supporting sprouts

FROM HOME TO SCHOOL

Administration
Guide

CHILDREN'S LEARNING INSTITUTE

UTHealth®
The University of Texas
Health Science Center at Houston

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Welcome!

Supporting Sprouts from home to school is a responsive caregiving parent and teacher training program that seeks to improve infants' and toddlers' language, cognitive, social-emotional, and self-regulation skills. Supporting Sprouts consists of two aligned but independent interventions: Strategies for Early Education and Developmental Success (SEEDS), supporting teachers in early education classrooms, and Play and Learning Strategies (ePALS), supporting families with children birth to three years of age. All content is available online through the CLIEngage platform. While the research evaluated outcomes were when both SEEDS and PALS were implemented simultaneously in the home and Early Head Start environments, child care centers and Early Head Start centers can choose to implement one component (SEEDS or PALS) or both depending on the needs of their teachers and families. This program was developed at the Children's Learning Institute/UTHealth Houston.

This guide is intended to provide center-based childcare and Early Head Start administrators and leaders with: 1) an overview of the development of the program and research findings; 2) intervention details including components and support tools; 3) key considerations for successful implementation; and 4) training and resources available.

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Supporting Sprouts Overview

Background

In 2015, the Administration for Children and Families funded four universities to develop and evaluate programs supporting parents and teachers in Early Head Start (EHS) center-based care. The Children's Learning Institute (CLI) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth-Houston), under principal investigators Drs. Ursula Johnson and Bethanie Van Horne, was awarded this funding to develop, implement, and evaluate the Supporting Sprouts program. The goal of the Supporting Sprouts program was to adapt two interventions for remote delivery within Early Head Start centers to improve the social-emotional, cognitive, and language development of babies and young children.

During the first year (2015-2016), the Research and Instructional Design teams at CLI developed and adapted content to create online learning modules for dissemination on CLI Engage to support Early Head Start teachers and parents. The SEEDS curriculum, targeting EHS teachers in center-based care settings, was adapted from an evidence-informed program for home-based childcare providers developed by CLI called BEECH (Beginning Education: Early Childcare at Home). The PALS curriculum, targeting parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers, is an evidence-based parent education coaching program with multiple research studies supporting its effectiveness among parents and their children as both a home-visitation and remotely-delivered intervention. PALS was adapted for remote delivery through the CLI Engage platform and is referred to as "ePALS", to help differentiate the online modules from the home-visitation model. An advisory group of local EHS stakeholders were consulted regularly throughout the development and design process.

Over the next three years (2016-2018), a randomized control trial was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of these two interventions on teacher, parent, and child outcomes. Each school year, center-based EHS sites from the greater Houston area were recruited to participate in the research study. Six of the seven agencies providing EHS center-based care in the region participated. Across those 6 agencies, 18 sites or centers were invited and agreed to participate. Each site was randomized to either receive the intervention or serve as a control site that practiced business as usual. Sites that were selected as intervention sites had teachers participate in SEEDS and parents participate in ePALS, whereas control sites did not receive any intervention. All sites received regular newsletters for parents that discussed infant and toddler development.

Over the three years, we had 11 intervention sites and 10 control sites. Three sites were re-visited (2 were previously control sites, and then given intervention; 1 site was intervention but had complete turn over and acted as a control site in cohort 3). Across the 18 sites, 59 classrooms, 104 teachers, and 293 families agreed to participate in the study. All teachers were female. The most common race/ethnicity for teachers was African American (44.9%), followed by Hispanic/Latina (37.8%). The majority of teachers had either some college (36.7%) or an Associate degree (31.7%), and 58.2% were monolingual English speakers. The majority of parents who participated were mothers. Their children were on average 2.38 years old and identified as Hispanic (66.7%), African American (21.4%), or multi-racial (10.7%).

Outcome Highlights

To evaluate the intervention's effectiveness, teacher and parent behaviors were observed through live and recorded observations prior to and post intervention. Teacher measures included observed support of child social-emotional, cognitive, and language development. Parent measures included observed support of children's signals and interests, contingent responsiveness, rich language input, and warm sensitivity. Child outcomes included language, social-emotional, and cognitive skills measured through standardized assessments and observation.

