



A Newsletter from your Technical Assistance Center, Prevent Child Abuse-NJ

Supporting Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean and Somerset Counties

Is a PLC right for me?

Pause for a moment to consider how you currently hold your staff meetings. Do you use the time to speak to your staff about policies and procedures? Do you have guest speakers come in to present workshops? Directors may struggle with planning staff meetings. They want to value their teachers' time, but often staff meetings may turn into a laundry list of do's and don'ts centered around policies and procedures. Why not consider making your next staff meeting an opportunity for teachers to form a Professional Learning Community?

Grow NJ Kids Technical Assistance Centers currently host Professional Learning Community meetings for directors and teaching staff. A Professional Learning Community (PLC) consists of a group of professionals that meet regularly to collaborate, share knowledge and work toward a common goal (e.g. a center's mission statement) while ultimately increasing their competency and proficiency. While at typical trainings participants passively receive knowledge from the educator, participants in a PLC actively work together, both teaching and learning from each other. This type of engagement encourages participants with varying levels of experience to self-reflect while providing the opportunity to make changes in perceptions, beliefs and practices. The center director, who previously may have acted as sole educator, may instead act as a facilitator—keeping conversation flowing, staying on topic, and allowing his/her staff to guide how they grow based on their self-identified interests.

Ready to give it a try? Here are some important questions to consider before you get started.



Participants and TA Specialists collaborating at a recent PLC in Middlesex county.

What type of tone do I want to set?

Help your team come up with some guidelines, for example: to listen attentively, be respectful, be curious, be goal-oriented, create a safe place and extend each other's knowledge together.

What will the participants need to bring?

You may want to suggest that participants bring journals for written reflections or to record questions that come mind.

How will I need to prepare?

Think about how you will guide the conversation without controlling it. Bring chart paper to write down questions/answers. Bring questions to the community that allow the participants to find answers for themselves. Provide resources when possible.

Do I need to establish a routine?

Create a routine that includes reminding your staff of the guidelines you created at the beginning of each session, recapping the last PLC's conversation, noting any successes or challenges that may have occurred since the last meeting and end each session asking participants to choose the topic for the next session. Consider as a group how you will mark the progress of their growth.

What type of follow up am I prepared to do?

Observation is a key component to learning. One benefit to holding a PLC in your center may include follow up observation sessions where teachers can model how to handle difficult situations for each other.



Annual Performance Evaluations

Grow NJ Kids Standard 4.3.4 requires that “all teaching staff receives an annual written performance evaluation, conducted by their supervisor.” Performance evaluations are directly related to the success of your center as a whole. They point out the important contributions that individuals are making to the center as well as outline areas for individual growth. (See right for the mutual benefits!)

When writing and presenting performance evaluations, it's important that Directors are fair and transparent about the process; there should be no surprises for those being evaluated. They should ensure clear and respectful communication where the staff has the opportunity to discuss the supports and impediments to their performance. The feedback should be reciprocal and responsive and the conversation should be focused on future goals. Think open, positive, supportive and constructive when evaluating staff.

Formal annual performance evaluations are comprised of four parts:

Part 1: *Create and complete the written review* by identifying and agreeing on Key Performance Indicators, and any goals and responsibilities to implement the Center's mission and/or Quality Improvement Plan. Consider aligning your Key Performance Indicators with the Grow NJ Standards; this can keep the evaluation focused on specific areas.

Part 2: *Preparing for your meeting* is crucial to keeping the discussion positive, meaningful, focused and mutually beneficial. Preparation should be undertaken separately by Center Director and the staff being evaluated. The teacher should prepare by reflecting on her performance, highlighting both successes and challenges during the year, identifying her professional development needs and collecting any supporting documentation. The preparation by the Center Director will involve a reflection on the employee's performance during the year, which will also reflect the agreed upon Key Performance Indicators.

Part 3: *Conducting the face to face meeting* at the end of the 12-month employment period. Discuss the teacher's successes, challenges and Professional Development needs, then together develop goals for the upcoming year. When providing feedback about concerns, the Director should provide specific examples that are based upon evidence, facts and observed behavior and steer clear of feedback that is personal. The meeting should be a back and forth dialogue rather than a one-sided top-down conversation. The Director's role is to ensure that the teacher understands the concerns and expectations and has strategies to address them, including knowledge of resources that are available to support the teacher's growth.

