



PYRAMID PLUS: THE COLORADO CENTER FOR SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AND INCLUSION A COLORADO COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE

Pyramid Plus: The Colorado Center for Social Emotional Competence and Inclusion was created to promote the positive social emotional development of all infants and young children and the inclusion of children with disabilities in all early childhood settings through use of the [Pyramid Model](#), [Special Quest Approach](#) and other evidence-based inclusion practices.

Social skills in young children are more closely associated with school readiness and success in Kindergarten and first grade than cognitive and academic skills (Raver & Knitzer, 2002; Smith, 2004). And yet, in a study commissioned for the Colorado legislature, early childhood (EC) teachers in Colorado rank their need to learn how to teach social skills and deal with challenging behavior as their number one training need (Hoover, 2006). Likewise, nationally, EC teachers report that challenging behavior and social skill problems are their greatest challenges and programs report expelling preschoolers at a rate three times that for school age children (Gilliam, 2005; Hemmeter et. al, 2007).

The Pyramid Model for Promoting the Social and Emotional Development of Infants and Young Children is a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices developed by two national, federally-funded research and training centers: the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) and the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI). These centers' faculty, including faculty at the University of Colorado Denver, represents nationally recognized researchers and program developers in the areas of social skills and challenging behavior. Based on evaluation data over the last five years, the Pyramid Model appears to be a sound framework for early care and education systems, and extensive training materials, videos, and print resources have been developed to help states, communities and programs implement the model (see <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu> and www.challengingbehavior.org).

States report that only 48% of preschoolers with disabilities spend 80% of their time or more in inclusive settings, meaning with typically developing peers. Additionally, social skills in young children with disabilities are greatly improved in settings where they are with their typically developing peers (Rous and Smith, 2009). The SpecialQuest Approach, the Building Blocks model, LEAP Preschool and other evidence-based models and practices have been shown to improve the high quality and effective inclusion of young children with disabilities into early education and community settings with their typically developing peers.

State Partnership

Building on three years of work with the Pyramid Model and SpecialQuest, the Colorado Department of Human Services Divisions of Child Care, Behavioral Health, and Developmental Disabilities /Early Intervention Colorado in October of 2009 announced a statewide collaborative effort to promote the positive social emotional development and inclusion of all infants and young children. The University of Colorado Denver, School of Education and Human Development was selected to implement the initiative through a competitive request for proposal process and **Pyramid Plus: The Colorado Center for Social Emotional Competence and Inclusion** was launched.

The overall goal of the Pyramid Plus Center is to increase the high fidelity use of evidence-based, early childhood social emotional and inclusive practices in early care and education settings through the promotion and integration of:

- the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence of Infants and Young Children- a tiered promotion and prevention model developed by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) and the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI);
- the SpecialQuest Birth-Five Approach to Early Childhood Inclusion of children with or at risk for disabilities
- as well as other related evidence-based inclusion practices

Key initiatives of the Pyramid Plus Center are to:

- Provide a system to prepare, support and certify high quality trainers, coaches and sites in the Pyramid Plus model
- Provide training, technical assistance (TA) and resources state-wide
- Facilitate state policy and systems development to plan for sustainability and state-wide scale-up

Pyramid Plus State Policy Team – 2011

Pyramid Plus: The Colorado Center for Social Emotional Competence and Inclusion has worked closely with the State Policy team to plan for sustainability and scale-up of the Pyramid Plus model. The team is made up of members representing state agencies, including the Colorado Department of Human Services - Divisions of Child Care, Developmental Disabilities and Behavioral Health, Peak Parent Center, Qualistar Colorado, JFK Partners, Arapahoe Community College, Colorado Head Start Collaboration Office, Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Office of Professional Development. Please see our website for member listing: http://www.pyramidplus.org/policywork/policy_team

In January 2010, the State Policy Team revised the vision and mission of the team to integrate inclusion into the work of Pyramid Plus.

Mission: All early childhood settings support the social and emotional development and inclusion of all children birth through five.

Vision: To promote a collaborative professional development system that fosters and sustains the state-wide, high-fidelity use of the Pyramid Model, SpecialQuest Approach, and other related evidenced-based practices integrated with relevant Colorado efforts.

The State Policy Team has identified five objectives for its work, and developed an action planning form that outlines actions to achieve these objectives. The action plan indicates the steps needed to achieve the objective, the timeline and team member responsible, resources and potential partners, indicators of success and how the work will be evaluated.

Objective I: Infrastructure: To develop an infrastructure that fiscally supports the high fidelity, sustained, statewide implementation of the Pyramid Model, SpecialQuest Approach and other related evidence-based practices.

Objective II: Professional Development: To ensure the Pyramid Model, SpecialQuest Approach and other related evidence-based practices are embedded in all early childhood and related interdisciplinary higher education and professional development initiatives.

Objective III: Public Awareness: To ensure the public recognizes the Pyramid Model as a set of evidence-based practices that promotes the healthy social and emotional development of infants and young children, and SpecialQuest as an effective approach to promoting the inclusion of infants and young children with disabilities.

Objective IV: Access: To ensure 1) families have access to programs and communities that implement the Pyramid Model, SpecialQuest, and other related evidence-based practices; 2) professionals have access to resources that support the implementation of the Pyramid Model, SpecialQuest Approach and other related evidence-based practices.

Objective V: Leadership: To demonstrate Colorado as the national leader for statewide implementation of the Pyramid Model and SpecialQuest Approach with other related evidence-based practices