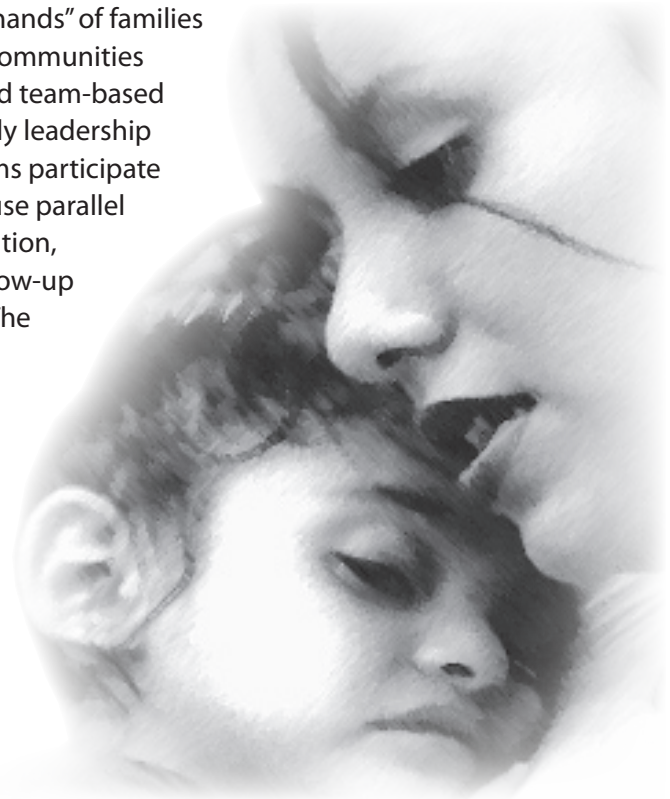


The SpecialQuest Approach to Professional Development on Inclusion for Young Children with Disabilities and their Families

The SpecialQuest approach to professional development focuses on inclusion for young children with disabilities and their families. The approach has two components, values and design. Each component is critical to successful professional development using the SpecialQuest approach. Elements of the components are noted in the matrix on the following pages, along with indicators that reflect implementation of the SpecialQuest approach.

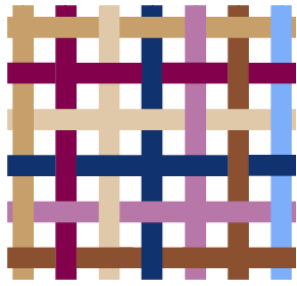
SpecialQuest is designed to touch the “head, heart and hands” of families and professionals working together to create inclusive communities for young children with disabilities. This relationship- and team-based approach enhances and sustains inclusive services, family leadership skills, and integrated, collaborative service delivery. Teams participate in intensive and engaging learning experiences, which use parallel process and continuous improvement strategies. In addition, teams are supported with coaching, facilitation, and follow-up over time to implement high quality inclusive services. The SpecialQuest approach is built on a solid foundation of current theories of adult learning, systems change, and sustainability.

With the SpecialQuest approach everything is done with intention. All aspects of the curriculum and implementation are done with purposeful design; all elements of the model are crafted and refined to lead to an ultimate outcome. Core values are not only interwoven throughout the curriculum but are evident in word, action, and deed. These values work very subtly, and by their nature, create a climate of support, respect and excellence.



The SpecialQuest Multimedia Training Library contains information on the SpecialQuest approach and the contents of the SpecialQuest curriculum, and is available in electronic format at no cost from www.specialquestlibrary.org. The easy-to-follow training materials and award-winning videos (in English, Spanish, and open-captioned) focus on the areas of: Including Infants and Toddlers (and Preschoolers*) with Disabilities, Building Relationships with Families, Collaboration and Teaming. The strategies outlined in these materials are the core of the SpecialQuest approach to effective professional development. The Web-based SpecialQuest Multimedia Training Library (www.specialquestlibrary.org) has additional information about the SpecialQuest approach, as well as resources for trainers and faculty at colleges and universities who desire to incorporate the SpecialQuest approach in their work.

