

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

Final Evaluation Report

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Introduction

The *2006-2008 Child Development Corps Training Coalition*, a pilot project of Every Child Counts (ECC) First 5 Alameda County, was launched in order to expand community-based training opportunities for early child education (ECE) providers, and to encourage partnership among agencies that provide professional development training. ECC identified four priority areas for ECE trainings (child development, social-emotional, health and safety, and business and management), and then selected seven agencies through a competitive request for proposals process.

Participating Agencies

Agency	Priority Area
Collaborative of Family Child Care Associations	Business & Management
Infant Toddler Consortium	Child Development
Jewish Family and Children's Services of the East Bay	Social Emotional
Kidango	Social Emotional
Museum of Children's Art	Social Emotional
Through the Looking Glass	Child Development
UCSF Childcare Health Program	Health & Safety

Administrators and trainers from the seven agencies, along with ECC staff, comprised the Training Coalition. Each agency planned and delivered multiple trainings series, and also met monthly as a coalition to share strategies, and provide support on a variety of topics related to providing well-targeted, high-quality ECE professional development trainings.

Training Coalition Objectives

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.

The evaluation sought to address these objectives through a variety of evaluation methods. A description of the evaluation methodology follows.

Evaluation Methodology

Philliber Research Associates (PRA) was contracted in August 2007 to evaluate the Training Coalition. PRA’s philosophy and approach to evaluation is based upon the belief that evaluations are made stronger through the collaborative involvement of all stakeholders. The evaluators worked closely with ECC First 5 Alameda staff and the seven Training Coalition agencies to ensure that the evaluation strategies and tools were useful and user-friendly. The evaluation was framed by the objectives of the Training Coalition.

Evaluation Strategies

The Training Coalition evaluation contained a range of evaluation strategies, as described in the table below.

Evaluation Strategies	Purpose and Data Collected
Discovery Sessions	A discovery session was held with each of the seven Training Coalition agencies at the outset of the program. A structured interview protocol gathered common qualitative data across agencies that helped inform survey development and yielded information about program implementation plans, successes and challenges.
Learning Circles	Three learning circles were held with administrators and trainers from the seven Training Coalition agencies. These sessions, similar to focus groups, yielded qualitative data related to implementation successes and challenges, perceived impact, and program quality. Each of these focus-group-type sessions focused on a set of specific topics. The learning circles were held in November 2007, February and May 2008.
Retrospective Pre and Post Surveys	Customized retrospective pre-post surveys were developed for each agency to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior of training participants, as well as to gather information on program satisfaction. A total of 299 surveys were gathered from the seven agencies.
3-Month Follow-up Surveys	Customized surveys were developed for each agency to determine the degree to which participants had incorporated training content into their ECE practices. A total of 137 follow-up surveys were gathered from the seven agencies, a 46% response rate.
ECC On-Line Training Data Base	The ECC On-Line web-based database captured demographic, geographic, educational and work experience data on the 446 ECE providers who participated in the trainings between August 2007 and May 2008.
Reflection Sessions	A reflection session was held with each of the seven Training Coalition agencies at the conclusion of the project. A structured interview protocol was designed to gather common information across agencies and yielded data about perceived impact and program implementation successes and challenges.

Data Collection and Analysis

The strategies for data collection and analysis varied depending on the type of data being collected (quantitative and/or qualitative). Following is a brief description of how and when data were collected and subsequently analyzed.

At the outset, evaluators interviewed the administrators of the seven Training Coalition agencies in a series of site visit **discovery sessions** to learn about the training being offered through ECC funding. A structured interview protocol was designed to gather common information across agencies about the content of the trainings, training objectives, the details about the number and timing of trainings, the intended target of the trainings, and outreach strategies. Most of these data were qualitative. At the completion of the discovery sessions, PRA summarized the responses to some key data elements in tables and made recommendations to ECC and the agencies for data collection from training participants.

In order to document program implementation findings, and in the spirit of program improvement, PRA facilitated a series of three **learning circles** with the trainers from the seven Training Coalition agencies. Each of these focus group type sessions focused on a set of specific topics (e.g., outreach, providing post-training technical assistance, building capacity). PRA and ECC staff developed sets of guided questions to frame the discussion and prompt exchange of ideas useful to overcome challenges and make improvements to their training programs. Comprehensive notes were taken and a set of findings were shared with all agencies to document the experiences of the trainers, including their successes and challenges, and the creative solutions that evolve from the process. A description of the analysis and findings of each learning circle can be found in Appendix A.

The evaluators, working closely with ECC and the grantee agencies developed a set of customized surveys for each Training Coalition agency. Surveys were translated into Spanish, Farsi, and Vietnamese, as appropriate. It was decided that a **retrospective pre- and post-survey** would be administered at the conclusion of each training program in order to measure knowledge and attitudes and behaviors, as well as program satisfaction and program feedback. These surveys, gathered at the conclusion of each training series, incorporated several “retrospective pre-test” questions which asked participants to compare their knowledge before and after participating in the training. This retrospective pre- and post methodology, while not perfect, is used to temper the fact that training participants often give inflated or otherwise inaccurate assessments of their knowledge and skills during traditional pre-tests due to the fact that they are at the time unfamiliar with the concepts to be covered in the training.

Putting knowledge into action is the ultimate aim of any training course. To gather data on the degree to which participants had incorporated changes into their ECC practice, **3-month follow-up surveys** were also developed and mailed to each training participant. Incentives were offered to participants to encourage them to complete and return their surveys. Several reminders were sent by the Training Coalition agencies to the participants to encourage them to return their surveys.

Upon finalization of survey forms for each agency, PRA developed databases in SPSS for entry and analysis of data. All databases were reviewed for accuracy and finalized. A data tracking system was set up by PRA to monitor survey data that was expected by each agency. Data began to flow to PRA in October 2007 and continued through the final program implementation in October 2008. As data were received by PRA they were logged in, cleaned and entered into SPSS for analysis.

Quantitative survey data (such as answers on 5-point scales) were described by producing frequencies and mean scores. Matched pair t-test analysis was conducted on all quantitative scale items that appeared both on the post and follow-up surveys. Qualitative open-ended question data were clustered and analyzed for themes. Individual reports were prepared for each agency involved in the Training Coalition. Reports were distributed and debriefings on report results occurred during the final reflection sessions. These sessions, in turn, yielded additional qualitative data.

The **ECC On-Line** web-based database, developed and maintained by First 5 Alameda County, captured demographic, geographic, educational, and work experience data on all training participants. The evaluation team accessed data captured on ECE providers who participated in training between August 2007 and May 2008, in order to document the delivery of trainings, attendance, and to describe the diversity of participants.

Structured protocols were developed to interview program administrators near the end of the study period for final site visit **reflection sessions**. At the conclusion of the project, PRA conducted this second round of site visits to the seven Training Coalition agencies to discuss their evaluation reports and encourage them to reflect on their results, document their implementation successes and challenges regarding outreach, training delivery, and follow-up technical assistance. These structured interviews also addressed the impact of participating in the Training Coalition on the agency and its practices. Themes were extracted from the interviews with regard to lessons learned about program implementation and lessons learned about perceived impact.

Did the Training Coalition Increase Training Opportunities?

A range of professional development trainings, that would not have otherwise existed, were developed and made available countywide to 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. There was consensus among agencies that their trainings would not have occurred without ECC funding. The seven agencies conducted 26 series of trainings that addressed the four ECC priority areas and reached 446 ECE providers.

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.”

