

## Improving Leadership and Management Practices- One Step at a Time By Jill Bella

Reprinted with permission from *The Director's Link*, Summer 2007, p1-3. Wheeling, (Illinois, USA): McCormick Tribune Centre for Early Childhood Leadership. (<http://cecl.nl.edu>)  
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*Engaging Creative Minds- Éveillons l'esprit créatif! Pre-conference Session (June 12), "Leading the Way to Quality: The Director's Role", with Teri Talen of the McCormick Tribune Centre for Early Childhood Leadership will feature the Program Administration Scale and how you can use it to optimize your child care program.*

All change, even the changes we perceive as positive can create stress. As a result, many people naturally resist change. In our society we celebrate those who make bold, grand changes, taking on monumental tasks or implementing ground-breaking, innovative initiatives. But rather than inspiring outstanding achievement, this mindset often leads to heightened fear among those directly impacted by organizational change. Fortunately, there are other ways to approach change. In the Japanese culture there is a concept referred to as *kaizen*. *Kaizen* emphasizes taking small, doable steps in any change process, personal or organizational. Approaching change from this perspective helps eliminate the fear and resistance that can accompany the change process. By re-conceptualizing change as a series of small incremental steps, real improvements seem more achievable yet the ultimate goal remains great. Taking small steps toward change is a sensible way to improve the leadership and management practices in your early care and education program. As a program director you deal with a wide range of administrative issues. You are the gatekeeper to quality. Your role as both leader and manager is pivotal to program success. Without efficient and effective systems in place at the organizational level, quality teaching practices cannot be sustained at the classroom level. The *Program Administration Scale* (PAS) is an assessment tool designed to help you make change in small incremental steps.

### The Program Administration Scale

Designed to complement the environment rating scales that measure the quality of learning environments, the PAS measures the quality of leadership and management practices of early care and education programs on a 7-point scale ( from 1 meaning inadequate to 7 meaning excellent) on 89 quality indicator strands.

These indicator strands comprise 25 items clustered in 10 subscales: human resources development, personnel cost and allocation, fiscal management, program planning and evaluation, family partnerships, marketing and public relations, technology and the staff qualifications. The 7-point continuum for each quality indicator strand allows you to easily see your program's strengths and target areas for improvement. As such, the PAS is a convenient and powerful tool for you to use in your early childhood program improvement efforts.

### The Program Improvement Process

The program improvement process using the PAS is straight forward and involves five steps:

- Rate individual PAS indicators. For each item on the PAS, begin by rating the indicator strands, progressing across each quality rubric from 1 (inadequate) to 7 (excellent). Note in the spaces provided a Y (yes) or an N (no) depending on whether or not the indicator is met. For example, in the item, Supervision and Performance Appraisal, one of the indicator strands includes the following indicator: "Written performance appraisal includes goals and professional development targets for the next year." If the performance appraisal in your program includes these components, you would respond with a Y in the designated place. Figure 1 (p.4) provides an example of a completed PAS item.
- Generate a score for the PAS items. Once all of the indicators for an item have been rated, you can determine the item score by following the scoring rules found in the PAS book. An average PAS score item is generated by totaling all of the item scores and dividing by the number of items assessed. The score gives you an overall picture of the quality of administrative practices in your early care and education program.

