



**2017**

**MAY**



## **WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS CHILD CARE PROVIDER NEWS**

### **June Provider Advisory Council Meeting**

Provider Advisory Council meetings provide a way for CCS providers to stay connected and up-to-date with news and information. Suggestions for agenda items are always welcome. Please plan to join us for the next Provider Advisory Council Meeting:

Thursday, June 22, 2017  
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Workforce Solutions Capital Area North  
6505 Airport Blvd, Ste 101E, Austin, TX 78752  
Lone Star Room

Please RSVP by June 15

**Note: Lunch will only be provided for those who RSVP.**

### **Youth Camp Permits**

Effective 10/1/17, programs with Youth Camp Permits will no longer be eligible providers. All providers will need to have a license with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in order to be a provider and serve Workforce children. For our large groups, any of the DFPS sites will still remain providers, but the camp sites/youth permit locations will be closed.

### **Save the Date - August 12 - Teachers' Symposium**

Our second Teachers' Symposium is going to be bigger and better! Please let your teachers know that our next Teachers' Symposium, *The Building Blocks of Learning*, will be held on August 12th at the Hyatt Regency.

### **Texas Rising Star Achievements**

Join us in congratulating:

#### **First Time Designations**

- Children's Courtyard - Harris Branch
- Children's Courtyard - Metric Branch
- Rosie's Infant Care

#### **Increased Ratings**

- Extend A Care - Littel Angels
- Little Dudes
- Promiseland
- Two Steps Ahead

### **CLASS Corner**

Workforce Solutions Capital Area has embraced CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) as a tool that can be utilized side by side with Texas Rising Star to enhance teacher-child interactions and further the understanding of the importance of interactions in our classrooms. In a recent blog post, Gina Gates discusses the importance of teachers promoting critical thinking and communication over the focus of rote learning.

## ***Teacher Tips: What's the Deal with Rote Practice?***

**Think back to a time when you were a student in a classroom.**

Yes, I know some of us, including myself, don't want to think back that far, but for the sake of this discussion, let's try it.

I remember, quite vividly, sitting at desks which were all neatly lined up in rows, with the teacher at the front of the room. I would stare at the back of someone's head, with very little eye contact. And forget about communicating with my peers because that was a no-no during most of my years of schooling. The teacher would write letters, numbers, or facts on the chalkboard. I was expected to repeat and recite them. This "drill and kill" activity might have then been followed up with a task of copying these same facts onto a piece of paper. Later, I would take them home and memorize them for an upcoming test.

Occasionally my teacher would say, "ok we are going to play a game today." I would get so excited because something different was going to happen. My teacher would pull out a set of flashcards, and hold up each one as we called out the correct answers. The child with the most flashcards at the end of the game was the "winner."

This would take place week after week, in each of the subject areas, and we'd be tested on these same facts each Friday. If you, like myself, were really good at memorizing facts, you would ace the tests. You would then get your report card with all of those A's, and everyone knew you were going to succeed at life because you were a good student. Sound familiar?

I think it's safe to say this was probably a pretty common scenario for many of you. You, like many students across the U.S., would work your way through school, memorizing information in each grade level, but were you really learning it?

The answer is most likely no, or at least not in the way that would actually promote critical thinking and communication. This focus on memorization has obstructed true learning, where children learn to solve problems, to analyze, to reason and think, and then to apply this new-found knowledge to their everyday life. If information is applied or actually used to solve problems, students will leave school with a much richer education. This transfer of knowledge (rather than just memorization) is crucial to getting students ready to succeed in the modern world.

Have we moved entirely away from this traditional model of rote learning? From my experiences of being in the classroom as recently as two years ago, I can say that the answer is no. There has certainly been a great deal of progress and the shift has been made in many areas, but I don't think we are entirely there. I have begun to see less rote learning and more of a focus on cooperative group learning where children are expected to solve problems, to design projects, and to use knowledge learned to deliver a presentation.

So the question is, where do we go from here? How can we make sure that we are doing more than rote "drill and kill" activities and encouraging our students to become critical thinkers?

