

**Division of Elementary and Secondary Education – Special Education Unit  
Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities  
Early Childhood, April 2021**

**Current Activities for Early Childhood Program Advisors/619 Coordinator:**

- **Multi-state Inclusion Cohort:** The State Leadership Team (SLT) is currently working to establish action items related to the previous indicator analysis work. The SLT chose to prioritize three Indicators of Quality Inclusion the team felt were crucial to address immediately. Sub-committees have been formed for Indicator 1: to formalize processes for the State Leadership Team, Indicator 3: to increase Family Engagement, and Indicator 12: to increase Public Awareness around inclusion.
- **Early Childhood Behavior Support Discussion Group:** The early childhood special education program is convening a cross-sector collaborative to create a comprehensive user-friendly platform that guides early childhood teachers in accessing behavior support services that are age-appropriate and discourage suspensions and expulsions.
- **National Institute for Early Education Research’s (NIEER) State PreK Leaders’ Peer Learning Community on Using Data on Teaching and Learning to Inform Policy for Preschool Programs:** Representatives from the early childhood special education program, Arkansas Better Chance program, and The Center for Exceptional Families meet frequently with NIEER and a multi-state cohort to discuss issues seen, data implications, and policy regarding the current COVID pandemic.
- **Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Partnership:** Early childhood special education and the Arkansas Better Chance Program are partnering to create a special education basic training for all ABC staff members.

**Current Early Childhood Special Education Technical Assistance and Professional Development:**

- **Early Childhood Outcomes, PLAAFP and Goals Professional Development:**
  - Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- **Site Visits:** We are currently scheduling/holding spring 1:1 virtual site visits with programs to discuss specific program needs, questions, and concerns. Four programs participated thus far. The rest are scheduling for up-coming months.
- **Early Childhood Virtual Discussion Group:** Monthly meetings are held to give any early childhood special education updates and released guidance, and to allow participants to generate questions, discuss, and plan for current circumstances.
- **Summer Book Study on Making Preschool Inclusion Work:** Book study books have arrived and plans are being made for our summer session. Virtual meetings will be held each week with the special education coordinator from each early childhood special education program and one other program staff member participating in inclusionary practices. This will serve as a follow-up to last year’s book study on inclusion. This study will offer practical strategies and activities for use in the field and foster discussions about practice across the state.

**Current Statewide Collaboration Projects:**

- **AAIMH** (Arkansas Association of Infant Mental Health) Analyzes mental health needs of infants/toddlers/preschoolers and available support services.

- **ABICE** (Arkansas Bilingual Interpreter Credential in Education) Provides professional credential training and support in Arkansas for bilingual adults acting as interpreters in educational settings from birth through twelfth grade.
- **AECCIG** (Arkansas Early Childhood Collaborative Impact Group: formerly Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (AECCS) Medical Home Workgroup) Work on drafting recommendations and providing feedback for the plan and standards for Better Beginnings.
- **BehaviorHelp** is a workgroup created to support a single point-of-entry support system for teachers struggling to manage challenging behaviors in child care center classrooms.
- **ELAN** (Equity Leaders Action Network), led by Head Start, addresses inequities in preschool services for African American boys.
- **Excel by Eight (E8)** Formerly known as the Pritzker Grant, is a planning grant and initiative to allow a team to develop a well-informed plan for infant and toddler support within the broader realm of developing successful children overall.
- **Learn the Signs, Act Early Network!** A grant designed to bolster early identification of developmental delays and disabilities, including through the use of the Learn the Signs, Act Early (LTSAE) parent developmental monitoring tool, and to advance the promotion of existing resources that enhance resiliency among families with young children during COVID-19 response efforts.
- **Arkansas None for Nine Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder Taskforce** Brings state-wide attention to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).
- **TECI (Teaming for Early Childhood Inclusion) Project** This project is led by the Partners for Inclusive Communities and is designed to build capacity within the early childhood education network for successful inclusion of children with disabilities.

#### Changes:

- Our Early Childhood Special Education support team has increased by one. Alesa Lambert joined our team in January of 2021. She also recently applied and has been selected to serve for two years as an aRPy Ambassador for the state of Arkansas. The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center established the aRPy Ambassador Initiative to disseminate information about and promote the use of the Division of Early Childhood for Council for Exceptional Children Recommended Practices (RPs). aRPy Ambassadors help build state capacity to use the ECTA Center's Practice Improvement Tools to support implementation of the recommended practices by local practitioners and families.

As these are the high leverage practices for early childhood, this will allow early childhood to align with the school-age High Leverage Practices support.