The i3 *We Are A Village* Grant

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons

Learned about Supporting

Family Engagement in Early Childhood

Annenberg
Institute for
School Reform

AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

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■ Acknowledgments

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Suggested citation: Geller, J. D., R. M. Lopez, V. Alcantara, K. C. Catone, and R. Tung. *The i3* We Are A Village *Grant: Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned About Supporting Family Engagement in Early Childhood, Final Evaluation Summary.* Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

■ Contents

■ Introduction

In January 2013, Rhode Island's Central Falls School District (CFSD) was awarded a $3 million Investing in Innovation (i3) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant, named *We Are A Village*, focused on developing an early childhood education culture (from pre-K to grade 3) where families would feel welcome, valued, and respected; connected to their peers, schools, and communities; and able to support their children socially, emotionally, and academically.

Children's Friend, a local social service agency, and Bradley Children's Hospital partnered with CFSD on the grant. Through the grant, Children's Friend hired five bilingual i3 collaborators who were each assigned to engage with parents and families in one of the five participating Central Falls schools. These included: Children's Friend at Dexter Street, a preschool run by the agency; a preschool housed in Progreso Latino, a local community center focused on serving Latino families; and three CFSD schools, including Captain Hunt (serving primarily pre-K students), Robertson Elementary School (serving primarily kindergarten[1] students), and Veterans Memorial Elementary School (serving students in grades 1 to 4).

We Are A Village activities fell into four major areas:
- creating family-friendly schools, with a focus on establishing parent resource centers, coffee hours, and support groups;
- building parent leadership by recruiting parent peer navigators (PPNs), providing parent leadership training, and establishing parent governing bodies to facilitate leadership and collaboration;
- supporting families through workshops, family assessments, direct support, and parenting training programs; and
- supporting teachers and staff through training in classroom management and strategies for offering social-emotional support to students and collaborating with families.

Our evaluation covered school years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. We asked the following questions:
- To what extent was the i3 grant implemented as intended? What conditions facilitated or hindered implementation?
- Do parents feel more welcome, valued, and respected at their children's schools and have improved connections and involvement with their peers and community? What conditions facilitated or hindered improvement?
- Are parents and teachers more capable of supporting children socially and academically? What conditions facilitated or hindered improvement?
- Do students have improved behavior and attendance?

In this summary of our full report,[2] we describe the Central Falls context, the theoretical frameworks that guided our evaluation, a summary of our findings, and recommendations for the future.

[1] The district-operated pre-K and kindergarten shared the same principal, despite being housed in separate buildings.

[2] The full report is an internal document.

Central Falls Context

Central Falls is a culturally and linguistically diverse city of approximately 19,000 residents, with 71 percent speaking a language other than English in the home and 38 percent having been born outside of the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). About one-third of residents live in poverty. The school district has an enrollment of approximately 2,800 students. 81 percent of the district's students qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch, and the student body is 73 percent Latino, 12 percent Black, 13 percent White, and 2 percent other races.

Theoretical Frameworks

Several theoretical frameworks guided the questions we asked, the methods we used, and the ways in which we interpreted data throughout this evaluation. These frameworks are briefly described in Figure 1: the first three relate to family engagement, while the last relates to implementation.

FIGURE 1. Summary of guiding theoretical frameworks

Framework	Framework assertion	We used it to understand:.
Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement framework (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2011)	Schools have an important role to play in creating a climate for family engagement, including providing supportive leadership and teacher professional development. Also, families may be engaged in their children's education in a variety of ways, all of which are valuable.	How the climate of the schools supported family engagement and how families engaged in their children's education in different ways.
"Transformative family engagement" framework (Ochoa, Olivos & Jiménez-Castellanos 2011)	Transformative family engagement equips school community participants to engage in action and reflection in order to transform unequal conditions. Connectedness – the first stage of transformation – occurs when school systems help parents better understand the system and enable parents to connect with one another, share concerns, and explore solutions.	How the We Are A Village grant was a building block toward transformative family engagement that increases equity and inclusion.
"Community cultural wealth" framework (Yosso 2005)	Communities of color have knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts that they use to survive and resist forms of oppression. These include abilities to: navigate discriminatory institutions (navigational capital); resist negative stereotypes and conditions (resistance capital); aspire despite structural obstacles (aspirational capital); communicate in more than one language (linguistic capital); and hold ties with an extended family that supports, cares for, and teaches one another (familial capital).	The resources of families in Central Falls and the extent to which those resources were acknowledged in the schools.
"Systems change" framework (Foster-Fishman, Nowell & Yang 2007)	Intended outcomes will not happen in one part of the system without efforts to change other parts of the system. A system consists of the actors, activities, and settings that have influence.	Factors that influenced to what extent the grant was implemented as intended.
"Quality implementation" framework (Meyers, Durlak & Wandersman 2012)	Strong implementation requires a good fit between the strengths and needs of the setting and the initiative, capacity/readiness, buy-in, and time to recruit and train implementation teams.	

◼ Methods

Our methods were informed in part by the diverse life experiences of each member of our five-person evaluation team. Our team was diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, culture, family immigration history, professional background, experience level, and area of content expertise. These varied and common aspects of our lives and backgrounds shaped all phases of our evaluation; our team's diversity enabled rich ongoing discussion throughout the data collection, analysis, synthesis, and interpretation process. Furthermore, close and ongoing communication with the partners and implementation staff informed our research design, data collection, and analysis.

We used mixed-methods, which combine qualitative research (interviews, focus groups, and observations) with quantitative research (student assessments and surveys). Although quantitative research is useful when trying to understand information about large groups of people, qualitative research is useful when trying to fully understand how individuals and groups experience a situation and allows them to articulate that experience in their own words.

