

TATS eUpdate
Program Effectiveness and Evaluation

The *What, Why and How* of Program Effectiveness/Quality and Evaluation

Part 1

October 2007

There is a link between program quality and increased outcomes for prekindergarten children with disabilities (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The increasing emphasis on accountability, standards, and evidence-based research for use in programs for these children is a result of mandates for program accountability in federal legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and the use of the continuous improvement model to monitor state programs.

Program assessment/evaluation is one tool used to determine program effectiveness or quality. Several steps are involved:

- The assessment of a program results in identification of strengths and weaknesses within the program.
- An action plan can then be developed from the results of this assessment.
- This action plan can then be implemented to effect program improvement and increase quality. It is an on-going, continuous process.

In order to assess the effectiveness of district programs for prekindergarten children with disabilities, two things need to be in place. First, **what** constitutes a process for looking at the quality of the program(s), and second, **how** to implement the process. This update (Part 1) will look at what constitutes the process of looking at the quality of the program(s). Part 2 will provide some suggestions on how to implement the process, and Part 3 will describe a plan of action.

Best Practice

What to look for in a quality program effectiveness process.

1. **Comprehensive goals guide the evaluation process.** The district needs a clear idea (vision/mission) of what aspects of the program are being evaluated and why. This may vary from district to district. In order to effectively evaluate how well these goals are being met, multiple sources of data should be used. The joint position statement on curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation by the National Association For the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) suggests that programs be evaluated regularly, “using

varied, appropriate, conceptually and technically sound evidence to determine the extent to which programs meet the expected standards of quality and to examine intended as well as unintended results” (2003).

2. **Progress is assessed using sound measures on an on-going, periodic basis.** The program evaluation process is used for continuous improvement. After the program is assessed, plans for improvement should be implemented according to established time lines. Re-evaluation of the process should occur periodically.
3. **There are indicators of achievement of child outcomes (concrete outcome goals) and a plan for attaining them based on effective practices.** Areas to be assessed include:
 - a. Program, curriculum and instruction, including environments, inclusion and transition processes
 - b. On-going assessment of child progress
4. **Procedures are in place for supporting and evaluating teacher quality/competence.**
5. **Procedures are in place for supporting and evaluating family and community involvement.**
6. **Interagency agreements/procedures are in place with procedures for periodic review and updates.**

Reflections

1. Are the goals of the special and general education programs aligned with each other and with state standards?
2. Is there a process in place to measure the effectiveness of the programs?
3. Are all of the key players (school-based administrators, district level administrators, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, resource personnel) knowledgeable about the standards and the efforts to improve program quality?

“Aim for success, not perfection. Never give up your right to be wrong, because then you will lose the ability to learn new things and move forward with your life.” – Dr. David M. Burns

References and Resources

Bowman, B.T., Donovan, M.S., & Burns, M.S. (Eds.). (2000). *Educating our preschoolers*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education

Research center focused on assisting state and local education agencies to organize and use data, provide information on effective programs and evaluate and disseminate findings. Assists in the development of a Data-Driven District (3-D) strategy using continuous student performance data to drive district and school policies and practices.

<http://www.cddrs.org/>

Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center

A 5-year collaborative project funded by OSEP providing research and technical assistance to promote the development and implementation of child and family outcome measures for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities for use in local, state, and national accountability systems. <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/index.cfm>

Florida Rule 6A-6.03026 Florida Administrative Code (FAC) Special Programs for Prekindergarten Children with Disabilities and 6A-6.03027 (FAC) Special Programs for Children Three Through Five Years Old Who are Developmentally Delayed.

<https://www.flrules.org/gateway/readFile.asp?sid=0&tid=1062846&type=1&file=6A-6.03026.doc>

<https://www.flrules.org/gateway/readFile.asp?sid=0&tid=1062943&type=1&file=6A-6.03027.doc>

Harbin, G., Rous, B., & McLean, M. (2005). Issues in designing state accountability systems. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 27(3), 137-164.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) & National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE). (2003). Early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation: Building an effective, accountable system in programs for children birth through age 8. www.naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/pscape.pdf

Sandall, S., Hemmeter, M.L., Smith, B.J., & McLean, M.E. (2005). *DEC recommended practices: A comprehensive guide for practical application in early intervention early childhood special education*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West

Shonkoff, J.P., & Phillips, D.A. (Eds.) (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Smith, B. (2000). *Administrator's essentials: Creating policies and procedures that support recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE)*. DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education. Retrieved January, 16, 2007 from the DEC website. <http://www.dec-sped.org/pdf/recommendedpractices/adminessen.pdf>

Technical Assistance & Training System (TATS)

Statewide project providing technical assistance and training to programs in Florida serving prekindergarten children with disabilities. Website provides information and resources on curriculum and instruction, evaluation and assessment, family involvement, inclusion, program effectiveness/quality, and transition, as well as, linking early childhood partners. www.tats.ucf.edu

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC):

Quality Rating Systems: Definition and Statewide Systems (NCCIC)

<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/qrs-defsystems.pdf>

Quality Rating Systems and the Impact on Quality in Early Care and Education Settings (NCCIC). <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/qrs-impactqualitycc.pdf>

Other topics, including children with disabilities and early childhood educational systems. <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/index.html#ecsystems>



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