



# Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes: Year 5 Evaluation Report

October 1, 2016 - September 30, 2017

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December 29, 2017

PR Award # S283B120054

CEELO 2017 Annual Evaluation Report  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) is one of 22 comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Programs. CEELO was designed to increase the capacity of State Education Agencies (SEAs) to implement comprehensive and aligned early learning systems to increase the number of children from birth through third grade that are prepared to succeed in school.

Between October 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017 CEELO provided three types of technical assistance (TA): (1) Responsive TA; (2) Strategic TA; and (3) Information Resources and Technology Supported TA.

CEELO engaged in a participatory evaluation in which data were collected over the course of Year 5. The evaluation was designed to: a) assess the degree to which CEELO accomplished planned activities; b) evaluate the nature and quality of CEELO activities; and c) assess the degree to which target stakeholders used the TA and other Center activities in their work and reported outcomes; and (d) examine the factors that supported or impeded SEAs' efforts to build capacity to implement policy for young children.

### Summary of Findings

CEELO exceeded many targets regarding number, type, quality, relevance, and usefulness of activities completed during the year. In Year 5, CEELO TA staff:

- Regularly communicated with federal and private TA providers in the RTT-ELC TA Consortium, regional Centers, NAECS-SDE and others as needed
- Provided TA to 9 RTT-ELC states in coordination with the RTT-TA center
- Presented at 16 national and regional meetings
- All but one of the 30 information requests received during Year 5 were addressed (one will be addressed in Year 6)
- Completed 63 TA requests and began addressing an additional 16 TA requests
- Successfully held a National Roundtable Meeting
- Co-planned and facilitated a third cohort of state teams to participate in a Teaching and Learning with the BUILD Initiative, a privately funded technical assistance center
- Successfully planned, implemented, and facilitated 2 Peer Exchanges for Preschool Development Grant–Expansion states
- Used formative evaluation data to engage in a continuous quality improvement process to enhance the quality, timeliness, relevance and usefulness of CEELO TA and products
- Provided TA that, as reported by recipients, led to changes in knowledge, policy, and practice
- Documented outcomes of the CEELO Leadership Academy

The accompanying report provides detailed findings from the Year 5 evaluation.



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Recommended citation:

Schilder, D. & Dahlin, M. (2017). *Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes: Year 5 Evaluation Report*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.



## INTRODUCTION

The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) is one of 22 comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education (USED), Office of Elementary and Secondary Programs. CEELO’s technical assistance (TA) is designed to build the capacity of State Education Agencies (SEAs) to implement comprehensive and aligned early learning systems in order to increase the number of children from birth through third grade that are prepared to succeed in school. CEELO’s five objectives are to:

1. Improve states’ knowledge about and use of early childhood comprehensive assessment systems
2. Enhance states’ use of assessment data and other information to improve program quality
3. Help states increase the knowledge and skills of the early learning workforce
4. Strengthen the alignment of birth through 3rd grade educational policies and systems
5. Increase the coordination of resources and policies across statewide systems

CEELO provides universal, targeted, and intensive TA to build the capacity of SEAs and Regional Comprehensive Centers to achieve desired outcomes. CEELO provides each of the eight types of TA that are supported by USED. Table 1 below illustrates the range of TA that CEELO provides and shows the corresponding alignment with definitions identified by the US Department of Education (USED) for Comprehensive Center Annual Management Plans.

**Table 1. Types of TA Based on USED Terms with Description of CEELO TA**

USED Term	Corresponding CEELO terms (used in the CEELO proposal and database)
<b>1. Professional Learning</b>	<b>Professional learning is delivered through Strategic TA and Responsive TA</b> to states when CEELO Center staff collaborate with individuals and groups to design, facilitate, or deliver learning sessions that address a problem or issue-specific concern.
<b>2. Relationship Brokering</b>	<b>Relationship brokering is one element of Strategic TA</b> , for example, Peer Exchanges, annual meeting (“Roundtable”), and Leadership Academy in which CEELO Center staff facilitate collaboration or partnership with another individual or organization who can help address a problem or issue-specific concern.
<b>3. Research Synthesis</b>	<b>Information resources</b> developed by CEELO Center staff synthesize seminal research on specific topics and provide access by SEAs and other stakeholders to research-based approaches and practices.
<b>4. Policy Development</b>	<b>Responsive TA and Information Resources</b> developed by CEELO Center staff are designed to assess, develop, and adapt policies, processes, or procedures that incorporate evidence-based practices.



USED Term	Corresponding CEELO terms (used in the CEELO proposal and database)
<b>5. Tool and Material Development</b>	<b>Strategic TA</b> (e.g. Cost of Preschool Quality Tool), <b>Information Resources</b> and <b>Technology-Supported TA</b> offered by CEELO Center staff, including the creation and adaption of TA activities into user-friendly materials, tools and resources.
<b>6. Facilitation</b>	<b>Strategic TA, Responsive TA, and Technology-Supported TA</b> in which CEELO Center staff convene and facilitate engagement among stakeholders.
<b>7. Evaluation</b>	<b>Responsive TA and Information Resources</b> in which Center staff design and implement formative and/or summative evaluations.
<b>8. Project Management</b>	Center staff develop processes for tracking and monitoring implementation of programs, projects, or initiatives.

CEELO leadership submitted a Year 5 management plan on September 1, 2016 that identified four major tasks designed to build SEA internal and organizational capacity. The ultimate aim of this increased capacity is to achieve sustained improvements in opportunities and outcomes for children from birth through third grade. The management plan articulates an intentional approach to delivering relevant and useful content in ways that maximize the use of technology and leverage the knowledge and expertise of CEELO’s federal technical assistance (TA) partners and other national experts. The tasks are organized into the following categories: (1) Responsive TA; (2) Strategic TA; (3) Information Resources (Research Syntheses and Tool and Material Development); and (4) Technology Supported TA (including Evaluation and Project Management). An accompanying logic model illustrates the links between CEELO activities (organized by task), desired outputs, short-term outcomes, mid-term outcomes and the long-term goal of building SEA capacity. (See **Table 2 on the following page**)



**Table 2. CEELO Logic Model**

Inputs	Activities/ Tasks	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-term Outcomes	Long Term Goal
Grant funding	Offer responsive TA	Number and quality of responsive, strategic and technology-enhanced TA opportunities	Improve stakeholder knowledge of research, best practice and effective policies in five priority areas	Improve policies in each of five priority areas	Build/strengthen SEA capacity to support birth through third grade services and policies that lead to improvements in early learning outcomes
Expertise	Offer strategic TA				
Organizational Expertise	Develop information and resources				
Other comprehensive and regional centers	Provide technology supported TA				
State networks and contact		Number of products			
		Percentage of recipients who report products and TA are high quality			

The logic model guided the development of the evaluation questions, analyses and reporting framework which are presented in the next section.

## EVALUATION DESIGN

One CEELO staff member with experience directing research and evaluation projects led the evaluation of CEELO Year 5 activities with input from project co-director and director. To provide further data collection, a consultant to CEELO conducted a sample of interviews with selected TA recipients. Members of the CEELO Management Team developed summaries of TA activities and the evaluation team reviewed the CEELO database, survey data, and data collected from the consultant to verify the accuracy of the information included in these summaries.

The evaluation was designed to answer the following questions:

1. Did the project complete planned activities during Year 5 (October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017)? Did the project meet the identified benchmarks noted in the Year 5 management plan?
2. How did stakeholders evaluate the quality, relevance, and usefulness of CEELO activities?
3. How did target stakeholders use the TA and other CEELO activities in their work and what outcomes were associated with CEELO supports?



4. What factors supported or impeded SEA’s efforts to build capacity to implement services and policy for young children?
5. What changes should CEELO make to improve TA to better achieve desired outcomes?

CEELO collected data on Year 5 activities, from October 1, 2017 through December 15, 2017. The findings reported in this report are based on an analysis of: a) data entered into a CEELO TA database that includes information entered by TA providers regarding each responsive TA request received, b) surveys administered after CEELO strategic TA including surveys after webinars, the annual roundtable, and conference presentations; 3) interviews of 16 key informants associated with the CEELO Leadership Academy; 4) surveys administered by TA recipients after concluding responsive TA; 5) documents such as changes in policies at the state level or emails sent to CEELO by TA recipients that provide evidence of perceptions regarding CEELO TA or evidence of changes that stakeholders attribute being informed by CEELO. A snapshot of the key methods is presented in **Table 3**. Further information about the data sources are presented in **Appendix A**.

**Table 3. Data Collection Activities**

Evaluation Activity	Target Audience	Purpose	Number
<b>Post Responsive TA Survey</b>	State specialists and early childhood stakeholders receiving responsive TA	Obtain perspectives regarding quality and reported outcomes of TA	9 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Post Strategic TA Surveys</b>	Participants in the strategic TA including the Roundtable, Learning Table, Leadership Academy, Peer Exchanges, and Cost of Preschool Quality TA	Obtain perspectives regarding quality and reported outcomes of the strategic TA	136
<b>Information Gathering Surveys</b>	State early childhood specialists and stakeholders working to advance early learning priorities	Obtain information to guide TA planning, advance state early learning priorities, and document progress	61
<b>Interviews</b>	Leadership Academy fellows, coaches, faculty, and fellow’s supervisors	Obtain additional perspectives regarding the quality, relevance, usefulness, and outcomes of the Leadership Academy	17

<sup>1</sup> A survey was sent to recipients of TA asking about the timeliness, usefulness, and relevance of the TA they received.



Evaluation Activity	Target Audience	Purpose	Number
<b>Document reviews – Surveys and Feedback</b>	Evaluation survey summaries provided by recipients of strategic and responsive TA, emails and other documents	Obtain verification of analyses from reviews of surveys and interviews	NA
<b>Database and log reviews</b>	Reviews of TA database, Info line database, and logs produced by CEELO TA providers	Determine the number of requests and the number of states we have provided TA and information in response to requests. Describe the nature and intensity of the TA. Analyze data to create summaries that describe the nature, intensity and impact of the TA. Analyze quality of the data to improve consistency and usefulness of data.	
<b>Document review- Product Targets</b>	Project communications Web analytics CEELO products (e.g., policy briefs and documents)	Determine number of resources posted on website, number of publications by type, etc. to inform whether met targets in Year 5 Management Plan.	

## FINDINGS

The presentation of key findings is organized based on the evaluation questions. The first section answers the question about whether CEELO accomplished planned activities and the degree to which benchmarks were attained. The next section answers questions about the quality, relevance, and usefulness of TA offered to state early education administrators and collaborators. The final section answers questions about how state policy contexts support or impede CEELO efforts to build capacity.

### ***Evaluation Question 1: Did CEELO implement activities as described in the Year 5 Management Plan? Did CEELO meet articulated targets?***

#### **CEELO Met Most Responsive TA Benchmarks**

CEELO provided responsive TA to each region of the country, and most states in each region. CEELO addressed responsive TA requests from early childhood specialists in state education agencies (SEAs), early childhood stakeholders representing other state agencies that oversee early childhood policies and services, regional centers, other comprehensive content centers, and other TA providers. Table 4 presents the degree to which CEELO TA providers met planned output targets during Year 5 of operation.





Table 4. Responsive TA

Planned Output Targets	Actual Output and Description – Year 5
Collaborate with RTT-ELC TA Consortium, Regional and Content Centers, NAECS-SDE, and other national and federal TA providers/organizations	CEELO TA staff regularly communicated with federal and private TA providers in the RTT-ELC TA Consortium, regional Centers, NAECS-SDE and others as needed.
Contribute to at least <b>3</b> joint TA requests with federal partners to RTT-ELC states	CEELO TA staff provided TA to <b>10</b> RTT-ELC states and coordinated this work with the RTT-TA center.
Attend and/or present at <b>4</b> national/regional meetings on topics of relevance to SEA and CEELO priorities	CEELO TA staff presented at <b>16</b> national and regional meetings.
Respond to 100% of information requests	CEELO addressed <b>97%</b> of the <b>30</b> information requests received in Year 5. (One request that was received in Year 5 is scheduled to be completed in Year 6).
Respond to 100% of TA requests.	CEELO completed <b>63</b> TA requests and initiated work on an additional <b>16</b> TA requests that had not been completed by the end of the year.

**CEELO participated in regular calls with federal and private TA providers.** The project directors participated in regular calls with Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) TA providers to share updates about the nature of the TA they were providing to the states. The coordination led to joint TA in many states that is described in Box 2 in the next section. CEELO continued to provide Preschool Development Grant (PDG)-Expansion technical assistance to states and conducted regular coordinating calls with the State TA leads for the Development grantees (under contract with AEM). These calls continued through the end of Year 5.

**CEELO conducted TA in nine RTT-ELC states and coordinated with the RTT-ELC TA providers, exceeding the target of three.** In Year 5, CEELO provided TA to the following RTT-ELC states: California, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Moreover, CEELO coordinated with the RTT-ELC TA liaisons. **Box 2** in the next section of the report briefly describes two examples of coordinated TA.

**CEELO coordinated activities with the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE) through regular communication.** CEELO’s project directors met monthly with the Executive Committee and CEELO staff regularly participated on monthly policy committee calls. Each year, CEELO identifies 2 co-chairs of the Annual Roundtable, and these staff and others participate on the program planning committee of the CEELO Roundtable.

