

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to give Early Childhood Education (ECE) specialists and other professional development providers background information about the design, content, and aim of the 15-minute in-service suites that have been developed by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL). This background information provides guidance to help professional development providers meet the needs of varied audiences.

The purpose of the 15-minute in-service suites is to share information on effective early childhood teaching practices in a way that helps teachers and home visitors better understand the teaching practices—what they are and why they are important—as well as what the practices look like in action. Further, the in-service suites offer suggestions to support teachers in implementing the practices in their own classrooms and visits.



WHY 15 MINUTES?

The original idea for 15-minute in-service suites grew out of awareness of the often limited time available for professional development in busy, active Head Start programs and other early childhood centers and programs. Even in such environments, teachers and others may have 15 minutes available before or after school, or during a break to watch a short video, or read a brief handout. The 15-minute in-service suites developed and distributed by NCQTL may, however, be used in a variety of ways as described in this guide.

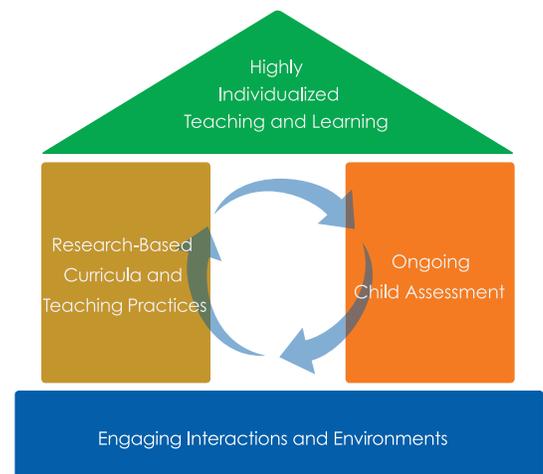
THE HOUSE FRAMEWORK

NCQTL uses a House to represent effective everyday practices for supporting school readiness for all children. There are four integral elements of quality teaching and learning, these are: the positive and productive everyday interactions between teachers and children and the engaging environment in which these interactions occur; the selection and use of a strong, research-based curriculum and effective teaching practices; the use of ongoing assessment of children’s skills and behaviors to gauge their learning; and individualized teaching to meet children’s needs, abilities and interests. In the House Framework, these elements correspond to parts of the House—the Foundation, two Pillars, and a Roof—and when connected with one another, they form a single structure that fosters children’s learning, development, and readiness for success in school.

The 15-minute in-service suites are categorized according to the four parts of the House.

Framework for Effective Practice

Supporting School Readiness for All Children



SCHOOL READINESS

The legislation reauthorizing Head Start makes it a top priority for programs to contribute to the school readiness of the children they serve. In very broad terms, this aim is defined as “The Office of Head Start Approach to School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children’s learning, and schools are ready for children” (2011 Leadership Institute Planner, p. 37). In the attachment to the Program Instruction on School Readiness (PI-HS-11-04), OHS outlines four School Readiness Action Steps. The 15-minute in-service suites can be useful in implementing the School Readiness Action Steps by helping teachers learn more about effective teaching practices based on research. Further, these in-service suites can help directors, education managers and supervisors better support teachers in using these practices.



15-MINUTE IN-SERVICE SUITES

Each 15-minute in-service suite focuses on one topic or big idea. The presentation is designed to take no more than 15 minutes. The in-service suite consists of a short video that highlights the big idea. This is supplemented with two or three handouts that provide tips for teachers and other useful resources. A teacher, assistant teacher, or anyone on the Head Start team might find an in-service suite on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC) website (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/center>) for a quick introduction or review of a topic. Or, an education manager or director might use one of these in-service suites within a staff meeting as a way to highlight a topic, remind staff of practices to use, or to introduce staff to the topic of an upcoming training or workshop.



