

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Preliminary Consolidated Review Report
Bullitt County
Visit Date: April 2-4, 2012

Overview

The consolidated monitoring site visit team visited Bullitt County on April 2-4, 2012. Preschool was represented by Katie Williams and Annie Rooney French, preschool consultants with KDE. The site visit included with observations in all 13 sites, interviews with various faculty including teachers, assistants, the preschool coordinator and other administrators. A follow up interview on April 4th included highlights from the final report. After examining the documentation and compiling the results of the site visits and interviews the following report contains the preliminary strengths, recommendations and findings from the consolidated monitoring site visit.

Preliminary Results

Strengths

- Collaboration between the special education staff and teachers is strength for the district. Special education works closely with the teachers in inclusive settings ensuring that children receive services in the least restrictive environment. Transitions from First Steps are completed before the child's 3rd birthday and the families are welcomed into the preschool community.
- The Head Start and Bullitt County work collaboratively in many areas including recruitment and screening. Several Head Start classrooms are located in the school buildings and the school provides transportation and meals for these children.
- Many fine examples were observed of the teachers providing positive guidance for children during the day including when a crisis would arise. It was evident how hard the teachers have worked throughout the year to create environments where all the children have been able to grow and learn. Teacher child interactions were individualized and the teachers responded to the children's needs and reflected current knowledge of the children's families. They also responded to child initiated conversations by building upon what the child had said.
- The school community connections are very strong in each school. Families have come to embrace developmentally appropriate activities and work closely with the teachers.
- Additional strength. The collaboration shared by teachers and teaching assistants provided a very warm team approach to many of the classrooms observed. One example includes teacher assistants taking anecdotal notes of the children.

Concerns

- One of the preschool teachers does not have an IECE certificate or a letter of exemption. All teachers including full-time substitutes are required to be fully certified or have an emergency or probationary IECE certificate.
- It was observed that one teacher left the classroom and the other teacher remained in the class with more than 10 children. A policy should be written and followed for providing for coverage so that no adult is ever left alone with more than 10 children.
- One of the playgrounds at Overdale Elementary does not have any playground equipment for the preschool children.
- Several examples of teachers using photocopied sheets in classroom were observed. Teachers should be encouraged to find developmentally appropriate methods and hands-on, real objects for teaching and learning.
- The enrollment form says that the Social Security card is optional, however, the 2012-13 recruitment document states that families must produce a social security card in order to enroll a child in preschool. This message could serve as a “chilling effect” for some families. This could be remedied by requesting rather than requiring this document. Additionally, the enrollment form and other documents such as the staff handbook should be updated to include eligibility for the preschool program includes income eligibility up to 150% of poverty.

Recommendations

- The district should ensure proper enrollment for all children including children with disabilities in Infinite Campus. For example children with an active and locked IEP who turn 3 on or after Dec. 2 and have their IEP implemented should be enrolled as Grade 97 in order to show up on the Supplemental Fall Count between December 2 and February 29th.
- The district should consider limiting the meal service to one meal for each half day program in order to maintain a high level of teaching and learning in the classes.
- The district has a policy for contacting parents when children are absent. However, the preschool regulation states that districts must have a policy for contacting parents when children are absent for 4 or more days.
- Some classroom schedules do not allow for a substantial portion of the day devoted to choice activities as recommended by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised (ECERS-R). The preschool program in Bullitt County has a challenge with regard to a situation with preschools in 13 different sites. While it is a positive factor to have the children at the same school where they will most likely be attending their elementary years, it is also a challenge for the teachers to receive appropriate professional development and for all the principals to become knowledgeable about appropriate early childhood practices. The recommendation is for the principals to be equipped with a “walk through” teacher observation tool that is specifically designed for 3 and 4 year-old children.

- Most of the equipment in the classrooms are child sized, however in the lunch rooms, several of the schools did not have preschool sized tables and chairs. It may be possible to use federal food lunch funds to purchase child sized tables and chairs.
- Even though the teachers are aware of the needs of each of the children, because many modifications and IEPs are implemented in the classrooms, the lesson plans could show individualization and adaptations for all children including children with special needs.
- The process of using assessments to guide the teaching and learning should be ongoing and evident in lesson plans, unit studies and progress monitoring.
- The district currently does not collect achievement information of the children who were in the preschool program as they progress through the primary program. Now that the children are enrolled in Infinite Campus, there is a mechanism for collecting these data.
- During some site visits, the school personnel were not able to produce the screening results of the at-risk children. A recommendation would include a consistent process for collecting and organizing the results of the screenings, health documents and children's cumulative files. Teachers would be recommended to collect samples of children's work including photos throughout the school year to demonstrate progress. Children's work could be collected electronically.
- In reviewing the state edition of Infinite Campus, several inaccuracies were found including enrolling children as a Grade "96" (2 year-old). Having one district person dedicated to inputting information on the almost 400 preschool children will facilitate accuracy in Infinite Campus reporting. The teachers should have access to the children's Preschool Tab in Infinite Campus. They could use this option to input valuable information such as home visit dates and services for families. Also, having the Head Start children enrolled in Infinite Campus would facilitate getting their family information into the data base system (in case of emergencies such as children left on the bus), and facilitate transition into kindergarten.
- Several of the classrooms have 50% of the population children with disabilities, some of them severe. The district would be best serve these children through continued support of additional personnel to help teachers implement the children's Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) effectively.
- During the upcoming school year (2012-13) Bullitt County will be engaged in the Preschool Program Review (P2R) process in which all the classrooms will be visited twice using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised (ECERS-R), once with a district inter-rater reliable observer and a second time with a specialist from the Anderson Regional Training Center. KDEs goal is for the district to have an average of a 5 on the 43 indicators. Also the district preschool coordinator will be engaged in a self-evaluation on compliance with the preschool regulations on the P2R document on line. It will be a stressful time for the teachers and they will be asked to move beyond their comfort zone. During this time, the district should show support and assist the teachers in improving their teaching and learning processes. The children and their families will benefit as a result of these improvements.