

PROMOTING

# INTENTIONAL TEACHING



The LEARN Professional Development Model  
for Early Childhood Educators

Julie K. Kidd | M. Susan Burns | Ilham Nasser

# Promoting Intentional Teaching

## The LEARN Professional Development Model for Early Childhood Educators

by

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**Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.**

Post Office Box 10624  
Baltimore, Maryland 21285-0624  
USA

[www.brookespublishing.com](http://www.brookespublishing.com)

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Typeset by Progressive Publishing Services, York, Pennsylvania.  
Manufactured in the United States of America by Versa Press, Inc., East Peoria, Illinois.

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This book is based on a Head Start University Partnership Teacher Effectiveness research grant, *Sustaining Teachers’ Effective Pedagogy (STEP): Continuous Program Improvement to Increase Teacher Effectiveness and Enhance Children’s Outcomes*, funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families from 2008 to 2012. (HHS-2008-ACF-OPRE-YR-0060, 90YR0020/10)

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kidd, Julie K., author. | Burns, M. Susan (Marie Susan), author. | Nasser, Ilham, 1963– author.  
Title: Promoting Intentional Teaching : The LEARN Professional Development Model for Early Childhood Educators / by Julie K. Kidd, M. Susan Burns, Ilham Nasser.  
Description: Baltimore, Maryland : Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.  
Identifiers: LCCN 2018020118 (print) | LCCN 2018036294 (ebook) | ISBN 9781681253145 (epub) | ISBN 9781681253152 (pdf) | ISBN 9781598579673 (paperback)  
Subjects: LCSH: Early childhood education. | Early childhood teachers—Professional relationships. | Early childhood teachers—In-service training. | BISAC: EDUCATION / Preschool & Kindergarten. | EDUCATION / Professional Development. | EDUCATION / Teaching Methods & Materials / General.  
Classification: LCC LB1139.23 (ebook) | LCC LB1139.23 .K53 2019 (print) | DDC 372.21—dc23  
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018020118>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data are available from the British Library.

2023 2022 2021 2020 2019

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

FOR MORE, go to <http://bit.ly/Promoting-IT>

*To the teachers, teacher assistants, children, and families  
who made this book possible*

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## About the Contributors

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# Acknowledgments

As with any project of this size and complexity, we could not have completed our work without the support and participation of a variety of people. First and foremost, this book would not have been possible without the Head Start teachers and teacher assistants who participated in the LEARN professional development and provided consent for us to study their growth as intentional teachers and their perceptions of the LEARN professional development model. We also appreciate the Head Start directors and parent advisory boards who provided support and permission for us to work with their educators. In addition, we want to acknowledge all of the children who welcomed us into their classrooms and reminded us of the real reason we chose to pursue this work.

Second, this book would not have been possible without those who contributed to our work throughout the process. We want to acknowledge Catherine Snow and Peg Griffin, who provided expert feedback and advice throughout the project, and Research Associates Deepa Aier, Debra Fulcher, and Robert Stechuk, whose contributions helped us to shape and implement the LEARN professional development. We also appreciate our former doctoral students who contributed to the project in a variety of ways over the years. We give our thanks to Mona Assaf, Trina Campbell, Sarah Daily, Leslie La Croix, Arlene Mascarenhas, T. Kevin McGowan, Leah Muccio, Raymond Shorter, and Stacia Stribling. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of our Program Officers, Laura Hoard and Wendy DeCoursey.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the support of John Kidd, Sara Huether, and Mohammed Abunimer. Their belief in us and our work helped us to persevere through the challenges and enjoy the successes of the project. We would also like to acknowledge our children, Christopher Kidd, Nina Huether-Burns, Ella Huether-Burns, Ayman Abunimer, and Luma Abunimer. They provided insights and inspiration throughout our work.

# Introduction

Ten years ago, we sat around Julie’s kitchen table with the Head Start University Partnership Teacher Effectiveness Research Call for Proposals in hand and brainstormed a new approach to professional development. We envisioned a dynamic, effective model of professional development that would contribute to Head Start teachers’ teaching effectiveness across content areas. At the time, the three of us—Julie, Susan, and Ilham—worked together in an inclusive early childhood education, preservice teacher preparation program that was designed to prepare teachers to work with young children with diverse abilities and their linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse families. We believed that the combination of our work together preparing preservice teachers, our separate experiences working with practicing teachers, and our knowledge of the literature provided us with the insights needed to develop a professional development model designed to sustain teachers’ effective pedagogy. Our goal was to develop a model that increased teachers’ and assistant teachers’ effectiveness and enhanced children’s learning outcomes.

Drawing upon Susan’s work on *The Knowledge to Support the Teaching of Reading: Preparing Teachers for a Changing World* (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2015), we adopted a framework for our professional development model titled LEARN. Snow et al. (2015) described the four steps in the process: *learning* (L) new information, *enacting* (E) the information learned, *assessing* (A) the effectiveness of the enactment, and *reflecting* (R) on what was effective and what could be changed to increase the effectiveness of the enactment. Based on our experiences and additional review of the literature, we added *networking* (N) with mentors and peers to this process. This process of learning, enacting, assessing, reflecting, and networking became the LEARN framework that is the foundation of our LEARN professional development model (discussed later in this chapter). In this book, the LEARN model will focus on developing early educators’ intentional teaching strategies. It is important to note that the LEARN framework can also be used for literacy, mathematics, or any other academic, pedagogical, or developmental content area in which teachers need professional development.

We started with the notion of intentional teaching as an approach to enhance and adjust instruction to provide quality educational experiences for young children (Burns, Kidd, Nasser, Aier, & Stechuk, 2012; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). We recognized that intentional early educators adapt their teaching to meet the prior knowledge, interests, abilities, and needs of individual children (Burns et al.; Copple & Bredekamp). We also were aware that intentional teaching involves educators intentionally planning and implementing strategies to promote positive learning outcomes (Burns et al.; Epstein, 2007). Yet, as we delved further into the literature, we found few studies that examined and defined intentional teaching. Building on the

literature and our own research in Head Start classes, we developed the following definition of intentional teaching:

Intentional teaching means that teachers provide learning opportunities designed to meet the individual needs, interests, and prior knowledge of all children in their instructional settings. This takes place through reciprocal, codirected conversation between teachers and children in learning centers/small groups. Conversation happens with all children, rather than a selected few, and takes place on a consistent basis (high quantity as well as high quality). Children's ideas are developed, and thinking is demanded using rich curriculum content (e.g., in science, creative arts, and social studies). Planned instructional strategies/activities take place within a positive classroom climate. (Burns et al., 2012, p. 284)

This definition became our foundation for building the professional development model. The model uses the LEARN framework to develop educators' knowledge of intentional teaching and their ability to implement intentional teaching strategies in their classrooms; we called this professional development model LEARN Intentional Teaching, or LEARN IT.

With a framework in place, we knew we also needed to identify effective formats for providing our LEARN IT professional development. Once again, we decided to take a yearlong approach that included LEARN institutes with educators across sites, in-class mentoring that took place one on one with a LEARN mentor, and site-based supportive learning communities facilitated by LEARN mentors (Nasser et al., 2015). We also included an online component that enabled LEARN mentors and educators to communicate and learn from each other between face-to-face interactions (Nasser et al.).

Once our project was funded, we spent the first year developing the content for the LEARN IT professional development program. This involved extensive reviews of the literature; on-site observations to gather baseline data of current teacher practices; gathering information on the interests, strengths, and needs of the teachers and assistant teachers; and developing professional development activities focused on identified intentional teaching strategies. During the second year of the project, we implemented LEARN IT professional development at a Head Start community-based program, housed in elementary schools across a small city in the mid-Atlantic region. We used data collected in this first year of implementation, including feedback from participants, to revise the content and activities. We implemented it again in the third year of the project with teachers and teacher assistants from one public school and two community Head Start programs across a wider geographic region. We used the data collected during the second year of implementation to further revise the LEARN IT professional development model. This book draws upon what we developed and learned as we implemented and studied this model, as well as upon other work in which we have engaged since the conclusion of this project. We found that, overall, the LEARN professional development program led to high teacher satisfaction. The participants valued the support they received from the mentor (Nasser et al., 2015). They appreciated the activities, resources, and involvement provided by the mentor. The model engaged educators, enhancing their teaching and, ultimately, children's learning.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book provides a comprehensive professional development model designed to enhance intentional teaching practices. Many professionals can engage with and benefit from the model, including preservice teachers, practicing teachers, and assistant

teachers, as well as administrators, coaches, trainers, supervisors, teacher educators, and professional developers. In this book, we use the term *professional development facilitators* or *facilitators* to encompass a range of professionals who play leadership roles in professional development for educators. Such professionals may include administrators, coaches, trainers, supervisors, teacher educators, professional developers, and others. Ultimately, our intent was that the LEARN IT framework could be applied to allow preservice and in-service educators to master intentional teaching, enhancing their effectiveness in the classroom.

Although the initial project focused on Head Start teachers and assistant teachers, all teachers and assistant teachers working with preschool to kindergarten children can participate in LEARN IT professional development. The guidance and examples throughout the book are applicable across this age range, as well as across an array of early childhood settings. Because we included teachers, teacher 2s (a second classroom teacher), assistant teachers, and paraprofessionals in our project, we use the term *educators* throughout the book to include all instructional professionals in the classroom who interact with children to promote positive learning outcomes. When the educators are participating in a professional development activity, we also refer to them as *participants*.

This book provides an in-depth examination of the LEARN IT professional development model as a tool to help educators develop intentional teaching strategies that enhance teaching and learning. Specifically, this book focuses on educators' use of effective instructional strategies that emphasize specific components of intentional teaching (Burns et al., 2012; Nasser, Kidd, Burns, & Campbell, 2015):

1. Learning through play
2. Including each child
3. Culturally responsive practice
4. Assessing diverse young children
5. Linking assessment with curriculum and instruction

## HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

Chapters 1 through 7 begin with a vignette that illustrates how educators engage in the LEARN IT professional development. Each vignette is designed to introduce the content of the chapter through the experiences of educators and their students. These educators and children appear throughout the chapters to more concretely illustrate key concepts and develop important points. While these vignettes are based on real observations and interactions with educators and children, they were created for illustrative purposes and may combine characteristics and experiences of several educators and students.

