

~ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS ~

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TRAINING: A LOOK AT NATIONAL DEFINITIONS

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Consistent terminology and definitions related to [professional development] methods, roles, knowledge, and capabilities have emerged as a critical issue for the early education field. ~Glossary (NAEYC, 2011)

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that "professional preparation and ongoing professional development for the early childhood education workforce is essential to providing high-quality services to children and families" (NAEYC, 2011). However, agreement on what professional development events and systems should look like in practice is a bit more complicated. Implementation can sometimes bog down over something as simple as consensus about the appropriate language to use. For example, do you provide "training" or "professional development"? Do you consider yourself a "trainer" or a "professional development specialist"?

In addition to choice of words, it can be challenging to articulate what influences the final choice of terms. No matter which terms you currently use, you probably—either consciously or unconsciously—associate a certain set of characteristics with these terms and to other words/terms related to teaching and learning. It is likely that there would emerge differing ideas about the meaning and/or characteristics of terms, even among individuals deeply rooted in the early childhood field.

NATIONAL GLOSSARY

To overcome this communication barrier and develop national definitions, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agen-

cies (NACCRRA) embarked in 2010 on a joint project to create a glossary of professional development, training, and technical assistance terms. Generated to promote consistency across the early education field, it is called the "Early Childhood Education Professional Development: Training and Technical Assistance Glossary" (2011). The carefully crafted definitions and explanations were developed at the end of nearly two years of research, multiple focus groups, extensive field review, and exploration of the use of these terms in practice in states and professional organizations across the country.

And then in 2012, NAEYC and the Alliance of Early Childhood Teacher Educators jointly developed national education-related definitions to include in the Glossary as well. Now together in one document, these glossaries are "intended to serve as guides for states to adapt and adjust as needed to meet their specific needs in clarifying professional development roles and policies; assisting with determining and supporting the knowledge and capabilities of those providing professional development; and in data efforts to count and track all types of professional development. The definitions are also designed to provide common understandings, or starting points, for research and national or cross-state discussions."

The Glossary is "composed of global definitions that embrace what NAEYC and its partners believe define the current best-practice ideals for training, TA, and adult education." The definitions were developed for "those who provide professional development, state

policy makers, early education advocates, and program administrators working to connect professional development activities and initiatives into an integrated system."

CONTEXTUAL DEFINITIONS

The first definitions to appear in the Glossary are "contextual definitions." Contextual definitions address the basic components of professional development and quality improvement:

~ Early Childhood Education Workforce

"[Individuals] working with young children and their families or on their behalf with a primary mission of supporting children's development and learning."

~ Early Childhood Education Professional Development

"A continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. These opportunities lead to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early education professionals. Professional development encompasses education, training, and technical assistance."

Individual Professional Development Plans

"Documents that provide a framework connecting various professional development experiences to each other and to the common core of knowledge and professional standards for early education professionals."

All early childhood education professionals should have IPDPs to assist in developing or articulating their career goals, and to guide and inform desired career advancement and decisions regarding PD opportunities. ~ NAEYC

More detail about each of these three components as well as the full text of the Glossary is readily avail-

able online. However, it may be helpful to carefully review the definitions related specifically to training independently of other aspects of professional development. Studying the training definitions in depth may serve to improve educational offerings by helping trainers match what they are currently doing with the characteristics of quality training identified by professionals in the early childhood field.

DEFINITION OF TRAINING

The Glossary presents a global definition of training. While the definition may not contain anything new, it establishes common ground for going forward.

"Training is a learning experience, or series of experiences, specific to an area of inquiry and related set of skills or dispositions, delivered by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills. A planned sequence of training sessions comprises a training program."

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAINING

In addition to developing a functional definition of training, the Glossary identifies and explains five distinct characteristics of training: focus, relationships, process, duration, and delivery. These five characteristics also serve as a common core of features for further describing and comparing training with technical assistance, mentoring, coaching, consultation, advising, and peer-to-peer technical assistance. The following descriptions of each characteristic have been taken in their entirety from the Glossary.

~ Focus

- *Part of professional development that builds or enhances the knowledge and competencies of early childhood education professionals.*
- *Training sessions and programs can focus on information dissemination; comprehension of content; application of knowledge or skills, and related attitudes and dispositions; analysis or synthesis of content; or a combination of these.*

~ Relationships

- *All training is strengthened by trusting and respectful interactions. Participants value each other as resources for learning, in addition to the trainer serving in the official leadership role.*
- *Because training programs include multiple sessions, they benefit from intentional building of positive relationships between and among trainer(s) and participants.*
- *Delivered by an individual or a team, to an individual or a group.*

~ Process

- *Planned and conducted based on the standards of the profession and an assessment of individual, group, and/or system needs. Standards, needs assessment, and other evidence are also used to define learning outcomes for training session(s).*
- *Follows adult learning principles including interactive learning activities, exercises, and instructional aides (handouts, audiovisuals, and other components of instruction) to teach the content that supports the defined outcomes.*
- *Includes an evaluative component that gauges the effectiveness of the training session/program including the resulting increase in participants' knowledge or capabilities.*
- *Completion of training programs can lead to participants' assessment for award of the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or another type of credential, continuing education units (CEUs), clock hours, or certification. In some instances participants who successfully complete a training program are awarded credit hours or may qualify for college credits. Trainers and/or their training content may need to meet specific approval requirements in order for participants to be awarded CEUs, clock hours, or other state-required documentation.*
- *Should be embedded in the recipient's broader professional development plan.*

~ Duration

- *Can occur one time or in a series of sessions (training program).*

~ Delivery

- *May be delivered through face-to-face, distance, technology-based, or hybrid methods.*

PRESERVICE VS. IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The Glossary also explains what is meant by the sometimes confusing terms "preservice" and "in-service" when applied to professional development.

~ Preservice

"Preservice or initial training refers to professional development in which an individual engages prior to beginning a position. Preservice training may be required for early childhood professionals to serve in a role."

Professionals engaged in initial training should work alongside or under the supervision of a qualified coworker until such training is completed. ~ NAEYC

~ In-service

On the other hand, "in-service or ongoing training is professional development in which early childhood professionals engage to enhance their skills and remain current regarding knowledge and practice in the field. In-service training may be required for early childhood professionals to continue serving in a role."

To help clarify the relationship between these two frequently used terms, the Glossary includes this explanation:

"Because of the field's varying requirements, there is often crossover regarding preservice and in-service education and training. An individual could receive preservice education and/or training to be a teaching staff member in a

community-based organization and also receive in-service education and/or training during her employment. The same individual could be pursuing a degree for a role as a teacher in a setting where individual licensure is required (e.g., public schools)—this education would be considered in-service professional development for the individual's current role and would be considered preservice preparation for the certified teaching position. Therefore, the labels preservice and in-service must be seen as related to the requirements of a position or established role in the field."

CONCLUSION

NAEYC has published guidelines for professional preparation programs with ongoing revision since 1981. These guidelines have been organized in a variety of ways in various publications over the past 30 years. With the 2009 revisions, the NAEYC Position Statement became "one statement of core professional performance standards, creating a unified framework for all early childhood professional development work."

It is a continuing effort to disseminate these professional guidelines to early childhood professionals who want, need, and will use them. It is the hope of NAEYC and its partners that the *Glossary* "helps us all in our efforts to improve the quality of practice and supports available to our nation's early education workforce." ~

*RESOURCES

* *Advancing the Early Childhood Professional: NAEYC Standards and Guidelines for Professionals Development* (NAEYC, 2012) with Alison Lutton, Editor. This newest volume of what has become known as the "red book" is designed as a resource for the entire early childhood field, across all early childhood professional roles and settings. It organizes the NAEYC position statements that describe what every early childhood professional should know and be able to do (the core professional preparation standards and Code of Ethical Conduct) and presents them alongside NAEYC documents that support states as they build professional development systems.

* *The Early Childhood Education Professional Development: Training and Technical Assistance Glossary* was developed in 2011 by NAEYC and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) for those who provide professional development, state policy makers, early education advocates, and program administrators working to connect professional development activities and initiatives into an integrated system. Available at www.naeyc.org/GlossaryTraining_TA.pdf

* *The Early Childhood Education Professional Development: Adult Education Glossary* was jointly developed by NAEYC and the Alliance of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators and ACCESS: Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators) in 2012. Available at www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/Adult_Education_Glossary_0.pdf

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