
**National Early Reading First (ERF) Evaluation
Effective Professional Development Practices
Follow-Up Case Study Report**

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Technical Assistance for Writing Reports on Successful
Professional Development Practices in Early Reading First Programs

Submitted to:

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Introduction

Purpose..... 4

Audience 4

PART 1: STUDY CONTEXT

I. Early Reading First 6

A. Program goals 6

B. Professional development focus 6

II. Study Plan 7

A. Methodology 7

B. Implementation 8

III. ERF National Evaluation Findings 11

A. Overall findings 11

B. Effective professional development practices..... 12

PART 2: CASE STUDY RESULTS

IV. Professional Development Practices during ERF 16

A. Site description 16

B. Professional development overview 17

C. Mentoring overview..... 23

D. Mentor training 23

E. Teacher training 24

1. Phonological awareness..... 24

2. Dialogic reading..... 25

3. Using assessment data 25

Contents (continued)	Page
<hr/>	
V. Challenges to Implementation.....	26
A. Transitioning to a research-based curriculum.....	26
B. Using explicit instruction.....	26
C. Improving phonological awareness instruction	27
D. Training teachers to use assessment data	29
E. Providing planning time and structure	32
F. Gaining administrative support.....	32
G. Accommodating differences in teacher backgrounds	33
H. Supporting special education staff	33
VI. Changes in Professional Development after ERF	34
A. Focus on theory to practice.....	34
B. Cover fewer topics	34
C. Work with administrators.....	35
D. Limited funding and support for mentors	35
VII. Lessons Learned	37
A. Impact of professional development on literacy instruction.....	37
B. Professional development practices that work	39
C. Need for specialized mentor training	43
D. Importance of systemic change.....	46
E. Success stories.....	47
VIII. What More is Needed?	49
A. Dissemination	49
B. Systemic program change	49
C. English language learner assessments.....	50
D. Pre-service education enhancement.....	50
E. Professional organization activities	50
F. Federal involvement.....	50

Appendices

A. 2004 ERF Grantee Abstract.....	51
B. ERF Grantee Interview Transcripts	53
1. Professional Development Provider #1 (Principal Investigator).....	54
2. Professional Development Provider #2.....	66
3. Mentor #1	73
4. Mentor #2.....	83
5. Mentor #3.....	92
6. Site Supervisor #1	97
7. Site Supervisor #2.....	104
8. Preschool Teacher #1	109
C. ERF Grantee Sample Materials	116
1. Weekly Checklist for Planning & Preparation.....	117
2. Checklist for Classroom Organization.....	120
3. Guidelines for Scaffolding Conversation.....	121
4. Phonological Awareness Inventory.....	122
5. Mentoring Cycle Log	124
6. Lesson Plans.....	130
a. Where I Live	130
b. Pets and Farm Animals.....	138
c. Bugs and Blooms.....	145
d. Family Celebrations / Celebraciones Familiares	151

Introduction

The mission of the National Institute for Literacy (the Institute) is to help children, youth, and adults learn to read by supporting and disseminating evidence-based reading research. Under the provisions of No Child Left Behind, the Institute is authorized to disseminate information on scientifically-based reading research and information regarding Early Reading First (ERF) projects that have proven to be effective.

In 2003 the Institute provided funding to the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) for its national evaluation of the Early Reading First program. The evaluation's purpose was to gather information on the extent to which: (1) ERF improves children's skills in oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge; (2) the quality of language and literacy instruction, practice, and materials differ between ERF preschools and non-ERF preschools, and (e) variations in ERF program quality and implementation are associated with differences in participants' outcomes. Funding from the Institute supported the collection of data that could inform the Institute's efforts to disseminate information on effective ERF projects. In June 2007, IES released the congressionally mandated final evaluation report.

Purpose. The purpose of this follow-up study was to elaborate on the professional development practices identified as effective by the National Early Reading First evaluation in order to strengthen the knowledge of early literacy, language, and reading development of early childhood teaching staff. While the ERF report identified successful professional development strategies, it may not have captured some important lessons learned as the grantees became more mature.

The study intends to enrich the evaluation findings by collecting more extensive and up-to-date information through program-level interviews with former ERF staff. The goal is to include more contextual information on how grantees successfully implemented ERF practices and provide more detailed information on the challenges encountered and how the challenges were overcome.

Audience. Audiences for this report include early childhood program developers, administrators, and supervisory and training staff. Administrators and professional developers can use the report as a resource to find out what they need to know about the research findings, implications for classroom practice, key components of effective professional development, and how to share their knowledge and skills with teachers to improve early childhood literacy development. The findings can help staff assess current practices and identify short- and long-term steps for instructional improvement, including professional development plans for preschool teachers and staff. Given the audiences for the report, the intent is to showcase practical ideas supported by research.

PART 1
STUDY CONTEXT

I. Early Reading First

Early Reading First was designed to create early childhood centers of excellence that prepare young children to enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive, and early reading skills for learning success. The program supported local efforts to enhance the early language, literacy, and pre-reading development of preschool-aged children, especially those from low-income families.

A. Program goals. The five aims of the program included:

1. Provide professional development for teachers, based on scientific research, to enhance children's language, cognitive and early reading skills.
2. Provide preschool-age children with cognitive learning opportunities and high-quality language and literature-rich environments.
3. Integrate materials, activities and instruction that are grounded in scientifically-based reading research to support the development of young children's vocabulary, their ability to hear sounds that make up words, and their understanding of how print and books work and their alphabetic knowledge.
4. Use screenings and assessments to determine the skills children are learning in order to prevent reading failure.
5. Improve all aspects of an instructional program, including materials, activities, tools, and assessments.

B. Professional development focus. Ongoing professional development to ensure high-quality literacy instruction was one of the hallmarks of the ERF initiative. Funding was awarded competitively to local programs that showed they would enhance young children's language and cognitive development by providing high-quality instruction and ongoing professional development based on scientifically-based research.

One of the invitational priorities focused on applications that included a specific plan for the development of English language proficiency for these children from the start of their Early Reading First preschool experience. Among other components explained in the invitational priority, the grantee plans were expected to include intensive professional development for instructors and paraprofessionals on the development of English language proficiency.

II. Study Plan

A case study approach was used to follow-up on the ERF national evaluation findings related to implementing successful professional development practices in grantee programs. The primary goals of this study were to:

1. Identify the successful professional development practices in ERF programs determined through the ERF National Evaluation Survey.
2. Expand and elaborate on what these practices look like in one former ERF program.

A. Methodology.

1. Select one former ERF grantee program for participation in the study that had demonstrated exemplary practices and positive early literacy outcomes during its participation in the ERF initiative.
2. Review the ERF national evaluation report's findings on professional development and identify successful practices for the follow-up study.
3. Review existing documents and materials related to the selected grantee program to determine what additional information is needed to expand and elaborate on the ERF evaluation's findings on professional development.
4. Work in consultation with the former ERF grantee project director to identify and locate former program-level staff to contact regarding participation in the study.
5. Prepare a set of interview questions for each staff member group, e.g., professional development providers, mentors/coaches, program administrators, and teachers.
6. Conduct interviews with former ERF program staff to collect additional and detailed information about their experiences with professional development during and after their involvement in the ERF grantee program. It was anticipated that interviewees would include the project director, professional development providers, center directors/site supervisors, mentors/coaches, and teachers.
7. Analyze and summarize the document review and staff interview data using a thematic, qualitative analysis approach.
8. Report on the study's results and formulate conclusions using the ERF findings on effective professional development practices as a framework.

B. Implementation.

Select a former grantee program. In consultation with the Institute, one former ERF grantee was selected for participation in the study. This grantee had been funded from 2004-2007 and received recognition from a federal project in 2007 for demonstrating exemplary literacy instruction and professional development practices. The former director of the program was contacted and agreed to participate in the study and to assist with locating former program-level staff.

The former ERF program had been nominated for federal recognition through an analysis of the ERF database to review grantee applications and identify sites with above average performance on student achievement data. Only a few preschool programs were included in the federal project. Nominee screening and selection were based on the following criteria:

- The preschool setting must be successful in fostering student achievement as measured through demonstrated positive effects on readiness outcomes in language and literacy for preschool children relative to a comparison of some type (including normative comparisons and benchmarks) and/or a trend of gains over time (cross-sectional). The setting must either demonstrate higher achievement than similar programs for at least two years or they must show readiness outcomes that have been improving over a two-year period.
- The preschool setting must be implementing research-based literacy practices with fidelity and quality in more than one classroom or with more than one teacher at the site. Based on available documentation about a site and information obtained through a gap-filling interview with the principal or director at each site, researchers rated the extent to which a site was implementing each practice.

Student achievement data available at that time showed significantly higher early literacy scores in favor of the this ERF grantee's students by the end of the project year, and significant gains on PPVT-III oral language for 69.2% of 3- and 4-year-olds and 80% of 3-year-olds in the program (Early Reading First Performance Report, 2005-06).

Review existing data. A review of the ERF national evaluation report was conducted and successful professional development findings were identified. In addition, existing grantee data that were available at the time of this study was reviewed. Data included the grantee's ERF application, site visitor reports, student outcome results, and other relevant documents retrieved from the ERF database, the grantee, and internet sources. The grantee's 2004 ERF abstract is included in this report as *Appendix A*.

The data review confirmed the need for additional information from program-level staff and suggested areas that would need to be probed in order to gain a deeper understanding of how professional development practices were implemented during the ERF program and insight into what makes these practices successful.

Identify former program-level staff. The grantee project director was able to identify and locate eleven former staff members. A letter explaining the study and inviting staff to participate was sent to the director for forwarding to the potential interviewees. Eight former staff members responded and agreed to be interviewed: two professional development providers, three mentors, two site supervisors, and one teacher.

- *Professional development providers:* The professional development providers were university faculty members who served as the principal investigators on the ERF grant. They were responsible for budgeting, hiring, and professional development. Since ERF, they have remained at the university and continue to provide professional development. One provider, who was also the ERF principal investigator, has been at the university for nine years; the other has worked at the university for six years.
- *Mentors:* Mentors were hired by the grantee to provide site-based teacher support to improve early reading instruction. Currently:
 - The first mentor is a research faculty associate at the university working on a Head Start project that provides professional development on supporting early literacy skill development bilingually to children in the local Head Start. She is the program coordinator and mentors two teachers in the program every week. In addition, she works quarter time on a project developing a screening instrument for Spanish-speaking children.
 - The second mentor is a research faculty associate at the university working on two grants—one focused on developing a curriculum for children with disabilities and the other on developing a curriculum for English language learners.
 - The third mentor is a research faculty associate at the university working in an infant child research program.
- *Site supervisors:* Site supervisors were responsible for overseeing the entire site, staff, children, and families. Responsibilities included lesson planning, home visits, trainings, the indoor and outdoor environment areas, child assessments, and supervising and coaching co-workers and classroom volunteers. One supervisor worked in one of the grantee sites for three years and has been a site supervisor for 20 years; the other supervisor worked in a

different grantee site for three years and has now been working at that site for six years.

- *Teacher:* The teacher worked in the grantee school district site for three years and has been a certified teacher for five years.

Conduct interviews. A set of guiding questions was prepared for each group of interviewees – professional development providers, mentors, center directors/site supervisors, and teachers. Because of the limited nature of this study, and given that the ERF national evaluation reported important findings on providing training in phonological awareness and child assessment, specific questions about professional development activities in phonological awareness instruction and the use of assessment data were added as a way to extend the scope and usefulness of the case study. Telephone interviews were conducted with the eight former staff members who agreed to participate. Interviews were recorded and transcribed (refer to *Appendix B*).

Analyze data. Document review and interview data were analyzed using a thematic, qualitative analysis approach to compare and contrast the data and identify emerging patterns and trends. The results of this structured analysis were used to infer meaning and formulate conclusions.

Report findings. The results of this study were summarized and are presented here as a case study report.

III. ERF National Evaluation Findings*

The ERF national evaluation was conducted with some of the earliest ERF grantees (the 2003 grantee cohort), gathering data on professional development from the fall of 2003 to the spring of 2004 – early in the implementation of the grants. The evaluation was intended to investigate the effects on children’s language development and emergent literacy when

- preschools receive funding to adopt scientifically-based methods and materials, and
- teachers are provided with focused professional development that supports the use of these materials and methods.

A. Overall findings. The national evaluation assessed the impact of the ERF program on teacher and classroom practices by examining the following outcomes:

- teacher knowledge and skills
- the general quality of the preschool environment
- the quality of language, early literacy, and child-assessment practices and environments

Overall findings indicated that the program had a positive impact on children’s print and letter knowledge, but not on phonological awareness or oral language. In addition, the program demonstrated positive, statistically significant impacts on several teacher and classroom environment practices that are intended to support the development of language and literacy skill. Positive outcomes for the following practices included:

- Teacher practices
 - number of hours of professional development that teachers received
 - use of mentoring as a mode of training
- Classroom environment
 - language environment of the classroom
 - book-reading practices
 - variety of phonological-awareness activities and children’s engagement in them
 - materials and teaching practices to support print and letter knowledge and writing
 - extensiveness and recency of child-assessment practices
- General aspects of classroom quality
 - quality of teacher-child interactions
 - organization of the classroom
 - planning of activities for children

* Jackson, R., McCoy, A., Pistorino, C., Wilkinson, A., Burghardt, J., Clark, M., Ross C., Schochet, P., and Swank, P. (2007). *National Evaluation of Early Reading First: Final Report*, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

B. Effective professional development practices. The Early Reading First program viewed professional development grounded in research-based reading research and knowledge of early language and literacy development as one of the key elements for improving preschool language and literacy instruction. ERF grantees were required to provide professional development that was ongoing, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused. In addition, the use of mentoring and coaching was encouraged.

The ERF national evaluation found that the program had positive impacts on the hours of teachers' professional development and increased the proportion of teachers receiving professional development through mentoring. The evaluation report summarized the impact on teachers' professional development as follows:

- ERF increased the number of hours of professional development that focused on language and early literacy topics by 48 hours (6 days) over the 12 months preceding the evaluation.
 - Teachers in ERF-funded classrooms received an average of 72 hours of professional development—the equivalent of 9 days.
- Nearly half of all ERF teachers reported receiving mentoring on language and literacy topics in the year preceding the evaluation.
 - A higher proportion of ERF teachers than teachers in unfunded programs reported receiving professional development on language or literacy topics and on curriculum topics through mentoring or tutoring, the more intensive approach recommended by ERF. The program's impact on the proportion of teachers receiving mentoring or tutoring on language and literacy topics was 41 percentage points. Over half of ERF teachers reported receiving mentoring or tutoring in the previous year on language and literacy topics, compared with 15 percent of unfunded teachers.
 - Nearly 70 percent of all ERF teachers had attended workshop training.
 - A larger proportion of ERF teachers than teachers in unfunded programs reported receiving workshop training on language and literacy topics. The estimated impact on the proportion of teachers receiving workshop training on language and literacy topics was 41 percentage points.

ERF grantees were required to identify and provide research-based activities and instructional materials to develop oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge. ERF programs also were expected to integrate assessments of child progress with teaching so that instruction could build on what

children already know and bring them to the next level. As a result, professional development was expected to focus on these language and early literacy topics.

Key findings related to the type and number of topics are listed below. It is important for the purpose of this study to note that 100 percent of teachers were trained in phonemic and phonological awareness, and nine out of ten teachers received training in assessment.

- One-hundred percent of teachers received professional development in phonemic and phonological awareness.
- The vast majority of teachers received training in six other language-development and early literacy topics, including:
 - literacy-rich print environments (97.8 percent),
 - concepts of print writing and prewriting (96.7 percent),
 - oral language (96.7 percent),
 - facilitating emergent literacy (95.7 percent),
 - alphabetic knowledge (92.4 percent), and
 - oral comprehension and cognition (88.0 percent).
- Nine out of 10 teachers received training in child assessment.
- Three-fourths of teachers received training in traditional early-childhood topics, including children’s development and ways to manage children’s behavior in the classroom.

Moreover, the evaluation found positive impacts on all domains of classroom language, early literacy, and assessment practices, as listed below. Again, it is important for the purpose of this study to note the positive outcomes related to classroom phonological awareness activities and the use of screening and progress monitoring for planning instruction on a regular basis.

- Oral language use by both the lead and assistant teachers
- Book-reading practices that include introducing new vocabulary, using expressive voice, and asking open-ended questions during the book-reading session
- Print and letter knowledge materials and activities to promote letter recognition and the association between sounds and letters
- Written expression and early writing activities

- Phonological awareness activities that promote knowledge of letter and word sounds
 - Rhyming was the most common activity in the spring of the evaluation year, and was observed in 64 percent of the classrooms. Listening and alliteration activities were observed in 43 percent and 32 percent of classrooms in the fall and spring, respectively. Other more challenging phonological awareness activities, such as blending and segmenting words, syllables, initial sounds, and phonemes, were observed in 27 percent or fewer ERF classrooms.
- Child screening and progress assessments on a regular basis to plan instruction
 - Nearly all ERF teachers (98 percent) reported using at least one assessment tool for children in their classes. A majority of ERF teachers (64 percent) reported using more than one assessment instrument with children in their classes.
 - Fewer than half of the classrooms had recent (within 30 days) documentation of children’s developmental progress across a range of emergent literacy areas, while more than half of the teachers said that they plan for instruction on the basis of children’s assessments and could identify an average of two ways in which they use results from child assessments.

PART 2
CASE STUDY RESULTS

IV. Professional Development Practices during ERF

This case study elaborates on the professional development practices identified as effective by the ERF national evaluation. It extends our understanding by providing more in-depth, contextual information about how one former grantee implemented the professional development practices. The study examines what made these practices successful at this site during the ERF program and describes how professional development activities have changed during the years following ERF.

In addition, the study explores challenges encountered by the grantee, how challenges were overcome to improve student outcomes, and lessons learned through the ERF experience. It also looks at the impact of professional development practices on phonological awareness instruction and the use of assessment data at this grantee site, two topics of current interest in the field of early childhood education.

Overall, the grantee program was successful in implementing the practices identified as effective in the ERF national evaluation report and staff reported a positive impact on literacy instruction. Since ERF ended, program administrators have found ways to sustain several components of intensive and focused professional development implemented. A major challenge has been locating funding for site-based mentors.

A. Site description.

Demographics. During ERF, the grantee was located in an urban area in the southwest United States. In 2007, it served 140 preschool children in classrooms housed in Head Start, elementary school, and day-care settings. More than 80% of the children were from low-income households; nearly 60% of students were Hispanic; and at least 50% spoke a language other than English at home. Eighteen percent of the students received special education services.

Program model. The program was established to help preschool teachers serving low-income students develop curricula for enhancing children's phonological awareness, vocabulary, alphabet and print knowledge, and expressive language skills. Built into the program's teaching were methods for monitoring learning progress, screening for early reading problems, and creating a language and print-rich classroom environment.

Combining research, professional development, and community outreach, the grantee collaborated with elementary schools and preschool programs to prepare pre-kindergarten children for success in reading and to establish a proven model that other schools could use.

The program was collaborative effort among university faculty and Head Start, school district, and literacy and learning center administrators. It supported five Early Childhood Education Centers of Excellence, with the university acting as the fiscal agent and coordinator of training, assessment, and project evaluation.

The program's evaluation model was based on an experimental/control group design. Five sites that included public school, day care center, and Head Start classrooms were involved in the evaluation. There were seven intervention classrooms and four control classrooms, with two teachers per classroom.

Evaluation outcomes. Evaluation results demonstrated that children enrolled in grantee program classrooms scored significantly higher on several measures of early literacy compared to 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in non-ERF classrooms. In addition, test scores showed that the grantee students were "at" or "above" expected benchmarks for kindergarten while a high percentage of special needs children no longer required special education services.

By providing professional development for preschool teachers, implementing early reading and math curricula, providing materials for classrooms, and monitoring children's progress, this grantee was successful in improving early reading skills and preparing children to enter kindergarten with the language, cognitive, and early reading skills needed to prevent reading difficulties and ensure school success.

B. Professional development overview. A primary focus of this grantee's program was intensive teacher training in early reading skills, including coursework that provided college credit and in-classroom mentoring by an experienced early childhood team. Training was provided by a five-member professional development team holding masters' or doctoral degrees, with expertise in early literacy assessment and development, reading, special education, and language assessment and development.

Professional development consisted of five key activities essential to high-quality teacher training:

- Instructional classes to give staff the knowledge and skills to teach children.
 - Three times a month, a professional development team of university and literacy and learning center staff members provided courses and training sessions (e.g., lecture and practice) for mentors and preschool teachers, sharing the latest research on reading and early literacy curricula.
- Scientifically-based reading research content that met the state's early childhood standards, coordinated with Early Reading First and Reading First goals.

- Intensive in-classroom mentoring to ensure that teachers know how to provide explicit and intentional instruction that starts with teacher-directed activities and moves to more independent activities.
 - Mentors from the elementary school district paired up and spent a minimum of eight hours a week with preschool teachers from two of the grantee’s participants—a for-profit day care center and a Head Start program. Together, mentors and teachers worked in their preschool classes to translate research into lesson plans and activities that would fit the needs of their students.
 - In-class mentors modeled/assisted, spent at least eight hours a week in each classroom (two to three classrooms per mentor), and held mentor-teacher meetings and teaching/administrative group sessions. They used videotapes of instruction and observation rubrics.
- Guided teacher practice in the classroom to ensure that training had a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and teaching team performance.
- Self- and peer-assessment to train teachers how to evaluate and improve their own classroom performance.

Team training. Teaching teams that included lead teachers, teaching assistants, and administrators attended professional development training classes as a group. Head Start and public school administrators were considered part of the training team because they would be going into classrooms and conducting observations.

Teacher training focused on how to explicitly teach early literacy skills and how to create a high-quality learning environment with many opportunities for children to engage in challenging oral and written language activities each day. Each teaching team received eight hours per week of in-classroom mentoring and received language and literacy materials for their classrooms. After each professional development training class, mentors worked with teaching teams in their classrooms to implement the strategies taught.

Mentoring. Mentors were early childhood teachers or speech-language pathologists with master’s degrees and at least five years experience working in early childhood classrooms. They were in classrooms weekly and spent an entire day with a teacher, essentially becoming a member of the teaching team. They also met with the teachers every week to provide feedback.

Mentors modeled teaching techniques, observed teachers, provided feedback regarding teaching, and helped with lesson planning. Initially a large proportion of mentoring time was devoted to writing objective-based lesson plans that incorporated

the literacy curriculum's pre-K activities, and to revising the classroom schedule to incorporate small-group teaching time, dramatic play, and center-based activities.

Mentors participated in and helped with professional development, and on-site mentoring was directly connected to teacher skill development and evaluation. Teacher evaluation focused on specific skills covered in professional development training sessions.

In a 2006 university-published article, the principal investigator described the beginnings of the mentoring program:

“When we first started the project, there weren't a lot of resources available for early childhood mentors, but we did use a . . . mentoring curriculum handbook. We taught a class to our mentors and then for skills-based mentor training, we met weekly with the mentors, we previewed what the professional development would be, and they helped us, along with the teachers, develop and refine the skills checklist that we used for feedback and for mentoring trainings.”

Mentors were trained to work together with preschool teachers to set goals and plan mentoring activities. Once the mentor and teacher identified goals, they planned a modeling-observation-feedback-action cycle to ensure that effective teaching strategies were implemented and sustained in the classroom.

At the start of the mentor-teacher conference, the mentor asks the teacher to reflect and talk about how the lesson went and whether the teaching objective was accomplished. The skills checklist is used to structure the conference and provides a good starting point for communicating feedback to teachers in a meaningful, collaborative, and effective way. The mentor log is part of an on-site training method that the program uses to help mentors work with preschool teachers to reflect on practice based on classroom observations.

Many staff members experienced growing pains early in the program. “Our first year it was like, ‘What are we doing?’” reminisces one preschool teacher. Another teacher agrees, comparing the process of creating a new curriculum that could overlap their existing one to being in a “lion's den.” Gradually the teachers found ways to implement the new curriculum, using games such as bingo to improve alphabet knowledge, and putting on class plays that make children use new vocabulary words to improve their reading and expressive language skills.

Earning the trust of teachers has been vital to the program's success, as they must critique each teacher's performance in the classroom. One mentor finds that modeling teaching skills in front of children helps develop this trust because “it

shows them I'm not going to ask them to do anything that I'm not willing to do myself." While their support has strengthened teachers' skills, the mentors also feel that their experience with teachers has honed their mentoring abilities.

The director explained how the mentoring program has changed over the years. "Well, [the mentoring program has] really evolved, it's changed every year because the teachers have grown a lot. I would say the first year it was a lot of relationship building and a lot more work on getting lesson plans in place, learning the curriculum and how to implement it. The second year...they were really intensively involved in getting all these other skills up to par with the teachers. We were concentrating on getting every teacher and the assistants because the assistants aren't treated any differently than teachers and our models.

So, they were really involved in these loops of all these different skills. The third year, our emphasis was on what we're calling withdrawal from—we're fading, we have really faded the support and we're doing a lot more cross-classroom mentoring based on the needs we see still left in that classroom. So, we're trying to pull them—they haven't been hands-on in the classroom with kids, they're still doing the mentoring but we're trying to get the teachers to do more of their own self-reflection and figuring out what they're going to do when we're not there."

First year goals. The grantee reported learning "as we went" about providing professional development over the three years of the project. The first year, they had partners in childcare and Head Start and in public schools where some of the teachers had bachelors' or masters' degrees and others just had high school diplomas. Therefore, it was important to begin with helping teachers obtain a strong knowledge base and understanding of how early literacy and oral language develop.

At the same time, the program was developing a brand new curriculum and needed to train teachers around the curriculum and creating objective-based lesson plans. During the first year, a fair amount of time was spent on creating language and literacy enriched classrooms and making sure those materials purchased with ERF funds were being used wisely and supporting the curriculum.

The first year focused on getting the basic skills in place, the curriculum going, and kicking off intensive professional development. Important professional development topics included:

- implementing the new curriculum
- creating a rich classroom environment
- creating objective-based lesson plans

- integrating small group instruction that supports language and literacy development into the daily schedule
- assessing student progress

In addition to phonological awareness and other literacy skills, the program trained teachers on implementing dialogic reading because of the growing evidence base supporting this practice as a good way to teach oral language. The principal investigator explained:

“We emphasized scaffolding conversation. We know that talking to children is a really important skill for building their future literacy development and many teachers just are not comfortable talking to children in conversations. They are very good at managing and organizing classrooms but not so much with the talking.”

A professional development provider pointed out that the grantee had a large English language learner population, and many of the teachers did not have the background knowledge to understand that children learning English go through different stages of English acquisition. As a result, the program wanted to emphasize the importance of native language development. This was a relatively new concept for some of teachers. First year professional development in this area focused on building teachers’ background knowledge in this area.

Overall, first year professional development was extensive. Additional topics covered in professional development included:

- early math skills
- integrating literacy instruction into a dramatic play center
- oral language needs for children on IEPs and the use of computers
- portfolio assessment
- successful transitions from preschool into elementary school

Second year goals. Because new teachers joined the program the second year, professional development offered refresher training as well as training on new topics such as:

- incorporating instruction into music, movement, art, science, and transition times
- writing, e.g., journaling
- implementation of strategies and bilingual assistance to support language development throughout the school year for English language learners

Third year goals. The primary goal for the third year was to help program staff and partner organizations plan for transitioning out of ERF. Professional development focused on:

- identifying key pieces of the program they wanted to make sure continued,
- developing administrative support for those pieces, and
- providing training for staff that had not been part of ERF.

Additional topics included behavior management and brain research, literacy learning through the web, taking dramatic play outside, and poetry and book making. The principal investigator commented, “By the third year, the teachers were getting great at creating new and innovative things that went above and beyond their curriculum.”

Feedback from teachers showed that although they felt overwhelmed the first year, they viewed this training as a very valuable experience by the third year.

Training delivery. Professional development was operated through the university’s continuing education program using ERF funds for tuitions. This worked well because many teachers in the program had never been to a university and continuing education staff went out to sites to help teachers enroll and navigate the system.

The grantee provided year-round training, and teachers were required to attend presentations. During the school year, staff met twice a month, generally in the late afternoon and evening. Typically participants were given reading assignments and sometimes homework. In the summer, a more intensive two-day training workshop was offered. The first year there were a couple of weeks before the program started, so the grantee was able to provide intensive daylong trainings.

All participants received stipends because the training was after work hours. In addition to the stipend, staff earned two units of graduate or undergraduate credit, whichever they needed, each year for all three years.

After the first year, the program decided to reward teachers with incentives for successfully using new skills. There were skills rubrics and teachers earned stipends based on how many skills they were implementing in the classroom. The principal investigator explained:

“It was taking them a lot of work to do it, work outside of their time. We have our stipend money, so instead of just giving a stipend, they earned more stipend money for achieving more skills. Teachers had deadlines for the time period where they can be working on skills, maybe for about three months after they

learned them in professional development. During that time they would keep doing these cycles until they achieved two out of three observations and they had done everything on the checklist for that skill. Some people made more money than others because they tackled more skills. We found that worked very well and it was motivating for them, too.”

C. Mentoring overview. Mentors spent eight hours a week in each classroom providing modeling and coaching to teachers and assistants on skills they were learning in the professional development sessions.

A “cycle” approach was used—*I do, We do, You do*. Mentors would first attend a professional development class on a topic. Then for the following two weeks, they would go out to classrooms, model the strategy, and observe the teachers and assistants using the strategy. In addition, teachers were given time to practice the strategies and the opportunity to videotape themselves doing the strategy when the mentor was not there. The cycle was repeated if needed.

Practice was very important, and teachers would often practice a strategy several times with the mentor beside them. When the teacher felt ready, the mentor would observe the teacher with a checklist of skills they were expected to master. Mentors would hold conferences to provide feedback on the observation using a mentoring log, which evolved into a skills checklist. During the conference, teachers were given the opportunity to share their thoughts about how the lesson went.

Mentors helped teachers with lesson planning. Mentors were available for at least one lesson planning session a week to help teachers incorporate the skills and objectives they were targeting for the weeks’ lesson plan. They focused on the skills teachers were learning at the time. Sample program materials are included in *Appendix C*.

