

## Increased Access, Increased Learning

Jennifer Fung: Hi, everyone. Welcome to our third webinar in the “Inclusion” series. Today our webinar, called “Increased Access, Increased Learning,” will cover the importance of planning for and using strategies that support the access and the participation and engagement of children with disabilities in their learning environments. Let’s get started. My name is Jen Fung, and I am the Inclusion Lead for the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, or DTL, as we call it. I am thrilled today to be joined by a very special guest expert, Tara O’Connor, who is an educator and a former colleague of mine, I’m really happy to say. She has an amazing history of teaching and supporting inclusion in a variety of different program settings. Tara, welcome and thank you for joining us today. And would you like to say hi and introduce yourself?

Tara O’Connor: Sure. Thank you, Jen. My name is Tara, and I currently work at the Haring Center at the University of Washington as an extended day teacher. Not only do I run our extended day class for preschoolers with autism, but I also provide coaching and consultation to our preschool teams on how to support and include our shared students with autism in their preschool classrooms.

Jennifer: That’s great, Tara. I know that our audience today is going to love hearing about your experience and a lot of the strategies that you use to support all kids with disabilities, but in particular young kids with autism. Let’s get started.

Today we’re going to talk about how disability services coordinators can help educators and other program staff plan to use strategies that children with disabilities or suspected delays can really access and participate in a full range of learning experiences and activities. Today we’re going to start by discussing the importance of access and participation for children with disabilities. Then we’ll discuss some strategies that support access for children with disabilities, and then we’ll discuss strategies that support participation and engagement. At the end of the webinar, Tara and I will do some questions and answers. Of course, you can please always put your questions throughout the webinar into that purple Q&A widget, and we’ll answer as we go as well.

Before we begin, I really want to acknowledge the current challenges that many programs are facing in promoting access and participation during remote and hybrid learning. While all of the examples that we provide today won’t explicitly focus on remote learning, the principles and strategies that we describe can definitely be used and applied during remote learning and hybrid learning and used to design and modify remote learning activities and home learning activities that we know many programs are supporting families with. We will be providing some specific examples of strategies for virtual learning and also some resources that DSCs can use to support program staff. By the end of the webinar, we’re hoping that participants will be able to identify strategies that support access for children with disabilities and suspected delays, explore tools for observing a child in order to assess their participation and what that looks like,

describe strategies that can be used to promote participation for individual children, and identify resources to use when you're supporting program staff to plan and adapt to virtual learning activities.

Today, as I mentioned, we're going to talk about some specific teaching practices and strategies that can be used to support the inclusion, participation, and learning of young children with disabilities and suspected delays in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. But before we dive really deeply into these strategies, I'd like to take a quick look at where these practices fall within our Head Start Framework for Effective Practice or the House Framework, as we call it. This image is probably familiar to most of you. This is the Framework for Effective Practice or the House Framework, as I just said. DTL uses this framework to represent the five integral elements of quality teaching and learning for children ages birth through 5 in all program options. This House Framework actually resembles another type of framework that we often use in early intervention and special education, which is called a Tiered Framework. And we'll talk a bit more about that in a moment.

We use Tiered Frameworks to really help us figure out the right level of support for each and every child. We know that while it's important for children to participate in learning activities, we also want to make sure that children are participating in such a way that they are learning and thriving and really meeting their important developmental goals, such as those outlined in the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, or ELOF, or the specific individual goals that are listed on their Individualized Education Program, or IEP, or on their Individualized Family Service Plan, or IFSP. Providing the right type and amount of instruction, we really do this through planned, intentional interactions by providing, as I've said, the right amount of meaningful learning opportunities and using the right amount and type of support during these learning opportunities. This is exactly what we mean by individualized instruction.

Let's take a look at a Tiered Framework. These Tiered Frameworks go by many different names, but what's really important to remember is that the strategies and practices at each level or at each tier in the framework differ in the level of individualization of the strategy. Again, these go by many different names. But I like to refer to this type of framework as an "all, some, few" framework. There are practices in the lower level or the lower tier that are universal and really foundational practices. They're the base of a high-quality, effective program. These practices and strategies at this level of practice are practices that all children will benefit from.

