

Transcription Episode Three, February 2022: [Leading from the Floor: An Early Intervention Leadership Podcast](#) *From Professional Development to Performance*

Gina Federico

Welcome to leading from the floor, an Early Intervention leadership podcast. This series is produced by Early Intervention technical assistance on behalf of the Bureau of Early Intervention services and family support. Today's episode is entitled from professional development to performance. We'll be discussing different professional development opportunities, and how that translates into high performing staff. We'll also hear from a family leader who will discuss the importance of the professional development opportunities that OCDEL provides to parents. Before we jump in, I want to take a moment to meet our co-hosts.

Brandi Binakonsky

0:55

Hi, everyone, I'm Brandi Binakonsky. I am currently an Early Intervention Technical Assistance consultant and have spent the majority of my career in preschool Early Intervention as both the supervisor and program administrator here in southwestern Pennsylvania. During this time, I was fortunate to have been part of the Pennsylvania Fellowship Program for special education leaders, and the OCDEL policy fellowship. And I'm delighted to be here with all of you.

Liz Wagner-Simmons

1:20

Hi, I'm Liz Wagner-Simmons also with EITA. I've been involved with EI in different capacities for many, many years, both at the county level as an EI coordinator and service coordinator supervisor. And then with the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports as an EI advisor. Early Intervention is a wonderful field and I hope you find this broadcast engaging and helpful.

Gina Federico

1:43

And hi, I'm Gina Federico. I have lots of preschool Early Intervention and early childhood classroom experience. I also work with EITA and I organize the OCDEL Policy Fellowship. Before we dive into the content of today's podcast, I'd like to go over a few procedural reminders for leaders in EI. The first is about child find and your aggregate or child count. At the end of the fiscal year the aggregate of children that you end up serving will assist in your planning for the following year. Take a look at your current child count and Pelican EI. One of the activities that supports this is child find. Child find is ongoing to ensure we are providing services to families and children. It is recommended to engage in some child find activities, especially if you are not projected to make your aggregate in order to reach as many families as possible. Talk with your advisor or EITA consultant for ideas. As you begin to think about child

find activities, one of the first data points that you will want to look at is the referral source. When your local determination data on community partnerships is compiled, the criteria for meets requirements for infant toddler was referrals from four out of four referral sources. And for preschool, the meets requirement criteria was five out of five. Although there are more sources in the Pelican EI drop down menu, they are categorized into the following: early childhood community, social service agency, medical, parent or family member and for preschool, the additional category of referrals is from infant/toddler EI programs.

Liz Wagner-Simmons

3:23

For you and your program leadership it would be important to make sure that you are connecting with your LICC and any activities that they may be planning around child find. Many local interagency coordinating councils have creative and effective ways to engage the community in identifying children who may be eligible for EI services. And as your staff are working with early childhood education partners, they can be a great resource for your child find efforts. As a leader, you can ensure that all staff at many levels are aware of the importance of doing ongoing child find activities. Another important thing to remember is that within the Pelican EI system, you should be checking on a regular basis for referrals that may come to you through Pennsylvania's COMPASS, that is the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Access to Social Services System. The purpose of the COMPASS to HCSIS referral process is to check for and manage referrals made through COMPASS. These referrals were created by individuals who entered basic information about a child in the COMPASS system, in order to learn what benefits and services might be available for the child. There is a great COMPASS referral process guide on the HCSIS learning management system that will walk you through the steps to manage these referrals.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that the family survey was made available on February 1st. While you're on the leadership page, check out the deeper dive into data Padlet. The January 2022 newsletter has important information about data related to the survey and some terrific tips from your fellow leaders about how to engage families in completing the survey. There are some very creative leaders. You might find one or two strategies that you could incorporate into your efforts. And if you haven't checked out the deeper dive into data yet, take a look at some of the past issues that address where to find your monthly data, including child count and aggregate count and how to analyze your data. The kickoff webinar slides for the family survey are available now on the leadership page of the EITA portal.

