

The Pyramid Plus Center: Scaling Up and Sustaining Evidence-Based Practices for Young Children With Challenging Behavior

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There is a pressing need to ensure EC professionals are skilled in providing effective and efficient supports that enhance social emotional competence for all young children.”

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There is a clear and documented relation between early social and behavioral competency and children’s cognitive development, acquisition of pre-academic skills, and preparedness for school (Brennan, Shaw, Dishion, & Wilson, 2012). Social competence in young children predicts important outcomes such as achievement, job retention, social competence, and relationship success (Christakes & Fowler, 2011). Conversely, behavior problems identified in the preschool years are predictive of later adjustment difficulties and negative long-term developmental outcomes (Frey et al., 2015; Poulou, 2015). Further confounding the problem, early childhood (EC) professionals reported that they did not feel effective with young children who exhibit challenging behavior (Hemmeter, Corso, & Cheatham, 2006) and that they were unlikely to use effective strategies to address or prevent the challenging behaviors (Hoover, Kubicek, Rosenberg, Zundel, & Rosenberg, 2012; Vinh, Strain, Davidon, & Smith, 2016). Indicative of this level of adult discomfort and skill, preschool-aged children were expelled from their schools at 3 times the rate of expulsions for school-aged children, primarily due to the child’s challenging behavior (Gilliam, 2005).

A recent report by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014) revealed that more than twice as many students with disabilities (13%) received an out of school suspension than students without disabilities (6%).

Highlighting these national trends, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services issued a joint policy statement in 2015 on suspension and expulsion in EC settings. The purpose of the federal statement was to “. . . work toward a goal of ensuring that all children’s social-emotional and behavioral health are fostered in an appropriate high-quality early learning program, working toward eventually eliminating expulsion and suspension practices across early learning settings” (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015, p. 2). Thus, there is a pressing need to ensure EC professionals are skilled in providing effective and efficient behavioral supports to prevent challenging behaviors and enhance social emotional competence for all young children. Furthermore, it is critical to examine strategies for

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bringing these evidence-based practices (EBP) to scale to facilitate sustained, improved outcomes for young children.

Zoe has been a teacher of 3-year-olds for nearly 10 years. For the first 6 years of her career, she worked in four different child care programs, none of which supported her professional development or addressed the needs of young children who exhibited behaviors such as hitting, biting, or kicking. Each time Zoe's frustration grew with her work situation, she simply moved to a different center because there were always openings in her community. Zoe was happy to be hired by The Sunshine Center 4 years ago. The Sunshine Center is a large community program based in Denver, Colorado, serving children 6 weeks to 5 years of age. The program serves 100 families from various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and strives to offer high-quality inclusive services to all children and families. All Sunshine Center staff and administration receive training and ongoing support to implement Pyramid Model practices to support young children's social emotional development and decrease challenging behavior.

The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2013)—herein referred to as the Pyramid Model—is a conceptual framework focused on systemic and sustained implementation of EBP related to promoting social emotional competence and preventing challenging behaviors in young children. The Pyramid Model is a research-based, multi-tiered support system to support EC professionals in promotion,

prevention, and intervention practices (Hemmeter, Snyder, Fox, & Algina, 2016). The federal policy statement on eliminating preschool suspension and expulsion described the Pyramid Model as an effective approach to promoting social emotional competence and addressing challenging behavior (U.S. Departments Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

There is growing evidence that the Pyramid Model is an effective approach to professional development likely to yield positive child outcomes (Hemmeter et al., 2016) and reduce rates of expulsion for challenging behavior (Vinh et al., 2016). This article documents the inception, development, and evaluation of Pyramid Plus: The Colorado Center for Social Emotional Competence and Inclusion—herein referred to as the Pyramid Plus Center—as an example of statewide implementation of Pyramid Model. Recommendations for scaling up and sustaining Pyramid Model practices also are provided.

Overarching Mission, Goals, and Framework of the Pyramid Plus Center

The overarching mission of the Pyramid Plus Center (2015) is to promote the social and emotional development and inclusion of all children, birth through age 5, through a professional development system that supports high-fidelity implementation of the Pyramid Model and related initiatives integrated within Colorado's efforts.

The Pyramid Plus Center is guided by three primary-related frameworks: (a) Pyramid Model, (b) EC inclusion, and (c) implementation science.