Qualitative Methods

Between fall 2013 and spring 2015, we conducted thirty-two parent focus groups (eighteen in Spanish and fourteen in English) with exactly one hundred unique parents. To understand whether and how the grant influenced change over time, we invited parents to attend four focus group sessions and created an incentive structure to encourage attendance at all four. To recruit parents for the first round of focus groups, AISR created a flyer and a letter that i3 collaborators used in a variety of ways, including hanging flyers throughout the building, sending flyers home with students, and advertising in the parent resource center, as well as approaching parents individually. They intentionally recruited families who varied in their level of engagement with i3 activities.

We also conducted focus groups and/or interviews with a variety of other stakeholders, including: twenty-four parent leaders,

twenty-eight teachers, i3 collaborators, school leaders, the district superintendent, home-school liaisons, school counselors/social workers, and members of the partners team. With the exception of the superintendent, we conducted between two and four interviews and/or focus groups with each of these individuals over the course of the study. All focus groups and interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on which language respondents felt more comfortable speaking.

We also observed coffee hours and parent leader meetings in each of the schools (when applicable) at multiple time points throughout the two years of implementation, as well as several collaborative working group (CWG) meetings and three clinical services meetings. Additionally, we observed bi-monthly partners meetings, although in a less formal way considering we were active participants in these meetings.

We collected and analyzed numerous documents that supplemented our interviews, focus groups, and observations, including:

- Teacher and parent satisfaction questionnaires from classroom management and parenting training programs (for each session and final)
- Teachers' written responses to open-ended questions about the i3 grant (administered to more than forty teachers and staff at a spring 2014 faculty meeting at Captain Hunt and Robertson)
- Meeting notes from i3 partner meetings, CWG meetings, and clinical services meetings
- Fliers, photos, and artifacts from teachers (such as parent communication logs and newsletters)

In regard to analysis, all audio recordings of focus groups were translated and transcribed verbatim into English.[3] AISR staff coded[4] each transcript or set of notes, notes from observations, and the documents listed above. We initially created the codebook by reading through the transcripts and notes from interviews, focus groups, and observations. We revised the codebook frequently to reflect the voices of the participants and emerging theoretical frameworks. AISR staff used Dedoose, a computer program designed to assist with coding. We then used the codes to synthesize data into important "themes," in other words, ideas that frequently came up (a) over time; (b) in multiple focus groups, especially with different stakeholders; and (c) across different schools. We discussed these themes repeatedly as a team, guided by the theoretical frameworks discussed above. We focus on these themes when we present our findings.

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[3] In the translation process from Spanish to English, some of the quotes we present below might have lost some of their original meaning.

[4] Coding is the process of organizing data into themes to ensure that we highlight the most frequently mentioned or observed topics.

Quantitative Methods

Quantitative data collection involved tracking implementation fidelity, collecting parent and teacher surveys, and collecting longitudinal student outcome data. Twenty-five teachers reported on changes in their classroom management strategies during the first and last Incredible Years training session (response rate was 68 percent). Sixteen teachers at the CFSD pre-K and kindergarten also completed both pre- and post-surveys measuring their trust in families (Adams and Christenson 2000) and their family engagement practices, administered at faculty meetings in early November 2014 and again in late May/early June 2015 (73 percent response rate).

We collected data on student attendance and behavior, following three cohorts of students from spring 2014 to spring 2015, ranging in age from pre-K to second grade (see Appendix A). District records were acquired at the end of the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.[5] To assess student behavioral changes, teachers rated pre-K and kindergarten students using the Pre-Kindergarten Behavioral Scales (PKBS) and first and second graders using the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS), since the SSIS is more suitable for children who are over six years old. Both of these assessments have two scales, termed "problem behavior"[6] and "social skills." The assessments were scored by a trained professional. We used the standard scores with a mean (i.e. average) of 100 and standard deviation (i.e. how much the students varied) of 15, which enabled comparison between the PKBS and SSIS.

[5] Because so few pre-K students from Dexter and Progreso enrolled in Robertson for kindergarten, we did not analyze attendance records for this small number of students.

[6] AISR does not endorse the term "problem behavior"; this term comes from the creators of the PKBS and SSIS assessments.

■ Findings

To what extent was the i3 grant implemented as intended? What conditions facilitated or hindered implementation?

Figure 2 details the goals of the four major areas of activities under the i3 grant and shows whether implementation – the extent to which the activities happened as they were intended – was high, moderate, or emerging.[7]

FIGURE 2. Implementation of i3 activities

CREATING FAMILY-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS		
Activity	Goal	Implementation
"Parents are Power!" resource centers	Establish warm, inviting, and family-friendly resource rooms that will function as community drop-in centers where parents and families can connect with one another, participate in *Village* activities, and receive assistance for their needs.	**HIGH** Resource rooms were established in each of the schools.
Family coffee hours	Establish routine coffee hours in each school where parents could hear from and ask questions of the principal, hear from guest speakers, and connect with one another.	**HIGH** Coffee hours were conducted regularly in each of the schools.
Kindergarten transition support	Conduct parent-to-parent support group(s) for more than thirty families of children transitioning into kindergarten to be co-facilitated by the i3 collaborator or guidance counselor along with a parent peer navigator (PPN).	**MODERATE** Transition groups occurred in the second year of implementation, but attendance was low.
Cross-system training for staff and parent peer navigators (PPNs)	Train a total of 180 teachers, staff, and PPNs twice annually through a cross-system training on the importance of family engagement; cultural norms, values, and belief systems that may influence family engagement; and effective engagement strategies that are culturally responsive, including meeting the needs of parents and families with children with disabilities and/or limited English proficiency.	**EMERGING** There was never a cross-system training, although there were many conversations among partners about the importance of this goal.

