The Michigan Persona Project eBook: Part 2

Preparing early childhood colleagues to support the promise of each Michigan child

The Michigan Persona Project began in spring 2021 to develop resources to provide powerful new tools to support the work of faculty and professional learning providers who prepare personnel to work with young children, including young children with developmental delays and disabilities. Teams from across the state of Michigan, representing a variety of roles, were formed to write personas.

Personas are short stories about a child and family. Each persona offers information about the unique composition of the family, details about the child (name, age, likes, dislikes), and insights about who the child is as a learner. The persona also provides details, like whether a child is receiving services for a disability, is a dual language learner, or has experienced traumatic life events. Each persona also has an engaging photo of the child. Personas offer faculty and instructors an effective way to promote individualizing. For example, students might be asked to identify the evidence-based practices they might use to support the child and their family in a persona. Michigan's early childhood and early intervention/early childhood special education agencies, faculty, and organizations are committed to producing students who are prepared to support each and every child.

Over the spring and summer of 2021, teams met to write personas that represent children and families in Michigan. In fall 2021, ten personas were field tested by faculty across the state. In 2022, The Michigan Persona Project eBook: Part 1 was distributed to professional development and higher education settings. Part 2 (this document) was released in fall 2022.

To learn more about the project: Michigan Persona Project

This project is supported by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act through grants from the Michigan Department of Education. For more information about the Michigan Persona Project, contact Kari Holmberg at holmberg_k@ccresa.org.

How to Use this eBook

In this book, you will find nine personas that were written by teams from across the state of Michigan, representing a variety of roles (see more information on teams below). The personas can be used in professional development and higher education settings.

The personas are in chronological order by age of the child. Each persona includes an engaging picture, narrative about the child and family, questions to use in professional development and higher education settings, and suggested resources.

The Table of Contents (found on page 3) has a clickable list of each persona including general tags.

The Michigan Persona Project Team

A deep appreciation is sent to the dedicated people from around the state of Michigan who agreed to collaborate to make this project happen. These include the following teams, consisting of family representatives, professional development providers, and higher education faculty.

The Upper Peninsula Team: • Tammra Houseman, Bay Community College, Team Liaison • Sheryl Hammock, Bay Community College • Becky Davis, Lake Superior State University • Laura Goldthwait, Michigan Department of Education • Kelly Hurshe, Michigan Department of Education • Andrea Caron, Family Representative	The Northern Lower Team: • Lisa Morley, West Shore Community College, Team Liaison • Cheryl Bloomquist, Northwestern Michigan College • Liza Ing, Ferris State University • Kelsey Laird, MiAEYC • Heather Stelzer, Family Representative
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And the project was supported by the following State Team:

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- LaShorage Shaffer, University of Michigan (Dearborn)
- Danielle Savory Seggerson, Lansing Community College
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Child's Name: Koel

Tags: infant, Early On®, developmental delays

Part 1: Koel is an 11-month-old who is a member of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians. He resides in the Upper Peninsula with his father, mother, and four siblings. Koel is the youngest child. Koel was diagnosed with four different challenges, including Cornelia de Lange syndrome, autism, laryngomalacia, and a condition related to the TAF1 gene. Koel's mother completed a self-referral for *Early On* evaluation. By the time he was four months old, Koel was receiving services that included home health nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech, and special education. Life included round-the-clock oxygen and monitoring, along with thickened food and other adjustments to help him eat and grow. Koel's mother has been by his side through multiple hospitalizations and therapy sessions and both parents worked to master feeding and positioning techniques.

Addressing Koel's complex needs has impacted his family in several ways. His mother sold her business because she no longer had the time to devote to it. Koel's dad struggles with how to help his son and support him to get better and his mom describes him as somber and disinterested in play. In addition, Koel's three-year-old brother vies for attention. Koel's family would like to focus on developing a stronger bond with Koel, learn ways to support his development at home, and ideas for family activities. Specifically for Koel, IFSP outcomes will focus on building his core strength, tracking with his eyes, turning his head, and general engagement. Both parents wonder if he'll be able to attend an early childhood program with other children.



