NC B3 Quality Initiative

Winter 2025



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Welcome



Welcome to the winter edition of the best newsletter for the early educators of our NC babies and toddlers! We hope you all enjoyed your families and some time off during the holiday season and are ready to love on your babies again!

Reflecting on the past year, I am reminded that change is inevitable and no time of development makes it more evident than infancy. As I began my career in early childhood (in the early 90s), science was just starting to discover the incredible changes that all babies' brains make during the first three years of life. Check out this article if you want to know more: **Understanding Brain Development in Babies and Toddlers** (from ZERO TO THREE). This information changed how we all view the need for well-informed, active teachers of our youngest children. You are all so impactful and needed. I hope that you know that we continue to shout that you all should feel that value in salaries, work climates and interactions with your co-workers, supervisors and families. We will continue to advocate for and with you to educate society on your value.

This edition of the newsletter has more good insight and tidbits of information for you to use. Please feel free to send us questions or suggestions for content. We love to know what you find valuable and needed so we can pull information together for you!

Fingers crossed we all get to enjoy a bit of snow!
Ginger, NC B-3QI Project Manager

You can find additional information by clicking on the links or by **visiting our website**.

Click the links below to learn more about the topics featured in every edition:

- **North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development (NCFELD) - ESD**
- **Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators - C3**
- **Milestone Spotlight**

Cohort-Based Learning Communities

By Birth-to-Three Anchor Specialists Kristin Snellings M.Ed., Amanda Hazen, Asata Virgo and Heather Noe

Wow! Our anchor specialists have been hard at work developing and implementing our Cohort-Based Learning Communities (CBLCs). We continue to take feedback from previous cohort participants as well as from our regional specialists to inform topics for future learning communities. Our project is currently offering CBLCs on the following topics:

- **The Whole Story**: This cohort-based learning community uncovers what matters most to you about your important work, and about the relationships and values that keep you afloat. Together, participants will identify the individual strengths they bring to their work with infants and toddlers, and how these strengths work with those of their coworkers and families. **Applications open in January 2025.**
- **Circle of Security Classroom**: Teachers engage in group discussion and self-reflection activities to understand how to shift focus from behavior management to enhancing teacher-child relationship quality through step-by-step approaches for promoting secure attachment with children in their classrooms. **Cohort currently underway. Next application period TBD.**
- **Love Them Through It**: This learning community focuses on strategies to provide the loving care that boosts children's social and emotional development. Together, participants ultimately answer the burning question: "How can we love them through it?" **Applications open in February 2025.**
- **Building Classroom Quality**: Environment Rating Scales are measures of quality in early childhood settings. Join us as we look into the items in ITERS-3 and why the indicators are so important for young children, teachers and families. This learning community will give you practical resources to improve the quality of your classroom. Participants will learn how the ITERS-3 tool is used to make a big developmental difference for our youngest children. **Cohort currently underway. Next application period TBD.**

Please be on the lookout for upcoming opportunities to apply for one of our CBLCs. We are so excited to share these new opportunities with you!

Coach's Corner: What Makes Feedback Work?

By Dr. Robin Warfield, Birth-to-Three Coaching Manager

Giving and receiving effective feedback is an art. B-3QI coaches have a great deal of experience receiving feedback themselves, both in previous

roles as teachers or administrators and in their current roles as your support specialists. They know what it feels like to have commentary on their job responsibilities, and have developed a strong sensitivity to providing feedback in an intentional and helpful way to you. Our coaches will ask you how you like to receive feedback, what helps you to absorb it and how they can do it in a way that honors your unique strengths. Generally, coach feedback is broken down into two major types for our coaching purposes: supportive and constructive.



