

## Techniques for Improving Instructional Support

Cori: Hi. My name's Cori, and I'm an education manager at DTL Head Start. We have 18 preschool classrooms, and I'm lucky to have a coach who works closely together with me. At the end of every year, I like to reflect to help plan for the upcoming year.

I've realized I spend a lot of time helping teachers use ongoing child assessment practices, implement curriculum with fidelity, and monitor children's progress toward their school-readiness goals, and these are just a few of the things we all do as Ed managers, right? It's a busy job, and in addition to all of that, this year, my team really wanted to focus on improving the instructional supports we provide to preschoolers to improve their learning outcomes. We've been tracking our class preschool scores for over a year for our internal professional development purposes and also reviewing our scores from outside observers during our monitoring visits.

Both sets of observational data showed a general trend towards stronger interactions across our emotional supports and classroom organization. But we just didn't see much improvement in our instructional support scores. As the person in our program who leads instruction, I wanted to work with the team of teachers, assistant teachers, and coaches to make this a focus and see if we could improve our instructional support scores.

Our team started by looking at the class data in different ways. We looked at which times of day our instructional support scores were strongest, and then we looked at which parts of the day we were scoring below our goal range of 3.5 to 4.5. We found that the times of day where teachers engaged in higher levels of instructional support were small-group science and math experiences.

As is true with all Head Start programs with low instructional support scores, we found our lowest scores in concept development. But we also noticed another area where we were struggling—instructional learning formats. Although it isn't in instructional supports, it includes teaching practices like using advanced organizers or letting children know what to expect and summary statements to keep children focused.

So, now I realized I needed some strategies to support teachers in these areas. I remembered attending a webinar where I learned that teachers who were engaged in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math—or STEAM—were more likely to score better in instructional support dimensions, specifically concept development. This makes sense. We know that teaching STEAM includes problem solving, brainstorming, and analysis and reasoning. We also know that if we could improve our teaching practices in these areas, we could improve child outcomes.

So, I thought, "Let's start there." I went to the ECLKC, and I searched "STEAM" and found tons of things to help me plan my supports for teachers. I know you're busy, so I won't show you everything I found, but I can show you a few helpful resources that supported me and my staff in reaching our goals.

So, when you can, check out the next video to learn about these ECLKC resources.