

Focus on Instructional Supports: Resources to Help Head Start Programs

Deborah Bergeron: Good afternoon, Head Start. We are so excited to be here. This is Dr. B here with lots of friends to talk today about instructional support. Just to give you a little premise for today's webinar, we're doing something a little bit different. If you are here, you are an exclusive invitee, and we have specifically reached out to folks that we know are going to be monitored this year, and the idea is we know that you're thinking a lot about that process, and it can be kind of anxious-provoking and make you nervous, but we're going to try to allay all of that by giving you some preparation because we know that when you're prepared that there is no need to be nervous. So, we're excited. We're going to jump in.

We've got a lot of content for you today, and of course this will be available to you afterwards via a link so you can always come back and use pieces or the whole thing as you need to, to refer. So, first, why don't we find out who we've got here at the table with me?

Amanda Bryans: Hello, everyone. Greetings. This is Amanda Bryans. I work in the office in -- of the Office of Head Start on everything related to education and research to practice, and as Dr. B had said, we're so glad that you could be with us today. You're all scheduled for class observation, and I think, Dr. B, what you said is, you really want to give them some precepts, shift us from reactive to proactive in supporting programs so that they have really ongoing high-quality instructional support with children. And to my left, we're joined by ...

Jamie Sheehan: Hi, good afternoon. This is Jamie Sheehan. I'm also with the Office of Head Start. I am in Amanda's unit with education and research to practice. I am the federal project officer for the National Center on Early Childhood Teaching and Learning. So, we are happy to have you, and like Amanda and Dr. Bergeron have said about really focusing in for this audience as well as all of the Head Start audiences, when it, in terms of instructional support and what you can do with the resources that we have available. So, we're really going to highlight within this -- within this webinar some of the great resources that we have and really help to promote all of the free resources that are available to you from the Office of Head Start.

Allyson Dean: And hi, everybody. I'm Allyson Dean with the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning, and I'm here to share some of those resources and hopefully make your year a little more successful as a result.

Deborah: And just to kind of give you a little preview as to what we're going to go through, our objectives today are to share with you high-quality instructional support for all children. We want to give you some resources to help you focus on improving instruction in your classrooms for your teachers, for their instructional ... It's really for all of your staff. Everyone in your building is a teacher, and interactions with children and then strategies for using these resources with educational staff, of course. You know, really, based -- this is really based on a belief that we do so many different things, but if we can ensure that all of our classrooms are demonstrating high levels of instructional practice, a lot of other things fall into place.

I think about behavior management, for example. Really tight instruction will usually -- for any, you know, behavior challenges that come from children not feeling directed, for example. So, there are a lot of benefits to ensuring that we have really tight instructional practice, and I'm very excited about supporting this process.

This is, as a former principal, was my favorite part of my job was helping teachers, and I thought I would share with you initially just some assumptions that we've made here right before we jump in. Some of the assumptions that I kind of based this activity on were things like, you know, the evidence that show instruction, especially concept development and quality feedback, are vital to supporting young children's development and readiness for public school, and that I can actually replace that with really any student's development in any environment. That concept development quality feedback are really the key levers that make a difference in instruction, and the evidence shows class is a reliable way to assess instruction. It's not perfect, but it is a very good indicator of tight instruction.

And, you know, we talk about this a lot because you really wish you had some mechanism that had no flaws that were perfect that you could just implement, and that doesn't really exist, but it is very comprehensive. And what we know, we've talked about this, you know, folks at this table have talked to me about this as a parent, if you just take yourself out of the professional piece, as a parent, that's the classroom you want your child in. You want your child in a 3.5 instructionally oriented classroom in terms of if you're looking at sort of how class identifies tight instruction.

So, using the idea that we know that instruction is important and that we believe class is a good measure of that, then what we want to do here is take you, this cohort of programs that is going to be monitored this year, and as Amanda said, proactively kind of say, "Hey, here is what we think really makes a difference during that monitoring in order to demonstrate quality instruction." And we hope that you find at the end of this that you've learned a couple of key strategies that are really gonna be difference makers. And it's my experience that, really, it's the simple things that you can do. This is not super complicated.

However, I would argue that it isn't necessarily intuitive. A lot of the ways people behave in the classroom, teachers' tendencies is to kind of feed children information instead of allowing them space to explore and grow. And I think that's kind of the difference. And I think it's bad intention. I think the intentions are good, but the outcomes aren't necessarily where they need to be.

So, I'll stop talking now because we have so much information for you. So let's move on. Amanda is going to do some, give you some information on just to kind of set the stage in terms of scoring and things like that.

Amanda: Thank you, Dr. B. And we have had, Dr. B and I have had many, many conversations that kind of span everything from our own experience with our own young children to experience with lots of children in Head Start, and in Dr. B's case, public school settings. And when we talk about instruction, I will say sometimes when you hear the word instruction, it sounds very kind of teacher-oriented, teacher-directed and a little, can even be a little intimidating, and so when you look at what instructional support really is and you hear words

like "language modeling," when you think about things like having extended dialogue with children, those are what we mean, and those sound like things that we're really familiar with. So, I think part of what we hope to do today, too is to make you feel, help you feel really comfortable about some of what makes up instructional support and make sure that we're supporting, you're using the resources to support this kind of practice all the time, which is really what the point is.

