

## **Portland Early Literacy Collaborative Professional Development: Course descriptions for CEU's**

2/6/06

### **ERF: Introduction to Early Literacy and OWL**

A broad overview of the 4 areas of Early Literacy (oral language, phonological awareness, letter knowledge and print awareness) was presented, with research on each of the areas referenced. This introduction will serve as a foundation for teachers and coaching staff to build upon during the duration of this ERF grant, so terms were defined. The Portland Early Literacy Collaborative ERF grant was referenced so that attendees would be familiar with important central features. Because the grant calls for the use of Literacy Coaches, a brief overview was also offered of the coaching model.

Opening the World of Learning is the Early Literacy program that is being used for this project. The materials were distributed and examined, and components explained. The first in a series of sessions about a specific technique used in OWL for (repeated) story reading offered both information about procedures and a chance for teachers to practice new skills. Initial questions were answered about the approach and materials.

3/6/06

### **ERF: Early Literacy Assessment and Story Time in OWL**

The classroom assessment tool, TROLL, was introduced by the evaluator and teachers were trained in using the tool. A power point presentation was followed by demonstration and the participants had a chance to practice the proper protocol.

In preparation for implementation of the first component of OWL, participants watched a demonstration of 4 different story reading techniques and had a chance to practice the techniques in small groups. The group then discussed and reflected upon the characteristics and features of each.

3/17/06

### **Introduction to Phonological Awareness and OWL: Songs, Word Play & Letters**

Phonological Awareness was discussed and defined. This is a complicated concept, and so clarification of how P.A. is different from phonics and related to phonemic awareness was necessary. Examples of how phonological awareness develops in children and what kinds of activities help sharpen P.A. were offered.

A second component of OWL, “Songs, Word Play, & Letters” was introduced. A rough sketch of how this component runs was presented. “Songs, Word Play & Letters” is designed to enhance children’s phonological awareness, as well as letter knowledge and print awareness, and the way that these areas are taught within this component was examined.

4/11/06 ERF:

### **Early Literacy Research and Predictable Books**

The goals of the PELC ERF grant were revisited and the term “scientifically based reading research” explained. Research was cited for major goals of the grant, and discussion centered around that research.

Participants were introduced to predictable books and Big Books, and a demonstration was offered in the use of these kinds of books with children. Participants had a chance to practice reading and using the books effectively. They also had an opportunity to develop ideas for enhancing literacy and language learning throughout the curriculum and embedding activities into the entire day, taking advantage of transitions and other times not normally associated with language and literacy.

5/10/06

### **ERF: Phonological Awareness II; and Implementing OWL: Songs, Word Play & Letters**

Laurie Mack, from Northeast Hearing and Speech, presented information about phonological awareness, defined terms like alliteration and segmentation and made recommendations for best practices in the EC classroom.

The final session to train participants in the “Songs, Word Play & Letters” component of OWL focused on specific activities included in the curriculum. Demonstrations were followed by a practice session and participants were encouraged to analyze those activities that might need adaptation in order to work effectively with individual children.

6/15/16

### **ERF: Implementing “Let’s Find Out About it” in OWL and Oral Language as a Foundation of Early Literacy**

The differences between skills and strategies in Early Literacy instruction were presented and compared and contrasted in chart form.

“Let’s Find Out About It,” a component of the OWL program, was introduced, demonstrated and discussed. Participants used the teacher’s guide in small groups to examine and practice the technique. Another component, “Conversations with Children,” was pointed out and discussed, with oral language development reemphasized as one of the goals of our grant.

8/08/06, 8/09/06, 8/10/06

### **ERF Summer Institute**

Day one: the morning consisted of training in the final 3 components of the OWL curriculum: Morning Meeting, Center Time and Small Groups. The afternoon session included a round table discussion of progress and highlights of the program, with teachers sharing successful techniques and anecdotes of children’s activities, and a hands-on “make-and-take” of a flannel board set. Participants also discussed the book, Oral Language and Early Literacy in the Preschool.

Day 2: the morning session was delivered by Dr. Loraine Spenciner from UMF, who spoke to the group about Assessment. She offered a power point presentation on the various uses and types of assessment and she showed video clips of classrooms to be reviewed and analyzed by the group. In the afternoon, a workshop on technology and observation was offered by Bonnie Blagovec, our Technology Specialist, from Orono.

Day 3: In the morning, Margie MacDonald & Grace Valenzuela of the Portland Public Schools presented data and information about working with English Language Learners. They offered history and background about the struggles that immigrant and refugee families have experienced and the challenges that they face. Helpful strategies for supporting ELL children in the classroom and for increasing vocabulary were demonstrated and discussed. At the final session, Linda Labas and Betsy Enright outlined and explained the concept of Universal Design for the Early Childhood classroom. They offered insight about inclusion of children with special needs and how to differentiate instruction so that classroom experiences and materials are available to all.

9/21 & 9/21/06

**ERF: Assessment and Using the OWL Rubrics**

Assessment terms were defined, including specifics about formal testing and informal or authentic assessment. The “what, why, when and how?” of assessment with young children was explained so that teachers were introduced to purposes and tools. The importance of careful observation and then reflection was emphasized, so that subsequent instruction & individualization will be informed by the observations about a child (or group).

The group then had hands-on experience using the OWL rubrics and forms developed especially for use within the PELC project. Ideas for organizing systems (for data collection & documentation) were demonstrated and small groups examined data to determine where a child should be placed on the rubrics (practice).

10/11 & 10/12/06

**ERF: Assessment & Family Involvement**

A review of assessment purposes & techniques was initiated through a reading of a chapter from the NAEYC book, Basics of Assessment. “Gathering Information About Young Children” was discussed, with each teacher highlighting one important or significant concept or idea from the reading.

