

Coaching to Success: Developing Inclusive Model Early Childhood Classrooms to Support Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Purpose

To describe capacity-building efforts in Tennessee for increasing inclusion and evidence-based practices for children with ASD in early childhood classrooms.

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The purpose of this talk is to describe capacity-building efforts in Tennessee for increasing inclusion services and the use of evidence-based practices for children with ASD in early childhood classrooms.

What is TRIAD?



TRIAD is dedicated to improving assessment, treatment, education, and community services for children with ASD and their families while advancing knowledge and training.

Benefits of Early Childhood Education

Increases in:

- Earning potential
- Graduation rates
- School outcomes

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Some of the benefits of early childhood education for all students include increases in earning potential, graduation rates, and school outcomes.

Why Inclusion?

- Gains in language abilities
- Sense of belonging
- Positive social relationships
- Growth in all developmental domains

Justice, L. M., Logan, J. A., Lin, T., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2014). Peer effects in early childhood education: testing the assumptions of special-education inclusion. *Psychological Science*, 25(9), 1722-1729.

Noggle, A. K & Stites, M. L. Inclusion and preschoolers who are typically developing: the lived experience. *Early Childhood Education Journal* (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-017-0879-1>

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Inclusion has been shown to positively impact students, both students with and without disabilities in a variety of ways including:

- **Gains in language abilities**
- **A sense of belonging**
- **Positive social relationships**
- **Growth in all developmental domains**

- 1. Justice, L. M., Logan, J. A., Lin, T., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2014). Peer effects in early childhood education: testing the assumptions of special-education inclusion. *Psychological Science, 25(9)*, 1722-1729.**
- 2. Noggle, A. K & Stites, M. L. Inclusion and preschoolers who are typically developing: the lived experience. *Early Childhood Education Journal (2017)*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-017-0879-1>.**

Promoting Inclusion in Tennessee

VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER
TREATMENT & RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

TN Department of
Education

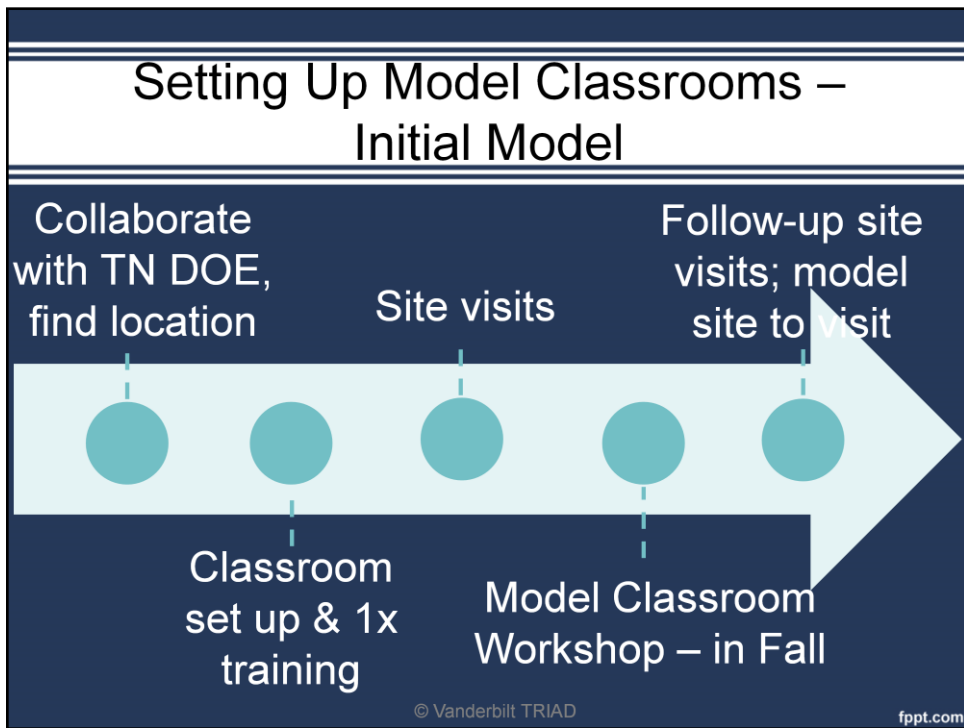


Goal: Build capacity in Tennessee for early childhood programs to provide inclusive and exemplary supports to students with ASD during the preschool years.