So, we thought we would share a little bit of data that we used when we were thinking about how to provide today's webinar. We have information about the national Head Start scores in class from 2018, and you can see that we're doing really, really well. In emotional support and classroom organization, our averages are very close. The averages are very close to the high range. We're approaching six, and that is something that we can all feel really proud of, and we in no way want to diminish the kind of central aspect of emotional support and classroom organization.

So, just because we're good at it doesn't mean we should stop paying attention to it. The area where we struggle more is instructional support. It's hard. As Dr. B said, it requires some intentional thought and some practice, and when we really started to analyze our data, we see that we're doing better in the areas of language modeling and quality of feedback, but we, overall are quite weak in the area of concept development, so. And we're not surprised because we think that most of us didn't get educated in environments that were really supportive of concept development, and teacher preparation often doesn't really address concept development as fully as it should be. So, luckily, we are here today to again give you some resources to help you with that.

The next slide is, just gives you some more of the national-level data across all of the domains, and again, this is at the domain level as opposed to dimension. We see that we're significantly lower in the area of instructional support and that the maximum is lower. We get quite close to a seven in the, we've seen maximum scores close to a seven for emotional support in classroom, organization. And the single highest score in a grantee for instructional support was 4.83, which is nothing to sneeze at, but it's still not in the high range. We believe it's hard, but it's something that people can do a lot to improve. And we think that's really very, very important, and so we wanted to share that information with you.

The next slide is gonna give you a little more information about the range of scores and instructional support. I won't go over, you'll be happy to know I'm not going to describe each bar on this chart or anything even close to that. But I want to tell you there is some good news, which is that over time, fewer programs score lower than a 2.5. We have some reason to think that above a 2.5 is better in terms of there being some, we can distinguish a little between kids' outcomes if they are in classrooms that are, have a 2.5 versus classrooms where they're lower than that, and so while our average hasn't changed very much in instructional support, we do have fewer programs scoring below 2.5, and that is something that tells us we can keep moving the needle.

And this is the cohort that is gonna feed that -- those tables for next year, and so I would just say, if I'm looking at those numbers, I'd love to see that that minimum score is 2.5. That we get everybody to that 2.5 sort of floor. That that sort of is an indicator of you're doing okay. And

then if we could get that high level above a five, maybe a 5.25, something like that where we've got top scores in the fives, then I think what we're gonna see is overall instruction is just getting better.

Deborah: Right, and the average will start to ...

Amanda: And the average will, and, you know, again, I think we can't emphasize enough that our interest in these scores is largely to do with our interest in improving the quality in the classrooms. The scores are a measure or a reflection of that. But what is most important is the experience that children have while they're with us. We believe that the highest need children in America needs to be getting the highest quality service that we can provide.

So, for the next slide, just very briefly highlights again that concept development is the area that we struggle the most in, and we wanted to remind all of you that concept development includes the use of instructional discussions and activities which support higher order thinking, which again could sound a little overwhelming, but it's actually a lot of fun when you do it with, when you're exploring higher order thinking with children. It involves a lot of open-ended questions, longer discussions with children, reasoning, thinking about helping them acquire strategies for problem-solving, beginning to think about things like the scientific method.

Why does something work that way? How could we find out? Is there classrooms? I think Dr. B alluded to where you see highly engaged learners and teachers, people who can't wait to get to the classroom in the morning and who are having fewer struggles with the day-to-day routines in their room.

Allyson: So, we know that instructional support was associated with greater preschool gains in both receptive vocabulary, expressive vocabulary, rhyming skills, letter-naming and math skills. So, we know that instructional support involves when teachers promote children's thinking and problem-solving, using feedback to deepen the understanding and to help children develop more complex language skills. But, when we think about instructional support and why do we struggle with concept development when we know it's so important. But why is it such a challenge is one of the questions we've been asking ourselves, and one of the things as a former Head Start education manager, I also struggled with some of my teaching staff in thinking about, "Why were we so challenged?" or "Why are we so challenged when it comes to concept development?"

Deborah: You know, I think that goes back to what I was talking about, about I don't think it's intuitive. I think you can know that it's the best practice, but intuitively, teachers just want to support kids so much that they want to give them the information. So, it's a matter of stepping back and believing that children have enough innate sense that they want to learn to allow them the time and the space to do it. I think we tend to just narrow that down a little bit, and so I think it just takes a little more thought.

What's interesting about this is, I will, I can think back to doing observations, and maybe it wasn't concept development, but I can imagine that this probably happens with class as well where somebody will get observed, and they'll say, "You should have been here a half hour earlier. You would have seen the lesson that was exploratory, and you came in during a time when I wasn't doing that."

And I think what we want to do here, the message is, that should be all day. Doesn't have to be a lesson plan. It's a way of treating children where you're giving them that space to think and explore and answer questions regardless of what the environment is like. But that has to become a change in the way you think naturally so it's not this planned thing. It just becomes the way the classroom is. And Amanda and I were talking about this the other day. The real power behind that isn't so much that moment where the teacher says, "How do you know that?" It isn't so much that. It's completely changing the way the classroom feels to the child where he expects you to ask him that. He's already thinking about it, and so whether you ask the question or not, thinking is going on.

Amanda: He's starting to ask himself.

Deborah: Right. That's right.

