

## The Leader's Role in Building Belonging

Vanessa Maañao-French: Excellent. Well welcome to our webinar, The Leader's Role in Building Belonging. My name is Vanessa Maañao-French and I'm joined by my colleague.

Katie Miller: Hi, I'm Katie Miller and we are from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, more familiarly known as DTL. We use acronyms, but I promise we'll explain them. And we are so happy to join you to talk about the leader's role in building belonging. I just feel like as leaders this is one of the most important things that we can do for our program, for the staff, the children, the families. We're really excited to talk about that today.

Vanessa: Absolutely. And Katie and I are both former education managers and so this topic really does hit home for us in a very special way.

Katie: Absolutely. A little bit about our time together. We have three main goals for what we hope to cover today and then what we hope you will take with you and then share with your programs.

To start, we're going to take a closer look at social and emotional development strategies that promote a child's sense of belonging. We plan to connect to strategies and resources that we as leaders can use to promote caring communities for children, families, and staff. And really importantly is our last goal. We call this ready, set, and act and we're going to talk about that in the context of resources and next step ideas.

Let's start with taking a closer look. We're going to look at social and emotional development and strategies that specifically promote a child's sense of belonging. And in that context, we'll also talk about building adult sense of belonging as well.

Of course as Head Start people, we always want to start with our Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework or ELOF. This is always our starting point. Research really does show that what happens in those first five years of life is critical to healthy childhood development. And Head Start's comprehensive focus on the five core domains of birth to 5 development is really essential for getting children ready for school and just for life in general. We always start with these, and I imagine that's why a lot of us are here because we really know how important these first 5 years are.

We really want to start there. As we mentioned, it reflects current research, and it begins with infants and toddlers as we really look to build that strong foundation for learning and to strengthen continuity in programming from birth to 5. We really want to think of it as one entire system, so not just their separate programs but how do they all fit together. And we think about that also in context of both the school and home as well. Just as a reminder, probably a lot of you are very familiar with this, but our five key areas of learning are also called central domains, our approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, cognition, and finally last but very much not least is our perceptual motor and visible development.

Today we're really going to hone in on the approaches to learning domain, specifically thinking about emotional and behavioral self-regulation and cognitive self-regulation and then also the social and emotional development domain as both places to start to strengthen our understanding of the social and emotional practices, strategies, and policies. As a program leader, we really want to think about how the ELOF can help provide your education staff with the reasons or the why behind teaching social and emotional skills.

Vanessa: And I love that we keep coming back to the ELOF, Katie, because it really touches on the work regardless of what program model you're in. The ELOF speaks to home visitors, early Head Start, Head Start, family child care, and center based. It's our universal touchstone.

Katie: Yeah. Absolutely. And it's really an important element for the work we do with adults too. I love how it all wraps together and frames all of our programming. Just a quick touch point about what we mean when we say a couple of these specific words. We say social development to start with as a foundation for that lifelong development and learning. And that refers to the child's ability to create and sustain meaningful relationships with both adults and other children. Both very important.

And then that emotional development side is that child's ability to express, recognize, and manage their emotions and respond appropriately to other's emotions. And of course, we always understand this is a building skill. So that responding appropriately is a skill that develops over time. We don't expect mastery this early, but we keep working on it. And both of these are really important for children's mental health. Social and emotional development is that really integral part when we say early childhood and mental health of what that means and that foundational skill.

Vanessa: Thanks for that, Katie. And it makes me think back to the ELOF. And when we look at those milestones and the activities behind them, a lot of them in this domain in particular say with adult support. These are things we are continuing to grow and I would argue many of us are still working on, including myself. When we talk about socially and emotionally competent children, the reason why this drives our work is because we know through research and through your practice you see this every day.

Research is catching up and telling us what you're doing well and the reasons why we do it. Children who are socially and emotionally competent have time to be in caring learning communities with adults and their peers. And because of that, there practicing those pro social and emotional skills early. And what that gives them is the ability to develop self-regulation. We're developing self-regulation. To engage in those pro social behaviors which leads them to be healthier and more focused when they are engaged in learning and in interactions with their peers.

And again, we're talking about social, so developing and sustaining those friendships. And to be able to achieve academically. Now as learning leaders, you support your staff to do this through targeted training, through really careful follow-up with that training. Because remember, training in isolation is a drop in the bucket. But when we're able to follow up through coaching, communities of practice, just peer dialogues on how can we do this a little bit better, to tinker

around the edges of our practice, that helps. But also protecting staff time so they have some space to reflect and meaningfully plan for both individual children and groups of children.

Katie: And I think we always want to acknowledge that that protecting and providing time is really tough. We understand that this is a difficult thing to ask for sometimes. As we talk about this, we'll talk about some creative ways to really make that happen, but we do understand that especially if staffing is a challenge right now for your program, that this is not an easy thing to do and we're going to help think about strategies to make it work.

