THE USE OF TEACHING MODULES COMBINED WITH PBC FOR INCREASING TWO PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' USE OF SELECTED PLAY SUPPORT PRACTICES

By

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To my supportive mother, Jonel Neely.

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Teachers can play important roles in supporting children's development through play, but require training to better understand this role. Practice-based coaching shows promise in its ability to train teachers in use of evidence-based practice, but has not been used for play support practices. The present study sought to explore using practice-based coaching combined with instructional modules on play support practices to examine whether teachers' use of play support practices increased.

A coach conducted frequency counts during 3 initial thirty-minute observation sessions to measure the teachers' incidence of play support practices during baseline. Then, the teachers were given access to an introductory webinar. Teachers were presented a menu of play support practices with definitions to choose a practice to target during coaching. After baseline, the coach shared instructional modules during the first coaching session. Intervention consisted of three observation and coaching sessions in which the coach 1) collected observation data and frequency counts of the teacher's use of the targeted practice, 2) shared from the observation session with the teacher, 3) gave supportive feedback and allowed for questions, and 4) reviewed the *Action Plan Form* with the teacher. One additional observation followed to collect

maintenance data. Data analysis revealed an increased incidence of the teachers' targeted play support practice after practice-based coaching combined with learning modules, with an increase for both teachers during maintenance. These findings suggest that teachers can show increases in their use of a play support practice after using learning modules and practice-based coaching.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The goal of this case study was to explore using practice-based coaching and instructional modules on play support practices to examine whether teachers' use of play support practices increased. The information from this study will be used to refine professional development modules and practice-based coaching for the Planning for Play Project (i.e. PFP). This project is designed to help teachers learn to use practices that support children's play and that support their learning through play. This section will serve as a brief review on play, guided play, early childhood professional development, and practice-based coaching. This information is expanded on in the literature review.

What is play? There has yet to have been a consensus on an operational definition of play, but there are qualities of play that appear in the literature that help build our understanding of how play is described for the purposes of this study. Play has been described as freely chosen, actively engaging, opportunistic, pleasurable, creative, and concerned more with means than ends (Pyle & Danniels, 2016). According to Monighan-Nourot et al. (1987), play has the following qualities: is enjoyable; spontaneous; involves active participation; intrinsically motivated; voluntary; free of external rules; is dominated by the players; meaningful; episodic; and involves suspension of reality. The idea of guided play appears as a possible solution to improving instruction methods in early childhood education. Guided play is best defined as child-directed play, where the child or adult takes initiative in a playful learning environment and the adult supports the play without overtaking or directing the play (Weisberg, Kittredge, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2016; Yu, 2008). This is not to be confused with free play in which the child is engaged in play with very limited guidance.

Only a few studies exist in the literature which measure the effectiveness of implementing guided play pedagogy with children. Previous studies examined other components of guided play such as teachers' ability to deliver the appropriate level (of support or developing a framework to help operationalize guided play (Lemay, Bigras, & Bouchard, 2016; Trawick-Smith & Dziurgot, 2010; Yu et al., 2018). Studies that looked at outcomes of using guided play with children, used guided play to target different subject areas such as geometric understanding (Fisher et al., 2018), to increase motor development (Palma, Pereira, & Valentini, 2014), and to enhance literacy development (Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Massey, 2013; Tsao, 2008) and were all shown to have strong findings regarding using guided play to teach these subjects. In all of these studies, using guided play with children was the focus rather than the professional development method for delivering this information to teachers. In most cases, teachers were not included as participants or data was not collected regarding their implementation, maintenance, or fidelity of using the guided play pedagogy. As a result, it is important to review the current literature on early childhood professional development (i.e. ECPD) to review the history of ECPD, the types, and their effectiveness in producing their intended outcomes.

A problem arises as to how to bridge the gap that exists between research and implementation in practice. Despite having a promising basis to help improve early childhood education through improving teacher instructional methods, research on professional development in early childhood education is lacking in just how to logistically and systemically train teachers in evidence-based practice. Prior studies on early childhood professional development including conferences (Jamil, Linder, &

Stegelin, 2018), team meeting (Vaughn & Beers, 2016), and workshops (Baker, 2018; Keengwe & Onchwari, 2009; Piasta et al., 2017; Powell & Diamond, 2013) showed these to be ineffective in producing the intended outcomes for professional development. A newer approach to EC PD is the use of practice-based coaching (i.e. PBC) as a method of coaching teachers how to use and implement evidence-based practice in their classrooms. This type of professional development is defined as a cyclical process for supporting preschool practitioners' use of effective teaching practices that leads to positive outcomes for children (Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2015).

Currently, only a few studies in the literature have used practice-based coaching, with limited findings regarding the effectiveness of this type of professional development. Conroy et al. (2018) used PBC to embed BEST in CLASS, a classroom-based preventative intervention to target challenging behaviors in a class environment, with early childhood teachers with limited findings due to data being collected through teacher report rather than through observation and recording. Salisbury et al. (2018) used the PBC framework in early intervention with families to improve outcomes for families and their children. Shannon (2017) sought to better develop the practice-based coaching framework and better develop the relationship between coach and teacher. Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox (2015) sought to measure fidelity of the practice-based coaching model. Snyder et al. (2018) compared on-site coaching to self-coaching and found better qualitative findings with on-site coaching. Quantitative data yielded mixed results and sometimes favored the self-coaching condition. Practice-based coaching is still relatively new, but it could show promise and serve as a delivery method to implement play support practices in future classroom environments.

There currently is a need to better understand the implementation of play support practices in early childhood classrooms. The literature presents a lack of consistent operational definitions of guided play and framework for implementation. In order to better understand guided play, better operational definitions need to be provided as well as detailed practices and the details on the professional development used to train teachers. Evidence-based practice is required to improve early childhood education. Guided play is presented as an effective and developmentally appropriate context of teaching young children that has evidence via the literature to support its claims, which supports it as an evidence-based practice. In order to implement play support practices during guided play, an appropriate method of delivery needs to be used to bring evidence-based practice to the field. Practice-based coaching offers a solution to bring practice to teachers in a way that ensure fidelity of implementation. Thus far, PBC has not been used as a form of professional development to teach early childhood educators how to use evidence-based practices during guided play. PBC is also still in the early stages of research which presents a rationale for delving further into the use of PBC to embed evidence-based practices.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review aims to present the current research regarding the presence of play-supported instruction in early childhood settings and professional development of early childhood teachers. It begins with a definition and review of why play is important to the development of young children. Then, I will briefly review current trends towards teacher-directed instruction and academics in early childhood education. The review will characterize the current research on guided play by the practices and outcomes these studies targeted.

A review of research literature on professional development for early childhood educators will be first framed by the examination of the history of professional development in early childhood education. Professional development will then be discussed and examined based on outcomes. Finally, the research on using practice-based coaching as professional development will be reviewed and components of the practice-based coaching method will be described for future research.

The Importance of Play

Play has been described as freely chosen, actively engaging, opportunistic, pleasurable, creative, and concerned more with means than ends (Pyle & Danniels, 2016). Play has also been described as being child-directed, spontaneous, and lacking external rules. A lack of clarity remains regarding how to best define play; however, it is important to understand the nature of play as it pertains to young learners. According to Monighan-Nourot et al. (1987), play has the following qualities: is enjoyable; spontaneous; involves active participation; intrinsically motivated; voluntary; free of external rules; dominated by the players; meaningful; episodic; and involves suspension

of reality. These qualities will be important in my review of play in early childhood education.

Play is advantageous to young learners as it positively effects all areas of development. Most noteworthy, is that play can help young learners social, cognitive and language growth. From a neurological perspective, brain development is reliant on experience to shape the brain, allowing for neurons to communicate. Play provides necessary stimulation to the brain that helps the brain in the process of transient exuberance (i.e. a great temporary increase in the number of dendrites that occurs in the first two years of life) and pruning (Berger, 2012). These processes are important because they shape the brain.

A developmental perspective suggests play follows a sequence of milestones (Hassinger, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2017; Piaget 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). Piaget (1962) believed that play was a way for the developing brain to match stimuli to growing concepts. Though developmental theories have historically clashed on whether play is a reflection of prior knowledge or the acquisition of new thought (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky; 1978), play is still seen as a vital instrument in early childhood education. This theoretical background is the foundation of educational pedagogy and has influenced play-based curriculum.

Despite the large body of research on the benefits of play, evidence suggests that the presence of play in preschool classrooms has declined in recent years. (Bowdon, 2015; Cavanaugh et al., 2017; Lemay et al., 2016). Though the exact beginning of this decline is debatable, evidence of this decline is made clear by the lack of play centers and play activities across the board. Many factors (e.g. governmental,

societal, etc.) have created an emphasis on literacy and mathematic learning. This has resulted in more preschool classrooms using a teacher-centered approach to instruction rather than a child-centered pedagogy. According to Cavanaugh et al. (2017), the No Child Left Behind Act has resulted in Kindergarten students spending most of their day in teacher-directed literacy, mathematics, and test preparation activities. The concern with teacher-centered instruction is that it is developmentally inappropriate and children are missing important stress-relieving play (Pyle & Danniels, 2016). Teacher-centered instruction is not necessarily a developmentally inappropriate practice when balanced with more child centered instruction (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Teacher attitudes are also a factor in the disappearance of play (Pyle & Danniels, 2016; Trawick-Smith & Dziurgot, 2011). Teachers' attitudes towards play can vary. Trawick-Smith & Dziurgot (2011) found that some believe play should be child-directed, with a hands-off approach from teachers, while others believe that teaching through play is not enough instruction. Teachers possess a major role in what happens in their classroom despite mandates by school curriculum or state standards. This role can be highly influential in how children will learn in their care. With teachers' attitudes leaning towards a hands-off opinion of play, we can see a lost opportunity on using play-based pedagogy to build from children's interests to encourage them to explore and learn.

