

Instructional Leadership Part III: Exploring the Essentials of Ambitious Instruction and Teacher Collaboration

Stephenie Hickman: Hello, everyone. Welcome. I'm Stephenie Hickman with the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. Thanks so much for joining us today for this final session of the Front Porch webinar series "Digging Deeper on the What and How of Instructional Leadership." I can't believe we're here, and we're at the end. This series has been amazing. I'm so excited to also be joined once again by two colleagues from the Ounce of Prevention, Jessica and Amanda. I will go ahead and let you both introduce yourselves.

Jessica Haremza Diop: Hello, everyone. My name is Jessica Haremza Diop, and I am an early childhood practice consultant at the Ounce of Prevention. I have been in the early educational field for over 20 years. Started as a teacher and have experience as a director in Early Head Start, Head Start program.

Amanda Stein: Hi, everyone. My name's Amanda Stein, and I'm the director of Research and Evaluation at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, and I'm a local evaluation partner for the Educator Learning Network. As a former Head Start teacher, myself, home visitor, and professional development provider turned researcher, I like to strive to build a strong evidence base and to help translate research and evaluation findings and data for early childhood practitioners, for program and systems leaders, policymakers – and even for parents. My research efforts focus on improving access and advancing the definition, measurement, and implementation of high-quality practices and organizational conditions in the early childhood field, and two of the most important are the ones we'll be talking about today.

Stephenie Hickman: Well, thank you both. We're thrilled again that you're here and can't wait to get started. Before we do, I just wanted to remind everybody kind of where we've come from in this series. So, the first part, we were really talking about those organizational conditions necessary for effective teaching practices, and then a couple months ago, we took a little deeper dive on the what and how of effective instructional leadership, and today, we're going to be exploring those ambitious instructions and teacher collaboration. So, I know that we're in for a treat with both of you here, and just wanted to go over a couple webinar features — sorry about that — before we get started. So, on the bottom of your screen, you will see a series of what we call "widgets." This is your opportunity to kind of click on any one of those, see what they're about. They're each realizable and removable. If you have any questions during the webinar, you can certainly click on that yellow "help" widget. There are frequently asked questions in there, and there's some support. We also invite you to use that purple question and answer, or Q&A widget, for any technical questions that you might have or specific questions for Amanda or Jessica. The resources for today's webinar are in that green resource widget. And then we will be using the group chat, that blue group chat feature. Some of you are already in there saying hello. So, feel free to open that and interact with each other. And then there's some tips for a webinar, both in English and Spanish, and also you'll see some English and Spanish captioning. So again, these are resizable and removable to customize your

experience today. So, with that, let's go ahead and get started, and I will turn it over to Amanda.

Amanda: OK. Thank you so much. Stephenie. I'm going to start us off by reviewing today's session objectives. So, at the end of our time together today, we're hopeful that you should be able to really recognize the significance of intentional teaching practices to both positive family and child outcomes, to identify the importance of collaborative and job-embedded professional learning routines to support classroom instruction, teaching, and interaction, and to understand the focused teaching cycle and how it encourages collaborative intentional classroom instruction. As you'll recall from the previous two — for those of you that joined us for the previous two segment in this Front Porch series — what we know is that early childhood programs and settings are really complex organizations and that what occurred in early childhood classrooms is influenced by the policies, the practices, and the relationships across the entire program. Research focused on particular organizational aspects of early childhood settings suggests that programs with a supportive climate, culture, and routine are also those that are more likely to exhibit higher-quality implementation and enhance children's learning. Our research suggests that a simultaneous focus on strengthening classroom practices and on those organizational contexts enabling effective implementation of those practices makes it more likely that practitioners, schools, centers will be able to realize meaningful and sustained improvements in classroom quality and student outcomes. So, what do we mean when we say collaborative teacher? This framework begins with a focus on the classroom where the work of school, teaching, and learning occurs. How well the teacher does with his or her students depends on multiple other domains — or subsystem — within the program. One of these areas is collaborative teachers or collaborative staff, if we want to define that more broadly, and strong leaders ... Collaborative teachers is defined as occurring when strong leaders champion professional collaboration at the pathway to excellent early childhood education. Leaders build professional capacity through ongoing job-embedded professional learning opportunities. Leaders ... Effective leaders protect frequent and routine times to facilitate and participate in staff collaboration, to define strategies for improvement, and to solve problems that impede progress at the organization level and at the classroom level. Collaborative teachers also use data together consistently to reflect on their evidence-based practices and to improve children's learning and healthy development and all staff are invested in their own and in their colleagues professional growth. All staff are really active partners with families for continuous program. So, when we use the term ambitious instruction, what do we mean? Having collaborative teachers is an important part of strong early learning programs, and teachers that are collaborative and engaged and invested in ambitious instruction in the classroom will help build an even stronger program. Ambitious instruction is defined as strong leaders and staff who hold strong commitments to crafting learning that is inquiry-based and developmentally appropriate, and those experiences help children achieve developmental goals. All adults, all staff in the program endorse and use early learning and developmental standards and specify those learning goals and assessment information to examine children's progress. Staff provide children guidance that articulates and refines the what and the why of inquiry-based teaching and learning and staff participate in reflective communities of practice, professional learning groups, and reflective supervisory dialogue and feedback to support transfer to practice. This

