



Child Care Professionals Focus Group Results: North Carolina



Teacher vs. Provider



Participants preferred the term “teacher” over “provider”, because they felt that teacher reflected what they are doing with children.

“You are a teacher. I think that’s the appropriate word, not provider. Because you not only provide, you’re teaching them...”

“We’re not babysitters.”



Nutrition



Participants largely agreed with the messages and supported them. They specifically noted that emphasizing the influence that the provider has on the children while they’re with them is a key element that encourages agreement.

This group, more than any other, referred to the importance of parent engagement around nutrition issues, for instance by limiting snacks brought in from home. They believe that it is part of their role to educate parents. They mentioned that while the phrase “teachers are important” resonates, they admit that some kids will just wait and not eat until they get home, when they can have less healthy foods that they are accustomed to.

“They are stubborn enough to know that they can wait. They will not eat something knowing that they’re going to get what they want when they get home.”



Active Play



Participants in this group agreed with the message and found it very effective. They responded positively to the specific time requirement of 60 minutes per day.

Participants also focused on the importance of using the word “play” and liked that these messages suggest how important play is for young children—active play specifically and play generally.

“It really does make the day work better for everybody, because you see that they’re getting that energy out that they need to, kids need to play.”

“Some parents, oh he gets so dirty. They’re concerned about their clothes. I had a parent concerned about their clothes. I mentioned to the parent do not send him in his expensive clothes. You’re sending him in [Jays] and \$25 pants. The response is, well, I don’t have the money to buy him play clothes. Okay. I’ll buy him play clothes.”

“[Parents are] not understanding that children learn through play. They’re like; all they do is play all day. Well, yeah. They’re learning as well. I kind of went through my introduction with [parents] about what play is, so I’m constantly telling them what [their children are] learning while they’re playing.”



Screen Time



Respondents agreed with the overall message on the potential value of technology but the need for there to be standards too. This resonated better than “some screen time is good.”

Participants also acknowledged that textbooks are being phased out, and that children are using screens to learn. Child care settings must prepare children to use computers, smart phones, smartboards and tablets for learning: “You have to expose them to it, but you can’t use it as a crutch, I don’t think, in a classroom setting or in a school setting.”

“Learning it, monitoring how they learn it, giving them examples of it in short periods of time, so that they’re able to access it and then use it for those timely things.”