BUILDING PARENT LEADERSHIP		
Activity	Goal	Implementation
PPNs and Family Leadership Institute	Pay small stipends to approximately fifteen PPNs to commit twelve or more hours per week to leadership in their schools and communities. Provide training through an annual Family Leadership Institute (FLI).	**HIGH** PPNs were hired and attended the FLI each year.
Parent Governing Bodies (PGBs)	Establish a PGB at each school consisting of families, PPNs, parent volunteers, i3 collaborators, and key school leadership staff that would meet monthly to collaborate about school matters and share leadership, decision-making, and policy development.	**MODERATE** PGBs did not convene at all schools for both years and did not always include school leaders.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES		
Activity	Goal	Implementation
Cross-system workshops for parents	Provide at least three workshops per year on topics selected by families, including workshops for families with children with disabilities and/or children who are English language learners.	**HIGH** At least three workshops were offered each year.
Family Check-Ups	Implement sixteen Family Check-Ups (FCUs) annually; FCU is an evidence-based assessment tool that assists in identifying parental and familial needs and connecting them to services.	**EMERGING** FCUs were implemented with fewer than five families.
Direct support from i3 collaborators	Provide personalized support through collaborator outreach to families with needs related to academics, attendance, health, housing, or other issues.	**HIGH** Collaborators routinely supported families in person and by phone and responded to teacher and staff referrals.
Incredible Years (IY) Parenting Program	Implement fourteen to eighteen sessions of the IY Parenting Program with sixty parents annually to help families promote their children's social, emotional, and language development, while learning how to build school readiness and effectively partner with school staff. Train district staff to implement the program for sustainability purposes.	**MODERATE** Fifty unique families participated. Many of the district staff who were trained did not implement program.

SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND STAFF		
Activity	Goal	Implementation
Incredible Years (IY) Teacher Classroom Management Training, classroom coaching, and collaborative working groups	Implement the IY Teacher Classroom Management Training – a thirty-six-hour training intended to build teachers' skills in creating a nurturing and effective learning environment and generating positive, collaborative relationships with parents and families – at each school. Establish collaborative working groups (CWGs), multidisciplinary teams of staff, such as teachers, guidance counselors, clinicians, and principals facilitated by a Bradley consultant or the i3 coordinator, to ensure effective readiness and ongoing support for the implementation of IY. Establish classroom coaching from Bradley consultants to be responsive to the individual needs of teachers.	**MODERATE** Training occurred at all schools except for Veterans; ninety-two teachers and staff participated. CWG groups were established, and coaching occurred on a smaller scale than was intended.

As shown in Figure 2, the implementation success of the i3 grant varied by school and by activity. The greatest implementation challenges involved finding time for the IY teacher training, implementing FCUs, and implementing teacher/staff professional development regarding family engagement. However, more "bottom-up" school-based activities were more successful, reaching a large percentage of families (see Figure 3). Moreover, i3 activities reached families who tend to be most marginalized by their children's schools, including families of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Limited English Proficient (LEP) status (Figure 4), and Latino families (Figure 5).

FIGURE 3. Percentage of Central Falls families who participated in at least one i3 activity (i.e. coffee hours, parent rooms, PTOs, volunteering, and/or i3 collaborator support)
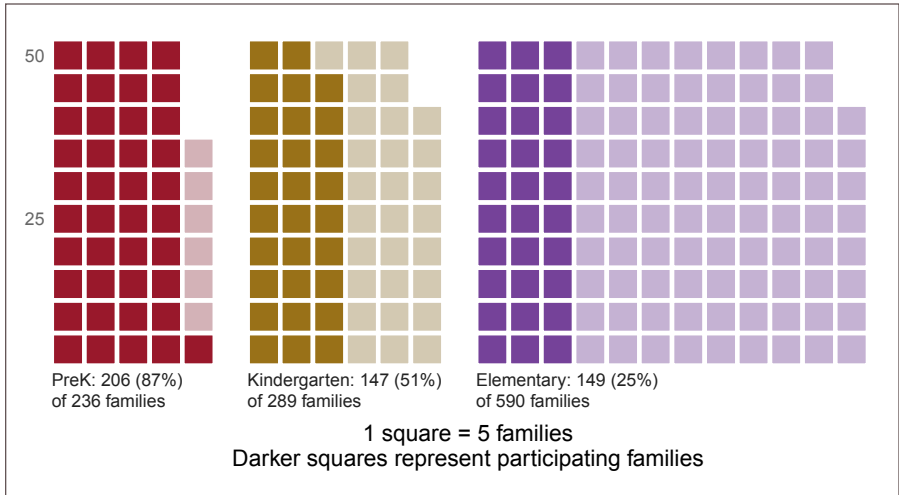

50

25

PreK: 206 (87%)
of 236 families

Kindergarten: 147 (51%)
of 289 families

Elementary: 149 (25%)
of 590 families

1 square = 5 families
Darker squares represent participating families

FIGURE 4. Representativeness of students whose families participated in i3 activities by IEP, LEP, and free/reduced-price lunch status