These guide the activities and training content, which is referred to as the Pyramid Plus Approach (PPA). The center goals are to (a) provide a system to prepare and certify high-quality trainers and coaches to support implementation of the PPA, (b) provide training and technical assistance (T/TA) and resources to EC programs throughout Colorado, and (c) facilitate state policy and systems development for sustainability and scale-up PPA.

EC Inclusion

According to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) regulations (34 CFR § 300) and U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education policy (2015), IDEA has a “strong preference for educating students with disabilities in the regular classes with appropriate aids and supports” (Musgrove, 2012) and “all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality EC programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations” (U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education & U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p. 1). Furthermore, the research on preschool inclusion is clear—high-quality inclusive settings are beneficial with positive outcomes likely to accrue for children with and without disabilities (Justice, Logan, Lin, and Kaderavek, 2014; Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011; Strain & Bovey, 2011). However, according to data from the U.S. Department of Special Education Office of Special

Education Programs (OSEP), the rates of inclusion have increased at a slow rate (Barton & Smith, 2015). The Pyramid Plus Center adopted the joint Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2009) position statement for EC inclusion, which defined preschool inclusion by access, participation, and supports. Appropriate access, participation, and supports ensure the child is a full participating member of both the physical and social environment.

Implementation Science

The Pyramid Plus Center is based on the rationale that a program’s capacity to adopt and sustain EBP should be guided by implementation science (Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Implementation science theorizes that EBP need to be defined in terms of their outcomes and the variables that affect implementation and sustainability. The key components within implementation science are referred to as *implementation drivers*, which are critical to the successful and sustainable implementation of programs, practices, and innovations (Metz & Bartley, 2012). The implementation drivers and strategies of the Pyramid Plus Center are (a) a state leadership team (i.e., leadership drivers), (b) demonstration sites (i.e., leadership, competency, and organizational drivers), (c) implementation communities (i.e., competency drivers), (d) data collection (i.e., organizational drivers), and (e) systematic partnerships of the PPA.

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Primary Pyramid Plus Center Components

The Pyramid Plus Center’s vision is to build the capacity of communities and early care and education programs statewide to use evidence-based approaches with fidelity, thereby improving all of Colorado’s young children’s social emotional competence and opportunities for inclusion. The Pyramid Plus Center provides T/TA to individuals, programs, and communities. The Pyramid Plus Center uses a tiered model of T/TA ranging from (a) providing information to everyone through a website to (b) intensive individualized support and assistance to specific individuals, programs, and communities. The TA approach was adapted from Blase (2009) who described two levels of TA in promoting the adoption of EBP: (a) *basic*: providing timely information about the practice to promote readiness for use of EBP and (b) *intensive*: “. . .requires considerable planning, frequent communication, on-site work, collaboration at multiple levels, coaching, and both process and outcome evaluation efforts at several levels (e.g., setting, organization, state) to build capacity and achieve systemic change” (p. 3).

The Pyramid Plus Center endeavors to advance the competence of Colorado’s EC personnel through a network of certified trainers, coaches, and programs to broaden the reach of the Center. The goal of this type of intensive TA is to have certified trainers and coaches available to serve every EC program in Colorado. The efforts are centered on the Pyramid Plus Approach Training Curriculum (Wasser et al., 2011). This curriculum integrates

PPA content and the DEC (2014) Recommended Practices into a 45-hr, 18-session training focused on young children (birth to 5 years of age) within a variety of learning environments (e.g., child cares, inclusive public school classrooms). The role of a certified trainer is to implement the PPA training. The role of a certified coach is to provide ongoing support regarding the implementation of the PPA practices.

In the Sunshine Center’s first year partnering with the Pyramid Plus Center, all Sunshine Center staff and administrators attended the 18 sessions of the Pyramid Plus Approach Training that was conducted by Pyramid Plus Center staff. As a teacher at the Sunshine Center, Zoe was excited to receive the Pyramid Plus Approach training in her first year of working there. She implemented a few of the strategies on her own that she learned about in the workshop training, including teaching children to take a moment to calm down with the Tucker the Turtle visual supports. She began sending the Backpack Connection Series (<http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/dol/resources/backpack.html>) to parents in her classroom to bridge knowledge from school to home. Zoe received several positive responses from families, which motivated her to communicate with them more often regarding their children and classroom activities. When Rita, a certified Pyramid Plus coach, started working with Zoe and other preschool teachers in their classrooms, they noticed even more improvements in their use of the practices associated with the Pyramid Plus Approach, including better supporting the children to problem solve peer-to-peer conflicts and including children with disabilities more meaningfully in classroom activities.