CEELO staff regularly participate on the NAECS-SDE listserv, providing and sharing resources to members. Listserv members pose questions around policy on the listserv, and CEELO has taken an active role in compiling these responses, analyzing the results, and disseminating findings with members – three threads became listserv summaries (see the Information Resources section for more information).



CEELO staff also encouraged state specialists to directly post questions to the listserv to build capacity and confidence rather than relying on CEELO to post questions and compile data.

**CEELO TA staff presented at 16 national and regional meetings sponsored by other organizations on topics of relevance to SEAs and CEELO priorities, far exceeding the benchmark of 5.** Throughout Year 5, CEELO maintained an active presence at national and regional meetings, including the QRIS National Learning Network, the National Association for the Education of Young Children – Professional Development Institute, and presentations to targeted audiences in states such as New York.

CEELO staff frequently co-presented with other federally funded technical assistance centers (RTT-ELC TA, PDG TA) as well as national organizations or research institutions such as the EducationCounsel and BUILD Initiative.

**During Year 5, CEELO Responded to 63 TA Requests from 25 States on each of the CEELO Priority Issues.** During the year five of operation, CEELO staff completed 63 TA requests.<sup>2</sup> In addition, CEELO began work on an additional 16 requests with targeted completion dates in the first half of Year 6. Some of the TA was conducted for Preschool Development Grant (PDG) expansion states. TA was provided in collaboration with the following regional centers: Great Lakes, Mid Atlantic, Midwest, Northeast, Pacific, and Southeast.

States continued to express interest in TA related to CEELO's priorities. Examples of the range of TA topics addressed in Year 5 includes:

- Strategic planning designed to enhance the capacity of the state education agency to oversee grants and initiatives designed to improve early learning outcomes
- Sustainability planning to continue initiatives initially launched with Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) or Preschool Expansion and Development Grant funding
- Transition planning to support SEA's during times of transition among chief state school officers, early learning specialists, and mid-level staff
- Development of approaches to support principal training to address childhood development and learning
- Financing strategies and supports to determine costs and revenues
- Kindergarten Entry Assessment selection, revision, and implementation
- Birth through third grade work initiatives
- State strategies to enhance the quality and credentials of the early learning workforce
- Family engagement plan design and implementation
- Research on how states/programs have improved instruction and CLASS scores

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<sup>2</sup> Targeted TA is based on a specific, and time limited need, such as a regional meeting; general TA is defined as broad dissemination of information, such as a conference presentation; intensive TA is a targeted, state-specific request, for example to revise a policy or practice.



In Year 5, many of the TA requests made by states were complex and time intensive. The intensity of TA was particularly notable for states receiving the PDG grants. **Box 1** provides an illustration of the intensity of TA CEELO offered during Year 5. CEELO also provided TA to other technical assistance centers and national organizations.

**Box 1. Illustrations of Range of TA Provided by CEELO in Year Four**

**General:** CEELO received a request from the Guam Department of Education about the use of federal funds to support early childhood education programs. Specifically, the Early Childhood Education Planning Committee was interested in the eligibility criteria and allocation approaches used with various federal funding streams including funds from the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Preschool Development and Expansion Grant. CEELO provided guidance recently released from the U.S. Department of Education, from CEELO’s Webinar on eligibility criteria employed by state’s pre-Kindergarten programs, and CEELO’s FastFact and report on eligibility criteria. The Planning Committee used the information to inform plans for early childhood programming.

**Targeted.** During year five, CEELO continued to support the regular exchange of information among PDG state teams and evaluators. Building from calls convened during Year four, CEELO invited PDG directors and their evaluators to discuss evaluation designs, methods, proposed analyses, reporting timeframes, and preliminary results. Two conference calls were convened with the teams and another was held with Dr. Steven Barnett to share solutions to evaluation challenges. Participants reported that the calls were quite useful. Two evaluation leads reported Dr. Barnett’s insights were quite valuable and informed their evaluation implementation approaches. Several evaluation teams reported that they benefitted from Dr. Barnett’s expertise and applied his advice to the design, data collection, analytic techniques, and reporting of evaluation findings.

**Intensive:** CEELO has supported Hawaii in developing a process to create its strategic plan for coordinating an early learning system. CEELO participated in the state’s steering committee meetings, provided state examples of strategic plans, identified state-specific questions within a logic model framework, identified a step-by-step approach to breakdown the process to manageable deliverables, and offered feedback to written drafts.

**CEELO responded to 97% of the 30 information requests made across the range of CEELO priority topics.** Information requests were received from SEAs, federal government agencies, TA providers, school districts, non-profits, and intermediaries such as a consultant that was supporting a school district in developing an early childhood strategic plan. In Year 5, CEELO received 30 information requests and responded to all but one during Year 5.

Information requests related to each of CEELO’s priority. The scope and intensity of requests varied, from general resources on a topic to specific tools. Requesters were interested in both research around the topic and information on how other states were addressing it. TA requests topics included those in CEELO priority areas – assessment, birth through third grade, data, systems, and workforce. Examples of TA content areas include:

- Preschool through Grade Three and Birth through Grade Three planning



- Research on high quality pre-K and child outcomes with an emphasis on literacy and assessment of quality instruction
- Evaluation rubrics for assessing the quality of curriculum
- Strategies for determining costs of preschool based on local contexts, standards, and funding requirements
- Coaching and mentoring of early childhood directors and teachers
- Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

As in previous years, many information requests from State Education Agencies led to TA requests and some of the information requests led to the development of specific products designed to address a need that was articulated by multiple requesters. For example, a number of states were interested in learning about Kindergarten Entry Assessment selection. As a result, CEELO developed multiple “Fast Facts,” a report, and a tool to assist states with the decision-making process. Similarly, as in Year 4, states and communities continued to request tools and resources to support decisions about the cost of high-quality preschool. In Year 5, CEELO created the Cost of Preschool Quality Communications Toolkit to assist states with these issues.

### CEELO Exceeded Strategic TA Benchmarks

In Year 5, CEELO provided Strategic TA to nearly all states and territories, across all CEELO priority topics, utilizing a range of TA strategies. Specifically, CEELO successfully planned and carried out the annual Roundtable meeting, implemented a final year of the Learning Table, supported state teams to strengthen Kindergarten through Grade Two, developed a series of Toolkits and tools and offered TA to support their use, held Webinars, and planned and facilitated Peer-Learning Communities. CEELO conducted third cohorts of both the Leadership Academy and the Teaching and Learning Table during Year 5 (meetings began in Fall of 2016). Each of the CEELO Strategic TA activities are described in **Table 5** below.

**Table 5. Strategic TA**

Strategic TA Activity	Description, Number of Participants/Events, and Status at end of Year 5
1- 50-state National Roundtable on <i>Leading for Excellence: Building Key Competencies to Lead High Performing Early Learning Initiatives</i>	The National Roundtable was successfully held with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 105 attendees</li><li>• 30 state agencies were represented by 62 attendees with 17 states bringing a team</li></ul>
1 Learning Tables on Teaching & Learning to support a third cohort of state teams with a focus on equity	CEELO, in collaboration with the BUILD initiative, conducted the third cohort of the Learning Table in CEELO Year 5.
Strengthening the quality of K-3	CEELO is partnering with the Education Commission of the States (ECS) to develop resources and technical assistance to improve the quality of K-3 instruction. In June, CEELO and



Strategic TA Activity	Description, Number of Participants/Events, and Status at end of Year 5
	<p>ECS co-sponsored a <a href="#">meeting on ESSA</a>. A peer exchange was held in September and teams from the six participating states attended.</p>
<p>1 New Jersey Early Childhood Academy (EC Academy)</p>	<p>The EC Academy expanded to include new districts in CEELO Year 5 (the Academy’s 4<sup>th</sup> year). It supported participating districts by engaging in systematic data collection and analyses, responsive coaching, and facilitating local Peer Learning Communities.</p>
<p>Preschool Expansion Grant (PDG) TA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsive Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Peer Exchanges</li> <li>• Communities of Practice</li> </ul>	<p>CEELO responded to TA requests to support PDG-related topics. These are described in the responsive technical assistance portion of this report.</p> <p>CEELO also convened PDG staff from multiple states in 2 peer exchanges. The first B-3 planning and implementation began in the last month of Year 4 with continued supports through Year 5. The second built on innovations in monitoring for quality improvement.</p> <p>CEELO staff co-facilitated two of the PDG Communities of Practice – Family Engagement and Dual Language Learners. In partnership with PDG TA at AEM, staff maintained a community of practice site that features resources and a discussion board. Each Community of Practice hosted five webinars focused on specific topics.</p>
<p>3 Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of Preschool Quality Companion Toolkit</li> <li>• Leadership Self-Assessment tool</li> <li>• Leadership Toolkit</li> </ul>	<p>CEELO produced <b>4</b> sets of tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1</b> <a href="#">Cost of Preschool Quality Companion Toolkit</a>. This toolkit provides guidance and resources to support the use of the tool and to assist with communicating findings from the use of the tool with key stakeholders in the state.</li> <li>• CEELO developed <b>1</b> <a href="#">Leadership Self-Assessment</a> tool to support both responsive and strategic technical assistance to build the capacity of Offices of Early Learning within State Education Agencies.</li> <li>• CEELO has developed <b>1</b> Toolkit on Leadership to support the <a href="#">individual</a> and <a href="#">collective</a> leadership of early childhood specialists in State Education Agencies.</li> <li>• CEELO developed <b>1</b> <a href="#">Tool to Guide Decisions Regarding Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) Selection and Implementation</a></li> </ul>



Strategic TA Activity	Description, Number of Participants/Events, and Status at end of Year 5
1 SEA Leadership Academy	During Year 5, the second cohort of the Leadership Academy was implemented. The 7 Fellows met 5 times, participated in interim webinars, engaged with their coaches, and completed their Job Embedded Projects.

**CEELO planned, sponsored, and convened early childhood specialists from state departments of education at an annual Roundtable.** A total of 105 individuals registered for the annual meeting with representation from 30<sup>3</sup> states and territories. The theme of the meeting was *Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education*. CEELO co-constructed the agenda with NAECS-SDE, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the Preschool Development Grant-TA Center (PDG-TA). This collaborative effort supported an integrated meeting designed to address the needs of early childhood specialists in state departments of education.

**CEELO planned and convened the third and final year of a Learning Table on Teaching and Learning.** This project, co-led with the BUILD Initiative (BUILD), aims to facilitate joint problem solving for stakeholders who are responsible for guiding early childhood policy and practice in their states. CEELO and BUILD created the Learning Table to “facilitate joint problem solving for stakeholders who are responsible for guiding early childhood policy and practice in their states.”<sup>4</sup> During Year 5, CEELO brought together experts and teams of leaders to continue to build on previous accomplishments. In Year 5, CEELO invited the state teams that had participated in the first two years to participate in a third year of the TA support. Three states (Nebraska, Mississippi, and Massachusetts) received TA and two additional states (Colorado and Illinois) participated in an in-person meeting to share challenges and lessons learned. More information on the Learning Table is available [here](#). Participating states created action plans to improve the development and implementation of policies that support teaching quality and focused on issues of equity. To support the development of these plans, the Learning Table consisted of one in-person meeting and [regular webinar meetings](#) (see next section for more details regarding the webinars). Technical assistance was provided to states throughout the time period to support them in applying their learning to state efforts.

**Partnered with Education Commission of the States to Strengthen the Quality of K-3.** During Year 5 of operation, CEELO engaged in a second year of partnership with the Education Commission of the States (ECS) to strengthen the quality of Kindergarten through Third Grade. In the first year, CEELO provided input on the creation of the 50-state database and participated in an Expert Meeting to identify the

<sup>3</sup> States attending with number of individuals representing the state: AL(3), AZ(3), CA(2), CO(1), CT(5), GA(2), HI(2), IA(1), IL(2), IN(1), KS(1), KY(2), MA(1), MD(3), ME(1), MI(7), MN(1), MO(1), MS(1), NC(2), NE(4), NJ(4), NV(2), OH(1), OK(1), PA(2), WA(2), WI(1), WV(1), WY(2).

<sup>4</sup> <http://buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/TeachingLearningPaperMaster.pdf>



policy priorities most critical to strengthening quality of K-3rd grade. In the past year, CEELO has collaborated with ECS to support the development of a [K-3 Policymakers' Guide to Action](#) designed to assist state education leaders in the development of policies that strengthen principal leadership, licensure and endorsements in K-3, assessments in K-2, third grade reading laws, full day kindergarten, developmentally appropriate curriculum, and other domains in these critical years.

In partnership with ECS, CEELO provided intensive technical assistance to four states – Arizona, Colorado, Massachusetts, and Mississippi - to identify priorities and actions for improving PK-Grade 3 continuum of policy and practice, as outlined in State's ESSA plan and other strategic plans/priorities of the SEA. CEELO co-led the planning and facilitation of an in-person Peer Exchange among the four states.

**CEELO collaborated with Comprehensive Center and Other TA Staff to leveraging expertise.** During Year 5, CEELO participated in several collaborative activities with Regional Comprehensive Center Staff and other TA providers.

