

The PAS-3 and Whole Leadership

BY ROBYN KELTON

The 3rd edition of the *Program Administration Scale: Measuring Whole Leadership in Early Childhood Centers* (PAS-3) was released this fall! The authors describe the 3rd edition as including current information supporting the reliability and validity of the tool and a greater emphasis on administrative practices that support inclusion, equity, and cultural and linguistic diversity. The PAS-3 reflects feedback from practitioners across the country and has key revisions based on recognizing whole leadership as the guiding framework (Talan et al., 2022). This thematic emphasis on the three domains of the Whole Leadership Framework (administrative leadership, pedagogical leadership, and leadership essentials) excites me because it offers administrators much-needed support for improving their leadership practices as well as the overall quality of their programs (Abel et al., 2022; Masterson et al., 2019).

Below is a more detailed description of the Whole Leadership Framework:



McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, in press.

The Whole Leadership Framework takes a comprehensive view of program leadership by emphasizing the interdependent relationships among the three domains (Abel et al., 2017; Masterson et al., 2019). I think of whole leadership as both the process *and* the product of the balance of and interactions between pedagogical leadership, administrative leadership, and leadership essentials. High-quality and sustainable programs have leaders and leadership practices that tap into all three domains.

Using a 7-point rating scale (inadequate to excellent), the PAS-3 assesses 25 items grouped into nine categories: human resources; personnel cost and allocation; operations; screening and assessment; fiscal management; organizational growth and development; family and community partnerships; relational leadership; and staff qualifications (Talan et al., 2022). PAS-3 items are rated and scored individually, and all item scores can then be averaged to provide an average PAS Item Score for the program. This allows administrators to identify specific areas of strength and areas for growth while also gaining a deeper understanding of best practices across a variety of areas. The PAS-3, with its seamless integration of the three domains of the Whole Leadership Framework, is the current example of the ancient axiom “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” (attributed to Aristotle).

Here is an example of administrative leadership using **Item 1: Hiring and Orientation**. It is no secret that there is a staffing crisis in our field. Research has found that strong orientation practices lead to less turnover (Hirsch, 2017). However, many early childhood education and care (ECEC) administrators lack access to professional development and resources regarding hiring and orienting new staff and research has also found that the majority of ECEC programs (53%) do not have written orientation procedures in place (Talan & Kelton, 2021). But fear not, the PAS-3 is here to help! The first strand in Item 1 focuses on hiring procedures, while the second strand focuses on practices that need to be in place for new staff orientation. Both are key components of administrative leadership (Talan et al., 2022). New administrators can use the PAS-3 for guidance about hiring candidates, compiling critical information newly-hired staff should receive during orientation, and identifying how to prioritize onboarding tasks during the first days, weeks, and months on the job.

Pedagogical Leadership broadly aims to improve the art and science of teaching (Masterson et al., 2019). **Item 3: Staff Development and Professional Growth**, touches on pedagogical leadership in several ways, but the strand that intrigues me the most is the fourth, which focuses on “practices that demonstrate job-embedded professional development for teaching staff” (Talan et al., 2022). Here the authors share a number of ways that programs can support teaching staff in learning, reflecting, and engaging in on-the-job professional development. Some examples include case studies used by teaching staff for critical analysis, teaching staff observing one another and providing feedback, and the use of journaling in reflective supervision (Talan et al., 2022). I especially like this strand because the examples provided give administrators a variety of low-cost but highly-relevant and engaging ideas for supporting pedagogical growth.

Moving to **Item 21: Internal Communication**, the second strand explores the administrator’s knowledge and use of a strengths-based approach to supporting staff, while the third strand looks at reflection and professional practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (Talan et al., 2022). This item includes specific practices administrators can easily integrate into their programs to demonstrate culturally responsive leadership and personal and professional self-awareness, important components of leadership essentials.

The PAS-3 includes many substantive changes and updates. Program administrators directly influence the quality and sustainability of the programs they lead, but specific support and professional development

focused on acquiring the knowledge and implementing the skills needed to manage and lead are often scarce (Talan & Kelton, 2021). For over two decades, the PAS and PAS-related professional development have helped to fill that void by providing administrators with a clear blueprint for best practices in leadership and management. The PAS-3 builds on that legacy.

SELF-REFLECTION:

1. In what ways do you think hiring and orientation practices can impact staff retention?
 - If you were to step back and reflect on your program’s hiring and orientation practices, what changes could be made to streamline the process and provide newly hired staff with a strong sense of the program and their role?
2. What are some advantages of job-embedded professional development?
 - What opportunities could you add for job-embedded professional development that are low-cost but highly relevant to the work of teaching staff?
3. Why is it critical for early childhood programs to foster an environment of reflection and self-awareness?
 - How does your program prioritize increasing self-awareness?

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