

The Director's Link

Published by the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National-Louis University

Summer 2009

A Typical Day Through the Eyes of Children

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Sean's Experience



It is 8:00 a.m. and Sean lies in the cozy corner of the toddler room. He is wearing his winter coat and a knit cap covers his face. His arms are tightly folded around his body. He is a large, burly mass of four-year-old boy. A substitute teacher enters the room. She approaches Sean and lifts up the knit cap. A wary eye

stares back at her as if to say, "Don't mess with me lady." The classroom assistant calls from across the room, "Just leave him alone. He is like this every morning." Sean pulls the cap back over his face. His message seems to be, "I know this room does not belong to me. This is not my place." He lies in the cozy corner of the toddler room completely disengaged for one hour. At 9:00 a.m. Sean's teacher arrives to take her children to their preschool classroom. Sean jumps to life. He quickly removes his coat and hat. Entering his classroom, he eagerly begins to play in the block area.

Too often young children are placed in early morning and late afternoon "holding tanks." Of course, no one refers to them in such harsh terms, but truth be told that is what many children experience in full-day programs. Many full-day programs find it too costly, especially during these tough economic times, to have every classroom open and staffed to accommodate children's staggered arrival and departure times. The result is children from several classrooms are combined together at the beginning and end of each day.

Often when I ask a teacher to describe the daily schedule for children in the classroom, her perspective is limited. She is only able to offer insight into what happens during her work shift. As director, you have the "big picture" perspective of what is going on within and between classrooms. This broader awareness helps

you understand the potential impact of staffing and grouping patterns on children's experiences. Why not take the opportunity to help your teachers also broaden their perspective. You can do this by assisting your teaching teams in collecting information about a typical day through the eyes of the children.

Grouping and Staffing Patterns Impact Quality

The NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria (2005) state that every attempt should be made to maintain continuity of relationships between teaching staff and children and among groups of children. The standards place it in the hands of center leadership to ensure that the program is organized and staffed to minimize the number of group, teaching staff, and classroom transitions experienced by an individual child during the day.

The Program Administration Scale, an assessment tool that measures early childhood leadership and management practices, also recognizes consistency of care as a component of program quality (Talan & Bloom, 2004). To earn credit at the 5 or good level of quality, a program must have a staffing plan that provides classroom coverage so that children are not regrouped at the beginning or end of the day.

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If you are the director of a full-day program, chances are you don't realize how many daily transitions are experienced by some children in your program. A recent study conducted by Le, Setodji, and Schaack (2009) looked at the frequency of movement of preschool children between classrooms and found that children moved on average one hour every other day and experienced an average of eight different teachers over a ten-day period. The frequency of movement was attributed solely to the length of time children spend in the program and the length of the day teachers worked. Similarly, research focusing on infant-toddler environments found that in center-based care, infants and toddlers moved frequently between classrooms to maintain required state teacher-child ratios (Cryer, 2005).

Let's consider what it means for children like Sean who experience transitions from one room to another and a variety of different teachers throughout the day. These children may have greater difficulty separating from their parents, forming a trusting relationship with their teacher, and developing positive social skills with their peers. The impact of frequent transitions on social-emotional development may be a contributing factor to the challenging behaviors increasingly demonstrated by young children.

There is also a concern about the type and balance of activities available to children when they are placed in temporary settings different than their assigned age-appropriate classrooms. This is the other disturbing feature of the "holding tank" classroom in the early morning and late afternoon. While waiting for their "real" teacher to arrive or for their parents to take them home, children are offered limited choices of materials and equipment for fear they might make too much of a mess in the transitioning classroom. Consequently, some children spend large portions of their day being expected to sit quietly, working with fine motor toys, or looking at books.

Collecting Data

The schedule posted in the classroom rarely conveys what children are actually experiencing. It takes some digging to gather the information which paints the picture of a child's full day. Often it requires talking to two or three different

teachers covering various work shifts and classrooms to capture what transpires during the full day. In one program I visited children were only given the choice of looking at books or working on puzzles for four and a half hours each day.

Frequent transitioning takes its toll on parents as well as children. One mother I encountered when I was observing a program opened the door to her child's classroom and was informed he was in the room down the hall. Tears welled in her eyes and she asked, "Will it be like this every day? Each time I arrive I don't know where to find my son."

How many different teachers and children does an individual child interact with on any given day in your program? If the child transitions to different rooms, what materials and equipment are actually accessible during that time? At your next staff meeting, see if you and your team can develop a true schedule of one child's day. Pick a child who gets dropped off early in the morning and picked up late in the day. Collect the following information: How many rooms is the child in during the day? How many teachers does the child interact with during the day? How many circle times does the child participate in daily? What activities are available and which interest areas are open to this child at various parts of the day? Finally, what is the total amount of time the child has access to blocks, dramatic play, sand/water, and gross motor play? The answers just might surprise you.