- In January, the CEELO project director and evaluation expert attended a Comprehensive meeting focused on creating a unified evaluation framework for guiding the evaluations of the centers. Following this in person meeting, the project director participated in a sub-committee that included several follow up calls to guide the development of a common definition of enhanced SEA capacity. The evaluation expert participated in a sub-committee designed to guide the development of a set of common evaluation questions, which consisted of several follow up calls and online collaboration.
- Throughout the year, CEELO collaborated with the Northeast Comprehensive Center to jointly provide technical assistance to Vermont and to divide the assistance to New York to meet the state's needs.
- In the fall 2017, CEELO participated in a technical assistance (TA) meeting with the Great Lakes Comprehensive Center designed to align the TA provided to the Michigan Office of Great Start.
- CEELO partnered with the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center on two in-person meetings focused on tools for incorporating early learning in state and local ESSA planning.



## Box 2. Two Examples of Coordinated TA

To support **Michigan's** work to coordinate and align early childhood policies and services, CEELO developed a scan of all of the technical assistance providers to the Michigan Office of Great Start. CEELO reached out to TA providers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and through private funders. The Michigan Office of Great Start houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, the Child Care Administrator, Special Education services, pre-K, Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge, After School, and community engagement services. CEELO identified over 35 TA providers who are working to support specific Office of Great Start programs

Reaching out to the RTT-ELC TA provider and the Great Lakes Comprehensive Center, CEELO developed a brief listing of each contact and the nature and scope of each activity. In Year 5, the Great Lakes Comprehensive Center plans to work with the Office of Great Start to create policies and structures to coordinate the TA in a way that can lead to greater alignment.

CEELO collaborated with **Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL)** and the **Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance (ELC-TA)** Center to support **Hawaii** in developing a more seamless and comprehensive approach to publicly funded pre-K programs within the state's SEA and the Charter School's Preschool Development Grant (PDG) grantees. As part of this collaboration, CEELO provided resources on principal leadership and kindergarten readiness. In addition, the coordinated TA approach allowed the centers to provide targeted learning opportunities for the state to learn about scholarships, including T.E.A.C.H., from **Vermont** and the growth of a high-quality pre-K program from **Alabama**.

**CEELO Continued to Convene a New Jersey Leadership Academy.** To support the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) reach local leaders, CEELO continued a partnership with the SEA and The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) to refine and implement a professional learning community (PLC) model, the Early Childhood Academy (EC Academy). The goal of the EC Academy has been to build peer learning among New Jersey school districts that provide support in leaders' understanding of critical topics and their application to early childhood. Districts are required to send a district early learning team to participate that includes at least one central administrator, at least one building administrator, and at least one preschool or kindergarten teacher. Inclusion of at least one first, second, or third grade teacher was added this year. Intended to be a long-term PLC, the EC Academy conducted its fourth year of implementation during Year 5.

During its first year of implementation in 2013-2014, the focus of the *EC Academy* included three key topics: preschool quality and program expansion, teacher evaluation, and implementing developmental primary grade standards aligned with the Common Core State Standards. In year two (2014-2015), the EC Academy included new districts and further supported participating districts by engaging in systematic data collection and analyses, responsive coaching, and facilitating local PLCs. In year three (2015-2016) the *EC Academy* had a strong emphasis on the implementation of new policies for early primary education (K-3) and building connections to high quality preschool. The newly developed [NJ First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines](#) alongside the [Preschool](#) and [Kindergarten](#)





[Implementation](#) guidelines provided the base for a systemic look at teaching quality. Districts were guided to use classroom data to understand the quality in their schools, generate a plan for improvement, and execute and evaluate the intervention with support from the EC Academy team.

In addition to the direct implementation of the EC Academy, CEELO staff have used the four years to build the SEA capacity for reaching local districts on key early childhood initiatives and practices. There are currently plans in the NJDOE to support this approach going forward and to scale the work throughout the state through the Office of Primary Education and in collaboration with the Division of Early Childhood Education.

**CEELO provided TA to Preschool Development Grant expansion states.** During Year 5, CEELO provided intensive TA to the Preschool Development (PDG) expansion grant states to support the state's management and implementation of the grant and created strategic TA opportunities for PDG states through peer exchanges. In Years 3, CEELO staff conducted needs sensing calls and developed TA plans with PDG states. In Year 4, CEELO offered TA to PDG states and in Year 5, CEELO continued to support PDG states.

CEELO established or sustained strong communication with stakeholders in each of the states through regular communication with project directors or project teams. As noted, the Northeast states have established regular peer exchange calls and occasional in person meetings that are facilitated by CEELO TA staff. In other regions, CEELO TA Staff regularly communicate with state program leads to review TA requests and progress.

In Year 5, CEELO continued to offer in depth supports to PDG grantees and leveraged existing products, tools and capacities to advance PDG grantee's efforts to implement high-quality preschool through PDG grant funding. Examples of TA that CEELO provided in Year 5 are as follows:

1. **Measuring program and child outcomes.** PDG grantees continued to request TA to support refinements to the design and implementation of systems for measuring program and child outcome data. CEELO continued to facilitate cross-state conversations among PDG directors, staff, and evaluators. During 2017, CEELO Senior TA staff along with the lead evaluator from one PDG state facilitated an affinity group at the Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium and scheduled follow up conversations among participants in the summer and fall 2017. In early 2018, the CEELO Senior TA provider will chair a session at the Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium on preschool evaluation findings with a focus on findings related to peer effects, and specific attention to issues of racial and ethnic equity.
2. **Aligning preschool programs within a Birth-3rd Grade Continuum, building systems across agencies.** States continued to request support to advance Birth through Grade Three alignment initiatives. In Year 5 CEELO offered a number of responsive TA opportunities to PDG states. For example, two CEELO staff presented at the New York State PDG meeting as key note speakers and assisted sub-grantees in the development and implementation of B-3 action plans.



3. **Creating sustainable programs.** A number of PDG states expressed an interest in obtaining TA support to identify strategies to sustain programs. CEELO provided TA on the topic of sustainability by supporting PDG grantees and sub-grantees use the Cost of Preschool Quality Tool and Associated Toolkit to identify costs and possible funding streams. CEELO staff worked with the Massachusetts PDG grantee to offer a number of sessions at a grantee meeting designed to assist with sustainability planning.

**CEELO Supported Peer Exchanges for Preschool Development- Expansion (PDG) Grantees.** CEELO convened state teams through two peer exchanges in Year 5. The Peer Exchanges gave participants an opportunity to learn from one another, gain knowledge from national experts, and brainstorm solutions to shared challenges. Recognizing a one-time event would not be sufficient, CEELO staff conducted call with state teams before the peer exchange to identify needs and strengths. These strengths were called on in the meeting as a spark for conversation. In addition, CEELO staff conducted follow up consultation calls to identify goals the state had following what they learned in the peer exchange and how technical assistance could be provided to support these goals. Clicking on the title of the Peer Exchange will open up a webpage that shares attendees, state resources, research resources, and other materials from the Exchange.

- [B-3 Systems](#) (which began in September 2016 with follow up that continued in the fall 2016) focused on the state education agency (SEA) role in building effective birth through third grade systems, including aligning state policy from birth through third grade in areas such as standards, assessment, and workforce development and supporting local Birth through third grade efforts. The peer exchange was aligned with a recently published [CEELO case study](#) of three states building P-3 Systems. Arthur Reynolds (University of Minnesota) presented on the Chicago Parent Centers and Brett Walker shared Oregon's approach. Participating states were Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Nebraska, New Jersey, Virginia. State teams included representatives from districts or schools.
- [Monitoring for Quality Improvement](#). This Peer Exchange gave participants an opportunity to engage in deep conversations about innovative and effective strategies to drive continuous quality improvement. Participants had a chance to consider balancing economies of resources (including limited staff) and placing a greater focus on efforts to improve instructional practice. The Exchange built on the 2015 Peer Exchange on Quality Improvement. Participants had a chance to hear from state and local grantee "sparks" on their monitoring practices, successes and challenges.

**CEELO Supported 2 Communities of Practice for Preschool Development- Expansion (PDG) Grantees.** CEELO staff, with PDG staff at AEM, co-facilitated Communities of Practice (COP). Unlike the Peer Learning Communities, the COPs webinars offered expert presenters that anyone could join to share information



with a wider audience and did not focus on facilitation of lessons learned from states that were expanding preschool. Two COPs were convened in Year 5. Brief descriptions follow:

- [Family Engagement](#) was a COP for professionals interested in and working on family engagement to come together to share ideas, strategies, experiences, and resources. The COP offered bi-monthly webinars on topics of interest to members, including self-assessments for program family engagement, Maryland’s family engagement toolkit, Strengthening Families™, and father engagement.
- [Dual Language Learners](#) was devoted to professionals who are interested in and working on issues related to young dual language learners and their families. In this Community, members came together to share ideas, strategies, experiences, and resources. Webinars were held on a quarterly basis on topics of interest to the community. These included a Dual Language Learner toolkit, planning for the classroom environment, identification and assessment, and an exploration of a National Academies of Sciences, Engineers, and Medicine report on Dual Language Learners.

**CEELO Created, Modified and Shared Tools Used in Technical Assistance.** In 2016, CEELO created and pilot tested the [Cost of Preschool Quality Tool](#) is an Excel-based model which can be used at the state or district level to estimate the cost of expanding high quality preschool programs. In 2017, CEELO created accompanying documentation, made refinements to the tool and supported state and district use of the tool to capture the costs of high-quality preschool and information generated from the tool to inform budgets and policies. During Year 5, CEELO continued to support the use of the tool through customized technical assistance. Box 3 provides a description of how CEELO provided TA and supported the use of the tool in one state.

### **Box 3. Building Blocks: The Kentucky Early Childhood Cost of Quality Study**

**What CEELO did:** Based on a review of other cost tools, CEELO developed the Cost of Preschool Quality (CPQ) to provide state early education administrators with comprehensive technical assistance on the costs of implementing a high quality preschool program at scale. The CPQ is based on the NIEER quality standards, and provides users with flexibility to compare costs of offering high-quality pre-K across settings, dosage and educator qualifications.

**Why we provided technical assistance to Kentucky?** In Kentucky, state and local leaders are identifying how to ensure sufficient funding for the [preschool program](#) which serves low-income children and all three and four-year-old children with developmental delays and disabilities, regardless of income. CEELO provided technical assistance to staff of the [Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence](#), who led the research in consultation with the Kentucky Early Childhood Cost of Quality Advisory Group, including state agency leaders and others on using the Cost of Preschool Quality (CPQ).

**What we did?** CEELO provided technical support to the research and held monthly calls with the Manager, School Readiness Branch, at the Kentucky Department of Education to identify data and discuss policy implications of the cost projections from September 2016 to November 2017. CEELO staff reviewed draft cost



models, provided input on a district survey, and participated in presentations to the Advisory Committee. The Kentucky cost team conducted site visits in seven districts to customize cost projections based on how districts in Kentucky allocate resources to meet the needs of the children in their programs.

***What was the result of the technical assistance?*** As a result of the state collecting comprehensive data on the costs of implementing preschool programs, the advisory committee was able to understand the most significant cost drivers of the Kentucky Preschool Program and then determine the costs of expanding enrollment at minimal, intermediate, and target levels of quality. The models are designed to inform a wide variety of budget decisions by state and local leaders across the Commonwealth. Cory Curl, project director, said, “*Having CEELO join our state advisory group for the Cost of Quality Study helped us build credibility and support for the process, including involvement of state agency staff.*” The final report is available [here](#). CEELO will be working with the Kentucky Department of Education as they move forward on developing the next steps for preschool expansion in the state.

CEELO continues to provide responsive TA to states to support their use of the CPQ to achieve priorities articulated in each state’s early learning agenda. Through this responsive and strategic TA, CEELO is supporting the state’s capacity-building during the transition.

Currently more than 12 states have requested the CPQ, and CEELO is providing customized technical assistance to Alabama, Arkansas, the District of Columbia, New Mexico, and Washington.

**Building a Highly Effective State Office of Early Learning.** During the second year of this project, CEELO expanded on advice provided at a year 4 Think Tank convened to identify the competencies and characteristics of effective Offices of Early Learning within State Agencies. During the year, CEELO developed a self-assessment tool and an expansive set of resources to support early childhood specialists in state departments of education in assessing individual and collective leadership capacity. These resources and tools will be refined and deployed in Year 6 of CEELO. With the initial developments and findings, CEELO provided customized, intensive technical assistance on strategic planning, systems thinking and building, and leading to results in Massachusetts and Nevada and began this work with Nebraska.

CEELO developed a third tool to assist with the planning implementation, refinement and revisions of a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The tool was developed and pilot-tested with a group of Michigan state stakeholders who requested a tool to assist with decisions regarding a statewide KEA.

**CEELO engaged a third cohort of fellows in the CEELO Leadership Academy.** The [CEELO Leadership Academy](#) aimed to: a) support improvements in the leadership and management skills of early childhood leaders, b) build SEA leadership and management capacity to advance a vision for ECE, and c) build individual leadership and management competencies.

During Year 5, seven fellows representing Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, and Nebraska participated in four in-person meetings, attended three interim webinars, engaged with their



coaches, and completed a work-embedded project. The meetings were led by outside experts and held over several days each session in order to facilitate deeper learning opportunities that the Fellows could build from and incorporate into their Job Embedded Projects. The topics of the meetings were as follows:

- Results-Based Accountability (January 2017)
- Systems Thinking (February 2017)
- Communication (May 2017)
- Systems Thinking II (June 2017)
- Project presentations and an interactive session on leadership with a set of early learning leaders (August 2017)

Between meetings, Fellows participated in group interim webinars and held one-on-one calls with a coach who guided and supported them in applying the leadership skills they were learning. The interim webinars were developed between meetings to reflect and apply what was learned in the in-person meetings to their job-embedded projects. Additionally, each Fellow completed a job embedded project in which they identified an opportunity to apply the skills learned in the Leadership Academy directly to their work.

