

Dimensions

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Resilience & Play

Relationship Anchors to Support Young Children's Resilience

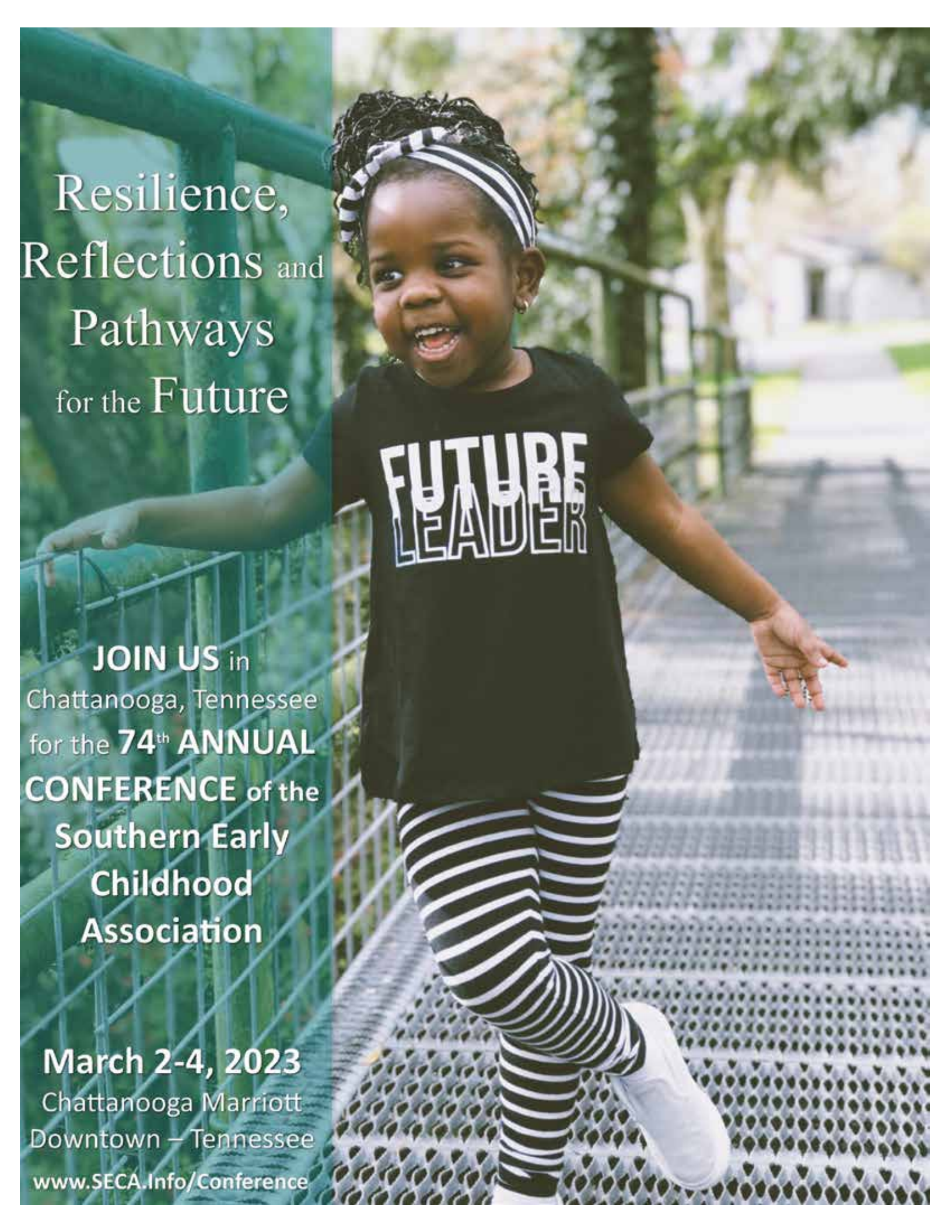
Learning to Teach During a Global Pandemic:
Examining Student Teachers' Experiences with Early School Closures

Rethinking Teachers' Roles in Creating a Play-based Learning Environment

Teacher Tools to Support Calm, Self-Control, and Resilience in Preschool

Herramientas para los maestros para apoyar la calma, el autocontrol
y la resiliencia en el aula preescolar

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Reflections and
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for the Future

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**Southern
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Editor: Wilma Robles-Melendez, PhD
Dimensions of Early Childhood

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In this Issue

**Volume 50
Number 3**

- 6** **Relationship Anchors to Support Young Children's Resilience**
Lisa Leifield

- 13** **Learning to Teach During a Global Pandemic: Examining Student Teachers' Experiences with Early School Closures**
Anna Hall, Qianyi Gao & Sandra Linder

- 19** **Rethinking Teachers' Roles in Creating a Play-based Learning Environment**
Aidong Zhang

- 26** **Teacher Tools to Support Calm, Self-Control, and Resilience in Preschool**
Carrie Cutler & Adrienne Johnson

- 33** **Herramientas para los maestros para apoyar la calma, el autocontrol y la resiliencia en el aula preescolar**
Carrie Cutler y Adrienne Johnson

MILESTONES

A Resource Devoted to Infants & Toddlers

- 42** **An Interview with a Behavior Therapy Specialist**
Kenya Wolff

Departments

President's Message/Mensaje de la Presidenta	4
Editor's Message/ Mensaje de la Editora	5
Children's Book Review	41



Moving Forward/Tiempo para continuar

Hello to everyone! Fall has arrived and for many of us, it's the start of a new school year. It's a somewhat busy and hectic time, but also an opportunity to move forward. This issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood* is focused on Resilience and Play. So many of the children we serve have been exposed to traumatic events that may have lasting effects. Play is often a medium through which children have an opportunity to work through their emotions and problem-solve while gaining resilience. We hope you find these articles beneficial in building your resources to help children grow and learn.

We would also like to invite you to join us in Chattanooga, Tennessee for the 74th Annual Southern Early Childhood Association Conference on March 2-4, 2023. Our theme is "Resilience, Reflections, and Pathways for the Future" where you'll find inviting sessions to explore even more. Make plans to join us! We'd love to see you there!

All the best!
Judy Whitesell
SECA President

¡Hola a todos! El otoño ha llegado y para muchos de nosotros, es el comienzo de un nuevo año escolar. Es un momento algo ocupado y agitado, pero también una oportunidad para seguir adelante. Este número de *Dimensions of Early Childhood* se centra en la resiliencia y el juego. Muchos de los niños a los que servimos han estado expuestos a eventos traumáticos que pueden tener efectos perdurables. El juego es a menudo un medio a través del cual los niños tienen la oportunidad de trabajar a través de sus emociones y resolver problemas mientras ganan y aumentan su resiliencia. Esperamos que estos artículos sean beneficiosos para desarrollar sus recursos para ayudar a los niños a crecer y aprender. También nos gustaría



invitarlos a unirse a nosotros en Chattanooga, Tennessee, para la 74ª Conferencia Anual de Southern Early Childhood Association Conference [SECA] a tener lugar del 2 al 4 de marzo de 2023. Nuestro tema es "Resiliencia, reflexiones y caminos para el futuro", donde encontrarán sesiones atractivas para explorar, aprender y conocer aún más. ¡Haz planes para unirse a nosotros! ¡Nos encantaría verte allí!

¡Todo lo mejor!
Judy Whitesell
Presidente de SECA

SECA NEWS



Crystal Campbell of South Carolina has been elected as our next SECA President. We look forward to her leadership during the next four years. Crystal brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position, having served as President of the South Carolina Early Childhood Association and as a Member-at-Large on the SECA Board of Directors. Our thanks go to Collette Sawyer of Oklahoma for her time and willingness to stand as a candidate for this position!



The **Annual Business Meeting** will be held at the 74th annual conference in Chattanooga, TN on Thursday, March 2, 2023 at the **Chattanooga Marriott Downtown**. All SECA members are invited to attend. For more information, go to: www.seca.info/conference.

Welcoming Fall / Una bienvenida al otoño

Wilma Robles-Melendez, PhD

Once again, we are welcoming fall. This time, we greet it with new emotions as we leave the days of the pandemic farther away from us. This is a time for harvest, where we are gathering what we have learned and keeping hopeful for what is ahead. Fall days are also a reminder about the challenges faced and how these experiences made us gain new perspectives about ourselves, about ourselves as early childhood educators, and especially about our work with young children. Seeing children laughing, playing, and eagerly exploring in our classrooms and neighborhoods brings and renews our hope. Many lessons have been learned and among those, one has been the resilient way of teachers and children that has powerfully shown us how they overcame the challenges faced. The articles in this issue present ideas about supporting children both through building their resilience and also through play. They also provide ideas to continue building our knowledge as early childhood educators. As we reflect on the experiences of this year, we recognize how working with children has made us appreciate all that has been learned and more importantly, how it has reaffirmed our commitment to children.



Una vez más, damos la bienvenida al otoño. Esta vez, lo saludamos con nuevas emociones mientras dejamos atrás los días de la Pandemia. Es tiempo para la cosecha, donde recogemos los frutos de lo aprendido con esperanza por lo que está por venir. Los días de otoño son un recordatorio sobre los desafíos que enfrentamos y cómo estas experiencias nos hicieron obtener nuevas perspectivas sobre nosotros mismos, como educadores y especialmente sobre nuestro trabajo con los niños pequeños. Ver a los niños riendo, jugando y explorando ansiosamente en nuestras aulas y vecindarios trae y renueva nuestra esperanza. Se han aprendido muchas lecciones y, entre ellas, una ha sido la forma resiliente de los maestros y los niños que nos ha mostrado poderosamente cómo superaron los desafíos que enfrentaron. Esta vez, los artículos de este número presentan ideas sobre el apoyo a los niños tanto a través de la construcción de su resiliencia como a través del juego. También aportan ideas para seguir construyendo nuestro conocimiento como educadores de la primera infancia. Al tomar un momento para reflexionar sobre las experiencias de este año, reconocemos cómo trabajando con los pequeños nos ha hecho apreciar todo lo que se ha aprendido y, lo que es más importante, cómo ha reaffirmado nuestro compromiso con los niños.

Friday, March 3, 2023



Dr. Kim Johnson

Children's author and educator, Dr. Kimberly P. Johnson grew up in Shelby, NC. She is married to Jeff Johnson who retired from the United States Air Force after 22 years of service. She is the author of 22 children's books. Kimberly received her Doctorate in Curriculum, Teaching, and Leadership from Northeastern University in Boston, Ma. she holds a Master's Degree from Clemson University, in Youth Development and Leadership. Kimberly has an Early Childhood Education Degree and a Communications Degree from UNC- Chapel Hill. She completed her post-doctorate work in the Advanced Leadership Program at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. She recently completed a certificate in Diversity and Inclusion at Cornell University.

Kimberly is a creative thinker and has a passion for teaching and helping others. She is currently teaching at Clemson University – she teaches Creative Activities for Youth and also teaches, Working with Diverse Youth. Dr. Kimberly also teaches Creative Writing for Social Change at Clinton College and is a course facilitator for the Leading Learning and Managing Evidence courses at Harvard University in the Graduate School of Education.

For more information visit www.seca.info/speakers

Friday
Keynote
at the SECA
74th Annual
Conference

Relationship Anchors to Support Young Children's Resilience

Lisa Leifield



Historically infant toddler programs have had a focus on relationships as central to their approach to teaching and learning. This emphasis is based on years of theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and research highlighting the role of relationships to development and learning (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). A relationship-based approach to working with infants, toddlers, and twos' is important for all children, but particularly for those exposed to trauma (Sciaffara, Zeanah & Zeanah, 2018). Reports indicate that the prevalence of trauma in young children is high (Bartlett & Smith, 2019) and that most early care and education teachers will encounter children who have experienced trauma (Bartlett, Smith, & Bringewatt, 2017).

All types of child maltreatment – physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect – are sources of traumatic experiences (Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation [CECMHC], n.d.). Other types of experiences that link to trauma include parental substance abuse, domestic violence, natural disasters, prolonged separation from parents (CECMHC, n.d.), and untreated mental illness (Bartlett & Steber, 2019). The COVID pandemic has also been identified as a source of stress and traumatic experience that may impact babies, teachers, and their parents (Osofsky & Costa, n.d.).

Young children are disproportionately impacted by trauma (Barnett & Hambien, n.d.) and are more vulnerable to the impact of trauma (Bartlett et al., 2017). Trauma in the early years' impacts

brain development (Bartlett, et al., 2017; Sciaffara et al., 2018), which has both immediate (Bartlett & Smith, 2017) as well as long-term consequences for young children (Bartlett & Steber, 2019; Sciaffara et al., 2018).

Promoting resilience has been identified as an approach to support positive developmental outcomes of children who have experienced trauma (Sciaffara et al., 2018). Resilience has been defined as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000 p.1). A consistent finding in the resilience literature

is the protective role of stable, responsive, and nurturing relationships in supporting resilience (Center for the Developing Child, 2015; Sciaffara et al., 2018; Bartlett & Steber, 2019). High-quality early care and education programs are ideally positioned to support resilience (Sciaffara et. al., 2017) through their relational approach, which is reflected in quality program standards (NAEYC, 2019).

The purpose of this article is to introduce the **Relationship Anchors Framework for Supporting Resilience (RAF/R)**. RAF/R provides a framework that infant and toddler teachers can use to ensure relationships remain in the forefront of their teaching practices. An anchor is defined as "a reliable or principle support" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Relationship anchors (RAs) are strategies teachers can use to provide support and stability for consistent, predictable, responsive, and nurturing relationships. RAs support the relationship requirements identified by Shonkoff & Phillips' (2000) seminal summary of child development research, which identified that children require eight things from relationships. Seven of these requirements are particularly relevant to children exposed to trauma. These include: 1) reliable support, 2) responsiveness, 3) reciprocal exchanges, 4) support for the growth of new skills and capabilities within the child's reach, 5) protection, 6) affection, and 7) respect. **Figure 1** illustrates the three sets of RAs. These include: 1) trauma sensitive practices, 2) practices that support continuous use of trauma sensitive practices, and 3) relational partners.

Relationship Anchor Set 1: Use of Trauma Sensitive Practices

Relationship Anchor 1: Attuned interactions within relational routines

Attuned interactions provide support and stability for relationships primarily through the relationship requirement of responsiveness and reciprocity. Attunement has been identified as the foundational component of trauma sensitive teaching practices (Nicholson et al, 2019). Attunement refers to teachers' responsiveness to children's cues and signals followed by individualized responses. (Sorrels, 2019). Use of attuned interactions is the central process used to support attachment (CECHMC, n.d.; Egeland, 2013), which is impacted by trauma (Bartlett & Smith, 2017).

Young children who have experienced abuse and neglect come to expect that interactions with adults are frightening, threatening, and/or chronically nonresponsive to their feelings and needs, rather than protective, warm, and responsive. Through teachers' emotional availability and responsive signal reading, children learn they can trust relationships. This is important as trusting relationships are foundational to children's mental health (Sorrels, 2019). Attunement begins with serve and return interactions (Nicholson et. al, 2019; Center for the Developing Child, 2017).

"Serve and return" refers to the back-and-forth exchanges between young children and important adults in their lives including parents and teachers (NAEYC, 2021; Center on the Developing Child, 2017). Teachers' serve-and-return interactions are typically fun, soothing, and need fulfilling, (Petersen & Yates, 2013) and their absence impacts brain development (Center for the Developing Child, 2017). While all types of abuse impact serve-and-return interactions, neglect particularly impacts these reciprocal exchanges (Center for the Developing Child, 2017), particularly due to the ongoing absence or inconsistent use of back and forth interactions.

Serve and return interactions occur within the context of care routines such as feeding, diapering, as children are going to sleep and waking up, as well as during play routines. These routines become relational when teachers are: 1) respectful of care and play routines as relational niches for back-and-forth interactions, 2) provide multiple opportunities every day over time for children to experience the reliability of back-and-forth interactions, and 3) utilize safe sequencing within routines to promote the predictability of relational care. For example, teachers use

safe sequencing when they tell children what is going to happen before, during, and after routines. This is particularly important for children whose daily experiences may have been unpredictable, chaotic, or scary. Teachers' use of repeated cycles of fun and need fulfilling serve and return interactions in relational routines, over time, support children's understanding that they are safe, understood, and cared for.

