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*Newsletter Staff Editor:
Robin Bayless, M.A.*

*Project Director:
David P. Lindeman, Ph.D.*

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Having Faith in Families: A Cornerstone in Family Centered Practice

**By 2009 KITS Summer Institute Presenter
Marilyn Espe-Sherwindt**

Research has identified two related but very different components of family-centered practice: relational and participatory help-giving practices (Dunst, Boyd, Trivette, & Hamby, 2002). Relational practices are made up of those interpersonal behaviors such as warmth, active listening, empathy, authenticity, and viewing parents in a positive light, all of which are behaviors used by professionals to build effective relationships with families (Dunst et al., 2002; Dempsey & Dunst, 2004). In contrast, participatory behaviors are more action-oriented, and encompass ways of sharing control: professionals share all information from families, professionals encourage parents to make their own decisions, professionals encourage families to use their existing knowledge and capabilities, and professionals help families learn new skills (Dempsey & Dunst, 2004). It appears to be the use of participatory behaviors that are particularly distinctive of family-centered practice (Dunst et al.). In other words, it is not enough to be “nice.” Professionals and programs trying to be family-centered must not only establish a trusting relationship with families; they must also use specific practices that equalize the balance of power. However, studies repeatedly have demonstrated that professionals appear to be far better at implementing relational skills than participatory skills (Dunst et al.; Wade, Mildon, & Matthews, 2007).



Why are participatory skills so challenging? Adopting a family-centered approach means replacing the role of expert with the more challenging role of partner, listener, facilitator and consultant (Mikus, Benn & Weatherston, 1994). This new role comes with its own set of challenges:

- Being too “impatient”. The more eager we are to assess and intervene, the less helpful we become. Our intent is not about “curing” others (Maslow, 1962).

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New Open Access Journal for ECSE

The International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE) posted its first online issue in June 2009. The peer-reviewed, open-access journal is available for viewing or download at <http://www.int-jecse.net/>. Articles may be viewed in abstract or full text. Features of the first issue include articles by Gerald Mahoney on relationship-focused intervention, Claudia Rinaldi and her colleagues on preschoolers with language and emotional disabilities, and Melinda Raab, Carl Dunst, et al., on response-contingent learning games with young children with multiple and profound disabilities.

The premier issue of the on-line journal also includes articles from researchers in Ethiopia and Turkey. The former abstract and text are available in English, while the latter offers only the abstract in English. Interestingly, the editor of the new journal is a professor at Anadolu University in Turkey, so we can look forward to the opportunity to review reports on evidence-based practices from an international perspective. The INT-JECSE will be published twice yearly, in June and December.

—submitted by Phoebe Rinkel,
KITS Technical Assistance
Coordinator

Having Faith in Families: A Cornerstone in Family Centered Practice continued

- Trying to be too “clever”. We often use words as techniques to move others in the direction we’ve chosen, to convince families that our perspective is right (Block, 1981).
- Being too “helpful”. We tend to believe that we know and the other does not. As Henning (2001) points out, “It is our instinct to control that actually interferes with change.”
- Promoting “codependence”. We can make the mistake of creating needs in order to justify our role in their lives (Markowitz, 2001a).
- Being too “invested”. We often feel responsible for the family’s “progress”. However, we cannot assume that our advice will lead to change. “We are no more responsible for . . . improvements than for . . . setbacks” (Markowitz, 2001a).

The question is no longer “How do I get my own way?” but “How can we have faith in each other’s capacity to contribute to change?” (Henning, 2001). In this kind of relationship, although we care about the other person, we are not responsible for what the other does with our expertise and information; the other (i.e., the family) has a right to fail. The questions we ask ourselves now become:

- How can I stand beside the [family] with whom I am working?
- How can I care about the [family] without forgetting whose work this really is?
- How can I support the [family] during the painful and messy times without trying to make

everything clean, neat and free of stress? (Barbeau, 2001).

When we join families, we are joining “a drama already in progress” (Markowitz, 2001b, p. 105). In our desire to help others, we must remember the fine line between controlling and having confidence in the capacity of the other.

