

Illinois Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER I) Pyramid Model Project



**THE
PYRAMID MODEL
CONSORTIUM**

Supporting Early Childhood PBIS

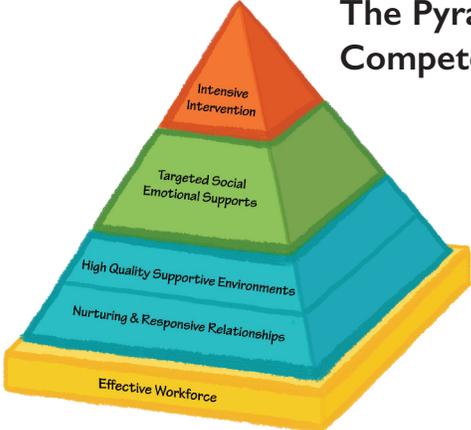


Final Report
June 30, 2021



In 2019, the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD), in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5). Through its Initial PDG B-5 grant, the State conducted a needs assessment and identified areas to be strengthened within the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system. In January 2020, Illinois was awarded a three-year PDG B-5 Renewal grant to continue and extend the work, putting forth a vision for strengthening this ECEC system through scaling up high-quality programming for children and responding to the needs of families. To help achieve these goals, the State continues to promote and support adoption of the Pyramid Model, a tiered intervention framework of evidence-based practices for supporting social-emotional competence in infants and young children. In Illinois, the Pyramid Model is implemented and scaled up across early childhood education and care programs with the broad goals to:

- 1) Enhance the capacity of the teacher and practitioner workforce to adopt Pyramid Model practices
- 2) Increase the number of high-quality Pyramid Model trainers and process coaches
- 3) Expand the number of high-fidelity program-wide and community wide implementation sites
- 4) Partner with families to enhance skills and strategies to support their children
- 5) Increase children’s prosocial skills and reduce challenging behavior
- 6) Prevent and severely limit expulsion and suspension in early childhood settings



The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social-Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children

INTENSIVE: *Individualized Plans* for addressing severe and persistent challenging behavior.

TARGETED: *Intensive strategies* for teaching children essential social-emotional skills such as friendship skills, identifying and regulation emotions, and problem solving.

UNIVERSAL: *Creating nurturing and responsive relationships* among all adults and children engaged in child care and designing and maintaining **high quality supportive environments**,

FOUNDATION: *An effective workforce*, characterized by professionals who are well-supported and well-qualified for their roles in early education and care.

*The Pyramid Model is a framework of evidence-based practices for early childhood educators and caregivers to promote young children’s healthy social-emotional development. The foundation for all practices in the Pyramid Model are the **systems and policies** necessary to ensure a workforce able to adopt and sustain these evidence-based practices. The Pyramid Model builds upon a tiered public health approach to providing universal supports to all children to promote wellness, targeted services to those who need more support, and intensive support for children who need them. The model is supported at the foundation by an effective workforce (NCPMI, 2021).*



In July 2020, ISBE used Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER I) federal grant funds to implement the GEER I Pyramid Model Project. The project was designed to ease the strain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on early childhood providers, children, and families in Illinois.

The evaluation in this report relates specifically to the outcomes of the GEER I Pyramid Model Project. The purpose of the GEER I Project funding was to deter the potentially negative and lasting hidden consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in Illinois. During the pandemic, children’s daily routines, peer relationships, and school supports were disrupted, resulting in children potentially facing challenges in: 1) understanding expectations and routines from adults, 2) communicating with adults and peers effectively, 3) identifying, naming and understanding emotions to solve challenges, and 4) fully participating in daily routines and activities.

The GEER I Project allowed for specific aspects of the Pyramid Model to be implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the focus was on preventing and addressing challenging behavior and supporting implementation of the Pyramid Model statewide, ultimately leading to positive outcomes for young children across Illinois.

