

**Filming Interactions  
to Nurture  
Development**  
FIND Stories of Impact  
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WASHINGTON  
**EARLY ACHIEVERS**  
PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

Gail Joseph, Crista Scott, and Alice Porter from the Childcare Quality & Early Learning Center for Research and Professional Development, collaborated on the interviews and accounts shown here.

Special thanks to the directors, coaches, and caregivers who so eagerly shared their stories and experiences with FIND coaching. The FIND Impact Stories couldn't be told without the partnership between the University of Oregon, Children's Home Society of Washington, and Roxanne Garzon at the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL).

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## The Promise of FIND

### What does it take to make a great teacher?

One answer is to reinforce teachers when they're doing their job well. And this is the objective of FIND—Filming Interactions to Nurture Development—a video coaching program that identifies and strengthens positive interactions between caregivers and children. Based on research conducted by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University and developed at the University of Oregon, FIND has been adapted to childcare settings by the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) and is currently implemented in 10 regions of the state.

Since its inception in July 2015, FIND DEL, as the program is known in Washington, is generating enthusiastic accounts from caregivers and coaches alike. We share three of these accounts in the stories below.

Two features characterize the FIND approach: it is dependent on trustful relationships between coach and teacher, and it focuses on care providers' strengths. The core model uses select video clips of adults engaging with children to reinforce developmentally supportive interactions—what's known as “serve and return.” The “serve” occurs when a child initiates an interaction. The “return” is when the caregiver or teacher notices and responds.

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Building on serve and return, the FIND program emphasizes five behavioral elements:

1. Sharing the child's focus (noting what the child is interested in and putting the caregiver's attention there)
2. Supporting and encouraging (returning serves with support and encouragement)
3. Naming (providing a label for what the child is seeing, doing, or feeling)
4. Conducting back and forth interactions between the child and adult
5. Noticing the ending of one interaction and the beginning of a new one.

FIND DEL coaching sessions focus on each of these elements, while continuously emphasizing provider strengths and capabilities. Five times over 10 weeks, each FIND DEL coach shoots from 10–15 minutes of raw video on a tablet and sends it to the Children's Home Society of Washington (a regional FIND “hub”) for editing down to three-minute clips that reveal children's serves (behaviors, looks, and sounds) and providers' returns (effective interactions mobilizing the five elements). The coach then meets with the provider to review the edited clips and discuss the positive, naturally occurring responses they capture.

FIND is supported in Washington State by the federal Child Care Development Block Grant, which is administered through DEL. FIND DEL extends the work of and draws on the consulting network developed by Washington State's Quality Rating Improvement System, known as Early Achievers. Early Achievers revealed the need to improve the quality of adult-child interactions in infant-toddler classrooms in Washington State. To this end, FIND DEL is already showing promise of achieving long-term changes in early childhood education coaching and practice—in ways that may improve the long-term outcomes for young children as they progress from infancy through preschool, kindergarten, and beyond.

## Rachel and Emily > Vancouver, WA



EMILY HUSE HAS TAUGHT young children for the past seven years, and she hopes this will be her life's work. But her job as lead toddler teacher at a social services agency in Vancouver can be stressful, and at times, overwhelming. She provides care to a mix of vulnerable children, most of whom are in the foster care system. Toddlers often come to her classroom from backgrounds of severe physical and mental trauma, poverty, exposure to drugs, and abandonment. Some have no impulse control, try to hurt other children, and engage in self-harm. Meeting the complex needs of all these children has at times pushed Emily to her limit.

Sometimes, on her way home from work, Emily would review the day's challenges and conclude, "I'm failing."

Rachel Fox, an infant-toddler consultant and coach with two decades of experience in early childhood education, knew otherwise. Rachel regarded Emily as "a highly empathic caregiver who gives 110%." But she recognized that Emily would benefit from new tools and strategies to address the uncommon pressures of her work. And Rachel was able to provide them through the FIND DEL program.

Emily says that FIND has transformed her practice by making her a more confident and resourceful teacher. The colleagues and families Emily works with, some of whom call her "the Baby Whisperer," would agree.

In common with other FIND DEL coaches, Rachel received intensive training in shooting video and incorporating the serve and return framework that is at the heart of the approach. "Serve and return is super important," Rachel explains, "because it acknowledges children's emotions and helps each child feel seen, heard, and understood." The edited video shared by coach and teacher emphasizes child-led responses. Rachel says that "the beauty of the FIND program is that the edited clips highlight these moments of interaction, reinforcing for the teacher how using serve and return responses supports the child's development."

For Emily and other teachers, the video confirms all they're doing right in both interpreting students' needs and responding in healthy and supportive ways. "No one ever gave me a name for what I was doing before," Emily says. During several FIND coaching sessions, the triumphs that Rachel and Emily have discovered in the video have been so powerful that both women were brought to tears of relief and joy.