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Faith in Families concludes on page 3

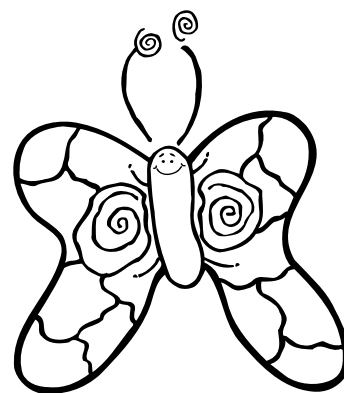
The Collaborative Calendar of Events

View at kskits.org/training

DATE	EVENT	CONTACT
9/10-11/09	<i>Kansas MTSS Symposium</i> , Wichita	http://www1.usu.edu/mprrc/ksmtss/register.cfm
9/23-24/09	<i>ATK Expo</i> , Wichita	http://www.atk.ku.edu/
10/1-2/09	<i>Getting Started with Responsive Teaching</i> , Manhattan	Lona Foust, 785-776-6363
10/2-3/09	<i>Parent Leadership Conference</i> , Topeka	Natalie, 785-783-2975
10/29-30/09	<i>Kansas Association of School Psychologists Fall Convention</i> , Overland Park	http://kasp.org/KASPCEC2008Conference.htm
11/4-6/09	<i>Governor's Conference for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect</i> , Topeka	https://www.kcsl.org/training_conference.aspx
11/6-7/09	<i>Autism Across the Lifespan: A Conference for Professionals and Families</i> , Wichita	http://kcart.ku.edu/autism-across-lifespan/
11/13/09	<i>Comprehensive Planning for Students with ASD</i> , via ITV	http://www.KansasASD.com
11/17-19/09	<i>Evidence Based Practices Institute</i> , Kansas City	Jennifer Tanquary, 913-588-7195
2/25-26/10	KDEC 2010: <i>Meeting the Challenges - Early Childhood 2010</i> , Wichita	Kathy Easterly, 913-780-7410, keasterlyhlc@olatheschools.com
2/26/10	<i>Evidence-Based Practices and Autism Spectrum Disorders</i> , via ITV	http://www.KansasASD.com
4/9/10	<i>Seeing is Believing! Self-Modeling Applications for Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities</i> , via ITV	http://www.KansasASD.com

Links to Other Training Calendars

- KCCTO child care or CDA advisor trainings: www.kccto.org
- Families Together: www.familiestogetherinc.org
- Children's Alliance Training Team: www.childally.org/training/training.html
- KACCRRRA: www.kaccrra.org
- Capper Foundation: capper.easterseals.com
- Council for Exceptional Children: www.cec.sped.org/pd
- KSDE: ksde.org



Having Faith in Families: A Cornerstone in Family Centered Practice concludes

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— submitted by Marilyn Espe-Sherwindt

Coordinator's Corner

Coming Soon to Your Local Infant-Toddler/ tiny-k Network — Site Visits!

In order to support, encourage and assist local networks, KDHE and KITS will be arranging site visits. There are three goals for the site review process.

1. Targeted conversations with KDHE & KITS about areas of interest/concern based on individual network data and other identified needs.
2. To assist local networks in identifying strengths, setting and prioritizing goals for service delivery, and accomplishing these goals.
3. To ensure Part C services in Kansas meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families appropriately, effectively and in a timely fashion.

Prior to the site visit, we will be providing you with self-assessment tools to help you identify areas that you may want to discuss.

Guidance from OSEP Regarding Transition and Late Referrals to Part C:

- If a child is referred to Part C within 45 days of the child's 3rd birthday, Part C has no requirement to evaluate/assess or conduct transition.
- The child may be referred to Part B.

If you have questions, please contact Tiffany Smith-Birk at tsmith-birk@kdheks.gov or 785-296-2245.

—submitted by Tiffany Smith-Birk, Part C Coordinator, KDHE

Part B – Section 619 Update

After a year in this position, I have had an opportunity to reflect on the past 12 months and consider the difference I have made. I have spent the year entrenched in learning about the State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report, data collection and analysis, IDEA, resources that are available to me and what it means to work in my position at the Kansas State Department of Education.

The highlights of my year were the opportunities to be in the field, to talk with providers and to “be” with the children enrolled in programs throughout the state that are being served through Section 619 of IDEA. I want to thank those of you who were willing to have me visit your programs and let others know that I hope to be able to continue to tour the state.

