

# National Professional Development Center on Inclusion



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# Why create a national center?

- Inclusion requires that early childhood practitioners with varying backgrounds, levels of education, and dispositions discover new ways of working together—in partnership with families—to incorporate effective inclusive practices.
- Majority of early childhood personnel are not adequately prepared to implement modifications to teaching methods and curriculum that ensure full participation of children with disabilities.

A recent survey of those overseeing early childhood teacher preparation programs reveals that even though early intervention and special education is part of many programs' missions, coursework and training often fall short.

—Chang, Early, & Winton, 2005  
*Journal of Early Intervention*

# Goal



The National Center will work with states to create a system of high quality, accessible professional development for early childhood personnel working in inclusive preschool settings.

# Unique Features

- Based on a strong theoretical and conceptual framework from the systems change, educational reform, and knowledge utilization literature.

Unique Feature

## Theoretical Framework

Factors that affect implementation of innovations based on literature include:

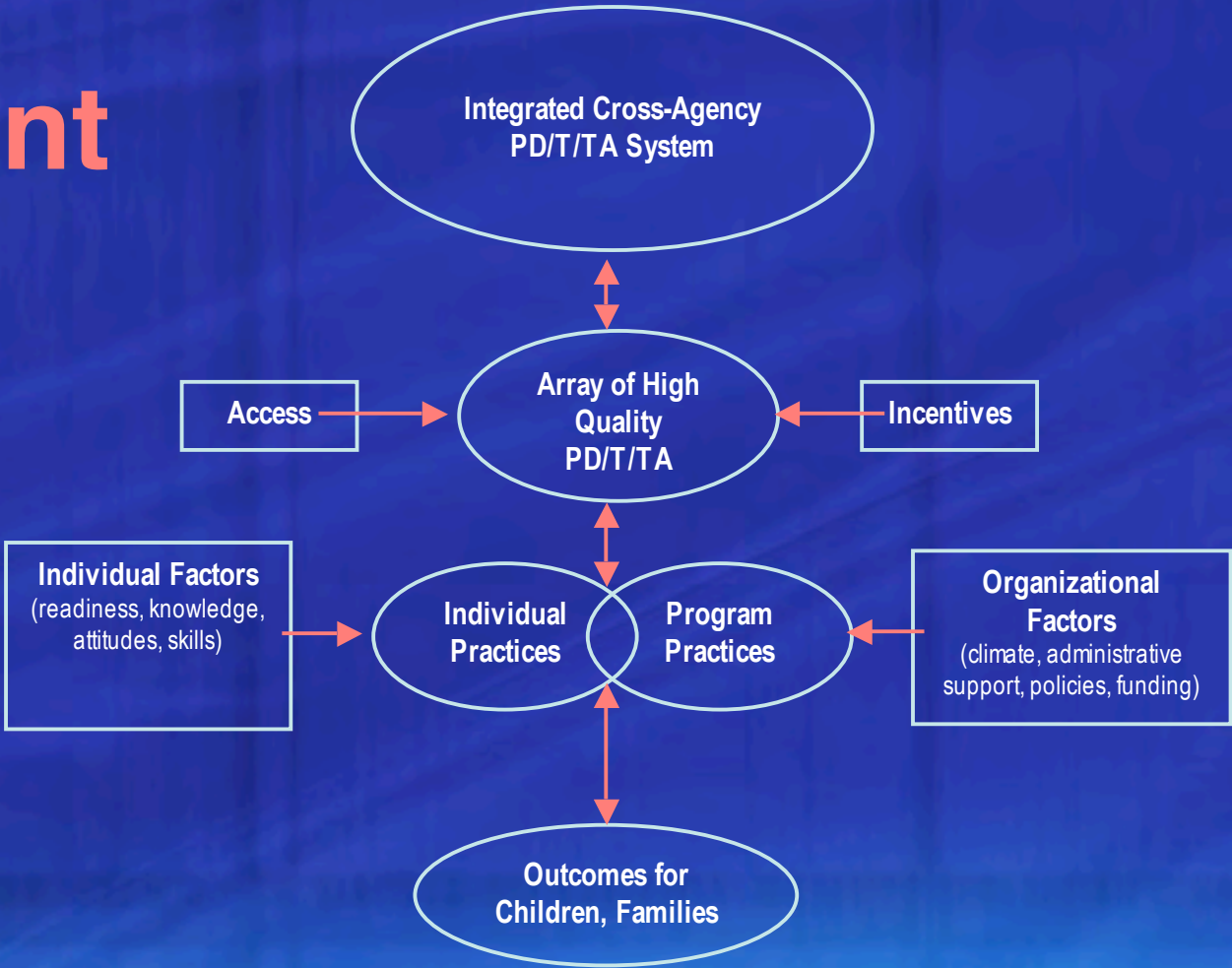
- Both “top down” & “bottom up” approaches
- Collegial partnerships
- Direct skills training coupled with ongoing assessment, feedback and support for implementation

