

Executive Summary

For the reporting year, please provide a summary of your State's (1) accomplishments, (2) lessons learned, (3) challenges, and (4) strategies you will implement to address those challenges.

Accomplishments

- The Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System technology solution was built and includes a robust and integrated approach for data collection and system efficiencies to support licensing, child care resource and referral, rating administration, and the tracking and administration of quality improvement funds. To date 624 child care program users have signed up within the Colorado Shines technology system. One-hundred-fifty-three level 2 applications have been submitted and 32 level 3 through 5 Applications submitted. The Early Childhood Professional Credential 2.0 and the scoring rubric was approved by the Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory.
- Developed user guides for the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System, including guides for specific users (licensing specialists, ratings assessors, and quality incentive navigators), along with a complete program guide for licensed child care providers.
- Developed, piloted and finalized the Level 2 Quality Indicators for programs who are just beginning their quality journey through the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System.
- An implementation team was established to guide the Colorado Shine Quality Rating and Improvement System ratings and Quality Improvement incentives. This team supports the Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood and the Colorado Department of Education on supports to programs and stakeholders.
- Five accrediting agencies have been recognized as an alternative pathway into the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System, with one, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, reaching a quality level 4 crosswalk. Four other agencies (American Montessori Society, National Association for Family Child Care, National Early Childhood Program Accreditation, and Association of Christian Schools International) reaching a level 3 crosswalk.
- All licensing specialists have completed the National Association for Regulatory Administration licensing credential, as well as an Environmental Rating Scale Quality Certification.
- Colorado's Statewide Coaching Credential and Coaching Network completed the development of Colorado's three-tiered coaching credential, awarding 60 early childhood professionals a provisional coaching credential.
- The approved school readiness assessment menu now includes four assessments: Teaching Strategies GOLD®; Teaching Strategies GOLD® Kindergarten Entry Assessment Survey; Desired Results Developmental Profile - Kindergarten (DRDP-K); and the Riverside Early Assessment of Learning (REAL).
- Developed the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System Coaching Framework based on the Practice Based Coaching model and provided a Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System Coaching Framework Training of Trainers.
- Colorado's Early Childhood Faculty Coalition completed the alignment of the Colorado Early Childhood Competencies for Educators and Administrators with 13 common early childhood courses.

- Scholarships and Incentives: Allocated \$625,000 of scholarship awards through partnerships with Qualistar T.E.A.C.H.; Colorado's Foundation for Community Colleges; and Preschool Special Education, and Early Intervention Services.
- A pilot was conducted to determine the success of requiring matching funding with the Colorado Foundation for Community Colleges, which raised an additional \$141,000.
- The Professional Development Information System launched Phase One Pilot in December 2014. This includes 14 Colorado Shines online courses supporting level 2 of the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System.
- Contract awarded to Simply Digi to customize its current Learning Management System to create an innovative workforce registry and training system based on Colorado's Early Childhood Competencies for Educators and Administrators.
- The Early Childhood Professional Development team, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Human Services Quality Rating and Improvement System team, conducted regular update sessions and webinars with early childhood professionals across the state.
- School district participation in the school readiness assessment project increased for the 2014-2015 school year: 15 school districts and 3,775 children were added.
- Advanced training was offered to teachers using Teaching Strategies GOLD® for a second year. These trainings addressed the following topics: authentic observation-based assessment, objective documentation, best practices in kindergarten, and how to use assessment information to inform practice.
- The school readiness web page was updated regularly. This included adding resources from other states. Examples of updates include: Revisions/updates of fact sheets as new information becomes available; Creation of new fact sheets as needed, for example, a fact sheet providing information on assessments that were added to the approved menu in the summer of 2014; Times, locations, and registration information for all community meetings were listed; dates, times and topics covered on all online webinars were listed; as related articles and/or reports became available they were added to the resource section; etc.
- A vendor has been identified to work with the Colorado Department of Education to produce video resources to enhance on-line trainings.
- Customizations to Teaching Strategies GOLD® were identified, including the addition of Colorado Academic Standards to all academic domains.
- Presentations continue to be made to a variety of groups including; the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE), the Early Childhood Summit, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC), and the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Committee. Presentations were designed to meet the need of the requesting organization. Most often there were updates on the school readiness assessment implementation process. At times presentations included specific information on each of the three approved assessment systems; Teaching Strategies GOLD, Riverside Early Assessment of Learning (REAL), and the Desired Results Developmental Profile for Kindergarten (DRDP-K). We were also asked to facilitate workshops designed to help teachers and school administrators learn more about