D. Mentor training. The grantee’s mentor training evolved over the first year of the project. As the principal investigator explained, “We were one of the first ERF projects. We did not have to propose in the grant how we train mentors. We had a big ‘aha’ about that about half way through our first year because we had mentors who all had masters degrees. They were speech-language pathologists or early childhood teachers so they were very experienced, but they were not very experienced as mentors. It was clear that being a mentor is not equal to just being a speech pathologist or teacher.”

By the second semester of the first year, the grantee recognized that they had to add mentoring training workshops. Mentors went through all the professional development training along with the teachers and the grantee met weekly with mentors to model strategies, however, more was needed.

For the second year, they developed a mentor training package, which included a systematic review of two books covering early childhood mentoring topics. Mentors received separate training at the same time they attended professional development sessions with their teachers. The separate training included two sessions on conducting conversations with teachers during which the mentors did role-playing. In addition, mentors attended early childhood education conferences and a mentoring conference that they found to be valuable.

Mentors received extensive training on a number of early literacy topics including:

- vocabulary development
- phonological awareness and phonemic awareness
- dialogic reading and its role in language development
- scaffolding children's conversations
- monitoring child outcomes in the classroom
- impact of the classroom environment on language development

E. Teacher training. As described previously, training followed a cycle that began with teachers attending a professional development class to learn about the content and teaching strategies related to a literacy topic. Teachers then were given a chance to practice skills. Next, the mentor modeled the instructional strategies in the classroom once or twice. The mentor then observed the teacher implementing the practice twice to reach criteria. The cycle ended with the mentors providing a follow-up training for the teachers.

High-priority professional development topics for this grantee included:

- Phonological awareness. The grantee provided training on the development of phonological awareness skills, where it fits into language development, and strategies for integrating this practice into the daily curriculum. Professional development provided a fair amount of information and activities to supplement the curriculum, which primarily focused on rhyming and initial sounds. At the time, the grantee began work on revising the core language and literacy curriculum, including the addition of a scope and sequence for phonological awareness.

On-site mentors modeled how to integrate phonological awareness strategies into lesson plans and demonstrated small group classroom instruction in this area for teachers to observe. They followed up by talking with teachers about additional daily classroom activities where phonological awareness could be integrated. The goal was to provide maximum exposure to those skills throughout the teaching day. Teachers were expected to teach letter sounds and letter-sound correspondence and to integrate phonological awareness

activities into activities such as transitions, outdoor times, dramatic play, storybook reading, and music.

- Dialogic reading. The grantee did extensive work in training teachers in dialogic reading and following up with on-site mentor support. Dialogic reading was used every day and was very rich in content. Grantee teachers used the PEER sequence (Prompt the child to say something about the book; Evaluate the child's response; Expand the child's response by rephrasing and adding information to it; Repeat the prompt-evaluate sequence to make sure that the child has learned the expansion); and CROWD prompts (Completion; Recall; Open-ended; Wh- questions; and Distancing), and also included print referencing in their storybook reading.

The program required books for teachers to read to students. Each curriculum theme required the reading of one narrative, one expository, and one pattern book. Because the program had a large Spanish-speaking population, these children always heard the book read in Spanish the first time and then heard it read in English the second time. In addition, the program trained teachers in how to select books for interactive reading and how to use two explicit strategies to target vocabulary. Mentors helped teachers choose books and plan how to highlight and explicitly teach vocabulary words identified in the story. This helped teachers to think ahead and develop an explicit plan for teaching vocabulary during interactive reading.

- Using assessment data. When the program started, data collection was not objective or systematic; it primarily took the form of anecdotal record keeping and informal observations. The program designed professional development to help teachers collect objective data related to language skills such as vocabulary and phonemic awareness. Training began with helping teachers use assessments already included in the curriculum. Mentors demonstrated how to administer the curriculum-based assessments with students, and then guided teachers on collecting and using assessment data. If teachers didn't have time or needed assistance, mentors would help them conduct assessments.

Teachers followed a five-week curriculum cycle—teaching for four weeks, followed by a fifth week review of the material, which then was followed by an assessment. To ensure that teachers assessed students, mentors had the teachers include the review week in their lesson plans. “If the teacher saw it on the lesson plan and knew this is part of this week, this is what [they would] do on this day, It was a critical component to making sure assessments were done.” Training evolved into helping teachers use data to identify individual and whole class progress and needs. Graphing the results helped teachers with data interpretation.

V. Challenges to Implementation

Former grantee staff identified numerous and varied challenges to implementing effective professional development practices that arose over the three years of the program.

A. Transitioning to a research-based curriculum. A major challenge was helping teachers read, understand, and accept the research on early literacy instruction. Initially in the first year, teachers were uneasy about beginning a new literacy curriculum that was research-based. Teachers were “shocked to think about overlaying a new curriculum. Many teachers have their favorite themes in early childhood that they taught forever and they just love them.” Thinking about ways to meld a favorite theme into a new way of doing things proved a challenge for many teachers.

- The principal investigator added, “There are always people who are enthusiastic about trying something new. The ones who are not take a while to convince. Or, you might not convince them. In that case the system [the educational organization] they work for has to decide how they want to handle that. It was not up to us [as professional development providers].”
- From a teacher’s perspective, “It was challenging. And there was some resistance to things because it was difficult and it was, I think, a higher level teaching than any of us were doing...old teachers are kind of resistant to change sometimes.”
- One mentor explained the challenge in the following way: “Our teachers were used to using a developmental curriculum, and they had a hard time looking at some explicit teaching strategies and saying that this is developmentally appropriate—even though they were reading research that said at this age we’re seeing that kids need to have these skills and they can learn these skills and they can be delivered in a developmentally appropriate way. But a lot of our teachers came from the school of not teaching things explicitly because you might be doing something that developmentally kids are not ready for. So accepting that was really hard.”

B. Using explicit instruction. One of the biggest challenges was helping teachers change the instructional delivery approach that they were used to and had been trained in—primarily large group instruction, reading stories, and free-choice time.

- One mentor explained, “[In ERF] we were asking them to use a more structured curriculum, more direct instruction, and to use assessments and collect data. The three of those things combined were really challenging for

teachers who were so used to an open-ended, play based approach. In essence we were asking them to think more about what they were providing for children. Initially teachers struggled with that...this went against their philosophy of early childhood...[But] we were encouraging them to envelope both ideologies. I think it was challenging for teachers initially to wrap their minds around this more directed instruction. But once they did, they were able to really see a difference in children's learning."

- A site supervisor recalled, "Before ERF, teaching was more giving the children the activities to do and handing out play things. But, after doing the ERF training, it was like, OK, you doing a lot more work, but the payoff is worth it. The modeling, the coaching them, and showing them (the children) made so much difference."
- Teachers gained working knowledge of explicit instruction through their mentors. One teacher said, "Just having someone in the classroom who could model those skills and just bump up the level of teaching we were doing. It was significant. ...instead of telling me what to do, she showed me what to do by doing it with the students. It just gave great insight and feedback."
- Another mentor added, "Even though we were reading the research that said it's really important for kids to get this explicit instruction and for them to have phonological awareness, language skills, vocabulary skills, it was really hard for them to make the changes." She stressed, "I think that three years of training and mentoring was the amount of time they needed to make some of those changes and incorporate them and sustain them over time."
- A third mentor commented on why small group instruction was challenging to teachers: "It was tough and challenging for many of our teachers because they had to let go of control of the entire class. They really had to lean on their teaching assistants and expect their teaching assistants to have the same level of teaching that they did."

C. Improving phonological awareness instruction. Challenges to improving phonological awareness instruction included a lack of teacher understanding of how phonological awareness fits in with other literacy instruction; the need for a research-based curriculum with a scope and sequence addressing these skills; and inadequate pre-service training for teachers on essential literacy skills.

Building teacher knowledge. The grantee was strongly committed to helping teachers understand how phonological awareness fits in with other early literacy skills even though this proved to be a challenge. Without this knowledge, teachers would

continue to struggle with creating instructional materials, planning lessons, and integrating phonological awareness into daily classroom activities. This practice became a key focus of professional development activities.

- A professional development provider explained, “I think that the hardest thing for teachers is integration – it’s pulling it all together. It’s what does it look like implementing all of these single pieces? It’s not so much can they do phonological awareness, they can. The issue is more how do I schedule phonological awareness when I have to do small group instruction for math, for science, or...dialogic reading?”
- A mentor said that professional development on phonological awareness was invaluable. She reflected, “For myself, it was the phonological awareness, because this wasn’t part of my college teaching. This helped me break the words into sounds and (know) how to get kids to hear sounds in words and how to make sounds into words.”

Providing a research-based curriculum scope and sequence. Many early childhood classrooms do not have a curriculum scope and sequence to guide early literacy instruction.

- The principal investigator elaborated, “Teachers really need that. They can’t create the activities all themselves. They don’t have time to do that. They don’t have the scope and sequence for how early phonological awareness skills have to come in to support development of later skills...they have to know what to expect. What should a three-year-old know versus what should a five-year-old know. It is a big challenge.” She added, “There are some programs on the market that just teach phonological awareness skills. They have great activities but seeing how you should order those and what you should do if a child doesn’t know how to do a particular thing, how you back up is a big challenge.” The former grantee is currently working on developing a scope and sequence for phonological awareness that will be incorporated into their curriculum.
- Another issue pointed out by a professional development provider was that they included phonological awareness very late in the training when they realized that although they assumed teachers were doing it, they weren’t doing enough of it. “[We decided] let’s dedicate one training to phonological awareness, but by then I felt it was too late.”

Expanding pre-service training. Many teachers do not receive the pre-service training they need in essential literacy skills for young children.

- Although some teachers have had exposure to phonological awareness instruction perhaps through workshops they've attended, the principal investigator commented, "...it is still not clear to me that people who are being trained as teachers are getting a lot of exposure on how to promote early literacy skills. They might have classes on children's literature, but often the big five skills that we think about are not presented in that way in teacher training. I think teacher training is still something we need to improve on."
- In thinking back on her prior training, a site supervisor said, "Actually, phonological awareness - most of it was new to me. I mean, yes, we did introduce letters before, but I never really went into the sounds...I never really looked at it as, hey, this is part of really what we need to do. It was just more of the letter recognition...so after the phonological part, every week we made sure we had something of it, whether it be rhyming, whether it be beginning sounds...we tried to cover all of the areas we learned."

D. Training teachers to use assessment data. Data can be powerful. As the principal investigator stated, "It is also great accountability when you go to your school board and ask for another teaching position or for materials, you can show what the children are learning and compare them to other programs that may or may not be doing the same thing you are doing." Nonetheless, helping teachers learn how to conduct assessments and use data poses a major challenge for many early childhood programs.

- A site supervisor recalled, "I remember (assessing the children) as being very helpful in identifying and individualizing for the kids, because when you do teach, sometimes you think that they are getting it, but in actuality, they are not...So you can say, 'Oh, I really thought she knew how to rhyme words, but then you assess, then...maybe they were just in the background and maybe need a little more help on that skill.'"

Institutionalizing assessment. One of the biggest challenges is a lack of commitment to planning and assessment on the part of the education institutions. They are not providing teachers with sufficient time to plan and implement good instruction, and time to look at the assessments and plan instruction based on data.

- Although many education organizations have come to recognize that early childhood assessment and curriculum are important and need to be developmentally appropriate, the principal investigator pointed out, "We have made that swing but I don't think it has happened in actual classrooms yet. We have lots of people who were trained when that wasn't the consensus. I

can see it is going to be a number of years until we have a teaching corps out there that have been trained in that way. It is like a slow moving ship.”

- A professional development provider emphasized the need for programs to institutionalize objective assessment. “Unless the administrators do this, I can talk to them as a mentor, I can talk to them until we turn blue, and it’s not going to help.” In her opinion, assessment needs to be curriculum-based. “I don’t think it is, ‘Can [the teachers] do it?’ The question is does the institution have the expectation and...is there time to 1) do the assessment and 2) look at the assessment, and plan instruction based on that assessment.”

Developing curriculum-based measures. According to the principal investigator, “[Schools can benefit from] a good curriculum [that has] some sort of curriculum-based measure that shows validity and reliability,...[that can] be administered quickly, and has repeatable forms so you are not telling the same story over and over again.”

- The grantee’s state has a list of three different curricular measures that teachers can choose from, and state-funded programs are required to use one of the measures. Although they are child observation-based measures that can provide valuable information, the principal investigator cautions, “...they are not reliable in terms of scoring. And, observational measures take a lot of distilling to get them down to the kinds of things where we make decisions on what we should be re-teaching. I think you need quick objective-based measures on the skills that your district or program thinks are really important. This is also powerful information to share with families so they can see what their child is learning.”
- This former grantee has met this challenge by embedding assessment measures into the curriculum: “[The curriculum] has a review every fifth week to give teachers time specifically to collect data on children’s progress and use it to inform their next set of lessons in the next five weeks or so. Having the curricular measures built into a curriculum is really important. If they are not built in, then helping education systems and teachers figure out what to use in place of those [is challenging].”

Organizing data. In the first year of the program, teachers collected portfolios. The principal investigator elaborated, “We used the pizza box method. Every child had a big pizza box that was donated free. They could put their art in there. They would annotate samples. Our intention in doing that was not for assessment as much for families to show progress. We also wanted samples to send up for when they went to kindergarten. So the kindergarten teacher would kind of know the developmental level of that child when they came in.”

Portfolios presented three challenges: 1) collecting materials took a lot of time; 2) copies needed to be made for parents; and 3) the receiving elementary schools did not have a system for handling the portfolios. The use of portfolios was discontinued after one year due to these complexities and other methods for communicating with parents and kindergarten teachers were put in place. However, a teacher reported that she still uses journals and portfolios: “We keep ongoing samples of work. We have the students give some input into that... We’ll keep them for conferences or end of the year portfolios.”

Using data. Although assessment was one of the most challenging practices for teachers to implement, seeing the student data turned out to be one of the most powerful motivators for teachers.

- According to one mentor, “Teachers were able to see how well the kids were doing, that was really powerful for them, and it helped them think about small group instruction and differentiating instruction. Helped them think, ‘Here is what we can do so this child can make more progress.’ It also helped them think about Tier II intervention. What to do with the kids who were not coming along and how to fit in extra practice for them. Without the data they would not have been thinking about that at all.”
- Another mentor added, “Many early childhood teachers start out working with a pre- and post- set of data... When we asked our teachers to do the curriculum-based measures every six weeks, of course at first they were not very excited to have to do these assessments so frequently. We would get together and we would look at those curriculum-based measures. We could tell where a child was growing or where a child was struggling.

The mentor and teacher would come up with an idea of which children needed additional assistance and ways to provide that assistance in helping to build their skills... We would be able to tell from the assessment data whether it was the entire class that missed out on specific letter or name or specific child... If the teacher didn’t have time or needed assistance in conducting them, we would help conduct the assessments.

But we really tried to encourage the teacher to start doing it. Especially in year two when they started to see the benefit of the assessment and we were able to train them to look at the data that they were collecting... I think that made a huge difference in the way that these teachers now look at data. In the end all of the teachers would have told you that they really did not want to be doing this in the beginning. They thought it was a big waste of time, but then over

time as they saw all the different data points and saw progress or no progress or even regression in some children, they really began to realize how important data collection is.”

- A site supervisor gave examples of how her team used assessment data to fine-tune instruction. “So every 5 weeks we were making adjustments. ‘Ok, these children are OK; these children - so and so needs a little bit more, but we won’t pull them out of their group.’ What we would do is just pull them aside and throw in an extra 5 minutes. ERF had come up with a thing called level 2, which is giving them the extra help of, like, letter recognition and sounds in small groups. We would get that small group together and do an extra activity with them.”

E. Providing planning time and structure. Often teachers are not provided with sufficient time for planning nor are they given a structure for lesson planning.

- One mentor explained, “If you can’t look at what objectives the kids need to meet and plan fun, hands-on, age-appropriate activities, if you don’t have time to plan those, it’s really hard to carry those out [effective instruction] during the day. Teachers need more support for planning and for providing materials...It takes a lot of hands-on props and materials to teach these skills in a fun way so books and pencils and paper are good but props that illustrate a vocabulary word, props that help you retell a story, props that help you act out in dramatic play and use language you’re using in dramatic play – all that takes money and time to put together. And if you have support for that, I think you can do a better job sustaining those early literacy and language skills through those teaching strategies in the classroom.”
- Another mentor pointed out, “We had a significant amount of time with [the ERF] teachers. So going in and doing the teacher conferences on Fridays, helping them develop their lesson plans, helping them prep for their activities, and giving them ideas/suggestions when we were doing those things made a huge difference in our mentoring.”
- A preschool teacher valued the time spent on planning. “Just the level of lesson planning was something that was way above what we had done before and it was me and my mentor and another teacher sitting down for 5 hours a week working on them. It was priceless.”

F. Gaining administrative support. Support from site administrators is essential in ensuring the success of new practices. If teachers are to be expected to implement new practices, the practices need to be made a part of institutional procedures at sites.

“If this is not integrated within a system that...[is] used for professional evaluation, then it is not going to take hold.”

The grantee dealt with this challenge by requiring administrators to commit upfront to the new practices and participate in team training. The principal investigator stressed, “Getting administrators on board is important but not easy. They are pressed for time, have meetings all over the place all the time. To get them to come to these meetings and be a participant is one of the very biggest challenges. They are often happy to arrange for you to come train their teachers, but they are not a part of it. In the training I have done since then, it has never worked if you don’t have buy-in from administration. It just doesn’t work.” Sustaining the new practices has remained a challenge for the former grantee sites.

G. Accommodating differences in teacher backgrounds. There is often a big disparity in the educational levels of early childhood teachers, ranging from high school through master’s degree programs. Professional development providers and mentors in this program recognized this disparity and adapted activities and on-site support to meet individual teacher needs.

- One teacher, who began her teaching career right out of high school, appreciated how the professional development met her needs. She said, “The professional development went right along with the mentoring we were receiving. So it was topics that we were using in class...everything from English Language Development to vocabulary instruction, to setting up dramatic play experiences in your classroom...the topics followed right along with the mentoring and the in-class experiences we were having also.”

“I taught pre-school ever since graduating high school and I became a totally different teacher after going through the program. I mean, just consider that I’m at a mastery level now due to the experiences.”

H. Supporting special education staff. Special education has gone through a transition period over the last several years. Supporting special education teachers in understanding that Tier I core instruction is for all children, including special education students, and that teaching objectives for these children need to be keyed in to state standards has been a challenge. The principal investigator explained, “The changing face of early childhood special education has been a big challenge for special education teachers. [They have been teaching for years from IEPs.] They saw that as their charge, what is valuable for teaching individual children.”

VI. Changes in Professional Development after ERF

Professional development has been an on-going effort that this former grantee takes very seriously. Professional development “has the potential to impact teachers and children right away,” whereas some of their research in the area of early literacy and oral language “takes time to conduct and to publish it and move it out into the public sector.”

Since the ERF program ended, the grantee has continued to provide professional development to some of the agencies they were involved with during ERF. They have maintained a close working relationship with Head Start and school districts and currently provide training to new staff. Some other school districts and private providers have expressed interest in their professional development. In addition, the principal investigator has been invited to do national training for Early Head Start and a statewide training for Early Head Start and Family Literacy.

Most importantly, the former grantee has been able to maintain the connection between professional development presentations focused on building knowledge and providing some degree of mentoring to help teachers implement the skills they have learned. One of the providers described how she builds this connection: “We do once a month presentations and then we do weekly mentoring four to five hours a week in the classroom. Then we do focused teacher discussions every month where they meet with different groups and problem solve. Each training is connected to a set of skills so the mentors and the teachers will work on those skills for the next month.”

Listed below are the most significant changes in professional development practices reported by the grantee’s providers.

- A. Focus on theory to practice.** One of the professional development providers, who primarily does professional development presentations, reported that she has added additional time to talk about application to classroom instruction: “I try to cover the why and the theory but then, I try to make sure that we have time to talk about application in the training...I really work on making sure that we have time to talk about what would a lesson plan look like? How can I implement this? What are some good activities that connect to this?”
- B. Cover fewer topics.** The professional development providers agreed that during ERF they expected teachers to do too much at one time. One provider said that she is “trying to spread it out and not to push them to implement so many things at one given time. It is very difficult for them. Let them work on one skill at a time and build on that instead of having so many expectations.”

C. Work with administrators. “You have to have complete backing from administrators...unless it’s an expectation from the institution, the teachers don’t implement it.” It’s essential to connect administrators to classroom expectations for teachers in terms of structuring the classroom, scheduling lesson plans, and evaluating teachers based on important skills. The professional development provider went on to explain, “Professional development has to happen not only from the bottom up but also from the top down to create this high level of expectations...my colleague and I are thinking...that’s the next way to go with professional development.”

During ERF, administrators were expected to participate in team trainings, however, sometimes they were “lackadaisical about it [and that was] the first thing to go off their schedules.” One of the professional development providers now has a couple of grants that requires that administrators attend and participate in the whole process. She reported that by the end of the year, the administrators had changed attitudes on key instructional practices, such as goal-oriented lesson plans and small group instruction.

In addition, the program is moving towards having curriculum specialists participate in the training process “because they have direct contact with teachers beyond the mentors, and they evaluate the teachers.” This will require a separate funding stream.

D. Limited funding and support for mentors. The end of ERF funding had a major impact on the type of professional development activities provided by this former grantee. Even if a site commits to a series of classes, they can no longer offer paid mentors. These providers now need to concentrate on helping educational organizations figure out where to locate even a small amount of funding for mentors and how to provide an alternative service that can be accommodated at their site. “Unfortunately, mentors are some of the first people to lose their jobs since they are not teaching...even if it is small amounts of money where you can get to hire somebody whose job it is to mentor, and they have free time to do that even if they are teaching, that is so important.”

Decrease in frequency and intensity. Mentors commented on the decrease in mentoring time and intensity, and its impact on instruction:

- “One of the changes in the mentoring that I do now is it’s not as frequent. We don’t spend as many hours with the teachers as we did in Early Reading First. That’s a bit of a disadvantage I think because changes in skill delivery and developing skills that you have not used previously in the classroom take time to change. So having a shorter amount of mentoring time feels like it’s even more difficult to help teachers make those changes.”

“[They] don’t receive the same intensity or the same amount of time for professional training. So they don’t have the advantage of being able to train on a skill, go and practice it, have it modeled for them, and deliver that skill with a mentor watching, and then loop back and train on that again. That was one of the real advantages I see to what we did in Early Reading First – that we were able to introduce phonemic awareness, start with it, watch the teachers deliver a lesson on phonemic awareness, and then come back to it and take it to another level.”

- “I am a literacy mentor now...we don’t have quite the depth because we don’t have the same amount of time with these teachers that we did in Early Reading First...We are really only in there for about half of their day (four hours) and then we try to meet with them if we/they have questions or concerns...Then we have an observation tool that we use with them, but it doesn’t have the same kind of depth that ERF had or the same intensity. And I think because we have less time with the teachers, I wouldn’t say we are less effective, but it’s just a different type of mentoring. It takes longer in the school year to develop that trust. I think because I don’t have that intensity and the relationships or that consistency of seeing them so regularly for such in depth amount of time. I’m having to do a lot of trust building in the beginning and that takes a lot of time and energy away from using the actual curriculum.”
- “After Early Reading First, I was a math mentor, and we only were in the classrooms one time a week – one class period a week. But it was a little bit more focused as to what we were looking at each week. We kind of had a set of skills that we were specifically looking for each time. With Early Reading First, we were looking at a really wide range of skills. So it was a little less intense.”

Less support for mentors. The training mentors received during ERF spanned a period of three years and involved an array of activities that are no longer funded. One mentor noted the value of the ongoing support provided through ERF funding to mentors, “Continued professional development for us was a really good part of ERF. After three years of ERF, I didn’t have any hesitation going into [my] next project as a mentor. I felt that I had solid mentoring skills from all that [professional] development. It was a really well set out program for developing teacher and mentor skills over three years. It had a really nice development cycle to it.”

VII. Lessons Learned

Interviews with former program-level staff provided insight into the professional development practices implemented during and after the Early Reading First program. The case study results confirmed many of the findings related to effective professional development practices discussed in the ERF national evaluation. However, the value of the case study goes well beyond the evaluation's findings. This study not only expands on what is already known about professional development practices that work, it suggests new areas for further exploration and provides a detailed picture of what happened at one grantee site during ERF. Perhaps more importantly, the study illuminates what happened in this program after ERF funding ended—how professional development practices changed and what staff took from the ERF experience.

A. Impact of professional development on literacy instruction. Staff members were able to offer some insight into how professional development can have a lasting effect on instruction.

- One mentor believed that the foundation ERF established would help teachers sustain these practices. “Part of that is because we were in the classroom for three years, so for three years they consistently had mentoring, PD, and they had us there to support and encourage them and to give them ideas. Because they had three years of this, it really changed their teaching style overall; we really facilitated change.”
- A second mentor commented, “I just had a conversation with one of the teachers who was in [the ERF program] and she was saying how...the mentoring was the best part for her and how it just really changed her whole way of teaching...now she considers herself a master teacher.”
- One ERF-trained preschool teacher said, “We’re trying to backtrack now and give the (new) teachers that kind (of training) that we got through the grant, the different kinds of training that I received. So we’re actually teaching a lot of the same things to the preschool teachers that are current now and trying to get them on the same level. I’m still using the same dramatic play and the same language skills (lesson plans) and I just kept everything I got from them and learn from them as far as what to teach and how to teach it.”

Phonological awareness. Although it is difficult for former grantee staff to know if there has been any lasting effect of the ERF professional development on current instruction, staff members have heard many teachers say that they continue to implement what they learned in ERF

- The principal investigator reports that she has heard many of the teachers and assistants say, “they would never go back” to what they were doing before in phonological awareness instruction: “They say, ‘I would never read a book again the way I used to read a book,’ which is to just sit down and read the book. They know why they are reading it and that day they might have an objective for teaching phonological awareness in a book; they might have picked a pattern book specifically to help children pick out rhymes or alliteration in the book and to practice it. They might have picked it to teach vocabulary, because it was a narrative, or expository. What they would tell you [is that] they would never just read books again, but what is embedded in that is that they understand that a book is a great context for teaching all kinds of language including print or phonological awareness.

[In addition] I think the teachers would say transitions are a great time for teaching phonological awareness because you can play a lot of games and do chants and things while you are moving from one place to another. [In] the new curriculum that we developed that is exactly what we do. We built phonological awareness into transition time, so the kids are singing songs, stomping and things that are rhythmic and teach phonological awareness.”

- A professional development provider added, “We started seeing a lot of phonological awareness implementation during transition activities for example...I think I find phonological awareness one of the easiest things to change. You just have to remind them to keep it in the lesson plan...we will be working on scope and sequence for them. And I think if they have it in front of them, they can do it.”
- One mentor commented, “I think many teachers are aware of the importance of nursery rhymes and are aware of teaching letter sounds, but they tend to get more focused on the concrete aspects. Even now when I go into classrooms I see teachers really focusing in on letter names but teaching letter sounds has gone past them. In ERF we really worked with our teachers on using nursery rhymes, teaching children how to rhyme, teaching children how to identify the rhymes. Teaching children letter sounds.”

Using assessment data. Learning how to conduct assessment and use data helped to inform instruction because it became part of lesson planning.

- A mentor explained, “[The teachers had] a review time at the end of a theme or unit because they felt like they needed to know where the kids were. They needed to know where they stood with the skills in that unit before they went onto the next one...They would say, ‘I need to go back to this for this week

because so many kids are not using these vocabulary words. So many kids are not, they can't tell me a word that begins with this letter.' It really made a difference for them as far as how they would plan what they were going to do and then, how they would change their instruction, because they changed groups of kids based on who was doing well and who was lacking in certain skill areas...In fact, I would say that that was one area where I saw change that was sustained...Assessment, changing small groups, and increasing small group instruction were changes that were evident and were sustained."

B. Professional development practices that work. Overall, teachers need to develop a strong knowledge base followed by on-site opportunities to observe and practice skills if they are to successfully implement new instructional practices. They need ongoing, consistent professional development to build skills and sustain research-based practices. One of the professional development providers summed up, "Just trainings alone don't do it because it's difficult to translate that into actual practice. So my feeling is that you have to have a level of knowledge to understand and the theory of the why and the how, and then you need actual hands-on in the classroom to help you with that...it has to be a combination."

Mentoring. Interviewees agreed that the most effective practice is to provide teachers with knowledgeable mentors. The professional development providers recommended, "If you could only have one type of professional development...provide training for the mentors then send them into the classroom."

- The principal investigator added, "If I had it to do it over again, now if I was hiring mentors, I would probably be training them ahead of the time they did any mentoring. There are a lot better resources and material available now on mentoring."
- One mentor said, " I think you need to be skilled in the skills you are trying to teach, so that you can model them effectively. Because if you can do a good job modeling with (the children) and the teachers can see that what you're doing is effective, then they are more likely to buy into it."
- Another mentor cited the *cycle* approach as most effective. She talked about the "modeling by the loop...where the mentor models, the teacher observes, the teacher models for the mentor, and then there's a discussion. There was a loop around the skill. There were times in the beginning where we would target to model a skill for the teacher, but the whole loop wasn't in place. A lot of times, the teachers would say, 'Oh, here's another person to conduct a small group. Here's another person to do an activity.' [Then they would] kind of walk away from the session the mentor was doing and go and do their own

session or attend to something else. And, you'd find yourself modeling for no one. So, it was most effective to have the loop—where the teacher was there when you modeled, and was expected to model the same skill back to the mentor, and then have a feedback session. So that kept everybody involved [in the process].”

- Another mentor stressed, “It was the consistency [of professional development] over time that made a difference because it wasn’t just one PD training and then we were done...Every single month we came back together and we talked about what we had discussed the previous month. Then we built upon those skills...[PD] was consistent, it was logical, and it was based on current research. Then our curriculum was based around that research. So it all fit together so nicely.”
- Mentors received training on process as well as content. One mentor related the importance of “other content, like building trust, ways to start a relationships, how to talk about multiple intelligences, what are the roles of mentor. We were working with some of the teachers’ supervisors and we needed to draw the line between mentoring and supervising.”

Building a team knowledge base. Another effective practice is to provide professional development classes in which all classroom and administrative staff are asked to participate.