Following each vignette is the Foundations section, which presents a review of the literature and content knowledge that educators need to learn in order to develop intentional teaching strategies. This is the *L* or *learn* element in LEARN. Next, each chapter includes a Professional Development Activities section, which provides replicable, facilitated activities to develop educators' intentional teaching practices. These

activities present effective ways for educators to master strategies for and practical applications of intentional teaching. In these activities, educators enact, assess, and reflect on specific intentional teaching strategies while networking with their peers. Just as the Foundations section supports the *learn* step, the Activities section supports the *enact*, *assess*, *reflect*, and *network* steps. Specifically, educators

Learn new information by linking their background to practical knowledge

Enact intentional teaching through implementation in their classroom

Assess the effectiveness of the intentional teaching strategies enacted

Reflect to make informed and intentional instructional decisions

Network with colleagues and mentors to share ideas for making intentional teaching work in their early childhood education classrooms

We conclude each chapter with a summary of the major content addressed in the chapter and a link to the next chapter.

Notably, the LEARN IT professional development model is flexible; the ideas should be adapted to the contexts and needs of the participants. For example, professional development facilitators and administrators can use the model to implement yearlong professional development for groups of prekindergarten and kindergarten educators. Teacher educators might integrate the information and activities into their existing courses and adapt the activities to fit their needs. Educators themselves can read the chapters and work through the pertinent activities with a small group of their fellow teachers. Furthermore, the activities prescribed can themselves be adapted. For instance, if mentors might be from a different school or district from that of the educators, mentoring sessions might be conducted via video chat. Supportive learning communities may choose to set up an online discussion board to facilitate networking when they are unable to meet in person. Whatever approach is taken, it is important to keep the LEARN framework as a central focus. Educators need opportunities to *learn* new information, *enact* new strategies, *assess* the effectiveness of their enactment of the strategies, *reflect* on next steps, and *network* with mentors and peers. This process is essential to fully integrating new knowledge and skills into practice.

In Chapter 1, we present the LEARN framework as a multifaceted, integrated approach to professional development. We explain what the LEARN IT professional development model is and how it incorporates research findings on professional development. In Chapter 2, we turn our focus to intentional teaching. We define intentional teaching and explain why it is key to effective interactions that promote young children's learning. Our research is presented along with theory and research from the field on intentional teaching. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 introduce intentional teaching and the LEARN professional development model.

Chapters 3 through 7 examine key intentional teaching strategies, as defined in our definition of intentional teaching. Chapter 3 examines how intentional teaching takes place within the context of play and how educators can develop knowledge and strategies that enable them to engage in intentional teaching as children play. Chapter 4 focuses on the topic of including each child and explains that educators must prioritize intentional interactions with each child in their classroom. Chapter 5 presents culturally responsive practice and includes a specific focus on children who are multilingual or dual language learners. Chapter 6 discusses the assessment of diverse young

learners. Chapter 7 emphasizes linking assessment with curriculum and instruction. The appendix, entitled Approach and Efficacy of the Study, provides an in-depth discussion of our research that informed the development of the LEARN professional development model.

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# Understanding LEARN IT



## A Multifaceted, Integrated Approach to Professional Development

With Leslie La Croix

Lillie, a Head Start teacher in a rural area, recently attended a LEARN Intentional Teaching (LEARN IT) professional development institute that was part of a yearlong multifaceted approach to professional development. Through LEARN IT, which is described in more detail in this chapter, early educators *learn* (L) new knowledge about intentional teaching, *enact* (E) or practice intentional teaching strategies, *assess* (A) the effectiveness of the strategies implemented, *reflect* (R) on their practice, and *network* (N) with their peers and mentors to develop and refine their *intentional teaching* (IT) strategies (Nasser, Kidd, Burns, & Campbell, 2015). The LEARN IT professional development program includes institutes guided by professional development facilitators; classroom implementation of new strategies with the support of a mentor; and supportive, on-site learning communities with mentors and other early educators. Intentional teaching, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 2, is a teaching framework in which educators provide “learning opportunities” that are “designed to meet the individual needs, interests, and prior knowledge of all children” (Burns, Kidd, Nasser, Aier, & Stechuk, 2012, p. 281). Intentional teaching occurs when educators engage in high-quality, codirected conversations with children that develop children’s ideas and require them to think (Burns et al., 2012). LEARN IT prepares teachers to successfully implement intentional teaching practices.

During the recent LEARN IT institute, Lillie learned that one example of an intentional teaching strategy is dialogic reading. *Dialogic reading* is defined as “an interactive shared picture book reading practice designed to enhance young children’s language and literacy skills” (What Works Clearinghouse [WWC], 2007, p. 1). Lillie learned that implementing dialogic reading with her 4-year-olds could have positive effects on their oral language development (Lonigan, Anthony, Bloomfield, Dyer, & Samwel, 1999; Wasik & Bond, 2001; WWC, 2009). In the session, she learned ways to encourage children to talk about what is happening in the pictures and in the story as she reads aloud (WWC, 2009). Before leaving the LEARN IT institute, Lillie began to conceptualize opportunities to enact dialogic reading in her classroom. She planned to purposefully engage her students in a picture book by listening actively to her students’ responses, asking questions, and providing prompts that elicit more detailed descriptions (Lonigan et al.; WWC, 2009). By engaging children in interactive shared reading

experiences, she hoped to expand their expressive and receptive vocabulary (National Literacy Panel, 2008; Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti, & Kaderavek, 2013).

A few days after the LEARN IT institute, Lillie sat with Ashley and Tanesha with a copy of *Nana in the City* by Lauren Castillo (2014). Lillie had read the book to a group of children earlier in the day, and she decided to use the book to focus on vocabulary development with Ashley and Tanesha. When they got to the page where the boy and his Nana are entering the subway train, Lillie asked, "What is going on here?" Ashley responded, "There's his Nana." Tanesha went on to talk about the boy and Nana getting on the train with all the other people who also want to ride the subway to get to another part of the city. As they continued to look at the book, Lillie used anecdotal notes to briefly capture the children's responses. She noticed that Ashley's responses to questions about the pictures and story were limited to phrases or short sentences, whereas Tanesha often talked at length when she responded to questions about the pictures and story. Later that day, Lillie reflected on what she noticed as she read to Ashley and Tanesha. She paused to think about how each responded to her prompts. She wondered why Ashley's responses were so short whereas Tanesha's were full of description.

The next morning, Lillie talked with Sheri, who had also attended the LEARN IT institute on dialogic reading. Lillie shared with Sheri what she observed and asked if Sheri had any ideas that would help. Sheri pointed out possible differences in Tanesha's and Ashley's prior knowledge that Lillie might take into account. Sheri reminded Lillie that Tanesha often visits her uncle who lives in the city. Her existing vocabulary from that prior experience might make it easier for her to expand on the pictures and story. Ashley, on the other hand, may not have many opportunities to visit the city and may not possess some of the vocabulary to provide rich descriptions of the pictures and text. She suggested that Lillie ask Ashley more specific questions (e.g., "What are the boy and his Nana going to ride?" and "What are all these people doing?") to encourage Ashley to put words to the objects and actions in the story before asking more open-ended questions like the one asked earlier (Lonigan et al., 1999). Sheri also encouraged Lillie to talk with Janet, her LEARN IT mentor, about coming into her classroom to observe Lillie and provide feedback about her implementation of dialogic reading. She also suggested that Lillie ask Janet to model the strategies or co-teach with her while trying out the strategies. Sheri reminded Lillie that Janet is available to provide implementation and mentoring support to specifically address her concerns and questions. By the end of their conversation, Lillie felt more confident and was ready to give dialogic reading another try.

It was no accident that Lillie struck up a conversation with Sheri while assessing and reflecting on her attempts to enact what she learned about dialogic reading in the LEARN IT institute. This type of collaboration and problem solving among colleagues is an integral part of LEARN IT. Through the program, Lillie learned new information, enacted what she learned, assessed the effectiveness of the instruction, reflected on next steps, and networked with her colleague, and later her mentor, to further develop knowledge and skills. Throughout this book, we share vignettes of early childhood educators engaged in the LEARN IT approach to illustrate how the model can promote educators' knowledge and use of intentional teaching strategies. By sharing their experiences, we demonstrate how early educators engage in meaningful professional development and embrace intentional teaching practices to enhance children's learning.



## WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS CHAPTER

Like Lillie, many early educators leave professional development sessions ready to try out new ideas or refine existing strategies, but they find it is not always easy to get the results promised by facilitators. Educators may then be tempted to discard the new approach and move on to some other idea or to revert back to what has always been done. Yet, with more time and development, that new strategy could have proved promising. Facilitators and mentors must provide resources to help educators adjust the strategy for their teaching style and pedagogical skill, as well as for their class' interests, past experiences, prior knowledge, strengths, and needs.

This chapter provides an overview of LEARN IT, a professional development model that supports learning, enacting, assessing, and reflecting (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005) while networking with mentors and peers (Nasser et al., 2015). Educators can use and/or adapt information and strategies found in the Foundations section to enhance their own intentional teaching practices. Likewise, professional development facilitators, coaches, teacher educators, administrators, and mentors can use the knowledge from the Foundations section to improve early educators' intentional teaching abilities. They can also implement the Professional Development Activities section that follows to put the foundational knowledge into practice and create a LEARN IT professional development program at their school. This chapter

- Reviews what is known about effective professional development for early educators and draws upon adult learning theories to guide our discussion
- Discusses the importance of engaging educators in a multifaceted, integrated approach to professional development focused on intentional teaching that includes opportunities to apply the LEARN framework through institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning communities (Nasser et al., 2015)
- Suggests strategies for applying the knowledge on teacher professional development to early educators' own professional growth and development
- Provides guidance on assessing and reflecting on knowledge and strategies enacted in the classroom
- Emphasizes the important role networking plays in effective professional development
- Describes LEARN IT experiences that support early childhood educators' understanding and use of LEARN in their professional growth and development

## FOUNDATIONS: EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

High-quality early education develops the knowledge and skills that serve as a foundation for enhancing children's later academic and social success. Rich educational opportunities are especially important for classrooms with children living in poverty, children with diverse learning abilities, and children from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Diamond, Justice, Siegler, & Snyder, 2013). A landmark report, *Eager to*

*Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers* (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000), presented the culmination of more than 2 years of work by an esteemed panel of social scientists to review and synthesize theory and research. The panel concluded that children who attend well-planned, high-quality programs and are in the care of well-prepared teachers are better prepared to succeed in school than children who do not attend such programs. A more recent report, *Synthesis of IES Research on Early Intervention and Early Childhood Education* (Diamond et al.), supports the assertion that quality instruction and well-prepared teachers are important to student success. In this report, Diamond et al. conclude, “Increasing teachers’ use of research-based instructional practices, with fidelity, promotes more effective learning by children enrolled in their classrooms” (p. 32). Diamond et al. also determined that providing quality professional development can enhance classroom instruction. Accordingly, providing early educators with quality professional development positively influences teachers’ instructional decisions that, in turn, enhance children’s learning.

