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Head Start Reimagined: How Leadership Coaching Unlocks the Potential of Ideal Learning

Emily Sharrock, Lily Rosenthal, Kristina Satchell, Michelle Brown-Grant



Introduction

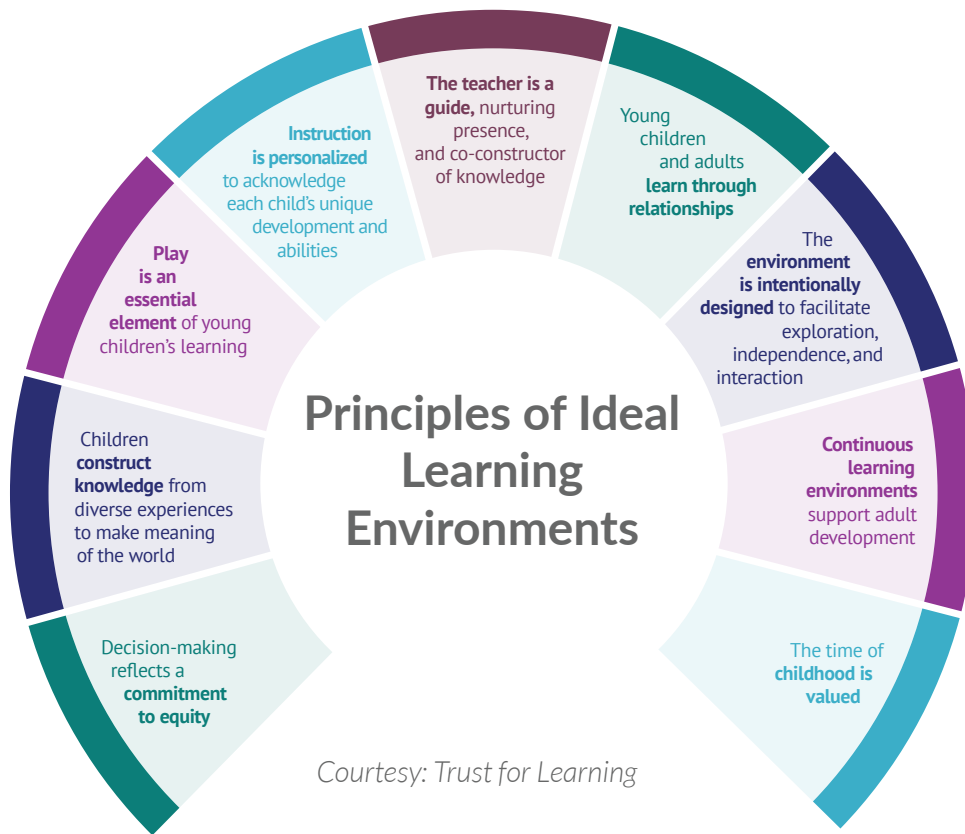
Head Start is one of the most influential early care and education programs in the country, with over 37 million children and families served since its inception.¹ Other early learning programs look to Head Start as an example of high-quality care. The Trust for Learning (the Trust) established the [Ideal Learning Head Start Network \(ILHSN\)](#) in 2019 after two Head Start program leaders approached the Trust with a pioneering idea to form a network of Head Start programs that embraced progressive, evidence-based learning approaches. Currently, the ILHSN serves 43 active provider organizations, reflecting a geographically diverse and expansive reach that spans from New Haven, CT, to San Antonio, TX, and from Boulder, CO, to New York, NY. Each of these organizations benefits from the combined expertise in Head Start and Ideal Learning that the network provides, exemplifying the nationwide impact of the ILHSN's initiatives.²

Bank Street's history with Head Start is longstanding. The College played an integral role in the formation of the national program in the early 1960s, and Head Start's first concept paper pointed to Bank Street classrooms as models for Head Start settings. In partnership with the Trust for Learning to support their shared vision, Bank Street led a coaching cycle with 27 leaders across 10 ILHSN programs to help leadership teams introduce and integrate nine principles of [ideal learning environments](#) for young children into their instructional models. **The programs that participated in coaching span the country and range in size from 50 children to 1,500 children. The majority of children served across the 10 programs are low-income and identify as children of color. In support of that goal, Bank Street led a coaching cycle with 27 leaders across 10 programs** to help leadership teams introduce and integrate the principles of ideal learning environments into their instructional models.

The principles serve as a foundational anchor for programs to continue to grow and flourish post-pandemic. They weave together several essential beliefs for high-quality early childhood programs, including a commitment to play, relationship-based interactions, an ecologically focused, child-centered perspective; equity; and a strength-based and inquiry-based approach with children, adults, and families.³

This toolkit provides key insights using nine principles of ideal learning environments to support Head Start leaders to establish, refine, and deepen commitment to a shared instructional vision across a program. It includes key learnings, as well as a set of practical tools to support implementation. See [page 11](#) of this toolkit for those tools.





The principles of ideal learning environments outline core concepts that create ideal learning environments for young children across settings. The principles allow for multiple approaches, models, and traditions, and take into account the varied contexts within which early educators and care providers work.

Our Approach: Using the Principles as a Reflection Tool to Spark New Ideas & Change

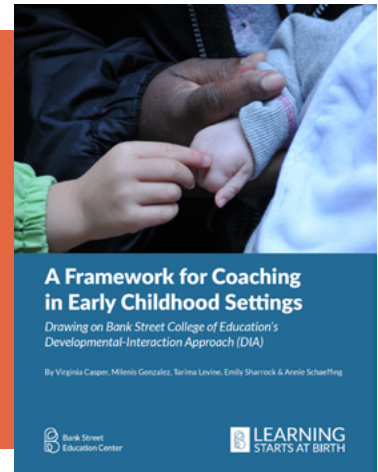
Two coaches deeply trained in reflective practice and Bank Street’s developmental-interaction approach⁴ provided approximately 20 hours of direct coaching support to 27 leaders from 10 ILHSN programs. Leaders included directors, coaches, and education coordinators. In addition to the 20 hours of team coaching, each team received approximately 13 hours of flexible coaching that could be used as additional team coaching, individual coaching for one or more members of the team, or site visits.

