When the Music Changes . . .

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Paraprofessionals play an important role in the education of young children with, or at risk for, disabilities. Yet, because few training programs sufficiently infuse content related to serving special needs infants and toddlers, paraprofessionals typically lack the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to address effectively the requirements of this population. The article describes how a program designed to prepare urban ECE paraprofessionals was modified to ensure preparation of individuals equipped to deliver high quality services to young children with diverse abilities and characteristics. The program improvement process was supported by funding from the USDOE Office of Special Education Programs and by technical assistance from the Monarch Center.

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There is an African proverb that says, "When the music changes, so does the dance," (http://www.wiseoldsayings.com/wosdirectoryw.htm). Viewed from an educational perspective, the proverb suggests that as educational standards change based on sound research and the demands of a complex world, the delivery of educational services to students with diverse demographics, experiences, and ability levels and therefore the preparation of personnel who provide these services must change as well. To this end, faculty at a university in a major metropolitan area embarked on an initiative to modify the institution's program for preparing highly qualified paraprofessionals. The program modification was largely inspired by faculty attendance at a *Program Improvement Seminar* sponsored by the Monarch Center - a national technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The seminar provided step-by-step procedures on how to modify programs to reflect evidence-based standards designed to improve outcomes for young children, particularly those with special needs or those at risk for developmental delays.

In considering how best to describe the implementation and outcomes of the modified program, project leaders reflected on the meaning of the dance proverb and its implication for the change process in which they have been engaged. Learning a new dance is about changing—altering familiar responses in ways that may be challenging or uncomfortable. It requires strength, balance, flexibility, and risk acceptance on the part of the dancer. Having acknowledged that the music had indeed changed, project leaders opined that a change in dance would likely require

dance instruction. Teaching a new dance seemed an appropriate analogy for the change initiative because, like educational change, dance involves both art and science. As an art form, dance generally involves moving rhythmically, usually to music, often with a partner or partners, using prescribed or improvised steps and gestures. Likewise, successful educational change involves executing timed activities in accord with others. As a science, both dance and educational change require knowledge of energy, force, and motion combined with their relationship to one another. Dance, like educational change, reflects a broad spectrum of social, cultural, aesthetic, artistic, moral, and other human characteristics.

Thus, improvements made to the paraprofessional pre-service program described in this article were based on the realization that the context in which early childhood education occurs (the music) has changed. As a result, change is required in the preparation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) personnel (the dance) such that they are able to deliver high quality services to diverse young children and their families.

The Changing Context of ECE: New Music

Out-of-the home early childhood care is a prominent feature of life for millions of preschoolers. More than half of the nation's 21 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children below age six are in childcare. Approximately 80% of children age five and younger with working mothers spend an average of almost 40 hours per week in a child care arrangement with someone other than a parent. African American children are especially likely to be cared for by a non-parent, and African American preschoolers are more likely than Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian preschoolers to attend center-based care (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2012) (See Table 1).

Table 1
Differential Likelihood of Non-Parental Childcare for Young Children

	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Caucasian
Children in a Non-parental Childcare Arrangement at 9 Months	63%	49%	47%	
Children in Center-Based Childcare at 9 Months	14%	5%	4%	9%
Children in Center-Based Childcare at 3-6 years of age (2007 data)	65%	39%	64%	58%

The ever-increasing diversity of our country has significantly influenced the context of early childhood education. During the past two decades, young children have become the most racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse age group in the United States. According to census data, there have been dramatic increases in the population growth of Hispanic and Asian

children, accompanied by a decline in the number of Caucasian children along with a slight decline in the number of African American children. As a result, in 2010, Hispanics represented almost a quarter (23%) of all children while Caucasians represented a little more than half (53%) (Frey, 2011).

Children from diverse racial and cultural groups, particularly those under the age of six, are disproportionately impacted by poverty. For example, 2010 data from the National Center for Children in Poverty indicate that while African American, Hispanic, and Native American children represent 40% of all children less than six years of age, they comprise 56% of those from low-income families. These data highlight the differential relationship between poverty and ethnicity and parent's country of origin (Addy & Wight, 2012). See Table 2.

