

Alaska Early Childhood Development Needs & Readiness Assessment

Indigenous Project LAUNCH

Southcentral Foundation

PROJECT
LAUNCH



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

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***“It is easier to build strong children than
to repair broken men.”***

~ Frederick Douglas

Overview

The purpose of Indigenous Project LAUNCH is to promote the wellness of young Alaska Native and American Indian children, from birth to eight years old, by supporting the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of development. The long-term goal of Indigenous Project LAUNCH is to ensure that all children enter school ready to learn and able to succeed.

Indigenous Project LAUNCH also seeks to improve coordination across child-serving systems, building infrastructure and increasing access to high-quality prevention and wellness promotion services for children and their families. To this end, we have established working relationships with many programs and services available in the Anchorage area.

Through these coordinated efforts with SAMHSA, Alaska early childhood development communities and parents, Southcentral Foundation (SCF) has conducted the following needs assessment that can give us an insight on the true state of early childhood development among Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) children and their families in Alaska.

Southcentral Foundation is in the heart of Anchorage Alaska, the states most populous city with a population of over 750,000 people. The city of Anchorage is also the central hub for most early childhood organizations as well as the main school district for the state.

Project LAUNCH grantees are guided by Young Child Wellness Councils, which bring families, public partners, and private partners together to improve policies, programs, and approaches using data and funds effectively. Each Project LAUNCH community implements the core set of five prevention and promotion strategies drawn from current research and evaluation.

Taking a comprehensive snapshot of early learning and development programs, facilities, services, and resources is the first step in a successful implementation of the Indigenous Project LAUNCH (IPL) Program from the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Southcentral Foundation has partnered with SAMHSA and is working for the betterment of early childhood development through IPL. Using the Indigenous Project LAUNCH Needs & Readiness Assessment as a starting point and continuing through with our strategic plans, evaluations, and the desired outcomes SCF will:

- Promote optimal resource utilization by addressing gaps and unnecessary duplication in systems of care serving the focal population.
- Identify and prioritize needs and ways to address social determinants of health for specific neighborhoods and communities.
- Identify staff training and development needs for people working with young children.
- Initiate or join efforts to increase public awareness and knowledge of young child wellness within the Alaska Native Community and the public with other child serving organizations.

The project will also develop a Public Education campaign focused on families expecting or with young children. The campaign will be developed to provide Native families with information and experiences designed to help them promote social, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellness of their children.

The IPL program stands on the foundational strategies and objectives to guide grantees through their multiple year programs listed below:

Project LAUNCH Prevention and Promotion Strategies

- Screening and assessment in a range of child-serving settings
- Integration of behavioral health into primary care
- Mental health consultation in early care and education
- Enhanced home visiting with a focus on social and emotional wellbeing
- Family strengthening and parental skills training

Project LAUNCH Objectives

- Increase access to screening, assessment, and referral to appropriate services for children and families
- Expand use of culturally relevant, evidence-based prevention and wellness promotion practices in a range of child-serving settings
- Increase integration of behavioral health into primary care settings
- Improve coordination and collaboration across disciplines at the local, state, territorial, tribal, and federal levels
- Increase workforce knowledge of children's social and emotional development and skills to respond to behavioral health challenges of young children and families

Purpose

Studies show that early learning development is at one of its most influential stages in children birth through eight years old (Britto et al, 2017; Black et al, 2017). Children develop cognitively, emotionally, socially, and physically during these critical early years of development (Britto et al, 2017; Black et al, 2017). Preparing children for the school systems is imperative during these early stages and if not addressed, children and their families can find themselves unprepared for the school system and underdeveloped in the areas previously stated. The Project LAUNCH main goal is for all children to enter school with the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills they need to succeed.

Drawing from SAMHSA's own resource guide for the needs and readiness assessment the IPL team will "consider children's health in the context of their families, communities, systems, and cultural backgrounds. Children must have the opportunity to live in families and communities that are safe, stable, and supportive." (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, 2019)

Scope

This report will focus on children ages 0 – 8 years old and their families living in Alaska along with the available resources, conditions, and barriers that families with young children face today. Parents are referred to throughout the needs and readiness assessment and whenever "parent or parents" are referred to it will include parents and guardians.

Data used for this report was drawn from current data available as well as newly developed surveys and focus groups. Surveys and focus groups were conducted with parents, teachers, and individuals involved with early childhood development in Alaska. The geographic locations for this data collection was conducted in Anchorage Alaska however many of the respondents to the surveys have lived in rural parts of Alaska and was not secluded as an "Anchorage Only" assessment. Most data pulled from

existing resources also covered the entire state of Alaska including rural villages. Nationwide data was also used for comparison purposes.

The 2018 Kids Count Profile (Foundation, 2018) shows multiple data points directly related to IPL and the proposed areas of concern in the early childhood development areas in Alaska. Ranked number 46 overall in the 2018 Kids Count Report, Alaska has much work to do with their young children and families. Some of the baseline statistics from the 2018 Kids Count Profile are listed below highlighting general overarching needs and some eye-opening statistics. (not all statistics are included in the following overview).

Data was also used from sources that show suspension and expulsion rates in the Anchorage School District. With suspension and expulsion rates climbing the IPL team felt that a correlation from early childhood development and later suspension and/or expulsion may indicate an avenue to follow.

Methodology

Collection of data for the LAUNCH needs and readiness assessment will be drawn from existing data sources already available from multiple organizations as well as new data collected by the SCF LAUNCH Program Evaluator by way of surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and observation. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be used throughout the course of the needs and readiness assessment as well as the overall program evaluation. To date, the SCF IPL Team has conducted the following data collections:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent Survey• Parent Focus Groups• Community Joint Task Force Meetings• Individual Community Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher/Admin Survey• Teacher/Admin Focus Groups• Parent Onboarding Sessions• Observations
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The SCF IPL team felt that while existing data is important, it is the customer-owner (CO) voice that guides most SCF directions, philosophies, and mission. By utilizing SCF's active COs, we were able to quickly get to the roots of early childhood development from the "first-hand" perspective of parents already navigating the systems. There are many ways to collect data in the early childhood development field however SCF knows from experience that starting with the end user and working backwards is a great way to gauge the levels of almost any service or organizational resources.

SCF has a long-standing history of listening to the customer's voice and conducting this needs and readiness assessment was no different. While ample supply of data is available in the areas of concern the IPL team felt it important to keep this tradition going by hearing what the voice of the parents, guardians, and employees in early childhood development had to say. With this focus the IPL team quickly conducted several surveys and focus groups with these groups.

The SCF IPL team wasted no time in collecting data to support this needs and readiness assessment. We immediately started collaborating and interviewing community partners in the early childhood arena with hopes of a clear understanding of the current realities of early childhood development and family resilience. While many suggestions came through this first round of discovery the IPL team decided that a parent survey asking parents and guardians of children 0 – 8 years of age would be a good starting point and would begin to lay a foundation of SCF's role in Alaska's early childhood development.