Bank Street’s approach to professional learning is anchored in adult development and builds from the power of relationships. Bank Street’s [Framework for Coaching in Early Learning Settings](#) served as the foundation for our coaching approach. Several programs used the framework in their coaching sessions to help them build reflective practice into their work as they implement the nine principles across their programs.

Consistent with this approach, our work began with a process of inquiry and context-building, seeking to meet programs and leaders where they were in their learning and understanding to ensure the process for introducing and incorporating ideal learning was tailored to the needs of each community.

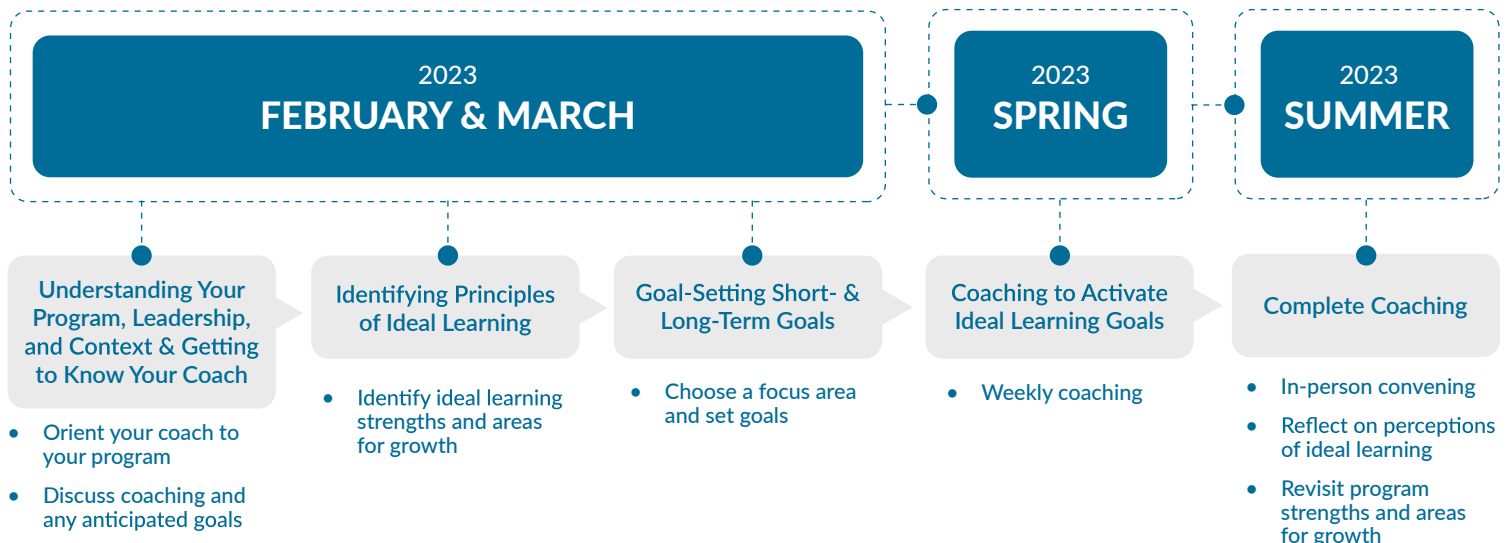
Framework for Coaching in Early Learning Settings

Coaching helps educators activate and better articulate their previous knowledge, skills, values, and belief systems—along with new concepts—to construct and continually refine an approach that is meaningful in their everyday work. This framework captures some commonalities of a positive coaching stance across contexts, while allowing enough flexibility to make use of these ideas in ways that will best serve that setting and educators.



While programs opted to focus their work through coaching in different ways, all of them began with learning about and making connections with the nine principles of ideal learning environments. They used this process to identify areas of strength and possibilities for growth to align their instructional models with this progressive approach.

The process began by working with our coaches to review each principle and to describe what each principle means to the program team. In doing this, we asked programs to make connections to existing practices, as well as their own values and beliefs around quality early learning environments. Programs then worked to gather evidence through video, photos, or other artifacts to identify ways each principle already appears in their program. As they assembled that evidence, program leaders looked for gaps and asked questions about whether there was room for improvement or growth as a precursor to establishing goals. Throughout this process, our coaches facilitated the discussion, including ample time and space for reflection and questioning.



This process of learning, unpacking, and making connections to the principles took between six and eight weeks of meetings and evidence gathering. Programs with more connected practices or pre-existing aligned goals were able to make connections more quickly. All programs saw the value in taking time to inquire using the principles as a way to step back and look at their work from a fresh perspective.

The next step in the coaching cycle was to set goals for strengthening the instructional model, culture, or support in each program, drawing from what surfaced through the reflection process. Programs set goals across a wide range of areas. However, almost all programs spent time planning how they would share, integrate, and roll out the principles to staff as one of their immediate goals and next steps. There was wide agreement with the value of using the principles as an organizational base for the coaching engagement and more importantly as a tool for reflection and professional learning for staff to advance changes in programs. Examples of some goals included reevaluating program monitoring tools to incorporate the principles, creating a crosswalk of Reggio Emilia and the principles of ideal learning environments, and implementing a program philosophy aligned with the principles.



Five Key Lessons Learned

Using evidence gathered through weekly reflective conversations with coaches throughout the coaching cycle, several network-wide convenings, two focus groups, and two surveys, we compiled a set of five considerations and lessons learned for other program leaders or coaches interested in embarking on a similar process.

