



10 things to know about leadership in center-based early care and education

2023 Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium Meeting

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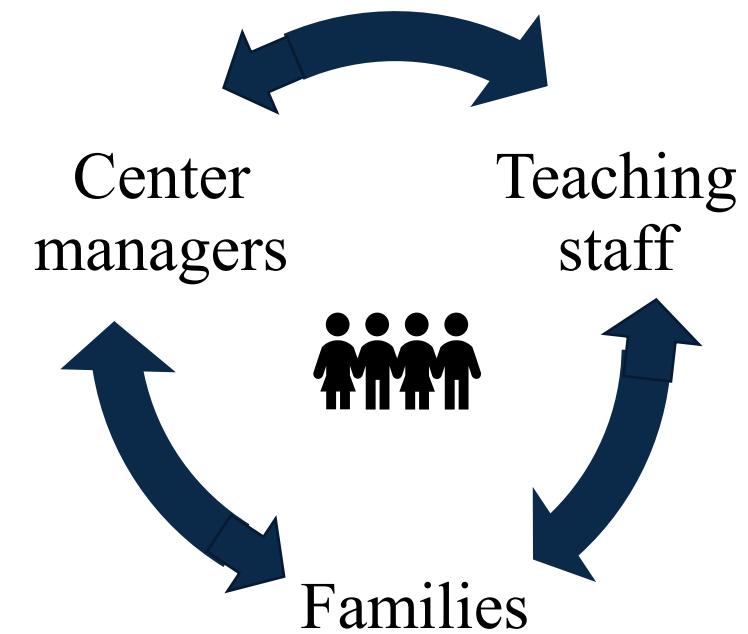


Early Care and Education Leadership Study (ExCELS)

- / **Aimed to understand what leadership looks like in center-based ECE settings that serve children birth through age 5 (not yet in kindergarten) and how leadership can improve quality**
- / **Key activities**
 - Conducted a literature review
 - Created a theory of change
 - Developed a new measure of ECE leadership
 - Tested the measure in a descriptive study with 110 ECE centers

1. Distributed leadership is well-suited for ECE

/ **Distributed leadership recognizes the participation of teaching staff and families in leadership, which may be well suited to the ECE context.**



2. Leadership is an important driver of quality with teaching staff involved as leaders

/ Involving teaching staff (lead, head, or co-teachers and assistant teachers) as leaders is important to improving quality and child outcomes

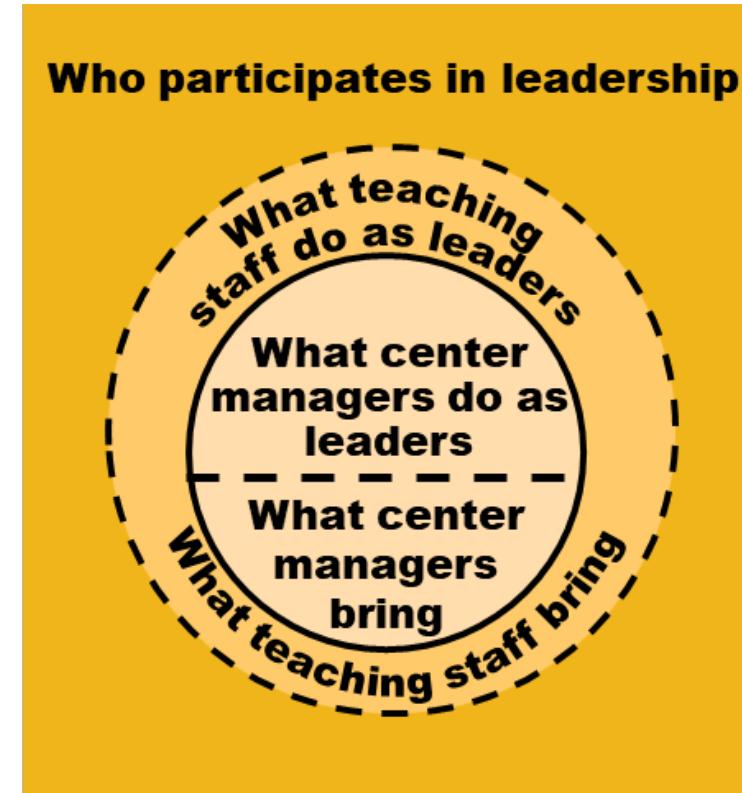




3. ECE leadership has three elements

/ We can measure ECE leadership by three key elements

1. Who participates in leadership
2. What center staff bring to leadership
3. What center staff do as leaders





4. Who participates in leadership

/ **Who participates in leadership is based on contributions to center decision-making, change, and improvement; not just formal management roles**

- Center managers—those who hold a formal position in oversight or management of center operations—have an essential role in leadership
- Teaching staff and families also can make contributions to leadership in centers
- Broad participation in leadership is possible regardless of center characteristics or formal management structures
- Drawing on the ExCELS descriptive study, may suggest room for more participation among “who” participates