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The early childhood programming at TRIAD is funded through a grant from the Tennessee Department of Education. TRIAD's early childhood grant has partnered with 4 different counties over the last 4 years to establish model classrooms. The goal behind the early childhood model classroom program is to build capacity in Tennessee for early childhood programs to provide inclusive and exemplary supports to students with ASD during the preschool years.



The process for TRIAD setting up model classrooms in Tennessee historically was as follows:

- 1. TRIAD collaborated with the Tennessee Department of Education to find a location for the model classroom.**
- 2. TRIAD spent two-three days in the summer helping the classroom teacher(s) set up the classroom. TRIAD also trained the classroom staff**

on several evidence-based strategies, such as schedules, visual supports, and reinforcement.

3. The model classroom workshop happened in the fall (typically in late September or early October).

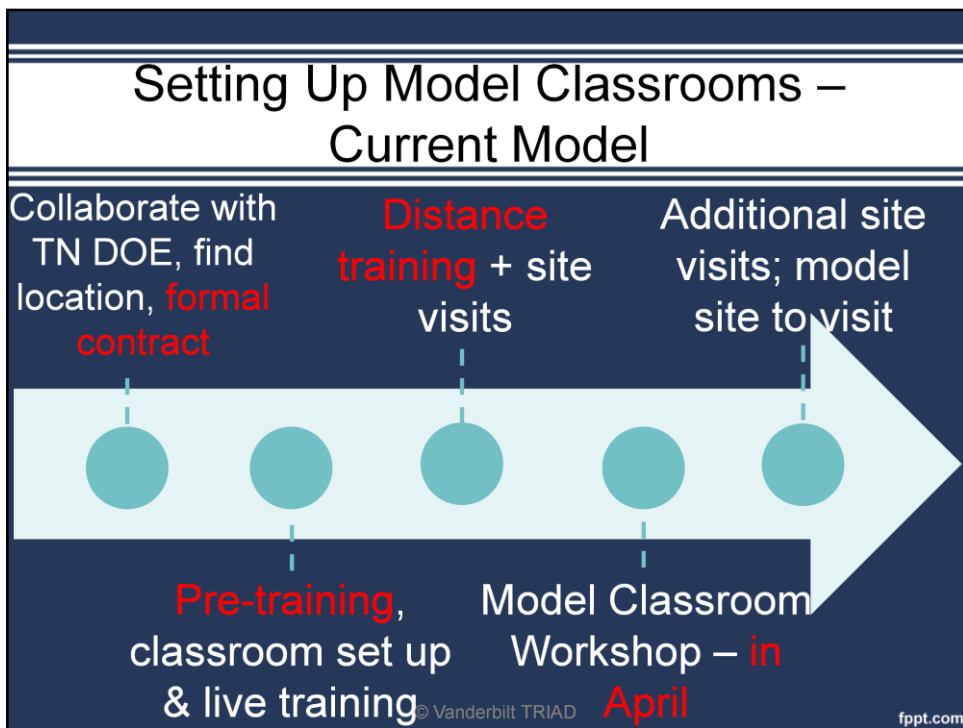
24 early childhood teachers attended the training each year, hosted at the site of the model classroom.

The attendees would learn about different evidence-based strategies to use with students with ASD within the context of an inclusive classroom.

Attendees would also get to visit the model classroom and practice strategies with the students.

4. The following year, the model classroom staff would get several more site visits and were considered a

**model site for other early childhood educators to
visit.**



Based on feedback and lessons learned after the first several years of setting up a model classroom in Tennessee, TRIAD revamped the model slightly. The changes to the process included the following:

- 1. TRIAD now has model classroom sites sign a formal contract agreeing to the collaboration. The classroom teachers, district personnel, Tennessee DOE representative(s), and TRIAD consultants all sign the**

agreement.