However, we know that even when all of the elements of a high-quality learning environment are in place, there are some children who may not readily learn or may not benefit from those foundational strategies. And those children will need a higher level of individualized support to participate, engage, and learn. And then we know that even when the foundational practices are used and then the practice is at kind of the secondary level or the "some" level, these individualized supports, we know that there will be a few children who still might not benefit from those strategies that are used in the first two tiers, even when those strategies are consistently used and implemented. These children may be children whose learning outcomes are not being addressed within the current curriculum or who aren't making the progress that

we'd like to see. At this level of this Tiered Framework, we use individualized teaching strategies that really support and focus on the unique learning needs of each child.

If we look back at the House Framework, we can see that the foundation and the pillars of the house really represent the universal practices or those foundational "all" practices that all children benefit from. Then, as you move up in the house, the roof represents the "some" level and the "few" level of practice. That's, again, where these practices and strategies get more individualized to respond to the unique learning needs of all children, but oftentimes children with disabilities and suspected delays.

The strategies that we're going to talk about today to support access, there's one set of strategies in particular that we're going to talk about called Universal Design for Learning or UDL, and those strategies really fall within the foundation of the House Framework. UDL principles are the guidance that we use when we're preparing the learning environment ahead of time so that we can meet the needs of all learners, all the possible learners, the variability of learning styles and characteristics that we know we're going to encounter in our classrooms and programs. With UDL, our emphasis is really on the environment, the materials, and the activities, and we'll talk a lot more about UDL.

Then, if we take a closer look at the roof of the House Framework, we can see that it's separated into three different tiers of highly individualized learning – curriculum modifications, embedded teaching, and intensive individualized teaching. In the roof, the levels of support and individualization intensify from the bottom up to the top. One of the practices that we're going to talk about today that's a practice used to support participation and engagement is curriculum modifications and adaptations. Modifications and adaptations are really what we use to adjust the learning environment for individual children after we've planned the environment for access using those UDL principles or other strategies but found that some children need additional support to really fully participate and engage. With curriculum modifications, we're really focusing on the individual needs of a learner or a child.

OK, so now that we've talked about where these practices, where UDL and where curriculum modifications fall within the House Framework, let's take a really quick look at why access and participation are so important to support young children's learning. We know that young children learn by actively engaging with materials and people in their environment, from manipulating a rattle or building with blocks to playing outside and making observations about nature, to enjoying mealtimes by requesting food, engaging in social conversations, and learning to eat on their own. Educational professionals and families work really hard to develop activities or lessons that get each individual child actively involved in learning. But we know that children have a variety of strengths, needs, learning styles, and interests that can affect their participation. And even with the most thoughtful lesson plans or well-structured learning environments, some children might still struggle or will still struggle to participate and maximize their learning within that environment.

We know that there is a strong connection between participation and learning. And when children don't engage with the people, activities, or materials in their environment in a

meaningful way, their opportunity for learning can be impacted. Again, this can be especially true for young children with disabilities and delays. So kind of in summary, supporting access and participation for all children is essential to supporting their learning. Increased access leads to a higher level of participation, and participating in a meaningful way provides a greater opportunity for learning.

Again, we want to acknowledge not only how important this is, kind of this equation that you see here on the screen, but also how challenging it's been over this past year plus to think about how to make virtual learning accessible and engaging for children, especially young children with disabilities and delays. We're really looking forward to sharing some resources and examples from creative teachers who are kind of rethinking how to use the strategies that they use to plan for in-person learning environments during remote learning.

As we mentioned, the variability of the learners and the children in your learning environments is wide, and there are many reasons why a child might need support to access their learning environment or fully participate in activities. Some individual learning styles or child characteristics may make it more difficult for children to participate. Tara, I'm curious, in your experience, what are some of the challenges that you've seen that make it more difficult for children to engage and participate?

Tara: Well, there are several I can think of, but like you said, Jen, they're really individual for each child. While I often work with children who have delays in social skills, and these delays can affect their participation, not all children with social delays have difficulty with participation. But some of the areas I've seen that might impact access and participation include a child's attention. How well are they able to attend to an activity or a person and for how long? And in another area that can be a challenge for some children is delays in motor skills. When kids are unable to move around their environment easily, it makes it hard for them to access materials or areas of the learning environment. For some kids with issues with fine motor skills, not being able to pick up or use the materials can easily impact how they can participate in an activity.

