Introduction: Trina Spencer was the presenter for Day Three of the KITS 2013 Summer Institute. Trina is a certified school psychologist, a board certified behavior analyst, and early childhood special educator. She currently serves as the Research Director at the Institute for Human Development (IHD) and is a Research Assistant Professor in the Educational Psychology Department at Northern Arizona University. In these positions, she leads several projects related to the prevention of disabilities among high-risk preschoolers including children whose second language is English. She has partnered with Head Start to complete six recent studies on multi-tiered systems of support for language development.

With partners, Dr. Spencer has developed and validated Story Champs, a tiered language intervention curriculum and the Narrative Language Measures, which is a curriculum based measurement system for language. As a full time researcher, Dr. Spencer is able to devote her time to conducting research, developing research-based tools for practitioners, and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students. She has published in the areas of evidence-based practice, tiered language and literacy interventions, assessment development, and social communication interventions for children with autism.

We tell stories all the time. They are a commonly used, meaningful means of communication. Storytelling is considered a sophisticated form of oral language because stories are generally about past events that the listener did not experience. There are two levels of narrative structure that meaningfully impact language comprehension (and therefore reading comprehension). While telling a story, the speaker must include the basic parts of a story (level 1) and use complex linguistic forms (e.g., causal and temporal subordination) to help the listener understand the sequence of events, their causal relations, and their meaning (level 2). Content organization is often referred to as story grammar. A basic episode of a fictional or personal story includes an initiating event (usually a problem), an attempt to solve it, and a consequence. In early childhood learning standards or curriculum objectives, this level of structure corresponds to “tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end.”

A second level of structure is the formation of sentences. Sentences that include adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions, causal and temporal markers, and subordinate and relative clauses provide more descriptive information to help the listener understand the story. This level of structure is consistent with the written language children are exposed to in academic settings.
A Narrative Intervention Approach – conclusion

Because narrative language is closely related to written language, narrative proficiency is highly predictive of reading comprehension. It stands to reason that young children with good narrative skills experience fewer academic problems later and storytelling abilities at 5-years-old is one of the best predictors of academic remediation in second grade. Importantly, proficient storytellers attract more peer attention and have more opportunities to practice language in social contexts. Most children learn to tell and comprehend stories incidentally, through interactions with their parents, teachers, siblings, and friends. However, some children require explicit instruction on story structure and targeted practice using complex language features. The sooner children become proficient narrators, the sooner they can use their skills to support the development of other literacy-related skills such as listening comprehension, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing.

Since 2006, my colleague and I have been pursuing a common, collaborative goal—that is to prevent reading, writing, and comprehension difficulties by ensuring every child has a sufficient narrative language foundation. As new researchers our intentions were focused on conducting high quality experimental research, but in doing our research we stumbled across answers to questions that have been vexing educators for years. For example, how do we accurately, but efficiently, monitor children’s progress in language development? How do we differentiate between language disorders and language differences? How do we provide targeted language interventions to youngsters without disabilities, but who are still struggling? How do English language learners fit within a response to intervention (RTI) model? How do we design interventions that employ explicit teaching strategies while also ensuring authenticity, developmental appropriateness, natural motivation, and generalization?

Through our research, we have developed a narrative intervention approach that helps young children learn the structure of fictional and personal stories and improve their use of complex language while engaging in fun, game-like activities that provide many opportunities for children to talk. Initially, we depended on the substantial research documenting the major principles of effective instruction and children’s typical narrative development to design each component of the intervention. By drawing extensively from this literature, the development of this program was “research informed”. Subsequently, we have iteratively evaluated the effects of the program in various arrangements—with excellent results. Because this program is intended to be well suited for RTI models, there are three tiers of intervention and a companion progress monitoring tool to help ensure timely “move and hold” decisions are made.

Why use a tiered narrative intervention approach with preschoolers?

- All children need narrative skills.
- A tiered approach provides a framework for differentiated language intervention.
- Storytelling can serve as a context for strategic language intervention.

The Narrative Intervention Approach

- Procedures can easily be adjusted for children with diverse language needs.
- Model stories feature experiences common among young children.
- Brightly colored visuals and games are used to explicitly teach story structure.
- Simple progress monitoring is an integral component.
- Storytelling can be embedded into centers, social lessons, and literacy activities.

