

California Collaborative on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning: Professional Development Evaluation Report

*Evaluation of Teaching Pyramid Professional Development
to Promote Social-Emotional Development in Preschool Children in California*

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation Purpose and Evaluation Questions

In the spring of 2015, the California Department of Education (CDE) contracted with the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) SRM Evaluation Group to conduct an evaluation of Teaching Pyramid professional development for early childhood education providers. The Teaching Pyramid, also known as the California Collaborative on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CA CSEFEL), provides a systematic framework for promoting healthy social-emotional development in young children and preventing challenging behaviors. The San Marcos Office of the WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies (referred to in this report as the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team) provides Teaching Pyramid professional development for early childhood education staff in California.

The purpose of this evaluation was to better understand the impact of the Teaching Pyramid professional development on early education practitioners' knowledge, practice, and attitudes. The evaluation questions addressed process and implementation as well as outcomes. The specific questions that guided the evaluation are shown below.

Process/Implementation Questions

1. What systematic services does WestEd's Teaching Pyramid team provide to administrators and early childhood education teaching teams, and what is the quality of those services?
2. To what extent has WestEd's Teaching Pyramid team provided guidance and support to ensure continuation of Teaching Pyramid practices when its support is discontinued?
3. To what extent have partner sites implemented the Teaching Pyramid professional development components?
4. To what extent have partner sites developed specific policies and procedures for working with children who have challenging behaviors?

Outcome Questions

1. What is the impact of the Teaching Pyramid professional development on program/site and teaching staff?
2. To what extent has Teaching Pyramid professional development prepared staff to more effectively support children, including those with challenging behaviors?

Teaching Pyramid Background

The Teaching Pyramid is based upon the principles of the National Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (National CSEFEL). It provides a systematic, tiered framework that promotes social and emotional development, prevents challenging behaviors, and addresses problematic behaviors. This tiered approach is grounded in the Early Childhood Positive Behavior Support (EC-PBS) model. WestEd's Teaching Pyramid team adapted the National CSEFEL approach to include four professional development components, with a greater emphasis on implementation with fidelity and sustainability over time.

Early childhood education providers contract with the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team to receive the four components as a package of services. These services are site-based, meaning multiple staff across the early childhood education sites receive training. Sites include public school districts, Head Start

programs, Title V-funded programs, community-based organizations, private centers, and county offices of education. The four components are:

- Training Modules:
 - Module 1: Promoting Children's Success by Building Relationships and Creating Supportive Environments
 - Module 2: Social-Emotional Teaching Strategies
 - Module 3a: Determining the Meaning of Challenging Behavior
 - Module 3b: Individualized Intensive Interventions
- Coaching
- Leadership team development and facilitation
- Follow-up for sustainability (training and technical assistance)

The first three components typically occur within the first year, over the course of six to nine months; the follow-up for sustainability component is optional in subsequent years.

Evaluation Design and Methods

The evaluation team used a mixed-methods approach to answer the evaluation questions, including surveys, observations, interviews, and secondary data. The approach was a convergent parallel design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), where the survey, observation, and interview data were collected concurrently and triangulated in the analysis. Interviews and observations were conducted between spring 2015 and spring 2016. Surveys were conducted in fall 2015 and winter 2016.

Because the goal of the evaluation was to assess professional development, UCLA, CDE, and the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team decided to focus on sites that had received most or all of the professional development components (i.e., “partner sites”). The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team identified eight partner sites that had been consistently implementing the Teaching Pyramid components. Teachers and administrators from these eight sites were surveyed, interviewed and/or observed. In an attempt to balance any potential selection bias, the evaluation also included one new “entry” site. Supplemental surveys were also given to non-partner “practicing” site staff who had attended Teaching Pyramid training within the last two years.

In all, five surveys were administered as part of this evaluation:

- Survey of selected partner site classroom staff;
- Survey of selected partner site administrators;
- Survey of training attendees from practicing, non-partner sites; and
- Pre- and post-training surveys of training attendees from an entry site.

It is important to note that organizations became partner sites because they were committed to implementing the Teaching Pyramid. Moreover, the sites chosen for the evaluation were selected due to their organizational ability to implement. In addition, data from multiple years showed that the sites had very low teacher turnover,¹ and site visits suggest there was strong administrator support, including financial support, and management buy-in for the Teaching Pyramid. These conditions likely contributed to the use and continuation of Teaching Pyramid practices. As such, the outcomes described may not be

¹ Although the intent was to analyze changes in teacher turnover over time, the turnover was too low (i.e. zero or one person/year) to reliably analyze trend changes due to the Teaching Pyramid.

the same for sites that lack these favorable conditions. The findings should be interpreted in this context.

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation findings provide an overview of Teaching Pyramid services and follow-up support, partner site implementation of these components, and the impact of the Teaching Pyramid on early childhood educators. Each of these aspects is discussed in turn.

Teaching Pyramid Services

The first component of the Teaching Pyramid is site staff training. According to observations, interviews, and the post-training entry site survey, the training modules are perceived as being of high quality. Interview participants were uniformly positive and appreciative of the training, and reported leaving each module with concrete ideas for how to implement pyramid strategies. Likewise, survey respondents considered their instructors to be extremely knowledgeable. Both survey and interview participants reported very positive opinions of their trainers, describing them as “very knowledgeable” and “awesome.” The majority of participants felt their time in training was well spent and useful to their everyday work, though it should also be noted that some indicated the eight-hour day was too long, “overwhelming,” and/or “intense.” As such, they suggested shorter, more frequent trainings instead. Further, interview data and observations of the training modules suggested that some participants would benefit from having the training materials in Spanish as well as English.

The second component, coaching sessions, are a valuable part of the Teaching Pyramid and are crucial to successful application of classroom strategies. The supportive approach reaffirms strengths, acknowledges teachers’ concerns regarding application, and gives them the tools to improve. The coaches were highly knowledgeable and demonstrated emotional intelligence; teachers praised their ability to put them at ease, and appreciated their positive, nonjudgmental, constructive tone. Throughout the observed session, the coach modeled effective practice, highlighted materials to review, and continually pushed strategies for sustaining Teaching Pyramid implementation once coaching ended.

The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team also oversees the development of a site-wide leadership team—the third component of the Teaching Pyramid. They facilitate five meetings during the six- to nine-month contract period. According to online Teaching Pyramid materials, the establishment of a site-based leadership team is “the first step” in implementation.² The ultimate purpose of the leadership team is to act as a guiding force for Teaching Pyramid support and site-wide impact and to oversee Teaching Pyramid growth and implementation beyond and alongside the training modules.

Guidance and Support to Ensure Continuation of Teaching Pyramid Practices

The Teaching Pyramid’s fourth component—follow-up for sustainability—is designed to promote enduring application of the Teaching Pyramid. Within this component, the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team provides training sessions on advanced topics, training refreshers, technical assistance for leadership teams, and additional coaching. As the name suggests, this component is not part of the initial package. Even though sites are encouraged to invest in these additional trainings to refresh and advance their practice, all follow-up or additional trainings are contingent on site budgets. The

² See <http://www.cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/>

interviews suggest that follow-up coaching is seldom utilized due to budget constraints, and survey results indicate that administrators are more likely than classroom staff to attend advanced trainings.

Sustainability is promoted by other means. Per the surveys, the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team most commonly recommends the continuation of the site leadership team. As part of the leadership team, sites are encouraged to document and monitor implementation using a Benchmarks of Quality tool. The Teaching Pyramid team also facilitate involvement with countywide leadership teams, which administrators said they valued for the opportunities they provided to network with other Teaching Pyramid sites and organizations. These meetings built and reinforced regional buy-in, which led to a strong base of educators advocating to local decision makers for continued Teaching Pyramid training support, mainly in terms of funding.

Other resources and tools also are provided. The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team administers the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) as a measure of how well teachers are implementing the Teaching Pyramid. This tool involves classroom observations and a teacher interview. The results suggest, however, that there is a need for more frequent and widespread administration of the tool. Additionally, there is annual symposia where teachers and administrators present on their sites' Teaching Pyramid practices. This meeting is highly regarded as another much appreciated chance to network with colleagues. Through Wiggio—an online forum open to partner sites—members can ask other members questions, access and download materials and resources, participate in webinars, and obtain information about upcoming events. Wiggio has the potential to be of great benefit, but some evaluation participants reported not knowing how best to navigate the site. Finally, the Teaching Pyramid website provides background, family, and classroom materials, as well as other resources. This site is open to anyone, not just partner sites.

Partner Site Implementation of Teaching Pyramid Components

While the selected partner sites were chosen due to their perceived consistent implementation, it is still important to document their actual implementation because the Teaching Pyramid recommends all four of the above components be implemented to achieve “fidelity and sustainability over time.”³ All of the selected partner sites had participated in the staff training series. Each had at least one administrator, as well as classroom staff, attend the three core modules (Modules 1–3a). All sites had received a Teaching Pyramid coach as part of the package of services in the initial year. Sites were also encouraged to identify an internal coach to support teachers in deploying Teaching Pyramid strategies, although the survey results call into question the level of implementation of this component.

According to the partner site administrator surveys and interviews, seven out of the eight sites reported having a program leadership team. However, teacher interviews suggest that the team and its role may not have been prominent or always visible to staff members who were not actually on the team. Evaluators found that leadership regarding the Teaching Pyramid often took place in the context of regular staff meetings and staff development efforts rather than in the context of formal Teaching Pyramid leadership team.

The site leadership team is also charged with conducting the Benchmarks of Quality assessment to monitor site-wide implementation. The assessment provides information regarding the implementation of 10 critical elements of the Teaching Pyramid. Data were only available for six of the eight selected

³ Source: <http://www.cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/components.html>

partner sites. Additionally, for those six sites, the data showed that the least implemented area was monitoring implementation data and outcomes.

All sites had practices in place, to varying degrees, to ensure continuation of the Teaching Pyramid. These sustainable practices ranged from utilizing advanced trainings and refreshers or ongoing Teaching Pyramid coaching, to including Teaching Pyramid topics in staff meetings, to simply practicing strategies with co-workers. Sites also utilized leadership team meetings to further support their Teaching Pyramid work.

Partner Site Policies and Procedures for Working with Children with Challenging Behaviors

All but one of the selected partner sites had a policy for working with children with challenging behaviors. A few sites changed aspects of their existing policies and procedures as a result of their participation in Teaching Pyramid training. These changes included rewriting referral forms to include more Teaching Pyramid language and strategies, changing forms completely, such as lesson plans, and overlaying Teaching Pyramid strategies on existing policies and procedures. However, most sites already had clear policies in place that were agency-specific and could not be changed.

Impact of Teaching Pyramid Professional Development

The results of the evaluation suggest that Teaching Pyramid professional development led to increased knowledge and use of classroom strategies to foster social-emotional development. Additionally, the professional development influenced both individual attitudes and organizational culture.

Knowledge

Most classroom staff in selected partner sites felt they were knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable about strategies to promote healthy social-emotional development. When asked what they attributed this knowledge to, the most common answer was professional development, including Teaching Pyramid training.

Furthermore, the results of the other surveys—i.e., the non-partner practicing site training attendee survey and pre- and post-training surveys at the new entry site—indicated that staff increased their knowledge after receiving professional development. Training attendees perceived the largest increases in their knowledge of positive descriptive acknowledgement (PDA), specific strategies to teach conflict resolution skills, and specific strategies to teach children how to recognize their own feelings.

Classroom Practice

The evaluation evidence suggests that the Teaching Pyramid positively influenced classroom practice. The vast majority of teachers and teachers' assistants said they usually or always used specific Teaching Pyramid strategies such as giving specific positive acknowledgement when children demonstrated appropriate behaviors, intentionally planning for transitions, and referring to classroom expectations when talking to children about their behavior.

Most classroom staff had posted a daily schedule with pictures and program-wide expectations on the wall, and had arranged the classroom to prevent challenging behaviors. Likewise, the post-training survey at the entry site showed a significant increase in frequency of giving PDA, intentionally planning for transitions, and referring to classroom expectations.

Individual and Organizational Attitudes

Teachers felt that their application of Teaching Pyramid practices increased their sense of professional self-efficacy, resulting in more fulfilling and satisfying interactions with children; staff members also linked these feelings to their own job satisfaction. Teachers noted that they felt more “calm,” “relaxed,” and “in control.” In many cases, interviewees reported that the training affirmed pre-existing beliefs about early childhood education. However, being given tools to more actively reflect on the meaning of children’s behavior, respond constructively, and witness changes in children’s behavior offered tangible evidence of their own ability to positively impact the children in their care.

As previously noted, language was one of the biggest practical shifts that occurred across partner sites, and this shift extended not only to children but also to adults. Adults gave each other positive descriptive acknowledgement, and this enhanced interpersonal relationships as well as feelings of respect and recognition. Many teachers reported feeling more appreciated and having increased enjoyment at work. Given the importance of collaboration and team teaching in this context, stronger collegial relationships bode well for morale and the sustainability of the Teaching Pyramid framework.

More Effective Support of Children with Challenging Behaviors

The Teaching Pyramid aims to prevent challenging behaviors before intensive intervention is required, and most teachers focused on this aspect. Nevertheless, challenging behaviors can arise, and the results of the surveys and interviews suggest that approximately half of the classroom staff felt confident or extremely confident that they could support children who exhibited challenging behaviors. One teacher explained, “I have more tools....The strategies are more clear and organized in my mind.” Yet, teachers also reported wanting even more support with strategies to address these challenging behaviors, such as support using Behavior Observation Reports – a form that helps teachers analyze and interpret the meaning of a challenging behavior.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The goal of this evaluation was to assess the Teaching Pyramid professional development and its impact on early childhood education practitioners’ knowledge, practice, and attitudes. The evaluation results show that the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team provides high quality trainings and coaching. Teaching Pyramid professional development positively contributes to increased understanding and use of strategies to promote healthy social-emotional development, and gives educators more confidence when dealing with challenging behaviors. Furthermore, site staff reported that applying the Teaching Pyramid resulted in more fulfilling and satisfying interactions with both children and co-workers.