Vanessa: Absolutely. One of the five Rs is resource. And probably one of the most valuable resources is time. We're going to take some time and we're going to watch a quick video from our friend and colleague Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter from Vanderbilt University. And in this video, she talks about the relationship between social and emotional development and belonging and children's lifelong success. We'll take a couple minutes to watch the video, but I did want to prompt you. If you have downloaded the viewer's guide, there is a space to capture some notes and we'll return to Dr. Hemmeter's video at the end to connect it to the next question we want to pose to you. Without further ado, let's listen to this video.

[Video begins]

Narrator: What does the literature tell us about creating learning environments that promote social and emotional development?

Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter: The literature gives us a lot of information about creating supportive environments to promote children's social-emotional development. The literature clearly tells us that relationships matter, that having good, positive interactions with adults matters in how children learn. The literature tells us that consistency and predictability is really important for children, that children are more likely to learn when they know what to do, know how to do it, when there's a consistent and predictable schedule in the classroom. The literature tells us that children are more likely to engage in appropriate social behaviors when they know what those appropriate social behaviors are, when we've taught them how to do those things.

We know that children are more likely to learn in a classroom where they feel like they belong. We know that environments that promote positive relationships, that are consistent and predictable for children, that promote a sense of belonging, are environments in which children are more likely to thrive, are more likely to develop these social emotional competencies they need, and more likely ultimately to learn and be ready to go to school.

Narrator: How can we help parents support social-emotional learning at home?

Dr. Hemmeter: I think that children are most likely to learn social emotional competencies when everybody's working on it. But we also have to be careful not to assume that just because people are parents, they know how to teach social skills or they know about the importance of consistency and predictability or they know about teaching children to calm down. I think that a really important part of our job is as we are working on social emotional skills at school that we're helping parents understand how to work on those at home.

If we think consistency and predictability in a daily routine is important and thus what we're doing at the beginning of the school year, we need to be sharing information with parents about why it's important to have a consistent and predictable morning routine. We have to be sure we're sharing that information with families in a way that they can use it, that they can do it as a part of their daily routine, and that doesn't put pressure on them to do something more than they're already doing just helping their child through their daily activities.

[Video ends]

Vanessa: Isn't that such a great video?

Katie: Yes.

Vanessa: I noticed that one of her colleagues, Jen Von, did give you the link if you would like to watch the entire video. It's about five minutes, but that little segment at the end really spoke to our topic. I mean there are other videos in the series, so I encourage you to check those out. It's called Five Questions with Child Development Experts. Don't quote me on that, but it's pretty close.

Here's the question that I thought we could spend a little time with. And this is your opportunity to use that Q&A button right there, sort of in the middle of your screen. And the question is this, what are the characteristics of a caring learning community? Dr. Hemmeter talked about supportive learning communities and how they can help children develop their social-emotional skills. Question for you, if you were to walk into a classroom or a socialization group, what would you see, hear, or feel? And we'll give you a little bit of time to pop that into the Q&A widget.

Katie: One of the things that I really loved that Dr. Hemmeter talked about was this idea of supporting families and not making assumptions both about what they know how to do but also what capacity they have. And I think about that with Head Start and how we approach comprehensive services for our adults. Like what can we do to support them that will not unduly add to their load? What can they do in the context of their current work and how can we help them to do the best that they can with what they are able to do at that time.

Vanessa: I so appreciate that comment, Katie. It also makes me think that sometimes we have labels or words for things that people are already doing and sometimes it's just about recognizing and elevating your already doing this. Did you know it's also called responsive relationships? And same thing with like we've been doing with the five Rs. it is creating a way to have shared language about our practice.

Katie: We're seeing some great things come through in Q&A already. Loving this.

Vanessa: I think I'm really in love with this kind respectful language. There was one about laughter. They're coming in very quickly, so they're disappearing almost as soon as we see them, so thank you. Keep them coming. We'll push these out so you all can see what your colleagues are saying across the country. Are there ones that pop out to you?

Katie: Oh yeah. I'm really appreciating how many people are commenting about positive focused interactions. Trying to be overloading on the positive side with any potential challenges

or negative or direct restrictive sort of language. Lots of consistency also, so not just that positive language but providing what feels like a really safe environment. A lot of that.

Vanessa: Oh my gosh.

Katie: Seeing children engaged and exploring. I love that.

Vanessa: I think Crystal summed it up with one word. She used the word sincerity and I'm like yes.

Katie: And I see serenity too.

Vanessa: Yes.

Katie: Love that. Seeing photos. An organized space with successful materials. Feeling warmth and confidence and welcomed.

Vanessa: A safe place to learn and to ask questions. We're thinking about this in the context of learning environments for children, but that last particular comment, addition, made me really think about do we create that same space for adults.

