



EDUCATION MANAGER

A REFLECTION

ON SUCCESS

First let's see how Deb and her colleagues collaborated to establish SR preschool goals for their program. Deb reviewed the guidance (Head Start Program Performance Standards 45 CFR 1307) and other relevant documents (HSCDELF, Framework for Effective Practice) and familiarized herself with the contents. She realized the importance of all management being part of the SR process and encouraged them to review the requirements as well. In addition to Deb, the management team consisted of

Jordan, the Health Manager,

Nicole, the Disabilities and Mental Health Manager,

Julie, the Nutrition Manager, and

Shawn, the Family Services Manager.

The management team met several times to:

- Have a heart-to-heart discussion about what School Readiness means and how children in their programs were doing. Were they really ready for kindergarten?
- Review the [HSCDELF and state guidelines](#).
- Identify key players and partners for this process (parents, teachers, LEAs, community partners etc.)
- Establish contact and set up meetings with partners in order to gather their input on SR Goals
- Review relevant program data such as Community and Self-Assessment, and PIR to identify the unique needs of the populations they serve.

Deb and the Family Services Manager, Shawn, developed a plan which would offer options for families to share input on goals and exchange information on children's progress.

All of this information was taken into consideration as they developed SR preschool goals for their program in the [5 essential domains](#) as outlined in the law. They based these on guidance from NCQTL, and the [NCQTL example preschool goals](#) that are closely linked to the HSDCELF.

The team also worked closely with their TA Specialist using her expertise and resources to support them through this process.

Let's take a look at how they work closely together to create and implement an action plan for achieving their program's SR goals.

Knowing the importance of a well thought out plan, the team spent a considerable amount of time on this step. As they worked on a plan for achieving their SR goals, the team quickly realized that:

- They had procedures in place that did not need to be replicated in yet another document; they decided to revise their existing content area plans instead of creating a new document
- All staff and parents need to be educated on the SR goals, and on strategies for promoting these
- Quality data would be a key factor in demonstrating children's progress and making program decisions going forward.

Deb, as the Ed. Manager, launched a program wide PD campaign to educate staff and parents on the SR goals. She was careful to emphasize the importance of what the staff already knew and were doing to avoid the 'one more thing to do' syndrome. As she thought about ways to get more buy-in from the staff, Deb decided to educate them on the achievement gap to help them understand the 'why' of all they do.

Deb also reviewed the current research-based curriculum, and program-wide assessment tool to ensure that these supported and assessed progress on the SR goals. She realized that the curriculum did not adequately cover Math skills and made a recommendation to purchase a supplemental curriculum to address this gap.

As part of the program's bi-weekly staff meetings, Deb and the classroom teams worked through the [NCQTL Alignment Review Tool](#) to see how their curriculum and assessment fit with their new School Readiness goals.

The education team already used an assessment tool that would provide information on children's progress toward School Readiness goals as well as progress in the curriculum.

But, Deb was a little worried about the accuracy of the data and the completeness of data collection.

As a team, the content area managers brainstormed around:

- The kinds of data they already gathered on a regular basis
- What additional data might be needed
- Whether they could get the same data from one tool versus several to avoid replicating efforts
- What systems they had in place to ensure data quality.

It was decided by the team to use the [NCQTL Framework for Effective Practice](#) to structure their planning around the integral elements of quality teaching and learning. They also started a data collection plan using guidelines from the Learning from Assessment Toolkit (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/eecd/Assessment/Ongoing%20Assessment/lfa.html>)

that identified what data needed to be collected on an ongoing basis, when the data would be collected and who would be responsible for collecting which data.

During their discussions, questions arose about:

- whether the staff possessed the knowledge and skills to implement the elements with fidelity
- if not, why not
- whether the PD being provided was leading to a change in practice at the classroom level, and
- how the management could address the above.

Some self-reflection also led to the team realizing they themselves needed support with the data piece as well. It became clear that staff needed additional training.



As a result of this conversation, the team requested and received training on data. They also began to revisit their PD plan to think about how they might provide staff the support to implement elements of QTL with fidelity. Follow-up to trainings and ongoing support to staff was identified as a major factor in ensuring quality of QTL.

Armed with information from their data training, the team set about revising the Education Plan to include gathering, analyzing, and ensuring quality of data. They included procedures in their existing content area plan/s around data that identified what data needed to be collected on an ongoing basis, when the data would be collected and who would be responsible for collecting which data. The plan also included details on tools, training of staff, follow-up, spot checks on quality and completeness of data, details on aggregation and analysis such as timelines, responsibilities, units of analysis etc.

Team members felt excited and confident – ready to find out just how well prepared the children were.

Realizing that they couldn't address everything at once, the team prioritized items and developed short and long term goals. Short term goals included:

- Implementing the newly developed procedures related to data, using guidelines from the NCQTL 15 minute in-service suites on [ongoing child assessment](#) and additional sources.
- Ensuring quality of data through staff reliability trainings, spot checks, Education Manager conducting assessments with struggling teachers etc.
- Assessing the quality of classroom interactions and environments to identify whether these were at [expected levels](#), and to inform PD planning and inform program decisions in the following year.

