



WISCONSIN'S 4K CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

November 2023

Wisconsin's 4K Connections is a quarterly newsletter from Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP). The goal of this publication is to bring relevant information and topics around 4K and 4K community approach to the community.

In each issue of Wisconsin's 4K Connections, you can expect to find informative articles, resources, and updates related to early childhood education.

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- DPI – Expanding Social and Emotional Support for Preschoolers with IEPs
- DCF – Fall Updates
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- WMELS Connection – Social Emotional Development & Play
- Professional Development Opportunities



WECCP MISSION

All children will be healthy, nurtured, safe, and successful.

WECCP VISION

Wisconsin communities, agencies, associations, and state government will work together as a system of high-quality, comprehensive early childhood services for all children and families.



STATE AGENCY PARTNER UPDATES/INFORMATION:



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Social and Emotional Development and Play Important Connections for Future Learning

As we continue to experience the impacts from a worldwide pandemic, it is natural to focus on the best ways to support future generations. Many reports and articles discuss how the pandemic has negatively affected academic “scores” as well as our physical and mental health. These may make us wonder, what do we do now? What do we focus on? Academics? Physical Health? Mental Health?

From the DPI perspective, the response to the questions above is: *We focus on everything from a holistic perspective. We approach it using practices that have been researched and proven to be effective for young children’s development, and we start by prioritizing the development of a strong social and emotional foundation for young children. With this in place, children will attain a sense of agency, a sense of belonging, which propels their curiosity and love of learning. These are crucial elements that prepare all children for the rigors of future academics and promote meaningful contributions to our world.*



<https://preschoolutahdanceartists.com/blog/6-reasons-child-needs-dramatic-play/>

The importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) for young children has been a central focus for the DPI for over the past decade. This is evidenced within the [Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards](#) and the [WI DPI Social and Emotional Learning Competencies](#). Each share the continuum of social and emotional development and highlight that “SEL skills are best learned when all adults are teaching, providing opportunities to practice, learning and modeling, and reinforcing these skills throughout the day.” (<https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/social-emotional-learning/competencies>).

Research supports the use of play as an effective approach to SEL (and academics, and physical learning...but we’ll stay focused on SEL). Highlights include the following:

- Play within the classroom promotes the development of social, emotional, cognitive, and physical growth (Pyle et.al, 2020b: Retrieved from [Portrayals of Play-Based Learning](#) 10/27/23).
- ...when used correctly play-based learning can allow children to learn both social and academic skills needed to succeed in school (Kroll, 2017; Lillard et al., 2013; Nilsson, Ferholt, & Lecusay, 2018 - Retrieved from: [How can a play-based curriculum foster social and emotional self-regulation skills in early childhood classrooms?](#) 10/27/23).
- Play is important in a child’s development to create experiences to work together, problem solve, resolve conflicts, and build confidence (Taylor & Boyer, 2019- Retrieved from [Can Play-Based Learning Provide Adequate Learning Experiences for Young Children?](#) 10/27/23).

In building upon the research, there are also key characteristics that foster the effective implementation of play as an approach to learning. A few essential questions need to be asked.

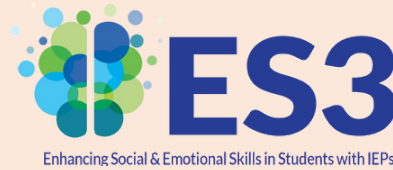
- What types of play should be used?
- What is the role of the adult?
- What does intentional planning look like?
- How do I know if the environment I create is effective?

Play has been proven to be a successful approach to SEL, yet its success is highly dependent on the skills and knowledge of adults who create and support young children’s learning. The following provide additional information about the key characteristics of implementation.

- [“Play is a play, is a play, is a play... or is it? Challenges in designing, implementing and evaluating play-based interventions”](#)
- [Play: Understanding the Value of Play Birth-3rd Grade: Supporting a Strong Foundation for the NY Learning Standards](#)
- [Kindergarten: Where Play and Learning Can Meet \(Documentary Viewing Guide\)](#)
 - [Kindergarten: Where Play and Learning Can Meet \(Video\)](#)



STATE AGENCY PARTNER UPDATES/INFORMATION:



Expanding Social and Emotional Support for Preschoolers with IEPs

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Early Learning Discretionary grant projects are happy to introduce two Wisconsin Statewide Coaches for Early Childhood Social and Emotional Learning! **Krista Johnson** has been working in education for 28 years with many experiences in the areas of early childhood, special education, and social-emotional learning. **Kurstin Kolodziej** has been working in education for 18 years with many experiences in the areas of early childhood, special education, social-emotional learning, and school mental health. Welcome to Krista and Kurstin!