Statistical analyses were completed comparing outcomes of intervention participants to those who did not receive intervention. During these analyses, we controlled for pre-test differences and demographic differences between groups.

Teachers

In sites that received the intervention, participating teachers had significantly higher scores in 4 domains compared to teachers who did not receive the SEEDS intervention.

DOMAINS
Positive Relationships: Teachers were more likely to show warmth and be sensitive and enthusiastic when interacting with children.
Detached Behaviors: Teachers were less likely to demonstrate behaviors that indicated they were uninvolved or uninterested in what the children were doing and saying.
Overall Classroom Quality: Teachers had higher overall classroom quality ratings.
Social Emotional Support: Teachers were found to be more supportive of the social emotional development of children in their classrooms. Common supportive behaviors included having responsive routines, scaffolding social problem solving, and being responsive to children's social and emotional signals.

Parents

In sites receiving intervention, participating parents had significantly higher scores on 4 domains as compared to parents from control sites who did not receive intervention.

DOMAINS	
	Warmth. Parents showed more physical affection, used a soft tone of voice, and were warm/nurturing in their interactions with their child.
	Contingent responsiveness. Parents were more likely to follow their child's signals/cues and responded promptly to the child's cues.
	Verbal scaffolding. Parents were more likely to add to their child's language by extending and modeling new words and phrases.
	Physical Teaching. Parents were more likely to use hand-over-hand and to physically demonstrate actions during toy play.

Children

Children whose teachers and parents received the Supporting Sprouts interventions, also had 4 areas where their scores improved significantly more than children in classrooms/homes receiving no intervention.

	FOUR AREAS OF INTERVENTION
	Language. Children had increased language usage such as gestures, words, phrases, and initiated talking more often.
	Engagement with Environment. Children engaged more in play and toy exploration.
	Red Flag Behaviors. Children demonstrated fewer behaviors that are considered "red flags" such as post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, depressive symptoms, or sexualized behaviors.
	Autism-Like Behaviors. Children demonstrated fewer behaviors that are associated with autism spectrum disorder such as repeating actions or words, appearing to be unaware of their surroundings, limited eye contact, avoiding physical contact.

Intervention Information

The SEEDS and ePALS interventions were developed as aligned but distinct programs targeting two of the most common adults caring for and supporting infant and toddler development-their parents/family and their childcare teacher. Both the SEEDS and ePALS interventions were developed using attachment principles and adult learning theory, and therefore are similar in structure, delivery, and content. The programs have 11-15 online sessions that include a review of the prior topics/skills and introduction to a new skill with exemplar videos from the target environment (home or classroom); knowledge testing with closed and open-ended questions; and remotely delivered guided practice and self-reflection with a trained coach. Coaches in both programs use videos uploaded by the teacher/parent to teach self-reflection skills. The SEEDS and ePALS programs also include similar content, which was intentional, to allow teachers and parents to have a common and shared language and skillset that are known to support early childhood development. The first table below provides a brief overview of the components and support tools available for each program. The tables following provide information on the content covered within each online course.

SEEDS — STRATEGIES FOR EARLY EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL SUCCESS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS	epals — PLAY AND LEARNING STRATEGIES PARENT EDUCATION FOR FAMILIES
15 online courses of professional development for teachers. Clock hours and CEU certificates are provided after each session.	11 online sessions for parents of infants 14 online sessions for parents of toddlers
Coaching scripts for guided coaching	Coaching scripts for guided coaching
Resources for teachers	Resources for parents
Training Resources for Coach-led Teacher Trainings	Training Resources for Coach-led Parent Workshops
** All resources are available in English and Spanish	

Strategies for Early Education and Developmental Success (SEEDS)

The SEEDS curriculum covers the following four big areas:

- How to change the environment to help children grow and develop
- How to respond in a sensitive and contingent manner
- How to provide appropriate cognitive, language, and literacy stimulation
- How to help children manage their emotions and behavior

There are 15 total courses that are sequenced to build upon one another in both skill and knowledge.