Strengths of Teaching Pyramid Professional Development

- Promotes the use of classroom strategies throughout California that foster healthy social-emotional development in children and appropriately support children with challenging behaviors.
- Provides high-quality training modules designed to engage early childhood education staff in meaningful learning experiences.
- Provides strength-based follow-up coaching that facilitates teachers applying their learnings in the classroom.
- Engages staff site-wide to promote sustainable change in classroom language, environment, and practice.
- Provides wonderful networking and learning opportunities through its annual Symposium.

Recommendations

The findings from this study were overwhelmingly positive, confirming the work and efforts of the Teaching Pyramid staff and partner sites. The recommendations below are intended to further strengthen the program.

Recommendation 1: Follow-up for Sustainability

Even though sites are encouraged to invest in follow-up trainings and coaching to advance and refresh their practice, these trainings are contingent upon site budgets and many site staff are unable to participate. As demonstrated by the survey results (Table 2), some classroom staff have never received formal training or received any coaching. Follow-up training is an important part of implementation at fidelity since staff may have attended Teaching Pyramid training years ago or there may be new teachers. Administrators and teachers identified coaching as an essential piece of implementation and sustained growth. CDE should explore additional ways to encourage and financially support sites in Teaching Pyramid trainings and coaching after their initial first year.

Additionally, the leadership team, combined with strong administrative presence and support for the Teaching Pyramid at the various sites, is essential for continuing site-wide practice. The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team should continue to provide guidance and support to the site leadership team, even after the first year. This continued guidance for partner sites should specifically address how to effectively use data to improve Teaching Pyramid implementation.

Recommendation 2: Data Collection, Monitoring, and Sharing

CDE and the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team should explore how to promote more consistent collection, monitoring, and sharing of data by partner sites. Not all of the selected partner sites had Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) data available. Since these data foster quality implementation of the Teaching Pyramid, the Teaching Pyramid team could work with sites to ensure more timely collection and sharing of these data. Likewise, the BOQ data showed that monitoring implementation and outcome data was not “in place” for any of the sites. The Teaching Pyramid team should explore how to support the partner sites, not only in the collection and sharing, but also in the use of the data.

There is also a need for more timely and widespread administration of the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT). As this tool is administered by the WestEd Teaching Pyramid Team, and not the sites, they should consider training more personnel to administer the tool more frequently.

Recommendation 3: Manageable and Accessible Training and Coaching

The trainings are highly regarded for their content and delivery, yet they are intense and require engagement at a high level. The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team should consider the option of offering shorter, more frequent sessions. In addition, some participants’ first language is not English and they have varying degrees of proficiency. As such, materials and training in Spanish could provide even greater access for Spanish speaking teachers. Further, much of the Teaching Pyramid strategy use is language dependent. Many materials have been translated already for use with families, but the Teaching Pyramid should continue to expand this practice and make all materials available to teachers and families in multiple languages. Similarly, WestEd Teaching Pyramid team should continue its efforts to recruit and train bilingual coaches.

Recommendation 4: Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviors

There is a need for more professional development around challenging behaviors. While the initial training and coaching supports these needs, there is the opportunity for more classroom staff to become confident in their ability to support these children. Some teachers also expressed a desire to learn more about addressing “top of the Pyramid” children.

Recommendation 5: Wiggio Support

Access to Wiggio is made available to partner sites; however, as part of follow-up support, the Teaching Pyramid team should consider adding a mini-unit on using and navigating Wiggio to get the most out of this extensive resource.

Recommendation 6: Expanded Funding and Incentives for Data Collection

A common theme throughout the findings and recommendations is the need for increased funds for further training, coaching, and teacher release time. The Teaching Pyramid is extremely well-received, and additional funding would help sustain the program and expand its reach. With the phasing out of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants, CDE could explore different funding models. Additionally, CDE could consider how to set aside funds to incentive consistent data collection and use by the partner sites. Thus, CDE should consider how to secure additional funding for training, coaching, and data support, while recognizing constraints within the ECE field.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

In the spring of 2015, the California Department of Education (CDE) contracted with the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) SRM Evaluation Group to conduct an evaluation of Teaching Pyramid professional development for early childhood education providers. The Teaching Pyramid, also known as the California Collaborative on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CA CSEFEL), provides a systematic framework for promoting healthy social-emotional development in young children and preventing challenging behaviors. The WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies provides Teaching Pyramid professional development for early childhood education staff in California.

The purpose of this evaluation was to better understand the impact of the Teaching Pyramid professional development on early childhood education practitioners' knowledge, practice, and attitudes. The evaluation questions addressed process and implementation, as well as outcomes. The specific questions that guided the evaluation are shown below.

Process/Implementation Questions

1. What systematic services does WestEd's Teaching Pyramid team provide to administrators and early childhood education teaching teams, and what is the quality of those services?
2. To what extent has WestEd's Teaching Pyramid team provided guidance and support to ensure continuation of Teaching Pyramid practices when its support is discontinued?
3. To what extent have partner sites implemented the Teaching Pyramid professional development components?
4. To what extent have partner sites developed specific policies and procedures for working with children who have challenging behaviors?

Outcome Questions

1. What is the impact of the Teaching Pyramid professional development on program/site and teaching staff?
2. To what extent has Teaching Pyramid professional development prepared staff to more effectively support children, including those with challenging behaviors?

The evaluation team gathered information through surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and training observations to answer these questions. Sites were purposively selected by CDE, the WestEd Teaching Pyramid Team, and the UCLA team. More detail on the selection process and the sites can be found in the Evaluation Design, Methods, and Limitations section.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND DESIGN

Teaching Pyramid Background

The Teaching Pyramid is based upon the principles of the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (National CSEFEL). National CSEFEL is housed at Vanderbilt University and is a project designed to strengthen the capacity of Head Start and childcare programs in order to improve the social and emotional outcomes of young children. It was initially funded in 2003 by the Office of Head Start and the Child Care Bureau, with support from the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in order to (a) promote the social-emotional development and school readiness of young children, ages birth to five, and (b) disseminate research and evidence-based practices to early childhood programs across the country.

In California, the National CSEFEL framework was adapted by the San Marcos Office of the WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies (referred to in this report as the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team) to include four professional development components. The four components—training modules, coaching, leadership team, and follow-up for sustainability—provide a greater emphasis on implementation with fidelity and sustainability. California’s adapted program is known as the Teaching Pyramid. It is part of the California Collaborative on Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CA CSEFEL), a state-wide multi-agency group focused on spreading the Teaching Pyramid framework throughout California. Please see the sidebar for more information regarding the California adaptations.⁴

Initially, First 5 Los Angeles (First 5 LA) funded the San Marcos Office of the WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies to provide training and technical assistance to six school readiness sites in Los Angeles County. The Early Education & Support Division (EESD) of the California Department of Education (CDE) later united with the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team to have California become an official partner. CDE funded the program with a portion of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant funds. The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team and EESD currently co-lead CA CSEFEL.

CALIFORNIA ENHANCEMENTS

In addition to the four professional development components, the CA CSEFEL Teaching Pyramid has been adapted and enhanced in several ways, including but not limited to:

- Aligning materials with the CA Early Learning & Development System
- Increased focus on teacher’s self-reflection and emotional experience
- Addition of early childhood mental health concepts
- Use of positive descriptive acknowledgement (PDA) to promote intrinsic motivation
- Addition of education on brain development
- Streamlined forms and materials
- Removal of time-out and physical restraint references
- Presence of a systematic conflict resolution process
- Focus on teachers’ and administrators’ understanding of concepts behind the strategies

⁴ Source: http://cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/materials/family/CACSEFEL_Enhancements.pdf

Teaching Pyramid Professional Development Components

The Teaching Pyramid approach provides a systematic, tiered framework that promotes social and emotional development, prevents challenging behavior, and addresses problematic behavior (Figure 1). This approach is grounded in the Early Childhood Positive Behavior Support (EC-PBS) model. The base of the pyramid fosters nurturing and responsive relationships for all children, along with building supportive classroom environments, with the goal of preventing challenging behaviors. As you move towards the top of the pyramid, it targets those children who need more emotional supports and/or intensive interventions

Figure 1: Teaching Pyramid Tiered Approach



The Teaching Pyramid professional development is a package of services and early childhood education providers contract with the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team to receive them. These services are site-based, meaning multiple staff across early childhood education sites receive training. Sites include those in public school districts, Head Start programs, Title V-funded programs, community-based organizations, private centers, and county offices of education. The professional development package includes four components: (1) staff training in four modules; (2) coaching; (3) a leadership team; and (4) follow-up for sustainability (training and technical assistance). The first three components typically occur within the first year, over the course of six to nine months, and the follow-up for sustainability component is optional in subsequent years. The sections that follow provide an overview of the four components; the Evaluation Findings section provides more detail.

Training Modules

The training series is composed of four 8-hour modules (Modules 1, 2, 3a, and 3b). The modules follow the tiered Teaching Pyramid framework, progressing from the base of the pyramid, focusing on building strong relationships and supportive environments, through more targeted social-emotional development strategies and, ultimately, individualized interventions that address persistent challenging behavior. The module topics are as follows:

- Module 1: Promoting Children's Success: Building Relationships and Creating Supportive Environments
- Module 2: Social-Emotional Teaching Strategies
- Module 3a: Determining the Meaning of Challenging Behavior
- Module 3b: Individualized Intensive Interventions

Technical assistance is also provided to support classroom teachers in implementing Teaching Pyramid strategies in their classrooms.

Coaching

In between each training module, a WestEd Teaching Pyramid team coach schedules follow-up observations and meetings to assess how participants are integrating Teaching Pyramid strategies and practices in the classroom. The coach observes and videotapes a portion of the day, then meets with participants to watch the video and debrief. The teachers and coach develop an action plan that includes strategies for teachers to practice, feedback for the coach, and next steps.

Typically, a session includes two to three teachers and/or assistants who are in the same classroom. These sessions are meant to parallel the approach teachers take with their students, and therefore the coach and teachers focus on what is going well and how to build on those strengths—for example, through the use of positive descriptive acknowledgements (PDAs).

Additionally, each site is asked to identify at least one individual to receive training to act as an internal coach to work with classroom teachers, build site capacity, and provide ongoing support for implementation of the Teaching Pyramid approach.

Leadership Team

The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team assists each site in developing a leadership team, composed of administrators, teachers, and specialists, which acts as a steering committee for program-wide implementation of the Teaching Pyramid. They facilitate team meetings over the first year, which occur at least five times during the training cycle. The leadership team monitors technical assistance and training needs, as well as problem-solves for classroom- or site-specific issues. Leadership team members attend trainings and provide support for training, coaching, and classroom practices.

Follow-up for Sustainability

Programs that have successfully completed the minimum training series and coaching sessions are provided access to advanced training and additional technical assistance to strengthen the staff knowledge base and ensure sustainability. This aspect of the Teaching Pyramid training is optional, and implementation is dependent on the site's ability to secure the necessary funding.

Site Classifications

As previously mentioned, sites implementing the Teaching Pyramid include school districts, Head Start programs, Title V-funded programs, community-based organizations, private centers, and county offices of education. These sites are classified into four types:

- **Entry site:** Entry sites have begun adopting the Teaching Pyramid approach and have some but not all of the components in place. These sites are interested in growing to the next level.
- **Practicing site:** Practicing sites are using the approach and implementing some or all of the components.
- **Partner site:** Partner sites have completed the three primary components, and are interested in sustainability and fidelity. These sites collaborate with the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team to collect data, share practices, and support site-wide implementation.

- **Partner site with mentor classroom:** Within some partner sites, individual classrooms undergo administration of the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPO) and receive a designation of “implementing with fidelity.” These classrooms are identified as mentor classrooms, and these sites are committed to sharing their practices by mentoring other programs.

As of April 2015, there were 21 partner sites from 12 counties (Alameda, Fresno, Glenn, Merced, Monterey, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego, Santa Clara, San Francisco, Ventura, Yolo). Within these sites, seven classrooms had been designated as mentor classrooms.

EVALUATION DESIGN, METHODS, AND LIMITATIONS

Evaluation Design

The evaluation team used a mixed-methods approach to answer the evaluation questions, drawing from surveys, observations, interviews, and secondary data. The approach was a convergent parallel design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) where the survey, observation, and interview data were collected concurrently and triangulated in the analysis.

Sample Selection

As noted in the previous section, early childhood education sites that receive Teaching Pyramid professional development are classified into one of four types: entry, practicing, partner, and partner with mentor classroom. Since the goal of the evaluation was to assess professional development, UCLA, CDE, and the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team decided to focus on partner sites because they had received most or all of the professional development components.

Eight partner sites were identified as consistently implementing the Teaching Pyramid components and included in the study. While this approach offers the ability to understand outcomes for sites that had implemented (or received the “dosage” of) the professional development components, it also introduces the potential for selection bias. To balance this potential bias, one entry site was also included. Supplemental surveys were also given to staff from practicing sites who had attended Teaching Pyramid training within the last two years. The selected sites represented a mix of types of agencies served, including school districts, private non-profits, Head Start programs, and community colleges.

