The Quest for Quality in Early Childhood

Inclusion Institute
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What We Already Know……

- Substantial evidence shows causal link between program quality & developmental outcomes
- This has spawned a quality improvement movement in the U.S.
But, What Do We Mean By Quality?
Intentional Teaching & Intervening

- Assessment & evaluation
- Child-staff ratio
- Family-professional partnerships
- Teacher qualifications
- Emotional climate
- Physical environment & materials
- Adult needs

Curriculum

Physical environment & materials

Emotional climate

Teacher qualifications

Family-professional partnerships

Child-staff ratio

Assessment & evaluation

Intentional Teaching & Intervening
Emerging Questions About Program Quality
What Do We Mean By High Quality Inclusion?

Early Childhood Inclusion

Today, an ever-increasing number of young children with and without disabilities play, develop, and learn together in a variety of places—homes, early childhood programs, neighborhoods, and other community-based settings. The notion that young children with special needs and their families are full members of the community reflects societal values about promoting opportunities for development and learning and a sense of belonging for every child. It also reflects a reaction against previous educational practices of separating and isolating children with disabilities. Over time, in combination with state regulations and protections under the law, these values and societal norms regarding children’s rights to live with disabilities and their families have come to be known as early childhood inclusion. The need for matching federal legislation with inclusion enacted over the past three decades has been to fundamentally change the way in which early childhood services should be organized and delivered. How successful inclusion takes many different forms and implementation is influenced by a whole variety of factors, questions remain about the precise meaning of inclusion and its implications for policy, practice, and potential outcomes for children and families.

The lack of a shared national definition has contributed to misunderstandings about inclusion. DCS and NAEYC recognize that having a common understanding of what inclusion means is fundamentally important in determining what types of practices and supports are necessary to achieve high-quality inclusion. This DCS/NAEYC joint position statement offers a definition of early childhood inclusion. This definition was designed not as a litmus test for determining whether a program was in-compliance or not, but rather, as a heuristic for identifying the key components of high-quality inclusive programs. In addition, this document offers recommendations for how the position statement should be used by families, practitioners, administrators, policy makers, and others to improve early childhood services.
What Practices Define High Quality for Children from Diverse Cultural & Linguistic Backgrounds?
Do Quality Frameworks Reflect Needs of Diverse Young Learners & Their Families?
A case in point
NAEYC’s position statements on DAP from 1987-2009
Quest for Quality Panelists

- QRIS – Kelly Maxwell
- Measuring inclusion quality – Elena Soukakou
- Professional Development – Pam Winton
Quest for Quality Reactants

- Beth Rous
- Deb Cassidy
What is a QRIS?

- Common Elements
  - Quality standards
  - Process for assessing/monitoring standards
  - Outreach and support to programs
  - Financial incentives
  - Consumer awareness
QRIS Across the U.S.

- Operating Statewide QRIS
- Developing QRIS or Other Quality Improvement Initiative

Source: Data compiled by the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center as of March 2010.
Special Needs

- 8 of 26 states address for centers
- 6 of 26 states address for family child care homes
  - Specialized training
  - Screening procedures
  - Planning for children with special needs
  - Documentation of plans & activities
  - Integration of children with peers
  - Environmental accommodations
Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

- 5 of 26 states address for centers
- 3 of 26 address for family child care homes
  - Communication in families’ home languages
  - Staff training (Louisiana)
  - Environment and materials reflect each child’s family and culture (Indiana)
Future Directions

- QRIS as a framework
- “Universal Design”
  - Broaden the stakeholders
  - Common definitions
Resource

  - Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluations
  - State Profiles
Three Issues in Measuring Dimensions of Quality in Inclusive Programs

Elena P. Soukakou, D. Phil.
Challenges in measuring quality in inclusive classrooms
Challenges

- High quality inclusion reflects a broad, complex system of practices
- Lack of consensus on dimensions of high quality inclusive practices
- Inadequacy of existing quality standards and measures
“Young children with disabilities can experience low quality in classes that are otherwise rated as being of high quality”
(Wolery et al., 2000)
The Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP)

- Structured observation
- 1-7 pt Likert-type scale
- 11 items
- Observation focus → Inclusive classroom
ICP Items

1. Adaptation of space and materials
2. Adult involvement in peer interactions
3. Adult guidance of children’s play
4. Conflict resolution
5. Membership
6. Adult-child social interactions
7. Support for social communication
8. Adaptation of group activities
9. Transitions between activities
10. Feedback
11. Planning and monitoring children’s individual needs and goals
Development of the ICP

1. Exploratory research
2. Conceptualization
3. Item generation
4. Expert review
5. Piloting
6. Validation
4\textsuperscript{th} Challenge

- Inclusion
- Individualization
“Inclusive adaptations”

“Practices which deliberately adapt the classroom’s environment, activities and instruction in ways that encourage participation and active engagement in the group, through adjustments that might differ from child to child”
Example Indicator 1

- Adults *monitor children’s involvement in play and when needed, help individual children to become involved* (E.g. adults help children find toys that are appropriate for their age and level; suggest games and activities; redirect child from self stimulatory behaviors to more purposeful play). *(O)*
Example Indicator 2

- Adults *deliberately* organize the physical space (including materials/equipment) during the day to *encourage peer interaction* (E.g. teacher adds a chair to computer area for child who is standing and watching a peer playing; adult sets-up circle area to encourage children to read together; adult takes out more puppets to encourage other children to join the puppet area; adult repositions child on wheelchair so that she can face her peers). (O)
Example Indicator 3

- *Children’s engagement in group activities is most of the time active and intentional* (E.g. child finger-paints showing interest and motivation; child actively follows song rhymes in group; child actively traces name on paper).
3 Issues in Measuring Inclusive Classroom Quality

• 1. Balance of indicators of general and specific relevance

• 2. Consideration of outcomes that inform practices

• 3. Differentiated use of quality indicators for program quality assessment and professional development
Measuring the Quality of Inclusion

How do we know if we are providing high quality inclusion for young children with disabilities? Join Sharon and Elena in discussing two new tools for measuring the quality of inclusion for preschool classes and programs. This is an early release of material to be discussed at the Inclusion Institute in May.

