



NEA Early Career Learning Labs

What are the NEA Early Career Learning Labs?

The Early Career Learning Labs (ECLL) are a professional learning program meant to support early career educators (ECEs) around problems of practice (PoP). The Labs occur in a blended learning format both in face to face and online. The program is member-led, member-driven.

- Watch our video: <https://youtu.be/FG1XD5XtgYw>
- See resources here: <http://bit.ly/ECLL2020Resources>
- Returning sites ECLL application: <http://bit.ly/ECLL2020returning> (close date Feb 28)
- New sites: ECLL application: **(link forthcoming)**
- Podcast: Introduction to Early Career Learning Labs. Rachael Poppe, a 15 year teaching professional from Green Bay, WI, shares her knowledge about resources for educators and NEA’s Early Career Learning Labs. <http://neatoday.org/podcast/introduction-to-early-career-learning-labs/>

Questions?

Contact Ambereen Khan-Baker, NBCT (akhanbaker@nea.org) and Ann Nutter Coffman, Ph.D. (acoffman@nea.org).

Our Theory of Change:

We are organizing teacher leaders who believe that we must address early career educators’ problems of practice by creating blended learning opportunities, so that by the end of their learning cycle, early career educators will be a supported path to improve each student’s learning environment.

| ECLL Site Levels for 2020-2022 | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Levels | Level 1: Emerging | Level 2: Developing | Level 3: Performing | Level 4: Transforming |
| Definition | Local affiliate values the importance of engaging early career educators and establishes ECLL as a program. | Local affiliate collaborates (e.g. district, university) to grow ECLL as a local affiliate-led program. | Local affiliate partners and leads development of new opportunities to engage ECEs and mentors. | Local affiliate creates opportunities to design new coaching and mentoring systems to develop teacher leaders. |

What does the ECLL learning cycle look like?

- Discover: ECEs identify an instructional problem of practice and socio-emotional challenges
- Engage: ECEs engage in a group process to refine problem of practice and build community
- Learn: ECEs learn strategies to address problem of practice and socio-emotional challenges
- Teach: ECEs apply new knowledge techniques with students
- Reflect: ECEs share experiences, refine teaching strategies, and build community

What are the program goals and how do we measure our members’ success?

- Inspire, engage, and retain ECEs through personalized professional and social-emotional supports.
 - ECEs identify new pathways to explore that was sparked because of coaching conversations
 - 10-15 ECEs participated in the local affiliate’s site and completed the ECLL learning cycle

- ECEs feel they are valued as educators and plan to stay in the teaching profession long term
- ECEs feel that their facilitators listened to them and provided appropriate coaching resources to improve their practice
- Provide learning communities to foster collaboration, develop reflective practices, enhance student learning, and build relationships.
 - ECEs participated in 10-15 zoom calls and attended 3 face-to-faces.
 - ECEs participate in a virtual professional learning community as required by their local ECLL site.
 - ECE applies learning and reflect from coaching conversations to their classroom practices.
 - ECEs build relationship with at least 5 local ECEs, facilitators, and association leadership.
- Increase the value proposition of membership for ECEs and empower them with personal experiences of how the union supports their professional growth
 - ECEs has a positive perception of their association after going through ECLL.
 - ECEs learned about the association and positive story-of-self of association leadership at a face-to-face.
 - ECE develop a story of self at the end of the ECLL learning cycle that includes how the association empower them with personal experiences of how the union supports their professional growth.
 - ECE use story of self to show other educators the benefits of engaging with the local's association.
- Build the capacity of the local affiliate to engage members around professional learning by developing local professional practice and association leaders to mentor ECEs.
 - Affiliate recruit 10-15 ECEs to participate in ECLL each year.
 - Affiliate identify 2 members to serve in teacher-leadership roles to implement ECLL.
 - Affiliate takes ownership of the program and continues to implement professional learning for ECEs after completion of ECLL.
- Early Career Educators develop and improve on a problem of practice based on student needs to improve student learning.
 - ECEs identify learning targets and a goal driven by student needs.
 - Problem of practice should be based on observable or measurable student behavior or performance.
 - Problem of practice should be based on high impact strategies that are meaningful, solvable, and relevant to teaching and learning.
 - ECEs will reflect on student outcomes as well as teacher learnings.

How should an affiliate best support their ECLL site to ensure success?

- Identify and support a program coordinator and a virtual coach (see below for responsibilities)
- Encourage collaboration, flexibility, trust, and respect
- Support the program coordinator in identifying and recruiting ECEs
- Provide a welcoming and safe space for ECEs to build community
- Create opportunities to engage ECEs around their professional learning needs
- Collaborate with districts about ECLL
- Communicate with all stakeholders about the progress of site's ECLL program
- Using program learnings, create a plan for how to integrate ECEs in the local affiliate and the ongoing development of ECLL in the local affiliate
- Communicate with designated NEA Teacher Quality staff liaison about questions and concerns

What are the roles and responsibilities of a program coordinator?

