

RESEARCH UTILIZATION SUPPORT AND HELP PROJECT

INVESTIGATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

FINAL REPORT

Beach Center on Disabilities

RRTC on Policies Affecting Families and Children with Disabilities

**George S. Gotto
Ann P. Turnbull
Jean Ann Summers
Donna Beauchamp**

April 2008

This product was developed with support from the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project **H133B031133**. We gratefully acknowledge additional funding from the Research Utilization Support and Help (RUSH) Project at SEDL, formerly the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

INVESTIGATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

FINAL REPORT

Executive Summary

The Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas utilized funding from the Research Utilization Support and Help (RUSH) Project to create and investigate the impact of an on-line environment for an Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice (EC-CoP). Its purpose is to create a web-supported environment to facilitate interchange of ideas about early childhood family support. In particular, we wanted to facilitate interchange of ideas to synthesize best available research about family supports, with family and practitioner tacit knowledge and experience, to produce guides for wisdom-based action that CoP members could use and discuss.

Creation and Implementation of a Web-Supported Environment: We utilized CoP software from Tomoye as the platform for our CoP. Lessons learned about the creation and implementation of a web-supported CoP include:

- Creation of a user-friendly environment that is attractive to a range of stakeholders (family members, researchers, practitioners) requires considerable re-design of the software platform and will continue to require reorganization and structuring as the body of information grows.
- Recruitment of members and facilitation of CoP activities is not a “start up” activity but an ongoing need for a successful CoP.
- To be utilized, the collected research highlights and “real stories” that we upload to the CoP must be linked with discussions and marketed through weekly e-mails to make sure members know and utilize the information.
- Similarly, panel discussions and “person of the month” required aggressive marketing and needed to be introduced through a more user-friendly format (e.g., doing an on-line “interview” with the person of the month rather than a video or written statement by the person) to invite participation.
- The research agenda developed through the CoP consists of practical tools families and practitioners want—for example, advocating effectively in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, gathering tips for successful vacations, finding supports from other family members.
- We discovered that people tend to visit the site more often than they participate in discussions; therefore, other means beyond discussion analysis are needed to gauge the impact of the CoP. We did find that the average number of page views per visit was 16.47, indicating that visitors to the site tend to spend time there.

- The majority of respondents surveyed found it easy or very easy to navigate the system.
- A total of 66 percent of respondents found the information from the site to be useful or very useful. Conversely, only 31% found the site to be useful or very useful in making friends.
- Over 70% of respondents rated the quality of the CoP content (discussions, contributions, organization) as good or very good. 69% rated CoP content to be relevant or very relevant.
- Respondents rated the system usability of the CoP in the positive range, but there is room for improvement as the site has grown. We draw from this the conclusion that we will need to make changes on a periodic basis to continuously improve the accessibility and quality of the site.
- In qualitative interviews, users identified gains in knowledge and understanding about topics that were discussed on the site. Also, they described an atmosphere of mutual support and welcome as they came to the site.
- Products of the CoP thus far include one how-to manual, three Knowledge Banks synthesizing information, one peer-reviewed journal article, and ten conference presentations.

We will continue both to improve the usefulness and variety of topics on the site, as well as to develop products and information based on the work and discussions of the CoP.

**INVESTIGATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
FINAL REPORT**

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Executive Summary.	ii
Introduction	1
Background	1
Implementation Activities.	3
Keeping it Going: Structure, Recruitment, and Member Support.	3
Collect and Upload Research Repository.	7
Collect and Upload Real Stories	8
Panel Discussions and Town Hall Meetings.	9
Develop Research Agenda from Content Summaries.	11
Outcome Data and Products.	13
Monthly Web Traffic Data.	13
Summative Analysis of Discussion Thread Content	14
Summative Analysis of Structured Survey Data	14
Summative Analysis of Qualitative Data from Interviews.	17
Products.	19
References.	22

Appendix A: Knowledge Banks Synthesizing Research and Experience
http://www.beachcenter.org/wisdom_based_action/welcome.aspx

Appendix B: Draft How-To Manual
<<http://www.researchutilization.org/products/copmanual/>>
[Note: RUSH staff have replaced with the final version the originally submitted draft].

Appendix C: Samples of “Word of the Week” and “Did You Know” e-mails

Appendix D: “Fostering Wisdom-Based Action through Web 2.0 Communities of Practice: Case Study of Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice” by Ann P. Turnbull, Jean Ann Summers, George Gotto, Matt Stowe, Donna Beauchamp, Samara Klein, Kathleen Kyzar, Rud Turnbull, and Nina Zuna, University of Kansas. Accepted for publication in *Infants & Young Children*.
[Note: due to copyright issues, RUSH staff did not upload this appendix].

INVESTIGATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

The Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas utilized funding from the Research Utilization Support and Help (RUSH) Project to create and investigate the impact of an on-line environment for our Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice (EC-CoP), which we had established as part of our Research and Training Center on Policies Affecting Families and Children with Disabilities. The overall goals of the project include the following:

- A. To synthesize and organize the best available research in order to increase the likelihood that evidence-based practices will be used by practitioners, families, and university teachers.
- B. To identify research gaps in order to focus future research agendas on priority topics.
- C. To demonstrate the utilization of wisdom-based action through the compilation of success stories illustrating the use of evidence-based practices as a way to contextualize the research and increase the likelihood of its implementation.
- D. To create a web-supported environment characterized by user-friendliness, connectivity, state-of-art disability core concepts, and relevant information that will be meaningful for stakeholder groups—families, practitioners, researchers, and university faculty.

In this report, we present the findings of our investigation and implementation activities over the last 15 months. We have divided the report into the following sections: (a) a background summary of the rationale for the project and evolution of our activities; (b) a description of the implementation activities, including lessons learned and modifications made to our initial plan of action; and (c) outcome data and products of the project.

Background

Communities of Practice (CoPs) are groups of people who “share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise . . . by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). At the Beach Center on Disability, we facilitate a CoP on Family Support in Early Childhood (EC-CoP). In the beginning, the EC-CoP met through a series of face-to-face meetings that: (a) determined that the field of early intervention should make a re-commitment to the idea of family supports and services in addition to the concept of effective partnerships with families (Turnbull et al., 2007); (b) developed a model of family supports and services that reflected a consensus of the field about the types of services as

well as the model for service delivery (Turnbull, et al., 2007); and (c) adopted a definition of evidence-based practice as the “integration of best available research with family and professional wisdom and values,” (Wesley & Buyssee, 2006) as our model for gathering practices—i.e., synthesizing research and family success stories—to provide family supports and services. The EC-CoP has met face-to-face now four times and has evolved considerably in that time.

When we initially launched our on-line CoP, we used the concepts of research, professional wisdom, and family wisdom to create three areas for conversation and discussion. However, we learned very quickly that participants did not view knowledge as compartmentalized by the learner and much preferred to dialogue among themselves. During the time that our CoP members were teaching us this lesson, we were also reviewing the literature from the field of positive psychology about the nature of “wisdom”—again, a suggestion from one of our CoP members. Both the reactions of our members and our review led us to evolve in our thinking, to move away from a concept of wisdom as the experiences of families and practitioners, to an understanding that “wisdom” is in itself a synthesis of collected information from all sources, leading to “wise actions” (Kekes, 1995; Sternberg, 2003). We therefore arrived at a definition of “wisdom-based action,” as follows:

Wisdom-based action involves integrating values, vision, and local factors (child/family/system/ community) with knowledge (experiential insight and research-based) to make and implement sound and balanced judgments in order to enhance quality of life.

