



Professional Development

ISSUE BRIEF 1

This issue brief is the first in a series developed by the Early Childhood Iowa Professional Development Component Group. This issue brief is intended to help inform policy makers about the importance of a system of professional development to support early care, health, and education providers.

What is a Professional Development System for Early Childhood?

Professional development consists of the formal education and training for early childhood professionals that supports and empowers them to improve the quality of care and early education provided to young children. Professional development is important for licensed teachers who have formal college education to continue to enhance skills that support school readiness. It is also important for professionals who meet Iowa Professional Licensing Standards in order for them to provide quality care that will assist children in achieving good outcomes. Research defines effective professional development as professional development that is outcome-based, provided by an approved trainer with ongoing technical assistance. The skills the early childhood professional is expected to master are practiced in both the training session and in the work setting. Providing outcome-based training assists professionals in meeting quality program standards and will assist in providing activities that help children achieve the Iowa Early Learning Standards.

An effective professional development system crosses many sectors in an effort to reach a variety of early care, health, and education professionals. In addition, an effective system addresses the elements of leadership, regulation and standards, education, articulation, training, compensation, and evaluation by its delineation of results and performance measures. A system implies coordination and articulation among and between agencies.

Why is it Important to have a Professional Development System?

The best way to improve quality in early care and education is through enhancing professional development. Research indicates children who participate in high quality early learning programs demonstrate greater school readiness and success through second grade than children who had been in low quality care, even after controlling for family differences (*The Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study*, 1999, National Center on Early Development and Learning).

A professional development system will assist Iowa in achieving results by:

- Supporting and empowering individuals to improve and sustain the quality of early care, health, and education in Iowa
- Identifying and documenting professional competencies of individuals
- Assuring that quality training is disseminated by approved trainers across the state
- Improving career mobility by increasing opportunities to link training education for advanced degrees
- Supporting individuals in receiving compensation that is commensurate with qualifications and responsibilities

Component Group Representatives:

- Area Education Agencies
- Child Care Center Providers
- Child Care Home Providers
- Child Care Resource & Referral
- Community Colleges
- Community Empowerment
- Department of Education
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Public Health
- Early ACCESS
- Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children
- Iowa Head Start Association
- Iowa State University
- ISU Extension
- Private providers
- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Iowa
- Universities

In order to achieve these results several components of the systems are necessary. Some of these components currently exist in Iowa. Some components exist only within some agencies or locales, while others are statewide. These components include funding, core knowledge, credentials and qualifications, quality assurances, and access and outreach. Iowa currently has a core body of knowledge as well as Early Learning Standards. Expectations for credentials and qualifications and quality assurances exist within some agencies or professions but are not shared statewide. These expectations create the foundation for an effective system of professional development but have not yet illuminated pathways, highlighted partners, or clearly defined mechanisms for delivery.

What Activities are Currently Funded?

In SFY 07 legislators allocated \$2.2 million dollars to the Iowa Community Empowerment Office. The office worked collaboratively with the ECI Professional Development Component Group to fund several outcome-based professional development activities that support a system. Activities include:

- Expand T.E.A.C.H. Iowa to support additional professionals achieving a degree in early childhood education
- Expand Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standard facilitators that support outcome-based training for early childhood centers
- Support new staff orientation for child care center staff
- Expand Every Child Reads
- Support oral health training for physicians
- Expand Early ACCESS service coordinator training for providers of services birth to three
- Provide scholarships for expanded Family Development Specialist Training
- Support early childhood centers in achieving the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation
- Support technical assistance to providers participating in the Environmental Rating Scales Training
- Support train the trainer workshops for early care, health, and education providers regarding maternal depression screening
- Support training on positive behavior supports for young children for child care center staff
- Support professional development system building

Professional Development System Building Activities - What do we Recommend?

- Continue to assess progress in the areas of leadership, regulation and standards, education, articulation, training, compensation, and evaluation
- Design a coordinating structure that will assist the state in integrating and linking current professional development initiatives
- Legislate licensing of all child care programs
- Support child care program participation in the Quality Rating System (QRS)
- Increase minimum qualifications for practitioners
- Legislate articulation between publicly funded community colleges and universities
- Provide training and technical assistance to strengthen training evaluation
- Commission a new work force study
- Support T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Iowa for all interested early childhood providers statewide
- Implement W.A.G.E.S