



# The Improving Teacher Quality Early Learning Projects

## Early Childhood Educators

### FINDINGS

The Early Learning Projects show that expanding teachers' knowledge and promoting a collaborative approach will contribute to an improved teaching practice and, ultimately, gains in children's learning.

- Increase early childhood educator content knowledge & pedagogical practices
- Improve understanding of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP)
- Develop continuity and meaning in professional relationships
- Create inclusive environments across position levels
- Understand function of varied early childhood education sectors and unify DAP

#### Increase content knowledge & pedagogical practices

The ITQ professional development sessions were a positive learning experience that increased the content knowledge and influenced the pedagogical practices of early childhood educators. Participants stated that after the ITQ program, they felt more comfortable with subject matter in their curriculum and felt more confident incorporating it into their lessons with children. The exposure to diverse pedagogical methods had an immediate and positive impact on classroom learning.

*"I think the lasting impact will be, we have a community now. We have teachers who know each other and grew together... We still keep in touch...to build our lessons and talk about how we use different content in the classrooms. I think it will continue."*

#### Continuity & meaning in professional relationships

The ITQ program allowed early childhood educators from throughout the mixed delivery system of the field to collaborate, learning from and with each other. These relationships and partnerships continued after the completion of the grant.

#### Improve DAP understanding

The ITQ learning sessions framed lessons, activities, and materials in ways that were DAP for young children. This assisted early childhood educators in identifying DAP ways to teach concepts to children and encouraged collaboration with colleagues in primary grades. Hands-on, play-based activities helped early childhood educators' set DAP expectations for young children's academic capabilities and supported children's engagement in the classroom.

#### Create inclusive environment

Participating in the ITQ program contributed to a more inclusive, helpful culture at schools and early childhood education programs. Early childhood educators noted that they felt more comfortable reaching out to their colleagues for ideas and opinions, to talk through curriculum development, and collaborate on lessons within and across grade levels. During the ITQ program early childhood educators working within public schools shared professional development and collaborated with those working in community-based early childhood education programs. Attending the sessions together and partnering to serve the children of the community benefited all parties as well as the community at large. Because of the shared professional development across sectors within early childhood education, public primary grade classrooms will be ready to teach children who are ready to learn, meeting the children where they are... with everyone likely to have better overall teaching and learning outcomes.

#### Unite practice

Participants commented that the ITQ trainings provided them with a new point of view and greater understanding of other education sectors. Early childhood educators reported a newfound appreciation, and resource in, the art and technology programs within their elementary schools. Partnerships between elementary schools and community-based early childhood education programs resulted in greater appreciation for the work conducted across locations enabling principals and administrators to share professional development resources and plan collaborative ways to serve the children of the community.

*"I increased both my content knowledge and my pedagogical skills. I was able to deliver highly engaging hands-on lessons to my very eager students."*



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### TOOLS

- Utilize coaching and mentoring Opportunities
- Network with other early educators
- Connect with families and community
- Contact Higher Education ECE

#### Coaching and mentoring opportunities

Develop a coaching and mentoring program in your building with other early educators. Once you've got something up and running, start training other trainers so it can spread throughout the community. Utilize your program or district to create a peer network in your school or program. Invite other early educators to visit your classrooms and ask if you can visit theirs; learning from and with one another. Network with early educators teaching and learning with the children in your community at different organizations.

#### Network with other Early Educators

Reach out and make connections in your region and district to find professional camaraderie for developmentally appropriate practice. Share, extend and develop pedagogical knowledge and clinical practice skills consistent with the science of early learning. Invite as many early educators working with children from birth through age 8 as possible. Make best practices more widely available to all children.

#### Connect with the families and community

Reach out to museum educators, children's librarians, and other organizations that serve young children. Let them know what curriculum children are engaged with and the topics in which they show interest. Ask for resources or activities that can enhance and encourage further curiosity, learning and engage families. Extend learning by taking field trips to places throughout your neighborhood and inviting community members into your classroom.

#### Contact Higher Education

Higher education wants you! Find the Early Childhood Education program coordinator in the higher education institution near you. Massachusetts 2- and 4-year public institutions have excellent certificate and degree programs led by early childhood educators who care deeply about profession and want to work with you and your organization or school to bring professional development opportunities and certificate and degree programs to early educators across our state.