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**"I'm much less overwhelmed," Emily reports. "This has been a life-changer."**

Rachel and Emily say that not only has FIND changed their coaching and teaching practice, but the program has also improved the life trajectories of the children and families they work with. "I know how to give kids the words to describe what they're feeling," Emily explains. "I can say, 'Looks like this really makes you mad. It's OK to be mad. And you can say that you're mad.'" Through FIND DEL coaching, Emily has learned "tangible language" to head-off challenging behaviors, to be receptive to eye contact and other serves from children, and to respond immediately with warmth and support.

Emily has many success stories to share. One child arrived in her class so traumatized that he cried all day and wouldn't move from a beanbag chair; he's now playful and functioning well in the center's early Pre-K program. Another child had a history of self-harming and knocking other children over; the FIND program helped Emily find ways to support this child, and when watching a later clip of him, both teacher and coach could see just how far he had come in using his own words to express needs.

Today Emily still has occasional bad days and goes home exhausted. But she says, "I know now that I've also had these wonderful moments of positivity, helping children's development. When I go over problems, I can relate to them as thousands of short moments, like in the video clips." And if parents or others question her positive approaches, Emily says, "I can educate them as I've been educated."

## Laura and Victor > Quincy, WA



LAURA SANDOVAL'S LICENSED FAMILY CHILDCARE HOME (FCC) sits at the edge of the small community of Quincy, with an elementary school on one side and farmland on the other that stretches west to the Columbia River. Victor Cardenas, her FIND DEL coach, describes "the sense of safety and concern for the children's well-being" that is evident on approaching the DEL-licensed home. Inside the house, the children's activity area is turned over to neatly arranged areas for books, play, and art projects.

Laura has been running this FCC, with help from an assistant and her daughters, for 14 years. She was one of the first providers in her area to participate in Early Achievers. So what can such a seasoned childcare professional learn from FIND DEL?

When Victor approached her about participating in the program, Laura was "a bit nervous" about the whole idea. She thought the FIND approach seemed "confusing" and was particularly apprehensive about the use of video in the FCC context. "It is my place of business, but it is also my home," she explains. She worried about what the videos would capture. "What if I do something wrong?" she wondered.

But when she discussed the coaching method in detail with Victor, she felt more comfortable. "I liked his explanation of how it would be useful to me in terms of professional development with the children," she recalls. Laura knew that "every day, we have the weight of our work on our shoulders, and maybe we don't have time to stop and watch what we're doing very closely." FIND DEL, Laura hoped, would give her the opportunity "to see how we, on a daily basis, help children grow and develop and give them our support."

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Despite her many years in the field, this would be the first time anyone offered her real feedback about what she was doing right in her work.

When Laura and Victor reviewed the first edited videos together, provider and coach experienced a real breakthrough. Victor says “a light bulb” went on in the coaching session. In subsequent sessions, Laura learned ways to “add more meaning” to every child-initiated interaction in her busy FCC. If a child picks up a book after a nap, Laura doesn’t simply notice that he or she is occupied but draws out the child about the book’s content. When she is occupied tending to a baby and an older child approaches her with a toy, she asks questions about the toy to encourage the child to talk with her about it. During mealtimes, Laura reinforces developmental steps when she notices children are learning to eat with utensils or correctly placing used dishes in the sink. If an accident occurs in the play area, Laura asks the children, in a nonjudgmental way, to describe what happened.

Victor notes that building such interactions can be challenging. “That connection is not spontaneous. It’s something you grow day by day, along with your relationships.” Though Laura is an experienced care provider, Victor saw that she would benefit from seeing how she nurtured connections with the children over time. During coaching sessions, Victor would point out successful serves and returns, which often go by very quickly in the videos. “Sometimes we didn’t notice them at first,” he recalls. “The first example comes so fast, and only upon a second review, we could focus on each specific part of the interaction, and in the second or third review...we would name the interaction, until it became something you can apply every day.”

Victor adds, “It can happen about a hundred times in 1, 2, 3 minutes,” but he says that even an experienced care provider like Laura needed the video-based coaching to recognize these moments.

Laura agrees. “Everything became clearer and more comprehensible” with the FIND coaching, she says.

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“We needed the coaching to see how we, on a daily basis, help children grow and develop and give them support. We do this every day, but I hadn’t come to realize it until I took part in the FIND program, honestly.”

Reviewing edited video with Victor, Laura saw the many opportunities in the course of a single day to “reinforce the children’s self-esteem and their physical and emotional development, by paying attention to them, by motivating them, by encouraging the strong connection that we share.”

It was a lesson that experience alone could not provide.

\* This interview was conducted in Spanish.

## Haley, Jasmine, Lisa, and Tabitha > Walla Walla, WA



TABITHA VANCE CAME HOME from her first day of kindergarten and declared to her mother that she wanted to be a teacher. She has not departed from that career path, which has led her to her current position as Director of My Friends' House Childcare. In her leadership role, she seeks out care providers who demonstrate a natural connection to young children and are drawn to the profession as she was.