Key Lesson 1

Use a Strengths-based Approach

Consistent with Bank Street's beliefs about how adults and children learn best, our coaches emphasized the need to take a strengths-based approach when introducing the nine principles of ideal learning environments. Leaders and educators reflected on the principles and looked for alignment with existing practice by starting with an emphasis on success to promote a sense of efficacy and inspire teachers about what is possible. At the beginning of the coaching cycle, programs had the opportunity to map their current practices onto the principles. We guided them to start with principles that aligned with current strengths and build from there. Program leaders took photos of their learning environments and matched them to different principles, in most cases, realizing that they were already incorporating many of the principles. By beginning the process of learning and inquiry by building upon what programs are already doing well, we were able to build confidence and create momentum to dig further.

"I used to think about what could be and should be in our practices (if we could only do this or we should be better here). Now I acknowledge that we have areas of growth, but also try to focus on what we are doing well and to build off of that instead, which makes the process feel more manageable." – Dana Hilbert, Curriculum and Inclusion Coordinator, Tulsa Educare

"I used to think that the staff were going to freak out when we introduced something like the principles since they were new. Now after going through coaching, I realize that most of the principles are things we are already implementing in our classrooms, so I think that we can reassure our teachers that they are on the right track and can implement these with ease." – Michelle Powell, Infant Toddler Coordinator, Urban Sprouts

Key Lesson 2

Position the Principles as Visionary, Not as a Compliance Tool

The principles of ideal learning environments provide a framework—not just a mandate to do something, but an approach, a lens, a shared commitment or vision with which everything can be connected. They serve as “the reason” and “the why” for the choices leaders and educators make programmatically each day.

“Even in more traditional programs, the principles are things that are recognizable as what is best for children.” – Head Start Leader

“I used to think our curriculum approach and locally designed curriculum was difficult to articulate. Now I believe I can explain it in a more concise way using the principles as my framework.” – Leonor Lundholm, Education Director, Child-Parent Centers, Inc.

“I used to think the principles were too complex for our staff. Now that they have been broken down, dissected, and simplified, I believe that we can do this.” – Jocelyn Tucker, Assistant Director, Foundation for Early Childhood Education



Key Lesson 3

Start with Leadership

As we began to explore the principles with our coaching teams, we quickly realized that we needed to engage deeply with the meaning of the principles in leadership circles before engaging all staff. Using them as a lens for examining practice across programs enabled leadership teams to engage in a process of norming around expectations for quality and defining what developmentally meaningful interactions look like in practice. Through these conversations, leaders often saw things from a new perspective and identified new or refined priorities or next steps for their programs. By engaging in this process at a leadership level, programs were able to do the important work of clearly defining their goals and being intentional in their planning before rolling out new expectations for educators.

“We wanted to use the principles for years to come, and so we got buy-in from everybody. The leadership team defined the principles together to make sure that we were on the same page before encouraging teachers to engage in these practices. In this way, we could make sure they were 100% supported.” - Jen Lee, Quality Teaching Specialist, Great Lakes Community Action Partnership

**“I used to think that we could do the same roll-out for all coaches and directors, but now I am thinking about meeting educators where they are depending on their prior knowledge.”
- Ashley Schmidt, Head Start Specialist, Greater Louisville Head Start**



Key Lesson 4

Look for Alignment with Existing Practices or Expectations

Avoid introducing the principles of ideal learning environments as “just one more thing.” Many programs identified ways to weave the principles into existing structures and routines. For example, some programs updated observation templates to make explicit references to ideal learning. Meeting agendas and routines for professional learning were adjusted to connect back to the principles. Some programs also began to consider crosswalk exercises and tools to make explicit connections between existing or other required standards and tools. This was an effort to make evident and transparent that the principles could connect across all areas of instructional practice and accountability. As they looked for these connections, programs also considered how the principles could serve as a backbone for ongoing professional development opportunities as well as coaching—by integrating them into these structures for instructional support, they were able to push practice forward and provide meaningful opportunities for staff to continuously learn and grow.

“If you start with things that teachers are already doing, it is more sustainable to incorporate them.” – Amber Maloy, Quality Teaching Specialist, Great Lakes Community Action Partnership

“In the beginning, we over-thought the process, and it seemed like another thing to introduce to our staff. But once we got into it, we realized we were already implementing most of the things in our space.” – Michelle Powell, Infant Toddler Coordinator, Urban Sprouts

“I used to think that my staff had to roll out the principles with expertise. Now I know it isn’t for us to do that but rather allowing educators to see how they already do these practices and support them as a guide.” – Shaniece Conyers, Early Head Start Director, All Our Kin



Key Lesson 5

Leverage the Opportunity for Deep Learning

It takes time to learn and deeply understand the intent of the principles and how they can show up in practice. At the start, seeing deep connection and alignment with the principles, many leaders planned to simply “roll them out.” However, as they began the process of self-reflection and assessment, it became clear that the power of the tool is in the opportunity to dig deeply into the questions the principles can raise about how to live and practice these approaches in context. By slowing down, programs were able to leverage inquiry into the principles to drive deeper engagement and learning across their staff.

“It’s important to linger on complex concepts. Everyone is coming from a different angle, and each principle will mean a different thing to each person. We need to leave space for everyone to dig deeper.” – Sarah Bonifer, Head Start Professional Development Coach, Greater Louisville Head Start

“If I had advice, it would be to slow down and not rush the process. I believe wholeheartedly in the ideal learning principles; they aren’t just a coaching tool. If you slow down to let others find the value in the principles, then they will be able to fully embrace them.” – Quality Teaching Specialist, Great Lakes Community Action Partnership

“Slowing down is especially important for family child care leaders, because they don’t have support to do things like cook meals and clean the classroom. They need time to digest the principles.” – Head Start Administrator

“I used to think that we should give providers all the information at once. I now think that there is much more value in taking things slow and allowing people to think through and integrate the information into their lives first.” – Gaby King, Quality Teaching Specialist, Great Lakes Community Action Partnership

“I used to think that because the principles were things we were already doing that the roll-out would be much faster. But I think it is important to take the time to dive into the complex concepts and leave space for people to dig deep.” – Sarah Bonifer, Head Start Professional Development Coach, Greater Louisville Head Start

Practical Tools

To guide this process, Bank Street created a set of practical resources enabling programs to track short-term goals and the outcomes from these coaching sessions, including several tools for coordinating and project management. These served to keep track of learning and related work over time.

