



Case Studies on Authentic Assessment in PreK for All:

Lead Teachers' Perspectives on Utility, Fidelity, and
Applications to Practice

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report shares findings from interviews conducted with head teachers in PreK for All (PKA) settings as part of a multiple case study project that sought to examine the adoption of authentic assessment systems (AAS) in PKA settings. A purpose of this work is to demonstrate how teachers find and use effective assessment strategies to support their pedagogical decision-making. Additionally, findings reveal the benefits and tensions in using AAS. A primary goal of this study was to amplify teachers' voices to gain deeper understandings of their roles as policy enactors. In alignment with systems building, a broader public investment in early care and education requires that the early care and education ECCE community examine the factors that increase the retention of members of the workforce.

Strengthening the workforce means understanding how policy directives and implementation outcomes affect teachers' daily lived experiences. In this regard, this project offers a close examination of how PKA teachers experienced the shifting policy directives around curriculum, teaching, and assessment. People working in governing or oversight agencies have an increased opportunity to engage in shared decision-making, or at a minimum establish shared understandings around policy, programming, and practice by hearing teachers' voices and learning about how they interpret policy, enact it, and make adaptations to their approaches to planning, instruction, and assessment.

Methods

The primary research questions that guided this study were:

1. What do teachers know about the authentic assessment tools they use in UPK settings?
2. How do teachers use authentic assessment tools?
3. How do authentic assessment tools influence teachers' pedagogical decision-making?
4. What other factors contribute to teachers' pedagogical decision making in UPK settings?
5. What data are most useful in identifying children's developmental needs?

To build the case studies, we collected several sources of evidence including interviews, participant observations, and a collection of classroom artifacts (e.g., photos of children's work,

daily schedules, lesson plans). We also asked participants to complete a survey to gain insights into their social identities and backgrounds, to gain deeper understandings of their program, school, or classroom community, and to pose initial questions about their views and experiences using authentic assessment systems.

Data collection was carried out over three years, with the majority of it happening during the 2016-2017 school year, and at a time when the requirement to use one of three AAS was implemented. The approved assessment systems included Teaching Strategies Gold (now My Teaching Strategies), the Work Sampling System, and High Scope's Child Observation Record. The chart below shows the breakdown of programs' adoption of an AAS within our sample.

Program's Adoption of AAS	
Teaching Strategies	6
Child Observation Record	2
Work Sampling System	2

A total of 17 head teachers participated in the study. We interviewed teachers at five different time points during an academic year to examine the ways in which assessment played a role in their pedagogical decision-making, and to learn how it helped them get to know children's individual needs, abilities, and interests.

Findings

The significant findings shared in this report fall under five broad categories

1. Teachers' Views on the Purposes and Goals of Assessment
2. Common Assessment Strategies
3. Benefits to Using Authentic Assessment
4. Areas Where Teachers Need Additional Support
5. Other Factors that Contribute to Teachers' Pedagogical Decision Making

Key Learnings

The key learnings from this study point to opportunities to enhance assessment practices. There are four broad categories used to describe the different focus areas for enhanced assessment practices including, 1) strengthening the adoption of authentic assessment, 2) using data to inform practice, 3) critically reflecting on children and their growth and learning, and 4) engaging professional learning and shared decision-making

Strengthening the adoption of authentic assessment

- Certain directors within our sample provide teachers with dedicated time to work on assessments during the school day. This was identified as being a promising practice as it reduces the amount of personal time teachers have to take to complete data entry.
- Teachers would benefit from having extended time to engage in their assessment work during the school day or they should be compensated for time completing the work while “off duty.”
- Many of the teachers in the study discussed doing things the “DOE way” and offered that as a rationale for their decision-making, which alludes to a compliance-oriented approach. Providing clear and consistent messaging around the intentions for quality improvement or accountability can help teachers understand the reasons why they are being asked to shift their practices.

Using data to inform practice(s)

- Teachers in our sample dedicated a significant amount of time writing anecdotes, taking photos, and collecting work samples, but teachers need the time to carefully review their assessment data.
- Many of the teachers seldomly had a chance to discuss their assessment data with others (e.g., their co-teachers) to confirm, question, or give deeper meaning to the conclusions they were making with the evidence of children’s learning they had collected.

Critically reflecting on children and their growth and learning

- The promotion of critical reflection around children’s growth and learning and the standards used to define child development or kindergarten readiness will enable teachers to think about or question the extent to which benchmarks or expectations are appropriate within the context of their learning communities.
- Involving children in the assessment process by capturing their perspectives of the process would also lead to more holistic understandings of their growth and learning

Engaging professional learning and shared decision-making

- The findings helped us to identify opportunities to rethink professional learning experiences that are responsive to teachers’ needs and are carried out in more localized contexts to promote communities of practice

- Forums for teachers to openly and honestly talk about their experiences using authentic assessment, or any other changes to programming and practice that have influence over their pedagogical decision-making, could lead to deeper collaboration and distributed leadership
- Policymaking that is done through a range collaboration with teachers

The teachers who participated in our study shared their voices and perspectives with us in the hopes that their views could lead to shared decision-making in matters related to programming, policy, and practice. Policymaking that is done in collaboration with teachers has the potential to improve implementation. It is essential to include teachers in this ongoing and collaborative work so that they gain a sense of empowerment and advocacy as decisions are made about the early childhood profession, their roles as educators, and Pre-K education.

Introduction

Increasing public investments in early childhood care and education (ECCE) has called for heightened accountability to ensure that funding allocated for preschool programming makes an impact on children's learning and school readiness. The broad expansion of universal prekindergarten programming in New York City in 2014, and with it the initiatives to promote a unified system of preschool education, served as a catalyst for this study. At the onset of the expansion and at present, there are strong efforts to establish common practices across all Pre-K for All (PKA) programs in order to create continuity and to emphasize quality early learning experiences. The PKA Policy Handbook outlines policies, procedures, and promising practices for key actors (e.g. head and assistant teachers, program leaders, and other support staff) to follow in order to achieve a higher quality of programming. Among them is a requirement for teachers to use one of three authentic assessment options approved by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE). The present study explores this wide adoption of Authentic Assessment Systems (AAS) from the experiences and perspectives of teachers and other key members of PKA learning communities. The findings from this study highlight the strategies teachers are using to document children's diverse abilities and make use of the assessment systems, and reveal the benefits and tensions in using AAS.

In alignment with systems building, a broader public investment in early care and education requires that the ECCE community examine the factors that increase the retention of members of the workforce. Strengthening the workforce means understanding how policy directives and implementation outcomes affect teachers' daily lived experiences. In this regard, this project offers a close examination of how PKA teachers experienced the shifting policy directives around curriculum, teaching, and assessment. Additionally, we looked at teachers' interpretations of the advice and recommended assessment practices provided to them through policy directives to see how changes were enacted in their classrooms. These understandings help build efficacy in using the systems of assessment, give instructional leaders and teachers an opportunity to talk about what works, and enable people working in PKA programs to resolve the challenges they encounter when collecting, inputting, and analyzing assessment data.