Amanda: I think Allyson may have some example around the way that would look in a classroom with children.

Allyson: Sure. I mean, this is, when we, when we talk with grantees about their challenges, this is, you're absolutely right, Debbie. That's one of the key things. You know, they are very focused on lesson planning and thinking about those open-ended questions that build analysis and reasoning, around small group activities, or maybe a planned center time. But then you think about things like mealtime, which is a lovely time to have social conversations, which is, we don't want you to stop doing that. Of course, we don't want you to stop doing that, but just thinking a little bit ahead of time to plan.

So, you might, instead of asking, "Jaime, what are you having for lunch today?" You can make those sort of social conversations a lesson in classification. "How many of our friends chose green beans today? Whose plate has the most green beans left?" You know, when you start to think about comparison and classification in simple, lovely, natural conversations, but as Dr. B, you said, that takes some planning ahead of time.

And so one of the things that we hear from grantees a lot and from ed managers is, they actually sort of set teachers up to do this naturally by placing maybe open-ended questions about the room at teachers' eye level, or even looking at lesson plans for the day and the daily schedule ahead of time and talking with teachers about places where they, this would be a great place to embed, you know, a reminder about something you did last week that's connected to that concept. And really as the instructional leader, an ed manager can really set teachers up for success in this area.

So, what you're seeing on the screen right now is actually a resource from our STEAM -- science, technology, engineering, arts, and math -- in-service suite where we really pulled out some questions that focus around the inquiry and problem-solving cycle, and these are great prompts to have around your classroom. They're also great things to sort of view video of teaching practice together with groups of teachers and look for times when the teachers in the video are using these types of questions that promote that higher, higher-order thinking that we want.

So, this is a resource that will also be available on a web page that we'll share later on in the broadcast here where we've consolidated all of these things for you.

Deborah: And, you know, we used this same strategy in high school. So, this is not unique to early ed. This is just good practice, and that is that you're assuming from the get-go, I'm not gonna always be thinking about, sometimes, you know, sometimes getting kids in line or making sure everyone is on the carpet is my foremost thought. But if you've got these kind of reminders in your classroom, and they pop, and they're easy for you to notice, they can be a great resource.

And it's just a, my advice on this is that these are placed so that there are not too many of them because then they can just become white noise, like you don't notice them, and that they change them out periodically because that'll help because otherwise you just get used to it.

Allyson: Yeah, absolutely.

Deborah: This becomes something else you get used to, but these are, this is such a great resource. I highly recommend everybody use that.

Amanda: And I just want to take a step back and say two things. One is, as you have questions throughout today's webinar, we'd encourage you to write them into the chat box. We have people looking through them, and we will select some as time allows to answer at the end. We like questions. We also know that when people ask questions, they tend to take more away from a presentation than if they are not asking questions.

The second thing is just, I want to explicitly say that this was designed -- this webinar was designed -- for education managers and program leaders -- including directors, to think about the ongoing training and technical assistance you give to your staff and to introduce resources that you can incorporate into your regular preservice and in-service training. You can do it. I think Allyson has alluded to coaches.

A coach could use some of these materials with an individual teacher or a small group of teachers. But we want to help introduce you to these materials so that you can use them as the regular structure of support that you're surrounding teachers with. So, that they can continue every day to do this hard work of being with young children and providing this incredibly high-quality experience for the children and for themselves.

Allyson: Absolutely. So, yeah, beyond that, sort of thinking about the less playful times of day, another challenge is really thinking about integration. So, when we're talking about concept development, we really have to think about integrating not only across activities throughout the day, but across periods of time, right? So, we're helping kids make connections to prior learning. We're thinking about connections to experiences they have in their home, and in their communities, and really thinking about integrating beyond just the small group activity or the learning center experience.

It's really going to take that kind of integration to move forward in this area. We know that from our work with grantees. And one of the ways you can really think about integration is going back to your curriculum. Believe it or not, I know just a little bit, like Dr. Bergeron said, sometimes your research-based curriculum can become white noise. You know, we have done the project on magnification 4 years in a row. We know exactly what we're doing, but really if you've got new teachers, if you've got turnover and really just for every teacher, having time to

go back into your curriculum, looking at the places in these research-based curriculum where concept development is promoted, you're gonna find that certainly in small group activities, but you're also gonna find that in things like, maybe you've got, maybe you're using Creative Curriculum, and you've got Mighty Minutes or Intentional Teaching cards. Those are great props to have available and to remind particularly new teachers how to really embed this approach to concept development throughout the day to ensure that it becomes a more natural process for them.

And so this resource on the screen you're seeing again will be on that consolidated web page we've put together for you. But this really talks about how you can, either through a staff study or an in-service or even a staff meeting, really take a look at the curriculum materials you've invested in. Find the places where concept development is highlighted and really use those to revisit and restrengthen your commitment to those pieces of curriculum implementation.

Curriculum is really highly tied to concept development scores. It also boosts instructional learning formal, which is tied to concept development, so making sure all of the modalities and props and things that are in your curriculum are being used is a great way to revisit this concept.

Amanda: I really like what you said, Allyson. Like I said, as a former ed manager, sometimes you think about, your curriculum is this, and then we do this for class, and we think this really helps to highlight how often these things are integrated together and that you are accomplishing many different things by thinking about concept development with the use of your curriculum, and you talk about the investment in curriculum.