Template for the Initial Meeting

[Appendix, Page 22](#)

Bank Street created an outline for the coach's initial meeting with each program that included specific logistical and programmatic questions to help them get to know each leader/program. Sample questions include: *What are the program's strengths? What challenges are you having right now? What is your understanding of coaching? Is there anything you'd like to know about me that would help make our work more effective?*

Leadership Tip: This structure proved to be useful for the coaches to begin their relationship with each program. If possible, it would be helpful to do this in person so that the coach could visit the program site.

Matrix of Ideal Learning Principles

[Appendix, Page 25](#)

The matrix is a crosswalk of the principles of ideal learning environments used during coaching sessions to chart where the program was at the beginning of coaching. Together, coaches and program leaders walked through each principle and outlined: a) what the principle means to the team; b) the strengths of this principle that already exist in their program; c) areas for growth, such as how the team could improve upon this principle; and d) any questions that came up around this principle. Program leaders enjoyed this reflective process and highlighted it in their mid-cycle survey.

Leadership Tip: Plan for sufficient time to go through the crosswalk, as it will likely take several meetings to complete. It was intended to take one or two coaching sessions; however, most programs did not have time to complete it between sessions. Therefore, it took several weeks to complete, prolonging the goal-setting process. Programs also realized that the principles tapped into multiple elements of their work (environment, language, policies, etc.) and wanted to be thorough in their reflections.

Goal-Setting Tracker

[Appendix, Page 30](#)

Bank Street created a template for tracking goal-setting to be used throughout the coaching cycle. There was space for each program to craft their goal, list three actionable steps they would take to achieve that goal, and note how the team planned to use the coaching sessions to activate the goal. The tracker also includes a goal-setting running agenda so that teams can track the tasks to complete, assign ownership to each task, set deadlines, track status, and add notes.

Leadership Tip: This tracker can be used with program teams or individuals to track their goals.

A Story of Coaching in Context

One of the 10 programs that participated in coaching was Tri-County Head Start. Based in the Midwest, they serve over 900 children across three counties in home- and center-based programs. The Head Start Educational Director and the Early Head Start Educational Director participated in coaching, both of whom work with directors across all of the program sites. Kristina Satchell, one of two Bank Street coaches, served as Tri-County's coach. Kristina is a graduate of the Infant and Family Development and Early Intervention Program at Bank Street and has worked as an educator, adjunct professor, fieldwork supervisor, and an early childhood consultant for over 12 years. Below is her account of her work with Tri-County.

My coaching sessions with Tri-County Head Start began with several weeks of diving into the nine principles of ideal learning environments. Together, we dissected each principle in depth, and the leaders reflected on where these principles were showing up in their daily work. As a coach, I wanted to work with the group to articulate the strengths they observed in their program and build from those to create goals.

After the initial deep dive into ideal learning environments, we looked at the program's priorities to begin a goal-setting process. Using their strengths-based assessment of the principles, they noted that because they have over 15 sites, there were inconsistencies in how different programs were implementing procedures, and they felt that was leading to inequities in the experiences of children and families. They also noted that they wanted to focus on family engagement to ensure that families were included in the learning process.

Their overarching goal was to use the principles to create more consistency across their agency. We broke the larger goal down into actionable steps:

- 1) Share and understand the principles across the agency.**
- 2) Support the education team in how to use the principles with teachers.**
- 3) Reevaluate monitoring tools used in classrooms to be consistent with the different principles.**
- 4) Rewrite their educational mission statement to better articulate prioritizing equity.**
- 5) Revise the template for the first home visit to ensure families understood the purpose and were part of the learning process from the beginning.**

As the coach, I knew these goals needed to be set by the leaders themselves to ensure buy-in and accountability. With these goals in mind, they asked some "big picture" questions: How do you create equity across the programs? How do you create a common language throughout the program? How can we continue to use a strength-based approach to support our work?

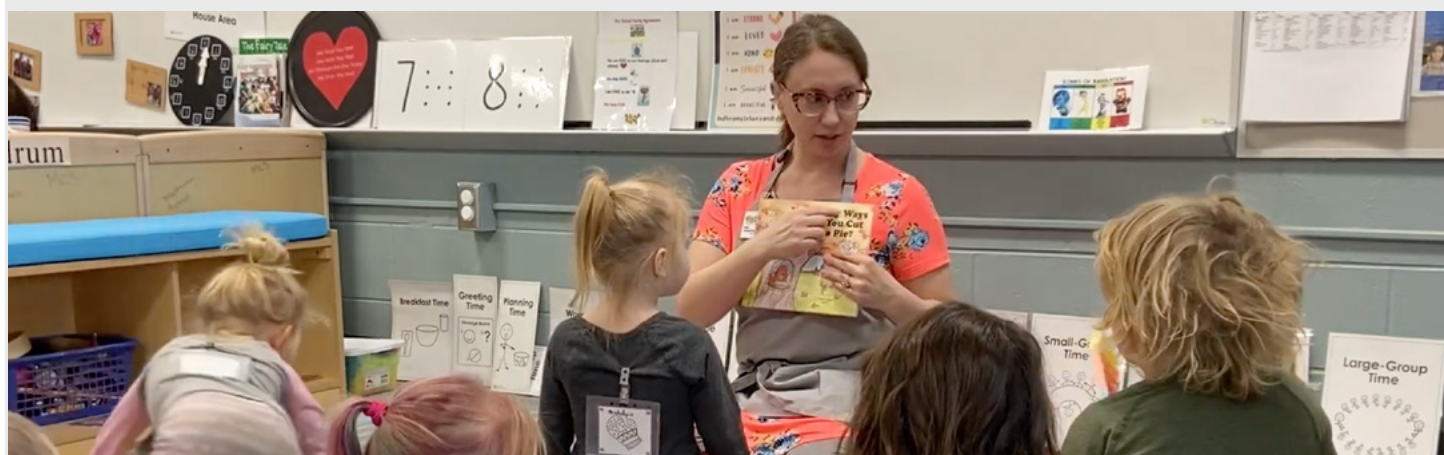
Early on in our time together, both leaders agreed that their team already recognized the value of the ideal learning principles; there was no doubt in their minds that the principles were already living in the classrooms and the interactions between teachers and students. However, they didn't have data or proof. The first questions they tackled became: What do the principles look like daily? How do we capture them and then, what do we do with them? We decided to use photographs as an initial strategy to support their work on professional development days with teachers.

