

Parent and Family Education 2012 Summer Retreat

Thoughts on Professional Development

(Friday PM Circle of the whole group)

Isolation of professional practice and need to find time to connect with other PEs

- Our work is often done alone and on our own.
- PEs need face to face time with each other to share and work on their own development and practice is needed to address the isolation of the practice.
- PE teachers at different sites are limited to discussion with EC teachers at same site as PE.
- Having a chance to talk to people who do the same job I do is really important to me.
- One methods class was not enough to prepare us for the job.
- Always looking for new ideas for what to do with parents, but not enough time to brainstorm with other PEs about what we do. Isolating.
- Co-teachers are helpful, even though they are not parent educators.
- I research a lot on my own.
- When I used to meet on my own with a group of parent educators at a coffee shop it was great to see ideas morph and emerge. That was beneficial.
- Reflection on our practice is important. It can be difficult to coordinate time to reflect with each other.

Policy and professional development

- Even though licensed in parent and family ed, policy issues in the development of the field compel involvement in making the greatest impact for families with special needs. Important to be involved in policies that have impact and be involved in research that directs policy because they inform and depend on each other.

Funding for professional development

- ECFE programs have control of their budgets. If professional development is important, programs can dedicate time for professional development, even if it means cutting some classes.
- Would like to see more focus on the larger system so PEs can flourish within it and be taken seriously. Infant classes don't run because there are not enough professionals. Parents with mental health issues are hard to facilitate.
- Between 2008 and 2010 over 50 programs in state had money in fund balances that was lost because it was not used. What could we have done with \$600,000 for professional development?

Reaching parents and families with greatest risk versus reaching the greatest numbers

- ECFE is not far reaching in who most often comes to classes. In Kingsland district, I have had success at reaching at-risk families, but the backlash is the perception that we need to reach more families (e.g.; a music class with little PE content drew lots of families and was seen positively).

- Disconnected with our mission. Give time to parent educators at beginning of the year to discuss needs. Maybe survey of parents: What do parents with special needs want from us? How can we better provide it? What would draw them in?

Connecting systems

- Connecting the pieces within the schooling system--research and policy information, and connecting K-12 and PE to learn from each other would better help families. Is our policy supporting things that we value? If we broadened our view of parenting to include all ages, we would have a better ability to advocate for our field. How do we incorporate different perspectives on children, families, and parents, to improve society?

Opportunities to develop parenting education outside of ECFE

- Lots of power in relationships outside of ECFE. Clinic got excited when I got started in relationship with them to let them know this is what we PEs do--support families in finding their own solutions. The clinic didn't know about parent educators. Physicians don't know to refer to PE to help parents deal with symptoms of lack of sleep, or other issues. So, what if we combined with other professions, too, to have them come together to learn from them, too.
- PE is a patient-parent on pediatric clinic advisory group. Doctors inundated her with questions because they want to be able to give resources to parents. Docs don't have educational resources. Docs can recommend a referral, but can't prescribe PE. The school and medical systems don't work together. Both systems are working with the same child..
- Would pediatric clinics see it as cost effective to have a PE on staff? Would Alina foundation or another provide grant for PE to be on staff with clinic?
- Parallels with lactation consultation in La Leche League. Trying to get docs to refer parents to group.
- PE and Head Start can work together more right now. Duluth is the only Head Start program connected to the school district. How can PE connect to Head Start regions and sites?
- Title I has a parent involvement component. PE should be involved, not only the Title I coordinator. Family Fun nights often are the parent involvement component. We could do better.
- Tell your doctor; tell your psychologist what PEs can do so other professionals know. Earning the respect of other professionals.
- Parenting programs going on in correctional institutions.

District-wide staff professional development opportunities and limitations.

- No separate early childhood professional development. We attend pd meetings with other teachers on direct instruction, academic achievement. K-12 staff wants PEs to push their academic agenda on parents.
- If no control for separate professional development for PEs, separate funding/scholarships are critical to enable PE to attend when district doesn't provide financial backing.

