

MODULE 1

GETTING READY FOR OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS

CONTEXT

Welcome to Unit 2 of *Steps to Success*. This unit focuses on two important skills for your Mentor-Coach work—conducting observations of your protégés and analyzing the data from these observations. These two topics are components of the professional conferencing process that you will learn about in this unit and in Unit 3. As explained in the opening session of Unit 1, early literacy themes are integrated into the mentor-coaching content in each unit. For this unit, the literacy themes are Early Writing and Alphabet Knowledge.

OVERVIEW

- Exercise 1: Completing the Self-Assessment
- Exercise 2: Participating in Online Discussions
- Exercise 3: Gathering Classroom and Staff Assessment Tools

EXERCISE 1: COMPLETING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT

In Unit 1, you learned about the role of self-assessment in *Steps to Success*. To be a truly effective Mentor-Coach, you must be knowledgeable in all facets of early literacy and language development. Being well grounded in the content of these subjects is the basis of work with your protégés. This opening module will give you an opportunity to assess your knowledge about effective practices in developing children's early writing and alphabet knowledge. Taking the time to complete this self-assessment will help you get the most out of the content of Unit 2. It also will help you target areas where you would like to build your knowledge and skills.

Self-Assessment: Teaching Early Writing and Alphabet Knowledge

Below is a set of skills that are important for helping your protégés to use effective practices in Early Writing and Alphabet Knowledge. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your current skills in addressing situations where you need to:

SKILLS	I AM NOT SKILLED IN THIS AREA		I AM SOMEWHAT SKILLED IN THIS AREA		I AM HIGHLY SKILLED IN THIS AREA
1. Know and articulate the Head Start Child Outcomes related to Early Writing and Alphabet Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
2. Help protégés identify age-appropriate strategies for infants and toddlers that support later writing development	1	2	3	4	5
3. Help teaching teams to create literacy-rich classroom environments	1	2	3	4	5
4. Help protégés understand the concept of functional print	1	2	3	4	5
5. Share with protégés ways to create writing and drawing opportunities in all parts of the curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
6. Assist protégés to teach the alphabet in meaningful contexts	1	2	3	4	5
7. Help protégés understand how to create, supply, and support a writing center in the preschool classroom	1	2	3	4	5
8. Help protégés understand and support the developmental stages of writing	1	2	3	4	5
9. Help protégés work with families to use the home to support children’s writing development and alphabet knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5

Reflecting on Your Self-Assessment

Based on the self-assessment, are you ready to guide protégés in using effective practices to encourage children's early writing and learning about the alphabet? Do you feel you need to learn more about these curriculum domains of early literacy? If so, you may want to check additional resources before you take part in the facilitated sessions. These resources are available through the Head Start Information and Publication Center (HSIPC) at <http://www.headstartinfo.org>. There are also Unit 2 References at the back of this manual.

EXERCISE 2: PARTICIPATING IN ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

In the first module of Unit 1, you participated in a facilitated discussion of a vignette describing a particular mentor-coaching issue. For the remainder of the units in *Steps to Success*, you will have the opportunity to engage in a similar activity with Mentor-Coaches from across the country.

In this exercise, you will go to STEP-Net (<http://www.step-net.org>). You will visit the Unit 2 discussion, where you will “talk” with other Mentor-Coaches. A *Steps to Success* staff member will facilitate the discussion. This staff member will answer questions and add postings that will keep the conversation lively. Please follow these steps before you go to STEP-Net.

- 1. Prepare for the discussion.** Read and reflect on the following vignette. Use the space provided to jot down questions or thoughts you wish to share.

Vignette—Evelyn

Evelyn serves as a site supervisor and one of several Mentor-Coaches at JKL Head Start and Early Head Start. Prior to the Mentor-Coach initiative, she conducted one observation in each classroom at her site every six to eight weeks. Following each observation, Evelyn met with each team, shared her notes, and helped the teachers to set future goals.

In her new role as a Mentor-Coach, Evelyn increased her time in each protégé's classroom. She was now observing in each classroom once every two weeks. She hoped that by spending more time in the classroom, she would gain a better sense of each protégé's literacy practices. She also wanted to establish a more-trusting relationship with each protégé, which was difficult to achieve as a site supervisor.

Evelyn really enjoys spending more time in the classroom. When she conducts an observation, she often takes part in the routine and plays with the children while modeling effective literacy practices. She has found that since she spends more time in the classrooms, she has less time to confer with her protégés. As a result, she gives quick verbal feedback and suggestions to her protégés on the spot.

After several months of working as a Mentor-Coach, Evelyn feels extremely frustrated by her protégés' lack of progress. The protégés have not made many changes to the literacy environment or their teaching practices. She is surprised that very few of her suggestions and feedback were incorporated into their practices, since she is spending so much time in their classrooms.

Questions or thoughts I wish to share:

- 2. Log on to STEP-Net.** Follow the steps below to log on to STEP-Net and to register and participate in the discussion.

Directions for Logging on to STEP-Net:

Go to <http://www.step-net.org>. *Steps to Success* will have its own button on the STEP-Net site. You can click on *Steps to Success* to enter the site.

Directions for Participating in the Discussion:

Please join in! When you log on you will notice that others have posted their thoughts. Read their comments and post your questions or comments. Check in often. You will be able to participate in the discussion for several weeks.

EXERCISE 3: GATHERING CLASSROOM AND STAFF ASSESSMENT TOOLS

During the next session, you will have an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of the classroom and staff assessment tools currently used in your program. You will discuss your experiences with the tools and compare these experiences with those of other participants.

For this exercise, simply gather a copy of any observation tools that you use to assess the classroom literacy environment and protégés' language and literacy practices. Please bring these tools with you to the next facilitated session (Unit 2, Module 2).