



Podcast 40: How to support children and families when Pre-K programs are closed for an extended time

Episode notes: prekteachandplay.com/podcast40

- Intro: [00:04](#) Welcome to the Pre-K Teach & Play Podcast where solutionaries are reclaiming children's right to learn through play, re-imagining inclusive classrooms and revolutionizing early care and education. Here's your host, Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak.
- Kristie: [00:22](#) Hey everyone, this is Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak and this is a bonus Pre-K Teach and Play podcast episode because I've been talking with so many fellow early childhood revolutionaries these past few weeks, and I see you and I hear you in these really unprecedented times...Having to think about how best to support children on IEPs can feel overwhelming and maybe even a bit scary. And while information can help some of us with our anxiety, it can also add to the confusion and the uncertainty. There are so many opinions and ideas coming from districts and everywhere you look on social media. Very much well-intended but still quite confusing, and it can lead to like, "What should I be doing?"
- Kristie: [01:09](#) So while there may be endless ideas about things that we should be sending home to families, one of the things that I want to make sure is that we aren't trying to turn homes into schools, yet we still have children that might need support to get through their day. We have IEPs that are in place for a reason, meaning that children need more support and services to access, participate, and make progress in daily routines and activities. But are we sure that the things that we are doing again-well-intended- maybe even just as quickly as we can think to do something, are they in line with our core values of being family-guided, of differentiating, and of utilizing and leveraging the power of play and daily routines as the context in which children learn?



© All rights reserved.
<http://prekteachandplay.com>

Kristie: [02:02](#) So I thought I'd join the conversation, but well let's take it in a slightly different direction. So in this bonus Pre-K Teach and Play podcast episode, I am joined by one of my favorite fellow early childhood revolutionaries, [Beth Diedrich](#). She's an early childhood special education expert and professional development provider. And in this episode, we talk about three big things. First, we want to talk about practices that support a strong home-school connection and partnership versus again, trying to do school at home. We also want to think about the considerations that districts need to be talking about in terms of children who have diversabilities, and children who have IEPs in place...not from a legal perspective, but in terms of supporting children's growth and development.

Kristie: [02:54](#) And then we love to end with a few possibilities that we see. This comes from the work of our colleague [Jennifer Lopez](#) in terms of trying to take a problem and reframe it into what possibilities, what are the things that we haven't yet seen that we are going to be better for on the other side of what might feel like a great deal of uncertainty and problems at this time. So some of you might be new to this podcast, you may not know me, and let me introduce Beth a little bit as well.

Kristie: [03:23](#) So for those of you who are new to me, I'm again [Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak](#). I was faculty for many years at Kent State University and now I'm on this mission. I'm part of the revolution that we really want to see that we do things differently in early care and education. We want to reclaim children's right to learn through play. We want to re-define and re-imagine what it means to be inclusive. And then again, this revolution, we often put the *R* in parentheses based upon the work of [Grace Lee Boggs](#), where the emphasis is on evolution. So again, we're really thinking about what can we change, how can we be different versus just doing the same thing in the same way but maybe even expecting a different result.

Kristie: [04:10](#) And then my guest today again is Beth Diedrich, and she is what some states will call an itinerant teacher. She will refer to herself as an intervention specialist. Some people will call it early childhood Special Ed, but she works in Lorain City School District



here in Northeast Ohio and she also provides professional development to early educators. On top of all of that, she's a mom, she's a doctoral student at The University of Toledo, and she's an ambassador working on the Division for Early Childhood's Recommended Practices. There's a whole lot of things in there and acronyms. I'll make a link in the show notes so you can see the work that she's doing as an ambassador on the recommended practices.

Kristie: [04:53](#) But Beth and I dive deep into some of our concerns about what we're seeing in terms of thinking about turning preschool online, or just even the rush that we've had to make decisions in districts that school's going to be closed and children won't be coming back the next day. So we're going to talk a little bit about our mindset, then we're going to get straight into the methods. So let's dive in.

