

# Lessons Learned about Professional Development

## Parent Engagement and Child Learning Birth to Five:

*Getting Ready Project*



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# *Focus of Project*

***The Project is based on the beliefs that:***

- Relationships *within* the family system, and *between* the family and other important support systems in a child's life, are central.
- Parent engagement is a key variable for early childhood development and school readiness.





# Objective of Project

- The specific **objective** of this study is to carefully evaluate the overall benefits of a multicomponent, multisystemic intervention that:
  - is child *and* parent focused;
  - addresses both home and center/school environments; &
  - is designed to improve the skills of early childhood professionals to increase **early** and **sustained** parent engagement in the learning of their child.
- Intervention is aimed at addressing variables that predict parent engagement, including:
  - Warmth/sensitivity
  - Support and guidance for child's autonomy
  - Active participation in learning and literacy

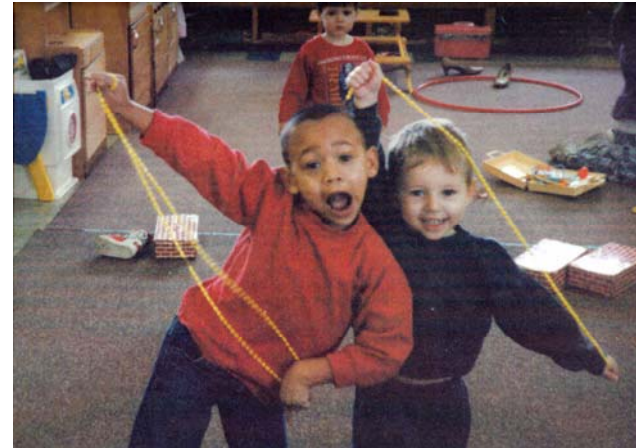
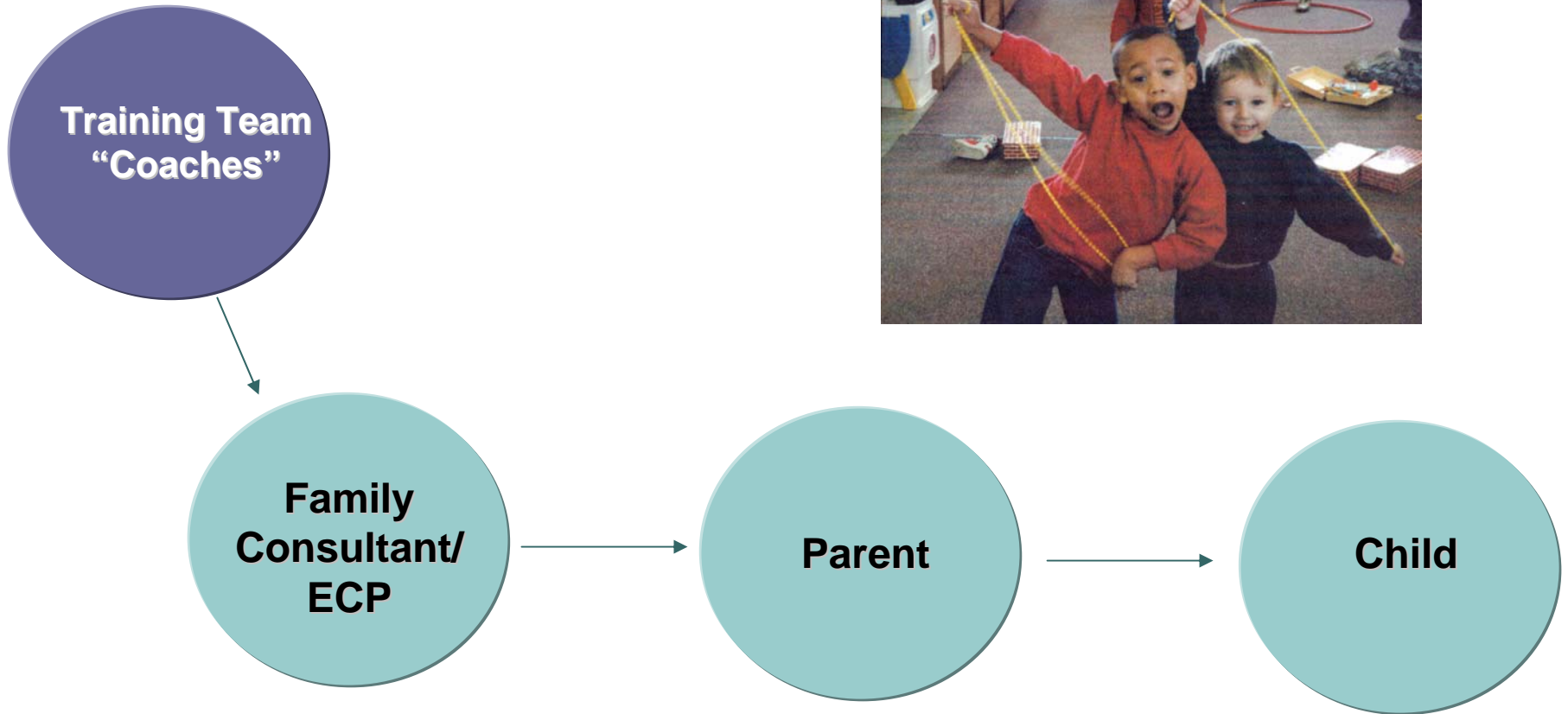