The following job embedded projects were completed by the Fellows:

- [Community of Practice for Principals of Elementary Schools with Early Learning Programs](#)
- [Building a Coach Designation System](#)
- [Data Governance – Connecting Data Systems in Early Childhood and in P-20](#)
- [Evaluation of Credentialing System for Educators](#)
- [Early Learning Academy – Providing Professional Development to Support P-3](#)
- [Increasing Quality of State Grant Recipient Pre-K Programs](#)
- [Redesign of State Preschool Grant Competition to Address Enrollment of High Priority Populations and Funding Priority for High Need Communities](#)

For in-depth information on the design and structure see the online [Leadership Academy Page](#).

### **CEELO Produced Resources in Response to Information Requests and Offered Technology-Supported TA Benchmarks**

CEELO develops information resources based on key strategic topics of high value to state early education administrators, and resources are presented in a variety of formats with the aim of providing timely and relevant information to policy makers. The information resources developed by CEELO are posted to the CEELO website and technology is used to gather information, analyze trends, and disseminate products.



In Year 5, CEELO produced resources tailored to the needs of early childhood specialists. These included policy reports and shorter documents that honed in on key research and application. In Year 5, CEELO produced a number of documents to support Preschool Expansion and Development (described above).

In some instances, CEELO produced more products than proposed in the management plan and in other areas, fewer documents were produced. Given the responsive nature of CEELO TA, the center adapts its efforts in production of documents to the arena of most need expressed. See Table 6 and accompanying text below.

**Table 6. Technology Enhanced TA Planned and Provided in Year 5**

Planned Activity	Description and Number of Participants/Events
Update website	CEELO regularly posted resources, new publications and updates to the CEELO website. This includes a weekly posting on the related resources page of the CEELO website.
Updated new resources in library	CEELO posted <b>50</b> additional resources to the Resource Library.
<b>1</b> directory and <b>1</b> state information page for each state and territory online (57 total)	During Year 5, CEELO continued to maintain and update a dedicated page on its website for each state. State page include information on the state’s Early Learning Guidelines, Program Standards, and other information of interest to early childhood stakeholders.
Policy reports, case studies, or meeting reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roundtable 2017 Summary</li> <li>• Fast Facts</li> <li>• Listserv Summaries</li> </ul>	CEELO developed <b>8</b> new publications to address policy and research questions posed by early childhood specialists in state departments of education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1</b> <a href="#">Roundtable Summary</a></li> <li>• CEELO produced <b>2</b> policy reports</li> <li>• CEELO posted <b>2</b> Fast Facts</li> <li>• CEELO compiled NAECS-SDE listserv responses for <b>4</b> topic strands and created listserv summaries for general public viewing.</li> </ul> Note: Total number of products is separate from resources developed specifically for ESSA or for peer exchanges described below.
ESSA Resources	CEELO produced the following resources to support state’s ESSA planning and implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Blog series in partnership with New America</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Scan of ESSA state plans</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Webinars</a> (see webinar section)</li> </ul>



Planned Activity	Description and Number of Participants/Events
1 Webinar proposed	CEELO facilitated <b>15</b> Webinars and the slides and recordings were made available on the CEELO website after the webinar concluded. These webinars are described in detail in the section on responsive technical assistance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preschool Expansion and Development Grant Community of Practice Webinars (<b>10</b> Webinars in total)</li><li>• Every Student Succeeds Act Webinars in collaboration with the Southwest Regional Education Lab and NAECS-SDE (<b>2</b> Webinars)</li><li>• BUILD/CEELO Learning Table (<b>3</b> Webinars)</li></ul>
E-News	To share its work and resources to a wider audience, CEELO produced <b>6</b> e-newsletters (E-News) during Year 5. The E-News shared new resources produced by CEELO, discussed selected technical assistance provided, and frequently featured interviews with state staff around key issues. The subscribers for the CEELO Impact Newsletter now exceed 870.

**CEELO successfully updated and populated the center website with relevant resources aimed at addressing target audience needs.** During Year 5 CEELO staff regularly updated and populated the center website. During Year 5, the ceelo.org website had 72,235 page views. During Year 4, the ceelo.org website had 67,553 page views. Since it was launched [www.ceelo.org](http://www.ceelo.org) has had nearly over 160,531 unique page views. The number of unique page views was 52,327 in Year 5. The number of unique page views was 38,322 in Year 4.

The most frequent pages that were viewed in Year 5 were the home page (12,894) state pages (7,121 page views) followed by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) page (2,809), CEELO Roundtable (2,268 page views), Cost of Preschool Quality toolkit (2,194 viewers), Birth through Third Grade resources (1,839), and CEELO products (1,503). The most frequent pages that were viewed in Year 4 were the state pages (5,818 page views) followed by CEELO Roundtable (2,099 page views), resources on B-3 (1,149 viewers) and information about CEELO (1,074 viewers).

In Year 5, CEELO staff identified 52 new external resources for inclusion in the CEELO database. In contrast, in Year 4, CEELO staff identified 97 new external resources for inclusion in the CEELO database (for a cumulative total of 618 resources identified) and posted 52 to the CEELO website's Selected Resources web page. The number of uploaded resources was lower than in previous years given that



seminal documents were already entered into the database and inclusion parameters were refined so that only highest value resources were entered.

The website is a tool for increasing communication and contact between states and with the comprehensive centers. There is a dedicated page with information on the other comprehensive centers that is updated as needed. The [ECE Contact Directory](#) – a comprehensive listing of state personnel leading programs serving young children - was updated in October 2016 and June 2017 to capture any changes in a state and maintain as current a directory as possible. This resource serves as a valuable conduit of information to connect states as indicated from verbal and email communication.

**State information for every state and territory online.** States express interest in learning about key documents and policies in other states. The [state-by-state pages](#) contain information on each state pertaining to their early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers, pre-K, and K-3. It also hosts links to state program standards for early childhood education as well as teacher and family guidance documents that relate to the standards. Each state page is headed up by links to the state’s office/s of early learning.

**CEELO produced multiple resources to address specific topics of interest to early childhood specialists.** CEELO proposed several types of information resources in its management plan. These resources took the form of policy reports, shorter informative documents, and blog posts; they were developed in response to needs expressed by states during year 5.

Policy reports produced by CEELO that stemmed from TA requests include:

- [Information and Resources to Assist States in Developing Policy on Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion](#)
- [Key Considerations to Assist States in Developing or Revising a Kindergarten Entry Assessment \(KEA\) Report](#)

CEELO recognized that many state early childhood specialists request shorter products, CEELO began offering a range of “quick reads” that highlight research and provide examples from states. These include Fast Facts and summaries from queries posed on the NAECS-SDE listserv. In Year 5, CEELO produced the following quick reads:

- [Assessment Tools Used in Kindergarten Entry Assessments \(KEAs\)](#)
- [Information and Resources on Developing State Policy on Kindergarten Entry Assessment \(KEA\): UPDATE](#)
- [Implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment \(KEA\) System](#)
- [KEA Checkpoints for Observing and Assessing Kindergarten Children](#)
- [Qualifications of Kindergarten Teachers](#)





**In Year 5, CEELO planned, sponsored, and convened Webinars on Topics of Interest to Early Childhood Specialists.** To leverage expertise tailored toward each webinar’s topic and intended audience, CEELO collaborated or invited presenters from a variety of other entities, including: *comprehensive centers and other federally funded centers* (Head Start National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, REL-SW), *state early childhood education specialists or representatives from local education agencies/early learning programs* (AR, AZ, CO, LA, MD, MI, NC,) *national organizations and foundations* (Council of Chief State School Officers, EducationCounsel, National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, NIEER, The Ounce of Prevention Fund, the Urban Institute). Key Webinars CEELO delivered in Year 5 is provided below:

- [Leading the Way: How States Are Addressing Early Learning Under ESSA](#) (March 2017)
- [Preparing for the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program -The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program](#) (June 1, 2017)
- [Preparing for the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\): Early Learning](#) (October 2016)

In addition, the following Webinars were offered through the BUILD/CEELO Learning Table:

- [Session 1: Webinar - January 19, 2017](#)
- [Session 2: Webinar - February 16, 2017](#)
- [Session 3: Webinar - March 16, 2017](#)

CEELO staff authored blogs for the NIEER Preschool Matters blog throughout the year. Blogs include the following:

- [Talking the Talk on High-Quality Pre-K](#) (November 2017)
- [Keeping Pace in State PreK](#) (October 2017)
- [Using Data-Driven Indicators to Improve Outcomes for Young Learners](#) (September 2017)
- [Takeaways from New America and CEELO Blog Series on Early Learning and ESSA](#) (September 2017)
- [Being the Change](#) (August 2017)
- [Leading from the Middle](#) (June 2017)
- [Playing Fair: Teacher Compensation Parity Policies and State Funded Pre-K Programs](#) (April 2017)
- [The Great Pretender](#) (April 2017)
- [Giving Young Students a Bigger Slice of the Pie \(Chart\)](#) (March 2017)
- [Better Together](#) (March 2017)
- [Seeing the Forest for the Trees](#) (March 2017)
- [Leading in Times of Transition or How to Dance during an Earthquake](#) (January 2017)
- [Out of Context: Can Standards Create Better Teaching and Learning Opportunities?](#) (January 2017)
- [Building Bridges: Linking Early Learning and Primary School](#) (December 2016)
- [He Said; She Said: Candidates Promote Competing Visions for Child Care](#) (November 2016)



- [Learning from Leading States: Building P-3 Systems](#) (October 2016)
- [Don't Just Nod—Do Something](#) (October 2016)

Finally, CEELO regularly uses Twitter® to disseminate CEELO products as well as important research and policy updates. CEELO now has 1,012 Twitter® followers as well—an increase from 688 followers at the end of Year 4.

### **ESSA Resources and TA Supports**

During Year 5, CEELO supported states seeking guidance regarding incorporating early learning priorities into their [ESSA plans](#). A brief summary of key ESSA activities includes:

- To complement the CCSSO tool, CEELO developed [A Supplemental Tool for Structuring Your Plan for Preschool to Third Grade](#), for chiefs, as state and local leaders develop their plans. The tool provides a number of questions to ensure that preschool to third grade is elevated as a priority.
- CEELO offered an in person and virtual peer exchange in the winter to bring together early learning teams from states in the Northeast with experts to answer questions about the ESSA planning process.
- A CEELO TA provider helped with a peer-exchange of Mid-Atlantic states to support ESSA planning in collaboration with the Mid Atlantic Comprehensive Center.
- CEELO convened early childhood specialists and state experts to share challenges and strategies to support ESSA planning and implementation in San Francisco immediately after the Roundtable meeting.
- In partnership with [New America](#), CEELO developed a series entitled [ESSA and Early Learning Blog](#), that highlights early learning opportunities and challenges under the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- CEELO developed the [Every Student Succeeds Act and Opportunities to Prioritize Early Learning Goals: State Scan](#). CEELO reviewed all 50 states' department of education websites for updates on information related to ESSA state plans and implementation.

***Evaluation Question 2: Was CEELO TA of high quality, and relevant and useful to state early education administrators and collaborators?***

### **Recipients of Responsive TA Provided Favorable Evaluations**

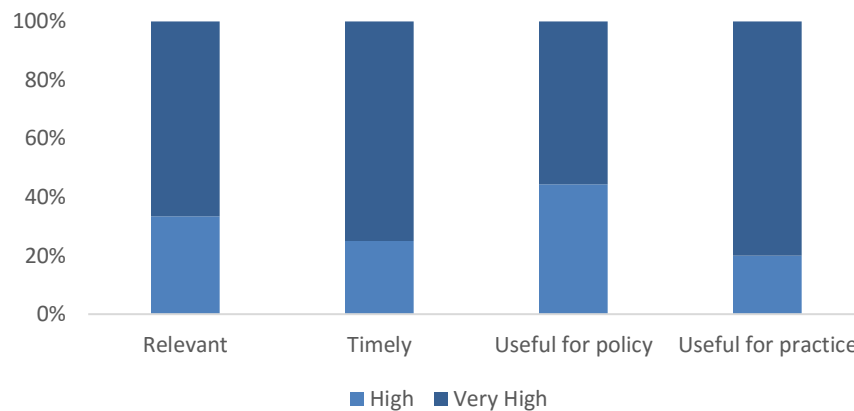
Overall, recipients of CEELO TA continue to report CEELO technical assistance as high quality, relevant, and useful to policy and practice. Respondents reported a variety of types of support (presentations, meeting facilitation, partnership building, provision of expertise, briefings, peer learning) across a number of relevant early childhood topics.



For the Year 5 evaluation, evaluation survey data that had been collected at the conclusion of responsive TA were analyzed. A total of nine individuals responded to the survey. Approximately 32 individuals received the survey, demonstrating a response rate of approximately 28 percent. (Note, not all recipients of responsive TA received a post TA survey in Year 5.)

**Figure 1** below shows that recipients of CEELO’s TA evaluated the TA as highly relevant, timely, and useful and also reported that it was high-quality.