inquiry-based collaborative guidance asks teachers to plan enriching explorations that build on children's prior knowledge, experiences, and skills, and target their social- emotional development and academic content and skills, such as their literacy, math, science, and the arts. ... Teachers who are doing ambitious instruction are able to differentiate instructional goals, materials, and activities. They reflect and plan intentionally to facilitate learning through interactions that are emotionally supportive, organized, instructionally meaningful, and support cultural awareness and sensitivity. And all staff partner with families to extend meaningful learning experiences both at home and in the early learning setting. In addition, their systems for continuous practice and improvement, which use research-based curricula and assessments that are coordinated and coherent across the entire program. So, now that we kind of have a better sense of what we mean when we say collaborative teachers or staff and ambitious instruction, we're going to dig a little bit deeper into each of these concepts. So first, we're gonna take a look at some of the evidence base behind the significance of intentional teaching practices to positive family and child outcomes. So, why is it that intentional teaching practices matter? Well, research in early childhood settings indicate that teacher collaboration improved teacher effectiveness and yields meaningful improvements in children's achievement. The degree of workplace support for professional learning and collaboration with peers has been found to be central to continuous improvement in classroom practice. In fact, two preschool-focused randomized controlled trials that compared traditional workshop training to weekly in-class mentoring from exemplary peers and weekly peer collaboration can dig into the curriculum together. In both of those trials, teachers in a collaboration condition reported greater satisfaction with their professional learning, higher rates of trust and appreciation for their peers, and had observations at the end of the year — observations of their teaching practices that indicated teachers providing greater emotional support and talking with children more frequently and in more cognitively complex ways. Extensive research has also linked developmentally appropriate and instructionally meaningful teacher-child interaction. In other words, those kinds of interactions that prompt children's thinking and develop their concepts, knowledge, vocabulary has linked that to gains in children's learning outcomes. Findings from national studies indicate that preschool children who spend more time engaged with teachers who implement these developmentally appropriate practices demonstrate larger gains at the end of the year in measures of language, literacy, and math. So, one can see why a focus on the quality of instruction and interaction is so key. Underscored in the early childhood research is the importance of teacher-goal orientation and intentionality. So, really understanding those learning objectives for all students and for individual students and doing so in a developmentally appropriate way to develop children's early literacy, early math, and expressive language skills. This is especially important for low-income or other otherwise vulnerable children. Major longitudinal studies of effective classroom practices and pedagogy have found that more positive practices are associated with positive child outcomes and that that pedagogy of those programs that were characterized by teaching high-quality and ambitious instruction involves sustained, shared thinking between teachers and the children, time spent working one on one or among small group work and that the leaders and staff in those setting really viewed educational and social development as complementary and of equal importance in the early years. Other research work has found strong ambitious instruction can involve a commitment to stronger really cognitive press and high expectations of student's

learning. Finally, what you see here, in this particular graph, if you take a look at the left-hand side of the graph, you'll see that across the board, effective instructional leadership and collaborative teachers, the aspect of high-quality programs — one of the aspects of high-quality programs that we're focused on today are showing positive relationships with scores in all three of the class domains, and the class domains, as many of you know, is a measure of teacher interactions and practice and observation-based measure. And as you can see in programs where collaborative teachers, where more collaboration among teachers and staff was happening more readily, you could also see associations with higher scores on all three domains of the class — emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. The strongest correlations are between collaborative teachers and domain scores on classroom organization and instructional support. The same body of work has found — although not pictured in this graph — has found that programs with collaborative staff also have higher average student attendance rate. The difference in attendance between strongly organized versus weakly organized early-childhood programs can add up to a lot of extra instructional time. For example, a small percentage point difference, like 6 percent, in average student attendance between programs, the strongest collaborative teachers versus the weakest — if you had a program here that had 180 days in the school year, then, on average, students in those states with stronger collaborative teacher scores attended pre-K on average for an additional 11 days or more over the course of the year. So, it equates to almost two more weeks of time spent learning in the classroom. So, first we have a short video clip for you. Materials from today's session has come from parts of the Educare Best Practices training. These trainings provide research, the lessons learned, and experiences from across the Educare learning network of schools. The learning experiences are based on a combination of leading early childhood organizations professional standards and competency, including NAEYC, Head Start and Early Head Start, and the interstate school leaders licensure consortium, or the ISLLC. Let's take a look at the video.

