

## Head Start A to Z

### Foundation Part II: Leadership, Systems, and Services

#### Background

Leadership is the core work of Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) directors and managers. However leadership is viewed—as “the ability to get things done through others,” “knowing how to exercise power,” “influencing others to get the job done,” or one of the countless other definitions cited by leadership experts—successful HS/EHS directors and managers embrace their role as leaders who can make a positive impact in their program, their home organization, and their community. They build a compelling vision for the future; they collaborate with staff, colleagues, and partners to build a realistic roadmap to success; and they hold themselves and others accountable for completing the journey.

While different directors and managers realize success using a variety of leadership styles, they all exercise an observable pattern of practices and behaviors and a definable set of skills and abilities. Research shows that leadership, like any skill, can be learned, strengthened, honed, and enhanced. A developing leader must have the motivation and desire to practice these skills and be open to feedback and coaching from others.

For example, Barry Posner conducted a longitudinal study examining changes in leadership behavior among students who were part of a leadership program. Results of the study indicated that the participants’ leadership skills improved over time, leading Posner to conclude that people can learn to be better leaders.<sup>1</sup> Becoming the very best leader you can be requires you to seek new knowledge and embrace continuous learning. The best leaders are the best learners.

Leadership experts also tell us that leaders can improve their skills through critical self-reflection. Harry Kraemer, Jr., of the Kellogg School of Management, strongly affirms the power of self-reflection. According to Kraemer, “The more you self-reflect, the better you know yourself: your strengths, weaknesses, abilities, and areas to be developed. Being self-aware, you know what you stand for and what is important to you. With this clarity, you are able to connect and communicate with others more effectively. Grounded in self-knowledge, your leadership becomes more authentic.”<sup>2</sup>

Leadership expert Warren Bennis concurs. While he acknowledges that “knowing your inner self” is the most difficult task any of us faces, he reminds leaders that, until they truly know

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<sup>1</sup> Kouzes, James M.; Barry Z. Posner. *The Leadership Challenge*. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Kraemer, Harry M. *From Values to Action: The Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership*. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass, 2011.

themselves—their strengths and weaknesses—and know what they want to do and why they want to do it, they can only succeed at a superficial level.<sup>3</sup>

In the session video, Dr. Richard Boyatzis, of Case Western Reserve University, applies the self-reflection theme to leaders' relationships with others, highlighting three important behaviors of effective leaders: they share the vision and purpose of the organization with others, engender trusting and caring relationships, and are authentic in their interactions with others.

There are many excellent resources that HS/EHS leaders can use to support their continuing leadership journey. These include the following:

- *The Leadership Challenge*<sup>4</sup> (James Kouzes and Barry Posner). [www.leadershipchallenge.com](http://www.leadershipchallenge.com)
  - ✓ This book and supporting resources emphasize the authors' "Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership":
    - Challenging the process
    - Inspiring a shared vision
    - Enabling others to act
    - Modeling the way
    - Encouraging the heart
- *The Mind Tool EBook*<sup>5</sup> (Mind Tools). [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)
  - ✓ This e-book enables new leaders to take the journey of leadership self-discovery in their own time and at their own pace.
- *Dance of Leadership* (Robin Johnson).
  - ✓ This book addresses leadership from a nature-based perspective.
- *Resonant Leadership* (Richard Boyatzis and Annie McAkee)<sup>6</sup>
  - ✓ This book provides leaders with ideas for getting in tune with those around them.
- MBTI Personality Types (Isabel Myers and Katharine Briggs). [www.myersbriggs.org](http://www.myersbriggs.org)
  - ✓ Leaders can use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Tool and related products to increase self-awareness of their behavioral preferences as they hone their leadership skills.
- 2.0 Strength Finders (Tom Rath). <http://strengths.gallup.com>
  - ✓ Leaders can participate in an online assessment of their strengths and find many strategies for applying those strengths.

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<sup>3</sup> Bennis, Warren. *On Becoming a Leader*. Philadelphia: Perseus Books Group, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Kouzes, James M. ; Barry Z. Posner. *The Leadership Challenge*. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Mind Tools. "The Mind Tool Ebook." [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)

<sup>6</sup> Boyatzis, Richard; Annie McKee. *Resonant leadership*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005.