- Recruit and identify 10-15 early career educators from the local affiliate to participate in ECLL
- Provide early career educators resources about the school district and local association
- Create face-to-face and virtual learning communities to foster collaboration, improve practice, enhance student learning, and build relationships through edCommunities and during face-to-face meetings;
- Follow-up with ECEs interested in membership
- Organize and facilitate three face-to-face meetings during the school year using provided materials

- Submit a calendar of the start and end dates of the site's learning cycles (including face-to face meetings) to the NEA liaison by October 1, 2020
- Complete responsibilities and tasks outlined in the coaching protocols
- Submit Problem of Practice groups to NEA and virtual coach within 48 hours of face-to-face meetings
- Work collaboratively with:
 - Virtual Coach to develop a communication plan before, during, and after the learning cycle, and document ECE's progress throughout the learning cycle
 - Local and state affiliate staff and leaders to support the development and implementation of ECLL
 - Local leadership and NEA staff on the progress of ECEs throughout the learning cycles
- Participate in the following meetings and trainings:
 - Attend a mandatory face-to-face training- TQ Program Coordinator Training at the NEA in Washington, DC on June 5-7 (NEA will pay for you to attend the training including any travel, hotel, and food.)
 - Monthly trainings on Monday and/or Thursdays (dates TBD)
 - Bi-weekly check-ins with the lead coordinator
 - 6-8 virtual trainings throughout the year

What are characteristics of a successful program coordinator?

- Has time and can manage it well to support the success of ECLL
- Strong at building relationships with ECEs
- Trusted and respected leader
- Influencer/recruiter
- Assertive and proactive
- Knowledgeable of district area/local and well-connected
- Effective communicator
- Bring new resources to ECLLs
- Encouraging, approachable, empathic, and flexible
- Has building or association rep training
- Has mentoring or coaching experience
- Comfortable with technology
- Willingness to learn new skills and take on opportunities

What is an NEA Early Career Learning Lab Virtual Coach?

- The virtual coach will be responsible for guiding and supporting Early Career Educators (ECEs) in unpacking and learning around their problems-of-practice throughout the learning cycle process. A virtual coach is expected to work 4-6 hours a week and with at least 15 ECEs at a time. Virtual Coaches must be NEA members in order to be hired and retained for this opportunity.
- Participate in a mandatory in-person training on September 18-20 (location TBD). (NEA will pay for you to attend the training including any travel, hotel, food, or substitute teacher costs needed.)
- Attend a virtual ECLL virtual coach introduction meeting
- Participate in mandatory bi-weekly Monday virtual coach meetings starting in August 2020 and ending May 2020 (8-9pm EST) and check-ins with a Lead Facilitator.
- Seek help from a technology lead/coach for support regarding technology
- Coach small groups of ECEs around their problems-of-practice and lead them through the learning cycle process using an online video conference platform (e.g. Zoom).
- Lead asynchronous, online conversations via edCommunities that foster collaboration, improve practice, enhance student learning, and build relationships.
- Participate in asynchronous, online conversations, and review resources in edCommunities for professional learning facilitator
- Communicate and collaborate with the Program Coordinator regarding ECEs progress.
- Navigate and document ECE progress for local affiliates and the NEA.

- Prepares for weekly coaching calls by creating coaching agendas, setting up any required technology required, identifying professional and social-emotional supports to share, and provide any follow-up after the call.
- Troubleshoot issues that arise and seek out support from Lead Facilitator as needed.
- Work collaboratively with NEA staff, fellow virtual coaches, tech coaches, and Lead professional learning facilitators.
- Complete alternative coaching assignments if needed based on the number of ECEs the professional learning facilitators supports (identifying and creating high-quality content for ECEs, tagging resources, working on blended-learning curriculum, creating micro-credentials, and/or other professional-learning responsibilities identified by the NEA).
- Respond within 48 hours to any digital communication from ECEs, Program Coordinators, **Lead Facilitators**, Tech Coaches, Content Leads, or NEA staff, and notify NEA staff of any planned absences.

Hear from our current virtual coaches about this role:

- [Tyrone from Maryland](#)
- [Rachel from Arizona](#)
- [Joann from South Dakota](#)

What are the characteristics of a successful virtual coach?

These are characteristics identified by fellow virtual coaches:

- Strong communication and listening skills
- Comfortable with technology and tech savvy
- Understands and applies coaching techniques with educators
- Familiar creating coaching agendas, providing feedback, and using questions to guide educators
- Understands adult learning principles
- Being able to hear the “core” of an ECE’s problem of practice
- Ability to build relationships virtually and approachable
- Mindful of others’ time and prepared for meetings
- Awareness of where participants are in the process
- Able to recognize self-identified needs from ECEs and understand how those needs may be related to others in ways that ECEs cannot yet fully articulate
- Trustworthy/Nonjudgmental
- Reflective and responsive

How will the NEA support your site’s ECLL?

- Provide trainings to support the program coordinator’s and virtual coach’s roles;
- Provide resources and materials through an edCommunities group to support the development and implementation of ECLL;
- Provide a lead to mentor the program coordinator and virtual coach and coordinate monthly calls/trainings to support both roles;
- Provide a virtual coach for problem-of-practice sub-group;
- Provide a meeting guide/protocol for the 3 face-to-face meetings;
- Provide a weekly coaching protocols for the local coordinator;
- Provide the ECLL Needs Assessments;
- Collect information about the ECLL process and learnings from ECLL educators through an online survey and share information with the local and state affiliates; and
- Provide program funding to support a stipend for the program coordinator and virtual coach and to the affiliate to cover administrative staff time dedicated to the ECLL, face-to-face meeting expenses (e.g. mileage, hotel)