[Video begins]

Narrator: Welcome to Educare Best Practices Training. Our training program supports early childhood professionals in providing high-quality services that prepare young children and their families for success. Educare offers four training modules. Data utilization, embedded professional development, high-quality teaching practices, and intensive family engagement. We share practices developed from our own continuous quality improvement efforts and from early education research. Educare shares your commitment to providing the highest quality early learning programs to young children. We do this through our national network of effective early learning schools, professional development initiatives, and federal and state advocacy efforts. Working together with you, we can ensure that more young children across the country can benefit from high-quality early learning programs.

[Video ends]

Amanda: So, now that we've done that overview, we would like to turn our attention to kind of digging deeper into each of these domains. The first of which is collaborative job embedded professional learning routines to support classroom instruction. And to get your wheels turning here, we have a poll question for all of those of you that are participating in the Front Porch

webinar today. So, turn your attention to the screen, and we'll take a look at this question together about, which of these routines are considered collaborative, job-embedded professional learning routines? And your options include data dialogue, study groups, lesson study, team lesson planning, interdisciplinary meetings, all of the above, or none of the above. So, if you would go ahead and enter your response now through the webinar screen. So, we have ... Looks like about a little over 100 folks joining us today, about 120. And I'm ... And only heard from about 10 percent of them at this point. Oh, now we're getting some more people. So, it looks like the majority of those folks ... Attendees that have responded thus far think that all of the above listed are job-embedded professional learning routines. And we have a few folks that are picking among data dialogue, study group, lesson study, team lesson planning. OK. So, in fact, all of the above are considered job-embedded professional learning routines, and I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Jessica to dig into those learning routines and to the focus teaching cycle a little bit more with us. All of the above was the answer. Here we go. Almost at 90 percent.

Jessica: Thank you, Amanda. So, as Amanda mentioned, we are going to spend some time thinking together about collaborative teachers and specifically job-embedded learning routines, and then talk a little bit about a resource or a framework that you can use in helping your program teachers to really make sure they're capitalizing on these learning routines when they're engaged to them. So, as you all identified in the poll results, all of the routines listed are job-embedded learning routine. Data dialogue, study group, lesson study, team lesson planning, and interdisciplinary meetings are all ways Head Start programs can really support collaboration between program staff and influence ambitious instruction in the classroom. All of the routine listed take place during the program day and focus on the work of teaching and learning. Do any of you currently have any of these routines in place at your program? Maybe you call them something different or they're embedded within a program. Feel free to share in the chat if there is any of these routines that you are already doing at your program or are working on in your program currently. As was discussed in the second webinar of this series, an important part of both the early ed essentials of ambitious instruction and collaborative teaching is job-embedded professional learning. Job-embedded professional learning. is what happens on the worksite, in the child care program during work hours. It supports the complex work of teaching, and it's focused on what young children's learning needs are, what challenges there are in the practice, and it propels the learning and other improvement goals of the program. It's really important for us to emphasize that this is a deliberate professional development experience focused on children's learning needs. It has a focus on learning and improvement goals of the program, and this work is grounded in the appropriate practices in early childhood that really targets that complex work of teaching and learning. So, as we get into a discussion thinking about high-quality teaching practices and collaborative experiences, we are going to think about how these practices do not happen by accident. They are intentional, purposeful, and thoughtfully planned. So today, as we focus on ambitious instruction and collaborative teaching, we're going to narrow our focus specifically to the job-embedded professional learning routine of team lesson planning. As you saw, there's a lot of different kind of job-embedded professional learning routines that are happening across Head Start programs, but today, for time's sake, we will just talk a little about collaborative team