Krista and Kurstin's primary responsibilities are in support of the **Enhancing Social and Emotional Skills in Preschool Students (ES3-P)** Grant. The ES3-P has been awarded to 8 districts across the state (Antigo, Appleton, Black River Falls, Brown Deer, Green Bay, Madison, Turtle Lake, and Wausau) who are working alongside one of the statewide coaches to strengthen collaboration with community partners, implement practices proven to support preschool students whose behaviors challenge adults, reduce or eliminate exclusionary practices and increase opportunities for preschoolers with IEPs to participate with their non-disabled peers.

Additionally, **Jess Nichols**, has transitioned into the role of Statewide Coordinator for Early Childhood - Special Education Social and Emotional Learning. Jess is not only leading the work of the ES3-P grant, she is also providing support to anyone across Wisconsin in two important ways.

Jess is leading no-cost, virtual professional learning opportunities throughout the school year. If you support preschool students with behaviors that interfere with their learning or the learning of others; if you find it challenging to teach social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies when the SEL expectations aren't a match for how your students are showing up; or if you find some of the behaviors exhibited by the kids you work with to be challenging, consider joining Jess for one or more sessions of her *Supporting Neurodiverse Students - Preschool learning* events! You can learn more about the sessions and find a link to register for these **free** learning opportunities [here](#). Jess is also offering a 7-part cohort that will take a deep-dive into supporting the neurodiverse needs of preschoolers. Information regarding registration for the cohort will be distributed widely later this fall; stay tuned!

Additionally, Jess is able to provide technical assistance to folks looking to problem solve around supporting the social and emotional development of preschoolers. Request a time to connect with Jess using this [TA Request Link](#)!

If you have any questions contact Jess Nichols at nicholsj@cesa5.org



STATE AGENCY PARTNER UPDATES/INFORMATION:

DCF Updates What's New? Fall 2023



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families

Child Care Counts

Gov. Evers announced that he is directing \$170 million in emergency funding to DCF to continue the Child Care Counts Stabilization Payment Program at current levels through June 2025. For more information as it becomes available, visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/childcare/payments>.



Healthy Minds, Healthy Children

Healthy Minds, Healthy Children is Wisconsin's **NEW** infant and early childhood mental health consultation program. Through trusting and reliable relationship, consultants build the capacity of adults to better support children's healthy development. Learn more at <https://www.healthymindswi.org/>

Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Policy Revision

Starting with October WI Shares benefits, parent subsidies changed from an hourly amount to a part-time or full-time amount. Parents are now also eligible to request limited funds to pay registration fees that a provider charges them. For more information on WI Shares, see <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/wishares/ptft>

Reminder: DCF Child Care Listserv

For the latest updates on DCF's programs delivered directly to your inbox, please join our child care listserv at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/email-signup>



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families



The YoungStar vendor transition is complete. YoungStar Connect now provides all YoungStar services. Find out more at www.youngstarconnect.com



MyYoungStarConnect is a free searchable resource database available to all early care and education professionals in the state of Wisconsin with information on topics such as child guidance, credit-based classes, and getting the most out of your YoungStar experience. Available in English and Spanish at youngstarconnect.my.site.com

Updates to the YoungStar Evaluation Criteria

The DCF Bureau of YoungStar will begin the update and revision process in the coming year for the YoungStar Evaluation Criteria. More information will be available as decisions are made regarding vision, scope, and timeline of the project.



STATE AGENCY PARTNER UPDATES/INFORMATION:



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES



Wisconsin Wayfinder
Children's Resource Network

Connecting Wisconsin families with special health care needs to essential support and resources

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) launched a new service that will transform the support structure for families of children with delays, disabilities, special health care needs, or mental health conditions. Wisconsin Wayfinder: Children's Resource Network includes a user-friendly website and toll-free helpline that lets families easily connect with real people – dedicated children's resource guides – who will help navigate through the essential services and supports that will enable their children to thrive.

