**Preschool Inclusion:**

**Current State Challenges and Solutions**



Results from a recent national survey about the current challenges and solutions to serving young children in regular Early Childhood programs were shared at the recent Improving Data, Improving Outcomes Conference September 2014. Participants had an opportunity to list challenges, and work together to discuss and share ideas and solutions to those challenges. Solutions and successful strategies for providing inclusive environments for young children are shared.

**Discussion of Preschool Inclusion Solutions:**

**Attitudes and Beliefs**

* Provide an on-going mind set and awareness of Inclusion
* Define Inclusion – What does it really look like?
  + Share information on inclusion – participation, access and supports
  + Continue the ongoing campaign of awareness
* All need to know the power of Inclusion – Part C and 619 are services to be provided in natural and least restrictive environments
* Have a parent panel inform school staff and the community about the importance of inclusion
* Educate
  + And empower parents
  + Medical professionals and private providers
  + Elementary school principals and administrators
  + Part C, where services in natural environments begin
* Differentiate medical vs. educational services
* Provide information to legislatures for the support of funding structures and other funding options that promote inclusive options
* Inclusion must be a consideration of all training, including personnel preparation programs, teacher ed programs, and paraprofessional training and certification
* Use national and state organizations as a venue to support professional development

**Professional Training and Qualifications**

* Provide pre-service training through Institutes of Higher Education (IHE).
* Shift the expectation of service delivery to service in regular early childhood programs
* Provide ongoing support to community and local education (LEA) programs
* Provide model sites
* Change delivery services models, provide professional development by coaching (Building Blocks)
* Use role release, ongoing professional development, trans-disciplinary teams and functional IEP goal
* Provide curriculum and teacher preparation training at Institutes of Higher Learning (IHE) that teaches how to provide services in inclusive models
  + Begin with teaching typical development
  + Teach beliefs and strategies to support inclusion
  + Teach teaming and the importance of adults working collaboratively together
  + Pair cooperating teachers and Institutes of Higher Learning (IHE) to ensure pre-service focus on inclusion
* Provide professional development to regular education teachers, child care providers
  + Support and build capacity , especially attitudes, knowledge, and skills
  + Support brainstorming solutions through communities of practice (CoP)
* Provide training for the role of 619 coordinators
* Require certification and licensing and dual certifications
* New Mexico has a new inclusion guide which focuses on staff and administration
* Massachusetts provides intensive training and coaching through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and a one year commitment to learn to design “ready environments”

**Transportation**

* Zone districts sites and services to be closer to families and consider HS and community programs within zones and areas of need
* Provide an awareness of transportation responsibilities, attitudes, costs, options, etc.
* Discuss attitudes regarding:
  + Parent responsibility – who is responsible for transportation and when?
  + How does your state and program view LRE? Is the home considered an LRE placement?
* Provide home based services, particularly for three year olds
* Strengthen state pre-k
* Plan and train for the use of itinerant staff , train both the itinerant and classroom staff
* Use community outreach projects, such as book mobile, libraries, health care, Ready for K and other community programs as opportunities
* Use distance learning to provide services
* Provide reimbursement to families for transportation

**Fiscal (Contracting, Eligibility)**

* Braid various funding streams and resources to create inclusive programs
* Engage in creative use of various funding streams
* Leverage various funding streams/resources such as Medicaid, Title I, 611
* Develop state funding policies that support ratios of 70/30 vs. 50/50
* Build community based partnership that promote inclusive services
* Create contracts with community EC programs
* State funded programs must contract with community centers
* Pay for tuition in community centers
* Provide itinerate services
* Pay for “windshield time” for itinerate staff
* Discuss possible use of high cost special education reimbursement funds, if available in your state
* The [WV County Collaborative Team Resources](http://wvde.state.wv.us/oel/county-resources.php) were listed as resources, particularly their budget templates andUniversal Pre-K Partnerships Collaborating with Community Programsresources
* Develop state policies and procedures that promote inclusion
* Include children with disabilities in universal pre-k programs

**Program Standards/Quality**

* Integrate children with disabilities and inclusion into state or regional quality system
  + All means all
  + Unless inclusive, quality not achieved
  + Indicators woven into quality designation
* Feds need to push inclusion in RTTT (directive?)
* All invest in quality system (Ed & EC)
* Look for work in progress for definitions of “quality” re: inclusion
* Provide TA for quality includes specialized content re: inclusion
* Train administrators on the use of preschool specific tools and resources
* Continue to share resources and tools, and post them on the ECTA website inclusion page

**Resources**

* Develop interagency agreements; define inclusion /services
* Educate teachers, administrators, community about the importance of inclusion
* Examine financial resources; cost of different environments; have inclusion specialists to assist (consultation) classrooms/teachers
* How do we change?
  + Have detailed models of inclusion
    - Steps for implementation
  + Inclusion collaborative (Santa Clara county (CA) office of ed tool kit)
* Show how children with disabilities don’t have to be “ready”
* Provide resources to support inclusion, e.g. [www.challengingbehavior.org](http://www.challengingbehavior.org)
* Have people who are doing it well show how, e.g. community of practice, demonstration sites
* Use universal pre-k
* Provide resources to train general ed staff
* Have a policy that stipulates the general ed setting should be considered first