

STATE POLICY TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING
Discussion Guide: In What Ways do Teaching Condition Support Effective Teachers?

Prepared by: Kate Tarrant
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Please note that this is an initial draft. In the coming months we intend to engage the authors of the tools that we included in this crosswalk in our work as we bring greater attention to policies that impact teaching conditions. We intend to conduct a deeper review and an analysis of the key issues and specific actions that can improve the conditions the impact early childhood teaching

This paper is designed to be a starting point for a discussion about ways to design policy to better support the context that surrounds teachers. Our aim is to encourage policymakers to consider the ways that conditions may help or hinder teachers' capacity to implement best teaching practices that will result in significant outcomes for children in their care. To that end, we have reviewed five teaching conditions' frameworks that are currently informing early childhood or public school sector reforms:¹

1. **Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (ECWES):** A tool used to measure the organizational climate on 10 dimensions based on the collective perceptions of the quality of work life for staff.
2. **Program Administration Scale (PAS):** An assessment tool to examine an early childhood program's compliance with leadership and management practices.
3. **Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning in Early Childhood Settings (SEQUAL):** A multi-purpose validated tool for examining and improving environments in which early childhood teaching staff work and learn. The SEQUAL Identifies the domains of the work environment that influence teachers practice and assesses how well the workplace supports teaching staff to learn and to continue to develop their knowledge and skills on the job. It is administered directly to teachers and assistant teachers in centers or school-based programs and brings their voice into quality improvement planning process. Program leaders also complete information about their center characteristics and teaching staff through an online tool.
4. **Teaching Conditions Standards:** The New Teacher Center developed the Teaching Conditions Standards and an associated on-line survey to improve the context of teaching in states and communities across the country. The standards survey has been validated to show a positive association between teaching conditions and student achievement as well as teacher retention.

¹ Many tools address the related areas of teaching conditions, school climate, and work environment and it should be carefully noted that this work is a starting point for a more comprehensive review and critical analysis of existing tools that communities are using to improve teaching conditions.

5. The Five Essential Supports – Framework for Early Childhood Education: The Consortium on Chicago School Research has investigated successful public schools and identified five characteristics of schools that improve student learning. Recently, they have adapted the 5 Essentials to apply to early childhood education programs.

As we looked across these five resources that address teaching conditions, we generated two tables that we hope will provoke discussion and a critical examination of current policies and practices:

- *Table 1. Early Childhood Teaching Conditions and Key Questions for Policymakers* describes the dimensions that we determined to transcend each tool based on the crosswalk presented in Table 2. We describe each dimension and then pose numerous questions that can provoke critical thinking about the way that existing policy structures support each dimension.
- *Table 2. Crosswalk of Teaching Conditions Frameworks* provides a very basic comparison of the five tools at a broad level to showcase some commonalities and differences in the ways that the tools address and describe teaching conditions and the context of teaching.

It is important to note that the first three tools we selected have been developed for an early childhood context and the fourth and fifth tools were developed for a public school K-12 context. Whether an early childhood program is located in a public school or community-based organization can shape the nature and importance of the features. Specifically, the features related to adult wellbeing and rewards are especially important in community-based organizations where compensation is highly uneven and teachers are not typically represented by labor unions. In contrast, public school based early childhood programs often need to attend more to family and community partnerships to be successful. As this project evolves and develops, we intend to do a more comprehensive, thorough, and analytical review of frameworks and research that address teaching conditions. Based on the more detailed analyses, we will investigate possible gaps (e.g., cultural competence) and trends (e.g., detailed information curriculum implementation). We will also explore the rationales and research for the different aspects of teaching conditions and how they function across different early childhood contexts.

Table 1. Early Childhood Teaching Conditions and Key Questions for Policymakers

The following table describes common dimensions of teaching conditions and then poses numerous questions for policymakers that can provoke critical thinking about the way that existing policy structures support effective teaching.

