



**Deepening Pre-School Educators'  
Opportunities to Learn through  
Reflection, Cross-Program  
Collaboration,  
and the Development of  
Pedagogical Leaders**

**An Initial Evaluation of the  
Collaborative Teacher's Institute**

**August 2016**



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An Initial Evaluation of the  
Collaborative Teacher's Institute

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## Executive Summary

The Collaborative Teacher's Institute grew out of the praxis of shared services, best practices in early childhood education, and a deep felt need for advanced professional development that focused on pedagogical leadership.

From January 2015 to the present representatives from a wide variety of early childhood education programs began meeting monthly to reflect on the documented work children were accomplishing in their programs. Through this work directors, lead teachers and other experienced educators developed skills and knowledge to support the teachers' in their programs to deepen their work with children by documenting, designing and building curricula based on children's and teacher's interests.

Individuals from seven early childhood and three supporting organizations have consistently volunteered to attend CTI's monthly meetings. The majority of educators who attended the CTI meetings as well as the teachers who teach in their programs have been teaching for at least ten years, if not longer, and have been with their programs for over ten years as well. In a field that is usually marked with high turnover, following these programs and understanding their interests and needs provides important insights for developing sustainable and stable high quality early childhood programs.

### **CTI Vision:**

Children are at the center of the Collaborative Teachers Institute's work. By supporting teachers' learning CTI supports children's learning. To accomplish this work, the following principles guide the Collaborative Teachers Institute's work with center directors and teachers.

**We believe teachers must challenge themselves to see every child as strong, capable and resilient** (*objective one*). In order to realize this...

- Teachers require time and support to help children deepen their interests and capabilities (*objective two*).
- Teachers require time to collaboratively plan and learn from each other (*objective three*).
- Programs benefit by supporting teachers' collaborative and reflective work by including the role of a trained facilitator (*objective four*).
- The facilitator requires time to reflect on his/her work (*objective five*).
- Families are children's first teachers. Children benefit when their families know what is happening in the classroom. Families are invited to participate in the life of the classroom (*objective six*).

This evaluation focused on assessing the CTI on these principles. Findings will be summarized under each objective.



**Objective one. Participants challenge themselves to see every child as strong, capable, and resilient.**

By participating in the CTI, pedagogical leaders gained tools for supporting teachers to see every child as strong, capable and resilient. One such tool is the Reflective Practice Cycle. The Reflective Practice Cycle supports teachers to see the complexity of children's work, which then offers the opportunity to deepen and expand students' opportunities to learn.

**Objective two. Teachers have increased and/or changed time and support to help them improve children's opportunities to learn by deepening children's interests and capabilities.**

By supporting pedagogical leaders to know how to structure teacher time and facilitate collaborative work, CTI supported and affirmed teachers in making a qualitative shift in their approach to teaching. Thus, children's opportunities to learn changed as a result of program's participation in CTI.


- The CTI meetings provided on-going support for regular participants and offered one-time attendees a stimulus to begin to imagine something different for teaching pre-school children. The CTI monthly meetings supported the work pedagogical leaders were trying to accomplish in their programs.
- Over time, teachers in programs that had someone participating in CTI monthly meetings shifted from a teacher centered and teacher driven approach to a more child centered social constructivist approach to curriculum development and instruction.
- Over time, teachers in programs that had someone participating in CTI monthly meetings structured class time differently and they offered fewer teacher directed activities and more child directed work.
- CTI supported experienced teachers to take up new practices such as documentation and doing more student led instruction in their classrooms.
- CTI provided the opportunity for teachers experienced in the work of documentation and developing child led curricula to deepen their practices in these areas.
- CTI supports and affirms directors and teachers to broaden how they document children's learning, which broadens and augments assessments required by accountability structures. This broadening includes families in the process and fosters assessment that comes from knowing children well.

**Objective three. Participants' collaborative planning time increased and/or changed because of participation in CTI.**

By centering the work on the Reflective Practice Cycle and documentation of children's interests, needs, and development, the CTI supported pedagogical leaders to reflect on and change how they were facilitating teachers' collaborative planning time. The CTI meetings also supported directors to structure teachers' time so that they had collaborative planning time with co-teachers and/or with the teaching staff at their school.

- The CTI supported directors and lead teachers to make structural changes to their programs to create time for teachers to have collaborative time to meet.
- The CTI supported pedagogical leaders to develop skills and knowledge for learning how to facilitate teachers' collaborative time using the Reflective Practice Cycle in formal and informal ways.
- CTI meetings supported on-going teacher collaborations inside and outside of individual programs to both reflect on the work they were doing in the classroom and to enrich their on-going work together across programs.
- This evaluation helped identify different types of collaborative planning activities that existed in participating programs.
- As the curriculum in CTI became more focused, more directors were considering ways to organize and lead teachers' collaborative planning time. Thus, at the end of the monthly meetings in spring 2016, more directors and lead teachers were talking about how to organize and facilitate collaborative meetings with teachers in their programs. This isn't a linear process, but an on-going back and forth iterative process for directors, teachers and the programs they work in. The CTI meetings supported this iterative process and the combination of the documentation and the Reflective Practice Cycle with the curricula foci helped to augment the process in some programs, and instigate it in others.
- The CTI meetings themselves offer important collaborative planning time for learning with peers who are advanced practitioners from different programs.
- All programs that were not doing it before, that regularly participated in CTI, identified ways to increase teachers' collaborative planning time to focus on documentation and emergent curricula development at the classroom level and/or at the school level.
- Collaborative planning time at the school level and peer to peer level supported teachers to approach their work of supporting children's growth and development from multiple perspectives.

#### Range of collaborative planning activities available to early childhood educators

	General Topics 		Focus on children's and teacher's interests	
<b>Classroom level (i.e. teaching teams)</b>	Dedicated time for classroom level planning/prep time for portfolio preparation and lesson preparation using pre-determined curricula.	Informal classroom level collaborative planning.	Dedicated time for classroom level collaborative planning time that focuses on documenting, reflecting on children's interests and developing emergent curricula	Classroom level collaborative planning time with the director/ pedagogical leader focused on reflecting on documentation of children's interests and developing emergent curricula
<b>Program staff level meetings</b>	Staff level meetings focused on pre-determined professional development topics.	Informal meetings with peers	Staff level collaborative planning time with the director/ pedagogical leader focused on reflecting on documentation of children's interests, development and needs and emergent curricula.	
<b>Program to program level meetings</b>	TTAP trainings, workshops, and conferences		Peer to peer collaborative planning time across programs (i.e. CTI meetings) focused on reflecting on documentation of children's interests, development and needs and emergent curricula.	

**Objective four. Programs benefit by supporting teachers' collaborative and reflective work by including the role of a trained facilitator at each site.**

As center directors and lead teachers, often new to the work themselves, began to introduce and offer examples from what they were seeing and hearing in the CTI meetings, the practices of teachers they worked with changed, in small and big ways. Importantly, directors and lead teachers recognized that they could not mandate these changes, but rather by offering examples, modeling and providing opportunities to see and discuss how other teachers were going about documenting children's interests and developing emergent curricula, teachers started experimenting and reflecting on their current practices and "trying things out," with the encouragement of a pedagogical leader. As has been documented in this report, there are many examples of how teachers benefitted from having their program leader engage in the work of becoming a pedagogical leader.

By engaging in the Reflective Practice Cycle, the CTI identified areas that participants needed more support in order to facilitate the Reflective Practice Cycle in their own schools. In response to this need that was recognized at the end of the first semester, during the 2015/2016 school year three curricular strands were introduced that supported pedagogical leaders to develop a foundation in three areas.

- Teacher as Researcher,
- Emergent Curriculum, and
- Pedagogical Leadership

As the CTI work continues in the 2016/2017, Dr. Yu is planning to integrate a fourth strand on aesthetics into the CTI curriculum. By attending to aesthetics Dr. Yu intends to support CTI participants to understanding and support the teachers they work with to recognize how the environment supports and constrains children's opportunities to learn. Just as the CTI encourages educators to do, the CTI curriculum evolves based on documentation and reflection on participants' needs and interests.

Having a pedagogical leader to facilitate the work in programs is essential on multiple levels and the CTI participants demonstrated that what participants gain from attending CTI meetings supports them on three levels:

- 1) Introducing new practices and ideas to early childhood educators in their programs and beyond,
- 2) Deepening on-going work in reflective practice and teaching based on children's interests, and
- 3) Sustaining a vision for the work as programs develop and change.

CTI helped develop and sustain a cadre of pedagogical leaders who not only lead teacher development in their own programs, but who also provide professional development for early childhood educators in the great community. Thus, the development of pedagogical leaders widens and deepens early childhood educators' opportunities to learn about best practices that are responsive to their needs and interests in their own programs and in their own communities.

**Objective five. The center facilitator has time to reflect on his/her work with teachers.**

CTI creates a safe unique space for experienced teachers to share their work, listen, and respond to perspectives and work from a wider scope of contexts. The CTI provides experienced educators a community of support for refining and deepening the practices in their classrooms and programs. It also provides a space for educators to renew and be affirmed, especially when participants worked in spaces where this pedagogical collaborative work was not the norm. Finally, the CTI provided these experienced educators to find ways to educate their community about excellent early childhood education and to broaden the professional development opportunities available to early childhood educators in Santa Fe and other parts of the state.

- Programs and teachers benefitted from sharing documentation from different schools in CTI meetings. Programs also shared how they structured teacher's collaborative planning time. This work supported directors and teachers alike to see what is possible beyond their own programs.
- Several program leaders who attended the CTI did not work in one program, rather, they worked with programs that supported early childhood education programs throughout the state. The CTI gave these educators an opportunity to envision a future for implementing quality early childhood programs in and with their programs. These participants drew meaning from their participation in the CTI that will influence and, in some cases, change their work moving forward.
- By bringing representatives from different programs together and creating a strong network, programs expanded the resources they had access to prior to CTI.

**Objective six. Families are invited to participate in the life of the classroom.**

Documenting children's interests and sharing that with families, as well as connecting with families when children are struggling are powerful ways to bridge the worlds between school and home. As participants in the CTI, and teachers learning about documentation through their director's participation in CTI, started doing more documentation, they found more ways to connect with families about what their children were doing in school. Teachers also recognized how children's interests at home could be supported in school. Thus, documentation serves multiple purposes, in addition to supporting teachers to reflect on their professional practice, and to reflect children's learning and interests back to them, it also helps build connections with families.

Developing documentation for sharing everyday events with parents supported teachers in their long-term documentation work. Thus reflecting on documentation in the short term helped connect parents to the work their children are doing and it supported teachers' longitudinal work with children that unfolded as projects and interests developed.

## **Challenges & Recommendations:**

A challenge for CTI will be to ensure that it is responsive to recognizing and sustaining the diverse cultures and languages of families and teachers who participate in CTI programs. An area for growth is to integrate a focus on language and culture to support teachers in developing culturally and linguistically responsive practices as part of their work documenting students' learning, developing emergent curricula, and reflecting on that work.

Integrating paid time for directors and teachers' to participate in CTI has been challenging for programs to navigate in terms of the existing professional development structures and employment requirements. Attending CTI was something that all participants did that was "above and beyond" and that many did on their own initiative. Finding ways to integrate opportunities like CTI monthly meetings and collaborative planning time into teachers and directors' professional duties will ultimately strengthen early childhood education in our communities.

The CTI offers a model for offering advanced professional development that goes beyond the one-stop workshop. Thus, the challenge is to find ways for early childhood educators throughout the state to have the opportunity and access to participate in in-depth, on-going professional development that focuses on implementing best practices at the classroom level. In order to sustain this work, CTI, participating programs, and early childhood agencies need to find ways to support teacher leaders' and directors' participation in CTI through compensation for their time, embedding CTI time into their jobs, and/or earning credits for advanced degrees.

Some possibilities may include:

- Working with institutions of higher education to integrate the CTI model into programs that offer participants a pathway for earning higher degrees (for example, a master's in pedagogical leadership) and/or,
- Working with institutions of higher education to integrate the CTI model into programs that offer participants a pathway for earning certificates (for example, a mentor teacher certificate).
- Create an institute that could house pedagogical leaders to support programs throughout a region to engage in collaborative professional development. The Pedagogical leaders in this entity would need funds to support focused time to work with a select set of programs to support teachers' collaborative and reflective work that is embedded into their jobs.
- Identify funding that can be used to support a facilitator for monthly meetings and consultation, a coordinator, and participants' time.

The Collaborative Teachers' Institute has developed a core group of programs that were high quality (i.e. NAEYC accredited and 4/5 Star Programs) when they started attending CTI. As the CTI continues it will be important to continue to reach out to programs that are working to improve the quality of their programs. Increasing the diversity of programs will require on-going reflection and communication as CTI learns how to recruit and support practitioners that are new to the ideas of developing curricula based on documenting children's interests.

## Introduction

### **The Collaborative Teachers' Institute (CTI):**

A Shared Services model for advanced professional development in pedagogical leadership that convenes center directors and teacher leaders from different early childhood education programs and organizations to develop teachers' professional growth while studying children's interests through documentation reflective practice.

### **Join a CTI meeting**

**4:30pm** - On a Thursday evening in November in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a dozen pre-school educators from different programs and organizations are gathering for a monthly meeting. Sometimes they meet at each other's schools, but tonight they are meeting at the Santa Fe Community Foundation where the organization that is incubating this unique professional development program, the Baby Fund, is housed. Each participant brings with them a contribution for the delectable potluck that provides nourishment to the group. All who attend are coming directly from a long day of work teaching in and leading the early childhood education programs they represent. There is a core-group of familiar faces and more often than not, there is someone new at the table, perhaps a teacher or director from a local pre-school or another interested party.

As people finish eating and settle in, there is a sense of excitement and weariness. Excitement for what is to come in the next few hours, and weariness from a long work week. The core group keeps returning to the voluntary advanced professional development because they value the peer interactions with other established professionals in early childhood education and they feel it rejuvenates them. After brief introductions Dr. Gigi Yu, the facilitator, reviews the agenda for the evening:

### **Review of CTI's guiding principles**

**4:45pm** - By reviewing the guiding principles each meeting, the CTI members (new and old are reminded about the purpose of their gathering). It helps to ground the participants and the conversation in the participants' common interests, developing skills and knowledge to support themselves and the teachers they work with "to challenge themselves to see every child as strong, capable and resilient."

### **Reminder of confidentiality (what is said in the meeting stays in the meeting)**

**4:50pm** - Establishing confidentiality creates a safe space where participants can talk about the challenges they face in their work, in addition to the successes.

**Focus of the session**

**5pm** - Over the course of a year, sessions focused on three themes: 1) Teacher as researcher, 2) Emergent curriculum 3) Pedagogical Leadership. Each theme was designed to help participants develop the foundation they need to become a pedagogical leader in their program. In each session participants were provided with a reading to share with teachers in their programs and to reflect on collectively. Dr. Yu also provided examples from local, national and international contexts to illustrate how this work has been taken up by individual teachers and programs. Often, participants were invited to watch a short video and then share their insights and perspectives with one another. Tonight, the guiding question was, “How does the role of listening relate to the “teacher as researcher?””

**Sharing documentation**

**6pm** - The heart of the CTI work emerged here. Each month, a different program was invited to share documentation. The documentation focused on student(s) work and interests. Each presenter was encouraged to bring “a work in progress” that they were trying to work through in their program. Initially presenters brought in more “finished” documentation, but as the group grew more comfortable, they started to bring in more “raw” pieces, a couple of photographs of children’s work, or a short video. Following a protocol developed by Dr. Yu, the group worked to make sense of the provocation. The presenter was probed about the context and about his/her thinking about the instruction surrounding the provocation. Only after a conversation that firmly established the context and current thoughts about the provocation, did participants offer thoughts and suggestions about what they heard and possible next steps for the presenter to consider to deepen and extend the child/children’s work. Tonight, the presenter, following the session’s focus shared an investigation she was working on in her classroom, documenting “good guy and bad guy” play. Her research question was, “how can sharing documentation of children’s experiences with them inform, change, and deepen their experiences?”

**Discussion about the collective exhibit the group is developing.**

**7pm** - In June of 2016 the participating CTI programs combined efforts to create an exhibit “Making Sense of Play.” The purpose of the exhibit was to highlight the work children throughout the Santa Fe community were accomplishing through their play. The exhibit opened at the Georgia O’Keefe Museum in June of 2016, and closed at the SFCC Early Childhood Conference in August 2016. Between the opening and closing, individual panels were displayed in businesses throughout the Santa Fe community with the intention of raising awareness about quality early childhood education. At the end of this particular session, following along with the session’s focus, participants were asked to identify and develop their own research questions.

**7:30pm** - the group disbands, the participants walk out together, continuing the conversation and calling out good-byes to their colleagues. They will see one another again in a month.

## Background & Context

Our group came together first around the quality issue of...creating more opportunities for advanced collaborative professional development. [Early childhood programs said], “There aren’t enough. There’s entry-level staff [professional development]. We’ve been in the field forever. Some of us even have advanced degrees.” And typically Shared Services doesn’t start there. They start with the shared finances. - Katy Dry, Director, The Baby Fund

The Collaborative Teacher’s Institute grew out of the praxis of shared services, best practices in early childhood education, and a deep felt need for advanced professional development that focused on pedagogical leadership. In 2014 Katie Dry, Director of the Baby Fund, hosted a series of meetings with early childhood education programs in the Santa Fe community. In the meetings, program directors and lead teachers from a variety of early childhood education programs convened to discuss the possibilities for Shared Services amongst early childhood education programs in Santa Fe. What emerged from those conversations was that, across programs, there was a deep felt need for advanced professional development. After contacting Dr. Gigi Yu, who brought a unique set of experiences and expertise around reflective practice to the group, the Collaborative Teacher’s Institute was born.

Starting in January 2015 representatives from a wide variety of early childhood education programs began meeting monthly to reflect on the documented work children were accomplishing in their programs as well as to develop skills and knowledge to support the teachers’ in their programs to deepen their work with children by documenting, designing and building curricula based on children’s and teacher’s interests.

The CTI met each month from January 2015 through August 2016 (with the exception of July). As of August 2016, the CTI convened for 18 sessions. Initially the meetings were 2.5 hours, but then increased to 3 hours as the curriculum and flow was refined. The aim of the facilitators’ meetings is to support directors and lead teachers to develop skills and knowledge as pedagogical leaders. The meetings are attended on a voluntary basis by program directors and lead teachers and a few program managers.

