The Michigan Personas Project

Preparing early childhood colleagues to support the promise of each Michigan child

The Michigan Personas Project is getting underway in Spring 2021 to develop resources that will provide powerful new tools to support the work of faculty and professional learning providers who prepare personnel to work with young children, including young children with developmental delays and disabilities.

What's a persona?

Personas are short stories about a child and family. Each persona offers information about the unique composition of the family, details about the child (name, age, likes, dislikes), and insights about who the child is as a learner. The persona also provides details, like whether a child is receiving services for a disability, is a dual language learner, or has experienced traumatic life circumstances. Each persona also has a totally engaging photo of the child, like Piper (see bottom of the flyer).

Personas offer faculty and instructors an effective way to promote individualizing. For example, students might be asked to identify the evidence-based practices they might use to support the child and their family in a persona.

Michigan's early childhood and early intervention/early childhood special education agencies, faculty, and organizations are committed to producing students who are prepared to support each and every child. To accomplish that, we need strong examples for students to practice with. That's why a set of Michigan personas will be developed, tested, and shared in 2021.

Sequence

- Bring together Michigan early childhood and early intervention/early childhood special education faculty, professional development providers, family members, and state agency leaders to develop a framework for the Michigan personas
- Work collaboratively to draft a set of personas that authentically reflect Michigan place names, family names, life circumstances, points of pride, and opportunities for enhancement
- Field test the personas in college/university courses and professional development to determine their utility; revise as necessary
- Share the personas widely through presentations at state conferences and diverse electronic networks (e.g., MiDEC, MiAEYC, MiACCESS, Preschool

Special Education Training and TA, *Early On* Training and TA, *Early On* Center for Higher Education). Presentations will include the actual Michigan personas, related resources, and information about how to use the personas effectively in teaching and professional development efforts.

Persona – Piper

Fourteen-month old Piper is Daniel and Emily's first child. Emily became pregnant when she was a senior in high school. With help from both sets of grandparents, Daniel and Emily completed high school and have full time jobs. They both admit that they don't know much about early childhood, but are quickly learning how to support all aspects of Piper's development. They had never heard of Down syndrome before their doctor shared Piper's diagnosis with them.

Piper attends a neighborhood childcare program each day, where she receives her early intervention services. Her speech-language pathologist is working with her teacher and family to support early speech and language development.

Piper recently got glasses to correct her significant astigmatism, and everyone has commented on how much this development has supported her interest in puzzles, puppets, and motor games, like rolling a ball.