# General Features of the Intervention

*Early childhood professionals (ECPs) use the following to support parent engagement:*

- **Triadic consultation** (McCollum & Yates) -- early childhood professionals interact with families in ways that promote their confidence (self-efficacy) and competence
- **Collaborative/Conjoint consultation** (Sheridan, Kratochwill, & Bergan) — early childhood professionals strengthen collaborative relationships among families and early childhood professionals and increase opportunities and expectations for meaningful involvement
- **Reflective supervision** (Erickson; McDonough) — early childhood professionals are provided ongoing support and video-mediated supervision (“self as model”) to continually improve skills and services to families

# *Indirect Model of Intervention*





# *Performance Sites*

## ***Early Head Start Home-Based Programs***

- Blue Valley Community Action Partnership (BVCA)
- Hastings Head Start Child and Family Development, Inc.
  - Home visits weekly; family socializations

## ***Head Start Center-Based Programs***

- Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) E<sup>x</sup>CITE
  - Home visits 6 times/year; family socializations, parent-teacher conferences

## ***Student-Parent Program Center-Based Program***

- LPS high school child care centers
  - Conferences bi-weekly; family socializations

# Aims of Professional Development

- Develop professionals' skills to support parent-child interaction and sense of competence and confidence.
- Support early childhood professionals in the use of *triadic and collaborative strategies* with families.
- Create a community of learners to support reflective practice.



The logo for the Getting Ready Project features three colored circles (dark teal, light teal, grey) above the text "Getting Ready Project" and a graphic of three interlocking blocks labeled "C", "B", and "DE".

# *Model of Professional Development*

- **Professional Preparation/ Training**
  - Initial training, 1 – 3 day sessions
  - Booster training sessions annually
- **On-going Support and Practice**
  - Group coaching
  - Individual coaching
  - In-vivo observations – home visits, socializations, conferences, etc.
  - Classroom support – Consultation and CBC

# Child School Readiness



## Parent Engagement

*(Expressing Warmth and Sensitivity, Promoting Autonomy and Self-Reliance, Participating in Child Learning and Literacy )*

*supported by*

***Triadic/ Collaborative Interactions***

Professional Preparation

Reflective Coaching

Practice with Families



# *Assessment of Model*

- **Assessment of Process**
  - Audio-tapes of individual and group sessions
  - Coaches' process notes
  - Teacher/provider questionnaires
  - Individual interviews with participants
- **Assessment of Outcomes**
  - Fidelity ratings of home visit videos



