

March 2014

Issue 4

Got *GOLD* ?



Early Learning Coalition
of Palm Beach County
Ready to Learn. Ready for Life.

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Reflecting on *GOLD*

The cycle of teaching and learning is a nonstop effort of observing, documenting, evaluating and planning. The *GOLD* online assessment is the tool that pilot participants have been using to engage in this assessment cycle. Because this model is built on generating documentation, it is appropriate to take the time to solicit feedback from pilot participants in order to evaluate the work so far and plan intentionally for the next stage in the *GOLD* Pilot.

The following quotes represent the highs and lows of implementing *GOLD* by the leaders of these early care and education programs:

- Palm Beach Preschool-** "Teachers have a greater understanding of child development because of the objectives and dimensions in *GOLD*. Parents are impressed with the professional look of *GOLD*. We use *GOLD* with parents to explain the progression of learning, and started using *GOLD* in parent orientation"



- Peter Pan-** "I would love to see more professional development opportunities pertaining to the *GOLD* assessment"
- Opportunity, Inc.-** "The quality of the lesson plans has increased. Plans are much more directed to the immediate needs of the children in the classroom."

"Reports can be a marketing tool for programs."

"The Interrater Reliability Certification test was not as intimidating or challenging as expected."
- A Baby's World-** "It is very important to take the online Basic Course offered to all *GOLD* users. All teachers took the first week to review Modules 2 and 3 and play in the Sandbox."
- Suncoast Christian Academy-** "The teachers love the selection of activities that aligns to the objectives and dimensions."
- Little Dude Ranch Academy-** "Making the time to enter child data daily can be challenging. The next step for our program is to exchange the checklists and other systems of observation/documentation for the *GOLD* version. This should reduce duplication and streamline teacher's work."
- Faith Lutheran School-** "The Family Conference Form in *GOLD* brings a level of professionalism to the school and the parent teacher conference process. Our parents like it and really understand the learning that occurs within children's play."
- Jewish Early Childhood Center-** "I would tell new programs entering *GOLD* to make sure to give yourself time and not to be too tough on yourself, it all works out."
- Igoe Amar, Easter Seals-** "We are looking forward to the TeamCentral feature in *GOLD* so other teachers and specialists who work with a particular child can share and collaborate in the assessment process."
- All About Kids-** "It helps to enter documentation every day. Waiting to the end of the week to get it all in is stressful and may not be as accurate."

Featured Program: Treehouse Learning Center

Starting a new project usually comes with questions and uncertainty, but like the saying goes “*Anything in life worth having is worth working for.*” by Andrew Carnegie

Our immersion into *GOLD* has been a challenge, but we are now at a point where we are enjoying the outcome. When we first started with the *GOLD* Assessment Pilot program, we were a bit overwhelmed navigating through all of the tools that *GOLD* has to offer. There is a lot to learn and we are still actively moving forward each day. Our hurdles were finding the quiet time to allow the teachers to view the training modules, play around in the sandbox and to stay focused on helping teachers who need assistance writing quality documentation. One strategy that worked for us was shared feedback, teachers and supervisors reviewing the documentation to ensure quality. With careful planning, we were able to allow teachers the time to gain confidence using *GOLD*.

Throughout our exploration into *GOLD* and the many layers of resources that are available, such as professional development and lesson planning, our staff has been able to connect to a wealth of information that we did not have access to be-

fore. In the past we had used the paper portfolio system and a developmental checklist to observe and assess children; this met our needs at that time, but did not provide us with meaningful data.

We have progressed from learning how to access the system to understanding why meaningful observations can lead to intentional planning that can be individualized to meet the specific needs of children. We are not there yet, but we are looking forward to lesson planning. Lesson planning will allow us to take the data

from individual observations and make educated decisions on how to better meet the needs of children. We are gradually moving forward in our ability to maximize *GOLD*.

Treehouse Learning Center has been involved with Quality Counts since its inception and before that, we were a pilot sight for the Picower Initiative which helped shape today’s Quality Counts. Over the years we have experienced so many positive changes with child outcomes always a priority, so we were excited to be able to participate in the *GOLD* pilot.



Teachers at Treehouse Learning Center entering documentation in *GOLD*.