SEEDS Course Sequence

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE DESCRIPTION
Course 0: SEEDS Overview	Teachers learn about the SEEDS Program and practice interacting with the online content, submitting videos for review and having a coach call.
Course 1: Setting up the Environment for Learning	Teachers learn about how the classroom environment affects children's learning and development—content looks at schedules, rules, physical environment and transitions.
Course 2: Reading Children's Signals	Teachers learn about how children communicate their interests, likes, feelings and needs for help or independence.
Course 3: Using a Warm Responsive Style, Part 1	Teachers learn the importance of responding in a warm and sensitive way to children's signals. The course identifies sensitivity behaviors and why responding contingently supports children's growth and development.
Course 4: Labeling Objects and Actions	Teachers learn strategies for using richer language with children, building children's vocabulary.
Course 5: Supporting Reading with Young Children	Teachers learn strategies for effective read alouds, and why reading is such an effective way to build language in young children.
Course 6: Maintaining Children's Interest to Support Learning	Teachers learn successful ways to maintain children's interests and how this supports learning. They also learn that redirecting children's focus interferes with learning.
Course 7: Supporting Young Children's Language Development	Teachers learn additional strategies for building children's language development, identifying five methods for providing more information about toys, everyday objects and activities.
Course 8: Using a Warm Responsive Style, Part 2	Teachers learn more about how to be responsive when it is difficult to do so—when the teacher is busy or a child wants to do something that isn't acceptable.
Course 9: Supporting Young Children's Behavior, Part 1	Teachers learn strategies for responding to children's behavior—planning ahead, using transition activities and being flexible are a few of the strategies explored in this course.
Course 10: Helping Children Learn Words	Teachers learn advanced language-building strategies, focused on encouraging children to build their spoken vocabulary.
Course 11: Supporting Young Children's Behavior, Part 2	Teachers learn additional strategies for responding to children's behavior—using distraction, preparing children through explanations and giving choices are some examples.
Course 12: Supporting Young Children's Emotional Development	Teachers learn strategies for supporting children's emotional development and how to help children manage strong emotions. This course also explores the impact relationships have on children's brain development.
Course 13: Building Children's Knowledge about their World	Teachers learn about linking and scaffolding young children's knowledge, building conceptual connections for toys, everyday objects and activities.
Course 14: Using Responsive Behaviors throughout the Day	Teachers focus on using all the strategies throughout daily routines and how this builds self-reliance and cooperation in young children.

Technology Needs

- Teacher needs access to a computer or tablet with reliable internet
- Coach needs access to a computer or tablet with reliable internet

In the model used during the research study, teachers completed tasks on a weekly basis. The schedule is outlined below. Please note, that there were weeks off during the holidays, when teachers were sick etc. The model allows for flexibility but does ask for teachers to maintain somewhat of a schedule in order to complete all of the courses over the school year.

SEEDS Weekly Schedule

Teacher completes the online sessions (approximately an hour)

- Listens, reads and reviews text, watches video clips
- Answers video and scenario questions
- Practices in the classroom daily
- Uploads one 5-minute video

View the teacher testimonial 1 | View the teacher testimonial 2
View the teacher testimonial 3

Teacher meets with Remote Coach (approximately 30 minutes)

- Reviews weekly practice
- Dialogue about new strategies learned
- Reviews shared video with coach, who asks questions and offers suggestions to help teacher learn new SEEDS concepts

View the sample remote coaching call.

Play and Learning Strategies

The ePALS curriculum covers the following three big areas:

- How to respond in a sensitive and contingent manner
- How to provide appropriate cognitive, language, and literacy stimulation
- How to help children manage their emotions and behavior

ePALS I Infant Course Sequence
(for parent of infants 5 to 18 months)

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE DESCRIPTION
Course 1: Introduction	Parents learn about the ePALS Program, how to navigate the online course, record and upload a practice video and have a coach call.
Course 2: Signals	Parents learn about how children communicate their interests, likes, feelings and needs for help or independence.
Course 3: Responding	Parents learn the importance of responding in a warm and sensitive way to children's signals. The course identifies sensitivity behaviors and why responding contingently supports children's growth and development.
Course 4: Labeling	Parents learn strategies for using richer language with their child, building their child's vocabulary.
Course 5: Reading	Parents learn to use PALS strategies while reading with their baby, and why reading is such an effective way to build language in young children.
Course 6: Review	Parents review the strategies they've learned so far and have an opportunity to share what they are learning with another caregiver in the child's life.
Course 7: Maintaining	Parents learn strategies to maintain their child's interests and how this supports learning. They also learn that redirecting children's focus interferes with learning.
Course 8: Helping Children Learn Words	Parents learn more about building language with their baby, how to play with sounds, sing and use nursery rhymes.
Course 9: Introducing Activities	Parents learn that beyond maintaining their baby's interest, they can introduce new toys and activities when their baby is in a calm, alert state.
Course 10: Daily Routines	Parents learn to use the PALS strategies with their baby during daily routines like feeding, bathing and dressing.
Course 11: Putting It All Together	Parents learn to use all the strategies throughout the day and how this helps build a strong, secure bond with their baby

