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SRCD State Policy Fellow Professional Portfolio Abstracts: Wendy Wei

2020-2021 SRCD State Policy Pre-doctoral Fellow at the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)

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Introduction: The following portfolio entries describe the work carried out during my Fellowship year at the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. I started this Fellowship working on supporting the development of the Birth-to-Grade 3 Framework. Throughout the remainder of the year, I worked on integrating data within the agency's Programs Division, which provided breadth in understanding regarding the different grant programs and supports EEC provides to the early care and education field. I also had the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of three grant programs within this Division: the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI), the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultations (ECMHC) grant program, and the Early Childhood Support Organization (ECSO) Initiative. Whereas the development of the Birth-to-Grade 3 Framework was focused on identifying research and reports to support the development of the framework, the latter four projects were focused on (1) conducting data analyses to understand the implementation of programs and (2) identifying areas to support data collection and the development of

data management systems.

Portfolio Entry 1: Birth-to-Grade 3 Framework

Project Overview:

Background: As part of EEC's strategic plan released in FY2020, one agency goal is to build a measurement system to ensure children are on track to 3rd grade success. This measurement system is designed to understand the educational, social, and contextual factors from birth to Grade 3 that may indicate whether children are on track for school success.

Goal(s): To 1) understand the child care landscape and the impact of COVID-19 on program health and outlook and 2) identify the barriers parents working in essential industries experienced with regards to locating, accessing, and paying for child care.

Contributions of Fellow:

- Identified and reviewed high-quality birth-to grade 3 resources developed by reputable organizations and/or states
- Created an initial draft of indicators that were pre-existing or could be collected for the framework
- Collaborated with external consultant in developing an initial framework for birth-to-Grade 3 indicators

Activity Focus Keywords: Framework Development, Literature Review

Policy Area Keywords: School Readiness, State Identified Measurable Result

Portfolio Entry 2: Programs Data Integration

Project Overview:

Background: EEC grant programs and supports individually collect different types of data. To date, these data have largely remained siloed from one another, and there is a lack of understanding regarding how

many programs are engaged with EEC supports and whether and which programs are engaged in many supports versus no supports.

Goal(s): To create a dataset that (1) supports understanding of EEC-licensed programs' engagements with various EEC supports and (2) fosters relationships between the program quality unit and licensing divisions at EEC; To identify approaches for streamlining the data integration process and opportunities for use in workstream

Contributions of Fellow:

- *Collected, managed, and integrated data from more than 10 EEC programs and supports*
- *Conducted descriptive analyses and presented results to EEC leadership and staff*
- *Facilitated discussion with EEC staff in identifying how the data could be used in regular work and areas for improvement in data collection and linking process*
- *Developed a set of recommendations for EEC regarding next steps*
- *Used this data to support Early Childhood Support Organizations (ECSOs) Initiative recruitment*

Activity Focus Keywords: Administrative Data, Data Analysis, Data Management System; Presentation

Policy Area Keywords: Continuous Quality Improvement

Portfolio Entry 3: Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative

Project Overview:

Background: The Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) program is a state grant that provides funding to nine grantees across the state in an effort to expand access to high-quality preschool particularly in low-income communities. This grant program is focused on building partnerships between private center-based care and the local public school system and improving the quality of EEC programs and systems in these communities. As part of this program, grantees submit enrollment and classroom quality data on an annual basis to track who the program is serving and the level of classroom quality that this program is supporting.

Goal(s): To help EEC understand who is being served by the grant program and general trends in classroom quality across years of the grant program; To provide information for the CPPI legislative report and data for the Preschool Development Grant data dashboard

Contributions of Fellow:

- Used child enrollment and classroom quality data submitted by grantees to understand the population of children served by CPPI programs
- Contributed to a legislative report reviewing grantee contributions and progress in FY20 and FY21
- Presented CPPI child enrollment and classroom quality data to grantees
- Supported data collection and data quality assurance
- Submitted cleaned CPPI data for Preschool Development Grant data dashboard, a cross-agency dashboard used to understand children's experiences with state-funded services from birth to age 8

Activity Focus Keywords: Cross-Agency Collaboration, Data Analysis, Data Collection, Data Visualization, Presentation, Written Report

Policy Area Keywords: Classroom Quality, Community-Public Partnerships, Development Grant B-5, Pre-Kindergarten

Portfolio Entry 4: Early Childhood Mental Health Consultations Grant

Project Overview:

Background: The Early Childhood Mental Health Consultations (ECMHC) grant provides funding to six different consultant groups throughout the state to provide services to address and support the social-emotional development and behavioral health of children in early education and care and out-of-school time settings. Individual children, classrooms, and entire programs can be referred for services. EEC staff are seeking to understand how the grant is currently implemented and whether there are opportunities for a deeper understanding of the progression of services, processes, and outcomes of the grant.

Goal(s): To understand program goals and implementation; To revise and improve current data collection tools to support current gaps in knowledge regarding implementation

Contributions of Fellow:

- Conducted a diagnostic analysis of the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultations grant program to understand program goals, activities, and preliminary outcomes
    - Used ECMHC program referral data to analyze the who, what, and where of children, classrooms, and programs who were referred for services in the past year
    - Wrote one data brief of results
    - Reviewed relevant documents, including the grant request for referral, other data reporting tools, and legislative reporting guidelines
- Revised and improved the data collection tool to support data linking across data reports and to capture gaps in knowledge regarding program implementation
    - Engaged with program staff and ECMHC grantees to discuss areas for improvement in the tool

Activity Focus Keywords: Document Review, Written Report, Policy Analysis, Data Analysis, Data Management System
Policy Area Keywords: Early Childhood Mental Health, Center-based Child Care, Family Child Care

Portfolio Entry 5: Early Childhood Support Organization Initiative

Project Overview:

Background: Launched in FY2020 and in partnership with New Profit, the Early Childhood Supports Organization (ECSOs) Initiative was created to support program quality. This initiative leverages an innovative model through which three early care and education coaching organizations work closely with EEC-licensed programs' leadership to (1) facilitate job-embedded professional learning for classroom educators and (2) support educators in successfully implementing curriculum. Through participation in the ECSO Initiative, programs will engage in continuous quality improvement.

Goal(s): To support with the implementation of the ECSO program during the pilot year via survey development and data analysis

Contributions of Fellow:

- Conducted Supported with recruitment for Cohort 1 and 2

    - Used the integrated programs data to facilitate licensors' identification of programs that show promise for being ready for the ECSO program
    - Supported via technical assistance in using spreadsheets
- Supported with survey development for instructional leaders and educators
- Conducted data analyses regarding program, instructional leader, and educator demographics and experiences in ECSO initiative
- Wrote multiple reports, including program, instructional leader, and educator characteristics of those participating in the ECSOs and instructional leader and educator experiences at initiative-level as well as individual ECSO-levels
- Presented results from analyses to EEC staff (division, licensors), ECSOs, and relevant stakeholders

Activity Focus Keywords: Data Analysis, Data Visualization, Implementation Research, Presentation, Survey Design
Policy Area Keywords: Center-based Child Care, Community of Practice, Professional Development

Read more about Wendy's fellowship experience