## Mentoring: A Personal Approach to Professional Development

In an era of constant change, we know that uncertainty is ever present. Given this reality, new leaders will naturally seek to connect with someone who can provide a “safe environment,” where they can get their questions answered, reflect on pressing issues, and be comfortable not knowing all the answers all the time.

New HS/EHS directors and managers need to master the extensive regulations and policies of Head Start, as well as the workings of its well-established organizational culture, history, and many relationships. People newly assigned to these positions can quickly feel overwhelmed. Many new leaders have found that a *mentor* can help them get them through the rough patches and support them while they are on the steep learning curve that is inherent in their new role.

Head Start and Early Head Start are complex organizations to lead and at times may appear chaotic. While chaos can bring uneasiness, it also provides opportunities for new discoveries and understandings. Mentors can provide support by reminding new leaders that chaotic situations are prime opportunities for creativity and growth.

It is helpful to find a mentor who has already survived the “new leader” phase and has learned through both trials and triumphs. New leaders should carefully choose as their mentor someone who is willing to share insights and past challenges and to listen in a supportive way.

Mentoring is also a matter of heart . . . a desire to share and impart knowledge. Content knowledge is powerful, and good mentors have to be willing to share what they know. In a spirit of reciprocity, a good protégé must be willing to do the same. Experiences and knowledge may differ greatly between the two; but most assuredly, if an intention exists on both sides to bring a generous mind and heart to the process, together the mentor and protégé will create a relationship of mutual learning, growth, and development.

A mentor understands that a protégé wants to be supported . . .

*. . . to keep the passion;*

*. . . through the pain; and*

*to establish and maintain priorities.<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Stoddard, David. *The Heart of Mentoring*. Colorado Springs, CO: NAVPRESS, 2003.

## Systems and Services

A system is any group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent parts that form a complex and unified whole and that have a specific purpose.<sup>8</sup> The key to understanding systems is to remember that all the parts are interrelated, create a whole, and have a purpose. Clearly, HS/EHS programs are complex systems.

HS/EHS directors and managers can benefit from the lessons learned in the field of systems thinking:

- Because systems are interconnected, a change in one area of the program will affect other areas; for example changes in transportation services may affect enrollment and attendance.
- Parts of different systems may not be interchangeable; for example, a successfully implemented community complaint procedure from a neighboring rural program may not work well in your urban community.
- Systems are dependent upon one another to function properly; for example, the community assessment determines strategies for recruiting expectant families, and programs must plan accordingly to support these families—making the eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance [ERSEA] system interdependent with planning systems).

Viewing HS/EHS programs through a “systems lens” helps new leaders develop a “laser focus.” It also encourages problem solving and solution building with an eye toward the long view. It can help answer important questions, such as (1) How might a particular solution play out over the long run? (2) What unintended consequences might that solution have? In systems thinking, you learn to ask the right questions, analyze the data, and examine the facts to identify the “root cause.”

In its wisdom, the Office of Head Start requires programs to develop and implement a group of management systems to support directors and managers in delivering services in an intentional, consistent fashion. HS/EHS programs function optimally when all 10 Head Start management systems are working well. The Head Start management systems are:

- Planning
- Program governance
- Self-Assessment
- Communication
- Human resources
- ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, Attendance)
- Fiscal management
- Facilities, materials, and equipment
- Recordkeeping and reporting
- Ongoing monitoring

<sup>8</sup> Kim, Daniel. *Introduction to Systems Thinking*. Westford, MA. Pegasus Communications, Inc., 1999.

## Overarching Theme

This segment of the session highlights the important leadership role of the HS/EHS directors and managers. It also encourages new directors and managers to look for opportunities to enhance their leadership skills and knowledge. During this session, new leaders will explore several professional development resources, discuss the power of self-reflection, and consider the benefits of mentoring.

In addition, this segment urges new leaders in the Head Start community to seek a mentor. An appropriate choice for a mentor might include a trusted professor, a seasoned colleague from another agency, or an experienced Head Start leader who operates a program in good standing.