lesson planning. I'm sure that we agree that it is important for lesson planning to be happening in our Head Start classroom, but we must pay attention to how it is structured, who's involved, and be sure to prep that time for it to consistently happen. As you think about the routine of lesson planning in your own program or the programs that you are supporting, who in those classrooms are doing the planning? So, we have another poll question for you. So, just in your experience in your program or the program that you're supporting, who's doing the bulk of lesson planning? Is it the lead teacher planning alone? Is the lead teacher working with a coach to plan? Is the lead teacher planning with an assistant teacher? Are they planning with a coach? Or, is the entire instructional team planning together? And I'm going to give you a few minutes to get your answers in. Well, it looks like we have some varied answers on this. A few more minutes, for everyone to respond. Alright. So, here are results. And as you can see, there's some kind of pie responses here for the lead teacher plans alone or the lead teacher is planning with an assistant teacher, and then another percentage – around 30 percent of you – saying that the entire teaching team plans together. So, best practice would tell us that planning together as a team is an important factor in ensuring that ambitious instruction is really happening throughout the program day. So, why is it so important that the teaching team is planning together and working collaboratively? Early childhood professionals need to be given time to connect and collaborate with their peers. When teachers are siloed and do not have an opportunity to collaborate with others, it produces isolation that then leads to burnout. Working collaboration with each other, it challenges and supports teachers thinking. It supports their beliefs and their instructional practices. Collaboration creates a sense of community and a shared responsibility amongst program staff and can shift and improve school culture. When teaching teams have that time to sit and talk together, they start to form a strong sense of community across the program. Collaborative teaching is especially important in Head Start program. Collaborative in teaching encourages classroom teachers to work together to provide the highest-quality care and learning environments to the children in the program. When teachers work together to discuss classroom environments, review student learning data, and share their observations and perspectives, they're able to think together about how to best create a positive classroom environment and problem solve challenges. For example, in a teaching team of three teachers, it's important that they spend time together sharing their observations of how activities go each day. If only one teacher planned, the activity would be slanted towards that teacher's perspective, and the observations from the other teacher would not be taken into account when that planning happened. When we think about a collaborative activity that most teachers would be able to engage in, team lesson planning really comes to mind. Lesson planning is the key to implementing intentional, purposeful high-quality teaching practice for children. There are so many formats and types of lesson plans in the field, just as there are so many different curriculum types. Each of you may have different forms or strategies for lesson planning that you implement within your program, or that the programs you're supporting are implemented. What matters most isn't the specific format you use for lesson planning, but that some critical components are included with that. So, as you see on this slide, here are some things that are important to have and pertains to look at when they're planning. When teaching teams are collaborating and planning together, they're looking at child and classroom data together, they're spending time reflecting and inquiring about their observations, they're supporting each other in the daily classroom work,

teams are allowing all the adults in the classroom, regardless of the job titles — so not just that lead teacher — an opportunity to serve as a cognitive coach, and when teams are planning together, they're making sure that all the adults in a classroom are really equipped, informed, and able to provide high-quality learning for all children. When we think back to the definition shared earlier about job-embedded learning routine, team lesson planning really checks all these boxes. It's grounded in the work of teaching and learning. It occurs in the workplace, and it focuses on children's learning needs and the issues of classroom practice. We'd strongly encourage team lesson planning where all members of a classroom scene are engaged in the planning process together — whenever possible. The collaboration and knowledge building among the team really becomes a rich opportunity for everyone to utilize his or her talents and skills in meaningful, intentional way so children have every chance to reach their full potential. Instructional leaders have the opportunity to facilitate this lesson planning process so everyone's voice is included and that the lesson plan has been really [Inaudible], reflecting everyone's knowledge of the children in the classroom and just not one or two teachers' knowledge or observation. As programs work towards ambitious instruction, team lesson planning is a good first job-embedded routine to put in place. I am sure lesson planning is happening in all of your programs, but as instructional leaders, it's important to ensure that this routine is structured in a way to provide a collaborative time for the teaching staff to focus on the children's learning, to make sure that we are really using the time wisely, and that it is allowing time for each member of the teaching team to talk about what they're seeing and the work that they're doing. So, as we transition into kind of talking about how to best use that team lesson planning time, are there any questions, Amanda, that we want to check in on before we move forward?

Amanda: Thus far, we haven't had anybody submit anything to the Q and A. But we're ready and willing, if anything comes to mind.

