If you answered yes to the above questions, then read Ruth C. Clark’s newest summary of current learning research: *Evidence-Based Training Methods: A Guide for Training Professionals.*

In this easy to read book, Clark dispels common training myths. Here is a highlight of six of our favorites:

**Myth:** Assessing and accommodating learning styles increases learning.

**Fact:** According to Clark, learning styles represent one of the more pervasive training myths of the past 20 years. The fact is that when learning something new, we are all visual learners. When reviewing a complex visual we all benefit from an audio explanation rather than a detailed text explanation. Assessing a learner’s prior knowledge of content rather than their learning style is more effective. For example, novices benefit from visuals, but visuals do little for those with experience.

**Myth:** Using the latest technology solves all learning dilemmas. (Clark refers to this as the panacea of technology.)

**Fact:** The active ingredients of your training are what cause learning regardless of the media used. Clark encourages trainers to, “Ignore panaceas in the guise of technology solutions in favor of applying proven practices on best use of instructional modes and methods to all media you use to deliver training.” (p. 14)
**Myth:** *The more they like it, the more they learn.*

**Fact:** The correlation between satisfaction scores and learning are too small to be reliable. This is why the OCWTP evaluation forms have changed over the years from purely satisfaction ratings to assessing knowledge gained and asking learners how the training will impact their practice.

**Myth:** *Content covered is content learned.*

**Fact:** Unfortunately, this is not true. You might be able to plow through content in the time allotted by eliminating time consuming application exercise, but for many of the complex skills required by child welfare staff and caregivers it is the practice that helps translate knowledge into skill.

**Myth:** *Practice always increases learning.*

**Fact:** There are some caveats to this notion. Research indicates that practice needs to be carefully constructed and timed to be effective. The biggest skill gain accrues in the first few practices. Continued practice can result in diminished return. For better long-term learning, practice should be dispersed throughout the learning event – not held off to the last segment after all content is taught. Learning is maximized when practice questions or assignments blend several different topics that require the learner to use critical thinking skills. Research continues to support the fact that the closer to the real work experience, the better the practice.

**Myth:** *Practice is all that’s needed to build skill.*

**Fact:** Trainers can improve learning by replacing some practice exercises with examples. Clark states, “In training designed to build skills, examples are not only useful—they are essential!” (p. 148) In her book, Clark sites studies that indicate that combining practice with examples of problems already worked out can accelerate learning. Most of our training designs include practice but many fail to include examples. Providing a handout of an effective case plan and then asking participants to practice creating their own is one example of combining both approaches. Another effective combination is to have the trainer model the skill before participants practice with role plays.

Much has been learned in the past 20 years about effective training methodologies and there is a growing body of research for the training field. However, many trainers still use time-honored methods and assume they work, despite recent evidence to the contrary. The above only skims a small part of what Clark’s book offers trainers. It has been recommended by several training and instructional design experts as a “must read” for 2010, and we heartily agree.

References:
OCWTP Trainer Nancy Burley, LISW-S, was selected as a 2010 Angel in Adoption recipient for her outstanding adoption advocacy and years of contribution to the field. The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI), which orchestrates the Angels in Adoption™ program, honored her along with more than 190 Angels, at an awards ceremony and gala event in Washington, DC, on October 6, 2010.

As Executive Director and founding member of Adoption Circle, Ms. Burley has contributed to the agency becoming one of the leading adoption agencies in Ohio. She is highly regarded by birthparents, adoptive families, adoption professionals, social workers, attorneys, and judges for her expertise, dedication, and determination in the field of adoption. She never ceases to present adoption and all of its benefits in the most positive manner.

The Angels in Adoption™ program is CCAI’s signature public awareness campaign and provides an opportunity for all members of the U.S. Congress to honor the good work of their constituents who have enriched the lives of foster children and orphans in the United States and abroad.

Former “National Angels” include First Lady Laura Bush, Patti LaBelle, Jane Seymour, Muhammad Ali, the late Dave Thomas, Steven Curtis Chapman, Bruce Willis, Alonzo Mourning, and Marcus Samuelsson.

The CCAI is a 501(c) 3 nonpartisan organization dedicated to raising awareness about the tens of thousands of orphans and foster children in the United States and the millions of orphans around the world in need of permanent, safe, and loving homes through adoption. CCAI’s goal is the elimination of the barriers that hinder these children from realizing their basic right of a family.

For more information on the Angel in Adoption program, visit ccainstitute.org

The National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) presented its awards on August 31, 2010, at NSDTA’s Annual Professional Development Institute in Boston.

Betsy Keefer Smalley received the Career Achievement Award for her devotion to promoting permanency for abused and neglected children, and her pioneering of training as a primary means to move the adoption and foster care systems towards placement stability. She has consistently provided high quality training, curriculum development, and leadership in the field of public human services for over 40 years. As Director of the adoption and foster care training component at the Institute for Human Services, through the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, Ms. Keefer Smalley works with a large constituency of regional training managers, county agency directors, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and a large pool of adoption and foster care trainers.