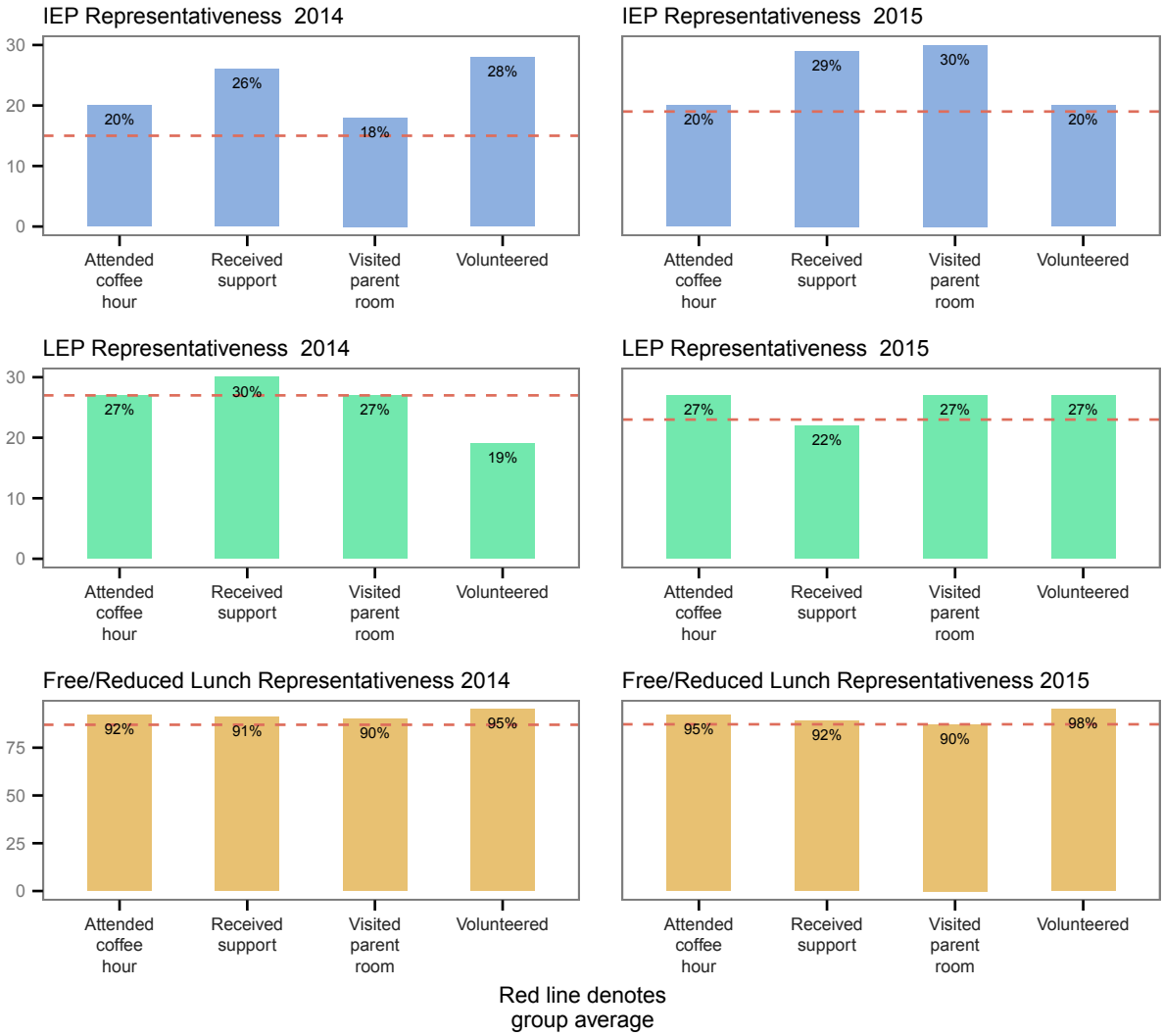**IEP Representativeness 2014**

- Attended coffee hour: 20%
- Received support: 26%
- Visited parent room: 18%
- Volunteered: 28%

IEP Representativeness 2015

- Attended coffee hour: 20%
- Received support: 29%
- Visited parent room: 30%
- Volunteered: 20%

LEP Representativeness 2014

- Attended coffee hour: 27%
- Received support: 30%
- Visited parent room: 27%
- Volunteered: 19%

LEP Representativeness 2015

- Attended coffee hour: 27%
- Received support: 22%
- Visited parent room: 27%
- Volunteered: 27%

Free/Reduced Lunch Representativeness 2014

- Attended coffee hour: 92%
- Received support: 91%
- Visited parent room: 90%
- Volunteered: 95%

Free/Reduced Lunch Representativeness 2015

- Attended coffee hour: 95%
- Received support: 92%
- Visited parent room: 90%
- Volunteered: 98%

Red line denotes group average

FIGURE 5. Representativeness of students whose families participated in i3 activities by race

Race 2014

	Latino	Black	White	Multiracial
Participating schools average	75	10	11	4
Attended coffee hour	88	9	2	1
Received support	86	6	5	3
Visited parent room	85	7	5	3
Volunteered	92	3	3	2

Race 2015

	Latino	Black	White	Multiracial
Participating schools average	75	10	11	4
Attended coffee hour	88	4	7	1
Received support	82	7	6	5
Visited parent room	89	4	5	2
Volunteered	88	6	6	0

Percentage

◼ Latino ◼ Black ◼ White ◼ Multiracial

We sought to understand why some i3 activities were easier to implement than others and found the following implementation strengths and challenges:

STRENGTHS
- Participation in school-based i3 activities such as coffee hours, parent rooms, and volunteering was strong, due in large part to:
  - the district's history of strong family engagement and the trust that had been built with families;
  - extra staff capacity (five i3 collaborators) who had the necessary time, knowledge, skills, and background, as well as support from one another and supervisors; and
  - general agreement among partners and school leaders that these activities were worthwhile and important.
- The IY teacher training was at first difficult to implement, but buy-in increased over time as teachers, staff, and school leaders had the opportunity to adapt the curriculum to their unique school contexts.
- Over time, there was increasing attention to systems change rather than simply implementing activities. Examples include:
  - integrating FCUs and IY parent group facilitation into the roles of existing support staff rather than hiring outsiders; and
  - hiring and training PPNs with the goal of nurturing leadership skills rather than meeting the schools' volunteer needs.