We all know, you know, the amount of time and resources that we put into our curriculum, and that we should go back to that and find the places of integration for concept development and instructional support and how those things work together.

Allyson: Right. And this next resource on the screen you're seeing is an interactive PDF. And it's all focused on STEAM. You know, one of the things research shows is that when teachers engage in STEAM-related activity, there's a natural boost in instructional support scores. And that makes perfect sense, right, because we're all pretty comfortable asking predictive questions, and open-ended questions and really trying to go deeper with children when we're doing science and math activities. So, just focusing on that can help.

And this iPDF has resources for your teachers. It has resources if you are running a staff meeting or a training. It has resources as well for families. So, it's a great sort of one-stop shop to an integrative approach to STEAM.

Amanda: You know, one of the things I've thought about a lot, Allyson, is exactly what you're saying around the sort of concept development in some way often makes more sense when we talk about science and mathematics, but the approach to learning that is represented when we talk about STEAM actually is applicable to everything. You can, when you're reading with children, we can say things like, "You know, what could happen next? How do we find out what happens next?" You know, you're asking them to make a prediction and figure out a strategy to find out if their prediction is accurate. That's a science approach, but it's applicable, it's really an approach to learning.

So, I think, you know, helping teachers recognize and think about how to generalize some of what we do with children in STEAM so that it is more pervasive throughout the instruction and the curriculum can be a really helpful strategies for teachers and ed managers and site leaders to use when they have serve in classroom.

Deborah: And I think some of that initially has to be planned and intentional because when you're sitting with children, are you gonna remember. So, you've got your sentence strips on the back of the wall, but maybe you have Post-Its in a book that remind you to stop so that you're not, you know, just banking on your ability to remember. You're building in some support for yourself. Over time, I think teachers become more intuitive, and they're able to do this in a more organic way. But to just know that initially, I mean, that's a lot to ask because you have so much on your mind.

Allyson: I'm just laughing as, you know, when I was a new teacher and thinking about like, "That would have been a great strategy for me!"

Deborah: Using cues to ...

Allyson: Yeah, to remind myself.

Amanda: Yeah.

Allyson: It wasn't until afterwards, and then after years you start to develop, you know, your own strategies, but, yeah, I would have loved that.

Deborah: Yeah, and every staff is so eclectic. You've got your veteran who's been there a long time, and then your cohort is new folks who are so excited to get in the classroom. But they're gonna need those structural supports in order to remember some of this stuff.

Amanda: Absolutely.

Allyson: The other thing, really, this is probably very familiar to all of you. This is a snapshot of the ELOF domains, and I think sometimes we think about concept development and instructional supports as only being related to the cognitive domain, when really what we know is that instructional supports are really woven throughout the domain.

So, one thing I like to always remind folks is that you can, the way that you structure any learning activity, based on one of the domains, should and can include instructional support. You can be working, for instance, at the beginning of the school year -- we're about to embark upon that -- you might be focused on social and emotional cues, helping children self-regulate, helping children know how to make choices about where they want to spend their free time, and that in and of itself is a social emotional development skill, but taking time to talk with children and brainstorm things like classroom rules, you know, "How many children can be in which area, and how do I keep myself and my friends safe?"

That's a brainstorming activity which is absolutely part of concept development. It's helping kids be creative and brainstorm and come up with their own ideas, and the added benefit is that you then have classroom rules that everybody can buy into and work towards. So, just remember not to sort of isolate your concept development and instructional support in that cognitive domain. That could be really helpful for teachers.

Deborah: And I could see, like, even using that, let's say you're past developing the rules, and you have someone coming into your classroom to observe, and you want to demonstrate that this is something you've done, and you have a behavioral correction that you need to make for whatever, and you refer to your rules that you created as a class. Just stopping and asking that child, "Why did we make that rule? Why was that important to us?" Just little things like that can make such a big difference, and, you know, the reality is, when, we don't ever want to say that we're teaching to a test or teaching to an evaluation, but if you are being monitored, you need to make sure you're demonstrating what we know you know, what you know you know how to do.

So, keeping in mind, "How do I do that?" during these different times so that the monitor can take away what you actually do know how to do. And I think that is part of the conversation, so it's both kind of things, behavior and putting your coat on and all of the things that may not fit into a curriculum, per se.

Amanda: Mm-hmm. You know, another important thing about the ELOF is the idea of having the developmental trajectory under each of the domains so that you can individualize or scaffold for each child. One question we get a lot, or concern we get a lot, about classes that, "I can't do these higher order things because many of the children in my room are still struggling." But in fact you can do all of these things, and you can still get a very high score on instructional support by showing how you're individualizing concept development around each child's, kind of the developmental sequence and where each child is and your knowledge of where each child is.

Deborah: Mm-hmm. Allyson: Yeah.

Amanda: So, I think that's another really important way you can use the ELOF tool.

Deborah: And, you know, if you just break that down one more level, so it isn't just, like, what you're doing, so you're thinking about questions. You're thinking of opportunities. Then there's this next piece that teachers often need some support with, and that is waiting. Because we want so much to get to the answer, and so our tendency is to support by jumping in and saving the child by providing the answer.

So, I think it's also practicing some of that patience and allowing kids to think and, you know, giving them that space. We were talking the other day about this, and I had mentioned that once you start to give kids space to think and answer, they'll understand that you actually are going to hold them accountable for that.

