Topic Guide 4

Training and Developing Staff to Support Inclusion

After reading this guide, you'll be able to...

✓ Identify quality professional development that supports inclusive attitudes and practices.

✓ Support professional development over time to help programs make a positive difference for students with disabilities.

Tools in this guide include...

✓ An action planning checklist, with links to selected resources.

The Importance of Inclusion-Focused Professional Development

Novice, veteran and noncertified teachers staff many school-based 21st CCLC programs. Youth development workers collaborate with school districts to organize and implement activities at community-based programs. Families, communities and institutions of higher education often provide volunteers to support programs. With regard to inclusion, these individuals bring varying levels of knowledge and experience to the program environment. Inclusion-focused professional development can help programs build the knowledge and skills needed to include students with disabilities in 21st CCLC programs.

Knowledge and skills alone, however, are not sufficient. Values, beliefs and assumptions also come into play.[1] The following factors influence the inclusion of students with disabilities: beliefs about disability, assumptions about children's rights to inclusive environments, fears and anxiety about the capacity to serve children with disabilities, and perceptions that including a child with disabilities might have a negative effect on other children.[2]

YOU FOR YOUTH

All *Lessons From the Field* guides on inclusion, as well as other professional learning and technical assistance tools for 21st CCLCs, are available on the U.S. Department of Education's You for Youth (Y4Y) website at https://y4y.ed.gov.

Well-designed professional development can support staff members as they examine the ways these factors affect their practice and the program's organizational culture.

Lynn Bravewomon, coordinator for the Safe and Inclusive Schools Program in the Hayward Unified School District (CA), says "At the Youth Enrichment Program, as throughout the school district, a benchmark of cultural change is being able to discuss our diversity." She says this means looking at personal beliefs, values and attitudes alongside professional responsibilities, and understanding challenges that can arise when people of different races, genders, sexual orientations and abilities intersect and interact. Lynn emphasizes the importance of "providing professional development and curricular support to adults, so they can consciously support the development of an inclusive environment."

Identifying Quality Professional Development to Support Inclusion

Advocacy groups, professional associations, state departments of education, and a variety of state and local organizations offer training and professional development resources on inclusion (as discussed in topic guide 5, "Identifying and Developing Partnerships"). As 21st CCLC program leaders plan or identify quality professional development, here are some elements to consider:

Opportunities for guided reflection on attitudes toward inclusion and serving students with disabilities. Ideas about disability are shaped by language and discussion. It is a complex topic that calls for informed discussion, intentional thought and reflection. Here are some discussion ideas: Ask program staff to talk about what inclusion means to them and to their program. Seed the discussion with information and examples from research and practice. Spend time talking about disability and learning about disability culture. Acknowledge that when people hear the terms "disability" and "developmental delay," they do not typically consider all of the preconceived notions and societal views that influence their reactions.

> ### Think About It
> #### What Does Inclusion Mean to You?
>
> ★ Why do you think disability advocates encourage people to say "students with disabilities" instead of "disabled students"?
>
> ★ Can you think of a time when you or someone you cared about was labeled, stereotyped or excluded? Describe your feelings about it.
>
> ★ How might inclusive attitudes and practices benefit all students?
>
> ★ What do you think inclusion should look like in a 21st CCLC program?

Foundational knowledge about inclusion. Those who are new to inclusion might need (1) basic knowledge about disability, (2) specific guidance on behavior supports, and (3) strategies for individualizing and modifying practices.

Program-specific concerns about inclusion. A needs assessment can help you identify the challenges and concerns of site-level staff. Perhaps their concerns are similar to those identified during the U.S. Department of Education's Lessons From the Field project on inclusion in 21st CCLC programs. For that project, on-site technical assistance was provided to 10 program sites in three states (California, Massachusetts and Utah). Of the 16 inclusion-related topics offered, all 10 sites requested training related to three major themes: (1) behavior support (including pathways to positive behavior, behavior support techniques and responding to aggressive behavior); (2) support for students' social-emotional needs; and (3) accommodations for specific disabilities such as autism and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Guidance on reasonable modifications. The *Americans with Disabilities Act* requires modifications in policies, practices and procedures to support the participation of students with disabilities (see topic guide 2, "Legal Foundations of Inclusion: What You Need to Know"). Many 21st CCLC practitioners may not feel prepared to

design and implement modifications without training. To modify expectations, requirements, materials, activities or the environment, they might need training in the following areas:

- **Multiple means of representation:** Using a variety of activity formats to address a range of student needs and ability levels.