The methodology the IPL team used for data collection was to gather as much information as possible from existing data sources and survey current parents and teachers to validate the existing data.

State Rankings Data

The availability of data surrounding children was at times overwhelming and it proved to be a challenge to only review and include data that would be helpful and beneficial to the mission and vision of the IPL team. The majority of data collected represents a statewide sampling with a focus from the IPL team on Anchorage through the first several years of the grant.

Multiple data sets were taken from the 2018 Kids Count Report (Foundation, 2018) as a starting point for the SCF IPL team and served as an early indicator of early childhood statistics to come.

Economic Wellbeing – Alaska Ranked 41st State

Measure	Total Number	Percentage	Up/Down Trend from Previous Report
Children in Poverty	26,000	14%	Up 1% from 13%
Children Whose Parents Lack Secure Employment	65,000	35%	Same
Children Living in a Household with a High Housing Cost Burden	53,000	28%	Down From 31%
Teens not in School and not Working	4,000	11%	Same

Education – Alaska Ranked 48th State

Measure	Total Number	Percentage	Up/Down Trend from Previous Report
Young Children (ages 3-4) not in School	14,000	64%	Same
Fourth-graders not Proficient in Reading	NA	72%	Down from 73%
Eighth-graders not Proficient in Math	NA	71%	Up from 67%
High School Students not Graduating on Time	NA	24%	Down from 32%

Family & Community – Alaska Ranked 20th State

Measure	Total Number	Percentage	Up/Down Trend from Previous Report
Children in Single-Parent Families	58,000	33%	Up from 32%
Children in Families where the Head of Household Lacks a High School Diploma	12,000	6%	Down from 10%

Children Living in High-Poverty Areas	10,000	5%	Up from 1%
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Kindergarten Preparedness

According to the 2015 ARISE (Anchorage Realizing Indigenous Student Excellence) Report to Our Community assessment conducted by Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), the percentage of students prepared for kindergarten, as demonstrated with an overall score of twenty or more on the Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP), only 34.9% of AN/AI were prepared for kindergarten vs 43.6% for all others. The ADP examines five domains identified from Alaska's Early Learning

Guidelines: physical health, well-being, and motor development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; cognition and general knowledge; and communication, language and literacy (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, 2018). Aside from the gap between AN/AI and other races less than half of all children were prepared for kindergarten using the ADP index. (Green Rock Consulting, 2015)

From the same report referenced above only 19.6% of Alaska Native children in grades five through twelve reported feeling connected to their school, 68.5% reported a neutral position, and 11.8% strongly disagreed they felt connected to their school. The data was grouped into three categories when compiled. 1) Strongly agree/agree, 2) agree some/disagree some, and 3) strongly disagree/disagree. (Green Rock Consulting, 2015)

In another section of the report main difficulties of families seeking early care are analyzed resulting in the following statistics.

Main Difficulties in Finding Early Care

- Availability – 56% of AN/AI families reported difficulty finding available programs
 - Quality – 41% of AN/AI families reported difficulty in finding quality programs
 - Cost – 44% of AN/AI families reported difficulty in finding affordable programs
 - Convenience – 26% of AN/AI families reported difficulty in finding convenient programs
- (Green Rock Consulting, 2015)

These four factors coincided with the issues discussed among the members of the Joint Task Force during the several meetings conducted to date. Cost and convenience were briefly discussed during the JTF meetings to date but did not hold as much weight as the other two factors, availability and quality. Quality and availability seemed to hold the most attention and sparked the most discussions from the JTF.

Suspension and Expulsion Rates

While collaborating with providers and other industry players in early childhood development we learned that the general perception of the school district is that they often do not know what to do with challenging students and often suspension and/or expulsion is the end result. Other data collected concerning suspension and expulsion rates in the Anchorage School District (ASD) also adds to the scope and mission of IPL. While it may be frustrating to parents and community the question remaining to be answered is what can the community do to better prepare children and their families to be successful in school?

Under the Civil Rights Data Collection section of the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development website the 2017-2018 report card gives a look at the school systems struggles with student suspensions and expulsions.

Category	Number of Children with Disabilities	Number of Children without Disabilities
Students who received one or more in-school suspensions.	1653	4536
Instances of out-of-school suspension.	3120	6722
Students who received an expulsion with educational services.	6	34
Students receiving a school-related arrest.	0	4
Students who were referred to a law enforcement agency or official.	97	357
(Alaska's Public Schools: A Report Card to the Public: 2017-2018, 2019)		

High School Graduation Rates

According to the newest report card put out by the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, all Alaska students completed high school at the rate of 78.51% for the years of 2018 through 2018. Among these graduation rates the Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) student population showed a significant lower graduation rate vs all other groups. AN/AI Alaskan high school students graduated at the rate 68.62% with a dropout rate of 5.37%, the highest among all groups. The below table depicts some of the main data points included in the report from the Alaska's Public Schools Report Card for the years 2017 – 2018.

**AN/AI Alaskan high school students graduated at the rate 68.62%
with a dropout rate of 5.37%, the highest among all groups.**

Group	Attendance Rate	Graduation Rate	Dropout Rate
Alaska Native/American Indian	89.96%	68.62%	5.37%
African American	93.56%	72.65%	3.60%
Asian/Pacific Islander	93.28%	83.66%	2.76%
Caucasian	94.14%	83.65%	1.88%
Hispanic	93.03%	75.90%	3.21%
Two or More Races	92.64%	74.23%	3.84%
(Alaska's Public Schools: A Report Card to the Public: 2017-2018, 2018)			

While high school graduation rates and dropout rates will not give specific data on children and families covered under the IPL grant it does give a major indicator that Alaskan children are not adequately prepared for high school. With approximately 54,000 children ages 0 – 4 on any given year the job of adequately preparing these children, and their families, to be school ready and have the same opportunity for success as any other child will be challenging. Alaska suffers greater disparity among the Alaska Native population as compared to other populations and the educational field is no different.

Gaps in Early Childhood

There are many commendable programs, organizations, and dedicated people working in the field of early childhood education in Alaska. It is a tough job but there are many that are willing to take on the task. With all the available resources surrounding this field we also came across multiple gaps in early childhood development the team felt pertinent to communicate. Gaps in early childhood development can improve with high-quality intervention and dedicated individuals willing to make a difference in the field.

The following gaps in early childhood development were identified by the IPL team during the first year and will be considered during the strategic planning phases and evaluation plan.