**Figure 1: Percent of Respondents Rating CEELO TA as Highly or Very Highly Relevant, Timely and Useful (N=9)**



Recipients of CEELO TA also reported that they perceive the quality to be high (33%) or very high (66%). Recipients of CEELO’s TA shared their thoughts on the quality, usefulness and relevance of the support they received:

*[Our TA provider] is an excellent partner who understands our challenges and can communicate very well to all levels of colleagues. She is intuitive, asks lots of relevant questions to REALLY understand our needs. . . and is a joy to work with overall. [She] is very well-informed on the topic, always prepared and helpful. We couldn't have asked for a better consultant-- she kept us on track, offered a ton of information and suggestions, and helped us move past some challenges. She jumps right in and becomes a part of our group, using her insightful intellect and great sense of humor/people skills. [She] is a great writer as well. We so appreciate all of her hard work!*

*CEELO provided expert technical assistance and support for [our state] on a challenging issue for all early childhood stakeholders.*

Some individuals who co-presented with CEELO reported that they appreciated the opportunity. One example follows:



*I really enjoyed working with you and [CEELO TA provider]. It was such a blast! I hope to work with you both again.*

Several state specialists and national experts reported that they appreciated CEELO's products and resources. For example, one national leader provided the following comment:

*This [the state directory] is a great resource. . . Thanks for doing it.*

A state leader responsible for the process of selecting a KEA provided the following comment regarding the KEA tool and associated process:

*Thanks again . . . The information you provided was invaluable for our stakeholder group to provide the guidance needed in making the best possible decisions in researching, evaluating and recommending the best tool.*

Finally, CEELO received feedback regarding the assistance and products, which included some suggestions for Year 6.

*Thank you for all the work and information you provide to increase positive outcomes for children. [In Year 6] I look forward to receiving the high-quality information that is always provided through CEELO but especially in relation to the following two goals: 1) using data and other information to improve the quality of instruction in early learning programs; and, 2) increasing the effectiveness of the early learning workforce. . . One of our anticipated goals is to examine data in order to guide professional development needs.*

### **Participants Provided Favorable Ratings of Selected Strategic TA Opportunities**

**CEELO Annual Roundtable.** Participants in the 2017 Roundtable gave high marks to the event, with more than 50% of participants responding to the evaluation survey. About 97 percent rated the overall event as high (38%) or very high (59%). Similarly, they found the event relevant to their work (high 38%, very high 59%) and useful to their work (high 39%, very high 55%).

Respondents reported valuing the format, the opportunities to learn from and share with colleagues, the resources and tools shared, and the content. Moreover, attendees reported that they appreciated the use of state specialists in planning, presenting, and facilitating. Example comments are presented below.

#### Comments about the format

*[The] plenary sessions were inspiring.*

*Breakout sessions supported continued thinking of the plenary subjects.*



*The cohort planning was effective in moving from one session to the other with ease and efficiency as well as built opportunities to establish relationships.*

*I appreciated the organized set-up of the cohorts.*

*Being the only representative from my state here, this rotating model made it possible for me to gather more information to bring home. Also, the size of the cohorts was just enough to offer conversation, opinions and networking.*

*The linkage between the plenaries and breakouts promoted deeper exploration of content.*

Comments about the content and expertise

*Lots of great information - especially enjoyed the system thinking. I actually would have enjoyed more time in that breakout session.*

*The format was energetic and engaging. Content was completely relevant to the work of B-K/3. This event was very beneficial!*

*It is always inspiring to be among such knowledgeable educators from across our nation.*

Comments about the usefulness of the Roundtable

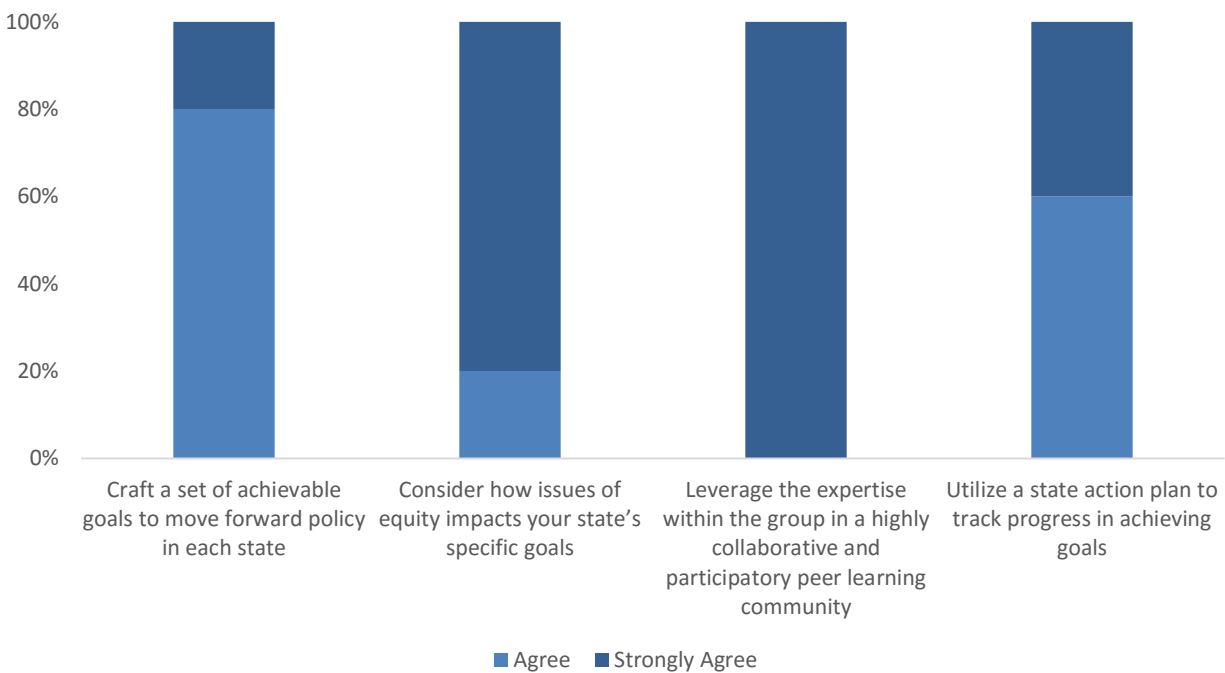
*This Roundtable really has me thinking about how I can change to make more change to the positive.*

*Our agency is much stronger and strategic because of this Roundtable and our engagement over the past three years.*

**Learning Table.** As noted in the previous section, together with partners from the BUILD Initiative CELO supported a Learning Table to Promote Effective Teaching and Learning. Participants in the Learning Table mostly provided favorable reports regarding their experiences. For example, five of the meeting participants completed post-participation evaluation. A total of 15 individuals attended the meeting, yielding a response rate of approximately 33%. All of the respondents reported that the quality relevance and usefulness of the meeting as high (2 of the 5) or very high (3 of the 5). Moreover, all reported that the meeting accomplished desired objectives.



Figure 2. Percent of Respondents Reporting that the Learning Table Met Objectives (N=5)



Participants provided favorable evaluations regarding the quality of the meeting and some reported that they would be taking specific actions resulting from what they had learned during the meeting once they returned to their state agencies. Example comments are presented below.

*I personally thought the whole design of the meeting facilitated efficiency and meaningful exchange. I appreciated the large group time (but also appreciate that the "large" group was still rather small) and the individual state discussions.*

*I especially appreciated the round robin state-specific time with [state experts], and [national experts].*

*Meeting with the experts was very helpful.*

*I am committed to moving forward an equity agenda in my state.*

*I will be the advocate for change within my agency, a voice that has not been there in the past.*

Participants provided feedback on their experience in the Learning Table through Surveys and interviews. Example comments are presented below.

*I would have preferred to have the PowerPoints in hand or some material for notes provided.*



*Having time with team is good, but it was also to split the team up by each person's role. Such as, high ed. people with higher ed. people, and state ed. department leaders with other state ed. department leaders.*

### **Participants in Peer Exchanges and Communities of Practice Provided Favorable Ratings**

Participants provided favorable ratings of the Peer Exchanges. Each session received the same evaluation questions on quality, relevance, and usefulness. The responses from 25 participants reveal that:

- All participants rated the **quality** as *high* (24%) or *very high* (75%).
- All rated the **relevance** of the exchanges as *high* (16%) or *very high* (84%).
- All rated the **usefulness** of the exchanges as *high* (20%) or *very high* (80%).

As in previous years, participants in the exchanges reported that they appreciated the opportunity to engage in participatory dialogue with experts and peers, had favorable remarks regarding access to tools, and valued the ability to have time away from the day-to-day to work with their team and other state staff. Participants elaborated on their perspectives on the Peer Exchanges:

*[I appreciated] the small size of the group on VERY FOCUSED TOPICS. Lots of professional dialog - a true peer learning community. For me, this was the best peer exchange yet!!:)*

*I enjoyed talking through practice problems with other states. Mainly seeing that our challenges are often the same but there are also many successes we can learn from.*

*This peer exchange will help us as an agency be more intentional about how we look at data and the [Continuous Quality Improvement] process. It made me look at how we are doing this currently and how we can move the work forward to improve monitoring for quality and not just compliance.*

*I came away with some concrete "to-dos" in terms of what I can change in our monitoring system.*

In Year 5, the overall ratings of the Peer Exchanges were higher than the ratings provided in Year 4. CEELO had incorporated formative input from participants in earlier peer exchanges. For example, participants in the Year 4 peer exchanges requested time for state planning and facilitation to support state action planning and CEELO addressed these issues in the design of the Year 5 Peer Exchanges.

Similarly, evaluations of the **Community of Practice Webinars** revealed attendees provided mostly favorable reviews. For example, an attendee of the Family Engagement *Father Engagement* webinar reported, "The webinar was a great as a check point for practitioners. Kudos for the interactive parts. It

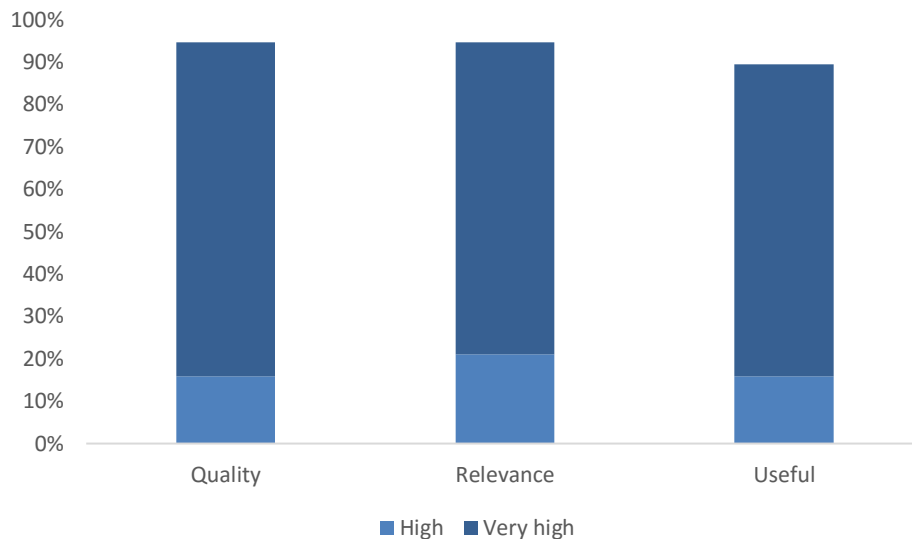


kept us on our toes during the webinar” while another commented, “This was by far, the best webinar I have ever attended. . . Great Job!”

### Leadership Academy Rated Favorably

Fellows who participated in the Leadership Academy provided favorable evaluations regarding the quality, usefulness, and relevance of the experience.

**Figure 3: Percent of Leadership Fellows Providing High or Very High Ratings (N=19)**



***Evaluation Question 3: Did CEELO TA assist state administrators in building capacity to implement policy for children birth through third grade? What specific policy outcomes were achieved?***

### CEELO’s Assistance is Supporting States in Achieving Desired Goals

Analysis of data from the TA database reveals that the 63 completed TA requests accomplished desired goals. Thirty-seven of the completed TA requests were intensive, seven were general, and 19 were targeted. In addition, 14 requests that began in Year 5 were still in process as of December 2017. Given the range of state needs and varying nature of the TA, the reported outcomes and benefits ranged accordingly. **Box 4** on the following page provides an example of the range of TA that CEELO provided and the impact of the TA on one state.

#### **Box 4. CEELO TA to Massachusetts**





**What CEELO has been doing.** CEELO has provided the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Higher Education with strategic and responsive TA over the past five years. During CEELO's fifth year of funding, CEELO offered strategic TA through the BUILD/CEELO Learning Table, the B-3 Initiative, through targeted Technical Assistance (TA) PDG sub-grantees on topics ranging from finance to costs of quality preschool, and to EEC to enhance the capacity of the agency to redesign processes to more strategically ensure grants and regulations support evidence-based practices that research reveals lead to enhanced early learning outcomes. Since 2013, CEELO has offered responsive TA to Massachusetts to support the implementation of the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge, the Preschool Expansion and Development Grant, and the coordination of state agency activities and priorities through the BUILD/CEELO Learning Table. In 2017, CEELO worked with the associate commissioner and commissioner to ensure the momentum that had been built through the RTT-ELC was sustained and that the various TA supports offered by CEELO were aligned toward the state's goals of providing efficient and effective supports to improve early learning outcomes.

