

## Implementation of Curriculum with Fidelity

Joe Preece: Hello. My name's Joe Preece. I'm with NCECDL. We see many people in the chat already excited about this session. We have large numbers today. So, we're really excited that you're here. I think this session will meet your need, and really just excited to get started.

So, welcome, welcome, welcome to the first webinar in the education manager series. This is the first of three. We have two additional Ed Manager webinar series coming up, one in January, on the 24th, and one in March, on the 28th, at the same time. So, we hope that you save these dates and we see you again on the next webinar. Just a few logistic things. You might want to familiarize yourself with where the chat box is. We do have a couple of activities where we utilize the chat box, and we look forward to your participation.

So go ahead and find where that is on your screen. The other thing that I want to familiarize yourself with is, if you'll notice, under "supporting documents," there's three handouts for you. One is the session presentation, where you can, you know, print that off and take notes, and you'll have the slides to keep after the webinar.

The second handout is the scenario. We will be using that scenario later in the presentation, so you may want to, you know, become familiar with where that is, maybe print it out, pull it up, you know, just get it ready. And the third is a curriculum fidelity handout that will also prove useful for you. So, our session objectives for today – we want you to understand curriculum fidelity. We want you to walk away with a clear definition of what that is and how to ensure that in your program. And we'll provide several examples of how to do that. Explore the research base around why curriculum fidelity is important. And, again, identify strategies around how a program can ensure that they are implementing their research-based curriculum with fidelity. I am going to now turn it over to Allyson Dean, who is going to talk about, what is curriculum fidelity? Again, thank you for being on. Allyson?

Allyson Dean: Thanks, Joe. Hi, everyone. Thanks for calling in this afternoon or logging in from wherever you are in the country. We're really excited to kick this webinar series off. And I'm gonna get to interacting right from the start. I see lots of you are already using the chat box. But since we're talking about curriculum today, Joe and I thought it might be interesting to have you all start with just entering a word or two in the chat box about what you think of when you hear the term "curriculum." What's a curriculum to you, with your program?

Go ahead and have a minute there to chat that in. And while you do that, I'll explain the visual on the screen, sort of two prompts there. We've got a written plan all the way over on the left side of the vector diagram, and over to the right, everything that happens, right? And so – Oh, folks are jumping in already. So, we are seeing things like planned learning, teaching and learning, educational guide, guide to help with planning, intentional teaching. So many great responses. And the reality is, when you think about where you are on this continuum, lots of folks might think a curriculum, big "C," is that written plan I purchased. I convinced my fiscal office that I had to have the manual, the fidelity tools, and all the activity cards to go with it.

So, you'd think about that. And then you'd think about what, you know, sort of happens in practice, which is that, in between routines and at your morning meeting and as you're handling transitions, that curriculum happens there, too. And so the continuum is a little bit of a falsity, right? Because what we know is that curriculum is all of these things. It's your written plan, it's how you're thoughtful about what you're going to be doing in any given day. And it's also things that happen where you extend learning, during a diaper change with a baby, for instance, and having language back and forth or as you're waiting in a transition line to go to outdoor play and you decide to do a finger play or a song.

So, curriculum is all of these things, and it also includes all of the things that you're all entering in the chat box. So, thanks for sharing. And we just wanted to get kicked off today with this definition because we know that sometimes it's confusing to staff. It can be confusing to a home visitor, what her curriculum is. It can be confusing to a teacher to know whether a curriculum is something rigid, like following a script, or something much more emergent as you go through the day. And as I said, it's a bit of both. So, let's talk a little bit about what curriculum fidelity is. And so you can see the definition up here, and it's a fairly straightforward and simple one. It's the extent to which a curriculum, including its content and processes, are implemented as designed by the developers.

So, what that means is that fidelity as implementation occurs when teachers use the instructional strategies to deliver the content in the same way that they were designed to be used and delivered, okay? And so one of the things the research gives us around this topic is sort of three main aspects of implementation fidelity, the first being differentiation – so, the extent to which the critical features that distinguish the curriculum are present. So, we could sort of think about that as the – sort of the way a curriculum – What sets your curriculum apart, you know? Why did you choose the HighScope curriculum? Why did you choose the Creative Curriculum? Why did you choose Opening a World of Learning? There were critical things.

There were unique things that you thought were a good fit with your program. And so that's one aspect of implementation fidelity. The other aspect is program adherence – so, the extent to which program components are delivered as described in your curriculum publication manuals – so, thinking about, you know, whether or not you're really following the different components of a day that are outlined and thinking about whether you consistently skip one piece of the curriculum because maybe a teacher is not quite sure how to do it. So, those types of things. And then probably the most important piece is the quality of delivery, right? So, the extent to which teachers feel prepared to implement the curriculum. How confident are they that they understand the components of a curriculum and how to implement them with fidelity?