Increased Spending

Spending has increased however little to no change has occurred and, in some cases, a negative impact was felt regardless of the increased revenues. According to the Annual Survey of School System Finances put out by the United States Census Bureau, the amount spent per pupil for public elementary and secondary education (prekindergarten through 12th grade) for all 50 states and the District of Columbia increased by 3.7% to \$12,201 per pupil during the 2017 fiscal year, compared to \$11,763 per pupil in 2016. The increase in spending in 2017 was due in part to an overall increase in revenue for school systems in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 2017, public elementary and secondary education revenue, from all sources, amounted to \$694.1 billion, up 3.4% from \$671.2 billion in 2016. (Bureau, 2019)

Alaska was among the top three school districts receiving the highest percentages of their revenues from the Federal Government at 14.0%. Revenues appear to be increasing for Alaska public schools along with the disparities found as well. (Bureau, 2019) The lack of progress in the midst of increased spending can be disheartening for those working in the field. Often money is at the forefront of discussions about improving early childhood education and other educational gaps and yet it does not always prove to be the definitive answer. Does money solve all problems? No, but it helps.

Childhood Development Awareness at the Federal and State Government Level

While preparing some of the final stages of this needs assessment I went on the U.S. Department of Education's website looking for resources and data. Their subscriptions page had various newsletters that can be subscribed to including a promising looking one that covers family, school, and community engagement. Unfortunately, I could not locate a regular newsletter or report on the state of early childhood development on their site. I felt they covered many great topics and there is a need for more information around this topic however the lack of inclusion among their top focuses of education for early childhood development lends to the lack of awareness of these issues. (U.S. Department of Education, 2019)

The State of Alaska created the Alaska System for Early Education Development (SEED) in 2004. The initial goal of SEED was to establish guidelines for early learning; SEED eventually adopted the State of Washington's early learning standards. Teaching preschool in Alaska requires regular teaching licensure (i.e. the same as K-12), which is tied to earning a bachelor's degree or higher in early childhood education. Alaska also requires certification to individuals who help in preschools or for those that are instructional aides in public primary schools. The main pathway to this licensure is the completion of the Childhood Development Associate (CDA), although 30+ hours of coursework and 400+ of supervised practice can take the place of CDA certification (State of Alaska, 2019).

Training the Trainers

There is a great training available through the Office of Children's Services and delivered through the University of Alaska. The training is a research-informed, strength-based approach to helping families reduce stress, address risk factors, and promote healthy development. The overarching goal is the promotion of child and family well-being. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective factors that help families succeed and thrive, even in the face of risk and challenges. Alaska was selected in 2005 by the Center for the Study of Social Policy to pilot this approach and continues to work with programs and communities in implementing this framework. (Office of Children's Services, 2019)

The gap here is that there is a lot of training the trainers happening and yet we still seem to be at a loss when it comes to sending an end user (parent) to an available training. I contacted the facility that conducts the trainings and asked where I could send a father. Unfortunately, they were unable to give me a location to send anyone and did not even know who might be providing the end user training. Training the trainers, workforce, and community is essential but through this little exercise I came up short assisting a father in need of strengthening.

This reminds me of the castaway confined to a small boat dying from thirst and yet surrounded by water. "Water, water, everywhere and not a drop to drink."

Nutaqsiivik Nurse-Family Partnership Gap 2-3 Years Old

The Southcentral Foundation Nutaqsiivik Nurse-Family Partnership is a voluntary, home visiting program that works with families, mothers and infants to provide education and support as a supplement to regular prenatal care and well-child checkups. Together, the nurse and family develop goals and an education plan that helps the family prepare to welcome a new member into their home. Through the standard program, families graduate on the child's second birthday. Alaska preschools begin accepting children when they are at age three leaving a [one-year gap](#) in early development. The home visiting

program at SCF is structured to serve different needs however there lies an opportunity to discover ways of combining efforts and utilizing a home visiting program with early childhood development. The gap or gaps we are seeing between the two existing domains exist because the program is not setup for early childhood development but could be.

No Governing Body

“Grants come and go” was a comment I recorded during one of our Joint Task Force Leadership Meetings. There is a strong desire and commitment from the Alaska early childhood development leaders and workforce in the community however the lack of a stable governing body leaves multiple gaps and challenges. Dedicated individuals are trying very hard to govern this field as best they can but, self admittedly, are falling short. Speaking with individuals that have been working in this field for many years we have learned that grants and programs come and go without much apparent progress.

Who could step in and fill this gap? Who or what organization could step in and lead the Alaska early childhood education governing body? Perhaps this question will be answered over the course of the next few years.

Lack of Prenatal Care Learning Circles

Prenatal care learning circles (classes) have ceased at SCF for various reasons. An evaluation of the pre and postnatal care experience through the SCF system is currently in discussion and if moved forward could provide another great resource for families.

Anchorage School District

In March of 2019 the IPL team applied at the Anchorage School District to conduct research by surveying staff and faculty. The application for research was denied based on several reasons however one reason stood out more than the others. ASD stated “we cannot work with you this late in the school year and that we should have contacted them when we were first awarded the grant.” It was a strange experience and disheartening to learn that our own school district is part of the problem.

Perhaps there were good reasons to respond this way. Regardless of the circumstances the perception received from the school district was one of non-collaboration and resistance. When new and enthusiastic participants enter the arena and are greeted by the school district in this manner it can take a lot of wind from their sails.

With that being said the Anchorage School District (ASD) has many departments and positions that support the cause of LAUNCH and through the course of this grant SCF has every intention of building strong relationships with the district and specifically the departments and people who can contribute to the overall goals of school readiness in children.

OBGYN to Pediatrics Transition

There is a potential gap found in the transition from OBGYN to pediatrics on the Alaska Native Medical Center campus. This potential gap may be part of the program evaluation later this year and no data has been collected on this possible gap. Behavioral health screenings and workforce knowledge on “what to look for” could be beneficial to pursue later.

Gap or no gap this could be a potentially powerful strategy to include in the IPL team's strategic plan. Utilizing the transition between OBGYN and pediatrics for referrals can really jump start a family's direction in developing their children early on.

The following tables gives a snapshot of the organizations and their services provided as related to early childhood development. The tables are separated by category and does not represent a comprehensive list of all organizations and services available in Alaska. As SCF moves through the course of the grant period these tables will serve as an index of community resources and will be updated periodically.

Program Capacity and Community Readiness – Strengthening Families.

