

The Ohio Professional Development Network is a collaboration of early childhood and afterschool professionals, partner agencies and organizations at the state and local levels. Members work together to support the creation of a comprehensive professional development system and advance the professional status of individuals working in early care and education, afterschool care, child development and in related specialized services for young children and their families.

## What are the primary activities of OPDN?

- Meeting regularly with network members to share information, learn about state and national initiatives and work in small groups on system components
- Convening stakeholders to research and design specific components of the professional development system
- Sponsoring a listserv to share information between meetings and with members who cannot attend regular meetings
- Developing and maintaining the OPDN Web site [www.ohpdnetwork.org](http://www.ohpdnetwork.org)
- Conducting studies on key issues and publishing results and recommendations
- Designing and implementing a Registry for early childhood and afterschool professionals



## Background

Beginning in the early 1990's a group of early childhood professionals and organizations began meeting to discuss creating a professional development system. The meetings and subsequent work has been led and supported by a variety of entities including the Head Start Collaboration Project, QNET, ODJFS Bureau of Child Care and Development, ODE Office of Early Learning and School Readiness, Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA) and Build Ohio.

## How is OPDN organized today?

Currently, OPDN serves as the Professional Development Work Group of Build Ohio. Terrie Hare, ODJFS Bureau Chief of Child Care and Development, and James Scott, Director of the Head Start Collaboration Project, serve as co-chairs.

Three committees research and design specific components of a professional development system.

- **The Core Knowledge and Articulation Committee** is developing the next steps in distribution and implementation of Ohio's Early Childhood Core Knowledge & Competencies.
- **The Compensation and Retention Committee** is researching state and local compensation and retention strategies.
- **The Registry Committee** is advising on the on-going development and design of the Registry and will draft criteria for training and trainer approval.

OCCRRA provides staff support to the Network and its committees, hosts the OPDN Web site and manages the Registry and T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Ohio. Funding for specific activities is provided through state agencies, private grants and Build Ohio.

## What has OPDN accomplished?

Through the work of many volunteers and the support of state agencies and private funders, the OPDN is developing key components of a comprehensive professional development system. Specific accomplishments include:

- Research and recommendations leading to the establishment of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Ohio. This scholarship and compensation program is now available in conjunction with Step Up To Quality and to Certified Family Child Care Providers. For more information contact Elaine Fencl at [efencl@occrra.org](mailto:efencl@occrra.org).
- Advocating for information on the workforce leading to the *2005 Workforce Study: Ohio Early Childhood Centers; General Analysis and A Profession Divided*.
- Convening stakeholders to develop a common understanding of the key components of a professional development system, which led to formalizing the Network and its working structure.
- Writing and distribution of Ohio's Early Childhood Core Knowledge & Competencies.
- Designing and establishing the OPDN Web site, [www.ohpdnetwork.org](http://www.ohpdnetwork.org).
- Creating and redesigning *Career Pathways*, a system to document and quantify professional growth and accomplishments.
- Supporting the development of the on-line version of the Registry.
- Securing resources to complete and update the descriptions of college and university programs for those seeking degrees in early childhood.

## What does the future hold?

OPDN is striving to reach out to the broad array of early childhood and afterschool professionals with the ultimate goal of a high quality comprehensive professional development system. OPDN works to:

- Develop a robust Web site which includes
  - Information on training and conferences
  - Trainers with specific expertise for specific topics
  - Tools to create a personal professional development plan
  - Publications and information of interest to professionals
- Create a cross-agency training and trainer approval process
- Streamline the process of documenting and tracking professional development
- Develop strategies to compensate and retain professionals
- Standardize a student-friendly articulation process
- Support working professionals with scholarships and options for completing student teaching and practicum experiences



## How can I get involved?

Sign up for the Ohio Professional Development Network listserv! Receive information about upcoming meetings, opportunities to participate in various work groups, and other announcements of interest to professionals.

*Email Donna Ruhland at [druhland@occrra.org](mailto:druhland@occrra.org) and ask to be added to the listserv.*