

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Family Development

A CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN EARLY LEARNING • FOUNDED IN 1985

We Are All In This Together



SPRING 2019

Our Mission

Highest Quality Early Childhood Development through Honoring Relationships Rooted in Equity and Social Justice

At the heart of the Family Development Program's work is an image of a child who is powerful, curious and infinitely competent as an active, dynamic learner. We do everything in our power to keep this remarkable spark of learning alive.

Since our earliest beginnings, the Family Development Program has promoted a philosophy of child-centered learning, where teachers and parents are collaborators in supporting children's natural joy, passion for creative discovery, and a wonder of learning.

We believe that quality education for every child defines one of our greatest challenges as a society and as a citizenry. We believe that equity is every child's inalienable right. Our approach to our work is rooted in a deep, enduring respect for the cultural and family heritage that our youngest children know and love dearly.

We believe that our children need to be surrounded by *circles of support* that actively engage their families as full partners with early learning programs and schools. We need strong and trusted relationships with families to tackle the complex and very tough job of education. It's a huge responsibility to instill a lifelong love of learning - learning that nourishes and builds our citizenship, our communities, and quality of life that is shared by all.

The heartfelt understanding and nurturance of children with their families is what defines the Family Development Program.

*by Lois Vermilya,
Family Development Program Director*

There is an African concept called Ubuntu. It roughly translates:

I am because of who we are together.

The Family Development Program's Spring 2019 *Journal* honors this ideal of Ubuntu, asking us to think about all the ways we are interconnected and interdependent. ***We Are All In This Together*** explores collaboration through the eyes of children, parents, programs and our own continuous learning as professionals and community leaders.

We know it is about relationships. We value that it requires leadership and learning. We wonder how we can see it in action through babies interacting, and family leaders working for families, and as bedrock within our programs.

The Family Development Program (FDP) cultivates a workplace that is deeply rooted in an underlying philosophy that celebrates this power seen in children, families, and educators. As an outreach program of the UNM College of Education, we have honed internal collaboration that seeks to practice what we stand for out in communities. FDP intentionally promotes shared leadership through organizational values that are built upon strengths and skillful conversation for active engagement at every level - from interns and work-study students to statewide trainers and managers. Similarly, our partnership approach with communities builds on assets rather than deficits, honoring relationships at every level: adults with children, educators with parents, co-workers with supervisors, cross-sector partners with each other, and early childhood leaders with community.

Our Spring 2019 *Journal* explores what collaboration and leadership looks like from the point of view of young children, families, educators, programs - even sharing one of our beloved retired staff member's perspective! Here are some questions to pique your interest for what We Are All In This Together has to share:

Nurturing Kindness and Collaboration by Dorothy Kerwin: What does the baby teach us about attentive collaboration and kindness? Can we see young children as collaborative leaders? And, what

do our strengths look like as teachers when we trust children's interdependence with each other?

Toddler Sass by Christian Soto: How can we collaborate with a toddler tantrum? What helps us keep our cool to stay in relationship with our little one's fury? What happens when we stand in a two year old's shoes?

Little Big Leaders by Cinthia M. Ramirez: What does leadership look like in young children? How can reflection on the similarities and differences of two individual children help us to understand that we can help them grow by promoting their strengths? What can we learn about leadership and collaboration from young children?

It Takes a Village... by Janelle Garcia Cole: How are we working together to help our children succeed and live a well-balanced, happy life? What if everyone in a new family's social circle contributed to the well-being of that new child and his or her family? What are simple ideas to help us be a part of the village together?

Collaboration = Colaboración by Ybeth Iglesias: What powerful lessons can we learn from the South Valley's Korimi Coopertiva, a parent-led community collaborative? What does their story have to teach us and our community? Can we imagine parents building a bridge with other parents to address concerns they share for their children all throughout our beloved state of New Mexico? And even more importantly -- how will we make it happen?!

The Experience of Collaboration at Christina Kent Early Childhood Center by Sam Rodriguez: What can we learn from Christina Kent, a 100-year-old early childhood development center? How has this program integrated collaboration at every level to add to its heritage of success? What parts of Christina Kent's story are part of your program's story, representing qualities of practice we ALL can celebrate?

A Culture of Collaboration by Lois Vermilya: What does it mean to embrace our early childhood work through a culture of collaboration? How does intentional leadership that is driven by values we all aspire to achieve help shape our work together? How can we practice shared leadership at home to promote collaboration with others in our communities?

The Family Development Program publishes the *Family Development Journal* for those working with, working for, and raising children in New Mexico.

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Playing in Retirement: A Recent FDP Retiree

Testimonial by Paula Steele: What about play! What does it look like when you immerse yourself in learning about it with others? Even after 15 years with FDP, what makes Play Orientations so intriguing? Can you imagine being a Play Advocate Volunteer?

Contact us: We're in the earliest stage of wondering what a statewide Wemagination strategy could look like - what are your ideas?

