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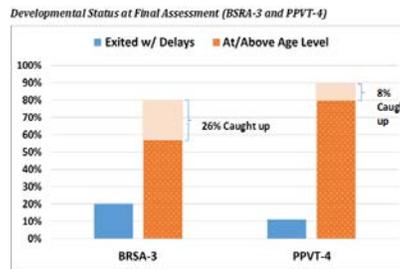
A quarterly newsletter published by the Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community (IIDC), focusing on current research and best practices for Early Childhood professionals and settings to inform practices in the state of Indiana.

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EEMG Year 2 Results

The Indiana Family Social Services Administration (FSSA) contracted with The Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute (ECC) to administer the evaluation of the prekindergarten Early Education Matching Grant (EEMG) program during the 2014-2017 school years. The evaluation's focus encompasses: children's gains in learning (early academic and school readiness skills), the quality of families' engagement in their children's learning and development, and classroom quality. The 2nd EEMG program year (2015-16) research sample included 242 randomly selected children throughout 46 classrooms across the state.

The EEMG year 2 evaluation results found that children made marked gains in nearly all measures. Significant improvements in receptive language, concept development, and key school readiness skills were demonstrated. The percentage of children showing developmental delays also decreased, sometimes dramatically. At the start of the EEMG 2015-16 year, 22% to 49% of the children showed delays in their receptive language on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-4) and concept development on the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA-3), respectively. These numbers had reduced by more than half by the end of the year. Figure 1 illustrates that progress. By the end of the program year, 88.8% of children exited at age level in receptive language and 79.8% exited at age level in concept learning. Furthermore, of the children that were delayed in skills at the start of the program year, 8% in concept development and 26% in receptive language, caught up to their same-age peers by the end of the program year.

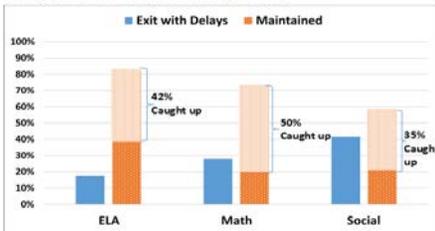


Want to Learn More?

The full year two EEMG report is prepared and will be released on The Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration website soon. Keep an eye out for a link to this report on our website at:

<https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/pages/early-education-matching-grant-eemg>

Developmental Status at Final Assessment (ISTAR-KR)



The Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting of Kindergarten Readiness (ISTAR-KR) measures also captured similar changes in children's developmental status. At the beginning of the 2015-16 year, 46.3% of children were delayed in two or more English/Language Arts skill areas, 67.7% were delayed in two or more Mathematics skills areas, and 61.4% were delayed in two or more Social-Emotional skill areas. By the end of the program year, those numbers had reduced to 17.5%, 28%, and 42%, respectively.

Families and teachers reported significant gains in social skills throughout Year 2 of the EEMG on the Preschool Kindergarten Behavior Skills (PKBS-2) assessment. Additionally, children who were at-risk socially and behaviorally at the beginning of the school year showed significant improvement in their social emotional skills by the end of the program year.

Classroom observations of teacher/child interactions using The Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) measure indicated that Indiana's EEMG teachers scored above average in the areas of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, but below average in Instructional Support, when compared with national samples and other studies. Statistical analyses showed that Classroom Organization was a significant predictor of decreased problem behaviors, as reported by parents. Likewise, when Instructional Support scores increased, EEMG parents and teachers reported fewer behavior problems. Examining classroom schedules found that children were exposed to a wide range of activities, however, they spent the majority of their time in free choice, basics, and group learning environments. As expected, children attending full-day programs spent a great deal more time in activities coded as "basics," such as: nap time, waiting in line, restroom breaks. Notably, teachers in classrooms where children spent more time in group instruction reported significant decreases in problem behavior.

Lastly, regarding family engagement, teachers in EEMG programs that reported a higher level of Assisting Families as Connected, Supported Members of the Community (one of the four components of the ELAC family engagement framework) also reported increased social skills.



The Development and Potential Outcomes of Early Social-Emotional Deficits

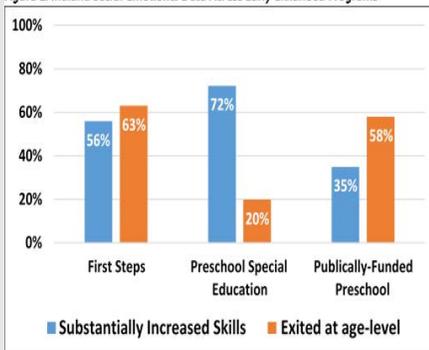
Social-Emotional problems develop from infancy

One of the challenges of the early childhood education profession is meeting the unique social and emotional needs of a diverse population of children. Children who develop social-emotional difficulties in infancy are likely to continue to struggle in childcare, preschool, and beyond without proper early intervention (McMahon & Frick, 2007). In fact, approximately 12% of two-year-olds display subclinical or clinical social-emotional deficits (Briggs-Gowan, Carter, Skuban, & Horwitz, 2001). What is even more concerning is that of the one-to-two-year-old children with parent-reported social-emotional delays, less than 8% receive necessary mental-health services (Horwitz, Gary, Briggs-Gowan, & Carter, 2003). Furthermore, research has shown that when children lack necessary social-emotional skills, they are more likely to display extreme behavioral problems (Briggs-Gowan, Carter, Skuban, & Horwitz, 2001). These extreme behavior problems may be the root of rising suspension and expulsion rates in early childhood settings. In fact, four-year-old preschool children are three times as likely to be expelled as children in grades K-12 (Gilliam, 2005).

Let's examine Indiana Data

Data collected across birth to five services in our state demonstrates the need to continue focusing on social-emotional development and learning for young children. Figure 1 displays exit data on both the percentage of children with substantial increases in their social-emotional skills and the percentage of children who displayed age-level social-emotional skills at exit from the program. As you can see, across early childhood delivery systems, children who have been identified as having social-emotional deficits are struggling to make adequate gains that catch them up to their peers who are developing typically. It is possible that these delays are accounting for some of our state's preschool suspension and expulsion rates. In 2013, suspension and expulsion rates for Indiana preschool and kindergarten children with identified disabilities (enrolled in special education)

Figure 1. Indiana Social-Emotional Data Across Early Childhood Programs



were 82% higher than rates for their typically developing peers. Additionally, nearly 7% of African American male preschool or kindergarten children in our state were suspended or expelled, compared to 2.2% of their white counterparts. (Nelson, Gopalan, & Farnworth, 2016). *Social-emotional development is critically important and we need to continue implementing evidence-based strategies to identify and intervene early with these children and families.*

What are we doing in Indiana?

The Local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&R) developed and implemented The Caregivers Learning Indiana's Model for Building Social Skill (CLIMBS) program to provide intensive training and technical

assistance to guide professionals through challenging behavior. This initiative utilizes The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence to encourage positive behavior support

Although there may be ongoing efforts at the program and district level, the lack of published Indiana data suggesting the effective implementation of evidence-based curricula to address widespread social-emotional deficits in early childhood at the local, district, and state level is concerning and calls for action

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Fast Facts

1. 12% of 2 year-old children display subclinical or clinical social emotional deficits (Briggs-Gowan, Carter, Skuban, & Horwitz, 2001).
2. Of the children that are identified with parent-reported social-emotional deficits, less than 8% receive the mental health services they need (Horwitz, Gary, Briggs-Gowan, & Carter, 2003).
3. 4 year-old preschool children are **three times** as likely to be expelled as their K-12 counterparts (Gilliam, 2005).
4. In Indiana preschool and kindergarten children with disabilities had suspension and expulsion rates that were 82% higher than those of their typically developing peers in 2013 (Nelson, Gopalan, & Farnworth, 2016).
5. Indiana African American preschool and kindergarten males had about a 7% chance of being suspended or expelled, compared to 2.2% of their white counterparts in the 2013-2014 academic school year (Nelson, Gopalan, & Farnworth, 2016).



Using Texting to Communicate with Families

Family engagement is a term that many of us in the early childhood education world hear on a regular basis. Family engagement, as defined by Indiana's Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC), is "families actively supporting their children's learning and development and sharing the responsibility with early care and education providers who are committed to engaging with families in meaningful, culturally respectful ways."

Research has shown that effective family engagement is linked with improved child and family outcomes (Van Voorhis et al., 2013). So how do we do it? As you might imagine, family engagement is not just one thing. ELAC's family engagement model has four main components. A thread running through all these components is effective communication between families and providers. This article will focus on using technology, specifically texting, to improve family-provider communication.

Why do providers often struggle to engage with families? There are many possible reasons. Families are busy, families may not perceive the importance of what is being communicated, families may not realize what is expected of them, there may be a language or culture barrier, there may be competing demands (e.g., paying rent, finding food), or providers may not be communicating in ways that work for families.

This article contends that technology can be used to overcome some of these barriers. Although there are many type of technology (websites, email, etc.), texting seems to be the most effective way to communicate with the broadest range of families (Daugherty, et al., 2014). A national survey of low-income families and technology found that 85% of low-income families report having some type of mobile device (Rideout & Katz, 2016).

Several studies have been released in recent years regarding the value of texting. A group of Stanford researchers found that weekly texts to parents of preschoolers with tips on teaching their ABCs and preparing them for kindergarten led to increases in home literacy activities and led to parents asking teachers more questions about their child's development (York & Loeb, 2014). Hurwitz et al. (2015) found that daily texts providing parenting information over a six week period were associated with an increase in family engagement in learning activities at home with their children.

Given these results and the fact that texting is relatively inexpensive, early education programs in Indiana may want to consider including texting in their family engagement arsenal. Partnerships for Early Learners here in Indiana is piloting such an initiative (<http://partnershipsforearlylearners.org/improving-early-education/family-engagement/bloom-bright/>).

Of course, if you don't have access to an official texting program, think about ways that you could use texting in a less structured way to increase the frequency of information sharing you do with your families. One study examined whether adding texts to an already established curriculum for mothers of young children would be associated with better outcomes. The results showed that mothers who received texts with reminders about newly learned behaviors and messages of encouragement had better outcomes than mothers who received the curriculum without the texts (Carta et al., 2013).

Interested in texting but worried about using your personal cell phone to text families? Consider Remind.com (<https://www.remind.com/>), which allows teachers to deliver two-way messages to families without sharing their personal phone number.

Although texting is just one way to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of your communication with families, it seems to be a powerful tool and one that we all carry in our pockets every day.

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Facts and Resources

Did you know that 85% of low-income families reporting having some type of mobile device? (Rideout & Katz, 2016)

Research has shown that as little as 2 texts per week to parents of preschoolers with tips on teaching their child the ABC's and preparing them for kindergarten can lead to increases in home literacy activities and to parents asking teachers more questions about their child's development (York & Loeb, 2016)

Want to give it a try? Below you will find a few resources for integrating texting or other types of technology into your classroom practices:

1. <http://partnershipsforearlylearners.org/improving-early-education/family-engagement/bloom-bright/>
2. <https://www.remind.com/>
3. <http://ltd.edc.org/using-texting-encourage-participant-engagement-and-retention>