Table 2
Differential Likelihood of Children Under Age Six Living in Low-Income or Poor Families

Demographic Group	Level of Poverty	
	Living in Low Income Families	**Living in Poor Families**
African American Children	70%	44%
Hispanic Children	66%	35%
Caucasian Children	35%	15%
Asian Children	30%	
Children with Immigrant Parents	64%	
Children with Native Born Parents	45%	

Further, these data imply the potential for related social, economic, and educational challenges because poverty puts children at risk for disabilities and other factors that threaten healthy development. The rising percentage of children from low income and poor families, the deleterious impact of poverty on their growth and development, and the disproportionate impact of poverty on racially and culturally diverse young children unquestionably influence the context in which their early education occurs.

Research confirming long-term benefits of early education is also exerting a significant influence on the context of early childhood education. Empirical evidence indicates that high quality early education programs can have positive impacts on children and families in terms of school success, family self-sufficiency, and parental support of child development. A rigorous, large-

scale evaluation of Early Head Start and Head Start programs reported improved cognitive and social-emotional development for children. Among the significant participant effects were (a) improved literacy skills (e.g., vocabulary, sound and letter identification, and pre-writing skills), (b) improved math skills, (c) fewer hyperactive or withdrawn behaviors, and (d) improved health status (Child Trends, 2012). Early intervention has the potential to modify the developmental trajectories of young children already identified as having a disability. Children who have disabilities enter childcare at rates similar to children without disabilities (Smolensky & Gootman, 2003). Early childhood education programs also have the potential to ameliorate or prevent developmental delays and other negative outcomes for young children considered at risk (Anderson et al., 2003).

ECE Personnel Preparation: The Need for a New Dance

Key to addressing the changing context of ECE and to reaping the benefits it can provide is the provision of high quality services delivered by well-prepared, skilled early childhood service providers. Consequently, IDEA-2004 (P.L. 108 446) requires that professionals who work with infants and toddlers with disabilities who receive Part C (early intervention) services be fully qualified to provide those services and places responsibility for ensuring their qualifications on each state. Specifically, IDEA requires that states offer a "*comprehensive system of professional development including the training of paraprofessionals....*"[20 USC 1435].

There is substantial agreement among researchers and others that paraprofessionals play an important role in the education of children with disabilities (Wallace, 2003). Paraprofessionals assist and provide services ranging from implementing behavior management plans, to providing complex life-sustaining health procedures delegated by medical personnel for medically fragile children, to being involved in daily administrative duties (Killoran, Templeman, Peters, & Udell, 2001; Picket, 1996). In fact, Killoran and colleagues (2001) maintain that "the paraprofessional has become the backbone of inclusive early childhood education and is frequently serving as a child's primary interventionist in inclusive and community settings" (p. 68). Despite substantial agreement among researchers and others that paraprofessionals play an important role in the education of children with disabilities (Wallace, 2003), evidence abounds documenting their lack of training to address the needs of young children with developmental delays or disabilities, or considered at risk for them (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; French & Pickett, 1997). Further, evidence exists that, even when training is provided, it is often insufficient in terms of quantity and quality (National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education, 2002; Whitaker, 2000).

In response to the need for paraprofessional training, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) established a priority to provide federal support to improve the quality of existing paraprofessional certificate or associate degree programs. Institutions receiving support under this priority are required to enhance or redesign the program curricula so that paraprofessionals are well prepared to work with children who have disabilities and their families. This article describes one such program funded by the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)—*Paraprofessional Pre-service Program Improvement Grant (CFDA84.325N).* The following chronicles the change process undertaken to make the paraprofessional preparation program more responsive to the diversity of the young children and

their families, particularly children with, or considered at risk, for disabilities and children from culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

Urban Paraprofessional Program (UPP): Changing the Dance

The *Urban Paraprofessional Program* (UPP), located at a community college in a metropolitan setting, targeted improvement of the Associate Arts Education degree program (AAE) and the early childhood faculty of that degree program (AA EC faculty). Over the past decade, approximately 210 individuals completed the AA degree through the institution's early childhood institute, an entity created as the city's organ for professional development in early childhood education. Currently, there are 400 candidates matriculating in the improved AAE program. Seventy percent of the candidates are African American. Hispanic individuals comprise 20% of program enrollment, while Asian and Caucasian individuals comprise five percent each of candidates enrolled.

