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Coach's Corner

Week of the Young Child



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Every year in April, the early childhood education community celebrates the Week of the Young Child (WOYC). This is a time to truly appreciate the magic of young children and advocate for their care and education. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) established the first WOTYC in 1971. Since then NAEYC has been promoting activities and advocacy every year during this special week.

We define “young child” as birth through 8 years. There are so many reasons to celebrate this incredible age! This is a period of tremendous growth, as everyday these little ones are discovering new ideas about the world around them. These first few years are an important time for cognitive, physical, and emotional development.



The Village of Early Childhood

Something to focus on during this week is the “village” of early childhood. They say that parenting takes a village, but so does early childhood education. There are lots of different people and organizations that make up this beautiful village. Urie Bronfenbrenner, American psychologist, proposed a theory that the environment of a child is made up of systems. These systems interact with each other and impact a child’s development. The first level of these systems is known as the microsystem. The microsystem is made up of things that have a direct effect on a child: family, school/early childhood education programs, neighborhoods, religious organizations, etc. These are many of the things that make up our early childhood village! Let’s take a look at a few.

Home

The homes of the children in our programs are an important part of the early childhood education village. One of the greatest partnerships is between early childhood programs and families. Children thrive when we can work together with their families. Inviting families to participate in your program is a great way to make this connection. Schedule fun, family-oriented events and invite the families to help with the planning. Consider planning out all family events in the beginning of the year and sending out a calendar. Family members will be able to better plan in advance to be there! If you need help thinking of ideas, send out a survey to families to see what types of events would be of interest to them. Families can also participate in other aspects of your program. Consider involving a few families in things like fundraising or volunteer opportunities. Larger programs could also create a family committee to help with different aspects of the program.



School

Connecting with local schools is a great way to set our children up for success! There is so much that early childhood education programs and elementary schools can learn from each other. Consider reaching out to schools within the district of your program. It is also helpful to reach out to some private and charter schools as well. This could not only help children with the transition to kindergarten but can also help families become more acquainted with the schools. In addition, if your program accepts school-age children, this could be a great way to advertise to families of elementary students.

Community Organizations

Another part of our early childhood village is our local community organizations. This is probably the broadest part of our village. There are so many options for community connections! First, look into organizations that provide support for families. Look into food pantries, housing options, shelters, etc. Even if your current families do not have a need for any of these services, there may be future families that do. Reach out to these organizations to make a personal connection rather than just looking up brochures or information. Look into community events. Are there options for your program to participate in events? One idea is putting together a craft table at a festival or farmer's market for children to complete a simple art activity. Programs could even work together to participate in these events.



As for early childhood educators, you get a front seat to this magical time! Although it requires a lot of patience, the rewards are plentiful. You are all at the heart of our early childhood education village and our village couldn't thrive without you!

Happy Week of the Young Child!

Resources:

[NAEYC: Week of the Young Child](#)

[Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory](#)