So, those are some of the key aspects of curriculum fidelity. And I want to invite you – I see folks are still in the chat box, but I do want to invite you to also use the question-and-answer box or the chat box to jot down or collect questions as we go along. We will have a Q&A period, but also something might come to you as I'm talking, and feel free to add that. The next piece here is, why is curriculum fidelity important, you know, aside from the fact that it's now in the new Head Start Program Performance Standards, which of course, makes it important? But why else is it important?

So, when we think about the overarching reason to pay attention to curriculum fidelity, it's, of course, about the children, right, as so much of what's important about our work is. So, ensuring the best and most positive outcomes for children means that we implement the curriculum to fidelity because research tells us that when teachers implement curriculum and instructional strategies in ways that are faithful to what was intended, children do better, right? And from the research from, you know, Bridget Hamre and Barbara Wasik, folks that – you know, names that we're all familiar with – their research really shows that that fidelity makes a difference in terms of children's outcomes.

And so when we think about wanting, really, to achieve some of the same results that were achieved by those researchers, we have to think about curriculum fidelity to ensure that we're optimizing those outcomes. Here's another reason to think about curriculum fidelity. This house framework for effective, everyday practice is really familiar to all of you, I'm sure, right? And what we know is that these four components, when pulled together, sort of define what we mean by effective practices, effective teacher practices that really lead to the types of outcomes we want for children and families. Now, if you look to the left pillar on your screen, research-based curriculum and teaching practices, and you think about all that that pillar is doing in this house, right?

It's holding up highly individualized teaching and learning. It's, in a cyclical way, informing your interactions, the way you set up your environment. It's informing the types of things you assess, and those assessments, in turn, are informing your curriculum plans. And all of those inform how you individualize and modify your curriculum in response to individual children. And so that pillar needs to be strong because it's holding quite a bit of information that's important in this house metaphor. And so when we think about research-based, that means that we chose these curricula because somewhere in the research, we found that there was maybe a good fit for the children and families in our program and that there was perhaps some evidence or implementation data that we have that says that it's going to be helpful for children and families.

And so that pillar is only as strong as that curriculum. And that curriculum is only as strong as the extent to which we implement it with fidelity, right? So, again, just thinking about, you know, if you make changes in a curriculum, it can be unclear what effects the curriculum will have on children. It can be unclear about how efficacious teachers feel about implementing the curriculum. So, again, really just thinking about making sure that we shore up that pillar of the house by making sure that we're following the curriculum and implementing it in the way it's intended. So, some more pragmatic benefits, which probably mean more to those of us who work with teachers regularly because it's why it's important to teachers. It gives teachers – it gives all of us – information about how to improve practices to ensure that all children progress as planned, right?

So, if a child isn't progressing as planned and you have some concerns, it can be helpful for teachers or a home visitor to really examine how the teaching was implemented, how the curriculum was adhered to, and where there was effectiveness of instruction and where maybe there wasn't, right? It's almost like triaging. You sort of go through all of the systems that are in your control, all the things you can control in terms of supporting children, and then if what's left is something more organic about the child, then you have great information to move forward with a referral or other options. But if, in fact,

there's data that tells you that maybe you haven't really been attending to the mass pieces of your curriculum, then so it's perhaps no wonder children are struggling to understand a concept. And that's good information to go back and change how we're implementing curriculum, what our practices are, to try to support that child. Similarly, you can think about the implementation issues across a program or even across several programs within an agency to strengthen your curriculum implementation.

So, if you bring all of your teaching staff together or all of your home visitors together, and there's, you know, a shared concern about how to implement a piece of a curriculum, you can problem-solve, and you can – teachers can share with one another how they have solved some of those problems. You think about a curriculum that might have an element that can be challenging. It makes me think about sort of the OWL curriculum. And one of the components of that curriculum is a Let's Find Out About It, which happens at morning meetings. Probably lots of you are familiar with that approach. So, maybe you have a teacher that's struggling about how to really do that Let's Find Out About It.

