

Defining High Quality Preschool

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



Ellen Wolock, Ed.D.
Administrator

The context for high quality: snapshot of NJ

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- 45,000 3- and 4-year-old children
- 680 provider and school sites
- 60% in provider settings, including Head Start and 40% in school settings

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What is high quality?

Here's a low (or no) quality book area



Here's a high quality book area

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3/6/12

The preschool program in 2001-2002

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- Few teachers with early childhood training
- Piecemeal curricula
- Substandard facilities
- Low classroom quality (3.86 out of 7 on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised)

NJ's five essential ingredients of a high quality preschool program

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Ingredient 1: Program structure that would increase likelihood of success

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- Qualified staff- Preschool certified teacher and an assistant for each class
- Small class size- 15 children max
- Adequate facilities equipped for preschoolers
- District/provider consistency- district/provider contracts
- Intensive- Full-day (6 hour educational day), 180-day program

Ingredient 2: Addressed the particularized needs of the children

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- Dual language programs for English learners, or at a minimum support for home language
- Inclusion of children with disabilities
- Training and staffing to help preschool children with potential challenging behavior and potential learning difficulties
- Multiple ways for families to be involved

Ingredient 3:

Used comprehensive, evidence-based curricula and assessment

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- Used developmentally appropriate, comprehensive curricula: High Scope, Creative Curriculum or Tools of the Mind
- Used performance based assessments: Child Observation Record, GOLD or Work Sampling System to collect information about children's progress and inform instruction;
- Stayed true to our choices, and pushed programs to implement with fidelity
- Avoided quick fixes and bandaids
- Gave ourselves time to get it right

Ingredient 4: Used professional development wisely

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- Provided professional development to principals (don't forget about provider directors)
- Prepared teacher aides
- Provided embedded support of curriculum and assessment PD through coaches or other staff
- Encouraged the use of regular classroom walkthroughs for administrators
- Engaged use of PD providers that were experts

Ingredient 5: Committed to the continuous evaluation and improvement cycle

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Used preschool evaluation tools to drive improvement

Child: Screening, Ongoing performance assessment

Classroom: Structured classroom observation instruments*

www.state.nj.us/education/ece/psguide/observation.pdf,

curriculum fidelity instruments, regular walkthroughs

www.state.nj.us/education/ece/checkups/ps.htm

School/District: Aggregated the numbers to refocus professional development, districts self-assessed whether each ingredient is in place

State : Watched data, external child and classroom evaluations, collected and analyzed district-reported info

Lesson learned: Choose classroom quality evaluation tools carefully

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1. Start with the basics (e.g. Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised)
2. Next tackle the fidelity instrument for the comprehensive curriculum (e.g. High Scope's Preschool Quality Assessment or Creative Curriculum's Fidelity Checklist)
3. For classrooms that are in the "good" range or better, use instruments that zero in on a specific areas like teacher-child interaction, literacy, supports for English Learners, and inclusion of children with disabilities (e.g. Classroom Assessment Scoring System, Supports for Early Literacy Assessment, Inclusive Classroom Profile)

An Example of Growth

NJ's Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Scores

SUBSCALE	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2011
space & furn.	3.76	4.00	4.57	4.72	4.90	5.03	5.03	5.16
personal care	3.69	4.20	4.47	4.16	4.30	4.29	4.34	4.49
language	4.27	4.57	4.97	5.03	5.08	5.46	5.56	5.84
activities	3.37	3.64	4.12	4.34	4.62	4.85	4.86	5.00
interactions	4.92	5.44	5.98	5.93	6.16	6.44	6.33	5.98
program structure	4.04	4.67	4.91	5.02	5.41	5.41	5.45	5.41
parents & staff	4.37	4.63	5.17	5.19	5.38	5.59	5.77	5.75
ECERS Overall	3.96	4.31	4.77	4.81	5.03	5.20	5.23	5.30

With all the ingredients combined you see...