This brief provides information on teachers as policy enactors, the methods used to explore answers to our research questions, findings and key learnings, and creates opportunities for collaborative and critical practical and policy-oriented conversations among the critical players in the PKA implementation. The findings we share are drawn primarily from our interviews with head teachers during the 2016-2017 school year, an academic year wherein many teachers and program/school leaders were familiarizing themselves with one of the three assessment systems, and adapting to curricular recommendations and adapting to additional guidance from DECE, such as curricular recommendations¹.

Teachers as Policy Enactors

Part of the reason I decided to do this with all of you is because we feel like we're getting a little bit of a voice, you know, because there is an importance to what we do. It's our life. It's not only our livelihood, it's our passion. It's something we love and it's nice that someone is recognizing that we are here.

~Pre-K Head Teacher, Public School, East Harlem

Heimer and Ramminger (2020) rightly point out, “Enactment of policy does not happen in a vacuum and therefore requires communication among key stakeholders” (p. 23). A primary goal of this study was to amplify teachers’ voices to gain deeper understandings of their roles as policy enactors. Throughout this brief, excerpts from interview transcripts are shared to provide a window into what their experiences have been like adapting to a new or different approach to authentic assessment. We see this as being an opportunity for policy-makers and thought leaders in early childhood care and education to become more strongly attuned to the experiences of teachers as being policy enactors. Douglass (2017) writes, “Educators are often treated as passive adopters of change, rather than as the architects and co-creators of it” (p. 67). Valuable lessons have been learned through the process of listening to teachers and carefully observing their experiences using authentic assessment tools. People working in governing or oversight agencies have an increased opportunity to engage in shared decision-making, or at a minimum establish shared understandings around policy, programming, and practice by hearing teachers’ voices and learning about how they interpret policy, enact it, and make adaptations to their approaches to planning, instruction, and assessment.

¹ The DECE created a curricular framework that consists of interdisciplinary Units of Study that PKA teachers are encouraged to follow.

We explore teachers' policy enactment process through the lens of implementation science (Akaba et al., 2019) as well as the critical ecologies of the early childhood profession (Dalli, Miller, & Urban, 2012). According to Proctor et al. (2011), implementation outcomes are seen through teachers' daily experience and consist of a policy's appropriateness (i.e., suitability), adoption (i.e., intention to try), acceptability (i.e., satisfaction with multiple aspects of the policy), feasibility (i.e., sustainability for daily use), and fidelity (i.e., adherence to policy requirements). Akaba et. al (2019) provides insights into teachers' experiences navigating the PKA expansion and takes an important step forward in amplifying their voices in policy-related discussions. By attending to teachers' experiences and perspectives, policymakers, instructional leaders, and others in leadership positions can implement strategies to promote teachers' engagement in decision-making processes around their teaching and assessment practices.

Research Questions and Methods

The primary research questions that guided this study were:

1. What do teachers know about the authentic assessment tools they use in UPK settings?
2. How do teachers use authentic assessment tools?
3. How do authentic assessment tools influence teachers' pedagogical decision-making?
4. What other factors contribute to teachers' pedagogical decision making in UPK settings?
5. What data are most useful in identifying children's developmental needs?

Methods

To answer these questions, a multiple case study research design was used to provide an in-depth perspective on Pre-K teachers' utilization of authentic assessment systems. See Appendix A for information on each of the participant groups in our study, including head teachers, assistant teachers, instructional leaders, and parents. We collected several sources of evidence including interviews, participant observations, and a collection of classroom artifacts (e.g., photos of children's work, daily schedules, lesson plans). We also asked participants to complete a survey to gain insights into their social identities and backgrounds, to gain deeper understandings of

their program, school, or classroom community, and to pose initial questions about their views and experiences using authentic assessment systems.

Data was collected across three years, with the majority of it being carried out 2016-2017. We interviewed teachers at five different time points during an academic year to examine the ways in which assessment played a role in their pedagogical decision-making, and to learn how it helped them get to know children's individual needs, abilities, and interests. Several teachers, however, needed to have combined sessions due to time constraints. Each interview session was approximately 45 minutes to 75 minutes. We also learned about how assessment data influenced their conversations with primary caregivers about children's growth and learning. Interviews with instructional leaders happened one-time only, and usually at the onset of our collaboration with teachers at their school. We aimed to interview parents three times during the academic year, generally around the time of an assessment checkpoint or conference with the teacher.

Additionally, research team members spent time in classrooms to observe how different learning experiences unfolded, and to document how teachers and children were interacting with one another. The noticings from classroom observations were used to generate interview questions about how children's engagement in various activities provided data for the AAS or gave greater insights into their development. Various artifacts (e.g., work samples, classroom newsletters, and photographs of bulletin boards) were collected as well. These artifacts were used to showcase the different ways teachers collected evidence of children's learning or documented and displayed their learning.

The data sources are used to present case studies that represent the lived realities of teachers and other key actors within the early childhood communities during the period of the PKA expansion. The case studies are complex and illustrate how members of the PKA community adapted to new or different policies, recommendations for their teaching, and the adoption of authentic assessment systems for their classrooms. We also shed light on how macro-level influences—systems building, quality improvement, and kindergarten readiness—are shifting teaching and learning in preschool settings.

Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed by utilizing the thematic analysis method by following the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, recorded interviews were transcribed, and researchers read and reread the transcripts multiple times to familiarize themselves with the data. Second, we generated the inductive codes based on the participants' discourse and coded the entire data set in a systematic fashion to elicit main themes. Third, we collated the coded data and sought for themes that were commonly found in relation to our research questions. Fourth, we reviewed the themes. Fifth, we defined and refined the specific meaning of each theme in relation to the data. Lastly, we sorted out excerpts and selected examples that were compelling to answer the research questions.

Sample of Thematic Content for Head Teacher Interviews		
2016-17 Academic Year	Assessment General	general mention of assessment, evaluation, the assessment the teachers, directors are doing
	AAS Informing Teaching	talk of how assessment is used in planning, instruction, informing goals or objectives
	Analyzing Data	Tracking data over time, looking at progress
	Anecdotes/Notes	mention of taking notes/anecdotes to collect data
	Purpose of AAS	mention purpose of assessment
	Data Collection	ongoing, continuous data collection through photos, notes, work samples other forms of documentation
	Individualization	use when <i>individualization</i> is stated, or when teachers talk about modifying instruction, objectives, etc. to meet children's individual needs
	Input Data	Talk of the process of inputting data into AAS
	Photo Documentation	Mention of taking photos, using photos as a form of data collection or documentation

Establishing Trustworthiness of the Data

Three reviewers were assigned to each transcript and each person tagged passages with the codes generated from the initial phases of data analysis. Each person coded the transcripts independently, and then numerous meetings were held wherein members of the research team discussed how the codes were applied to teachers' talk. Agreements and disagreements about the coding were addressed, and inter-rater reliability was established through an iterative process. Members of the research team examined whether the codes were used in a way that accurately represented the data to ensure trustworthiness.

It is important to note the findings from this study illustrate the experiences of teachers at a particular time and within localized spaces. It is not intended to be generalizable. The data used in this study is meant to provide in-depth understandings of the adoption of AAS in PKA programs during a period of rapid expansion. There are data exemplars shared in this brief and they serve as provocations for all members of early childhood communities that are intended to generate dialogue on the adoption of common practices across universalized preschool programs, and specifically around the use of authentic assessment.

