The Big Picture Planning Guide

Building Cross-Sector Professional Development Systems in Early Childhood

May 2010

Introduction

The Big Picture Planning Guide is designed to support a state-level planning process that leads to a single, integrated professional development (PD) system, incorporating professional learning resources and opportunities across all early childhood sectors (e.g., child care, Head Start, early intervention, early childhood special education, public pre-kindergarten). The ultimate goal is to ensure that early childhood practitioners are highly effective in supporting the development and learning of every young child, including those with diverse abilities. Cross-sector planning for PD is most likely to be productive when it meets three conditions:

- First, it involves a heavyweight, state-level team—people who represent the various early childhood sectors and who have the influence and authority to transcend traditional boundaries to create new ways of working together and innovating to transform PD.

- Second, it includes reaching consensus on a single definition of PD that emphasizes both the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and the application of this knowledge in practice. The NPDCI conceptual framework provides a common language around PD issues that helps state planners frame problems and generate effective solutions. Specifically, the who, what, and how framework helps planners identify pressing challenges related to creating cross-sector systems of PD, to categorize these as either infrastructure issues such as policies and resources (outer circle) or core to delivering PD in terms of evidence-based content and methods (inner circle), and to make connections across these dimensions.

- Third, it makes evidence-based practice—the specific educational programs and intervention strategies that have been validated through research, along with a decision-making process that practitioners can use to integrate various sources of evidence—the centerpiece of the PD system.

Planning Sequence

The planning process is organized around four steps that planners cycle through more than once to reflect the need to orient new team members as well as to address new PD opportunities, challenges, and initiatives that emerge over time. The four steps are:

Step 1 – Take Stock

Step 2 – Identify a Shared Vision and Focus Areas for Improvement

Step 3 – Develop an Implementation Plan

Step 4 – Create a Structure for Continuous Improvement

Step 1—Take Stock

- Identify key sectors to be involved in and to endorse the planning process and representatives of each who have the power, authority and resources to support early childhood PD.


2 Early Childhood Advisory Council legislation identifies key sectors as child care, public school (Title 1, pre-k, 619), Head Start, health or mental health, Part C, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), and other entities and agencies determined to be relevant by the Governor (Satkowski, 2009). Other considerations include ensuring that voices of families are represented.
• **Create a structure** for governance, decision-making, and management of planning tasks and activities.

• **Agree on a PD conceptual framework and definitions** of key terms that support the planning process. A number of tools have been developed to assist states in appraising PD policies and infrastructure supports for an integrated state system. These tools can help guide discussion and lead to the creation of a dynamic profile of existing policies and infrastructure supports (see Appendix A: State Profile on Early Childhood PD). The NPDCI (2008) *Conceptual Framework for PD in Early Childhood* (see Figure 1), and the *Who, What, and How Planning Matrix for Early Childhood PD* (see Appendix B) also can be used to guide discussions and record information about existing PD activities. The outer circle of the framework includes contextual issues such as policies, structures, resources, and other supports, whereas the inner circle of the framework illustrates the three core components guiding the implementation of PD:

  ♦ **Who** (characteristics and needs of the learners and of the PD providers),

  ♦ **What** (what learners should know and be able to do), and

  ♦ **How** (how PD can best be delivered to address those needs).

• **Summarize the current status of early childhood PD.** Based on the information gathered through discussions organized around the **who, what, and how** conceptual framework, consider the following questions:

  ♦ What gaps and duplications of PD efforts with learners across key sectors are evident?

  ♦ Is there evidence of collaboration across sectors in how PD is funded, planned, and implemented? How could collaboration be improved?

  ♦ What specific evidence-based practices serve as the core of current PD efforts? Where are the gaps? What is needed to support evidence-based decision-making and how can this be incorporated into PD?

  ♦ What methods are being used to support the acquisition of knowledge and skills and the application of this knowledge in practice? Where are the gaps?

  ♦ What are the characteristics and qualifications of the PD providers? What supports and resources are available for PD providers?

Use the **WWH Planning Matrix** to capture key ideas and summarize information gathered through discussions. Consider using the online survey tool, *The Landscape: A Statewide Survey for Providers of Professional Development in Early Childhood* (Buyssse, Hollingsworth, & West, 2009), to gather additional information about the status of PD organized around the **who, what, and how** conceptual framework.

### Step 2—Identify a Shared Vision and Focus Areas for Improvement

• **Develop a vision,** a broad statement that reflects hopes for the future, based on the information from the **WWH Planning Matrix** and the acknowledged gaps between the current status of PD and what is desired. (See sample vision in Appendix C.)

• **Brainstorm and prioritize collective needs related to achieving the vision,** based on the information generated through completion of the **WWH Planning Matrix** and any data collected through the *Landscape* survey and other means.

• **Identify 1 – 3 focus areas** that reflect the strongest cross-sector priorities for improving PD and moving
toward an integrated system. Some focus areas will address infrastructure “outer circle” issues (e.g., creating regional cross-sector teams to provide PD); others will address core “inner circle” issues (e.g., providing PD on evidence-based intervention practices to support inclusion, implementing the most effective PD approaches). If the focus is on core “inner circle” issues, it is important to specify the who (the target of the PD), the what (the content focus and evidence-based practices within that content area), and the how (the characteristics of the PD providers and the evidence-based PD methods and approaches that best meet the needs of the PD target audience).