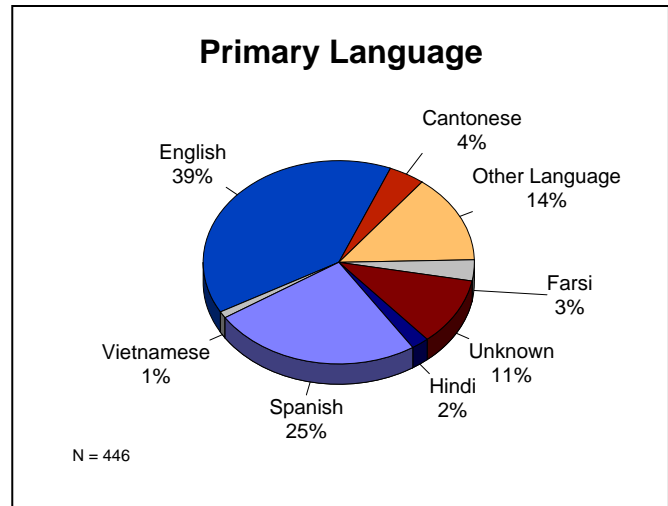
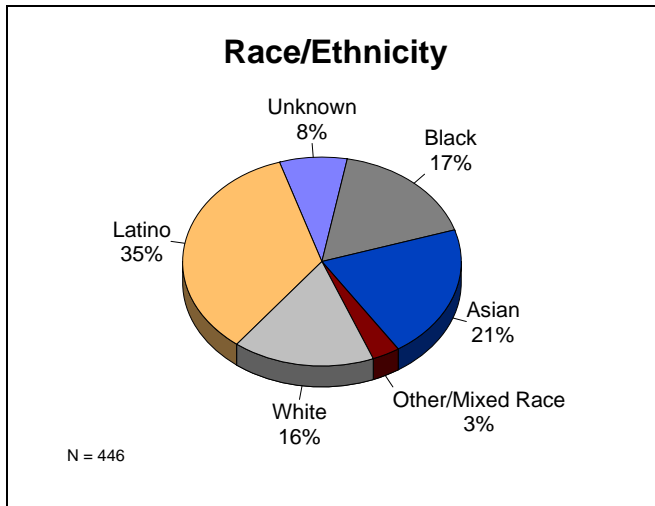
“Retention was great throughout our four classes. We developed a strong sense of community.”

Who the Training Coalition Reached

A total of 446 ECE providers were reached by the seven agencies between August 2007 and May 2008. Just over a third of the providers were from North County and more than a quarter from South County. Just over half of the providers were center-based and over a third were family child care providers.

Geography	Percent (N=446)
North County	36%
South County	29%
East County	5%
Other	5%
Unknown	24%

The ethnic background of the providers was very diverse with the largest group being Latino. The providers spoke a variety of languages with just over a third speaking English and a quarter speaking Spanish as a 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. The mastery of knowledge items ranged between 83-98% for all training areas except for computer skills which only had a 45% mastery of knowledge items by post-test.

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.
- 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 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."

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

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

“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 Shift 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

One of the primary challenges for professional development is to deliver trainings that are useful and applicable to the participants in a way that they will be motivated and able to put their learning into practice. The ECC Training Corps was able to accomplish this objective.

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. A total of 137 follow-up surveys were gathered from the seven agencies, a 46% response rate.

- 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.
- 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.

“For outdoor art activities, we used to only have easel painting and crayons on paper. Now we use lots of recyclable materials like big boxes and bottles to collage on and paint on.”

“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.”

Successful Implementation Highlights

The following are from a variety of data sources (follow-up surveys, reflection sessions, and focus groups) and describe the ways in which ECE providers improved their practice as a result of participating in the training sessions.

