Although critical thinking and language development are key to school success, the unfortunate truth is that in Head Start we have many, many classroom teachers who are not themselves very strong language modelers and who do not typically engage in critical thinking during everyday classroom interactions.

In fact, now that the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) has been used to assess Head Start classrooms all over the country, we have discovered that in the area of Instructional Support (the domain that measures support for language development and higher order thinking), the percentage of Head Start classrooms scoring in the high range was zero. That’s right... Zero. And, on a scale of 1-7, 40% of our classrooms scored lower than a three.

This should be most troubling to us, with reauthorization just around the corner, particularly at a time when Head Start has been battered by critics in the mainstream media, and when our own impact study cannot even provide evidence of academic gains beyond kindergarten.

The CLASS should be a ray of hope in an otherwise bleak picture. It was incorporated into the Head Start Act because, unlike any other rating scale or assessment system, the CLASS provides evidence that high quality classrooms lead to long term academic gains. However, simply knowing that high quality interactions can impact school success is not much help if we are not able to deliver these interactions at the classroom level.

This training will provide specific strategies for managers and supervisors to measurably increase the level of discourse in our classrooms. It will identify systemic barriers that make it difficult for teachers to engage in language modeling or to provide children with high quality feedback. It will help us support teachers in asking better questions, providing more thoughtful responses, and using more complex vocabulary.

And, the next time our classrooms are assessed, we just might see the kind of scores that predict academic success for our children.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Participants will reflect upon the “disconnect” between typical classroom practices and basic child development... not to mention brain research.
- Participants will consider the obstacles and opportunities that present themselves when classroom staff do not typically provide language modeling and who themselves do not engage in higher order thinking.
- Participants will rethink agency policies for assessment, planning and individualization in order to maximize opportunities for language modeling and higher order thinking.
- Participants will synthesize information and develop specific agency plans for improving language modeling and higher order thinking.

(continued on page two)
Sample Agenda

**Day One (6 hrs)**
- Child Development Language Modeling
- Assessment and Individualization: Who Is This Child?

**Day Two (5 hrs)**
- Identifying Opportunities (and missed ones) for Language Modeling and Higher Order Thinking in Routine Interactions
- Supporting Teachers Who Are Not Themselves Language Models and Who Do Not Engage in Higher Order Thinking

**Day Three (3.25 hrs)**
- Re-inventing Agency Policies and Practices to Support Language Modeling and Higher Order Thinking

While content will not change, the exact schedule may be adjusted. Visit us at www.ttas.org