Just as all young children require supportive serve and return interactions, they also require co-regulatory support while learning to regulate their emotions and behavior. (Nicholson et al., 2019). Co-regulation is a developmental process supported by responsive interactions and is a key strategy to support infants, toddlers, and twos exposed to trauma. Teachers provide co-regulatory support through their use of facial expressions, tone of voice, body movement, and pacing. (Nicholson et al., 2019). Developmental psychologist Gerald Costa (n.d.) notes that it is important for parents and teachers to be attentive and reflective on their use of nonverbal ways of communicating, while providing co-regulatory support, because babies feel "felt" and "understood" through these interactions. Costa (n.d.) developed the "AGILE" framework to help teachers and parents remember five interactional ways to support coregulation. **Table 1** identifies the components of the AGILE framework and examples of questions teachers can ask about their use of these strategies.

Relationship Anchor 2: Observation for trauma triggers
Observation for trauma triggers provides support and stability for relationships primarily through the relationship requirement of responsiveness. A key component of NAEYC's DAP Position Statement (2021) is that teaching practices are informed by a

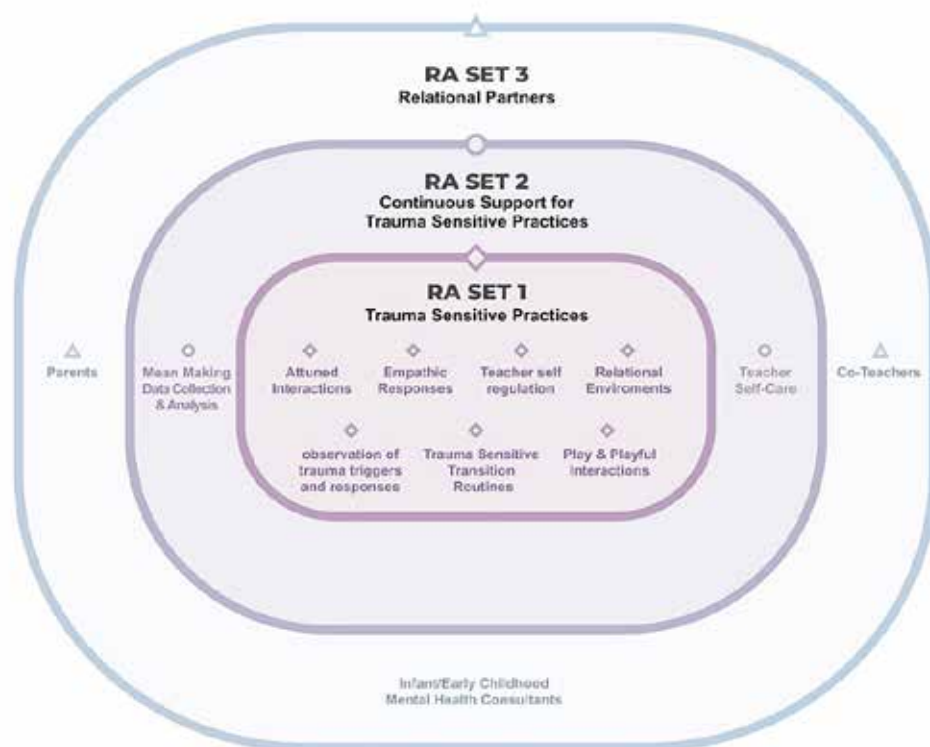


Figure 1: Relationship Anchors that Support Resilience

Table 1. Teacher questions to support AGILE components

AGILE Components	Teacher questions to support AGILE components
Affect	Do my facial expressions communicate warmth and care? Does my affect communicate safety? Does my affect reflect reassurance?
Gestures	Are my movements smooth rather than quick and jerky? Is my body posture relaxed rather than tense? Am I positioned at the child's eye level? Is my physical approach predictable? Is my approach welcoming rather than threatening?
Intonation	Is the rising and falling of my voice soothing and calming?
Latency	Does my supportive waiting provide the opportunity for the child to both "feel" and "take in" my interactions? Do I observe the child's response and adjust my interactions?
Engagement	Did my behaviors support a child's calm state? Did my behaviors support a child's exploration or engagement in serve and return interactions?

cycle of observation and individualization. NAEYC's historical emphasis on observation and individualization has even deeper meaning and relevance for teachers because responsiveness to young children can be challenging because of their sometime confusing and puzzling behaviors.

Observation for trauma triggers is a key focus area for teachers. Triggers are defined as "an event or situation that results in negative or disturbing feelings of being threatened or unsafe" that elicit stress responses (Charbonneau et al., n.d., p. 148). The first type of trigger occurs in the environment. For example, sudden loud sounds, overstimulation, and unorganized and chaotic environments can lead to a dysregulated state. A second type of trigger relates to transitions, which are often difficult for all children. A third type of trigger relates to adult behavior. For example, a change in teachers, unfamiliar adults entering the room, or a teacher's behavior or interaction style can trigger a stress response. Young children who have been exposed to trauma may experience stress related responses to a harsh voice tone. Similarly, a teacher's stern or angry look or sudden rapid body movement can startle or overwhelm a child, activating a stress response.

Another trigger related to adult behavior includes the type of touch used by a teacher. Young children exposed to trauma may avoid or resist touch during care and play routines because of a history of abuse involving harsh touch or neglect involving limited or absence of touch. Teachers' use of gentle movements and gentle touch (Guttentag, n.d.) during care routines reorients children to the warmth and care communicated through touch.

Relationship Anchor 3: Observation for trauma stress responses

Observation for trauma stress responses provide support and stability for relationships primarily through the relationship requirement of responsiveness. Additionally, NAEYC (2021) notes that teacher recognition of signs of trauma is a teacher competency. Trauma overwhelms children's coping abilities and they

might exhibit signs of flight, fight, or freeze behavior in response to trauma triggers (Sorrels, 2019). Flight behavior for babies between birth and one include, for example, crawling away, excessive sleeping, or avoidance of eye contact (Charbonneau et al., n.d.). Children between one and three might walk or run away, have difficulty paying attention, isolate themselves, or withdraw (Charbonneau et al., n.d.).

Signs of fight behavior for infants between birth to one might include crying, clinging, fussing, or back arching (Charbonneau et al., n.d.). Fight behaviors teachers might observe in children one to three might include aggressive behavior: hitting, biting, kicking, (Charbonneau et al., n.d.) or tantrums above and beyond what is typically expected for this age group (Osofsky & Costa, n.d.).

Signs of freeze behaviors for infants between birth to one might include looking away or moving quickly between sleep and wake states (Charbonneau et al., n.d.). Teachers might observe the following behavior for babies between one to three include "checking out," difficulties with learning, or refusal to participate in activities (Charbonneau et al., n.d.).

Relationship Anchor 4: A meaning making approach to understanding behavior

Teachers' understanding of the underlying meaning of trauma stress related behavior provides support and stability for relationships through the relationship requirements of responsiveness and respect. Additionally, NAEYC (2021) supports a meaning making approach to understanding behavior. Teachers' meaning making approach is respectful of young children through understanding that their behaviors are coping mechanisms to keep themselves safe (Nicholson et al, 2019) and make themselves feel better (Osofsky & Costa, n.d.). Central to a meaning making approach to behavior is a teachers' reflective stance about the communicative intent of behavior – or what the child is trying to communicate through distress signals. For example, a child might be communicating: "I feel scared," "I am frustrated," or "I feel alone." (Charbonneau et al, n.d.).

A meaning making approach supports teacher responsiveness to children's stress responses rather than attempts to manage behavior. For example, when a teacher looks for the message behind an older toddler's sudden outburst rather than viewing the toddler as being "bad" or non-compliant, he/she is using a meaning making approach. The meaning making approach would then call for co-regulatory support or environmental support depending on the meaning of behavior.

Relationship Anchor 5: Teacher self-regulation

Teacher self-regulation provides support and stability primarily through the relationship requirement of responsiveness, reliable support, and protection. Teachers monitoring of their own emotional state and behavior, while supporting an infant or toddler experiencing distress, promotes psychological safety, as advocated by NAEYC (2021). When young children view their teachers as sources of safety and comfort rather than sources of fear, they develop trust in the relationship. It is also important for teachers to monitor their feelings and interaction because children's dysregulated behavior can be contagious (Nicholson et al, 2019). Teachers' reflective rather than reactive posture helps them to remain calm rather than following the child's dysregulation through angry, frustrating, or rejecting responses (Nicholson et al, 2019).

A key strategy to support teachers' self-regulation is to use a reflective rather than a reactive approach. A reflective approach is supported by self-inquiry questions (Nicholson et al, 2019). When teachers use self-inquiry questions, it allows them to take a pause to think rather than react to children's behavior (Nicholson et al, 2019). Examples of teacher self-inquiry questions include: 1) What behavior is triggering me?, 2) How does this behavior make me feel?, 3) How am I managing my own big emotions?, and 4) How is my behavior impacting the child?

Relationship Anchor 6: Empathic responses

Teachers' use of empathic responses provide support and stability primarily through the relationship requirement of respect. Teachers are respectful of children when they reflect on rather than reject children's emotions. Empathy promotes children's sense that their teacher is with them rather than feeling alone, unsafe, and vulnerable when experiencing distress. Additionally, an empathic posture supports teachers' use of a compassionate lens to viewing behavior Sorrels (2019) through a focus on what has happened to the child rather than what is wrong with the child (Early Childhood Knowledge and Learning Center, n.d.).



Relationship Anchor 7: Trauma sensitive transition routines

Trauma sensitive transition practices provide support and stability for relationships primarily through the relationship requirement of responsiveness and reliable support. Transitions are hard for all young children because of the uncertainty that accompanies children during entry to care and departure from care, as well as transitions between care and play routines. Transitions are particularly difficult for children exposed to trauma. Teachers use trauma sensitive transition practices when they provide gentle reminders of upcoming transitions, use fun or soothing transitions songs, provide visual schedules for older toddlers, orient children to what is happening during care routines, and remain close to children during transitions. Creation of entry and departure rituals also provide all young children with a sense of security.

Relationship Anchor 8: Relational environments

Relational environments provide support and stability for relationships primarily through the relational requirements of responsiveness, protection, and support for the growth of new skills and capabilities within a child's reach. NAEYC (2021) endorses the use of carefully structured environments as a way of promoting psychological safety noting that "pace, time, and stimulation are modified to take into account children's individual needs and feelings of psychological safety" (p. 17.). Relational environments are characterized by environmental design promoting serve and return interactions, play and exploration, and self-regulation.

Teachers can support a relational environment through soft, cozy spaces for relaxed interactions, safe spaces for children when needed to calm, and organized and inviting play spaces for interactions with teachers, as well as independent play. Teachers' creation of comforting calming environments through use of gentle soothing music, neutral wall and floor coverings,



Play supports new skills across developmental domains including self-regulation and relationship skills

and soft lights prevent overstimulation and promote calm states in babies. Comfort objects, like soft materials, favorite stuffed animals, or snuggles in the environment that are easily accessible to babies promote a sense of security and calm.

Relationship Anchor 9: Play and playful interactions

Play provides support for relationships primarily through the relationship requirement of support of growth of new skills and capabilities within the child's reach. Play supports new skills across developmental domains including self-regulation and relationship skills. Scaffolding or providing just the right amount of support (NAEYC, 2021) promotes skill development. The centrality of play to children's development is reflected in NAEYC's definition of developmentally appropriate practices, which is "methods that promote each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning" (2021, p.5).

The playful exploration of children exposed to trauma can be impacted because fear and anxiety impact play and playful interaction (Sorrels, 2019). Babies might exhibit constricted play, and toddler's play may be chaotic (Nicholson, 2019) and non-symbolic (Sorrels, 2019). Sorrels (2019) notes that play and playful interaction throughout the day provide a context for teachers to create experiences that provide "short moments of authentic joy with a baby," (p. 73) building emotional connections. Teachers can scaffold children's exploration by their calm, reassuring, and attuned presence during play. They can also scaffold during playful serve and return games, as well as serve and return interactions around toys.

Relationship Anchor 10: A strengths-based approach

A strengths-based approach provides support for relationships primarily through the relationship requirement of respect. A strengths-based or asset-based approach to trauma means that children are

not defined by their trauma exposure or trauma related stress responses (Galinsky, 2019), which informs a healing approach to trauma (Galinsky, 2019). Infants and toddlers are both vulnerable and competent (Lally & Mangione, 2017). Trauma increases children's vulnerability. However, babies come into the world wired for relationships, ready to explore, and with the beginnings of self-regulation through co-regulatory support. Teacher's mindfulness of these strengths, along with children's skills across developmental domains and temperamental characteristics, supports teachers in not defining children in terms of trauma exposure.

Relationship Anchor Set Two: Support for Continuous Trauma Sensitive Practices

Relationship Anchor 11: Teacher self-care

Teacher self-care provides support for relationships through the relationship requirements of responsive and reliable support. The emotional demands of working with ITTs exposed to trauma can lead to compassion fatigue (Erdman, Cocker & Winter, 2020). Compassion fatigue leads to feelings of being overwhelmed or feeling exhausted, which can impact teachers' ability to consistently use trauma sensitive practices. Teachers' compassionate self-care supports their ability to be compassionate to children on an ongoing basis. Teacher self-care plans might include: mindfulness activities, exercising, connections with friends, talking with supportive colleagues, and positive self-talk (Erdman et al, 2020).

Relationship Anchor 12: A meaning making approach to data collection and analysis

A meaning making approach to data analysis provides support for relationships primarily through the responsiveness and reliable support requirements of relationships. For relationships to buffer children from trauma, responsive interactions must be used over time (Petersen & Yates, 2013). Relational care is supported by teachers' modification of teaching practices responsive to children's changing needs and developmental progress.

A meaning making approach to teachers' analysis of their observations helps them monitor what is working and what changes are needed to support young children's progress. Nicholson et. al (2019) in their discussion of trauma sensitive teaching practices note that teacher reflection on recorded observations supports

teachers in identifying patterns of behavior. For example, a teacher's examination of video interactions, of a certain baby, might show that a certain type of touch in relational routines prompts back arching. This observation would inform a change in the type of supportive touch they are using with that baby. Teachers might also note that anecdotal observations of a certain toddler indicate that every time a transition occurs without a fun transition song, the toddler exhibits over-the-top tantrums. This observation would prompt the use of fun transition songs.

Relationship Anchor Set Three: Relational Partners

Relationship Anchor 13: Shared information between co-teachers

The first group of relational partners are co-teachers. A key role of co-teachers is mutual sharing of information about children in their care. Sharing information is important because consistent care is important for all young children (Bartlett et al., 2017) but is particularly important for children exposed to trauma (Bartlett et al., 2017; Center on the Developing Child, 2015). Sharing information supports co-teachers consistent use of trauma sensitive practices. Inconsistent care is confusing for young children, making teachers' commitment to sharing information, in the service of relationships, key to shared teaching practices. For example, teachers can share information on use of self-soothing strategies with a specific baby, use of individualized serve and return interactions, or strategies to support play.

Relationship Anchor 14: Shared information between teachers and Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants (I-ECMHCs)

A second group of relational partners are I-ECMHCs. I-ECMHC is a relationship-based approach focusing on promotion of social-emotional health of children and is a recommended trauma-informed care practice (Zero to Three, 2017). Sharing information with relational partners is consistent with NAEYC's DAP position statement that teachers are to seek out support, when needed, to assist with children who have experienced trauma (NAEYC, 2021).

Since I-ECHMC consultation is a collaborative process (CECMHC, n.d.) it is important for teachers to share with their consultant supportive strategies they already use to support resilience. For example, teachers can share with their consultant their use of self-inquiry questions, use of serve and return interactions, or how they use a meaning making approach to behavior. Similarly, they might ask consultants for help with responding to aggressive behaviors (Sorrels, 2019).

