



SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
Randolph E. Ward, County Superintendent of Schools
Student Services and Programs Division
Early Education Programs and Services



Preschool Times

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Photo courtesy of Sandi Meschoulam

A Closer Look: Professional Development in the San Diego County Preschool for All Demonstration Project

Improving the quality of preschool experiences for children and their families is a primary focus of the San Diego County Preschool for All (SDCPFA) Demonstration Project. Preliminary analysis of data from last year indicates that preschool sessions involved in the project experienced the most dramatic improvement in program quality to date. 80% of preschool classroom sessions scored high enough on their external review results to increase by at least one tier-level according to the SDCPFA Quality Criteria.



Sandi Meschoulam

This growth is attributed to many factors within the realm of professional development. The purpose of this article is to

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Important New Research

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discuss some of the Professional Development support offered through SDCPFA in collaboration with the hard work that SDCPFA preschools puts forth toward the overall improvement of their programs.

The following is an interview with Sandi Meschoulam, SDCPFA Professional Development Specialist, which covers the past, present, and future of Professional Development in the SDCPFA Demonstration Project.

Q: Were you surprised to see such dramatic improvements in quality last year?

SM: Not at all surprised, but more thrilled that there was documentation of the efforts made by so many instructional staff at all the SDCPFA agencies. The coaching team has the opportunity to see so many effective changes taking place and it is wonderful to have assessment data that shows improvements in concrete terms.

This is only the first step in making visible the quality of all the classrooms. We really hope to share even more visual documentation that will tell the story of great practices in the SDCPFA community of preschools.



Q: What was the single most important thing that the SDCPFA Professional Development Team did to improve quality?

SM: The coaches on the Professional Development Team are very intentional in providing technical support. It always starts by building a relationship with the teacher and the agency, but observation and discussion always consider the external review assessment results and the child level outcomes.

In reflection on classroom strengths and areas for improvement, specific goals are determined with the teacher. At a later visit, actions taken are recorded to demonstrate how the goals were addressed. This gives excellent structure for preparing the learning environment and planning intentional instruction.

Technical assistance includes both a general and personal approach. We look for specific qualities in the environment and instructional process; but also, the coach relates to every

teacher individually, and supports them in considering the needs of each child.

Q: What is one of the most difficult challenges facing Professional Development?

SM: ALLOCATED TIME. This work is so important; it deserves our very best effort. Teachers need time to plan and reflect on the observations and assessments that help make that planning purposeful. All staff need more time to share observations and documentation of children's development and learning.

The support of supervisors to mentor their instructional staff can best take place when they have time to spend together as a team. In the classroom, the teachers and instructional aides need more time to have daily discussions and weekly strategic planning.

The SDCPFA coaching team has been challenged by the limited time teachers have to spend in thoughtful reflection. This is essential to professional development and especially to the field of early childhood education.

Q: What are you doing differently this year to improve the effectiveness of the Professional Development Team's work?

SM: This past year we convened job-alike groups of directors, supervisors, teachers and instructional aides to ask them what they needed for professional growth. We added their suggestions to our previous experience for providing technical assistance and designed new ways for greater collaboration in the professional development process.

This new process included creating a digital format for the professional development plans that record many of the goals carried out each year by every SDCPFA agency. The plans were developed to make visible the valuable work that is completed at each level, from agency to supervisor and from teacher to instructional assistant. They are easily shared electronically for instantaneous communication.

Then we set up opportunities for mentoring that offered vertical support between supervisory staff and instructional staff, and horizontal support among classroom staff as well as with job-alike peer buddies.

As a result of increased staff collaborations, the coaching team can be more effective in supporting changes to the overall quality of the programs. The agencies also benefit in having greater visibility of their accomplishments by documenting how goals are being supported at all levels.

Q: What are some of the cutting-edge developments in Professional Development that you would like to include in your practices in the future?

SM: The creation of digital documentation tools for all staff positions in early education is a first step in professionalizing our field. We need to sing the praises of all the tremendous work that goes into the educational process. Through observation, documentation, reflection and planning, we are able to individualize the learning opportunities for children from all cultures and abilities.

The next step is to increase communication by utilizing the newest technology for virtual learning communities and bring together all the great minds in our field. Creativity is the hallmark of child development professionals and wonderful ideas are often lost due to the isolation of classroom teachers. The potential of professional development for early childhood education would increase tremendously if teachers had a forum for sharing their successes in a way that makes visible the multiple possibilities for learning.

New networking opportunities require digital literacy and access to technology. These are both improvements we want to embrace for our profession. The access to shared knowledge, available from any place at any time, can be a great motivator for instructional staff eager to participate in discussion.

This Fall 2009 at a Saturday "Reflective Teaching" round table hosted by Grossmont Community College, instructional staff representing seven SDCPFA agencies joined educators from preschools, child care centers and family child care homes across San Diego County. At the end of the day, the greatest request on all the participant evaluations was "more time for discussion".

