

Inclusion and Professional Development: What We Know and What We Need to Do

Participant Outcomes:

1. Describe the research on preschool inclusion and professional development (PD)
2. Be aware of the need for continued and improved efforts on PD related to inclusion
3. Describe a definition and conceptual framework related to PD and inclusion
4. Identify actions to improve the quality of personnel working in inclusive settings

Agenda:

I. Inclusion and Professional Development: Looking at the Data

- Inclusion takes many forms; a single definition of inclusion does not exist (Odom, Schwartz, & ECRII Investigators, 2002).
- Almost 50% of young children with disabilities are being served in inclusive settings or natural environments (U.S. Department of Education, 2005)
- Children in inclusive settings do at least as well as children in specialized settings. Inclusion can benefit children with and without disabilities, particularly in the area of social development (Buisse & Bailey, 1994; Buisse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002; Cole, Mills, Dale, & Jenkins, 1991; Guralnick, Conner, Hammond, Gottman, & Kinnish, 1996; Odom & Diamond, 1998; Odom et al., 2004).
- A variety of factors influence the acceptance and implementation of inclusion (Bailey, McWilliam, Buisse, & Wesley, 1998; Buisse & Bailey, 1994; Buisse, Wesley, & Keyes, 1996; Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi, & Shelton, 2004; Lieber et al., 2000; Odom, Wolery, Lieber, & Horn, 2002; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996)
- Specialized instruction is an important component of inclusion and a moderator of child outcomes (Anita, Kreimeyer, & Eldridge, 1994; D'Allura, 2002; DeKlyen & Odom, 1989; Lefebvre & Strain, 1989; McEvoy et al., 1988; Odom et al., 2004; Schwartz, Carta, & Grant, 1996).
- Collaboration among parents, teachers and specialists is a cornerstone of high quality inclusion (Hunt, Soto, Maier, Liboiron, & Bae, 2004; Odom, Schwartz, et al., 2002)
- Families of children with disabilities generally view inclusion favorably, although some families are concerned about quality of programs and services (Bailey & Winton, 1987; Bailey & Winton, 1989; Green & Stoneman, 1989; Lamorey & Bricker, 1993; Miller et al., 1992; Odom et al., 2004; Peck, Carlson, & Helmstetter, 1992; Reichart et al., 1989).

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- For inclusion to be an effective preschool option, high quality is necessary but not sufficient for children with disabilities to succeed (Odom, Schwartz, et al., 2002)
- Personnel in early care and education settings lack confidence and competence in serving young children with disabilities (Buysse, Wesley, Keyes, & Bailey, 1996; Wesley, Buysse, & Skinner, 2001)
- Early childhood teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare teachers to work with children with special needs (Chang, Early, & Winton, 2005; Early & Winton, 2001)

II. Establishing the Need for Professional Development Related to Inclusion

The lead story in the Wall Street Journal published on June 25, 2007, (“Mainstreaming” Trends Test Classroom Goals) discusses major problems with “mainstreaming.” Using examples from one community’s experiences, the reporter describes many problems across the nation including:

- Teachers are alienated and leaving the field because of inclusion; they do not have training and support to be successful
- Behavior of children with disabilities is distracting the rest of the class
- Children without disabilities are not getting the attention they need because of demands on teachers from children with disabilities
- There are not enough specialists to assist in the regular classrooms
- Parents of children with and without disabilities are against inclusion with a few exceptions
- The American Federation of Teachers does not support inclusion
- School districts aren’t mainstreaming but “main-dumping”...packing classrooms with disabled children without adequate support.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Do data support these conclusions? What are the implications of the concerns expressed in the article for the field?

III. National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI): Goal and Definition and Conceptual Framework for PD

- NPDCI Working Definition of Professional Development: Professional development is defined as structured teaching and learning experiences that are formalized and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice (NPDCI, 2007).
- Conceptual Framework for Cross-Agency Professional Development System

IV. Actions You Can Take to Move from “What Is” to “What Can Be” (see Activity Sheet)

V. Closing and Evaluation

- Videoclip from *It’s really no different: Conversations with caregivers*

References for Handout and PowerPoint:

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A copy of this handout and accompanying materials are available at the NPDCI website at <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/>