## Outcomes

- Explore the importance of knowing your “personal leadership self”
- Identify the value of a mentor-protégé relationship

## Materials

- PowerPoint presentation
- *Effective Leadership* video
- Paper and pencil for each participant
- 3 pieces of chart paper, one for each of the effective leadership characteristics:
  - ✓ Using the purpose of the organization to inspire
  - ✓ Being trusting and caring
  - ✓ Practicing mindfulness
- Variety of colored markers
- Chart paper
- Index cards 3"x 5" or 4"x 6"
- Masking tape
- Noisemaker
- Optional: 4 or 5 Director’s Clapboards (Available through Oriental Trading Company: <http://www.orientaltrading.com/api/search?Ntt=clapboards>)
- Handout
  - ✓ Nifty Notes
  - ✓ Key Messages

## Planning Ahead

- Time required for session will vary based on size of group and their level of knowledge.
- Preview the *Effective Leadership* video.
- Estimate the time you will need to complete each step of this training segment based on the size of the group.

- Write the three characteristics identified in the *Effective Leadership* video on separate pieces of chart paper:
  - ✓ “Using the purpose of the organization to inspire”
  - ✓ “Being trusting and caring”
  - ✓ “Practicing mindfulness”
- Post the papers in separate corners of the room
- Review the background information (pages 1–2).
- Review “Mentoring: A Personal Approach to Professional Development” (page 3).
- Make copies of the handout “Nifty Notes.”
- Make copies of the handout “Key Messages”
- If you choose to deliver this session in two parts, you may want to create a title slide after slide 17.

## Let’s Get Started

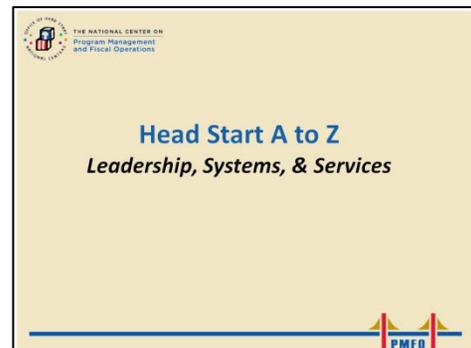
1. Welcome participants to the session and introduce yourself. If you have co-facilitators, invite them to introduce themselves, too.

Offer the following beliefs and ideas about *Head Start A to Z*:

- The National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations (PMFO) has created *Head Start A to Z* as a set of learning sessions targeting new leaders in the Head Start community:
  - ✓ Leaders who are new both to the Head Start program and to holding a leadership position
  - ✓ Those new to Head Start who have held leadership roles in other organizations
  - ✓ Individuals who know Head Start well but are taking on a leadership role for the first time
  - ✓ Leaders of newly funded Head Start programs
  - ✓ Those currently serving in a Head Start leadership role and who want to re-energize
  - ✓ Current directors and managers who are supporting the orientation and ongoing learning of new leaders in their programs, such as individuals in management staff positions and governing body members.

*Head Start A to Z* will provide an excellent opportunity for these groups to learn together about the foundations of Head Start and other *A to Z* sessions.

- PMFO wants the Head Start community to know that whenever they attend any conference where an *A to Z* session is offered, the *A to Z* label means that the session is geared toward new leaders in the Head Start community. These *A to Z* presentations



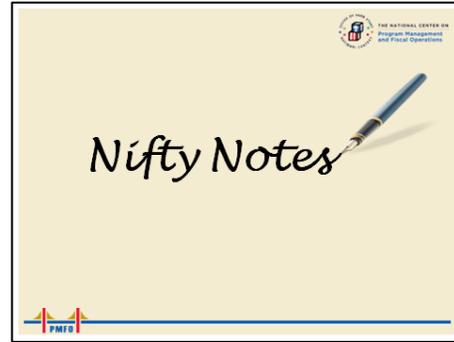
will bring together new directors and managers to learn about their role in strengthening the Head Start management systems. Participants will leave these training opportunities with renewed vigor for their work and with practical information that they can bring back to their programs.

