

**Evaluation of the Impact
of the First 5 Alameda County Every Child Counts
2006-2008 Child Development Corps Training Coalition**

Executive Summary

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Evaluation of the Impact of the Every Child Counts 2006-2008 Training Coalition Executive Summary

Introduction

The Training Coalition, an Every Child Counts (ECC) pilot project, was aimed at expanding community-based training and technical assistance opportunities for early childhood education (ECE) providers, as well as creating a partnership among agencies that provide training. Seven agencies, together with ECC staff, formed the Coalition, which met monthly to share strategies, problem solve, and provide support on a variety of topics related to providing well-targeted, high-quality ECE professional development trainings. The evaluation included Learning Circles, customized pre and post assessments, analysis of registration data, and site visits.

The four objectives of the Training Coalition were to:

- Increase training opportunities for ECE providers in Alameda County.
- Understand the impact of the trainings on ECE providers who participated in the trainings.
- Understand factors that affect the likelihood of successful trainings.
- Increase the networking and leadership capacity of training providers.

To address these objectives, ECC identified four priority areas for training: child development, social-emotional, health and safety, and business and management.

Did the Training Coalition Increase Training Opportunities?

A variety of trainings, that would not have otherwise existed, were made available countywide to ECE providers. The seven agencies conducted 26 series of trainings that addressed the four priority areas and reached 446 ECE providers. The Training Coalition funding inspired agencies to launch new and innovative trainings, address critical topics in child development, and employ unique multicultural strategies. New types of training resulted and new audiences were reached.

Agency	Priority Area	Description of Training	Number of Series Delivered	Number of Participants	Average Attendance
Collaborative of Family Child Care Associations	Business & Management	A six-session training on basic computer skills to family child care providers including introduction to computers, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, internet searching and web-page design.	2	58	3.3 sessions (range 1-6 sessions)

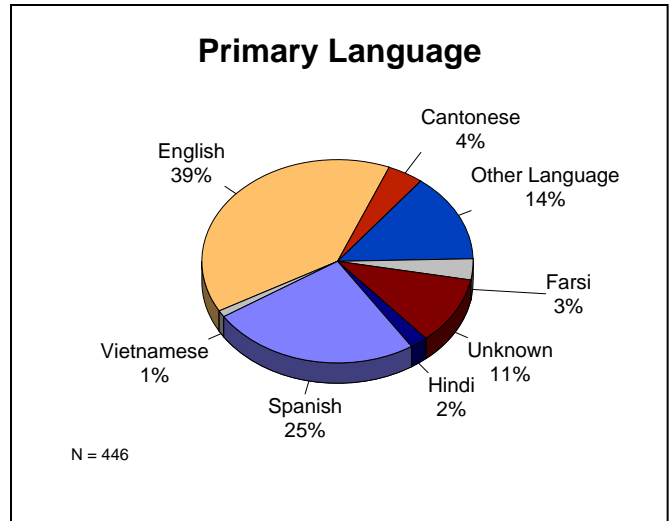
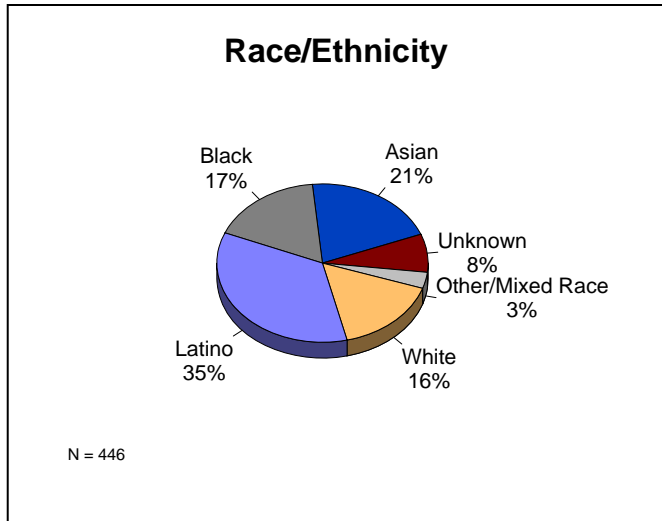
Agency	Priority Area	Description of Training	Number of Series Delivered	Number of Participants	Average Attendance
Infant Toddler Consortium	Child Development	[1] A seven session train-the-trainer series to build the capacity of support trainers to facilitate the [2] in-depth support group/training series of eight or nine parts aimed at family child care providers on care for infants and toddlers.	1 support trainers	9	6.8 sessions (range 6-7 sessions)
			8 support group participants	46	6.2 sessions (range 1-9 sessions)
Jewish Family and Children's Services of the East Bay	Social Emotional	A ten-month long, fifteen-session training series on behavior management building on the work of Linda Brault for family child care and center-based providers.	1	26	10.0 sessions (range 1-13 sessions)
Kidango	Social Emotional	A three-part training series designed to provide family child care and center-based providers with an in-depth look at the foundations of effective practices that promote social-emotional development.	3	109	2.3 sessions (range 1-3 sessions)
Museum of Children's Art	Social Emotional	A four-part training series on practices that support the development of growth of young children through the teaching of art-based activities.	4	66	3.4 sessions (range 1-4 sessions)
Through the Looking Glass	Child Development	A six-part training to family child care and center-based providers on developmental theory and practice relevant to children or parents with disabilities, medical or developmental concerns.	4	76	5.0 sessions (range 1-6 sessions)
UCSF Childcare Health Program	Health & Safety	A three-session advanced health and safety training for ECE professionals to be certified as Child Health Care Advocates.	3	56	2.7 sessions (range 1-3 sessions)
TOTAL			26	446	