**How the technical assistance has effected the state.** EEC has created a strategic plan for the policy and workforce division that aligns the grants, monitoring and regulation activities with the broader vision for the state. Across a range of grant programs, EEC is creating a common frame for including evidence-based research in funding solicitations across grants, is working to ensure solicitations focus on similar priorities, and is taking steps to create a more coordinated monitoring system. Moreover, lessons learned from PDG sub-grantees are being applied to a range of grant programs including programs to enhance the quality of the workforce, to provide community supports, to screen and assess young children, and to rate the quality of and support enhancements for early education and care providers.

All of the 63 TA requests that were completed accomplished the desired goals established by state early education administrators and CEELO TA liaisons. Many of the TA requests were similar to those received during previous years, but in Year 5, many states asked CEELO to support more intensive and in depth activities. Examples of the goals of these requests are as follows:

- Improve implementation of the Preschool Expansion Grant by supporting State Education Agencies' support of B-3 planning with participating districts and schools, evaluation implementation and reporting, recruitment and documentation of students with disabilities, and monitoring
- Increase access to research and best practice of districts and schools in addressing issues of suspension and expulsion in the early grades
- Develop a sustainability plan for Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) as well as Preschool Expansion and Development (PDG) activities through range of supports including use of the Cost of Quality Preschool tool
- Develop systems to improve data-based decision-making (including online preschool application systems, monitoring forms, and reporting systems)
- Provide supports for ESSA planning by offering examples of how early learning can be included in the plans, reviews of state plans, and peer-to-peer supports among state leaders engaged in ESSA planning



- Kindergarten Entry Assessment planning, revision, procurement, training and implementation support
- Strategic planning to build the capacity of Offices of Early Learning within State Education Agencies to more efficiently and effectively administer federal- and state-funded programs to focus on results and use data to inform mid-course correction and document desired outcomes
- Develop plans and policies to address the low wages and educational attainment levels of early childhood educators

Building capacity of SEAs is a primary aim of CEELO TA. CEELO surveyed SEA staff to ask about ways in which TA had or had not affected SEA capacity. Survey results reveal that respondents were most likely to report using the TA to share ideas and lessons learned with colleagues, provide authoritative support to advance their SEA work, increase their understanding of a topic, and develop relationships.

### **Uses of CEELO TA and Resources**

Recipients of CEELO TA and resources reported using the supports in a variety of ways. Recipients of CEELO TA report using the assistance to strengthen policies and practices and several reports that the TA enhances overall SEA capacities to advance early learning priorities. Box 5 presents one description of the TA offered to Southern states.

#### **Box 5. CEELO Supports to Enhance Leadership Capacity in Southern State Agencies**

**Why CEELO has provided TA.** Building early education leadership capacity within SEAs remains a key goal for CEELO. Although many Southeastern states are pioneers in advancing quality early education, the need for constant support and partnership of state early education leaders remains high as agency personnel transition and policy demands shift. For example, **Georgia** was the first state in the nation to offer universal state-funded pre-K; Alabama’s preschool currently meets all of the NIEER quality benchmarks; and, Alabama and Georgia are currently integrating pre-K into a larger birth – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade system with child care and human services through dedicated state agencies. Nonetheless, in recent years, personnel transitions have occurred in these states.

**What CEELO is doing.** CEELO is providing support through offering consistent, outside feedback that has provided the states an opportunity to problem solve with a national expert. In **Georgia** CEELO supported activities by the Department of Early Care and Learning to address the uneven demand and supply of pre-K throughout the state. In **North Carolina**, CEELO has supported the institutionalization of P-3 within the Department of Public Instruction. In **Alabama** CEELO has helped the state address the Governor’s priority for P – 3 learning. In **Mississippi**, CEELO is assisting with the integration of multiple initiatives with limited staff. Finally, CEELO is helping South Carolina rebuild the early education division. Two CEELO TA providers have worked with these state by providing monthly feedback and intensive technical assistance specific to their needs and goals, typically in collaboration with the Southeast Regional Comprehensive Center.



**Benefits reported.** State leaders frequently comment that CEELO's monthly leadership coaching has led to benefits both individually as leaders and enhanced the overall capacity of their agency to manage during times of change.

Other state early childhood specialists reported that the TA has resulted in enhanced interagency work and in specific changes to policies and practices. Examples of reports are provided below.

Served to support interagency work

*TA provided by CEELO helped to convene staff across 3 state agencies to more closely align systems, coordinate initiatives, and foster interagency collaboration.*

*This TA helped build and strengthen connections between key players in and out of government, all working towards the same goals. Helped bridge silos. Brokered new policy insights from other states.*

*This assistance was instrumental in helping [our state] move forward in providing much needed guidance to the field of early childhood education.*

*CEELO really helped agencies dialog together toward improved collaboration. This kept workforce issues on the table. At the outset to engaging CEELO, workforce was quietly being jettisoned to a 'back-burner'. We reached out to CEELO to help us salvage a cross agency focus on the workforce in all ECE sectors. CEELO helped us to flush out the both/and needs for educational attainment, credentials, competencies, compensation, and baseline training. Assistance also helped an over-extended group keep moving to finalize documents and be accountable to the work.*

Informed policy/practice

*Assistance from the TA from CEELO has assisted our state in the development of best practice documents and presentations and has assisted us in developing new procedures.*

*The project was productive and [our state] will be able to use the guidance document for our work with the Depts. of Education and Social Services. It's a win-win! Awesome outcome! Thank you!*

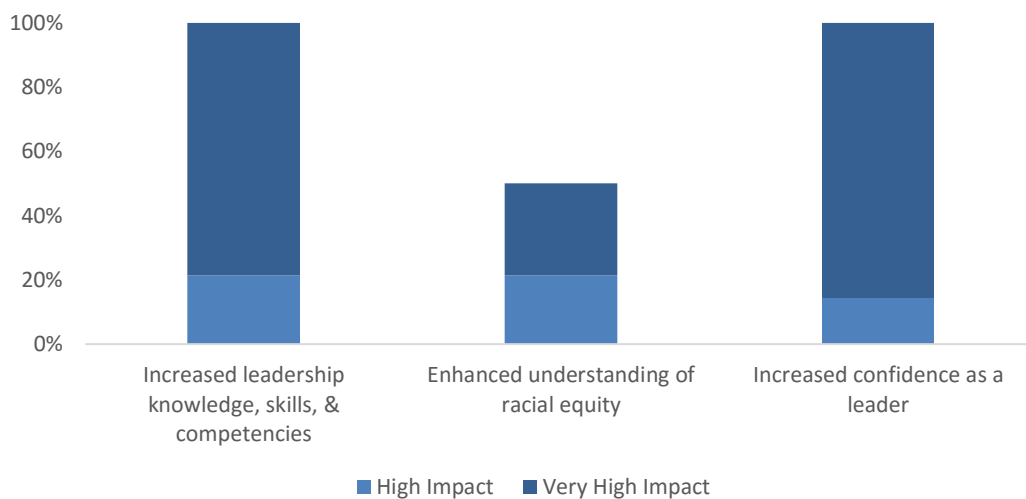
**Leadership Academy Led to Improved Outcomes for Fellows and State Education Agencies**

In Year 5, CEELO conducted a retrospective study to capture information about the nature and outcomes of the CEELO Leadership Academy. Interviews were conducted with 17 individuals including 10 fellows, two coaches, three faculty members, and two supervisors of Leadership Academy Fellows. In addition, 14 fellows completed an online survey.



Participants in the retrospective study reported that the Leadership Academy improved outcomes for the participating fellows and led to some improvements in state education agency capacities. Specifically, all (100%) of the survey respondents reported that the Leadership Academy had a strong impact on their leadership knowledge, skills and competencies and increased their confidence as a leader. Less than half reported that their participation in the Academy had a strong impact on their understanding of racial equity. This is not surprising as the issue of racial equity was introduced to the third cohort of Fellows but not the previous cohorts.

**Figure 4: Percent of Leadership Fellows Reporting High or Very High Impact (N=14)**



Fellows provided comments about the impact of the Leadership Academy on their competence, understanding and confidence. Some fellows reported specific content and others reported specific formats of the Academy that they especially valued. Example quotes follow:

*[I] Truly enjoyed Systems Thinking, Leadership on The Line readings, coaching, and networking. [This fellow noted that she now applies knowledge of results-based leadership, systems thinking and lessons from Leadership on the Line to her regular work and even to her personal life.]*

*My experience with my coach left the most impact. My work in my current position and my leadership development as a whole, really has been enhanced because of the reflective style of my coach. I feel in talking with other fellows that not everyone may have had the same experience as I did with my coach. I would suggest periodic check-ins with the fellows about how the coaching piece of the fellowship is going and whether they are getting what they need from it. I really appreciated the face to face meetings and that there was a specific leadership theme each time. It helped me to gain more out of the sessions than if there would have been specific topics throughout one meeting time.*



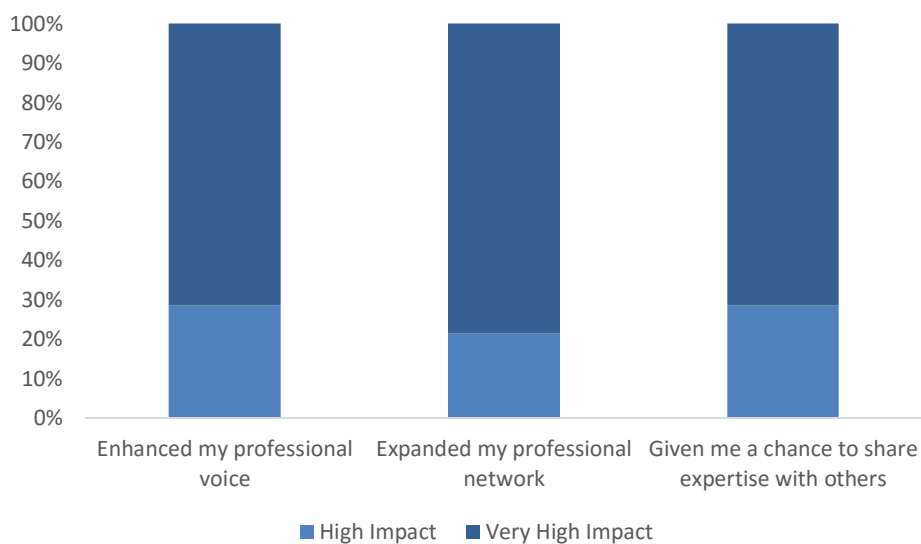
*The most important outcome from the Leadership Academy is my increased confidence to use skills related to Result Based Accountability/Leadership and Habits of a Systems Thinker. Follow up consultation with Tracy Benson to apply the Habits of a Systems Thinker directly to my work was especially impactful.*

*I have met amazing leaders through CELO and am deeply appreciative of the depth of conversations and engagements afforded to me through their outstanding program. I will continue to advocate for equitable educational communities for ALL children, which is dependent upon all educational professionals to understand early learning! In addition to school educators, no administrator will be certified again through my center without understanding developmental learning progressions.*

*I have been reading about confidence and I have a different perspective about it. I do think that my confidence was grown but I think participating in the Leadership Academy enhanced my ability to be courageous. It helped me to start conversations by saying, I wonder or what if. It gave me tools to know where I was going. With being courageous, and with the skill I gained and the tools, I ended up feeling more confident. By the increased confidence resulted from my increased courage, skills and opportunities. I now know that I am properly equipped and when I am taking a risk, I know it is an educated risk and because of the tools I now have, I feel I have a safety net.*

All of the fellows reported that the Leadership Academy had a high or very high impact on their professional voice and network and gave them a chance to share their expertise with others. See Figure 5 below.

**Figure 5: Percent of Leadership Fellows Reporting High or Very High Impact (N=14)**





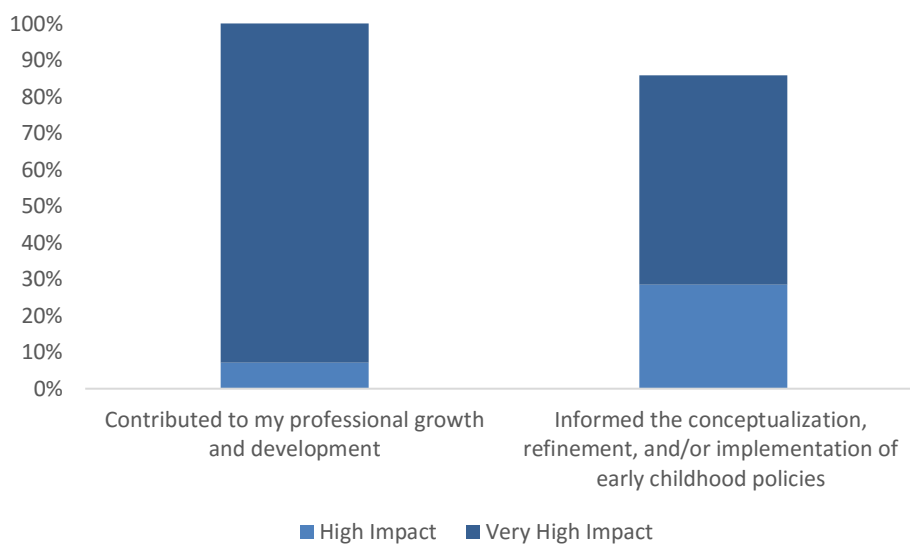
Fellows elaborated on how the Leadership Academy had an impact on their professional voice and networks:

*The small, intimate group allowed for strong relationships to develop among participants, coaches and faculty. As a result, we have built a network for both professional and personal connection and development.*

*Every in-person meeting was an amazing experience for me. . . We heard from each other reflect on our initial proposal and through the coaching and TAs, how we have revised and refined our projects. Through our shared moments, we peeled off the layers of our self-preservation and through laughter, tears, disappointments, and breakthroughs we discover that we are all leaders. As fellows, we continue to connect with each other. We just had a conference call together and shared what's happening with our personal as well as professional lives. We will be scheduling another call in February and promised to connect in person soon. . . I just want to extend, again, my deepest thank you for the academy and its funders, for giving me this amazing experience.*

All (100%) of the fellows reported that the Academy had a high or very high impact on their professional growth and development and a large percentage (86%) reported that their participation in the Leadership Academy has informed the conceptualization, refinement or implementation of specific early childhood policies. Those who indicated that it has not yet informed early childhood policies reported that they have not yet had the opportunity to apply the knowledge or skills gained in the Leadership Academy to specific policies but have applied what they have learned to practice.