### **Participants:**

Although a wide variety of programs and entities have joined in and many have visited, individuals from seven early childhood and three supporting organizations have consistently volunteered to attend CTI’s monthly meetings. In the first six months seven programs attended regularly. Over the 2015/2016 school year, ten programs attended regularly. Two programs have two people that attended regularly. The other eight programs are represented primarily by one person, although different teachers from the programs attended several times over the course of the year. These early childhood programs and organizations represent a wide range of early childhood opportunities in Santa Fe. Several Head Start Programs attended CTI once or twice, but none sustained their participation in this advanced professional development initiative.



### **Participating CTI Programs & Organizations**

- **American Indian Language Policy Research and Teacher Training Center**, trains instructors pre-k through college and conducts research to help preserve Native American languages
- **First Presbyterian** provides developmentally age-appropriate, child- centered programs that focus on the process of learning through play and discovery. They are a state four star program and are in in step three of four in the NAEYC Accreditation process. They will be having their NAEYC visit during the 2016/2017 school year.
- **La Casita**, established in 1971, La Casita is a “parent co-op that has been a Reggio Emilia inspired school since 1994,” one of the longest practicing Reggio schools in New Mexico. La Casita was one of the first programs in the country to be accredited by NAEYC and they are committed to maintaining their five-star rating.
- **Rio Grande School** is a private pre-k - 8 school in Santa Fe. The preschool program was established in 1978. It is play-based and focuses on exploration and discovery.
- **The Santa Fe Community College Kids Campus**, as a NAEYC accredited program provides childcare for the SFCC student body and faculty and the wider community. Under new leadership in the past year, the SFCC Kids Campus is growing its capacity to deliver high quality early childhood programs, including bilingual classrooms. The Kids Campus is a lab school for the SFCC Early childhood and nursing programs.
- **Santa Fe Opera’s Early Childhood Initiative**, offers informative, hands on professional development opportunities are offered to early childhood teachers, administrators and teaching artists interested in learning about the value of using the expressive arts to support creative thinking practices and children’s learning in the classroom, as inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach.
- **Santa Fe School of the Arts and Sciences** is a private expeditionary school. The early childhood director/co-teacher and co-teacher have been studying the Reggio Emilio approach for several years.
- **Tic Tac Grow**, independent early childhood consultant who most recently opened the Early Childhood and Family Center at UNM Gallup
- **United Way of Santa Fe County’s Early Learning Center** teachers and director began their interest in the Reggio Emilio approach five years ago, and have been immersed in studying the pedagogical approach through collaborative teaching meetings the past four years. Their commitment to learning is evident by their New Mexico FOCUS 5 star status and bilingual classrooms.

### **Background of Participating Early Childhood Programs**

Seven schools and three organizations had sustained participation in CTI over the past year. Three of the schools hold a New Mexico PreK and or Early PreK grant. There are three programs that are accredited by the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and two are licensed as a FOCUS 4 or 5 star program (New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System). NAEYC accreditation is considered equivalent to NM FOCUS 5 star. Each program has its own history along with philosophy and practices. Representatives from three other supporting organizations also attended regularly. To provide some context, a summary of childcare centers available in Santa Fe County is provided below in table 1.

Table 1\*: Early childcare centers, state rating, capacity and ages of children served in Santa Fe County (2014)

Type of Provider	# Include	Age 2 - 5		Under 2	
		Lic. Cap.	Curre nt	Lic	Curre nt
1 Star Center	1	44	26	0	0
2 Star Center	20	936	578	71	30
3 Star Center	3	83	30	56	40
4 Star Center	6	227	183	24	20
5 Star Center	2	101	89	45	50
5 Star FOCUS Center	8	508	346	136	97
<b>Total Centers</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1899</b>	<b>1252</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>237</b>

\*Data source: SFCC ECCOE Business Plan, Dec 2014, p.3 ([http://kidscampus.sfcc.edu./files/ECCOE\\_planV2.pdf](http://kidscampus.sfcc.edu./files/ECCOE_planV2.pdf))

All of the early childhood programs were and continue to be in different places in terms of program development, staff development and curricula development. They also serve different populations, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic data pertaining to children attending programs participating in CTI

Program 2015/2016	# of Children Served	% of Children Receiving Subsidies or Free Services	% of White Children	% of Hispanic Children	% of African American Children	% of Asian Children	% of Native American Children
FP	78	6%	63%	23%	3%	6%	1%
LC	20	20%	65%	25%	0	5%	5%
RG	Not available						
SFCC	100	60%	Not available				
SFPS	144	**73%	**16%	**79%	**1%	**1%	**2%
SFSA	21	0	67%	14%	14%	0	0
UWSFC	70	100%	6%	84%	3%	2%	5%
Total	433 children (approximately 30% of children participating in early childhood programs in Santa Fe County)						

\*\*Based on SFPS 2015/2016 120th day data for all students attending SFPS

([http://backweb.sfps.info/sfps/data\\_repos\\_code/sfpsDashboard/sfpsDashboard.cfm?select\\_school=DISTRICT](http://backweb.sfps.info/sfps/data_repos_code/sfpsDashboard/sfpsDashboard.cfm?select_school=DISTRICT))

The majority of teachers in these programs have been teaching for at least ten years, if not longer, and have been with their programs for over ten years as well. In a field that is usually marked with high turnover, following these programs and understanding their interests and needs provides important

insights for developing sustainable and stable high quality early childhood programs. Table 3 below provides a summary of the different participants and the programs who have regularly attended CTI.

Table 3: CTI Participants' & Programs Backgrounds

Program	Regularly Attending Participants	Account-ability Model	Classroom & Ages	Funders	Level of Education	Years Experience
FP	Director	State 4 star program; Working on NAEYC (visit will be this year)	(1) 1-2 year (1) 2-3 year (1) 3-4 year (1) 4-5 year classes	Non-Profit, Fee Based	Director- BA Lead teachers: AA+ Assist. Teachers and Support Staff: AA+ and MA in other fields	Director: 17 years  All Teachers: 5-30 years
LC	Director & Teacher	NAEYC	(1) 2.5-5 year class	Non-Profit, Fee Based	Director: BA+ 1 Full time: BA 4 Part Time: AA	Director: 9 years All Teachers: 3-12 years
RG	Education Coordinator	CYFD	(1) 3-4 year (1) 4-5 year classes	Non-Profit, Fee Based	MA	26 years
SFCC	Director	NAEYC	(2) Inf-1 year (1) 1-2 year (2) 2 - 3 year (2) 3 - 4 year (1) 4 – 5 year classes	Non-Profit, NM PreK, NM Early PreK	Director – PhD Ed Coord – BA+ Lead teachers: AA Asst. teachers: CDC AA, BA in other fields	Director: 15years+
SFPS	Consultant Teacher	FOCUS	Consultant supervises teachers and ast teachers in 16 classrooms of 4-5 year olds	NM Pre-K	Consultant: BA Teacher: MA	Consultant: 15+ years
SFSA	Teacher Director & Co-Teacher	FOCUS 4 star	(1) 3-4 year class	Non-Profit, Fee Based	Teacher Director: BA Co-Teacher: MA	Teacher Director: 10+ years Co Teacher: 5 years
UWSF-EC	Director & Lead Teacher	FOCUS 5 star	(3) 4-5 years classes	Non-Profit, NM PreK	Director: MA Lead Teachers: 1 MA, 2 BA Asst. Teachers: 3 working on AA	Director: 29 years Lead Teachers: 9- 18 years Assist. Teachers: 6-10 years

Using the Santa Fe Public School's demographic data as an approximation, three of the seven schools have student bodies that are representative of the demographics of the Santa Fe Area. In addition, the program managers and consultants that represent the non-program organizations serve highly diverse and often under-served populations. As the CTI moves forward, it will be important to continue to reach out and be responsive to the range of programs that serve NM's diverse and traditionally underserved children. It will also be important to attend to the cultural and linguistic needs and interests that children, their families and teachers have. As one participant reflected, "I'm hoping that at some point we start talking about language and cultural impacts within the classroom."

It is promising that such work is already beginning to emerge through the work already happening in these programs. For example, one teacher who has a bilingual classroom documented her teaching by video recording and realized that she was speaking in English and Spanish, but that she needed more balance in terms of the language she used for academics versus behavioral guidance. By documenting her actual teaching and reviewing her documentation with peers and her director, through the reflective practice cycle, she was able to recognize where and how to adjust her teaching so that children had the opportunity to learn academics and social lessons in both languages. The CTI has the potential to guide this work by elevating a focus on the roles of language and culture in early childhood classrooms. Educators who participate in the CTI recognize the importance of this work.

"I'm hoping that at some point we start talking about language and cultural impacts within the classroom." -- CTI Participant

## **Early Childhood Education**

A growing convergence of consensus has established that the extraordinary and essential growth and development that young humans do in the first five years of life has lasting impacts in terms of people's educational attainment, economics, health, crime and happiness. Thus the opportunities available in the contexts children spend time in matter (Vygotsky, 1978). Indeed, "the developmental tasks of this period range from the mastery of essential building blocks for learning and the motivation to succeed in school, to the ability to get along with other children, to make friends, and become engaged in a social group, as well as the capacity to manage powerful emotions" (Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) p. 386). This consensus has led to the recognition that quality early childhood education supports children to thrive socially and academically well beyond their early childhood experiences (Currie, 2001; Barnett, 2011). And while investment in early childhood education has grown substantially in the past decades, thereby increasing the number of children who have access to early childhood education programs, there is still much work to be done in order to prepare and support early childhood

educators throughout their careers to ensure the children entrusted to their charge have equal access to the opportunities that will help them thrive in pre-school and beyond (Heckman, 2011).

Quality early childhood education supports children to thrive socially and academically well beyond their early childhood experiences (Currie, 2001; Barnett, 2011).

Outcomes in early childhood programs aren't just about access; they are also related to the quality of the programs (Currie, 2001; Barnett, 2011). While there are many factors that contribute to the quality of programs (e.g. see "The 10 NAEYC Program Standards" at <https://families.naeyc.org>), the education and professional development available to educators who work with our children is an important factor that is under-developed, under-researched, and under-valued (Martinez-Beck & Zaslow, 2006; Heinz, 2016). This dearth is

especially apparent when it comes to developing master educators in early childhood education. Not only do master teachers bring their expertise to their classroom work with children, they are also the pedagogical leaders who support all teachers' development in their programs.

Teachers with years of experience and/or advanced degrees often yearn to continue their own learning, but unless there is funding, time, and interest from their program for pursuing advanced degrees, there are often limited opportunities to develop the pedagogical leaders needed to nurture the development of the advanced knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes early childhood educators need to ensure the children entrusted to them have the most wonderful opportunities available to nurture their growth and development. This issue is not just about the desires and interests early childhood educators have to continue their professional learning, it is also about developing the structures necessary for supporting and nurturing that growth. The research presented here analyzes one community-based program that developed in response to this need for pedagogical leadership development. The need emerged as a common interest across programs during conversations about Shared Services. More than anything, it is important to recognize that this program grew out of the interest, passion, dedication, and (uncompensated) time of leading early childhood educators in the Santa Fe community.

Before presenting the findings, we provide some context for the curricular and pedagogical choices that were made by the CTI facilitators and participants, based on their continued and ever-emergent understanding of best practices in Early Childhood Education, as one veteran teacher put it,

"Attending CTI was my extra, my trying to learn something new, and I try to implement it as much as I can. First [my director] asked me, then curiosity, and then seeing how the field is changing. And as long as I have been in it, [I've recognized] that I need to change with it as well. So that primarily was my reason for going." – CTI Participant

## Best practices in Early Childhood Education.

“Emergent curriculum is learning that begins with keen observation and listening for a child’s agenda, followed by deep reflection, responses and support from the child’s educators. It allows for children and teachers to co-construct curriculum that is intentional and meaningful. The use of emergent, inquiry-based practices with young children continues to spread rapidly throughout the world...This is heartening for those of us who have spent many years advocating for play-based, child-centered learning.”

– Susan Stacey (2015)

Early childhood professional literature suggests fostering both teachers and children’s interests and agency. Throughout time, pedagogies have developed and have been implemented in early childhood classrooms across the United States and throughout the world that value the interests of children as well as the teacher, such as the project approach (Katz & Chard, 2000), emergent curriculum (Caldwell, 1997; Jones, 1994), and the Reggio Emilia approach (Malaguzzi, 1992; Gandini, 2002). Proponents of these constructivist and social constructivist approaches to curriculum development see young children as active constructors of knowledge (Katz, 1999; Vygotsky, 2012). These approaches grew out of cultural and political circumstances and according to Katz (1999), focus on children’s interests to guide classroom activities. This type of curriculum uses observations made by teachers of children’s interests during their play or other activities to create classroom studies. Teachers and children co-construct activities derived from children’s original ideas.

Documentation is used for understanding children’s motives and unique thoughts as well as how they make decisions. In addition, documentation is used as a way to study teachers’ practices and instructional strategies, and to make children’s learning visible (Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001).

While there are extensive writings on different forms of curricula that focus on children’s interests (e.g. Beane, 1997; Cremin, Burnard, & Craft, 2006; Dewey, 1938; Katz, 1999), there is little research on the processes teachers might use to learn how to study these interests. The processes for studying children’s interests were not discussed in practical terms to help teachers apply this to their practice. According to Birbili and Tsitouridou (2008), “given the importance of organizing learning around children’s interests, it is surprising to find that teachers learn practically nothing about this issue in their studies” (p. 152). They suggest that teachers need to learn how to observe and document children’s actions and words in order to identify their interests. In response to the early childhood educators’ felt needs, the Collaborative Teachers’ Institute (CTI) aims to support early childhood educators from different programs to improve children’s opportunities to learn based on collaboratively studying children’s interests through documentation. This evaluation aims to understand how the structures of the CTI supports teachers to accomplish these aims.

## Shared Services Approach

Job embedded professional development can empower teacher learning but this requires early childhood programs to find ways to support the role of a pedagogical leader. Programs can support a pedagogical leader by sharing this position with several other centers. Programs may currently have administrative positions such as education coordinators, staff trainers, or mentor teachers; programs need to rethink how this role can be used to support on going job embedded professional development that supports teachers' classroom practices. -- Carter (1998).

A Shared Services approach builds alliances within a community. These partnerships occur between small businesses, profit and non-profit organizations alike, for the purpose of delivering more efficient and effective services to a community, while creating greater capacity for quality (<http://opportunities-exchange.org>). Within the early childhood arena the goal of shared services aims to reduce costs by having programs share costs of supplies and/or staffing, while also building shared program capacity, such as usage of “common tools and systems, shared mentoring and supervision and/or collaborative improvement process” (<http://opportunities-exchange.org>). In this respect, the focus of Shared Services has two main aspects, business leadership and pedagogical leadership. The first has to do with the overall administrative running of an organization and the second seeks to support teachers and directors to develop reflective skills and vision for improving classroom practices (Stoney, 2013). In general programs tend to use shared services for administrative purposes and those that do use the shared services for pedagogical leadership share trainings that support Race To the Top Early Education standards and quality Rating Improvement Systems (Stoney, 2013).

The CTI is a new model for shared services for developing pedagogical leadership that aligns with these systems of government requirements and accountability, but that also aligns with another level of accountability, to the every day needs and interests of children, their families and their teachers. While shared services for quality rating systems are important for sustaining quality programing, the CTI model supports the development of educational leaders and their capacity to facilitate reflective practices with the teachers in their programs based on listening for children's interests and passions (Rinaldi, 2006). This work is ultimately community and school based and is on-going. It challenges participants to think about accountability to the children in their programs, to their families, to their colleagues, and to themselves, in addition to accountability to governing entities (Krechevsky, Rivard, & Burton, 2009).

As one CTI participant observed, educators need to be accountable for their own learning, in addition to children's learning. Such learning is fostered by developing and sustaining a culture for it:

Do you ever walk in the door and say, ‘It’s my responsibility and my job today to walk through that door and make my choice to be a happy human being that’s going to do the best I can with these children?’” And that kind of accountability doesn’t cost money. It really doesn’t. It’s really a culture and an attitude and how does that happen?

--Judith K. Lavender, M.Ed.



### **A New Approach: The Collaborative Teachers' Institute**

The Collaborative Teachers' Institute (CTI) developed out of conversations between program directors and lead teachers in the Santa Fe area who identified a common need for advanced professional development. The program directors and teacher leaders were interested in developing their own capacities to better support the professional growth of their teachers and to continue to improve children's opportunities for learning in their schools and programs. The vision and structure of the CTI are described below. The lead facilitator, in collaboration with initial CTI participants, developed this vision and structure.

**Vision:** Children are at the center of the Collaborative Teachers Institute's work. By supporting teachers' learning CTI supports children's learning. To accomplish this work, the following principles guide the Collaborative Teachers Institute's work with center directors and teachers.

**We believe teachers must challenge themselves to see every child as strong, capable and resilient.**

In order to realize this...

- Teachers require time and support to help children deepen their interests and capabilities.
- Teachers require time to collaboratively plan and learn from each other.
- Programs benefit by supporting teachers' collaborative and reflective work by including the role of a trained facilitator.
- The facilitator requires time to reflect on his/her work.
- Families are children's first teachers. Children benefit when their families know what is happening in the classroom. Families are invited to participate in the life of the classroom.

For the purposes of this evaluation, these guiding principles were used as the objectives of the CTI. Namely through involvement in the CTI, this evaluation will gauge if and how:

1. Participants challenge themselves to see every child as strong, capable, and resilient.
2. Teachers have increased and/or changed time and support to help them improve children's opportunities to learn by deepening children's interests and capabilities.
3. Participants' collaborative planning time increased and/or changed because of participation in CTI.
4. Programs benefit by supporting teachers' collaborative and reflective work by including the role of a trained facilitator at each site.
5. The center facilitator has time to reflect on his/her work with teachers.
6. Families are invited to participate in the life of the classroom.



These objectives are summarized in figure 1.

