

**Components of Site-Based CQI Leadership: *Creating a Culture of Caring, Reflection and Improvement***

This chart describes how a program leader creates an organizational culture that supports Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and how the leader structures the CQI work. ExceleRate Illinois defines CQI as follows:

“CQI is a leadership philosophy and an ongoing process that involves the Plan, Do, Study, Act (or Plan, Do, Review) cycle. It is proactive, not reactive. It is related to the internal “owning” of a process by the team in a program. It goes beyond meeting the externally applied regulations and standards – and moves the lever for change internally, using data to guide decisions and reflect upon the results of the improvement plan to increase program quality.”<sup>1</sup> (See the last page in this document for a diagram of the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle.)

| What does a program leader do?   | Whole Leadership Dimension   | EC Work Environment Survey                    |
|--|--|---|
| <p align="center"><b>Building a foundation for CQI: Leadership Essentials<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p align="center">“Leadership Essentials are foundational competencies and individual qualities necessary for leading people that are expressed in personal leadership styles and dispositions. Leadership essentials are often developed through reflective practice.”<br/>(McCormick Center)</p>   |  |   |
| <p><b>Take charge of quality improvement</b></p>   |  |   |
| <p>Demonstrate commitment and energy for continuous improvement and a belief that your work with the team to jointly construct program improvements will make a difference in children’s lives.</p>  | <p><i>Self-efficacy</i></p>  |   |
| <p><b>Lead by example</b></p>  |  |   |
| <p><u>Model caring and learning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make time to be with staff, families and children</li> <li>• Listen</li> <li>• Show understanding and empathy</li> <li>• Help find people’s strengths</li> </ul> <p><u>Learn about and welcome people of every race, culture and ability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find, include, and value people from other cultures in your professional and personal life. Seek to learn from and with them.</li> <li>• Understand your own cultural background and limitations, and that you will always be learning about other cultures.</li> <li>• Create places that are safe and trusting for all.</li> <li>• Include gender identity in your efforts to understand others.</li> </ul> <p><u>Value and build on the talents and strengths of each person, culture and community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize the talents and strengths of each child and staff member and find ways to make use of them in classroom and program activities.</li> <li>• Incorporate exploration and learning about children’s cultures and communities.</li> </ul> | <p><i>Empathy</i><br/><i>Learner</i><br/><i>Authenticity</i><br/><i>Humility</i><br/><i>Transparency</i></p> | <p>Supervisor Support</p> <p>Collegiality</p> |

<sup>1</sup> *Continuous Quality Improvement and ExceleRate Illinois*, Illinois BUILD CQI Team, 2015 ([www.exceleRateillinoisproviders.com](http://www.exceleRateillinoisproviders.com): Resources by Standard for Licensed Child Care and School-Based Programs, Standard 1C. Continuous Quality Improvement).

<sup>2</sup> Components are grouped using the Whole Leadership Framework developed by the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (<https://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/library/whole-leadership-a-framework-for-early-childhood-programs>).

| What does a program leader do?   | Whole Leadership Dimension | EC Work Environment Survey                                  |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| <p><u>Develop Trust and Collegiality</u></p> <p>Use a variety of strategies to develop trust and collegiality among staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show humility, empathy and limitations.</li> <li>• Discuss one’s own values and hopes while taking an interest in those of staff members.</li> <li>• Listen – “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”</li> <li>• Believe in staff members, show respect and appreciate their strengths.</li> <li>• Be open about organizational plans &amp; challenges, seek advice from staff, share bad news that will affect staff as early as possible.</li> <li>• Demonstrate ethical conduct (The NAEYC Code of Ethics provides guidance)</li> </ul>   |                            |   |
| <p><b>Communicate</b></p>  |                            |   |
| <p><u>Communicate clearly, often, and in multiple ways</u></p> <p>Communicate frequently and with transparency about how the program works, its policies, procedures, and decisions that have been made. Listen and respond to staff concerns.</p> <p><u>Recognize good work.</u></p> <p>Acknowledge the contributions of staff members by listening to them, acting on their ideas, distributing or sharing leadership with them, and thanking them in private and in public.</p>   |                            | Clarity   |
| <p><b>Create a learning organization</b></p>   |                            |   |
| <p><u>Cultivate “reciprocal learning”</u></p> <p>In a learning organization all the individuals – teachers, other staff members, children and families – learn from each other and build knowledge together. Create opportunities for every individual to contribute their unique strengths and interests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage teachers to learn from their children and find new ways to engage them. Every day presents unique opportunities.</li> <li>• Ensure that staff members experience the same kind of active, engaged learning that the children experience. The leader’s role is to help each staff member be successful.</li> </ul> <p><u>Be the “chief learner”</u></p> <p>Increase your own professional knowledge and share with others. Contribute to the profession through involvement in Communities of Practice, professional associations and the like.</p> | <i>Creativity Learner</i>  | Supervisor Support<br>Professional Growth<br>Innovativeness |
| <p><b>Make decisions that put children first</b></p>   |                            |   |
| <p>Ensure that children’s well-being is the first and most important consideration in all decisions including budgeting, staffing and daily operations.</p>  | <i>Integrity</i>           |   |