Kristie: [05:17](#) Beth, before we get started and dive into all the amazing things we want to share with people, a quick side note for our listeners; when Beth and I talk about the team, or in particular when we talk about the IEP team, which stands for Individualized Education Plan, we always honor and recognize that families are a member of that team. So if you don't hear us say families and we're just saying team, we always mean the professional members of the team as well as the family members. I thought we should say that right out so that people know we're talking about everybody. And I thought maybe you could start us off talking a little bit about from your lens and your vantage point on this globe, kind of like what you see going on or what your own internal struggle is that led to us making this podcast episode.

Beth: [06:11](#) For sure. So as an itinerant intervention specialist, I am struggling in these uncertain times with... I mean, I have a professional responsibility to these students and to this team, right? And to these families, and I want to make sure I'm supporting these kids. But at the same time I understand that that's a big challenge for families, for myself even as a mom. We received a YouTube video from my children's district and it was really well done. I started to watch it, but then I just got overwhelmed by it and it went a little longer than I wished it would have. And to be honest, it was like too long, didn't read. I just couldn't do that



right then. So I allowed myself the grace of the weekend and I said, "You know what? I'll tackle this on Monday. We'll get on top of this. I think this weekend we just need to be together and get grounded." So it's just trying to find that balance there with knowing that kids need support and structure, and then also understanding that it's overwhelming and challenging.

Kristie: [07:22](#)

Yeah. I've been watching it as well, as I've been thinking about- especially for children with IEPs- like we already have all of this a struggle on a day to day basis about how to get enough minutes in for what we often call a "specially-designed instruction". How do we get to more places with less time? How do we spread ourselves out across a county, especially for someone like you who services many different families and different schools and different classrooms. And so I was thinking like, how are we going to make sure that kids still get occupational therapy and physical therapy and speech therapy and all of this? I started to get overwhelmed and so... Anyway, Beth and I started that. Okay, let's talk about this, not from a legal perspective in terms of what's the obligation of a school district in the time of such unprecedented events, but from a practical perspective, how do we take on what Beth was just mentioning? That too long didn't read, I'm overwhelmed with input. There's all these activities, but I also want to continue to support my child.

Kristie: [08:31](#)

We were also thinking that some of you might be new to being a caregiver of a young child in general, or a young child with an IEP. So maybe you're a sibling or a grandparent or even a neighbor who hasn't been responsible for a child's IEP before and now you're feeling like, "Huh, there's no one else around doing this but me." So we wanted to talk to those folks as well. Oh, and one other quick thing. I have so many thoughts in my head as people who follow my podcast know, but the thing is...is that we have all of our resources that Beth and I are going to mention on a landing page for you. So you can request access to all of our resources at kristiepf.com/home-school-resources.



Kristie: [09:22](#) But before we get to the methods, I have a mantra. It's called "Mindset before Methods". So maybe, Beth, talk to us a little bit about, you've got this struggle and we've got all these resources and tips along with a million other people out there. Where do we start? Where does the family start? Where does the team start?

Beth: [09:41](#) Well, Kristie, like you said, it's "Mindset before Methods". Even in the example I shared about that YouTube video that I have from my children's school, I just need to be in the right mindset before I can dive into that. And so I'm prioritizing that and waiting until I'm ready to digest that information, and then I'll get there. One thing I want everyone to be clear about is that we don't expect families to become teachers or therapists. We want to support families. Of course, we want to support families all the time and not even in a time of crisis. That's just something that we do as intervention specialists, but we really need to make sure that the mindset of whoever that caregiver is, like you said, could be somebody that's new to the caregiver role, could be somebody that doesn't have unfortunately as strong of a relationship with the youngster. So there are so many factors at play, but we really need to get that mindset right before we can worry about doing interventions and targeting IEP goals.

