WASHINGTON
EARLY ACHIEVERS
PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

childcare quality & early learning
CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

EARLY ACHIEVERS COACHING is designed to give child care providers the support and skills they need in order to prepare children for success in school. In this document we describe the **guiding principles** of our coaching approach; the **Early Achievers framework for school readiness**, which serves as the focus for our coaching efforts; and the **practice based coaching** components.

Also included in this document are a brief introduction to coach **trainings and seminars,** and the **quality assurance** processes; together these provide a pathway for ongoing support and improvement. Finally, a **glossary of terms** is included at the end of the document.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Three guiding principles serve as a constant reference point for the coaching team. Every decision and activity, whether it is material development, a training session, or an observation debrief will embody three guiding principles: cultural competency; parallel processes; and adult resiliency. Each of the guiding principles is described below.

Cultural Competency

Purposefully woven into all trainings and coaching supports is cultural competency. Culturally competent coaches meet specific cultural competence standards of the Early Learning Professional Core Competencies and Early Learning and Development Guidelines.

Cultural competency is comprised of five essential dispositions and practices. These are:

1. **Responsiveness and reciprocity –** A responsive and reciprocal communication approach is an important part of cultural competence. This approach is in line with the overall coaching framework as mutual understanding and information sharing are hallmarks of practice based coaching. In diverse coaching settings, responsiveness means that coaches make efforts to respectfully learn about and understand provider's cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and adjust coaching interactions to respect the needs of providers. Reciprocity means that coaches expect and encourage back and forth exchange of information between themselves and providers, and consider both their and providers knowledge and experience as relevant information to the coaching process.

2. **Inclusiveness –** Coaches honor diversity of viewpoints and also build inclusiveness around the shared goals of Early Achievers. This means that coaches facilitate inclusive interactions between diverse providers that encourage and make space for multiple viewpoints, and help providers develop a shared set of values in relationship with Early Achievers goals of getting all kids ready for school. An important principle here is that of being "bi-cultural", both for the provider and the coach. Being bi-cultural means that providers are helped to honor their own values while learning how to negotiate what may be somewhat new values introduced by Early Achievers Standards. Coaches will learn how to acknowledge the "lens" through which providers see their role and child development, as well as the coaches personal "lens" which shapes their values and biases.

3. **Extending Leadership Competence** – Ultimately, the role of a coach is to help providers build internal capacity to support ongoing commitment and effort towards high quality care for children. In terms of cultural competence, this means that coaches support opportunities for diverse voices to be heard in relation to reaching Early Achievers goals, and create avenues to integrate these contributions into increased leadership for providers both within facilities and across communities.

4. **Representation and Participation of Diverse People** Successfully promoting cultural competence in Early Achievers depends upon the inclusion of a community of providers and coaches who represent the richness of Washington's cultural and linguistic diversity. Where possible, efforts to recruit diverse participants are strongly encouraged at the provider and coach level.

5. **Culturally and Linguistically relevant materials and trainings –** In whatever way possible, coaches will offer materials and trainings in culturally and linguistically relevant ways. This means that coaches will have access to and distribute materials in relevant languages, and enhance trainings to support inclusion of participants who speak languages other than English. Similarly, materials and trainings provided to coaches should also be culturally and linguistically relevant. Efforts will be made to provide coaches with materials in relevant languages, and to design coach trainings that are inclusive of coaches whose first language is not English.

Parallel Processes

This principle reminds participants of the power and influence that all of the relationships within the system have upon one another. The relationship between a coach and supervisor, for example, may serve as a model for the way that the coach interacts with providers. This, in turn, may influence how a provider engages with children and families.

'Do unto others as you have them do unto others.' – JEREE PAWL

With the recognition of parallel processes comes the need for a commitment to the components of the coaching framework at every level. All members of the coaching team, from providers to trainers, are expected to interact in respectful, culturally competent, and empowering ways. Likewise, just as providers work in communities of practice, set goals, open up their practice to observation, and are asked to discuss constructive feedback (see practice based coaching), so too will coaches. In this way coaches will have experience with both sides of the coaching the model. Additional examples of this process are listed below.

