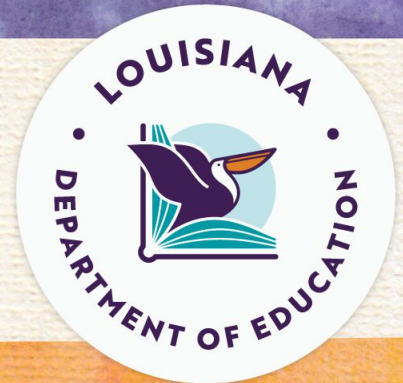




EARLY CHILDHOOD
CONFERENCE 2024
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**Creating a Supportive Work
Environment for Early Childhood
Teachers**



Learning Objectives

Overview: During this session participants will learn about evidence-based practices to support the learning and development of new and experienced early childhood education and care leaders and understand the importance of supportive work environments and the connectedness of it all to retention.

Participants in this session will:

- Understand the importance of retaining employees.
- Determine which evidence-based practices to use to retain employees.

Agenda

1. Learning Objectives
2. What is retention
3. Implementing Evidence Based Practices to Retain Employees through Creating Supportive Work Environments
4. Closing

Opening Activity

Case Study - Ms. Bates's Struggle with High Turnover

Ms. Bates runs a well established child care center known for its excellent curriculum and programs for early learners. However, in recent months, she has lost many staff members. Despite the center's reputation, talented educators and caregivers have been leaving at an alarming rate.

Pair & Share

Turn to a neighbor and discuss the following questions:

- Have you ever had a experience like Ms. Bates?
- How did you feel?
- What did you do?

Share your thoughts with the whole group!



What is Retention?



Retention is...

- Defined by the ability of child care centers, preschools, or early education facilities to keep their staff employed over time.
- Involves the strategies and practices implemented by leadership to ensure teachers, caregivers, and other personnel stay in their positions within the organization for an extended period.



Why Invest in Retention?

- High staff turnover rates can negatively impact both children and child care programs in several ways.
 - additional stress
 - lack of continuity of care
 - unfamiliar routines
- Addressing and minimizing staff turnover is crucial for the well-being of children and the sustainability of child care programs.

Impact on Children

High staff turnover rates in early childhood settings can result in:

- **Inconsistent care:** Constant staff turnover can impede the creation of secure attachments and relationships between children and early childhood staff.
- **Disrupted learning:** Children thrive in stable environments where they can build trusting relationships. High turnover can disrupt the learning process and impede developmental progress.

Impact on Children

High staff turnover rates in early childhood settings can result in:

- **Emotional distress:** Constant goodbyes can create stress and anxiety among children, contributing to emotional instability and difficulty in forming connections.
- **Lack of continuity:** Frequent turnover prevents continuity to instructional approaches and can hinder a consistent approach to a child's growth and development.

Impact on Early Childhood Programs

High staff turnover rates in early childhood settings can result in:

- **Higher recruitment and training costs:** High turnover rates result in increased costs associated with recruiting, hiring, and training new staff, straining financial resources.
- **Reduced quality of care:** New staff take time to acclimate to policies, routines, and children's needs.

Impact on Early Childhood Programs

High staff turnover rates in early childhood settings can result in:

- **Decreases staff morale:** Existing staff may feel overworked or demotivated due to the constant turnover.
- **Negative Reputation:** Constant turnover can lead to a negative reputation for child care programs which can impact the program's ability to attract new families and retain existing ones.

Pair & Share

Turn to a neighbor and discuss the following questions:

- What impact has staff turnover had on the staff, your program, the children you serve, and their families?
- What impact has staff turnover had on you and your role?

Share your thoughts with the whole group!





Creating A Supportive Work Environment

Creating a Supportive Work Environment

Positive cultures have a profound impact on employee retention and lead to better organizational outcomes.

- **Cultivating a positive work culture:**
 - Encourages diversity and belonging
 - Cohesive teams lead to broader perspectives and creativity

Creating a Supportive Work Environment

Mentoring programs are a great way to cultivate a supportive work environment for your employees and increase the likelihood of retaining employees.

Pairing experienced staff with newcomers:

- Fosters skill development
- Builds community
- Creates a mechanism for emotional support

Supporting and Retaining Teachers, Pt 1

- **Focus on School/Program Climate**

- Studies indicate school/program context or school/ program climate is a stronger predictor of teacher retention than individual teacher traits.

- **How do you feel when you enter your center? How do your teachers feel when they enter your center?**

- **Consider Organizational Quality**

- Teachers list behavior concerns as well as high stress and emotional and physical exhaustion as reasons for leaving the field of early education.

- **What support do you offer teachers to handle stress and exhaustion?**

Supporting and Retaining Teachers, Pt 2

- **Continuously Monitor and Improve the Quality of Leadership**
 - Teachers who received appropriate administrative support or perceived administrators as having high levels of competence were more likely to remain in the field of early childhood education.
 - **What administrative supports do you offer? How do you know they meet the needs of your teachers?**
- **Continuously Monitor and Improve Relationships**
 - Early educators report positive relationships between themselves and their co-workers, their students, and the families of students influence their decision to remain in their early education program more than any other factor.
 - **What relationship and communication norms have you set?**

Understanding Employee Needs

Understanding your employees' unique needs as early childhood staff is an essential first step in retention.

- Early childhood educators value **appreciation, growth opportunities, and work-life balance**
- Studies indicate these factors are crucial for staff satisfaction

Common factors that contribute to employee turnover include:

- Burnout due to heavy workloads and emotional strain
- Limited growth opportunities and inadequate support can contribute to employee dissatisfaction

Engaging Teachers in their Growth & Development

As an instructional leader, your role is to:

- Model the **parallel process** by regularly monitoring teachers' progress through observation, assessment and feedback;
- Meet teachers where they are starting from, with the belief that **they are capable** of growing and learning;
- **Regularly** engage in clear, open dialogue about teachers' progress, effectiveness, and areas for improvement; and
- Hold a **high standard for the quality of children's learning and care** while in your center.

Individualized Professional Development Plans

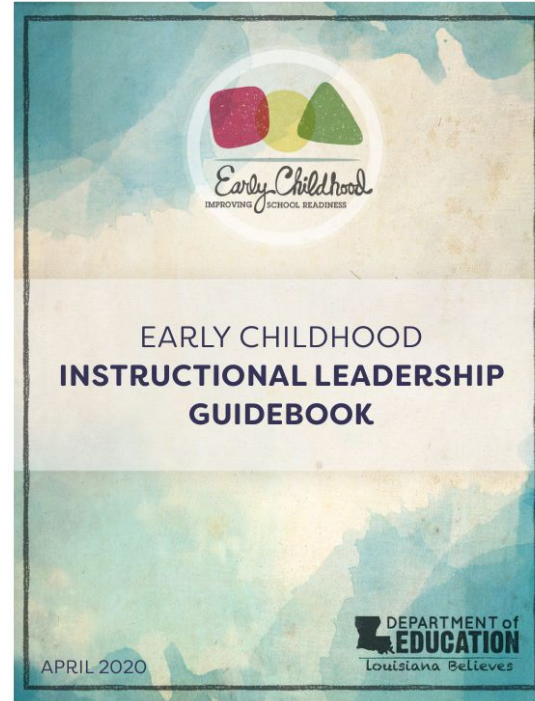
- Promotes **personalized** attention, growth, and professional relationship building.
- Gives directors an **opportunity to talk 1:1** with each staff person and see how they can support them to meet their goals.
- Can help directors **identify trends** among their staff and point out areas to provide further training or development for teachers.
- Generally established at the beginning of the program year and reviewed at least twice.
- May be used to set expectations for **short and/or long term goals**.

Why Create and Use Professional Development Plans?

- Helps early childhood educators develop or specify their career goals
- Supports teachers as they change and improve their instructional and care practices
- Provides a pathway to guide and inform career advancement
- Informs decisions about professional development opportunities
- Contributes to building a collaborative learning environment for staff

LDOE Early Childhood Instructional Leadership Guidebook

The Instructional Leadership Guidebook includes a template you can use to create individualized professional development plans.



