

Intentional Play in MPS

A Systemic Approach

May 24, 2022



Our Agenda

01

Toward a systemic approach

02

Intentional Play is HQI

03

Bringing it to life in our Classrooms



HERE THEY COME!

A CONVENING TO ASSIST IN THE 2022-23 TRANSITION
TO KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE
MAY 24, 2022 | 9:00 - 11:30 AM

The impact of the pandemic on children's social-emotional development, self-regulation, learning experiences, and skills across all domains is like nothing we have seen!

During this Convening, you will have the opportunity to learn with experts, teachers, and administrators. They will share real-life examples and evidence-based best practices that they have found supported young children's emotional well-being and skill development. You will leave with ideas, tools, and strategies that will assist you in planning for the transition of young children for the 2022-23 school year.

REGISTER

9:00 AM - WELCOME
Dr. Andrea Brinnel – CT State Department of Education
Dr. Melissa Hickey – CT State Department of Education
Dr. Rosie O'Brien Wojtek – CT Association of Schools

9:15 AM - PRESENTATION
"Executive Function and Active Engagement in Playful Learning Approaches to Increase Self-Regulation and Outcomes for Children"
EA Aschenbrenner, Project Director – Executive Function and Purposeful Play

10:00 AM - VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP
Oswegatchie Elementary School, Waterford

10:15 AM - PANEL DISCUSSION
"Why, What, When and How?"
Panel Facilitator: EA Aschenbrenner, Project Director – Executive Function and Purposeful Play

Panel Members:
Joe Macrino, Principal – Oswegatchie Elementary School, Waterford Public Schools
Dr. Amy Fedigan, Asst. Superintendent, and Liz Gaffney, Coordinator of Early Childhood Programs – Millford Public Schools
Lisa Hunter, Principal, and Christine Nuzzolo, Kindergarten Teacher – Hazardville Memorial School, Enfield CT

11:25 AM - CLOSING REMARKS



Why are play and executive function important?

“Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development.”

From American Academy of Pediatrics

(<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/182>)

- School Achievement
- Positive Behaviors
- Good Health
- Successful Work



Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

What does the research say?

Research on the developing brain shows us that early childhood experiences build the foundation for a skilled workforce, a responsible community and a thriving economy. A new evidence base has identified a set of skills that are essential for school achievement, for the preparation and adaptability of our future workforce, and for avoiding a wide range of public health problems.



Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Current Early Childhood Programs in MPS

Integrated PK



3's AM and 4's PM, 2-5 days - Special Ed and General Ed (gen ed pays fee) (LOS, JFK, OHS, PDS)

Ready-to-Learn



Full Day, plus before and after care; fee-based (PDS, LOS, OAS)

**Child Care Lab
Foran High School**



Fee-based day care, M-F full day; High school Family Consumer Science Course

PK 5



4 full days M-TH (OAS)

Self Contained PK and K



PK students attend 4 ½ days Monday pm and T-F all day; K students attend 5 days; partner with PK/K classes (LOS)

Primary Development



Full day program with a partner Kindergarten class; Special Education (OAS)

Supported K/Kindergarten



Concentrated special ed cluster in 2 gen ed class w/support (OAS)



District Study

Purpose: examine current program practices and make recommendations about incorporating intentional play and executive function in preschool and kindergarten.

Process: Interviews, Focus Group, Observations, Surveys, Curriculum and Assessment Review

Commendations

- MPS investigating ways to increase engagement in learning and agency in early grades
- The Model of High Quality Instruction makes learning stick
- Instructional Supervisors support coaches and teachers
- Community support of early childhood opportunities
- Executive function skills recognized as critical for social and academic success as well as are indicative of improved long term outcomes
- Spanish in kindergarten

Recommendation #1

Building Coherence PK-12

- Continue professional learning on the model for HQI, embedding executive function and intentional play in the context of the Vision of the Learner
- Develop a shared understanding and infographic on executive function and intentional play
- Consider merging the various early childhood programs under the same administrative oversight to afford consistency and continuity across programs for children and families

Recommendation #2

Curriculum and Professional Learning

Provide curriculum writing and professional learning opportunities to allow staff to develop early childhood learning experiences across content areas that

- use intentional play as an instructional strategy
- promote executive function as a critical competence to support academic and social success
- enhance social emotional learning (SEL) and
- embed developmentally appropriate assessment practices to inform responsive instruction

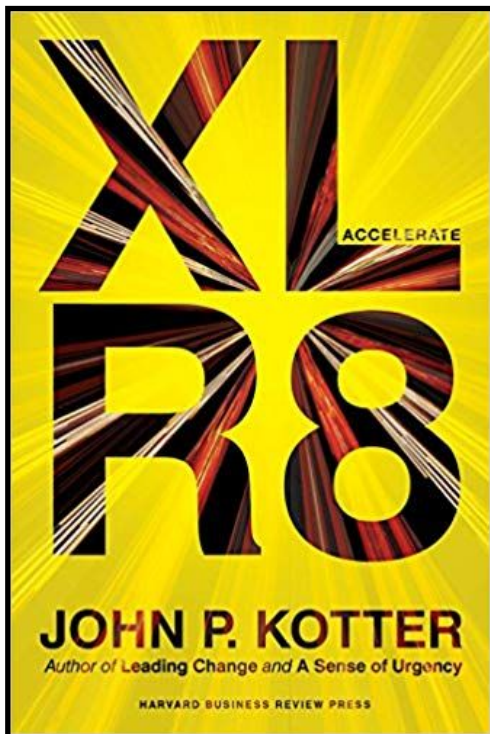
Recommendation #3

Schedule, Resources and Environment

- Integrate intentional play in the daily schedule, including outdoor time, ensuring that the planned opportunities promote the development of executive function and align to the district model for high quality instruction
- Provide carefully selected materials for children to engage in that supports HQI
- Evaluate room arrangement, including storage and access to materials as well as what is visually available to children