GEER I Project funds provided professional development and resources to the ECEC workforce to support children within their programs. The GEER I Project sought to achieve the following outcomes:

- 1) Provide access to Preschool eModule distribution to 1,500 providers and Wellness eModule distribution to 5,000 providers
- 2) Support program-wide implementation work to 16 programs (eight Year 1 implementation sites and eight Year 2 implementation sites)
- 3) Support readiness to implement the Pyramid Model through ePyramid cohort support and delivery of leadership and readiness modules

The overall result of the above stated outcomes is preparedness of a large contingency of early education providers in Illinois to support children and families through the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as increase Pyramid Model implementation statewide.

Preschool and Wellness eModules Distribution

Online training included access to Preschool eModules for up to 1,500 providers and Wellness training modules for up to 5,000 providers. Objectives for the trainings are listed in the table below.

eModule Training	Training Objectives
Preschool	As a result of the training series, I can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement practices that demonstrate the relationship between challenging behavior and social-emotional development • Create nurturing and responsive relationships • Provide high-quality supportive environments • Design and implement targeted social-emotional supports
Wellness: Taking Care of Yourself	As a result of this training series, I have a better understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The general understanding of suspension rates, causes, and consequences • How to recognize the nature, causes, and effects of implicit bias • How to understand the term and meaning of disproportionality • How to develop a comprehensive meaning of culture

All of the Preschool and Wellness eModules were successfully disseminated to early childhood providers in Illinois between December 2020 and June 2021, and the majority of codes were accessed. To date, for the activated codes, users on average completed 71% of the Wellness course and 65% of the Preschool course. Of note, the Preschool and Wellness eModules were dispersed through June 2021 and take 18 hours to complete. Participants will continue to have access to complete the courses for one full year after activation. This timing will ultimately positively impact completion numbers of both eModules.

National data on the objectives and percentage of agreement from users of the Preschool modules are featured in the table below.

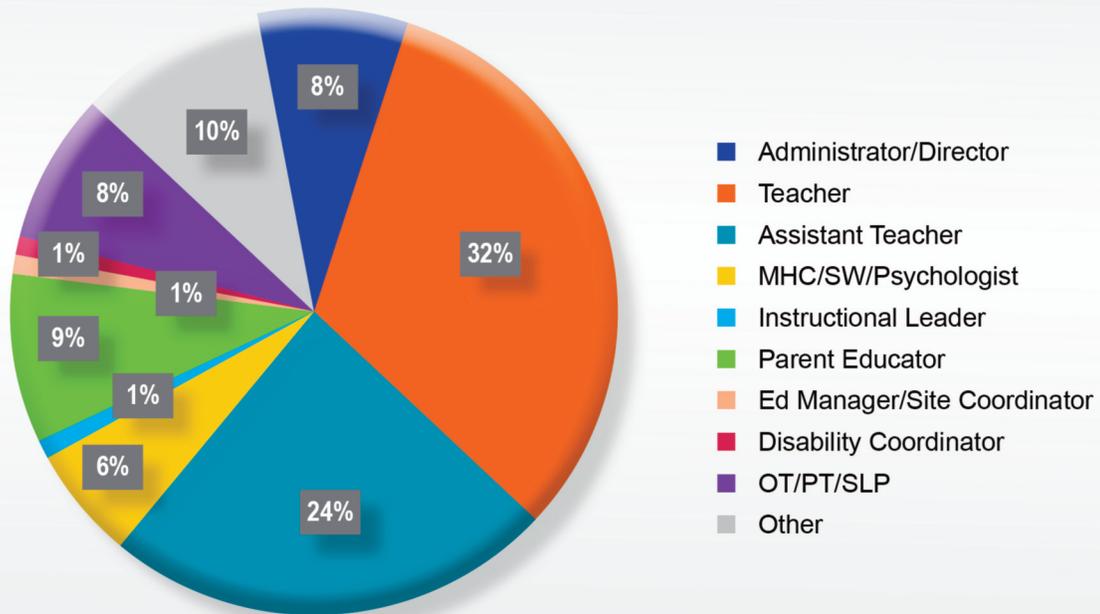
eModule Training	Training Objectives	% Agree
Preschool	I understand the relationship between challenging behavior and social-emotional development.	85%
	I understand how to create nurturing and responsive relationships.	85%
	I understand how to provide high-quality supportive environments.	86%
	I understand how to design and implement targeted social-emotional supports.	65%

Training objectives and percentage of agreement from respondents as of February 2021 on meeting the Wellness training objectives are listed in the table below.

