



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

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



An Interview with The Preparatory Academy

“It’s a lot of work, but we want quality child care.”



The Preparatory Academy in Ocean County has spent the last year working hard and *growing* along with *Grow NJ Kids*. Wendé, the Assistant Director wears many hats in this school, helping to manage the program, implement the curriculum, lead the teachers and also work with children in the classrooms. Wendé took some time out of her busy schedule to talk about her “eye-opening” experiences, sharing how the school transitioned from a “primarily worksheets-oriented curriculum to implementing the research-based *Creative Curriculum* they follow today.

You adopted a new curriculum when you enrolled in Grow NJ Kids. How did this change the way you think about early childhood education?

“It really changed the philosophy of our teaching. The hands-on learning experiences and bringing the interactive teaching element into the classroom helped the children to interact more, develop social-emotional skills and the learning came from them, instead of us forcing them to learn. The free choice play time allowed more interaction, acting out of social roles, problem-solving and building those connections with the teacher.”

What changes have you made or plan to make in the classroom?

“The Learning Centers were our biggest change.” Amongst other things, she said, “...the Infant room teacher couldn’t believe what she was seeing when she saw the infants picking up books and turning pages in the library area which they had turned into a Cozy Corner. Before being made into a cozy area, it was not a very happening area.”

How did you get your staff on board with the new curriculum?

“Getting the teachers to trainings of *Creative Curriculum* where they worked in small groups and interacted with the materials gave them an opportunity to explore and understand it. Jennifer Riche, (our TA Specialist from Prevent Child Abuse-NJ) had a fun curriculum party for us where all infant, toddler and preschool teachers got together and went piece by piece through the curriculum materials, helping all the teachers to understand it even better.”

How did the families react to this big change in curriculum?

“At first, it was an adjustment for parents. We made sure we communicated the change with them and showed them the *Creative Curriculum* materials; we explained how it would benefit the children. We had an open-door policy and answered all their questions. We got wonderful feedback about how the classrooms looked as we developed our learning centers.”

Some parents said they felt that if they weren’t seeing a worksheet, then learning was not happening. Wendé demonstrated the math manipulatives for the families. “They don’t even realize they are learning shapes because they are so engrossed in using the blocks.” She talked to them about how all of the materials in the classroom helped children learn different concepts such as math, literacy and science.

What stood out for you during this whole process?

“Our close relationships with our staff and our families and the networking within Grow NJ Kids built our unity. The morale of the school continues to grow seeing how students, parents and teachers are benefiting from the program. It’s a lot of work, but we want quality child care.”

Moving from the Three R's to the Four C's

“A play based curriculum? You mean my children are going to play all day? I send them here to learn, not to play! I can send them to my neighbor’s house for babysitting if I just want them to play!”
“What can they possibly learn from playing ‘House?’”

A new curriculum can sometimes lead to many doubts and questions by the parents who are invested in their child’s education. They have very carefully selected a preschool that will meet their needs- teaching the children the three R’s: reading, writing and arithmetic! Focusing on academic learning at this young age may result in some children learning new concepts but only on a superficial level, while the other critical areas of development are often ignored completely. Have your parents heard about the 4 Cs? **C**ommunicating, **C**reative Thinking, **C**ollaboration and **C**ritical Thinking and problem solving.

In order to introduce the new curriculum to the parents, directors and teachers first need to be familiar with its philosophy, objectives and alignment to early learning standards. Here are a few helpful tips to explain a play-based curriculum to parents:

What do I say to parents about a play based curriculum?

- This curriculum encourages the child’s whole development using techniques that are interesting to children.
- This curriculum also encourages children to develop **The 4 C’s**, 21st century skills which are required to be successful today:
 - Communicating
 - Creative thinking
 - Collaboration (working together)
 - Critical thinking and problem-solving
- We have learning centers in the classroom that integrate multiple subject matter and engage children in learning.
- Children experience exploration with different educational materials in learning centers, rather than “children play with toys in the different areas.”
- The entire day is strategically and purposefully designed to help children reach their developmental goals.



- Give explanations and provide displays of daily concrete learning. For example, say, “Julian practices counting when serving himself 5 cookies for snack,” or display the different stages of writing in pictures on the parent board.
- Provide opportunities for parents to explore the educational materials at a parent meeting or during a home visit. Model play while explaining the benefits of the materials. For example, sorting teddy bear counters teaches children about mathematical concepts related to size, color, patterns, counting, classification, etc.
- Give parents a tour of the classroom and point out what the children are learning in each center.
- Invite parents to visit the classroom at the end of a study topic or special project.