Leading For Early Childhood Education

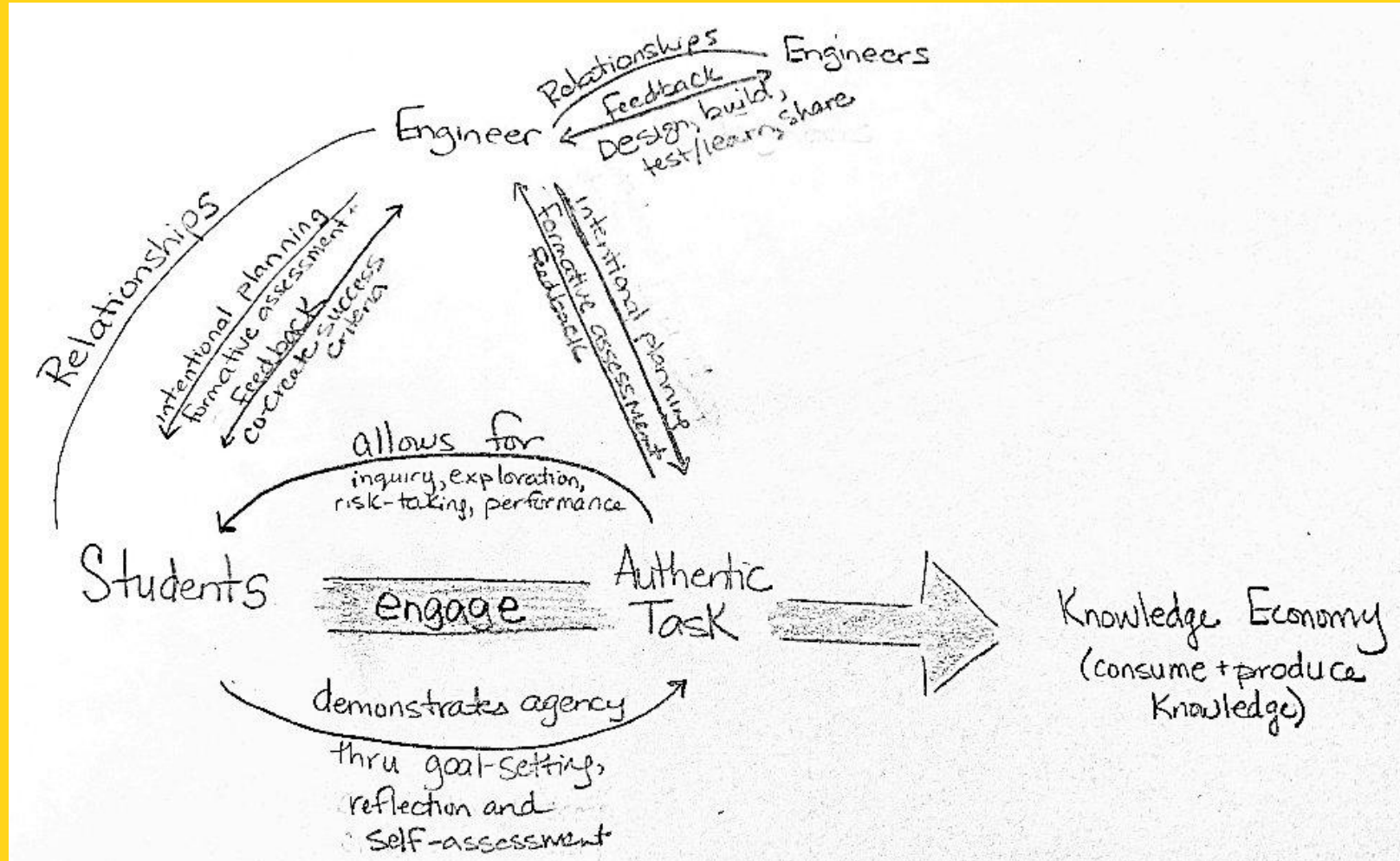
“The energy that is at the core of accelerated action and dual operating systems is an aligned energy. The kind of pioneers who create these systems begin by developing not just a powerful sense of strategic urgency among large numbers of people, but a force for change that aligns peoples’ feelings, thoughts and actions.”



8 Accelerators

- 1. Create a sense of urgency**
- 2. Build a guiding coalition**
- 3. Form strategic vision and initiatives**
- 4. Enlist a volunteer army**
- 5. Enable action by removing barriers**
- 6. Generate short-term wins**
- 7. Sustain acceleration**
- 8. Institute change**

Intentional Play and HQI








The Developmental Relationships Framework and Executive Function



The Developmental Relationships Framework

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people's lives.

Elements	Actions	Definitions
 Express Care Show me that I matter to you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be dependable.....Be someone I can trust. • Listen.....Really pay attention when we are together. • Believe in me.....Make me feel known and valued. • Be warm.....Show me you enjoy being with me. • Encourage.....Praise me for my efforts and achievements. 	
 Challenge Growth Push me to keep getting better.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect my best.....Expect me to live up to my potential. • Stretch.....Push me to go further. • Hold me accountable.....Insist I take responsibility for my actions. • Reflect on failures.....Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks. 	
 Provide Support Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigate.....Guide me through hard situations and systems. • Empower.....Build my confidence to take charge of my life. • Advocate.....Stand up for me when I need it. • Set boundaries.....Put limits in place that keep me on track. 	
 Share Power Treat me with respect and give me a say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect me.....Take me seriously and treat me fairly. • Include me.....Involve me in decisions that affect me. • Collaborate.....Work with me to solve problems and reach goals. • Let me lead.....Create opportunities for me to take action and lead. 	
 Expand Possibilities Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspire.....Inspire me to see possibilities for my future. • Broaden horizons.....Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places. • Connect.....Introduce me to people who can help me grow. 	

NOTE: Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.

Copyright © 2018 Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN. www.searchinstitute.org. May be reproduced for nonprofit, educational use.

- Children are more likely to build executive function skills if the important adults in their lives are able to:
- Support their efforts;
 - Model the skills;
 - Engage in activities;
 - Provide a consistent and reliable presence;
 - Guide them from dependence to independence;
 - Protect them from stress that disrupts development.

MPS Vision of the Learner

Scholarship



Knowledge and academic skills learners of all ages acquire and sustain to be successful now and in the future.

