

Systems Thinking in Early Childhood: *Thinking Below the Surface*

Use these ideas and questions to build on what you have learned and extend your practice.

THINK ABOUT IT!

■ Self-Reflection

Use these questions to think about your own practice.

■ Reflect with Others

Supervisors, directors, coaches, and teachers/providers can be reflective partners.

■ The Power of Practice

Invite a colleague to join you; observe or record each other and share ideas.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- How can I use the iceberg visual to become aware of “below the surface” aspects when reflecting on situations at work? What are some work-related events or situations that might be helpful to think about?
- What mental models do I have about young children? What mental models do I have about families in my program? How do these mental models influence my work?
- What “relationship circles” or structural elements in my program support my work as an ECE teacher/provider? What would I change to improve my work?
- What information about children, families, or program practices might be helpful to track over time? How can I record this information as part of my daily routine?

TRY IT OUT!

With a coworker, think of a situation in your work setting that you’d like to improve or change.

Examples:

- Transition time between indoor and outdoor play
- Parent involvement in the classroom or program
- Collaboration time with other teachers/providers and specialists

Together, use the iceberg visual to identify the “below the surface” aspects of this situation. For example, what mental models do you hold about the situation? What are the patterns affecting the situation? How do the parts of the system (such as children, other adults, schedules, rules, or activities) influence this situation and influence each other?

Now, make a plan for gathering some of this information over the next week. Set a date and time to come back together and talk about your findings.

How Did It Go?

What did you learn about this situation? What “below the surface” aspects were brought to your awareness?

What Next?

What small changes can you make to improve or positively influence this situation in the future?

The iceberg visual is adapted from the work of the Waters Foundation.

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