

Connecticut State Personnel Development Grant

Evaluation Update

June 2009

The CT SPDG, like most federal grants, includes an evaluation component to ensure activities are being implemented as proposed and the intended outcomes are being achieved. It is this accountability component that results in the flood of springtime evaluation activities, leading some of you to feel like you're drowning in data requests.

Another component of evaluation (and the piece we like much better) is to provide information that can be used to improve your programs and promote sustainability. So, as the 2008-09 school year ends and the CT SPDG enters its fifth and final year of grant implementation, our goal is to provide the information and feedback you need to make this final year a success.

In our visits and conversations this spring, one request we did hear rather consistently was to hear what's happening in projects other than your own. In response, this update includes a brief description of the status of each individual project.

We're currently preparing a summary of our project-leader interviews and will be sharing this with you in the near future.

In addition, we are preparing the following project-specific documents:

- ✚ CPAC FAST Team Survey Report
- ✚ SCSU PACE Survey Report
- ✚ SERC PBS Site Visits Summary Report
- ✚ SERC EIP/RtI Site Visits Summary Report
- ✚ SERC Literacy Site Visits Summary Report

In the meantime, we encourage you to contact us anytime with suggestions, comments, or requests. We hope you all have a wonderful summer!

~ Glen Martin Associates

"The long range goal of our work is to reform and improve CT's system for personnel preparation and professional development through a package of comprehensive strategies focused on expansion of the workforce and improvement in results for children with disabilities, leading to lasting systemic change."

(CT SPDG Application, 2005)

Paraprofessionals as Certified Educators (PACE)

Southern Connecticut State University

The purpose of the PACE program is to recruit paraprofessionals currently employed in targeted urban districts to enroll in Southern Connecticut State University's (SCSU) comprehensive special education certification program.

Four districts (New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport, and Waterbury) have been phased into the project, with recruitment activities held most recently in the Waterbury school district.

Project highlights include:

- ✚ 42 paraprofessionals have been accepted into the SCSU certification program: 16 in New Haven; 9 in Hartford; and 17 in Bridgeport.
- ✚ 12 New Haven paraprofessionals have earned their initial certification in comprehensive special education, K-12. All 12 graduates have permanent positions in urban districts and 11 of the 12 are teaching in special education.
- ✚ 8 Hartford paraprofessionals have passed Praxis II exams in both special education and elementary education, and have completed or are currently completing their DSAP or student teaching requirement.
- ✚ 55% of the 42 paraprofessionals accepted into the SCSU program are from a minority group, compared to just 5% of certified special education teachers statewide.

"I love to teach and that's what I know how to do best. I am a paraprofessional dreaming about getting my own classroom and becoming a certified teacher in special education in CT."

(Bridgeport PACE paraprofessional)

- ✚ 8 paraprofessionals accepted into the SCSU program are fluent in a second language, including Spanish, French, Turkish, and Romanian.

In the year ahead:

- ✚ Acceptance decisions for the Waterbury cohort will be made this summer.
- ✚ 16 Bridgeport paraprofessionals are expected to finish their coursework and obtain a DSAP or student teaching position.
- ✚ 8 Hartford and 3 New Haven paraprofessionals are expected to earn initial certification and obtain a permanent teaching position.
- ✚ Results from the 2009 web-based PACE participant survey will be shared; 22 of 42 paraprofessionals from 3 districts responded to the survey for a response rate of 52.4%.
- ✚ An advisory group led by the PACE project coordinator and SPDG project director will be formed to create a replication/resource guide for similar programs.

"I love teaching and would not be a teacher right now if it were not for the PACE program. As a part-time working mother of two, I was able to complete the necessary credits to become certified in a career that I love without financial burden."

(New Haven PACE paraprofessional)

Enhancing Collaborative Relationships between Parents and Schools

Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center

The Enhancing Collaborative Relationships between Parents and Schools project is designed to increase family-school collaboration in selected school districts by providing training, information, and support to parents and staff.

Four districts (Montville, Norwich, Waterford, and Vernon) were sequentially chosen to participate in the CPAC project.

Project highlights include:

- ✚ All 4 districts have active FAST (Family and Staff Together) teams with members from various stakeholder groups, including families, general and special education teachers, administrators, and additional school personnel. The teams have developed written action plans outlining measurable objectives and strategies to build family-school partnerships.
- ✚ The FAST teams have developed a variety of resources, including a post-PPT survey postcard to gather parent and staff perceptions of the PPT meeting; a resource binder with special education-related resources and contact information; and a checklist for case managers outlining steps to take before, during, and after a PPT meeting.
- ✚ CPAC has provided administrator, staff, and parent trainings, as well as informal assistance such as facilitation of FAST team meetings,

“As a building administrator, the FAST team has helped me understand parents’ perspective especially during a PPT. I look forward to the completion of our Parent Binder which will further enhance communication between schools and families.”

(Vernon FAST team member)

telephone assistance, and informing team members of conference opportunities. In 2008-09, CPAC provided telephone assistance to approximately 150 parents in the 4 FAST team districts alone.

