

## **C6: Applying Evidence-Based Quality Improvement Approaches to More Equitably Strengthen the Knowledge and Skills of the Child Care and Early Education Workforce**

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. | *L'Enfant Ballroom ABCD (Livestreamed)*

### **1. Descriptive Information**

<p><b>C6: Applying Evidence-Based Quality Improvement Approaches to More Equitably Strengthen the Knowledge and Skills of the Child Care and Early Education Workforce</b></p> <p>From preservice training to Quality Rating Improvement Systems, efforts and investments often focus on strengthening workforce knowledge and skills. In this session, we will explore the application of competency-based frameworks, coaching support, and the continuous quality improvement (CQI) methodology to unpack the active intervention ingredients used in these promising approaches. Hear from panelists representing three recent Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation projects. The first project is the Infant and Toddler Teacher and Caregiver Competencies project, which conducted a multi-case study to provide a comprehensive picture of its implementation in five states. Then we will hear about the Culture of Continuous Learning project, which implements a CQI methodology, called the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, to promote evidence-based practices in child care and Head Start. Finally, attendees will learn about the Mechanisms for Strengthening Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program Quality and Workforce Competency project and how it examines the implementation and outcomes of the mentor-supported Continuous Quality Improvement Plan in the Texas Rising Star quality rating and improvement system. We will discuss the next steps for maturing the application and study of these approaches from research, policy, and practice perspectives. This session is part of a series focused on supporting equitable outcomes for the ECE workforce. Participants are welcome to engage in a single session in the series (Session 2 of 3).</p>	<p><b>Presenters</b></p> <p><b>April Crawford</b>, Children’s Learning Institute</p> <p><b>Kathryn Tout</b>, Child Trends</p> <p><b>Pia Caronongan</b>, Mathematica</p> <p><b>Scribe</b></p> <p>Allison Wimmer</p> <p><b>Number of Attendees:</b> ~20</p>
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### **2. Documents/Presentations Shared** (Please list any electronic documents, PowerPoint presentations, or web links used during the session.) **Collect presenter PowerPoints or other documents on the flash drive provided.**

- Applying Evidence-Based Quality Improvement Approaches to More Equitably Strengthen Knowledge and Skills of the CCEE Workforce

### **3. Brief Summary of Presentations**

#### **Supporting Competencies of the Infant and Toddler Workforce: Findings from the Infant and Toddler Teacher and Caregiver Competencies Project**

Pia Caronongan, Mathematica

- The Infant Toddler Teacher and Caregiver Competencies project (ITCC) project
  - Qualitative case study in five states
  - Competency

- Key foundational tasks – existing competency frameworks vary in key ways – ages, roles targeted, proficiency levels, aligned with assessment, include competencies specific to infants and toddlers
- Implementation involves multiple functions, therefore multiple agencies and organizations
- 28 states have frameworks with at least one competency specific to infants & toddlers (I&T), but not all are linked to state workforce development or quality improvement initiatives
- Interviews conducted from state agencies, higher ed, 17 programs (centers and family child care [FCC])
- CA, IL, ME, OR, TX were the case studies
- Why and how were competency frameworks developed?
  - To support professional development (PD) and professionalization of ECE field
  - Collaborative process with state reps, higher ed institutions, research experts, sometimes head start collaboration offices
  - Efforts were made to align with existing assessments
- Related supports – training, coursework, and job-embedded learning
- How are they linked to recruitment and retention efforts?
  - Career pathways and credentials
  - Benefits and wages
    - Less common overall, but some teachers may receive an increase in pay after completing, they also may influence promotion/performance reviews
  - Pre-service preparation
- How are they linked to program quality?
  - Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) standards and supports, can be used in coaching
  - Positive interactions, planning lessons and activities
  - Developmental monitoring, can be used to measure progress and guidance for working with children with delays
- How do they address equity?
  - Some specifically address diversity of their I/T workforce and families, also provide materials related to frameworks in non-English languages
- Broader workforce retention challenges can sometimes overshadow competency-based efforts
- Integration with other workforce development/QRIS initiatives requires coordination
- Data is lacking about whether and to what extent frameworks improve teacher practice/outcomes – currently focused on tracking participation/completion, limited infrastructure

### **Culture of Continuous Learning Project: A Breakthrough Series Collaborative for Improving Child Care and Head Start Quality**

Kathryn Tout, Child Trends

- Culture of Continuous Learning (CCL) Project
- How do we promote equitable quality improvements that can be sustained over time?
- Key challenges
  - Including and listening to educators, applying knowledge, adapt to children and family needs, building organizational capacity for sustainability, addressing compensation, benefits, and other workplace conditions
- Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC)
  - Addresses how and what to improve
  - Mobilizes leadership at all levels
  - Uses data to drive improvements and focuses on change that results in improvements
  - Focuses on organizational system and culture/social dynamics of change
- Five components
  - Cross-role teams
  - Model for improvement
  - Expert coaches
  - Change frame work
  - Shared learning environment
- Incremental changes, building on what works
- Establish new routines for collaborative learning and continuous improvement
- Two phases:

- Learn how the BSC methodology promotes organizational processes and changes that results in improved and sustained quality
- Learn how the BSC method could be integrated in state quality improvement and professional development systems to promote quality at scale
- Research Questions
  - What did engagement and participation look like, how successfully did they develop a culture of continuous learning? Did they achieve the desired outcome?
    - Participation varied, but people enjoyed participating.
    - Shared learning increased
    - There were shifts in organizational culture, increased self-efficacy and leadership at all levels
- CCL project promotes positive workplace culture, positive interactions, and focuses curricula on social-emotional learning, moving knowledge into practice

### **Continuous Quality Improvement: Mechanisms for Strengthening ECE Program Quality and Workforce Competency**

April Crawford, Children's Learning Institute

- Texas QRIS: Texas Rising Star
  - Transitioning to required participation
- Goal areas
  - Child Care Regulation Requirements
  - Director & Staff Qualifications and Training
  - Teacher-Child Interactions
  - Program Administration (Family Education and Involvement, Program Management)
  - Indoor/Outdoor Learning Environments
  - Pre-K Partnership
  - Management and Leadership
- Improving workforce knowledge and skills
  - Mixed delivery model, virtual and in-person
- Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) integrated practice and learning supports
- Strengthening mentoring implementation capability
- Early learning program quality, recruitment and retention, workforce knowledge and skills
- **Preliminary Phase A Findings**
  - Regional variability in implementation
  - Use varies across centers and FCC programs
  - Program directors are more frequently the target of CQI support than teachers
  - Plan length doesn't vary across baseline star rating, suggesting room for more differentiation of CQI support by quality rating
  - Lower star rated programs were less likely to have an active CQI
- Most used
  - Physical material/equipment
  - Professional dev certificates
  - Financial incentives
- CQI is generally well received
- Variability in coaching competency
- **Phase B**
  - Technology mediated
  - Technology mediated + director coaching
  - Technology mediated and director coaching and extra dosage for teacher
  - Hoping to come out with cost effectiveness data for the state

#### **4. Brief Summary of Discussion**

- What evidence is there linking successfully achieving the goals to child/family outcomes? Example, measuring teacher-child interactions as a goal.

- April - Spent time in focus groups discussing how CQI improved their ability to work with kids – they could articulate specific ways they were improving
  - Next phase will look more specifically at variation/the extent to which competency demonstrates relates to quality in teacher-child interactions
- BSC is still in pilot phase, but the metrics that teams are collecting about impact on behavior (decrease in challenging behavior)/interactions with families.
- Pia – in our case study, not a lot of direct evidence available so far, because there haven't been enough efforts to look at that yet. They're still in the implementation phase. Anecdotal evidence from programs/teachers that those who are able to engage with supports are able to see benefits. But there are barriers to that.
- Why are lower star rated providers less likely to participate?
  - April: Not sure – those that do report favorable opinions, so not sure it's a burden on them
    - There will be a massive influx of lower quality rated providers, since those that joined voluntarily may be higher rated at this point
  - BSC application process is a mutual selection, which has implications for equity – who has capacity to participate?
  - Pia – interesting to think of providing the resources for high quality, assuming they'll get there
- Where does CQI live? How do we make it part of the standard?
  - BSC – what do we take off providers plates to encourage them to focus on sustaining quality?
  - April – we have been working more with colleges with practicum routines, so future educators can set some goals grounded in competencies, developing action plans, improvement plans, reflect on their progress
- How do we convince people that these types of mini-certifications actually will translate into higher wages or something otherwise beneficial to them.
  - BSC – it would first have to be proven true; we're still in the beginning stages

**5. Summary of Key issues raised** (facilitators are encouraged to spend the last 3-5 minutes of sessions summarizing the key issues raised during the session; bullets below are prompts for capturing the kinds of issues we're looking for)

- **ITTCC:**
  - Challenges related to recruitment and retention can overshadow competency-based efforts
  - Integration of competency-based efforts with other workforce development and quality improvement initiatives requires coordination and collaboration
  - Can also prevent stalling of implementation efforts due to competing priorities or lack of resources
  - Not enough information about whether and to what extent competency frameworks improve teacher and caregiver practice or child outcomes
  - Data collection is mainly focused on tracking training completion
  - Lacking information about reliability and validity of competency-based assessments currently in use
  - Limited infrastructure and processes for directly assessing teacher/caregiver practice
- **CCL project/BSC:**
  - Works at organizational level
  - BSC can be applied to any content level, not just SEL
  - Centers equity, positive workplace culture, positive interactions
  - Can be paired with other initiatives to support ECE workforce
- **Texas QRIS**
  - Transitioning from voluntary to mandatory participation
  - Mixed-delivery model, in person and virtual
  - Structural variability in CQI implementation
    - Lower star rated programs less likely to have active CQIP
  - Participation incentives
    - Program-level preferences for equipment/materials
    - Preference for financial incentives over education-focused incentives
    - Concerns over sustainability of financial incentives
    - Limitations in how many incentives could be distributed