The program offers two training strands: (a) an Infant/toddler training focus and (b) a pre-Kindergarten - Grade 3 training focus. These programs were developed to prepare early childhood personnel to address the needs of the city's 35,356 young residents who are under the age of six. More than half of the children (58%) are African American; 13% are Hispanic; and 24% are Caucasian. Virtually one-half (47%) live in low-income families, including 16% who live in extreme poverty. According to 2010 data from the National Center for Children in Poverty (Addy & Wight, 2012), two-thirds of the children under age six are exposed to multiple *risk factors* (e.g., single parent home, poverty, linguistic isolation, parents with less than a high school education, and parents who have no paid employment). This figure represents a nine percent increase from 2007 figures. Specifically, 40% of the children under age six are exposed to one or two risk factors, while approximately one-fourth (27%) are exposed to three or more risk factors—an eight percent increase in three years. The combination of low-income and other risk factors raises the vulnerability of the city's young children to disabilities and developmental delay.

The fundamental purpose of the UPP is to enable AA EC faculty and field site personnel to better prepare paraprofessionals to deliver early childhood education to diverse young children with disabilities or considered at risk for disabilities. Specific goals of the project are to:

- Revise 15 courses and the internship experiences that comprise the AA curricula to infuse evidence-based practices and professional standards designed to meet the needs of young children with disabilities;

- Create and deliver professional development that prepares ECE faculty and field site partners to effectively deliver the revised course content and fieldwork;

- Utilize the revised curricula and practice to provide high quality training to pre-service paraprofessionals; and

- Institutionalize project course/practice revisions and professional development.

Implementation of the UPP has occurred in two main phases. Phase I of the project focused on readiness issues such as institutional climate, buy-in, communication, barriers, etc.; Phase II, which is still ongoing, addresses the implementation of specific change activities.

Phase I: Addressing the Readiness for Change

Project implementation actually began with a review of literature regarding educational change and reflection on the change-related implications of teaching and learning a new dance. The review and reflection helped to pinpoint both readiness concerns and strategies or steps for preparing the institution and targeted faculty for the desired curriculum changes. Following is a description of these readiness concerns and the project's incorporation of literature-based steps for facilitating change as adapted from recommendations by Kotter and Cohn (2002).

Ensure supportive institutional climate. *Describe the new music, explain the need to learn a new way of dancing, and solicit support for learning the new dance.*

While teaching some courses in the AA Education Program, the Principle Investigator (PI) of the UPP, a special education faculty member, recognized a need among pre-service paraprofessionals for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to working with diverse young children with disabilities and their families. Having identified this need, she identified external funding (i.e., OSEP's *Paraprofessional Pre-service Program Improvement* Grant) that would contribute meaningfully to creating an institutional climate supportive of the desired change. This lead to the development of a successful grant proposal supported with assistance from the Monarch Center.

The creation of a climate conducive to implementation of the proposed changes involved apprising key university and community stakeholders of the need for change and soliciting their support. Conversations were held with the Director of Sponsored Research and other university stakeholders, such as the Coordinator of the AA Education program. The project PI also considered her professional and community service activities and reached out to individuals and organizations whose affiliations and/or missions were aligned with project goals. Thus, the CEO of a community nonprofit that focuses on issues affecting individuals with intellectual disabilities, the Director of the local chapter of the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), respective directors of special education and early childhood education for the local school district, as well as former and current students in the AA program were solicited as project advisory board members. These individuals were contacted via a formal letter describing the grant and articulating the value their support/involvement could provide. Letters were followed up with phone calls inviting these individuals to a luncheon where the project and project activities were described in more detail. Each attendee was given an opportunity to ask questions and then asked to sign a contract confirming their role as a project Advisory Board member.

Of particular importance to ensuring that the institutional climate was supportive to the UPP was the need to address the University's restructured organization. Prior to transmitting the project application for federal funding, a number of programs (e.g., the AA Education) that had previously been offered by the flagship university were resituated in a newly developed

community college that maintains some administrative and programmatic relationship with the parent university. Given that the AA program resided in the community college while the special education program (and the project PI) retained residence in the flagship university, it was essential that administrative, fiscal, and other issues be addressed and resolved. It was necessary to develop supportive institutional climates across two institutions and to establish clearly articulated understandings about how the change initiative would be implemented.

Form a powerful coalition. *Identify individuals who are familiar with the music and experienced in the dance to be taught, and committed to facilitating the change effort.*

The institutional leaders listed above comprised a critical component of the project coalition. Additionally, a balanced change initiative team of key project personnel was formed consisting of individuals representing a variety of administrative roles, responsibilities, and experiences in special education, early childhood education, and personnel preparation. Finally, a project Advisory Board was established that reflected broad representation from the ECE community, including parents of preschoolers who have disabilities or were considered at risk for disabilities.