Relationship Anchor 15: Shared information between teachers and parents/family members

Parents are also relational partners because their use of nurturing relationships is a protective factor that supports resilience (Sciaffara et al., 2017; Nicholson et al., 2019) necessitating a positive alliance between parents and teachers (Bartlett & Smith, 2017). When parents and teachers connect in positive ways, children's security is supported (NAEYC, 2021). Teachers sharing of information within a



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climate of care, support, and empathy (Mortensen & Barnett, 2016) builds trust. Additionally, strengths-based communication makes it easier for teachers to access the parent-child relationship (National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, 2010) when concerns arise. Teachers can also provide welcoming invitations to parents (Sciaffara, et al., 2017) to share their perspectives on their child's response to trauma, goals for their child, supportive strategies they use with their child, as well as cultural practices.

Some Concluding Thoughts

Relationship Anchors provide support for stable, safe, consistent, and responsive relationships. Teachers should also participate in dedicated trauma training, a trauma informed care practice (Cummings, Addante, Swindell & Meadean, 2017) to support their professional development (Sorrels, 2019). Finally, it is important for teachers to ask for support, when needed, as well as build on their strengths including their love and joy with working all babies and toddlers in their care.

Lisa Leifield has taught early childhood education courses at the college level and has supervised pre-service infant toddler college students at community based early childhood programs. She also has worked on a variety of federal and state training and technical assistance projects to support the infant toddler, child welfare, and early intervention workforces.

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Learning to Teach During a Global Pandemic: Examining Student Teachers' Experiences with Early School Closures

Anna Hall, Qianyi Gao & Sandra Linder



Field-based experience has been an integral part of teacher preparation, and there is a consensus among key stakeholders that school-based practica are one of the most critical components of effective teacher education programs (Aspden, 2017; La Paro et al., 2018; Vick, 2006; Zeichner, 2002). Based on John Dewey's theory that knowledge is acquired by doing, field-based experiences provide preservice teachers with an opportunity to practice and reflect on teaching in an authentic environment and to translate theoretical ideas into practice (Dewey, 1938; Gurvitch & Metzler, 2009; Schon, 1983; Zeichner, 2010). Through mentored classroom experiences and engagement in teaching practices, preservice teachers learn to develop their own pedagogy and understand more deeply the students they will teach (Darling-Hammond, 2006; 2020; La Paro et al., 2018). Furthermore, they are able to develop skills for curriculum building, assessment, and the construction of positive, equitable learning environments (Coffey, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2020; Smith & Lev Ari, 2005).

Field experiences not only bridge the gap between theory and practice, but also provide a context for preservice teachers to develop a sense of self as teacher (Cole & Knowles, 1993). These first-hand classroom experiences influence preservice teachers' views on the roles of teachers and shape their beliefs and at-

titudes towards teaching and learning (Hancock & Gallard, 2004; Johnson et al., 2017; Smith & Lev Ari, 2005). They also contribute to preservice teachers' development of teaching self-efficacy (Berg & Smith, 2018; Johnson et al., 2017). The practical knowledge gained through field experiences is highly valued by preservice teachers. In fact, many preservice teachers view field-based experiences as the most valuable part of their teacher education program (Allen & Wright, 2014; Smith & Lev Ari, 2005).

Strengthening field-based experiences in teacher preparation is an important strategy for developing the competence of new teachers and the capacity of the teaching force as a whole (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Therefore, engaging in field-based experiences is

a widely recognized requirement by different teacher accreditation organizations. For example, participation in field experience is mandated by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2013). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) also has specifically addressed field experience expectations in their Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs (NAEYC, 2010) and its newly published Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (NAEYC, 2020).

Challenging Times

Despite the importance placed on field experiences, preservice teachers conducting their student teaching in the spring of 2020 faced unexpected challenges when COVID-19 began to spread throughout the United States. Declared a global pandemic in March 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 changed preservice teachers' lives dramatically. Many countries, states, and cities declared states of emergency and were in lockdowns. Nearly 90% of the world's student population, which is comprised of over 1.5 billion learners in 165 countries, had their learning experiences disrupted by precautions and policies implemented to slow the spread of

the global pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). With no exceptions, drastic changes were brought to educational settings throughout the U.S. Most schools, including K-12 and higher education, were closed suddenly in March of 2020 due to COVID-19. Classes were moved online and almost all school buildings remained closed for the rest of the academic year. The transition from a face-to-face to a virtual environment was sudden and unexpected for both students and teachers, and the way in which students and teachers interact, teach, and learn have changed as a result.

Frustrations emerged and were sustained from uncertainty about how to deal with the widespread disruptions, which were being experienced for the first time in educational settings (Kim, 2020). Teacher education programs and their partners in K-12 school systems had to try to continue functioning in the middle of such uncertainty. Field experiences, which were a practical undertaking in the face-to-face classroom prior to the pandemic, presented unique challenges and became more demanding during this difficult period. Classroom teachers had to transition to online instruction with very little preparation time following the sudden school closures. These school closures, in turn, affected teacher education programs, especially in relation to preservice teachers' field experiences in local schools (Cho & Clark Gareca, 2020).

While these changes were occurring at the PreK-12 level, their effects were also largely felt by preservice teachers. When schools in the U.S. closed in response to the pandemic, it brought an abrupt end to the field experiences of many preservice teachers who were placed in those schools. These preservice teachers had to quickly adapt and follow the ongoing guidelines and recommendations that were issued by the school districts. Some were able to stay connected with their cooperating teachers and follow the class activities online, while others did not have the opportunity to continue their experience at all. Preservice teachers' involvement and the pace and diversity of tasks they received from the cooperating teachers differed greatly after the school closures. There is little doubt that preservice teachers' preparation and attitudes were influenced by the early school closures due to the global pandemic. This article presents results from an explorative study of preservice teacher perceptions of the pandemic and the resulting impact on their preparation experience.

Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of student teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic to better understand the impact of early school closures on their teaching preparation and their attitudes toward teaching. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How did student teachers feel when their field placement schools closed abruptly?
2. What struggles did student teachers face when their field placement schools transitioned from in-person instruction to virtual learning?
3. What unique lessons did student teachers learn as a result of student teaching during a global pandemic?

Participants

Eighteen student teachers from an early childhood teacher education program located at a large public university in the southeast United States participated in the study during the spring semester of their senior year. Eight participants were part of a five-year teacher residency program in which students graduate with their bachelor's and master's degrees. These students were in the second semester of their year-long student teaching placement. The other twelve participants were in their senior year of a traditional four-year bachelors' program at the same university. They completed course work and field placement hours in the fall of 2019 and were completing their one semester of full-time student teaching in the spring of 2020. All participants were white females between the ages of 21-22 years, which is representative of the early childhood student population at this institution and representative of the inservice teacher population in this region.

Instructional Context

The study took place during a required capstone course, which participants took concurrently with their student teaching hours. The course focused on preparing student teachers for future employment and gave them a space to share, debrief, and ask questions about their student teaching experience. Throughout the semester, student teachers met in person with their instructor for special events, such as an interviewing seminar and career fair, and participated in online readings, activities, discussions, and reflections.

An ongoing assignment in the course was to read journal reflections written by their instructor during her first year of early childhood classroom teaching and to reflect on the commonalities and differences they were experiencing during their student teaching. These reading assignments were divided into early fall, late fall, winter, and spring journal entries and students responded via an online discussion board. A sample entry is included below:

September 8, 1999 12:17 PM

Subject: Day 2, Getting there

Chaos seems to still be the theme for this week, but routines are slowly taking hold and children are finding the classroom (which took weeks to create) lively and exciting. Relationships are forming with those who need me the most, while other children are so quiet and independent that I haven't gotten to know them yet. Discipline is the inevitable problem that all teachers must deal with, so today I attempted to tackle it. First, we discussed consequences to broken rules and then on a positive note, I told them I was going to start a list of kind acts. I would record a mark each time someone was kind or generous to someone else. We'll see how it goes. I think we'll be into our full routine quicker than I expected. The children are eager to move on and learn more and more about how things will work. The security of routines is comforting to them. Tomorrow we will practice the old and add some new.

After student teachers read the instructor's journal entries for each time period, they were asked to answer the following

A central goal for the students' placements was to provide preservice teachers with varied experiences that prepared them for a wealth of early childhood teaching contexts.

questions on the discussion board: How can you relate to what you read? How does it make you feel? What questions do you have? Then, they were asked to respond to three of their peers' posts. At the end of the semester, students also engaged in writing a final reflection paper to reflect on their student teaching experience including challenges and successes.



In addition to taking the capstone course, participants were completing their student teaching requirements (either in the four-year or five-year program) and were placed in Kindergarten through third grade settings across four counties in the upper region of this southeastern state. At the time of this study, students in the four-year program had completed the first half of their student teaching experience and had just begun to take over fully for their cooperating teachers. Students in the five-year program had been in a single placement for a longer period and had been teaching the entire day at this time. Placements were chosen based on level of diversity within demographic requirements reported from the school district. A central goal for these placements was to provide preservice teachers with varied experiences that prepared them for a wealth of contexts after graduation.

Data Sources for the Project

The two data sources used for this study were the assignments completed following field placement school closures on March 16, 2020. The final of four discussion board reading assignments (described previously) due April 3 was analyzed in addition to the final reflection paper due April 24. The final reflection paper asked students to respond to the following prompts:

- How have you grown this semester as a student majoring in early childhood education?
- What have you gained from this experience that will help you in the future as an early childhood teacher?
- What challenges did you face? What goals will you set to address these challenges in the future?
- What other activities/assignments would you have benefited from during student teaching?

It was evident, in both the final discussion board reading assignment and the final reflection papers, that student teachers were sharing a unique and impactful student teaching experience

due to the challenges of learning and teaching during a global pandemic. Therefore, in late March of 2020, we obtained approval for the research protocol. Student teachers were invited to complete consent forms via email and assured that their lack of participation would not affect their grade in the course. All students consented to participate.

Data Analysis

Utilizing each of the data sources, data were analyzed and coded through a content-analysis approach with an emergent coding scheme (Nuendorf, 2002; Saldaña, 2014). Keeping the research questions as the center of analysis, two researchers (the lead author and a graduate assistant) individually read through each data source (i.e., open-ended written responses to final journal reflection readings and final reflection papers) underlining phrases and sentences and assigning each phrase and sentence with an initial code. After initially coding the responses, the lead author and graduate assistant met to discuss discrepancies and reached an agreement on shared themes and sub-themes.

Results

Analyses of participants' discussion board posts and reflective papers yielded three overarching themes related to their perceptions of how COVID-19 influenced their student teaching experience. The first theme related to how teachers described their attitudes regarding the school closures. The second theme focused on the struggles these preservice teachers experienced when trying to transition from a face-to-face setting to a virtual setting. The third theme focused on the reflective capability of these preservice teachers and the lessons they learned from their overall experience. What follows is a description of each theme with examples extracted from artifacts.



One of the most common struggles voiced by participants was how much they missed seeing their young students on an everyday basis.

wished they could complete the tasks they had prepared. One participant said, "I had planned all of these super fun and engaging hands-on math activities for my 10-day unit. I even had a classroom transformation planned! Unfortunately, I did not get the chance to teach it due to the school closures. I know that I would have loved teaching this unit, and I believe my kids would have loved all of the activities as well."

Attitudes Toward School Closures

Participants described feelings of heavy-heartedness about not being able to attend their placements in person, not because of their need to have more experience or a lack of preparation, but because they were not able to engage directly with the children with whom they were teaching. One participant stated, "I understand that the closures were necessary, but my heart was still broken at the fact that I would not get to teach my students again." There were also feelings of disappointment that their student teaching experience ended so abruptly, over the course of a single weekend. One participant said, "Leaving my school almost two weeks ago after our teacher workday to prepare for digital learning, I felt deep sadness that we may not be returning to our classroom." Another participant stated, "As it looks more and more likely that we will not be returning this school year, it saddens me that I will not be able to have a proper goodbye." Finally, these feelings extended to the realization that they would likely not be able to have what they described as a "proper goodbye" for their students. A participant reflected, "Now I look back at the last goodbye I had with them and wish I would have known it might be the last one for the year. They deserved the excitement and cheering and confidence in going home for the summer and having people at school who loved them still. I am hoping we get to go back so that my kids get the send-off they deserve." Another participant stated hopefully, "The end of the year is something we never get to experience as student teachers, so I am trying to remain optimistic that we can go back and spend the last few weeks together."

Struggles with Transitioning

Participants expressed frustration when they were unable to teach previously planned lessons due to the early school closures. Year-long student teachers expressed these frustrations less often than their fourth-year counterparts, but it was clear that all participants

For participants in these settings, moving to online instruction was fraught with difficulty. First and foremost, teaching young children in virtual spaces (whether synchronous or asynchronous) was challenging at best and an unobtainable goal for many. Participants often commented on how hard it was to attempt to engage with their students in a non-traditional format. For those who were able to connect synchronously, the struggle was often related to technology and the effectiveness of teaching young students through tools like WebEx and Zoom. For others, where districts did not have synchronous online opportunities, their frustrations often centered on the lack of control they had throughout the experience. For example, one participant said, "I did not really know how to help with the e-learning assignments. I went to the school when they were first closed to help my cooperating teacher and the grade level team create packets to send home with the students. After that day, my students were set for the next month. I did not have a way to do Google Meets or Zoom calls with them because the packets we sent home were not electronic. This was hard for me. Many of my classmates were able to see their students and do more with the e-learning because of the technology they had, but unfortunately my school could not do that. I tried to help my cooperating teacher any way I could, but there was not much for me to do."

At times, these struggles would cause participants to voice concerns over their ability to do the job they set out to do at the beginning of the field experience. One participant explained, "I have begun to doubt my role as a cooperating teacher. Yes, I help run our WebEx lessons, but I feel out of the loop with planning lessons and talking with parents." Overall, one of the most common struggles voiced by participants was how much they missed seeing their students on an everyday basis. For example, one participant stated, "Through this e-learning experience, I

am not able to see my students' faces as often as I would like to, and I miss them. I miss hearing their stories (even if their stories lasted three minutes too long), I miss hugging them every morning, and I miss seeing their faces light up when they figured out a problem."

Lessons Learned

The final theme that emerged from the data focused on participants' ability to think reflectively and, even with many challenges, learn from their unique student teaching experience. As participants reflected on how the pandemic affected their overall teaching experience, they often expressed regret over counting down the days to the end of the semester during their earliest days in their placements. Many participants described looking forward to spring break and the end of their student teaching experience, rather than truly engaging in the experience in the moment. For example, one participant said, "I definitely was counting down the days I had left. Looking back, I wish I would have never have had this thought. I loved going to my school every day and experiencing the pure joy from the students and teaching. I was becoming overwhelmed as the tasks began to pile up more and more."

As they reflected on their regret, many rationalized their actions by saying they were tired or overwhelmed by assignments. But looking back, they felt guilt about the missed opportunities to engage with their students. One participant said, "I regret counting down the days and hoping spring break would come. I was exhausted and tired from full-time teaching and school-work, but I wish I could've done more with my students."

Finally, by moving to a virtual format (or in some cases a non-interactive format where students received packets to complete on their own), participants expressed the realization that they learned to not take teaching experiences for granted. While this is a lesson that many learn as they grow older and teach for many years, the pandemic served as an early pivotal life experience that helped solidify these students' appreciation. It seems that the shutdowns associated with COVID-19 had a direct impact on their assumptions about schooling. One participant said, "Through this time of e-learning, I have learned a very powerful lesson: every day is important. For as long as I am teaching, I want to ensure that every day is an opportunity to have a great day and that I take advantage of each day I get to have with my students." For some, it seems that these realizations could potentially impact the way they interact with children as they transition to their own classrooms. For example, one participant noted, "If there is anything I have learned from this, it is to not take a day for granted with my students. Greet them with excitement, tell them you love them, have fun with them, laugh with them, and hug them on their way out every single day."