- 2. Prior to helping with setting up the classroom and doing an in-person training in the summer, the classroom teachers (and paraprofessionals) are encouraged to attend one or more TRIAD workshops, as well as watch several online modules, which are then followed up by phone calls with the TRIAD consultant. Once the summer training and classroom set-up have occurred, training then continues throughout the year via online modules, training via Zoom, site visits, monthly phone calls, and email.**
- 3. The model classroom workshop now happens in the**

spring. This was changed to allow the model classroom site to get additional training and practice/feedback with the evidence-based strategies. Prior attendees also expressed that it would be more helpful to have the workshop prior to setting up their classrooms in the summer before the school year started. Due to the nature of the workshop, with attendees being able to practice the strategies with students in the model classroom, the training has to take place during the school year. So the TRIAD team settled on having the training near the end of the school year with follow-up site visits at the beginning of the following school year.

Model Classroom Support

Classroom Set Up

Coaching



Setting up the classroom & making visual supports with the classroom staff



Training the classroom staff on zoning plans. A TRIAD consultant joined the training via Zoom.

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When developing our approach to the set up and coaching of the model classroom(s), we were attempting to develop a model that could be systematized and fairly easily replicated across our state. We have been working on developing a standard set of trainings to pull from for the summer training, plus we have targeted areas to focus on during the set up of the model classrooms. Additional

training and coaching has successfully occurred through the use of a variety of technologies, including Zoom (as shown in the picture on the right). This has been especially useful when the model classroom sites are in different regions of the state from where the TRIAD office is located.

Classroom Set Up

- 2 days of classroom set up in the summer
- In-person training on evidence-based practices (EBPs)
- Planning



One of the model classroom sites for 2017-2018 after the summer training/set-up

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The actual classroom set-up occurs in the summer and typically takes 2 full days. As part of the summer visit, the TRIAD consultants spend some time training the staff on several evidence-based practices, as well as planning for the year (i.e., daily schedules, plan for introducing different social-emotional skills, etc.).



This is a picture of one of the past model classrooms post classroom set-up. The consultants focused on ensuring the classroom was set up in such a way as to promote student independence, clarify expectations, and minimize distractions. The consultants also worked with classroom teachers on setting up individual schedules and other visual supports.

National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders Autism Intervention Literature Review (2014)					
Prompting	Antecedent-Based Intervention	Time Delay	Reinforcement	Task Analysis	Discrete Trial Training
Functional Behavior Assessment	Response Interruption & Redirection	Differential Reinforcement	Extinction	Social Narratives	In Vivo/Video Modeling
Naturalistic Interventions	Peer-Mediated Intervention & Instruction	Pivotal Response Training	Visual Supports	Cognitive Behavioral Intervention	Self Management
Parent Implemented Intervention	Social Skills Training	Structured Play Group			Scripting
Functional Communication Training	Picture Exchange Communication System	Technology Aided Instruction and Intervention	Augmentative and Alternative Communication	Structured Teaching	Music Therapy

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This is a table showing evidence-based practices for individuals with ASD, as depicted by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders. The strategies highlighted in teal are ones we cover with all of our model classroom teachers during the initial in-person training, as well as during continued support and professional development. The strategies highlighted in purple are

practices that we get to with some model classroom teachers but not necessarily all teachers. Our hope is that by changing our model and systematizing things more, we will get to the practices in purple with nearly all model classroom teachers either during the first or second year of support.

Coaching

- Online trainings
- Distance consults
- Observations
- Site Visits
- Training Opportunities

Online Trainings

- 5 online series
- Continuing to add more topics
- Brief (5-10 minutes each)

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As part of the new coaching model for model classroom, we now have our model classroom teachers (and hopefully paraprofessionals) participate in a series of online trainings. At this point in time, there are 5 online series available to the teams. A variety of topics are included and each training module is very brief, so this is not a time-consuming task for the classroom staff. More trainings are gradually being added so that teachers will have more resources to help further their skill sets.