A few months into our work together, Tri-County planned out their summer training days to support new and existing teachers for the upcoming year. For these sessions, one of the priorities was to revise their initial home visit process that was conducted at the beginning of each school year. Specifically, they wanted to use language that intentionally invited families to contribute to the learning goals of their children. For Tri-County, this work overlapped with many of the principles, but in particular, that **decision-making** (from the families) **reflects a commitment to equity** by including families in programmatic decisions. By creating a standard for the format of the home visit and being intentional with their word choice on the form. For example, by using open-ended questions to get input, they felt they were able to better involve and invite families into the conversation on how best to support their child's education and growth.

After the first home visit template, the coaching team shifted their focus to rolling out the principles with their larger educational team. This larger team included program directors, educational directors, and learning specialists at the different sites they support. To prioritize the principles, they decided to add it as a permanent topic of discussion on the meeting agenda with space for reflection. They ordered the [Powerful Interactions](#) coaching tool for all of the educational leaders, which supported their goal of everyone being on the same page and using consistent and supportive language (equity and strength-based approach).

During their "Book Club" style meeting, they held the principles at the forefront of the conversation and we discussed how to actively use the "I notice" statements and Powerful Interactions to support the ideal learning rollout.⁵ "I notice" statements bring attention to what Jablon et al (2016) call "moments of effectiveness" and can be used to highlight strengths to support goals and strengthen practices. According to a statement on the Powerful Interactions website:

"When you provide strengths-based articulation, it is as if you are a mirror, calling attention to moments of effectiveness. You state the facts, without judgment, and then offer a clear statement about the impact of the other person's words or actions."



Near the end of our coaching session together, I was invited to join two larger educational team meetings (with program directors and learning specialists) about the principles. In the first session, with the support of the leaders in coaching, the group was able to discuss the principles and how photos could be used to capture these moments of effectiveness using the ideal learning environments as a guide. For example, if the team was focusing on the principle that **play is an essential element of young children's learning**, they would capture a moment where they felt this was happening successfully and write an "I notice" statement. We practiced how to write "I notice" statements with leaders from across the agency and discussed the different ways to share them with teachers. In the second session, the team shared photos they took and reflected on the process. These conversations and practices will be ongoing as the program continues to document and discuss the integration of the principles into classroom practices.

Based on these conversations, the leadership team created an accessible template to share the principles with their teacher, the [reflection tracker](#). This template was considered a "living document" in which teachers could add, revisit, and reflect on what the principles meant to their work and how they were or were not yet showing up in classrooms. They created a PowerPoint to go with it, [Tri-County principles of ideal learning](#).

The reflection tracker got such positive feedback from teachers regarding its accessibility and versatility, that leaders agreed we should share it with other programs that were participating in coaching. The majority of my programs used the template to support initial discussions with their educational teams and teachers around the principles. At the end of our time together, Tri-County was well-positioned to revise their mission statement with feedback from the larger educational team and to begin to roll out the principles to teachers in classrooms.

- Kristina Satchell
Bank Street Coach



Reflections and Opportunities

The principles of ideal learning environments brought back to the forefront the reason or the “why” of the work that everyone was doing. Educators and administrators are often bogged down with meeting mandates and daily administrative tasks—all of which became more overwhelming during COVID and the worker shortages. Through this work, they were able to stay focused on the importance of building positive relationships and a sense of engagement with their community including children, families, and staff. The ideal learning environments helped to do that—by centering them in the work, we were consistently reminded of the key foundations to quality early childhood education.

The main areas of focus or needs identified by the programs coached were increasing enrollment, increasing family engagement, increasing hiring capacities and supporting children with different needs. The nine principles laid a foundation for addressing all of these challenges. Many education leaders are isolated in their work and are busy running programs, leaving little room for reflection and personal growth. These dynamics have been exacerbated by the demands on staff across early childhood programs, given the worker shortage and burnout from COVID. Time and again, we heard calls for more support, more coaching, more resources, and more group professional learning time. We also experienced the demands and time pressure on educators—not enough time for regular meetings, being pulled in many directions including as substitutes, and not enough paid professional development time with staff to realize the vision leaders have for their programs. This work requires a balance of patience and time, as well as an aspirational vision for what is possible.

