

A publication of Child Care Aware® of Kansas

KansasChild

Winter 2021 Volume 20, Issue 1

Elevating
Provider
Voices

**NO BETTER
TIME:** Systems Thinking
for All

IN THIS ISSUE

Designing Child
Care Solutions

Connections
& Play

Design
Thinking
For & With
Children

Designing

Child Care Solutions



KELLY DAVYDOV

Executive Director, Child
Care Aware® of Kansas

Kelly Davydov joined Child Care Aware of Kansas as Executive Director in September, 2020. Kelly's professional background includes leadership for two key initiatives in Iowa: the state's early childhood system-building effort, Early Childhood Iowa, and its 2-Gen anti-poverty initiative. Kelly, her husband, Dmitry, and their two sons (Ethan, 12, and Henry, 10) have made Kansas City their new home. Together, they enjoy exploring state and national parks, farmers markets, and spending their winter weekends poolside at swim meets.

As a team, Child Care Aware® of Kansas has had many conversations over the past few months about our path forward, both as an organization that provides critical support to families seeking child care and the professionals who provide child care, and broadly, as a partner in Kansas' early childhood system. In many ways, we are asking ourselves the same questions that our child care system asks: Who will we be when the pandemic ends? How do we ensure that we are able to meet the changing needs of young children, their families, and child care providers? How do we approach these questions so that we get it right?

Getting it right has never been more important. As much as families, child care providers, and entire communities might be struggling right now, this is our collective chance to do better. We can build an early care and education system that invests in young children the way our public school system invests in older children. By doing so, we can build an economy that works for everyone: employers that need a dependable workforce, parents who need access to high-quality options for culturally responsive care, children who need a safe and nurturing environment in which to grow and learn, and child care providers who deserve to be recognized – and compensated – for the essential role they play.

In the articles that follow, you will hear from thought leaders spanning Kansas' early childhood system. They'll talk to you about designing child care solutions that work, and how to center the voices of families and providers from the very beginning. They'll ask you to commit to equitable outcomes for vulnerable and underserved children and families. And they'll tell you about local innovations that are in motion across the state.

I couldn't be more proud of the team at Child Care Aware of Kansas and this issue of *Kansas Child*. As an organization and as a system, we will get it right. We will do better. All of us – together.



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IN THIS ISSUE

No Better Time: 4 Systems Thinking for All

Start with Those Who Know7
the Challenge Best

Slowing Down to Speed Up8

Am I Making Myself Clear?.....10

Connection & Play11

Advocacy Providers and Parents....12

Building Blocks & Bumble Bees: ...13
Science as the ABCs

Child Care in Kansas:.....14 Paralysis to Action

Kansas School Redesign in15
Early Childhood Settings

Elevating Provider Voices.....16

Picking Up the Pieces.....18

Design Thinking For &..... 20
With Children

Book Nook: 22
For the Love of Books





NO BETTER TIME: Systems Thinking for All

BY TRACY BENSON

A System Is a Collection of Related Parts

Having recently been absent, Marisa enthusiastically returned to school. Her teacher, Ms. Vicky, as she did with all children returning after being away, eagerly waited to greet her.

"Marisa, it's so wonderful to see you! We missed your smile. We missed the way you help others, and the clever ideas you share during story circle time. Our system wasn't the same without you."

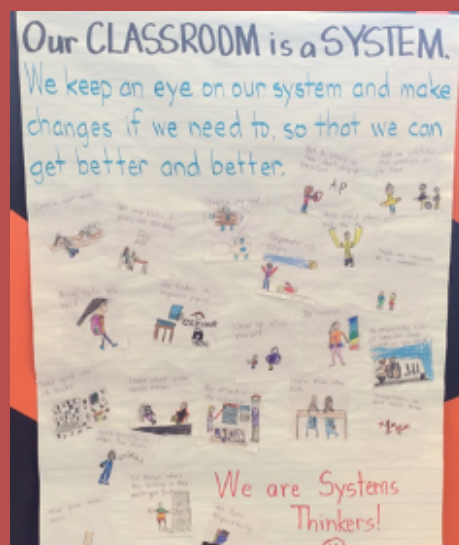
Hearing the teacher's enthusiastic greeting, some of Marisa's classmates chimed in by adding,

"Marisa, like when a puzzle piece was missing over there (pointing to puzzle station). It was like a big hole. When we found it, the puzzle was done. You're like the lost piece, and it's good you're back!"

"Ya, in story circle, we all had to try harder to think and figure out what would happen next 'cuz you weren't around. I'm glad you're back, too."

Ms. Vicky then stepped in:

"You're all such important members of our classroom system. When you're absent, we miss your contributions, as each of you is key to our learning and make us all better learners and friends. We are better together!"





It is classrooms like this that demonstrate how our youngest learners are very capable of seeing systems as connected parts. The *Our Classroom is a System* example shows how children hold themselves accountable to the system with watchful eyes, have the ability to make changes and are determined to get better as systems thinkers.

Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is a way of seeing our world. This perspective helps us make connections and see patterns. Like a finished puzzle with all the pieces in place, children see their world as naturally connected. When changes are made to classroom routines or even furniture arrangements, they observe how modifications to their system cause change. They recognize that change has an effect. Early childhood systems are complex with many moving parts that can sometimes be disconnected, resulting in undesirable results for children, educators and families. A systems-thinking approach helps people of all ages see the whole and develop an understanding of how different parts affect one another. Knowing the system helps identify places to intervene in order to leverage resources and expertise.

Habits of a Systems Thinker

At the Waters Center for Systems Thinking, we have seen care providers, preschool teachers, center directors, early childhood leaders and policymakers apply the *Habits of a Systems Thinker* to positively affect their work. There are 14 Habits that all work together and complement one another to

help people of all ages intentionally practice the behaviors of systems thinking. The Waters Center utilizes *Habits of a Systems Thinker* cards to help learners familiarize themselves with these concepts.

Taking a Deep Dive into the Habits The Big Picture

Systems thinkers *Seek to Understand the Big Picture*. The illustration for this Habit shows a person on a balcony taking in a wide array of trees, grasses and living things that are affected by water, air and climate. The view includes buildings and roads that have an effect on nature and people. As in Ms. Vicky's classroom, relationships between people (children and adults) and other parts such as classroom resources, schedules and lessons, are all aspects of the interconnected big picture.

To practice this Habit, systems thinkers might ask, "How can I maintain balance between the big picture and important details? To what degree is my big-picture view focused on areas of influence, rather than areas of concern that I cannot influence?"

Interconnections

An important aspect of seeking the big picture is the recognition of how parts of the system are connected. A systems thinker *Makes Meaningful Connections Within and Between Systems*. Connections are the links and cause-and-effect relationships that make a system work. Children saw the effect of a classmate's absence and described that effect on their learning and interactions.

There is great value in seeking the connections between the various aspects of the early childhood system. For example, access to child care and preschool, kinder-

garten readiness, responsive policymaking, governance, family services and support, pediatric health care service, funding sources, workforce development, and more are all interconnected and have an effect on the system as a whole. Systems thinkers strive to forge connections by building structures for communication and collaboration between and among seemingly disparate parts.

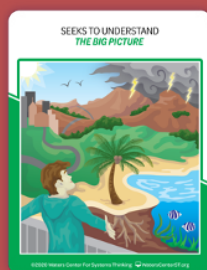
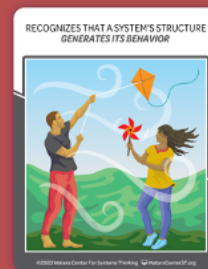
Systems thinkers might ask, "How can recognizing the many aspects of a system create a better understanding of the system as a whole?"

