



*Director Toolkit: Instructional Leadership
Becoming an Instructional Leader*

Director's Leadership Pilot

The Director Toolkit was designed as a resource to assist early learning program directors, mentors, coaches and instructors in using data-informed decision-making when planning professional development to support the quality improvement process. The Director's Leadership Pilot took place during the 2018-19 program year and supported the development of the Director Toolkit. Nineteen directors across the state volunteered to participate in the project. The goals of the project included

- Supporting directors in becoming instructional leaders of their programs;
- supporting directors in reviewing and analyzing assessment data with educators to determine program goals, make instructional decisions and identify professional learning needs using the VPK Assessment progress monitoring tool;
- supporting directors in creating a professional learning community for early educators interested in growing their teaching practices and knowledge by reviewing and discussing VPK Assessment data; and
- supporting director's in communicating with families and involving them in the continuous improvement process of the program.

Throughout the pilot, directors participated in seven virtual video meetings from September 2018-May 2019. Directors were asked to review and provide feedback on leadership articles and participate in discussions for implementing leadership strategies with their staff. The directors also participated in four data review sessions to discuss how the Florida VPK Assessment data can be used to support instructional and program goals and to determine professional learning needs of the staff.

Professional Articles on Becoming Instructional Leaders

Early childhood directors often balance both business and managerial tasks for their center but with today's educational focus on standards and accountability, directors also need to become a pedagogical, i.e. instructional leaders. The professional articles shared in the pilot provided insights on how to conceptualize and organize the different kinds of work involved in leading, not just managing an early childhood program. Many of the articles challenged directors to think about how to explore common ground on center-wide, agreed upon values and beliefs as well as determine the extent in which their program supports each individual child and family.

Each session of the director's pilot started with an article that the director was asked to review and discuss. Participating directors shared that they felt the articles, discussions and comments from fellow colleagues were beneficial and lead to thoughtful insights. Many directors shared articles with their staff and implemented several of the "surveys" included in some of the articles. The professional articles reviewed and shared throughout the pilot are included in this section of the Director Toolkit.

Process for Reviewing and Analyzing VPK Assessment data

An expectation for directors participating in the pilot was that they must administer the Florida VPK Assessment three times throughout the program session.

The Florida VPK Assessment is a formal, progress monitoring assessment, administered three times to track children's progress toward oral language, early literacy and mathematic skills. The Florida VPK Assessment provides teachers with valid and reliable feedback regarding children's progress in achieving the growth and developmental expectations defined in the *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Kindergarten (2017)*.

Directors participated in a virtual meeting following each assessment period to be guided through the process for reviewing and analyzing the assessment data. Many of the participating directors were already familiar with the VPK Online Reporting system which is used to record and report the VPK assessment data and generate the reports for administrators, instructors and families. The goal of the pilot was to involve directors and instructors in looking closer at the raw data and how it's used to determine the *expected norm* score.

Assessment Period 1 (AP1) is administered in the first 30 days of the preschool program. After administering the VPK Assessment at the beginning of their program, directors were asked to complete the Class Summary Chart with the VPK instructor. By entering the raw data using the child's Response Booklet, it provided the instructor an opportunity to take a closer look at the child's responses for each of the four measures. After entering the raw data, the Expected Norm Score chart was used to determine the expected norm score for each child and then for the whole class on each measure. The director and instructor met to review and talk about what they learned from the data using the guided questions from the Process for Reviewing and Analyzing AP1 Data document. *

Next Steps: The information from the beginning program assessment is considered "base-line" data, i.e., providing information for where children are as they enter the program. This data helps a director or instructor think about each child and how they are responding to the new experience of being at school. The next step following this assessment period is to take a closer look at the quality of the learning environment and instruction of the preschool classroom. The Quality Learning Environment Knowledge Check and the Quality Instruction video were provided in the Toolkit for directors to use with instructors when taking a closer look at their learning environment.

Director's provided feedback regarding the process and resources.

- Directors and instructors expressed that using the Expected Norms Chart to complete the classroom summary chart was very informative in understanding how the "numbers" were determined. They were able to obtain more information by going through this exercise with their instructors using the response booklets than what they have understood when reviewing the charts accessed from the VPK Online Reporting System.
- When using the Process for Reviewing and Analyzing Data document, some directors indicated that the guided questions for looking at the data as a whole, including background information about the child (i.e. the child's age), were important things to think about and consider when discussing the data.
- The Quality Learning Environment Knowledge Check provided a tool for directors and instructors to use when determining what quality elements are in place and what still needs to be addressed. The video on Quality Instruction and Learning supported instructors who wanted to take a closer look at their learning environment.

