Quality Trickles Down: The Importance of Directors in Creating and Maintaining High Quality Programs

Michelle Mathews, Ph.D.

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Quick Introductions

Michelle Mathews – Assistant Professor and Director of the Child Development Lab at the University of Missouri –Director Experience - ~15 years

And you are . . .

- Early Childhood Educator?
- Program Directors/Administrators/Leaders?
- Aspiring Directors?
- Other?

Years in the Field

- 0-3
- 4-10
- 11-20
- 21-plus

Presentation Objectives

1. Explain the role of management, leadership, organization, and effective practices in high quality programs for children and families.
2. Identify and apply recommended guidelines for continuous program improvement.

We want to create a safe space to:

discuss
self-evaluate
reflect
share ideas
brainstorm
be creative

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No Endorsements

- We do not officially endorse any of the instruments/tools/products in this presentation. We are just sharing what works for us.

Discussion: Challenges to High Quality

- Q1. What are the challenges that directors face in creating and maintaining high quality programs for children, families, and teachers?

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Great work, now what can we do about it?

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Importance of Directors

- Research shows that high quality programs are associated with highly qualified, well-trained, educated, and engaged directors.

Ressler, Doherty, Ferguson, & Lomotey, 2015

Importance of Directors

- Directors' level of formal education and the quality of administrative practices are strong predictors of the overall quality of the children's learning environment.

  McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, 2010

Importance of Directors

- In addition, directors who have specialized training in administration are more likely to support the professional development needs of their staff.

  Ressler, Doherty, Ferguson, & Lomotey, 2015

Importance of Directors

- More knowledgeable directors improve the quality of the work environment and the knowledge and well-being of the teachers. These factors directly influence the behaviors of the teacher, which has a positive effect on the children's learning environment, improving relationships with children, families, and other professionals.

Many Types of Early Childhood Programs

- Center-based
- Home-based (Family Child Care)
- Family, Friends, and Neighbors (FFNs)

Programs might be:

Profit or Not-for-profit

Licensed or Licensed-Exempt

Unlicensed

Regulated

Accredited

One Thing in Common

- The one thing that all of these programs have in common is that there is a **LEADER** or someone in charge of leading and managing the program.

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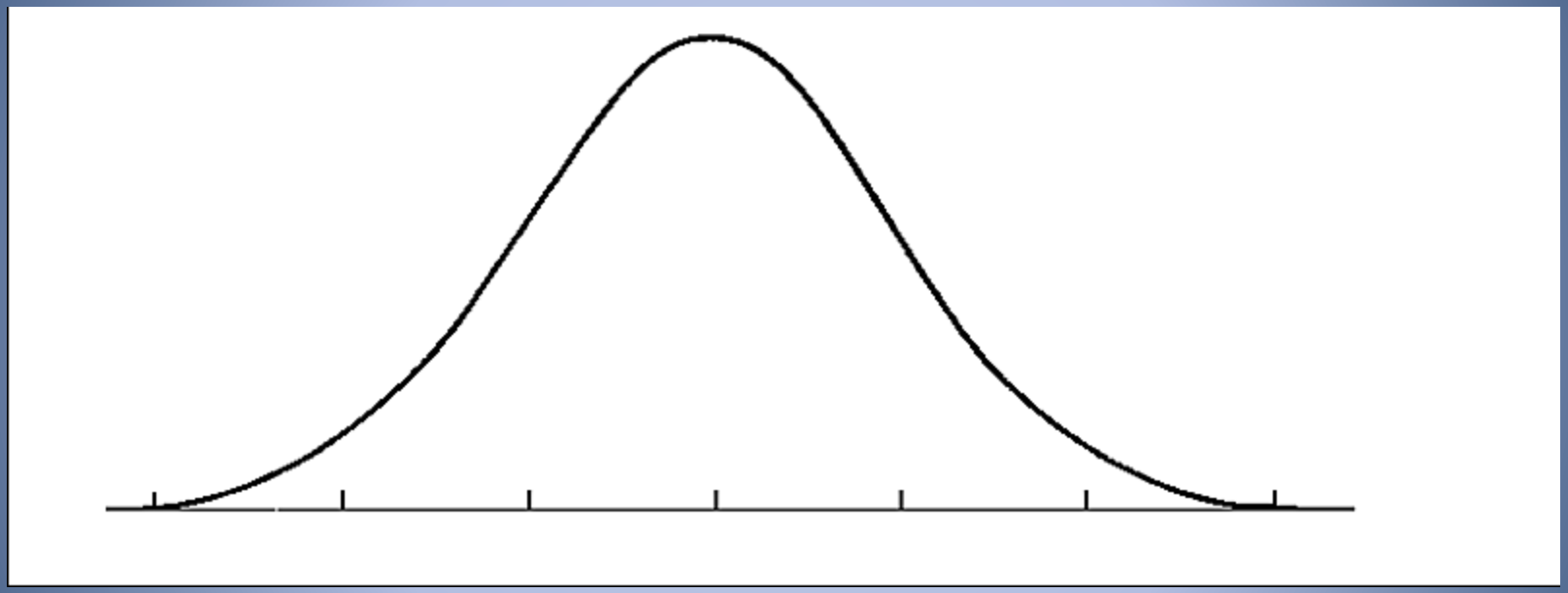
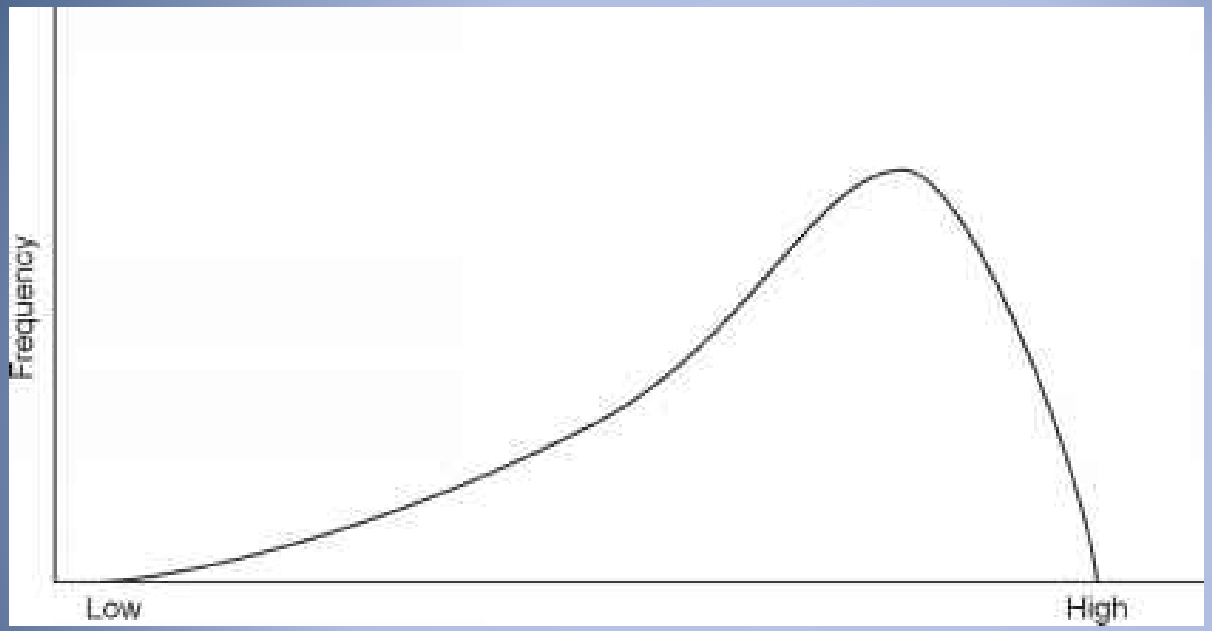
Bell Shaped Curve