Katie: Actually, as I scroll through a lot of these comments, everything that I'm seeing is so helpful for adults too, happy, engaged, comfortable, empathetic, a lot of nonverbal's. I really think about what do we do for children and how do we make sure that we're doing something similar for our adults? Like don't forget as important as it is to be flexible and individualized when we can for children, like how wonderful is that when we can do that for our adults, for our staff members as well.

Vanessa: Perfect. You did say at the top that this was going to be a parallel process. Going to be talking about children, but really we're talking about both. Here's another question to hold in your mind when we think about your role as a leader is how can you create and sustain those creating communities, those caring communities, excuse me. If we know that children learn best with all of these beautiful characteristics of a community, how are we creating that for one another in our spaces as adults?

And I would love to share a quick story about a teacher that I worked with, and her name is Beverly. Beverly Moncrief if you are out there, I'm talking about you because 20 years later you still inspire me. And she will likely remember the story and people who know her will know this sounds just like teacher Bev. She came to me with a goal. Her professional development goal is and she said, "I will arm wrestle you if you say no." And I said, "Not planning on saying no." She wanted her one and only goal to be present with the children. That was her goal. And I'm like let's do it. How can I support you? How will you know you're making progress toward this goal? She had it all planned out.

But that's really part and parcel of what we're talking about in terms of creating those caring learning communities is being authentically present, building those responsive relationships, but also giving time to nurture that. It's not a one stop shop. It's not going to happen overnight, but what can we do to build a caring community. Some of the ways you might do this and supporting your teams in more tangible ways is we talk about zoning where teachers can have,

if you're in a classroom situation, split up the room so that you know that this is your group that you're being fully 100% present with.

And you're going to engage in rich conversation and learn from the children and follow their lead while you know and you can trust that your teaching team on the other side has their place where they're zoning and they're focusing in on those children. Considering zoning.

Katie: I just want to add a connection piece. If you saw the Teacher Time episode that was the bonus episode of last season, they also talked about zoning as a way to support this challenge that we're having in staffing right now because it helps people who might be new to the team are new to the classroom or even just a substitute to be able to know what they're responsible for and take care of. Hits multiple goals at the same time.

Vanessa: Oh absolutely. I would think about that for volunteers especially. You know your zone and you own it. The other way is to be yourself, to be present, and to model the type of interactions you'd like to see between adults and the children to be able to be there and show what you know and show how it looks. And then finally we talked about this before thinking about how can we help teachers have the time to be outside of classroom to do their reflection. And we know that's super-duper tough.

But as Katie mentioned, we would love to share some strategies with you, but we're also wondering if there may be strategies in our virtual room together. If you have innovative ideas about how you've been able to protect time for teachers to do some planning, these feel free to share it in the Q&A and we will share that with the world. Well maybe not the world. Maybe just us.

Katie: Our little world.

Vanessa: Our little world. Our caring community of people. We have another question for you that will lead us into the next segment which is we would love for you to think about a time when you did not experience a caring community in your workplace. What words would describe how you felt, what did you want to do? Yeah, what comes up for you in terms of how you felt in that moment? We invite you to share your ideas and Q&A.

Katie: As you're doing that, I can reflect on that experience as an experience that I've had with that as well. We would love to say that we have all had the work history that has always felt like optimal sense of belonging, of support, but even in the best of workplaces there are times when we might feel a lack of belonging. And personally, when I have felt that it was a lack of check-in from my leadership, a lack of support, and uncertainty about what I was intended to do. And I think that's what resonates with me, that feeling of isolation.

Vanessa: Yes. Yeah, absolutely. The feeling of what am I supposed to do and who do I count on to help me learn? Well let's see some ideas that have come up, feelings, uncomfortable and anxious. OK, Crystal, I think you're channeling my inner me when you said you just wanted to leave. That's the physical want to leave.

Katie: A void of energy. Yeah. Feeling unappreciated, discouraged, stressed.

Vanessa: Yeah. Ignored. And I'm also seeing a few people putting in that they ultimately quit. They left their position because of that feeling of not experiencing that caring community.

Katie: Some frustration, a lack of validation, a lack of acknowledgment. Definitely some parallels, so some opposites from what we talked about earlier. Earlier we talked about valuing that feeling of warmth, and the opposite side of the coin is obviously feeling that coldness and isolation. But we do like again want to acknowledge that even in the best of situations, we can have these moments. And we really want to think about how do we as leaders try to prevent them or if they do happen how do we respond.

Vanessa: Absolutely. Thanks, Katie. We hope that you hold onto these feelings as we move on to do some parallel backwards this time with children and considering kids can't quit.

Katie: Absolutely. And I do want to bring up just really quickly someone shared a really great strategy for time in their program, so I want to acknowledge that. They said that for our duration, classes go four days one week and five days the next so that every other Friday is a staff workday with a designated day for training for the whole program. Rather than trying to carve it out of time with children, it's already set up in advance so that families can plan for that. What a great idea. I do want to share there's another one too.