And maybe that teacher has children who just really can't attend or she feels like she's losing children halfway through that and it's not really having the effect that she wants or that is intended. So, teachers can come together. And maybe they've got another teacher who's really experiencing quite a bit of success who can offer some advice. And so in that way, collecting information about curriculum fidelity can really be helpful. It can be diagnostic, to a certain extent, for a program. And then of course, as I said earlier, we know that curriculum fidelity is important because our Head Start Program Performance Standards really outline this as a key factor in high-quality early-learning programs, as defined within the Head Start Standards. And so what – This is taken directly from those new Standards. And it basically says that a program has to support staff to effectively implement curricula and, at a minimum, monitor curriculum implementation and fidelity. And really that's about ensuring that teachers are getting and all staff are getting support, feedback, supervision for continuous improvement. And those things should be tied to another part of the performance Standards around professional development and making sure that there is a place for teachers or home visitors to really get one-on-one feedback and supervision and mentoring around the use of the curriculum. So, I'm gonna turn now just to sort of outline some of the features from the research again that are critical to successful implementation of curriculum. So, we'll talk here a little bit about, again, fidelity of implementation, those processes. We'll talk about professional development support and the ongoing assessment of child learning, okay?

So, all of these things are really critical to ensuring implementation with fidelity. And let's start with fidelity of implementation. And when we think about fidelity of implementation here, we're talking about two aspects, really – global fidelity and individual lesson or activity fidelity. And I'm gonna start with global fidelity. Global fidelity is really key because it provides information on how consistently and regularly staff implement the key elements of curriculum over time, right?

So, programs that are committed to ensuring fidelity have processes in place to ensure that, over time, things are happening in a consistent way. And that information is really helpful to program leadership, such as education managers, such as yourself, As you think about what supports are needed to sustain curriculum implementation. For example, maybe there are certain components of the curriculum that

are implemented less frequently or with less fidelity by the majority of classrooms. You know, that's a – We can have natural biases about the types of things we love to do in our classrooms. All of us who've been teachers have been there, right? I love, you know, maybe the literacy component of a curriculum. I love using stories to do, you know, different types of acting out of plots and things. But maybe I really stay away from the science pieces of a curriculum because I'm not really as confident there. Or maybe I don't have the materials I need to do some of the pieces in a curriculum.

So, those are the types of things you really want to track over time. And I want to emphasize the "over time" and its importance here because what we don't want curriculum fidelity to be is a scripted response to curriculum implementation. We don't want teachers and home visitors to feel like, really, curriculum fidelity means, you know, "I open to page 27 in the book, and it says that today we are going to do an outdoor environment activity where we explore the different textures on our playground, and it's pouring rain out."

So – [Laughter] What are you going to do? You're not going to go out with your umbrellas. Well, you might go out with your umbrellas if you're really adventurous. But certainly you want teachers to still feel that they have the flexibility to really be responsive to individual children, to changes that occur every day in a classroom, and to whatever's happening or whatever's relevant that day.

So, over time, if you saw that a teacher, you know, never went out and did that activity on texture – you know, it was months and months, and that piece was never addressed – that's one thing. That might be an implementation issue, right? But if it's one week and it rained every day and it didn't happen, but within the course of a month, you see some – that activity or something very similar around helping children understand different textures, then that would still be a curriculum implemented with fidelity, even though it wasn't scripted and it didn't happen in the exact time and place that a curriculum might define. So, what might you see in a program that was really focused on this type of global fidelity over time, right? You would see classrooms where, you know, ed managers and other staff visit classrooms regularly to coach and to provide feedback to teachers as they work on improving teaching practices through a reflective cycle, such as maybe the practice-based coaching cycle. You would see perhaps folks going out alongside a home visitor to observe a session or to observe a socialization and provide some performance-based data to improve their implementation of the home-visiting curriculum. You would see maybe programs that administer some program evaluation instruments in assigned classrooms in the fall and then again in the winter to kind of think about quality practices, homes, or socialization.

So, maybe you might use the ITERS. Maybe you might use the HighScope High/Scope Program Quality Assessment, maybe the CLASS, maybe a curriculum fidelity tool that came with your published curriculum. You would use those regularly to gather feedback and share it back with staff so that they can use it to improve their implementation to fidelity. You might see certainly performance-based assessment data used to determine, you know, different types of coaching models used, maybe a more intensive versus a less intensive or peer-based approach, depending on what your data's telling you about how curriculum is being implemented across classrooms.

And certainly you want to ensure that there is some observation going on so that teachers are not, as I said, just following a specific script or not adjusting for individual children's needs or knowledge or skills, those types of things. The other thing you might see is the use of survey or other qualitative methods of gathering feedback from teachers themselves or home visitors.

