Head Start A to Z

Ongoing Monitoring

Background

Ongoing Monitoring (OGM) is the Head Start management system that involves systematically reviewing internal and external data to ensure that program goals and objectives are met and that programs are in compliance with regulatory requirements. The HS/EHS program uses OGM to measure program performance, identify areas of concern, make immediate program corrections, and generate reports. The HS/EHS program also uses OGM results as a data source for Self-Assessment.

If a grantee has a delegate agency, an OGM process of that delegate's operations must also exist. The contract between the grantee and a delegate should describe the scope, frequency, and process for corrective action of any identified issues. The delegates' own monitoring process should ensure that its OGM system effectively monitors data used to assess its work toward meeting program goals, objectives, and program compliance with regulatory requirements. There are no specific processes or formats that are mandated for an OGM process.

Whether for a grantee or a delegate agency, OGM systems should call attention to accountability, follow-up, dialogue, and the Self-Assessment process.

Accountability

HS/EHS directors essentially have oversight responsibility to ensure that the HS/EHS OGM system operates effectively:

- Making certain that monitoring procedures are in writing, available, and current
- Being accountable to their managers, who assume the yeoman's share of monitoring responsibilities
- Ensuring that all managing staff are capable of fulfilling their monitoring responsibilities
- Being prepared to offer training as needed to guarantee that monitoring staff will be successful in their OGM role

As OGM is largely a management function, it is important to note that managers are often responsible for supervising teams or staff who have the direct monitoring responsibilities.

Managers are accountable to their teams and should ensure that staff are trained to execute their monitoring responsibilities. They should provide support in helping their team members become adept at being objective and consistent in their monitoring responsibilities. Managers should also hold regular debriefings during monitoring activities.

HS/EHS directors are accountable to their governing body and should report key monitoring results to both the governing body and the Policy Council. Regular reports showing the progress of any corrections should also be provided to the governing body and Policy Council.

Most importantly, HS/EHS programs are accountable to their children and families. Through OGM, programs are able to identify areas of concern and, through a process that includes data analysis and dialogue, determine the best path of corrective action. Children, families, and communities are reliant on the HS/EHS program's ability to enact this process in order to keep the program viable and operating successfully.

Follow-up

Follow-up is integral to an OGM system. According to regional office staff, OGM systems are rendered ineffective when key leaders neglect to "close the loop." This means that when corrective actions are decided, it is of significant importance to include in corrective action strategies time to go back, evaluate, and determine if the proposed corrective action was successful. This also means that the dialogue about the course correction should also address the data and ask, *"Are there other data or new data that should be collected and monitored?"*

Dialogue

 Vogt, Brown, and Isaacs (2003) point out that one of the strongest steps leaders can take is to assist their organizations in discovering the right questions to ask at the right time.[1] One of the key responsibilities of a leader should be to create an infrastructure for dialogue and engagement that encourages others at all levels to develop insightful questions and to search for innovative paths. The degree that HS/EHS directors are able to build a culture of continuous improvement that invites questioning that leads to good dialogue will determine how effectively the program will operate. Marquardt (2005) says that dialogue allows a group to tap the collective wisdom of its members and to see the situation as a collective whole rather than

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[1] Vogt, E. E. Brown, J., & Isaacs, D. (2003). *The art of powerful questions: Catalyzing insight, innovation, and action*. Mill Valley, CA: Whole Systems Associates. Retrieved from
http://www.principals.ca/documents/powerful_questions_article_(World_Cafe_Website).pdf

a fragmented part.[2] An effective OGM system adapts a questioning technique that encourages solution finding dialogue.

Self-Assessment

In this era of Head Start, HS/EHS programs are asked to use OGM data that is collected, analyzed, and aggregated throughout the program year as the data used to conduct the annual Self-Assessment. This is an important concept that has great implications for a HS/EHS OGM system. The annual Self-Assessment creates the ideal time for HS/EHS programs to examine that data—what they have been gathering during the course of the year, through multiple years, and across different data sets—to uncover patterns or trends based on data collected during the OMG process. Programs use OGM to ask, "Are we doing things right (and on time)?" However, they use the annual Self-Assessment to ask, "Are we doing the right things?" An adaptation of Friedman's (2005) Performance Measurement Categories[3] points out three questions that should become a mantra for OGM: (1) *How much are we doing?* and (2) *How well are we doing it*? which leads to the big question that will be evaluated during Self-Assessment: (3) *Will the children, families, and community be better off*?

