Perspectives of Systems Change; Implementing the Early Childhood Systems Model

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Design/Purpose

- Qualitative interview and documentation analysis
- Examined the implementation of the preschool systems model
- Explored the perspectives of preschool leadership teams
- Revealed themes that emerged during implementation
- Identified factors that contributed to or hindered the process

Participant Demographics

Gender	N	Age	N	Role	N	Years Employed with the Program	N	Prior Training on Systems Development within 12 Mon.	N
Female	9	20-29	1	Preschool Special Education Teacher	2	1-4	1	Conference In-service	5
Male	1	30-39		Administrator	5	5-9	5	Information from District	7
		40-49	1	Related Service Provider	2	10-20	3	Professional Reading	5
		50-59	5	School Age Representative	1	>20	1	Discussion with Colleague	6
		60-69	2					Study Group	3

Early Childhood Systems Model Implementation Process

The Early Childhood Systems Model was implemented in four stages over a 10 month timeframe.

Stage One: Introduction to the Model
Introduced all participating preschool programs to the components of the Early Childhood Systems Model through professional development and team meetings

Stage Two: Leadership Team Identification and Plan Development
Supported preschool programs in the selection of a representative leadership team that worked together to develop a continuous improvement plan

Stage Three: Implementation of the Plan
Provided guidance and support to leadership teams as they implemented the actions outlined in their continuous improvement plans

Stage 4: Sustaining Improvement
Focused on providing teams with information to sustain program improvement efforts and continued implementation of the Early Childhood Systems Model

Early Childhood Systems Model

Representative Leadership Team

- A leadership team is in place to plan, support, and monitor implementation of the preschool system
- The team is comprised of essential key stakeholders to incorporate critical perspectives and ensure change is possible
- Families are viewed as an integral part of the system
- Community partnerships are established to ensure a representative leadership team

Collaborative Planning Process

- Leadership team engages in a systematic planning process comprised of the following steps

Step 1: Analysis of the current system

Step 2: Hypothesize why the gaps exist

Step 3: Develop goals to target improvement

Step 4: Outline an action plan

Step 5: Monitor progress and reevaluate current plan of action

- Quality
- Ability to Change
- Sustainability
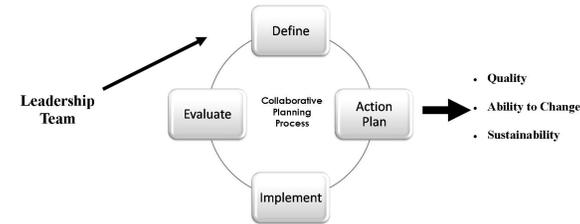
Data Based Decision Making

- Systematic process is organized to focus the collaborative planning of the leadership team which entails the collection, review and interpretation of program data
- Data is used to influence the decisions made within the preschool system
- Scope of the data collected is comprehensive and encompasses a meaningful and purposeful focus for the leadership team and stakeholders

Ongoing Professional Development and Support

- The goals and vision for professional development are aligned with the preschool program's action plan and priorities
- Embedded opportunities for learning are in place to allow for continued problem solving, practice with support and feedback, and time to reflect on the effectiveness of practices and services offered

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

- Three trained data collectors completed monthly observation notes during leadership team meetings
- Two individuals were selected from each leadership team to participate in interviews based on established criteria
- Observations and interviews were analyzed using grounded theory
- Observation notes were uploaded into NVIVO Version 7; codes were created through an open coding process
- Observation notes were grouped into three time periods to analyze for changes over time
- Codes were initially identified from observation notes, analyzed and grouped to create eleven themes in the external perspective
- Definitions were created and used to recode observation notes across all time periods
- Interviews were coded using same process utilized for analysis of observation notes to identify internal perspective
- Ten interviews were fully transcribed before analysis occurred using audio recordings
- Twenty-six codes were identified through initial review of transcripts; then reexamined to identify seven final codes

Triangulation:
- After coding process was completed, data collectors discussed identified themes through a peer debriefing process
- Member check process was conducted with interview participants through e-mail

Results
Common Internal and External Themes

The following themes were identified through the analysis of the internal and external perspectives established during implementation of the Early Childhood Systems Model. The themes represent factors that supported and/or hindered implementation.

Theme 1: Systems Understanding
- Varying degrees of understanding of the purpose of the Early Childhood Systems Model
- Clarity was needed regarding participants roles on the leadership team
- Lack of understanding resulted in resistance to improvement
- Established understanding lead to a focused plan development and implementation process

Theme 2: Trust Among the Leadership Team
- Different levels of trust among the members of the leadership team
- New collaborative relationships meant a lack of trust and a need to build relationships
- Established trust and respect over time lead to the development of parity and ability to share opinions
- Administrative validation of team members contributed to a more cohesive team process

Theme 3: Time
- Efficient use of time supported focused and productive team meetings leading to successful implementation
- Finding consistent time to collaborate presented challenges to leadership team members
- Commitment to implementation lead to the identification of time to meet and plan collaboratively

Theme 4: Consistent Planning Process
- A continued and consistent focus on identified goals lead to leadership team progress
- Teams struggled with a lack of discussion and shared vision
- Inability to complete each step of the collaborative planning process lead to issues surrounding communication, collaboration, and shared decision making

Future Research

- Validation of the Early Childhood Systems Rating Rubric
- Process and outcome evaluation of the implementation of the Early Childhood Systems Model

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