Online Modules: Series 1

Introduction:

- Introduction to ASD
- Defining Behavior
- Descriptive Praise

Approximately 30 minutes of training



Classroom expectations in one model classroom

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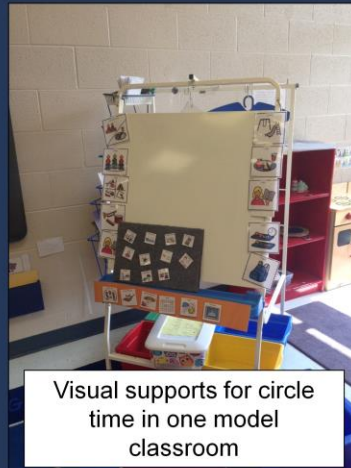
The first series of modules the teams are asked to watch cover basic introductory topics including: and introduction to ASD, defining behavior, and descriptive praise. This series takes approximately 30 minutes total for teams to watch.

Online Modules: Series 2

Classroom Set Up:

- Physical Structure
- Visual Supports

Approximately 20 minutes of training



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The second series of modules the teams are asked to watch cover classroom set up and environmental arrangement. Topics include: physical structure and environmental supports. This series takes approximately 20 minutes total for teams to watch.

Online Modules: Series 3

Reinforcement:

- Introduction
- Response-Based Token Systems
- Time-Based Token Systems
- Class-Wide Token Economies

Approximately 50 minutes of training



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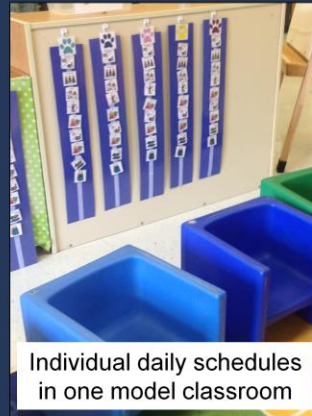
The third series of modules the teams are asked to watch are focused on reinforcement. Topics include: an introduction to reinforcement, response-based token systems, time-based token systems, and class-wide token economies. This series takes approximately 50 minutes total for teams to watch.

Online Modules: Series 4

Schedules:

- Introduction
- Class Schedules
- Individual Schedules
- Independent Work Systems
- Activity Schedules

Approximately 60 minutes of training



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The fourth series of modules the teams are asked to watch are about schedules. Topics include: an introduction to schedules, class schedules, individual schedules, independent work systems, and activity schedules. This series takes approximately 60 minutes total for teams to watch.

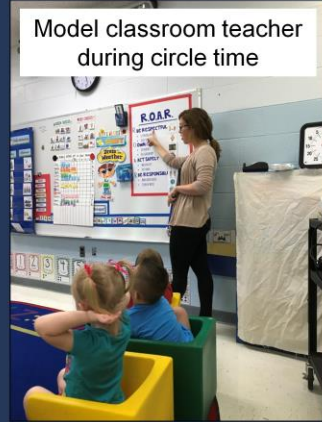
Online Modules: Series 5

Circle Time:

- How to Structure Circle Time
- Defining Circle Expectations
- Increasing Student Engagement
- The Read Aloud
- Using Reinforcement
- Smart Board Activities

Approximately 75 minutes of training

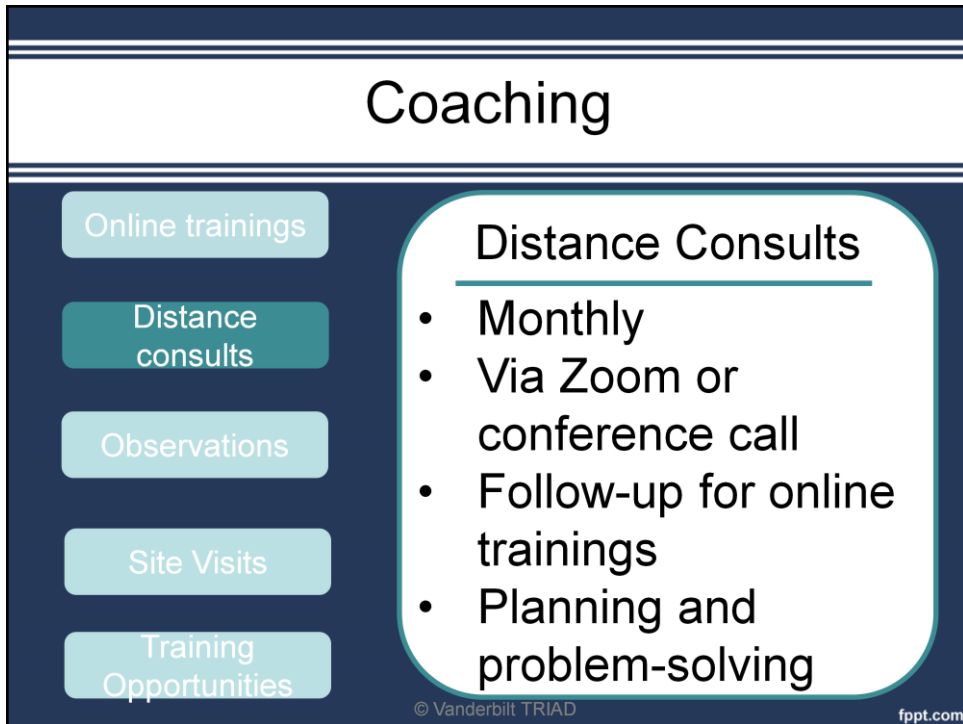
Model classroom teacher during circle time