Citizenship



The skills required for learners to be global citizens who think and act in the service of others.

Creativity & Innovation



The skills required for learners to be persistent, imaginative, and resourceful problem-solvers.

Personal Development



Personal skills required for learners to be productive, self-directed, healthy and successful in school and life.

Intentional Play

What does it look like?



Executive Functioning

- Independence
- Problem-solving
- Self-control
- Making choices
- Building memory



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



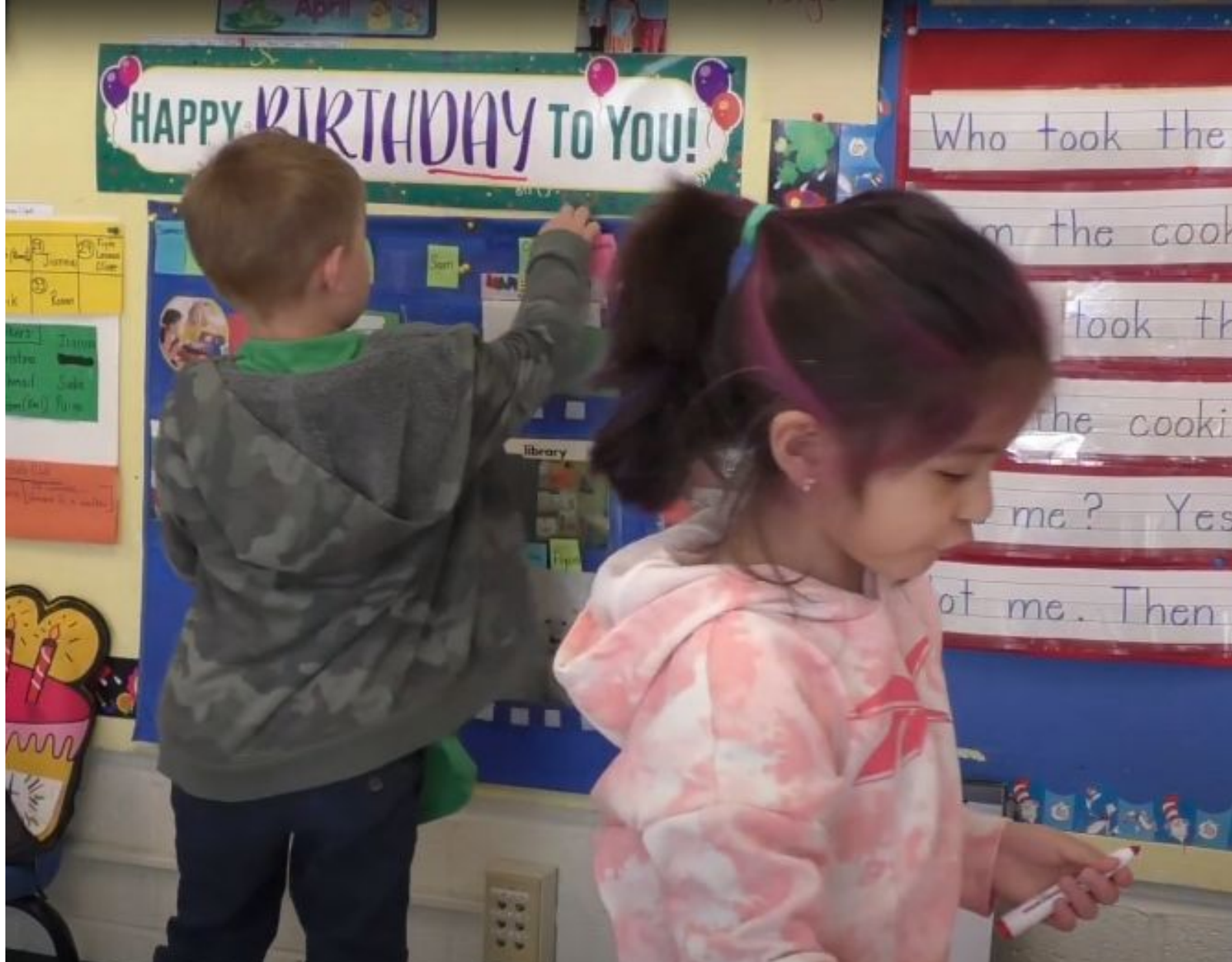
Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut

Oral Language

- Expanding vocabulary
- Building background knowledge
- Problem-solving
- Social emotional learning