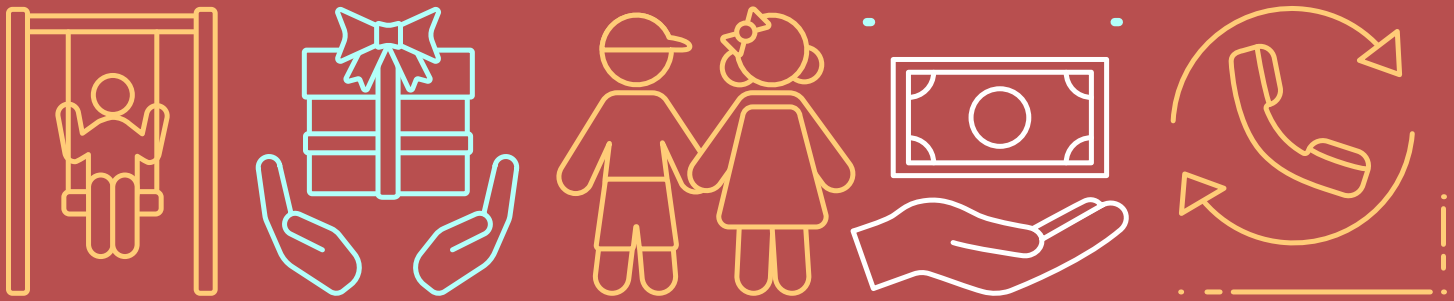
System Structure

System structure is essential to generate meaningful connections and improved system performance. Systems thinkers *Recognize that a System's Structure Generates its Behavior*. The kite and pinwheel in this illustration behave quite differently on a windy day. Here, the design or structure of the toy causes one object to fly, and the other to spin.

Just like two different toys behave differently on a windy day, children will respond differently to established classroom or family structures like routines, expectations, or lessons. For teachers, have you ever taught the exact same lesson to different groups of children and observed completely different responses or results? For families, have you noticed how an unexpected occurrence such as a change in routine or an after-hours work call causes children to demonstrate different behaviors than expected? For governing bodies, how does messaging about a new policy get interpreted and implemented by individuals from various parts of the system?

Systems thinkers might ask, "How does the organization and interaction of the





parts create the behavior that emerges? When things go wrong, how can I focus on internal causes rather than dwell on external blame?"

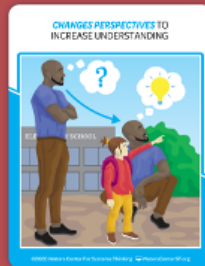
Mental Models

Life experiences, cultural backgrounds and personal preferences influence how we interpret the world around us. *Mental models* are the assumptions, beliefs and values we hold that influence the way we view, pay attention to and interpret day-to-day situations. Our mental models cause us to notice, prefer, ignore, or focus on particular aspects of daily life. Everyone has mental models and, like the thought bubbles in this drawing, they are often apparent only to the person who holds them. For example, when a family considers pet adoption, the decision generates different mental models. A child sees the new pet as something to love and hug, while a cautious parent questions the cost to feed and care for this new family member. Mental models affect how people interpret life experiences and how they make decisions and solve problems.



Because no single mental model completely represents a true and valid picture of a system, systems thinkers strive to see the world through the eyes of others by changing perspectives to increase understanding.

Systems thinkers might ask, "How are the current mental models advancing or hindering our efforts to achieve desired results? How am I helping others see the influence that mental models have on our decision-making?"



the world from different viewpoints. The perspective of a single person regarding a system is incomplete and limited. It is by experiencing multiple perspectives that a more complete picture emerges. Consider the value of asking children what they like most about their school, and families what they value about their child's care and education. Responses often vary, and by collecting the various perspectives people have, early educators are in ideal positions to meet the diverse needs of all those they serve.

Systems thinkers might ask, "Whom should I approach to help me gain new perspectives on an issue? As I learn about new perspectives, am I willing to change my mind?"

No Better Time

Systems thinkers embrace new ways of thinking, and new ways of doing that result in a welcoming attitude toward change and innovation. The growing complexity and challenges facing today's families and early childhood educators make a systems thinking approach more important than ever. The *Habits of Systems Thinking* help people navigate complex system relationships and are a great way to get started as a learner. Systems thinking is not limited to adult learners. There has been much research that supports young children's ability to think in complex and abstract ways. Young children see the world

Perspectives

The ability to *Change Perspectives to Increase Understanding* transcends empathy. This Habit challenges us to get in the shoes of others and strive to see

as naturally connected and interdependent. They do not view problems as challenges that require specific mathematical or scientific frameworks, but as holistic conditions that call for unbiased observation, unaffected recall, and the wisdom of a beginner's mind ready to discover new insights and understanding. When early education systems are designed to encourage children to reflect, predict, make connections, question, and hypothesize, the result is deep learning and understanding. Systems thinking is for everyone, and there is no better time to become a Systems Thinker. To learn more about other Habits of a Systems Thinker, explore free online courses, systems thinking tools and resources, visit the Thinking Tools Studio, a learning system powered by the Waters Center for Systems Thinking. ●

Habits of a Systems Thinker & Thinking Tools Studio:
thinkingtoolsstudio.org/cards



TRACY BENSON

President, Waters Center for Systems Thinking

Tracy Benson Ed.D. is the President of a 501(c)(3) non-profit, the Waters Center for Systems Thinking. With 35-plus years working at PreK-20 levels, she leads a team that provides technical assistance, coaching and facilitation to a wide range of education and community-based systems.



Start with Those Who Know the Challenge Best

BY JULIA MCBRIDE

If you aspire to launch more creative child care solutions, you know you need to get parents and child care providers involved. Don't delay! Too many advocates and policy-developers wait until they've chosen their favorite solution to get parents and child care providers on board. They recruit moms, dads, grandparents and child care providers to talk with legislators and sell their marvelous solution. Well-meaning, perhaps, but not the way to set things up for success.

What if you got families and providers involved much earlier in the process? Rather than waiting to hand off a plan to these best-of-all-advocates, why not pull them in at the very beginning? Let their on-the-ground experience inspire creative solutions to child care dilemmas.

Wouldn't that be messy? Won't it take too much time? Yes. It might be messy — or at least not as straightforward as you want it to be. And yes, time is an issue. Engaging all those powerful voices will take more time than if you designed the plan yourself. But research and experience from the Kansas Leadership Center shows that treating creative child care solution design as the complex, adaptive challenge it is leads to more lasting change and real progress for the people you care about. Recognizing child care as a complex challenge opens opportunities for engaging the right voices and seeing new ways forward.

OK, so it will take more time, but that time will pay dividends in lasting solutions. How do we start? How do we get parents and care-

givers involved in designing solutions?

Before you start to consider new ways, use focus groups, surveys, interviews and informal one-on-ones to hear about what's going on from those who know best. Have conversations that allow parents and caregivers to describe the problem from their point of view.

Ask wide-open questions, such as:

- For you, what are the most pressing child care issues?
- What's happening?
- What's not satisfactory?
- What's the gap between where we are now and the kind of child care system you want for your community?
- What's working?
- What do you, personally, struggle with?
- If you could wave a magic wand and make child care wonderful, what changes would you make?

Pose a question, then, just listen. Listen actively and deeply. Make sure you really understand what parents and providers care about most. Then, after you've heard from as many as you can, describe the problem in writing from their point of view. Describe the child care problem not as you — the policymaker — see it, but from the point of view of the people living with the problem every day.

Get the people who matter most engaged from the beginning. Once you see the prob-

lem as stakeholders see it, you'll be in a much stronger position to mobilize families and providers in a trustworthy process to design solutions. Those solutions will be more creative and more lasting, with your best advocates even better prepared to make the case for change. ●



JULIA MCBRIDE

Vice President, Kansas Leadership Center

Julia Fabris McBride is vice president of the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC), a certified coach and co-author of *Teaching Leadership: Case-in-Point, Case Studies and Coaching*. She oversees teacher and coach development and has created professional programs for leadership developers that have drawn people to Wichita from four continents.

