

# The Principal's Primer

## Research-Based Supports for Early Learning Classrooms

This bi-monthly newsletter is designed specifically for Principals and Assistant Principals with early learning classrooms on their campus. In an effort to strengthen your understanding of instructional strategies and developmentally appropriate perspectives, the Children's Learning Institute is pleased to provide you with the latest research, best practices, resources for supporting early learning on your campus, and innovations in technology that support collaborative leadership. Past issues can be viewed in the [Newsletter Archive](#) on CLI Engage.

Happy Holidays from the Children's Learning Institute!



**December 2019**

*In this issue:*

**Continuous Improvement:**

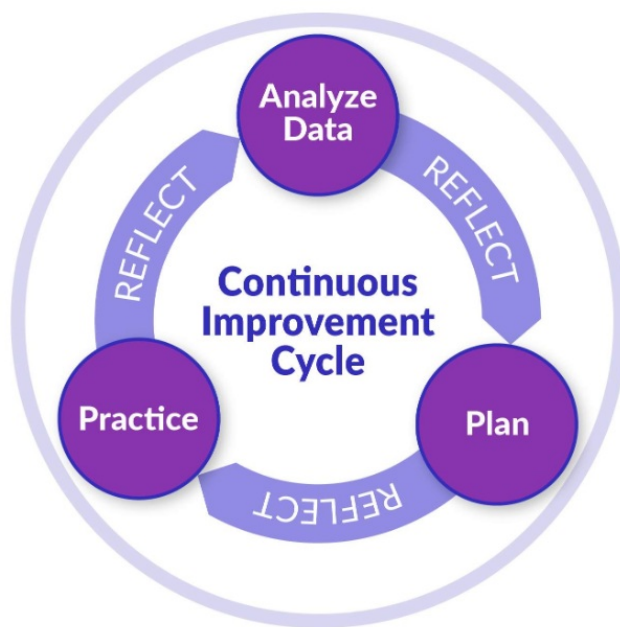
- The Cycle (recap)
- Prioritizing Data
- Planning for Improvement

### Continuous Improvement

**Continuous improvement in education is a professional development model** that acknowledges people grow as professionals when they have clear goals in mind, repeated opportunities for practicing those goals, and ways to reflect upon the success of their practice.

Continuous improvement in support of teacher growth does not have a start and end point, but rather is a process. This continuous improvement model focuses on a small, realistic number of goals for teachers to practice at a time. Goals are prioritized based on the needs interpreted from available data. This limited scope allows professionals to put highly focused energy into improving specific parts of their practice for a period of time. Over time, incremental gains in skills accumulate to become high-quality teaching practices.

**The continuous improvement cycle is the period of time the professional spends preparing for and practicing a specific set of goals.**



In our last issue we focused on analyzing student data. In this month's newsletter we will **focus on prioritizing data** and the next stage in the continuous improvement cycle: **planning for improvement** to increase teaching competencies.

A review of student data from recent progress monitoring results will be a large contributor to deciding priorities for teacher behavior goal setting and professional development planning. Goals should be set around instructional strategies that support the identified student learning needs. Setting goals to improve teaching in the priority learning areas should be matched to the teacher's current teaching skills, and not too easy or too hard.

Principals and other support staff such as campus-based coaches can utilize the [Classroom Observation Tool \(COT\)](#) as a means to identify teacher's current deficient understandings with a built-in goal setting system that allows teachers to work towards specific short-term goals and track their progress. Video exemplars of more than 200 key instructional strategies give teachers opportunities to view examples of quality instruction.

The COT is designed to document teachers' demonstration of each competency through classroom observation and to use the data to set professional development goals with teaching staff. The COT can also be used directly by teachers themselves to self-assess their skills, set goals for improvement, and track their progress over time.

The COT includes 231 specific indicators representing teaching behaviors that research suggests improve child outcomes. Items are associated with content domains that are emphasized in the online courses on CLI Engage. The COT is organized by the following areas:

- Classroom Management and Community
- Social and Emotional Development
- Center/Independent Workstation Activities
- Oral Language Use
- Read Alouds
- Phonological Awareness
- Print and Letter and Early Reading
- Written Expression
- Math
- Science
- English Language Learners
- Effective Use of Technology
- Student Progress Monitoring, Assessment & Lesson Planning

On CLI Engage you can [learn more](#) about the **COT** and the **Administrator-COT (A-COT)**, an abbreviated version of the tool that helps administrators focus their observations.

Principals with [access to CLI Engage](#) can enter COT results in the system, set goals with

the teacher, and identify specific strategies well aligned to goals from the [CIRCLE Activity Collection](#) to provide practice opportunities for use in the classroom.

Professional development should also be matched to goals. The broad array of course options on CLI Engage allows for an opportunity to individualize and personalize selections for teachers according to interests and needs.



**Foster a personalized professional learning environment.  
Make professional development more meaningful and relevant.**

One personalized approach to professional development is using the suite of [online professional development courses](#) on the CLI Engage platform. In addition to providing teachers with a personalized professional development system, the data can be leveraged as part of the cycle of personalized professional learning.

Teachers' training needs are based on their students' academic performance data from the [CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System](#), teachers' past training certificates documented on CLI Engage in the learning management system, as well as self-evaluations and administrative feedback generated from short term goals using the COT. Once the needs are assessed, teachers can create a personal learning plan. Teachers can then gauge their growth and set new goals by accessing integrated information from student academic performance data, coaching feedback, and observations.

By offering teachers access to data in a way that is meaningful to them, the school is able to create more meaningful connections between teacher development and student learning.

CLI Engage offers the [eCIRCLE Professional Development Program](#) that includes more than 70 certificate course hours of self-instructional training in 16 courses, covering a broad range of topics including: language and literacy, social and emotional development, science, and mathematics. Courses feature renowned national and international experts and documentary style case studies of teachers in real classrooms.

CLI Engage also hosts a series of online courses on the [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#). These video-based courses cover all ten learning domains of the revised 2015 guidelines: social and emotional development, language and communication, emergent literacy, reading emergent literacy, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, physical development, and technology. Child outcomes and specific instructional strategies are explored through extensive videos filmed in Texas pre-K classrooms. Video commentary guides the viewer in what to look for. Each subdomain also links to video lessons in the [CIRCLE Activity Collection](#) that support the discussed child skills.

The multiple [Texas School Ready](#) resource tools on the CLI Engage platform are designed to complement one another through both content focus and data integration. Professional development courses introduce teachers to key instructional strategies that can be measured by observation tools such as the COT or the [Classroom Environment Checklist \(CEC\)](#). Student summary results generated from progress monitoring can identify the need for targeted teacher improvement goals and additional professional development courses to enhance understanding of content. Assessment results from both student progress monitoring data and teacher observation data provide teachers with links to exemplar videos of teachers demonstrating targeted intervention activities in real classrooms.

By taking a closer look at the relationship between professional learning and student

learning, **we can connect student and educator growth data.** Obtained from results on CLI Engage, **using the formative assessment analytics to inform decisions can have a tremendous impact**--from the district to the school to the individual level--for both students and educators!

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Read the white paper [\*Continuous Improvement in Education\*](#), published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, for examples of how continuous quality improvement is being applied to make education more efficient, effective, and equitable.

CLI Engage is part of the Children's Learning Institute at UTHealth

[www.cliengage.org](http://www.cliengage.org)