Overarching Theme

This interactive learning session supports new leaders in better understanding ongoing monitoring through the following:
- Pinpointing elements of an effective ongoing monitoring system
- Stressing the importance of follow-up when developing corrective actions for problem issues
- Introducing and explaining a five-step strength-based perspective that uses questions to generate dialogue and leads to appropriate course correction
- Concluding with an activity that incorporates the information that was highlighted throughout the session

Outcomes
- ➢ Demonstrate the importance of Ongoing Monitoring as a system that is essential to ensuring continuous improvement
- ➢ Define the elements of an effective ongoing monitoring system
- ➢ Use a strength-based model to examine issues and determine the best corrective action

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[2] Marquardt, M. J. (2005). *Leading with questions*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
[3] Friedman, M. (2005). *Trying hard is not good enough*. Victoria, BC: Trafford.

Materials

- Magnifying glasses (optional; available through Oriental Trading Company: http://www.orientaltrading.com/api/search?Ntt=magnifying+glasses)
- Maginfying glass photo (optional)
- Sticky notes: 2" x 2" (2 colors)
- Sticky notes: 4" x 6"
- Envelopes 10" x 13" (one for each table)
- Envelopes 4" x 5 ¾"
- Instructions for *Metaphorically Speaking*
- Elements of An Effective OGM System (cards)
- OGM cover
- Handouts
  - ✓ Nifty Notes
  - ✓ Key Messages
  - ✓ What the Regulations Say: Ongoing Monitoring
  - ✓ Linking OGM, SA and Planning
  - ✓ Elements of an Effective OGM System
  - ✓ Tip sheet: Asking the Right Questions
  - ✓ OGM: Asking the Right Questions
  - ✓ Imagine that . . .
  - ✓ Parent Engagement Bar Graph
  - ✓ Annual Summary of OGM Indicators (one page from services and one page from systems)
  - ✓ Quarterly Summary of OGM
  - ✓ Parts of an Ongoing Monitoring Plan (sample)

Planning Ahead

- Time required for session will vary based on size of group and participants' level of knowledge. Suggested time is 90 minutes to two hours.
- Review the **Background** information (see pages 1-3)
- Optional: Distribute magnifying glasses on the table before the session begins.
- Distribute 4" x 6" Post-it notes on the tables before the session begins.
- Make copies of "Metaphorically Speaking." Before the session begins, place one or two copies on each table.
- Make copies of the handouts. (Note: Creating a workbook is a good strategy to organize multiple handouts. See "OGM cover" under **Materials**.)
- Make sure you have posted chart paper in the room.
- Enclose one set of "Elements of An Effective OGM System" cards in envelopes. One set for each group five.
- Make copies of the role cards. One set for each group of six.

➢ Make a copy of the magnifying glass for emphasis. (**Optional Idea**: Post around training room)

Let's Get Started

1. As participants enter the room, invite them to participate in the "Metaphorically Speaking" pre-session activity. Draw their attention to the instruction card in the center of the table.

   Welcome participants and introduce yourself. If you have a co-facilitator, that person should introduce her or himself, too. Offer the following beliefs about *Head Start A to Z*:

   Say to participants, "Each one of us 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 of what we must do to prepare for the future. All roles are essential for Head Start as a learning organization to continue to grow and flourish.

   "*Head Start A to Z* sessions are 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 to the "Key Messages" handout. Say to participants, "*Head Start A to Z* sessions are based on a set of key messages. For this session, 'Ongoing Monitoring,' we will focus on key message #6."

   Read the key message: "Systems thinking provides a fresh perspective and a 'big-picture lens' that taps into a higher level of analyzing, problem-solving, and strategizing."

   Say to participants, "As leaders you are asked to be systems thinkers. Understanding how systems work allows you to function more effectively and more proactively."