Implementation Communities

One key goal of the Pyramid Plus Center is to build internal capacity of programs and communities. A multi-level approach creates a network of support within each program and builds program-wide sustainability. The intensive TA includes program-wide support to leadership teams and administrators. Classroom and individual child supports are provided through Pyramid Plus Certified Coaches in the program with guidance from Pyramid Plus Center staff. T/TA from Pyramid Plus Center staff is provided to each site. T/TA includes support for the administrative team to assist in developing sustainable practices, policies, and expectations. This includes developing data systems to drive program development, teacher professional development plans, and support for the investment in PPA. T/TA also includes assisting candidates through the certification process. Programs also receive support in delivering and maintaining a parent training component and extending PPA into the community. The parent training utilized is called *Positive Solutions for Families* and includes facilitated workshops with small groups of families to support their use of positive parenting practices during family routines. Pyramid Plus Center staff support diminishes over time as the program's fidelity of implementation and sustainability becomes evident.

The Sunshine Center leadership team uses various data systems to identify which areas of implementation they should focus on for ongoing professional development. For example, Rita, a Pyramid Plus Certified Coach, completes the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT™;

Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2015) in each preschool classroom to evaluate classroom-level implementation of Pyramid Model practices and identify areas for professional development or coaching support. Rita has also supported the Sunshine Center administrators and staff to deliver a parent training each fall and spring for families in a group format. Rodney, the Sunshine Center's family liaison, facilitates these parent groups that have been well-received and support families to use Pyramid Model strategies during challenging routines at home (e.g., mealtime, bath time, and bedtime).

Certification Models

The Pyramid Plus Center uses a rigorous certification process for trainers and coaches that involve training, opportunities to practice newly learned skills, and performance-based feedback. Since 2010, the Pyramid Plus Center has certified 50 Pyramid Plus trainers and 65 Pyramid Plus coaches (Pyramid Plus Center, 2015). To become a trainer or coach, candidates must complete the Pyramid Plus Approach 18-session training and a rigorous application process. Once accepted, the first component involves a 4-day training that covers the certification process and requirements, the Pyramid Plus Approach, and teaming and leadership strategies. The "Pyramid Plus Coach Certification Handbook" (Fowler-Beckel, Levy-Conti, et al., 2011) and the "Pyramid Plus Trainer Certification Handbook" (Fowler-Beckel, Wasser et al., 2011) and an individualized professional development plan guide the process. The trainer or coach candidate creates the individualized professional development plan early

in the certification process to establish clear goals for training or coaching skills he or she wants to acquire, or strengthen and plan for incorporating his or her new role as a trainer or coach in his or her current work.

Those pursuing training certification are observed conducting Pyramid Plus Approach trainings in their programs and communities. Pyramid Plus Center staff members provide feedback on these trainings using a skill-based scoring rubric identified in the trainer certification handbook (Fowler-Beckel, Wasser, et al., 2011). It includes skills on a range of items from room set up, content delivery, participant engagement, and so on. Those pursuing Pyramid Plus coaching certification are observed coaching in a preschool, early intervention, or mental health program in their community using a “Coach Circuit” (Fowler-Beckel, Levy-Conti, et al., 2011). During the Coach Circuit, Pyramid Plus Center staff model appropriate coaching techniques, use behavioral rehearsal, and provide performance-based feedback to guide coaches toward proficiency in supporting teachers’ use of the Pyramid Plus Approach. A skill-based scoring rubric identified in the coach certification handbook is used to guide specific feedback on the six coach circuit activities. Video recordings are used in both trainer and coach certification to facilitate self-reflection and improve skills. The coach and trainer certification processes are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. A recertification process is available every 3 years.