Kristie: [10:46](#) Yeah. So if people are unfamiliar with our mantra of "Mindset Before Methods", mindset is like how you're feeling about things and what you're thinking- it is a priority. It's like Beth said, if she's overwhelmed and worried about so many things and just watching the video makes her even more overwhelmed, then she's not going to be able to help anybody. So we often turn to the work of doctors, Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson, their latest book is called *The Power of Showing Up*. And my colleague Barb Avila and Dan Siegel were on my podcast's last episode. Barb and I did a webinar that will be linked in the show notes on how to apply what I'm going to talk about next in terms of mindset for children with autism, or who are neurodiverse. Just know that our show notes have a ton more about what I'm going to talk about in terms of this mindset of the four Ss.

Kristie: [11:43](#) And so it's basically do humans, and in this instance we're talking about young children, do they feel safe? Do they feel seen? Are you able to soothe them when they become hyper-aroused or hypo-aroused? And do you have a secure attachment? So we're really thinking about what our mindset is, that our job is always to be the person who is helping this child feel safe, seen, soothed, and secure. So whether you're a neighbor, a grandparent, or the actual parent, we want you to have the mindset that your job all day, every day is to make sure that your children feel safe, seen, soothed, and secure. We don't want you to get too caught up in the ideas that may come home from your district, which are totally well-intended of activities that you could be doing. We just really don't want people to think that we're trying to make home into school.

Kristie: [12:47](#) So we know about homeschooling, but this isn't really an opportunity to now all of a sudden go, "Huh, I guess I'm now homeschooling my kids." We had a colleague share with us yesterday, you may remember about it, that she was a mom, she had been homeschooling her child and had just recently decided to enroll them in public education. And now with the schools closing down they're sending her kid back to home and she's like, "I don't want to go back to homeschooling. Like, we had made a decision that that wasn't the right place for our family right now." So for her to have all this anxiety that now her job is to develop a curriculum and to have a schedule, which we'll talk more about here in a minute.

Kristie: [13:26](#) Yeah, so really the mindset is, are your children safe? Are they feeling seen? So when they have these big emotions or confusion or even boredom, can you recognize that? Can you soothe them, get them reengaged, and do you have a secure attachment? So how does that sit with you? Because I know Beth, a lot of people are like, "Wait, get to the methods. What do I do? How do I help this child? What do I do with their IEP?" And we're like, take a step back.



- Beth: [13:53](#) Absolutely. Because we know we're not going to get anywhere with that IEP if those things aren't in place. Meaning if the child isn't safe, seen, soothed, and secure. And then I'll even say if the caregiver isn't feeling that way, and so many of us adults are not feeling really safe or secure or soothed or even seen, and some people have differing opinions on what's going on, and so there's so many things at play right now. And it's just really important to remember that mindset is the important thing, and we need to make sure that our adults who may be new to the caregiving role, and the kids are ready for the next step, before we start getting into, God forbid, a power struggle. We certainly don't want these take home materials or whatever they might be from districts that are coming home to become a problem, to become a source of tension for families when there's already so much tension involved in the situation.
- Kristie: [14:55](#) Yeah, that's a good point Beth, because the other night our colleague Barb O'Neill that hosts the Transform Challenging Behavior Online Conference, she said something very similar. She's like, "I don't want you all to think, okay, we're going to watch a YouTube video with our favorite author reading a book, or the district sent home these activity ideas or sheets. And then it becomes this idea of compliance that I have to make sure my child completes these activities or watches these YouTube videos."
- Beth: [15:26](#) I mean that's just adding stress, and then also we're getting into the scheduling. But that's a whole 'nother level of (or layer rather) to the complexity of this problem.
- Kristie: [15:37](#) Let's go ahead. Let's talk about it. So we know that... Because you're going to think, well what's our routine going to look like? And maybe every day is going to change just out of necessity in terms of your own job, in terms of your children's health, the health of your own parents, of your animals, whatever, right? So we know that schedules are influx. We know that each day things are changing rapidly. We also know children need predictability. We know that children need a routine. So how can we help support families, especially for children on IEPs- who probably that team has been working all year long to get them

on a routine- to follow a routine, to feel comfortable with the routine? What do we say to that?

