

Title of Training: The Social Emotional Aspects of Navigating EC Classrooms during Covid19

Board Present: Jennifer Bowman – President, Rebecca Dunahoo – President Elect, Michelle Weise – VP of Communications, Emma Tempest – Secretary, Nicole Bedard – Benton County Member-at-Large, Anna Cannon – Washington County Member-at-Large, Terri Teters - Ex-Officio, Debbie Mays – Advisor, Susan Edwards – Advisor

Participants in attendance: 23

The meeting was called to order at 6.30pm by Jennifer Bowman. Jennifer welcomed the participants to the NWAECA meeting. She thanked Leslie Corbell for hosting the meeting.

Business:

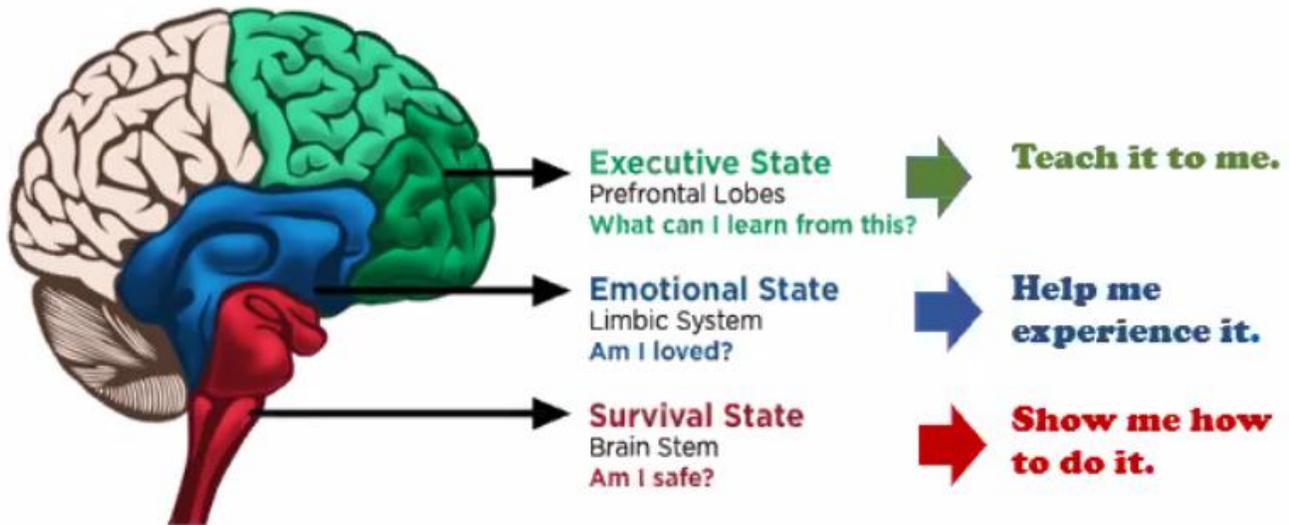
1. Jennifer shared that the Arkansas Early Childhood Association have their next virtual conference event this **Saturday, 14th November 10am-12:30pm** with a panel of experts discussing *Provider and Child TLC: Taking Your Questions about Social-Emotional Behavior and Provider Self-Care during COVID-19*. Register on the website here: www.arkansasearlychildhood.org/conference **FREE for AECA members!** Join today and access all the virtual events for 2020-2021!
2. Jennifer shared a **free** crisis counseling resource, [Promoting Positive Emotions \(PPE\)](#) that is available to anyone who needs support with building coping skills for the recovery process, managing Covid related stress and identify and meet children's needs.

Speaker: Leslie Corbell

Leslie started by asking everyone to share how many years they had been working with children. This group had over 150yrs of experience!!! Wow! She kicked off her session with a Brain Smart Start – a process from Conscious Discipline that consists of four activities designed to get children and adults in the optimal brain state for learning and problem-solving. These components include an activity to Unite, an activity to Disengage Stress, an activity to Connect and an activity to Commit. You can find out more on the [Conscious Discipline website](#).

Leslie encouraged us to think about the parents of the families we serve – where are they in their brain right now? Once we figure out where parents are, we can custom our responses, our feedback, and our information to best serve them.

Thinking about Parents



Create Calm

Structure, rather than control, brings order to chaos.