Professional Development Provides an Opportunity for Collaborative Reframing

by Paige Abrams: What does our early childhood field's commitment to continuous learning offer us as new ideas to share with each other? How do we sit with what is hard or not obvious in our daily practice? Even when we don't have answers yet, what keeps us curious and learning?

New Mexico has a bold vision for high quality early learning led through an integrated, unified system that assures the full participation of every child and family. FDP's Spring Journal declares: it takes all of us - we all have a role to play! So find out which questions in this year's *Journal* call out to you - and ponder how your story also could be told!

We are because of who we are together! We are all in this together!

Nurturing Kindness and Collaboration

by Dorothy L. Kerwin

In the Infant-Toddler room at A Child's Garden in Albuquerque, an eight-month-old has crawled herself into a corner under a chair. Lead teacher Wendy Wyman turns to Teri and says, "Let's go help Eve." Teri crawls over and together, she and Wendy offer her their hands and Eve is soon back in the center of the action. This simple phrase and simple gesture represents the seeds of kindness, compassion and collaboration in our youngest children.



Teri and Eve

Research shows that we are born with a natural inclination to work together and help others. An interesting experiment by Kiley Hamlin and Karen Wynn, from Yale University, demonstrate how well humans are born with a pro-social preference for helpful individuals over those who create obstacles or hinder others. The researchers created a situation involving three block puppets with googly eyes. One puppet is trying to get up a hill while another puppet helps by giving it a push. Then the puppet tries again and this time a different shaped puppet pushes it back down. After watching this scenario, eight-month-old babies are allowed to choose which puppet shape they would want and almost 100% of the babies choose the helper puppet. Research



in the last 20 years has proven what connected caregivers have sensed throughout the ages: infants and young children are wired to learn in relationship with others.

Just as children develop speech when they hear us talking, they develop their collaboration skills as they watch us collaborate and give language to those actions. When Wendy uses the words "Let's" in the opening scene, she invites Teri to work with her to help her playmate. She knows that Teri is capable of helping. But she also knows that it is important to give Teri guidance and encouragement for her to be successful. When caring adults believe in the value of kindness and cooperation, they find ways to weave opportunities for collaboration into their daily interactions in mindful and intentional ways.

When listening to Amy Richardson talk about her four-year-old students in her Dolores Gonzales Even Start Program classroom, it is difficult not to be swept up in her enthusiasm for their abilities to show compassion. She tells stories of her students



comforting, teaching, and encouraging each other. But as she describes the daily challenges of preschoolers trying to navigate their own emotions and how to take the perspective of others, it also becomes evident that this is not always an easy task. Yet because she believes these are important skills to develop, she realizes that time spent nurturing them is time well-spent. As a guiding principle, Amy embraces the techniques she has learned in the N.M. Pyramid Framework for Social and Emotional Well-Being. Her classroom activities place an emphasis on making sure each child feels known and welcomed. She recognizes how meaningful it is for all of the children to know each other. The day begins when they sing together a Hello Neighbor song that acknowledges each of their names. Amy muses that when they are singing and having fun together, they aren't bugging each other. By taking the time to build a classroom community, the students find it easier to talk to each other when they have a problem. When this happens, Amy takes a backseat role. She guides them through the process while letting the children take the lead and celebrates when they acclaim with wonder, "It worked!"



Amy Richardson and Wendy Wyman are just two of the multitude of caregivers in New Mexico who value the importance of creating a sense of community. May we all learn from them and be inspired to be the caring adults who mindfully encourage children to be kind and work together so that we can nurture the development of this innate tendency in young children. ♥

Toddler Sass

by Christian Soto

No one likes to hear “no”, especially if it’s coming from a toddler. No parent or caregiver enjoys being challenged by a two-year old or witnessing an over-the-top meltdown in public. For generations, people have handled this dilemma differently. Books, experts, and strangers all try to make sense of toddler tantrums. It seems as if everyone has a solution and are ready to share their opinion with you at any opportunity. So, what do we do when our authority is challenged by someone in training pants? How do we handle the inevitable toddler sass?



To an extent, toddler sass is a good thing. A toddler’s brain is no longer the brain of a baby. It has developed substantially (developing millions of neural connections each second!). Toddlers are becoming more independent, confident, and aware. Toddlers recognize the power of words, tones, and facial expression. There is a newfound freedom with being able to control their body; movements such as walking or jumping contribute to toddlers’ sense of self- confidence. They are also mini-scientist, testing limits and observing behavior. But, like any good scientist, they need direction and rules.

During the toddler years, between 12 and 36 months old, children are hungry for experiences that encourage cognitive, emotional, and social development. Toddlers crave information! They may start using objects to play more imaginatively. For example, you might see your toddler use a towel as a cape or an empty box as a car. However, because **social skills** are still developing at this age, toddlers are not yet ready to understand logic, reasoning, and perspectives outside of their own. The toddler’s vocabulary continues to grow with “mine” as the go-to phrase. They do not understand why they cannot have a toy or play in the sandbox all day. They are often offended (beyond belief!) if you interrupt their play time or suggest they share with others. This is why parents and caregivers receive

the brunt of toddler sass and why it is important to work with your toddlers and not against them.