Survey Methods

Five surveys were conducted as part of this evaluation. All of the following surveys collected data regarding the knowledge and use of Teaching Pyramid strategies:

- Survey of selected partner site classroom staff
- Survey of selected partner site administrators
- Survey of training attendees from non-partner practicing sites
- Pre- and post-training surveys of training attendees from an entry site

Since the focus of the evaluation was on the partner sites, the survey analysis primarily focused on the results of the partner site classroom staff and administrator surveys. The surveys from other sites provide supplemental information to better understand the professional development’s impact outside of the partner site context.

Partner Site Surveys

The survey of selected partner site classroom staff occurred between October 2015 and January 2016. Since the number of staff at each partner site was small (30 or fewer), the evaluation team distributed and collected hard copies in order to increase response rates. During site visits, the surveys were distributed to teachers, teachers’ assistants, and any other classroom staff. Eighty-four percent of eligible classroom staff completed the survey.

Partner site administrators were surveyed between October 2015 and January 2016 to gather information about the organization and implementation of the Teaching Pyramid components. This survey was conducted online, via SurveyMonkey. At least one administrator from each site received an email with a survey link. Thirteen administrators were invited to participate and 11 surveys were completed, with one or more administrators at each site completing the survey.

Practicing Site Surveys

The survey of training attendees from non-partner practicing sites was conducted in October and November 2015. This survey gathered feedback from those who had attended a Teaching Pyramid training within the last two years (2013–2014 and 2014–2015). The sampling frame was compiled from the email addresses of those who attended training, with partner site attendees removed. The online survey was sent to all email addresses on the sampling frame. A total of 901 surveys were sent and 297 were returned, for a 33% response rate.

Entry Site Surveys

The pre- and post-training surveys at the entry site were designed to better understand changes in teacher knowledge and practice and to gather perception data about the quality of the trainings. The evaluation team surveyed one new site whose staff had received the module training. The pre-training survey was given at the beginning of the first module in the fall of 2015. The post-training survey was given in the spring of 2016 after the last module in the series. The surveys were administered in hard copy at the trainings, distributed and collected by evaluation staff. A total of 42 surveys were collected at the first training (pre-training), and 40 were collected at the last (post-training). One hundred percent of those who received a survey completed it. The post-training survey asked respondents whether they had completed a pre-training survey, so that the pre- and post-training surveys could be compared.

Table 1: Survey Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	Partner Site Survey (Classroom Staff)		Practicing Site Survey (Training Attendees)		Entry Site Survey (Post-Training)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Position Type (Multiple Responses Allowed)						
Program Director, Site Administrator/Supervisor	9	9%	58	25%	6	15%
Teacher	62	60%	119	50%	16	40%
Teacher's Assistant	33	32%	25	11%	21	53%
Other	2	2%	55	23%	3	8%
Total	106	103% ^a	237	109% ^a	46	115% ^a
Years of Working in Early Childhood Education						
Less than 5 years	31	30%	33	11%	7	18%
5 to 9 years	28	27%	48	17%	14	35%
10 to 19 years	25	24%	116	40%	15	38%
20 or more years	19	18%	92	32%	4	10%
Total	103	100%	289	100%	40	100%
Missing	2		8		0	
Highest Level of Education						
High School Diploma/GED	32	32%	13	6%	10	26%
Associate's Degree	26	26%	48	21%	8	21%
Bachelor's Degree	29	29%	84	36%	13	33%
Master's Degree or Higher	10	10%	67	29%	4	10%
Other	3	3%	21	9%	4	10%
Total	100	100%	233	100%	39	100%
Missing	5		64		1	
Ethnicity (Multiple Responses Allowed)						
African American	4	4%	10	4%	5	13%
Asian	15	15%	26	11%	0	0%
Native American/Alaska Native	0	0	5	2%	2	5%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0	3	1%	2	5%
Hispanic/Latino	56	57%	93	40%	20	51%
White	20	20%	87	38%	20	51%
Other	2	2%	7	3%	0	0%
Declined to State	3	3%	14	6%	0	0%
Total	100	101% ^a	245	106% ^a	49	126% ^a
Gender						
Male	4	4%	8	3%	not asked	not asked
Female	95	96%	223	97%	not asked	not asked
Total	99	100%	231	100%	not asked	not asked
Missing	6		66			

^a Responses total more than 100% due to respondents choosing more than one response.

Observation and Interview Methods

In order to represent the scope, characteristics, and quality of support offered by the Teaching Pyramid program, the evaluation team conducted observations and interviews over 12 months at the selected partner sites. Similarly to the survey, pre- and post-training observations were conducted at the entry site.

Observation Data Collection

Observations of Teaching Pyramid trainings (n = 4), classroom teaching (n = 24), a statewide leadership team meeting (n = 1), a trainer of trainers session (n = 1), and a coaching session (n = 1) were conducted at the various agencies. Observations lasted 1–8 hours, depending on the event being observed. Specifically, trainings lasted 8 hours, the statewide leadership team meeting observation lasted 6 hours, and classroom observations and the coaching meeting lasted approximately 1 hour. Field notes were taken at each event.

Interview Data Collection

Interviews were conducted at each of the partner sites with teachers (n = 20) and administrators (n = 15). One WestEd Teaching Pyramid team coach was also interviewed. The researchers also had many less formal conversations, during which WestEd Teaching Pyramid team staff, teachers, site administrators, and coaches shared information about their history at each site, their processes, and other details relevant to the context of their work. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Field notes were taken following the informal conversations.

Analysis Methods

The survey data were analyzed using descriptive and, where appropriate, inferential statistical methods. Raw data were either downloaded from SurveyMonkey or entered from hardcopies and imported into SPSS statistical analysis software. The data were cleaned and prepared for analysis. The analysis included those who worked with preschool children within the last 3 years. The observation and interview data were reviewed, manually coded, and then interpreted, looking at the themes and patterns that emerged.

The evaluation team assessed patterns and themes from all datasets (surveys, interviews, and observations), searching for commonalities and dissimilarities. These findings were used to answer the evaluation questions and to form conclusions. While the analysis investigated site variation due to implementation differences, the results are not reported by site to protect confidentiality.

Limitations

Although generalizability of the findings was not a goal of this evaluation, it should be noted that the selected partner sites were identified as those with consistent implementation. Moreover, data from multiple years showed that these sites had very low teacher turnover.⁵ Site visits also suggested strong administrator support, including financial support, and management buy-in for the Teaching Pyramid. These conditions likely contributed to the use and continuation of Teaching Pyramid practices. Thus, when considering the findings of this evaluation, context must be recognized. Specifically, these sites

⁵ Although the intent was to analyze changes in teacher turnover over time, the turnover was too low (i.e., zero or one person per year) to reliably analyze trend changes due to the Teaching Pyramid.

may differ in important ways from sites that do not implement consistently, particularly in relation to organizational support. As such, the outcomes may not be the same for sites that lack these favorable conditions.

Another limitation is the lack of student data. While this evaluation intended to analyze Desired Results Development Profile Data (DRDP) over time, some of the sites either did not have or were unable to access data for previous years. Furthermore, with the change from DRDP 2010 to DRDP 2015, the data were not directly comparable across years.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Teaching Pyramid professional development was evaluated using a framework similar to Thomas Guskey's (2000) *5 Levels of Professional Development*, which identified the features of high quality professional development and a structure for gathering relevant evaluation evidence. Through surveys, interviews, observations, and other data sources, information was gathered on the training modules, coaching, administrator and classroom staff learning and use of new knowledge and skills, and partner site organizational context.

Teaching Pyramid Services and Support

What systematic services does WestEd's Teaching Pyramid team provide to administrators and early childhood education teaching teams, and what is the quality of those services?

This section sheds light on the professional development services offered by the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team and the quality of those services. As described in the Program Background and Design section, the Teaching Pyramid professional development is a package of services that includes staff training in four modules; coaching; facilitation of a leadership team; and follow-up for sustainability through training and technical assistance. The first three components typically occur within the first year, and the follow-up component is optional in subsequent years. Each is discussed in turn.

Training Modules

As previously noted, training and technical assistance typically occurs over the course of six to nine months. The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team leads four modules to introduce key concepts, provide practical strategies, and engage in meaningful learning experiences that support the integration of the Teaching Pyramid approach into everyday teaching practices. Modules include interactive discussions, video presentations, and hands-on activities. They center on the following topics:

- Module 1: Promoting Children's Success by Building Relationships and Creating Supportive Environments
- Module 2: Social-Emotional Teaching Strategies
- Module 3a: Determining the Meaning of Challenging Behavior
- Module 3b: Individualized Intensive Interventions

To emphasize the importance of a strong foundation, portions of Modules 2, 3a, and 3b are also devoted to reviewing the principles from Module 1. Specifically, throughout the four modules, trainers continually stress the importance of relationships and environment as the key to success of the Teaching Pyramid. All of the observed training modules were led by WestEd Teaching Pyramid team certified trainers. At one of the observed trainings, two "trainers in training" directed portions in fulfillment of their certification requirements.⁶

⁶ The "train-the-trainers" program is offered by the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team to certify those who are interested in teaching the Teaching Pyramid modules. They also offers a similar coaching training program.

Site staff attend the training modules (and receive coaching) as part of a site-based team. As the interviews revealed, this format is beneficial because it provides the ability to focus small group discussions on site-specific issues, an increased sense of accountability to colleagues, and shared development of language and instructional habits necessary for implementing the Teaching Pyramid consistently at the site. Some interviewees attributed better classroom implementation and outcomes to being part of the same training cohort as other members of their classroom team; they noted that having an entire team trained was essential to success at the classroom level.

As part of the trainings, participants receive a binder containing printed copies of all of the PowerPoint presentations and resources covered in the four modules. This binder serves as the main written reference for participants throughout the training modules, mirroring the training in its content and order of presentation of topics. Not only was the binder heavily relied upon during the trainings, teachers at partner sites consistently cited it as one of their main resources as they implemented the Teaching Pyramid months or years after the training. In addition to the binder, training participants are encouraged to access online resources through the Teaching Pyramid section of the Working Together for Inclusion & Belonging website, as well as the National CSEFEL website.⁷

Overall, the training modules were high quality. Interview participants were uniformly positive about and appreciative of their overall experience with the module series. It should be noted that, although the majority of respondents felt the time was well spent, some felt that the eight-hour day was “too long,” “overwhelming,” and/or “intense,” and they suggested shorter, more frequent trainings would be preferable. Nevertheless, even those who noted difficulty in losing their Saturdays or missing work felt it was a worthwhile experience. Participants reported leaving each module with concrete ideas for how to implement Teaching Pyramid strategies.

The post-training survey results at the entry site support this positive assessment. For all four modules, the survey asked about the knowledge levels of the instructors, whether the time was well spent, and how useful the trainings were to participants’ everyday work. Almost of all of the respondents (97%–100%) rated their instructors as “knowledgeable” or “extremely knowledgeable.” For each module, more than nine out of 10 felt like their time in the trainings was well spent. Likewise, almost of the attendees (95%–97%) said the trainings were useful or extremely useful to their everyday work. In open-ended comments in the surveys, as well as in interviews, participants reported very positive opinions of their trainers, often naming specific trainers and describing them in terms such as “very knowledgeable” and “awesome.”

Coaching

As described in the Program Background and Design section, four coaching sessions are provided during the training period. The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team coach meets with site teachers after each training module and conducts classroom observations and provides feedback. Coaches develop an action plan that outlines how to incorporate Teaching Pyramid concepts and tools in the classroom.

The observed coaching session highlighted the remarkable quality of the coaching services. The strengths-based approach appeared to validate teachers’ concerns of how difficult it was to apply strategies in the moment, and to give them the tools to improve. The coach walked through a taped experience, pinpointing where staff had enacted concepts and modeling what they could do next time.

⁷ See <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/> and <http://www.cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/>

Throughout the session, the coach highlighted sections in participants' binders to review and continually pushed strategies for sustaining Teaching Pyramid implementation once coaching ended.

At the partner sites, interviewees had nothing but praise for the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team coaches with whom they worked. Their comments affirmed that coaches were highly knowledgeable educators and experts on the Teaching Pyramid model. Moreover, they felt coaches were skilled at making participants feel at ease, and successful in cultivating a positive, nonjudgmental, and constructive tone when offering feedback. Finally, the participants viewed the coaches as accessible for additional help if and when it was needed.

Importantly, although all participants had positive things to say about coaching in general, not all partner site participants were able to speak about their coaching experiences in great detail. This was especially true for those who had completed the initial training a year or more before the interview. Some participants also had difficulty differentiating between the WestEd Teaching Pyramid coach and other instructional coaches who had visited their classrooms—coaches who may have been trained on the Teaching Pyramid but were not associated with the coaching component of the Teaching Pyramid program. For example, one participant noted that in addition to the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team coach visits, her First 5 Coach was CSEFEL-trained and helped with some Teaching Pyramid strategies. Likewise, some partner sites had an administrator or other person on staff who acted as an internal Teaching Pyramid coach in addition to other coaching and professional learning support duties.

Leadership Team

The establishment of a site-based leadership team is considered the first step in implementing the Teaching Pyramid model and, as part of the package of services, the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team oversees its development. Program documents state the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team will work with site contacts to facilitate the formation of an initial leadership team, composed of administrators, supervisors, teachers, and specialist staff. This team is expected to meet once prior to the initial training modules and five times during the training cycle. The ultimate purpose of the leadership team is to act as a guiding force for Teaching Pyramid support and site-wide impact, and to oversee Teaching Pyramid growth and implementation alongside and beyond the training modules.

The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team facilitates and encourages involvement with countywide leadership teams. Administrators at seven of the eight surveyed partner sites reported that at least one person at their site participated in a county-level leadership team. Administrator interviewees valued these teams for the opportunities they provided to network with other Teaching Pyramid sites and organizations. These meetings also served to build and reinforce regional buy-in among participating early childhood education providers, which in turn led to a strong base of educators advocating for continued Teaching Pyramid training support (mainly in terms of funding priorities) to local decision makers.

