SLDS Topical Webinar Summary
Innovative & Effective Utilization of Early Childhood Data

This webinar addressed innovative use of local early childhood data. Dr. Cindy Decker, Director of Assessment and Accountability for the Tulsa Community Action Project (CAP), presented CAP's efforts to gather classroom quality data, child outcomes, and health and workforce data, as well as CAP's efforts to link these data to area public schools' data systems. Dr. Jason Sachs, Early Childhood Director for Boston Public Schools (BPS), presented Boston's efforts to track school readiness assessment data, classroom quality data, workforce data, and child outcomes from pre-K to the K12 system, as well as how the district has used these data to influence policy and program development.

Overview of the Tulsa Community Action Project

CAP serves 2,000 kids aged six weeks to five years. The program has been changing its focus to not only school readiness, but also longer-term outcomes. CAP's vision is to improve the prospects for the long-term economic success of very young low-income children, their families, and the communities in which they live.

As part of this vision, CAP regularly reviews data as it strives for honesty, transparency, data-driven decisionmaking and accountability. CAP is working to create a coordinated early childhood community system utilizing six main categories of data:

1. Child application completed by family

The application captures basic demographics such as income, housing situation, and health. CAP uses these data to determine eligibility for the program, describe whom it serves and how this varies across sites, and understand child retention across years. These data are merged with assessment data.

2. Information gathered while at CAP

This information includes attendance, health information (obtained from on-site height, weight, vision, hearing screenings), referrals for disability/mental health and the results of the process, parent attendance at events, and data from optional public benefit screenings. These data are used primarily for compliance and case management.

3. Child assessments

The two main assessments used by CAP are Teaching Strategies GOLD® and the Bracken School Readiness Assessment. These data are used to determine professional development needs by teacher; assess child development domain (e.g., health, emotional maturity, cognitive development); ascertain child characteristics; and identify what makes a difference in quality (e.g., attendance, years enrolled at CAP, and teacher attributes).

4. Classroom quality assessment

CAP assesses classroom quality using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The data are used to identify unique professional development needs for staff and set employee goals; determine whether CAP is meeting its goals; and feed into the Teacher Effectiveness measure, which assesses effectiveness based on qualitative measures, such as student academic growth, and qualitative measures, such as organizational and classroom management skills.

Webinar Presenters:
Cindy Decker
Tulsa Community Action Project

Jason Sachs
Boston Public Schools

Moderator:
Susan Illgen
SLDS Program, State Support Team

5. Data on children and families after leaving CAP

CAP works with two school districts to provide information on 2001 CAP alumni. CAP provides a list of alumni, which the districts merge with their data systems. Information collected includes current enrollment and specific school, standardized test scores, participation in special education, current grade (which also indicates whether a student repeated a grade), attendance, and free/reduced-price lunch. CAP uses these data to:

- understand student mobility in and out of districts;
- determine whether CAP is reaching its short-term goal of Kindergarten readiness and longer-term goal of school success;
- understand child/family health and income;
- determine where further early childhood supports are needed; and
- work together as a community to meet these needs.

Additionally, CAP began its "Alumni Impact Project" in the spring of 2010. More than 200 families with children in the program for three-year olds signed up to take a survey every year for the next five years. The results of year one of the project are available at *http://www.captc.org/iLab/AlumniProject.php*.

6. Other operational data

Other data collected include tax returns, child injury reports, staff turnover, employee satisfaction, teacher appraisal scores, and volunteer information.

CAP is also partnering with UCLA on the Early Development Instrument (EDI), which measures the five domains known to affect school readiness: physical health and well being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge. More on the Tulsa area's efforts to collect EDI data is available at *http://www.captc.org/iLab/ResearchProjects.php#edi*.

Boston Public Schools: Using Data in Real Time for Real Decisions

In 2006, BPS performed a quality evaluation of its programs and classrooms, and discovered that their Kindergarten program (K2) was lagging behind. Based on the data collected in that evaluation, BPS decided to serve all four-year olds in a pre-Kindergarten program they call K1. They then listed both short-term and long-term solutions/goals for the program.

How Do Data Guide the K1 Program?

BPS started measuring K1 outcomes in 2008. As in 2006, BPS used assessments focused on classroom quality, such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and CLASS, and assessments focused primarily on vocabulary and language, such as the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT). BPS used these data to:

- influence the choice of curriculum;
- influence quality enhancements;
- evaluate quality/outcomes; and
- prove that the K1 program is worth the investment.

Data Show Positive Impact of K1 Program

Because BPS and the City of Boston were financing K1 without the assistance of federal grants or outside financing, it was even more vital to show progress at an early stage. Data collected on K1 between 2006 and 2008 indicated the following:

- A large-scale study of more than 2,000 students who either went to K1 or directly to K2 demonstrated significant and substantial differences on literacy, math, executive functioning, and self regulation
- K1 students scored notably higher on Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as compared to students who went straight to K2
- The K1 program's positive effect on students' DIBELS scores maintained into Grade 2
- Students who participated in K1 performed significantly better on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (which tests English language arts, math, and science, and is administered beginning in Grade 1)

Results Based on Data

The successes of the K1 program had an overarching effect on the future paths of both the K1 and K2 programs. Because high vocabulary skills were identified as a good predictor of future success, curriculum geared toward the Expressive Vocabulary Test was selected. Additionally, a bigger emphasis was placed on conceptual development in curriculum because K2 students originally tested poorly in this area (which includes cognitive tasks, such as identifying objects in the world, forming analogies, making inferences, etc.). Accreditation with the National Association for the Education of Young Children proved to be a positive step for K1 students, and so it was implemented as a strategy for K2 programs. In perhaps the biggest result stemming from K1 data, the documented successes and cost savings of the program shielded it from budget cuts in a particularly bad economic climate.

BPS hopes to continue the work of K1 data collection by building the capacity within institutions to do their own research; building a longitudinal database to help them understand what happens to students as they get older; building a deeper understanding of programs and services students receive prior to coming to BPS; and continuing to use data to improve the district's work.

- Tulsa Community Action Project: *http://www.captc.org*
- CAP's "Alumni Impact Project": *http://www.captc.org/iLab/AlumniProject.php*
- Early Development Instrument Data in Tulsa: *http://www.captc.org/iLab/ResearchProjects.php#edi*
- Education Counsel LLC: *http://www.educationcounsel.com*
- Boston Public Schools: *http://www.bostonpublicschools.org*
- SLDS State Support Team: *http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS/techassistance.asp*