Gina Federico

5:39

As we wrap up our discussion of the family survey, I'd like to begin transitioning to another aspect of today's discussion by talking about family leadership opportunities funded by the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports through EITA. As you know, one of Pennsylvania's leadership programs for parents is Parents as Partners in Professional Development, or P3D. P3D brings together families of children receiving Early Intervention or family support services to share their personal experiences to help develop training and resources for EI professionals and leaders. P3D also promotes connections between families. This past year, P3D participants hosted virtual Parent Cafes, virtual meet

and greets prior to the State ICC meetings, and even participated in the Family Voices project with OCDEL's professional development organizations across the state. I'd like you to now hear from Sue Bower, who will share a bit about her P3D journey with all of you. Listen as she discusses her parent guide. She references Hands and Voices Guide by your Side, which is now known as Family Connections for Language and Learning another parent support program specifically for parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. A quick note the Parent Guides are now referred to as mentors.

Sue Bower

6:58

My journey with P3D started about four years ago when my son Owen was diagnosed with moderate hearing loss. The morning after his diagnosis, we received a phone call from a Hands and Voices Guide by My Side. Quite frankly, I was annoyed with the call. We had just found out our sweet baby boy can't hear. We were devastated, scared, and confused. I had zero interest in speaking to a stranger about my sweet boy. After calming down, we agreed to have our guide come to the house for a visit. This was the best decision we had made. She was able to help us start our hearing loss adventure. What I didn't know was how our guide would influence me personally. Let me explain. Once Owen started Early Intervention, I wanted to know everything about EI. So our guide sent me a link to C2P2 EI and I applied was accepted, and graduated. From there my guide worked with me on sharing my journey with other parents through Parent Cafes. I attended several cafes and was impressed with the room host. I was approached by an EITA consultant to lead a room. I have been leading now for about three years. What P3D did for me was offer outstanding training, helped me organize my family story, and most of all helped me be confident. I am now able to really be a part of my son's EI team. I am able to walk beside parents as they start their journey into EI and transition into preschool just like my guide walked beside me. I have combined my passion for EI children and training from P3D into providing positive change in my community. I was recently elected to the Carlisle Area School District School Board, where I hope to place a much needed focus on special education. I also sat on a parent panel at the Fall EI conference which helped bring parent perspective to EI leadership. I have also made it my personal mission to help incoming US Army War College families get services quickly as these families are only here for 10 to 11 months. It is so important for families to get involved with this program. My family would have been totally lost without our guide. I can't imagine where we would be without this program. I feel my son would have never received the awesome care he is getting without it. He wouldn't be the sweet, funny, positive, helpful little man he is without it. I wouldn't be out in the community walking beside other families who are just starting their journey without P3D. I would like to ask for your help. The P3D program helps evoke positive change in our communities all around the state. I need your help promoting this program to your families. P3D is much more than just a program or initiative. It's a lifeline for scared, confused, frustrated and tired parents.

Gina Federico

10:21

Thank you so much for sharing your story with us Sue, that was incredibly impactful. You can just hear the importance of P3D for Sue, and other family leaders like her. Just as quality professional development opportunities are important to family members, it is also important for leaders and

professionals. I'm going to ask my colleague Liz to tell us a bit more about what constitutes effective professional development and what leaders need to do to provide their staff with the best possible PD.

Liz Wagner-Simmons

10:52

Thank you Gina. A leader's role can take on many forms when ensuring effective professional development training for your staff. Whether you are the person developing and presenting the training, gathering training resources, or approving training provided by others, state and local training requirements need to be considered. There is the 24-hour training requirements for infant/toddler staff, ACT 48 for educators, and 20 hours per year for paraprofessionals. As a leader you may also be required by your individual organization to provide additional training and you may have a need for other training that addresses specific topics and specialties. Other considerations for providing effective professional development include the size of the audience, the availability of a location, the format of virtual or in person, and the selection of a date and time that aligns with the staff or contracted provider's schedules. Regardless of the behind the scenes activities that set up the professional development, there are key components that add value and help to maximize the effectiveness. As you begin to plan for your training needs using data to drive these local decisions is a valuable resource. Your local determination report, your QEP, Program Reports, and staff input and families' feedback can support leaders in making high quality training decisions. It's important to think about developing long term strategies of ongoing and repeated support. Taking this approach will begin to address any issues that arise from your analysis of the local determination data in your QEP to foster sustainability. The one and done training model may infuse a ton of information, but without the time to practically apply it. Many of you may have attended a valuable training and then the everyday job responsibilities have become a priority and that valuable information has not been applied. While the QEP serves as a catalyst for professional development topics for staff, there are additional resources that your EITA consultant and advisor can direct you to in order to extend that learning. Please reach out to your EITA consultant, as they can provide you with local guidance to support your staff and providers.