To what extent has WestEd's Teaching Pyramid team provided guidance and support to ensure continuation of Teaching Pyramid practices when its support is discontinued?

A key element of any professional development program is the ability of service recipients to sustain practices learned beyond the point at which direct training is offered. The Teaching Pyramid has mechanisms for sustainability built into the program, most explicitly through the fourth professional development component—follow-up for sustainability. Additionally, the leadership team at each

participating site is designed to promote Teaching Pyramid practices after initial WestEd Teaching Pyramid team services end. The Teaching Pyramid also provides a plethora of resources that early childhood education providers can access. This section describes these services and resources.

Follow-up for Sustainability

The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team provides training sessions on advanced topics, training refreshers, technical assistance for leadership teams, and additional coaching. Advanced training sessions include:⁸

- Diverse Perspectives on Behavior: Honoring Culture and Family Through Dialogue
- Acknowledge, Ask, Adapt: Training Strategies to Improve Communication with Family Members in Collaborative Relationships
- Spunky or Squirrely? The Relationship between Temperament and Behavior
- Using Music, Art, and Movement to Support Social-Emotional Development
- Skills for Life: Going Deeper with Conflict Resolution and Problem-Solving
- Close to Magic: Positive, Descriptive Acknowledgement Can Change Everything
- Practice Makes Permanent! Increasing Language Models while Building the Brain and Developing Social-Emotional Skills

Sites are encouraged to invest in these trainings to advance and refresh the practice of teachers who may have been trained initially over a year ago. However, all additional trainings are contingent on the site having the budget to incorporate them. In interviews, all administrators expressed concerns about how to deepen the knowledge of those who have been trained as well as to bring new people into the training; they expressed a desire to provide support and training for current staff and for new staff and substitutes. At the same time, some expressed regret at not having the funds to do everything they would like to do. For example, funding coaching beyond the first year is ideal as far as implementing with fidelity; however, many sites saw it as more cost effective to handle this in-house, with supervisors, administrators, and teachers driving the continued conversation.

Benchmarks of Quality Assessment

The partner site administrator survey asked whether the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team had provided guidance to ensure continuation of Teaching Pyramid practices once initial support had ended; all sites responded “yes.” Specifically, engagement with a leadership team—whether site-based or otherwise—was the most common example of guidance given. As part of its work with site-based leadership teams, the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team encourages the documentation of implementation using the Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) tool. Typically, the BOQ occurs annually each spring. The assessment collects data on the following 10 critical elements:

- A. Establish leadership team
- B. Staff buy-in
- C. Family involvement
- D. Program-wide expectations
- E. Strategies for teaching and acknowledging the program-wide expectations
- F. All classrooms demonstrate the adoption of the Teaching Pyramid
- G. Procedures for responding to challenging behavior

⁸ Source: <http://www.cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/sustainability.html>

- H. Staff support plan
- I. Coaching and technical assistance
- J. Monitoring implementation and outcomes

This BOQ tool allows sites to set Teaching Pyramid goals and monitor progress. The above items can be designated as “not in place,” “in process,” or “in place.”

The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team provided BOQ data for six of the eight selected partner sites. The lack of BOQ data for the remaining two sites could be an indication that their leadership teams did not conduct these self-assessments. The potential low implementation of this assessment tool itself was further supported by the interviews. Only one interviewee explicitly mentioned the BOQ; it came up in the context of discussing the countywide leadership team, where it was the focus of the work that happened there.

Other Resources and Tools

Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool

The Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) is considered a measure of program implementation fidelity. It is a copyrighted assessment instrument developed by researchers and used nationally. It is intended to be given by a trained administrator who observes a classroom and interviews the teachers within it. Implementation of the TPOT is the criterion for being designated as a partner site with mentor classroom, which is a great point of pride. For example, one site posted the designation on their public website, accompanied by a congratulatory letter to their teachers.

While use of the TPOT fosters sustainability, implementing it has some challenges. First, logistically, the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team does not have enough personnel trained to accommodate partner sites’ requests to have the TPOT administered. Second, the mentor designation stays with the classroom for three years, even if one or more of the observed teachers moves to another classroom and/or new untrained teachers join the classroom. Indeed, as evidenced by conversations with site staff, teacher teams frequently changed as teachers shifted to different classrooms.

Symposia

The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team holds annual symposia at which teachers and administrators are invited to showcase what they are doing at their sites to sustain, expand, and strengthen their use of the Teaching Pyramid. Topics included, engaging families, techniques for addressing challenging behavior, and how to use data to advocate for your program. Interviewed administrators and teachers acknowledged the benefits of attending these events and spoke enthusiastically about past and future symposia.

Online Resources

The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team provides background, family, and classroom materials, as well as other resources, on the Teaching Pyramid pages of the Working Together for Inclusion & Belonging website, which is open to anyone, not just partner sites.

Wiggio is an online forum open to partner sites through which teachers and administrators can ask questions of other members. They can also access and download materials and resources, participate in Teaching Pyramid webinars, and obtain information about upcoming events. Most administrators who were interviewed had accessed Wiggio, and some reported using it to find resources, such as In-Service

Spotlights. However, most also expressed some confusion about how best to use it. One interviewee noted that it had many great forums and resources but also commented, “It is not very intuitive. I am new to it, but I have a hard time finding what I want....I need a Wiggio lesson.”

Partner Site Implementation of Teaching Pyramid Components and Policies

To what extent have partner sites implemented the Teaching Pyramid professional development components?

While the selected partner sites were chosen due to their perceived consistent implementation, it was still important to document their actual implementation of the professional development components. The Teaching Pyramid team recommends that sites implement all four components in order to achieve fidelity and sustainability. In addition to the surveys and interviews, the BOQ assessment also provides data regarding site-wide implementation.

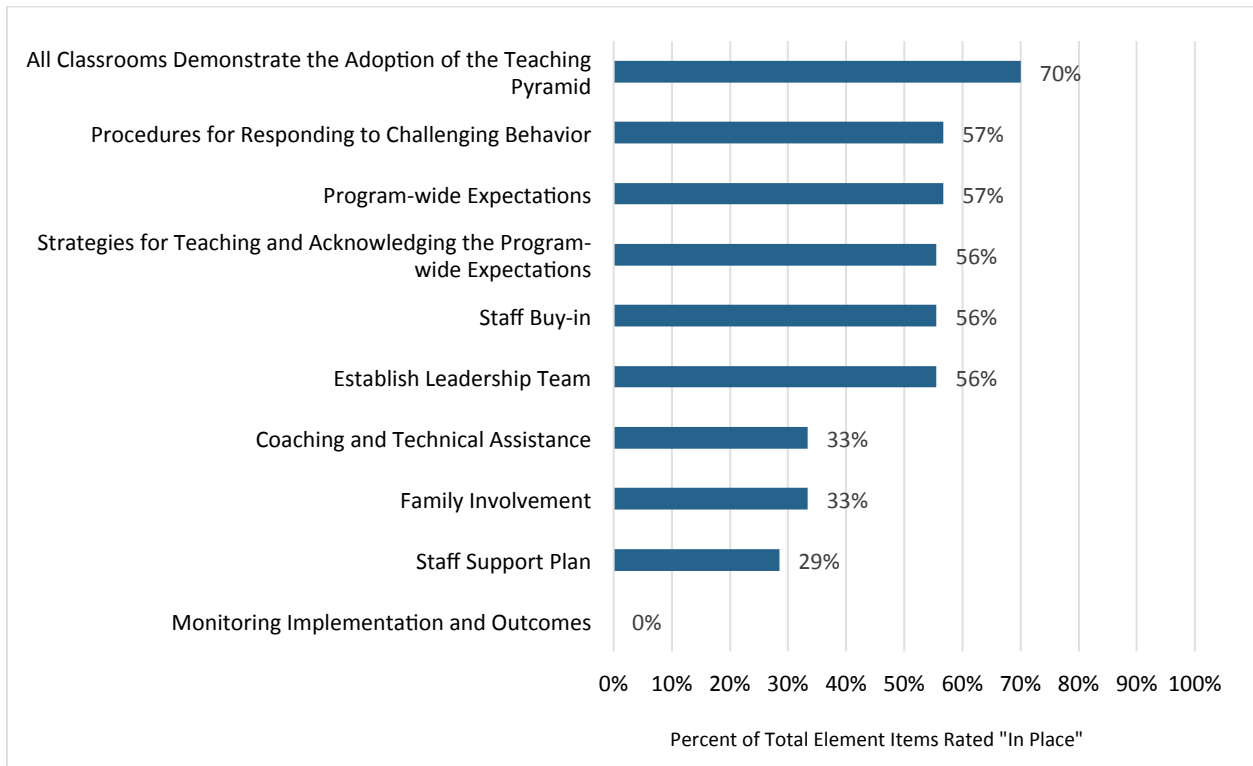
Benchmarks of Quality

As mentioned previously, Benchmarks of Quality is a site-wide assessment tool intended to be implemented by leadership teams. It provides information regarding the implementation of 10 critical elements of the Teaching Pyramid. Within each element, there a number of items to be rated. As part of this evaluation, the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team provided BOQ data from six of the eight selected partner sites.

At the six sites that completed the BOQ, there was distinction in the implementation of the critical elements. Figure 2 shows the percentage of each element’s total item responses that were rated “in place.” It does not reflect the percentage of sites, but rather provides a comparison of the critical element implementation across the sites. Of the ten critical elements, the adoption of the Teaching Pyramid in the classroom was ranked highest, with 70 percent of items rated as “in place.” This element included items like “teachers and program staff have strategies to promote positive relationships with children, each other, and families in place, and they use those strategies on a daily basis” and “teachers and program staff have arranged environments, materials, and curriculum in a manner that promotes social-emotional development and guides appropriate behavior.” The least implemented area was monitoring implementation and outcomes, with none of the item responses receiving “in place.”

There was variation among the sites. Two sites indicated “in place” implementation in most areas; two were in the middle, with a mixture of “in place” and “in process”; the remaining two were mostly “in process,” or reported a combination of “not in place” and “in process.”

Figure 2: Benchmarks of Quality Data for Selected Partner Sites



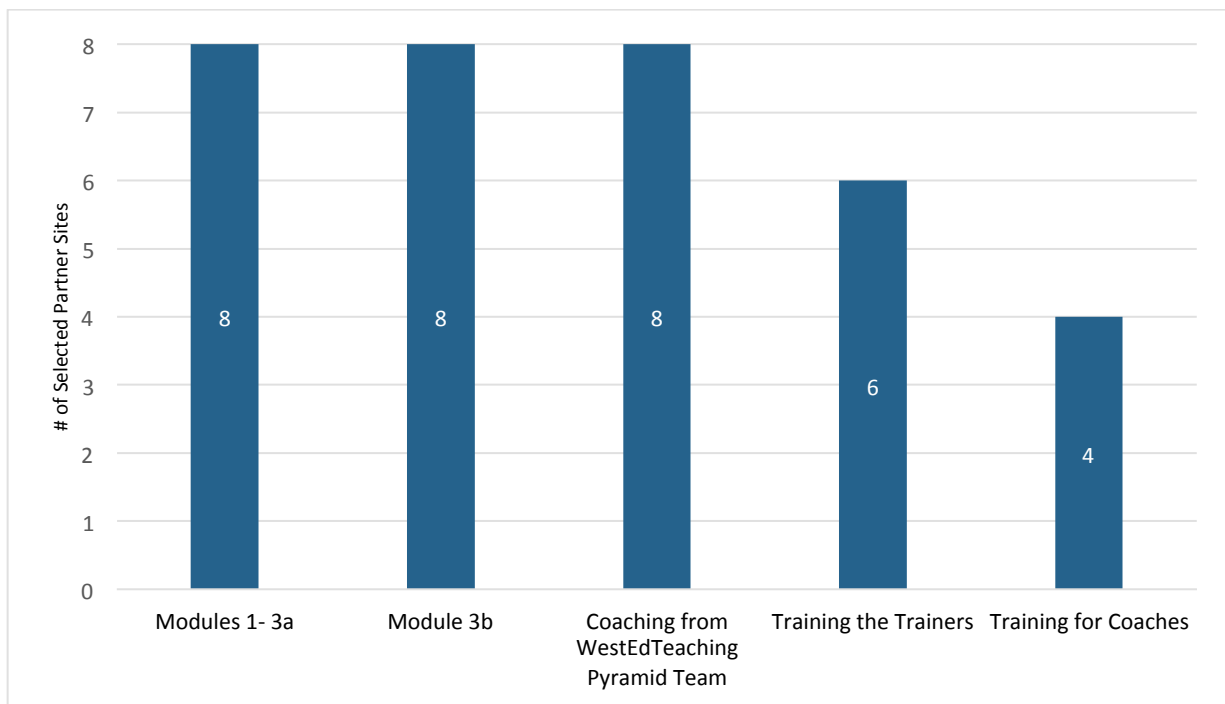
Source: WestEd internal data, July 2015.

Site Implementation of Training

As shown in Figure 3, all of the selected partner sites had participated in the training series. Each had at least one administrator, as well as classroom staff, attend the three core modules (Modules 1–3a). The fourth module (Module 3b) is intended for those supporting challenging behaviors and intensive interventions.

Some agencies that had adopted the Teaching Pyramid agency-wide had invested in having the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team train their own staff to lead the modules. This makes training new staff or those who missed the Teaching Pyramid trainings more cost-effective and efficient. As shown in Figure 3, six of the selected partner sites had invested in “training the trainers” and four had participated in training for coaches’ professional development.