- A professional development provider explained, “If you just take a lead teacher...and you train them and they have to go back and train everyone on the team, they are so pressed for time, it is unrealistic that they are going to have the time to model the practice. If they all attend training together they all are on the same page. They all have the same terms; they have seen the same things modeled. They are more of a team.”
- A site supervisor stressed the importance of everyone in a team knowing their responsibilities, which is part of effective lesson planning. “Make sure when you are doing that lesson plan that everyone knows what their responsibilities are, what their tasks are. So say, teacher A has three kinds and they’re doing an activity and this is the objective and this is what you want that group of kids to learn...And the same for each teacher, because if you don’t do that, then teacher A might think they are supported to do teacher B’s lesson. So if everybody knows what they need to do and you’re prepared for what you’re going to teach the kids, everything else just seems to fall into place.”

- The principal investigator added that the professional development class should provide “some kind of didactic training or at least modeling skills for people in a group setting where they have a chance to not only sit with their team to discuss and plan but they get to sit with other teams who are facing the same challenges. They can get ideas from them and develop friendships. We found that was a powerful networking opportunity for people who even though they might work around the block from each other and the children that they are teaching might all go to the same elementary school, they never met each other. We focused on training everyone within a geographic area... They had a chance to feel comfortable and get to know each other.”
- One of the mentors commented, “At the same time that [the teachers are] learning this information and learning how to incorporate it, [the mentors] see what they’re learning. We’re there with them and hearing about some of the latest research and some of the latest practices at the same time. That gave us a really good common ground for us to go into the classroom together to work on those skills.”

Focusing on research-based practices. The professional development providers agreed that they overwhelmed teachers during the first year of ERF and that it is important to “keep it simple.” They suggested identifying the top five skills with the strongest research based and working on getting teachers to a level where they are implementing a skill successfully. Then, move on to the next skill or perhaps work on two skills at once.

- One mentor described how she benefited from training focused on literacy research: “When I came into Early Reading First and was provided with the research and the skills to not only work with children to help develop their early reading skills, but also to help guide the teachers in developing those skills—those were the strengths that I really got out of the professional development training.”

Modeling instruction: Modeling was a strength of this grantee’s mentoring program.

- One mentor reported, “I think that was really our strength in our mentoring program because when a teacher can sit and watch someone else do it with their children [in their classroom], with the same book they are using, with the same vocabulary words, they get ideas about how they can do it. They start to understand that this is something that is attainable.”
- A site supervisor related how mentors helped “walked us through the objectives of the grant in hands-on style... They helped us with the kids by

modeling so that we could see examples of the different objectives the program had. They would also meet with us and help us prepare lesson plans. They would take us...so we could see the different classrooms and the different ways, the different set ups.”

Videotaping instruction can sometimes serve as an alternative to on-site modeling. The former grantee collected videotapes of teachers during ERF, which continue to be a valuable asset in their teacher training program. Videotapes are helpful because teachers can view authentic instruction and discuss it with a coach or peers. Videotapes are especially valuable when teachers can observe teachers making mistakes, children misbehaving, and challenges that come up classrooms. This helps to put teachers at ease and make their expectations realistic.

Providing time for practice. The professional development providers agreed that the single-day, or even a weeklong, workshop was not effective in bringing about change. “The literature bears this out, it is the workshop type where you come and sit and you soak in whatever someone is teaching you then you go back and try to implement it yourself. We just know that with adults, it is hard to change your routine and behavior. It is very challenging. Even the people who are most motivated to do that, it involves more than just taking that knowledge and putting it in. Other things usually have to go.”

- The professional development providers will do a workshop only if the requesting site has a system worked out for providing time for teachers to practice skills back in their classrooms. Changing behavior requires practice. The principal investigator explained, “I won’t do [a workshop] unless there is some system worked out for practicing back in their classrooms. I have to work that out with the administrators, or whoever is doing that. Usually they understand that completely, but it puts a load on the direct supervisor for that...I will work with them beforehand to identify who is going to hold the people accountable for practicing the skills I am teaching and who will be available to at least serve as a mentor to help out. I usually insist on having more than one session because we know that single workshops don’t work if they have not had a chance to practice something and bring it back and talk about it.”

Facilitating transitions to elementary schools. Kindergarten teachers were asked to participate in the grantee’s training in order to build stronger transitions to elementary schools. The kindergarten teachers became the grantee’s transition coordinators. The principal investigator summarized:

- “Training kindergarten teachers in terms of what is happening in preschools was powerful. It was a two-way street. Many kindergarten teachers had never been to a preschool classroom and were amazed at what they were learning. Many of the preschool teachers had never been to an elementary school. By having not only the teachers and the assistants know what the children have to do in kindergarten, but having the visits for the kids that was powerful, too.

What was really interesting was their classrooms looked more like preschool classrooms by the end of the three years. They knew they could get both higher and lower early literacy out of things like dramatic play. They knew how to do that whereas before they were very focused on the curriculum with a letter a week and workbooks...[the] kindergarten teachers were very well respected teachers in the district so they had some clout in terms of going back to kindergarten and first grade teams. We even had one librarian who came because we met in the library for professional development.”

C. Need for specialized mentor training. A mentor is not just a knowledgeable and experienced teacher. A mentor needs to develop a host of others skills if they are to be successful.

Professionalism. The grantee stressed that mentors need to be able to take things professionally and not personally.

- The grantee found that they needed to move mentors around. “We decided that over the three-year project, every teacher would have at least three mentors. We did not move them around during the year, but usually they had a primary and secondary mentor and then that would change. We did that so everybody would know that they would not have that same interpersonal relationship for the whole time but they would have a chance to get close.”
- Mentors must have a clear understanding of their role. “In our case, the mentors were never in a position to grade or sit in on personal evaluation teams. It was a confidential relationship and that was clear from the beginning. But, they still need to know where to draw the line between being just a friend to the teacher and being someone who a teacher is accountable to for growth and change. All of that is a lot more complicated than just coming in and showing somebody how to do something and then leaving in the end.”
- One mentor commented, “There is a fine line you have to develop, where you develop the teacher’s trust and you recognize that you’re coming into their classroom...and so you have to be very respectful of their space and of how

they run their classrooms. You really have to coach and guide without being intrusive.”

Knowledge of how adults learn. It is essential that mentors are knowledgeable about adult learning, especially when teachers come from a range of educational backgrounds.

- A professional development provider elaborated, “People who have attended higher education tend to have a didactic way of learning and then applying it. Many people have not attended higher education. Even when you get into their own environments, their classrooms are like their homes, and then you are a guest in their classrooms. You are not a teacher who is teaching them. So how adults learn best, the different learning styles of adults, and how you can perceive when you are in someone’s environment versus when they are coming to your environment.”
- One mentor said, “Patience comes first. Then, with adult learners, I had to learn ways to work with the multiple intelligences...And you need to be a good listener.”

Understanding diversity. Mentors need to understand the educational culture they are working in and recognize that staff is coming from diverse backgrounds and levels of educational experience. “For example, Head Start has a very different educational culture coming out of a different background and goals than public school special education preschool programs. If our mentors had not worked in each of those areas, and not all of them had, they had to learn about the culture to get things done within that kind of environment.”

- One mentor described her experiences working with teachers from different educational backgrounds in a Head Start program and an elementary school setting. “None of [the Head Start] teachers had degrees...They were [very dedicated to the program] and very receptive to all of our information and willing to try it, which was very interesting. But they also, because they hadn’t had a lot of experience or an educational background, really needed a lot more support and guidance. So I found myself mentoring much more frequently in that classroom than I did in my other classroom.

I also mentored in a family literacy program...and the teacher I was working with had a BS and a teaching certificate. She had been teaching for many years in early childhood and in some ways, I think because she had so much experience, she wasn’t quite as open to learning as the Head Start teachers were. I had to develop trust, and that was something that took quite a long

time to develop with her. And it was also difficult to get her to commit to times to get together to work on her lesson planning, to have our meetings. But I think toward the end, once she really started to understand that I was there to help and support her and I wasn't there to just observe and provide criticism—but that I was truly there to help her become a better teacher—she became more responsive and more participatory in the process. It was really interesting because it is not what you would have thought.”

How to give effective feedback. Mentors need to be highly skilled at providing direct and specific feedback.

- One mentor commented, “A lot of times, it’s hard to be really direct, especially when you’re seeing things in the training that are not being carried out. [Mentors need provide direct feedback and teachers need to feel] like they have a chance to respond to it and then maybe perform or practice the skill again for observation.”
- Another mentor reported, “I found the best way to [give feedback] was through constructive criticism – always finding something good to tell the teachers, and giving them what I would recommend they might try, and then wrapping up with something positive...Even asking open-ended questions [was helpful], ‘How do you think that went? What could you have done to improve that?’
- A third mentor added, “The Head Start program that I worked for...was really big on communication, reflective supervision, and open feedback, and positive feedback. So, I had training in that – just like timely feedback, making sure that you do it within – you know, you can’t wait a month because then too much time has passed. That you start with the positives and say what went really well. You first ask [the teachers] to evaluate, ‘What do you think went well? What do you think you struggled with? What would you change?’ And then you go into, ‘This is what I saw. This is what I think maybe you could’ve tried differently or done differently, or maybe done better.’ So starting out with the positives and what they did correctly and what was great and then having them do some self-reflection.”

Modeling instruction. Mentors need to be skilled in effective teaching strategies so they can model them effectively. As one mentor stated, “If you can do a good job modeling [strategies] and the teachers can see that what you’re doing is effective, then they’re more likely to buy into it.” Important skills areas mentioned by interviewees included the following:

- *Differentiation* is an essential part of successful classroom instruction. Mentors need to understand how to differentiate lessons for children with special needs and how to help the teachers take data and do measurement activities to help them differentiate.
- *Objectives-based lesson planning* proved to be a big challenge for the mentors in the grantee’s program. They especially needed to learn how to help teachers move from writing very simple lesson plans to being able to write measureable objectives. One site supervisor recalled that “every month we had to turn in one of our lesson plans, the ones that we thought were our best ones...and there was a guide that we would follow to make sure we hit certain points...They would evaluate our lesson plan and write their comments, their feedback to us and say this, this, and this and score us on it. So overall, we would take all the feedback that they’d give us and we’d process it and we’d say, OK, what can we do to change things around?”
- *Behavior management* poses a challenge in most classrooms. To be helpful, mentors need to be skilled in this area. “Most of them had it from being in their own classrooms, but coaching another person on how to manage behavior, especially if you are from a different cultural background, it can be important in learning how to do that.”

Knowledge of the age group. One mentor explained, “I had ten years of experience working in a variety of early childhood settings before I came in and worked with teachers. So it was so easy for me to tell teachers that I understand when you have a crazy day or when you have a child that is out of control. I understand these things...I could give them a lot of empathy and a lot of understanding of where they are coming from. The fact that they have demands placed on them by their administration, paperwork, parents, by so many demands outside the classroom [is challenging] and so I was able to give them support, and encouragement.

D. Importance of systemic change. The Early Reading First program provided the funding, structure, and expectations needed to provide effective professional development focused on research-based practices. When ERF ended, the grantee experienced the constraints of providing professional development within a programmatic structure that lacked the necessary funding, structure, and expectations.

- The professional development providers stressed the need for systemic change to bring about instructional change, “I don’t think teachers change unless they have the structure and institutional expectations to change.”
- One provider added, “I think [the program we’re working with now] has a lot of good strengths, and I’m very proud that now everybody’s required to do

goal-based lesson plans [and small group instruction] and everybody is required to have to a degree... So that was huge. But we spent two years working on that.”

- One site supervisor related how she now supports month-long modeling with new staff, building trust between co-workers so that teachers feel comfortable asking for help.

E. Success stories. Interviewees shared insights into what they learned about effective professional development practices through the following success stories:

- From a professional development provider: “I would say a success in particular was [with] a teacher that was an assistant, and our teaching assistants [participated in] all the professional development training – they had the mentoring, they had the skill feedback, they modeled the skills for us, and we modeled them for them... [this] teacher embraced some of the early literacy areas and stopped seeing herself as an assistant and more as a teacher. So, instead of spending a lot of time in maybe cleanup, straightening, she would go at free-choice time and she would sit down, read a book with kids, and prompt them to ask questions at a concrete and then a more abstract level, which is something that we worked on. She would engage kids in a phonemic awareness lesson during free-choice time that she knew was an area that we were working on that week. So getting an assistant teacher to see themselves as a teacher throughout the day, for a teacher assistant was a success.

She left after a couple of years. She had some health issues that made working with little kids and being up and down a lot a bit of a burden for her so she ended up leaving the classroom. However, I think there was a happy ending to that story... [there was an] assistant next door, who came at the end of this particular teacher’s time, I think she came in new. [The teacher] modeled for her less cleaning and more teaching. That assistant [is still] with one of our ERF teachers. I just talked to them recently. Even though the teacher didn’t stay, I did see some carry-over from her to the new assistant that was really a success.”

- From a mentor: “We had one Head Start teaching assistant that was really not only scattered in her life but also in her teaching style. I think ERF, when we were giving her more structure in terms of the lesson plan, guidance, and a regularly set schedule; I think that really improved her teaching. At the end, I think she would say that it really changed not only her teaching, but also kind of her perspective on life. She realized that she needed more structure in her life as well.”

- From a mentor: “There was one of the teaching assistants in one of the classrooms. I was their mentor for the entire grant. She...still to this day tells anybody and everybody that [the ERF grantee program] changed her life, changed the way she teaches. I was her mentor and every time I see her, she wants to give me a hug, and she’s just awesome in the classroom and just phenomenal with the children.”

VIII. What More is Needed?

Grantee staff shared important recommendations for improving professional development that go beyond the suggestions that emerged in discussions of challenges and lessons learned. Staff insights and recommendations regarding the type of additional training or support needed to improve or sustain research-based instruction in early childhood settings are presented in this section.

A. Dissemination. Information about research findings and research-based practices needs to be disseminated in a timely manner and in a form that is accessible to teaching staff. The What Works Clearinghouse, for example, is one model for providing information on effective research-based practices to teachers and administrators. Teachers will need assistance in finding, reading, and interpreting the research, and professional development providers can help them translate research into practice.

- One mentor believed that “the foundation ERF laid down...will help [teachers] to sustain their teaching practices and also to seek out research-based practices. Because we were able to provide so much research about early reading and children’s early reading skills, I feel they now know that they can go out and learn about what is being researched and what is actually working...I think they will seek out research more frequently.”

B. Systemic program change. One of the professional development providers suggested, “I think it’s the principals that need additional training, and the administrators who are helping these teachers pull it all together...institutionalized structure change and systemic, high quality expectations [are needed]...I think we’re training the teachers to death. It’s more of a systematic, structural change in institutions that needs to happen.” Mentors agreed that support is critical:

- “I think one of the things that would really help with teachers sustaining the practices they learned in ERF would be to have more support from the people who are the administrators in their program. Many of them have program directors and the program directors have a lot of training in early childhood, licensing, and a lot of the administrative things that have to be done in a program. But, they weren’t as fully engaged in some of the teaching practices...Some of those Early Reading First teachers that I visited that are sustaining the Early Reading First skills they learned have a program person who went through as one of our administrators. She incorporated one of the checklists we did. She just kept it on after we left, so she would come back and visit her teachers and check that they were using some of the early literacy and some of the ERF skills in their classrooms.”

- “I think people lose sight of the fact that being in a preschool classroom with twenty four-year-olds is exhausting and to be a truly good childhood teacher you need time to prepare quality instruction...they really aren’t given the time to do what needs to be done. I think it really needs to be a systemic change where we realize that ECE teachers need time with children. But they also need time to prepare their classroom, lessons, and activities, and opportunities to go to conferences and interact with other teachers so they can get ideas, suggestions, and continue to build their knowledge base so they can become the best teachers that they can be.”

C. English language learner assessments. Information is needed on assessment for ELL students. A professional development provider urged, “[We] don’t know where [English language learners] are in...language development...in the English acquisition stage...It has to be one of your main areas of [professional development]. [Teachers] need to know if a child is in the silent period, in the topographic stage, in a fluent stage, and then modify instruction according to where those children are. And so, one of the ways I try to implement assessment is to [have teachers] think about, where is the child and what kind of instruction or adaptations will you use? Because sometimes teachers keep those children too low. They treat them like they don’t have enough English and they don’t push them to do inferencing, to answer questions with whole sentences. And sometimes they expect them to do too much.”

D. Pre-service education enhancement. Universities need to take responsibility for ensuring that their undergraduates have the best research information available. “It is not just about teaching you how to be a teacher, but teaching you how to weigh the evidence and go find evidence based-methods.” In addition, there is a growing need for early childhood leadership training.

Community colleges should play a central role in preparing assistant teachers. “We used to have the Early Childhood Certification and that has kind of gone away. The community colleges need to be playing a role...for people who are at that stage of their career, too.”

E. Professional organization activities. Professional education organizations need to be more active in disseminating research. They need to explore ways to provide some type of professional development or other activities to support their members who are already out there in the field.

F. Federal involvement. The government needs to do more in providing research and practice information that is accessible and easily understood by people already working in the field, and professional development opportunities and resources.

APPENDIX A
2004 ERF GRANTEE ABSTRACT

2004-2007 ERF Grantee Abstract

Project Director: XXXX

Funding: \$2,491,777 for a three-year project period

Number of Teachers Served: 20 teachers and staff per year

Number of School Districts Served: 1

Number of Students Served: 160 per year

The *ERF Program* will support five Early Childhood Education Centers of Excellence. The centers comprise public school, private, and Head Start classrooms. The _____ acts as the fiscal agent and coordinates training, assessment, and project evaluation. The goals of the *ERF Program* are:

- Every child will show growth in oral language including listening comprehension, expressive language, and understanding and use of vocabulary.
- Every child will demonstrate growth in phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge.
- Every child will show growth in background knowledge and thinking skills that support listening comprehension, expressive language, and understanding and use of vocabulary.

Services, instructional materials, and activities, including explicit and contextualized instruction, will be facilitated with the use of the *Harcourt Trophies Pre-K* curriculum.

Professional development will consist of five key activities essential to high-quality professional development: instructional classes to give staff the knowledge and skills to teach children; scientifically-based reading research content that meets the state's Early Childhood Standards, coordinated with Early Reading First and Reading First Goals; intensive in-classroom mentoring to insure that teachers know how to provide explicit and intentional instruction that starts with teacher-directed activities and moves to more independent activities; guided teacher practice in the classroom to insure that training has a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and teaching team performance, and self and peer assessment to train teachers how to evaluate and improve their own classroom performance.

Screening reading assessments including the *PALS-PreK*, will be implemented along with *The Preschool Word and Print Awareness Task*, *Trophies Pre-K Progress monitoring assessments*, *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)*, *the Woodcock-Johnson III Test of Achievement* and *the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)*.

The *ERF Program* includes an evaluation plan that will be carried out by Dr. _____ of the University of _____.

APPENDIX B

ERF GRANTEE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Please start with introducing yourself by name, affiliation, position, and length of time in your position. Describe your role and responsibilities.

My name is _____. I am an associate professor in the Department of _____ at _____. I have been here for nine years. I was the principal investigator on our Early Reading First (ERF) grant along with my colleague _____ who is also an associate professor in our department to lead that grant. We were responsible for budgeting, hiring, and professional development.

Talk a little bit about what you have been doing in professional development since Early Reading First ended.

Since the ERF project has ended we continue to do professional development for some of the agencies we were involved with in ERF. We provided training for new staff in both Head Start and the school districts that we work with. We have maintained a close working relationship. As a result of the training that we did that had been seen by several people since that time, I have done national training for Early Head Start and also a statewide training for Early Head Start and Family Literacy. And, some school districts have been interested and some private providers. It has been an on-going effort and something my colleague and I really take seriously because we do a lot of different kinds of research but professional development research has the potential to impact teachers and children right away. Some of the research we do in the area of early literacy and oral language takes time to conduct and to publish it and move it out into the public sector.

Describe the type of professional development provided, some of the topics covered, and who you trained during ERF?

We learned as we went in our professional development. As you know, ERFs are three years long. The first year of the project we had partners in childcare and Head Start and in public schools where some of the teachers had bachelors or masters degrees and some just had high school diplomas. We felt first it was really important for them to develop a base knowledge and understanding of how early literacy and oral language develop. We also were developing a brand new curriculum. We had to do a lot of training around what is a curriculum and how do you create objective-based lesson plans. The first year we spent a fair amount of time on getting language and literacy enriched classrooms. Making sure that the materials we purchased through ERF were being used wisely and were supporting the curriculum we developed.

The first year was a lot about getting the very basic skills in place, getting the curriculum going, and kicking off a pretty intensive professional development time. Some of the topics we talked about were: assessment for children, implementing curriculum, creating a rich classroom environment, creating objective-based lesson plans, and creating a classroom schedule with small group instruction that supports language and literacy development. We also trained on dialogic reading because there is a good evidence-base that continues to accumulate for dialogic reading as a good way to teach oral language.

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

We emphasized scaffolding conversation. We know that talking to children is a really important skill for building their future literacy development and many teachers just are not comfortable talking to children in conversations. They are very good at managing and organizing classrooms but not so much with the talking. And because we are speech/language pathologists, we like talking a lot.

We had a big math curriculum in addition to our language and literacy curriculum so we did training around early math skills, dramatic play, how to set up a dramatic play center and get language going in there. We had a significant number of children who had individual education plans in each of those schools, so we did training around oral language needs for children on IEPs, how to use computers in the classroom, and then toward the end of the year, which was a very busy year, we focused on successful transitions from preschool into elementary school. Bob Pianta's work has shown that that is really important to get kids off to a good start. Finally, we ended up with doing some portfolio assessments for the children. So that was the first year. That was a lot.

In the second year, we had a few new people join us. We had lost a few teachers, so we had some new teachers come in, so we had to bring them up to speed. For the second year we had some refreshers on the topics I just mentioned. We also trained on some new activities. We concentrated on successful transitions, incorporating literacy in the music and movement and art and science. We also did a fair amount of training on English Language Learners and how the curriculum should support their language development from early in the school year until late. We had an emphasis on teaching writing in the classroom. That included journaling and the kinds of activities that would help children develop their writing.

In the third year, we really focused on helping teachers, and the organizations we were working with, think how they would transition out of ERF. What were the key pieces that they wanted to make sure they continued and how could they develop administrative support for those pieces and how they could then train people who had not been part of ERF. In addition to those plans, which we worked on in our professional development training, we had what we called the level three training on behavior management and brain research. Also working on the web, creating literacy learning through the web, and taking dramatic play outside. There was nice unit on poetry and book making. By the third year, the teachers were getting great at creating new and innovative things that went above and beyond their curriculum.

The way we deliver professional development training was that we had teachers teaching the assistants and administrators from the three different organizations. Altogether we met twice a month, late afternoon and evening for professional development. We did that throughout the year. In the summer we had usually a more intense two-day training workshop. All of the participants received stipends for attending the training because it

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

was after their work hours. They also received university credit. They received two units per year for all three years for the university credit. They did some reading and typical class kind of things for that too. We didn't use outside conferences because we kept them pretty busy doing all of the things we were doing. All in all, I think the feedback showed that the teachers were pretty overwhelmed the first year but by the third year they felt that it had been a very valuable experience for them. The first year we had a couple of weeks before it started, so some of that was pretty intensive daylong trainings.

You mentioned teachers teaching assistants and administrators, and I know you provided mentoring and coaching. Talk about how mentoring fit into professional development and the training mentors may have received.

We were one of the first ERF projects. We did not have to propose in the grant how we train mentors. We had a big "a-hah" about that about half way through our first year because we had mentors who all had masters degrees. They were speech-language pathologists or early childhood teachers so they were very experienced, but they were not very experienced as mentors. It was pretty clear that being a mentor is not equal to just being a speech pathologist or teacher.

By our second semester, we decided we had to add mentoring training workshops. Although, we met weekly with the mentors, and we did role-playing and a lot of the things that would help mentors, we were busy catching up with all the issues. We were not being proactive about it. For the second year, we developed a mentor training package. There were two books out then that were covering early childhood mentoring topics. We systematically went through those in a separate training class for our mentors. The mentors also did all the professional development training with us.

Then, we had a cycle approach. If we had a professional development class on dialogic reading, for the next two weeks the mentors would be working with the teachers in their classrooms and the teaching assistants on dialogic reading. It was kind of a "I do, we do, you do" cycle where we would learn about it in professional development class, the mentor would go out and model that in each of the classrooms for the teachers, usually a couple of times. Then the mentor would help the teacher/teacher assistant and would be there watching them do it. Then we had the teacher video tape themselves when the mentor was not there doing the technique or whatever they were learning about. They would turn in things, if it was a lesson planning, if the teacher felt comfortable. Then we would go back in, observe, and decide whether that person looked like they got the skill where we would like it to be. If not, we would do another cycle with that.

The mentors were in each classroom for eight hours a week. They had plenty of time to be doing the modeling and coaching. After our first year we implemented what was kind of like Brownie badges, but we decided in conjunction with the teachers, they would really like to be rewarded in a way for achieving these skills. It was taking them a lot of

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

work to do it, work outside of their time. We have our stipend money, so instead of just giving a stipend, they earned more stipend money for achieving more skills.

We would have deadlines for the time period where they can be working on skills, maybe for about three months after they learned them in professional development. During that time they would keep doing these cycles until they achieved two out of three observations and they had done everything on the checklist for that skill. Some people made more money than others because they tackled more skills. We found that worked very well and it was motivating for them too.

In terms of training mentors now, there is a lot more available on mentoring and coaching in educational settings. If I had it to do over again, now if I was hiring mentors, I would probably be training them ahead of the time they did any mentoring. There are a lot better resources and material available on mentoring. That was a big “a-hah” for us.

What type of specialized knowledge or skills do you think mentors need to be effective, besides understanding early language development and teaching strategies?

I actually wrote a chapter in a book on this after learning and working with other ERFs. They definitely need to know how adults learn and especially adults from a wide range of educational backgrounds. People who have attended higher education tend to have a didactic way of learning and then applying it. Many people have not attended higher education. Even when you get into their own environments, their classrooms are like their homes, and then you are a guest in their classrooms. You are not a teacher teaching them. So how adults learn best, the different learning styles of adults, and how you can perceive when you are in someone’s environment versus when they are coming to your environment.

Helping with behavior management is a lot bigger issue than I thought it would have been. We had to begin with behavior management. A lot of the mentors needed skill in that area. Luckily most of them had it from being in their own classrooms, but coaching another person on how to manage behavior, especially if you are from a different cultural background, it can be important in learning how to do that.

Objectives-based lesson planning was a big challenge for our mentors, especially in helping teachers move from writing very simple lesson plans to being able to write measureable objectives. They really needed skill (development) in that area.

They had to be flexible. Sometimes people are not ready to work on a skill when you are ready. Also, there may be multiple things going on in their classrooms or their lives.

You have to learn how to take things professionally and not personally when you are a mentor. You develop close relationships with the people you are working with.

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

We found that we needed to move mentors around. We decided that over the three-year project, every teacher would have at least three mentors. We did not move them around during the year but usually they had a primary and secondary mentor and then that would change. We did that so everybody would know that they would not have that same interpersonal relationship for the whole time but they would have a chance to get close.

You really have to understand educational culture and cultural systems. For example, Head Start has a very different educational culture coming out of a different background and goals than public school special education preschool programs. If our mentors had not worked in each of those areas, and not all of them had, they had to learn about the culture to get things done within that kind of environment.

They really need to know how to differentiate lessons for children with special needs and how to help the teachers take data and do measurement activities to help them differentiate.

Then they really have to know the difference between being a mentor, what a mentor's roles are, and what they are not. In our case, the mentors were never in a position to grade or sit in on personal evaluation teams. It was a confidential relationship and that was clear from the beginning; but they still need to know where to draw the line between being just a friend to the teacher and being someone who a teacher is accountable to for growth and change. All of that is a lot more complicated than just coming in and showing somebody how to do something and then leaving in the end.

What type of professional development do you think is most effective (and least effective)?

I am pretty clear that the least effective, and the literature bears this out, is the workshop type where you come and sit and you soak in whatever someone is teaching you then you go back and try to implement it yourself. We just know that with adults, it is hard to change your routine and behavior. It is very challenging. Even the people who are most motivated to do that, it involves more than just taking that knowledge and putting it in. Other things usually have to go. So, the single day workshop or even a weeklong workshop is not very effective at getting change.

I think that one of the grants we have been working on since ERF is over is another colleague and I developed a curriculum for special needs children. We started out the first year; we were implementing that program with about monthly mentoring in the classroom. We found out that is not nearly intensive enough.

If I had to bet, I would say the top thing to do is have mentors who are knowledgeable. If you could only have one type of professional development, I would provide training for the mentors then send them into the classroom. However, mentors are really busy

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

mentoring and they often don't have the time to conceptualize topics and bring background knowledge.

My second level would be the professional development class of some kind. I think it is valuable in that case to have everyone that works in the classroom be a part of that because small group instruction is so important for children. If you just take a lead teacher or just a speech language pathologist and you train them and they have to go back and train everyone on the team, they are so pressed for time, it is unrealistic that they are going to have the time to model and give the practice, whereas if they all attend training together they all are on the same page. They all have the same terms; they have seen the same things modeled. They are more of a team.

The second level would definitely be some kind of didactic training or at least modeling skills for people in a group setting where they have a chance to not only sit with their team to discuss and plan but they get to sit with other teams who are facing the same challenges. They can get ideas from them and develop friendships. We found that was a powerful networking opportunity for people who, even though they might work around the block from each other, the children that they are teaching might all go to the same elementary school. They never met each other. We focused on training everyone within a geographic area. Once they knew each other, some of them even shared families, different siblings but they never talked to each other. They had a chance to feel comfortable and get to know each other.

I forgot to mention, we also had kindergarten teachers participating in our ERF so we could build stronger transitions to elementary schools. Training kindergarten teachers in terms of what is happening in preschools was powerful. It was a two-way street. Many kindergarten teachers had never been to a preschool classroom and were amazed at what they were learning. Many of the preschool teachers had never been to an elementary school. By having not only the teachers and the assistants know what the children have to do in kindergarten, but having the visits for the kids that was powerful too.

