

Embedded Instruction Pilot Grant

University of Florida, Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, Lead Investigator

Overview:

A major purpose of instruction in early childhood education is to provide sufficient experiences and opportunities for preschool children to learn behaviors and skills that facilitate their access to and participation in a preschool curriculum, their attainment of desired developmental and learning outcomes, and their readiness for school (Snyder et al., 2013). Embedded instruction is a multi-component approach for planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction for preschool children. It is one variant of several naturalistic instructional approaches that have been described in the early intervention/early childhood special education literature and is a ***Division for Early Childhood*** recommended practice (Division for Early Childhood, 2014). It involves providing instruction on children's priority learning targets during typically occurring activities, routines, and transitions in the preschool classroom.

Embedded instruction is distinguished by an emphasis on providing learning opportunities to young children that are embedded rather than decontextualized. The teaching and instructional strategies used vary on a continuum from less to more structure, but are intentional and systematic. The purpose of this project is to adapt, pilot, and evaluate a professional development package for California preschool teachers serving children with individualized education programs (IEPs) that focuses on embedded instruction for early learning.

Fresno Unified School District, Los Angeles Unified School District, and Santa Clara Unified School Districts will work in conjunction with the University of Florida, Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies to adapt, pilot, and evaluate a professional development package to link the DRDP 2015, curricular frameworks, and embedded instruction to support the instructional utility of the DRDP 2015 for preschool children with individualized education programs IEPs in inclusive settings as well as to guide teachers' individualization of instruction and progress monitoring activities. The purpose of this pilot project is to develop an embedded instruction professional development package that can be disseminated statewide over the coming years.

Eight to ten teachers in inclusive and self-contained classroom settings from each of the three school districts will participate in the professional development program. Professional development materials for using embedded instruction to guide instruction based on the DRDP 2015 will be developed during the summer of 2015 by personnel at the University of Florida. A cohesive series of workshops for teachers focused on linking the DRDP 2015, curricular frameworks, and

embedded instruction will be provided at the beginning of the 2015 school year. Monthly professional learning community (PLC) meetings will be provided and teachers will have access to a website developed by the University of Florida to conduct self-coaching as follow-up to the PLC activities.

Social validity data will be gathered from teachers, special education division grantee administrators, principals, and other stakeholders about the feasibility, utility, and acceptability of the professional development package and embedded instruction for early learning. In addition, the university will evaluate impacts of the professional development package for increasing teachers' implementation of embedded instruction, child learning, and developmental outcomes. Based on the data gathered, the professional development package will be revised for use in other districts and Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) in the coming years.

Scope of Work:

The University of Florida will oversee implementation of a pilot study at three LEAs selected by the California Department of Education (CDE), Special Education Division (SED). The pilot study will focus on supporting practitioners working with young children with IEPs to implement with fidelity practices associated with embedded instruction for early learning. To conduct the pilot studies, the University of Florida (UF) will adapt for use in California an existing evidence-based professional development system, based on research conducted from 2007-2011 titled, "Impact of Professional Development on Preschool Teachers' Use of Embedded Instruction Practices" which focused on embedded instruction for early learning (Snyder et al., 2013). The professional development system will be adapted in collaboration with leaders and practitioners from the three pilot LEAs, including Fresno County Office of Education, Los Angeles Unified School District, and Santa Clara County Office of Education and staff from the Desired Results (DR) Access project, and leadership from the SED to ensure it explicitly aligns with the California Early Learning and Development Foundations and Frameworks, and the Desired Results and Development Profile (DRDP) 2015. The UF will develop, collect, analyze, and report process, impact, and outcome data from the pilot study.

The Embedded Instruction Pilot Study will be a train-the-trainer model utilizing site coordinators and lead coaches to facilitate the pilot's scope of work objectives. The term of the pilot is from April 1, 2015 through September, 30, 2016.

The University of Florida team will include Patricia Snyder, Mary McLean, and a graduate assistant. The Desired Results Access team will include Patty Salcedo and Steve Lohrer. The CDE, SED state project coordinator will be Sheila Self, Education Program Consultant.