Title:
Computer-Based Training for Collaborative Professional Development among Child Caregivers and Teacher Education Candidates

Abstract:
This paper will describe the development and implementation strategies for a collaborative model of professional development and computer-based training for infant caregivers and teacher education candidates assigned to their centers and schools. Providing research-based and effective, on-going training on child development and care giving skills is an on-going need in the field of early childhood education. Early childhood teacher education candidates are mandated to have field experiences that are consistent with the latest knowledge in the field. Through computer-based training, consistent follow-up activities that support the training content and enhanced communication between the university supervisor, center-based teacher and early childhood candidate, professional development needs are met and field experiences with very young children are enhanced.

Brief Paper Proposal
This paper will provide a description and specific implementation strategies for computer-based training among child caregivers that work with infants and toddlers. Early childhood teacher education candidates are mandated by national accreditation standards to have substantial field experiences with infants and toddlers in programs that maintain the highest standards of care and learning experiences for our young children. Challenges for early childhood teacher educators who must identify and provide field experiences for their candidates that meet the standards of research-based, effective nurturing care for young children.

Providing child caregivers and professional staff within centers access to computer-based training meets several needs. Primarily, child care centers can provide consistent, meaningful and on-going training for a group of early educators that are in need of the latest and best information about the development and care of young children. Due to limited financial resources in centers, time restrictions on personnel due to the demands of their work, and identifying training that is accurate and meaningful, professional development for child caregivers has been difficult. Through partnerships with early childhood teacher education programs child care centers can access the latest information and participate in computer-based training with the early childhood candidates that have been assigned to their centers for field experiences.
The pervasive need for training and communication among child caregivers can be readily met through computer-based, on-line training and professional development. Early childhood teacher education candidates who have degree requirements can work in collaboration with child care center staff in meeting course and program requirements, while child caregivers can further develop and enhance their professional skills. Overall communication among a community of early childhood professionals is greatly enhanced, well beyond simply managing field experiences for teacher education candidates. The latest information concerning the health, education and well-being of very young children can be shared and discussed. Further, this method of computer-based training provides on-going follow-up and support to professional content that supports better care for young children and effective field experiences for early childhood teacher education candidates.