<i>Conditions</i>	<i>The Vision</i>	<i>Key Questions</i>
1. Teaching and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers’ qualifications and experience fit the developmental and cultural needs of their students. • Teachers’ instructional decisions are informed by the developmental needs, culture, and life experience of their students. • Teachers have the resources and support to implement curricula and assessment tools to meet appropriate learning standards. • Teaching teams are thoughtfully hired and supported as they collaborate to teach their students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are institutions of higher education preparing teachers to use instructional tools so that they maximize students’ learning? • How are teachers’ use of curriculum, assessments, and early learning standards integrated into the states’ early childhood quality improvement and accountability structures? • Are recommended instructional tools aligned and complementary so that teachers have a coherent, developmentally, and culturally appropriate approach to instruction? • How do curricula pacing and assessment demands support effective teaching and maximize student learning? • How do existing teaching credentials reinforce effective teaching and instruction?
2. Time for Planning and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have sufficient time built into their schedules for planning individually and in collaboration with their peers. • The daily schedule and curriculum pacing is structured to give teachers uninterrupted instructional time so that they can engage their students in deep exploration of new content and thinking skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do teachers have sufficient paid time to work individually and with their peers to plan and engage in professional learning? • How do administrative responsibilities impact teachers’ time for planning and working with colleagues? • How are daily schedules structured to minimize interruptions in the class time so that children and teachers can engage in rich learning activities?
3. Teacher Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are given sufficient flexibility and support to respond to their particular students’ developmental needs and make the moment-to-moment decisions to individualize instruction. • Teachers are encouraged to take initiative and work collaboratively to customize instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are institutions of higher education preparing teachers to work in collaboration with their peers to be responsive to their children’s learning needs, culture, and life experiences? • How are program leaders encouraged to give teachers autonomy and leadership opportunities within their programs? • How are leaders encouraged to treat teachers equitably and professionally?

<p>4. Professional Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development opportunities are designed to encourage teachers to engage in reflection and ongoing continuous quality improvement in collaboration with their peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the professional development system shifting to support communities of practice? What structures are in place for program staff to work toward continuous quality improvement? How is job embedded professional development and the use of focused professional learning communities supported through accountability systems?
<p>5. Adult Well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers receive equitably, stable, and sufficient compensation – wages and benefits (e.g., paid sick time and health insurance) to support their overall wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does early childhood education financing support equitable, stable, and sufficient teacher compensation? Is compensation built into program quality improvement practices and program accountability structures?
<p>6. Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders manage their programs to encourage all staff to participate in ongoing quality improvement by actively engaging in staff development. Programs have sustainable funding to support a positive work environment geared toward collaborative professional growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are institutions of higher education preparing teachers to assume leadership roles in the field? How do workforce policies encourage program leaders to have sufficient understanding of early childhood practices as well as the management experience to operate a viable program? In what ways do program leaders receive job-embedded professional development that is responsive to programs’ strengths and areas for improvement?
<p>7. Family and Community Partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs include families in instructional practices so they can reinforce learning at home. Transitions for children are supported through partnerships between community-based early childhood programs and public schools. Schools engage families as partners in their children’s education and treat them respectfully and equitably. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do accountability structures incorporate the strategies that teachers and leaders use to involve families in their children’s learning and development? Do communities have structures in place to facilitate collaboration between early childhood programs and public schools?

Table 2. Crosswalk of Teaching Conditions Frameworks

The following table provides a basic crosswalk of five tools/frameworks that explain early childhood teaching conditions. We looked across the tools to identify common dimensions that are included in the first column of the table and then input content from each tool that related to the common dimension.

<i>Tools</i>	<i>ECWES: Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (10 Domains)</i>	<i>PAS: Program Administration Scale (10 Domains)</i>	<i>SEQUAL: Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning in Early Childhood Settings (5 Domains)</i>	<i>Teaching Conditions Standards (7 Domains)</i>	<i>5 Essential Supports Framework for Early Childhood Education (5 Domains)</i>
Purpose/Use	Assesses the perspectives of all program staff about the quality of the work environment.	Assesses the measurable leadership and administrative practices of an early childhood program.	Provides teaching staff assessment of how well the workplace supports teaching staff to learn and to continue to develop their knowledge and skills on the job.	A framework that is used to evaluate public school system performance in some localities and states.	A framework that highlights the features of successful schools which is used to inform metrics that evaluate public school performance in some localities
1. Teaching and Instruction					
	<p>Task Orientation: The emphasis placed on organizational effectiveness and efficiency, including productive meetings, program outcomes, and accountability.</p>	<p>Child Assessment: Examines the availability of screening procedures to assist with the identification of children with special needs, the type and frequency of child assessment to determine learning and developmental outcomes, and whether the results of child assessments are used in lesson planning.</p> <p>Staff Qualifications: Considers the level of general education, specialized training, and job experience of the administrator and members of the teaching staff.</p>	<p>Teaching Supports: Explores whether teaching staff are trained and receive ongoing guidance on how to use their program’s curriculum and child observation and assessment frameworks in their classroom teaching; assesses whether there are sufficient levels of trained staff in all classrooms to meet children’s needs.</p>	<p>Instructional Practices and Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Teachers use formative and summative assessment data to drive instructional practice. b) Teachers are supported to work collaboratively to develop, align, and improve instructional practices. c) Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students. 	<p>Ambitious Instruction</p> <p>An instructional guidance system articulates the what and how of teaching and learning for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.</p>

