Primary Talent Development Video
Nurturing and Challenging All Children

Transcript and Video Description

[Applause]

[Music]

[Applause]

[Music]

Title: Nurturing and Challenging All Children

Harry Walker, Principal: When I first learned about PTD, I really wasn't a real big fan and the reason was as I was looking at the program as really something else that we were asking teachers to do. They already had a full plate in terms of what they needed to cover and curriculum and it seemed like an extra. But when I learned more about the program, it wasn't really one more thing, it was probably one of the most important things because we were really looking at identifying or providing rigorous programs for all kids, so the focus became more about equal access and equal opportunity to rigorous instruction for all kids and I have a hard time arguing with something like that.

Narrator: Our youngest learners must be prepared to grapple with 21st century issues, ideas, and problems. The Primary Talent Development Early Learning Curriculum, designed for pre-kindergarten through 2nd-grade classrooms, response to this call to action with hands-on learning experiences that are rigorous, purposeful, and engaging.

Kriscine Coston, GT Education Resource Teacher: It's important to reach every child because all children come with special talents and abilities that are already within them and with the right teachers in the right person

believing in them, those true talents can come out. Then, you know, it's no telling what they could be in the future because someone saw something in them when they were small.

Narrator: PTD is a thinking-skills curriculum, based on early childhood and gifted-education theory and practice.

Harry Walker, Principal: What PTD does is that provides activities. Provides a mindset for the teachers to look for certain behaviors that may indicate that the children have more promise and potential then they may be demonstrating through what we typically look at is assessments.

Melanie Carter, PTD Resource Teacher: The importance of that is that when young children enter at the door, some come with academic skills; some come with content knowledge, but they all come with an enthusiasm and exuberance for learning. And lots of times, what they lack in academics or what they lack in content, they can demonstrate through those cognitive behaviors, which we know are so often indicative of talented young children. All young children communicative. They're all inquisitive. They all have leadership. They all have creativity, and resourcefulness. And we know, by tapping into these behaviors, that we can begin to value and to grow those cognitive behaviors and hopefully use them as a springboard or a bridge to the academic skills that children need to be successful in school.

Sarah Fischer, PreK Teacher: The goal is to identify children who may have certain gifts in certain areas and you don't know which child that might be. What I found in my classroom, is that the children who excelled in this program were not necessarily the children who had strong academic skills. They weren't the kids, who memorized all their letter names who could tell me all the different letter sounds, or who could count to 20. The kids that I found that excelled in their communication skills were the kids who were the squirmiest

kids on the carpet, who often seemed to be daydreaming about other things as I was trying to teach a letter shape. The ones that I had to redirect because their interest might be somewhere else, but when asked to go outside and explore and come back to the table and explain what they had seen, they were the ones who were observant of the world around them.

Narrator: PTD uses a science platform to develop seven essential learning behaviors persistent creative resourceful communicative inquisitive perceptive leadership.

Harry Walker, Principal: Developing these behaviors I think shows the kids that they're really capable. We can say to children, "You know we believe in you; "We have high expectations;" "The sky's the limit;" but, until we make the children see that these behaviors really build and that they really are smart, I think it really does a lot in terms of their self-esteem. And its self-esteem that they've earned rather than something that we've just granted to them, so by encouraging these types of behaviors and pointing out the things that they're doing that are so smart I think it encourages them to try new things and and be persisted and and and go beyond what they think they're capable of achieving.

Narrator: The PTD behaviors are taught explicitly and scaffolded over the course of pre-kindergarten through second grade.

Sarah Fischer, PreK Teacher: One of our lessons involved taking a Census Walk. We divided the children into groups. One was the I see group. Another might be the I hear or I smell. And then a teacher would take each of the groups around the building, around the school grounds, to explore, to find things, and then come back to the room, draw pictures about what they experienced outside of our classroom. Once they drew the picture, they were asked to dictate sentences, which we then wrote on the bottom. And we were trying to expand their language and use descriptive language in explaining what

they were able to explore and see.

Narrator: Each grade implements to PTD Modules, one typically taught in the fall and one in the spring. First graders hone their perceptive and persistent skills by creating observing and evaluating a habitat for a worm.

Kriscine Coston, GT Education Resource Teacher: The children love going out and looking at the trees and looking at the environment. The children love working with the worms and learning about the worm and habitats. They loved being a part of a structure where it's not just I'm sitting, I'm required to read, I'm required to write. This allows them to be creative, to think on their feet, and to help motivate themselves and each other.

Debra Myers, PTD Resource Teacher: Each of these behaviors are important to success in school--to success in life. We teach these behaviors through strategies, which would be attributes, questioning, and creative problem-solving, and it all comes together at the end of second grade with the module exploring the environment where they use all of these strategies to solve a real-world problem on their campus. They have to be persistent, to carry their solution out. They have to be perceptive, to know the right angles to take to complete it. And throughout all of this, you have to communicate. We have to be able to express our ideas, thoughts, to others that they know what it is we want, what we need, and what we can offer.

Narrator: The PTD Early Learning Program typically is coordinated by the school systems Office of Gifted and Talented Education. As student strengths emerge, more students may be referred for gifted and talented education programs.