Results

- Improved language and listening comprehension.
- Preschoolers draw and create their own stories.
- Supports the development of children’s first language.
- Children work as teams and learn how to be good peer tutors.
- Teachers and students have fun!

I have always appreciated the importance of language for the development of reading and writing; but I am a new believer in the necessity of narrative language. This type of oral discourse is paramount. I was thrilled to share the narrative intervention approach to enhancing language expression and comprehension of young children with the participants of the KITS 2013 Summer Institute. Participants learned key principles of narrative intervention and how to differentiate intervention with diverse children; they heard suggestions about how to embed narrative activities into classrooms; and they received training and practice in the administration and scoring of the language progress monitoring assessment. These tests take only one or two minutes and children enjoy them. The Narrative Language Measures can be downloaded at no charge from www.languagedynamicsgroup.com
# Collaborative Calendar of Events

Check the KITS Collaborative Training Calendar for information on a variety of training events for Kansas early childhood professionals!

[www.kskits.org/training](http://www.kskits.org/training)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT / LOCATION</th>
<th>SPONSOR / CONTACT / REGISTRATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/30/14</td>
<td>Using Simple Strategies To Improve Classroom Behavior And Increase Engagement (Project EMPOWER) / Lawrence</td>
<td>Registration and other information is available on the TASN calendar at <a href="http://ksdetasn.org/cms/index.php/component/registrationpro/day/20140130">http://ksdetasn.org/cms/index.php/component/registrationpro/day/20140130</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14-16/14</td>
<td>Families Together - Family Enrichment Weekend / Garden City</td>
<td>Families Together, Inc. / (620) 276-6364 or <a href="mailto:gardencity@familiestogetherinc.org">gardencity@familiestogetherinc.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/19/14</td>
<td>KSDE-TASN 2014 Winter Conference for Special Education Administrators / Wichita</td>
<td>Information available online at <a href="http://www.cvent.com/events/2014-winter-ksde-leadership-conference-for-administrators/fees-74688e6d316c4f3080ab20575fa58c90.aspx">http://www.cvent.com/events/2014-winter-ksde-leadership-conference-for-administrators/fees-74688e6d316c4f3080ab20575fa58c90.aspx</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/1/14</td>
<td>Together We Can Learn Conference / Wichita</td>
<td>Families Together, Inc. – Wichita Administrative Center: (316) 945-7747 or (888) 815-6364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Did You Know?**

Our Twitter followers and Facebook friends can see announcements of KITS training events first!

[KITS on Twitter](https://twitter.com/kskits)  [KITS on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/kskits)
Let’s Look at Literacy

Transforming Literacy Practices in Preschool: Research-Based Practices

As Kansas preschool programs realize MTSS, they need resources that support them in the implementation of research-based practices for early literacy. Lea M. McGee’s book *Transforming Literacy Practices in Preschool: Research-Based Practices That Give All Children the Opportunity to Reach Their Potential as Learners* provides this type of practical guidance. McGee’s book addresses critical tier-one support for both the classroom language/literacy environment and approaches for explicit and embedded instruction in alphabet knowledge, oral language and phonological awareness. Readers will develop an understanding of the evidence-base in early literacy and gain concise guidance for designing high-quality preschool instruction.

Informed by the author’s extensive work in preschool classrooms, this reference is practical and teacher friendly. McGee provides sample activities that demonstrate research-based strategies put into practice in the early childhood classroom setting. She also illustrates the use of curriculum-based measures to support instruction. Chapters address the classroom environment, read alouds, writing, vocabulary, alphabet knowledge, concepts about print, phonemic awareness, and beginning spelling. For those wishing to transform their preschool literacy instruction, McGee’s book is an outstanding resource.

*Transforming Literacy Practices in Preschool* by Lea M. McGee and other resources related to early literacy and MTSS in early childhood can be borrowed from the TASN-KITS ECRC. Likewise, if you would like help in implementing research-based tiered supports, you can request assistance through the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) by clicking on the Request Assistance button and typing in your request.


Submitted by Chelie Nelson, Ph.D.
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Just For Families

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

[http://www.cdc.gov/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/actearly)

Skills such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, and waving “bye bye” are called developmental milestones. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, and move. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” program aims to change perceptions about the importance of identifying developmental concerns early and gives parents and professionals the tools to help.