- **Changes to the Classroom Environment.** Participants described making changes to their classrooms and ECE centers that were inspired by the training content. Trainings focused on child social/emotional and behavioral issues taught participants to observe and analyze their classroom environments in order to understand its impact on children’s behavior. Child care providers described making changes to their child care settings – such as breaking up a large space into smaller play and activity areas – which resulted in fewer conflicts among children. They also described creating “cozy, quiet spaces” within the larger classroom, which the children loved, and which led to a happier environment and more peaceful behaviors. Similarly, the training focused on serving children and parents with disabilities inspired modifications to make the classroom environment more inclusive and work better for all.
- **New and Exciting Learning Materials and Teaching Strategies.** Several of the training series resulted in many new activities, materials, and teaching strategies being introduced at ECE centers. Participants in one agency’s trainings described increasing the amount of art in their programs, and using art activities in new ways with positive impact on the children. Participants in other courses described adapting activities to support children with disabilities, incorporating an intensified focus on positive behaviors, and adding new groupings by age, as well as new and exciting learning activities to engage children and help avoid behavioral problems.
- **Improved Health and Safety Practices at ECE Centers.** Participants described many changes they incorporated into their ECE centers including practices related to auditing immunizations, meal preparation and food storage, hand washing, changing diapers, injury prevention, self-care, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, and sharing health information.
- **Changes to Operation of Child Care Business.** One agency held several training series focused on using computers to improve participants’ family child care businesses. In their 3-month follow-up surveys, participants described their new abilities to make flyers and signs, design their own advertisements and forms, find information on the web, type up contracts, and keep track of budget, enrollment and expenses.
- **Greater Understanding of the Underlying Causes of Children’s Behaviors.** In a training series about children’s social and emotional development, participants described how they were able to shift their perspectives about children’s challenging behaviors. Rather than focus on the difficult behavior itself and respond to or be annoyed by it, participants learned to look beyond the behavior to understand underlying causes. Participants learned to observe and analyze children’s motivations and behavioral triggers, as well as the interplay of the classroom environment. They began to plan for transitions and new routines with helped avoid troublesome behavior and create a more positive social environment.

“I’m having fun learning and it’s increased my productivity.”

- **Understanding their Own Behavior and Interactions More Fully.** In this same series, participants described how their perspectives had also shifted around their own behavior as teachers. Through the training, they came to be more aware of their own actions, reactions and particularly what “pushes their buttons” as far as children’s behavior. Participants described how the course helped them understand how the variance in their own moods impacts the classroom environment, as well as the power that teachers have to be positive and set the tone, which in turn affects the children’ behavior and overall classroom environment.

“I have a child who would disrupt class and hit other children. I talked to his mother and found out his dad is in jail. I made him my special helper, gave him responsibility for helping younger kids in the classroom. When I started to show him respect, he did the same thing.”

- **New Communication Skills.** Participants from multiple training courses described benefits in communication that improved their child care practice.
- **Improved Communication Style with Children.** Participants in the social/emotional development trainings described the impact of learning how language used with children can affect the mood and tone of a classroom. They described how cheerfulness and positive interactions are contagious, and how their group learned and promoted the value of increasing their number of positive verbal interactions with children, striving for 5:1, positive to negative comments. For example, instead of saying “*don’t run,*” they would use “*walk please,*” in a cheerful voice. Participants described how easy-to-implement, subtle verbal shifts impacted the tone and mood of everyone, and made both teachers and students feel happier and calmer.
- **Improved Communication and Relationships with Parents.** Child care providers described opening up more extensive communication with parents and the resulting impact this had in their gaining deeper understanding of children’s behavior. In the disability-related training, participants described coming to view parents with disabilities with far greater understanding and respect for their abilities to parent. They described learning new communication strategies, such as dialing 711 to enable text communication with deaf parents which dramatically opened up avenues of communication and improved the relationships. In the social/emotional training, participants described new family communication strategies, such as gathering background information, understanding family context, and sharing with the parent a variety of joys and challenges around their children’s behavior that was inspired by the training series.
- **Improved Communication with Colleagues around Important Topics.** In the 3-month follow-up surveys, participants from multiple trainings described how the trainings inspired new dialogue and analysis with their colleagues around ECE critical topics. Whether it was communicating around the classroom environment, changes to health and safety practices, how art activities enhance cognitive development, or how to adapt classroom activities to incorporate a child with a disability, participants described the importance of this enhanced communication to improve their child care practice.

“I learned how it is really important to gain rapport with parents, to communicate and work together on challenges with children.”

Impact on Professional Lives

In addition to changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, participants, through focus groups and open-ended comments on surveys, described the positive effects of the trainings on their professional lives.

