

Foundations of ERSEA: Plenary

Brandi Black Thacker: Hey, everybody. Welcome. Come on in. We're happy to see you. We hope you enjoyed the opening. We can't wait to unpack a little bit with you about what you heard and what you're thinking. I have the distinct honor of sharing some time and space with one of my most favorite folks today. We're going to introduce you to her in just a little bit. But we're here to think about the Foundations of ERSEA.

Before we go too far, I want to make sure you have access to what you need to choose your language. I want you to find the Interpretfy widget, and once you open it – it's in the top right-hand side of your screen – click on the embedded piece of it. That's step one here; you can see on the screen. Step two is where you select your language. Then three is where you click "Connect."

Now I understand this next piece is the very, very, most important piece, which is this third bullet where you mute the webcast. You mute your audio output on the video player. And if you look really closely here on this slide, you'll see that circled with step four. Then you can listen in real time because we have simultaneous interpretation today with one of our dearest friends. With all that, Jackie, I want to make sure that the folks get to hear your voice straight away. How are you doing?

Jacqueline Davis: I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm happy to be here for this ERSEA Institute. Would I be safe to say that this is one of the first ERSEA Institute that Head Start has convened?

Brandi: I was wondering about that, too. I was thinking with mine and your history, we might know about something like that.

Jackie: Exactly, exactly. [Laughter] For sure.

Yes, I am Jackie Davis, and I'm from the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations. I serve as a professional development manager there. I'm happy to be here with you today, Brandi. Thank you for inviting me.

Brandi: It's a true honor and pleasure, Jackie. It's truly mine. I'm Brandi Black Thacker for those of you that I haven't had the honor to meet yet. I'm the director of T and TA development strategy for the National Center on Parent Family, Community, and Engagement, and I'm so excited to get into what I'm calling, Jackie, this ... Well, where I'm from, we call it a teeter-totter. I don't know if you all call it a see-saw. [Laughter] [Inaudible] This chance for Jackie and I to really go back and forth on the topic of ERSEA and the processes that make it up.

We want to show you what we've planned for our experience together today. Then we're going to just jump right in because I feel like, not only do we want to share some things that have really resonated with us as we've prepared for this conversation, but certainly we're going to create the space to hear from you, too.

We are going to start off – much in the spirit of what David, Kirsten, and I got to do in the opening this morning with some reflections about the key moments in our history and, specific

to this conversation, key ERSEA moments in our history and how they can inspire what we do moving forward.

The other thing – and this is where I love talking to Jackie because she was one of the – Jackie, could I say “birth mamas” [Laughter] of this really wonderful document called Foundations for Excellence, where we talked about so many things, but there’s a piece in particular we want to pull out here around the PFCE Framework and the Management Systems Wheel.

Today, we want to highlight how they can really be used together to guide your ERSEA practices. Then Jackie and I are going to do a little bit of dancing, if you will, around the letters, E-R-S-E-A, so that we can explore how each of those are embedded, not only in the systems from Jackie’s PMFO perspective, but I’m going to be able to also represent the family piece and what those look like in combination. What do you think about all that, Jackie? We have some [Crosstalk] in store.

Jackie: Yes. Exactly. Let’s get going. This is going to be great. Thank you.

Brandi: Of course, Jackie and I have known each other for a good long time, and we both—I met Jackie when we were both in the arena of what used to be called – remember, Jackie? FCP, family-community partnerships. We’ve come through some of the things that you’ll see on the slides before us together, but we wanted to pop out some of the key moments in our history.

You guys know where we are. The theme of this conference, as you heard earlier, are thinking about remembering our roots, lifting up where and how we’ve been resilient over all this time together, and how we’ve done it through and with relationships. Those roots, resilience, relationship are threads that you’ll continue to hear.

We feel like it’s so critical because, Jackie, you know what I know, not only do we have decades of folks on this line that have given their life to Head Start over decades, we also have some brand-new colleagues on the line. We want to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to understand where we’ve been, what our forefathers and foremothers did to blaze the trail for and with us, and then how we can carry that torch.