3. Remind the group that there are 10 Head Start management systems. On the second click for this slide, say to participants, "**Ongoing Monitoring** is one of them." Explain that Head Start and Early Head Start services are supported by systems; well-functioning systems support high-quality services; and high-quality services lead to positive outcomes for children and families.
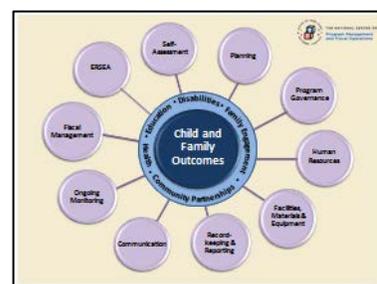
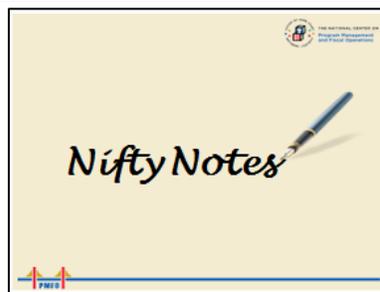|	
4. On the second click say, "All systems in an organization are linked. These systems constitute a set of interacting, interrelated parts that form a complex whole with a specific purpose. And when those systems are operating effectively, they work together like parts of a well-oiled machine."	
5. Also on the second click, say to participants, "As with all organizational systems, Head Start systems are interrelated. When one system is not operating effectively it influences the other systems, therefore affecting services to children and families. In systems that aren't functioning optimally, there certainly may be pockets of quality due to the hard work of high-performing staff; but as a whole, services are likely to be inconsistent. Children and families receiving services in one center may receive a completely different experience than children and families across town in a different center. When systems are out of balance, the program risks its quality plummeting when a high-performing leader leaves. Why? Because there are no systems in place to help the program withstand change." **Note**: You may want to ask some probing questions to have participants elaborate on their experiences of inconsistent systems or services.	
6. Draw participants" attention to the "Nifty Notes" page and say: "The Nifty Notes pages are for you to capture your thoughts, "A-ha!"moments, or any new knowledge you may acquire during this session."	
7. Read outcomes as they are written on the PowerPoint slide.	

8. Introduce the activity, *The OGM Huddle.* Metaphorically speaking, a huddle is like OGM because you come together at times to exchange ideas and make decisions about the best course of action.

Activity—The OGM Huddle: Check in to make sure everyone has a magnifying glass and sticky notes in two colors. Say to participants "Each huddle should have at least one magnifying glass, a blue Post-it note and a yellow Post-it note. Write 'yes' on the blue Post-it note. Write 'no' on the yellow Post-it note."

Ask participant to form huddles of six. Say to participants, "I will read a statement. In your huddle, if you agree that the statement describes OGM, place the blue Post-it note on the magnifying glass. If you disagree and think that the statement does *not* describe OGM, place the yellow sticky note on the magnifying glass. When you have all decided where to place your notes, raise from your huddle a magnifying glass with the color that reveals your answer. You will have 30 seconds to decide on an answer." (**Alternatives: Substitute magnifying glasses for thumbs-up & thumbs down; Yes/No cards; one finger for yes and two fingers for no. There are many other ideas to signify yes or no. Feel free to be creative.**)

Read the statements. After each statement, allow participants to huddle and agree on their response. When the magnifying glasses with the Post-it notes are raised, affirm what you see. Read the answer.

a. Statement: OGM is an integral part of the planning cycle. Everyone has a role in the process.
   Answer: Yes. Head Start encourages comprehensive, integrated approaches to service delivery. It is not appropriate to think in terms of isolated service areas with isolated goals and responsibilities. Everyone contributes to program quality; and when a part of the system is not functioning effectively, it is the responsibility of everyone within each designated role to support and contribute to the course correction.

b. Statement: OGM can be successfully accomplished by reviewing records.
   Answer: No. Direct observation of service delivery and daily performance—as well as checking records and reviewing reports—are important to successfully carrying out the responsibilities of OGM.

c. Statement: OGM and the Office of Head Start Monitoring Reviews serve the same purpose.
   Answer: No. OGM is an internal process that looks at a program's progress in meeting the specific steps toward implementing plans, accomplishing goals and

objectives, and complying with federal requirements. The data gathered is analyzed internally to determine the issues, and the program has the opportunity to fix its problems.

During the Office of Head Start Monitoring Review, OHS gathers data about the grantee and uses the information to evaluate multiple levels of performance, which includes determining program strengths, concerns, noncompliances, and deficiencies.

d. Statement: As a new director you have to prioritize. You know that Self-Assessments are conducted annually and federal monitoring events are conducted according to OHS's new aligned monitoring system schedule. It is ok to place OGM lower on your list of priorities.

