



# U.S. Department of Education PDG Annual Performance Report Executive Summary

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Grantee State: CT

PR/Award #: S419B150006

You are required to submit an Executive Summary of up to 3000 words with your Annual Performance Report. This summary should relate to your approved application and summarize the goals and objectives that have been achieved under your grant, what you learned, and any evaluation results. Describe any unanticipated outcomes or benefits from your project and any barriers that you may have encountered. If there have been any changes to the project from the approved application, those should be explained as well.

The start of the second year of PDG in CT began on July 1, 2016, at which time PDG was moved into the newly established Quality Improvement (QI) Division of the OEC. The QI Division has since outlined a clear vision of early childhood quality improvement for the state, focusing on five pillars of quality: Health and Safety; Workforce Qualifications; Program Leadership; Family Engagement; and, Learning Environments. Since October of 2016, the QI division has conducted 12 listening sessions with approximately 300 members of the public to further inform CT's quality improvement work and that of the future Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS). Feedback from these listening sessions, along with lessons learned from PDG implementation, as well as expertise from local and national partners will inform and advance Connecticut's QRIS work.

In 2016 the OEC officially launched the Early Care and Education component of the state's Early Childhood Information System (ECE-ECIS). The ECE-ECIS is a secure online data system that will allow the OEC to collect and monitor data to make informed program and policy decisions affecting young children birth to age five. All early childhood programs receiving public funds are required to participate in ECE-ECIS including PDG. Launched in October 2016 after a series of setbacks related to technological glitches, ECE-ECIS now contains 15,004 unduplicated state and PDG funded children. 240 out of 730 PDG eligible children are currently not in the system but will be uploaded in March 2017 after the release of a batch upload function made available to programs in February 2017. This function will help larger programs upload children into ECE-ECIS all at once, rather than one-by-one, reducing the likelihood of error and duplication of children in the system.

In addition to using ECE-ECIS as a tool to track, monitor and analyze data, the OEC has also refined and implemented new monitoring tools in the second year of PDG implementation to assess subrecipient compliance at the state level, as well as help subrecipients assess their own compliance at the local level. One such tool is the Corrective Action Plan (CAP), a formal document that outlines the issue(s) of noncompliance and requires subrecipients to document and provide timelines of how compliance will be attained. To date, four CAPs have been issued and returned with satisfactory plans to resolve issues of noncompliance. Additionally, the PDG Project Manager for Data and Accountability has been involved in the development of a new monitoring tool for all state-funded programs. Together with managers of state funded programs, a tool that integrates all requirements including PDG, is being developed. This new tool will be launched in the Spring of 2017 and will be piloted with PDG subrecipients as well as other state funded programs; it will classify subrecipients and programs into low, medium and high risk categories in order to better target technical assistance and other support services to programs and to ensure compliance with all federal and state funded grant requirements.

The PDG Project Manager for Data and Accountability has also made an effort to transition existing data collection and reporting efforts to electronic and web-based applications. This shift has helped both PDG project managers to track and analyze data with greater efficiency, as well as programs to submit information in a more expedient manner. In the past, many forms and surveys were completed using word documents that needed to be printed, completed and then collected in-person, mailed, scanned or faxed to the OEC for review. This process has made the completion and collection of forms burdensome on both programs and the OEC. Thus far, feedback from subrecipients about using electronic and web-based forms has been positive. Additionally, the OEC's School Readiness program has followed suit, now utilizing the same web-based application to submit their annual RFPs and end-of-year reports.

In year two the OEC has continued using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool in PDG classrooms but has made significant changes in how data is tracked, analyzed and shared for the purposes of program improvement. In year one, CLASS observation data was collected in hardcopy and analyzed by hand, which made the assessment of trends difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, the OEC quickly realized that sharing CLASS observation data with coaches, who could use the data as part of teacher development and goal setting, was both cumbersome and not secure. It became obvious that something needed to be done to ensure data was collected in a more efficient and secure manner and shared in a timely fashion to ensure program improvement.

Beginning in August 2016 PDG began using myTeachstone, an online subscription service designed to combine CLASS observation data with individualized professional development resources and ease the sharing of CLASS data through a secure portal. To date, 51 CLASS observations have been completed using the online tool. A full analyses of CLASS scores within and across the first and second year of PDG programming will not be available until June 2017.

Just as CLASS is used to improve quality in PDG classrooms, so too are services that enhance social and emotional wellbeing for children, such as the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP), an evidence-based early childhood mental health consultation model. In year two ECCP has continued to provide its core classroom and child-specific services in every PDG classroom. As of December 31, 2016, 41 of 55 classroom contracts were underway, serving 97 teachers and teaching assistants as well as 590 unduplicated children. Of the children served, 40 have received child-specific services that included a home visit and targeted interventions based on the child and family's needs. 94% of teachers who have received ECCP consultation to date, agree or strongly agree that they have a better understanding of how to address social-emotional and behavioral issues in their classrooms. That same percentage of teachers reported that they agree or strongly agree that there have been improvements in the social-emotional environment in their classrooms. Furthermore, 100% of parents that participated in child-specific services reported that they were able to use the strategies outlined in the action plan for their child. Of those parents, 73% reported noticing changes made by the classroom teacher to accommodate their child's specific needs and 94% reported seeing improvements in their child's behavior.