Jackie, do you have any connection to that overarching message about our legacy and what we’re about to experience here?

Jackie: Yes. When we think about where Head Start began and all of that work, it really connects back to ERSEA, because we began with that, making sure that we bring in the children that really need our services. That’s that eligibility and recruiting, although back then, we probably weren’t calling and recruiting and all of that when it first started. But that’s what grew out of that. I think that that’s an important message that we’ve been doing since the inception of Head Start.

Brandi: Yes. I love how you said that – “the inception of Head Start” – because, as you can see on the slide here, in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson took up the cause, you can see here, of building on the Great Society by declaring a war on poverty. Now it wanted ... One of its main goals was to create jobs, to increase productivity, and to enhance the quality of overall life for everyone.

In that moment in time, when we were born in 1965 – you guys remember – shortly after in 66, we already had systems forming. Jackie, I know this is exciting for you. Yes. [Laughter] You can see here a little bit on the screen of what that looked like. But Jackie, there are some words that are in there now from 1966 that parallel some of the systems that exist today. Do you see any?

Jackie: For sure. Definitely. You see there that the administrative staff bringing together the community services, the social services, health services, psychological services, service programs. From the inception, Head Start was being built on a sturdy foundation of systems, and those systems coming together and operating to build and grow Head Start. Yes. Systems. They're from the beginning. Had to be.

Brandi: I noticed too, Jackie – and we'll get back to this here in a second again – but we have a Policy Advisory Committee that comes up, so also thinking about how, from the very beginning, we had a group of trusted advisors that we sought out in our respective communities. That, too, is still firmly in place today with families and parents at the forefront. That's a thing you'll see continue.

By 1969 – I remember we were born in 65 – we've always been connected to our communities. We've always known where things are happening, where we can celebrate with families, and where needs might represent themselves. In 1969, the Migrant Head Start program was born. And you can see here, to ensure that farmworker families and their children have the same advantages made available and always in the timing that they deserve.

From this moment, we start to see how we, as a collective community across the country, were able to take stock of who we have the honor to serve and make services that are individualized for those specific communities. You're going to see that play out a couple more times here as we look at a couple services.

Let's look at this next one, Jackie. I want to check in with you here, too. This is one that's near and dear to me, for sure. In 1972, we're zooming in our focus on services to children with disabilities. There's a specific amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act that allowed for Head Starts to expand our programming. Jackie, as we're talking about ERSEA, I mean that next piece, here's where the 10 percent comes in.

Jackie: Exactly. Yes, with disabilities, and that is, as you were just saying, Brandi, an important part of really paying attention to that as we are going through the recruitment and in the selection criteria in that way ... so that ... Yes. Definitely, very important.

Brandi: Well, I don't know, Jackie, when you worked in program ... Like when I was a director, I remember that we had this thing. We used to tease out about, "Well, they said. [Laughter] [Crosstalk] They said we had to do it this way." Yes. But what we did together ... I was just young and naive enough to ask questions like "Who are 'they'?"

I've often over time in my Head Start tenure wondered, "Where did some of these regulations start? If I'm being vulnerable and honest, I didn't know this. I didn't know that the 10% came about way back in 1972, very close to when we were born – but a whole another piece of evidence about what we've always known about each other in our connection to one another

and our communities in a meaningful way to offer families supports, as they're ready, that are connected to their dream about where we go next as partners.

Jackie: Yes, definitely.

Brandi: Jackie, this next one I know is another one you and I've talked a lot about over time – 1987. You guys will recognize this language. The McKinney-Vento Act was passed in Congress. And of course, we know today and even back then that that's when we got the requirement to be in service of families and children experiencing homelessness. Now we use this definition – and Jackie, for you guys at PMFO, this is really important because there's a specific distinction attached to this as it relates to selection?