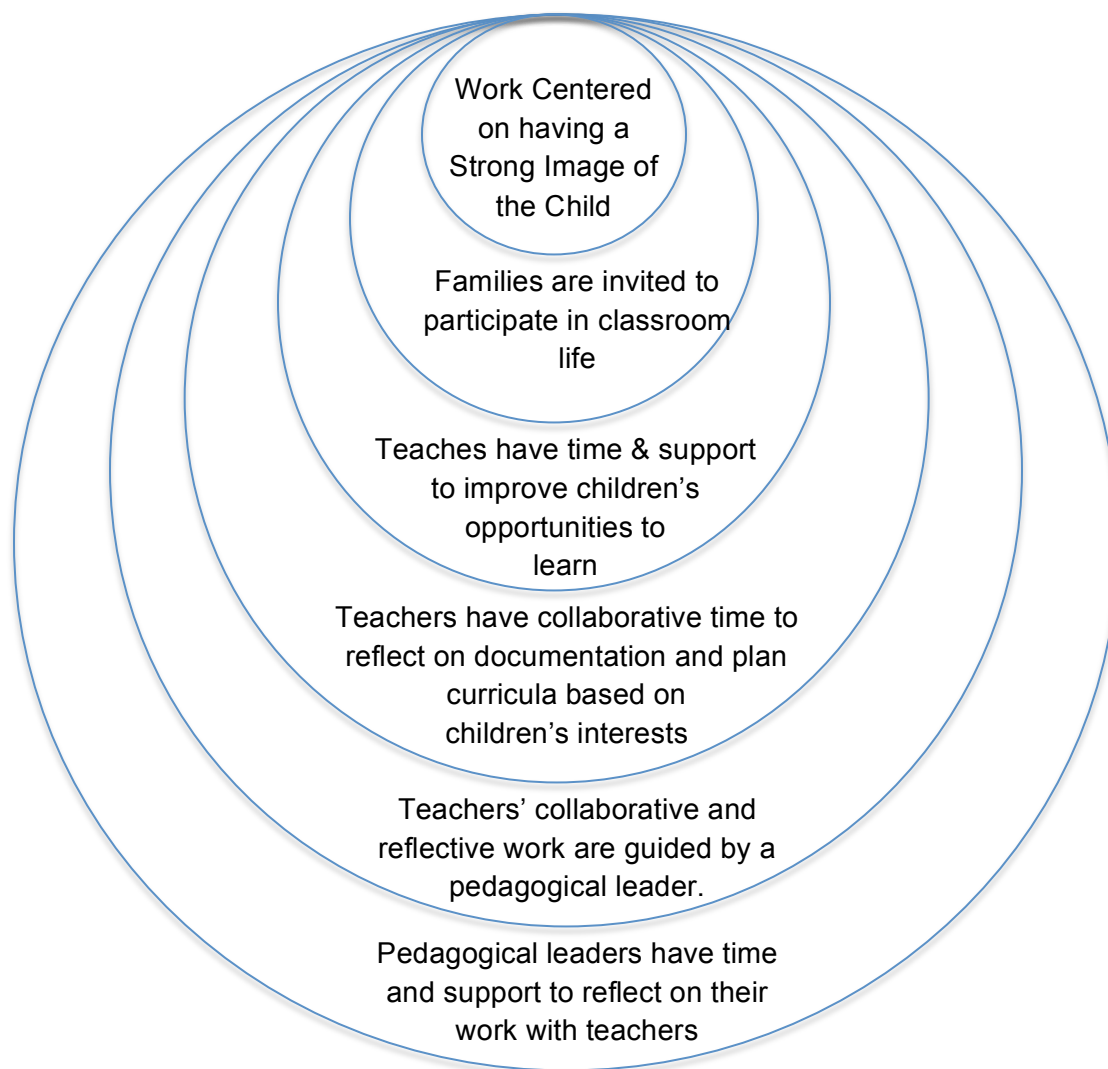


Figure 1: CTT's Work

The CTTI was designed to support program directors to hold regular on-site meetings for supporting teachers to study children's interests and collaboratively plan curricula that emerges from children's interests. The work of the CTTI from January 2015 to the present has been to learn how to do this work with a diverse set of programs. The programs that came to the table to participate regularly in CTTI started in different places. Some programs were already holding regular onsite meetings for all teachers to reflect on documentation of children's learning and interests; whereas other programs joined CTTI to learn more.

When the CTTI was first envisioned, four components were identified that the facilitators and participants thought would support the work of creating space and time within programs for teachers to meet regularly to study documentation and collaboratively plan in order to center their work on children's interests, passions, and developmental needs.

- At the center of the work is a monthly meeting for directors, lead-teachers, co-teachers, and other experienced educators to convene to guide and support their professional growth in pedagogical leadership.
- Consultation visits from the lead facilitator at program sites.
- Opportunities for CTI participants to engage in higher education programs and/or clock hours.
- A shared substitute pool so that programs' teachers have time to participate in regular on-site meetings with a pedagogical leader.
- Support a cadre of center facilitators to guide and support teachers' work in studying children's interests and planning together.

In what follows, each objective will be appraised. The different components of the model will also be assessed. Program and participant outcomes will be discussed within objectives and in summary. In addition, challenges will be discussed along with recommendations.

### **Summary Assessment of the CTI Model**

**The Educators:** Participants who regularly attended CTI between January 2015 and May 2016 are strong educators from a wide range of programs with a wealth of experience, expertise, and knowledge. CTI educators are committed to supporting children's development and growth, in collaboration with families. In addition, they work in programs that are well established. Their programs have low teacher and student turnover and have been accredited at state and national levels. The participants were committed to their own professional growth and the professional growth of teachers they work with. They were motivated to deepen their practice and to strengthen their abilities to collaborate with colleagues, families and children. They saw that the way to strengthen their programs was to support and strengthen teachers' opportunities for professional growth. None of the CTI participants received extra compensation for attending CTI and their participation was "above and beyond" their job expectations. An area for growth is to find ways to support educators' participation in CTI by compensating their time, embedding the work into their jobs, and/or integrating the work in higher education programs so that participants can earn credits toward advanced degrees.

**The Structure:** Monthly Meetings. The monthly meetings with an expert facilitator are at the heart of the CTI. In these meetings, directors, lead teachers, and other experienced educators built on their knowledge and experiences to in order to develop their own skills as pedagogical leaders. A high level of trust developed over time among participants who were able to bring their successes as well as their struggles to the table to work through. Developing this peer group of pedagogical leaders has been an important outcome of the CTI work and speaks to the importance of making time for pedagogical leaders to reflect on their work with teachers. After a

year and a half the CTI participants have a rich professional network. Participants regularly turn to each other for advice, to develop and share in professional development opportunities, to recruit staff, and to provide support for one another, thereby expanding the resources individual programs had prior to CTI.

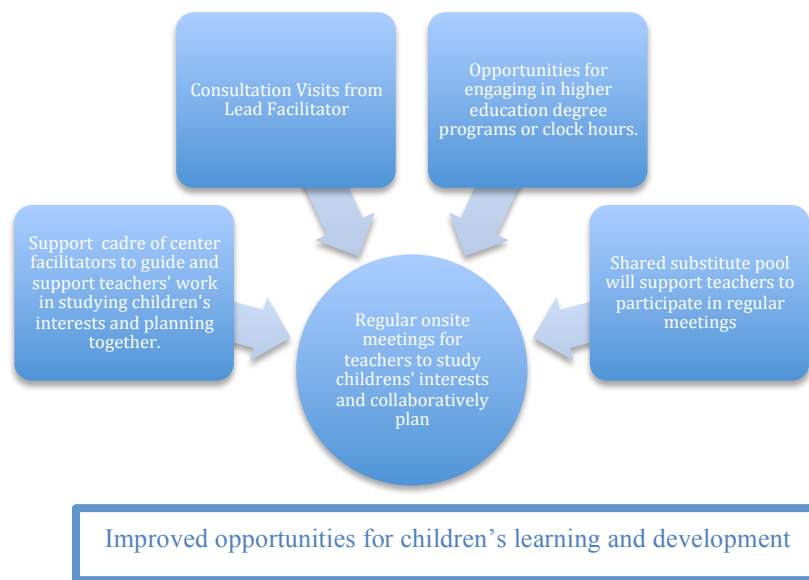


Figure 2: CTI Structure

**Higher Education:** While many participants took advantage of getting clock hours that counted toward maintaining their license and program accreditation, many are ready to pursue the next step in education. Several of the participants were working on their master's or PhD during their participation in CTI. These participants felt that the CTI supported and extended what they were learning and being asked to do in their advanced degree programs. There is potential for the CTI to partner with a university to support participants to earn credit for participating in the CTI that would count toward advanced degrees and/or certificates.

**Consultation Visits:** The consultation visits emerged in various ways, depending on programs' individual needs and interests. At first, it was imagined that the facilitator would visit each program on a semester or annual basis. However, this was beyond the capacity of the current CTI structure. What emerged instead helps reveal what the program needs might be in this area. First, programs became consultants for one another. For example, a program that was new to documentation and emergent curricula arranged for their staff to visit one of the other programs that is more developed in these areas. Another program invited Dr. Yu and a teacher leader to provide on-site professional development on documentation. This professional development was co-designed with the director to meet the needs of the staff. Thus the CTI provided directors a network for being able to support taking the next step in their own programs based on their unique needs. As the CTI continues, the emerging pedagogical leaders in the CTI

are beginning to collaborate to develop and offer workshops that draw from their individual areas of expertise to a wider audience. For example, several participants offered a workshop for early childhood educators on materials use in early childhood at the Albuquerque Museum. In supporting the development of pedagogical leaders for programs, the CTI also supported the development of pedagogical leaders for the early childhood community in New Mexico. Consultation visits that programs can sign up for have been built into the 2016/2017 CTI schedule.

**Shared Substitute Pool:** The shared substitute pool came together in the spring of 2016. A director with a tremendous amount of administrative expertise stepped forward to work through the bureaucratic aspects of creating a shared substitute pool. She developed MOU's between the different programs, worked with CYFD so that the substitutes could do one background check instead of having to do one for every program, and her program housed the grant funded pilot. In the summer of 2016 two substitutes were hired full time by the hosting institution to float between participating programs on different days.

Not all programs were in session in the summer, but the programs that were, were asked to commit to having a substitute on a particular day, which worked to varying degrees. For example, some programs didn't always need a substitute for an entire day. However, if the substitute was only at a program part time then the substitute needed a place to go for the rest of the day and the hosting institution would have to pay mileage for travel. Based on the summer pilot, there is still work that needs to be done to refine the process for hiring substitutes (for example, can substitutes be hired part-time?) and clarifying the substitutes' weekly schedules across the different programs based on programs' needs. In addition, as programs figure out how to share the cost of having a substitute pool, it may be worth considering if and how the "lead substitute" institution (i.e. the program that hires the substitutes and holds the background check) can rotate from program to program on a semester or annual basis. In addition programs may need support in thinking through how best to use the substitute to release teachers for collaborative planning and curricula development.

### **Summary:**

The work that CTI accomplished reveals that there are several layers that need to be attended to in order to support the development of pedagogical leaders who can, in turn, support the growth and development of experienced and novice teachers in their respective programs. Pedagogical leaders need a community of practice to grow their own knowledge and development. This community of practice also offers an important opportunity to strengthen their professional networks and learn from the different ways programs approach their work. Pedagogical leaders need access to excellent professional development that is based on their needs and interests in the same way that teachers do, in the same way that children do. In addition, program directors, as pedagogical leaders, need support in order to envision how to restructure teacher time so that teachers have time to develop and reflect on documentation and collaboratively plan curricula

that is based on children's interests, needs, and developmental needs. This restructuring often has implications for staffing needs as well as accounting for teacher time in new ways.

The following sections document how the CTI's objectives support this work. The objectives are nested in terms of the process of developing pedagogical leaders. At the center of the work is learning how CTI and the process of documentation challenges participants and the teachers they work with to see every child as strong capable and resilient. Hand in hand with this work is also recognizing and learning how to engage families in this work. As programs develop processes for documenting children's learning and development, teachers must be provided time and support for doing this work. This support includes structuring teachers' time so that they have time and support to collaboratively plan and reflect on their work with children. The CTI is structured on the premise that having pedagogical leaders to lead this work is essential and that pedagogical leaders need time and space to reflect on their work with teachers, in order to support teachers to reflect on and deepen their work with children.

The majority of evidence for this evaluation is triangulated based on observations at CTI meetings, observations in participating programs classrooms, and interviews with CTI participants and non-participants who work in the same setting. For clarity sake, participants' statements were corrected for grammar and transition words (ie. "like" and "you know" were removed.). In addition, to protect participants' confidentiality example statements (quotes) were assigned to "Program Directors, Teachers, and Assistant Teachers." CTI participants hold many roles in various organizations, some unique, so revealing the specific role for every quote would compromise individuals' confidentiality. For more information on the methods used please see the methods section in the appendix.

It's necessary that we believe that the child is very intelligent, that the child is strong and beautiful and has very ambitious desires and requests. This is the image of the child that we need to hold. -- Loris Malaguzzi (1994)

**Objective one:**  
**Participants challenge themselves to see every child as strong, capable, and resilient.**

I think the more I've studied children in the classroom and in school and spent time with them, the more I understand that they really are coming from a very authentic place and that if we watch them long enough we can really understand why they do what they do...it makes absolute sense to them...And I think if we can understand people that way-- like with children it makes perfect sense to them what they're doing. It's a total response to who they are and to their environment, and to give them that respect and understand that. The CTI affirms this process for me.

-- Program Director

By participating in the CTI pedagogical leaders gained tools for supporting teachers to see every child as strong, capable and resilient. Based on best practices, CTI maintained a focus of supporting pedagogical leaders to support teachers in their programs to develop curricula and practices that are grounded in and build on documenting children's interests. By attending CTI educators were challenged to deepen and extend the work they were doing in their centers to support teachers and children's growth and development. Evidence for this outcome will be seen throughout this report. In the following section, we focus on demonstrating how the image of the child is at the center of the CTI work, and how teachers' work was challenged, changed and deepened by documenting children's interests, the center of the work CTI supported through reflective practice.

The CTI brought program leaders together who had varied levels of experience in documenting children's interests and analyzing teacher's documentation of children's work using the reflective practice cycle. A reflective practice cycle starts by having teacher's 'listen' to the children, then the teacher documents their work and 'interprets it through a reflection process.' After interpreting the work the teachers decide on a project, develop a plan for the project and lastly hypothesize what they think will happen in the implementation of the project prior to executing it (Scheinfeld, Haigh and Scheinfeld, 2008). The process also allows for children and family members to engage and reflect on the documentation and contribute to deciding how the projects should proceed. The process is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach for influencing curriculum planning for the purpose of child and teacher development (Krechevsky & Moran, 2007, Rinaldi, 2006). Dr. Yu refined and adapted this process for the CTI's work in developing pedagogical leaders (Yu, 2012). This reflective practice cycle is a process that places children's work and interests at the center, even for directors and lead teachers who are no longer in their own classrooms.

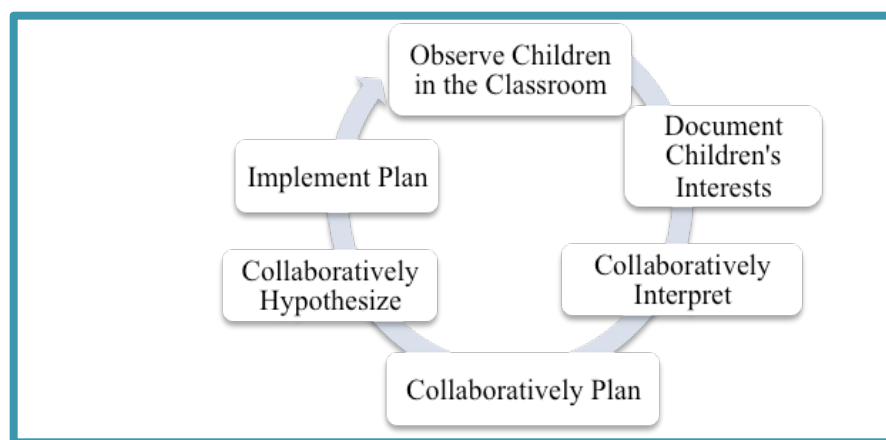


Figure 3: The CTI Reflective Practice Cycle.

In the CTI reflective practice cycle, teachers start by observing children in the classroom. Next, based on children's and teacher's interests, the teacher documents children's interests. The teacher then shares the documentation with peers and pedagogical leaders in order to collaboratively interpret the children's work and documentation. From there, the group collaboratively plans how the teacher might build on and extend the children's work in his/her classroom. Based on those plans, they also collaboratively hypothesize what might happen as a result of their collaborative planning. From there, the teacher implements the plan and the cycle has the potential to begin anew.

At the heart of this process is the work of learning to see every child as strong, capable, and resilient, which requires recognizing it as complex work. Thus, in order to see the complexities in the work that the children are doing, teachers need to learn and recognize the complexities of the work they are doing. We cannot see every child as strong, capable, and resilient without also seeing that every teacher is strong, capable and resilient themselves. The CTI Reflective Practice Cycle supports this process. Pedagogical leaders in the CTI not only learned how to engage in this process around their own documentation of children's work, they also learned how to support teachers to engage in the Reflective Practice Cycle in their own programs, to varying degrees of depth, based on where their program started.

The CTI supported this work by inviting representatives from different programs to share documentation of children's learning each month at the CTI meeting. Initially, the documentation that was shared was a thoughtfully crafted panel that told the story of learning over time. Participants thought they needed to share a finished product. However, as the CTI continued, the documentation, with encouragement from Dr. Yu, began to vary more in terms of "being finished". Dr. Yu often reminded participants that documentation is "never finished" and participants started to recognize that even emergent documentation provided rich opportunities to learn from the child. They came to realize that a single photograph of a child's work, or capturing a short dialogue between two children offered rich opportunities to collaboratively



interpret and plan next steps for children's learning. Learning to see documentation as “never finished” provided teachers the opportunity to recognize the complexity in the on-going work children were doing in their classroom, versus looking for a “finished product.” This insight supported some teachers to begin doing documentation and it supported other teachers to approach documentation differently. For example, one teaching team decided to do an on-going documentation project in their classroom, instead of creating a documentation panel at the end of a project.



Figure 4: Ongoing documentation in CTI classroom

Another example shows how the Reflective Practice Cycle process supports teachers to see the complexity of students work, which then offers the opportunity to deepen and expand students' opportunities to learn. During one CTI meeting in the fall, a teacher, who was fairly new to thinking about emergent curricula, bravely shared documentation about something she was trying to make sense of in her classroom. One of her students had a keen interest in trucks. He drew trucks, played trucks, and talked about trucks throughout the day and the teacher wanted to understand more about the student's interest and how to extend it. By sharing her observations with the group, she and everyone at the CTI that night, gained a more in-depth way to understand the rich and complex work the child was doing when he drew, built, and



played out his keen interest in trucks. Indeed the “truck” conversation was one that many referred back to as a touchstone for understanding the complexity of children’s work, over the course of the year.

In order to bring the work to the CTI group, the teacher observed the child in her classroom, documented his interests in formal and informal ways, and brought that documentation to the group in the form of sharing a few examples of his work. By making observations and asking the presenter questions about the documentation, the CTI group collaboratively interpreted the documentation. The insight the teacher, and the CTI group, gained from this conversation is that the child’s interest in trucks was also about his relationship with his father who drove a truck for a living. The insight grew out of the CTI group sharing their multiple perspectives and asking questions about both the child’s and teacher’s work in the classroom based on the documentation she shared.

