

**Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative (VCPC)/
Vermont Birth to Three (VB3) Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TSG)
2013-2014 Pilot
Mid-Point Evaluation Executive Summary**

Overview of the 2013-2014 TSG Pilot

Given the essential role of child development assessment in high quality early childhood care and education, the A.D. Henderson Foundation provided funding in July 2013 for a collaborative initiative to help strengthen and expand a state-wide system of assessment of the developmental progress of children from birth to school age, by bringing Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TSG) to private home-based and center-based child care programs. The 2013-2014 TSG Pilot Project is a partnership between the Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative (VCPC), Vermont Birth to Three (VB3), and the Vermont Agency on Education (AOE).

To date, pilot participants have received (at no cost) 15 hours of intensive training, as well as on-going access to technical assistance and informational resources. Each participant will be receiving an iPad, with accompanying advanced training, to use as a tool for observing and documenting child observations.

This executive summary captures key lessons learned since the program was launched and recommendations for moving forward in further strengthening and expanding a state-wide system of assessment of the developmental progress of children from birth to school age.

Key Mid-point Findings

- Initial interest in the pilot was strong (only 62% of applicants could be selected) and has remained strong, as evidenced by the high on-going rate of participation (88%).
- Prior to the pilot, a majority (98%) of selected providers were novices with TSG and had limited to no experience with offering public Pre-K.
- Also prior to the pilot, certain practices associated with quality early care and education were not widespread among selected participants, with over half (59%) never or only sometimes documenting individual child development progress/concerns and two-thirds never or only sometimes offering formal parent-teacher conferences.
- Both prior to and at the mid-point of the pilot, pilot participants demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to acquiring and applying the skills, knowledge and practices associated with quality early care and education.
- At the pilot's mid-point, positive impacts were reported for children, parents, program staff, and overall program operations.
- Throughout the pilot, providers have been offered and have utilized a strong system of training and on-going support, with providers and Technical Assistance (TA) Mentors offering key insights on ways to improve supports and the inter-rater reliability certification process offering guidance in how to target supports more strategically.



Important Contextual Factors

Key findings from the mid-point evaluation are particularly relevant in the current child assessment landscape:

- VCPC's and VB3's preparations to roll out another TSG pilot for 2014-2015, which will greatly benefit from lessons learned from the current pilot
- Vermont's Federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Grant program, which includes the institution of a statewide plan for a Comprehensive Assessment System by 2016, with TSG playing an integral role in that plan, as well as playing a role in other RTT-ELC initiatives
- A new Teaching Strategies assessment product under development that could be used in tandem with the birth to 6 TSG tool, thereby expanding assessment coverage to up to 8 years old (3rd grade), which represents an opportunity for Vermont to implement a consistent system of assessment for the entire early childhood spectrum
- Increased focus by national policy-makers and researchers on quality of early care and education, with individual child assessment viewed as an essential component of quality

These contextual factors create an environment that is rich with opportunities and responsibilities to continue implementing and evaluating child assessment initiatives in Vermont, which shaped the recommendations cited below.

Recommendations

The three administrators of the 2013-2014 TSG Pilot project collectively formulated recommendations going forward with the current and planned pilot, as well as for Vermont as a whole.

A. CONTINUITY OF INDIVIDUAL CHILD ASSESSMENT

A number of measures might be considered for ensuring the continuity of assessment of individual children:

- In center-based settings, establish strong institutional knowledge of TSG
- In home-based settings, institute protocols for child portfolio transfers
- In all early child care and education settings, create more effective portfolio management, with consideration given to making TSG portfolios part of the child's school record.

B. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

TSG requires a multi-layered system of technical support:

- Institute the most effective means (the right "who" and "how") of providing technical support, with early childhood care and education (ECE) practitioners receiving clear up-front and follow-up instruction on accessing resources
- Extend technical support to users of the TSG tool to also address questions related to Vermont early childhood care and education
- Create a tutorial for ECE practitioners and administrators on interpreting and applying assessment findings
- Establish a system of technical support to ensure data accuracy and reliability
- Facilitate the sustained usage of TSG after pilot.



C. STATEWIDE TRAINING PLAN

It would be helpful to establish an on-going, more robust, sequential system of training in Vermont:

- Make high quality introductory training available state-wide each summer/fall
- Hold a fall follow-up training related to finalizing checkpoints
- Offer second- and third-level trainings state-wide annually on an on-going basis
- Use a professional trainer from Teaching Strategies (the company that developed TSG) for certain trainings
- Expand trainings for the planned 2014-2015 pilot and for the planned state-wide system of assessment.

D. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES

For the planned VCPC/VB3 pilot in 2014-2015, minor adjustments to certain administrative processes would support more efficient and effective operations, such as revisions to: pilot announcement; pilot description; application process; time-line; participant commitments; and inter-rater reliability testing parameters.

Full Evaluation Report available at <http://vermontbirthtothree.org/impact/> or <http://vermontbirthtothree.org/programs/teaching-strategies-gold/>.

