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Better Conversations with Jim Knight

In September, the Kansas Inservice Training System (KITS) had the pleasure of hosting a workshop by Dr. Jim Knight who shared his research on communication and instructional coaching. Dr. Jim Knight earned his PhD in Education from the University of Kansas and is currently a senior research associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, the director of the Kansas Coaching Project and the president of the Instructional Coaching Group. He has been studying professional learning and instructional coaching for nearly 20 years and has written several books on the topic.

The workshop was enthusiastically received with an audience of 150 people composed mostly of program administrators and providers of tiny-k services. Tiny-k services are early intervention services delivered in accordance with Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), providing services to infants and toddlers birth to three years old with identified developmental delays or disabilities and their families. Tiny-k early intervention services are delivered via an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and nearly all tiny-k services are provided to families in the natural environment, typically the family's home, child care facility, or other location where the family typically spends time.

Providing services in the child's typical learning environment allows providers to build and maintain close, trusting relationships with families and the professionals on the team, which absolutely aligns with Dr. Knight's work. The workshop centered on Dr. Knight's book, *Better Conversations: Coaching ourselves and Each Other to be more Credible, Caring, and Connected* (2015). Providing services in the child's typical learning environment allows providers to build and maintain close, trusting relationships with

families and the professionals on the team, which absolutely aligns with Dr. Knight's work. The workshop centered on Dr. Knight's book, *Better Conversations: Coaching ourselves and Each Other to be more Credible, Caring, and Connected* (2015). His research emphasizes the power of better conversations in order to strengthen connections and build trust with those relationships both professional and personal.

Tiny-k programs use a Primary Service Provider approach whereby professionals are organized into teams of professionals comprised, at minimum, with a speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, early childhood special educator, a physical therapist, and a family service coordinator who may also serve as one of the professionals. Within each team, one professional is assigned as the Primary Service Provider (PSP) who will serve as the main contact and build a relationship with the family. The entire team meets regularly to discuss progress towards the child and family outcomes identified on the IFSP and apply coaching techniques via providing suggestions and ideas for their colleagues to take to subsequent home visits with families.

Dr. Knight targets beliefs that are central to having better conversations which include seeing conversation partners as equals, listening to others while being present in the conversation, refraining from judging others, and conversations that go back and forth. There are ten habits detailed in the book and he covered several habits in the workshop such as demonstrating and listening with empathy, making emotional connections, building trust and finding common ground. He acknowledges that changing a belief or habit is not easy and takes time, but is certainly worth the journey when better conversations are a result of this hard work.

Dr. Knight advises individuals to tap into their core beliefs and habits within conversations beginning with self-reflection activities. He encouraged participant to contemplate their own communication styles and even video record conversations and review them in order to get a clear picture of how communication styles shape a conversation. This can be a powerful experience

particularly because often what people believe they do and what they really do are not the same.

At the heart of building relationships with families and colleagues is having better conversations. Dr. Knight's workshop was a refreshing reminder of how important communication is within relationships, both personal and professional. The workshop was well-received by the tiny-k staff and the material is currently being reviewed in monthly calls with the Master Coaches. The book, *Better Conversations: Coaching ourselves and Each Other to be more Credible, Caring, and Connected* (2015), is available to be checked out at the ECRC located at the Life Span Institute in Parsons. Please contact Kim Page with any questions.

Submitted by Michele Utt (785) 764-4390 or email michutt@ku.edu for more information.



Just For Families

The holiday season can be overwhelming for many people, especially those with social-emotional, sensory or other disabilities. The disruption to the typical routine, unfamiliar sights and smells, new people and a house full of noise can cause full on anxiety.

The following tips for surviving the holiday season have been contributed by parents of children and adults with special needs.

1. Reduce the Stress

Schedule in quiet times and create chill-out zones in your home. Remember, your child will pick up on your stress levels, so try not to over-stretch yourself.

2. Ask for Help

Friends and family may not know how they can help unless you tell them.

3. Wrap Up Familiar Toys

If your child is not keen on opening presents because they're new and unfamiliar, try wrapping up some favorite toys.

4. Give Your Child a Job and a Schedule

I always give my children 'jobs' to do at family gatherings – take coats, offer nibbles round etc. Giving them something to do reduces their stress of having people in the house. I also give them an itinerary so they understand, for example, that people stand around and chat a lot, and that is part of the occasion.

5. Manage New Smells

Add cinnamon to your child's play-dough to gradually introduce new smells. One thing that some people complain about during the holidays is the many different perfume smells coming from visiting adults. Ask your family and friends to hold off on the perfume.

6. Work on Gift Giving

Help and encourage the person you are caring for to give gifts. This provides an excellent opportunity to work on social skills, like thinking of other people's needs and interests, and being kind and helpful. Some children love making their gifts for family and friends.

7. Reserve Some Special Time for Your Child

It's easy to get overloaded with festive preparations at this time of year, so plan daily activities to make some special time for your kids – ie. 5 to 10 minutes of undivided attention. Let your child take the lead, tune into their world and see it through their eyes.