You want to hear from teachers and home visitors about their challenges in curriculum implementation, what things they feel particularly good about, how well the curriculum meets the needs of the children and family in their program. Those are all key indicators that a program is really thinking fidelity over time and globally. On the micro level, you would probably expect in these programs to see staff in regularly scheduled planning times, staff who have time to organize materials in learning environments, and to plan curriculum modifications to support access to learning activities for children with disabilities or to modify activities in response to the communities they serve. These things seem obvious, but, again, when you're thinking about global fidelity over time, it's one thing to miss planning time, you know, once in a while because staff are out and it's just too overwhelming. But has it been, you know, a month and a half and staff have been able to plan together? That might be something you'd want to think about when you're assessing how your program is supporting curriculum fidelity. So, now we're gonna switch to think about actual individual activity, individual lesson fidelity, which really provides more of the sort of in-the-moment information about the way a curriculum activity is implemented within the learning setting, okay?

So, they focus on a specific curriculum element or a specific curriculum activity. And so in programs where you're seeing a high degree of implementation fidelity or processes to support that, you're going to see staff focus on the specific goals identified in the lesson plan. Now, that sounds like a tall order, but when you really think about the ways in which we are already coaching staff to do some of these things, you can sort of use other data you're collecting to inform this. So, if you're already working, for instance, with teaching staff around the CLASS pre-K indicators under instructional learning format, for instance – so, all of those things where you're asking staff to be thoughtful about using advanced organizers or re-orienting children back to the purpose of a lesson or some of those summary statements that, again, help children connect why they're doing certain things, what the purpose of activities is, what you're really – what they're really – what you're hoping they're going to get out of the activity. Those are all things we're already looking at and thinking about when we're working with teachers and perhaps coaches and others to support instructional support strategies or classroom organization strategies.

So, as you're doing that, you can also think about those same types of supports as related to curriculum fidelity. You're gonna see in these classrooms staff really using all of the recommended materials. So, those science materials in the science corner with the, you know, magnifying glasses that children never venture over to and look brand-new and unused – you definitely – those are – those are things you'd want to think about. You know, why – If the science area isn't utilized, why not? Is that an issue of teachers feeling insecure about that area? Is it that children are just really focused on a different – they have different interests at this moment? And so you have to think about how to make that area more meaningful and relevant to children. All of those things are things that you would think

about in terms of fidelity. Certainly staff differentiating instructions and learning goals based on formative assessment.

So, I think about this, something just, you know, really straightforward. For instance, if the curriculum guide for this week or this month say that you're going to focus on shapes and all your children already identify shapes well and have really a solid understanding of that concept, you're not going to the activities around shapes, right? Because it would be meaningless for children. Well, maybe not meaningless, but certainly maybe not as meaningful as another approach. If children are struggling with fine motor, then that's maybe what you would focus on at that particular time of the year, based on your assessment data.

So, again, really not having a scripted approach to curriculum, but over time and within lessons, seeing that key elements are used and addressed, but not at the expense of what your individual child and family data is telling you children need in a moment. And you certainly would see children engaged in child-guided experiences. And that's an important one because, again, I think sometimes when we think about adherence to a curriculum, a particular model or a plan, we forget about the pieces that are really open-ended and meant to be child-guided, which are just as important in terms of components around a curriculum. So, if you're using the creative curriculum and there's a certain amount of autonomous exploration of interest areas, you want to make sure that teachers are making time for that, particularly in shorter days, where scheduling might get in the way. Those are things you'd want to think about in your curriculum fidelity pieces. So, let's move past implementation to professional development.

And when we talk about professional development as a component of curriculum fidelity, we're thinking about things like initial training or a course in the curriculum, ongoing coaching and mentoring, and opportunities for self- and peer-reflection. So, when you introduce a new curriculum or maybe when you're doing refresher training or maybe you're introducing a curriculum that augments your foundational curriculum – maybe it's a language and literacy add-on to a foundational curriculum you're already using – how do you do that initial rollout? Is that training, an asynchronous, sort of 20-minute video that folks watch online and then they're given the curriculum manual and off they go into their classroom? Well, probably not. That's probably an oversimplification. But really thinking about, when we train on a curriculum or when we introduce a new curriculum, are we giving practice-based training, right? So, am I learning about the training?

Am I learning about the curriculum? But then having a chance to go and practice it. And then, in addition, when I practice it, am I getting some good modeling and coaching to make sure that I'm implementing the curriculum in the way it's intended? And do I have opportunities myself to think about what I need to do this well and how I think I'm doing? Those are all pieces of P.D. that are really important. So, again, what might you see in those programs? So, teachers and staff with regular, individualized consultation and coaching, procedures for providing teachers with specific and regular feedback, and ensuring that that feedback is focused on curriculum implementation, okay? So, again, tying these pieces of P.D. are also connected to other standards, right, the standards that say that we want to use research-based professional development.