Promoting positive skills through reflective practice:

• Coaches will work together to help one another to see what is going well in their work and share ways to expand on those areas

• Coaches continue this practice with providers as they help them to highlight strengths and enhance skills

• Providers are helped to apply this practice in their work with children and families in their program

Promoting a dynamic system:

• The UW team will collect feedback from coaches and all areas of the Early Achievers community in order to make changes and offer different supports

• Coaches will use the feedback they get from the providers to adjust accordingly

• Providers will learn to apply these same efforts to their work with children and families

Resilience – Promoting Support and Empowerment

Resilience is a critical principle because research has confirmed what many have always known – working with young children is both a rewarding and challenging experience. Challenging child behaviors, working with families who are experiencing difficulties or existing challenges in a provider's own life, can leave providers and coaches feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. Research has demonstrated that caregivers who are struggling with these feelings may not be able to offer children the type of sensitive and supportive interactions they need.

To combat these challenges and manage the stress resulting from the variety of factors faced by providers and coaches, a resilience skills training will be provided to coaches. This training will empower coaches with a foundation of resilience including concepts, language and skills that will benefit themselves and serve as tools to cultivate providers' positive adaptation in the face of every day stressors and challenges. A positive adaption allows providers to become mindful and aware of existing challenges, identify rewarding aspects of their lives and profession and be empowered to achieve the goal of preparing kids for school.

THE EARLY ACHIEVERS HOUSE:
A FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL READINESS

The Washington Early Achievers "House" provides a structure that incorporates the Early Achievers quality standards and provides a framework for effective everyday practices for supporting children's school readiness.

We use a house structure to represent six integral elements of quality care giving – family engagement and partnerships; everyday interactions with children; choosing and implementing a strong curriculum; using regular assessment of children' skills, individualized teaching for every child; and providing professional development and training. In our house framework, these elements correspond, respectively, to parts of a house: -- the open door, the foundation, two pillars, a roof, and strong siding – and when connected with one another, they form a single structure that fosters children's learning and development, regardless of if they are served in a family home, a center or a preschool.

Building a Solid Foundation

Effective, engaging interactions and environments are the foundation for all learning in early childhood classrooms. These high quality practices include a well-organized, clean, safe and managed learning environment; social and emotional support; and instructional interactions and materials that stimulate children's thinking and skills. These elements are featured in the facilities and environments standard.

The Open Door: Family Engagement and Partnership

When parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated across program foundations and program impact areas, family engagement outcomes are achieved, resulting in children who are healthy and ready for school. Parent and family engagement activities are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families.

The First Pillar: Curriculum and learning opportunities aligned with Washington State Early Learning Guidelines

A high-quality, research-based *curriculum* provides learning goals and activities in key areas of children's development that reflect the program's school-readiness goals. Curriculum plays a vital role in achieving the Early Achiever's goal of enhancing the social competence and school readiness of children.

A curriculum provides guidance as to what to teach (content) and how to teach (learning experiences and teaching strategies). The content is drawn from current child development science, the interests and ideas of the children, and the values of the community. The Washington State Early Learning Guidelines are an important resource for identifying the content of a program's early childhood curriculum.

The Second Pillar: Screening and Ongoing Child Assessment in collaboration with families

It is helpful to think of the *ongoing assessment* process as a GPS for child learning. If our goal is to help children achieve school readiness and individual learning goals, then we need to keep track of how the children are doing. We do this by determining where children are when they start a program, checking regularly to see how they are learning, changing our teaching if progress is slow or stalled, and celebrating learning accomplishments. Assessment information helps us to monitor progress—both for individual children and for the program as a whole. The important thing to keep in mind is that assessment information needs to be valid, reliable and useful (i.e., the results should inform curriculum and instruction).

