



Hello!

For our October Monthly Update, we want to take a different approach to communicating the progress of the grant. In September, grant leadership worked with the Steering Committee of the Chittenden Region Building Bright Futures Council to develop a series of scenarios regarding young children and their families, and explain how the Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grant might come into play in each scenario. These scenarios were presented at Chittenden's Regional Council's October 1st meeting.

We've decided to share this approach with you here because many of you tell us that it is hard to conceive how the systems-level work of the grant impacts the lives of children and families. Hopefully these hypothetical stories, based on actual experiences with children and families in Vermont, will give you a better sense of how a strong early childhood system impacts children and families.

"Morgan"

Morgan really struggled with a successful pre-school experience. He moved between several programs, each not working for a variety of reasons. Eventually, a pre-school program that was able to meet Morgan's needs was found. Morgan's teachers worked to understand both the child and the family and learned that the parents had an especially trusting relationship with their pediatrician. This pediatrician contributed to parents agreeing to a developmental assessment through Essential Early Education which, in turn, determined that Morgan was eligible for special education services and an individual education plan. This school year, Morgan is in kindergarten, and his teachers report a successful start to the school year!

ELC projects related to this scenario:

- The program that was successful in meeting Morgan's needs demonstrated an understanding of how important it is to value and work with the parent as well as the child. Family engagement is an element of quality expected of programs in the top tiers of STARS and of publicly funded preschool programs. The ELC funding expands and supports implementation of the Strengthening Families framework. This results in more programs implementing practices that support families.
- It is important that the public, especially parents, have a better understanding of the critical elements of program quality that support all children, including those with special needs such as Morgan. Toward this end, the ELC grant funds an independent evaluation of STARS, Vermont's program quality and recognition system. Another ELC project will create a monitoring system for early learning and development programs including publicly funded preschool programs. These projects will help determine if programs are effectively implementing required practices in order to provide high quality early experiences for all children.
- Morgan may have benefitted, early on, from more in-depth social and emotional support to address some of his behavioral challenges. Expanding the Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support framework to more early childhood programs is another project of the grant. Early MTSS helps programs put in place best-practice social and emotional supports for all children in a program, as well as more targeted supports and interventions for children with increasing levels of need.



- Morgan's story has a happy ending: he is thriving in Kindergarten. In order to be sure we have an accurate measure of all children's preparation for Kindergarten, the grant funds professional development for Kindergarten teachers on the newly revised, reliable, and valid Kindergarten Readiness Survey.
- In this scenario, we see the results of a successful collaboration between the health and early learning sectors. This represents the type of systems change the Early Learning Challenge grant is trying to promote at the local and state level. At the state level, the Agency of Education, the Department for Children and Families, and the Department of Health (VDH), all collaborate to oversee and implement the grant. Likewise, we support similar collaboration at the community level.

"Kylee"*

Kylee's grandmother is concerned about her 2 ½ year old granddaughter's speech and behavior. Kylee uses very few words to communicate and the words she does use are very difficult to understand. Grandma has noticed that Kylee is increasingly crying and having tantrums when others do not understand her requests. Kylee is unable to hold a crayon and struggles to use utensils - preferring to use her fingers to feed herself. Grandma has shared her concerns with Kylee's parents, but they are not concerned about the child's development and do not think she needed extra support or services. Grandma is unsure how to get help for the family.

ELC projects related to this scenario:

- Kylee and her grandmother were able to benefit from *Help Me Grow* Vermont (HMG), a new referral system that connects families to resources and services they need. On her local news channel, Grandma heard about the *Help Me Grow* Vermont phone line hosted by Vermont 2-1-1 and called to share her concerns. The HMG Child Development Specialist who staffed the line shared information on typical developmental milestones for 2 ½ year olds and followed up by mailing Grandma CDC's Milestone Moments Booklet with information on tracking developmental milestones as well as positive parenting tips (ages 2 months through 5 years). With subsequent follow up calls from the HMG Child Development Specialist, Kylee's grandmother was connected to several community resources: the local Building Bright Futures Regional Council community playgroup, a kinship care support group, and the local library story hour. During one follow up call, Grandma reported she had shared CDC's Milestone Booklet with Kylee's parents. After reading about typical developmental milestones, the parents eventually dialed 2-1-1 and spoke to the HMG Child Development Specialist directly. They gave permission for a referral to be made to Children's Integrated Services (CIS). The parents additionally gave permission for Kylee's pediatrician to be notified that a referral to CIS had been made. Kylee is now receiving early intervention services. *Help Me Grow* is a service for the whole-population, with the goal of finding and connecting at-risk kids and families who are currently not accessing services.