We found that our kindergarten teachers were our transition coordinators. They went to all of our classes and gave the perspective, but they found out what to do with a child in class that is not ready for the level of instruction. They did not know what the precursors were to early literacy. They did not know how to back up. Kindergarten was the starting point. These days, kindergartens have a pretty high starting point. They didn't know what to do. As a result of our training they did. What was really interesting was their classrooms looked more like preschool classrooms by the end of the three years. They knew they could get both higher and lower early literacy out of things like dramatic play. They knew how to do that whereas before they were very focused on the curriculum with a letter a week and workbooks. These two kindergarten teachers were very well respected teachers in the district so they had some clout in terms of going back to kindergarten and

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

first grade teams. We even had one librarian who came because we met in the library for professional development. She got really interested in some of the things we were doing.

You mentioned that the participants received a stipend; did they get any continuing education credits or any kind of credits toward certification or undergraduate degrees?

They earned two units of graduate or undergraduate credit whichever they needed each year. That was in addition to the stipend. We used ERF money to pay their tuition. We ran it through continuing education which was nice because those classes can start a little later in the year and they actually send people to your group and help you enroll and all that. A lot of the people have never been to a university. It can be daunting to them in how to apply and all that. So that part worked out well.

Since ERF has ended, how has your professional development changed? What are your funding sources right now, and have there been changes in the kind of topics covered, type of professional development or mentoring?

Of course it has changed because even if the people that we are working with commit to a series of classes, we don't have paid mentors. Now if I am doing professional development training and they want the workshop model, I will work with them beforehand to identify who is going to hold the people accountable for practicing the skills I am teaching and who will be available to at least serve as a mentor to help out. I really won't do workshops if I am getting paid for them. I won't do them unless there is some system worked out for practicing back in their classrooms. I have to work that out with the administrators or whoever is doing that. Usually they understand that completely, but it puts a load on the direct supervisor for that. I usually insist on having more than one session because we know that single workshops don't work if they have not had a chance to practice something and bring it back, and talk about it. When big problems hit and they usually do, they don't have help overcoming them. It taught me a lot about if you really want someone to change their behavior, even a single skill, for example, dialogical reading, then they need some practice.

I have started to realize how accountability in terms of the early childhood leadership is either a stumbling block or really helps people. If they get credit in their own job for doing something well because it is valued by their leadership, then they will do it. If it is not integrated with the system that they are being used for evaluation/professional evaluation then it is not going to take hold. Especially in our country, we don't have much in terms of training or research in early childhood leadership. With the current economy, a lot of those people, at least in our state, are losing their jobs. We are kind of set back I think.

Another thing, keeping it simple, identifying your top five skills that you are going to teach, get them to a level where people are doing very well. So pick the skills that have the strongest research base and work on that skill until they can do it in their sleep. Then

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

move on to the next skill or maybe work on two at once. I know we just overwhelmed people the first year (of ERF) with all we were trying to get them to do so keep it simple. Keep it simpler. That is something I have learned to do.

A third thing is because of ERF and some other projects; I have a lot of video tape of teachers. That has really been a help as we are training. When we started ERF, we didn't have any of those training video tapes but now we do. That helps teachers the first time they see something where they can see it and discuss it. Especially when you have kids that are not perfect in the videos and teachers making mistakes and funny things happening, it helps to put people at ease and make their expectations realistic.

Funding sources for professional development: I think helping educational organizations go in and partner with them, and help them think about where could they get some funding if they wanted to have a mentor or a full time mentor. Once Reading First ended a lot of the funds they were using for mentors in early elementary school, went away, but I think there are places, even if it is a small amounts of money where you can get to hire somebody whose job it is to mentor and they have free time to do that even if they are teaching. That is so important. I know in the Head Start we left, they had five mentors. We helped do some training for them. Unfortunately, mentors are some of the first people to lose their jobs since they are not teaching. I am convinced that that is important, so helping people figure out how they can get a mentor out of not very much money is something we have concentrated on too.

What do you think are the biggest challenges for teachers in teaching phonological awareness and using assessment data to plan instruction? What type of professional development helped?

I think teachers have had some exposure to phonological awareness where along the way if they have gone to workshops but it is still not clear to me that people who are being trained as teachers are getting a lot of exposure on how to promote early literacy skills. They might have classes on children's literature, but often the big five skills that we think about are not presented in that way in teacher training. I think teacher training is still something we need to improve on.

In terms of phonological awareness itself, you can teach teachers what it is and give them activities to do. They are pretty good at doing that but until they really have a clear understanding of how it fits in with other early literacy skills they are not very good at creating new materials on their own or integrating it.

That is where I think a good curriculum comes in. I still think the majority of early childhood classrooms in our country are not using a curriculum at all that has an actual scope and sequence in either math or early literacy instruction. Teachers really need that. They can't create the activities all themselves. They don't have time to do that. They

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

don't have the scope and sequence for how early phonological awareness skills have to come in to support development of later skills. Not that they all are just built on top of each other but they have to know what to expect. What should a three-year-old know versus what should a five-year-old know. It is a big challenge.

That is one of the things we try to help them see – what young children are doing with phonological awareness in their play and what they understand about it – as we do training. There are some programs on the market that just teach phonological awareness skills. They have great activities but seeing how you should order those and what you should do if a child doesn't know how to do a particular thing, how you back up is a big challenge.

What about using assessment data?

That is a challenge. Assessment data goes hand-in-hand often with a curriculum. A good curriculum should have some sort of curriculum-based measure that shows validity and reliability, that should be able to be administered quickly, and have repeatable forms (so you are not telling the same story over and over again), and that teachers can use that data to guide their instruction.

I particularly like the curriculum we developed that has a review every fifth week to give teachers time specifically to collect data on children's progress and use it to inform their next set of lessons in the next five weeks or so. Having the curricular measures built into a curriculum is really important. If they are not built in then helping education systems and teachers figure out what to use in place of those.

Our state now has a list of three different curricular measures that teachers can choose from. If you are a state funded program you have to use one of those. All three are observation-based measures where they are observing children in authentic situations. Those have their place but they are not reliable in terms of scoring. Two different people can have such different ideas about what a child really knows based on their play. Kids don't do the kinds of skills we want to know if they have them. It takes more than just observation measure. And, observational measures take a lot of distilling to get them down to the kinds of things where we make decisions on what we should be re-teaching. I think you need quick objective-based measures on the skills that your district or program thinks are really important. This is also powerful information to share with families so they can see what their child is learning.

In our ERF project, we found that having that kind of data was one of the most powerful motivators for teachers. Once they saw that data and they saw (usually) how well the kids were doing, that was really powerful for them, and it helped them think about small group instruction and differentiating instruction. Helped them think, "Here is what we can do so this child can make more progress." It also helped them think about Tier II

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

intervention. What to do with the kids not coming along and how to fit in extra practice for them. Without the data they would not have been thinking about that at all. So, I think data is powerful. It is also great accountability when you go to your school board and ask for another teaching position or for materials, you can show what the children are learning and compare them to other programs that may or may not be doing the same thing you are doing.

Other than just looking at scores, have you trained teachers in using portfolios or collecting work samples and organizing data?

In our first year we did collect portfolios. We used the pizza box method. Every child had a big pizza box that was donated free. They could put their art in there. They would annotate samples. Our intention in doing that was not for assessment as much for families to show progress. We also wanted samples to send up for when they went to kindergarten. So the kindergarten teacher would kind of know the developmental level of that child when they came in.

We found that we had all these materials that took quite a bit of time for the teachers and had to make copies of them so the parents could have a set for home if we were going to archive them. The receiving elementary schools did not have a system for handling them. It did not go very well. The next two years, we did not use that. We used other kinds of transition thing. In talking to the kindergarten teachers—we do not have time and we are not getting this for all children. If we only get it for a few children in our class it is not going to make an impact on what our instruction is going to be. We would need it for all of the kids in the class so that did not go very well.

The curriculum-based methods that we used did include social, emotional, and negotiating skills. We had a problem-solving curriculum we used. We did take observational data on those things instead of sit-down assessments, and those were more on rating scales and those were successful in terms of quantifying children's growth in those areas but we had put a fair amount of work into making them reliable measures. That is a difficult thing to do on any kind of observational scale.

How do you think your training has made the biggest impact on preschools, specifically in terms of using phonological instruction or using assessment data? What were some of the biggest challenges you faced?

Lasting impact just in terms of phonological awareness is a little specific for me to know. I think that in the years past, and knowing what teachers have continued to do and hear them say they would never go back, most of them have been more around the delivery of teaching skills that included phonological awareness. For example, I have heard many of the teachers and assistants say they would never read a book again “the way I used to read a book” – which is to just sit down and read the book. They know why they are reading it and that day they might have an objective for teaching phonological awareness

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

in a book, they might have picked a pattern book specifically to help children pick out rhymes or alliteration in the book and to practice it. They might have picked it to teach vocabulary, because it was a narrative, or expository. What they would tell you, they would never just read books again, but what is embedded in that is that they understand that a book is a great context for teaching all kinds of language including print or phonological awareness.

I think the teachers would say transitions is a great time for teaching phonological awareness because you can play a lot of games and do chance and things while you are moving from one place to another. In the new curriculum that we developed that is exactly what we do. We built phonological awareness into transition time, so the kids are singing songs, stomping and things that are rhythmic and teach phonological awareness.

In terms of the biggest challenge—teachers initially in the first year, were shocked to think about overlaying a new curriculum. Many teachers have their favorite themes in early childhood that they taught forever and they just love them. If you love bears and the curriculum you adopt doesn't have a bear theme and you have to think how you can meld your bear theme with the curriculum.

There are always people who are enthusiastic about trying something new. The ones who are not take a while to convince. Or, you might not convince them. In that case the system they work for has to decide how they want to handle that. It was not up to us. One of the biggest challenges is having the support of the administrators and supervisors. We were lucky in our case, but it was also because we required that the administrators had to come to the training and had to get on board. That was a criterion. I would never give that up because they were convinced early on and they made it a part of their institutional procedures for teachers to be expected to do these kinds of things. Some of that stayed, I know it has been a challenge for them. Getting administrators on board is (important but not easy). They are pressed for time, have meetings all over the place all the time. To get them to come to these meetings and be a participant is one of the very biggest challenges. They are often happy to arrange for you to come and train their teachers but they are not a part of it. In the training I have done since then, it has never worked if you don't have buy-in from administration. It just doesn't work.

The big disparity in terms of early childhood teacher backgrounds from high school through masters degree programs. And, the changing face of early childhood special education has been a big challenge of SPED teachers who have for years taught off from IEP. They saw that as their charge, what is valuable for teaching individual children. To see that no children from special education need to part of a regular Tier I just like all kids do, and teaching objectives need to be keyed in to those state standards. Special education is in a big transition period in these last several years. That is a big challenge for early childhood education.

Professional Development Provider Interview #1 (Principal Investigator)

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

I see a swing in AEYC, and a lot of organizations have come now to say that assessment and curriculum is important and needs to be developmentally appropriate. We have made that swing but I don't think it has happened in actual classrooms yet. We have lots of people who are trained when that wasn't the consensus. I can see it is going to be a number of years until we have a teaching corps out there that have been trained in that way. It is like a slow moving ship.

What type of additional training or support do you think would help teachers the most to improve or sustain research based practices.

They need to have ways of getting that information. This is a big challenge in speech/language pathology at the graduate degree level. In our masters program we are teaching that to speech/language pathologists but they are already in graduate school. They know how to go get their own research and read the research and how to search for it.

I think professional education organizations have a big role to play in this. They are going to have to be the delivery method for people who are already working. I think universities have a big responsibility to make sure their undergraduates have the best research information. It is not just about teaching you how to be a teacher, but teaching you how to weigh the evidence and go find evidence based-methods.

What Works Clearinghouse has certainly been a great resource for people. I am always telling people about the What Works Clearinghouse, and they have never heard of it. These are people who would read a professional journal.

The government has a big role to play in this too, along with professional organizations and universities in getting the work out there.

Community colleges would be the other place where assistant teachers are interfacing. We used to have the Early Childhood Certification and that has kind of gone away. The community colleges need to be playing a role in that for people who are at that stage of their career too.

Professional Development Provider Interview #2

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Please start with introducing yourself by name, affiliation, position, and length of time in your position. Describe your role and responsibilities.

I am _____ and I'm a professor here at _____ in the department of _____, and basically, I do mostly research and I teach a little bit on oral language, the _____ intervention, and actual professional development as well. I have been here since 2004.

Describe the type of professional development provided, some of the topics covered, and who you trained during Early Reading First (ERF)?

Well, I provided mostly the presentation type professional development. I didn't do the mentoring or anything like that. But I provided professional development on dialogic reading, English language development for English Language Learners, and how to help them with English learning strategies for teachers. I also do something on phonological awareness and classroom environment.

My colleague and the mentors worked with us as well on the professional development and the program managers as well. We all worked together. I didn't do mentoring per se. We did classroom evaluations but no mentoring because we had mentors specifically hired to do that. But the mentors participated and helped with the professional development and we had an administrator, teachers, and teacher assistants for sure in the professional development sessions.

Talk more about the components of the presentations, the schedule, and the audience.

I can't remember the frequency. It was every other week or every month. But, they were scheduled Monday nights and they had a schedule with reading, they had a schedule with mostly readings to do. They sometimes had homework. I didn't work on that end but my colleague did because they also did the courses so the training as a class. So a lot of the teachers were getting credit for it, kind of thing.

During the Early Reading First program, were all teachers required to attend presentations?

Yes, well, they got incentives for participating, and they had to have a certain number of attendances, and they were also evaluated. So there were very specific skills that they had to achieve to get some of the incentives.

What were the incentives?

It was financial – it was money. They may have received some materials, but I don't know. This was too long ago. I don't remember – I know they got materials, but I don't know if there were other materials as part of the incentives. But definitely, _____, sweatshirts.

Professional Development Provider Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Were most of them participating in these presentations to earn credits toward certification or an undergraduate degree?

You know, I don't know the details of that. But some of them were engaged in degrees. Some of them – remember that Head Start change? Some of the requirements – some of them were using those credits. To improve their background information and some of them might just have been for regular professional development credits. Most of them were doing it for credit.

What type of professional development do you think is most effective (and least effective)?

Oh, my goodness. Well, because I specialized in English Language Learners, a lot of them did not have the background that children learning English go through different stages of English acquisition. And the other big emphasis that I provide is the importance of native language development. So I think those 2 things were relatively new for some of these teachers. So, the first year was kind of background – we kind of built the background knowledge.

Year 2 and 3, we really started to implement some type of bilingual language stimulation and they started doing it. So everything's a combination of efforts, so I don't think it was just me talking to them, but then mentors helping them implement because most of them had bilingual assistance so helping them implement – or teachers – some of the dual language instruction as well. So I think from what I do and what I thought was relatively new for the teachers was all the information on English as a second language and the importance of native language development.

What I hear is that the presentations weren't in isolation like perhaps a workshop might be – typical professional development workshop – but were connected to the on-site mentoring. I'm assuming that the mentoring was on-site, that the mentors went into the schools.

Yes it was on-site mentoring but also connected to skills and evaluation. So when we would do classroom evaluations, we were looking for specific skills that we covered in the regular trainings. Then the mentors were working with them on some of those specific skills. So we connected all those dots.

With the presentations, you talked about how you really helped them to develop their knowledge, followed by readings to learn about it to build their knowledge. In addition, they had homework assignments. But it sounds like the actual practicing and developing of new skills, went on in the classroom – were translated into the classroom. Is that correct?

Absolutely, yes.

Professional Development Provider Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

From your experience, what type of professional development in general is not as effective?

I think any of them in isolation is not. So mentoring in the classroom, even though it has good support, I think you have to understand why you're doing what you're doing. So I think it has to be a combination and we know that just trainings alone don't do it because it's difficult to translate that into actual practice. So my feeling is that you have to have a level of knowledge to understand and the theory of the why and the how and then you need actual hands on in the classroom to help you with that. So I don't think of them as one more effective than the other. I think it has to be a combination. I'm the type that needs to understand why before I do anything.

Since ERF has ended, how has your professional development changed? What are your funding sources right now, and have there been changes in the kind of topics covered, type of professional development or mentoring?

Since Early Reading First ended, I have changed my professional development in 2 ways, I think. Content wise, as I was saying before, I try to cover the why and the theory but then, I try to make sure that we have time to talk about application in the training. So that's one level of change. But I really work on making sure that we have time to talk about what would a lesson plan look like. How can I implement this? What are some good activities that connect to this?

And the second way that I have changed....I think we were expecting the teachers to do too much at one time. So, it's kind of trying to spread it out and not to push them to implement so many things at one given time is very difficult for them. Let them work on one skill at a time and build on that instead of having so many expectations.

And actually I have changed in a third way. My third way is that, and this is evolving....I have a professional development grant that has started right now. And the third way, and maybe I'll backtrack a little bit on you – I think you have to have complete backing from administrators. So my third change is that unless administrators make structural changes in the programs and the evaluations and the expectations, nothing happens. And so, the way I'm changing is working with those administrators to make for example, small classroom instruction a required part. It's not a free for all kind of thing. So they have to have lesson plans that are goal oriented and they have to plan small group instruction for all kids. And the reason I changed that and we battle a lot of that is that unless it's an expectation from the institution, the teachers don't implement it. So that a lot of the professional development has to happen not only from the bottom up but also from the top down and create this high level of expectations. So in that sense, I've change a lot. My colleague and I are thinking that that's the next way we are going on with professional development. So, to connect administrators to classroom expectations in terms of classroom structure, schedule lesson plans, and then how to evaluate the teachers based on those skills.

Professional Development Provider Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in **yellow**

Do you train administrators? Do the administrators sit in on the training you do for teachers?

Well, they do, but they're lackadaisical about it so that's the first thing to go off the schedules. So we have a couple of grants now just to make sure that doesn't happen. Because they get funded if that's a requirement that they be present and part of the whole process. And in the _____ funding that I have, the mentors are there. The administrators kind of go in and out. But at least the people involved – the mentors, like curriculum specialists. Next year they are invited to be part of the professional development program. At least you know you didn't do that and there's a disconnect. However, by the end of the year, the administrators have changed attitudes on specifically those two things that I talked about, which is goal-oriented lesson plans and small group instruction.

It sounds like the training now has been targeted to teachers, maybe the curriculum specialists, but there isn't any specific training directed at the administrators...the program directors?

Right.

OK, but that's going to change?

Yes. Actually the curriculum specialists are now going to be part of the training. Before, they weren't. And the other administrators kind of go in and out. They stay in things sometimes, but I think we're moving towards having curriculum specialists knowing exactly what we're doing because those are the ones that have direct contact with the teachers beyond the mentors. And those are the ones that evaluate the teachers so now they're going to be part of that process.

But then, it would get funded for a completely different grant and group of people. What we're working on is a principal or director program training where there's team training where they train the assistant, the teacher and the principal are part of that training. The whole goal is to make sure that there is systemic, institutional change because I don't think teachers change unless they have the structure and institutional expectations to change.

What type of funding you have now since the ERF funding ended?

Well, I had Institute of Education Sciences funding for oral language intervention programs for an assessment intervention, and then I have Head Start funding for professional development.

Professional Development Provider Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

So you've been able to maintain some of the level of professional development you provided before. Have you been able to maintain the connection between the type of presentation, that is, knowledge-based, and the mentoring to help implement practice?

Absolutely. I mean, the professional development I have now – we do once a month presentations and then we do weekly mentoring 4-5 hours a week in the classroom. Then we do focused teacher discussions every month as well where they meet with different groups and problem solve. And then each training is connected to a set of skills so the mentors and the teachers will work on those skills for the next month.

What kind of training do you provide in phonological awareness and using data to plan instruction, and what is the focus of the training?

We're training on both and I'm not happy about either one.

We're training on phonological awareness. We provide the training, we provide the development, but the curriculum that they have, and we've been doing a lot of supplemental stuff _____ because it's not very good. The [current curriculum] that they have – coming here we are actually revising and having a scope and sequence for phonological awareness inserted into their curriculum because we didn't see enough of it. We did see some of it – it's not that they didn't do it, but they're basically doing rhyming and initial sound – that's all they do because that's all they have in that curriculum. So what we're doing is we're going to do a whole scope and sequence of phonological development that they can be implementing throughout this curriculum. I still think [phonological awareness] needs more and we actually did it very late in the training and it was more like, they're not doing enough of it. Let's dedicate one training to phonological awareness but by then I felt it was too late. Because we assume that they were implementing it from their own curriculum. So that prospect is going to have to undergo some revisions but hopefully for the better.

Then in terms of assessment data, this is a constant battle. They kind of obtain data. But I don't think it's objective or systematic enough. And I don't know how to tackle this matter. We've talked to them about collecting objective data in terms of vocabulary, in terms of modern knowledge, in terms of phonemic awareness. And their data collection is more anecdotal records and I don't think they have a clue. When we ask them to bring their assessment data a couple of times, they have no idea how many letters those kids made, how many words, the type of vocabulary those kids knew, and what skills they had. So the few that they did, we were actually very surprised. And again, unless the administrators do this, I can talk to them as a mentor can talk to them until we turn blue, and it's not going to help. So again, programs have to institutionalize objective assessment. Otherwise, it's not going to happen. So that's my frustration.

The other piece of data that I'm very passionate about is they don't know where those kids are in English Language development. So, one of the things I talked to them about it,

Professional Development Provider Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

it has to be one of your main areas of instruction so you need to know that child is in the silent period, in the topographic stage, in a fluent stage, and modify instruction according to where those children are.

And so, one of the ways I try to implement assessment is for them to think about, where is the child and what kind of instruction or adaptations will you use? Because sometimes they keep those children too low. They treat them like they don't have enough English and they don't push them to do inferencing, to answer questions with whole sentences. And sometimes they expect them to do too much. So I think that's one of the areas for example that I think half the country ignores, and I feel very passionate about that they need to know where those children are _____ in the English acquisition stage for good instruction.

It sounds like when Early Reading First was in place it provided the kind of structure, expectation for understanding the research, understanding the components of free reading or early literacy and for actually implementing these practices. But now it seems you have the constraints of providing professional development within a different programmatic structure that doesn't have those expectations.

It's true. I think we've made huge gains and I'm very proud that they have. But again, in terms of the [current program], I think it's going to have to come from the [top] down. And I think [the program we're working with] has a lot of good strengths and I'm very proud that now everybody's required to do goal-based lesson plans and everybody is required to have to a degree...small group instruction per session per day. So that was huge. But we spent 2 years working on that.

How do you think your training has made the biggest impact on preschool literacy, specifically in terms of using phonological instruction or using assessment data? What were some of the biggest challenges you faced?

It's providing the background, it's the mentoring, it's the assessment skills, and especially in terms of both components - phonological awareness and small group instruction - think about an assessment, this is why it's important. This is what it is. These are the skills you need to have and demonstrate in the classroom. And the mentors went to work on that. And we did - especially in phonological awareness - it's a very tangible, concrete skill to add. So we started seeing a lot of phonological awareness implementation during transition activities for example. I definitely observed a lot more of those activities in transition times. So, there was a change and I think I find phonological awareness one of the easiest things to change. You just have to remind them to keep it in the lesson plan.

And that's why we're developing the scope and sequence for them this year - the coming year - because the [current curriculum] only has rhyming and initial sounds. So we're going to have them work on word segmentation, syllable segmentation, identifying

Professional Development Provider Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

sounds, in addition to the rhyming that comes with all of the lessons. So we will be working on scope and sequence for them. And I think if they have it in front of them, they can do it.

What do you think are the biggest challenges for teachers in teaching phonological awareness and using assessment data to plan instruction? What would help them the most?

In [phonological awareness] training, I think that the hardest thing for teachers is integration – it's pulling it all together. It's what does it look like implementing all of these single pieces? So it's not so much can they do phonological awareness, they can. The issue is more how do I schedule phonological awareness when I have to do small group instruction for math, for science, or I have to do some _____ development, dialogic reading. So I think that the most difficult is pulling all the pieces together and again, the expectations of the institution.

What about collecting and using assessment data?

It has to be institutionalized. I think if you leave it up to them to figure it out, it's not going to happen. So they need to have a system in place that is _____, that is curriculum-based, and is not a big long task but that there are expectations that every two weeks, or every whatever, they are looking back at what each kid can do and where those weaknesses are so they can plan instruction based on that. So I don't think it's can they do it. The question is does the institution have the expectation and as related to that is it time to 1) do the assessment and 2) look at the assessment, and plan instruction based on that assessment.

One of the biggest challenges is that the teachers or the institution do not allow plenty of time. So even in my [current program work right now], they work half days, they are paid for full days, but the other half of the day is actually booked with meetings. They have so many layers of bureaucracy. They have family specialists, curriculum specialists, mentors, special needs. So they basically spend their afternoons or their morning program meeting with all these levels of bureaucracy that they shouldn't even be meeting with. They could be doing more planning for good instruction. It's the time to set up time in the classroom, time to do it, and then time to look at the data and plan instruction based on that.

What type of additional training or support do you think would help teachers the most to improve or sustain research based practices.

It's the principals that need additional training, and the administrators helping these teachers pull it all together, and in having that institutionalized structure change, and systemic, high quality expectations. So, I don't think it's the teachers. I think we're training the teachers to death. It's more of a systematic, structural change in institutions that needs to happen.

Mentor Interview #1

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Please start with introducing yourself by name, affiliation, position, and length of time in your position. Describe your role and responsibilities.

My name is _____. I'm at _____, I am a research associate, and I have been here for five years in this position.

Currently I'm working on a project that is a Head Start project where we are doing professional development to teachers in Head Start – where we're working with them to provide early literacy skills bilingually to children in the local Head Start. I coordinate – I'm the program coordinator on that right now – and then I also mentor two teachers every week, two teachers that are part of our program, so I'm continuing to do early literacy mentoring. I'm also a quarter time on a project that is developing a Spanish screening instrument for children and that's a program where we're going out in the area and testing children to develop this screening instrument.

Talk about the type of professional development you received as a mentor.

My professional development coincided with my mentor position. When we started our mentoring positions for Early Reading First (ERF), we were trained alongside our teachers in many of the early literacy skills and we had separate mentoring training that we did with what we called our administration staff because we had people from some different agencies that worked with us on the project. So, while we were going to professional development training with our teachers, we were receiving professional development training for mentoring at the same time.

What topics were covered in the mentor training? What topics did you cover with teachers?

Our list of early literacy topics that we covered was pretty extensive. We had training in vocabulary development for young children and we had training in dialogic reading and the purpose of dialogic reading to develop language in kids. We had training in the classroom environment and how that can enhance language.

We had training specifically on monitoring the kids' outcomes in the classroom and we used the curriculum that we had used for our program. We trained the teachers to use the curriculum-based measures in the curriculum to monitor the kids' progress throughout the year. It was actually part of our curriculum...to monitor once a month some of the areas that we were working in.

We had training in scaffolding a conversation and then we had training in taking literacy outside as well as separate training in phonological awareness and phonemic awareness. Then we had trainings that surrounded our curriculum and a lot of that training was language specific because the curriculum that we used had a lot of literacy and language components to it.

Mentor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Then the professional development training for mentors, we went to some early childhood education conferences. We attended a mentoring conference that was held here at _____ and then our program coordinator and principal investigator (PI) did – can't remember if it was one or two – I think it was two trainings on mentoring on conversations with teachers, and we actually did some role-playing on having conversations with teachers.

What do you think was most helpful (and least helpful) to you in developing skills as a mentor?

I think that being part of the professional development training with our teachers was really helpful because at the same time that they're learning this information and learning how to incorporate it, we see what they're learning. We're there with them and hearing about some of the latest research and some of the latest practices at the same time, that gave us a really good common ground for us to go into the classroom together to work on those skills.

Then the mentoring training we received was helpful too because mentoring is not, at least for me, hadn't been around that long. There were the people doing coaching, sometimes it is a little bit different than mentoring. So, the mentoring training was helpful.

They also did a mentoring conference – our program coordinator and PI – for our local Head Start, and so the mentors in the ERF program went to that. That was another mentoring professional development training that we took part in. So, those trainings were the most helpful.

If I was going to say what was the least helpful? I can't really think of anything that wasn't helpful to be really honest with you. It was all pretty helpful.

In providing mentoring, what type of approach did you take? What types of activities did you do? Who was the audience?

Generally, our audience for our mentoring was our teachers and teaching assistants in the classrooms we were in. Sometimes we had more than one assistant. The programs that I was in most often had just one assistant and they were the target audience.

We didn't provide mentoring...the mentors didn't provide mentoring to the administration. That was done more through our administrative team, which was made up of our program coordinator, our PI, a co-PI, and then some administrators that were from some other agencies that did some of the co-teaching with our administrative group. So they did the administrative mentoring.

Mentor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Our target was really teachers and their assistants, and we were assigned to specific programs that we mentored in. We changed those throughout the three years of ERF, and then we changed and reduced some mentoring to teachers that were not our home school – the school that we were assigned to mentor. We would go and model skills for teachers in other programs, have them watch us, and then we went and did an assessment of them delivering that curriculum using those skills.

Can you elaborate on the approaches/strategies you used, e.g. modeling, observation?

We spent usually a day in the classroom on the days that we were mentoring, so we would choose with the teachers what skills we were going to model based on what skills we had just been training on. Or, if we were doing a recycle back to a skill that we trained on earlier and do first a modeling of the skill for the teacher with the teachers watching, and then sometimes the teachers would say, “I’d like to see that again and I’d like to see it in this setting.”

And then when the teachers felt like, “OK, I’ve practiced this” – the teacher would practice it a lot of times with us beside them – then when the teacher said, “OK, I think I’m ready to be observed doing this skill,” we would watch the teacher and have a checklist of things that we expected to see when we were delivering early literacy using those skills. Then we would have a feedback conference with the teacher where the teacher would give their opinion on how that session went and then we’d talk about it and give feedback to them.

Then we would also do some checklist that we did unannounced. Somebody would come and do a global checklist of the skills that we were focusing on, and see how they were being implemented in the classroom.

We also did a lot of lesson planning sessions. Part of our mentoring was that we were available for at least one lesson planning session a week to help the teachers incorporate all the skills and the objectives that we were trying to meet in a weeks’ lesson plan and do them using the skills that we were training on.

What type of mentoring component/approach do you think is most effective (and least effective)?

Well, I think the most effective was to have the modeling by the loop. The mentor models, the teacher observes, the teacher models for the mentor, and then there’s a discussion. So, there was a loop around the skill and I thought that was the most effective.

