The Big Picture

A Planning Guide for Cross-Sector Early Childhood Professional Development Systems

NPDCI

Introduction

This guide offers a 7-step sequence for considering the key components and contexts of a statewide early childhood professional development (PD) system. The content of the guide stems from a definition[1] and conceptual framework for PD developed by the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (National Professional Development Center on Inclusion, 2008a). The purpose of the guide is to support states in developing integrated plans and systems for cross-sector[2] early childhood professional development. It was designed to support individuals and groups with responsibility for the organization and facilitation of a sequential process.

7-Step Planning Sequence

1	Set the Stage
2	Discuss Core PD Components
3	Determine Key Contexts and Supports for PD
4	Clarify Your Vision
5	Identify Goals for Attaining Your Vision
6	Develop Your Plan for Cross-Sector PD
7	Evaluate Your Progress

Information included under each step will offer suggestions and questions to guide examination of current practices and promote discussion of possible future directions. While this tool was originally designed to guide the development of a cross-sector PD system that supports high quality inclusion (National Professional Development Center on Inclusion, 2008b), it could also be an effective resource for generating generic plans or to address specific content areas such as promoting social-emotional development or enhancing early language and literacy skills.

Facilitated discussion is required at each step of the process, as well as mechanisms for capturing input and synthesizing it for use in each succeeding step.

National Professional Development Center on Inclusion

Helping states achieve an integrated professional development system that supports high quality inclusion

Step 1—Set the Stage

Setting the stage for effective cross-sector planning requires important preliminary steps. Some involve identifying who will be involved, which includes both a coordinator for the ongoing process and the cross-sector leaders who will participate throughout. Taking inventory of the scope, sequence, and effectiveness of existing early childhood PD efforts is an important first step in the planning process. Gathering information from different sectors about existing plans, frameworks, guidance, initiatives, and lessons learned, sets the stage to build on, learn from, and collaborate with both past and present PD efforts. Compiling these resources so they are accessible to all can lead to seeing commonalities across sectors, discovering tools that are unique to one or more sectors, and identifying strategies for using one sector's resources more broadly, in a cross-sector manner.

- **Identify an individual to coordinate the planning process.**
  - ¤ Who will take responsibility for facilitating the process and orchestrating the details ranging from meeting date/time/place to capturing an ongoing record of the work accomplished?

- **Identify and engage cross-sector leaders who will work together in all steps of this process.**
  - ¤ Which leaders from various sectors have knowledge, power, and resources to support PD in this area?
  - ¤ Which individuals are providing leadership in early childhood professional development?
  - ¤ Have you thought broadly about the sectors and included representation from higher education? Family members?
  - ¤ Do the members reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of your state?
  - ¤ Do the members reflect agencies and initiatives that support young children with disabilities and their families?

- **Create a profile of state resources.** Compile existing visions, initiative, plans, standards, competencies, etc. related to early childhood professional development. Appendix A provides details on one strategy for gathering this information.

- **Identify the potential benefits of cross-sector early childhood PD (e.g., enhanced collaboration among PD providers and beneficiaries, reduction of duplicative efforts, etc.).**
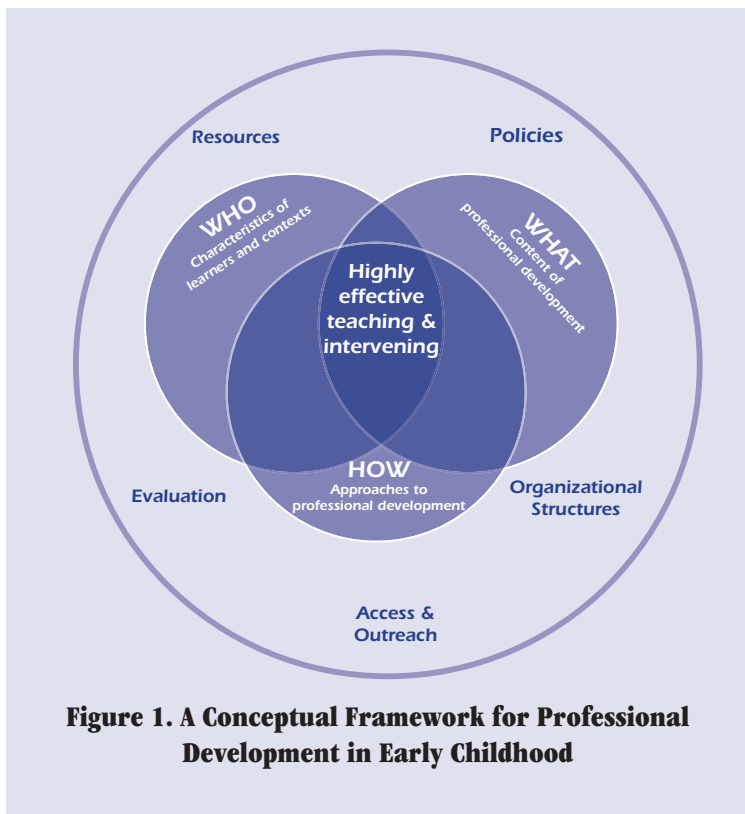

Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework for Professional Development in Early Childhood

Step 2—Discuss the Core PD Components:
Who, What, and How

Building on the information gathered in Step 1, Step 2 invites consideration of who is currently providing and receiving professional development, the capabilities being developed, and the approaches being used to support that development. *The Landscape* is a tool NPDCI has developed to help in gathering some of this information (Buysse, Hollingsworth, & West, 2008). As Figure 1 indicates, the who, what, and how should be examined in terms of the current status of PD efforts and in terms of future directions that would be consistent with improvements in cross-sector PD efforts. The broader context of PD shown in the diagram will be examined in Step 3.

Who

CURRENT STATUS

- Who are the learners who currently benefit from early childhood PD?
- Who are your PD providers? What are the qualifications of those PD providers?
- Describe the characteristics of the learners in terms of their qualifications, roles and experience, and describe the characteristics and contexts of the children and families they serve.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Who could best deliver PD to these groups?
- What underserved groups of learners could benefit from a cross-sector approach to PD?
- How could you better reach underserved audiences and geographic regions?

What

CURRENT STATUS

- What knowledge and skills do PD providers need to build the capabilities of practitioners who work with young children and families?
- What written professional competencies or standards guide decisions about who is qualified to provide PD? Are there written competencies that are recognized and used by all sectors?
- Have the competencies needed by practitioners to be prepared to work effectively with young children, families and colleagues been identified? Do these competencies identify knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to support children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse? If yes, are these competencies recognized and used by all sectors?
- What other program, professional, and early learning standards guide PD priorities? Are these standards recognized and used by all sectors?
- What relevant research guides PD priorities for PD providers? For practitioners?

FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What knowledge, skills and dispositions do you want to build in PD providers? In practitioners?

How

CURRENT STATUS

- What PD approaches (e.g., training, consultation) are currently being used to support professional development?
- What relevant research guides the approaches currently being used to support professional development?
- Which implementation guides support current approaches to PD (e.g., consultation or coaching guidelines)?

FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How could PD be organized and facilitated to build the expertise of PD providers over time? Of practitioners?
- How could PD approaches incorporate ongoing support, collaboration, guidance, and feedback on specific practices (e.g., consultation, coaching, technical assistance, mentoring)?

Step 3—Determine Key Contexts and Supports for PD

Five interconnected components form the context for a cross-sector professional development system. These components interact in ways that sometimes strengthen and sometimes challenge the effectiveness of the system. Building on the work you did in Steps 1 and 2, consider what is currently in place, then identify what could be put in place to improve early childhood PD in your state.

Organizational Structures

CURRENT STATUS

- What structures that support early childhood PD are currently in place (e.g., a trainer/training approval system? Higher education consortium? Statewide PD committee?)

FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO CONSIDER
- How could you build on the strengths you have identified? How could you address the weaknesses or gaps you have identified in the current structures? For instance, do existing structures operate in silos? Does the lack of a collaborative, cross-sector approach result in duplication of efforts?
- How could you address coordination of PD efforts across multiple agencies, institutions and disciplines?

Access and Outreach

CURRENT STATUS
- What mechanisms are in place to provide easy access to available PD opportunities (e.g., online database, training calendar, directory of college degree programs, training registries)? Effective and successful?
- To what extent have diverse audiences benefited from outreach efforts (e.g., providers of family child care)?
- To what extent are multiple methods of accessing PD (e.g., weekend classes or workshops, face-to-face and distance offerings, etc.) available? Effective and successful?
- What available supports are in place for diverse learners (e.g., scholarships, tuition remission, advising, mentoring, etc.)? Effective and successful?
- Are there gaps in current approaches to PD?

FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO CONSIDER
- How could you address the weaknesses or gaps you have identified in access and outreach?

Policies

CURRENT STATUS
- What existing policies influence planning for cross-sector PD in positive ways? In neutral ways? In negative ways?
- What policies support the planning in this area? What policies impede planning in this area?

FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO CONSIDER
- How could you address policy barriers you have identified?

Resources

CURRENT STATUS
- What resources support the delivery of PD? What funding streams are currently in place to support PD for children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability-diverse (e.g., funds earmarked for PD initiatives)?
- What methods/strategies exist for leveraging resources across sectors?

FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO CONSIDER
- How could you ensure sufficient supports for the planning, delivery, and administration of PD?

Evaluation of Professional Development

CURRENT STATUS
- What information is currently being gathered to better understand the who, what, and how of PD efforts?
- Are data being collected that help identify which PD efforts are effective and successful?

FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO CONSIDER
- How could you support evaluation of the effectiveness and success of future PD efforts? How could you evaluate the fidelity of implementation of the PD approaches being used?