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



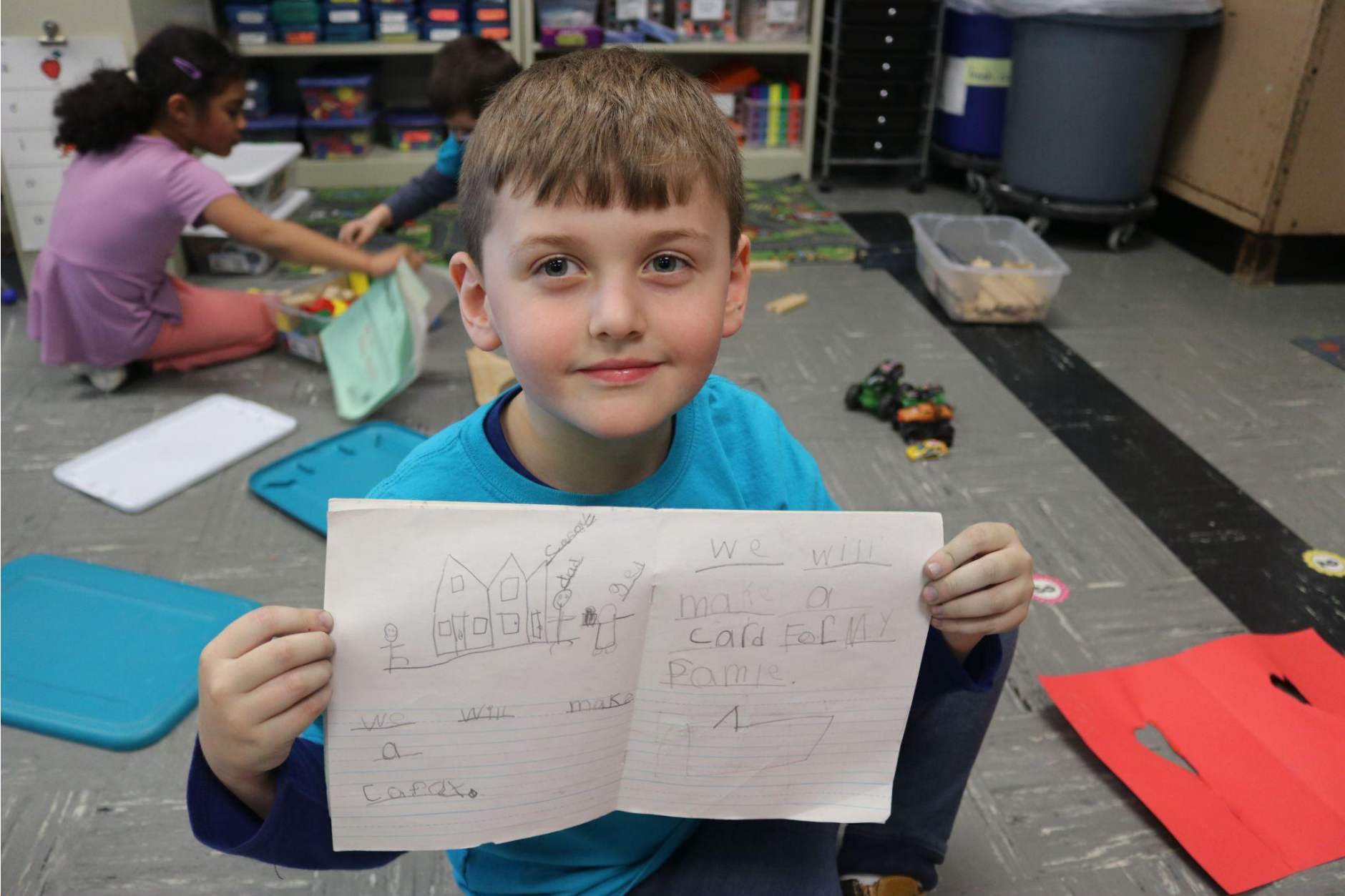
Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



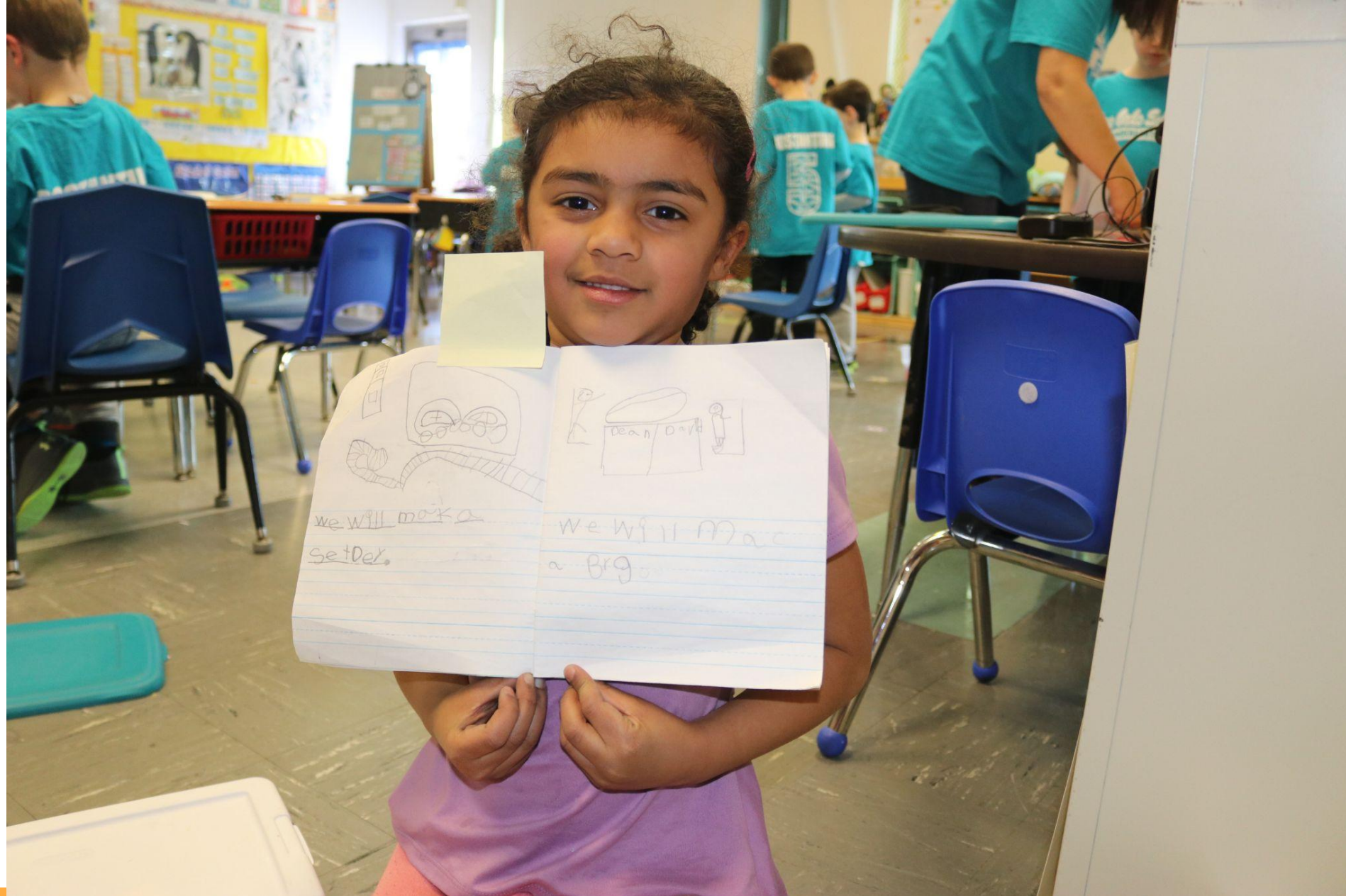
Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut

Play Plans

- Select a center
- Draw a picture
- Write a sentence
- Refer to plan later



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



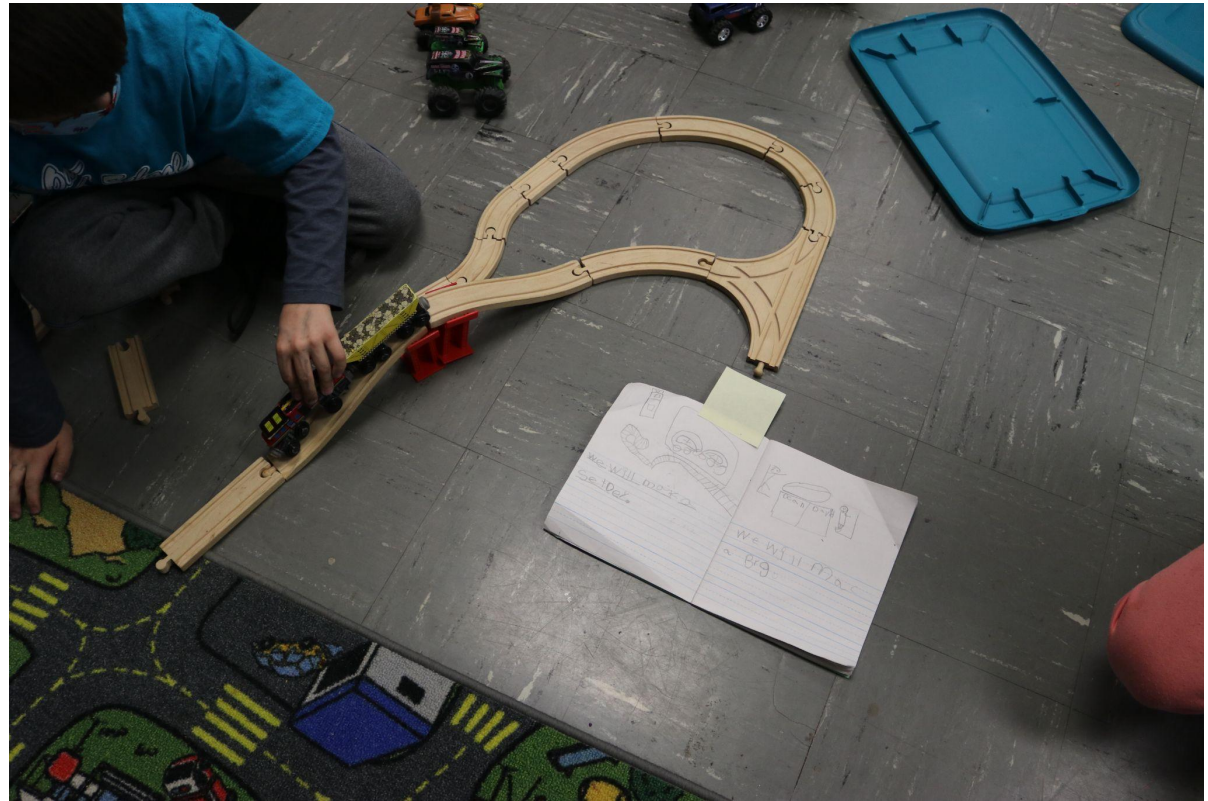
Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut

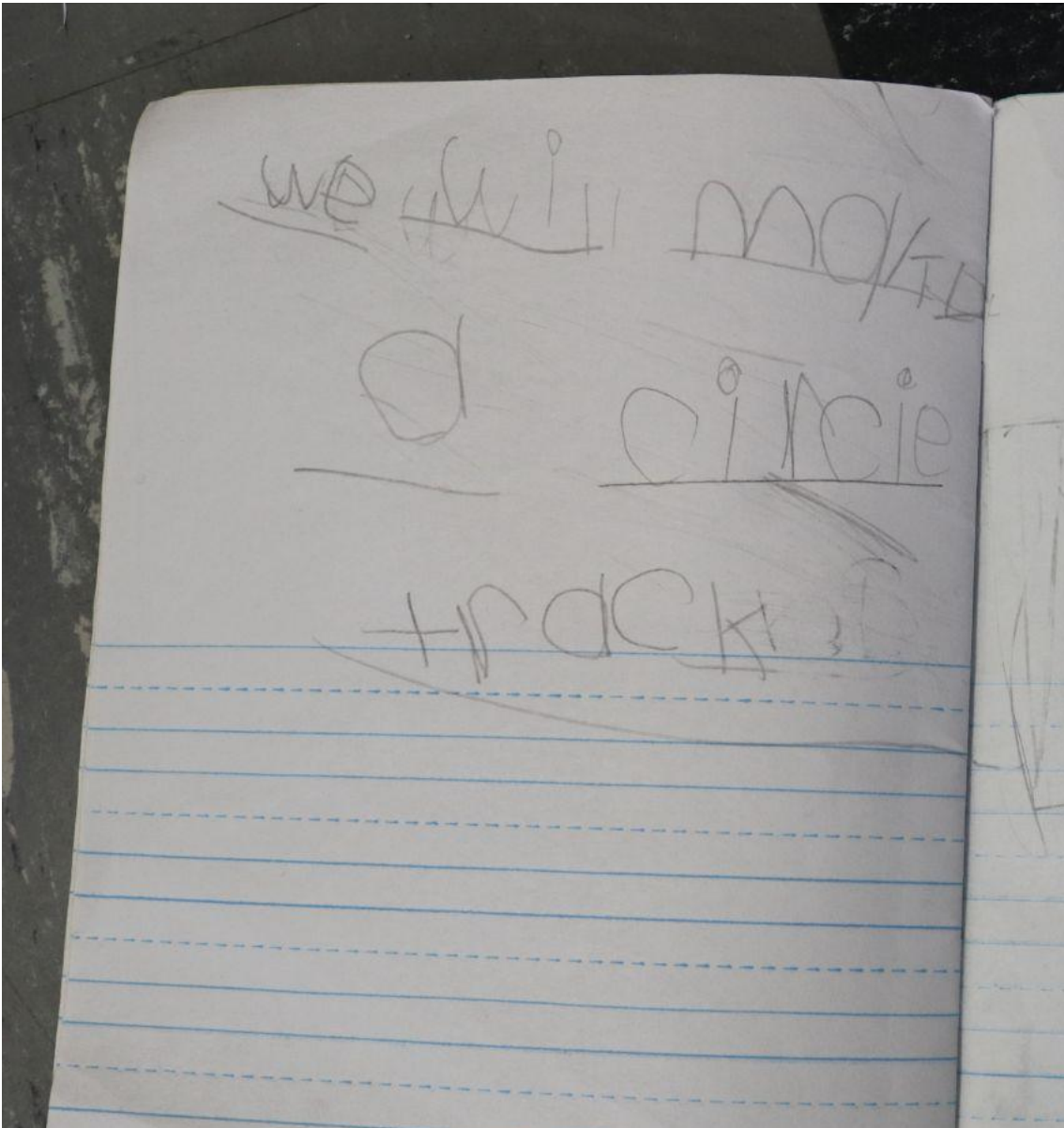


We Will ~~Help~~ Mark
the Animal Hspl



we will help
set up the
an animal

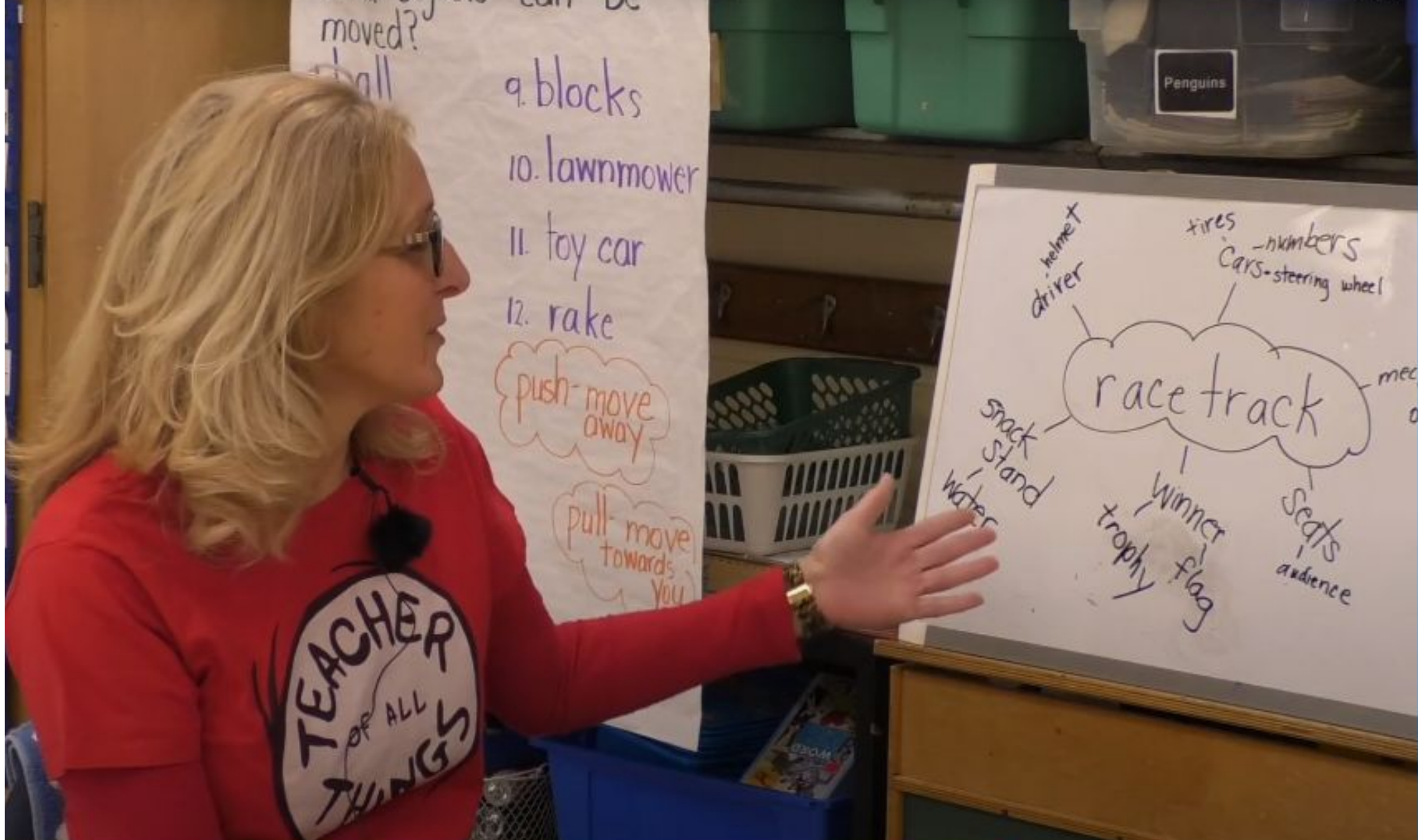




Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut

Scenario Development

- Imagination