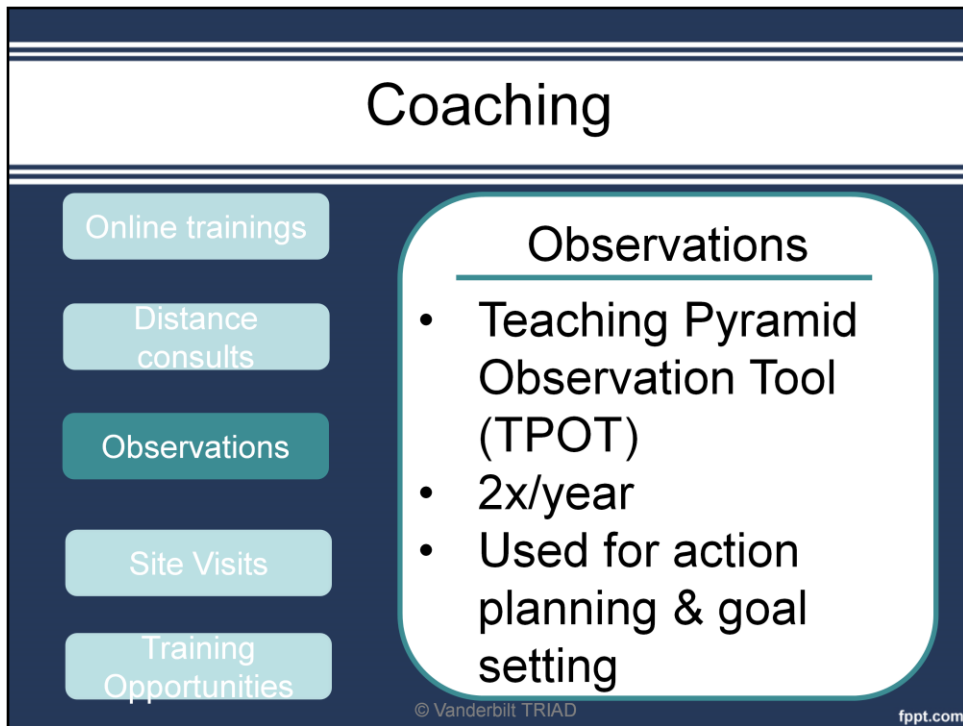
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The last series of modules (as of right now) the teams are asked to watch is about circle time. Topics include: how to structure circle time, defining circle expectations, increasing student engagement, the read aloud, using reinforcement, and smart board activities. This series takes approximately 75 minutes total for teams to watch.



In addition to the online trainings, the model classroom teacher(s) participate in distance consults with their TRIAD consultant(s). These take place on approximately a monthly basis, and occur via Zoom or conference call. The distance consults are spent as follow-ups to the online trainings the team has just participated in, as well as for planning and problem-solving about what is happening currently in the classroom.



In addition to the trainings and consults, the TRIAD consultant(s) conduct a structured observation 2x a year. This is a new addition to the process. We use the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT), and the rationale for using this tool is to guide action planning with the teachers and help them to set meaningful goals. It will also be used as a way to help measure growth over the course of the year.

