Creating an Effective Technical Assistance System to Develop High Quality Early Learning Programs

Session #1
Laying the Foundation for Effective State Technical Assistance Systems

Sheila Smith
Billie Young
Debi Mathias
Introductions and Updates

A person from each state report on one item — a success, a challenge, a question — your state team has to share about ** Creating an Effective Technical Assistance System to Develop High Quality Early Learning Programs. **

AZ, DE, IL, ME, MI, NC, NH, PA, VT, WI CA, CO, CT, FL, HI, IN, DY, MA, UT, WA
Recap Agenda

• Key child outcomes and practices QRIS TA should target (highlights from research)
• Findings from research on effective TA
• Response from states
• Questions and Discussion
• Next Steps for Learning Table
Key child outcomes and practices TA should target
(highlights from research)

Sheila Smith, Ph.D.
Director, Early Childhood
National Center for Children in Poverty
Key child outcomes and practices
TA should target

- What do we want to achieve with technical assistance?
  - What **child outcomes** do we want TA to help promote?
  - What **practices** in ECE settings do we want TA to improve, so that these settings promote key child outcomes?
Overview

- Research over past two decades has identified key competencies children need to succeed in school
- Briefly review these foundational competencies
- Highlight ECE practices that have been shown to help children acquire them
Social-emotional competence

- Social skills that help children get along with peers and teachers (cooperation, sharing, positive response to others ideas)
- Emotion knowledge and regulation

- Social-emotional competence related to children’s engagement in learning and positive relationships with teachers
Social-emotional teaching practices

- **Model** positive social behavior
- Intentionally teach children positive social behavior and emotion regulation
- Help expand children’s emotion vocabulary and understanding of others’ intentions
- Promote supportive relationships with children
Language and Literacy Competencies

- Oral language skills
  - Growing vocabulary
  - Ability to understand and use increasingly complex language

- Literacy skills
  - Letter knowledge
  - Phonological awareness (seen in knowledge of letter-sound relationships, ability to hear syllables in words)
Practices that Promote Language and Literacy Competencies

- Conversation about interesting topics; use explanations, pictures, and props to teach new vocabulary; encourage children’s use of new language
- Letter and PA games and activities (intentional teaching)
Early math competencies predict both math and reading outcomes

-- Number sense (counting, quantity)
-- Shapes
-- Spatial relationships
-- Measurement (smaller, longer, faster)
-- Patterns
-- Analysis and representation (graphs)
Practices that Promote
Early Mathematics Knowledge and Skills

- Daily intentional teaching of math concepts/skills in developmentally appropriate activities, math talk
- Specialized and general curricula
  -- Big Math for Little Kids
  -- Building Blocks for Math PreK
  -- High Scope’s Numbers Plus
Executive Function and Approach to Learning

- Executive function
  - Regulate attention and behavior
  - Working memory

- Approach to Learning
  - Motivation/initiative
  - Persistence
Practices that Support Executive Function and Approach to Learning

- Opportunities for children to plan some of their activities and experience sustained attention (e.g., through longer periods of planned thematic play) (Tools of the Mind)

- Classrooms with low stress and strong supports for children’s social emotional competence (Chicago School Readiness Project)
Other key practices

- Monitoring children’s learning and individualizing supports for learning

- Early learning focused parent involvement
Why targets matter

TA → Practices that support foundational competencies → Child Outcomes: School Readiness
Why targets matter

TA

Practices in programs unrelated to foundational competencies

Child Outcomes? School Readiness

NCCP

naeyc®

Build

Strong Foundations For Our Youngest Children
How well is TA targeting key child outcomes and practices that support these outcomes?

Coaching and Quality Assistance in Quality Rating Improvement Systems: Approaches Used by TA Providers to Improve Quality in Early Care and Education Programs and Home-based Settings

Also see: Practices for Promoting Young Children’s Learning in QRIS Standards
Findings from Research on Effective TA

• Two leading researchers, Kathryn Tout and Barbara Wasik, will talk about
  – Promising approaches to coaching and TA
  – Supporting TA providers to deliver effective TA
  – Related topics that are key to building effective TA Systems
Research on TA and Coaching

Kathryn Tout, Ph.D.
Co-Director, Early Childhood Research & Senior Research Scientist
Child Trends
What have we learned about coaching?