- Creativity
- Builds recall/memory
- Background knowledge

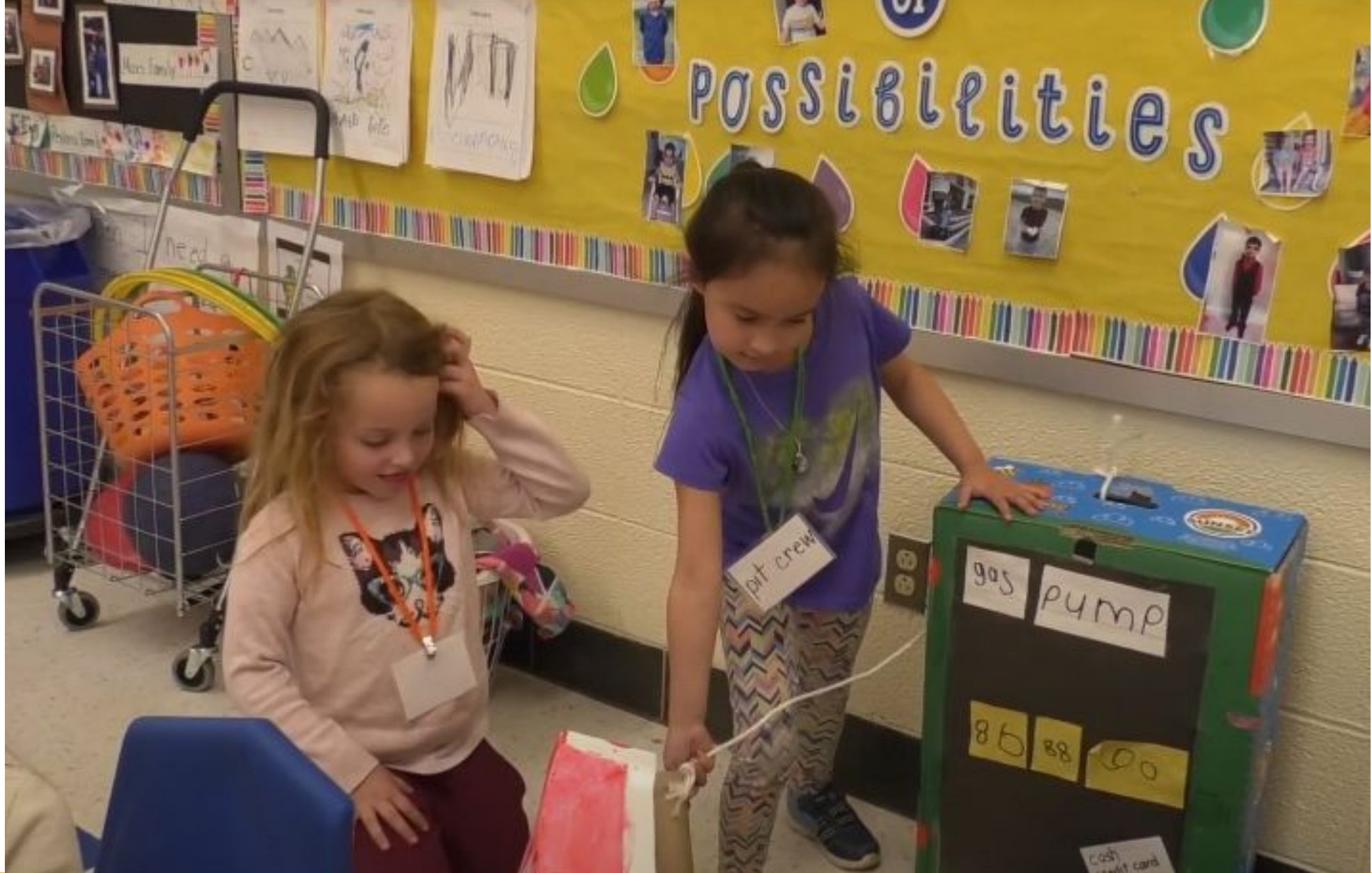




Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



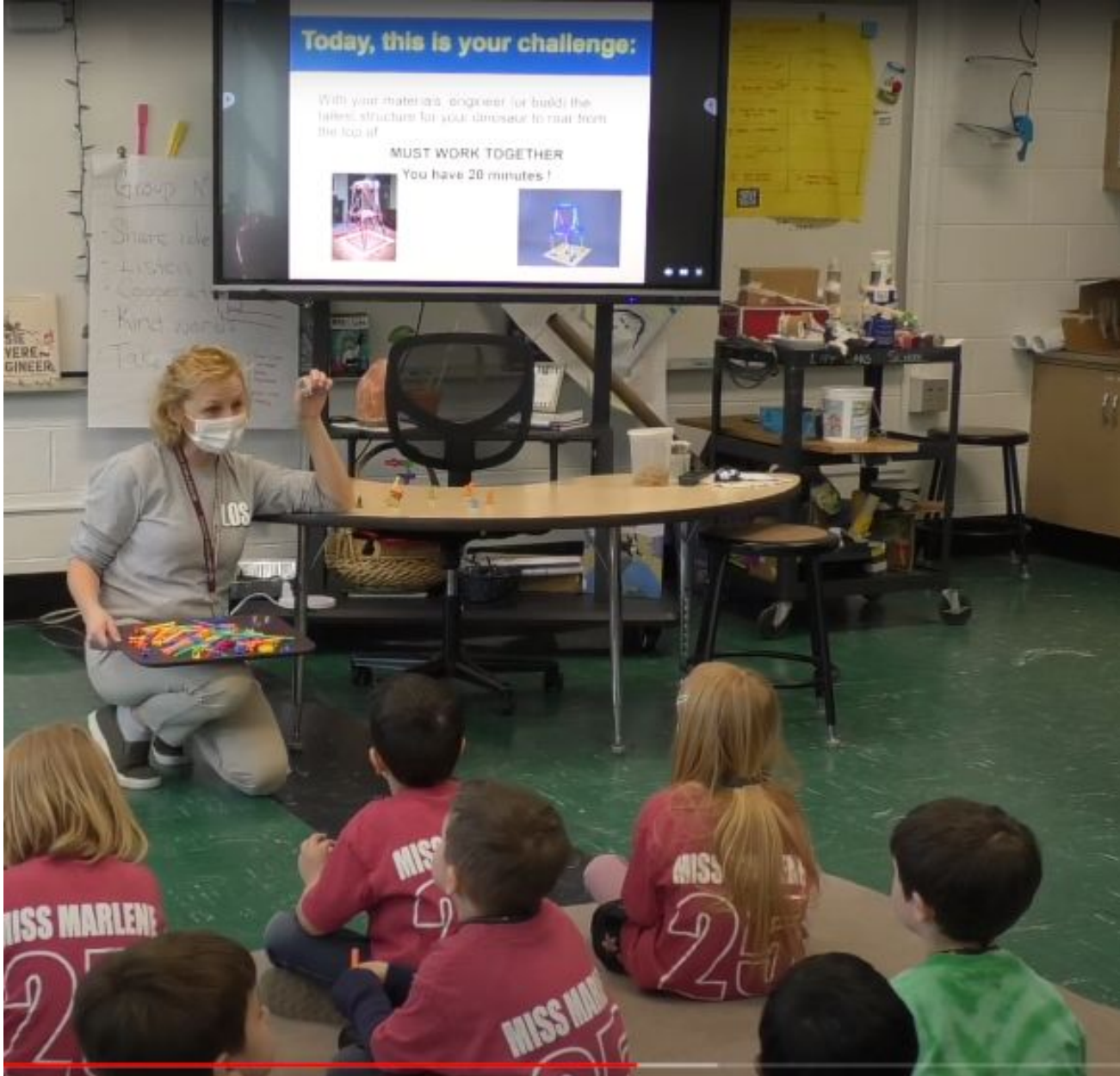
Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