Part 4: *Collaboratively develop an individual professional development plan.* It is a best practice for the Director to prepare a draft of this plan in advance. During the meeting, work collaboratively to identify needs for improvement by including training needs and resources that the teacher can access and use toward progressing on the individual professional development plan.

Mutual Benefits of Performance Evaluations

- clarifies the requirements of the job, desired outcomes, and how the staff will be evaluated recognizes the contribution and accomplishments of staff
- encourages and offers opportunities for reflective practice for staff
- identifies NJ Registry Career Lattice and Professional Development opportunities for staff
- enhances the staff's understanding of how their performance contributes to the overall goals of the Center
- fosters understanding and communication between Director and staff
- aids the overall improvement of the quality of the services provided by the Center
- supports the Center to achieve its objectives and goals assists the Center to meet licensing requirements encourages a culture of continuous improvement and provides opportunities for goal setting and identifying professional development needs.



Quality Childcare EXPO– Central Region



What an experience!

The TA Center at Prevent Child Abuse – NJ proudly presented a Quality Childcare EXPO for the entire Early Childhood community on January 11. Participants networked with peers, attended mini-workshops and health and safety demonstrations, met with ECE vendors and won prizes!



Teacher Spotlight

Meet Nancy Martinez, who is currently a preschool teacher at *Precious Moments*, a child care center located in Jersey City, New Jersey. Ms. Martinez is utilizing the Grow NJ Kids Teacher Scholarship Incentives. She is taking the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential course with Academic Excellence, one of the many approved professional development providers in the state. Ms. Martinez will be completing her credential early this year. In her coursework, she has learned about child development and has used this new knowledge to incorporate additional math and literacy activities in her classroom. She has also used her newfound practices to redesign her classroom with the recently received classroom incentives. Her director, Dora Statham has encouraged her staff to take advantage of the trainings and scholarships offered and is extremely grateful for the assistance she has had with Grow NJ Kids.

For more information about Grow NJ Kids Scholarships, call (908) 737-4289 or email scholarships@pinj.org.



Save the Date for these Upcoming Opportunities!



Webinars, *Open to all GNJK programs*

Date	Time	Topic	Presenter(s)	Description
2/17/17	1– 2pm	Providing Choices for Children	Grow NJ Kids Technical Assistance Center-Northeast: Barbara Thornton, Joy Baker, & Leanna Felipe	Overly managed classrooms may look controlled, but are not optimal for children's development. Learn about how we can allow children to exercise their power of choice, and why it is so important. Registration Link: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/9059257109733181186



GNJK Peer Learning Communities (PLCs), *County Specific*

Date	Time	Location	County
2/15/17	12-2pm	Montgomery Presbyterian Church, Belleville	Essex
3/15/17	1-3pm	Child Care Connection, Trenton	Mercer
3/22/17	1:30-3:30pm	DCF Training Academy, New Brunswick	Middlesex/Somerset
3/23/17	1-3pm	Child Care Resources, Neptune	Monmouth/Ocean
3/28/17	12-2pm	North Bergen Public Library, Kennedy Branch	Hudson



Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey™

PCA-NJ operates a broad range of preventative services designed to support the improvement and quality of professional workforces and programming, resulting in significant positive impacts on family functioning and health in all 21 counties. ***PCA-NJ programs include:***

- ◆ Grow NJ Kids TAC
- ◆ Healthy Families
- ◆ Parents as Teachers
- ◆ Parent Linking Program
- ◆ Enough Abuse
- ◆ Middlesex County Council for Young Children
- ◆ Human Trafficking Prevention
- ◆ Essex Pregnancy & Parenting Connection
- ◆ Parent Education & Technical Assistance
- ◆ The Period of Purple Crying

Central Region TA Center 103 Church Street, Suite 210 New Brunswick, NJ 08901 732.246.8060

Northeast Region TA Center 550 Broad Street, Suite 1105 Newark, NJ 07102 973.371.5301

<https://www.preventchildabusenj.org/growtac>