Jennifer: For sure, Tara. Thank you. Those are really good points. Knowing that these characteristics or types of delays that we see in children may lead to challenges with access or participation can really help us think kind of preventively about how we plan and design environments and activities to prevent potential challenges. In addition to what Tara mentioned, there are a few other kind of learning characteristics and styles that I wanted to mention.

A child's communication or language skills, including their ability to understand and use language to communicate with others, may impact their participation. We know that a child's observation skills and their ability to imitate what the people around them are doing can also potentially impact their participation and how they engage. And then, as you see there at the bottom of the screen, a child's motivation to engage or persist in learning activities might impact their ability to access and participate.

To reiterate Tara's great point, it's really important to reiterate and remember that the reasons that a child struggles will be very individual from child to child. There isn't a specific disability. There isn't a specific delay or temperament or learning style that predicts whether or not a child will need support to participate. It's really how that child's individual characteristics interact with what's going on in the learning environment and the curriculum. That's why it's so important that, when we're planning and designing activities and environments that support access, we really need to consider the range of abilities of interests and learning styles of young children who are in your care. When we're planning to make a modification to support a child who's struggling to participate, it's really important to consider that child's individual strengths and their learning needs. These strategies are all about avoiding kind of that one-size-fits-all approach to learning and creating environments that really work for everyone.

Now that we've talked about why learning – I'm sorry – why access and participation are so important to learning, let's get started talking about some strategies. As a quick reminder, there are many practices and many different strategies that can be used to support access and participation for children with disabilities. But today we're really going to highlight and focus on two, Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, which supports access, and curriculum modifications and adaptations, which are used to increase participation and engagement. These strategies can really be utilized as programs are planning for return to in-person services or planning to, you know, provide some continued access if programs are still remote.

As we discuss strategies across both sections, as we discuss UDL and as we discuss curriculum modifications and adaptations, and as more specifically as we think about how to support program staff to use these strategies, we're going to borrow from some classroom curriculum language and frame the content in a "plan, do, review" approach. Framing our work with staff, with supporting staff in this sequence can really help us organize the type of support that we're providing and help program staff learn to use a process that's really focused on successfully implementing these practices.

First, we want to start off by helping staff, supporting program staff, to plan for access and participation. Then we're going to think about organizing and providing support to help them try it out – let's see what this looks like in the classroom. And then we're going to the classroom or the home or the learning environment. And then we're going to really support – focus our support with staff on reviewing and assessing how children responded, what their access and participation looked like, and reflect on how effective the strategies that we used were.

As we're supporting staff to think about UDL principles and increasing their knowledge and starting to help them prepare to use these strategies, it's really important to consider what program staff need to know about UDL principles and strategies in order to use them effectively. A big part of planning is understanding what the strategies are and why we use them. We know that for some program staff, we'll really need to focus our support on sharing information about UDL and how it can support not only access for children with disabilities but how it can also help support the learning of all children in a learning environment. We know that every child has strengths, traits, learning styles, and areas of need that make them really

unique. And effectively meeting the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds and differing abilities really requires intentional planning. Program staff should use specific strategies to make sure that all children have access to, can participate in, and can learn from their learning environments and the curricula. How can we make sense of all of this? And how can we purposefully plan learning environments that really do support and promote access for a wide range of learners? And this is where Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, comes in.

UDL is a framework for designing learning environments with the needs of all learners in mind from the beginning. Like we said earlier, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to learning. By using the principles of UDL, we can help ensure in our learning environments that learning can take place in a variety of ways and that children aren't limited to one way, a single way of participating and engaging and learning. This is really especially important as we think, like we said, about providing access and supporting the learning of children from a variety of different backgrounds and abilities, but also as we think about planning for access in virtual activities and environments. We will talk more about each of these principles and specific considerations for planning. But first, Tara, I'd love to hear from you. What approach do you take? How do you support your staff that you work with to plan for accessible and inclusive learning environments?

