

Local Evaluator Report to BHK Great Explorations (GE)

Dr. Robert A. Wertkin, (February 3, 2020)

Dr. Wertkin has been the local evaluator for BHK-GE for more than ten years. He is familiar with staffing, program sites, and the demographic/geographical catchment area. As with other statewide GE grant sites, there are unique factors that guide program planning and development that may affect recruitment and retention, and impact educational, social, behavioral, and developmental outcomes.

A local evaluation of the BHK site visit was completed on January 24, 2020. Dr. Wertkin met with GE staff, discussed program successes and challenges, engaged in systematic problem solving, reviewed data tables (e.g., PQA. Leading indicators) and conducted an afternoon staff training workshop.

Inservice Training

The training topic was selected by GE Coordinators based on what they believed to be most needed and useful to experienced and new staff. The workshop focused on resiliency, compassion fatigue, burnout, and self-care.

A participatory model was used to engage staff in the training. This entailed completing a self-assessment and concept worksheet which remained confidential but served as a reference point and device for anchoring main training concepts. There was considerable discussion throughout the session. The challenges of GE work and successful methods for coping and having a positive work attitude were actively shared. Participation was unusually high, especially from newer staff. A follow-up workshop in Spring is being considered.

A Culture of Assessment

One of the strengths of being a GR program for more than a decade is the institutionalization of assessment protocols. There are no surprises. Each data collection requirement is planned and executed. Over time, the role of the local evaluator in data collection processes has lessened as staff become more adept at knowing what to do and getting it done. The local evaluator role has shifted to focusing more on the results of the data collection and making recommendations that promote continuous improvement.

PQA

A review of PQA data found that both programs produced mostly positive observations. Some items that received low numbers might be due to when the PQA observation occurred. A “safe environment” received the highest mean summary scores. According to the “Pyramid of Program Quality,” a safe environment establishes the foundation from which all other domains rest. This is similar to Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs.” Safe environment received a mean score

of 4.35 for the two sites combined, “supportive environment” 3.32, “interaction” 3.56, and “engagement” 2.96.

It is recommended that staff discuss how each program addresses and serves the specific elements within the supportive environment, interaction, and engagement domains. The goal is always continuous improvement.

Leading Indicators

For many years, BHK has had more GE sites. This allowed for a useful comparative analysis between sites and to statewide results. With only two sites, data has to be more carefully interpreted. For example, 7 staff completed surveys. That gives each respondent a 14% share in the outcome. With small samples, small score variances can skew the results. This does not invalidate results but does raise the flag of caution in interpreting results. Secondly, surveys are a point in time and do not reflect the totality of the school year. Surveys were completed by 4 of 6 staff and 15 of 16 Baraga 4-5th graders. All 3 staff and 7 students submitted the survey for the L’Anse site.

A detailed analysis of the leading indicators was conducted. These provide valuable data on how the sites compare to state averages. There are some areas where the sites achieved averages higher than the state such as student retention. There are other areas where BHK GE is below state averages such as connecting activities with school-day goals and instructional quality. The results provide valuable inputs on how to improve.

The local evaluator will continue to consult with BHK GE staff about leading indicators with the focus on items that received “low” or “very low” ratings. Effective ways to increase these ratings will be explored.

Conclusion

BHK GE continues to be a high quality program serving children and families in the most northern-western counties of the Upper Peninsula. The local evaluator has analyzed PQA and Leading Indicator data and discussed findings with the GE Project Director. The local evaluator recently completed a comprehensive training as well as a site visit to discuss pertinent GE issues and improvement strategies. He plans to continue working with GE to enhance program quality and efficiency.