Jackie: Yes, definitely. You see there where it says to “automatically enroll eligible children”? The McKinney-Vento Act and that whole idea of the homeless, the family's experiencing homelessness, they have the opportunity to just come on in to Head Start and that automatic enrollment. That's a really important part to really recognize the children and families experiencing homelessness, because it's really important.

This other thing that I always think about is that when I first started working with this McKinney-Vento Act, it was shared with me to use the words “families and children,” “children experiencing homelessness,” because that saying, “homeless children and families” is like pointing that at them and saying that, “You are homeless.” That was really important to me, and that really stuck with me all these years. Now we see this part of the language and how we talk about it.

Brandi: Well, I wouldn't be surprised, Jackie, if you influenced that movement. It's absolutely how we say it today, given what you said and so much more. We don't define a family by their circumstance. Often what we've done – and this is a great challenge for you guys, as we think about this. There's so many of you that have signed up to be part of this experience this week, and one of my challenges to you is, have this conversation with families experiencing homelessness without using the word “homeless.” Because when you have the chance to be with a family, and you say, “Well, I think that we might be able to qualify you if you're interested in being our partner over these next years. In a couple of different ways, if you're willing to talk about your living situation. Would that be comfortable for you to do with me today?”

Just being able to think in a way, Jackie, because language has power, especially when we're thinking about enrollment and selection, those things when we very first get to meet families ... We're asking about a whole lot of sensitive stuff, and that can feel a lot of ways for families and for us. Thinking about how to navigate those pieces very respectfully is always on our minds. We've heard so many stories from you guys around the country about how you're doing it, and we thank you for it.

Jackie: Definitely.

Brandi: Well, Jackie, I mean connected to the McKinney-Vento discussion we just had, in '92, we get a whole IM, an Information Memorandum for programs who are specifically encouraged to seek out families experience and homelessness. This is a whole another conversation we can

have about – and you’ll hear this later from some of my colleagues at PFCE – about how we don’t say that families are “hard to reach.” Sometimes we’re hard to reach, [Laughter] and we’ve got to check our own systems, Jackie, speaking of systems, to make sure that they’re accessible, and to make sure that we are accessible for families as they’re ready for us, and based on their ability to mobilize, based on their current set of circumstances.

I’m grateful that we have led the thinking around how to do this in a way that is thoughtful.

Jackie: Yes, for sure.

Brandi: All right, Jackie. Just two more trips down memory lane here. [Laughter]

Jackie: OK.

Brandi: We would be remiss if we didn’t mention in 1994 – again, this is the underpinning. We are always thinking about who we are and what we’re offering, and is it a current match for where our families are? In 1994, Early Head Start was born. That’s when we began to offer services to tiny babies, toddlers, pregnant women, and the expectant families. This is one of my favorite benchmarks in all of our history.

Jackie, do you remember when this happened?

Jackie: Well, yes. The one big question that would come up after 1994 is the question about pregnant women and how do we count them. That was a big question back then. That became a huge conversation at that office, that the Office of Head Start had to negotiate and talk about and get that settled with the people. I remember that part of it. Answering that question – it came in fast and furiously, and often as the case settled on that understanding. [Laughter] I do remember that.

[Crosstalk]

Brandi: I remember these pieces, too. ‘94 was a little before my Head Start time, but I remember it coming up a little later in the timeline, too.

One last one for the purpose of this conversation. We wanted to bring forward that, again, early on, this was 1995, guys – I know we’ve had a whole resurgence of our connection to fathers and males that are important in the lives of our little ones, but this is where we were in ‘95. This is when – as you can see here – the Federal Fatherhood Initiative brings together several key government agencies to evaluate fatherhood on the national level and in local programs.

You guys know where we are today. We’ve had this as a focused priority for a couple of decades now in the way that we do our work and the way that we bring the conversations forward then, Jackie, in conversations about ERSEA in particular, there’s some real specific things that come up, right?

Jackie: Yes, in terms of when we’re talking about fatherhood and how that changed the way we even look at families and how we talk about eligible families in that way. This was a landmark move in that direction, as well. It really led to some conversation. It generated some thinking in a good direction around that. I remember that as well.