Founded in 2007 by the Kansas Health Foundation, KLC is a first-of-its-kind nonprofit educational organization with a civic mission, national reputation and global reach. Its programs strengthen Kansas communities with the core teaching that leadership is an activity available to anyone at any time.

Courses build soft skills of interpersonal communication, collaboration and leadership so that people at all levels in any context make a greater impact in their organizations, at home and in their communities.

Kansasleadershipcenter.org



SLOWING DOWN TO *S P E E D U P*

A Multi-level Approach:
Child, Family, Program, Agency, Community, System



Building an Early Childhood governance system at the current speed and building trust with long-term goals in mind.

BY MELISSA ROOKER

Since the pandemic began last March, the nation has been confronted with a fundamental truth our child care professionals have always known — child care is essential. Parents on the frontline grapple with tough choices when schools and child care providers shut down. Policymakers and employers across the country are facing the stark reality that our economy simply cannot function without a strong early childhood care and education system.

When the pandemic hit, Kansas had just completed a year of early childhood systems improvement planning. Our 2019 Needs Assessment identified eight crucial areas for improvement and used information from parents, providers, business leaders, and a variety of community-based organizations to draft the All In For Kansas Kids strategic plan. It sets goals for achieving the vision that every Kansas child will thrive. Leaders from the

The pandemic required us to slow down our systems improvement work while we focused on mobilizing a crisis response.

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, the Kansas State Department of Education, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas Department for Children and Families built a strong, collaborative team during the course of the project — relationships served us well when crisis hit.

The fragility of the child care system was exposed by COVID-19. Parents shared experiences through the Our Tomorrows Storybank — fear and isolation, impossible demands to report to work even when schools were shut down, lost wages. All In For Kansas Kids webinars allowed child care providers to

give voice to the challenges they face—difficulty finding cleaning supplies and PPE, fear and uncertainty about how to adapt practices to changing public health guidelines, lower attendance rates, and tough choices between making parents pay for vacant slots vs. absorbing the losses. Already low wages and slim-to-nonexistent operating margins intensified the financial stresses of child care providers.

The pandemic required us to slow down our systems improvement work while we focused on mobilizing a crisis response. However, having the strategic plan in place has allowed us to implement emergency efforts in alignment with our vision for the system. Using what we have learned from this experience, we are about to hit the accelerator. With funding through the Preschool Development Grant renewal, we have awarded Quality Improvement subgrants, are building a workforce registry to consolidate professional development efforts in one place, and are preparing integrated data protocols to streamline the use of data to inform practice and make decisions.

But we know this is not enough.

We must reimagine and invest in child care as public infrastructure. Child care is the power grid enabling parents to work outside the home, which in turn provides businesses with a reliable workforce. Most importantly, it helps children grow and learn. It will take all of us to shift mindsets and generate public will for the level of investment needed. We will continue to share messaging that unifies our voice, act on your behalf to enhance funding streams and policies, and learn from national and global thought leaders. Securing the future we want for our children requires each of us to be All In For Kansas Kids.

Join the All In For Kansas Kids team at kschildrenscabinet.org. ●



MELISSA ROOKER

Executive Director,
Kansas Children's Cabinet
and Trust Fund

**All In For
Kansas Kids** 

Melissa Rooker is the Executive Director of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund. Before joining the Cabinet, Melissa served three terms in the Kansas House, focusing on children's issues and public education, and spent 15 years as a development executive at Clint Eastwood's Malpaso Productions. Melissa is a KU graduate and lives in Fairway with her husband, Tom.

Am I Making Myself Clear?

BY CHELSEA SCHULTE

How frequently do you share information through written language? Think about parent handbooks, policies-and-procedure manuals, websites, social media pages, contracts, etc. This list goes on and on.

How frequently do you have to clarify information you shared through written language? Someone calls with questions about something they read on your website or social media page. A parent insists the sick policy in your handbook doesn't cover the symptoms their child has right now, so they should be able to attend.

You might ask yourself, "How do I make myself more clear?" I have just the answer for you.

Follow the Federal Plain Language Guidelines.

These guidelines were originally developed to make government regulations easier to understand; however, they can be applied to any written language. The guidelines address a range of issues with written language, including big-picture guidelines such as identifying your audience, as well as specific guidelines, such as using short, simple words.

When you use the guidelines in your written language, your reader benefits from the clarity. Where to begin, you ask?

I recommend reading the guidelines completely. Don't be alarmed by the length of the 118-page document. It is a quick and easy read. I have read it multiple times and still reference it regularly, even while writing this article!

Below I have listed some of the guidelines I use regularly when writing or revising written language:

- **Address one person, not a group**

When writing your document, consider who your audience is. If you are writing a parent handbook for your child care program, the audience is the parent. Write as if you are talking directly to a parent, not a group of parents.

- **Use lots of useful headings**

Headings break up chunks of text and allow the reader to quickly find the information they are looking for. Headings can be in the form of questions, statements, or topics, but should be consistent throughout the document.

- **Use active voice**

When you use an active voice, you let the reader know who is responsible for what. Rather than saying "Nap blankets must be washed every 5 uses," say, "I will send home nap blankets on Fridays for you to wash over the weekend."

- **Use "must" to indicate requirements**

As you write, consider whether you are describing a requirement or a recommendation. If you require parents to remove their shoes when they enter your program, say, "You must remove your shoes in the entryway." If you want parents to remove their shoes, but it isn't required, use the word "should" instead.

- **Write short sentences**

Limit each sentence to one idea. If your sentence is getting long, break it into multiple sentences.

For more information and to read the guidelines in their entirety, visit www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines. The next time you find yourself clarifying something you've shared through written language, review your document alongside the guidelines to see where you can improve your writing.