Despite the clear decline in play, the term "play-based" has become more common in schools around the world. Teachers struggling to meet the standards struggle with how to implement play-based pedagogies (Wood, 2014). Teachers are in charge of the difficult task of having to find the appropriate balance between more direct teaching and child-directed play. This balance usually tips in the favor of academics

over play with the Common Core regularly cited as an influence (Cavanaugh et al., 2017). The Common Core, which was developed in 2009, allowed for the states to unify standards for K-12. This push in academics at the federal level has often been identified as a factor in the decline of play, even though play is not explicitly outlawed in the description of the Common Core (Bowdon, 2015). The Common Core State Standards Initiative (2019) states that the Common Core "focuses on developing the critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills students will need to be successful" and that the standards should "establish clear, consistent guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in math and English language arts from kindergarten through 12th grade." The Common Core is not free from blame as it does require teachers to adopt a new curriculum with little support in implementation. This has created pressure on teachers from the top down which makes implementing play a challenge when teachers are worried about meeting the standards. The pressure from the Common Core also has its effects on early childhood education in pushing academics earlier than it has in prior years. However, the push for academics does not have to result in the sacrifice of play. Play can be a meaningful way to teach content areas such as literacy and mathematics.

Before delving into how to teach through play, we must first understand play. One thing that is important to our understanding of play is identifying or describing the different types of play. To name just a few, play has been categorized as block or construction play (Fisher et al. (2013), 2013; Ramani, Zippert, Schweitzer, & Pan, 2014), collaborative play (Pyle & Danniels, 2016), exploratory play (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, 2013), games with rules (Pyle & Danniels, 2016), pretend play

(Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Massey, 2013; Pyle & Danniels, 2016), socio-dramatic play (Tsao 2008), and solitary play (Toub, Rajan, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2016). These labels are meaningful in characterizing play as an umbrella that can take many forms for learners young and old. Play in recent years is often characterized in research as either free play or guided play. These two categories are becoming common terms to describe playful learning pedagogies in early childhood curriculum.

Free play is often described as play without guidance or goals in mind, in which children are free to make their own choices (Toub, Rajan, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2016; Weisberg & Zosh, 2018; Zosh et al., 2018). Free play has been suggested to have the advantage of allowing children to relieve stress (Pyle & Danniels, 2016) and socialize with their peers (Weisberg & Zosh, 2018). Schools using a play-based pedagogy additionally will use the terms “free play” to describe free choice time, yet this is not always an accurate description (Wood, 2014). Free choice time in schools is often controlled by the teacher where the learner is restricted to a play area or a small selection of activities. Free play that is true to form is a necessary component of play-based pedagogy, but may not be enough for young learners to acquire new information. A review of studies using free play found that free play alone is not enough to achieve desired learning outcomes such as Fisher et al. (2013); Palma, Pereira, & Valentini, (2014); Wood (2014); Weisberg et al. (2013). Though free play has many of the same qualities as guided play (i.e. it is child-centered and child-directed) it lacks important elements for extending some types of learning and the scaffolding that could help learners enhance their knowledge and understanding.

Guided Play

Guided play, like free play, has been used as a playful pedagogy with young children. However, unlike free play, guided play uses adult interaction as a tool to enhance learning. This has sometimes been described as scaffolding (Lemay, Bigras, & Bouchard, 2016; Massey, 2013). Through a review of the literature, guided play has been defined as child-directed play, where the child or adult takes initiative in a playful learning environment and the adult supports the play without overtaking or directing the play (Weisberg, Kittredge, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2016; Yu, 2008). Guided play can be seen used in two popular ways: through use of natural learning opportunities (e.g. the teacher makes comments or questions during outside play to enhance learning), or through a more structured setting (e.g. the teacher prepares the classroom environment with a certain goal in mind (Weisberg, Kittredge, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2016)). An important takeaway is the necessity of maintaining the appropriate balance between child-initiated play and adult guidance. Guided play is considered child-directed, which means that the role of a teacher should be to enhance learning opportunities but not overtake.

Guided play has been shown to have a strong correlation to social learning and language development in young children (Weisberg & Zosh, 2018). Researchers believe that this is due to key factors found in guided play. The material must be hands-on, children are engaged, the content is meaningful, and the activity is socially interactive (Hirsh-Pasek, Zosh, et al., 2015; Toub et al., 2016). The use of both concrete and abstract language in the classroom during guided play also contributes to language development (Massey, 2013). According to Tsao (2008, p.516), “while children play and communicate, they are learning intuitively how language works, practicing its many

nuances, and gaining insights into the meaning of written language." This claim is further supported by looking at intervention developed across disciplines (i.e. speech pathology) to support children's language and development. Tsao (2008) explains that the storybook curricula used during their study was developed originally by speech-language pathologists intending to be used for early intervention with young children. Combining research tools from other disciplines with guided play has the potential to have better outcomes for children than using the tools in isolation.

The role of a teacher in guided play has presented a challenge in the research. Due to the nature of this role, it can differ on a case by case basis (Pyle & Danniels, 2016). This has left the teacher to be the judge of how much guidance is appropriate and even when to step in and when to stay silent. Teachers have reported that they need to find a balance between using the child-directed approach while meeting mandated curricula, feeling unable to play for a play-based pedagogy, and discomfort about taking away the play from the child. (Pyle & Danniels, 2016).

To better understand the adult's role, I reviewed studies in which either a teacher or other practitioner used guided play to examine how their role was described. A number of studies stated that a teacher should follow the child's lead or growth (Lemay, Bigras, & Bouchard, 2016; Pyle & Danniels, 2016; Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013). Some studies called for more of a structured role from the teacher, stating the teacher should constrain the environment to ensure teachable moments would occur (Toub, Rajan, Golinkoff, Hirsh-Pasek, 2016). Yu et al. (2018) developed a framework that can be applied to guided play that describes the teacher's role. The framework

includes both the child's initiative and how the adult/model responds to the child to enhance the child's learning.

Yu et al. (2018) describes a working framework for implementing guided play. This framework has two external dimensions detailing guided play as being both a) interactive b) dynamic. Interactive in this case refers to the interaction between child and adult which may differ in amount of interaction. Dynamic refers to the ongoing learning and change that is influenced by the support the adult provides the child. The framework also includes a child and adult/model to list the roles and responses to help ensure appropriate guidance. The adult or model is first "trained with existing guided play interactions and theories to identify relevant behavior hypotheses for a specific task" (Yu et al., 2018, Figure 1). The adult's next step is based on what the child presents and whether this necessitates future guidance or support. If the child requires more guidance, the adult must assess the appropriate level of guidance. Yu et al. (2018) explains the adult or model must identify optimal guidance and guide in a way consistent with guided play.

A review of the literature to identify practices used in guided play yielded a variety of suggested practices and frameworks. Lemay, Bigras, & Bouchard (2016) identified observing, following/playing, facilitating, commenting/interpreting, supporting, and leading as current practices used in guided play pedagogies. Trawick-Smith & Dziurgot (2010) developed a model presenting good-fit teacher-child interaction based on the principles of guided play and research by Vygotsky. The practice described that a teacher must 1) observe the child, 2) determine if and how much guidance is required,

3) comment or ask questions to enhance learning. Some practices included types of questions to use with examples (Massey, 2013).

Many examples of practices used in guided play use the terms scaffolding to describe the practice and make the connection to previous research by Vygotsky. Tsao (2008) describes the practices to follow the idea of first making an observation or assessment of the child's current understanding, otherwise called the child's zone of proximal development (i.e. ZPD), and help them reach the next level through a providing a series of steps. The is now referred to as scaffolding by current Vygotskian researchers. The term scaffolding unfortunately only vaguely describes the practice. For operational definitions, these practices need to be more precise to allow for replication.

I examined all studies looking for evidence of guided play in classroom environments as well as studies implementing guided play and reviewed the outcomes of each. Two studies (Trawick-Smith & Dziurgot, 2011; Lemay, Bigras, & Bouchard, 2016) sought to gather data to document the appearance of guided play in early childhood classroom. Guided play was defined in these studies by the observable response of the teachers to the children (i.e. the teacher would respond to the children appropriately during play activities to enhance their understanding of given concepts).

Guided play has been used in order to teach subjects of geometric understanding (Fisher et al., 2018), to increase motor development (Palma, Pereira, & Valentini, 2014), and to enhance literacy development (Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Massey, 2013; Tsao, 2008). Fisher et al. (2013) found that guided play enabled children to have better geometric understanding and identification than didactic play or free play. This study also showed the necessity of adult instruction in teaching new

concepts compared to purely chance encounter through free play. According to Palma, Pereira, & Valentini (2014, p. 183), the guided play intervention was able to better impact the child's performance in motor development (i.e. gross motor skills through physical education) when compared to free play which had "no significant changes in their performance over the intervention period." Cavanaugh et al (2016) used guided play during sociodramatic play as a means to strengthen literacy skills. This study found that the guided play condition (i.e. the children developed their own phonemic awareness games after being given a model of a hands-on game) had a higher gain increase than the control condition (i.e. the model for a hands-on phonemic awareness game). These studies had strong findings regarding the implementation of guided play, but few such studies exist in the current literature. Massey (2013) and Tsao (2008) did not develop a study to implement guided play but had suggestions for future practice to include pretend play as a means of learning literacy skills.