   Answer: No. OGM is crucial to ongoing oversight, identifying concerns, overseeing and ensuring staff are fulfilling their roles, and ensuring identified concerns are addressed and that all these things are identified and addressed in a timely fashion. As a new director, it is the OGM information that is going to guide you to the areas of priority and focus for your work in overseeing the program and ensuring compliance and progress on goals and objectives. Additionally, thorugh OGM you will also be able to identify the areas of the program that are operating well.

e. Statement: If the grantee has delegates, the delegates' monitoring process should be the same as that of their grantee.

   Answer: No. If the grantee has delegates, an ongoing monitoring process of the delegates' operations must also exist. The contract between the grantee and the delegate should describe the scope, frequency, and resolution process for any identified problems. The delegates' own monitoring process should ensure that its operations effectively implement the Head Start or Early Head Start program.

                  The grantee's monitoring of delegate operations is to ensure that the delegates' operations effectively implement the Head Start or Early Head Start program.

                  Grantees and delegate agencies can use OGM as an opportunity to build cooperative relationships by communicating often about the results of their OGM and exchanging ideas about planned improvements.
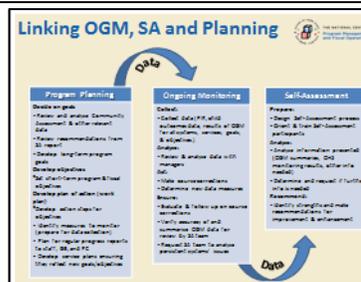
Move to the *Metaphorically Speaking* sticky notes, and read what the participants wrote: "A

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magnifying glass is like ongoing monitoring because . . . " After you have finished reading their statements, transition to the next PowerPoint slide.	
9. Ask the question, "How is this picture NOT like ongoing monitoring?" Listen to responses from the group. Usual responses include: looking from far away, keeping a secret, viewing through rose-colored glasses, spying on someone. On the second click say to participants, "An effective OGM system relies on trust, team work and transparency. This picture does not reflect OGM." Transition to the next slide.	
10. Say to participants, "This chart really helps us see how OGM, program planning, and Self- Assessment (SA) are linked and how data is the linchpin that brings the three systems together. During your program planning you not only determine goals and objectives. You also plan for what data you will need to collect and monitor to establish if you are moving towards attaining goals and objectives and meeting compliance requirements. Throughout the	

year you know what data you are monitoring and why. When it is time for your program Self-Assessment, it is the data that you have been collecting and analyzing during OGM throughout the year that will be submitted to the Self-Assessment team. It is critical for the OGM system to operate effectively. |

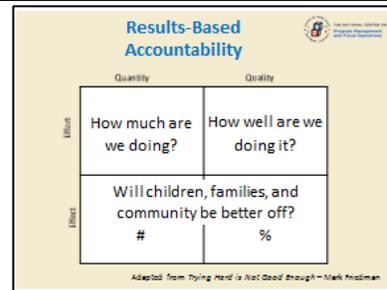|	
11. Say to participants, "Planning involves many skills, such as thinking analytically, using good judgment, and demonstrating a capacity to learn from experience while looking to the future. Planning also involves creativity and instinct, a willingness to change directions, and, at times, taking a calculated risk."	

     Say to participants, "Planning in Head Start is both a process that contributes to continuous improvement and a process that produces documents or products. Head Start regulations call for developing several different planning supports, including the community assessment, Self-Assessment, program goals and objectives, and action plan(s) for implementing services. The plans are created through the planning process. Let's look at this Program Planning Cycle. It shows the ongoing nature of program planning and suggests when other systems and activities influence this process.

You see that within the planning cycle, there is goal development and development of an implementation plan or plan of action. The inner circle is where the OGM system is in full operation. Once you begin to implement the action plan, you evaluate the progress. If something isn't operating well you must make course corrections.
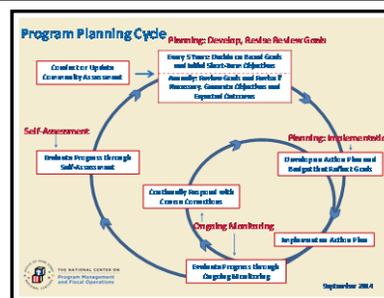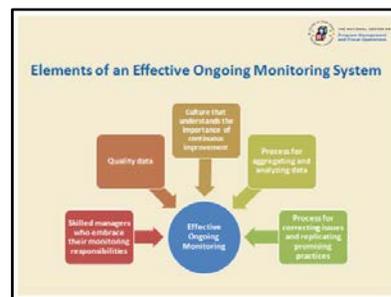
Say to participants, "It is this process that keeps the management team asking the important questions about how to best meet the needs of children, families, and communities."