| What does a program leader do?   | Whole Leadership Dimension  | EC Work Environment Survey  |
|--|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Maximizing Team Capacity: Administrative Leadership</b><br>“Coordinating work and mobilizing people to ensure the organization remains stable and continues to grow.”   |                             |   |
| <b>Develop an authentic mission and vision</b>   |                             |   |
| Engage staff teams and families to develop or update a shared mission or vision for the program that is built on values and strengths.   | <i>Strategic Leadership</i> | Goal Consensus  |
| <b>Build a team or teams for collaborative reflection and improvement planning</b>   |                             |   |
| <p><u>Build staff teams for 2 purposes:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaborative reflection and <u>planning based on observations and assessments of children</u><br/>           Ensure that classroom teams meet regularly for planning, sharing and problem-solving – focused on children’s learning and development. Teams use observations of children and child assessment instruments to guide this work.<br/>           (A team could be the teachers in one classroom or the teachers from several classrooms. Child observations might include anecdotal notes, review of work products, etc., and examples of child assessments instruments would include Teaching Strategies GOLD, Work Sampling System, etc.)</li> <li>2. Collaborative reflection and planning <u>based on program quality goals and assessments</u><br/>           Ensure that one or more teams meet regularly for planning, sharing and problem-solving – focused on program quality. Teams use measures of program administration, organizational climate and culture, or unique program goals to guide this work.<br/>           (Measures might include results from ERS, CLASS, PAS, accreditation indicators, licensing compliance, EWES, SEQUAL, Early Ed Essentials Survey, etc. See glossary re acronyms.)</li> </ol> | <i>Strategic Leadership</i> | Collegiality<br>Goal consensus<br>Decision-making<br>Innovativeness |
| <p><u>Communicate team purpose and structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Communicate the goals of the team(s) and benefits to children, families and staff members</li> <li>--Discuss how the team will work, including frequency of meetings, desired results and supports from the organization</li> <li>--Build on strengths within the teams</li> <li>--Build diversity in teams and address implicit bias</li> </ul>   | <i>Strategic Leadership</i> | Clarity<br>Collegiality<br>Goal consensus<br>Supervisor support     |
| <p><u>Specify routines or protocols for meetings</u></p> <p>Ensure that team meetings use a standard format or routine to examine child and classroom data (including anecdotes and stories) or program quality data and make plans based on the data and the team’s goals. Ensure that teams are facilitated by staff member(s) trained in the formats or routines used.</p> <p>(Routines can range from simply ending a meeting with an action plan and reviewing it at the start of the next meeting, to regular use of the Tuning Protocol for activity planning, to the “Data Dialogues” described in Lead, Learn, Excel, and more. They help teams focus consistently on their goals.)</p>   | <i>Strategic Leadership</i> | Clarity<br>Task Orientation   |

| What does a program leader do?   | Whole Leadership Dimension    | EC Work Environment Survey                |
|--|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Include job-embedded professional learning</b>  |                               |   |
| <p><u>Provide team training within the Plan-Do-Study-Act or Plan-Do-Review cycle</u></p> <p>Ensure that learning experiences for staff support team planning and problem-solving. When the team decides on a goal in the “Plan” phase, remember to build staff capacity as part of the “Do” phase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When possible, include college credits for this job-embedded professional learning.</li> </ul> <p>(Refer to ExceleRate Plan-Do-Study-Act diagram at the end of this document. Learning experiences might include targeted trainings, coaching, peer to peer sharing, etc.)</p> | <i>Strategic Leadership</i>   | Task orientation<br>Professional growth   |
| <b>Put organizational supports in place</b>  |                               |   |
| <p><u>Distribute or share leadership functions</u></p> <p>One program leader cannot usually perform all leadership functions required in an organization – and often these reflective practice and program improvement functions are left out. Create a shared leadership structure including defined areas of responsibility, scope of authority and reporting relationships.</p>   | <i>Operational Leadership</i> | Supervisor Support<br>Decision Making     |
| <p><u>Specify and protect paid time for staff teams to meet</u></p> <p>Ideally, teams will reflect and plan for children weekly, and reflect on overall program quality measures at least monthly. Not all programs have the staffing or resources to do that, but however they structure collaborative reflection, it should take place regularly during paid time.</p>   | <i>Operational Leadership</i> | Professional Growth<br>Task Orientation   |
| <p><u>Specify and protect paid time for teachers to reflect and plan with parents or family members</u></p> <p>Parents are the child’s first and most important teachers. Learning experiences will be most effective if designed in consultation with the parent.</p>   |                               |   |
| <p><u>Provide regular developmental, reflective supervision</u> (based on observations of practice) for each staff member outside of team meetings.</p>  | <i>Operational Leadership</i> | Supervisor Support                        |
| <p><u>Ensure that staff have access to and support for professional learning opportunities</u>, both on the job and in other settings. Opportunities might include participation in an External Community of Practice, training cohort, release time for education, tuition reimbursement, etc.</p>  | <i>Operational Leadership</i> | Professional Growth<br>Supervisor Support |
| <b>Engage stakeholders in program self-assessment</b>  |                               |   |
| <p>Periodic self-assessments inform goal-setting for daily, weekly or monthly CQI work. Tools are available from funding streams, accreditation systems and ExceleRate Illinois. (See next section regarding use of this information.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Assemble a program self-assessment team that includes families and community members with varying cultural perspectives</u></li> </ul> <p>It is important to include families and community members in establishing program priorities that reflect what they want for their children and make best use of community resources.</p>     | <i>Operational Leadership</i> | Goal consensus                            |