The first thing we need to do is recognize the opportunity for collaboration. These mini-scientists aren't saying "no" to get your goat. They are saying "no" because they do not yet have the tools to regulate their emotions. Therefore, as parents and caregivers, it's our job to help them develop those tools by listening, keeping a cool head, and understanding the root of the sass.

Planning is a great tool for tackling the sass. If your toddler dislikes a certain food, you can offer two or three acceptable options. Offering options allows your child to make a choice and control the situation. Communication is helpful, too. When transitioning from one activity to another, share simple messages with them slowly. You may want to share the changes ahead of time, such as, "We are going to put the toys away in the bins. Then we are going to put the bins away in the closet. Then we are going to have a yummy lunch!" You may still run into some sass, but this will help them understand the cues of change and know what to expect. It is important to recognize that the child is experiencing real feelings and emotions. Just as we like to have our feelings validated, so do toddlers. Understand that children are not able to see how their behavior is affecting you or the world around them, but know that you can help children process emotions and feelings by listening to both their verbal and body language and then responding appropriately. Use clear language that toddlers will understand. For example, explain that they need to wear a jacket because it might rain outside, and without a jacket, they may get wet, cold, and sick. Avoid angry tones and sarcasm, and instead use stories and humor to make children feel safe and at ease.

Next time the sass comes out, take a moment to look at the child with empathy, listen to his needs, and tell him you understand. Use the same empathetic ears you would use for a friend who is going through a rough time. Display the type of behavior that will teach them about emotions. Toddlers are watching us and learning from our triumphs and our mistakes. Sometimes, we just need to put on a good show, if not for them, then for us. Finally, try to avoid anger and don't blame yourself



if you and a child are unable to collaborate; there may be times when you recognize that you need to choose your battles. Children are usually unaware of the stress you are enduring. Rather than resort to anger, take a deep breath, step away for a second if possible, and know that you are doing your best. It is important to reflect on these experiences and ask yourself what triggered the sass. Was it something that you could have prevented? What were the triggers in the situation, if any?

Alexander Pope once wrote "To err is Human; to forgive, Divine." Parents and caregivers will inevitably make mistakes, but it is only when we recognize our errors and forgive ourselves that we can begin the collaborative relationship each child needs to develop and thrive. ♥

Little Big Leaders

by Cinthia M. Ramirez, B. S.



It is important to recognize that we are all leaders who lead in different types of ways; we are essentially an important part of any group because we bring an array of traits that others may not have. We should become aware that children are the same. They each have their own leadership identity and it is important to reflect on the beauty of being a young child and what being a young child can teach us about ourselves and others. When looking at my niece Diane and nephew Derick, who are both five, I see two strong leaders. They share a lot of similar qualities but they also have different characteristics which reflect their personalities.

Diane and Derick share qualities that are found in each other and can also be found in other children. They demonstrate an extensive creativity through play and activities with each other or independently. When playing, they practice flexibility and are open to new creative ideas. But they don't appreciate being rushed. Both children also appreciate and live through fairness. Both demonstrate a concern for the wellness of others. They also typically follow rules given by authority figures. Overall, as with all children, they are fun to be around because they are playful, energetic, goofy, sweet, and expressive.





Diane
*Youngest child with two
teenage brothers*

- Comfortable to be herself in any setting, small or large
- Shows bravery with or without encouragement
- Talkative, risk taker, and encourages others to take risks
- Coaches, motivates, inspires, and encourages herself and others
- Likes to be inclusive
- Advocates against injustices and feels the need to defend others. Uses her presence or seeks an older authority figure to help
- Consoles the person being victimized
- Makes connections and is open and trusting
- Likes to give instruction and maintain order
- Feels frustrated and sense of being overwhelmed when others disobey
- Prefers familiarity and consistency
- Prefers not to multitask due to attention to detail and focus
- Moves slowly with care and thoughtfulness
- Enjoys dedicating herself to a task; then appreciates praise and feedback
- I see the potential for Diane to become a big leader, activist, and advocate



Derick
Only child

- Comfortable with smaller groups than large
- Needs to establish trust with others and his environment to feel comfortable to be himself.
- Brave when encouraged, but can also encourage himself to take risks depending on the situation and who he is around.
- Advocates against injustices and feels the need to defend others.
- Practices good problem-solving skills
- Makes meaningful connections and has a visionary mindset.
- Understands the importance of paying close attention to details
- Persistence sometimes leads to frustration; but also builds resiliency
- If no one else does, will take the lead in setting rules and order in a group, but is also supportive \ when others take the lead
- Stands back during altercations
- Flexible and open to new opportunities and able to adjust to unfamiliar situations
- Likes to do many tasks at once, able to multitask. Can shift quickly but efficiently.
- I see the potential for Derick to become a big leader, activist, and advocate

I have been able to observe that when Diane and Derick work and play together, they make a powerful team. It is wonderful to witness that a trait one of them has, the other might not. This allows them to complement each other and their interactions perfectly. Above I have listed a couple of differences that make them the unique leaders. Although different, these qualities can be useful in present and future leadership settings. Taking the time to reflect on their individual qualities, we can find opportunities for collaboration with each child. By collaborating, we provide a safe and supportive environment for the child to continue strengthening and practicing their collaborative leadership qualities.