Brandi: Well, Jackie, the purpose of this trip down memory lane is a couple-fold, I think. It's, one, to remind ourselves of where we've been, how and why we were born, and what we've accomplished in times that were challenging, in times that were not, and the elements that were present for us to come through those things.

It's been the partnerships, the relate – I know we're going to get more into this in a little bit – but it really is the connection to those systems that you mentioned, our high-quality services, how families and children grow because of those, and then how that ripples out really in a parallel process way into community and beyond. I am ever grateful to be part of this community.

Jackie, I know we heard David say it earlier, it's like when you get to be in Head Start, it gets in your blood. There's never a time that I've been more proud to be part of our collective community.

With all of that, let's look at where we want to go next. You saw the bullets as we were coming in with those objectives. One of the pieces that we want to touch in a real way for those of you that are on the line today, that are thinking about the integration into your larger systems and how to make connection across your comprehensive services – Jackie and I want to offer you a couple of ideas about how you could consider making those pieces sing specifically as it relates to ERSEA.

I want to start off with my favorite graphic in yours, everybody. You love it, you live it. You haven't memorized – the PFCE Framework. Did you like that, Jackie? [Laughter] She's like, "What did you all sign me up to do?" This is the PFCE Framework, and you guys know how it works. We stand first and foremost in those positive and oriented relationships. We stand first and foremost in the arrow that brings forward the critical and prioritized pieces of equity, inclusion, culture, and language.

When we have those as our cornerstones, our anchors, the full fiber that we operate within, and use our strong systems – which Jackie, it's what you've been telling us about. We're going to get to that more in a minute, which really this yellow column represents for us – and we deliver those high-quality, comprehensive services, which is really what this pink column represents for us, then families and children grow. That's the story of the Framework. We call it, "If this, then that."

Many of you, when you first saw this about 11 years ago, you're like, "That's cute, Brandi, but how does it work?" [Laughter] I'm going to tell you guys exactly how it works. If you use those arrows in the way that we've been trained and that we know to do in the real, we stand on the systems and services that are required by our Performance Standards and families and children growth.

We have been the nation's laboratory for good reason. That's how we're recognized. We want to show you how some of those pieces come together. Now I want to give you a little nod here, because several of you over time have been thinking, "Well, how do some of the major icons that we know in our Head Start vernacular fit?"

If we use the PFCE Framework as that anchor, you're going to see a couple of ways that we propose for you to think about it. Jackie, this was one of my most ... This is why I mentioned the Foundations for Excellence a little earlier. It is here in the console, if you guys want to go over to the Resource widget to download. We do have it available for you so that you can have this graphic, too, and you can see how it comes together.

With "If this, then that," if you have those high-quality system, the strong systems and high-quality services, families and children grow, the Management Systems fits right in that column that we really see as the systems piece of the PFCE Framework. If we take it one more zoomed out way, for those of you who are education experts in your program – teachers, teacher assistance, home visitors, and managers – when you think about the early learning outcomes framework, it's right here for you, too.

We have the Management Systems Wheel in the column that we really feel like supports those systems anchors, and we're driving toward growth for families and children. In terms of the child's growth and development, that's where that Early Learning Outcomes framework fits. You can see how that core foundation of families and that PFCE piece is there as the underpinning. It is the great connector of all of those things.

Jackie, as we were thinking about this and thinking about the importance of bringing forward the systems' voice alongside the family's voice, this was one way that we thought we could offer it to you to consider because these guys have gotten really good at putting this PFCE Framework to work for them as a roadmap, as a guide, as a benchmarks and barometer for how things are going in both their systems and services practices.

Before we get too much further, though, Jackie, I'd really like to hear some more about the systems pieces and how specifically they relate to ERSEA.

Jackie: OK. Let's go. Yes. Here, Brandi, we want to start off with the systems message that can really ground us in this conversation that we are about to have. Here we have a message from Peter Senge. He says, "Collectively, we can be more insightful, more intelligent than we can possibly be individually."