Gina Federico

13:16

Thanks, Liz. As you're developing your annual training plan, there are many factors to consider. I'm going to chat with my colleague Brandi now to gain a bit more insight. Brandi, what would you say is the best place to begin when developing your training plan?

Brandi Binakonsky

13:33

The simplest answer is to think of the who, what and how. EITA plays a major role in supporting both infant/toddler and preschool programs in providing and coordinating access to various collaborative professional development topics in addition to how QEP goals and outcomes can be met, or supported with training opportunities. Begin by looking at all of the resources available on the EITA portal and on the EITA mobile app. If you haven't accessed it lately, there are a variety of updated resources that can

be utilized as you begin to develop your training plan. In particular, check out the recent updates to the professional development section. It's helpful to subscribe to the Portal to Practice newsletter to learn about new resources available. You can subscribe to this from the EITA portal homepage. Also, take a look at the portal section titled "Useful websites for Early Intervention professionals" on the professionals' page. There you will find a variety of links to other resources, both national and Pennsylvania related. If you're developing training yourself, the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion or NPDCI talks about factors to consider and provides great guidelines to follow. Essentially, they note the importance in considering the learner. The intent is to make it relevant to their particular role, whether that be in the home, in the community, or in a variety of environments. Also, in the same way that we assess young children in terms of their strength and needs, based on previous experiences, and current level of performance to develop a plan for working with them and their families, the background of adult learners is important as well. Especially when we consider their area of expertise, the years they have been in the field, and the dynamics of the locations where they provide services. In light of all these considerations, it is also critical to remember that adult learner's needs are different from the children with whom we work. We need to consider that they should be involved in supporting the selection of the training topics as motivation increases, when you are interested, and focused on a topic that is meaningful to you. Keep an eye out in the EITA portal to practice for more information to come on effective adult learning.

Gina Federico

15:51

How can we think about the background that adult learners bring with them to help us plan?

Brandi Binakonsky

15:57

We want to ensure that the learning opportunities we provide are going to make an impact on the services and their interactions with others. If we go beyond sharing information, and instead think about what practices are critical for them, especially around coaching across settings and inclusion, we are more likely to give them what they want and need.

Gina Federico

16:15

We know that terms like evidence based practices need to be more clearly defined. How can we go about selecting those that are evidence based and have the research that supports their use?

Brandi Binakonsky

16:27

It is always best to look at things like position statements that come from professional organizations, such as the American Speech Language Hearing Association, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Zero to Three, as well as the Division for Early Childhood from the Council for Exceptional Children. We want professional development to showcase those foundational skills essential

to our work. I love how NPDCI says that we identify the models of collaboration and specialized instructional practices that constitute the foundational knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Gina Federico

17:03

So now that we have the who and what established, can you tell us more about the how the how?

Brandi Binakonsky

17:12

It really is about making the training specific as opposed to general, aligning it with goals, and making it occur over time, as opposed to the traditional one stop shop. Other considerations include how to incorporate aspects of coaching or mentoring, professional learning communities, and other sustainable efforts. In the family guided routines based intervention course, we review concepts related to supporting adults, which includes involving them in the planning process, finding ways to help them take in new information and organize it, and help them make new information meaningful by connecting it to prior knowledge. Things such as problem solving, reflecting and engaging in active learning helps it to be more relevant and enhance the learning process.

Gina Federico

17:57

All right, Brandi, that is a lot of information, what would be the best way to pull it all together?

Brandi Binakonsky

18:05

It is important that we remember to consider the needs of the professionals as adult learners. As noted in an article from Ryerson University, adults have different characteristics that should be acknowledged as they vary from young learners. These include helping them to choose topics that are relevant to the work that they do, and is provided in a way that allows them to be accountable for their own learning. Adult Learners are also open to flexibility and appreciate when trainers capitalize on the unique experiences and backgrounds that they bring to learning. Empowering them as individuals further supports the process.

Gina Federico

18:41

Before we leave, I want to remind everyone that you can find resources to support this episode of the podcast and so much more on the EITA portal at eita-pa.org. Make sure to check out the leadership page and review additions and updates to the Early Intervention leadership guide for a trove of

information to support your work, day in and day out. Don't forget to share this podcast with your colleagues. Thanks again for listening to leading from the floor, an Early Intervention leadership Podcast.

I'm Gina, I'm Brandi, and I'm Liz. We'll talk to you next time