Table 1 – Family Strengthening

Organization	Service Provided	Pop. Served	Goals	Challenges or Gaps	Involvement with IPL
Agnew Beck	AGNEW::BECK is a multidisciplinary consulting firm based in Anchorage, Alaska with an office in Boise, Idaho. They are skilled in analysis, policy development, planning, public engagement, and project implementation.	All	At Agnew::Beck, we provide services that enhance community, human, cultural and environmental resources.	Data collection, A2P2 is needing additional funding for needs assessment	Data sharing for needs assessment, they are contracted for PDG needs assessment
Alaska Association of School Boards	The Association of Alaska School Boards is an organization representing all the local school boards in Alaska. Its membership consists of more than 330 individual board members, responsible for 100 percent of the students who attend Alaska's public schools.	K-12 children	AASB prides itself on offering a variety of relevant, innovative services to our membership. Our experienced staff will work with your district, schools, board, and community to meet your needs in improving and sustaining high student achievement		B. Brenneman is also part of the Joint Task Force leadership. She is working with the PDG.
Alaska Department of Education and Early Development	Public School Funding, Fiscal Accountability, Compliance and Oversight, School Effectiveness Programs, Active Partnerships		State Education Policy AS 14.03.015 It is the policy of this state that the purpose of education is to help ensure that all students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.		Supanika Ackerman is the contact for this partner. She is also co-chair for the Joint Task Force. She has been providing insight on DEED, recommendations on data collection
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Program	Alaska DHSS program oversees a variety of services such as Alaska Psychiatric Institute, Behavioral Health, Finance and Management services, Health Care Services, Juvenile Justice, Office of Children's Services, Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention, Public Assistance, Public Health, and Senior and Disabilities Services.	Statewide	The mission of the Department of Health and Social Services is "to promote and protect the health and well-being of Alaskans".		IPL partners with several offices within AK DHSS through the JTF like the Child Care Program Office

Anchorage Municipality		Statewide		Still searching to find a way to help legislatively	Ear for the legislation, more conversations are needed to establish best way to collaborate with each other
Child Welfare Academy	The Child Welfare Academy provides training and technical assistance to the State of Alaska, Office of Children's Services. CWA also contracts with other organizations, as requested, to provide a variety of training and facilitation needs in the area of child welfare.	Statewide	The Child Welfare Academy trains, develops and supports Alaskans to assure children are safe, youth thrive, and families are strong. We work to develop professionals so that they may be competent and compassionate		IPL reached out to Child Welfare Academy to inquire about Strengthening Families training. We have had Christian Mortensen attend a training already. They are a good contact for workforce training initiatives
Cook Inlet Tribal Council	Established in 1983, CITC serves nearly 10,000 people each year through an array of integrated programs in several service areas that help individuals achieve their full potential.	Cook Inlet Region	To work in partnership with Our People to develop opportunities that fulfill Our endless potential		Presiding over SCF, we still need to establish representation from them in the YCWAG.
Stellar Group	Contractor hired by Impact Project to perform their statewide needs assessment	N/A		N/A	Providing data for needs assessment
Learning Circles	Learning circles are opportunities for people to connect and build relationships through a variety of wellness activities. They are a core part of upholding Southcentral Foundation's mission of working together with the Native Community to achieve physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. Learning circles bring small groups of people with similar needs together to talk, share story, and learn from each other.	SCF customer owners, SCF employees	Physical, mental, & spiritual wellbeing	Lack of outcome data, integration, working in silos	Can be beneficial to partner with learning circles as related to early childhood development and mental health
thread	thread is committed to supporting families' access to quality, affordable childcare by leading projects that increase the quality and availability of childcare, collaborating with community partners and businesses, undertaking research, and advocating for childcare policies that positively impact the lives of children and families. thread acts as a	Families, early childhood educators, early childhood education programs, communities	thread has been working to advance child development and promote early education outcomes in Alaska. thread provides free resources and childcare referral services for Alaska families, as well as provides professional development, technical assistance, and financial supports for the early childhood education industry. thread also manages and houses Learn & Grow, Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) and the early childhood education industry's Professional Development		Providing data for needs assessment, community partner,

	centralized network for early childhood data, information, and services.		System, known as the System for Early Education Development (SEED).		
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Mental Health, Social, and Emotional Wellness and IECMHC Efforts.

Table 2 – Mental Health, Social, and Emotional Wellness and IECMHC Efforts.

Organization	Service Provided	Pop. Served	Goals	Challenges or Gaps	Involvement with IPL
Alaska Infant Learning Program	The Alaska Infant Learning Program is a statewide system of professionals dedicated to serving all Alaskan families with children who are at risk for or experience developmental delay. --- Envisions a system where all Alaskan families have access to the services and resources to help their children thrive.	Alaskan families with children at risk for or experience developmental delay	Our mission is to build upon natural support and provide resources that assist family members and caregivers to enhance children's learning and development through every day learning opportunities.		Have not solidified relationship with IPL. IPL did attend their IPL Coordinator meeting and provided a project update. Maureen Harwood is the contact for this group.
Alaska Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health	AK-AIMH is a non-profit statewide organization and network of parents, multidisciplinary professionals and caring individuals developed to support the emotional health and wellbeing of infants, young children and their families. We are devoted to strengthening relationships between infants, parents and caregivers. The caregiver-infant relationship is central to the healthy development of young children, and we are committed to the view that these relationships are influenced by the parent's or caregiver's actions and experiences, the infant's characteristics and responses and the surrounding environment.	State of Alaska	To promote the social emotional well-being of young children and their families throughout the State of Alaska		Have not pursued relationship yet however they are on the top of the list

Alaska Mental Health Trust	the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority has administered the trust and served Alaskans who experience mental illness, developmental disabilities, chronic alcohol or drug addiction, Alzheimer's disease and related dementia and traumatic brain injuries	Trust Beneficiaries	Our Mission: It is the duty of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide leadership in the advocacy, planning, implementing and funding of services and programs for Trust beneficiaries.		The contact for this office is Jimael Johnson. She is affiliated through the JTF and involved with the Expulsion / Suspension steering committee.
All Alaska Pediatric Partnership	A catalyst for improvements in Alaska's health care systems and services for children and their families. We support and link healthcare services between government, healthcare entities, social services, and payers for children and families by leading collaborative opportunities, improving efficiency within systems, advocating on behalf of children, expanding education and training opportunities for healthcare professionals, and enhancing communication around children's health and wellness. We recognize and respect the diversity within our organization and our community and use it as a guide to innovative thinking that leads to change.	Statewide	We are the leaders of collaborative, statewide efforts to improve health and wellness outcomes for children. We do this by communicating, coordinating and advocating best practice efforts in Alaska.	Need funds and data to help with current needs assessment	A2P2 is open to collaborating with IPL at some level. They are currently doing their own needs assessment through the Impact Grant with Agnew Beck. Their needs assessment will not be completed until October however we are still sharing data gathered and collected through the Joint Task Force collaboration.
Best Beginnings	a public-private partnership that mobilizes people and resources to ensure all Alaska children begin school ready to succeed	Families, children	Parents and extended family are engaged in their children's learning from birth on. Sufficient funds are committed - from public and private sources - to ensure that every Alaska child has the opportunity to begin school ready to succeed.	Funding shortage, small workforce (5 people)	Support, access to parents

Women's, Children's and Family Health	Through the provision of reliable data on maternal and child health issues for use in planning and evaluating programs, preventing poor health outcomes, and guiding public health policy.	Alaskan women, children, teens and their families	The Mission of Women's, and Family Health is to promote optimum health outcomes for all Alaskan women, children, teens and their families: Through leadership; Coordination with the primary and public entities within the health care system to improve access to and organization of services in support of families; Deliver preventive, rehabilitative and educational services that are family-centered and culturally appropriate targeting women, all children and teens, and their families.		
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Developmental and Social Emotional Screening and Assessment