Tags: toddler, Head Start, developmental delays

Part 2: Koel is the youngest of five siblings who lives with his mom and dad. Koel was diagnosed with four different challenges, including Cornelia de Lange syndrome, autism, laryngomalacia, and a condition related to the TAF1 gene. Koel is also a member of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

Three-year-old Koel uses a walker to navigate his Head Start classroom. While he requires a soft food diet, he feeds himself and is thriving. His family was warmly welcomed by program staff who invited Koel's parents to share all they know about how to support his success.

With support from a paraeducator provided by the school district, Koel is included in all learning experiences. His teacher is in frequent contact with Koel's parents to learn about what Koel is interested in (Paw Patrol) and what concerns or frightens him (uneven surfaces, touching unfamiliar substances or textures). At times, his participation must be planned to ensure he can engage in a meaningful way. For example, Koel is not yet comfortable finger painting but with the use of gloves, he engages successfully. At times, it can be hard for Koel's teacher to see progress in a traditional way but she observes Koel and celebrates small wins with him.

Possible Questions

- Koel and his family receive *Early On* services and support from multiple early intervention providers. What are ways you can actively and meaningfully involve the family in assessment, planning, and intervention services?
- How might you address Koel's parents' concerns about attending an early childhood program with other children someday?
- What are some strategies that Koel's teachers could use to engage and support his learning and development across the routines of his classroom (e.g., snack, small group work, outdoor play)?
- In small and large group activities in the Head Start classroom, how might you individualize activities to support Koel's successful participation?

Suggested Resources

- Building Babies' Brains Through Play: Mini Parenting Master Class
- Curriculum Modifications for Infants and Toddlers
- Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten
- *Early On* Michigan
- MiFamily: Michigan's Family Engagement Framework
- Standards for the Preparation of Teachers of Early Childhood General and Special Education (Birth-Kindergarten), Michigan Department of Education



Child's Name: Maggie

Tags: toddler, Early On, developmental delays

Maggie is a playful and curious 18-month-old who lives with her mother, Michelle, and 13-year-old brother Michael in a suburb of Wayne County.

Maggie loves to explore and experiment with toys, especially outside of her crib. She is always all smiles when her older brother Michael pushes her in a stroller to nearby Heritage Park. Michelle is concerned about Maggie's speech, language, and motor development. Maggie drinks from a bottle and is not yet eating solid foods. Maggie mostly gets around by crawling. She responds to sounds and people's voices but uses crying to communicate her wants and needs. Her favorite thing to do is play with her stuffed animals with whom she interacts easily.

After a referral to *Early On*, the evaluation team determined that she qualified for early intervention services based on developmental delays. As part of the assessment process, Michelle mentioned her lack of confidence in parenting Maggie. Michelle also shared that Maggie will soon be attending a family childcare program in the neighborhood and wondered how Maggie's teacher might be a resource.

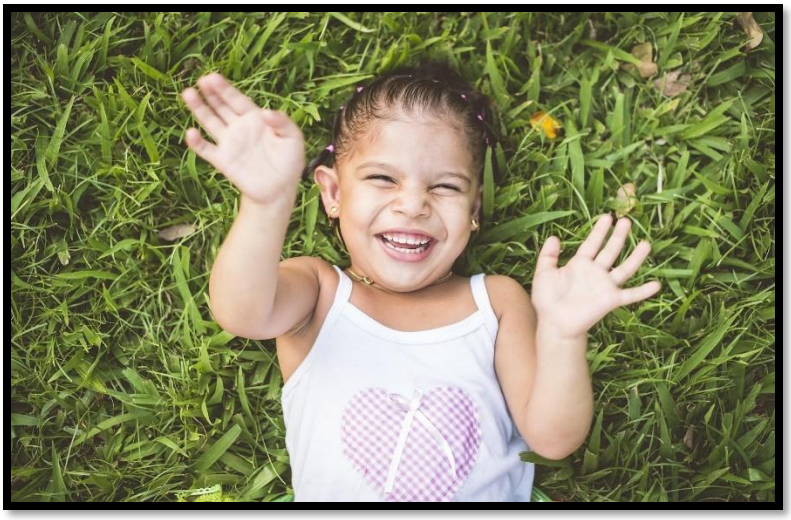
Possible Questions:

- What outcomes would you focus on to support Maggie and her family? Why?
- What are some resources that can be shared with Michelle to address her concerns?
- What role does the family childcare program have in supporting Maggie and her family?
- How would you support a family childcare program in meeting Maggie's needs?

