

NJDOE Early Childhood Academy: Participants' Perspectives

Scott Bortnick, Principal of Brunner Elementary School
Kate Rosander, District Supervisor of Elementary Programs



Scotch Plains and
Fanwood

Our Towns:

Scotch Plains & Fanwood, NJ

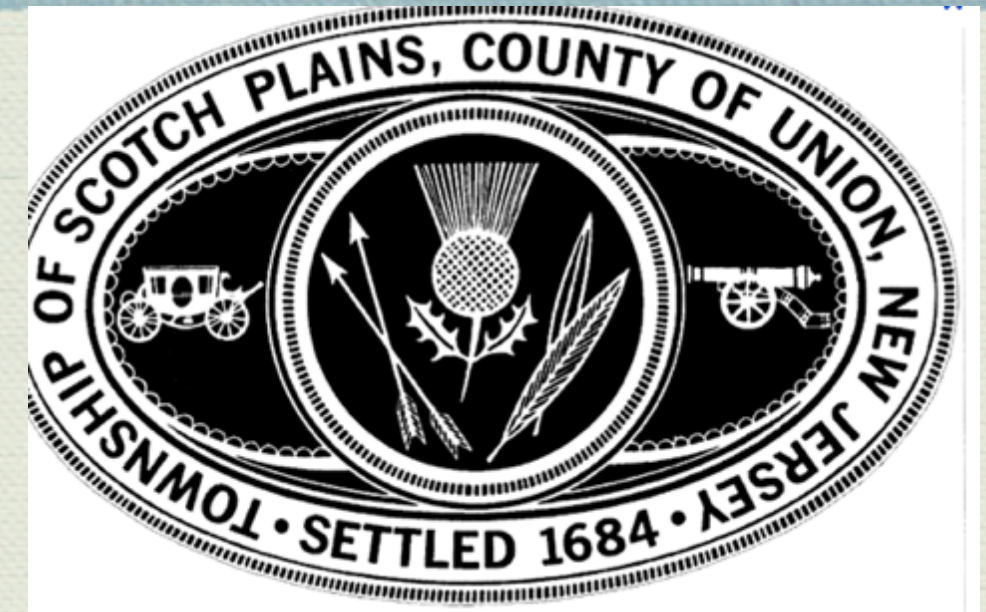
Scotch Plains

Population: 23,510 residents

Size: 9.1 square miles

Estimated household income in 2009:
\$99,891

Mayor:
Kevin Glover



Fanwood



Population: 7,700 residents

Size: 1 square mile



**Estimated
household income
in 2009:** \$113,327

Mayor:
Colleen Mahr



Our District

...educates and empowers our community of individual learners to be successful citizens of the world

District Leadership

- ◆ Dr. Margaret Hayes, Superintendent
- ◆ Dr. Joan Mast, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Technology
- ◆ 11 Content Area Supervisors, K-12
- ◆ Elected Board of Education

District Configuration

- ◆ District Factor Group: I
- ◆ Our Schools:
 - ◆ 5 elementary schools, PreK-4
 - ◆ 2 middle schools, 5th - 8th
 - ◆ 1 high school
- ◆ ELL services housed in one elementary school, beginning in 1st grade
- ◆ PDD programs follow students through their home school
- ◆ Multiply Disabled PreK housed in 1 school



Our Elementary Schools



District Demographics

◆ Student Enrollment: 5,546 (PK-12)

- ◆ 172 Pre-K students, including PDD and MD classrooms
- ◆ 298 Kindergarten students
- ◆ 439 students in 1st grade
- ◆ 406 students in 2nd grade
- ◆ 431 students in 3rd grade
- ◆ 449 students in 4th grade
- ◆ 412 students in 5th grade

Ethnicity Breakdown:

Asian- 7.9%

African American- 9.8%

Hispanic- 6.4%

Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander- 0.1%

White- 73.6%

Multi- 1.9%

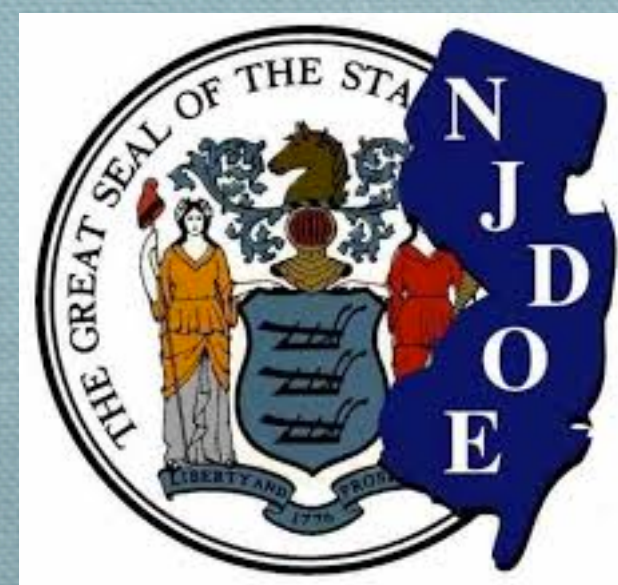
Free/ Reduced lunch- 5.4%

Special Education- 14.2%



Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

A Community of Learners Seeking Excellence Together



Participation in ECA

Impact of Participation

**Knowledge &
Understanding:**
Professional
Development

**Relationship-
Building:**
Other Districts
& NJDOE

ECA

Advocacy:
Full-Day
Kindergarten

Knowledge and Understanding

- ◆ **Best Practices in Early Childhood**

- ◆ Expert Presentations

- ◆ Sharon Ritchie: First School Initiative

- ◆ Nell Duke: Problem-Based Learning

- ◆ Peer Presentations and Ongoing Conversations

- ◆ Teacher Evaluation Support Document: PreK & K

- ◆ **Leadership**

- ◆ Protocol for facilitating productive PLCs

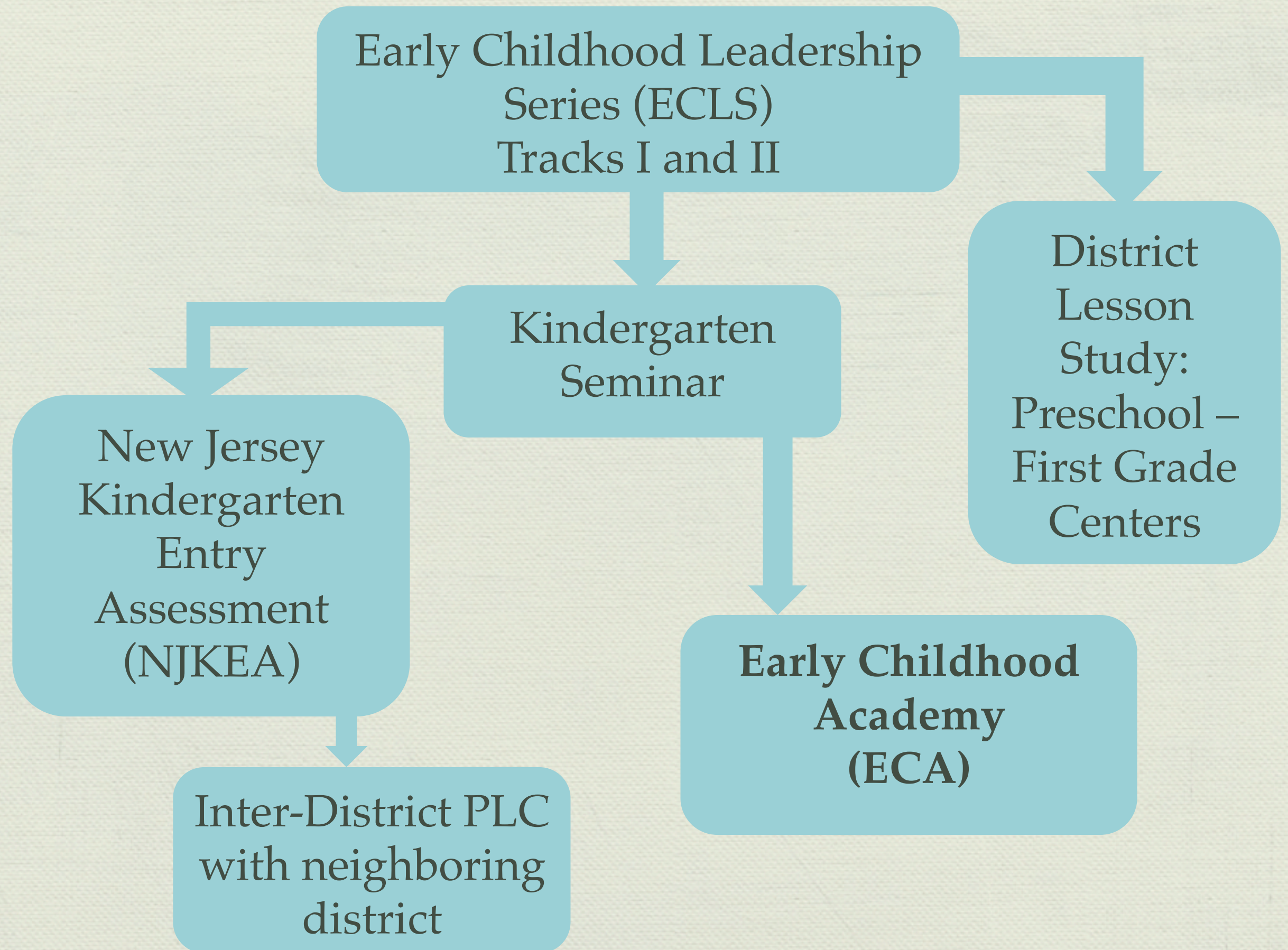
Relationship Building

◆ **Creating Connections with Other Districts**

- ◆ Working collaboratively through similar challenges
- ◆ Learning from those who have already navigated these challenges