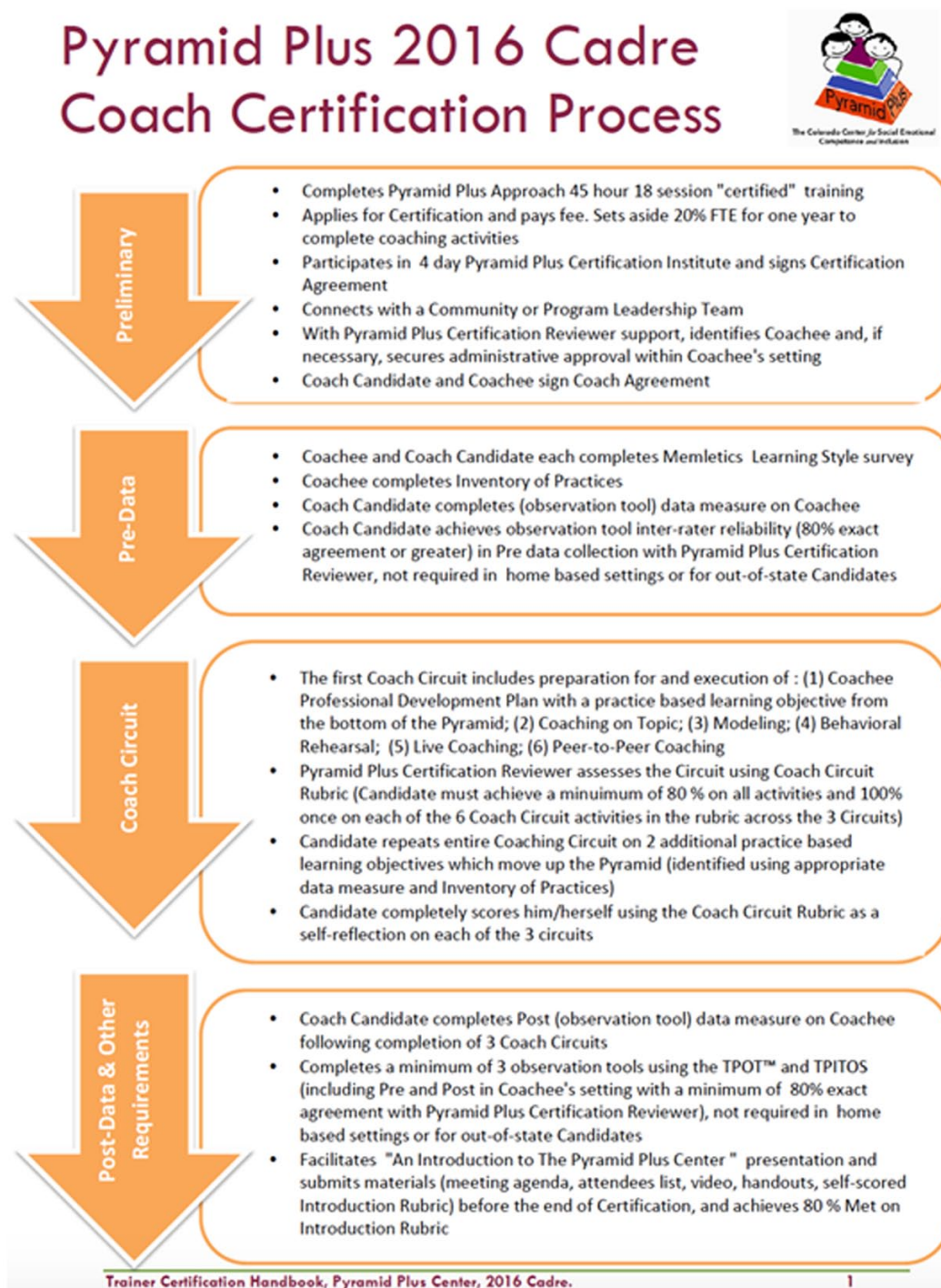
Rita had been a preschool teacher in a large center for 15 years before she was introduced to the Pyramid Plus Approach. Although she had implemented many pieces of

the Pyramid Plus Approach on her own over the years, she had loved to finally find a complete model that reflected a positive and supportive approach to young children’s social emotional skills and challenging behavior. Rita was one of the first to complete the “Coach Circuit” in Colorado and found the process to be enlightening and self-reflective. She loved her new role of supporting other teachers to implement the Pyramid Plus Approach strategies. While at the Sunshine Center, Rita supported several teachers who were interested in going through the coach certification process, including the wonderful preschool teacher, Zoe.