Some reflected on the need for these positive interactions to also be reflected in their instructional practice, with one participant stating, "I know there was no way to predict when the shutdown would happen or for how long it would happen, but it goes to show that every day you have with your students is a precious one. Through this whole incident, I realized how I want

to take hold of each day I have with my students and make sure that I fill each day with love and engaging lessons because you never know when you will have to go from in-person to on-screen".

What We Learned from this Experience

In this study, we examined preservice teachers' perceptions of the pandemic and its impact on their teaching preparation. There is little doubt that early school closures due to the global pandemic affected not only in-service teachers and students in the classroom, but also preservice teachers' field experiences and their attitudes towards teaching.

Teacher retention is a prominent challenge that school systems throughout the U.S. are facing. Prior to the pandemic, the U.S. was facing a national teacher shortage that is projected to grow substantially in the coming years, and attrition is a major driver of the shortage (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teachers have much higher attrition than many other professions. About 30% of college graduates who become teachers are not in the profession five years later (Ingersoll, 2014). One of the purposes of student teaching is for preservice teachers to build a sense of excitement around teaching and foster their love for instructing and facilitating. Losing these opportunities could have a profound effect on preservice teachers' ability to maintain a healthy disposition toward teaching as they transition to in-service settings, which may contribute to their attrition from the profession.

The struggles that preservice teachers experienced during school closures indicated that the role of the preservice teacher became difficult to complete amid the pandemic. The close connections and interactions between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers tended to be impeded because of the school closures and transition to a virtual environment. Many cooperating teachers were facing their own challenges with the transition, so working with preservice teachers became a secondary priority, and their expectations for preservice teachers shifted. Therefore, many preservice teachers felt out of the loop with lesson planning and communicating with students' families. In the meantime, it became difficult for preservice teachers to engage with their students, which led them to doubt their own ability to engage with children in the future.

Teaching young children in virtual spaces is extremely challenging. First, current early childhood preparation programs rarely prepare preservice teachers for teaching in virtual environments. Preservice teachers often leave their preparation programs with little or no experience with online teaching and learning. Second, although some researchers and educators believe that technology in early childhood education is necessary and beneficial, some question whether communicating with young children through technology such as WebEx or Zoom is developmentally appropriate (Kim, 2020).

The pandemic has been a life-altering event for everyone living through it, and its impact on education is likely to last for years

to come. Our current use of various technology methods may become more normal in education, even after the pandemic has passed. Therefore, teacher preparation programs need to react to this transition and adjust better prepare our preservice teachers for what lies ahead. The development of skills for teaching with information and communication technologies should be addressed in teacher preparation programs so preservice teachers are better prepared to face this type of situation when it arises in the future. Also, we encourage early childhood preparation programs to equip preservice teachers with the abilities to implement developmentally appropriate online teaching practices and find effective ways to interact with and teach young children in virtual environments.

Our study examined the field experiences of preservice teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic to better understand the impact of early school closures on their teaching preparation and their attitudes toward teaching. This study is exploratory in nature, and the generalizability is limited by the small sample size. Also, the types of data collected were similar, which could limit the scope of the study. Despite the limitations, findings illuminated the immediate impact of the pandemic on some preservice teachers' student teaching experience. The study was conducted in the spring semester right after COVID-19 became a global pandemic and schools were suddenly closed. Future research could continue investigating the long-term impact of the pandemic on these particular preservice teachers and how this experience influences their overall success as they enter the teaching profession.

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Rethinking Teachers' Roles in Creating a Play-based Learning Environment

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Gordon and Browne (2018) define the environment as the sum total of the physical and human qualities that combine to create a space where children and teachers work together. In other words, an environment includes not only the physical space and materials but also aspects of time and interpersonal relationships. In particular, Gordon and Browne's notion of environment consists of essentially three facets of the learning environment: the physical environment, the temporal environment, and the interpersonal environment. The

physical environment includes the equipment, facilities, and materials availability, as well as the arrangement of the room. The temporal environment contains timing for transitions, routines, and activities. The interpersonal environment is made up of the number of teachers, the ages, and number of children, and interactions among teachers, children, and their families. Classroom learning environments provide physical and social settings in which children interact with their peers and teachers. Within this social context, the learning environment is viewed as the third teacher and a significant indicator of play-based learning for early childhood programs (Malaguzzi, 1996).

Play-based classroom learning environments have an immediate and long-term impact on children's optimal growth and development. With the continuing efforts of state and federal government agencies to fund early childhood programs with the intention of assuring that all children enter school ready to learn, enrollment into these programs continues to grow. However, progress to reduce the achievement gap continues to be slow (Kober et al., 2010). As such, increasing attention has been paid to two issues in the current early childhood education literature: play-based classroom learning environments and roles of early childhood teachers in creating play-based learning environments.

Play-based Learning Environments

Vygotsky's social learning theory implies that it is important that the learning environment serves as a platform for children's growth and development. In Vygotsky's viewpoint, children learn to construct their own knowledge through play and meaningful interactions with the environment. Interactions with adults or peers in a social environment are important to facilitate children's cognitive growth and knowledge acquisition. Similarly, the Reggio Emilia approach, which highlights the role of play, views the classroom environment as "the third teacher" (Malaguzzi, 1996). According to Copple and Bredekamp (2009), in a developmentally appropriate classroom, teachers have an important role in creating an age appropriate, individually appropriate, and socially and culturally appropriate classroom learning environment for children.

In the next section, neuroscience's support of a play-based learning environment for children, as well as Vygotsky's social and cultural learning theory, the Reggio Emilia approach, and developmentally appropriate practice are discussed respectively. They provide the theoretical background that explains the importance of play and of learning environments for children's optimal growth and development.

Neuroscience Supports Play-Based Learning Environments

Neuroscience, the scientific study of the nervous system, has provided significant scientific evidence to support play-based learning environments for young children. The convergence of research from neuroscience and developmental psychology showed that early experiences determine whether a child's developing brain ar-

chitecture provides a strong or weak foundation for his or her future learning, behavior, and health development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007). The most significant message from neuroscience advocates is that the first five years of a child's life matters and lasts a lifetime (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). According to a report from the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), brains are built over time and a substantial proportion is constructed during the early years of life. The fact is that the human brain develops more rapidly between birth and age five than during any other subsequent period. Their report further concludes that as a consequence, children cultivate 85 percent of their intellect, personality and skills by age five. Some of the key findings about brain development are listed in **Table 1**.

Another important message from neuroscience suggests that the best learning happens when children are engaged in an environment that is caring, stable, and supportive. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) further state that the development of the human brain is the result of complex, dynamic interaction between nature (genes) and nurture (environment). They agreed that a large proportion of human brain development took place as a result of interactions with the environment. Developing children's healthy brains rely on caring, stable, and supportive relationships with their caregivers. Responsiveness and sensitivity of care has been found to be an important predictor of effective brain development and social emotional functioning (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007; Perry, 2002). Children are more willing to reach out and explore when they are in a nurturing and predictable environment. Studies have shown that nurturing relationships and attachment between children and their caregiver have been found to be critical for optimal brain development (Halfon et al., 2001). Similarly, it has been found that a significant part of a nurturing environment is determined by established secure attachments with others (Cacioppo

et al., 2003). As a result, a stable and secure attachment optimizes children's social and emotional development. Conversely, a negative relationship and environment adversely affects the children's development in the long run.

Children's optimal brain development is dependent on a positive environment. While the brain is developing in the early years of children's lives, it is more sensitive to stimulation from environmental conditions and experiences (Friederici, 2006; Horn, 2004). Therefore, the implications of the findings regarding neuroscience emphasize the critical role that play-based early learning environment has in children's development and learning. Through increased understanding of brain development, it is clear that play-based environments where children are supported by highly skilled early childhood teachers, are crucial to the optimal development of children's brain architecture at early years and beyond.

Vygotsky and Social Learning Theory

The theoretical perspective of teachers' roles in children's learning within the context of classroom environment can be attributed to Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. In his social learning theory, Vygotsky (1978) espoused that children construct their own knowledge through meaningful interactions with the environment. He highlighted the importance of the social and cultural environment on the child's cognitive development. In Vygotsky's view of cognitive development, children are born with the basic cognitive capacities of perception, attention, and memory. During the first years of the child's life, these cognitive capacities grow and develop as the child interacts with the environment. In Vygotsky's view, interactions with the social environment, including adults or peers, are important to facilitate individual cognitive growth and knowledge acquisition. The two significant concepts of Vygotsky's social learning theory include the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the role of teachers in scaffolding children's learning, particularly in a play-based environment, which are discussed here.

Table 1. Key Findings about children and brain development

- Scientists and researchers have provided compelling evidence that starting early in life, the foundations of brain architecture are established through interactions between genetic influences and environmental conditions and experiences (Friederici, 2006; Grossman, et al., 2003; Horn, 2004).
- At birth, babies have approximately the same number of neurons (nerve cells) as an adult but approximately 10 times fewer connections (synapses); as a result of experience, from birth to age three, the number of neural connections multiplies by 20 times (Lexmond & Reeves, 2009).
- The brain operates on a "use it or lose it" principle. A process of pruning selectively eliminates those connections that are not used (Perry, 2002; Bruer, 2006). The pruning process helps to structure the brain's architecture into organized networks depending on that child's experiences. According to Perry (2002), the determination of which synaptic connections will persist is environmentally regulated and dependent on information received by the brain. Perry further stated that synaptic connections begin prior to birth and are created at a rapid rate through age three.

Source: (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000).

Zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Vygotsky proposed the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in children's learning. The ZPD refers to the gap between the "actual developmental level" that children can accomplish independently and the "potential developmental level" that children can accomplish when they are interacting with others who are more capable, whether they are peers or adults (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD implies that child development is a constant flow rather than determined by a singular point on a given scale. Namely, independent performance and assisted performance are

two levels of performance within the ZPD (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Independent level performance is the lower end of Zone of Proximal Development, which refers to a child who performs independently without adult guidance. A child's level of the ZPD depends on assisted performance, which requires assistance by skilled adults. Sharp and Gallimore (1988) defined assisted performance as sensitive scaffolding of children's learning by teachers who assist children in accomplishing goals in their ZPD that take place in activity centers where collaborative interaction and assisted performance occur.

Teachers' role in scaffolding. Vygotsky (1978) stated that learning will occur when the child is interacting with people in an environment and in cooperation with other capable adults and peers. According to the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), children have a range in which they are able to perform tasks successfully on their own. Children also have a range above this in which they can successfully perform more challenging tasks with the help of an adult or more advanced peer. Both of these ranges are constantly shifting. As the child is exposed to the more challenging activities with the help of an adult, the range of activities that the child can perform successfully without assistance expands.

Teachers have an important role in providing a play-based learning environment for children. To apply Vygotsky's theory into classroom practice, teachers act as facilitators and should assist children's learning as they advance within their zone of proximal development. The learning occurs when children are exposed to activities that are interesting and challenging to them. A teacher's responsibility is to provide such experiences and to support and guide children successfully through these activities. Additionally, teachers can scaffold children's learning by providing models, asking open-ended questions, and extending children's play.

Play-based Learning Environments as a Third Teacher

The Reggio Emilia approach is an educational philosophy based on the image of the child possessing strong potential for development and as subjects of rights who learn and grow in relationships with others. In the 1940s, Italian teacher and psychologist Loris Malaguzzi created the Reggio Emilia Approach that emphasizes that children learn and develop through interactions within the environment, first with adults (parents and teachers), then with peers, and then with the environment itself. The fundamental principles of Reggio Emilia include the image of the child, the role of the teacher, and the role of the environment. The Reggio Emilia Approach sees a child as a competent protagonist and initiator who interacts with his or her environment. In Reggio classrooms, each child is viewed as capable, independent, curious, and full of imagination. Children have interest in relationships, in constructing their own learning, and in negotiating with what the environment offers them.

In Malaguzzi's theory, teachers are viewed as partners in learning along with the children. By listening, observing, and documenting children's work, the teacher is equipped to guide children's learning experiences and co-construct knowledge with them (Gandini, 2008). In the Reggio Emilia classrooms, teachers are considered as

partners in learning along with the children. Additionally, teachers observe children in action and ask them questions to expand their learning outcomes. The Reggio Emilia Approach places significant value on the role of the environment where the learning environment is viewed as the third teacher (Malaguzzi, 1996), after the parent and the teacher. The environment serves an advocacy role on behalf of young children, inspiring parents and teachers to work together to realize the potential of children. In other words, the environment not only reflects what children are learning, but also plays an active role in nurturing and stimulating children's learning and development. In this approach, the classrooms are places where teachers have thought about the play-based learning and instructive power of space. Their design of classroom space encourages children's exploration, engagement, communications, and relationships.

In the Reggio Emilia Approach teachers are seen as researchers. Teachers observe and document children's learning activities through writing learning stories, making photographs, and documenting representations of children's works. Reggio teachers use documentation as a primary tool to help them understand and evaluate the children. Furthermore, teachers use documentation to communicate children's progress with parents and families.

Play-based Learning Environments are Developmentally Appropriate

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (NAEYC, 2020) is an approach to teaching grounded in research on how young children develop and learn, as well as what is known about effective early education. Its framework is designed to promote young children's optimal learning and development. DAP suggests teachers meet young children where they are by stage of development, both as individuals and as part of a group. Furthermore, DAP provides the foundation to answer questions about what classroom learning contexts should be provided to children at various developmental stages. More importantly, DAP is concerned with how early childhood teachers create play-based learning environments that support and promote children's growth and development in all domains.

Play-based learning has been a key message in the DAP position statement from the National Association for the Education of Young Children since it was first published in the mid-1980s (NAEYC, 2020). DAP was intended to provide the framework for the purpose of ensuring teaching that engages young children's ages, experience, and ability to promote young children's optimal growth and development. In its newly fourth edition, the NAEYC (2020) position statement defines DAP as "methods that promote each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning" (NAEYC, 2020). Play-based learning is the core in a developmentally appropriate classroom. Teachers play an important role in creating an age appropriate, individually appropriate, and socially and culturally appropriate classroom learning environment for children. First, age-appropriate practice allows teachers to make broad predictions about what children at a particular age are like and what experiences will promote growth and development. Second, individually appropriate practice requires teachers

to understand the pattern and timing of each individual child's growth, personality, and learning styles. Lastly, socially and culturally appropriate practice suggests that teachers should look at children and their families within the context of their community and culture to provide a meaningful and supportive learning environment.

Furthermore, early childhood teachers should have knowledge in three core areas to make decisions about each child's optimal growth and development (NAEYC, 2022). The three core areas include: 1) teachers' knowledge of commonality in child development and learning; 2) reflecting on the individuality of each child's unique characteristics and experiences; and 3) the context in which development and learning take place. The first core area requires that early childhood teachers have a full grasp of knowledge on child development and learning of children within a given age. Understanding how children grow and develop in multiple domains is essential for teachers of young children. This understanding helps teachers' decision making in organizing the classroom environment and providing age-appropriate activities and materials. The second core area suggests that early childhood teachers should acquire knowledge of what is individually appropriate. This core area enables teachers to know each child's strengths and needs as an individual. Therefore, teachers can adapt an activity and be responsive to individual children who are at different developmental levels. The third core area emphasizes the need for early childhood teachers to have knowledge of the social and cultural environment in which the child lives. A social and cultural environment includes the values, beliefs, rules, and expectations that are passed on to children from members of groups and families. This knowledge helps teachers create learning environments and experiences that are meaningful and relevant to children's daily lives.

In a developmentally appropriate classroom, teachers are able to provide a play-based learning environment when they make decisions based on knowledge of child development and learning, knowledge about children as individuals, and knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live. According to Fraser (2012), a classroom environment that is functioning successfully as a third teacher is responsive to the children's interests, provides opportunities for children to make their thinking visible, and fosters children's learning and engagement. By utilizing the implications of the ZPD, the teacher's role as a facilitator is to create an environment and opportunities for children to learn and interact to support their learning.