“We reached and exceeded our numbers and had a long waiting list. More people want this training.”

“Retention was great throughout our four classes. We developed a strong sense of community.”

Who the Training Coalition Reached

A total of 446 ECE providers were trained by the seven agencies between August 2007 and May 2008. Providers were ethnically diverse, with the largest group being Latino. This is consistent with the ethnic diversity of children in Alameda County. The providers spoke a variety of languages with just over one-third speaking English and a quarter speaking Spanish as their first language.



What was the Impact of Trainings on Participants?

Impact on Knowledge and Attitudes

ECE providers participating in the training sessions were surveyed at the conclusion of their course, and again three months following course completion to learn about changes in knowledge and attitudes.

Each of the Training Coalition agencies had customized surveys that measured how well the participants mastered the knowledge areas that were covered in the trainings. As can be seen below, the trainings had a measurable impact on ECE provider knowledge related to providing quality instruction and care.

Knowledge Gain Highlights

- 100% said they now knew more about strategies they can use to help with challenging behaviors, and 95% said the training helped them feel more prepared to anticipate difficult situations before they occur and take steps to avoid potential behavior problems.
- 92% said they now knew several instructional strategies, and 94% said they now knew several modifications they could make to their classroom environment, in order to help with challenging behaviors.

"I learned to acknowledge positive behavior. I point out the children who are sitting nicely and then everyone sits up and listens."

- 96% said they now knew several ways that engaging in art activities supports preschool children’s school readiness.
- 84% said they now knew specific strategies for including children who are blind/partially sighted or deaf/hard-of-hearing in activities with other children.
- 92% said they now knew how to identify children with communication issues; and 88% said they could identify children with sensory issues.

“I learned that doing a large muscle activity right before can calm an active child enough to participate in circle time.”

“I learned how you can dial 711 to communicate with deaf parents. I have a couple in my class and it has made connecting with them wonderful.”

“It encouraged me to learn more about the computer and gave me more confidence.”

“My confidence level has increased and I feel re-charged to keep doing what I do best – provide loving quality care to children.”