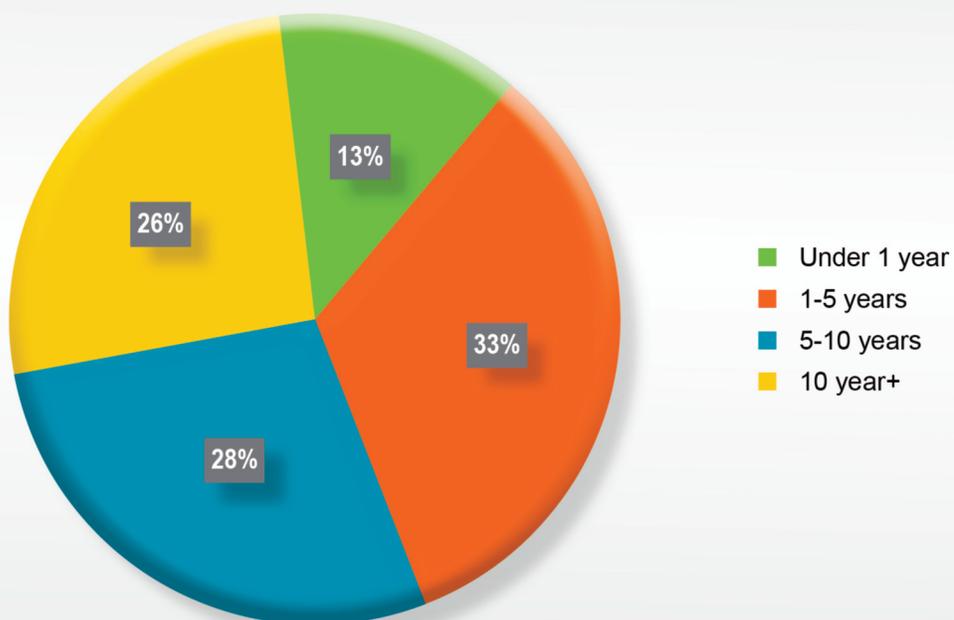
eModule Training	Training Objectives	% Agree
Wellness: Taking Care of Yourself	I understand the impact of adult well-being on children's social-emotional development.	99%
	I can identify symptoms of stress, compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, and vicarious trauma.	95%
	I learned strategies for reducing stress and increasing wellness.	96%
	I understand how mindfulness can reduce stress and improve well-being.	96%
	I learned how to practice mindfulness.	95%
	I learned how to develop a self-care plan.	95%

Demographic data was also collected on a majority of the 5,000 providers who participated in the Wellness eModules. Role, time in role, race ethnicity, and language spoken by the participants polled are demonstrated in the following charts.

