

LEADiNg a Culture of Play-Based Learning in Early Childhood Classrooms



OKLAHOMA
Education



Introduction



Rori Hodges - LEAD Facilitator
Early Childhood Specialist
Office of Standards & Learning
rori.hodges@sde.ok.gov

LEAD Meets a Need

- Research-based early learning practices are inconsistently used in preK and kindergarten classrooms.
- School leaders may have limited knowledge about play-based learning and high-quality interactions in preK and kindergarten classrooms.
- Teachers may be hesitant to implement play-based learning.



Oklahoma's Play to Learn Act (HB 1569)

Now Oklahoma State Statute 70 O.S. § 11-103.2a

- Supports the **planning and implementation of play-based learning environments** in grades Pre-K through 3rd.
- Prevents school officials from preventing or obstructing play-based learning.
- Allows school districts to provide ongoing early childhood professional development for teachers and administrators.
- The goal is to recruit and retain teachers and support use of developmentally appropriate practices in the early years.



Goals of LEAD Project

- Increase school leader and teacher knowledge of research-based early learning practices, including play-based learning and high-quality interactions.
- Support school leaders' adoption and implementation of schoolwide systems and leadership practices that encourage teachers' use of research-based early learning practices.
- Improve teacher implementation of research-based early learning practices in their classrooms to increase student academic performance in literacy and math.
- Improve preK and kindergarten students' early academic skills and districts' formative early reading assessments) and skills to support learning.

The LEAD Partnership



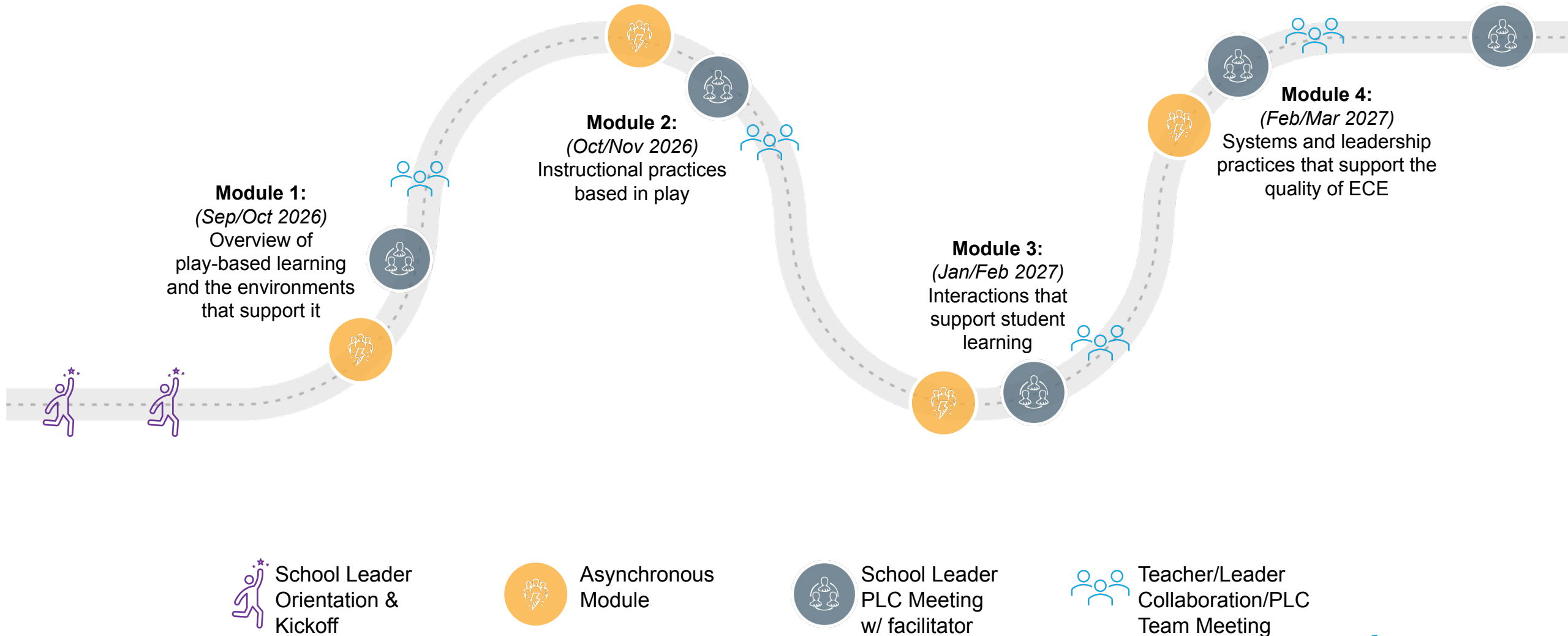
- The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) and REL Southwest formed the Leading Early Childhood Achievement and Development (LEAD) partnership in Oklahoma in 2022. Two elementary school sites joined the partnership as Cohort 1 participants for 2023-2024.
- Cohort 2: 2024-2025 - Two early childhood centers
- The OSDE took control of the LEAD project beginning with Cohort 3 during the 2025-2026 school year, which included two elementary schools.
- Cohort 4 will take place during the current school year and includes three early childhood/elementary schools in central Oklahoma.