Renee Serio, Family Literacy Consultant to the project, delivered background information and data supporting the need for strong family connections in the education of young children. After making a case for why we need to involve families, she asked small groups of teachers (divided into teams by site) to develop ideas specific to their site & situation that will strengthen the ties between home & school. Teachers were asked to create both short-term and long-term plans for family involvement. The specific details of how these plans are to be executed will be mapped out at follow-up sessions at each site.

11/8 & 11/9/06

**ERF: Children’s Literature**

The training Children’s Literature took place at the Portland Public Library. Mary Prevada, children’s librarian, spoke to the group of teachers giving them information on the use of the Children’s Book Room and how to apply for a library card. A broad overview of the presented topic was presented by Lyn Smith, with a focus on research based information pertaining to children’s Picture Books and Emergent Literacy as defined by

the goals of the Early Reading First Grant. The session was facilitated with discussions pertaining to categories of picture books, good qualities of picture books and a short presentation of the different types of awards given for children's literature. The participants of the training read a chapter from the book, "Using Children's Literature in Preschool", by L. Morrow and L. Gambrell. Following the reading time was spent in small groups with a book talk/reflection. The conclusion of the training had teachers participating in a picture book scavenger hunt with a follow up discussion to reflect about what books were located and why they were considered quality picture books.

12/13 & 12/14/06

**ERF: OWL Assessment & Using Technology to Support Learning**

"Evaluating Language and Literacy in 4-year-olds" contains rubrics that teachers are beginning to use to plot growth in children. Since it is a new tool and they have been trying out various methods of data collection & organization, teachers were given a chance to practice and reflect upon the strategies they have been using. The first half-hour was a work-session in small groups for the sake of collaboration and problem-solving.

Bonnie Blagojevic, from the Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies at the University of Maine and consultant to this project, offered a wide variety of possibilities made possible through technology. She demonstrated teaching and organizational tools and ways of documenting children's work through technology, including photography. Bonnie explained many ways of enhancing and making teachers' work more efficient and effective, with the idea that each individual teacher would choose a goal to work on as a follow-up to this training, write an individual plan to learn to use the new tool, and Bonnie would act as a support mentor to help the teacher achieve the goal. Bonnie will schedule individual sessions with each teacher to help facilitate and teach the teacher new skills.

1/10 & 1/11/07

**ERF: Transitioning from Preschool to Kindergarten**

Myrt Collins, Portland Public School literacy consultant and Tracy Warren, Literacy Specialist at the Riverton School, presented information about the literacy program in Portland Public School Kindergartens. The trainers shared screening tools used, as well as a wealth of strategies and materials used by Kindergarten and Literacy teachers in Portland. The purpose of this training was for preschool teachers to see what kinds of experiences children will have upon entering Kindergarten and to see how

the (OWL) curriculum they are using now through Early Reading First will help prepare the children for a smooth transition and success. A love of literature as a goal and the need to engage preschoolers in rich and extensive book experiences was emphasized. Plans were made for follow-up visits by the preschool teachers to the Kindergarten classrooms, so that they can observe the program directly. Eventually Kindergarten teachers will also have a chance to observe in the ERF preschools.

2/7 & 2/8/07

### **ERF: Supporting Oral Language in Preschool Classrooms**

In February and March, we have chosen to split the teachers into smaller groups for training. The non-lead teachers received a Power Point presentation by Wendy Oakley, Early Literacy Specialist, based on the book by Carol Garhart Mooney, Use Your Words. The book is subtitled “How Teacher Talk Helps Children Learn,” and examines guidelines for teachers’ oral language that helps to foster growth in vocabulary, usage, skills, concept development and behavior in preschool children. The Maine Early Learning Guidelines were referenced, and after the presentation teachers were asked to compose possible responses to hypothetical scenarios. These teachers were given a related article to read from the journal, Young Children and were also assigned the book, Oral Language and Literacy for Preschoolers, published by the International Reading Association, in preparation for a discussion at the March training.

2/12 & 2/13

### **ERF: Oral Language of Teachers: Supporting Children’s Growth in Preschool Classrooms**

Judy Schickedanz, co-author of the OWL Curriculum, nationally-recognized expert on the language and literacy of young children, and Professor at Boston University, lead a training with lead teachers. She first worked with Literacy Coaches so that the coaches could scaffold teacher learning during examinations of transcripts of actual teacher talk in preschool classrooms. Based on videotapes, the transcripts described real conversations, questions, and responses that furnished a basis for discussion of what constitutes helpful language on the part of a teacher. Dr. Schickedanz guided teachers in 1.) noticing opportunities that were either missed or exploited and 2.) speculating on possible alternative language noting how that would affect the response (or lack of) from a child. In March Dr. Schickedanz will return to proceed through a similar process using transcripts from teachers involved in this ERF project.

3/12 & 3/13

**ERF: Oral Language of Teachers: Supporting Children’s Growth in  
Preschool Classrooms, part II**

In Dr. Schickedanz’s absence (due to illness), the ERF Professional Development team, consisting of 6 Literacy Coaches, the Early Literacy Specialist and the Project Director, presented a workshop based upon a document called “Analysis of Classroom Verbal Interactions: Characteristics of Quality Talk,” by Schickedanz. The session began with a discussion of why Oral Language has been chosen as a focus topic, and why it is so important. The list of Characteristics of Quality Talk document was read through and discussed in detail, followed by a small group exercise in which teacher-generated statements were analyzed according to those characteristics. A transcript of recorded teacher talk was then analyzed according to the characteristics, with participants noting which of the teacher’s utterances could be extended or needed “repair” in order to improve the quality of interaction. Finally, each teacher met individually with her coach to create a written “joint plan” of action based on this training.