State Policy Team

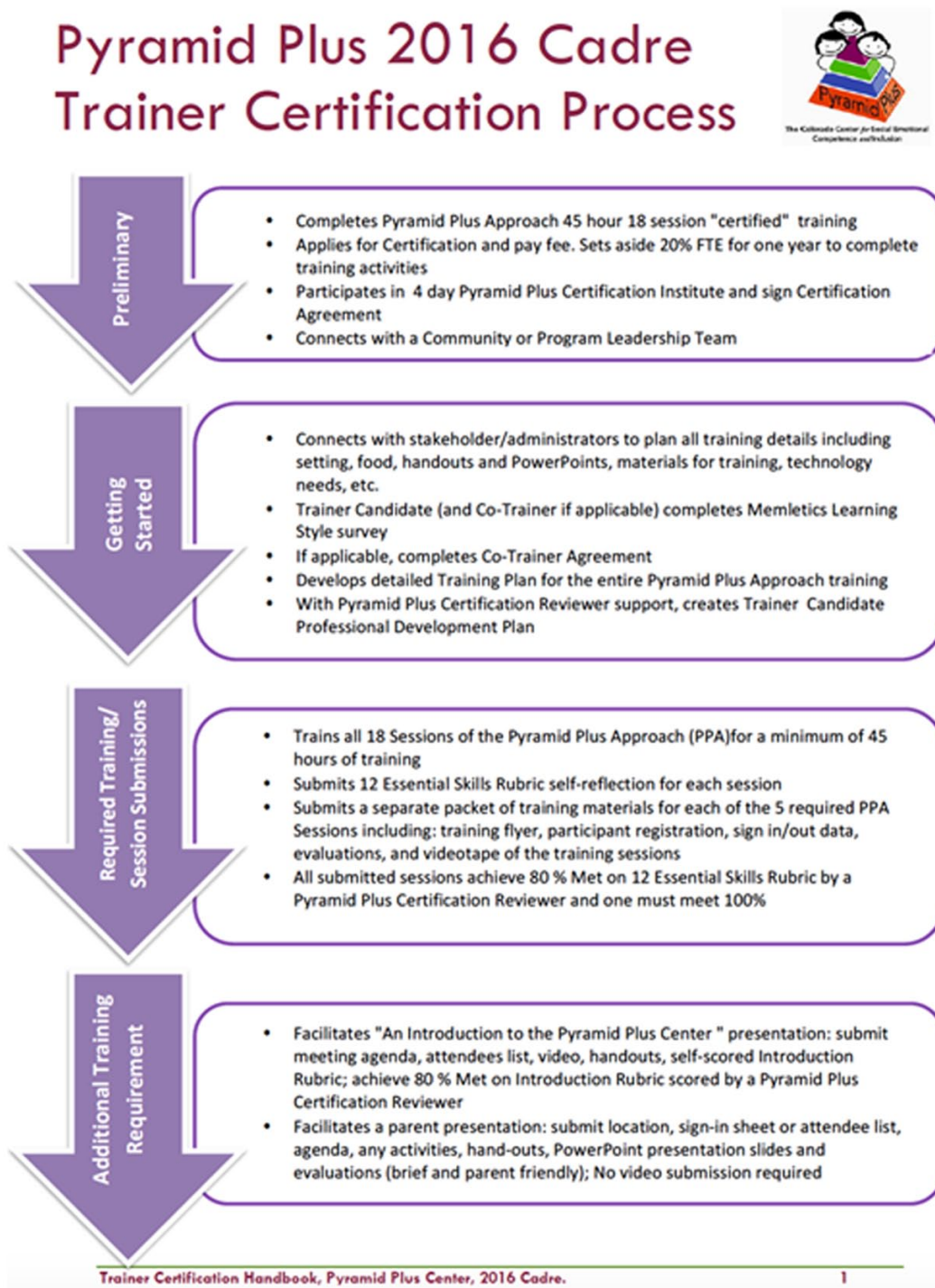
From the beginning, the Pyramid Plus Center focused on state policy work to ensure that the Pyramid Model was available to EC programs across Colorado and built upon related statewide efforts. The Colorado State Policy Team for the Pyramid Model and Inclusion Practices is co-facilitated by the Director of the Pyramid Plus Center and the 619 Coordinator for Colorado—the person who oversees assessment and educational programming for preschoolers with disabilities between 3 and 5 years of age who qualify for services under IDEA. Membership on the state team is comprised of high-level administrators and policy makers in key state offices related to EC (e.g., Head Start, early intervention, interagency councils, child care, and quality rating and improvement system [QRIS]) and representatives from institutes of higher education in the state. To facilitate the work of the state team, the Pyramid Plus Center staff in collaboration with Colorado Department of Education staff