Learning Objectives For LEAD

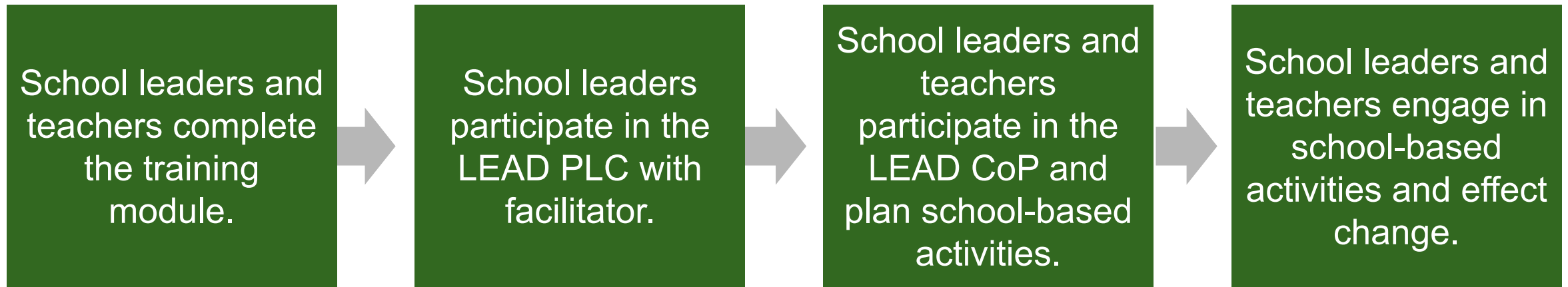
Module 1: Overview of play-based learning and the environments that support it	• Identify the characteristics of play-based learning and the different types of play-based instruction. • Recognize the key environmental components that support play-based learning. • Assess the classroom environment to ensure that different types of play-based learning are supported.
Module 2: Instructional practices based in play	• Identify play-based instructional practices that support students' learning and development. • Observe and document instructional practices, classroom routines, and instructional planning methods that support play-based learning. • Implement strategies that facilitate teachers' use of play-based instructional practices. • Communicate the importance of playful learning experiences to families.
Module 3: Interactions that support student learning	• Use the research that supports the importance of teacher-student, student-student, and family-student interactions and their impact on students' learning and development when talking with other educators and families. • Identify and document high-quality teacher-student interactions when observing classrooms. • Encourage and support strong teacher-student interactions.
Module 4: Systems and leadership practices that support the quality of early childhood education	• Articulate the importance of systems and leadership practices on process quality in classrooms. • Use research-based strategies to create a climate of trust and confidence that enables implementation of play-based learning environments for all students.

LEAD Handout 2-Sep 2025

LEAD Professional Learning Modules



Learning Sequence for Modules



The learning sequence for each module is approximately four weeks from start to finish. The length of time it takes to complete each learning sequence will be influenced by participants' schedules (e.g., if they complete the learning module in one sitting or completing it in multiple segments).

Expectations For School Leaders



Commit and engage

Complete asynchronous modules, attend all PLC sessions, and engage teachers in learning activities.



Prioritize

Make effort to implement and complete action steps related to LEAD.



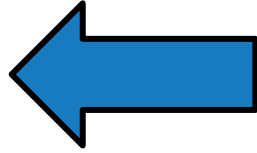
Contribute to the research and development process

Provide ongoing feedback to refine the professional learning experience.

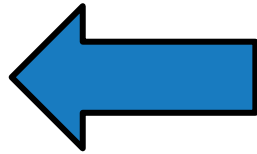
Expanding Research-Based Practices Through LEAD Resources

- ***Play-Based Learning in Action* Video Series**
 - Showcases examples of purposeful play and high-quality interactions
 - Illustrates instructional practices aligned with Oklahoma Academic Standards
 - Aims to support educators in applying research-based practices
- **Learning Modules for Teaching Assistants:**
 - Intended to support teaching assistants and staff new to early learning settings
 - Introduces foundational concepts in **child development** and **classroom management**
 - Grounded in Oklahoma Academic Standards and Oklahoma's early learning framework
 - Highlights practical strategies for classroom and instructional support

For more information:



Scan this QR code to learn more about the LEAD Professional Learning Series.



Scan this QR code to watch an informational video about Cohort 1 of the LEAD Professional Learning Series.