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early developments Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

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Inclusion in Child Care Centers

From the Director's Office: Inclusion at the Frank Porter
Graham Child Development Center

Policy Makes a Difference

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Inclusion

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NCEDL News: Advising the Researchers

Policy makes a difference

How one defines inclusion affects the policy decisions that are made about placements.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH INSTITUTE on Inclusion (ECRII), a joint effort of the FPG Center and UNC's School of Education, has found that communities, schools and early intervention programs have a variety of ways of defining inclusion for pre-school children. A better understanding of definitions may lead to more informed placements of young children with disabilities, according to ECRII director Sam Odom.

"Our research is beginning to reveal organizational factors that may serve as barriers to and facilitators of inclusion," said Odom. Policies make a difference. "For example, in order for community-based programs to operate, some school systems had to develop policies that allowed them to use funds to pay for the tuition of children with disabilities in private child care centers and to allow staff to travel in the community rather than working within a school building."

4 Organizational structures are another factor. When Head Start operates within the public school organization, intra-agency organizational variables (for example, whether the early childhood programs for young children with disabilities are administered through a Special Education division or an Early Childhood division of the organization) appear to affect the implementation of inclusion.

Identifying goals

These factors come into play because different program types are associated with different goals and if these goals can be identified, this may lead to better informed decisions about placements for children. Put another way: Having a common understanding of the meaning(s) of inclusion allows discussion of programs that might be most useful for specific children.

Another component of Odom's institute examined the impact of changing roles on relationships among professionals in inclusive program for young children (see sidebar on page 5 for highlights of this study).

Policy implications

These findings have implications for personnel preparation. Odom said, "Previously, personnel preparation has been child-centered with little emphasis on consultation, group process and interpersonal skills. However, as programs that serve young children have become more inclusive, adult roles are changing radically. The ways in which adults work with, communicate to, and collaborate with other adults is assuming primary importance. Efforts to prepare personnel are critical so that participants develop the skills necessary to collaborate effectively in a variety of new roles."

(See POLICY, next page)



A better understanding of definitions may lead to more informed placements of young children with disabilities


Highlights of this study

The Impact of Changing Roles on Relationships between Professionals in Inclusive Programs for Young Children

- When early childhood teachers had little input into the development of the inclusive program, problems with roles and relationships were identified.
- Joint ownership sometimes proved difficult to achieve in a number of programs using an itinerant approach (i.e., early childhood special education teachers travel to consult with teachers in child care centers).
- Communication among program staff members was also a major determinant of how successful their relationships were and how successfully the program functioned.
- Ill-defined and poorly understood roles sometimes affected teachers' satisfaction with their role and served to undermine working relationships.
- The ability to release roles and share responsibilities was helpful in some circumstances.
- Familiarity with other adults in the program, which often had a positive impact on the relationships among the adults, did not occur when there was a lack of stability in the professional staff.
- In a new program, a lack of familiarity with roles and among the various adults in the program can impede the development of staff relationships.
- A sense of shared philosophy or joint ownership of children appears to produce more positive experiences for adults and children.

POLICY

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And as head of a new degree program in Child Development and Family Studies at UNC's School of Education, Odom finds himself in the position of being able to make the changes he and others have urged. "Our program includes emphasis on both early childhood education and early intervention. Our graduates will be prepared to work in kindergarten, child care preschools and early interventions programs," he said. An emphasis is placed on preparing students to be leaders and the local and state levels. 

In partnership with the community

BUILDING A RAMP FOR CHILDREN with disabilities is the least of the problems faced by many community child care programs trying to become inclusive.

Recognizing this, in 1991 several state agencies in North Carolina and the Frank Porter Graham Center created Partnerships for Inclusion (PFI) as a technical assistance vehicle to raise community awareness, help erase fears about inclusion, and provide strategies for child care and other community programs.

It started as a test project in 17 counties; today, it covers all 100 counties and is funded by a number of state agencies, including the division that licenses child care programs. The project has three offices across the state and a dozen staff members including three full-time inclusion specialists.

Over the years, PFI has developed many technical assistance services and models. For example, the community forum is a half-day event where diverse stakeholders in the community come together to learn what inclusion is. "For many communities, it is a springboard for planning future directions," said Pat Wesley, an FPG researcher and PFI director.

Inclusion of different cultures

In recent years, Wesley and her team have *(See PARTNERSHIP page 6)*



moved into an increasingly familiar direction for many: Developing products and technical assistance for people who speak Spanish. "Inclusion today means not just children with disabilities, but people from different cultures and countries," said Wesley.

She said North Carolina has made good strides toward inclusion. "But we've got a long way to go before we, as a state, can say we're offering quality child care to every child."

She sees several challenges: "In North Carolina, child care is expected to be available and affordable, and the truth is that we pay some child care providers less than we pay parking lot attendants. Typically, providers don't have degrees or adequate training in child development, much less special education. A system that does not recruit and maintain qualified providers is a system ill-prepared to serve children at all."

Lack of expertise

Fear of change is another challenge. "Some special education teachers and therapists have felt threatened by inclusion because they lack experience and expertise in typical classrooms. And we find similar concerns with administrators.

Today, we're discovering that, with training and support, early interventionists and early childhood teachers have


success with inclusion and like it. And they'll come to us and say, 'You need to explain all this to our bosses. They need to understand how it works.'"

Another challenge is in academia. Wesley said, "We need to raise the scholarly status of technical assis-

tance, so that researchers see TA as a vital link between their work and practitioners. It's not a one-way street. We need more constituent involvement and collaboration in our planning, research and dissemination."