Suggested Resources:

- Parent2Parent
- Zero to Three: Parent Favorites
- Learning Environments
- Family Engagement
- *Early On* Personnel Standards

- Standards for the Preparation of Teachers of Early Childhood General and Special Education (Birth-Kindergarten), Michigan Department of Education
- Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten



Child's Name: Anastasia

Tags: toddler, Head Start, building upon child strengths and interests

Anastasia is the 3-year-old daughter of Emily and Jacob who lives with her parents and maternal grandparents in a 2-bedroom apartment. Anastasia's parents work full time, and her grandparents support her care. Anastasia's grandparents want the best for her and enjoy spending time with her, but their interactions are limited due to their advanced age and mobility issues. Anastasia spends most of her time indoors watching television; her favorite shows are PJ Masks and Paw Patrol.

When she is not in the care of her grandparents, Anastasia attends a Monroe County Head Start Program. In the classroom, she has shown that she can recognize upper- and lower-case letters and can count to 30. She can also name most shapes and colors when asked. During choice time, Anastasia is content to play alone, and the marble racetrack is her favorite. Anastasia's family and her teachers have discussed ways in which they might build on her interest in the marble racetrack to explore science concepts like ramps.

Possible Questions:

- What might be thoughtful ways for Anastasia's teachers to learn more about Anastasia and her family (e.g., what her family is interested in, values, celebrates, etc.)?
- What might be examples of opportunities for Anastasia's grandparents to support her learning, development, and play that don't require active physical participation?
- How might you build from Anastasia's interest in the marble racetrack to explore other developmentally appropriate STEM concepts that might be of interest?
- How might you connect Anastasia's interests to other domains of development?

Suggested Resources:

- Funds of Knowledge
- Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten
- STEM Curated Books and Stories for Infants/Toddlers



Child's Name: Colleen

Tags: preschooler, inclusive preschool, language delay

Colleen is a three-year-old girl who lives with her mother, father, and older sister on their family farm in Coleman, Michigan. Colleen's father, Charles, works full-time on the family farm. Colleen's mother, Lisa, is a stay-at-home mom and attends Mid-Michigan Community College part-time as she prepares to earn a degree in nursing. Colleen's grandparents, whom she refers to as "Farmer Papa" and "Farmer Nana", live close by, and Colleen spends time with them daily. Colleen loves tractors, combines, and farm animals. She wears cowboy boots and a cowboy hat as well as her favorite "work gloves" every day.

Colleen has a significant expressive language delay and was receiving speech-language services through *Early On*. She recently transitioned to an inclusive preschool classroom. In addition to Colleen's one-on-one and small group therapy, her speech-language pathologist (SLP) visits the classroom weekly to provide direct services in her classroom.

Colleen's transition to the classroom has gone well. She is learning to adjust to the structure of the classroom. She willingly joins and attends during circle time and is able to transition to activities without difficulty. During circle time, she seems content to observe and rarely joins in the active music, movement, and literacy experiences. During free choice time, she enjoys solitary play, especially with toy farm equipment, and is slowly beginning to engage in play with peers. Colleen has not yet explored the book area independently. However, she will listen to stories read by her teachers during free choice.

Recently, Colleen's SLP introduced a core communication board to use at home and in the classroom. It includes basic signs to allow Colleen to communicate using other communication modalities. She has quickly picked up signs to convey "more", "thank you", and "play". She has learned to use the core communication board to request items and indicate a need to use the restroom. Since starting in the classroom, she has also learned to gesture and verbalize "yes" and "no" responses.

Possible Questions:

- Based on what you know about things Colleen likes and is interested in, if you were her teacher, how might you support her development in each of the learning strands of the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten Programs? How would you coordinate that work with her speech-language pathologist and her family?
- What are some ways you can collaborate with the family and the speech-language pathologist to best support Colleen in her growth and development?
- As Colleen's teacher, what curriculum modifications might you use to increase Colleen's participation and engagement in classroom activities?