Teachers are busy, hard-working people. They juggle a multitude of challenges on any given day. For legitimate reasons their focus is on the demands of their regular work shift. The problem is someone needs to shine the spotlight on the situation of children who spend ten or eleven hours in their child care programs. Are those the children exhibiting difficult behaviors in the classroom? Perhaps stepping back and looking at a typical day through the eyes of such a child might suggest solutions to improve the situation.

Sammy's Experience

There is another program across town from the one Sean attends. In this program a great deal of attention has been devoted to minimizing transitions for children and having each classroom set up and ready for children to engage in active free play throughout the day. When

The Director's Link is made possible by funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and the McCormick Foundation, and is distributed free of charge to early childhood directors in Illinois.

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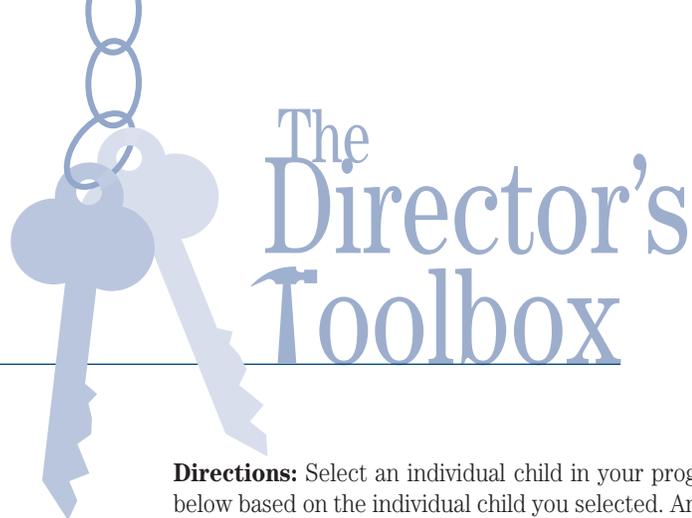
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Our Mission

The McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership is dedicated to enhancing the management skills, professional orientation, and leadership capacity of early childhood administrators. The activities of the Center encompass four areas: training and technical assistance, program evaluation, research, and public awareness.



Taking a Closer Look at a Child's Daily Schedule

Gathering information about how children spend their day is the first step toward identifying how well your program is organized and staffed to minimize the number of group and teacher transitions that a child experiences each day. Once this data is collected you can begin to develop a program improvement plan to address any areas of concern.

Directions: Select an individual child in your program that typically spends a long day at your center. Fill in the table below based on the individual child you selected. Answer the questions at the bottom of the table to determine the child's daily experiences related to grouping, teaching staff, and transitions.

Child's Name _____

Time	Classroom	Teacher(s)	Activity
6:00 - 6:30			
6:30 - 7:00			
7:00 - 7:30			
7:30 - 8:00			
8:00 - 8:30			
8:30 - 9:00			
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4:00 - 4:30			
4:30 - 5:00			
5:00 - 5:30			
5:30 - 6:00			
6:00 - 6:30			

How many different classrooms is this child assigned to on a typical day? _____

How many different teachers does this child interact with on a typical day? _____

How many small-group or circle times does the child participate in daily? _____

How much time during the day does the child have access to:

blocks? _____ dramatic play? _____ sand or water? _____ gross motor play? _____

ANNOUNCING

The Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (BAS)

The McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership and Teachers College Press are proud to announce the release of a new resource for family child care. Written by NLU faculty Drs. Teri N. Talan and Paula Jorde Bloom, the *Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care* (BAS) is designed to measure the quality of business and professional practices of family child care programs.

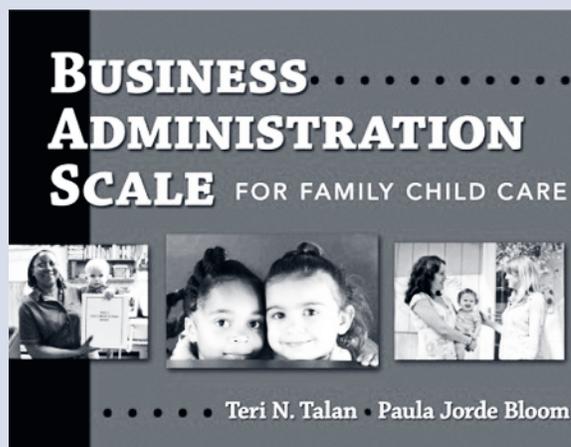
The BAS reflects the growing professional consensus that the quality of family child care is determined by more than a provider's nurturing heart and caring interactions with children. Research on family child care indicates that providers who utilize effective professional and business practices are more likely to view family child care as a career. They are also more likely to provide a higher quality learning environment and interact more sensitively with children.

The Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care is applicable for multiple uses: program self-improvement, technical assistance and monitoring, training, research and evaluation, and public awareness.

The BAS measures quality on a 7-point scale in 10 items:

- Qualifications and Professional Development
- Income and Benefits
- Work Environment
- Fiscal Management
- Recordkeeping
- Risk Management
- Provider-Parent Communication
- Community Resources
- Marketing and Public Relations
- Provider as Employer

The BAS is currently one of the assessments being used in Quality Counts, the Illinois Quality Rating System and is available for purchase from Teachers College Press (www.teacherscollegepress.com)



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Professional Development Opportunities

Program Administration Scale—Assessor Reliability Training

September 21-24, 2009

The Program Administration Scale (PAS) measures leadership and management practices of center-based early care and education programs. Assessor Reliability Training includes an overview of the instrument, how to rate indicators and score items, the protocol for interviewing and collecting data, and procedures for verifying documentation. Individuals who successfully complete the training are eligible to become certified PAS assessors.

This four-day training is designed for technical assistance specialists, quality monitors, management consultants, researchers, and other professionals interested in using the PAS to reliably assess early childhood leadership and management practices.

Location: McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee: \$850, includes all texts, materials, and meals

Hotel accommodations are available at the Candlewood Suites, adjacent to the Center. To make a reservation, call (847) 520-1684. Participants may receive two semester hours of graduate credit (ECE582C, Early Childhood Program Evaluation) by paying an additional fee.

Fall Management Institute—Managing Infant-Toddler Programs

October 23-24, 2009

Managing infant-toddler programs is different from managing preschool and school-age programs. This institute will focus on the components of program planning, implementation, and evaluation that are different for infant-toddler programs. You will find out how the demands on the director differ and how to adjust your leadership and management style to fit these realities. Guest presenter Dr. Kay M. Albrecht is the author of the *Innovations* series of infant, toddler, and preschool curricula and training materials. She is a former teacher and directed the first infant-toddler program to successfully achieve national accreditation by NAEYC.

This institute is designed for center owners, directors, assistant directors, supervisors, and education coordinators who are interested in understanding the essentials of managing high-quality programs for children birth to three years of age. Participants will be contacted prior to the institute to discuss some of the challenges and/or opportunities they face so that this professional development experience can be customized to their needs.

Location: McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership
National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee: \$199 includes all handouts and meals.

Participants are expected to cover their own travel and hotel expenses. Hotel accommodations are available at the Candlewood Suites, adjacent to the Center. To make a reservation, call (847) 520-1684 and mention you are attending a training event sponsored by the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership to receive a discounted rate. Participants may receive two semester hours of graduate credit (ECE582, The Administration of Infant-Toddler Programs) by paying an additional fee and participating in online follow-up activities. This course is applicable to the core competency requirements for the Illinois Director Credential.

For more information about these professional development opportunities, please contact Debra Trude-Suter at (800) 443-5522, ext. 5056 or debra.trudesuter@nl.edu. You can also register online at <http://cecl.nl.edu>.

Thanks for making our 9th Leadership Connections such a great success!

Alive with the energy of 500 enthusiastic early childhood administrators and guests, the Westin Chicago North Shore was the site of the ninth annual Leadership Connections conference. Thanks to all of the presenters and participants who made this year's conference such an invigorating event. A special thank you to our sponsors for their generous support:

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10th Anniversary of Leadership Connections and the
25th Anniversary of the Center!

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Sammy enters the classroom his teacher recognizes immediately that he is having a difficult morning and needs her support. Sammy's mother gives him a quick kiss on the cheek and dashes out the door to work. Sammy bursts into tears. His teacher bends down and says "I know you are missing your mama but I am going to take good care of you while she is at work." His teacher opens up her arms and Sammy snuggles into her warm embrace. She rocks him back and forth and gives him time to grieve. Then she suggests that they go over to the play-dough table and make some cookies, recalling the time Sammy's mom brought special cookies for his birthday. Sammy brushes the tears from his face and hand-in-hand with his beloved teacher heads off to start his day.

The continuity of care and nurturing support that Sammy receives is quite different than the daily reality faced by the children like Sean in our early childhood programs. It is hard to place a price tag on that type of quality, but it is a goal worthy of pursuing.

References

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Le, V., Setodji, C. M., Schaack, D. (2009, April). *Examining the relationship between temporary classroom transitions and children's social outcomes*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

Ann Hentschel was a center director for several years and is currently a training and technical assistance specialist at the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership.