Podcast 23: How To Free Up 60 Minutes of Circle Time Every Day

Episode notes: prekteachandplay.com/podcast23

Kristie: Hey, Solutionaries. This is Kristie and today I'm super excited. I guess I'm always super excited when I go to do a podcast, but today I have three amazing members of the revolution with me. You will have known them a little bit. You might even recognize their voices from previous podcasts. But I have three members of the revolution here, Jen, Jolene, and Alicia, and I'm going to ask them just to introduce themselves quickly and then we're going to dive right into talking about another one of my favorite topics, which is Calendar Time.

So, let me say hello to my fellow revolutionaries, and then we'll get started.

Jen: Hi. I'm Jen Davis. I work with the Clark County school district at Rundle Elementary School. I'm a Pre-K teacher and I teach in a co-teaching classroom. I am duly licensed in early childhood Special Ed and Gen Ed early childhood, and I'm real excited to be doing this podcast today.

Kristie: Thanks, Jen.

Jolene: Hi, I'm Jolene Chavez. I also work at the Clark County school district. I'm a special education preschool teacher, just finished my tenth year. I am currently in a co-teaching classroom as the Special Ed teacher, and I'm excited to be here as well.

Kristie: Perfect.

Alicia: And I'm Alicia Frost, I am the Title 1 Pre-K teacher at Vegas Verdes Elementary School with Jolene. We have been together as a team for going on- this will be our second year- but I've been in Pre-K for about 14 years.

Kristie: Perfect.

Alicia: And have dual licensure, as well, in Special Ed and Gen Ed.
Kristie: Good stuff. All right. Thanks, girls, and thanks again for agreeing to do another podcast with me. So, you know, past podcasts we’ve been a little controversial talking about Circle Time or a large group that’s “an option”, and open policy around snacks, so we figured, "Why not continue with the controversies?" Right? And we'll talk a little bit about why some of us don't really love Calendar Time and why it may not be the best use of our time with young children.

So, just a little background for those of you who are catching up like, "Hey, I just made my calendar for the new year." Don't worry. There's lots of room for options here, but we want to talk a little bit about some of the research and share a little bit of our own experiences around why Calendar Time may not be the best way to teach some of the skills that we thought we were teaching around numeracy, or vocabulary, or sequencing, or number identification.

So, girls, I'm going to turn it over to you and just sort of say, did you start off with Calendar? Was it something you inherited from your teacher prep program or the classroom that you inherited first out? Did your district say you had to do it? Was it sort of this habit, this, just, tradition that you had to overcome? Or did you never do calendar? So, just kind of, like, tell us a little bit about where you've been on your own journey? And any of you can go in any order, it's cool.

Jolene: I started with Calendar because that's kind of what they told you to do. My bachelor’s was not in education, so I came in really green and you had to have a calendar, and you had to find a really good day of the week song.

Kristie: Yes. With snapping involved, right?

Jolene: Yes. And you had to have all the cute, little, expensive numbers and you could pattern them. And I was told the reasons why. So, yes, I did start, and luckily Clark County school district PreK looked at the research and has slowly gotten away from that, but I did start.

Jen: I also did start 15 years ago when I was teaching First Grade. It was expected that we did Calendar Time, and it was a lot of the patterning and of course numbers and things like that, and sequencing. I also came in to the classroom with a bachelor’s in psychology, so I didn’t really have that background in Early Childhood yet, and that was just an expectation- but like you shared, I'm happy to know that CCSD, Clark County school district, has decided that that's really not relevant for young children, so we're happy to have that as our back up.

Alicia: And I was going through some old pictures, and actually in the background of my Whole Group area, there was my calendar with all the patterns. We tried to make it as relevant as, at the time, we could. You know, counting down until at least Friday, or if there was a parent meeting or somebody's birthday. So, I think in our minds we
felt like that was more applicable, even though we were still counting through all the numbers and doing that as well.

Kristie: Yeah, I was going to say, Alicia, even if you guys can go back to that early feeling you had. Did you have a sense that you were working really hard to keep kids' attention? Or did it feel just like any other time trying to get a three-year-old to attend? Or did you kind of have this sort of internal thing saying, "This does not make a lot of sense"?

Jen: I definitely had that, 'cause I could just see that the kids weren't that interested, they weren't engaged, they just really didn't care, to be honest. So, I found myself shortening the Calendar Time as each day came because they just weren't into it. It wasn't interesting to them.

Kristie: Mm-hmm.

Alicia: And I think looking back, too, during my Whole Group when I first started teaching, looking at the behaviors, I felt that there was a lot of redirection and it was hard to maintain their focus, and kind of reflecting on that and then asking, "What if ... why am I sitting here? Why am I constantly trying to regain their attention to this information? Because they're not interested and they're not getting much out of it."

So, when we have stepped back and shortened that, I've noticed that the behaviors and the engagement has increased when we are in a whole group.

Kristie: Yeah, 'cause that's the other thing. It seems like when we do Calendar Time, we're doing it with children that are too young to capture the kind of abstract concepts around even the sequencing and patterning...because the most the calendars I see anyway, to make it relevant- kind of like you guys were saying- they would use holidays. So, let's say it's Halloween, then we use ghosts, and witches, and pumpkins as part of our patterning. But even those concepts and this notion of a holiday can either be abstract or not something that's practiced in that particular community or family.

So, it's like we make all these environmental things to try and make it relevant, but in our heart, we kind of know that this is kind of lost on the group.

Jolene: I think back in the day, we pushed through a 45 minute to an hour Circle without paying attention to whether or not they were attending. It was just something you were supposed to do. You had to get all of these things done in this amount of time. That's what we thought teaching was at that time, at least when I started. So, it wasn't relevant, and once you look at relevance, it's kind of changed our perspective. We were talking about even some of our highest kids don't know their birth dates, and that is extremely relevant. They can tell you what they did, if they celebrated, what was on their cake, but they don't have any clue about the date.
Kristie: Right. Right. And they think it's tomorrow, right? It's again tomorrow. "No, it was yesterday."

Yeah. And I also think for a lot of kids, just that idea of predictability is kind of not around as much, meaning they don't have a pattern. I even saw this in my own nieces growing up, that their week didn't look the same week to week to week. Like, our lives anymore, especially if you're dual parenting or you have strange work cycles as parents, the kids don't have a predictable schedule, so every Monday doesn't look like the past Monday, and I think that's even led to some of this sort of difficulty, if you will, with the concept of time, because it's not always the same. Does that make sense? Do you guys see that a little bit, too?

Jen: Oh, yeah. Definitely.

Jolene: I think, also, just kids are the center of their own little universes, so it's a matter of now or not now, yesterday or tomorrow. If it's not happening now, then maybe it's tomorrow. Or if it already happened, it was yesterday. But then it doesn't matter how long ago it was or how long it will be. Whatever's important and happening right then, they're very present, where adults aren't as present, unfortunately.

Jen: True.

Kristie: Right. That sort of also speaks to some of the problem with some of these token economy systems or even school wide interventions where kids have to wait until a certain amount of time to get the reward, right?

Jen: Oh, yeah. It's definitely...that's really hard for them to understand. I've definitely had experiences with having to use things like that in the past, and it's very hard for them to understand, "Well, you have to get three more stars and then when you do that, then you can get this," and it's just, it's really not that effective for them.

Jolene: Or even parents scolding for something that happened eight to ten hours ago.

Kristie: Right.

Jolene: It's like I have no clue why am I in trouble, what did I do?

Kristie: Right. Because it was eight hours ago. Jen, this is a total side note and then we're going to go on to some solutions to this issue of having Calendar Time, but you were presenting recently at the Nevada...what do you guys call it that you're-

Jen: ...the Nevada AYC.
Kristie: Yeah. And you were telling a story about the kindergartner and the behavior chart, about how he immediately moved to red and what he said to his teacher. Can you just tell us that story again? Because it's just hilarious.

Jen: Yeah. And so, she had put him on red, I don't know, early in the morning and she said, you could tell she was angry, and she was like, "All right, that's it. You're moving to red." And he's like, "Well, I'm already on red, so what are you going to do to me now?" And she's like, "Well, I'm going to put you on red for the rest of the week." And he said, "Well, good. Then I won't listen to you for the rest of the week."

So, it was like, you've lost all your bargaining chips at 9:00 AM.

Kristie: I thought it was great, because here's a kid who actually understood the concept of time.

Jen: Yes. He did. Yeah. He really did. And there are some kids that definitely do understand that concept of time. Most of them, usually not. But he was very bright, so he understood that and he was not having it.

Kristie: Yeah. And it was just like, so great, because he was like, "Great. Then I got a whole week of freedom from you, lady. I don't have to listen to."

Jen: Exactly. "I don't have to listen to you."

Alicia: Pushing a grown-up's buttons is always relevant to a child.

Kristie: So, yeah. So, we've said that Calendar Time, why do we do it? So, it's been our history, it's been a tradition, it's been passed down, it's been an expectation. What would you say, I've shared a list of things like vocabulary, sequencing, patterning, number identification...if or when you gave up, so personally or if you're thinking for others, what do you think people are most worried that they won't be able to cover or teach without doing Calendar?

Jolene: I think for whatever reason, it's replaced the number line. I don't know why, but they feel like that's one easy way to work on counting. But I feel like it takes so much time and they're not engaged that you lose that engagement and you lose that beginning or that community that's built, and that discourse.

Jen: Right. And it's just really not that meaningful to them. We always count the kiddos who are absent and that's meaningful to our kids. They want to know how many friends are missing that day, and that's super meaningful for them.

Alicia: And I would say number identification and one-to-one correspondence is something that I feared when I got rid of the calendar, but we often do a Question of the Day that they answer when they come in and so, again, that makes it more relevant and
meaningful to the students in the group, because it's their names on the board and they've answered the question, and then we build a vocabulary within that Question of the Day, so we can count, do number identification, and showing that one-to-one correspondence while we're counting and then, again, vocabulary introduction.

So, we are still able to reach a lot of those concepts by not using the calendar.

Jen: Right. And we also do a lot of the same with that. We do the Question of the Day as well, and that is a lot more meaningful than the Calendar Time.

Kristie: So, give us an example, I'm going to stretch your brains just on the fly for a minute, but give an example of a Question of the Day that you might ask that you've found that really keeps kids engaged or allows you to embed instruction around order or number identification?

Alicia: Well, we wrapped up with insects, which they were very, very interested in. So, if we asked, "What's your favorite insect with four wings or two wings?" And then they choose, there's no right or wrong, and then we quantify. So, we will count together and then we will show them the amount that matches what they have, the number that we've written down, and then we'll talk about, we'll use that vocabulary as we're asking the question, repeating the question, and then we write a sentence together, we work on that as well. So, we kind of hit everything all at once without a calendar, and it's also still relevant to our topic and to our extension of our vocabulary.

Jen: Right. And we've done similar things. We also wrapped up with insects at the end of the year and we ask questions like, "How many days do you think it will take for the caterpillars to make their chrysalis? How many days will it take for them to turn into butterflies?" So, they got to, there was no wrong answer there. They got to pick and we got to embed that vocabulary and those expansions and things like that.

Kristie: Yeah, so even in just those two quick examples, I could hear that you're talking about numeracy, vocabulary, sequencing, patterning, number identification, one-to-one, all those temporal concepts are totally coming in and the units and the periods of time, what order things will happen, how many there are, and then representing that in both our written number tags as well as our labels, as well as really thinking about those concepts of how long or how short or how much. Right?

Jen: Right.

Kristie: Okay. So-

Alicia: It gives one a chance to give input.

Kristie: Yeah.
Alicia: They take part in the conversation whereas during Calendar they're listening and maybe repeating, but there's no real engagement and ownership.

Kristie: And so what have you guys done in an inclusive classroom where you might even have some children, because of their development, they're not even quite ready for this level of vocabulary? Like, whatever you just said, Jen, about the “chrysalis”. I don't know what that is. I should, but I don't.

But this insect stuff, right?

Jen: So, we would say, it's a fancy way to say cocoon. So, we might break it down a little bit for our younger kiddos, like our three-year-olds and things like that, and then I'd say stuff like, "If you want to sound like a scientist, a scientist might say the word chrysalis instead of cocoon," and reference that back to the Hungry Caterpillar, and that's what they talk about as well. So, just kind of tying that all in together during that time.

Jolene: I don't even think vocabulary, for us really, is a barrier, because as long as they're hearing it, something is soaking in. We have the behavior challenges where the ones that don't want to participate at all, so those are the ones that are given an option, "Let's go read a book about this instead. Let's count one-on-one as we read a story," rather than trying to sit through a whole group that that child is not developmentally ready for.

Kristie: Yeah.

Jolene: And then they're still getting the concepts and the vocabulary. I will use the same level of vocabulary with a two-year-old that I do with a six-year-old just so it's being heard.

Kristie: Right. Right. So, what you're thinking about is that constant flow of content, but then also individualizing on top of that. So, if the child has trouble with the whole group, giving them the choice to do it in a smaller group, or even on their own. But then for a child who might have younger or simpler words, you can do those as well, but you're always giving them that undercurrent or that flow, so they're always having that exposure.

Jen: Right.

Jolene: Yes.

Kristie: Okay. So-

Alicia: I think-
Kristie: Yeah. Go ahead, Alicia.

Alicia: I was just going to say, we also, for our younger ones that do choose to sit through our whole group time, we also make sure that they're supported. We are lucky that we have assistants in our classrooms, so for our younger ones, we have an assistant sitting near them so that they're also engaging in the conversation. Or maybe if they're second language, that information could be being translated in their language, as well, to help with those concepts and that vocabulary, to support them for staying in our whole group, as well.

Kristie: So, as you guys made your move away from Calendar Time, we've already hit on some of the solutions in the sense of either just not doing it as a large or whole group, right? That's one solution. There might be some kids who are really fascinated with the calendar and ready for some of that higher-level stuff, but I think Jolene, when you even hit on it, too, it's like that rope counting isn't higher level stuff, right? But this brainstorming and this getting to wonder, that does get to the higher order. So, it's kind of this weird thing that we think that by doing a hard concept like a calendar actually promotes higher order thinking where it actually is just working on memory, which is really low-level thinking.

So, as you kind of break it down and think about your movement away from Calendar Time, was there anything that you needed to do to scaffold it for yourself? Did you go from whole group to those who wanted to do Calendar Time? Did you just, like, rip it off the wall and automatically know what to do in its place? Can you kind of help people see how you went from where you were to where you are today?

Jen: I think like what we talked about with the Question of the Day, that just lends so many opportunities to talk about math and a different group setting for them that's more meaningful, and so for me, even when I taught kindergarten, I didn't do calendar and I focused more on the Question of the Day and making it relevant for them, and even inviting them to come up and help me write the numbers and things like that. It was just so much more meaningful, so it was an easy switch for me to kind of give up the Calendar Time, just because I saw the amount of growth and things that were happening with the kiddos in kindergarten and then even in PreK, I just saw so much more engagement and back and forth conversation, like one of you mentioned about they were just more listening to you when you were doing Calendar Time. There was no conversation and discourse back and forth, where Question of the Day really allows you to have that discourse and that conversation back and forth with the kiddos.

Jolene: I wasn't that intentional. When they said, "You have to have a ten-minute Circle," there was just no time for Calendar, so I got rid of it. And being in self-contained, it looks a lot different than what I'm talking about. What I had to do is I really had to see Alicia do it, and now that I'm the first time in a General ED environment and seeing, okay, things are a little different, and honestly watching how she was able to squeeze
everything in that Question of the Day and what a real Question of the Day should look like is how I kind of grew.

But as far as the calendar, like I said, it just had to go because there was no way with ten minutes that that was going to happen. And I think it took me a little bit. I had to, when I first started teaching, I had the big pocket chart calendar with the patterns and all of that, and so you know, we did, "What's today? Tomorrow? Yesterday?" And all of that. We went through the whole thing and then I gradually moved away from that, but it took me a little bit. Then I had to buy a real calendar and hang it up. So, we'd kind of start “X-ing out”, but not necessarily talking like, "Here we are today." So, it didn't take up as much time, and then eventually, I again, asked myself, "What's the what in crossing out a day every day? Is this meaningful for my students?"

And then yes, we were limiting our whole group time, so again, it's what was relevant to them and what can we get most bang for our buck in that whole group time. So then, I just kind of, we went away from using a real calendar. So, during the whole group thing.

Kristie: And where do you guys then embed just the trueness of the calendar? You know, there's some people who do linear calendars, there's this idea of chunks of ten and that's how kids really start to learn the principles around numeracy. So, or even if people argue it's about weather and change in terms of seasons and things like that, where do you find it makes the most sense to embed those “what’s” in terms of those base 10 things or the idea of the passage of time? Is it just in every day conversations that you use concepts of time? Or have you felt like you needed to create other ways to expose kids to the principles and practices of a calendar?

Jolene: I think our visual schedule kind of-

Kristie: Okay.

Jolene: -helps with that. We talk about what's next and when we don't have school. Then we're at science and we're talking about the weather and the sun and day versus night, then we're at Dramatic Play and we can have the calendar up and talk about... sometimes we put what we have to do today on the calendar, or Alicia was talking about a kid who was interested in counting down to his birthday.

Alicia: So, we've looked on the calendar and we used the one behind her desk and we put it out in Dramatic Play and wrote, "Peter's birthday" on the calendar. But it was meaningful to him because he was interested in how long it was going to be until his birthday. So ... other kids, "Well, when's my birthday?" So, again, it's abstract, but it gives them a purpose for what the calendar is for, so those that were interested in it, it became meaningful to them.
Kristie: That's really interesting how you guys just reshaped that. It's like, how do we use calendars in our lives, right? That's where the word relevance or meaningful comes in. It helps us- like a visual schedule. I always say that someone's planner or their (because some of my friends still have the old-school planner) that's how we-

Alicia: Just me.

Kristie: Just you?

Jen: Me too.

Kristie: All right. All right. Sorry. But it's how we, it's like an adult picture schedule, right?

Jen: Right.

Kristie: So, it really helps make things that are unpredictable predictable. So, it can absolutely be really supportive as a visual support, and really help people understand and mark the passage of time and know what to expect next. I like that you, those were really concrete examples of how you embedded that, but I love how it ended up in the Dramatic Play area as part of just your ongoing conversations about one another's lives.

Jolene: Even with those little guys that have just trouble transitioning. We talk about time all the time. "You only have to be here for a little bit of time, then you get to go home, and then you know what? You don't have to come back to school for three more days." Again, it comes to the now and not now, and "How long do I have to wait to see my mother?" So, we talk about time all the time without having to sit there with the calendar in front of us.

Jen: Right. And same with the weather, because I've heard people ask, "How do you talk about the weather?" I'm like, "Well, we talk about it when we're outside playing, during our Gross Motor time. Or maybe we talk about it if we read a book about it in the Science Center", you know? So, there's lots of opportunities to still embed that kind of instruction throughout the day without having to do it in a Whole Group Calendar setting.

Kristie: Yeah. I love that, too. And as you said that, Jen, I was thinking, "Wow. Amazing to actually not be in Circle Time and look outside and go, 'Oh, what's the weather,' but to be out in nature and actually be aware of, 'How do you feel? Are you cold? Are you hot? Do you feel the breeze? Do you notice the birds?'"

These are things that we try to reteach our poor adult brains to be present, right? And here is this fabulous opportunity for little kids to do it in the moment.
Jen: Oh, yeah. And they have, once you start talking to them about it, they start talking to each other about it and then it's leading to this great discourse between their peers and they're like, "Wow, look. I can't really see the mountains today. It's pretty cloudy out." So, there's lots of opportunity out there to still talk about weather and things like that.

Kristie: Yeah. Because weather, it changes and it does mark the passage of time, so being aware of it is kind of a fabulous thing. So, where does that kind of bring us? You all had the support of your county and in fact it sounded like you had some internal mandates or policies or discussions around limiting Group Time, so that kind of was a catalyst to maybe prioritizing, but tell us a little bit about any words of wisdom that you have or anything about, we talked a little bit about your ECERS rating and how others have perceived your classrooms as they've maybe witnessed it differently than what they expected, or just anything that you would suggest that people do to make use of their time and to be clear about “what's their what”.

Jolene: I think a big one is if you're having to struggle with behaviors, it's not working. And it's okay to stop and to do something different.