As you think about that, Brandi, what thoughts do you have about what does this mean as we begin to think about systems from ERSEA perspective? We also encourage our listening audience out there to think about that and throw something in the chat if something comes to mind for you. Brandi, anything in particular that comes up?

Brandi: Jackie, you know how we used to do with the Performance Standards. We would dissect word by word by word to really get the meaning at the program level is what I'm thinking. I can't get past the word "collectively" here because to me, I appreciate, I'd love to hear what our audience folks and colleagues and experts have to say about this, and what this quote brings forward for you.

For me, "collectively" really means "together," how we can know more and be more because we have each other is how it reads to me because we get to honor our collective gifts and wisdom and not just depend on a person.

Jackie: Exactly. I see someone just put in the chat “collaboratively, working collaboratively.” I put the page number, page 221. When I was looking at this quote in this particular section, they did talk about collaborating and how this connected to that, and so that’s also in there. I just wanted to share that in terms of a way to begin to think about this.

Brandi, you hit the nail on the head in terms of looking at that quote to set this section up. Then, if we keep on going here, we have the management systems – da, da, da, da – that Brandi has been mentioning as she talked about the PFCE Framework. My message around this – when I see the Management Systems Wheel, I look at it from like a whisperer – a whisperer perspective. What it says is that at the foundation there is leadership and governance.

Then within that foundation, we have what is the program management and the planning and those oversight systems. That’s what we see in the light blue around in there, all 12 of the management systems. When that leadership and governance foundation is strong and then those systems, it encourages and creates opportunities for those systems to operate effectively.

If those systems are operating effectively, then we bring it on in, and we see that the services, and those services are affected by those systems. Now those services are also operating effectively. Which service do we see there? The service that this institute is about, which is ERSEA.

We know that if the systems are operating effectively and those services are operating effectively, the opportunity to have high-quality family and child outcomes becomes really high. It becomes an opportunity for that to happen. That’s the way I look at this Management Systems Wheel in terms of saying it in a nice compact way. Then as we begin to think about this, now we’re going to take this Management Systems Wheel and PFCE, and we’re going to define and explore ERSEA little bit more.

Brandi: I love this part, Jackie, just because, like I said, we have tenured [Inaudible] tenured colleagues [Laughter], and we might have brand-new colleagues in the space, so we want to unpack the E, R, S, the E, and the A so that together we can spring from the same page as we go into this larger conversation over these next three days.

I know Jackie, you’re going to kick us off here, and then we’re going to get to do that teeter-totter I was talking about earlier – take turns a little bit on the program, systemic perspective with the family perspective at the same time.

Jackie: Exactly. We’re going to start off here. We see that thinking systemically about ERSEA helps us understand how each of those elements influence each other. As we look at them, it encourages us to think in terms of the impact of ERSEA on those management systems. As we go through this, Brandi, we’ll pick up a couple along the way.

As you just said, ERSEA may be new to some of us out there. It’s “eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance.” We’re going to unpack those in some really interesting ways. We are ready to get started. Then we’re going to [Crosstalk]

Brandi: In true form, Jackie, me and my mute button are excited today [Laughter]. In true form, to follow your lead, we took the E, the R, the S, the E, the A, and we made connections to how

families are experiencing this whole process as they come through what I lovingly call the life cycle of a guarantee recipient, Jackie. These really do follow from the moment that we might get to meet a family, what that looks like, what it feels like, and what a family might be considering in those same moments.

To parallel what Jackie offered with E-R-S-E-A that we would know traditionally from our Performance Standards and obviously from the Management Systems Wheel, we pair these with what she offered. We're going to go through each one of these. You can see "entrust, rapport, support, engage, and action." Speaking of action, Jackie, over you. [Laughter]

Jackie: OK. All right. Our first one that we're going to unpack, this is "eligibility." When we think about eligibility, we know that that's that important piece of really finding and preparing that kind of criteria or that support. How are we going to determine who comes into Head Start?