Table 3 – Development and Social Emotional Screening and Assessment

Organization	Service Provided	Pop. Served	Goals	Challenges or Gaps	Involvement with IPL
Alaska Native Cultural Charter School	Charter school	K-12 children	Our Mission is to build student excellence through traditional cultural learning	Lack of school nurse, would like to explore resources for parents, SI prevention, behavior support, nutrition, exercise	One meeting was held in Oct 2018. No other communication has been initiated as they would like to know what direction the project will take and if they have a role in it.
Child Care Program Office	The Child Care Program Office (CCPO) is the lead agency for the Federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) functions. The CCPO monitors, regulates, and licenses childcare facilities across the state and further promotes childcare quality through grants to Child Care Resource & Referral agencies and the direct administration of the Child Care Grant Program. The CCPO promotes capacity and accessibility in childcare with special	Infants, school age children, children with special needs	Mission: We support families in Accessing Quality Child Care		Co-Chair with Joint Task Force, part of the Preschool Development Grant

	attention to infants, school age childcare, and children with special needs.				
Clare Swan Early Learning Center	The Clare Swan Early Learning Center provides for the needs of working families beyond simple childcare. We implement the research-based Early Head Start curriculum that emphasizes the importance of responsive and caring relationships to support the optimal development of infants and toddlers.	Infants to 2 years	Clare Swan Early Learning Center also provides child development information and performs periodic assessments to track child development through their stages of growth. Our center encourages families to participate in their child's education as well as supporting our families' goals.	Lack of mental health professional in classroom, parents are dealing with significant lack of resources	Parent access, providing input on needs assessment, providing annual reports for IPL
Cook Inlet Native Head Start	Building Strong Foundations with Alaska Native Families through Alaska Native Cultures and Education	Families, children	Building Strong Foundations with Alaska Native Families through Alaska Native Cultures and Education	Lack of mental health professional in classroom, parents are dealing with significant lack of resources	Parent access, providing input on needs assessment, providing annual reports for IPL
Help Me Grow	a system that connects children and families with the services they need, and is a program under the umbrella of the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership	Families in the communities of Kodiak, the Mat-Su and Northern Sound			Could be a helpful partner in finding children outside of SCF empanelment. Megan Johnson is the contact for this project and has been a large contributor to JTF and IPL discussions.
Program for Infants and Children	PIC's mission is to promote the growth and development of young children who experience developmental delays by supporting and strengthening parents.	Statewide	PIC's mission is to promote the growth and development of young children who experience developmental delays by supporting and strengthening parents		Support, access to parents

System for Early Education Development (SEED)	SEED is Alaska's early childhood professional development system. Based at thread, SEED integrates and recognizes the needs of a diverse workforce, which includes early care and learning providers, certified teachers, early interventionists, administrators, and others working in related positions that support the development of young children.	Early educators in Alaska	SEED is a collaborative of Head Start, the Tribal Childcare Association, State of Alaska Departments of Education and Early Development, Health and Social Services, Labor, thread, and other nonprofit agencies in Alaska.		SEED is a member of the Joint Task Force and is also housed within thread.
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Integration of Behavioral Health into Primary Care

Table 4 – Integration of Behavioral Health into Primary Care

Organization	Service Provided	Pop. Served	Goals	Challenges or Gaps	Involvement with IPL
Elder Program	provides a comprehensive approach in delivering services to address the needs of Alaska Native and American Indian elders, age 55 and older, who reside in the Anchorage area. The services are designed to enhance the quality of life and promote independent living through fostering an environment of quality, dignity and pride.	SCF Customer-Owner Elder Community	Provide accessible services to AN/AI elders and their families, reduced emergency department utilization, physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing		
OB/GYN	The OB/GYN Clinic works closely with Southcentral Foundation's Health Education Department to ensure expectant mothers have access to thorough, timely and relevant information as they prepare to have a baby.	SCF customer owners, SCF employees	Provide a full range of health services for women, both pregnant and non-pregnant, throughout the life continuum, from adolescence to post-menopausal		Potential involvement going forward with an integration with mental health
Pediatrics	provides outpatient primary care and specialty consultative care for children.	SCF customer owners, SCF employees	Diagnosis and treatment of acute illnesses Developmental screenings		Potential involvement going forward with an integration with mental health

			School, sports, and childcare examinations Health care management for children with complete health needs Guidance on behavioral and parenting concerns Evaluation and counseling by dietitians Preventative screenings General pediatric consults and referrals to specialists Immunizations Well-child check-ups and health screenings Appointments for Family Health Resources		
Prenatal Health Classes	staffed by clinical exercise specialists, lactation specialists, childbirth educators, general health educators and more. We work in partnership with you and your care team to provide access to a variety of classes, including prenatal exercise, prenatal education, childbirth and parenting, as well as baby food demonstrations, mom and baby play groups, and more!	SCF customer owners, SCF employees			On hold currently
Primary Care	provides a full spectrum of primary health care services for Alaska Native and American Indian families in the Anchorage Service Unit.	SCF customer owners, SCF employees	Acute and chronic disease treatment Preventive care Same day appointments Minor surgery Lab and X-ray Social services Maternity care Pediatrics		Potential involvement going forward with an integration with mental health
Traditional Healing	provides traditional Alaska Native approaches to health in an outpatient setting, in conjunction with other services offered at Southcentral Foundation	SCF customer owners, SCF employees	Traditional Counseling Traditional Physical: Healing Hands Healing Touch Women's Talking Circle Traditional Healing Garden	Acceptance	

Home Visiting

Table 5 – Home Visiting

Organization	Service Provided	Pop. Served	Goals	Challenges or Gaps	Involvement with IPL
Nutaqsiivik Nurse Family Partnership	a voluntary, home visiting program that works with families, mothers and infants to provide education and support as a supplement to regular prenatal care and well-child checkups. Together, the nurse and family develop goals and an education plan that help the family prepare to welcome a new member into their home.	New mothers enrolled in before 28 th week of pregnancy, eligible for WIC and/or Denali KidCare or Medicaid	<p>Improve maternal outcomes, promote self-efficacy and promote early childhood development for school readiness</p> <p>Improve pregnancy outcomes for AN/AI families</p> <p>Improve health outcomes in AN/AI children</p>	Not able to enroll every new mother, staffing, grant requirements	Possible integration/collaboration with LAUNCH
Providence Hospital AK	<p>The Providence Nurse-Family Partnership is a program for women who are having their first baby. If you enroll, your registered nurse will visit you in your home and discuss health, baby's growth and development, labor and delivery, infant care, and many other topics.</p> <p>Your nurse will visit every week or two during your pregnancy and up until your baby is 2 years old. You and your nurse will decide the exact schedule.</p> <p>My nurse will help me: Have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby Become a better parent Build a strong network of support for me and my baby Make my home a safe place for my</p>	Anchorage, Mat-Su Valley, Girdwood, and all communities between	<p>Have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby</p> <p>Become a better parent</p> <p>Build a strong network of support for me and my baby</p> <p>Make my home a safe place for my baby to live and play</p> <p>Get referrals for health care, childcare, job training and other support services available in my community</p> <p>Find ways to continue my education and develop job skills</p> <p>Set goals for my family's future and find ways to help me reach them</p>	Eligibility requirements, not well known, not statewide	This NFP has collaborated with the Nutaq program at SCF and has great potential for IPL collaboration

	baby to live and play Get referrals for health care, childcare, job training and other support services available in my community Find ways to continue my education and develop job skills Set goals for my family's future and find ways to help me reach them				
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Parent Surveys & Focus Groups