Because high-quality professional development influences children’s learning outcomes, it is important to consider what constitutes effective professional development. Isolated workshops, common in many schools, do not provide the tools for reinforcement and implementation that result in lasting pedagogical changes and, therefore, are not the answer (Diamond et al., 2013; Tooley & Connally, 2016; Zaslow, Tout, Halle, & Starr, 2011; Zaslow, Tout, Halle, Whittaker, & Lavelle, 2010). Instead, researchers highlight the importance of providing coherent, ongoing opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development activities (Bowman et al., 2000; Diamond & Powell, 2011; Tooley & Connally, 2016; Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, & Garet, 2008). Converging evidence from research suggests that, at a minimum, early childhood educators need specific content knowledge, pedagogical understanding, and instructional strategies to fully support and enrich children’s learning experiences (Snow et al., 2005). Schools should provide multifaceted, integrated professional development “that balances teacher self-direction and input from instructional experts” in order to enhance educators’ successful implementation and long-term use of effective instructional strategies (Tooley & Connally, 2016, p. 11).

In their groundbreaking report on how people learn, Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) asserted that learning takes place in learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered environments. Learner-centered environments build on teachers’ interests and abilities and take into account their varied levels of expertise. These environments focus on developing teachers’ research-based content and pedagogical knowledge, and they use assessment-centered practices that provide opportunities to enact new strategies, assess their effectiveness, and receive feedback to guide future enactments. These learning experiences take place within a community-centered environment that provides opportunities to learn with and from peers and expert mentors (Bransford et al.).

Research also suggests that effective professional development is relevant to educators’ professional roles and responsibilities (Tooley & Connally, 2016; Wayne et al., 2008) and provides opportunities for learners to actively engage in learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999). Tooley and Connally explain, “Adult learning theory posits that making PD [professional development] content relevant to teachers’ daily practice is effective because it helps motivate professional learning” (p. 8). When educators learn information, skills, and strategies that they can apply to their own work with children, they are

more likely to retain and implement their new knowledge. As Bransford et al. (2000) pointed out, learners have higher levels of motivation to learn when the usefulness and impact of the information is apparent. Adult learning theory also suggests that learning occurs when learners are actively engaged in their learning (Bransford et al.; Darling-Hammond & Bransford). Therefore, effective professional development takes an interactive approach that includes active engagement with relevant content, enactment of new information and strategies, feedback from more expert mentors and peers, and individual and collaborative problem solving (Nasser et al., 2015; Tooley & Connally).

Adult learning theory also recognizes teachers as lifelong learners whose levels of expertise progress from novice to master teachers. In their study of 263 early childhood educators, Weber-Mayrner, Piasta, and Pelatti (2015) found that participants varied in their qualifications, areas of expertise, and number of years of teaching, and suggested that effective professional development takes into account these differences among participants. Snow et al. (2005) proposed “progressive differentiation” as a framework for teacher development; when there is evidence that a teacher’s capacity for a particular skill is ineffective, that capacity should not be superseded. Instead, the capacity should be “analyzed and elaborated,” leading to the educator reorganizing his or her “enacted knowledge into reflective knowledge” (Snow et al., p. 6). They explain, “Preservice, apprentice, and novice teachers are most heavily involved in new learning” (Snow et al., p. 6). These preservice and early career teachers initially rely on declarative knowledge, the facts and information that they receive from instruction, as they learn about teaching and learning. Later, they put into practice what they are learning and develop procedural knowledge, the knowledge necessary to perform particular activities. On the other hand, experienced teachers have a wealth of knowledge to build upon and engage in assessment and reflection of their teaching as they develop “expert, adaptive knowledge” (Snow et al., p. 8). This knowledge enables them to identify instructional challenges, obtain evidence-based knowledge, and integrate new and existing knowledge. Master teachers develop “reflective, organized, analyzed knowledge” (Snow et al., p. 9). They use their experiences to analyze and evaluate new knowledge as they reflect on instructional decisions.

Although the development of teachers’ knowledge and skills is important in teacher professional development, teachers’ beliefs, dispositions, and cultural values play an essential role in their professional growth as well (Aikens, Akers, & Atkins-Burnett, 2016; Avalos, 2011; Kidd, Sánchez, & Thorp, 2008; Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, & Knoche, 2009; Weber-Mayrner et al., 2015). Weber-Mayrner et al. note that beliefs influence changes in behavior; therefore, they encourage professional development facilitators to “be aware of educators’ beliefs, including their feelings of efficacy, openness to change, and approaches and orientations to teaching and learning” (p. 55). Educators who have high levels of self-efficacy and report being open to change tend to be more likely to implement new instructional approaches than those who question their abilities and the value of the professional development content (Weber-Mayrner et al.). Research suggests that when the content of teacher professional development conflicts with their beliefs and values, teachers are less likely to continue to implement instructional strategies beyond the time of the professional development (Sanford DeRousie & Bierman, 2012; Schachter, 2015). Kidd et al. noted the influence of beliefs, dispositions, and cultural values in their work with early childhood education preservice teachers.

They share a story about one preservice teacher that illustrates the conflicts teachers may feel when what they are learning is counter to their upbringing:

One preservice teacher, in particular, shared the conflict she felt between her own upbringing in a family from Korea and the cultural values of her focus child's White family. She described the mismatch between her upbringing that valued dependence and the focus child's family who valued independence. In her story, she acknowledged the importance of respecting and responding to the family's values and goals, but admitted that it was a challenge to truly understand and act upon those values when working with the family's child. (Kidd et al., 2008, p. 327)

In their study of Head Start teachers, Sanford DeRousie and Bierman (2012) reported similar findings. In interviews, teachers acknowledged that once they were no longer required to implement particular instructional strategies, they did not incorporate strategies that conflicted with their beliefs about how children best learn (Sanford DeRousie & Bierman). Sheridan et al. (2009) asserted that attention must be given to "uncover process variables that promote change in practitioners' knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are indicative of effective practice" (p. 396). They contended that professional development that includes targeted training, individual coaching and consulting, and communities of practice help teachers acquire new knowledge, develop their skills, and implement practices supported by research (Sheridan et al., 2009).

## The LEARN Framework

LEARN IT is an approach to developing early educators' intentional teaching practices, taking into account what is known about effective professional development and adult learning theory. Underlying this approach is LEARN (i.e., learn, enact, assess, reflect, network), a framework that is integrated into educators' professional lives (Nasser et al., 2015; Snow et al., 2005). This framework is based on the premise that early educators develop professionally as they 1) learn new knowledge and skills, 2) enact what is learned, 3) assess the effectiveness of the enactment, 4) reflect on next steps and future practices, and 5) network with colleagues and mentors. When this framework is integrated into all aspects of early educators' professional development, it enables early educators to take ownership of their professional growth and use professional development opportunities to target their own individual interests, strengths, and needs. The goal is for educators to develop adaptive, reflective knowledge that enables them to implement intentional teaching strategies in the classroom, beyond their active engagement in professional development activities (Snow et al.). They do this by learning knowledge directly applicable to their teaching, transferring this knowledge into enacted classroom practice, and assessing and reflecting on the outcomes of enacted intentional teaching strategies to make instructional decisions (Snow et al.).

As seen in Figure 1.1, the LEARN framework guides early educators' learning as they participate in the program's three components:

1. *LEARN IT institutes*: Gathering of educators, across sites or across a school, that meets for long blocks of time (e.g., half day or all day) throughout the year to learn specific knowledge and intentional teaching strategies.
2. *Implementation and mentoring*: Guidance, support, and feedback provided by a mentor while educators enact, assess, and reflect on new knowledge and teaching strategies.
3. *Supportive learning communities*: Small groups of educators with common interests who meet formally and informally in person and online to provide support as educators enact, assess, and reflect on new knowledge and teaching strategies.

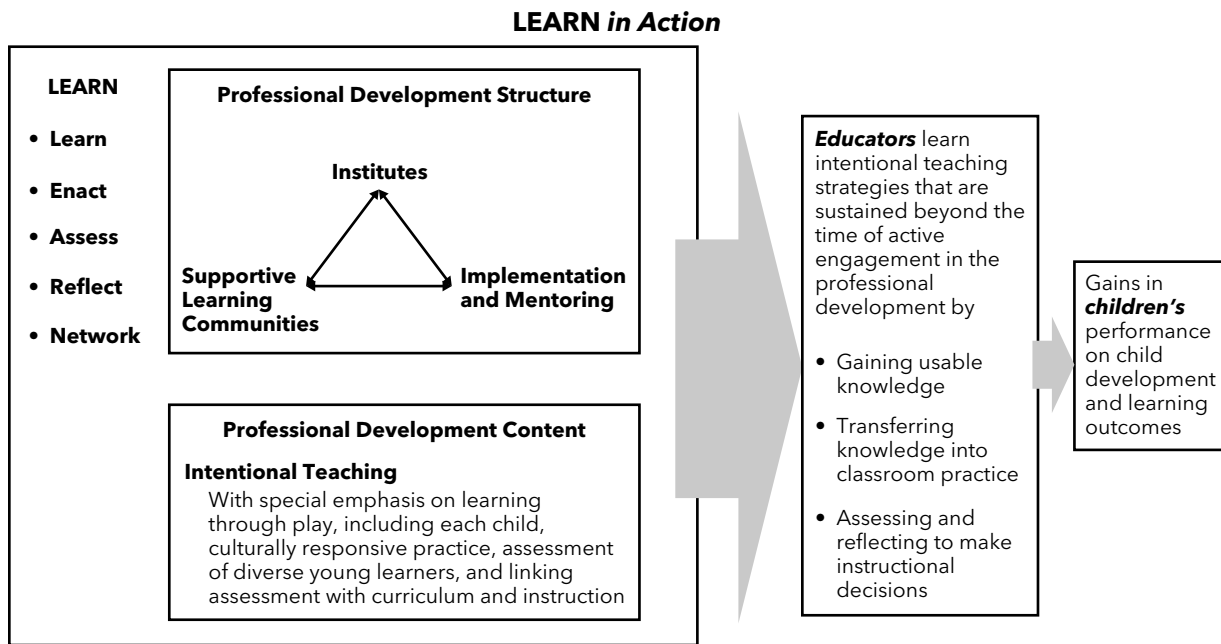


Figure 1.1. LEARN in action.

These opportunities support early educators as they learn with others across schools or sites, within their own classrooms, and with supportive colleagues in their own buildings (Nasser et al., 2015). Specifically, in the LEARN IT professional development, early educators learn and enact knowledge focused on supporting their efforts to embrace intentional teaching practices that promote learning in individual children. Intentional teaching practices, underscored throughout the LEARN IT professional development, include an emphasis on 1) play-based learning opportunities; 2) inclusive and culturally responsive practices; 3) assessment of diverse young learners; and 4) the strategic linking of assessment, curriculum, and instruction (see Figure 1.1). The subsequent section provides advice on getting started on a LEARN IT program focused on developing early educators' intentional teaching strategies. It also describes in more detail each facet of the LEARN framework and the role of institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning communities in early educators' professional development. Chapters 3 through 7 further discuss the intentional teaching practices noted in Figure 1.1.

## Getting Started on LEARN IT

Successful professional development does not just happen; professional developers must plan and prepare for each aspect of the experience. Although this book contains descriptions of experiences that professional development facilitators should implement for each key concept, the specific content, activities, and schedules may need to be adapted to fit participants' interests and needs. Professional development facilitators must consider the strengths, prior experiences, interests, and abilities of the early educators who will participate and the schedules that will best align with their day-to-day routines and academic calendars. To gain an understanding of participants and their contexts, professional development facilitators and mentors should get to know who educators are and what they bring to the professional development, their

everyday contexts, and their students. Facilitators can accomplish this by spending time in participants' classrooms and by talking with participants about their prior experiences, pedagogical beliefs and practices, vision, and goals. In this way, they become familiar with the educators and children as well as the school and community settings. In addition, facilitators should also be aware of any new initiatives, such as adoption of a new curriculum, that may influence the professional development experiences.

Professional development schedules must be feasible and practical as well. While scheduling LEARN IT, professional development facilitators can use the questions in the Planning the Logistics text box that follows. Facilitators should consider when and how often to hold institutes, engage in implementation and mentoring, and convene supportive learning community meetings. Likewise, the question of where to hold institutes and supportive learning community meetings must be considered. It is important that the locations and timing of these forums be conducive to adult learners and have the space and technology needed to support learning.

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### **PLANNING THE LOGISTICS**

Use the following questions to guide your thinking as you plan for LEARN IT institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning community meetings.

#### **Institutes**

- Is it feasible to hold a 2- or 3-day summer institute at the beginning of the professional development experience? Is there money to bring educators in before their contracts begin? Are there days already in the schedule before the children report to school that can be dedicated to professional development?
- Are there days in the academic calendar that will be conducive to holding full-day or half-day institutes throughout the academic year? Will additional days need to be identified and plans for class coverage be needed?
- How many days will be scheduled for institutes and how often throughout the year will they occur?
- Where will institutes be held and what will be the start and end times? What is a convenient location for all if there is cross-site participation? What location will take participants out of their everyday context and give them an opportunity to engage in learning without interruptions that might occur when their classroom is down the hall or when nonparticipating colleagues are nearby? What start and end times will work with educators' schedules?
- What types of space and technologies are available? Is the space and furniture appropriate for adult learners? Is the space conducive to activities that range from large-group forums to small-group activities? Are needed technologies available or easy to set up?

#### **Implementation and Mentoring**

- How often will implementation and mentoring take place? What would be ideal? What is feasible given current resources?
- What time of day will mentors work with educators?
- When and how will debriefing between early educators and mentors take place?

#### **Supportive Learning Community Meetings**

- When and how often will supportive learning communities meet? What scheduling opportunities and constraints must be considered? Is there a common time within the day that is available? If meeting after the children leave, what obligations might have an impact on what time the meeting needs to begin or end?
  - Where will the meetings be held? Are there spaces available with adult furniture that will be more comfortable for meeting? Is there a space where technology is available or easy to set up?
-

Facilitators must also carefully consider and identify the content and intentional teaching strategies to address and plan activities that will promote learning. Knowing who the participants are and what they bring to the professional development experience will inform the content and strategies emphasized as well as the types of learning experiences incorporated to promote effective implementation. The space and technologies available may also influence decisions and should be taken into consideration when planning; arrangements for appropriate spaces and technologies should be made in advance. In addition, attention must be given to the structure and organization of the LEARN IT institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning communities to ensure that each experience includes opportunities to learn, enact, assess, and reflect while networking with mentors and peers. These considerations are apparent in the subsequent discussions and in the Professional Development Activities detailed later in this chapter.

## Learn New Knowledge

When early educators participate in LEARN IT, they learn how to implement intentional teaching strategies as well as the theory and research that supports their use (Nasser et al., 2015). Understanding theory and research and how they link to practice allows educators not only to implement strategies in their classroom but also to modify and adapt strategies to support the learning of the diverse children in their classrooms (Allen & Kelly, 2015). This knowledge also gives them the freedom to use their professional judgment as they make decisions about how, if, when, and with whom specific instructional strategies are enacted.

One way to develop early educators' knowledge of intentional teaching strategies and the theories and research that support these practices is to offer institutes like the one Lillie attended on dialogic reading. These institutes take place over the course of the year and provide opportunities for educators to gather within or across sites or schools to strategically acquire new knowledge and skills. The nature of the institutes enables early educators to delve deeply into specific intentional teaching strategies. The purpose is to activate prior knowledge, learn new content, practice specific evidence-based instructional strategies with guidance and feedback, and assess and reflect on what is learned within the context of a network of facilitators and peers (Nasser et al., 2015). An example of a schedule for a day-long professional development institute is shown in the text box that follows, *Intentionally Expanding Children's Vocabulary Using Dialogic Reading: November Institute Agenda*.

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### **INTENTIONALLY EXPANDING CHILDREN'S VOCABULARY: USING DIALOGIC READING NOVEMBER INSTITUTE AGENDA**

**9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

#### **Networking**

- Light breakfast and networking
- Warm-up activity

#### **Welcome and Announcements**

#### **Review of October LEARN IT**

- Institute highlights
- Implementation and mentoring successes
- Supportive learning communities' reflections

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*(continued)*

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(continued)

### **Learn About Dialogic Reading**

- Dialogic reading as an intentional teaching strategy
- The role dialogic reading plays in expanding children’s vocabulary
- Planning for dialogic reading

### **Dialogic Reading–Guided Practice**

- Enact dialogic reading with facilitator-selected book and premade guide
- Assess what worked and identify areas for growth
- Reflect on what will be needed to implement dialogic reading independently
- Network with facilitators and peers to gain the information and feedback needed to implement dialogic reading independently

### **Lunch**

#### **Networking**

- After-lunch socializing
- Warm-up activity

#### **Dialogic Reading–Independent Practice**

- Prepare materials (i.e., guide, sticky notes) for self-selected book
- Enact dialogic reading with a partner
- Assess what worked and identify areas for growth
- Reflect on what will be needed to implement dialogic reading in your classroom
- Network by sharing copies of completed guides and sticky notes

#### **Dialogic Reading–Classroom Enactment**

- Identify an opportunity to enact dialogic reading in your classroom
- Outline what you will need to do to prepare for the classroom enactment
- Anticipate what support might be needed from your LEARN IT mentor during the next implementation and mentoring session

### **Wrap-Up**

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Educators construct new knowledge by actively engaging in learning experiences that develop understandings of when and where to use knowledge as well as insights into why this knowledge is important to their work with young children (Allen & Kelly, 2015; Bransford et al., 2000). Knowing the theory and research that supports the use of evidence-based instructional strategies increases the likelihood that educators will transfer what they have learned to their work with children in their classrooms (Bransford et al.). Furthermore, purposeful practice within the context of a network of mentors and peers allows educators to practice implementing intentional teaching strategies as they receive guidance and feedback. These opportunities to practice intentional teaching strategies enable educators to assess and monitor their learning and reflect on how these strategies might work with children in their classroom (Nasser et al., 2015). The goal for each LEARN IT institute is for educators to connect theory, research, and practice to increase the likelihood that they enact these strategies in their own classroom.

When educators have opportunities to build on their prior experiences, strengths, interests, and needs in knowledge-centered environments, learning is enhanced (Bransford et al., 2000). LEARN IT institutes provide an environment that promotes learning using a variety of formats. These formats include readings, presentations, videos, discussions, interactive activities, and hands-on practice, as described in the



Professional Development Activities sections that conclude each chapter. These learning experiences take place with the guidance of more expert facilitators and mentors and in collaboration with colleagues. As educators interact with colleagues and engage in activities that encourage them to learn together and reflect on their understandings and experiences, they gain new insights and knowledge that influence their thinking and enhance their teaching (Bransford et al.; Buchanan, Morgan, Cooney, & Gerharter, 2006). LEARN IT institute activities provide a foundation for learning knowledge and skills that educators can transfer to new situations in their own classrooms.

## Enact New Knowledge

LEARN IT experiences provide opportunities to enact new knowledge and skills in the classroom and integrate them into educators' existing knowledge, skills, and instructional routines (Nasser et al., 2015). As noted earlier, Lillie and others who attended the LEARN IT institute on dialogic reading practiced specific intentional teaching strategies with their peers under the guidance of the LEARN IT mentors. This practice enabled them to become more comfortable implementing specific intentional teaching strategies before enacting them in their own classrooms. They were able to assess their enactment of the strategies and reflect on ways to implement them with their own students. Engaging in this process with their peers meant they learned together as they tried out and considered new strategies.