Vanessa: I have not heard that model. I don't see it. Do you want to share it? Go ahead.

Katie: Sure. At PGD month part of which is training, part of which is time for staff to complete paperwork, reflect, and meet. I really like that.

Vanessa: Excellent. Keep them coming because we're going to push these out so that your colleagues can see them as well. I'm going to move us along. But again, we want to hold those feelings that you brought through in your responses and we're going to move on to thinking about children.

Katie: Yeah. A lot of you said things like the feelings they were like I wanted to leave, lonely, isolated. And we want to acknowledge that those feelings don't always come through in words. Young children let us know their wants and needs through their behaviors long before they have words. They give us cues to help us understand what they're trying to communicate. And to be very honest with you, so do adults a lot of times give us cues. We want to think about really what's behind those.

One of my favorite things that I've ever read talked about the difference between patience and understanding. And with children and with adults we really want to think about understanding what people are saying both on the surface as well as beneath the surface.

Vanessa: Absolutely.

Katie: Because sometimes we're not ready or we don't feel safe enough or we don't know our leadership well enough yet to know if it's a safe place or what the context is. On the last slide we saw a lot of behaviors that children used to communicate, but these are some of the ideas that they might be trying to share like I need help, I'm lonely, hungry, nervous, I want some time by myself. All of those things could be the things that they're thinking of.

And please do feel free to also add your thoughts. In the Q&A you can share with us what children might be trying to tell us about their behaviors. What else are your children communicating with some of these what we'd say behaviors that challenge adults? We'll encourage you to share that in the Q&A and then we'll push those out as well.

Vanessa: Thanks, Katie.

Katie: OK, we talked about the connections. We keep going back and forth between what children are saying, what adults are saying, and what that means. And often when we talk about supporting children, when we talk about this child development ELOF, when we talk about supporting adults in the context of our managers, we often talk about our five Rs. If you're familiar with the five Rs, this might be things that you've heard before, but we do always want to revisit these because they are so great as a foundation to guide our work.

Just a quick recap, we use these five Rs to describe the effective practices of early learning leaders. Always starting with building strong relationships with educational staff and using these relationships to build a unified culture, a workplace with trust, collaboration, and belonging. And the second R is early learning leaders inspire educational staff to meet program goals and objectives by providing reasons for policies and practices. Earlier you talked about the why. That's really the reason is the why behind our work. Third, early learning leaders are resourceful. They use their knowledge, educational staff, and families' expertise.

I'm going to pause there because I really want to encourage us to think about our people as our resources. Staff and families' expertise, as well as what we might traditional think of our resources, our funding, to support educators' professional development and growth.

Vanessa: You're my resource.

Katie: And back at you. One hopes. And early learning leaders engage in reflective dialogue to learn how staff, children, and families are doing. And then finally early learning leaders create formal and informal opportunities to recognize big and small wins and encourage the hearts of educational staff. It's always about the heart.

Vanessa: It is. I love the five Rs.

Katie: Who doesn't? Why don't know who you are, but I love them too. Of course today we're really honing in again on that very first R, the foundation of our work, building trust with staff by letting them know their expectations, having supportive conversations, and being aware of staff needs, challenges, and expectations in order to help us collaborate and strengthen our education staffs' work with children and families.

Vanessa: There was a recent study that Katie and I were exposed to maybe a year ago. And it was a study done by Gallup. And in this study, I promise this is going to bring us back to relationships, in this study what they did was they interviewed thousands of staff and they asked them to list out the qualities or the characteristics of the supervisors that they felt were most effective and most supportive.

They asked them, give us three words. What are those three words? And then they collated all of those three word lists into what you now see in front of you, this four word list of what really, really matters to staff in terms of the support they are seeking from their supervisors. Stability, trust, compassion, and hope. And for education leaders out there who have ridden the wave of the pandemic, you know that these four in particular have come center stage in terms of supporting your staff. In times when things feel unstable, to be that person who offers the stability of information, of resources, of what our plan has shifted but here's why, of come to



me if you have questions. I am here for you. That messaging is so important. That they know you are a trusted information source. If there's a question, you're their go to.

Compassion, oh my gosh. We'll never be out of the need for demonstrating compassion. And this can take different forms. I think we saw more during the pandemic and as we're emerging through it, that ability to be flexible with work schedules for example, so staff can balance who they are as staff and their professional role, but then also to go home and be dad, mom, uncle, brother. To balance their family lives as well. Being able to show that through schedules and through time and through just caring and listening.

And finally, hope. And strangely, probably not so strangely to you, I feel like data is going to be able to demonstrate hope. We'll talk about reflective dialogues a little bit too, but data can really help shine a light on where we're making progress even in times where we feel like the pace has stalled. Sometimes that little nudge, we talked about it before, celebrating those big and small wins, and sometimes we can go through an entire day, an entire week, month, year and not recognize all that we've done. Being able to show what we've done and the value of that work. Stability, trust, compassion, and hope, that's what staff need.

