



In this issue:

- Bringing an Infant Mental Health Framework to Early Intervention
- Early Childhood Outcomes Training (AEPS & HELP)
- Resources for Parents and Professionals from KPIRC
- KDEC Mini-Grant RFP
- Application of Best Practice in Early Childhood Award Winners
- Parent Summit
- Children & Families Benefit from New Model
- Time Coordination Solutions

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Bringing an Infant Mental Health Framework to Early Intervention

By Scott Harmon, 2006 KITS Summer Institute Presenter

Infant mental health refers to the healthy social and emotional development of a child from birth to three years. As a field of both study and practice, the field of infant mental health is broad, encompassing many disciplines including social work, child welfare, early education, speech and language pathology, occupational and physical therapy, child and family development, psychology, nursing, pediatrics and psychiatry. Infant mental health professionals may be employed in settings that: promote the healthy social/emotional development of very young children; prevent disruptions of parent-infant relationships in high-risk families; or diagnose and treat early mental health disorders.

Regardless of their professional orientation, infant mental health practitioners work to understand and treat very young children within the context of family, care-giving and community relationships, and by doing so recognize the critical role culture plays in influencing every aspect of human development. The principles of infant mental health practice, briefly outlined below, are

grounded in an applied approach to early development, and can help professionals from across a range of disciplines extend the scope and efficacy of their practice.

The first three years life, are a time of remarkable growth and change. It is also a unique period of rapidly unfolding developmental capacities. These capacities are shaped through the interaction between a child's constitutional differences and contributions from the environment. Nature and nurture work in concert, determining the trajectory of developmental pathways. Social and emotional development, like the other developmental domains, also emerges as a function of this interaction between the child and the environment, especially the relational environment.

Infants are social creatures, arriving in the world with the capacity to experience the full range of human emotions. Infant and toddlers are also active participants





Have You Picked a Tool for the Early Childhood Outcomes?

For information on training using the HELP, see page 8. For information on training using the AEPS, see page 3. **Check often** for updates at kskits.org/html/eco/outcomes.html for information on:

- Proposed Plan for Measuring Child Outcomes in Kansas
- Information Matrix on Chosen Assessments
- Bibliography of Selected Readings
- Kansas ECO Training and Implementation Resources including:
 - ◊ COSF Template
 - ◊ Crosswalks (additions 5/06)
 - ◊ Child Outcomes: What is Typically Developing?
 - ◊ Curriculum-Based Assessments for Measuring EC Outcomes
 - ◊ Decision Tree for Summary Rating Discussions (new 5/06)
 - ◊ Definitions for Outcome Ratings
 - ◊ PowerPoint Presentation (updated 5/06)
 - ◊ Instructions & example for COSF
 - ◊ Outcomes Web System Users Guide (updated 5/15/06)
 - ◊ Roles List
 - ◊ Sources of Information Used to Complete COSF
 - ◊ Timelines
- Links to Information about Kansas ECO Assessment



Bringing an Infant Mental Health Framework continues from page 1

in their own learning, displaying an innate drive to explore and master one's environment, including the relational environment. Through repeated interactions with parents and significant caregivers, infants share and communicate feelings and experiences, learning to regulate their levels of arousal and affect, building expectations of both self and others. In this way, the emotional well-being and the life circumstances of adult's directly impacts the quality of early relationships and supports or impedes the child's emerging capacity for self-regulation, the very foundation of mental health. Nurturing, protective, stable and consistent relationships with caregivers support the mental health of the developing child. In turn, harsh, threatening, unstable and inconsistent relationships hinder social/emotional development. Developing a sense of oneself as competent to engage in relationships and to act upon the world is an important aspect of infant mental health, helping to insure that a child will enter their preschool settings with the skills necessary to make use of the available educational resources.