The rationale for using guided play to teach young children is driven by the need to have evidence-based practices when supporting the development and learning of young children. Evidence-Based practice is defined as the "use of rigorous, systematic, and objective methodologies to obtain reliable and valid knowledge (AERA, 2015)." Guided play has been researched and found to have positive outcomes for young children but needs to be refined as a set of practices used in the context of play in order to improve early childhood education quality. High-quality instruction in early childhood education has been shown to have a positive effect on later learning. Guided play has promise in working as process with several distinct evidence-based practices but requires effective professional development to implement this practice with fidelity in

schools. According to Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox (2015), evidence-based practice "when implemented with fidelity, have been shown through research to be positively associated with child engagement and learning."

For future research, it is important to determine the appropriate method to deliver guided play framework to teachers in professional development. Guided play also needs to be explained with clear detailed examples of practices and given scenarios of their use. This is an important requirement of evidence-based practice, that is also delivered in a structured and reliable way. To understand how to develop the pedagogy of guided play into appropriate professional development, a review of the current literature of professional development must first be examined.

Professional Development In Early Childhood Education

Historically, professional development in early childhood education has been largely undefined and exists in a variety of forms (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Snyder et al., 2012). Early childhood professional development has been identified as needing to be re-evaluated and refined by organizations (e.g. NAEYC) and recent research (Snyder et al, 2012). Not only should the methods of professional development be refined, but also the method of follow-up needs to be examined. The follow-up methods for professional development is a way to ensure that the practice (i.e. the topic of professional development) is still continuing to be implemented. Guskey (2000) provides guidelines on how to best evaluate professional development based on five "critical levels" (i.e. participant's reactions and learning, organization support and change, participant's use of knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes). The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion also released a position statement addressing the need to define appropriate EC PD based on a) the who, b) the

what, and c) the how (Buysse & Holligsworth, 2009). Snyder et al. (2012) was also reviewed to help develop the framework for a review of EC PD. Using the framework presented by Snyder et al. (2012), I will review prior studies regarding professional development in early childhood based on a) the characteristics and contexts of the learners (b) content and (c) the organization and facilitation of learning. I will also discuss the results based on student outcomes.

The characteristics of the learners in a variety of EC PD studies were found to vary in experience and the position they held in the school. All studies included early childhood education teachers, yet differed on the information provided about the participants (i.e. background, experience, age of children they instruct). Jamil, Linder, & Stegelin (2017) included participants from early childhood classrooms in public school districts, Head Start centers, administrators, and privately funded schools and preschools. Head start teachers used as participants for PD studies were those mainly that had the background of either a two-year or four-year college degree in either early childhood education or a related field (Arikan, Fernie, & Kantor, 2017). The Head Start teachers shown in the studies differed in age as well as years of experience. Some of the Head Start teachers also became teachers because of their experience as parents rather than from their level of education, meaning not all Head Start teachers possessed formal education. This was also true of other studies using EC educators that were preservice teachers or worked at centers not requiring formal education.

The focus of EC PD in the literature covered a range of developmental areas as well as the inclusion of early intervention regarding children with special needs. Early childhood professional development topics included literacy (Powell & Diamond, 2013),

play-based curriculum (Baker, 2018), STEAM (Jamil, Linder, & Stegelin, 2018), technology implementation (Arikan, Fernie, & Kantor, 2017; Keengwe & Onchwari, 2009; Vaughn & Beers, 2016; Kerekaert, Vanderlinde, & van Braak, 2015), special education (Barton et al., 2013). These subjects covered current trends in innovating EC and policy factors requiring inclusion of children with special needs. Evidence-based practice in EC PD also largely drove the topic selection.

After reviewing topics, I categorized them based on the facilitation of learning used in the professional development project. Categories I found in a review of studies within the last ten years included community (i.e. a diverse group of people brought together around certain individual or collective goals based on a web of social relationships) (Arikan, Fernie & Kantor, 2017), conferences (Jamil, Linder, & Stegelin, 2018), exploratory development (i.e. using brainstorming to determine future professional development) and team meetings (Vaughn & Beers, 2016), workshops (Baker, 2018; Keengwe & Onchwari, 2009), workshop and coaching (Piasta et al., 2017; Powell & Diamond, 2013). These categories represent the current ways PD is being delivered to early childhood educators.

Current studies on EC PD have found interesting results regarding the effectiveness of the organization and facilitation of learning. EC educators have the issue of having to evolve to meet the demands of a diverse population of learners with time constraints and increasing pressures on accountability (Jamil, Linder, & Stegelin, 2017). This invariably leads to the educators needing differing amounts of support to implement new information given in PD. The trend to use workshops with a questionnaire or survey follow-up to implement new information is far from a perfect

system. Those using workshops ranged in duration of workshop (e.g. a two-day workshop or an eight-week workshop), method of follow-up (e.g. interview, Likert scale, etc.), and method to measure fidelity of implementation. The studies using workshops alone were found to be ineffective in teaching educators the intended topic of PD. Another finding was that the workshops including larger groups of educators were found to have no effect (Piasta et al., 2017).

Studies using a community framework or team meetings were found to have more success in implementing PD. Arikan, Fernie, & Kantor (2017) used partnership and support as a way to implement a technology framework with adult learners. The use of community partnership was found to be more effective in learning new information as it allowed for social connectedness that led to proficiency in a new content area. Vaughn & Beers (2016) similarly used a type of community structure that was based on team meetings. The team meetings structure was an effective way to share ideas and new information (i.e. the iPad in the classroom) but it did not capture how effective the PD was in helping the teacher perform better in the classroom. The use of team meetings has similar findings in that it allows for group discussion, information sharing, and problem solving that show promise when combined with the training.

According to Fox et al. (2015, p.180) “Early childhood professional development research suggests that professional development focused on supporting teachers’ implementation of evidence-based practices should be (a) cohesive and focused on a practice or set of practices, (b) implemented collaboratively with the teacher, (c) grounded in the teachers’ practice, and (d) linked to desired outcomes.” There is a research-to-practice gap between evidence-based practice and implementation of

practices. This finding has led to a new push in research to “bridge the gap” to allow for more high-quality professional development. Snyder et al. (2018) states that “research-to-practice gap is unlikely to be reduced without attention to understanding and creating the conditions that support practice implementation.”

A way to “bridge the gap” that occurs between research and practice is the use of coaching. Coaching occurs in the literature as a method to follow a workshop or training conference. It has been implemented in various dosages and guided by several different frameworks as it occurs in the literature. Coaching that occurred in Piasta et al. (2017) required training developed by ecQ-net that followed the framework of cyclical coaching that included “goal setting, planning, observation, and feedback and reflection.” Coaching also has followed a similar framework in Fox et al. (2011) of goal setting and action planning around priority areas of implementation and a classroom observation followed by the provision of performance feedback related to the observation.

Other types of coaching identified in a review of coaching include email coaching, text coaching (i.e. using text messaging to coach), web-based self-coaching coaching wherein the teacher would check onto a website to follow implementation of evidence-based practices (Shannon, Snyder, & McLaughlin, 2015). This type of coaching has the advantage of being possibly more cost-effective than on-site coaching, yet does not have nearly the same effectiveness in embedding practices. The performance feedback found in other forms as well as on-site implementation showed better results. Coaching though requires a more cohesive format and detailed explanation of practice in order to

be replicated in future research. This type of PD has been further refined to become what we now called practice-based coaching.

The Benefits of Practice Based Coaching

Practice-based coaching (PBC) is defined as a cyclical process for supporting preschool practitioners' use of effective teaching practices that leads to positive outcomes for children (Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2015). The cyclical process is comprised of three components 1) shared goals and action planning, 2) focused observation, and 3) reflection and feedback. All three components of PBC exist under one umbrella referred to as a collaborative partnership which refers to "a coach and teacher working together to set goals and identify action steps to support practice implementation" (Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2015 p. 3). PBC is used in conjunction with workshops or other professional development media (e.g. power point, web-based platforms, etc.) to deliver continuing education and implementation of evidence-based practice.

PBC is a way to better utilize coaching and it provides a clear and descriptive definition of the coaching model. As previously noted, follow-up supports, such as coaching, are not well defined in the literature with details about the coaching protocol largely left out. To help embed evidence-based practice, coaching itself has to be clearly defined as a practice to ensure cohesiveness in future EC PD. Standardization of PD through coaching also could result in better outcomes for educators and children alike due to embedding evidence-based practice in the classroom environment.

Very few studies are in the literature thus far regarding PBC as it follows this framework (Conroy et al., 2018; Salisbury et al., 2018; Shannon, 2017; Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2015; Snyder et al., 2018). These studies focus on coaching

teachers to embed practices on-site and follow the cyclical PBC framework. A review of each study was necessary to measure the effectiveness of using PBC to teach a variety of topics. Topics used with PBC in the literature include embedding instruction to decrease challenging behavior using BEST in CLASS (Conroy et al., 2018), embedding in early intervention (Salisbury et al., 2018), Tools for Teachers (TfT) PD intervention (Shannon, 2017; Snyder et al., 2018), and embedding social and emotional teaching practices with children with disabilities (Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2015).

Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox (2015) intended to operationalize practice-based coaching and proposed a working framework that could be followed in future replications. The study had on-site coaching in four phases that included "(a) orientation to the coaching process (Session 1); (b) early coaching sessions focused on rapport building, needs assessment, collaborative goal setting, and action planning (Sessions 2 to 3 or 4); (c) later coaching sessions with supportive and constructive performance feedback on action plan implementation (Session 4 and beyond); and (d) a final session to review cumulative progress." (Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2015, p.3) This study sought to find measure fidelity of the practice-based coaching model and offered recommendations for future research. This study presented an area for more research in regards to the amount of time spent coaching (i.e. sessions) and what delivery format is most effective for coaching (e.g. web-mediated or face-to-face).

Shannon (2017) sought to better develop the practice-based coaching framework and to better understand how to deliver best practice for developing the relationship between coach and teacher. The conversations that occur between the coach and teacher are an integral part of the collaborative relationship, which overarches the entire

framework of PBC. The type of feedback used (e.g. Supportive Verbal Feedback, Constructive Verbal Feedback, and Clarifying Questions) were measured through several indicators in the coaching protocol through a measure of frequency. The findings supported 1) the need for consistent operational definitions of PBC protocol, 2) the need for support through coaching manuals and protocols, 3) the need for coaching feedback for implementation fidelity. This study also showed that the types of feedback (i.e. general praise and supportive feedback) need to be further defined to eliminate confusion in the future.

Conroy et al. (2018) used practice-based coaching in order to embed BEST in CLASS (i.e. a classroom-based preventative intervention to target challenging behaviors in a class environment) with early childhood teachers serving children three to five years of age. The use of practice-based coaching to embed BEST in CLASS showed positive outcomes regarding decreasing challenging behaviors in most of the students. The data gathered on PBC used in the study suggests that PBC had positive effects on the teachers' use of embedding BEST in CLASS but the study is limited in its findings because the data was based on teacher report rather than from observations or recordings.

Salisbury et al. (2018) developed a framework using PBC to target early intervention parent coaching to improve the coaching model used in early intervention and improve outcomes for parents and their children with disabilities. This model followed a process of coaching developed for an hour-long coaching session that included five sets of practices (e.g. setting the stage (SS), observation (OBS), providing opportunities to embed (O), problem solving (P), reflection (R), and review (R)

(SOOPR)) and a Five-Question Framework (i.e. why, what, how, who/when/where, and how do I know it's working?)(Salisbury et al., 2018, p.18). These components of the coaching model were taught to the coaches and the early interventionists. Data was gathered through protocols and rating scales (e.g. Intervention Rating Profile-15, 14 interview questions, and Likert scale). Qualitative analysis of the data showed that this model was effective in generating caregiver competence and confidence and had a positive impact on the early interventionists. This study had strong findings regarding increased confidence and competence among providers but had a limited scope of implementation among families of children with disabilities. The amount of coaching required to build confidence in implementing evidence-based practices also needs to be examined as it may improve outcomes for providers and families.

Snyder et al. (2018) examined the effects of two types of coaching (on-site and self-coaching) and the effects on preschool teachers' implementation of embedded instruction practices and children's developmental and learning outcomes. Using Tools for Teachers, teachers were randomized into three groups to either receive the on-site coaching format, the web-based self-coaching format, or business as usual professional development (BAU PD). This study that the two types of Tools for Teachers did not have any statistically significant findings when compared to each other but did have noteworthy differences when compared to professional development that did not include coaching. Quantiative data yielded mixed results when comparing self coaching with on-site coaching. Qualitative findings were in favor of on-site coaching rather than the web-based self-coaching.

Protocol for the coach is included in the form of manuals and fidelity logs to help keep track of implementation to maintain reliable method. Shannon (2017) used CPOT-RVI to code the coaching sessions based on “duration of conversation focus, frequency of coach and teacher initiations, and the frequency of coach verbal behavior.” Specifics to the coaching itself included details of the coaching feedback model and types of feedback (e.g. Supportive Verbal Feedback, Constructive Verbal Feedback, and Clarifying Questions). In Conroy et al (2018), coaches used a Likert scale to measure teacher competence and quality of implementation.

PBC presents a model for teaching guided play instructional methods in a way that could lead to an increase in high-quality learning environments for young children. A structured coaching model found in PBC will help teachers understand how to properly embed guided play and address a unique problem that occurs in guided play, how to properly balance guidance and child-directed play. The nature of PBC allows for observation to give the teacher and opportunity to attempt to embed on their own, which in turn makes feedback meaningful. Performance feedback after the observation will allow the educator to clarify practices and understand when to embed the knowledge provided. Workshops alone do not have the ability to practice the concepts in a hands-on way which is why PBC is so important to improving EC PD.

The present study sets out to discover whether play support practices can be taught to teachers through the use of practice-based coaching. There currently is a need to better understand the implementation of play support practices in early childhood classrooms. The literature presents a lack of consistent operational definitions of guided play and framework for implementation. In order to better understand guided

play, better operational definitions need to be provided as well as detailed practices and method of delivery. Evidence-based practice is required to improve early childhood education. Guided play is presented as an effective and developmentally appropriate method of teaching young children that has evidence via the literature to support its claims, which supports it as an evidence-based practice. In order to implement guided play, an appropriate method of delivery needs to be used to bring evidence-based practice to the field. Practice-based coaching offers a solution to bring practice to teachers in a way that ensure fidelity of implementation. Thus far, PBC has not been used as a form of professional development to teach early childhood educators how to use guided play. PBC is also still in the early stages of research which presents a rationale for delving further into the use of PBC to embed evidence-based practices.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Research Question

My research question is:

Do teachers who participate in practice-based coaching combined with Planning for Play instructional modules show increases in use of practices they select from among three practices for supporting children's play?

Participants

In January and February of 2020, I coached two teachers from Baby Gator Child Development and Research Center in two play support practices of their choosing. These teachers taught children age four to five and did not previously participate in the Planning for Play project. Participant characteristics for Teacher A included 15 years of experience working with young children and a Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education. Participant characteristics for Teacher B included 8 years of experience and Associates of Science in Early Childhood Education for Teacher B. Both teachers taught children 4 to 5 years in age and worked in a classroom with a co-teacher.

Procedures

The two teachers were selected by contacting the director of Baby Gator Child Development and Research Center. The teacher needed to meet the requirements of teaching young children age three to four. Children older (i.e. age five) were included in the age requirement to mitigate the issue of using a small population of teachers that also needed to have not previously participated in the PFP project. The need for the teachers to complete the state required ten in-service hours was preferred. We agreed to grant them in-service hours for participating in the study that occurred while they

were away from their classroom and were still on the clock (i.e. 1.5 hours for Teacher A and 1 hour for Teacher B). The teachers must also consent to the study by signing an informed consent form.

After the selection of the two teachers, I met with both teachers to introduce myself and provide informed consent forms for the study and allow them a chance to review and opt into the study. I discussed with each teacher when would be the best time to observe them interacting with the children in play, exchanged emails as a form of contact outside of the center, and began observing the teachers at the times they designated for that day. Data was not collected because the children were not engaged in play at this time (e.g. I observed mainly transitions and circle time during this time). I spoke with each teacher regarding what would be an ideal time to observe the children playing for at least thirty minutes. We agreed to meet on Mondays and Thursdays from 10:30 to 11:00 for Teacher A and 11:00 to 11:30 for Teacher B. Each teacher was observed for a total of thirty minutes for each observation session. Both teachers explained that these times were typically when the children would be playing in centers and that outside time was not typically longer than 20 minutes due to transitions. The next three days consisted of observation and data collection through frequency counts in a field journal. The coach observed for incidence of the three practice (e.g. open-ended questions, paraphrasing, and describing children's actions) and documented if a teacher used a practice through tallies next to each practice for the frequency count. This was recorded in the field journal. The coach also wrote down what the teacher said in the field journal. This included when the teacher used the practice and when the teacher did not use the practice.

Each time I made sure to greet the teacher when entering the classroom and thank them for allowing me to observe with a reminder of the next day I would be observing at the end of each observation. On the second observation, I spoke with the teachers telling them I would be sending them the link to the webinar and for them to review the webinar at their earliest convenience. The webinar Teaching Practices to Support Learning through Play in Your Preschool Program (Gryphon House, 2017) served as an introduction to play support practices and included a definition and examples of play. This webinar also emphasizes why play is important and why play support practices are appropriate. The intent of using this webinar was to introduce the teachers to play support practices and to set the stage for what the expectations are for this project (i.e. defining what type of interactions we are looking for and a clarification of what constitutes play). I chose to send the webinar to the teachers earlier in order to provide them ample time to review the webinar. This also fell on a three-day weekend. I emailed them the link to the webinar.

On the third observation I spoke to the teachers about whether they were able to access the webinar and I discussed when would be appropriate times for the coaching sessions that would begin on the fifth day. Both teachers reported to have not accessed the webinar and I explained that it would be best to have reviewed the webinar before the fourth observation. They also provided times that would be best for the coaching sessions. I worked with the front desk to arrange coverage for the teachers on the coaching days. On the fourth observation, the teachers were given a menu of practices to choose from and were asked to send me an email with their choice so that they may receive the PowerPoint module to review before the next observation. I also asked

before that day's observation if they had reviewed the webinar. Teacher A reported to watch half of the webinar and Teacher B reported that she did not watch the webinar. I sent them an email reminder to choose a practice before our next observation (i.e. on Monday). Only one teacher responded with a selected practice. This was received late on Sunday, giving little time to review the module. I chose to change when the teachers would review the modules to during the first coaching session. This would then be tied in with learning the practice and reflecting on their current practices. I helped Teacher B choose a practice before observing her on the first day of targeted practice observation and coaching.

For the coaching sessions, video recording was used to record the session. We started the meeting by first reviewing the modules. I allowed for questions and answered the questions the teachers ask regarding the targeted practice. After reviewing the introductory modules, I introduced each teacher to the practice-based coaching model and allow for questions and answers as well as an explanation of future expectations. Then we filled out the Action Plan Form together to develop with the teacher the a) goal they want to achieve, b) goal achievement statement, c) steps to achieve this goal, d) resources needed, and e) a timeline. The Action Plan Form started from the teacher's current strengths and was non-judgmental regarding their current teaching style or beliefs. This form was revisited each session to track progress (i.e. review the section at the bottom of the form) and is found in Appendix A.

Each coaching session followed the observations and lasted 30 minutes each (e.g. from 11:30 am to 12:00 pm for Teacher B and 12:00pm to 12:30pm for Teacher A). There were 3 coaching sessions for Teacher A and two for Teacher B. Teacher B was

absent for the third session. The first session consisted of a review of the modules, reflection of the observation, feedback, and goal setting on the Action Plan Form. The second and third session consisted of reflection, feedback, review of the Action Plan Form, and development of the next steps on the Action Plan Form.

During the final observation, I collected data to assess the degree to which the frequency of targeted practices was maintained. I observed the teachers in their classrooms and collected data on the frequency of their use of practice as well as field notes to review the practice. These field notes consisted of what the teacher said when using the practice, the materials used, and the activity the children were engaged in to give a clear picture of what was happening in the classroom to assess if the practice was used appropriately during play. These notes were used later during data analysis to determine if tally marks for the frequency count were accurate, in that they reflected the practice's definition.

The menu of practices consisted of definitions and examples of open-ended questions, describing children's actions, and paraphrasing. Open-ended questions are defined as the use of questions to support children's play as they play (e.g. Two children are playing with blocks and ramps wondering which car will go faster. Before they test this theory, the teacher says, "Wait. I'm really interested in your idea. What makes you think that it will go faster on Brantley's ramp? How did you think of that idea?"). Describing children's actions is defined as creating a statement that can be used to describe a child's behavior in a way that promotes the child to think about their actions (e.g. A child is stacking beads on wooden posts and the teacher says "I see you put fewer beads on this post than on that post."). Paraphrasing as a practice is defined

as the teacher listening to what the child says and restating what the child said in a longer se or more complex sentence with new words inserted (e.g. A child says “I draw shapes!” and the teacher responds “You are drawing many different shapes! I see circles, squares, triangles…”). These practices are featured in the PFP project and feature components of guided play pedagogy.

The power point modules detailed the three practices (i.e. open-ended questions, describing children’s actions, and paraphrasing). These modules consist of definitions of the practice, examples to help the teacher practice identifying the given practice, an explanation of the purpose of the practice in supporting children’s play, and reflection component for the teacher to reflect on how they can implement this practice in their own classroom. The power point modules are found in Appendix A.

Measures

Data was recorded by using a field journal in which I kept track of the frequency of targeted practices and in which I recorded more detailed observations. This data counted the teacher’s incidence of using the practice in their classroom before coaching began and included a section for notes and a frequency count of the targeted practice during and after coaching. Notes were also taken in the journal in the form of anecdotal records for the interactions between teacher and child, materials used, and activity. Each observation was dated and time stamped. Additional factors were also recorded if an observation needed more time or if a change in the schedule occurred where both teachers were in the same space.

I used a checklist to measure fidelity of the coaching procedure. This checklist is the *Coaching Components and Reflection Sheet* that is provided in the PBC manual 2017. Video consent was approved by IRB to record coaching sessions to be reviewed

for fidelity after the session. These video recordings were reviewed using the checklist and the coaching protocol to guide my coaching sessions and help ensure that I met all components of the PBC framework.

The *Action Plan Form* served as another measure of what strategies were used during coaching to help the teacher perform. It also served as a tool to review current progress on achieving the goal with the teachers.

Data Analysis

For my research question “Do teachers who participate in practice-based coaching combined with Planning for Play instructional modules show increases in use of practices they select from among three practices for supporting children’s play?”, data was collected through the coaching protocol and analyzed based on descriptive analysis (i.e. frequency counts through observation). The design of the study is that of a case study. The field journal will serve as a place to record and measure the incidence and frequency of the practice used during the observation of the teacher. This will be used to suggest whether the teacher’s use of practice increased and help determine if play support practices can be taught through practice-based coaching.

Data was analyzed on the maintenance of coaching fidelity and the use of coaching strategies through reviewing video recording through the coaching checklist and the *Action Plan Form.* This analysis consisted of descriptive and qualitative measures of fidelity of PBC. The *Coaching Components and Reflection Sheet* will be analyzed based on descriptive measures to ensure fidelity. The *Action Plan Form* will be looked at based on qualitative measures to see holistically how the form was filled out and what bearing that goal setting had on the implementation of the teachers’ selected practice.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The target population was early childhood educators working at Baby Gator Child Development and Research Center teaching children age 3 to 5. Both teachers were first selected based on the age of children in their care and the availability of having not participated in a prior Planning for Play project. These teachers were selected after having corresponded with the director looking for teachers that meet this requirement. The coach visited the school once given the list of available teachers to inquire about interest in the study and to give informed consent if teacher's expressed desire to participate. Both teachers were informed about the schedule of observation for four days and coaching for three days. Teachers and the coach exchanged emails that would be the method of contact to receive related materials (i.e. access to webinar, PowerPoint modules, and feedback) and menu of practices. Consent of video recording was opted by both teachers to be used for coaching sessions only. This data is used to look at fidelity of coaching procedures. The schedule for this study was Monday and Thursday, each week for four weeks, from 10:30 to 11: 00 for Teacher A and 11:00 to 11:30 for Teacher B.

Research Question

Do teachers who participate in practice-based coaching combined with Planning for Play instructional modules show increases in use of practices they select from among three practices for supporting children's play?

Frequency data for the targeted practices was collected during the pre-coaching and modules, introduction of coaching and introduction to the targeted practice, and one session of observation to gather data on maintenance after coaching. This information

is presented in Figure 4-1. and 4-2, which shows the frequency of all practices during the initial observations for each teacher during the pre-coaching, baseline phase of the study. Figure 4-3 and 4-4, which shows the frequency data for the targeted practice during baseline, coaching (intervention), and maintenance phases of the study. Fidelity data was also collected through video recording and the use of the coaching form (i.e. the *Action Plan Form*). This information will be presented in a review of what strategies were used and the feedback given by the coach during sessions.

During the first coaching session, Teacher A and Teacher B individually worked with the coach to set goals for embedding their selected practice. This information was presented in the *Action Plan Form*. Teacher A chose as a goal to use paraphrasing in at least 2 play activities through the course of coaching. Teacher B chose that she wanted to be able to strengthen her interactions and the children's interactions by describing the children's actions in at least 2 play activities through the course of coaching. Table 4-1 and Table 4-2 present the strategies developed in the coaching session to help achieve this goal.

Observation data and data on coaching feedback consists of examples of the teacher's use of the practice and the feedback that was intended to help support the teacher's progress in use the practice. These data were collected on the three sessions (i.e. session 4, session 5, and session 6) of coaching. Teacher B only received two days of observation-coaching due to absence.

Observation and Coaching Data for Teacher A

The first session of targeted practice observation (Session 4 of the project) for Teacher A found no examples of using paraphrasing as it is defined for this project. To help the teacher to use paraphrasing, the coach recorded and shared examples in

which the teacher began to paraphrase what the child was saying but did not extend (e.g. Teacher A said “You are coloring your flag” after the child says “I am coloring my flag.”). Paraphrasing as a practice is defined as the teacher listening to what the child says and restating what the child said in a longer or more complex sentence with new words inserted. The coach also recorded examples where paraphrasing could have been used during the activity (e.g. The child says “The boat has canons” and the teacher did not respond with paraphrasing). This was referred to in the coaching session as a way to reflect on opportunities where this practice would be appropriate and allows the teacher a chance to apply their knowledge in a working example with their coach.

The first coaching session for Teacher A consisted of a review of the corresponding module for paraphrasing and feedback from that day’s observation. The coach provided a handout of the PowerPoint slides to review during the session and allowed for the teacher to read through and ask questions. The coach highlighted the teachers current use of the practice and asked them how they would add to it (e.g. Teacher said “You are coloring your flag” and the coach asks “how can you change this to extend upon what the child said?”). The coach uses the example from the observation of the teacher folding the paper into a boat to help guide the teacher toward child centered practices (e.g. The children started talking about boats and a child said “they are cannons.”). The coach uses this to help think about other opportunities in which this practice would be appropriate as well as brainstorm ways to move away from primarily direct instruction (e.g. The coach asks “In the boat activity, how could you change the activity to allow for paraphrasing?”). The coach and the teacher decided on

the addition of reference cards to help guide the teacher in embedding paraphrasing. Reference cards were index cards that had either a short example of paraphrasing (e.g. Child says “a boat” you say “a boat with windows and sails”) or a short definition of paraphrasing (e.g. Repeat what the child says and extend on what they say).

