

FPG Child Development Institute



7/31/2015

In Year 2 of the Transformation Zone (TZ) evaluation, evaluators are attending county and state level meetings, in person and remotely with groups and individuals. We are regularly communicating with state level 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. Finally, we are sharing findings — themes about what we have heard and observed — quarterly with TZ county and state participants via a newsletter, of which this is the third.

For this update, members of the TZ evaluation team attended 16 meetings in April and May to learn how implementation and systems change approaches are working in the TZ counties. Our observations and listening identified several themes: (1) efforts related to technical assistance (TA), (2) communication and practice-policy feedback loops, and (3) sustainability issues related to learning to use data, learning from transitions, and capacity building. In this update, you will find observations for each of these areas, and questions to consider as the TZ processes move forward.

Technical Assistance

Evaluation team observations:

There is an emerging sense of urgency among TA providers as they advise, coach, train, prepare and support county teams and stakeholders in their efforts to build sustainable structures and processes for early childhood in TZ counties. Coaches received regular peer-to-peer mentoring on systems change processes. New county coaches received intensive coaching and support. There has been

an increase in purveyor assistance with problem-solving related to retention and recruitment of teachers, parents and facilitators, data sharing, model development, and sustainability. Personnel are reaching out to each other for help and guidance. Implementation coaches are increasingly being called upon to work toward full implementation of strategies while becoming more deeply involved in system scan activities, dealing with per-

sonnel changes, providing team-based management, and building capacity. The notion of shifting roles and responsibilities of coaches has prompted new dialogue among teams, conveners, and TA specialists.

Question for consideration: *How might county leadership and implementation teams identify, prioritize and communicate their technical assistance needs in the next months?*

Communication: Feedback Loops/Messaging

Evaluation team observations:

Communication: Coaches continue to be the principal nexus for TZ communication, with instances of improved communication links among state purveyors/local service providers and teams. Literacy coordinators asked for information on coaching processes and held a joint training session with county coaches. Local teams are increasing their use of existing connections to communicate about strategies,

programs and system scan work. Cross-county sharing is accomplished through meetings, reports, and phone conferences. Challenges remain with maintaining feedback loops, particularly in exchanging information between state and county entities.

Messaging: The NCPC Communications team continued their work in the counties, identifying how to support county teams' efforts to connect their vision and message

to their communities. Communication tactics and training will be built into counties' strategic plans to ensure messaging is maintained going forward.

Questions for consideration: *How might counties plan for communication and feedback loops after the grant?*

How might counties adopt messaging as a way of work in their community efforts?

Implementation Science and Systems Change: Using Data, Transitions, and Capacity Building

Using Data

Evaluation team observations:

Local teams are involved in systems scan work and data collection and analysis to better understand their community demographics and service gaps, and assist with identifying needs and making decisions. Teams demonstrate increased understanding of data use, and coaches

have developed skills for using various tools to analyze and explain data to leadership teams. Some purveyors are actively involved in sharing data with teams, but data sharing remains a challenge for some strategies. TA providers continue to support the use of data to ensure quality of each strategy.

Questions for consideration:

How might counties continue to build on their increased capacities for using data?

What supports might be helpful to establish sound practices related to data collection and use?

Transitions

Evaluation team observations:

In light of ongoing transitions in the TZ, local and state teams are strategizing around how to support the work and plan for future staffing and team changes. Team members and purveyors are

interested in conversations about how policies and practices might be put in place to buffer the effects of transitions on sustaining strategies. Some transitioning staff will be able to contribute to TZ efforts in new community roles. Cross-training of existing

personnel is another way local communities are dealing with transitions and building capacity.

Question for consideration:

How might counties continue their momentum in the context of team and personnel changes?

Capacity Building

Evaluation team observations:

Counties remain committed to offering various types of strategy training to TZ staff and stakeholders as a way of engaging new communities and increasing infrastructure capacity. Some local teams are also partnering with early childhood service providers to prioritize child and family outcomes and align systems around a shared vision. Transferring knowledge and skills to local staff to build leadership is one

aim of a strategy purveyor. Two purveyors mentioned nurturing a community of practice as a way of maintaining effective interventions. Financial assistance for additional training of county staff is available from one funder to increase coaching and grant writing capabilities. Counties continue to look for ways to partner with others to more efficiently serve their communities. Some county teams have created structures to establish

community-based identities. Others are revisiting their *Terms of Reference* to finalize a way of work for their teams.

Question for consideration: *How might state level partners increase collaborative efforts to support county transformations?*

We welcome opportunities and invitations to listen and observe how processes are emerging. Contact us at TZeal@unc.edu with questions and feedback.