- While *Head Start A to Z* is designed to support new directors, it also provides learning and support for leaders at other levels; these include members of the governing body and Policy Council, as they have important leadership roles in Head Start as well. The *Head Start A to Z* design provides opportunities for managers to develop and hone their leadership skills, while at the same time learning new ways to engage their teams and support their director.
- Share with participants the following: “*Head Start A to Z* sessions are also designed to emulate the concept of the ‘learning organization.’ We recognize key characteristics of learning organizations, including a supportive learning environment, openness to new ideas, and time dedicated for reflection. Each attendee has an important role to play in the success of this session. Those with experience remind us where we’ve come from and what we must do to maintain our identity and uniqueness. New members bring a fresh perspective and remind us what we must do to prepare for the future. All roles are essential for Head Start to be a learning organization that continues to grow and flourish. *Head Start A to Z* sessions are most successful when they help us share the best of what we have to offer with a strength-based focus. As you engage in this session, we hope that you will support one another in the learning process by generously sharing your knowledge, experience, and perspective.”

2. Guide participants’ attention to the “Key Messages” handout. Introduce the *Head Start A to Z* Key Messages. Say to participants, “All *Head Start A to Z* sessions are based on a set of 10 key messages. Give participants a minute to look them over. After two minutes, guide their attention to key messages #4, “Leadership is a journey,” and #6, “Systems-thinking provides a fresh perspective and a ‘big-picture lens’ that taps into a higher level of analyzing, problem-solving, and strategizing.”



- Share with participants the “Nifty Notes” page as a place for capturing their thoughts, “A-ha!” moments, or any new knowledge they acquire during this session.



- Say to participants, “Leadership is the core work of Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) directors and managers. Whether viewed as “the ability to get things done through others,” “knowing how to exercise power,” “influencing others to get the job done,” or any of the other definitions cited by leadership experts. “Leadership is . . . .”

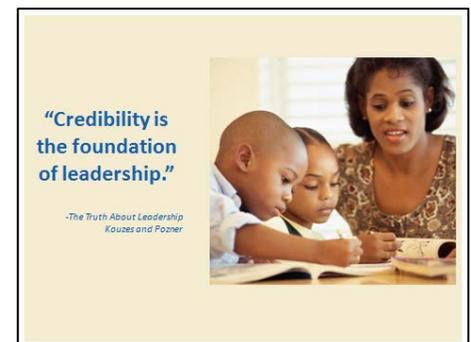
Read the leadership quotes on slides 5–8. As you read them, ask participants to think about which quote resonates most with them.



- Read the quote on the slide.



- Read the quote on the slide.



7. Read the quote on the slide.

“Leadership is the skill of influencing people to work enthusiastically toward goals identified as being for the common good.”

-The Servant



8. Read the quote on the slide.

Leadership is the exercise of power and influence.

-Resonant Leadership



9. Read the quote on the slide.

Ask participants, “Which quote resonates with you?”  
 Solicit a couple responses. Say to participants, “There are many experts on leadership, but you are the expert about who you are and who you will be as a leader.”

“Leadership is a matter of how to be...not how to do.”

-Frances Hazelbain  
 CEO of American Girls of the USA (1976-1990)  
 Founder of the Drucker Foundation School of Mgmt.



10. Explain to participants that they have an opportunity to create their own leadership quote. Make sure everyone has markers and chart paper. Invite participants to create their own leadership quote as a group or individually.

Encourage participants to be creative. As they finish, ask participants to tape their quotes on the walls.

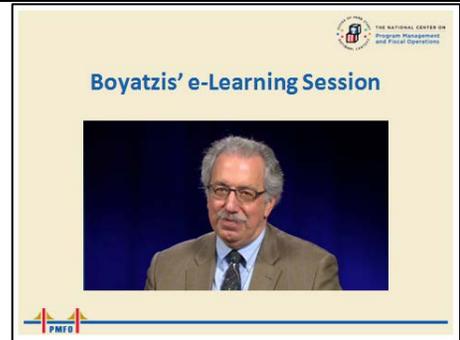
Create your own leadership quote or illustration

11. Introduce the 12-minute *Effective Leadership* video. Include the following:

- Boyatzis is a Professor at the Mandel School at Case-Western Reserve University.
- He has conducted research on leadership for many years.
- He provides learning opportunities for new and existing leaders in all types of organizations throughout the world.

- He is going to engage you in an e-learning experience today.

Alert participants to the two exercises in the video. Encourage participants to use their “Nifty Notes” page to jot down key points as they watch the video so they can share their thoughts, ideas, and questions in a group discussion at the video’s conclusion.