With **supportive feedback**, which you will always receive when working with a B-3QI coach, coachees receive information on their many strong points, and what specifically is going well in the classroom and in administration. This type of feedback highlights practices that make a positive impact on children, families and coworkers, and allows coachees to see what they might easily overlook–the ripple effect of high-quality interactions to create a nurturing child care climate for everyone. “Good job” or “I like the way you did that” are positive comments, but provide very little information. A B-3QI coach might say instead, “When you smiled at Kayden and asked if he wanted to read a book while using his name, he opened right up to you and brought the book over. He clearly felt cared for.” **Supportive feedback allows coachees to identify the practices that make a difference.**

Constructive feedback is only provided once a solid foundation of trust has been built between the coach and coachee. This kind of feedback is handled delicately, because if trust has not been built, the coachee may take these comments as an indication that they are not doing well enough in their practices. When a teacher or administrator has a lot of experience, this can feel like an invalidation of their knowledge and skill, even when it is only meant for useful purposes. Constructive feedback from our coaches is always framed in a way that allows for open discussion because the coach understands that coachees know their classrooms and centers best. B-3QI coaches are open to other perspectives on what they observe and are lifelong learners themselves. They take into account the coachee’s indicated preferences on how they take in constructive content. Constructive feedback from a B-3QI coach may sound like, “Tell me what it was like for you to follow the diaper-changing procedures. Which parts were easy for you, and which did you feel needed more practice?” Our coaches encourage coachees to view feedback as a tool that is in no way personal or judgmental. **When provided and received well, feedback can have a powerful impact on the quality of the environment for children, teachers and administrators.**

Tip for Quality

By Priscilla Hayes, Region 6 Birth-to-Three Specialist

An infant and toddler classroom with sensitive teachers is an environment in which caregivers are a source of comfort, support and attention. When

teachers are sensitive, individual infants and toddlers are responded to routinely, swiftly and effectively.

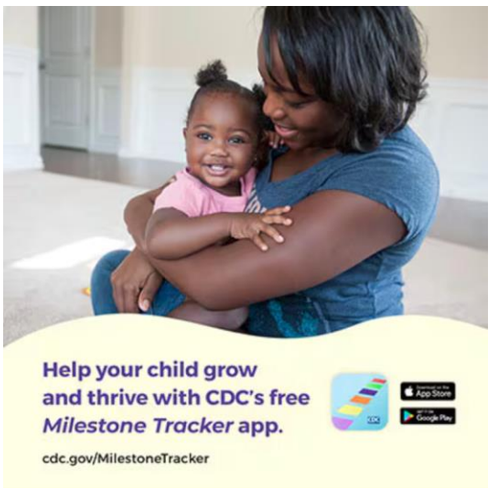
Infants and toddlers thrive in classrooms when they feel comfortable exploring and experimenting with various materials and activities. There are several methods to demonstrate teacher sensitivity. You may physically recognize an infant or toddler by patting their back or holding their hand. If you have a more quiet child in your classroom, let them know you notice them non-verbally with a smile.

When you support children in how to handle their emotions, you are demonstrating teacher sensitivity. An example of handling emotions is noting when a child is upset and giving them words to label their emotions, even when they do not yet have expressive language.

Monitoring and Screening: Milestones Matter!

By Birth-to-Three Specialists Teresa Boykin, Region 12, and Demeka Bryant, Region 2

From birth to age five, children should reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave and move. Track children's milestones from two months to five years with the CDC's easy-to-use illustrated checklists. Get tips from the CDC's website to encourage children's development, and find out what to do if you are ever concerned about how your child is developing.



Source: **"Learn the Signs. Act Early." | CDC**

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DEVELOPMENTAL MONITORING (AND RECEIVE A QUICK HANDOUT TO SHARE WITH PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS)

Director's Toolbox: What is the Weather at Your Child Care Program?

By Birth-to-Three Specialists Melinda Lescar, Region 10, and Karen Mintz, Region 6

As the weather is changing into the winter season, what is the weather in your child care program? Do you feel that you have a positive work climate? How is morale in your program, and how do you know? Are you or your staff

experiencing burnout? Check out a few strategies below that can help improve the climate in your child care program.

Create a positive environment through transparent and effective communication by:

- Having an open-door policy that allows teachers to express concerns and ideas in a safe and inclusive space.
- Saying thank you! This shows your teachers that you respect and appreciate them, which will help to improve morale.
- Showing appreciation of professional and personal milestones such as a birthday or completing a college course. Give thank you notes and gift certificates, and recognize achievements at team meetings.
- Treating teachers with respect, ensuring that they feel held, heard and seen.
- Relieving stress and reducing burnout with a yoga session or mindfulness activity at the beginning of staff meetings.
- Creating and distributing an anonymous employee work survey where staff can provide feedback in a way that feels safe.