Drawing upon what they learn and practice in the LEARN IT institutes, educators enact their learnings in their classrooms with their own students. As they apply what they learned, the knowledge, strategies, and skills become their own and they are more likely to include them in their instructional repertoire. In addition, educators identify additional knowledge and skills they may need to more effectively enact strategies to support their students' learning. As was the case for Lillie, they may find that knowledge gained during LEARN IT institute experiences may not transfer seamlessly into enacted practice in the classroom context. Recognizing that her enactment of specific intentional teaching strategies did not have the desired outcome for one of her students, Lillie reached out to her colleague, Sheri. Sheri gave her several ideas and also suggested that she enlist the help of her mentor.

Implementation and mentoring take place with LEARN IT mentors who are more experienced educators and have knowledge of how adults learn. LEARN IT mentors provide guidance, modeling, and feedback to less experienced colleagues (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2011). Their goal is to enhance educators' knowledge and implementation of child-specific instructional strategies (Sheridan et al., 2009). Their work requires sharing knowledge and skills with educators in ways that recognize educators' individual styles and goals (Sheridan et al.) as well as their prior knowledge, interests, strengths, and needs. Implementation and mentoring provide educators with opportunities to enact new knowledge and strategies and examine professional dispositions and attitudes with the support of an experienced mentor.

Research suggests that mentoring provided by experienced educators is an important component of effective professional development (Algozzine et al., 2011; Allen & Kelly, 2015; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Neuman & Wright, 2010; Rudd, Lambert, Satterwhite, & Smith, 2009; Varol, Farran, Bilbrey, Vorhaus, & Guess Hofer, 2012). Likewise, studies focused on the professional development of early childhood educators indicate that coaching provided by experienced mentors enhances educators'

implementation of classroom instructional strategies (Neuman & Cunningham; Neuman & Wright; Rudd et al.; Varol et al.). For example, Neuman and Cunningham found that early childhood home and center child care providers who participated in coursework, coupled with coaching, implemented new language and literacy instructional strategies more effectively than those who participated in coursework only or than those in the control group who received neither coursework nor coaching. Similarly, Neuman and Wright's study of urban prekindergarten teachers who participated in either coursework or coaching revealed that coaching was more effective than coursework in improving examining classroom structural characteristics as well as the quality of teachers' language and literacy instructional practices.

Similar results were found in studies focused on developing instructional strategies in mathematics. In their study of university child development center teachers, Rudd et al. (2009) concluded that coaching can enhance teachers' implementation of math-mediated language strategies presented during professional development. Likewise, Varol et al. (2012) found that the amount of in-class mentoring positively affected Head Start teachers' mathematics instructional strategies. Based on their review of studies that involved coaching in professional development for early childhood educators, Gupta and Daniels (2012) concluded that coaching that focuses on instruction "shows potential in improving the practices of teachers with varying educational backgrounds" (p. 218).

To increase the likelihood that implementation and mentoring is effective, it is important to consider how LEARN IT mentors are selected for their roles as coaches. Based on a large-scale, national study, Lloyd and Modlin (2012) concluded that selecting highly skilled coaches is key to successful implementation of effective coaching models. They assert that coaches must 1) have experience and expertise in early childhood education and development, 2) possess effective coaching skills, and 3) be knowledgeable about the content of the professional development program (Lloyd & Modlin). Coaches also need to be familiar with principles of adult learning and know how to engage those they mentor in active learning (Artman-Meeker, Fetting, Barton, Penney, & Zeng, 2015; Knoche, Kuhn, & Eum, 2013; Lloyd & Modlin). In addition, effective coaches understand the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships and developing respectful, trusting partnerships with those they mentor (Knoche et al., 2013; Sheridan et al., 2009). This means taking a strength-based approach to their relationship with early educators; mentors should recognize and value the knowledge and skills that early educators possess. Mentors should also help educators navigate difficult situations and make sound decisions when facing challenges (Lloyd & Modlin). They listen actively, provide new perspectives, and share relevant and specific feedback (Knoche et al., 2013).

Professional development facilitators should match mentors with early educators in ways that foster effective mentoring relationships. Building a positive, trusting relationship contributes to the effectiveness of the mentors' coaching activities (Knoche et al., 2013; Sheridan et al., 2009). When mentors and early educators engage in relationships built on mutual respect and interest, they have opportunities to learn from one another. Conversely, Brown, Knoche, Edwards, and Sheridan (2009) found that when relationships between mentors and early educators were not trusting and productive, early educators' participation in the project and their commitment to learning decreased. One way to promote a productive relationship is to ensure that the mentor's expertise aligns with the early educator's goals (Sheridan et al.). For example, one of

Lillie's goals was to enhance the language and literacy development of the children in her classroom. Her mentor, Janet, is highly knowledgeable about strategies that support young children's language and literacy development. This expertise made Janet a good match to help Lillie meet her goals. However, Brown et al.'s findings also suggest that being knowledgeable is not enough. Mentors, like Janet, must also use their understanding of individual early educator's goals, interests, strengths, and needs to promote professional learning. When mentors recognize that early educators bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences to the relationship and provide opportunities for them to express and show what they know, mentors are better able to engage early educators in activities that will foster learning. In addition, early educators benefit from mentors who are willing and able to adapt their approaches to meet the learning preferences of individual educators.

Although research suggests that in-class coaching by an experienced mentor enhances educators' enactment of instructional strategies, few studies focus on what mentors specifically do to enhance early childhood educators' instructional practices (Gupta & Daniels, 2012). However, there are studies suggesting that the guidance and feedback mentors provide on how to implement instructional strategies are important aspects of the mentoring process and are key to promoting successful enactment of new strategies (Algozzine et al., 2011; Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009). The focus on developing new strategies is a key point to consider. In a study of early childhood educators, Landry, Anthony, Swank, and Monseque-Bailey (2009) concluded that mentoring was helpful when educators enacted new instructional strategies but not as beneficial when they implemented strategies that were already part of their teaching repertoire. For this reason, mentors must take a collaborative stance and work with educators to decide which strategies they wish to implement and the types of support that will be most beneficial.

Mentoring is an individualized approach to professional development and, as such, can take place in a variety of ways. Typically, there is communication between the mentor and the individual educator prior to the implementation and mentoring session. To begin the sessions, the mentor or professional development facilitator should develop a form that lists strategies taught in the institutes and the types of mentoring support the mentor is offering (see Figure 1.2). Space should be included for the educator to identify the child or children and context in which the focus strategy will be enacted. Mentors should encourage educators to set their own goals for learning (Trivette, Raab, & Dunst, 2012) by asking educators to select the strategy they wish to address during implementation and mentoring. This approach ensures that the mentoring is focused on a strategy that educators are not currently using and that the strategy selected meets the goals of the early educator. Educators will complete this form before each implementation and mentoring session.

To respond to early educators' learning preferences, mentors should ask educators to indicate the type of support they believe would be most beneficial. Such supports include 1) mentor modeling of strategies, 2) mentor and educator co-teaching, 3) mentor observation of and feedback about the educator's implementation of a target strategy, and/or 4) other (See Figure 1.2). Modeling occurs when the mentors enact identified strategies with a child or children in the classroom while the educator observes. Having opportunities to observe experienced mentors helps early educators gain greater understandings about ways to implement specific practices and is an important option for early educators when refining new practices (Nasser et al., 2015; Trivette et al., 2012).

To be completed by early educators

## Implementation and Mentoring Form

Educator's name \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor \_\_\_\_\_

Site \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Identify the **intentional teaching strategy** you want to **enact**. Select one child to interact with during  center time  small group  individually. Describe the support you would like from your mentor to help you implement the **intentional teaching strategy**.

### Intentional teaching strategy of focus:

#### Culturally Responsive Practice

- Choose an area and set it up to reflect children's cultures
- Account for child's interest-background and use child's prior knowledge
- Inspire child to complete the idea/activity by connecting it to his/her home culture
- Provide specific feedback to extend child's play in that area
- Question to promote higher-level thinking

#### Interactional Reading

- From *Bringing Words to Life*
  - Choosing vocabulary words
- From Dialogic Reading
  - Prompt
    - o Completion prompt
    - o Recall prompt
    - o Open-ended prompt
    - o Wh- question prompt
    - o Distancing prompt
  - Evaluate the child's response
  - Expand the child's response
  - Repeat-child repeats the expanded response

#### Expanded Vocabulary

- Math vocabulary (5 words)
- Science vocabulary (5 words)

#### Assessment and Instruction

- Follow child's interest
- Observe and record child learning behaviors
- Initiate conversations and write plans with child
- Provide meaningful learning opportunities informed by assessment

#### Extending Play

- Redirect play to replace violent play
- Plan play
- Act out stories
- Dramatic use of the constructions child makes

#### Inclusion

- Adapt environment
- Adapt routines
- Adapt materials and activities
- Adapt requirements
- Adapt instruction

### Continue on back if needed

#### Focus child \_\_\_\_\_

Elaborate on how you will implement the intentional teaching strategy. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### What type of in-class support do you think will help you?

- Modeling while you take notes
- Assistance with co-teaching the child
- Feedback after observation
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Use back if needed

**Figure 1.2.** Implementation and Mentoring Form.

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Educators value these opportunities to observe new strategies being implemented with children in their own classrooms and believe modeling contributes to their effective implementation of identified strategies (Nasser et al.; Trivette et al.). Co-teaching with an experienced mentor can also benefit early educators as they work to enact new strategies. When educators and mentors teach together, educators have an opportunity to observe while at the same time try out aspects of the new strategy. This level of support provides an opportunity for mentors to intentionally scaffold the co-teaching experience and allows mentors to gradually transfer full responsibility for enacting the new strategy to educators. In addition, co-teaching provides an opportunity for mentors to guide educators' reflection on the effectiveness of the new strategy. Likewise, educators gain knowledge and expertise when they invite mentors into their classrooms to strategically observe their enactment of new strategies. This level of support allows early educators to pinpoint instructional areas of concern and seek specific feedback from a mentor who can support their learning and ability to enact new strategies more effectively with their unique student population.