Professional Development & Learning

Ineffective- Traditional Professional Development

- Goals/expectations set by others
- Teachers implement in isolation
- Off site training/workshops
- Monitoring teacher implementation for compliance



Effective- Job Embedded Professional Development

- Teachers **co-construct** improvement goals
- **Shared** responsibility and professional collaboration
- Routine **protected time** onsite to discuss and reflect about instructional practice
- Observation, coaching and reflection toward **improved practice.**

Professional Development Opportunities

Offering opportunities for continuous learning can help ensure your employees see their growth potential within your organization. Continuous learning opportunities:

- Provide employees with ongoing training that enhances their knowledge, skills, abilities, and morale.
- Demonstrates a leader's investment and commitment to employees' growth.

Professional Development Opportunities

You can also support employees' professional development by defining career advancement pathways within your program.

Career Advancement Pathways:

- Encourage and motivate employees' long-term commitment to your program.
- Allow employees to envision their future within your program.



Work-Life Balance Initiatives

As a leader, supporting your employees requires you to think about them as complete human beings and not just as employees. Maintaining a work-life balance is crucial for everyone, but it can be particularly challenging within the early childhood field. Implementing effective strategies and prioritizing well-being can support early childhood professionals in balancing work and personal life.



Work-Life Balance Initiatives

Here are some strategies that can help you support employees to establish a health work-life balance:

- **Establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. Examples include:**
 - Defining specific work hours for your employees and sticking to them
 - Avoiding taking work-related calls or responding to emails during personal time

Work-Life Balance Initiatives

- Offer vacation time and encourage employees to take time off
 - Time off is essential for recharging and rejuvenation
- Encourage employees to delegate tasks
 - Sharing responsibilities reduces individual employee workload and fosters teamwork and collaboration among employees
- Take intentional breaks
 - Incorporate regular breaks as appropriate within your employees' work schedule to prevent burnout and boost productivity

Work-Life Balance Initiatives

- Encourage open discussions about work-life balance among your employees
 - Foster an environment where team members can share strategies, offer support, and collectively prioritize well-being
- Recognize the signs of burnout
 - Check-in with staff regularly about how they are feeling and observe any burnout warning signs such as chronic fatigue, irritability, or reduced job performance and satisfaction

Recognizing and Rewarding Employees

Recognition opportunities provide a dedicated space for you to acknowledge and celebrate your employees.

- Acknowledging achievements boosts morale and engagement.
- Supports employees in feeling valued, which increases overall job satisfaction and reduces turnover rates.
- Can be accomplished formally (ex: recognition ceremony) or informally (ex: shout-outs during team meetings, verbal acknowledgements after a job well done)



Feedback and Communication

Creating a culture of open communication encourages transparency and trust between leadership and employees. You can foster open communication by:

- Actively engaging employees and incorporating their feedback.
 - demonstrates that you value employee perspectives and boosts morale
 - supports a culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect
 - examples include:
 - incorporating opportunities to provide input before decisions are made; conducting routine check-ins with staff; suggestion boxes

Pause and Reflect

What are ways that you have gathered feedback from staff in the past?


Can you think of a time where a leader has made you feel valued and appreciated at work?

What did they do? How did it make you feel?




Key Takeaways

- Retention is the process of retaining early childhood employees over time.
- Enhancing employee retention positively impacts children's well-being and the quality and sustainability of child care programs.
- Developing a long-term onboarding process is the foundation for employee retention and promotes job effectiveness.
- Fostering a culture of transparency, trust and belonging is an essential part of staff feeling valued, supported and appreciated.
- Incorporating opportunities for staff to provide ongoing feedback is a great way to improve your retention efforts. This supports the notion that staff are important and valued.

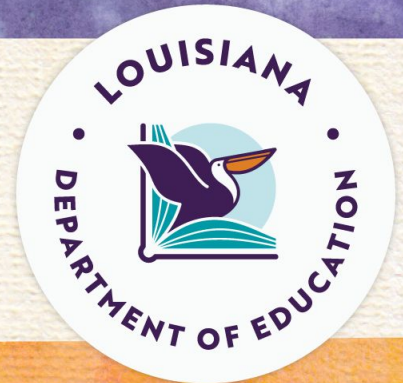



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Thank you for attending my session!

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