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**Figure 3: Action Plan**

**Goal:** To improve performance appraisal processes. (PAS Item #2)

Objectives	Action Steps	Person Responsible	Time	Resources Needed (people, materials, \$\$\$)	Evaluation Checkpoints
To change performance appraisal criteria so they are mostly objective and behavior-based (e.g. teacher uses positive guidance techniques, asks children open-ended questions). (Indicators 1.2 & 3.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Review currently used and sample performance appraisals for objective and behavior-based criteria and determine which criteria should be included in performance appraisals</li> <li>▶ Create new performance appraisals that are mostly objective and behavior-based.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Director</li> <li>▶ Director and Administrative Assistant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 8 hours to research and refine self-appraisals</li> <li>▶ 4 hours to create, format, and edit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Internet, <i>Blueprint for Action</i> book, community Director's Network members</li> <li>▶ Computer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Feedback from staff on new form at weekly meeting.</li> <li>▶ Feedback from mentor at next meeting.</li> <li>▶ Review forms after using for mid-term appraisals.</li> </ul>
Change current performance appraisals so they reflect the different teaching roles at the program. (Indicator 5.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Review job descriptions for lead teachers, teachers, and apprentice teachers and determine which responsibilities are not included in the current performance appraisals for each</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ All teaching staff and director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Approximately 2 hours of planning time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Current job descriptions, current performance appraisals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ At next program meeting staff will submit edits to current performance appraisals</li> </ul>
Improve performance appraisal methods to include multiple sources of evidence (e.g., artifacts, parent feedback, co-worker feedback) (Indicator 7.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Develop parent feedback form</li> <li>▶ Develop co-teacher feedback form</li> <li>▶ Implement portfolio system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ All teaching staff and director</li> <li>▶ All teaching staff and director</li> <li>▶ Director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Approximately 1 hour</li> <li>▶ Approximately 1 hour</li> <li>▶ Approximately 50 hours over the year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Sample parent feedback forms</li> <li>▶ Sample co-teacher feedback forms</li> <li>▶ <i>Visionary Director</i> book, digital camera (\$150), color printer (\$125)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ At next program meeting staff will go over both feedback forms</li> <li>▶ At end of each month add 2 items to each portfolio</li> </ul>

- **Create a PAS profile.** Once scoring is complete for all items, you can plot your scores on the graph provided in the PAS book. This profile will give you a visual picture of the areas of strength in your program and areas in need of improvement. Your PAS profile provides a snapshot of the current level of quality from an organizational perspective. Figure 2 (p.4) provides an example of a completed PAS profile.
- **Target areas for improvement.** The distribution of scores on the PAS Profile can help you determine where to begin making improvements in your program. Look for trends-items in a particular subscale that are consistently high or low. Determining which areas to target for improvement will depend on several things- your program's strategic priorities, the fiscal and human resources available, and the time you have to devote to the program improvement process. In some cases you'll want to tackle items that are easily achievable. In other cases, you may decide to tackle items that require a long term commitment.
- **Develop an action plan.** Targeting an area for improvement will be an idle exercise unless you follow-up with a concrete action plan. Your action plan should embrace the concept of *kaizen*, noting improvements in small achievable steps. Figure 3 provides a sample action plan for improving Item 2 on the PAS, Supervision and Performance Appraisal.

The action plan focuses on the second strand for Item 2- the criteria used to measure performance in the centre's performance appraisal system. As you see in the example, the objectives are precise statements of what needs to be done to achieve a positive rating in this indicator strand. For each objective, detailed action steps are described and the individuals responsible for completing the action steps are noted along with the resources and time needed to accomplish each action step. In addition, the action plan includes evaluation checkpoints to assess progress and determine if the objective has been met.

### Small Steps Can Support Big Changes

Using the PAS for self-assessment and creating an action plan to improve program quality based on the results may seem like a daunting task. But following the *kaizen* approach and making small incremental changes can help reduce feelings of anxiety, encourage creativity, and increase effectiveness. By choosing one item on which to work and crafting an action plan for improving the item's score, you will be taking an important step in creating a norm of continuous improvement in your program and helping to achieve your goal of program excellence.

*Jill Bella is Director of Special Projects at the McCormick Tribune Centre for Early Childhood Leadership. The Program Administration Scale (PAS) by Teri Talen and Paula Jorde Bloom is available from Teacher's Quality Press ([www.teacherscollegepress.com](http://www.teacherscollegepress.com)) and New Horizons ([www.newhorizonsbooks.net](http://www.newhorizonsbooks.net))*

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## Connections Journal 13.1 May 2009

Connections, the mini journal of Child Care Connections is published two to three times each year. The publishers neither endorse nor oppose opinions expressed in this publication and the Celebration newsletter, and do not vouch for any claims in published advertisements. We reserve the right to refuse ads or submissions that are contrary to the aims and objectives of Child Care Connections. Contributions from writers should be discussed with the publications editor prior to submission, a style sheet is available. Advertising rates are available on request. Advertising space may be limited to allow priority to editorial content. Child Care Connections reserves the right to refuse advertisements.

