

Take service-centered professionals from burning out to fired up!

A Workplace Transition

At a state-wide early childhood meeting, you learn that next, the state's QRIS system will require that you and your staff meet new training requirements. Your program will need to meet those requirements to maintain its current star rating. Moving to the next level will require meeting additional training and education requirements.

You take a deep breath. You're in good shape; you already exceed the administrator requirement. This is going to mean significant change for at least 1/3 of your teachers, though. These are people who've been with your program for many years and who do great work with the children and their families. For various reasons they have refused suggestions to take college level courses. Now they will have to earn at least 90 clock hours of approved credit-bearing early childhood college courses and take at least 12 hours of ongoing training each year.

The teachers do excellent work and they are rightfully proud of it. Your task will be to help those who will be reluctant to enroll in college courses to adapt to this change. You do not want to lose these valued staff members. That would be devastating to them and to your program. At the same time, maintaining and possibly increasing your star rating is important too. It communicates your commitment to quality to families seeking care for their children, and it also helps your bottom line in another way. State reimbursement rates for subsidized care are tied to your star system level.

As you think about all this, you turn to what you recently learned about the Seasons of Change to guide you in helping your staff with this change.

You recognize that you yourself are in Fall with it, having just learned that next year is going to be different from this year – something, you acknowledge, that is par for the course in early care and education programs.

You are aware of feeling uncertainty and uneasiness which is a natural part of Fall. These signal that you should pay attention the signs that a change is coming, slow down, and proceed carefully. It will help you to get support, create a refuge to help you handle the upcoming Winter, and to start considering begin options for moving forward.

Part of what you'll need to do is help your staff understand what they're experiencing and another part will involve supporting staff with the tasks of each season of change.

**You decide you will schedule a day to spend reflecting on past changes you have lead, and planning for how best to support your staff.
You also decide to reach out to your mentor, an experienced early childhood professional, to get some guidance.**

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Taking care of your own needs will enable you, in turn, to be responsive to your teachers' needs.

Here are some examples of strategies you can use to support staff through the Seasons of Change.

Fall

- Hold a full staff meeting to announce the new requirements and talk about their impact for the program and for staff. This may affect everyone, not just the teachers who need to newly enroll in college courses.
- Encourage full discussion of concerns as well as positive aspects of this change.
- Facilitate brainstorming to address concerns and support one another through this change
- Create a safe environment to air worries or uncertainties.
- Acknowledge the feelings of anxiety, worry or uncertainty that people may have.
- Discuss how this may affect all staff, not only those who will need to enroll in courses.
- Share as much information as is available.
- Create a refuge – a quiet, comfortable space, if possible.
- Help staff members anticipate what the next stages of change may be like.
- Set up individual meetings with the most directly affected teachers.

Winter

- Acknowledge how staff members may be feeling:
- Tired, confused, in the dark, as if they don't know anything, and gain new insights and awareness in Early Winter and Winter Solstice.
- In Late Winter, they may start feeling more energized and anxious to get going. They may have a vision for themselves without a clear plan.

Create time to reflect during staff meetings and in one-on-one meetings with you.

- Ask reflective questions or offer reflective prompts, like
How does it feel to be taking your first college course?
What is it like to be required to take these classes?
My greatest hope for my career as a teacher is _____.
The best thing about having us all take these courses is _____.
The most difficult thing about having to take these courses is _____.
- Allow open discussion of thoughts and feelings in a nonjudgmental atmosphere. Let teachers acknowledge concerns, and facilitate creative brainstorming about options.

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In group and one-one one meetings, encourage staff members to:

- Follow up on insights. For example, a teacher may realize that she's always wanted to get a college degree but her family didn't value higher education for women. She sees that it's hard for her to go against her family's beliefs. Provide empathy and support for this awareness.
- Identify what they will stop doing/thinking/telling themselves in order to make room for what they are setting out to do. For example, a teacher may decide to stop holding onto a limiting belief like, "I'm no good in school" and replace it with encouraging beliefs, like "I know I can learn new things. I do it all the time."
- Create Professional Development Plans with goals for completing at least the state-required courses. Identify any obstacles to following through on the plan, and brainstorm options for getting past those obstacles. Choose actions from the brainstormed list and create action steps and dates for taking care of them.

Spring

Help teachers recognize the signs they are in Spring. They may notice

- Feeling energetic
- Developing new attitudes and behaviors
- Fears or nervousness about new roles and behaviors.

Other strategies

- Encourage discussion of the signs of spring in group and one-on-one meetings.
- Set up a structure for peer mentoring, with teachers who have just begun their college coursework being mentored by teachers who have completed at least the required coursework.
- Notice and comment on the signs of growth and learning
- Support teachers in implementing their Professional Development Plans by
 - Checking in with them periodically rather than waiting for the annual plan review
 - Helping them find solutions if they are running into any barriers or problems
 - Celebrating milestones achieved along the way

Summer

- Note staff members' achievements. Comment on these in one-on-one and group meetings.
- Help the entire staff appreciate and savor their accomplishments.
- Write a letter to the program's parents, informing them of the teachers' achievements.
- Ask your parent advisory group to plan and organize an appreciation event.

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- Have a program-wide party to celebrate. Invite your larger agency's director to make a brief congratulatory speech.
- Hold a meeting in which teachers can reflect on what they've learned and gained through this change.

References

Slides: Handling Change Starts with Leaders Themselves, 2017 prepared by Nancy L. Seibel for Early Childhood Investigations

Book: The Seasons of Change, Carol L. McLelland, Ph.D., 1998, Conari Press

Free Resource

Would you like to learn more about a change you're experiencing? Take the Seasons of Change Questionnaire by [clicking here](http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/704682/Seasons-of-Change-Questionnaire), or by copying and pasting this link in your browser: <http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/704682/Seasons-of-Change-Questionnaire>

This questionnaire won't rate you or put you in a category. Rather, your responses provide clues to help us have a useful conversation about the change going on in your life.

Directions:

1. Enter my name as your coach: Nancy L. Seibel
2. Enter this email address for me: nancy@keystochange.net
3. Hold one change in mind as you answer the questions.
4. Don't linger over the questions – just respond as feels most right in the moment.

When I get your results, I'll email you to see if you'd like to set up time for a free, no-obligation conversation about your responses. These conversations are always very worthwhile. I look forward to hearing from you!