Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Early Childhood Education Initiatives

To prioritize the intersectionality of social emotional development and embedded inclusionary practices in early childhood programs, OSPI’s Special Education division has funded the following initiatives to increase positive outcomes of young children (3–5 years) with disabilities with coordinated intensive technical assistance and systems-level coaching for early childhood staff in integrated early learning environments.

Washington Pyramid Model
Washington state was awarded the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) Intensive Technical Assistance Grant in January 2019. Implementation of the Washington Pyramid Model Implementation initiative includes Phase II, Year Two, with four programs: Shoreline, Neighborhood House, Clover Park, Arlington Partners for Pre-Kindergarten Learning Enhancement/Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (APPLE/ECEAP) and two Educational Service District (ESD) partners: PSESD 121 and NWESD 189. Phase I, Year Two has continued with two programs: Mead, Central Valley, and one ESD (10 sites). Recruitment for Phase III implementation is underway as of February 2021. The Washington Pyramid Model State Leadership Team (SLT) mission is to employ responsive systems that partner with the adults in children’s lives to promote social-emotional health through the framework of the Pyramid Model, so all children, prenatal–5 years, experience high-quality, inclusive early learning settings. Washington Pyramid Model supports the development of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) structures across grade bands, P-12. To find more information about Washington Pyramid Model work visit the Intensive Technical Assistance Grant webpage.

Learning Experiences and Alternative Program (LEAP)
LEAP for Preschoolers and Their Parents involves immersing children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) into preschool classrooms with typically developing children. LEAP Preschool reflects both a behavioral as well as a developmentally appropriate approach for teaching children with and without disabilities within an inclusive early childhood environment. Learning activities are selected based upon the needs, interests, and developmental levels of individual children within the classroom. In LEAP PreK Models, the typically developing peers are trained on how to communicate and engage in reciprocal social relationships with their classroom peers with ASD. OSPI has contracted with the University of Denver to create three LEAP replication sites: Camas School District (1 site) and Evergreen Public Schools (2 sites) in partnership with ESD 112. For more information, visit the LEAP Preschool Model webpage.

State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)
The State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) is Washington’s plan for improving school district performance on the federally required program Indicator 6 (Early Childhood Least Restrictive Environment), Indicator 7 (Early Childhood Outcomes), Indicator 11(Timely Initial Evaluations), and Indicator 12 (Early Childhood Transitions).
Problem of Practice: Lack of access to inclusive, high-quality early childhood learning experiences with integrated Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) infrastructures contribute to opportunity gaps in social-emotional development as these students enter kindergarten. These opportunity gaps increase year after year, leading to more restrictive placements, less access to core instruction, increased achievement gaps, and poor post-school outcomes.

OSPI is committed to implementing and assessing the effectiveness of SEL, intensive technical assistance, coaching, and professional development associated with the Pyramid Model (PM) early childhood MTSS infrastructure.

Research to Action: PreK Inclusion Champions Network (PIC)
The Pre-K Inclusion Champions (PIC) Network is committed to leveraging the impact that regional leaders, districts, and community-based champions possess to promote inclusionary placement options for preschoolers. These champions believe preschool students of all abilities have the right to participate in high-quality, inclusive early childhood programs. The PIC Network makes available small awards to the special education divisions within the ESDs and local school districts, with ESD leaders working with PIC teams and community-based partners that represent a cross-sector learning community aligning preschool and K-12 systems. To date, nine ESD agencies and fifty-two school districts across the state are engaged in the development of schoolwide cross-sector collaboration to enhance early childhood programs for all children across Washington state. Additionally, OSPI has partnered with the University of Washington Haring Center for Inclusive Education to create Early Childhood Special Education demonstration sites highlighting best practices in inclusive education across the state.

Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Birth Through Five
This federal competitive Preschool Development Grant supports state coordination and aligns existing early childhood care and education mixed delivery systems. Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) received a one-year planning grant in 2019 and a three-year renewal grant 2020–22. This interagency agreement supports three collaborative initiatives: 100 Schools Reach, Transitional Kindergarten Partners in Transition, and Outdoor Early Learning Transitions using Since Time Immemorial curriculum. DCYF, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and the Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) partner with OSPI Early Learning, Special Education, Office of Native Education, and Title programs to support these initiatives.

Pre-K Inclusion Collaboration Team (PICT)
Under the Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Settings focus area of the Partners for Preschool Improvement (PPI) Grant, OSPI’s Special Education Services and Learning & Teaching Division, in partnership with DCYF and ECEAP, have convened a volunteer, statewide Pre-K Inclusion Collaboration Team (PICT). Over the last two years, this team has assisted in the development, promotion, and implementation of the Washington state preschool inclusion mission and vision. Future work of the PICT stakeholders includes the identification of early childhood inclusion models, funding models, ongoing development of a joint mission statement, and high-quality instructional strategies

Visit the OSPI Early Childhood Special Education page for more information or contact Ryan Guzman, Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator, at Ryan Guzman’s email address.