Based on this definition, we revised our on-line CoP format to move away from compartmentalizing knowledge and separating experienced-based information from research. We also developed a template for creating “Knowledge Banks” about specific topics related to supporting families of young children with disabilities. Knowledge Banks are focused on providing, in family-friendly language and through multi-media formats, guidance for making best informed, wisdom-based action that is intended to fit a given family’s vision and values, about a given topic. Knowledge Banks contain: (a) a synthesis of best-available research on the topic; (b) real stories and synthesized information about family experiential knowledge about the topic; (c) resources and information about practitioner knowledge and models for addressing the topic; and (d) policy advisories. Using this template, we developed three Knowledge Banks, which we included in a web-based format and presented at our Beach Center State of the Science Conference in Washington, D.C. in March 2008. The three topics were:

Providing emotional supports to families through parent-to-parent programs
Planning for transition from early intervention to preschool
Advocating for care coordination

The contents of the three Knowledge Banks are found in Appendix A, and can also be accessed at http://www.beachcenter.org/wisdom_based_action/welcome.aspx

This background and evolution of our thinking was greatly influenced by our experiences in developing an on-line CoP and the contributions of the members to our thinking. For example, the Knowledge Banks included in part our summaries of discussion threads related to these three topics. Further, we guided our selection of topics based on what appeared to be salient questions and most burning issues emerging on our on-line EC-CoP. In short, in the brief time we have been operating our on-line EC-CoP, we have learned some very fundamental wisdom: that the outcome of a successful on-line CoP is not only the dissemination of usable knowledge to the participants, but also the *creation* of knowledge through the collective contributions of its members.

To explain how we arrived at this point in our thinking, we now review the implementation activities, including (a) decisions about structure, recruitment, and member support, (b) collecting and uploading research repository materials and success stories, and (c) the conduct of town hall meetings and panel discussions.

Implementation Activities

Many of the “lessons learned” in the process of launching and facilitating the EC-CoP have become grist for our how-to manual: “Community of Practice Development Manual: A Step-by-Step Guide for Designing and Developing a Community of Practice.” A draft of the manual is provided in Appendix B. [Note: RUSH staff replaced this draft with the final version]. Following is a brief summary of some of the main lessons learned from our experiences.

Keeping it Going: Structure, Recruitment, and Member Support

Staff and Administrative Actions: While it is a tenet of the CoP literature that the membership drives the contents of learning activities, an important lesson from this project is that the CoP environment will not maintain itself without considerable investment from staff and administration. The staffing required to implement this project included:

Administrative Leadership and Vision: Overall leadership and hands-on involvement from our Beach Center Director and Research Director (Ann Turnbull and Jean Ann Summers) was needed to maintain the resources and energy needed to complete the project. Without continuous support the maintenance of this virtual community would likely fall behind with other competing priorities.

Administration and Facilitation: Our Administrator, George Gotto, provides technical support to members, monitors and analyzes web-traffic data, and conducts the CoP research. Donna Beauchamp, our Facilitator, provides facilitation of discussions and membership recruitment.

Technical Support: Our graphic artist and curriculum development specialist, Jon Johnson, and our web programmer, David Stowe, provide adaptations to the

purchased software and helped maintain an attractive graphic appearance which was necessary to make navigation of the site as user-friendly as possible.

Content/Resource Collectors: In our case we relied on other NIDRR Core staff and doctoral students to help collect resources for members based on emerging topics in the discussions.

Only Ms. Beauchamp was dedicated full-time to the project; however, the diverse tasks required for successful implementation across administration, research, technical support and content expertise, do suggest that a successful CoP requires significant time investment from a wide variety of individuals.

Site Structure: We guided changes in our site structure over time by web-traffic data and by our surveys of our leadership committee and general membership. Our general site structure consists of a series of photo “windows” where members and visitors can click to enter a topic area, which we believe greatly reduces confusion and aids navigation. We also have four video tutorials

<<http://beachcop.beachcenter.org/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=2318&lang=en-US>>

which are posted in the CoP that explain how to navigate the CoP website, become a member, sign in and sign out, and how to start a discussion and reply to discussions. We provide transcripts for each of the video tutorials. In addition, we have eight text-based tutorials related to navigation and participation in the CoP. Finally, our Administrator sends out regular “Did You Know?” e-mails to our membership providing tips about using the website (e.g., how to post a photo). See Appendix C for examples.

One “lesson learned” in implementing our CoP is that we should anticipate changing major topic areas over time as interests of the membership shift. While changing topic areas too often could lead to member confusion if they are unable to find a favorite topic or discussion, the structure should also be flexible to evolve with major shifts in interest. Our current sections include:

Spreading the News: Building community results from getting connected. This is an area where members share with one another by letting others know how they can become involved with their organizations and posting announcements, flyers, invitations, etc.

Gathering Wisdom: To bring family members, practitioners, and researchers together to tell their own stories and discuss topics that affect early childhood family support. This is also the area where we are uploading real stories.

Translating Research: One of the major goals of our CoP is to synthesize the best-available research for the benefit of families and practitioners. This is an area where researchers, families, and practitioners can “translate” research results so that they are meaningful to families and practitioners.

Talking about policy: The purpose of this section of the CoP is to identify policy barriers more clearly, as well as solutions to those barriers.

Town Hall Meeting: Our Town Hall Meeting is a place where members can interact directly with our featured person of the month. Each month a different guest will be available to answer questions and facilitate discussion on a specific topic.

Celebrating: The purpose of this folder is to provide a place for members to describe their successes and their joys.

Block Party: This is a “fun” section, for people to add light-hearted comments and stories and to share bits of themselves.

History of this CoP: This section contains documents about the CoP generated prior to the launch of the site, as well as our Code of Conduct for members and other pertinent materials.

Library: Many key documents are or will be uploaded in their relevant topic areas (e.g., Best Available Research, Conversations about Policy), but they will be cross-referenced here. Therefore, members will be able to find and download resources without searching through the topics. Or vice versa, while engaging in topic discussions, they may find and download documents.

Need help: This section contains guidance and tips on how to navigate the CoP website. This is where the video tutorials are located.

Another addition to our EC-CoP structure is the development of a blog. The purpose of the blog is to highlight issues that are discussed in the CoP as well as disability issues related to family supports that appear in national news outlets. Additionally, it provides another avenue for members and non-members of the CoP to get information and make comments of their own. Thus far the blog has posts related to IDEA, inclusion, partnerships, tips and facts, and real stories. Matt Stowe, a researcher at the Beach Center, has taken the primary responsibility for managing the blog. Other members, both Beach Center team and EC-CoP members, have posted to the blog. To visit the blog, please follow this link: <http://earlychildhoodcop.blogspot.com/>. Because the software that supports the main pages of the CoP does not have blog capabilities, the CoP blog was created using Google Blogger. As a result the blog pages have a different design and color scheme than the main pages of the CoP.

An exciting addition to the CoP, which has generated quite a bit of activity by a small group of members, is the ability to create wikis. Because the Tomoye Ecco 1.6 software does not support wiki activities, we use Google Docs. This is not ideal because it requires that members have a username and password separate from those they use in the CoP. The soon-to-be released Ecco 2.0 has wiki capability, which will make our wikis much more accessible. Despite the challenges to creating wikis, the CoP members have created wiki documents on strategies for improving intervention and reducing intrusion and a fact

sheet that lists barriers to school-based interventions and how parents can address those barriers.

The Tomoye ECCO upgrade is not yet available but we anticipate its availability soon. In addition to wiki capability, the new software will enable members who have “subscribed” to various discussions (which sends a new comment via e-mail to the subscribing member) to join the discussion directly from their e-mail simply by clicking “reply” and composing their comments. Based on comments from our members, we anticipate this feature will greatly increase the numbers of participants in our discussion threads. A few other features within the new Ecco 2.0 that will have a big impact on the EC-CoP include the ability for each member to write their own blog, file sharing capabilities, and social bookmarking. These are activities our CoP members currently do, but they do them outside the CoP website. Moving them to the CoP website will make it much more vibrant. We will expect to have the transition to the ECCO upgrade by mid-July, 2008.