As part of the greater picture in the arena of early childhood readiness in Alaska, we decided to immediately reach out to AN/AI parents of children 0-8 or have had recent experience raising children in that age range. Utilizing both surveys and focus groups, parents were asked some hard, personal yet relevant information about the current landscape looking for answers to questions that people have been asking for years.

Parents were asked how they viewed current early childhood development resources, services, and their perceptions of accessible resources, the role parents play in the child's development, and what barriers they encounter while raising children. While many of the answers and discussions on these topics had a wide range of personal experiences and insights, major themes developed and at the core of early childhood development, we all seem to be thinking along the same lines.

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be summarized together from both survey data and focus group data for each question for organizational purposes.

Questions were either administered in survey form or conducted within a focus group. Questions did not change during focus groups. All closed ended questions utilize a six level agree/disagree choice form "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". All open-ended questions answered per directions for each relevant question. Survey Likert Scale used did not incorporate a neutral answer. Respondents had to agree or disagree at some level or could choose not to answer. Dynamically the survey's total responses were calculated based on each question and context. N can include "did not answer" as a relevant response to some questions.

Questions Used in the Parent Surveys & Focus Groups

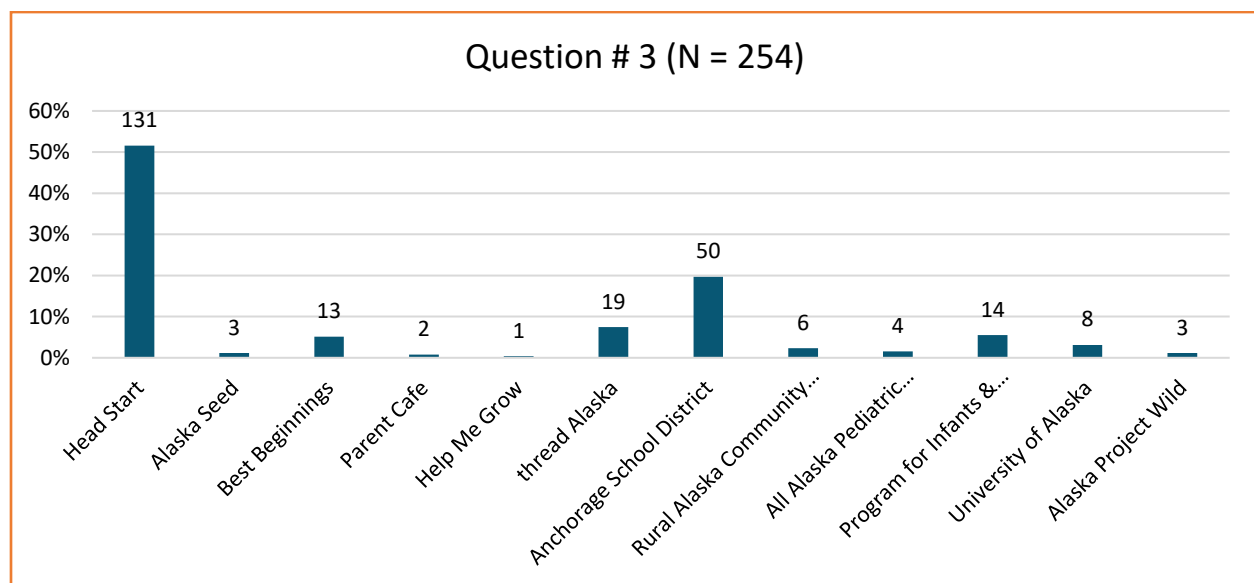
1. Are you a parent or guardian of school aged children currently living at home with you?
2. If yes, please fill in their age ranges. Fill in all that apply.
3. Have you and/or your children participated with any of the following organizations listed below to help prepare your children for kindergarten?
4. Are you aware of other community services that help parents prepare their children for kindergarten not listed above?

5. What activities do you and your children engage in, or have engaged in, that can help them prepare of kindergarten?
6. There are times when I don't know what to do as a parent.
7. I know how to support my children to be successful in school.
8. I spend time with my children doing what they like to do.
9. There are times as a parent or guardian that I do not feel supported.
10. There are times when my family needed services but, I didn't know where to go.
11. If there were times when your family needed services, what barriers prevented you from receiving services?
12. Please list up to four of your most serious family needs you have today, if any.

For the purposes of this report, general demographic questions #1 & #2 will be intentionally left out. Surveyed parents were prescreened as to whether they were parents or guardians of children in the age ranges covered by this needs and readiness assessment as well as if they were Alaska Native or American Indian (AN/AI).

One of the first concerns the Indigenous Project LAUNCH (IPL) Team had at the onset of this needs and readiness assessment was who and where are there available services to help and assist children ages 0 – 8 years old and their families? Not only is the who and where important but how to communicate available resources to the families that need them most. It is not only enough that there are available resources for parents, guardians, and children but also the ability to access these resources and avoid the many hindrances and barriers that can stand in the way of children and their families proved to be most important. All the resources in the world may be available to families however if they do not know they exist, whom does it serve?

Question # 3 – Have you and/or your children participated with any of the following organizations listed below to help prepare your children for kindergarten?