While a differentiated local approach is critical to respond to local context and properly meet individual needs, there is power in aligning that work to a broader set of goals and a cadence for the work that creates structure and provides momentum. The [Ideal Learning Head Start Network](#) can serve as a vehicle for that support and path toward change. In particular, the opportunity for program leaders to come together in learning communities provides a supportive and reflective opportunity for the following:

- **Sharing strategies for what’s working and also finding support from colleagues.**
- **Finding time during the day for educators to engage in professional learning as a critical investment needed across programs; identifying release days when educators can be focused on learning and collaboration would significantly move the needle.**
- **Sustained coaching grounded in an approach consistent with reflective supervision for both leaders and educators.**
- **Differential professional learning supports differentiated to take into account experience, local contexts, and the goals of individual programs.**
- **Utilizing resources like [Bank Street’s Coaching Framework](#) and the [Trust for Learning’s What to Look For tools](#) to provide the needed materials to anchor these learning opportunities.**

We know that if these opportunities for robust professional support for educators are realized, together, we can provide more robust and sustained developmentally meaningful learning for families and young children.

"It's been beneficial and valuable to have that protected time to assess our program and agency-wide alignment with someone. It allows us to see the differences and how we all align. It's also helpful to have colleagues to discuss professional matters within a safe and transparent space. This allows us to challenge ourselves, approach projects from different perspectives, and benefit from the insights of thought partners in the same field. It's nice to have someone who can help us think things through a different lens or approach a big project in a new way. This kind of collaboration is very beneficial and it would be great to have more opportunities for it."

- Great Lakes Community Action Partnership (OH) 2023 Coaching Cohort



About Bank Street

For over 100 years, Bank Street has focused on improving the education of young children and their teachers by applying to the education process all available knowledge about learning and growth and by connecting teaching and learning meaningfully to the outside world. Bank Street has worked directly with early childhood educators in our graduate programs and public impact work for decades, including playing an integral role in the founding of Head Start in 1965. Our graduate school engages educators in reflective practice facilitated by an advisor or professor, which is a powerful approach to educator preparation. The Learning Starts at Birth Initiative (LSAB) was established in 2020, with the release of a white paper calling for stronger investment in the early childhood workforce, *Investing In the Birth to Three Workforce: A New Vision to Strengthen the Foundation for All Learning*. LSAB has released numerous publications, tools and resources and works with state, local, and regional partners to advance policies and programs that demonstrate what is possible for all young children and families when we invest in the workforce.

For this project, Bank Street drew upon our knowledge of reflective practice and adult development to provide tailored coaching using the principles of ideal learning environments as a guide.

Bank Street Coaches



Kristina Satchell

Kristina has held leadership roles at innovative Early Head Start programs across NYC. Kristina is a graduate of the Infant and Family Development and Early Intervention Program at Bank Street College and has worked as an educator, adjunct professor, fieldwork supervisor and Early Childhood consultant for Bank Street over the past 12 years. She has worked as a QI specialist in NYC and has held leadership roles in Early Head Start programs. She currently works at Educational Alliance, home to an innovative Head Start program where she is the director of their home-based program.



Michelle Brown-Grant

Michelle been a teacher, supervisor, early childhood center director, school principal, assistant professor of education, and consultant in academically and culturally diverse settings in the tri-state area. As a consultant for Bank Street College Education Center, she provides professional development in early childhood topics such as: play-based, developmentally appropriate trauma-informed instructional approaches, social-emotional development, literacy with creative curriculum, process art, block building, math and science inquiry, and transitions. Michelle has facilitated family and parent leader workshops on healthy early child brain development through play.

Trust for Learning

[Trust for Learning](#) was founded in 2011 by a small group of philanthropists who saw the potential to expand developmentally appropriate, play-based, whole-child early learning approaches like Montessori to serve far more children and families. Today, our staff and board support projects and investments around the country that expand ideal learning approaches in the public sector. Trust for Learning believes that every child has unlimited potential, and ideal early learning environments unleash it. We support expansion of ideal learning programs in the public sector to reach every child, particularly those who have been historically underserved.

About the Ideal Learning Head Start Network (ILHSN)

Founded and supported by Trust for Learning, the [ILHSN](#) is a group of Head Start leaders and advocates who come together in a community of practice to learn and share resources, guidance, and expertise. We also help other programs around the country to adopt equitable, play-based pedagogical approaches, and we come together to advocate for policy and regulatory changes to make ideal learning environments possible for all young children and families in Head Start. Our goal is to build the capacity of programs to effectively integrate the principles of ideal learning environments into Head Start. Our programs create equitable learning environments and experiences that are culturally affirming and accessible to all children, families, and educators.

[Join the Network](#)

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.ffyf.org/resources/2020/10/a-brief-history-and-overview-of-the-head-start-program/>
- 2 <https://trustforlearning.org/resource/ideal-learning-head-start-network/>
- 3 <https://trustforlearning.org/resource/principles-of-ideal-learning/>
- 4 Bank Street's DIA serves as the foundation for all teaching and learning and that guides our coaching practice. It helps us to understand how children and adults learn and gives us an approach to support them in this process. DIA is not a formula to follow, but a guide to steer us. For more information read Bank Street's Coaching Framework, visit: <https://educate.bankstreet.edu/bsec/10/>
- 5 Jablon, J., Amy Dombro et al. (2014). Coaching with Powerful Interactions. Washington D.C.:NAEYC



Appendix

Important Resources & Coaching Program Forms

List of Programs



ALL OUR KIN

All Our Kin
New Haven, CT



Child-Parent Centers Inc.
Tucson, AZ



Eagle County Early Head Start
Eagle, CO



Foundation for Early
Childhood Education
Pasadena, CA



Friends Center for Children

Friends Center for Children
New Haven, CT



Great Lakes Community
Action Partnership
Fremont, OH



Greater Louisville Head Start
Louisville, KY



Tri-County Head Start
Paw Paw, MI



Tulsa Educare
Tulsa, OK



Urban Sprouts
St. Louis, MO

ILHSN Coaching Forms

Phase 1: Understanding Your Program, Leadership, and Context to Set the Stage

1. Review the program’s application and send them the pre-work below.

After reading the application and background resources shared, what specific questions do you need to ask to better understand the program, culture, and context?