There are some things that need to be done. I could see how the training and professional development could be a really good system to pay attention to because we all have to know and understand what do we need to do to make sure that we are identifying the families and children that could be eligible for Head Start.

Then of course, that strong ... Here is also where that strong record-keeping and reporting systems come into play. All of those internal policies and procedures are critical for eligibility in terms of verifying and documenting. That record-keeping and reporting is where that documentation comes in, and it's really important. This is when we think about eligibility – eligibility and ERSEA from a system's perspective. We're focusing in on eligibility. That's some of the things that we look at, that we think about. Brandi?

Brandi: Let's see, Jackie. On the family side, this is where we get to the place of "interesting." I love that word for a couple of reasons because we already discussed that we're potentially asking for some sensitive information as it relates to ERSEA policies, procedures, coming in the door. Families are entrusting us not only with their information, more importantly with their most precious gift, their little one.

We want to make sure that as we are coming into this shared space with a family that we're able to start off in a connection and in a way that is not only meaningful and thoughtful, but open and honest about where we're going to go, because, Jackie, today families have choices. I personally want all families to know about the gift that is Head Start.

I don't know if you guys agree, but I've been doing the work now for a little while, and what I've come to know and understand is not everybody knows and understands us like we do. I'm thinking about a session that's going to come, Jackie, tomorrow on marketing and on the connection to each other and to our families and how when we share this experience together through this moment, the moment that we get to be with each other the very first time, that it builds and blossoms into something that we all benefit from. But this is where it starts.

I think that this is a really important place to remember, that when we get to step in that space with families, they're watching to see if we are who we say we are, and if they can entrust their most precious gift into our hands, and if they can trust their heart with our system. Again, Jackie, we talked this morning – Head Start is heart work.

You guys know we're collecting and these heart notes all through our sessions this week. To me, when you're a family member and you've come through a lot of systems, your heart can be hardened because not all systems are as supportive and truly reverent as we are for and with families. That's another piece of interest that can really come up for families when they're at this part of the process.

Jackie: Yes. Right, Brandi. Then we're looking for our next letter, which is R for "recruitment." What we know is that that recruitment is that systematic, the systems piece in that, is that year-round process. You think about that in terms of what procedures do you have in place? How are you recruiting? Where are you recruiting? What kind of outreach are you doing?

Brandi, there is this piece that I remember from when I was doing family and community partnerships work. It was Dunst and Trivette, Carl Dunst and Carol Trivette, and their saying was that it takes 11 contacts to build a relationship. But here is the thing. What kind of contacts? Is it positive or is it negative? What kind of contacts; and contacts could be your social media, the way that you're putting your information out that represents your program.

That's a really important part, and so that's something to think about in terms of your systems. How? What kind of recruitment are you doing? Is it getting you? Is it attracting? Are the children and families coming to that? Are they paying attention to it? Is it being done in a way that is attracting the children and families for Head Start? That's something to really think about and that's it from a system's perspective. Then, Brandi?

Brandi: Thank you. Well, I have words to say about this. I love, Jackie, as I'm thinking about where we're going to get to go with folks during this institute, there's so much confirmation that's happening. I'm excited also to think about the innovation that we're going to learn as we're together this week, not only from the folks that we've gathered for you to hear from but from each of you. I'm excited to think about those networking sessions and the practical application sessions and the ways that those are going to come forward so that we do have ready-made think tank of experts here amongst all of us.

When we think about the R for families, it's "rapport." I have to be honest with you guys. When we were building this presentation, I grappled with "Do we say 'relationship'" here? Is it "rapport"? Is it – and I think as we're thinking about that life system of how and where families are as we go through the ERSEA process, it's probably more rapport.

We want to be genuine in our interactions. As we look to see if families are going to be ready for this commitment, this partnership alongside us, we're looking forward to a long-term, goal-oriented partnership. At this point in the stage, we're just looking for that connection and looking for ways to solidify it and making sure that families have all that they need to make a good, informed decision about their fit with us at this point in time. This is, as Jackie said, this is their recruitment piece. This is where we're sizing things up about each other to make sure that we're the best possible fit for the family.