Step 4—Clarify Your Vision

Essential to the success of this process is the establishment of a shared vision for early childhood PD that articulates what you want to achieve collectively. Written in words that are easy to understand, the vision, which will build on Steps 1–3, should paint a clear picture of direction, purpose, and common ground for current and future collaborating partners.

- Is there an existing vision for PD on which you could build? If not, develop a process for developing a shared, written vision.

Step 5—Identify Goals for Attaining Your Vision

Completion of Steps 1-4 should leave cross-sector leaders with a clear picture of the current components and contexts of early childhood PD in your state and ideas for areas of change. Here are some important considerations to keep in mind while working toward the identification of a concise set of goals that will support the attainment of your vision.

- Keep your vision clearly in mind. Your goals should articulate doable and important steps toward attaining that vision.
- What did you identify in Step 2 about the core PD components (who, what, how) that should guide your goals?
- What did you identify in Step 3 about key contexts and supports for PD that should guide your goal setting?
- How will these goals address gaps in current approaches to professional development?
- How will these goals benefit children who are culturally, linguistically and ability-diverse and their families?
- Are the goals both doable and important?
- Are the goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely)?

Step 6—Develop and Implement Your Plan

Building from the vision (Step 4) and goals (Step 5), develop the components of a plan for accomplishing your goals. One format for a cross-sector PD plan is provided in Appendix B.

Specify

- The sequence of objectives and action steps needed to attain each goal;
- The date by which each objective will be accomplished. This can also be expressed as the duration for that action step;
- The individual(s) responsible for each action step;
- The benchmark(s) and data sources for measuring progress toward achieving the objective; and
- The product(s) that will be developed in meeting each objective.
- How "who, what, and how" are integrated in each goal, objective, and action step.

Step 7—Evaluate Your Progress

Consider

- How will you monitor and measure progress on this plan? Toward attainment of your vision?
- At what intervals will you revisit your action steps, objectives, and goals to assess progress or to see if they need to be revised?
- Developing a portfolio of artifacts that documents changes and a rubric by which to evaluate progress.

Notes

[1]"Professional development is 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." (National Professional Development Center on Inclusion, 2008a)

[2]NPDCI uses the term cross-sector to mean representation of diverse "sectors" of the early childhood field, ranging from agencies to higher education and family organizations.

References

Buysse, V., Hollingsworth, H., & West, T. (2008). *The landscape: A statewide survey for providers of professional development in early childhood.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, NPDCI. This resource, for gathering information about key PD components and contexts, is available to download at the NPDCI Web site (http://community.fpg.unc.edu/npdci).

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National Professional Development Center on Inclusion. (2008b). *Professional development 1-2-3 planning guide.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, Author. This resource, to help individuals organize planning around a single early childhood PD goal, is available to download at the NPDCI Web site (http://community.fpg.unc.edu/npdci).

Resources

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Appendix A
Building a State Early Childhood Professional Development Profile

An important step for supporting cross-sector professional development is to gather information about the guidance, initiatives and plans that each sector uses. Compiling these resources can support opportunities to:

- see commonalities across sectors;
- discover tools that are unique to one or more sectors; and
- identify strategies for using one sector's resources more broadly, in a cross-sector manner.

The template below could form the basis for building, sharing, and using a State Profile.

State Profile on Professional Development
1. Existing Vision(s) Related to Professional Development
2. Professional Development Initiatives • Funded projects that provide early childhood professional development • Partnerships with national early childhood projects and centers like the Center for the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning
3. Foundations: Plans, Agreements, Policies and Guidance • The Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) plan • Part C and 619 improvement strategies related to natural environments and least restrictive environments
4. Standards, Competencies, and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) • Early learning standards or guidelines for infants and toddlers and/or preschoolers • Competencies for teachers, practitioners, consultants, etc. • Program standards
5. Other Professional Development Data Sources • The National Prekindergarten Center's report on Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Programs profile on your state, which is available at http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npc/pages/state_reports.cfm

Appendix B
Plan for Cross-Sector Professional Development

Vision (an agreed upon statement of what the group would like to see happen in the future)

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

Goal (broad statement(s) of what needs to be accomplished to achieve the vision)

Example: Develop a cross-sector professional development system to support increased opportunities for high quality inclusion

Objective (definitive statement(s) of specific and measurable work to be accomplished in order to achieve the goal). Two kinds of objectives might be identified:

    1) professional development objectives; and/or **2) systems or organizational objectives.**

Professional Development Objective (stated in terms of who, what, and how)
Examples: "_____ (Who) _____ (What) _____ (How)
Cross-sector PD providers including the R&R network of trainers, regional special education coordinators and Maternal and Child Health consultants (Who) will receive professional development on research-based practices to support inclusion (What) through a state-wide summit and ongoing communities of practice (How).

Systems Level/Organizational Objective to Support the PD Objective (consider policies, organizational structures, access and outreach, resources, evaluation of professional development)
Example: Create a new organizational structure to support a regional cross-agency approach to early childhood professional development

Action Steps*	Date/ Duration	Human Resources	Benchmarks/ Data Sources/ Products