In the year ahead:

- ✚ CPAC will continue their outreach to local universities in an effort to better prepare pre-service teachers to communicate and collaborate with families from various backgrounds.
- ✚ CPAC and the FAST teams will work to develop and implement original and innovative strategies for recruiting new parent leaders.
- ✚ In an effort to promote long-term sustainability, FAST team members will be encouraged to transition into the role of team facilitator, a duty currently performed by a CPAC representative.
- ✚ Results from the 2009 web-based FAST team survey will be reported; 28 of 38 (73.7%) team members from 4 districts responded to the survey.

“There is much more collaboration with parents. I believe that parents are becoming more aware that they have a voice and learning to advocate for their children. This is definitely a move in the right direction. The pamphlets, information and successful strategies are a great asset to our program.”

(Norwich FAST team member)

Scaling-Up Evidence-Based Practices

Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

State Education Resource Center

The PBS initiative is designed to assist districts in meeting the needs of all students by using targeted efforts to scale up effective Positive Behavior Support (PBS) through the development of district partnerships across the state.

Windham and Colchester were selected, through a competitive bidding process, to serve as PBS “model districts.” SERC provided technical assistance and support as district- and school-based PBS teams were identified, and designated schools were enhanced to serve as “model sites.” Both model districts have begun scaling up district-wide, and more recently began working with “partner districts” wishing to implement and scale up PBS practices.

Project highlights include:

- ✚ Windham established 3 model sites and in 2007-08 scaled up PBS to one additional school. In 2008-09, all 4 schools were implementing with fidelity (a minimum SET score of 80/80).
- ✚ Colchester established 2 model sites and in 2008-09 scaled up PBS to 2 additional schools. Three of the 4 schools were implementing with fidelity in 2008-09.
- ✚ In model schools where more than one year of SWIS data was available, referrals per 100 students, out-of-school suspensions, and the number of students contributing to out-of-school suspensions declined across the two most recent academic years.

“Kids are realizing that their voice is being heard. Kids are stepping up and feeling empowered.”

(Housatonic Valley PBS team member)

- ✚ In 2008, Region One and Hebron were selected and matched as “partner districts” with Windham and Colchester, respectively. The partners have created “partnership maps” which outline activities and expected outcomes for the new collaboration.
- ✚ SERC staff, in collaboration with UConn and CSDE, authored the report, “PBS: Data Report and Summary: A Look at Connecticut” which is posted at www.pbis.org.

In the year ahead:

- ✚ Model sites will focus on refining their secondary and tertiary interventions; while partnership schools plan to strengthen their primary support systems by expanding PBS implementation from unstructured locations to all school areas.
- ✚ SERC will continue to reinforce with participating school leaders the important role of accurate and comprehensive SWIS data entry in making informed, timely decisions about school-wide discipline.
- ✚ SERC will investigate the potential of the PBS partnership model to enhance the state’s capacity to meet the growing demand for assistance and training in PBS evidence-based practices.

“There is the connection piece of knowing there are other people out there that we can go to; they may not have the answer, but they have a common understanding and vocabulary, and the same issues to deal with.... It’s about connecting communities together.”

(Hebron Elementary PBS team member when asked about their partnership with Colchester)

Scaling-Up Evidence-Based Practices

Early Intervention Project/ Response to Intervention (EIP/RtI)

State Education Resource Center

The purpose of the EIP/RtI initiative is to scale up evidence-based practices regarding early intervening services, such as the Early Intervention Project (EIP), by providing a continuum of supports and interventions for all students through the development of district partnerships across Connecticut.

Four districts (Bristol, CREC, Greenwich, and Waterbury) were selected, through a competitive bidding process, to serve as EIP/RtI “model districts.” SERC has provided the districts with individualized professional development and technical assistance in areas such as SRBI, core skills, common formative assessments, and data team processes.

Project highlights include:

- ✚ 6 model schools were established across the 4 participating districts, and 3 of the 4 districts have begun scaling up district-wide.
- ✚ SERC representatives were able to use the successes and challenges of the EIP/RtI model sites to inform the state’s progress and direction in developing Scientific Research Based Interventions (SRBI): Connecticut’s Framework for RtI.
- ✚ Informational sessions or “open houses” for educators were hosted at 3 model sites and included presentations, discussion sessions, observations of team processes, and classrooms visits.

“For some students, the program has given them a chance at life. Students are developing a sense of ownership and now have intrinsic motivation.”

(Two Rivers focus group participant)

- ✚ School personnel from EIP/RtI model sites presented their experience and insights with regard to multi-tiered interventions and early intervening services at the statewide RtI Training Series Forums and at the ConnCASE Leadership Conference on SRBI.
- ✚ The SERC EIP/RtI team began piloting an “SRBI Self-Assessment” tool intended to facilitate discussion and provide schools with the information they need to implement RtI with fidelity.