And part of using research-based professional development is using a coaching or a modeling approach that provides real-time, specific feedback. Okay. One of the things to think about is sort of why this professional-development piece is so key. And I think, again, we can look to the research here to give us a clue about that. And what Robert Pianta and his associates found in a study regarding the use of a curriculum intervention, in terms of positive outcomes for children, was that it was that individualized consultation and regular, consistent feedback that were most effective in improving preschool teachers' use of instructional strategies. And the other reason that ongoing support is essential is, again, a more pragmatic one, but to prevent drift, okay, or a teacher or program gradually shifting away from implementation fidelity. And that one seems pretty important, right? Even in our own lives, natural drift happens from things we commit to. Every year, for instance, I go to my doctor. I have my blood drawn. I get my cholesterol levels. I have a little panic moment. I get all of these great diet and exercise sort of scripts that I should follow.

And I change my lifestyle, and I'm really, really good. I adhere to that diet. I adhere to that exercise routine. For, you know, two weeks, I am on it. And then by week three, I start to think about, "Well, maybe in could just introduce some dark chocolate 'cause it has antioxidants, and that's good, too." So, I start to maybe drift away from my initial commitment to really following something with fidelity. And it's the same for teachers, particularly when they have so many things really pulling on their time and their focus. So, continuing that ongoing coaching and support really helps teachers stay on it, really helps them see when maybe they're starting to move away from the implementation with fidelity. The other piece that's really important is ongoing assessment of learning. And that's not just to answer the fundamental question of, "How well is the curriculum working for the children?" although that's – that's, you know, critical, particularly when we think about the Head Start Standards around individualizing and using data to individualize.

But it's also really important to teachers to give them information about how their practice is working or not working for children. So, you're going to want to know if your program is using assessment data over time and that that formative assessment data is used to inform curriculum modification. So, in addition to observation, where you can see that in action, you might look at lesson plans. You might look at observation notes. You might look at how teachers have been responsive and flexible to make modifications in response to data. You're gonna want to see that staff are regularly documenting children's knowledge and skills, that they're making modifications, that they're using appropriate strategies, for instance, for children who are dual-language learners. All of those things you would see on a regular basis in a program implementing curriculum with fidelity.

And then let's think a little bit, again, from the teacher's perspective about why ongoing assessment of child learning is so important. And, really, if you look across disciplines even, but certainly in the early childhood and k-12 world, those teacher variables that are most related to implementation fidelity include the teacher and the intervention alignment, teacher beliefs – so, their efficacy – previous practices, and congruence between teacher and intervention priorities, right? Other research tells us that teachers are concerned about what they perceive as the need for the intervention. And when we say "intervention," which is a research-y word, I would just replace that with "curriculum."



So, if teachers believe that this curriculum is effective, that there's a need for it, that the curriculum will be effective and that they themselves have the ability to carry it out and that, in doing so, that's going to benefit children. This one is particularly powerful. And I think about it because I spent sort of the last three years of my life really researching implementation of curricula and other supports to improve class instructional support scores in Head Start program as part of my dissertation research and, really, to a "T," whether a teacher has implemented maybe a stronger focus on quality of feedback in the class or maybe they focused on implementing the OWL curriculum or other curriculum that was maybe a little more structured than they had been used to. In other words, when I was – when people were – when teachers were pushed out of their comfort zone and asked to adopt a new technique or a new strategy, to a person, each participant in my study indicated that the most powerful reason that they were able to do that was because they saw that it benefited children.

So, when I said to these teachers, "How did you commit yourself to learning this new curriculum?" or, "How did you sort of remain positive and stick with this sort of different approach to your teaching style?" they, to a person, all said, "You know, receiving kindergartens told us that our children were coming in so well prepared for kindergarten." Or parents were hearing children tell them what they had learned that day rather than just what they did, right? They knew that when they were playing in the water table, it was because they were exploring the concept of volume or how – you know, how different containers take different amounts of fluid. Even though a tall container looks like it has more, the wide container might have more. So, as they saw children benefit and really increase their access to and the outcomes from the learning experiences, they were more and more committed to continuing to do it.