Suggested Resources:

- Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten
- Practice Improvement Tools: Interaction Checklists (especially child social communication and child-child interactions)
- Practice Improvement Tools: Interaction Practice Guides
- PROJECT CORE communication systems
- Head Start: ECLKC: Curriculum Modifications Guide



Child's Name: Jeremy

Tags: preschooler, community-based preschool, implicit bias

Jeremy is an inquisitive and fun-loving three-year-old. He is an only child and spends his days with his mom engaged in puzzles, building with blocks, painting, drawing, playing outdoors, and marveling at how things work, frequently asking questions. His parents both come from large families, who spend time together during the summer at various inland lakes in the Irish Hills area. These family gatherings have given Jeremy the opportunity to develop great social skills by playing with his cousins who are of similar age. To meet Jeremy's needs academically, his parents enrolled him in a community-based preschool in their Chelsea neighborhood. Although his parents were nervous because he had never been away from his mother, they were delighted at how easily Jeremy adjusted. He was fond of his teacher Ms. Cathy and she frequently reported how curious and bright Jeremy was, speaking of his contributions to large and small groups.

A few months into the school year Jeremy's parents became concerned. They noticed that Jeremy didn't seem as happy going to school, especially when Ms. Cathy was not going to be there. The assistant teacher, Ms. Lesley, often shared everything Jeremy had done "wrong" during the day when his mother picked him up from school. She described Jeremy as aggressive and not willing to follow the class directions. This was very different from what Ms. Cathy typically shared about Jeremy's day. His parents became even more concerned when his mother volunteered in the classroom and observed that Jeremy seemed to be under Ms. Lesley's constant surveillance, being punished for the same behavior as his peers, but not being disciplined for it. Jeremy's parents were also frustrated that Ms. Cathy did not seem to interrupt Ms. Lesley's behavior.

Possible Questions:

- How does this persona raise the issue of bias in early childhood education?
- What is the responsibility of the lead teacher in this situation? What support might the school administration provide to the family and teachers?
- How does the language each teacher uses to describe Jeremy impact their interactions with Jeremy and his family?
- What might be at the root of, or what might be the dynamics of, Ms. Lesley's behaviors toward, and treatment of, Jeremy?
- How would you address Jeremy's change in perception and response to attending school?
- How would you respond to Jeremy's parents' concerns regarding the treatment of their son?

Suggested Resources:

- Barbarin, O. & Crawford, G. M. (2006). Acknowledging and reducing stigmatization of African American boys. Young Children, 11(6), 79-86.
- Early Childhood Expulsions and Suspensions Undermine Our Nation's Most Promising Agent of Opportunity and Social Justice Article
- Interview with Dr. Walter Gilliam on Preschool Expulsion and Bias
- Who Is Being Expelled from Preschool, and Why? Video
- Strategies for Addressing Implicit Bias in Early Childhood Education Article
- Not That Kind of Racism: How Good People Can Be Racist Without Awareness or Intent Blog Post
- What Racism Looks Like: An Infographic
- Preschool Suspension and Expulsion: Defining the Issues



Child's Name: Alexis

Tags: preschooler, preschool, play therapy, trauma

Alexis is a bright and energetic 4-year-old girl from Grand Rapids. She loves princesses, princes, and all things related to Disney. She often dresses up like a princess and enjoys going about her day staying in her costume, even when the family is on their summertime camping and fishing trips in the South Haven area. Alexis also loves dinosaurs, helping her mom cook dinner, and setting the table for the family.

Alexis comes from a family of seven. She lives with her mom and dad, older sister Hannah (9), little brother Brady (2), and new baby sister Katelynn (1 month). Alexis had another sister named Macie who was 5 years old when she passed away. Macie was medically fragile her entire life and the family stayed largely in and around their home. Alexis and Macie were inseparable and the closest of friends and playmates. Alexis was two and a half years old when Macie died during the night.

It has now been over two years since Macie passed away and Alexis displays trouble separating from her parents or siblings for any amount of time, especially at night. She has had continual sleep issues and gets out of bed at least 10-15 times a night, stating she is scared "everyone will be gone in the morning." Drop-off times in the morning are challenging as well.

Alexis has recently begun play therapy with a therapist in the private sector and has moved from sleeping on the floor of her parent's bedroom to sharing a room with her older sister Hannah, which has been a positive step.