Member recruitment. Another “lesson learned” in implementing the EC-CoP is that recruitment is not an activity which we must do at the beginning and then can stop. Members wax and wane in their level of participation depending on their time availability and interest. Furthermore, there are always new audiences to reach. One can never count on a total “word-of-mouth” recruitment process. We therefore consider two primary components to the overall recruitment process: (a) recruiting new members, and (b) maintaining member interest in the site. We address strategies both for recruiting and maintaining membership in our Manual (Appendix B):

<<http://www.researchutilization.org/products/copmanual/>>

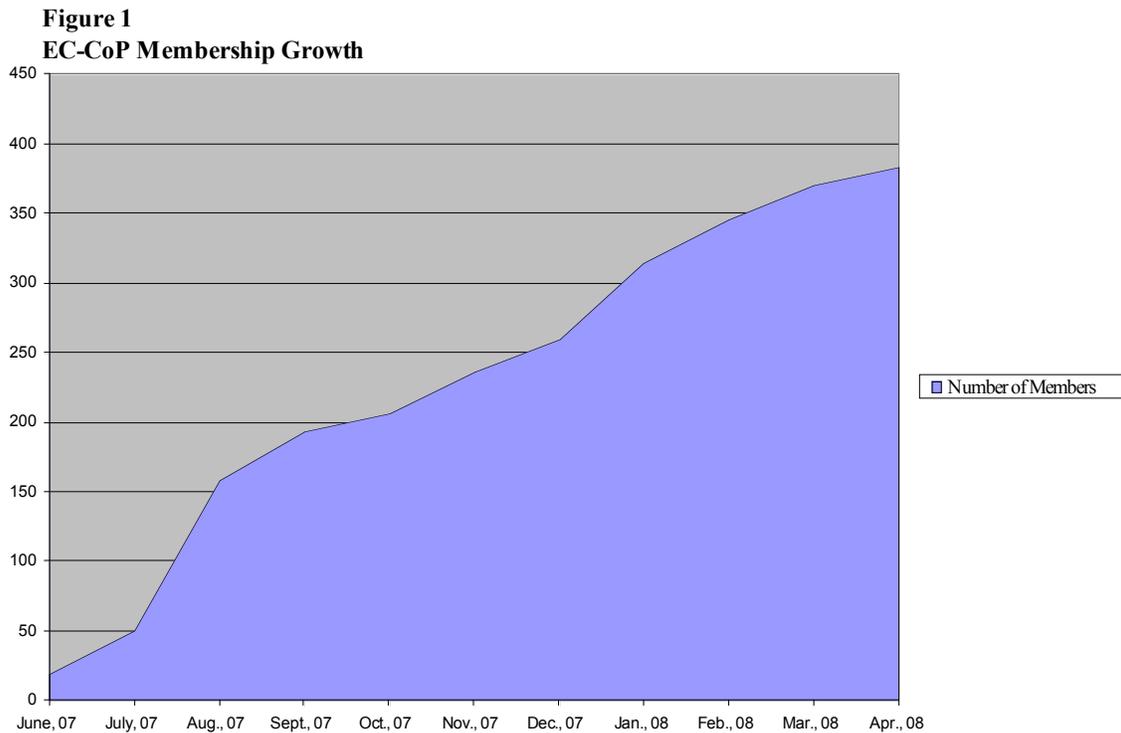
With respect to recruiting new members, we have contacted researchers, family members, and practitioners through a variety of strategies. These included (a) partnering with organizations to send our invitation letter to their membership groups; (b) creating promotional flyers and distributing them at state and national conferences; and (c) presenting at conferences to demonstrate the advantages of and ease of participation. We use these contacts to collect lists of e-mail addresses which we continually expand to send out regular announcements about current activities on the site. Organizations which have contributed to our e-mail list include:

- Alliance for Families in Early Intervention
- Association for Persons in Supported Employment (ASPE) Group
- Autism Alliance of Greater Kansas City
- Autism Speaks
- Center for Child Health and Development at KU Medical Center
- Division for Early Childhood Meeting
- Down Syndrome Congress
- Family Voices
- International Society for Quality of Life Studies
- Iowa State Interagency Coordinating Council
- Kansas Commission of Education
- Kansas State Interagency Coordinating Council

Office of Special Education Programs: Early Childhood Project Directors
Meeting
PACER
Parent-to-Parent USA
Through the Looking Glass

This expanding list of both members and non-members receives our weekly “Word of the Week,” which poses a question, announces an event on the site (e.g., a Town Meeting), or otherwise aims to pique interest. Examples of Word of the Week are shown in Appendix C.

As a result of our member recruitment and maintenance activities, we currently have a total of 384 members. Figure 1 shows the growth of our membership beginning with our initial launch in early June 2007.



Collect and Upload Research Repository

We began uploading research articles and highlights to the CoP Library during the last week of August. As of April 2008 we have 43 articles uploaded to the “Research Repository” in the CoP Library. To view the articles and highlights follow this link: <http://beachcop.beachcenter.org/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=1633&lang=en-US>. To see all the articles and highlights, you will need to click the tabs at the top of the web page labeled “Contributions” and “Discussions. These articles are related to the following topics: Family Quality of Life, Parent to Parent, Person-Centered Planning, Family and

Professional Partnerships, Participant Direction of Funding, and Positive Perceptions. Staff from the Beach Center on Disability developed 40 research highlights which provided an overview of each article for practitioners, families, and university teachers. Additionally, CoP members have started uploading research-based articles and other texts related to their own areas of interest. However, they are uploading them in the context of discussions and not in the Research Repository, which makes it slightly more difficult to track. We have identified 10 research-based products that members have been uploaded. Web-tracking data indicate that members download the articles and highlights. However, the articles are not leading to discussions. Therefore, we are exploring ways to generate conversation based on research. For example, for selected articles, we try to pull out the key point or question, frame a vignette around it or simply state why we think it is important and present it to the CoP. We have also attempted to state creatively the recommendations from the article in a discussion and ask people what they think. Donna Beauchamp, the CoP facilitator, is particularly good at presenting an idea in a way that resonates with members of the CoP. For example, in reference to a [Policy Advisory](#) on the Beach Center on Disability's website that discussed parents' rights and roles in planning for transition to preschool she started a discussion as follows:

When my oldest son was very young, I didn't even know that I needed rights, let alone know what those rights were. At that time, our school district was just on the cusp of initiating inclusive settings, so I just went with the traditional self-contained placement that was offered. A few years later, when our youngest son was not yet diagnosed but exhibiting characteristics of what would turn out to be Fragile X syndrome, I was aware of more options available. I knew that I wanted him to be fully included from the beginning. Our district had a cooperative setting with a community preschool that sounded ideal for Ben. However, he would have to ride the bus for an hour, starting at 6:45 a.m. to attend. It wasn't even light that early in the morning! He was very shy and resistant to unfamiliar people, and could barely communicate outside of our family. I felt torn. I didn't want to disappoint the school staff who had done so much work to prepare for him, but my mother's heart couldn't let him get on that bus all by himself—in the dark. I called the school district transportation department to let them know that Ben was not going to attend that preschool after all. When I explained why, the director said that he understood and that I could drive him there myself, with mileage reimbursement from the district until an appropriate bus pick-up time could be arranged. He told me that it was one of my son's rights. What good news for Ben and me! When did you first learn how important it was to know your child's rights? Where did you get information about those rights? How did you find out about your rights as the parent of a child with a disability? Or are you one of the professionals who provided information and guidance to parents about their rights?

Collect and Upload Real Stories

Within the CoP, we changed the name from “Success Stories” to “Real Stories” because not all of the stories discussed successes. Additionally, we moved these from the “Celebrations” section of the CoP to the “Gathering Wisdom” area because we believed that more members would see them in “Gathering Wisdom” and they contribute to the cumulative wisdom of the community. Currently, there are 25 Real Stories in the CoP. To view these stories click on the following link: <http://beachcop.beachcenter.org/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=1518&lang=en-US>. To see all the articles and highlights, you will need to click the tabs at the top of the web page labeled “Contributions” and “Discussions.”