CHALLENGES

- There was little time, leadership, and capacity during the planning phase of the grant to address issues such as:
  - whether the grant was a form of systems change, what parts of the system needed changing, and how;
  - a common definition of family engagement and understanding of goals; and
  - how the i3 activities and resources could complement existing resources, rather than compete with them.
- Although teachers and support staff were invited to voice their opinions about implementation of i3 activities, they had little power to enact change.
- There was insufficient capacity of leadership at CFSD and Children's Friend to make timely decisions affecting implementation and to ensure consistent and clear communication to school leaders, teachers, and staff.
- Challenges with trust between district administers and teachers and between parents and teachers were not addressed and limited buy-in to the grant's goals.
- A lack of time and Spanish language skills limited the abilities of support staff and clinicians to engage in IY programs and the FCU.
- Variation in fit between the goals of the IY teacher training and the goals of school leaders and principals influenced to what extent implementation of the IY training and related components (including CWGs and coaching) occurred.

Do parents feel more welcome, valued, and respected at their children's schools and have improved connections and involvement with their peers and community? What conditions facilitated or hindered improvement?

Interviews, focus groups, and observations indicated that families felt increasingly welcome, valued, and respected and connected to one another and the community. Below, we highlight the strengths that contributed to these changes and also emphasize the challenges that hindered greater progress.

STRENGTHS

- Families expressed feeling more welcome, valued, and respected and connected to one another and the community due to:
  – school leadership that was generally welcoming to families;
  – improved teacher attitudes toward families and efforts to engage families;
  – collaborators who staffed the parent room, mentored and supervised PPNs, and provided respectful, culturally responsive, and linguistically appropriate individual support to families;
  – the opportunity to become a leader in the schools (as a PPN or volunteer), which helped families feel more connected to teachers, school staff, and one another; and
  – coffee hours and parent governing boards that enabled parents to voice their opinions, ask questions of school leaders, and learn about school and community resources.

CHALLENGES

- Language barriers: Spanish-speaking families expressed that they could not always find someone in the schools who spoke Spanish (although the presence of i3 collaborators improved this feeling), and English-speaking parents sometimes felt alienated during meetings because translation to English was not comprehensive.
- Cultural deficit lens: Many school staff and teachers continued to view parents through a "cultural deficit" lens, whereby the emphasis was on what they lacked rather than the resources they could bring to the school. When family resources were mentioned, they were often described narrowly, such as being "crafty," rather than considering how they could help to make curriculum and pedagogy more culturally relevant.
- Traditional definitions of family engagement: Although there was progress throughout the grant period, many parent leaders did not receive the necessary support to lead their schools and the district to make substantive changes that would improve student learning outcomes.

Are parents and teachers more capable of supporting children socially and academically? What conditions facilitated or hindered improvement?

To answer these questions, we relied on interviews, focus groups, observations, IY parent and teacher satisfaction surveys, and pre/post surveys of teachers before and after the IY training. The following strengths and challenges emerged:

STRENGTHS

- Parent volunteers supported students academically and emotionally in the classroom and gained a better understanding of classroom practice.
- There was a reported shift in the culture of how parents interacted with the school system, for example, asking questions about how their children were doing academically.
- The IY parent groups reached fifty unique families, and participants believed that the groups were helpful.
- The IY teacher classroom management training reached ninety-two teachers and staff. Overall, teachers were satisfied with the training and reported stronger classroom management and family engagement as a result of the training (see Appendix B). Teachers also appreciated the opportunity to work collaboratively with one another and to adapt the training to their own school cultures.
- Through the IY parent and teacher trainings, parents and teachers developed a common and mutually reinforcing language to talk about and manage student behavior.

Parents became more confident to ask questions and began to expect more from the schools and district.

"Right now, I think we have created a culture where parents and the community at large are beginning to understand that the expectation is that "No, this is a thing that we do together." That this work of educating our kids is not – it's something that cannot be done by the district itself. So I think those are some of the impacts in terms of those cultural changes. Awareness in academics, in attendance for instance, . . . because part of the family engagement is understanding the correlation of attendance as it relates to academics. Families being able to not wait for report cards to come out, but to be asking and to be on top of that."

—Former CFSD superintendent

"We can be more aware of the education that they are receiving. If my son has a necessity, we know that we can ask for help. Maybe if you are a parent that is not too involved with the school, you do not know about the opportunities that there are for your children. If there is a child with special needs, we know how to request help for him."

—Parent

CHALLENGES

- Language barriers between teachers and parents limited communication about academics.
- The average attendance rate was low for the IY parent program (55 percent). There were several barriers to attendance at the IY parent training sessions, including that parents felt the program was too long, bad weather, or life circumstances prevented parents' completion of the program. However, attendance was much better in the group that was facilitated by a CFSD social worker (as opposed to district outsiders) who could develop strong relationships with families both in the program and at their children's schools.
- Teachers and staff voiced several concerns about the IY teacher training, including that it was redundant of content they already knew, too long, and that the videos, vignettes, and book were not representative of the students they taught.

Do students have improved behavior and attendance?

We used quantitative data gathered from the district and schools to identify to what extent attendance and behavior improved throughout the two years of implementation (see Appendix A). We could not identify an appropriate comparison group; therefore, it is difficult to assess whether changes in student outcomes were related to the intervention or to something else. Our main findings are described below:

ATTENDANCE

- Chronic absenteeism declined substantially and attendance rates increased significantly for students who transitioned during the grant period from pre-K to kindergarten and for students who transitioned from kindergarten to first grade (see Appendix A, Table 2). However, these percentages likely reflect the fact that children are more likely to attend school in kindergarten than in pre-K, and in first grade than in kindergarten (Applied Survey Research 2011). When we examined data from all three CFSD schools and compared chronic absenteeism and attendance rates for students at the same grade level in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, we found that the rates of chronic absenteeism actually increased at every grade level except for kindergarten, although none of these changes were statistically significant (See Appendix A, Table 3).
- Among students who were chronically absent in 2014, when their family member(s) attended at least one coffee hour, volunteered, or visited the parent room at least once, the student's risk of being chronically absent again in 2015 was reduced by 32 percent, compared to students whose families did not engage in these activities. Although we cannot conclude that engagement in these activities caused students to attend school more often, this finding suggests that family engagement in i3 activities might have influenced student attendance. The deliberate emphasis of i3 collaborators, PPNs, and many i3 activities on promoting attendance bolsters this claim.

