Defining and Measuring Engagement to Inform a Performance-Based Contract

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Study Purpose

- 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
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
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

- **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

- 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.

- 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

- 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