

# 2020-2021 Statewide Evaluation Report

## The Mission of STAR NET

Illinois STAR NET provides a variety of opportunities for personal and professional growth for those who touch the lives of young children, ages birth through eight, with an emphasis on children with special needs. STAR NET supports family-centered, researched and effective practices in early childhood education and care.

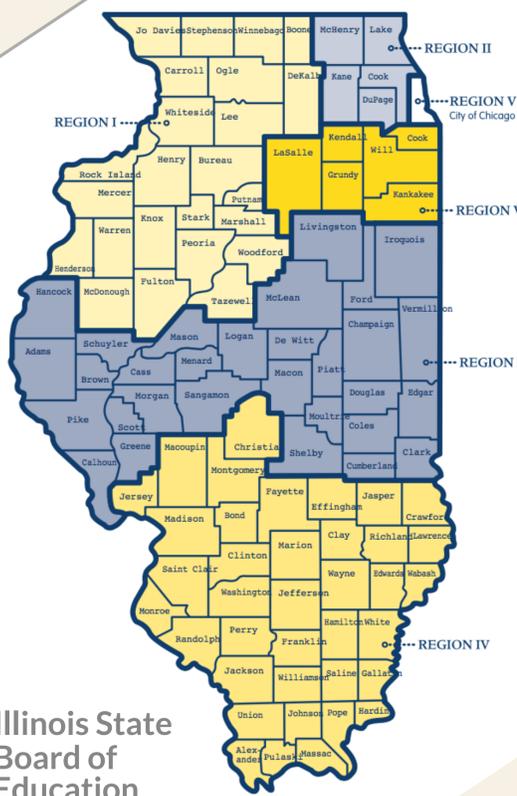


As a statewide system, STAR NET assists the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Division in meeting regional and local needs by providing professional development services throughout Illinois. To facilitate the management of activities, the project has been divided into six regions, with Regions I and III operating under the same fiscal agent.

## STAR NET Services

STAR NET accomplishes its mission through a variety of opportunities that include:

- Workshops, Webinars, and Conferences
- Technical Assistance and Consultation
- Funding Opportunities
- Information and Resources
- Collaboration/Linkages and Networking



For the past 19 years, STAR NET has utilized a responsive evaluation conceptualized on the premise of measuring outcomes as reported by early childhood education and care providers in the state of Illinois. Over this time, the evaluation design has been periodically revised to ensure it remains up-to-date with the latest federal and state initiatives. The majority of evaluation resources and efforts were intended to monitor how well the STAR NET system was meeting its objectives and outcomes and to determine the overall impact of the project around these outcomes. This report highlights the work conducted between July 1, 2020– June 30, 2021.



STAR NET Parent Event

## Webinar Trainings

Due to COVID-19, STAR NET conducted all trainings via web-based format. Each of the regions dramatically increased their capacity to support the early childhood workforce through a distance training approach in an effort to respond to the needs of early childhood programs during the pandemic.



*This webinar was one of the best I have participated in. It was packed full of concrete strategies that we can use with all kids. I loved that I can leave this webinar and start using the strategies.*  
- Regions I & III

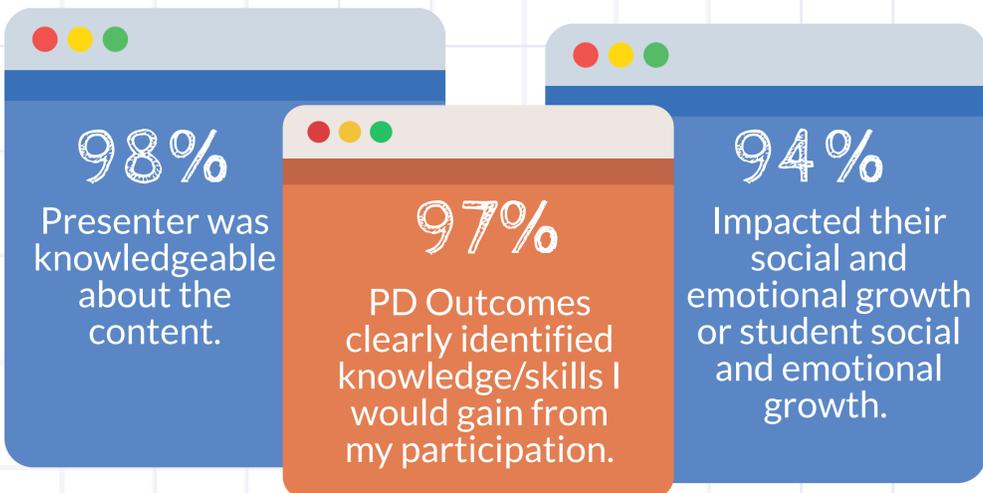
Participants indicated the following impact of the training:

**96%**  
Impacted my growth/student growth.

**94%**  
Will directly improve social and emotional growth.

**94%**  
Aligned to my district or school improvement plan.

Participants indicated the following about webinars:



## Webinar Follow Up

A sample of training participants receive follow up surveys approximately 3 months after their workshop to determine the impact of the event.



**95%**  
Impacted my professional growth.

**95%**  
Deepened my knowledge on the content.

## Family Trainings

Some of STAR NET's trainings are designed specifically for family members who have children with developmental delays. In 2020-21, STAR NET delivered:

**49**  
Family-Focused Trainings

**612**  
Families Participating

Families indicated the following impact from the training:

**96%**  
Increased knowledge and ability to find information, support, or other resources to help their family.

**97%**  
I feel like I can try an idea or strategy to help my child.

**88%**  
Increased ability to actively support their child and effectively speak on behalf of their child's needs at the IFSP or IEP meeting.

**94%**  
Increased their knowledge and understanding of their child's strengths, abilities and special needs.



## Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance (TA) is offered by STAR NET Early Childhood Resource Specialists or Family Resource Specialists. TA can be provided on a variety of early childhood topics in a variety of formats (email, phone, virtual, or onsite consultation).

STAR NET provided:

135

Technical Assistance Supports

502

Individuals Participated in the TA Activities

Participants indicated that the technical assistance increased awareness and understanding of evidence-based practices in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to support:

88%

The use of appropriate behavior to meet the needs of preschool children.

89%

Positive social emotional skills for preschool children with IEPs.

92%

Children in inclusive environments.

94%

Their awareness of problem solving strategies, ideas, and skills.

89%

The acquisition/use of knowledge and skills for children with IEPs.

## TA Follow Up

A random sample of participants (n=411) were asked to complete a follow up survey approximately three months after a TA event.

97%

Indicated that they applied the knowledge and skills gained as a result of the STAR NET technical assistance to their family or work.

92%

Increased their knowledge about the provision of special education and related service to preschool aged children with disabilities in programs with peers who are typically developing.

97%

Increased their knowledge and skills in supporting the development of young children with disabilities.

Results from the multiple sources of data collected continues to suggest that STAR NET has had a significant effect on early childhood education personnel who serve children and families across the state of Illinois. Key findings from 2020-21 STAR NET evaluation support impact data on several of the intermediate outcomes including the following:

Providers are applying the knowledge and skills they gained in their work with children and families.

Families have increased their knowledge and ability to access information, support, or other resources to help their family.

The professional development being provided by STAR NET is positively impacting the professional growth of early childhood providers across the state.



## Funding Opportunities

The statewide STAR NET system awarded 6 funding opportunities to professionals and family members. Primary categories of funding for 2020-2021 included substitute teachers, professional fellowships, and family fellowships. Awardees who received financial support and completed evaluation forms provided positive ratings similar to the trends over the past several years.

Funding helped me meet Illinois Teaching Standards

My skills with my child(ren) with special needs increased

4

Strongly Agree

Funding enhanced my knowledge in supporting my child with special needs

Funding helped me learn information and/or establish networks of support

Funding helped me meet performance standards

This Grant provided the School Social Worker an opportunity to share with teachers and other team members which Social Emotional and Adaptive assessments are currently being used and the importance of social emotional supports and their role in helping children as well.

- Region II

The Resource Specialists have been an invaluable resource to our program for almost three years. They have helped us to shape and improve our program in many areas. These opportunities provide tangible ways to improve our methods of care and education of all young children.

- Regions I & III

This assistance has been so informative on applying a variety of strategies for the upcoming school year including how to do our best to implement best practices during a pandemic, tips for remote learning, how to get children to use their masks, and other helpful resources.

- Region IV

Loved the variety of information the trainings have provided and easy to adapt to the children's learning environment.

- Region V

Appreciate the tips for how to deal with our children when they are not in a mood to cooperate.

- Region VI



## Statewide List of Collaborators

\*Not all regions work with all entities on this list.

- Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Stakeholders Committee
- Early Childhood Professional Learning/The Center
- Early CHOICES: Preschool LRE Initiative
- Family Matters Parent Training Information Center
- Family Resource Center on Disabilities
- Heart of Illinois Down Syndrome Association, Inc.
- Illinois Assistive Technology Program
- Illinois Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators

- Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children
- Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership
- Illinois Division for Early Childhood
- Illinois Early Childhood MTSS Committee
- Illinois Early Intervention Training Program at the University of Illinois
- Illinois Early Learning Council - Special Education Subcommittee
- Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood
- Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

- Illinois Principal Association
- Illinois Professional Development Providers Collaborative
- Illinois Pyramid Model Partnership
- Professional Development Advisory Council
- Sharing A Vision Statewide Conference Committee
- Statewide LRE Stakeholders Consortium
- Statewide Transition Guidance Committee
- The Arc of Illinois Family to Family Health Information/Family Voices