Tara: Sure. Well, I really like to start by first trying to encourage the teachers I'm working with to help to think about and learn about the children in their care and to reflect on what the children are bringing to their learning environment. Specifically, I encourage them to try to learn about how are the children interacting with the world around them. What languages do they hear and speak at home? How do they move around in their world? What are the cultural expectations about exploring their surroundings? What are the children's interests and strengths and how do they communicate? How do they interact with their caregivers and other people in their world? All this information will help guide their planning when designing activities and experiences in their program.

Jennifer: Thank you, Tara. That's really great perspective. And that's actually the perfect lead-in to talking about the specific principles of UDL, which are really important, again, for staff to know as they're planning to use them and planning to create and design learning environments that are accessible to all children. The three principles of UDL are really used to ensure, again, that all children have access and are provided with a variety of ways to interact and access new information, to process new information, and really to demonstrate their learning and show us what they know.

The three principles of UDL are multiple means of engagement, which is really the "why" of learning. This is where we think about planning for a variety of ways to gain learner interest and to maintain learner interest. When we're thinking about this principle, the principle of multiple means of engagement, we think and ask ourselves what will motivate children to play with and explore materials? What will motivate children to interact with others? And what will motivate them to participate in routines and activities? What's going to keep or capture and keep their attention?

The second principle is multiple means of representation or the “what” of learning. This is where we think about planning for a variety of ways for children to gain access to information and content, including both the format of the information and the complexity level of how the information is presented. When we’re planning using this principle, we really want to ask ourselves at what level and in what ways do children receive and understand information?

Then the third principle of UDL is multiple means of action and expression, and this is really where we think about the “how” of learning. This is where we want to think about planning and providing a variety of ways for children to express and demonstrate what they know. When we’re planning, considering this principle, we really want to ask ourselves, how do children show us what they know? Do they use gestures, words, draw, write, or sing? And how do we support and provide the means for them to demonstrate and express themselves using those different formats?

In addition to helping program staff learn about the principles of UDL as part of the planning process, DSCs and other people in support or supervisory roles will also guide and support the staff as they’re using these principles to design their learning environments. DSCs will want to help program staff reflect on considerations such as the one you see on the screen here. “Have I identified multiple and activity materials in my learning environment that children are currently drawn to? Have I considered different options for how I present materials and how I present content and information in different formats?” And whether that’s visual, auditory, tactile formats. “And also have I provided this information and this content in more than one form at the same time?”

We also want to think about or support program staff to think about, “Have I planned for many different formats that children can use to express themselves and respond to others?” Whether that’s verbal, physical, or symbolic formats. So, Tara, I know you mentioned you do a lot of coaching of program staff in your current role. Do you use guidance like this?

Tara: Yes, I do. I coach the staff I work with to consider UDL principles when they’re planning lessons and designing their learning environments. I’ve got a few different planning tools and supports I like to use depending on the teacher and how they prefer to receive support information. I found that while using – while planning using UDL can be a new way of thinking for some teachers, once they start to use these principles during their planning process, they learn to use them pretty quickly and they appreciate how these principles make their learning environments and activities more accessible to all children, not just the children with disabilities.

Jennifer: I love to hear that. And that’s something that I hear a lot, why people are really drawn to UDL and why it’s a recommended practice not just for children with disabilities but for all children, as you mentioned. We want to make sure to point out to the participants that our webinar resource list includes a great link to a checklist called “UDL for Early Childhood” checklist, and that this might be a helpful tool for some program staff during this planning process.

Before we move on to the “do” component of that implementation support approach or sequence, I really want to touch quickly on UDL and virtual learning. The considerations and prompts that we just discussed to think about helping staff design their learning environments will also be helpful as your supporting staff potentially to plan for virtual learning. When we’re thinking about how we’re presenting information or what information we’re presenting to children when they’re not in the classroom, we really want to think about how we’re planning to give children the option to engage with materials and information in different formats. For young children, this will mean that we need to ensure that they have access to learning materials beyond a screen. While we may be using screens to deliver and, you know, kind of center some of the remote instruction, we want to make sure that there are other ways and other formats for children to engage with the information and the content that’s being focused on. This might mean that we need to create packets of materials to use at home during at-home learning activities that we might drop off or mail to families. And then we also want to think about when we’re conducting learning activities using a screen, how do we use as many formats as possible? Do the children create puppets and then use the puppets while a story is being read through the screen? Does the educator model and encourage movement during songs or other activities when presenting information during a lesson or an activity? Is the educator holding up pictures or objects to help enhance children’s understanding?