In the year ahead:

- ✚ Discussions regarding EIP/RtI partner districts will continue, and if possible, partnership RFPs will be distributed in fall 2009.
- ✚ Model districts will be working on developing a portfolio to document implementation efforts, lessons learned, and changes in philosophy, policies and procedures.
- ✚ Data submitted as part of CT’s EIP data system will be provided to the evaluation team for analysis of student outcomes in SPDG model schools.
- ✚ SERC will continue to provide targeted technical assistance to participating districts according to each site’s specific needs.

I am excited for a lot of things that are happening.... Just this week I was watching a Tier III group and half were special education and half were not. It was perfectly appropriate for all of them – exactly what we want.

(Hamilton Avenue focus group participant)

Scaling-Up Evidence-Based Practices

School-Based Literacy Teams: A Three-Tiered Approach

State Education Resource Center

The Literacy initiative was designed to identify highly effective school-based literacy teams that combine best practices in literacy with decision making in a multi-tiered approach.

Four elementary schools (Bowers, Chaplin, Killingly Memorial, and Mary Griswold) were selected to establish model literacy teams, consisting of an instructional leader, a highly qualified coach, grade-level and special education teachers, and other specialists. SERC has provided technical assistance and professional development to the teams in order to build the schools' capacity to raise student achievement.

Project highlights include:

- ✚ SERC provided participating schools the opportunity to select the literacy areas for which they would receive job-embedded and individualized support. Areas chosen included the data team process, common formative assessments, system of assessments, and comprehension.
- ✚ All of the participating schools have maintained active literacy teams, supplied additional resources to facilitate professional development, and provided additional time for coaching and literacy team meetings.
- ✚ SERC school liaisons field-tested a literacy implementation tool designed by initiative leaders to measure school-wide implementation of three-tier literacy

"I loved going to the workshops; they were fantastic. Every time I was there, whatever I was learning, I would take back and apply it in my classroom.... They always had current information, and they gave us time to reflect on us and on the community we teach in."

(Killingly Memorial focus group participant)

instruction. The instrument has provided a more systematic method for collecting data and has been used to inform planning discussions with coaches and principals.

In the year ahead:

- ✚ Efforts to promote sustainability will continue, such as mapping existing curricula, developing pacing guides, and utilizing a tool developed in Reading First schools to plan tiers of instruction.
- ✚ Professional development will include an increased focus on data analysis, which was highlighted in 2008-09 as an area where school personnel continue to struggle.
- ✚ SERC will begin to cultivate school and district partnerships by facilitating opportunities for the model teams to visit and observe in each other's schools, encouraging the schools to open their doors to other educators in or outside of the district, and involving district staff in professional development and technical assistance visits.

"The flexible grouping has had a big impact on student achievement. The instruction is much more targeted. We even go so far as to take one comprehension strategy at a time and assess, reassess, and break it down in order to get to those kids that are still not getting it."

(Mary Griswold focus group participant)

Early Intervention Providers Professional Development

Birth to Three

The goal of the Early Intervention Providers Professional Development project is to produce a DVD and training manual for Birth to Three service providers on best practices in early intervention.

The project has also been working to add a second chapter to the current family orientation video in an effort to provide families with more complete information on what to expect from a Birth to Three visit.

Project highlights include:

- ✚ Project leaders have provided input and feedback into the recently revised Birth to Three Service Guideline on Natural Environments (on which the video content is based). The guide was completed in January 2009 and is posted on the Birth to Three website at <http://www.birth23.org>.
- ✚ Families and early intervention service providers have been filmed in various settings, including a regular home visit, a routines-based interview, and a staged Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting.
- ✚ Over 14 hours of raw video footage has been edited, a draft DVD has been

"The Birth to Three System strives to educate the entire community (families, referral sources, human service agencies, and early care and education providers) that the ultimate goal of early intervention in natural environments is to help caregivers know how to best help their child."

(Natural Environments – Service Guide #2, 2009)

developed, and the training manual is currently being written.

In the year ahead:

- ✚ Video footage including a Spanish-speaking family and/or provider will be added to the draft DVD.
- ✚ Approximately 25 service providers will be invited to a video-viewing workshop and will participate in a focus group discussion related to the video and training manual.
- ✚ The DVD will be finalized and will be available on the Birth to Three website by October 2009.
- ✚ A second chapter will be added to the Birth to Three orientation video and will be distributed to families new to the system.

"Working on the video has made us all more mindful of what a good home visit looks like and will be very useful in the training that we do. It will also help families have a better idea of the services Birth to Three provides and what those services should look like."

(Birth to Three project coordinator)

Glen Martin Associates
270 River Street, Suite 402
Troy, NY 12180
Tel: 518.274.2407 | Fax: 518.271.8746
rwalker@glenmartinassociates.com

For more information about CT SPDG, contact Dana Corriveau, Project Director at the Bureau of Special Education.
Tel: 860.713.6844 | Fax: 860.713.7051
Dana.Corriveau@ct.gov

The Connecticut State Personnel Development Grant is funded through a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education (CFDA 84.323A).