

# Wisconsin Early Childhood Cross Sector Professional Development Initiative Executive Summary



**Five-Year Project Report**  
January 2013 to December 2017

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**  
Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent



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Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP)  
Braided Funding and Race to the Top—  
Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC)

## Executive Summary

### **Five-Year Project Report**

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# Executive Summary

## Wisconsin Early Childhood Cross Sector Professional Development Initiative

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#### Introduction:

Professional development is a key feature of a coordinated and comprehensive system to promote quality in the early childhood-related professions. For over 20 years, Wisconsin's early childhood stakeholders have engaged in cross-sector professional development collaboration. Much of this collaboration occurs under the auspices of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP) Braided Funding Initiative and their Wisconsin Early Childhood Professional Development Structure (WI-ECPD). In 2013, the state Departments of Children and Families, Public Instruction, and Health Services applied for a four-year grant and received \$34 million in federal grant funding for early childhood initiatives through the federal Race to the Top—Early Challenge grant (RTT-ELC). As a result, the Wisconsin Early Childhood Professional Development (ECPD) System has undergone significant enhancements and project activity. It has benefited particularly from Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant funding, as its funding supported personnel to engage in system collaboration to build integration and capacity among sectors and partners.

This executive summary is an overview of a full report that describes the state's early childhood professional development efforts during the grant period, including a no-cost extension year. The full report describes in detail the Wisconsin Early Childhood Professional Development (ECPD) System and the structure. It highlights milestones in the RTT-ELC-defined areas of Early Learning Standards and Professional Development. It also includes information about continuing opportunities to sustain the ECPD system beyond the RTT-ELC grant. Projects and documents can also be found by visiting <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com>.

## The Wisconsin Early Childhood Professional Development (ECPD) System and Structure:

Consisting of interrelated efforts, services, and supports, the system and its structure address the continuum of workforce needs with a common goal of building and sustaining an effective system of education, training, and technical assistance. The system supports a cross-sector workforce

that includes professionals in a variety of programs for young children and their families, including health programs, home visitation, child care sector, Head Start, 4- and 5-year-old-kindergarten, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C and B-619 programs.



## Impact on Wisconsin Early Childhood Professional Development Structure:

A primary impact during the past five years has been to clarify the ECPD Structure to support cross-sector professional development. Of significance is the strengthening of cross-sector communication, agreed upon professional competences and standards, a commitment to reduce duplication of efforts, and, an increased understanding of system roles and partnerships. Activities have resulted in an agreed upon statewide infrastructure that can be utilized to further improve early childhood pre-service education and ongoing professional development. The descriptions below are based on the core elements that have been defined during this five-year process.

- A. Sector and Cross-Sector Commitment to System Alignment and Collaboration: State agencies and related associations committed to collaboration among existing state professional development structures, including those that provide provider/teacher preparation, educator licensing, educator/provider effectiveness, ongoing professional development, and training and technical assistance practices.
- B. Regional Networks, Coaches, and Teams: The use of the WECCP braided funding initiative structure resulted in an increased ability to support efforts at the regional and local levels through the use of Regional Collaboration Coaches, Regional Action Teams, Regional Work Plans, and local mini-grants.

- C. System Sectors and Partners: The new RTT-ELC efforts brought expanded awareness and participation at the state, regional, and local levels. This increased the scope of commitment to building the vision and capacity for high-quality comprehensive services for young children and families.
- D. Cross-Sector Professional Development Initiative (WI PDI): The WI PDI became an accepted structural mechanism to enhance alignment among the early childhood professional development sectors and to shape cross-sector alignment and consistent evidence-based practices.
- E. Communication through Web-based Professional Development System: Web-based professional development was enhanced or developed to create common understanding, share cross-sector products, align efforts, and provide broader access to best practices print and media materials.
- F. Cross-Sector Commitment to Excellence for Early Childhood Professional Development: The use of consistent guiding principles, early learning standards, professional core competencies, trainers and technical assistance competencies, and consistent qualification levels ensured a level of reliability in quality. Best practices were promoted through training packages and resources in the content areas, including social-emotional competence, early literacy and math, inclusion, dual language learners, homelessness and poverty, comprehensive system for child screening and assessment, 4-year-old kindergarten community approaches and YoungStar, and tribal-state relations.