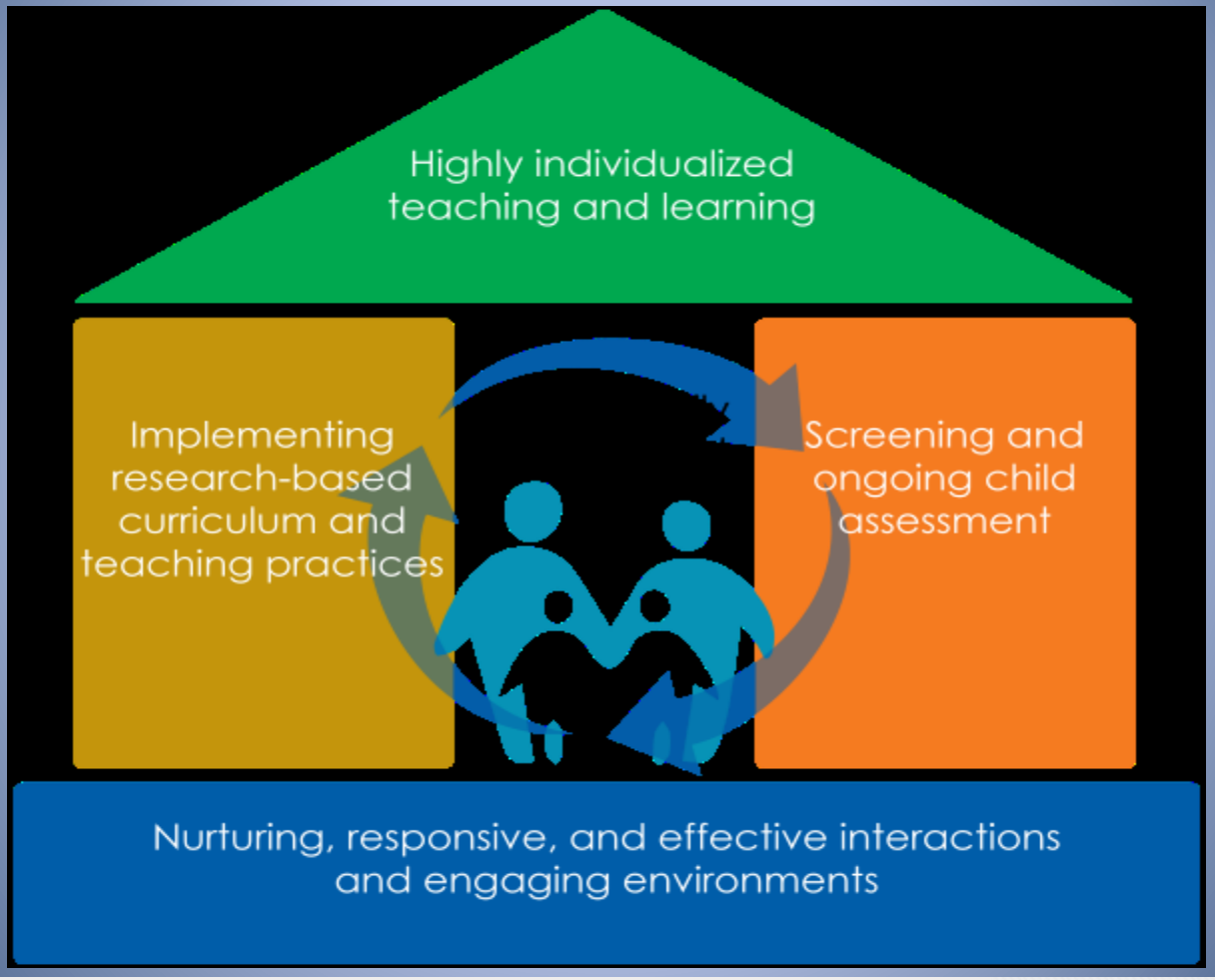


Our Vision: Majority of Directors are Effective, Awesome, Amazing



House Framework

Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center



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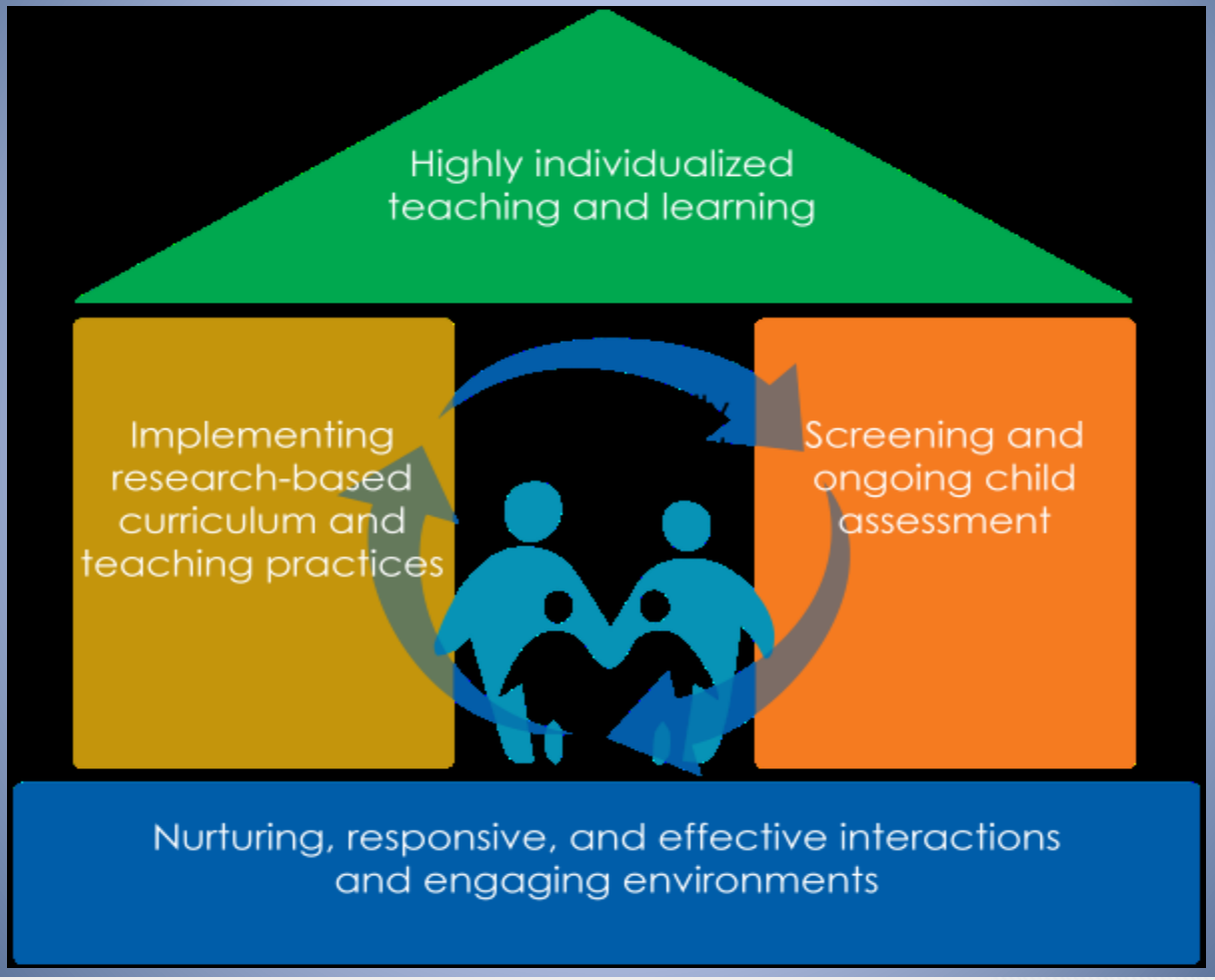

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EFFECTIVE DIRECTORS FACILITATE ENGAGING INTERACTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTS

The foundation of our house.

Strong Foundations are Key

- The fact of the matter is that you can't build a strong program without engaging interactions and environments.
- How do we do this?
- How do we ensure our foundations are strong?

It all starts with . . .

