

Working with Families in Partnership

- Building Trust & Strong Relationships
- Navigating Difficult Conversations
- Being Responsive and Supportive

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Certification



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Jacki Visman
Early Childhood Education Specialist

Video

Please review the professional development training video; you will need approximately 60 minutes to complete the training.



Certification

Please take a moment to complete the learning review provided. Upon submission, your certification will be sent to you immediately.

Start



Jacki Visman



- M.S. in ECE
- 10+ years in ECE
- Teacher and School Director, Infant-PreK
- Early Childhood Education Specialist
- Parent of a spirited Preschooler

We Skoolhouse, grounded in developmentally appropriate practice, guides teachers and parents in facilitating early learning and development of children from pre-birth to six years old.



Building Trusting and Positive Relationships

From the Beginning....

- Why is it important to establish a strong, trusting relationship first, and immediately?
 - families are more likely to be involved
 - stronger family engagement leads to greater success for the child, holistically
 - supports parents in their parenting
 - strengthens the community
 - benefits the school
- Initiate and keep a line of open communication
 - **Family Intake Questions**
- Be flexible



Active Listening

Paraphrasing – repeating back what the person is saying to you. This validates their feelings and lets them know they've been heard. This also gives the parent the chance to clarify their message, in case it was incorrectly received,

Verbal and Non-verbal encouragers – Head nods, gestures and “uh-huhs,” can indicate that a message is being received, and can encourage continued communication.

Questioning – don't ask too many questions to avoid the feeling of being interrogated, however, questions can be a powerful tool. Ask open-ended questions that elicit many possible answers and allow for greater disclosure and insight from the parent.



Educate and Inform the Families (Use Documentation)

The more you inform families of the happenings of their child's classroom, the better they will understand your educational approach, the progress of their child's learning and development, and the more likely they are to be interested and engaged in the practice.

Documentation **informs** the families of their child's work and progress, and offers a window into their child's daily experiences and learning journey.

Documentation **educates** the families on development, and on your pedagogical approach and developmentally appropriate practices.

Documentation **prompts involvement**.



Emailed Journals/Daily and Weekly Recaps

Schoolhouse Journal

May 2nd, 2025



This week, the teachers invited our older toddlers, the **Engineers**, to explore a variety of loose parts and recycled materials, creating a rich environment for open-ended discovery. With curiosity as their guide, the children were encouraged to touch, sort, stack, and imagine—using bottles, egg carton boxes, legos, dolls, and other everyday items in new and inventive ways. Through this sensory and exploratory play, the toddlers engaged in early problem-solving, collaboration, and creative expression, highlighting the endless possibilities that emerge when children are trusted as capable and competent learners. **We observed the meaningful interactions that were created amongst the children.**



Through the teacher's observations, the Engineers used their little hands to explore, engage and create something (if they choose to)

Engineers were actively involved with the materials and as a group, we observed that they supported each other during decision-making and solving problems. We also observed that the Engineers seemed to enjoy engaging with the materials and had different ideas throughout their exploration. For example, the teachers observed that the children's preferred material to work with were egg cartons. All of them seemed interested in what they could put inside of them. **"Eggs, two eggs here!"** Said one Engineer when we asked **"what are putting inside of it?"** **"Are they legos?"** asked the teachers, since they were putting legos inside of the egg cartons, the teachers were curious to hear their answers: One of the Engineers said: **"no, no legos, eggs, blue eggs, hot, hot!"** Another engineer has said something very interesting as well: **"I have muffins, corn muffins, yellow muffins, do you want muffins?"** Another Engineer was very focused on making a book fit inside of the egg carton, we approached her and asked: **"what are you doing?"** **"This, put book inside, close, open, said this engineer while giggling.**



Abby was engaged with the egg carton box. Karine, who was visiting the classroom asked **"Abby, what is in your egg carton box?"** Abby, starring at the box, smiled, but did not answer.



We observed that Karine's question sparked curiosity amongst her other friends. **Talia, Rafaela, and Maeva**, all came over and started to look, point, and talk about the egg carton box. Karine asked the question again, but this time, **Freya**, who was on the other side of the room answered **"a book."**



Freya quickly ran over to the table and said "there's a book" as she came over to join her friends.



Karine was amazed to see that Abby, did in fact have a book inside the egg carton box, and how Freya, knew this information even if she was initially not directly playing with Abby. We observe how the older toddlers naturally engage in a rich process of social learning by observing one another. These quiet moments of observation are powerful as children are not only gathering ideas, but also learning about cooperation, turn-taking, and communication without the need for direct instruction. **The environment encourages this type of interaction, fostering a sense of community and shared discovery where each child's ideas inspire and influence the group.**



Freya: I think this will fit.



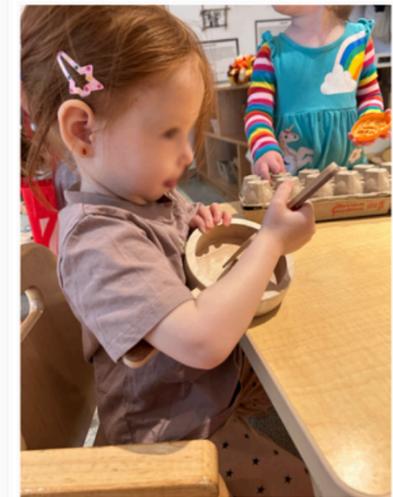
Freya: it fits!



placing the baby in it. Rafaela, seeing that the baby fit in this, said **"yes it fits."**



The children engaged in conversations and also connected this activity to previous provocations that they have done in the past. For example, we observed that **Rafaela** pretended to pour water on the babies' head. Rafaela said **"take a bath."** In the past, The Engineers have pretended to bathe the babies. We observed how past provocations stay relevant even through different and current provocations.