Figure 3: Partner Site Participation in Teaching Pyramid Training and Coaching



Source: Partner site administrator survey, partner site administrator interviews, and partner site classroom staff survey (October 2015–January 2016).

Table 2 shows the percentage of site staff that received the various trainings. Modules 1 and 2 were the most commonly attended; 100% and 91% of administrators attended these trainings, respectively, and approximately three out of four classroom staff members (74% and 76%, respectively) did so. Although still a majority, fewer partner site staff attended Modules 3a and 3b. Eight out of the 11 administrators (73%) also participated in the “Going Deeper” training, and nine out of the 11 (82%) attended the webinars.

Table 2: Partner Site Staff Participation in Teaching Pyramid Trainings and Coaching

Teaching Pyramid Training Component	Administrators (n=11) ^a	Classroom Staff (n=101)
Module 1: Building Relationships and Creating Supportive Environments	100%	74%
Module 2: Social & Emotional Teaching Strategies	91%	76%
Module 3a: Individualized Intensive Intervention: Determining the Meaning of Challenging Behavior	82%	67%
Module 3b: Individualized Intervention	82%	58%
Going Deeper training	73%	31%
One-day overview training	18%	17%
3-hour online overview training	na	2%
Webinars	82%	7%
In-service spotlights	27%	15%
Coaching by WestEd Teaching Pyramid Team	45%	24%
Coaching by another program staff member	18%	13%
Other	18%	4%
None	0%	20%

^a The total sample size is 11, and one to two people can result in large percentage differences. As such, the percentages should be interpreted with caution.

Source: Partner site classroom staff survey, partner site administrator survey (October 2015–January 2016).

Site Implementation of Coaching

Coaching from the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team is part of the package of services in the initial year. Sites also are encouraged to identify an internal coach who will support classroom teachers in deploying the Teaching Pyramid strategies. The internal coach receives mentoring and support from a WestEd Teaching Pyramid team coach.

Partner site surveys suggested that fewer than half of the classroom staff had received coaching from a WestEd Teaching Pyramid team coach (24%) (Table 2). Most interviewed teachers reported receiving some coaching. As mentioned earlier, some interview participants were unable to differentiate between the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team coach and other instructional coaches who had visited their classrooms. Many of these sites had gone through their training and coaching cycles two to three years ago, and respondents may have had difficulty recalling their coach specifics. Thus, it was unclear whether some sites fully implemented the coaching component.

Additionally, a small percentage of classroom staff (13%) recalled being coached by an internal program staff member, calling into question the level of implementation around the internal coaching component (Table 2). Interviews also suggested the inconsistent deployment of internal coaching. The lack of time on the part of a potential coach and of teachers was cited as a potential reason for low implementation.

Site Implementation of Leadership Team

According to the partner site administrator surveys and interviews, seven out of the eight sites had a program leadership team. Interviewed teachers who were part of the team saw his or her role as providing the teacher perspective. Interviews with other teachers revealed, however, that the team and its role may not be prominent or visible to staff members who are not actually on it. The interviews suggested that some teachers were either unaware of their Teaching Pyramid leadership team or

uninvolved with it. Other teachers who were aware of their leadership team, but not on it, thought its activities extended beyond the scope of the Teaching Pyramid and included broader strategic planning and professional development functions.

This does not signify that site leadership was uninvolved or lacking commitment to supporting Teaching Pyramid practices and strategies; on the contrary, site administrations were generally very enthusiastic about the Teaching Pyramid as a whole. Evaluators found that leadership regarding the Teaching Pyramid often took place in the context of regular staff meetings and staff development efforts, rather than in the context of a formal leadership team; however, these professional development activities may have been planned at the team meeting.

Site Implementation of Follow-up and Sustainability Activities

According to the administrator survey and interviews, all sites had practices in place, to varying degrees, in an effort to ensure continuation of the Teaching Pyramid. These practices ranged from utilizing Teaching Pyramid resources (such as advanced trainings and refreshers and ongoing coaching), to including Teaching Pyramid topics in staff meetings, to simply practicing the strategies with co-workers. Administrators also mentioned utilizing leadership team meetings to further support Teaching Pyramid work.

As shown above in Table 2, advanced trainings and webinars were more commonly utilized by administrators than classroom staff; this may be due to the timing of the trainings and the challenge of securing classroom coverage. Almost three out of four administrators (73%) and approximately one third of classroom staff (31%) at partner sites attended the advanced training, “Going Deeper.” While a large share of administrators (82%) attended Teaching Pyramid webinars, only 7% of classroom staff did so. Nevertheless, attending follow-up trainings and any kind of refresher was spoken of highly in interviews.

Participants had access to two online resources. All reported accessing these online resources to some degree. The Teaching Pyramid Wiggio website was intended to be an access point to online webinars, discussion forums, and resources. However, interviews indicate that there was inconsistent use of this platform and not all administrators and coaches knew how to use it as intended. In addition, the Teaching Pyramid website pages were cited by both teachers and administrators as an easy-to-use source for downloading materials. Teachers appreciated when coaches and administrators printed the materials for them, however, as many did not have access to a computer to do so in the classroom and did not have as much time as they would like to explore the site and find the materials.

Perhaps the resource employed the most at selected partner sites was the binder that individuals received at Teaching Pyramid trainings. Individuals used the materials to refresh their memories about particular strategies and as templates for use in their classrooms. This held true for participants who had binders from 3 years ago as well as those who were recently trained. The investment in continued refinement and development of the binders thus appears to be paying off in both the short and long term.

To what extent have partner sites developed specific policies and procedures for working with children who have challenging behaviors?

The survey given to administrators showed that all but one of the partner sites had a policy in place for working with children with challenging behaviors. The interview data also supported this finding. When asked during interviews, staff at some agencies reported changing aspects of their existing policies and procedures following participation in the Teaching Pyramid training. However, most already had clear policies in place that were agency-specific and not able to be changed.

A few sites did rewrite certain policies and procedures in response to the Teaching Pyramid training. These changes included rewriting referral forms to include more Teaching Pyramid language and strategies, completely changing forms, such as lesson plans, and overlaying Teaching Pyramid strategies onto existing policies and procedures. One site reported including the Teaching Pyramid training as an expectation for new hires, adopting the training agency-wide, and committing to training all new hires, including substitutes and teaching assistants.

Most interview participants reported using the forms from the Teaching Pyramid binder to help them develop individual interventions for students. The most common form mentioned was the Behavioral Observation Report (BOR), which is used to document student behavior and describe the conditions in which the behavior occurs. BORs are collected and analyzed to determine what the child is trying to communicate and to determine patterns so that the teacher becomes more aware of what is triggering the behavior and can mitigate it. Despite participants' common mentions of BORs, many administrators still reported pushing for increased use; teachers admitted to knowing about BORs but not using them as much as they wanted to, citing time and attention away from the other children as an obstacle as well as wanting more support and practice with this form.

Impact on Knowledge, Practice, and Attitudes

What is the impact of the Teaching Pyramid professional development on program/site and teaching staff?

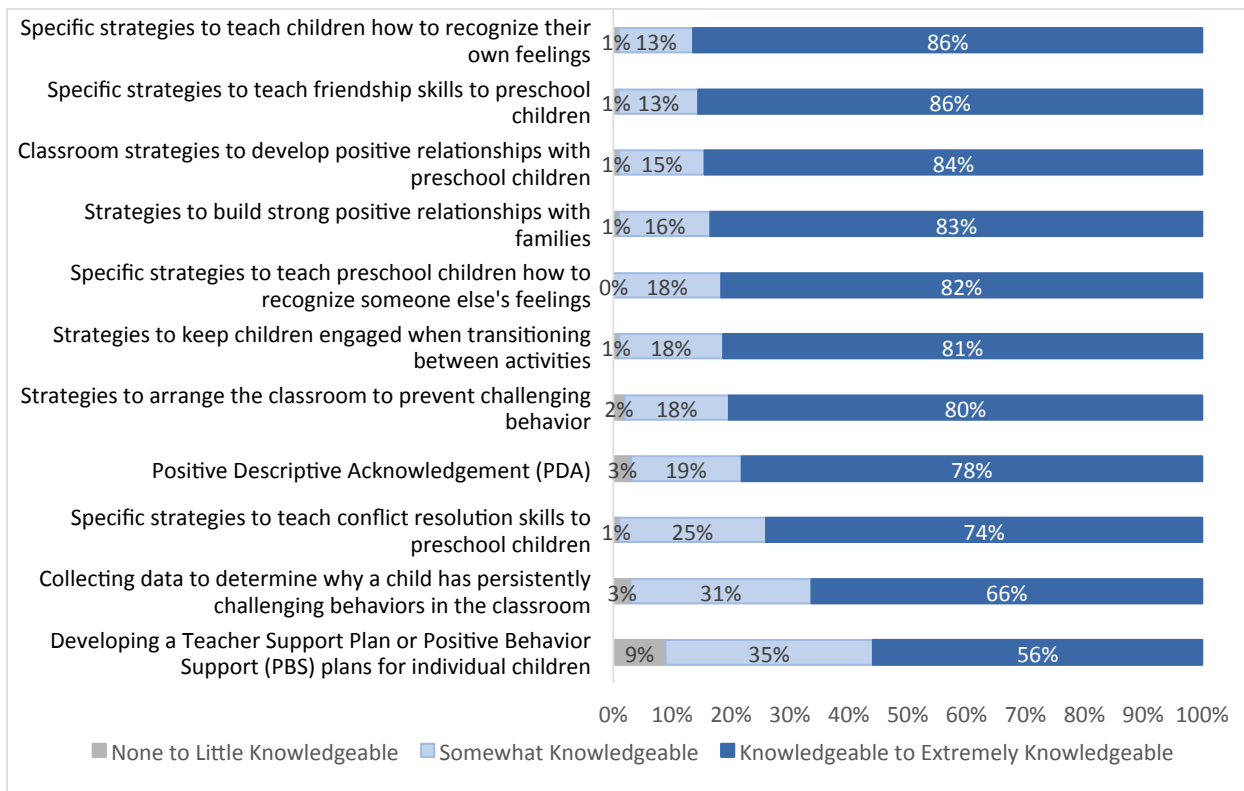
The results of the evaluation suggest that Teaching Pyramid professional development led to increased knowledge of and use of classroom strategies to foster social-emotional development. Additionally, the professional development influenced both individual attitudes and organizational culture. This section describes these findings.

Knowledge of Strategies to Promote Healthy Social-Emotional Development

The surveys and interviews indicate that Teaching Pyramid professional development resulted in increased knowledge around strategies to promote children’s social-emotional development. As shown in

Figure 4, most classroom staff at partner sites felt they were knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable in strategies related to social-emotional development. When asked what they attributed their knowledge to, the most common answer was professional development, including Teaching Pyramid training (69%; not shown). Practice and/or experience was the next most prevalent answer, at 26% (not shown).

Figure 4: Partner Site Classroom Staff Knowledge of Social-Emotional Development Strategies



Source: Partner site classroom staff survey (October 2015–January 2016). n = 101–104.

Partner site survey participants were broken down into three groups—those who received none of the module trainings, those who received some of the module trainings, and those who received all of the module trainings. Results show that a greater proportion of respondents who attended *more* Teaching Pyramid training tended to report being knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable (Table 3). Although this connection does not prove a causal relationship, it does lend support to the conclusion that the professional development contributed to increased knowledge. In a few cases there was a higher proportion of those with no modules than those with some modules who indicated they were knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable. One possibility for this phenomenon may be that those with no training may believe they are already knowledgeable because they have not received the training detailing Teaching Pyramid strategies; thus, “they don’t know what they don’t know.” This idea was supported by informal conversations with the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team and the coaching observation. It is further described on pages 35 – 36 regarding perceived use of strategies before receiving training.

Table 3: Partner Site Classroom Staff Knowledge of Strategies, by Amount of Training Received (% Knowledgeable/Extremely Knowledgeable)

Survey Items: How knowledgeable are you about:	Training Received			Total
	No Modules	Some Modules	All Modules	
Classroom strategies to develop positive relationships with preschool children	70%	75%	96%	84%
Positive Descriptive Acknowledgement (PDA)	50%	78%	91%	78%
Strategies to arrange the classroom to prevent challenging behavior	61%	70%	95%	80%
Strategies to keep children engaged when transitioning between activities	74%	65%	93%	81%
Strategies to build strong positive relationships with families	61%	83%	95%	83%
Specific strategies to teach friendship skills to preschool children	75%	88%	91%	85%
Specific strategies to teach children how to recognize their own feelings	83%	79%	93%	86%
Specific strategies to teach preschool children how to recognize someone else's feelings	67%	79%	91%	82%
Specific strategies to teach conflict resolution skills to preschool children	71%	63%	82%	74%
Collecting data to determine why a child has persistently challenging behaviors in the classroom	63%	50%	76%	66%
Developing a Teacher Support Plan or Positive Behavior Support (PBS) plans for individual children	45%	46%	65%	56%

Source: Partner site classroom staff survey (October 2015–January 2016). n = 101–103.

The pre- and post-training surveys at the entry site also show an increase in knowledge after the four training modules. Table 4 displays the mean values before and after the trainings. The scale ranged from 0 to 8, where “8” was “extremely knowledgeable.” For all items, the perceived increase was statistically

significant (Mann Whitney U, $p < .05$).⁹ Interview data confirm that teachers and administrators gained knowledge of specific strategies they could use to foster healthy social and emotional development in their classrooms as well as tools to prevent negative behaviors from occurring in the first place. Many interviewees also expressed wanting even more knowledge on how to address the needs of the “top of the Pyramid” children.