The birth of a baby offers a family a unique window of opportunity for growth and change through the formation of new relationships. However, as caretakers encounter the physical and psychological demands of parenting, early parent-infant relationships may become distorted or disturbed by parental histories of unresolved losses, traumatic life events or by the special needs of the infant. Parenting is a relationship, not a set of discrete skills, and like all other forms of learning, occurs within the

context of relationships. Improvement in the functioning of the parent-child relationships can be positively influenced by the quality of the relationship formed between the infant mental health professional and the parent. Therefore as we consider how best to intervene with distressed families we can look to relationships as both the focus and the vehicle for intervention.

Working with infants, toddlers and families from this relationship-based perspective engages practitioners both emotionally and intellectually. Infant mental health professionals work to understand how behaviors feel from the inside, not just how they look from the outside. They also recognize their own, often strong emotional reactions as important and useful information that can inform our interventions with children and parents. By creating safe environments, through reflective consultation and supervision, we can listen and be heard, share our observations, wonder about our reactions, build family strengths, question and share multiple perspectives. We can begin to formulate more effective therapeutic responses by becoming mindful of the impact our relationships have upon parent-child relationships.

Early interventionists from the many disciplines that come into contact with infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families can benefit from deepening their knowledge of infant mental health principles, while mental health professionals entering the field have much to learn from those disciplines with long histories working most closely with very young children and their families.

Bringing an Infant Mental Health Framework continues on page 4

The Collaborative Calendar of Events

View at kskits.org/ktc/

DATE	EVENT	CONTACT
5/24-26/06	<i>Region VII Head Start Association Conference</i> , Kansas City	Mary Baskett, khsa@kc.rr.com , 913-422-1700
5/31-6/1/06	<i>Premature and Medically Fragile Infants & Toddlers</i> , Wichita	Susan Knuth, sknuth@kumc.edu , 785-863-2991
6/1/06	<i>Skills for Working with Students with Autism</i> , Lawrence	Belinda Andrews-Brumfield, jbbumfield@mobill.net
6/20-23/06	<i>Promoting Positive Social & Emotional Development in Young Children Through Evidence Based Practices</i> , KITS Summer Institute, Manhattan	Misty Goosen, 785-864-0725, mistyg@ku.edu , kskits.org/conferences/si/si.html
6/23-24/06	<i>Parent Networking Conference for Military Families</i> , Topeka	800-264-6343
7/26/06	<i>Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP) Training</i> , Lawrence	Robin Bayless, 620-421-6550 ext. 1618, rbayless@ku.edu
8/7-9/06	Early Childhood Education Conference, <i>Pathways to Our Future</i> , Mayetta, Kansas	Natalie McClane, 785-966-2707, nataliem@pbpnation.org
8/10/06	<i>Parent Summit</i> , Kansas City	www.kpirc.org , 866-711-6711
10/4-6/06	<i>1st International Symposium on Usher Syndrome & Related Disorders</i> , Omaha, Nebraska	www.sahlgrenska.se/vgrtemplates/Page___38539.aspx#
10/19-22/06	DEC 2006, <i>Advancing Knowledge, Expanding Opportunities</i> , Little Rock, Arkansas	dec@dec-sped.org
10/21/06	KAEYC Annual Conference, <i>Early Childhood: A Time to Soar</i> , Manhattan	Mary DeLuccie, deluccie@ksu.edu
11/3/06	<i>Kansas Head Start Association Annual Conference</i> , Salina	Mary Baskett, khsa@kc.rr.com , 913-422-1700
2/22-23/07	KDEC 2007, <i>Making Beautiful Music Together</i> , Wichita	Gayle Stuber, GStuber@ksde.org

Links to Other Training Calendars

- KCCTO child care or CDA advisor trainings: www.kccto.org/training.htm
- Families Together: www.familiestogetherinc.org
- HeadsUp Network distance training for Head Start and early childhood: www.heads-up.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 Student Support Services: online.ksde.org/calendar/calendar.asp

AEPS Training Available

Trainers are available to come to your facility to provide AEPS training. For more information contact:

Vera Lynne Stroup-Rentier
620-421-6550 ext. 1768
visrent@ku.edu



Resources for Parents and Professionals from KPIRC

The Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC), federally funded under Title V of *No Child Left Behind*, has new one page bilingual handouts for parents:

- *Parents As Teachers Curriculum and the Basics of Literacy*
- *No Child Left Behind and Parents As Teachers*
- *Where Does a Good Start in School Begin*
- *Key Parents as Teachers Findings: A Research Review*

Parent educator versions with more in-depth information, of each of these documents are also available. You can download copies at www.kpirc.org/ecResources.htm

Other topics of interest to parents include:

- *How to Help Your Child Become a Better Reader*
- *Put Reading First*
- *Summer Fun With Reading*
- *Uncovering Math With Your Family*
- *Table Top Mathematics: Mathematics Activities That Parents Can Do At Home*
- *Choosing a School for Your Child*

Bringing an Infant Mental Health Framework continues from page 2

This evolving dialogue between professionals and across disciplines engaged in the practice of infant mental health, has the potential to improve the outcomes for children and their families by enhancing the effectiveness of the services we are charged to deliver.

Lieberman, A. (1997, December/1998, January). An infant mental health perspective. *Zero to Three*, 18(3), 3-5.

Weatherston, D. (2000, October/November). The infant mental health specialist. *Zero to Three*, 21(2), 3-10.

Zero to Three (2000). *About infant mental health*. Retrieved May 10, 2006, from <http://www.zerotothree.org/imh/>



KDEC Mini-Grant Request for Proposal

The Executive Board of KDEC is pleased to announce a mini-grant competition. Three \$500 grants will be available for programs serving young children with disabilities and their families. Proposed projects must focus on ways to improve services.

One \$500 grant will be available for support of a student project which directly impacts the early intervention field.

Proposals must be postmarked by June 30, 2006. Funds will be distributed after July 15, 2006.

Proposals must include:

- Rationale or need for the funds;
- Goals and objectives of the project and a timeline;
- Benefits of the project for children and families, to the field;
- Who will be involved, and what other resources will be used;
- Budget information showing how funds will be used;
- Plan for measurement and evaluation of project success;

G. Assurance that project information will be disseminated in the KDEC newsletter and at the KDEC Conference (either presentation or poster session);

H. Assurance that a final project report will be provided to KDEC within two months of project end – projects must be completed by January 31, 2007;

I. Letters of support or commitment as needed (appendix).

At least one individual involved in the mini-grant proposal and the implementation of the project must be a current member of KDEC.

Three copies of each mini-grant proposal (no longer than six pages) should be sent to:

Peggy Miksch, KDEC President
Geary County Infant-Toddler Services

123 N. Eisenhower
Junction City, KS 66441

(H) 785-456-8881

(W) 785-762-7859

FAX 785-238-1863

peggymiksch@usd475.org

Application of Best Practice in Early Childhood Services Award Winners

The Kansas State Department of Education and Department of Health and Environment recognized programs for application of best practice in early childhood services. These programs were awarded \$1000 to use as a resource and a certificate of recognition at the Kansas Division for Early Childhood Conference last March.

The Haysville Early Childhood Program is recognized in the area of family centered services. This program through the use of a needs assessment, staff development, and planning, has modified their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process to be family centered and family guided. Through communication with families in identification of family routines, strengths and concerns regarding their child, an IEP is developed that focuses on the priorities of families. The result of this process has led to a stronger relationship between the program and families they serve.

Contact: Carla Heintz
1745 W. Grand, Haysville
316-554-2233

The Manhattan-Ogden Public Schools is recognized in the area of transition practices from preschool to kindergarten. This process has been in development for a number of years and has resulted in a seamless system for transition of children to kindergarten. Through involvement of families, cross observation of programs by staff from the preschool and kindergarten, and systematic follow-up children are successfully transitioned across educational experiences and settings.

Contact: Pam Russell
2031 Poyntz Avenue, Manhattan
785-587-2000

The Northeast Kansas Education Service Center Early Childhood Program is recognized for application of an evidence-based practice. This award focuses on the utilization of the LEAP Model as a basis for the development of social interaction and communication skills by preschool children. Through a needs assessment, planning and strong administrative support this peer mediated intervention strategy has led to significant changes in programming for all of the children serviced by this program.

Contact: Shelia Smith
1220 Walnut Street, Oskaloosa
785-863-3410

Flint Hills Special Education Cooperative's tiny-k Network has been awarded this recognition based upon their two year transition to utilization of a coaching model for delivery of early intervention services to children and families they serve. The model is based on extensive evidence of its effectiveness in promoting positive outcomes for very young children with disabilities and their families. A primary interventionist/coach works with a family to support development and attainment in reaching outcomes on the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Further, this program has worked with collaborating community programs to implement the model.

Contact: Elizabeth McCoy
1700 W. 7th Avenue, Emporia
620-341-2325

See kskits.org/html/bestpractice/ep.html for more information on current and past award winners.



Parent Summit August 10, 2006 Kansas City

The Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC) is hosting a Parent Summit for parents, educators, parent advocates and community-based organizations that work with parents at the Jack Reardon Center in Kansas City on August 10, 2006. This free one-day summit, sponsored by the US Department of Education, will feature four concurrent sessions: 1) School Improvement and Title I Parent Involvement; 2) Accessing Supplemental Education Services and Choice Options Under No Child Left Behind; 3) Understanding Your School's Report Card, and 4) Building Parent, School, and Community Partnerships to Support Quality Public Schools. Lewis Diuguid with the Kansas City Star will be the luncheon keynote and copies of his book, *A Teacher's Cry: Expose the Truth About Education Today*, will be given to each participant. For more information on the Summit please visit the KPIRC website – www.kpirc.org or call 866 711 6711 (toll free).



Children and Families Benefit from New Model

Editor's note: Flint Hills Special Education Cooperative is one of three preschool and one infant-toddler program to receive the 2005-06 Best Practice Award

More than a year of training, restructuring and a lot of hard work are paying dividends for the Flint Hills Special Education Cooperative Infant-Toddler Team in Emporia. This team of special education professionals was recognized by its peers at the Kansas Division for Early Childhood Conference last March and received a \$1,000 award for Application of Best Practice in Early Intervention Services. The award recognizes the team's use of the evidence-based coaching model for serving children and their families.

Team members are: Nikki Heinen and Jonni Brown, early childhood teachers; Nancy Devenport, speech and language therapist; Dana Green, physical therapist; Stacey Handly, occupational therapist; and Linda

Baumann, vision specialist. Judy Rockley is the team leader. The team serves children and families in seven school districts in Lyon, Chase, Morris, Wabaunsee, Osage, Coffey and Greenwood counties. Their territory stretches from Severy to Alta Vista and from Aliceville to Burns.

FHSEC was one of five sites in Kansas chosen in 2005 to be trained in the coaching model by the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. The team is working with M'Lisa Shel-

don and Dathan Rush, who are leading the training, starting with "boot camp" last September. The training has been essential for the team to shift from a traditional delivery model where an entire team was assigned to a child and each member saw this child individually.

Under the new structure, special education professionals provide families with the skills needed to help their children learn and develop to their fullest potential. The

sultants to the case leader. The team currently serves approximately 35 families using the coaching model.

Research shows that families are more likely to follow through with therapy and individual education plans if they are involved in establishing goals for the child. As a result, the child makes better progress toward the goals and the parents have better skills to do more for their children.

"Coaching is a strategy for parents that gives them confidence to look at the situation and brainstorm ways to solve problems when we are not there," Handly said. "We are building competence and confidence in parents."

In an effort to share our experience our team made a presentation at the KDEC Conference. The panel discussion titled The Struggle to Learn a

New Model: Coaching was presented by Jonni Brown, Nikki Heinen, Nancy Devenport and Stacey Handly.

For more information about Evidence-Based Practices, contact Elizabeth McCoy, FHSEC director, or Judy Rockley, team leader, at 341-2325. You also can contact them by email at emccoy@usd253.org or jrockley@usd253.org.

—submitted by Elizabeth McCoy and Judy Rockley



Back: Dana Green, Stacey Handly, Nikki Heinen, Nancy Devenport
Front: Linda Baumann, Jonni Brown, Judy Rockley

services are provided in a child's natural environment. That may be at home, at school or in a fast-food restaurant.

Team members serve as coaches for family members rather than as service providers. One member of the team is assigned as the lead consultant for a family. That individual works with the children and parents in their natural routines and parents become more independent care givers for their children. Other members of the team serve as con-

New Items at the Early Childhood Resource Center

- Handbook of Early Literacy Research: Vol 2
- Letter Links: Alphabet Learning with Children's Names
- Preschool Readers and Writers: Early Literacy Strategies for Teachers
- High/Scope for Children with Special Needs: A Developmental Approach
- Developmental Screening in Early Childhood: 5th ed
- Compendium of Screening Tools for Early Childhood Social-Emotional Development
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale: Revised ed
- Building a High/Scope Program: Full-Day Preschool Programs
- Understanding Assessment and Evaluation in Early Childhood Education
- Psychoeducational Profile 3
- Infant-Toddler Programs: Building a High/Scope Program

Time Coordination Solutions

The Kansas Division for Early Childhood (KDEC) conference last March in Overland Park gave me the chance to share with other professionals some of the wonderful opportunities available to collaborate at a distance. In almost every session I heard other professionals discussing the challenges they face to coordinate calendars so that staff can all come together in one place at one time. When I hear these trials, I wonder if technology might not be a viable solution.

Recent months have brought about an explosion in collaborative, or social, technologies. These technologies range from browsing the Internet using your cellular phone, to writing documents collaboratively, to using web-conferencing software. Using what is available in creative ways and being flexible about how your staff communicates can lead the way to more professional contact and better results for children.

Many program representatives who attended my session at KDEC spoke about the challenges of firewalls and being allowed to use social networking tools such as Microsoft

Messenger through their place of work. Another concern was policies dealing with confidentiality that must, of course, be observed. If you are interested in looking for solutions that might improve the quality or quantity of team participation, always talk to your information technology expert before downloading any software onto your computer; it will save you lots of explaining in the long run!

So, what's available and how do you use it? One of the most effective tools that KITS has implemented has been Yahoo's online calendar. This too may be found at www.calendar.yahoo.com. You must register for a free yahoo account. Then you can share your calendar with your entire team online. This means you can access and update your team calendar from any computer with an Internet connection. This calendar also has an option to publish your calendar live so that it may be viewed by anyone with an Internet connection. The KITS team shares a calendar to coordinate our activities. We all use the same login and password and post all our events in one place which saves quite a bit



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



of time when we are looking for free dates!

There are many other technologies available which are low or no cost to programs. If you are interested in how these technologies might be put to use in your program, check out the blog that I have created to share information: <http://collaborativetech.blogspot.com>

If you have a favorite technology you would like to share, please feel free to do so!

—submitted by Tammie Benham, ECRC Coordinator

**Training for
Early Childhood
Professionals and
Families**



Contact KITS by...

...phone:

620-421-6550 ext. 1618
800-362-0390 ext. 1618

...fax:

620-421-6550 ext. 1702

...email: kskits@ku.edu

...web: kskits.org

**Training on Using the
HELP (Hawaii Early Learning Profile)**

**Instructor: Dr. Barbara Kuczen
July 26
Lawrence Memorial Hospital Auditorium**

Workshop and lunch are provided free of charge.

To have meaningful participation in the training, you need to bring a copy of the manual *Inside HELP-Administration* for birth to three providers or *HELP for Preschoolers Assessment & Curriculum* for preschool providers (available from http://www.vort.com/products/help_overview.html). Copies of the developmental strands will be provided.

Registration: 8:00-8:30
Presentation: 8:30-3:00 (lunch provided)

Register online at <http://kskits.org/conferences/hawaii/help.html>
If you are unable to register online, call or email Robin Bayless at 620-421-6550 ext. 1618, 800-362-0390 ext. 1618, rbayless@ku.edu

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