**Step 3—Develop an Implementation Plan**
- Identify implementation processes and activities needed to achieve the vision for improvements identified in Step 2 (see sample plan in Appendix C).
- Identify, secure, and/or develop resources needed to implement the plan.
- Revisit organizational structure developed in Step 1 and refine, if needed, to facilitate implementation of the plan.
- Develop dissemination and outreach strategies for sharing information about the plan with a broad group of stakeholders to ensure widespread adoption and implementation of PD improvement activities.

**Step 4—Create a Structure for Continuous Improvement**
- Develop strategies for monitoring and evaluating implementation of the plan and the accomplishment of focus areas.
- Develop a portfolio of artifacts that demonstrate progress toward achieving the vision.
- Develop a plan for sustaining and building on the accomplishments.

**Glossary**

**Collaboration:** As defined by Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey (2004), collaboration is a commitment to work together across clearly recognizable sectors or subsystems to address a problem and achieve a goal that could not be accomplished by the organizations working individually.

**Cross-Sector:** NPDCI defines cross-sector as the major organizations, agencies, and institutions in a state that provide services and support the development and learning of young children, their families, and the practitioners who serve them.

**Implementation:** As defined by Fixsen and Blasé (2009), implementation is the art and science of incorporating innovations into typical human service settings to benefit children, families, adults, and communities.

**Inclusion:** As defined by DEC and NAEYC (2009), early childhood inclusion "embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports."

**Professional Development:** As defined by NPDCI (2008), professional development (PD) is the “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) the characteristics and contexts of the learners (i.e., the ‘who’ of professional development, including the characteristics and contexts of the learners and the children and families they serve); (b) content (i.e., the ‘what’ of professional development; what professionals should know and be able to do; generally defined by professional competencies, standards, and credentials); and (c) the organization and facilitation of learning experiences (i.e., the ‘how’ of professional development; the approaches, models, or methods used to support self-directed, experientially-oriented learning that is highly relevant to practice.”

**Professional Development System:** As defined by NAEYC (2008), a PD system is “comprehensive system of preparation and ongoing development and support for all early childhood education professionals working with and on behalf of young children.”
References and Resources


Suggested citation:


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This document was developed by the NPDCI team. The work was supported by the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion funded through a grant from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. The content and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the funding agency. Permission to copy, disseminate, or otherwise use information from this document for educational purposes is granted, provided that appropriate credit is given.
An important step in developing a plan for an integrated, cross-sector PD system is to identify current policies and infrastructures related to PD. Policies and infrastructures may provide support or present challenges to the development of a PD system. Use the sample template below to compile information about such policies and infrastructures.  

**Sample Template: State Profile on Early Childhood PD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Quality Assurance Initiatives such as Professional Standards, Competencies, and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)</th>
<th>(What is driving the content of PD?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Access to PD, Career Pathways, and Articulation Agreements</td>
<td>(What mechanisms and supports are available to support EC practitioners in obtaining PD and credentials?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Advisory and Organizational Structures</td>
<td>(What structures are in place that support early childhood PD?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Data and Evaluation</td>
<td>(What information is being gathered to inform PD efforts?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Funding and Resources</td>
<td>(What funding streams and resources are currently in place to support PD?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Template categories are based on the six essential policy areas provided in *Workforce Designs* (LeMoine, 2008), and on the contextual issues in the outer circles of the NPDCI Conceptual Framework for Professional Development (2008).*

An important step in developing a plan for an integrated, cross-sector PD system is to identify the current status of early childhood PD implementation. Use the matrix below to compile information from representatives of major sectors about the PD they fund. This matrix may be completed in advance or during group discussion. The WWH Planning Matrix consists of two parts addressing the WWH at the level of learners and at the level of PD providers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1: WWH – Learners</th>
<th>Part 2: WWH – Providers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who are the major agencies providing PD in early childhood?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Who are the PD providers for the agencies listed above?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who are the learners who receive PD from these agencies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Who provides resources and supports to PD providers?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the content of PD for learners?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is content of the resources and supports provided to the PD providers?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How is the PD implemented to learners?</strong></td>
<td><strong>How are PD providers supported?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does PD link to infrastructure supports (quality initiatives, licensure, accreditation, evaluation, policies)?</strong></td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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THE BIG PICTURE  
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Appendix C: Sample Vision, Focus Areas, and Action Steps

**VISION**
All early childhood personnel will possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will promote the successful inclusion of young children with disabilities.

**FOCUS AREAS**
1. Develop a regional, cross-sector PD system to support increased opportunities for high quality inclusion.
2. Provide professional development to PD providers* focused on research-based approaches to PD.

### Focus area 1:
Develop a regional cross-sector PD system to support increased opportunities for high quality inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Date/Duration</th>
<th>Human Resources</th>
<th>Benchmarks</th>
<th>Updates &amp; Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Create a new organizational structure to support a regional cross-agency approach to PD by sharing information with key stakeholders and leaders, and by obtaining authorization to move forward with a regional cadre approach.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Use the Landscape or other methods to gather information about the characteristics, experiences, qualifications, and interests/priorities/needs of the PD providers (i.e., regional consultants, technical assistance providers, and inclusion specialists).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Focus area 2:
Provide professional development to PD providers* focused on research-based approaches to professional development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Date/Duration</th>
<th>Human Resources</th>
<th>Benchmarks</th>
<th>Updates &amp; Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify best practice/evidence-based practices in PD. a) Identify existing standards for PD providers. b) Gather research about effective PD methods.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identify methods for providing PD to PD providers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Providers from cross-sector early childhood agencies and initiatives including family support/leadership groups