I want to make sure that everyone is aware of a great video and a great series of videos from our partners at the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, or ECTA, as we call it. In this particular video, which is Episode 3 of the “Preschool in the Pandemic” series, you’ll see some educators explaining how they’ve used UDL principles to really plan and adapt their virtual learning activities. In the episode, which we’ll put the link to this episode directly into the Resources widget, but starting at about 1 minute and 47 seconds, you’ll see some of the teachers describe strategies they’ve used to provide different ways to help children access the learning activity. They’ll describe some of the different ways that they have helped children participate and different ways that they have helped children demonstrate what they know and express themselves. Again, definitely take a look at this video in particular. But this 16-video series is called “Preschool in the Pandemic.” There’s lots of great examples and resources in there about making learning activities accessible and helping to try to increase participation during virtual and remote learning.

When we’re thinking about moving on to the next step in the sequence in this “plan, do, review” sequence, once the DSC has supported staff to plan for access using UDL principles, then it’s time to put those strategies into action. Let’s take a look now at what some of these practices look like in different learning environments. Tara, I would love it if you could share some examples of learning environments that show these practices in action.

Tara: Sure. Well, let’s take a look at the Multiple Means of Engagement principle first. As you described, Jen, this is where we’ve asked ourselves, “What will capture and keep the children’s attention and get them excited to explore and engage with materials and activities and design the environment with those questions in mind?” I support staff to think carefully about what the children’s interests are. We know that interests can be very different from child to child.



There are several factors that can influence a child's interest, including gender, temperament, life experiences, their family culture, and current popular characters or toys. We definitely incorporate these interests based on those factors into our planning. Other strategies that can help capture a child's attention include providing a balance of novel and familiar materials or activities and providing choices with an activity.

Jennifer: Great.

Tara: Now let's take a look at Multiple Means of Representation. This is the next principle where we've asked ourselves how children receive and understand information and planned a learning environment that's going to give children a variety of ways to access that [Inaudible]. Children – well, all of us, really – vary in how we process and learn best from information, whether that's auditory, visual, or tactile. I support staff to think about how they can present information in multiple formats and, when possible, present the different formats all at the same time.

Jennifer: Perfect. That makes a lot of sense and is really aligned with the use of the principles. What are we seeing in these photos? Can you tell us a little bit more?

Tara: Sure. In the picture on the left, you see a form of a daily schedule, which, of course, is used to help children – help to support a child's participation in the temporal environment. On that schedule, the information – each activity on the schedule – is represented in a variety of ways. The word is printed, there is a drawing, and there's an actual object. The different formats all represent the same information, but when it's presented simultaneously, it's more likely to be accessed and understood by a wider range of learners.

Jennifer: I love that example. That is very clever. What about the picture on the right?

Tara: Sure. In that picture, that's an activity in the classroom's writing center meant to work on literacy skills. Kids can use those boards in a variety of ways. They can trace the letter with their finger. They can write on the board with a dry-erase marker, or they can form the letter with clay. You can't see it in the picture, but there are also some traces of sand where children are able to trace the letters in the sand, which is nice for some children who are tactile learners. This has been a very useful strategy when I'm supporting teachers during remote learning.

Jennifer: Great. Thinking about helping teachers and educators think about different forms and different ways that children interact. OK, great.

Tara: And these last examples are of strategies for multiple means of action – for the Multiple Means of Action and Expression principle. In the programs that I support, this is a really important principle to plan for, since how children communicate varies a lot. I work with program staff to make sure that children are provided with the means to express themselves in a way that's appropriate for the individual level of development and strengths. We know that there are so many ways that children express what they know verbally, using gestures, using pictures or signs. They also express themselves through play, through writing or drawing or

with songs. In fact, most children use all of these approaches to demonstrate their knowledge and express themselves. We work really hard to make sure that the learning environment is flexible and allowing for and supporting many different types of expression.

Jennifer: Yes, I'm really glad you said that, Tara. That is so important, as you mentioned, when we have children who communicate in a variety of different ways. And, really, that's what UDL is about, making sure that the children aren't limited to just one way of participating and really making sure that your learning environment works for everyone.

Once the DSC has supported the "plan" and the "do" components of that sequence, it's really important to think about supporting program staff to review and reflect on how the use of those UDL principles have or maybe have not supported access and participation for children in the learning environment. Let's take a quick look at this other video, really with this idea of reflecting on access in mind. As you're watching this video, really reflect and ask yourself, "Is this learning environment designed with the needs of all children in mind?" There's a particular child of focus. Is the learning environment accessible for this particular child? And if so, what characteristics of the learning environment are making it accessible for him? So make note or kind of keep track of what you observe during this video.

[Video begins] [Children playing and talking] [Inaudible]

Teacher No. 1: You're being a very good friend to your friend.

Teacher No. 2: Nice work together.

Teacher No. 3: What do we have here?

[Children playing and talking] [Inaudible]

Girl: Stand up. Stand up. Ethan, Ethan, stand up. Stand up. Stand up. Please, 7, 8, 9, 10. Stop. Ethan, stand up.

Teacher No. 1: Yay, Ethan!

[Children playing and talking] [Inaudible]

Teacher No. 4: Atta girl.

[Video ends]

Jennifer: First of all, I love that video clip, and I hope you enjoyed it, too. But for those of you who were reflecting and kind of taking note on what you noticed, there were a lot of great things to take note of in that video. Thinking about the principles of UDL and this idea of accessible learning environments, there are several characteristics of the learning environment that made it accessible for him. First, the physical environment was set up so that he could navigate pretty easily. Overall, the path was free of obstacles, and it looks like he was able to

move around pretty freely. And also his little buddy, she moved something out of the way. She helped him when there was something in his path. And in terms of the motivation to engage in the environment, he appeared to be pretty motivated. He was moving pretty quickly around that playground. And when the activity seemed to get challenging for him, kind of when he fell to his knees, he was pretty willing to persist in standing back up. There may have been aspects of the environment that captured his interest, maybe the materials or the equipment on the playground, maybe the other children. But he also appeared to be pretty motivated, like I said, by his friend who was walking with him, which is really great to see. We know that pairing peers together intentionally can really provide a lot of support and motivation.

His friend, his little buddy, also used some really great strategies to engage him and help him access that activity. Maybe she's a future educator. She used multiple methods of communication when she was reminding him to stand up and walk. And also, the level of complexity of the language that she used with him really seemed to match his level of development.

The social environment of the classroom was also really supportive of his access and engagement. When other children were kind of in his way and blocking his path, his friend asked them to stop while he walks by, and the other children responded really nicely. They easily stopped and they waited, and they seemed to understand what he needed to participate and learn, and they were really respectful of his learning needs. It was clear that the educators in that program have used a variety of strategies to really nurture a caring and supportive community. This is the type of reflection that we're going to want DSCs to engage with with program staff. Really supporting program staff to observe and ask themselves if they've provided a variety of ways for children to interact and engage and express themselves. Or are they finding that many children still require additional support or changes to the environment or the activities or the materials? Remember that UDL is a foundational planning strategy. When you're using it and using it well, when you've planned from the beginning for each activity or lesson, whatever it may be, to reach the widest variety of learners, the need for modifications and adaptations for individual children should overall be reduced.

OK, so back to thinking about this model of tiered supports we used – that we talked about. UDL is a foundational principle to plan the learning environment, which should be in that first tier, kind of that first level of practice. But as we discussed, even with a high-quality environment that was planned to promote access and engagement, some children may not readily engage and may not readily access the learning environment or the people in the interactions. And this is where we really want to think about moving up within that tiered system and use strategies that are focused on the individual needs of a particular child and their need for support. Let's start talking about strategies that we can use to support program staff to really think about supporting the participation and engagement of individual children.

Really, this is the same concept as using curriculum modification. Participation happens when program staff provide children with individualized supports that allow them to fully participate and play in learning activities with their peers. One of these individualized supports is the use of

curriculum modifications. As you probably know, a curriculum modification is a change to the classroom activity or the materials that's really used to facilitate or maximize a child's participation in planned and ongoing routines, interactions, and activities. Our task as people who support program staff is really to help the program staff use the modifications to intentionally match to the child's individual needs so that we can enhance their participation and enhance their – I'm sorry – enhance their engagement so that hopefully we can enhance their opportunity for learning.

Going back to this kind of "plan, do, review" sequence, let's think about how DSCs and others who are in those coaching roles can organize their support for program staff to use curriculum modifications and adaptations. Again, it's going to be really important to think about what program staff need to know about these strategies in order to use them. A big part of that is knowing about curriculum modifications and again, what they are and why they are used.

There are a couple of really important things that we want to make sure program staff know and remember about modifications and adaptations. One is that modifications do not significantly alter or change the content, the scope, or the sequence of a curriculum. Modifications are usually really simple and easy to implement and don't take many resources to use. We often say that curriculum modifications are small changes that make a big impact. And another point to remember again is that when we move to using modifications, the focus of the planning really shifts from participation of all children and the access of all children to the participation of an individual child within the learning environment. The modification strategies that we plan and that we use are really based on those individual child's needs. While they're simple, these strategies are also intentional. If a child needs more support or more challenge even, it takes thoughtful planning to identify the most appropriate modifications that are based on the individual needs of that child.

An important part of knowing how to use modifications is understanding the many different ways that classroom materials, interactions, activities can be modified and adapted. There are eight general types of curriculum modifications that you see on the screen. And I want to note we're not going to talk specifically about each of these today. There are some great resources on the ECLKC that can help you learn about or help program staff learn about the different types or categories of curriculum modification. And we've provided links to those resources. They're 15-minute in-service suites. We've provided links to those resources on your webinar resource list.

In addition to knowing what modifications are, it's also really important that we help program staff think about when to use them. Tara, I'd love to hear from you again, knowing that you do a lot of support for staff. How do you help them learn when a curriculum or identify when a curriculum modification is needed?

Tara: I start by asking staff to really observe children and recognize when a child is not fully participating in a meaningful way. But it's also important to note this might look different from child to child. As part of this process, I work with staff to observe and clarify ... [Inaudible] It's important to identify just what the issue is with participation. It might be that a child seems

really interested in an activity or a routine but can't quite do it on their own. And we see them watching other children and maybe trying it out, but they don't quite succeed. Or when a child can access an activity and can participate in parts of it, but they still really need adult support for portions of the routine or activity. Sometimes this might be when a child is participating in an activity, but there is some component that is physically challenging for the child, or maybe a child has the skills to participate that they're not motivated to do so.

Jennifer: OK, great. That's super helpful. I'm interested to hear how do you help that support, that planning? You know, what kind of tools do you use?

Tara: When these situations come up, my first step with a teacher is usually to complete the child participation evaluation form together. This form is a really useful tool for a couple of reasons. One, completing the form helps us to clarify what our expectations for all the children are related to a routine or activity. Then it helps us to think about how a specific child is participating in each routine or activity in relation to the overall expectation. And lastly, it really helps to be specific about our concern for an individual child.

Jennifer: Perfect. I know that that form has been useful to me and is really useful for many program staff as they're starting to think about planning for those modifications and adaptations. The child participation form is available in our Resources tab for people to download. Tara, anything else that you think about as your supporting staff at this point in the planning process?

Tara: Definitely. Not only are we thinking about when we're not seeing engagement and child participation, but we also want to think about which routines or activities are there where the child is showing confidence when they do where they do participate successfully? And this can help us identify ways to support the child during those more challenging.

Jennifer: Perfect. Great. This is a great point. And it leads us to another important part of the planning process. That's choosing a modifications strategy. Once you've worked with your staff to identify a specific concern, you'll want to help them plan for what modifications to use that's matched to the individual child's needs. Tara, how do you approach this step when you're supporting staff?