Learn more about tracking
your child's development.

Learn how to connect with trained
experts.

Get guidance on programs
and support.

Learn more about help for behavioral and
mental health conditions.

Learn about the special education
options available to you.

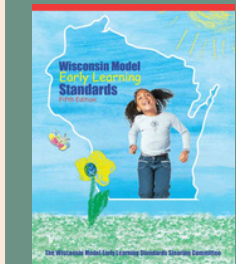
Learn more about health care specialties
and therapies for children.

Learn more about options for
medical insurance.

"This service is a critical step toward improving the way families with special health care needs access and connect with the vital resources they need, especially during crucial moments like after an initial diagnosis," said DHS Deputy Secretary Deb Standridge. "Our children's resource guides are people committed to personally assisting families on this journey. Wisconsin Wayfinder embodies our commitment to inclusivity, support, and accessibility for our state's children and their families."

A statewide, user-friendly website, dhs.wi.gov/wiscway, and toll-free number, 877-WiscWay (877-947-2929), provide families with convenient, direct access to compassionate and knowledgeable children's resource guides.





WMELS CONNECTION

NURTURING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PLAY

In the world of early childhood education, the power of play cannot be underestimated. Play serves as a crucial vehicle for children to explore, learn, and grow in various domains, including social and emotional development.

The Social and Emotional Development Domain in the [Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards](#) encompasses a broad spectrum of skills and abilities that are vital for a child's holistic development. It involves understanding and managing emotions, forming positive relationships, and thriving in group settings. These skills are not only crucial for immediate well-being but also set the foundation for future academic and life success. In addition to the sample child behaviors and adult strategies in the WMELS, the information below highlights how "play" can be used to support SEL development.

Performance Standard	Teacher Strategies	Play Strategies	Reflection Questions
Emotional Development: A.EL. 1 Expresses a wide range of emotions	Encourage children to express their emotions freely. Create a safe and accepting environment.	Use emotion cards or charts to help children identify and express their emotions. Ask them to identify how they feel at different moments.	What strategies do I use to create a safe and welcoming environment where children feel comfortable discussing their feelings and emotions?
Emotional Development: A.EL. 2 Understands and responds to others' emotions	Actively observe, accept, and validate the emotions of yourself and others.	Read stories that depict characters experiencing different emotions. Discuss these emotions with the children and ask how they would feel in similar situations.	What are there specific play activities or games that I incorporate into the classroom that require children to pay attention to the emotions of others and adjust their actions accordingly?
Self-Concept: B.EL. 1 Develops positive self-esteem	Praise effort and accomplishments and encourage children to take on challenges during play. Offer positive feedback and affirmations.	Encourage children to draw or paint self-portraits and discuss their strengths and things they like about themselves, boosting their self-esteem.	How do I provide constructive feedback and encouragement during play activities to help children build confidence and self-esteem?
Self-Concept: B.EL. 2 Demonstrates self-awareness	Model self-reflection and self-awareness. Encourage children to talk about their own experiences and thoughts.	Introduce activities that promote self-reflection, like drawing, journaling, singing, or dancing.	What are opportunities for children to engage in self-reflective activities or discussions during play, such as journaling or group reflections?





WMELS CONNECTION CONTINUED...

Performance Standard	Teacher Strategies	Play Strategies	Reflection Questions
Social Competence: C.EL. 1 Demonstrates attachment, trust, and autonomy	Create a predictable and consistent routine and encourage children to make choices within set boundaries.	Provide cooperative games and activities that promote trust and collaboration where children work together.	How do I provide opportunities for children to make choices and take age-appropriate risks during play, allowing them to develop trust in themselves and others?
Social Competence: C.EL. 2 Engages in social interaction and plays with others	Actively participate in social interactions and play with children, modeling positive social behaviors and communication skills.	Set up centers that facilitate imaginative play, allowing children to interact, create scenarios, and play together.	How can I facilitate positive social interactions during play to enhance social competence?
Social Competence: C.EL. 3 Demonstrates understanding of rules and social expectations	Consistently enforce and model the rules and social expectations of play activities.	Allow children to actively participate in creating rules for their play scenarios, encouraging ownership of social expectations.	How can I help children grasp social rules while keeping play enjoyable and educational?
Social Competence: C.EL. 4 Engages in social problem-solving behavior and learns to resolve conflict	When conflicts arise, guide children through the resolution process. Encourage them to talk about their feelings, listen to others, and brainstorm solutions.	Create scenarios for role-playing where children practice resolving conflicts with peers, using problem-solving techniques.	How can I create an environment where children can practice conflict resolution skills in a safe and supportive way during play?

