

**In Year 2 of the Transformation Zone (TZ) evaluation,** evaluators continued attending county and state meetings in person and remotely in order to remain in contact and communication with TZ members. We continue to communicate with state partners (NIRN, NCPC, ABLe, and Grants Management) to provide developmental feedback related to implementation of evidence-based strategies and systems change processes at state and county levels. We continue to share findings about the progress within the TZ via various delivery methods.

**For this update, the TZ evaluation team attended 23 meetings from September-December 2015** to examine how state and county teams are using implementation science and systems change approaches to enhance state and local early childhood systems. Several themes were identified in the course of our observations, including (1) efforts related to technical assistance (TA), (2) learning about communication and messaging, and (3) sustainability related to transitions, building capacity, and community engagement.

# FPG Child Development Institute



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## Technical Assistance

In this final year of the funded Transformation Zone, state and county teams shifted their focus to sustaining strategies and systems processes. Following months of planning with ABLe specialists, each County Leadership Team held a visioning retreat in September 2015. Many stakeholders across multiple sectors gathered to discuss county needs and resources related to local early childhood systems, school readiness, and family/community engagement. Counties began to develop targeted TA plans for sustainability, emphasizing priorities that emerged during the retreat. Also during the retreats, counties discussed an ongoing need for support related to messaging with community stakeholders. Following needs assessments completed in fall 2015, NCPC's Communication Director will enhance counties' messaging efforts.

To support counties' capacity to sustain prioritized programs and processes, TA provision with coaches, teams and purveyors related to active implementation (NIRN) has shifted to focus on policy-practice feedback loops and data-based decision-making. NIRN TA specialists are shifting responsibility for routine processes (such as meeting planning) to county teams, coaches and conveners. Biweekly coaching priorities calls ended in October 2015. NIRN continues to 1) participate in bi-weekly planning sessions with NCPC and coaching sessions with the state coach coordinator and, 2) provide TA to the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) staff regarding implementation science.

To address ongoing priorities related to systems change, ABLe offered targeted TA to counties via remote sessions. The county coach peer-to-peer sessions, whose purpose was to support processes related to visioning retreats, concluded in September 2015. Ongoing TA will focus on counties' efforts to engage families in their communities' school readiness work.

***Question for consideration: What steps might County Leadership and Implementation Teams take to build local capacity while state TA support becomes more targeted and less intense?***

## Community Engagement

The need to more effectively engage a broad representation of families and other stakeholders emerged as a major theme from the county retreats and discussions of priorities. While two counties discussed their desire to bring family voice to Leadership and Implementation Teams, the other two counties emphasized the need to inform and recruit parents for available TZ services. Finally, TZ State Leaders discussed ways to increase family voice in its early childhood policy and practice teams.

***Question for consideration: How will counties and the state increase families' engagement in the systems change work?***

## Communication Feedback Loops

Efforts to enhance state and county communication were discussed at the *September 2015 Cross-County Meeting* where many state leaders were in attendance. Discussions centered on promoting aligned state and local efforts. County teams continued efforts to strengthen feedback loops with purveyors to gather data related to TZ strategies. For example, Triple P is providing county-specific data and Child Care Health Consultants are providing data to counties. Nevertheless, data sharing between strategy purveyors and counties remains a challenge. In an effort to improve county-state feedback loops and increase the likelihood of sustainable change at the state and county levels, funders and grants management agreed to reconvene the Transformation Zone State Leadership Team in early 2016.

***Question for consideration: How might the state partners and county teams implement and strengthen policy and practice feedback looks to enhance communication with TZ rural counties?***

## Transitions

The emphasis in this final year of the grant is on building capacity for sustainability, and specifically, skills related to data driven decision-making, messaging to enhance community engagement, and supporting knowledge and skills around active implementation and systems change. NIRN and ABLe will continue to provide targeted TA to address county and state priorities and needs. Support for routine functions, such as meeting agenda support, convening, and basic coaching will be decreased. This tapering of intensive TA was built into the grant planning to allow the counties and state to identify areas of need and use established capacities (e.g., Leadership and Implementation Teams and feedback loops) to access targeted coaching and support. This will allow TA providers to respond to county and state requests with specific knowledge and tools to support sustainability.

As 2015 came to an end, significant planning for TA transitions were discussed. Two strategies, Healthy Social Behavior and Infant Toddler Expansion, concluded. Purveyors and local service providers met with coaches to discuss service delivery and service completion activities. An additional transition currently underway is that NCPC has assumed leadership for convening the Funders group and reconvening the State Leadership Team.

## Capacity Building and Sustainability

Although the TZ Evaluation Team did not attend the individual county visioning retreats, counties reported the retreats were well-attended and that they successfully engaged and informed additional county stakeholders in the TZ work. Attendance across all retreats ranged between 35 and 55 county participants. The retreats provided time for counties to identify their top transformation priorities for the final year of the grant and beyond, especially those related to community/family engagement and kindergarten readiness. The TZ Evaluation Team attended the September 2015 Cross-County Team meeting in which retreat outcomes and priorities were discussed.

***Question for consideration: How will each county retain a focus on enhancing services and systems for young children and families?***

**We welcome opportunities and invitations to listen and observe how processes are emerging. Contact us at [TZeval@unc.edu](mailto:TZeval@unc.edu) with questions and feedback.**

Yazejian, N., Gallagher, K., Cianciolo, S., & Jones, M. (February, 2016). Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.