12. Say to participants, "Here is a diagram adapted from Mark Freidman's *Trying Is Not Good Enough.*" Ask participants, "How is this diagram relevant to OGM?" Ask participants to spend 5 minutes at their table. After 5 minutes, bring the groups back together and ask them to share their thoughts. Explain to participants, this graphic is a great image of the Head Start's paradigm shift, the 5-Year Project Period. Year 5 is the culminating moment when you will be asked to report the impact you have had on children, families and communities. Surely you won't wait until the 4th year to start analyzing data that responds to this question. In an ONGOING way you will monitor the data that you collect, aggregate and analyze. The questions How much are we doing? and How well are we doing it? should be the mantra for your OGM system. It will keep you laser-focused on the big 5th year question The impact? Because you are always considering the end game… Will children, families and communities be better off?	
13. Say to participants, "OGM systems are locally designed. Grantees and delegates must be knowledgeable about the most recent federal regulations that govern HS/EHS and must incorporate them when designing their OGM system. From a systems-thinking perspective, we know that when OGM is fully integrated into the other systems, program operations flow more smoothly and problems can be detected and corrected more easily, which is the important function of the OGM system. Let's consider the Elements of an Effective OGM System." Call out each element. Make sure every table has a set of "OGM Element" cards.	
14. **Activity: OGM Systems Experts –** Check in to make sure participants are in groups of five. Give each group a set of the "OGM Element" cards. Explain to the participants that they will have 10 minutes to discover the importance of these elements as each relates to OGM. Group members choose one of the five "OGM Element" cards. After all cards have been distributed within the groups, everyone stands and finds others who have chosen the same card. Participants with the same cards work together to brainstorm important facts or details about the element. Participants write the facts and details on their "Nifty Notes" page. They can also write short summaries about the element. After 10 minutes, group members return to their original group of five. Participants will have 10 minutes to take turns sharing the facts, summaries or details they listed from their element groups. Other group members who are listening should take notes.	

As a facilitator walk around and listen to the "OGM Element" card group conversations to make sure the important facts they list include details you consider important.

(IDEA: Use music to transition the groups)

15. Review by calling out each of the elements and stating or restating some of the key characterisitics as listed below:
**Skilled mangers who embrace their monitoring roles** are managers who

- implement a system of supervision where staff receive feedback,
- hold team debriefing sessions during monitoring activities,
- recognize they may not have direct monitoring responsibilities but manage staff who do, and
- possess the ability to manage conflict.

16. **Quality data is data** that is

- relevant. The information is connected to why it is being collected.
- Timely. It adds credibility to the process of data analysis and decision-making and is captured as quickly as possible.
- Accurate and free from error
- Complete. No information is missing.
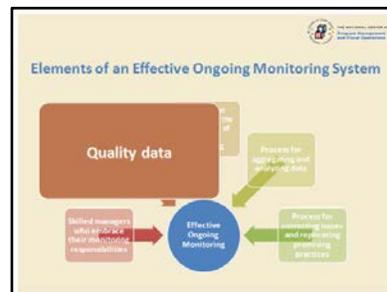
17. **A culture that understands continuous improvement**

- embraces accountability;
- grows, learns, and contributes to the overall goal;
- empowers staff;
- instills commitment; and
- supports problem solving to get things done.

18. A **process for aggregating and analyzing data**

- assigns responsibility for gathering significant data,
- looks at data that helps see the big picture, and
- uses the data that leads to answers.