Figure 1
The Pyramid Plus Center coach certification process flow chart



Note. FTE = full-time equivalent; TPOT™ = Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool; TPITOS = Teaching Pyramid Infant/Toddler Observation Scale.

Figure 2
The Pyramid Plus Center trainer certification process flow chart



Note. FTE = full-time equivalent.

provide administrative support, team facilitation, and preparation of reports and other policy materials. Meeting evaluations are used to monitor productivity. The State Policy Team uses the *State-Wide Benchmarks of Quality* (Smith, Dunlap, & Blasé, 2013) as a guide (http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/communities/state_docs/tacsei_state_benchmarks.pdf).

The Colorado State Policy Team for the Pyramid Model and Inclusion Practices asked if they could visit the Sunshine Center to see the Pyramid Plus Approach in action. Before touring the classrooms, the state policy team met with Cynthia—the center director—Rodney—the family liaison—and several teachers and certified coaches in a small conference room to hear more details about how the Sunshine Center implemented the Pyramid Plus Approach. Cynthia started by explaining how another local center director had told her about the Pyramid Plus Approach and how she was initially wary, as she had been exposed to a lot of other curricula and training models that seemed to offer a simple fix. These other models would require that all of her staff went to a one-time training that her teachers would be excited about, but then she would watch as they could not figure out how to translate the new ideas into practice in their classrooms. Cynthia talked about how the Pyramid Plus Approach was so different and how it had been a big and many-year commitment, but that the payoff was huge. She then described some of their specific strategies for making it work at their large center, including how she has reallocated funds from new hire training to use instead on ongoing professional development for staff, now that they have such low staff turnover. Then, Zoe talked and shared

her experiences as a preschool teacher working in a center that did not use the model versus the success she now sees with children in her classroom. She shared a recent story about using a visual schedule with a boy with significant physical disabilities to support his transitions and peer-to-peer interactions and how his mom just told her how happy she was that he was invited to his first birthday party. The state policy team then toured the Sunshine Center classrooms, observing how the language in the classrooms was notably positive, how teachers used emotion language (e.g., “I see that you’re happy that he shared that with you!”), and how children worked together in more positive interactions than they were used to seeing in other centers. The state policy team left their visit at the Sunshine Center with a renewed commitment to bringing the Pyramid Plus Approach to more early learning centers in the state.

Pyramid Plus Center Evaluation

Multiple levels of support and data-based decision making drive successful implementation of the strategies associated with the Pyramid Plus Approach in Colorado. Each level of support that the Pyramid Plus Center provides (e.g., leadership teams, classroom-level support) has specific data measures and a specific purpose for the data collected.

Leadership teams

Each of the four demonstration sites has an established leadership team that meets monthly. Each leadership team completes the Program-Wide Benchmarks of Quality (Fox, Hemmeter, & Jack, 2010), once in the fall and annually to measure and track the critical

elements necessary for program-wide implementation of EBP. Items addressed drive action plans and program development (e.g., team membership and buy-in, data collection systems, program expectations, and systems for hiring and training teachers).

The Sunshine Center formed its leadership team during its first year of implementation of the Pyramid Plus Approach. Cynthia—the center director—Rodney—the family liaison—a behavior specialist, and several teachers, including Zoe, are part of the leadership team at the center. The leadership team meets every first Wednesday of the month for 1 hr in the morning. Each person on the leadership team has a back-up person who works in the building who steps in for their position during that 1-hr meeting.

Classroom-level outcomes

Each demonstration site collects multiple data measures at the classroom level. These data drive professional development plans, inform program and training needs, and document teacher progress on using PPA accurately. The TPOT™ (Hemmeter et al., 2015) and the Teaching Pyramid Infant/Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS; Carta, 2009) measure the fidelity with which teachers are creating supportive environments and building relationships, implementing social and emotional teaching strategies, and providing effective behavioral supports. Coaches and supervisors complete TPOT™/TPITOS assessments in each classroom at the beginning and end of the school year. Results inform individual teacher professional development plans and the resulting data are used to identify topics for staff trainings.