Coaching

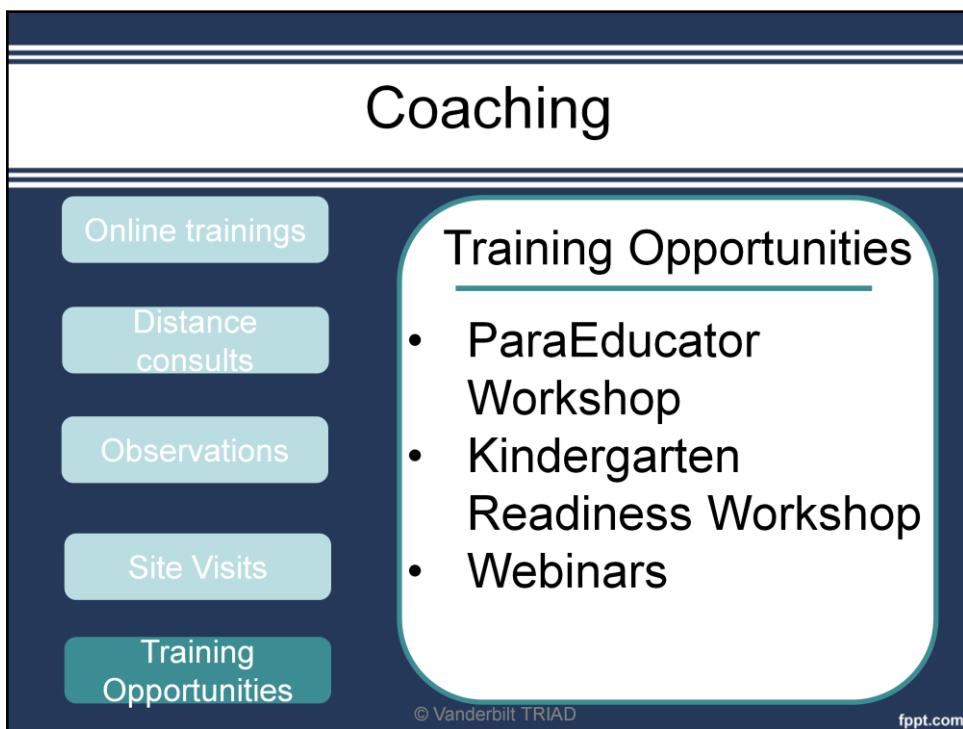
- Online trainings
- Distance consults
- Observations
- Site Visits**
- Training Opportunities

Site Visits

- 5 full-day site visits (40 hours total)
- Completed prior to 3-day workshop (approximately 10 months)
- Modeling & feedback

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As part of the formal contract, the model classroom teachers get 5 full-day site visits over the course of the first school year. This is a total of 40 hours in person with the TRIAD consultant(s). With the workshop now taking place in April, the 40 hours occur prior to the workshop over the course of approximately 10 months. During the site visits, the consultants model strategies, provide feedback, and observe in the classrooms.



Additional TRIAD training opportunities have been offered to the model classroom teams this year. The teams for this current model classroom, as well as the team from last year’s model classroom, attended a 2-day paraeducator workshop in the spring. The teams have also been offered the chance to attend a kindergarten readiness workshop early this spring, and to view several early childhood-focused webinars throughout the year. We are hopeful that our teams

will take advantage of these extra training opportunities.

Model Classroom Workshop



Model classroom attendees practicing strategies with students from the model classroom

- 3-day workshop
- ½ day site visit

- 24 attendees
- Middle, East, or West region



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The model classroom workshop is the culmination of the set-up and coaching efforts. In April 2018, 24 attendees from West Tennessee will attend the 3-day workshop. As part of the experience, they will learn about a variety of evidence-based strategies and topics including: environmental arrangement, schedules, task analysis, teaching social-emotional skills, setting up the classroom for success,

reinforcement, communication/naturalistic teaching, teaching play skills, and responding to inappropriate behavior. Participants will have opportunities to observe in the model classrooms and to then practice the evidence-based strategies with the students in the model classrooms. The workshop takes place in a different region of the state each year depending on where the model classroom site is located.

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