If you need any additional assistance with creating a positive work environment within your child care program, please contact your local birth-to-three specialist.

Including and Celebrating All of Us

By Dr. Robin Warfield, IMH-E®

NC B-3QI is committed to honoring diversity and has been exploring and unpacking the ***Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children and Families*** one at a time to better understand what they mean to our project and its services. Developed by the Tenets Initiative, the tenets are a set of strategies for strengthening the commitment and capacity of individual professionals, organizations and systems that serve young children and their families to embed diversity, inclusion and equity principles into their support. The ten tenets are divided into four principles. *Central Principle for Diversity-Informed Practice* includes the first tenet, while tenets two through five fall underneath *Stance Toward Infants, Children and Families for Diversity-Informed Practice*. Tenets six through nine are a part of *Principles for Diversity-Informed Resource Allocation*, and the final tenet represents *Advocacy Towards Diversity, Inclusion and Equity in Institutions*. We invite you to think about how the tenets apply to your work! As we have explored tenets one through three in previous editions of the NC B-3QI Newsletter, we are ready to review the fourth tenet and how our project represents it.

Stance Toward Infants, Children, and Families for Diversity-Informed Practice Tenet #4. Recognize and Respect Non-Dominant Bodies of Knowledge:
Diversity-informed practice recognizes non-dominant ways of knowing, bodies of knowledge, sources of strength and routes to healing within all families and communities.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TENET FOUR

ITS-SIDS and Infant Toddler Zone



Are you looking to find an **ITS-SIDS course**? Our birth-to-three specialists are now conducting this required training virtually in an effort to promote accessibility across the state.

We are also offering the newly revised **Infant Toddler Zone** modules with key information regarding the care, health and safety of children from birth-to-three. Like ITS-SIDS training, these modules will be offered virtually. Each module provides 2-DCDEE contact hours upon completion. The four modules can be taken in any order.

Building Relationships with Infants and Toddlers
Nurturing relationships are critical to the healthy development of infants and toddlers and are essential to adult wellness. The focus of this training is on the components of important relationships that sustain us throughout our lives, and how we can build them with young children. Join us as we look into the process of developing relationships with infants, toddlers and each other as their caregivers and educators.

Infants and Toddlers Healthy Behaviors
Young children are learning how to function in the world around other children and adults. Understanding how to support infant and toddler social and emotional development is a critical part of caring for this age group. This session will provide a basic overview of child and brain development as it relates to observable behaviors. Participants will also explore strategies for self-care and how to encourage healthy behaviors for young children and for themselves.

Creating a Yes Environment: Safe Spaces for Infants and Toddlers
What does it take to create and utilize a safe environment for infants and toddlers? Join us as we look at key strategies incorporating child development and active supervision in maintaining safe and engaging environments.

Applying NC FELD to Infant-Toddler Planning
During this course, we will introduce and review the origin and purpose of the North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development (NC FELD) resource. Through observation of high-quality learning experiences participants will have opportunities to reflect on the ways in which using NC FELD is vital for every child. Participants will take a hands-on approach to understanding developmental skills for infants and toddlers and will discuss strategies to support the growth of school readiness skills.

CLICK HERE TO SEE WHEN ITS-SIDS AND INFANT TODDLER ZONE MODULES WILL BE OFFERED JANUARY-MARCH 2025

Workday Wellness

By Joy Johnson, Region 11 Birth-to-Three Specialist

By simply going outside, you as an early educator will be provided with a change of scenery while boosting your immune system and overall health. While in nature, our minds and bodies feel a sense of relaxation. Your commitment to being outdoors also allows the children in your care with time for essential outdoor play. The Virtual Lab School website provides a list of activities that can be done outside with infants and toddlers. **These are the highlighted activities.**



NC B3 NITTO

New Infant Toddler Teacher Orientation

New Infant Toddler Teacher Orientation (NITTO) is a FREE self-paced online training with 14 contact credit hours earned upon completion. The course is housed on **DCDEE's Moodle website**. To register, you will need your NCID. If you do not yet have an NCID, **you can find information and sign up here**.