Play-based Classroom Learning Environment Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the three parts of the Play-based Classroom Learning Environment Framework (Play-CLEF) as shown in **Figure 1**. The first part is from the Gordon and Browne (2018) concept of the classroom learning environment and its three facets (physical, temporal, and interpersonal environment) served as the model. The second part is play-based learning. The third part of the diagram is the roles of teachers in creating a play-based classroom learning environment.

Three Facets of Classroom Learning Environment

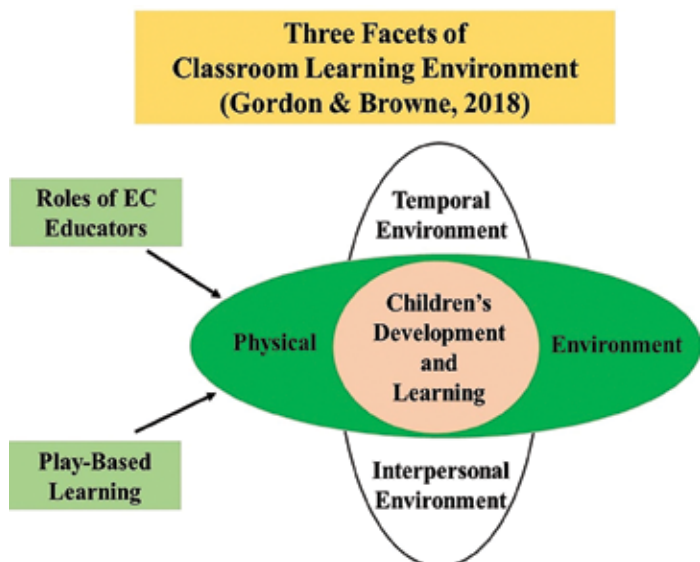
According to Gordon and Browne (2018), the classroom learning environment consists of physical, temporal, and interpersonal environments. A play-based learning environment is a combination of these three facets.

Physical environment. A well-designed physical environment is fundamental to play-based learning, both indoors and outdoors. While early childhood teachers create the physical environment, it should reflect the program's goals and the developmental needs of children (Bredenkamp, 2011). A classroom should include a variety of areas and centers for learning and play. The physical setting of a classroom needs to have child-sized furniture and equipment. The arrangement of the classroom and the playground should encourage children's play activities and interactions. Children should have access to a supply of materials that can be used in a variety of ways.

Temporal environment. The learning environment should incorporate the temporal setting/timing for transitions between routines and activities (Gordon & Browne, 2018). When teachers plan the daily schedule, they should consider the needs of all children in the classroom. For example, a well-planned schedule includes balanced indoor activities and outdoor time. Also, the balance of small group activities and big group time allow for children to explore at their own developmental levels. While planning schedules, transitions between different activities should be clear so children can understand them well and are able to make them smoothly.

Interpersonal environment. The interpersonal environment refers to the number and nature of teachers, ages and numbers of children, and the types of teacher-child interactions (Gordon & Browne, 2018). Positive interactions between teachers and

Figure 1. Play-based Classroom Learning Environment Framework (Play - CLEF)



children are an important part of a play-based learning environment. The group size and ratio of teachers to children should be limited to allow individualized and age-appropriate activities (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The classroom learning environment includes all the influences that affect children and adults in early childhood classrooms (Bullard, 2010). It refers to the organization of classroom physical environment and social relationships between and among children and adults. In the Reggio Emilia Approach, Malaguzzi (1996) acknowledges the learning environment is a key factor that creating space for relationships, emotional, and cognitive development that produce a sense of well-being and security for the children.

The NAEYC position statement (2020) on developmental practices further suggests that learning environments should provide three basic needs for all children. These three needs are: 1) protecting health and safety of children; 2) developing positive relationships; and 3) creating opportunities for stimulation and learning from experiences. All three elements must occur to maintain a high quality play-based environment.

Learning Environment and Children's Development

There has been a growing emphasis on the play-based learning environment and its impact on young children. Play-based learning has a lasting impact on children's lives. Neuroscience research in brain development has determined that young children are learning from the earliest moments of life, with especially rapid growth in their first five years (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). It has been shown that nurturing environments and brain stimulation during early years profoundly impacts children's success in life.

Play-based classroom learning environments are recognized as an important component in predicting children's cognitive and social outcomes (Pianta et al., 2005). Children who experience higher play-based learning environments do much better than those in lower play-based early learning environments (Burchinal et al., 2002). Over the past decade, in research on American early childhood education, several studies have shown a link between play-based learning environments and children's cognitive and social development (Barnett, 1995; Belsky et al., 2007; Helburn, 1995; Howes, 1997; Loeb et al., 2004).

A study conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) indicated that children who experienced higher play-based learning consistently showed somewhat better cognitive function and language development across the first three years of life (NICHD, 1999, 2000a, 2000b). Children who experienced play-based learning environments were somewhat more cooperative and compliant and slightly less aggressive and disobedient at two years and three years of age (NICHD, 1997). Similarly, the results of the Cost, Play-based, and Outcomes study (Helburn, 1995) indicated significant positive relationships between play-based classroom learning environments and children's cognitive and social skills. Helburn's research suggested that preschool play-based learning environments had a modest but significant positive relationship to children's receptive language, early math skills,

and sociability through kindergarten. In addition, it was found that the association between play-based classroom learning environments and children's math skills remained significant through second grade.

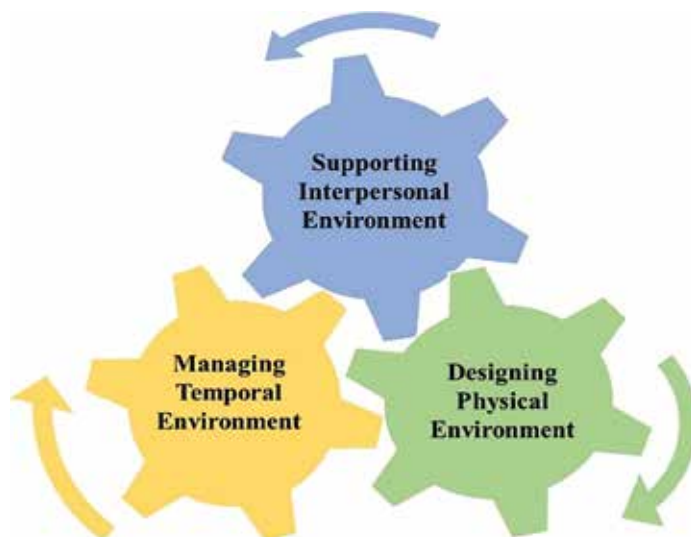
Roles of Teachers in Creating Play-based Learning Environments

Grounded in Gordon and Browne's (2018) notion of learning environments, the roles of teachers in creating play-based learning environments can be characterized as: 1) designing the classroom physical environment; 2) managing the temporal environment; and 3) supporting the interpersonal environment. The ultimate goal of creating a play-based learning environment is to meet the needs of children's growth and development in all domains.

Figure 2 demonstrates the roles of teachers in creating a play-based learning environment.

Designing play-based physical environment. Classroom physical environments include the equipment, materials, the room arrangement, availability of facilities, and the way the space is organized and used (Gordon & Browne, 2018). A well-designed classroom physical environment is an important element of a play-based learning environment. When designing a play-based classroom physical setting, teachers should arrange the space to reflect learning goals. The classroom physical arrangement serves as a powerful tool for providing students effective play-based instruction and facilitates positive interactions. The physical arrangement of the classroom should be reflective of the diverse cultural and linguistic characteristics of the students and be consistent with specific learner needs (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Early childhood teachers are responsible for the arrangement of the play-based classroom physical setting. This includes all the equipment and materials for children to manipulate and explore during the day. When designing play-based classroom indoor space, teachers should consider basic health and safety standards. Children need equipment that is

Figure 2. Teachers' Roles in Creating Classroom Learning Environments



safe and accessible on a daily basis. Bredekamp (2011) suggests that teachers should monitor children's play behavior to ensure classroom settings are maintained at a safe level.

Early childhood teachers spend a lot of time working on classroom displays. Well-designed play-based learning centers where materials are accessible for children encourage them to participate and explore in a wide variety of age-appropriate activities (Bredekamp, 2011). For example, children benefit from creative art activities. Therefore, materials that invite and engage children in art projects at a beginning and advanced level should be available at learning centers. Likewise, children need a supportive environment that includes a variety of blocks and accessories to explore spatial and mathematical concepts. Activities that involve sand and water help children to learn concepts with their senses. Similarly, science and nature activities foster children's curiosity and learning through direct experience and application. Classroom centers may provide children with a wide range of materials and opportunities to engage in hands-on learning. By doing this, children are given chances to make choices and progress at their own pace. Learning centers also promote the development of children's social skills while working on their own and working with peers and teachers.

Managing play-based temporal environment. Temporal environments involve the daily routines, structure of the day, timing, and the transitions from one activity to another (Gordon & Browne, 2018). In general, the schedule needs to reflect the structure of early child programs. The brains of young children work better when there is organization and consistency (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Hence, it is essential to understand that schedules and routines for preschool children need to be established and adhered to in the classroom environment. While scheduling, teachers need to pay special attention to a balance between teacher directed large-group activities, small-group activities, and free play activities. As a result, children can anticipate what comes next when the schedule is consistent and have a smooth transition.

Supporting play-based interpersonal environment. Interpersonal environments incorporate the interactions among teachers, children, and their families (Gordon & Browne, 2018). According to Kontos and Wilcox-Herzog (1997), children who have more positive interaction and more secure relationships with their caregivers tend to have more positive engagement with their peers. It has also been indicated that positive interpersonal relationships help to meet children's emotional needs to further develop their sense of self-worth and self-esteem (Gordon & Browne, 2018).

Children learn through interaction with peers and adults. It is essential that early childhood teachers provide a supportive classroom environment in which children's language development is promoted through play (Bredekamp, 2011). For example, in a language-rich environment, children are encouraged to participate in conversations to help them develop their language skills. Children learn best when they explore and experience things themselves. To support this, teachers need to consider the interests of children while planning activities. According to

Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), children need someone available to support and encourage them to overcome the challenges they encountered.

In summary, early childhood teachers play an important role in creating a play-based learning environment that demonstrates the following four common features.

1. A play-based learning environment is developmentally appropriate (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2022). A developmentally appropriate learning environment is designed based on the teacher knowledge of child development and young children's learning at a given age. This environment not only reflects individual differences and learning styles of children, but also embraces the cultures in which children come from and live.
2. Well-designed play-based learning environments create a caring community of learners (NAEYC, 2022). Being part of this community contributes to interrelated areas of children's development in all domains (physical, cognitive, social, and emotional). Within this community, children gain a sense of acceptance and belonging, which are two critical elements for developing and learning.
3. A play-based classroom learning environment reflects early childhood program goals (Mott et al., 1992; NAEYC, 2022). The arrangement of classroom physical space and selected materials reflect the learning goals. For instance, how classroom space is used can significantly impact children's learning and development. A play-based classroom learning environment should include opportunities for children to engage in individual, small-group, and large-group activities and teacher-directed and child-initiated activities that reflect multiple ways of learning. Lastly, a play-based learning environment provides children an opportunity to engage in hands-on learning experiences (Stuber, 2007).
4. A play-based learning environment is an important and powerful teaching tool. If the environment is set up with the knowledge of how children learn and develop, it will positively support children's learning and development. Well-designed learning environments are inviting to children and have interesting materials and a range of activities that support children's growth in all areas of development.

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Teacher Tools to Support Calm, Self-Control, and Resilience in Preschool

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ly high levels of stress affect children's brain development by impairing neural connections related to higher order thinking and problem solving (Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2020), teachers must actively support children's social and emotional health.

Fortunately, teachers already do many things to help mitigate the negative effects of traumatic situations. These supports include communicating frequently with families, creating safe physical and emotional classroom spaces, offering compassion and support, allowing children to express emotions, and using positive guidance techniques (Hill & Adesanya, 2019). We believe these

Prior to the pause in their preschool year necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, 4-year-olds Nausheen and Ana rarely became agitated, lost control of their emotions, or were unable to bounce back from a disappointment. However, since returning to school, things seemed different. While playing in a center, Ana became angry, pushed Nausheen, and told her to stay away. When their teacher intervened, Ana explained that "the bad germs" had made her grandmother sick. Nausheen and Ana both cried for much of the day. These children lost more during the pandemic than academic progress. Their feelings of calm, self-control, and resilience seemed to have become victims of the epidemic's effects, as well.

The psychological and cognitive impacts of COVID-19 on children are still unfolding; however, several researchers have noted negative effects of quarantine on youth (Orgilés et al., 2020) and parents (Fontanesi et al., 2020). The abrupt departure from preschool due to social distancing and potential family disharmony associated with financial and health concerns put children at risk for toxic stress—the type resulting from prolonged activation of stress response systems in the body. Because consistent-

strategies are important foundations for shielding children from the effects of toxic stress, but because they are also widely used, our article directs teachers to some lesser known helpful approaches. Here, we present a five-piece toolkit for bolstering feelings of calm, self-control, and resilience based on the following: *Movement, Mindfulness, Sensory Experiences, Acts of Kindness, and Children's Literature*.

While we present separate sections for the first four tools, we have chosen to interweave children's literature throughout. The stories and situations in the books we recommend provide context for exploring emotional calm, self-control, and resilience in child-centered ways.

Movement

Movement, whether child-initiated or teacher-directed, has been positively associated with improved cognitive functioning, concentration, and memory (Drollette et al., 2014; Madan & Singhal, 2012). When children move, their bodies release endorphins that enhance feelings of well-being and improve self-regulation (Braniff, 2011). Movement integrated with other areas

of the curriculum provides variety throughout the school day. In **Table 1**, we suggest movement activities that promote well-being and connect to science, mathematics, and reading.

