The Head Start
Child Development and Early Learning Framework Webcast

Transcripts

AMANDA BRYANS
Director of the Education and Comprehensive Services Division
Office of Head Start

"Welcome to this introduction to *The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework,* formerly called the *Head Start Child Outcomes Framework.* I am Amanda Bryans, Director of the Education and Comprehensive Services Division in the Office of Head Start.

This Division includes program specialists and content experts in early education and language development, family engagement, professional development, infant/toddler development, health, oral health, and mental health, as well as services to children with disabilities.

We were very involved in preparing the revised Framework and are so glad that it is now available to Head Start and the larger early childhood community. The panelists today are eager to talk about the Framework and they have much to say about it.

Let's begin with introductions. Michele."

MICHELE PLUTRO
Education Specialist, Office of Head Start

"Hi everyone. I'm genuinely happy to be with you today, participating in this discussion of the revised *Child Outcomes Framework.* I have been at the Office of Head Start for nearly 20 years now. Before that, I'm happy to say that I worked for over 15 years as an education coordinator in a community Head Start program."

SHARON YANDIAN
Early Language Specialist, Office of Head Start

"Hi, my name is Sharon Yandian and I'm the early language specialist at the Office of Head Start. Michele and I started 20 years ago at the Office and then I left and I worked with migrant and seasonal Head Start programs as their technical assistance provider and I currently work as the early language specialist, supporting programs as they work with children and families who speak languages other than English."

DEBRA BARRETT
Senior Head Start Specialist/Education Coordinator
Y of Central Maryland, Baltimore County Head Start

"Hi, I'm Debra Barrett, education coordinator for the Y of Central Maryland, Baltimore County Head Start. I've worked in early childhood for more than 20 years now and I've worked as a teacher assistant, a teacher, education coordinator, as a child development specialist, and also as a contractual writer for the Core Knowledge Foundation."

AMANDA:

"We're going to have an exciting and informative conversation with Michele and Sharon, staff at the Office of Head Start, and we are so glad that Debra can join us and share experiences from

her Head Start program. Her program has just been designated a Center of Excellence by the Office of Head Start, based on their exemplary practices, especially implementing curriculum and reaching school readiness goals. Congratulations, Debra. Our intention today is to give you a brief overview of the revisions -- what's new and what's the same -- and to energize you re-connecting the Framework to many aspects of your program. I'm very proud of the revised Framework. It continues to raise expectations about what preschool-aged children can learn and do in Head Start.

A major part of our mission in Head Start is school readiness and this Framework is truly another step toward this very attainable and critical goal. Let me set the stage for our discussion by making a few points about the revised Framework.

First of all, much of it will be very familiar to Head Start programs. It will continue to be used in curriculum and assessment decisions and in other aspects of your program management. The original *Outcomes Framework,* published in 2000, also served these functions. I also want to point out that the revised Framework is to be used by all Head Start programs serving 3- to 5-year-old children and it has broad application to other early childhood programs for preschoolers.

We can imagine that Head Start programs are already beginning to share it with their early childhood partners. Although there is much to say about the details of this Framework, we do want to begin by talking about why it was revised. Michele, you were a really important part of this process."

MICHELE:

"Indeed, I was. I was steeped in this revision process for about a year, assisted by other colleagues in the Office of Head Start and in the Office of ACF's Deputy Assistant Secretary and in the Office of Research, Planning & Evaluation. As I think about the timing of these revisions, 10 years after the original Framework was released, several things come to mind: first, I'd like to point out that when the original Framework was published in 2000, it reflected the provisions of the Head Start Act of 1998, as well as research in the field that was applicable.

Certainly a big reason for the revisions is to reflect the changes now in the 2007 reauthorization of the Head Start Act. As you know, it is called the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act. These changes expanded the role of the Framework in Head Start programs. Within the Act, the Framework is mentioned 11 times, explicitly in the context of a range of program requirements. These requirements range from professional development to alignment with state early learning standards."

AMANDA:

"Thanks, Michele, for sharing this background with us. Sharon, can you tell us a little about the process of revision and who was involved with it?"

 SHARON:

"Sure. Well, the process involved many stakeholders over a period of time. There were various discussions and reviews with leading experts in child development and in early learning, including experts in science, math, and creative arts. Researchers in social emotional development and in first-and second-language development were involved as well. We then brought together a group of Head Start programs to participate in focus groups. Their feedback helped us make further revisions. All these efforts on the Framework help to ensure that Head Start sets high standards and promotes the highest-quality services."

AMANDA:

"Thank you. All this work involving many people over an extensive period of time produced the revised Framework. Debra, can you talk about your initial impressions of this Framework, of the document?"