- Taking care of ourselves

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By strengthening and supporting Directors, they will be able to better assist teachers, who will be able to better serve children and their families.

Share: Director Self-Care

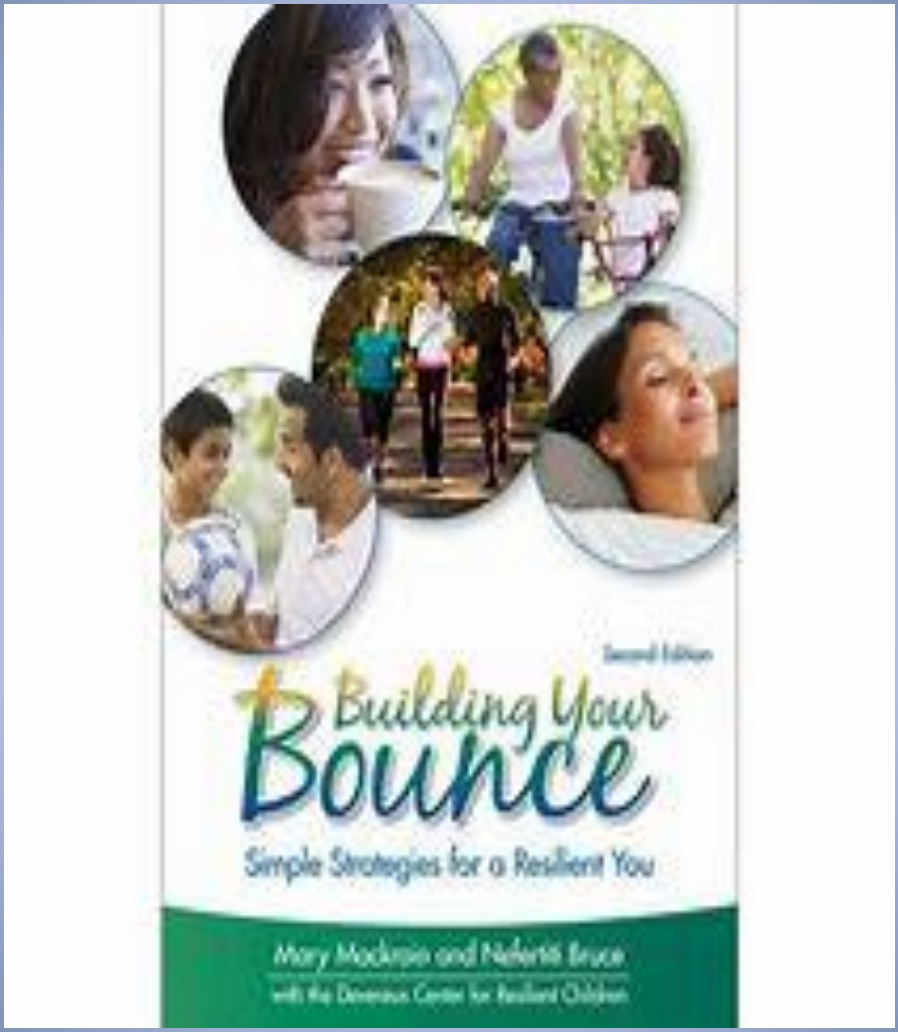
- Before you can help others, you need to make sure you take care of yourself.

Q2. What self-care practices do you use that work for you—or that you want to try?

Other Self-Care Ideas

- maintain a healthy work/family balance
- promote physical well-being
- provide positive work relationships
- stay active
- eat well
- music, reading, aromatherapy/diffusers
- practice mindfulness and other self-care activities (meditation, yoga, drinking soothing tea, getting enough sleep, etc.)

Tool that might Support a more resilient You!



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Tool that Supports Teachers

SEQUAL – Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning

- This survey tool can help directors examine and improve environments for the teaching staff.
- It assesses five domains:
  - teaching supports
  - learning community
  - job crafting
  - adult well-being
  - program leadership

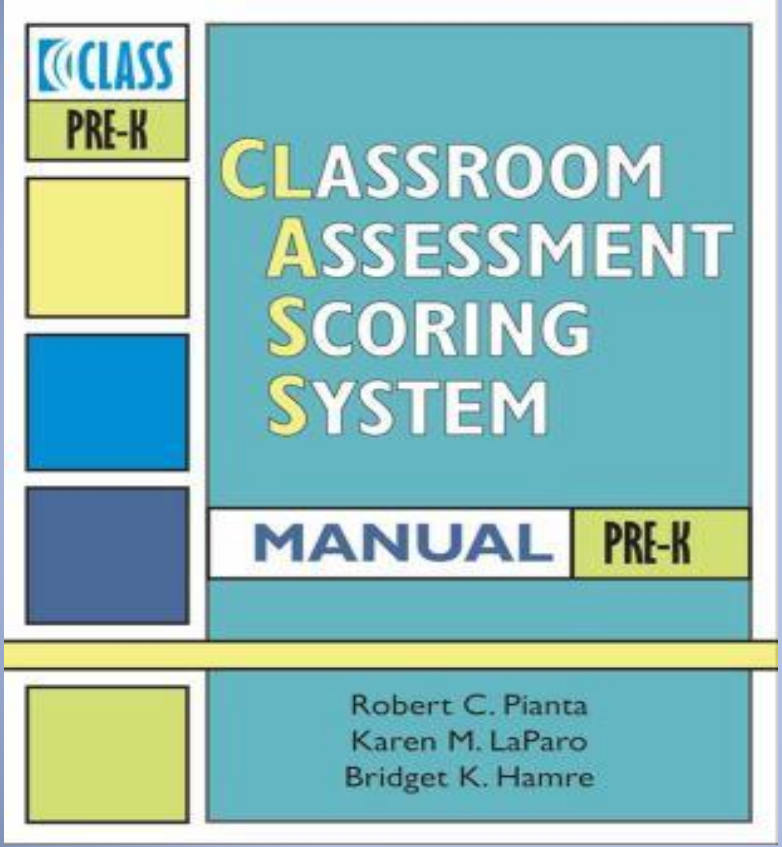
Job Crafting—What Is It?

- Everyone get out your phones and google “Job Crafting”.
- What definition did you find?
- How can we use this to promote wellness in the work place?
- What other tools or strategies do you use to support yourself or your employees?

Evaluation Tools Provide Goals to Work Toward

- Next we will briefly discuss some evaluation tools that can help directors create and maintain high quality programs for children, families, and staff.
- Building a strong foundation

Supportive Interactions



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Harms, Clifford and Cryer Environment Rating Scales

Importance of Directors

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Strong Administrative Practices

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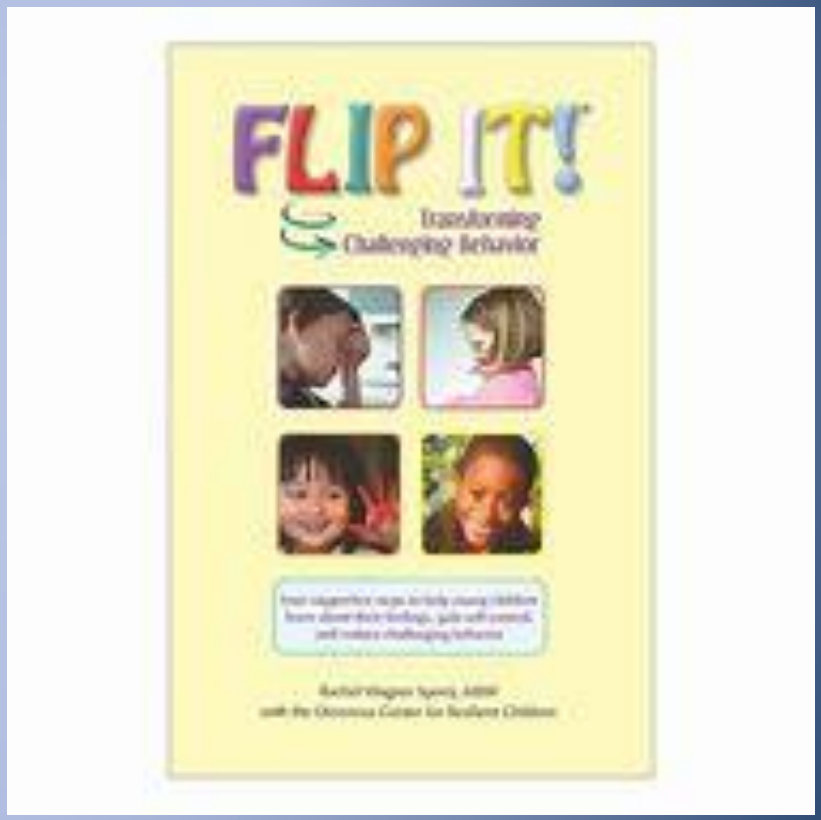
Classroom Management



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Discussion: Evaluation Tools

- Do you use the CLASS? How do you use it?
- How many of you use the ERSs? How do you use it?
- Do you use the PAS? How do you use it?
- What classroom management systems do you use and how is it helpful to your children, families, teachers?
- What other evaluation tools do you use to make your program stronger?