After deciding to contact her LEARN IT mentor, Janet, Lillie looked at the mentoring form and decided she wanted to request implementation and mentoring on dialogic reading. Specifically, she wanted to work on using open-ended prompts. She thought she would benefit from modeling, but also knew she would remember how to enact the strategy better if she tried using open-ended prompts after observing her mentor implement the strategy. As such, she decided she wanted to prepare for a co-teaching session. In this way, she could observe Janet and then try using open-ended prompts with Janet right there to step in if she needed additional support. After deciding she would continue to work with the same students, Ashley and Tanesha, Lillie selected a book and then e-mailed the form to Janet. Janet acknowledged receipt of the form and let her know she would be back in touch to plan.

After locating a copy of the selected book in the school library, Janet e-mailed Lillie to initiate a co-planning session. Lillie e-mailed some details about her students Ashley and Tanesha to help Janet get a sense of the interests and abilities of both children. Janet modeled how to begin planning for the dialogic reading session with a focus on open-ended prompts by sharing plans she developed for the first part of the book based on what was emphasized in the institute session on dialogic reading. She asked Lillie to review the initial plans and send her a time they could videoconference to discuss the initial part of the plan and to continue the planning process. During the videoconference, they revised Janet's initial plans based on Lillie's knowledge of Ashley and Tanesha and then collaboratively finished the plan. Lillie then created sticky notes with open-ended prompts and added them to the appropriate pages in the book.

When Janet arrived in Lillie's classroom, the materials were prepared and organized. Janet took a few minutes to review the materials and observe Ashley and Tanesha. When Lillie was ready, she invited Ashley and Tanesha to a comfortable reading corner and shared with them that Miss Janet was going to join them that day. Janet started the dialogic reading session and modeled using open-ended prompts. Lillie observed Janet and noted Ashley's and Tanesha's responses to the prompts. Once she felt ready, Lillie indicated that she would like a turn reading the book. Lillie read and used the prompts while Janet observed. At one point, Janet rephrased a planned prompt when the girls did not respond as expected. At another point in the book, Janet used an open-ended prompt that was not preplanned but seemed to be one that would

enhance the children's interaction with the book. Lillie continued to read and ask open-ended prompts and, like Janet, rephrased some of the planned prompts and created new prompts in response to the children's responses to the story.

## Assess and Reflect on the Effectiveness of the Enactment

Debriefing is an essential aspect of each implementation and mentoring session. After modeling, co-teaching, or observing, mentors meet with individual educators and ask them to assess the enactment of the strategy and reflect on what worked well and what could be done differently in future implementations. During the debriefing sessions, mentors provide feedback and encourage educators to consider the additional knowledge and support needed to further refine the implementation of the strategy. Mentors also prompt educators to reflect on how the strategy might need to be adapted or modified when implementing with other children.

For example, after the implementation and mentoring session in the classroom, Janet and Lillie met to discuss their enactment of using open-ended questions when implementing dialogic reading. After a quick review of the knowledge they used when asking open-ended questions during dialogic reading with the children, Janet asked Lillie to talk about what she thought went well. Lillie shared that the planning process was very helpful. She indicated that having possible questions written on sticky notes helped her to stay focused on asking open-ended questions. She stated that having these written questions made her feel more confident and also enabled her to try asking questions that had not been prepared but seemed appropriate in the moment. When Janet asked her to think about what did not go as well, Lillie said that she found rephrasing the questions when the children did not respond a little challenging. She also thought she asked too many questions and it interrupted the flow of the book. After prompting from Janet to reflect on what she needs to continue to enhance her practice, Lillie indicated that she needed more practice on her own with the rephrasing questions, but would benefit from talking with others to get ideas on how they find the right balance of number of questions to ask.

Janet also wanted to encourage Lillie to think about the impact of the lesson on the children. Therefore, she asked Lillie to assess Ashley's responses to the questions. Janet asked Lillie to note whether Ashley's responses to the questions were similar to the previous day's dialogic reading lesson or whether she heard any additional elaborations or use of rich vocabulary that had not been present the last time Lillie read to Ashley. Janet encouraged Lillie to reflect on what she would do similarly and differently with Ashley the next time she engages her in dialogic reading. She also asked her to consider what additional resources she needs to support Ashley's vocabulary development. The LEARN IT Implementation and Mentoring Debriefing Guide (Figure 1.3) contains key questions to guide the debriefing session and can be completed by the educator and mentor as they assess and reflect.

Early educators appreciate the advice or tips mentors share with them as they reflect on their shared experiences enacting new strategies (Nasser et al., 2015; Neuman & Wright, 2010). Likewise, early educators find it helpful when mentors share resources such as books, articles, and web sites with instructional plans and materials. For example, beyond each debriefing session, the early educators in our initial LEARN IT programs also appreciated the resources and materials mentors brought into the classroom to facilitate each mentoring opportunity (Nasser et al.). Similarly, in another mentoring

## LEARN IT Implementation and Mentoring Debriefing Guide

### Learn

- What new knowledge did you use to enact the strategy?

### Enact

- What strategy did you enact?

### Assess

- What went well when implementing the strategy?
- What did not go as well when implementing the strategy?
- How did the child or children respond to the implementation of the strategy?
- What did you learn about the child or children when implementing the strategy?

### Reflect

- What would you do the same when implementing the strategy again?
- What would you modify or do differently when implementing the strategy again?
- What additional information, support, and/or resources do you need?

### Network

- What support would you like from your mentor?
- What interactions with peers would be helpful?

**Figure 1.3.** LEARN IT Implementation and Mentoring Debriefing Guide.

experience, Neuman and Wright reported that early educators valued the materials mentors brought, which included journals and catalogues, to support the educators' implementation of strategies related to enhancing children's literacy and play.

When early childhood educators receive guidance, support, and feedback of the nature described in this section, they are more likely "to be reflective and intentional about their practice" (Algozzine et al., 2011, p. 258). Overall, educators appreciate having the opportunity to select a target strategy and method of support (Nasser et al., 2015). Through relationship-based processes, "mentoring is intended to increase an individual's personal or professional capacity, resulting in greater professional effectiveness" (NAEYC, 2011, p. 11). As early educators enact new knowledge and skills in their classroom, they may assess the effectiveness of the instructional strategies enacted and reflect with other colleagues, in addition to their mentors (Nasser et al.; Snow et al., 2005). With their colleagues, educators assess not only their students' successes and challenges, but also the effectiveness of their implementation of instructional strategies. They reflect on these insights to make informed instructional decisions and to determine the resources they need to more effectively support their students' learning. Lillie engaged in this type of assessment and reflection when she realized the strategies she enacted were not as effective with Ashley as they were with Tanesha. She reached out to her colleague Sheri to help her reflect on the outcome of her attempts to implement dialogic reading. After talking with Sheri, she decided to adjust her instruction with Ashley and contact her mentor for additional support.

Lillie and Sheri are part of the same supportive learning community that meets on site once or twice a month to provide additional opportunities for learning and networking. At these meetings, Lillie, Sheri, and four other educators come together with their mentor to reflect on implementation and mentoring experiences, reinforce information emphasized in the institutes, and learn new information specific to their interests and needs (Nasser et al., 2015). These meetings provide a less formal context for educators to assess and reflect on their efforts, with the guidance of a mentor and within the context of a supportive community. As educators meet within this context and take advantage of ongoing opportunities to share their expertise, experiences, and knowledge, the supportive learning community evolves and provides a valued venue for learning and problem solving (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). In these communities, educators build on their collective knowledge and goals as they pursue matters of importance to themselves (Brouwer, Brekelmans, Nieuwenhuis, & Simons, 2012).

Mentors can play a significant role in facilitating supportive learning communities that are sustainable beyond the more formal professional development opportunities. Mentors should spend time discovering initial interest, conducting a needs assessment, and assessing educators' strengths and goals in order to tailor the community to meet the specific interests and needs of its members. Knowing the prior experiences, interests, strengths, needs, and goals of each individual educator enables mentors to plan content and activities that support individual learning. This prior knowledge provides the foundation for educators to take ownership of their own professional growth and development.

One way to identify educators' strengths, needs, interests, and goals is to give them a self-assessment that lists topics or outcomes relevant to the professional development and encourages them to identify their level of interest and/or need. The self-assessment can include broad topics, as seen in Figure 1.4, but can also include specific outcomes focused on a particular topic.



## LEARN Interests/Needs Self-Assessment

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Below are the topics associated with the LEARN professional development. For each, please mark one box indicating your interests/needs in this area.

Topic	I would like professional development in this area.	I know a great deal about this area, but can still learn from professional development.	I do not need professional development in this area right now.	I know this area very well and would like to help deliver professional development in this area.
1. Intentional teaching				
2. Learning through play				
3. Including each child				
4. Culturally responsive practice				
5. Assessment of young children				
6. Linking assessment with curriculum and instruction				

**Figure 1.4.** LEARN Interests/Needs Self-Assessment.

One focus of the supportive learning communities is to further develop educators' understandings of effective instructional practices and to cultivate the pedagogical skills to successfully enact them in their classrooms. Mentors facilitate educators' growth by reinforcing and building upon knowledge addressed in institutes and linking discussions to the educators' enactment of specific strategies in their classrooms. Expanded knowledge and skills are introduced through readings, videos, and discussions. For example, when Lillie's supportive learning community met after her implementation and mentoring session, Janet started the meeting with a video of an early childhood educator engaged in dialogic reading with a child in his classroom. Janet used this video to encourage members of the community to identify the types of prompts the educator used and to begin a discussion of what members of the community did successfully when using prompts during dialogic reading in their own classrooms. She also asked them to consider what questions they have or what supports they need to further develop their use of prompts. Following the discussion, Janet provided information about evaluating children's responses to prompts, expanding the response, and repeating the expansion. She facilitated an activity that enabled them to practice strategies that promote children's elaborated responses to prompts. These types of activities and the nature of the supportive learning communities promote in-depth consideration of ideas and strategies and provide opportunities to address the goals of individual educators.

Assignments and activities completed by supportive learning community members also provide a vehicle for learning. For example, educators in LEARN IT might conduct an environmental analysis of their classroom, discuss their findings with their peers, and use that analysis and discussion to make changes to the physical environment in their classrooms. Later in the year, individual educators can video record themselves teaching. After viewing the video recordings and reflecting on the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, they can identify a short clip to share with their group members. The discussions of their video clips promote additional reflection and provide individual educators with valuable feedback about their enactment of specific intentional teaching strategies.

