

## Chapter and Case Study Discussion Activities

### Chapter 9: Leading a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Early Education Setting: Supporting Educators to Support Children

In this chapter, we considered how to support educators to support children. Specifically, we learned about a 5-part cycle that can help leaders to effectively design and implement an effective system of professional learning. We also reviewed common roadblocks that act as barriers to quality, and we reflected on how to address these challenges. Use the following case study from Chapter 9, along with the questions below, to reflect on how concepts and key takeaways from the chapter apply to your professional work and settings.

*It is June. Melinda, the director of the Explorations Early Learning Center, has just left a Pre-K classroom. She pauses a moment to reflect as she sits down at her desk, smiling to herself as she thinks about the visit. At the point when Melinda arrived, Maria had been reading to the children; there was so much talk – sharing thoughts and feelings among the children and also with Maria – that Melinda smiles again. The children were so engaged. It was clear that Maria was applying everything she has been working on this year, asking great questions and giving children lots of opportunities to respond. Meanwhile, Jada had been working with Anthony, who asked to get up from the rug area, self-advocating for a body break. The two of them were sitting together, doing some calm breathing. “You made a good choice for yourself when your body was tired of sitting,” she said. Jada looked up at Melinda and winked, saying “This actually helps me, too!”*

*Melinda reflects with satisfaction on the evident progress made over the last year, which had not been without struggle. She thinks about the initial push-back and reticence she observed when she first brought Karen, the coach, on board. She knows that these professional relationships are still definitely in the making, but a foundation of trust has clearly been established. Melinda looks at her calendar—and ahead to the next academic year. She starts to think about the plan for the fall.*

#### Questions for Leaders to Consider

After reading case studies in previous chapters, we see Jada and Maria have implemented new strategies that have improved their practices. How do you as a leader celebrate this growth in a system or your setting? When do you acknowledge improvement? How do you recognize and celebrate your contribution to success?

We also see that Melinda is making plans for the fall. If you were in her position, given what you know from the case studies, what would you prioritize for the fall? What else would you want to know to make decisions for next year's professional development plan?

# Resources for Implementation

The Early Education Leader's Guide

## Case Questions for Leaders to Use in Professional Learning Discussions

- What are Maria and Jada doing well in this case example? In what specific ways have Maria and Jada progressed from the first few case examples? Which competencies- using executive functions, effective emotion regulation, and cultivating strong relationships- have Maria and Jada strengthened?
- What seems to have supported the educators' growth in this situation? When have you experienced growth in your professional work and practice and what helped you to build new skills or try different strategies? How did you know you had improved- what data or indicators showed your growth? How did you recognize and celebrate this growth?
- In this chapter, we focused on a 5-part Learning Cycle. This cycle consists of five action steps that build upon one another: 1. Notice; 2. Reflect; 3. Build Knowledge; 4. Plan; 5. Try. Have you used this type of learning cycle in your work? If so, how has it supported your growth? If not, how might you use this process to help when trying something new?
- We also learned about four common roadblocks that can act as barriers to change: 1) unease that comes with change, 2) conflict among adult learners, 3) weak coordination and cohesion across professional learning opportunities, and 4) providing structures without processes. Which of these roadblocks seem to derail change efforts most often at your setting? How have you worked to overcome these barriers?
- The last roadblock describes "providing structures without processes." Structures are the concrete parts of a strategy or plan- staff meetings or trainings- and the processes are how those structures come to life- interactions with children or colleagues, or an implementer's skill set. In this case study, what structures and processes impact quality? What structures and processes affect your efforts to improve in your professional work? What structures lack supportive processes?

## Self-Study Activity

This discussion pointed out an important strategy to implement change: the 5-part Learning Cycle. Think of challenging situation you recently faced in your setting. Then consider how you could apply the learning cycle to this situation. Identify where you are in the learning cycle and determine one action step to move to the next part of the cycle.

- Notice: Observe specific challenges or areas of growth.
- Reflect: Consider data and notice patterns or trends related to the challenge.
- Build knowledge: Learn about what needs to take place to respond to a challenge.
- Plan: Determine how to implement a strategy. What actions will you take, when?
- Try: Implement the plan.