BEHAVIOR

- There was a significant improvement in student social skills, as reported by teachers,[8] from pre-K to kindergarten (See Appendix A, Table 4). We also found that the behavior of kindergarten students improved from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 (see Figure 6 and Appendix A, Table 4). Social skills and problem behavior worsened, however, for students who transitioned from kindergarten to first grade and first grade to second grade. Together, these findings suggest that students who were in a classroom for two years with an IY trained teacher fared better than students who had no exposure or only one year of exposure to an IY trained teacher.

- Families of students whose behavior improved substantially from pre-K to kindergarten were slightly more likely than families of students whose behavior stayed the same and much more likely than families of students whose behavior worsened to have attended a coffee hour or workshop, visited the parent room, or volunteered (see Appendix A, Table 6). Again, we cannot conclude that engagement influenced improved student behavior – only that there was a relationship between the two. Family engagement in i3 activities may have influenced student behavior – either directly or indirectly through facilitating more communication with teachers – and further research is warranted.

[8] Since behavioral scores were reported by teachers, the scores may be more of an indication of teachers' *perceptions* of student behavior than actual student behavior.

FIGURE 6. Teacher-reported behavior of kindergarteners, 2013-2015
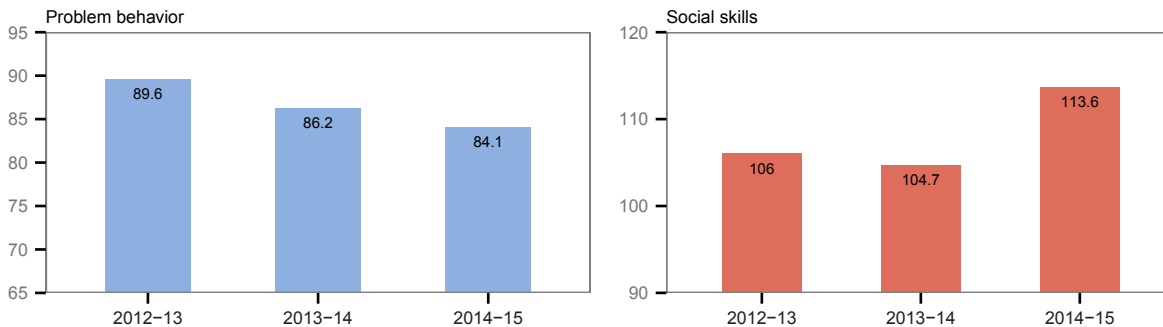
■ Lessons Learned and Implications

Here, we discuss our findings through the theoretical frameworks we shared on page 2. The recommendations that follow are informed by these ideas.

First, the findings illustrate that the grant very successfully addressed the variety of family engagement outcomes in the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) framework, as shown in Figure 7. The family engagement outcome with the most room for improvement was "families as lifelong educators." Although having the opportunity to volunteer in classrooms gave some parents insight into instructional techniques, and some parent workshops addressed how to support children academically, future attention should be directed to making report cards and student data more transparent and understandable, helping families understand how to help with homework, and inviting families to have a stronger voice in deciding on curriculum and pedagogy.

FIGURE 7. Alignment Head Start PFCE Framework Family Engagement Outcomes with i3 Activities

Head Start PFCE Framework Outcome	Alignment with i3 Activity
Family well-being	• Collaborator support • FCUs • Coffee hours • Parent workshops
Parent-child relationships	• IY parent training
Families as lifelong educators	• PPNs and volunteering • Parent workshops
Families as learners	• IY parent training • Parent workshops
Family engagement in transitions	• Parent transition groups • Home visits
Family connections to peers and community	• Coffee hours • Parent rooms
Families as advocates and leaders	• PPNs and volunteering • PBGs

The PFCE framework also emphasizes that the climate in which family engagement happens is critical. The i3 grant activities and resources developed a climate that the majority of families found welcoming and respectful. The people in each school – school leaders, teachers, staff, i3 collaborators, PPNs, and home-school liaisons – built the foundation for the i3 activities to flourish. This finding illustrates that investing in people who will welcome, value, and respect parents is just as important as investing in resources such as coffee hours and parent rooms. Such investment can take multiple forms, including hiring school leaders, teachers, and staff who believe in family engagement; providing professional development; or setting clear expectations for how school leaders set the tone for family engagement to flourish. We also found that despite parents' high rates of engagement and progress toward teachers developing stronger trust in families, capacity building for all staff must challenge the cultural deficit model by explicitly addressing race, teaching cultural responsiveness, and focusing on family strengths rather than deficits, following the "community cultural wealth" framework. This is the only way to avoid placing the burden solely on parents to change teachers' attitudes. The "transformative family engagement" framework offers a roadmap for how to build from the success of the i3 grant in developing stronger connectedness among parents and between parents and their schools and community.

In regard to implementation, we found that to be consistent with the "systems change" and "quality implementation" frameworks, implementation would have benefitted from establishing a common vision, language, and goals earlier in the process, and understanding fit, capacity-building, and buy-in. Components of the grant flourished when there was sufficient capacity to implement them. Also, as implementation went on, the ability to adapt activities to the contexts of each school improved buy-in and ownership. We synthesized lessons learned about implementation into a list of questions for cross-sector family engagement partners to consider when launching a new initiative (Appendix C).

■ Recommendations

The recommendations below focus on which components of the i3 grant to sustain, how to do so, and other considerations for implementing future initiatives that involve multiple components and partners.