Melanie Carter, PTD Resource Teacher: REPI coding is an acronym for Readiness, Emergent, Progressing, and Independent, and it really mirrors a lot of the GT literature that talks about the spectrum from novice to expert. We understand

there is a full range of response and sometimes the response or the behavior as its demonstrated can be very rudimentary or readiness--means I'm ready to learn more. I'm ready to do more. Or it can be rather sophisticated for young children and you can be quite surprised by that. Teachers can take all kinds of artifacts--it can be an anecdotal note, it can be a photograph, it can be the child's work, it can be the child's behavior as captured by the teachers writing, so there are a little there are a myriad of ways for children to demonstrate the targeted behavior. And because we're looking not only for the behavior to be demonstrated, but for the range of the behavior to be demonstrated, we use the REPI scale to say to what degree, to what intensity, to a complexity the child demonstrate that targeted behavior.

Narrator: By compiling student work collected from primary talent development lessons into a cumulative portfolio, we document student growth over time.

Melanie Carter, PTD Resource Teacher: One of the questions that teachers always ask how do I collect the data while I'm delivering the lesson? The lessons for Primary Talent Development are not largely didactic— they're very, very hands-on they're very, very child-centered. The environment and the task is such that children can come to it with their own prior experience and be fully engaged.

Rich Weinfeld, Consultant, Gifted Children with Learning Difficulties: Primary Talent Development is a wonderful program of finding kids at their best at a very early age and it trains teachers to observe what kids do to really identify the gifts of many kids very early, so that we can we can start to program effectively for them. It's crucial that while we're doing that that we don't overlook kids where the gifts may be masked and it may be kids with disabilities, kids of poverty, kids who were primarily speakers of other languages. Those, those are all masks that

may make it hard for us to see the the
talents of those kids in an early age.

Maureen Partilla, Principal: We're seeing
students emerging and qualifying for gifted
programs that perhaps would not have been
there if they hadn't had this program and
had someone searching for those talents
within them.

Harry Walker, Principal: I think that the
data that we get from PTD is really powerful
because again it's a different type of data.
It's not just a number on a norm-referenced
test and it's really encouraging our
teachers to look beyond just number data,
to really get to know the kid, to to get
insights into through thinking, and to
look for those little those glimmers as
those sparks that come up that might not
show themselves on an assessment.

Larry Sizemore, Technology Resource Teacher:
Teachers begin to see these behaviors
emerging all over the curriculum and
they begin to add additional
documentation from their math classes
and from the reading classes and the
like.

Melanie Carter, PTD Resource Teacher:
While we target these behaviors
and PTD and we really look at them in
isolation through our PTD program. The
hope is really twofold. That children
will realize that they have these
cognitive abilities that they are valued
and that there are strategies that they
can pull from their own little toolbox
to use as they solve problems throughout
life--that's ideal. The second piece is
probably the professional development
piece. That primary teachers begin to
realize that these cognitive behaviors
are just as important as isolated skill,
just as important as content,
and that, as teachers, they can create, and
sustain, and augment learning experiences
so that children have a chance to go to
those little tool boxes and use the
strategies that they've had.

Harry Walker, Principal: What we're
doing in terms of collaborating across

classrooms is we do grade-level meetings. And what we'll do is we'll sit down with the student work, and we'll take turns sharing that work, and we'll read it aloud, and then we'll look at the rubric in terms of determining whether or not it's a readiness or emergent, and we'll have a discussion. So, it's almost like a range-finding, where we're all deciding, you know, what is good and what it looks like. So yeah, we are looking at different student performance across different classrooms and trying to reach some sort of consensus in terms of how we're evaluating those behaviors.

Narrator: Using a trio of enduring strategies across the PreK-to-2 learning years to target and make manifest these thinking behaviors, students gain tools that enable them to grow, learn, and succeed.

Pat Goldys, Principal: Our teachers feel confident and knowledgeable in the areas of teaching, planning lessons, getting their children to think at higher levels. Because if children can think at a Higher critical and creative level, they will learn their basics.

Melanie Carter, PTD Resource Teacher:
I think the turning point for teachers, is when they try it and they see, for the very first time, a response from a child where they never thought they would and when the teacher's that kind of invited into that child's world in a way that he would have never been invited before, if the experience hadn't existed.

Christina Slater, Special Education Teacher:
PTD is wonderful because it can be used for all students no matter what their skills or talents or capabilities are and it allows all of the students to see that learning can be fun and positive even though they've been struggling with other skills during school and they may feel a little bit discouraged when they are in school.

Kristine Coston, GT Education Resource Teacher:
For children who may come from homes with difficult backgrounds or children who have English as a

Second Language, this could very well be a tool that helps them to shine.

Larry Sizemore, Technology Resource Teacher:
We don't have a whole lot of behavior issues that come up during primary talent development because the kids are very engaged in what they're doing. Once a lesson is engaging, behavior problems seem to go out the door.

Narrator: Ultimately the Primary Talent Development Early Learning Program is a professional development model with the goal to challenge teachers expectations for students and change instructional practices.

Larry Sizemore, Technology Resource Teacher:
It's not focused on reading; it's not focused on math, so some teachers are hesitant until they do it, and when they do it, and they begin to see the value of it, and they see those kids engaged, and they see their their, their minds working, you can see in the expressions of children's faces, that that they're thinking and that they're thinking ways that they're not used to thinking, and once teachers see that, you know, where all the teachers are here to develop those kinds of thinking.

Student: One reason I like worms is because they're like slimy and they're like fun to play with. And this is its cl, cl, cl, clitellum. This is its head—right here.

[Music]

[Applause]

[Music]