- ***Feeling Valued, Affirmed, and Rejuvenated in their Role as Teachers of Young Children.*** Impact at this emotional level helps prevent attrition and sustain ECE providers in their often low-paying and challenging line of work. One of the huge benefits of participation in trainings was being affirmed and valued for their important role in young children's lives. Participants described this feeling of being valued as "rare." They also described how rejuvenating it was to take part in the training sessions, saying it helped them look at their jobs with "new eyes again." Several described having been in the child care business for many years, and that the shift in perspective and increased support has caused them to take greater joy in their interactions with young children.
- ***New Skills and Strategies Applied to Their Lives Outside the Classroom.*** Several participants also described the positive benefits gained by applying their newly developed skills in other aspects of their lives, and with their own children, grandchildren, spouses, and other family members.
- ***ECE Providers Are Eager for More Training.*** Learning circles and final reflection sessions yielded qualitative data indicating that the ECE field is underserved with regard to training opportunities. Training Coalition agency staff described how ECE providers work in isolation from other adults and, unlike educators in the K-12 field, do not have training opportunities built into their professional lives. They described the participants in their training sessions as being extremely eager for any training opportunities that are available. "There is a lot of unmet need out there." The Training Coalition experienced robust enrollment levels, consistently strong attendance rates, and agencies and participants expressed enthusiasm and eagerness for additional trainings. Agencies that provide training described the significant financial challenges they face that limit the number and type of trainings they can provide.

"Outstanding course! I learned so much. This class really motivated and encouraged me. It reminded me how valuable our profession is. We impact so many lives. It is such an important job."

Participant Feedback about the Trainings

All seven of the Training Coalition agencies asked the same three questions on their post-surveys to gather feedback on their course. The majority of training participants (84%) strongly agreed that the information that they learned in the course would be helpful to them in their professional life. The majority (81%) also strongly agreed that the course information was presented in a way that was organized and easy to understand as well as lively and engaging. While feedback was consistently high across the Training Coalition agencies, there was some variation in the perception of course helpfulness and feedback about course delivery.

Training Area	Percent Who Strongly Agreed		
	Helpful in Professional Life	Organized Content	Lively and Engaging
Social Emotional Development (N=22)	100%	100%	100%
Supporting Family Care Providers (N=7)	7 of 7	7 of 7	7 of 7
Arts Education (N=57)	93%	93%	93%
Children with Challenging Behaviors (N = 70)	78%	76%	82%
Children and Parents with Disabilities (N=62)	87%	90%	85%
Health and Safety Practices (N=52)	96%	88%	88%
Computer Skills for Business (N=66)	53%	45%	55%
TOTAL	84%	81%	82%

Participants in all trainings were also asked about the kind of structure, ongoing support or follow-up they would need to continue to improve their work. Their feedback clustered in the following ways:

- **Additional Training** – It is no surprise that many course participants did not want the training to end. Participants requested more content and resources, a refresher course, and advanced trainings in their content area.
- **Ongoing Consultation** – Following the course, participants would like to be able to access support from the trainers or other knowledgeable professionals to receive ongoing support for integrating the knowledge into practice. They also need support in helping to transmit this information to additional staff in their program.
- **Provide Continued Incentives/Materials** – Participants particularly appreciated the incentives that they received to participate in the training. Many of the trainings offered take home materials as well. With limited budgets available for supplies, many participants suggested that it would be helpful to receive some type of ongoing funding to buy supplies.
- **Keep the Group Together** – The participants in many of the training courses became very attached to their groups. They expressed a desire to keep the group together and to meet periodically to give each other support and hear about each others' progress.

"I feel as if we're just beginning. What's next?"

What Factors Affect the Likelihood of Successful Trainings?

Three learning circles attended by all the agencies, a set of structured final reflection session interviews conducted separately with key staff at each agency, and one participant focus group held at the conclusion of a training series yielded substantial qualitative data about implementing professional development trainings for ECE providers. Analysis of impact using survey data uncovered additional findings about the likelihood of successful trainings. The following are lessons learned that may inform future ECE training practice.