| What does a program leader do?   | Whole Leadership Dimension      | EC Work Environment Survey |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Professional Practice: Pedagogical Leadership</b>   |                                 |                            |
| “Leading the art and science of teaching with an emphasis on educator dispositions and high-quality interactions with children.”   |                                 |                            |
| <b>Prepare to use Plan-Do-Study-Act (or Plan-Do-Review)</b>  |                                 |                            |
| <u>Know professional standards</u><br>Become familiar with the sets of standards on which professional practice is based (Licensing, Accreditation, Head Start, ExceleRate, etc.).   | <i>Instructional Leadership</i> |                            |
| <u>Identify the standards or set of standards most important or strategic for achieving the program’s mission at this stage of development</u><br>Plan-Do-Study-Act or Plan-Do-Review cycles can advance compliance and goal achievement at any stage of program development. The program leader needs to review the standards and supports most important and useful for program development and choose which set or pathway the program will focus on.   | <i>Instructional Leadership</i> |                            |
| <u>Collect documents and tools for the chosen route</u><br>If accreditation, for example, enroll in self-study and receive the self-study materials. If the ExceleRate Assessment Route, attend orientation, print standards, and find support materials on the ExceleRate Illinois Providers website.   | <i>Instructional Leadership</i> |                            |
| <u>Join an external Community of Practice or Cohort for program leaders</u><br>Program leaders benefit from opportunities to share and learn from other program leaders. Opportunities are often available through CCR&R agencies, SAM cohorts, Lead-Learn-Excel cohorts, Aim4Excellence cohorts, Taking Charge of Change cohorts, community collaborations, AEYC chapters and more.<br>(See glossary re acronyms.)  | <i>Instructional Leadership</i> |                            |
| <b>Make data available and train staff on its use</b>  |                                 |                            |
| Ensure that useful data on children’s learning and program quality is made available to staff teams or generated by staff members.<br>(Data sources might include: Child observations and assessments such as anecdotal notes, review of work products, data from Teaching Strategies GOLD, Work Sampling System, etc., and program assessment results from ERS, CLASS, PAS, accreditation indicators, licensing compliance, EWES, SEQUAL, Early Ed Essentials Survey, etc. See glossary re acronyms.) | <i>Instructional Leadership</i> |                            |

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|---|--|----------------------------|
| <b>Model and lead reflective practice including Plan-Do-Study-Act (or Plan-Do-Review Cycles)</b>  |  |                            |
| <p><u>Help staff teams use the specific data collected on their classroom or program to generate ideas for improvements and to try them.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on your professional knowledge, lead team discussion about which program activities are reflected the data and encourage classroom or family program observation to help with this discussion. This “root cause analysis” will help the team generate ideas for small, achievable changes.</li> <li>• Ask the team how its improvement ideas could build on the strengths and priorities of families from multiple cultures.</li> <li>• Value small, short-term experimental changes. Assure the team that they will learn from the experiment whether it succeeds or fails.</li> </ul> <p><u>Find and make available relevant training and technical assistance for the team as part of the planning cycle.</u></p> <p>For example, if a team is working on children’s behavior issues, training on the Pyramid Model might help them generate ideas for improvements. If the team is working to raise child assessment scores in math, consultation with Erikson Institute’s Early Math Collaborative might help them.</p> <p><u>Ensure that team reflection and planning always aligns with the program’s mission and values and supports the values of enrolled families</u></p> <p>An authentic and effective mission and values statement is developed with staff, families and community representatives from multiple cultures. Update the statement frequently and help each staff member to embrace it.</p> | <p><i>Instructional Leadership</i></p> |                            |

See the next page for a diagram of the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle.

Based on shared vision of quality and awareness of program's strengths:

- Identify general goals & select team
- Analyze current condition using data
- Propose experiment - make plan
- Decide on measures of success

- Build staff capacity
- Carry out the plan
- Collect documentation & data



- Adopt, modify or abandon these practices
- Determine what more needs to be done and learned
- Set up next round

- Share and analyze impact, track results
- Consider adjustments
- Celebrate learning & successes!