These success stories come from a variety of places. First, eight were developed by a group of graduate students at the University of Kansas enrolled in a seminar taught by Ann Turnbull, the Co-Director of the Beach Center on Disability and a Professor in the Department of Special Education. The students conducted interviews with families and then wrote stories based on the interview transcripts, much as a journalist might do. These stories were then approved by the families before they were posted. All of the information provided in the stories was approved by the families. When requested, names and details were changed to protect the anonymity of the families. Second, Dr. Linda Mitchell, an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Wichita State University, assigned a similar project for five students who participated in a graduate seminar with her during the Spring 2007 semester. These stories were added to the “Real Stories” repository. Third, the Beach Center worked closely with Dr. Barbara Barnett at the William Allen White School of Journalism & Mass Communications at The University of Kansas. Students in Dr. Barnett’s class conducted interviews with 21 “pioneer” families across the United States who were innovative in their approach to finding supports and services for their children with disabilities. Thus far, nine of these have been edited and uploaded to the CoP. Once the remaining 12 stories are edited, they too will be added to the repository. Fourth, one story highlights an article from the Kansas City Star, which told about a boy with autism who became an Eagle Scout. Finally, and perhaps most exciting for the CoP, two mothers of children with disabilities, posted their own stories chronicling the challenges they experienced and the steps they took to overcome those challenges.

Panel Discussions and Town Hall Meetings

Initially, we planned to sponsor a total of seven panel discussions on a bi-monthly basis. However, we discovered that it is much more difficult to recruit members to participate in panel discussions than we thought it would be. We found that people are both very busy and reticent to participate in online panel discussions. The reticence seems to be primarily due to the technology. People who normally have no inhibitions about presenting to groups of people need a lot of support and encouragement in order to participate in an on-line discussion.

Despite this challenge, we sponsored three panel discussions in spring 2008. They include the following:

“When Parents and Schools Disagree—What Next?” with Rud Turnbull, Matt Stowe, and Samara Klein. The panel fielded questions and facilitated discussions about IDEA policies and rights.

“Supports that Improve Family Quality of Life” with Carol Kennedy, George Singer, and Brandy Ethridge. The discussions centered around types of supports and services that help families with emotional stress.

“Care Coordination for Children with Special Needs” with Erin and Morgan Crapser, Susanna Reeder, Vicki Miller, and Terri Lavenbarg. The panel led discussions related to seeking and securing quality healthcare for children with special needs.

The second week in May 2008 will feature a panel discussion related to oral healthcare for young children with disabilities. The panel will be lead by Marcia Manter the Community Development Specialist at Oral Health Kansas. She is bringing colleagues to the panel from Families Together, Inc. and Boston University.

The Town Hall Meetings were initially planned to alternate with the Panel Discussions on a bi-monthly basis starting in May 2007. We began the first Town Hall Meeting in June 2007 and structured it around the “Person of the Month.” The Person of the Month is an “expert” from one of the four stakeholder groups (family member, professional, researcher, policy leader) who introduces a topic for discussion related to his or her area of expertise. The Person of the Month is available for one month to facilitate discussions on the selected topic. Featured Persons of the Month during this project included:

Ann Turnbull, Co-Director of the Beach Center and PI of this project, who introduced the idea of Wisdom-Based Action in a video presentation and then facilitated discussions about the issues.

Judy Swett, Early Childhood Coordinator at PACER Center in Minnesota, who presented a video about her own experiences with early intervention services; the most pressing issues in early childhood today; The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) family outcomes for all early intervention programs; resources needed by EI programs to do the best possible job in supporting families to achieve OSEP’s outcomes; resources are available to families from sources other than EI programs; and her grand vision of how the Early Childhood Family Support CoP can be a helpful resource for practitioners and families.

Sookyung Shin, a mother of two children, her youngest having significant developmental disabilities. She participated in an interview in which she discussed her recent vacation to Southern California with her children. She answered questions about preparations, the flight, accommodations, challenges, and sibling issues. The interview was conducted live, in the Town Hall Meeting area, by George Gotto and Donna Beauchamp. They typed questions and submitted them. Sookyung, who was online at the same time, answered the

questions as soon as they appeared to her. The purpose of conducting the interview in this way was to experiment with new ways to generate conversation.

Janice Fialka, the mother of a young man with a developmental disability, the author of several books and articles, and currently the Special Projects Trainer for Michigan's [Early On ® Training and Technical Assistance](#) (Part C of IDEA). We conducted the interview with Ms. Fialka just as we did during the previous Town Hall Meeting.

In May 2008 we will feature Debbie Shaumeyer, whose son has autism. She is an activist in Missouri who advocates for the rights of young children with autism. She is going to lead a month-long discussion on autism issues based on her activities during April, which was Autism Awareness month.

Develop Research Agenda from Content Summaries

This is perhaps the most exciting part of the CoP at this time. As we mentioned above, we began incorporating wikis into the CoP. A wiki is software that allows multiple users to create, edit, and link documents easily and simultaneously. They are a part of a larger movement in web-based environments which make use of Web 2.0 technologies. These include social network software, wikis, file sharing, blogs, and vlogs among others. Each of these are platforms that encourage open networks and lend themselves to applications that enable collaboration and communication, and, as Rollett and colleagues (2007, pp. 4-5) explain they are platforms that “harness collective intelligence.”

In our effort to “harness collective *wisdom*” of families, practitioners, researchers, and policy leaders, and include them in the research and dissemination efforts of the CoP, we developed wikis and invited the community to participate in analyzing the content of discussions and using it to create strategy sheets. Once they are complete, we will format these sheets and make them available through the Beach Center web site as well as the CoP.

Our first wiki project was based on a discussion in the CoP entitled, “Intervention or Intrusion?” This discussion included 26 comments from nine CoP members. The conversation began with a story in which a mother described her first encounter with early intervention services. The social worker came to her home and the mother spent hours cleaning her house and making sure her children were dressed in their nicest clothes. She wrote, “the professionals may have thought of this as an intervention, but it felt like an intrusion to me. Have you ever felt this way about in-home services for your child?” Other parents, professionals, and researchers went on to address this issue primarily through their own stories or by highlighting specific research related to the topic. Once the conversation ended, George Gotto and Donna Beauchamp converted it into a tip sheet and posted it as a wiki. We then invited the whole community to the wiki to edit and add to the tip sheet. Appendix A

<http://www.beachcenter.org/wisdom_based_action/welcome.aspx>

contains the wiki document created by the community. It includes four tips or statements, each of which is followed by specific strategies for parents to use. The four tips are:

1. You can be an empowered decision-maker. You can question intervention approaches that you believe are not appropriate or are stressful for your child.
2. You are the ultimate decision-maker about where you prefer to have Early Intervention services delivered—in your home or elsewhere. The possibilities for where services can be delivered are not limited, but they must be a part of *your* reality.
3. Utilizing every day activities as opportunities for therapy can help your child make greater progress and help you not to feel like a “therapist”.
4. The Individual Family Support Plan, IFSP, meeting is a good place to start building a partnership with professionals.

Another wiki project was initiated by one of the CoP members who felt that it would be nice to list all the comments parents hear during IEP meetings and then develop helpful replies parents could use. The conversation started in the CoP and once we had several comments, we moved them to a wiki. Members who were interested then went to the wiki page and added more comments or suggested possible responses. Some of our members who were knowledgeable about policy added information from IDEA (Individuals with Disability Education Act). Once people were no longer making comments on the wiki, we took the information, formatted it, and created 19 cards which we call The Four R’s: The **R**emark, **R**ecall the Law, and The **R**ationale used to create the **R**esponse (see Appendix B for an example, <<http://www.researchutilization.org/products/copmanual/>>). We then posted these cards on the CoP (<http://beachcop.beachcenter.org/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=3567&lang=en-US>) where people can download them and use them. We have received great feedback on this resource. For example, one CoP member who is both a parent of a child with disabilities and a case manager for other parents came to the CoP and made the following comment: “I plan to put a copy of the 'cards' in the 'organizing notebooks' I give to families when working with them ... and will use them in IEP trainings!” This project exemplifies the harnessing of collective intelligence, which is possible using wikis and other Web 2.0 technologies.