Here is a link with more ideas to help highlight learning in each center. Have fun “playing” around with words that communicate and convince!

<http://childspaystpauls.blogspot.com/2013/12/preschool-curriculum.html>

Link to ‘Stages of writing’ article and pictures:

<http://www.mecfny.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/StagesofWritinghandout.pdf>



Home Visits: The Home-School Connection



“At the end of the day the most overwhelming key to a child’s success is the positive involvement of parents.”
-Jane D. Hull

As teachers, have you ever felt that you had to start routines all over again every Monday after children have been home with their parents for two days? Or have you thought “If only her parents would work with her on potty training at home as well, she would be potty trained by now!”

Talking to parents about potty training for 5 minutes during parent-teacher conferences, or stealing a minute here or there at drop-off and pick-up times to discuss a behavior issue may not yield the results desired. These short conversations are not sufficient to build trusting relationships and strong communication between teacher and parent. A Home Visit can be the solution. Home Visits provide an opportunity for both teachers and parents to open up, communicate and build trust. Home Visits lead to mutually supportive relationships where teachers and parents are both better informed and more willing to support one another, and ultimately, the child. Open communication and mutual collaboration during visits show families that teachers care.

If you want to bridge the gap between home and school, you can learn more about Home Visits by signing up to attend on of our upcoming trainings.

Home Visits Online Training—May 17, 2017

Registration URL: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4430490182192166914>

Full-Day Trainings are also available statewide. Go to www.pinregistry.org to sign up.

GNJK Standard 3.3.4, 3.4.4 and 4.2.3



Problem Solving at Home and School

“I was here first!” said Hala gruffly. “No! I was here first!” said Brianna forcefully. Both girls pushed against each other blocking the cozy book area and preventing the other from getting to it.

What should the adult do?

- Option 1: Tell both girls they cannot use the area right now.
- Option 2: Pick one girl who you think may have been there first.
- Option 3: Give them the problem-solving cards that you have introduced previously in your classroom.

Let’s see what happened.

The teacher asked “What should we do when we have a problem?” Hala said, “We can use the problem-solving cards!” The cards were handed to them by another curious child. They picked the timer option and played rock paper scissors to decide who would go first. Conflict resolved!! It is amazing how children behave when they are in control of their situation.

This is a situation common to classrooms and at home. Teaching children to take charge of the situation and giving them strategies to resolve their problems can reduce stress when a conflict arises.

These cards can be used in school with friends and at home with siblings. Teachers and families can print and laminate them and put them on a ring so they can travel wherever the classroom or family goes. To find a set of illustrated conflict resolution cards and for more tips on problem solving for teachers and families, follow the links below.

<http://content.cleverex.com/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/teacher-tools-problem-solving.pdf>

Tips for Teachers:

<http://content.cleverex.com/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/problemsolving-teachertips.pdf>

Resources for Parents:

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#teachingskills>
<http://content.cleverex.com/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/problem-solving-family->



Save the Date for these Upcoming Opportunities!



Webinars, *Open to all GNJK programs*

Date	Time	Topic	Presenter	Description
5/18	1-2pm	Finding the Why in Quality- Our Journey to Rating Readiness and Beyond	Guest panelists: Dr. Holly Seplocha & Lauren Busco NJ Center for Quality Ratings	Participants will better understand the GNJK standards, Continuous Quality Improvement and how to better utilize GNJK resources to prepare for rating readiness.



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

Date	Time	Location	County
5/17/17	1:30-3:30pm	South Branch Reformed Church Preschool, Hillsborough	Middlesex/Somerset
6/19/17	12:00-2:00pm	North Bergen Library, Kennedy Branch, North Bergen	Hudson
5/26/17	12-2pm	Learning Resource Center, East Orange	Essex
6/16/17	1-3pm	Child Care Connections, Trenton	Mercer
TBD	1-3pm	Child Care Resources, Neptune	Monmouth/Ocean

CONGRATULATIONS!

The following programs have received
3 STAR RATINGS...



Middlesex County

Grace Early Learning Center

Somerset County

The Tree House Preschool

Networking Meetings, *Region Specific*

Region	Date & Time	Location	Open To
Central Register	5/31/17 9am-1pm	RWJ Conference Center: 3100 Quakerbridge Rd, Mercerville	Mercer Middlesex Monmouth Ocean Somerset
North East Register	6/1/17 10am-1pm	The Waterfront 2 Grafton Ave, Newark	Essex 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>