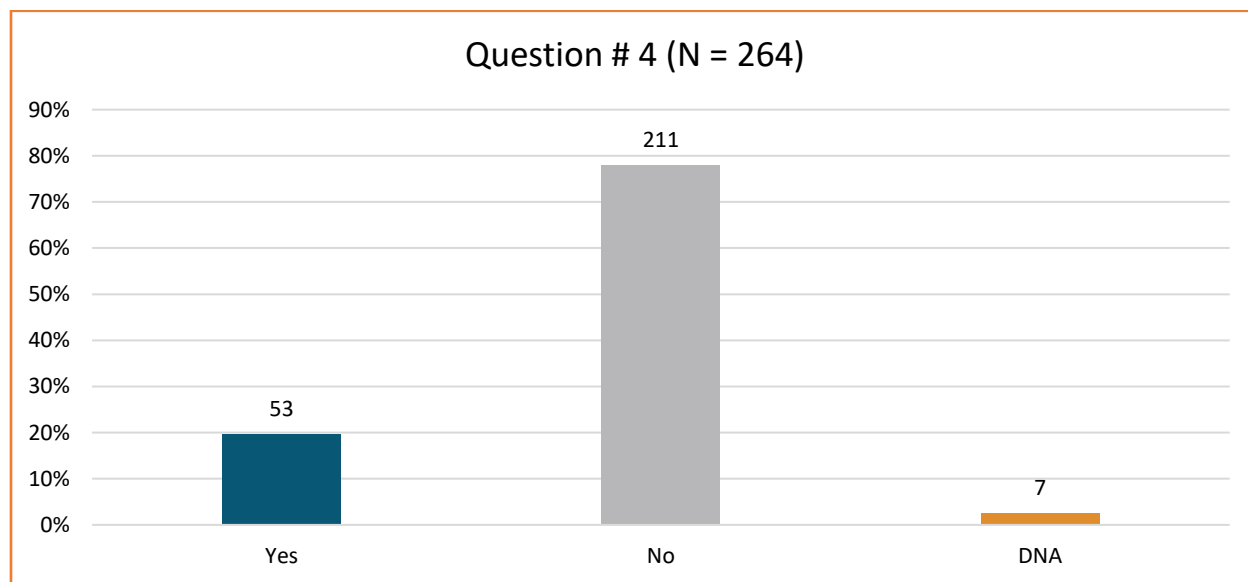
Over half of the respondents had participated with Head Start at 52% with a distant second place finisher coming in at 20% making “Head Start” the program of choice at over a two-to-one ratio as well as multiple other early childhood development organizations.

There can be several reasons for Head Start being the program of choice over others such as availability and enrollment requirements. Looking at the main players enrollment requirements could give us a better understanding on why over half of the respondents had participated with them. Was it easier to get their child into the program, did they qualify anywhere else, is money a factor, etc?

As a follow-up question to number 3 parents and guardians were asked if they were aware of any other programs that were not listed on the survey. Several other types of services were listed, some relevant, some not. Relevant services listed that did not appear on the survey included:

- The Stone Soup Group
- The Boys & Girls Club
- Program for Infants & Children (PIC)
- Cook Inlet Head Start

Question # 4 – Are you aware of other community services that help parents prepare their children for kindergarten not listed above?



53 of the 271 respondents reported knowledge of other programs that were not listed in the previous question. Other programs listed include:

- The Anchorage Public Library
- Boys & Girls Club
- Kids Corp
- Sprout Homer Alaska
- Denali Services
- Well Child

The IPL team found it interesting, and the data suggests, that almost 80% of respondents reported not knowing of any other resources available to them at the time of the survey. This question alone gave us an interesting insight not to what is available to parents or guardians but what is available and, do they

know about the resources available? All the services in the world will change nothing if not utilized or shared.

Perhaps some kind of starting point for parents to start such as an information booth. At an information booth you tell an attendant what it is you are looking for and they then point you in the right direction. This discussion has come up multiple times in the last six months and in several meetings. The thought is that there is no “one place” a parent can start. The actual issue the parents are facing is perhaps not what the focus should be but just giving them a universal place to start. Within that universal place, number, website a trained person with knowledge of programs and their requirements can guide parents in the direction they need to go.

This concept, and it is still a concept, may reduce wasted time, resources, and frustrations of families just trying to find services that can help them in their current situation. If families must engage with several organizations just to find out where they should go, chances are they may not make it to the ultimate destination that could actually help them. This can also help eliminate families receiving incorrect information on what and where they should be doing or going. Just because someone works in the field does not mean they know all resources available to all families and all situations.

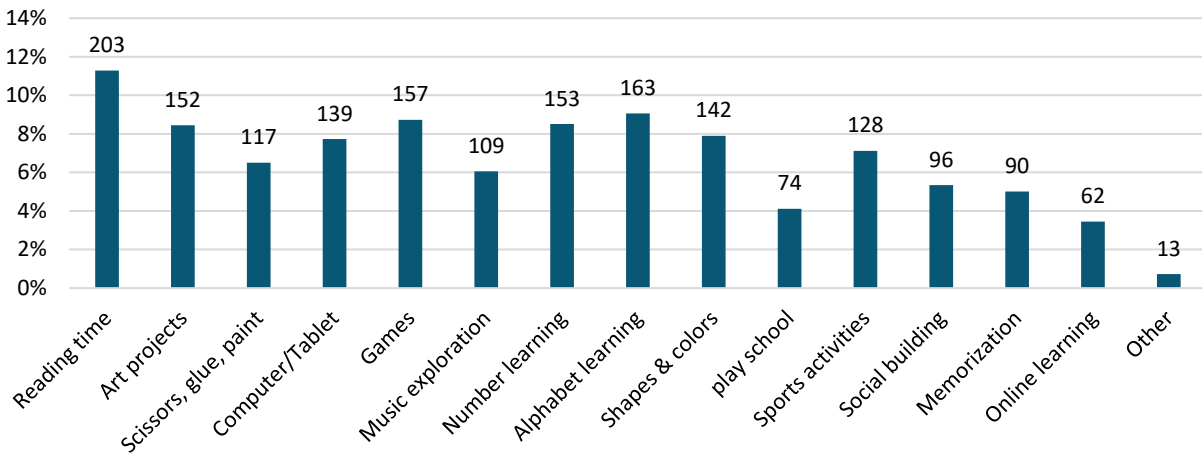
Alaska does have a 211-referral line however further research would need to be done to determine the functionality and effectiveness for AN/AI specific families and resources.

Question # 5 – What activities do you and your children engage in, or have engaged in, that can help them prepare for kindergarten?

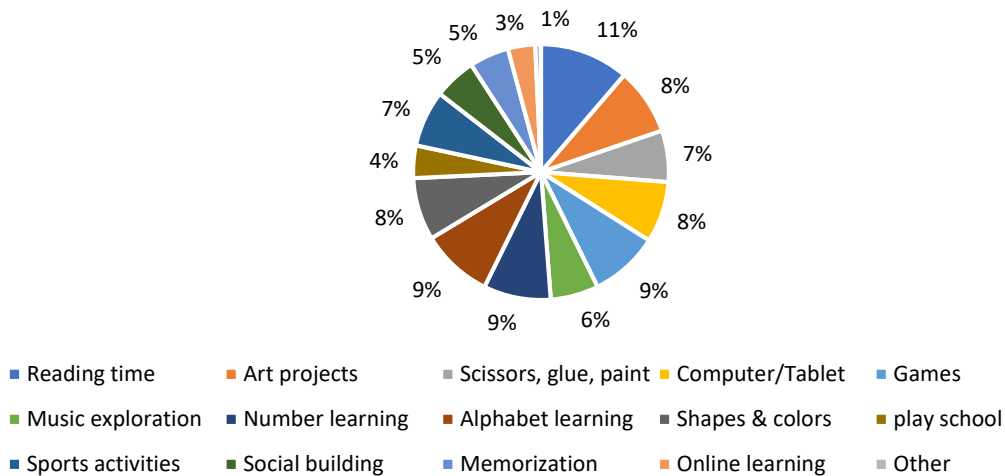
The IPL team thought it would be beneficial to understand how the parents or guardian’s perceptions of how well they engage with their children doing activities that could benefit the children and prepare them for kindergarten.