House Framework

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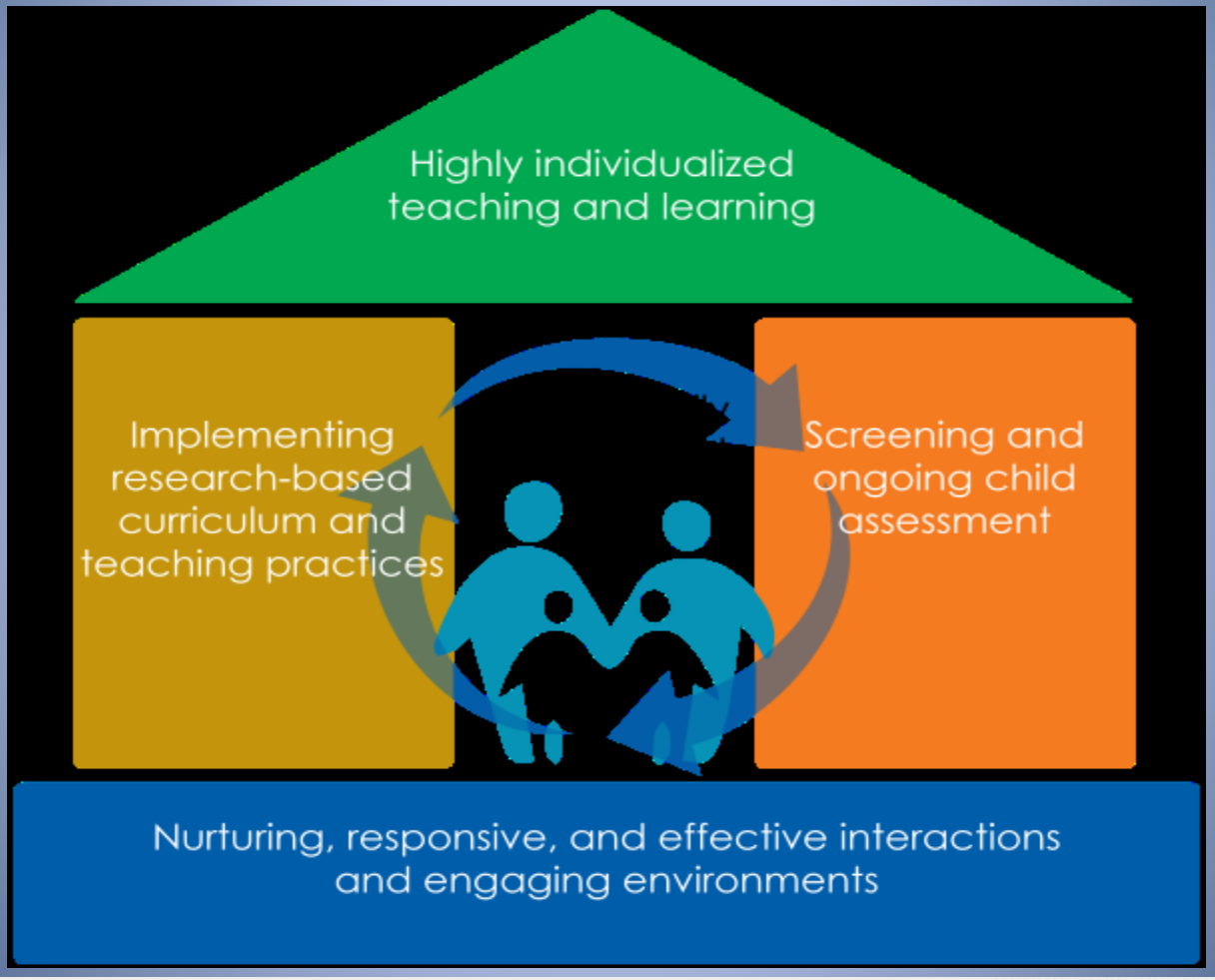

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EFFECTIVE DIRECTORS SUPPORT RESEARCH-BASED CURRICULA AND TEACHING PRACTICES

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Curriculum Approaches vs. Models

- So what's the difference?
- Curriculum approaches tend to be more philosophical. It's a way of living and being. It requires in-depth study and cannot be easily replicated.
- Curriculum models are those that can be easily copied/replicated/purchased, etc.

Standards

- According to the Head Start House Framework for Effective Practice, all curriculum should be research-based and aligned with standards.

- In Missouri, we use the Missouri Early Learning Goals for our state standards.

Missouri-Approved Curricula

- Creative Curriculum
- ELLC – Emerging Language and Literacy Curriculum
- High/Scope
- Project Construct
- Montessori (for programs with teachers with Montessori teaching credential and programs affiliated with AMS, AMI/USA)