I'm excited about this piece because we're always operating in a relationship-based space because once we get to do that, it blossoms into something that's going to appear here in a couple of slides. Jackie?

Jackie: Yes, for sure. Now we're onto the S, and the S is "selection." Selection is that thought. . . we need, a really thoughtful selection process. Thoughtful selection, policies, and procedures ensure children who would benefit most from this program are being brought in, being selected and brought into the program. That is why selection criteria is so important.

One of the systems that really connects with selection criteria as well as recruitment is that community assessment, that part of this, because it's really important to really know who is in your community and how do we recruit for them and how are we selecting them. That is really an important part. That's a system that pays us, that really comes to mind for this one. Even when we are thinking about the selection criteria, really paying attention to who's in the community, and really thinking about the systems that it takes to build the selection criteria. What are the policies? What are the procedures? That, to me, is a really important part of selection. Brandi?

Brandi: At this point in the family piece, Jackie, we're talking about support. This comes up in a couple of ways because we're thinking with families in this part of the life cycle, like assessments, those family strengths and needs assessments. We're thinking about where families want to know and do more in terms of not only the information that they would like to have or know more about, but we're asking about strengths.

We're asking about where they want to focus their energies, and we're asking them permission. This is the place where we're checking in with families as they're ready to see what kind of supports we might be able to offer for them based on their dreams for their family – again, a true form of reverence and connection. We're thinking about how we use our data and how we use the voices of our families and their true hopes about their direction to really guide where we get to go next.

Jackie: Yes. Now we're ready to move on to enrollment. Head Start's mission is to serve the children and families who would benefit most from our services. We know that maintaining funded enrollment is really important. This is where systems comes into play as we think back to our message at the beginning.

Here we are thinking about enrollment. If those numbers aren't where they should be, maybe you need to go back and look at those systems, look at your recruitment process, look at your selection criteria, look at the things that may be affecting maintaining or getting that funded enrollment that is necessary. That's my conversation here on systems – really thinking about those policies and procedures and those strategies that you're using in terms of maintaining the funded enrollment. Now let's see what you're saying about the E for this one, Brandi.

Brandi: I feel like we need a whole drum-roll moment, because this is our signature slide at PFCE. It's all about engagement, everybody. [Laughter] This is what I was alluding to before, and this is why we spent a little bit of time in the Framework, because what we know is "involvement" is different than "engagement." They are both necessary and critical to the developmental trajectory of our relationship alongside families.

We're always striving to get to engagement because that's when families start to take the lead. It's when their growth intensifies. Here's what we know, you all – I know I'm preaching to the

choir, Jackie – when families grow, their children do, too. Yes. Our goal has always been to engage with families as they're ready and as they tell us.

When that happens, that's when the growth happens. We're constantly – as we're working with families and we're thinking about where they might find themselves on that involvement-to-engagement spectrum – when they get to the place where they're ready to step into a more leadership role – and whether that means a Policy Council, policy committee, governance structure, or whether it means like something that they're doing within the context of a program – it becomes a magical moment where that growth is real. That's what we're striving to do.

You can't do it right away. I mean, do families engage with this right away? Absolutely. But some families we need to really convince and, I would say, support in ways that feel meaningful to them. You guys, I just have to say, I'm in awe because we've had to acknowledge – like we did this morning – that we've come through some really hard things. We've had to acknowledge and validate that it hasn't been easy over this past amount of time.

We have to acknowledge and validate that you've continued to be the heartbeat of your communities. For that, there are no proper words to express our collective gratitude, but this is why. You found ways to make sure families didn't feel alone. You've found ways to make sure that if families needed food, that you not only created space for our Head Start families, but sibling groups and larger reach into the community for families who will never know the honor of our service and vice versa. We're honored when we get to do the family.

I just think this is such a critical piece, and this is a little bit of evidence to say that this is something we work up to and that it changes things, when we make it. Jackie, I better get the mic back to you because this is one of my favorite things to think about.