The Roof: Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning

Young children vary widely in their skills, knowledge, backgrounds and abilities. Some, even at an early age, have been identified with disabilities that require specialized attention. Teaching has to effectively reach all children regardless of their abilities and disabilities. The roof of the house reflects this aim and recognizes the need for all teachers to be skilled in understanding, planning for, and delivering effective teaching for all children. This takes the form of teaching and learning that is truly individualized and happens from the ground up — when teachers are sensitive and skilled in interactions; when they use ongoing formative assessment of each child's skills to plan instruction; and when they choose and use curricula and activities that engage all children, regardless of their strengths or needs. These teachers can both take advantage of teachable moments/interactions in an individualized way, and plan and execute instruction that is tailored to children with special needs.

Effective instruction for all children requires specialized teaching and learning opportunities to access, participate, and thrive in their preschool classroom — and for some children this need for specialization is a particularly important form of individualized teaching (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmter, Joseph & Strain, 2003; Sandall, Joseph & Schwartz, 2010). It requires specific learning objectives tailored to an individual child, not the group (these may come from a child's IEP or a behavior support plan), a plan to teach these new skills that specifies certain teaching behaviors that will be effective for that child's needs, and requires frequent teaching opportunities throughout the day as well as frequent data collection. Data are collected to ensure that teaching and learning are on track. Truly individualized teaching is for all children and includes even those more specialized teaching practices used whenever the fundamentals – good interactions, evidence-based curriculum, and regular assessment — are not enough.

The Strong Siding: Professional Development and Training

For caregivers to be most successful in reaching school readiness goals, they need ongoing professional development and training. The National Association for the Education of Young Children defines professional development as learning experiences designed to improve the knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes and values of the early childhood workforce. Key features of successful PD include:

• Evidence based experiences

• Structure that promotes linkages between research and practice

• Responsiveness to each learners background, experiences, and the current context of his or her role

• Basis in specific outcomes that define what the professional should know and be able to do for young children and families, and

• Continuous assessment tied to these outcomes.

In addition to high quality PD and training, caregivers need time to plan, mentoring and to engage with a community of practice to reflect and improve practice.

The Early Achievers House diagram showing: Mentoring • Planning • Communities of Practice; Professional Development and Training (along the roof and sides). Inside the house roof: "Individualized Teaching and Learning for Every Child." Columns inside: "Curriculum & Learning Opportunities aligned with Washington State Early Learning Guidelines"; "Family Engagement and Partnership"; "Screening and Ongoing Child Assessment in collaboration with families." Foundation: "Engaging Interactions and Environments — Well organized ▪ Social Emotional Support ▪ Instructional Interactions."

Bringing the Early Achievers House home: Connections to Cultural Competency

The house represents six integral elements to move all children toward school readiness. They connect and support the parts of the house—the components of effective everyday practice that will help children become ready for school. The house provides both teachers and directors with a framework for effective practice and can function to galvanize program improvements that optimize results for all children. Every house must reflect the values and design of the community in which they are built, while maintaining the essential elements of quality.

High quality child care programs reflect the values and culture of the community that surround them. Through this reflection, children develop a strong sense of self in relationship to their knowledge of, and pride in, their cultural community. Coaches work with providers to support School Readiness by promoting practices that include and honor the cultures and communities of which children are a part. Coaches can apply the Cultural Competence Screen, in addition to the Early Learning Guidelines, to help providers make cultural competence a part of their work with children.

PRACTICE BASED COACHING

Practice Based Coaching provides coaches with a model for supporting the use of effective teaching practices and improving quality ratings in Early Achievers standard areas. This approach to coaching involves the creation of shared goals and action plans, conducting focused observations, and providing reflection and feedback within the context of collaborative partnerships. The components of Practice Based Coaching are intended to help coaches and providers focus their time and to ensure that they are working towards a shared goal of getting kids ready for school.

Shared Goals and Quality Improvement Plans

This component of the practice-based coaching model includes processes for *initial* goal setting and action planning and processes for *on-going* goal setting and action planning. For initial goal setting and action planning the Early Achievers rating reports will be used as a needs assessment for participating programs.

Based on the rating information, a set of goals is developed that guides the creation of an action plan. Goals should be clearly defined, measurable, and achievable within a defined timeframe. Goals provide accountability and allow opportunities to celebrate progress. For example, a coaching goal might be that the provider wants to increase children's responses and interactions during storybook reading.