European Approaches

- Montessori Method
- Reggio Emilia Approach
- Waldorf Approach

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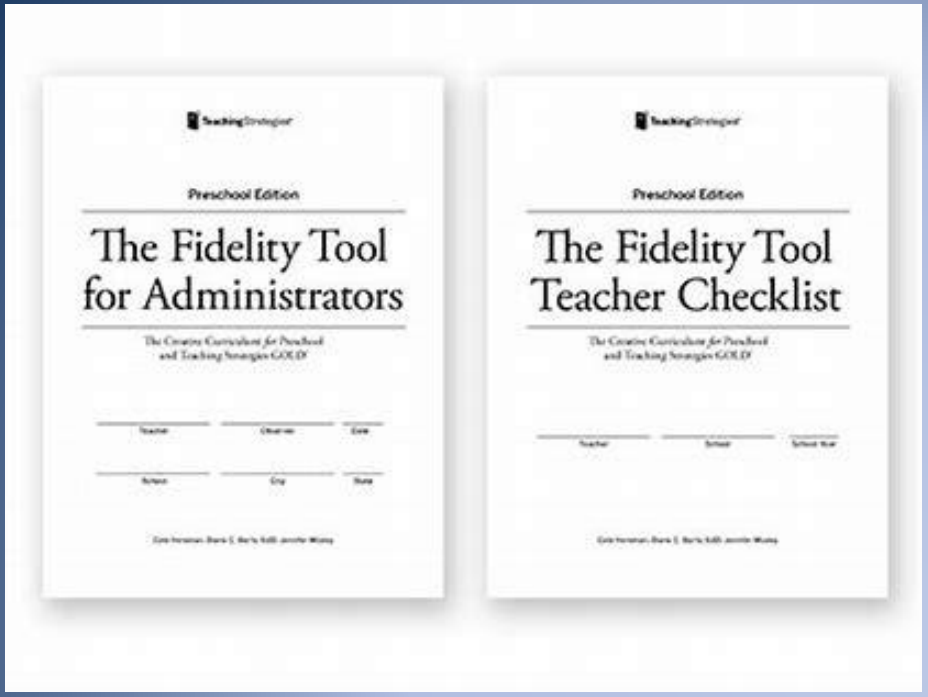
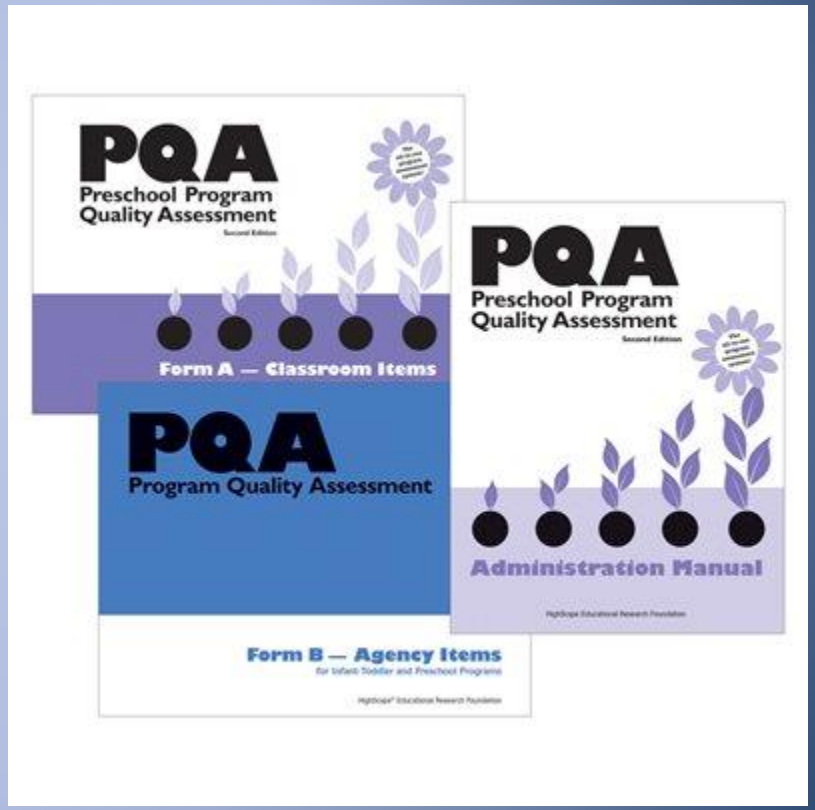
CDL Uses

- IT – Creative Curriculum
- Preschool – Project Construct
- Preschool – High Scope
- Preschool – Emerging Language and Literacy (ELLC)

We want college students to see four different curricula “in action” and for the CDL to be a model program for each type.


Preschool Edition
The Fidelity Tool for Administrators
Preschool Edition
The Fidelity Tool Teacher Checklist


PQA
Preschool Program Quality Assessment
Form A — Classroom Items
PQA
Program Quality Assessment
Form B — Agency Items
PQA
Preschool Program Quality Assessment
Administration Manual

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Curricular Fidelity

- High Scope – Program Quality Assessment (PQA)
- ELLC – ELLC Fidelity Checklists
- Project Construct – PC-ECCOS
- Creative Curriculum – Teacher and Administrator Fidelity Checklists

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Discussion: Research-based Curriculum and Teaching Standards?

- What curriculum model(s) do you use?
- Do you use fidelity checklists to ensure the curriculum is being implemented as intended?

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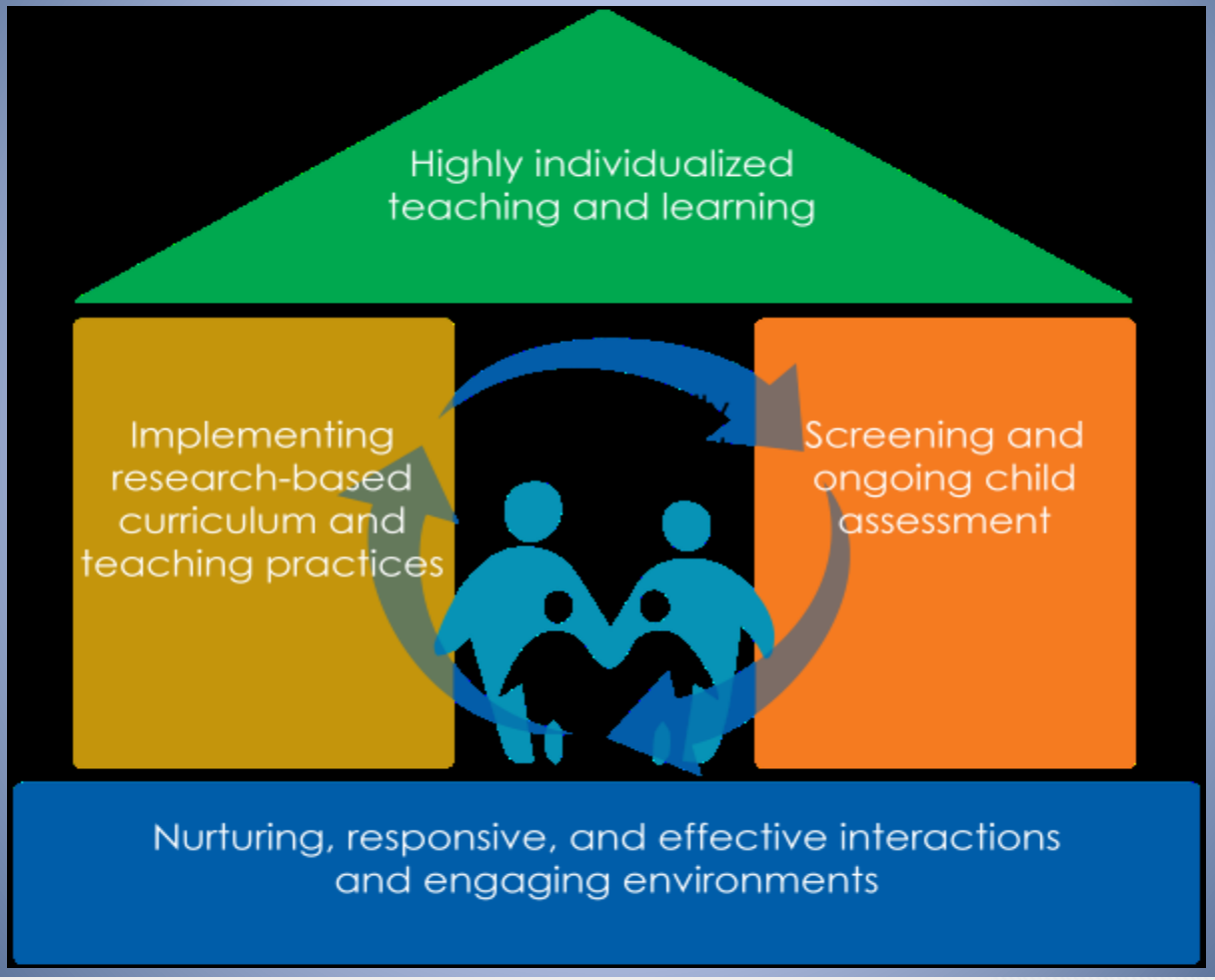

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EFFECTIVE DIRECTORS EXPECT HIGHLY INDIVIDUALIZED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)

- We use the DRDP to monitor children's progress and to inform our teaching.
- Teachers take anecdotal notes daily and then score the children on a continuum (Responding, Exploring, Building, Integrating).
- DRDP is completed three times a year and it helps teachers be more intentional teachers.

DRDP (2015)

PS Comprehensive View Rating Record

A Developmental Continuum from Early Infancy to Kindergarten Entry

For use with preschool-age children

Child's Name (First and Last): _____

Statewide Student Identifier (10-digit SSID): _____

Assessment Period (e.g., Fall 2015): _____

Date DRDP (2015) was completed (e.g., 09/07/2015): _____ / _____ / _____
month day year

Note: The Rating Record is meant to be used together with the DRDP (2015) Instrument for keeping track of each child's developmental levels as you complete the assessment.