2. Time for Collaboration and Planning					
		<p>Personnel Cost and Allocation: Looks at whether the organization has a written salary scale and annual salary increases, the type and availability of fringe benefits, whether children are regrouped during the day to maintain ratios, and the availability of paid planning time for teaching staff.</p>	<p>Teaching Supports: Sufficient staffing levels and patterns that allow teaching staff to complete their professional duties (e.g. planning, reporting); availability of trained substitutes or floaters; provision of paid planning time without responsibility for children; and management of staff turnover.</p> <p>Job Crafting: Explores whether teaching staff work well as a team and share responsibilities.</p>	<p>Time Available time to plan, collaborate, provide instruction, and eliminate barriers to maximize instructional time during the school day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Teachers' class sizes facilitate high quality instruction. b) Teachers have sufficient time to provide all students with effective instruction. c) Teachers have time during the school day to plan and collaborate. d) Schools make efforts to streamline processes 	
3. Teacher Leadership					
	<p>Decision-making: The degree of autonomy given to staff and the extent to which they are involved in making center-wide decisions.</p>		<p>Job Crafting : Explores whether teaching staff are well-informed about program policies and involved in decisions about program and classroom policies (e.g., ability to adjust classroom schedule, input into staff meeting agendas).</p>	<p>Teacher Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Teachers demonstrate leadership in the classroom. b) Teachers demonstrate leadership in the school. c) Schools have efficient and effective decision-making processes that engage teachers. 	
4. Professional Learning					
	<p>Professional Growth: The degree of emphasis placed on staff's professional growth. The availability of opportunities to increase professional competence.</p>	<p>Human Resources Development: Assesses whether the program provides an orientation for new staff, ongoing staff development, regular opportunities for supervision and support, and systematic performance appraisal.</p>	<p>Learning Community: Explores opportunities for teaching staff to learn and improve their teaching, including observing other teachers, trying new teaching approaches, and sharing ideas with other teaching staff.</p>	<p>Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Time and resources are provided for professional development, ensuring all teachers have access to continuous learning opportunities. 	<p>Professional Capacity Building Through Collaborative Learning Routines Leaders use supervisory resources, performance feedback, professional development, and social resources within</p>

	Collegiality: The extent to which staff are friendly, supportive, and trusting of one another. The peer cohesion and esprit de corps of the group.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Professional development meets best practice standards for delivery and support. c) Professional development enhances the ability of teachers to implement instructional strategies and improve student learning. 	the staff to build professional capacity.
5. Adult Well-being					
	Reward System: The degree of fairness and equity in the distribution of pay, fringe benefits, and opportunities for advancement.	Personnel Cost and Allocation: Looks at whether the organization has a written salary scale and annual salary increases, the type and availability of fringe benefits, whether children are regrouped during the day to maintain ratios, and the availability of paid planning time for teaching staff.	Adult Well-being: Explores teaching staff perceptions about program policies and practices that support their economic, physical, and emotional well-being. Explores teaching staff level of worry about policies such as being sent home without pay if child attendance is low or for an unexpected closure (e.g., bad weather) and degree they can depend on policies such as payment for required meetings and availability of substitutes. Adult well-being also explores teaching staff level of worry about their own economic well-being (e.g., having enough to pay for housing costs and monthly expenses) and quality of work life (e.g., fair treatment and respect for different points of view among coworkers).		
6. Leadership					
	Supervisor Support: The		Program Leadership: Explores	School Leadership: An atmosphere	Inclusive Leadership: Leaders