During quality improvement planning, the steps, resources, and supports needed to reach a goal are specified. The plan also includes a timeframe to review progress on goals. The steps included on an action plan are small, observable tasks or strategies that support accomplishment of the goal. For the above storybook reading goal, sample action steps might be to read articles about shared storybook reading; to read the storybook ahead of time and put post-it notes in the

book as reminders for inserting interactive activities; to select books with repetitious phrases that children can repeat; and to have an assistant video tape the story reading for later review. The goals and action plan provide a "roadmap" for the support and feedback that occurs as part of the other components in the coaching cycle.

Focused Observations

The second component in the *Practice-Based Coaching* model is engaging in focused observations. The term "observation" refers to the process of gathering and recording information about implementation of desired teaching practices during on-going classroom activities, routines, and transitions. Focused observations are guided by the selected goals and quality improvement plan described above. There are many different ways to engage in focused observations, including live observation by the coach, reviewing videotape of the provider in the classroom, or self-monitoring on the part of the provider. Focused observations may include the coach providing support to improve and refine teaching practices. This support might include strategies such as the coach modeling an instructional practice, providing a verbal prompt, or offering quick suggestions. Coaches, whether working directly with providers or by

offering assistance to peer- and self-coaching, use a range of strategies that support using effective teaching practices during on-going classroom activities, routines, and transitions. The strategies are selected based on the action plan steps and discussion between the coach and the provider.

Reflecting and Sharing Feedback

The third component of the *Practice-Based Coaching* model focuses on (a) mutual consideration of the support strategies used and information gathered about teaching practices to identify successes, challenges, and areas for additional improvement or refinement (i.e., reflecting on teaching practices); and (b) sharing feedback about implementation of support strategies and implementation of teaching practices. This component happens in the context of a debriefing "meeting". A debriefing meeting is a time to communicate about progress and challenges, and making plans for future meetings and observations.

Reflecting on teaching practice involves taking time to think about what was effective and what was a barrier to improving or refining implementation of teaching practices. Reflection encompasses consideration both of the feedback and the support experiences.

Sharing feedback about teaching practice involves providing information about performance that is both supportive and corrective, and is intended to help achieve identified goals and improve or refine teaching practice. Supportive feedback is used to recognize and encourage successful implementation of teaching practices. Supportive feedback connects information from the observation with the goals and action plan steps to illustrate progress toward desired outcomes. Corrective feedback is used to help recognize opportunities for improving or refining teaching practices. Corrective feedback should be specific and constructive. Feedback is informed by experiences from examining and supporting teaching practice, and might also be informed by reflection.

There are different ways to reflect on and share feedback about teaching practices. For example, reflection might occur through journaling, while watching a video of practice, or in conversation. Feedback could take the form of written notes or emails, graphical representation of progress, or discussion. As in the previous component, support strategies are also used during reflection and feedback to improve or refine effective teaching practices. Examples of support strategies include role-playing, problem solving conversations, or provision of materials and resources.

Collaborative Partnership

Practice-Based Coaching occurs within the context of a collaborative partnership. A collaborative partnership refers to the working interactions between a coach and provider that provide a safe space for providers to ask questions, discuss problems, get support, gather feedback, reflect on practice, and try new ideas. Coaching is neither evaluative nor judgmental. *Practice-Based Coaching* is a supportive way to help adults grow professionally.

Developing a collaborative coaching partnership is an on-going process that develops over time. Collaborative partnerships are begun and developed by establishing rapport and shared understandings. This might be done through sharing of professional experiences and

backgrounds; establishing a set of shared expectations for time commitments and outcomes; or discussing and reaching a mutual understanding of the coaching process and purpose. The coaching cycle is designed to strengthen collaboration and should be used systematically. The coaching components require reciprocity or two-way interactions. Each coaching partnership is individualized to the unique strengths, needs, shared understandings, and desired outcomes of the coach and provider.