Attitude Shifts Highlights

The trainings had a measurable impact on ECE provider attitudes related to providing quality instruction and care.

- 87% said their belief that parents with a disability are capable of raising children had “increased greatly.”
- 96% said the enjoyment they experience when participating in arts activities with children in their programs had increased either “moderately” or “greatly.”
- 92% in one program and 100% in another program said their motivation to make program modifications (environment, curriculum, strategies) to assist with challenging child behavior had increased either “moderately” or “greatly.”
- 93% of support group participants said their skill and confidence as a family child care providers had “increased greatly;” 96% said the likelihood of continuing working as a child care provider had “increased greatly.”

Impact on Practice

Three months after completing the training, participants were asked questions about ways they had implemented what they had learned in the trainings into their ECE practice.

- 96% had provided painting activities; 88% had provided print-making activities; and 88% had provided collage activities for children in their program. There were substantial increases in those who stated they provided these activities at least weekly.
- 100% said they had changed their way of communicating, made a change in the classroom environment, and changed a teaching strategy or learning activity in order to help a child with challenging behavior.
- 81% reported working on written health and safety policies for their ECE program, and 81% reported conducting immunization audits.

“The children are fascinated with the art of clay. One child did a lot of little animals using the clay and gave them all names. This child, who is a bit troublesome, now wants to use clay every day and it’s calming.”

“I have talked about and posted notes and procedures for cleaning and disinfecting the environment. I made two health and safety boards using information from the web and the training binders.”

- 84% said they had modified classroom environment or activities to make them more appropriate for children with disabilities.
- 80% had used Word at least monthly to write a letter or make a flyer for the child care business.

Impact on Professional Lives

In addition to changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, participants, through focus groups and open-ended comments on surveys, described an affective impact of the trainings. Impact at this level may help prevent attrition and sustain ECE providers in their often low-paying and challenging line of work.

- Feeling valued, affirmed, and rejuvenated in their role as teachers of young children.
- Having camaraderie, support, and the opportunity to learn one from another.
- Being reached in their native language on topics critical to their work with young children

What Factors Affect the Likelihood of Successful Trainings?

Qualitative data was gathered through a series of learning circle focus groups and through a final reflection session with staff members of each agency.

- There is a ***strong value in a multiple-session training format***. Having a series allows for training *and* follow-through. It provides participants the opportunity to learn, implement, and then come back together to analyze and troubleshoot implementation. It also facilitates peer-to-peer learning, and feelings of connection, professionalism, and support in the high-attrition field of work.
- As in any educational experience, having ***exceptional content and skilled instructors*** are critical. Many of the trainings used well-respected, high-quality curricula, or developed new curricula to fill a gap. Innovative instructional tactics, such as role plays, analyzing scenarios, journaling, and reflective practice were used to reinforce and transfer learning to their work environments with young children. Training staff demonstrated hard work and dedication to quality. One agency summed up their strengths as trainers as having the important combination of *“planning plus passion.”*
- Training agencies believe that participation ***incentives are important, both practically and philosophically***. Stipends, to ensure participants are paid for their training time, continuing education credits, and gifts related to the training topics were all found to be valuable. The psychological incentives of increased professionalism, feeling valued and affirmed, and mutual support were also important.
- With regard to technical assistance, it appears that ***informal contextual TA is more valuable than traditional on-site follow-up TA***. Trainers and participants alike spoke of the benefits of providing targeted TA, often in response to students seeking out instructors immediately following class sessions. Several agencies described the realization that they needed to build in extra time for this at the end of each session: *“This was the technical assistance that was really effective in their frontline work with children.”* Traditional models were not as well-utilized as expected.
- A truly unique aspect of the Training Coalition was the ***provision of training and support on critical ECE topics in multiple languages***. Providing training in languages other than English was also found to be a good way to serve the family child care providers, who are often underrepresented in ECE trainings.

Did the Training Coalition Increase the Networking and Leadership Capacity of Training Providers?