Instructions: Write the child's name, student identification number, and the date this Rating Record was completed. Mark the developmental level the child has mastered for each Measure. Check EM (emerging) if the child is "emerging" to the next level (optional). In the rare circumstance that you are unable to rate a Measure, mark UR. If you are not rating a child on a Conditional Measure, mark Conditional Measure.

		Responding		Exploring			Building			Integrating		Conditional Measure		
Measure	Measure Name	Earlier	Later	Earlier	Middle	Later	Earlier	Middle	Later	Earlier	Not yet	(Not rated)	EM	UR
ATL-REG 1	Attention Maintenance*	○	○	○		○	●					○	☐	☐
ATL-REG 2	Self-Comforting*	○	○	○		○	●					○	☐	☐
ATL-REG 3	Imitation*	○	○	○		○	●					○	☐	☐
ATL-REG 4	Curiosity and Initiative in Learning	○	○	○		○	○	○	●	○			☐	☐
ATL-REG 5	Self-Control of Feelings and Behavior	○	○	○		○	○	○	●	○			☐	☐
ATL-REG 6	Engagement and Persistence			○		○	○	○	○	●	○		☐	☐
ATL-REG 7	Shared Use of Space and Materials			○		○	○	○	●	○	○		☐	☐
SED 1	Identity of Self in Relation to Others	○	○	○		○	○	○	○	●			☐	☐
SED 2	Social and Emotional Understanding	○	○	○		○	○	○	○	●			☐	☐
SED 3	Relationships and Social Interactions with Familiar Adults	○	○	○		○	○	○	○	●			☐	☐
SED 4	Relationships and Social Interactions with Peers	○	○	○		○	○	○	○	●			☐	☐
SED 5	Symbolic and Sociodramatic Play	○	○	○		○	○	○	○	●			☐	☐
LLD 1	Understanding of Language (Receptive)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●			☐	☐
LLD 2	Responsiveness to Language	○	○	○		○	○	○	○	●			☐	☐
LLD 3	Communication and Use of Language (Expressive)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●			☐	☐
LLD 4	Reciprocal Communication and Conversation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●			☐	☐
LLD 5	Interest in Literacy	○	○	○		○	○	○	●	○			☐	☐
LLD 6	Comprehension of Age-Appropriate Text				○	○	○	○	●	○	○		☐	☐
LLD 7	Concepts about Print				●	○	○	○	○	○	○		☐	☐
LLD 8	Phonological Awareness				●	○	○	○	○	○	○		☐	☐
LLD 9	Letter and Word Knowledge				●	○	○	○	○	○	○		☐	☐
LLD 10	Emergent Writing				○	●	○	○	○	○	○		☐	☐

Measure	Measure Name	Discovering Language	Discovering English	Exploring English	Developing English	Building English	Integrating English	Conditional Measure (Not rated)	EM	UR
ELD 1	Comprehension of English (Receptive English)	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	☐	☐
ELD 2	Self-Expression in English (Expressive English)	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	☐	☐
ELD 3	Understanding and Response to English Literacy Activities	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	☐	☐
ELD 4	Symbol, Letter, and Print Knowledge in English	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	☐	☐

*These measures required for children with IEPs.

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DRDP Benefits

- Helps teachers get to know children.
- Helps to identify strengths and limitations.
- Helps teachers plan curriculum and experiences using real data.
- Helps teachers identify areas where children don't play (child never go in the writing area or never dances).
- Makes sure teachers are individualizing teaching and learning for each child.

Discussion: Individualizing Teaching and Learning

- What assessment or tools do you use for progress monitoring or informing your teaching?
- What other ways do you help teachers individualize teaching and learning?

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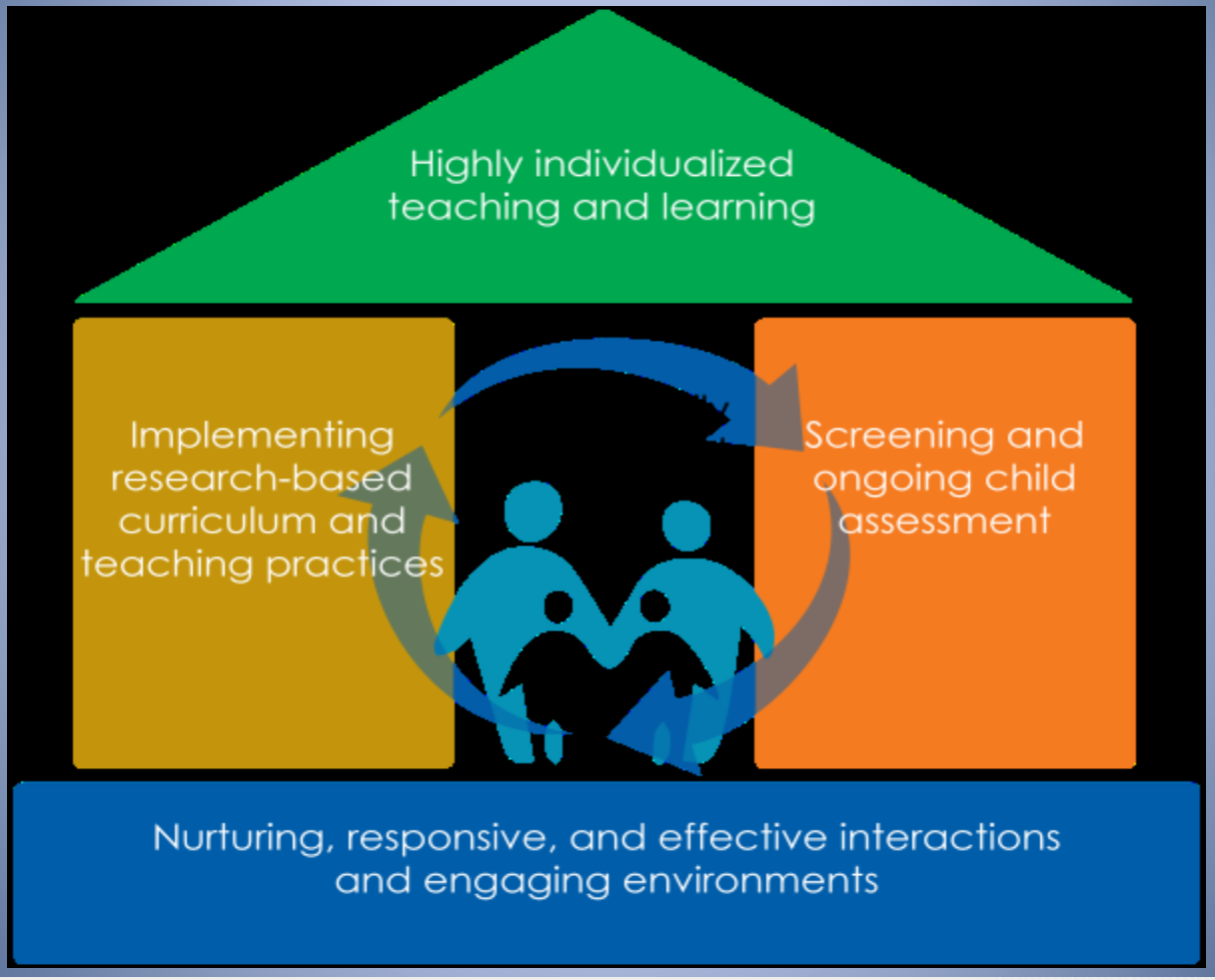

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EFFECTIVE DIRECTORS ENSURE ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT

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Screening

- Definition- The use of a brief procedure or instrument designed to identify, from within a large population of children, those children who may need further assessment to verify developmental and/or health risks.
- Screening tools need to be reliable and valid.

Assessment

- Definition – The process of obtaining information about a child in order to make judgments about their characteristics and decisions about appropriate teaching and care.
- Simplest definition – Getting to know each child.