So over time, you'll notice their answers will actually come faster because they're already thinking before you get to them. You've sort of trained them that in this classroom, we actually expect you to answer the questions. So, kids get more prepared for that. When teachers save kids all the time, they just make the assumption that, "I don't really have to do the thinking because you're gonna do it for me."

Amanda: Or, "You're not even that interested in what I'm gonna say. It might take me 20 seconds or 30 seconds to put it together, and you jumped in and filled the void, and I was going to say something really different than what the teacher said," so ...

Allyson: Yeah.

Amanda: So, let's pause here for a minute and see if we have any questions. If we've had, let's ask ... We've got some people looking at our chat box.

Deborah: See? We're giving you thinking time. We're gonna wait.

Allyson: We do have one question that came in a little earlier, Amanda, when someone, one of the participants asked where you would recommend starting with new teachers on this whole idea of instructional support. Teachers who might not be familiar with the class.

Amanda: Right. I think that's a great question. I think it could be really overwhelming if we did kind of this level of a presentation to a new teacher. I think that some of, though, the ideas that we have talked about would be really important. I might want to think about a video showing some of the high-quality strategies. We know that when teachers see what it looks like, that can be really helpful.

The other thing that's really helpful is to do some observation with the teacher and recognize where they are doing some of the high quality, it could be a very brief, you know, you see 20 seconds of a really high-quality instructional support teaching moment. You tell them, "Oh, that -- that was really, when you asked that question and waited, and I saw you have six exchange turn, you know, turn, oh, the six turns the child had in that dialogue with you until the child clearly moved on? The way you did that was very high quality."

We know when we can tell teachers that, that reinforces and helps them build on that practice, and that I think I would do some of the really basic, simple things that we've talked about here. Instruct, sentence strips. Remember to ask your questions. I would do some code laying around. Wait time around integrating this kind of approach throughout the daily routine, including, you know, children's work or choice time. And we have so many people who say, "Transitions are so terrible. Kids are all doing, you know, this is when we have all the challenging behavior." And we talk about, "Well, let's think about transitions. What are you doing? That's actually a time for teaching and learning. You know, you can be doing finger play. You can be working with children. You can be telling stories."

So, I think not to be too overwhelming, simple things, some exposure to high-quality practice, recognition of what they do already that's high quality, and then some of those supports like the teaching strips and some feedback from somebody who's observing. I think we also often hear that having a non-supervisory mentor or ... [Inaudible]

Deborah: That's what I was going to say. I would pair them with somebody in your building who demonstrates this kind of naturally. There'd be kind of tips, right? They've had enough years to know what this looks like. But you have to be a little mindful of that because it also has to be somebody who can reflect on why that works and what I'm doing specifically. Some people are just naturally really good, and if they can't recognize why, then they're not going to be very good at supporting somebody who's trying to learn. They have to be able to identify why and explain that.

And, you know, for new teachers, I love what you said about picking the, "Pick the levers that matter, the simple ones that matter where you're gonna get some gains and focus on the positive."

Amanda: Yeah.

Deborah: Go, you know, having regular walk-throughs, one of the things I've talked about that's sort of off this webinar topic, but very relevant is instructional leadership in the building. And I think that some of our programs don't have that evidently available, but I think that if you have regular walk-throughs as the instructional leader in your building, whether that's the center director, the site leader, whatever you call yourself, and you are giving constant feedback to teachers -- positive feedback where you see it working -- you'll get more of what you see working. But that has to be regular. It can't just be monthly or something like that. It's got to be almost in an organic way. And there are some really good tools you can use that are either electronic or just paper that you're constantly giving feedback. It's really important.

Amanda: Do we have any more questions?

Allyson: Yeah, so another one of our participants asked, "Will my TA specialist be able to help me use these resources to create supports for staff?" Yeah, so the answer to that is, "Yes." We have our early childhood specialist from a regional TA system who are very familiar with these resources. We're actually meeting with them this week, and they're, you know, they're fully, picked up new resources. They picked up existing resources. They're also very familiar with the web page that we developed.

So, while the responsibility for ongoing professional development within a grantee is your responsibility, we also have folks in place which is your regional early childhood specialist to help you to navigate some of the resources to think about the, how you can use these to best support your agency and your staff.

Deborah: And, in fact, we just had a big session, and I mentioned that we were working on this, and I had someone from Dallas who was doing some TA last year in this exact format, you know, looking at who was gonna have a class, observation, pulling a cohort of 20 of their programs, kind of front-loading the training, and they saw about a 1.5 bump in instructional and instructions domain. So, I think that there's a lot of promise in this approach. So, I encourage you to reach out to your TA, but then also look at your own program as to how you're gonna provide the ongoing support.

Allyson: We've had another question. This is a specific question about coaching. So, our audience member is asking, "Does a 6-month coaching cycle work best in early childhood ed, or 10 or 20-month cycle better?" I think it also depends on your assessment that you've done on your staff to figure out where their needs are, and I wouldn't, you know, in the Head Start performance standards, we are very specific in not giving specifics, because we know that every staff need will depend.

So, I think it's about thinking about your needs assessment survey that you set up, what professional development you have in place that supports the coaching. How frequently your coach is going out. So, there's lots of things that come into play. So, 6 months, if you're going

out once a week or twice a week, that may work great. A 10-month might be good depending on what the staff needs are.