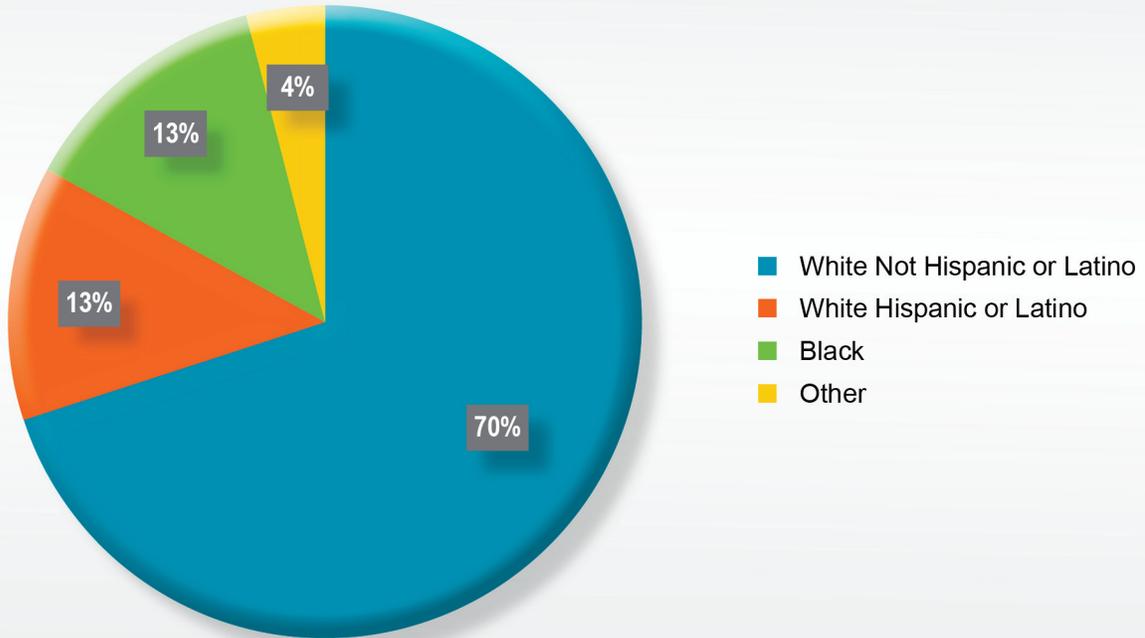
Wellness eModule Role



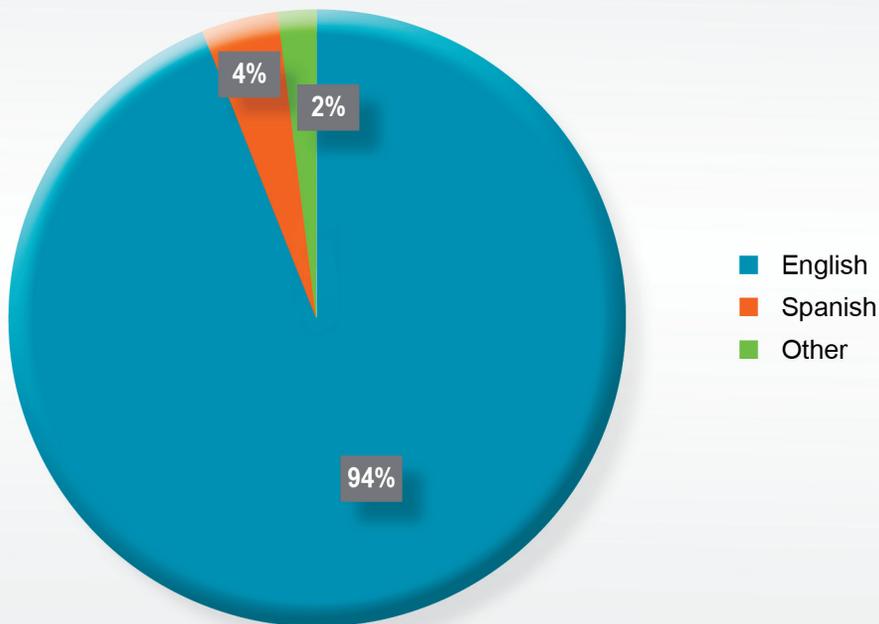
Wellness eModule Time in Position



Wellness eModule Participants by Race



Wellness eModule Participants by Primary Language

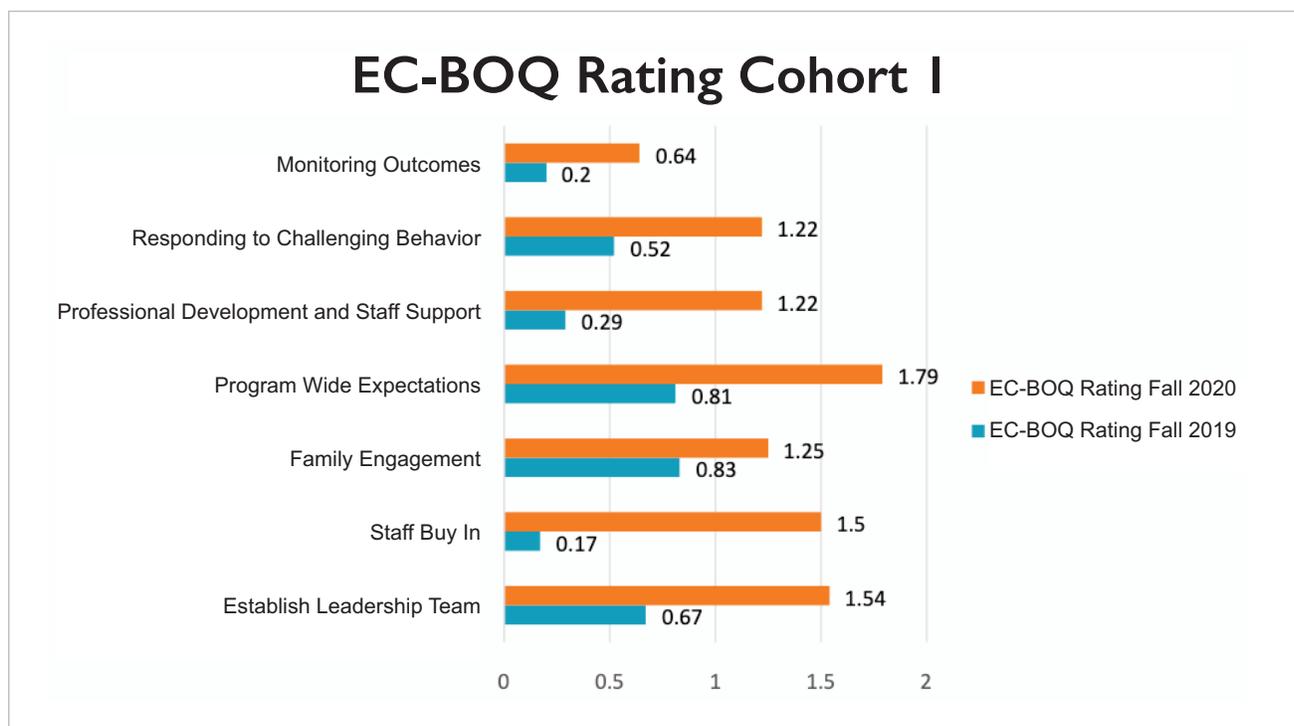




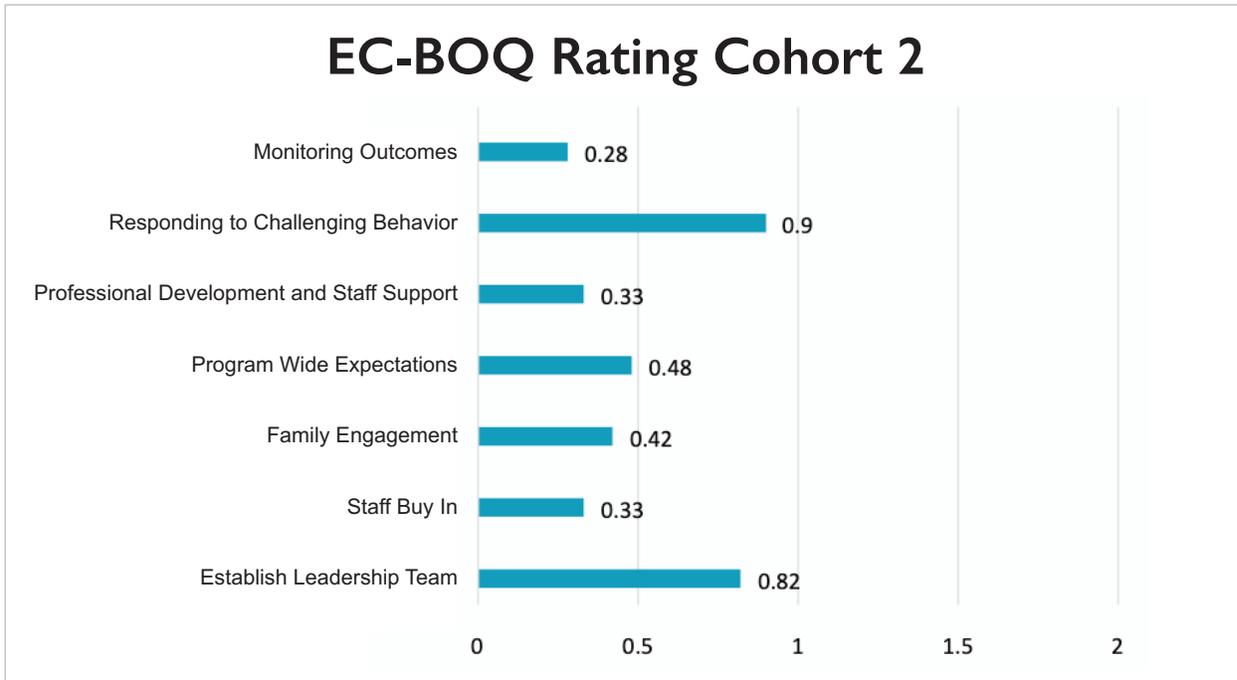
Program-Wide Implementation

Following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, GEER I funding supported 16 programs toward program-wide implementation. Eight Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE) sites were given coaching for Year 2 implementation (cohort started Fall 2019 and is referred to as Cohort 1 below). Additionally, eight new sites were supported in Year 1 toward program-wide implementation with a cohort starting in Fall 2020 (referred to as Cohort 2 below). Priority for Cohort 2 was given to programs in areas with populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 as determined by