COLLABORATIVE COACHING PARTNERSHIPS

SHARED GOALS AND ACTION PLANNING

SUPPORTING HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS

REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

FOCUSED OBSERVATION

* Adapted from the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning

Connections to Cultural Competency

Through collaborative partnership and goal setting, Practice Based Coaching promotes *Responsiveness and Reciprocity* and *Inclusiveness*. Only when efforts are made to develop mutual understanding, engagement, and a safe space for multiple opinions and perspectives can providers be helped to reach goals that are meaningful to them and aligned with the goals of Early Achievers.

Coach Training

Coaches will participate in numerous trainings and seminars that will introduce them to the guiding principles and components of the coaching framework.

1. Cultural Competency trainings will cover the following topics:

   - Introduction to the Cultural Competence Screen
   - Using the Cultural Competence planning tool
   - Applying cultural competency to components of the Early Achievers coaching framework
   - Cultural Competency, current research and related information will be woven in to all trainings, materials, webinars, and feedback

2. Practice Based Coaching seminars will cover the following topics:

   - Promoting collaborative partnerships
   - Developing shared goals and quality improvement plans
   - Reflecting and providing feedback
   - Helping providers to self and peer-coach
   - Using the Cultural Competence screen with Practice Based Coaching
   - Managing the caseload, making decisions about the level of coaching that each provider will need
   - Expectations for note taking in WELS
   - Working in reflective coach groups

3. Adult Resiliency seminars will promote coaches abilities to become resilient people while promoting resiliency in others. Topics to be covered include:

   - Developing Awareness and Mindfulness
   - Relaxation Strategies
   - Learning to Think in Helpful Ways and Becoming an Optimistic Person
   - Thoughts as Tools that Change Feelings and Behaviours
   - Challenging Old, Resistant Habits
   - Training our Attention towards Positive Elements
   - Thinking like a Resilient Person in Challenging Situations
   - Building Confidence Step by Step
   - Identifying Role Models in our Family and our Community
   - Forming Support Networks
   - Developing Effective Skills to Deal with Conflict
   - Exploring Solutions and Coping Step Plans
   - Turning a Coping Step Plan into Practice – break it into small steps
   - Preparing for Challenges now and in the future – Long-term Practice
   - Noticing Body Warning Signs of Stress
   - Celebrating and Taking Strength from our Successes

4. CLASS Trainings

In an effort to give Early Achievers participants the most support possible in their efforts to improve CLASS scores and effectively demonstrate CLASS indicators, coaches will be trained to reliability on this tool. Reliability will increase coaches abilities to identify CLASS indicators and coach to improve them. All coaches will receive a CLASS training upon employment and must pass a reliability test within 60 days of the training. Individualized training and support will be provided to coaches who experience difficulties passing reliability and accommodations will be made for coaches for whom English is not their first language.

5. School Readiness

Coaches will participate in a Train the Trainer training that will enable them to deliver the School Readiness level 2 training to Early Achiever program directors.

As with teaching, best practices in coaching are constantly being improved upon as we learn more about preparing children for school. Monthly webinars will help provide additional trainings and information throughout the year

EARLY ACHIEVERS COACHING QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance materials allow Early Achievers coaches and the UW team to make informed data driven decisions about the coaching model. Use of the materials allows for goal setting, observation, and feedback that can be used to inform all aspects of the model from specific coach-program relationships to systemic processes and procedures.

The following outline introduces quality assurance measures for Practice Based Coaching, School Readiness trainings, and cultural competency. Supporting materials are in development.

VI. Quality Assurance

    a. Monthly Webinars

        i. **Monthly coach webinars** will be held as a means to disseminate new information and materials, review examples of best practices, and participate in-group discussions related to experiences in the field.

    b. Fidelity checklists

        i. **Pre-visit planning tools** will provide coaches with the opportunity to consider preparations for each coaching visit and training.

        ii. **Post-visit reflections and checklists** are expected to be filled out after closing a visit or ending a training and will give coaches the opportunity to consider the review the session. Post-visit reflections and checklists will cover the process, structure, and content of the coaching session.

        iii. Where possible the items discussed above will compliment WELS.

    c. Practice Based Coaching for Coaches

        i. The implementation of coaching support will feel very familiar for coaches who will participate in supported self-coaching.

