A major focus of the National Early Childhood Transition Center (NECTC) is to provide information to families and professionals about transition research, policy, and practice in a format that is usable and accessible. In order to determine the current status of research, policy, and practice in early childhood transition, NECTC conducted a comprehensive review of research, state and national policies, and field practices. Two major activities included assembling a database and a systematic review of the research literature.

The literature review process was designed to identify evidence related to early childhood (birth to age 5) transitions that support positive outcomes for children with disabilities and/or their families. The overall goal was to review published research studies and synthesize the results in order to inform the field on the status of evidence-based practices (Buysse & Wesley, 2006; Snyder, 2006; Winton, 2006). The definition of evidence-based practice (EBP) used was “a decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence with family and professional wisdom and values” (Buysse, Winton, Snyder, & Rous, 2006; Buysse & Wesley, 2006; Snyder, 2006; Winton, 2006).

DATABASE

In order to provide a comprehensive, searchable database of transition literature in the areas of policy, practice, and research, we implemented a multi-level approach for the identification of materials and documents, such as EBSCO and PsychInfo searches, direct recruitment of materials via an acquisitions brochure, presentations and poster sessions, contacts with states and programs, and Web-based recruitment activities.

**Acquisitions.** Research studies were identified through several activities. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education conducted a search in June 2003 which identified 208 resources from 1992-2003 in which “transitional programs” appeared as a major descriptor or the word “transition(s)” appeared in the indexing field as a major descriptor.

In addition, the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) conducted an ERIC search with the words "transitional programs" as a descriptor paired with the following words: “professional development,” “practices,” and “policy.” The two ERIC search results were cross-referenced and duplicates were eliminated.

The priorities for the literature search included: (1) young children with disabilities (birth to age five) and their families, (2) young children without disabilities (birth to age five) and their families, (3) young children with disabilities (outside birth-to-five age range) and their families, (4) young children without disabilities (outside birth-to-five age range) and their families. The literature search was conducted using the following major and minor descriptors to capture the population of interest: “early intervention,” “preschool,” “early childhood,” “infants,” “young children,” and “kindergarten.” Those descriptors were used with the following major and minor descriptors to capture the literature of interest: “transitions,” “preschool readiness,” “kindergarten readiness,” “school readiness,” “preschool entry,” and “kindergarten entry.” We also used the descriptors of “policy,” “practices,” and “professional development” with the previous descriptors to ensure that literature applicable to policy and administration was identified. Information searches covered...
In addition to a traditional process of identifying literature through databases, NECTC networked with colleagues, organizations, agencies, and NECTC advisory groups (Advisory Council, Expert Review Panel, and Diversity Work Group) to ensure that the database included research reports, consensus documents, evaluation reports, and recommendations to the field. Document acquisitions were solicited via direct contact, dissemination of an acquisitions brochure, and through the NECTC Website.

Internet searches on the World Wide Web were used to locate relevant documents by using the same descriptors used in the database search and “visiting” home pages of national organizations and federal agencies concerned with early childhood transitions. Organizations and agencies included: the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC), Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL), National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC), National Head Start Association (NHSA), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), National Research Council of the National Academies of Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and ZERO TO THREE.

Database Development. The development of the searchable database included feedback from NECTC Advisory Council members, Research Team members, and consumers. The NECTC Transition Alert: Online Transition Database was sent out electronically announcing the database in September 2004. (http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/nectc/Documents/September%202004%20Transition%20Database.pdf)

To date, 786 documents have been acquired and entered into the database, 26% (N=203) of which are research based and were reviewed according to our acquisition process (see Table 1).

Table 1 June 2006 NECTC Database Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Document</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Research</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>73% of total articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>26% of total articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20% of total research articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>58% of total research articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative &amp; Quantitative</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22% of total research articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1% of total articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 Document Review Process
**Reviewer’s Guide.** NECTC is using a Reviewer’s Guide tool for the review of the research literature to determine the research evidence available (e.g., “with this intervention, these outcomes occur, for this population [age range, gender, SES, race/ethnicity, disability], in this setting”). To minimize duplication of effort, the NECTC guide was developed collaboratively with two other organizations involved in large-scale research studies in similar areas of interest. First, the Research and Training Center on Early Childhood Development (2003) Practice Based Research Synthesis Coding Form, from the Center for Evidence-Based Practices, includes the work of Dunst, Trivette, & Cutspec (2002), which uses an evidence-based approach to document the characteristics and consequences of early intervention practices. Second, the What Works in Transition Research Synthesis Project (2003, August), located in Ft. Collins, Colorado, at Colorado State University School of Education, uses a Data Extraction Protocol, version .3 to identify research in the area of secondary transition. Once developed, the NECTC Research Reviewer Guide was sent to NECTC Expert Panel members for use in conducting reviews focusing on research related to families and children during early childhood transitions.

**References**

**Diagram:**

```
  Research Based Articles
       ↓
  Complete Internal Review
       ↓
  Enter Into Database
       ↓
  Material Appropriate for Review
       ↓
  Research Page or Policy & Practice Page
       ↓
  Complete Abstract
       ↓
  NECTC Expert Panel
       ↓
  Conduct full review of synthesis and determine appropriate format for stakeholder groups
       ↓
  Develop Documents
       ↓
  Field Review and Revisions
       ↓
  Dissemination of Documents
```

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