So, I think really being thoughtful, thinking about what your professional development along with your coaching and how those two things work together. I'm sorry that we don't have a very specific answer, but again, all those factors are all into play.

Deborah: You know what I think is most important regardless of how long the actual coaching cycle is? Is that within that cycle, there are bite-sized benchmarks and feedback, because it's the success that feeds the growth. People need to feel that success in a structured kind of tangible way.

Allyson: Right. So, if folks are using the practice-based coaching that OHS has invested in, and you're using the coaching cycle, and you're getting to some of those small pieces within the coaching cycle as far as observing and giving feedback and your collaborative approach, those things will certainly help to figure out the amount of time and the amount of effort that's needed to support the education staff person.

Amanda: The other thing I would add that I think is applicable actually to both of the last two questions we've had about coaching and the availability of the regional TA system, the early childhood specialist support program, staff and program is that, I think more and more we know that everybody who is working in a classroom with young children needs the opportunity to reflect on their practice, for professional reflection. and we know that we don't have enough resources in most programs for every staff member to have a coach, but every staff member needs that same opportunity to reflect on their practice. What went well? What worked? What isn't working? How could I do this differently? Do I need more new materials? Am I implementing the curriculum in a way that isn't responsive to the needs of individual children in the class? You know, how can I adjust this kind of, my approach?

That opportunity needs to be built in at the program level. And you can think about them, again, these resources that we're introducing you to, but which have been available for really intentionally thinking about across your whole staff and all your classrooms. Maybe you're going to use some, maybe you can get some TA from that region. You've got some coaching for some targeted staff, and then you've got your overall ongoing approach kind of that is gonna encompass those things and everybody. And how are you going to build that so people have that regular opportunity, like they do in most professions, to work on their practice? And I think we haven't always been, haven't recognized that as much as we should have, but people, early childhood teachers are professionals. They need these opportunities.

Deborah: Absolutely, that's great. All right. Let's talk about one more common challenge we've heard about, which we've sort of already talked a little bit about, but really engaging in the sort of high-level, back-and-forth interactions with children and building these conversations takes time. And what that means is time in a couple of ways.

First, that we really need to pause and wait for children to respond to our questions. And a lot of times we want to be helpful, and so we jump right in. So, we might ask an open-ended question like, "Tell me about what you're drawing or what you're making, what you're sculpting," and we pause for a bit, but when the child doesn't respond right away, maybe we

jump in with an, "Are you making a house?" question, which is a more close-ended or rope question.

And so, in our effort to want to sort of prompt and move the conversation along, we may actually not be pausing quite as long as we need to to give children time to think. And I imagine that's, at least in my own practice, and probably many of you have the same experience, you're working with a child who's a dual-language learner, or if you are working with a child who maybe takes a little bit longer to process, it is so important to slow down and wait and watch for a response -- sometimes verbal, sometimes not -- that we can then build on. And waiting and taking the time and observing and listening also helps us understand what background knowledge children bring to the interaction.

Again, so it gives us information as a teacher to really go in and scaffold and tailor our interactions. And this is not an easy skill to learn. This is very nuanced. I remember when I first started teaching, and my brother said, "Well, it's not rocket science," and I was like, "Well, actually it kind of is." Like, understanding and pausing and waiting and watching and knowing just the right time to come in with just the right level of support is a hard skill to learn. And that's why it's really important to have good models and resources available to see that in action.

And some of the things we have that we'll talk about briefly here are effective practice guides and in-service suites, which I hope a lot of you are already using, but they really give you the ability as an ed manager to share information about the effective practice, to show a clip of the effective practice in action so that teachers can see it, and then to give them a cycle where they go out and do it and get some feedback. So, it's really that know, see, do, improve and reflect cycle that we want for teachers that is embedded in these resources that can be so helpful for these types of skill sets, but again, they just don't necessarily come naturally.

The 15-minute in-service suite here, you're seeing this on the screen because we've got some new ones. We've just uploaded a new STEAM in-service suite. We also have a new math suite that was developed by Doug Clements out of the University of Denver on number recognition and subitizing. These are great resources to really host viewing parties, have studies with your staff.

You know, one thing I think to remember as an educational leader is that your staff needs the same kind of inquiry cycles that we're talking about here for children. We could think about staff and ongoing professional development as a study or a project in and of itself that we coordinate as an ed manager. In the same way that we want teachers doing this for children, we want teachers engaged in that kind of high-level analysis and thinking and inquisitiveness that brings them into your classrooms every day with excitement. And so these suites are really a great place to do that kind of joint study together.

Deborah: That's, I just want to jump in. You just said something that's really important, and I think about this a lot. So, we're supporting teachers in what is thought to be the best instruction based on the research we have. There are very specific skills and strategies we're going to ask them to use. As you're supporting your teachers, you should be modeling the exact same process.

So, think about what we said. We've talked about feedback. We've talked about wait time. We've talked about asking questions. So, when you're doing an observation and you have feedback, really try to formulate questions instead of delivering statements about what you think they should be doing. Our tendency is to say, "You really should give kids more time to wait." But instead, say something like, "Why do you think so-and-so doesn't answer your questions?" Make, you know, get the teacher to think about it just like you would a child.

