

Activity 8.7: Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge
Pyramid Model Institute
Final Report

Contract #33633

Submitted to the:
North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education

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Introduction

Nationally, North Carolina has been a leader in the early care and education field and it is with much appreciation that the North Carolina Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Council works with the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) to advance this system. This report will provide a summary of the accomplishments of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant (RttT-ELC): Activity 8.7 – Pyramid Model Institute. Child Care Resources Inc. (CCRI) provided contract and fiscal management for the activity, and employed and supervised the Healthy Social Behaviors (HSB) Statewide Project Manager who assumed responsibility of project management for the activity in addition to project management of the statewide HSB initiative. CCRI also employed and supervised the HSB Education Specialist who developed the training modules used for the activity. CCRI contracted with the previous HSB Statewide Project Manager to provide Institute Coordination and conference planning services. HSB Behavior Specialists from across the state collaborated to provide the training to more than 200 Institute participants.

A summary of the accomplishments of this initiative throughout the project has been included in this report, and addresses: subjective information about successes, challenges and lessons learned, and observations and reflections which may have implications across projects for future policy decisions. DCDEE plans to extend the Pyramid Model Institute activities through June 30, 2017 utilizing CCDF funds. A summary of planned activities for CY17 is also included.

Activity 8.7: Pyramid Model Institute

North Carolina's Early Learning Challenge grants provided multiple opportunities to improve our state's early learning education. Social-emotional competencies for young children were identified as a key intervention need based on the plethora of research since 2000 indicating that children who lack these skills are less likely to graduate or become productive members of the community, and more likely to experience expulsion, incarceration, serious mental health issues, and drug dependence. The HSB initiative has made training and technical assistance on social-emotional development available to child care providers since 2005 utilizing the Pyramid Model, an evidence-based framework for preventing and addressing the challenging behaviors of children in care by systematically and intentionally promoting the social-emotional health of these young children. The goal of the Pyramid Model Institute was to extend CEU-level training on the Pyramid Model to other key ECE professionals, including higher education faculty, Head Start Education Managers, Child Care Health Consultants, and NC PreK Administrators, Mentors, Evaluators and other identified staff. Facilitated by HSB Behavior Specialists, the multi-day, multi-track Institute would enhance the skills and practices of participants who train and mentor North Carolina's early care and education (ECE) workforce.

The HSB Education Specialist utilized resources from the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) to prepare CEU modules on the Pyramid Model. CSEFEL's *Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Development in Infants and Young Children* is based on the public health model of promotion,

prevention, and intervention, and provides the framework for teachers to promote optimal social-emotional development of all children in their care, and to prevent the escalation of behaviors that could lead to future problems. One cadre of NC PreK's Early Education Support, Learning, and Professional Development (EESLPD) staff received a train-the-trainer version of these modules as well as a follow-up 2-day reliability certification training on the accompanying assessment tool (the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool, or TPOT) in order for the EESLPD unit to become self-sufficient in their inclusion of social-emotional development within their programs. Additionally, these designated EESLPD staff and the higher education faculty participated in a fourth day of professional development which included presentations on the proposed Infant Mental Health Competencies for NC, a crosswalk of Pyramid Model strategies and goals from NC's Foundations for Early Learning and Development, and small group discussions identifying the gaps between observed and expected social-emotional teaching practices in NC PreK classrooms. A series of 1-day overview seminars on the Pyramid Model facilitated across the state was included in the grant application to be responsive to interested professionals who might be unable to commit to the multi-day Institute.

According to CSEFEL, 30% of children in group care will likely require intentional teaching strategies and/or individualized interventions to develop the social-emotional competencies needed to be successful in a group setting, and approximately 10-15% of children will display mild to chronic levels of behavior problems. December 2015 data from DCDEE indicated there were 171,201 children birth-five enrolled in 4,695 child care centers in NC, including private child care, public pre-k, and Head Start programs. Applying CSEFEL findings to this figure would indicate that approximately:

- 51,360 children would likely require intentional teaching strategies and/or individualized interventions to develop the social-emotional competencies to be successful in a group setting, and
- 25,680 children might exhibit early signs of serious mental health problems.

