Early Childhood Systems Model Overview

An early childhood system supports improvement efforts by putting in place a process that leads to sustainability. Early childhood systems maintain adaptable programs that are able to change in order to manage current mandates and support preparation for future requirements and improvement efforts. A comprehensive system entails the following components 1) Representative Leadership Team, 2) Collaborative Planning Process, 3) Data Based Decision Making, and 4) Ongoing Professional Development and Support.

Representative Leadership Team

• A leadership team is in place to plan, support, and monitor implementation of initiatives, innovations, and mandates
• The leadership team is comprised of essential key stakeholders (e.g., teachers, administrator, related service providers, school age representatives, community members, families) to incorporate the critical perspectives needed to ensure change is possible
• Families are viewed as an integral part of the leadership team

Collaborative Planning Process

• Leadership team engages in a systematic planning process comprised of the following steps
  o Step 1: Define the focus of the work or the problem/gap to be addressed
  o Step 2: Develop an action plan that guides the work of the team and stakeholders to address the targeted goal
  o Step 3: Implement the plan
  o Step 4: Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in achieving the targeted goal and revise as necessary

Data Based Decision Making

• A systematic process of data collection has been established to gather information about the child, classroom, program, and the overall system functioning
• Data/documentation is used to influence the decisions made within the early childhood system
• Scope of the data/documentation 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 program’s action plan and priorities, in addition to state and federal initiatives
• Professional development should have a whole program focus involving administrators, teachers, families, related service personnel, and paraprofessionals working in the program
• 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

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Implementation of the Early Childhood Systems Model

After a representative leadership team has been established, the team engages in collaborative planning to determine the focus of their work. A plan is then developed to guide the action needed to achieve the targeted goal. After the plan is implemented, the team engages in data based decision making to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. Programs are encouraged to first focus on the goal of identifying and implementing a curriculum framework, as the curriculum framework is core to any quality program and is a critical link to improved child outcomes.