The idea of listing Diane's and Derick's collaborative and leadership qualities side-by-side is to invite time for our own self-reflection. It is important that we understand we too have our own set of qualities that make us leaders in our personal, educational and professional lives. We can learn a lot about children and the way they impact the world in loving and open ways. As adults, we can help make a positive impact on our children's development by being loving and open with ourselves and them, too. We are not much different than children, if they are little leaders, you are a big leader. ♥

It Takes a Village...

by Janelle Garcia Cole

I can still picture myself playing with my cousins at our grandmother's house. I can remember seeing my uncles, my aunts, and family friends laughing, eating and chatting about life. I remember piling up in the big blue van and taking trips all together. Growing up in a large family, I was supported, encouraged, and most of all loved. We were fortunate to live in a neighborhood where everyone took care of one another. We had sleep-overs, and we played together while our moms visited over coffee, and we were carpooled to school and practices. We had a sense of community that was heart-warming as well as essential to growing up happy and healthy.

Life Today

Today, many families feel overwhelmed, rushed, and exhausted. We tend to over plan and overextend ourselves in ways that make us wonder how we do it. Some days we are superheroes and some days we are surviving on coffee and chocolate. We are bombarded with information and tips from social media, commercials, and societal pressures.



We often look to others for help, advice, and encouragement. We wonder if we are being the best parents/caregivers we can possibly be. We wonder if we are “enough.” These are natural and expected feelings that many parents and caregivers have.

What does collaboration look like for families?

As a co-parent of three active boys, I realize the meaning of the well-known African proverb: ***It takes a village to raise a child.*** It takes an entire community of different people interacting with children in order for a child to experience and grow in a safe and positive social emotional environment. My parents made parenting look easy: I never realized how demanding and challenging parenting can be. I did not realize it was a twenty-four-hour job for the rest of my life. I love being a mother but I give so much credit to my parents, in-laws, family members, and friends who step in to help at a moment's notice. They give our children opportunities to experience life in such a meaningful and beautiful way. The little things make the most difference. They have stepped in at times I really



needed them. Children who are supported, nurtured, and loved during childhood tend to have a positive sense of self.

As we know, our children's brains are growing rapidly during their first five years. Realizing this, our babies and caregivers need support to ensure meaningful connections are being made. We should all ask ourselves, how are we working together to help our children succeed and live a well-balanced and happy life? If we make healthy families a collective responsibility rather than leaving new parents to navigate these transitions on their own, we can have a tremendous impact on the health of our society.

What if everyone in a new family's social circle contributed to the well-being of that new child and his or her family?

Here are simple ideas to help us be a part of the village...

- Offering to watch the baby or children while family prepares dinner
- Offering to attend doctor appointments with

families to help with baby or children while mom or dad take care of the paperwork

- Carpooling can save time and be very helpful for many families
- Preparing a large dinner and sharing it with others
- Planning play dates for children and families
- Reminding mom, dad, or caregiver that they are doing a great job
- Just being present with listening ears and a comforting heart
- Reading, interacting, and singing with babies or children is helpful to all of us
- Taking walks together in nature to restore ourselves

When we work together to make moments matter with our children, we strengthen families in more ways than one. When we plant seeds of hope, love, and joy in others who are raising families, we strengthen many generations as a whole. Let's be a part of the solution that makes healthy families a collective priority for all of us. ♥

Collaboration=Colaboración=Korimi

by Ybeth Iglesias, MPA

The difference between cooperation and collaboration is the purpose behind the action; cooperation refers to working together while collaboration means working together towards a common goal or purpose.

The members of Korimi are exemplary role models of *colaboración*. They have faith that people believe in the future of the children in Albuquerque's South Valley. Korimi has had a long collaborative relationship with the UNM Family Development Program and with the Partnership for Community Action. Korimi seeks and rejoices in traditional and unusual partnerships for the common good of the South Valley, Albuquerque, and New Mexico.

The Cooperativa Korimi was formed in 2010, after inspired parents completed the *Abriendo Puertas* curriculum and decided they wanted to pull together a collaborative of parents to focus on the resources and needs of the Latino families in the South Valley area. It is comprised one hundred percent of family leaders who offer training to other families. "Korimi" is from the Tarahumara or Raramuri language of Mexico and means "rainbow." Korimi members see themselves as a bridge between the Latino community, resources and other communities.