Beth: [16:21](#) There are many things. The first thing I'll say is that they are used to that routine at school. Routine is a really important part of a preschooler's school day. The predictability of that routine. We provide visual supports to kiddos who need it. We are always trying to work kids through the routine. Like that's one of our objectives and one of the things that we focus really specifically on in preschool classrooms. So that being said, now that whole thing has blown up for these little kids...so back to our mindset, they need to be safe, seen, soothed, and secure. But there are a lot of schedules that are, let's say going around on Facebook. For example, a friend of mine who is a PTA mom, so she has a large following on Facebook of other moms in the district. She had shared a schedule and I've seen several of these out there on social media and they're great. They're wonderful tools.

Beth: [17:21](#) The one she had shared was like, okay, at eight o'clock it's breakfast, and then 9:00 we're going to clean up and do a chore, and then at 10:00 we're going to read a book and do some school work and then at 12:00, we're going to have lunch. And then at 1:00 we're going to do a chore and so on and so forth. And I saw many people commenting because I'm sure it alleviated some of their anxiety. They're like, "Oh yeah, yeah, we'll do that." And so they're like, "Yes, love this, taking this, going to do this." And so I couldn't help myself, and I commented. I said, "You know, I think this is a wonderful tool. I think in my family what we'll do is we'll find something that looks like this and we'll sit down and look at it together."

Beth: [18:02](#) And my kids are a little older, they're 10, 12 and 15, so they can certainly have a voice in this. But I'm here to tell you that a three or a four year old could do this as well. Sit down and talk about it. Say, what are the things that we kind of need to have in place as a family? We need to have meals, right? Oh yeah, we need to eat. Okay. Right? Yeah. I can see this developing between the caregiver and the child, and then devise your own schedule. Whatever's going to work for you and your family, and then I'm also going to say that the times give me a little bit of anxiety. Now that's just me. Maybe some people would thrive with that

structure, but in my house it's probably going to be more fluid. In fact, my procedure for homework in my house is pretty fluid.

Beth: [18:44](#) It's- you tell me what time tonight are you going to work on your homework. And they tell me, and they do it, and that's just the way that it works here. It's not, you get off the bus and you do your homework. They're not ready for that day, then that's not the time to do it. I think giving the kiddos that ownership and control of doing it together really helps them to feel secure, right? It helps them to feel seen. Mom came to me and asked me what I thought about this, and it gives them a voice and that's really important that they continue to feel like they have some power and control. Especially with the chaos that's going on around us right now.

Beth: [19:20](#) Whether it's something you find online, something you co-create with your family, or if you're a family who just kind of says, "We're going to go with the flow." And try to get certain things done every day, I just want you to know that the most important thing is that you are connected as a family so that those relationships are solid so that then when it's time for the learning, it's not going to be a power struggle for you. It's not going to be a challenge, and it's going to be something that just feels nice.

Kristie: [19:47](#) Yeah. There's so many nuggets in there because you know, another colleague of ours, Barb Avila, talks about personal agency where people feel like they have some control over their lives, and for children with autism, that's such an important thing to develop. So you might not, as Beth said, her children are older so she can have this conversation. So if you're thinking, "Well, my child's not yet verbal, or my child's really young, or my child doesn't really understand time." All the more important that we get rid of our, I'll call it even, the white dominant cultures' perspective of time, and really think about, "I want predictability". I want the child to feel safe and know what's going to happen next. I want to be able to move through the day with a little bit of grace and ease so everything doesn't feel uncertain.

Kristie: [20:39](#) So for me, the takeaway as I was listening to Beth, was don't worry about scheduling or over-scheduling. Perhaps this is an opportunity to look at our lives and go, "Huh, maybe we've

scheduled it to the minute and booked ourselves and overbooked ourselves." Perhaps we don't need to refill the schedule with something like even a YouTube video of a story being read. So there's a lot of conversation that you might just be invited to have, and reflection to think about what will help my family feel safe, seen, soothed and secure knowing that there's some realistic things you might need to do. But using actual objects, that's when we talked about visual support, we mean something that the child can see to know what's going to happen next. So if it's time to move from play to eating, maybe showing them the box of cereal or their a cup that they drink out of that helps them know what's going to happen next.