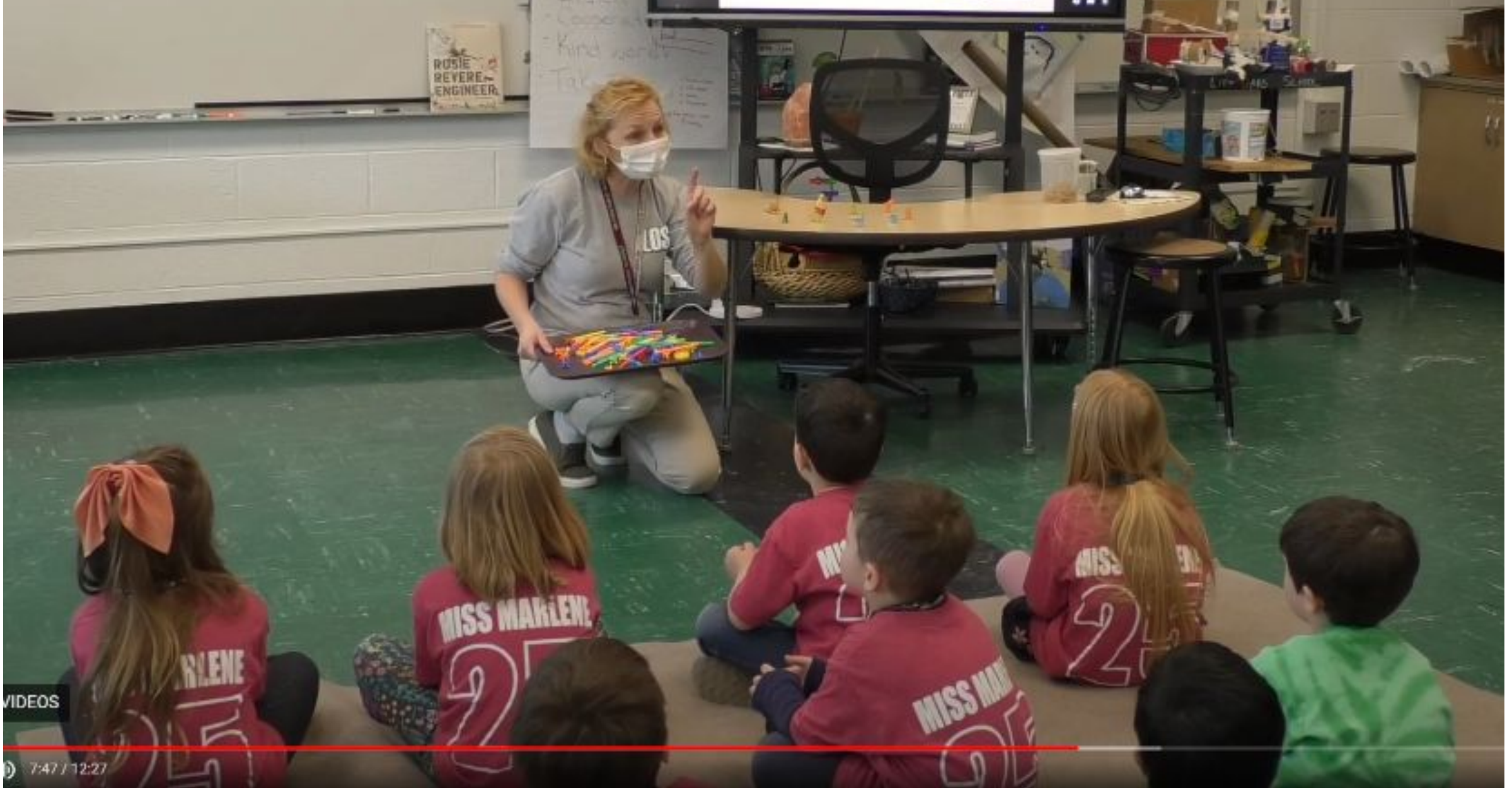
Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut

STEM & Specials

- Receive instructions
- Use background knowledge
- Encourages conversation
- Communication



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut



Milford Public Schools ♦ Milford, Connecticut

MPS Steps to date...

- Spring 2021 the Guiding Coalition of MPS district leaders, EA Aschenbrenner and teachers started the process of drafting a vision and shared understanding for executive function and intentional play.
- Professional learning experience on Intentional Play for district administrators; Stakeholder and Community Engagement
- Pilot Implementation
 - 9 Preschool and 9 kindergarten classrooms implemented play
 - Professional learning throughout the school year
 - Coaching sessions with EASTCONN consultant, Coordinator of Early Childhood Programs and building leadership
 - Supportive materials
 - Modeling of Intentional Play strategies by Coordinator of Early Childhood Programs

Next Steps 2022-2023...

- Full implementation in all kindergarten classrooms
- Professional learning plan for all preschool and kindergarten teachers
- Consideration for learning schedules in early childhood settings
- Continued communication of the vision for early childhood learning opportunities
- Update the kindergarten classroom environment to allow for the integration of Intentional Play
- Collaboration with community preschools to share professional learning and vision for early childhood learning to ease the transition from preschool to kindergarten