During the observation session for session 5 for Teacher A, the coach recorded the teacher using paraphrasing in two different activities, outside play and building with gears. The coach recorded 7 examples of paraphrasing (Figure 4-3). During outside play, the teacher used paraphrasing to extend that a child was helping clean up a play activity (e.g. Child says “they left the toys they dropped.” Teacher responds “They left what they dropped! My goodness you are so helpful!”). During the gear activity, the teacher attempted to connect the activity of building with gears to the overall theme of learning about types of transportation, a topic being discussed in this class for the past month. Examples included the following: A child says “choo choo train” and teacher responds, “A choo choo train. Where are you going on your choo choo train.”; Child says “to the train station” and the teacher responds “To a train station. Your train takes you to a train station.”; Teacher asks “what is that?’ The child responds “a tree.” The teacher says “You made a tree.” The child says “eee eee” the teacher responds “Eee eee, a monkey says eee eee. It’s a monkey.” The child responds “Monkey” the teacher responds “That is a monkey! A monkey in a coconut tree.” Another child says “He said monkey.” And the teacher responds, “He did say monkey. A monkey in a coconut tree.”

The coaching session for session 5, included a review of instances where the teacher used the practices for the purposes of reflection and supportive feedback given on these instances. The coach went through two instances where the teacher used

paraphrasing (e.g. the first example during outside play and the example of the child saying “monkey”). The coach gave supportive feedback to the teacher on use of the practice in these instances by commenting that the teacher paraphrased and extended on what the child said in a way that potentially enhanced their understanding of the practice. The session also consisted of a review where the coach asked if the supplemental resources were helpful and whether more resources would be helpful. This included the addition of an email of important points of the session (e.g. how the teacher used paraphrasing in the above examples and the next step in the action plan to develop more index cards) and the development of more example cards for reference.

On the last day of observation and coaching (i.e. session 6), Teacher A organized an activity where the children were practicing writing on dry erase boards. Observation time was changed for this day because children were still in circle time when the coach arrived (i.e. 10:45am to 11:15am rather than 10:30am to 11:00am). The teacher provided one board with the names of the continents for the children to practice writing. The children were allowed to choose this center with one child choosing this center initially. This activity does not fit the description of play. The coach was able to record several instances of using paraphrasing but these were excluded from the data count due to the nature of the activity. This activity later turned into an art center where the children began coloring on the boards and talking about continents as the places they were going The coach recorded 5 examples of paraphrasing (Figure 4-3). The teacher supported this discussion through use of paraphrasing in the following examples: Child says “I am making Africa” and the teacher responds “You are making

Africa. Africa has elephants, giraffes and baboons."; The child says "Africa has animals" and the teacher responds "Africa has lots of animals. Africa is full of wild things."; A child says "When I was a baby, I saw animals" and the teacher responds "When you were a baby you saw wild animals." Then the child says "I saw wild animals when I was a baby astronaut and I went to Pluto." The teacher responds "So when you were a baby you were a baby astronaut and you went to a different planet." The child says "when I was 4 months." The teacher responds "4 months! You were only a little baby."

The coaching session for session 6 was not recorded on video due to a personnel shortage at the center that would have been a violation of IRB approval of video recording (i.e. session had to take place in the classroom with the children present). The coach took notes on this session and emailed these notes to the classroom teacher. "Thank you once again for participating in the coaching project. I wanted to send a quick recap of our last coaching session. We discussed the use of paraphrasing in the activity. You were able to use paraphrasing 12 times during the writing activity. Some examples included paraphrasing the child's story about being an "astronaut baby" and about different animals that live on different continents. We discussed if the notecard reminders were helpful and about using a small notebook to help remind you of possible topics the children may be interested in as well as the components of paraphrasing that would serve as a reminder to use the strategy. Also, we talked about targeting more activities for paraphrasing as well as your new goal to expand on paraphrasing in more activities. I hope these notes are helpful and I will see you tomorrow for your final observation." (K.M., Keim, personal communication, February 5, 2020)

Observation and Coaching Data for Teacher B

On the first day of observation and coaching for Teacher B (i.e. session 4) included an observation of the teacher with the children as they were painting during an art activity. The teacher used the practice describing to give directions rather than to describe the child's actions. These examples were used during the coaching session to guide the teacher in understanding how to embed the strategy during play activities. For example, the teacher described what the child's actions should be by saying "Back and forth" to describe the child's paintbrush but not as way to describe what the child was doing with the paintbrush. This was later used in the coaching session after reviewing the describing module to help brainstorm how the teacher could improve on what she previously used to describe the child's actions.

The coaching session for Session 4 began with a review of the module on describing children's actions while they play. The teacher asked the coach if she could answer the questions in the module out loud which allowed for some clarification and practice. The teacher asked "So we are supposed to describe to the child what we see them doing?" and the coach responded with clarification that you observe the child then describe what they are doing to help extend their understanding. The teacher gave an example "So if I said, "I see you put a red bear then a yellow bear then another red bear. You made a pattern." The coach allowed for the teacher to review the module on their own during the session and allow for more questions before reflecting on that day's observation. The coach reflected on the teacher using describing to give directions rather than to describe children's actions (e.g. when the teacher said "back and forth" to give direction on using the paintbrush) and asked how this same practice could be changed to fit the definition of describing (i.e. Describing children's actions is defined as

creating a statement that can be used to describe a child's behavior in a way that promotes the child to think about their actions). The coach then set the goals with the teacher and gave an overview of practice-based coaching and the *Action Plan Form*. The coach and teacher agreed to developing some reference cards to help guide the teacher in describing children's actions (e.g. an index card that says "Describe"). This reference card served to simply remind the teacher to use the practice.

The second day of observation and coaching (i.e. session 5) for Teacher B included observation of describing being used in two play activities, outside play and painting. The coach recorded 6 examples of describing children's actions (Figure 4-4). During outside play, the teacher engaged in describing in the following ways: The teacher said "I see that you are standing on a cube."; "I like how you put the scooter in the air." "It looks like a bridge." During the painting activity, the teacher used the describing practice in the following ways: "I like the way you were so quick to get that rag (to clean up)." "You were fast like a racecar." "I like how you are using green and blue. Your planet looks nice."

The coaching session for session 5 consisted of a review of the teacher using describing in the above instances. The coach asked if the teacher felt more comfortable using the practice during the outside play in a free play activity. The teacher explained that she "felt comfortable describing during outside play" and that during inside activities she felt "overwhelmed by having to delegate activities and managing the classroom." The coach and the teacher took a chance to discuss how to help with this in order to be able to embed this practice effectively inside. The coach offered some suggestions to help the teacher (e.g. some of the art activities could be child-led and play activities

could have a teacher in proximity). The coach noted an increase in her use of the practice and reflected on whether the resources developed were helpful. The teacher stated she would like to make more references to post in the room and the current reference cards were perfect for taking with her outside of the classroom (e.g. on walks with the children, outside play, or field trips).

Coaching Fidelity

Coaching Fidelity was measured by reviewing the video recordings and reviewing the coaching components checklist. All sessions that were videotaped were found to include all elements of the coaching procedure outlined in the checklist. The one session that was not recorded used the checklist during the session to be sure all components were followed. The coach used checkmarks next to each item to keep track of which items were covered and reviewed the checklist once more at the end of the session. Coaching Fidelity met 100% fidelity in all sessions.

Table 4-1 Example of Strategies in the Action Plan Form for Teacher A

	Steps to achieve this goal	Resources needed
1	Use an example to remind	Index cards or sticky notes
2	Develop more cue cards and email a transcript of the meeting	More index cards of examples
3	Expand on paraphrasing in more activities. Would like an email reminder of the important points of the session.	An email transcript

Table 4-2 Example of Strategies in the Action Plan Form for Teacher B

	Steps to achieve this goal	Resources needed
1	Use example cards that say “Describe”	Index card or sticky notes
2	Add more reminder cards with examples and place them in parts of the room where you will be while the children are playing. An email reminder of the important points of our session.	Sticky notes and an email of the meeting
3	Teacher absent	