DEBRA:

"Sure. The first thing that stood out to me were the photos of children across the domains, engaged in learning experiences, indoors and outdoors, involved in play. And then the next thing was the English Language Development domain. Our program is experiencing a significant increase in dual language learners and so that was very important to us. And, lastly, it was the pie chart. I think that was a wonderful addition. It gives a snapshot of the Framework overall."

AMANDA:

"Well, it's really wonderful to hear your positive review and this is just what we hoped for – programs engaged in the material, thinking about how to use it with their staff.

Before we look closely at some of the revisions, I want to mention the title. The title was changed to *The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.* This reinforces our focus on the continuous development of the whole child. Next, let's turn our attention to the 'structure' of the revised Framework – its organization and its content. The terms 'domain' and 'domain element' are familiar. They're retained from the original Framework. Michele, could you tell us more about some of the changes here that we hope will assist programs?"

MICHELE:

"Certainly. I'm so glad that Debra likes the chart. We're receiving other positive feedback via the ECLKC and also in our personal mailboxes at the Office of Head Start, that people like the addition of this chart. And we're going to offer a little more explanation of a few of the other changes. There are 11 domains, 37 domain elements, and quite a few examples that we hope will be useful to programs. The organization, the domains, and the domain elements, as Amanda says, are similar to the original Framework. The domains are key areas of child development and early learning essential for school readiness. And another change which programs are finding helpful is that we now provide a brief description -- a definition, if you want to call it that for each domain and its relevance to school success.

You'll see that eight domains are the same as the original Framework. They've been retained and, in some cases, renamed: Physical Development & Health, Social & Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Language Development, Literacy Knowledge & Skills, Mathematics Knowledge & Skills, Science, Creative Arts Expression.

There are three additional domains new to this Framework: Logic & Reasoning, Social Studies Knowledge & Skills, and English Language Development.

You'll find examples to help illustrate some of the behaviors, skills, and abilities related to each domain element. These are certainly not meant to be comprehensive, by any means, and programs will certainly identify examples that are meaningful for them. Debra, have you been able to do this for your program?"

DEBRA:

"Definately. I can think of examples that have come from our curriculum goals, curriculum implementation, child assessment tools, and from samples of children's work, conversations with parents, and other resources. To name a few from language development: children learn to

identify and express their feelings; to sequence and describe events through the use of the pictorial schedule; and they learn to use and understand spatial words, to answer who, what, and when questions; and in math, they learn to count groups of objects and to identify numerals."

MICHELE: "Thank you."

AMANDA:

"I'd like to follow up on these three new domains. You can see that the revised Framework includes the new domain of Logic & Reasoning. These abilities appeared in the earlier version as separate domain elements and now, they've been brought together in one domain and they reflect both kind of the latest research findings on brain development and our recognition that preschool children can and should engage in higher-order thinking."

DEBRA:

"I would like to add that I'm very glad to see a prominent place for logic and reasoning. By standing out as a separate domain, we give more recognition to how important logic and reasoning are to children's school readiness."

AMANDA:

"Looking at the next domain, social studies, I, first, have to admit that I love social studies. Head Start has always known the role of social studies content in early childhood curriculum, although we haven't always named it as such. Children are so interested in learning about their neighborhoods, community helpers, their families, how local businesses work. These components also were reflected in the earlier Framework. By making social studies its own domain, we hope that we help programs frame this important area more clearly so that they can plan meaningful and useful experiences for the children they enroll. The third new domain is English Language Development, which applies to programs that are serving children who are dual language learners. Sharon, could you please elaborate more on this domain."

SHARON:

"Well, you know, I'd be glad to say more. I want to first remind viewers *who* are the children who are dual language learners -- DLLs, for short. These are children who come to Head Start speaking a language other than English at home. We recognize their home language as a tremendous strength. Children learn English in Head Start as well as have support to maintain and continue developing their home language, therefore using the term 'dual language learners.'

As our viewers know from experience, children who are dual language learners are a very diverse group. About 140 different languages are spoken by Head Start children. Programs are charged with supporting dual language learners in their home language and in learning English in Head Start. Programs must meet this charge in many ways that are both culturally and linguistically responsive."

AMANDA:

"Some centers or classrooms have many, many children who are dual language learners, and others have just a few. In some classrooms, all children who are dual language learners speak the same language. In other classrooms, there is great linguistic diversity, with five or more different languages spoken by the children."