Questions Answered

Frequently asked questions this checkpoint period:

1. What are the differences between “not observed” and “not yet” when checkpointing?

- “Not Observed” Should be used on rare occasions such as if a child has had significant absences during the checkpoint period. Choosing this rating prevents the measurement of progress for children in the areas in which it is selected. The GOLD system requires a reason be given when this box is selected.
- “Not Yet” A color band in the “Not Yet” column shows that a child of that age is not yet expected to demonstrate a particular skill or behavior. Marking a child at the “Not Yet” level may apply to a child with a disability or developmental delay who is not yet demonstrating a particular skill or behavior.

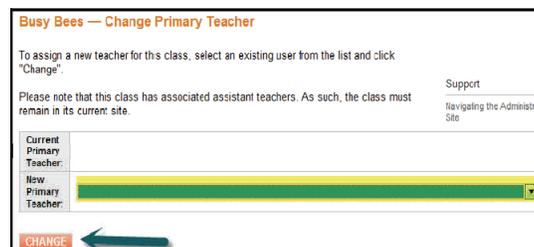
2. How do you change a classroom’s primary teacher?

As a Center Leader you can change a classroom’s primary teacher from your Administrator view. Make sure the new primary teacher already has a GOLD user name and password .

- First, go to the Administrator’s tab and select Classes
- Choose the class and select GO
- Pull the drop down window under Action and select Change Primary Teacher



- Select the new primary teacher’s name from the drop down menu and select CHANGE.

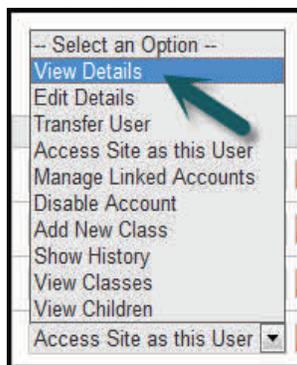


3. How do you delete a teacher from GOLD?

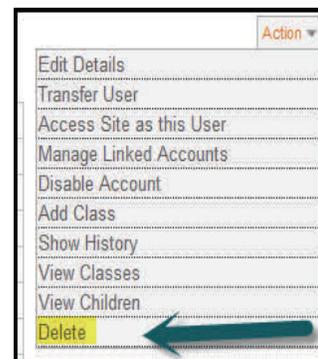
A teacher or administrator can only be deleted if the classes and children underneath have been removed. Children have to be transferred, archived, or deleted in order to delete a class. Classes have to be given to another primary teacher or deleted. Once there are no children or classes connected to a teacher, follow these steps:



1. Go to the Administration Tab and select Manage Users and then Teachers and Administrators.



2. Choose the teacher and then select View Details from the drop down menu beside their name then GO.



3. Use the Action drop down to choose delete, if delete is not listed then the teacher is still connected to a class.

Notes from the field with Dr. Becraft

Having had the chance to work through three checkpoints with a growing number of early care and education sites has allowed for patterns of work in *GOLD* to be recognized and reflected upon. With the recognition of styles of work in *GOLD* comes the ability to make clear to participants strategies for “best practice” in the field. Rather than capture a story to tell from a few select sites, this Got *GOLD?* issue’s Notes from the field section will highlight some “best practice” trends across all participating sites.

“The best gift you can give a teacher is time.”

Dr. Barbara Becraft

Daily Use

First, it has become very clear that the key to success is daily use. The time spent in formal training is a good start, however what really seems to be the determining factor in speedy success in the *GOLD* comes from using the system every day. When teachers and directors chisel out even a small amount of time in each day to work at this approach to assessment, their expertise within the system grows steadily and quickly. Waiting for later, when you “have time” is a pitfall to be avoided. Recording and storing multiple days of observations in journals is another approach which has proven to be problematic. This way of working in the *GOLD* tends to leave the teacher with too much to do and not enough time to get it done before the checkpoint deadline dates. When teachers make the decision to set aside time during each day for generating observations, adding documentation with connections and preliminary levels, they begin to remember the language of the dimensions as well as see these objectives and dimensions in the daily life of the classroom. When directors and other leaders-on-site structure their time in such a way that reviewing quantity and quality of documentation and level-decisions is a regular part of their everyday lives at school, then the work of the teachers at that site improves with little need for external support.

Every morning choose children to observe that day. Use a roster, and rotate systematically.

- Observe during center time (substantial portion of the day) or outside play time.
- When you start writing/observing, try to keep adding details of what the child is doing with their language, body, hands, etc...for at least 3 minutes.

Every afternoon, follow these three steps:

- Add Documentation
- Connect to 1-5 objectives/dimensions
- Add and save preliminary levels for each documentation

the
Daily Routine

Notes from the field with Dr. Becraft



Making Strong Connections

The value of making strong connections between objectives/dimensions and documentation cannot be underestimated. In order to make accurate decisions about preliminary levels, the connections between documentation and dimensions must be strong. A recommendation for making these connections stronger in *GOLD* is to immediately “click on the rainbow” when connecting to a specific dimension. The reason for this is simple. Often, it is very difficult to know if a connection is strong until the language of the indicator (found in each level in the rainbow) has been read and understood. If you think a piece of documentation is connected to a dimension, then you must check your thinking by looking at the descriptions found in level 2, 4, 6, & 8 of the progressions for learning (rainbow). To level any piece of documentation accurately, a close connection between the documentation and the dimension must exist.

Level	Not Yet	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Indicators	Not Yet		Uses adult support to calm self	

Longer Observations with Rich Details

The suggestion to observe and write about children at play for longer periods of time (1-3 minutes) has resulted in the ability of teachers to connect to many dimensions in the first 4 areas of development (Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive). Observing children at play makes sense in *GOLD*. This is when they are actively demonstrating their abilities socially, linguistically, physically, and cognitively. We do not need to ask children to do these things. They simply do. And, it is time for the teacher then to stand back for a moment or two and write in a richly detailed way, what the children are doing with their bodies and minds. These longer observations of open-ended learning and doing have been helpful to teachers working in the *GOLD* because they will often connect to many dimensions (rather than just one or two). Until a teacher has become a strong observer and recorder of children's growth and development, this approach to documentation can be a strategy for improving the quality and richness of detail found within her documentation. Kudos goes out to all of the directors and teachers who are trying out this approach to improving documentation while increasing connections to dimensions.

Teaching Strategies GOLD Online Orientations

You can sign up for live orientations in the calendar below. To view a recorded orientation, [please visit this page](#).

All times are Eastern Time.

Check out the Teaching Strategies
GOLD Online Orientations!

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
March 4 ADMINISTRATOR <i>Dashboard and Setting Up Programs</i> 12-1 PM Register	March 5 TEACHER <i>Dashboard, Documentation, and Checkpoints</i> 3-4 PM Register	March 6 ADMINISTRATOR <i>Reports: Supporting Your Staff</i> 1-2 PM Register	March 7 ADMINISTRATOR <i>Reports: Generating Outcomes Data</i> 10-11 AM Register
March 11 TEACHER <i>Planning, Communications, Family Central, and Reporting</i> 11 AM-12 PM Register	March 12 ADMINISTRATOR <i>Dashboard and Setting Up Programs</i> 3-4 PM Register	March 13 ADMINISTRATOR <i>Reports: Supporting Your Staff</i> 10-11 AM Register	March 14 TEACHER <i>Dashboard, Documentation, and Checkpoints</i> 1-2 PM Register

Before you call or write an e-mail have you checked all of the available resources????

For any GOLD related question, please try searching for the solution using the following resources

- The Early Learning Coalition Website: www.elcpalmbeach.org
 - Palm Beach County Assessment Manual
 - Administrator's Complete Guide
 - Teacher's Quick Start Guide
 - GOLD Orientation Toolkit
- Help icon in GOLD
- GOLD Basic Course



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Please contact Jennifer Coleman at ELC for:

All GOLD related ?'s

- Navigation (Where can I find..?)
- Function (How do I.....?)
- Coordination (Who do I contact to...?)

Please contact Nonprofits First for:

- Computer Related ONLY
- Problems with the laptop
- Problems with the other pilot equipment

Nonprofits First®

Please remember to use the new online ticketing system <http://www.nonprofitsfirst.org/GoTechClientLogin> to submit any new helpdesk requests.

If you do not have access to the online system, please email helpdesk@nonprofitsfirst.org or call 561-910-3895.



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