appropriate assessment for children in kindergarten. This included information on the importance of assessing both developmental and academic domains. Presentation Topics:

- Designing a P-3 system: the whys, the hows, and the expected outcomes
 - What does the research say about authentic assessment in early childhood classrooms?
 - How does implementation of school readiness support quality programming for children?
 - How to use school readiness assessment to support efficient data gathering of student's progress for instructional planning
- Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funds were used to provide training for the state team and three school districts to become certified Teaching Strategies GOLD® trainers.

Lessons Learned

- The aggressive time line of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant requires government systems to move quickly.
- Communication is critical.
- Engaging early childhood professionals and local implementation partners while designing and developing new systems is critical.
- Successful implementation of an authentic, observation-based school readiness assessment is dependent, in part, on support from principals and school district administration. To address this challenge the Colorado Department of Education is:
 - Distributing *Leading Pre-K - 3 Learning Communities, Competencies for Effective Principal Practices* published by the National Association of Elementary School Principals.
 - Revising the content for principal training sessions. Principal training sessions will be added to the training calendar.
 - Identifying a principal or other district administrator(s) who would be willing to share their experience with their colleagues.
 - Exploring the development of a principal/leadership institute with the Colorado Department of Education Literacy Office.
 - Creating a webinar focused on the multiple uses of assessment data.
 - Developing a guidance document on a P-3 approach to early childhood education.

Challenges and Strategies to Address Challenges

- The results of the Evaluation Summit highlighted challenges with data collection and analysis and the need for a solid understanding of areas for evaluation. To address this challenge, an Evaluation Task Force was convened to develop a logic model and identify key research questions to inform the request for proposal to solicit an evaluation vendor.

- Aligning the development timelines of Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS) and Quality Rating and Improvement System technology platforms was challenging. Colorado is creating the PDIS by enhancing Simply Digi's learning management system. The QRIS is a new system build by Vertiba on a Sales Force platform. Each vendor approaches development based on their differing business models. To address the differences in approach and development timelines, QRIS and PDIS staff participated in joint work sessions.
- The ED PD staff had to simultaneously develop the business operations model and technology specifications for the competency system; workforce registry; learning management system; credentialing system; trainer approval and training approval system. To address this challenge, the Colorado Department of Education added staff to focus on support of current credentialing system and Professional Development Information System Help Desk. Timeline for the trainer and training approval system were extended.
- The high demands placed on kindergarten teachers impede the implementation of a school readiness assessment for all kindergarten children. To address this challenge, the Colorado Department of Education has deployed an enhanced communication plan to increase school district awareness of the implementation options. Additionally, there is ongoing distribution of resources that offer guidance for how the school readiness assessment system aligns with other assessments and responsibilities (i.e. used to create report cards, family conference forms, individual readiness plans, possibly eliminate the need for additional assessments, etc.) and examples of time saving techniques. There is also ongoing training and technical assistance offered by the School Readiness State Team, including weekly office hours to answer questions and Training of the Trainer opportunities to give additional school districts an opportunity to have an in-house trainer available.
- Parents and others are very concerned about the collection and reporting of school readiness assessment data. To address this challenge, the Colorado Department of Education reviewed and revised security and privacy policies to exceed state and federal law.
- Some kindergarten teachers and school administrators have limited knowledge of the unique learning and development needs of children in kindergarten. To address this challenge, the Colorado Department of Education is developing resources, training materials, webinars, etc. that provide the research based information and examples needed to inform practices.