Jessica: Perfect. Thank you. So, feel free to add questions as you go, and I'm going to move us forward, and we will start talking about the focus teaching cycle. And so, now that we've really established the importance of collaborative job-embedded professional development and identified that team lesson planning is one of those routines that focuses on the areas of learning that we want to be looking at in program, we're gonna think together about what does good team lesson planning look like. What are some best practices for this collaborative routine? So, now that we've established that it's important to have collaborated lesson planning, let's talk about what happens during that lesson planning. So, as we think about lesson planning, I ask that you all participate in a quick imagery activity with me, as we think about your program. So, let's imagine that you're walking through the halls of your Head Start program. You're looking at all of the classrooms as you walk through. You're observing the children and the teachers in the classroom. Let's think ahead — we'll skip ahead a few weeks. So, we're not quite in October, but let's imagine that in our scenario that it's October. So, it's October. You're walking through the classrooms. You're seeing kids playing. You're seeing teachers doing their work. What are you seeing in the classrooms during this month? What do you hear? What are children experiencing? What materials are out? What kind of learning is happening in those classrooms? What is the role of the teachers as you're observing and walking through the classrooms? What are the teachers doing and what materials are they

putting out for the kids to interact with. So, you can feel free to share in the chat what you're experiencing as you're walking through your program in November — in October — excuse me. As I said, I've been a program director and so, in my experience, some things I might see are pumpkins, possibly the signs of fall through the program art and the different decorations in the classroom. You could possibly be seeing the colors of orange and red and yellow, or maybe, depending on what part of the month of October that we're in, you could be seeing some signs of spooky cats or Jack-o'-lanterns. As we think about what we're seeing in the classroom, as we're kind of walking through and observing the going on of the program, I would like us to wonder together about what is informing teachers in the classrooms as they plan. So, how have the teachers kind of decided to put certain materials in the classroom or complete their new activities. And so, we have a poll for you to kind of share what your thoughts are on what teachers are kind of using to inform their work and their ideas. So, the question is, what is informing teachers in the classrooms when they're planning? So, this your October classroom. Is it a calendar month? Are teachers being informed by child observation? What about the current season? Do you feel like that has an influence on what's happening in the classroom? Are teachers using developmental screening data? Are they looking at the learning standards? What about the weather? Has the weather influenced the teachers in their planning in the classroom? Are they guided by curriculum goals? Or IFSP and IEP data? Could the teachers possibly be getting input from families on what to put in the classroom? So, I'm going to give you a couple seconds to give your answer as you can kind of think about what you're seeing in your imaginary classroom that you're walking through, and then we'll talk about what you think is informing the teachers as they're looking at that. And looking ahead, it looks like we have some varied responses. I'm going to give a couple more seconds for people to answer. So, as a few more are finishing up your responses, do you think teachers are really using the children's interests to plan from what you're seeing in your imaginary classrooms in October? Are the teachers relying heavily on the influence of the outside world? So, is this the calendar month or the season? Even my own social media is starting to tell me that I should be thinking about pumpkin spice drinks, falls leaves, and pumpkins. But in my neck of the woods where I'm at right now, it's still 90 degrees outside, and all I want is a cool iced tea. So, you know, really thinking about what influences are. So, let's go ahead and I'll share the full results. And so, looks like some varied answers. But lots of different things are influencing teachers. when they're doing some planning. Some are those outside influences, and then it looks like people are feeling that teachers are really using some more formative assessment, curriculum goals, developmental screening data to influence the work that they're doing in the classroom. So, in order for us to ensure that teachers are focusing on their observations, their knowledge of child development, and on children's interests in the classroom, it's important for us as instructional leaders to provide a framework to guide teachers as they engage in a collaborative job-embedded learning routine of team lessons planning. Well, I'm sure many of the children in the classroom you observe during our imagery exercise are starting to see pumpkins or leaves in their own lives, whether at the grocery store or in their own outdoor space. It's important for teachers to remember that focusing on programs standards, formative assessments, and setting up environments that promote learning during team lesson planning are important and not to let themselves get easily derailed by the calendar month or season. As we all know, we have such a short time with the children in our program. It's important that we make the most

