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# **Defining and Measuring Engagement to Inform a Performance-Based Contract**

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Child Care Policy Research Consortium**

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# Study Purpose

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- **Inform the performance-based contract between the funder (First 5 LA) and grantee (Los Angeles Universal Preschool [LAUP])**
  - **Step 1: Develop shared definition**
  - **Step 2: Develop self-administered questionnaires**
  - **Step 3: Test questionnaires in descriptive study**
  - **Step 4: Use results to consider targets for the performance-based contract and revisions to questionnaire**

# Defining Engagement

- **Developed definition of engagement to guide selection of/development of items for a questionnaire**
  - Initial draft based on literature review, key informant interviews (practitioners and researchers), focus groups with LAUP program parents and staff
  - Revised based on feedback from LAUP
- **Final definition distinguishes between “engagement” and how programs support it:**
  - **Element 1: Parents supporting children’s learning and development beyond the program**
  - **Element 2: Parents and programs connecting to support children’s development**
  - **Program strategies for supporting engagement**

# Measure Development Process

- **Developed “test” questionnaires for parents and providers that**
  - **Mirrored shared definition**
  - **Format: self-administered**
  - **Many items from existing measures/surveys, especially in parent version**
    - Including measures on aspects of climate aimed at elementary parents
  - **Multiple rounds of feedback from First 5 LA and LAUP**
  - **Cognitive interviews to refine content**
  - **For parents, Spanish, English, and Korean versions**
  - **Lengthy**

# Test of Questionnaires

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- **Representative sample of LAUP center-based and FCC programs (108)/classrooms (124)**
  - Questionnaires distributed to all teachers/assistant teachers in sampled classrooms
  - Of the 396 teachers, 112 (28 percent) responded
    - From 50 percent of programs
- **Sample of parents not representative**
  - First 10 parents in center classrooms and first 4 in FCC classrooms to sign consent forms
  - Of the 869 parents, 607 (70 percent) responded (questionnaire or interview)

# Select Findings

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- **Self-selected sample of teachers and parents indicated that parents engaged in a variety of ways**
- **Self-selected sample of teachers indicated that support for engagement was strong**
- **Patterns indicated few differences by:**
  - **Concentration of dual language learners in program (high versus low)**
  - **Program type (center versus FCC)**
    - **More e-mail in FCCs**

# Select Findings, cont.

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- **Climate measures designed for elementary parents inappropriate for EC settings?**
  - Overwhelmingly positive responses
- **Congruence between teachers and parents where explored**
  - Difficult to untangle

# Target Development

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- **Base targets on what programs can do to support engagement**
  - Strategies for communication
  - Opportunities for engagement
  - Information about community resources
- **Base determination of whether targets are met on program director responses**
  - Thus, may reflect policy as much as behavior
- **Consider teacher and parent data for planning purposes**