1. Preparing for successful implementation

When implementing a new initiative that involves multiple partners, engage in conversations during the grant-writing and planning phase in which partners seek to surface and understand:

- whether the initiative requires systems change, and if so, what parts of the system need to be changed and how;
- underlying assumptions among the different partners about the purposes of the initiative;
- to what extent there is capacity among leaders who have the power to change the system, and if not, how capacity can be built;
- to what extent relationships between actors in the system need to be altered or repaired and how to do so;
- to what extent the initiative fits with existing needs, goals, programs, and practices of the system and schools and how to adapt the initiative or existing needs, goals, programs, and practices; and
- to what extent there is staff capacity and buy-in and how to build it.

Invest early on in a communications strategy to inform stakeholders about the purposes and activities of the initiative.

Employ individuals who have the time, knowledge, skills, and background to adapt the initiative to the school setting. Ensure that these individuals are supported through:

- communicating with school leaders about their role and encouraging school leaders to welcome them and integrate them into the school community; and
- establishing a community of practice for these individuals through which they can support one another and exchange ideas.

Support teacher, staff, and parents as decision-makers through enacting clear decision-making procedures and policies.

Focus on doing fewer activities well.

2. Ensuring that parents feel welcome, valued, and respected and connected to one another and community

Develop teacher capacity for family engagement in order to maintain a culture that is inclusive and welcoming to parents and to connect family engagement with student outcomes. For example:

- engage teachers in home visiting; consider securing funding for The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Program, which has demonstrated positive results elsewhere (Sheldon & Jung 2015);

- offer training in cultural responsiveness and culturally relevant pedagogy that is explicit about challenging the cultural deficit model;

- provide classroom coverage so teachers can attend PGB meetings or hold PGB meetings at times that are convenient for both teachers and parents;

- support teachers to have the time for more frequent communication with all families, including time to make positive phone calls;

- include teachers in conversations about roles parents can play in the school and classroom; and

- offer leadership opportunities to teachers who have demonstrated a strong commitment to family engagement to enact these changes. For example, Boston Public Schools has two teacher leaders in many buildings who receive intensive family engagement training and then act as leaders in their schools to disseminate what they learn and support colleagues to engage families.[9]

Keep parent rooms open and staffed by home-school liaisons or parent volunteers.

Continue offering opportunities for parents to develop their leadership skills to build from the higher degree of "connectedness" established by the grant.

Continue to invest in the skill and professional development of parent leaders as a form of compensation for what they give to the school system. Continue to consider how the partnership between CFSD and Rhode Island College might further this goal. (For more on this partnership, see McAlister, Geller & Tung 2015).

3. Building parent and teacher abilities to support children academically, socially, and emotionally

Continue offering Incredible Years (IY) training to parents and to pre-K and kindergarten teachers and consider implementing IY or another socio-emotional professional development opportunity for first- and second-grade teachers that is aligned with IY. In particular:

- engage in intentional recruitment of English-speaking parents;

- continue to encourage common language among support staff, teachers, and parents to address behavior and academic needs of students; and

- build teacher ownership and buy-in to future initiatives prior to the beginning of the training and support teachers with more experience in the subject matter to take on more leadership in the training.

Continue to provide opportunities for parents to volunteer in the classroom. In particular:

- focus on how parents can support students academically and socio-emotionally; and

- offer parents training that is informed by teachers in how to assist in the classroom and ensure that there is staff to support the logistics of matching parents and teachers.

Continue having bilingual staff to outreach to families and make efforts to recruit more bilingual teachers and staff to the district.

Offer more opportunities for families to learn how to support their children academically. Our data suggest that a successful program that has been implemented in many other cities, Academic Parent Teacher Teams (Paredes 2010), would work especially well.

∎ Conclusion

The activities of the i3 *We Are A Village* grant led to positive changes for families, students, teachers, and the community. The result is a climate in the Central Falls schools described in this report in which parents feel more welcome, valued, and respected. The commitment and hard work of the i3 partners has laid the groundwork for continuing to build support for family engagement by fostering parents as lifelong educators, empowering parents to challenge the status quo, and inspiring teachers and staff to turn to parents as valued partners in the success of their children.

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■ Appendix A: Student Outcome Tables

TABLE 1. Student outcome data collection and instruments*

COHORT 1		
Grade at data collection Time 1: **Pre-K**		
Grade at data collection Time 2: **Kindergarten**		
	Attendance	Behavior
Instrument Time 1	**District records**	**PKBS**
Instrument Time 2		**PKBS**
Sample size	77	53

COHORT 2		
Grade at data collection Time 1: **Kindergarten**		
Grade at data collection Time 2: **First grade**		
	Attendance	Behavior
Instrument Time 1	**District records**	**PKBS**
Instrument Time 2		**SSIS**
Sample size	123	101

COHORT 3		
Grade at data collection Time 1: **First grade**		
Grade at data collection Time 2: **Second grade**		
	Attendance	Behavior
Instrument Time 1	**District records**	**PKBS**
Instrument Time 2		**SSIS**
Sample size	118	58

*Time 1 = spring 2014; Time 2 = spring 2015; PKBS = Pre-Kindergarten Behavioral Scales; SSIS = Social Skills Improvement System

TABLE 2. Chronic absenteeism and attendance rate by cohort

Activity	% chronically absent 2013-14	% chronically absent 2014-15	Attendance rate 2013-14	Attendance rate 2014-15
1 (N=77)	39.0%	19.5%***	0.87 (.15)	0.93 (.07)***
2 (N=123)	33.0%	20.3%***	0.90 (.08)	0.93 (.06)***
3 (N=118)	17.0%	16.0%	0.96 (.06)	0.96 (.07)