Jackie: OK. We have them engaged. Now we really have to make sure that they're attending because the attendance is really important. Having them there is really important. Regular attendance has a really direct impact on their school readiness and future school success.

That attendance piece is really important. Where systems comes in with this is when you're thinking about how do we know if our children are in those classrooms and attending Head Start. If they're not, what are we doing? That's where those systems come into play because there should be a way, a system in place, for how we connect back with the children, with the families, to make sure that the children are coming to school and coming to the Head Start program—and maybe even those systems that catch it before, like educating, making sure, the parents understand the value of being there in that classroom every day.

It's preschool, but/and it's really important. What Head Start has to offer for the children is really, really key and really, really important. That's an important part that we really have to talk about. Then, Brandi?

Brandi: Attendance, Jackie, leads to action with and for our families. Guys, you know like I know that this action can manifest in a whole myriad of ways. I think about the family partnership process and how critical it is to who we are and our goal setting alongside families as they tell us what their hopes and dreams are for their family. We help them actualize those.

Jackie, I know you have a thousand of these stories, and I'm going to ask you to tell one in a second. They range from everything from ... You know, we hear all the time from families, "I'd like to enhance my education opportunity." We know families that have gone to vocational school. They've gotten apprenticeships. They've done associates, bachelors, masters, doctorates.

You heard Dr. Futrell's story this morning. We know all of the pieces of the incredible success that families have experienced in terms of their action as they come alongside and teach us as we get to partner. We've had families tell us their goal is to get rest or sleep. They have four young children under the age of five, and we figure out how to get them support so they have what they need.

Jackie, this action manifests in all the ways that it does. You all have stories that you could tell about your impact. I want your impact and those who've impacted you. I want you all to be thinking about that as we go forward because leave a "heart note" for somebody. We want to hear what sorts of things that have happened in your Head Start journey as you've come along your own timeline. With that, Jackie, I want to leave folks with the sentiment that you gave us, a story from your journey.

Jackie: Yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. When I was working in a Head Start program in LACOE, in Los Angeles County Office of Education, there was this parent. She had this talent of art, of working in art. She painted a flower, and she did such a beautiful job. I framed it and everything, and I have that with me right here now because it really lifted her up. I shared it with her, and it just really lifted her up, and it was such an inspiration. I still have that painting today, and her name is Patricia Montoya. If she's out there listening anywhere, I know that she's somewhere being a great artist. That was a story I had to share. That really is an action story.

Brandi: And a heart note story. [Laughter] Well, Jackie, in summary, I hate to leave our family, but it's time. Time always flies when we get to be together. We want to leave you with a couple things. We have what we need to go forward, and that's each other. You have the systems and the services that are built to not only operate in ways that continue to be high quality, but with families at the forefront.

We have faced hard things. We've had obstacles. We've had challenges, and we've done and come through them with compassion, kindness, and perseverance, as evidenced by the first part of this session from the beginning. From the beginning.

Jackie, this is something I wanted to close out with you on. We're going to do this together because the tradition and the legacy that has come before us will be ours to continue. I want to think with you and challenge this group of our most respected colleagues: What legacy are you building? What are you working toward? What systems are you strengthening? What families are you embracing, and what kinds of things are you going to be telling folks about?

Jackie: Yes.

Brandi: Jackie, I want to say, "Thank you. Just thank you." You better take the mic before I get emotional. [Laughter]

Jackie: Yes. This has been really great, and that second bullet – we all benefit when we build from systems. That’s the important part of this work. Thinking about this from a systems perspective is really an important part of being successful with your ERSEA endeavors and your ERSEA implementation. I was happy to be here with you today, Brandi, as well.

Brandi: It’s a pleasure always, my friend, Jackie. You guys enjoy the rest of the conference. Feel free to ... You’re going to get a bit of a break. We’re looking forward to seeing you back here in a little bit, but thank you for coming. Thank you for gifting us your time, and thank you for everything you do. We’ll see you soon.

Jackie: OK.