Kristie: [21:40](#) So it doesn't have to be 10 o'clock we're going to eat, but it has to be that I know there's going to be at a point in time where I'm going to eat. So it gives you a wide variety of ideas to think about a schedule, knowing how important it is. And we'll put some more things in show notes. Alyssa Blask Campbell from Seed and Sew, Beth and I are big fans of her work and she's got some beautiful ways to also think with very young children about schedules and routines. So let's go because we don't want to, I don't know, make this too long, right? Someone else is going to open it up and get overwhelmed, right Beth?

Beth: [22:18](#) That's right.

Kristie: [22:18](#) But we want to get to some methods also. So we've talked a little bit about your mindset that we want to make sure that that's first and foremost what you worry about. If you're going to fuss over something and lose sleep, let's make sure that we're using our energy to make sure of the four Ss. We also know that that's really important to have predictability and a routine so that those four S's are really something that is possible. But now let's get into a little bit about methods and I'm going to have Beth share a little bit about what we mean by this term. We call it embedded learning opportunities. But basically, as Beth said already, we're not trying to turn family members or caregivers into teachers and therapists, but we want to be realistic that we have children who need extra support. That's why they're on an IEP.

- Kristie: [23:10](#) There's something that they need in their daily routine that they need from adults, from the environment, from peers, from materials that give them access, allow them to participate and help them make progress in daily activities. So it's not that all of a sudden, just because school's not in session, children don't still need support. So how can we, in the context of these routines that Beth and I just talked about in terms of the schedule that we're trying to get some predictability around, how can we support children? And we call that embedding. I'm going to let Beth talk a little bit about how that plays out in her work as an intervention specialist, as an itinerant teacher.
- Beth: [23:52](#) I feel like we're probably a little bit ahead of the curve on this one because we work with that IEP team, which to remind everyone, we develop goals that are functional, that can happen in a variety of settings that are interdisciplinary, meaning that any related service provider can work on that goal or we collaborate when we develop goals with those related service providers to make sure that all of those different aspects of the child's needs can be incorporated. And then of course we're working with the families. We're always looking for opportunities to embed support into the child's daily routine. And again, with that close partnership with families, it makes it possible for us to look at their routine, their at home routine, especially for those kiddos who are only with us for like two and a half hours a day.
- Beth: [24:43](#) We're giving some ideas, support strategies to families that they can embed in their routine at home. What I want parents to know though, is they're doing a great job. Like, I look around me, I see the families that I work with and sometimes I'll just do this. I'll go and just hang out. I'll observe them reading a book together or playing together as we're working and then I'll say, "Do you know how many wonderful things I just saw happen? And I can say when you were pointing to the words on the page and then looking at her in the eyes, how amazing that was and how important that is for drawing their attention." Or if they're doing something to prompt or elicit language, oftentimes they don't realize that that's what they're doing. They would never say, "Oh, I was doing that because I was prompting an eliciting language." But that's what they were doing.

Beth: [25:38](#) And so I'm kind of trying to give these parents some ownership by highlighting the awesome things they do. I think that's really important, and I think... So there was a viral video that went around little while ago of a man sitting on the couch with his toddler son who couldn't talk, meaning not words that we would understand, but Oh my, was he vocalizing? Was he communicating? His intonation was on point. This little boy was just going back and forth jibber jabbering with his dad and he would jibber Jabber, jibber Jabber, jibber Jabber and his dad would respond with, "No kidding. I know, I thought so. That's what I was thinking." That kind of thing. And I just wanted to annotate that whole interaction and highlight all of the wonderful things that I saw happening there as far as relationship building, all the way down to language building. There were just so many awesome things happening and I just want parents to know that it doesn't have to be something that you pull out of the backpack. It doesn't have to be something really complex or you don't have to refer to the IEP to know what to do.

