2015 Leadership Conference
“All In: Achieving Results Together”

Improving the Design and Implementation of Inservice Professional Development in Early Childhood Intervention

Mary Beth Bruder
ECPC Project Co-Director
University of Connecticut

Carl J. Dunst
Senior Research Scientist
Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute
Objectives

1. Provide an overview of the research foundations of evidence-based early childhood intervention professional development

2. Describe the key characteristics of effective inservice professional development

3. Describe challenges in implementing evidence-based inservice professional development in early childhood intervention
Unlike many fields that have a history of steady improvement built on a continually expanding knowledge base, professional learning for educators has a mixed history at best. Some critics argue that [professional development] lacks a strong evidence base [because] of a general absence of purpose. Others...argue that the research community has failed to offer useful guidelines for “best practice” for...improving the quality and effectiveness of professional learning activities (Guskey, 2014, p. 10).

Research Foundations for the Professional Development Model

Metasynthesis of inservice professional development studies:

• 15 research reviews of different types of inservice professional development
• 555 studies included in the 15 reviews
• 50,000+ early intervention, preschool, elementary, and secondary education teachers, educators, and practitioners

Method of Analysis of the Inservice Reviews

• Multiple case study research design (Yin, 2014) was used to identify which inservice professional development characteristics under which conditions were associated with positive adult and student/child outcomes

• A replication logic (Hak & Dul, 2010) and pattern matching (Hak & Dul, 2010) were used to determine if the same or similar inservice characteristics in the different reviews were associated with the same or similar study outcomes

Characteristics of Inservice Professional Development Coded in the Metasynthesis

**Focus of Training:** Learner objectives and content area

**Inservice Setting:** Job-embedded or non job-embedded inservice training

**Inservice Characteristics:** Trainer introduction and illustration of a practice, authentic educator/practitioner learning opportunities and learner reflection, professional development specialist coaching, mentoring, or performance feedback during inservice training

**Contextual Variables:** Extended learner supports and inservice dosage of sufficient amounts to reinforce initial learning

**Study Outcomes:** Learner outcomes and student/child outcomes
Seven Characteristics of Effective Inservice Professional Development

- Professional development specialists’ explicit explanation and illustration of the specific content knowledge and practice to be learned
- Active and authentic job-embedded practitioner opportunities to learn to use a practice and to engage in evaluation of their experiences
- Explicit inclusion of different types of practices for engaging practitioners in reflection on their understanding and mastery of a practice
- Coaching, mentoring, or performance feedback by a professional development specialist during inservice training
- Ongoing follow-up supports by professional development specialists, coaches, supervisors, peers, etc. to reinforce inservice learning sessions
- Inservice professional development of sufficient duration and intensity to provide multiple opportunities to become proficient in the use of a practice
- Inservice professional development that includes all or most of the six sets of key features described above is more likely to be effective compared to professional development including fewer features
Professional Development Specialists’ Explicit Explanation and Illustration of the Specific Content Knowledge and Practice to Be Learned

This includes the methods used to introduce and describe the key characteristics of the practice constituting the focus of inservice professional development and the student/child outcomes that are related to the practices, and the methods used to demonstrate or illustrate the use of the practice and its effects in terms of expected or desired outcomes.

Active and Authentic Job-Embedded Practitioner Opportunities to Learn to Use a Practice and To Engage in Evaluation of Their Experiences

This includes, but is not limited to, job-embedded home-based or classroom-based use of a practice, simulated learning opportunities, learner-led descriptions of use of a practice, and opportunities to be actively involved in as many of the inservice training activities as possible “as opposed to passively sitting through lectures” in workshops (Desimone, 2011, p. 69).

Explicit Inclusion of Different Types of Practices for Engaging Practitioners in Reflection On Their Understanding and Mastery of a Practice

This includes, but is not limited to, performance-based group discussions, collective participation, journaling, self-assessment of mastery against a set of performance standards, and practitioner-instructor reflective conversations. Especially important are opportunities for reflection on what worked and what needs improvement based on authentic job-embedded use of a practice.

Coaching, Mentoring, or Performance Feedback by a Professional Development Specialist During Inservice Training

This includes in-vivo observations of practitioners’ use of a practice and performance feedback, coaching or mentoring sessions, instructor suggestions and feedback from videos of practitioners’ use of a practice, and telephone, e-mail, or web-based suggestions and mentoring (e.g., Glazer & Hannafin, 2006).

Ongoing Follow-Up Supports by Professional Development Specialists, Coaches, Supervisors, Peers, etc., to Reinforce Inservice Learning Sessions

The importance and necessity of continued supports have been noted by a number of investigators synthesizing available evidence for promoting the adoption and use of different types of intervention practices (e.g., Joyce & Showers, 2002; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010). Kretlow and Bartholomew (2010) noted, for example, that coaching was most effective when it included “follow-up observations and specific feedback” (p.292) of practitioners using the intervention practice that was the focus of inservice training.


Inservice Professional Development of Sufficient Duration and Intensity to Provide Multiple Opportunities to Become Proficient in the Use of a Practice

According to Desimone (2011), professional development will likely be most effective when practitioner learning opportunities are distributed over time and include a sufficient number of contacts between professional development specialists and practitioners.

Improving Inservice Professional Development in Early Childhood Intervention

• Results from the metasynthesis were used to adapt models proposed by Desimone (2009) and Guskey (2002) applicable to inservice professional development in early childhood intervention.

• The proposed model builds and expands upon a model developed based on a meta-analysis of adult learning methods (Dunst & Trivette, 2009).


Challenges in Implementing Evidence-Based Inservice Professional Development in Early Childhood Intervention

• Limited inservice professional development resources (funding, expertise, time, etc.) to plan and implement effective training

• Sheer number of early childhood intervention professionals that are employed in early intervention and preschool special education

• Systems, policy, and practice-related barriers that discourage the use of evidence-based in service professional development

• Changing the status quo (ecology) and history of early childhood professional development
PowerPoint available at:

www.puckett.org
and
http://www.ecpcta.org/our_work/powerpoints.html