impact we can while they're in their classroom. So, for thinking about this, I would like to introduce the focused teaching cycle, and you can see it here on this slide. This is a tool or a resource for you to use in your program during collaborative job- embedded learning routines of team lesson planning. This is a framework or organizer that will deepen the understanding of high-quality teaching practices or ambitious instruction amongst your staff. And we're going to use it today to guide our conversation for the rest of this webinar. And we encourage you that you think about this format and sharing it as a way to really help keep lesson planning focused and really thinking about those critical elements that we talked about earlier. So, just to kind of orient you to the focused teaching cycle, it is made up of two cycles, and the larger piece, the red boxes that you see ... We'll move through those clockwise. And so, we'll go through each of the steps of those — standards and curriculum goals, formative assessment of children's progress, designing interaction and instruction, and facilitating and documenting learning. And then there is an additional cycle of teacher-child interactions that also interacts within this other cycles. The observe, reflect, and respond cycle. This focused teaching cycle can be used with any program curriculum. So, no matter what kind of format you use when you are planning for lessons or what curriculum you're using at your program, this focused teaching cycle is a nice framework to kind of just do a check to make sure that all of the critical elements of planning are in place and it also supports domains of class. So, it supports emotional support by encouraging responsive teaching through that observing, reflecting, and respond cycle. It connects to the dimensions of teacher sensitivity, regard for student perspective, and positive climate. Classroom organization and instructional support are supported when you are thinking about designing classroom interactions and instruction, and it connects to the dimensions of behavior management, productivity, instructional learning formats, quality of feedback, content development, and language modeling. I want to just highlight this report that we have shared with you for today's webinar, and you can find it in the green resource widget that Stephenie mentioned earlier at the beginning of the webinar, and this resource is there for you to use. We've shared it with you as a way for you to take this back to your program, and we encourage you to print it off and think about how you can kind of use it in the work that you're doing. The worksheet is organized into four different areas and really walk teaching teams through the focused teaching cycle. It gives some prompts and questions for the team to reflect on and to think about together when they are team lesson planning, and this is something teaching teams can take to just print off and use as they are working on lesson planning. And even if you're an instructional coach, you could be there spending some time with the teaching team as they're working through each of this process. So, feel free to print that off and use it or think about how you can kind of incorporate it into that job-embedded professional learning routine in your program of team lesson planning. So, we will now spend some time walking through each of the different areas of the focus teaching cycle. The first step of the teaching cycle is standards and curriculum. And standards are really ... The important part of this is that they've been informed by research and helps us understand what children should know and what they should be able to do at different stages. They should help inform our lesson planning so that we can plan for ... So our plan for children really connects directly to a learning standards. So, if I'm an infant teacher, it helps me understand what's coming next for the infants in my classroom. When we think about this part of the focused teaching cycle, we want to engage and wander together about a couple of things, and you'll see these questions here on

the screen. What learning and developmental goals do we have for the group or individual children in our classroom? What do we want young children to know, understand further, and be able to do? Standards are really goals for what students should learn and establish what teachers should teach. Each state has created its own standards and Head Start programs have, of course, the Head Start performance standards, and the Head Start early learning outcome framework to guide our work. So, when we're planning a lesson for children, there should always be at least one specific learning objective created that's connected to a standard and identifies what children will learn or be able to do as a result of the specific lessons. So, if we're thinking about using the Head Start early learning outcomes framework, the domains and subdomain are the standards and goals that would connect to the objective on your specific lesson plan. So, for example, if you're focusing on the language and literacy domain with a subdomain of vocabulary, the objective for your lesson plan would be the goal of children showing understanding of word categories and the relationship of words. So, that could be one of your goals. The lesson plan could have an activity that allows children to explore with words and categories that connects to the learning that's happening in the classroom, such as if you are learning about the words that go along with a construction site because the children are interested in building that's happening across the street from the school. So, using those different domain or subdomains from the early learning outcome frameworks can kind of be the starting point for building that lesson plan. All of our programs are using research state curriculum and the standards and learning objectives that are built into those, and those are the lessons that teachers should be teaching in the classroom. We will, of course, still need to modify them based on the individual needs of the children in the classroom. The standards and goals really give us a nice jumping off point. So, that's the standards and curriculums part of the focused teaching cycle. The next piece of the focused teaching cycle is formative assessments. Formative assessments is simply observation and documentation of children's learning. In other words, assessments help answer the question, "How will I know whether — or to what degree — a child has learned 'X' and what evidence will I see?" By thinking through how we'll assess children's learning and development before you plan your lessons and daily schedule, you'll have a better sense of what activities will help them achieve the learning goals you establish. So, doing some brainstorming about how we're going to assess and know what's happening or how we can be sure that our goal is being met really helps for the planning piece to be a little more intentional. There are a variety of formative assessments available for us to utilize in our program. And this is our next poll question, so we'd love to get a feel for the types of formative assessments that you have seen or used in your program. What are examples of these formative assessments? So, we listed some suggestions here, and you can choose all that apply. Are you using photos of child's progress? What about a developmental assessment? Are teachers using developmental assessment to assess progress? Are you using work sampling? Classroom teachers — are they using informal child observation or some a formal coach observations? Is diagnostic testing happening to help inform classroom planning? Are teachers using written observations or even video observations in their planning? So, it looks like a few of you have started to answer, and, like I said, you can pick all that apply. I feel that it's not uncommon for multiple types of formative assessment to be used in programs and probably best practice that we are not relying on only one type of assessment. So, I'll give a couple more seconds. Looks like almost half of you have answered. So, go ahead and close the poll, and it