SHARON:

"That's right. As we help children learn English, we now have a new domain to frame what that looks like. This is the 11th domain that Michele spoke about: English Language Development. It's for programs who serve children who are dual language learners. It's represented by the slice of the pie at the bottom of the chart. This domain includes three domain elements related to children's progress in acquiring English: Receptive English Language Skills, Expressive English Language Skills, and Engagement in English Literacy Activities.

These elements focus on dual language learners communicating, listening, and participating in experiences that help them acquire English. We know that there is a lot of variability with children as they learn English, including their exposure to the language prior to entering Head Start, their temperament, their current ability in their home language, and more. Programs need to talk with families and find out about the language environment at home -- what language or languages are spoken, by whom -- parents, grandparents, older siblings? The more we know, the better we can individualize our support for each child."

AMANDA:

"Although English Language Development is a new domain, programs may recognize some of its elements from the earlier version of the *Child Outcomes Framework."*

MICHELE:

"That's correct. The requirements of the 1998 Act, which I mentioned earlier, were reflected in the domain of language to stress that programs are responsible for ensuring that children learning English show progress in listening to, understanding, and speaking English.

Because of that 1998 set of requirements, many programs are well on their way toward these outcomes. The elements of this domain will be quite familiar to them, especially as they work with public schools and consider the transition of dual language learners into kindergarten."

DEBRA:

"This new domain gives recognition to the commitment to school readiness for all children."

AMANDA:

"As we've just discussed, there is one domain that applies only to our work with children who are dual language learners: English Language Development. But the rest of the Framework, the other 10 domains, all apply to programs serving dual language learners as well.
Sharon, could you talk more about this?"

SHARON:

"Yes, certainly. Just like for all children, we must support the whole child in their learning and development, not just the part that they can demonstrate to us in English, so to make a distinction, we are interested in what a child knows and can do *and* we are interested in their English language development, both of those things. To make this point clear, we've included a statement at the end of the description of each domain and it reads:

'Programs need to ensure that children who are dual language learners can demonstrate their abilities, skills, and knowledge in any language, including their home language.'

I think, to put it simply, programs need to encourage dual language learners to show what they

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know and can do in their home language or in English or in any combination of both languages.

Program staff also need to know how to capture this information both when there are speakers of the child's language in the program and when there are not. Depending on how much language a child has, either in their home language or in English, like all preschoolers, they will show what they know and can do nonverbally as well, through drawings, block building, and so on. They can also be observed talking to their peers in the learning environment and during outdoor play. You know, it's important to remember that children who are dual language learners, like all children, come to Head Start with skills and abilities. Programs need to build on what children know already. So as children acquire their home language, they are also building upon their conceptual knowledge. For example, if a child understands and identifies apples, bananas, and watermelon as fruit, the child is learning to categorize, a very important conceptual skill. The child just needs to learn the names of the individual fruit in English. The underlying conceptual skill of categorization has already been learned in the home language. It's important for program staff to understand that many skills and concepts transfer across languages.

Programs serving children who are dual language learners also need to ensure progress in the domain of language development. This means promoting language development in their home language. We know from research that the home language serves as a strong foundation for the acquisition of English. The stronger the foundation in the home language, the better children are able to learn across all domains and to learn English, so programs need to ensure that children's home language continues to develop. There's a lot more to discuss in this area -- and we don't have time today -- and this will look very different, depending on many, many factors, including the composition of children in the classroom, languages spoken by the staff, just to name a few."

DEBRA:

"I'm also thinking about how important it is to families and Head Start programs to work together. There's so much we need to learn from families about what children know and what they can do. We also want to talk about how the revised Framework applies to programs serving children with disabilities. In fact, there's a section in the Framework and this section can be helpful to programs.

The revised Framework can be used to support the implementation of the child's Individualized Education Plan. The children may need accommodations in their instruction or in their learning environment, but the goal is to help them to make progress across all domains."

MICHELE: "Good point."

AMANDA:

"We've had a great discussion about the revised Framework and how programs can use it to promote child development and early learning of all preschoolers in Head Start. Let's take a look at how this ties in to so many aspects of program operations, program planning, and quality-improvement efforts. How can programs connect all these pieces and put the Framework into context and into action?"

MICHELE:

"Well, earlier, we talked about how the *Child Outcomes Framework* was mentioned 11 times in the Head Start Act, across a range of sections. Let's look at these program areas where the Framework has a critical role: curriculum planning and implementation, child assessment, working with local schools, state early learning standards, program self-assessment, program improvement, and reporting to key stakeholders."