When the Sunshine Center had its first leadership team meeting, they individually completed the Program-Wide Benchmarks of Quality and then shared them with each other to develop a collaborative version that they used to guide their initial goal and action planning. They decided to first develop their program expectations, create a schedule for Rita to complete the TPOT™ in each classroom, and draft a newsletter for staff and families to learn more about the Pyramid Plus Approach and how it would be implemented at the Sunshine Center. At each subsequent leadership team meeting, the group followed up on each action plan item and planned next steps, always noting who was in charge and when it would be accomplished. This helped the team stay focused on their goals and work toward implementation across the center.

Now as a certified coach, Zoe helps to conduct the TPOT™ in the preschool classrooms each fall and spring at the Sunshine Center. The TPOT™ results are written up into reports with accompanying bar graphs showing the teacher's percentage of implementation of each of the TPOT™ indicators (e.g., having supportive conversations) and the reports are shared with Cynthia, the center director, the teacher, and the leadership team. After the fall, TPOT™ results are shared, the leadership team discusses particular areas (e.g., transitions or teaching problem solving) that might be useful for staff trainings during the school year. And, each teacher reviews her report with her coach to discuss areas of strength and to develop a professional development plan for specific strategies and approaches to work on over the school year. The spring TPOT™ results are used to note progress and celebrate achievements.

Individual child outcomes

Data also are collected on individual children's social emotional skills to evaluate the impact PPA on child outcomes. Programs regularly conduct social emotional screening using the Ages and Stages Questionnaires: Social and Emotional (ASQ: SE-2; Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2015). The ASQ: SE-2 is completed by teachers at least twice per academic year. This tool helps programs identify children who might need additional social emotional assessment and support.

Each teacher at the Sunshine Center completes the ASQ: SE-2 at the beginning of the year and uses this information to identify children who might benefit from small group social emotional activities, peer interventions, and/or individualized supports. Last year, Zoe had 4-year-old girl named Carina in her classroom who scored above the cutoff on the ASQ: SE-2. Zoe had Carina's father complete the ASQ: SE-2 as well, and her father noted concerns at home as well, especially around tantrums that occurred when Carina was asked to do something. Zoe worked with Carina's dad to teach Carina to use her words when she was asked to do something she did not want to do and they made more of an effort to provide choices as a prevention strategy. Zoe collected data on the tantrums across days and realized that they were almost always in the afternoon. Carina's dad concurred that they always happened in the afternoons on the weekends. He shared that Carina had recently stopped taking a nap but that they had not adjusted her bed times. He started putting her to bed earlier, while continuing to provide choices and encouraging her to use her words, and the tantrums

dramatically decreased. Carina's spring ASQ: SE-2 scores were within the normal range, below the cutoff score. Zoe appreciates being able to use a quick screening tool to identify possible concerns, start a dialogue with families, and work collaboratively toward an effective way to address the issue.

Implementation community outcomes

Each Implementation Community establishes a leadership team to guide their community work. The leadership teams score themselves on the Community-Wide Benchmarks of Quality (Jack & Fox, 2010) at least annually to monitor critical implementation elements and meet monthly to monitor and guide implementation efforts.

The Sunshine Center joined the Denver County Implementation Community during its third year of implementation of the Pyramid Plus Approach. Cynthia—the center director—and Rodney—the family liaison—are both on the community leadership team. During the first meeting that Cynthia and Rodney attended, the community leadership team completed the Community-Wide Benchmarks of Quality to note the areas that the community needed to target for that year. They targeted several objectives to work on, including having more funding for staff to attend trainings and coaching certification, holding more family training opportunities within the community, and celebrating their accomplishments more regularly and in ways that staff found meaningful. Since that first meeting, Cynthia and Rodney have worked with their implementation community to secure a small grant from a local foundation for additional funding for staff

substitutes so that teachers may attend professional development. They have also shared their family training model with the rest of the group and more centers are using their approach. The implementation community leadership team is still working on a community-wide approach to celebrating community accomplishments and recognizing individual achievements.

