Early Reading First

Early Reading First (ERF) is a federal grant program housed in the U.S. Department of Education. This program funds directly to projects based on a competitive, peer review process. ERF supports the development of early childhood centers of excellence that focus on all areas of development, especially on the early language, cognitive, and pre-reading skills that prepare children for continued school success and that serve primarily children from low income families. (www.earlyreadingfirst.gov)

ERF funds must be used to:
• Provide intensive, ongoing professional development
• Ensure a broad early childhood foundation
• Integrate scientifically-based reading research into all aspects of the program, including materials, teaching strategies, and curricula
• Develop literacy-rich classroom environments
• Implement screening and ongoing progress monitoring
• Evaluate effects on classrooms and children

DELL-D

Developing Early Language and Literacy in Danville (DELL-D) is an Early Reading First Project located in a small city in east central Illinois. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has three community partners in Danville:
• East Central Illinois Action Agency (Head Start)
• Danville School District #118
• Danville Area Community College Child Development Center
In all, the project serves 19 teachers in 10 classrooms and approximately 240 preschool children.

Professional Development Approaches in DELL-D

Professional development is the foundation for change in classroom practice. In addition to being intensive and ongoing, professional development is responsive to classrooms and offered through multiple, integrated formats.

Year 1:
• Teacher Institutes – 5 ten-hour weekend institutes
• Literacy Coaching – weekly for half-day session

Years 2 and 3:
• Teacher Institutes – 3 ten-hour weekend institutes, 30 hours/year
• Literacy Coaching – weekly for half-day session, 100 hours/year
• Small Group Meetings – 8 two-hour meetings and additional workshops as requested, 48 hours/year

Literacy Coaching

Coaching is one of three inter-related approaches to professional development in the DELL-D Project. Coaching links the topics and big ideas presented and practiced in teacher institutes and monthly small group meetings and workshops with the everyday context of classroom practice. In turn, data from coaching and classroom assessment inform not only the selection of topics but also the training strategies, groupings, and locations.

This approach to professional development keeps training fresh, salient, and able to accommodate the needs of teachers who bring to the project a broad range of experiences and educational backgrounds and who work in three different organizational contexts: Head Start, public school, and child care.

Progress toward ERF and DELL-D Project goals is measured by:
• Pre- and post-scores on the Early Language and Learning Classroom Observation: Pre-K Tool (ELLCO) (Smith, Brady, & Anastasopoulos, 2008)
• Achievement of benchmarks and levels on the Classroom Recognition and Improvement System (CRIS) in the following areas:
  • observational data based teaching skills checklist
  • fidelity to curriculum planning and implementation
  • integration of SRBR skill areas into all aspects of the learning environment
  • making decisions based on child data

What is Coaching?

“Coaching is an adult learning strategy through which the coach promotes the learner’s ability to reflect on his/her own ability to determine their effectiveness and to develop a plan for refinement and use of the actions in the future.” (Rush & Sheldon, 2005)

DELL-D Coaching Model

A coach is a “vehicle” that carries a valued person from where he/she is to where he/she wants to be

DELL-D Coaches...
• Work with teachers in their classrooms for 3 hrs/week
• Maintain the coaching schedule
• Attend teacher institutes and monthly small group meetings alongside teachers
• Focus on strengths and growth
• Foster skills in problem-solving, self-direction, and reflection
• Keep the lines of communication open and build trust
• Model strategies by leading, shadow coaching, side-by-side
• Use the coaching cycle
• Support and celebrate change

Developing Coaches...
• Orientation
• Manual
• Ongoing training
• Coach for the coaches
• Side by side visits

Coaching Results

“Coaching is developing people on purpose.” (Doyle, 1991)

Changes in ELLCO Scores Year 2

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<th>Post-observation (Apr/May 2009)</th>
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<td>Language &amp; Literacy Environment</td>
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Changes in CRIS Levels Year 2

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Disclaimer

This information is being provided for the purpose of the fiscal year (FY) 2008 Early Reading First Evaluation. This report includes all data and materials mentioned or shown at this meeting by presenters or grantee is provided as resources and examples for the viewer’s convenience. This information is not intended as an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.

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