By fostering emotional development, self-awareness, and social competence through play, we set our children on a path to success in both their early years and beyond!

Resources

- [Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards](#)
- [Social and Emotional Learning : Wisconsin DPI](#)
- [A Practice Guide for Teaching Executive Skills & Practical Strategies : National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations](#)
- [Preschool: Social & Emotional Development : Virtual Lab School](#)
- [Sample-Teaching-Activities : CASEL](#)
- [Promoting Young Children's Social and Emotional Health : NAEYC](#)
- [THE KINDNESS CURRICULUM : PBS](#)
- [Top Resources for Implementing Social Emotional Learning : Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools](#)



The Intersection of Joy and Play in Developmentally Appropriate Practices

DAP Definition

Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) are, “methods that promote each child’s optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning.”

[-NAEYC Position Statement](#)

A strengths-based, play-based approach to learning creates a deep rooted sense of belonging and nurtures students identities and possibilities.

Play-based approaches that use scaffolding to expand children’s current strengths are opportunities for children to gain confidence and explore their world. Through the delight of play, they feel connection and belonging with their environment, play partners, and play facilitators. Play nurtures a sense of community and opens a world of possibilities for the future.

Joyous Education

In a recent [4K Leadership Forum](#), guest speaker Juliana Urtubey shared her message of a [Joyous and Just Education](#). She described joy as a deep rooted belonging. Joy is nurturing our identities and possibilities.

Learn More

- [Play in Early Childhood: The Role of Play in Any Setting](#) video by Center on the Developing Child
- [Play is for Everyone, Everywhere](#) by the Lego Foundation
- Learn more about the science of play with the [National Institute of Play](#)



WISCONSIN'S 4K/4KCA VIRTUAL CONNECTION

2023-2034



Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners

Wisconsin 4K Connection Series is an online networking forum for information sharing and collaboration of quality practices relating to 4K and 4K Community Approaches. Sessions will include an overview of the featured topic and sharing of resources. Sessions will be interactive, so please come prepared to share your experience, knowledge, and feedback on the featured topics.

Audience: 4K Teachers, 4K Directors, Principals, Head Start, Child Care, Private Schools, and 4K Community Approach Partners

All meetings ARE 3:30 - 4:30 pm

Registration is Not Required

Join Online:

<https://cesa5.zoom.us/j/630088301>

Meeting ID: 630 088 301

Phone: 1 646 558 8656 US

OCT. 18TH

Social-Emotional Learning
Through Play

DECEMBER 13TH

Unpacking Wisconsin Act 20:
Supporting Early Literacy in 4k

MAY 1ST

Documentation:
Reflections on Play

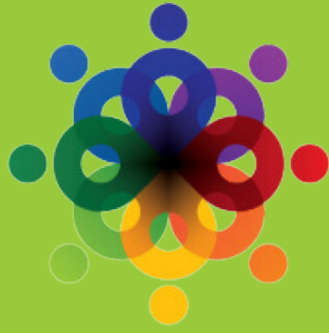
FEBRUARY 7TH

Play to Learn:
Math and Critical Thinking

Questions? Please contact Tiffany Swain ~
swaint@cesa5.org



SAVE THE DATE



Promoting Early Childhood

Play is Life Long Learning

5

MARCH

Nature and Special Education
Pre-Conference

6&7

MARCH

Conference

Registration will open in Early December!

Radisson Hotel and Conference Center
625 Rolling Meadows Dr.
Fond du Lac, WI 54937

PEC is an early childhood collaborative event sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in partnership with the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP).

<https://dpi.wi.gov/early-childhood/pec-conference>

~ SAVE THE DATE ~

WISCONSIN'S 4K LEADERSHIP FORUM AND NETWORKING EVENT

APRIL 23, 2024

Join us for this FREE virtual event to collaborate
and network around 4-year-old kindergarten in
Wisconsin!

If you have any questions about the networking event, contact
Tiffany Swain - swaint@cesa5.org