Table 4: Training Attendees’ Knowledge Before and After Teaching Pyramid Professional Development

Survey Items: On a scale of 0–8, how knowledgeable are you about:	Before Module 1	After Module 3b
Classroom strategies to develop positive relationships with preschool children	5.75	6.82
Positive descriptive acknowledgement (PDA)	4.18	6.88
Strategies to arrange the classroom to prevent challenging behavior	5.40	6.67
Strategies to keep children engaged when transitioning between activities	5.67	6.76
Strategies to build strong positive relationships with families	6.00	6.82
Specific strategies to teach friendship skills to preschool children	5.80	7.00
Specific strategies to teach children how to recognize their own feelings	5.83	6.94
Specific strategies to teach preschool children how to recognize someone else's feelings	5.69	6.94
Specific strategies to teach conflict resolution skills to preschool children	5.67	6.88
Collecting data to determine why a child has persistently challenging behaviors in the classroom	5.21	6.70
Developing a Teacher Support Plan or Positive Behavior Support (PBS) plans for individual children	4.50	6.52

Note: Reflects mean knowledge rating scores for the whole group. Individuals rated themselves on a scale from 0 to 8 (0 = not at all; 2 = a little knowledgeable; 4 = somewhat knowledgeable; 6 = knowledgeable; and 8 = extremely knowledgeable).

Source: Pre- and post-training survey of entry site training module attendees (September 2015 and April 2016); $n = 33\text{--}42$.

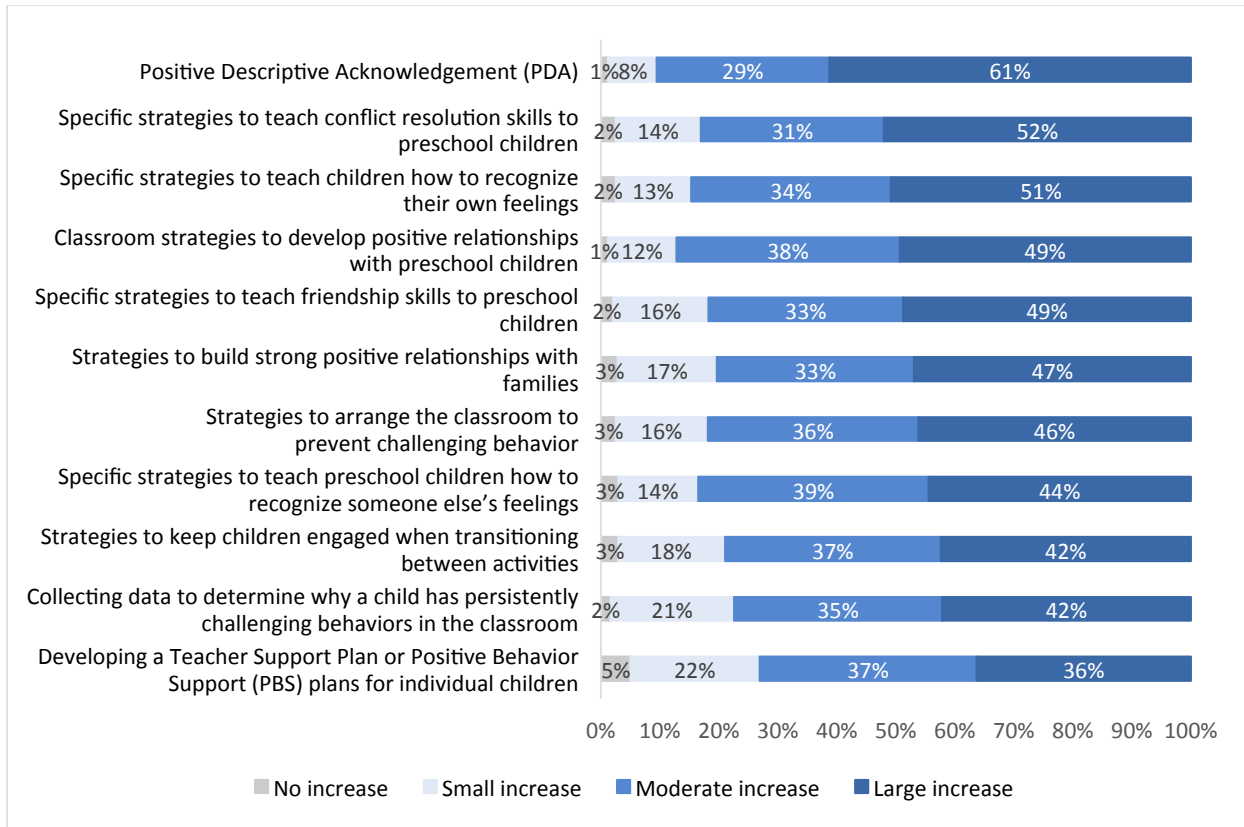
Training participants from practicing non-partner sites also perceived moderate to large increases in their knowledge of children’s social-emotional development. The survey asked if they stayed the same or increased in their knowledge of strategies compared to two years ago, before they received Teaching Pyramid training. As shown in Figure 5, they perceived the largest increases in their knowledge of positive descriptive acknowledgement, or PDA (61%), specific strategies to teach conflict resolution skills (52%), and specific strategies to teach children how to recognize their own feelings (51%). Again, when asked what they thought caused their increases in knowledge, the majority (81%) said Teaching Pyramid professional development (not shown).

Interviewed teachers felt that Teaching Pyramid training further confirmed what they believed about children’s social-emotional development. It also caused them to be more aware and intentional about

⁹ Although the two samples (pre/post) were dependent, they were not exactly the same at both time points. A small number of respondents took the pre-training survey but not the post-training survey, and individual pre/post scores were not linked. The decision was made to use the Mann Whitney U for independent samples, which showed significance even with a more conservative estimate of the test statistic.

the approach they were taking with children, and gave them more specific strategies to teach social and emotional skills. Implicit in Teaching Pyramid training is that teachers do know effective social-emotional strategies, but that, as Module 1 teaches, “knowing something and doing it are two different things.” Teaching Pyramid training hopes to impart knowledge and tools to increase the use of effective strategies.

Figure 5: Teaching Pyramid Training Attendees’ Perceived Change in Knowledge



Note: Includes administrators, teachers, teachers’ assistants, and others who attended Teaching Pyramid training in 2013–2014 and 2014–2015; n = 238–245.

Source: Practicing site training participant survey (October–November 2015).

Classroom Practice

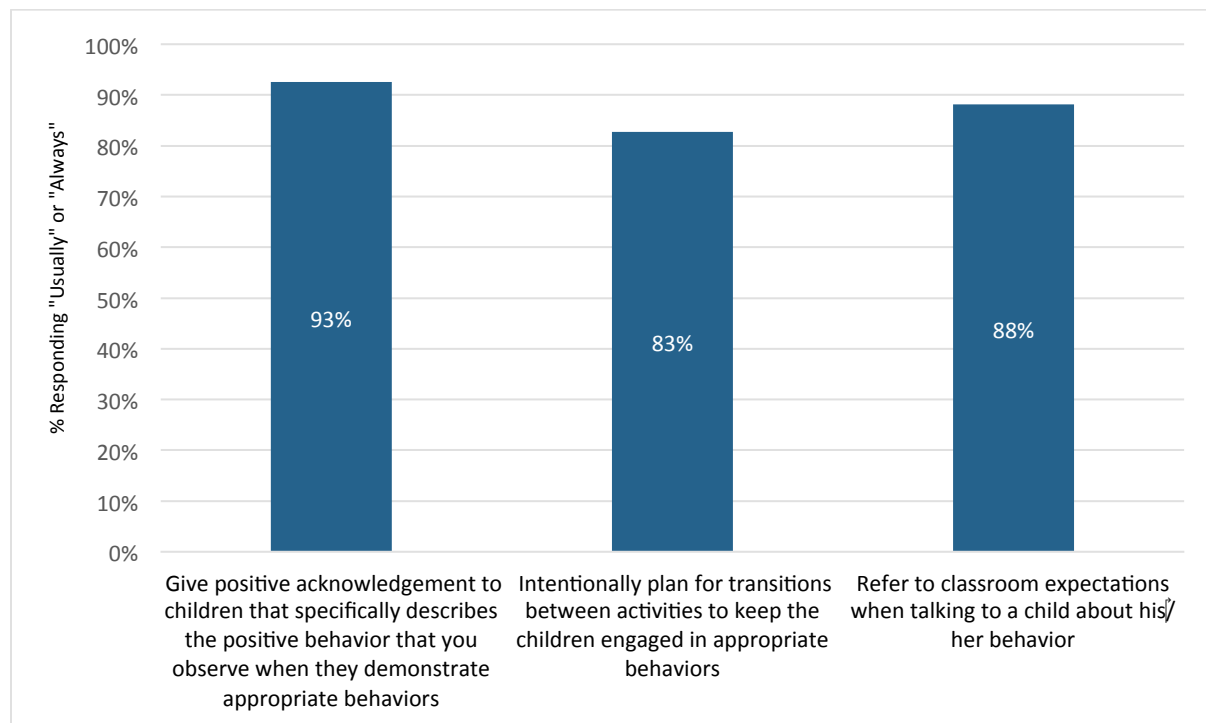
The evidence suggests that Teaching Pyramid professional development positively influences classroom practice as well. Interestingly, the results of pre- and post-training surveys at the entry site indicate that teachers and teachers’ assistants may have initially thought they were engaging in Teaching Practice strategies before they received professional development, but their assessment of their individual practice changed after they became more knowledgeable. For example, before training, a large percentage of respondents (79%–91%) said they usually or always engaged in the three activities—giving positive acknowledgement, intentionally planning for transitions, and referring to classroom expectations. However, the post-training survey asked them to once again rate their use of these strategies before attending the first module, and the results were noticeably different. Upon reflection,

a much smaller percentage of respondents (47%–59%) rated their previous use as “usually” or “always” (not shown).

This previous lack of understanding regarding Teaching Pyramid principles was highlighted in the observed coaching session and supported by informal conversations with the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team. Teachers often felt they already knew and applied strategies before receiving trainings and/or coaching. As part of the professional development, “aha moments” emerged where they realized their prior activities had been managing children instead of supporting healthy social-emotional development. Thus, their new knowledge and mindset shift helped them reflect upon their use of classroom strategies.

A high proportion of teachers and teachers’ assistants at partner sites used Teaching Pyramid strategies. As shown in Figure 6, more than eight out of 10 teachers and teachers’ assistants said they usually or always give specific positive acknowledgement when children demonstrate appropriate behaviors (93%), intentionally plan for transitions (83%), and refer to classroom expectations when talking to children about their behavior (88%). Indeed, evaluators were able to observe PDA at all sites and evidence of teachers talking about classroom expectations, as well as other Teaching Pyramid strategies such as working with an emotions chart and managing transitions efficiently and with appropriate behaviors.

Figure 6: Frequency of Partner Site Use of Strategies to Foster Social-Emotional Development (% Usually/Always)



Note: Reflects teachers and teachers’ assistants at selected partner sites; n = 93–94.

Source: Partner site classroom staff survey (October 2015–January 2016).

Interviews and observations generally support the picture painted by partner site survey results regarding classroom practice. Although PDA was widely observed, a common theme across all interviews was the challenge surrounding the new language required to provide this feedback. This strategy requires that the teacher and administrator drop phrases like, “good job,” and “I like the way you _____,” in favor of simply acknowledging what the child is doing, thereby promoting intrinsic motivation. One teacher explained:

The hardest thing was the language—getting away from just the “good job.” Doing the PDAs took time. Sometimes I catch myself. I practice—I constantly have to have that in the back of my mind, but I see the benefit of it. Even with staff—that is the hardest to do, to remind myself to give PDAs to them. That is something I am still working on.

Many sites adopted PDA site-wide, encouraging staff to practice on each other. Several participants said this had created a more positive climate for both adults and children, and most teachers noted that they saw positive impacts on children’s behavior.

An added challenge noted by some teachers was that this language shift was particularly difficult if a teacher’s first language was not English:

The PDAs [were the most difficult] because of my language. I have to think before I speak. English is my second language and I wanted to say it in a fluid manner—not like a robot, [but] naturally. I had to practice. That was my biggest challenge because of my second language.

The survey also asked how many times during a typical week teachers and teachers’ assistants engaged in specific strategies such as implementing activities in small groups, reviewing classroom expectations with the whole class, or conducting activities to practice friendship skills, express feelings, or recognize someone’s else feelings. Since this question asked about frequency, the analysis included only teachers and assistants who taught or assisted with one class each day so that responses would be comparable between staff. With the exception of reviewing classroom expectations, more than half of the classroom staff said that, on average, they implemented these strategies at least once a day (Table 5). Respondents who had received more Teaching Pyramid training reported a higher use of strategies (Table 6).

Table 5: Frequency of Partner Site Classroom Staff Use of Teaching Pyramid Strategies

Survey Items: During a typical week, how many times do you...	Frequency				Total
	None	Less than once a day	Once a day	More than once a day	
Implement activities in small groups of 3 to 5 children	5%	28%	34%	34%	100%
Review classroom expectations with the whole class	3%	53%	17%	27%	100%
Conduct activities that help children practice friendship skills	0%	34%	25%	42%	100%
Conduct activities that help children practice expressing their own feelings	2%	43%	15%	40%	100%
Conduct activities that help children practice recognizing someone else's feelings	2%	45%	19%	34%	100%

Note: Reflects teachers and teachers’ assistants at selected partner sites who taught one class a day; survey responses were recoded from number ranges; n = 64–65. Source: Partner site classroom staff survey (October 2015–January 2016).