*Note: All the resources provided to directors during the pilot are included in the Decision Making section of the Director Toolkit.

Assessment Period 2 (AP2) is administered during the middle of the preschool program. This data/information is helpful as instructors begin to look closer at each child and their instructional needs. Mid-program data can be used to determine if the program curriculum covers all the literacy and mathematical skills that children need to become successful learners and if children are on target in meeting expected outcomes.

After administering the AP2, directors were asked to complete the Class Summary Chart with instructors using the child's raw data from the response booklets and determine the expected norm score. Mid-year program data can be used to determine if the program's curriculum covers all the literacy and mathematical skills that children need to become successful learners and if children are on target in meeting expected outcomes.

An exercise using the Class Data Worksheet was suggested that helps instructors take a closer look of the data to make curriculum and planning decisions. Two videos, Discussing AP2 Data and Planning Instruction are available in the toolkit for directors and instructors to review this process.

Director's provided feedback regarding the process and resources.

- Several directors expressed that the process for reviewing AP2 data provided a deeper understanding of the items for each measure and how it may differ from the first assessment period. The question posed for the instructors: Do you need to make adjustments in your planning or instruction?
- The Class Data Worksheet exercise helped instructors think about what areas they need to focus on, for example, is additional instruction needed to support children who are "almost" *meeting expectation*? How can small groups be formed to help children who are *below expectations*?
- Directors also helped instructors think about other areas (not covered on the assessment) that need to be addressed and did not assume that if the scores showed all children *meeting and exceeding* on a specific measure that learning for them was over.
- Directors who viewed the videos thought they were helpful for teachers to get a step-by-step look at how the class data worksheet provides useful information and can help when planning for instruction.

Assessment Period 3 (AP3) is administered and submitted within 15 days of the end of a program. This information can be used to determine the progress children have made overtime and if they are on target for *meeting or exceeding* learning outcomes. This assessment period is also the time to look at the children who *are below expectations* and begin discussions with the director and the parents regarding what measures are needed to support the child in *meeting expected* learning outcomes.

AP3 is also the time to look closer at the classroom curriculum, for example, are there gaps that need to be addressed regarding when skills are introduced? Should those skills be introduced sooner than when they are addressed in the curriculum?

Directors were asked to have their teachers complete the End of the Program Survey. The purpose of this survey is to help teachers think about their experience in administering the VPK Assessment throughout the year. It was suggested that directors meet and discuss this information individually and as a staff. The survey asks instructors to name three goals that they would like to work on to grow their practice based on what they may have learned from the VPK assessment data. Finally, directors were given the Growing Your Practice document to use with teachers to help them reflect on their practice and put specific goals in place that would improve the quality of their instruction.

Director's provided feedback regarding the process and resources:

- Directors shared instructors understood that even though children were showing that they are *meeting or exceeding* on a measure, it's important to practice and reinforce all skills to assure children will maintain the learning through the summer.
- The meeting with the teaching team was informative and the survey provided opportunities to address curriculum needs and areas that instructors felt they needed to grow their practice.

Following the final virtual session, directors were asked to provide feedback regarding the Director Leadership Pilot project. Below is a summary of what was shared.

Benefits of participating:

- The pilot provided opportunities for networking with other directors across the state
- Resources (e.g., articles, content documents, videos), were informative and useful.
- The format of virtual meetings was interactive, reflective and provided content to share with staff.
- The Facebook group was helpful by providing easy access of PowerPoints, articles, documents and videos for directors to use and provide feedback.
- The facilitator offered several options of dates and times for virtual meetings which allowed flexible participation for directors.

- Director's personal knowledge on mentoring and becoming an instructional leader was enhanced.
- Reviewing and analyzing the data following each VPK assessment period provided opportunities for directors and instructors to understand the data and how to use it to inform instruction.

Recommendations on how to use the articles, documents and processes for VPK Directors across the state:

- Directors suggested that a face-to-face replication of pilot in a learning circle format or professional learning community (using facilitators or directors grouping themselves) would benefit other directors in their journey in becoming instructional leaders.
- Provide replication of director's leadership pilot program through webinars.
- Develop a toolkit with articles, documents and videos for directors and instructors to access current and relevant educational topics.

The Director Toolkit is located on the Standards website <http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/>