Participants

We worked with 17 head teachers throughout the course of the study. The majority of the head teachers held a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. They were of diverse backgrounds—with the majority of them identifying as Black or Latina. The majority of teachers were monolingual English speakers, and two spoke both English and Spanish. All of the head teachers, with the exception of one, identified as female. There was one male participant. The age of the teachers encompassed a broad range, with the oldest being 55 years or older, and the youngest being between 18-25 years of age. Teachers' experiences in early childhood classrooms also varied, with some working in preschools for 20+ years, while others were embarking on their first year of teaching.

Programs

The research team used a place-based sampling approach, as instructed by the Foundation for Child Development and the New York City Early Childhood Research Network. Project data was collected in 10 PKA programs. Of these 10 programs, 9 were New York City Early Education Centers (NYCEECs), one was a PKA in a public school, all situated in a variety of community contexts across three of the five boroughs, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. We worked in 3 DOE-sponsored programs, as defined within the sampling framework. However, there were DOE-sponsored classrooms within some NYCEEC programs. Four of the programs were, at the time, Administration for Children's Services (ACS)-sponsored sites². The majority of our partner schools were located in low-resourced community districts (n=5), and some were a part of moderate (n=4) or high-resourced communities (n=1). Resource levels were determined

² Starting in July 2019 all EarlyLearn contracts formally overseen by ACS were transferred to the DOE. The transfer of contracts was carried out in an effort to establish a more comprehensive system of early care and education in NYC.

by the concentration of poverty within each of the community districts. One program was a special education inclusionary program and worked with children with identified delays or disabilities and with neuro-typically developing children. The programs had to be working with one of the three assessment systems, Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG), Work Sampling System (WSS), or High Scope's Child Observation Record (COR). Six programs in our sample adopted TSG, two utilized WSS, and two used COR.

Significant Findings

The significant findings shared in this report fall under five broad categories

1. Teachers' Views on the Purposes and Goals of Assessment
2. Common Assessment Strategies
3. Benefits to Using Authentic Assessment
4. Areas Where Teachers Need Additional Support
5. Other Factors that Contribute to Teachers' Pedagogical Decision-Making

1. Teachers Views on the Purpose and Goals of Authentic Assessment

I think that you cannot be an effective educator, not a teacher, an educator, without being influenced by reliable and valid information. While it (COR) shouldn't be the only tool you use to educate your students, it is of the utmost importance because you know, you can set goals. And I think goal-setting is paramount to just being successful in life.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC program, Bushwick

Teachers collect data every day and are constantly monitoring whether children are meeting the goals they have set for them. Authentic assessment systems allow teachers to survey their own teaching, to see learning domains and content areas that children engage with, and provides a "landscape view" of their classroom's strengths and growth areas. Jones (2004) argues, "educators can become better advocates for young children when they begin to demystify assessment and testing and come to understand the strengths and limitations of the range of assessment options" (p. 17).

[Teaching Strategies] helps me to know what they're expected to do at a certain age and time throughout the school year and what I need to target within that timeframe... Then whatever's in TSG, how can I incorporate those skills to make sure that that specific child or all the children can be able to achieve that goal.

~Head Teacher, DOE sponsored NYCEEC, Windsor Terrace

He knows his name, you can check that off. He knows his colors, you can check that off. He knows his numbers, you can check that off. Those things are now something you don't have to do or emphasize on. You can move on and start building. You can now move on and start building a child. Because once the foundation is laid, where they know their name, their age, and stuff, now let's move. With the assessment, it shows you how to move to the next thing. So, assessment is to help build a child stronger and stronger.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, Bronx

It is evident they hold expectations for children and their growth and learning across domains, and particularly in the areas of language and literacy and mathematics. As another teacher in Bushwick stated,

Right now, since it's a Pre-K classroom, we are aiming for them to leave here you know at least writing, to prepare them for kindergarten. Writing and knowing also the letters, the numbers, identifying their names and last names, and building on the skills that they've ... building more on there so they came in with, to prepare them for public school or a charter school.

Their expectations for children aligned with the standards outlined in the Pre-K Foundation for Common Core (now Pre-K Early Learning Standards). This alignment provided uniformity across all PKA programs in defining what skills and knowledge children should engage with during the preschool years. The AAS gave them a new lens for progress monitoring and almost all of the teachers commented on how the AAS they adopted helped them to see nuances in children's growth and learning that they were not attending to before.

Don't you smile when you're data-entering an anecdote from a week or so before? It, it just really makes you smile when you see how they started compared to how they are now, how they're progressing themselves. It just makes you feel proud. And so, the COR highlights every aspect of development, even things that you don't realize you're assessing. It awakens you to the minute parts of development that you take for granted.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, Bronx

Every teacher in our sample used the word *individualization* in their conversations around modifying instruction to meet the needs of all the children in their classroom. Their references to *individualization* exemplify the way common language is being used among members of the workforce to describe how a practice is becoming embedded in their daily work and highlights the way teachers are responsive to children's needs and assets.

The individualization is really to meet the children where they are and be with their specific needs. It can also be during large group or small group. But there are specific things you do, activities to do with them, to achieve or to meet the objective that you have for the day...

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, East New York

They would also examine how children were grasping other content knowledge, constructing knowledge, or expanding their worldviews. This was particularly evident as it connected to the themes the class was exploring at any given time.

For example, that one (pointing to photo documentation) was about an experiment. They are trying to figure out. They're talking about light and there was an experiment, they pass a light through a clear container, clear water. They had to observe that. Then pass the light through a dark liquid so they are to tell me if the light was able to go through the dark or if the light was able to go through the clear. So, I wanted to show that light passes through certain things and it does not pass through certain things, but they have to find that out by themselves.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, East New York

2. Common Assessment Strategies

We asked teachers to describe their process for collecting data and many replied by saying that their process was an emergent one. Meaning, they would “jot down” notes or capture a moment with a photo spontaneously. As one teacher said,

There is no time you decide. It's whenever you see it happening. Whenever a child is working and they do something, you should be jotting down anecdotes. Like information, any kind of way you can. Or take a picture of it, or take the picture of the child that draws [...] We collect data all day long from the things you hear, from the things you see, it's all day long.”

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC

Observation and documentation are the primary methods of data collection for authentic assessment. Teachers utilized photo documentation and would take “anecdotes” or informal notes in order to input summaries of children’s growth and learning into the authentic assessment systems. Anecdotal note-taking was a strategy that teachers would employ to document the process-oriented nature of children’s learning. Some also discussed how it helped them to record children’s conversations.

So if they are working in centers and they make a great sculpture I'll write down whether they worked together or didn't work together. How they communicated, communicating

with each other, if they were problem-solving, stuff like that. If they are in writing, I'll take a picture of their writing, Like the first time a student wrote his name, took a picture of that and I'll write down, you know, how they were doing for that... Were they able to hold the pencil or crayon properly with the proper grip?

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, East Harlem

Note-taking or “anecdotal” are also considered to be a promising assessment practice in the broader discourse. During professional learning workshops on assessment, teachers were trained to write “low inference notes” and to be unbiased in their reflections on children’s behaviors or engagement in different learning experiences.

