“My professional development activities have been taken to a higher level with focus on adult learning processes. The evidence based mentoring/coaching strategies is among the skills I learned from my ACE Quality Specialist. I have a clear picture of how to mentor and coach teachers.”

Florence Olarewaju.

Florence’s Work Experience:

Florence Olarewaju has worked in the field of Early Childhood Education for fifteen years. Throughout that time, she has worked on providing program planning and coordination, personnel supervisor, and implementing and monitoring policies and standards. Currently, Florence works at PACE. She has been with them for 13 years in the capacity of Child Development Supervisor and Site Supervisor/Teacher. Today, Florence oversees 32 staff throughout four different sites in LA County.

Florence was eager to be a part of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Head Start Achieving Comprehensive Excellence (ACE) initiative. During Florence’s first visit with her ACE Quality Specialist (QS)/Coach in January 2013, she mentioned that she was stagnant and up for a challenge. She shared that she needed fresh new ideas to inspire her. Florence was interested in learning specific strategies and/or new methods to assist her in understanding the newly required federal tool known as Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). She desired to learn new ways on how to engage her staff during meetings and/or trainings. Florence also stated that she needed to build more rapport with her staff and provide her Site Supervisors with leadership strategies that would assist them on coaching and mentoring their teachers and instructional aides to enhance school readiness outcomes for children and increase the home school connection for families.

Florence’s Participation with the ACE Initiative:

In 2012-13, Florence received 35.5 hours of technical assistance (TA), over 10 visits, from January-June 2013. The average number of TA hours for most ACE instructional leaders, like Florence was 24 hours. Of the 13 ACE professional development opportunities offered during the year, Florence attended seven, for a total of 18 hours. Professional development topics ranged from leadership, to read alouds, and a focus on phonological awareness with Dr. Hallie Yopp, a national researcher. Florence’s ACE QS/Coach was Norma Fregosa-Graciano. Norma supported Florence in the areas of Instructional Leadership, Analyzing, Using and Communicating Data, and CLASS awareness and strategies.

Florence’s Journey with ACE

At the initial ACE meeting in December 2012, the 13 participating instructional leaders (ILs) were asked to complete a Pre Self-Assessment on the three ACE goals for 2012-13. In June, ILs were asked to do a Post Self-Assessment. The ACE Self-Assessment for Instructional Leaders consisted of 20 questions aligned with the three ACE goal areas: 1) Leadership; 2) Data; and 3) CLASS. IL’s answered questions using ratings of 1-Never; 2-Seldom; 3-Usually; and 4-Always.
Florence’s pre and post results are in the chart below:

Florence’s greatest area of growth from the pre to the post was in the area of CLASS. Of the eight questions in CLASS, Florence made great strides in four areas. Unfortunately, there were three questions that went unanswered in the pretest on CLASS.

Her second area of greatest growth was in analyzing, using, and communicating data, followed by Leadership.

In her end of year reflections, Florence reported that she had grown in the following areas due to her participation in the ACE project: 01: My teachers readily use discussions and activities that encourage analysis and reasoning; 02: My teachers provided opportunities for students to be imaginative and/or generate their own ideas. 03: My teachers modeled more complex language, problem-solving skills, and exploration and reasoning skills to expand children’s experiences; 04: My teachers ask students open-ended questions throughout the day.

According to Florence, the strategies used to make such progress in increasing staff awareness of CLASS included: “The CLASS PD focused on Instructional learning was supported by agency data and individual results, complimented by using hands-on practical application. My ACE Quality Specialist conducted a shadow classroom observation and modeled mentoring and coaching sessions with me. With that experience, I conducted several mentoring/coaching sessions with all my staff to help them understand the application of CLASS in the classroom. Additionally, several teaching staff and I attended ACE training on phonological awareness. Often I received coaching on book reading in the early childhood education classroom and strategies for teaching children vocabulary. A wealth of resources on a variety of topics to improve quality was shared with me during my ACE Instructional Leadership mentoring/coaching sessions.”
Here is Florence leading her team on the Instructional Support Domain of CLASS.

Here are Florence’s teachers at PACE fully engaged and actively learning how to engage children in rich language and math activities.
All ACE instructional leaders were asked to share how much of their time during the six months was spent in each of their ACE goal areas: 1) Leadership, 2) Data, and 3) CLASS. Here’s just a sample of the time Florence spent on CLASS, her greatest area of growth on the three ACE goals, noted above.

Florence shared in her ACE Percentage of Time Survey that she spent most of her time developing her knowledge and professional development skills in the CLASS Instructional Supports domain.

Specifically, her time commitment was as follows in the three ACE sub goals under CLASS:

1. **Emotional Support**
2. **Classroom Organization**
3. **Instructional Support**
   - (Concept Development)
   - (Quality of Feedback)
   - (Language Modeling)

To conclude ACE participation ILs were asked to prepare a professional portfolio that had evidence or artifacts in all three ACE goals. Florence’s professional portfolio that included numerous artifacts and samples of training materials she used with her site supervisors and teachers. Examples of her portfolio content under the CLASS tab included:

- The poem, *Making of a Masterpiece* by John C. Maxwell, etc. to help staff create a common vision;
- Staff training agendas with expected outcomes and staff evaluations on topics that included CLASS;
- Teacher observation forms and action plans;
- A number of photos and sample forms used with her staff to promote quality in the early childhood education classroom.

At the end of year meeting and celebration, all ACE instructional leaders were given the option to share their professional portfolios with peers in a café setting. Florence was proud to share her portfolio with colleagues.
Final Reflections

Florence: “The ACE project has helped me gain tremendous understanding of the CLASS instrument and the practical application in the classroom. For the first time, I was able to make connections on how to help teaching staff apply the strategies in their daily interaction with children.”

Florence’s Coach, Norma: “Florence shifted her paradigm of professional development from a lecture style to a theory to practice model. In addition, she created agenda’s with learning objectives, materials were colored coded and distributed in manila folders; sign-in sheets were available to document attendance. Additionally, tool boxes were available at each table. Activities were well organized and executed. Teachers had opportunities for reflection and sharing and evaluations were given to teachers at the end of each professional development.”

Florence’s Teachers: “(Excerpt taken from a video clip that was filmed by the QS at the Cluster End-of-Year Celebration). Teacher noted, “I really started trying to implement everything Mrs. Florence was telling us to do with children and it did work. For instance, we stopped telling them the title of the book or anything about the book. We would hold-up the book up and ask the children, “What do you think the book is about?” Etc….Everything she was teaching us was working and we kept doing it more and more! Teacher Florence told us to put some squares on the floor one day and had the children hop in the squares and count the syllables in their names….It did work!”

ACE is an organic, local initiative focused on enhancing a culture of quality in early childhood education. ACE was co-created by Head Start and the Family Literacy Support Network at the Los Angeles County Office of Education in 2009-10.

FLSN is a partner and contractor to the LACOE Head Start Division. Created in 2002, FLSN works to positively impact the holistic and healthy growth and development of young children, increase family involvement and build the organizational capacity of schools and community-based organizations through high quality research-based technical assistance, professional development, and peer networking opportunities for early childhood education staff in LA County.