Tara: There are a few things I coach staff to remember as they're choosing modification strategies. The first is just what you said, to intentionally match the strategy with the child. I support staff to remember what the specific concern is for the child and what type of support is most likely to address that. Then we talk about what we need to know about the specific child, their strengths, their abilities, and their interests. Individualizing support, the intentional match between the child, the need, and the strategy is what makes modifications. I also coach staff to keep the strategy as simple as possible. The simpler modification it is, easier it is to implement. We try to keep things as simple as possible and then make adjustments and add more support. Remember that curriculum modifications are small changes [Inaudible].

And then I remind staff that they shouldn't be afraid to experiment. Maybe they try a strategy or a combination of strategies, and the first idea doesn't work. That's OK. Teachers spend much of their time observing, making their best guesses about strategies to support learning, trying out new ideas, and evaluating how well they work. This is what teachers are great at. The important thing when trying out modifications is that we're intentional about what we decide to try, we give it a try, and then we carefully observe and decide whether or not that approach is working. If it isn't working, we'll know because we're watching and then we'll try again.

Jennifer: Perfect. Tara, I'd love to talk more about strategies that we use and kind of what we would see in the "do" part of the of the process, but we're running short on time, and I want to make sure that we have time for questions and answers today. I just want to remind people that you can see many of these strategies in action or all of the strategies across categories in action in the 15-minute in-service suites that we've linked to in your resource list. One thing I want to really talk to make sure that we have time to talk about today, once staff has planned to use the activities and have really tried out using these activity modifications and adaptations in practice, is how you support staff to review and figure out how this went and if the modification was successful. Can we talk a little bit about this review component of the planning process?

Tara: Sure.

Jennifer: Great.

Tara: Well, we need to remember that modifications are simple and should work pretty quickly to increase participation if we've really addressed the issue. I usually plan to use a strategy for about a week or so before looking at this step. And when I get to this step, I usually revisit the modification planning worksheet. There's a space in the last column to check whether or not the modification is working. When the team is talking about this step, we think about our observations and the information that we've collected and ask ourselves if the child is participating more fully and then we decide what we're going to do. If the answer is yes, the child is participating more fully within the activity of routine, then we'll decide whether or not we're going to keep using our modification and continue to monitor the child's participation or maybe whether we'll add another modification strategy. If the child is fully participating and engaged, as we see more confidence, we'll decide how we're going to slowly decrease the levels. If the answer is no, that that child is showing no signs of improvement in their participation, then we'll talk about what else to try.

Since modifications are really meant to work pretty quickly within a few days, we check in every day and then do a review at our weekly team meetings. After about two weeks, if we're still not seeing an increase in participation, we know it's time to try something else. Sometimes it can take a bit of trial and error before you find the modification that's the right fit. After a while, even when several modifications have been used, the child still might – still may not be showing any signs of improvement in participation. At this point, we talk about whether it's time to move up in the tiered support framework that you talked about, whether we need to provide a higher level of support and increased learning opportunities [Inaudible].

Jennifer: OK, perfect. And actually, Tara, that is just what our July webinar will address, which we'll broadcast on July 27th. In that webinar, we're really going to talk about specific strategies to help program staff plan for increased – providing increased learning opportunities. And I did want to point out that the planning form, the modification planning worksheet that Tara referred to, where we can think about, OK, once we've identified what the need is, once we've matched some strategies, this modification planning worksheet is linked in your Resources tab. Definitely take a look at that, but that really helps the team organize themselves and say, "OK, knowing what modification strategies we want to use, what materials do we need? Where do we need to place those materials in the environment? Or where do we need to make those small changes? And who's going to be responsible for doing that so we can make sure that the strategies that we want to use are actually being used?"

I just wanted to point out that that resource is also available in your Resources tab in addition to the full links to all of the in-service suites so that you can really explore more deeply with program staff who need to learn about and who are interested in learning about these different modifications and adaptations. What are they? When and why do we use them? And really, what do they look like in action? So, thank you to everyone who joined us today and have a great afternoon. And, Tara, thank you so much for being here today.

Tara: You're welcome, Jen. Thank you for having me.