Our most recent wiki project is to develop sample letters for parents to use as guides when they need to contact a school. We have started three sample letters and plan to complete more related to the following topics: Complaint Regarding Evaluation, Evaluation Request, Re-evaluation Request, Independent Educational Evaluation Request, Additional Testing Request, Freedom of Information Request, Review & Revision of IEP Request, Request for Evaluation/Services under Section 504, Records Request, Requesting Change in a Child's Records, Memo of Understanding, Progress Reports not Received, Communication Regarding Discipline. Once we finish these letters

we will post them to the CoP for parents to access. To view these and other wiki projects, please follow this [LINK](#) and use the following information to log in:

Email: ecfsCoP@gmail.com

Password: ecfsCoP@ku

As we mentioned above, the software (Tomoye ECCO) that supports our CoP does not currently have wiki capability. A new version of Tomoye ECCO, which will be released in March 2008, will have wiki capabilities. In the meantime, we use Google Docs to create the CoP wikis. This is inconvenient in that members have to remember an additional user name and password in order to participate in the wiki projects. Yet, we are encouraged by the fact that two of our current wikis were started by CoP members who are not affiliated with the Beach Center on Disability.

Lastly, we believe that the use of wikis helps us fulfill the mission of giving families and practitioners a voice in the development and dissemination of research. It also helps researchers to learn how to present research in a format that is accessible and useful to families and practitioners.

Outcome Data and Products

Monthly Web Traffic Data

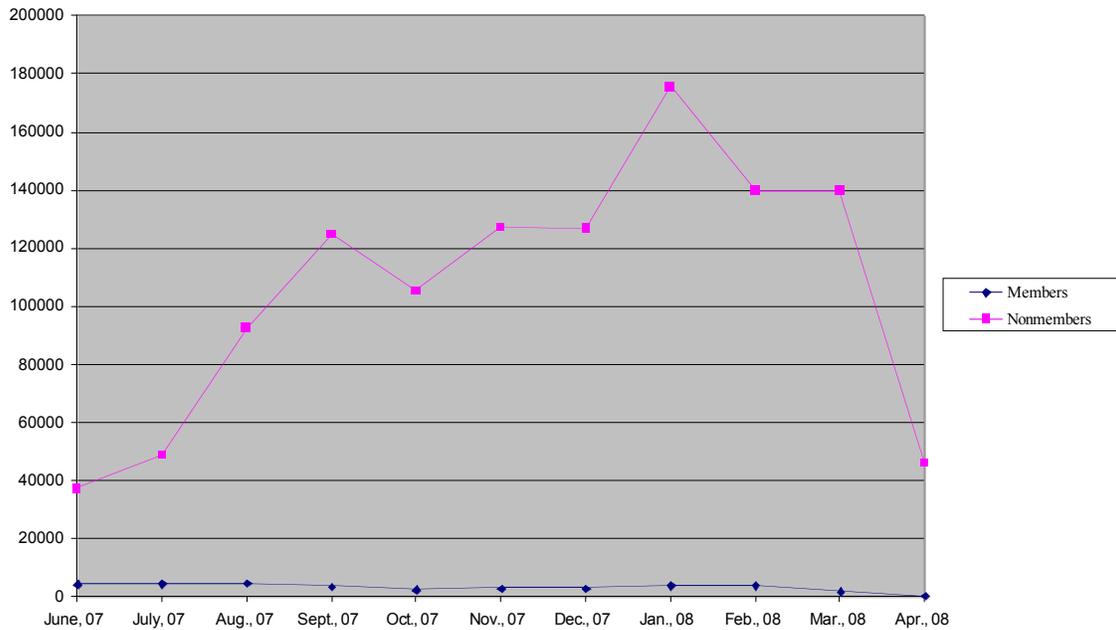
The Early Childhood CoP opened on June 12, 2007, and as we mentioned above we now [as of April 2008] have a total of 384 members. On average we added slightly over 38 new members each month. As Table 1 demonstrates, since the inception of the CoP, visitors (members and nonmembers) have viewed a total of 1,164,499 pages and on average they view 16.47 pages each time they visit. The number of pages all visitors to the site are viewing demonstrates that the content of the EC-CoP is reaching far more people than our membership. It is difficult to determine what this means in terms of the impact of the EC-CoP but we do know that nonmembers are able to download and use information from the CoP website.

Table 1
Lifetime Totals for the EC-CoP

Total Number of Page Views	1,164,499
Member Page Views	36,910
Nonmember Page Views	1,127,589
Average Page Views per Visit	16.47
Number of Uploads	69
Number of Discussion Posts	1,278
Number of Members	384

Figure 2 further illustrates the reach of the EC-CoP beyond its 384 members. We know that CoP members make up only three percent (36,910) of the total page views.

Figure 2
Monthly Page Views



Summative Analysis of Discussion Thread Content

We produced summaries of the discussion threads related to the three topics for our State of Science Conference. To produce these summaries, we conducted a thematic analysis to identify all comments related to (a) perceptions about the value of support from other parents to meet emotional needs; (b) knowledge about rights of parents in transition from early intervention to preschool, and (c) health care coordination. We first identified all comments related to the topics, then extracted major themes reflected across the comments. Summaries of the three analyses are shown in Appendix A: http://www.beachcenter.org/wisdom_based_action/welcome.aspx.

Many more summaries and potential dissemination products, including peer reviewed journal articles, are possible. We will be continuing to “mine” these discussion threads in the weeks and months ahead.

Summative Analysis of Structured Survey Data

In September 2007, we develop a 20-question survey that asked members to rate various aspects of the CoP. We asked how often they visited and contributed to the CoP. We then asked a series of questions about how easy it was for them to navigate the CoP. Next we asked them to rate the usefulness of specific aspects of the CoP. Finally, we asked them to rate the overall usefulness of the CoP. More recently, in February 2008, we added the System Usability Scale (SUS) to our survey in order to get a better idea about the usability of the CoP. We combined the two questionnaires using SNAP Surveys (2007),

survey development software used for web-based surveys. To view the online version of the survey you may visit the following URL:

<http://web.ku.edu/~beachsvy/ecfs2/ECFSeval2/ecfs2.htm>.

The survey was sent to 273 people. A total of 42 (15.4%) responded. The majority of the respondents were either family members (23 [55%]) or service professionals (17 [40%]), with the remaining respondents being either researchers (14 [33%]) or policy leaders (9 [21%]). These numbers total more than 42 because several of the respondents selected more than one role. Slightly over half (24) of the respondents had been members of the CoP for six months or more. Only four of the respondents had been members for one month or less. Table 2 demonstrates how often the respondents visited the CoP, how often they participated in discussions, and how often they downloaded information or materials. As with the web traffic data, these data indicate that people visit the site more often than they participate in discussions.

Table 2
Visits, Discussions, and Downloads

	More than once a week	Weekly	Bi-weekly	Monthly	Bi-monthly	Less than bi-monthly
	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)
CoP Visits	19 (8)	14 (6)	17 (7)	26 (11)	12 (5)	9 (4)
Discussions	9 (4)	5 (2)	5 (2)	14 (6)	2 (1)	60 (25)
Downloads	2 (1)	2 (1)	5 (2)	26 (11)	14 (6)	45 (19)

Respondents to the survey answered 15 questions about the quality of the CoP based on a 5-point Likert scale where one (1) was the most positive response, three (3) was neutral, and five (5) was the most negative response. The response stems varied depending on the questions.

Table 3 displays the percent and number of responses to the four questions related to the ease of navigating the CoP. These questions asked about locating content, starting discussions, responding to discussions, and finding answers to technical questions. The positive news is that the vast majority of the respondents did not find it difficult to navigate the CoP. At the same time, a sizeable number of respondents were neutral about the ease of navigation. In terms of both starting a discussion and getting answers to technical questions, slightly under fifty percent were neutral. This is an area for targeted improvement.