Based on this insight, the group collaboratively planned possible provocations that the teacher could use to test the hypothesis that the boy’s interest in trucks was also about his interest in his relationship with his father and his interest in his father’s occupation. The ideas focused on how to build on and extend this child’s interests. As a group, they collaboratively hypothesized how different provocations might support the child’s and his classmates’ sense-making about their parents’ occupations and family relationships. Through this conversation, this teacher and other CTI members learned to see and prompt a greater degree of depth about the child’s work. Yes he was interested in trucks, but he was also trying to make sense of much more through his interest in trucks. Thus instead of focusing solely on developing a child’s interest in trucks, the teacher facilitated work in her classroom that supported her students’ interest in their parents’ occupations and their relationships with their family members.

This work helped the teacher to develop a stronger vision of the child and to recognize the complex ideas he was working through in his play. This process helped her to develop provocations that supported the student and the rest of the class to build on their interests in their parents’ occupations and their relationships to that work in their own families. After the meeting, the teacher chose what to implement, observed, documented and reported back to the group about what happened at a later meeting. This conversation led to further explorations about occupations and family relationships in her classroom. The on-going provocations and documentation the teacher started to do made children’s interest and work more visible.

By seeing how this process worked for one of her teachers, the teacher’s director – and other directors - were able to see how the CTI Reflective Practice Cycle process supported this teacher to approach her work with more depth, and to recognize ways to support the teachers in their programs to recognize that their work is to make sense of what children do, say and produce in order to better support their cognitive, physical and emotional learning and development.

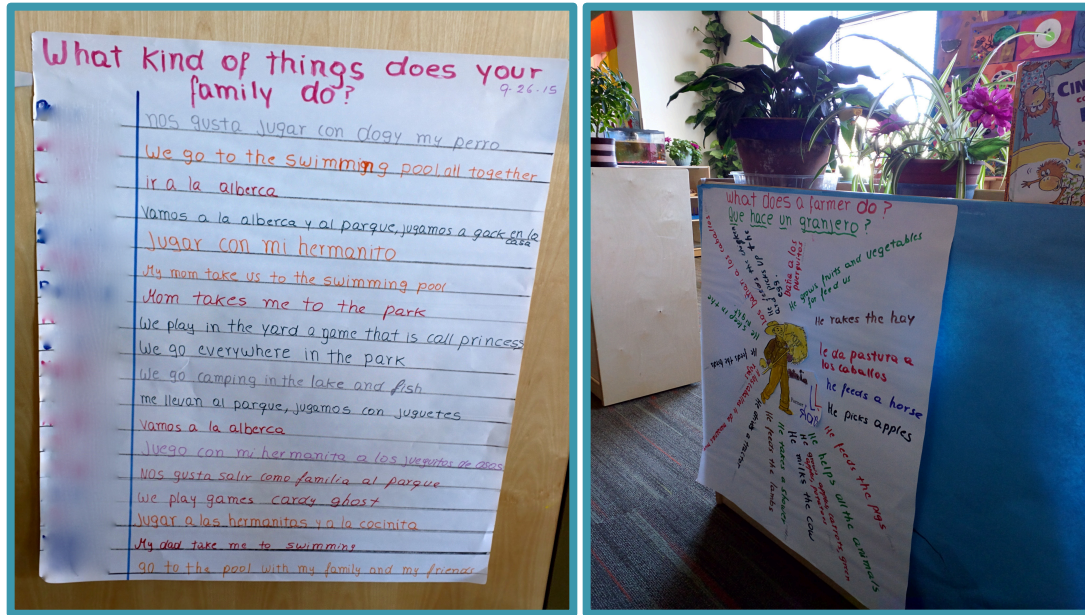


Figure 5: Photos from CTI teacher classroom (“What kind of thing does your family do?” “What does a farmer do?”)

This conversation was a turning point for this teacher and she began to find other ways to document and build on children’s interests in her classroom. The conversation was also a touchstone for other CTI participants because they were challenged to begin thinking about finding the story behind the story in their own work with teachers and children. It helped them to see how the Reflective Practice Cycle could help them to facilitate similar conversations with teachers in their own programs. It affirms that creating the time for reflective dialogue through the Reflective Practice Cycle supports children and teachers’ growth.

By learning this Reflective Practice Cycle process, there is the potential for a continual flow of getting ideas from the children, sharing ideas and interpretations with colleagues and then developing ideas for provocations to grow children’s opportunities to learn. One assistant teacher, who did not attend the monthly CTI meetings, described how this process extended into her own work in the school, with the support of her lead teacher and director who attended CTI meetings.

If I know something doesn't work for this group [of children] then I'll try something else. It's a lot of times just reflecting back on what happened and then being able to see what kids need. It's a lot of observation. It's a lot of note taking, a lot of picture taking, a lot of talking with my colleagues, a lot and with my teacher, so she and I will talk ... we'll just stay talking about these kids and what they need and what worked and what didn't and what we want to see the goal to look like in the future, and how we're going to make those steps to get there. Kind of scaffolding ourselves and scaffolding the class and scaffolding

the kids and so it's a lot of building on what we already know and then anything that comes up, as you know, something we don't know yet and it's always valuable I think, knowledge and we learn from our mistakes. -Assistant Teacher

This example demonstrates that this Reflective Practice Cycle can be supported in both formal meetings and in informal conversations between two teachers who share a classroom and who have integrated the reflective practice cycle into their practice. The facilitation of the collaborative meetings outside the classroom plays an important role in the process as this is an opportunity for teachers to develop the practice to reflect, analyze and learn from colleagues and the children. Similar processes have been documented in other studies with experienced and new teachers (Davis & Head, 2010; Given, Kub, LeeKeenan, Mardell, Redditt & Twombly, 2010; Glassman & Whaley, 2000; Feldman, 2010; Murphy, Bryant & Ingram, 2014; Yu, 2012). Although the processes slightly vary to meet the needs of the contexts, each learning cycle is based on social constructivist thinking, which places documentation and dialogue as the driver of teachers' and children's learning. In each study adults collaborated and inquired about documentation presented at meetings. The emphasis on these meetings was to support teachers' understandings of children and their own work with children. When the teachers from these studies worked together they were able to share thoughts about what they were experiencing and seeing in children's work as they queried about the documentation and their own professional development in the process. In essence the adults in these studies are searching for meaning within their own work and in the work of their students. The curriculum in their classrooms and programs is then enhanced as it focuses on the growth of both the children and the adults working with them, making learning visible.

The CTI experience revealed that even the highly experienced teacher leaders and directors needed time and space to take a step back and learn/remember skills and processes that help them and the teachers they work with to reaffirm and hold a strong image of the child in their work with teachers. The heart of this work is developing and fine tuning our abilities to "see" and respond to children and their interests through documentation, as Dr. Yu observed about the CTI Reflective Practice Cycle process:

When teachers slow down, [and start] visually collecting information about children, documenting, through photograph or video, children's work, when teachers come together to talk about it, there is a shift in teacher's perspective of children's potential and, you know, they're saying things like, "I didn't know that the children were capable of that." When teachers start listening to children...they realize what they didn't know that about the children in their classroom...Once teachers develop that kind of shift in their image, it changes how they plan or how they practice, how they think about the experiences in the classroom. - Gigi Yu

**Objective Two:**  
**Teachers have increased and/or changed time and support to help them improve children's opportunities to learn by deepening children's interests and capabilities.**

In order for teachers to see children as capable there needs to be a shift in thinking and behaving on the part of the teachers. There also needs to be a change in how time is used when taking a pedagogical approach that is grounded in children's interests. The participants who regularly attended CTI brought many years of experience with them. They were all master teachers and have spent their careers in the field of early childhood education as teachers, directors and consultants. And yet, they recognized the importance of being supported to document and reflect on children's learning – be it in their own classrooms, or with teachers in the classrooms they are supporting. All participants felt that although this work is the most important work they did, that often, it was the work that was the hardest to get to in regular and meaningful ways. As CTI teachers, and the teachers they worked with, embraced the idea of documenting and developing curriculum based on children's interests, many of the CTI educators reflected on having gone through a qualitative shift in how they approach their work. Others reported being in the process of going through this qualitative shift in their work. For many, this shift is work that started before their participation in the CTI. Both regular participants, and the non-participating teachers they worked with, felt that the CTI supported and affirmed this shift. One teacher described the shift as realizing that the “mess makes sense.” Instead of trying to control what children did with the materials in the classroom, she has learned to observe what they do and say in order to understand what they are learning and how to build on it.

And then I had to just let myself understand that sometimes children learn through messy stuff...Not everything needs to be quiet, perfectly, and especially at these ages. I think it has been a process for me and I'm still working on it. - Assistant Teacher

Another director saw and supported a similar shift in her program as she found ways to support her teachers to meet collaboratively and document children's interests. She recognized that teachers in her program needed support for re-organizing how they structured the children's time in school:

The teachers realized that they were spending so much time saying, “OK. Clean up. Clean up. Clean up...We have to go to circle time,” and now...they're not having those transitions. Snack time is happening during play and if [the children are] wanting to come take a break from their play, they do and if they do not, they don't, you know, and that's fine....And so the energy is much, much better in the classroom. The teachers are more engaged, the children are more engaged and they don't feel so stressed out. The children aren't being told to pick up and clean up in the middle of their projects just so we can do what's next on the schedule. So, we are—I'm definitely seeing a lot of it and it's

working and I'm thrilled. So, the planning, consequently planning looks differently. So when they're meeting with their partners, it's a lot more about gathering materials than setting up very structured teacher-directed activities. -Program Director

All the teachers interviewed for this evaluation described this qualitative shift both in terms of their own approach to teaching and in their observations of how other teachers approached their teaching. Teachers interviewed included both CTI participants and teachers who worked in schools that had a CTI participant but did not attend the CTI meetings themselves. All teachers in all of the regularly attending CTI programs were invited to participate in the survey and interview process, one or two teachers from each program declined or were unavailable. When directors and peers discussed teachers with whom they were struggling, the struggle was that the teachers had not made a shift from a teacher centered to a child centered social-constructivist approach to teaching. The teachers that did describe their work from the perspective of having made this shift saw it as an on-going process that required their time and effort. All of the CTI participants felt that the CTI meetings affirmed this on-going work for themselves and the teachers with whom they worked.

What is also important to note is that teachers with varied backgrounds spoke about the same shift. For example, veteran assistant teachers working toward their Associates Degrees described this shift in similar ways to how teachers working toward their master's degrees described making this shift. And, while there were a few participants who described having always approached their teaching from a social-constructivist perspective, all participants who described this move, also described how important it was to have a pedagogical leader who could support them in doing the reflective work the social-constructivist perspective calls for. As one director described,

What I want in my ideal classroom is I want a reflective teacher. I want someone that's going to be willing to take time and look at what they're doing. Is it having an impact? I want someone who is going to continue to learn. So I want that same thing for a director. You know, I want that—as passionate as I have been and have moved stuff forward, I want the same for my team....I feel like CTI deepened my awareness of the validity of the [teacher's] work, the depth of their work...it's really honoring of that process of building them up, you know rather than like, "What can I go and implement?"— Program Director

Several directors who invited and encouraged lead teachers to attend at least a few CTI meeting with them saw a direct correlation between CTI participation and shifts in the practices they observed in the classroom. As one director described:

The hard part is I've not gotten all my teachers to go there [to CTI]. So, we are at different levels now and if I could have brought everybody with me to every meeting, I think we would have made leaps and bounds of improvement, you know. But those that

attended [CTI] more regularly are doing drastically different things than they did a year ago, which is great. -Program Director

And, it is important to recognize that the work is on-going as directors support teachers to grow professionally from where they are. These observations speak to the symbiotic work that CTI meetings accomplished. On the one hand the focus of the meetings was to support pedagogical leaders to develop skills and knowledge to support teachers in their programs. On the other hand, the CTI meetings supported all of the teachers who attended to implement a social-constructivist approach in their teaching by grounding the work in the Reflective Practice Cycle and the documentation of children's work. Both teachers and directors taking beginning steps in this work to those who were advanced practitioners were supported by this work.

The director from one of the more experienced Reggio Emilia guided programs made this observation about how the CTI impacted the work they were doing in their school:

[We wondered], when are we going to get to a higher level of understanding of our work?" And I think we're getting there...slow and steady wins the race. So I feel like we are getting to higher level of understanding, that it was a revelation to us to realize that we thought we were having a higher level of understanding of our work, but in reality we were still doing some theme-based sort of things. Like when kids were interested in something we might've pulled out some of those problem boxes a little bit. You know, we were still in that frame of mind of not complete, like, beginning to understand children and what they were thinking, but still relying on, you know, pulling out the prop boxes. And so I think that's changed dramatically for many of us. I think it's that the teachers can now identify things on their own without me noticing it. Even the ones that are not going to CTI, but through the process and what I've brought back from CTI, and now [others] are starting to bring back...So I think our understanding of children's work and the theories that they're practicing has elevated. -- Program Director

Another director who's school was more at the beginning of this work, both in terms of understanding the work of documentation and in finding ways to support teachers, also felt that the CTI supported teachers' growth in her school. She had the vision, but was committed to taking one step at a time to support – not direct – the teachers in her program to take up this work in more and more depth.

And it's been presented in a way that's not demanding of them, that you have to do it this way or you have to do it that way, but more, you know, this is how the children are really benefiting elsewhere and try it and see if it works for you and it is...[For example,] for the longest time, we used to have circle times that were very old-fashioned, you know, where they have their calendar and they were having a literacy component and a music component and whatever their unit of study was, they were doing some sort of formal

learning like that and they've really dropped that. They know—I mean, even when I taught them, when I first came here, I tried to be very, very soft, like, “Oh, calendars,” you know, “It’s really not developmentally appropriate,” but they still lived by it and I didn’t want to demand that they change all of these things, but now they really realize that there is no benefit in some of that structure and they’re really redesigning their classrooms, the materials are just far more available to children. They are not quite so concerned with making it look perfect with teacher-directed artwork and such, but there are a lot more murals and things of that nature. Circle time is far more free flowing and they feel far more comfortable letting go of things that are not working...and following, you know, the way that it’s going and it’s all due to the children. - Program Director

Not having the expertise herself, the director from another CTI program recognized that she needed to hire a pedagogical leader to support the teachers in her program to begin to learn the process of documentation and to shift the learning opportunities she saw in her program, “The professional development they were getting before [CTI] was kind of like, here’s where we are today, kind of like the nuts and bolts and no real pedagogy stuff was being talked about.” To start the work, she was able to write a grant to secure the funding to hire a pedagogical leader with the skills and knowledge to model and support her and the teachers in her school in making this qualitative shift in their approach to instruction. The director’s participation in CTI gave her the vision and affirmation for taking these steps to change the opportunities the teachers and children in her program had the opportunity to experience.

And so, she’s hired and one of the things she’s doing is she’s documenting or looking at the relationship between infants and how they create relationships in the classroom if teachers promote that or if they hinder that and it all came about through the CTI. And so, basically, it was like, “Well, how can we really extend the research questions to the classrooms?”...So I wrote [a grant] for [a pedagogical leader] to work with the teachers on what they were interested in studying in the classroom...And the second person that came forward was one of our teachers and it was basically around materials, use of materials in the classroom in literacy and does the use of materials influence literacy with children? And the teacher and her whole philosophy has changed.

When [the pedagogical leader] first came, she was like, you know, “You can put materials in all the centers, you know, literacy, put pads and paper and markers and papers so the kids can write and do their stories and stuff like that.” And the teacher’s response was like, “Why? They don’t know how to write anything.” And so, it’s like, “Ah.” And so, it was like a learning opportunity. So, [the pedagogical leader] took that moment to coach the teacher that the materials matter and how they’re presented matters and then also documented children’s work for the teacher - the theory behind emergent literacy and the writing process. And so, she worked with different children and then she showed the teacher that this ties back to the theory on writing. And so, it

was kind of like a full circle for the teacher to say, “Oh, my gosh.” So, it was a good process. And so, [the pedagogical leader] will continue next year for us. We have grant money still that she’ll be able to continue working with the teachers on literacy practices or research that they’re interested in. --Program Director

Through their participation in the CTI center directors were affirmed in pursuing opportunities to support the teachers’ in their programs to continue their professional growth by documenting children’s interests. This work affirmed and supported teachers to approach their teaching from a social-constructivist approach that both broadened and deepened children’s opportunities to learn. What is unique about the CTI is that it supported programs and teachers who were more advanced in this approach to teaching and documenting students’ learning in addition to supporting teachers who were new to the work. In both cases, the opportunities students had to learn in CTI programs were more developed because someone from the program participated in CTI’s monthly meetings. This shift is not easy, nor is it tension free.

One tension that continued to surface in CTI meetings as well as in observations and interviews with directors and teachers was figuring out how to balance outside accountability measures with internal accountability measures. Krechevsky, Rivard and Burton (2010) describe accountability in three realms, 1) accountability to self, 2) accountability to each other, and 3) accountability to the larger community.

- (a) Accountability to self: Looking at what one intended to teach in relation to what actually happened);
  - (b) Accountability to each other: Contributing to collective learning as well as one’s own); and
  - (c) Accountability to the larger community: Evaluating the relationship between the school’s mission and classroom practice.
- Krechevsky, Rivard and Burton (2010)

All of the programs that participated in the CTI took outside accountability seriously and they are either accredited through the state process or through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The faculty under the different accreditation processes had different experiences within the different accountability structures. The programs accredited by NAEYC felt that the accreditation process aligned with the documentation work they were doing in their programs. Indeed the documentation and work supported by CTI aligns with national standards. The process of documenting children’s interests provided teachers the opportunity to be accountable to themselves, to the other teachers and families in their programs and to the larger early childhood education community. The programs that worked with the state’s FOCUS program also create portfolios for each child that demonstrates each student’s development in terms of New Mexico’s Early Learning Guidelines (<http://www.earlylearningnm.org>). This process involves documenting essential indicators named in the Early Learning Guidelines



for each child (<http://www.earlylearningnm.org/early-learning-guidelines>). There are 23 essential indicators that teachers must document for each child two times a year for half day programs and three times a year for full time programs. For a class of 20 that means teachers are documenting 460 essential indicators per class for each portfolio window.

While teachers found that both the process of creating the portfolios and the process of documenting children's interests were beneficial and important, they also felt that that it was hard to do both at the same time because they felt like different processes. One teacher described it as the difference between trying to break a child's development into the many distinct pieces described in the Early Learning Guidelines and taking the more holistic approach that documentation calls for. In CTI meetings participants discussed how the Early Learning Guidelines can be found in the documentation teachers do, and the documentation teachers do can be found in the Early Learning Guidelines, but often because of how the processes happen in the classroom it felt like two different processes that were in tension with each other. As one teacher described, when portfolios were due she felt like she had to stop documenting and chase children around to show her the Early Learning Guideline indicator she was missing in her portfolio documentation. Instead of following and guiding children's interests and development it felt more like forcing it because the Early Learning Guidelines called for it.

