

**Culture of Continuous Learning Project:  
A Breakthrough Series Collaborative for Improving Child Care and Head Start Quality**

**Project Team:**

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**Project Description.**

A challenge for current quality improvement efforts in early care and education (ECE) is to produce sustained changes in practices that support positive outcomes for children and families. The field is seeking innovative models that can be tailored for and tested in ECE systems. The Culture of Continuous Learning (CCL) Project will assess the feasibility of implementing a Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) in child care and Head Start settings. The BSC differs from other ECE quality improvement initiatives by building capacity and recognizing leaders across an organization, rather than supporting changes in individual practice through a single coach or consultant. The model promotes change through collaborative teams that include staff (at all levels) and families. A goal is to spread and sustain change in the use of evidence-based practices. The model has supported practice and process improvements in the health, child trauma, and child welfare fields, but has not yet been widely tested in ECE.

CCL project staff are in the process of implementing a BSC focused on improvements in practices to support children’s social and emotional learning with ECE programs in the Boston area. Programs applied to participate in

the year-long BSC and identified core staff (at all levels) to participate in BSC team activities beginning in the summer of 2018.

Over the course of the year, BSC team members attend four in-person learning sessions led by social and emotional learning experts and quality improvement specialists. Between each learning session, teams test the practices and processes they identify, primarily using the plan-do-study-act model as they strive to implement, spread, and sustain the improvements across their organization.

**Research Questions.**

- What are the costs of implementing the BSC in ECE settings?
- What characteristics support “successful participation” in the BSC in child care and Head Start settings?
- In what contexts or under what conditions do participants in the BSC experience initial changes in individual beliefs, knowledge, and/or practices?
- How and to what extent do quality improvements spread within ECE programs and systems, beyond just the participants in the Core BSC team?

- What does “successful participation” in the BSC look like?
- What BSC elements are most helpful and most challenging to Core BSC Teams?
- In what contexts or under what conditions do participants in the BSC experience initial changes in organizational culture?

### **Sample.**

Six community child care centers and one Head Start center applied and were accepted to participate in the BSC for Social Emotional Learning (BSC-SEL).

### **Methods.**

CCL project staff will gather information throughout the implementation of the BSC-SEL to assess the feasibility and potential effectiveness of the model using a case study design. The case study will include cross-site comparisons and analysis of patterns related to the conditions or characteristics of programs (e.g., program size, sponsorship) that support successful engagement in BSC activities. Feasibility Study data collection will incorporate a variety of local perspectives, including those of leaders in the ECE system, participating program directors, teachers, and parents. Data collection will include classroom observations to capture and describe teaching practices, surveys to capture organizational climate and other constructs targeted by the BSC model (e.g., psychological safety, efficacy), and key informant interviews and focus groups administered early and later in BSC implementation.

### **Progress Update.**

The CCL project team has held three of the four learning sessions for sites participating in the BSC-SEL and continues to provide ongoing support to teams as they make improvements to support children’s social and emotional learning at their centers. Project staff have conducted the first round of surveys, classroom observations, and interviews to inform the study of the feasibility of the BSC-SEL in ECE settings. Additionally, in early 2018, CCL project staff published a literature review examining the evidence base of the BSC to understand the outputs and outcomes of the BSC and the contextual factors that may support success.

### **Implications for policy/practice**

Findings will inform quality rating and improvement systems, child care and Head Start training and technical assistance, and professional development for early care and education. Results are expected to spark interest among practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, and generate new opportunities to implement the BSC in ECE settings to support Continuous Quality Improvement.

### **Implications for research**

Results from this study will shed light on the feasibility of using improvement science methodology in ECE settings.

### **For more information:**

Project Description:

<http://www.childtrends.org/culture-continuous-learning-project/>

Literature Review:

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/culture-of-continuous-learning-project-a-literature-review-of-the-breakthrough-series-collaborative>

Open Science Registry: <https://osf.io/xuhzh/>

Breakthrough Series Collaborative:

<http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/IHIWhitePapers/TheBreakthroughSeriesIHICollaborativeModelforAchievingBreakthroughImprovement.aspx>

### **Contact**

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