Alicia: I think that was a really hard one for me on my journey is, "I have this book to get through, and I have calendar to get through, and we're going to sit and we're going to do it." And then I wasn't aware of their cues. So, it did take a lot for me to say, "I'm in the middle of counting and I'm looking out and I can see that everyone's playing with their shoes or they're turned around, or they're just not engaged." So, just stopped what I was doing and moved to something else. We've done that with books while we're reading, too, in Whole Group reading. It's, "Okay. We have to get up and move. We just need to save this for another day."

So, I think really looking at the students and reading their cues and being okay with stopping and knowing that they're not getting anything out of it and moving on to something else.

Kristie: And before we go to you, Jen, so Alicia and Jolene, you guys still have Whole Group, right, at some point during the day?

Alicia: Correct. We do.

Kristie: And how many kids would that be, about?

Alicia: We have 25 students. So, upon arrival they answer a Question of the Day and then we come back to a Whole Group to look at that Question of the Day and do a read-aloud. But we do also give our students the option if they are not wanting to be a part of our Whole Group during that day that they can go, come back to the Library Center where we have somebody there, either a teacher back there reading or supporting them, or
we have story re-tell pieces, we have big books, and having similar, or having conversations back there in our Library Center.

Kristie: Okay. And how many of your kids on IEPs?

Jolene: Per session, eight to ten.

Kristie: Because you guys are half-day, right? So, you have the morning and afternoon. You have 25 in the morning and 25 different ones in the afternoon.

Jolene: Yes. But the funny thing is, children's behavior is just changing, so on any given day it was a mix of IEP versus non-IEP who chose to leave Whole Group. It wasn't always just, "Oh, there goes your Special ED kids to the Library." It wasn't that at all, it was just those ones who weren't ready.

Kristie: Right. Right. Okay. So, you definitely still do some amount of Whole Group, but you've really shaped it more into, and we'll put some links to some videos so people can see it in action where it's more about the message of the day, but it's also about embedding very traditional of why we did Calendar “what's”, meaning the numeracy and the pattern, and the counting and the one-to-one into that Whole Group still, but without a calendar. And then you have the option of kids being able to go to a quiet area if they're not engaged even in that short time, right?

Jolene: Yes. The quiet area with the grown up that is still engaging them, so it's not just like you have to go to Quiet Center and be by yourself.

Kristie: Right. Right. Okay. Jen, what were you going to say as far as how others have viewed it or what you would recommend, or something from your experience with ECERS?

Jen: You know, I think sometimes it's just hard to kind of step out of our own comfort zone and just try something different, and sometimes we do things because it's what we've always done and everyone else does it, so it must be right. So, sometimes I think you just have to take a step back and like you guys were saying, really look at your kiddos and look at the engagement and if it's not happening, then it's clearly not working for them, so you can stand up in front of them and continue to put on this "show", but if they're really not engaged, then they're really not getting anything out of it. So, I think sometimes you just really need to be willing to kind of step back and really look at yourself as a teacher and what's best for your kids and try something different. So, that's what I would recommend to people is just try it, because if it doesn't work, you can always try something else.

The kids don't really know what you have planned, so as long as you just kind of are flexible and go with it, you might find that you find something that's going to be more meaningful for them. As far as ECERS goes, we definitely do Choice Group. We closed
down some of our other centers and we do have a few centers open that are quieter like our Art Center, but there's only like certain materials out during Art and there's always someone over there to kind of support those kiddos that might need to leave. The Fine Motor center's open, the Library Center's open, so there are some choices if they decide, "Just today I'm not feeling it. I can't sit for this long. I just need to get up." So, that's okay and we've kind of taught them that they don't even have to announce it or ask, they can just quietly stand up and just go to another center and that's okay.

And we do have kids that come and go throughout our group time. They'll maybe come for the beginning song and then they'll leave, but then when we're going to count, they're coming back, and that's fine with us, too. And it took us a while to get comfortable with that, because sometimes it's hard, like, "Why are they leaving? Am I being really boring?" So, you know, but you can't take it personal. Maybe for that kid, you are being a little boring. So, it's okay.

The other thing I found is they're still listening when they're at other centers. I've had kids shout out things to me as I'm doing group and they're at the Art Center and they're coloring and I didn't think they were listening, but they were. So, sometimes they're still engaged, but maybe they just need to be doing something else like with their hands or whatever and that's okay with us.