So there's hardly, there's maybe a one month break in between or less that we don't have to be constantly documenting and trying to get the standards. It really closes up what I can do with the kids because I have to have a writing sample for each one. I have to have, you know, what fits these portfolios, so instead of just being with the kids and happening to say like, "Oh, well, why don't we write this"? I feel pressured to get the writing sample for every kid, so we're just like, "Hey, do you want to write your name? Do you want to write your name on this"? And, you know, chasing them around trying to get what we need to get for the portfolios. So it's very much a different feel in my classroom when it is portfolio time. Because we're always working on writing and counting and measurement and all the things that the Standards are addressing, I mean that's always there, but it's not at the same level of I need to get this for every single child, I need to make sure I have it documented...instead of being in the moment with the kid. So that's really hard for us. And, you know, it's one of those things we just talk about a lot. And it's different also because when I'm documenting for the Reggio approach that we do, I mean there's a lot of documenting that goes on with that, but it's just a different feel again of the purpose of that documentation. I'm documenting because I'm really interested in what the kids are doing and there's something really engaging and interesting about what's going on that I want to delve into deeper. When I'm doing it for the portfolios is because I need to have something down and done that the state needs me to have done for the specific standard that they're looking for. -- Teacher

Another tension that participants discussed is that, when setting the two processes next to one another, when we focus on only assessing developmental milestones, we are potentially limiting the possibilities of documentation, as it only allows the teacher to look at a child's abilities. Whereas in pedagogical documentation the teacher aims to look at a child's abilities and beyond

to understand children's interests, needs, motivations and the theories they are developing about their worlds. In addition, through the collegial conversations and interpretations of the documentation of children's interests teachers felt they had more of an opportunity to reflect on the instructional opportunities they provide children and to grow their professional practices.

Finally, there was also consistent discussion that demonstrated that participants felt that the analytical process involved in the documentation of children's interests involved children and family members. For example one innovation for programs that was born out of conversations about documentation at CTI meetings was sharing documentation with children in order to reflect back to children the teachers' observations about their learning. In one program, teachers started sharing documentation during classroom meetings with students. This sharing opened up conversations between teachers and students about children's insights and reflections about their own learning. In addition, all programs posted documentation of students' learning in classroom for students to see and reflect on with their teachers.

In regards to involving families, all programs posted documentation for families to see and review. Teachers felt like the documentation fostered conversations that strengthened what teachers had to draw on to design curriculum based on children's interests. In some programs teachers shared documentation with families on a weekly basis. Other programs shared documentation during family nights and engaged parents in discussions about their children's interests, motivations and developmental needs. Some of the documentation shared with families was the documentation being collected for the NM Early Learning Guidelines Portfolios. Some was documentation on children's interests and aligned with reflective practice. The discussions that develop from documentation lead to building bridges between home and school and offering more relevant curriculum to develop children's interests and needs. Such conversations also supported teachers to know their students' and families better which in turn helps provide more accurate assessments of children's abilities and needs. What was important was opening the opportunity for families, children and teachers to discuss children's interests, needs, and developmental needs. As one program director described, balancing the different accountability structures means keeping things in perspective and developing teachers' professional judgment.

We still do our assessment, we still do our anecdotal observations and ongoing assessment, but it is not what we live and die by. I mean, we do it and we look for progress, but—and the teachers will say, “Oh, I don’t have a written observation for that.” I’ll say, “You’ve spent three months with this child or six months with this child, have you seen them doing that?” “Yeah.” “Then assess it.” But they’re so used to being in, you know, held accountable. If you don’t have a written observation, you can’t assess them on that, you know. Well, of course, you can. So, I think just letting them know that we’re going to be OK, when TTAP [NM’s Training and Technical Assistance Program] comes, when NAEYC comes...For me, if you can show me they’re making progress over time and you can explain that, that’s all we have to do. So, we’re spending less time on the paperwork piece of things. We’re still doing as much as we have to do, but a lot more time on the hands-on learning and consequently, they are really able to assess these children when it

comes time. You can also assess these children very easily by knowing them well. And that's what I'm trying to get them to focus on spending our time on. –Program Director

The CTI meetings affirmed directors in taking a more holistic stance toward assessment and accountability. Thus, the CTI supports directors to support teachers to develop tools to learn and respond to a wider swath of children's development, needs and interests. In addition the CTI supports pedagogical leaders, in the variety of roles they have, to support the teachers to work beyond the required accountability structures and to keep their eye on best practices. As one director described, it can be a tricky balance especially when you are in the role of evaluating the work teachers are doing in their classrooms.

And it takes a lot of time and it takes a lot of building of trust and relationship. And I have tried to push harder than I maybe should have. And so, I've had to kind of really back off from some of the teachers and let them do their thing and really through celebrating...what they're doing that is more child-centered and the child interest perspective. So with that in mind...because I feel supported by the community of thinkers that I'm supported by with the CTI, for supporting a more open-ended practice or project approach, then I feel more happy. I feel more appreciated in my work. Without it, it would be really hard. - Program Director

Deepening children's interests and capabilities is a collaborative process between directors, teachers, families and children. The CTI supported the work by affirming pedagogical leaders to support teachers in shifting their practices to a child centered social-constructivist approach to teaching. Approaching their work from this stance also changed teachers' approaches to assessment and accountability. Rather than checking off boxes, teachers, in collaboration with families, worked to know their students well and to base their assessments on that knowing. Pedagogical Leaders who participated in the CTI supported the teachers they worked with to improve children's opportunities to learn by deepening their abilities to know children's interests and capabilities.

**Assessment and evaluation in early childhood education should:**

1. better serve children and families following a philosophical principle of the greater good for all;
2. be democratic and participatory;
3. actively involve children;
4. take into account children's holistic learning;
5. seek participation of parents and other primary carers of the children;
6. be ecological, that is, referred to contexts, processes and outcomes;
7. support individual learning journeys;
8. support the learning journeys of children and professionals;
9. be (inter)culturally relevant;
10. be documented, that is, informed by the documented learning of each child;
11. provide useful and usable information for children and families, professionals and schools, teacher educators and policy makers;
12. contribute to a civic spirit of accountability.

- Formosinho, Formosinho, Pascal and Bertram (2016)

**Objective three:**  
**Participants' collaborative planning time increased and/or changed because of participation in CTI**

[In our meetings] a lot of our communication is based around teachers' stuff about what we can do for these kids, the behind the scenes kind of stuff and I think that's what the CTI meetings are - a lot of behind the scenes kind of stuff so that we can all go into our classrooms and feel ready and more capable and more willing and more patient and all these things we want the kids to be. - Lead Teacher

The CTI supported participating programs' collaborative planning on at least two levels, the structural level and the pedagogical level. By centering the work on the Reflective Practice Cycle and the documentation of children's interests, needs and development, the CTI compelled participating directors and pedagogical leaders to reflect on how they were facilitating teachers' collaborative planning time as well as how to structure teachers' time so that they had collaborative planning time.

Every program started the CTI in a different place in terms of how teachers' collaborative planning time was orchestrated and supported. On one end of the spectrum, one program had monthly or bi-monthly meetings where teachers were gathered for professional development on predetermined topics and collaborative planning time occurred in informal ways between lead and assistant teachers. In another program, teachers had weekly planning time with their co-teachers and then bi-monthly meetings as a staff. And, another program centered collaborative planning time around teachers' documentation, and had been evolving their processes to support this collaborative work for several years. In this program, co-teachers had dedicated time to met weekly to discuss documentation. Then, every other week, the teacher teams met with their director to discuss the documentation that was emerging from their classroom. On a monthly basis, all the teachers in the school met and the different classrooms took turns presenting documentation at this meeting. Essentially programs ranged in terms of teachers having minimal collaborative time to teachers having extensive and varied collaborative planning time. The range of collaborative planning activities in programs are described in table four.

Some programs had all of the components described in table four, whereas others were on the other extreme with only informal classroom level collaborative planning and staff meetings focused on administrative and pre-determined professional development topics. Most of the programs' efforts to build in collaborative planning time for teachers fell in between these two approaches. In spring 2015 one CTI program director made strides to develop the structures for collaborative planning for the teacher teams in her program. Two programs already had integrated collaborative planning time in their weekly schedules when they started CTI. In spring 2016 all participating programs except one were identifying ways to increase teachers' collaborative planning time at the classroom and/or school level.

Table 4: Range of collaborative planning activities available to early childhood educators

	General Topics		Focus on children's and teacher's interests	
<b>Classroom Level (teaching teams)</b>	Dedicated time for classroom level planning/prep time for portfolio preparation and lesson preparation using pre-determined curricula.	Informal classroom level collaborative planning.	Dedicated time for classroom level collaborative planning time that focuses on documenting, reflecting on children's interests and developing emergent curricula	Classroom level collaborative planning time with the director/ pedagogical leader focused on reflecting on documentation of children's interests and developing emergent curricula
<b>Program Staff Level Meetings</b>	Staff level meeting focused on pre-determined professional development topics.		Staff level collaborative planning time with the director/ pedagogical leader focused on reflecting on documentation of children's interests, development and needs and emergent curricula.	
<b>Program to program level or peer to peer level meetings</b>	TTAP trainings, workshops, and conferences		Peer to peer collaborative planning time across programs (i.e. CTI meetings) focused on reflecting on documentation of children's interests, development and needs and emergent curricula.	

Initially, the teachers who worked in programs that only had informal classroom level collaborative planning time with staff meetings focused on pre-determined administrative and professional development topics reported that any collaboration that existed came from their own initiative and interest, as one teacher described when asked about collaboration in her work,

Collaboration? We don't have time to collaborate. It's very poor. It's what I get from experience, from my background. It's what my assistant teacher brings up. It's what the children are interested in and we collaborate with them. The parents just a little.

-- Lead teacher

Whereas for teachers who worked in programs with a full spectrum of collaborative activities, not only did they have dedicated time for collaborative work, there was also guidance for that collaboration from a pedagogical leader. Teachers who worked in highly collaborative programs described how the collaborative work was an integral part of the work they did with children in the classroom and with their families, as one assistant teacher, who did not attend CTI meetings, described,

I support students by observing them and just listening and watching them. It's kind of hard because we have to figure out what aspect they are looking at it from or what part of it are they enjoying. What aspect of this project are they most interested in? And that's

what the collaboration meetings and everything's about. It's tough to try and figure that out, but, once we think it's something we can try and help them build on that interest...[In the collaboration meetings] we just talk to each other and every three weeks we get a turn for our classroom, and we just talk as a group and present what the project is that the children are interested in and what we've observed through it and just kind of get any input or anything that can help us think outside of the box or see different ways that we didn't see or suggestions, suggestions really that we can get as far as extending the play, and it really helps because we all know more minds are better than one. So, you know, "I didn't see it that way," or, "Hey, I didn't think of that," so, it's really helpful.

-- Assistant Teacher

Collaborative planning time supported the teachers, who had it, to approach their work supporting children's growth and development from multiple perspectives. From having time to document and discuss what was happening with children with a co-teacher to having a group to share documentation with in order to get the perspectives of colleagues who aren't in the same classroom. This work supported teachers to reflect on what was happening in their classroom from multiple perspectives, to learn from the children, and to build and refine curricula to extend and support children's interests, needs and development.

Attending CTI meetings and having the Reflective Practice Cycle be the center of the work gave participants first hand experience in collaborative planning. Teachers who attended the CTI monthly meetings also had the experience of seeing how collaborative planning in CTI meetings influenced their work in the classroom. As one participant reflected:

Looking at work together as colleagues. Looking at work from different schools together and how inspiring that's been for me both to look at the work other people are doing in their schools and to ask deeper questions together about work that's being done in each of our schools. I found that really inspiring and I think it's given me -- it's reminded me to move with curiosity through my own classroom and not just kind of always move from my to-do-list, but really try to keep asking myself, what are the children curious about, what is really interesting to any of us in the situation, which you know with a million things that you have going through your minds in terms of people's wellbeing and their comfort level and diet and their sleep and everything with children that it's really wonderful to have that. --Lead Teacher

Although many lead teachers from participating programs couldn't attend CTI meeting regularly, the regularly attending directors thought that having teachers attend some CTI meetings was beneficial. For example, in one case it provided inspiration for a director and teacher to approach their supervision meetings more from a collaborative perspective versus the usual evaluative perspective. The director saw more growth in the teacher's practice because of this shift, as she described, "The CTI has been giving us a context to use our conversations, to

impact our conversation and to take some of the work that's happening in her classroom to another level."

In another program the director felt having teachers attend even a few CTI meetings helped her to move the work forward in classrooms across her program,

[Teachers] attending just a couple of times has been beneficial...that has been big and I think then they feel more professional in implementing this work and it's not something I'm just telling them, but they're attending these, you know, really high level meetings with other people in the field and they feel empowered and good about, you know, doing the same work. And it's not, again, just something that I'm telling them to do.

- Program Director

**Making adjustments within programs to support collaborative planning time:** In addition, during the CTI meetings, program directors shared how they organized collaborative planning time. Thus the CTI meetings provided the opportunity for participants to experience collaborative planning time and to discuss how to organize time in their programs so teachers could have dedicated collaborative planning time. Early on, as a result of attending CTI meetings, one director advocated for funds from her advisory board to hire a part time teacher in order to provide release time for her teachers and their assistants to collaboratively plan together once a week, a big step for a small program.

We have made some adjustments. Hiring that staff, I mean, just getting it approved through our finance committee and explaining the high, high need for it was a process. But it really is important and I do see the benefit and in turn, of course, that keeps more families wanting to come here. The people that are more worried about the financial impact of these things are starting to really understand the benefit to the children and the families of the program and the overall income. --Program Director

This director feels that the CTI supported her efforts. Not only did it help her to develop a vision for the work, it helped her to see that making it happen in her program was manageable.

I think the CTI inspired more than anything and made me feel confident in doing these things, you know, that there absolutely will be a benefit and that it's manageable. You know, when I first started, it was a little daunting even to me. [I asked], "Where are we going with this? What is this going to look like in my day-to-day operations?" But, you know, once we started having other programs share how they're doing it, it became very manageable and easy to see how you can do that in your own work. --Program Director

The participants in the CTI helped each other by sharing how they did their work as well as how they organized the work. As the CTI continues and more programs continue to organize and

facilitate collaborative teaching time, there will be more models for how to approach this work. The programs continue to get ideas from each other but each still implements and shapes changes based on their own contexts.

Having the experience of collaboration and seeing the impact it has on the work teachers accomplish in the classroom both affirmed and inspired CTI program directors to structure teachers' time so that they would have some amount of dedicated time for collaboration. Because each program started from a different place and because CTI participants had different degrees of power and resources to structure teacher's time, how programs integrated collaborative planning time for teachers varied -- in some cases, as we saw above, programs were able to advocate for funds to hire and re-arrange the staff needed to ensure teachers have the opportunity to collaborate with others in order to grow their professional practices. In other cases, as is described below, the CTI inspired participants to think about how to integrate the work into the structures that are already in place. For example, one participant has been inspired to help the teachers she works with to stake out collaborative planning time, even though it isn't required and to open up a space for teachers to come together regularly to reflect on their work. As she describes,

I want them to have each other every Friday [during their planning time]...I want to make an agenda and say, "you have to sit down and talk between nine and ten. That's your sacred time and you're going to tell your supervisor that's what you're doing and if your supervisor wants to come and join in that conversation, then they know when to come." So space for a collaborative meeting...I'm noticing that part of my work is—and these are lessons for myself -- is that I need to be in a practical way helping the teachers to become leaders. – Program Director

This same participant is also thinking about how to carve out more collaborative planning for teachers from different classrooms to get together on a voluntary basis since her program isn't (yet) in the position to require teachers to attend such meetings,

About creating teacher leadership, I want there to be staff meetings twice a month [so we can have] more meaningful conversation...I'm thinking, "I think I'll just go ahead with the staff meetings and put it out and maybe we create a space. And I will facilitate that space and if you can come, great, if you can't, you can't." – Program Director

The CTI supported this director to begin establishing these collaborative spaces for the teachers she works with. Another program director, new to the work herself, tried different ways to start this work in her program. At first she tried to encourage teachers in her program to attend CTI meetings with her, but the timing didn't work out for teachers, even when she offered teachers stipends to attend. Next, she wrote a grant and was able to hire a pedagogical leader to work with teachers to model, research, and document children's work and learning in their classrooms,



a new practice for the teachers at this school. This director recognized she was still developing the skills and knowledge for facilitating collaborative work, so she figured out a way to bring someone who had expertise in pedagogical leadership to work with the teachers in her program. This director continues to identify ways to make the pedagogical leadership work sustainable in her program by working with her staff and advisory board and by hiring individuals with pedagogical leadership expertise. The pedagogical leader this program hired was recruited from out of state.

Several of the program directors also discussed the importance of hiring teachers who either had experience in social-constructivist pedagogies or who were open to it. In some cases programs and teachers recognized they were going in different directions and teachers found different places to work. Directors recognized the importance of getting the right staff on board, but they were also dedicated to working with and supporting teachers' professional growth as the centers became more clear about their vision for doing early childhood education. For example, another approach directors have taken to support teachers' development through collaboration was to think about how to re-assign teacher teams in order to support teachers' pedagogical growth, as one director described she planned to place one teacher who attended CTI meetings and who was taking up the work in her classroom, with another teacher who was more hesitant to shift her practice. This approach had some budgetary implications because it meant assigning two lead teachers to a classroom, but the director thinks it will ultimately benefit the instructional opportunities children will have in her program.

And so really hearing what they heard at the CTI meetings, the teachers have tried to step out of their comfort level in so many ways and it's so obvious. The look of their classroom is changing. The feel of their classroom is changing. The richness of their projects is absolutely changing. And in comparison, we have a classroom, another lead teacher...I am very much struggling to get her to make any changes and I think she's afraid she's going to have chaos when she lets go of control rather than really engaged happy children. And so I'm actually going to move her in the fall to work with one of the teachers who's really getting this. -- Program Director

In another program the director re-thought her own role so that she could do more teaching and also support the pedagogical work she wanted to strengthen in her school. Again, there are budget implications, but she thought it was an important step forward in sustaining the pedagogical work at her school.

So, this next year I'm taking us through a re-accreditation process this year, but also, I hired someone to do admin for me so I can be in the classroom more and be a lead teacher and I'm really excited about that. So, I guess, for me, I mean CTI made me -- it's made me feel like maybe I just need to be in the classroom doing this because it's such an important part of the program and I want it to happen. -- Program Director

These directors have worked with the resources that exist in their schools to re-think structures and work assignments. Thus, because of their participation in CTI directors have started making decisions that they believe supports the pedagogical work in their schools.