All right, we want to move on to another section. We took a closer look and now we're going to connect. We're going to talk about some leadership practices that you can employ to really support connecting staff to the practices that we hope that they use in classrooms. Three that we're going to highlight today. If we had more time.

Katie: We could talk about each of these for probably a day.

Vanessa: Exactly. But we are going to touch on three. And those are modeling empathy, disrupting negativity bias, and finally elevating gratitude.

Katie: I love this. And I would talk all day certainly about modeling empathy. It's one of my favorite things to talk about and how it develops in children, as well as how we supported in our adults. In our role as adults with leaders and our educational staff, we create caring, inclusive learning environments where both adults and children understand and share the feelings of others.

Of course developing empathy is really crucial for establishing relationships and behaving compassionately as we just talked about on those four main goals. It involves experiencing another person's point of view rather than just your own and being both pro-social and using helping behaviors that come from within rather than being forced. I think about like saying I'm sorry versus really understanding and trying to respond with compassion. And how do we support children to find that balance? Research shows that empathy begins developing during early childhood and continues through adolescence and even into our early 20s. And to be very honest with you, I would probably say throughout the rest of our adult lives we continue to work on this skill. It's really important because it helps us navigate social problem-solving. How many of us still do that with adults? Of course we do. It's part of our important work.

How also do we manage our own and others' emotions and avoid unnecessary conflicts, but also process conflict in a way that's positive and leads us to a good outcome. We want you to think for a moment how do you currently model empathy both in and outside of the learning

environment? Do you support your staff during classroom activities or socialization groups? How do you model empathy during coaching or reflective supervision, especially when education staff share their struggles? And again, I know we constantly run into this idea of time as a challenge. We would encourage you, so jump in Q&A if you feel like you'd like to and answer those questions, or just reflect yourself, or even use your viewer guide.

Vanessa: OK. I have to pause for a second before I advance the slide because that is teacher Bev that I talked about before. You and I talked earlier about this particular set of photos and it actually is beautiful that you can see both sides of the story. And this is Bev being completely present. And it just brings back such great memories of teaching at its finest.

Katie: Absolutely. And I think that we can really see that in these photographs to, the attributes of empathy. Perspective taking. You can see that the child with the stripes is really locked in on the other child. And you can see that the educator Bev is supporting and talking to both of them and between them but not blocking them. Scaffolding and supporting and communicating, helping them communicate each other's understanding of the others' feelings. We think about how does that translate also to adults. Empathy in our workplace improves communication, it strengthens those working relationships, and actually it boosts creative thinking. We remember last season we talked about our approaches to learning. Great connections between social-emotional learning and that initiative and creativity.

Vanessa: The other one we wanted to bring forward to you is negativity bias. Katie and I were talking about this and relating it to Yelp reviews where it's very easy to remember and to be vocal about things that are negative. And often times those positives get pushed to the side and are more easily forgotten. That's what brought up the Yelp reviews. When somebody wants to talk about their experience in a restaurant, you're going to lead with a lot of negativity. But if you scroll through, you'll see lots of positives too. They feel few and far between. If you think about negativity as the Velcro. It sticks to us. But the good experiences somehow are like Teflon and they roll right off. We want to interrupt that.

What we want to do is hold onto those positive vibes, those positive experiences because they can help shift our perspective on situations. Again, as a leader it's about celebrating those small wins that sometimes can turn the corner and have a different perspective on a situation where you felt like that felt flat or I wish I did that differently. But again, to focus in and say but this happened. Did you notice this?

Katie: And I would also say some people already like rethinking about this earlier when you are talking about positive language, and they talked about balancing like five to seven positives with one negative. And I think in the context we were talking about with children, but this really goes into how does this impact us. When we do that positive language, how does it change our own perspective. And I think that that's really powerful.

Vanessa: Absolutely. I heard this strategy and I'm sure others have used it out there, so feel free to tell me, "Yeah I already do this, Vanessa," especially when working with children with challenging behavior, it's easy to just create just this, I don't even know how to describe it, but like just an attitude toward a child that you want to push to the side. And the strategy was that at the end of every day to write down five positive things, five positive interactions, five things

that kid did with another child and you're like, "Oh I've got to give it to him, that was good. That was good."

Katie: I actually also, when I was a center director, we were struggling with one child and the teacher really wanting to communicate with the family what had happened during that child's day because the family really wanted to know. But it had developed into a really challenging pattern where they were reluctant to pick up because they got tense as soon as they walked in the door.

What the teacher and I ended up deciding to do was that they would write down like fact based objective, what happened in the day, in the book that they would have the parents to see. But at pickup, they only wanted to talk about what happened that was positive. And then that parent would just open the book whenever they were ready, and they were prepared and so they got to choose. And they would only engage in positive conversation at actual pickup. And I thought, what a creative and flexible but still meaningful way to engage.