	degree of facilitative leadership providing encouragement, support, and clear expectations.		teaching staff perceptions of how supervisors and program leaders interact with staff to support their teaching practice, professional growth, and well-being (e.g., supervisors meet regularly with staff to discuss their teaching, encourages professional development, and treats staff equitably).	of trust and mutual respect is pervasive in the school. a) Teachers' performance is assessed objectively and effective feedback is provided that improves performance and enhances student learning. b) School leadership articulates a vision and implements effective strategies for school improvement. c) School leadership makes sustained efforts to improve teaching and learning conditions.	establish a strategic focus on children's health, learning, development and school readiness, and they support teachers to be effective in their work.
7. Family and Community Partnerships					
		Family Partnerships: Examines the type and frequency of communication with parents, their level of involvement in center activities and decision making, and the degree of support the center provides to parents from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.	Teaching Supports: Explores teaching staff perceptions about support services to help teachers meet the needs of children and families in their classrooms (e.g., resources are available to find outside help if a problem with a child or family is identified, training is available for staff about teaching children with challenging behaviors).	Community Support and Involvement: a) Parents, guardians, and community members support the teachers at the school. b) Parents, guardians, and community members are knowledgeable about classroom and school policies and practices. c) Parents, guardians, and community members are provided opportunities to influence the success of the school.	Strong Ties and Partnerships among Families, School, and Communities: Children do not exist alone; they are members of a family that lives within a community.
8. Physical Space					
	Physical Setting: The extent to which the spatial	Center Operations: Considers the health and safety of the facility,	Teaching Supports Explores teaching staff perceptions about	Facilities and Resources: Availability of instructional,	Child-Centered Supportive Learning Climate: All adults in

	<p>arrangement of the center helps or hinders staff in carrying out their responsibilities. The availability of supplies and materials.</p>	<p>whether the center has a risk management plan, the adequacy of the space to meet the needs of staff, and the frequency and quality of internal communications, including shared leadership at staff meetings and conflict resolution.</p> <p>Technology: Looks at the center’s technological resources, how technology is used by administrative and teaching staff, and whether the center has clear policies and procedures regarding the appropriate use of technology at work and the confidentiality of work-related information.</p>	<p>materials that help staff teach effectively (e.g., equipment and materials are appropriate for the children, teaching staff have access to current, professional materials about early childhood education).</p> <p>Adult Well-being Explores teaching staff perceptions about policies to prevent injury, illness, and support good health (e.g., program provides adult-size equipment and space away from children for breaks).</p>	<p>technology, office, communication, and school resources to teachers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Materials and resources are provided for teachers to deliver quality instruction. b) Technology facilitates 21st Century learning opportunities. c) Physical environments support teaching and learning. d) Teachers have access to a broad range of Professional Support Personnel. 	<p>the school community create physical environments, a daily structure, and an emotional climate that enables children to consistently feel safe, liked, able to actively explore, and competent in their approaches to learning.</p>
9. Planning					
	<p>Clarity: The extent to which policies, procedures, and responsibilities are clearly defined and communicated.</p> <p>Goal consensus: The extent to which staff agree on the philosophy, goals, and educational objectives of the center.</p> <p>Innovativeness: The extent to which the center adapts and encourages staff to find creative ways to solve problems.</p>	<p>Program Planning and Evaluation: Assesses whether the center has a written mission and vision statement, engages in strategic planning, and involves staff and parents in evaluating program practices.</p>			

10. Operations				
		<p>Fiscal Management: Looks at the director's role in the annual budget planning process, if payroll and other expenses are paid in a timely manner, and if standards accounting procedures are adhered to.</p> <p>Marketing and Public Relations: Evaluates the type and frequency of different external communication tools, how responsive the center is to the needs of the neighborhood or local community, and the administrator's involvement in early childhood professional organizations, as well as local civic, business, or faith-based organizations.</p>		<p>Managing Student Conduct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) School leadership and teachers develop and communicate policies and procedures regarding student conduct and school safety. b) Administrators and teachers enforce policies and procedures regarding student conduct and school safety consistently.