

Central Region Inclusion Connections Meeting Highlights

September 12, 2008

Guilford Child Development, Greensboro, NC

Number of Participants:

- 51

Topics discussed:

- **Research:** Reviewed what research tells us about inclusion.
- **Resources:** Explored some resources to support inclusion. Participants added additional resources to *Some Favorite Resources on Inclusion* handout. Updated handout is included.
- **The State of Inclusion:** Facilitated discussion of what's happening within communities for children with disabilities and their families. The following themes emerged, as well as inherent challenges, during our discussion.
 - ❖ **Resources** to support inclusion including resources to meet families' desires and include diverse families.
 - ❖ **Professional Development/Education/On-going training** is needed to support families and early care and educational professionals (teachers, administrators, consultants, higher education faculty members, etc.). Community colleges are making efforts to infuse inclusion into online courses and are in search of resources to support this effort. There is a need to prepare and support early care and education professionals on the pre-service end and in our higher ed. Institutions.
 - ❖ **Range of options** for children and families with respect to families' choice (natural environments, self-contained settings, and/or inclusive settings).
 - ❖ **Culturally relevant/responsive/family centered approach** that allows for diverse perspectives. There is a need to provide information to families, including written information, in a meaningful and relevant manner and in the families' primary language. Anne Marie encouraged the group to go beyond the family's primary language and reminded us that we are trained in the American way to educate/provide care and that there are other diverse ways to support families.

- ❖ **Roles:** Our roles and responsibility to ensure that we are sharing information with families in a relevant way and the roles of administrators/leadership to support inclusion emerged.
 - ❖ **Learning opportunities** beyond the classroom for all children, including the importance of outdoor learning environments.
 - ❖ **Fear** (or feelings) from individuals in the field of not being prepared and/or ready to work with children with disabilities.
- **Opportunities to observe and visit inclusive settings:** Participants shared information about their programs and extended an opportunity for individuals to observe inclusive settings:
 - ❖ Partners in Learning, Salisbury, NC
<http://www.epartnersinlearning.org/>, Norma W. Honeycutt, Executive Director, and Cindy Webb, Inclusion Specialist.
 - ❖ The Special Children’s School, Winston-Salem, NC,
<http://www.specialchildrenschool.org/>, Karen Young, Child Care Director.
 - ❖ Thompson Child and Family Focus (Matthews, NC)/Thompson Child Development Center (Charlotte/North Charlotte, NC),
<http://www.thompsoncff.org/>, is opening a new 5 Star Child Development Center.
 - **Staying Connected:** Participants are open to rotating the meeting’s location and creating a list serv to stay connected. Below is a listing of participants’ suggestions for the new Regional Inclusion Connections’ web page on Partnerships for Inclusion’s website. These suggestions were noted on the meeting evaluation form :
 - ❖ List Serv, links, maybe a chat room, online training opportunities/meetings.
 - ❖ Post meeting agendas and minutes, and maybe a blog.
 - ❖ Reviews of books or resources that others have found helpful
 - ❖ Bulletin board for exchanging ideas, getting new perspectives in issues
 - ❖ Updates in NC and National Updates
 - ❖ Some way to vent/share ideas to solve problems
 - ❖ Hot topics
 - ❖ More on the laws of school exceptional services and parent knowledge of support
 - ❖ Information for providers

- **Suggestion for Regional Inclusion Connections' web page, continued:**
 - ❖ Ideas for expanding inclusion in the county
 - ❖ Strategies that are working
 - ❖ Training modules to train staff regarding inclusion
 - ❖ Opportunities for direct observations
 - ❖ Trainers to come to staff meetings, models, ways to pursue other agencies for help
 - ❖ What agencies are currently doing, in what counties, what services are offered, and how to connect parents to them.
 - ❖ QuickNotes II as a PDF
 - ❖ New Research, Train-the-trainer options and support for TA Providers
 - ❖ Links to different supports for parents and professionals
 - ❖ Videos on best practices
 - ❖ Guest speakers
 - ❖ Discussion forums
 - ❖ Current research and articles

Agency Update: Partnerships for Inclusion's Activities for 2008-2009 were reviewed. Participants were invited to announce agency updates or submit updates electronically to Rhodus.

Evaluation, Certificates, & Adjourn

Submitted by: Rhodus Riggins, Jr., November 11, 2008