Figure 4-1

Frequency Counts of All Three Practice During Initial Observations for Teacher A

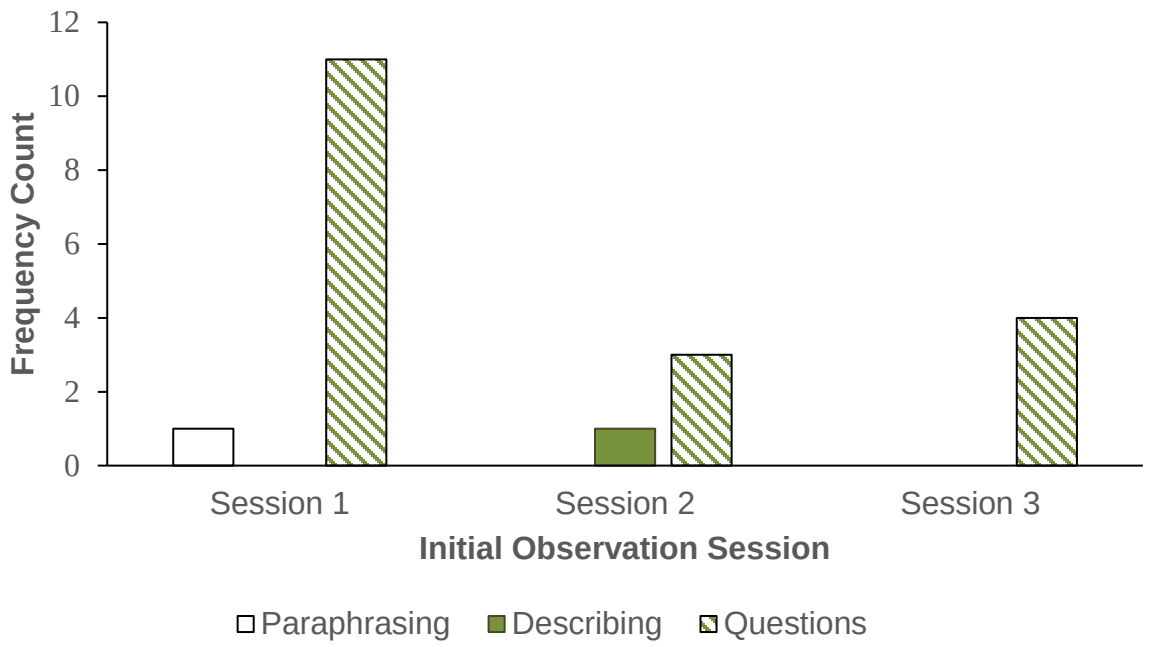

Figure 4-1. Presents data collected for Teacher A during the first three observations on use of any of the three targeted practices (i.e. paraphrasing, open-ended questions, and describing children's' actions). These were thirty-minute observations (i.e. 10:30am to 11:00am). Teacher A showed strengths in using open-ended questions in the preliminary observations. Only minimal use of the other practices was found pre-coaching.

Figure 4-2

Frequency Counts of All Three Practices During Initial Observations for Teacher B

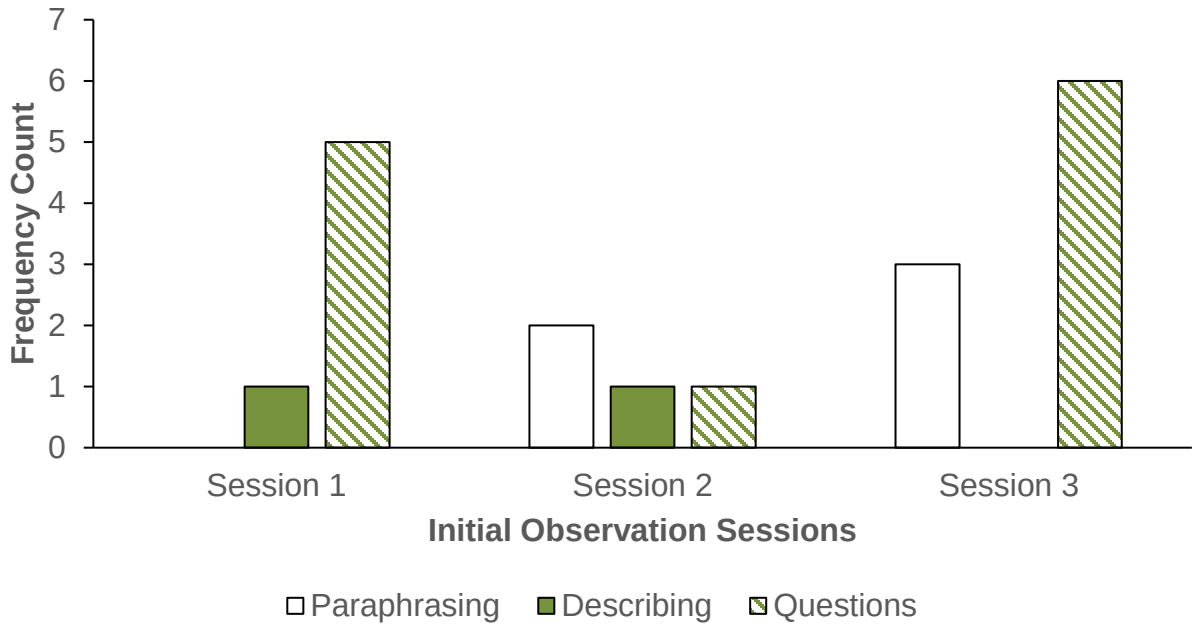

Figure 4-2. Presents data collected for Teacher B during the first three observations on use of any of the three targeted practices (i.e. paraphrasing, open-ended questions, and describing children's' actions). These were thirty-minute observations (i.e. 11:00am to 11:30 am). Teacher B showed strengths in use of open-ended questions and use of paraphrasing. Limited evidence was recorded for use of describing children's actions while they play.

FIGURE 4-3

FREQUENCY COUNT OF TARGETED PRACTICE FOR TEACHER A

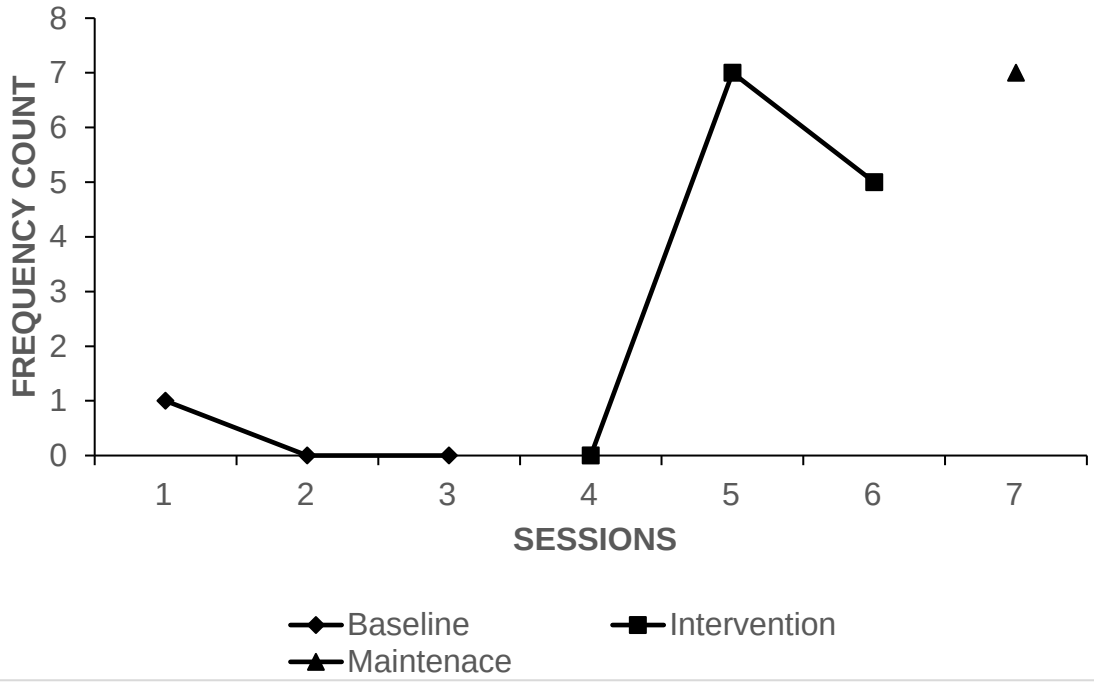

Figure 4-3. Presents data collected for Teacher A and their use of the targeted practice paraphrasing. Teacher A showed an increase after being presented with the related module in the coaching session. Teacher A only viewed half of the webinar before intervention data was recorded. There was only a slight decrease in use of practice in maintenance.

FIGURE 4-4

FREQUENCY COUNT OF TARGETED PRACTICE FOR TEACHER B

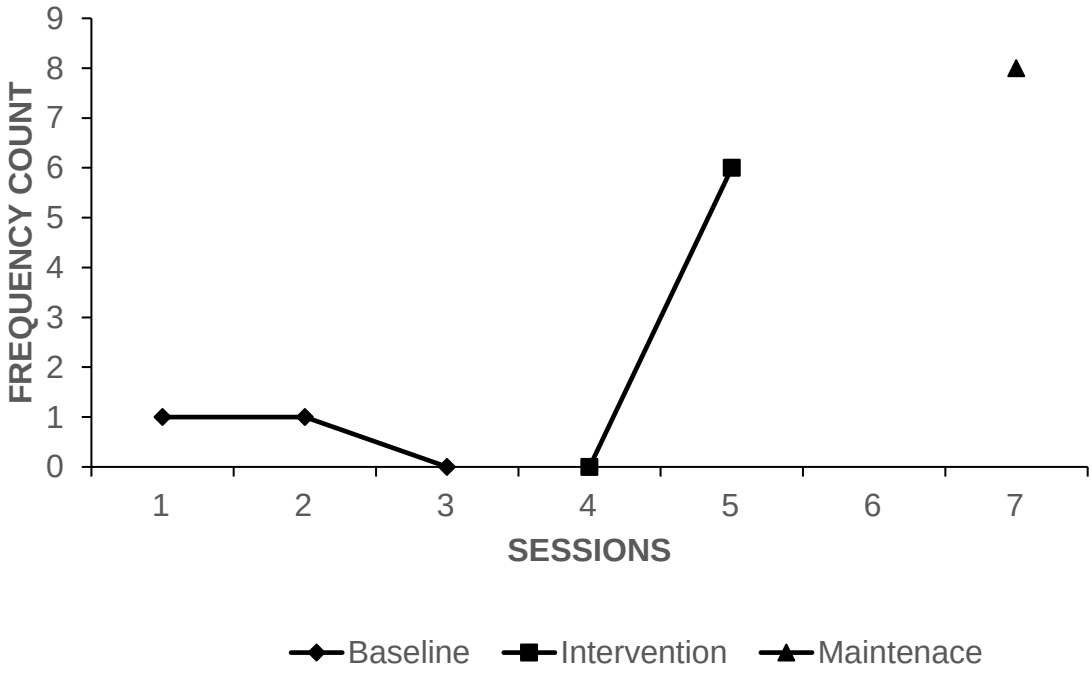

Figure 4-4. Presents data collected for Teacher B and their targeted practice of describing children's actions. Teacher B showed increases in intervention and maintenance. Teacher B did not view the webinar but was presented the menu of practices prior to intervention. Data for the third observation was incomplete due to teacher absence in final observation and coaching session. Teacher was present in maintenance which allowed for recording of data.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this case study was to explore the use of learning modules combined with practice-based coaching to increase the frequency of each teacher's selected play support practice. This study served as a pilot study to help understand the different components of using practice-based coaching to teach play support practices and these findings are intended to be used to strengthen the Planning for Play project.