Summary and Recommendations for State-Wide Scale Up and Sustainability

The Pyramid Model addresses the unique needs of young children and the complexities of EC programs and systems (Dunlap & Fox, 2015). The Pyramid Model defines the EBP that have been effective within EC programs to prevent challenging behaviors and promote social competence in young children (Dunlap & Fox, 2015). This article described how the Pyramid Plus Center supports EC programs across Colorado in the sustained, high-fidelity implementation of the Pyramid Model. The following recommendations, based on the experiences of the Pyramid Plus Center, are offered to facilitate sustained, high-fidelity implementation of the Pyramid Model and inclusive practices.

Have a strong vision and a clear action plan

The leadership team should write an action plan with a specific and overarching vision statement for the goals and actionable steps. Identifying who will take the lead on

each step, the resources needed, a timeline, and a plan for evaluating the action plan is critical. Successful programs in Colorado developed both short- and long-term objectives with clear action plans, and regularly celebrated successes.

Identify implementation drivers

The implementation drivers are critical to the success of the action plan. Implementation drivers should include “champions” for the work at each level. Statewide and local stakeholders can help garner buy-in and support across communities. Also, funding sources both public and private should be identified and sought out to capitalize on the broad appeal of the work and increase the likelihood of sustained support. Likewise, hiring flexible, knowledgeable staff members who use data to make informed decisions is important to ensure action plan goals are achieved within a reasonable time with limited resources.

Tailor the content to the needs of the state or program

The content of the training materials utilized should start with current research and the needs within the state. For example, in Colorado, inclusion was the focus of multiple initiatives at the state and local levels. Furthermore, Colorado was home to multiple researchers who have promoted EC inclusion for decades and devoted their professional careers to enhancing both policy and practice related to high-quality preschool inclusion. Thus, the Pyramid Plus Center identified social emotional

competence and inclusion as complementary foci; thus, the Pyramid Plus Center developed a joint professional development curriculum (e.g., training materials) that covered both and was comprehensive from birth to age 5. The existence and use of the Pyramid Model training materials available through the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning allowed for the creation of the PPA training materials in a relatively brief amount of time.

Develop recruitment strategies

Create a process for recruiting programs or communities interested in and ready to implement the Pyramid Model. Outline the program and community readiness criteria needed, the expectations of the program and community, and the T/TA to be provided. A written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by all parties involved ensures everyone knows the expectations and roles. The Pyramid Plus Center recruited communities through the EC Councils, which had an infrastructure in place to support this work.

Create a training and coaching certification system

A systematic and feasible process for identifying skilled practitioners who can train and coach others across the state ensures sustainability and scale-up of Pyramid Model implementation. The certification process in Colorado was streamlined and a 1-year completion timeline was required to ensure it was feasible and attractive for EC professionals in the state. Candidates with program or community support were more likely

to complete the rigorous certification process. Monitoring and adapting the process to ensure and improve feasibility, usefulness, and appeal is the key.

Plan for intensive technical assistance

Ongoing support is critical; thus, programs should intentionally allocate sufficient resources to engage in intensive technical assistance. Intensive technical assistance, which requires a significant amount of time, was necessary to ensure success. For example, the Pyramid Plus Center staff often supplied specific and direct program administration support and problem solving to support sustainability. Staff resources were allocated to allow for this level of support.

Engage in ongoing progress monitoring

Progress monitoring is critical to evaluate outcomes at all levels (e.g., program, child) to make timely and relevant decisions or adaptations. Ongoing progress monitoring created opportunities to improve Pyramid Plus Center systems. Data were used to continually seek and diversify funding sources. A data coordinator in each Implementation Community was vital to ensure ongoing progress monitoring occurred.

Conclusion

The goal of the Pyramid Plus Center is to build the capacity of EC programs across Colorado to use EBP for improving children's social and emotional competence, advancing high-quality inclusion, and reducing overall suspensions and

expulsions of preschool children. As described in this article, the initiatives used to reach this goal are (a) providing T/TA, (b) certifying trainers and coaches across the state, (c) partnering with communities and programs, and (d) building state infrastructure. The systematic, empirically supported, and intentionally executed efforts of Pyramid Plus Center were described in the hopes that other programs, districts, and states can replicate and improve on these efforts to enhance the quality of EC programs and child outcomes for years to come.

Authors' Note

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