- **Multiple means of engagement:** Arousing students' attention, curiosity and motivation; addressing a range of interests and preferences; and maintaining students' interest by challenging them at the appropriate level to ensure learning.

- **Multiple means of expression:** Providing options in the materials and formats students can use for expressing ideas, responses, feelings and preferences and for demonstrating what they know.[3]

Real-life examples and role-play. Staff members can benefit from authentic examples of how to accommodate diverse student needs and opportunities to practice (role-play) specific modifications. As a follow-up to training, consider spending time in the program to observe staff using the strategies they learned. Schedule time to debrief so staff can reflect on how they implemented the strategy and how they might further refine it to meet students' needs. With the staff members' permission, you might share successful strategies with practitioners in other 21st CCLC programs.

Here is an example of a modification that resulted from professional development: After participating in Lessons From the Field project training on accommodations for children with autism, the art teacher at Gardner Pilot Academy in Boston examined her art room with a new perspective on the sensory needs of students with autism. She was able to see how paint splattered on the tables could be visually distracting to some students. She also realized that the accoustics in the art room created an "echo" that produced a noisy environment. To address these issues, the teacher covered paint-splattered tables with butcher paper and implemented a voice volume chart to help students keep their voices low.

Training for adults in various roles. Program leaders, staff, volunteers and community partners who work in 21st CCLC programs need to know what inclusion means; what the law says about disability rights; and

what it takes to implement inclusive policies and practices.[4] Wareham Public Schools in Massachusetts, for example, provides training for all school professionals, including those involved in afterschool, on the bus, and in maintenance and custodial services. The focus is developmental assets — skills, experiences, relationships and behaviors that prepare young people for academic, social and emotional success. These assets include the ability to plan and make decisions, to take personal responsibility for one's actions, and to resolve conflicts peacefully. Wareham's Office of Beyond School Time also offers the training to grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and to other adults who come into contact with students in the 21st CCLC program. (To learn more about developmental assets, visit http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets.)

Supporting Professional Development on Inclusion Over Time

Program leaders and practitioners can better implement what they learn during training when they have ongoing opportunities for reflection, discussion and support. Consider the following:

Create time and space for ongoing professional development within the program environment. Here are some ideas:

- **Guided practice:** Mentors or trainers observe implementation and provide immediate feedback.[5]
- **Partnerships:** Partner with school and community professionals to provide ongoing support for practitioners as they implement new practices.

- **Job shadowing:** The employment contract of Utah's Promise South Salt Lake program includes a requirement for staff to shadow school-day teachers at the feeder schools. Afterschool staff spend time each week assisting the teacher and leading activities. This helps teachers and staff to get to know each other and build positive relationships. In addition, afterschool staff receive feedback about effective strategies from experienced teachers.

Expose staff to a variety of strategies for inclusion, over time. Many 21st CCLC programs in Massachusetts provide training on Universal Design for Learning, an instructional approach for meeting the needs of all individuals with varying levels of ability. It provides flexibility and opportunity by using collaborative partnerships, technology tools and differentiated instruction. A critical component is multiple means of representation, engagement and expression. Learn more at www.udlcenter.org. Also, see topic guide 9, "Addressing Individual Needs and Engaging All Learners."

Story From the Field

Providing Opportunities for Staff to Learn and Grow

Gardner Pilot Academy, Boston

The special education coordinator at Gardner Pilot Academy offers monthly, 90-minute trainings in the evening, and inclusion is often on the agenda. She also makes herself available for consultations and observations. A 21st CCLC practitioner who's trying to figure out how to serve a specific child with a disability can ask the coordinator for individual assistance. The coordinator might meet with the practitioner several times over the course of a few weeks to discuss the issues and help plan accommodations, observe the accommodations in action to see how they have been implemented, then provide feedback to the 21st CCLC practitioner.

Provide tools that will help staff practice concepts learned during training. For example, you might provide a checklist like the one below[6] after a training session on effective strategies for fine-tuning inclusive practices:

Checklist: Strategies for Making Activities Inclusive
When a student says "I can't do that," make sure …

- ✓ The activity is appropriate for the student's age and developmental level.
- ✓ The activity is authentic and relevant to the student's experience.
- ✓ You used multiple modes of presentation to convey activity goals and instructions.
- ✓ You used cooperative strategies.
- ✓ You provided alternate ways for the student to complete the activity.
- ✓ You have modified the activity according to student needs.
- ✓ You have modeled completion of the activity.