the Illinois Business Interruption Grant (BIG) Program. Data from completed Early Childhood Benchmarks of Quality (EC-BOQ) and coaching logs from Process coaches reveal important information about the effectiveness of GEER I funding to sustain Pyramid Model implementation in Illinois.

The EC-BOQ is used by program Leadership Teams, often in coordination with Process coaches, to assess progress toward program-wide Pyramid Model implementation and to develop action plans and revisit as needed. These data are shared with the evaluation team to assess statewide progress. The participating programs are using the EC-BOQ version 2.0, which was updated in 2017 with new and revised benchmarks associated with culturally responsive practices to ensure equity. The following figure shows the average ratings for each critical elements across all programs combined; the numbers represent the average rating across all benchmarks that comprise each element on a scale of 0-2. Data for this finding are based on a summary of the EC-BOQ results submitted for 14 of the 24 GEER I-supported programs engaged in Year 2 implementation in Fall 2020 with an initial start date of Fall 2019. As shown below, the programs in the cohort reported growth over time, indicating progress toward program-wide implementation between Year 1 and Year 2.



Data for the findings below are based on a summary of the EC-BOQ results submitted for four of the eight GEER I-supported programs engaged in Year 1 implementation beginning in Fall 2020. The programs in this cohort were only in Year 1 of implementation; as a result there is only one data point for the EC-BOQs.



Coaching logs from the Process coaches who supported Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 in implementation provide a description of the Process Coach supports delivered. The following data is representative of the coaching logs submitted to the database.

Number of programs	16
Number/Percent of programs with documented coaching contacts	10/63%
Timeframe of log entries	January 2021- June 2021
Average number of contacts per program	2.8
Average duration for each contact	72 minutes
Format of contact	Virtual meeting: 90% Phone call: 8% In-person: 2%
Type of support provided	Leadership Team Support: 86% Internal Coach Support: 11% Pyramid Practices: 2% Provided training on another topic such as PBC: 2%



Readiness

ePyramid Cohorts for Program-Wide Implementation

In an effort to provide a structured cohort experience to guide sites that were not yet implementation sites through the Preschool Pyramid eModules, programs were invited to participate in a 6-part series around the modules. In Fall 2020, 47 participants across four programs participated in 27 hours of eModules and additional coaching support around the material. In the Winter/Spring of 2021, a train-the-trainer model was used; 26 programs sent representatives from their programs (totaling 42 participants) to go through the coached cohort series with the idea that they would then facilitate a similar cohort experience with other staff at their respective programs. Participants in Fall 2020 and Winter/Spring 2021 cohorts included staff from Preschool for All and Preschool for All Expansion (PFA/PFAE) programs.

Key findings on the quality and effectiveness of the ePyramid cohort to promote readiness for Pyramid Model implementation are below. These data points are based on a collective summary of input from program leaders and participants across multiple data sources.

- Cohort program leaders were effective in supporting readiness.
 - o GEER I cohort meetings started between November 2020 and March 2021 and ended between February 2021 and June 2021, indicating that programs received at least four months of intensive coaching.
 - o Cohort program leaders gave 4.5/5 stars for the effectiveness of the project in supporting the ECEC providers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - o Cohort program leaders were 100% confident that those who participated in the coaching can implement the Pyramid Model in their programs.
- The project prepared program leaders and cohort members to implement the Pyramid Model moving forward.
 - o 100% of respondents who received cohort coaching indicated they were confident in their ability to deliver the Pyramid Model modules to staff in their program.
 - o 73% of the respondents indicated they have already started or plan to implement training of Pyramid Model modules within their own program.
 - o 25/37 respondents who received cohort support stated they were planning to facilitate Pyramid Model implementation in their programs in the 2021-2022 school year.
 - o 10/10 programs who participated in readiness training were asked to become implementation sites in the next budget year.

Leadership and Readiness Training Series

Program-wide Pyramid Model Leadership and Readiness webinars were designed to explore the various layers required to implement program-wide Pyramid Model strategies to fidelity in early childhood programs. Four sessions were provided to training cohort participants between February 2021 and May 2021. Evaluation of the Leadership and Readiness series by the respondents indicated several important findings featured in the table below.

Objective	% Agree
I can identify Pyramid Model readiness resources.	100%
I can describe the aspects of readiness in my program.	100%
I understand basic levels of implementation science.	100%
I have identified next steps in Pyramid Model implementation through action planning.	100%

Also of note, respondents rated the quality of the materials and coaching in the leadership readiness series with 4.8/5 stars. Respondents rated the effectiveness of support for their role in implementation with 4.6/5 stars. Respondents in a variety of roles in early childhood shared:



“I will continue the Pyramid with the Pre-K team as the Instructional Leader. Plans are to continue the assessment/action plans, cohort meetings/trainings, and personal reflections in a way that is sustainable for the team once I am gone as the Instructional Leader.”

– Instructional Leader

“Select 1 or 2 programs to work with and go through the e-mods with them like we did in our cohort and support implementation of Pyramid Model.”

– Administrator

“Our entire program just completed the Pyramid Training, so our next steps are to do program-wide implementation. I will have an important role in implementation, so I was thankful to have this additional training.”

– Teacher

“I am part of a team that will be introducing the Pyramid Model to the child care center I service.”

– Mental Health Consultant

“I plan to lead our 4 preschool/early childhood teachers through the modules and implementation of the Pyramid Model.”

– Administrator

Summary

The GEER I Pyramid Model Project met the three stated desired outcomes through collaboration between state leaders, cohort leaders, and the Pyramid Model Consortium. In addition to saturating the field of early childhood providers in Illinois with high-quality professional development to understand the unique context of children in the pandemic, program leaders who participated in the readiness support are well-poised to initiate and/or continue Pyramid Model implementation in their programs into the 2021-2022 school year.