Korimi's mission is "to help parents to develop their leadership, so the children achieve a high-quality education which will give them the opportunity to become healthy, happy and successful adults."

Korimi has had great success in engaging the Spanish-speaking Latino community in the South Valley and throughout Albuquerque. Their workshops are always full and they consistently receive excellent evaluations. They have been providing between seven and twelve *Abriendo Puertas* classes in Albuquerque Public Schools elementary schools a year. Both principals and families reach out to them when an issue or concern arises in a school and their input is valued. Community partners such as First Choice Health Clinic, Partnership for Community Action, N.M. Department of Health, and local churches seek their guidance in family participation and involvement. They often contract them to recruit families for their classes/workshops, initiatives, and services.

Families seek out Korimi for guidance and advocacy when a community concern such as lack of sidewalks, poor street lighting, teen cluster-suicides, and discriminatory actions and services are identified, and they need support addressing them. Parents have also influenced Korimi's development of trainings beyond those included in *Abriendo Puertas*. In response to parents' requests, Korimi develops powerful workshops that meet the needs of the community.

Korimi members believe a big contributor to their success is their collaborative approach with both families and organizations. Korimi strongly values the families' knowledge of their children, involvement in their lives, and the heritage language and cultural wealth. The caregiver is recognized as





the expert and the child's first teacher. Korimi is very aware of all the challenges Spanish-speaking families encounter and overcome. Latino families find encouragement and inspiration since most of the Korimi families have experienced the same challenges of immigration status, poverty, trauma, racism, and discrimination. Korimi members serve as role models. They all have received their Child Development Certificates from CNM and constantly seek to increase their knowledge. They have navigated the university system and several of their children have graduated college and are going on to advanced degrees, including law school and graduate school. Korimi also actively involves community agencies and organizations by providing trainings for them, partnering with them in family engagement activities, and serving as family liaisons.



Korimi members genuinely believe themselves to be the "Korimi." They are the bridge between the families and community organizations, a bridge that creates meaningful and sustainable partnerships. ♥

Christina Kent Early Childhood Center

by Sam Rodriguez

Christina Kent Early Childhood Center is a thriving 100 year old center. The Center (originally known as the Albuquerque Day Nursery) has a heritage of practicing collaboration at every level. The mission of Christina Kent is to serve the children of economically diverse working families with quality childcare, early education, and nutritional services in a safe and nurturing environment.

Today Christina Kent operates with a 5-star rating from New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System, FOCUS, and has NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) accreditation, marking the highest national level of quality. The Center's dedication to high quality is demonstrated in their developmentally appropriate practice, observation and assessment, and family engagement.

Collaboration with Children and Families

Christina Kent opens its doors to 62 children on a daily basis. The collaborative nature of the Center promotes a space where children feel safe and secure. Out on the playground the children know all of the teachers and the teachers know all of the children. Families like to check in at the front office with Jeany, the program manager and Allison, the executive director, to say hello in the morning and good bye at the close of the day. The experience of safety and security frees children to be strong learners.

The true strength of Christina Kent lies in the collaboration of learners, not in the knowledge of any one given person.



At Christina Kent children are recognized as powerful learners and parents are celebrated as the first and most important teacher. In the 4-year-old Busy Bee classroom a child and his parents brought in tadpoles. Another family from the class contributed an aquarium to accommodate the tadpoles. The children participated in the process of care for the tadpoles by preparing the aquarium and thinking about what the tadpoles would need to develop and grow. This was a big experience for everyone involved, the children and parents were so excited to be co-scientists and co-learners. Children had the opportunity to understand that they make valuable contributions to the learning experience of their peers and that their parents join and build on their curiosity about the world. This is a powerful example of the child being at the center of collaboration and a Center understanding the lead of the child.

Children at Christina Kent experience rich Reggio-inspired environments that invite curiosity and wonder. The Center is engaged in a farm-to-preschool initiative where children get their hands in the soil to plant seeds. Children nurture and care for the planted fruits and vegetables and then get to celebrate the fruits of their labor with the harvesting. Most importantly, the produce is used to create dishes for consumption at meal time. The hope is to grow enough produce for children to be able to take some home and share with their families. Christina Kent partners with local growers to offer children healthy fresh fruit and vegetable options.

Collaboration with Teachers and Administrators

A great deal of thought and energy is devoted to supporting staff with meaningful professional

development opportunities. The Center maximizes the resources afforded for professional development and creatively seeks learning opportunities.

Teachers have the opportunity to participate in Reggio Study Group meetings that are supported by the educational committee. These meetings are a learning opportunity for both the teacher and the facilitator practicing the skills of observation, documentation and reflection.

Teachers are routinely encouraged to enjoy a meal together to engage in reflective dialogue about some of the delights and challenges they experience in the classroom. These opportunities allow teachers to think deeply about their practice with children and how they can be their best selves to support the children they are serving.