**Figure 6: Percent of Leadership Fellows Reporting High or Very High Impact (N=14)**





Fellows provided specific comments about the impact. Example comments follow.

*The coaching was very helpful too in helping me think about my project differently and make some tough decisions. Attending the Leadership Academy has inspired me to think about going back to school and getting my Ed.D. In fact, I'm working on my application now and hopefully will begin in the Summer of 2018 if accepted.*

*Following the Leadership Academy, I was appointed the Director of the Office of Early Learning. Currently. . . I am the Senior Director of the department. This position is an "assistant cabinet member" position appointed by the Governor. The department employs around 125 employees.*

*Although there are no structure-type of changes in my current position, I believe my view on systems thinking has been improved tremendously and the confidence to speak in front of colleagues. Since June 2017, I have facilitated three systems thinking sessions: 2 at [our state] Association for the Education of Young Children and 1 at Region 9 Head Start Association Family Engagement and Cultural Effectiveness Conference. I have been asked to facilitate a similar session for our Early Learning Board and at [our city] AEYC Conference in March. . . I feel that I have brought the habits of systems thinking to [our state].*

*I have become more involved with NAECS-SDE as the Vice President. In addition, I find myself attending and presenting at the national level much more than before the academy.*

Two supervisors of Fellows were interviewed and both provided favorable evaluations regarding the Leadership Academy. One reported specific changes in policy and practice that she attributed to the Leadership Academy:

*[One of the Fellows I supervise] flourished through the experience. She craves learning opportunities and it was right up her ally. For her project, she developed a P-3 leadership institute and we are now looking to expand it statewide. We are looking to support P3 implementation throughout the state. . . This [the Leadership Academy] has really been valuable. I know that she learned from that experience and it gave her a level of confidence and to be more assertive and be a thought partner throughout the division.*

A second supervisor reported that the Leadership Academy has made a big difference in highlighting early learning in his state. He reported:

*When [the Fellow I supervise] began the Leadership Academy, she was not in a leadership position. Since then, she has been promoted and now supervises an entire unit. Before, she attended I was aware that she really knew her stuff, but she was quiet. Now I feel that if you give her time, she could speak almost anything well. If she is speaking about early learning, she is able to run circles around anyone. Her ability to*



*work with others, get outside of the minutia and know when to break outside of that to get stuff done and not be constrained by state government.*

This supervisor further reported that some of the practices that the Fellow learned, such as results-based planning, have been adopted by leaders in the state agency. He reported that he believes the Leadership Academy has been quite valuable for the state. He noted that because of the skills and capacities gained through the Leadership Academy, the fellow is now positioned to make early learning a priority. He noted:

*The cost to benefit factor [for the Leadership Academy] was really high here. It was a very low cost and huge, huge benefit.*

In sum, reports from fellows and supervisors reveal that participation in the Leadership Academy is leading to growth in personal leadership as well as enhanced capacities of state education agencies to advance early learning priorities.

**Evaluation Question 4: *What did we learn about how state policy context supports or impedes efforts to build capacity? How can CEELO improve delivery of TA that builds SEA capacity to implement policy for children birth through third grade?***

To date, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and the Virgin Islands have had the opportunity to participate in CEELO webinars, and annual or regional meetings; they have access to materials on the website and receive CEELO materials in E-News and other electronic means. Many factors effect a state’s ability to effectively use TA, and CEELO’s ability to build capacity to implement effective policy varies based on the specific needs and capacities of the states. In Years 4 and 5, CEELO TA specialists noted substantial staff turnover in SEAs. To address this issue, CEELO developed the Leadership Toolkit to support ongoing leadership training, continued to provide tailored TA to new SEA staff, and set up regular times for consultation calls to support the SEAs ongoing work.

Other issues of concern to state specialists have been reported in earlier sections of this report. Specifically, state specialists reported a need for a tool to determine the costs of high-quality preschool, support for sustainability planning after the conclusion of the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge or Preschool Expansion and Development Grant programs, and support for ESSA planning and implementation.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In Year 5, CEELO devoted more resources to strategic TA activities and became more targeted to impact when providing responsive TA. Recipients of the TA reported an appreciation for CEELO’s role in





supporting strategic planning and being proactive in supporting state leaders in their plans to improve the capacity of their agencies to more efficiently and effectively improve early learning outcomes.

- ***Continue to offer opportunities for states to learn from one another and tailor experiences to meet participants' needs.*** Participants in the CEELO strategic TA opportunities reported that learning from other states' experiences continues to be valuable and provides specific actionable support. Combined with expertise from outside experts, respondents reported that opportunities to learn from others continues to be both effective and efficient. Consistent with findings from the previous evaluations, ratings of these opportunities have consistently been high and those attending these experiences report that the knowledge gained, practical tools and policies and procedures developed by other states are very valuable.
- ***Continue to disseminate products and materials that are designed to be most useful to SEA early childhood leaders and staff.*** Evaluations of CEELO Webinars and products are highly rated in terms of quality and relevance. Specialists also encouraged short documents as more accessible, preferring syntheses and analyses to larger policy papers. CEELO should consider continued efforts to both streamline the format of products and engage in continued dissemination to ensure the materials are used by the intended target audiences.
- ***Leverage strategic TA and streamline the number and intensity of responsive TA offered.*** Consistent with the Year 6 management plan, multiple respondents reported that intensive TA that is aligned with strategic opportunities yield specific and measurable benefits. Responsive TA recipients reported that they are grateful for the agility that CEELO demonstrates in offering supports in response to targeted requests. Nonetheless, recipients of strategic TA reported that they appreciated the opportunity to “step away from the ever-growing to do list” to make sure the actions they take have a strategic impact.



## Appendix A: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of the evaluation were to collect data and report findings to use formatively to improve CEELO activities and to document perceived outcomes of CEELO activities. Three different teams were engaged in collection and analysis of data for this evaluation report. The scope of the data collection and analysis activities and methodology employed by each team is described below.

### CEELO Evaluation Team

The CEELO team began collecting data in the last quarter of 2016 and completed data collection, analysis, and reporting in December 2017. A senior CEELO TA provider who leads multiple large-scale evaluations and has experience working at the Government Accountability Office worked in collaboration with the CEELO leadership team to engage in a participatory evaluation. The primary focus of the 2017 annual report was Year 5 (fiscal year 2017) but the report includes some data that were collected and analyzed in previous years and references some activities that concluded in the first quarter of Year 6.

**Surveys.** The CEELO evaluation team drafted different surveys that were used to capture data about the quality and outcomes of CEELO activities. In previous years, the evaluators administered a year-end survey to all of the recipients of CEELO TA and partners as well as other Comprehensive Centers and TA partners. Early in Year 5, CEELO attended a joint meeting with other Comprehensive Center leaders to discuss all of the Centers' evaluation plans. During the meeting, it became clear that many State Education Agency personnel were overwhelmed with the number of evaluation activities (including the national evaluation) and a number of SEA staff had requested a more streamlined approach.

The CEELO Director and the evaluation lead participated on planning calls to discuss a future coordinated and streamlined evaluation process. By the end of Year 5, the coordinated process had not yet been finalized. Nonetheless, the Year 5, the CEELO Management Team decided that it was prudent to address the issue voiced by some SEA staff of receiving too many evaluation surveys. For Year 5, survey data from post responsive and post strategic TA requests were analyzed but the team did not administer a year end survey. The Center plans to conduct a needs assessment in Year 6 and at the conclusion of the current cycle of funding once the national survey effort has concluded and the Center has coordinated with others on a more streamlined design.

- **Post TA and InfoLine Surveys** were administered after CEELO provided TA or information line responses. Surveys were only administered at the conclusion of a TA activity and as noted, in many instances the TA was seamless and in such cases recipients were not asked to complete surveys each time a new TA request began. A total of 30 individuals completed surveys at the conclusion of a responsive TA activity.



- **Roundtable Surveys** were administered to participants in the annual meeting via paper-based survey, 56 returned a survey.
- **CEELO Leadership Academy** surveys were administered after each in person meeting and one was administered to all Fellows who had participated over the four-year period in which the Leadership Academy was offered. In year 5, three surveys were administered after each in person meeting with a total of 19 respondents. A year end survey was administered to all previous fellows and a total of 14 responded.
- **Other Surveys** such as surveys of participants in regional center quarterly calls, surveys of participants in the peer learning community, and a needs sensing survey of stakeholders in selected states were administered. A total of 15 surveys were administered and the total number of respondents was 61.

**Interviews.** The senior CEELO TA provider and a CEELO consultant developed semi-structured interview protocols and employed a purposeful sampling strategy to collect data from ten CEELO Leadership Academy fellows, two coaches, two faculty members, and two supervisors of Fellows. The interview protocols included questions about the quality, relevance, usefulness and outcomes of the Leadership Academy. The interviews varied in length from about 10-minutes to about 30-minutes.

**Database and log reviews.** During the first quarter of Year 1, CEELO contracted with an independent firm to develop an online TA database and Information line database. The database includes variables to capture the following aspects of the TA: the requester, provider and any possible collaborators, the intensity, the priority topic, the goals, the tasks necessary to achieve the goal, target dates, and follow up steps. The Information Line database included the following fields: requester, provider and possible collaborator, priority topic, and details about the information provided. Separately, CEELO staff collected data regarding ongoing collaborations with other TA providers.

CEELO TA providers and staff populated the databases and logs over the course of the year. The CEELO evaluation team analyzed the data to determine the number of requests, the intensity of the TA, the priority topics covered, the number of states that had requested and received TA and information, and the number of collaborative activities CEELO engaged in.

**Document reviews.** The CEELO evaluation team reviewed project agendas, emails, and ongoing communication among the Leadership Team to obtain contextual information. The team used Google analytics to determine the number of Web hits over the year, the number of states that had accessed the site, and the most popular pages. Finally, the CEELO evaluation team reviewed materials developed by CEELO and also reviewed comments by peer reviewers to determine and assess the quality of the materials.



**Table A1. Data Collection Activities<sup>5</sup>**

Evaluation Activity	Description	Purpose	Number Year 1	Number Year 2	Number Year 3	Number Year 4	Number Year 5
<b>Surveys</b>	Year End Surveys <sup>6</sup>	Obtain evaluation data regarding quality and impact of TA and assess current needs and issues	212	92	89	163	NA*
	State specialists	Obtain evaluation data regarding quality and impact of TA and assess current needs and issues	NA	76	22	44	NA*
	Collaborators	Learn about effectiveness, quality, and impact of collaborations	NA	16	17	12	NA*
	Publications (CEELO E-News recipients, State specialist, and collaborators)	Learn about the quality and usefulness of CEELO's resources	NA	NA	50	95	NA*
	Post TA/info line response surveys	Learn about perceptions of quality and usefulness of information	16	59	53	30	30
	Post Webinar surveys	Learn about perceptions of quality and usefulness of information	84	130	144	52	NA*
	Roundtable surveys	Determine quality, usefulness and desired next steps	73	113	36	49	56
	Other surveys	Assess needs of target audience and obtain feedback on targeted activities	43	90	74	170	61

<sup>5</sup> These numbers include incomplete responses and responses in which respondents said they did not receive or access services. These were excluded from the data set and are not reflected in selections in the narrative or charts in the report; hence, the difference in numbers.

<sup>6</sup> In Years 3-4, the survey was sent to state specialists, collaborators and recipients of publications through separate survey monkey links. In Year 1 a single survey was sent and in Year 2 separate surveys were sent to state specialist and collaborators.



Evaluation Activity	Description	Purpose	Number Year 1	Number Year 2	Number Year 3	Number Year 4	Number Year 5
<b>Interviews</b>	CEELO TA recipients - State early education administrators	Learn about the nature, effectiveness, and impact of TA  Learn about future needs	11	15	15	11	17
<b>Document review</b>	Reviews of TA database, Info line database, and logs produced by CEELO TA providers Determine the states we have provided TA and info responses Describe the nature and intensity of the TA Analyze data to create “vignettes” that describe the nature, intensity and impact of the TA Analyze quality of the data to improve consistency and usefulness of data Project communications Web analytics CEELO products (e.g., policy briefs and documents) Determine number of resources posted on website, number of publications by type, etc. to inform whether met targets in Year 4 Management Plan						

\*The Year-End survey was not administered in Year 5 at the request of some SEA staff who requested that Comprehensive Centers streamline efforts so it is less time-consuming for SEA staff.



## Appendix B. CELO Presentations Conducted in Year 5

Listed below are the titles of the 16 presentations, by month, by CELO staff in Year 5.

### November 2016

[Breaking the Mold: Leadership for Early Learning Impact](#) examines the need for new approaches to leadership and initiatives currently underway throughout many RTT-ELC and PDG states and communities to cultivate effective, inspirational B – 3rd leaders, often with the support of national partners. As State birth to third grade (B – 3rd) early development and learning systems evolve, leadership has become ever more critical. The shift from accountability and compliance to leadership for innovation and excellence places new demands on community, state, and federal systems and organizations which recognize that many existing structures, approaches and tools are not always suited to fostering and supporting new leaders. This material was presented at the [2016 Preschool Development Grantees and Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grantees Annual Meeting](#) November 18, 2016 in Arlington, Virginia.

[Connecting the Dots: Using Best Practices to Support Three- to Five-Year-Olds and Their Families](#) focuses on current research on child development and learning; revised Vermont Early Learning Standards; standards-referenced, child-centered curriculum development; and developmentally appropriate and effective teaching practices. CELO's Jim Squires presented with VT Higher Education Collaborative Early Childhood Coordinator Manuela Fonseca at an interactive full-day session for the [Vermont Higher Education Collaborative](#) (VT HEC) on November 30, 2016 in Montpelier, Vermont.

[Cost of Preschool Quality: Using a Tool to Project Costs for Scaling and Sustaining High Quality Preschool Programs](#) shares and demonstrates the Cost of Preschool Quality (CPQ) and how this tool could be used by states to: (1) Estimate the additional funding that would be required to raise standards in an existing program so that these more closely align with the best practice quality standards, (2) Assess the costs of various state specific policy proposals, and (3) Provide information on what will be needed from other sources to sustain funding after federal grant funds end. CELO presented during this session at the [2016 Preschool Development Grantees and Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grantees Annual Meeting](#) November 18, 2016 in Arlington, Virginia.

[Financing High Quality Preschool Programs: How States and Communities are Addressing Adequacy, Equity and Efficiency of Funding](#) presents preliminary findings from a study of how local communities (districts and community based programs) use mixed funding sources, including state, federal (including PDG), and local funds, to offer high quality preschool programs, in mixed delivery settings, to children from varied economic backgrounds. CELO staff facilitation a discussion of three critical issues: (1) Adequacy of funds to implement the established indicators of high quality, (2) Efficiency of financing systems to manage multiple funding sources and comply with regulations, and (3) Equitable access to high quality programs and teachers in all settings. The session discussed lessons learned and recommendations to ensure the financing of high quality preschool programs supports the expected



goals and outcomes for children and families. CEELO was joined by state representatives from New York (Tina Rose-Turrioglio, Peg Drappo) and Tennessee (Lisa Wiltshire, Kathryn Bostick) during this session at the [2016 Preschool Development Grantees and Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grantees Annual Meeting](#) November 17, 2016 in Arlington, Virginia.

### January 2017

[Building the Next Generation of Inclusion Leaders](#) explores how the early learning field is now rethinking ways to cultivate and support new leaders capable of powerfully impacting each and every child with their families, borrowing lessons learned from related fields on cultivating. This session discusses “what we know” about leaders and leadership and then identifies and explores “what we need to learn and do” to build the next generation of inclusion leaders. Jim Squires gave this presentation at the Alabama First Class Pre-K Annual Conference in Mobile, AL on January 4, 2017.

[Where Are We Heading? Children, Childhood, and Early Education in the USA](#) traces the roots of children and childhood over the ages through the eyes of artists; examines trends and future directions of childhood and early learning; and explores implications for participants as parents, teachers and caregivers, program leaders, community leaders, and citizens. Jim Squires gave this presentation at the Alabama First Class Pre-K Annual Conference in Mobile, AL on January 4, 2017.

[CEELO’s Role in Supporting an Extraordinary Professional Workforce for Young Children](#) describes CEELO’s role and services in supporting the professional early childhood workforce. CEELO Senior Fellow Jim Squires presented this material during a webinar to the [EarlyEdU Alliance](#), a 35-member consortium of institutions for higher education and 16 state-based teams supporting quality teaching in Head Start and early childhood programs. ([Slides](#) | [Recording](#))

[Early Learning Programs: Ensuring Young Children are Successful](#) provides information on best practices to help young children experience high quality education, every day, and every year, from preschool through third grade. Lori Connors-Tadros, CEELO Project Director, presented at the 2017 Technical Assistance Meeting for the Insular Areas (the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) sponsored by the [U.S. Department of Education, School Support and Rural Programs](#).

### May 2017

[Preschool to Grade 3 Framework](#) provides an overview of the key issues to consider in developing a Preschool to Grade Three plan. Diane Schilder and Melissa Dahlin gave this keynote address to the Preschool Development and Expansion Sub-Grantees on May 9, 2017 in Albany, New York.

[Cost of Preschool Quality Tool](#) details the goals, purposes, and uses of the Cost of Preschool Quality Tool and provides a short demo of the tool. This presentation was given by Lori Connors-Tadros at the Sustainability Planning Meeting held by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care on



May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Worcester, Massachusetts. Attendees were Preschool Development Grant – Expansion grantees and other early learning programs.

[Leadership for Early Learning Impact](#) shares tools to support leadership, including habits of systems thinking, driving with data, self as an agent of change, powerful communicating, and collaborating to get things done. This presentation was given by Jana Martella at the Sustainability Planning Meeting held by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Worcester, Massachusetts. Attendees were Preschool Development Grant – Expansion grantees and other early learning programs.

[Kindergarten Entry Assessments: Key Issues to Consider](#) provides state stakeholders with an overview of the key questions to ask and resources available when selecting, revising, or implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA). This presentation was given by Diane Schilder at the Michigan Office of Great Start KEA stakeholder meeting held on May 17, 2017 in Lansing, Michigan.

### **June 2017**

[Leading for Equity: Ensuring a Competent Workforce that Supports All Children](#) discusses the powerful policies needed to lead and drive state efforts to improve the workforce and teaching quality with an equity lens. It explores the question – *How can policy leaders identify and remedy disparities throughout the systems they lead so that the workforce is equipped to ensure each child's learning and development can be optimized?* CEELO's Jana Martella presented with BUILD's Kate Tarrant, Debi Mathias, and Aisha Ray on June 13, 2017 at the [NAEYC Professional Learning Institute](#).

[Moving Family Engagement into Action: Promising Practices to Support Implementation in Early Learning Settings](#) identifies ways to address common barriers in implementing family engagement in programs by sharing resources from research and from various settings. Participants engaged in a demonstration of the Maryland Family Engagement Toolkit, which offers accessible and field-tested practices that can be used in any type of early learning setting (e.g., infant/toddler programs, child care, pre-K, Head Start). CEELO's Melissa Dahlin presented with Sue Mitchell (PDG TA) and Cynthia Lessner (Maryland State Department of Education) on June 11, 2017 at the [NAEYC Professional Learning Institute](#).

[Early Care and Education Professional Development Systems: Meeting the Needs of Child Care, Head Start, and pre-k Professionals](#) provides an overview of key research on early care and education professional development systems and offers stakeholders a framework for action planning. Jana Martella and Diane Schilder presented during a break-out session on June 14, 2017 at the [NAEYC Professional Learning Institute](#).

[Early Care and Education Professional Development Systems: Meeting the Needs of Child Care, Head Start, and pre-k Professionals II](#) offered tailored information for child care administrators, technical assistance providers and higher education providers at the Quality Rating and Improvement Systems





conference. Diane Schilder co-presented with Katherine Theodore from the Southeast Comprehensive Center on June 29, 2017 at the Quality Rating and Improvement Systems meeting in Dallas, Texas.

## Appendix C – CEELo Publications Year 5

### Fast Facts

[Assessment Tools Used in Kindergarten Entry Assessments \(KEAs\)](#) is a national scan on the current assessment tools that are used in states to assess the development of children at kindergarten entry. (January 2017)

[Information and Resources on Developing State Policy on Kindergarten Entry Assessment \(KEA\): UPDATE](#)-This Fast Fact is an update of the February 2014 Fast Fact which provides information on how other states are approaching the development and implementation of KEA as part of a comprehensive assessment system. (June 2017)

### Policy Reports and Briefs

[Information and Resources to Assist States in Developing Policy on Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion](#) includes a review of current research on the impact and prevalence of suspension and expulsion in early childhood programs and a summary of key federal and national policy on suspension and expulsion in early childhood programs. It also provides an overview of emerging state policy, descriptions of effective approaches for prevention, and considerations for states in developing policy in this area. (March 2017)

[Key Considerations to Assist States in Developing or Revising a Kindergarten Entry Assessment \(KEA\) Report](#) is based on a review of existing reports, information provided from a response to a listserve request, analyses of meeting notes and information gathered from interviews with key informants. It provides answers to key questions posed by stakeholders in the process of selecting and revising a KEA. (December 2017)

### Tools

[Cost of Preschool Quality Companion Toolkit](#). This toolkit provides guidance and resources to support the use of the tool and to assist with communicating findings from the use of the tool with key stakeholders in the state.

The [Leadership Self-Assessment](#) tool is designed to support both responsive and strategic technical assistance to build the capacity of Offices of Early Learning within State Education Agencies.

The Toolkit on Leadership is designed to support the [individual](#) and [collective](#) leadership of early childhood specialists in State Education Agencies.



[Tool to Guide Decisions Regarding Kindergarten Entry Assessment \(KEA\) Selection and Implementation](#) is designed to support stakeholders who are in the process of selecting, revising or implementing a KEA.

### **Listserv Summaries**

[KEA Checkpoints for Observing and Assessing Kindergarten Children](#) offers responses from state contacts on the NAECs-SDE listserv, who were asked about their kindergarten entry assessment and checkpoint dates. Because kindergarten is such a formative time in a child's education and life, it is imperative for teachers to have a good understanding of where individual children are in their development, as well as the class as a whole. (August 2017, NAECs-SDE Listserv Summary)

[Qualifications of Kindergarten Teachers](#) shares responses from state contacts on the NAECs-SDE listserv on requirements for Kindergarten teachers in twelve states. It includes a table that lists responses from states and describes the state's requirements, along with links to specific state resources and tools are included where applicable. (November 2016, Listserv Summary)

### **E-News**

[November 21, 2017](#) - This issue celebrates five years of CEELO partnership with state early childhood specialists and previews what is coming next. Our Leadership Spotlight features Lauren Zbysinski, AZ Dept of Education Director of Professional Learning & Sustainability and NAECs-SDE Vice President. CEELO shares lots of new resources and shares TA@Work stores from Virginia and Kentucky.

[September 21, 2017](#) - This issue features CEELO's Jim Squires reflection on updates in quality standards benchmarks in the NIEER State of Preschool Yearbook. Participants in the 2016-2017 CEELO Leadership Academy share their perspectives on leadership. Also, inside are examples of CEELO TA at work and new resources available.

[July 20, 2017](#) - This issue explores leading for change in early childhood education. CEELO's Melissa Dahlin discusses lessons in leadership during times of change. Our Leadership Spotlight features Renee DeMars-Johnson of Michigan, recipient of the 2017 NAECs-SDE Light Award, and our TA@Work section highlights practical benefits of the EC Academy.

[May 18, 2017](#) - This issue explores early childhood policy leadership. CEELO's Diane Schilder provides perspectives on leading from the middle. Highlighted is Nicol Russell, an Arizona leader who wears hats as both Deputy Associate Superintendent for Early Childhood and Director of the state Head Start State Collaboration Office, along with updated resources.

[March 16, 2017](#) - This issue focuses on collaboration, featuring the perspective of CEELO's GG Weisenfeld, former Director of Hawaii's Executive Office on Early Learning; a discussion with Debra Anderson of Smart Start Oklahoma and Sharon Morgan, director of early childhood for the Oklahoma Department of Education, and updated resources on early education in ESSA.



**January 27, 2017** - This newsletter focuses on leading in times of transition. It includes a thought piece by CEELO's Jana Martella and a discussion with Harriet Feldlaufer (CT Director of Division of Early Care and Education) and John Pruette (NC Executive Director of Office of Early Learning).

**November 15, 2016** - The new Impact Newsletter features expert perspectives, profiles of education leaders, TA success stories, the latest resources and CEELO events. This edition focuses on implementing ESSA for early education, and a Q&A with Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education Secretary Jeana Ross.



## Appendix D Webinars Held in Year 5

[Leading the Way: How States Are Addressing Early Learning Under ESSA](#). Cohosted by REL Southwest and the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO), this webinar will provide participants with resources, examples, and strategies for including early learning in their ESSA state plans. The intended audience includes state administrators responsible for ESSA state plans and state and district early childhood administrators. State leaders from Arkansas, Louisiana, Michigan, and Washington will describe their strategies for integrating the following key policy areas that research shows help reduce achievement gaps for young children:

- Increasing access to high-quality preschool
- Aligning and coordinating early learning programs from birth to grade
- Preparing and supporting highly effective teachers and leaders

Early Learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act: Expanding Opportunities to Support Our Youngest learners was hosted by CEELO and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education ([NAECS-SDE](#)), the webinar included information from the USED Office of Early Learning on the guidance (see below) and views from three states – North Carolina, Colorado and Arizona – on their efforts to strengthen early learning in their ESSA planning.

- [View the recording](#) (MP3 75 minutes)