Kristie: [26:48](#) Yeah. As you were talking about that I was thinking, "Huh, maybe us as a professional members of the team could learn something as well." Because sometimes we get so caught up in the curriculum and the structure and the therapies and the... I don't know, versus thinking like, "It's just my interaction, it's just me being attuned to this child and being interested in what they are thinking about and jibber jabbering about and noticing what their needs are." So it's probably maybe another opportunity for us to all say, "Huh, maybe we need to slow down in our two and a half hours and our interactions and do more of just this natural back and forth. But we'll come back to that. So what I hope you got from what Beth was saying is that like, okay, it's just this natural flow of things, but some of you are going to be like, "Hmm, yeah, but I have a child who is hard to play with, or I have a child who's not yet verbal or I have a child who has a really complex medical needs."

Kristie: [27:53](#) And so we don't want to discount that or diminish that because those are definite challenges. But we want you to start with basic idea that learning occurs through interactions and learning

occurs when children are engaged and curious and interaction and play. So we're going to give you five steps to consider. So if you're thinking you need a little bit more structure, you need a little bit more what we call intentionality, we're going to give you five steps. So the first thing is you want to think about what is it that you're trying to help your child learn? So if you want to look to your IEP, if you have something on your heart that says, "I really wish my child knew how to say words, or I wished my child knew how to follow the routine, or I wish my child was able to let me know when they were tired or hungry."

Kristie: [28:46](#)

So just think about that in your own words. Don't worry about how we've written it on that IEP document. Just think about what it is you want your child to be supported and what you think you can do in that daily routine. So that's the first thing is select something that's meaningful to you. Something that you want to help give your child more support whatever your role is. If you're the grandparent, the neighbor, and a sibling, think about, "Hmm, what does my brother or sister need a little bit of support on as we're playing?" The second thing is think about when is a good time for you to offer that support? That sounds funny because you're like, "Well, when I offer it, when they need it?" Yes, that is exactly the idea. But you want to be ready for it. So you're going to think about, "When might they need me to be close to them? When might they need that visual support? When might they need me to adapt their cup?"

Kristie: [29:41](#)

So you're thinking ahead so that you're ready in the moment. The third thing is you think, where might we be? So are we going to be in our apartment? Are we going to be on the playground? Are we going to be in some mode of transportation? Whether it's the subway or the car or the bus. So we want to, again, you're fast forwarding and saying, "When might my child need support? When will it be? Where will we be? And then what materials might you need?" So will you need something that maybe the school district sent home? Maybe there's materials or toys from the classroom that you can ask the district that you know is a favorite for your child or that you can have a little bit more variety in other settings.

- Kristie: [30:25](#) So if you're going to be a grandma some days, or you're going to get the neighbors some days, you may talk to your school district about being able to use some books or puppets or Play-Doh. Just think about what's readily available, what's already in the environment. Don't feel like you have to have all the materials that a school district might have access to or what you see on YouTube. Even if it's around a story, you can just tell a story. You don't even have to have a book and you can tell that story using your own imagination or at any level. If you have some scratch piece of paper, you can just draw some images and then tell a story about it.
- Kristie: [31:07](#) So don't worry about having print materials that are fancy books or things that we have in schools because we talked about Barb O'Neill, I'll say two things like puppets are this amazing thing to help support children through transitions, to learn complicated ideas to manage and think about their emotions. And you could just use a sock or put your hand underneath the towel that can become a puppet. So we have what you want to work on, what you want to support your child with. That's number one. Number two, is when in your schedule, when in your routine, whether that's spelled out on a calendar and a clock or more, go with the flow. Third, where will you be? Fourth, what materials do you need to support the child? And then fifth, how do you be a play partner?
- Kristie: [31:54](#) And so we're going to put in our show notes, another video. So you might want to go straight to that six ways of how to be a play partner. So those natural interactions that Beth was highlighting, we'll give you six ways that people can do that. So if you're not used to playing or you want some ideas about how to play and support children, we're going to give you six more ideas on how to be a play partner. Beth, any of those steps you want to add to or elaborate or clarify?
- Beth: [32:23](#) I think that thinking about that schedule in that flexible way, just being ready for those teachable moments, maybe we could even say is a really nice way to look at it. I loved you talking about puppets. I happen to be a huge fan of puppets. I have a giant

named Mario and it is amazing how I can really facilitate an awesome interaction with a youngster.