**Making adjustments within CTI to support schools' collaborative planning time:**

When the CTI was first developed, it was imagined that every program would have regular meetings with staff that would use the Reflective Practice Cycle to guide teachers in developing a reflective practice focused on the documentation they were developing in their classrooms. In reality, because every program was in a different place, the work around supporting teachers' collaborative planning time looked different at each school. As one program director described, the CTI model did not unfold as anticipated,

Yeah. So, I do think the CTI has made a difference in our program. Maybe not exactly in the way it was initially set up to do. We still have not been able to come up with a great schedule for having different teachers from different classrooms meet regularly throughout the week... So that has not been where we've had the most benefit, but what we found is that myself and most teachers who have attended the monthly meetings have gained a lot from those. From hearing what other schools are doing, from having training with Gigi on best practices and having more Reggio-inspired learning. Really slowing down and letting the lessons be taught by the interest of the children. That I have seen come back into the classroom and really be implemented and make a difference. So, you know, for nothing else, I love the program because of that.

– Program Director

After the first semester of CTI meetings, after reflecting on the progress programs were making to facilitate regular collaborative planning, Dr. Yu recognized that directors needed more structure in their own development as pedagogical leaders. In response to these realities, Dr. Yu identified three curricular foci for the following year to support CTI participants' development as pedagogical leaders who could facilitate the collaborative work that unfolds around documenting children's interests, needs and development and facilitating the Reflective Practice Cycle. As Dr. Yu reflected:

And every meeting, I would ask, "So how's it going at the center? How are you? Are you creating meetings at your program?" or, "What's happening?" and it was pretty slow going. Most of the programs were not. Some were, a lot were not but really enjoying the time we were having together. So the following year, I started to create more of a laid out schedule where the first part of the year would continue this idea about teachers sharing their research from the classroom, their documentation. We also connected readings to it so that people could see how other teachers from different parts of the country or world were thinking about similar kind of topics, just to kind of go even a little bit further and

more in depth with their study. So we spent some time doing that. We also spent some time looking at environment, how the environment connects to deepening studies and materials and then the idea was then at the end of the year, to look more at this idea of pedagogical leadership and how you start to implement meetings within your program.

– Gigi Yu

The lesson the CTI learned was that collaboration within programs grew from having a pedagogical leader. And pedagogical leadership emerged from developing directors' and lead teachers' expertise in documentation and the Reflective Practice Cycle. As Dr. Yu reflected, "if you don't know how to document, you don't have anything to collaborate with." Thus, the curricula foci for its meetings helped prepare pedagogical leaders to develop the foundation they needed in documentation and emergent curriculum for leading collaborative work in their programs. As described above, the three strands are:

- Teacher as Researcher,
- Emergent Curriculum,
- Pedagogical Leadership

In each CTI session Dr. Yu shared a reading and offered an example of how teachers in other programs across the country and throughout the world approached their work in these areas. Thus, in addition to sharing documentation from their own programs, CTI participants were reading articles about documentation, the environment and pedagogical leadership. Each week, Dr. Yu also showed a video that provided examples and vignettes from other programs that aligned with the focus of the week. What was offered each session both built on the last session but also stood on its own, since there were a core of participants who attended every week, but also visitors and attendees who were able to attend every few months. Although this type of work was happening in the first semester, identifying the curricular areas helped to reveal the developmental work involved in pedagogical leadership.

Programs couldn't just suddenly say, "ok now we are going to have collaborative meetings," the directors and lead teachers who would be leading these meetings needed first to develop the foundations that supported teachers to identify research questions, to document children's work and develop provocations, and organize their classrooms in ways that supported children's own research. Once program directors and teachers were doing documentation and developing provocations to extend what they were noticing in the documentation, then program directors were ready to think about how to facilitate and organize collaborative planning time for teachers. Thus, at the end of the monthly meetings in spring 2016, more directors and lead teachers were talking about how to organize and facilitate collaborative meetings. Of course this isn't a linear process, but an on-going back and forth iterative process for directors, teachers and the programs they work in. The CTI meetings supported this iterative process and the combination of the

documentation and the Reflective Practice Cycle with the curricula foci helped to augment the process in some programs, and instigate it in others.

As the CTI work continues in 2016/2017, Dr. Yu is planning to integrate a fourth strand on aesthetics into the CTI curriculum. By attending to aesthetics Dr. Yu hopes to support educators in understanding and supporting teachers to recognize how the environment supports and constrains children's opportunities to learn. Just as the CTI encourages educators to do, the CTI curriculum evolves based on documentation and reflection on participants' needs and interests.

Another teacher and emerging pedagogical leader, described her involvement with CTI as a two way process that reflects the developmental process that unfolded in the CTI. The collaboration at CTI helps to bring more perspectives to the work she is doing in the classroom with her co-teacher and then preparing the documentation to share helped her to reflect on the interaction between herself, children and the environment.

It seems there are two different layers of working together where I feel like, you know, we can spend the whole day in the classroom together and so it feels very close to us. It's kind of hard to see these different perspectives. So sometimes we can kind of just continue to talk about the same stuff whereas the CTI brings in many different perspectives and ask questions that we might not ask each other because they're not in our classroom...But then on the other side of things...we'll decide what to bring to the CTI and then it's more about reflecting on the classroom and the kids and the environment. I think seeing other samples from the teachers allows me to think about like, oh yeah, that's another way of like coming in to children's way because children's way is so sacred. It's really rich and beautiful experience they're having with themselves, with each other. And so, as an adult, you know, I could come over and I put on a hat and be something where I'm doing a lot of teacher direction or I can just sit there and take notes or I can expand on their play. Or, I can play along with them. There's so many different ways to do it. So, I feel to learn how to really see what they're doing and get their essence of what it is that they're really exploring and then learn how to see it and observe what other teachers are reflecting to someone who is presenting work, you know, throwing those questions back and forth and what were the original questions of the teacher who brought in the sample just gives me creative ideas to share with my co-teacher and to feel like, oh, "let's look at that," "what do you think about that?" And, "those are what I observed." And, "so and said this, you know." --Co-Teacher

Thus doing collaborative work helps teachers bring new ideas to the work they are doing with children and with their teaching partners. Reflecting on the work through documentation and sharing that work with other educators helps teachers to refine their work, and deepen their collaboration. It builds a strong case for making the needed space for teachers to collaborate around documentation to provide richer opportunities for children's learning.

Objective three focused on examining if and how CTI participants' collaborative planning time increased and/or changed because of participation in CTI. The CTI supported directors and lead teachers to make structural changes to their programs to create time for teachers to have collaborative time to meet. In addition, the CTI supported pedagogical leaders to develop skills and knowledge for learning how to facilitate teachers' collaborative time using the Reflective Practice Cycle in formal and informal ways. The CTI has developed three pedagogical strands to support directors and lead teachers to grow as pedagogical leaders in these ways. Finally, the CTI meetings supported on-going teacher collaborations to both reflect on the work they were doing in the classroom and to enrich their on-going work together.

For directors and teachers new to the work and because of the realities of some people's responsibilities beyond work, the monthly meetings were not accessible to everyone. Something the CTI will be doing in 2016/2017 is developing differentiated opportunities to attend a CTI Meeting. They plan to offer regular meetings that are accessible to those who cannot every month. These meetings would focus on the work teachers can do with documentation and can be led by the pedagogical leaders that have emerged from the initial CTI cohort.

#### HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING IN NEW MEXICO (Heinz, 2016)

Ten early childhood education programs in New Mexico that successfully serve a high proportion of children from low income families or children whose first language is not English have:

- **Strong site-based leadership:** Program directors used a leadership style that made employees feel supported and appreciated. In a sector where wages are low and other employment benefits are generally not offered, less tangible benefits are crucial. Educators at most centers featured in this study said their workplace felt like "a family."
- **Stability of Core Teaching Staff:** In part because of these feelings of family and appreciation, many programs included in this study had long-term, veteran educators in their classrooms. This was particularly true among lead teachers, with more turnover among assistant teachers and ancillary staff.
- **Following Children's Interests:** Educators said they felt empowered to follow the interests and abilities of the children they care for, using frameworks and standards to guide their practice but not feeling confined to inflexible lesson plans. Most of the sites included in this study did not use formal curriculum, but the majority did use the observation guidelines and planning structure of New Mexico PreK, which they said was beneficial.
- **Rich Classroom Environments:** Classrooms were filled with interesting items that children could explore independently or with teacher direction. These items included books and cozy reading areas, sensory areas (like sand trays), and areas for dramatic play (dress up, toy kitchen items). At several sites, these items were changed periodically to give children new experiences.
- **Intentional Family Involvement:** Family involvement was prominent and intentional, and included practices such as hosting inclusive family events, providing ways for families to volunteer, and accommodating parents' needs and work schedules.
- **Dual Language Instruction:** Several sites incorporated both English and Spanish into classrooms to support English Language Learners. In several cases, this meant ensuring that at least one adult in the classroom spoke Spanish, labeling classroom objects in both languages, providing dual language books, and singing songs and giving directions in both English and Spanish.
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Teacher interactions with children were positive, affirming their efforts rather than emphasizing mistakes. Teachers were attentive to children's social and emotional development, and continued to facilitate learning even if children had reached the top of their skill rubric.

**Objective four:**  
**Programs benefit by supporting teachers' collaborative and reflective work by including the role of a trained facilitator at each site.**

Through monthly meetings directors and lead teachers developed skills and knowledge to be program facilitators that serve as pedagogical leaders in their own programs. Yu's (2012) CTI Reflective Practice Cycle and the three curricula strands lay out how the facilitator becomes a pedagogical leader, or a *pedogista*, a term coined by the Reggio Emilio approach (Edwards, Gandidni & Forman, 2012). The *pedagogista*'s role is to support teacher's "autonomy" by having teachers gain an understanding of children and their own professional development through documentation and reflection (Cagliari, Filipini, Giacopini, Bonilauri & Margini, 2012, p. 139). The teacher's views and perspectives have the potential to evolve as a result of the facilitator's ability to share new ideas and keep the dialogue focused on teachers' and children's interests. The pedagogical leader is there to support teachers' documentation and reflection and to support teachers to continually refine their perceptions of the work children are accomplishing and being documented. The documentation and reflection cycle allows the teacher to self reflect and study her/his own actions and processes of teaching (Burnaford, Fischer, & Hobson, 2001). The CTI participants implemented and facilitated these investigations within their programs in different ways. Unlike traditional forms of mentoring, where the mentor comes into the classroom and observes the teacher and then discusses the observation, the CTI facilitator supports the teachers to document, reflect, and plan curricula using the CTI Reflective Practice Cycle. The focus of the interaction is on teacher's and children's work, not the facilitator's observations. This approach supports the teacher to be the driving force in her own learning and her students' learning, in collaboration with a pedagogical leader and/or other teachers.

Participants of the CTI came from programs with varying levels of experience in implementing this process. For some programs it meant putting new practices in place, while others deepened their reflective collaboration practices. There have been challenges and celebrations throughout the times these emerging pedagogical leaders met in CTI meetings and worked to make changes in their own practices, as well as the teachers with whom they work.

**Pedagogical leaders initiate new practices**

For programs that are just learning to implement these practices it is a matter of introducing new concepts and new practices to directors, lead teachers and teachers alike. As directors learned new concepts and practices through their work with CTI, they introduced the ideas and concepts to their teachers by sharing insights from attending a CTI meeting, sharing and discussing one of the articles read in a CTI meeting, or learning to respond to teachers' needs and interests as they learn to respond to children's needs and interests. A directors' abilities to reflect on what and how she is implementing what she is learning benefited the practices in the classrooms and the program as a whole. As one director, new to the process, noted,

... there's a lot I've learned about how to be a better listener, and not wanting to jump in with an answer to my staff, and to sit back and...slow down, <laughs> and help them reflect -- you know, when you're so busy in this role, it's hard to sit back and reflect on a piece of art for an hour when you have so much to do, you know? But then, to see how helpful it is to the teachers to be able to talk things through with someone else, and bring it back, and to see them slow down and really be more focused on their teaching, it has been helpful.-- Program Director

When starting a new process, it became apparent to this director that learning to slow down and take it easy “honors teachers and children for the work that they’re doing, and making it feel more... like home, not an institution.” She also sustained concrete examples of quality early childhood programming such as low family and teacher turnover.

There is a growing sense from the teachers in CTI that documentation based on child interests is becoming an important part of their practice as well. One teacher talked about how she will now “read things back to [the students] that they say” and she recognizes that children “love to hear their own words.” In another classroom the teachers have started putting pictures of their work on the walls with the frame of mind that children can begin to engage in dialogue with their teachers about their documentation. Another teacher noted how she has shifted from focusing on documenting specific milestones first to becoming “more geared into, ‘what are they doing?’ and concentrating on building on that and then I can implement literacy into their building, maybe write the words of what they’re making and what they’re saying and document it and put it with a picture so they could see it.” This process also supported a director to develop a new way to support teachers’ instruction through this process.

So I would say before I wasn’t really like looking at the work. It was maybe more at the instruction. And so, it’s different. Before, I would see somebody struggling and would look at the instruction. But, in the CTI group, it’s like, well, let’s document and capture some things, and let’s look at the children’s interest and let’s look at, you know, what they’re doing. And so, I would say that’s just a different process, a different way of doing it. -- Program Director

By offering a new way to support teachers, this director was supported to reflect on her own practice and shift her approach from focusing on instruction to focusing on children’s work and growing teachers’ practices from there. By looking at the documentation, the teacher started to see ways to change her instruction and improve children’s opportunities to learn by noticing the opportunities her instruction afforded children. Thus documentation not only helped teachers to deepen their work with children, it also provided directors a way to support teachers.

Another participant started coming to CTI when she took a new position leading a program. Although new to the work, through CTI she gained a pedagogical perspective toward early

childhood education that is not only influencing classroom work, but also is contributing to hiring decisions and other work she is doing to reconfigure and grow the program.

And so, what I can say is that we're definitely working on many of those aspects of a Reggio model. So, very child-centered programming, definitely teaching the teachers that it's not just play, that you have to sit down and you have to guide some of the play with the children for them to extend the learning and stuff like that. A lot of early literacy professional development has come forward for the staff...The board of directors has created funds to hire a consultant who supports literacy research with teachers using a pedagogical approach to professional development supported by her understanding of the CTI process. --Program Director

This person's experience with CTI also influenced her selection of presenters at a conference she helped organize, where Dr. Karen Haigh, author of *We are All Explorers* (Scheinfeld, Haigh, & Scheinfeld, 2008) and an Education Administrator of several Head Starts in Chicago who has done a lot of work with the Reflective Practice Cycle spoke, along with several workshop presenters who focused on the tenets of CTI and were presented by CTI members. These workshops were open to early childhood educators throughout Santa Fe, thus expanding the opportunities non-CTI programs have to learn about these pedagogical shifts. As for next steps, the program is in the process of hiring an education coordinator that will attend CTI meetings and continue the pedagogical shift that has begun in this program.

As center directors and lead teachers, often new to the work themselves, began to introduce and offer examples from what they were seeing and hearing in the CTI meetings, the practices of teachers they worked with changed, in small and big ways. Importantly, directors and lead teachers recognized that they could not mandate these changes, but rather by offering examples, modeling and providing opportunities to see and discuss how other teachers were going about this work, teachers started experimenting and reflecting on their current practices and "trying things out," with the encouragement of a pedagogical leader. As has been documented in this report, there are many examples of how teachers benefitted from having their program leader engage in the work of becoming a pedagogical leader.

In the same vein, several of the educators spoke about how CTI helped them to deepen their work with children by extending their knowledge, by helping them to "see" more of what is happening for the child and with teachers in their programs. Whether participants were new to the process or experienced participants, teachers described feeling supported in their learning and understanding in reflecting on the documentation and how it informs the teacher about what the child knows and is learning about the world.



### **Pedagogical leaders deepen existing practices**

In the same vein, some regularly attending programs had been doing this work for many years and several of the regularly attending directors and lead teachers brought decades of experience to the work. The more experienced pedagogical leaders spoke about how CTI helped them to deepen their work with teachers and children by extending their knowledge, by helping them to “see” more of what is happening for the child. For example for the more advanced programs, the CTI process helped the pedagogical leaders hone what to listen for and extend during collaborative planning meetings:

Well, I think it's definitely influenced the way that I am able to reflect with other teachers here when we're doing our collaborative curriculum meetings that we have here. I think that I can feel when those thoughts are coming up, like, “Oh, this is totally something we came up with in CTP” or this is something that we talked about. I'm able to reflect on that there and bring some of that here. And it's nice because my director and I are going so we can kind of, we both can support each other in bringing that into the conversation with the other teachers here in the center. So I think that our-- from those experiences I think that our collaborative curriculum meetings have also gotten deeper and more focused than they were before. - Lead Teacher

Lead teachers that are experienced with the CTI cycle speak to how their programs have expanded their dialogue about children’s needs and interests at the teacher level but they also noticed it spilling into the classroom. They replicated the process in the classroom with children,

I'm sure that's influencing everybody. You know, I don't know for sure, but we have more discussions. The reflection circles (with children) have become much more common, that's something that we all have really taken on this year. – Lead Teacher

Several teachers described how the CTI Reflective Practice Cycle supported them in “looking at things differently” and being more open to exploring children’s ideas, even if they were imaginative.

What is my teacher research question and what is driving me? And that piece that we have talked about several times about when to give them the answer and when not to give them, that one drives me crazy and I don't believe in ever giving them the answer...Like, the other day the kids were telling me about different trees that they plant, that they grow in their gardens and they were saying", "Like yeah, and I grow a macaroni plant". And I told them, "Well, what does the macaroni plant look like"? And they gave me all these details...And so I think that I am aware of that a lot more because of CTI, because that was one topic that we discussed there of like being really purposeful of not shutting down any of their ideas and making sure that who knows, it might be-- we

might think that it's impossible now, but it may be possible. Who knows where we're going? –Teacher

Discussions like “when do you give an answer” evolved out of sharing and reflecting on documentation in CTI meetings. Thus, the documentation and Reflective Practice Cycle supported teacher leaders take their work to the next level. Another school that has worked to do documentation over time stated, “And we’re doing something-- we used to do like mini panels on everything. And now this year we’re doing, we’re trying to do, bigger panels that are more about long-term projects.” These quotes reflect how CTI teachers and leaders, working in environments that support collaboration to a high degree, deepen their collaborative work by having pedagogical leaders inside and outside the classroom. The CTI meetings themselves offer important collaborative planning time for learning with peers from different programs.