15-MINUTE IN-SERVICE SUITES: TRAINER VERSION

There are longer versions of each of the in-service suites that can be used by ECE specialists or other training and technical assistance providers. These in-service suites contain the following:

- A PowerPoint presentation provides a description of the topic (often a practice or set of practices), the benefits for children, and ideas and suggestions for using the practice(s). Photographs and video clips are used to illustrate the practice(s).
- *Presenter Notes* give the professional development provider additional information on logistics, suggestions for organizing a presentation, and additional content.
- *Tips for Teachers* is a handout for teachers, that gives suggestions that teachers can take into their classrooms to aid in planning and teaching. Some in-service suites also include visual reminders that teachers can post in their classrooms.
- *Tools for Supervisors* are tip sheets or guides for supervisors to use when observing in classrooms, conversing with teachers, or problem solving with a teacher or classroom team.
- *Helpful Resources* are short lists of additional resources for a teacher, supervisor, or ECE specialist who wants to learn more about the topic.
- *Learning Activities* are application activities for use within the training or other professional development activity. Trainers may use these activities to extend participants' learning and help them think about how to use the practice(s) in their classrooms.
- Individual in-service suites may have additional materials that can be used for training.



USE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is defined as "...facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice" (see National Professional Development Center on Inclusion [NPDCI], 2008, for complete definition). Professional development takes many forms such as workshops that can occur either on-site or off-site, conferences, institutes, classes, coaching and consultation, professional learning groups, and web-based trainings.

Research evidence suggests that some type of follow-up support is critical to achieve changes in teachers' teaching practices, and to achieve desired child development and learning outcomes. Examples of follow-up support include coaching, mentoring, peer support groups, communities of practice, assignments, handouts, action plans, follow-up visits, letters, emails or telephone calls, refresher sessions, and various job-aids such as planning forms or how-to posters (see Snyder, Hemmeter, Meeker, Kinder, Pasia & McLaughlin, 2012 for a review of the literature).

The 15-minute in-service suites lend themselves to a variety of uses. The most common use is likely to be as part of a workshop or other on-site staff development activity. The trainers' version of an in-service suite is apt to take at least an hour. This version can be expanded to allow for sufficient time for discussion and learning activities. The ECE specialist will need to review the presentation materials ahead of time, gather any needed training materials, and make plans to customize the training for the specific audience (see below for additional considerations).





Individual in-service suites can be grouped in a variety of ways to offer a longer workshop or course on a topic. For example, a staff development series for Head Start center staff might feature the in-service suites within the series of *Engaging Interactions* to help staff improve their frequency and use of effective teacher-child interactions. Or, a longer workshop might focus on methods of *Ongoing Child Assessment* and incorporate the in-service suites on anecdotal notes, checklists, video, and work samples. When grouping or bundling the in-service suites for presentation as a series or within a longer workshop, the ECE specialist will want to review all of the individual suites, delete some slides that are repeated in each presentation,

and carefully consider the number and type of learning activities and discussions to take best advantage of the time available.

The in-service suites also offer ways to provide follow-up support for implementation of the practice(s). The short form of the in-service suite may be used as a refresher. The trainers' version contains handouts and job-aids that can be used by the teacher and then checked on by the trainer in follow-up visits. Tools are provided so that supervisors or others who are on-site may provide ongoing observation, feedback, and support.

ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDER

The 15-minute in-service suites are designed for flexible use to meet the needs of the participants as well as the trainer. The trainer will want to assess the needs and interests of the audience either formally or informally. The trainer will also want to understand the characteristics of the participants and their prior learning and job-related experiences. This information is used to shape the professional development. There is increasing evidence about effective professional development and what it takes to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers. The 15-minute in-service suites incorporate some of those features such as integrated content knowledge based on research and practice, opportunities for active learning, demonstrations of the practice, and suggestions for follow-up. In their planning, the professional development provider will want to use: information sharing, demonstrations (live or video), and opportunities to practice and receive feedback. Practice opportunities can be provided through role playing and video analysis. When skill development is the goal, the addition of practice in the work setting with coaching or other ongoing support is important. The ECE specialist can customize the materials in the 15-minute in-service suite to meet the needs of the participants.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