ISSN:0843-6304

Mailed under Canada Post Publications Mail Sales Agreement # 40052845

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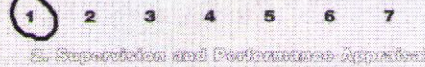
**Figure 1:**  
**2. Supervision and Performance Appraisal**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
<u>N</u> 1.1 Written annual performance appraisal is not conducted for teaching staff. <sup>9</sup>	<u>Y</u> 3.1 Written annual performance appraisal is conducted by supervisor for teaching staff. <sup>9</sup>	<u>Y</u> 5.1 Teaching staff participate in annual performance appraisal process (e.g., written self-appraisal in file along with supervisor's appraisal). <sup>*</sup>	<u>Y</u> 7.1 Written performance appraisal includes goals and professional development targets for the next year.			
<u>Y</u> 1.2 Criteria used for performance appraisal are mostly subjective and trait-based (e.g., teacher is warm, friendly, caring).	<u>N</u> 3.2 Criteria used for performance appraisal are mostly objective and behavior-based (e.g., teacher uses positive guidance techniques, asks children open-ended questions).	<u>N</u> 5.2 Performance appraisal criteria differ by role and are tied to the specific responsibilities detailed in each job description.	<u>N</u> 7.2 Performance appraisal includes multiple sources of evidence (e.g., artifacts, parent feedback, co-worker feedback).			
<u>N</u> 1.3 Teaching staff are not formally observed as part of the supervision and performance appraisal process. <sup>**</sup>	<u>Y</u> 3.3 Teaching staff are formally observed as part of the supervision and performance appraisal process. <sup>**</sup>	<u>Y</u> 5.3 At least three times a year, supervisors provide teaching staff with written or oral feedback based on observation of the teacher's performance.	<u>N</u> 7.3 A system is implemented to provide ongoing feedback and support to teaching staff. <sup>***</sup>			

**Comments:**

- 1.2-3.2 Performance Appraisal criteria are mostly subjective.
- 5.2 Performance Appraisal Forms are same regardless of teaching role (lead & apprentice teachers fill the same form).
- 7.2 Performance Appraisals do not contain multiple sources of evidence
- 7.3 The only element of a system for providing feedback and support is concrete

Circle the final score based on the scoring rules on page 5.

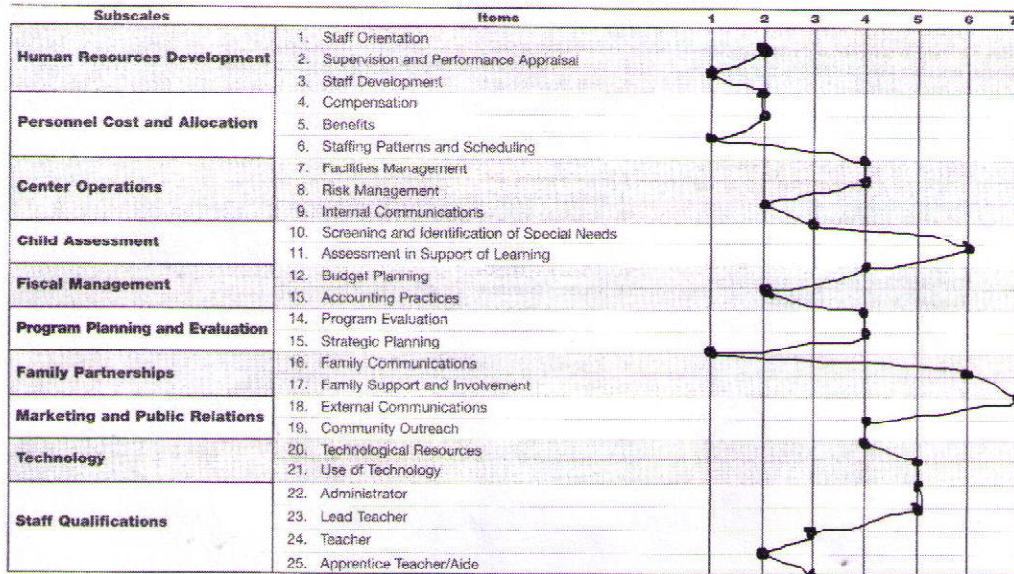


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**Figure 2: The Program Administration Scale (PAS) Profile**

Program name: Anywhere Head Start Centre

Date: May 11, 2007



Total PAS Score 86 ÷ Number of items 25 = Average PAS Item Score 3.44