• Coaching is linked to...
  – Improved learning environments
  – Improved practices, including teacher-child interactions
  – Improved developmental outcomes for children

• We know less about...
  – The specific dimensions and features of coaching that are linked to positive outcomes
Research on Coaching

• Two reviews of the research literature on coaching were conducted in 2011
  – Child Trends (Isner, Tout, Zaslow, Soli, et al)
  – Mathematica Policy Research (Aikens & Akers)

• Both reviews included research on approaches described as coaching, consultation and mentoring
  – There is inconsistency in how these terms are used
Learning Environments

• Coaching has positive effects on measures of the learning environment:
  – Activities and materials available for children
  – The structure of day and provisions for learning
  – Specific features of the environment related to literacy

• Findings based on observations using tools such as the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and the ELLCO.
Teacher Practices to Support Foundational Competencies

• Coaching has primarily positive effects on teacher practices and interactions, for example:
  – Responsive to children’s cues
  – Engaging children in language
  – Creating a more positive emotional climate
  – Provision of an enriched math environment

• Findings based on observational measures such as the CLASS.

• Studies infrequently reported on how coaching effected knowledge, attitudes and beliefs.
  – Some studies reported no effects; a few found positive changes in knowledge or attitudes.
Children’s Outcomes

• The findings on children’s outcomes are varied, but generally positive.
• Akers & Aikens reported 21 studies with positive effects, 8 with mixed effects and 6 with null effects on children.
• The effects of coaching are usually not examined separately from the effects of training and curriculum.
• Outcomes that were assessed include:
  – Specific language and literacy skills
  – Math skills
  – Social-emotional skills/positive behavior
  – Reduction in challenging behavior
Features of Effective Coaching

• Follows an intentional sequence
• Specific and goal-focused
• Linked with other professional development strategies such as training, coursework and communities of practice
• Structures are in place to track and support coaching in the field
Characteristics of Effective Coaching

Barbara Wasik, Ph.D., Professor & Chair in Early Childhood Education, Department of Teaching and Learning, Temple University
Context for Coaching

• Language and Literacy Intervention

• Funded by *Early Reading First*

• *ExCELL*- Exceptional Coaching for Early Language and Literacy
ExCELL

• One example of an effective PD intervention

• Focused on scaffolding teachers’ language interactions to provide more opportunities for children to talk and use language

• Book reading plays a critical part language development
ExCELL Findings

• Research-based intervention

• Evaluation shows significant impacts on:
  – Teacher quality (CLASS),
  – Classroom environment (ELLCO),
  – Child outcomes (PPVT-III; PALS)
Characteristics of Effective ExCELL Coaches

• Master’s degrees
• Knowledge of ECE and literacy
• Trust
• Ability to provide honest, direct yet not hurtful feedback
• Coach ≠ Friend
Support for ExCELL Coaches

- Initial training
- Ongoing mentoring & supervision
- Monthly PD (2 hours)
- Fidelity checks (lead coach)
ExCELL Teacher Training

- Monthly group trainings
- Weekly coaching sessions (1-3 hours)
- Books, materials, and lesson plans that support the development of children’s language and literacy, and
- Progress monitoring of children
Monthly Training Topics

- Oral language
- Conversations
- Book reading
- Phonological sensitivity
- Alphabet knowledge
- Print awareness
- Writing
ExCELL 1-to-1 coaching

• Observe & video teacher implementing a strategy
• View videos and discuss what was observed including both the positive things and what needs work
Critical Role of Coaches in *ExCELL*

- Train teachers to change the way they talk & interact with young children
  - Ask “open-ended” questions
  - Model rich language
  - Provide meaningful feedback
  - Recast what is said in a more rich, elaborated way

- Increasing the instructional quality
Coaches need to ...

- Model the strategy that they are teaching
- Scaffold teachers’ knowledge and practice, start small
- Provide constructive feedback
Power of Videotaping

- Show me vs. tell me
- See the whole experience from a different angle
- Objective perspective
T: Did you like the story?
C: Yeah
T: What did you like about the story?
C: The mitten
T: Tell me a bit about the story?
C: It was about a mitten and animals in the mitten?
T: Yes, what about the mitten?
C: The animals all tried to get into the mitten
T: Tell me about that?
C: There wasn’t enough room, the bunny, and the bagger, the owl, all of them.
Questions around Coaching related to Scaling-Up

• **Dosage** - How much training over what period of time

• **Fidelity**

• **Feasibility** - ExCELL-e
Coaches and Teachers need to work together to achieve positive child outcomes
Thank You!