# Unique Features

- Based on strong theoretical and conceptual framework
- Alignment of professional development with teacher and program standards and child and family outcomes.

Unique Feature

# Alignment





# Unique Features

- Based on strong theoretical and conceptual framework.
- Alignment of professional development with teacher and program standards and child and family outcomes.
- Evidence-based practice approach to professional development.

Unique Feature

## **Evidence-based practice**

“A decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence with family and professional wisdom and values.”

—Buysse & Wesley 2006

*Evidence-Based Practice in the Early Childhood Field*

# Unique Features

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- Evidence-based practice approach to professional development.
- Empirically-based professional development.

Unique Feature

# Empirically-Based Professional Development

- What do we know about research-based approaches to professional development?

Available syntheses indicate a very slim body of research.

—Winton, 2006

# Conclusions from k-12 research syntheses

- The body of teacher education research “that addresses pupil or other desirable outcomes is relatively small and inconclusive.” —Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005
- “Research on teacher preparation and professional development is a long way from the stage of converging evidence.” —Whitehurst, 2002

# Conclusions (continued)

- Recommendations in the literature for “more intense, content-focused training experiences, as well as opportunities for peer collaboration, are based on anecdotal evidence, inferences based on adult learning theories and survey data related to teacher satisfaction.”

—Whitehurst, 2002

# Unique Features

- Based on strong theoretical and conceptual framework.
- Alignment of professional development with teacher and program standards & child and family outcomes.
- Evidence-based practice approach to professional development.
- Empirically-based professional development.
- Catalyst to bring together existing professional development initiatives.

Unique Feature

# Many Perspectives

NPDCI will consult with national advisors and partners that will include leaders in the field representing:

- state and local agencies,
- programs serving preschool children,
- trainers of early care and education personnel,
- early childhood technical assistance providers,
- higher education faculty,
- parents,
- providers,
- national professional organizations and
- researchers.



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**National and State Advisors and Partners**

**National Impact  
Work Group**

**State Recruitment  
Work Group**

**State Professional  
Development Work  
Group**

**Inclusion Resources  
Work Group**

**Evaluation Work  
Group**

# National Impact Workgroup

- ❑ Work with cross-agency federal advisors and national leaders
- ❑ Monitor national professional development needs and successes related to inclusion across time
- ❑ Make tools, rubrics and products available to all on website

# State Work Groups

## ■ Recruitment

- National application process
- 4 states in 2007, 4 states in 2008
- Application materials, selection criteria available on NPDCI website—early 2007

## ■ Professional Development

- Planning, resources, professional development, supports for participating states

# Inclusion Resources Work Group

## Policy needs

- Critical elements of statewide cross-agency professional development plan
- Core competencies for high quality preschool teachers in inclusive settings
- Agreed upon definitions of terms such as inclusion, professional development, and evidence-based practices

## Resource issues

- Synthesis of instructional resources for supporting professional development

## Practice concerns

- Summary and description of empirically-based professional development activities, strategies and models

# Evaluation Work Group

## ■ Theory-Based Evaluation

- Explicit theory of change & causal linkages
- Convergent sources
- Mixed methods: Integrated analyses

## ■ Sources of Data

- National PD Survey
- State Needs Assessment Survey
- Qualitative interviews
- Document Review: State Plans & Portfolios

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