

ATTACHMENT 7

Project Proposal and Growing Professionals

Project Proposal:

Development of Early Learning Guidelines

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Date of Submission: January 3, 2005

The following project description consists of a collaborative curriculum-writing project proposed by the Peace Garden Consortium of Student Support Services in Bottineau and the Early Childhood Special Education Personnel Preparation Program at Minot State University. The proposal is designed to research, draft, and field test a prototype document referred to as *Early Learning Guidelines*. The proposal presents an overview of the philosophy and guiding principles in addition to an outline of the anticipated components, procedures for developing the guidelines document, implementation procedures and budget considerations.

Philosophy: The *Early Learning Guidelines* will embed a set of developmental outcomes and benchmarks with recommendations for enhancing a child's development in the early literacy, numeracy, motor, social/emotional, adaptive skills, communication and cognitive domains. The guidelines will embed strategies for providing targeted interventions for children ages birth to five years in the young child's natural learning environments including the home, child care centers, and other essential community learning environments. The guidelines document will contain interagency collaborative approaches to service provision, documentation of efficacy, and consumer input and evaluation.

Guiding Principles: The developmental phase of the *Early Learning Guidelines* document will embed the guiding principles listed below.

- All proposed content for the guidelines document will be based on scientifically proven effective practices and other promising practices identified in the literature.
- The guidelines document will be based on the recommendations from a Statewide Stake-holders Task Force. Ongoing collaboration with the task force will ensure that the recommendations and input of the task force members are embedded within the document throughout the developmental phase.
- The curriculum standards and benchmarks will be aligned with existing K-12 standards disseminated by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.

- The guidelines document will be inclusive of all children birth to five years of age regardless of ability, ethnicity, or socio-economic background.
- The guidelines document will be designed with ongoing input from family members. Collaboration with parents and other family members will occur throughout the developmental process including the initial design of a prototype and the field-testing process. Parents will also be consulted in the final editing review prior to submission to the state task force.
- The final product of the developmental process will consist of a working document available to parents, related service providers, community child care providers, and other medical and allied medical service providers. The document will be designed to guide the decision making process for determining the need for intervention, selecting intervention targets, planning normalized activities to enhance developmental outcomes, and to guide the documentation of efficacy.

Project goals address the initial review of the literature for comprehensiveness and the developmental process.

Goal 1. To conduct a comprehensive review of the literature to examine existing research findings in targeted areas.

Implementation: Two project personnel, Dr. Alan Ekblad and Marlys Albright will be responsible for the initial review of the literature and the identification of exemplary outcomes and practices for inclusion in the prototype guidelines document. Anticipated sources consist of a review of current documents from states such as Washington and Colorado who have adopted similar standards. Other potential professional groups and resources that will be reviewed and considered consist of: The Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC), the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) Curriculum Standards and Benchmarks, the National Head Start Collaboration Project, and University research projects such as the Carolina Abecedarian Project (Campbell & Ramey, 1994), Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES; Zill et al., 2001) and Early Head Start Research and Evaluation project (Love et al., 2002).

Goal 2. To develop a prototype *Early Learning Guidelines* document

Implementation: After an initial review of the literature, the project personnel will compile potential content into a draft document for review by consumer groups. Although the actual format of the document will evolve from the composite input of the multiple sources, an initial format that has been conceptualized consists of:

- Developmental Outcomes across six-month intervals from ages birth to 5 years.
- Benchmarks that specify criteria for skills performance and observations of child development referenced to each of the developmental outcomes.
- A usable curriculum referenced measurement instrument across domains that parents and other interventionists may utilize for determining developmental status and discrepancies in development. The curriculum referenced measures will be designed for periodic use for monitoring of child development over time.

- Suggestions and strategies for implementing interventions in normalized home and community environments, utilizing normally occurring routines and activities as contexts for intervention.
- Consistent reference will be made throughout the document to significant variables that impact early intervention including the role of the parents and other family members as primary interventionists, utilizing cultural strengths and considerations, utilizing interagency collaboration across service provider agencies, and planning systematic transitions across early intervention programs.

Goal 3. To ensure ongoing input from consumer groups throughout the developmental process.

Implementation: Two essential consumer groups will be utilized for initial input and ongoing input during the formative development of project content.

- The State-wide Consumer Task Force will be consulted at critical points including: a) communicating the initial charge to the project personnel, b) approving the initial format of the prototype document, c) review of the field-testing and parent-input data, d) review of all edits and changes in content made throughout the project duration, and d) approval of the final draft of the document.
- The Peace Garden Consortium of Student Support Services *Family Educator Enhancement Team* (FEET) Advisory Committee will sponsor and conduct focus group interviews with consumers groups including parents, early childhood service providers, and community child care providers.
- Focus-group input will be solicited from pilot-site consumer groups (See goal 4) including a) Early Head Start parents and family members, b) Parents and family members of children served through combined Head Start and Early Childhood Special Education classrooms, Right Track families, and Lake Region KIDS families. Additional input will be secured from a sample of service providers from each of the pilot sites programs.

Goal 4. To field-test the working draft.

Implementation: After the initial design of a prototype document, and with the input and approval of the State-wide Consumer Task Force, the Early Learning Guidelines document will be field-tested utilizing existing programs in several communities.

- Early Childhood teachers providing services through the Early Head Start Program in Minot.
- Interventionists providing services to young children with disabilities, ages birth through 2 years, through the Lake Region KIDS Project in Devils Lake.
- Early childhood teachers providing services through combined Early Childhood Special Education and Head Start classrooms in Stanley, Lignite, and Mohall.
- Preschool teachers and child care providers employed by the Bottineau, Stanley and Mohall Community Preschool Programs.
- The Peace Garden Consortium Region II Right Track Program.
- The Lake Region KIDS Region III Right Track Program.

Project personnel will sponsor training sessions with personnel from each of the participating programs. The training sessions will address the content of the manual, requested implementation strategies for field-testing, expectations for data collection, and ongoing collaboration for project input. At the conclusion of the field-testing phase, each participating agency will be asked to provide additional formative input including:

- a) appropriateness of the content and strategies, b) data on sensitivity of the content in consideration of cultural, ethnic and socio-economic variables of the family units, c) usefulness of the format, d) sensitivity to families, e) applicability to the mission of the agency, and f) “user-friendliness” of the strategies and format for parents and providers.

Goal 5. To revise the document based on the findings from the field-testing and to edit the document into a final draft.

Implementation: After a final review of the field-testing data and the recommendations of the focus group participants, a revised draft will be written and presented to the State-wide Consumer Task Force for final input and approval.

Timelines:

<u>Project Component</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
✓ Notification of Project Proposal Approval	
✓ Meeting with State-wide Consumer Task Force for discussion of the charge to the committee and guiding principles.	3/1/2005
✓ Completion of the review of the literature.	5/1/2005
✓ Development of an initial draft of an <i>Early Learning Guidelines</i> document.	8/1/2005
✓ Meet with State-wide Consumer Task Force for input.	9/1/2005
✓ Training sessions for field-test participants.	10/1/2005
✓ Conduct field-testing.	10/1/2005 through 4/1/2006
✓ Conduct focus group interviews with consumer groups.	11/1/2005 through 5/1/2006
✓ Document revisions made.	5/1/2005
✓ Final meeting with State-wide Consumer Task Force for approval.	6/1/2004
✓ Submission of final draft.	6/30/2006

Budget Analysis: Funding is requested to employ project personnel to complete the activities inherent in the project proposal. Salary amounts are based on current rates adopted by the applicant agencies. The total budget is based on estimated amount of time it is anticipated will be necessary to complete project component activities. Additional project funds are requested to provide incentives and stipends to pilot-site service providers, for mileage to attend meetings and training activities, and for consumable supplies such as paper, toner, and postage. The analysis of project activities based on estimated professional time consists of:

Qualifications of Project Personnel:

The Peace Garden Consortium of Student Support Services in Bottineau, ND will serve as the fiscal agent for the project. The Peace Garden Consortium has an extensive history of serving as the fiscal agent for state and local special education and human service programs serving students with disabilities. Current programs and projects consist of serving as the fiscal agent for the following programs:

- Lake Region KIDS Program in Devils Lake, ND.
- Region III Right Track Program in Devils Lake, ND.
- Region II Right Track Program for a 5 county area in Region II.
- IDEA grant awards for 3 special education units in north central North Dakota.
- IDEA Preschool grant awards for 3 special education units in north central North Dakota.
- Peace Garden Curriculum Consortium.

Key personnel who will implement project activities consist of:

Dr. Alan Ekblad is a Professor of Special Education at Minot State University (MSU) in Minot North Dakota. Dr. Ekblad is primarily responsible for the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) graduate personnel preparation program at MSU. Dr. Ekblad earned his BA degree in Speech and Language Therapy at Minot State University and his MA degree in Special Education from the University of North Dakota (UND) in Grand Forks, ND. Dr. Ekblad also completed his Doctorate of Education degree in Special Education at the University of North Dakota. Dr. Ekblad's prior early childhood experiences have included direct teaching, serving as the ECSE Program Coordinator for Souris Valley Special Services unit in Minot, and serving as Section 619 Coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. Dr. Ekblad has taught ECSE Coursework at MSU since 1994. An area of research interest that Dr. Ekblad has been actively pursuing is the development of systems for monitoring the outcomes for Head Start programs.

Keith H. Gustafson is the Director of the Peace Garden Consortium of Student Support Services in Bottineau, ND. Keith completed his BA degree in Elementary Education and Special Education at UND. His MA degree in Special Education was completed at George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville Tennessee. Prior early childhood experiences have consisted of direct classroom instruction, serving as Assistant Professor of Special Education in Infant Toddler Development at Minot State University, and serving as the Section 619 Coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. In addition to serving as the Chief Executive Officer for the Lake Region KIDS Project in Devils Lake, Keith is the former Director of the Minot State University Infant Development Program in Minot, ND. Keith has served as the Director of the Peace Garden Consortium since 1996.

Marlys Albright is the ECSE Program Coordinator for the Peace Garden Consortium in Bottineau, ND. Marlys completed her BA degree in Child Development/Family Relations from North Dakota State University (NDSU) in Fargo and her MA degree in Special Education from Minot State University (MSU). Marlys has over 20 years of teaching experience in the areas of early childhood and early childhood special education. Marlys is currently serving as the Coordinator of the Region II Right Track Program, the Peace Garden Consortium Country Cousins, Village Teams, and Early Literacy projects.

All three personnel have extensive experience in serving on local, regional and state-wide early childhood committees, early childhood special education committees and task forces, providing training to consumer groups, and collaborating with other agencies in the provision of early childhood special education services.

References:

- Campbell, F.A. & Ramey, C.T. Pungello, E, Sparling, J., & Miller-Johnson, S. (2002) Early childhood education: Young adult outcomes from the Abecedarian Project. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6, 42-57.
- Love, J.M., Kisker, E.E., Ross, C.M., Schochet, P.Z., Brooks-Gunn, J., Paulsell, D., et al. (2002). *Making a difference in the lives of infants and toddlers and their families: The impacts of Early Head Start*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. Early Head Start Research and Evaluation project
- Zill, N., Resnick, G., Kim, K., O'Donnel, K. Sorongon, A. McKey, R.H., et al. (2003). *Head Start FACES 2000: A whole-child perspective on program performance*. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families.