Table 3
Ease of Navigation

	Locate Content	Start Discussion	Respond/Contribute	Technical Questions
	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)
Very Easy	12 (5)	19 (8)	17 (7)	12 (5)
Easy	52 (22)	21 (9)	43 (18)	31 (13)
Neutral	24 (10)	43 (18)	26 (11)	48 (20)
Difficult	7 (3)	5 (2)	7 (3)	2 (1)
Very Difficult	2 (1)	--	--	--
No Reply	2 (1)	12 (5)	7 (3)	7 (3)

It is very important to us that the CoP is useful to its members. In particular, we were interested to know if it helped members to make contacts, make friends, and locate information. We also wanted members to let us know whether the facilitators of the site (George Gotto and Donna Beauchamp) were able to provide the assistance members required. The overall data from these four questions are positive. For example, 45 percent of the survey respondents believed the CoP was useful or very useful when it came to making contacts. Perhaps the best news is that 66 percent of the respondents found the information from the site to be useful or very useful. As with the ease of navigation questions, we are concerned with the number of “neutral” responses to these four questions.

Table 4
Utility of the CoP

	Making Contacts	Making Friends	CoP Facilitators	CoP Information
	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)
Very Useful	14 (6)	7 (3)	14 (6)	28 (12)
Useful	31 (13)	24 (10)	26 (11)	38 (16)
Neutral	31 (13)	43 (18)	40 (17)	9 (4)
Slightly Useful	14 (6)	12 (5)	7 (3)	14 (6)
Not at all Useful	7 (3)	12 (5)	7 (3)	5 (2)
No Reply	2 (1)	2 (1)	5 (2)	5 (2)

We also wanted to know what CoP members thought about the overall quality of the CoP. We asked them to rate the quality of discussions, contributions (i.e., articles, videos, research highlights, etc.), and organization. We also asked one question about the overall relevance of the content. We were very pleased with the responses to these four questions. In each case, well over fifty percent of the respondents found the quality of the CoP to be good or very good. In fact, over 70 percent of the respondents rated discussion content, contribution content, and organization as good or very good. In terms of relevance, 69 percent rated the CoP content to be relevant or very relevant.

Table 5
Overall Quality of the CoP

	Discussions	Contributions	Organization of Content	Relevance of Content*
	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)	% (#)
Very Good	14 (6)	33 (14)	19 (8)	26 (11)
Good	59 (25)	45 (19)	55 (23)	43 (18)
Neutral	24 (10)	17 (7)	19 (8)	14 (6)
Bad	--	2 (1)	2 (1)	12 (5)
Very Bad	--	--	2 (1)	--
No Reply	2 (1)	2 (1)	2 (1)	4 (2)

* Response stem for this question was: Very relevant, Relevant, Neutral, Slightly relevant, Not relevant.

As we mentioned above the second section of the online survey was made up of the 10-questions System Usability Scale (SUS) (Brooke, 1996). The SUS is scored using 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” The items in the SUS cover a variety of aspects of system usability such as the need for support, training, and complexity. The only change we made to the scale was to replace the word “system” with “CoP.” We chose to use the SUS because the items cover a variety of aspects of system usability. Furthermore, items were worded so that strong agreement on half of them should indicate strong disagreement on the other half. The developers of the SUS did this to prevent response biases caused by not having to think about each item. The SUS yielded a single number representing a composite measure of the overall usability of the CoP. SUS scores have a range of 0 to 100, where 0 means perfect usability and 100 means the CoP is useless. Our SUS score was a **33.70**. Although this score falls within the range of positive scores (0 – 50), it is higher than we hoped it would be. As is reported below in the summative analysis of the qualitative interviews, the growth of the CoP has created an unwieldy feeling. We are currently working to alleviate this problem by consolidating information, rather than having it so compartmentalized. Our goal is to make it possible to access information or start a discussion with no more than three clicks.

Summative Analysis of Qualitative Data from Interviews

We interviewed 15 participants, 5 who were members of our Leadership Committee, and 10 who were from the general membership (5 parents, 5 practitioner/researchers). Interview questions covered the issues of ease of access and navigation of the CoP, suggestions for improvements, and application of the information from the site in terms of knowledge gains and behavior change. Interviews ranged from 10 to 30 minutes in length. We analyzed the transcripts by identifying key themes related to our three primary research questions: Implementation, Knowledge gains, and Behavior change. We plan to conduct more thorough analyses of these data for journal submission in the coming weeks. At this point, preliminary themes that have emerged include:

Implementation. Regular participants find the site easy to use; they feel comfortable contributing to discussion threads. Most appreciate the subscription feature which enables

them to read new comments without logging on to the site; however, this has reduced their level of actual participation since they do not always follow through by logging on to the site to reply. The upgrade of the Tomoye software will correct this problem since members will be able to participate simply by replying to the e-mail.

The growth of the site has created an unwieldy feel and reduced the accessibility of information on the CoP. Some material, especially items uploaded earlier, are “buried” several “clicks” deep in the site. Participants, and not just Beach Center staff, are uploading materials, which is a positive development and one of our hopes to have the participants feel that level of ownership on the site. However, they tend to upload resources within discussion threads, leading to difficulty finding them from other topic areas or from the library repository. Several respondents suggested that it might be time to reorganize to create more accessible ways to access and expand the information on the site.

Knowledge Gains. All of the respondents reported gaining information from the site. Information about policies, tips about managing issues at home (e.g. vacations), ideas for working with teachers were all mentioned as specific knowledge gains. Five of the interview respondents reported downloading information from the site to share with other parents or with students.

An interesting development is that higher education professionals have been specifically assigning their students to go to the CoP, read discussions and comments from parents, and summarize or otherwise reflect on what they learned from the site. One of our ten respondents specifically discussed this. However, we know of five other higher education faculty members who have assigned their students to this task.

Behavior Change: All of the parent respondents spoke of the emotional support they gained from their participation. As one parent put it, “people really listen and they really want me on.” There were also clear examples from the discussion threads of individuals responding to others’ expressions their feelings with supportive comments.

Three of the ten respondents reported downloading materials to use with their own IEP meetings and in other negotiations with professionals. The “Four R’s” cards were especially notable as easily portable and useful tools for families.

Another interesting development is the number of members who have begun to contact each other directly, off-line, for support and information exchange. Five of the ten respondents mentioned doing this with one or more of the other members, and we have evidence from our discussion thread analysis that this may be a general result.

In general, however, more long-term behavior change should await longer participation in the site. We anticipate continuing to analyze and monitor the activities and outcomes of the CoP.

Products

First, we have completed a draft of our how-to manual—see Appendix B:
<<http://www.researchutilization.org/products/copmanual/>

Gotto, G.S., Turnbull, A.P., Summers, J.A. (2008). *Community of practice development manual: A step-by-step guide for designing and developing a community of practice*. Lawrence, KS: Beach Center on Disability, University of Kansas.

[Note: RUSH staff have replaced this draft with the final version. The next two paragraphs explain the Beach Center’s process for improving the draft.]

Please note that the draft shown in Appendix B is a draft only at this point. First, we plan to modify the format of the manual so that it is fully accessible (currently, the text boxes cannot be “read” by blind-reader devices). Second, we plan to submit this manual for peer review to members of the CoP-squared group, i.e., individuals who have been our co-learners in a national community of practice on communities of practice. These are individuals who have been involved in launching and administering their own communities of practice. One person, Susan Stewart, is the administrator for the Special Quest Community of Practice, which is a CoP for local teams of early intervention and Early Head Start practitioners and families with the purpose of fostering greater interagency coordination of services. The second CoP expert is Etienne Wenger, who is one of the pioneers of community of practice concepts.

Based on their feedback, we will make revisions to this draft. We plan also to add video tutorials [Note from RUSH staff: this was done and they are located at <http://beachcop.beachcenter.org/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=2318&lang=en-US>] and other examples of information about strategies for developing and implementing an on-line CoP. Ultimately, we will post the manual on our Beach Center website, on our CoP, with RUSH, and with the National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC).