In addition to content-connected movement, teachers should allow opportunities for dramatic movement generated from the child's own inner expressions (Kaufmann & Ellis, 2007). When children are given freedom to move creatively, they build flexibility, experience heightened relaxation, and develop resilience in responding to the unfamiliar (Thom, 2010). The dramatic movement activities listed in **Table 2** support children's emotional well-being by allowing them to use their imaginations and experience emotions in a risk-free context.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness practices bring awareness to an attentional object such as the breath, external stimuli, thoughts, or emotions (Flook, et al., 2015). Practicing mindfulness with children helps them identify where they feel sensations such as anxiety, anger, sadness, and joy in the body, and it encourages them to connect their physical responses with their emotions (Thierry et al., 2018). Taking ten minutes for mindfulness can recharge and refresh tired minds and bodies and allow for refocus on academic tasks (Harris, 2017). To set the stage for mindfulness, use a calm, slow voice and participate alongside children. Consider starting each session with the disappearing singing bowl practice (see **Table 3**). Encourage children to do the simple strategies given in **Table 3** whenever they feel the

Table 1. Integrated Movement Activities that Promote Well-Being

Activity	Description	How the Activity Promotes Calm, Self-Control, or Resilience
Wind, Rain, and Thunder (Science)	Have children sit in a circle and copy your motions. Rub your hands together (wind). Pat your thighs (rain). Stomp your feet (thunder). Shift between the three motions. End the activity by building from quiet to loud then back to quiet.	Children's focus and concentration allow them to bond as they contribute to a group with a shared goal. The activity ends with a peaceful feeling. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How did your breath change as the storm got louder and stronger? How did you feel when the storm ended?</i>
Water Paintings (Science)	On a sunny day, children use cups of water and paint brushes or sponges to paint on the sidewalk. Observe how the painting fades as the sun dries the water.	The teacher can play different styles of music (classical, marches, Mariachi, etc.) to inspire children's art. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How do you feel like painting when you hear the fast/slow music? How does your heart feel when you hear the different kinds of music?</i>
Rubber Duck Race (Math)	Place three ducks in a long tub of water with ends marked <i>Start</i> and <i>Finish</i> . Children move the ducks by blowing through straws, noting which duck crosses the finish line 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. (Note: Cut a slit in straws about 1 inch from the top so that children can only blow and not suck through them.)	Puffing through the straw creates energy while the excitement of the race gives children a chance to practice self-control. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>When you take a big breath, how do you feel? When you blow it all out, what happens to your heart?</i>
Sums of 10 Partner Hunt (Math)	Make a stick of ten linking cubes and place it where children can refer to it. Give each child a name tag with a number 0-10. Children make sticks of cubes to match their number then find a partner whose number plus theirs sums to 10 and join their cubes together. Children double check by comparing to the reference stick. If children find an incorrect sum, they say, "Not yet!" and try again.	Communicating and cooperating builds a sense of group unity and focus. Children build resilience by verbalizing being okay with making a mistake and persevering. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How do you feel when you and a friend work together? How do you feel when you make a mistake? What does it feel like to keep trying?</i>
Scarf Toss Sight Words (Reading)	Write sight words on adhesive labels. Place 5-7 labels on a scarf or bandana. Children can toss the scarf up in the air and catch it or toss the scarf to a friend. The child who catches the scarf reads the word that is closest to his thumb.	This can be a quiet, individual activity or a peer game. Catching a scarf is possible for all skill levels as the scarf drifts slowly down and is easy to grasp. Children can build on the success of catching the scarf as they approach the more challenging task of reading. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How do you feel when you catch the scarf? How does it feel to make a mistake reading a word? Do you want to give up or try again?</i>

Table 2. Dramatic Movement Activities that Promote Well-Being

Dramatic Movement Activity	Description	How the Activity Promotes Calm, Self-Control, or Resilience
<p>Paintbrush Feet</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>Niko Draws a Feeling</i> by Bob Raczka</p>	<p>Imagine your foot is a paintbrush and that you are covering the ground with a beautiful painting. How would you move your paintbrush foot if the painting showed something sad? What if the scene were of something angry or happy?</p>	<p>Children need help connecting words to happy, sad, fearful, and angry feelings. Moving their bodies in different ways can help children differentiate the emotional and physical qualities of their emotions.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>Can you tell me about your sad picture? How do you feel when you are painting something sad?</i></p>
<p>Let's Go for a Walk</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>I Walk with Vanessa</i> by Kerascoët</p>	<p>Walk by yourself around the room or around the playground. How do you feel when you walk alone? Show this in the way you walk. Now, find a friend, link arms, and walk together in a way that shows your friendship.</p>	<p>Loneliness affects all of us, even children. But being okay with being alone is also an important emotional state. For some children, physical contact with friends connects them to one another and builds feelings of belonging. Other children prefer solitary play and resist physical touch. Teachers can read children's cues and help them understand and honor their own preferences.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How do you feel when you walk alone? Do you feel different when you walk with a friend?</i></p>
<p>Grumpy Troll</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>Grumpy Monkey</i> by Suzanne Lang</p>	<p>Imagine you are a grumpy troll throwing coins out of a wishing well. Throw ten coins as far as you can. Then notice a flower growing beside the well. Pick the flower and sniff it deeply. Blow the petals off the flower in a long slow breath. How do you think the troll feels now?</p>	<p>Children can sometimes get stuck in a rut of grouchy feelings. Vigorous physical activity followed by controlled breathing can help soothe angry feelings and replace them with calm.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does your breath feel when you throw the coins? Does throwing the first coin feel different than the last? How do you feel when you blow the petals off the flower?</i></p>
<p>The Monster Mash</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>Sometimes I'm Bombaloo</i> by Rachel Vail</p>	<p>Within their personal space bubbles, encourage children to stomp their feet and pump their arms in the air, simulating the energy expenditure of a real tantrum without the emotional elements. Next direct children to lie on the floor, pulling their knees to their chests, giving themselves a supportive hug and rocking gently from side to side. Using a paper fan, create a breeze over each child and ask them to imagine their big feelings blowing away in the wind.</p>	<p>This activity helps children deal with feelings of shame, blame, defensiveness, embarrassment, and fatigue common with a tantrum.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does your body feel after a tantrum? What can we do with those big feelings? How does your heartbeat feel now?</i></p>

Table 3. Mindfulness Practices for Preschoolers

Mindfulness Practice	Description	How the Activity Promotes Calm, Self-Control, or Resilience
<p>Disappearing Singing Bowl</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>Listening to My Body</i> by Gabi Garcia</p>	<p>Singing bowls are made of metal and come with a wooden dowel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press the dowel around the outside ridge of the bowl in a circular motion to make the bowl ring or sing. • Children close their eyes, press one hand to their hearts, and listen for the disappearing sound. • When children can no longer hear the sound, they raise their hand. 	<p>A Tibetan singing bowl's tone floats as it softens, centering the listener's focus and calming the mind.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>Do you notice a change in how you feel now that we have practiced listening and being still? Why do you think that happens?</i></p>
<p>Yoga</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>I Am Yoga</i> by Susan Verde</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect the breath and the body through yoga poses. • <i>Note: Some internet sites provide yoga poses appropriate for children. You can also check with a physical education teacher about appropriate yoga activities.</i> 	<p>Yoga can soothe anxiety and stress and shift children from the reflexive or reactionary (fight or flight) areas of the brain where big feelings are held into the prefrontal cortex where thoughtful processing can take place (Harper, 2013).</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does your heart feel? Can you move your body with your breath? Where does your body feel tight? Where does your body feel loose?</i></p>
<p>Helicopter Breathing</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>Breathe Like a Bear</i> by Kira Willey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand up straight. • Hold pointer fingers straight up. • Move fingers and arms up in a swirling motion, making the sound "Ch-ch-ch-." • Exhale one long "Chhhhhh---" while bringing the hands down to the sides and crouching to the floor. • Repeat until calm. 	<p>Coordination of the three discrete parts of this practice--breath, movement, and the audible "ch-ch-ch" expression--focus the child's energy and mind on the moment and center the child in the body. Children can experience the release of emotion as they verbalize the "ch-ch-ch" sound with vigor.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>Do you notice a difference in how calm you feel? How does breathing in a different way make your body feel?</i></p>
<p>Five to Focus</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>Charlotte and the Quiet Place</i> by Deborah Sosin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in a comfortable position. • Turn the hands palms up, resting the wrist on the knees or legs. • Touch thumb and pointer finger together and inhale. • Exhale the word, "I." • Touch thumb and middle finger together and inhale. • Exhale the word, "Am." • Touch thumb and ring finger together and inhale. • Exhale the word, "In." • Touch thumb and pinky together and inhale. • Exhale the word, "Charge" (Harper, 2013). 	<p>Long, slow, deep breathing with each pinch sends a message to the parasympathetic nervous system of safety and relaxation (Harper, 2013). Children can practice this activity throughout the day without drawing attention to themselves.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How do you feel knowing you are in charge of your feelings? Did you notice a change in your breathing during the activity?</i></p>
<p>Mindful Walking</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>The Lemonade Hurricane</i> by Licia Morelli</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk around the room as slowly as possible. • Roll your foot from the heel to the toe, trying to feel every part of the foot as you step. • Alternatively, walk toe to heel, one hand on the belly and one hand on the heart. • Continue until mental chatter is quiet and the focus is on the physical act of walking. 	<p>Making conscious contact with all areas of the foot enables the child to slow down and pay attention to the sensations in the feet. Self-control requires a calm focus that helps to maintain balance while walking slowly.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>Can you feel every part of your foot when walking slowly? Are there some parts you cannot feel? Is it easy or hard to walk slowly? What makes it easier?</i></p>

Table 3. Mindfulness Practices for Preschoolers (continued)

Mindfulness Practice	Description	How the Activity Promotes Calm, Self-Control, or Resilience
<p>Guided Meditation & Body Scan</p> <p>Children's Literature Connection: <i>Imaginations: Fun Relaxation Stories and Meditations for Kids</i> by Carolyn Clarke</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children lie like a starfish on the floor. • Draw children's attention to parts of the body, instructing them to tense each part for two to three seconds and then relax with an exhale. • Lastly tense and relax the entire body with an exhale. 	<p>Progressive muscle relaxation focuses the mind on specific parts of the child's body, creating body awareness. Children learn to recognize the difference between tension and relaxation and can identify it in their own bodies in times of stress.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>Is it easy to feel all the parts of the body? Which parts are hard to feel? How did it feel to relax on the floor? Is it hard or easy to be still?</i></p>

Table 4. Sensory Experiences that Promote Well-Being

Sensory Experiences	Description	How the Activity Promotes Calm, Self-Control, or Resilience
Shredded Paper Dig (Scent)	<p>Prepare scented craft sticks (two of each scent) by dousing them with essential oils or flavorings like vanilla, cinnamon, lavender, and orange. Place the sticks in a sensory table filled with shredded paper. Children dig to find scented sticks and match them to zippered bags.</p> <p><i>Note: Be always mindful about children's allergies before using any scents in the classroom.</i></p>	<p>Children cope with uncertainty and build resilience as they struggle to identify and match the scents.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does your body feel when you breathe in the scent through your nose? How do you feel when you are unsure what the smell is?</i></p>
Just Right Lemonade (Taste)	<p>Children use droppers to add lemon juice to a cup of sweetened water. Repeatedly tasting the lemonade, children decide when it has just the right flavor for them.</p>	<p>Children exercise self-control and self-direction as they perfect their lemonade recipe.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does it feel to make the lemonade just the right amount of sweetness for you? How does it feel to make decisions about your food?</i></p>
Butterfly Feeder (Sight)	<p>Place a bird feeder outside the classroom window and provide binoculars for children to make observations several times a day.</p>	<p>Caring for and observing birds that share children's environment engenders appreciation for living things and inspires calm.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How do you feel watching the birds eat? How do you feel knowing you are providing nourishment for the birds? How do you think the birds feel?</i></p>
Leaf Crunching (Sound, Smell, and Touch)	<p>Children gather dry leaves from the playground and crush them between their hands onto a tray.</p>	<p>The tactile and auditory crunch punctuated by the scent of the natural decaying process connects children to nature.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does it feel to crush something noisy? How do your fingers feel? What does the smell remind you of?</i></p>
Frozen Orange (Touch)	<p>Keep an orange in the freezer. Children can squeeze or hold the orange and roll it over their skin to interrupt negative thought patterns.</p>	<p>The sensation of the cold, solid orange in the palm redirects scattered focus and provides a sense of grounding and calm.</p> <p>TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does it feel to squeeze the orange? What does it feel like to roll the orange while pushing it hard against your lower arm or thighs? Where did your other feelings go?</i></p>

Table 5. Acts of Kindness for Preschoolers

Free and Quick		
Let a friend have a turn before you.	Share a special toy with a friend.	Teach someone something new.
Hold the door open for someone.	Tell a friend a silly story or joke.	Wave at cars passing the school.
Tell someone three things you like about them.	Give high fives or elbow bumps to a friend.	Invite someone to play on the play-ground.
Written or Creative		
Draw a picture and slip it into a book to surprise someone.	Use chalk to draw happy pictures on the sidewalk.	Make up a special handshake to do with a friend.
Do a breakdance for the school director or librarian.	Decorate a hug coupon and give to a friend.	Draw a smiley face on a sticky note and place in the restroom.
Sing a thank you or kindness song to a community helper.	Make a "missing you" card for a class-mate or teacher who is out sick.	Paint and hide happy stones on the playground.
Simple Service Projects – Completed with Adult Assistance		
Gather recycling from another classroom and place it in the school's recycling bin. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does recycling show we care about our earth? How do you feel when you do an act of kindness for another class?</i>	Dry the slides on the playground with towels after it rains. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does it feel to go down a wet slide? What can we do to make it easier for our friends to go down the slide? How does it feel to do something nice for friends?</i>	Donate unused or outgrown toys and books to a younger class. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How do you feel when you see unused toys in our classroom? How could another class get joy from these toys?</i>
Pick up litter on the playground. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does cleaning up show we care about our playground? How do you feel when you do an act of kindness for our school?</i>	Clean items in the home center with a baby wipe. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How does sharing in the responsibility for caring for our class materials make you feel?</i>	Make playdough for another preschool class. TEACHERS CAN ASK: <i>How do you feel when you receive a gift? How do you think your gift makes others feel?</i>

need to. Occasionally, tell children when you are doing them, too! Model how taking a moment to center affects your outlook and disposition (Albrecht, 2018).

mild depression by providing a simple, effective, inexpensive, and widely available means of improving emotional outlook (Curry et

Sensory Experiences

The senses provide children with continuous information about the environment through smells, textures, images, flavors, and sounds. But, when used intentionally to do so, the senses can also cultivate mindfulness and reinforce calm in the classroom (Harris & Fisher, 2017; Vagovic, 2008). The ideas listed in **Table 4** pair sensory experiences with mindfulness practices such as deep breathing to support calm connections to mind and body through sensory input and interpretation.

Acts of Kindness

Acts of kindness can disrupt feelings of social isolation and



al., 2018). When children look beyond their own feelings to recognize the emotions of others, they build foundations of compassion, sympathy, and empathy (Masterson & Kersey, 2013) and discover their power to bring others joy (Smith, 2013). Teachers can draw attention to the shift in the child's emotional state by helping children connect their improved thought patterns with carrying out an act of kindness. In future situations when children are feeling down, they may spontaneously choose an act of kindness as a strategy for managing their emotions. **Table 5** provides suggestions for Free and Quick, Written or Creative, and Simple Service Projects that are appropriate for preschool-age children. The ideas need some scaffolding by teachers but can mostly be carried out independently. We include Teacher Talk suggestions to focus teacher-led service projects more explicitly on the emotional benefits children receive from serving others. Some of the service projects can be modeled initially by the teacher and later carried out independently.

Conclusion

As teachers, we struggle to mitigate the effects of trauma and toxic stress on our students' emotional well-being. But we are empowered to bolster calm, self-control, and resilience when we actively incorporate movement, mindfulness, sensory experiences, acts of kindness, and supportive children's literature in our classrooms. Teaching children to recognize and regulate their bodies' responses to stress provides a lifelong foundation for emotional health and happiness.

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Herramientas para los maestros para apoyar la calma, el autocontrol y la resiliencia en el aula preescolar

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de calma, autocontrol y resiliencia parecían haberse perdido, víctimas de los efectos de la epidemia también.

Los impactos psicológicos y cognitivos de COVID-19 en los niños aún están surgiendo; sin embargo, varios investigadores han observado efectos negativos de la cuarentena en los jóvenes (Orgilés et al., 2020) y los padres (Fontanesi et al., 2020). La salida abrupta del aula debido al distanciamiento social y la posible falta de armonía familiar asociada con problemas financieros y de salud han puesto a muchos niños en riesgo de sufrir un estrés tóxico, el tipo resultante de la activación prolongada de los sistemas de respuesta al estrés en el cuerpo. Debido a que los niveles consistentemente altos de estrés afectan el desarrollo cerebral de los niños al afectar las conexiones neuronales relacionadas con el pensamiento de orden superior y la resolución de problemas (Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2020), es importante que los maestros apoyen activamente la salud social y emocional de los niños.