looks like written teacher observation and work sampling are the top two choices for formative assessments with the other ones that I mentioned kind of coming in close, and it looks like diagnostic testing and teacher video observations are the two that were chosen and seems to be used the least in programs. Using formative assessment is a process that really explores to what extent something has been learned or achieved during the learning process. Formative assessments can be used to adjust and refine teaching practices, to ensure children have opportunities to develop the desired knowledge, skill, or understanding. They can be formal or informal. So, thinking about diagnostic testing or just that informal classroom observation. They should always be an ongoing process, and formal assessments should not be something that only happens once a year. Formal assessments use learning or developmental standards as a reference to help us measure children progress, and they really should be and can be documented in a variety of ways. So, even from our poll, we see that sometimes you're using photos, sometimes a work sample, sometimes a video. Formative assessments really give us a sense of the distance traveled on a child's journey of learning. So, just remember that assessing children is happening all the time. Your teachers are watching what they do, what they say, how children engage with others, what new things they're starting to do. They're talking to parents about what they're noticing at home, and these are all examples of formative assessments. Making sure that we're organizing assessments and writing a summary or a narrative about what children learning is also an important part of this. So, we need to remember that lesson planning isn't just a checklist of activities. It's really an opportunity to be thoughtful and intentional about children's learning so we can be more precise with our instruction in the classroom and ensure all children reach their maximum potential from an early age. Good lesson planning really requires time commitment and collaboration but it can lead to improved outcomes for children and families. So, the next piece of the focused teaching cycle is designing interactions and instruction. And in this part of the focused teaching cycle, we're really thinking about creating supportive learning environment. So, in this area, we really want to remember that the classroom itself serves as another teacher. So, teachers need to be providing stimulating, nurturing activities and materials that allow children to explore at their ability and help push their learning and development further along. During team lesson planning, teaching teams should be talking together about the classroom, its setup, and the materials that are in place. A specific focus should be placed on setting up these experiences or environments within a classroom to make sure that every child in the classroom growth and development are nurtured. So, not just for the whole class, but really looking at each children's individual goals thus far. So you know, thinking about each toy in each state as teachers go through their lesson planning and think about the goals for planning. So, this brings us to the last step of the focused teaching cycle, and this step is facilitating and documenting learning, and in this step – this step is really a key part to ambitious instruction. Teachers and children will engage in this cycle of observe, reflect, and respond, and this will really help take the information that teachers have started from their lesson plan with their curriculums and standard goals, think about how they're assessing it, how they design the interaction, and it really kind of completes the loop and puts into place all of that work from before and puts it into action. So, one of the important things, as I said before, is we're always assessing, and this is an ongoing cycle, and so it will just continue on. And so, as we are working through this cycle, teachers will then be getting ready for the next step as they're seeing what's happening in the

classroom and can be thinking ahead. So, thinking through the teacher-child interaction cycle of observe, reflect, and respond, observe is really paying attention to what you're noticing about children's learning. What are you seeing? What are you hearing? Is reflecting on what you're learning and seeing. So, I noticed that the kids in the block area are doing this, and that this was happening, and then thinking, "I wonder what would happen if I put out a new material?" So, then that's your response. And so, then once you've given a response, it will circle back again for you to do some observation and reflect and respond. And so, that cycle just continues on as you're going through your classroom day. So, now that you have walked through all four steps of this focused teaching cycle, I want us to look at a video that really focuses on lesson planning. And while we're watching this video, I ask that you think about the areas of the focused teaching cycle that you are noticing throughout the video. So, let me get the video started. And afterwards, we'll kind of do a check in to see if there's any area ...

[Video begins] Angela: And look at that. And what is that? What is that, Rylin? Is that an orange block? Can you wave it or try? Can you turn the ball for me? Yeah! That's a good boy. Move it right ... Move it with your fingers. Oh! Rylin is doing it! You are doing it, Rylin. All by yourself. Look there!

Lenisa: Me and my co-teacher, Miss Angela, we worked together once a week to make sure our lesson plan is completed.

Angela: You like that?

Lenisa: And we look at our individual curriculum plans. Each child in our classroom has their own ICP, and based on the different developmental domains — social-emotional, language, literacy, physical, fine motor, we try to prepare them with goals that we want them to meet depending on their developmental. Angela: Five! Ooh! Keep going. You got it. You got it. Six. Seven. Eight.

Angela: We try to meet the needs of every child, and we do realize that each child develops differently, so we want to capture and meet them right at their needs.

Lenisa: Amias, where is Demarco? Say peek-a-boo!

