

SECTION 2

2:5 Teachers discuss: How did it happen?

- Diana We really took off when we saw where our kids were. Saw that this process really could be valuable, that we really could learn what our kids were doing and really, wow! Then we're going to have a middle assessment and an end assessment and I think that's where we really started to understand the process.
- Yael I really think we just keep getting more and more organized. We're getting better and better at doing it so we're becoming more efficient. And each year we see where our kids are and where they need that extra push and we focus more in on that.
- Diana The AALT strategy which is very specific about assessing evaluating, developing strategies and then assessing again.
- Yael Right.
- Diana Which is like a very clear cut step process—
- Yael Right, they have helped us a lot in shedding light.
- Sandy And when I took over and went to the AALT meetings, the thing that I learned: 1) was I learned the process because I was able to go the AALT meeting with all the kindergarten teachers from ten schools—
- Interviewer Mhm.
- Sandy --and I found that the, one of the common problems that people were having was collecting the assessments in a timely manner. And the more I thought about it and when I heard about it in school, I also um realized maybe the teachers didn't really understand why this was so important because at the AALT meeting it became really clear to me why it needed to be done. So what I did then, I went and I put it in graph format so when we shared it in the meeting it wasn't just numbers we could look at, we could really have a picture.
- Interviewer: yeah those pie charts are just... beautiful.
- Sandy And as soon as we did that, I think, I mean, I've never had a problem since then now. Everybody gets their things in on time.
- Diana They understand the process.
- Sandy It made a big difference and it has saved us time in our meeting as well.
- Gerardo Yeah because everybody buys into the importance of assessing and evaluating everything that we need to strategize for, like the specific strategies for sight words we were talking about; the sounding out. I mean, we've gotten data from looking at our children. This is where they need to go.

2:6 Teachers discuss: Impact in the classroom

- Gerardo And then we implement it. A lot of times, something we didn't see in the video is that we come back and how did that strategy work? We talk about that and then we go from there and, you know, modify it.
- Yael We all had different types of tests before.
- Gerardo Mhm.
- Yael Now we're doing the same tests.
- Mona I think it helps us re-organize the way we teach in the classroom. Like I knew before when I first started teaching our first year, there is a lot of things that we never did that first year at kindergarten.
- Gerardo yeah.
- Mona And uh now that this is the third year, we kind of know what we need to focus on. The way we plan our lessons are completely different from when we first started three years ago. You know we're really focusing a lot more on um, we're looking at concepts more and I think I did-- we did away with a lot of things that we did the first year.
- Ts Mhm.
- Mona --that were, you know, just not really helping the children. And um, our lessons are becoming much more, um...
- Diana Focused.
- Mona Focused (nodding)
- Ts focused.
- Gerardo Mhm. And we have more uniformity.
- Yael Exactly. They're all the same that's the main thing too.

2:7 Teachers discuss: Advice to teachers and principals

- Interviewer What advice would you offer to an AALT rep or a principal who wants to get, what they just saw on the video now going on in their school, but they've not been able to get off the dime. What advice would you give them?
- Diana Try to build trust between the members of the group. You know, build the trust and between the administration that this is not a way being critical, it's a way of working for the good of the children and everyone involved.
- Yael I think staying firm because a lot of us, we're going in different directions saying, well I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if my children can do this—

Ts Oh it's too hard (Multiple agreements)

Yael I have model B. I have-- yeah, everyone felt like because of some situation to, personal to themselves, it may not work. And because administration was really firm with us and said, look this is what you need to do. So like it or not, do it. (Various agreements among the others.) You know and I, I was in the beginning giving my own exams and the exams that they were doing and then suddenly I went, wait a minute. As I saw the results, I was like wait, okay. I put all my results, all my exams away and now we're all using the same ones. So you're going to have rebellion in the beginning a little bit.

Diana Exactly.

Sandy I think too, the fact that we all are working as a group, like all the statistics are kindergarten, the whole team and that's how it's presented. We all want all of our kids to improve and so that's been a focus. It hasn't been broken down by track. It hasn't been broken down by teacher. It's been the K (emphasis) teachers, A, B, and C track.

Diana Yeah, that's a big key.

Mona We have to give a lot of things to our writing coach, Mia Robinson

Ts (multiple agreements)

Mona because she really comes into our meetings, um, weekly and she helps guide, she helps, you know, gives us guidance—

Diana Gives us ideas and strategies.

Mona --and gives us ideas and she presents strategies to us through videos, through paper forms, anything that she can do. Modeling. And I think she has been a tremendous help—

Gerardo Yes she has.

Mona --to organize us and to build that trust and to lead us in the right direction.

Tina And I think we learn a lot from each other because we have the, we have like model A teachers working with model B teachers which makes it, I think, easier to see like you know maybe they understand our children better and we understand their children better and the way we can use different strategies too. (Various agreements.) Because I think it would be working only with the model B teachers and it would be 2 model B teachers. Maybe we're not trying as much or maybe we're not grasping as much as they _ do. And then we're not getting the opportunity to do so.

Yael Even though we have different opinions, I think teachers probably (laughing) are the most opinionated people there are. But um—

Diana Everybody wants to boss everybody. (laughs)

Yael Everybody wants to have their say. So I think that you know one of things is just making everyone realizing it and staying firm. Saying, this is what we're doing, try it, and you can always change it, but let's try it.

Diana But to administration I would also say, it's the same as in the classroom. It's the balance you've gotta pull and push at the same time. But not be too negative, you know. Because that shuts everything down, but not just let everything slide either because then it does slide. So it's kind of that real, delicate balance.

2:8 Teachers discuss: Changes in Kindergarten Achievement

Mona And I remember the first year that I taught. The first grade teachers, oh my goodness!

Ts (laughter)

Mona Our kids were not where they were supposed to be. And so we asked them, you know, what is that you need us to teach them? Where do they need to be when they go into first grade? Boy, we got an earful. And so that also helped us to you know, figure out what our goals were. And um, you know it never ends there. You just keep plugging along and you know, when the kids went to first grade last year, we got a lot of compliments from the first grade teachers. And they were saying, incredible! You know your kids came to first grade in a totally different light, and they were really excited about where they were. And so that I think that we seem to, first grade helped us to understand what we needed to do also.