Encourage increased understanding of the relationship between students' behaviors and their social-emotional skills. Students with behavioral issues present the biggest challenges for practitioners in inclusive settings.[7] What if program staff have done all they can to ensure that an activity is inclusive, but a student persists in challenging behavior? It's possible that such behaviors are rooted in the student's lack of social-emotional skills. See topic guide 10, "Supporting Social-Emotional Learning," for ideas and strategies.

Involve people who understand disabilities. Consider inviting advocacy groups or people with disabilities to lead a professional development activity, participate in a discussion or mentor program staff. These groups and individuals often have experiences and insights that provide a valuable perspective.

Action Planning Checklist for 21st CCLC Programs (With Selected Resources)

Identifying Quality Professional Development to Support Inclusion

☐ **Assess the program's professional development needs.** What do staff, partners and volunteers already know about including students with various disabilities, providing behavior supports, and modifying practices to meet individual needs? What do they need to know? Consider using a survey or meeting to get input on training topics.

☐ **Set the stage.** Prompt staff to think about the larger purpose and importance of including all students in 21st CCLC programs: For example, you might ask them to think about the skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults. The Search Institute has developed a framework of developmental assets that help children of various ages grow up healthy, caring and responsible. Learn more at http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets.

☐ **Zero in.** Identify and share resources that target specific needs at the program and site levels. For example, if student behavior is an issue, you might consider the *Social and Emotional Learning Practices: A Self-Reflection Tool for Afterschool Staff,* from the American Institutes for Research, available at http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Social-Emotional-Learning-Afterschool-Toolkit-Sept-2015.pdf.

Supporting Professional Development on Inclusion Over Time

☐ **Create time and space for ongoing professional development.**

  ☐ Identify which times of day are best for professional development.

  ☐ Consider bringing several sites together so staff can establish collegial relationships and learn from each other. This process provides opportunities for individuals with inclusion experience to mentor others with less experience.

  ☐ Follow up after training events through team meetings or professional learning communities to identify ways to help practitioners implement what they learned.

  ☐ Allocate time for staff to research and plan activities and to meet as a team when beneficial.

☐ **Share the *Lessons From the Field* guides on inclusion with program staff and volunteers.** The U.S. Department of Education developed this series of 10 guides especially for 21st CCLC programs. Each guide covers a topic related to inclusive programming, partnerships or student engagement. Available at https://y4y.ed.gov.

Interested in checklists on other inclusion topics? All *Lessons From the Field* topical guides on inclusion contain checklists like this one. The guides are available at https://y4y.ed.gov.

YOU FOR YOUTH

Notes

[1] J. Rix and A. Paige-Smith, "Exploring Barriers to Reflection and Learning: Developing a Perspective Lens, *Journal of Research in Special Education Needs,* 11, no. 1 (2010): 30-41.

[2] S. Wong and T. Cumming, "Family Day Care Is for Normal Kids: Facilitators and Barriers to the Inclusion of Children With Disabilities in Family Day Care," *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood,* 35, no. 3 (2010): 4-12.

[3] Division for Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children, *Promoting Positive Outcomes for Children With Disabilities: Recommendations for Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation,* 2007. http://www.tats.ucf.edu/docs/DEC_CurriculumFramework.pdf.

[4] L. Knoche, C.A. Peterson, C.P. Edwards, and H. Jeon, "Child Care for Children With and Without Disabilities: The Provider, Observer, and Parent Perspectives," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 21 (2006), pp. 93-109.

[5] M. E. Snell, M. D. Voorhees, R. A. Berlin, T. L. Stanton-Chapman, S. Hadden, and J. McCarty, "Use of Interview and Observation to Clarify Reported Practices of Head Start Staff Concerning Problem Behavior: Implications for Programs and Training," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions,* 14, no. 2 (2012): 108-17.

[6] M. M. Thompson and S. W. Tutwiler, "Coaching the After-School Instructional Staff," *Educational Leadership,* 58, no. 7 (2001): 56-58.

[7] E. Gal, N. Schreur, and B. Engel-Yeger, "Inclusion of Children With Disabilities: Teachers' Attitudes and Requirements for Environmental Accommodations," *International Journal of Special Education,* 25, no. 2 (2010): 89-98.