8. Create A Weekly Calendar

Print or make a weekly calendar and add a picture of your planned activities during the holidays

(divide into morning, lunch afternoon etc) and this will help put your child at ease about the week ahead.

9. Prepare Your Family

Talk to family members ahead of time. Discuss your child's specific needs, and gently but firmly tell them what your plans are. Be sure to let them know that this will make the whole experience better for everyone. Ask for their support.

10. Prepare A Bag of Activities

When you are visiting friends or relatives, fill a backpack with things your child finds comforting or enjoys playing with – toy cars, a stuffed animal, a CD and CD player, or a few books. If your child gets over stimulated, find a quiet corner or a back room and pull out the backpack.

11. Prepare with Pictures

Some children love looking at pictures and a great way of explaining different events to a child is through pictures. A holiday season book made with pictures of them and their family doing things during the holidays including pictures of them in the school play, relatives coming to visit, etc. It helps not to get overwhelmed with what's going on.

12. Create an Alternative Experience

Instead of having a party at this time of year, arrange an experience for them. For children, teachers and parents, it's much more enjoyable as there is no pressure to conform to the demands that a social occasion puts on them.

13. Easy to Open Presents

Make gifts for children with fine motor skills easy to open. A lot of tape and difficult boxes can be very frustrating.

Adapted with permission from

www.friendshipcircle.org. Original article by Emma Sterland.

Submitted by Kim Page.



New to the ECRC

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To borrow these or any other resources, contact the **KITS Early Childhood Resource Center** at (620) 421-6550 ext. 1651 or toll free in Kansas: (800) 362-0390 ext. 1651. Our email is: resourcecenter@ku.edu. Our entire catalog can be searched online at [KITS ECRC](http://kskits.org/ecrc/) or <http://kskits.org/ecrc/>.





Baby Steps to STEM: Infant and Toddler Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Activities

Innately curious, infants and toddlers love to explore, investigate, and discover—making the earliest years a perfect time to begin teaching the foundations of STEM. This book explores what science, technology, engineering, and math education looks like for this age group, and why it is so vital for all children to develop STEM knowledge.

Expand your understanding of STEM to lay the foundation for children to develop skills in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. This book supplies 60 play-based, developmentally appropriate activities for introducing STEM. All activities include extensions, inquiry questions, and tips on how to help parents strengthen children's learning at home.

Age focus: 0–3.

Information retrieved from:

<https://www.redleafpress.org/Baby-Steps-to-STEM-Infant-and-Toddler-Science-Technology-Engineering-and-Math-Activities-P1642.aspx>
Baby Steps to Stem is available and may be borrowed from the KITS Early Childhood Resource Center. Contact Kim Page at resourcecenter@ku.edu or (620) 421-6550, ext. 1638.

Contact the KITS

Early Childhood Resource Center

(620) 421-6550 ext. 1651

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Email: resourcecenter@ku.edu.

Our entire catalog is searchable online at

[KITS ECRC](http://kisksits.org/ecrc/) or <http://kisksits.org/ecrc/>

'Intentional' Teaching Has Big Impact on Preschoolers

The instructional practices of preschool teachers may have the largest effect on young children's social and academic skills, according to a new review of research on several measures of the quality of early childhood education. The comprehensive review helps untangle a complicated knot of factors that affect young children. "High quality preschool is one of the most effective means of preparing all children to succeed in school," says Margaret Burchinal, senior research scientist at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "However, this review of research indicates the need to expand our definitions of quality."

According to Burchinal, many of the most effective curricula incorporate planned, engaging activities for preschoolers, with a schedule of lessons and activities in a variety of learning settings. Effective learning opportunities often include some whole group instruction and more time in small groups, learning centers, and computer work.

Burchinal also says the research shows that the teaching practice of "scaffolding" brings big benefits.

"Scaffolding occurs when the adult caregiver talks with and models a learning activity for the child, making the activity fun through conversation that builds on and extends the child's interest and knowledge about the world," Burchinal says.

To read more on this topic, click

<http://www.futurity.org/preschool-teaching-kids-skills-1606582/>

Retrieved from natural resources on November 29, 2017.

Collaborative Calendar of Events

Check the KITS Collaborative Training Calendar for information on a variety of training events for Kansas early childhood professionals!

	EVENT / LOCATION	SPONSOR / CONTACT / REGISTRATION
02-01-2018	Building Your Early Childhood Toolkit	KCCTO-KITS Infant Toddler Specialist Network http://kccto.inc@gmail.com
02-03-2018	Building Your Early Childhood Toolkit	KCCTO-KITS Infant Toddler Specialist Network http://kccto.inc@gmail.com
03-01-2018	36th Annual KDEC Conference	http://www.kdec.org/conference.html
03-01-2018	Building Your Early Childhood Toolkit	KCCTO-KITS Infant Toddler Specialist Network http://kccto.inc@gmail.com
03-24-2018	Building Your Early Childhood Toolkit	KCCTO-KITS Infant Toddler Specialist Network http://kccto.inc@gmail.com