The executive director and the program manager have no problem stepping in to lend support in the classroom when a teacher needs to step out. This supportive collaboration allows administrators to have direct experience with the classroom environment and to partner with the teachers.

Community Collaboration

Christina Kent Early Childhood Center resulted from collaboration. In 1919, the Albuquerque League of Women creatively developed the idea for a child care center to meet the growing needs of a community of single parents and households where both parents worked outside of the home. The women collaborated with businessmen, bankers, attorneys and other key members of the community to establish one of the first child care centers in the United States. Christina Kent has been reliant on long-standing relationships with community members and corporations that have served as a financial resource to the program. The community has had rich involvement with the Center from the very beginning supporting its viability.

Christina Kent has deep relationships with its community partners. The Center is currently partnering with Explora Science Center to create opportunities for children and families to participate in activities such as *Growing a Scientist*, a learning activity about how animals camouflage. Halloween was an opportunity for the partnership of children and community and most importantly reciprocal joy.



The students of Christina Kent had the opportunity to trick-or-treat at neighboring businesses: La Mexicana Tortilla Company, First United Methodist Church Albuquerque, PNM, Amy Biehl High School Foundation, New Mexico Bank and Trust and Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce. Christina Kent hosts robust fundraising activities that help meet their children's needs. Crayons & Canapés is a super fun and successful annual event that draws on community support and spirit. The Family Development Program (FDP) has a longstanding partnership with Christina Kent that supports best practice where both Christina Kent and FDP learn together. Because of this partnership, FDP has been able to take lessons learned from Christina Kent's collaborative spirit and share it in support of a statewide collaborative web.

Relationships at the Heart of Collaboration

Our culture of collaboration: We take the time and the effort and value really getting to know each other, respecting each other and supporting each other.

— Jeany Baines, Program Manager

At the close of each day 62 children return home from Christina Kent Early Childhood Center. Deep care and thought has been woven into everything a child experiences from the moment they walk in the door. From the careful consideration of the classroom environment, to the healthy fresh fruits and vegetables that are used daily, to the thoughtfulness and mindfulness that is practiced to support each child's learning; the educational experience offered at Christina Kent is a reality because of the rich collaboration and partnership it has exercised for the last century. Surely, it will continue to flourish for the same reason. ♥

A Culture of Collaboration

by Lois Vermilya

What does it mean to embrace our early childhood work through a culture of collaboration?

Can our programs model practices for achieving goals for the full participation of educators, parents and children in an early learning system that deeply understands cooperation and inclusion?

The Family Development Program (FDP) believes that we have to walk the talk if we are serious about making a shared commitment to full participation as a guiding principle of our state's Early Learning Vision. FDP strives to do this by holding ourselves accountable as a culture of collaboration within our own workplace. We try to ensure that our internal culture mirrors what we believe is possible in our relationships with all other early childhood partners and families. We think disciplined collaboration and shared leadership within FDP is the daily practice that enables us to promote partnership throughout our early learning system.

A set of Guiding Principles has shaped our internal work culture for more than three decades, beginning in 1985 when our work started in the

South Broadway neighborhood of Albuquerque. These Guiding Principles are also foundational to the philosophy and learning activities promoted in FDP's *Early Childhood Collaborative Leadership Tool Kit*. The *Leadership Tool Kit* captures community experience from many successful collaborative efforts in our state, compiling a rich heritage of work done by others on whose shoulders we all stand.

FDP has been contracted by the New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department to strengthen a culture of collaboration at every level of our early learning system. This work includes families and educators at the local community level, cross-sector community efforts, and statewide opportunities to better align all early childhood work. As part of this initiative, we are facilitating Collaborative Leadership Institutes in communities and disseminating the Tool Kit widely with educators and community programs throughout New Mexico.

FDP invites you to join us in this learning opportunity by exploring these Guiding Principles as a trusted foundation for making a commitment to collaborative practice in support of your own work. We encourage you to sit with these key ideas and ask yourself: How do these principles reflect my own



Investment Zone Convening at the Wemagination Resource Center



Statewide Investment Zone Partners

work? How could they add value to my program and to collective efforts with others in my community? Feel free to share the principles with your team and see where the discussion leads you.

An essential challenge for all of us who are dedicated to New Mexico's Early Learning Vision is that we have to commit to continuous learning and reflection about our growth as collaborative leaders. It will take all of us to co-create a Culture of Collaboration that realizes the potential of what "full participation" really can mean. We have to grow our capacities for collaborative leadership at the same time that we are working hard to nurture and improve the quality of life for our children.

It is up to us to be the change for young children and families that we want to create!

Family Development Program's Guiding Principles

OUR CHILDREN:

The Family Development Program intentionally takes a stand for the rights of children. We think that this shared commitment requires all of us to place the well-being of our children and their families at the heart of everything we do. We must embrace urgency by grappling with the fundamental question: How are the children? Our capacity to answer this question directly impacts the quality of life for our children and their families.

EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:

A culturally responsive framework of equity and social justice informs every aspect of our work. We have to consider how poverty and cultural inequities limit access to resources, and ultimately hold children back from reaching their full potential. The Family Development Program considers knowledge as power and we work hard to ensure that families have access to the same information as educators and other professionals. We believe that authentic partnership with families — supporting their leadership and full participation in our work — is essential for high quality early childhood education and lasting community change.

CULTURE OF COLLABORATION:

The Family Development Program promotes participatory practice, where facilitated dialogue for inclusion of many voices is sought and valued both within our organization and through our relationships with others. We believe that it is important to create work-places where leadership is shared through mutual respect and skillful engagement. We also recognize that authentic family and community partnership requires skillful collaboration.

DEEP LISTENING:

An underlying value of active listening and thoughtful reflection informs how we approach our work. The Family Development Program seeks to ensure that all voices are heard. We recognize that it takes both skill and humility to remain open to learning from



Sam Rodriguez, FDP and Sophie Bertrand CDD

others, especially when there is disagreement. Our staff members are continuously engaged in rigorous reflective practice, both inside our program and as we partner with others. Deep listening asks us to make time on a regular basis to ponder how our behaviors or points of view impact others and the goals we share.

TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION:

We endorse open communication and transparency which are especially needed as decisions are made. It takes concerted discipline to think beyond our own needs or organization to consider: Who needs to hear what, and when? Skillful communication in support of collective efforts is a practice that intentionally seeks to share information, foster collaboration and build mutual understanding.

CO-LEARNING:

Collaborative practice requires a commitment to fully participate in a community of learners. Shared leadership nurtures work places and community cultures that value reflection, joint problem-solving, participatory planning and open evaluation of lessons learned. An essential foundation for continuous quality improvement can only be built through mindful collaboration that is well facilitated by participatory leaders.

AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIP:

The Family Development Program is rooted in community-based approaches that are relational and that intentionally seek to build bridges through active engagement. Authentic partnership requires ownership with recognition that power is shared. This principle also expresses willingness to embrace areas of discomfort, including: cultural responsiveness, conflict resolution, power differences and pre-conceived biases. An underlying question is: Who has a seat at the table and who doesn't? - and why? We know this is as important within our organization as it is in the relationships we work hard to build throughout New Mexico.

DISCIPLINED ACTION: Family Development Program staff members makes time for disciplined planning and shared decision-making, where data is openly explored to inform progress and corrections. We think that collaborative leadership does not just mean endless meetings and too much talk - it is driven as an action-oriented process that seeks to achieve shared results. Accountability to be fully present and follow-through is also expected.

PLAYFULNESS and JOY: There is a spirit of playful learning that is as an essential ingredient of both our internal and external work culture. We recognize that collaboration is hard and takes time. We find balance in practices that urge us to not always be so serious. We can take deep breaths to lighten the load and also find genuine comraderie in the sheer good work of accomplishing things together. Reggio Emilia's philosophy of Nothing Without Joy shapes how we try to approach every aspect of what we do.

LEADER AS CHANGE AGENT: The Family Development Program defines leadership as anyone who is willing to step forward to make change. We believe that transformational leaders are people who build upon strengths and assets to get important things done. They look for what is working to make it better rather than bogging down discussions with barriers or complaints. Within our program, we recognize that we share leadership not based on a role or title, but rather as both formal and informal leaders who take action as change agents together.

CONTINUUM OF LEARNING: The Family Development Program is committed to building



Moving Forward Together Retreat, May 2018



*Roberta Marquez and Mary Dudley
Early FDP Leaders*

bridges between health, early learning, family support and developmental services for strong early childhood systems alignment and change. We think that collaborative leadership is needed at every level for effective cross-sector partnership. We are deliberately child and family centered as advocates for cradle to career efforts that understand that lifelong learning and health require circles of collaborative support beginning with pregnancy.

BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO CREATE: We think of our statewide work to share the Family Development Program's Early Childhood Leadership Tool Kit as a call to action. We are committed to building a culture of collaboration where leadership is recognized at every level of our system – children, parents, educators, home visitors, program managers, coaches, mentors, trainers and state leaders. We believe it will take all of us to achieve the promise of full participation as an essential value promoted through FOCUS! ♥

A Recent FDP Retiree's Testimonial

by Paula Steele

I worked, and played, with the Family Development Program (FDP) for 15 years - 15 really wonderful years. In that time I facilitated scores of Play Orientations. After I had a few dozen under my belt, I began to say with wonder, "I've never seen anyone do the same thing although the same materials are often used. Each experience is unique and eye opening."

Now, maybe you are not familiar with Play Orientations. I'll provide a brief description. The original Play Orientation is a two hour guided experience of playing with open-ended materials. Sometimes these materials are called "loose parts." You'll see some photos here.

