The AI-Enabled Administrator: Reclaim Valuable Time

TOOLS: GEMINI GEMS, NOTEBOOKLM, PERPLEXITY SPACES

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OVERVIEW

The evidence is clear that early childhood professionals' most significant challenge is a lack of time. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, when used strategically, can give administrators some of the time they desperately need, allowing them to focus more on their staff and the children and families in their care. This approach aligns with the foundational goal of strengthening leadership effectiveness and program impact (Abel, Talan, & Masterson, 2023).

When I scan the AI landscape of available products and platforms, it becomes overwhelming. There are so many options that it is impossible to keep up with every new development. Focusing on a limited number of AI tools backed by organizations with strong infrastructure and fiscal stability is a wise place to start your AI journey.

McCormick Institute for Early Childhood's (MIEC's) upcoming professional development sessions will focus on three AI tools. These include Gemini Gems, NotebookLM, and Perplexity Spaces. Think of Gemini Gems as your customized AI assistant that you "train" to follow your rules and meet your goals. Gemini Gems are the right tool to tackle **Internal Operations**. NotebookLM is perfect for creating **Family Support** resources that stick. NotebookLM is a powerful AI tool that uses only the documents or other resources you add to generate specific, focused output. Perplexity Spaces is a fantastic choice to address **Marketing** demands. Like many AI tools, you can toggle back and forth between open web searches and focused documents that are specific to your work.

GEMINI GEMS: THE "SPECIALIST TEAMMATE"

Gemini Gems allow you to create templates you can use repeatedly for agendas, HR policies, and more. If you have used AI in the past, you know that writing an effective prompt takes time, and they can easily get "lost" if you use AI often. Gems removes that challenge and lets you save your most effective prompts without having to rewrite them every time you use Gemini. It is up to you to decide if you want to create several smaller Gems to tackle common challenges you face or create larger Gems that encompass large swaths of your work. For our purposes, we will focus our Gem work on Internal Operations, addressing Program Administration Scale (PAS) Item 9: Internal Communications (Talan & Bloom, 2011). Imagine using a Gem to turn messy staff meeting notes into professional minutes with clear action plans in minutes or less!

NOTEBOOKLM: THE "WALLED GARDEN"

NotebookLM is an excellent tool for **Family Support** for your center, addressing PAS Item 17: Family Support and Involvement (Talan & Bloom, 2011). After uploading documents and resources, such as your parent handbook or community referral lists, to your Notebook, you can create several resources that parents/guardians of your center students will love. Just a few of the impressive features available with NotebookLM include audio (podcast) summaries, video summaries, and reporting functions with templates or the option to create your own report with metrics that matter most to you.

PERPLEXITY SPACES: THE "RESEARCH LIBRARIAN"

Perplexity Spaces is a perfect AI partner for Marketing your early childhood education (ECE) program, addressing PAS Item 18: External Communications (Talan & Bloom, 2011). You can build your own centralized repository, with control over branding to ensure consistency and present a professional, current image. Adding specific instructions to your space eliminates the need to format documents constantly and saves valuable time. The consistency that a Perplexity Space offers in this regard allows you to upload messages that are the "voice" of your brand. Your marketing efforts are not only more aesthetically pleasing but also enable you to track trends at similar centers in your area, helping you assess the competition.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:

1. Audit your Internal Communications: Identify one repetitive task, such as creating staff meeting agendas (PAS Item 9), and automate it with a Gemini Gem.
2. Curate your Family Resources: Gather three to five existing documents to "feed" a NotebookLM project for more responsive family support (PAS Item 17).
3. Standardize your Brand: Use a Perplexity Space to ensure all public relations tools project a consistent, professional image (PAS Item 18).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Which administrative task takes the most time away from your interactions with staff and families?
2. How might centralizing marketing materials (branding) impact the professional image to prospective families?

Table 1: *AI Tools for ECE Professionals*

Feature	Gemini Gems	NotebookLM	Perplexity Spaces
Persona	"Specialist Teammate"	"Walled Garden"	"Research Librarian"
Primary Use Case	Internal Operations	Family Support Resources	Marketing Demands
Free Version	Create Custom Gems; Access to Gemini 3 Flash; 100 monthly AI credits	100 Notebooks / 50 Sources; 50 Daily Chat Queries; 3 Audio/Video Overviews	Unlimited Basic Searches; 5 Pro Queries/Day; 5 Deep Research Credits
Paid Version Cost	$19.99/month	$20/month (Google AI Pro)	$20/month (Pro Plan)
Paid Version Perks	Access to Gemini 3 Pro; 2TB Cloud Storage; Advanced Deep Research	500 Notebooks / 300 Sources; 500 Daily Queries; 20 Audio/Video Overviews	Unlimited Pro Queries; 500 Deep Research Credits; Multiple AI Model Access

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION:

Explore the Tools: Gemini, NotebookLM, and Perplexity.

Talan, T. N., & Bloom, P. J. (2011). *Program Administration Scale: Measuring Early Childhood Leadership and Management* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Abel, M. B., Talan, T. N., & Masterson, M. (2023). "Whole Leadership: A Framework for Early Childhood Programs". McCormick Institute for Early Childhood.

The McCormick Institute will host an engaging two-part webinar series in February and March 2026 on how AI tools like Gemini Gems, NotebookLM, and Perplexity Spaces can help save time and reduce administrative burden for early childhood center leaders. Visit our Events page for details about these trainings and other opportunities.

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