** This story is based on an actual call to the Help Me Grow Vermont phone line. Names and identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality.*



“Tarah’s Family”

Tarah is two and just started at a new high-quality, home-based childcare program. Tarah is in DCF custody living with a foster family, but there is a plan for re-unification with her birth mom, who is pregnant. Her mom’s due date is in two months. In order for mom to access ongoing treatment for her substance abuse, and eventually find a job, she will need the same full time care for both children. There isn’t space, however, at Tarah’s program for the new baby.

ELC projects related to this scenario:

- Tara’s birth mom would likely benefit from one of the new, evidence-based Home Visiting models being implemented in Vermont. Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home visiting (MECSH), a nursing-based model, and Parents as Teachers (PAT), a family support based model, are both being implemented throughout the state, with training in each model funded through the grant.
- It is likely the new baby would be eligible for CIS Specialized Child Care Services that provide care for the most high-needs children. Through the grant, the requirements to become a specialized child care provider are being revised to make sure providers are able to offer as high quality care as possible. The grant is also funding an increase in financial reimbursement for specialized child care to increase the incentive for becoming a specialized child care provider.
- The lack of capacity in Tara’s program may be a community-wide issue. The data projects of the grant, including the development of Vermont Insights, a project of Building Bright Futures, will help communities easily access data about capacity and other issues. The grant’s investment in the Building Bright Futures regional council infrastructure would support a community wide discussion about the capacity issue, and help generate a community-led response.
- This scenario offers another example of a program that may benefit from the expansion of the Strengthening Families child care model, to better support families like Tarah’s. Thanks to ELC grant funding, the Strengthening Families model is being implemented at more centers across the state, particularly among home-based providers. Strengthening Families helps to develop parents’ knowledge of child development and improve parenting skills, while providing support in areas of need and building trusting relationships.

“Mohamed and Abdi”:

Mohamed, age 3, and Abdi, age 4, are brothers and attend an early care and education program close to their home. The family loves the program and is looking forward to taking advantage of Act 166 public pre-k funding; however, the provider has 2 stars and is not yet able to become a Pre-Qualified provider.

ELC projects related to this scenario:

- The grant funds an expansion of the STARS Bonuses to provide an incentive for programs to increase or maintain quality levels.



- The grant funds training in Teaching Strategies Gold (TS Gold) through the Agency of Education, to help more providers meet the Act 166 requirement that Pre-Qualified programs implement that assessment.
- Grant leadership helped facilitate the new provisional licensure process at AOE for private providers to become licensed teachers in order to meet requirements of Act 166. The process includes a partnership with Vermont Birth to Five to provide mentoring toward full licensure. We re-directed grant dollars already set aside for professional development to VAEYC's TEACH program (also a grant project). TEACH will provide additional scholarships for provisionally licensed teachers needing to finish up a few courses to get their full Vermont teaching license with early childhood education or early childhood special education endorsement.

What's next?

Some of the projects mentioned in these scenarios are already off and running, making a real difference in the lives of Vermonters. Others are still in the development phase. As we begin to compile our second Annual Performance Report (due in February 2016) we look forward to sharing more concrete data about the impacts being made across all projects.

If you or the organization with which you are affiliated would like more information or would like to discuss the grant with grant leadership directly, please contact Julie.cadwallader-staub@vermont.gov.

For more information on the grant visit <http://buildingbrightfutures.org/early-learning-challenge/>.

Thank you for your continued interest in supporting our youngest Vermonters!

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GLOSSARY:

AHS – Agency of Human Services
AOE – Agency of Education
ASQ – Ages and Stages Questionnaire (developmental screening, Projects 11, 12, 13)
ASQ-SE – Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social and Emotional
BBF – Building Bright Futures
CDD – Child Development Division (within CDD)
CIS – Children’s Integrated Services (within CDD)
CLASS – Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Project 10)
DCF – Department for Children and Families (within AHS)
ECLI – Early Childhood Leadership Institute (Project 3)
ELC – Early Learning Challenge Grant
ERS – Environmental Rating Scales (Projects 7 and 10)
GOV – Governor’s Office
HMG – Help Me Grow (Project 12)
KRS – Kindergarten Readiness Survey (Project 18)
M.A.T.C.H. – Mentoring, Advising, Teaching, Coaching, Consulting, and Helping (Project 15)
PAT – Parents As Teachers (Project 11)
RBA – Results Based Accountability
RFP – Request for Proposals
T.E.A.C.H. - Teacher Education And Compensation Helps (Project 16)
TS Gold – Teaching Strategies Gold (Formative assessment under Project 10)
VCCICC – Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council
VAEYC – Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children
VDH – Vermont Department of Health (within AHS)
VELS – Vermont Early Learning Standards