So, it took us a while to get to that point, but the growth that we've seen in the kids and the self-regulation skills that they're building, it's just amazing.

Kristie: And so, any ... so we've sort of talked about that you see so many behavior things come up when we try to force fit maybe a habit with a practice. So, it's like, "We've always done Calendar and now we've always got kids acting out," and we've never connected the two and said, "Oh, maybe if I stop doing Calendar, kids would stop acting out." So, we've sort of approached it to say you can get higher engagement, you can get higher order thinking, you can also embed lots of your "what" around what we did during Calendar at different times. So, just that last part, have you had to help others understand by showing them in your lesson plans or in some sort of embedding schedule, or in conversations? How do you show them that you're still covering the standards and the content without a Calendar Time? Is there anything that you would suggest or a tip to make it more observable, palatable for others?

Jen: I mean, I invite them to come in, especially our kindergarten teachers, because they're like, "Whoa, what do you mean you're not doing Calendar? Whoa, what do you mean Group Time is a choice?" So, I'm like, "Come in and see it." You know? I'm like, "See it in action," because I know it must sound, so I invite them to come in and see it. I kind of give them the research behind it, and I think that's been helpful for them, and some of them are like, "I might try that next year." And I'm like, "You should. Why not?"
So, I really just think if they can see it or I tell them to watch the podcast sixteen, just so they can see what it's really like. And they're like, "Well, what are the other kids doing?" And it's different for them because they don't have assistance, so they'd have to tweak it to make it work for their classroom because it's just one teacher, but even when I taught kindergarten, I allowed the library to be open and I allowed kids to kind of come and go out of my Whole Group during kindergarten time, too. So, I think coming in and seeing it in action is really the best way.

Kristie: Okay.

Jolene: I thought Calendar was antiquated until Alicia and I had to leave one day for an observation and we came back to a giant, hand-written calendar on our board by the substitute teacher, like, "Oh. Okay. She thinks we're missing something." Or a sub telling me, "I thought we'd be more structured by now." And just not having that buy-in. And I think the more we discuss with people "what our what is" and how kids work and that they work through play, and that this is how they're getting it, and its conversation we have with parents all the time, so parents who want the homework and the dittos, and once we show them what it looks like and how our materials are helping with their development, but it's an ongoing conversation. It takes some teachers and some parents a long time to really buy into that, if they do.

Jen: Definitely. Like, we have parent volunteers and they're always trying to get the kids to all come to Circle and it's like we have to explain, "No, it's a choice," and they're like, "Well, what do you mean it's a choice? They all should come." So, it's kind of teaching the parents, too, about "This is why we do this." It's been an obstacle for us, but most of the parents, once we kind of explain it and they see it, they're a little more open to it, but it did take them a while.

Alicia: And I think again, you know, you talk about your shark music and stuff, but I think you might hear it, but just attempt it and try it and see how it works for you and just be open, you know, to tweaking it or maybe just do a little bit here and there and eventually it will evolve itself if you use some of those tips. It works. I mean, it was kind of scary at first even having an option of if they were going to leave and then come back, I'm all, "Oh my gosh, then the entire group is going to leave and the entire group is going to be back in the Library Center. How is that going to work out?" And it is really interesting to see that they come and go and some days the same kids want to go back there and some days, it all depends on the day, but it's good, it is that self-regulation that they're seeing, and it helps them to be successful in our classroom, so ...

Kristie: Yeah. Fabulous. Okay. Well, I'll just close this out to remind people that what we're inviting them to consider is do they have a habit of doing Calendar Time that's not really serving the children that they are trying to build brains...and if it is working, we're not suggesting that they have to do away with it. They would have evidence that it's really engaging and that children understand the concepts and are benefiting
from the Calendar Time. So, I want people to always understand that oftentimes when we are inviting them to change their practice, it's because we have experienced or we see the research that shows kids really may not be benefiting from this particular tradition or this particular way of doing things, and so it's really an awareness and really a self-reflection, kind of as you were suggesting, Jen, to just sort of look at your practice and see if you think it's working and maybe it looks like it is for you, but just take a peek at your audience and read the crowd and see if calendar is working for them.

So, I thank you fellow revolutionaries for being with me today.