My question to you is how do I serve your needs? I am still working on how best to communicate information, how to get your questions answered, how to work together for the greater good of children and families in Kansas. I would love to hear from you, to better understand the challenges and SUCCESSES in your programs. It is so interesting to be able to hear from different LEAs how things work for you. There are differences and similarities among programs; you are all unique in your own way. This is something that I am comfortable with and is the cornerstone of my experiences in early childhood.

Have you visited the KSDE website lately? There has been a significant change in it and we feel that it will continue to be developed and

improved. You will find us under the Special Education tab, then Early Learning Services Unit. This is an area where I will provide updates and documents that may support you in your work. Would this be a useful place to post information that I would like you to know?

One of my goals for the upcoming year is to work more collaboratively at the state level with colleagues in early childhood. I have been meeting consistently with Tiffany Smith-Birk, our state's Part C coordinator and from time to time with Carrie Hastings, from the Head Start Collaborative office. In addition, I have been working with Gayle Stuber, here at KSDE, and the practitioner's group to discuss the future Kansas Preschool Program. Tiffany and I jointly prepared for a state presentation at the KDEC Conference this past February, and included Cayla Wright, from Kansas Health Policy Authority, as well. All of these efforts to build collaboration at the state level have proven worthwhile. I would like to know more about how you work collaboratively (and with whom) at the local level. I believe that it is from these conversations that great things are created. Often building relationships can be uncomfortable and difficult, but in the end, it is so worth it!

Additionally, I will continue my work on the SPP indicators for Early Childhood. We are setting baseline and targets this year for Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO). You have done a great deal of work to develop an agreed upon rating using the Child Outcome Summary Form (COSF) and enter the data in to the Outcomes Web System (OWS). I have been reviewing those entries to see how we

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Part B – Section 619 Update concludes

are doing with including families in this process, using curriculum based assessments, writing positive, strength based, functional information across settings in our summaries and providing enough information that the rating and the data match. I can tell you that we have some work to do. For the Transition indicator, I will continue to support Margy Hornback, as the lead for this indicator, and learn from her mentoring. The State of Kansas has done very well in improving this indicator: having an IEP in place by a child's third birthday. Congratulations! We will need to continue to be diligent and find ways to work together to continue to progress toward the OSEP target of 100% compliance. The third indicator is Preschool Environments, which has been discussed and changed by OSEP. As of early July 2009, the word is that we will not be reporting on this indicator in the February 2010 SPP. Kansas' goal has always been to place children in the least restrictive environment, and has continued to make progress toward ensuring that we appropriately place children based on needs and with the support of the entire IEP team, including the general education teacher and the family.

So, what can I do for you? Please take this request seriously and let me know. I can be most easily reached by email at cayres@ksde.org but you may also call me at 785-296-1944. If you don't want to send a detailed email, just ask me to call you. When I am on the road it isn't easy to get voice mail messages, so I tend to check those only when I am in the office. I look forward to hearing from you!

—submitted by Carol Ayres, 619 Coordinator, KSDE

Knowledge and Camaraderie: Two Benefits of the KITS Summer Institute

Near the end of June, over four warm sunny days, a group of early interventionists, special and regular educators, agency personnel, university professors, parents and others gathered together at the Adams Alumni Center on the campus of the University of Kansas. Each person came to the annual KITS Summer Institute with the intention of increasing their knowledge and skills in order to work more collaboratively with the wide range of families we serve. It was an exciting and emotional week. Friendships were made, work was shared, and laughter was abundant. By the end our time together we had a plethora of strategies and tools to meet the challenges early childhood educators face on a daily basis, but more importantly we left knowing what we do for a living makes the world a better place.

In planning for the Summer Institute, KITS staff worked closely with the presenters to establish a common format for introducing and reflecting upon the information to be shared. Presenters were encouraged focus on elements of Evidence Based Practice into the information they were presenting in their presentations. Specifically, they were asked to a) provide the best available and most current research, b) professional standards and/or laws, and c) share the applicable wisdom from families and professionals who have learned through their experience. As a foundation the professional standards outlining family centered practices were taken from the *DEC Recommended Practices: A Comprehensive*

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KCART Autism Conference Registration

Online registration is now available for the Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training (KCART) statewide conference, *Autism Across the Life Span: A Conference for Professionals and Families*. The conference keynote speakers include Phil Strain, University of Colorado Denver, whose work includes the LEAP Project, a model program for young children with autism, and Susan Wilczynski, Executive Director of the National Autism Center and the National Standards Project. Strands are planned for early education, social skills/behavioral supports, community living, employment, and transition.