NITTO is designed to complete one section per week over the course of 7 weeks, but you may take longer if needed. Here are some quotes from people just like you who have taken NITTO:



"NITTO is helpful for new teachers as it provides valuable insights into child development, helping them better understand the needs and growth of their students."

"I love the class and I hope this helps a lot of early education teachers."

"I would describe it as very comprehensive, using the latest research and informed and progressive approach to childcare and education, while using a combination of videos, reading, searching documents and feedback questions."

For more information about NITTO contact **itorientation@earlyyearsnc.org**.

Connecting and Chatting

Do you love interacting on social media? Wouldn't it be great if there was a platform just for Early Childhood professionals? Well, there is! JOIN TODAY.

You can interact with other professionals, ask questions, get & give advice, get access to articles and resources, and be inspired by self-care tips. B-3QI has partnered with the Healthy Social Behaviors Project (HSB) on their Mighty Networks platform for **Social Emotional Connections**. Once you join, you can choose which groups you want to be connected with. B-3QI helps to facilitate the **infant/toddler group** and the **administrator group**. There is even a **free app** you can download for easy access!



CLICK HERE TO JOIN SOCIAL EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

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Quote of the Quarter

Shared by Michelle Glacken, Region 5 Birth-to-Three Specialist



Facility to Family - Beyond the Walls: How Outdoor Experiences Enhance Early Child Development

By Kimberly Peele, Region 3 Birth-to-Three Specialist



Outside play offers children the opportunity to experience play in a whole new way. Being outside encourages gross motor play as well as opportunities for peer interaction. Children can explore new concepts and make connections with the learning they have engaged in within the indoor environment, not to mention the endless sensory experiences that outdoor play provides. Looking at a book and reading stories about nature introduces children to new concepts and ideas, but there is nothing like crunching the snow beneath your feet, and watching the icicles melt as the sun warms them up.

Want to learn more about the importance of outdoor play and what it looks like for infants and toddlers? The resource below is also a great tool to share with parents and caregivers.

CLICK HERE FOR THE RESOURCE

Self-Care: Connect with Yourself - "You Just Need to Calm Down"

By Amanda Bea, Region 6 Birth-to-Three Specialist



How many times has being told to calm down actually helped you in an emotionally escalated moment?

Working in childcare can come with so many moments that require emotional awareness. Everyone has different experiences that influence how we respond in these escalated moments. Sometimes we might develop an attitude of “Why can't you just calm down?,” but how far has that attitude gotten us? Taking a moment to reflect on situations that trigger our hot buttons can help us better understand ourselves and how we can handle these times inside the classroom.

CLICK HERE TO READ MORE ABOUT HOT BUTTONS AND GET AN NCPMI HANDOUT AND SELF-REFLECTION ACTIVITY

The Reading Nook
Creating a Love of Learning

Read early and read often with young children!

By Valerie Person, Region 12 Birth-to-Three Specialist

Reading tip: Reading to infants and toddlers can be fun and exciting. Watching their faces light up to new things they discover in pictures is priceless. Did you know you are your child's first teacher in preparing him or her to read? Early literacy is what children know about reading even before they can read. The best way to practice early literacy is by talking, singing, reading, writing, and playing with young children. So, get some books and get started and have fun! Here are a few books below to get you started!

Dear Zoo (Dear Zoo & Friends) lift the flap hardcover
By Rod Campbell (author and illustrator)
Young readers love lifting the flaps to discover the animals the zoo has sent—a monkey, a lion, and even an elephant! But will they ever find the perfect pet? With bright, bold artwork, a catchy refrain and a whole host of favorite animals, Dear Zoo is a must for every child's bookshelf.

Whose Toes Are Those? board book
By Jabari Asim (author), LeUyen Pham (illustrator)
A vibrant, playful verse that celebrates a beautiful brown baby's adorable little toes, for fans of Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes. Who do you suppose has such fine toes? So brown and sweet. Who could have such darling feet? Snuggle with a child on your lap with this cheerful rhyme inspired by the classic giggle-inspiring game of This Little Piggy. This interactive board book full of toddler appeal is a perfect baby gift for parent-child playtime.