And that's important, right, because if we believe in something and we believe it's something we can do with support and that it will be beneficial to children, we're gonna continue to do it, and we're gonna continue to work hard to do it well. So, those are some of the pragmatic reasons for thinking about curriculum fidelity. So I'm gonna pause here for a minute, and I'm going to let Joe lead us through, really, a pragmatic scenario where a program finds out that they have a finding around – a monitoring finding around curriculum fidelity. And so we're gonna walk through that and give you a minute to look at that. Joe, are you there? Okay, I think we might have lost Joe, so I'm going to ask Renita to pull up the scenario at this point.

Okay, so, on your screens now, you should see a scenario. If you're having trouble reading this – because we do want to keep the chat box open – I want to remind you that you have it as a handout in the "supporting documents" pod on your screen. And you can print that out and follow along. And in addition, I'm going to read it out loud here. So, in this scenario, we have a grantee who did not implement with fidelity a curriculum promoting young children's school readiness in the area of social-emotional development. The Creative curriculum – the curriculum that this program had chosen – was not implemented with fidelity in terms of providing examples of diversity and ethnicity in 4 of 13 classrooms observed.

The environments in four classrooms were not designed to help children feel a sense of belonging and the sense of belonging that was needed to develop a healthy concept of personal identity important to

their self-esteem and confidence. There were no pictures of the people of different ethnic backgrounds and economic means, people with disabilities, non-traditional families, and women and men in different types of jobs. There were no pictures of children's families posted in the classroom. Teachers have used cartoon characters to help children develop self-concepts. In addition, over in the West Head Start Center classrooms, classrooms one and two, Cambridge County Community Action Agency Head Start/Early Head Start Center classroom two, the New City Head Start found that they lacked materials and pictures showing diversity, as specified in the creative curriculum to support children's cultures and home lives and ensure children felt a sense of belonging.

In addition to the observations, during interviews, the teachers stated that the "Sesame Street" cartoon-character posters in the classrooms represented the diversity and ethnicity of the children. So, as a result of all of those things – and you can see here multiple classrooms, multiple programs within an agency having the same issue around authentic resources and materials to support diversity – these – as a result of these things, the monitoring finding was that grantee did not implement with fidelity a curriculum promoting young children's school readiness in the area of social-emotional development and therefore was not in compliance with the regulations. So, as you think about all of those issues, right, materials, authentic depictions of diversity, what are some of the ways – Again, if you're thinking about the three-legged stool, the three factors we talked about that support fidelity, if you think about the professional development here, what types of professional development or how could professional development support the grantee in this scenario? So, thinking about your role as an education manager, if you are working with this program and you have this finding, how would you use professional development to support the grantee?

And you can use the chat box to jot your answers in. And I'll try to capture some as they come in. Okay, so, Jamie is saying they could use real-life photos of people and children of different cultures. Absolutely. Kim is saying that the grantee needs to make sure that proper materials are available. Yes. And I would say P.D. along with that, right? So, you've got the materials. You can have beautiful materials, but if you're not sure how to use them or where to place them in your program – or like me when I had teachers in my childcare program – it wasn't a Head Start program, but a childcare program – we would get new materials once a year.

The budget was fresh. They'd have all these beautiful things, and then teachers would be, like, afraid to use them because they worried they would run out of materials. So, in addition to purchasing them, making sure teachers feel confident in using them. Wow. Lots of great responses coming in. Barbara – assess if teachers receive the full, interactive orientation to the curriculum. That's a great one. Asking parents to share about their culture is a great one. Amanda's saying invite families to make family posters. That's a great one. Training around culture and identity. Have parents of color to visit the classrooms. Great one.

Diversity training. Resources to put child photos. Absolutely. We forget how expensive those things are, right? Kim is suggesting you could use the ECERS. And I'm assuming Kim means to sort of gather data about what's going well. what's – what – where folks are struggling and really using that to do some coaching or other professional development around the issue. Okay. Display photos and art

representing actual families in the classroom – great. Oh, that's a great idea. "Seval" – "Seville"? – hopefully I'm not killing that – is saying having children dress up and create their own diversity photos. Great one. Train on why it's valuable to have diversity represented in the classrooms. Train on how to form relationship with families. Glenn, so important. Karen Campbell Sawyer – Oh, I recognize that name. Hi there, Karen. A fellow Mainer. With permission, take child and family photos from their Facebook postings.

Oh, that's a great idea. Nobody has printed photos anymore. That's probably true. Okay, great. These are all fabulous. Oh, Amanda, thank you, reminding us to review the Office of Head Start multicultural principles. And that would be a great thing to do as part of a professional development day or even a community of practice, right, where you have sort of a safe environment in which to really dig deep into that content. Peter, job shadowing. That... What a great idea, right? So being able to go and – and maybe visit another program and see how others are doing that, as well. Great. Kim says, "Have teachers swap classrooms and look for materials needed." So smart. These are terrific. Sheila says bring in a consultant that will make learning about cultures and using real examples fun for staff and therefore memorable. So important, right?

We spend so much time focused on making sure that learning is meaningful and relevant for children, and we need to do the same thing for our staff, to do real and meaningful professional development. It reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from Lilian Katz, which is, "Feed the staff so they don't eat the children," right? We always have to remember to take care of our staff so that they can in turn take care of our children. These are great. All right. I am going to move us along. Renita, if you want to go back to the PowerPoint, and I will... All right. Okay. So let's just summarize some of these things that came up in the chat box, but let's think also just globally about all kinds of things we can do as a program, really foundational things to support curriculum fidelity from the start, right, so thinking about how you hire staff. Maybe you start to think about looking to identify new staff with training and education, certainly in early childhood education, but maybe with a focus on curriculum instruction, right, and... or maybe you're looking for folks who have experience implementing the curriculum that your program has decided to implement. Certainly, we want to train all education staff to implement the curriculum as intended using any fidelity tools that may be provided by the publisher, and I think several of you mentioned that in our chat box.

We can't emphasize enough, right, ensuring time and support, including materials for proper implementation. We really have to think about that. And on the flip side of that, once we have the materials, making sure that staff feels supported in using them and using them in the way they were intended to to support the curriculum. And then think about employing staff who have the knowledge and capacity to observe and support curriculum fidelity to both content and process. Though, again, thinking about the competencies of the staff that you're going to hire maybe to oversee curriculum fidelity processes or maybe to support staff to build their skills.

Do they have the knowledge needed? Do we ourselves or do you as Ed managers feel like you need some more support to fully understand a curriculum in order to support staff in implementing it? Really thinking through those things, both the content knowledge and also the processes, because

teachers are going to say, "If I could just see that morning meeting done in the way it's so beautifully laid out in my manual. It's never gone that way for me," right? "Sometimes, morning meeting is great, and sometimes it's bad, but I don't think it's ever really gone in a way that I felt was most beneficial. So having someone who can support that staff by going in and perhaps running a morning meeting, modeling it, and really doing some coaching around that is going to be important. Certainly, ongoing professional development.

And this really speaks to what I was talking about earlier in terms of drift. So you may have terrific up-front orientation, maybe you bring in the office of a curriculum, you do coaching, you do all of these things in the first three months. And then slowly, you wean back, right? You can't really ever totally wean back. What we know is that this type of support and P.D. and coaching, though certainly can change in terms of its dosage and frequency and sort of intensity, it needs to be present in an ongoing, consistent way for staff to really be able to feel supported and to really stay – stay true to implementation in the way it's intended. Definitely, it seems obvious, but making sure you're using the most recent version of the curriculum is always important because as research progresses, curricula change. Authors update them.

And using data related to curriculum fidelity for continuous program improvement. Again, seems obvious, but – but a really important one. What is our data telling us, and then how is that data reflected in the decisions we make about selections, augmentation, implementation of curriculum? So I'm going to pause here and see if we have questions. We have about 10 minutes, so I think we have plenty of time for questions. and again, you can... Maybe Renita or Joe, if you've been tracking questions, if you want to pick a few that haven't been answered or if you want... People want to add them in the chat box now, that's great, too.

Joe: Hi. Can you hear me now?

Allyson: We can hear you now, Joe. Welcome. Welcome back. [Laughter]

Joe: I had some connectivity difficulties. One of the first questions... We have a couple of questions that have come in during the course of the webinar. How do you... And I think this goes back to some of the content, but I think it's good to reiterate some of the points that's been made. How do you work with teachers who are not implementing the curriculum in the way it was intended?

Allyson: Okay. So I think, just like you might sit down and think about a child who is not getting an aspect of the curriculum or maybe they're struggling with a concept, you're going to individualize, right? So the first thing you're going to want to do is find out from that teacher what he or she is thinking about why the implementation is a struggle, right? You've got to sort of get to what's behind that, right? Is the teacher lacking confidence? Is the teacher lacking materials? Is the teacher, you know, not sure how to use her formative assessment to tailor or individualize a particular activity? You've got to sort of figure those things out and then, you know, respond in kind.