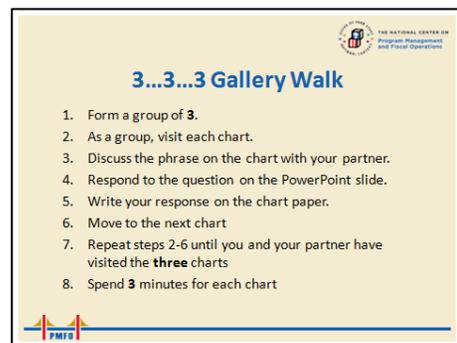


Begin the video. Be ready to pause the video when instructed.

After the Boyatzis video ends, invite participants to share their initial thoughts about the content of the video.

12. Ask participants, “What did Boyatzis identify as the three characteristics of an effective leader?” Guide participants to the three phrases posted on chart paper around the room and read them out: (1) “Using the purpose of the organization to inspire.” (2) “Being trusting and caring.” (3) “Practicing mindfulness.”

Take 1–2 minutes to ensure that participants are clear about what each characteristic means by asking volunteers to share what they heard in the video about each of the characteristics.

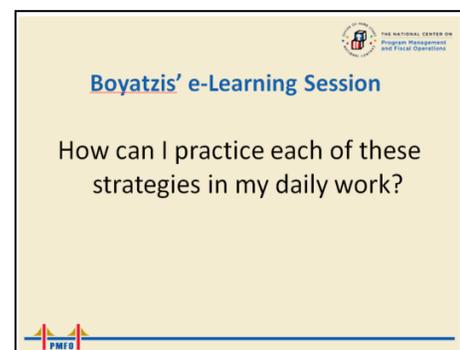


Say to participants, “You are going to engage in a 3 . . . 3 . . . 3 gallery walk. 3 people dialoguing about the 3 characteristics and writing your thoughts on chart paper in 3 minutes for each.” Read the instructions from the PowerPoint slide. Draw the group’s attention to the three charts posted around the room. The heading of each chart paper is one of the characteristics of an effective leader that Boyatzis talks about in the video.

13. Say to participants, “This is the question to which you will respond.” Read the question on the PowerPoint slide.

Make sure each group has a marker. Give the participants 10 minutes to visit each chart and return to their seats.

Debrief the activity.



14. Transition to a discussion about leadership resources. Briefly share the resources in the PowerPoint slide. Invite participants to share other resources that they have found helpful.

Chart any resources participants mention, and make the chart available throughout the session.

NOTE: This a good sharing and networking opportunity.



15. Begin a discussion about mentoring by saying that mentors and coaches are an excellent resource. Invite participants who have had a mentor or coach to share their experiences. Say to participants, “Mentors and coaches are a great resource and support.”

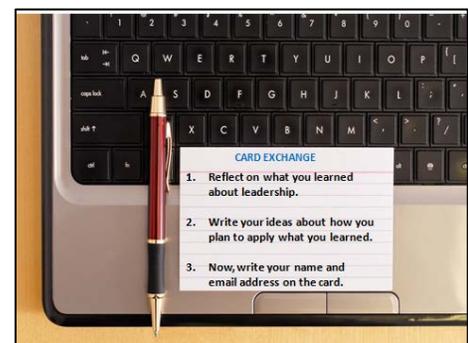


16. Say to participants, “Good mentors and coaches know that as a new leader YOU need support to keep the passion . . . you need support through the pain and you need support and help to establish and maintain priorities.”



17. Make sure all participants have an index card. Say to participants, “You are all going to participate in a card exchange. But first take a few minutes and reflect on what you heard about leadership during this session. Use your “Nifty Notes” to help. Take a few minutes to write some ideas about how you plan to apply some of what you learned. Then write your name and email address on the card.”

After 5–7 minutes, ask participants to pair up with someone and dialogue about what they wrote. After 10 minutes bring the group back together. Now ask everyone to take a picture of their card. (NOTE: If someone can’t take a picture, volunteer to take the picture and email it to them). Then ask the pairs to exchange cards. After the exchange is complete, share with participants for the next month please check-in to see how things are coming along.



## Overarching Theme

This session segment is designed to promote the value of systems thinking. Head Start and Early Head Start programs are complex organizations, and their systems must operate in a synchronized and coordinated manner.

