KEY CONCEPT

THE FIVE ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK

Instructional Leadership

Leaders establish a strategic focus on children's health, learning, development and school readiness, cultivating strong partnerships with families and supporting teachers to be effective in their work. They achieve this by:

- Building and maintaining mutually trusting and respectful relationships through the course of daily activities and interactions
- Establishing a vision for child-centered supportive learning environments and ambitious teaching practices
- Remaining focused on children's learning, development and kindergarten readiness
- Hiring staff who are determined to continuously improve learning opportunities and outcomes for young children and families
- Ensuring embedded professional learning opportunities for all staff
- Directing resources toward a vision for sustained learning and improvement
- Enlisting teachers in improvement efforts, practicing shared leadership consistently and in doing so, build collective responsibility
- Cultivating leadership from within, including teachers, families and community partners
- Managing the business of running a school/center (including facilities, budgeting, staffing and human resources) while keeping their leadership vision, goals and practices in the forefront

Collaboration Routines

Leaders use supervisory and professional development resources, performance feedback and social resources within the staff to build their professional capacity.

- Leaders work together with staff to define their strategic focus, practice improvement goals and solve learning and implementation problems.
- Leaders protect time for job-embedded professional learning routines. They structure and facilitate routines that support staff to be reviewing data, examining practice, reflecting and collaborating to design and try out practice improvements.
- All staff work in collaboration to promote their own and their colleagues' professional growth. In such schools and centers, teachers and staff are active partners in quality improvement, committed to the school/center and the children and families it cares for and educates, and focused on continuous professional learning, effectiveness and improvement.

Engaged Families

Children do not exist alone; they are members of families that live within communities. Early family-school partnerships shape family awareness and capacity for partnering with educators and advocating for their children's needs to ensure positive experiences and success in school and life. When families, schools and communities focus collectively on children's needs from birth through college entrance, children are healthy, competent motivated learners who realize long-term social and academic success.
• Through systematic approaches, the entire staff works to build responsive, respectful relationships with families that motivate their engagement and create goal-oriented partnerships.
• Families are partners in developing and achieving goals for their children and themselves. Staff value family perspectives and participation and are willing to be influenced by the needs of the family.
• All staff share and seek information from families to build mutual respect and understanding. They make decisions collaboratively with families and work cohesively across home and school to support children’s participation, health, learning and development.
• All staff cultivate strong ties with elementary schools and actively support families, children and teachers to make successful kindergarten transitions. Through referrals and connections to community resources, staff work to reduce material hardships, promote well-being and increase family capacity to engage with children’s learning and development.
• By building social networks among families, staff work to reduce isolation, increase social-emotional supports and open life and learning opportunities that strengthen families and entire communities.

**Supportive Environments**

• Child-centered supportive learning environments are essential in order for children to develop a positive sense of themselves, trust in others and develop successful approaches to learning.
• Leaders use resources and establish policies that ensure all adults in the school or center community create consistently child-centered supportive learning environments.
• All adults attend daily to how they use physical space, materials, daily structure and routines, continuity of care, group size and ratio to create child-centered, supportive environments. This foundation supports adults to create an emotional climate allowing children to consistently feel safe and liked, be able to build relationships and actively explore.
• Teachers are seen by children as trusted adults who are responsive to children’s individual emotional and intellectual needs.
• Teachers hold high expectations for children’s capacity to relate, learn and develop. They affirm and promote children’s exploration, friendships, engagement and persistence.

**Ambitious Teaching**

When combined with child-centered supportive learning environments, ambitious instruction has the most direct effect on children’s learning and development.

• All adults are provided guidance through a system of support that articulates the “what” and “how” of teaching and learning for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. The system supports implementation of effective teaching practices and continuous improvement.
• All adults endorse and use early learning and development standards and assessment information about children’s progress toward the standards to design meaningful learning opportunities.
• Teachers reflect on and plan intentionally for their role in providing children with interactions that are emotionally supportive, organized, instructionally meaningful and individualized to the needs of each child.

• All adults partner with families in continuing to learn about meaningful and effective learning opportunities for the children at home and at school.

• Structures for implementation of curricula, assessments and use of materials are coordinated across the program. While teachers may have substantial discretion in how these resources are used, teaching effectiveness depends on the community of practice, job aids and supervisory dialogue and feedback that support implementation.