With the numbers of children at risk for poor social-emotional development and resulting poorer life outcomes, it is critical that the larger field of ECE professionals be knowledgeable about social-emotional development and actively assisting both current and future early childhood educators in this topic.

The part-time Institute Coordinator was hired in February 2016 and immediately began searching for a venue for the Institute planned for early August. A contract with the Durham Convention Center was signed in late March. The Institute Coordinator also worked to create a logo, marketing flyers, and participant applications tailored to each target participant group, organized multiple lodging options, planned catering menus, actively managed the formal registration of applicants, and handled myriad other event details required to successfully facilitate the Institute.

The following tables describe the Institute participants from each target group and the trainings provided by participant cadre.

Demographics of Applications Received for Pyramid Model Institute

Track	Cadre	# Applicants	% Attended PM Training Previously	Average Self-rating of PM Knowledge prior to PMI 1-Minimal 5-Mastery	Education Level	ECE Experience Level	# Participants
1	EESLPD	27	56.5%	2.9	61% Masters degree or higher	91% = 10 years or more	21
2	Higher Education Instructors	35	8.5%	2.6	97% Masters degree or higher	71% = 10 years or more	23
3	Child Care Health Consultants	23	12.5%	1.75	8.3% Masters degree or higher	34% = 10 years or more	23
3	Head Start Education Managers	16	25%	2.4	50% Masters degree or higher	87.5% = 10 years or more	11
3	NC PreK/EESLPD	81	31.3%	2.4	52% Masters degree or higher	79.5% = 10 years or more	69
		182	26.7%	2.4	53%	72.6%	147

Institute Track Descriptions by Participant Cadre

- Track One: Pyramid Model Train the Trainer 2.0 CEU (20 hours) for a maximum of 20 Early Educator Support, Licensure, and Professional Development (EESLPD) administrators, mentors and evaluators (delivered over four days);
- Track Two: Pyramid Model 2.0 CEU (20 hours) for a maximum of 50 ECE higher education instructors (two groups delivered over four days);
- Track Three: Pyramid Model 1.5 CEU (15 hours) for a maximum of 150 EESLPD, Head Start, Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC) staff (delivered over three days);
- Track Four: Pyramid Model Introductory Overview 0.5 CEU (five hours) for a maximum of 200 EESLPD, Head Start, CCHC, higher education, or other ECE professionals;

TPOT Reliability Certification: one Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) Reliability Certification seminar (delivered over two days) will be offered subsequent to the August Institute to certify those EESLPD professionals who participated in the Track One Pyramid Model Train the Trainers session.

Having heard from a number of ECE professionals both before and after the August Institute that they were unable to participate for various reasons but were greatly interested in the information provided, four 1-day Pyramid Model Overview Seminars were planned for facilitation across the state. The HSB Education Specialist and Statewide Project Manager worked to identify venues and to create and distribute marketing flyers for these events.

Unfortunately, on October 16 disaster struck the eastern portion of NC as Hurricane Matthew caused billions of dollars in damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Some towns or portions thereof were flooded for over a week, residents were displaced, major roads were blocked and/or destroyed, and homes and businesses – including child care centers, colleges, and universities – were damaged, lost or closed for an extended period. The flooding and damage in Johnston, Wayne, and southern Chatham counties negatively impacted attendance at the first planned 1-day seminar in Chatham County, and the continued flooding caused cancellation of the third seminar scheduled for Columbus County.

The 2-day TPOT Reliability Certification event planned for early November was also negatively impacted by the effects of Hurricane Matthew: approximately half of the EESLPD staff – primarily those attached to their Eastern Carolina University Hub - were unable to attend.

The chart below describes the 1-day Pyramid Model Overview Seminars and the TPOT event.