Systems thinking involves looking at reality in a way that influences what we see and how we make decisions to take the necessary steps to improve our organization. Consider this scenario: A mom and dad come into a Head Start program to enroll their child, and the Head Start staff person says, “We are so sorry but all of our slots are filled. Why don’t you come back next September? Maybe we will have an opening then.” This response makes it clear that, at a minimum, there are two systems that are not operating as they should: (1) eligibility, recruitment, selection, and enrollment, and attendance (ERSEA) and (2) communication.

A non-systems thinker might say, “Let’s call that mom and dad back and invite them to sign up on the waiting list. We can tell them that, as soon as a slot is available, we’ll give them a call.”

Systems thinkers would do the same—but more. They would also ask the “why” and “what” questions that would lead them to discover the breakdown in staff understanding regarding recruitment and enrollment. They would then re-evaluate and strengthen the systems that are involved, and they would be motivated to make the adjustments necessary to ensure the desired outcomes whenever staff communicate in the future with parents about enrolling their children in Head Start.

## Outcomes

- Increase your understanding of the Head Start management systems
- Understand how systems affect services

## Materials

- PowerPoint Presentation
- Index cards with one management system written on each (suggestion: make two sets)
- 1 sheet of chart paper for each group
- Markers (at least one for every group of three)
- Head Start Management Systems (handout)
- Head Start Management Systems and Services (graphic)
- “Take 2” scenario cards

## Planning Ahead

- Time required for session will vary based on size of group and their level of knowledge.
- Review the background information (pages 1–4).
- Make sure you have chart paper and markers for the activity.
- Make copies of the “Take 2” scenarios. One for each group.
- Make copies of handouts:
  - ✓ Head Start Management Systems and Services
  - ✓ Head Start Management Systems
- Write each of the management systems on an index card (make two sets).
- Prepare index cards with service area descriptions.
- Important: Take time to review the “Head Start Management Systems” handout. As each group shares its illustration from the “My Management System Is the Most Important” activity, be prepared to emphasize, restate, or introduce critical points. Listen closely to gauge the group’s overall understanding of the management systems; this understanding is very important. As the groups work on their illustrations, peruse the room and engage groups as needed, adding helpful hints as appropriate.

## Let’s Get Started

18. Read the definition on the slide. Explain to the group that it is important to remember that systems (1) are interrelated, (2) form a whole, and (3) have a purpose. Offer to the participants the analogy of the human body as a system: all parts are interrelated and work together to keep us alive.


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### What is a System?

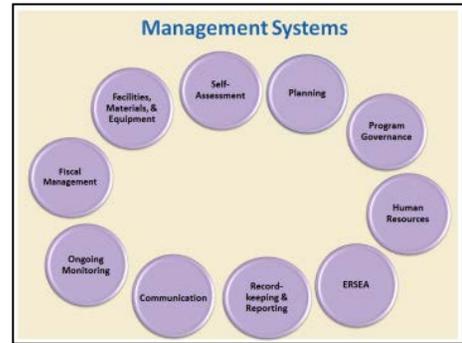
A set of interacting,  
 interrelated or  
 interdependent parts that  
 form a complex and unified  
 whole that has a specific  
 purpose



19. Draw the group’s attention to the plant leaves. Ask participants, “How is this plant part of a system?” Elicit responses from the group. Encourage discussion by asking the following questions: “What makes it a system? What would happen if some part of the system no longer functioned?” Then ask participants to share examples of other systems.



20. Transition to a discussion about Head Start management systems. Invite the group to look at the handout “Head Start Management Systems.” Briefly call out each of the 10 management systems. Reiterate some of the earlier comments made by the group about systems. As a tease, ask the group which of the management systems is the most important.



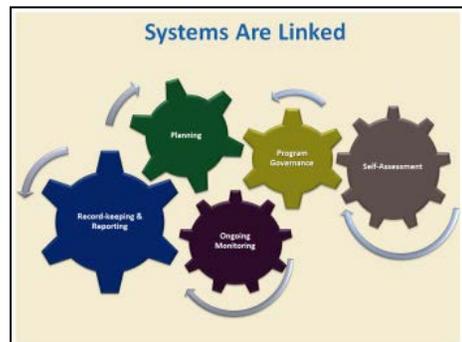
21. Explain to the participants that they will now engage in an activity: “My Management System Is the Most Important.”