ASQ™
Ages & Stages Questionnaires®

DIAL™-4
Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning

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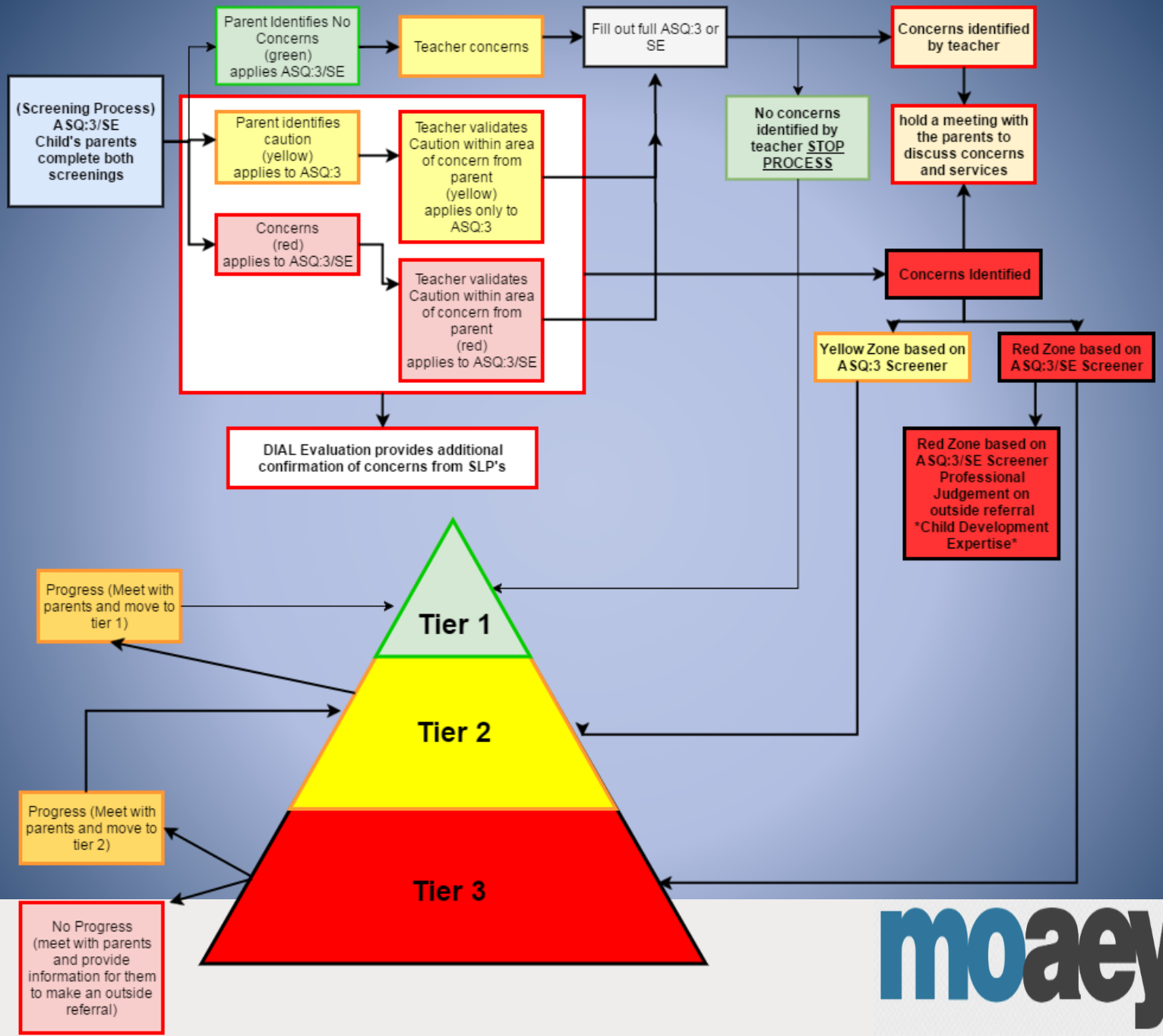
Child Development Lab Initial Referral Evaluation Process

University of Missouri



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Discussion: Screening and Assessment

- What reliable and valid screening tool do you use to catch possible delays in young children?
- Why did you select that screening tool?
- Do you have a procedure in place for making sure no child falls through the cracks?

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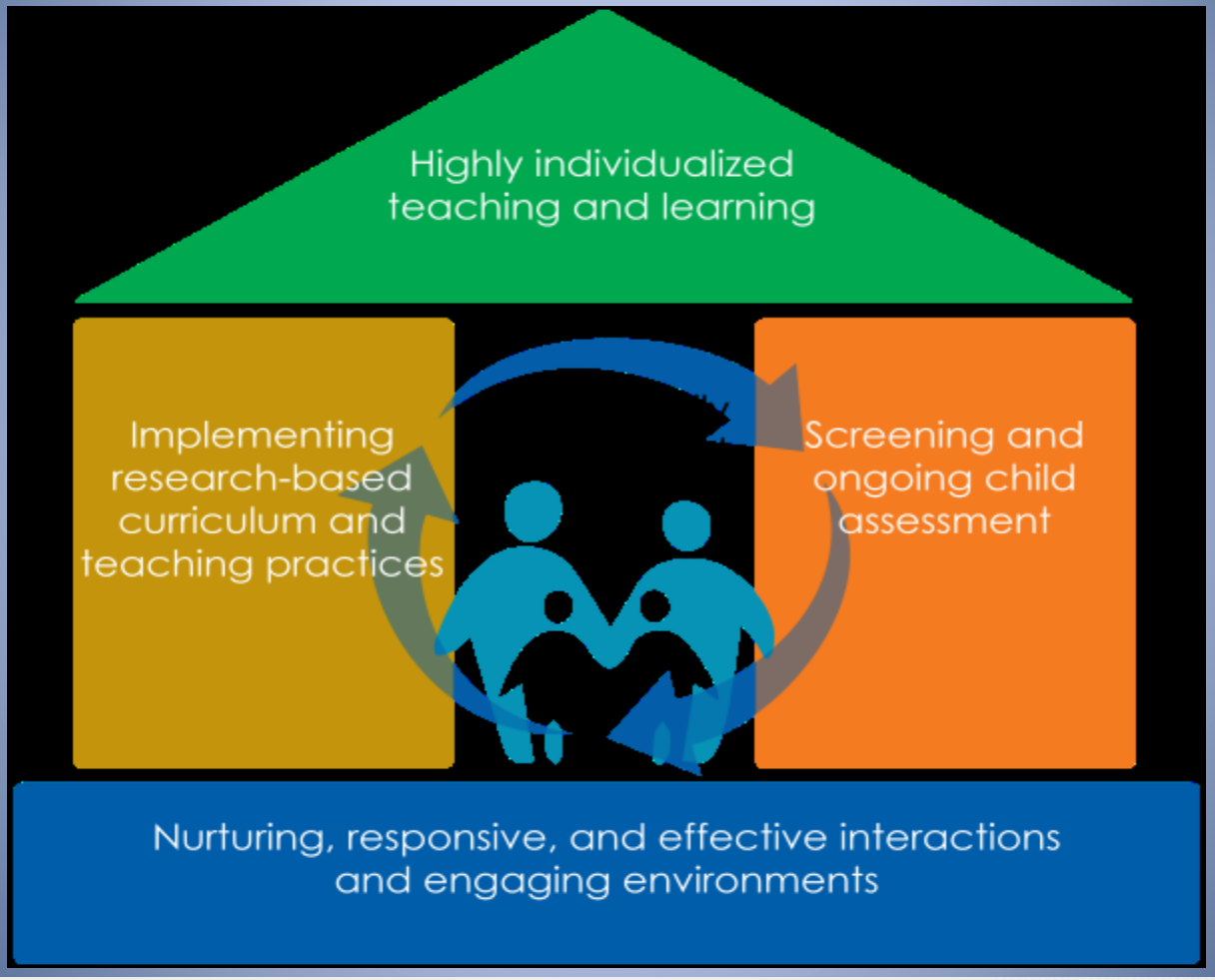

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EFFECTIVE DIRECTORS ENGAGE PARENTS AND FAMILIES IN THE PROGRAM

Family Involvement

- Families should be involved and engaged in every part of the House Framework. It's a core value that is integrated, continuous, and ongoing.

NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

- Standard 2. Family-Teacher Partnerships and Community Connections
- 2a: Know about, understand, and value the diversity of families.
- 2b: Collaborate as partners with families in young children's development and learning through respectful, reciprocal relationships, and engagement.

OTHER IMPORTANT DIRECTOR SKILLS

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1. Dedicate Time for Self Care

- The effective director takes time for his/herself . . .
- whatever that might be.

Self-Evaluation 1

- I dedicate sufficient time for self-care.

2. Have a Strong Vision for the Future

- Effective directors are forward thinkers. Always looking ahead rather than dwelling on the past.
- Effective directors need to be visionaries. Imagining what is possible, rather than staying stuck on what's holding them back.
- Effective directors enjoy a good challenge and an opportunity to solve a problem, create a better outcome.

Self-Evaluation 2

- My visioning skills are strong.

3. Inspires Others

- The effective director doesn't work to make people love her, but makes people love to work for her.

- The effective director is always working to develop an effective team. Understands he/she cannot do it alone.

Self-Evaluation 3

- People love working for me because I am a strong leader who inspires others to do their best work

4. Continually Assesses and Evaluates

- The goal is to constantly keep improving, keep getting better, striving for excellence if everything we do.
- Effective directors assess themselves, others, and the organizational climate

Self Evaluation 4

- I am constantly striving to improve, learn more, grow as a leader, and engage in continuous quality improvement efforts.

5. Stays Current with Latest Research, Laws, and Technology and . . . Is Not Afraid of Change

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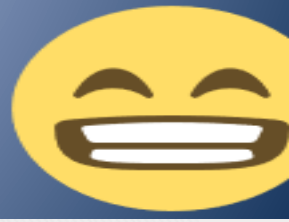
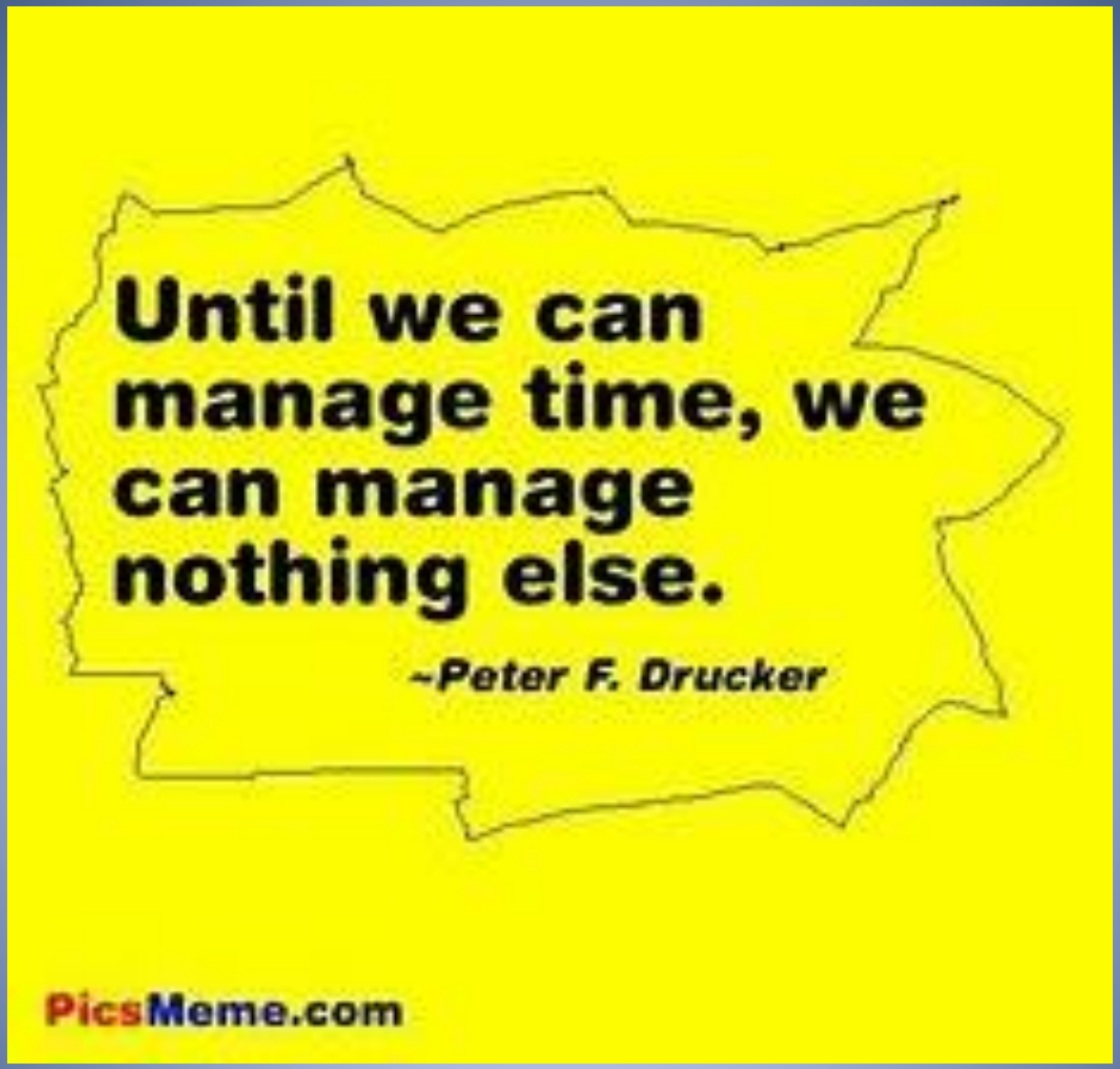
Self Evaluation 5

- I stay current with the latest technology, laws, and research and I am not afraid to make changes if I think it will improve the overall program.

6. Organizes and Manages Time Well

- At the CDL we have a yearly calendar and although this may seem redundant we do the same things at the same time each year.
- In a way, the annual calendar to staff is just as important as the daily schedule for children.
- It provides consistency, structure, and teachers know what's happening and when.
- Remember that multi-tasking is not necessarily a good thing.




Until we can manage time, we can manage nothing else.
~Peter F. Drucker
PicsMeme.com

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Self Evaluation 6

- I take pride in my organization and time management skills. I get more done than most people.

7. Creates a Positive School/Family and Working Environment

- Has high expectations for staff
- Respects teacher's autonomy and doesn't micro-manage
- Provides professional development/invests in his/her teachers
- Finds time to observe and provides constructive feedback
- Recognizes growth and successes
- Encourages collaboration and team building
- Shows appreciation and values contributions
- Fosters creativity and new innovative ways of doing things

Self Evaluation 7

- I encourage a positive working environment and work hard to promote a strong school family.

8. Makes Decisions Effectively

- Directors have to make difficult decisions. These include:
  - ✓Handling complaints from parents/family members
  - ✓Raising tuition and deciding how much
  - ✓Mediating disputes between teachers or between teachers and parents
  - ✓Disciplining teachers
  - ✓Firing teachers

Self Evaluation 8

- I am an effective decision maker. I'm not afraid to make difficult decisions even if it might mean hurting feelings occasionally.

9. Collaborates with Others

- Effective directors understand that they cannot do this work alone. They collaborate with families, colleagues, community partners, and other professionals in interdisciplinary ways.

Self Evaluation 9

- I have a support network. I have a group of other directors or professionals who I can collaborate with, ask questions, brainstorm, network, socialize, etc.

10. Be a Mentor

Self Evaluation 10

- I actively mentor someone younger or less experienced. I encourage everyone's professional development with professional development plans and on-going training and PD.

Why do we do this work?

- Because high quality early childhood programs matter. The Early Childhood Profession matters.

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Network with Us!

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