Systems Thinking in Early Childhood: *Changing Times*

CHANGING TIMES VIGNETTES

VIGNETTE #1: USING CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

Denise teaches a class of four-year-olds; she is committed to improving her teaching practices. Lately, Denise feels she spends too much time managing children's conflicts. She consults with her site supervisor, and together they agree that Denise will implement three specific strategies to build children's skills in resolving conflicts: 1) reading scripted stories about conflict resolution with the children, 2) teaching the children a series of problem-solving steps, and 3) increasing her own use of positive, descriptive feedback. After implementing these strategies, Denise now wants to track the children's behavior to see if they are taking an active role in addressing conflicts.

Using Conflict Resolution Strategies

Reflection Questions:

1. What is changing?
2. How is it changing?
3. How did making a behavior-over-time graph help Denise?

VIGNETTE #2: BOOK LENDING PROGRAM

Lisette, a site supervisor, began a book lending program for families. She wants to know how the program is working. She considers three questions:

Reflection Questions:

1. What information do I collect?
2. What trend do I see in that information?
3. What does the trend mean?

Book Lending Program
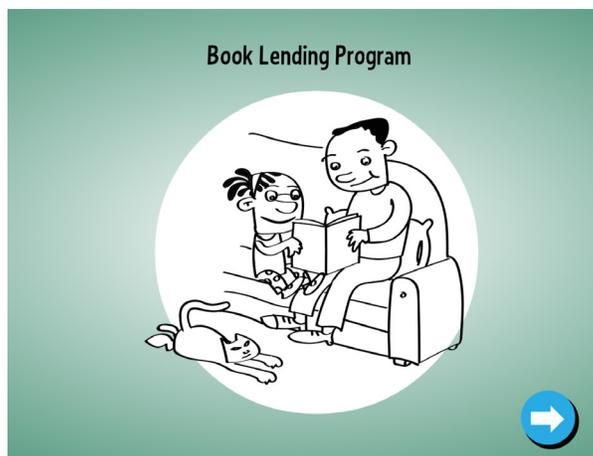
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VIGNETTE #2: ROLE PLAY

Lisette: I appreciate you and the Blue Room teachers tracking the use of the book lending program. I made a behavior-over-time graph based on that information, so let's see what story it tells.

Donita: I see that book lending first increased, then leveled off, and then decreased. But I'm not sure why.

Lisette: Well, let's think about it. Why might book lending increase at first?

Donita: I think families were interested in this new project and wanted to try it out.

Lisette: That makes sense to me, too. What would lead to a decline in book lending later?

Donita: I think people lost interest and became busy with other things.

Lisette: Are there any small changes you can make to encourage families to borrow books on a regular basis?

Donita: Well, I can find different ways to remind them about the program. I can make a poster about the book lending program and hang it up on the classroom door. I can also make sure we talk to families about the books when they pick up their children and ask what they would like in a book lending program.

Lisette: One of the Red Room teachers mentioned that they change out the books every two weeks. Have you introduced new books over the last month?

Donita: No, I thought the children would enjoy reading the same books several times. But maybe I need to introduce some new ones, too.

Lisette: Why don't you change out half of the books each week? That way, children will have a choice between old favorites and new books.

Donita: I like that idea. I'll track book use for another month and see what happens. The families mark the books they borrow on a wall chart, so it's easy to collect the information.

Using the BOTG to Tell the Story

Reflection Questions:

1. What information do I collect? Lisette asks teachers in the Blue Room to track the number of books checked out over the next month.

2. What trend do I see in this information? Lisette creates a behavior-over-time graph using the information the teachers collected.

3. What does the trend mean? Lisette and Donita, the lead teacher in the Blue Room, review the graph together.

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VIGNETTE #3: ATTENDANCE AT FAMILY WORKSHOPS

The staff of the Sunshine Children's Center has decided to work on increasing family engagement. They planned a series of workshops based on topics that families requested and decided to track the number of participants at each event. Based on their attendance records, let's create a behavior-over-time graph.

First, label the behavior they will track on the y-axis (vertical axis): attendance at family workshops. Then, label the x-axis Month 1, Month 2, Month 3, etc., up to six months. Now mark this information on your graph:

   Month 1: 4
   Month 2: 8
   Month 3: 4
   Month 4: 8
   Month 5: 12
   Month 6: 10

Connect the dots on the graph.
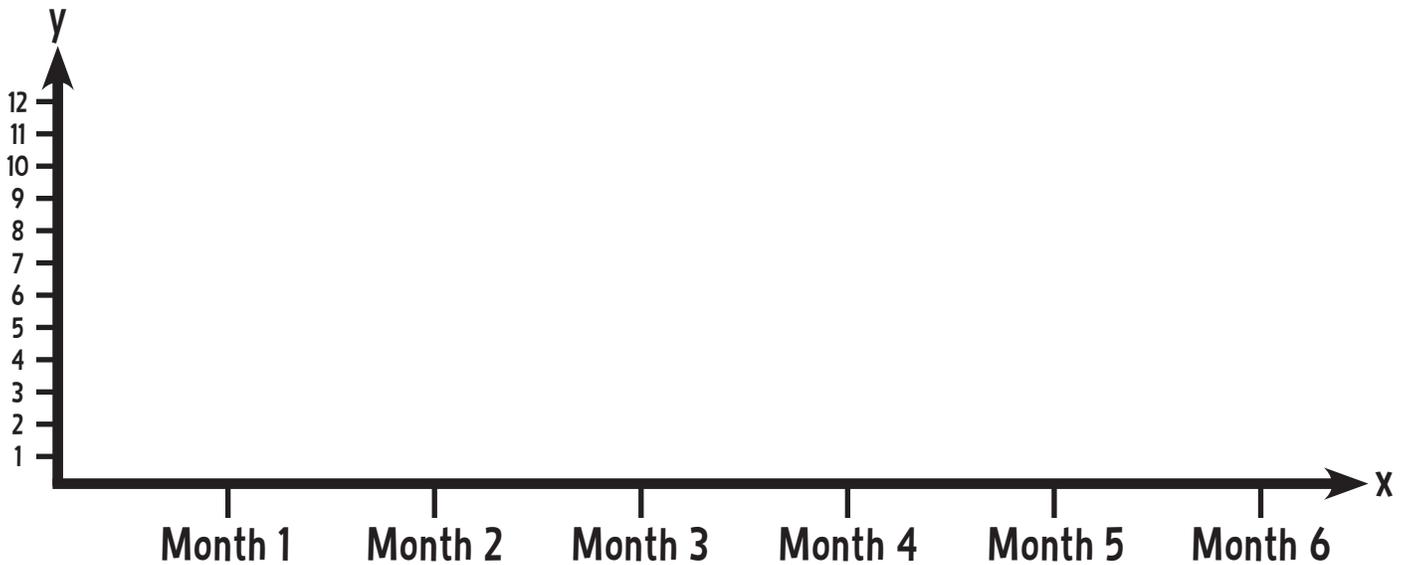
Family Workshops

Reflection Questions:

1. Is the trend increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same? How does the trend change over time?

2. What did you notice about the trend of attendance at family workshops?

3. How might the staff of the Sunshine Center use this information to promote family engagement?