- Kristie: [32:47](#) ... links in the show notes to some of those resources from Barbara O'Neill about puppets. Since we've said it a couple of times, we'll give people an idea. Because I love puppets, but I don't love working with puppets. What I mean by that is I love the idea of it, I see the value of it, but it feels hokey when I do it. Bard do it, I'm like, "Oh, that's so powerful." So for any of you who might be thinking like, "What in the world, how would I do puppets?" We'll give you some support.
- Beth: [33:14](#) Yes, and I totally agree. A few years ago I had a puppet come into my classroom once a week and I thought, "Oh my word, I could never ever do that." And now I just love it. I walk around school with them on my hand. I just absolutely love it. So you can grow into your abilities with puppets, folks. That's [inaudible 00:33:30].
- Kristie: [33:31](#) But it doesn't make you feel safe, seen, soothed or secure. Don't even worry about it like [crosstalk 00:33:36] go away.
- Beth: [33:36](#) That's right.
- Kristie: [33:38](#) Okay. So we've got this idea that you and I had of getting on, having a conversation, getting people's mindset, making sure that people really thought about their daily routines. Don't just grab things off of what's working for other families, but think about does it work for your family and your routine? And then we wanted to give you some specific ways or start the conversation about how can you provide support around children's IEP goals regardless of whether they're in their pre-school setting. But I think what really got you and I both excited was this idea of possibility. So yet another friend of ours, Jennifer Lopez, and yes, we like to call her J-Lo. Jen has taught both Beth and I so much about reframing a problem or a challenge or a crisis even into hope and possibility.
- Kristie: [34:28](#) It's not about putting rose-colored glasses on and being oblivious to things, but for example, Beth, maybe we'll talk about what we were saying before we jumped online about inequities. That maybe, and we're going to talk to you about what we see as our

possibilities, but one of the things is maybe this whole having to shift from how we've always done school to thinking like, "Huh, maybe this isn't always working for everybody. This is an opportunity to sort of think of all the inequities that exist in our educational system." And I know that's big, but maybe you want to say something about what you were thinking on this.

Beth: [35:05](#) Yeah, it is big. It's enormous. But let's take this as an opportunity to start and continue the discussion around it. One of the things I have seen on social media was someone had commented, "Why is it okay that we've been given kids without internet computer homework for the last 10 years and now all of a sudden we're worried about who does or doesn't have internet?" You know, it's just kind of really shining a spotlight on some of those glaring inequities and the same as we've discussed, what level of support are these districts exactly expecting these families to provide?

Kristie: [35:45](#) And so I don't want to gloss over that in any way. I just know that we have been going long. So I'm going to put a couple of links to some of the books that I've been reading lately around educational inequity. I know that maybe people have been hearing a lot about equity and equality in different places, but I think that it's really important that as educators, we see the inequities that are in our school policies and how many of the things that we're doing in particular the book we want to do more than survive, which is by Dr. Bettina Love. It's a must read, in my opinion, for all educators, especially white educators, because we have to see how our policies are not supporting all of our children.

Kristie: [36:32](#) So we'll put those in the show notes as well. But we did want to say that we see this as a possibility. So even as a huge challenge to have equitable policies and policies that don't harm our children absolutely. There's hope and that we're having these conversations is a great first step. And so Beth and I, as it relates to IEPs, because ability is another form of where we see inequity for sure in terms of segregation, even pull out, pull over, pull aside versus inclusion.

Kristie: [37:06](#) So ability is a huge topic that we have to think about when we're talking about educational practices for all. And so Beth and I got goosebumps. We were super excited about the possibilities of what this might mean for children's IEP. And so Beth, maybe you want to talk a little bit about what you see as hopeful or where we might come out on the backside of all of this when it comes down to meaningful IEP for young children.