- When we have been given a 4 day notice on professional development opportunity, it is not enough time to figure out how to make use of the time in PE. We can't sit around and talk, the time has to be in line with increasing academic achievement. Institutional culture is oppressive and inhibiting.
- Positive in my district: all staff included in professional learning communities. We had to design ourselves. Seven of us read different parenting books and gave report and handout. We had paid reading time.

Technology

- I use technology with my groups because they use technology.
- More opportunity to develop learning about technology and how to use with parents.

Education or therapy or service provider/connector?

- I find I'm working in Doherty's therapy level a lot. Beneficial for educators to have training in those levels. Talks with social work and counseling all the time because the reality is that we are going to that depth whether we want to or not.
- Decision making about roles in assisting families - helping them find services. We want families to leave our programs feeling good about the work they've invested in, for their families.

Group process

- Desire more understanding of group dynamics for challenging families and individuals. Hands on examples of how to handle those situations.
- Skill in group facilitation techniques that address emotion and intellect, as well as the difference between education and therapy. Education is therapeutic.
- As a parent educator, it's frustrating to have to sit through k-12 teacher development (math lessons), etc. Money and time is being wasted. I will start squawking soon. As a new person it is hard.

Improving our program at the University

- Change comes slowly but can be uplifting and positive.
- There is also a challenge as an institution to create things where the benefit equals the cost.
- Our students should have more opportunities observing and more exposure to policies and tensions surrounding them.
- I would like to see our program address some of these areas and explore how PEs understand the boundaries between education and therapy.

Building the field and promoting parent education more broadly

- EC tends to be seen as more important than PE. Give stakeholders ownership to make it worthwhile.
- Collecting data on student achievement would be required.
- How do we educate the superintendents? Even our program directors need to understand what our jobs are like.

- Does anyone track ECFE students to see if there is a difference?
- Megan Gunnar's brain research shows that at age 2 you can predict 3rd grade reading scores. Income isn't as important as parent engagement.
- Are you serving a representative population of your district? ECFE is thought to be for white moms' coffee club. How to meet the challenge of reaching the diversity of families in ECFE (since it is a universal access program)? Diversity in our classes is real energy!
- If we had better numbers to show, it could be helpful. Numbers don't look as good as they should.
- Does early social-emotional growth help to reduce bullying?
- Family stress reduction/management and school performance relationship could be useful.
- Superintendent meeting with hospital administrator would help open doors for PE in clinics and hospital settings.
- How would you come up with more culturally relevant approaches?
- If you're a PE and had a parent who had potential, could there be a process where parent would be co-teacher with PE and time would count toward college credit?
- Where to parenting educators gain the skills to advocate for program universality and equity?

Competition and other outside forces

- ECFE funding is OK this year, but scholarship advocates are going to ask for \$150 million that could take money from ECFE in future legislation. In Cambridge we looked at second grade reading scores. ECFE families were at 84% for reading scores, preschool was 56%, which is a testament to parent involvement. People who argue against preschool/Head Start say it only provides a temporary bump in school performance. We should know what is happening in the years K, 1, 2, 3 to see why gains are not retained.
- Competition is coming from outside for-profit corporations. District is consulting with [PIQE](#) that brings in educators to work with parents to show them that how engagement increases test scores. They have research to sell themselves.
- Medical clinic asked PE to train parents in "1-2-3 Magic" parenting program. PE refused because approach is not consistent with her philosophy. Psychologist put the proposal together.
- Build on momentum for Pre-K3 movement. United way supports it, districts do it. Beware of districts pushing down academic learning to EC. Inform districts that are some things you need to learn from us -- family involvement we do well, you do not.
- How to change the ethic that thousands will attend a sporting event but you can't get 10 parents out to a parenting education program? Is it in what we offer? The tone of parenting ed? The feeling of exclusivity? Away from stigma?

Funding for professional development

- Resource-rich districts can sponsor retreats and invite neighboring districts.
- Look at funding reports to see fund balance. ECFE money is protected, so district can't take it. Community Ed. can't take ECFE money. State gets report of funds avail in each district.

- PTO raises money in Edina. They pay for workshops and books.

Pay equity

- Difference in pay between districts is huge. Individual districts made decisions for how Qcomp would be set up.
- Not all PEs are part of the union.