The “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” program offers parent-friendly materials that are research-based, free, easily accessible and customizable.

- Materials are available for parents, early educators, and health care providers.
- The free Parent Resource Kit contains information on developmental milestones by age, developmental screening, and a growth chart.
  - Milestone checklists, tips for parents, early warning signs, fact sheets, and other materials can be downloaded or ordered for free.
  - See milestones that children should reach, plus interactive tools to help keep track of milestones.
  - Positive Parenting Tips are tools and resources for positive parenting and child safety according to age groups.
- All materials are available in English and Spanish; some are available in other languages.

The CDC’s campaign provides resources to help early childhood educators and health care providers educate parents on the full range of child development. National, state and local programs can customize the materials with their own contact information and distribute them to the populations they serve.
Early Childhood Resource Center
(620) 421-6550 ext. 1651
Toll free in Kansas: (800) 362-0390 ext. 1651
Email: resourcecenter@ku.edu.
Our entire catalog is searchable online at KITS ECRC

ECRC Spotlight On
Physical Restraint and Seclusion in Schools

Explore the realities behind the headlines concerning children who have been isolated or physically restrained in schools, sometimes resulting in injury or even death. The editors address the legal and ethical issues underlying these practices, and, more importantly, what can be done to move schools away from potentially harmful treatment of children. They explore the array of practices and approaches that provide effective and safe ways to prevent and reduce conflict, de-escalate conflict and aggressive behavior and train educators in crisis intervention. They highlight proven approaches such as positive behavior interventions and supports, climate-based strategies, relationship-based strategies, social and emotional learning, mediation programs and violence and bullying prevention and intervention.

This important publication provides you with the information you need to lead your school to safe and more effective practices. It is a new item available from the ECRC.


New Items Available From The Early Childhood Resource Center


Part B ECSE Preschool Coordinator’s Corner

Editor’s Note: The Kansas State Department of Education is in the process of hiring a new Section 619 Coordinator to replace Tiffany Smith, who left to work in the field of early childhood mental health. Updates will be provided when the hiring process has been completed. If you have questions please contact:

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Early Childhood Coordinator
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(785) 296-5352 / gstuber@ksde.org

School Readiness Framework Update

The School Readiness Framework has been officially supported by multiple agencies and organizations. Members of the State Agencies Early Childhood Leadership Team have shared the Framework and the overview of their team’s work and mission for the past several months. The Framework provides Kansas with a vision for school readiness across four components: Community; Educational Environment; Family; and Child.

State Pre-Kindergarten Program
(Formerly the Four Year Old At-Risk Program)

The Kansas Pre-Kindergarten Program is up and running for 2013-14! The teachers are hard at work, observing their children and completing the Kansas Early Learning Inventory for Fours (KELI-4) on ten randomly selected children in their classrooms. Families of these children will be asked to complete two surveys, and the teachers have two surveys to complete as well – Classroom Practices and a new one around Transition practices. The KELI-4 is the final version after several years of statistically analyzing and validating the items, including aligning them with the 2013 Kansas Early Learning Standards.

Kansas Preschool Program
(Formerly the Pre-K Program)

The Kansas Preschool Program has made some changes for this and upcoming years that will positively impact the learning of the children involved in the KPP classrooms. Changes for the next couple of years include: (1) requiring all teachers to be licensed and, starting in 2014-15, licensed in Early Childhood or Early Childhood Unified; (2) requiring all sites to participate in the research-based Multi-Tiered System of Supports – a model of providing high quality, research-based services that result in improved learning; and, (3) planning for a

2014-15 implementation of a Parent Education/Family Engagement model that is research-based and has fidelity of implementation—at this time Parents as Teachers for 3-5 and the Head Start model meet criteria. With the focus on ‘proof of improvement’ in all aspects of education and early learning, the KPP is poised to provide that proof while showing improvement!

Kansas Early Learning Standards

The long-awaited Kansas Early Learning Standards are now posted on the KSDE website. Please go to: http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=3321 for your copy. OR—go to www.ksde.org and click on Early Childhood on the left side of the page. Scroll down to Early Childhood Unit Resources for Kansas Early Learning Standards.

In the past, the Early Learning Standards have been printed for distribution. Due to the added costs and the reality that in the past several years, fewer than half of the printed copies were ever requested, no hard copies will be made of this revision. The document has a new look and has included Kindergarten Standards where possible, which should make this a great resource for early childhood educators and their Kindergarten counterparts. Please share!