Vanessa: And that really does help keep in mind that whatever those pickup conversations are, they're typically happening with the child within earshot.

Katie: Absolutely.

Vanessa: That child is hearing this messaging going back and forth. And similarly, I have a story of a parent who had that same apprehension. Their child had been from one center to another and now they were in Head Start. And you could feel, like OK what happened today? It was like that feeling. And the teacher responded with, when your child smiles, he lights up the entire room. Parent was not ready for that. Child heard that. Child continues to smile because my smile lights up the room. I love that idea. But holding onto those positives and bringing those front and center, disrupting negativity bias.

We're going to move on to our last one, which is I am excited about because it brings in our amazing friend and colleague that we are so grateful to be able to, speaking of gratitude, so grateful to get to work with, Dr. Gail Joseph. And she's going to talk to us about the benefits of gratitude. Here's a quick video. And there's space in your viewers guide if you want to write some notes.

[Video begins]

[Music]

Dr. Gail Joseph: Gratitude is this felt sense of wonder, of thankfulness, and appreciation of both the small and the big things that come along with life. We experience gratitude when we intentionally focus our attention on particular aspects of life that we are thankful for and have a deep appreciation of. What if I was to tell you that I found something that can make you more satisfied with life, can make you happier, can make you feel more optimistic, can actually make it easier for you to handle challenges, and help you get sick less often, help you get more sleep, help you exercise more, and actually think more clearly, would you do it?

Well those are actually all the researched benefits of gratitude. In fact, there was this great study that they did where they took people and they put them into two groups. And half of the people they actually had them write down once a week five things that they were thankful for.

That was it. Five things that they were thankful for. And the other group wrote down five daily hassles once a week. And they each did this for 10 weeks. And after just 10 weeks, the folks that had been randomly assigned to experience more gratitude or express more gratitude actually had all of these benefits that I just discussed. They were more satisfied with life, they were happier, they were more optimistic, they were better at handling challenges that came to them, they had fewer illnesses, they actually got more sleep, they went out and exercised more, and they were able to think more clearly.

Gratitude has amazing benefits. I want to talk a little bit about how to best practice gratitude. The way in which people think about positive life events and practice gratitude is pretty critical. They have to actually believe in it deeply and intentionally practice it. Remember our natural tendency as humans is to pay more attention to negative things and to engage in more complaining behavior. We have to intentionally think about things that we are grateful for. And the more we practice it, the deeper ingrained this will become and the better the benefits for us.

Sometimes thinking about the absence of a positive event from our lives that improves our well-being is more helpful than thinking about the presence of an event if you will. If you think about on a daily basis I think about how grateful I am for my children. And one of the things that helps me think about that is what in the world would I do without them. Thinking about the absence of a positive thing can sometimes really deepen our sense of gratitude.

How does gratitude actually work? Let me take you through the steps. First, we identify things to be grateful for and verbally say them or write a list of them or some other way to engage in the practice of gratitude. Then we start to experience an overall increased sense of psychological, physical, and social well-being because we become more joyful and energetic, more alert, and with a greater ability to notice the support we receive from others and how we can give support to others having identified receiving that support ourselves.

In turn, this leads to more generous, compassionate, and pro-social behaviors. We are less bothered by everyday aches and pains and we exercise more and ultimately sleep better and longer. This translates to better rested, happier beings with a greater sense of fulfillment and less stress, meaning a lower chance of burnout and other depressive or anxiety ridden conditions.

[Music]

[Video ends]

Vanessa: Such a great video.

Katie: I love that it also shows that once you participate in the cycle it's easier to continue with it. Really like getting over that first initial engagement in gratitude. And I also love that she talked about needing to believe it. Just giving lip service to it will get us a little ways, but really to get the most benefit out of it, you really have to embrace the idea that it's going to change our lives.

Vanessa: Absolutely. And that becomes a way of being. And I'm all in for the additional sleep. We're going to focus on another R and that is resources. And again, as Katie mentioned, it is

those tangible things. Your funding, your materials in the classrooms, but really it's also about each other. How do we leverage each other's resources? And then how can we lift up the practices of our staff through a couple of pretty specific ways.

Well, we're going to give a couple specific examples. One is to promote the BASICS and the second is to provide ongoing professional development. This is the BASICS. This may be familiar to some of you out watching this webinar right now, but this was introduced last year during the Teacher Time webinar series, and I love it. That team has a really solid way of being able to package up a lot of sometimes not complex but a lot of information into one really snazzy acronym.

Katie: One might call it basic.

Vanessa: It is basic, but so much more. BASICS stands for behavioral expectations in advance, to attend and to encourage appropriate behavior, to scaffold with cues and prompts, to increase engagement, to create or add challenge, and then finally specific feedback. And for those who were a part of the webinar series last year, they use the BASICS and focus on a specific domain of the ELOF, which was approaches to learning and it was fantastic. Because you've got infant toddler focus, preschool focus, BASICS, approaches to learning. Amazing.

If you haven't seen that series, you must. And the BASICS continues on in the series this year, but really focusing on just a couple of the blocks each episode, but looking more at social and emotional development. Do you see some synergy in our webinars? I am curious and I thought we'd do a quick poll, who has heard of the BASICS?

And here is our quick poll question. Have you learned about the BASICS by participating in a Teacher Time webinar? Have you heard about it from your coworkers? Or is this brand new to you? We'll give you a couple of seconds or so to fill out that poll. We did get a quick question about the video from Gail. We will share that on MyPeers, so if you would like to have that video or watch it again or share with others, look for it there. I'm so glad it resonated. Be sure to share that resource with you.

Katie: And we'll make sure to share if you have not joined our community on MyPeers yet, we'll share that link also before we close today.

Vanessa: Absolutely. We want to see you. All right, I'm going to go ahead and share our poll results. Let's see what this looks like. All right. Sorry, I didn't quite push it all the way out. Here it comes. OK. We are introducing you to something fantastic. I'm so excited. Talk about a resource.

Katie: Absolutely.

Vanessa: Talk about a resource. There are eight webinars that really unpack the BASICS. Again, thinking about approaches to learning. And I see there are about 24% of those who heard about the BASICS either by attending a webinar or from a coworker. It is a fantastic resource and they're the first Thursday of each month. It's either infants and toddlers or preschoolers. We have infants and toddlers up next in December. And one of our amazing Q&A support team members is the one and only Becky Seagram and she is one of the co-hosts. Please do check out

that resource. It is in your viewers guide if you'd like to learn more. And all of those videos are available on PushPlay and ECLKC.

The other resource we wanted to highlight and spotlight in terms of ongoing professional development and our topic is the in-service suite creating a caring community. We started at the top talking about creating a caring community. Here is an in-service suite that has so many great resources. And if you're unfamiliar with the in-service suites, they are available on ECLKC. It has a highlight video that gives you an overview of what the entire suite of materials are. But then there are these amazing little tabs you can click on and get a PowerPoint presentation, presentation notes, tools for teachers, tools for supervisors, additional resources, supplemental videos. I could go on and on and on and on.

But what you're saying on the screen right now is one example of the handouts, which is explaining the DROP, which is a way to frame out thinking about how you create a caring community. How do you design a caring environment? How do you respond to individual needs? Organize awareness activities? And promote and encourage a sense of community?

Katie: And I do want to highlight this is one of the strategies where time is a challenge. The in-service suites are really wonderful responses for professional development because they have a variety of lengths of times. They are incredibly short or you can use your resources to make it a longer engagement. You really can decide based on your own needs how much you can use it and at what time and how you can split it up. We had a really nice also Q&A where someone mentioned they use it in college classes they teach, so an intro to ECE. Really exciting.

Vanessa: That is exciting. And to your point, Katie, parts of this can be done asynchronously. Individual staff can view the videos, look at the tools, and then come together and talk about it. So many, many ways to use the in-service suites. And if you have other ideas, pop them in the Q&A. We will certainly take those and run.

Katie: Absolutely. Our final R that we're going to talk about today is one is Vanessa's all-time favorite so I'm borrowing it for today and am going to be the one to talk about it, but it is a big love of hers to talk about, reflective dialogues that help to make data come to life and to inspire action. That's one of the things that Vanessa loves about it. One of the things that I love about it is how this area really helps leaders to have a series of engaging in meaningful conversations to facilitate an attitude shift from data as compliance to data as a powerful tool to make informed decisions that drive practice and improve program quality.

And reflective dialogues also really they center your child data, your equity, and her staff around well-being. They include asking equity focused questions like who is benefiting and who's not. And it really drives a way to look at it from a different light, from a different perspective and I really love that. It also asks the questions how do we transform systems, policies, and practices so that the child is furthest from educational justice, is provided equal opportunities to benefit. This might be looking at child assessment data from the classroom, from family childcare, from home based options and identifying who's going to benefit from extra support, experiences, or maybe even a different approach.

It's also continuously reflecting on our own behavior and implicit biases and asking are our practices equitable? Are we providing information to families about things like the IFSP or IEP

meeting in their preferred language? Are we including everyone that they want to be included at the meeting? Are we offering intervention services in the child's home language? Obviously reflecting on a lot of different questions. But also reflecting on data saying who is being referred for additional support and who is not? How and who is making those decisions?

For example, you might notice that white children with challenging behaviors are being referred to Child Find over special education evaluation and services, but black children with challenging behaviors are being referred to behavioral specialists. Well what does that mean? We can't tell you right now what that means. It might mean different things for different programs, but it's important to ask the questions.