Despite her own staying power, Tabitha knows that turnover is a chronic problem in the childcare world. Close to a third of childcare providers leave the field within a few years, worn down by the challenges of working with young children and low pay. So when Tabitha found two promising infant-toddler teachers in Haley Puckett and Yasmin Ramos, she was committed to keep them in the profession by making their work manageable and rewarding. And she found just the right vehicle to achieve this in the FIND DEL program.

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**“Confidence,” Tabitha says, “is key. Teachers need empowerment. They need to see where they excel and build on that. “**

Working with coach Lisa Mathias, Haley and Yasmin learned to recognize serves—the child-initiated signals that can lead to productive interactions. “When you’re engaging in that area, children’s brains light up,” Lisa explains. And these opportunities come along continually, “in 10-second bursts, all day long.” Lisa points out that many teachers of young children are consumed by tasks: “I change so many diapers a day and provide so many meals. Where’s the reward in that?” This dynamic shifts when Lisa and other FIND DEL coaches use video to call teachers’ attention to children’s serves and their own responses. “We help them see where children are focused and meet them there,” Lisa says.

One such serve to Haley resulted in a week of focused activities that fully engaged her students. When a boy came to her classroom crying after receiving a shot from his doctor, Haley's first impulse was simply to "scoop him up" and move on. But thanks to FIND, she recognized a serve when she saw one: "I thought, everyone knows what it's like to go to the doctor." Haley asked the other students to share their own stories. She downloaded and distributed photos of stethoscopes and Band-Aids. The children discussed how to listen to their hearts, the different types of medicines they receive, and how to test their reflexes. "Haley built an entire week's curriculum off that one serve," Tabitha proudly recalls.

Yasmin recognized a similar opportunity when a student came to class in a state of some confusion over the arrival of a baby brother. Rather than simply comforting the child, Yasmin brought out dolls and encouraged the girl and her classmates to rock the "baby" and "shush her to sleep." "We talked about how it's okay to be a big sister and that it would actually be fun for her." FIND, Yasmin says, has given her the tools to creatively manage her students "in a group and as individuals, one at a time."

Lisa has worked with the two providers to pick up subtler serves. One day, a child lagged behind when the class was filing into another room for lunch. Through her FIND training, Haley recognized that he wasn't ignoring instructions but was waiting for the opportunity to close the door behind the children, which he knew to be the classroom routine. She has learned to understand "what's really going on" when a quiet child sits alone in the corner (reading a book) or when a child stares out a window (studying a squirrel). "We work on what they show us they're interested in," Haley explains.

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Lisa says that "in an infant-toddler classroom, every day is unique," and meaningful student-teacher interactions "happen all day, every day."

Her job through FIND has been to show teachers how to spot serves and understand the needs they reflect. "When you see a classroom of young children that seems to be out of control, it's because the children aren't engaged," the coach explains. Lisa notes that FIND's strengths-based approach communicates the essential message "that you can be your own teacher. This is you, and you're doing your job exactly right."

In the long term, Lisa believes, FIND DEL is an effective strategy to keep childcare providers in the field. "What has shifted," she explains, "is each teacher's energy. It's not just outflowing. There is an ebb and flow now. We're all very much more aware now of the give and the receive."

## Report from the FIND DEL Implementation

In the two years since the Department of Early Learning launched FIND DEL, 227 caregivers have completed the program, observing nearly 1,400 videos. The program has validated the agency's commitment to supporting a new method for coaching in childcare settings in Washington State. The experience also shows that:

- The success of the FIND DEL method—coaching childcare providers in improving interactions with children by using video to show them what they are doing well—is due to the focused effort of a team of partners: the University of Oregon, the Washington State Department of Early Learning, the Children's Home Society of Washington, the network of early learning consultants who train coaches to work in the field, and the care providers and teachers who undergo the process to improve learning outcomes for young children.
- FIND DEL has been implemented rapidly across a large geographical area and in diverse childcare and teaching environments.
- The coaches and agencies participating in FIND DEL have shown that it is practical to employ the FIND core model in the context of childcare, and they report impressive improvements in caregivers' skills and confidence.
- The FIND DEL team—specifically, the Children's Home Society of Washington—developed a new technology platform using a secure file sharing application on tablets for video capture, sharing and playback. This new system is secure, cost effective, and user-friendly.
- FIND DEL has helped coaches improve the quality of the feedback they offer to providers. Coaches are now more likely to apply a strengths-based approach and to balance repetition and specificity when working with providers at all levels of skill and experience.

The University of Washington Childcare Quality and Early Learning Center for Research and Professional Development is conducting an evaluation of FIND DEL. Preliminary findings show that the program has already had a positive impact on the myriad ways the state works with Washington's extended community of childcare program directors, providers, and coaches, including by:

- Improving inter-agency communication and shared tracking to monitor activities and coaching progress.
- Creating incentives that encourage program directors to work with their caregivers to facilitate communication, scheduling for observations, and completion of study paperwork.
- Streamlining the process of consent for caregivers and families to participate in studies.

The UW will release its full report on the FIND DEL evaluation in 2018.