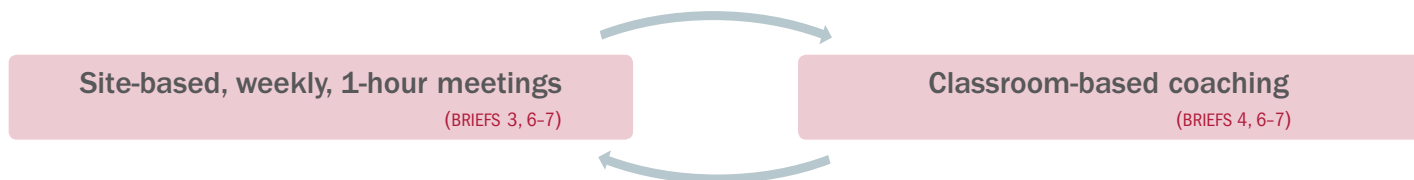


Cultivating a 21st Century Early Educator: Lessons from the Field

ISSUE: This new era for early education — with young children’s care understood to be part of an early learning system, and many more children having access — demands a clear commitment to building and sustaining educators’ capacity. Success rests on the quality of the educators’ performance, yet commitment to, and investment in, the professional lives and training of these adults remains drastically low. In this brief, we describe a professional development initiative, which focuses expressly on the adults. We begin with an overview of the approach, and then, in Brief 9, illustrate promising early data about building adult capacity to improve children’s outcomes.

GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 1: To enhance educators’ cornerstone competencies (Brief 2), intensifying their corresponding practices to develop children’s language, literacy, social, and emotional skills • Goal 2: To synthesize what we know about adult learning and behavior change and apply this knowledge to building early educators’ professional knowledge and practice
STRATEGY	Create and run a Professional Learning Community (PLC), anchored in content-based modules, over a multi-week scope and sequence.

CONTENT-BASED MODULES



CONTENT EXAMPLE OF AN 8 MODULE SCOPE AND SEQUENCE	Within each of its eight modules, PLC meetings and classroom coaching are organized around a 5-part reflective cycle (Brief 3) in which educators work collaboratively. Each module features a case that facilitates analysis and discussion, knowledge-building conversations on classroom strategies, and opportunities for educators to take on decision-making and leadership roles.			
	MODULE 1: Creating a reflective professional community	MODULE 2: Analyzing classroom stress: When, where, and why?	MODULE 3: Applying knowledge from brain science to manage classroom stress	MODULE 4: Using concrete strategies to manage classroom stress as it occurs
	MODULE 5: Using choice to prevent classroom stress from occurring	MODULE 6: Promoting emotional well-being in the classroom	MODULE 7: Strategies for nurturing ourselves and others	MODULE 8: Enhancing relationships in the service of teaching and learning

LEAD EARLY EDUCATORS FOR SUCCESS

Guidance on leading quality improvement in early education

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To illustrate what we're learning about this approach, we draw from a corpus of information gathered from observations in PLC meetings and classrooms, as well as from field notes, assessments, and end-of-year educator interviews.

What did this approach mean for educators?

Participating educators demonstrated enhanced competencies in executive function, emotion regulation, relational/interpersonal skills, and using talk for learning. Below we provide examples of what educators were doing.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

- Planning steps for implementing classroom strategies
- Adjusting strategies to match the children & context

EMOTION REGULATION

- Tuning into responses to challenging situations
- Using and teaching calming and deescalation strategies

RELATIONAL/INTERPERSONAL

- Showing an emerging understanding of how adults' and children's responses influence each other in the classroom

TALK FOR LEARNING

- Using books as platforms for conversations and vocabulary learning
- Encouraging children to discuss their feelings

Core tools and strategies embedded in the approach:

FOUNDATIONAL WORK

- Forming a partnership
- Setting personal commitments

TEACHER REFLECTION

- Discussing strengths and challenges
- Evaluating daily stressors

TEACHER PLANNING

- Discussing during the read-aloud
- Using mindfulness and self-regulation routines

CLASSROOM VISUALS

- Posting strategies for stress management
- Posting strategies for using emotion words

What did this approach mean for children?

Children enrolled in the participating educators' classrooms demonstrated significantly higher performance on measures of literacy (e.g., alphabet knowledge) and social-emotional skills (e.g., impulse control) when compared to their same-age peers in the setting studied, and to those in other similar settings in the region.

“They tell [each other] stop and think, the two [strategies] that we've taught them, the breathing, inhale, exhale, blow out the candles. I find that they tell each other that a lot, especially when one oversteps a boundary.”

— PARTICIPATING TEACHER