The conference will be held at the Wichita Airport Hilton Executive Conference Center on November 6-7, 2009. For information about the program, hotel, and registration, go to <http://kcart.ku.edu/autism-across-lifespan/>

—submitted by Phoebe Rinkel, KITS Technical Assistance Coordinator

Knowledge and Camaraderie: Two Benefits of the KITS Summer Institute continued

Guide for Practical Application in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith & McLean, 2005) and made into a worksheet that provided space for participants to make note of the research and professional/family wisdom supporting specific methods and strategies discussed each day.

On the first day, Dr. Jean Ann Summers (University of Kansas, Beach Center) and Connie Zienkewicz (parent and Director of Families Together, Inc.), partnered together setting the stage for our work during the week. They provided a common definition: “Family-centered service delivery is applied across disciplines and settings and recognizes the centrality of the family in the lives of individuals. It is guided by fully informed choices made by the family and focuses upon the strengths and capabilities of those families” (Allen & Petr, 1996, p. 68). Information was shared regarding the importance of identifying specific services and supports that help families build capacity as well as strategies to help families identify their own desired outcomes. The highlight of the day was a parent panel presentation that provided an opportunity for three parents to share their experiences in early intervention/early childhood special education. The panel consisted of two mothers and one grandmother helping raise her grandson. Participants laughed and cried with panel as they shared their hopes and dreams, what worked and what didn’t work, and what they wished all professionals could learn from this experience.

The following day participants were introduced to another “presentation team”. Dr. Susan Moore, from the University of Colorado, and her friend and colleague, Clara Perez-Mendez, founder and director of Puentes Culturales (a parent resource center). They immediately put participants to work, breaking them up into groups and engaging them in the first learning activity. The purpose of this activity was to illustrate the need to immediately put all of our assumptions, biases, and personal needs (e.g., cards) on the table in order to begin the process of becoming more culturally sensitive. The rest of the day participants were led through video clips, personal stories, opportunities for self-reflection, examples of current research, and opportunities to practice culturally responsive strategies. The importance of cultural mediation and steps for “growing” local cultural mediators was also discussed.

Back by popular demand was Dr. Marilyn Espe-Sherwindt, from Kent State University (she was a presenter at the 2003 Summer Institute). Building on Day Two, Dr. Espe-Sherwindt continued the diversity theme, this time focusing on families who are ability diverse or cognitively challenged. As the director of the Family Child Learning Center in Akron, Ohio, she acknowledged that certain families dominated the conversation of her staff, often leaving them feeling frustrated, helpless, ineffective, and yes, at times, even angry. Her staff often came to her with questions like: “How can I get the family to see, or do...?” In essence the

real question they were asking was, “How can I get the family to do what I think they should do?” Those of us sitting in the presentation agreed we have had the very same questions from time to time.

Strategies were shared to help professionals understand that whether or not expertise is used ultimately depends on the level of trust and emotional confidence held by each member in the relationship. Methods such as coaching, motivational interviewing, and contracting were discussed as a means for establishing more open and honest relationships as well as a way to better prepare families and clarify roles and expectations for all. Activities were also conducted to help each professional gain a better understanding of their own working style, potential hot buttons, and de-stressors. Having a better idea of what “drives each of us crazy” puts us in better control of our emotions, and can go a long way to establishing more positive and productive relationships (with families as well as co-workers).

The final day of the Summer Institute was a culmination of the first three days. Dr. Pam Winton (University of North Carolina) spent the first half of the day providing a more thorough examination of Evidence Based Practice and strategies for applying that concept into our everyday work. She introduced a five-step problem-solving process outlining how to compare a given situation to specific research studies. Participants used scenarios to go through the process and then discussed the effectiveness of this

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Knowledge and Camaraderie: Two Benefits of the KITS Summer Institute concludes

method as a group. The morning activities also provided an opportunity for participants to hear from Dr. Winton's colleague and a special guest of the Summer Institute, Dr. Ann Turnbull, Director and Researcher at the University of Kansas Beach Center.