Create and communicate a vision for change. *Provide opportunities for holder of the dance vision to emerge and communicate the vision for the dance.*

The teaching experience of the project PI allowed for the emergence of a vision related to improving the quality of early education paraprofessionals. Both before and after submission of the proposal, the PI facilitated multiple discussions with key project personnel, AA EC faculty and field supervisors, and project consultants (including an individual recommended by the Monarch Center) regarding the implications and impacts of the current and proposed way of preparing paraprofessionals. Discussants agreed that the perceptions of both AA EC faculty and candidates needed to change, as did their knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to disabilities, instructional strategies, and universal design. The proposed changes to curriculum and professional development were linked to a shared vision of high quality educational services delivered by outstanding education personnel to young children and families who resemble our children and families.

Remove obstacles. *Anticipate obstacles that have the potential to interrupt, postpone, or cancel the flow of the dance.*

The impact of obstacles to the change desired can be greatly mitigated by immediate intervention, positive leadership, and a determined, focused support network. A not uncommon obstacle that had major implications for the UPP was the institutional sluggishness that impacted project access to and use of grant funds. When appeals to institutional administrators produced less than satisfactory results, the project PI tactfully solicited suggestions for resolution from the funding agency. This strategy, when pursued with discretion and diplomacy, can be quite effective in removing logjams, particularly when an obstacle negatively influences expenditure of funds, adherence to funder policies, and/or project ability to honor commitments and meet specified deadlines.

Plan and reward short-term successes. *Present the new dance in small movement phrases and provide recognition for competent performance of the dance phrases.*

Key project personnel developed achievable short-term project targets that could be implemented without help from critics of the change. After each successful project activity, project personnel analyzed what went well and what needed improvement. By leveraging project momentum, they were able to maintain a focus on continuous improvement. Individuals who helped the project meet curriculum revision, professional development, and project management targets were given rewards commensurate with their positions and affiliation with the project. Specifically, AA EC faculty who met syllabus revision targets received summer compensation, community partners who met material review targets received public recognition at an advisory board luncheon, and a local project consultant who facilitated meeting project management targets received a campus-parking discount.

Articulate a plan for building on and institutionalizing the change. *Consider dancers' skill set and adapt choreography as needed to meet their needs.*

Efforts were made to ensure that the institution's leaders continue to support project changes and these changes remain visible throughout the institution. For example, in addition to written project documents, periodic face-to-face meetings were scheduled with key university administrators to apprise them of project accomplishments. Moreover, project-developed professional development modules will be submitted for certification through the institution's Quality Matters Review. Such certification would enable all faculty to complete and use the modules as evidence of the professional development required by the faculty performance review process.

Phase II: Teaching a New Dance

Perusal of web-based resources related to teaching a new dance indicated that the process should incorporate the following steps: (a) know the characteristics of target learners, (b) know what dance needs to be taught, (c) help individuals learn the dance steps, (d) be fun and energetic, (d) allow learners to add their own moves, and (e) be patient with learner differences (retrieved from http://www.wikihow.com/Teach-Dance-Steps).

Know the characteristics of learners. The immediate learners targeted by UPP's change initiative were the six ECE faculty members who provide training for individuals seeking AA degrees in early childhood education. After completing the Phase I readiness activities described in the previous section, project personnel focused on identifying and describing the relevant characteristics of these individuals. In addition to a review of each faculty member's demographic and professional experience data, a pretest was administered to determine their knowledge of special education and service delivery to young children with special needs. Demographic and experiential data indicated that faculty were diverse and had extensive knowledge and experience in the preparation of early education personnel (see Table 3).

Table 3

Characteristics of AA Degree Faculty

Number of Faculty	Ethnicity	Employment	Degree	Degree Area	ECE Experience
6	1 Hispanic	3 Full time	2 PhD	ECE General Ed Ed Admin.	At least 25years each
	5 African American		1 Masters		
		3 Adjunct	3 Masters		At least 15 years each

Pretest results revealed that faculty had experience in preparing early education paraprofessionals for service delivery to young children *without disabilities* and felt adequately prepared to address issues related to the racial and cultural diversity of children and families in our city. However, the pretest feedback also indicated that AA EC faculty was far less knowledgeable, confident and comfortable with issues related to the diversity and educational programming for young children with disabilities.