To build upon the successful efforts of ECCP in improving children's social-emotional wellbeing, in November 2016 PDG was also a part of Connecticut's effort in becoming a member of the Pyramid Model Consortium to strengthen practices and services that enhance children's social and emotional wellbeing across the state. Collaboratively with the Connecticut State Department of Education-Office of Special Education and the Head Start Collaboration Office, PDG will help pilot policies, practices and other evidenced-based models from the consortium that will be rolled out to other state funded programs and into the work of the OEC's Quality Improvement Division and future QRIS. Four OEC staff members, including the coordinator of PDG workforce development, will attend the National Training Institute's conference in April which will provide an in-depth learning experience built around the Pyramid Model.

PDG is also improving quality within PDG classrooms by way of high-quality professional learning opportunities, namely through the provision of ECCP, individualized coaching, and tailored family engagement support and technical assistance. At the close of year one, results from a third-party evaluation however, revealed that subrecipients regarded the three components as disjointed. In response to these findings, the OEC developed the PDG Professional Learning Collaborative as a means to provide an integrated approach that would better serve communities and classrooms. The Collaborative was launched in March 2016 and together, the Project Manager for Family Engagement, ECCP Consultants, and Program & Instructional Support Coaches prioritize work through regular meetings and ongoing collaboration to provide: an environment for sharing and receiving feedback and support; an opportunity to develop consistent messaging through the adoption of a shared set of goals; and supports for a culture of continued growth and development for the Collaborative and for communities and programs.

To date, the Collaborative has met five times and developed a shared set of goals and intended outcomes as well as a process for sharing information and providing regular updates. The Collaborative also meets to set the agenda for the professional learning that occurs at the technical assistance level (i.e. for coaches, ECCP consultants and family engagement specialists). The OEC hopes that the third-party evaluation will show improvements with regard to the Collaborative development and the delivery of high-quality professional development.

An additional high-quality component continues to be the deepening of family engagement in the 13 PDG

communities by employing meaningful, culturally appropriate strategies utilizing a quarterly meeting process. The quarterly meetings are facilitated by the Project Manager for Family Engagement and create a context in which community teams reflect on their practices, review promising strategies, and develop plans for deepening family engagement. Teams include teachers, administrators, and families as well as including those who interact with children and families on a daily basis, to the extent they are willing and able to participate. Other community stake-holders are welcomed and invited to participate.

Year two saw the integration of families into the quarterly meeting process. All communities have family participation as an action step on their Roadmaps and update their successes and challenges on a quarterly basis. Communities without family participation are currently being asked for an action plan on how they will secure parent participation in year 3, including consulting with communities who have been successful. Currently, 9 of 13 communities currently include families.

Several communities have worried out loud that families won't be comfortable, that they will be bored, or that they won't participate and have been hesitant to invite families. In the case of the communities who have secured family participation, none of these predictions have materialized. Families are participating enthusiastically and demonstrating, without exception, that they bring to the table exactly what is needed in the process - a passion for their children's education, a desire to participate, and knowledge of their children, their families, their neighborhoods, and their cultures - knowledge we need to optimally support their children's learning. Hopefully, the three communities who have apprehensions will be inspired by their colleagues who are excited about their family participation.

To provide structure for the quarterly meetings, a set of organizing principles was identified during year one and states that the work be strengths-based, be family-centered, be focused on quality relationships, be linked to learning, be community-specific and build capacity of both teachers and families. Utilizing these organizing principles, engagement in year one focused on identifying where communities were, where they wanted to be and how they wanted to get there.

In year one, community teams adopted four high-quality frameworks and strategies for use in all 13 communities. The strategies include: the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships; Growing and Sustaining Parent Engagement Toolkit for Parents and Community Partners; the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP); and, the Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality Measures (FPTRQ).

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework provides communities with the compass for their work; the Growing and Sustaining Parent Engagement Toolkit provides them with a Roadmap that will document how they want to "get there;" PTHVP relational home visits "jump start" the all-important relationships between family and teachers - home and school; and the FPTRQ assesses progress along the way.

Inspired by the case study in the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, PDG identified PTHVP as a means of launching family engagement efforts within its classrooms in year two. In June 2016 the OEC trained 101 staff on the use of PTHVP, and 62 staff across all 13 communities opted into the program to conduct home visits. To date, 200 visits have been conducted.