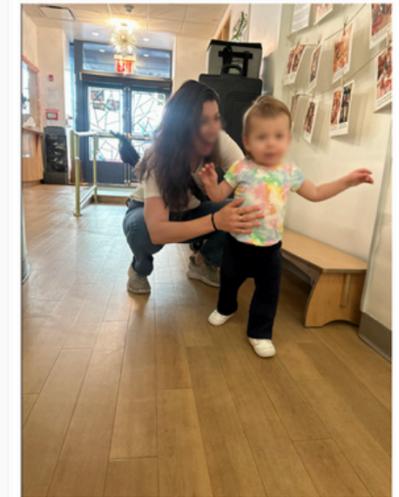
Talia pretended to cook. **"Cooking"** said Talia as she used the wooden fork to stir.



The younger toddlers continue to express themselves joyfully through movement, even in the simple act of running back and forth across the classroom. Azaan happily ran from one end to the other, sometimes chasing the bouncy balls around the classroom. As Azaan ran, he said **"Hi Kiki, bye Kiki."** These bursts of energy are not only a celebration of their growing physical abilities, but also a reflection of their enthusiasm and comfort within the environment.

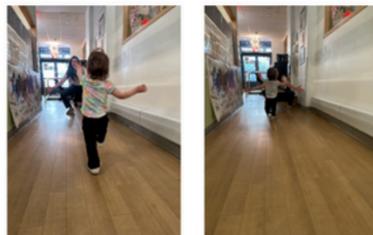


We view this movement as a vital part of their learning process, an expression of curiosity, freedom, and emotional well-being. Whether they are chasing a friend, exploring space, or simply reveling in the rhythm of their own bodies, **these moments of motion are meaningful and filled with a sense of discovery and joy.**



We are deeply grateful to the parents who entrust us each day with the care and growth of their children. It is a privilege to be part of these early and foundational years, and we honor the trust placed in us with every interaction and moment shared. Each morning at drop-off, we

Maizie, from our infant room, giving her mom a couple of more hugs before going into her classroom.



We are so proud to witness how many of our infants are now walking and moving confidently through the environment that has supported their growth from the very beginning. Not long ago, these same children arrived as young babies, nestled in arms, observing the world from the comfort of their parents embrace. **Now, they explore their surroundings with curiosity, independence, and joy, each step a reflection of their growing confidence and sense of self.**



We see this milestone not just as a physical achievement, but as a symbol of the learning journey they've been on—supported by strong relationships, thoughtful environments, and the natural rhythm of their development.



Hold Events and Opportunities for Families to Participate

- Scheduled family visits (to join circle time, conduct a read aloud, join during classroom free play)
- Monthly or seasonal family events within the classroom (such as around seasonal holidays)
- Invite parents to come in and share in a celebration of their culture/holiday
- Hold an event for documentation! An “art exhibit” or an event highlighting the “day in the life” for earlier in the school year.



Parent - Teacher Conferences

Before

Schedule conferences and be flexible.

Survey families about questions and issues they would like addressed.

Have an outline plan for the conference, and all materials organized and ready.

Gather samples of students' work that demonstrate progress in skills and knowledge.

Have collected and organized regularly documented observations of students' development and learning (i.e., social, emotional, cognitive, language, physical....)

Have handouts: milestones checklist, progress report, relevant resources to share with families.

During the Conference

Explain the purpose of the conference.

Begin with a positive attitude, sharing a positive story about the child.

Show samples of the child's work or other documentation.

Share anecdotes from the child's play that highlight the child's temperament, personality, and development in endearing ways.

Use active listening strategies.

Encourage families' questions and input.

Be aware of the time schedule.

End with a summary and a plan for targeting the child's next learning goals.

After the conference

Document notes about the conference: family questions and comments, any plan of action.

Follow up with a note of appreciation.

Periodically review your notes.



Navigating More Challenging Conversations: A Concern with a Child's Behavior or Progress

1. Communicate with your team.
2. Schedule a discussion with the parent
3. Begin with positives.
4. Then share your concern.
5. Try to avoid using educational jargon, unless you plan to simply define it for the parents' understanding.
6. Get the parents' insight.
7. Make a plan of action for support, or at least to continue monitoring the concern.
8. Thank the family for their time to discuss the concern, and for their insights.
9. Document the conversation for your records.
10. Circle back with the family.



Being Responsive and Supportive with Diverse Families

- Families of children with special needs
- Families with differing socioeconomic status, or differing educational backgrounds
- Immigrant families and families who speak another language
- Diverse cultures, religions, and ethnicities
 - **Cultural discontinuity**... when children who differ from the majority of their class feel disconnected and isolated.
 - **Intercultural communication**... the process of sharing information, ideas, and feelings between people from different cultural background, with the purpose of learning about another and working together respectfully.
- Diverse Family Structures
- Diverse personalities and temperaments



Questions? Let's Hear Them!



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NEXT WEBINAR!

Making Sense of Milestones

Wednesday, June 25th, 12pm EST