Know what dance needs to be taught. In determining the curriculum modification and professional development needs of AA EC faculty and field-site personnel, UPP key personnel considered AA EC faculty characteristics, pretest results, and priorities of the UPP funding agency. Course revisions and professional development content and strategies were designed to address OSEP requirements that:(a) each course in the AA program incorporate evidence-based and competency-based special education content and practices, and (b) the AA program provide practicum experience in an early education setting serving children with disabilities. Additionally, key personnel sought to incorporate general content and a knowledge base specifically responsive to the context of early education in our city. Finally, project leaders instituted a systematic syllabus assessment process designed to identify faculty needs with regard to course content and pedagogy.

A consultant identified through the Monarch Center, who had expertise in early childhood special education and experience in curriculum revision, was employed to guide faculty dyads through an intensive assessment of their existing course syllabi. Faculty used a rubric provided by the consultant to assess the extent to which their syllabi incorporated elements (e.g., diversity, evidence-based practices) designed to prepare paraprofessionals for effective service delivery to young children with disabilities and their families. Table 4 provides a cross section of the attributes addressed by the syllabus assessment rubric. The entire rubric is presented in Appendix A.

Table 4

Syllabus Assessment Rubric

Syllabus Elements	Assessment Questions
a. Course description	• Does the course description reflect the core value of diversity? • Does the course description reflect evidence-based practices?
b. Course objectives	• Do course objectives reflect clear expectations? • Do course objectives address instructional strategies for meeting the needs of young children with disabilities? • Do course objectives address technology-related knowledge, skills, and dispositions important for meeting the needs of young children with disabilities?
c. Texts, readings, resources	• Do course resources support candidates in learning how culture, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status influence early childhood development? • Do course resources support evidence-based practices? Community involvement?
d. Assignments	• Do course assignments engage candidates in diverse settings?
e. In Class Instructional Experiences/Guest Speakers	• Are instructional experiences linked to program values? • Do guest speakers include family and community members?

As a result of these activities, it was necessary to infuse courses with updated curricular content and experiences designed to facilitate the development of infants and toddlers with developmental delays and/or disabilities, assist families in meeting the needs of their children, ensure that paraprofessionals have knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with licensed/certified ECE practitioners, and ensure that paraprofessionals meet qualifications consistent with State standards in accordance with part C of IDEA (2004). More specifically, course content needed to be revised in four areas—understanding basic special education terminology, laws, policies, procedures, and services; assessment; instructional strategies; and assistive technology, particularly as these relate to service delivery in early childhood settings. Similar professional development needs were identified in the areas of disability awareness, evidence-based instructional strategies for early education settings, effective practices for

facilitating diverse family involvement, assistive technology for early education settings, and pedagogy and instructional technology supporting delivery of revised coursework.

Implement choreography to help individuals learn the dance. UPP project leaders systematically instituted carefully planned procedures to achieve desired changes and meet UPP goals. Below are the five essential elements that characterized the project's change initiative.

- *First*, throughout UPP course revision activities and course delivery-related professional development activities, project leaders incorporated supports/approaches designed to enhance faculty ability to work effectively in collaboration with one another. Course revision activities (i.e., syllabus assessment and subsequent content infusion) were conducted by AA EC faculty dyads who taught the courses assigned to them for revision. Professional development activities (i.e., creation of professional development modules) were conducted by small work teams consisting of an AA EC faculty member, a SPED faculty member, a student, and a community partner or resource consultant with training in early education, language development, assistive technology or some other critical content area. Project leaders endeavored to create course-revision dyads with complementary personalities. Leaders facilitated team-building activities for module development teams. A tactful change in personnel was implemented in response to a particular instance in which a faculty dyad remained incompatible.

- *Second*, leaders created an environment for learning and working that promoted continued buy-in and provided numerous resources (e.g., consultant, rubrics, templates) to support the work expected. Additionally, acknowledging that a learning environment that is fun and high energy is as important for adult learners as it is for young learners, project leaders endeavored to create such an environment. For example, meetings and work sessions included humorous icebreakers, team-building activities, and refreshments appropriate to the occasion.

- *Third*, project leaders provided a number of guided and independent practice opportunities. For example, AA EC faculty received feedback on their course revisions from internal (project personnel) and external (community partners and Advisory Board members. Their reviewers provided feedback regarding trial implementations of some syllabi.

