

# ILLINOIS PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT - EXPANSION (PDG-E)

Pyramid Model Pilot  
SPRING 2018 - DECEMBER 2019

## Evaluation Report

*Prepared for:*



Illinois  
State Board  
of Education



THE PYRAMID  
MODEL  
CONSORTIUM

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

COP	Community of Practice
EC-BOQ	Early Childhood PBS Benchmarks of Quality
GOECD	Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development
ISBE	Illinois State Board of Education
PBC	Practice Based Coaching
PBS	Positive Behavior Supports
PDG-E	Preschool Development Grant - Expansion
PFAE	Preschool for All Expansion
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PMC	Pyramid Model Consortium
PTR-YC	Prevent, Teach, Reinforce - Young Children
TPOT	Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool

# Executive Summary

## OVERVIEW

In 2017, the **Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD)**, in partnership with the **Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)**, received supplemental federal funding as part of the **Preschool Development Grant - Expansion (PDG-E)**. Illinois is promoting and supporting healthy social emotional growth for all children ages birth to five, and working to enhance and expand the quality of preschool education in high-need communities; PDG-E is specifically focused on four-year-old children. To help achieve these goals the state selected the **Pyramid Model**, a tiered intervention framework for supporting social emotional competence in infants and young children, as its evidence-based approach.

Twenty-eight preschool programs comprise the Illinois PDG-E grantees. Among these, **26 programs** self-selected to participate in the **Pyramid Model Pilot**. Twenty-two programs joined in spring 2018, while four others joined beginning in spring 2019.

Illinois contracted with the **Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC)** to collaborate on project implementation. PMC is a non-profit organization that promotes high fidelity use of the Pyramid Model through in-person professional development sessions, online training (“ePyramid Modules”), program coach supports and guidance, and access to resources to support implementation efforts. PMC organized and facilitated the services and supports that comprise the Pyramid Model Pilot with the Illinois PDG-E programs. These activities included a series of state-level professional development events related to Pyramid Model strategies and implementation fidelity measures, as well as ongoing, individualized supports for programs provided by 18 Process Coaches. Each PDG-E program had one Process Coach, while each Process Coach worked with one or more programs.

## PILOT EVALUATION

Since spring 2018, the PDG-E Pyramid Model Pilot sites have been taking part in a statewide evaluation to assess both the implementation of the work throughout the grant period, as well as to document the outcomes associated with this effort for programs, children, and families. The Pyramid Model Consortium contracted with Evaluation Partners LLC, an independent evaluation and technical assistance firm, to carry out this work on behalf of GOECD and ISBE.

The evaluation was guided by a series of key questions across two broad categories: *Implementation and Outcomes*, and *Facilitating Factors and Sustainability*. The findings in this report are organized around the key questions, which were addressed through the following data sources:

- Professional Development Feedback Forms
- Process Coach Logs
- Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality (EC-BOQ)<sup>1</sup>
- Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)<sup>2</sup>
- Pyramid Model Leadership Team Surveys
- Process Coach Survey

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<sup>1</sup> Program-level implementation measure: Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality, version 2.0, Lise Fox, Mary Louise Hemmeter, Susan Jack, and Denise Perez Binder (2017).

<sup>2</sup> Classroom-level fidelity measure: Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) for Preschool Classrooms, Lise Fox, Mary Louise Hemmeter, and Patricia Snyder (2010).

## KEY FINDINGS: IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES

- ⦿ Participants of professional development events reported having gained knowledge and skills across the array of topics offered throughout the grant, including: Leadership Team processes, Practice Based Coaching (PBC), TPOT, Positive Solutions for Families, PTR-YC (Prevent, Teach, Reinforce - Young Children, or “top of the Pyramid” practices), Strategies for Inclusion, Culturally Responsive Practices, and other topics to support Pyramid Model implementation.
- ⦿ Participants typically found the statewide events to be relevant and useful to their professional practice. They are also confident that implementing the strategies they learned has the potential to benefit the children in their care.
- ⦿ Leadership Team members generally found their Process Coach to be knowledgeable in Pyramid Model content and strategies, and effective at providing support to help move implementation forward.
- ⦿ Program personnel report having gained skills and techniques for supporting children’s social emotional development, creating learning environments that are culturally responsive and that address equity, promoting inclusive settings, and building stronger relationships with families, among other skills.
- ⦿ Early EC-BOQ results suggest that the PDG-E programs began the project strong, with Leadership Teams noting all critical elements at least “partially in place”. Two of the strongest elements noted at the outset were *procedures for responding to challenging behavior*, and *establishing a leadership team*.
- ⦿ EC-BOQ results from a sample of PDG-E programs with at least two ratings over time suggest substantial progress toward program-wide implementation. The greatest areas of growth were noted in *establishing program-wide expectations*, *staff-buy in*, and *family engagement*.
- ⦿ TPOT results showed teachers, on average, at or near fidelity (80%) in several key practice areas. On average, teachers were rated most highly on *collaborative teaming*, *connecting with families*, and *engaging in supportive conversations with children*.
- ⦿ TPOT ratings over time for a sample of teachers suggest progress across many of the key practice areas. The greatest growth was observed in *interventions for challenging behavior*, and direct teaching of social emotional and problem-solving strategies.
- ⦿ Personnel across many programs described their successes related to using the Pyramid Model framework. Examples included: working with children specifically around identifying emotions and problem solving, fostering greater family engagement, strategies toward program-wide adoption of the Pyramid Model, and using data more effectively.
- ⦿ Many program personnel reported having noticed benefits of being in Pyramid Model classrooms for children, and for their families. These benefits include improved social emotional and academic competencies, as well as stronger relationships with families.
- ⦿ Many personnel also believe that Pyramid Model implementation has contributed to decreased rates of suspension and expulsion.

## KEY FINDINGS: FACILITATING FACTORS AND SUSTAINABILITY

- ⦿ A combination of factors has contributed to program progress toward Pyramid Model implementation, including local efforts by teaching staff, support from a Process Coach, participation in statewide professional development sessions, and enthusiasm and buy-in from teaching staff, instructional leaders, and others.
- ⦿ Process Coaches have been generally satisfied with the progress their programs have made over the grant period. In describing their greatest successes, Process Coaches mentioned building relationships, seeing staff embrace the framework, collaborating with and supporting their Leadership Teams, and observing benefits for program staff.
- ⦿ Process Coaches appreciated the level of ongoing communication with GOECD, ISBE, and PMC, and the guidance they received throughout the project. All Process Coaches had a good sense of the project expectations and for their role in the work, which for some became clarified during the course of the project.
- ⦿ The greatest challenges to implementation include time for program personnel to meet and plan, the logistics of internal coaching, and the need for increased knowledge of the Pyramid Model among staff.
- ⦿ Most program personnel surveyed strongly believe this model is sustainable within programs like theirs. The keys to sustainability mentioned most often included: ongoing training for all staff, fostering staff buy-in, continued guidance from Process Coaches, and having the support of program administrators to make the Pyramid Model a priority.
- ⦿ To continue moving forward, program personnel most often identified Pyramid Model practices training (i.e., Modules 1, 2, and 3), guidance for using data, and additional statewide professional development opportunities that support implementation (i.e., PTR-YC, TPOT, PBC) as their greatest needs. Process Coaches also believe that support for scaling-up internal coach capacity, including TPOT processes, are a priority.
- ⦿ To continue building their skills for effectively supporting preschool programs, Process Coaches indicated their interest in learning more about supporting programs to use data for decision-making, supporting instructional leaders (internal coaches) with fidelity approaches and measures, and building implementation plans based on the principles of implementation science.

## SUMMARY

The Illinois PDG-E Pyramid Model Pilot initiative reached 26 preschool programs over the past 18 months, with most programs beginning professional development activities in spring 2018. The Pyramid Model Consortium offered a series of high-quality statewide and local training events in Pyramid Model practices (Modules 1, 2, and 3), fidelity measures (i.e., TPOT), and other topics essential for program-wide implementation (i.e., PBC, PTR-YC, etc.).

As of fall 2018, Process Coaches had begun providing regular support and guidance to the PDG-E program Leadership Teams, as documented throughout the project. PMC and state leaders – GOECD and ISBE – also guided and supported Process Coaches through monthly virtual meetings/calls, and annual onsite meetings. By all accounts, Process Coaches were thoroughly supported in their roles by state leaders and

PMC, and were clear on the expectations for the programs they supported, as well as their own part in the project. For some, that clarity was established as the project evolved.

The aim of the initiative was to promote and support healthy social emotional growth for preschool children, and to enhance and expand the quality of preschool education in high-need communities. The Pyramid Model was selected as the evidence-based practice to deliver that vision. As discussed throughout the full report, findings suggest that many program staff have gained new skills, and are making improvements in program-wide practices and classroom strategies that align with the Pyramid Model framework.

In terms of progress measures toward program-wide implementation, “baseline” results on the EC-BOQ suggest that the group of programs as a whole made a strong start, with all of the critical elements as rated on the self-assessment at least “Partially in Place”. And, data from a subset of programs with EC-BOQ data from at least two points in time suggest progress had been made across all but one of the critical elements over the time span (average span of 12 months). Substantial progress was noted in the areas of *Program-wide Expectations, Staff Buy-in, and Family Engagement*. The area that decreased slightly for this group was *Procedures for Responding to Challenging Behavior*.

With respect to fidelity of implementation in the classroom, TPOT results for a sample of teachers suggest that on average, teachers are nearing fidelity in many of the key practice areas. And, for a small subset of teachers for whom data were available from two TPOTs over time, progress has been observed in some of the most challenging areas generally – direct teaching of social emotional and problem-solving strategies. While these findings are promising, additional classroom level data will be important going forward to fully appreciate fidelity to the model, and to assess progress over time.

Leadership Team members, who represent staff across multiple roles, have noted that these program- and classroom-level changes have translated into tangible benefits for children. Specifically, these benefits include improved social emotional competencies, and greater cognitive and academic progress, including early literacy. Additionally, some have noted that rates of suspension and expulsion have decreased within their programs. Benefits for families have also been observed, in the form of stronger relationships between family and practitioner, and enhanced skills among family members for supporting their children in social emotional development.

The evaluation findings from the Pyramid Model Pilot point to some considerations for state-level project leaders (GOECD, ISBE, PMC) as they move forward in supporting the framework within these programs, and statewide. These points are based on a collective summary of the input from Leadership Team members and Process Coaches across the multiple data sources.

- ◎ **Access to ongoing professional development opportunities:** One of the key themes woven throughout the feedback was the need for training (and re-training) opportunities for *all staff*, especially in response to staff-turnover. This would include Pyramid Model practices training (Modules 1, 2, and 3), both in person and via the ePyramid Modules, as well as foundational training in PBC, PTR-YC, TPOT, and other topics to support high-fidelity implementation.

Some challenges related to professional development in general that could be examined are the accessibility of statewide events (i.e., location), the need for substitutes to cover staff, and the mix of funding streams across different classrooms in a building (i.e., PDG-E, PFAE, etc.), that can make it difficult to align planning.

- ⦿ **Buy-in from administrators and staff:** To move forward most successfully, Leadership Teams and other staff need the ongoing support and buy-in of their building and district administrators. Building training opportunities into professional development days, professional learning communities (PLCs), and other established forums were offered as suggestions both to help set the priority, and to make the most effective use of time.

Staff buy-in is also essential, which some suggest will be further bolstered by ongoing training, as well as by providing information about the potential benefits of using the Pyramid Model. In addition to sharing existing research, state leaders may want to consider forums for Illinois preschool programs to share their success stories with their colleagues, to continue to generate enthusiasm.

- ⦿ **Continued support for Leadership Teams:** Leadership Team members and Process Coaches recognize that Pyramid Model implementation takes time. With this in mind, continued and sustained support for Leadership Teams for high-quality implementation and fidelity to the model from Process Coaches, including continuing to build the capacity of instructional leaders for internal coaching and processes for using the TPOT with teaching staff, will be essential.
- ⦿ **Continued support for Process Coaches:** Process Coaches also identified several areas of interest for their own professional development as they continue this work. Namely, Process Coaches would benefit from strengthening their skills and strategies for assisting teams in processing and using their own data for program improvement, supporting instructional leaders, and building implementation plans solidly rooted in principles of implementation science. Going forward, as new Process Coaches come on board, the team may benefit from early review of the Leadership Team Implementation Manual<sup>3</sup> as a group, and a brief set of general guidelines around Process Coaches' roles and expectations.

Based on the pilot evaluation to date, findings suggest that the foundation for Pyramid Model implementation has been well-established in many of these Illinois preschool programs. On the whole, program staff are truly excited about the possibilities for the children in their care, as well as for their families. Going forward, future evaluation efforts could be enhanced through more detailed program participation data (i.e., professional development registration data by program, professional development needs by program), additional classroom-level fidelity data (i.e., TPOT), continued sharing of formative data with stakeholders throughout the project, and the collection and analysis of child performance and outcome data to begin to establish the impact of the initiative.

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<sup>3</sup> Leadership Team Implementation Manual: Resources - Tools - Records, Lise Fox, Denise Perez Binder, Mary Louise Hemmeter, Erin E. Barton, and Christopher Vatland (2018).



# Illinois PDG-E and the Pyramid Model Pilot

## INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the **Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD)**, in partnership with the **Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)**, received supplemental federal funding as part of the **Preschool Development Grant - Expansion (PDG-E)**. Illinois is promoting and supporting healthy social emotional growth for all children ages birth to five, and working to enhance and expand the quality of preschool education in high-need communities; PDG-E is specifically focused on four-year-old children.

To help achieve these goals the state selected the **Pyramid Model**<sup>4</sup>, a tiered intervention framework for supporting social emotional competence in infants and young children, as its evidence-based approach (see box at right).