Related content:
- Including Children With Disabilities In State Pre-K Programs
- Inclusive Classroom Profile
- SpecialLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale
Quality Initiatives

Professional Development

Inclusion

Presented by Pam Winton
Rising Stars
with Parallel or Intertwined Destinies?
Purpose: To Share

- Traditional recommendations for linking quality, professional development, and inclusion
- A disruptive innovation
“Professional development is facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice ...”
The key components of professional development include:

a) characteristics and contexts of the learners (i.e., the “who”);

b) content (i.e., the “what” of professional development); and

c) organization and facilitation of learning experiences (i.e., the “how”).
National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) PD Framework
Quality initiatives have potential to:

- Motivate learners (the WHO) to participate in PD
- Shape the focus of PD content (the WHAT)
- Undergird the quality of the PD experiences available to learners (the HOW)
Example: Two Components of QRIS Focused on PD

• TA available to promote program quality ....what is the content & quality of TA & TA providers, etc?

• Education/training requirements ...but what is the content & quality of IHE preparation, training, etc?
Traditional recommendations requiring slow incremental changes to existing structures.
Recommendations to states for integrating quality, PD and inclusion:

- Create structures for developing cross-sector integrated quality and PD systems based upon an agreed upon definition of PD

- Identify evidence-based practices that promote the development and learning of every child within a quality inclusive environment and make these the centerpiece of the PD system

- Ensure the quality of PD provided and that PD providers are supported in implementing effective PD methods to teach about quality improvements and evidence-based practices.
Disruptive Innovation
An EBP Approach to PD

Focus on young children in inclusive environments

- Help build early childhood practitioners’ abilities to make evidence-based decisions

For faculty and PD providers

CONNECT Modules

Online Instructional Resources
Emphasis on Customizing Teaching

5 Step Learning Cycle - Process for Making Evidence-Based Practice Decisions
Step 1: Dilemma
Step 2: Question
Step 3: Evidence
Step 4: Decision
Step 5: Evaluation

Modularity
Family-Professional Partnership
Diversity
Assistive Technology
Assessment
Socioemotional development
Challenging behaviors
Teacher-child interaction
Collaboration
Family support
Variety of PD Contexts

- Coursework
- Practice
- Seminars
- Workshops
- Consultation
- Supervision
Use of Social Media: Available 24/7, online discussion, YOUTUBE

Comment on additional guideline

Posted by Johnna Darragh at Feb 05, 2009

Thanks for the opportunity to review—I found the guidelines very comprehensive and well-developed. The only add on suggestion that I had pertained to demonstrating diversity in professional roles...there is a broad range of target audiences listed, and an overt inclusion of this as a guideline could ensure that the modules "speak to" the broad array of professionals who could benefit from the materials.

Reply  Remove

Comment on additional guideline

Posted by Pam Winton at Feb 06, 2009

So true Johnna...we are striving to incorporate ways to engage a variety of learners at different levels (and we hope you all can help with this) and guidelines need to make that explicit. Thanks

Reply  Remove

Feedback

Posted by Christine Myers at Feb 06, 2009

I think this is very comprehensive, I just had a couple comments. First, under E-learning/Accessibility, you might add "at a variety of font sizes" to "Materials and module components are readable on the screen". I have had this be an issue when I teach online. Also, I see learner reflection mentioned in Family-Centered practices and collaboration, but not under Instructional Design. Perhaps you could be a little more specific and add something about "Opportunities for learners to reflect on application of the practice" instead of just addressing feedback. This may help to close the loop for practitioners. Christine

Reply  Remove
Planning for Adoption: Pilot Participants
Visit our community website
http://community.fpg.unc.edu

CONNECT

Pam Winton, Virginia Buysse, Maggie Connolly, Chih Ing Lim, Jonathan Green, Christine Lindauer, Heidi Hollingsworth

NPDCI

Pam Winton, Virginia Buysse, Camille Catlett, Shelley deFosset, Tracey West, Jonathan Green
Heidi Hollingsworth

Ann Turnbull
Beth Rous & Patti Singleton
Turning around program quality through innovation ...
Customized early education & intervention
New technologies & skills to manage innovations in intentional teaching
A modular, cross-sector system of standards, accountability, resources, and supports
Where is the most fertile ground for future innovations?

- In places where practitioners work and children learn.
Hot Off the Press

THE QUEST FOR QUALITY
PROMISING INNOVATIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Patricia W. Wesley & Virginia Buysse
Foreword by Anne W. Mitchell
Initial Design Process

Planning a QRIS requires many considerations, and the process must be handled thoughtfully and with great deliberation because it lays the groundwork for everything that follows. If done well, the process can unify a wide range of constituencies and lead to greater understanding and support for early childhood care and education. This section includes information on setting the vision and goals, beginning the design process, determining which programs will participate, and gathering information on the current workforce and the licensing program.

Establishing the QRIS Vision and Goals
Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluations

April 2010
Quality Indicators of Inclusive Early Childhood Programs/Practices

A Compilation of Selected Resources