



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

# Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Diversity in Early Childhood

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*A Project of the National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University  
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This study is a two-year action research project that addresses a central challenge: What do we know about strategies for promoting social inclusion and respect for diversity (SI & RD) in early childhood education environments? The project is designed to examine the efficacy of four integrated strategies to promote greater attention to issues of SI & RD in early childhood in the U.S.:

- the development of regional coalitions;
- the mobilization of national organizations and stakeholders;
- the synthesis and translation of research-based knowledge about core questions on promoting SI & RD in early childhood; and
- a cost-effective, web-based dissemination strategy.

This project builds on a previous effort by NCCP that described the “state of the art” of U.S. research and practice aimed at promoting diversity, tolerance, and respect for diversity (DTRD) in early childhood. This project identified leading researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and organizations working on

DTRD issues with young children, and determined the leverage points where a DTRD perspective might be integrated into early childhood education policy and practice.

The core activity of our action-research study involves facilitating and documenting the development of regional coalitions whose role is to support, strengthen and refine already existing SI & RD efforts with young children and develop infrastructure for a more purposeful, concerted expansion of SI & RD work in the regions. Consisting of representatives of researchers, policymakers, practitioners, evaluators, advocates, and funders in each of two regions,

- the *Northwest & Rocky Mountain West* (Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska), and
- the *Southeast* (North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi),

these coalitions are seen as relatively loose, flexible associations where individuals and organizations become involved and committed to their level of ability and embed the coalition’s

goals and activities within the every day activities and operation of their organizations. We will follow an action research approach in which we are both participants and researchers in order to provide a reflective account of the experience and lessons learned, as well as to inform the subsequent formation of coalitions in other regions of the U.S.

As part of the action research component, we will:

- examine the history and current sociodemographic and policy context surrounding SI & RD work in each region to better understand the historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts within which SI & RD work will take place, as well as help us uncover areas where coalition activities might be most effective;
- identify key stakeholders, individuals, organizations and programs conducting SI & RD work with young children;
- describe existing approaches to SI & RD work with young children in each region, as well as the challenges, obstacles, and possible levers for action that are specific to each region, through Internet

- and document research, and in-depth interviews with key informants in the regions;
- establish a steering committee for each coalition, made up of representatives of stakeholders in each region;
  - facilitate the collective formulation of an approach, strategies, a plan for action to be implemented by the coalition, which will cover the areas of research, practice, policy analysis and policymaking, training and professional development, and parent involvement, as well as of a timetable for implementation, and performance indicators to move SI & RD to the forefront of the early childhood agenda in each region;
  - facilitate the implementation of these strategies and document the process in each region;
  - conduct one Emerging Issues Roundtable per year with representatives of the regional coalitions, focusing on one topic identified by coalition members to allow steering committees the opportunity to discuss with experts their experiences implementing SI & RD programs with young children and developing the regional coalitions, the problems encountered, and their plans for action;
  - plan for the sustainability of the coalitions; and
  - assess the status of the coalition, its accomplishments, obstacles faced, and next steps toward the end of the project period.

Activities supporting the action research component of the study, aimed at disseminating the work of the coalition, synthesizing and disseminating research findings, and generally, promoting a SI & RD agenda in early childhood, include:

- conducting debriefings and presentations at national meetings of key professional organizations involved in early childhood education;
- producing two short updates on emerging research;
- producing two issue briefs on the implications of research for policy and practice;
- developing a non-moderated listserv for the regional coalitions to promote technical assistance and communication, as well as a sense of membership and common purpose within the regional coalitions; and
- developing and implementing a web-based strategy to disseminate the research and issue briefs in the regions and nationally.

The project's national advisory council will review the work plan, assist in the identification of key stakeholders in the regions, provide feedback to the regional steering committees and project staff on the formulation and implementation of the action and sustainability plans, and mobilize their national organizations and constituencies, and regional and local affiliates to bring an SI & RD perspective into the mainstream of early childhood education.

Members of the project's Advisory Council represent the breadth of the field of social inclusion and respect for diversity in education. Together, they offer a wide range of expertise in support of project activities. We regularly seek the Advisory Council's input and review for workplan development, assist in the identification of key stakeholders in the regions, provide feedback to the regional steering committees and project staff on the formulation and implementation of the action and sustainability plans, and mobilize their national organizations and constituencies, as well as regional and local affiliates, to bring an SI & RD perspective into the mainstream of early childhood education. Council members are:

Sybil Jordan Hampton, EdD  
Former president of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF)

Jacqueline Hayden, PhD  
Programme Manager, Social Inclusion and Respect for Diversity  
Bernard Van Leer Foundation

Jason Irizarry, PhD  
Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
University of Connecticut, Storrs

Laurie Olsen, PhD  
Executive Director, California Tomorrow

Robert L. Selman, PhD  
Professor, Graduate School of Education  
Harvard University

Christine Sleeter, PhD  
Professor Emerita, College of Professional Studies, California State University, Monterey Bay

For more information on *Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Diversity in Early Childhood*, contact: Dr. Mariajosé Romero at 646-284-9641 or e-mail [romero@nccp.org](mailto:romero@nccp.org).

To join Promoting SI & RD's listserv, go to [www.nccp.org/projects/diversity\\_mailinglist.html](http://www.nccp.org/projects/diversity_mailinglist.html). Through this listserv, you may share information about new publications, resources, upcoming webinars and conference calls relevant to social inclusion and respect for diversity in early childhood, as well as project announcements. This list is primarily intended for project stakeholders in the regions.

For information about related projects and published products, see: [www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org).