Conducting Successful Outreach and Enrollment

- **Tactical and Practical Outreach.** A multitude of outreach strategies were used, including telephone calls, emails, flyers, website postings, one-on-one meetings, and group presentations. Consider using a mix of strategies, so potential participants would hear about the training several times from several sources. Other suggestions included specifically recruiting among specific language or cultural groups, working through resource and referral agencies, and continuing to use regular mail since not all ECE providers use computers.
- **Enrollment Strategies.** Agency staff recommended initially over-enrolling for trainings to allow for the slight drop-off that occurs at the beginning of sessions. Consider over-enrolling even more for family child care providers since greater attrition tends to occur with this group. Also, to balance types of participants, it is suggested to hold a specified number of slots available only for family child care providers. Training sessions can quickly fill up with center-based providers who often hear about them first. Take steps to fill slots that invariably open up during the course – either through making personal invitations or from a waiting list.
- **Wise Use of Incentives.** Agency staff members believe that it is important, both practically and philosophically, to offer incentives for participants. Stipends, to ensure participants are paid for their training time, continuing education credits, and gifts or instructional items related to the training topics were all found to be valuable and could have positive impact on attendance at the training sessions. The “*psychological incentives*” of increased professionalism, feeling valued and affirmed, and mutual support were also important. Having “*a nice catered meal*” was also often mentioned as an important incentive.
- **Comfortable Training Space.** Having a quality training space was described as an important element of a successful training. “*We try to make people comfortable and happy, which puts them in a positive frame of mind to learn.*”

Providing High-Quality Educational Events

- **Strong Value in Multi-session Training Format.** Holding a training series, as opposed to one-day training, allowed for better implementation and follow-through. Participants and agencies described how useful it was to have the opportunity to learn new concepts, go back and apply them within their ECE programs, and then reconvene back in class to analyze and troubleshoot together on implementation issues. They described this sequence of learning, application, and analysis as “ideal.” Additionally, in the one series that was designed more along the lines of a drop-in model, participants had less consistent

attendance, less demonstrated knowledge gain, and lower satisfaction with the course than participants did in the multi-session models.

- **High-Quality Curricula.** Successful trainings have strong curricular content. Two of the Training Coalition agencies built off of the well-respected work of Linda Brault on behavioral issues and the social and emotional development of young children. Another provided a health and safety curriculum developed and field-tested by UCSF and the California Training Institute. Other agencies within the coalition pioneered new curricula in order to fill a recognized need within the field. One example of this was a newly piloted, field tested and revised curriculum of art-based ECE activities explicitly linked to child development measures.
- **Skilled Instructors.** As in any educational experience, staffing is critical. While there are a host of strategies and skills demonstrated by effective teachers, one agency summed up their abilities as instructors as a combination of “planning plus passion.” Agencies and trainers described extensive planning efforts they engaged in, as well as the enthusiasm and passion they had for their work with child care providers. At several of the trainings, participants could not have been more complimentary about the quality of instructors and the skill of their instruction.
- **Building Trust and Engaging Participants.** Even in a brief training series, the relationship that is established between student and instructor is always a key component of learning. Instructors who are able to quickly build trust, establish connections, and communicate caring have a substantial impact. Agencies described the importance at the beginning of the course, of recognizing the strengths of all participants, acknowledging the experience and expertise in the group, and establishing a positive context of all learning together.
- **Motivating Adult Learners.** High-quality training sessions demonstrated sound principles of adult learning, including using a mix of learning strategies to keep courses lively and participants engaged, addressing directly about how course content is useful and can be applied in the work place, using paired break-out discussions encourage everyone to participate, and using humor to set a relaxed atmosphere.
- **Innovative Instructional Strategies.** A variety of instructional strategies were used to positive effect, including role plays, problem-solving real work situations, modeling effective practice, sharing stories, and bringing in guest experts. Participants described how the instructors set up scenarios or role plays, accurately observed, and used them to reinforce teaching content. Agencies described that sharing stories was a particularly effective strategy for making people comfortable and bringing diverse groups together.
- **Make Adjustments Along the Way.** Agencies described how important it was to have skilled and perceptive trainers who could quickly and accurately read the audience and make adjustments as necessary. *“During training itself we would check in and make adjustments . . . constantly.” “We would elicit feedback after each session and incorporate that feedback into the very next session.”*
- **Employ Strategies for Reinforcing Learning.** Agencies described planning ahead for specific strategies they would use during the training to reinforce learning. They described successful tactics, such as beginning sessions with activities to help re-cap previous content, or eliciting example or stories participants had recently encountered in their ECE