# *Lessons Learned...*





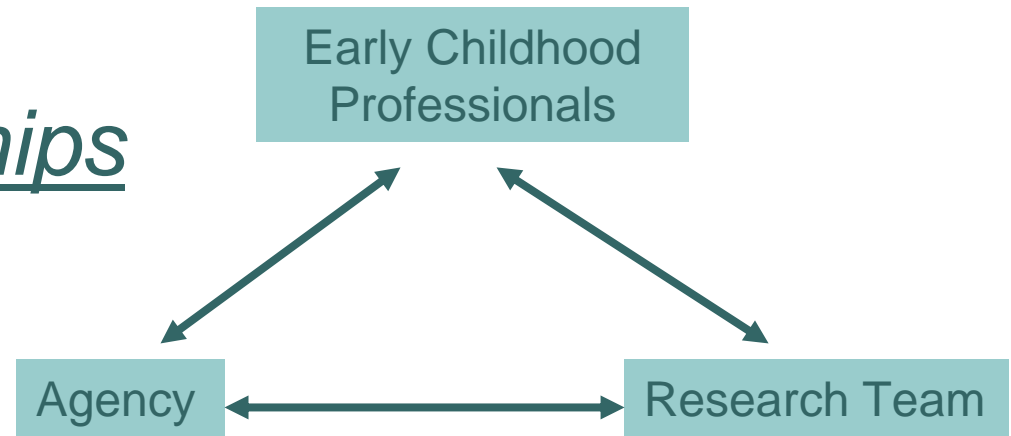
# *Challenges to Implementing the Professional Development Model*

- Relationships
- Buy-in
- Background/existing skills of early childhood professionals
- Variety of contexts
- Moving from awareness to application and then generalized practice of the strategies
- Teacher turnover & limited time





# Relationships



## Project Responses:

- Build initial relationships with agencies through listening and goal setting based on shared values about family-centered practice;
- Reinforce agency practices (e.g. family literacy portfolios);
- Modify project coaching personnel based on teacher responses to coaching styles and philosophies



# Buy-in from early childhood professionals

*- Attitudinal shift regarding priority of parent partnership and readiness for change*

## Project Responses:

- Build morale during training;
- Use skilled, upbeat trainers;
- Integrate professional development aims with agency expectations





# Background/existing skills of early childhood professionals

- *Limitations in child development background and observational skills for home visitors;*
- *Varied ability to apply knowledge of working with parents for center-based preschool educators;*
- *Varied ability to use environment and teachable moments with parents, for center based teen parent educators;*
- *Varied assistance from agency supervisors in applying the new practices*



# *Background/existing skills of early childhood professionals*

## **Project Responses:**

- Modify coaching practices to support skill development
  - Use videos from home visits in intentional ways and discuss strengths as well as “missed opportunities”;
  - Infuse child development discussions into coaching sessions;
- Provide additional support (graduate teaching assistant) in one of the teen parent programs (drawing from success with CBC grad assistants in preschool programs)

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## Variety of contexts

- *diversity of settings,*
- *parental backgrounds/ vulnerabilities,*
- *agency climate*

### **Project Responses:**

- Work in a flexible, relationship-based way that promotes partnership as much as possible;
- Acknowledge and respond to the contexts through individualized planning and goal setting concerning use of triadic and collaborative strategies




# *Moving from awareness to application and then generalized practice of the strategies*

## **Project Responses:**

- Individualize coaching process;
- Adapt model for use over several years to respond to increasing skill of early childhood professionals and their needs and preferences as they emerge (e.g. using focus group feedback to respond to their concerns)





*Teacher turnover, limited extra time, and stressful nature of the work*

**Project Responses:**

- Develop materials for use in streamlined trainings;
- Build a supportive climate in coaching that acknowledges their issues and realities (e.g. allow discussion of job stresses during initial part of coaching session)

*Ongoing challenge for our study and the field.*



# Questions and Discussion

