



Quality Improvement is a Process

“One Step at a Time”

Nicole Schabow (Manager) and Jenny Johnston (Educational Coordinator) from Gunderson Child Care Center know that running a quality child care program is hard work and implementing new processes in the program takes time. Being intentional when planning activities for children meant that teachers needed to understand how to assess children and create goals for each individual. Learning how to assess children was the first step that Gunderson staff and management took in creating a system for documenting children’s progress.

Creating a System to Document Progress

Trying something new often seems scary. This is true for child care teachers learning a new system for planning for children based on their needs and development. Many steps must take place from assessing to implementation. Nicole and Jenny feel that introducing one thing at a time is key to getting staff buy-in and gives them time to master one skill before moving to the next. They decided to start with finding an assessment tool that was easy to use and offered a lot of information about each child. Both Nicole and Jenny stressed that starting with finding an assessment tool and learning how to use the tool is highly recommended. (Think: Teaching Process-Assess, Plan, Implement). “Many programs want to start with changing their lesson plans, but there is a large disconnect in doing this,” says Nicole. After all, you can’t plan for individual goals if you don’t know what the children already know.

“Give lots of time to learn the process before moving on to a new process,” says Nicole. Both Nicole and Jenny agreed that

management needed to be involved in training staff and be available as a support, but, staff need to work together and take ownership of the process so it works for their classrooms. Management personnel could not simply tell staff what to do.

Once the staff had found the best assessment tool for their program, they worked together to learn how to write goals and plan activities for each individual child in their room based on the information that they learned from the assessment. Jenny noted that staff have become very creative in planning activities that will help encourage children to try something new. Staff are careful to plan goals and activities that set children up for success by making sure the goals are attainable and activities take into account children’s interests.

Hard Work Paid Off, But Quality Improvement Does Not Stop

Nicole and Jenny credit their staff in working hard to earn and maintain a 5 Star rating and continuing their efforts toward improving the quality of the program. Jenny checks their assessment tools and children’s goals monthly. Management staff do classroom observations on occasion to make sure classrooms are following licensing standards and ITERS and ECERS standards. They have found that staff want feedback from them, the areas that they are doing well and the areas of development so that they can do what is best for children. The best advice Nicole and Jenny can give to others looking to implement new practices in their programs, “Take baby steps and introduce one practice at a time.” After all, quality improvement is a continuous process.

Wisconsin’s Stars are Shining

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