5. What individuals bring to leadership

/ **What an individual brings to leadership**

- is a combination of their education, training, and experience and their values and beliefs about ECE
- can influence whether and how they participate in leadership



6. What center staff do as leaders

/ **Leadership is reflected by actions in five areas of practice**

- **Instructional quality practices** that promote, facilitate, and enable high quality teaching and classroom quality
- **Relational coordination practices among center-based staff** to create and sustain a culture of respect, collaboration, and continuous learning
- **Relational coordination practices with families and the community** to promote engagement and partnerships
- **Strategic practices** that establish and implement a shared strategic vision
- **Operational practices** that establish and manage consistent, efficient organizational structures, operations, and performance management



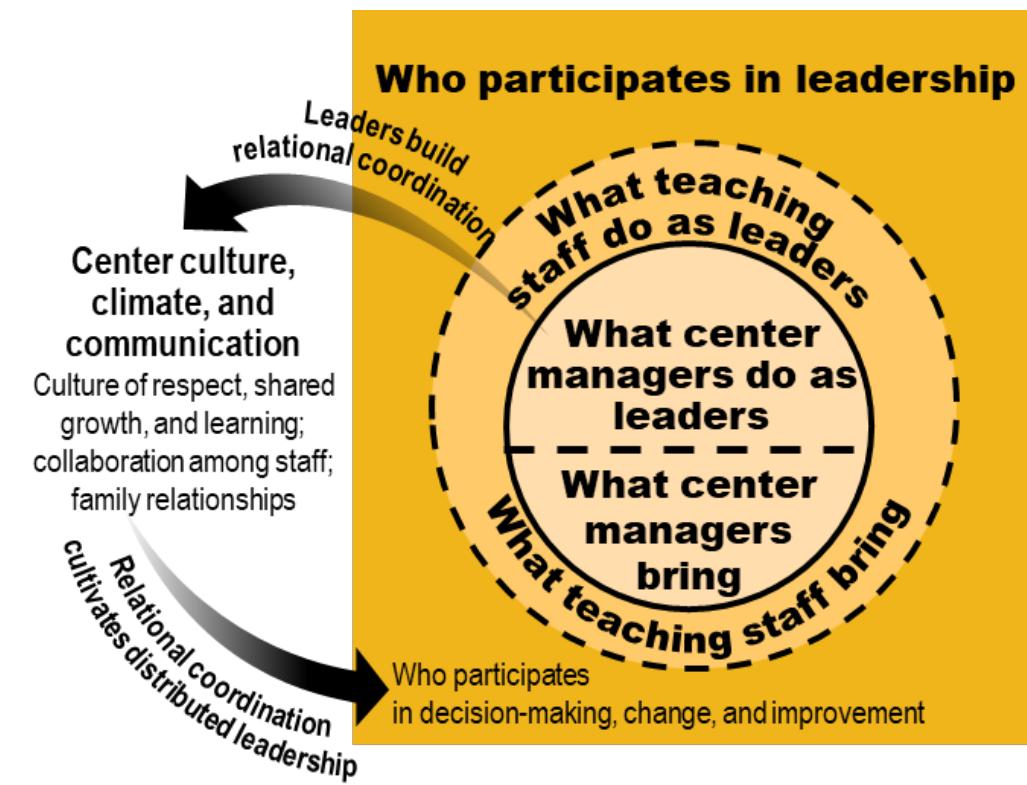
7. Who participates in leadership and what they do as leaders can influence staff and family outcomes

- / **High participation of teaching staff in leadership was associated with higher teacher-reported family involvement**
- / **High engagement in practices by center management to support instructional quality and relational coordination was associated with lower job stress among teaching staff**
- / **High engagement in strategic and operational practices by center management was associated with job satisfaction among teaching staff**

8. Center managers can build relational coordination that cultivates distributed leadership

/ Center managers can strengthen leadership and its influence on children's learning by

- building a positive organizational climate and relational trust with teaching staff
- creating the conditions that engage teaching staff to participate in leadership





9. Leadership can develop and change over time

- / **Leadership is not static**
- / **What individuals bring to leadership is not based on inherent qualities; skills, experience, and values and beliefs can develop and expand**
- / **Participation in leadership and what staff do as leaders can similarly develop based on**
 - Growth in what individuals bring to leadership
 - Collaborative and supportive organizational culture
- / **Leadership development initiatives can help**



10. Evidence is needed to guide leadership development

- / We need more evidence about leadership development programs and initiatives that can support center managers and teaching staff to be effective leaders for quality improvement
- / A new measure of ECE leadership can help



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More information:

Website for the study and publications:
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-care-and-education-leadership-study-excel-s-2018-2023>

