

## What We're Learning About Better Hiring in ECD



At [DataDrive2030](#), we've always known the practitioner matters. Our Positive Deviance Initiative shows that it's not just what children are taught, but *how* (and by *whom*) that shapes their learning. Responsive, intentional, engaged practitioners can make all the difference.

But lately, we've been asking a new question: What if we could support principals not just in growing great practitioners, but in *finding* them in the first place?

We're working in the background designing a recruitment tool that ECD principals can use to select better-suited practitioners; quickly, confidently, and contextually. The tool itself has two components: a conversation and an observation (monitored teaching activity). We also hope the tool can double as a development resource to help practitioners grow.

Although we are still in the early phases of designing these tools, here are four lessons we would love to share in the spirit of open learning.

### Lesson 1: Design with the Real World in Mind

ECD hiring doesn't happen under ideal conditions. Limited finances and low practitioner salaries makes attracting and motivating practitioners very challenging. Principals often have to hire in a hurry, without a strong pool of candidates and with very little time to make a choice. This means the recruitment tool has to work under pressure.



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It has to be quick, clear, and easy to use *without losing depth*. The hope is that the tool will help principals identify candidates who are a better fit for the role (or who show the potential to grow into strong practitioners) even when resources are limited and time is tight. We're learning that if a tool doesn't fit into the actual hiring process, it won't get used; no matter how well designed it is. Our qualitative work is helping us ground the design in reality, and later this year, we'll be integrating Thrive by Five Index data to strengthen this understanding even further.

## Lesson 2: Keep It Simple, But Not Shallow

There's a constant tension between making the tool simple enough for ease of use, and rigorous enough to help principals find the best candidate in a fair way. Designing it feels like multiple pendulum swings: between the complexity that captures the richness of practice, and the simplicity that considers the environmental constraints and psychological mindset of principals.

We're working to find that sweet spot by engaging behavioural scientists as well as psychometricians for input. Like most of us, principals who have a lot on their plates not only have limited time, but also limited bandwidth. They need easy to use tools that are intuitive. We're also exploring both digital and paper-based options, so the tool can be applicable to a variety of settings and levels of tech comfort.

## Lesson 3: Create Space and Design Environments that Enable Honest Feedback

It's hard to get true, honest feedback. People don't always feel comfortable pushing back, even when they have valuable insights to share. Feedback sessions need to account for the natural tendency to say what they think we want to hear. Some techniques we're using include showing multiple versions of designs and asking questions in specific ways. We're learning to slow down, build trust, and create safe spaces for open dialogue. It takes intentional facilitation and a willingness to hear things we didn't expect; even when it challenges our assumptions.

## Lesson 4: How to more systematically integrate feedback in the design process

So much of the insight from this process lives in people's heads, in meeting notes, quick chats, and WhatsApp voice notes. Capturing that learning in a systematic way is a work-in-progress. We're thinking hard about the design process with specific emphasis on how to best track, document, and integrate feedback so it flows back into the tool meaningfully. It's slow work, and the cycles take time. But we're committed to it. Because the tool is only as strong as the learning behind it.

This is still an unfolding journey, but one we're excited to be on. We'll be sharing more as we go, especially once the Thrive by Five Index 2024 findings are considered. Watch this space! If you have ideas, questions, or challenges of your own, we'd love to hear from you.

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