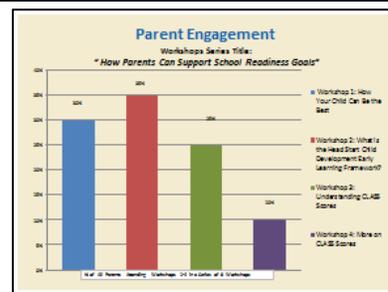|	
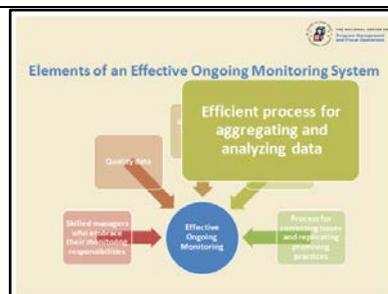
19. A **process for correcting issues and replicating promising practices**
 	
     • Includes follow-up,
     • makes changes to the plan of action,
     • determines what new data needs to be collected,
     • looks at the 'bright spots', and
     • identifies promising practices that can be replicated.	
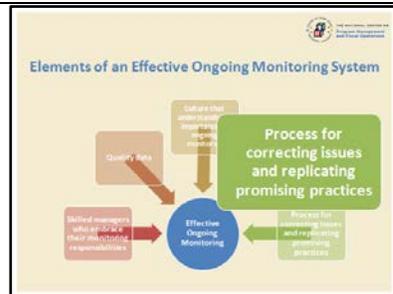
20. Explain to participants that, as new leaders they can't be everywhere. Ask participants, "How, as a leader, are you able to ensure that the OGM system in your program is operating effectively?"
Give participants 5 minutes to buzz. Bring the group back together. Ask for responses. You may want to chart the responses. Ensure that these comments are included:
 	
     • **Model** what **accountability** looks like.
     • **Celebrate** successes that are a direct result of ongoing monitoring.
     • Put an **oversight** committee in place.
     • Be **intentional** in that you engage your management team in the same manner you want them to manage their teams.
     • Ensure that managers have **time to balance** their monitoring responsibilities with other responsibilities.
     • Make sure assigned monitors are **compatible with their role.**
     • Have **monitoring procedures** in writing and keep them up to date; make sure that follow-up is part of the procedures. "Close the loop."
     • Provide **training and supervision** for staff who have monitoring responsibilities.	
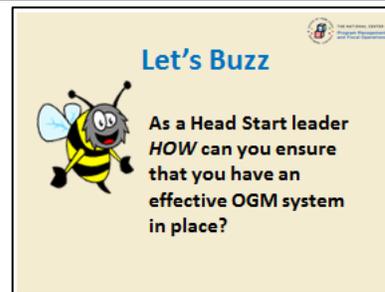
21. Say to participants, "Developing a process for corrective action is not a didactic, linear process. There is a need to ask questions to find out what is happening and to encourage dialogue. As we discussed earlier, questions are important to get to a deeper level of thinking . . . good questions lead to good dialogue . . . which often leads to good solutions for issues that require corrective action. Share with participants that they have a tip sheet, "Asking the Right Questions" that they will find helpful. Say to participants, "As you, your management team, and other monitors review OGM data,	

everyone is usually laser-focused on the issues that need to be corrected. Ron Fry, a Professor at Case Western Reserve University, suggests that you may be more successful if you approach the problem initially from a strength-based perspective. In addition, you can effectively use "great questions" to examine issues identified during OGM."

Guide participants' attention to the "OGM: Asking the Right Questions" handout. Say to participants, "The five steps incorporate examples of great questions. Notice that these OGM steps are important to an internal corrective action process and get to the heart of the matter quickly." Briefly walk through the chart. Emphasize that Step 1, "Lead with strengths," is focused on what the data says is working well in the targeted area that requires corrective action. Call out the titles for the remaining four steps. Emphasize that follow-up is critical. Lack of follow-up after a course correction has been a BIG issue in OGM systems. Follow-up helps "close the loop."

22. Say to participants, "You are going to use this handout to guide you through the final part of this session." Ask participants to return to their groups of six as they were for the OGM Huddle. Make sure every group has an envelope with the six role cards. Guide participants to the handout "Imagine that." Say to participants, " Imagine that you and your Head Start management team have identified an area that requires course correction. Read the "Imagine that" scenario and follow steps 1–4. You will need to refer to the "Parent Engagement" bar graph and the "OGM: Asking the Right Questions" handout. You have 20 minutes. Please let us know if you have questions." After 20 minutes bring the group back together and debrief.	
23. End the session by sharing the samples of "Quarterly Summary of OGM", "Parts of an Ongoing Monitoring Plan (sample)", and "Annual Summary of OGM Indicators." Explain to participants, "we've talked about many things, such as the importance of follow-up, asking the right questions to generate good dialogue, the importance of accountability. These samples have the ingredients for an effective OGM system. Take the smples back to your proram. Evaluate them . . . make modifications . . . use as your team sees fit." Thank you!	