The existence of the Training Coalition impacted the network of providers in the following ways:

- ***Networking and Mutual Learning*** – The coalition meetings provided a forum for analyzing training elements, sharing strategies, problem solving, and giving and receiving support. This mutual learning and analysis of the elements of successful trainings helped “raise the bar” on training quality.
- ***Demonstrating Innovative Models of Training*** – Several innovative training models were successfully demonstrated within the coalition, including a long-term (9-month) training intervention and a unique, multi-level, train-the-trainer model. Another unique model was built around a series of guest speakers, many of whom had disabilities. These presenters relayed their own experiences and helped shape participants’ attitudes about teachers, parents, and children with disabilities.
- ***Developing New Types of Trainings on Critical ECE Topics*** – The provider agencies, with Training Coalition financial support and encouragement, demonstrated leadership by developing innovative new trainings for providers. One agency had never previously presented trainings to the ECE community, and had done very little work with their local community, having mostly worked at the national level. Other agencies developed brand new training series aimed at meeting ECE professional development needs.
- ***Sustaining and Developing New Trainings*** – The partnership aspect of the Training Coalition has since led to ongoing networking among agencies, including joint grant-seeking and new projects. One agency will be continuing its support groups developed under Training Coalition funding. Another agency is applying for new state mental health funding that will allow them to continue their trainings first launched under the Coalition. Yet another agency has applied for and received new funding which will bring their trainings, again first developed with Training Coalition funding, to public school district child development center throughout Alameda County.
- ***Promoting Multicultural Models of Learning*** – The Training Coalition was intentional in promoting language and culturally inclusive ECE trainings. Separate additional language augmentation funding was received by many of the agencies who then engaged in workshops and conversations around strategies for creating inclusive and culturally-based instruction. Training series were held in English, Spanish, Farsi and Mandarin.

Recommendations

- ***Provide or Advocate for Additional Professional Development Training for the ECE Community*** – The ECE field is underserved with regard to training opportunities and ECE providers are extremely receptive and hungry for more knowledge and skills to improve their practice. Trainings were very well-attended and participants enthusiastically expressed their desire for additional content, refresher courses, and advanced trainings. Similarly, grantee agencies expressed their need for ongoing funding to continue to provide training on critical topics to the ECE community. Every Child Counts should continue to look for ways to fund or otherwise advocate for continued ECE provider trainings, including networking or collaborating with other organizations, foundations, or government agencies supportive of ECE professional development.
- ***Identify the Most Important Training Topics*** – The content areas identified within the Training Coalition (child development, social/emotional, health and safety, and business and management) appeared to be well-targeted and well-received areas of high interest to ECE providers. Trainings in the area of social-emotional appear to be an ongoing critical need. Every Child Counts should periodically assess training needs to identify priority areas and emerging new topics.
- ***Implement Essential Elements*** – Ensure that future ECE professional development offerings include elements essential to successful trainings. This evaluation report includes an extensive description of the multiple factors identified as leading to successful ECE professional development trainings. Some key ones include: targeting both family-based and center-based ECE providers; attending to language and cultural needs; ensuring high quality curricula, skilled and engaging instructors, and innovative instructional methods; integrating informal, contextual technical assistance into the regular instructional series; and ensuring that courses are of sufficient length to allow for transfer of knowledge and behavior change.
- ***Encourage Ongoing Networking and Growth*** – The Training Coalition inspired professional growth, and enthusiasm for continued professional growth, among both the recipients and the providers of ECE professional development training. Among provider agencies, it would be beneficial to continue to meet periodically, as a network of community-based training providers, to share information around resources, strategies, and training content. Similarly, at the training participant level, a high degree of interest was expressed in having ongoing network and growth opportunities. Every Child Counts, and the provider agencies, should encourage continued learning and interaction, wherever possible, through follow-up meetings, refresher trainings, or potlucks or other gatherings of former training participants.