### **Strategies you can use in your classrooms**

- **Redefine your definition of "teacher:"** In a more traditional mindset, the teacher was the one who held the knowledge and it was their responsibility to share this with the

learners. Children were viewed as empty vessels who needed to be filled with facts. In contrast to this, I like to think of myself as the facilitator. A facilitator is someone who helps bring about an outcome by providing indirect or unobtrusive assistance, guidance, or supervision. Therefore, when we say the teacher has to play the role of a facilitator in the classroom, we mean the teacher should not be the king or queen who controls the activities of the learners. They should grant the learners some space to be creative, to get involved and to be active participants. A teacher's job is not to tell; their job is to stimulate thinking, to encourage exploration, to make associations, and to be a connector. When you move from teacher to facilitator you leverage the shared experience and wisdom of your learners, and establish an environment where applied and real learning can take place.

- **Begin by asking questions:** What are your students interests? How do they learn best? What do they already know about the topic at hand? What is the desired learning outcome? It is always best to answer these questions before you begin a new topic or unit of study. One strategy I often used (I am sure I am dating myself here) was the classic Know-Want to Know-Learned (KWL). This allowed me to find out what was already known, and what my students wanted to learn about a topic. It also gave my students ownership of their learning. Even today, when I am facilitating CLASS trainings, I still begin many of my trainings by saying, "tell me what you know about CLASS."
- **Hands-on activities that incorporate a variety of modalities:** We all know one of the skills children are expected to learn while in preschool is shape recognition. But how can we make this more exciting and engaging than just showing them shapes on flash cards? Some ideas might include: tracing shapes into shaving cream, playing with different shaped building blocks in the block area, cutting out shapes and using them to form pictures on a mural, reading stories about shapes, playing a shape bingo game, or taking a walk outside and finding shapes in nature. There are countless ways children can learn their shapes other than through a rote activity. Incorporating a variety of modalities complements different learning styles, and makes the classroom a more exciting place.
- **Effective questions are key:** Asking questions is natural and intuitive. They're an important part of any lesson because they invite the student to think critically. Historically, teachers have asked questions to figure out what has been learned and understood, to help them gauge whether to further review previous learning, to increase or decrease the challenge, and to assess whether students are ready to move forward and learn new information (factual checks – ie 'Closed' questions). But teachers also need a range of 'Open' questioning strategies to address different learning needs and situations. Teachers must also pitch questions effectively to raise the thinking challenge. Let's look at a few examples of how to turn a close-ended question into an open-ended question:

**Close-ended question:** "What color is this?"

**Open-ended question:** "You used a lot of blue on your painting. What does it remind you of?"

**Close-ended question:** "How many teddy bears are on the block?"

**Open-ended question:** "What are those teddy bears thinking about?"

**Close-ended question:** “What’s your doll’s name?”

**Open-ended question:** “Your baby is so beautiful! Tell me about her.”

- Cooperative work groups and collaboration: Teachers can create an activity and then encourage their students to work together either in a group or with a partner. This method inspires students in several ways, including:
  1. Problem solving
  2. Communication skills
  3. Interactive learning

You can use this method to identify areas where your students need assistance and areas where they are doing well. Collaboration should be followed by a group discussion where students can converse about their perceptions and findings.

The more intentional we are about encouraging students to explain their thinking, to solve problems, to analyze situations, and to apply knowledge to their everyday life, the better off we will be at preparing our students to succeed in the modern world.

This post originally appeared on [Teachstone.com](http://Teachstone.com).

## **Reporting**

Please remember to report timely. This includes reporting parents who do not pay their parent fees on time and any issues with the CCAA system. Remember to think about the rule of 3. A parent has 3 business days to pay their parent fee. It is due on the 1st of each month. Also, if the CCAA system has not been working and it has been three days, please let us know. This includes the swipe machine or the phone system.

## **PLEASE NOTE:**

**Workforce Solutions Child Care Services will be closed  
May 29th and July 4th.**

## **Feedback**

We welcome your response! Workforce Solutions Capital Area is committed to continuing to bring quality child care news to the community. If you have comments about this newsletter or suggestions for future topics, please contact Susan Helfeld at [susan.helfeld@wfscapitalarea.com](mailto:susan.helfeld@wfscapitalarea.com) or 512.597.7112.

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*Relay Texas: 1.800.735.2989 (TDD) / 711 (Voice)*