There were times in the beginning where we would target to model a skill for the teacher, but the whole loop wasn’t in place and a lot of times, the teachers would say, “Oh, here’s another person to conduct a small group.” Here’s another person to do an activity and

Mentor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

kind of walk away from the skill the session the mentor was doing and go and do their own session or attend to something else. And you'd find yourself modeling for no one. So it was most effective to have the loop where the teacher was there when you modeled and expected to model the same skill back to the mentor and then have a feedback session. So that kept everybody involved in the skill.

What was the least effective?

It goes back to what I said at the beginning of that answer. Planning to model skills in a classroom without having a component where the teacher is present with the mentor and is responsible for observing what's going on and then doing that skill themselves later was ineffective. Because we would find ourselves as I said, going into model a skill and we'd start maybe doing a dialogic reading or we'd start out with the teacher and then the teacher would pop up to do something else, and you would end up conducting the group but not having a teacher there to have any kind of interaction about what was going on what the skill was. So modeling without a component that has the teacher responsible for some of the observing of the modeling and doing it themselves was frustrating.

What type of specialized knowledge or skills do you think mentors need to be effective, besides understanding early language development and teaching strategies?

I think it's pretty important to have the skills in the early literacy and language topic that you're asking teachers to perform in the classroom because it's hard to model it for them and it's hard to give good feedback if you haven't practiced some of those skills yourself or delivered them yourself to children in that age range.

And I think that the skills of providing feedback, of being direct about the feedback, and of having conversations where you set the parameters that you're going to provide direct and specific feedback and the teacher has a chance to give their response to that is a very important skill. A lot of times, it's hard to be really direct, especially when you're seeing things that the training is not being carried out and that directness and the teacher feeling like they have a chance to respond to it and then maybe perform or practice the skill again for observation, I think those are things that you need some training in before you just go into a classroom and start trying to be the mentor.

Since ERF has ended, how has your mentoring changed? Have there been changes in the kind of topics covered or type of mentoring?

Actually, one of the changes in the mentoring that I do now is it's not as frequent. We don't spend as many hours with the teachers as we did in Early Reading First. That's a bit of a disadvantage I think because changes in skill delivery and developing skills that you have not used previously in the classroom take time to change. So having a shorter amount of mentoring time feels like it's even more difficult to help teachers make those changes.

Mentor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

And our teachers that I work with now don't receive the same intensity or the same amount of time for professional training, so they don't have the advantage of being able to train on a skill, go and practice it, have it modeled for them, and deliver that skill with a mentor watching, and then loop back and train on that again. That was one of the real advantages I see to what we did in Early Reading First – that we were able to introduce phonemic awareness, start with it, watch the teachers deliver a lesson on phonemic awareness, and then come back to it and take it to another level like more specific needs for some children who didn't seem to be getting it the first time around who needed more intensity, who needed more frequency. And the second time around in training, the teachers were able to look at that a little bit more because they had been practicing it for a while. So being able to train on a skill over time and more than one time on a skill is something that I don't see in the mentoring that I'm able to do right now. I think that's a bit of a disadvantage.

And what about the kind of support that you received as a mentor while Early Reading First was in operation and now afterwards?

That was the part that I talked about earlier that I thought was most effective because we continued over the three years to try and find _____ for mentors to another level. That's when we attended some early literacy conferences, our state early childhood conference that had a lot of literacy presentations in it. Then we went to some mentoring conferences. We received two books on mentoring through the three years, so our mentoring, and our administrative team, developed new instruments for us to use so we had a mentoring log to begin with that talked about what we modeled with the teachers and what we did. That developed more into a skill checklist where the teachers would teach a skill and we had specific things to watch for.

So, that mentoring going to more specific detail over the years and the continued professional development for us was a really good part of ERF. I would say after three years of ERF, I didn't have any hesitation going into this next project I'm on being a mentor. I felt that I had pretty solid mentoring skills from all that development. It was a really well set out program for developing teacher and mentor skills over three years. It had a really nice development cycle to it.

What do you think are the biggest challenges for teachers in teaching phonological awareness and using assessment data to plan instruction? What type of mentoring helped?

Phonological Awareness -- what we followed for phonological awareness was the curriculum that we had chosen for our Early Reading First at scope and sequence. So the first thing that we would do would be to model for the teachers how to incorporate it into the lesson plans so that they had a specific objective tied to the curriculum to reach for phonological awareness and then where they would put that into the lesson plan.

Mentor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Then we would, after the lesson planning, we would actually do phonological awareness small group for the teachers to observe. Then we would talk with the teachers about where else do we need to put phonological awareness throughout the teaching day so that we know the kids are getting the maximum exposure to that skill. So, we worked a lot.

We took the phonological awareness outside – outdoor literacy. We would incorporate it sometimes even in dramatic play. It would be sometimes in our dialogic reading and it was used a lot in transitions because we found that that would give reinforcement for the skill in lots of places throughout the day. We were lucky enough in the program that I was in to have an exceptional music teacher. She even ended up coming back and teaching all of our ERF teachers at a conference on how to use music and teach some phonological awareness so our children had that. Our teachers had that model of phonological awareness being taught through music. Those were all important components that we used to help establish phonological awareness throughout the teaching day for our classrooms.

What about using assessment data?

Well we started out with the assessment data really focused on the assessments that came with our curriculum. We set up a program, again this was part of lesson planning, because we had a cycle where we would teach for four weeks and then we would have a review week, so we would put the review week in the lesson plan, which actually was a really important part of assessing because if the teacher saw it on the lesson plan and knew this is part of this week, this is what you do on this day, I think that was a critical component to making sure assessments were done and were done currently.

Then our teachers had training on different types of assessments and since we were mostly using the curriculum-based measures, we trained on that, but they learned some things about criterion reference assessment and a little bit about norm reference testing. That was all done by our assessment team. Although we did provide our schools with some of our norm referencing testing so that – that was a tool or the actual test, that was a tool that they would have after we left and they did actually keep up with a couple of the tests that we used because they found that they liked having a beginning and ending data from those norm tests.

In one of the programs I was in, they continued using those tests. They made them part of their test battery. So we would put it in the lesson plan and then we would actually test with the teachers in the beginning because they weren't used to having a quick assessment that they could do during a review week so we would test with them.

Sometimes we would do some of the tests. We would say, "OK, we'll do letter knowledge and phonological awareness for you. Why don't you test vocabulary this month and then we'll rotate around," so we did the test with them.

Mentor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Then we evolved to helping them take the test data and get a picture for individual kids and then also a classroom picture and we did some of that by just printing out a graph after we'd test things like letter knowledge and letter sound, who knew that in the class. We'd make a class graph and say, "Wow, this tells us what letters are not being learned by a large group of kids and these are where we're having trouble with phonemic awareness," and then it would help inform their instruction by looking at that classroom data as well as individual data.

Then they had a real advantage in that part of ERF was a Tier 2 intervention that was tied to the whole ERF program. So they could say, these are the children based on my data that are having difficulty in these areas and those Tier 2 interventions were based on phonemic awareness – were targeted I should say, on phonemic awareness. Then, we brought in extra help to give them Tier 2 intervention for those kids. We would have student assistants come in who would provide one or two days a week, I hope I'm remembering that right, I think it was two days a week they got a small group added intervention outside of what the classroom teachers did. So we helped the teachers say if you step up targeted intervention, now let's look and see what the assessment and the outcomes look like, and it gave them a great idea about if you do a very targeted individual intervention, how does that change outcomes? That was a real advantage they had too.

Did teachers have any training on response to intervention?

No, that was not part of our training in ERF. But, we did talk to them a little bit about what it looks like to go to after you've done the classroom Tier 1. What it looks like to go to a more targeted Tier 2 kind of intervention, but we really didn't get into response to intervention that I recollect with the teachers.

How do you think your mentoring has made the biggest impact on teachers, specifically in terms of using phonological instruction or using assessment data?

Frequency of assessment changed for sure. Taking a look at your assessment data to go back, inform your instruction, and make a difference on what you've put in the lesson plan so instead of saying, well, I'm going to be on this objective, and I'm going to be on this objective. The teachers would go back and say they've looked at their curriculum-based measures and say, "I need to go back to this for this week because so many kids are not using these vocabulary words. So many kids are not, they can't tell me a word that begins with this letter." It really made a difference for them as far as how they would plan what they were going to do and then, how they would change their instruction, because they changed groups of kids based on who was doing well and who was lacking in certain skill areas.

And I think it also just informed the scope and sequence of the teaching because they implemented review times that they didn't have even though their curriculum provided it.

Mentor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

I don't think they were doing it before, and it became part of their lesson planning to have a review time at the end of a theme or unit because they felt like they needed to know where the kids were. They needed to know where they stood with the skills in that unit before they went onto the next one.

Were the teachers aware of how the children's skills improved when the instruction improved?

Yes, because part of Early Reading First was for them to receive anonymously, but they would know which class was theirs and the data, but they would receive the data to see how classes were doing. So, they knew if their kids were not picking up the skill, they would see it in all the graphs of all the classrooms in Early Reading First and realize I am falling behind in vocabulary. My kids are not getting this. I think it made a difference. In fact, I would say that that was one area that I saw change that was sustained, then maybe in some other areas that we trained in.

There were other things that I don't think the teachers – they had more difficulty and I didn't see it sustained over time. Assessment and changing small groups and increasing small group instruction were changes that were evident and were sustained. It was really an optimistic view of the outcome of three years.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced as a mentor?

I think one of the biggest challenges was to get teachers to accept the research that they were reading and about the importance of having objective-driven lessons and direct objectives to teach children explicitly. Our teachers were used to using developmental curriculum and they were, they had a hard time looking at some explicit teaching strategies and saying that this is developmentally appropriate even though they were reading research saying that at this age, we're seeing that kids need to have these skills and they can learn these skills and they can be delivered in a developmentally appropriate way. But a lot of our teachers came from the school of not teaching things explicitly because you might be doing something that developmentally kids are not ready for. So accepting that was really hard.

Along with that was accepting the fact that it was very difficult to get teachers to change from the model of an early childhood classroom that they had been teaching in that was focused a lot on large group instruction, a lot on reading and a lot on a pre-play time that again tied into the developmental background that they had for early childhood. And to get them to utilize what they called free-choice time as still a time to group children by ability or group children by skill level and do some explicit teaching around the play and using the play but having those objectives in mind. That was a really hard change for people, and I think that three years of training and mentoring was the amount of time they needed to make some of those changes and incorporate them and sustain them over time.

Mentor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

What did you find was your biggest challenge in mentoring teachers?

I think the biggest challenge for me was to help them change some of the classroom delivery structure that they were used to and what they had actually been trained in. Even though we were reading the research that said it's really important for kids to get this explicit instruction and for them to have phonological awareness, language skills, vocabulary skills, it was really hard for them to make the changes. They were like all of us – you're in a routine, you're in a structure that's familiar, and that on a lot of levels is working. These kids finish their pre-school year with a lot of good social skills. They learned, in large group, they learned some of the early literacy skills we wanted them to learn. They gained an appreciation for literacy for books. They could tell you – they knew some things about print, they could write their names. So the teacher saw the kids gaining skills.

But when we read the research about what were some really important skills for them to have at the end of their pre-school years before they went to kindergarten, we needed to change the structure of the classroom to more explicit small group instruction and that was a hard change for them to make. That was hard for me to sit down with them and say, "Oh, I read this. I realize it's important." Then not see it get carried over to the classroom...that was hard as a mentor.

Can you think of a teacher who was having some particular difficulty and describe what you did to help that teacher...a success story?

I would say a success in particular was getting a teacher that was an assistant, and our teaching assistants did all the professional development training – they had the mentoring, they had the skill feedback, they modeled the skills for us, and we modeled them for them. I would say it was a teacher who embraced some of the early literacy areas and stopped seeing herself as an assistant and more as a teacher. So instead of spending a lot of time in maybe cleanup, straightening, she would go at free choice time and she would sit down and read a book with kids and prompt them to ask questions at a concrete and more abstract level, which is something that we worked on. She would engage kids in a phonemic awareness lesson during free choice time that she knew was an area that we were working on that week. So getting an assistant teacher to see themselves as a teacher throughout the day, for a teacher assistant was a success.

Do you know if she went on to get a certificate or a degree?

I'm disappointed you asked me this. She left after a couple of years. She had some health issues that made working with little kids and being up and down a lot a bit of a burden for her so she ended up leaving the classroom.

Mentor Interview #1

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She sounds like someone who would have gone on and just needed that motivation, that seeing that she can do it too, that she has the skills to do it.

I think what was a happy ending to that story though was that the assistant next door, who came at the end of this particular teacher's time, I think she came in new and she had modeled for her less cleaning, more teaching and that teacher is still the assistant with one of our ERF teachers and I just talked to them recently. Even though she didn't stay, I did see some carry-over to a new assistant from her that was really a success.

What type of additional training or support do you think would help teachers the most to improve or sustain research based practices.

I think one of the things that would really help with teachers sustaining the practices they learned in ERF would be to have more support from the people who are the administrators in their program. Many of them have program directors and the program directors have a lot of training in early childhood and the licensing and a lot of the administrative things that have to be done in a program but weren't as fully engaged in some of the teaching practices. And so, without that support for the teachers to sustain it, they would not receive from people, "Oh, wow, you're still reading in small groups every day? You're still doing repeated reading? I heard you use this higher vocabulary with your children. I notice that you had an individual conversation with ten kids today." When you get that sort of support that's expected that those things are going to continue to happen in the classroom, I think that helps sustain those practices.

Some of those Early Reading First teachers that I visited that are sustaining the Early Reading First skills they learned have a program person who went through as one of our administrators and she incorporated one of the checklists we did. She just kept it on after we left, so she would come back and visit her teachers and check that they were using some of the early literacy and some of the ERF skills in their classrooms.

And another area that I think is particularly difficult for early childhood, at least that I'm seeing more now than I did in ERF in the program I'm mentoring in now, is they do not get enough time to lesson plan, which is critical to carrying out these skills. If you can't look at what objectives the kids need to meet and plan fun, hands on, age appropriate activities, then if you don't have time to plan those, it's really hard to carry those out during the day. I think they need more support for planning and for providing materials. It takes a lot of hands-on props and materials to teach these skills in a fun way so books and pencils and paper are good but props that illustrate a vocabulary word, props that help you retell a story, props that help you act out in dramatic play and use language you're using in dramatic play – all that takes money and time to put together. And if you have support for that, I think you can do a lot better job sustaining those early literacy and language skills through those teaching strategies in the classroom. And so, I'd say administrative support, time support for planning, and time support for time and materials support for props and materials helps sustain all those things.

Mentor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Please start with introducing yourself by name, affiliation, position, and length of time in your position. Describe your role and responsibilities.

Hello my name is _____ and I am a research faculty associate at _____. I have been working on two different grants in the last three years and those were both to develop curriculum specifically for children with disabilities and also another curriculum specifically designed for English Language Learners. We created these curriculums obviously to help children develop early reading skills: language, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and print referencing.

Before that I worked for the Early Reading First (ERF) program as a literacy mentor. All of these jobs are very similar, in that I would go into classrooms and help teachers to basically improve their skills in teaching early reading. In the ERF program, I was assigned to two different classrooms, and one of them was a Head Start Program and one of them was in the elementary district where I worked with a certified teacher. I had slightly different experiences with the different teachers because of their different levels of education, experience, and backgrounds, etc. But as a mentor in ERF my objectives were to help the teachers with the lesson plan and the curriculum that we provided but also to help them develop their skills in phonological awareness, vocabulary development, print referencing, and generally overall language and early reading skills.

Talk about the type of professional development you received as a mentor. What topics were covered in the mentor training?

The type of professional development/training that I received during Early Reading First was all focused on early reading skills. When I came in as a mentor I had had years of early childhood education experience working in a variety of early childhood classrooms but Early Reading First really helped to train me and provide professional development in specifically early reading, so phonological awareness, vocabulary development, language skills, scaffolding conversations with children. It really came from that language area, which as an early childhood person I always knew was important, but when I came into Early Reading First and was provided with the research and the skills to not only work with children to help develop their early reading skills also help guide the teachers in developing those skills, those were the strengths that I really got out of the professional development training.

What do you think was most helpful (and least helpful) to you in developing skills as a mentor?

The parts that were most helpful in the professional development (PD) training I think really had to do, not with the individual skills but the general consistent PD. We had monthly PD trainings with Dr. _____ and other professors and I think it was that really consistency over time that made a difference. Because it wasn't just one PD training and then we were done. But it was that every single month we came back together and we talked about what we had discussed the previous month and then we built upon those

Mentor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

skills and whether it was vocabulary and how to teach vocabulary one month and the next month we went in and we worked specifically on using those vocabulary words to teach print referencing. It was really that ongoing, continual PD that I think made the biggest difference and the fact that it went...I got into the Early Reading First Program about half way through, so I really got it for a year and a half of consistent training and three years for all of our teachers I think was what made the biggest difference in PD.

I am rather biased. I really didn't find anything in the PD that wasn't helpful. It was consistent, it was logical, and it was based on current research. Then our curriculum was based around that research. So it all fit together so nicely that there weren't really any elements that I would say were not helpful.

What type of specialized knowledge or skills do you think mentors need to be effective, besides understanding early language development and teaching strategies?

There are so many skills that are important when you are a mentor. I think you have to have specific knowledge of the age group that you are working with. So for myself working in preschool I had ten years of experience of working in a variety of early childhood settings before I came in and worked with teachers. So then it was so easy for me to tell teachers that I understand when you have a crazy day or when you have a child that is out of control I understand these things. This is the way it goes sometimes, and I could give them a lot of empathy and a lot of understanding of where they are coming from. The fact that they have demands placed on them by their administration, paperwork, parents, by so many demands outside the classroom and so I was able to give them support, and encouragement.

But I think also as a mentor there is a fine line you have to develop where you develop the teacher's trust and you recognize that you're coming into their classroom or as some of the people said in Early Reading First, they're the queens of their castle and you're coming into their castle and so you have to be very respectful of their space and of how they run their classrooms and you really have to coach and guide without being intrusive.

I found the best way to do that was through constructive criticism – always finding something good to tell the teachers and giving them what I would recommend they might try and then wrapping up with something positive. So I always found that worked very nicely or even asking open-ended questions: how do you think that went? What could you have done to improve that? Do you think you got the vocabulary words out of the children that you wanted to? What could you do to get that vocabulary? So those are some of the skills. I think mentoring is a very abstract method and it's very difficult to define.

Mentor Interview #2

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In providing mentoring, what type of approach did you take? What types of activities did you do? Who was the audience?

In Early Reading First we mentored teachers and teaching assistants. It was usually the team that we mentored together. The kinds of things we would mentor on were focused predominantly on early reading, early literacy skills. But we would work on things like their dramatic play area to help them develop language with their children. We also provided lesson plans and a curriculum so that they had objectives they had to meet each week.

Can you elaborate on the approaches/strategies you used, e.g. modeling, classroom observation?

In Early Reading First we used different strategies for mentoring. The most important aspect of our mentoring was that we were in the classroom with those teachers every single week and we would spend an entire day with them. So we really kind of became part of their teaching team, which again led to trust between the mentor and the teacher.

When we were in the classroom we were able to do quite a bit of modeling. So we could model how to do scaffolding conversations; we could model how to build vocabulary; we could model how to get children to use vocabulary in dramatic play; we could model print referencing skills. So I think that was really our strength in our mentoring program because when a teacher can sit and watch someone else do it with their children, with the same book they are using, with the same vocabulary words, they get ideas about how they can do it. They start to understand that this is something that is attainable. So I think our strength in mentoring was really that modeling.

But of course we would also have teacher conferences where we met with the teachers every week and that actually contributed to the number of hours we were in our classrooms. With my classroom, a Head Start classroom, I was in the classroom really all day with them and it was a longer day for the Head Start program, so I would be there from 7:45 AM to 3:30 PM and I would still come back on Friday. Fridays were the time they had available to do planning and that was when I could do a lot more discussion with the teachers. We also had significant amount of time with these teachers so going in and doing the teacher conferences on Fridays, helping them develop their lesson plans and actually help them prep for their activities, giving them ideas/suggestions when we were doing those things, made a huge difference in our mentoring.

I actually came into Early Reading First about halfway through so I wasn't there in the beginning and I don't know much about that time. By the time I got into the program they had really established their mentoring protocols so there weren't a lot of questions still at that time.

Mentor Interview #2

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Talk about your experiences as a mentor working with teachers who had different educational backgrounds.

I had one certified teacher in the elementary school and then I had the Head Start program. This was actually very interesting because some of this had to do with personality as well. I mentored in a Head Start classroom and I have to say that these were three teachers – there was the lead teacher and two teaching assistants. Actually at the end there were two teaching assistants, but when I initially went in there were three teaching assistants.

For some reason and we never quite figured out why exactly, but those Head Start teachers were so dedicated to our program that in some ways they were more receptive to the information that we were providing. Now none of those teachers had degrees, I believe maybe one had finished her Associate degree and she was working toward her Bachelor degree and everyone else had a high school diploma and maybe a CDA or had been working towards an Associate degree. So it was a very different level of education and they were very receptive to all of our information and willing to try it which was very interesting. But they also, because they hadn't had a lot of experience or education background, they really needed a lot more support and guidance so I found myself mentoring much more frequently in that classroom than I did in my other classroom.

I then mentored in a family literacy program, which obviously is a Title I program and the teacher I was working with had a BS and teaching certificate. She had been teaching for many years in early childhood and in some ways, I think because she had so much experience, she wasn't quite as open to learning as the Head Start teachers were. So I had to really develop trust, and that was something that took quite a long time to develop with her and it was also difficult to get her to commit to times to get together to work on her lesson planning, to have our meetings. But I think toward the end, once she really started to understand that I was there to help and support her and I wasn't there to just observe and provide criticism but that I was truly there to help her become a better teacher, she became more responsive and more participatory in the process. It was really interesting because it is not what you would have thought.

Since ERF has ended, how has your mentoring changed? Have there been changes in the kind of topics covered or type of mentoring?

I am a literacy mentor now. I actually work on a preschool curriculum grant and a preschool curriculum grant designed specifically for English Language Learners and for children with disabilities. That curriculum or that position has really required that they have a very specific curriculum. So I go in and I can mentor on different components of the curriculum but we don't have quite the depth because we don't have the same amount of time with these teachers that we did in Early Reading First.

Mentor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

I have mentored on these grants for the past three years and again, we are really only in there for about half of their day (4 hours) and then we try to meet with them if we/they have questions or concerns, and then we have an observation tool that we use with them but it doesn't have the same kind of depth that ERF had or the same intensity. And I think because we have less time with the teachers, I wouldn't say we are less effective, but it's just a different type of mentoring. It takes longer in the school year to develop that trust but I'm still doing quite a bit of modeling and encouraging early language and literacy, and I think because I don't have that intensity and the relationships or that consistency of seeing them so regularly for such in depth amount of time that I'm having to do a lot of trust building in the beginning and that takes a lot of time and energy away from using the actual curriculum.

What do you think are the biggest challenges for teachers in teaching phonological awareness and using assessment data to plan instruction? What type of mentoring helped?

In terms of phonological awareness, in ERF we tried to explain to teachers how important phonological awareness is and for really a lot of early childhood teachers it was a matter of teaching them what phonological awareness is. Even though good early childhood teachers tend to phonological awareness, it tends to be just by perchance, it's not actually planned as well as what we did with ERF.

In ERF we really worked with teachers on teaching children letters, sounds, playing games with sounds, doing listening activities, working with language and literacy to help children develop phonological awareness. We did that through modeling, also helping them to plan their lessons and their activities and then giving them strategies and ideas for activities, helping them prepare their materials and another aspect that was difficult for early childhood teachers, where it shouldn't be, but it is, is the idea of going from whole group to small group instruction.

We really encouraged our teachers to use small group instruction. That was tough and challenging for many of our teachers because they had to let go of control of the entire class and they really had to lean on their teaching assistants and expect their teaching assistants to have the same level of teaching that they did.

How do you think your mentoring has made the biggest impact on teachers, specifically in terms of using phonological instruction or using assessment data?

There were so many areas that made a difference in phonological awareness, in the ways that teachers teach phonological awareness. I think the first is just plain awareness. I think many teachers are aware of the importance of nursery rhymes and are aware of teaching letter sounds but they tend to get more focused on the concrete aspects. Even now when I go into classrooms I see teachers really focusing in on letter names but teaching letter sounds has gone past them.

Mentor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

In ERF we really work with our teachers on using nursery rhymes, teaching children how to rhyme, teaching children how to identify the rhymes. Teaching children letter sounds and using music, environmental sounds. We did a Tier 2 intervention on phonological awareness where we took the children that were really at risk and we as mentors pulled them out and specifically worked on phonological awareness skills with those children.

Can you talk about using assessment data to identify these kids, to identify the kind of Tier 2 intervention they might receive, and how you helped teachers to do this? Was there a screening instrument that was used?

Yes, absolutely. I can't remember if it was exclusively a standardized instrument (which I don't think it was, because I remember doing it in the middle of the year). I believe the children were selected based on a variety of topics/issues.

In ERF we used a Tier 2 intervention program and what we did was select children based off of recommendations from the mentors and the classroom teachers as well as using curriculum-based measures, which meant that about every six weeks or so the mentor and/or usually the teacher assessed children in things like letter names, letter sounds, print awareness (maybe more). There were about five different areas that we looked at in the curriculum-based measures.

What we did was select children that were struggling specifically in areas of phonological awareness and also just generally their early reading skills. Then, we as mentors, switched sites so that we weren't working with children that we knew well, and we would go to that site. We went about once a week, and we would pull these children out of their class, and we would do an emergent literacy/early literacy phonological awareness activity. And I think the activities were predominantly phonological awareness and it was just playing games, trying to get the kids make different sounds, trying to get them to identify different sounds and then eventually corresponding letter sounds and letter names.

Did you train teachers to do progress monitoring to identify kids, to interpret the data, and to use data to plan special activities or adapt instruction?

We didn't use them to do the Tier 2 intervention because that was really a research experiment. What the teachers had was curriculum-based measures. They would conduct those about every six weeks on all of the children in their classrooms and then that way they could tell what level their children were working at. We would get together and we would look at those curriculum-based measures and we could tell where a child was growing or where a child was struggling and then we would know that child specifically needed more assistance.

Then in that case, usually the mentor and teacher would come up with an idea of which children needed additional assistance and ways to provide that assistance in helping to

Mentor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

build their skills. So sometimes it was simply a matter of during the review week they would focus in on letters or a specific letter, and we would be able to tell from the assessment data whether it was the entire class that missed out on specific letter or name or specific child.

If we saw that it was the entire class then that would be a great activity we would definitely make sure to incorporate into the review week in a stronger way to make sure the children were all exposed to it.

Now if it was a specific child that we saw consistently falling behind, it did depend somewhat on the teacher, but as mentors we would encourage the teachers to work specifically with those children, give them extra attention, and especially in the Head Start program where they are working on individualization, that was really applicable. So the teachers could take the data, look at what each individual child needed, and then could work specific skills with that child.

Did you train or mentor the teachers on using data and how was the data organized? Did you use a charting method to chart progress, or portfolios?

Actually, we trained the teachers specifically on how to use these curriculum-based measures. I want to say that is another area where we saw tremendous growth with teachers. Many early childhood teachers start out with doing a pre- and post- set of data, and I think that is pretty normal for most classrooms. When we asked our teachers to do these curriculum-based measures every six weeks, of course at first they were not very excited to have to do these assessments so frequently. But as mentors we would go into the classroom and if the teacher didn't have time or needed assistance in conducting them, we would help conduct the assessments.

But we really tried to encourage the teacher to start doing it. Especially in year 2 when they start to see the benefit of the assessment and we were able to train them to look at the data that they were collecting and to see their class and their individual child's growth to see who needed intervention and who needed assistance. I think that made a huge difference in the way that these teachers now look at data, and in the end all of the teachers would have told you that they really did not want to be doing this in the beginning, they thought it was a big waste of time, but then over time as they saw all the different data points and saw progress or no progress or even regression in some children, they really began to realize how important data collection is.

What did you find was your biggest challenge in mentoring teachers?

The biggest challenge was initially. It's really a matter of developing that relationship and developing trust between yourself and teacher. This is an ongoing experience that I've had over the past couple of years as well as during ERF. You're coming into someone's classroom, and in so many ways that classroom is their home and they are the head of

Mentor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

that home and they are used to people coming in. And especially my Head Start classroom, we were so used to people coming in and telling them everything that they were doing wrong. It made it very difficult because I would have to come in and gain their trust and demonstrate to them that I was truly there to support them, encourage them and help build their teaching skills and my objective was to do that without tearing them down, without being destructive, I was there to be constructive.;

What do you think was most difficult for teachers to learn about implementing these new practices? Can you talk about a specific success story where the teacher was having some difficulty?

What is most difficult for any teacher at this point, especially if they are somewhat established, is change – doing something different.

In ERF, what I think was most difficult for many of our teachers was that we were moving away from that child-directed play, entirely play-based, open-ended curriculum and asking them to put more structure into their day. For many teachers this just adamantly went against their philosophy of early childhood. It was actually a change that I had to make in my perceptions of early childhood. So we started asking them to use a more structured curriculum, and we asked them to use more direct instruction, and we also asked them to use assessments and collect data. Three of those things combined were really challenging for teachers who were so used to an open-ended play based approach.

In essence we were asking them to think more about what they were providing for children. Initially teachers struggled with that. But as the research came out and we were able to provide research to these teachers, and as times have started to change and combined with we were asking them to add these elements to their teaching but we were asking them to take away the play. We were encouraging them to envelope both ideologies. I think it was challenging for teachers initially to wrap their minds around this more directed instruction. But once they did, they were able to really see a difference in children's learning.

Can you think of a teacher who was having some particular difficulty and describe what you did to help that teacher...a success story?

We had one Head Start teaching assistant that was really not only scattered in her life but also in her teaching style and so I think ERF, when we were giving her more structure in terms of the lesson plan, guidance, regularly set schedule, I think that really improved her teaching and at the end she would say that it really changed, not only her teaching, but also kind of her perspective on life. She realized that she needed more structure in her life as well.

Mentor Interview #2

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What type of additional training or support do you think would help teachers the most to improve or sustain research based practices.

I think the foundation that ERF laid down is what is going to help these teachers sustain these practices. Part of that is because we were in the classroom for three years, so for three years they consistently had mentoring, PD, and they had us there to support and encourage them and to give them ideas. Because they had three years of this, it really changed their teaching style overall; we really facilitated change.

In the program I'm mentoring now we go into programs and we work with teachers just for one year and we see a tremendous amount of change in that one year, but I always say to myself if we were here just one more year, even if we could give them two years for mentoring I think we would see even more change.

I think it is really the foundation that ERF laid down for these teachers that will help them to sustain their teaching practices and also to seek out research-based practices. Because we were able to provide so much research about early reading and children's early reading skills, I feel they now know that they can go out and learn about what is being researched and what is actually working by themselves, so I think they will seek out research more frequently.

What do you think the preschool programs can do, especially the ones where you have spent just a year and then you leave. What kind of support do you think they need to provide if they can't hire mentors that could help?

Having been in a preschool classroom, it is really challenging to be in that classroom, so I kind of think that there needs to be systematic changes where preschool teachers are just in general given more support. I think people lose sight of the fact that being in a preschool classroom with 20 four-year-olds is exhausting and to be a truly good childhood teacher you need time to prepare quality instruction. Right now what we are seeing in my state is this change, even in our Head Start programs, having teachers teaching 8-9 hours a day and then maybe having some time on Friday to do all of their paperwork and to do their lesson planning. So they really aren't given the time to do what needs to be done. I think it really needs to be a systematic change where we realize that early childhood teachers need time with children, but they also need time to prepare their classroom, their lessons, activities, and need opportunity to go to conferences and interact with other teachers so that they can get ideas, suggestions, and that they can continue to build their knowledge base so that they can become the best teachers that they can be.

Mentor Interview #3

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in **yellow**

Please introduce yourself by name, school affiliation, and position.

I am _____. I worked for Head Start for 3 years. I was an elementary ed person, have been a teacher and also a supervisor. I was a mentor for the ERF Project. Now I am currently with Head Start, working in administration, specifically work as the oral language coordinator. This is a new position. I am trained to go into classrooms and do observations with the children and teachers. I am listening to types of vocabulary used in the classrooms. We are working on scaffolding conversations so that the teachers are really trying to build the kids' oral language skills.

What were your role and your responsibilities as a mentor with the Head Start ERF project?

We were first supposed to form a bond with the teachers to get the relationship going. After the teachers received training, we were supposed to help them implement what they learned in their classrooms with their own students.

To do this, we went to trainings together that were part of the University project. However, the mentors met ahead of time with Dr. _____. We had additional training - got ahead of the training that the teachers would get. Then we went through the training with the teachers and helped them in implementing the training in their classroom. We really helped them figure this part out.

We were really fortunate to have a lot of time for mentoring. There were three mentors altogether and only 5 classrooms in the grant. All three mentors were in classrooms 4 days a week; 3 days the kids were here and one day for planning.

During ERF, describe the type of PD you received and early literacy or other topics covered.

What kinds of PD?

We covered objective based lesson plans; print rich environments, how to set up schedules for teaching and grouping. We were trained on dialogic reading, had lots of phonological awareness, print awareness, dramatic play, good books for ages and uses, vocabulary development and working with dual language learners. We were also trained on doing assessments, student portfolios and work sampling.

As mentors, we also received, separately, other training. There was other content like building trust, ways to start a relationship, how to talk about the multiple intelligences, what are the roles of a mentor. We were working with some of the teachers' supervisors and we needed to draw the line between mentoring and supervising. We learned tools like True Colors, to uncover personalities and what you bring to your teaching just as a person.

What type of PD was most helpful in becoming a mentor?

For myself, it was the phonological awareness, because this wasn't part of my college teaching. This helped me break the words into sounds and how to get kids to hear sounds in words and make sounds into words. Teaching vocabulary was another area. We really

Mentor Interview #3

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

worked on how to do that through other things, like dramatic play. We wanted the teachers to find many different ways to support the vocabulary. We wanted them to know how to make it real, to put it into a real context. How to say words in sentences.

What type of professional development was least helpful?

How to organize the classroom environment - organization. This itself wasn't helpful, because it wasn't new to me and what I had had before was even better.

Who did you mentored (e.g., teachers, administrators); what type of mentoring did you provide and what were some examples of early literacy topics covered?

I mentored all of the teaching staff in the classroom. The Head Start classrooms had a lead teacher, teacher and an aide. The administrators went to trainings but we didn't work with them. It was a three year grant but I was with them for 2.5 years.

At first, I just worked along side the staff and gave feedback to build trust. Then I would do modeling with the children. For example, we would take vocabulary out of book, then I would do it first, then the teacher would do it, back and forth, modeling and observing and giving feedback.

During the second and third years, we did more formalize observations and used rubrics for different skills sets to assess how we were doing for each of the skills. Then we had feedback with teachers and with other mentors. Then we did feedback on all of the teachers, formalized it.

I might think my teachers are doing great, but having some one else come in and doing the feedback was better.

What type of specialized knowledge or skill training do mentors need to help teachers improve (e.g., to scaffold teacher learning and provide effective feedback)?

Patience comes first. Then with adult learners, I had to learn ways – like with the multiple intelligences so you know how to work, not only with children, but how to work with other adults.

And then, I think also you need to be skilled in the skills you're trying to teach, so that you can model them effectively. Because if you can do a good job modeling with them and the teachers can see that what you're doing is effective, then they're more likely to buy into it.

And you need to be a good listener. The teachers need somebody to talk to sometimes.

Mentor Interview #3

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Was there a special knack you had to acquire to give good feedback? How did you pick that up?

I think I had the Head Start program that I worked for in the state, I think I was lucky in that they were really big on communication, reflective supervision.

And open feedback, and positive feedback. So, I had training in that – just like timely feedback, making sure that you do it within the right time frame – you know, you can't wait a month because then too much time has passed.

That you start with the positives and say what went really well and then you first ask them to evaluate, “What do you think went well? What do you think you struggled with? What would you change?”

And then you go into “This is what I saw. This is what I think maybe you could've tried differently or done differently, or maybe done better.”

So starting out with the positives and what they did correctly and what was great and then having them do some self-reflection.

In terms of effective mentoring, what do you think worked the best for language development and improving early literacy instruction overall?

Yeah, really, the modeling, that was it. The modeling because then – it's different than watching it on a video where you're going and sitting at a training - because then you see someone actually doing the activity in your classroom with your materials and your environment with your children. So I think that that was really the most effective was the modeling.

And is there anything that you can think of that you would label as the least effective?

I really don't think our rubrics were that effective. I think that the feedback we gave them in the notes, just the observation, was more effective than going over like the actual little rubrics that we developed. And I don't know that the teachers – most of them – got that much from those.

And in what ways has your mentoring changed since this program? Are you doing things differently now? Do you have less time to do the kind of mentoring you did under the project?

Yeah, the grant that I worked on after Early Reading First, I was a math mentor also. And we only were in the classrooms one time a week – one class period a week. But it was a little bit more focused as to what we were looking at each week. We kind of had a set of skills that we were specifically looking for each time. And with Early Reading First, we were looking at a really wide range of skills. So it was a little less intense.

Mentor Interview #3

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

You mean the one that you did after Early Reading First was less intense?

Yeah. But I think it did change how I mentored in that I was more open to feedback from them – to listening to how they felt things went. So that was a skill that I developed better during Early Reading First – was being a better listener to the people I was working with.

I just had a conversation with one of the teachers who was in that program and she was saying how it just – the mentoring was the best part for her and how it just really changed her whole way of teaching and she really considers herself – now she considers herself a master teacher and when she goes back on where she was before the experience, she recognizes that it may have been quality, but it wasn't nearly what those kids needed in order to bridge that gap especially. So whatever it was that you did, it was very much appreciated.

(The mentoring and the ERF) ...it's changed my perspective as to what I think a quality pre-school classroom is, that's for sure. When I go into classrooms that somebody tells me is quality, when I go and I say...I don't see it. I have much higher expectations because I've seen that it can work and it really can be effective if you're committed to it so it changed.

If I went back into the classroom, I think I would feel like I was a master teacher as well because it really did – I learned tons from the grant – I really did.

That's very cool. We had talked a little bit yesterday, in between the dropped line, about materials and I believe you had talked a little bit about having some things that you might be able to send? I might've gotten my interviews mixed up too.

Was there anything in terms of materials that you would like to tell us about? Especially about using assessment materials or perhaps phonological awareness?

Yeah, I don't have the actual assessments and things we did on children anymore. I didn't keep any samples as far as I can remember. I have lots of PowerPoint's and resources that they gave us for different trainings but I don't have materials. What we used, though, was straight out of the Trophies Pre-K curriculum. The CBMs that came with it – the curriculum based measures – we used that on an ongoing basis in the classroom. We didn't use all of them though.

Then we had our pre and post assessments – we used like the PALS pre-K – I can't remember all the other tests.

The Peabody? Yes, I think so.

Mentor Interview #3

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

I can't remember all the assessments we used. But the CBMs I do remember, we did the alphabet, naming letters and sounds so they had to go just through the alphabet and name the letters and the sounds that they knew. And we did that every 5 weeks with the children. Then we did a rhyming game with them – a little rhyming assessment. Then we did a beginning sound assessment where we had the same – I think it was 6 little pictures, and we would say “This is a fan. What's the first sound you hear in the word fan”? And then they would have to tell us the first sound that they heard. And then there was – I think there was a little story that they re-told. We read them a little story and they were supposed to re-tell it to us.

Would you have a success story you'd like to share in terms of your work with a particular teacher?

Well, yeah. There was one of the teachers – she was actually a teaching assistant in one of the classrooms. I was their mentor for the entire grant and she just says all the time, she still works for Head Start so now I work with her at Head Start, and she still to this day, tells anybody and everybody that our ERF program changed her life, changed the way she teaches. I was her mentor and every time I see her, she wants to give me a hug and she's just awesome in the classroom and just phenomenal with the children. She just tells people all the time how ERF – that's what we called the grant – changed her life.

She's always my success story.

Do you ever have a chance to see the students that you worked with?

No, not the students. The teachers I see actually fairly regularly now that I work back with Head Start but I don't see any of the students. I don't live in the area where the grant was and I don't think I'd recognize any of them now anyway.

Was there anything else you would like to tell me about your work or your experiences?

Like I said, I learned more I think from Dr. _____ in the 3 years working on the grant than I did all my 4 years at college and my first years of teaching. She's a phenomenal professor and teacher herself and she really knows her stuff. She knows vocabulary and language and phonological awareness – she's a Speech and Language Pathologist, obviously. So, I learned more from her than from any other person that I've worked with so I just feel like she really has helped shape me into the early childhood person that I am now. Phenomenal teacher – I learned a ton. And all the admin. People that were kind of a part of the training core on the program just were really wonderful and really knew their stuff and I learned a lot from them.

Well, that's a wonderful endorsement. Thank you so much for your time and your patience.

Site Supervisor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Could you please start by introducing yourself by your name, the position you held, and the school that you worked in when you were affiliated with the Early Reading First program?

My name is _____ and I'm at the Head Start site...and I was a site supervisor at the site.

For the program, I was a site supervisor for the last 3 years, but I've been a site supervisor position for 20 years.

Could you just give me a brief description of all that you did as a site supervisor?

As a site supervisor, we are responsible for lesson planning, home visits, trainings, lesson planning, planning the indoor and outdoor environment areas. We're responsible for assessments of the children, in charge of co-workers and volunteers that are in the classroom, the supervision of the children. We need to plan everything. It's quite an ordeal. Overall, we're just in charge of everything. As far as the family case specialists and ensuring the safety and the welfare of the children, we are in charge.

Yes, it is kind of a mix of an administrative position and also working on building capacity of staff at same time, because another role that we do is we mentor and we coach the co-workers, the staff too – ensure that they're learning the process and following through what it is that we expect of them.

Can you describe what kind of professional development you received when your Head Start Center was part of this Early Reading First project?

Well, I attended several trainings, site supervisor trainings and workshops, and enhanced my knowledge of different ways of teaching children. And I thought I was already pretty good, but after the Early Reading First program, I have a totally different outlook. I wouldn't go back to what I was doing before.

When I started the program, we were like thrown into the lion's den – it was like we were looking at each other like, what are we doing? And as the time went on, because it was for 3 years, it slowly unraveled itself and just all the trainings that we went to, all the coaching and the mentoring that we got from them, it has totally changed my whole way of teaching and I wouldn't go back to the old way.

You know, when the program was over, we continued with the program. But now they've put me into a different curriculum and it's like, wait a minute, I'm going backwards. I'm gonna fail my kids when I've been doing it (as I learned during ERF) for 6 years and it's like, I don't like it. It was very hard for me and it is very hard for me change my way of teaching because I see that they way we teach these children are helping them making gains and they retain it. And we've all agreed, all of the staff trained before, I wouldn't

Site Supervisor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

go back to how I used to do it before. It's more structure, more modeling to see the gains in these children. Even children with special needs make gains.

When you think about everything that comes in under early literacy, what topics were you exposed to through professional development that changed how you thought about your early literacy instruction?

We used the pre-school state standards a lot. There was phonological awareness, there was oral language, there's the print awareness, the alphabet and the print. There was also math, there was science, physical activity, the well-being of the child which was the health and safety, there was social-emotional, the fine arts, the social studies, social, emotional and the physical development.

You know, it was professional development in all these areas. But it was like, before, I never really listened to it. Before, teaching was really more giving the children activities to do and hand out play things. But after doing the ERF training, it was like OK you're doing a lot more work but the payoff was worth it. The modeling, the coaching them, and showing them made so much difference.

Now, when you're talking about the modeling and the coaching them, you're talking about the teachers that you're working with right?

No, the children. Like for example, let's say we're doing the doctor's office or the dentist's office, what we did is we introduced the area, we introduced the tools, we introduced things that you would see at a dentist's office. And we said, when you go to a dentist, there's the secretary making appointments, there's the dentist, you're the client, you're the patient. You're coming because your tooth hurts. And we explain all of that for them and while they're in there playing, we'll use the proper - we'll model for them phrases for them like, my tooth hurts. I need to make an appointment. Because we're also targeting vocabulary. We're introducing the dentist. We're introducing the gauze or whatever it is - the vocabulary that we're introducing. So when they're in there playing we make sure that they hear these words that they would use at a dentist's office. Like the mirror, or the scalpel, or whatever it is that we're doing. So we kind of coach the children on how to say it and stuff like that. And that's basically the first week and the second week they're on their own and you can hear them with the vocabulary and stuff on their own.

So how did you work with your teachers to get them to really adopt a different kind of instruction?

Well, when we started the program, we all went to this training. It was the whole staff that was included. It wasn't just me. It was a team effort thing. So the training that I received, they received at the same time. And with the mentor that they supplied for us, she would come in and work with us.

Site Supervisor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

She would model for us, she would coach us and we had to earn badges – let’s say for oral language – we had to earn the badge for oral language, which is what we had to implement what it is that we learned and they would come in and observe it – and yes, you did it, or no, you didn’t. So if we didn’t make it, they would say well, let’s do this and we would try again.

So we would get re-evaluated on it and then every month we had to turn in one of our lesson plans, the ones that we thought was the best lesson plan that we had, and we would turn it in and there was a guide that we needed to follow to make sure we hit these certain points, and we’d turn it in, they would evaluate our lesson plan and they would write their comments, their feedback to us and say this, this, and this and they would score us on it.

So, overall we would take all of the feedback that they’d give us and we’d process it and we’d say OK, what can we do to change things around?

Can you tell me more the experience you had with the mentors?

Our mentors – they were here pretty frequently. Our mentor was here 2 days a week and 2 days a week at another site.

But we also had people, other mentors coming in from different areas to do walk-about and they’d bring a checklist with them to see...

- OK, their lesson plan is up.
- Are they doing scaffolding with conversation?
- Are they doing this? Are they doing that?

And all of that information and checks – they would compile and give us back the feedback and say well, we saw this but we didn’t see this. And they’d check the inside environment and the outdoor environment. So it was very intense. But you know what? It was worth it. It was worth it.

When the mentor was there, after he or she had an opportunity to watch, observe, check things off, how did she give that information back to the teachers?

We had our planning days on Fridays because our kids only came Monday through Thursday. So on Friday, she would come to the classroom and she would give us the report of all the mentors that came through our classroom. And she’d say, well, this is what so and so found and this is what so and so found, and how can we correct this? And she would give us suggestions.

She’d help us lesson plan to cover the areas because that’s what she was doing – mentoring and helping us, guiding us. You know, “This is what we need to do” or “You did very good here, but here we need a little bit more”. And she would ensure that we

Site Supervisor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

covered all areas. But there's always that one little thing – OK that got away from us, you know. But she met with us weekly and gave us feedback weekly.

Our mentor was working with the University who hired the mentors and the mentors worked with them, and then they came on into the classrooms with us. They also did training for us, at the University. They gave us credit. We were actually enrolled through the University and we got credit for the classes that we were taking.

Did this help teachers work towards, advance towards their degrees?

Yes, the University actually took care of all of that. We didn't have to put money out of our pockets or anything. It was all part of the program. If we were part of the program that they were doing, they would take care of the cost for the classes

What kind of professional development do you think was the most useful in helping you and your teachers adopt different ways of understanding how kids acquiring language and how to do instruction for early literacy?

Overall, I like the whole program because you hit all areas as far as the phonological, oral, and all that stuff. Really, the thing that I really liked and I still do is the curriculum based assessment measures. What that is, is, every 5 weeks we do a small assessment on the children as far as math, their vocabulary, the expressive and receptive language, parts of the book, how many of the letters do they remember.

It's a very simple assessment that they use. But by doing that every 5 weeks, we learned the level of each child. There were a few who needed extra help. We knew if we needed to switch children around and put them in a different group, we can do it. And to me, that was really important. I still do it and it helps me and my coworkers to really focus on the child's needs. And like I say, it was a wonderful program. I can't deny it, that I wouldn't go back to how I used to teach before.

To go deeper into that whole area of professional development, can you describe the training that got you and your teachers able to use curriculum based measures of assessment?

The University already had it planned on how they were gonna do it. And they put together the assessment. Well, what our mentor did when she came into the classroom, she brought everything, and they supplied all materials for us. And she walked us through the process of doing it and then we got hands on training taking turns doing it on each other.

So then when the children came, when we were ready to do the children, our mentor sat with each one of us and she did an assessment on the child while we observed her. And then as soon as she was done, the next child that came, she flip-flopped with us and observed us doing the assessment.

Site Supervisor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Everything that they taught us was modeled to us. It was coached to us. And it was a lot of visual props and watching and a lot of hands on.

What happened after you had the assessment information, after you knew where kids were?

Out of the assessments, for example, the math – we would all start them in counting – let's say counting 1-20 or whatever. And we'd do the whole process. And after the first 5 weeks, all of the children at the beginning are on the same level because we're testing to see where they're at.

Another example...do they know their colors? Do they know that? What don't they know?

So after we get all the results we sit and we say, OK, these children need help with colors. Or, these children need help with counting or vice versa or whatever it is that they need. Or rhyming – if they're not catching onto vocabulary words, we say OK, these kids need help.

ERF had come up with a thing called level 2, which is giving them the extra help of like letter recognition and sounds in small groups. We would get that small group together and do an extra activity with them so that they could just get the gist of recognizing the letter with the sound.

So I mean, out of the assessments, we got a lot of information. And with those assessments, you could move the children around freely without singling out this one, this one, and this one.

So every 5 weeks, we were making adjustments. OK these children are OK. These children – so and so needs a little bit more, but we wouldn't pull them out of their group. What we would do is just pull those few aside and say OK; they need a little bit more, so we would just throw in a little extra 5 minutes. We say, let's play a game of writing letters or play a game of saying sounds.

Another big topic in literacy is the phonological awareness. Can you tell me about the phonological awareness training for that given to you and the teachers that you worked with?

They used a lot of handouts. When we'd get together and they introduced the area, they modeled for us through different games. They gave us materials - different games - that we could play with them. They gave us hands on practice.

Site Supervisor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

They brought in people to do trainings, helped us not only through music, but to catch onto other phonological awareness, like the rhyming and the sounds, and stuff like that, but we learned to incorporate colors, but yet they're spelling out the colors with letters.

So everything was done by hands on and they brought in people from the outside to do the training, plus they – whatever they were specializing in – they came in and they mentored and they modeled for us too. Not only in the big trainings, but they would also send somebody to the classroom. Or it might be the mentor who would come in and say OK, I went to this training and let me show you how it went. So they would not only do it outside of the classroom, but they would also do it at the campus area or whatever.

After you got this training in phonological awareness, how were things different? Did you do more of something than you used to or was it all new?

Actually, the phonological awareness – most of it was new to me. I mean, yes, we did introduce letters before but I never really went into the sounds. It was just more of the letter recognition. And we did do a little bit of rhyming by reading rhyming books but I never really looked at it as hey, this is part of really what we need to do. So after the phonological part of it, every week we made sure that we had something of it, whether it be rhyming, whether it be beginning sounds, whether it be re-telling the story, we just tried to cover all the areas that we learned.

In what ways has your professional development changed since the Early Reading First ended? How are you trying to keep this learning alive and make sure you don't slide back, so to speak? You said you'd never want go back to the other way of doing it.

Well, we still attend workshops or trainings as they come up – we try to anyway. If any of the girls say oh, I was at such and such place and this is what I saw, you know, we try whatever – we still gain. We have attended a couple of workshops outside of the ERF program, and we just try to keep up with the most. You know, the economy is changed and the prices are hiked up. It's like - Wow – about taking classes and stuff like that.

But we're always asking, we're always looking. And we'll call our mentor every now and then still after so many years and say, hey is there anything new that's happening? And she's very good about telling us yeah, there's something going on. She'd say, you might be interested in this. Or she'll send us an email and say this is going on, you might be interested.

I've gotten some new staff since the program was over. Well, actually this was the first year since we got some new staff since the program was over. And there was still a coworker and myself, and the coworker took it upon herself to model for the new person. This was totally new to her because she was doing a different curriculum and we're supposed to do the same curriculum that she knew, but we just taught it in a different

Site Supervisor Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

manner, still with the Early Reading First approach – the structure, but still toned down some.

But, my co-worker, she said “I’m gonna model for you for a whole month on how we do it”. And she would observe and then we’d say, “OK, now you take the initiative and the little bit that we did model for you, see what you can do”.

When she didn’t feel comfortable, she would ask for help. You know, like the letter sounds when we introduced a new letter. She’d say. “I’m not sure how to say the sound, can you please help me?” So, she was comfortable enough to say “can you please show me?” But we did model for her for a whole month.

Well, I think that’s a great thing to do. Before, new teachers were just thrown in and they’d sink or swim.

Well, awhile back, we were looking at some stuff and we found a lesson plan from when we first started this ERF in 2004 and I thought “Oh, my God, look at this lesson plan compared to what we have now”.

And we crack up laughing because it’s like OK, yeah; you were thrown in the lions den. You guys didn’t know what you were doing, compared to how you do a lesson plan now.

Could you send me a sample of lesson plans on phonological awareness and it would be so interesting where you have a before and after lesson plan to compare and contrast? And also, if you just had anything that you could send us in the assessment area, your measurement area, that would also be really helpful.

OK. Because they do have a session for phonological awareness which is the rhyming because there are things that we do rhyming and that’s part of the assessment. Can they hear the rhyming, so that was part of the assessment too that they put together.

Is there anything else you want to tell me but I just didn’t have the right question?

The only thing I would say is the Early Reading First program has changed my way, well, our way of teaching and we wouldn’t go back. Like I said, it was hard for me to turn to go and do a different curriculum but I found myself still doing it but plugging in some of their stuff, so they couldn’t say I wasn’t doing it. But we still do Early Reading First.

Site Supervisor Interview #2

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Would you start out by introducing yourself just by name and the position you had then and the school affiliation and how long you were in that position?

My name is _____ and at the time of the Early Reading First program I was a site supervisor at ___ Head Start. At this time, I've been there for 6 years. When the program first started, that was my first year with them. I'm still at the same site.

Can you just tell me kind of briefly what your role and responsibilities were as a site director for the Early Reading First program?

Yes. The responsibilities were overseeing the entire site, the staff, and children, and families. We were creating lesson plans with a focus on increasing vocabulary and literacy skills and math. We worked closely with mentors to help us learn that teaching style. We participated in classes along with the University. There's so many things I did.

I may try to have you expound on some of those things and if other things come up, we can just add them in. That gives us a good long list.

You mentioned that you were working with the mentors that came into the classroom. What is it that they did specifically? How did they work with you and staff in the classroom?

They were there to help the teachers, to kind of guide us through the learning process of this new teaching that we were learning. But they also helped us with the kids by modeling so that we could see hands on examples of the different objectives that the program had. They also would meet with us and help us prepare lesson plans. They would take us to different programs that were working in the grant, so we could see the different classrooms and the different ways, the different set ups.

But they were just – pretty much they helped walk us through the objectives of the grant in a hands on style.

So you were the director, and as you talked about the things that you were responsible for, you were kind of the “buck stops here” person in that site.

How did you as a director work with these mentors? How did your role change because of that experience?

I'm not sure exactly how many hours the mentors were there a week. As far as me for a director, even though I'm in charge of the staff and the site, I still have a large responsibility in educating the children and performing the educational instruction. It's more of a team effort I would have to say. So for me, it really helped me make the teaching with the children based in the preschool philosophy. It helped me in the manner in which I teach the kids.

OK. Well right now, we were talking about what you did as a director and you were telling me that it was a team effort in your classroom. And you do some of the

Site Supervisor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

instruction yourself with the kids so that you were really learning along with the teachers what the mentors had to share with you, right?

You had mentioned that the mentors had been doing some modeling of different ways to approach these things language and early literacy. If you were gonna talk about specific kinds of training, what topics come to mind?

We did a lot with scaffolding conversations, learning how to build on conversations that we have the kids do to increase their vocabulary.

We did a lot with dialogic reading and that's pretty much how you can kind of analyze a book and see how to make the reading of the book more objective based. Like instead of just reading a book to the kids, you're actually finding out what do I want to teach the kids from reading this story?

We learned about the different kinds of books to read to the kids – like the narrative and the patterned books. We learned about a term called searing (?) when you're learning vocabulary. You say it, explain it, have the kids repeat it. Those are some of the techniques that we learned.

Another big one was the lesson planning. I think that one still even for me is a really big one because the lesson plan is kind of your blueprint.

And are you still lesson planning in the same way?

I am, yes. It's very hard for me not to because I always think of things that we're doing – teaching the kids specifics - and to make it measurable.

When you have new teachers that come into your team, is that something that you're sharing with them and expecting them to do?

I do and I show them how they can take some of the objectives and make them more measurable. So if you want the kids to play with Playdough, why do you want them to play with it, and what are they gonna learn from doing that? To make it more meaningful.

And then also lesson planning on the different levels of the children. So you might be doing a similar activity but at three different levels so that you're developing all the kids' skills.

And that kind of leads us into the topic around assessment. How do you help the teachers? What kinds of training did you have on figuring out where kids were? That whole assessment topic.

Site Supervisor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Every 6 weeks we did assessments on the kids to find out where they were as far as their alphabet and phonological awareness. We also worked on their print concepts. Do they know that the words are read from left to right?

Different things – we also assessed if their ability to re-tell a story. And then from there we could say OK, this child really needs to work on this or this child needs to work on that. And that really helped you to identify and individualize for each child.

Was that a new practice for you?

Yes. For me it was, yes. You came into this training, I guess it's been 6 years ago now right? Yeah, then you had 3 years of it and it's been over for 3 years.

In what way has your role as director changed because of that Early Reading First? And to what extent are you keeping some of those things going?

I think I've more or less probably shared with the incoming staff because we were taught in a different style I would say. Even though we use the same curriculum, then what we used for the Early Reading First program, it can still be the teaching method and the strategies can still be used.

I don't think that I've – even though I'm not with them anymore, I think I'm still using those practices and then sharing them with other teachers.

How did you experience this focus on understanding research and using research based practices? To what extent did that make a difference to you?

When the grant first started, I was brand new to Head Start so, and prior to that, I had only worked with toddlers so I wasn't really sure of the whole pre-school – in my training, I had worked with pre-schoolers and such so I think for me, it was a good time because I hadn't really put any other practice into play. So the habits that I learned, the teaching styles that I learned from the grant, are pretty much all I know. So as far as working with pre-schoolers, I think in that aspect, I was at an advantage.

Did you observe that it was harder for teachers who had done things differently for a long time?

No, I don't think so. I think everyone that was involved was very excited to try this – the teaching method. Everyone involved was very excited and willing to try all the new teaching.

What kind of results did you feel you were getting with kids?

I'm not sure exactly what the percentage is but I know we had successes in the areas that were being studied in the grant. So to me, that was just proof that this was working. Everybody was willing to try it.

Site Supervisor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

I can't speak for them but I would say I don't remember anybody complaining or being difficult. Everyone to me seemed very anxious and very willing to participate and then all the training that we did receive, it was very intense and very, for me just really beneficial.

So everyone even today says that the way that you talk to the kids, then the vocabulary that you use and everything else like that. So even the kids in the classroom will use kind of like those Tier II vocabulary because that's just kind of how I talk to them and I just come into that practice.

I don't really see it as I'm trying to do it. It's just kind of the way it comes out.

Do you recall any specific training you got phonological awareness?

As far as phonological awareness goes, we had several. I can't off the top of my head think of any specific things. I remember we did some – they asked people to volunteer – I just can remember doing one of those Madelyn Hunter lesson plans and doing the onset in rhyme, and showing them how I teach the kids the onset and rhyme objectives. But as far as any acronyms or anything, I'm drawing a blank on them.

And I'll kind of ask the same question about the assessment. Do you remember how they began to teach you and others about the assessment? What it was about that teaching that kind of stuck with you?

I just remember it being very helpful and identifying and individualizing for the kids because when you do teach, sometimes you might think that they're getting it but when in actuality they're not.

Until you really take a close look at what they are learning and then doing that, it just allows you to individualize each child and what their strengths and what their weaknesses are.

So that you can go forth and say, "Oh, I really thought she knew how to rhyme words." But then you go and assess them and you're like, oh, maybe they were just kind of in the background and maybe need a little more one on one with that skill.

So that's what really sticks out for me. Just how helpful it was to individualize each child. And then as a site director, which you were then and you are now.

What kind of knowledge or training do you think directors like yourself need to help teachers improve? For example, to do that kind of effective modeling for teachers and to provide feedback where they can really benefit?

Well, I think any good teaching or any good base would start, "This is your lesson plan. I would say to start there would be to really focus on teaching it." How to create an

Site Supervisor Interview #2

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in **yellow**

effective lesson plan, because once you have that, everything else just kind of falls into place.

And then making sure that when you are doing that lesson plan that everybody knows what their responsibilities, what their tasks are. So say this person, teacher A has these 3 kids, and their doing this activity and this is the objective and this is what you want that group of kids to learn so that she can prepare for what she needs to teach.

And the same for each teacher, because if you don't do that, then teacher A might think that they're supposed to do teacher B's lesson.

So if everybody knows what they need to do and you're prepared for what you're going to teach the kids, everything else just seems to kind of fall into place.

OK. Well is there anything else that you want to tell me about your role, or what you took away from your experience with the Early Reading First folks?

I took away a lot. I think I've pretty much touched on everything. The big one is the lesson planning, vocabulary, individualizing, the dialogic reading.... It was. I really took a lot away from the experience.

Preschool Teacher Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Would you please introduce yourself with your name and the affiliation you had then, and the position that you held with the Early Reading First grant?

OK, my name is _____ and I'm a pre-school teacher in the _____ School District and I was a pre-school teacher in the School District when I was under the Early Reading First grant.

And how long were you involved in that grant?

For 3 years. This is my 5th year as a certified teacher.

Can you describe for me what kinds of professional development you received throughout the course of that project?

The professional development went right along with the mentoring we were receiving. So it was topics that we were using in class and were working on to further our understanding. So everything from English Language development to vocabulary instruction, setting up and using dramatic play experiences in your class. So _____ the topics that followed right along with the mentoring and the in-class experiences we were having also.

And did you take part in any of the continuing education or for credit courses given by the University at the time?

We were receiving credit for them. I didn't take any outside courses other than what we were given credit for the grant.

And when you started with that program, were you a fairly new teacher?

I was a new *certified* teacher, yes. I always taught pre-school since I graduated from high school so I've been doing it for a long time. But as a certified teacher, it was my 2nd year.

So are you still working in a pre-school program in the system?

It's very similar to a Head Start program in that we service similar students. There are some different qualifications as far as home visits and things like this, but it's a lot like a Head Start program.

I want you to think back about the kinds of professional development, the mentoring and all that, during the Early Reading First program and the kind of professional development you receive now in your current position. So how does the Early Reading First professional development compare to what you're currently receiving?

We're trying to backtrack now, really, and give the teachers that kind that we got through the grant, that different kind of training that I receive.

So we're actually teaching a lot of the same things to the pre-school teachers that are current now and trying to get them on the same level. And that's at the pre-school level.

Preschool Teacher Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Then at the district meetings, a lot of that stuff really isn't relevant, the way it works under the grant because it's not early childhood focused.

So, what you said was really interesting to me about you're trying to backtrack now. So what does that mean, I mean in terms of the quality or how do you value what you've learned under that program?

For sure. Like I said, I taught pre-school ever since graduating high school and I became a totally different teacher after going through the program.

I mean, just consider that I'm at a mastery level now due to the experiences and the growth that the children show and the on-going achievement that they're having, just shows us that that's what they need and those are the skills that, especially these at-risk students, aren't getting at home, so we need to provide for them.

What kinds of training really helped you become a master teacher like you are now? Can you tell me a little bit about a particular kind of training? Some content areas?

Right. Well, along with just the overall language development, from the tiny pieces like phonological awareness all the way up into vocabulary instruction, and conversations. Just having scaffolding conversations where we're keeping them on topic and showing them appropriate language usage, and the vocabulary development is huge.

We used what Early Reading First calls Tiers II Words so that these students have a larger vocabulary going into the grade levels where their reading scores are going up because they have more words under their belt.

But also you know, the smaller pieces like the phonological awareness and the phonics and the big 5 – what they call the big 5 – those pieces – it's totally skipped my mind. Phonics, phonological awareness, fluency and these kinds of things that they're giving.

You mentioned dramatic play. How did dramatic play come into helping kids develop these new kinds of language skills? How did that work?

It's a very big component of curriculum. Besides the vocabulary, we used dramatic instruction. So they come in every 2 weeks and there's a new dramatic play immersion area and the vocabulary is directly related so that we can go in and model it with them and use it with them and have them actually saying the words over and over again and just giving them experiences where they understand what that vocabulary is and are using it.

Do you remember what the name of the curriculum was that you used? Was it like a commercial curriculum or was it like the one at the university?

I think it was – I don't believe it was a curriculum. I think that Dr. _____ has a lot to do with putting it together and just – I don't know, she's a speech and language professor. Yes, we talked to her the other day, yes. Yeah, so I know a lot of her ideals went into in

Preschool Teacher Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

and what she considers is important to children. And the population that we're working with doesn't come to us with that language and the higher level language and use it. So for them to get those experiences, just provide the backbone for later experiences, that is big.

And were the students you were working with, were the kids from English speaking homes? Or non-English speaking homes? Or mixed?

It's very diverse. I have about ½ and ½ right now and then it's not just Spanish speaking students either. I have Burmese and Sudanese and just families from all over the world. Their cultures are very different and their languages are very different and so a lot of it too is using regalia, or pictures and teaching vocabulary through real experiences rather than just the language, because they're not gonna pick that up.

You mentioned that you could see the growth in the kids. What part did assessment they play in helping you see the growth and then helping you plan instruction to move that growth along?

Well, instruction is driven by our assessments and the results we get. We do use several tools from the PALS early literacy screening tool and creative curriculum. But those give you ... like PALS – it tells you exactly what they've learned and what they haven't as far as literacy skills.

But a lot of informal observations too. Just watching their growth through the conversations you're having with them and the way they're using language in the classroom.

We also do dramatic play outside where they're using the same skills outside. So just the way they're interacting with each other, informal observations, and then the creative curriculum gives you a guide to go by as far as the different developmental areas.

So it's a little more subjective. It's a good tool to use as far as watching their growth and seeing that they're mastering pre-school skills.

How did the teachers put all this data together? Was that a part of what you did in your classroom?

Yeah, and we still use those things, student journals and portfolios. We keep ongoing samples of work. We have the students give some input into that and would you like to save this and show it to your mom, and those kinds of things. We'll keep them for conferences or end of the year portfolios and our observations are huge.

Just anecdotal notes of what's going on in the classrooms throughout the day and making notes on what the children are doing and what they're saying and how they're acting,

Preschool Teacher Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

even. And just using those as tools to assess them and also, you know, what their needs are to teach them ongoing.

And how did you use that kind of assessment to group kids?

Well, a lot of the groupings are done by the PALS, sort of, assessment in that for reading groups and literacy groups and math groups also.

You know, we look at where they're at and that's more creative curriculum, it talks about math and logical skills more than cognitive. So we'll use those for math groupings but then there's also flexible groups with groups that have high speaking, high language and literacy, kids with English language learners so that they're getting models in their group also. And those are kind of less formal usually.

But sometimes it goes; it just depends on what the objective. My lesson plans always follow a schedule so on Tuesdays and Thursdays, we do math. So those groups that we're pulling to dramatic play, we can focus on what their needs are language wise. The groups that we're pulling to the math groups are gonna ones that are pretty much on the same level so we can individualize instruction a little easier.

When you started the project, you had had a number of years experience as a teacher.

What was it like to have a mentor or a coach?

Unbelievable because really, the instruction that I was providing wasn't – it was quality, but it wasn't what the students need now because these are at-risk students and they need much more than what I was giving as far as vocabulary and language instruction. Just having someone in the classroom that could model those skills and just bump up the level of teaching that we were doing. It was significant.

She was an unbelievable mentor – very highly qualified in speech and language, just skills that I didn't have and she was an excellent model because she worked directly with the kids. Instead of telling me what to do, she showed me what to do by doing it with the students. It just gave great insight and feedback. She worked relentlessly with us on lesson plans.

Another thing that I got from Early Reading First was a mapped curriculum so that we were hitting all the standards. And the way they did it, they mapped it so that the standards were hit 3 times during the year, each standard. And then, the expectation was that we would teach the standard twice in the week.

So just the level of lesson planning was something that was way above what we had done before and it was me, and my mentor, and another teacher sitting down for 5 hours a week working on them. It was priceless.

Preschool Teacher Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

And in terms of your schedule now, do you have that kind of time for lesson planning?

Well, it doesn't take that much because the lesson plans I have are great. So I just really copy and paste and I'm still using the same dramatic play and the same language skills and I just kept everything I got from them and learned from them as far as what to teach and how to teach it.

So I've just been copying and pasting it. I gotta say, I'm not giving my lesson plans to new pre-school teachers, and it's a little extensive for them actually. They're like ... "I don't know that I can keep up with this", but it also gives them a great guide to go by, by just making sure you're hitting the standards.

Would you be willing to share a couple of your lesson plans? I would love to see them for the purposes of this study. Are they emailable?

Yes, sure. They're all on the computer and ready to go.

Was there anything about the Early Reading First professional development that was particularly difficult? Did they try something that just didn't work and then they had to go down a different path? Were there any challenges?

It was challenging. And there was some resistance to things because it was difficult and it was, I think, a higher level teaching than any of us were doing so it just.....

You know, old time teachers are kind of resistance to change sometimes. But in hindsight I see the value of it and I've kept everything that they did because I see the growth that my students are making. Just the level of teaching is where it needs to be and before, it wasn't.

But it was very challenging and it was tiring and the lesson planning sessions could be frustrating when you wanted to, maybe, not spend so much time on a Tuesday working on your lesson plan, but I think that was most of it.

And I think that they were right on with the topics and the subjects they were teaching. I wish I would've brought home my binder because I could've gone into more detail but in the email I can send you the topic list that we went over because it was really remarkable.

If there were a couple of topics that you thought were the most important – I know they're all important, but what would they be?

I think vocabulary and language enrichment is huge. Using assessments to drive your instruction is a big one. And working with English Language Learning students because that's something that now we're all working on and learning and even, in the upper grades, it's a huge focus.

Preschool Teacher Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

And how do we instruct these students in the best way? And what's best practice for them? This is best practice for everybody, really but just meeting the needs of the English language learners.

And do you ever see the little kids that you had?

Yeah, for sure. And unfortunately, last year our school got re-purposed so we kind of got broken up but the goal of the pre-school program is to keep these kids at our district schools so I still am in contact with a lot of them and a lot of the families.

Their teachers, there's such encouragement, they tell us that these students are coming in as models for their students and they know what to do, they know the expectations, their have good benchmarks going into kindergarten so they have the skills that they need to be successful learners.

It seems like a great, great experience. It really was. I can't say enough good things about it. I learned so much from them that just is invaluable knowledge.

Are you working with anybody – any of the team that used to be together in that time?

Yeah, my early childhood coordinator at another district, she was in the group with us, and she's actually gonna retire in January. But she's just been so supportive and she had gone through the training also so she just feels as strongly as I do.

And so she actually asked me, this year we had 2 new pre-school teachers to the district and she said, "Could you please be their mentor and guide them with the same skills that you got from Early Reading First essential?"

So we just both feel so strongly about it and about the concepts that they taught us and then there is another pre-school teacher that also went through the grant. So out of 5 district pre-schools – just the 3 of us. Another friend of mine that went through the program also, she now teaches 3rd grade, but I know she's also using the same skills that we learned in Early Reading First with her students.

It's vocabulary instruction and immersion, systematic units, and just giving them more real life experiences and these same things that we learned are going even into 3rd grade, they're still applicable and important.

When I taught out of high school, we did QR projects and a little finger play or do the poem and we still do finger plays but they the emphasis on the rhyming and these kinds of things. There's so much more that goes into it now – or should go into it now. Yeah, it has been really neat. You know, they're getting ready for kindergarten right now.

Preschool Teacher Interview #1

NOTE: Questions are highlighted in yellow

Another piece of the Early Reading First was kindergarten transition and getting them excited and making that transition easier for them. So this week, today actually we went and visited with the kindergarten classrooms and did their rotations with them and tomorrow we'll be going to specials with them.

So the kids are just excited about it and they're ready. I mean, looking at the work that the kindergarteners are doing, they were right there with them. We knew what to do with our actual models, as far as using procedures and knowing the rules and expectations that the kindergarten teacher would have. That's what we hear from them the most is that they're just shining examples for the other students.

Is there anything else you want to tell me that I just didn't think to ask you?

Nothing I can think of but like I said I really wish I had my binder, so I'll just – I know I'm forgetting some of the major components and concepts that they taught us but I'd like to just send you those topics.

APPENDIX C

ERF GRANTEE SAMPLE MATERIALS

Sample Material #1: Weekly Checklist for Planning & Preparation

This material is from the third year of the project when the grantee was helping programs prepare for sustainability of practices after ERF ended.

Weekly Checklist for Planning & Preparation

(fill in name of responsible party)

Lesson Planning

What does each teacher bring to the lesson planning session?

Lead planner _____

Pre-read books and plan story time _____

Dramatic Play _____

Circle Time _____

Teaching Table _____

Teaching Center _____

Outdoor dramatic play & literacy _____

Open centers _____

Meals & scaffolded conversation _____

Transitions _____

Distribution of lesson plans

Front pages & letters distributed to parents _____

Printing and posting copies of the lesson plans _____

Distributing complete lesson plan w/ front page to teaching team _____

Translated Parent Information _____

Preparation of weekly teaching activities, including end of day set up for next day teaching activities

Who is responsible for gathering and preparing materials including ELL supports for:

Circle _____

Teaching Center _____

Teaching Table _____

Open centers _____

Dramatic Play _____

Outdoor dramatic play & literacy _____

Meal table topics & scaffolded conversation _____

Transitions _____

Dialogic reading _____

Preparation of weekly Native Language Instruction

Who is responsible for gathering and preparing material for:

Circle _____

Trophies _____

Big Math _____

Dialogic reading _____

Sample Material #1: Weekly Checklist for Planning & Preparation

This material is from the third year of the project when the grantee was helping programs prepare for sustainability of practices after ERF ended.

Teaching Team Absences
(Lead Teacher)

If a member of the teaching team is absent responsibilities will be as follows:
(Circle all that apply)

Make certain that activities and materials are prepared for the day

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____

Story time 1

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Story Time 2

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Dramatic Play

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Circle Time

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Teaching Table

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Teaching Center

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Outdoor Dramatic Play and Literacy

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Prepare meals

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Transitions

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Meal Topics/ Scaffolded Conversations

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Materials preparation for the next day

Teaching assistant, substitute, other _____

Sample Material #1: Weekly Checklist for Planning & Preparation

This material is from the third year of the project when the grantee was helping programs prepare for sustainability of practices after ERF ended.

Teaching Team Absences
(Teaching Assistant)

If a member of the teaching team is absent responsibilities will be as follows:
(Circle all that apply)

Make certain that activities and materials are prepared for the day

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____

Story time 1

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Story Time 2

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Dramatic Play

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Circle Time

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Teaching Table

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Teaching Center

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Outdoor Dramatic Play and Literacy

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Prepare meals

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Transitions

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Meal Topics/ Scaffolded Conversations

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____ delete activity

Materials preparation for the next day

Lead teacher, substitute, other _____

Sample Material #2: Checklist for Classroom Organization

This material is from the third year of the project when the grantee was helping programs prepare for sustainability of practices after ERF ended.

Checklist for Classroom Organization

Changes in Lesson Plan

Write it on the actual lesson plan _____
Communicate changes to the rest of the team _____
Preps materials for the changed activity _____

Writing

Rotates writing center materials on a schedule _____
Rotates and re supplies writing materials in all centers _____
Re supply and update Post Office Pals materials _____

Books

Gathering and displaying theme books _____
Rotate books in the library _____
Rotating books in centers around the room _____
Catalogue & maintain books by theme _____
Rotate & update culturally diverse books _____
Filing system for comments & questions for dialogic reading _____

Dramatic Play

- Indoor
 - Gathering dramatic play materials _____
 - Setting up dramatic play _____
 - Tearing down dramatic play _____
 - Maintaining dramatic play theme boxes _____
- Outdoor
 - Gathering dramatic play materials _____
 - Setting up dramatic play materials _____
 - Tearing down dramatic play _____

Small Group Instruction

Review and graph CBM data _____
Review CBM data and re assign small groups _____
Copy CBMs and schedule in lesson plan _____

Big Math

Prepare Big Math materials (school/take home) _____
Copy CBMs and schedule in lesson plan _____
Review and graph CBM data _____
Review CBM data and re assign small groups _____

Rotation and Updating

Science/Sensory _____
Blocks/Manipulatives _____
Puzzles/Toys _____
Children's work/writing _____

Vocabulary and Scaffolded Conversation

Gather objects and pictures for vocabulary _____
Assess conversation tracking system quarterly _____

Scaffolding Conversation

- The adult provides support for the conversation so that the child can “stretch” their growing edge by using (slides gave examples of each)
 - New vocabulary
 - Longer sentences
 - More conversational turns
 - Stay on topic
 - Express emotions more clearly
- The best way to start a conversation is with a comment
- Conversation map
 - Get down on the child’s level
 - Be a good listener, giving eye contact
 - Make a comment about what the child is doing or interested in
 - Wait...wait...wait for a response
 - Scaffold that response
 - Wait...wait...wait for another response.
 - Scaffold that response
 - Etc.
- Project objectives—Teachers will:
 - Insure that every child is engaged in high-quality scaffolded conversation with a teacher at least 5 minutes per day for 5 hour programs or 10 minutes per day for 8-11 hour programs.
 - Model targeted vocabulary words at least 5 times per day for 5 hour programs or 10 times per day for 8-11 hour programs
 - Use “higher level” or “complex” vocabulary as they teach and converse with children
- Best times for conversation are
 - Snacks and meals
 - Small group instruction
 - Dramatic play
 - Outdoor play
 - Transitions with small groups
- Tracking conversations option 1
 - Assign each child to a different teacher
 - List your children on one summary sheet
 - Record conversation information directly onto that summary sheet
 - Date
 - Name
 - Topic
 - New vocabulary
 - Number of conversational turns
- Tracking conversations option 2
 - Write each child’s name on a popsicle stick
 - Each time a teacher has a scaffolded conversation, move the stick to the “done” can
 - Record information on summary sheet
- Tracking conversations option 3
 - Write each child’s name on a post it note/label
 - Record information on the post it/label
 - Transfer them to a summary sheet at the end of the day

Sample Material #4: Phonological Awareness Inventory

Name: _____

Phonological Awareness Inventory Task 3: Identifying Beginning Sounds

Task: The child will listen to a word and identify its beginning sound.

Model: Here's a picture of a horse. The word starts with the sound /h/. Now I want you to tell me what sound these words start with.

Item	Correct response	Child response	Date
1. Put your finger on the picture of the <i>can</i> . Touch each picture as I name it: <i>can, man, tree</i> . Listen for the picture name that rhymes with <i>can</i> . Listen: <i>can-man, can-tree</i> . Point to the picture that rhymes with <i>can</i> .	<i>man</i>		
2. Put your finger on the picture of the <i>house</i> . Touch each picture as I name it: <i>house, mouse, pig</i> . Listen for the picture name that rhymes with <i>house</i> . Listen: <i>house-mouse, house-pig</i> . Point to the picture that rhymes with <i>house</i> .	<i>mouse</i>		
3. Put your finger on the picture of the <i>dog</i> name it: Touch each picture as I name it: <i>dog, lamp, frog</i> . Listen for the picture name that rhymes with <i>dog</i> . Listen: <i>dog-lamp, dog-frog</i> . Point to the picture that rhymes with <i>dog</i> .	<i>frog</i>		
4. Put your finger on the picture of the tree. Touch each picture as I name it: tree, see, pig. Listen for the picture name that rhymes with tree. Listen: tree-see, tree-pig. Point to the picture that rhymes with tree.	<i>see</i>		
5. Put your finger on the picture of the car. Touch each picture As I name it: car, bus, star. Listen for the picture name that Rhymes with car. Listen: car-bus, car-star. Point to the picture that rhymes with car.	<i>star</i>		
6. Put your finger on the picture of the pig. Touch each picture as I name it: pig, dig, man. Listen for the picture name that rhymes with pig. Listen: pig-dig, pig-man. Point to the picture that rhymes with pig.	<i>dig</i>		
7. Put your finger on the picture of the run. Touch each picture as I name it: run, saw, sun. Listen for the picture name that rhymes with run. Listen: run-saw, run-sun. Point to the picture that rhymes with run.	<i>sun</i>		
8. Put your finger on the picture of the <i>day</i> . Touch each picture as I name it: <i>day, play, lamp</i> . Listen for the picture name that Rhymes with <i>day</i> . Listen: <i>day-play, day-lamp</i> . Point to the picture that rhymes with <i>day</i> .	<i>play</i>		

Sample Material #4: Phonological Awareness Inventory

Name: _____

**Phonological Awareness Inventory
Task 3: Identifying Beginning Sounds**

Task: The child will listen to a word and identify its beginning sound.

Model: Here's a picture of a horse. The word starts with the sound /h/. Now I want you to tell me what sound these words start with.

Item (English)	Correct response	Child response	Date
1. Here's a fan. What sound does fan begin with?	/f/		
2. Here's a ball. What sound does ball begin with?	/b/		
3. Here's a duck. What sound does duck begin with?	/d/		
4. Here's some milk. What sound does milk begin with?	/m/		
5. Here's a pot. What sound does pot begin with?	/p/		
6. Here's a van. What sound does van begin with?	/v/		
7. Here's a dog. What sound does dog begin with?	/d/		
8. Here's a nut. What sound does nut begin with?	/n/		

Item (Spanish)	Correct response	Child response	Date
1. Here's a <i>foca</i> . What sound does <i>foca</i> begin with?	/f/		
2. Here's a <i>babe</i> . What sound does <i>babe</i> begin with?	/b/		
3. Here's a <i>dedo</i> . What sound does <i>dedo</i> begin with?	/d/		
4. Here's some <i>manzana</i> . What sound does <i>manzana</i> begin with?	/m/		
5. Here's a <i>perro</i> . What sound does <i>perro</i> begin with?	/p/		
6. Here's a <i>vaca</i> . What sound does <i>vaca</i> begin with?	/v/		
7. Here's a <i>dinoasurio</i> . What sound does <i>dinoasurio</i> begin with?	/d/		
8. Here's a <i>nuez</i> . What sound does <i>dinoasurio</i> begin with?	/n/		

Mentoring Cycle Log: Planning On-Site Training with Teachers

In this ERF grantee site, mentors are trained to work together with preschool teachers to set goals and plan mentoring activities. Once the mentor and teacher have identified goals, they plan a *modeling-observation-feedback-action cycle* to ensure that effective teaching strategies are implemented and sustained in the classroom. At the start of the mentor-teacher conference, the mentor asks the teacher to reflect and talk about how the lesson went and whether the teaching objective was accomplished. The skills checklist is used to structure the conference and provides a good starting point for communicating feedback to teachers in a meaningful, collaborative, and effective way.

Teacher: _____

Mentor: _____

Mentor Log for Level I Skills

(Complete with the Teacher)

Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing. Albert Schweitzer

With the teacher select one of the skills checklists:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trophies Curriculum Measures | <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum-Based |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Big Math Curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten Transition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dramatic Play | <input type="checkbox"/> School-Home connection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary | <input type="checkbox"/> Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scaffolded Conversation | <input type="checkbox"/> Post Office Pals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Literacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Dialogic Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson Planning I | <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Environment I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | |

Focused Modeling Plan

Which skills from the checklist would you particularly like to see modeled?

What setting? (e.g., small group book reading, block area, dramatic play area)

What date and time?

Will this be videotaped? Yes No If yes, who will set up?

Feedback Conference Notes

- 1) Ask teacher to summarize her impressions and assessment of the skills demonstrated by referring to her skills checklist.
“Looking at your skills checklist how would you assess your teaching?”

- 2) Ask teacher to reflect on positive aspects of her assessment.
“Which skills were you most pleased with?”

- 3) Build on the positive aspects of the teacher’s reflections.
“Yes, and I saw you X” (referring to your notes on the skills checklist or sample).

- 4) Ask teacher to reflect on what they might do to improve their teaching.
“What would you like to change or improve?”

- 5) Build on that goal by reviewing comments and examples from the Mentor’s Skills Checklist.
“OK, I noted that you did X...perhaps X would have a better result.”

- 6) Review remainder of skills checklist for additional goals.
“What other skills from the checklist should we work on?”

- 7) Develop action plan for following 5 days.
“OK let’s prioritize our goals for the next 5 days.” What specifically do you want to work on and how can I help you?”

Action Plan

Goal 1: _____

Teacher will prepare by:

Mentor will support by:

Goal 2: _____

Teacher will prepare by:

Mentor will support by:

Goal 3: _____

Teacher will prepare by:

Mentor will support by:

Teacher Signature

Mentor Signature

Date _____

Skills Checklist Feedback Conference

1. Observer/evaluator asks teacher or instructional assistant to summarize her impressions and assessment of the lesson/skill demonstrated, e.g., "How do you think this lesson went? Did you accomplish your objective?"
2. Observer/evaluator builds on the positive aspects of the teacher's reflections. Observer/evaluator says "Out of those things that you mentioned what were you most pleased about?" "What was difficult about the skill area?" "What would you change?"
3. Skill Checklist Review
 - a. Provide specific examples of what you observed using the Skill Checklist ("I saw you do this, this, and this. Did I miss anything?")
 - b. Provide specific examples of what you expected to see and didn't (again, refer to the Skills Checklist - e.g., if the skill area you are observing is Dramatic Play and there were dramatic play props available but not demonstrated there is room for improvement...). Ask again, "Did I miss anything?"
 - c. Summary statement - "This is what I observed - are we in agreement about this? "Talk It Out."
 - d. Observer/Evaluator says "Our goal is to complete all of the skills on the Skill Checklist. What should be included in your 'Action Plan'?"
 - e. The Action Plan should include what specifics the teacher needs to demonstrate (If the skill area is dialogic reading the teacher may need to practice reading and re-reading the book out loud, identify the Tier Two Vocabulary, add sticky notes with questions to ask, etc.).
 - f. The teacher should request the mentor with the specific skill expertise to model the activity and then observe the teacher in the activity.

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – a. Where I Live

Teaching Team:		School:	Week of:	Theme: Where I Live	
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Greetings 8:15-8:25 12:15-12:25	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	No School
Circle 8:25-8:45 12:25-12:45	<p>Introduce Theme</p> <p>Introduce Vocabulary</p> <p>Sing along with “Rooms In A Home” and pantomime motions for different rooms in a home. SEER vocabulary using traffic signals, cars, and rug for neighborhood, traffic, and signals</p> <p>Introduce letter of the week Aa and circle Aa’s in the morning message.</p>	<p>Letters & Sounds</p> <p>Children will name the letter of the week Aa.</p> <p>Teacher will letter talk Aa while students write in the air then on the carpet.</p> <p>Students will identify Aa words from the Magic Can.</p> <p>Students will read sight words with teacher.</p>	<p>Phonological Awareness</p> <p>Sing nursery rhymes right and wrong ways and have students signal with thumb if you are right or not.</p> <p>Let students volunteer to sing sully rhymes. From HC Neighborhood theme 7.</p>	<p>Shared Writing</p> <p>Get out car rug of places in the neighborhood, students stand on one place and identify it by saying “ the fire station is in the neighborhood” teacher make list on board</p>	
Breakfast/ Snack 8:45-9:05 12:45-1:05	Scaffolded conversations about neighborhoods and where we live.	Scaffolded conversations about neighborhoods and where we live.	Scaffolded conversations about neighborhoods and where we live.	Scaffolded conversations about neighborhoods and where we live.	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – a. Where I Live

	Students answer specific questions about family traditions, example: holidays	Use sight word ate with word card in a sentence	Students answer specific questions about family traditions, example: holidays	Students answer specific questions about family traditions, example: holidays	
Story Time 9:05-9:20 1:05-1:20	<p>Group 1</p> <p>Teacher Tells the story of the Three Pigs with props.</p> <p>Students and teacher will complete a flow map sequencing the events in the story.</p> <p>Group 2 – No Jumping on the Bed. Children complete the sentence following the pattern in the book.</p>	<p>Group 1/ ELL</p> <p>A House is a House for Me. Children describe house or apt. they live in and describe houses for creatures in the book.</p> <p>Group 2 – How a House is Built – children use cards to order three steps in a building a house in sequence.</p>	<p>Group 1/ELL</p> <p>The Napping House – Children fill in the names of the animals that pile on top of the quilt</p> <p>Group 2 – Read Apartments. Students describe their house or apartment to their neighbor.</p>	<p>Groups 1 & 2</p> <p>Re-enact The Three Little Pigs with a narrator and the children say the dialogue of the characters.</p> <p>Each group performs for the other. (Take pictures for yearbook)</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – a. Where I Live

<p>Rotations: 9:25-10:20 1:25-2:20</p>					
<p>Rotation 1: Teaching Table</p>	<p>Letters & Sounds</p> <p>Letter Hunt, children will find letter Aa written on the sticky notes around the classroom (notes will be placed on top of Aa objects or print in the classroom).</p> <p>Students will name the letter and the sound it makes.</p> <p>Using Trophies picture/ word cards, students will make the /a/ sound when they see a picture/ word that begins with /a/.</p> <p>Sing alphabet in my mouth or who let the letters out.</p>	<p>Phonological Awareness</p> <p>From a choice of three centers students will decide what center a sound was played from.</p> <p>Students will sit in a circle with eyes closed.</p> <p>Teacher will choose one child to say a sentence.</p> <p>Other students will identify which child spoke.</p>	<p>Vocabulary</p> <p>Student will label the rooms in an apartment (use dollhouse).</p> <p>Students will pull items out of a bucket and describe which room in the apartment the item belongs.</p>	<p>Writing</p> <p>Students will draw and describe their apartment or house. Then affix to large mural used to create a map of their neighborhood.</p> <p>Students dictate a description of their neighborhood to the teacher for post office pals.</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – a. Where I Live

<p>Rotation 2: Teaching Center</p>	<p>Inside Dramatic Play/ELL</p> <p>Children will use the dialogue of customers and employees at the post office.</p> <p>Clerks will describe what routes the mail carriers and customers can take to avoid traffic in the neighborhood. They will describe the neighborhood and indicate on neighborhood maps where things are located.</p> <p>Clerks at the Post Office will sell products and request products.</p>	<p>Harcourt Math</p> <p>Students will match the numeral cards to the corresponding number of dots, draw a dot card from the pile and match it to the corresponding numeral card, and draw a numeral card and decide if it goes before or after the numeral card in front of them.</p>	<p>Blocks</p> <p>Students will use blocks or Legos to build a model of their kitchen at home.</p> <p>Students use vocabulary traffic, signal, and neighborhood while using cars, street signs, and traffic rug in the block center.</p>	<p>Harcourt Math</p> <p>Students will count 1-20 while pointing to the corresponding number on the number line.</p>	
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Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – a. Where I Live

<p>Rotation 3:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Art</p> <p>Students will create a traffic signal using black rectangles and red, yellow, and green circles.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Inside Dramatic Play/ELL</p> <p>Children will use the dialogue of customers and employees at the post office.</p> <p>Clerks will describe what routes the mail carriers and customers can take to avoid traffic in the neighborhood.</p> <p>They will describe the neighborhood and indicate on neighborhood maps where things are located.</p> <p>Clerks at the Post Office will sell products and request products.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Letters and Sounds</p> <p>Children will match some letters to sounds using the alphabet pocket chart.</p> <p>Students will write, trace, or copy letter Aa using stamps and stencils, and magnet letters.</p> <p>Students will identify letter Aa on the alphabet song.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Writing</p> <p>Students will use numeral stencils to write the numbers 1-5 in a flow map format.</p>	
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Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – a. Where I Live

<p>Rotation 4:</p>	<p>Computer Center</p> <p>Students will click on the letter Aa on the alphabet game on Starfall.</p>	<p>Toys/Puzzles</p> <p>Students will make a tower by counting out a specified number of cubes and stacking them together.</p>	<p>Art</p> <p>Students will create a traffic signal using black rectangles and tracing circles then coloring them with red, yellow, and green chalk.</p>	<p>Sensory</p> <p>Students will use construction vehicles In the dirt.</p> <p>Students will sort the vehicles by one attribute (ie. Wheels, colors) Students will discuss rules of traffic, building a neighborhood.</p> <p>Students will incorporate signals and describe their use.</p>	
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Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – a. Where I Live

<p>Free Choice Centers/ 10:20-10:50 2:20-2:50</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!!</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Students will point to the area where they hear a sound coming from in the classroom</p> <p>Students will take turns leading the group in the Egg Shaker song.</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!!</p> <p>Vocabulary & letters</p> <p>Students will rub a crayon on paper taped over sandpaper Aa's.</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!!</p> <p>Math</p> <p>Students will count the number of chocolate chips on the cookies and self-correct by looking at the number printed on the bottom of the cookie.</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!!</p> <p>Inside Dramatic Play/ELL</p> <p>Children will use the dialogue of customers and employees at the post office.</p> <p>Clerks will describe what routes the mail carriers and customers can take to avoid traffic in the neighborhood.</p> <p>They will describe the neighborhood and indicate on neighborhood maps where things are located.</p> <p>Clerks at the Post Office will sell products and request products.</p>	
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Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – a. Where I Live

<p>Community Circle/ Town Hall 10:55-11:15 2:55-3:15</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	
<p>Transitions</p>	<p>Students identify letters A, S, M, or F</p>	<p>Students point to the word ate or a and identify name.</p>	<p>Students fill in rhyming word of nursery rhyme.</p>	<p>Students tell which they live in apartment or house. Students tell what comes next in the schedule.</p>	

Teaching Team:		School:	Week of:	Theme: Pets and Farm Animals	
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Greetings 8:15-8:25 12:15-12:25	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	No School
Circle 8:25-8:45 12:25-12:45	<p>Introduce Theme</p> <p>Introduce Vocabulary</p> <p>Use objects, stuffed animals, and pictures for vocabulary words.</p> <p>Students will repeat vocabulary words leash, collar, vaccination, veterinarian, bull, calf, lamb, and colt. Name the pets on vocab. cards 25 & 26.</p> <p>Children will clap the letters and missing letters in BINGO.</p>	<p>Shared Writing</p> <p>Children name an animal and describe it as good or bad pet.</p> <p>Teacher writes the animal name in a two- column chart.</p> <p>Children place picture of animal or stuffed animal in a box for good pets/ bad pets.</p>	<p>Letters and Sounds</p> <p>Children say uppercase and lowercase Tt when they see the letter card.</p> <p>Children will say the name of items that begin with Tt in the magic can.</p> <p>Children practice writing uppercase and lowercase Tt.</p>	<p>Phonological Awareness</p> <p>Children will select an animal from the pet carrier and tells the teacher a sentence about the animal (My dog is brown).</p> <p>Children hold up a finger for each word in the sentence and then count the number of fingers.</p> <p>Groups of children act out Mary Had a Little Lamb while the group sings the song.</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – b. Pets and Farm Animals

<p>Breakfast/ Snack 8:45-9:05 12:45-1:05</p>	<p>Scaffolded Conversation</p> <p>I have a cat, dog, and two hermit crabs. Do you have any pets?</p>	<p>Scaffolded Conversation</p> <p>Would an elephant make a good pet?</p> <p>What would we need to take good care of a pet that large?</p>	<p>Scaffolded Conversation</p> <p>Did you enter a pet in the pet show?</p> <p>Did your pet win a prize?</p>	<p>Scaffolded Conversation</p> <p>How many items do you have on your tray?</p> <p>Do you have more than, less than, or the same amount as the person sitting next to you?</p>	
<p>Story Time 9:05-9:20 1:05-1:20</p>	<p>Group 1 - Read The Best Pet of All</p> <p>Students will create a list of characters and a list of pets that they have at home.</p> <p>Group 2 - Read Farm Animals</p> <p>Introduce plastic farm animals or manipulatives in blocks.</p> <p>Students will name and use animals appropriately.</p>	<p>Group 1- Read The Best Pet of All</p> <p>Students name the problem and how the boy solved it.</p> <p>Group 2 ELL- Read Bark George</p> <p>Reread story and students say dialog of animals inside George.</p>	<p>Group 1 - Read Farm Animals</p> <p>Students put farm animal and animal babies puzzle together.</p> <p>Students describe the texture of the animals.</p> <p>Group 2- Read Harry the Dirty Dog. SEER leash and collar</p> <p>Students explain why Harry ran away and why the family did not recognize him.</p>	<p>Group 1 ELL - Have You Got My Purr? SEER lamb.</p> <p>Students fill in closed sentence Have you got my —.</p> <p>Group 2 - Read The Best Pet of All</p> <p>Students say the dialog of the characters and narrate the story.</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – b. Pets and Farm Animals

<p>Rotations: 9:25-10:20 1:25-2:20</p>					
<p>Rotation 1: Teaching Table</p>	<p>Vocabulary SEER vocabulary words; veterinarian, leash, collar, and vaccination.</p> <p>Students will describe attributes of these items (i.e. The leash is longer, the collar is shorter).</p> <p>SEER farm animal vocabulary.</p> <p>Students will sing Mary had a little lamb, colt, and calf. Mystery box-</p> <p>Students will put a pet manipulative into a small individual mystery box and provide clues based on the attributes of the pets.</p>	<p>Writing</p> <p>Students will review and add to list of good pets and bad pets.</p> <p>Students will illustrate, dictate, and use inventive spelling to make a page for the class pet book.</p>	<p>Letters and Sounds</p> <p>Children will use paper tubes to find the letter T or objects that start with /t/ in the classroom.</p> <p>Students will write Tt on whiteboards as teachers use “letter talk”.</p>	<p>Phonological Awareness</p> <p>Students will clap words in a sentence about pets, (written on a sentence strip with a hand under each word).</p> <p>Students will dictate a sentence describing a pet or pet item and others will clap out words after teacher writes sentence.</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – b. Pets and Farm Animals

<p>Rotation 2: Teaching Center</p>	<p>Dramatic Play</p> <p>Students will use the vocabulary words; veterinarian, leash, collar, and vaccination as they play the roles of vet, office staff, and pet owners in a Vet Office.</p> <p>Students will fill out forms describing their pet and why they are at the office.</p> <p>Vets will fill out forms related to the check-up.</p>	<p>Harcourt Math</p> <p>Students will compare capacities of containers and use the terms empty, full, holds more, holds less, and holds about the same to describe capacities.</p>	<p>Dramatic Play</p> <p>Students will use the vocabulary words; veterinarian, leash, collar, and vaccination as they play the roles of vet, office staff, and pet owners in a Vet Office.</p> <p>Students will fill out forms describing their pet and why they are at the office.</p> <p>Vets will fill out forms related to the check-up</p>	<p>Harcourt Math</p> <p>Students will compare capacities of containers and use the terms empty, full, holds more, holds less, and holds about the same to describe capacities.</p>	
<p>Rotation 3:</p>	<p>Writing</p> <p>Students will complete sentence I have a leash for my _____.</p>	<p>Sensory Table</p> <p>Students will use animals, barn, and silo to recreate a farm.</p> <p>Students will follow directions to “milk the cow.”</p>	<p>Writing/Journals</p> <p>Children will illustrate, dictate, and use inventive spelling to communicate what pet they would want to have.</p>	<p>Blocks/ Manipulatives</p> <p>Children will build doghouses for their “pet dogs.”</p>	

<p>Rotation 4:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Art</p> <p>The students paint a picture of their pet/pets at home.</p> <p>The student will label it with the type of animal it is.</p> <p>Write animals names on a piece of paper with an illustration next to it, so the students know how the spell the animal name.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Dramatic Play</p> <p>Students will use the vocabulary words; veterinarian, leash, collar, and vaccination as they play the roles of vet, office staff, and pet owners in a Vet Office.</p> <p>Students will fill out forms describing their pet and why they are at the office.</p> <p>Vets will fill out forms related to the check-up.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Writing/ABC's</p> <p>Children will select a picture from the pet dish and name the sound the picture starts with</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Dramatic Play</p> <p>Students will use the vocabulary words; veterinarian, leash, collar, and vaccination as they play the roles of vet, office staff, and pet owners in a Vet Office.</p> <p>Students will fill out forms describing their pet and why they are at the office.</p> <p>Vets will fill out forms related to the check-up.</p>	
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Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – b. Pets and Farm Animals

<p>Free Choice Centers/ 10:20-10:50 2:20-2:50</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!!</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Students will point to correct words and letters while singing B-I-N-G-O.</p> <p>Students will clap as letters are removed from the song.</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!!</p> <p>Vocabulary & letters</p> <p>Students will point to each word while reading sentences in the pocket chart.</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!!</p> <p>Math</p> <p>Students will provide animals with the correct size feeding dish.</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!!</p> <p>Inside Dramatic Play</p> <p>Students will use the vocabulary words; veterinarian, leash, collar, and vaccination as they play the roles of vet, office staff, and pet owners in a Vet Office.</p> <p>Students will fill out forms describing their pet and why they are at the office.</p> <p>Vets will fill out forms related to the check-up.</p>	
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Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – b. Pets and Farm Animals

<p>Community Circle/ Town Hall 10:55-11:15 2:55-3:15</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	
<p>Transitions</p>	<p>Give a thumbs up/down if the two words I say rhyme/don’t. Meow and walk like a pet kitten.</p>	<p>Clap syllables in vocabulary words: veterinarian, leash, collar, bull, calf, colt, lamb, and vaccination. Name the sound letter t, q, h, c, b makes.</p>	<p>Pick a lowercase t and put next to a capital T (or reverse) Tell me one thing a veterinarian does.</p>	<p>Clap the words in the sentence; I have two (name a pet). Walk your dog on a leash, put on his collar.</p>	

Teaching Team	School:	Week of:	Theme: Bugs and Blooms		
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	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Greetings	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	Parents/Books/ Scaffolded Conversation	No School
Circle	<p>Introduce Theme</p> <p>Letters & Sounds</p> <p>Introduce Uu letter card.</p> <p>Students will recite name and sound.</p> <p>Read Iggy is an Inchworm. (on chart paper)(p 147 Harcourt teacher’s edition).</p> <p>Students will trace over li’s in poem with red marker.</p>	<p>Vocabulary/ELL</p> <p>Mystery Box</p> <p>Students ask questions to guess what is in the box.</p> <p>Seer vocabulary and review Harcourt vocabulary picture cards.</p> <p>Students label the thorax, abdomen, and antennae of a large insect model using post it notes with vocabulary printed on them.</p>	<p>Phonological Awareness</p> <p>Students name rhyming words in the sentence The snake likes cake.</p> <p>Explain what rhyming words are.</p> <p>Students will help make up silly rhymes about insects and animals.</p> <p>Teacher model writes responses and points out similar endings in rhyming words.</p>	<p>Vocabulary</p> <p>Students identify abdomen, thorax, and antennae of insect manipulative they are holding.</p> <p>Students describe insect to their neighbor and illustrate their insect on a whiteboard.</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – c. Bugs and Blooms

Breakfast/ Snack	Scaffolded Conversation	Scaffolded Conversation	Scaffolded Conversation	Scaffolded Conversation	
Story Time	<p>1. Students listen to Three Billy Goats book. SEER meadow. 1.1d Ask students why they want to cross the bridge? Students identify that the grass on their side is dead or gone and they want to eat green grass. Students identify the characters and problem of the story.</p> <p>2. The Icky Bug Alphabet. Book students identify page with the first letter of their name and teacher reads aloud. Students tell one bug that lives in their backyard. SEER Antennas. Students identify bugs with antennas.</p>	<p>ELL</p> <p>1. ELL students read Three Billy Goats Gruff in Spanish. Students identify the characters and the problem.</p> <p>Substitute - Flower Garden in afternoon for English students identify a flower blooming by pointing and saying “this flower is blooming”</p> <p>2. Read The Ants Go Marching. Students march in groups of number on page and sing pattern phrase with group.</p>	<p>1. Teachers act out Three Billy Goats Gruff. Students tell which character each teacher played.</p> <p>2. Students sing one, two, buckle my shoe clapping on number words. Sing again acting out rhyme.</p>	<p>ELL</p> <p>1. Students read, sing, and act out itsy, bitsy spider in Spanish and English. Students choose new bug to replace spider in rhyme.</p> <p>2. Icky Bug Alphabet book. Students point to the title of book. Students choose a letter of the alphabet and group sings abc’s until they reach that letter and read page of book.</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – c. Bugs and Blooms

<p>Outside Time</p>	<p>Students will use magnifying glasses, clipboards, and writing materials to document insects and the natural environment.</p>	<p>Students will use magnifying glasses, clipboards, and writing materials to document insects and the natural environment.</p>	<p>Students will use magnifying glasses, clipboards, and writing materials to document insects and the natural environment.</p>	<p>Students will use magnifying glasses, clipboards, and writing materials to document insects and the natural environment.</p>	
<p>Rotation 1: Teaching Table</p>	<p>Letters & Sounds</p> <p>Magic Can - St. name/repeat words that begin with letter of the week.</p> <p>Ii. Students will create list of Ii words (can pull pictures out of a bag).</p> <p>Teacher will differentiate instruction accordingly.</p> <p>High group-long Uu short Uu t- chart.</p>	<p>Vocabulary</p> <p>Mystery Box: Students will provide clues and ask questions to figure out what is in the box.</p> <p>SEER vocabulary words using pictures or hands on objects.</p>	<p>Phonological Awareness</p> <p>Students will identify the insect picture by beginning sound when given the name. (higher level sound group)</p> <p>Students will sort insect picture by beginning sounds.</p>	<p>Letter & Sounds</p> <p>Students will swat fly (with flyswatter) printed with lower case letter named by teacher.</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – c. Bugs and Blooms

<p>Rotation 2: Teaching Center</p>	<p>Dramatic Play</p> <p>Students will use vocabulary thorax, abdomen, and antennae at the entomology lab or students will use vocabulary blooming and nectar at the flower shop.</p>	<p>Harcourt Math</p> <p>Read Miss Spiders Tea Party</p> <p>St. play numeral memory to identify 1-10 numerals.</p> <p>Students choose a numeral and draw that many bugs on paper.</p> <p>Make class counting book</p>	<p>Literature Response</p> <p>Read Three Billy Goats</p> <p>Students fill in dialog of the troll.</p> <p>Students draw a picture of the character that they want to act out with colored pencils.</p>	<p>Harcourt Math</p> <p>Students will make a robot using a variety of rectangle colors, textures, and sizes.</p>	
<p>Rotation 3:</p>	<p>Musical Instruments</p> <p>Students will use rhythm sticks to keep the beat to “Ants Go Marching”.</p>	<p>Sensory</p> <p>Students will plant their own flower seeds and state what their plant needs to grow.</p>	<p>Math</p> <p>Students will use bug shaped counters to count to 20 or higher.</p>	<p>Toys/ Puzzles</p> <p>Students will create ants with playdough. Use diagram to SEER thorax, abdomen, and antennae.</p> <p>Students create all three to build ants. Students count ants and sing with The Ants Go Marching pattern book.</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – c. Bugs and Blooms

<p>Rotation 4:</p>	<p>Writing/ ABC's</p> <p>Students will illustrate and label a picture of an insect in their journal.</p>	<p>Technology</p> <p>Students will work with teacher to google entomology labs.</p>	<p>Art</p> <p>Students will color and cut out flower growth sequencing cards, put them in order, and glue them onto a sentence strip.</p>	<p>Dramatic Play</p> <p>Students will use vocabulary thorax, abdomen, and antennae at the entomology lab or use vocabulary blooming and nectar at the flower shop.</p>	
<p>Free Choice Centers/</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!! Talk It Out/ P.O. Pals</p> <p>Reintroduce mailbox, new job (mail carrier), and personal mailboxes.</p> <p>Students choose one friend to write a letter to.</p> <p>Students dictate a sentence about bugs on computers and illustrate. Students address envelope and place in mailbox.</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!! Writing/ELL</p> <p>Teacher model writes students' dictated sentences (from circle time activity).</p> <p>Student illustrates, punches holes in, and puts in binder as research material for entomology lab and flower shop. (Pass on to next class with materials).</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!! Talk It Out/ P.O. Pals</p> <p>Reintroduce mailbox, new job (mail carrier), and personal mailboxes.</p> <p>Students choose one friend to write a letter to.</p> <p>Students dictate a sentence about bugs on computers and illustrate.</p> <p>Students address envelope and place in mailbox.</p>	<p>Creative Curriculum Notes!!! Inside Dramatic Play</p> <p>Students will use vocabulary thorax, abdomen, and antennae at the entomology lab or students will use vocabulary blooming and nectar at the flower shop.</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – c. Bugs and Blooms

<p>Community Circle/ Town Hall 10:55-11:15 2:55-3:15</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	<p>Teachers will role model, “talk it out”. Students identify problem and solution.</p>	
<p>Transitions</p>	<p>Students will work with teacher to segment a word and/ or blend sounds back together.</p>	<p>Students will identify and name a numeral when shown.</p>	<p>Students will provide an adjective (bubble map) about the insect they are holding.</p>	<p>Students will identify basic shapes and count the number of sides and corners.</p>	

Lesson Plan: Family Celebrations / Celebraciones Familiares

School Name: _____	Teachers: _____
Theme: Family Celebrations / Celebraciones Familiares	Week of: _____

<p>Target Letter (Letras): B, C, (I), E Sight Words: Make, blue, can</p>	<p>Learning Objectives: Objectivos de Aprendizaje</p>
<p>Target Vocabulary Words (Vocabulario): <i>(English)</i> relatives, holiday, feast, celebrate, gather <i>(Spanish)</i> parientes, vacaciones, banquete, celebracion, reunen</p>	<p>Oral Language (Lenguaje Oral): 2:5c Uses temporal words / Usa palabras temporales 2:5e Uses tier 2 words / Utiliza palabras del nivel 2 2:5b Uses general to specific words or phrases / Utiliza palabras / frases generales especificas 1:2d/f Uses tone and inflection when speaking / Usa tono y inflexion al hablar 2:6c Relates stories / Relaciona los cuentos 2:1b Identify signs and symbols / Identifica signos y simbolos</p>
<p>Books We'll Read (Libros Requeridos) #1: Little Red Riding Hood #2: If You Take a Mouse to the Movies #3: My First Chinese New Year</p>	<p>Phonological Awareness (Conocimiento Fonologicas): 2:3c Identifies syllables / Identificar silabas 2:3d Recognize words that begin/end with the same sound / Reconoces palabras que empiezan y terminan con el mismo sonido 2:1b Invents rhymes and repetitive phrases / Inventa rimas y frases repetitivas</p>
<p>Suggested Books (Libros Sugeridos) Too Many Tamales My First Chinese New Year Celebrations When the Relatives Come</p>	<p>Alphabet Print (El Aphabeto y Imprime): 2:4a Recognizes the letter and symbol / Reconoces letras y simbolos 3:1a Writes, traces, or copies the letters / Escribe, traza, o copea la letras 2:1c Recognize that letters make words / Reconoce que la letras formans palabras 2:4e Makes some letter/sound matches / Emperaje la letra con su sonido</p>
<p>Nursery Rhymes & Songs (Rimas & Canciones) Families The More We Get Together</p>	<p>Math (Matematicas) Big Math Unit 2 Activity 4: Count straight sides and corners of shapes / Cuenta lados derechos y esquinas de formas</p>
<p>Talk It Out</p>	<p>Science (Ciencia):</p>
<p>Post Office Pals Make a card or invitation for a family celebration</p>	<p>1:3b Uses a variety of materials to record and organize data / Usa variedad de materiales para registrar y organizer los datos 1:3c Identifies cause and effect relationships / Identifica las relaciones de la causa y el efecto</p>
<p>Dramatic Play / Juego Dramatico Family Reunions / Reuniones Familiares</p>	

Sample Material #6: Lesson Plan – d. Family Celebrations / Celebraciones Familiares

Time/Person Responsible	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-9:10 Arrival	Children will sign in and teacher will assist those who cannot write their names.	Children will sign in and teacher will assist those who cannot write their names.	Children will sign in and teacher will assist those who cannot write their names.	Children will sign in and teacher will assist those who cannot write their names.	
9:10-9:40 Breakfast	Children will tell if they attended any celebrations, visited with relatives or gathered with family over the weekend.	Children will tell friends what they did outside at the outdoor reunion and tell which games they liked.	Children will tell the names of relatives they are planning to invite to their celebration on Thursday.	Children will tell what celebrations, gathering, they are planning to attend over the winter break.	
Independent Reading	Children will choose a book of their choice to read it themselves or to a friend/teacher and point to letters or symbols (C, b, e, l)	Children will choose a book of their choice to read it themselves or to a friend/teacher and point to letters or symbols (C, b, e, l).	Children will choose a book of their choice to read it themselves or to a friend/teacher and point to letters or symbols (C, b, e, l).	Children will choose a book of their choice to read it themselves or to a friend/teacher and point to letters or symbols (C, b, e, l)	
9:40-9:55 Greetings Circle Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Children will sing the greeting song. *Children will see who the helpers are for the day. *Teacher will give hints and children will tell what the theme of the week is. *Children will say before/after when answering questions about the days of the week. *Children will say if it is a letter or a symbol, name it and say its sound. *Teacher will SEER hints to vocabulary words and children will tell the word it is. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Children will sing the greeting song. *Children will see who the helpers are for the day. *Children will say before/after when answering questions about the days of the week. *Children will say sign words. *Magic Can - Children will name the items inside (letter or items). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Children will sing the greeting song. *Children will see who the helpers are for the day. *Teacher will give hints and children will tell what the theme of the week is. *Children will sing along the rhyme (Families). *Teacher will SEER hints to vocabulary words and children will tell the word it is. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Children will sing the greeting song. *Children will see who the helpers are for the day. *Teacher will give hints and children will tell what the theme of the week is. *Children will sing along the rhyme (The More We Get Together). *Children will read and say sight words. *Children will tell the step to "Talk It Out." 	
Transition	Children will listen to the beginning sound of their first name to line up.	Children will find and name letters and symbols hiding throughout the classroom.	Children will listen for the ending sound of their name to line up.	Children will invent rhyming words using colors.	

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Time/Person Responsible	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:55-10:25 Outdoors	Children will participate in games and role-play different characters (announcers, relatives, etc.) (e.g., Can we all gather over by the table. Welcome relatives, friends and neighbors to the school reunion).	Children will participate in games and role-play different characters (announcers, relatives, etc.) (e.g., Can we all gather over by the table. Welcome relatives, friends and neighbors to the school reunion).	Children will participate in games and role-play different characters (announcers, relatives, etc.) (e.g., Can we all gather over by the table. Welcome relatives, friends and neighbors to the school reunion).	Children will participate in games and role-play different characters (announcers, relatives, etc.) (e.g., Can we all gather over by the table. Welcome relatives, friends and neighbors to the school reunion).	
Center with Teacher <i>Rotation #1 10:25-10:40</i> <i>Rotation #2 10:40-10:55</i> <i>Rotation #3 10:55-11:10</i>	Children will play musical letters targeting the letters C., B, E.	Children will predict what will happen to the capsule when added to water. Teacher will chart & graph their responses.	Children will cut out their names into syllables and then put them back together to form their names. Then they will exchange names with a friend.	Children will predict what will happen to the capsule when added to water. Teacher will chart & graph their responses.	
Teaching Table	Children will make up words using letter cards and say what word they made. Then they will say if it is a real word or a silly word. Teacher will chart the results.	Children will sort out items that begin or end with the same sounds and place them in the correct baskets.	Children will make up 3-5 letter words while playing the GNU game. Then say if the words are real or silly.	POST-Pals Children will draw a picture of the reunion or gathering and tell what they liked best.	
Open Center #1	Indoor Dramatic Play: Children will plan for their gathering on Thursday while using temporal words before/after when giving their ideas.	Indoor Dramatic Play: Children will plan for their gathering on Thursday while using temporal words before/after when giving their ideas.	Indoor Dramatic Play: Children will plan for their gathering on Thursday while using temporal words before/after when giving their ideas.	Indoor Dramatic Play: Children will plan for their gathering on Thursday while using temporal words before/after when giving their ideas.	

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Time/Person Responsible	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
11:10-11:45 Free Choice	All Areas Open (Parent Input) <i>Triangle Shape Reindeer</i> Children will name, write/draw shapes, letters on a tree shape paper.	All Areas Open (Parent Input) <i>Hand Print Santa</i> Fine Motor: Children will trace, cut hand out, and glue pieces together.	All Areas Open (Parent Input) <i>Gingerbread Boy/Girl</i> Children will use thumb/finger grasp to place eyes, buttons, and nose.	All Areas Open (Parent Input) <i>Mitten Wreath</i> Children will trace around mittens and cut them out.	
11:45-12:00 Music, Story, Mystery Bag	Read: "Snowball" *Mystery Bag: Children will ask questions to guess what is in the Mystery Bag.	Read: "Ten Little Snowmen" *Mystery Bag: Children will ask questions to guess what is in the Mystery Bag.	Read: "Amy Loves the Snow" *Mystery Bag: Children will ask questions to guess what is in the Mystery Bag.	Read: <i>Children's Choice</i> *Mystery Bag: Children will ask questions to guess what is in the Mystery Bag.	
12:00-12:40 Lunch Tooth Brushing	Children will look for letters or symbols on their milk cartons and name them.	Children will tell about what they predicted the capsule would be.	Children will look for letters or symbols on their milk cartons and name them.	<i>Children's choice of conversation.</i>	
Independent Reading	Children will choose a book to read themselves or to a friend/teacher and point to letters or symbols (C, b, e, l).	Children will choose a book to read themselves or to a friend/teacher and point to letters or symbols (C, b, e, l).	Children will choose a book to read themselves or to a friend/teacher and point to letters or symbols (C, b, e, l).	Children will choose a book to read themselves or to a friend/teacher and point to letters or symbols (C, b, e, l).	
12:40-1:45 Dialogic Reading Literacy Time Quiet Time	<i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> : All 3 groups. Children will focus on the setting and characters.	<i>#1: Little Red Riding Hood</i> : Teacher will retell story in simpler terms while focusing on the setting and characters, problem and solution. <i>#2: If You Take a Mouse to the Movies</i> : Children will tell what happened 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , last. <i>#3: My First Chinese New Year</i> : children will tell how their families celebrate the holidays in their homes.	<i>#1: Little Red Riding Hood</i> : Teacher will retell story in simpler terms while focusing on the setting and characters, problem and solution. <i>#2: If You Take a Mouse to the Movies</i> : Children will tell what happened 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , last. <i>#3: My First Chinese New Year</i> : children will tell how their families celebrate the holidays in their homes.	<i>#1: Little Red Riding Hood</i> : Teacher will retell story in simpler terms while focusing on the setting and characters, problem and solution. <i>#2: If You Take a Mouse to the Movies</i> : Children will tell what happened 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , last. <i>#3: My First Chinese New Year</i> : children will tell how their families celebrate the holidays in their homes.	

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Time/Person Responsible	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1:45-2:00 Free Choice	All Areas Open (Parent Input) <i>Triangle Shape Reindeer</i> Children will name, write/draw shapes, letters on a tree shape paper.	All Areas Open (Parent Input) <i>Hand Print Santa</i> Fine Motor: Children will trace, cut hand out, and glue pieces together.	All Areas Open (Parent Input) <i>Gingerbread Boy/Girl</i> Children will use thumb/finger grasp to place eyes, buttons, and nose.	All Areas Open (Parent Input) <i>Mitten Wreath</i> Children will trace around mittens and cut them out.	
2:45-3:15 Snack	Children will tell or recall their weekend activities, events, etc.	Children will look for the letter C on their milk cartons.	Children will count how many C's are on their milk cartons.	Children will tell what they are planning to do over the weekend.	
3:15-3:20 Recall	The children will recall the day's activities by answering the questions, "What did we do today?" "What did you like best today?"	The children will recall the day's activities by answering the questions, "What did we do today?" "What did you like best today?"	The children will recall the day's activities by answering the questions, "What did we do today?" "What did you like best today?"	The children will recall the day's activities by answering the questions, "What did we do today?" "What did you like best today?"	
3:20-3:31 Dismissal Transition	<i>SING:</i> Head Start Is Over & Good-Bye Song	<i>SING:</i> Head Start Is Over & Good-Bye Song	<i>SING:</i> Head Start Is Over & Good-Bye Song	<i>SING:</i> Head Start Is Over & Good-Bye Song	