NPDCI is funded by a five-year grant from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services of the US Department of Education. October 1, 2006 — September 20, 2011.
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.
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

Integrated Cross-Agency PD/T/TA System

Array of High Quality PD/T/TA

Access
Incentives

Individual Practices
Program Practices

Individual Factors
(readiness, knowledge, attitudes, skills)

Organizational Factors
(climate, administrative support, policies, funding)

Outcomes for Children, Families
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

- 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.
- 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
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.
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.
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
References

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