Illinois contracted with the **Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC)** to collaborate on project implementation. PMC is a non-profit organization that promotes high fidelity use of the Pyramid Model through in-person professional development sessions, online training (“ePyramid Modules”), program coach supports and guidance, and access to resources to support implementation efforts.

GOECD and ISBE are also currently engaged with PMC on the expansion of Pyramid Model adoption more broadly throughout the state, to programs such as *Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE)* and *Head Start/Early Head Start*, as well as ongoing collaboration with the Illinois Pyramid Model Statewide Leadership Team.

## PROJECT DESIGN

### Participating Programs

Twenty-eight preschool programs comprise the Illinois PDG-E grantees. Among these, **26 programs** self-selected to participate in the **Pyramid Model Pilot**. Twenty-two programs joined in spring 2018, while four others joined beginning in spring 2019. The participating programs are listed in **Table 1** on the following page.


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

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

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

**Second Level:** *Targeted emotional supports* - intentional strategies for teaching children essential social-emotional skills, such as cooperation, sharing, and regulating emotions.

**Top of the Pyramid:** *Intensive intervention* - individualized plans for addressing severe and persistent challenging behavior.



Adapted from: The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI)

<sup>4</sup> Information about the Pyramid Model is available through the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI).

**Table 1. PDG-E Pyramid Model Pilot Programs**

SPRING 2018 Start-up (n=22)	
Addison School Dist. 4	Kid's Hope United Northern Reg
Aurora East USD 131	Lansing SD 158
Cahokia CUSD 187	Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood
Children's Ctr. Cicero-Ber	McLean County USD 5
Children's Home and Aid Society	Metropolitan Family Services
CUSD 300	North Chicago SD 187
Decatur SD 61	Rock Island ROE
Dolton SD 148	Rockford School Dist. 205
Dolton SD 149	SD U-46
Freeburg CCSD 70	Valley View CUSD 365U
Harvey SD 152	West Chicago ESD 33
SPRING 2019 Start-up (n=4)	
Aurora West USD 129	Collinsville C U Sch. Dist. 10
Berwyn South SD 100	Mount Vernon SD 80

### Leadership Teams, Professional Development, and Ongoing Supports

Each participating PDG-E program began by identifying a **Leadership Team** to guide Pyramid Model implementation. Ideally, the teams are comprised of an Early Childhood Program Director, teaching staff, behavior specialists, an instructional leader<sup>5</sup>, family educators, and other staff. Each program also receives ongoing, individualized support from a state-level **Pyramid Model Process Coach** to guide program-wide planning and fidelity to the model. There are currently 18 Process Coaches supporting these 26 programs.

The Leadership Teams began their professional development with a two-day *Leadership Launch* facilitated by the Pyramid Model Consortium. These events are designed to teach the basics of the Pyramid Model, and to launch team collaboration and planning based on the Early Childhood Benchmarks of Quality (EC-BOQ)<sup>6</sup> for program-wide implementation. Beyond these initial events, programs had access to several methods for training their staff in essential Pyramid Model practices (Modules 1, 2, and 3). These methods included participation in statewide events co-facilitated by PMC and Process Coaches, access to the online ePyramid Modules for self-paced learning, and on-site training.

PMC also offered a series of statewide professional development events to Leadership Teams and other program personnel to further prepare them for implementing the Pyramid Model with fidelity. For example, *Practice Based Coaching (PBC)* is a two-day event for instructional leaders, team members, and other staff to learn about creating shared goals and action plans, conducting focused observation, and providing feedback to practitioners to support Pyramid Model implementation. The *Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)*<sup>7</sup> *Reliability Training* is a two-day event designed to prepare instructional leaders and other personnel who support teachers for administering the TPOT, a measure of implementation fidelity at the practitioner level. The statewide professional development events are shown in **Table 2**.

<sup>5</sup> PDG-E programs typically have an instructional leader acting as the Pyramid Model internal coach.

<sup>6</sup> Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality, version 2.0, Lise Fox, Mary Louise Hemmeter, Susan Jack, and Denise Perez Binder (2017).

<sup>7</sup> Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) for Preschool Classrooms, Lise Fox, Mary Louise Hemmeter, and Patricia Snyder (2010).

**Table 2. Statewide Pyramid Model Professional Development Events  
(May 2018 - December 2019)**

Dates	Event	Description
<b>SPRING 2018</b>		
Two events May 10-11 May 15-16	<b>Leadership Launch</b>	Two-day kick-off event for the original 22 Pyramid Model Leadership Teams. Designed for teams to learn about Pyramid Model basics including the Early Childhood PBS Benchmarks of Quality (EC-BOQ) for program-wide implementation, and to begin team collaboration and planning.
June 25-26	<b>Practice Based Coaching (PBC)</b>	A two-day event for instructional leaders, team members, and Process Coaches to learn about creating shared goals and action plans, conducting focused observation, and providing feedback to practitioners to support Pyramid Model implementation.
<b>FALL 2018</b>		
Sept. 10-11	<b>Practice Based Coaching (PBC)</b>	<i>As described above.</i>
Oct. 16	<b>Positive Solutions for Families</b>	A train-the-trainer session designed to help individuals who facilitate parent classes/skill building groups to promote young children’s social and emotional skills, understand their problem behavior, and use positive approaches to teach children appropriate behavior.
Two events Nov. 8 Nov. 9	<b>Prevent, Teach, Reinforce - Young Children (PTR-YC)</b>	A full-day training session in “top of the pyramid” practices, including understanding functions of behavior in developing behavior plans, and using data to track behaviors and inform decision-making. Designed for behavior specialists and others who create behavior support plans.
Two events Nov. 8 Nov. 9	<b>Targeted Strategies for Successful Inclusion</b>	This training provides classroom teams (teachers and assistants) as well as supervisors, behavior specialists and other special education team members with training in successful inclusion strategies.
Nov 14-15	<b>TPOT Reliability Training</b>	A two-day training designed to prepare instructional leaders and other personnel who support teachers for administering the Teacher Pyramid Observation Tool within their programs. TPOT is a measure of implementation fidelity at the practitioner level.
Two events Dec. 4 Dec. 5	<b>Culturally Responsive Practices to Reduce Implicit Bias</b>	A full-day training for Leadership Team members and other staff focused on the importance of culturally responsive practices in enhancing outcomes for all children, especially those from diverse backgrounds. Participants are offered ideas on how to use the values of the family/community to inform teaching and learning through the lens of the Pyramid Model.
<b>WINTER / SPRING 2019</b>		
Jan 16-17	<b>TPOT Reliability Training</b>	<i>As described above.</i>
March 4-5	<b>Practice Based Coaching (PBC)</b>	<i>As described above.</i>
Three events April 2, 5, 12	<b>Leadership Implementation Academy</b>	Full-day leadership event intended for all members of the Leadership Team to support ongoing implementation.
<b>FALL 2019</b>		
Oct. 16	<b>Linking Early Literacy and Social Emotional Development</b>	A full-day training for teachers devoted to connecting social emotional development with early literacy, including ideas for supporting infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. A variety of classroom strategies are shared with teachers.
Oct. 21-22	<b>Practice Based Coaching (PBC)</b>	<i>As described above.</i>

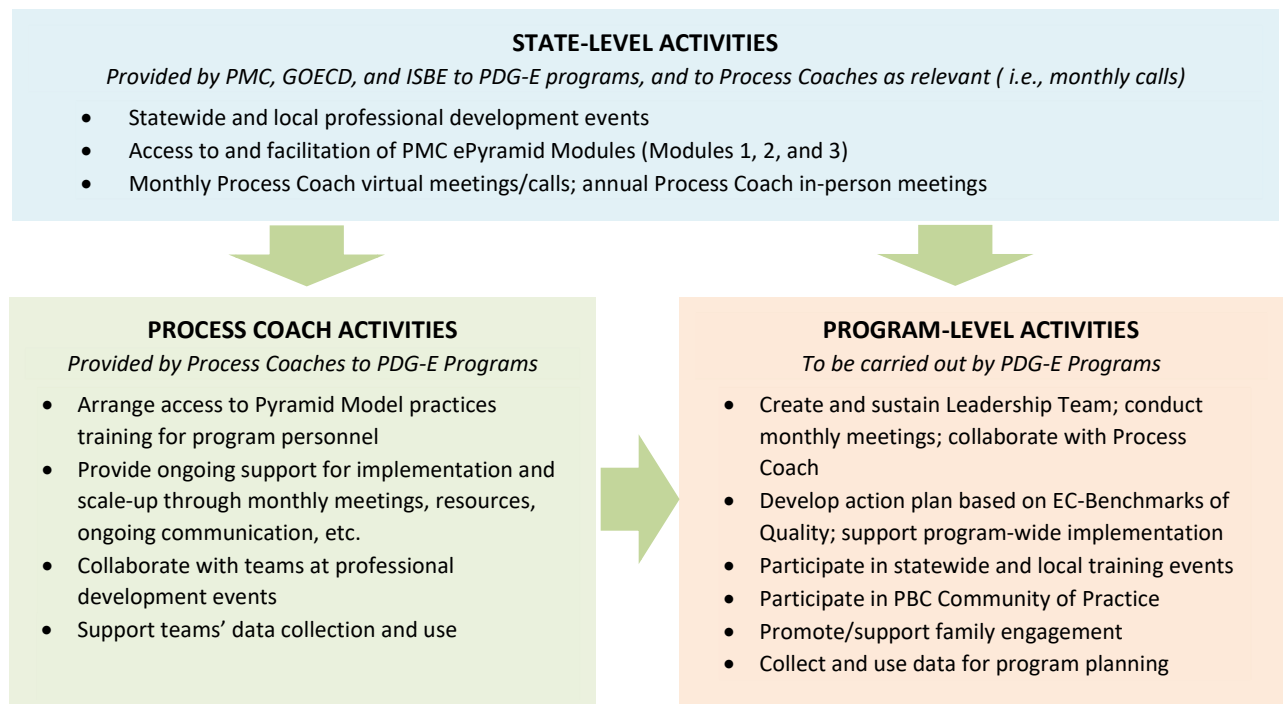
Dates	Event	Description
Oct. 22-23	<b>Practice Based Coaching in a Group</b>	A one and a half-day event designed for instructional leaders, team members, and others to learn about cost- and time-effective ways to deliver Practice Based Coaching in a group setting.
Nov 7-8 <i>(Rescheduled for Jan. 2020)</i>	<b>Behavior Incident Report System (BIRS)</b>	A two-day training to provide early education and care programs a system to collect and analyze behavior incidents in their programs.
Dec 3-4	<b>TPOT Reliability Training</b>	<i>As described above.</i>
Dec 5	<b>TPOT Reliability Training Booster</b>	A one-day refresher designed to support instructional leaders and other personnel who support teachers for administering the Teacher Pyramid Observation Tool within their programs.

Note: Aside from the events designed specifically for the PDG-E Leadership Teams, events were open to other programs beyond the PDG-E grantees working toward Pyramid Model implementation (i.e., Preschool for All Expansion, PFAE; Head Start / Early Head Start).

To ensure that Process Coaches were fully supported in their roles, Pyramid Model Consortium conducted monthly video-conference calls with Illinois state leaders from GOECD and ISBE, and the Process Coaches, to provide guidance, discuss progress, address Process Coaches’ questions, and discuss evaluation requirements. The Process Coaches are also part of the state’s Pyramid Model Master Cadre of 24 individuals trained to support programs. As part of the Master Cadre, Process Coaches also had the opportunity for a second virtual meeting each month with PMC and state leaders around Pyramid Model implementation resources and supports. Additionally, PMC offered a monthly Practice Based Coaching Community of Practice (PBC COP) for instructional leaders, those who provide *internal* coaching to teaching staff, to come together virtually to discuss successes and challenges to foster fidelity to the PBC model.

Beyond the virtual meetings, the Illinois team including GOECD, ISBE, PMC, and the Process Coaches also came together two times annually for in-person meetings. **Figure 1** below shows the relationship between the state-level, Process Coach, and program-level activities that comprised the PDG-E Pyramid Model Pilot.

**Figure 1. Illinois PDG-E Pyramid Model Pilot Activities**



# Pyramid Model Pilot Evaluation

Since spring 2018, the PDG-E Pyramid Model Pilot sites have been taking part in a statewide evaluation to assess the implementation of the work throughout the grant period; outcomes for programs, children, and families; and program needs going forward to scale-up and sustain the work. The Pyramid Model Consortium contracted with Evaluation Partners LLC<sup>8</sup>, an independent evaluation and technical assistance firm, to carry out this work on behalf of GOECD and ISBE. The evaluation was guided by a series of key questions across two broad categories: *Implementation and Outcomes*, and *Facilitating Factors and Sustainability*. The findings in this report are organized around these categories and the key questions.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

### Implementation and Outcomes

1. To what extent were the professional development events and Process Coaching supports found to be effective, relevant, and useful?
2. How effective was the project in increasing participants' knowledge and skills for working with children and families to support social emotional development?
3. To what extent are Pyramid Model strategies being implemented to fidelity (i.e., program-level, classroom-level). Has there been progress over time?
4. In what ways are participating programs implementing Pyramid Model strategies?
5. To what extent have benefits been observed for participating children and their families?

### Facilitating Factors and Sustainability

6. What have been the facilitating factors associated with Pyramid Model implementation?
7. What do programs need most to move forward to ensure continued growth and sustainability?

## EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation questions were addressed through the data collection activities described below. Response rates are also provided. The findings and recommendations in this report were derived from these sources.

### Professional Development Feedback Forms

Event Feedback Forms were designed to gather feedback from participants following each statewide professional development event. The topics included participant progress on the relevant learning objectives, and the quality and usefulness of each event. Feedback was collected for the spring 2018 events using paper forms; beginning in fall 2019, feedback was collected using online surveys. This shift allowed for timely analysis and data sharing with project leaders. To this end, summary results from each event were shared with PMC throughout the project for review by event facilitators, GOECD, and ISBE. The average feedback response rate across the 13 face-to-face events for which data were available for this report was 62%.