* The materials are being used in a variety of professional development settings for those working with *young children birth-five*. Go to the Supplements page of the Web-based SpecialQuest Multimedia Training Library (www.specialquestlibrary.org) for new and adapted materials, as well as suggestions for modifications to make the materials more applicable to those who serve preschool age children with disabilities and their families.



Weaving Values and Design into Effective Professional Development on Inclusion to Benefit Young Children with Disabilities and their Families

Values

- The elements under the values component are interrelated and each element is critical to the SpecialQuest approach and required for full implementation of the SpecialQuest approach to professional development.
- Values guide the SpecialQuest approach and must be evident throughout each element of design of a professional development process.

VALUES ELEMENTS & INDICATORS

Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development is based on a shared vision for inclusion, which incorporates the concepts of belonging, families as partners and leaders, and teaming and collaboration.
Team-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants come as cross-agency teams that are comprised of key stakeholders, including family members and direct service providers, and administrators, reflecting diverse roles, cultures, languages and abilities. • Teams have support from administrators to participate in professional development, implement learning, and engage in the process of continuous improvement.
Relationship-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and supportive relationships are fostered among team members and facilitators. • Interactions are characterized by a sense of acceptance, respect, and trust. • Individuals are valued for their diverse experiences and perspectives.
Families as Partners and Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families are actively involved as informed decision-makers, participants, partners, and leaders. • Families' experiences ground all aspects of professional development in the context of daily family life.
Parallel Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers of professional development model the core values that they are expecting the participants to adopt.
Head, heart, hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development addresses and weaves together cognitive, skill-based, and emotional (motivational/inspirational) aspects of learning.
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and delivery of professional development incorporates ongoing participant input, data-based decisions, and wisdom of the field. • Professional development supports reflective practice; providing periodic opportunities to pause and reflect on personal experiences, the context, and implications of new ideas and concepts when applying knowledge to practice in order to create and sustain change.

Design

- Learning strategies are designed to be respectful, individualized, and experiential.
- Learning is applied by teams to create and sustain program and systems change.
- Content reflects effective practices in inclusive service delivery, family engagement and leadership development, and teaming and collaboration.

DESIGN ELEMENTS & INDICATORS

Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content and learning strategies have a consistent and logical organization and flow. • Learning environments are structured to best support active learning, and address diverse learning styles and modalities, as well as participant comfort. • Learning activities and environments encourage creativity of participants and facilitators. • Participants are provided with open access to professional development materials and strategies, and are encouraged to use them with others.
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pacing and duration of professional development provides multiple opportunities to internalize information, deepen understanding, and develop and refine skills over time. • Time within professional development activities is semi-structured to ensure a balance of content, practice, and reflection, as well as individual and group learning.
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations for learning and behavior are made explicit in the form of agendas, learning outcomes, and follow-up. • Participants are provided with information and skills that directly relate to their work and are expected to utilize and share information with others. • Team members share responsibility and accountability for implementing action plans.
Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators work in teams that represent a variety of roles and perspectives. • Facilitators provide learning experiences that create a shared context, ensure opportunities for practice, and support direct application to the teams' work. • Facilitators include and elicit a variety of personal experiences and real life examples of successful inclusive practices to educate, motivate, and inspire. • Facilitators build on the strengths of the participants, support accomplishment of learning outcomes, and celebrate successes. • Facilitators individualize intensive, interactive, and engaging learning experiences for participants.
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals and teams reflect on their learning and how it applies to their work. • Participants use problem-solving strategies to develop and implement action plans that address the challenges and realities of their work environments.
Follow-up and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teams are supported through ongoing, individualized coaching over time to implement their action plans. • Teams incorporate the principles of sustainability into their practice to assure long-term systems change. • Professional development supports reflective practice; providing periodic opportunities to pause and reflect on personal experiences, the context, and implications of new ideas and concepts when applying knowledge to practice in order to create and sustain change.

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