Jim Still-Pepper, trainer for the OCWTP, received the Distinguished Service in Training Award. This award is given to individuals demonstrating outstanding skills as an adult educator in public human services by using creative approaches and ensuring that effective transfer of learning occurs. Mr. Still-Pepper has written and presented innovative training curricula to child welfare caseworkers, supervisors, and foster parents.

For more information on the NSDTA Awards, visit: nsdtaphsa.org
If you had asked me in 2004, after aging out of foster care, if in the future, I would ever be back on the professional side of child welfare, I would have laughed or said, “I highly doubt it.” But here we are in 2010 and I am pleased to be a part of the OCWTP family.

Our child welfare system has changed a great deal since the 11 combined years I spent in care. However, there is one aspect that remains the same - the lack of youth input into their lives and their future as it relates to being in care.

During my tenure in care, there were numerous opportunities to involve me in my case and to bring my eyes, my ears, and my insights to the table. However, the opportunities weren’t seized. I was not allowed to go to my court hearings, I was not invited to the table, nor was I informed of the status or progression of my case unless I was being placed in another home. These missed opportunities left me feeling empty and fearful of the unknown - feelings I still struggle with today. Think about the missed opportunity for both me and for the system. What could we have learned about child welfare practice from that little boy? What if you had talked to me, then shared my observations and opinions in your workshops?

As trainers, we must not lose focus of the valuable resources young people can be. They have a unique perspective on child welfare concepts and procedures—developed through their close observation and interaction with caseworkers, judges, guardians and other professionals. We must solicit and incorporate these youth perspectives into our trainings.

It is our duty and obligation to educate not only ourselves, but also the rest of our child welfare community about the need to include young people as part of the decision-making team. Consider this: is an intervention truly “best practice” if we are not getting feedback or listening to the ones who are being “practiced” on?

Involving youth is not only beneficial to youth. Youth involvement in all aspects of our system provides invaluable ideas and suggestions for improving our system. When trainers incorporate those ideas into their workshops, the positive impact is felt across our state.
If you want to learn more about the child welfare system from the youth perspective, check out these resources. Read the articles and postings – you might even consider asking to attend one of their meetings or interviewing alumni.

• The Ohio chapter of Foster Care Alumni of America: [http://www.fcaa-oh.org/](http://www.fcaa-oh.org/)
  Foster Care Alumni of America is a national organization that connects and transforms the community of people who grew up in foster care. They have a great map that shows the locations of local foster care youth and alumni communities.

• Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board: [http://www.pcsao.org/ohioyouth.htm](http://www.pcsao.org/ohioyouth.htm)
  Created in 2006 by youth for youth, OHIO YAB advocates for youth who have experienced out-of-home care. Review their recommendations, created during the 2006 My Voice, My Life, My Future Project.

• The State of California has done wonderful work to involve youth: [http://www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/OMBprog.html](http://www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov/OMBprog.html)

• Youth Communication: [http://www.youthcomm.org/](http://www.youthcomm.org/)
  This organization out of New York helps teenagers develop their reading and writing skills so they can acquire the information they need to make thoughtful choices about their lives. Represent, a magazine they founded in 1993, is written by and for young people in foster care.

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**I-Backup, SharePoint, E-Track . . . and Access of Trainer-Related Information**

Keeping up with the technology resources used by the OCWTP can be a challenge. It is important for you to know where to go to access that PowerPoint you need for Saturday, or where RTCs can find the handouts for your next workshop. Here is a summary of the three main resources.

**I-Backup** is an on-line storage provider the OCWTP uses for moderate-security collaborative storage and sharing of files. There are two “sides” to I-Backup – the RTC side and the Trainer side. All trainers use a common username and password to access files and folders stored on the trainer side of I-Backup. This allows them to view and download trainer-related documents and standardized training materials (but not full curricula). Proprietary training materials are not stored anywhere on I-Backup.

**SharePoint** is a Microsoft product that allows the OCWTP a highly-secured method to share trainer information with RTCs. Each OCWTP trainer has a folder on SharePoint containing their application materials, documents related to important actions, and training materials. Only IHS and RTC staff have access to SharePoint files and that access is strictly monitored. When accessing SharePoint files, the RTC must enter a site-specific username and password.

**E-Track** is the OCWTP’s new on-line learning management system. E-Track has not yet launched and is therefore not accessible to RTCs and trainers. In the future, trainers will access E-Track in two ways – either as a trainee, or as a trainer. More information and training will be provided as we approach the launch date. Even after E-Track launches, proprietary training materials will not be stored in E-Track, but will continue to be accessible only through SharePoint.
The number of Alternative Response (AR) counties is growing, and no doubt you are hearing more about AR in your workshops.

Counties participating in AR separate investigations into two tracks— the traditional track, and the alternative assessment track. In the alternative assessment track, there is no formal determination of maltreatment. For an in-depth explanation of AR and links to several resources, see the February 2008 issue of Common Ground. You can also view the Alternative Response Brochure.

In 2007, Ohio began the Alternative Response Pilot Project. This was a cooperative effort among the Ohio Supreme Court (Sub-Committee on Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency), the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and the AIM team (made up of representatives from American Humane, Institute of Applied Research, and leaders from Minnesota). There were 10 counties selected to participate in the pilot: Clark, Fairfield, Franklin, Greene, Guernsey, Licking, Lucas, Ross, Trumbull and Tuscarawas.