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<sup>8</sup> The Pyramid Model Consortium played a role in several aspects of the evaluation, including distribution of the initial Pyramid Model Leadership Team Survey conducted in winter 2018/19, and communication with Process Coaches about data collection requirements and data entry processes (i.e., Process Coach Logs, TPOTs, EC-BOQs) throughout the project. All other activities were conducted by Evaluation Partners, including the independent analysis of all data and preparation of this report.

### **Process Coach Logs**

An online Process Coach Log was designed for Process Coaches to document the supports they provided to their PDG-E programs, including Pyramid Model practices training sessions. For each substantive contact that Process Coaches made with their programs, the log was designed to capture details such as the amount of time spent providing support, who participated (i.e., roles of participants), the specific support activities that were conducted, and planned next steps. The purpose was to document project activities for project leaders and for the evaluation, while also providing Process Coaches with a system for capturing notes about their work and next steps for their own use. A total of 336 support contacts were logged by the Process Coaches across 25 of the 26 programs (96% of programs).

### **Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality (EC-BOQ)**

The EC-BOQ is used by program Leadership Teams, often in coordination with Process Coaches, to assess program-wide Pyramid Model implementation. Ideally, the information is used for action plan development at the program level, and revisited by the teams as needed. The Illinois PDG-E 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. All programs were encouraged to complete the self-assessment tool two times annually. EC-BOQ results were submitted to the evaluation for 24 of the 26 programs (92% program response rate), with multiple EC-BOQs submitted for 14 programs (54% of programs).

### **Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)**

The TPOT is a measure of Pyramid Model implementation fidelity in the classroom. It consists of a two-hour classroom observation by a TPOT reliable rater and a subsequent interview with the teacher. TPOT data were requested from all programs via Process Coaches. De-identified results (i.e., without identification of program or teacher) were submitted as part of the statewide evaluation for 54 teachers across many of the PDG-E programs.

### **Pyramid Model Leadership Team Surveys**

Two online Leadership Team Surveys were designed and distributed over the course of the project. PMC distributed an online survey to each program's Leadership Team in December 2018, approximately seven months after the initiative began. The purpose was to learn about participation in grant activities and early progress toward implementation. All programs completed the survey (one per program), for a 100% response rate. A summary report was produced from the results in February 2019 and shared with project leaders and Process Coaches. Process Coaches were encouraged to share and discuss the summary findings with their Leadership Teams.

A second Leadership Team Survey was distributed by Evaluation Partners in November 2019. The survey addressed many of the same topics, as well as perceived benefits of the project and ideas for next steps and sustainability. The survey was designed for completion by all Leadership Team members. Survey responses were received from 98 individuals across 23 of the 26 PDG-E programs. This represents an 88% program response rate, and an approximate 75% team member response rate (based on an estimated 130 team members).

### **Process Coach Survey**

An online survey was designed to gather feedback from Process Coaches about project communication and supports, their own professional development needs, perceptions of programs' progress, and ideas about how best to support programs going forward. Fourteen of the 18 coaches completed the survey for a 78% response rate.

# Project Participation

## STATEWIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Illinois PDG-E programs had an array of professional development opportunities available to them to support Pyramid Model implementation. **Table 3** shows the number of personnel who attended each event offered by PMC. It is important to note that as Illinois strives to implement the Pyramid Model across the state, these events were also open to other programs and personnel (beyond PDG-E) working toward similar goals. As such, the participation numbers available from these events reflect a broader group of personnel than those affiliated with the 26 PDG-E programs. For example, events from Spring 2018 through Spring 2019 were primarily targeted toward PDG-E programs as they began implementation. Beginning in Fall 2019, as the Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE) grantees and others began Pyramid Model efforts, those programs became the primary audience for some of the professional development topics that had already been offered to PDG-E. This shift can be seen in Table 3, in the smaller proportion of PDG-E personnel represented at more recent professional development events.

For all events, the percentage of PDG-E participants among the total attendees is estimated as the *percent of feedback responses that were received* specifically from PDG-E personnel, as shown in the last column.

**Table 3. Statewide Professional Development Event Participation**

Event	Attendees	Feedback Responses	Percent of Feedback Responses
<b>Spring 2018</b>			
Leadership Launch	98	97	100% PDG-E
Practice Based Coaching (PBC)	27	21	24% PDG-E
<b>Fall 2018</b>			
Practice Based Coaching (PBC)	20	*	*
Positive Solutions for Families	33	19	90% PDG-E
Prevent, Teach, Reinforce - Young Children (PTR-YC)	59	31	90% PDG-E
Targeted Strategies for Successful Inclusion of Children with Disabilities	70	37	43% PDG-E
TPOT Reliability Training	41	17	88% PDG-E
Culturally Responsive Practices to Reduce Implicit Bias, Disproportionality, Suspension and Expulsion	79	64	80% PDG-E
<b>Winter / Spring 2019</b>			
TPOT Reliability Training	23	15	53% PDG-E
Practice Based Coaching (PBC)	31	20	80% PDG-E
Leadership Academy	116	53	100% PDG-E
<b>Fall 2019</b>			
Linking Early Literacy and Social Emotional Development	25	12	50% PFAE, 33% Head Start/Early HS, 17% PDG-E
Practice Based Coaching (PBC)	20	10	30% KIDS , 20% PFAE, 10% Head Start/Early HS, 10% PDG-E
Practice Based Coaching in a Group	15	10	40% KIDS, 20% PFAE, 10% Head Start/Early HS, 10% PDG-E
TPOT Reliability Training	28	16	81% PFAE/PFA, 13% PDG-E, 6% Head Start/Early HS
TPOT Reliability Training Booster	15	14	43% PDG-E, 36% PFAE

\*Feedback was not collected.

## PROGRAM SUPPORT FROM PROCESS COACHES

Each PDG-E program was provided with ongoing support from a Process Coach, an essential aspect of the Pyramid Model Pilot and a key feature of program-wide implementation as guided by the Pyramid Model Consortium. As noted, the 18 Process Coaches devoted to PDG-E programs are part of the state’s Master Cadre of 24 individuals trained in Pyramid Model practices, who collectively play a larger role in statewide support for the framework across birth-5 settings. The expectations for Process Coaches in their provision of support to PDG-E programs included the following:

- Supporting Leadership Teams by facilitating monthly in-person meetings, helping to establish meeting processes, and addressing other program support needs identified by the teams.
- Reviewing and discussing the EC-BOQ with their Leadership Teams; helping to facilitate the creation of action plans for program-wide implementation based on EC-BOQ results.
- Attending Leadership Academies with their teams, and facilitating access to or providing training in Pyramid Model practices (Modules 1, 2, and 3).
- Providing information about statewide professional development opportunities and supporting teams in identifying attendees for each event; providing other Pyramid Model resources as needed.
- Supporting data collection and use for program planning (e.g., EC-BOQ, TPOT, etc.).
- Supporting the instructional leader at each program (who served as the internal coach).

The Process Coach Log captured the range of supports that Process Coaches documented over the course of the project, in keeping with these expectations. As noted, the log was intended both as a record-keeping system for the Process Coaches, as well as a data collection tool for project leaders and for the evaluation.

A summary of the frequency and types of contacts are provided in **Table 4**. As shown, 25 of the 26 programs had support documented. The number of contacts that Process Coaches reported for each program varied widely. For programs that started up in spring 2018, documentation began in August 2018. Over the course of the 2018-19 school year, plus the fall term of the 2019-20 school year, documented contacts for each of these programs ranged from as few as 3 to as many as 36. For the additional programs that started up in spring 2019, 3-4 contacts per program had been logged by the time of this report.

**Table 4. Summary of Process Coach Log Contacts**

Contact Details	Spring 2018 Start-up	Spring 2019 Start-up
Number of programs	22	4
Number / percent of programs with documented coaching contacts	21 / 95%	4 / 100%
Timeframe of log entries	August 2018 – December 2019	April 2019 – December 2019
Range of Process Coaching contacts documented per program	3 - 36 contacts	3 - 4 contacts
Average number of contacts per program	15	4
Range of duration of each contact (Longer contacts generally associated with training sessions.)	<1 hour to 9 hours	
Average duration of each contact	3 hours	
Format of contact	Site visit - 65% Phone call - 15% Training event with team - 9% Email - 4% Virtual meeting - 3%	



During nearly half of their contacts with PDG-E programs, Process Coaches worked with:

- Leadership Teams (53% of contacts)
- Internal Coaches (as noted, typically the instructional leaders) (50% of contacts)
- Program Administrators (48% of contacts)

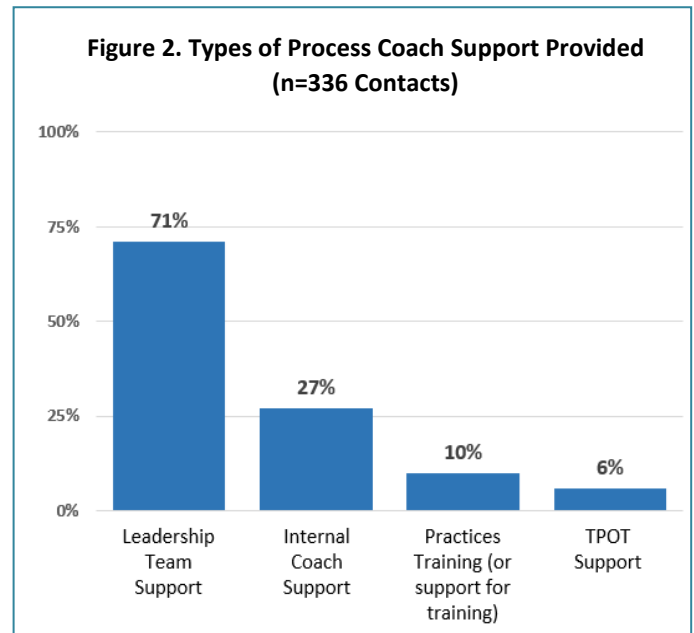
Coaches also frequently worked with:

- Classroom Teachers (30% of contacts)
- Parent Educators (26% of contacts)

Other contacts included work with behavior specialists, paraprofessionals, social workers, mental health coordinators, and other staff.

**Figure 2** shows the major categories of support that Process Coaches provided to their programs<sup>9</sup>. The majority of contacts focused on supporting Leadership Teams (71%), followed by support for internal coaches (27%).

Additionally, 10% of contacts were related to supporting or providing Pyramid Model practices training, while 6% were related to TPOTs – conducting, scoring, reviewing results, etc.



## PYRAMID MODEL PRACTICES TRAINING

Staff training in Pyramid Model practices (i.e., Modules 1, 2, and 3) is an important foundational aspect of program-wide implementation. In terms of Process Coaches' delivery of training, a few details were derived from the Process Coach logs:

- Module 1 training was provided to 282 individuals across seven of the PDG-E programs. The training times ranged from 3 hours to 8 hours.
- Module 2 training was provided to 101 individuals across 3 programs. Training times ranged from 4 to 6 hours.
- Module 3 training had begun with at least one program.

PDG-E programs also had access to online training using the Pyramid Model Consortium's ePyramid Modules, on request. At the time of this report, PMC data suggest that 14 programs requested access to the ePyramid Modules. A total of 182 access codes had been created across these programs since August 2018, and 151 of those codes have since been activated.

Finally, according to Leadership Team Survey data from 98 individuals, 61% of respondents across 17 different PDG-E programs had used the online e-Pyramid Modules by the time of the survey.

<sup>9</sup> The total percentage across the types of support is greater than 100%, as Process Coaches were able to indicate more than one type of support per contact.

# Findings: Implementation and Outcomes

## Q1. To what extent were the professional development events and Process Coaching supports found to be effective, relevant, and useful for participants?

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

**FINDING:** Participants of professional development events reported having gained knowledge and skills across the array of topics offered throughout the grant, including: Leadership Team processes, Practice Based Coaching, TPOT, Positive Solutions for Families, PTR-YC (“top of the Pyramid” practices), Strategies for Inclusion, Culturally Responsive Practices, and other topics to support Pyramid Model implementation.

This section contains results across selected statewide events which are representative of the feedback overall, and which specifically address event effectiveness, relevance, and usefulness. It is important to reiterate that professional development participants included personnel from PDG-E programs as well as staff from other programs engaged in Pyramid Model implementation. Therefore, this section includes feedback from a group more broad than the 26 participating programs. Data displays are focused on the events with the greatest proportion PDG-E participation.

To assess effectiveness, learning objectives were established by the facilitators of each event; participants then indicated whether they met the learning objective using a four-point agreement scale. **Table 5** below shows selected events and the percentage of participants responding “agree” or “strongly agree” that the learning objectives were met.

As shown, the vast majority of respondents typically reported that the events were effective along these measures. The overall means for each event ranged from 89% to 100% agreement, with *Culturally Responsive Practices to Reduce Implicit Bias* and *Practice Based Coaching* receiving the highest percentages of agreement (100% and 98% respectively).