2. Bring specific questions to the first coaching meeting (90 minutes) and draw from example questions below.

Logistics

- How will you participate? Will you all be together? Sharing a computer or each have their own?
- When should we schedule our weekly calls?
- Agree to 20 hours of coaching between 2/15/2023 and 7/30/2023?
- Agree to completing work in between sessions?
- Agree to participating in a two-day convening in person?
- Agree to collect evidence, artifacts, and data with coaches and program staff to share learning and impact with the field?
- Agree to participate in opportunities for sharing learning and approaches in public formats?

Program

- Tell me more about this school's strengths. What does it have going for it?
- What are the big issues and challenges for this school right now?
- Are there any other big issues you anticipate coming up this year?
- How would you describe your relationship with teachers? With other staff? With your colleagues? With your students and their parents?
- What's prompted you to explore coaching now? (Expand upon your application.)
- What is your understanding of what coaching is? Of my role?
- Is there anything you'd like to know about me that would help make our work more effective?
- What are your hopes and fears for our work?

Add specific questions here for this program:



Pre-Work for Program Before Coaching Session 1

To prepare for a first meeting with your coach, please complete the following exercise and upload it to your coaching folder.

What documents or resources help offer a deeper understanding of your work?

Please insert links to key resources that can help coaches get to know your program and context, such as school plans, websites, and professional development plans. Name or link to your curriculum. (You may also upload relevant resources to your coaching folder.)

- Is there anything else you want us to know that is not reflected in the application or in these documents?
- Are there any relationships or requirements you are managing toward (e.g. Head Start program standards, State QRIS)?

Do you have any questions for your coach?

Phase 2: Identifying Ideal Learning Strengths and Areas for Growth

A. Pre-assessment of understanding of principles of ideal learning environments

Go through each principle and ask for the team to describe what that principle means to them. This will give the coach a better understanding of the baseline to work from. After going through each principle, identify two or three to focus on.

B. Provide evidence for the focus principles.

For pre-work, have the program provide video or photo evidence of the two or three focal principles (see “pre-work” box below).

1. Together, have the program think about how this principle is already showing up in their program.
2. Then, have them think about where there is room for improvement/growth. (These could become eventual goals.)
3. Have team rank principles in order of most importance to them/their program and articulate why (also can help with goal setting).
4. Leave space and time for reflection/questions.

Note to coaches: Having resources, articles, and evidence already available and ready for each principle to give additional information about why these principles are important/valued. Identify two or three principles to focus on.

Pre-Work for Programs for Phase 2

To prepare for your meeting with your coach, please complete the following exercise and upload it to your coaching folder. Your coach will identify two to three principles to focus on.

- As discussed, your coach will ask for a video walk-through or photos of your site that represent the strengths of several principles in your program.** (For example, this could include classroom setup, student work, and bulletin boards.) How are teachers working and learning together? Consider a video (where possible) that shows what it looks like for children, families and caregivers, or teachers to be welcomed as they enter and spend time in school or programs.

Exercise for Phase 2: To be completed with your coach

What are your strengths and areas for growth across the [principles](#)?

With your coach, use your photos and artifacts to complete the chart below. What do we see, and what questions does this raise about what isn't here?

Principle of ideal learning	Brief description of what this principle means to you/your team	Program strengths: How is this principle already showing up in your program?	Program areas for growth	Questions you have about this principle
Decision-making reflects a commitment to equity				
Children construct knowledge from diverse experiences to make meaning of the world				
Play is an essential element of young children's learning				

Principle of ideal learning	Brief description of what this principle means to you/your team	Program strengths: How is this principle already showing up in your program?	Program areas for growth	Questions you have about this principle
Instruction is personalized to acknowledge each child's development and abilities				
The teacher is a guide, nurturing presence, and co-constructor of knowledge				
Young children and adults learn through relationships				
The environment is intentionally designed to facilitate children's exploration, independence, and interaction				

Phase 3: Program Goal-Setting & Action Steps

Goal-setting tool to use with whole program

Create a shared document to use with each program to track progress toward their goals.

Stepping stones to strengthen alignment to the principles

Step: _____

Step: _____

Step: _____

How will we use coaching to activate this goal and achieve these interim steps?

Director/Leadership sign off

Date: _____

Signature : _____

Goal-setting agenda

Date	Task	Owner	Participants	Complete By	Status	Notes
					<input type="checkbox"/>	
					<input type="checkbox"/>	
					<input type="checkbox"/>	
					<input type="checkbox"/>	

Phase 3a: Individual Goal-Setting & Action Steps (For use with individual coaching)

Goal-setting tool to use with individuals engaging in individual coaching sessions

Create a shared document to use with each participant to track progress toward their individual goals.

Stepping Stones to Support Your Leadership to Advance Ideal Learning

Program goal:

Individual goal (connected to program goal):

Step:

Step:

Step:

How will we use coaching to activate this goal and achieve these interim steps?

Time	Agenda & Pre-Work	Notes
5 mins	<p>Following up What did I commit to following the last coaching conversation? What happened next? Any significant takeaways or learning from it?</p>	
10 mins	<p>Understanding & application of content from last session Use this space to document your reflections on assigned questions or next steps.</p>	
30 mins	<p>Space for reflective conversation What goal or focus do I have for this coaching conversation? Consider bringing an artifact to anchor this discussion, such as a documented problem of practice or a document being developed for a professional learning moment or difficult conversation. Insert those documents as links and provide some background or context to prepare your coach.</p>	
5 mins	<p>Next steps or commitments following this coaching session</p>	

Principles of Ideal Learning Environments: Teaching Staff Tracking & Self-Reflection

Adapted for TCHS from the principles of ideal learning environments and Trust for Learning:
<https://trustforlearning.org/resource/principles-of-ideal-learning/>

- **Reflection Tracker**

A helpful tool to guide on teaching staff tracking & self-reflection

- **Tri-County Principles of Ideal Learning PowerPoint**

A helpful presentation on teaching staff tracking & self-reflection

Principles of Ideal Learning – Teaching Staff Tracking & Self-Reflection

Adapted for TCHS from Principles of Ideal Learning & Trust for Learning (<https://trustforlearning.org/resource/principles-of-ideal-learning/>)

Decision making reflects a commitment to equity.