**Impact Summary by Professional Development Method:**

- Resource material and products were consistently promoted across sectors and partners. Products were vetted by content-specific project committees and were disseminated through web-based and in-person mechanisms. Professional development packages were created for online access. All content area resource materials were made available online. A plan to align the cross-sector websites began.
- Four hundred eighty-three full-day training sessions provided direct instruction on the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), Pyramid Model, Dual Language Learners (DLL), and vision screening (reaching over 10,000 participants).

- Ten state conferences were hosted or co-sponsored which were attended by more than 1,570 participants.
- Nine statewide and 80 regional Communities of Practice gatherings were utilized to increase trainer skills, ensuring consistency and quality related to WMELS, Pyramid, screening/assessment, and DLL.
- Twelve online webinars increased access to diverse stakeholders interested in homelessness or vision screening.
- Fourteen train the trainer events ensured that state-approved and content-specific trainers were knowledgeable and consistent in WMELS, Competencies, Ages and Stages Screeners, and WISELearn.
- Information was shared through four listservs reaching 2,452 subscribing members, many of whom then forwarded the messages to other stakeholders.
- Mini-grants were used by Regional Action Teams or content projects to support 159 local projects.
- Regional stipends were provided to cover attendance of 700 people at state and national conferences.

#### **Impact Summary by Project Area:**

- WMELS structures, training, and resources were expanded and aligned to help the child care workforce, school districts, and other early care and education providers use standards in everyday practice. The WMELS document was updated and reprinted. Materials in WMELS trainer curriculum and assessment tool kits were updated. There were 201 full-day training sessions for 4,940 people. Forty-five new trainers were approved, including those that could provide training targeted to Spanish- and Hmong-speaking audiences and tribal communities.
- The *Pyramid Model for Social Emotional Competence* cross-sector structure was advanced and new materials were developed. Two hundred forty-nine Pyramid Model trainings were provided to 5,216 people. Cross-sector implementation sites increased by 21 programs located in 73 sites. Eight communities implemented Parents Interacting with Infants groups.
- Early literacy and math content was developed. A seven-topic online early literacy module is available online. A 2014 conference “kicked-off” the material to over 200 participants. A collaboration with the

Wisconsin Mathematics Council resulted in an early math preconference and strand being added to their 2017 conference, with at least 50 early childhood participants attending.

- **Inclusion:** Collaboration among the state departments resulted in additional training and technical assistance to help children with special needs. Two statewide conferences were held with over 400 cross-sector technical assistance providers and others. Online materials for providers were developed. National inclusion resource materials were promoted to stakeholder groups and through three local pilot projects.
- **Dual Language Learners (DLL):** A comprehensive and consistent approach to dual language learners was promoted through partnerships with WIDA Early Learning Years. Two statewide full-day trainings were provided to 90 participants. A cadre of DLL content trainers was developed. The content was promoted locally through these trainers and through Regional Action Team meetings, material distribution, and stipends to attend state events.
- **Homelessness:** A comprehensive and consistent approach to homelessness was framed for early childhood and promoted to the field through webinars, email blasts, and conference sessions. In addition, a community tool kit was produced and seven communities received mini-grants to pilot the kits.
- **Screening and Assessment:** The concept of kindergarten entrance assessment (KEA) was explored. It resulted in the promotion of a vision for a comprehensive and consistent approach to screening and assessment at the state level. Communities were supported in their efforts to increase cross-sector screening and assessment, including support for trainers using the Ages and Stages screening tools. Professional development materials were created and shared at conferences to increase child care providers' knowledge of comprehensive screening practices and promote school utilization of child care and Head Start as part of their Response to Intervention data collection and practices. Collaboration with Prevent Blindness Wisconsin provided webinars and training to increase vision screening in the early years. Screening/assessment tools were made more readily available.
- **Four-year old kindergarten and YoungStar alignment:** The alignment between private child care and public 4K was promoted to increase provider participation into the WI QRIS (YoungStar). Updated policy

and practice information was shared through the Forces44 listserv. The Preserving Early Childhood conferences brought together more than 250 school, child care, and Head Start leaders annually to promote community approaches to 4-year-old kindergarten. In addition, annual school district network meetings shared information on quality, YoungStar, community approaches, and other best practices.

- Tribal professional development: RTT-ELC placed emphasis on professional development alignment to an existing collaboration through the IDEA-funded Disproportionality Technical Assistance Network. A complete report on the full impact of this project is available. The professional development goal focuses on making the state professional development projects more receptive to and accessible by tribal communities. It included recruiting and supporting trainers to provide WMELS training in the tribal community. Culturally appropriate materials were developed to support WMELS, Pyramid Model, and trauma informed care trainings. Eight of the 11 tribal communities applied for and received mini-grants to support professional development and community collaboration.

#### **Continuing Opportunities and Sustainability:**

The Wisconsin Early Childhood Professional Development System and Structure have had substantial capacity building over the past five years. The structure has supported alignment among state, regional, and local professional development initiatives, thereby reducing duplication and maximizing funding. Professional development in early childhood content and project areas has impacted more than 10,000 early childhood providers, educators, administrators, trainers, and technical consultants.

Recognizing the importance of this work, key stakeholders have made a number of commitments to support sustainability, including, but not limited to:

- The key partners recognize and commit to continue to work in partnership to explore how to sustain these cross-sector professional development efforts, refine the structure, and take advantage of the continuing opportunities identified in the various content areas.
- The key partners will continue to explore the use of the WECCP braided funding for coaches, Action Teams, and the website.

- The Office of Early Learning and the Early Childhood Consultant will continue their work to promote cross-sector efforts.
- The DPI will continue to explore increased alignment with current department efforts related to screening and assessment as well as efforts of the RtI Center and PBIS.
- DPI recognizes the importance of the funding from and/or alignment with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the Title III English Language Learners, and the longitudinal data system, and will continue to support alignment with these efforts.
- The Disproportionality Technical Assistance Network will continue its funding of the early childhood tribal project.
- The DCF has committed to maintaining functions of RTT-ELC coordinator positions related to inclusion and professional development.
- Stakeholders are committed to continue to improve data coordination through the use of the RTT-ELC System's Portfolio and to continue efforts to align project and Registry data collection.
- Stakeholders are committed to continue PDI and to explore its relationships with other continuing committees, including WMELS, Pyramid, and ELAG.
- Stakeholders are committed to continue screening and assessment efforts through promotion of the *Comprehensive and Aligned System for Early Childhood Screening and Assessment: Wisconsin's Blueprint* and related professional development resources.
- Conferences and networking events will continue by increasing or requiring fee-based registration or by aligning with other existing events.

The end of the RTT-ELC grant funding will have a significant impact on the sustainability of this work in the future. Without continued intentional focus on, and integration of, newly developed systems, skills, materials, and relationships, the impact of the grant's accomplishments will be time-limited and an effective system of professional development will be more difficult to sustain. The commitments listed above will sustain some of the RTT-ELC grant activities. As these commitments evolve, Wisconsin is hopeful that new opportunities and partnerships will emerge, allowing for the continued promotion and implementation of optimal supports and services in the field of early care and education.

More details on the projects, as well as the specific products and publications, can be found by linking to the appropriate content area at:

<http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/>

**The complete Wisconsin Early Childhood Cross Sector Professional Development Initiative**

Five-Year Project Report is available from:

The Office of Early Learning

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