Second, we have completed one journal article featuring the CoP, which has been peer-reviewed and accepted for publication. The reference is:

Turnbull, A.P., Summers, J.A., Gotto, G.S., Stowe, M., Beauchamp, D., Klein, S., Kyzar, K., Turnbull, R., & Zuna, N. (accepted). Fostering wisdom-based action through web 2.0 communities of practice: Case study of early childhood family support community of practice. *Infants & Young Children*.

Third, we have made a number of conference presentations describing the CoP and presenting some of the content. These presentations are in addition to the Knowledge Banks created and presented as part of our State-of-Science conference on March 14, 2008 in Washington, D.C. (see Appendix A, <http://www.beachcenter.org/wisdom_based_action/welcome.aspx>). They include:

- Turnbull, A.P. (2006, October). Parent to Parent USA Director's Meeting, Washington, DC: Presented keynote presentation entitled "Parent to parent support as an essential option, reaching national consensus on a framework of family supports and services."
- Turnbull, A.P. (2007, August). National Down Syndrome Congress 35th Annual Convention, Kansas City, MO: Presented keynote entitled "Enhancing Family Quality of Life: Thinking and Acting Wisely."
- Turnbull, A.P., & Gotto, G. (2007, October). DEC 2007: The 23rd Annual International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families. Presented presentation entitled "Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice: Fostering Evidence-Based Action."
- Turnbull, A.P., & Beauchamp, D. (2007, December). OSEP National Early Childhood Conference, Arlington, VA: Presented presentation entitled "Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice: Fostering Wisdom-Based Action."
- Turnbull, A.P. (2008, May). Infant and Early Childhood Conference, Seattle, WA: Presented keynote addressed entitled "Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice: Fostering Wisdom-Based Action."
- Turnbull, A.P. (2008, May). Infant and Early Childhood Conference, Seattle, WA: Will present workshop entitled "Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice as a Resource for Families and Practitioners in Washington."
- Turnbull, A.P. (2008, July). 2008 Southeast Regional American Association for Home-Based Early Interventionists, Atlanta, GA: Will present keynote entitled "Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice: Fostering Wisdom-Based Action."
- Turnbull, A.P. (2008, July). 2008 Southeast Regional American Association for Home-Based Early Interventionists, Atlanta, GA: Will present workshop entitled "Visioning How the Family Support Community of Practice can be as Beneficial as Possible to Members of the American Association for Home-Based Early Interventionists."
- Turnbull, A.P. (2008, July). The 8th National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute, Chapel Hill, NC: Will present keynote entitled "Living Life Inclusively; Communities of Practice as a Way of Moving Beyond Information to Wisdom-Based Action."
[RUSH staff note: Abstract available at http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/meetings/inclusionmtg2008/draftagenda_noon_6-19-08.pdf]
- Turnbull, A.P. (2008, July). The 8th National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute, Chapel Hill, NC: Will present workshop entitled "Visioning an Ideal Community of Practice to Increase the Likelihood that Young Children and Families Live Life

Inclusively.” [RUSH staff note: Abstract available at http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/meetings/inclusionmtg2008/draftagenda_noon_6-19-08.pdf]

In conclusion, we have already begun the process not only of developing the EC-CoP as a tool for knowledge translation, but also have begun disseminating information about the impact of this tool and its potential to bring together research and real life experiences to produce wisdom-based action. In addition to its immediate application to families, practitioners, and researchers in the early childhood disability field, we believe we are well on our way to a replicable model for other NIDRR grantees to use in knowledge translation.

References Cited

- Brooke, J. (1996). SUS: A “quick and dirty” usability scale. In P.W. Jordan, B. Thomas, B.A. Weerdmeester, & A.L. McClelland (Eds.) *Usability Evaluation in Industry*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Kekes, J. (1995). *Moral Wisdom and Good Lives*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Rollett, H., Lux, M., Strohmaier, M., Dösinger, G., & Tochtermann, K. (2007). The Web 2.0 way of learning with technologies. *International Journal of Learning Technology*, 3(1), 1-21.
- Snap Surveys (2007). Survey Software: The essential software for questionnaire design and analysis (Version 9.0) [Computer software and manual]. Retrieved March 26, 2008, from <http://www.snapsurveys.com/>
- Sternberg, R.J. (2003). *Wisdom, Intelligence, and Creativity Synthesized*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Turnbull, A.P., Summers, J.A., Turnbull, R., Brotherson, M.J., Winton, P., Roberts, R., Snyder, P., McWilliam, R., Chandler, L., Schrandt, S., Stowe, M., Bruder, M.B., DiVenere, N., Epley, P., Hornback, M., Huff, B., Miksch, P., Mitchell, L., Sharp, L., and Stroup-Rentier, V. (2007). Family supports and services in early intervention: A bold vision. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 29:3, 187-206.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W.M. (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Wesley, P.W., & Buysse, V. (2006). Building the evidence base through communities of practice. In V. Buysse and P.W. Wesley (Eds.). *Evidence-based Practice in the Early Childhood Field*. Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three.

APPENDIX A

The content of Appendix A is the Community of Practice's Knowledge Banks. They can be accessed here:

http://www.beachcenter.org/wisdom_based_action/welcome.aspx

APPENDIX B

The content of Appendix B is the Community of Practice Manual. It can be accessed here:

<http://www.researchutilization.org/products/copmanual/>

APPENDIX C

**SAMPLE
“WORDS OF THE WEEK”
AND
“DID YOU KNOW” E-MAILS**

The Words of the Week are: **Attachment Parenting**



Our discussions begin this week with **The 8 Ideals of Attachment Parenting**. What do you think about co-sleeping or the family bed concept? What age is best to stop breast-feeding? Does positive discipline really work? We'll talk about these practices and others in our Gathering Wisdom section. Please share your thoughts and experiences with us.



Coming in May is our Panel Discussion on Oral Health Care for Children with Special Needs. Also, the CoP will feature two members, both mothers of children who have Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Please join us in the Early Childhood Family Support **Community of Practice, CoP**. Come in to share your own experiences or look for resources and information. Enter through www.beachcenter.org Click on **Communities of Practice**. Then select the **Early Childhood** Family Support CoP. From here you can *read* all of the discussions. To add your own comments, you'll need to become a member of the CoP. Click on **Become a Member**. Complete your **profile** and click **Submit**. When you receive your email confirmation, you can sign in and start participating.



Check out what's happening in "Spreading the News" right now. Consider it **your** space to announce conferences and important events. You can also ask questions about specific disabilities, health concerns, or resources. Click on the Bulletin Board to get started.



Words of the Week: **Does Policy Promote or Prevent Support at Home?**

Please enter our Early Childhood Family Support **Community of Practice (CoP)** to read the stories, share your own, or offer information. This week's topic, shown above, comes from a question recently asked by one of our Community members. You can learn about this member's personal experience by reading the story in our CoP. You can also read previous discussions and respond to any by completing our **free** membership profile and selecting *Early Childhood Family Support* as **your** Community

We have customized areas for participation that include Families, Practitioners, Researchers, & Policy leaders. Enter into your area of interest or expertise. Move from one area to another. It's a **Community**.

If you are already a member, Welcome Back! You can continue to comment in any previous topic area, or start your own conversation.

If you are new to our site, we're glad to have you. As a visitor, you can **read** any of the ongoing discussions. However, participating in the conversations is a member privilege. Please join us now!

www.beachcenter.org

Click on Communities of Practice

See you there!

Welcome to the New Year, 2008!

and

Welcome to our Community of Practice (CoP)

With over a million visits to the CoP in the past few weeks and almost 300 members, we are quickly becoming an important instrument to integrate our insight and knowledge from both research and experience into wisdom-based actions that lead to families' true quality of life. Thank you for being a part of this valuable Community.

The CoP's look has been updated with new photos on the front page.
Would you like to see someone you know on the front page? Please send us your favorite photos to be included in our next update.

Many research articles have been added to the Research Repository which is found under the Library tab.
Please take some time to read these interesting and informative articles that resulted from our various studies related to families and young children.

More Real Stories are available in the Gathering Wisdom section.
We hope these accounts will inspire you and lead us in meaningful discussions.

