

Evidence-Based Practice

What Does It Really Mean for the Early Childhood Field?

I. Sources of knowledge that guide professional practices

- A. Scientifically-based research
- B. Theory
- C. Wisdom and experience
- D. Core values

II. Defining evidence-based practice

- A decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence with family and professional wisdom and values (Buisse & Wesley, 2006)
- Integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction (Whitehurst, 2002)
- The integration of the best available research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values (Sackett et al., 2000)

III. The 5-step process for evidence-based decision-making

1. Ask an answerable question
2. Track down the best available research
3. Appraise the relevance and quality of the research
4. Integrate the research evidence with wisdom and values
5. Evaluate

IV. Defining a community of practice

- A community of people with diverse expertise (parents, teachers, students, administrators, researchers) who engage in shared inquiry and learning (Palincsar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford, & Brown, 1995).
- The joining of practice with an analysis and reflection to share the tacit understandings and to create shared knowledge from experiences among participants in a learning opportunity (Stein, 1998)
- Based on collective expertise and designed to stimulate a bidirectional flow of knowledge from research to practice and from practice to research (Wesley & Buisse, 2006)

V. Theoretical and conceptual foundations of a community of practice

- Knowledge is situated in experience (Situated Learning Theory)
- Experience is understood through critical reflection with others who share this experience (Reflective Practice)
- Practice knowledge reflects the integration of the best available research evidence with professional and family wisdom and values (Evidence-Based Practice)

VI. Defining features of communities of practice (Wesley & Buisse, 2006)

- Diverse expertise
- Shared purpose and goals
- Activities (discussions, deliberations, reflection, observation)
- Inquiry (formulating & testing hypotheses)
- Linking ideas and findings with those of the broader community
- Regeneration of membership and cycles of activities

VII. Getting Started:

Building a Community of Practice from the Ground Up

(Buisse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003)

1. Identify areas for shared inquiry and learning
2. Start with existing groups
3. Seek members with diverse expertise
4. Build relationships and negotiate new roles to achieve diverse expertise
5. Create opportunities for discussion and reflection
6. Establish a discourse among community members
7. Develop mechanisms for making decisions and sharing findings
8. Seek new ways to inculcate the value of community relationships

Virginia Buisse



UNC

FPG CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Where to Go to Learn More

- Barnett, W. S., & Frede, E. C. (2001). And so we plough along: The nature and nurture of partnerships for inquiry. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16*, 3-17.
- Barab, S. A., & Duffy, T. M. (2000). From practice fields to communities of practice. In D. H. Jonassen & S. M. Land (Eds.), *Theoretical foundations of learning environments* (pp. 25-55). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Buysse, V., & Wesley, P. W. (2006). Evidence-based practice: how did it emerge and what does it really mean for the early childhood field. In V. Buysse & P. W. Wesley (Eds.), *Evidence-based practice in the earlychildhood field*. Washington, DC: Zero To Three.
- Buysse, V., Wesley, P. W., & Able-Boone, H. (2001). Innovations in professional development: Creating communities of practice to support inclusion. In M. J. Guralnick (Ed.), *Early childhood inclusion: Focus on change* (pp. 179-200). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Buysse, V., Sparkman, K. L., & Wesley, P. W. (2003). Communities of practice in educational research: Connecting what we know with what we do. *Exceptional Children, 69*(3), 263-277.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning in communities. In A. Iran-Nejad & D. Pearson (Eds.), *Review of research in education* (Vol. 24, pp. 249-306). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Cousins, J. B., & Simon, M. (1996). The nature and impact of policy-induced partnerships between research and practice communities. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 18*(3), 199-218.
- Graham, W., Osgood, D., & Karren, J. (1998). A real-life community of practice. *Training and Development, 52*(5), 34-38.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Palincsar, A. S., Magnusson, S. J., Marano, N., Ford, D., & Brown, N. (1998). Designing a community of practice: Principles and practices of the GISML community. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 14*, 5-19.
- Pugach, M. C. (1999). The professional development of teachers from a "communities of practice" perspective. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 22*(4), 217-233.
- Rogoff, B. (1994). Developing understanding of the idea of community of learners. *Minds, Culture, and Activity, 1*, 209-229.
- Sackett, D. L., Straus, S. E., Richardson, W. S., Rosenberg, W. S., & Haynes, R. B. (2000). *Evidence-based medicine: How to practice and teach EBM*. Edinburgh, UK: Churchill Livingstone.
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Stamps, D. (1997). Communities of practice: Learning is social. Training is irrelevant? *Training, 43*, 34-42.
- Stein, D. (1998). Situated learning in adult education. *ERIC Digest, No. 195*, ED418250.
- Wesley, P. W., & Buysse, V. (2001). Communities of practice: Expanding professional roles to promote reflection and shared inquiry. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 21*(2), 114-123.
- Wesley, P. W., & Buysse, V. (2006). Building the evidence base through communities of practice. In V. Buysse & P. W. Wesley (Eds.), *Evidence-based practice in the early-childhood field*. Washington, DC: Zero To Three.
- Whitehurst, G. J. (2002, October). Evidence-based education. Presentation at the Student Achievement and School Accountability Conference. Retrieved June 23, 2004 from www.ed.gov/offices/list/ies/director.html.

FPG Child Development Institute at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is one of the nation's oldest multidisciplinary centers devoted to the study of children and families. Our mission is to cultivate and share knowledge that enhances child development and family well being.