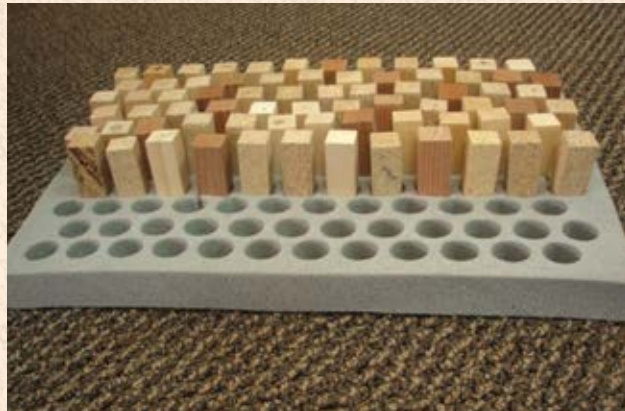
In a Play Orientation, you play. With these materials. Alone and with others. You talk about it. You share



memories of play and you relate this experience to learning - in particular to children's learning.

So, though I have retired from FDP, I am still facilitating Play Orientations as a volunteer. They are simply much too fun and too interesting to give up. And now there are three more of them! In addition to FDP's original version we have: *Play and Storytelling*, *Play and Math*, and *Play and Social-Emotional Development*. Because each of these topics naturally occur as discussions unfold in the foundational Play Orientations, it became clear that each could be magnified into a more fulsome exploration.

I continue to be engaged in play for other reasons as well. I get to co-facilitate with another volunteer. We meet for a short while to review the agenda, to share ideas, and to determine who is going to lead which part. We learn from one another before we embark upon an event. We collaborate on managing the flow and timing. We learn even more as we move through the two hours, playing off one another as well as the participants. Each facilitator and each participant brings their own resources and knowledge to a Play Orientation. Rich



conversations arise and richer connections are made as we work together to weave strands of our own involvement into a more profound understanding of the inner workings of children's minds. We come to appreciate the capabilities that play brings to light - in adults as well as in children.

And did I mention that it's fun? And relaxing? Simply put, sharing stories about memories of play, as well as this immediate immersion into play, creates an environment that is open and one in which laughter is easily accessed. Play and laughter put our minds at ease.

Maybe you would be interested in becoming a Play facilitator. I know that I would love to meet you and to become a co-learner, co-player, co-thinker, co-laborator with you! Retirement from whatever current role in which you are employed is not required. An interest in learning and in play with others is.

For more information, please contact Paige Abrams: paige@unm.edu 505-277-8515 ♥

An Opportunity for Collaborative Reframing

by Paige Abrams

The Family Development Program team recently had the honor of attending the Zero to Three National Conference in Denver, Colorado. Since 1977, Zero to Three has advanced the field of early childhood by providing helpful resources, practical tools and responsive policies for millions of parents, professionals and policymakers. National conferences open up new windows and highlight how we, as a field, have grown. We are exposed to so much new and valuable material in such a short time. It is true early childhood immersion!

As early education professionals, the opportunity to improve quality of practice, enhance working knowledge of the field, and find flexible and inventive approaches to entrenched issues is a blessing. Below are three things that I brought home with me from Denver which changed the framing for me and deepened my practice. I look forward to sharing these new sensibilities with the educators and communities with whom I work.

First, brain science has advanced to a point where our understanding of what is going on in the infant's developing mind has radically shifted based on functional MRI scans. This allows educators and other child-serving professionals a new platform to explore the importance of trauma-informed care. As we know, early trauma impacts a child's ability to learn and develop. Because what we have always known is now officially supported with brain science and empirical data, we can now truly focus on what strengthens resilience in children and adults. It's clear that creating trauma-sensitive childcare centers and schools needs to be a priority, especially in New Mexico, where we remain 50th in child well-being.

Secondly, change in the early childhood community (and in education in general) requires innovation. New ways of positively changing the landscape are being achieved and continue to be developed. As a



collaborative body, we are clear that a fundamental shift is necessary to elevate the overall health of our youngest citizens. A new paradigm of thought has emerged that suggests that both public and private organizations should not restrict themselves to taking an external approach to innovation. Rather, organizations create a greater capacity for healthier algorithms by looking inward rather than outward. A process of reflection and inquiry from within a workplace is a powerful practice.

The third idea that shifted for me addresses sensitive practice. I have been thinking a lot about what it takes to work with deeper understanding in relation to the 23 tribes in New Mexico. It is important that we have respect for what we don't know (which may be quite a bit). While this can be challenging, awareness that there is likely to be protected information, and having respect for it, will help foster productive relationships with tribal members. Each tribe is unique and influenced by its local environment, as is its traditional knowledge.

The Zero to Three Conference helped me understand the unique, systemic issues which challenge our state's early childhood workforce, children, and families. These issues can be incrementally addressed by acting on moments that shift our frame of reference. In this way, we can cause a life-affirming ripple effect. These small moments and actions, over time, will aid **individuals** and **communities** to sustainably **thrive**. ❤️

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I am *Exploring New Territory* with
ZERO TO THREE!



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