DEBRA:

"In Baltimore County, we are blessed to have a strong collaboration with our LEA. There are about 50 feeder schools that our children move into and staff from both programs work together to ensure a smooth transition from Head Start to public schools. Activities such as reciprocal visits for children and parents are planned and carried out, our family service workers attend PTA meetings to inform parents about enrollment opportunities, and school principals are invited to participate on Head Start advisory committees. Another thing is that our disability coordinator has established a positive relationship with our Infants and Toddlers program for children entering into Early Head Start and Head Start, so teachers, along with the disability coordinator, attend those IEP meetings for those children. This collaboration is beneficial to both parents and to children."

AMANDA:

"I want to emphasize the role of the revised Framework in ensuring your curriculum is inclusive of all the domains and in ensuring your assessment systems collect information about children's progress across all these domains. As part of your program's annual self-assessment, you must conduct an analysis of data, including child assessment information, information on teacher-child interaction, and on children's progress, overall. Programs use this analysis to get an understanding of where they are, where they are going, not only with each child, but as an entire program.

Importantly, you can use this information for program improvement. A program that has a good handle on where they are and where they're going can put into place professional development, staffing, and other efforts to continually improve your program. For example, if you analyzed your child assessment data and found that children were not making expected progress in mathematics and you were confident that your curriculum addressed math adequately, you might think about what was going on, in terms of instructional practices in the classroom and you might look at whatever information you had, related to your ongoing process of teacher-child observation and classroom observation. And you might speculate 'You know, we think our instructional practices are not adequate and they're not really supporting children's development in the area of early mathematics' and, as a result, you institute new professional development opportunities, maybe a training institute.

I'd encourage you to use the mathematics webcast we developed at the Office of Head Start and facilitate those with an education manager, have some supportive coaching for teachers in mathematics. And all the time you're doing this, you're continuing to look at how children are doing in math and what their acquisition of math skills looks like. That's the kind of ultimate use for the *Child Outcomes Framework* we want to see. This is really about helping programs improve their intentionality around what children are learning and how they're continuously improving, in order to better meet the learning needs of children and their families.

As you can see, the revised Framework is integral to program quality and excellence. Before we end, I'd like each panelist to think about why the Framework is important to you -- Sharon and Michele, in your work as Office of Head Start staff; and Debra, as an education manager at a Head Start grantee. I encourage our listeners to do the same. Ask yourselves 'What is the value that the Framework can bring to our work and to the critical focus on school readiness?' Sharon, you go first."

SHARON:

"You know, given the work we do around helping programs better understand and support all children who speak languages other than English at home, I'm excited about the clarity the Framework provides, in terms of expectations of supporting our preschool children who are dual language learners. I was excited to hear that Debra felt that was an important piece as well. Two aspects of the Framework stand out, in this regard: (1) that we must focus on what

children know and can do in any language in all areas of child development and early learning, (2) that we must have a clear focus on helping children learn English, both receptively and expressively.

Related to this, measuring progress in English is part of looking at the overall progress of children. Together, these are very important for the school success of every child who is a dual language learner."

DEBRA:

"The Framework provides us with common knowledge of what we can expect preschoolers to know and learn as they get ready for kindergarten."

MICHELE:

"For me, one of the most important contributions of the Framework, both the original and this one, is that it contributes to a more level playing field. It brings greater consistency to both the range and depth of curriculum experiences each preschooler will have in Head Start.

It is important that this consistency can be expected by families and communities, whether the Head Start program is located on an American Indian reservation, in a big city, a suburb, a small town, or in a farm worker camp. Each program must ensure that preschool children show progress across all domains. This is good for Head Start and, more importantly, it's positive for children."

AMANDA:

"I, too, share these perspectives with my colleagues here. I also think that, with the revised Framework, we are making very explicit that Head Start programs must address positive outcomes for all children, including those with disabilities, and that we are intensifying our efforts for children who are dual language learners.

Head Start is committed to preparing all children for success in school and in life. I also think that the revised Framework offers an increased opportunity for Head Start programs to collaborate with their early childhood partners, with the goal of creating a seamless experience for young children in a variety of early education programs.

I want to thank our panelists, Michele, Sharon, and Debra, who have spoken with deep passion, from the heart, and with great understanding about the revised Framework and its role in programs. We hope that you, too, will feel passionate and excited about the Framework and we look forward to hearing from you about your experiences.

We've reached the end to this introduction to the revised Framework, but if you would like to learn more about setting school readiness goals, aligning curriculum and assessment with the Framework, and responsive program improvement, please consider participating in the Office of Head Start Summit: 'On the Road to School Readiness.' This meeting is for Head Start leaders: directors, education managers, and other local leaders. It takes place February 15-17 in Baltimore, Maryland. If you haven't already registered, you should do so today. Mostly, we want to say thank you for the work you do every day in Head Start, all across the country, and see you in Baltimore."