- *Fourth*, leaders reinforced successive approximations, as well as competent demonstrations of expertise (i.e., syllabus revisions, module development). Incentives for continued effort were also provided. For example, following trial implementation of revised syllabi, AA EC faculty were invited to a one-day retreat to which project Advisory Board members and community partners were also invited. The retreat provided the opportunity to review project implementation, celebrate project accomplishments, acknowledge AA EC faculty and other change agents, and solicit and discuss areas for project improvements.

- *Fifth*, in the instances where resistance to learning the dance occurred, project leaders attempted to understand and address the source of the resistance. In virtually all cases, both the source of and the response to the resistance could be found in one of the elements above (i.e., the level or type of support provided to facilitate faculty work, attributes of the learning/working environment, availability of practice opportunities, or the nature of reinforcement and incentive structures). Development and ongoing maintenance of an environment that fostered open communication allowed for fairly rapid identification of resistance. Once the source and the nature of resistance were identified, adjustments or corrections were made to address the issue. For example, when faculty expressed uncertainty about completing a task within a given timeframe, project leaders provided assistance (work support) in organizing the task such that it could be completed in the desired timeframe. The utilization of Scope of Work contracts, with clearly articulated work tasks, timelines, and compensation amounts provided an incentive that proved helpful in ameliorating resistance.

Allow learners to add their own moves. The UPP change process involved planned choreography, in which motion and form (e.g., course revision activities) were dictated in detail, as well as improvisation, in which AA EC faculty learners received generalized directives, then had latitude to express their personalized interpretations. Each approach contributed uniquely and meaningfully to the overall effort. The best example of faculty improvisation was their *trial run* implementation (or dress rehearsal) of the revised syllabi. As faculty utilized the revised content, assignments, etc. with AA EC candidates, they made adaptations, adjustments, and took notes regarding the practical usage of the revisions. This feedback is currently being used to further refine AA EC courses.

Be patient with diverse learning styles and speeds. Any competent instructor knows that some may find it harder to learn than others, particularly when the instruction involves learning something new or modifying something previously learned. UPP project leaders remained cognizant of common barriers people often have while in motion (e.g., fear of being embarrassed or negatively judged; self-perceived lack of coordination or rhythm, etc.). They supported one another in responding sensitively to the learning diversity of the adult learners targeted by project activities. A variety of supports were provided to AA EC faculty learners. Among these were aids provided to AA EC faculty and project personnel to assist them in organizing their project-related responsibilities (e.g., activity calendars, specification of concrete deliverables and associated due dates, written contracts tying summer compensation to specified work products); and individual supports such as timeline extensions and one-on-one consultations.

Current Status and Plans for Improvement

For the most part, the UPP has proceeded according to schedule. As a result of readiness activities (Phase I) and well-organized dance instruction (Phase II), two primary goals of the UPP project are near completion. The 15 courses that comprise the AA Education program have been revised, refined, undergone limited implementation, and been further modified. As part of an online approach to faculty development, professional development modules for course content are undergoing modification and refinement. Subsequent steps are: (a) full implementation of the

revised curriculum with AA candidates; (b) assessment of the curriculum's impact on candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; (c) overall evaluation of project execution, and (d) institutionalization of project associated curriculum revisions and professional development materials and methods.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the past, preschool personnel were only prepared to serve children without disabilities, even though children who were subsequently diagnosed with disabilities may have enrolled. Consequent to the passage of IDEA 2004 (P. L. 108-446), states have made great strides in identifying children who have developmental delays. However, the Act does not require ECE teachers or paraprofessionals to be certified in special education. Recently, projects like UPP have received OSEP funding to address this gap in services for young children under IDEA Part C (2004). Today's early childhood programs must be responsive to the needs of children who represent diverse ability levels, as well as diverse cultures, languages, and religions. Thus, the following recommendations are offered to others engaged in similar personnel preparation efforts.

- Identify compatible dance partners. Target influential and/or passionate individuals in the IHE and the community (including families) who share the vision of change desired.

- Establish a rhythm or pattern for creating change. Systematically structure change-related activities such that they can be communicated in a way that engages others.

- Allow for sufficient dance practice. Establish or develop strategies that enable learners to implement the change in venues both with and without an audience that will judge their performance.

- Don't forget the recital! Create or take advantage of opportunities to showcase the results of the change initiative, as well as the change agents.

- Take the performance on the road. Contribute to the state of the art and to the motivation of your professional peers by disseminating effective aspects of your change initiative.