Have I made myself clear? ●

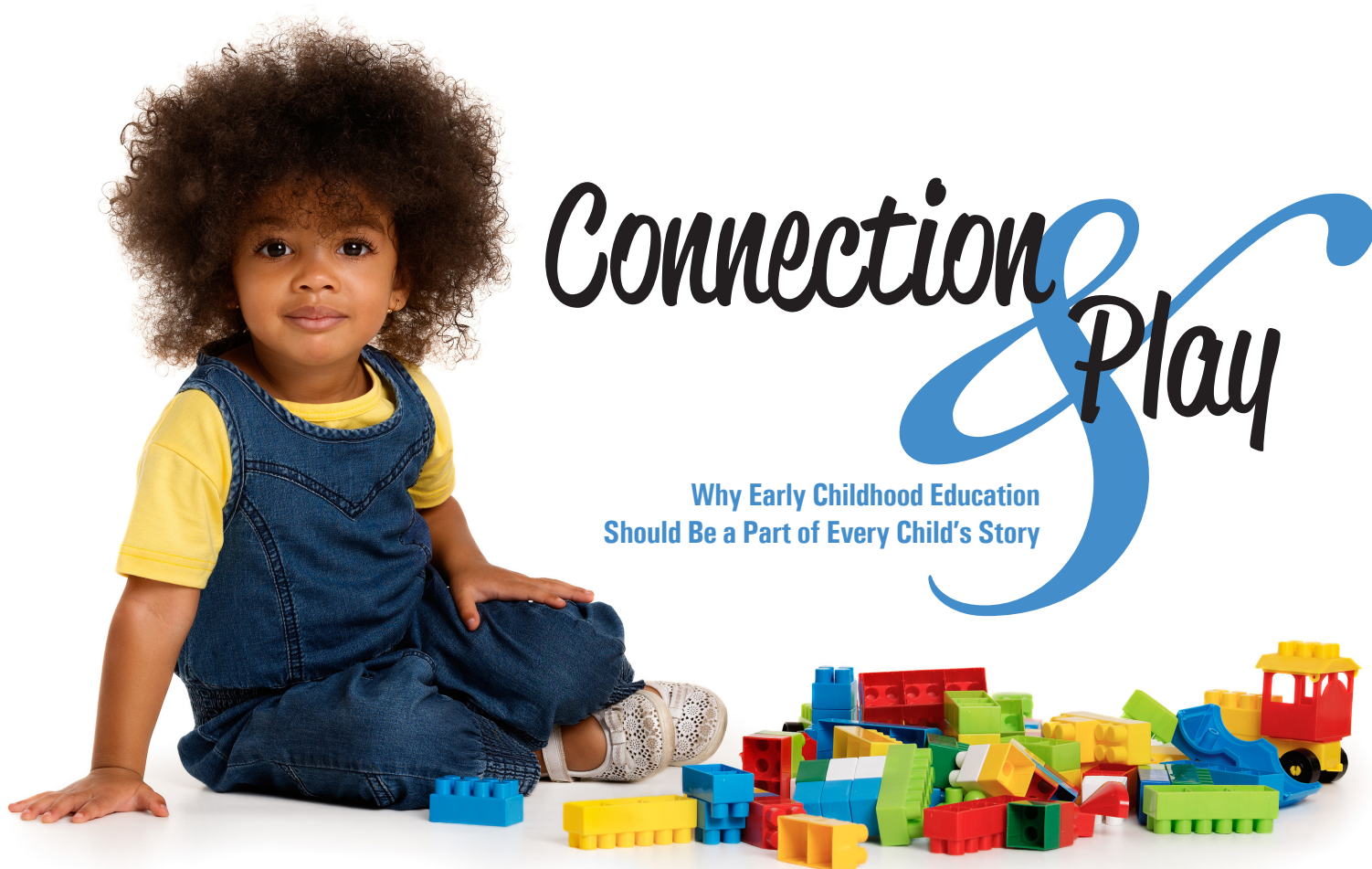


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• Reference: Plain Language Action and Information Network. (2011). Federal plain language guidelines. www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines



BY TABATHA RESPROY

Whether you are a child or an adult, we all are in desperate need of connection, which this pandemic has proven to us all over again. From the moment we are born, we are seeking it. These positive connections with others build patterns in our brain that we rely on later in life to help us solve problems and interact with our peers. That's why reaching a child from birth to age 5 is so crucial: It's when their brains are developing most rapidly and when they are becoming hard-wired with behaviors that can help or harm their future selves.

I've seen early childhood education move children from special education to general education in less than a year. I've seen it change troubled, aggressive kids with lives full of trauma into ones with the skills to calm and self-regulate in kindergarten. I've seen it positively affect the lives of so many children, and I've also seen the negative effects of not reaching children until it's much more difficult to re-shape destructive patterns in their lives.

We learn through experience. We learn through conflict. The great Dr. Becky Bailey says, "Conflict is our friend." I repeat that to myself every time I begin to feel that old nudge of impatience when I have an expectation for my classroom that is thwarted by a disagreement amongst littles. But this is how they learn. And I can offer an environment where children are challenged to grow through their own experiences. What better way to do that than through play?

The most valuable learning takes place in open-ended activities that are heavily based in play and exploration. THIS is how children learn best. They learn by having things in their hands, trying out different ideas, and experiencing conflict. This is not only how our littlest students learn best, it's how most children learn best.

Fred Rogers said it best when he said, "Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning."

When I think about the incredible opportunities for play and connection that early childhood programs provide, I also have to think about the children we aren't reaching. Across the country, only 34% of all 4-year-olds are enrolled in state-funded pre-K programs. That's 1.5 million students. So, we have 3.5 million students who are potentially underserved. Some states move ahead while others leave students without access. The number of 3-year-olds enrolled in state-funded programs is even smaller, and the number of infants and toddlers is even smaller than that.

One piece of my students' stories might be their trauma. But another piece of their story is my classroom. Both experiences have the power to change their lives forever, but their time in my classroom makes the next chapters of their lives ones of strength and hope. That's why I dream of working to make a quality early childhood education experience a part of every child's story. ●



TABATHA RESPROY

Early Childhood
Educator & 2020 National Teacher of the Year

Tabatha Rosproy, a veteran early childhood educator from Winfield, Kan., is the 2020 National Teacher of the Year. The first early childhood educator to be named National Teacher of the Year, Tabatha hopes to use her platform to promote universal preschool and expanded social-emotional learning for all students.



ADVOCACY

Providers and Parents

THE VOICES THAT SHOULD INFORM CHANGE- PROCESS IN OUR CHILD CARE SYSTEM



PEGGY KELLY

Executive Director,
Kansas Head Start
Association

Peggy Kelly is the Executive Director of the Kansas Head Start Association. She has continued the work of KHSA to create opportunities for parents to advocate and support their voice in issues around children, families and early childhood services. She has specifically worked to build a network of parent advocates who can encourage other parents to find their voice. Prior to working with Head Start she directed TANF and Community Collaboration programs with the State of Kansas and was a Medical Social Worker.

BY PEGGY KELLY

Long before COVID-19 completely re-designed our lives and view of what “normal” meant, the discussion of what child care in the United States is, or should be, had been going on below ground. The first time someone raised the issue of inadequacies in our child care system with me was way back in the 1990s. New to having child care subsidy case work in my area of responsibility, I thought it was pretty cool that we were able to pay providers to care for the children of public-assistance and low-income families. To learn that other countries provided so much more in terms of parental leave or subsidized child care was a bit of a surprise. The wonderment of how to do this differently has been in the back of my mind ever since. Conversations about what could or should be have ebbed and flowed over the years without a clear picture emerging of what a child care system that truly works would look like.

COVID has made people acutely aware of the role that child care plays in our society. Parents who are essential employees have had to figure out how to keep their children safe while they go to work.

Parents who can work from home have had to figure out how to be child care provider and schoolteacher while also participating in endless Zoom calls and accomplishing other work tasks. This moment has brought attention and appreciation for the work that child care providers and preschool teachers do every day.

Employers are much more aware of the essential role that child care providers play

in the success of their company. Before COVID, the economic development world was struggling with child care supply as a factor in attracting new business to their communities. Meanwhile many child care providers are struggling to maintain their business due to low enrollment and the cost of sanitation and protective supplies.

Who has been missing from the tables where discussions about the child care system have been taking place? Often it has been parents and providers. How do we bring these essential voices into the room? How have we been going about the work to address policies and practices that drive our system? Have the meetings been held at 9 a.m. or 3 p.m. during the workweek? How often have they been in the evening or on a weekend? Does Zoom offer new opportunities for engaging providers while they care for their charges?

Intentionally inviting parents and providers into the conversations to cast a new vision for our child care system will bring vital perspectives of how the system works. Provider compensation and child care rates, hours of care, location, accessibility, and transportation are all issues that parents and providers are challenged with and equipped to influence.

We must authentically engage parents and providers as the influential people in the room. The practice of starting every discussion by first speaking with those closest to the child will drastically change the conversations. When conversations change, solutions will change as well. ●

Building Blocks and Bumble Bees: Science as the ABCs

BY MEG RICHARD

Studies have long shown that the foundations laid in the early childhood years pave the way for the learning ahead. I've often said that Preschool and early ed teachers are the smartest and trickiest teachers our students will ever have. Just think of all the concepts to the tune of "ABCD," "Baa baa black sheep," etc., It's brilliance! When approaching science with our littlest learners, many of the same strategies apply! What might seem like small steps can be giant leaps for our little learners. Over time, it's these small steps that help our students make sense of the world — so let's start with some ABC's of Science learning!

Attention and Attitude:

When using science in the early education classroom we want to support the way students pay attention to the world around them. Much of this can be accomplished using materials that likely already are being used in classrooms and play. A recent British report noted that more children could recognize the McDonald's restaurant logo than they could a bumble bee or an oak leaf. Why? Is it because there are more McDonald's than bumble bees? Absolutely not! It's all about our attention and attitudes. Our students start to recognize McDonald's and associate it with the meal, the toy and the joy! So, how can we bring the same joy about the natural world? It could be as simple as taking that step and going for a walk.