We collect data...throughout the whole day. Like if we're doing circle time, during lessons, sometimes when the teacher is doing her lesson, she could probably assign her assistant to take notes of what the kids are saying, like anecdotes throughout the day, during free play, we take anecdotal notes, during lunchtime we're taking mental notes of what the children are saying. So throughout the day, we're taking anecdotal notes.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, Bronx

Other teachers relied heavily on the photographs that they took of children to generate data to input into the systems of assessment. Teachers found photo documentation to be one of the most efficient ways for them to gather information about children’s learning experiences. They used photo documentation as a means to help them remember the things that occurred in their classrooms. They then used the photographs to generate notes or anecdotes on the children’s learning experiences. As one teacher described, having a “photographic memory” saved her time and allowed her to do things in the classroom aside from taking notes. Many teachers said that they preferred photo documentation over writing anecdotes because they felt as if 1) they did not have time to take notes “on the spot” in classrooms and 2) it was hard to balance teaching and being present with the children while also trying to capture what they were doing in writing.

I take a picture of them with their picture and then I'll write anecdotal. But sometimes I'll just play with them in the centers and I'm listening, I'm taking pictures and then I'll write later. Because it's like... we went to a meeting last Wednesday and some teachers are required to have a clipboard in their hand at all times, and I think that stops the process of really getting in and playing with them.

~Head Teacher, Public School, East Harlem

Summative assessment strategies were also employed so teachers could gain perspective on children’s discrete skills and knowledge acquisition. They are very keen on examining children’s

alphabet knowledge, their writing abilities, and their math and numeracy skills. In order to do this, teachers meet with individual children and ask them questions to gain a snapshot of their abilities within a specific area.

Sometimes I take them aside during free play and kind of do my own little assessment by asking them questions about the letters, having them write their names, having them do little academic activities to see where they are.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, Bronx

3. Benefits to Using Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment has expanded teachers' assessment literacy.

The adoption of authentic assessment established “norm of practice” (Brown, 2015) among PKA teachers and created a shared language around curriculum and assessment. As mentioned, teachers would talk extensively about *individualization* and this is illustrative of one way they understood the benefits of assessment. Additionally, teachers would often mention how their assessment work resulted in them becoming more reflective in their practice, identifying different growth areas.

I use it (WSS) in many different ways. One way is, it helps me infuse different lesson plans into the unit or into the day: science or social studies. I also see how I can take a small group of kids that need help and then, you know, work with them in a small group. I see what I'm missing, [...] what I need to focus on... And also, it's a bouncing off plan to talk with the parents to see how they're doing.

~Head Teacher, Public School, East Harlem

Authentic assessment has played a significant role in helping teachers better understand how to individualize instruction and enables them to meet children *where they are*.

Teachers used data from the AAS to plan small group activities. They group children together who demonstrated similar abilities to target certain objectives and to help them progress along particular learning domains. Small group instruction allowed teachers to carry out more individualized instruction and they could be more responsive to children's diverse abilities. There was also a strong emphasis on helping children meet certain expectations related to discrete skills and knowledge acquisition. In exploring the answer to the question, what data are most useful for teachers, it is evident that they are looking at the milestones within the AAS and examining children's capacities to meet standards related to kindergarten readiness.

On a sticky note, in my phone, when we're at the park. Yesterday, for example, one of my kids successfully demonstrated a gross motor ability. She said, "I did

it!” And this is a predominantly Spanish speaker who started in my class about a month ago. That’s a salient point. That’s something you need to write and record because that shows her growth and part of her socio-emotional development, you know self-confidence.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, Bronx

Teachers considered what is important for children to do while acquiring social-emotional skills. The teachers we worked with used their expectations of what kindergarten will be like to promote certain social-emotional skills—children being in large classrooms with only one or two teachers there to help them. Independence is emphasized, and many teachers want children to do things on their own. Other skills considered to be important for children include learning how to be a part of a group, sharing and taking turns, understanding their emotions, emotion regulation, speaking up for themselves, and fostering independence.

My goal for them is to be able to develop independence and be able to ask and answer questions based on whatever we are currently studying or teaching at the moment, to be able to socialize with their peers appropriately, to be emotionally sensitive to their peers as well.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, East New York

4. Areas Where Teachers Need Additional Support

The challenges teachers faced were dependent on their previous experiences teaching and using assessment tools or systems. The teachers we worked with had varying levels of efficacy using the authentic assessment systems. Whereas some teachers had used a particular system for many years, for others this was their first time having to engage in this approach to assessment. For example, the teachers at the public school had extensive experience with the Work Sampling System. At a NYCEEC program, there was one teacher who had worked with TSG for many years and felt very confident using the tool. The teacher in her neighboring classroom, however, was new to the TSG and was not familiar with all of its functions. There are many opportunities for data usage (e.g., generating reports and getting ideas for lesson plans) but some teachers are constrained in exploring all the possibilities because they do not know how to use the systems to their fullest potential. One teacher in the Bronx who was using TSG said,

one thing I realized when doing documentation, like on the bottom it states ‘save and add to preliminaries,’ but then when you save and add to preliminaries, you don’t really see it towards when we’re actually doing the checkpoint...we don’t really see it. So I think...maybe I’m doing it wrong.

Additionally, **the expectations to use the systems caused some teachers to enter data as a form of compliance**, and many did it in order to meet their professional obligation.

So TSG has certain checkpoints, they have these certain things that you're supposed to look for, and I mean, they're all things that us as teachers are trained to look for as is, so maybe for an inexperienced teacher, it kinda goes back to, "Oh, I should have looked at that! I didn't get anything for that. Let me make sure I have something for that. Let me make sure I'm tracking this." You know, it may be like a reminder, but unfortunately, I mean, not unfortunately, but for me, it doesn't. I've been in this field way too long to not know their milestones and where they should be at.

~Head Teacher, DOE Sponsored NYCEEC, East Harlem

Teachers need support in making data collection and uploading artifacts an efficient

process. One teacher saw the benefits of using the app on her mobile device to input data into TSG, but could not take advantage of it because phones were not allowed in her classroom. This classroom had no mobile devices, like an iPad, to use for the purpose of data collection. For example, with the app, teachers can take photographs on their mobile devices and have them upload directly into the online platforms. Many of the teachers also said that they would receive mixed messages from instructional leaders, including instructional coordinators, ECERS, or CLASS reviewers, and their directors about how to approach assessment.

The instructional coordinator and social worker need to get on the same page as ECERS reviewers in the classroom. They are all completely different. ECERS wants you to do this way, CLASS wants you to do this way, the DOE [instructional coordinator and social worker] wants you to put things away this way... For each one, I have to change my room around. For each individual thing. What is the point of that?

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, Windsor Terrace

[Assessments] were due December 2nd. I even asked that in a meeting, why can't it be due, like, after the vacation? So I can really sit and really spend the time to do it. And I wrote that we had an ECERS review and now was taking a big portion. [...] Like certain things that have to be in place and we were running around like chickens with their heads cut off. You're getting ready for this because you put so much effort, time, and love into the classroom. You want to put your best, you want to say, 'we are not perfect but we want to show you the great things we are doing.' Time is always... I get here ... I wake up at 4.30, I get here at quarter to 7, and at the end of the day I am telling you, I am tired. I don't want to stay longer, and, you know, it's hard.