Interpretation of Findings

Data collected prior to modules and coaching indicated that both teachers had some knowledge of play support practices and were currently using at least one play support practice (i.e. open-ended questions). The data supported that the teachers may benefit from coaching on either a) describing children's actions or b) paraphrasing. Though findings suggest that a combination of elements (i.e. coaching and the modules) had some bearing on the increases that are later noted, the study still lacks robustness that would be necessary to conclude these were exclusive factors. Parts of the procedures had to be modified due to a lack of teacher response to communications in the form of email. Introduction through the webinar, selection of practices, and delivery of the modules all was intended to be delivered through email alone, but lack of teacher response to email resulted in changes to the procedures. The webinar was only accessed by Teacher A, who reported that she reviewed half of the content while the other teacher did not access the webinar at all. The webinar was meant to deliver information on what play looks like, the importance of play for children, and an overview of a variety of support practices that teachers can use during children's play. Both the

introductory information and the module for the selected practice were therefore delivered in person during the first coaching session. This change in the procedures shortened the amount of time utilized for coaching which makes it difficult to discern the introductory modules from the practice-based coaching when looking at the increase in each teachers' targeted use of practice.

The main finding of this study was the increase of each teacher's targeted use of practice during coaching and the noted increase in maintenance. For each teacher, maintenance was at its' highest (see Figure 4-3 and Figure 4-4). This supports the hypothesis that learning modules combined with practice-based coaching may have led to the increases in use of practices. For the Planning for Play project, this finding serves as a rationale for using learning modules combined with practice-based coaching in future research.

Previous studies have examined the usefulness of various methods for communicating with teacher to deliver feedback information. Shannon (2017) had recommendations the dyad of the teacher and coach including types of feedback to give and the efficacy of the PBC framework. Performance-based feedback (i.e. supportive verbal feedback and constructive verbal feedback) are necessary in order to inform teachers that they are using the practice appropriately and that it contributing to the desired outcome (i.e. their use of practice is effective). Probing questions during coaching sessions allowed for the teachers to reflect by "encouraging the teacher to share personal opinions, perspectives or feelings" (Shannon, 2017) and were far more likely to elicit teachers to reflect than simply asking clarifying questions. These

recommendations highlight the need to give feedback that is supportive and constructive to help build on teacher's confidence and capacity to embed new practices.

The coach in this study strived to used feedback that was supportive and constructive to deliver effective coaching to the teachers in this study. Using video recording, this study was able to document examples in which the coach used supportive feedback and note the teacher's reactions to this type of feedback. The coach also strived to use probing questions in order to encourage collaboration and help teachers reach an understanding of when to implement their targeted practice (e.g. The coach asks "In the boat activity, how could you change the activity to allow for paraphrasing?"). This not only helped to ensure the fidelity of coaching, but also allowed the coach to review how the feedback was received by each teacher. An essential component of PBC is the umbrella portion called the collaborative partnership (Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2015). This component is described as being essential for the cyclical process of coaching to continue as it is the foundation for the coach and teacher relationship. In this study, the coach and teacher dyad engaged in collaboration during the session in the form of the conversations between the coach and the teacher (e.g. the coach gave feedback on Teacher B's use of describing during outside play which led to a problem solving discussion on how to help implement this practice in the classroom). Increases in the targeted practices during coaching and the maintenance data supports the finding that the PBC framework was a factor that led to increases in the use of a targeted play support practice.

Collection of information in the *Action Plan Form* also helps describe the formation of the collaborative partnership. For each dyad, the coach and teacher

worked together to 1) develop the goal, 2) develop steps to reach this goal, 3) list resources that would help support the teacher, and 4) review the goal and add more steps or resources. In the study, each *Action Plan Form* documented the different ideas the teacher and the coach came up with to help them with learning a practice that was new to them.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study was limited due to its sample, which was small due to limited time and limited resources. The available number of teachers was further restricted by using one school, two teachers, and excluding teachers that worked with other ages or who had participated in the previous project. Generalization to the target population is seriously restricted due to these factors. Other limitations included the length of time of coaching, incomplete data for Teacher B due to absence, and lack of use of the introductory webinar by the teachers which make the findings unclear as to what exactly brought about increases in the teachers' use of play support practices.

For future research, it is important to consider stating clear expectations for the coaching process to the teachers. Using online versions of the targeted content may not be the optimal way to establish expectations or offer the best way to provide an overview of the information. This may also hinder the formation of a collaborative partnership, the foundation of practice-based coaching. This consideration takes into account that teachers may struggle with time constraints that prevent them from reaching online content outside of the workplace.

Future studies should allow for the initial introduction to coaching and the learning modules to take the form of an on-site workshop or an interactive online format in order to ensure that the teachers are all participating in learning the content. Online

modules may help with the logistics of structuring coaching in the future, but this should possibly still be provided from the coach during a session that allows for feedback and application to happen face-to-face or virtually through software that allows for face-to-face contact. It may also benefit future studies to develop a working coaching script to be used for PFP to increase horizontal alignment between the modules and coaching sessions. This script should include examples of types feedback to give (i.e. supportive feedback, constructive feedback, and general praise) and types of questions (i.e. clarifying and probing questions) to ask the teachers. The script should also combine the framework of practice-based coaching and the PFP learning modules in a way to build a collaborative partnership and address the three components of PBC (i.e.1) shared goals and action planning, 2) focused observation, and 3) reflection and feedback). This would help serve as a guide for future coaches to help them meet fidelity of coaching and effectively coach on the play support practice.

In regards to future research for the PFP project, it is important to develop an introductory learning module that provide a clear definition for play with video examples. Clear examples of play and the addition of non-examples in the introductory modules may also be helpful to help decrease the variability of interpretation and provide an operationalized definition of play. This presented a challenge in the current study due to lack of clarity for the teacher of what play is as it pertains to this study. The field notes recorded during the study noted the occasions in which the teachers were engaged in activity that would not support play as it is viewed for the purposes of the PFP project. In coaching, it may be helpful to address what activities would be considered as play, but

this must be done in a way that is respectful of the teacher and based around their strengths.

APPENDIX A
ACTION PLAN FORM

Action Plan

Embedded Instruction for Early Learning

Teacher ID:_____ Coach ID: _____ Date:_____ Action Plan # ____

Implementation of Goal			
Goal I want to achieve:			
Goal Achievement Statement			
Steps to achieve this goal		Resources Needed	Timeline
1			
2			
3			
4			
Review			
Review Date 1: _____ ( ) Goal achieved! ( ) Making progress, but not there yet. ( ) I need to change my goal.	Review Date 2: _____ ( ) Goal achieved! ( ) Making progress, but not there yet. ( ) I need to change my goal.	Review Date 3: _____ ( ) Goal achieved! ( ) Making progress, but not there yet. ( ) I need to change my goal.	

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APPENDIX B
COACHING COMPONENTS AND REFLECTION SHEET

Coaching Components and Reflection Sheet				
Coaching Components	**Yes**	**No**	**N/A**	**Notes**
Reflection				
1. I encouraged the teacher to consider her actions by asking reflective questions.				
Feedback				
2. I reviewed the current action plan goal				
3. I shared data on the relevant action plan goal				
4. I provided supportive feedback on teacher's use of strategies related to the relevant action plan goal.				
5. Feedback was positive and highlighted teacher's strengths.				
6. I provided constructive feedback which were non-judgmental and included suggestions for improvement related to the relevant action plan goals.				
Planned Actions				
7. I directed teacher to examples or materials that might help the teacher address the relevant action plan goal.				
Scheduling				
8. Together, the teacher and I determined days/times to conduct next observations.				
9. Together, the teacher and I determined days/times to conduct next coaching session.				
Checking In				
10. I asked the teacher if he or she had any questions or concerns.				
11. I answered any questions.				

Notes

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kahlie earned her degree of Master of Arts in Education from the University of Florida in 2020. Her major of study was Early Childhood Education. Since 2018, Kahlie has worked as an Infant Toddler Developmental Specialist for North Central Early Steps, working with families of children with developmental delays and disabilities to provide early intervention services.

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