They also use data and reflection to extend that why, so the reason that we just talked about the why it all intertwines and connects. We think about how individual children who might be furthest from justice and how we can discuss their progress at each staff meeting so that the entire program is thinking about how they can support them by transforming those policies and practices to create that pathway towards self-actualization and opportunity.

We open where we talked about school readiness. It's all about opportunities, and how do we make that happen for our children, for our families, and for our staff. What do we want to do? We want to think about how reflective dialogues help us to observe, to plan, and to act.

We want to consider together some information that was offered in one particular study. I love talking about this study because it is such a great opportunity to take a step back and think about the impact of our behavior and reflect on more deeper context. In this study they found that only 20% of children were asked 80% of the questions by a teacher. Who do you think those children were? Who was in the 20%? Who was in the 80%? We want to think about our observations of those classrooms and other group care settings. We think about paying attention to who gets asked questions? Who gets the harder, more challenging question? Who is responded to? Who receives encouragement? And those nonverbal students, who receives smiles more versus who is redirected?

Vanessa: It really comes down to this question to sum up all that you said is are our practices equitable and inclusive? And I love that you said that data gives you a chance to step back again because sometimes we're so engaged in our practice, we don't take the time to take a little bit of a step back to think who is missing? Who is in the gap? What can we do differently to improve our practice? Looking at start to wrap up our time together by getting ready, setting, and acting.

Katie: I love that phrase that we talked about when we introduced it, everything we do when we do these webinars is a starting point. We want to focus on where do we go with implementation. It's a really important part of this conversation. We have created a ready, set, act section with ideas to help you take what we've shared and apply it in your program in a way that suits you, but as soon as possible.

We know that immediacy really makes a difference. We encourage you to first explore that creating a caring community in-service suite that Vanessa introduced and that we shared a little with you in our Q&A. We also want to encourage you to listen to Parallel Play. I've got to tell you this was one of our newer podcasts. We have a variety of podcasts, but this is one of my

newest favorites. It's for educators who love toddlers. Or the Research On The Go podcast if you really love research. Either one or both of these are really great resources.

Vanessa: And if you're going for a walk to do a little bit of self-care, 20, 30 minutes, pop in one of these podcasts, and again another shout out to our colleague Becky who is supporting us behind-the-scenes, and our colleague Mike Brown. I also love the Parallel Play. It's this beautiful back-and-forth conversation between the two of them that somehow manages to weave in research, connected practice, and the sounds of toddlers. It's amazing.

Katie: We also encourage you to use the guiding questions in your viewers guide to reflect on this webinar with your colleagues. There's also a list of additional resources where you can explore your topics of interest more deeply. Again whichever way makes sense for you, for the amount of time you have, and for the intent of your implementation.

Vanessa: Absolutely. And please give us some feedback on this ready, set, act little segment both in the webinar and in the viewers guide. This is our first time trying this out and we're hoping it helps you take this one hour with us to the next level. We know we have a limited amount of time, so this allows you, as we mentioned, to customize what that looks like for you. I don't know, Katie, if we have time for a question or two, but maybe we'll try to squeeze one or two in. If you have a question that you'd like for us to try to answer in our remaining time together, we will try our best.

And while you're typing, I will do a couple of quick little tiny announcements. One is if you haven't already checked out the iPD courses, these are in your viewers guide. These are very related to our topic today. It's all about relationships, the five Rs, and building social and emotional learning every day. And we did say we wanted folks to join us on MyPeers. If you're not already a part of the educational leaders community, please join us. Again this is where we continue the conversation from our webinars. We share resources. Leaders from across the country ask questions and talk about resources they like, they share with one another. Great place to exercise that resources R in the five Rs.

Katie: And I see that we have not a question but a great comment in chat that I think we can share with you because this is really a great use of the information. And the participant says we are already discussing about having some teacher dialogues going back to reflect on our preservice and using this as a springboard to start what they want to call their peer reflective dialogues. What a great community of practice they must be creating. Hats off to you Julie and team.

Vanessa: Absolutely. I'm leaving inspired. But that's our time. It goes so fast, Katie. Thank you for joining us. As we mentioned before, we know one of the greatest resources we have that feels the most limited is time. And we know what it means to take an hour away to step away from what you normally do during your day to day to spend some time with us. It is much appreciated. And we do hope you'll join us again when we come back with another episode of the Education Manager Webinar series in February 2023. That seems forever away.

Katie: I know. How is it almost already 2023? But we're really excited to continue this conversation and continue this focus. I love the connections between our approaches domain last year and our social-emotional this year. And you might notice a lot of our webinars really



dialing in on the social-emotional focus as the people who participate have told us how important it is to you. We really want to be here to support you in ways that are meaningful, so we're thrilled to be able to offer this topic as a big focus for us this year.

Vanessa: Thanks, Katie. We'll see you next time. Thank you all.

Katie: Thank you. Bye.