Pyramid Model One-Day Overview Events

October 17, 2016	Chatham County Community Library, Pittsboro	11 Participants
October 21, 2016	McDowell Technical Community College, Marion	24 Participants
November 14, 2016	Southeastern Community College, Whiteville	<i>Cancelled due to flooding</i>
November 18, 2016	Down East Partnership for Children, Rocky Mount	21 Participants

Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool Reliability Certification

November 4-5, 2016	Drury Inn, Greensboro	9 Participants
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Successes

In addition to the successful achievement of all performance measures for the Pyramid Model Institute (see Outcomes/Outputs table below), several other positive outcomes occurred as a result of this activity:

Many participants commented that the Pyramid Model Institute drew together a wide audience of ECE professionals who benefited from the ability to network and forge relationships. Participants also remarked frequently on their deep appreciation for high quality professional development providing in-depth knowledge and skills around a focused topic with direct application to their work. Attendees were eager to learn about similar planned events, and disappointed that funding was not likely to be available for future Institutes.

The most dramatic successes occurred within the higher education participants, particularly within the community college cohort. Higher education instructors and a select group of EESLPD administrators, mentors, and evaluators were invited to stay for a 4th day agenda which included information about:

- Foundations/Pyramid Model Crosswalk developed by the Healthy Social Behaviors Initiative, which EESLPD staff were delighted to have for implementation use mentoring teachers;
- Course syllabi available and recommended for implementation by community college and by university ECE departments for a semester-long course on social-emotional development based on the Pyramid Model and vetted by the Healthy Social Behaviors Statewide Project Manager;

- Mental Health Competencies recommended for anyone providing care for young children currently being piloted by the NC Infant Mental Health Association, which higher education instructors believe should be incorporated into ECE degree attainment; and
- Discussion focused on gaps between what is taught in ECE higher education curricula and the evidences of skills expected of new ECE teachers as detailed in Instructional Practices Checklists for Nurturing Relationships and for Creating Supportive Environments available for teachers, staff, observers, and administrators when mentoring and/or evaluating ECE teachers. Higher education instructors present for this discussion were completely unaware of these skill checklists. The discussion was followed by brainstorming about ways to bridge these gaps.

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Outcomes and Outputs	Results
By February 1, 2016, an Institute Coordinator is identified to organize the Institute, identify a venue(s), handle associated facilitation details, develop needed participation applications and agreements	ACHIEVED A .25 FTE Institute Coordinator was identified in late January and contracted to provide services described from Feb 1-Sept 30.
Facilitation of multi-track Pyramid Model Institute, including one Pyramid Model Train-the-Trainer session and TPOT Reliability Certification Training for select EESLPD mentors	ACHIEVED A 4-day multi-track conference on the Pyramid Model was attended by 187 ECE professionals August 2-4 at the Durham Convention Center. One cadre of EESLPD staff participated in Train-the-Trainer sessions; TPOT Reliability Certification for this cadre was held in Greensboro November 3-4. Three 1-day Pyramid Model overview seminars were held across the state and attended by 56 professionals unable to attend the multi-day Institute.
By December 31, 2016, 95% of Institute participants will demonstrate increased knowledge of the training topic.	ACHIEVED 100% of Institute participants demonstrated increased knowledge of social-emotional development and the Pyramid Model through pre-post training surveys.
By December 31, 2016, 80% of TPOT Reliability Training participants will achieve reliability certification.	ACHIEVED 100% of TPOT Reliability training participants achieved reliability certification.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The challenges faced in implementing the Pyramid Model Institute were logistical rather than programmatic.

One of the greatest challenges was locating an available venue in the 6-month window between confirmation of the grant award and the event date targeted for early August to avoid conflict with the start of NC PreK and higher education classes. Conferences of this magnitude typically require a planning period of 12-24 months, and most venues large enough for the planned event were already booked when our search began. Locating sufficient acceptable lodging at the state rate near the event venue also proved extremely difficult; eventually forcing event planners to obtain approval for an exception to the state rate for lodging. Additionally, utilization of multiple locations to meet the anticipated needs for lodging necessitated that participants pay for their own rooms and request reimbursement following the event; this expense made attendance problematic for some prospective attendees.