Antes de la pausa en su aula preescolar requerida por la pandemia de COVID-19, los niños de 4 años Nausheen y Ana rara vez se agitaban, perdían el control de sus emociones o no podían recuperarse de una decepción. Sin embargo, desde que regresaron a la escuela las cosas parecían diferentes. Mientras jugaba en un centro, Ana se enojó, empujó a Nausheen y le dijo que se mantuviera alejada. Cuando su maestra intervino, Ana explicó que “los gérmenes malos” habían enfermado a su abuela. Nausheen y Ana lloraron durante gran parte del día. Estos niños perdieron mucho más durante la pandemia que su progreso académico. Sus sentimientos

Afortunadamente, los maestros ya hacen muchas cosas para ayudar a mitigar los efectos negativos de las situaciones traumáticas. Estos apoyos incluyen comunicarse con frecuencia con las familias, crear espacios seguros en el aula física y emocional, ofrecer compasión y apoyo, permitir que los niños expresen emociones y usar técnicas de orientación positiva (Hill & Adesanya, 2019). Creemos que estas estrategias son fundamentos importantes para proteger a los niños de los efectos del estrés tóxico, pero debido a que también se usan ampliamente, nuestro artículo dirige a los maestros a algunos otros enfoques útiles

Tabla 1. Actividades integradas del movimiento que promueven el bienestar

Actividad	Descripción	Cómo la actividad promueve la calma, el auto-control o la resiliencia
<p>Viento, lluvia y truenos (Ciencia)</p>	<p>Pida a los niños que se sienten en círculo y que copien los tipos de emociones que tu haces, como los siguientes: Frótese las manos (viento). Acaricia tus piernas y muslos (lluvia). Pisa fuerte con tus pies (trueno). Alterna los movimientos. Concluya la actividad con movimientos que van de lo silencioso a lo ruidoso y luego de vuelta a silencio.</p>	<p>El enfoque y la concentración de los niños les permiten vincularse a medida que contribuyen a un grupo con un objetivo compartido. La actividad termina con una sensación de paz. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿No-taste algún cambio en tu respiración? ¿Cómo cambió tu respiración a medida que la tormenta se hizo más y más fuerte? ¿Cómo te sentiste cuando terminó la tormenta?</i></p>
<p>Pinturas con agua (Ciencia)</p>	<p>En un día soleado, los niños usan vasos con agua y pinceles o esponjas para pintar en la acera. Observe cómo la pintura se desvanece a medida que el sol seca el agua.</p>	<p>El profesor puede tocar diferentes estilos de música (clásica, marchas, tradicionales, etc.) para inspirar el arte de los niños. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo te apetece pintar cuando escuchas la música rápida/lenta? ¿Cómo se siente tu corazón cuando escuchas los diferentes tipos de música?</i></p>
<p>Carrera de patitos de goma (Matemáticas)</p>	<p>Coloque tres figuras de patos de goma en una larga tina de agua con los extremos marcados Inicio y Fin. Los niños mueven los patos soplando a través de sorbetos o pajitas, observando cuál pato cruza la línea de la meta. <i>(Nota: Cortar pajitas de aproximadamente 1 pulgada de la parte superior para que los niños solo puedan soplar y no chuparlas).</i></p>	<p>Soplar a través de la paja crea energía, mientras que la emoción de la carrera les da a los niños la oportunidad de practicar el autocontrol. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>Cuando respiras profundamente, ¿cómo te sientes? Cuando lo explotas todo, ¿qué le sucede a tu corazón?</i></p>
<p>Sumas de 10 búsqueda con un compañero (Matemáticas)</p>	<p>Junte diez manipulativos o cubos para hacer una bastón y colóquelo donde los niños puedan referirse al mismo. Dé a cada niño una etiqueta con los números 0-10. Los niños hacen palos de cubos para que coincidan con el número que recibieron y luego localizan un compañero cuyo número más el suyo suma 10 y unen sus cubos. Los niños verifican dos veces comparando con el bastón de referencia. Si los niños encuentran una suma incorrecta, dicen: "¡Todavía no!" y lo intentan de nuevo.</p>	<p>Comunicarse y cooperar construye un sentido de unidad y enfoque grupal. Los niños desarrollan resiliencia al verbalizar estar de acuerdo con cometer un error y perseverar. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo te sientes cuando tú y un amigo trabajan juntos? ¿Cómo te sientes cuando cometes un error? ¿Qué se siente al seguir intentándolo?</i></p>
<p>Juego con bufanda Reconocimiento de palabras (Lectura)</p>	<p>Escriba palabras en etiquetas adhesivas. Coloque 5-7 etiquetas en una bufanda o pañuelo. Los niños pueden tirar la bufanda al aire y atraparla o arrojar la bufanda a un amigo. El niño que atrapa la bufanda lee la palabra que está más cerca de su dedo pulgar.</p>	<p>Esto puede ser una actividad tranquila e individual o un juego de pares. Atrapar una bufanda es posible para todos los niveles de habilidad, ya que la bufanda se desplaza lentamente hacia abajo y es fácil de agarrar. Los niños pueden aprovechar el éxito de atrapar la bufanda a medida que se acercan a la tarea más desafiante de la lectura. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo te sientes cuando coges la bufanda? ¿Cómo se siente cometer un error al leer una palabra? ¿Quieres rendirte o intentarlo de nuevo?</i></p>

Tabla 2. Actividades de movimiento dramático que promueven bienestar

Actividad de movimiento dramático	Descripción	Cómo la actividad promueve la calma, el auto-control o la resiliencia
<p>Pies como pincel</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>Niko Draws a Feeling</i> by Bob Raczka</p>	<p>Imagina que tu pie es un pincel y que estás cubriendo el suelo con una hermosa pintura. ¿Cómo moverías tu pie pincel si la pintura mostrara algo triste? ¿Qué pasaría si la escena fuera de algo enojado o feliz?</p>	<p>Los niños necesitan ayuda para conectar las palabras con para expresar sentimientos de felicidad, tristeza, temory enojo. Mover sus cuerpos de diferentes maneras puede ayudar a los niños a diferenciar las cualidades emocionales y físicas de sus emociones. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Puede contarme sobre su triste imagen? ¿Cómo te sientes cuando estás pintando algo triste?</i></p>
<p>Vamos a dar un paseo</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>I walk with Vanessa</i> por Kerascoët</p>	<p>Camina solo por el aula o por el patio de recreo. ¿Cómo te sientes cuando caminas solo? Demuéstralo con la forma en que caminas. Ahora, encuentra un amigo, toma su brazo y caminen juntos de una manera que muestre su amistad.</p>	<p>La soledad nos afecta a todos, incluso a los niños. Pero estar de acuerdo con estar solo también es un estado emocional importante. Para algunos niños, el contacto físico con amigos los conecta entre sí y construye sentimientos de pertenencia. Otros niños prefieren el juego solitario y se resisten al contacto físico. Los maestros pueden leer las señales de los niños y ayudarlos a comprender y honrar sus propias preferencias. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo te sientes cuando caminas solo? ¿Te sientes diferente cuando caminas con un amigo?</i></p>
<p>Personaje l gruñón</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>Grumpy Monkey</i> by Suzanne Lang</p>	<p>Imagina que eres un personaje l gruñón que arroja monedas en un pozo de deseos. Imagina que lanzas diez monedas hasta donde puedas y luego observa una flor que crece al lado del pozo. Recoge la flor y olfatea profundamente. Sople los pétalos de la flor en una respiración larga y lenta. ¿Cómo crees que se siente el personaje ahora?</p>	<p>Los niños a veces pueden quedar atrapados en una rutina de sentimientos malhumorados. La actividad física vigorosa seguida de una respiración controlada puede ayudar a calmar los sentimientos de enojo y reemplazarlos con calma. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo se siente tu respiración cuando lanzas las monedas? ¿Lanzar la primera moneda se siente diferente a la anterior? ¿Cómo te sientes cuando soplas los pétalos de la flor?</i></p>
<p>El juego de los monstruos</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>Sometimes I'm Bombaloo</i> by Rachel Vail</p>	<p>Dentro de su de espacio personal, anima a los niños a pisar fuerte y bombear sus brazos en el aire, simulando el gesto potente de una rabieta real sin los elementos emocionales. A continuación, dirija a los niños a acostarse en el suelo, tirando de sus rodillas hacia sus pechos, dándose un abrazo de apoyo y meciéndose suavemente de lado a lado. Usando un ventilador de papel, cree una brisa sobre cada niño y pídales que imaginen sus grandes sentimientos volando en el viento.</p>	<p>Esta actividad ayuda a los niños a lidiar con sentimientos de vergüenza, culpa, actitud defensiva, vergüenza y fatiga comunes con una rabieta. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo se siente tu cuerpo después de una rabieta? ¿Qué podemos hacer con esos grandes sentimientos? ¿Cómo se sienten los latidos de tu corazón ahora?</i></p>

Tabla 3. Prácticas de atención plena para niños en edad preescolar

Práctica de atención plena	Descripción	Cómo la actividad promueve la calma, el autocontrol o la resiliencia
<p>Tazón cantor que desaparece</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>Listening to My Body</i> by Gabi Garcia</p>	<p>Los tazones cantores están hechos de metal y vienen con una clavija de madera.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presione la clavija alrededor de la cresta exterior del tazón en un movimiento circular para hacer que el tazón suene o cante. • Los niños cierran los ojos, presionan una mano contra sus corazones y escuchan el sonido que desaparece. <p>Cuando los niños ya no pueden escuchar el sonido, levantan la mano.</p>	<p>El tono de un tazón tibetano flota a medida que se suaviza, centrando el enfoque del oyente y calmando la mente.</p> <p>LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Notas un cambio en cómo te sientes ahora que hemos practicado escuchar y estar quietos? ¿Por qué crees que sucede eso?</i></p>
<p>Yoga</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>I Am Yoga</i> by Susan Verde</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conecta la respiración y el cuerpo a través de posturas de yoga. • Nota: Algunos sitios de Internet ofrecen posturas de yoga apropiadas para niños pequeños. También puede consultar con un profesor de educación física sobre las actividades de yoga apropiadas. 	<p>El yoga puede calmar la ansiedad y el estrés y llevar a los niños a cambiar las reacciones de tipo reflexivas o reaccionarias (lucha o huida) que se mantienen en el cerebro donde se encuentran los sentimientos profundos en la corteza prefrontal que es donde puede tener lugar el procesamiento reflexivo (Harper, 2013).</p> <p>LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo se siente tu corazón? ¿Puedes mover tu cuerpo con la respiración? ¿Dónde se siente tu cuerpo apretado? ¿Dónde se siente suelto tu cuerpo?</i></p>
<p>Respiración en helicóptero</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>Breathe Like a Bear</i> by Kira Willey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levántate derecho. • Sostenga los dedos apuntando hacia arriba. • Mueva los dedos y los brazos hacia arriba en un movimiento arremolinado, haciendo que el sonido sea como el de un helicóptero, Ch-ch-ch-". • Exhala un largo "Chhhhhhh---" mientras bajas las manos a los lados y te agachas en el suelo. • Repetir hasta que esté tranquilo. 	<p>La coordinación de las tres partes discretas de esta práctica (respiración, movimiento y la expresión audible "ch-ch-ch") enfoca la energía y la mente del niño en el momento y lo centra en el cuerpo. Los niños pueden experimentar la liberación de la emoción mientras verbalizan el sonido "ch-ch-ch" con vigor.</p> <p>LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Notas una diferencia en lo tranquilo que te sientes? ¿Cómo la respiración de una manera diferente hace que tu cuerpo se sienta?</i></p>
<p>Cinco acciones para enfocar</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>Charlotte and the Quiet Place</i> by Deborah Sosin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siéntese en una posición cómoda. • Gire las palmas de las manos hacia arriba, apoyando la muñeca sobre las rodillas o las piernas. • Toque el pulgar y el dedo puntero juntos e inhale. • Exhala la palabra "Yo". • Toque el pulgar y el dedo medio juntos e inhale. • Exhala la palabra: "Estoy" • Toque el pulgar y el dedo anular juntos e inhale. • Exhala la palabra, "En". • Toque el pulgar y el meñique juntos e inhale. • Exhala las palabras, "En control" (Harper, 2013). 	<p>La respiración larga, lenta y profunda con cada pellizco envía un mensaje al sistema nervioso parasimpático de seguridad y relajación (Harper, 2013). Los niños pueden practicar esta actividad durante todo el día sin llamar la atención sobre sí mismos.</p> <p>LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo te sientes al saber que estás a cargo de tus sentimientos? ¿Notó un cambio en su respiración durante la actividad?</i></p>

Práctica de atención plena	Descripción	Cómo la actividad promueve la calma, el autocontrol o la resiliencia
<p>Caminata consciente</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>The Lemonade Hurricane</i> by Licia Morelli</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camine por la habitación lo más lentamente posible. • Haga rodar el pie desde el talón hasta el dedo del pie, tratando de sentir cada parte del pie a medida que camina. • Alternativamente, camine de puntilla a talón, una mano en el vientre y una mano en el corazón. • Continúe hasta que la charla mental esté en silencio y el enfoque esté en el acto físico de caminar. 	<p>Hacer contacto consciente con todas las áreas del pie permite al niño reducir la velocidad y prestar atención a las sensaciones en los pies. El autocontrol requiere un enfoque tranquilo que ayude a mantener el equilibrio mientras camina lentamente.</p> <p>LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Puedes sentir cada parte de tu pie al caminar lentamente? ¿Hay algunas partes que no puedes sentir? ¿Es fácil o difícil caminar despacio? ¿Qué lo hace más fácil?</i></p>
<p>Meditación guiada y escaneo corporal</p> <p>Conexión con la literatura infantil: <i>Imaginations: Fun Relaxation Stories and Meditations for Kids</i> by Carolyn Clarke</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Los niños yacen como una estrella de mar en el suelo. • Llame la atención de los niños sobre partes del cuerpo, indicándoles que tensen cada parte durante dos o tres segundos y luego se relajen con una exhalación. • Por último, tensa y relaja todo el cuerpo con una exhalación. 	<p>La relajación muscular progresiva enfoca la mente en partes específicas del cuerpo del niño, creando conciencia corporal. Los niños aprenden a reconocer la diferencia entre tensión y relajación y pueden identificarla en sus propios cuerpos en momentos de estrés.</p> <p>LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Es fácil sentir todas las partes del cuerpo? ¿Qué partes son difíciles de sentir? ¿Cómo se sintió al relajarse en el suelo? ¿Es difícil o fácil estar quieto?</i></p>

que son menos conocidos. Aquí, presentamos una serie de herramientas con cinco componentes para reforzar los sentimientos de calma, el autocontrol y resiliencia basado en la práctica de los siguientes: Movimiento, Atención plena, Experiencias sensoriales, Actos de bondad y Literatura infantil. Si bien presentamos secciones separadas para las primeras cuatro herramientas, hemos optado por entrelazar la literatura infantil en todos los demás componentes. Las cuentos y situaciones en los libros que recomendamos proporcionan un contexto para explorar la calma emocional, el autocontrol y la resiliencia centrada en el niño.

Movimiento

El movimiento, ya sea iniciado por el niño o dirigido por el maestro, se ha asociado positivamente con un mejor funcionamiento cognitivo, concentración y memoria (Drollette et al., 2014; Madan & Singhal, 2012). Cuando los niños se mueven, sus cuerpos liberan endorfinas que mejoran los sentimientos de bienestar y mejoran la autorregulación (Braniff, 2011). El movimiento integrado con otras áreas del currículo

proporciona variedad a lo largo de la jornada escolar. En la **Tabla 1**, sugerimos actividades de movimiento que promuevan el bienestar y que conectan con la ciencia, las matemáticas y la lectura.