So, I think if you can take these strategies and apply them to yourself as an instructional support person, you're gonna get more growth from your teachers, just like your teachers will get more growth from their children.

Amanda: So, important.

Allyson: So, one final thing about the 15-minute in-service suites is that we've crosswalked these to all of the class domains and the individual dimensions. So, if you're working with a staff member around a particular dimension, maybe it's concept development. Maybe it's quality of feedback. You can open the crosswalk and see which in-service suites really demonstrate that practice. So you can use those to tailor the professional development that you're offering staff.

Deborah: I just have to say that this has been one of my favorite visuals to see how again the resources work together to accomplish a variety of PD needs, so approach could use this. An education manager could use this. You could use this to cross off with your needs assessment for coaching or for staff PD. You could think about this in planning your preservice or your ongoing in-service that will happen throughout the year. There's a variety of different ways to think about both of the crosswalks and how they can be used together to support your needs.

Amanda: Do you think a teacher could use this, like, if they know there's a skill they're really trying to, so it's good that the teachers know this is a resource, too.

Jamie: Right. So, again with the in-service suites, they can be done with a coach or an ed manager or a teacher themselves could go in, and they could look at all the materials together, and it could be, you know, self-paced. We have some other resources that we're gonna talk about and how teachers could just do some things on their own.

Amanda: There could be some real power in asking your teachers to reflect on their practice and go to that crosswalk and say, "Pick one that you think would really boost your instruction." By getting them to drive their own professional development, just like a kid, getting a kiddo to pick what matters to them, what they believe they need the most support with could really make a difference in how it impacts their instruction.

Jamie: And I think one that could really help teachers along is to think about the practice. I know a lot of teachers like to think about the activities that they're going to do with children and not necessarily thinking about the practice.

Amanda: Right.

Jamie: So, I think this is one way to really get at the practice and then think about, "What is the activity I can do that supports the practice that I'm trying to do with my kids?"

Allyson: So, we're going to take a minute now and just ask you about your experience with the in-service suites. How many of you have actually used the in-service suites? You can choose an answer here, anything from "I'm not familiar with these in-service suites, these resources," up to, "I use them all the time in my work with staff." And so we'd love to just get a pulse and hear from you about how familiar you are with these resources and how, whether you've actually used them before.

Amanda: So, just click on the appropriate response and click submit, and hopefully soon we'll get a visual of a little test to see who out there's paying attention.

Jamie: We're still getting some votes in. We'll wait just a few more seconds here, and then we'll post them. But we're actually happily trending towards, "I've used these in-service suites with my staff." You can see here.

Amanda: That makes me so happy.

Jamie: That, it does because it's really rewarding to know that these are being used. They're such good resources.

Amanda: And there's room for improvement, too.

Jamie: Absolutely.

Amanda: So, that's good, good news. A majority of people know about them at 51 percent, but we see there are plenty, well, more than that. Well people know. Some people know about them and have not used them. We should be asking, so in Dr. B's reflection, we would be saying, "Well, I wonder why you haven't used them."

Deborah: Well, now you know about that, but ...

Jamie: And know how to use them.

Deborah: That's right, and who to use them with.

Amanda: So, we only have 10 minutes left. What are we doing with the rest of our time?

Allyson: Well, I think we ought to just model exactly what we've been talking about, and let's share a quick video clip, and we'll take a minute. Hopefully when, as you're watching, think about the things that we've talked about, right? Connecting to earlier experiences, integrating your class curriculum, asking open-ended questions: See if you can spot any of those in this video clip.

[Video begins] Woman #1: I'm going to pass out a roly-poly. The reason that we decided to do the roly-poly as an activity was because I noticed that children during outside time found roly-polies, and they discovered that they were under the ground, and they discovered that they could be picked up, and they put it on their hand, so they were trying to figure out why they rolled.

Child #1: Big one!

Woman #1: Why did Gina's curl up in a ball?

Child #2: Look, [Inaudible].

Child #3: He turned around, went under the ground!

[Chatter]

Woman #1: They went under the grass? So, I wanted to bring that outside environment to the inside of our classroom, and so what we decided to do was that on Monday, we just, for example, talked about, what is a roly-poly? What do we know about the roly-poly? Are they insects?

Child #1: No.

Child #2: No.

Woman #1: What are they? Child #3: Insects.

Child #4: Crustacean!

Woman #1: They're crustacean animals. What are crustaceans?

Child #1: The one about there.

Woman #1: That's a crustacean animal. It's like the cousin of the crab or the lobster, right?

[Chatter]

Woman #1: How many eyes does it have?

Child #1: Two.

Child #2: Two.

Woman #1: Two. Did you see that it ...

Child #3: Two, like human.

Woman #1: Two like us, it has two eyes like we do!

Child #3: Two like a lobster!

Woman #1: And lobsters, yeah! And then the next day, we decided to go out and find them in their environment. And then we decided to explore them in our classroom. So, it was hands-on. The children were able to touch them, use their sense to really look at them with their eyes, to really explore them, and if they had any other questions that they wanted to learn about the roly-polies, then we were there to answer those questions, and if we didn't know, we were gonna find out as we explored.

[Chatter]

Woman #1: So, as a result of what I saw today, I asked them, if we went to roly-polies again, what would they like to add to this activity? What do you want to know about roly-polies?