This pilot was evaluated by the Institute of Applied Research, which determined the “alternative response” practice is safe for children and beneficial to families and caseworkers. Based on the success of the pilot program, American Humane recommended Ohio develop a comprehensive plan for statewide implementation, and the Ohio Supreme Court Subcommittee on Child Abuse and Neglect approved this recommendation.

As part of the statewide implementation plan for AR, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services selected an additional 10 counties to launch the “second wave” of the Alternative Response Pilot Project. These counties are: Ashtabula, Huron, Erie, Medina, Mahoning, Coshocton, Athens, Washington, Hocking, and Hamilton.

Independent of Ohio’s Alternative Response Pilot Project, the National Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response in Child Protective Services (QIC-DR) selected three sites in October 2009 to begin focusing on the implementation of their research design. Ohio was one of the sites selected. Counties include Champaign, Clark, Madison, Montgomery, Summit and Richland.

Both the QIC-DR counties and the additional Alternative Response Pilot Project counties began implementing their AR programs this summer.
SEORTC

SEORTC announces the departure of David Jackson as of July 6, 2010. Though he is missed, staff are happy Dave moved into a supervisory position as the Adult Services Coordinator at Meigs County DD. SEORTC will not be filling the training coordinator position at this time due to budget uncertainties and the unknown impact E-Track will have on work loads.

NEORTC

NEORTC welcomes Luba Shirley as their new Administrative Assistant. Luba has been at Summit County Children Services for 13 years, most recently in Human Resources. She replaced Barb Riordan, who recently retired.

In June, NEORTC hosted the kick-off to Summit County Children Services’ Fatherhood Initiative with the training Empowering Fathers to Improve Their Child’s Life. Trainers included Anthony President, Maureen Heffernan, and Larry Taylor, a custodial parent and father advocate. Other presenters included Tracy Robinson from the Ohio Fatherhood Commission and Kevin Brown, Director of Research at Summit County Children Services. The curriculum was written by NE’s very own Jeanne Bennett and Jodie Hembree. The training was very well received.

NEORTC also hosted a two day Alternative Response training for Summit County on August 11 and 12. There are now 5 counties in the NEORTC region involved with Alternative Response – Ashtabula, Mahoning, Medina, Summit and Trumbull.

CORTC

CORTC bade farewell to Jo Kramer who retired on September 10, 2010, after serving 30 consecutive years with Franklin County Children Services. While the majority of her professional career was in direct service as a child welfare caseworker, she was promoted to a child welfare supervisor, followed by the last decade in the Training Department as a New Employee Orientation trainer. She has taught and influenced hundreds of new agency employees. CORTC wishes her well as she ventures into this new chapter of her life!

Congratulations go out to Nichole Bruce, CORTC’s recent addition and Jo Kramer’s replacement as the New Employee Orientation trainer. Nichole brings over 14 years of direct service child welfare experience to CORTC. Nicole began in September 2010, after six years as a child welfare supervisor in Foster Care and Adoption Preparation. CORTC is pleased to welcome her to their department!

Additional congratulations to Shawney Johnson, CORTC’s Foster Care Training Coordinator who received her Master’s of Science in Administration degree, with a concentration in Public Administration, in August 2010!

The CORTC helped launch two major FCCS initiatives by providing training coordination and support:

- The Permanency Initiative is a partnership between FCCS, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Franklin County Juvenile Court. Permanency roundtables, which create an open forum for discussion and brainstorming, are a central component of this new initiative. The ultimate goal of the roundtables and the entire permanency initiative is to ensure that each child under the agency’s care experiences ongoing stability and connectedness.

- Team Decision-Making Meetings (TDMs) began in July 2010. TDM was developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and is intended to engage families to make the best possible decision for placement and permanency for their child when removal of a child is being considered.
Upcoming Training of Trainers (TOTs)

Presentation Skills - November 1-3, 2010
Curriculum Development - December 1-2, 2010
PowerPoint - December 9, 2010
Transfer of Learning - January 5, 2011
So You Want to be a Trainer - January 6, 2011

Skill Building Lab for Trainers

As trainers, it is often hard to take time from busy schedules to concentrate on enhancing the trainings you offer – adding effective application exercises; including more child welfare specific examples; texturing the training day to address differing learning styles. This learning lab is designed to help you do just that. Using an online meeting format, called Go-to-Meeting, the lab is designed so that you can participate from your home office using your own computer, internet connection and phone line – no travel involved. You can even participate from a hotel room if you have internet connection and access to a phone.

DATES: November 3, 17, and December 8, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM
The lab is designed in three, two-hour sessions (see dates above) with time between to allow you to enhance your training design by making additions and revisions you identify through lab sessions. You will join other trainers online and via phone to both receive feedback on your own training design and give feedback to other trainers on their design. You will receive training credit.

To register, please contact Debra Sparrow at: dsparrow@ihs-trainet.com or 614-233-2223. Registration is limited, so register now!