Table 6: Partner Site Classroom Staff Use of Teaching Pyramid Strategies to Foster Social-Emotional Development, by Amount of Training (% Saying Once Per Day or More)

Survey Items: During a typical week, how many times do you...	# of Modules Received			Total
	No Modules	Some Modules	All Modules	
Implement activities in small groups of 3 to 5 children	44%	65%	83%	68%
Review classroom expectations with the whole class	24%	47%	53%	44%
Conduct activities that help children practice friendship skills	61%	71%	67%	66%
Conduct activities that help children practice expressing their own feelings	33%	47%	73%	55%
Conduct activities that help children practice recognizing someone else's feelings	42%	47%	64%	53%

Note: Reflects teachers and teachers' assistants at selected partner sites who taught one class a day; n = 64–65.

Source: Partner site classroom staff survey (October 2015–January 2016).

Most partner site classroom staff arranged their classrooms as recommended by the Teaching Pyramid. Observations and survey results support this finding. For example, approximately eight out of 10 had posted a daily schedule with pictures (82%) or program-wide expectations (78%); just as many had arranged the classroom to prevent challenging behaviors (79%). The evaluation team found evidence of Teaching Pyramid expectations in all observed classrooms. Table 7 shows the breakdown by the amount of training received. The sample size was too small to conduct a chi-square test of independence. Thus, the percentages reflect sample differences and may or may not be characteristic of all partner site differences.

Table 7: Partner Site Classroom Staff Use of Teaching Pyramid Strategies for Classroom Set-Up, by Amount of Training (% Saying Yes)

Survey Items	# of Modules Received			Total
	No Modules	Some Modules	All Modules	
Does your classroom have a daily schedule hung on the wall with pictures where children can see it?	48%	90%	96%	82%
Does your classroom have program-wide expectations hung on the wall with pictures where children can see them?	61%	84%	83%	78%
Is your classroom environment arranged to prevent challenging behavior?	65%	70%	90%	79%

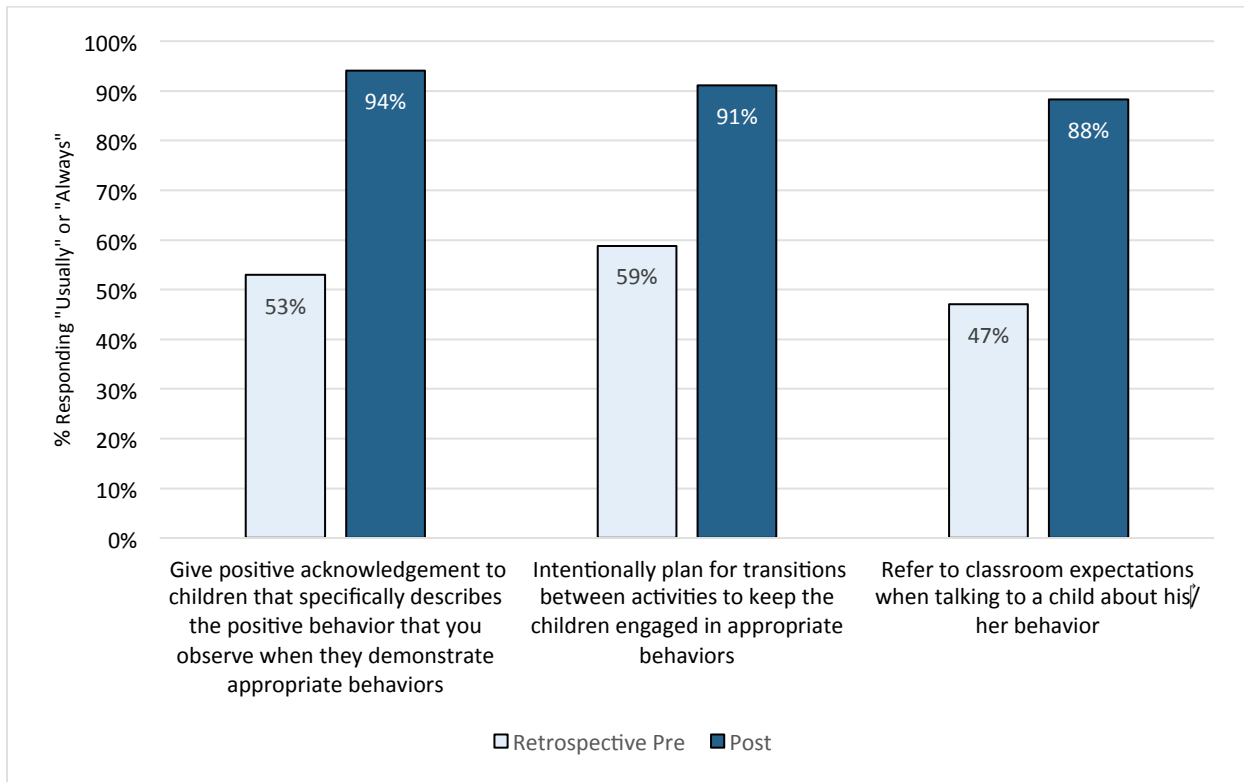
Note: Reflects teachers and teachers' assistants at selected partner sites; n = 88–91.

Source: Partner site classroom staff survey (October 2015–January 2016).

The results from the other surveys also support the idea that Teaching Pyramid professional development contributes to positive changes in teacher practice. The post-training survey at the entry site, for example, shows a significant perceived increase in frequency of giving positive

acknowledgement, intentionally planning for transitions, and referring to classroom expectations. As discussed in greater detail elsewhere, observations also confirm some use of PDA and evidence of clear classroom expectations. Since earlier analysis demonstrated that respondents tend to overestimate their use of strategies prior to training, this analysis compares a retrospective question and post-training question that were both given after the training (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test, $p < .05$). Figure 7 illustrates the perceived change.

Figure 7: Teaching Pyramid Training Attendees' Perceived Change in Strategy Use (% Usually/Always)

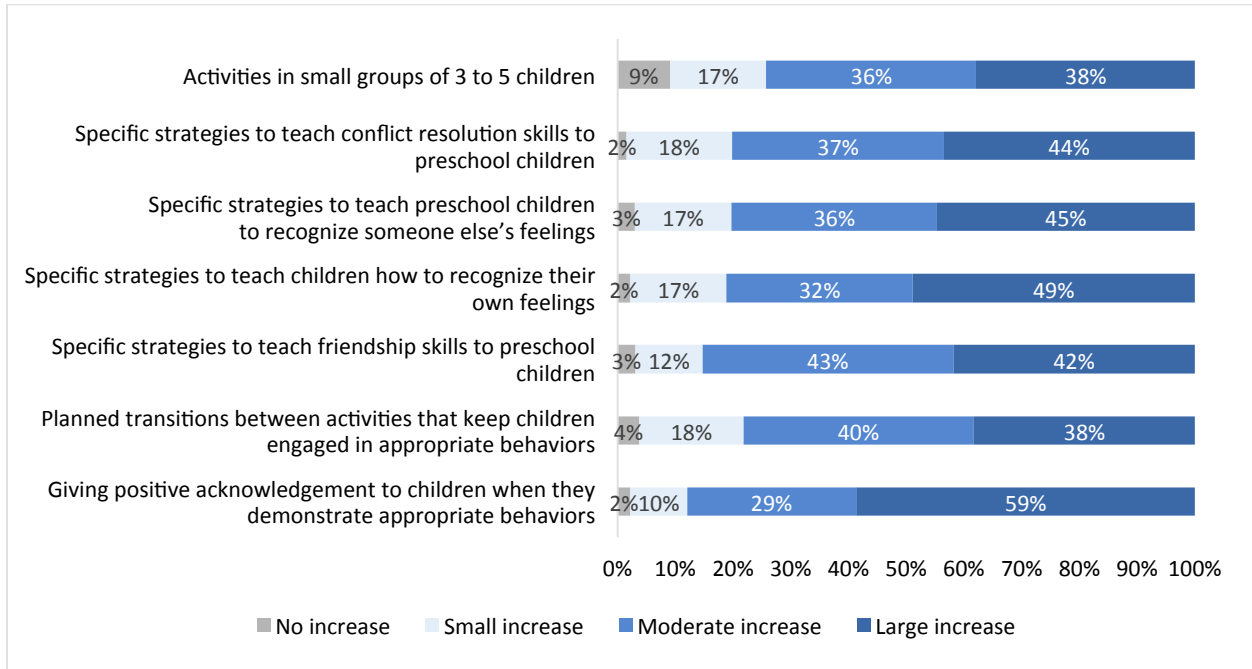


Note: Retrospective pre-question was given on post-training survey; Includes teachers and teachers' assistants. $n = 34$.

Source: Post-training survey of entry site training module attendees (April 2016).

Participants at non-partner practicing sites who attended Teaching Pyramid professional development also showed increases in social-emotional development classroom practices after training. As shown in Figure 8, they reported the biggest increases in strategies related to PDA (88% reported a moderate or large increase), specific strategies to teach friendship skills (85%), and specific strategies to teach children how to recognize their own feelings (81%). When asked what they thought caused their increase in strategy use, 70% attributed it to Teaching Pyramid professional development, and 19% said professional development in general (not shown).

Figure 8: Non-Partner Site Classroom Staff's Perceived Change in Strategy Use Following Teaching Pyramid Training



Note: Includes teachers and teachers' assistants who attended a Teaching Pyramid training in 2013–2014 and 2014–2015, and who had worked in early childhood education for more than 2 years; n = 129–133.
 Source: Practicing site training participant survey (October–November 2015).

Another important aspect of the Teaching Pyramid strategies has to do with the beliefs that underlie them. Teachers are encouraged to frame decisions and classroom practices to support the notions that social and emotional skills can and should be taught, and that behavior is a form of communication. Rather than adhering to a script or curriculum, implementation at fidelity allows for some flexibility and adjustment. The emphasis is on understanding the Teaching Pyramid reasoning and embracing this mindset, using it as a guide for classroom decisions. In keeping with the Teaching Pyramid philosophy, the evaluation team saw this as a strength of Teaching Pyramid implementation at partner sites, as underlying beliefs were being operationalized in context-specific ways that are responsive to the site and its children.

Shifts in Organizational Attitudes

As mentioned previously, indicators of healthy organizational cultures were already present in the majority of selected partner sites. Namely, these sites have historically enjoyed low turnover, high morale, and strong support for professional development at the leadership and administrative levels. That said, interviews offered insight into additional holistic benefits of Teaching Pyramid participation for partner sites.

One such theme involved teachers' reflections that their implementation of Teaching Pyramid practices increased their sense of professional self-efficacy, resulting in more fulfilling and satisfying interactions with children. Beyond feeling prepared and confident to meet the needs of the children, staff members

linked these feelings to their own job satisfaction. Teachers noted that they felt more “calm,” “relaxed,” and “in control.” One teacher summed it up by saying, “I started using more of those words and...I feel better. I feel like I know more.” In many cases, interview participants reported that the training only affirmed pre-existing beliefs about early childhood education. However, being given tools to more actively reflect on the meaning of children’s behavior, respond constructively, and witness changes in children’s behavior offered tangible evidence of their own ability to positively impact the children in their care.

As already noted, language was one of the most evident practical shifts that occurred across partner sites, and this shift extended not only to children but to adults as well. When asked about the impact of the Teaching Pyramid training at a staff level, interviewees singled out greater appreciation for the importance of the first level of the pyramid (Nurturing and Responsive Relationships) as a foundational principle for working with children *and* adult peers. Examples of adults giving each other “positive deposits” and PDA enhanced interpersonal relationships, feelings of respect, and recognition. Many teachers reported feeling more appreciated and experiencing increased enjoyment at work. For example, one teacher explained:

It has made it a really more positive experience. Before there were days where you just couldn't do it. Now it is much more positive. The whole culture of the school has just done a real 180. There was a lot of blaming, 'Why are you doing it this way?!' and self-reflection was not able to happen before. - a complete 180, it is amazing!

Given the importance of collaboration and team teaching in these contexts, stronger collegial relationships bode well for the sustainability of the Teaching Pyramid framework and site morale.

To what extent has Teaching Pyramid professional development prepared staff to more effectively support children, including those with challenging behaviors?

As shown in the previous section, Teaching Pyramid training contributed to knowledge and use of social-emotional development strategies to support children. Data collected from the survey, interviews, and observations provide evidence that not only are partner site staff learning and engaging in Teaching Pyramid activities, but they also feel more prepared to support all of their preschool students. One teacher described this shift:

It has made me feel more confident. I have more tools. When parents come to me and ask questions, like about how I handle a conflict or what's my approach, I feel like I have more verbal tools. The strategies are more clear and organized in my mind.

The Teaching Pyramid is a tiered framework that aims to promote appropriate social-emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors before intensive intervention is required. Thus, most teachers focused on how the training helped them support children in the prevention of challenging behaviors. One Teaching Pyramid strategy for preventing challenging behaviors is to start with the environment. Specifically, how the room is set up and what is posted on the walls can prevent behavior challenges before they start. The majority of teachers and teachers’ assistants (79%) reported that they arranged their classrooms with this in mind. Some noted that they made changes in their room set-up

based on observing their “hot spots” (where conflicts tend to happen regularly) and “cool spots” (where things regularly go well). Some classrooms had clearly defined areas where a child could go “to get away,” such as a small mesh tent. All classrooms had clearly defined centers and areas for small groups to work.

In addition to changing the physical space, Teaching Pyramid training suggests that teachers have clear visual expectations posted with pictures (ideally photos of the students themselves) to help children remember classroom expectations. Most classrooms had visual schedules to give students clear expectations of where to be and when, and of what is coming next; all classrooms had posted expectations, also with visuals.