THANKS ALSO TO THE EXCELL TEAM

MARY ALICE BOND
ANNEMARIE HINDMAN
ANN MARIE JUSCZYK
Dialogue with the Experts

• What needs to happen at the systems level to support the use of a consistent coaching model?

• How can coaches help teachers individualize learning supports for children -- a key feature of quality?

• How can TA providers help programs implement practices that promote continuous quality improvement?
Response from three states

• Stephanie Golden, M. Ed.
  Professional Development System Specialist
  Arizona First Things First

Barbara Mezzio
  Central Arizona College

• Katrina Coburn, M.Ed.
  Community Initiatives Director
  Pennsylvania Key

• Cindy Wheeler, MA, MPA
  Manager, Early Educator Support, Licensure and Professional Development Unit (EESLPD Unit)
  Division of Child Development and Early Education
  NC Department of Health and Human Services
Questions, Reflections, Comments?
On-Site Meeting in Chicago

Desired Results for the Meeting:

• Develop trust and teamwork across Learning Table states
• Lay the foundation for future Learning Table sessions
• Draft “maps” of TA in states
• Articulate individual state goals for the Learning Table
Agenda Highlights for On-Site

- History of TA—creating a timeline
- TA Glossary
- Laying the foundation for effective TA
- Mapping state TA systems
- Indicators of an effective cross-sector TA system and readiness for change
- TA planning template
- Next steps
Homework for On-Site

Reading

- Technical Assistance Planning Guide, PDW Center (on the landing pad)

Activities

- Meet with team, by phone or in-person, prior to the Chicago meeting: to gather information for The State TA Mapping Grid, and to discuss take-aways from Session 1 and implications for your work in your state which you can capture on the Work Plan Template
- State TA Mapping Grid—Work with your state team to fill it out to the extent possible prior to the Chicago meeting
- Bring enough business cards to exchange with 55 people
- Bring your team’s Learning Table goals to the meeting (question #8 on the application, or updated goals based on your team meeting)
At the Feb. 27 meeting, you will use this information to create a visual of the TAPs on a map of your state and to analyze:

- What more do we need to know to inform our planning? Are there opportunities we can grasp now?
- Are there major gaps in service, either geographically or by setting or sector?
- Are there redundancies to eliminate or ways we can increase alignment?
- What data are being collected and how do we know if TAPs are using research-based practices? What are the goals for the various TAPs across our state and how do we know if they are effective in achieving them?
Sample State Mapping Grid

*If you use the Program or Initiative, please indicate, if possible, whether or not they use coaches, mentors and consultants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaches—indicate the relevant Program or Initiatives using coaches*</th>
<th># TAP</th>
<th># Clients served</th>
<th>Geographic area served</th>
<th>Goals or outcomes: high level (literacy, licensing compliance, QRIS step increases, Head Start compliance issues)</th>
<th>Settings</th>
<th>Sectors served</th>
<th>Supervising or Employing Organization</th>
<th>Funding Sources</th>
<th>Governance: Who governs TAP services, sets standards, prioritizes recipients, establishes goals, collects data and evaluates effectiveness?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K Literacy coaches</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17 Pre-K programs; 68 teaching teams</td>
<td>Slowgo County and Mega City</td>
<td>Improve school readiness; increase use of literacy practices, such as dialogic reading, in Pre-K classrooms</td>
<td>centers and schools</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>Local educational service districts (ESD)</td>
<td>Early Reading First; state tobacco tax</td>
<td>Federal DOE, state DOE via the ESDs</td>
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</table>
The work plan is designed to help your state capture what you are learning and what you plan to do. It is part of your monthly homework:

Part I: Considerations from reading, homework, webinars, and peer resources

Part II: DRAFT action plan with objectives, action steps, resources needed, etc.
## TA Learning Table Work Plan Template
**Things to Consider in Building the State’s Work Plan**

### Session I – Laying the Foundation for Effective State Technical Assistance Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things to Consider from the Implementation Guide</th>
<th>Readings/Homework</th>
<th>Webinars/Presentations</th>
<th>Team Comments</th>
<th>Peer/State Resources and Other Thoughts</th>
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<tr>
<td>List the goals/outcomes your state wants To achieve:</td>
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<td>What information is important to capture as you move forward on goals/outcomes?</td>
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<td>What best or promising practice research does your state need to integrate into your planning?</td>
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## Work Plan: Action Planning Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Team Member(s) Assigned</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Desired Completion Date</th>
<th>How will we know when we've arrived?/What does it look like when we get there?</th>
<th>Peer/State Resources and Other Thoughts</th>
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Thank You

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