By discussing and reflecting with their supportive learning community, educators share their experiences and explore new approaches to implementing and modifying effective intentional teaching strategies (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). As a supportive learning community evolves, educators build a sustainable form of professional development that encourages them to reflect on multiple perspectives, collaborate with peers to problem-solve, and accept and use constructive feedback from others (Nasser et al., 2015). By identifying the prior experiences, interests, strengths, needs, and goals of individual educators and focusing the content and interactions on helping members meet their goals, mentors set in motion a structure that can continue to support educators' professional growth and development beyond formal professional development opportunities.

## Network with Colleagues and Mentors

Although networking takes place throughout the LEARN IT institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning communities, networking also extends beyond these forums. For example, Lillie found that networking with her colleague Sheri helped her to assess and reflect on her enactment of dialogic reading. As in Lillie's

conversation with Sheri, networking with colleagues takes place informally across the school day. Educators may network as they wait for buses, prepare for the day, or wrap up after school. Although informal, these networking moments are intentional dialogues informed by a shared professional development experience. Ongoing networking with other educators provides an additional support system that sustains educators outside of more formal opportunities for learning. Educators appreciate the network of support that comes from engaging in professional development with colleagues (Nasser et al., 2015; Shernoff et al., 2011). Although they also appreciate the expertise the mentors share, educators typically find that being able to talk with and rely on those who work with them on a day-to-day basis encourages them to continue to put into practice what they are learning. Through their interactions with colleagues, educators share their triumphs and challenges, seek advice, or brainstorm viable solutions. Their close colleagues know them and their students and understand their instructional context. They help them make sense of what they are learning and how the new knowledge and strategies relate to and work within their own classrooms.

In addition to face-to-face interactions with colleagues, educators may also use technology to engage in networking with mentors and peers. Although some early educators admit that technology-based supports are not as enticing to them, others value online learning experiences and take advantage of online resources (Nasser et al., 2015). Early educators can take advantage of e-mail, texting, interactive documents (e.g., Google Docs), shared folders (e.g., Dropbox), and videoconferencing (e.g., Google Hangouts and Skype) to stay in touch with their mentor and colleagues. Educators can also establish effective networking communities by leveraging platforms such as discussion boards or chat rooms. It is important that educators ensure child/family confidentiality when communicating with mentors and peers, especially in electronic communications.

In addition, some early educators appreciate online components, such as learning modules, that give educators access to learning resources when and where they want and enable them to learn at their own pace (Ayling, Owen, & Flagg, 2012). With the help of mentors and colleagues, educators can build their competence and confidence in using technology to support their professional growth.

## The Learn Framework

A primary goal of professional development is for educators to take ownership of their own professional growth. Educators develop a deep understanding of the LEARN framework to embrace learning opportunities, enact what they learn in their classrooms, and assess and reflect on their implementation of new knowledge and strategies with the support of a network of peers and mentors. If educators understand and practice LEARN, they will internalize the framework and be able to apply it in the future to other aspects of their professional growth.

Before beginning the first LEARN IT Professional Development Activity that follows, educators should read the Foundations section that opens this chapter. After participants complete the reading, they engage in facilitated LEARN IT institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning communities that help them to develop concepts and put strategies into practice. The intent of this book is to provide a professional development model that can be replicated or adapted to build on the individual interests and strengths of early educators and address their specific interests, abilities, and needs.

### LEARN IT Institute

As noted, LEARN IT institutes are opportunities for early educators to engage in learning new knowledge and skills. Institutes are designed to encourage participants to learn about and interact with new intentional teaching strategies. They typically take place within a school or across school sites. During the first institute, educators discover the LEARN framework and develop an understanding of the value of the institute, the implementation and mentoring session, and the supportive learning communities. To develop participants' understanding of the LEARN framework, the first institute can be modeled after the sample agenda shown in Figure 1.5. The agenda can be adapted as needed to the unique characteristics of the participants and environment.

Networking is an essential aspect of the LEARN framework, so participants frequently interact with each other throughout the LEARN IT professional development program. To promote networking across sites and teams of early educators, institutes should include informal opportunities, such as breakfast and lunch for participants to get to know each other and build relationships. Educators network in more structured ways through warm-up activities, facilitated group discussions, and varied group composition. Warm-up activities at the beginning of the day and after lunch help to break the ice and build community.

To get started, educators participate in the Circle Warm-Up Activity, described in the Circle Warm-Up Activity text box; this activity develops a positive rapport because educators and facilitators get to know each other personally and professionally. As they interact, participants can discover common connections and interesting information about others that can help them to start up conversations and develop relationships as they work together at the institutes and in their supportive learning communities.

## LEARN IT Day 1 Morning Institute Agenda

9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

### Networking

- Light breakfast and networking
- Warm-up activity

### Welcome and Announcements

#### LEARN Framework

- *Learn* new knowledge and strategies.
- *Enact* new knowledge and strategies with children and their families.
- *Assess* the effectiveness of the enactment of the new knowledge and strategies.
- *Reflect* on next steps and future practices.
- *Network* with mentors and colleagues.

#### LEARN IT Forums

- Institutes
- Implementation and mentoring
- Supportive learning communities

#### LEARN Tote Bags

- Use LEARN to design a tote bag that shows your understanding of the LEARN framework.

#### Morning Wrap-Up

- Distribute LEARN IT binders.
- Review professional development structure and processes.

#### Lunch

**Figure 1.5.** LEARN IT Day 1 Morning Institute Agenda.

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**CIRCLE WARM-UP ACTIVITY**

1. Form two circles, one inside circle and one outer circle, of equal numbers of people.
2. Instruct the inside circle to move clockwise and the outside circle to move counterclockwise.
3. Tell participants to stop and face their new partner.
4. Provide a prompt or question for the partners to discuss.
5. Repeat the process and provide a new prompt or question.
6. Use prompts and questions that range in depth and topic to meet your needs.

Some possible questions include the following:

- Where have you traveled?
  - When is your ideal time to go on vacation?
  - What languages do you speak? What languages do you wish you could speak?
  - Who is someone who has had an influence on your life?
  - Why do you enjoy teaching?
- 

Early in the professional development program, participants discuss the LEARN framework and explore how the framework will be implemented across LEARN IT institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning communities. Facilitators can begin by presenting an overview of the LEARN framework and how the implementation of the LEARN IT program will work in practice. In a large-group setting, educators learn each aspect of the framework and provide relevant examples of how LEARN is enacted in institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning communities. Vignettes such as Lillie's, shared at the beginning of the chapter, illustrate how LEARN is enacted in the workplace and can also be beneficial to educator understanding. Then participants work with a partner to share their understanding or an example of what was discussed.

After this discussion, educators engage in an activity to enact what was learned about the LEARN framework and apply their knowledge of the process. In this activity, participants design a tote bag that reflects their understanding of the LEARN framework. Designing tote bags provides participants with a hands-on way to experience LEARN; educators network with peers to learn how to create designs on canvas bags, enact what they learned by creating their own designs, assess their design, and reflect on what they would do the same or differently if they created another tote bag. In addition, they walk away from this first session with a tote bag for their LEARN IT materials that has a logo or design that will help them to remain focused on the LEARN framework as they move through the program.

Necessary materials for this activity include a canvas tote bag, fabric markers, pencils, papers, and newspaper. To create a tote bag, participants should:

1. Place newspaper under the bag to absorb ink.
2. Draw desired images on the bag with colored fabric markers.
3. Use colored fabric markers to fill in the images.
4. Outline the design with contrasting color or black if desired.

Following those directions, participants enact what they learned as they create their own tote bag designs. Participants work on their own individual tote bags while sharing ideas and materials with others at their tables as they work. When tote bag designs are completed, participants assess and reflect on their designs as they talk with others at their table. The following questions can be used to guide their assessment and reflection:

- What worked well with the design development and implementation?
- What messages did you effectively communicate through your design?

- What would you do differently next time and why?
- How did this activity reinforce your learning about the LEARN framework?

After assessing and reflecting in small groups, the large group should reconvene and share tote bag designs and insights on the LEARN framework that emerged through this process. After the institute, participants can use the tote bags to store and carry their LEARN IT materials. The designs that participants drew will serve as a reminder that they are engaged in professional development that involves learning new knowledge, enacting the knowledge, assessing the application of the knowledge, and reflecting on future steps supported by a network of mentors and colleagues.

## Implementation and Mentoring

After participants complete the first LEARN IT institute, facilitators assign participants to mentors. Mentors will provide guidance, feedback, and support as participants enact, assess, and reflect on the knowledge learned thus far. Participants and mentors set up an initial implementation and mentoring session, either in person or via videoconference.

The first implementation and mentoring session is different from the subsequent sessions, which focus on a specific strategy. The purpose of the first implementation and mentoring session is for the mentor to become more familiar with the early educators in the classroom and to come to know the children. Typically, prior to the implementation and mentoring session, educators will complete the mentoring form discussed earlier in the chapter (see Figure 1.2). In the form, participants identify a strategy learned at the institute, note how they are going to implement the strategy, and indicate what type of support they want. When the mentors receive the form, they review the plans and identify additional knowledge that might be needed. For this first implementation and mentoring session, participants instead provide information on themselves and the children in their class. This information might include, for example, the age level, number of children in the class, and children's languages and special needs. It might also include the educator's highest degree, years of experience in education, languages spoken, professional development goals, and insights on how the mentor can best support individual educator's growth. Educators complete Handout 1.1, *Tell Me About Yourself and Your Class*, and share it with their mentor prior to the implementation and mentoring session.

The mentor uses the information provided to plan for the first implementation and mentoring session and consider what additional information will be helpful to know. For instance, through this process, the mentor Janet discovered that Lillie held a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, had been teaching for 21 years, with most of the years being in Head Start, and spoke English only. Her class of 16 children included six who were dual language learners and two with identified disabilities. Lillie wanted Janet to know that because of her experience, she feels comfortable and competent as a preschool teacher; however, she is open to learning and trying new strategies. Her goal for LEARN IT is to learn how to be more intentional in her teaching. She is interested in learning more about strategies that will support her students' language development.