Child #2: What they eat.

Woman #1: What they eat?

Child #2: Yeah.

Woman #1: So, I asked them what kind of foods that they would eat, and some of them gave suggestions like tomatoes, strawberries, oranges.

Child #1: Apples?

Woman #1: So, the next ...

Child #1: Strawberry?

Woman #1: Apples and strawberries. So, we're going to bring those in the classroom, and we're going to explore how roly-polies eat. That's what they want to find out next. [Video ends]

Amanda: Well, there was certainly a lot going on there. I will say, first of all, we call those roly-polies potato bugs in my neck of the woods. But that was an exciting exploration. You could see how engaged those children were. You probably felt that the teacher was also enthusiastic. I thought that she followed the children's lead in identifying an interest that they had outside in helping them really learn about that crustacean that they were curious about bringing inside, doing, she didn't, you know, tell them they were right or wrong about the food they predicted the animal would like. She was gonna go on with the experiment. I could see this developing into quite a long, long, you know, project that, unit that would last a while. I love that they did the drawings.

I would say on the reflections side, I would ask her, "What do you think about, you know, I noticed some of the children are not really saying as much. You know, what do you think about that? Do you," I would want to know, does she have a plan for talking? Some children really were saying a lot. Some children were saying less. You know, how was she going to check in with the children who were saying less? Kids have all different kinds of feelings and reactions to small creatures, you know. Kind of a little checking in with the pulse for all the kids is something I might have helped her reflect on. But I think, you know, overall it was tremendously ...

Deborah: Absolutely.

Amanda: It looked like she was ...

Deborah: You could feel the positive energy, which is what you want. If you want -- if you want to dig deeper into the instruction though, you're absolutely right. With kind of the open-ended conversation, you're going to have your more eager children be more participatory, and some will float to the back. And there are some really good strategies for getting more participation that she might want to look at.

And as well, I noticed the, "It's a crustacean, like a crab or a lobster," was a great opportunity for a question. And that's a good example of how teachers' tendency is to give the answer, not for any bad intention, but that just keeps the conversation going, but it would have been great to be, "Is that more like a lobster or a dog?" They might not know what a lobster is, so to just highlight ... [Inaudible]

Deborah: But they probably could have discerned that, and then they could have started to think about what makes a dog different than a lobster and sort of really identify, "Oh, it's the shell piece that is," you know, that kind of thing. So, there was lots of opportunity there.

And as you give teachers feedback, the point of that isn't to bring them down. It's to show them opportunity for growth. And so some of that, what I would want to do is show her the video and say, "What do you think?" Rather than giving a lot of my own perspective because if she can come to those conclusions herself, that's gonna make all the difference.

Amanda: Absolutely, and I think we're down to 4 minutes, but I would, but kind of final remark about that was the most important thing you can do is consider showing this video, video of teachers on practice with them again and offering that opportunity for reflection and helping together jointly identify the examples of really high-quality practice and reflect on the ways that you probably could make some improvements.

Jamie: And if they're willing, videotaping their own teaching is such a great way to look at, and, you know, I used to videotape lessons, but I wouldn't videotape the teachers. I just videotaped the kids so that she or he would watch the children and be able to see interaction and engagement rather than what they look like because that's really irrelevant. What really matters is, what are the kids doing? So ...

Amanda: Great strategy.

Allyson: Yeah.

Jamie: All right. That's a great segue-way to our last slide about resources, which is really this page that we have put together with you all in mind. This is on the ECLKC now under teaching practices, but you've also got the link right here on this slide and in the resource panel for the webinar. But this is a place where we've pulled together some of our best and most supportive resources.

The roly-poly videos and a few others are right on there for you to see and use in your coaching as well as the resources around integrating throughout the day, the in-service suites and lots of other things. So, we hope you'll check it out, and we hope it'll be useful to you as we really try to help to proactively set you up for a great year as you focus on instructional support.

Allyson: So, these are some of the best research practices that we have to share with you, and they are free and available to you. You also have access to the coaching companion, which is a great application that we have where folks can go in and upload their video, and they can share with their coach. They can share with other people, so we, well, on the ECLKC, like, we provide that to you as a resource so you can take advantage. You don't need to come up with your own videotaping platform. We have one already set up for you which is on the ECLKC.

Deborah: Well, this has been so much fun. I'm very excited. You guys are like my experimental group to see if we take the, if we front-load this challenge to you as a cohort to see what we can do around improving instruction and using class as the evidence of that improvement. So, we're excited to see how the year unfolds. I would encourage you, number one, to please fill out, I think there's an evaluation here, right?

Jamie: Yeah, right after we close out, I'm going to link ...

Deborah: We need everybody to fill that out because we need your feedback, and then to continue to give feedback either to me directly or through TA or whatever, what else do you need? What would make this more effective for you? I think if we can flip the instructional lever

in our classrooms, we will make the biggest difference for our children, and that is just something that is so important. So, thank you for taking the time, and I look forward to hearing back and seeing lots of evidence of success.

Jamie: All right. And just one last thing: We're going to post this link immediately following in MyPeers under the Educational Leaders MyPeers community so you can watch it there. And we'll also send it out via e-mail in case you want to share this with your staff. And have a great year!

Thanks so much. Amanda: Thank you.

Deborah: Thanks, everyone.