

**Title of Training:** Building a Culture of Community Through Everyday Routines

**Board Present:** Jennifer Bowman – President, Rebecca Dunahoo – President Elect, Natasha Kile – Treasurer, Emma Tempest – Secretary, Michelle Weise – Vice President-Communications/Membership, Nicole Bedard – Benton County Member-at-Large, Harmony Benedict – Washington County Member-at-Large, Advisory Board – Debbie Mays & Elizabeth Scudder

**Participants Present:** 23

The meeting was called to order at 7.00pm by Jennifer Bowman. Jennifer welcomed the participants to the NWAECA meeting. She thanked Misty Newcomb and Prism Education Center for hosting the meeting and allowing the tour of their program.

**Business:**

1. Jennifer introduced the current board members and invited the participants to record any questions for the Meet the Division Meeting next month. Questions can also be submitted on the NWAECA Facebook page.
2. Debbie Mays shared information about the AECA conference in Little Rock 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> October. The theme is 'Impact' – about ACEs and trauma-informed care. Registration for conference will be capped. September 29<sup>th</sup> is the due date for payment if you want the early bird rate.
3. Jeff Dyer and Paul Lazenby, from the new administrative home of T.E.A.C.H., talked about the scholarships that will be offered to early childhood educators as part of the program. Jeff also expressed how valuable the affiliate meetings are, and that they want to continue the movement AECA has for early childhood education by gathering a small army of educators - just like you! – to tell real stories that will be retold further up the chain to aid conversations with legislators and other people who can enforce real change. Jeff also mentioned that the office in Little Rock is available for people to use if you need a space.
4. Natasha Kile, NWAECA Treasurer, reported that as of September 2019 we have \$716.24 as our current balance.

**Speaker:** Misty Newcomb

**Host:** Prism Education Center, Fayetteville

Misty presented some real-life stories of how to work rituals and routines into your school community, that then have a knock-on effect of building resiliency as a tool to combat trauma. She reflected on how in her own family she grew up eating around the dinner table with everybody together. She tried this in her classroom, but with 20 three-year-olds she felt stressed, rushed and had that feeling of 'just trying to get it done'. She realized that she needed to be engaged with the students and put their needs first, instead of just focusing on the routine of passing out dishes/food and getting meal time over with. When

you get caught up in running a classroom the 'right' way, you miss out on the tiny details. She said that the impact of slowing down and engaging in deeper conversation means less stress for you, less stress for the children and the ability to let go of all the control makes for a happier classroom all round.

Other routines Misty shared:

- Measuring children's heights on a wall on the first day of each school year. Parents will take photos and it becomes part of their own traditions.
- One of her teachers started to braid children's hair when they arrived at school and became so good at it, it is now a ritual that the children go through to have some one-on-one time right at the start of the day.
- Community meal – each class contributes to a meal in some way and then everyone meets as a community to eat and spend time with each other.
- End of the day discussions – talk about the things that contributed to the 'best part/hard part' of your day. Some children take this tradition out of class on their way home with their caregivers – who also share their 'best part/hard part'.
- Teachers meet after school to talk about 'best part/hard part' of their day also. They encourage each other, offer advice, empathy and share ideas. They also implement a strict 'no gossip' rule to create a safe working environment. Staff talk up – not out: directly to management or the person involved, rather than other staff. Community from the teachers builds community in the classroom. This leads to community being built with families that leads to resiliency throughout.
- Tribal name ceremony – at the end of the year, teachers choose a tribal name for their students based on their classroom theme and the individual talents or contributions made by each student.

Misty made the point that a lot of the routines and rituals don't cost a lot of (if any) money. She said that the small routines eventually build up to big feelings of safety, community and family. She shared a story about when tragic events happen, talking about them in a suitable manner with the children – like you would at home as a family – gives them the information they need to process it accordingly. Misty shared an example of how Prism received multiple phone calls from people wanting to help in this specific example. So much so, that four months' worth of meals were donated to the person in crisis – some from people who had never even met the person directly; it all stemmed from that feeling of community and family that had grown from routines and traditions.

### **Meeting was adjourned by Jennifer Bowman**

**Next Meeting:** October 1, 2019 6.30pm-8.00pm Course ID: 17607

**Host:** D.O.C.K & Character Kids, 807 SE 14<sup>th</sup> St, Bentonville, AR, 72712

**Topic:** Meet the Division

**Presenter:** The Division

Minutes shared by Emma Tempest