Resources are targeted to individual needs. All children and families are valued. Educators are knowledgeable about the community. Children's differences are celebrated as unique aspects of their identity.

How is your work already representing this?

How can this principle be strengthened?

What questions, thoughts, ideas do you have about this principle?

Children construct knowledge from diverse experiences to make meaning of the world.

Children engage in ongoing exploration with their hands, minds and bodies. Educators facilitate children's learning through the preparation of enriched learning environments, both indoors and outdoors. Educators find opportunities for exploration.

How is your work already representing this?

How can this principle be strengthened?

What questions, thoughts, ideas do you have about this principle?

Principles of Ideal Learning – Teaching Staff Tracking & Self-Reflection

Adapted for TCHS from Principles of Ideal Learning & Trust for Learning (<https://trustforlearning.org/resource/principles-of-ideal-learning/>)

Play is an essential element of young children’s learning.

Play is a right of childhood and represents a crucial aspect of physical, intellectual, and social development. Educators empower children to develop initiative by providing time, space, and materials for play, appropriate risk-taking, and experiences that engender a sense of accomplishment.

How is your work already representing this?

How can this principle be strengthened?

What questions, thoughts, ideas do you have about this principle?

Instruction is personalized to acknowledge each child’s development and abilities.

Educators understand where individual children are in their development and tailor their practices and learning environment to their needs. Daily routines and curriculum reflect an understanding of how trauma might play out in an individual child’s behavior and needs.

How is your work already representing this?

How can this principle be strengthened?

What questions, thoughts, ideas do you have about this principle?

Principles of Ideal Learning – Teaching Staff Tracking & Self-Reflection

Adapted for TCHS from Principles of Ideal Learning & Trust for Learning (<https://trustforlearning.org/resource/principles-of-ideal-learning/>)

The teachers is a guide, nurturing presence, and co-constructors of knowledge.

Educators have a strengths-based view of children and families, which enables them to partner with and guide them into new areas of learning. Educators are researchers who use their observations knowledge to interpret, adjust, refine, and redirect their approach. Educators are thoughtful and intentional about the decisions they make in the classroom, guided by a moral and ethical commitment to the common good of humanity.

How is your work already representing this?

How can this principle be strengthened?

What questions, thoughts, ideas do you have about this principle?

Young children and adults learn through relationships.

Educators foster a sense of community among children and adults in the classroom. Educators develop a relationship with each child that helps them feel seen and acknowledged. Educators know the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on young children of different ages and how to respond in meaningful ways.

How is your work already representing this?

How can this principle be strengthened?

What questions, thoughts, ideas do you have about this principle?

Principles of Ideal Learning – Teaching Staff Tracking & Self-Reflection

Adapted for TCHS from Principles of Ideal Learning & Trust for Learning (<https://trustforlearning.org/resource/principles-of-ideal-learning/>)

The environment is intentionally designed to facilitate children’s exploration, independence, and interaction.

Materials, spaces, and processes are intentionally chosen to support and emergent approach that reflects children’s interests and questions. Environments are created to stimulate and encourage expression of children’s ideas, questions and emotions.

How is your work already representing this?

How can this principle be strengthened?

What questions, thoughts, ideas do you have about this principle?

The time of childhood is valued.

An intentional, calm, responsive pace informs daily learning experiences, rhythms, and routines. Children are allowed time to fully engage with materials and each other. Daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms are incorporated into the classroom and provide predictability and security for children.

How is your work already representing this?

How can this principle be strengthened?

What questions, thoughts, ideas do you have about this principle?

Principles of Ideal Learning – Teaching Staff Tracking & Self-Reflection

Adapted for TCHS from Principles of Ideal Learning & Trust for Learning (<https://trustforlearning.org/resource/principles-of-ideal-learning/>)

Continuous learning environments support adult development.

Educators and administrators create, cultivate and maintain an intentional, coherent, and shared educational philosophy that guides practice and is revisited routinely by all. Coaching and supervision are both strengths-based and inquiry-based to encourage curiosity, build resources, and increase self-awareness.

How is your work already representing this?

How can this principle be strengthened?

What questions, thoughts, ideas do you have about this principle?

Principles of Ideal Learning

MANDY ORLANDO

Introduction

9 key components of learning environments that define high-quality

Foundational

Focus on equity and relationships

Creates "positive ripples of change"

At your tables:

Pick two principles
Use two sticky notes

1. What this means to you
2. Where/how we are strong in this

Principles of Ideal Learning

- The teacher is a guide, nurturing presence, and co-creator of knowledge
- Young children and adults learn through relationships
- The environment is intentionally designed to facilitate children's exploration, independence, and interaction
- Continuous learning environments support adult development
- The time of childhood is valued
- Decision-making reflects a commitment to equity
- Children construct knowledge from diverse experiences to make meaning of the world
- Play is an essential element of young children's learning
- Instruction is personalized to acknowledge each child's unique development and abilities

1. What this means to you
2. Where/how we are strong in this



Implementing...

Strengthen & align what you are already doing



Reflecting...

Principle

Info about principle

Three reflection questions:

- How is this already part of your work?
- How can this be strengthened?
- Questions, thoughts, ideas about the principle.



THANK
YOU



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