[Baby coos]

Say peek-a-boo! Where's Amias? Thank you! You want to do it Rylin? Here. Ready? Ready? Ready? Peek-a-boo! In order to create an ICP for a child, you have to observe and collect information to know that child, to know what they're good at, and to figure out goals — what will make them better.

Angela: And a lot of times when I plan different assignments like that and I see that it's not capturing that child, I think of something quick, or I let that child lead me, because if I can see I'm playing peek-a-boo with you, and you're over here in the box, I'm like, "OK. He's not interested in this." So, I'll join in and follow his lead with the blocks and try to ask more questions like, "What are you doing over here?"

Lenisa: Yay!

[Video ends]

Jessica: So, as we see in the video, those teachers are talking about the ways they're thinking about the children's goals and the information that they're taking in and then kind of being responsive as they're working in the classroom with the children. And so, those different sets of the focused teaching cycle are really in place in their actions in the classroom. So, today, this is where we're going to kind of stop and put it all together. So, now that we spent a little bit of time talking through each of the different cases of the focused teaching cycle and so just remembering that it's important that teachers are using this framework to guide them when they're lesson planning to ensure that it's not haphazardly happening and that teachers are just not planning based on a whim or seasons and that they're thinking about the child's lead and using standards and curriculum goals to really guide them as they're planning and thinking about instruction. So, as we think about working towards ambitious instruction and collaborative teaching in Head Start programs, I wanted to share with you just a few strategies for you to use and think about using as you finish the webinar and go back to your work. So, some suggestions that ... And best practices that we have kind of gathered from those that we've worked with are to make sure that teachers are using a journal and writing down observations as they're happening in the classroom. Really encourage the use of technology. So, whether that's a photo or a video to help capture and document moments and to show the progression of development or to give you time to go back and really look through a small group activity that you videotaped and see each child and how they kind of responded. As instructional leaders, it's important that we're protecting time and showing that there's value in this collaborative learning routine. And so, really making sure that we're giving enough time for it within the program day. Give teachers time to reflect with children, and then also make sure that we are supporting teaching staff by giving them their own professional learning opportunities. Really thinking about that parallel process and as an instructional leader, watching teachers and thinking about, you know, what you're seeing and reflect on that and then respond with some good professional learning opportunities. So, these are just some easy tests for you guys to think about kind of continuing this work that we talked about in your classroom as you move forward. And then I know that days in a Head Start program go by quickly. So, a few additional things just for you to consider. So, we shared with you the focused teaching cycle tool and so think about, you know, do you have embedded routines happening in your program? If they are, are there ways you can kind of improve them or enhance them? And so, think through that with yourself. And then if you take this information to your leadership team, so you can make sure, you know, what does team lesson planning look like in your program and do a little — a little B-side together and think about how you can kind of make it better. And then I, of course, suggest using the tool that we shared, the focused teaching cycle worksheet to help kind of put some focus around lesson planning. And as I mentioned, it doesn't matter what curriculum you're using or what format of lesson plan you're using, but that focused teaching cycle is just a nice way to make sure that you are all staying on track and keeping focused and on task when planning and that it's not just, you know, the whim of the seasons that are kind of giving you your focus or influencing teacher planning. So, hopefully, those ideas have been helpful. I want to thank you all for joining us today. As always, we like to thank and acknowledge those that have supported our work and helped with that through grants. So, the Race to the Top in Illinois, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Stranahan Foundation, and the Pritzker Children Initiative. As Amanda mentioned, the work

that we shared today is part of a lot of a larger body of work that we do with Educare Best Practices Training. So, if you're interested in learning more about the work that we shared today or any of the additional work that we do, please feel free to reach out to us at the Ounce, and our contact information is here, and I will go ahead and pass it over to Stephenie to finish us out. Thanks for having us, Stephenie.

Stephenie Hickman: Thank you guys so much. I just want to extend our gratitude, not only to Jessica and Amanda, but the entire team that we worked with at the Ounce of Prevention for this series. It was so great, and I mentioned this earlier, but I just want to remind everybody. If you happened to miss the first two webinars in the series, you can find those on the ECLKC. Just search Front Porch Series, and you will get there. Also want to mention that the evaluation link will pop up once we close out the webinar. We invite you to complete that. You can then download a certificate of completion, and we do value your feedback. And the last announcement that I want to make is just to keep an eye out for the next Front Porch Series. The topics — excuse me — the topics for the next three will be instructional supports for children who are dual language learners, and those are scheduled for the first Thursday in February, April, and September. So, we definitely hope that we see everybody there. Have a great evening and thanks again.