PFI is building its own ramp to the future by expanding the definition of inclusion beyond the classroom to include community opportunities for children with disabilities. "Are there children with special needs in karate class offered by the community rec department? What about the 4-H camps? Scouting? Before and after school programs? If we listen to the people in communities, more and more of them see the need to make opportunities like these open to all children. At the state level, we see more flexible funding mechanisms in early intervention and increased subsidies for child care programs. These are important policy changes designed to support inclusion at

the local level. My hope is that it won't be long before inclusion becomes a way of life in all communities. I guess then I'll be looking for a new job!"

(For more information about PFI, contact Pat Wesley at 919-962-7356 or pat_wesley@unc.edu or PFI, 521 S. Greensboro St. Suite 100, Carrboro, NC 27510.) 

PFI highlights

- Designed a preservice curriculum about inclusion for students taking early childhood courses in the community college system.
- In collaboration with state agencies, reviewed standards for child care and early intervention programs with an eye toward removing obstacles to inclusion.
- Developed training materials and award-winning videos for child care providers and other professionals serving children and families.
- Publishes a quarterly magazine for early childhood/early intervention professionals and families.
- Trains general early childhood and early intervention professionals to provide consultation services to improve the quality of child care.
- Conducts staff development activities with about 2,000 people each year who work across NC in child care, public schools, early intervention, Head Start, research and referral programs, public health, Smart Start, and other community agencies.
- Maintains an extensive statewide lending library of materials about inclusion.
- Offers training and on-site consultation on classroom strategies.
- Conducts study tours of effective inclusive programs.

Selected inclusion publications

-  **Promoting Positive Attitudes of Kindergarten-Age Children toward Individuals with Disabilities**
P.C. Favazza, & S.L. Odom. (1997). *Exceptional Children*, 63, 405–422.
-  **Supporting Early Childhood Inclusion: Lessons Learned through a Statewide Technical Assistance Project**
P. Wesley, & V. Buysse. (1996). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 16(4), 476–499.
-  **Rethinking Pull-out Services in Early Intervention: A Professional Resource**
R.A. McWilliam. (Ed.) (1996). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
-  **Assessing the Comfort Zone of Child Care Teachers in Serving Young Children with Disabilities**
V. Buysse, P. Wesley, L. Keyes, & D.B. Bailey. (1996). *Journal of Early Intervention*, 20(3), 209–210.
-  **The Relationship Between Child Characteristics and Placement in Specialized Versus Inclusive Preschool Programs**
V. Buysse, D.B. Bailey, T.M. Smith, & R.J. Simeonsson. (1994). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 14(4) 419–435.
-  **Providing On-Site Consultation to Promote Quality in Integrated Child Care Programs**
P. Wesley. (1994). *Journal of Early Intervention*, 18(4), 391–402.
-  **Communications among Preschoolers with and without Disabilities in Same-Age and Mixed-Age Classes**
J.E. Roberts, M.R. Burchinal, & D.B. Bailey. (1994.) *American Journal of Mental Retardation*, 99, 231–249.
-  **Behavioral and Developmental Outcomes in Young Children with Disabilities in Integrated and Segregated Settings: A Review of Comparative Studies**
V. Buysse, & D.B. Bailey. (1993). *Journal of Special Education*, 26(4), 434–461.
-  **Friendships of Preschoolers With Disabilities in Community-Based Settings**
V. Buysse. (1993). *Journal of Early Intervention*, 17(4), 380–395.
-  **Providing Family Support in Integrated Settings: Research and Recommendations**
P.J. Winton. (1993). In C. Peck, S. Odom, & D. Bricher (Eds.), *Integrating Young Children with Disabilities into Community Programs: From Research to Implementation*. Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.
-  **Dimensions of Mastery in Same-Age and Mixed-Age Integrated classrooms**
P.M. Blasco, R.A. McWilliam, W.B. Ware, & M.R. Burchinal. (1993). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 8, 193–206.
-  **Mainstreaming Young Children: A Training Series for Child Care Providers**
P. Wesley. (1992). Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.
-  **Promoting a Normalizing Approach to Families: Integrating Principles with Practices**
P.J. Winton. (1990). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 10(1), 90–103.
-  **Normalizing Early Intervention**
D.B. Bailey, & R.A. McWilliam. (1990). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 10(2), 33–47.
-  **Friendship and Acquaintance Among Families in a Mainstreamed Day Care Center**
D.B. Bailey, & P.J. Winton. (1989). *Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded*, June, 107–113.
-  **Stability and Change in Parents' Expectations about Mainstreaming**
D.B. Bailey, & P.J. Winton. (1987). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 7(1), 73–88.
-  **Consequences of Mainstreaming for Families of Young Handicapped Children**
P.J. Winton. (1986). In C.J. Meisel. (Ed.), *Mainstreamed Handicapped Children: Outcomes, Controversies and New Directions*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
-  **Selecting a Preschool: A Guide for Parents of Handicapped Children**
P.J. Winton, A. Turnbull, & J. Blacher. (1984). Baltimore, MD: University Park Press.
-  **A Comparison of Specialized and Mainstreamed Preschools from the Perspectives of Parents of Handicapped Children**
A. Turnbull, & P.J. Winton. (1983). *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 8(1), 57–71.
-  **Mainstreaming in the Kindergarten Classroom: Perspectives of Parents of Handicapped and Nonhandicapped Children**
A. Turnbull, P.J. Winton, J. Blacher, & N. Salkind. (1983). *Journal of the Division of Early Childhood Education*, 6, 14–20.