Además del movimiento conectado con el contenido, los maestros deben ofrecer oportunidades para el movimiento dramáti-



Tabla 4. Experiencias sensoriales que promueven el bienestar

Experiencias sensoriales	Descripción	Cómo la actividad promueve la calma, el autocontrol o la resiliencia
Excavación con pedacitos de papel (aroma)	Prepare palitos artesanales perfumados (dos de cada aroma) rociándolos con aceites esenciales o saborizantes como vainilla, canela, lavanda y naranja. Coloque los palitos en una mesa sensorial llena de papel rallado o triturado. Los niños excavan para encontrar los palitos perfumados y combinarlos en bolsas Nota: Siempre tenga en cuenta las alergias de los niños antes de usar cualquier sustancia aromática en el aula.	Los niños hacen frente a la incertidumbre y desarrollan resiliencia a medida que luchan por identificar y combinar los olores. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo se siente tu cuerpo cuando respiras el aroma por la nariz? ¿Cómo te sientes cuando no estás seguro de cuál es el olor?</i>
Limonada perfecta (Sabor)	Los niños usan goteros para agregar jugo de limón a una taza de agua endulzada. Probando repetidamente la limonada, los niños deciden cuándo tiene el sabor adecuado para ellos.	Los niños ejercen el autocontrol y la autodirección mientras perfeccionan su receta de limonada. LOS MAESTROS S PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo se siente hacer que la limonada tenga la cantidad justa de dulzura para ti? ¿Qué se siente al tomar decisiones sobre su comida?</i>
Merendero para las mariposas (Vista)	Coloque un comedero para pájaros fuera de la ventana del aula y proporcione binoculares para que los niños hagan observaciones varias veces al día.	El cuidado y la observación de aves que comparten el entorno de los niños genera aprecio por los seres vivos e inspira calma. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo te sientes al ver comer a los pájaros? ¿Cómo te sientes al saber que estás proporcionando alimento a las aves? ¿Cómo crees que se sienten los pájaros?</i>
Crujido de hojas (Sonido, olor y tacto)	Los niños recogen hojas secas del patio de recreo y las aplastan entre sus manos en una bandeja.	El crujido táctil y auditivo caracterizado por el aroma del proceso natural de descomposición conecta a los niños con la naturaleza. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo se siente aplastar algo ruidoso? ¿Cómo se sienten los dedos? ¿A qué te recuerda el olor?</i>
Naranja congelada (Toque)	Mantenga una naranja en el congelador. Los niños pueden apretar o sostener la naranja y correrla a sobre su piel para interrumpir los patrones de pensamiento negativos.	La sensación del naranja frío y sólido en la palma redirige el enfoque disperso y proporciona una sensación de conexión a tierra y calma. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: <i>¿Cómo se siente exprimir la naranja? ¿Qué se siente al enrollar la naranja mientras la empujas con fuerza contra la parte inferior del brazo o los muslos? ¿A dónde fueron a parar tus otros sentimientos?</i>

co, generado a partir de las propias expresiones internas del niño (Kaufmann & Ellis, 2007). Cuando a los niños se les da libertad para moverse creativamente, desarrollan flexibilidad, experimentan una mayor relajación y desarrollan resiliencia al responder a lo desconocido (Thom, 2010). Las actividades de movimiento dramático enumeradas en la **Tabla 2** apoyan el bienestar emocional de los niños al permitirles usar su imaginación y experimentar emociones en un contexto libre de riesgos.

Atención plena

Las prácticas de atención plena llevan a tomar conciencia y atención de un objeto como la respiración, los estímulos externos, los pensamientos o las emociones (Flook, et al., 2015). Practicar la atención plena con los niños les ayuda a identi-

car dónde sienten sensaciones como ansiedad, ira, tristeza y alegría en el cuerpo y los alienta a conectar sus respuestas físicas con sus emociones (Thierry et al., 2018). Tomar 10 minutos para la atención plena puede recargar y refrescar las mentes y los cuerpos cansados y permitir un reenfoque en las tareas académicas (Harris, 2017). Para preparar el escenario para la atención plena, use un tono de voz serena y lenta y participe junto a los niños. Considere comenzar cada sesión con la práctica del tazón de canto que desaparece (ver **Tabla 3**). Anime a los niños a seguir las estrategias simples que se indican en la **Tabla 3** siempre que sientan la necesidad de hacerlo. De vez en cuando, dígasela los niños cuándo los está haciendo también. Modele cómo tomarse un momento para centrar su perspectiva y disposición (Albrecht, 2018).

Tabla 5. Actos de bondad para niños en edad preescolar

Actos Gratis y Rápidos		
Deja que un amigo tenga un turno ante ti.	Comparte un juguete especial con un amigo.	Enséñale a alguien algo nuevo.
Mantén la puerta abierta para alguien.	Cuéntale a un amigo una historia o broma tonta.	Saluda a los autos que pasan por la escuela.
Dile a alguien tres cosas que te gustan de él/ella	Saluda a a un amigo.	Invite a alguien a jugar en el patio de recreo.
Actos por Escrito o Creativos		
Haz un dibujo y colócalo en un libro para sorprender a alguien.	Usa tiza para dibujar imágenes felices en la acera.	Inventa un apretón de manos especial para hacer con un amigo.
Inventa un baile para saludar al director de la escuela o el bibliotecario.	Decora una lámina con la imagen de un abrazo y dáselo a un amigo.	Dibuja una cara sonriente en una nota adhesiva y colócala en el asiento o mesa de un compañero .
Canta una canción de agradecimiento o amabilidad a un ayudante de la comunidad.	Haga una tarjeta saludando para un compañero de clase o maestro que esté enfermo.	Pinta y esconde “piedras con caras felices” en el patio de recreo.
Proyectos de servicio simples – Para Hacer con Asistencia de Adultos		
Reúna el reciclaje de otra clase y colóquelo en el contenedor de reciclaje de la escuela. LOS MAESTROS S PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: ¿Cómo demuestra el reciclaje que nos preocupamos por nuestra tierra? ¿Cómo te sientes cuando haces un acto de bondad para otra clase?	Seque los toboganes en el patio de recreo con toallas después de que llueva. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: ¿Cómo se siente bajar por un tobogán mojado? ¿Qué podemos hacer para que sea más fácil para nuestros amigos bajar por el tobogán? ¿Cómo se siente hacer algo bueno por los amigos?	Dona juguetes y libros no utilizados o que usabas cuando eras más pequeño a una clase más joven. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: ¿Cómo te sientes cuando ves juguetes sin usar en nuestro aula? ¿Cómo podría otra clase obtener alegría de estos juguetes?
Recoger la basura en el patio de recreo. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: ¿Cómo demuestra la limpieza que nos preocupamos por nuestro patio de recreo? ¿Cómo te sientes cuando haces un acto de bondad para nuestra escuela?	Limpie los artículos en el área/centro del hogar con una toallita para bebés. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: ¿Cómo te hace sentir compartir la responsabilidad de cuidar nuestros materiales de clase?	Haga plastilina para otra clase de preescolar. LOS MAESTROS PUEDEN PREGUNTAR: ¿Cómo te sientes cuando recibes un regalo? ¿Cómo crees que tu don hace sentir a los demás?

Experiencias sensoriales

Los sentidos proporcionan a los niños información continua sobre el medio ambiente a través de olores, texturas, imágenes, sabores y sonidos. Pero, cuando se usan intencionalmente, los sentidos también pueden fomentar la atención plena y reforzar la calma en el aula (Harris & Fisher, 2017; Vagovic, 2008). Las ideas señaladas en la **Tabla 4** combinan las experiencias sensoriales con las prácticas de atención plena, como la respiración profunda, para apoyar las conexiones tranquilas con la mente y el cuerpo a través del estímulo sensorial y la interpretación.

Actos de bondad

Los actos de bondad pueden interrumpir los sentimientos de aislamiento social y depresión leve al proporcionar un medio simple, efectivo, económico y ampliamente disponible para mejorar la perspectiva emocional (Curry et al., 2018). Cuando los niños miran más allá de sus propios sentimientos para reconocer las emociones de los demás, construyen bases de compasión,

simpatía y empatía (Masterson & Kersey, 2013) y descubren el poder que tienen para traer alegría a los demás (Smith, 2013). Los maestros pueden ayudarlos a reconocer el cambio en su estado emocional ayudando a los niños a conectar sus patrones de pensamiento positivo con la realización de un acto de bondad. En situaciones futuras en las que los niños se sienten deprimidos, pueden elegir espontáneamente un acto de bondad como estrategia para manejar sus emociones. La **Tabla 5** proporciona sugerencias para proyectos de servicio gratuitos y rápidos, escritos o creativos y simples que son apropiados para niños en edad preescolar. Las ideas necesitan del apoyo por parte de los maestros, pero en su mayoría muchas se pueden llevar a cabo de forma independiente. Incluimos sugerencias de Teacher Talk para enfocar los proyectos de servicio dirigidos por el maestro de manera más explícita sobre los beneficios emocionales que los niños reciben al servir a los demás. Algunos de los proyectos de servicio pueden ser modelados inicialmente por el educador y luego llevados a cabo de forma independiente.

Conclusión

Como maestros, luchamos por mitigar los efectos del trauma y el estrés tóxico en el bienestar emocional de nuestros estudiantes. Estamos capacitados para reforzar la calma, el autocontrol y la resiliencia cuando incorporamos activamente el movimiento, la atención plena, las experiencias sensoriales, los actos de bondad y la literatura infantil de apoyo en nuestras aulas. Enseñar a los niños a reconocer y regular las respuestas de sus cuerpos al estrés proporciona una base de por vida para la salud emocional y la felicidad.

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Adrienne Johnson es una ex bibliotecaria de la primera infancia y actualmente una entrenadora de crianza consciente y creadora de contenido de medios de atención plena para niños.



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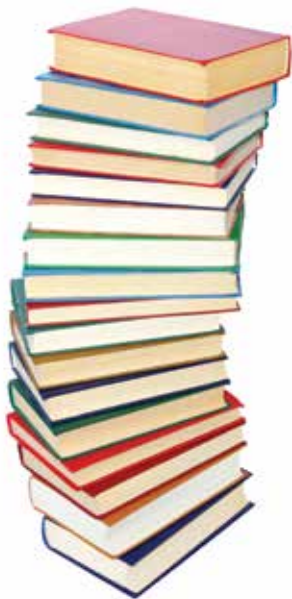
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Children's Book Review

By Dina Costa Treff

This is a School

This is a School is the first picture book released by John Schu. Author Schu is a children's librarian and advocate for children's literature. He tells the story of all that a school is beyond the physical space and challenges the concept that a school is just a place. This book embraces all that a school should represent: diversity, inclusion, safe spaces, creativity, and much more. It is a space where sometimes we are successful, and sometimes we fail, but all of that is okay and to be expected regardless of your strengths or weaknesses. Schu's story is that a school is for you, for me, for everyone. A school is a community that celebrates, transforms, and works together, and it is a community where all are important. *This is a School* also gives a quick glimpse into distance school when students are not able to attend school physically. From cover-to-cover Veronica Miller Jamison's illustrations show a diverse population in which all students are welcome and well represented. The vibrant pages are a celebration of school and all those who make up the school community.

While the school depicted in the book is an elementary school, this book is suitable for children ages 3-8. While this is a great group read aloud, children may benefit more from a smaller setting to fully appreciate the illustrations.

This is a School [Esta es una escuela] es el primer libro ilustrado publicado por John Schu. El autor es un bibliotecario infantil y defensor de la literatura infantil. Cuenta la historia de todo lo que una escuela está más allá del espacio físico

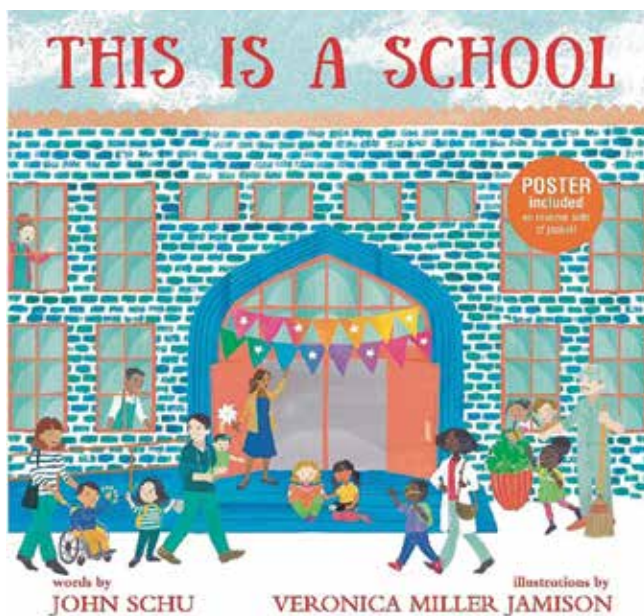
y desafia el concepto de que una escuela es solo un lugar. Este libro abarca todo lo que una escuela debe representar,

diversidad, inclusión, espacios seguros, creatividad y mucho más. Es un espacio donde a veces tenemos éxito y a veces, fallamos, pero todo eso está bien y es de esperar independientemente de sus fortalezas o debilidades. La historia que nos cuenta Schu es que una escuela es para ti, para mí, y para todos. Una escuela es una comunidad que celebra, transforma, trabaja en conjunto, y una comunidad que todos son importantes. *This is a School* también da una visión rápida de la escuela a distancia cuando los estudiantes no pueden asistir físicamente. De principio a fin, las ilustraciones de Veronica Miller Jamison muestran una población escolar diversa en la que todos

los estudiantes son bienvenidos y están bien representados. Las páginas vibrantes con sus imágenes y mensajes son una celebración de la escuela y de todos los que conforman la comunidad escolar.

Si bien la escuela representada en el libro es una escuela primaria, este libro es adecuado para niños de 3 a 8 años. Aunque este es un cuento perfecto para ser leído para un grupo y en voz alta, los niños pueden beneficiarse más de un entorno más pequeño para así apreciar completamente las ilustraciones.

Dina Costa Treff is the Lead Teacher of the Preschool Program at the Child Development Lab at the McPhaul Center College of Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Georgia.



An Interview with a Behavior Therapy Specialist

Kenya Wolff



Behavior continues as one of the topics of interest and most commonly discussed by educators and parents. During the early years, behavioral patterns and responses begin to take shape as children interact with their environment, peers, and adults. Attention to a child's behavioral responses and reactions during their first three years of life offers important information about their social and emotional development. Concerns with behaviors is what is addressed through the practice of Applied behavior analysis (ABA). This time, to learn more about ABA, we interviewed Dr. Kayla Cook, an assistant professor of special education at the University of Mississippi. Dr. Cook helped develop the Applied Behavior Analysis master's program at the University of Mississippi. Her research area focuses on Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) Tier 1 interventions, specifically group contingencies and the Good Behavior Game. During the interview, she provided comments that will help us gain a better idea about the role and goals of ABA during the early years.

What is ABA therapy?

Applied behavior analysis is the study of behavior and specifically how the environment shapes our behavior. We all engage in behavior every day that is shaped through reinforcement and punishment. ABA therapy utilizes specific strategies and methods to teach individuals new skills, as well as more socially acceptable behavior.

How long has ABA therapy been around?

ABA as we think of it today was first described in 1968 in a research article titled "Some Current Dimensions of Applied Behavior Analysis." In this article the authors described seven areas of ABA. The seven areas are: Applied, Behavioral, Analytic, Technological, Conceptually Systematic, Effective, and Generality.

Who can benefit from ABA therapy?

Everyone! Like I mentioned, we all engage in behavior every day that has been taught or shaped throughout our lives. I have worked with individuals ranging in age from 2 to 60 years old. Some of these individuals had developmental disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and others were neurotypical. For two years in Athens, Georgia, I worked in an elementary school and served the general education teachers in pre-k to 5th grade classrooms.

At what age can it begin?

This is a tricky question to answer because it depends on the type of clinic and the state's insurance policies and procedures. If an individual is served through their school, then they can potentially receive services from pre-k to age 21.

What should early childhood teachers know that could help them work with an ABA therapist who is coming to their classroom to work with a child?

First and foremost, the teacher should recognize that we are there to help them AND the student. Helping may mean changing the teachers' behaviors FIRST. More often than not, when I worked with teachers, I changed their behavior not the student's behavior. This could look like having the teacher ignore inappropriate behavior rather than provide a reprimand then providing praise when students engage in desired appropriate behavior. It isn't to be taken personally; and at the end of the day, we are all there to serve the students.

How long is a typical session?

Another tricky question, I think it depends on the clinic structure. Some clinics will see clients for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. Others may shorten that and do 4 hours, 5 days a week. It all depends on the needs of the client.

Overall, I think a few take aways from me are 1) behavior can be shaped and changed through environmental changes. 2) so much is an "it depends" situation because students and clients have individual needs and therefore their experiences with ABA will be different. 3) ABA is NOT just a therapy for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder or developmental disabilities. ALL students and teachers can benefit from the principles and concepts of Applied Behavior Analysis.

Kenya Wolff is an associate professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Mississippi. Dr. Wolff's research focuses on social-emotional learning in Early Childhood Education. She is a member of SECA's editorial committee.

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