centers in light of course content. Other agencies described consistently “*reframing and re-threading*” previously taught concepts in order to reinforce them.

- **Address Challenges around Literacy and Comprehension.** Agencies described challenges and solutions in the area of meeting participants’ needs despite their varying literacy and comprehension levels. Strategies included: explicitly naming and then repeatedly reinforcing by name skills and constructs being taught, as well as journal-writing to follow up and reinforce comprehension around newly introduced topics. Trainers described the great value of journaling as an instructional strategy that “*encompasses any language, any spelling, and a variety of literacy levels,*” in order to reinforce learning and deepen understanding.
- **Value of Peer-to-Peer Learning.** Class participants would engage in analyzing and teaching each other examples from their own classrooms, and the instructors would helpfully label the examples and ideas with terms and concepts, reinforcing what they were learning together. Participants described the instructors as “*very skillfully knowing when to instruct, when to introduce new concepts, and when to stand back and let the students learn from one another.*”
- **Camaraderie and Support.** Participants and agency staff described the value of the strong learning community that developed within many of the training series. They described fun, interactive environments, with good food, moral support, and lots of laughter. “*You get everything you need – dinner, camaraderie, and understanding.*” The camaraderie and support are important elements that further facilitate peer-to-peer learning, and feelings of professionalism, as well as serve to combat work-related stress in the high-attrition field of work.
- **Transferring Knowledge from Training Session to the Real World.** Instructors worked explicitly to help participants implement the skills and concepts they were learning in class. Instructors would often address directly how the course content was practical and useful in ECE settings. Instructors also used a variety of instructional, discussion and problem-solving strategies to facilitate the transfer of knowledge into practice. Participants in one course described how useful it was to first learn and discuss new concepts in class, then go back and apply them within their child care practices, and later come together again to analyze and problem-solve together.

Considering Language and Cultural Needs

- **Value of Providing Instruction and Support in One’s Own Language.** A truly unique aspect of the Training Coalition was the provision of training and support on critical ECE topics in multiple languages. Courses or support groups were provided in English, Spanish, Farsi, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. One participant described the value of the training in her native language: “*I’ve never before had anyone like this in my life to rely on for information.*” 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.
- **Capitalize on Language and Cultural Affinity.** Agency staff identified the positive impact of language and cultural affinity on learning. One agency designed a multi-level intervention that provided support groups in multiple languages with positive results on support providers as well as the participants. Another agency said the opportunity with Training Coalition funding to provide training in participants’ own language and reflective of their own culture

“was huge . . . people felt very comfortable.” Another agency described their course in English which had predominantly African-American participants as developing a great group rapport and learning dynamic.

- **Challenges Identified in Providing Trainings in Languages Other than English.** Agencies described their challenges in finding instructors who possessed both content knowledge and language knowledge. They also describe challenges in translating materials and handouts, and deciding what among the many course materials absolutely needed to be translated. Courses in languages other than English were described as being more expensive to deliver due to translation needs.
- **Be Aware of Interaction of Culture and Learning Style.** Agency staff described how some activities and learning strategies seemed to be particularly successful (or particularly stressful) for various groups of participants. One agency described their Spanish-speaking participants as responding extremely well to analyzing “scenarios.” They described the rich conversation, excitement and hard work that occurred when using this strategy. Several agencies discussed their perceptions that some of the Asian participants were less comfortable with the teaching methods of self-reflection and small group discussion.