Pictures take expectations from the abstract to the concrete. When you add visual aids to your centers/schedule/routines it brings structure to the day, so children know what has happened and what is going to happen next. Also, share these pictures with the parents so they understand what happens each day and can talk with their child about it. This helps them feel more connected to your program and understand the expectations you may have about particular Covid procedures (or even non-Covid procedures e.g. drop off/pick up). This helps support the children with their transitions.

Parents

				
1 wash hands	2 well wishes & goodbye	3 play with toys		4 music with Ms Ruth
				
5 wash hands snack	6 bathroom wash hands	7 read books	8 circle time	9 play outside

Add Relationship

5 minutes of playing with children reduces challenging behavior by 50%!

When we are more present with the children AND the parents, it relaxes them and makes them feel safe and secure. Even a simple exchange of eye contact with parents as they drop off their child can produce those bonding moments. When thinking about teachers who don't have contact with the parents of families anymore due to Covid restrictions, Leslie and the participants discussed different ways to build relationship – perhaps creating a ritual at the front desk to provide connection, or having an extra person to cover the class as a teacher sees the parent, or even communicating via an online platform. Leslie suggested when brainstorming to ask, “What is my goal?” and use that as a focus for your creative ideas to solve problems. Leslie shared a ritual for parents that helped create a school family feeling – each child had a placeholder that they would put into a heart-shaped box when they arrived at school. The teacher had added the words that they would use in the classroom for the parent to say, so they were using a shared language to explain that the children would be safe while in class and that a family member would be back to pick them up at the end of the day. Being present with a parent in that moment – no matter which member of staff it is – creates relationships.



Look for teachable moments

Discipline means to teach

So much of our learning happens in the moment. We want children (and parents!) to have authentic moments with us so that we can all communicate better. All behavior sends a message and points us to a skill that needs to be taught. Leslie shared a social story about a child wanting to play with others – teaching the child that there are different ways to ask for a turn or enter play with others (e.g. tap and say name, look in the eyes, ask ‘May I play?’). The parents practiced with the child at home using this story and the child ended up being a master at social-emotional skills! Being able to share these tools

in your classroom with a homemade book AND with parents creates that teachable moment that is shared with everyone.

Me First

My state dictates the child's state.

When we are calm, we can download calm to others. When we are organized and intentional with our actions and decisions, we are more likely to be working from our executive state and then more likely to be successful. Leslie shared some things that help her show up each day ready to go. Do any of these resonate with you? Our bodies and minds must show up ready before we can expect children to.



We want to share this composure with parents. We want to give them positive intent and grace. Teach the parents what you are teaching children – we are all in this together! What you give to them, you will get back. When you give out a good feeling to others, dopamine and oxytocin is made in your own brain too leaving you with a good feeling also. We also must be aware of our negativity bias that shifts our focus onto the not so good side of life. Creating a gratitude practice will help us to balance this out by finding three positives for every negative. Sharing this with parents can help them to see the brighter side – simply asking, “What are you grateful for right now?” can spark a conversation. Letting the parents know how thankful you are for them bringing their children to your program is a small way to show your gratitude. You can also do this in the classroom by noticing acts of kindness or moments in the day you are grateful for and sharing these with your children.

Leslie finished her presentation by asking, "What holds you back?" and then invited participants to create a plan for action. This could be a Classroom Plan or a Me First Plan. Here are some examples of what that might look like:

Classroom Plan

- Create calm for my class through Picture Schedule or Picture Routines
- Add relationship
- Look for teachable moments

Me First Plan

- Breathe when triggered and throughout the day
- Add 30 minutes of movement to my day
- Get one extra hour of sleep
- Healthy diet
- Intentional thankfulness
- Quiet time

Leslie suggests these four steps to help you create your plan:

Step 1: What is my commitment?

Step 2: How am I going to do it?

Step 3: What supplies do I need to do it?

Step 4: When am I going to do it?

We invite you to share your plans over in our [Facebook group](#)! We would love to hear what your ideas are and maybe you can borrow some from other people!

Leslie also shared that if anyone would like to find out more about Conscious Discipline or other social-emotional supports that A State offers please email Melissa Sutton mtaylor@astate.edu or visit behaviorhelponline.org.

Meeting was adjourned by Jennifer Bowman

Next Meeting: Tuesday 8th December 6.30-7.30pm

bit.ly/NWAECADec

Topic: Social-Emotional Responses due to Covid19 – Responsive Circle

Minutes shared by Emma Tempest