Event marketing to the multiple targeted audiences had to be achieved by proxy as no list-serve was available for most groups. This caused delays in targeted registration dates when collaborating intermediaries did not share information in a timely manner or prioritize online registration of their members.

Unusual severe weather conditions plagued the eastern portion of NC in late 2016. The extensive damage and facility closures caused the cancellation of one follow-up overview seminar, and low attendance at another overview seminar and at the TPOT reliability certification event.

Pyramid Model Activities Extension

In light of both the phenomenal success of the Pyramid Model Institute and the delays which impacted registration and attendance at Institute activities, DCDEE plans to extend Pyramid Model Institute related activities to June 30, 2017 (utilizing CCDF funds) to allow facilitation of additional professional development opportunities. While plans for these additional opportunities have not yet been contracted to CCRI, the blueprint includes additional in-depth Pyramid Model training targeted to community college instructors, three additional overview seminars, one TPOT reliability certification event, and one gaps identification discussion, with similar outputs regarding increased knowledge of the training topic and achievement of TPOT reliability certification.

Observations and Reflections: Implications for the Future of Early Childhood Education

Kindergarten teachers report that as many as 46% of children enter school without the social skills necessary for optimal learning (Rimm-Kaufman et al, 2000; Blair, 2002). Faculty in higher education ECE programs report that students are least likely to be prepared upon graduation to work with children with persistent challenging behaviors (Hemmeter, 2004), and an astounding 80% of teachers report that children's challenging behaviors negatively affect their job satisfaction and the likelihood that they will remain in their current positions (Hemmeter, Corso & Chetham, 2006).

Higher education instructors who participated in the Pyramid Model Institute have embraced the importance of pre-service training on social-emotional development. Community college instructors in particular are actively seeking ways to embed knowledge about social-emotional development and familiarity with Pyramid Model strategies within each currently required ECE Associate degree course. Instructors at several community colleges are advocating for inclusion of a semester-long course on social-emotional development at their institution utilizing the vetted syllabus provided following the Institute. Instructors across all institutions are utilizing Healthy Social Behavior Specialists as classroom guest speakers and conference keynote speakers. EESLPD mentors and evaluators are making a concerted effort to focus their technical assistance to teachers on creating developmentally appropriate pro-social classrooms.

According to a 2011 report from the National Center for Children in Poverty, *Building Strong Systems of Support for Young Children's Mental Health*: "An essential element of a strong system of supports for early childhood mental health is a workforce that has the knowledge and skills needed to promote positive social-emotional growth in young children and to identify and address problems in this domain." Since 2005, NC has directly supported the development of pro-social early childhood classrooms and teacher practices through the Healthy Social Behaviors (HSB) initiative. Typically these services are sought by teachers in the midst of crisis because they had little or no pre-service training on social-emotional competencies or managing challenging behaviors in the classroom. Of teachers receiving HSB services, 97% reported an increased ability to address challenging behaviors; 96% of the children whom teachers identified as using challenging behaviors were able to maintain their child care placement when teachers utilized Pyramid Model strategies.

Clearly, empowering the ECE workforce with knowledge about social-emotional development and strategies for managing challenging behaviors is crucial to improving the quality of our state's early childhood education and the futures of our youngest citizens. Pre-service training would enable teachers to embed social-emotional strategies in their practices from the outset and provide a base of knowledge on which to build additional supports through technical assistance. Expanding CEU-level training on the Pyramid Model beyond that reached by the child care resource and referral staff to others who also train and mentor North Carolina's ECE workforce has the potential to multiply the historical success of the HSB initiative and to create sustainable positive change in the future of early childhood education available in NC.