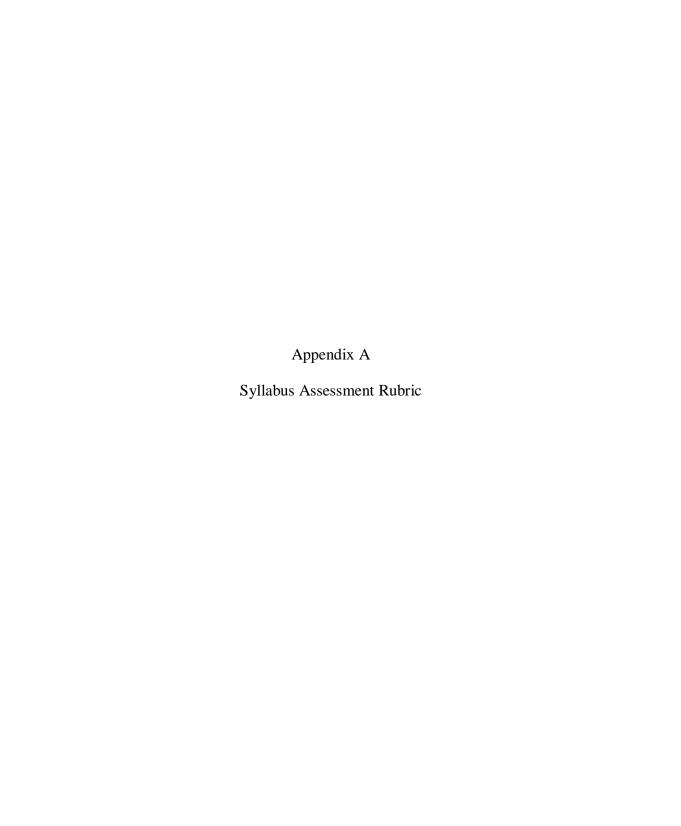Finally, to rephrase Lee Ann Womack's popular song, [*We] Hope You Dance!*

AUTHOR NOTES

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Appendix A

Syllabus Assessment Rubric

Rubric for Assessing Current Syllabi

Element	Indicators	Extent that the Syllabus Emphasizes Core Values					Notes
		Little or None	Some	Significantly	Extensively	Not Applicable	
Course Description	An emphasis related to cultural, linguistic, and ability diversity is articulated in the description of the course.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	An emphasis on evidence-based practices is articulated in the description of the course.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
Course Objectives	Course objectives provide clear expectations for outcomes related to children of diverse abilities and their families.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address implementing instructional strategies to support early development and learning or pre-academic achievement.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address using technology to enhance children's development and access to natural learning opportunities and participation in the general curriculum.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address skills for observation and data collection.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address assisting in the implementation of transition plans and services across settings.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives address communicating effectively with children and families.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives provide clear expectations on outcomes related to children who are culturally and linguistically diverse and their families.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Course objectives underscore the emphasis on evidence-based practices and decision making.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
Texts, Readings, Resources	Assigned resources support students in learning how culture, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, and other factors influence early childhood development and practices.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Assigned resources support students in learning how to support the full participation of young children with disabilities in diverse home and community settings.	L	S	SI	E	NA	
	Assigned resources support students in learning about evidence-based practices for supporting children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse.	L	S	SI	E	NA	

Rubric for Assessing Current Syllabi

Element	Indicators	Extent that the Syllabus Emphasizes Core Values					Notes
		Little or None	Some	Significantly	Extensively	Not Applicable	
Assignments	• Assignments engage students in learning how to support the full participation of young children with disabilities in diverse home and community settings.	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	
	• Assignments engage students in learning how culture, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status and other factors influence early childhood development and practices.	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	
	• Assignments provided opportunities for students to reflection upon the experience and similarities and/or challenges to their own cultural background.	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	
	• Assignments provide students with a variety of experiences in problem solving and evidence-based decision making.	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	
	• Assignments provide students with different opportunities for collaboration with children, family members, and colleagues	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	
In-class instructional experiences including guest speakers	• In-class experiences are clearly linked to core program values (e.g., inclusion, evidence-based practices).	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	
	• In-class activities engage students in learning how to support the full participation of young children with disabilities in diverse home and community settings.	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	
	• In-class activities engage students in learning how culture, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status and other factors influence early childhood development and practices.	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	
Guest Speakers	• Guest speakers include family members and community partners with stories related to the core values.	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	
	• Guest speakers support students in learning about the strength and diversity of their community.	**L**	**S**	**SI**	**E**	**NA**	