ePALS II Toddler Course Sequence
(for parent of infants 18 months to 3 years)

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE DESCRIPTION
Course 1: Introduction	Parents learn about the ePALS Program, how to navigate the online course, record and upload a practice video and have a coach call.
Course 2: Signals	Parents learn about how children communicate their interests, likes, feelings and needs for help or independence.
Course 3: Responding I	Parents learn the importance of responding in a warm and sensitive way to children's signals. The course identifies sensitivity behaviors and why responding contingently supports children's growth and development.
Course 4: Labeling	Parents learn strategies for using richer language with their child, building their child's vocabulary.

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE DESCRIPTION
Course 5: Maintaining	Parents learn strategies to maintain their child's interests and how this supports learning. They also learn that redirecting children's focus interferes with learning.
Course 6: Reading	Parents learn to use PALS strategies while reading with their child, and why reading is such an effective way to build language in young children.
Course 7: Linking	Parents learn about linking and scaffolding their child's knowledge, building conceptual connections for toys, everyday objects and activities.
Course 8: Review	Parents review the strategies they've learned so far and have an opportunity to share what they are learning with another caregiver in the child's life.
Course 9: Behavior I	Parents learn strategies for responding to children's behavior—planning ahead, using transition activities and being flexible are a few of the strategies explored in this course.
Course 10: Helping Children Learn Words	Parents learn advanced language-building strategies, focused on encouraging their child to build their spoken vocabulary.
Course 11: Daily Routines	Parents learn to use the PALS strategies with their child during daily routines like mealtime, bathing and dressing.
Course 12: Behavior II	Parents learn additional strategies for responding to their child's behavior—using distraction, preparing their child through explanations and giving choices are some examples.
Course 13: Responding II	Parents learn more about how to be responsive when it is difficult to do so—when the parent is busy or their child wants to do something that isn't acceptable.
Course 14: Putting It All Together	Parents learn to use all the strategies throughout the day and how this builds self-reliance and cooperation in young children.

Technology Needs

- Parent needs access to a computer or tablet with reliable internet
- Parent needs access to a video recording device such as a smart phone, tablet, or computer with a camera
- Coach needs access to a computer or tablet with reliable internet

In the model used during the research study, parents completed courses and met with their parent coach once every one to two weeks. The schedule is outlined below. Similar to SEEDS, there is flexibility in when the parent and coach meet but it is highly recommended that they keep to a relatively consistent schedule in order to get through the materials and have time to practice and put their new skills into action.

ePALS Weekly Schedule

Parent completes the online sessions (approximately an hour)

- Listens, reads and reviews text, watches video clips
- Answers video and scenario questions
- Practices with child daily
- Uploads two 5-minute videos playing or doing daily routines with their child

View the parent testimonial

Parent meets with Remote Coach (approximately 30 minutes)

- Reviews weekly practice
- Dialogue about new strategies learned
- Reviews shared video with coach, who asks questions and offers suggestions to help parent learn new PALS concepts

View the sample remote coaching call.

Options for program delivery

During the research trial, both interventions were delivered as described above with participants completing online materials on their own followed by a call with a trained coach who led the participant through guided self-reflection using uploaded videos from the home or classroom showing the participant interacting with the child(ren). This is a fairly intense level of intervention that requires trained staff to conduct the coaching components of the interventions. We recognize that not all programs looking for teacher and family interventions have this level of staffing or are able to contract for this programming to be provided to the teachers and families in their centers. Therefore, we were able to adapt some but not all of the content delivered through the Supporting Sprouts research study for alternative delivery options.