~Head Teacher, Public School, East Harlem

Teachers found it difficult to shuffle the demands of assessment with the other aspects of their teaching, including planning and instruction. Many grappled with aspects of “data management” and this has an impact on how children’s growth and learning are understood and on how information is shared with others.

Because we still have to do all the other work, we still have to plan, we still have to ... get things ready. I did the science experiment, I had to make each child their own little science thing, I had to develop the pictures, I had to type... So it's all this stuff going on at the same time. I have to... I do a newsletter so ... sometimes I understand the purpose of it [assessment], and I find at times that it is helpful, but at times I feel overwhelmed.

~Head Teacher, Public School, East Harlem

The process of collecting assessment data was not always consistent and this was caused by a number of factors. Classrooms were sometimes understaffed and teachers needed to focus on meeting the immediate and most basic needs of the members in their learning communities. Fortunately, children were prioritized, but this also meant that teachers had to do things other than observation and documentation. Other evaluations (e.g., CLASS or ECERS evaluations) also disrupted the authentic assessment work.

Many teachers engage in their assessment work on their outside of the school day or their working hours. This occurred because of time constraints and other job responsibilities that demanded their time. As a result, they had to carry out assessments, or input data, at home or on their personal time. Moreover, they would use their evenings or weekends to make sure they completed the necessary tasks.

TSG I feel like it is a big demand and it's time-consuming, it's super time-consuming. But the reality is, is nobody does it until the day of. To be perfectly honest, yes, I should be entering stuff right now, but I'll probably do it this weekend. I have 'til the tenth. I'll try to do it this weekend, like I'll leave myself a post-it note and remind myself. Same with putting the things in the portfolios. In a perfect world, we would be doing that during prep and after, you know I have [my co-teacher] until 3:30, we could be doing that. And sometimes we are. Other times-, we're prepping for the next day. So if we're prepping for the next day, I can't write a report.

~Head Teacher, DOE Sponsored NYCEEC, Windsor Terrace

There was a common expectation that teachers could input data or carry out assessment-related work during nap time, but many talked about how this was not always easy.

Well, I just do the pictures, throughout the whole day and if I have time during nap time, I put it in. But realistically, sometimes I don't have time during nap time, 'cause I have to check homeworks and stuff, I have to do so many things. But the time that I usually use is naptime.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, Bushwick

Teachers need more time to complete the work required to carry out all phases of the assessment cycle. It's a difficult balancing act trying to collect and input all of the data needed for the assessment systems and carry out all the other aspects of teaching and building community. The teachers emphasized the process of inputting data was onerous. Data collection also (e.g., taking photographs, collecting work samples, or conducting summative assessments) is time-consuming and shifts teachers' focus. Rather than playing with children, or learning alongside them, oftentimes they had to ensure documentation was taking place.

Collaboration among co-teachers and their abilities to engage in dialogue around assessment were constrained within the classrooms where we worked because of the teachers' heavy workloads. One teacher talked about how she and her co-teachers would "divide and conquer" the process of documentation—while this decreases the workload, it limits the potential for teachers to work collaboratively on assessment. Assistant teachers were instrumental in collecting data to input into the AAS, but most Head Teachers had the responsibility of uploading all the information into the online platforms. The individualistic nature of teachers' approaches to authentic assessment inhibits opportunities for them to have collaborative and rich discussions with their colleagues about children's engagement in different learning experiences, and about their progressions or regressions within and across the learning domains.

5. Other Factors that Contribute to Teachers' Pedagogical Decision Making

The PKA expansion had a significant impact on teachers' approaches to curriculum and assessment. New policies and/or recommendations for lesson planning, teaching, and other pedagogical practices carried a lot of weight in teachers' decision-making. Teachers needed to change their practices to align with the policies and practical recommendations set by the DECE and this had a significant influence over their pedagogical decision-making.

I just got a whole new way that we're doing lesson plans. I was just in an hour meeting and we were given, we're doing it the DOE way. So that's different for us and that's a lot more work. Constantly writing reports. Authentic Assessment... I feel like it is a big demand and it's time-consuming, it's super time-consuming. I'll probably do it this weekend.

~Head Teacher, NYCEEC, Windsor Terrace

Children's diverse abilities play a very significant role in teachers' pedagogical decision-making. Teachers use the assessment systems to identify growth areas for the children in their classroom and make modifications based on their observations. The rubrics within each of the assessment systems are generally the guides they use to determine whether a child is meeting expectations. There are risks in relying on the assessment systems to design curriculum or lesson plans. Some of these activities may be prescriptive in nature and can potentially supplant emergent or child-embedded curricular approaches commonly used in early childhood contexts. Kim (2016) argues that "the paradoxical nature of a TS Gold-driven individualization lies in the fact that a greater focus upon individual differences also depends on the assumed sameness for all children" (p. 106).

I have a love-hate with assessments. I enjoy it because as a teacher it kind of gives you an insight that you might not normally—on your routines, through your observations, and through your planning—notice about the student. Like i.e., the ESIR allowed me to see the physical delays that my students were having in the classroom. But I don't like it because it tracks the student throughout and I feel like it becomes more, "Well we want this kid to score really good on this test," and it becomes less about the student.

~Head Teacher, DOE Sponsored NYCEEC, East Harlem

Kindergarten readiness is a driving force behind teachers' pedagogical decision-making.

Kindergarten readiness is a notion that carries multiple meanings that vary based on community needs and assets, families' ideas about schooling, teachers' perspectives, and other socio-cultural factors. When asked to describe the goals they had for children, most of the teachers in our study stated that they wanted children to demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to start elementary school on the right foot. Recognizing the letters of the alphabet, reading, having strong numeracy skills, and carrying out basic math problems were among priorities teachers had for children's learning.

What I'm trying to do, like vocabulary, vocabulary of the week, because they say you're supposed to learn a thousand words or something before kindergarten so that's one of

the things. Being able to do at least some CVC words, like being able to identify some of those and stuff that just goes with the New York State Standards, which that's what I see as kindergarten ready.

~Head Teacher, NYCEE, East Harlem

The emphasis on discrete skills and knowledge acquisition is not surprising as it falls in line with the shifts in early education that have occurred as a result of broader education reform movements. What is interesting is the extent to which teachers have internalized the expectations for kindergarten readiness as constructed in dominant discourses on schooling. This shift toward AAS coincides with standards-based accountability reform movements (Brown, 2015). While teachers need to keep up with the changes that are moving the pre-k education into alignment with Kindergarten-Grade 12 systems of schooling, they can engage in critical reflection to examine the impact of defining kindergarten readiness by narrow indicators of child development. Professional learning opportunities can help PKA teachers gain competence and confidence in examining children's growth and learning in a deeper and culturally responsive way.

Key Learnings and Opportunities to Enhance Assessment Practices

Teachers' talk about how the successes and challenges they face present different opportunities for strengthening the adoption of authentic assessment, using data to inform practice(s), understanding children and their growth and learning, along with training and professional learning. Following is a brief overview of the key learnings, followed by more extended explanations.

Strengthening the adoption of authentic assessment

- Certain directors within our sample provide teachers with dedicated time to work on assessments during the school day. This was identified as being a promising practice as it reduces the amount of personal time teachers have to take to complete data entry.
- Teachers would benefit from having extended time to engage in their assessment work during the school day or they should be compensated for time completing the work while "off duty."

