

# Office of Early Learning Newsletter



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Featured Speaker Principal Baruti Kafele

## OEL to Introduce P-3 Summer Institute Virtual Thursdays in August

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Early Learning cancelled its Annual P-3 Summer Institute historically held at the College of St. Rose in Albany. In its place, we are scheduling *P-3 Summer Institute Virtual Thursdays*. Each Thursday in August, the Office of Early Learning will make available on its website content that is relevant to New York State's P-3 Teachers and Administrators.

We are excited to be bringing you important guidance, curriculum considerations, supports for teachers and children, and relevant speakers and presenters. Please go to [our website](#) after July 27<sup>th</sup> to see what we have scheduled for August 2020.

## News from the Director

First and foremost, thank you to all the administrators, educators, paraprofessionals, students and volunteers for their hard work during these unprecedented last few months of school. It has truly been inspiring to hear from schools across New York State what they have been doing to keep students learning while at home. As we move forward, please be on the lookout for guidance on reopening schools from the State Education Department. A big thank you goes to all the people who shared their feedback and concerns at the regional meetings. This could not have been done without your voices! While it may be summer vacation, I know the work of a teacher never ends. Continue to stay safe and healthy. I look forward to the 2020-2021 school year.

Sincerely,  
Mr. Jason T. Breslin, NBCT

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## \*OEL Update\*

We would like to welcome the newest members of our team, Tanya Amodio-Kovacs and Sean Murphy. Tanya has been serving as an Associate in Bilingual Education with the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages, and Sean was Administrative Assistant for the Office of Student Support.



## DeSylvia Dwyer Retires

Dee Dwyer had been with the Office of Early Learning at NYSED since its inception in 1998. Dee's profound commitment to early childhood education was known throughout New York State. Dee will be remembered for her deep knowledge of early childhood and her direct and supportive approach as teacher and mentor. She will be missed. Her last day with NYSED was June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. If you would like to send well-wishes to Dee at [oe1@nysed.gov](mailto:oe1@nysed.gov) we will be happy to send them along to her. We're sure she'll love reading them this summer from her deck that overlooks the beautiful pastures and hills of Schoharie County.

## **Teaching Kindness: Prosocial Behaviors Such as Empathy, Appreciation, and Cooperation Can Be Taught**



Researchers are finding that kindness is in fact a skill that can be taught. "It's fundamentally no different than learning how to play the violin or learning to do sports," detailed Richard Davidson, PhD, the director and founder of the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Davidson developed the mindfulness-based kindness curriculum for preschoolers to help them pay closer attention to their emotions. The mindfulness-based kindness curriculum is free to download from the Center of Healthy Minds' website, and it's available in both English and Spanish. [Link to curriculum and full interview with Dr. Richard Davidson.](#)



## Young Children and Screen Time During the Coronavirus Crisis

For many families, remote work may be a relatively novel concept — if parents and caretakers have been operating within standard workplace walls for years, the notion of carrying on your 9-5 from the comfort of your home may take time to adjust to. And, at the onslaught of Covid-19, many families are not only adjusting to remote work, but also transitioning their childcare and schooling to the home as well.

What families have been experiencing over the last few months is a complete upheaval to the typical work and school day, and thus with that comes a completely new process of adjustment and reacclimating to a routine — this includes learning new technology systems to maintain work productivity, taking on new roles as your child's school facilitator, and balancing parenting roles and responsibilities, such as managing your child's screen time.

As many education systems turn to remote learning to accommodate their classrooms, this means that children are surpassing typical allocated screen time. Staff writer at Child Mind Institute Hannah Sheldon-Dean says, “right now, limits on screen time will probably look a lot different than they once did. Start by acknowledging — to your kids and to yourself — that with school and socializing happening online, increased screen time is unavoidable.”

That said, she suggests a variety of ways that parents can reestablish screen time management, including, practicing compassion towards your child as they are adjusting to this ‘new normal’ just as much as you are, establishing firm screen time boundaries, and brainstorming non-screen time alternatives with your children, such as game time, arts and crafts, etc.

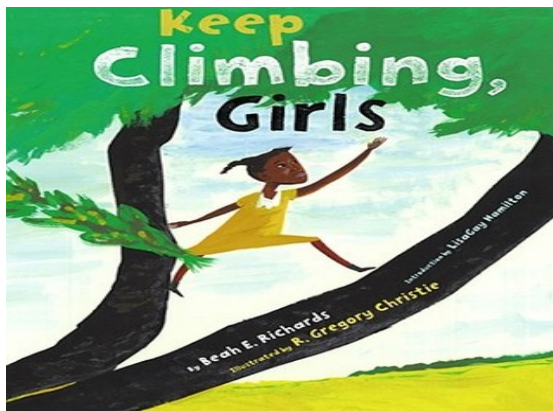
Hannah also notes the importance of modelling healthy screen use as a form of being present with your children — this means that the entire family adheres to screen time rules to prioritize familial connection first and foremost. “If you make a point of setting aside your own screens during set times, your children will be more likely to do the same without putting up a fight. Plus, taking breaks from tech has the added benefit of helping you limit your own media intake and giving you moments of mindfulness with your kids.”

Above all, Hannah stresses the importance of practicing compassion both towards your family but also with yourself. There is no rulebook on how to navigate this time, and while it may feel that you aren’t achieving the upstanding parental standards that you’ve set up for yourself, showing up for yourself and your family is the most important thing right now.

## One Hundred Race Conscious Things to Say to Children to Advance Racial Justice



[Raising Race Conscious Children](#) is a resource to support adults who are trying to talk about race with young children. The goals of these conversations are to dismantle the color-blind framework and prepare young people to work toward racial justice. A community of guest bloggers represent diverse backgrounds and the strategies discussed may be helpful for all. The list models language that has been used in a conversation with a child regarding race and other identity-markers. Explore this resource for blogs, workshops/webinar, and small group workshop series.



SocialJusticeBooks.org  
Provides a Guide for  
Selecting Anti-Bias  
Children's Books

[SocialJusticeBooks.org](#) is a project of [Teaching for Change](#), a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide teachers and parents with the tools to create schools where students learn to read, write and change the world. Teaching for Change developed [SocialJusticeBooks.org](#) in 2017 to identify and promote the best multicultural and social justice children's books, as well as articles and books for educators. Their website includes a [guide for selecting anti-bias children's books](#) which helps educators check children's books for issues such as stereotypes, tokenism, invisibility and loaded words. [Learn more.](#)

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