The previous version from 2009 had several sections around using the standards such as connecting with how children learn, developing standards-based IEP’s, and other topics. These sections will be reviewed, revised where needed to bring the information and the resources up to date, and be made available online. Training will also be developed and hopefully provided in the upcoming year. There is no set timeline yet—but you will be kept updated!

Technical assistance and training opportunities are available through the Technical Assistance System Network (TASN). LEAs may request assistance by clicking on the big blue button on the TASN website.

Please note KSDE’s new address:
Landon State Office Building
900 SW Jackson, Suite 620
Topeka, Kansas 66612
Part C Coordinator’s Corner

Leadership in Early Childhood Special Education

“Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another.”

— John C. Maxwell

The complexities of providing quality early intervention supports to young children and their families present many challenges and opportunities to the field. Among those is the need for adequate leadership capacity to ensure the achievement of quality outcomes for children and families, the development of appropriate learning environments and curricula, and the identification and implementation of evidence-based interventions.

As a field, building leadership capacity and capital is central to ensuring high-quality systems and achieving child and family outcomes. It is well documented that empirical investigations regarding leadership in early childhood education are scant (Aubrey, 2007; Mujis, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004; Rodd, 1996, 2005). Aubrey (2007) described that what is available is dominated by a few researchers and not well informed by theory. Additionally, the leadership within early childhood special education is woefully inadequate. While several authors have noted the importance of leadership at various levels of the early intervention system (e.g., Epley, Gotto, Summers, Brotherson, Turnbull, & Friend, 2010; Rous, 2004; Woods & Snyder, 2009), the word leadership in early childhood education has been associated primarily with program administration (e.g., McCracken Taylor, McGowan, & Linder, 2009) or master and doctoral level personnel preparation programs (e.g. Bricker, 2000; Spencer, Fruend, & Browne, 2006). Such conceptualizations restrict leadership to certain individuals within specified contexts and roles.

Leadership is a role that most assume within the field of early childhood special education. We need both leaders and managers. Individuals in all roles and all levels of the early childhood special education system can and do practice leadership by behaving in ways that positively influence the families with whom they work, their colleagues, policy makers, and others. Such actions are directed purposefully at accomplishing tasks that move those involved toward shared, meaningful goals. Engaging individuals in the process of considering present and future leadership needs and translating the needs into actions is an important part of building the field’s leadership capacity.

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) is a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. DEC’s focus is on those individuals who work with or on behalf of children with special needs, birth through age eight and their families. Historically, DEC has been a leader in the field of early childhood special education. The organization promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices to support the development of young children with special needs to create a system of support for all young children and their families. Recently, the organization has recognized the importance of providing opportunities for individuals interested in leadership as a concept or practice, to affiliate and develop capacity in themselves and the field. In early 2012, DEC approved the development of a leadership Special Interest Group (SIG) to provide such opportunity to its members. The SIG’s inaugural meeting was held at DEC’s 28th Annual International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families. Participants determined that a next step would be to hold a national summit on leadership in early childhood special education to begin a discussion on how best to build and preserve the field’s leadership capital.

I was honored with the opportunity to participate in the national early childhood leadership summit at DEC’s 29th Annual International Conference on Young Children with Disabilities and Their Families. The purpose of the summit was to bring together a national cadre of researchers, faculty, program administrator, teachers and other personnel, as well as families of children who receive special education services to participate in a focus group discussion about the present state of and future needs for leadership in early childhood special education. Participation in this focus group provided me an opportunity to begin reflecting on what I am doing as a leader to support the ongoing development of leaders within the field. I came away from the experience with thoughts about the necessity to meet immediate needs in a field in which its leaders are aging and are nearing retirement. For me, the answer lies in developing the leadership talent of professionals and family members who are in mid-career to fill urgent needs of leadership. Additionally, building a system where young leadership talent that is culturally representative of the children and families served within early childhood special education programs is imperative to building leadership capital. As the Coordinator of Kansas Infant-Toddler Services, I am constantly looking for ways to build leadership capital in our state. We have started to work toward building this capital through our New Coordinator Training, and we hope to expand that training in the future.

Part C Coordinators Corner concludes on Page 8
Part C Coordinators Corner - Conclusion

References

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