I Love Fall! touch-and-feel board book
By Alison Inches (author) and Hiroe Nakata (illustrator)
From plump orange pumpkins to crunchy leaves, readers will love all the textures fall has to offer in this delightful touch-and-feel board book. From wooly scarves and plump orange pumpkins to crunchy leaves and smooth wicker baskets, readers will delight in all the different textures fall has to offer. With simple, rhyming verses and sweet, vibrant illustrations, children can celebrate the season with this touch-and-feel board book that is perfect for small hands.

Ask a Specialist: Is Circle Time with Infants, Toddlers and Twos Developmentally Appropriate?

By Amanda Hazen, Anchor Birth-to-Three specialist

QUESTION: Is circle time with infants, toddlers and twos developmentally appropriate?



ANSWER: Many teachers of very young children think of circle time as the part of the day where children learn most and become prepared for school. Many teachers think of circle time as mandatory, and some family members even think of it as a necessary activity in child care settings for their children to gain important skills.

Let's look at the research and think through some questions you can ask yourself about your own circle times. How appropriate and effective is circle time, really, for our youngest children? You might be surprised by the answer!

CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE

Meet a Few of Our Regional Birth-to-Three Specialists



Michelle Glacken
Region 5



Amanda Bea
Region 6



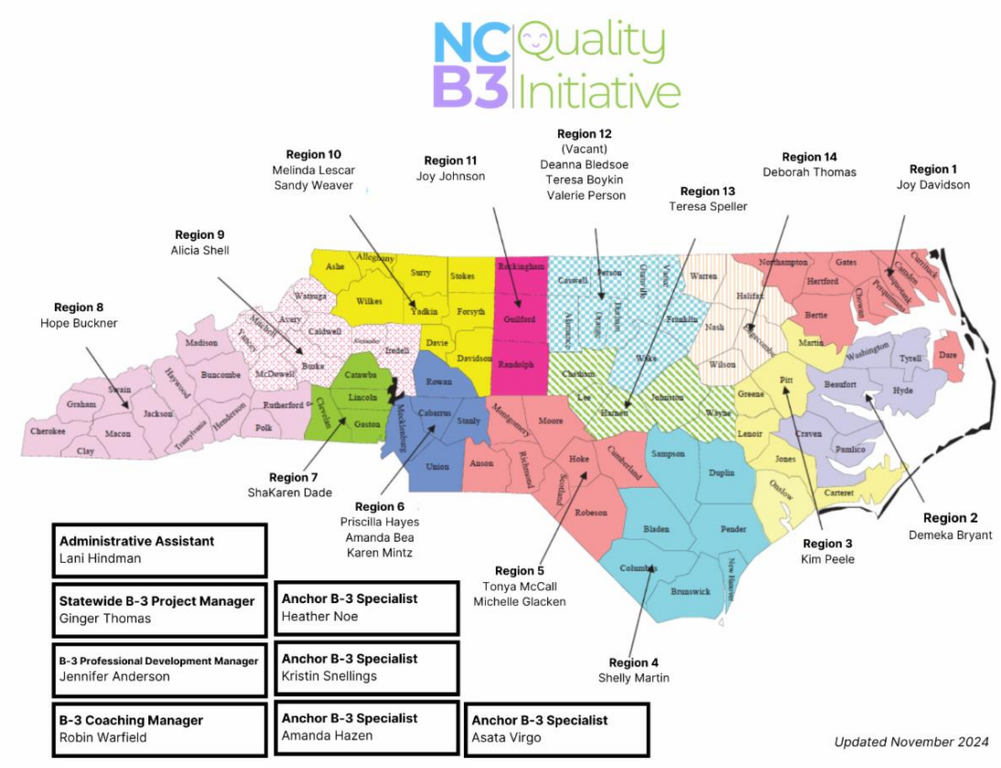
Deborah Thomas
Region 14

CLICK HERE TO LEARN ABOUT THESE BIRTH-TO-THREE SPECIALISTS

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Statewide map:



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