- Many of the teachers in the study discussed doing things the “DOE way” and offered that as a rationale for their decision-making, which alludes to a compliance-oriented approach. Providing clear and consistent messaging around the intentions for quality improvement or accountability can help teachers understand the reasons why they are being asked to shift their practices.

Using data to inform practice(s)

- Teachers in our sample dedicated a significant amount of time writing anecdotes, taking photos, and collecting work samples, but teachers need the time to carefully review their assessment data.
- Many of the teachers seldomly had a chance to discuss their assessment data with others (e.g., their co-teachers) to confirm, question, or give deeper meaning to the conclusions they were making with the evidence of children’s learning they had collected.

Critically reflecting on children and their growth and learning

- The promotion of critical reflection around children’s growth and learning and the standards used to define child development or kindergarten readiness will enable teachers to think about or question the extent to which benchmarks or expectations are appropriate within the context of their learning communities.
- Involving children in the assessment process by capturing their perspectives of the process would also lead to more holistic understandings of their growth and learning. Involving children requires that adults generate dialogue with children about their observations and documentation and gain their point of view about the process, and hear their interpretations of their own learning. It is important to include children as adult perceptions about children’s interactions or experiences in classrooms could be biased and shaped by broader constructs such as school readiness (Yoon & Templeton, 2019), and gaining children’s insights can help to provide more nuanced and contextualized assessment information.

Engaging professional learning and shared decision-making

- The findings helped us to identify opportunities to rethink professional learning experiences that are responsive to teachers’ needs and are carried out in more localized contexts to promote communities of practice.

- Forums for teachers to openly and honestly talk about their experiences using authentic assessment, or any other changes to programming and practice that have influence over their pedagogical decision-making, could lead to deeper collaboration and distributed leadership.
- Policymaking that is done through a range collaboration with teachers, and at various time points throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation of program expansion and shifting policy directives. Increased opportunities for teachers' to be consulted or included in shared decision-making at both the micro and macro level can promote stronger systems building.

Strengthening the Adoption of Authentic Assessment

There are increased benefits to providing teachers with extended time to complete their assessment work.

Certain directors within our sample provided teachers with dedicated time to work on assessments during the school year. For example, one education director gave head teachers one hour a day to work on authentic assessment, and the assistant teachers were provided with 30 minutes. While one assistant teacher was provided with 30 minutes, she gave her time to the head teacher. This approach was not perfect, and teachers still found it difficult to step out of the classroom on a consistent basis. Embedding assessment work into the daily schedule reduces the amount of personal time teachers have to take to complete data entry. This also creates other opportunities for teachers to focus on different aspects of their teaching, including curricular planning and family engagement. Teachers working within the DOE are provided 155 minutes for professional learning, family engagement, and other professional work. Public school teachers have dedicated time after school (e.g., 80 minutes on Mondays and 75 minutes on Tuesdays), to fulfill these responsibilities. It would create more equity if all teachers working in NYCEEC programs be given the same opportunities. This will reduce the amount of personal time they use to fulfill their responsibilities around planning, instruction, and assessment, and to ensure they can be compensated for the work they do “off duty.” It is also important for directors to ensure there is adequate classroom coverage so that head teachers can leave their classrooms during their dedicated time to complete assessment work.

Providing clear and consistent messaging around the intentions for quality improvement or accountability will help teachers understand the reasons why they are being asked to shift

their practices. In the early years of the PKA expansion, policy enactment was narrow and well-defined, causing teachers (policy enactors) to mainly fall into compliance with the rules and recommended practices. New policies and/or recommendations for lesson planning, teaching, and other pedagogical practices carried a lot of weight in teachers' decision-making. According to one teacher, "All Pre-K has to comply with the DOE and that's what I do." Teachers are constantly adapting to the new(er) approaches to curriculum and teaching as set by the NYCDOE DECE. They commonly cited the Interdisciplinary Units of Study, the Creative Curriculum, and the "Common Core" as being central to their pedagogical decision-making. Compliance with the different rules, regulations, mandates, and recommendations was a strong factor in teachers' decision-making as they were concerned about job security, but they also wanted to better support the children and families in their classrooms. They saw the recommendations as being promising practice.

Using Data to Inform Practice(s)

Teachers in our sample dedicated a significant amount of time writing anecdotes, taking photos, and collecting work samples, but teachers need the time to carefully review their assessment data. While teachers seem to understand that documentation is essential, they need additional support in making "documentation doable" (Kang & Walsh, 2018). Making documentation doable involves establishing a systematic approach to collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting of data (Kang & Walsh, 2018). Kroeger and Cardy (2006) point out one of the most significant limitations of documentation is the demand on teachers' time. This demand creates a "hard to reach place" and is present because of the effort it takes to collect evidence of children's learning, but also because teachers can have a narrow view on the purpose of assessment. Additionally, their assessments are confined to the skills and concepts embedded in standards-based documents or developmental checklists. Their research offers solutions to some of the dilemmas inherent in carrying out authentic assessment, including having teachers think carefully about the purpose of an assessment for any given interaction with a child or learning experience, and creating opportunities for them to experiment with different documentation practices.

Many of the teachers seldomly had a chance to discuss their assessment data with others (e.g., their co-teachers) to confirm, question, or give deeper meaning to the conclusions they

were making with the evidence of children’s learning they had collected. Collaboration is essential to carrying out meaningful assessment. As Mitchell (2018) asserts, “Documentation and dialogue enable a process of learning and teaching to be made visible so that they can be deconstructed” (p. 93). Due to time constraints and other work requirements, head teachers carried out much of the documentation process on their own. When assistant teachers were asked to support their co-teachers in their authentic assessment work, the teaching team would often take on a “divide and conquer” approach. This would involve them dividing up the class and focusing their observation and documentation on only a select number of children. Whereas the tendency for teachers to organize and analyze assessment data independently is convenient for them, there is limited opportunity to talk about their noticings and patterns of children’s learning with their colleagues or with children’s family members. Building dialogue with others and constructing shared meaning is an integral aspect of assessment. Team meetings should allow for collaboration around child studies or lesson studies.

Critically Reflecting on Children’s Growth and Learning

The promotion of critical reflection around children’s growth and learning and the standards used to define child development or kindergarten readiness will enable teachers to think about or question the extent to which benchmarks or expectations are appropriate within the context of their learning communities. The heightened focus on kindergarten readiness has significant implications for linguistically, culturally diverse families, as well as children with diverse abilities. Engaging teachers in the Critical Ecologies framework might enable them to see how the definitions of “age appropriate” behaviors are social constructions. The framework can help them examine how certain skills or knowledge are based on white, middle-upper class, neurotypically developing norms of child development. Pérez and Saavedra (2017) assert that the fields’ strong reliance on developmental psychology and Global North constructions of childhood has reinforced universalized or “one size fits all” conceptions of children. Kim (2016) brings attention to the normalizing and regulatory effects on the adoption of TSG in Head Start programs. As she asserts, “...TSG simply reduces the complexity of children’s developmental characteristics and learning experience to a fixed score” (p. 105). Teachers should be empowered to question ideas shared around appropriate practices, effective teaching, and high-quality early childhood experiences. In order for teachers to engage in critical

inquiry around their teaching, Brown, et al. (2015) assert that teachers must engage in a three-step process. The three steps include helping teachers become aware of how they perceive their practices in relation to developmentally appropriate practices and culturally responsive teaching, questioning whether they are enacting such processes, and reflecting upon how this reflective process impacts their perceptions of their teaching and actual practices in the classroom (p. 19).