### **Challenges**

In one or two cases, the person who attended the CTI was not in the position to make the changes promoted by the CTI, and/or the teachers in the program were not ready. As one director described it when one of the teachers from her program attended a meeting, she said at the beginning, ““I don’t have a clue what’s going on,” it was so different to the way she’d been working.” Then, during that meeting two of the more seasoned pedagogical leaders talked with this teacher about the project that was being discussed and this helped the teacher to start to see the work. As the director described, “So at the end of the meeting she said, “Oh, this is interesting.” She had gone from the beginning of the meeting saying “I’m clueless” to “this is interesting.”” These meetings provided on-going support for regular participants and offered one-time attendees a stimulus to perhaps begin to imagine something different for teaching pre-school children, which supported the work pedagogical leaders were trying to accomplish in their programs.

Despite not being able to make the changes they wanted to see, the CTI was still vital to their work. It affirmed them in having the stance that they did toward teaching and gave them ideas for making changes in small ways, often by modeling documentation. As one person described,

[CTI] reflected my own beliefs in how we should work with small children and I just think it’s fascinating and it was a support group too really. I mean, everyone is very respectful of everybody else and very open to new ideas. I love the presentations. I learned something new every time...That was an important part of my going to the CTI because, you know, I lived in hope that things would change at [my program]. --Program Director

CTI participants learned that this transformative work can be slow work and that it is something teachers and administrators need to be invited to be a part of; it cannot be mandated. When asked why it mattered, a frustrated director replied,

Oh, for so many reasons. The teachers have a much deeper understanding of where the child is at and how to further the child's interest and the child's concept development. It boosts the child's morale to see their work up there, the parents have a deeper understanding of what their child is capable of—it's interesting—it's interesting for anyone to look at, but I don't know if that would be enough to convince administrators.

– Program Director

At the same token even for programs that have been practicing this approach for a while there can be challenges. One director whose program has practiced the Reggio Emilio approach expressed some of the blockades to implementing the CTI Reflective Practice Cycle.

Sometimes it feels a little stale, like one of our head teachers is new this year to teaching in a Reggio-inspired classroom, so I'm kind of saying to her "Okay, we don't have any documentation of this year. I mean, we did something in the fall, but it's been a few months. Let's - ." We still really struggle with having the meeting time to do that, to really be able to do the documentation, and I'm still brainstorming, like "How do we do this?" And I feel frustrated, because it's been five years. <laughs> And we have different things that worked at different times. Sometimes we have parents who can come and do-- they're willing to get background checks. They'll hang out with the kids, and we can do meetings, but we don't this year, so we did last year." – Program Director

Such challenges came with recognizing that time must be made for documenting and collectively reflecting with colleagues and children. At the same time, this director continued to work through the challenges of supporting new staff and navigating how to make time for collaborative work. The CTI supported her to work through the challenges and to develop more skills to support the work in her school as new staff was hired,

And you know, when you bring in a new teacher and they've never done it before, it takes a couple of years. It really does. It's really hard to just jump in. It's so time consuming. There's so much to it. So that's kind of where we're at with that. I think CTI helped hold the container in terms of like, yes, this is who we are, yes. You know, going to the meetings and really being kind of affirmed in that. I mean it's something that the school has -- it's a form and an inspiration the school has held for years before I was here. But it really depends on who's here how that is carried out.

– Program Director

Teachers and directors recognize that the CTI Reflective Practice Cycle is an important and essential aspect of supporting teachers in this work. It enhances teacher's practices and children's learning opportunities. Having a pedagogical leader to facilitate the work is essential on multiple levels and the CTI participants demonstrated that what participants gain from attending CTI meetings supports them on three levels.

- 1) Introducing new practices and ideas to early childhood educators,
- 2) Deepening on-going work in reflective practice and teaching based on children's interests, and
- 3) Sustaining a vision for the work as programs develop and change.

Another set of challenges has to do with constraints programs have in terms of the employment regulations and requirements for paying teachers for professional development and giving them comp time for attending professional development. Programs have to provide 24 hours of training a year and according to a recent finding from the Department of Workforce Solutions employees have to be paid or provided comp time during that week for those hours. This ruling put tremendous constraints on early childhood programs, as one director explained:

I think-- I mean, from centers, and from the teachers' point of view, we have-- this is very logistical challenge. You have to provide 24 hours of training a year, and you have to pay your staff to do that. So for many, many years, centers were having their teachers attend training through TTAP at night, and on weekends they were offering all these trainings and things. Well, it turns out you're supposed to be paying them for all of that, and if you can imagine, 24 additional hours of overtime paid per staff member, per center, that's a really big budgetary hit. So we've built in those training hours into our schedule, and we provide them on-site or off-site together during that paid time, so it's not overtime. So when I send my teachers to CTI, I have to give them comp time during that week, legally. They don't even want it. They were fine, like, "Oh, no, Anne. I'm fine. I'm fine." But legally, you have to. You can't expect to provide anything that's related to their job and not pay them for it. And so the Department of Workforce Solutions has been all over preschools and childcare centers, because that was done wrong for so long. We had a really intense audit this year from them, and they reviewed timesheets, they reviewed training logs, they reviewed agendas from trainings. And we didn't have any findings, but the first year I started and all the years before that, we would've been hit big, with big fines and all of that. So in that way, you have to be kind of careful, because you have to do employment lawfully. So that has been interesting, because I'd love to have all of them come to CTI, but I can't have all of them leave three hours early, you know, in one week. The comp time has to be done in the week that they attended. So that's a really weird logistic little piece...that is something that has been hard for us. So that's why, when I had the opportunity to call Gigi and share her knowledge with everyone at one time, I was on it. You know, so we can all be together, and all learn it together, or reflect on it together. Ideally, that would happen more often, or you have these meetings during worktime, and you could schedule that if you knew that every other month or so you were going to have a three-hour time where your staff could all attend and could all work through this. You can plan that, you know?

Different programs handled this issue differently. Most CTI participants just thought of attending CTI as a private initiative that they did outside of work. At the same time, many participants documented the hours they attended CTI so they could count the hours toward the 24 hours of required training. On the one hand the 24 hours offers an opportunity for programs

to find ways to integrate the CTI work into their directors and teachers' time. On the other hand the logistics of doing that is challenging. Integrating paid time for directors and teachers' to participate in CTI has been challenging for programs to navigate in terms of the existing professional development structures and employment regulations. Attending CTI was something that all participants did that was "above and beyond" and that many did on their own initiative.

### **Pedagogical leaders help imagine new possibilities.**

Several program leaders who attended the CTI did not work in one program, rather, they worked with programs that supported early childhood education programs throughout the state. The CTI gave these educators an opportunity to envision a future for implementing quality early childhood programs in and with their programs. These participants drew meaning from their participation in the CTI that will influence and, in some cases, change their work moving forward.

After attending several CTI meetings one person continued to be involved because the experience supported her belief that early childhood education needed to be "creative" in order to support children to "develop much more to their capacity, instead of subjecting them to rote learning, which unfortunately was the case" [in many programs she worked with]. In her observations, she saw how "children, who were very lively and could speak their language and could interact with everyone, would get into [their program] and all of a sudden it's like a shutdown." Participating in the CTI process gave her the perspective of what could happen given, "time and resources," which is the next step in creating and obtaining support at early learning centers throughout New Mexico.

Another regular participant who worked in program development for informal learning opportunities was influenced to introduce new educational programs focusing on early childhood and the arts. Her participation in the CTI also inspired her to further her own education,

I helped develop and then manage the early childhood initiative and that started basically this past year. And a lot of what I've experienced and learned through the CTI and also connections I've made there have informed the development of this program. It's a totally different pedagogy. So, the pedagogy of that program is this inspiration I've taken, is the Reggio Emilia approach. And so at the same time, I'm going back to school. So, I've been taking a course, a certification in pedagogical coordination, through Webster University and it's a graduate course and essentially, at the end of it, I get a certificate. —Program Director

This participant's participation in CTI supported her to create an entirely new program in her organization that focuses on professional development for early childhood educators. This organization has four workshops planned for the 2016/2017 school year. Each workshop will

accommodates up to 50 educators and will explore topics of interest related to innovative early learning best practices and will be presented, in part, by pedagogical leaders from the CTI.

The initiatives these participants work with reach children throughout New Mexico in public, tribal and private schools by supporting early childhood educators. Through the CTI, and other learning opportunities they have sought, the CTI participants have gained more skills to recognize, and hold a vision for what powerful early childhood education can look like. Having this vision and experiencing the Reflective Practice Cycle can support them to provide experiences for educators and children to experience this work themselves in a multitude of settings from informal learning opportunities for children, to professional development opportunities for teachers. Thus these participants offer the opportunity to plant seeds with the educators they work with to develop different opportunities to support children's development and growth by documenting and reflecting on children's interests in a variety of settings. As one such participant reflected,

I do benefit from the experiences of the other teachers [in CTI]. I don't know how much, you know, my own can contribute. I guess that'll be seen down the line, but I certainly benefit, because one of the things that keeps me, I guess you could say gives me hope, is that if there are teachers who think similarly to some of the values we have, then that's good. And maybe we can start changing some of how people perceive, "This is the policy, so therefore this is the only way we do things." --Program Director

**Objective five:**  
**The center facilitator has time to reflect on his/her work with teachers.**

CTI creates a safe space for experienced teachers to share their work, listen, and respond to perspectives and work from a wider scope of contexts. The CTI provides experienced educators a community of support for refining and deepening the practices in their classrooms and programs. It also provides a space for educators to renew and be affirmed, especially when participants worked in spaces where this pedagogical collaborative work was not the norm. Finally, the CTI provided these experienced educators to find ways to educate their community about excellent early childhood education and to broaden the professional development opportunities available to early childhood educators in Santa Fe and other parts of the state.

The CTI not only supports the development of pedagogical leaders, it provides a space for pedagogical leaders to connect as peers. As one director shared,

As director – I don’t have anyone to reflect with. With CTI I feel more passionate about it – I didn’t feel as excited about it until we got to do it. Before it felt like one more thing, now I feel more excited about it. --Program Director

Another CTI member talked about the tone in the collaborative community. She sees the CTI as a safe space to talk through the challenges of working in early childhood education. Over the course of the year and a half CTI met monthly, the participants challenged and disagreed with one another. They also discussed the challenges they faced in their very different environments. Although some of these conversations were tough, in reflection, one participant shared how she

appreciated everyone’s point of view... It touched me, we have a place where we can be honest – that is something I’m learning – we have to be honest to move forward... its so deeply important to honor the debate and to listen to their theories and how we trump that. I needed rejuvenation. -- Program Director

Another director shared how the CTI also supported her in having hard conversations with the teachers she worked with.

And I keep saying to her, I really want to be able to sit down with you and really look at two aspects in her work and one of them is the classroom as the third teacher. I really would like to support her practice in that way...And then also her taking a risk in not being so, in a sense, prescriptive of where the children should go with their thinking. And I think that that she’s very good at what she’s doing now and I see how she’s interested in our work, in the sort of work in the CTI and in Reggio Emilia and the deeper thinking. She and I are ready to collaborate more and to maybe have some kind of, not scary conversations, but to have some conversations to say, “This is what I really think,

although I'm not criticizing you, it's just I could see how you could really build your practice if you did this. What do you think?"...And I feel comfortable and I think that that's the context also I've got from the CTI...[to have] courageous conversations.  
–Program Director

By experiencing excellent facilitation and support for working through conflict in CTI meetings, this pedagogical leader started to see how she could do the same work with the teachers she works with.

The CTI has also supported participants to grow the resources and networks they have available to do the work, both in terms of growing their pedagogical resources, but also growing the number of people the participants have to reach out to when they need support or have a question about navigating in the early childhood education environment. As one participant described,

Just the philosophy, like a new philosophy on how to look at work...It's just a different philosophy. So, you know, really looking at the children's work and analyzing it as a team and seeing, how can you expand it, or not. I've also gained a resource of people in the community to work with. And so, it's not just about how we've learned all this pedagogy and, you know, instructional stuff from Gigi but I have also learned that there's a group of colleagues that I can call upon and say, you know, can you come and present at this next conference? Would you be interested in doing your work? And so, I think I've gained a network of people. –Program Director

Over the year and a half these peers have been meeting, they have learned to see one another's strengths, thereby expanding the resources they have to make their own programs successful. Participants now regularly share job openings they have in their centers and they have organized observations for their teachers in one another's programs. Several of the participants have started to collaborate to present at conferences and offer professional development workshops to the early childhood education workforce in different parts of New Mexico (such as the Santa Fe Opera's Early Childhood Initiative). Building on the Reflective Practice Cycle and documentation of children's interests, the CTI has nurtured pedagogical leaders to expand their influence and share their expertise with other early childhood educators. As CTI participants have shared their experiences in different venues, educators from other parts of the state are starting to ask CTI leaders for advice and support to start CTI meetings in their own community. This interest from other programs speaks to the on-going need for advanced professional development. It also speaks to the interest in building a community of practice where directors and teacher leaders can reflect and grow their own practices, both in terms of what they accomplish in the classroom, but also in terms of how they can support the teachers' in their programs to grow their practices based on learning and growing children's interests, development, and needs.



In June of 2016 the CTI participants opened an exhibit, with support from the Baby Fund. Over the course of the year, programs documented long-term studies that the teachers did with children. The focus of the exhibit was “Making Sense of Play.” As the exhibit developed over the course of the year, the CTI educators not only developed the exhibit to share the incredible work children were doing in their programs, they also wanted to support the larger community to see the complex work children were accomplishing through play. Through the documentation process this exhibit inspired teachers and directors alike to make sense of the play children were doing in and across their programs. In addition, they worked to make sense of the children’s play to inform their own work with children. Finally, the CTI participants collaborated to craft a message to the Santa Fe community about the importance of play in children’s development.

This exhibit opened with a reception at the Georgia O’Keefe Museum on June 18, 2016. It closed at an Early Childhood Conference at the Santa Fe Community College in August of 2016. In between, the panels from the exhibit were displayed in businesses and non-profits throughout the Santa Fe community, thereby expanding the impact of the participants’ collective reflections and documentation. The photos included here not only provide examples of the rich documentation that took place in the different CTI programs during the 2015/2016 school year, it also shows the sense of pride and accomplishment CTI participants have for this work, and if you look closely, you can see subtle and strong examples of the powerful work this documentation inspired teachers to accomplish with children. Perhaps most importantly, you can see the important work children are being supported to accomplish in these programs.



Figure 5: Collaborative Teachers’ Institute’s Exhibit Making Sense of Play, June 2016



## MAKING SENSE OF *play*

*An exhibit of the Collaborative Teachers Institute*

**JUNE 18, 2016 - 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM**  
**123 GRANT AVE.**  
**EDUCATION ANNEX OF THE GEORGIA O'KEEFFE**  
**MUSEUM**

Join us for a free and fun reception for families with young children to celebrate the art of play!



*Making Sense of Play* explores the many ways that children make sense of the world through their play. Drawings, paintings, sculpture, and various activities coupled with their own words and those of their teachers show us how, where and why young children play and learn in Santa Fe. They also illustrate how teachers can support this playful learning. The posters in the exhibit were created by teachers who participate in the Collaborative Teachers Institute (CTI), a group of early childhood educators who meet regularly to discuss and jointly develop their work. To learn more about the CTI, please visit [www.collaborativeteachersinstitute.com](http://www.collaborativeteachersinstitute.com).

Figure 6: Collaborative Teachers' Institute's Exhibit Making Sense of Play, June 2016

**Objective six:**  
**Families are invited to participate in the life of the classroom.**

We need to make a big impression on parents, amaze them, convince them that what we are doing is something extremely important for their children and for them. -- Malaguzzi (1994)

CTI educators collaborate with families on multiple levels in order to support children's growth and well-being. CTI participants found including families in the conversations that occur in the classroom between children and teachers an essential aspect of their documentation work. Betram and Pascal (2004, 2006) point to this as creating a "triangulation of voices (teachers, children and parent)" which supports understanding an authentic and inclusive practice (cited in Formosinho & Formosinho, 2016). Documentation is a vehicle for bringing families close to the inquiries and work their children do in early childhood classrooms. Through documentation, families have an opportunity to participate in the questions their children are interested in pursuing. Teachers not only share the learning projects occurring in the classroom, but it is a mechanism for sharing how capable children are by presenting how children are thinking about their own work and how children articulate their work. Collaboration with families begins with communication as one CTI teacher described,

I think there's collaboration with everybody here from us as a team to the parents, whether it's good or bad it's constantly collaborating with the parents and letting them know this and this is happening. "What do you do at home? What can we do here to help... because we have to work together, so that's not just my job and it's not just your job." We work together...with that particular child we have collaborated a lot with the parent and it's that consistency at home and at school that he's been able to grow that much also. So it helps. -- Teacher

The participants of the CTI broaden these communications with the use of documentation as it supports teachers in articulating the intelligences of children to families so they to see and recognize how capable and intelligent their children are. CTI participants are always refining their communication with families, from sharing documentation in panels hung in and by the classroom to what one teacher refers to as daily updates. Thus, the documentation not only informs teachers' pedagogical choices, it also engages parents.

Sharing information daily, with parents, which takes time to do. So it's more like they're kind of like panels. It's like, "This is what the kids did today. This is what they're doing." And so it was like a way to share that information, which takes time. And so instead of making mini panels, it's more like the parents are just so happy to have a little window into their child's world for the day. And that's kind of like a mini panel, but not really. The parents seem much more involved, to have that dialogue with them daily. And I

don't know. I feel like the expeditions are-- when we were doing quick panels it was almost like when I would do a panel, in my mind it was done. And so now since I have, like, long-term panels going, and we meet to share more of the documentation ourselves, I feel like we're going deeper with them and the children are going deeper with their work. -- Teacher

Here, developing documentation for sharing everyday events with parents supported teachers in their long-term documentation work. Thus reflecting on documentation in the short term helped connect parents to the work their children are doing and it supported this teacher with more long term work she was documenting with her co-teacher.

Teachers from CTI shared documentation of children's work at conferences through the use of binders and panels. Sometimes children were supported to dialogue with their families about their work using the documentation present in the classroom. One director acknowledged how challenging it is for working parents to spend time at the school, therefore reaching out through email and text with mini observations made families feel connected to their child and the school. Newsletters are another form of outreach where teachers articulate to families the learning occurring and the strengths of children. There are also schools participating in CTI who invite families to meetings to engage in the reflective documentation cycle. One teacher observed that "although the language that people were using was different, the outcomes and the ideas and the thought process came up pretty much the same" in the reflective cycle process with parents and teachers alike. According to this teacher, it showed the families and the teachers how "we don't all have to have this "high education," that we are all "capable of participating in the reflective documentation process" to learn about and support children's interests.