We are excited to announce that our Featured Member leading the next Town Hall meeting will be **Janice Fialka**. Her presentation, "The Dance of Partnership, Why Do My Feet Hurt?" is a popular message at conferences across the country. You won't want to miss what she has to say about inclusion, building relationships, and creating hope for the future. Please set aside Monday, February 4th, 10:30am (Eastern Time) as Janice joins us in the CoP to share her family's story and address many of the issues facing families who have children with disabilities.

To join this CoP, go to www.beachcenter.org Click on **Communities of Practice** Once inside, select **Early Childhood Family Support**. Then, scroll down the left side to find and click on **Become a Member**. Complete your **profile** by creating a user name and password, your email address, and telling us a little about yourself. Click **Submit**. When you receive your email membership confirmation, you can sign in and start participating.



The Words of the Week are:

How Do You Know & Act on Your Rights?

As parents of young children with special needs, how do we know which services are appropriate for our child? Who decides how those services will be delivered? Can services be changed without our approval?

As practitioners working with young families, how do we balance our responsibility to them and to our employers? How do we support families with whom we don't agree about services for their child?

What rights do we have to help us answer these questions and where can we gain information about those rights? This week's opening discussion on the CoP targets these issues.

Please join us in the Early Childhood Family Support **Community of Practice, CoP**. This is an on-line space where you can read the stories of families who have young children with disabilities and the insights they've gathered. Come in to share your own experiences or look for resources and information. Become acquainted with people all over the country who share your interests. Please join us at

www.beachcenter.org

Click on **Communities of Practice**

Once inside the Early Childhood Family Support CoP, you can *read* all of the discussions but cannot join in them until you become a member.

Click on **Become a Member**. Complete your **profile** and click **Submit**.

As soon as you receive your email membership confirmation, you can sign in and discover all of the features of the CoP.

Early Childhood Family Support

Dear ECFS CoP member,

Did you know we made a few changes to the CoP? After talking with many of you, we merged the conversations that were in "Family Wisdom" and "Professional Wisdom." They now appear in "Gathering Wisdom." The feeling was that the former topic areas created a barrier between families' conversations and professionals' conversations, which was contrary to the stated goal of this community.

The second change we made was to add the "Spreading the News" area, which I think of as an announcements page. As the front page in this topic area states, you are encouraged to post announcements, flyers, invitations, etc. for upcoming events that you know about. Many of us are involved with organizations or have websites, books, or CDs and we should feel free to advertise them in the "Spreading the News" topic area. Donna and I will use this area to announce upcoming events in the CoP.

Lastly we added some new pictures just to keep the CoP looking fresh. This is something we will do every few months as we find new and better photos. If you have any that you would like to share we would love to see them.

Let me know what you think of these changes and if you have ideas for others.

Best wishes,

George Gotto, CoP Administrator

[Early Childhood Family Support](#)

Dear ECFS CoP Members,

Did you know that the last week has been our most active week in the short history of our CoP? There are some excellent conversations happening on topics related to knowing and acting on your rights, symbols for wisdom, segregation or inclusion, families attending conferences, and life with autism among others. Please come in and join the conversations if you haven't already.

With all this conversation, many members have interest in creating wikis that summarize conversations or provide strategies for parents and professionals based on the conversation. As I mentioned last week, we set up a wiki page using Google Docs. To see the wikis we currently have click <http://docs.google.com/?hl=en&tab=wo&pli=1> - all.

In order to see the wikis and contribute to them you will need the CoP username and password.

Username: ecfsCoP@gmail.com

Password: ecfsCoP!

You may also link to these wikis from within the discussions in the CoP. I look forward to seeing you in the CoP. For those of you in the United States, have a very happy Thanksgiving!

Best wishes,

George Gotto, CoP Administrator

Good Morning ECFS Members:

This weeks' "Did You Know?" item for the Early Childhood Family Support CoP is about member profiles. Did you know that you can view the profiles of the other members in two ways?

First, anytime you see a person's name highlighted in blue you can click on it and their profile will pop up. Most commonly a person's name appears next to a post she has made.

Second, on the main page of the CoP, just above the photos, there are four tabs: "Welcome," "Contributions," "Discussions," "Members." Click on the members tab and you will see the names and photos (if they posted photos) of the 10 most recent members. If you want to see the other members click the words "Search Members," which appear just above the "Latest Members to Join." In the Search box that appears, type "*" and below that check "Profiles." Then click "Search" and the profiles of all members will come up.

Finally, if you are looking at a person's profile and you want to e-mail them, click "Email this person" in the "Participate" menu on the left side of the screen and you can e-mail them directly from the community of practice.

Let me know if you have any questions about this weeks' "Did You Know" topic or if you have suggestions for a future topic.

Best wishes,

George Gotto, CoP Administrator

[Support](#)

Early Childhood Family Support

Good Afternoon CoP Members:

This week's "Did You Know?" highlights three new features within the Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice.

First, did you know that we have a new "**Featured Person of the Month.**" **Judy Swett**, a parent and service provider, participated in an interview with me that now appears in the CoP. Please come in to learn more about Judy, listen to her insightful comments, and share your own thoughts.

Second, we started a new series in the "Celebrations" topic area called "**Success Stories.**" There are currently seven success stories from parents and service providers. Each story also includes a list of helpful resources and a support matrix and tips for family members and service providers.

Third, we started a "**Research Repository**" in the Library, where we are collecting articles and research highlights relevant to Early Childhood Family Support. As of today, we have identified 32 articles and developed highlights for each of them. We should finish posting them within the next two weeks.

Finally, I would like to announce an upcoming Panel Discussion titled "**When Parents and Schools Disagree--What Next?**" This panel discussion will feature three policy experts who will answer your questions and respond to comments about due process and resolving disputes under IDEA and Section 504. The discussion will begin on September 10 and run through September 14. More information on this discussion will be coming soon.

Enjoy your Labor Day weekend. I look forward to seeing you in the CoP very soon.

Best wishes,

George Gotto, CoP Administrator

Early Childhood Family Support

Dear CoP Members,

Many of you have emailed or called me in recent weeks asking me to reinstate the weekly "Did You Know?" e-mail. So, here it is. If you prefer not to receive this message every Friday, please let me know and I will take you off the list. For our newer members, the weekly "Did You Know?" message highlights one or two technical aspects of the CoP that will make participation easier or let you know about new aspects of the CoP. I am also going to archive the weekly messages in the "Need Help?" topic area.

With that, Did You Know that the CoP has several wiki projects? Currently, members are working on wikis related to: early childhood transition, comments parents hear during IEP meetings, questions families would like to be asked, and strategies for improving intervention and reducing intrusion, among others.

Currently we use Google Docs to work on our wikis. To participate in these wikis or to start a new wiki, follow these steps.

1. Go to this url: <http://docs.google.com/?hl=en&tab=wo&pli=1#all>
2. Enter the username: ecfsCoP@gmail.com; and the password: ecfsCoP@ku
3. Click "Sign In."
4. You will now see a list of all the wikis for the ECFS CoP. Click the title of the wiki you want, then read it and add to it as you like.
5. Save your changes before you log out by clicking the "Save" button in the top right-hand corner of the screen.

One last note: The username and password above are for general CoP usage. If you would like to participate in the wikis under your own username, please send me your email address, tell me which wiki you want to work on, and I will send you an invitation to the wiki. You will then be able to log in as yourself and your individual work will be recognized.

Finally, I want to thank each of you for making our CoP such a vibrant community.

Best wishes,

George Gotto, CoP Administrator

APPENDIX D

The content of Appendix D is a manuscript, “Fostering Wisdom-Based Action through Web 2.0 Communities of Practice: Case Study of Early Childhood Family Support Community of Practice” by Ann P. Turnbull, Jean Ann Summers, George Gotto, Matt Stowe, Donna Beauchamp, Samara Klein, Kathleen Kyzar, Rud Turnbull, and Nina Zuna University of Kansas. It has been accepted for publication in *Infants & Young Children*.

Due to copyright issues, RUSH staff did not upload this appendix.