Deb reminds herself that data collection happens 3 times per year. See how she makes sure that teachers continued on-going assessment and meet with each team periodically to share and make sense of child data.

With all the data collection activity Deb wanted to make sure that teaching didn't falter. She had teachers create bulletin boards outside their classrooms to highlight the teaching and learning activities that were linked to School Readiness goals.

In the absence of the 'yet to be hired' data expert, the responsibility of aggregating child outcomes data fell to Deb. The program was already using an online assessment tool, however, staff were not familiar with all the capabilities of the tool. Deb used the online trainings of the tool to familiarize herself with the reporting system and ensured staff also received training on entering and accessing their data in order to use it for individualizing and activity planning.

Realizing she could not possibly monitor each classroom on her own, Deb set about selecting a random sample of classrooms to assess for classroom quality. She used a research based instrument for this purpose.

Deb also began to monitor teachers' data entry online by conducting spot checks on a weekly basis.

She followed up by congratulating staff for a job well-done and co-entering data to support teachers struggling with this task.

She used the online system to aggregate data at three checkpoints during the year:

- Baseline (to demonstrate where children were upon entry to the program)
- Mid point (to demonstrate growth at mid-year and identify areas of focus for rest of the year based on results)
- End point (to demonstrate child progress towards SR goals over the course of a year).

Using this system, Deb produced charts with key information (i.e., the percentage of children at proficiency in each domain) that showed how well children were progressing towards their SR goals.

Since Deb's program was using a research-based instrument for assessing children, Deb had a basis of comparison (norms) for reviewing scores as she aggregated child outcomes data and examined the data for patterns. The baseline data aggregation revealed some red flags!

- All children scored at or above norms
- Some 3 and 4 year olds scored at 5 year levels..... at the beginning of the year!

Read more to see what Deb did to better understand these findings and develop plans for improvement.

Deb made a note to make further checks on accuracy of the data. She also wondered if all teachers completely understood the assessment items.

Deb continued to dig deeper with the data, dis-aggregating by sub-groups of children. The management team identified the sub-groupings based on PIR data and the questions they were trying to answer using data.

- Jordan and Julie (Health and Nutrition Managers) wanted to know how children with health issues were doing as compared to healthy children
- Similarly, Nicole (Disabilities, Mental Health Manager) wanted to know how children with IEPs were faring as compared to their peers
- Shawn (PFCE Manager) was interested in learning about children with low attendance, first time versus returning children, and children whose parents were highly engaged in the program
- Deb, in addition to the above, was interested in ensuring all children regardless of gender, age, primary language at home and race, made comparable progress on SR goals.

They prioritized their questions and dug into the data.

The data showed no significant differences between children across sub-groups, except for children with IEPs who made variable progress across domains, scoring for example, better in physical development but lower in language.

The lack of differences across sub-groups, however, raised Deb's suspicions about the quality of the data.

Refusing to be daunted, and knowing that change takes time, Deb then embarked on a series of bi-weekly interactive

in-services during staff meetings to retrain all teachers on the assessment tool and ensure they were reliable. She also made sure that teachers were familiar with the assessment tool's approach of scoring children along a two-year continuum of developmental milestones and skills.

Deb followed-up by visiting classrooms, using [supervisor tools](#) to help her make targeted observations and give constructive feedback.

As the year progressed, Deb focused on spot checking data for completeness and accuracy. She also worked on jointly conducting assessments and co-entering data with some staff who she had concerns about in order to provide immediate feedback and ensure reliability.

While the mid-point data aggregation showed that children scored lower than at baseline, the mid-point scores were more in line with the norms, demonstrating the positive effects of the retraining efforts and data spot checks.

As the team began to dig deeper with the data, they realized that they were actually having fun with it! The possibilities were endless and they could slice and dice their data in so many ways. However, they had to remain focused on the questions they wanted answered and not lose themselves in data!

As Deb and the rest of the team continued their efforts into the following year, the quality of data showed a marked improvement, allowing them to use it to make program improvements. Some changes implemented were:

- More thoughtful PD based on data using [NCQTL in-service suites on ongoing child assessment](#).
- Providing follow-up and ongoing support to teachers with lowest scores (this decision was made with the realization that the program did not have sufficient resources to provide one-on-one follow-up to all teachers)
- Pairing teachers with higher scores on classroom quality and child outcomes with teachers who needed additional support
- Having a 'Master Teacher' at each site selected from existing staff, who would use NCQTL Practice-Based Coaching guidelines (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/practice-based-coaching.pdf>) as a model to mentor colleagues in addition to her regular duties (a small raise to these Master teachers was found to be more economical than hiring full time mentors and also raised staff morale and motivation)
- Recognizing staff efforts at meetings and having teachers share how improvement in their assessment practices resulted in better learning outcomes for children.
- Additional efforts toward ensuring quality of data
- Providing teachers with more planning time
- Attendance campaigns to improve attendance
- Focused Family Engagement campaigns
- Thoughtful and focused use of TA.

...And so, as the story goes, when the review team came, the program team was prepared!



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

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