Idea for the classroom:

- Acorns: Acorns come from oak trees. Have students go on a nature walk and find an acorn and start asking questions! Where did they come from? How do we know? Why do they have funny hats? It is OK not to have all the answers to your little learner's questions. In science, we don't have all the answers. Part of the fun could be in the stories you create.

B is for Budding:

Budding questions lead to building brains — and we are in luck because science is all about questions! When thinking about how to best support our wee wonderers, one of the best strategies is supporting their questions and helping them to realize the fun in figuring it out! In a classroom, this might look like providing something interesting for students to look at (a butterfly chrysalis, lights blinking in a certain pattern, or a plant bud that over time will change into a bloom).

Idea for the classroom:

- Bumble Bees: Get excited when you see a bee. Remember, an important part in this process is our attitude! Sometimes when we are afraid of something it is because we don't understand it. Bees can be a great opportunity to discuss respecting nature and how important it is to us (bees pollinate the food we eat). Consider singing, "I'm bringing home my baby bumble bee" to ease concerns, and then talking about the patterns we see on their bodies, comparing them to other bugs or even having a honey celebration! The goal is to get learners excited about what they see and then have them make connections. Remember to be careful and respectful around bees to avoid stings.

C is for Creativity:

For too long science has been thought of as concepts and chemistry. But, what about creativity? When we think of science concepts and we look at multiple areas of science we notice that the same pieces keep emerging as tools to help us make sense of the world. We call these the cross-cutting concepts! Cross-cutting concepts are a great tool to use while looking at the world and wondering and helping students draw connections. When it comes to creativity, science is everywhere, and the cross-cutting concepts help to make connections. For example, while walking, look up!

Idea for the classroom:

- Clouds: Clouds are a great opportunity for kids to get creative. Any time you are outside take a moment to look at the clouds. What shapes can we see or imagine in them? Is there a pattern to their color and what it feels like outside? Do they always move the same way, and where might they be going? •



MEG RICHARD

K-12 Science Education
Program Consultant,
KS Dept. of Education

Meg Richard is the K-12 Science Education Program Consultant for the Kansas Department of Education. Meg had been teaching middle school science since 2010 and joined the department in 2020. Meg is Nationally Board Certified in EA Science and was the 2019 Kansas State Science Awardee for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). Meg is passionate about integrating authentic, hands-on science experiences for students, and at times she can't believe she is lucky enough to get to do the best job in the world: teach! Connect with her on Twitter: @frizzlerichard



Child Care IN Kansas:

PARALYSIS TO ACTION

BY TRAVIS RICKFORD

Today, our rural way of life looks a little different as we adapt to new challenges presented by COVID-19. Our work environments look different, and we think twice about going to the local coffee shop. Similar to the concerns about gathering over the holidays, some of us might look at annual gatherings with more trepidation than we have in the past. As we look at the community supports that have been made available to help families through this global crisis, the ability to access quality child care has been magnified to a “higher than code red” designation.

Before COVID-19, rural communities were in crisis as they explored ways to make child care more available. Businesses built child care facilities for their employees, and daycares looked for ways to expand. Communities created significant fundraising efforts to build child care centers. However, problems related to sustainability continued to exist. Before COVID, almost 80% of all counties in Kansas reported that up to 10 children were waiting for an opening (Child Care Aware of Kansas, *2019 Child Care Supply Demand Report*). In some counties, there are as many as 40 children waiting for an opening. Again, this is before COVID-19.

With the onset of COVID-19, the child care gap was exacerbated by closures of day cares. As the leader of a nonprofit, we are not exempt from the problems created by COVID. In addition to our regional initiatives, we operate two group child care facilities. On average, we receive three heartbreaking calls a week asking for care that we cannot provide. As I write this article, one of our facilities is closed because of COVID. All of the preventative measures we took could not hold back a deadly pandemic hell-bent on infiltrating every aspect of our lives. So what do we do? How do we do it? How can child care become something that families never again have to worry about?

My preliminary response, like it tends to be with any adaptive challenge, is to look toward community-centered approaches. As community members, we sometimes have the best ideas, however, we struggle to transform those ideas in action. The magnitude of

a problem like child care can paralyze us because it affects every facet of our lives. This is not the first time an adaptive challenge has presented an issue. Like child care, rural communities struggle to provide resources to address mental health. When it was apparent that services were not going to magically appear, the community, particularly the sectors that make up the community (i.e. health, government, education, etc.) had to participate in community conversations and other participatory processes to make progress. I emphasize the word progress, because issues such as mental health and child care do not get resolved right away.

If we can focus on community-led “turning points,” or incremental changes, we might be able to address these highly adaptive challenges and not become overly dismayed in the process. As communities, we need to continue to look at participatory approaches to make progress before our paralysis turns into a vegetative state. ●



TRAVIS RICKFORD

Executive Director,
LiveWell Northwest Kansas

Travis Rickford serves as the Executive Director for LiveWell Northwest Kansas, a regional nonprofit focused on improving infrastructures for health, early childhood and child care. Travis also serves as an adjunct faculty member for the political science department at Fort Hays State University. He is pursuing his PhD in Leadership Communications.

KANSAS SCHOOL REDESIGN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

BY TAMRA MITCHELL

Beginning in the fall of 2017, Kansas launched an ambitious project to redesign schools. The Kansans Can School Redesign Project, based on data collected from thousands of Kansans, is a movement to change schools to better meet the academic and social-emotional needs of every student. Kansans were clear that in addition to academic skills, they wanted students to develop character, citizenship, work ethic, and most importantly, to connect learning with students' individual needs, interests and talents. Schools that volunteer to redesign participate in a year of planning guided by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). Andrea Manes, Principal, Swenson Early Childhood Center, in Osawatomie, and Stacey Green, Principal, Stockton Grade School, in Stockton, share the following about what Redesign has meant for their students and families.

Swenson Early Childhood Center

At Swenson Early Childhood Center, much has changed in our approach. We used to take the responsibility of mastering what other grade levels expected to make their instruction easier, but now we are guided by what our students need. Students became frustrated during whole-group instruction, but now they explore learning through small group, hands-on and play-based instruction. We used to strictly follow the curriculum, but now we use the curriculum as a resource and allow developmental standards to guide our instruction. We became frustrated when children didn't master skills, but now we look at what is developmentally appropriate and find creative ways to help students progress to the

next level. Staff were burned out from monotonous lessons, but now they are creative, providing instruction that is fun for everyone. Students were sitting most of their day, but now movement is the foundation of learning. We used to celebrate big goals. Now we celebrate individual goals (no matter how big or small) to model the importance of every little step. Student data were either flat-lined or slowly making progress, but now they love to watch their "mountains grow." Yes, little ones can set goals and watch their data mountain grow! Our school taught and followed through with what other schools in the district do, but now we recognize our students learn uniquely, and we embrace it with pride.

Stockton Grade School — Early Childhood Classroom

In Stockton, we had several positive strategies to improve teaching and learning, but we knew we needed to change the system. We needed to move from silos of greatness to a system of great. It had been several years since we had revisited our vision and mission. We had grown comfortable, and we were ready to get uncomfortable and grow. Several conversations, including the need for preschool, offered to all 3- and 4-year-olds, had been discussed, but we lacked the vision and planning steps. This school year (2020-21), we provided preschool to all 3- and 4-year-olds in our district. Previously, we could offer preschool only to our at-risk students, students on an IEP, and two or three peer models. We received KSDE grants and moved from serving 16 children to 41 chil-

dren this year! We know this will affect our district and school goals. Our Redesign journey equipped us with a process and mindset to adapt to change and adjust our behaviors to see opportunities instead of roadblocks. Early childhood is finally receiving the platform and the funding that for decades has been necessary. As we look at our system redesign goals, early learning is critical in closing our gaps, partnering with families, and laying the foundation for equity in our system. ●



TAMRA MITCHELL

Elementary Redesign Specialist, Kansas State Department of Education

Tamra Mitchell is the Elementary Redesign Specialist for the Kansas State Department of Education. She has taught preschool through fourth grade, with the majority of her classroom experience in kindergarten. She has experience as an early literacy coach, instructional coach, and adjunct professor. While working for the KSDE, she has led the Kansas Learning Network to provide support to schools on improvement and has led the statewide Kindergarten Readiness initiative. Now, as Redesign Specialist, she works to build a system to support elementary schools as they redesign teaching and learning to provide more personalized experiences to students in a project-based or problem-based integration of core curriculum. Tamra has a Baccalaureate degree in Elementary Education from Wichita State University, a Master's Degree in Curriculum Leadership from Emporia State University. She is pursuing a Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership from Kansas State University.

Elevating Provider Voices



BY TARA GLANTON & BERNIE HOWE

2020 has been robust, with quick shifts and new experiences that have highlighted front-line workers in all industries and have given a unique opportunity to experience firsthand the importance of child care on our local, state, and national economies. This experience has served to amplify providers' voices as they join the crusade for professional identity in the field of early care and education. With many years of referring to caregivers as "babysitters," there has been a recent push from leaders in the field to embrace the knowledge and expertise child care providers have regarding development and child outcomes. Quality of care is determined by building responsive relationships with children and families, aligning learning through play with developmental milestones and individual needs, and engaging in professional development opportunities to keep abreast of state mandates, best practices and accountability. Hence, child care providers' voices, reality, and dedication are all crucial pieces to closing the gap on professional recognition and switching the focus to providing equitable contributions to society. No one knows better, no one can speak more candidly about the journey, and no one deserves more acceptance as contributors of high-quality care and education than those working with young children.

POWER TO THE PROFESSION

An initiative to give credit where credit is overdue is making headway. It is well known that higher education in child care providers leads to a higher quality of care and better outcomes for children. Still, training and education programs are often expensive and yield very few financial benefits for providers. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has recently spearheaded an effort to bring unity and recognition to early educators in a way that is both respectful of the current workforce and provides a framework for better preparation and compensation in the field. The Power to the Profession decision cycles have resulted in a published Unifying Framework, which is a collaborative effort from 15 Task Force Member Organizations, 38 Stakeholder Groups, 11,000 Early Childhood Educators, and seven Rounds of Public Comment (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2020). This initiative supports the

Child care provider voices must be at the forefront of the conversation

voices of reason and hosts groundbreaking efforts to create a framework for individuals that recognizes the importance of professional standards and competencies for early educators, compensation, unity, and diversity in the field. The early childhood profession is now in grave danger due to declining resources and the overwhelming effect from the pandemic. The future of early educators relies heavily in elevating provider voices of concern to answer the question, “What will it take to keep providers employed?”

FINDING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Recent historical events have highlighted disparities in income, race, socioeconomic status, and access to services that affect both child care providers and the families they serve. Advancing equity in early childhood means committing to self-reflection with intentions of improving the quality of care provided to children and families and creating a diverse workforce. In such a time of uncertainty, recruitment, and retention of a diverse workforce is challenging and necessary. It is critical to peel back the layers and shed light on the rich mixture of experience and backgrounds already present in the field and seek out voices that might be missing. “A culture of equity and inclusion is not only critical to the success of diversity efforts, but creating an equitable and inclusive workplace also creates a positive experience” (Wowk, 2020). Those positive experiences are what will encourage employees to commit to their employers as well as to the children and families they serve. Acknowledging the importance of workplace equity and the value each employee contributes is a powerful and supportive team approach. Child care providers must be a voice in the conversation to identify barriers and design supports that will empower all providers to be equal and sustained contributors to the field.

Child care provider voices must be at the forefront of the conversation that focuses on professionalizing the field, recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, and recognizing their role in advancing equity in early childhood education. These professionals work closely with children, families, and others to foster relationships and support children’s developmental outcomes

and positive outcomes for families. Child care providers are individuals who create experiences that will enable children to dream, explore, play, solve problems, express big emotions, and grow throughout many stages of development. Providers are the voices of rea-

The time is now to value and trust, to advocate and appreciate, and to become engaged.

son, and their presence today, in communities everywhere, is prevalent and critical in ways that will shed light through the darkness. Providers’ voices play a crucial role in supporting children, families, and other professionals related to the field of early care and education, and we must continue to elevate these voices. The time is now to value and trust, to advocate and appreciate, and to become engaged. ●



BERNI HOWE

Lead Training and Technical Assistant Specialist, KCCTO

Berni Howe is the Lead Training and Technical Assistance Specialist at Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO). She has worked in the early childhood field for nearly 20 years in many capacities, including providing direct care to children, administration, advocacy, coaching and training. In addition to her work with KCCTO, Berni is the board president of KSAEYC.



TARA GLANTON

Early Childhood Programs Director

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Picking Up the Pieces

An Overview of Child Care Aware of America's Report on COVID-19's Impact on the Child Care Systemtracking



BY DIONNE DOBBINS

Long before COVID-19, the U.S. child care system was in trouble. Last year, Child Care Aware® of America explored that broken system in our report, *The U.S. and the High Price of Child Care*. We found it was fragmented, inequitable, inaccessible, and underfunded. When COVID-19 was layered onto the already fragile child care system, it shattered.

Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) has been tracking data on the pandemic's effect on the child care system. In Fall 2020, we released our report, *Picking Up the Pieces: Building a Better Child Care System Post COVID-19*. It would be tone deaf to speak only about what the child care system looked like in 2019 when so much changed over the first half of 2020. So, we gathered as much information and updated data as possible about the effects of COVID-19 on the child care system.

Our report is broken into chapters on Access, Affordability and Quality. Below are some key findings:

ACCESS

- From 2018 to 2019, 79% of states reported a decrease in the number of family child care providers and 53% of states reported a decrease in the number of centers.
- More than 30 states were able to provide us with child care supply data as of July 2020. When we compare these numbers to 2019, we found that 35% of centers and 21% of family child care providers remained closed nationwide as of July 2020.

AFFORDABILITY

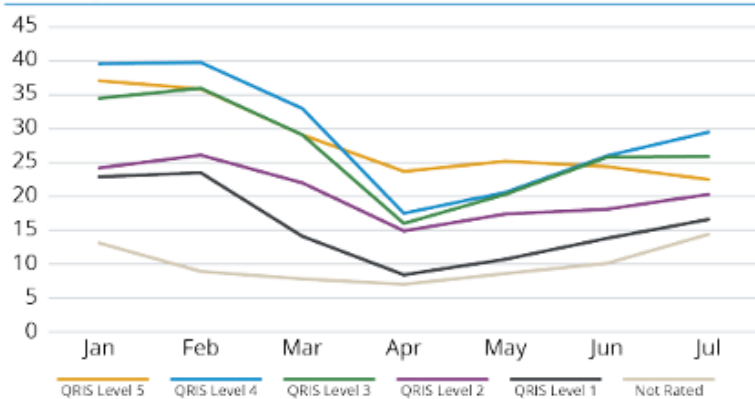
- The national price for child care in 2019 ranged from \$9,200 to \$9,600 – about 10% of median income for a married-couple family and about 34% of income for a single parent.
- We don't have the data needed to determine if COVID-19 has made child care less affordable. However, providers tell us that increased costs associated with health and safety supplies, and reduced group sizes have cut into their already-fragile income.

- In our report, we feature a case study from Child Care Aware® of Washington (CCAoWA). They found massive budget shortfalls for providers during COVID-19, especially for toddler and preschool classrooms, due in part to reduced group sizes. Although restrictions are being lifted across the country, the financial damage on these providers could be long term.

QUALITY

- In 2019, our annual survey responses indicated Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) participation rates averaged about 63% for centers and 52% for FCCs nationally.
- The long-term effect of COVID-19 on quality child care remains to be seen. We partnered with Early Learning Ventures (ELV), a child care data management program based in Colorado to analyze their data on quality. In Colorado, Level 5 is considered the highest quality. Starting in March 2020, all providers regardless of quality level had sharp declines in attendance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, providers with lower QRIS levels are recovering a bit faster than providers at Levels 4 and 5. We found that providers at Colorado's highest QRIS level (the gold line) began the year with an average attendance of around 37 children. As of July, attendance among this group of providers had dropped about 40%. When we look at Level 1 providers (the black line), they began 2020 with an average attendance of around 23 children. By July, their attendance had decreased only by 29%. This dataset showed that providers with higher QRIS levels are not recovering as fast as providers with lower QRIS levels, at least in terms of attendance. This is just a sample of providers in one state, so we can't generalize these findings across the country. However, it would be interesting to see if similar trends are being seen by a larger sample of providers nationwide and if so, to explore possible reasons.
- The ELV case study includes a subset of child care providers in one state. More research is needed to determine if this trend is seen in other states by a larger number of providers.

Figure 9: Average Monthly Attendance by Quality Level, Early Learning Ventures, Colorado Providers



What is needed to reimagine the child care system post COVID-19?

- **Funding.** For the child care industry to survive, at least \$50 billion is needed from Congress. We do not know how long the pandemic will last, and after it is over, higher levels of funding are critical to creating a child care system that works for all of us.
- **Data Interoperability.** Accurate and timely data is essential to identifying gaps in the child care system. We need data systems that talk to each other across the country so that we can quickly analyze the data when crises such as COVID-19 hit.
- **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) organizations.** For years, organizations such as Child Care Aware of Kansas have provided child care referrals to families and critical supports to child care providers and families, especially in times of crisis. Expanded funding for CCR&Rs would strengthen the overall child care system.

We believe that if there is no child care, there will be no recovery from COVID-19. However, we fear that there will be much fewer options available because child care providers cannot handle the financial strain caused by COVID-19.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Look up your state's data.
- Share this report with your social networks.
- Read our policy recommendations and take action today. ●



DIONNE DOBBINS

Sr. Director of Research,
Child Care Aware® of America

Dr. Dionne Dobbins is the Sr. Director of Research at Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA). She leads a team of researchers who work closely with the policy staff to align research reports with CCAoA's strategic goals, including our well known reports on the child care landscape, price of child care, and licensing.

Study Finds Child Care Not Associated with Spread of COVID-19

Researchers at Yale University conducted the first-ever, large-scale assessment of the risk of working in child care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings, published online in October in *Pediatrics*, the peer-reviewed journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, found that exposure to child care was not associated with an elevated risk of spreading COVID-19 from children to adults, provided the child care programs took multiple safety measures – including disinfecting, hand-washing, symptom-screening, social-distancing, mask-wearing, and limiting group size – and were located in communities where the spread of COVID-19 was contained.

In May and June 2020, the researchers surveyed 57,000 child care providers in all 50 states, representing more than 70% of America's counties, and compared self-reported COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations among workers whose programs stayed open and those whose programs closed.

The Yale research team cautioned that their findings do not necessarily apply to adults who work in schools or other settings with older children. Programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers tend to be small, and kids stay together. In schools and colleges, there are usually more people in a building, and students and teachers move more, switching classes and moving around the building.

The study also did not investigate the effects of COVID-19 on children in child care. It focused only on adults working in child care settings.

For more information, visit
www.childcareaware.org/study



Design Thinking For & With Children

BY MARK LOGAN

Innovation teams in corporate settings frequently attempt to conjure up the energy and unrestrained creativity of childhood. Using problem-solving frameworks such as Design Thinking, these teams attempt to tap into the vast imagination and optimism of their youth. But Design Thinking isn't just a discipline for businesses. It's a useful practice for solving all sorts of problems, and it's a highly valuable tool to instill empathy, confidence, and creativity in kids.

What is Design Thinking?

The practice of Design Thinking has emerged in the past 20 years as a popular tool for practicing creativity and producing change. It's a framework and collection of practices intended to produce creative solutions to challenging problems. Design Thinking is used in academia, business, education, and social change.

Although there are many ways of doing Design Thinking, the best-known model comes from the Stanford d.school. This five-step framework – Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test – lays out the steps to produce rapid, effective innovation.

In a typical scenario, a Design Thinking team convenes to tackle a challenge. They will work through the steps in the model, although rarely in a linear fashion. Most typically, Design Thinking processes flow back and forth as events and learning dictate revisiting earlier stages. The work of each stage is as follows:

Empathize – Developing a feel for and emotional connection with the people most directly impacted by the problem to be solved

Define – Clarifying and expressing exactly what problem the team will tackle. This can be different, slightly or radically, from the original challenge, depending on learnings from the first phase

Ideate – This is the fun part. Teams generate ideas. Bold, wild, crazy, impossible, and abundant ideas.

Prototype – The team produces rough, simple versions of their ideas to gain a better understanding of ideas and of the people using them.

Test – The goal of prototyping is to test as quickly and often as possible. In the last two stages, the team flows back and forth between the two as testing leads to changes in the prototype until an acceptable outcome is produced.

Designing With, not For

While Design Thinking has been widely embraced and is practiced in a variety of settings, it does have limitations and drawbacks. One of the principal pitfalls of Design Thinking is that it places the Design Team in a position of privilege. They are positioned as the experts, designing a so-

Design Thinking is a lifelong skill... that will serve them well in school, in work, and throughout their lives.

lution for people who need their help. In some applications, especially in the realm of social innovation, this privileged position is problematic. It can exacerbate historical and existing inequities.

To address this problem, the practice of Equity Centered Design (ECD) has emerged as an important offshoot from Design Thinking. ECD is grounded in the conviction that the people closest to the problem are the experts. Accordingly, one of the fundamental principles of ECD is “Design with, not for.” Designing with means that community members are members of the design team, not merely subjects of study. They have a direct say in the direction and shape of the solution.

Design Thinking and Kids

Teaching the Design Thinking process to kids at an early age can be a rewarding and empowering experience. Children make ideal Design Thinkers. Their imaginations are vast and uninhibited. That’s why many Design Thinking sessions attempt to conjure that spirit of uninhibited creativity in their adult participants with toys and craft supplies.

Teaching kids Design Thinking and having them practice it gives them a problem-solving framework that they can apply throughout their lives. It encourages them to explore and tackle the problems they encounter. It helps them practice empathy for others. It fosters and rewards creativity. And it instills in them confidence in their ability to shape the world they live in.

It can, however, also reinforce privilege. That’s why teaching the mindset of “Designing With, not For” is so important. Positioning designers and users together as co-equal creators is fundamental to producing sustainable, equitable outcomes.

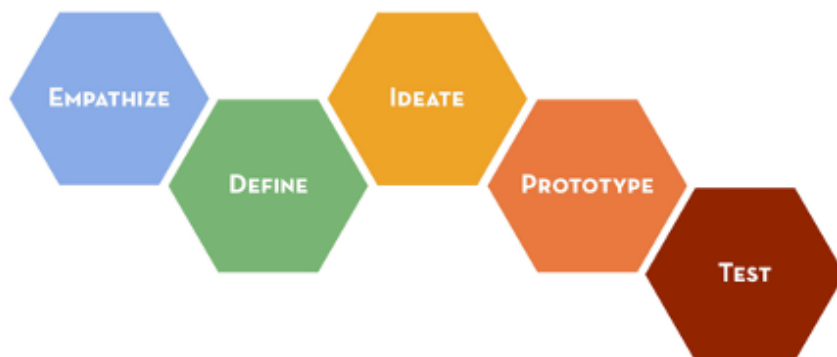
Design Thinking is a lifelong skill. Kids who learn and practice it have the chance to become empathetic, creative problem-solvers. And that’s a skill set that will serve them well in school, in work, and throughout their lives. ●



MARK LOGAN

Founder & Chief Collaborator, idealect

STANFORD D SCHOOL DESIGN THINKING MODEL



Mark Logan is the Founder and Chief Collaborator at idealect. Prior to launching idealect in 2018, Mark founded and led Moonshot, the innovation lab at Barkley. At Moonshot, he led the innovation practice for Barkley blending human-centered design methods and emerging technologies to create distinctive brand experiences and innovation culture programming for partners and clients. Mark helped Barkley earn AdWeek’s Inaugural Project Isaac award for Best Practices in Innovation Management as well as favorable recognition from industry analysts such as Forrester. Before joining Barkley in 2005, Mark founded internationally acclaimed digital agency, lookandfeel new media in 1996. He has twice been named among Kansas City’s Top 50 Technology Leaders by the Kansas City Star.

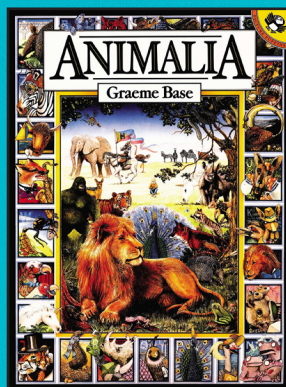
For the Love of Books

BY ALICE EBERHART-WRIGHT

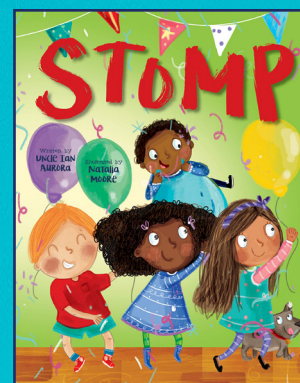


It seems that technology is taking over the world, but some of us can never give up books. I am one of those crazy adults, but judging from the

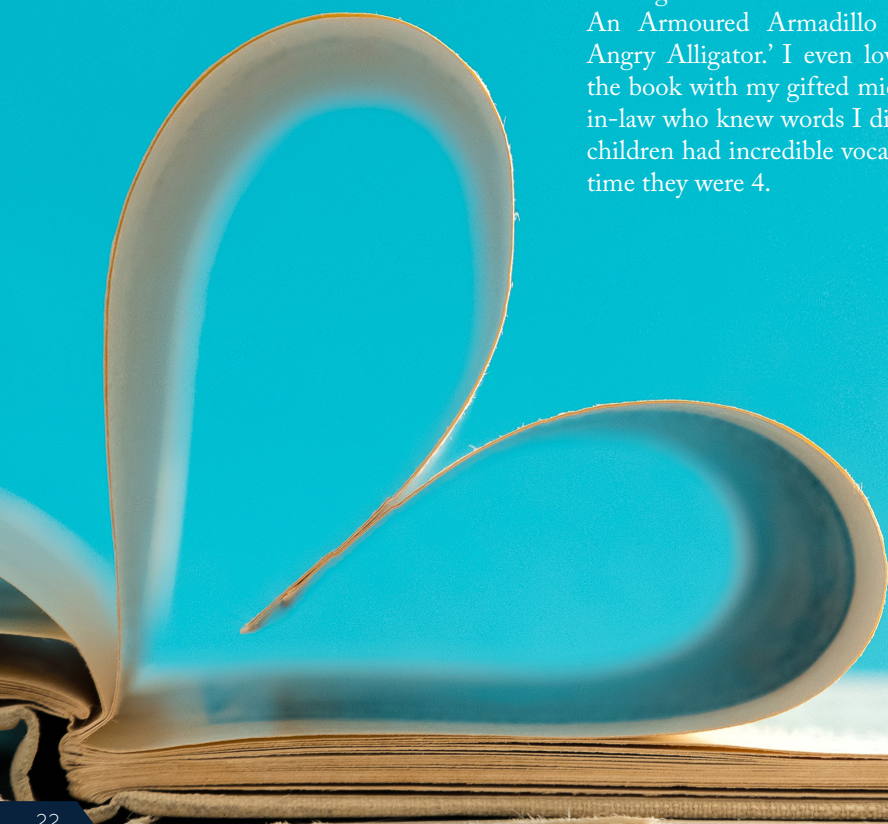
popularity of libraries and bookstores, books are not yet dinosaurs. First of all, reflect on the storybooks you loved as a child. Share those. A love of anything is often associated with the people who introduced you to their own great loves.



I pull out *Anamalia*, by Graeme Base. Written in 1986, it is still my very favorite alphabet and story telling book for all ages. Each page from A to Z explodes with images that start with the featured letter, so that any page will have scores of things starting with that letter. Example: 'A is for An Armoured Armadillo Avoiding An Angry Alligator.' I even loved looking at the book with my gifted middle aged son-in-law who knew words I didn't know. His children had incredible vocabularies by the time they were 4.

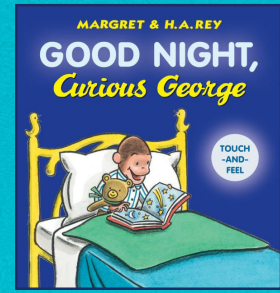
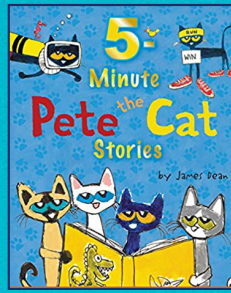


Thinking of the amount of time children spend sitting in front of screens, books that call for action should be high on your list. *Stomp*, written by Uncle Ian Aurora and illustrated by Natalia Moore, invites lots of activity, including stomping. It's a simple book that could be easily memorized with a few reads, it's a possible beginning reader, and a good model for our commitment to diversity. This is the type of book that calls for the reader to be active, loud, and dramatic. It's a book to be brought out when you and the children are tired of weather that keeps you inside, and when a pandemic makes you feel like screaming.



The Book With No Pictures

B.J. Novak



Schools start promoting chapter books in kindergarten. Being a person who loves picture books, I was startled to learn that one of the librarian's favorite new books is *The Book With No Pictures*, by B.J. Novak. I love the words used to describe it. "Disarmingly simple and ingeniously imaginative." "An unending source of mischief and delight." "You have to see it to believe it." "I eat ants for breakfast right off the ruuuuuug!" Print and colors are the tricks the illustrator used to display words. I want to see a lineup of skilled actors and actresses read this book. When we are allowed to gather in family groups again, I would like to have a contest of who in the family most effectively can read this book. I have some center-stage great-grandkids who would want to compete.

Feeling a bit like Rip Van Winkle, I wanted to see if there was a new character in this century who today would be as wonderful to children as Dr. Seuss and Curious George were to children in the late 1900s. Here comes Pete the Cat, who is the curious cat who does everything from science experiments to being a firefighter to getting into a race with a turtle in a racing car. There are Pete the Cat stickers, Pete the Cat games, and even a big book of *5-Minute, Pete the Cat Stories*, all by James Dean. I was mesmerized and can't wait to give my new mini-collection to loud, active, 3-year-old Myles and 4-year-old Devin, two of my great-grandchildren. I am ready to hear which stories are their favorites.

If you are one of the older generation, you will remember Curious George, the naughty little monkey who had a host of bad behaviors. So, what has happened to Curious George? Well, there is a touch-and-feel board book by Margret & H.A. Rey called *Good Night, Curious George*, illustrated by Greg Paprocki, that brings George into the bedtime routine for toddlers settling down for the night. However, this George is well-behaved. He loves his rituals to quiet down.

Final word: Keep books alive for every age. In laps, in groups, combining younger and older children. You and your love of books can make all the difference. ●



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