The closing activity took most of the afternoon as participants were broken into groups and asked to use information shared during the course of the week to work through a real life family/professional scenario (either provided by the parent panel or by one or more group members). Groups were encouraged to use the problem-solving process outlined in the morning, to incorporate research, professional practices/standards/laws, and the wisdom shared by the families as well as other professionals at the Summer Institute. Each group had an opportunity to share their scenario and the plan of action they had developed as a result of the process. As it turned out every

group identified a scenario that was being currently faced by one or more of its' members. While each group reported out, participants could be seen frantically writing down very clear strategies that they could use back home. During the group activity, one group created a Community of Practice by establishing a "Facebook" page to provide ongoing support to one another.

It has been a few weeks since the Summer Institute. We have had an opportunity to review the evaluations, and listen to the comments and feedback. In all, this was one of our most successful events. Participants repeatedly remarked on how much they enjoyed the presentations but more importantly the camaraderie that was established throughout the event. As planners of this event, the positive feedback is nice, however, a large degree of the success lies on the shoulders of our participants. The participants came to the Summer Institute with the desire

to become even better at what they do. They came with open minds and hearts, and we all are the better for it.

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—submitted by Misty Goosen,
KITS Project Coordinator



Supporting Young Children with Autism Through Effective Transition Activities

Editor's note: The ECSE program at SEK Interlocal USD 637 is one of two preschool and three infant-toddler program to receive the 2008-09 Best Practice Award (see <http://kskits.org/resources/#ApplicationBestPractice>)

The Early Childhood Special Education staff at SEK Interlocal USD 637 was identified for applying a "Best Practice" in recognition for their efforts in assisting children with autism and other severe language disorders to transition from preschool services to kindergarten in their home schools. The team utilizes collaborative planning between sending and receiving programs that includes staff development experiences related to transition and direct

support to the receiving program during the initial transition time.

The incidence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has grown exponentially during recent years and school systems have struggled to meet the needs of children with moderate to severe ASD as they make the transition from ECSE services to partial or fully inclusive kindergarten settings. It is well documented in research that primary strategies for successful inclusion

experiences include, but are not limited to, a) consistent classroom routines, b) visual cues for instruction, rules and schedules, c) planned physical space, and d) structured transition time activities (NEA, 2006). Typically, our children with moderate to severe autism characteristics receive interventions in errorless learning (discrete trial training) while in the Early Intervention (EI)

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Supporting Young Children with Autism Through Effective Transition Activities continues

classroom so that they can learn basic imitation skills essential for language and social skill development. They spend part of their day in 1:1 EI for this instruction and part of the day in supported activities in the inclusive ECSE classroom. The ECSE classrooms have from 60% to 70% ratio of typically developing peers. A trained paraeducator is shared between the programs to assure consistency and immediate communication between the two environments.

Since the initiation of the Early Intervention program for preschool children with ASD, the problem became evident that the progress that was made at the preschool intervention level was often lost when the child transitioned to the environment of the general public school building. Even though student transition meetings had been held and significant information shared, the impact of the new environment often resulted in difficult, and sometimes unsuccessful, kindergarten experiences. The EI/ECSE staff began discussions with parents, representatives from the Interlocal 637 behavior support team, local kindergarten building representatives and the transportation department to identify the issues that seemed to be pivotal in the success or failure of inclusive kindergarten placement. Through analysis of the information provided, it was determined that three factors were critical components in successful transitions: 1) provision of staff development on the individual programs and procedures that were successful with individual children, including the progress monitoring

and data management for decision making; 2) provision of a graduated transition between the EI/ECSE environments to kindergarten with familiar support staff and the purpose of providing ample opportunity for the child to adapt to the new environment and social expectations; 3) negotiation of specific timelines for completion of activities. A critical factor in the analysis of components and the development of the individual plans was continual parental input. Guaranteeing a seamless transition from pre-K to school age services requires planning “beyond the norm” for children with ASD because the classroom accommodations and modifications are often extensive and interventions involve ongoing team problem solving. Effective collaborative planning for kindergarten transition assures that research based practices are applied with fidelity and based on empirical data specific to individual needs (VanDerHeyden & Snyder, 2006). Interlocal 637 has developed a flexible system of supports that is data based and provides for staff development opportunities unique to each child.

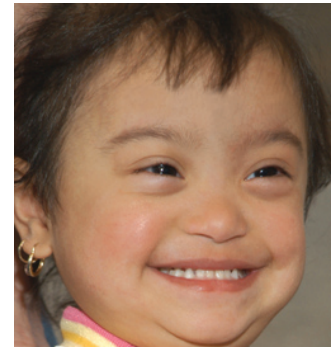
In the spring prior to transition, the EI/ECSE staff meet with the representatives from the receiving kindergarten team to develop a transition plan individually tailored for each student. This plan delineates specific staff development activities, strategies, individualized materials, reinforcement systems, and behavior plans. A kindergarten staff member participates in the ECSE extended school year in the summer instructional activities. This provides a specific venue for training

the kindergarten staff about specific programs that are successful, participation in behavior plans with “hands on” experience with the student they will be receiving, and becoming familiar with the data progress monitoring system. The kindergarten representative learns first hand the programs for each child and has direct interaction with the child in an environment that is familiar and secure for the child. At the beginning of the kindergarten year the child continues with limited time in the EI program and the majority of time in kindergarten with a shared paraeducator between the two programs. During this time, problem solving occurs on a daily basis and the team generally sets a goal of full transition within the first quarter of the school year.

This practice has proven successful because both the child and the receiving staff have adequate time and support to develop relationships and routines that minimize the adjustment issues that typically occur when a child with moderate to severe ASD moves into a new school setting. Prior to implementation of this practice, students were often unsuccessful in moving into kindergarten because the new environments and expectations prompted behavioral responses that were so severe that the receiving building felt inadequate to meet their needs and recommended more restrictive classroom placements. With this unique investment of time and resources during transition, the likelihood of success is greatly enhanced and the student is assured of an educational placement in their

New Items at the Early Childhood Resource Center

- Rethinking the Education of Deaf Students: Theory and Practice from a Teacher's Perspective (1997)
- The Deaf Child in the Family and at School: Essays in Honor of Kathryn P. Meadow-Orlans (2000)
- The Care and Education of a Deaf Child (1999)
- The Young Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child (2003)
- The World of Deaf Infants: A Longitudinal Study (2004)
- Language & Literacy Development in Children Who Are Deaf (2000)
- Language Learning in Children Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Multiple Pathways (2000)
- Infants and Toddlers with Hearing Loss (1994)
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (2009)
- Basics of Developmentally Appropriate Practice: An introduction for teachers of children 3 - 6 (2006)
- Journal of Special Education Technology
- Readings in Special Education Technology: Universal Design for Learning (2009)
- Readings in Special Education Technology: Young Children and Assistive Technology (2009)
- Readings in Special Education Technology: Research Reviews (2009)
- A School Administrator's Desktop Guide to Assistive Technology (2004)
- Language Learning Practices with Deaf Children (2004)
- Reading Practices with Deaf Learners (2007)
- From Gesture to Language in Hearing and Deaf Children (1994)
- Context, Cognition, and Deafness (2001)
- Choices in Deafness: A Parents' Guide to Communication Options (2007)



Contact ECRC:

phone:
620-421-6550 ext. 1651
800-362-0390 ext. 1651

email:
resourcecenter@ku.edu

web:
kskits.org/ecrc

fax:
620-421-6550 ext. 1791

mailing address:
2601 Gabriel
Parsons, KS 67357

Supporting Young Children with Autism Through Effective Transition Activities concludes

home school with typically developing peers.

With each child the goal of full transition to kindergarten is established with a specified timeline established for completion. Typically, full transition is accomplished within the first quarter of school but might be extended as long as a semester if the data indicated the need. Activities for completion of the transition process are defined with clear targets for completion. Progress reviews between the EI/ECSE teacher and the kindergarten teacher are completed with weekly

adjustment of instructions to the para-educator.

Full team reviews with the parents and building administrator are pre-planned with agreed upon timelines and decisions are guided based upon progress data, behavior plan data and anecdotal information from the parents and teachers.

This practice redefines transition and has become an effective model for planning and sharing of resources for children with significant disabilities in the Interlocal.

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—submitted by Debbie Potter, ECSE School Psychologist/Coordinator, Patty Steffens, ECSE Teacher and Pamela Thompson, ECSE Paraeducator at SEK Interlocal USD 637

**Training for
Early Childhood
Professionals and
Families**



Contact KITS by...

...phone:

620-421-6550 ext. 1618
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