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Warm and responsive teachers that enhance children's social skills, including children with disabilities



Classroom centers designed for preschoolers that promote each learning domain



Teachers scaffolding learning; introducing children to new concepts and vocabulary throughout the day

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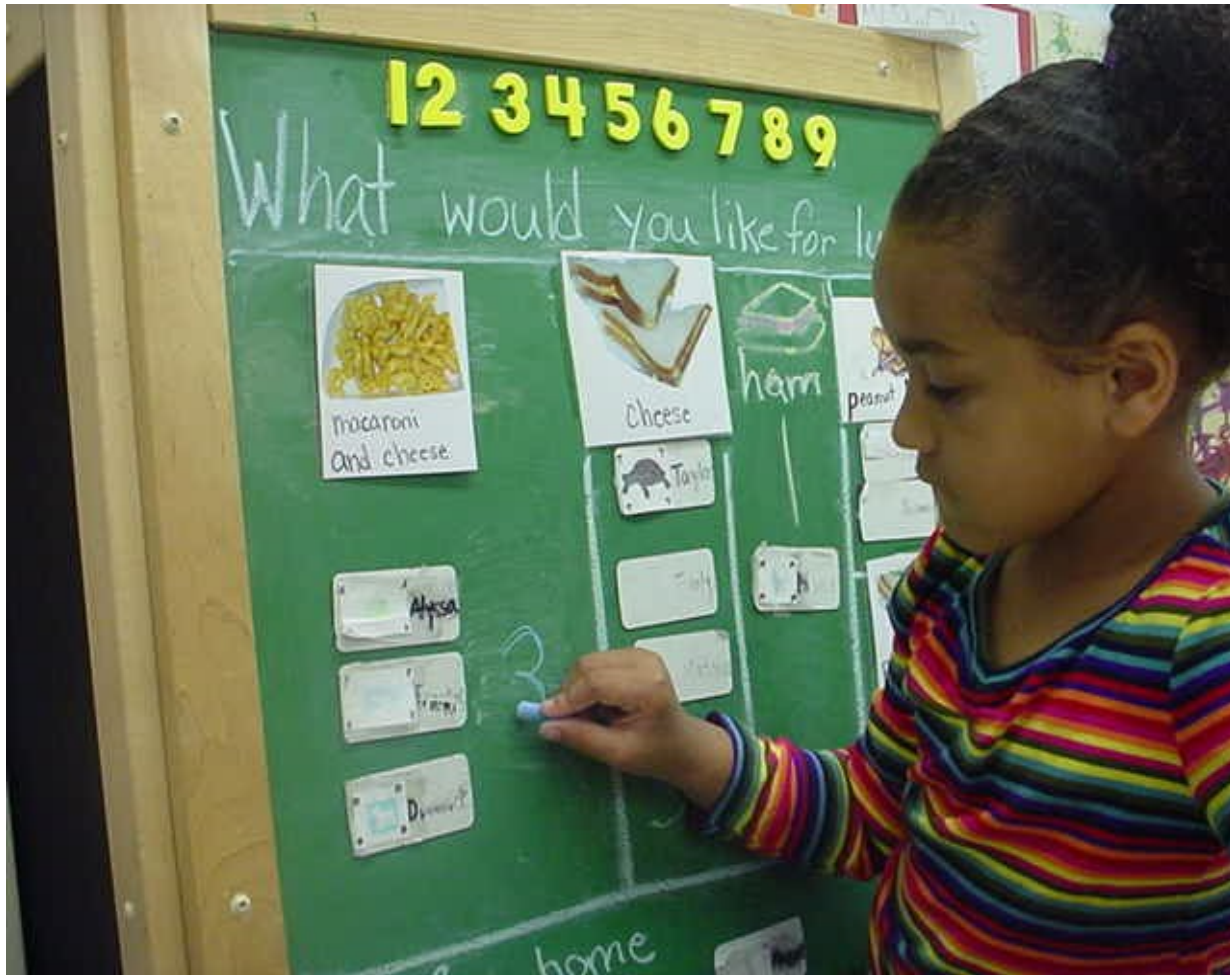
Supports for Home Language

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Classroom routines that promote emerging skills



Children developing independence and self regulation



Organized activities to promote listening and speaking skills



Children experimenting with new concepts



Classroom schedules that maximize learning and minimize transitions

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Children's writing

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Involved Families



The benefits for NJ's children*

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- Achievement gap approximately cut in half for preschool attendees with two years of preschool having twice the effect of one
- Effects sustained through 2nd grade
- Differences between attendees and non attendees still significant at end of 2nd grade
- Reduced grade repetition at grade 2: 10% (no preschool) 7.5% (1 yr) 5% (2 yrs)

*Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Evaluation Study, Preliminary Results through 2nd Grade, June 2009, National Institute of Early Education Research

Where you'll find NJ's 5 ingredients

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NJ Preschool Teaching & Learning Standards

www.state.nj.us/education/ece/guide/

NJ Preschool Program Guidelines

www.state.nj.us/education/ece/guide/impguidelines.pdf

Elements of High Quality Preschool Programs

www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap13a.pdf

Self Assessment and Validation System

www.state.nj.us/education/ece/savs/