◆ **Strengthening Connections with the NJDOE and NIEER**

- ◆ Support with data and research
- ◆ Helped us get over our own inertia



ECA Team

- ◆ **Scott Bortnick**, Principal of Brunner Elementary School
- ◆ **Kate Rosander**, Supervisor of State, Federal & Elementary Programs
- ◆ **Mary Jean Madden**, Preschool Teacher
- ◆ **Laura Smoot**, Kindergarten Teacher
- ◆ **Heather Terantino**, Kindergarten Teacher
- ◆ **Dr. Margaret Hayes**, Superintendent
- ◆ **Dr. Joan Mast**, Assistant Superintendent
- ◆ **Debbie Saridaki**, Business Administrator

Advocating for Full Day Kindergarten

- **District level PLC: Feasibility study/ research**
 - Budgeting (banked cap)
 - Space
 - Competing interests/ needs
- **Supervisor/ Principal/ Teacher PLC**
 - Curriculum implications
 - Assessment implications
 - Scheduling shifts
- **Outcome:**
 - BOE Presentation

Exploring Full-Day Kindergarten

*Scotch Plains – Fanwood Public Schools
Board of Education Meeting
June 11, 2015*

High-Quality Kindergarten

Caution: Children at Work

Learning Through Guided Play

- Teachers design center-based activities that allow students to...
 - Explore and discover
 - Apply skills
 - Make choices and decisions
 - Develop relationships with others
 - Gain autonomy and independence
 - Reflect on their own learning
- “Children who play more have better social skills, demonstrate better self-regulation and are more creative thinkers.” (Skolnick-Weisberg, et. al, 2015)

From Good to Great

Every Minute Counts

- “Every minute counts when impacting lives.”
(Ritchie, 2015)
- “Recent evidence suggests that, at least for some skills, playful learning is more effective for producing student learning than direct instruction.” (Fisher, et. al., 2013)
- A closer look at the
[Kindergarten Timeline Comparisons](#)

Self-Regulation

- Self-regulation is the ability to “ignore distractions, to focus and attend, to delay gratification, to persist in challenging situations, to ask for help and to control emotions and express them appropriately.” (McClelland, Acock, Morrison, 2002)
- Self-regulation and perseverance develop when students have time to engage with an activity. With 60 minutes of center time (increased from 20 minutes) students would have that opportunity as well as the opportunity to extend their learning over time, share, and reflect.
- “Evidence indicates that self-regulation and impulse control do not emerge spontaneously but are learned.” (Ritchie, 2015)
- Research also shows that, “Childhood self-control is twice as important as intelligence in predicting academic achievement.” (Anthony, 2014)

Observation & Differentiation

- Longer center times would provide additional opportunities for teachers to observe students in action
- With greater and deeper observation comes greater understanding of student thinking and learning which then provides more strategic and targeted learning for specific groups.
- Differentiation truly allows for responsive teacher rather than one-size-fits all teaching

Foundations for Future Success

Kindergarten is Critical: Child Development

- Bridge from preschool to primary classrooms
- Cognitive Development
 - More flexible in their thinking
 - Make great strides in reasoning and problem-solving skills
- Grow confident readers, writers, thinkers, problem-solvers, scientists and citizens

Kindergarten is Critical: Curriculum

- Balance child-initiated play to explore the world with focused learning through teacher-guided experiences
- “By emphasizing this time in play based activity, kindergarten programs afford children opportunities to become deeply engaged at a complex level that supports every content area in the curriculum.” (Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines, 2011)
 - Conversations develop language skills
 - Working with manipulatives builds mathematical concepts
- Design flexible instruction responsive to student needs
- Provide opportunities for earlier interventions

Prime Time

- Quantity *and* quality
- Teachers and district administrators have participated in training provided by the NJDOE Division of Early Childhood Education around best practices in Kindergarten
- Part of the a broader initiative to align Preschool – 3rd Grade programs into a comprehensive continuum
- Potential to impact *every* child who comes into the district

NEXT STEPS: ECA 2015-2016

◆ To be continued...

◆ Lesson Study to examine *First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines*