



Professional Development Toolbox

Before you start

- ❖ Give teachers the Program Guidelines handout and ask them to conduct a self-evaluation over the next week or so. Ask teachers to identify areas of strength and one or two areas they would like to work on next. On your return visit, have a conversation about their strengths and self-identified next steps.

Environment and materials

- ❖ Ask teachers to read the article “Preventing Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Effective Practices.” Go over bullet points and have teachers identify what strategies they currently use and what strategy they would like to implement. Assist teachers to develop a concrete implementation plan and check back for effectiveness. (PCF, p. 42-44)



- ❖ Discuss with teachers how to integrate soothing colors, natural woods and fibers, and soft textures into the environment. Explain how when children feel calm and comfortable, they constructively interact with adults, peers, and learning materials. (PCF, p. 49)
- ❖ Use a tape recorder to record classroom sounds during a typical free choice time. Listen to the tape later with teachers and together identify classroom noise levels and competing noises that may make it hard for some children to focus or hear spoken language. Together, brainstorm strategies to lower the noise level in the room. (PCF, p. 49 and Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 39)

Program design and curriculum practices

DAILY SCHEDULE AND TRANSITIONS

- ❖ Look at the daily schedule with the teacher. Help the teacher ensure that there is at least one uninterrupted hour at a time for free exploration and play. If necessary, refer teachers to the top of page 41 in the Preschool Curriculum Framework. Read and discuss the selection together, addressing teachers’ perceived challenges in implementing this strategy. (PCF, p. 41, 58)

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❖ Observe problematic behaviors that occur when materials and activities are not prepared ahead of time. Later, ask the teacher to reconstruct what was going on while materials and activities were being prepared and share your observations if necessary. Strategize with teachers how they might avoid having children idly waiting for the next activity. (PCF, p. 72)

FOSTERING A SENSE OF SELF

❖ With the teacher, brainstorm class jobs to give children opportunities to take on important roles in the classroom. Help the teacher create a job chart in such a way that jobs can be rotated on a weekly basis. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 88)

❖ Work with teachers to create a list of 10 ways for children to take leadership roles or share their expertise in the classroom. You might begin the list with “Ask a child who can pump on the swing to teach another child how to pump.” (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 88)



FOSTERING FRIENDSHIPS

❖ Look at the room arrangement with the teacher to assess whether there is at least one or more clearly defined places for two or three children to engage in activities that are more complex for extended, uninterrupted periods of time. Strategize with the teacher to create such spaces as needed. (PCF, p. 83)

❖ Conduct a classroom walk with the teacher, listing all the materials that promote and encourage peer play, such as heavy blocks, wagons, or a car wash outside. Together, brainstorm additional materials and activities that can be added to the environment. (PCF, p. 67)

❖ Work with teachers to identify friendship pairs. Discuss ways to consider existing friendships when organizing small-group activities or mealtime groups. Structure small-group activities so that more-hesitant children work on projects with others whose interests and styles seem compatible. (PCF, p. 83)

❖ In a program where a child with special needs is not playing with other children, suggest that the teacher read pages 52-53 in *Inclusion Works!!*. Have a conversation about how to integrate the strategy into the classroom. (*Inclusion Works!* p. 18)

❖ Help teachers take photos of children working and playing together. Print out full-page photos to create a poster or a classroom book to reinforce for children that friendship and teamwork are valued in the classroom. (PCF, p. 74)

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PROMOTING SELF REGULATION

❖ Look at the room arrangement with the teacher to assess whether there is at least one place where a child can play alone. Strategize with the teacher to create such spaces as needed. (PCF, p. 83)

HELPING CHILDREN UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE DIVERSITY

❖ Compile a small collection of books from the handout “50 Multicultural Books Every Child Should Know.” Share the handout and books with the teacher. Together, review the books in the classroom library to identify other books illustrating diversity. Suggest that the teacher take the handout to the local library to supplement the classroom collection. (PCF, p. 43-44, 47, Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 38, 42 and ECERS cards www.desiredresults.us)

❖ Introduce teachers to planned activities to draw children’s attention to people’s similarities and differences, including preferences and feelings. For example, transition children by saying, “If you are wearing blue, you can choose an activity. If you are have a cat, you can choose an activity...” (PCF, p. 47)

❖ Invite teachers to read the article “How Can You Create a Learning Environment that Respects Diversity?” Ask teachers to identify strategies they are already implementing and three new strategies that they will implement over the next few weeks. (PCF, p. 47)

❖ Suggest a family project where children bring in family photographs that show the children and their families’ members engaged in familiar activities. Discuss how those pictures form the basis for further exploration of similarities and differences among individuals and groups. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 42)

❖ Demonstrate how to make class books that encourage children to talk about activities in their lives that illustrate similarities and differences in the traditions, practices, roles of family members, and family structures represented in their cultures and communities. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 42)

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INDIVIDUALIZING

❖ Assist teachers to develop learning areas that reflect the various interests and abilities of members of the class. (PCF, p. 83)

❖ If many children are struggling to stay engaged in large group activities, suggest that the teacher plan large-group activities with smaller groups of children. One option is to have the assistant run one group while the teacher does the other. Alternatively, the assistant can supervise one group for a choice time while the teacher leads the others, and then trade groups. Explain how smaller, large-group activities may be more manageable for younger preschoolers who are new to teacher-initiated experiences that require children's knowledge of routines and higher levels of self-control. (PCF, p. 72)

❖ Videotape a child during free choice time. View and analyze the video later with the teacher to determine the child's general level of engagement with classroom activities and materials; the amount of curiosity and enthusiasm a child usually displays; the child's level of self confidence in abilities; and the amount of persistence the child shows when trying something difficult. (PCF, p. 58)

❖ Ask the teacher to identify the child who has the most trouble making it peacefully through a typical program day. Ask the teacher to keep a journal for a week, observing the level of social interaction skills that the child brings to the group. Include whether a child can initiate or enter into play with another child; work with others to accomplish a simple, shared goal; communicate with others in acting out a complex pretend-play script; negotiate with another child to resolve a conflict about play materials or behaviors; and ask for and respond to adult coaching in resolving peer disputes and practicing new social skills with peers. Meet again to discuss the child's level of social and emotional development, and develop specific strategies to support that child's growth and development. (PCF, p. 66)



❖ Ask the teacher to identify one child who struggles to participate in large group activities. Video that child during one such activity and review the video with the teacher. Work together to make best guesses as to what additional supports or adaptations that child might need to be successful, and implement one or more of those strategies during the next group time. Have a conversation with the teacher afterwards about what worked, what didn't and what might be tried next. If necessary, remind the teacher that we learn as much from strategies that fail as we do from those that work. (PCF, p. 72)

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INDIVIDUALIZING FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- ❖ Brainstorm with teachers strategies to support a child with special needs to participate in classroom activities, such as putting a plastic chair near the water table for a child who uses a wheelchair. Refer teachers to pages 40-41 from Inclusion Works! for additional ideas. (Inclusion Works! p. 17)
- ❖ Help teachers compile photos, pictures, or objects to help signal the next activity for children with special needs. (Inclusion Works! p. 15)
- ❖ Talk to teachers about the value of assigning a primary caregiver to a child with special needs so that the assigned adult is able to know the unique needs of the child and ways to support him/her. (Inclusion Works! p. 17 and PCF, p. 82)
- ❖ Invite teachers to read pages 46-48 from Inclusion Works! Discuss with teachers how they and other children in the group might better communicate with a specific child in their program with special needs.(Inclusion Works! P. 17)

INDIVIDUALIZING FOR DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

❖ Guide teachers to read Principle 2 on page 28 of the PEL Guide and relate suggested practices to specific dual language learners in their program. Ask teachers to generate a list of one strategy to implement for each of their dual language children. (PCF, p. 65 and PEL Guide, p. 28)



- ❖ Demonstrate how to support dual-language learners by encouraging them to express themselves through various means, such as speech, pantomime, pointing, and role-playing. (PEL Guide, p. 28)
- ❖ Share with teachers how children may have different ways of speaking and listening based on what is acceptable within their cultural background. For example, in some cultures, interrupting someone who is speaking is considered rude, whereas in others that behavior is acceptable. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 43)

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❖ Share the importance of promoting and assisting peer interactions to provide opportunities for English learners, including those with disabilities, to communicate with peers who are more fluent English speakers and can serve as language models. (PEL Guide, p. 31)

❖ Explain how some cultures emphasize the importance of individual initiative while others place a higher value on being a member of a group. Children from families that value individual initiative may be more prepared to assert their own opinions but less prepared to cooperate with others. Ask the teacher if she thinks this might be a factor in the behavior of one or more children in the group. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 43)

Developing mutually respectful and affectionate relationships with children



❖ Share the article “Building Positive Relationships with Young Children” with the teachers. Together, explore the concept of “making deposits.” Ask each teacher to identify one child in their group with whom they want to create a better relationship. Over the next week, ask teachers to consciously apply strategies from the article and to keep a journal of their attempts and the results. Have teachers bring their journal to the next meeting to share out with the group. (PCF, p. 82)

❖ Use a tally sheet to track teachers’ contacts with each child during free choice time. Include individual contact and support with tasks. Afterwards, asks teachers to predict your findings before you share your observations. Together, discuss the results and strategize if needed. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 90)

❖ Model for teachers how to convey enthusiasm for each child’s efforts and interest in their ideas. Role-play to practice how to engage in extended conversations about topics a child introduces. (PCF, p. 82)

Teacher-child interactions and teachable moments

PROMOTING SENSE OF SELF

❖ Provide teachers with the handout “Some Starters for Giving Positive Feedback.” Have them make a wall chart with five sentences that they will practice over the next few weeks. (PCF, p. 47)

❖ Model how teachers might compare aloud children’s past and present abilities as you observe them: “When you first came to preschool, Kim, you couldn’t turn on the water by yourself, and now you can turn it on and off.” (PCF, p. 47)

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PROMOTING SELF-REGULATION

❖ If children are having trouble during transitions, suggest that teachers explicitly prompt children how to transition to a new activity. For example, they might say, “First wash your hands, then find an empty seat for lunch.” (PCF, p. 70)

PROMOTING PEER INTERACTIONS AND FRIENDSHIPS

❖ Demonstrate for teachers how they can use proximity and suggest extensions for children’s cooperative play to add complexity to their interactions and negotiations. (PCF, p. 67)

❖ Introduce teachers to the strategy of redirecting children’s requests for adult to a capable peer. For example, when a child asks for help to turn off the faucet, you might call over Lucas and say, “Would you please teach Briana how to shut the faucet? You’re pretty good at doing that already.” (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 88)

❖ Point out how teachers can encourage contact among more and less socially skilled children by creating opportunities for them to perform small tasks and chores together. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 90)

❖ Demonstrate how to comment on children’s play in ways that encourage further interaction. (Inclusion Works! p. 18)

PROMOTING PROBLEM SOLVING

❖ Model for teachers how to verbalize the positive social behaviors they demonstrate regularly in the classroom. For instance, when they move over to give another child room at a circle gathering, they can say, “I’m moving over to give Lora some room to join us.” Observe during the next classroom activity, recording times the teacher employed the new skill and missed opportunities. Debrief your observation with the teacher afterwards. (PCF, p. 42)

❖ Encourage teachers to engage children in solving routine, daily problems during the day instead of silently solving all problems by themselves. For example, if a child can’t reach a plate of crackers at snack time, say, “Oh-oh. Felipe can’t reach the crackers. I wonder what we can do to help him.” (PCF, p. 47)



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❖ Model for teachers how to solicit children’s opinions regarding how to deal with problems involving rules. Emphasize that sufficient time should be taken to ensure that all children are heard; and all children are not rushed into premature resolutions of issues. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 87)

❖ Show teachers how to give children specific, descriptive feedback on the positive impact of their prosocial behavior. For example, you might say, “Arthur, you helped David pick up the bike when it fell over. I saw that he gave you a big smile to say thank you.” (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 88 and PCF, p. 70)

Planned learning activities

TEACHING SELF-REGULATION

❖ Leave teachers with the article “Teaching Children a Vocabulary for Emotions.” Ask teachers to implement one strategy and report out on it at your next meeting. (PCF, p. 42 and PEL Guide, p. 40)

❖ Provide resources describing relaxation exercises appropriate for children. Discuss with the teacher how stretching and relaxation exercises assist children in self-reflection and build self-regulation skills. Plan with teachers how they may integrate these exercises during group activities and transitions. (PCF, p. 51)

❖ Guide teachers to page 74 of the Preschool Curriculum Framework and ask that they review the sections on Guiding Principles and involving children in creating examples of expectations. Work with teachers to develop no more than three rules for classroom. Model the process of encouraging the children to provide examples of what compliance might look like in the classroom. Perhaps have children pose for photos of themselves illustrating the guidelines and help the teacher create a rule poster for the classroom using the children’s quotes and photos. (PCF, 74)



TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

❖ Organize a planning session with two or more teachers to plan how to integrate group activities into the following week lesson plan specifically to focus on caring, cooperation, or friendship skills. (PCF, p. 39)

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- ❖ Together with the teacher, review some favorite children's books and stories to identify opportunities to highlight social problem solving, cooperative behavior and other social and emotional skills. Talk together about how to use these concepts as discussion points with the children. Share the handout "Children's Book List" for ideas of books to add to the collection. (PCF, p. 44)
- ❖ Create a study group with a group of teachers. Provide each with copies of two articles "Creating Environments for Peaceful Problem Solving" and "Child-Friendly Ideas for Teaching Problem Solving." A week later, gather the teachers together to discuss how they might use strategies outlined in the article in their own classrooms. Meet regularly to discuss what worked, what didn't, and ideas for improvement. (PCF, p. 47. 67 and ECERS, p. 60)
- ❖ Review a few weeks worth of lesson plans with teachers, looking for "planned group experiences" such as creating a garden or planning for a family night activity. Discuss with teachers the value of adding such experiences to establish community and build shared knowledge as children learn turn-taking skills and cooperative conversation (PCF, p. 71)
- ❖ Model the use of books, puppet plays, and group discussions to identify and reinforce friendship skills. Discuss with teachers how Interactions between the characters in a book can lead to discussions about ways to show loyalty to an old friend while including a new one, and the choices children face when playmates have a variety of personality characteristics (PCF, p. 84)
- ❖ Help teachers think of specific ways to teach children to successfully engage and interact with a child with special needs. (Inclusion Works! P. 18)

Developing meaningful relationships with children's families



WELCOMING FAMILIES INTO THE PROGRAM

- ❖ Work with teachers to create a welcoming environment to parents, with displays depicting such things as schedules, recent activities, or planned activities. Help teachers collect and provide comfortable and adequate adult furniture in appropriate places. (PCF, p. 80 and Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 38)
- ❖ Discuss the value of and challenges associated with creating an open-door policy that encourages parents to visit the classroom or center at any time. Plan strategies to overcome identified challenges. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 67)

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- ❖ Assist teachers in developing predictable arrival and departure routines. (PCF, p. 80)
- ❖ Discuss with teachers how they can help families design a predictable good-bye routine for their child. Suggest that teachers invite family members to make use of quiet areas in the classroom to allow slow-to-warm children to make the transition to the space. (PCF, p. 80)
- ❖ Emphasize to teachers the importance of listening and responding to children's feelings about separation from their family members. (PCF, p. 80)

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES AS THE CHILD'S FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER

- ❖ Emphasize how family members are a provider's first and best resource, and the importance of including families in the planning and implementation of care for their children. (Inclusion Works! p. 28)
- ❖ Encourage teachers to establish a warm and collaborative relationship with each child's family beginning with the first meeting of the family and continuing through the time of enrollment and beyond. (PCF, p. 80)
- ❖ Role play with a small group of teachers how they might demonstrate in the child's presence a friendly, cooperative, and respectful relationship with the child's family in various situations. For example, what if the parent tries to engage you in a lengthy conversation while you are busy; if the parent is harsh with the child in the presence of the rest of the children, if the parent is unhappy that the child's socks are missing. (PCF, p. 82)
- ❖ Gather two or more teachers to share strategies on how to use the family culture to create bridges between the program and the home. Discuss ways to support the children's pride in their family experience and to understand individual differences in background and viewpoint. Talk about how to encourage parents and family members to share their skills with staff, the children in the program, and other families. (PCF, p. 42 and PEL Guide, p. 16)
- ❖ Suggest teachers to visit the children's homes and observe not only how parents interact with the child but also how other relatives and siblings talk to the child and how the child talks to or interacts with them. (PEL Guide, p. 29)
- ❖ Invite a group of teachers to share strategies for regular family communication about children's preschool activities, progress, and any concerns they have. Bring in pictures of documentation displays, photo albums and examples of children's work portfolios as additional ideas for ways to engage parents and family members in meaningful conversation. (PCF, p. 80)
- ❖ Suggest that teachers let parents know about their children's friendships in the early care and education center so that, if possible, those friendships can be cultivated outside the program. (Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines, p. 91 and PCF, p. 84)