Integrating Technical Assistance and Follow-Up

- **On-site Technical Assistance Not Well Used.** Several agencies offering follow-up technical assistance at participants’ work places found that fewer participants than expected took advantage of it, and appeared to be more comfortable receiving technical assistance in other ways. Agencies proposed that this may be due to how challenging it is for an ECE provider to schedule and engage in technical assistance during their work day with children present. They suggested that more information is needed to explore how training participants can become more comfortable with participating in on-site consultations. Agencies also described being somewhat relieved that fewer had chosen to participate in the on-site technical assistance due to the large amount of staff time necessary to provide it.
- **Value of Informal, Contextual Technical Assistance.** Trainers and participants alike spoke of the great value of providing and receiving technical assistance during the regularly scheduled training time. Instructors were frequently approached after class by participants who had experienced a particular issue touched upon during the session. Immediate, meaningful one-on-one technical assistance often resulted. As one trainer stated, *“This was the technical assistance that was really effective in their frontline work with children.”* In the training series that lasted the longest, it appears that the value of the informal, contextual technical assistance was one of the key elements that kept participants happy, engaged, and attending consistently over the course of 10 months. Several agencies also described how they realized mid-stream during their training series they needed to allow time at the end of each session for this important informal technical assistance. They also plan to build in extra time at the end of their future training sessions expressly for this purpose.
- **Ongoing Email and Phone Consultations.** Several agencies described having continuing contact and provision of technical assistance through emails and telephone calls. One agency has a call-line available to all participants as a central piece of their ongoing educational intervention. They described the growth of training participants as evidenced through the ongoing technical assistance and support: *“People still email us and we see them becoming agents of change in their centers.”*

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

Not only were the participants impacted by the trainings offered by the Training Coalition, but the training providers themselves were also impacted.

Positive Impact of the Training Coalition

The existence of the Training Coalition impacted the network of training 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.

Suggestions for Improvement

While the Training Coalition participants were very positive in their feedback about the benefits of having been a part of the coalition, they also described the following suggestions for improvement:

- ***Increased Content and Modeling around Training Best Practices*** – Some agencies' staff described that the Training Coalition meetings could have been improved by having additional content and increased modeling of training best practices. Specific suggestions included structuring meeting content around designated best practices, and modeling best practices of acknowledging group expertise, managing group dynamics, and seeking group feedback and making corresponding adjustments.
- ***Fewer or Shorter Training Coalition Meetings*** – Several agencies' staff expressed the thought that the Training Coalition could have been equally or even more effective if there had been fewer meetings and/or shorter meetings. The combined effect of coalition meetings plus "language augmentation" meetings, in which many agencies also participated, may have added to this perception. Additionally, even though the evaluation learning circles occurred during the regularly scheduled coalition meetings, some of the content dealt with during these sessions had also been the focus of the previous coalition meetings. This may have increased a perception among participants of excessive length or redundancy.

"ECC staff were dedicated, focused on their work, and better TA providers than other funders we have worked with. They were a perfect match for us!"

Summary

The First 5 Alameda Every Child Counts 2006-2008 Child Development Corps Training Coalition resulted in increased community-based trainings for ECE providers in the areas of child development, social/emotional, health and safety, and business and management. A total of 446 providers participated in the 26 trainings series funded by the Training Coalition. ECE providers who participated in the trainings were ethnically and linguistically diverse, represented all geographical regions of the county, and were well-balanced between family-based and center-based care.

Training participants demonstrated an overall high mastery of knowledge related to the training content, as well as positive shifts in attitudes. ECE providers also demonstrated ample evidence of positive change, and application of knowledge, in their ECE professional practice within three months after completing training. Participation in the trainings also affected professional identity in positive ways that may support retention of child care providers within the profession. Additionally, grantee agencies and providers of training also benefited from their involvement in the Training Coalition, using the funding and support they received to develop and demonstrate innovative new models of training and types of training on critical ECE topics.

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.