So if it's a materials issue, figuring out a way to support the purchasing of materials. If it's a confidence issue, figuring out the best way to provide training and support. So is that teacher available to do

training? Do you have the resources to support them? Or would that teacher thrive more in a smaller group setting where you can talk through these issues with other teachers? Maybe, as Peter said in the chat box, maybe there's a chance for a teacher to go and see the curriculum implemented in a really strong way that can be used as a model. And then, of course, tying to an individual professional development plan the types of experiences and things that the teacher will do and then that the two of you commit together to come back and work on through maybe using the practice-based coaching approach where you set some goals and work together on those. That – That would – Those are really the things that you need to do, just like we tried to figure out how to support children, you know, looking at what data tells us, asking teachers what they need, and then trying to come around and provide those in a meaningful way.

Allyson: It's probably the best you can do.

Joe: Yeah, so there's – there's been a couple of questions on curricular enhancements, and I think the question that best gets to what we're trying to get to is what should programs think about if they are considering a curriculum enhancement?

Allyson: Well, I think probably the first thing, really, to think about is doing some type of an assessment with a group of folks about what is the curriculum enhancement... What's the purpose of that, right? What gap is it filling? So looking at your curriculum and saying, you know, "What are the... Does this curriculum meet maybe all of the critical domains in the ELOF, and does it meet or address activities in support of the school readiness goals we've set for our children, and if not, what is missing?" And then if there is a significant thing missing that a curriculum and augmentation might address, then you would go about looking at that and really, I would say, bringing the group together to figure out goodness of fit between your different curricular options and your program needs, your family culture, the local community needs, and then really develop a plan whereby you can think about sort of the initial rollout and training and then the ongoing P.D. that will be required to really start to implement a new piece of curriculum.

One of the things that we'll be coming out with in the next few months, and some of the... some of your regional early childhood specialists, your T/TA folks got last week, was a draft of some materials including a curriculum alignment tool that lets you assess, do a self-assessment, of your curriculum against all of the ELOF domains and subdomains which can be helpful in terms of thinking through this question. And that guide is called an Ed manager's tool kit. It comes within that tool kit, and it really walks you through the process of pulling a team together to think about these issues. And using a process, sort of a process embedded in implementation science, you kind of think through the steps and the supports that will be necessary along the way to augment curriculum or enhance curriculum, so I would also watch for that. That could be very helpful as you start to think about this work.

Joe: Yeah. Okay. I think we have time for one more question. So, a lot of people are bringing up the notion of, you know, "I'm not sure that we're meeting our curriculum with fidelity. How do we ensure that? How do... Are there tools that exist that would help us understand where we are with fidelities?"

So just... I think reassuring people and just helping people understand, when do you know fidelity is met?

Allyson: Well, I think a couple of things. One, I think this PowerPoint is available for you as a resource as well as a handout, so we sort of created, like, a back-to-back handout on curriculum fidelity that gives you some of the key things that I talked about today; the key things that you would look for and see either at the classroom level or the program level that tell you that curriculum is being implemented in the way it was intended and with fidelity.

So you can certainly use those tools. In addition, I would look for the tools coming out in the next two months around curriculum, implementing the curriculum... using the ELOF to enhance curriculum. That will be a tool you'll look for. Probably the most important tool for you to look for is anything that came with your published curriculum. So whether you're using Creative Curriculum or the OWL or HighScope, many of these publishers also publish fidelity tools. And those are things that you would want to take a look at. Sometimes, they include things like checklists or observation procedures, interview questions to ask staff and families about, things that can really help you collect data to help you answer that question, "Is curriculum being implemented with fidelity across our program?" And probably most importantly, I would say in addition to using those tools and resources, developing an action plan as a result of what you find, right?

So monitoring and looking across your own programs for curriculum fidelity is important, but more important is what are you going to do with that data when you find it? If you find that 6 out of 10 classrooms have not had any math activities going on in the past two months, you're – you're going to need a plan, right? You're going to need to talk to staff, you're going to need to think about professional development supports, you're going to need to try to uncover what's going on there so that you can address that issue so staff feel comfortable and supported in getting back on track with those pieces of the curriculum.

Joe: Okay, well, those were – those were great answers, Allyson, and it looks like we're at 3:59, so I don't think we have time for another question, but I wanted to thank you for coming and being our guest presenter today on this important topic. And just as a reminder... Yeah, so thank you again. So just as a reminder, we have two more webinars in this series.

One will be January 24, and the other will be March 28th. And I am sure we'll have some exciting topics for all our participants then, as well. So again, just thank you, and thank you to our participants for – for joining us today and being so lively in the chat and – and submitting questions and answers. So thank you again, thank you, Allyson, and thank you to Renita, who's our support staff today. So thank you, all, and have a great evening.

[End video]