Despite efforts to prevent them, challenging behaviors can arise in the classroom. As shown in

Table 8, the partner site survey asked about confidence in three areas: identifying the reason a child has challenging behavior, matching an effective intervention with a child’s challenging behavior, and developing a successful positive behavior support plan. The evaluation data suggest that approximately half of the classroom staff felt confident or extremely confident that they could support children who exhibited challenging behaviors. A large proportion of respondents also felt somewhat confident in all three areas (38%, 42%, and 30%, respectively).

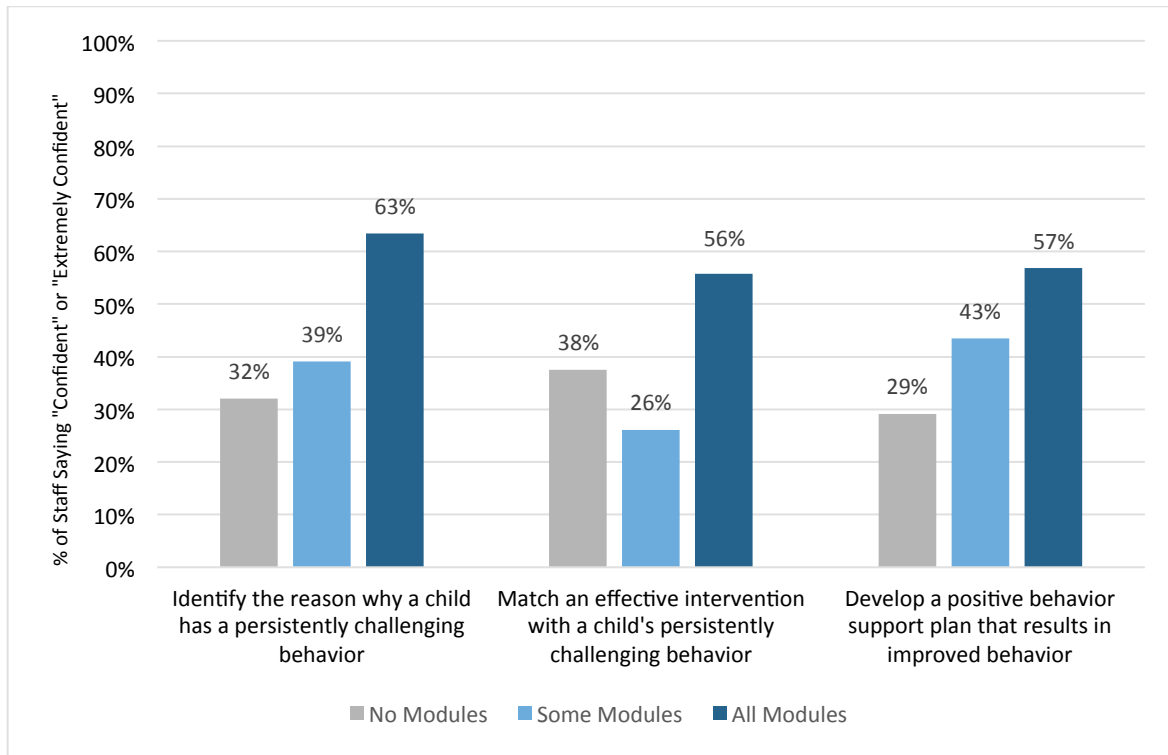
Table 8: Partner Site Classroom Staff Confidence in Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviors

Survey Items: Currently how confident are you that you could...	Level of Confidence					Total
	Not at all confident	A little confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Extremely confident	
Identify the reason why a child has a persistently challenging behavior	3%	9%	38%	48%	2%	100%
Match an effective intervention with a child's persistently challenging behavior	2%	11%	42%	39%	5%	100%
Develop a positive behavior support plan that results in improved behavior	2%	21%	30%	42%	5%	100%

Source: Partner site classroom staff survey (October 2015–January 2016). n = 98–100.

Figure 9 further breaks down confidence level by the amount of training the classroom staff received. It illustrates that a higher proportion of respondents who received all modules were confident. While this does not signify a causal relationship, it does support the idea that professional development contributes to the selected partner site staff feeling more prepared to deal with challenging behaviors, especially since the last module in the training series focuses on supporting children with challenging behaviors.

Figure 9: Partner Site Classroom Staff Confidence in Strategies to Support Children with Challenging Behaviors, by Amount of Training Received (% Confident/Extremely Confident)

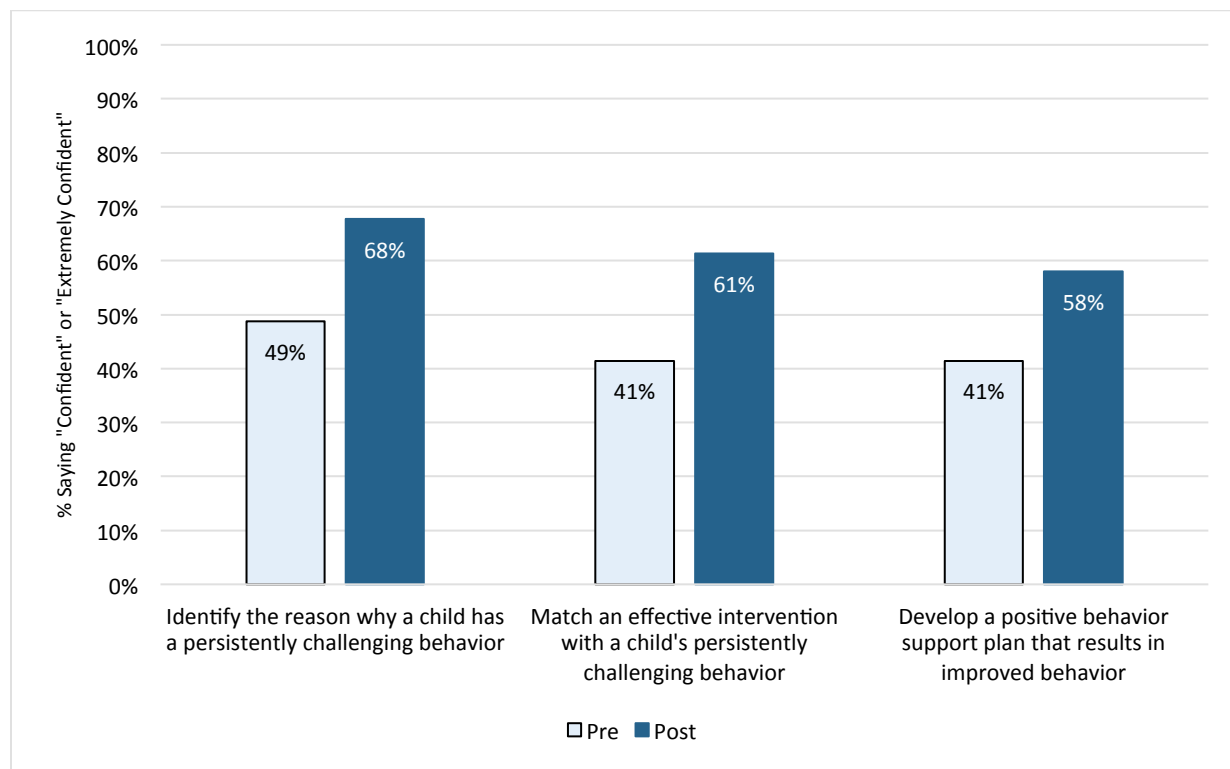


Source: Partner site classroom staff survey (October 2015–January 2016). n = 98–100.

Again, the results of the entry site pre- and post-training surveys suggest that professional development contributes to increased confidence in dealing with challenging behaviors. Respondents significantly increased their confidence levels over the training period (Mann Whitney U, $p < .05$).¹⁰ Figure 10, on the next page, illustrates this increase.

¹⁰ Although the two samples (pre/post) were dependent, they were not exactly the same at both time points. A small number of respondents took the pre-training survey but not the post-training survey, and individual pre/post scores were not linked. The decision was made to use the Mann Whitney U for independent samples, which showed significance even with a more conservative estimate of the test statistic.

Figure 10: Training Attendees' Change in Confidence Following Teaching Pyramid Training (% Confident/Extremely Confident)



Source: Pre-and post-survey of entry site training module attendees (September 2015 and April 2016). n = 31–41.

This relationship between training and confidence is further supported by the survey responses of training participants at non-partner practicing sites. Approximately 75% of these training attendees stated that when they were identifying the reasons for a persistently challenging behavior, matching effective interventions, and developing a positive behavior support plan, they had moderate to large increases in their confidence levels compared to two years ago (not shown). Interview data and observations underscore this finding. Teachers were able to cite specific strategies they used with children who had challenging behaviors.

Teachers and administrators also described a change in their thinking about challenging behavior. For example, many said they were more reflective and reframed behavior as a form of communication. One interviewee asked, “How can we support the children who are really struggling? [We] need to slow down and look at everything before jumping to conclusions. You have to be that detective.”

This change in mindset was also observed in the coaching session. The participating teachers seemed to have an understanding of the Teaching Pyramid practices in general but not of how to put the concepts into practice. By walking through an actual taped experience, the coach pinpointed where they enacted the concepts and modeled what they could do next time. This led to an “aha moment” for all of them, when they realized they had previously been “managing children,” but they were now “developing children.”

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this evaluation was to assess Teaching Pyramid professional development and its impact on early education practitioners' knowledge, practice, and attitudes. The findings reveal that the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team provides high quality trainings and coaching. The Teaching Pyramid professional development positively contributes to increased understanding and use of strategies to promote healthy social-emotional development, along with giving teachers more confidence when dealing with challenging behaviors. Furthermore, site staff found that applying the Teaching Pyramid resulted in more fulfilling and satisfying interactions with both children and co-workers.

Recommendations

The findings from this study are overwhelmingly positive, confirming the work and efforts of the Teaching Pyramid staff and local partners. The recommendations below are intended to further strengthen the program.

Recommendation 1: Follow-up for Sustainability

Even though sites are encouraged to invest in follow-up trainings and coaching to advance and refresh their practice, these trainings are contingent upon site budgets and many site staff are unable to participate. As demonstrated by the survey results (Table 2), some classroom staff have never received formal training or received any coaching. Follow-up training is an important part of implementation at fidelity since staff may have attended Teaching Pyramid training years ago or there may be new teachers. Administrators and teachers identified coaching as an essential piece of implementation and sustained growth. CDE should explore additional ways to encourage and financially support sites in Teaching Pyramid trainings and coaching after their initial first year.

Additionally, the leadership team, combined with strong administrative presence and support for the Teaching Pyramid at the various sites, is essential for continuing site-wide practice. The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team should continue to provide guidance and support to the site leadership team, even after the first year. This continued guidance for partner sites should specifically address how to effectively use data to improve Teaching Pyramid implementation.

Recommendation 2: Data Collection, Monitoring, and Sharing

CDE and the WestEd Teaching Pyramid team should explore how to promote more consistent collection, monitoring, and sharing of data by partner sites. Not all of the selected partner sites had Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) data available. Since these data foster quality implementation of the Teaching Pyramid, the Teaching Pyramid team could work with sites to ensure more timely collection and sharing of these data. Likewise, the BOQ data showed that monitoring implementation and outcome data was not "in place" for any of the sites. The Teaching Pyramid team should explore how to support the partner sites, not only in the collection and sharing, but also in the use of the data.

There is also a need for more timely and widespread administration of the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT). As this tool is administered by the WestEd Teaching Pyramid Team, and not the sites, they should consider training more personnel to administer the tool more frequently.

Recommendation 3: Manageable and Accessible Training and Coaching

The trainings are highly regarded for their content and delivery, yet they are intense and require engagement at a high level. The WestEd Teaching Pyramid team should consider the option of offering shorter, more frequent sessions. In addition, some participants' first language is not English and they have varying degrees of proficiency. As such, materials and training in Spanish could provide even greater access for Spanish speaking teachers. Further, much of the Teaching Pyramid strategy use is language dependent. Many materials have been translated already for use with families, but the Teaching Pyramid should continue to expand this practice and make all materials available to teachers and families in multiple languages. Similarly, WestEd Teaching Pyramid team should continue its efforts to recruit and train bilingual coaches.

Recommendation 4: Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviors

There is a need for more professional development around challenging behaviors. While the initial training and coaching supports these needs, there is the opportunity for more classroom staff to become confident in their ability to support these children. Some teachers also expressed a desire to learn more about addressing "top of the Pyramid" children.

Recommendation 5: Wiggio Support

Access to Wiggio is made available to partner sites; however, as part of follow-up support, the Teaching Pyramid team should consider adding a mini-unit on using and navigating Wiggio to get the most out of this extensive resource.

Recommendation 6: Expanded Funding and Incentives for Data Collection

A common theme throughout the findings and recommendations is the need for increased funds for further training, coaching, and teacher release time. The Teaching Pyramid is extremely well-received, and additional funding would help sustain the program and expand its reach. With the phasing out the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants, CDE explore different funding models. Additionally, CDE could consider how to set aside funds to incentive consistent data collection and use by the partner sites. Thus, CDE should consider how to secure additional funding for training, coaching, and data support, while recognizing constraints within the ECE field.

Conclusion

This report evaluates the Teaching Pyramid professional development, including its impact on early education practitioners' knowledge, practice, and attitudes. In conclusion, the Teaching Pyramid team provides high quality trainings and coaching. The Teaching Pyramid program positively contributes to the understanding and use of strategies that promote healthy social-emotional development in children.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Partner Survey Instrument

Appendix B: Partner Survey Tables

Appendix C: Other Survey Instruments

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Appendix E: Benchmarks of Quality Tool