Explore opportunities to bring children into the assessment process. Teachers are constantly watching children and making judgements about their growth and learning, but it is not often that children's perceptions of their own educational experiences are taken into consideration. Their perspectives on their own growth and learning should be honored, and adults can be having more conversations with them about their needs, assets, interests, and preferences. Teachers should also explore humanizing and socio-cultural approaches to assessment to explore the brilliance of children (Pérez & Saavedra, 2017). Recognizing children's agency in classrooms (Adair, 2014) is also vital. This can be made possible through the use of various forms of documentation already collected by teachers. For example, photo elicitation can provide an opportunity for children to share their reflections on what was captured in a photograph. Adults sit with children and ask them to describe what they see (e.g. using the prompt "Tell me about this picture) which provides a clear window into how younger people think and talk about various encounters or experiences that shape their socialization in home, school, and community spaces. As Yoon and Templeton (2019) point out, *listening* to children becomes complicated in classrooms that are constrained by adult agendas for learning, prescriptive curriculum, and formalized assessments. Efforts to reduce adult biases and interpretations on children's engagement in curriculum or activities can lead to new or different understandings on their learning. The use of narrative-based assessments, such as learning stories, invite children to share their views on what they are experiencing as they interact within their social worlds, or gain skills and knowledge across learning domains. Children are encouraged to dictate or write their own stories, set goals for themselves, and reflect on what supports their learning.

Engaging in professional learning and shared leadership

Teachers want to engage in professional learning, and they appreciate learning from their peers and other teachers. Research shows that professional learning is most impactful when it occurs on a frequent basis, is relevant to the lived realities of teachers, children, and families

within localized contexts, and taps into the expertise and “funds of knowledge” of all the people engaged with professional learning experiences. In addition, teachers should be empowered to examine and question ideas shared around what is considered to be appropriate practices, effective teaching, and high-quality early childhood experiences. Teacher directed professional learning experiences also establishes trust in their expertise and shows that their work is honored and respected. Douglass (2017) asks members of the early childhood community to be innovative in their responses to the change, particularly as it relates to varying expectations, policy shifts or education reform, the acquisition of new or different knowledge, and changes in access to resources and funding (p. 25). With this in mind, redesigning professional learning opportunities so that they are collaborative and grounded in collective inquiry is important.

Teachers voiced an appreciation for hearing from their peers or colleagues at other sites.

Professional learning that is grounded in a communities of practice approach could provide teachers with an opportunity to learn alongside one another and build dialogue around their most pressing issues, ideas, or concerns. Child studies or lesson studies can be instrumental in helping teachers maximize assessment data. For instance, they can share work samples, their photo documentation, anecdotal notes, etc. to explore the different facets of a child or children’s engagement in various learning experiences. The Division of Early Childhood Education is already taking a positive step forward with regard to implementing the Teaching Team Learning Communities Track for professional learning.

Forums for teachers to openly and honestly talk about their experiences using authentic assessment, or any other changes to programming and practice that influence their pedagogical decision making, could lead to deeper collaboration and distributed leadership. There is potential to reinforce teachers’ professional learning by establishing localized and context-based communities of practice for them to continue to engage in a variety of curriculum and assessment strategies. Communities of practice (Wenger, 2011) function when there is a *joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire* among its members. Recognizing teachers’ brilliance and emphasizing their funds of knowledge in decision-making processes around curriculum and assessment is important. Acknowledging the essential role teachers play as policy enactors and as leaders in their own right leads to reciprocal partnerships

and mentorship. Teachers' engagement in the Teaching Team Learning Communities can amplify their perspectives, which in turn promotes collective action and shared decision making around matters that impact their daily classroom life, and increases opportunities for distributed leadership.

Instructional leaders play an important role in building community, establishing a positive climate, and fostering a work culture that promotes connection and continuity. There are numerous opportunities for directors to engage in transformative and collaborative leadership, and many of the Education Directors in our study strived for just that. However, collaborative leadership was hindered by the demands of their jobs, as well as the teachers' heavy workloads. From our collective work, it is evident that there are many internal and external demands put on instructional leaders in their pursuit to support early childhood educators, whether it be increased workloads—completing paperwork, facilities management, budgeting, or conforming to heightened expectations for quality improvement and accountability. Distributed and transformational leadership can be instrumental in reshaping or rebuilding the systems or operational structures that many providers rely on to run their programs.

Concluding Remarks

One of the most significant outcomes of this work is that it elevated the voices and experiences of Pre-K teachers. The teachers who participated in our study offered their views and voices in the hopes that their perspectives would be heard and could shed light on how decisions made about their programs and teaching practices had influence over their daily classroom lives. Their engagement in this study promotes shared understandings, and demonstrates what is possible when there are opportunities for them to discuss policy and practice, implementation, and impact. Policymaking that is done through a range of collaboration with teachers has the potential to improve the enactment of directives and recommendations. Simply stated, helping them work better, helps the system work better. Thus, it is essential to include teachers in this ongoing and collective work, and invite their participation in research and policy focused initiatives, particularly as they pertain to their roles as educators, curriculum and assessment, professional learning, and program improvement. As Ayers, et al. (2017) point out “teachers’ voices are absolutely vital to any efforts at positive and lasting school improvement” (p. 156). It

is important to note that teachers' engagement in policy and advocacy happens in a myriad of ways and that their participation may be active, passive, or happen on the periphery.

The research presented in this brief takes an important step forward in recognizing the vitality of teachers' perspectives, and builds on the work of researchers at other institutions. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California, Berkeley has carried out extensive research around teacher well-being and the early childhood workforce (e.g. Whitebook et al., 2018) One aspect of their work is the Teacher Voices project that was carried out within QUALITYstarsNY programs in New York State. The research presented in this brief seeks to accomplish a goal similar to that of the Teacher Voices project in that we bring teachers' perspectives into the discourses that are circulating around professionalization, quality improvement, professional learning, effective teaching, caregiving, and nurturing the well-being of early childhood practitioners. As Douglass (2017) writes,

Organizations that respect the expertise of their front-line staff can achieve better outcomes when it comes to quality improvement than those that do not. These organizations and systems retain staff, foster a culture of respect and learning, and are more resilient in the face of stressful conditions and external pressures. (p. 68)

Recognizing the essential role teachers play as policy enactors, as experts, and as leaders in their own right is humanizing and leads to reciprocal partnerships and collaborative relationships

[...] You are your students' advocate and don't let your guard down when you want to advocate something for the kids, for your students and you see that people might not agree with that, if you know this is the best decision, like go for it... Stand your ground is the biggest advice I can give anybody that takes on my position.