Possible Questions:

- How has the context of the family's life impacted Alexis' development?
- Reflect on the role of the teacher in working with the family. Do you feel it's important for a teacher to step in and help support Alexis and her family, or is this a private matter for the family to work out? If you were Alexis' teacher, how might you navigate this situation? Refer to NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment for guidance.
- What are some resources that can be shared with the family and how might you share them? What are some resources that would be useful in educating the classroom staff to help them support this family?

- What are some ways you can collaborate with the family and the play therapist to best support Alexis in her growth and development?
- How might you use Alexis' interests to support her during transitions and throughout the day?

Suggested Resources:

- Childhood Stress and Trauma Resources
- Sesame Street Toolkit: Helping Children Grieve
- Play Therapy Resources from Georgia State University
- Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University: Resilience
- NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment
- Healthy Outcomes for Positive Experiences Framework



Child's Name: Denisse

Tags: preschooler, GSRP classroom, building upon child strengths and interests

Denisse is an energetic biracial 4-year-old girl living with her grandmother and her husband. Her grandmother, Eleanor, received custody of Denisse within the last six months. She continues to have weekly interactions with her mother during supervised visits in Alpena. Eleanor works full-time as an office assistant and does all of the caretaking for Denisse. She admits that she had not expected to be in a parental role again and feels out of practice with parenting and the challenges she is experiencing with Denisse.

Denisse enjoys attending a state-funded Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) preschool classroom. Denisse has great gross motor coordination and enjoys rough and tumble play. She can often be found laughing and shouting while running in the open play field behind the school or climbing and jumping from the play structures. Her preference is to engage in large play. She shows disinterest in activities requiring her to sit still.

Eleanor has recently shared her concerns with Denisse's teacher that if Denisse doesn't learn to sit still and listen, she's going to have difficulty learning to read. Eleanor and Denisse's teacher have agreed to work on this together.

Possible Questions:

- What are some resources in the community that might be available to Denisse's family to continue to build connections and a support network to enhance Denisse's learning and development?
- How might you individualize Denisse's learning and development to support her successful participation in small and large group time?
- How could you incorporate storybooks within Denisse's love of play? What activities could you use to build upon Denisse's language and literacy use?
- Eleanor has concerns about how the impact of Denisse's high interest in gross motor play might affect her ability to learn to read. How would you

collaborate with Eleanor to support Denisse's literacy development using Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP)?

Suggested Resources:

- DAP: Engaging in Reciprocal Partnerships with Families and Fostering Community Connections
- MiFamily: Michigan's Family Engagement Framework
- DAP: Teaching to Enhance Each Child's Development and Learning
- DAP: Principles of Child Development and Learning and Implications That Inform Practice
- Playing with Stories: Using Books to Inspire Play
- Practice Improvement Tools: Interaction Practice Guides
- Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten



Child's Name: Timothy

Tags: preschooler, transition, supports for motor development

Timothy is a 5-year-old who will be transitioning to public kindergarten in the upcoming school year. He will turn 6 years old in November. Timothy lives with his 3-year-old sister, mom, and dad in a middle-class Lansing neighborhood. He is a busy child, full of energy, and always engaged in something of interest. He has excellent verbal skills but struggles with large motor movement. Timothy is also an excellent reader and devours books, especially if they involve magic and adventures.

He began to attend a private preschool at age 3. Based on seeing how frequently he seemed to stumble or run into things at home and at school, Timothy was referred for further evaluation. Although his evaluation supported his problems with motor planning and development, he did not qualify for services. His parents and teacher, however, were able to use the evaluation results to individualize and create accommodations for better success at home and in the classroom. In both settings, they created lots of opportunities for Timothy to be involved in activities that required movement, motor planning, and using both his arms and his legs together.

Possible Questions:

- What might be thoughtful ways for Timothy's teachers to learn more about Timothy and his family (e.g., what his family is interested in, values, celebrates, etc.)?
- What are examples of evidence-based practices that can support children who have difficulty with motor planning?
- What might be ways to connect the things Timothy loves to opportunities to build his gross motor development?
- Timothy will soon transition from his private preschool to the public kindergarten. What are effective practices that Timothy's preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers should use to support him and his family in making the transition as successful as possible?

Suggested Resources:

- Funds of Knowledge
- Motor Planning: What You Need to Know
- Activities for Improved Motor Planning
- School Age: Physical Activity
- Transition to Kindergarten
- The Kissing Hand