**Table 5. Effectiveness of Professional Development Events:  
Percent Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Learning Objectives**

Professional Development Events and Learning Objectives	Agree / Strongly Agree
<b>Leadership Launch</b> <i>Spring 2018 (n=97, 100% from PDG-E Programs)</i>	<b>MEAN</b> <b>89%</b>
I have a better understanding of the elements of program-wide adoption of the Pyramid Model.	91%
I have a better understanding of the Benchmarks of Quality tool.	96%
I have a better understanding of how my program will develop an implementation plan based on the BOQ.	82%
I have a better understanding of how our Leadership Team will function to implement the Pyramid Model.	87%
<b>Positive Solutions for Families</b> <i>Spring 2018 (n=19, 90% from PDG-E Programs)</i>	<b>MEAN</b> <b>93%</b>
I understand the purpose and intent of Positive Solutions for Families.	100%
I have become familiar with the Positive Solutions content, materials, strategies, and resources.	100%
I completed an action plan to determine next steps.	79%

Professional Development Events and Learning Objectives	Agree / Strongly Agree
<b>Prevent, Teach, Reinforce - Young Children (PTR-YC)</b> <i>Fall 2018 (n=31, 90% from PDG-E Programs)</i>	<b>MEAN</b> <b>93%</b>
I understand the structure and purpose of the PTR-YC model.	100%
I am familiar with the ways in which PTR-YC can enhance PBS and PBIS efforts.	97%
I know how to use data and progress monitoring in the design of an intervention plan.	81%
<b>Targeted Solutions for Successful Inclusion of Children with Disabilities</b> <i>Fall 2018 (n=37, 43% from PDG-E Programs)</i>	<b>MEAN</b> <b>92%</b>
I have a greater understanding of why inclusion is important.	92%
I am familiar with the foundations of a high quality early childhood setting.	95%
I know how to build individualized supports into classroom activities / routines to support inclusion.	89%
<b>Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) Reliability</b> <i>Fall 2018 (n=17, 88% from PDG-E Programs)</i>	<b>MEAN</b> <b>93%</b>
I have a better understanding of how to prepare to administer a TPOT.	94%
I have a better understanding of how to complete the TPOT observation.	94%
I have a better understanding of how to complete the TPOT interview.	88%
I have a better understanding of how to score the TPOT assessment.	94%
<b>Culturally Responsive Practices to Reduce Implicit Bias</b> <i>Fall 2018 (n=64, 80% from PDG-E Programs)</i>	<b>MEAN</b> <b>100%</b>
I have a deeper understanding of current inequities in education, specifically around suspension and expulsions.	100%
I learned strategies to avoid engaging in color blind practices and to reduce my own implicit bias.	100%
I had an opportunity to identify how microaggressions show up in the workplace and gained strategies to help avoid the pitfalls associated with microaggressions.	100%
<b>Practice Based Coaching (PBC)</b> <i>Spring 2019 (n=20, 80% from PDG-E Programs)</i>	<b>MEAN</b> <b>98%</b>
I am able to identify the key components of Practice Based Coaching.	100%
I can describe the characteristics of collaborative partnerships.	95%
I understand how to create shared goals and prepare action plans for achieving them.	100%
I know how to conduct a focused observation and reflection / feedback based on an action plan.	95%
<b>Leadership Academy</b> <i>Spring 2019 (n=53, 100% from PDG-E Programs)</i>	<b>MEAN</b> <b>93%</b>
I am able to identify the process that guides a successful Leadership Team through Pyramid Model implementation.	93%
I can describe the components of staff buy-in and staff commitment.	94%
I understand the importance of promoting family engagement and I know several activities that could be used.	94%
I can identify several critical elements needed in order to provide professional development experiences and ongoing supports for all classroom staff.	93%
I understand my role in the process of gathering and reviewing data on implementation and using data-based decision making for a program-wide approach.	93%

**FINDING: Participants typically found the statewide events to be relevant and useful to their professional practice. They are also confident that implementing the strategies they learned has the potential to benefit the children in their care.**

Event feedback also addressed the relevance and usefulness of the material presented – most of the items used were those set forth by Illinois as standard feedback items for statewide professional development.

**Table 6** shows the percentage of respondents to agree across the key content sessions from Table 5.

With respect to event relevance generally, *Positive Solutions for Families*, *PTR-YC*, and *Practice Based Coaching* received some of the highest ratings. The ratings for perceived usefulness were very high across all events as shown, with *Positive Solutions* and *PBC* again receiving some of highest ratings.

**Table 6. Participant Ratings of Event Relevance and Usefulness**

Relevance	Positive Solutions	PTR-YC	Successful Inclusion	TPOT	Culturally Responsive Practices	PBC
This professional development aligned to my performance as an educator.	90%	94%	68%	71%	88%	95%
The outcomes for the activities relate to student growth or district improvement.	79%	90%	62%	71%	80%	85%
The activities offered for this event aligned to State-approved standards.	47%	68%	57%	59%	56%	55%
Usefulness	Positive Solutions	PTR-YC	Successful Inclusion	TPOT	Culturally Responsive Practices	PBC
This professional development will impact my professional growth or student growth in regards to content knowledge or skills, or both.	100%	94%	95%	94%	100%	100%
This professional development will impact my social and emotional growth or student social and emotional growth.	100%	97%	95%	88%	97%	100%
The professional development aligned to my district or school improvement plans.	100%	93%	87%	94%	98%	100%
I am confident that I have the resources and human support to implement the ideas and practices presented.	95%	87%	89%	77%	88%	85%
The professional development will lead to improved learning for children.	72%	87%	84%	77%	83%	85%

The feedback received from each event was summarized and shared throughout the project to allow project leaders and facilitators an opportunity for timely review. Collective feedback from each event included many positive comments and some suggestions for future events. Below are some examples of common themes that typically emerge from these events.

- Appreciation for hearing from event facilitators that implementation will take time, and can be paced according to program needs/readiness.
- General enthusiasm for the Pyramid Model content and strategies, and excitement about beginning the process.
- Eagerness for additional professional development opportunities.
- Teams always appreciate opportunities to collaborate and plan together, as much as time allows.
- Participants also typically note the value of coming away with specific strategies and resources to use and to share with others, and often request more of these resources.

## PROCESS COACH SUPPORTS

The Leadership Team Survey conducted in November 2019 was the primary source of feedback about the effectiveness of project supports generally, including the contribution of Process Coaches. To provide additional context for the survey results included below and throughout this report, the 98 survey respondents from 23 different programs included the following:

- 29% were classroom teachers,
- 27% program administrators or coordinators,
- 13% instructional leaders,
- 10% family educators, or others who support parents, and
- 21% represented a mix of paraprofessionals, assistant teachers, social workers, behavior specialists, school psychologists, speech pathologists, and other staff.

**FINDING: Leadership Team members generally found their Process Coach to be knowledgeable in Pyramid Model content and strategies, and effective at providing support to help move implementation forward.**

Survey respondents provided feedback about their work with their Process Coaches along several aspects of knowledge, skills, and effectiveness. A large majority “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with each of the survey statements as shown below.

***Our Process Coach...***

- 95%** - Displayed knowledge of Pyramid Model content and strategies
- 93%** - Displayed professionalism by being timely, responsive, and communicative
- 90%** - Exhibited an understanding of our program’s unique needs and context
- 89%** - Was effective in delivering support to our team

On average, survey respondents indicated that the support and guidance they received from their Process Coach was one of the greatest factors contributing to their progress – 39% indicated that Process Coaches contributed to progress “to a great extent”, and 32% indicated “to a moderate extent”. Additional information about facilitating factors is provided in a later section of this report.

**Q2. How effective was the project in increasing participants’ knowledge and skills for working with children and families to support social emotional development?**

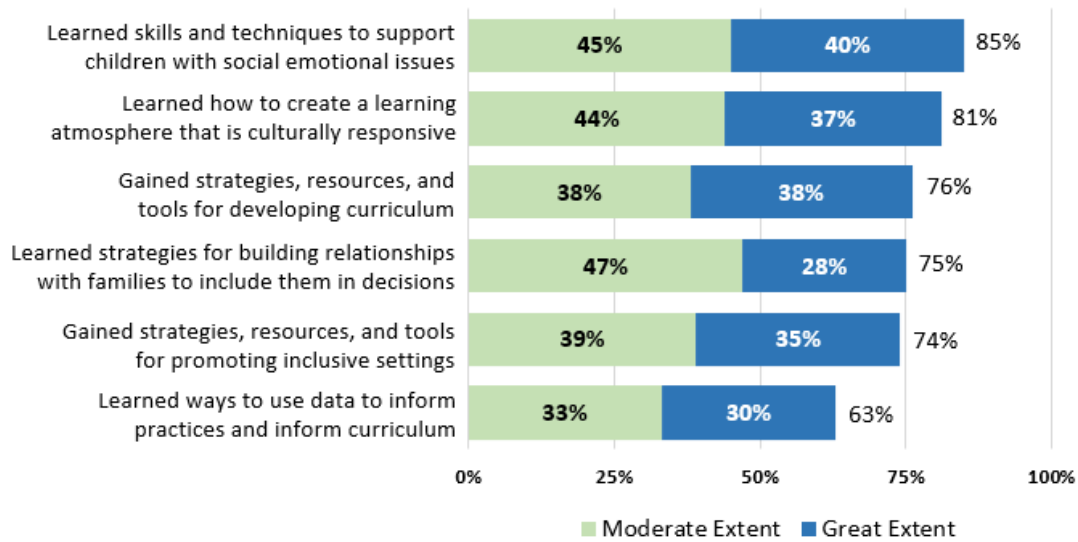
**FINDING: Program personnel report having gained skills and techniques for supporting children’s social emotional development, creating learning environments that are culturally responsive and that address equity, promoting inclusive settings, and building stronger relationships with families, among other skills.**

As shown in **Figure 3**, a large majority of survey respondents reported having gained new skills to support Pyramid Model implementation since the initiative began. With the exception of “using data to inform practices”, three-quarters or more of respondents indicated having gained new skills in all areas addressed by this survey question.

The greatest gains were related to techniques for supporting children with social emotional issues (85% of respondents), followed by creating a learning atmosphere that is culturally responsive to children and families that addresses equity (81%).

Three in four respondents also reported having gained skills for developing curriculum (76%), promoting inclusive settings for children with disabilities (74%), and building relationships with families for decision making (75%). And, nearly two-thirds (63%) have learned about ways to use data to inform their professional practice.

**Figure 3. Skills Gained by Program Personnel:  
Survey Respondents Reporting “Moderate” or “Great Extent”  
(n=98)**



### Q3. To what extent are Pyramid Model strategies being implemented to fidelity? Has there been progress over time?

#### PROGRAM-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION

Results on the Early Childhood Benchmarks of Quality allow a view into the status of program-wide implementation across the PDG-E programs. The EC-BOQ v2.0 consists of 41 benchmarks of high-quality implementation of the Pyramid Model framework across seven critical elements (the critical elements are shown in **Figure 4**, and the full list of indicators is provided in the **Appendix**). Each benchmark is rated on a scale of 0-2, where 0 = not in place, 1 = partially in place, and 2 = in place.

Leadership Teams were guided by PMC to use the EC-BOQ self-assessment tool early in the project as a means of reviewing and discussing the elements that are critical to program-wide implementation, and also to identify the areas in which they would focus their program planning (i.e., for implementation/action plan development). As a general guideline, teams were encouraged to use the EC-BOQ two times annually.

**FINDING: Early EC-BOQ results suggest that the PDG-E programs began the project strong, with Leadership Teams noting all critical elements at least “partially in place”. Two of the strongest elements noted at the outset were *procedures for responding to challenging behavior, and establishing a leadership team.***

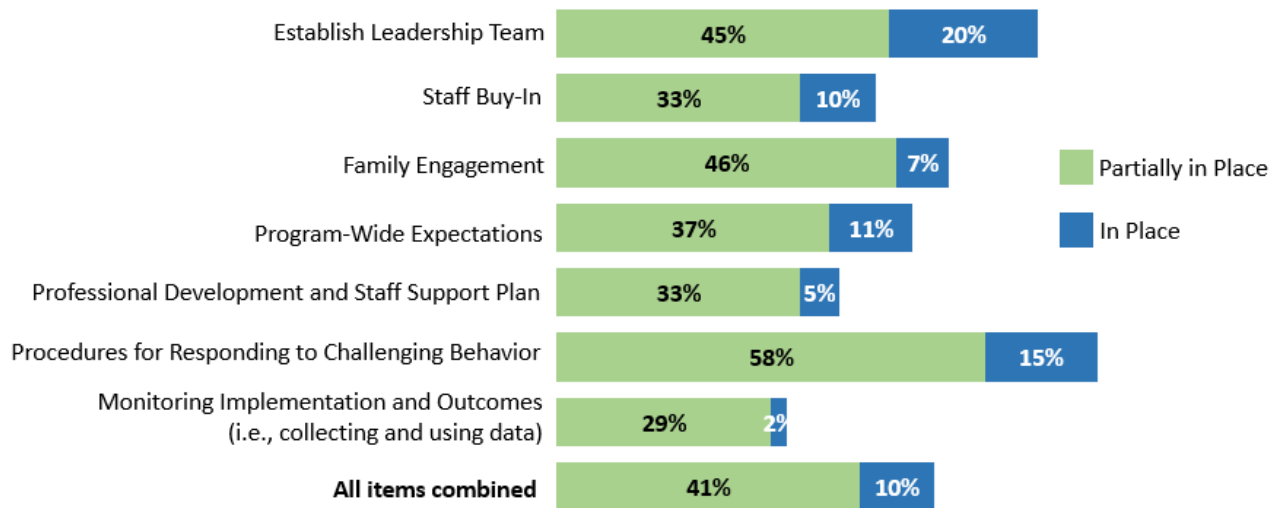
**Figure 4** on the following page shows the average ratings for each critical element across all programs combined – the percentages represent the average rating across all benchmarks that comprise each element. EC-BOQ results were submitted for 24 of the PDG-E programs. Among the seven critical elements, programs began their first year of implementation strongest in the following areas:

- ⦿ Procedures for responding to challenging behavior
- ⦿ Establishing a leadership team
- ⦿ Family engagement

The greatest areas for growth included:

- ⦿ Collecting and using data (critical element labeled “monitoring implementation and outcomes”)
- ⦿ Creating professional development and staff support plans
- ⦿ Staff buy-in

**Figure 4. “First” EC-BOQ Ratings across the Seven Critical Elements (n=24 PDG-E Programs)**



**FINDING: EC-BOQ results from a sample of PDG-E programs with at least two ratings over time suggest substantial progress toward program-wide implementation. The greatest areas of growth were noted in *establishing program-wide expectations, staff-buy in, and family engagement.***

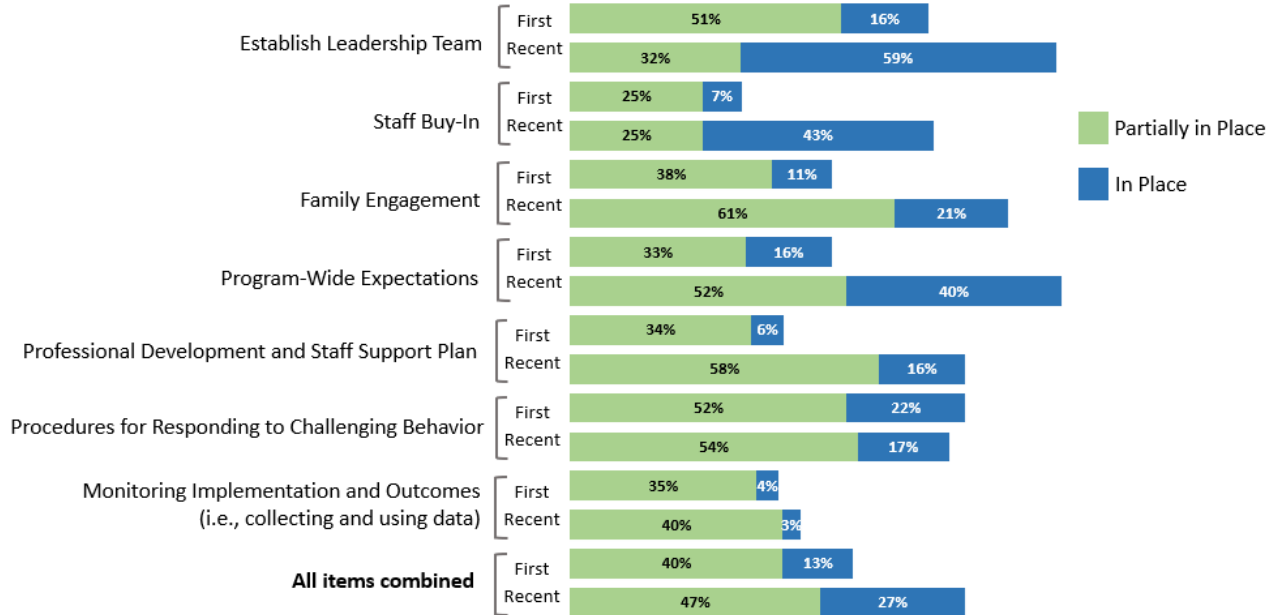
**Figure 5** on the following page shows the average ratings for 14 PDG-E programs for which multiple EC-BOQ results over time were submitted for the evaluation. The time span between the first and most recent ratings ranged from 3 to 17 months, though most ratings were taken 7 months apart or more. The average time span was 12 months.

As shown, on average, this group of programs reported progress on six of seven critical elements. The greatest growth was noted in the following critical elements:

- ⦿ Program-wide expectations
- ⦿ Staff buy-in
- ⦿ Professional development and staff support plans
- ⦿ Family engagement

It is worth noting that for one critical element, *Procedures for Responding to Challenging Behavior*, the overall rating decreased slightly over time. A closer look at the data revealed that the ratings went down for a very small number of programs among the group, which may be a function of these programs bringing new classrooms on board (i.e., scaling-up), and/or team members adjusting their own internal metric for rating these items as they learn more about Pyramid Model strategies.

**Figure 5. EC-BOQ Ratings Over Time: First to Most Recent  
(n=14 “matched” PDG-E Programs)**



## CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

To begin to assess fidelity of implementation of Pyramid Model strategies in the classroom, de-identified TPOT results were requested from PDG-E programs (via Process Coaches) as they became available. As a general guideline, the minimum target was for programs to use the TPOT in 1-2 classrooms each year, two times annually. By the time of this report, 54 teachers had at least one TPOT score that had been submitted for the evaluation.

**FINDING: TPOT results showed teachers, on average, at or near fidelity (80%) in several key practice areas. On average, teachers were rated most highly on collaborative teaming, connecting with families, and engaging in supportive conversations with children.**

Across the 14 key practice areas, there are 114 indicators that comprise the assessment. A score of 80% is considered fidelity on this tool. **Figure 6** on the following page shows average ratings in each of the 14 Key Practices, and overall for the practices combined. The ratings shown in the figure are the “first” TPOT for each teacher submitted for the evaluation. The overall average score for the group was 61%. As shown, these teachers, on average, were observed to have reached fidelity on practices for *collaborative teaming*. Additionally, teachers were observed to be strongest in:

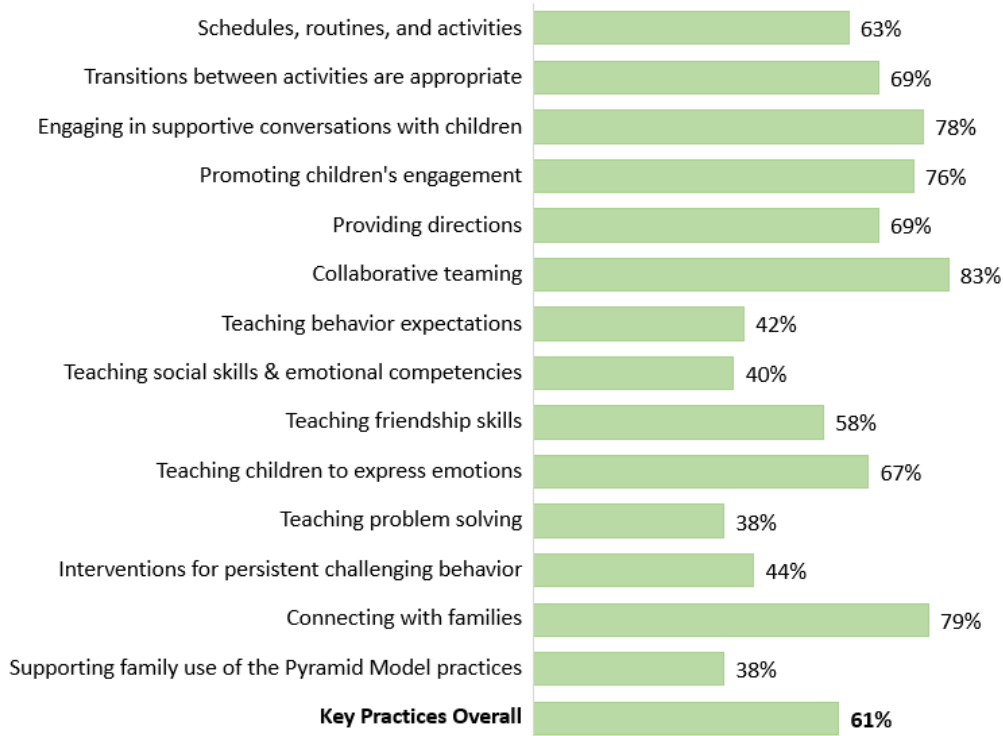
- ⊙ connecting with families,
- ⊙ engaging in supportive conversations with children, and
- ⊙ promoting children’s engagement.

On average, these teachers have the most room for growth in:

- ⊙ teaching problem-solving skills,
- ⊙ supporting family use of Pyramid Model practices,
- ⊙ teaching social skills and emotional competencies, and
- ⊙ teaching behavior expectations.



**Figure 6. TPOT Results Across the Key Practices and Overall  
(n=54 Teachers)**



**KEY FINDING: TPOT ratings over time for a sample of teachers suggest progress across many of the key practice areas. The greatest growth was observed in *interventions for challenging behavior*, and direct teaching of social emotional and problem-solving strategies.**

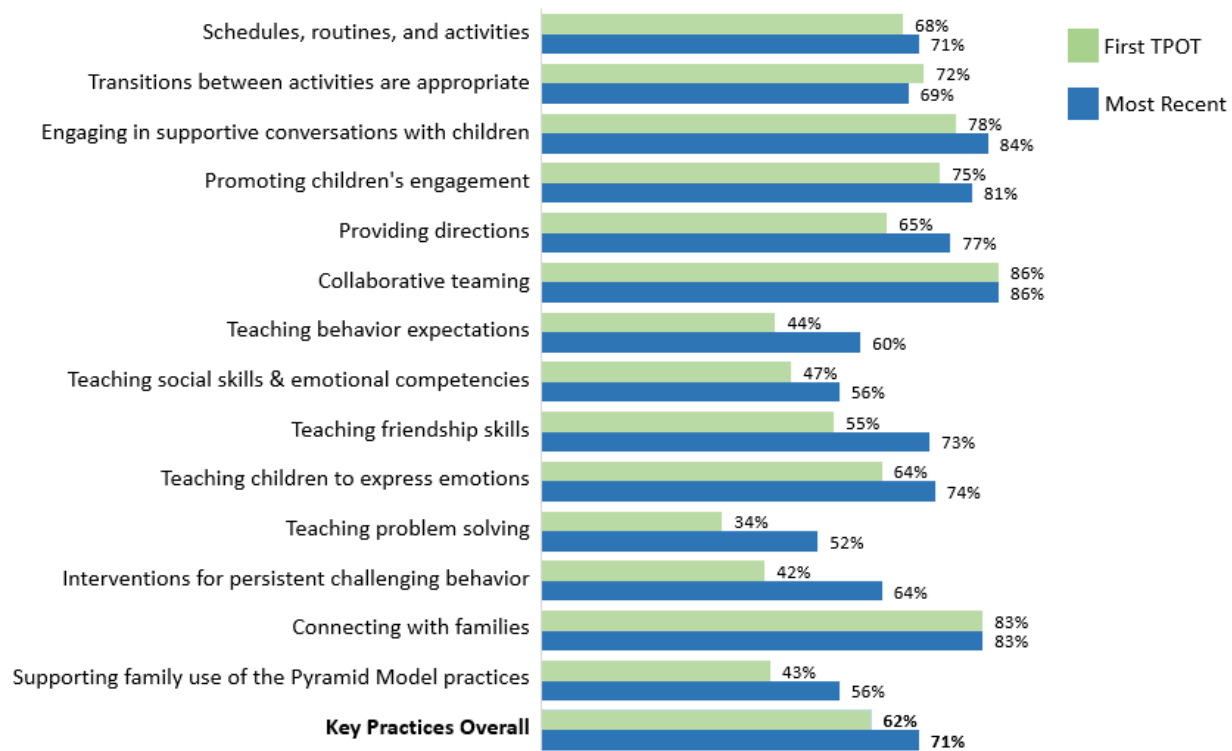
**Figure 7** on the following page shows the average ratings for 18 teachers with multiple TPOT scores over time that were submitted for the evaluation. The time span between the first and most recent rating ranged from 5 to 13 months; most ratings were taken 7 months apart or more. The average time span was 8.5 months.

As shown, on average, this group of teachers made progress or maintained fidelity (80%) across all of the key practice areas. Substantial growth was noted in several areas, including:

- ⦿ interventions for persistent challenging behavior,
- ⦿ teaching friendship skills,
- ⦿ teaching problem-solving, and
- ⦿ teaching behavior expectations.

These areas of greatest growth appear to align with what teachers needed to strengthen most, based on their first TPOT, suggesting the value of the Practice Based Coaching model. Finally, the overall combined percentage across all key practices increased by 9 percentage points from time 1 to time 2: from 62% to 71%, indicating considerable growth for this group over the time span.

**Figure 7. TPOT Results Across the Key Practices and Overall (n=18 Teachers)**



#### Q4. In what ways are participating programs and practitioners implementing Pyramid Model strategies?

**FINDING:** Personnel across many programs described their successes related to using the Pyramid Model framework. Examples included: working with children specifically around identifying emotions and problem solving, fostering greater family engagement, strategies toward program-wide adoption of the Pyramid Model, and using data more effectively.

On the recent Leadership Team Survey, team members were asked to share brief “**Success Stories**” of how they are using Pyramid Model strategies, and the related benefits they have observed for children, families, and their programs. Approximately one-third of survey respondents across 15 PDG-E programs offered examples, which clustered around the following themes:

- Working with children to identify emotions and apply problem-solving skills
- Greater family engagement and building stronger relationships
- Implementing more effective approaches to addressing challenging behavior
- Program-wide efforts around establishing expectations and developing a common vocabulary
- Pyramid Model implementation fidelity and using data for program improvement

Comments were shared by personnel across all roles: classroom teachers, program administrators, family educators, instructional leaders, social workers, paraprofessionals, and others. To provide a full picture of these program-level experiences, survey quotes are provided in this section, organized by common themes.

## ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN: SOCIAL SKILLS, PROBLEM SOLVING, AND MORE

*I have really focused on giving students deposits! Giving students more responsibility in the classroom by using visuals and classroom jobs has eliminated much of the everyday routine withdrawals we take from students. Peers are helping one another out and encouraging their peers to do well. I have decreased my use of language when I can to help with withdrawals as well. This has made a big change in how the students are in the classroom.*



*I'm now doing many more whole group lessons on social skills. This was not happening in this way prior to Pyramid training. I hear my students expressing their feelings on a daily basis. They are able to identify emotions in themselves and each other. I see kindness and compassion with their classmates. Our classroom is a safe place, and they are actively participating to make that happen.*

*Through Pyramid Model, I was introduced to the problem solving solution kit. I have worked with several teachers in implementing this in their classrooms. I did this with a few teachers, and they found it to be so successful that they shared it with even more teachers. In these classrooms, I now see children using the solutions independently of the teachers.*

*I have implemented more community-oriented circle time to promote friendship and cooperation.*

*It starts with building self-esteem. Giving praise when the child has accomplished a task or even made an attempt to do so. Encouraging a child to take a chance and letting them know that if it doesn't work the first time keep trying. It's okay to fail or not get it right the first time but give praise to the child letting them know to keep trying.*

**~Classroom Teachers, Instructional Leaders**

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

*I personally feel as though through the implementation of the Pyramid Model, I have greatly strengthened the relationship I have with parents. I feel like with the addition of a family coordinator a few years ago, I took a backseat to communicating with parents. This year has been so different. I got back in the driver's seat. I am communicating frequently with several parents on a weekly basis and it has really strengthened our classroom climate.*

*We have done a great job building relationships with families! We did a home visit and gave each family a home visit bag.*

*Using the Pyramid Model, teachers, parents, and children are engaged in the whole child. As a teacher, we have invited parents to take part and become involved in the learning process of their children by participating on the Parent Advisory Committee.*

*Parents are truly in charge of the parent advisory board. They take ownership and have sat on discussion forums. They are progressing towards goals set in the beginning of the school year, and they are excited about supporting the school ideals at home.*

*I sent home the Tucker the Turtle story for students to read at home with their families. One family shared that they read it every day. Another student began using the same language from the book when he was upset.*



*We have been having family nights that the parents are part of, and this has been beneficial to everyone. Positive feedback to students and learning about the withdrawals and deposits.*

*I have gained a great deal of knowledge when working with the families and making each parent a part of their child's learning environment; hands-on approaches [that include] engaging during family nights and in the classrooms.*

**~Classroom Teachers, Family Educators**

## SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

*A stronger focus on relationship building – the base of the Pyramid – has helped, as have the pieces of social-emotional curriculums (Second Step, Conscious Discipline) shared program-wide. The BIR [Behavior Incident Report] developed by our program is user-friendly and will, over time, provide valuable data for how to support children with challenging behaviors.*



*After meeting with a parent in regards to her child's challenging behavior and working with a classroom teacher, the child is able to succeed in school without being removed and his behavior has changed at home. The goal was to focus on the positive rather than negativity. Re-framing thoughts, providing consistent routines and structure, and working on developing replacement behavior has helped this child in decreasing challenging behaviors.*

*Implementation of Pyramid Model strategies has helped our program shift our focus to adult behaviors and how a change in those behaviors can positively impact the behaviors of children. We are focusing on viewing children through the lens of their strengths, rather than calling them out for deficiencies.*

*There seem to be better structures in place for dealing with challenging behaviors and the flow and process for problem-solving.*

**~Classroom Teachers, Instructional Leaders, Program Administrators, and others**

## PROGRAM-WIDE REACH OF PYRAMID MODEL

*All classrooms have been provided with procedures for the bus and playground in poster or story form with simple illustrations and consistent wording. This has really helped classes throughout the school go over the [school] expectations for these places daily. The students know them and start to take ownership of them too. It is all about the relationships...teacher and student relationships, teacher and family relationships, and family and student relationships. It is also about the ability for the school to connect to the community. The Pyramid Model has been a tool to help educate and unify our staff and to give us the skills to support our school community.*

*We use social stories for transitions/nap routine/playground rules/going to the bus, etc. and post posters with pictures of school expectations. Bus drivers are able to use the same language with support from a copy of the social story on each bus.*

*We have displayed school-wide expectations throughout our school so no matter where you may be with children you have a visual to refer to. At parent teacher conferences this year, we had a table where we invited families to "Shout Out" to our school or school staff. We had them write their comments on a word bubble. We then hung them throughout the entrance to our school. Teachers and staff were/are very appreciate of the kind word our families shared! We ordered "We Are Pyramid" t-shirts to promote awareness of the schoolwide initiative with our entire community. We continually speak about Pyramid in monthly professional development. There is even more to mention, but we feel confident we will only continue to grow in our efforts as we move more towards full implementation.*

*I am connecting all of our work (staff meetings, individual conversations, professional development offerings, etc.) to the model. We are finding that we are able to use consistent common language that is "hooked" to the pyramid in a way that makes sense to all stakeholders. The MTSS/PBIS models can come across as "the work of the specialists", but the Pyramid Model demonstrates how ALL OF US make up the base (GOLD) and how the things we do all day, every day fit into the blue and green... AND how any of us can support "the specialists" with the red... and most importantly, how we can decrease the need for "the red" by strengthening the gold, blue and green!*



**~Classroom Teachers, Instructional Leaders, Program Administrators, and others**

## PYRAMID MODEL APPROACH AND USING DATA

*As the Instructional Leader for our program I find that Practice Based Coaching is so helpful in connecting the teaching practices to positive outcomes in children. The cyclical process of planning, observing, and reflecting keeps everyone focused on what the goal is. I am seeing change in staff as we go through the Benchmarks of Quality and work together as a team to understand those benchmarks and plan steps to meet them.*



*We have developed an SEL team that meets consistently, and our Process Coach has been supportive of our needs. The PBC Community of Practice conversations with [Pyramid Model Consortium] have been very helpful.*

*From the administration standpoint, I appreciate all of the work being put into the BIRS implementation at the school-wide level. This data has been enlightening and specific. It has allowed our other school-based teams to plan and strategize specific interventions based upon behavior and time of day/activity. It has helped us to focus our problem solving conversations and plan for future changes.*

*All of our full day classrooms have been fully brought on to using the TPOT. They have also identified a goal based on their TPOT results. Each our 11 full day classrooms are being coached by our instructional leaders.*

*~ Instructional Leaders, Program Administrators*

## Q5. To what extent have benefits been observed for children and families?

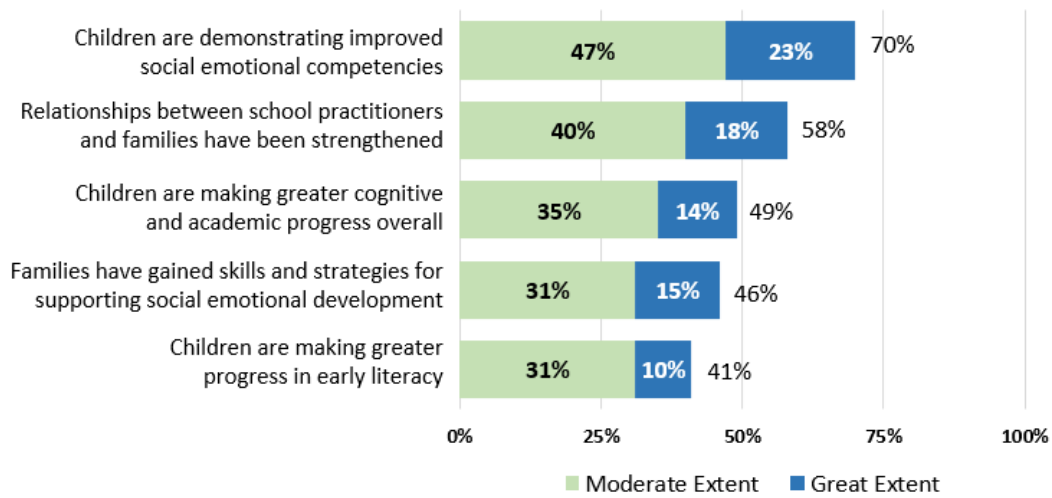
The previous sections described PDG-E programs' overall progress toward program-wide and classroom level implementation (i.e., EC-BOQ and TPOT results), as well as stories from program staff about their successes. The Leadership Team Survey also asked respondents to indicate the extent to which specific benefits have been observed for children and families as a result of the Pyramid Model work.

**FINDING: Many program personnel reported having noticed benefits of being in Pyramid Model classrooms for children, and for their families. These benefits include improved social emotional and academic competencies, as well as stronger relationships with families.**

**Figure 8** on the following page shows the percentage of survey respondents who indicated having observed benefits to a “moderate” or “great extent” since the initiative began. As shown, a large majority (70%) reported that children are demonstrating improved social emotional competencies, with 23% indicating “to a great extent”. Half (49%) reported that children are making greater cognitive and academic progress generally.

With respect to family-related benefits, 58% noted stronger relationships between practitioners and families as a result of this initiative, and 46% believe that families have gained new skills and strategies for supporting their children in social emotional development.

**Figure 8. Perceived Benefits of Pyramid Model Implementation:  
Leadership Team Members Reporting “Moderate” or “Great Extent”  
(n=98)**

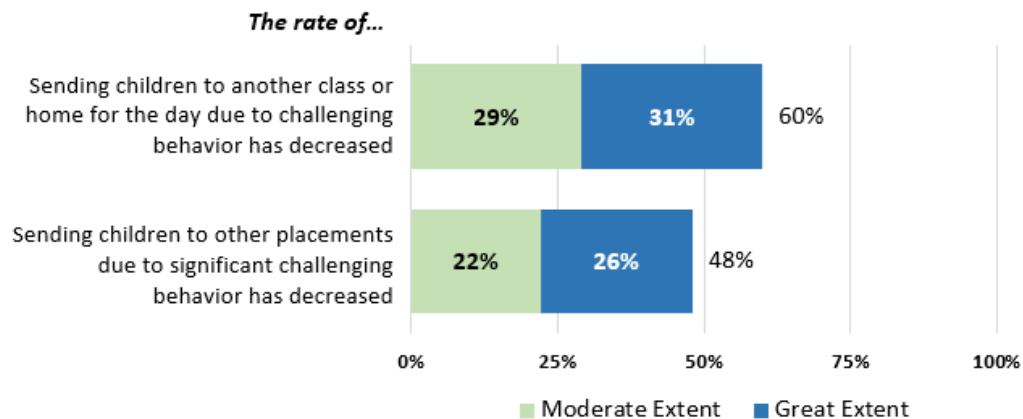


**FINDING: Many personnel also believe that Pyramid Model implementation has contributed to decreased rates of suspension and expulsion.**

Leadership Team members were also asked whether the initiative has led to decreases in suspension and expulsion rates. For this survey item, **suspension** was articulated as: *the rate of sending children to another class or home for the remainder of the day due to challenging behavior*. **Expulsion** was articulated as: *the rate of sending children to other placements due to significant challenging behavior*.

As shown in **Figure 9**, approximately half or more of survey respondents indicated having noted decreases in rates of both suspension (60%) and expulsion (48%) due to the Pyramid Model. A quarter or more indicated seeing these benefits “to a great extent”.

**Figure 9. Perceived Benefits of Pyramid Model Implementation:  
Leadership Team Members Reporting “Moderate” or “Great Extent”  
(n=98)**



# Findings: Facilitating Factors and Sustainability

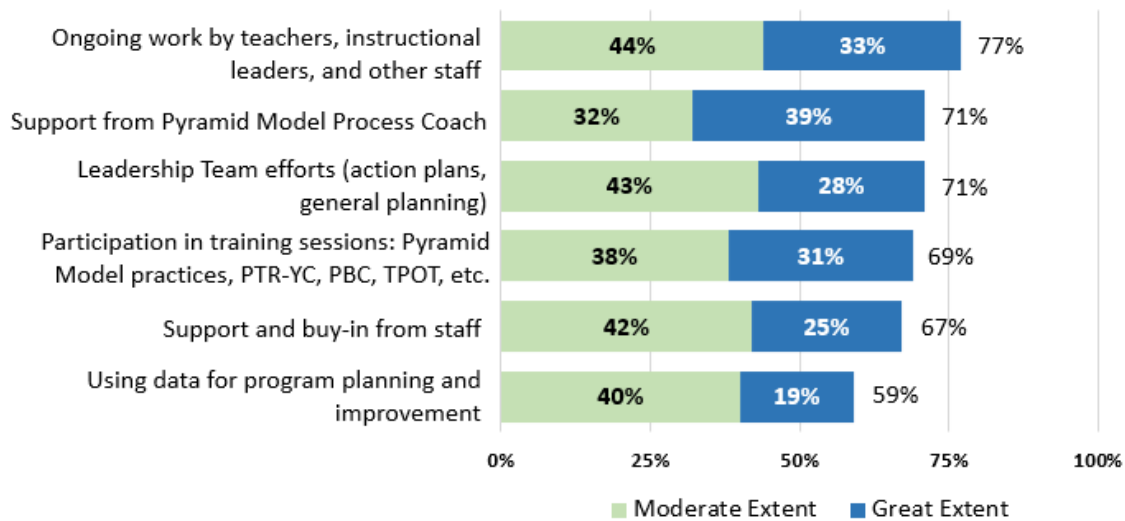
## Q6. What have been the facilitating factors associated with Pyramid Model implementation?

**FINDING:** A combination of factors has contributed to program progress toward Pyramid Model implementation, including local efforts by teaching staff, support from a Process Coach, participation in statewide professional development sessions, and enthusiasm and buy-in from teaching staff, instructional leaders, and others.

Leadership Team members were asked to rate a series of factors and indicate the extent to which each has contributed to their progress to date. As shown in **Figure 10**, the ongoing work by teaching staff, instructional leaders, and other staff is considered to be the greatest factor (77%), followed by support from a Pyramid Model Process Coach (71%). In terms of factors contributing “to a great extent”, support from a Process Coach was indicated most often (39%).

Other contributing factors reported by most respondents included work by Leadership Teams (71%), participation in various training sessions (69%), and staff support and buy-in (67%). More than half of respondents (59%) also reported that using data for program planning was a factor.

**Figure 10. Factors Contributing to Progress toward Pyramid Model Implementation: Survey Respondents Reporting “Moderate” or “Great Extent” (n=98)**



Several team members suggested additional factors that have been important to their progress:

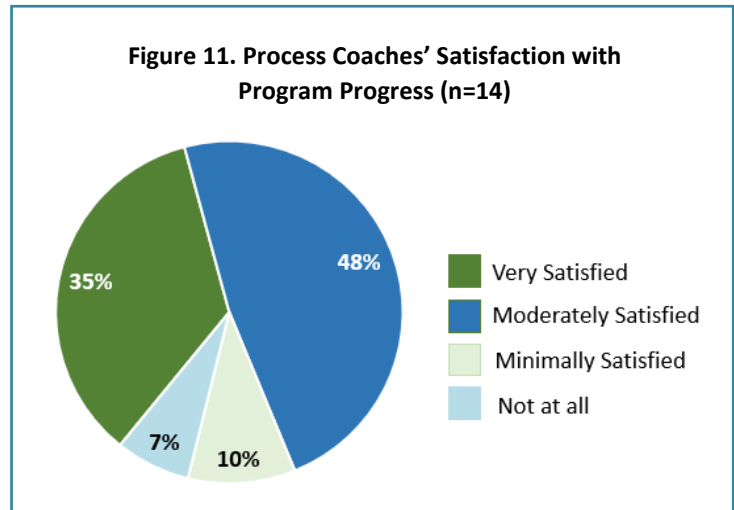
- ⦿ Collaborating with other programs through monthly virtual meetings facilitated by Pyramid Model Consortium (PBC Community of Practice meetings for instructional leaders)
- ⦿ Extending the Pyramid Model framework and resources to other classrooms beyond PDG-E
- ⦿ Having a staff member come into the classroom to support implementation
- ⦿ Institute days

**FINDING: Process Coaches have been largely satisfied with the progress their programs have made over the grant period. In describing their greatest successes, Process Coaches mentioned building relationships, seeing staff embrace the framework, collaborating with and supporting their Leadership Teams, and observing benefits for program staff.**

For their part, Process Coaches have been largely satisfied with the progress their programs have made so far. On the survey conducted in December 2019, Process Coaches were asked to consider each of their PDG-E programs, and to provide a satisfaction rating on their progress.

**Figure 11** shows that 35% are “very satisfied”, while 48% are “moderately satisfied”. Representative quotes from Process Coaches describing their successes are shown below.

Process Coaches also rated the effectiveness of the supports they provided to their programs, in terms of moving implementation forward.



- ⦿ Reviewing or discussing the Benchmarks of Quality - 100% very effective
- ⦿ Working together on action plans; general planning with Leadership Team - 21% moderately, 79% very
- ⦿ Helping to build the capacity of instructional leaders - 57% moderately, 36% very
- ⦿ Supporting programs’ use of data for planning and decision-making - 57% moderately, 21% very

#### PROCESS COACHES’ GREATEST SUCCESSES

*The teacher who reported to me during the last TPOT that she is so much happier with her job, in her classroom and with the children since implementing Pyramid Model. She said that she loves coming to work again. Life changing!*

*Best success, everyone is on board.*

*Helping a program with very little internal support through module training, launching program-wide expectations, BIR customization and PBC launch.*

*...The key for this particular district has just been making regular connections, building our relationship so that they feel they can depend on me, and getting them what they need when they need or ask for it. The lesson I've learned is that things really do hinge on the leader, and that "taking baby steps" really does mean slow, incremental progress will be made when we put in the time and effort and stay connected.*

*Greatest success is that the Leadership Team is using their action plan as a living document. As a group we continue to reflect on it and use the document to continue the work.*

*Building and sustaining the Leadership Team, beginning to use data to support decision making. Because of the implementation of the Pyramid Model there has been a reduction of tier three behaviors, improved classroom management, and teacher satisfaction.*

*Building relationships, guiding Leadership Teams to come to consensus.*

*Action plan developed from BOQ. They have used the BOQ as the primary action plan for their program. This has helped them to focus more on Pyramid Model practices and how they relate to other issues within their program.*



Process Coaches also rated the effectiveness of different approaches to providing access to Pyramid Model practices training sessions to their programs (i.e., Modules 1, 2, and 3).

- ⦿ Statewide training events (co-facilitated with PMC) - 7% *moderately effective*, 86% *very effective*,
- ⦿ Onsite training events - 14% *moderately*, 71% *very*
- ⦿ Providing access to and/or setting up use of ePyramid Modules - 36% *moderately*, 43% *very*

**FINDING: Process Coaches appreciated the level of ongoing communication with GOECD, ISBE, and PMC, and the guidance they received throughout the project. All Process Coaches had a good sense of the project expectations and for their role in the work, which for some became clarified during the course of the project.**

Process Coaches reported strong communication structures with project leaders (GOECD, ISBE, and PMC), had access to the resources they needed to be successful, and understood the process for entering evaluation data. Process Coaches were also clear on the expectations for the supports they should provide to their programs, which tools to use with their programs and when (e.g., TPOT, EC-BOQ), and the expectations for what their programs would strive to accomplish; for some, these expectations were clarified over the course of the project.

With respect to the ongoing “formal” communication structures, all Process Coaches found the annual face-to-face meetings to be “moderately” or “extremely” useful, while the vast majority reported the same for the monthly calls facilitated by PMC. The Process Coaches offered some additional feedback about project communication and supports:

- ⦿ The monthly calls have generally been very effective; Process Coaches indicated the need to continue these conversations (by phone, and in person) to address needs as they evolve with progress at the program level. A couple of suggestions included ensuring that all Process Coaches have an opportunity to provide input during the calls, and sharing information via email when possible.
- ⦿ The Leadership Team Implementation Manual<sup>10</sup> is considered to be a valuable resource for Process Coaches. A couple of Process Coaches noted that it would be useful to review the manual as a group at the project outset.
- ⦿ One Process Coach suggested that it would be useful to have a way to view the data entries they had made for their programs (Process Coach Logs, EC-BOQs, etc.) throughout the project in support of the evaluation, and/or to receive monthly reminders about reporting data for the evaluation.

## **Q7. What do programs need most to move forward, to ensure continued growth and sustainability?**

This section contains feedback about the challenges encountered while working toward Pyramid Model implementation, as well as the specific supports that PDG-E programs and Process Coaches would benefit from going forward to ensure growth and sustainability.

**FINDING: The greatest challenges to implementation include time for program personnel to meet and plan, the logistics of internal coaching, and the need for increased knowledge of the Pyramid Model among staff.**

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<sup>10</sup> Leadership Team Implementation Manual: Resources - Tools - Records, Lise Fox, Denise Perez Binder, Mary Louise Hemmeter, Erin E. Barton, and Christopher Vatland (2018).

As shown in **Figure 12**, the greatest challenge that team members reported was finding time to meet and plan with colleagues (65%). As “time” is typically the greatest challenge noted by staff implementing new initiatives, a follow-up question requested ideas for alleviating this challenge (see below). Other challenges include lack of time/availability for internal coaching (40%), lack of understanding of the Pyramid Model among staff (34%), and difficulty attending statewide professional development events (31%).

Some of the challenges described in open-ended comments echoed the need for ongoing training opportunities, including onsite sessions, and ways to address training in response to staff turn-over; alignment and understanding of the Pyramid Model by the district as a whole; additional support for children with challenging behaviors; and support toward sustainability once fully implemented. Several comments were related to the need to understand the “big picture” of the Pyramid Model earlier in the implementation process, to help set the vision for the program.

**Figure 12. Challenges to Moving Forward with Pyramid Model Implementation: Leadership Team Survey Responses (n=98)**



Process Coaches were asked a similar question about the greatest challenges that programs face, and had similar responses. In their estimation, the greatest challenges included: lack of time/availability for internal coaching (64%), and a lack of understanding of the Pyramid Model among staff (57%).

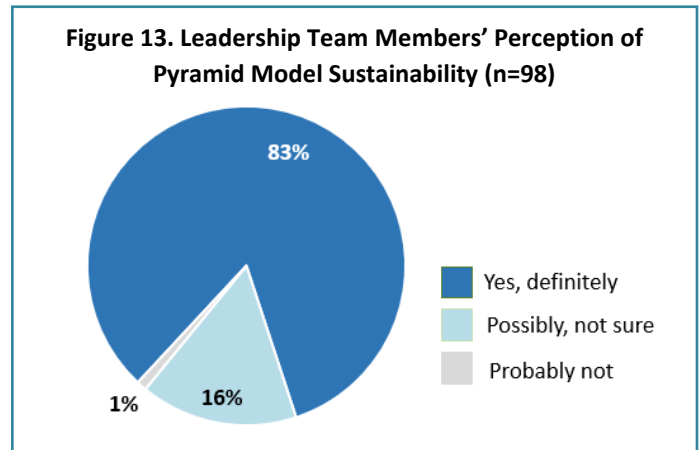
As mentioned above, Leadership Team members offered suggestions and their own approaches for alleviating time constraints. A few common themes emerged, including:

- ⦿ **Use Existing Professional Development Days / Times:** Focus on the Pyramid Model on Early Release Days / program professional development days / PLC time with teaching staff.
- ⦿ **Plan Ahead, and Commit to Monthly Meetings:** Some have created year-long professional development schedules; others described committing to monthly team meetings that are set for the same day of the week throughout the year (e.g., first Tuesday of each month), allowing the team to prioritize the meetings and keep them on the calendar.
- ⦿ **Streamline Teams:** Some noted the merging of their Pyramid Model Leadership Team with PBIS, and/or social and emotional team to reduce meeting time and streamline processes.
- ⦿ **Build on Existing Practices:** Others focused on recognizing Pyramid Model strategies as part of existing practice, and found that only “minor tweaks” to current practice were needed to align with the model. *“We just agreed that this had the power to impact academics and behavior both, and as such, it was worthy of the prioritization of our time and resources.”*

**FINDING: Most program personnel surveyed strongly believe this model is sustainable within programs like theirs. The keys to sustainability mentioned most often included: ongoing training for all staff, fostering staff buy-in, continued guidance from Process Coaches, and having the support of program administrators to make the Pyramid Model a priority.**

Despite challenges recognized during the first phase of implementation, 83% of team members surveyed believe that the Pyramid Model is “definitely” sustainable within community early childhood programs (Figure 13). Most all others believe that sustainability is a possibility. When asked about the keys to sustainability, several familiar themes emerged:

- ⦿ **Continued access to high-quality professional development:** The need for ongoing staff training (and re-training), especially in response to staff turn-over, was a running theme throughout much of the survey feedback.
- ⦿ **Staff buy-in:** Themes related to buy-in were the availability of consistent, ongoing training opportunities; showing teaching staff evidence that the model “works”; and creating/providing tools and resources that teaching staff can use with children.
- ⦿ **Continued support:** Support for Leadership Teams and program leaders about how best to implement the model, and how best to work toward fidelity and scale-up.
- ⦿ **Administrator buy-in:** Having administrators on board and setting the Pyramid Model as a priority.

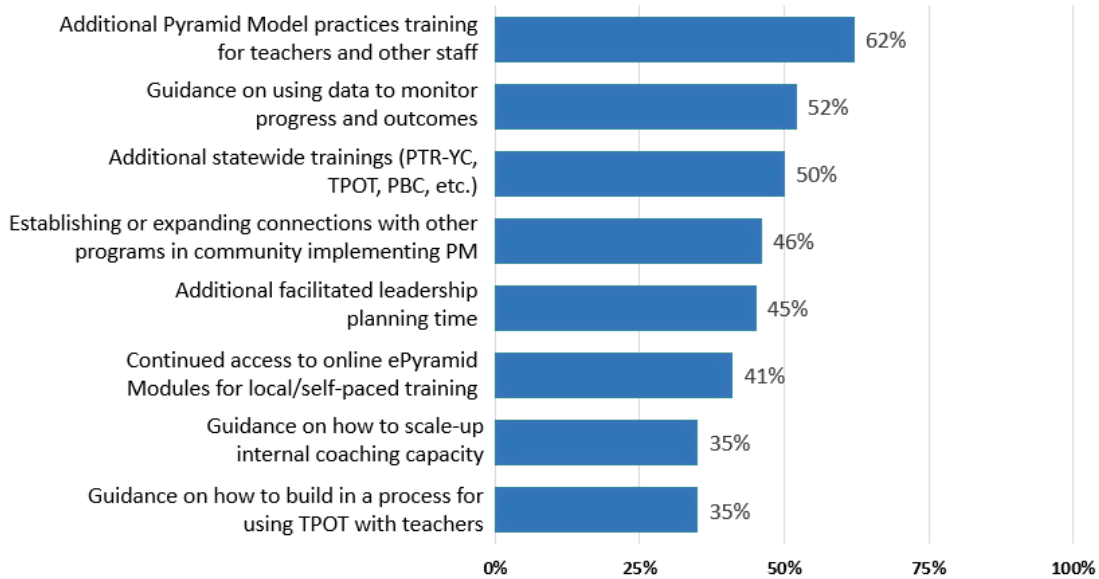


**FINDING: To continue moving forward, program personnel most often identified Pyramid Model practices training (i.e., Modules 1, 2, and 3), guidance for using data, and additional statewide professional development opportunities that support implementation (i.e., PTR-YC, TPOT, PBC) as their greatest needs. Process Coaches also believe that support for scaling-up internal coach capacity, including TPOT processes, are a priority.**

As discussed above, the majority of Leadership Team members who responded to the survey believe in the sustainability of the Pyramid Model within their programs. Both Leadership Team members and Process Coaches were asked what programs need most to move forward successfully. Survey responses differed somewhat across these groups, in terms of where the greatest needs are at this time. Nevertheless, these results echoed the themes throughout this report.

As shown in Figure 14, Leadership Team members most often identified the need for additional Pyramid Model practices training for all staff (62%), guidance for using data (52%), and additional professional development opportunities on Pyramid Model strategies and fidelity measures (PTR-YC, TPOT, PBC, etc.) (50%). For Process Coaches, the greatest needs are perceived to be additional professional development opportunities on Pyramid Model strategies and fidelity measures (indicated by 79% of those surveyed), guidance on how to scale up internal coach capacity (79%), and expanding connections with other programs in the community that are implementing the Pyramid Model (71%).

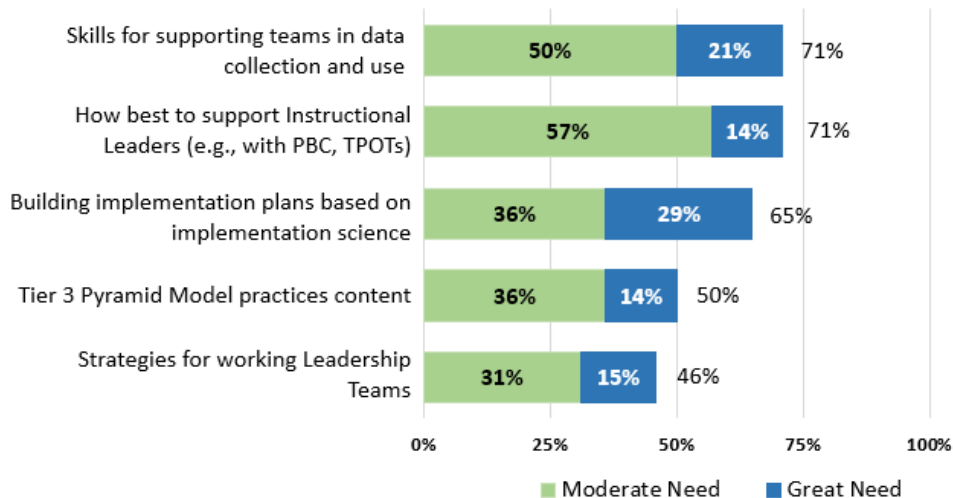
**Figure 14. Types of Assistance Needed Most to Expand Implementation Reported by Leadership Team Members (n=98)**



**FINDING: To continue building their skills for effectively supporting preschool programs, Process Coaches indicated their interest in learning more about supporting programs to use data for decision-making, supporting instructional leaders (internal coaches) with fidelity approaches and measures, and building implementation plans based on the principles of implementation science.**

Process Coaches identified several areas of their own professional development for building their skills to support programs. As shown in **Figure 15**, nearly three-quarters of the group identified skills for supporting teams to use data, and strategies for supporting instructional leaders for internal coaching. Two-thirds of the group would like to learn more about ensuring that the implementation plans they help their teams develop are rooted in the principles of implementation science. Half of the group indicated the need for learning more about Tier 3 Pyramid Model practice content (20% indicated the same for Tiers 1 and 2).

**Figure 15. Process Coaches’ Professional Development Needs (n=14)**



## Summary

The Illinois PDG-E Pyramid Model Pilot initiative reached 26 preschool programs over the past 18 months, with most programs beginning professional development activities in spring 2018. The Pyramid Model Consortium offered a series of high-quality statewide and local training events in Pyramid Model practices (Modules 1, 2, and 3), fidelity measures (i.e., TPOT), and other topics essential for program-wide implementation (i.e., PBC, PTR-YC, etc.).

As of fall 2018, Process Coaches had begun providing regular support and guidance to the PDG-E program Leadership Teams, as documented throughout the project. PMC and state leaders – GOECD and ISBE – also guided and supported Process Coaches through monthly virtual meetings/calls, and annual onsite meetings. By all accounts, Process Coaches were thoroughly supported in their roles by state leaders and PMC, and were clear on the expectations for the programs they supported, as well as their own part in the project. For some, that clarity was established as the project evolved.

The aim of the initiative was to promote and support healthy social emotional growth for preschool children, and to enhance and expand the quality of preschool education in high-need communities. The Pyramid Model was selected as the evidence-based practice to deliver that vision. As discussed throughout this report, findings suggest that many program staff have gained new skills, and are making improvements in program-wide practices and classroom strategies that align with the Pyramid Model framework.

In terms of progress measures toward program-wide implementation, “baseline” results on the EC-BOQ suggest that the group of programs as a whole made a strong start, with all of the critical elements as rated on the self-assessment at least “Partially in Place”. And, data from a subset of programs with EC-BOQ data from at least two points in time suggest progress had been made across all but one of the critical elements over the time span (average span of 12 months). Substantial progress was noted in the areas of *Program-wide Expectations, Staff Buy-in, and Family Engagement*. The area that decreased slightly for this group was *Procedures for Responding to Challenging Behavior*.

With respect to fidelity of implementation in the classroom, TPOT results for a sample of teachers suggest that on average, teachers are nearing fidelity in many of the key practice areas. And, for a small subset of teachers for whom data were available from two TPOTs over time, progress has been observed in some of the most challenging areas generally – direct teaching of social emotional and problem-solving strategies. While these findings are promising, additional classroom level data will be important going forward to fully appreciate fidelity to the model, and to assess progress over time.

Leadership Team members, who represent staff across multiple roles, have noted that these program- and classroom-level changes have translated into tangible benefits for children. Specifically, these benefits include improved social emotional competencies, and greater cognitive and academic progress, including early literacy. Additionally, some have noted that rates of suspension and expulsion have decreased within their programs. Benefits for families have also been observed, in the form of stronger relationships between family and practitioner, and enhanced skills among family members for supporting their children in social emotional development.

The evaluation findings from the Pyramid Model Pilot point to some considerations for state-level project leaders (GOECD, ISBE, PMC) as they move forward in supporting the framework within these programs, and statewide. These points are based on a collective summary of the input from Leadership Team members and Process Coaches across the multiple data sources.

- ◎ **Access to ongoing professional development opportunities:** One of the key themes woven throughout the feedback was the need for training (and re-training) opportunities for *all staff*, especially in response to staff-turnover. This would include Pyramid Model practices training (Modules 1, 2, and 3), both in person and via the ePyramid Modules, as well as foundational training in PBC, PTR-YC, TPOT, and other topics to support high-fidelity implementation.

Some challenges related to professional development in general that could be examined are the accessibility of statewide events (i.e., location), the need for substitutes to cover staff, and the mix of funding streams across different classrooms in a building (i.e., PDG-E, PFAE, etc.), that can make it difficult to align planning.

- ◎ **Buy-in from administrators and staff:** To move forward most successfully, Leadership Teams and other staff need the ongoing support and buy-in of their building and district administrators. Building training opportunities into professional development days, professional learning communities (PLCs), and other established forums were offered as suggestions both to help set the priority, and to make the most effective use of time.

Staff buy-in is also essential, which some suggest will be further bolstered by ongoing training, as well as by providing information about the potential benefits of using the Pyramid Model. In addition to sharing existing research, state leaders may want to consider forums for Illinois preschool programs to share their success stories with their colleagues, to continue to generate enthusiasm.

- ◎ **Continued support for Leadership Teams:** Leadership Team members and Process Coaches recognize that Pyramid Model implementation takes time. With this in mind, continued and sustained support for Leadership Teams for high-quality implementation and fidelity to the model from Process Coaches, including continuing to build the capacity of instructional leaders for internal coaching and processes for using the TPOT with teaching staff, will be essential.

- ◎ **Continued support for Process Coaches:** Process Coaches also identified several areas of interest for their own professional development as they continue this work. Namely, Process Coaches would benefit from strengthening their skills and strategies for assisting teams in processing and using their own data for program improvement, supporting instructional leaders, and building implementation plans solidly rooted in principles of implementation science. Going forward, as new Process Coaches come on board, the team may benefit from early review of the Leadership Team Implementation Manual as a group, and a brief set of general guidelines around Process Coaches' roles and expectations.

Based on the pilot evaluation to date, findings suggest that the foundation for Pyramid Model implementation has been well-established in many of these Illinois preschool programs. On the whole, program staff are truly excited about the possibilities for the children in their care, as well as for their families. Going forward, future evaluation efforts could be enhanced through more detailed program participation data (i.e., professional development registration data by program, professional development needs by program), additional classroom-level fidelity data (i.e., TPOT), continued sharing of formative data with stakeholders throughout the project, and the collection and analysis of child performance and outcome data to begin to establish the impact of the initiative.

# Appendix

## EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM-WIDE BENCHMARKS OF QUALITY CRITICAL ELEMENTS AND QUALITY INDICATORS

Adapted from: Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality, version 2.0, Lise Fox, Mary Louise Hemmeter, Susan Jack, and Denise Perez Binder (2017)

### ESTABLISH LEADERSHIP TEAM

1. Team has broad representation that includes at a minimum a teacher, administrator, a member who will provide coaching to teachers, a member with expertise in behavior support and a family member. Other team members might include a teaching assistant, related service specialists, a community member, and other program personnel.
2. Team has administrative support. Administrator attends meetings and trainings, is active in problem-solving to ensure the success of the initiative, and is visibly supportive of the adoption of the model.
3. Team has regular meetings. Team meetings are scheduled at least 1x per month for a minimum of 1 hour. Team member attendance is consistent.
4. Team has established a clear mission/purpose. The team purpose or mission statement is written. Team members are able to clearly communicate the purpose of the leadership team.
5. Program has a child discipline policy statement that includes the promotion of social and emotional skills, use of positive guidance and prevention approaches, and eliminates the use of suspension and expulsion.
6. Team develops an implementation plan that includes all critical elements. A written implementation plan guides the work of the team. The team reviews the plan and updates their progress at each meeting. Action steps are identified to ensure achievement of the goals.
7. Team reviews and revises the plan at least annually.

### STAFF BUY-IN

8. A staff poll is conducted in which at least 80% of staff indicate they are aware of and supportive of the need for a program wide effort for (a) addressing children's social emotional competence and challenging behavior, (b) using culturally responsive practices, and (c) addressing implicit bias.
9. Staff input and feedback is obtained throughout the process – coffee break with the director, focus group, suggestion box. Leadership team provides update on the process and data on the outcomes to program staff on a regular basis.

### FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

10. Family input is solicited as part of the planning and decision-making process. Families are informed of the initiative and asked to provide feedback on program- wide adoption and mechanisms for promoting family involvement in the initiative (e.g., suggestions box, focus group).
11. There are multiple mechanisms for sharing the program wide plan with families including narrative documents, conferences, and parent meetings to ensure that all families are informed of the initiative.
12. Family involvement in the initiative is supported through a variety of mechanisms including home teaching suggestions, information on supporting social development, and the outcomes of the initiative. Information is shared through a variety of formats (e.g., meetings, home visit discussions, newsletters in multiple languages, open house, websites, family friendly handouts, workshops, rollout events, access to staff with bilingual capacity).
13. Families are involved in planning for individual children in a meaningful and proactive way. Families are encouraged to team with program staff in the development of individualized plans of support for children including the development of strategies that may be used in the home and community.

## **PROGRAM-WIDE EXPECTATIONS**

14. 2-5 positively stated program-wide expectations are developed.
15. Expectations are written in a way that applies to both children and staff. When expectations are discussed, the application of expectations to program staff and children is acknowledged.
16. Expectations are developmentally appropriate and linked to concrete rules for behavior within activities or settings.
17. Program staff and families are involved in the identification of the program-wide expectations that address needs, cultural norms and values of the program and community
18. Expectations are shared with families and staff assist families in the translation of the expectations to rules in the home.
19. Expectations are posted in classrooms and in common areas in ways that are meaningful to children, staff and families.
20. Strategies for acknowledging children's use of the expectations are developmentally appropriate and used by all program staff including administrative and support staff (e.g., clerical, bus drivers, kitchen staff).

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STAFF SUPPORT PLAN**

21. A plan for providing ongoing support, training, and coaching in each classroom on the Pyramid Model including culturally responsive practices and implicit bias is developed and implemented.
22. Practice-based coaching is used to assist classroom staff with implementing the Pyramid Model practices to fidelity.
23. Staff responsible for facilitating behavior support processes are identified and trained.
24. A needs assessment and/or observation tool is used to determine training needs on Pyramid Model practices.
25. All teachers have an individualized professional development or action plan related to implementing Pyramid Model and culturally responsive practices with fidelity
26. A process for training new staff in Pyramid Model and culturally responsive practices is developed.
27. Incentives and strategies for acknowledging staff effort in the implementation of Pyramid Model practices are implemented.

## **PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR**

28. Teachers have received training related to potential bias when responding to behavior challenges and have strategies to reflect on their responses to individual children
29. Program staff respond to children's problem behavior appropriately using evidence-based approaches that are positive, sensitive to family values, culture and home language, and provide the child with guidance about the desired appropriate behavior and program-wide expectations.
30. A process for responding to crisis situations related to problem behavior is developed. Teachers can identify how to request assistance when needed. A plan for addressing the child's individual behavior support needs is initiated following requests for crisis assistance.
31. Teachers have opportunities to problem solve with colleagues and family members around problem behavior. Teachers are encouraged to gain support in developing ideas for addressing problem behavior within the classroom (e.g., peer-support, classroom mentor meeting, brainstorming session).
32. A team-based process for addressing individual children with persistent challenging behavior is developed. Teachers can identify the steps for initiating the team-based process including fostering the participation of the family in the process.
33. An individual or individuals with behavioral expertise are identified for coaching staff and families throughout the process of developing and implementing individualized intensive interventions for children in need of behavior support plans.
34. Strategies for partnering with families when there are problem behavior concerns are identified. Teachers have strategies for initiating parent contact and partnering with the family to develop strategies to promote appropriate behavior.



## **MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES**

35. Data are collected, summarized with visual displays, and reviewed by the leadership team on a regular basis.
36. The program leadership team monitors implementation fidelity of the components of program-wide implementation and uses data for decision making about their implementation goals.
37. The program measures implementation fidelity of the use of Pyramid Model practices by classroom teachers and uses data on implementation fidelity to make decisions about professional development and coaching support.
38. The program collects data on behavior incidents and program actions in response to behavior and uses those data to address child and teacher support needs.
39. Behavior incident and monthly program action data are analyzed on a regular basis to identify potential issues related to disciplinary action bias.
40. Program-level data are summarized and shared with program staff and families on a regular basis.
41. Data are used for ongoing monitoring, problem solving, ensuring child response to intervention, and program improvement.