In this section, we offer suggestions to assist ECE specialists in tailoring the in-service suites to the needs of diverse audiences. Professional development providers use a variety of strategies to support full engagement of participants. Consider:

- The prior experience and preparation of participants
- The cultural traditions and linguistic backgrounds of participants
- The learning preferences of participants
- The characteristics of children and families enrolled in the participants' programs



PLANNING FOR TRAININGS

Find out who your audience is:

Participants' characteristics:

- Geographic locations
- Cultural backgrounds
- Languages spoken
- Monolingual, bilingual or multilingual abilities
- Individual needs
- Levels of education
- Roles and experience in Head Start

Characteristics of programs and/or classrooms:

- Geographic locations
- Cultural backgrounds of children and families
- Linguistic backgrounds of children and families
- Children with disabilities and their families
- Teaching staff – backgrounds, languages spoken, related experience and interests
- Volunteers – backgrounds, languages spoken, related experience and interests



SETTING UP THE TRAINING

Things to think about:

- Make sure the content builds on participants' existing knowledge and prior experience.
- Prepare agendas that include many opportunities for interaction, and varied learning activities .
- Include opportunities for participants to share ideas and give feedback.
- Use professional development materials that are meaningful to participants.
 - » Represent the culture and languages of the participants as well as the children and families.
 - » Ask participants to bring examples from their own classrooms and programs.
 - » Provide examples—books, photos, toys, and materials.
 - » Use the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Express Checkout Worksheet (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic>) developed by the National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (NCCLR).
- Create a welcoming professional development environment that reflects the participants' backgrounds as well as the children and families.
 - » Find out what languages the participants speak and prepare welcome materials in appropriate languages.





- Make sure that all participants are able to participate fully.
- Take into consideration participants who may require additional visual or audio support, or additional time.
- Prepare for participants who speak more than one language or those who may not be thoroughly familiarized with academic language in English, arrange for interpretation and translation when possible.
- Refer to the document on the NCCLR website (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic>) for more information on how to work with interpreters.

STRATEGIES TO INCLUDE DURING THE TRAINING

- Use multiple strategies to engage participants.
- Use songs, rhymes and participative movement (i.e., participants walk to another participant and share one piece of new information they learned) as short breaks or transitions from one topic to another.
- Ask participants to draw from their own teaching experiences, or give examples from their classrooms to make the learning more meaningful.
- Have participants share examples that are relevant to the cultural backgrounds of the children and families in their programs.
- Have participants share examples of individualized teaching strategies related to the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) of children in their program.
- After viewing videos, ask participants to share examples from their own teaching.
- Give meaningful feedback that focuses attention on the practice(s).
- Follow up learning activities with opportunities for participants to discuss how to adapt the practice, if needed, for their own classroom.
- Trainers may collect and use their own video examples and learning activities to supplement those provided in the in-service suites.
- Consult with documents provided by the NCCLR including:
 - » *Program Preparedness Checklist*
 - » *Strategies for Supporting All Dual Language Learners*



FOLLOW UP

Follow up and ongoing support are critical to implementation and use of the practices that are introduced in the in-service suites. Some ideas to consider:

- Have participants develop a written plan for how they can use the practice in their own classroom or program.
- Help organize a peer support group.
- Identify next steps for discussion or problem-solving for use in existing professional learning communities.
- Encourage program supervisors to use the *Tools for Supervisors*.
- Schedule follow up through visits, emails, or phone calls.
- Send a follow up activity or reading that supplements or reinforces what was learned in the training.

The purpose of the 15-minute in-service suites is to share information on effective early childhood teaching practices in a way that helps teachers and home visitors better understand effective teaching practices. Each in-service suite includes explanations of that practice as well as photographs and videos to help participants see what the practice looks like. Opportunities are provided for participants to interact with the materials and think about how to use the practice in their own classroom or program. Along with other professional development activities and supports, these in-service suites are designed to help teachers be the best teachers they can be and to help children learn, develop, and thrive.

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For more information, contact us at: NCQTL@UW.EDU or 877-731-0764

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