            1. **Goal Setting and Action Planning.** Coaches will set their own clearly identified, measurable and achievable goals for their own work. UW will conduct periodic review of goals and coaching peers.

            2. **Observation.** Coaching sessions and school readiness trainings will be either videotaped or observed live once a month. Their sessions will be watched with specific goals in mind. Tapes may be used as examples for webinars or training. Coaches may also watch their own as a method of self-coaching.

            3. **Feedback.** Coaches will participate in debriefing sessions that may take a variety of forms including peer-to-peer, with members of the UW coaching team, and as part of webinars and group trainings. Additional feedback may come in the form of phone calls, emails, and journaling.

            4. **Collaborative Partnerships.** The Early Achievers coaches and UW coaching team will work together as part of a collaborative partnership that promotes a safe space for sharing ideas and trying new things. Shared expectations and a commitment to timelines Review in WELS.

II. Provider evaluations

    a. After each training and coaching session Early Achievers
participants will be asked to fill out an evaluation form.

    b. Providers may be asked to participate in additional interviews and/or evaluations.

III. Additional School Readiness quality assurance

    a. To insure that all participants are receiving the same information coaches
will be provided with scripts for use during school readiness trainings.

IV. Additional Cultural Competency quality assurance materials

    a. Cultural Competency Screen has been developed to help coaches and others to
ensure that all trainings and efforts are in line with culturally competent values.

    b. A Professional Learning Community protocol helps to
ensure that all people and opinions are heard.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Bi-Cultural – "…of, relating to, or including two distinct cultures" (Merriam-Webster's online). In the context of the coaching model and Early Achievers, to be bicultural means to acknowledge and honor one's own culture, while also gaining skills and understanding of how to participate in and navigate another culture.

Culture: According to School's Out Washington (2011), culture is "the unique collection of beliefs, practices, traditions, valued competencies, world views, and histories that characterize a group of people." (WA State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals, 2011)

Cultural Competence: "Cultural competence requires holding and practicing a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable effective interactions with youth within a cross-cultural framework (Cross, Bazron, Dennis & Isaacs, 1992)." (WA State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals, 2011)

Diversity – "Refers to differences and/or heterogeneity of human qualities that are present in individuals, groups, society, and institutions. Examples include: age, ethnicity, educational background, learning styles and abilities." (WA State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals, 2011)

Focused Observation – The act of gathering and recording information about a desired practice that is guided by select goals.

Inclusiveness – Inclusiveness is the act of encouraging belonging. Inclusion means more than simply valuing diversity — it is to understand and aggressively remove barriers to participation that fall unevenly on diverse groups.

Lens – The way in which an individual views the world and their interactions with others.
A person's lens is shaped by their culture, experiences, beliefs, biases, and values.

Linguistic Diversity – According to the Department of Early Childhood, cultural linguistic diversity refers to "behavioral, value, linguistic, and other differences ascribed to people's cultural backgrounds" (DEC Position Statement, 2010). Linguistic diversity includes the many different languages spoken within our state, and also the level of diversity in how a single language is understood and used, such as various dialects, accents, or word meanings in different regions or cultural groups.

Parallel Processes – The notion that relationships in one part of a system influence and reinforce similar patterns of interaction in other parts of the system.

Peer – In this framework peers may be colleagues who work in the same childcare program, or providers who work with similar age groups in the community.

Practice-Based Coaching – A cyclical process for supporting providers' use of effective practices that lead to positive outcomes for children.

Quality Improvement Plan – Tool found in WELS (see below) to track goal setting and accomplishments based on the Early Achievers ratings.

Resiliency – The ability to bounce back in the face of adversity.

Teacher – Anyone who works with young children including childcare providers and parents.

Values – Values reflect aspects of one's culture (e.g., behaviors, beliefs, language) that are given elevated positive weight, esteem and/or significance. Common values can be, and often are, shared within a culture. It is important to understand our own values and those of others, and the impact values have on different approaches to working with children and families.

WELS – Early Achievers online database.

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