Each of these formats provides teachers an opportunity to support families in seeing how their child has grown and the many strengths and abilities of children. One director in the CTI group worked with a teacher to create and display documentation panels as a way to model the process for other teachers in her program who were new to the work. When she posted the documentation in the hall for the teachers, she found out that families really responded to the documentation as well. This process reminded this director how documentation, and sharing it with families, can become a joyous part of teacher's work.

Last year, I did quite a bit of documentation with a couple of teachers, and I did it and hung it up on their wall and kind of modeled it. And it was so interesting because families saw it, and just the other day, I was walking through the corridor, and a family member came and said, "Oh, I'm always going to remember you because I loved what you did for my son's work, and I really saw what he did, and it really made sense because you helped him learn, da da da da da", and it was like that's what that's about. They got it. I want the teachers to enjoy that more and have that be part of their practice.

– Program Director

Teachers from all of the programs recognize documentation as a form of collaboration with families, by sharing photos, quotes and project interests. Depending on a program's understanding and experience with the pedagogical process, documentation is used to collaborate and engage families at varying levels. Some teachers are still learning to articulate and dialogue with families extensively about the documentation. Pictures will be sent out to families via email, "A lot of parents say, "Great. Love it." Yet it is a practice that takes time to develop as one director explained,

We've also increased a lot of our documentation in the classroom so parents walking in can see it, so the children can see evidence of their work and that wasn't happening as much prior to, you know, our years with the CTI. So, they're really starting to grasp that.  
--Program Director

As teachers begin to see their documentation as a vehicle for dialogue with families to gain more insight about a child and the development of projects, teachers also begin to see families as meaningful resources. The teacher who brought the documentation about the child's interest in trucks to CTI described what this work looked like in her classroom from the perspective of engaging parents.

A little boy that was interested in drawing and writing but everything involved with trucks. And then I figured out it involved the father because I asked the mom and the mom say, "Because when he has to deliver the jumper games to rent, he goes with him." Then we took his skill to help other ones because when we need transportation, he was the main one there...because he was an expert on trucks...It helped because the father shared with me, the mother shared with me, it helped, it was easier to recognize and when we did transportation, oh my goodness, he was a hit there, it was his team mostly, he was the leader of that team. And it helped because his self-esteem grew so much and he was able to help everybody else draw a car and show them how to draw a truck. -- Teacher

Since this teacher came to see her documentation as meaningful she was able to talk to family members about what she was observing and it facilitated a meaningful dialogue with the family throughout the year. In turn families, teachers and peers come to see the child as a meaning maker who has something to contribute to the learning in the classroom. This work supported the child thrive by building on and extending his interests. His interests became a resource for the class.

As teachers came to see documentation as a meaningful way to share information with families, they also learned how it can be a way to work with a family to support a child in the classroom. The following stories tell how teachers worked with families to make a child's strengths and capabilities in the classroom environment more apparent. In one case documentation of a child's

interest supported the work. In both cases the teachers show the power of seeing the families as resources to support their child to thrive in the classroom.

Story 1:

Well, in our classroom we have a set of twins. We have two but one is a Spanish-speaking family, and they are-- they were not talking at all in the classroom. They were not doing anything. They were not participating. They were not active players. They were not doing anything. And then I started to build a good relationship with them, like a closer relationship, and just talking and just reading for them and talking to mom, asking, "What do they like?" "What would you like me to do in the classroom for them to get their attention, to get their confidence or trust?" And then she mentioned to me that they like to play with trains. One likes to color. The other likes to do this. But they don't talk that much. And then we started introducing all those materials and just working one-on-one with them. And now they're more independent in the classroom. They're more confident. They still talk very little, but they are talking now. They communicate at least with us and with the coworkers. And I think that is because we had to go and talk to their families in order to understand what's going on with them, how can we support them. And I think it's a good example about talking with parents. And at the same time too, learning how to share with a parent as well, like, all of their learning and deep learning. So I find when I share with a parent about some support that a child is needing, I have to actively think. I want to tell that parent "This is what they did today," and really share all their learning as well in all the areas of talent, so that the parent doesn't feel like, "Oh, God. What else is happening?" ...Which is an art, I feel, to learn how to really say what's going on and really say what we think they need support with.

– Assistant Teacher

Story 2:

I think we've had one person who, let's see, maybe I should think about how I want to talk about. Well, I think the little girl you saw in the circle today with her father is a good example. She's somebody who expressed some shyness, particularly around strangers coming into the class or big kids, she used to just kind of hang on to my leg and cry when they would come in. So one thing that we've been doing is we talked to her family about how to support her, which is something we really like to do as family collaboration. And they talked to us about...[what] helps her navigate through the world...So she's been starting to tell us these stories about herself as the explorer and how that person has a lot of courage and they used the courage to come into the classroom. So she's been starting to tell those stories and then she actually came with on her own idea to have her dad come in to meet the buddies today as a way to kind of bridge that connection for her...I think we really try to see what kids' needs are and support them individually and not force them into doing things and collaborate with their families as well. We also tied it into some of our character traits, so we've been talking a lot about the word courage and



acknowledging kids for being courageous. Like we were doing a performance and she didn't want to come up, so she sat next to me, and so I acknowledged her for being courageous. And she said, "Yeah, just like the explorer. I'm just like her". So---... Yeah building a real strong image of the child for herself... And to see herself as somebody who's courageous and who can share her needs and not feel like they're not going to be met. - Teacher

Documenting children's interests and sharing that with families, as well as connecting with families when children are struggling are powerful ways to bridge the worlds between school and home. As participants in the CTI, and teachers learning about documentation through their director's participation in CTI, started doing more documentation, they found more ways to connect with families about what their children were doing in school, but they also recognized how children's interests at home could be supported in school. Thus, documentation serves multiple purposes, in addition to supporting teachers to reflection on their professional practice, and to reflect children's learning and interests back to them, it also helps build connections with families.

Through documentation and attention to children's interests, these teachers developed new ways to communicate with families by presenting documentation to families. Through this process, teachers' understandings of the children they were working with evolved. The process also helped teachers to recognize the strengths and resources families had to support children's learning. Teachers gain comfort in working collaboratively with families by listening to and being heard by the children they work with and their families. By supporting documentation and its development, teachers develop their image of the child by reflecting on their observations and documentation. When they share this documentation with families, communications with families evolves and richer experiences for children occur in the classroom. In addition, family members themselves develop a deeper appreciation for what their children are capable of.

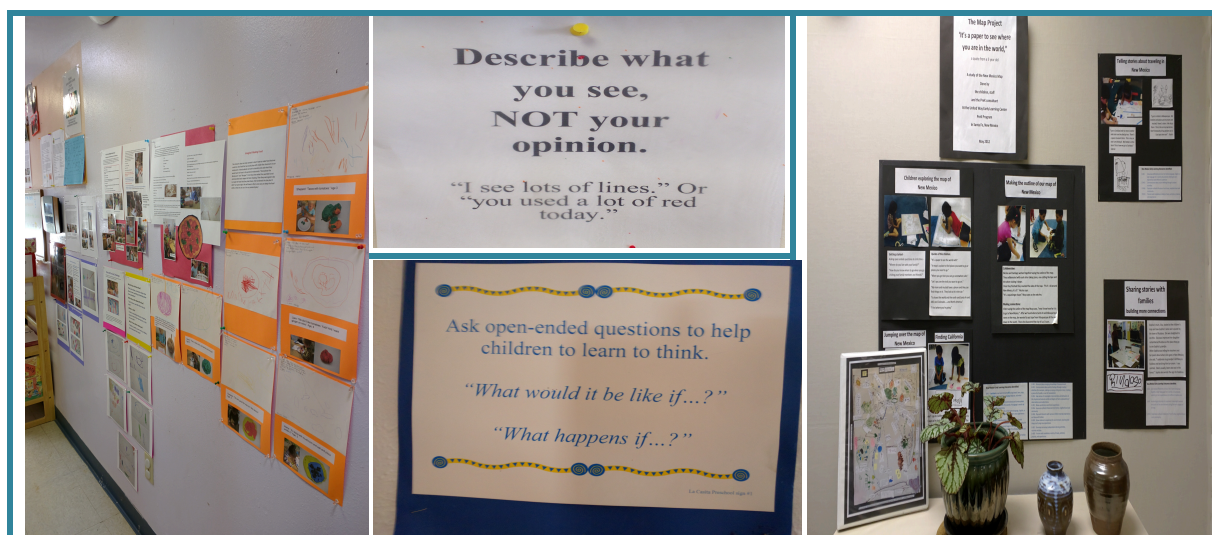


Figure 7: Documentation panels and advice displayed in CTI programs

## Summary

The CTI's work centered on having and developing a strong image of children. This advanced professional development recognizes teachers must challenge themselves to see every child as strong, capable and resilient and that this process is a reflective one. This recognition occurs when teachers are supported to slow down to document and reflect on children's interests in order to develop emergent curricula that nurtures and extends children's interests, needs and development. This work does not happen in isolation and the programs that have the most success in supporting teachers to do this work have worked to identify resources and structures that ensure the teachers in their program have time to collaboratively plan and reflect on the work they are accomplishing in their classrooms through documentation. These teachers have time to document and reflect on children's interests at the classroom level within their teaching team, with a pedagogical leader, and at the school level with colleagues who work in other classrooms. The documentation also supported teachers to strengthen relationships with families in ways that supported and extended children's opportunities to learn.

The resources to fund a pedagogical leader are seen as a financial luxury and rarely as a beneficial way for programs to spend their money. Yet, programs benefit overall by supporting teachers' collaborative and reflective work, including the role of a pedagogical leader, which is ultimately reflected in the quality of education for children. --Haigh (2007)

Through their work with the CTI program directors and lead teachers developed knowledge and skills as pedagogical leaders who could work one on one with teachers to improve children's opportunities to learn, as well as facilitating reflective practice meetings with the faculty in their program. The CTI's monthly meetings brought directors and lead teachers from a diverse group of programs together to reflect on the work they were doing as pedagogical leaders. These monthly meetings not only supported these educators make program decisions from a pedagogical perspective, it also helped them to broaden their networks for accomplishing this nuanced and courageous work in their programs and to broaden opportunities for advanced professional development throughout the state. This work starts with documentation and reflection and it ends with documentation reflection. In between children, teachers and programs discover what is possible when their work is guided by developing a strong image of what children and teachers are capable of accomplishing. The CTI offers an innovative model for accomplishing this work.



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## Appendix

### Study Methodology

This research was conducted between January 2015 and August 2016.

#### Observations:

- Meeting attendance. The researcher attended all CTI meetings and took field notes in each meeting (N = 16 meetings).
- One to two observations in each of the participating pre-school programs (N= 15 observations). Half the observations were completed in fall 2015 and follow up observations were completed in spring 2016. Observations lasted between one and two hours and focused on teacher/child interactions, teacher/teacher interactions, teacher documentation, and evidence of family engagement.

**Interviews.** Interviews were conducted in fall of 2015 (N=22 participants) with follow up interviews and a focus group in summer 2016 (N=16 participants). Interviews included CTI participants (Directors and lead teachers) and non-CTI participants (lead teachers, co-teachers and teaching assistants). Due to participants' time constraints, four interviews were conducted in teacher/co-teacher pairs. The focus group in spring 2016 was conducted with the entire staff at one school. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 90 minutes.

**Surveys.** With their permission, the TSEEQ was given to all directors to give to their teachers in fall 2015 and again in spring 2016. Participation on the surveys was low both times (N = 12). The survey was given to directors to give to their staff in paper form as well as electronically, with multiple prompts and encouragement.

**Analysis.** Data were coded by two researchers, with conversations to develop inter-coder reliability. Each code was aligned to the research questions identified in this study. Analysis occurred by identifying themes in the codes with the highest occurrence. Low occurrence codes were used to affirm and disconfirm each theme. Data were also analyzed based on relationship to CTI objectives.

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, [1999](#)) using Dedoose qualitative analysis software. This method of analysis includes an iterative process of open coding and thematic coding involving both researchers reading each piece of data and comparing it to other pieces of data to look for confirming and disconfirming evidence. Themes were developed based on the frequency of linked items and co-occurrences across the data set. Thematic analyses were completed by coders who independently examined all transcripts for interviews, and focus groups, field notes from meetings and observations and survey responses. Early stages of analysis included developing initial sets of codes that the coders refined, resulting in a set of themes and theme definitions that guided final coding of data. Final themes needed to occur frequently across and within transcripts. Codes with minimal frequency were also examined to understand outlier data. After coders agreed on final themes each independently identified all supporting text and quotations from the data for each theme. The final analysis step included discussion and review between coders to settle on findings and coded text to support identified themes. Final themes are presented in the findings section, along with examples of supporting quotations pulled from the data for illustration purposes. Findings were triangulated across data types.

**Limitations.** The researcher approached four different programs who expressed interest in CTI but did not end up participating regularly to interview, be observed and complete surveys, but the directors chose not to participate. Ideally, there would have been comparison schools included in this evaluation.

The survey participation in this evaluation was disappointing. When I prompted and asked about the low response rate, teachers and directors both spoke to the limited amount of time teachers have to “do one more thing.” Although disappointing and limiting in terms of being able to quantify the impact of CTI, it does speak to the commitment participants have for attending CTI -- despite not having time to do “one more thing” the regularly attending participants found three hours to dedicate to attending a CTI meeting once a month. Time that was always above and beyond their duty.

Comparing programs that have different ways of evaluating staff and different layers of accountability was challenging. Programs were not open, as a part of this evaluation, to using one tool (such as ECERS or CLASS). It should be noted that all the regularly attending participants from pre-school programs worked in programs that have achieved top ratings in the different accreditation processes available (i.e. they are four and five star programs FOCUS or NAEYC). All of the programs used some sort of tool for regular evaluations of their teachers. All of the directors spoke about the importance of ECERS (the tool most commonly used) as a tool for having constructive conversations with newer teachers. However, directors also indicated that they did not think that ECERS or CLASS would pick up the nuances of the work that CTI is supporting. For example, teachers can demonstrate how their students are meeting the Early Learning Guidelines in a program that is more grounded in teacher driven instruction and curriculum as well as in a program that is more grounded in curriculum and instruction that this driven by children’s interests.

## Initiatives inspired by participation in CTI



**The Santa Fe Opera's**  
*Early Childhood Initiative* presents:

### **Working with *Expressive Languages*** **in Early Childhood Education:**

*Exploring the Language of Color through Watercolor Paint*

In this workshop, early childhood educators will have hands on opportunities to study and create with color while exploring how to use watercolors with different materials. They will consider how learning about the "expressive language" of watercolor translates to supporting children's learning in the classroom.

*What can watercolor paint do that other paints cannot?*

*What does it mean to build a brushstroke vocabulary?*

*How can you use watercolor paint to create textures?*

*What is the power of color?*

**Early childhood educators, inspired by the Reggio Approach will share stories and experiences from the classroom about working with watercolor materials.**

*Featuring Presenters from the Collaborative Teachers Institute:*

*Gigi Schroeder Yu, PhD, Early Childhood Art Educator*

*Suzanne Maheshi Shakespeare-Jones and Aurora Hvidsten, Early Childhood Teachers,  
Santa Fe School for the Arts and Sciences*

**The FREE workshop will take place on: Saturday, October 1, 2016, from 10:00 to 1:00 p.m. at The Santa Fe Opera's Stieren Hall.**

***Refreshments will be provided***

***3.0 Training Hours***

***Limited Space***

To register for this workshop please contact ECI Manager, Kim Shakespeare-Jones at: [ECI@santafeopera.org](mailto:ECI@santafeopera.org).

*"The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences." – Loris Malaguzzi*

## Early Childhood Professional Development Institute

Wednesday, August 3, 2016,

7:30-8:00-Traditional Breakfast

### **8:15-10:15 Keynote: Karen H. Haigh. Best practices, Emergent Literacy**

Karen M. Haigh, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in the Early Childhood Education program for Columbia College Chicago. Her areas of expertise include Reggio Inspired principles and practices in an American Context with a particular focus on the Classroom Environment, the Role of Materials and Languages, Documentation, Listening and Observing to development of emergent curriculum, Parent Partnerships, Collaboration, and Professional Development. She has worked extensively with low-income, inner city, diverse populations in Head Start, subsidized childcare, and state Pre-kindergarten programs.

Dr. Haigh has co-authored, *We Are All Explorers: Learning and Teaching with Reggio Principles in Urban Settings*. She has also contributed chapters/sections for books: *Insights and Inspirations*, *Next Steps Towards the Reggio Way* and *First Steps Towards the Reggio Way*. Additionally she has written articles for *Theory Into Practice*, *Child Care Information Exchange* and *Innovations in Early Education*.

Dr. Haigh has worked as a teacher of young children, an education coordinator and a program administrator within Chicago Area Social Service organizations. Additionally, she has worked as director of professional development for the Chicago Public Schools Early Childhood Education Department.

10:15-10:30 Break

10:30-11:30-Las Cumbres –Mental Health

11:30-12:30-Lunch

12:30-2:15-Break Out Sessions

- Room 212 Music/Movement-Cathy Lubold
- Room 213 Dramatic Play, How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love Dramatic Play. - Jennifer Anderson, PreK Teacher at El Camino Real Academy
- Room 214 Creative Curriculum- Marilyn Johnson, Education Coordinator PMS (0-3 or Early Head Start)
- LL321 Family Dining - Megan Sommer
- Room 217 Early Numeracy, Lisa Tsuchiya Ed.D., CNM Early Childhood Faculty
- LL319 Engaging Parents — Miguel Acosta, The Center for Relational Learning and Leadership
- LL320 Children's Medical Services-Susan Merrill
- **Jemez Room – Making Sense of Play**, Gigi Yu, Phd - Early Childhood Art Resource Teacher/Albuquerque and presenters from the Collaborative Teacher Institute

2:30-4:30

- Room 212 Music/Movement-Cathy Lubold
- Room 213 Managing Challenging Behaviors Through a Team Approach, Jamie Seward
- Room 214 Creative Curriculum- Marilyn Johnson, Education Coordinator PMS (3-5 or Head Start)
- Room 217 Early Numeracy, Lisa Tsuchiya Ed.D., CNM Early Childhood Faculty
- LL321 Family Dining-Megan Sommer
- LL319 Parent Engagement— Miguel Acosta, The Center for Relational Learning and Leadership
- LL320 Children's Medical Services-Susan Merrill
- **Jemez Room – Making Sense of Play**, Gigi Yu, Phd - Early Childhood Art Resource Teacher/Albuquerque and presenters from the Collaborative Teacher Institute