**Activity: My Management System Is the Most Important**

If your group is large, break it into smaller groups of two or three. Distribute to each group a management system card, chart paper, and markers. Instruct each small group to take 10–15 minutes to create a poster illustrating *why their system is the most important to the successful operation of a Head Start program*. Invite groups to include key points about their particular system from the handout “Head Start Management Systems.” Explain that each team will be given 1½ minutes to share its poster. After members from each group share what they have illustrated, you’ll want to add, emphasize, or introduce additional information as needed. Be sure to applaud and thank each group.



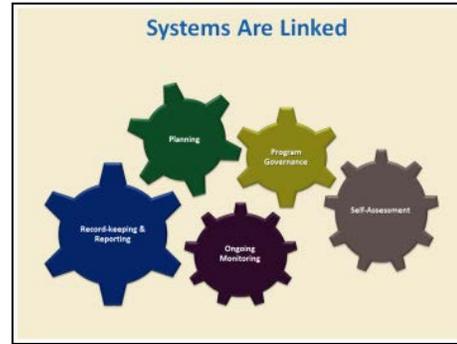
22. . Reiterate the fact that all Head Start management systems are interrelated, create a whole, and have a purpose—and that when they are operating effectively, the systems work together like parts of a well-oiled machine.



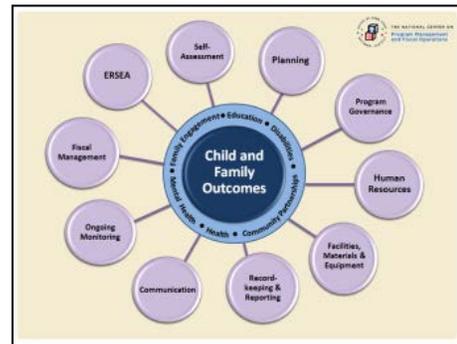
23. State “When one of the systems is not operating effectively, problems occur.”

Suggestion: A five-minute reflection may be appropriate at this point. (See *Facilitator Activities* in the “Facilitator/Coach Support” section.)

Transition to a discussion about services. Ask the group, “What are Head Start services? How would you describe the relationship between Head Start Management Systems and Head Start services?”



24. Listen to responses to the question. Restate some of the accurate responses and say, “Strong systems support high-quality services, and high-quality services lead to positive outcomes for children and families.”



**25. Activity: Take 2**

Divide participants into small groups of three or four. Explain that each small group will receive a card with a short description of a situation in a HS/EHS program. Explain that they have the opportunity to **reenact** the situation that is described on their card. What would they do differently in “Take 2”? Read the two questions on the slide: “Look at the scenario through a management systems lens. What would you do differently? What services are affected?”



**Take 2**

Look at the scenario through a management systems lens.

1. What would you do differently?
2. What services are affected?



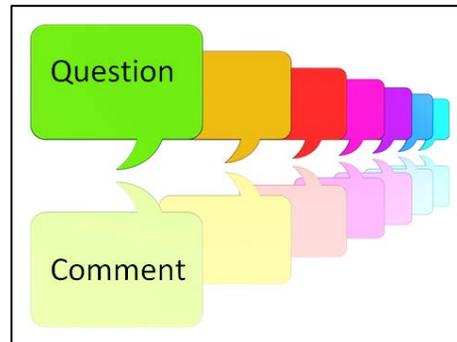
Reconvene the group. Say to the participants, “Someone from your group will read the scenario as it is written on the card. Another person from the group will take the clapperboard and clap it as they call out, “Take 2!” Now the group will answer the question and talk about what they did differently after examining the scenario through a management systems lens.”

26. Check in with the group. End the session by restating that “Strong systems support high-quality services, and high-quality services lead to positive outcomes for children and families.”



27. Question and Comment

Ask participants to reflect on what they heard about Head Start management systems. Say to participants, “After reflecting, write one question you want to ask.” Allow 5 minutes. Ask participants to trade questions with another person at their table. Direct the partners to answer each other’s question.



End the session by thanking everyone for coming and sharing.

This product was prepared under Grant #90HC0006 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations.