Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development
Illinois State Board of Education
Drafted by Pyramid Model Consortium

THE
**PYRAMID MODEL
CONSORTIUM**

Supporting Early Childhood PBIS

**Illinois Pyramid Model Efforts to Support
Early Childhood Care and Education Programs
2021 Evaluation Report**

Executive Summary

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BIRS	Behavior Incident Reporting System
CARES	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
CC	Child Care
COP	Community of Practice
EC-BOQ	Early Childhood PBS Benchmarks of Quality
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
FCC	Family Child Care
GEER	Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund
GOECD	Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development
HS	Head Start
IDHS	Illinois Department of Human Services
INCCRRA	Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
ISBE	Illinois State Board of Education
NCPMI	National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations
PBC	Practice-Based Coaching
PBS	Positive Behavior Supports
PDG B-5	Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five
PDG-E	Preschool Development Grant – Expansion
PFAE	Preschool for All Expansion
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PMC	Pyramid Model Consortium
PTR-F	Prevent Teach Reinforce – Families
PTR-YC	Prevent Teach Reinforce – Young Children
SDA	Service Delivery Area
TIC	Trauma-Informed Care
TOT	Training of Trainers
TPITOS	Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale
TPOT	Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool

Overview

As part of the Illinois Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Strategic Plan, state leaders and stakeholders are collaborating to expand access to high-quality early childhood education programming and support the ECEC workforce infrastructure. This work is being realized through a variety of federal and state funding opportunities for professional development and supports that are being offered to ECEC programs and the broader workforce. The ultimate goal is to ensure high-quality programs for all children across the ECEC system.

Illinois has promoted adoption of the Pyramid Model since 2017 through a continued collaboration with the **Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC)**. PMC is a non-profit organization that promotes high-fidelity use of the Pyramid Model through professional development sessions, online training opportunities, Process Coach supports and guidance for implementing ECEC programs, and access to resources for implementation.

PMC organized and facilitated the services and supports that comprised the Pyramid Model activities during 2021. These activities included continued support for new and existing implementation sites, as well as professional development for program personnel and the broader workforce in Pyramid Model practices and strategies. Currently 61 ECEC programs across ISBE, Head Start, and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Centers and Family Child Care are working toward Pyramid Model implementation. Each program has a Leadership Team to oversee implementation, as well as an 'external' Process Coach who provides support and guidance on a regular basis.

This evaluation report addresses Pyramid Model activities and progress across the state. It was made possible as part of the three-year federal Illinois Preschool Development Grant Birth Though Five (PDG B-5). The varied federal and state funding sources supporting the Pyramid Model work include: PDG B-5; the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund component of the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security), ending in June 2021; Head Start; and state funding within the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the IDHS Child Care system. Since the 2017 start of the project, a number of programs have been implementing the Pyramid Model but not receiving Process Coach support. Data from these programs are not reflected in this report. Future evaluation plans will include opportunities to collect data from all of the sites launched in Illinois.

Pyramid Model Evaluation

The evaluation of the Pyramid Model activities was conducted by the Pyramid Model Consortium with the support of an independent contractor. This report provides the findings from 2021. It evaluates ongoing feedback from events to support workforce development among the Master Cadre, implementation site personnel, Process Coaches, Practice-Based Coaches, and Pyramid Model trainers, and takes a deeper look at progress and needs across the Pyramid Model implementation sites. Because ISBE began implementation in spring 2018, Head Start in fall 2019, and Child Care in fall 2020, the findings in this report are largely focused on the longer-running ISBE-funded programs. Evaluation findings in future years will reflect more implementation results of the Head Start and Child Care programs.

The evaluation was guided by a series of key questions related to the Pyramid Model professional development and supports, as well as implementation efforts within ECEC programs during 2021. Findings are based on the following data sources:

- **Professional Development Feedback Forms** – Online feedback following each virtual training event/opportunity.
- **Program Leaders Survey**– Brief profile of existing programs' setting, prior experience with the Pyramid Model, and program needs toward implementation.
- **Process Coach Logs** – Documentation system to record ongoing support provided to programs.
- **Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality (EC-BOQ)** – Program-level implementation measure, self-assessment.
- **Process Coach Survey** – Brief survey to assess Process Coaches' approaches, support needs, and perceptions of implementation at the program level.
- **State Leadership Team Benchmarks of Quality (SLT-BOQ)** – State-level implementation measure, self- assessment.

Key Findings

- There were more than 375 attendees across the real-time professional development events, including members of the Master Cadre, personnel from the implementation sites, Process Coaches, Practice-Based Coaches, and Pyramid Model trainers. Additionally, 1,503 eModules were distributed across the content areas of Preschool, Infant-Toddler, Reducing Implicit Bias, and Trauma-Informed Care.
- Across events, the vast majority of participants indicated having met the learning objectives for each topic and rated the events as being high-quality. The highest rated events were Practice-Based Coaching (PBC), Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool, and Positive Solutions for Families.

- Participants typically found the statewide events to be relevant and useful to their professional practice. Across events, most expressed confidence that implementing the strategies had the potential to benefit the children and families in their care.
- Program leaders indicated the need for continued training and ongoing access to the Pyramid Model resources (e.g., PM Modules, TPOT). Other needs included continued support from Process Coaches, assistance for engaging and supporting families, and guidance for implementing the Pyramid Model in a challenging early childhood landscape.
- Process Coaches spent the year collaborating both virtually and in person with Leadership Teams, administrators, and internal coaches, depending on the site. In the spring 2021, the focus was on re-establishing team plans and goals, connecting staff to professional development opportunities with a focus on Wellness and Trauma-Informed Care, and supporting programs to assist families. In the fall 2021, with more programs open, Process Coaches spent time helping program teams to develop coaching plans through the use of the TPOT or the Pyramid Model Implementation Checklist.
- Process Coaches feel well-prepared in general for their roles and responsibilities. On average, the group feels best prepared to support their teams around the use of Pyramid Model practices and social-emotional skills development. Overall, the group indicated the most room for growth in guiding teams' use of data, approaches to Pyramid Model sustainability, and supporting equity.
- Process Coaches continue to request additional training and support on Prevent Teach Reinforce – Young Children, guidance for coaching in programs that do not have internal coaches available, and remote coaching strategies.
- EC-BOQ results available from programs implemented in spring and fall 2021 indicate that on average, Leadership Teams report that many critical elements are "partially in place," with a fair portion "in place." The strongest elements noted were Establishing Leadership Teams, Staff Buy-In, and Program-Wide Expectations. The greatest area for growth is collecting and using data. Implementation teams showed tremendous growth in beginning to implement procedures to address challenging behavior.
- Pyramid Model implementation activities in 2021 responded to provider requests to support children's social- emotional development, share program-wide expectations with families, and work to connect staff to Positive Solutions for Families, Prevent Teach Reinforce for Families, and other much-needed training opportunities for family partnerships.
- Process Coaches described approaches that are helping to move programs forward. Examples included facilitating access to training opportunities, providing resources (especially from NCPMI), maintaining strong relationships with Leadership Teams, using the EC-BOQ as a guide for planning, supporting teachers' use of Pyramid Model practices, and meeting programs "where they are" at this time.

Summary

During 2021, state project leaders (from GOECD, ISBE, IHSA, EITP, and INCCRRA) with the Pyramid Model Consortium collaborated to support the Pyramid Model implementation sites and to strengthen the broader ECEC workforce. For the second year, Pyramid Model implementation was carried out within the context of COVID-19, with programs in varying stages of in-person learning, rolling quarantines, staff shortages, and unique child and family needs across the year.

PMC provided professional development to the Master Cadre, personnel from the implementation sites, Process Coaches, Practice-based Coaches, and Pyramid Model trainers who provide individualized support to the implementation sites. Of the 61 ECEC programs, the findings in this report are focused on the ISBE PFAE and PFA, Head Start sites, Child Care pilot sites, and a cohort of Spanish-speaking Family Child Care programs.

Program leaders across the implementation sites indicated what they needed most in 2021 to support their efforts, including continued training in Pyramid Model practices and other foundational topics and continued support from their Process Coaches. Teams also indicated the need to collect TPOT data to develop coaching plans and expand Pyramid Model practices implemented across learning environments.

For their part, the Process Coaches documented regular contact with their programs throughout spring and fall 2021, providing supports that echoed the themes shared by program leaders. Among other activities, they assisted programs with professional development by connecting staff to needed trainings; helped to re-establish program-wide expectations as programs returned to in-person learning; and supported family engagement. New systems and approaches for connecting virtually with Leadership Teams were effectively put in place, and Process Coaches focused on keeping these relationships strong.

In terms of their own professional development, Process Coaches expressed interest in additional training in providing PTR-YC supports for children needing Tier 3 supports or behavior intervention plans. Other areas for development include remote coaching, supporting equity, using data, and supporting teams across multiple settings, including Child Care and Family Child Care.

General progress toward program-wide implementation was evaluated using data from the EC-BOQ. For the programs that shared self-ratings during either spring or fall 2021, on average, teams reported that the critical elements are "partially in place," with a fair portion "in place." A small subset of these programs had ratings from at least two points in time, which, taken together, indicated progress over the past three years despite breaks in collection due to COVID. Some of the specific Pyramid Model implementation activities at the program level included partnering with families and sharing resources, supporting teaching and learning through visual supports, and, as noted above, promoting program-wide expectations as in-person learning resumed. As noted by both program leaders and Process Coaches, resources from NCPMI have been extremely valuable, especially for supporting families and re-establishing routines.

The evaluation findings point to some future considerations for state-level project leaders in supporting the Pyramid Model framework. These points are based on a collective summary of input from program leaders and Process Coaches across multiple data sources.

- **Implementing the Pyramid Model in an ever-changing and challenging early childhood landscape:** A key theme woven throughout the feedback was ongoing system challenges (the continuing COVID pandemic, subsequent requirements for early care and learning settings, ongoing staffing and workforce issues). Providers, implementation teams, and coaches continue to ask questions about Pyramid Model implementation: for example, how can programs re-establish high-quality environments, relationships, and routines in the new COVID-19 context? How can TPOT processes to ensure fidelity be resumed? How can the capacity of teams to engage in data-based decision-making be grown? How can providers and teams build their capacity to support children with challenging behaviors?

- **Access to ongoing professional development opportunities:** Ongoing training opportunities for the implementation sites in all aspects of the Pyramid Model will be essential going forward. This includes the ePyramid Modules (continual access if possible), foundational trainings such as PTR-YC and PTR-F, supporting equity, and continued use of the ePyramid Modules in Wellness and Trauma-Informed Care. As one program leader suggested, additional guidance around a scope and sequence of trainings could be helpful.

- **Continued support for Leadership Teams:** Continued and sustained support for Leadership Teams from Process Coaches—including continuing to build the capacity of instructional leaders for internal coaching and TPOT processes—will also be essential. A Leadership Team retreat may be helpful in renewing the essential elements of high-quality implementation (including use of the EC-BOQ) and highlighting the importance of the Pyramid Model work at this time.

- **Continued support for Process Coaches**: Process Coaches will continue to benefit from additional training to help programs promote equity and use of culturally responsive practices, support internal coaches toward fidelity, guide teams' use of data, and help to move programs toward sustainability.

The 2021 evaluation was based on one year of Pyramid Model activities, which yielded descriptive information about the notable progress being made as well as the continued challenges posed by COVID and the educational environment. As the project moves forward and the COVID context continues to evolve, a focus on program-wide implementation and fidelity to the model, and the related evaluation of these components will be important next steps.
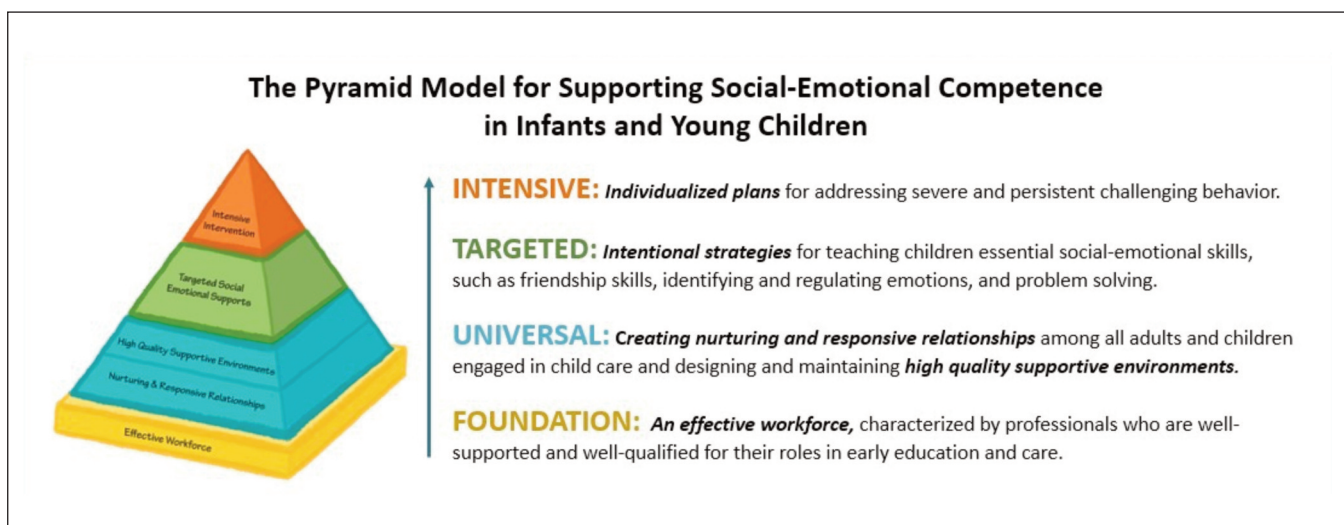
Introduction

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To help achieve these goals, the Illinois Pyramid State Leadership Team and its public and private agency partners continue to promote and support adoption of the Pyramid Model. The Pyramid Model is a tiered intervention framework of evidence-based practices for supporting social-emotional competence in infants and young children, as shown below.

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

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

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

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

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

With an effective workforce as the foundation, the Pyramid Model framework promotes universal strategies among all adults and children—creating nurturing relationships and maintaining high-quality environments. At the next tier, teaching staff and specialists use targeted strategies to support social-emotional competence through intentional teaching of skills and strategies. At the top tier, behavior specialists design individualized plans as needed to address persistent challenging behavior.

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Pyramid Model Activities

The evaluation focuses on the services and supports being provided by PMC (see **Figure 1**). These include:

1. Continuing to support **Pyramid Model implementation sites** within the ISBE and Head Start (HS) sectors and expanding implementation training and support to Child Care (CC) and Family Child Care (FCC) centers.

2. Expanding the **Master Cadre (MC)** to a second cohort of Pyramid Model expert trainers through professional development and monthly support and supporting the larger Master Cadre. This is a diverse group of professionals (n=38) situated across all regions of the state who serve ECEC programs across sectors including ISBE, HS, and CC.

3. Providing professional development for **the MC**, personnel from the implementation sites, Process Coaches, Practice-Based Coaches, and Pyramid Model trainers, a cross-sector group of professionals with reach beyond the Pyramid Model sites. PMC conducted a series of needs assessments during Year 1 to identify the specific training and support needs of trainers and coaches.

Figure 1. PMC Pyramid Model Activities

1

Pyramid Model Implementation

- Identify continuing and new implementation sites across systems (ISBE, HS, CC)
- Provide professional development, including:
  - Trauma Informed Care (online modules)
  - Wellness – Taking Care of Yourself (online modules)
  - Pyramid Model Practices (ePyramid Modules access)
  - Implementation – TPOT, PTR-YC, PBC, etc.
  - Support for Instructional Leads in PBC: Monthly PLCs, COPs
- Provide access to Process Coach (one per site) to guide and support implementation
- Support Process Coaches (n=20 for PDG B-5) via monthly meetings, ongoing training. *Note: Process Coaches for implementation sites are drawn from the Master Cadre.*

2

Master Cadre

- Identify new members (Cohort 2, n=14); provide start up training:
  - Pyramid Model Practices - Preschool Modules (1-3) Training of Trainers (TOT)
  - Practice Based Coaching (PBC)
- Ongoing training for all MC members (n=38), including response to COVID-19:
  - Guide to Reopening TOT
  - Training in a Virtual Environment
  - PBC Equity Guide, etc.
- Provide support through virtual monthly meetings

3

Pyramid Model Trainers (cross-sector)

- Provide training opportunities for statewide network of Pyramid Model Trainers/Coaches across systems (ISBE, HS, CC), including:
  - Guide to Reopening TOT
  - Training in a Virtual Environment
  - Pyramid Model Practices, Modules (1-3) TOT, etc.
- n= ~125 individuals
- *Note: The network of Pyramid Model Trainers includes the Master Cadre/Process Coaches.*

In describing the project plan, it is important to recognize the ongoing influence of COVID-19 and the consequences of the pandemic on the early care and learning environment. While programs across the state returned to in-person learning throughout 2021, program leaders and staff worked amid a challenging landscape that included unique child and family needs, COVID protocols for cleaning and contract tracing, understaffing, and staff turnover.

To address these ongoing needs, PMC delivered virtual trainings with content for implementation, such as Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) and Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) Reliability training. Professional development offerings are described in the next section. Additionally, GEER I Project funds provided professional development and resources to the early childhood education workforce to support children within their programs. The GEER I Project sought to achieve the following outcomes:

1) Provide ePyramid access to providers. Preschool eModule distribution to 1,500 providers and Wellness eModule distribution to 5,000 providers.

2) Support program-wide implementation work to 16 programs (8: Year 2 implementation and 8: Year 1 implementation sites).

3) Support readiness to implement Pyramid Model through cohort support and delivery of leadership and readiness modules.

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

Pyramid Model Implementation Sites

The Pyramid Model implementation sites are a key focus of this report. There are currently 61 ECEC programs engaged in implementation efforts, as shown in **Table 1**. Some of these programs were previously available, while others are new to the Pyramid Model. The evaluation data for this report was gathered from the ISBE PFA and PFAE sites. Most of which began Pyramid Model work prior to the 2020-2021 school year. The Child Care Centers are newer to the Pyramid Model, having joined in November 2020. Data collection was expanded to all participating sites in Year 2.

Table 1. Pyramid Model Implementation Sites

ISBE – PFA/PFAE

PDG-B5 (2019 launch)
Berwyn South SD 100
Cahokia CUSD 187
Children's Center Cicero-Berwyn
CUSD 300
Decatur SD 61
Dolton SD 148
Dolton SD 149
Freeburg CCSD 70
Lansing SD 158
Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood
McLean County USD 5
North Chicago SD 187
Rock Island ROE
Rockford SD 205
SD U-46
Valley View CUSD 365U

PFAE (2019-20 launch)
The Center Resource Teach&Learn
Harmony Emge SD 175
Havana CUSD 126
Peoria SD 150
Smart Start Learning Center, Inc.
Unity Point CCSD 140

GEER 1 (2020 launch)
East St. Louis SD 189
Peoria Heights CUSD 325
Peoria ROE
Plano CUSD 88
Pontiac CCSD 429
Rockford SD 205
Williamson Co Spec Educ District

PFAE (August 2021 launch)
Aurora East SD 131
Cicero SD 99
Eldorado CUSD 4
FSD 145
Lincoln ESD 156
Northern Illinois Uni

Head Start
Catholic Charities
Easter Seals
Illinois Action for Children
Kankakee 111
Project Now
River Bend HS Family Services Tazewell Woodford
TCOC-Tri-County Opp Council

Excelerate Sites
Amity Day Care and Learning Center RBC Early Education LLC
Step by Step Child Care Center, Inc.

Family Child Care Homes—All Spanish-Speaking
Brightstart Home Daycare Inc.
Drops of Wisdom
Family Child Care Home-LR
Family Child Care Home-MR
M. Mundo Paro Aprender, Inc.
Magic Dreams, Inc.
Mundo De Juguete Daycare, Inc.

Child Care (SDA Pilot)
Busy Bee Learning Center *(on hold for implementation at the time of this report)*
Hearth Stone
In a Kid's World
The Learning Tree
Lincoln Land Community College Child Development Center
MKH Early Education Center

Leadership Teams and Process Coach Support

Each participating program begins by identifying a **Leadership Team** to guide Pyramid Model implementation. Ideally, teams comprised a teacher/teaching staff, an administrator, a member who will provide coaching to teachers, a member with expertise in behavior support, and a family member. Adjustments to the Leadership Team are made for Child Care and Family Child Care sites as needed based on the supporting infrastructure. Each program also receives ongoing individualized support from a **Pyramid Model Process Coach** to guide program-wide planning and fidelity to the model. There are currently 34 Process Coaches supporting the programs across ISBE, Head Start, Child Care, and Family Child Care.

Prior to 2020, Leadership Teams typically began their professional development with a two-day, in-person *Leadership Launch* facilitated by the Pyramid Model Consortium. These events were 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) for program-wide implementation. As in 2020, 2021 Leadership Team start-up events were provided virtually, with an introduction from PMC and follow-up with each program's Process Coach. Beyond these initial events, programs have

access to Pyramid Model Practices (Modules 1, 2, and 3) through virtual trainings facilitated by Process Coaches, as well as access to the online ePyramid Modules for self-paced learning.

PMC also offered a series of virtual professional development events to Leadership Teams and other program personnel to further prepare them for implementing the Pyramid Model with fidelity. *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)* Reliability Training is a two-day event designed to prepare instructional leaders and teacher-support personnel for administering the TPOT, a measure of implementation fidelity at the practitioner level. This year's offerings also included access to multiple licenses to ePyramid Modules in Wellness and Trauma-Informed Care. The virtual training opportunities provided by PMC across all levels – implementation sites, the Master Cadre, and Pyramid Model Trainers(as described in Figure 1) – are shown in **Table 2.** Descriptions are based on PMC event information.

Table 2. PMC Pyramid Model Professional Development Events (January – December 2021)
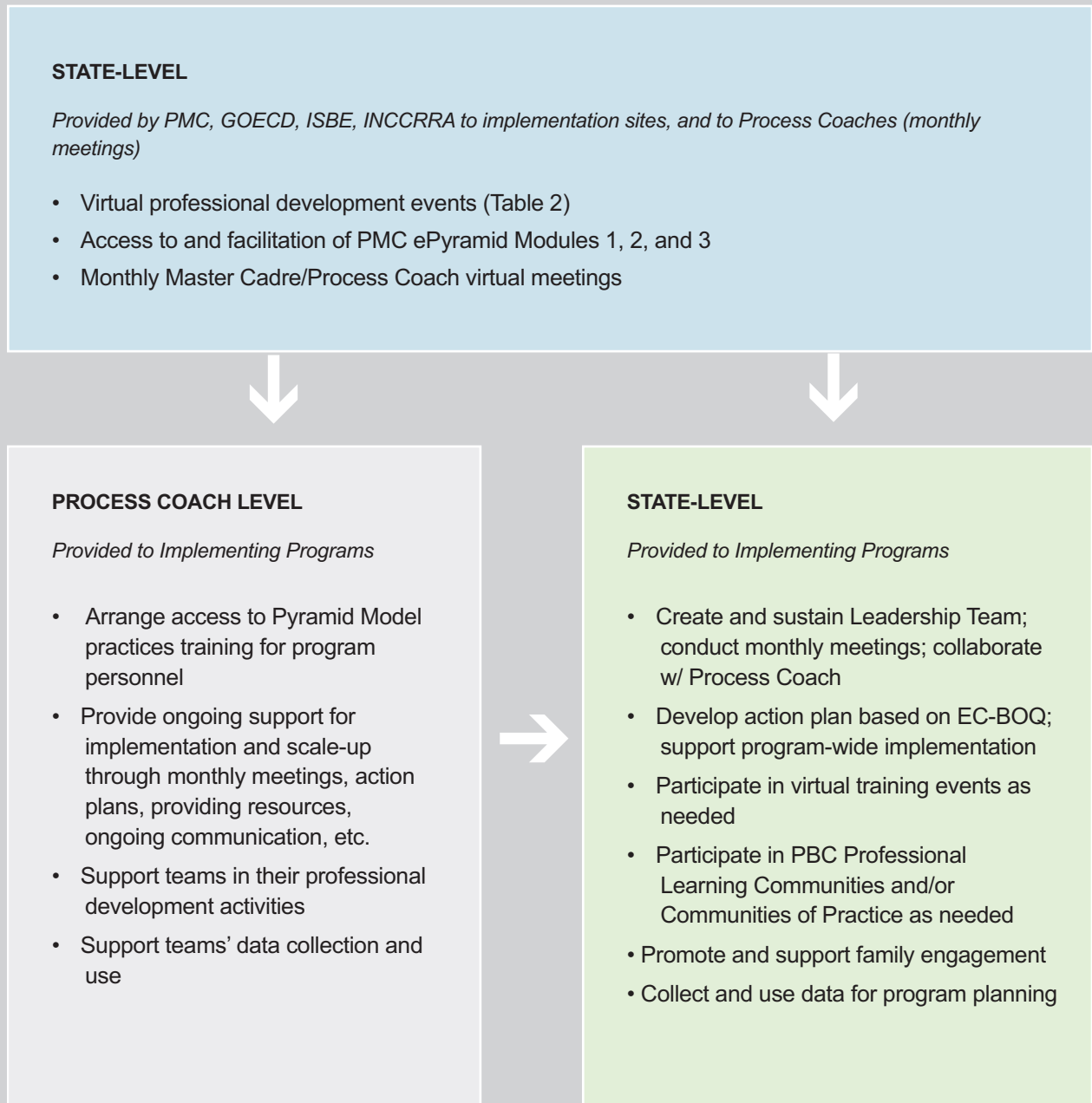
Dates	Events/Audience	Description
January 2021		
Jan 13	Prevent Teach Reinforce – Families (PTR-F) *Family Support Staff*	Training event for providers to support families, prevent behavior problems in children ages 2–10, teach proactive communication and social skills, and reinforce positive behavior.
Jan 28	Positive Solutions for Families (PSF) *Family Support Staff*	Training event 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 them appropriate behavior.
February 2021		
Feb 11	Preschool Module 1 Train the Trainer *Booster Previous Module 1 Trainers*	Training event to provide instruction on the use of the Promoting Social-Emotional Competence Tier 1 modules for delivering high-fidelity training to classroom practitioners for children ages 2-5 years.
Feb 11	Preschool Module 2 Train the Trainer *Booster Previous Module 2 Trainers*	Training event to provide instruction on the use of the Promoting Social-Emotional Competence Tier 2 modules for delivering high-fidelity training to classroom practitioners for children ages 2-5 years.
Feb 12	Prevent Teach Reinforce – Young Children (PTR-YC) *Providers who develop behavior intervention plans*	Training event intended to improve the social-emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors of young children in preschool by offering a manualized approach to development of functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans.
Feb 16, March 16, April 13, May 18	Readiness Series *Training Cohort participants (past/current/future).*	Training webinars designed to explore the various layers required to implement Program-Wide Pyramid Model strategies with fidelity in early childhood programs.
Feb 22	Preschool Module 3 Train the Trainer Booster *Previous Module 3 Trainers*	Training event to provide instruction on the use of the Promoting Social-Emotional Competence Tier 3 modules for delivering high-fidelity training to classroom practitioners for children ages 2-5 years.
March 2021		
March 2-3	Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) *Implementation Site Coaches*	Training event for new Master Cadre members to learn about PBC processes including creating shared goals and action plans, conducting focused observation, and providing feedback to practitioners.
April 2021		
April 8	Targeted Strategies to Support Inclusion *Implementation Site Teams*	Training event provided to classroom teams (teachers and assistants) as well as supervisors, behavior specialists, and other special education team members with training in successful inclusion strategies.
April 12-13	Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) in a group *Implementation Site Teams*	Training event for a cost- and time-effective way to deliver Practice-Based Coaching.
April 20-21	Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) Peer-to-Peer *Implementation Site Teams*	Training event covering the process for PBC using reciprocal peer coaching. Participants practice action planning, conducting focused observation, and reflection and feedback.
April 23	Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) Booster *Previous Reliable TPOT Observers*	Training event designed to re-do reliability of previous TPOT observers for administering the Teacher Pyramid Observation Tool within their programs. TPOT is a measure of implementation fidelity at the practitioner level.
April 27-28	Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) *Those who will complete the TPOT assessment*	Training event designed to prepare instructional leaders and other personnel who support teachers for administering the Teacher Pyramid Observation Tool within their programs.

Dates	Events/Audience	Description
May 2021		
May 10	Prevent Teach Reinforce – Young Children (PTR-YC) *Providers who develop behavior intervention plans*	Same as Feb. 12.
June 2021		
June 7	Readiness Training Process *Coaches*	Training event to explore information on program-wide Pyramid Model readiness and the various layers required to implement Program-Wide Pyramid Model strategies with fidelity in early childhood program.
June 17	Leadership Training *Process Coaches*	Training event to explore information on program-wide Pyramid Model leadership and skills beneficial to guiding programs toward Pyramid Model fidelity
August 2021		
August 3-4	Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) *Those who will complete the TPOT assessment*	Same as April 23.
Aug 24-26	Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) *Those who will complete the TPOT assessment*	Same as April 27-28.
September 2021		
Sept 9-10	Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS) *Those who will complete the TPITOS assessment*	Training event to administer the TPITOS reliably. The tool is used to support instructional leaders of children birth to age 3 to conduct a classroom observation and measure fidelity of implementation of the Pyramid Model Practices.
Sept 28	Trauma-Informed Care Train the Trainer *Infant and early childhood mental health consultants*	Training events in the content of the Trauma-Informed Care(TIC) ePyramid Modules and to prepare professionals for facilitating the content with other personnel at the implementation sites.
October 2021		
Oct 8	Inclusion Series #1 *Implementation Site Teams*	Training event to demonstrate how purposeful and effective routines can provide a high-quality inclusive programming.
Oct 12-13	Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) *Implementation Site Coaches*	Training event for new Master Cadre members to learn about PBC processes, including creating shared goals and action plans, conducting focused observation, and providing feedback to practitioners.
Oct 28	Positive Solutions for Families (PSF) *Family Support Staff*	Same as Jan. 28.
November 2021		
Nov 4	Prevent Teach Reinforce – Young Children (PTR-YC) *Providers who develop behavior intervention plans*	Same as Feb. 12.
December 2021		
Dec 7	PBC Equity Guide *Implementation Site Coaches*	Training event that provides an opportunity to think deeply about engaging in coaching with an equity lens.
Dec 10	Inclusion Series #2 *Implementation Site Teams*	Training event to support the development of goals and how to intentionally embed them throughout the school day.

In addition to these training opportunities, PMC and state leaders from GOECD, ISBE, and INCCRRA hold monthly virtual meetings with Process Coaches to provide guidance, discuss progress, address questions, and discuss evaluation requirements. Individualized support is also offered to Process Coaches by PMC consultants with expertise in implementation. More recently, these monthly meetings have been expanded to include the full Master Cadre, many of whom act as Process Coaches or will be taking on that role in the future. **Figure 2** shows the relationship between the state-level, Process Coach–level, and program-level activities that comprise the vision for Pyramid Model implementation across the 61 sites.

Figure 2. Illinois Pyramid Model – Implementation Activities

STATE-LEVEL

Provided by PMC, GOECD, ISBE, INCCRRA to implementation sites, and to Process Coaches (monthly meetings)

- Virtual professional development events (Table 2)
- Access to and facilitation of PMC ePyramid Modules 1, 2, and 3
- Monthly Master Cadre/Process Coach virtual meetings

PROCESS COACH LEVEL

Provided to Implementing Programs

- Arrange access to Pyramid Model practices training for program personnel
- Provide ongoing support for implementation and scale-up through monthly meetings, action plans, providing resources, ongoing communication, etc.
- Support teams in their professional development activities
- Support teams' data collection and use

STATE-LEVEL

Provided to Implementing Programs

- Create and sustain Leadership Team; conduct monthly meetings; collaborate w/ Process Coach
- Develop action plan based on EC-BOQ; support program-wide implementation
- Participate in virtual training events as needed
- Participate in PBC Professional Learning Communities and/or Communities of Practice as needed
- Promote and support family engagement
- Collect and use data for program planning

Pyramid Model Evaluation

The data in this report were gathered by Pyramid Model Consortium. All findings are from 2021. The evaluation examined ongoing feedback from the training events to support workforce development (Master Cadre, Pyramid Model Trainers) and took a deeper look at progress and needs across the Pyramid Model implementation sites. The latter included previous PFAE sites from the Pilot Study in 2018-2019, newly added PFA and PFAE sites, and Child Care and Family Child Care pilot sites.

As the pandemic continued to have an impact on project activities, the evaluation was aligned with these changes. Specifically, the evaluation questions and data collection tools addressed the post-COVID context and sought to learn about the unique experiences and needs of stakeholders during the ongoing pandemic.

Evaluation Questions and Methods

The data in this report were gathered by Pyramid Model Consortium. All findings are from 2021. The evaluation examined ongoing feedback from the training events to support workforce development (Master Cadre, Pyramid Model Trainers) and took a deeper look at progress and needs across the Pyramid Model implementation sites. The latter included previous PFAE sites from the Pilot Study in 2018-2019, newly added PFA and PFAE sites, and Child Care and Family Child Care pilot sites.

As the pandemic continued to have an impact on project activities, the evaluation was aligned with these changes. Specifically, the evaluation questions and data collection tools addressed the post-COVID context and sought to learn about the unique experiences and needs of stakeholders during the ongoing pandemic.

The evaluation was guided by a series of key questions, shown below. The findings in this report are organized around these questions, followed by recommendations for the future.

1. What was the level of participation across the professional development opportunities?

2. To what extent were the professional development events found to be effective and useful for participants?

3. What do implementing programs need to support their Pyramid Model efforts?

4. In what ways are Process Coaches supporting programs toward implementation?

5. To what extent are Process Coaches feeling prepared for their roles supporting programs? What training and supports would be most helpful going forward?

6. What types of implementation activities are underway at the program level?

7. What have been the facilitating factors for implementing programs this year? What do programs need in the future?

8. How are State Leadership Team structures supporting Pyramid Model implementation in programs across Illinois?

These questions were addressed through the data collection activities described below. Response rates were affected by the shifting landscape of COVID response and ongoing workforce challenges present in Illinois and across the US. The findings and recommendations in this report were derived from these sources.

Professional Development Event Feedback Forms

Online forms were designed to gather feedback from participants following each virtual professional development event. The topics included participant progress on the relevant learning objectives, and the quality and usefulness of each event. Summary results were shared with PMC and state project leaders to provide feedback and to guide efforts going forward. The average feedback response rate across the 26 virtual events for which data were available for this report was 71%.

Process Coach Logs

An online log was designed for Process Coaches to document the supports they provided to their programs throughout 2021, including Pyramid Model practices training sessions. For each substantive contact that Process Coaches made, the log captured details such as the amount of time spent providing support, who participated and their roles, 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 258 support contacts were logged by the Process Coaches across 45 of the 61 programs (76%).

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 progress toward program-wide Pyramid Model implementation and to develop action plans and revisited as needed. These data are shared with the evaluation team to assess statewide progress. The participating programs are using the EC-BOQ version 2.0, which was updated in 2017 with new and revised benchmarks associated with culturally responsive practices to ensure equity. EC-BOQ results from 2021 were submitted for 21 programs across PFAE, Child Care, and Family Child Care programs.

Process Coach Survey

An online survey was designed to gather feedback from Process Coaches about project supports, professional development needs, perceptions of programs' progress, and ideas about how best to support programs in the future. The survey was distributed in November 2021. For the Year 2 evaluation, this data source served to provide greater context to the unique needs of programs throughout the year as the landscape of early care and learning continued to be affected by the pandemic. Eighteen of the 34 coaches (those who were active across all sectors of the projects) completed the survey, for a 52% response rate.

Program Leaders Survey

In November 2021, an online survey was delivered to program leaders to help leaders understand training and implementation successes and challenges, perceptions of programs' progress and ongoing needs, and program implementation implications from the ongoing COVID pandemic. Of the 61 total programs, 23 program leaders responded (39%).

Evaluation Findings

Q1. What was the level of participation across the professional development opportunities?

FINDING: There were more than 375 attendees across the real-time professional development events, including members of the Master Cadre, personnel from the implementation sites, Process Coaches, practice-based Coaches, and Pyramid Model trainers. Additionally, over 1,500 eModules were distributed to providers across the content areas of Preschool (45), Infant-Toddler (2), Reducing Implicit Bias (1,143) and Trauma-Informed Care (313). It is important to note that the numbers above are reflective of the eModules funded by PDG. However, additional funding from the GEERS project resulted in the delivery of an additional 6,500 eModules to providers in Illinois during this reporting period.

Table 3 shows the number of personnel who attended each event offered by PMC. As discussed above, events were open to different audiences based on the varied goals of the grant; attendees included the Master Cadre, Instructional Leads, and other personnel from the implementation sites, and the broader group of Pyramid Model Trainers. The professional development events shown in Table 3 were conducted virtually and attendance data were shared with the evaluation team. Facilitators also distributed feedback links after each event; as shown, response rates ranged from 46% to 90%, with an average response rate of 68%.

Table 3. Statewide Professional Development Event Participation (January – December 2021)

Event	Audience	Attendees	Feedback Responses	Response Rate
January 2021				
Prevent Teach Reinforce – Families (PTR-F)	Family Support Staff	16	9	56%
Positive Solutions for Families (PSF)	Family Support Staff	16	13	81%
February 2021				
Preschool Module 1 Train the Trainer Booster	Previous Module 1 Trainers	32	21	66%
Preschool Module 2 Train the Trainer Booster	Previous Module 2 Trainers	10	9	90%
Prevent Teach Reinforce–Young Children (PTR-YC)	Providers who develop behavior intervention plans	24	15	63%
Preschool Module 3 Train the Trainer Booster	Previous Module 3 Trainers	10	7	70%
March 2021				
Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)	Implementation Site Coaches	21	13	62%
April 2021				
Targeted Strategies to Support Inclusion	Implementation Site Teams	40	-----	No data
Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) Booster	Previous Reliable TPOT Observers	10	-----	No data
Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)	Those who will complete the TPOT assessment	24	18	75%

Event	Audience	Attendees	Feedback Responses	Response Rate
May 2021				
Prevent Teach Reinforce – Young Children (PTR-YC)	Providers who develop behavior intervention plans	26	22	85%
June 2021				
Process Coach Readiness Training	Future Process Coaches	12	8	67%
Process Coach Leadership Training	Current Process Coaches	28	17	61%
August 2021				
Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)	Those who will complete the TPOT assessment	24	15	63%
Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)	Those who will complete the TPOT assessment	24	13	54%
September 2021				
Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS)	Those who will complete the TPITOS assessment	24	15	63%
Trauma-Informed Care Train the Trainer	Infant and early childhood mental health consultants	17	12	71%
October 2021				
Inclusion Series #1	Implementation Site Teams	15	7	47%
Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)	Implementation Site Coaches	14	12	86%
Positive Solutions for Families (PSF)	Family Support Staff	13	6	46%
November 2021				
Prevent Teach Reinforce – Young Children (PTR-YC)	Providers who develop behavior intervention plans	29	30	97%
December 2021				
PBC Equity Guide	Implementation Site Coaches	13	6	46%
Inclusion Series #2	Implementation Site Teams	15	8	53%
		Total Attendees: 400+		

It is important to note that staff training in Pyramid Model practices (Modules 1 through 3) is an important foundational aspect of implementation. Training is provided by the Pyramid Model Professional Development Network of trainers and coaches, made up of early childhood professionals in professional development systems across the state, including members of the Master Cadre. To provide context for this year, the Program Leaders Survey asked program leaders whether most staff had received training in the Modules as of Fall 2021. Survey results suggest that 77% of programs have had all/most teaching staff trained in Module 1 (Relationships), 55% in Module 2 (Targeted Strategies), and 40% in Module 3 (Individualized Intervention).

Additionally, the implementation sites could also use the online ePyramid Modules for training staff (purchased as part of the GEER 1 Project). All of the Preschool and Wellness eModules were successfully disseminated to early childhood providers in Illinois between December 2020 and June 2021, and the majority of codes were accessed. In July 2021, for the activated codes, users on average completed 71% of the Wellness course and 65% of the Preschool course. Of note, the Preschool and Wellness eModules were dispersed through June 2021 and take 18 hours to complete. Participants continued to have access to complete the courses for one full year after activation. This timing will ultimately have a positive impact on completion numbers of both eModules.

Q2. To what extent were the professional development events found to be effective and useful for participants?

FINDING: Across events, the vast majority of participants indicated having met the learning objectives for each topic and rated the events as being high-quality. The highest rated events were Practice-Based Coaching (PBC), Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool, and Positive Solutions for Families.

Feedback summaries from each event were shared with project leaders to review event-specific detail and to make adjustments going forward as needed. Each feedback form includes 3-5 relevant learning objectives, while the remainder of the form is standard across events. The forms also include a rating of overall quality, as summarized in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3. Overall Satisfaction with Professional Development Training ("Excellent" and "Very Good")
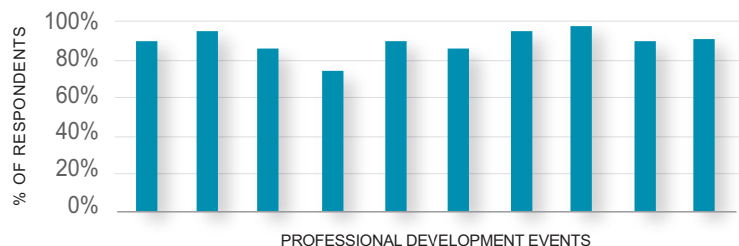
The rating options are on a 5-point scale, where *1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good, and 5=excellent.* As shown, for **all** events, 74% or more participants rated events as "very good" or "excellent." Participants indicated that specific strategies and resources shared during the events were most useful, as well as having opportunities to learn about what others are doing.

- Participants across events were generally interested in continued exploration of the topics and opportunities to reflect and share information with each other.
- Across events, participants were interested in specific practices to support the content through the lens of the Pyramid Model framework.

FINDING: Participants typically found the statewide events to be relevant and useful to their professional practice. Across events, most participants expressed confidence that implementing the strategies 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 4** shows the percentage of respondents that indicated agreement across key topics.

Table 4. Participant Ratings of Event Relevance and Usefulness

Relevance	PBC	PTR-YC	TICTOT	PSF	TPOT	PTR-F	PBC Equity Guide
Activities were of a type that engaged participants over a sustained period of time allowing for analysis, discovery, and application as they relate to student learning, social or emotional achievement, or well-being.	92%	78%	63%	79%	81%	67%	100%
The outcomes of this professional development were clearly identified as the knowledge and/or skills that I should gain as a result of my participation.	72%	76%	72%	100%	77%	100%	83%
Usefulness	**PBC**	**PTR-YC**	**TICTOT**	**PSF**	**TPOT**	**PTR-F**	**PBC Equity Guide**
This professional development will impact my professional growth or student growth in regard to content knowledge or skills, or both.	100%	100%	100%	95%	100%	100%	100%
This professional development will impact my social and emotional growth or student social and emotional growth.	100%	97%	83%	95%	100%	100%	100%
The professional development aligned to my district or school improvement plans.	100%	94%	90%	96%	100%	100%	100%
I am confident that I have the resources and human support to implement the ideas and practices presented.	100%	97%	41%	95%	89%	88%	100%
The professional development will lead to improved learning for children.	76%	61%	40%	61%	81%	89%	100%

With respect to event relevance generally, events in the *PBC*, the *PBC Equity Guide*, and *TPOT* received some of the highest ratings, as did *Positive Solutions for Families*, offered to family support staff and program implementation teams. The ratings for perceived usefulness were very high across most events. Throughout all the trainings provided in 2021, generally participants were concerned with having the resources and human support available to implement the ideas and content presented.

Q3. What do implementing programs need to support their Pyramid Model efforts?

Based on the survey completed in November 2021, 57% of program leaders used remote learning for some or all of the year. Additionally, program leaders described COVID-related impacts to programs as the following:
- increased staff turnover (60%)
- chronic understaffing across programs (65%)
- widespread illness throughout programs, causing closures or rolling quarantines (57%)
- requirements for additional COVID protocols related to cleaning, daily symptom checks, and contact- tracing (91%)

With these conditions in mind, program leaders indicated that what they needed most to continue Pyramid Model implementation was time for training and coaching to support implementation; full staffing and daily classroom coverage, including filled teacher positions and substitutes; and ongoing support for Tier 3 (PTR-YC) implementation for children with severe and persistent challenging behavior.

FINDING: Program leaders indicated the need for continued training and ongoing access to the Pyramid Model resources (e.g., PM Modules, TPOT). Other needs included continued support from Process Coaches, assistance for engaging and supporting families, and guidance for implementing the Pyramid Model in a challenging early childhood landscape.

- **Continued Staff Training in Pyramid Model Practices:** Several program leaders described challenges around continuing professional development around the Pyramid Practices due to high levels of staff turnover. Some requested ongoing access to the Modules for review at all times, and/or both maintaining and expanding implementation. Tier 3 supports continue to be frequently requested.

- **Additional Training to Support Implementation:** Several programs mentioned the need for BIRS (Behavior Incident Reporting System) training, along with other program-specific requests for PBC, TPOT, and TPITOS (Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation System) trainings. Other individual comments indicated: a need for clear guidance on specific goals with obtainable timelines to complete trainings; internal systems for providing differentiated professional development to staff; regional trainings for local programs to collaborate; and Kindergarten-related trainings.

- **Continued Coach Support and Local Efforts:** Several programs noted the importance of continued support from their Process Coaches, including ongoing work and collaboration with their Leadership Teams. Programs mentioned the need to continue using the resources that have been provided, and time to keep practicing what they were learning. There was also mention of the need for in-person modeling of implementation from the internal coach.

- **Assistance Engaging and Supporting Families:** Several programs mentioned the need for strategies to support families during remote learning, and/or training for families' use of Pyramid Model strategies at home.

Taken together, these suggestions from programs are reflected in the work of PMC and Process Coaches throughout winter and spring 2022. Process Coach activities are described in the following section, followed by descriptions of program-level progress and activities to date.

Q4. In what ways are Process Coaches supporting programs toward implementation?

Each program has been connected with a Process Coach to support implementation, an essential feature of the project guided by the Pyramid Model Consortium. For sites continuing their implementation efforts from prior years, the Process Coach assignments remained consistent to ensure continuity. During 2021, Process Coaches engaged with their programs as they were launched. This included PFA and PFAE sites, Head Start sites, and Child Care pilot sites beginning in November 2020 and Child Care and Family Child Care programs launched throughout 2021.

FINDING: Process Coaches spent the year supporting Leadership Teams, administrators, and internal coaches. In spring 2021, the focus was on re-establishing team plans and goals, connecting staff to professional development opportunities with a focus on Wellness and Trauma-Informed Care, and supporting programs to assist families. In fall 2021, with more programs open, Process Coaches spent time helping program teams to collect and use TPOT data to develop coaching plans.
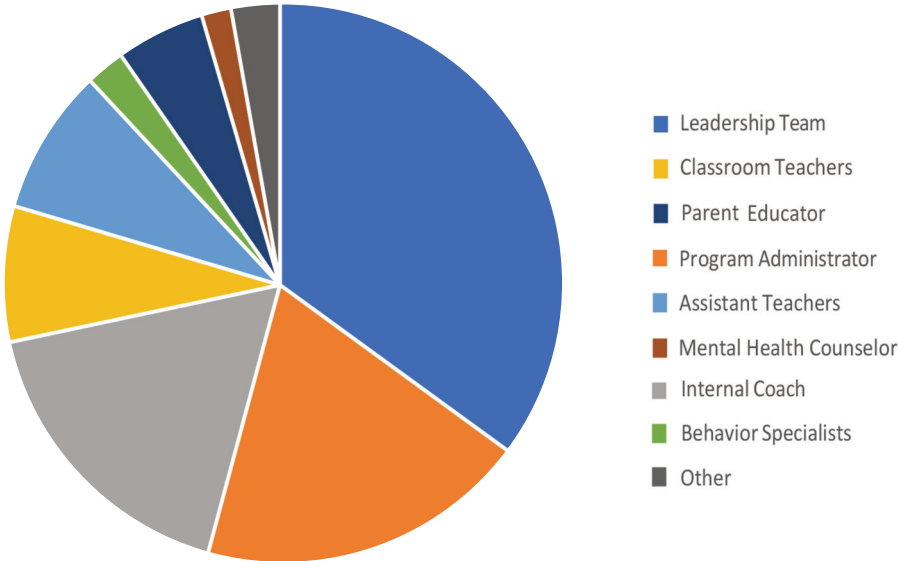
The Process Coach Logs captured the range of supports documented from January to December, and also pointed to the ongoing modifications that programs were making due to the ongoing COVID pandemic. A summary of Process Coach contacts with programs is provided in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Summary of Process Coach Log Contacts

| Contact Details	August Start-Up
Number of programs	61
Number / percentage of programs with documented coaching contacts	42 / 71%
Timeframe of log entries	January – December 2021
Range of Process Coaching contacts documented per program	1-25 contacts
Average number of contacts per program	4
Range of duration of each contact	30 mins to 5 hours
Average duration of each contact	1.5 hours
Format of contact	Virtual meeting – 77% Phone call – 7% Site visit – 9% Email – 7%

As shown, 42 of the 61 programs had support documented by the Process Coaches. Ninety-one percent of the contacts were virtual, as COVID-19 restrictions continued throughout 2021; no on-site visits were allowed for a large portion of the year and they were not approved for ISBE sites. Those coaches who did not meet virtually with the program-wide leadership teams met via phone (7%). A small number of in-person contacts with the program teams were held (9%) during the brief part of 2021 where site visits were allowed. The range in number of contacts in programs is due to the staggered launching that occurred throughout the year, giving some programs opportunities for many more coaching contacts. **Figure 4** identifies the contact frequency by role.

Figure 4. Process Coach Contacts

- Leadership Team
- Classroom Teachers
- Parent Educator
- Program Administrator
- Assistant Teachers
- Mental Health Counselor
- Internal Coach
- Behavior Specialists
- Other

Figure 5. Primary Areas of Process Coach Support

Figure 5 shows the major categories of support that Process Coaches provided to their programs. The majority of contacts focused on supporting Leadership Teams (77%), followed by support for internal coaches (13%). Additionally, 7% of contacts were related to supporting or providing Pyramid Model practices training.
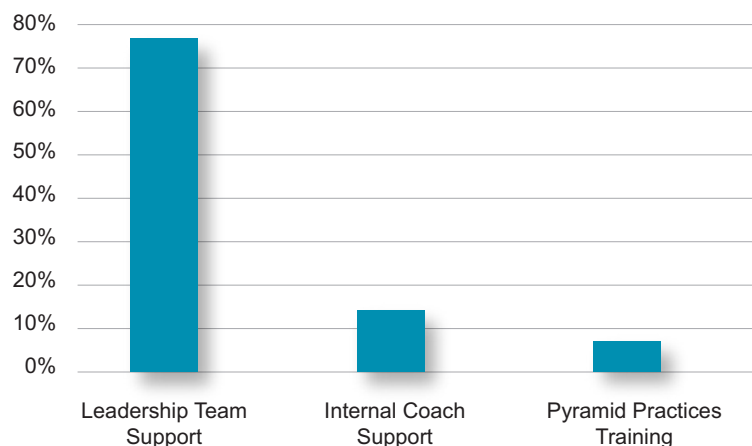
The Process Coach Log entries indicated the alignment of the work with the Critical Elements of the EC-BOQ for program-wide implementation. Examples include:

*   **Leadership Team Activities:** Re-establishing teams/identifying members, reviewing status after one to two years of implementation, articulating and clarifying action plans, and identifying areas of need for moving forward.

*   **Professional Development and Staff Support Plans:** Facilitating access to online trainings such as Wellness and Trauma- Informed Care and the ePyramid Modules (1-3), making connections to the PBC Professional Learning Community and/or Community of Practice opportunities (PLC/COP) for internal coaches, linking to training resources.

*   **Program-Wide Expectations:** Re-establishing expectations for staff, sharing expectations with families.

*   **Family Engagement:** Introducing families to the Pyramid Model and importance of routines and expectations at home and school, incorporating more home-to-school Pyramid practice to support family engagement, virtual handouts for parent and child expectations.

*   **Responding to Challenging Behavior:** Helping to build capacity to support teachers and families for children exhibiting challenging behaviors.

For newer PFAE sites and Child Care Centers, Process Coach Logs indicate work toward establishing Leadership Teams, becoming familiar with Pyramid Model practices, and working on completion of the EC-BOQ.

Q5. To what extent are Process Coaches feeling prepared for their roles? What training and supports would be most helpful going forward?

FINDING: Process Coaches feel best prepared for supporting Leadership Teams in general planning for Pyramid Model implementation, completion of the EC-BOQs, and helping leaders to support teaching staff to engage in Pyramid Model practices. Areas with the greatest potential for growth include supporting fidelity in the classroom, guiding teams' use of data, supporting equity, and supporting teams to engage in the PTR-YC process.

The survey distributed in November 2021 asked Process Coaches to indicate their preparedness for their work supporting ECEC programs. Each item was rated on a scale of 1 to 5, where *1=not well prepared and 5=very well prepared.*

Figure 6. Process Coach Areas of Support

As shown in **Figure 6**, Process Coaches who responded to the survey feel best prepared for supporting Leadership Teams in general planning for Pyramid Model implementation and completion of the EC-BOQs; and helping leaders to support teaching staff to engage in Pyramid Model practices. Areas with the greatest potential for growth include supporting fidelity in the classroom, guiding teams' use of data, supporting equity, and supporting teams to engage in the PTR-YC process. As to overall preparedness to engage as a Process Coach, 66% of respondents indicated they were completely or fairly confident they could work independently. The survey also asked Process Coaches to describe their future training and support needs.

FINDING: Process Coaches continue to request additional training and support on Prevent Teach Reinforce for Young Children, guidance for coaching in programs that do not have internal coaches available, and the need for remote coaching strategies.

Process Coaches were asked to describe the ways in which they could be best supported. Many indicated interest in additional training in PTR-YC guidance, and many mentioned guidance for coaching in programs that are not staffed with a coach. Additional examples of needs include:
- The need for remote coaching strategies
- Facilitation strategies for Leadership Team meetings
- Tips for organizing content of coaching sessions

Several Process Coaches also identified the need for more opportunities to share strategies, successes, and challenges with each other (i.e., Community of Practice for Process Coaches). One coach mentioned needing *"a place to talk more about the implementation of what we learn. I would find it very beneficial to participate in an intentionally facilitated meeting of this type. Not just a chat session, but one that is focused and advances practices."*

Q6. What types of implementation activities are underway at the program level?

Implementation of the Pyramid Model framework at the program level was assessed in several ways for this report, including using program-level data from the EC-BOQ completed by Leadership Teams and descriptions of implementation activities provided through the Process Coach Survey. As the Pyramid Model work continues, the evaluation is slated to collect data about implementation and outcomes from the ECEC sites through Leadership Team Surveys. With the COVID-19 pandemic still at play in 2021, TPOT data was difficult to collect. Some programs were able to collect baseline data on the TPOT to develop action plans. With on-site restrictions in place, many coaches developed action plans from providers using the Pyramid Model Implementation Checklist. With a focus on increasing access to TPOT reliable users, 106 participants were trained in TPOT, TPOT Booster, and TPITOS combined in Illinois in 2021. This is an important step toward gathering classroom-level TPOT data to examine fidelity to the model both locally for program staff, and as part of the grant evaluation.

Program-wide Implementation (EC-BOQ)

The EC-BOQ self-assessment consists of 41 benchmarks of high-quality implementation of the Pyramid Model framework across seven critical elements. (Critical elements are shown in Figure 7 below; the full list of indicators is provided in **Appendix A**.) 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 are guided by PMC to use the EC-BOQ self-assessment tool at the outset of their Pyramid Model efforts to create an implementation/action plan, and to revisit the tool as often as needed to assess progress and adjust their plans. As a general guideline, teams are encouraged to use the EC-BOQ two times annually.

In using the EC-BOQ as a gauge of program progress, it is worth noting that the data are self-reported and based on each Leadership Team's "internal metric" for assessing their own progress. Taken together in the aggregate, however, the evaluation team looks to the results of these ratings to draw some general conclusions about overall progress based on this measure, such as areas of strength and potential growth.

FINDING: EC-BOQ results available from implementing programs in spring and fall 2021 indicate that on average, Leadership Teams are reporting many critical elements "partially in place," with a fair portion reportedly "in place." The strongest elements noted were Establishing Leadership Teams, Staff Buy-In, and Program-wide Expectations. The greatest area for growth is collecting and using data. Implementation teams showed tremendous growth in beginning to implement procedures to support with challenging behavior.

Data for this finding are based on a summary of the EC-BOQ results submitted for 21 of the 61 programs engaged in implementation during 2021. Programs who entered EC-BOQ data have been engaged in Pyramid Model efforts for anywhere from 3 months to two years. **Figure 7** 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.

Figure 7. 2021 EC-BOQ Results: Percent of Critical Elements "Partially in Place" and "In Place"
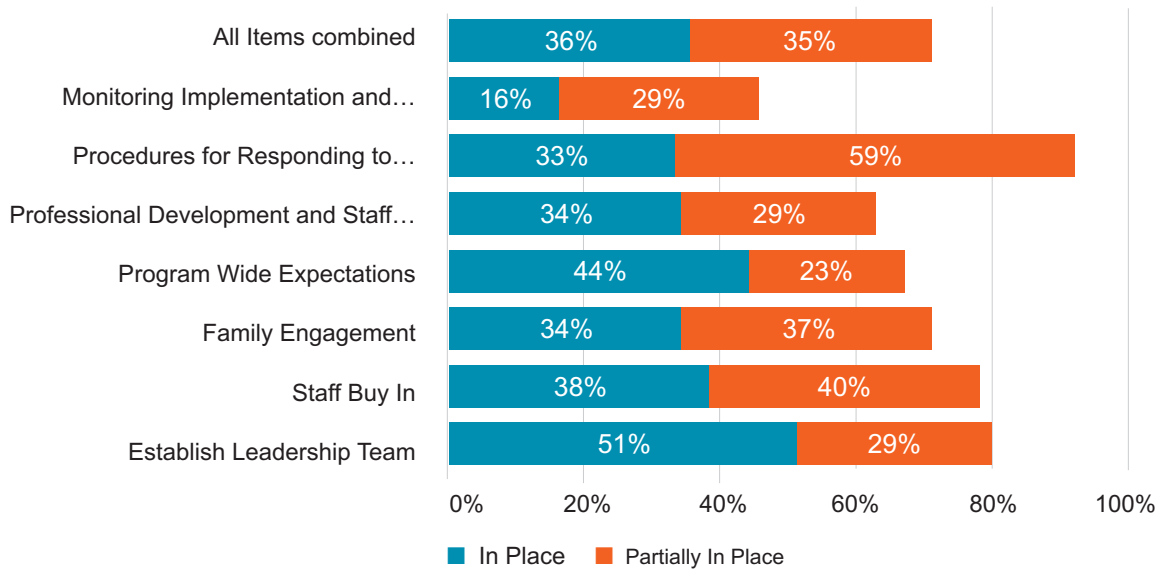
As shown in the figure, among the seven critical elements, implementation is reportedly furthest along in the following areas:
- Establishing a Leadership Team
- Staff buy-in
- Program-wide expectations

The greatest area for growth is:
- Collecting and using data (critical element "Monitoring Implementation and Outcomes")

It is important to note that programs showed the greatest growth (over previous years) in Procedures to Responding Challenging Behavior. This is in line with the pointed effort in 2021 at providing PTR-YC training and additional coaching supports.

Additionally, data were analyzed for 10 programs with EC-BOQ ratings from November/December 2020 and November/December 2021. Some of the programs had been implemented since 2019 and others starts implementation in 2020.

As shown in **Figure 8,** programs that started in 2019 or 2020 showed growth across all of the critical elements on the EC-BOQ, indicating progress toward program-wide implementation when re-assessed in 2021.

Figure 8. Year 1 / Year 2 Leadership Team Outcomes
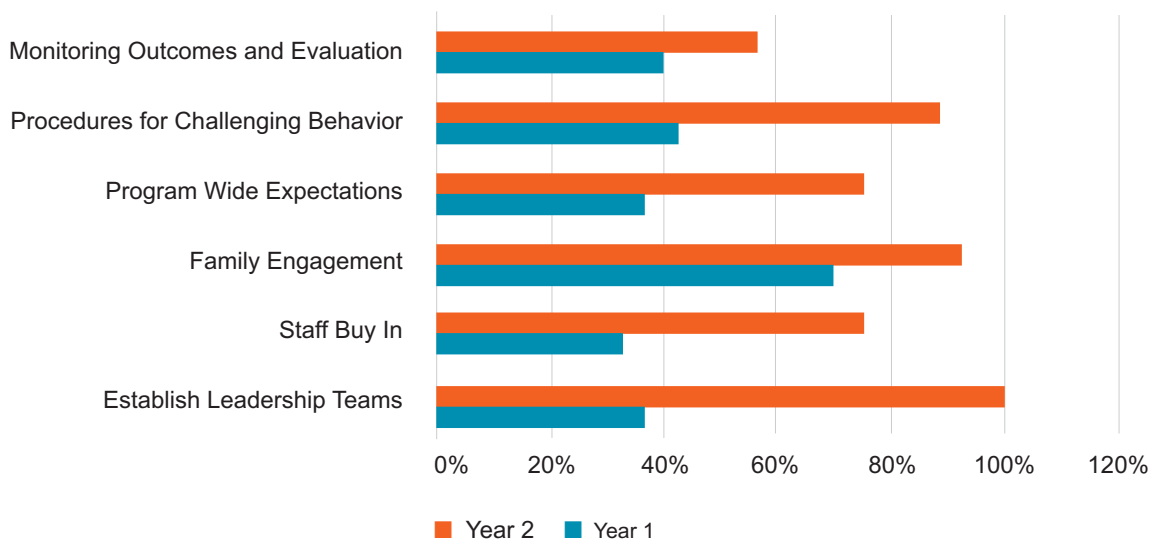
Implementation Activities

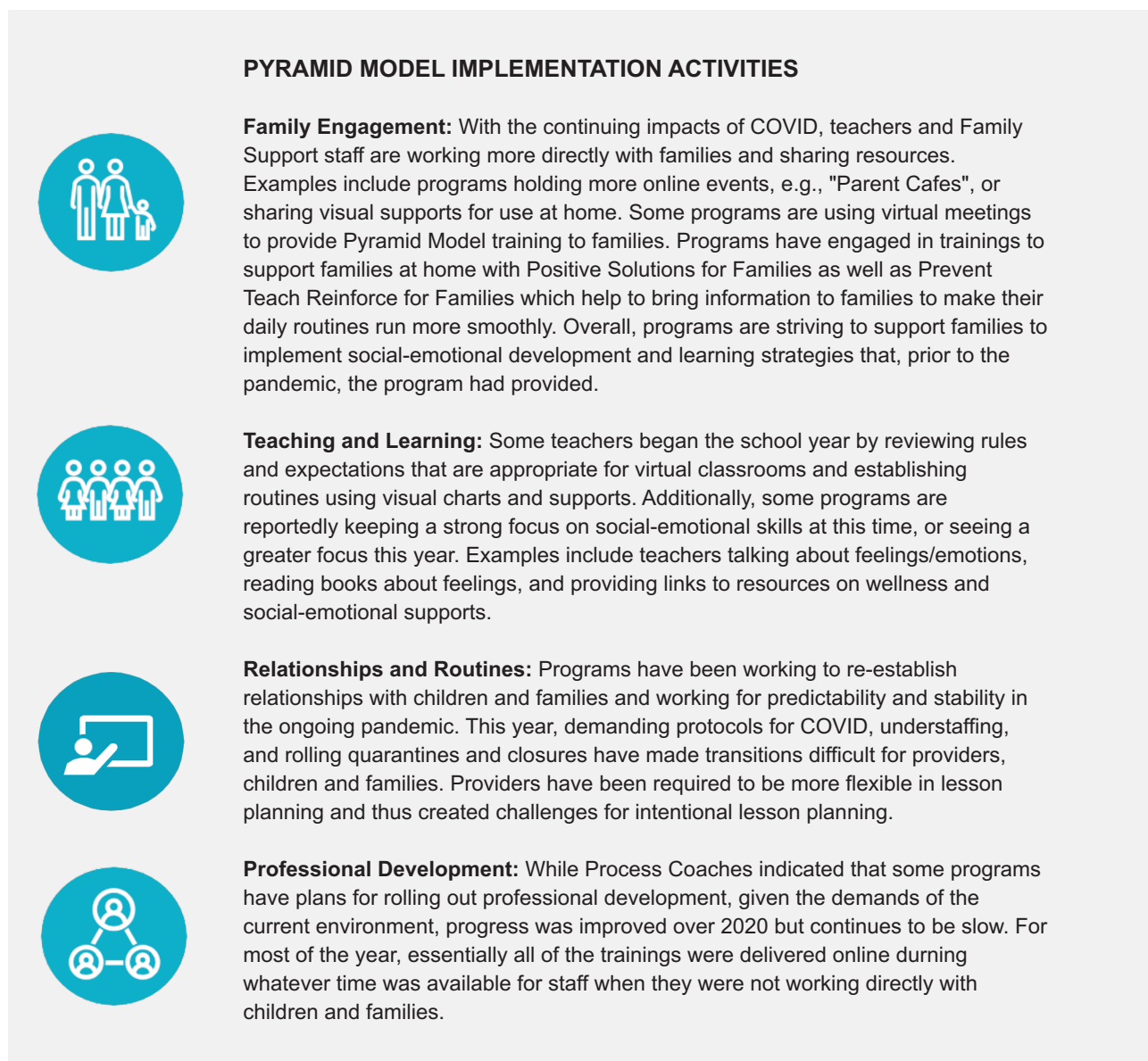**FINDING:** Pyramid Model implementation activities in 2021 responded to provider requests in 2020 to find new ways to support children's social-emotional development, share program-wide expectations with families, and work to connect staff to much-needed training opportunities for family partnerships, including Positive Solutions for Families and Prevent Teach Reinforce for Families.

Most Process Coaches provided descriptions of implementation activities at the program level, organized below (in **Figure 9**) by common themes. Several of these themes directly align with program needs and areas for development identified on the Program Leaders Survey.

Figure 9. Pyramid Model Implementation Activities

PYRAMID MODEL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

Family Engagement: With the continuing impacts of COVID, teachers and Family Support staff are working more directly with families and sharing resources. Examples include programs holding more online events, e.g., "Parent Cafes", or sharing visual supports for use at home. Some programs are using virtual meetings to provide Pyramid Model training to families. Programs have engaged in trainings to support families at home with Positive Solutions for Families as well as Prevent Teach Reinforce for Families which help to bring information to families to make their daily routines run more smoothly. Overall, programs are striving to support families to implement social-emotional development and learning strategies that, prior to the pandemic, the program had provided.

Teaching and Learning: Some teachers began the school year by reviewing rules and expectations that are appropriate for virtual classrooms and establishing routines using visual charts and supports. Additionally, some programs are reportedly keeping a strong focus on social-emotional skills at this time, or seeing a greater focus this year. Examples include teachers talking about feelings/emotions, reading books about feelings, and providing links to resources on wellness and social-emotional supports.

Relationships and Routines: Programs have been working to re-establish relationships with children and families and working for predictability and stability in the ongoing pandemic. This year, demanding protocols for COVID, understaffing, and rolling quarantines and closures have made transitions difficult for providers, children and families. Providers have been required to be more flexible in lesson planning and thus created challenges for intentional lesson planning.

Professional Development: While Process Coaches indicated that some programs have plans for rolling out professional development, given the demands of the current environment, progress was improved over 2020 but continues to be slow. For most of the year, essentially all of the trainings were delivered online during whatever time was available for staff when they were not working directly with children and families.

Q7. What have been the facilitating factors for implementing programs this year? What do programs need in the future?

Facilitating Factors

FINDING: Process Coaches described approaches that are helping to move programs forward. Examples included facilitating access to training opportunities, providing resources (especially from NCPMI), maintaining strong relationships with Leadership Teams, using the EC-BOQ as a guide for planning, supporting teachers' use

Process Coaches described some of the strategies and resources that were most effective during 2021. Examples included:

- **Access to Training:** Sharing information about Pyramid Model training events and opportunities; access to the Wellness ePyramid Modules that address how to recognize and reduce stress.

- **Fostering Relationships:** Building a strong relationship with the entire team, staying connected virtually or in person when possible; encouraging teams to problem-solve together drawing on available resources.

- **Leadership Team Support:** Staying involved in meetings; planning for Leadership Team meetings by establishing agendas with key leaders ahead of time; engaging small group discussions and problem- solving. Several teams described a focus on staff wellness as central to their work in 2021.

- **NCPMI Resources:** Encouraging use of resources on the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) website include strategies for remote learning, family support, and re-establishing routines.

- **EC-BOQ as a Guide:** Several Process Coaches described using the EC-BOQ elements to help guide the implementation process.

- **Classroom/Teaching Strategies:** Framing discussion of strategies to support children in their social- emotional development using Pyramid Model practices. (In one example, this involved using the TPOT to talk about areas to improve and turning to teachers skilled in those areas to share examples with staff.) Also, facilitating PLCs around the ePyramid Modules for staff; meeting with the instructional coach for reflection and planning; providing support via teacher podcast to allow "going deeper."

- **Recognizing Program Needs and Successes:** Some Process Coaches described supporting programs in their current state, not pushing too hard as the landscape of early childhood continues to evolve.

Q8. How are State Leadership Team structures supporting Pyramid Model implementation in programs across Illinois?

The Illinois Pyramid Model State Leadership Team first convened in 2017 and meets monthly. Members represent a cross-sector of agencies, including ISBE, Home Visiting, Head Start, Part C, Part B, Child Care, Mental Health Consultation, Parent Training and Information Centers, higher education, private funders, and technical assistance providers. The purpose of the team is to ensure that a state infrastructure exists to support Pyramid Model implementation statewide. Their work includes a focus on collaboration, data-based decision-making, and policy development.

Figure 10. State Leadership Team Benchmarks of Quality Critical Elements
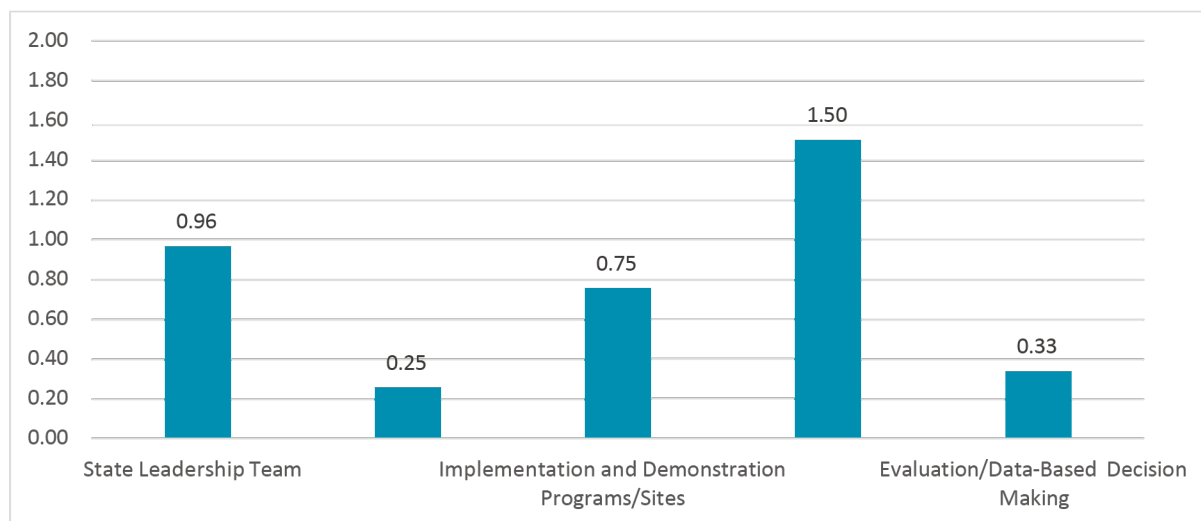
Figure 10 displays the critical elements on the State Leadership Team Benchmarks of Quality for the Illinois SLT as of the end of 2019. The SLT BOQ is a self-assessment tool that can be completed by the SLT as a whole or in small groups, with the results from each group compiled into one consensus document to ensure that all SLT members are in agreement. The data from the SLT-BOQ are used for planning future work and tracking progress.

From these data, in addition to meeting as a full cross-sector group, the Illinois Pyramid Model State Leadership Team has developed workgroups to address the specific needs identified on the SLT-BOQ. Members of the SLT are divided across 1) a data and evaluation workgroup, 2) an implementation workgroup, and 3) a professional development workgroup. Each workgroup has an individualized action plan with items related to statewide support for Pyramid Model implementation and communication about the project. Workgroups meet monthly and share updates at the monthly SLT meetings.

With an eye toward increasing equity, in winter and spring 2021, the SLT engaged in a process to learn from the Children's Equity Project about equity in early childhood systems. The SLT also completed the State Leadership Team Equity Inventory to identify leverage points to increase equity in services to programs, providers, and children and families who are typically underserved. Findings from the Equity Inventory have led to the development of infographics used to influence policy at the state level as well as to guide training, coaching, and program recruitment.
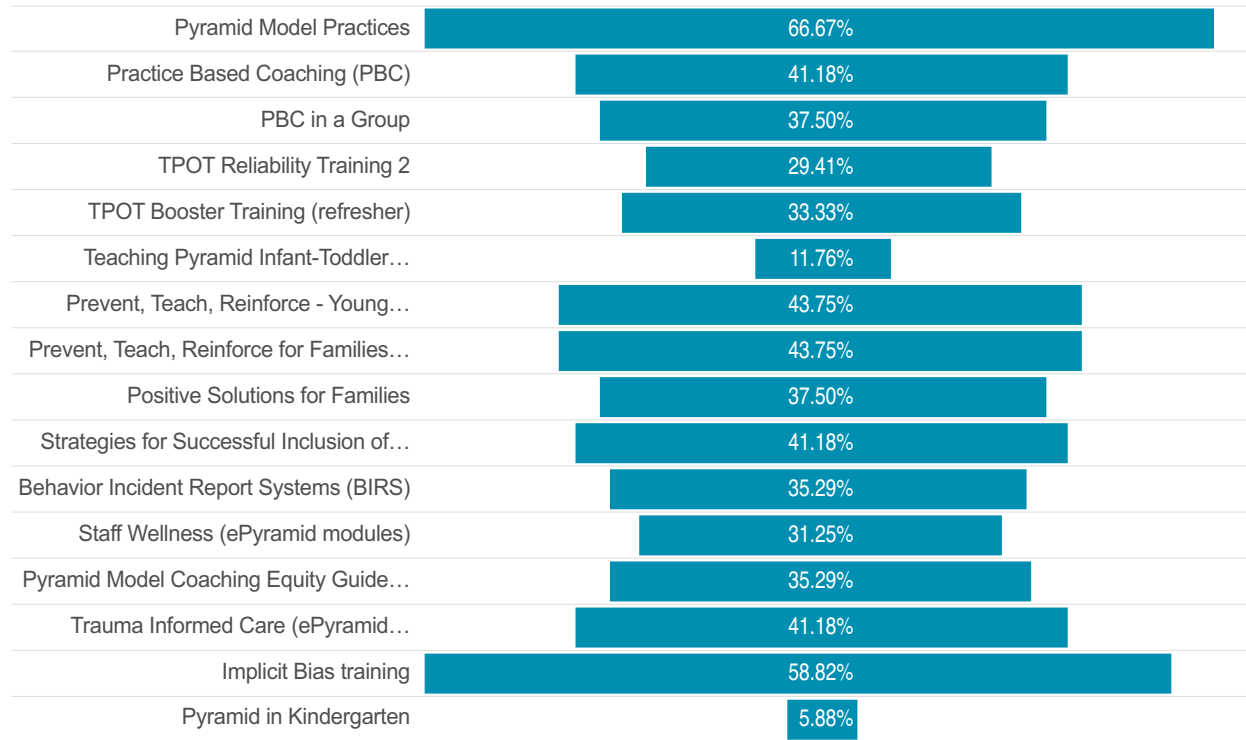
Needs Going Forward

Process Coaches also provided feedback about the training and supports programs would benefit from going forward.

FINDING: Professional development priority areas continue to be broad as programs begin implementation and strive for fidelity. The most-requested trainings include those dealing with Pyramid Model Practices and implicit bias, followed closely by Trauma-Informed Care, Strategies for Inclusion of Children with Disabilities, and Prevent Teach Reinforce for Young Children and Prevent Teach Reinforce for Families.

With respect to training needs, Process Coaches were asked to rate different topics from 1 to 4, where *1=Not a Priority at this time and 4=Highly Beneficial.* The summary results in **Figure 11** show training and coaching items that Process Coaches rated as "highly beneficial."

Figure 11. Professional Development Activities Rated Most Beneficial for Implementing Programs

Activity	Percentage
Pyramid Model Practices	66.67%
Practice Based Coaching (PBC)	41.18%
PBC in a Group	37.50%
TPOT Reliability Training 2	29.41%
TPOT Booster Training (refresher)	33.33%
Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler…	11.76%
Prevent, Teach, Reinforce - Young…	43.75%
Prevent, Teach, Reinforce for Families…	43.75%
Positive Solutions for Families	37.50%
Strategies for Successful Inclusion of…	41.18%
Behavior Incident Report Systems (BIRS)	35.29%
Staff Wellness (ePyramid modules)	31.25%
Pyramid Model Coaching Equity Guide…	35.29%
Trauma Informed Care (ePyramid…	41.18%
Implicit Bias training	58.82%
Pyramid in Kindergarten	5.88%

Other themes identified by the Process Coaches include:
- **Ongoing support for engagement and buy-in** among staff for the Pyramid Model, given the complex and competing demands created by COVID and other intense workforce challenges.
- **Continuing to support families,** including examples and recommendations for how school personnel can help families to meet children's social-emotional needs.
- **Continued communication about the value of Pyramid Model implementation,** with recognition that it will look different for each program. Some suggested a "reboot" or retreat for experienced teams and start-up events for new teams.
- **Continued support for staff wellness** as staff respond to the ever-changing and challenging landscape of early childhood education in Illinois.

Taken together, these suggestions reflect the work underway as discussed throughout this report. Going forward, these areas of focus will continue to be important as programs and Process Coaches collaborate on next steps to support children and families. The following section provides a brief summary of this year's findings and offers several considerations for going forward.

Summary
During 2021, state project leaders (from GOECD, ISBE, IHSA, EITP, and INCCRRA) and the Pyramid Model Consortium collaborated to support the Pyramid Model implementation sites and to strengthen the broader ECEC workforce. As in 2020, the work this year was carried out within the context of COVID-19, with programs providing services through a combination of in-person and remote settings and Process Coaches supporting programs virtually.

PMC provided professional development to Pyramid Model Trainers, the Master Cadre of Pyramid Model experts, and Process Coaches who provide individualized support to the implementation sites. As of the writing of this report, there are 61 ECEC programs working toward Pyramid Model implementation across ISBE, Head Start, and Child Care Centers and Family Child Care.

Program leaders across the implementation sites indicated that what they needed most in 2021 to support their efforts were continued training in Pyramid Model practices and other foundational topics and continued support from their Process Coaches. Teams also indicated the need for strategies and resources to support families during remote learning.

For their part, once their programs were launched, the Process Coaches documented regular contact with them throughout 2021, providing supports that echoed the themes shared by program leaders. Among other activities, they assisted programs with professional development by connecting staff to needed trainings; helped to re- establish program-wide expectations; and supported family engagement. Systems for connecting with Leadership Teams virtually were continued and Process coaches focused on keeping these relationships strong.

General progress toward program-wide implementation was evaluated using data from the EC-Benchmarks of Quality. For the programs that shared self-ratings during 2021, on average, teams reported that the critical elements were "partially in place," with a fair portion "in place." Some of the specific Pyramid Model implementation activities at the program level included working more directly with families and sharing resources with them, supporting teaching and learning through visual supports, and, as mentioned above, promoting program-wide expectations in the new learning environment. As noted by both program leaders and Process Coaches, resources from NCPMI have been extremely valuable, especially for supporting families.

The evaluation findings point to some future considerations for state-level project leaders in supporting the Pyramid Model framework. These points are based on a collective summary of input from program leaders and Process Coaches across multiple data sources.

- **Implementing the Pyramid Model in an ever-changing and challenging early childhood landscape:** A key theme woven throughout the feedback was ongoing system challenges (the continuing COVID pandemic, subsequent requirements for early care and learning settings, and ongoing staffing and workforce issues). Providers, implementation teams, and coaches continue to ask questions about Pyramid Model implementation: for example, how can programs re-establish high-quality environments, relationships, and routines? How can TPOT processes to ensure fidelity be resumed? How can the capacity of teams in engage in data-based decision-making be grown? How can providers and teams build their capacity to support children with challenging behaviors?
- **Access to ongoing professional development opportunities:** Ongoing training opportunities for the implementation sites in all aspects of the Pyramid Model will be essential going forward. This includes the ePyramid Modules (continual access if possible), foundational trainings such as PTR-YC and PTR-F, supporting equity, and continued use of the ePyramid Modules in Wellness and Trauma-Informed Care. As one program leader suggested, additional guidance around the suggested scope and sequence of trainings could be helpful.
- **Continued support for Leadership Teams:** Continued and sustained support for Leadership Teams from Process Coaches – including continuing to build the capacity of instructional leaders for internal coaching and TPOT processes – will also be essential. A Leadership Team retreat may be helpful in renewing the essential elements of high-quality implementation (including use of the EC-BOQ) and highlighting the importance of the Pyramid Model work at this time.
- **Continued support for Process Coaches:** Process Coaches will continue to benefit from additional training to help programs promote equity and use of culturally responsive practices, support internal coaches toward fidelity, guide teams' use of data, and help to move programs toward sustainability.

The 2021 evaluation was based on several months of Pyramid Model activities that yielded descriptive information about the notable progress being made, as well as the unique challenges posed by the current learning environment. As the project moves forward and teaching and learning strategies are re-established and expanded, a focus on program-wide implementation and fidelity to the model, and the related evaluation of these components, will be important next steps.

Appendix A: EC-BOQ Critical Elements and Indicators

**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, an 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. The 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 elimination of 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. Two to five 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 for 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, are 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.
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.