~Head Teacher, NYCEE, East Harlem

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Appendix A

Participants – Overall Project

Instructional Leaders Background Information

Director	Role	Ethnicity	Gender	Works At	Borough	Years at Current Site	Years of Experience Working with Children and Families
1	Principal	Black/African American	Female	Public School	Manhattan	1	16
2	Principal	White	Female	Public School	Manhattan	0	22
3	Education Director	Asian	Female	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	24	3
4	Education Director	African American	Female	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	0	21
5	Education Director	Latina	Female	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	1	21
6	Program Director	Latina	Female	NYCEEC	Manhattan	2	11
7	Education Director	Black/African American	Female	NYCEEC	Manhattan	1	9
8	Site Director	Other Race/Ethnicity	Goddess	NYCEEC	Bronx	0	15
9	Education Director	Black/African American	Female	NYCEEC	Bronx	8	13
10	Director	Chinese	Female	NYCEEC	Manhattan	1	20
11	Education Director	White	Female	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	4	19

0 indicates that they had just started in this role at the time of the interview

Head Teachers' Background Information

Teacher	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Languages Spoken	Works At	Borough	Years at Current Site	Certification
1	Black	Female	English and Spanish	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	20	Early Childhood Education
2	Black/African American	Female	English	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	.5	Certification in progress
3	Black	Female	No response	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	No response	Early Childhood Education
4	Black	Female	English	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	5	Early Childhood, PreK-Grade 6, Special Education
5	Black/African American	Female	English	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	1	Early Childhood Special Education
6	White	Female	English	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	2	Study Plan Candidate for EC
7	White	Female	English	Public School	Manhattan	13	Early Childhood and Elementary Education
8	African American, Native American, West Indian, Irish, Cuban	Female	English	Public School	Manhattan	14	Early Childhood Education
9	Hispanic	Female	English and Spanish	NYCEEC	Manhattan	2	Early Childhood Special Education
10	No response	Female	No response	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	No response	No response
11	Black/African	Female	English	NYCEEC	Bronx	3	Early Childhood
12	Black/African	Female	English	NYCEEC	Bronx	No response	Early Childhood Special Education
13	Latina and Black	Female	English	NYCEEC	Bronx	2	Early Childhood Special Education
14	Black	Female	English	NYCEEC	Bronx	No response	Early Childhood Special Education
15	Black American	Male	English	NYCEEC	Manhattan	10	Early Childhood Education
16	No response	Female	English	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	1	Study Plan in Early Childhood
17	Black	Female	English	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	6	On track for certification

Assistant Teachers' Background Information

Teacher	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Languages Spoken	Works At	Borough	Years at Current Site	Credentials
1	Other, Latinx or Hispanic	Female	English and Spanish	Public School	Manhattan	15	Master's degree
2	Latinx or Hispanic	Female	English and Spanish	Public School	Manhattan	10	Bachelor's degree, Elementary Teaching credential, Bilingual credential
3	Black/African	Female	English	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	Over 30	Teaching Assistant Certification
4	No Response	Female	No Response	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	No Response	No Response
5	Black/African	Female	English	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	4	High School Diploma, Study Plan Candidate
6	No Response	Female	No Response	NYCEEC	Brooklyn	No Response	No Response
7	Latinx or Hispanic	Female	English and Spanish	NYCEEC	Manhattan	20	Child Development Associate
8	White	Female	English	NYCEEC	Manhattan	3	Child Development Associate
9	Jamaican, Israeli	Male	English	NYCEEC	Manhattan	0	High School Diploma
10	No Response	Female	No Response	NYCEEC	Bronx	No Response	No Response
11	Mixed Race	Female	English	NYCEEC	Bronx	2	Child Development Associate
12	American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latinx	Female	English and Spanish	NYCCEC	Bronx	3	Assistant Teacher Certificate

12 Assistant Teachers were interviewed for this study, but 9 completed the survey which provided the demographic information.

0 indicates they just started working at their respective program

Appendix B

Professional Presentations and Publications

Refereed International and National Conference Presentations

- Peters, L., Smith, T.B., Smith, S., Ryan, S., Li, Z., & Tarrant, K. (2020). The Power and Possibilities of Early Childhood Leadership: An Interactive Discussion on Instructional Leaders and Professional Learning. A webinar that will be presented at the virtual meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children Professional Learning Institute, New Orleans, LA.
- Peters, L. (2020). There is an importance to what we do: Elevating Pre-K teachers' experiences and perspectives to promote their agency and advocacy. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Ethnography in Education Forum, Philadelphia, PA.
- Akaba, S., Liang, E., Graves, S.B., & Peters, L. (2019, April). "I do what I am told to": Pre-K teachers' professional identity development during universal Pre-K expansion. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto.
- Peters, L., Liang, E., Graves, S.B., & Akaba, S. (2019, April). Teachers perspectives on the adoption of authentic assessment systems in universal Pre-K programs. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto.
- Akaba, S., Liang, E., Graves, S. B., & Peters, L. (2019, April). "The whole idea is college readiness": Pre-K teachers' conceptualization of college readiness. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto.
- Peters, L. (2019, April). Teacher Resistance and Reconceptualization of the Universal Pre-K Assessment Directives. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto.
- Peters, L. & Graves, S. B. (2018, April). The possibilities and limitations of authentic assessment in universal Pre-K settings. A paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, New York.
- Akaba, S., Lomidze, A., Hossain, M., Christie, E., Peters, L., & Graves, S. B. (2018, April). Pre-K teachers' perspectives on universal Pre-K expansion: An examination of factors that influence their experiences. A paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, New York.
- Liang, E., Tauste, L, Peters, L., Graves, S.B. (2018, April). "If they have more work, they learn more": Parent's views on homework in Pre-K settings. A paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Tarrant, K., Cleary, S., Vecchiotti, S., Peters, L., & Graves, S.B. (2017). Innovations in bridging research, policy, and practice: Lessons from a policy-research network focused on the early care and education workforce. A panel discussion at the annual National Association of the Education for Young Children Professional Learning Institute, San Francisco.

Local and Regional Conferences

Peters, L. & Graves, S.B. (2019). Re-envisioning professional learning to account for and include teachers' brilliance. A paper presented at the New York City Early Childhood Research Network Symposium.

Cramer, T., Siegel, J, Peters, L, Graves, S. B., & Cleary, S. (2019). Partnering to close the research-practice gap: Lessons from the New York City Early Childhood Research Network. A panel discussion at NYCDOE Forum on Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice, New York City.

Publications

Akaba, S., Peters, L. E., Liang, E., & Graves, S. B. (2020). "That's the whole idea of college readiness": A critical examination of universal Pre-K teachers' understandings around kindergarten readiness. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 96, 1-12.

Liang, E., Peters, L., Lomizde, A., Akaba, S. (2020). 'I like being involved in school stuff': Mothers' Perspectives Around Their Participation in Family Engagement in Universal Prekindergarten. *School Community Journal*, 30(1), 59-87.

Liang, E., Peters, L., Akaba, S., Lomidze, A., & Graves, S. B. (2020). "If they have more work, they learn more": parents' views of their children's learning experiences and homework in Pre-K settings. *Early Years*, 1-16.

Akaba, S., Peters, L., Liang, E., Lomizde, A., Tauste, L., Graves, & S.B. (2019). *Pre-K teachers' perspectives on the factors that influence their experiences through universal Pre-K policy changes; Journal of Early Education Research*.

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