* $p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

TABLE 3. Chronic absenteeism and attendance rate by grade

| Grade | % CHRONICALLY ABSENT | | ATTENDANCE RATE (std. dev.) | |
	2013-14	2014-15	2013-14	2014-15
PK	43%	47%	86% (.15)	86% (.13)
P	35%	32%	90% (.08)	90% (.11)
1	23%	25%	92% (.07)	94% (.06)
2	17%	20%	93% (.06)	93% (.07)
3	15%	16%	93% (.06)	94% (.07)
4	12%	17%	95% (.05)	94% (.06)

TABLE 4. Behavior of students by cohort[1]

| Cohort | Construct | MEAN (std. dev.) | | Year-to-year change |
		Time 1	Time 2	
1	Problem behavior (N=52)	84.85 (12.9)	82.35 (10.2)	- 2.77
	Social skills (N=52)	110.60 (12.3)	115.20 (10.6)	+ 4.60**
2	Problem behavior (N=98)	84.10 (13.6)	100.50 (15.6)	+ 16.40***
	Social skills (N=98)	107.50 (18.9)	97.50 (13.7)	- 10.00***
3	Problem behavior (N=56)	89.30 (15.7)	97.80 (13.5)	+ 8.52***
	Social skills (N=56)	107.40 (14.9)	97.70 (14.9)	- 9.72***

* p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

[1] Note that improvement is denoted by a lower score on the "problem behavior" scale and a higher score on the "social skills" scale.

TABLE 5. Behavior of kindergarteners by year

School year	PKBS scale	Average score (std. dev.)	Change from 2012-13	Change from 2013-14
2012-13 (N=206)	Problem behavior	89.6 (14.6)		
	Social skills	106.0 (14.7)		
2013-14 (N=249)	Problem behavior	86.2 (14.7)	-3.37*	
	Social skills	104.7 (19.0)	-1.31	
2014-15 (N=77)	Problem behavior	84.1 (12.8)	-5.46**	-2.10
	Social skills	113.6 (13.4)	+7.57***	+8.88***

* p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

TABLE 6. Percent of families who engaged in i3 activities among students whose behavior worsened, stayed the same, or improved* from pre-K to K

	% participating families among students with worse teacher-reported behavior	% participating families among students without substantially changed behavior	% participating families among students with improved teacher-reported behavior
Problem behavior	23% (N=13)	42% (N=26)	46% (N=13)
Social skills	21% (N=13)	40% (N=25)	54% (N=14)

■ Appendix B: Teacher Outcome Tables

TABLE 7. Incredible Years (IY) teacher training pre- and post-survey ratings

Frequency of…	Pre	Post	Change
Use of family engagement strategies (e.g., sending home newsletters)	3.31	3.55	0.24*
Use of praise (e.g., calling parents to report good behavior)	3.70	3.96	0.26**
Use of proactive strategies (e.g., using problem solving)	3.63	3.96	0.33***
Teaching socio-emotional skills (e.g., modeling self-regulation strategies)	3.61	3.90	0.29*
Setting limits (e.g., using time out for destructive behavior)	3.34	3.90	0.56**
Avoiding using inappropriate behavior (e.g., commenting on bad behavior)	3.43	3.41	-0.02

N=25; *=p<.10; **=p<.05; ***=p<.01[1]

[1] A small p-value (typically < 0.05) indicates strong evidence that there was a meaningful difference in outcomes between two groups (in this case, teachers before and after the IY training). Here, one star indicates that the differences were almost statistically significant (p-value=.06).

TABLE 8. Pre-post scores on teacher survey, changes from fall 2014 (Time 1) to spring 2015 (Time 2)

Construct	ALL TEACHERS (N=16)		CAPTAIN HUNT (N=5)		ROBERTSON (N=10)*	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Family engagement**	3.15	3.38	2.90	2.93	2.99	3.46
Teacher trust in parents***	2.45	2.62	2.26	2.49	2.53	2.63

*One teacher identified as both Captain Hunt and Robertson.

**Family engagement response scale: 1=Never; 2=once/year; 3=2–3 times/year; 4=once/month; 5=once/week; 6=daily

***Teacher trust in parents response scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree

■ Appendix C: Considerations for Cross-Sector Partnerships When Implementing New Family Engagement Initiatives

Establishing a common vision, goals, and language

- Does the initiative require systems change?
- What does the system look like? Who are the actors and how are they connected to one another?
- What parts of the system need to be changed for the initiative to work? How do we go about changing them?
- What will participating schools look like if we are successful? For example, how will families be engaged? How will teachers relate to families and students? What will school leaders believe about family engagement and how will they enact these beliefs?
- What will the system look like if we are successful? For example, how will staff use their time differently? What might be the roles, skills, and backgrounds of new staff? How will staff be supported to make decisions?
- How is family engagement defined by partners, and how well does that definition fit with school leaders' definitions of family engagement?
- How is parent empowerment defined? Does the system provide opportunities for parents and teachers to collaborate with one another rather than be in opposition to one another?

Human and social resources

- Do partner staff have the necessary time to devote to implementation and communicating with one another and others about the initiative?
- What is the level of trust between teachers, parents, and administrators? How can we help schools repair mistrust?
- What is the level of trust between the district administration and teachers, particularly when it comes to implementing and following through on new initiatives? Between the district administration and parents? How can we repair mistrust?
- Are teachers accustomed to having opportunities to be leaders in their schools?

Capacity, fit, and buy-in

- Are there a sufficient number of staff and teachers who speak the languages families speak?
- Are there one or more individuals who can serve as champions of the initiative, inspiring and leading others to implement the innovation and its associated practices? How can the organization and the community assist the champion in efforts to foster and maintain buy-in for change?
- How do various programs and practices complement one another? If they don't, which programs and practices should be replaced?
- What is each school already doing that it's proud of? What are the goals of school leaders, teachers, and parents? What are the unique needs of each school?
- How does the initiative fit with or differ from these strengths, goals, and needs? In what ways does the school need to be flexible, and in what ways does the initiative need to be flexible? Is there staff capacity in each school to help the initiative fit better?

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