Beth: [37:33](#) Like I said, I think that making sure, I mean we've always worked to ensure that we're writing these functional interdisciplinary transferable IEP goals with solid input from the entire IEP team. Now, right now it's almost like a little stress test of those goals. Like if people are having a hard time working on IEP goals at home, then maybe they're not so functional or maybe they're not so collaboratively developed with all of the related service providers and the families voice. Or maybe we haven't been collaborating and providing support to the family all along and that's why we're struggling to do it now.

Beth: [38:11](#) So I just think it kind of calls us to task to make sure that we're doing that moving forward. And then prioritizing those partnerships with families and caregivers I think is super important. Like I said, if we've been doing that all along, then this transition is going to be a lot less stressful for kids and families kind of looking around going, "Maybe we haven't been doing that right all along then let this be our call to action." Right?

Beth: [38:36](#) Let this be the opportunity that we have hope that we can you know, build on and strengthen that practice as we move forward. Another thing that I just want to say is that I've been thinking about ways for the... like the teachers have just disappeared out of those little kiddos lives, right? Some of us that we were returning to school on Monday and now we're not. When I'm thinking about making sure those kids feel safe, seen, soothed, secure I'm thinking about that and I would welcome input from anyone who's listening with ideas. I'm looking for ideas there and that's weighing on my heart as well. But that just comes back to the connection and to making sure these kiddos...

Kristie: [39:15](#) Yeah, I think that's... You just had another idea, but my takeaway or my possibility was like maybe schools will start seeing this both sides. It's the communities will see that they're part of schools and schools will see that they're part of communities. And I know that's a big broad statement. Like why wouldn't we see our schools as part of our community? But I feel like sometimes they work in total isolation in the community. If there's a challenge, it feels like it falls just to the school versus the school in partnership with families and in partnerships with businesses and in partnership with and so on and so forth.

Kristie: [39:50](#) So even when you said that, it's like, okay, we close school, wash our hands of that, shut it down, here's your kids back. I know that's not how schools are approaching and I know that people are trying to figure out how to stay connected, but it seems like we're thinking more about how do we stay connected with the content and cover the curriculum and get our hours in or get our specially designed instruction or do we have to deliver IEP services versus what you just said.

Kristie: [40:18](#) What about what else schools provide, which is connection to friends and connection to their teachers and connection to curiosity. And so how do we, while we're separate, remain connected. So maybe that's my sort of close or takeaway is like if we're not physically together, how do we remain focused on keeping our relationship? So I hope everyone that this has helped a bit, or at least our conversation helps giving you some ideas of conversations. As Beth said, we totally welcome your suggestions, your feedback, your ideas, your strategies, your resources.

Kristie: [40:57](#) So you find this across all social media outlets and you can join the conversation and then for sure make sure that you visit our resource page. Every single one of our friends and colleagues that we mentioned in today's conversation, we will put links to their work, to their blogs, to their podcasts, to their books, anything that we can to help support you. And again, that's at kristiepf.com/home-school-resources. So please reach out if there's anything that Beth or I or those that are in our network can do to support you.



- Kristie: [41:34](#) A few quick things as we wrap up this episode. First, a note of gratitude to my guest for her wisdom, generosity and willingness to support the early care and education revolution so deeply. Second, do you know about my ECE Solutionary Membership program? It's a special membership library, chockfull of hundreds of searchable resources and tools that you can have in hand at the click of a button. Visit prekteachandplay.com/ece-membership to learn more and become a member today.
- Kristie: [42:10](#) Lastly, if you were inspired by this episode, if something affirmed your beliefs or perhaps you discovered a practical tool you can put into practice to help all children thrive in school and in life, then I invite you to share the episode on whatever app you're using. Share with someone you feel would benefit or someone who would be inspired by today's conversation. Someone who it will make a difference for. Then be sure to subscribe so you can stay connected. With so much gratitude for all that you do fellow revolutionaries, until next time.
- Closing: [42:47](#) Be sure to visit prekteachandplay.com for more resources, tips, and tools for early educators.

