



# Even Start Early Childhood and Parenting Education: Making Meaningful Changes in Program Design

## Small Group Work I

### IMPROVING PROGRAM DESIGN

The statements below describe the primary conditions needed for high quality services to support children's language and literacy development. The statements are meant to stimulate discussion among team members. Concentrate on areas where you need to implement changes to improve services.

#### **Organizational Providers of Early Language and Literacy Services (providers may be Even Start or partners)**

- Philosophy of provider organization(s) supports quality practices in early learning
- Providers are willing to improve/change
- Providers are financially stable and have stable staff

#### **Staff Credentials and Experience**

- Teachers and teacher assistants (home visitors if home-based program) meet formal qualifications—educational backgrounds and certification
- Teachers and teacher assistants (home visitors if home-based program) have demonstrated expertise—warmth with children, ability to follow through, connections with parents, etc.
- Teachers and teacher assistants (home visitors) have good language skills, e.g., speak native language of children, clarity of spoken English
- All staff understand expectations for curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment

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#### **Staff Support, Supervision and Professional Development**

- Ratio of instructional staff to children fits state guidelines and permits individualization
- Staff receive training related to curricular goals, curriculum materials, assessments
- Supervision includes regular observation and feedback for staff
- Program offers variety of types and levels of professional development opportunities
- Some professional development is onsite and embedded in job responsibilities, e.g., coaching and demonstration
- Staff have opportunities to share and exchange within program and with staff from other programs
- Staff are paid for planning time, including time working with staff from other Even Start components
- Staff receive incentives for good work/advancements
- Staff are stable in terms of longevity, retention

#### **Curriculum, Materials, and Instruction**

- Program has curricular goals in oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness
- Program has policy to guide staff use of language in instruction
- Teachers have adequate materials for supporting direct and indirect instruction and practice in each area, including books for children, writing materials, and play props
- Space has materials/centers for play that encourage language development
- Program has adequate resources to rotate materials/centers for variety
- Teachers have some flexible/on demand resources to provide experience for children/add materials to enhance language potential of play
- Teachers provide some direct instruction in vocabulary development, print concepts, comprehension of narrative/expository material, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, pre-writing each day
- Teachers share books with children each day
- Teachers spend most of interaction time with children in indirect instruction related to language and literacy
- Teachers provide opportunities for musical and creative arts expression

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#### **Space and Equipment**

- Space is adequate size for number of children and meets any state guidelines
- Space is organized for quality language opportunities, e.g., noise factors, room for centers (also applies to home-based programs)
- Space includes classroom or home library
- Space has room to display materials and equipment for easy access and use, e.g., books, tape recorders, musical instruments, etc.
- Space includes place to display children's work (also applies to home-based programs)

#### **Instructional Time and Schedule**

- Children are engaged in quality early learning experiences at least 15-20 hours a week throughout the full year
- Schedule permits variety of grouping opportunities, especially individual conversations with children, play with peers, small group direct instruction
- Children have opportunity to interact freely with peers in play and informal settings on regular basis

#### **Parent-Child Interactions/Home Visits**

- Each family receives adequate number of home visits (also applies to center-based programs)
- Families have opportunities for structured parent-child interaction that is language/literacy based at least once a week
- Most parent-child interaction activities support the parent practicing ways to support children's language development
- Home visitors/staff who work with parents for parent-child activities have opportunities to plan with early literacy staff at least weekly
- Staff who make home visits communicate with early literacy staff at least weekly

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### **Assessment and Record Keeping**

- Staff use a range of assessments for diagnosing children's needs and assessing mastery of progress, including review of children's work
- Staff administer assessments related to program and performance indicators in accurate and complete manner
- Staff maintain individual up-to-date records of progress toward curriculum goals
- Staff report to parents about children's progress and ways parents can support children/reinforce learning on at least a weekly basis
- Supervisors review individual children's progress on a periodic basis
- Program has clear process for making referrals for special needs screening/intervention

### **Other Supports**

- Program's annual evaluation is designed and conducted to be used for continuous program improvement, and the evaluator is knowledgeable about early literacy programming and assessments
- Program administrator works with administrators/staff of partner programs to ensure that Even Start families are receiving appropriate, high quality services that meet their needs and goals