The relational home visits provided through PTHVP provide an opportunity to visit families with no agenda other than to listen to their hopes and dreams for their children. This model can be used even in programs with an existing home visiting component, such as Head Start. Feedback has been very positive from those who have engaged in PTHVP home visits, one teacher within a Head Start/PDG program expressed appreciation for the opportunity to visit her families first, just to listen, prior to subsequent visits in which agendas are required by Head Start standards.

Another teacher, who at first was apprehensive about participating in PTHVP, declared after her first visit that she "learned so much!" and looks forward to her next. Another teacher commented that she too, was hesitant to participate, but was quick to add that she has never had the quality of relationships with families that she now has with those who hosted home visits.

Additionally, a mother who received a home visit commented that she had been nervous before the visit, but by the time her child's teacher left, she felt very comfortable "being herself." She also commented that she

feels so much more confident initiating interaction with the teacher and asking questions. Multiple teachers have also reported how thrilled children are when they conduct a visit. One teacher overheard a child bragging to his classroom friend, "My teacher came to my house. Did she come to yours?"

Every home visit log provides examples of what program staff learned from the home visits. In some cases, they were able to identify assumptions made before the visit that proved to be inaccurate, and others identified ways to use what they learned to support children's learning in the classroom. Many recognized the significant potential of parents to contribute in day-to-day classroom activities.

The potential of the PTHVP relational home visit to "jump start" mutually respectful trusting relationships with families is demonstrated in a variety of ways after reviewing logs from just one visit, and it contributes to the capacity of both teachers and families to serve as co-educators of children.

Satisfaction surveys are being designed to quantify the impact of the home visits on program staff and families, results will be available in the summer of 2017. The OEC will also use indicators from national research documenting the significant impact of PTHVP on child outcomes to assess impact within PDG. Indicators include increased attendance, decreased behavior problems and increased parent participation in school activities.

Another tool that is being used to measure the deepening of family engagement is the FPTRQ and family and teacher surveys are conducted in October and May of each year. In year one, administration of the FPTRQ was challenging; the learning curve was steep for all involved; full implementation was demanding on both subrecipients and OEC staff. One setback was the timing of the first round of survey administration, which included pre and post survey dates that were closer together than desired. However, the second round proved more timely, and the OEC has overcome obstacles relative to distribution, instruction, collection, confidentiality and validity of surveys. Additionally, the OEC will begin implementing the FPTRQ using a web-based application which should increase return rates and ensure surveys are fully completed.

While FPTRQ measures are designed to obtain a comprehensive picture of the quality of relationships fundamental to high- quality family engagement, the instrument is new, and as yet, there are no definitions for high or low scores. To-date, the measures have not been used to test associations with child or family outcomes. Scores can be compared to the findings from a field study and pilot test which are included in the FPTRQ: Updated User's Manual. PDG community *total* scores all fall in the 200s; the field test scores all fall within the 100s, yielding a favorable comparison. The maximum total score possible is 261, and the lowest is 66. PDG sites' highest score was 248; the lowest score was 217.

In addition to the total scores described above, FPTRQ provides scores for four constructs: *knowledge*; *practices*; *attitudes*; and *environmental features*. The overall PDG third party evaluation includes total scores and scores on three of the four constructs - knowledge, practices, and attitudes.

During the 2015-2016 school year, three communities saw their *total*, *knowledge*, and *practices* scores improve pre-test to post-test. Ten communities saw improvements in their *practices* scores. This information provides some information as to improvements made however, given the newness of the tool, the significance of the improvement is unknown. Final analysis of the FPTRQ results will be provided within the third party evaluation report.

PDG is committed to supporting communities in developing a seamless birth-third grade continuum that ensures a smooth transition for children. To that end, several efforts are being implemented:

1. In addition to the relational visits provided through PTHVP, the model also includes informational home visits which will be conducted in the spring of 2017. The focus of the informational home visits will be on transition to kindergarten. Staff have been prepped for these home visits, and community teams have reviewed two promising strategies relative to transition to kindergarten - The Building Bridges Interactive Case and Ready4K!
2. The PDG Birth-Third Grade Advisory Group was established. Participants include members of the OEC, SDE, and three fellows of the first cohort of the UCONN PK-3 Leadership Group. The Advisory Group

will oversee PDG birth-third grade continuum efforts throughout the remaining years of the grant.

3. SDE and OEC are collaborating in the development of an online toolkit for kindergarten transition. Community teams will serve as focus group participants and support formative and summative evaluation efforts regarding the toolkit. Professional development for teachers will be designed to support use of the toolkit.

In year two, the federal Preschool Development-Expansion Grant (PDG) has allowed the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to expand access to high-quality preschool programs in 13 high-need communities throughout the state for 730 eligible preschoolers. The OEC has built on the successful implementation of PDG in year one by streamlining, further refining and enhancing key components of high-quality, making year two even more effective and meaningful for eligible children and families throughout the state.