Below are the options for program delivery depending on the level of staff and time programs have to devote to these programs. Please note that altering the delivery of the interventions may impact the results observed and you may not see the same significant impacts at the teacher, parent, and child level that were found when the full interventions were delivered simultaneously.

Option 1: Free Access, No Supportive Coaching Components

All of the SEEDS modules (14 English and 14 Spanish) are available as self-instructional courses on CLIEngage.org. Teachers in early childhood classroom can access this content and the additional teacher resources within each module for free. At the end of each module, teachers will receive a clock hour or CEU certificate for completion.

Group parent workshop facilitation materials, including a downloadable and scripted PowerPoint presentation, are also available. There are 4 presentation topics to choose from: Social and Emotional Learning, Language Development, Managing Behaviors, and Early Literacy Development.

While the complete ePALS curriculum is not available for self-instructional use by parents/families, PALS Spotlights provide quick snippets to help build knowledge and skills in parents.

Option 2: CLI Supported Facilitation

The coaching approach used in both the SEEDS and ePALS programs is one that requires

training, practice, supervision, and certification. Staff can be trained through [CLI's Solutions Group](#). Once trained, your coaches will have access to all of the SEEDS and ePALS facilitation materials including coaching scripts in English and Spanish, parent handouts, fidelity checklists to help monitor implementation, and much more. Coaches will also be able to take the skills learned and utilize them in other ways to support your teachers and parents (e.g., in-person teacher coaching, during interactions with parents and children, problem solving with teachers and families, etc).

Key Considerations for Successful Implementation

Is Supporting Sprouts a Good Fit for Our Agency?

There are several key questions that can be used to help determine if the Supporting Sprouts program as a whole or one of the interventions within the program would be a good fit for your agency. These questions are also intended to help you identify things you need to have in place BEFORE you decide to implement.

	QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY
	• Do teachers have designated weekly time for professional development? • Who will ensure that teachers have the needed time to participate? • Do you have an identified coaching staff able to incorporate this into their workload?
	• Do coaches have regularly scheduled time for supervision? • Who will provide regular supervision for coaches?
	• What devices will parents, teachers and coaches use to access course content, record, upload and store videos and participate in coach calls? • Do teachers, parents and coaches have access to high-speed internet? What adaptions can your team make to support internet access?

Training and Resources

The training and resources you will need depends greatly on the delivery model you decide makes the most sense for your agency or program.

For those choosing the "Free Access, No Supportive Coaching Components" option, all of the information and resources you will need to access and complete the courses are on the CLIEngage platform.

The CLI Engage Platform

The CLI Engage Platform available at www.cliengage.org has a plethora of resources for early childhood teachers, administrators, and families with young children. We encourage you to explore the resources available on the website (before you login) as well as those available to you once you login.

To access the courses and resources from the Supporting Sprouts program, you will need an account for CLI Engage. To do this, all you need is a gmail account. The CLIengage Quick Start Guide is a great resource if you need further assistance signing up.

Once logged in, click on the "Online Learning and Professional Development" bar. You may need to scroll down on the webpage to see this purple bar. Next, click on the "Full Course Catalog." This will take you to our learning management system where all our courses are housed. The SEEDS English and Spanish Self-Instructional Courses are available once you click "View Courses" under the one you would like to select.

Because the SEEDS course materials build upon one another, courses need to be taken in the order they are presented. Once a course is completed, you can enroll in the next course in the program.

For those choosing the "CLI Supported Facilitation" option, you will need to contact the CLI Solutions Group to schedule a consultation and obtain a quote. Your team will also need to be able to access the CLIEngage platform.

ePALS and SEEDS Coach Training Through CLI Solutions Group

Solutions Group will guide your agency through the best training, certification and facilitation process for your needs. Training is scheduled in a minimum of four two-hour remote live sessions in groups of ten or less with required self-study of the course materials, scripts and coaching practice. Video submissions of work are required for completion of training and towards certifying in the model. If your agency chooses to participate in a full online implementation of PALS or SEEDS, your coaches will have full facilitator access to the courses, coaching scripts and supporting materials and will be able to enroll and monitor participants' progress through the courses.

Technology Support

Recognizing that remote coaching models are technology-dependent, and, that available resources change rapidly, CLI can provide guidance during trainings on utilized resources and strategies for successfully coaching remotely.