During the first implementation and mentoring session, mentors observe the early educators and children in the room. They jot down notes that will help them in their future interactions with the educators and children. They also write down questions they have as they observe. In addition, they take note of the intentional teaching strategies the educators already employ. This information gives them a starting point for working with the educators. Typically, during this time, mentors reinforce previous learning and share additional information that might be helpful in guiding the enactment of a new strategy in the classroom. As noted earlier in the chapter, educators ask their mentors to model the strategy, collaborate as a co-teacher in the implementation of the strategy, or observe and provide feedback. They can also indicate if there is another type of support they desire.

HANDOUT 1.1.

### Tell Me About Yourself and Your Class

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Highest degree: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of years in education: \_\_\_\_\_ If post-high school diploma, major(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Age/grade level of students: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years teaching this level: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of students in the class: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of dual or multi-language learners: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Languages you speak: \_\_\_\_\_ Languages your children speak: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of students identified with special needs: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Nature of identified special needs: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you want me to know about you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you want me to know about your students? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What goals do you have for the LEARN professional development at this time? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How can I best help you reach your goals? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Although this first session involves observation, feedback is not provided. Instead, when mentors meet with participants, they use their notes to ask questions, clarify information, and engage participants in conversations that help them get to know the educators and their goals better. Mentors should also explain that in the future, after implementation, they will assess the effectiveness of the enactment of the strategy, reflect on next steps and future practices, and identify ways the supportive learning community can support the educator when trying out new knowledge and strategies.

## Supportive Learning Communities

The LEARN framework is developed further through the supportive learning communities at each site. After the implementation and mentoring sessions, educators meet in supportive learning communities, which are groups of six to eight early educators who meet once or twice a month with a LEARN IT mentor or mentors. At each session, educators engage in hands-on experiences and discussions that reinforce LEARN IT experiences. These meetings reinforce and refine previously learned knowledge and introduce new information and strategies. Interactive experiences allow educators to practice strategies with their peers and receive additional guidance and feedback from their peers and mentor. This supportive environment fosters relationships among the participants that encourage efforts to seek information and support from each other outside of the scheduled professional development activities.

In the first supportive learning community session, the group should revisit the LEARN tote bag designs and discuss that LEARN provides the framework for LEARN IT. After a brief review, participants should gather in small groups. Participants use the questions in Handout 1.2, *LEARN in Action Discussion Guide*, to discuss their understandings of the LEARN framework, what it means to them, and the types of support they believe will support their learning.

After small-group discussion, the larger group should reconvene to discuss the LEARN framework and to reflect on what this framework means to them. Educators discuss and summarize how the LEARN framework unfolds across the institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning communities. Facilitators can highlight that in the institutes, participants will learn new knowledge through sharing information, readings, videos, discussions, and activities. They will enact strategies with their peers, assess the effectiveness of the strategies practiced, and reflect on next steps as they network with their colleagues. Likewise, facilitators should explain that during the implementation and mentoring, mentors provide individualized learning and support participants' enactment and assessment of identified strategies. Participants should reflect on their next steps and prepare for networking in their supportive learning communities. Finally, the group can explore how their particular supportive learning community serves as a network that will help participants work through the steps of LEARN. Building community among the participants in these site-based groups is especially important to the team's success.

Figure 1.6 is a checklist of this LEARN IT strand that the professional development team can use to assess whether they implemented all aspects of the LEARN framework. While planning and implementing the LEARN IT activity, facilitators use this checklist as a tool to guide the process. Likewise, educators can use the form to track each step of the LEARN IT process. If all aspects of LEARN are utilized across this strand of the professional development, participants will engage in learning knowledge and skills specific to understanding and implementing the LEARN framework. They will have multiple opportunities to enact, assess, and reflect on specific aspects of the LEARN framework within the context of their classroom and a supportive learning community.

HANDOUT 1.2.

## LEARN in Action Discussion Guide

### Learn new knowledge

- What does it mean to learn new knowledge?

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- What are ways you learn best?

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---

### Enact new strategies

- What does it mean to enact new strategies?

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- What kinds of support might help you to enact new strategies in your classroom?

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---

### Assess the effectiveness of the enactment of new strategies

- What does it mean to assess the effectiveness of the enactment of new strategies?

---

---

- What will help you assess the effectiveness of the strategies you enact?

---

---

- How does assessing your instructional strategies differ from assessing your students?

---

---

### Reflect on next steps and future practice

- What does it mean to reflect on next steps and future practice?

---

---

- What will help you reflect on next steps and future practice?

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### Network with peers and mentors to enhance teaching

- What does it mean to network with peers and mentors to enhance your teaching?

---

---

- What will help you network with peers and mentors?

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## Checklist for LEARN Intentional Teaching

	LEARN IT institute	Implementation and mentoring	Supportive learning communities
<b>Learn</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitators presented research and best practice related to professional development and adult learning theories while explaining the LEARN framework and the three forums for engaging in LEARN IT institutes, implementation and mentoring, and supportive learning communities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors helped participants identify initial goals and understand how the LEARN framework will be used to help them meet their goals.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors reviewed information on the LEARN framework.
<b>Enact</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitators encouraged participants to use information about the LEARN framework to create tote bag designs for LEARN IT.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors observed participants in their classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors engaged participants in a discussion of how each aspect of the LEARN framework is enacted.
<b>Assess</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitators provided participants with an opportunity to share their tote bags and discuss their understanding of the LEARN framework.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors guided participants to discuss the children in their classroom and their approaches to teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors provided an opportunity for participants to share their understanding of the LEARN framework.
<b>Reflect</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitators encouraged participants to consider how the LEARN framework will support their professional goals.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors promoted reflection on participants' goals for LEARN IT.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors encouraged participants to consider what the LEARN framework means to participants' professional growth and how they will use this framework throughout LEARN IT.
<b>Network</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitators provided opportunities for participants to meet in large and small groups to learn, discuss, and reflect.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors provided opportunities to network with peers and follow up in supportive learning communities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentors provided opportunities for participants to learn together and encouraged discussion and reflection among participants.

Figure 1.6. Checklist for LEARN Intentional Teaching.

## SUMMARY

As demonstrated by the vignette at the beginning of this chapter, Lillie enacted what she learned about dialogic reading with Ashley and Tanesha. As she did, she observed what the children did well and made note of where their next opportunities for growth might be. However, Lillie not only assessed Ashley's and Tanesha's responses, she also assessed and reflected on her enactment of dialogic reading. Lillie's intentional reflection on her practice allowed her to determine the additional steps she needed to take to better support Ashley's and Tanesha's learning and consider how she could refine her future practice. As she reflected on this teaching event, she reached out to her colleague Sheri. This networking helped Lillie to develop a plan of action that included adjusting her instructional enactments of dialogic reading to account for Ashley's and Tanesha's unique background experiences as well as making a plan to take advantage of implementation and mentoring to further refine her enactment of the new strategy.

When early educators, like Lillie, engage in LEARN IT, they *learn* meaningful and relevant knowledge and skills, have opportunities to *enact* new intentional teaching strategies in their classroom, take time to *assess* and *reflect* on enacted instruction to make informed instructional decisions, and *network* with mentors and peers. This process can be supported when early educators 1) participate in LEARN IT institutes that develop links among theory, research, and practice; 2) take advantage of implementation and mentoring from knowledgeable LEARN IT mentors; and 3) become part of a supportive learning community that promotes learning and networking with mentors and colleagues.

The research reviewed in this chapter suggests that a multifaceted, integrated approach to professional development that provides opportunities to *learn*, *enact*, *assess*, and *reflect upon* new knowledge and strategies across time is beneficial (Allen & Kelly, 2015; Diamond et al., 2013; Markussen-Brown et al., 2017; Nasser et al., 2015; Zaslow et al., 2011; Zaslow et al., 2010). Research supporting professional development that is multifaceted and integrated indicates that this approach 1) builds on individual educators' strengths and needs, 2) develops educators' knowledge of specific content, 3) provides opportunities for educators to apply what is learned, 4) offers opportunities for feedback, and 5) takes place in collaboration with others (Diamond et al.; Snow et al., 2005; Zaslow et al., 2010). In addition, a multifaceted approach is more dynamic and provides participants with multiple ways to learn new knowledge and skills and allows for individuals to learn in different ways (Markussen-Brown et al.). The research we reviewed also suggests that preparing educators to engage in assessment focused not only on assessing child outcomes but also on their own knowledge and skills is an important part of monitoring the influence of professional development on their own professional growth (Snow et al.; Zaslow et al., 2010).

“Weaving the latest research on adult learning and child development, the LEARN IT model is a major step toward achieving the primary goal of developmentally appropriate practice—all children reaching their full potential.”

—Sue Bredekamp, Ph.D., Early Childhood Education Consultant on Developmentally Appropriate Practice and Professional Development

“This book gives professional development providers practical, research-based tools, including workshop designs, engaging PD activities, and downloadable forms—all intended for implementation and reflection by communities of learners.”

—Marilou Hyson, Ph.D., Consultant, Early Childhood Development and Education

A highly effective, recommended practice in early childhood education, intentional teaching enhances all children’s learning through planned instructional strategies, conversations, and activities that build on each child’s needs and interests. *Promoting Intentional Teaching* presents an evidence-based professional development framework—the LEARN IT approach—that helps educators put intentional teaching into action in their classrooms.

**LEARN IT** strengthens teaching in five steps: **L**earning new knowledge and skills, **E**nacting knowledge and skills in the classroom, **A**ssessing the effectiveness of instructional interactions, **R**eflecting on and revising practices based on the assessment, and **N**etworking with colleagues and mentors. Practical, flexible, and supportive, this proven plan for professional development will help schools make lasting gains in teacher effectiveness and boost learning outcomes for all young children.

#### Benefits of the LEARN IT Approach:

- **Evidence-based and field-tested:** LEARN IT was developed and tested during a multiyear research project with Head Start teachers.
- **Demystifies key elements of intentional teaching:** Educators will discover how to facilitate play, include each child, engage in culturally responsive practice, and link assessment with curriculum and instruction.
- **Engages teachers:** Facilitated professional development activities build teachers’ skills through group meetings, one-to-one sessions between educators and mentors, and small-group discussions.
- **Ensures lasting improvements:** Going far beyond one-time teacher trainings, the authors’ multifaceted approach ensures that educators implement and retain new strategies and skills.
- **Fits a variety of professional development needs:** LEARN IT can be used with large or small groups of teachers, and activities are flexible and adaptable.

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