

April 14, 2010

Session Topic: Professional Development

How does this research connect to practice? How could it be used?

- We need further investigation in the areas of coach preparation and mechanisms to ensure high quality coaching. How can coaches access support/consultants for continued training and professional development?
- One weakness in professional development is documentation; the use of newsletters as a form of documentation was helpful.
- There are four important relationships to consider in professional development for early childhood educators: *Parents & Children, Teachers & Children, Parents & Teachers, Coaches & Teachers.*
- We need a comprehensive model for home visitation that can be replicated in settings across the state. Training in this model could then be provided to leaders state-wide.
- Professional development is needed that shifts from training on basic information to appropriate and consistent implementation of skills in practice. Intentionality is important; intentional about what to deliver, when and how from (a) *trainer to provider* and (b) *provider to parents.*
- Even though it is challenging, the payoff for families is great when affirmation for competence is provided to the adults (teachers and parents) by the professionals.
- Fidelity needs to be attended to in research, evaluation and practice settings.

How does this research connect to policy? How could it be used?

- Home visiting is complex; we need to effectively communicate the types and purposes of home visiting (e.g., not all is court-ordered) to policy makers (e.g., state senators) using case examples, perhaps in the form of videos, from exemplar programs.
- We need to use more of what we know about what works to help inform how programs are regulated. For example, limit the distribution of public funds to childcare centers that use an evidence-based curriculum.
- If we knew what was optimal for best outcomes for children and families in terms of home visiting, then we could begin to implement these in practice and develop policies to support it.

What information from the practice/policy community might inform research in this area?

- How might the outcomes differ when these models of professional development are provided in more traditional early childcare settings vs. Head Start, where educators do not have the same levels of support in place? How would coaching work?
- What about the *coaches*, how did they see their involvement in programs? What was their background knowledge and experience; how did they feel about the model, training, consulting?
- A study is needed that looks at optimal levels of home visiting, how many visits, what rates of interaction predict positive outcomes for children and families. We need to understand how much works and for whom (need to know child, family, environmental variables).
- Tools are needed to evaluate the impact of training and skills on implementation in the classroom.