In the future, we need to provide innovative ways to increase the opportunities for discussion and reflection. We need to recognize the professionalism of early childhood care and education by making visible the importance of reflective teaching as the means of providing optimal learning opportunities for all children.

Announcing! Early Years Conference 2010

**"Especially for
Kindergarten
and Preschool
Educators
working with
children
ages 3-5"**

January 29, 2010

7:30 A.M. -3:15 P.M.

Marina Village Conference Center
1936 Quivira Way
San Diego, CA 92109

12 Unique Sessions Including:

- Following the Lead of the Child
- Art as a Process
- Children with Special Needs and Behavior Challenges
- La Teoría de la Música para los Prescholares
- Putting it All Together
- Growing a Healthy Future
- El Arte se Encuentra en Todos Lados
- The Next Step: Communicating with Peers
- Getting to Inclusion in a Preschool Setting
- Off to a Good Start: School Readiness
- Data is our Friend
- Bringing the Classroom Outdoors

[For more information view the Early Years Flyer here!](#)

Proper Hand Washing Techniques Highlighted by State Superintendent

Lemon Grove, CA - California State Superintendent of Public Education Jack O'Connell addressed the media at Lemon Grove School District October 1st to discuss the importance of thorough hand washing to combat the spread of the H1N1 Flu.

The visit included a press conference discussing countywide measures to prevent H1N1 and culminated in a tour of a Lemon Grove School District preschool session where children demonstrated proper hand washing techniques.



Announcing Professional Development Opportunities in San Diego County!

San Diego County Preschool for All Professional Development Workshops:

The following workshops have been designed to meet the professional development goals of teaching staff involved in the San Diego County Preschool for All Demonstration Project. For information about how to attend these workshops, [contact Sandi Meschoulam](#).

Language and Reasoning (En Español)
January 6, 2010
5:30-7:30 PM
South County Regional Education Center
Comm Labs 1 & 3
800 National City Blvd.
National City, CA 91950

Language and Reasoning (En Español)
January 21, 2010
10:00-12:00 PM or 1:30-3:30 PM
VIP Village
1001 Fern Ave
Imperial Beach, CA 91932

California Preschool Instructional Network:

The following workshops are provided through CPIN. For information about how to attend these workshops, [contact Kathy Cheatham](#).

Exploring Language and Literacy Series Presented by Dr. Hallie Yopp

March 9 and 10, 2010

4:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Room 306

San Diego County Office of Education

6401 Linda Vista Road

San Diego, CA 92111

English Language Development: 3-Part Series

February 18; March 23; April 27

[Contact Kathy Cheatham](#) for more information



Take an Adventure Today letsgo4preschool.sdcoe.net

SDCPFA Preschool Directory

The following agencies meet or exceed the [quality criteria](#) established by the San Diego County Preschool for All Demonstration Project. Please feel free to contact preschool agencies directly:

Escondido

Community Development Institute (CDI): (760) 747-1037

Escondido Community Child Development Center (ECCDC): (760) 839-9361

Escondido Union School District: (760) 489-4131

KinderCare Learning Centers: (760) 745-2474

North County Serenity House: (760) 746-5747

Lemon Grove

Lemon Grove School District: (619) 825-5727

Mt. Empire

Mountain Empire Unified School District: (619) 478-9240

National

Carrillo's Family Child Care: (619) 527-8412

Child Development Associates (CDA): (619) 427-4411 x209

Episcopal Community Services Head Start: (619) 244-5885

Gladys Zavala Family Child Care: (619) 474-7384

National School District: (619) 336-8670

San Ysidro

Episcopal Community Services Head Start: (619) 454-1370

Fuentes Day Care: (619) 423-2066

San Ysidro School District: (619) 428-4476 x 3583

South Bay

Episcopal Community Services Head Start: (619) 454-1370

South Bay Union School District - VIP Village: (619) 628-8690

Valley Center/Pauma

MAAC Project - Pauma Valley: (760) 615-2000

MAAC Project - Valley Center: (760) 749-5190

Ridgeview Preschool: (760) 751-9868

Valley Center - Pauma Unified School District: (760) 749-0464

Vista

NEW! Children's Paradise, Inc.: (760) 822-9349

Educational Enrichment Systems (EES): (858) 569-7273 x102

Other

A+ Family Day Care: (619) 422-6584

Child Development Associates (CDA): (619) 427-4411 x 209

Francisca Carvajal Family Child Care: (619) 427-2414

Southwestern College CDC: (619) 216-6695

The Children's Company: (619) 421-9244

South Bay YMCA Early Enrichment Center: (619) 422-8068

Funding for the Preschool for All Demonstration Project is provided by the
First 5 Commission of San Diego County



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