During some of the teacher/administrative focus groups teachers commented on how helpful it was to the classroom environment when parents engage in school-type activities.

Question # 5 - (Total Responses = 1798)



Question # 5 - (Total Responses = 1798)



Reading time, alphabet learning, games, number learning, and art projects took the top spots for engaging activities that parents and/or guardians participated in with their children. For this question set the N was set on the number of activities listed and not the sample size. Two charts have been included for a more balanced representation.

Below are some helpful quotes on the reasoning behind some of the activities listed.

"kids are into social media these days. Looked up educational games on my tablet....to her it is a game, to us she is learning letters, numbers, etc."

“HBO Family has programs appropriate for kindergarten, the problem is they will be sitting in front of the tv.”

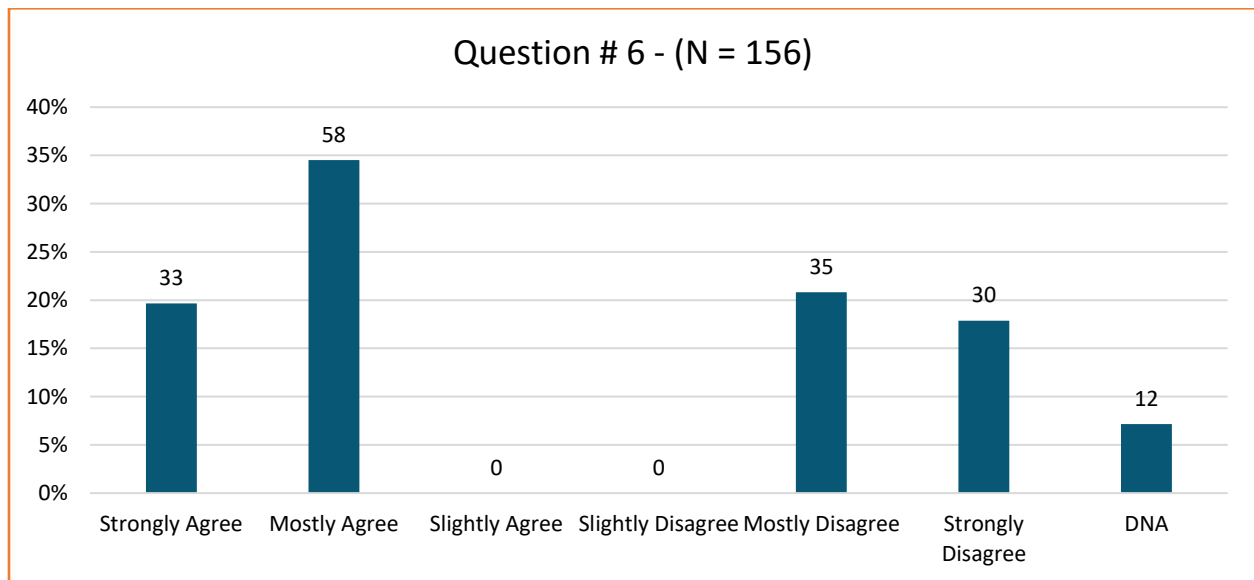
“The checklist has been really helpful.....it helps me understand where he is. He got the checklist from the teacher, an ASD checklist.” (ASD = Anchorage School District)

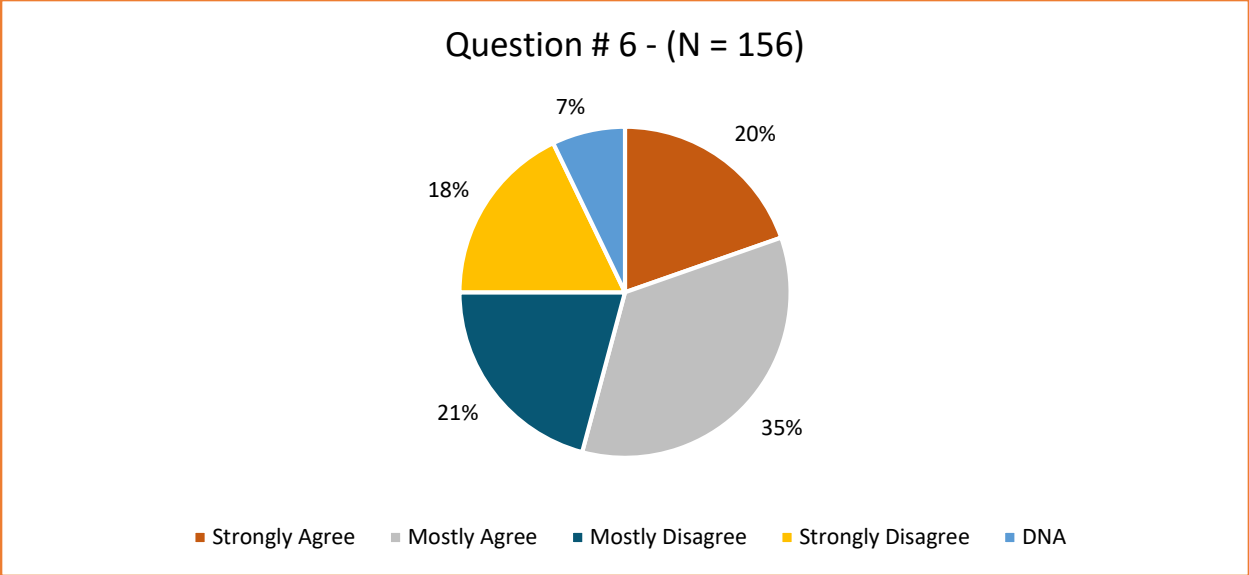
“I use the library as a resource, it is hard to find resources.”

Question # 6 – There are times when I don’t know what to do as a parent.

This question seemed to cause the most interest with stakeholders and community providers. At first glance the early childhood development scene in Alaska looked hopeful however after surveying parents and conducting focus groups other developments emerged that may indicate that parents and guardians can, at times, feel lost on what to do as parents or guardians. Regardless of how many resources and services may be available, if a parent or guardian does not know how to access them or even what to do during the day-to-day activities of raising children then those resources and services go underutilized.

The graph below shows that more parents sometimes feel they do not know what to do than those that do. Just over 90 parents admitted to sometimes not knowing what to do versus 65 parents say that they either mostly disagree or strongly disagree with the statement meaning they feel they know what to do as parents when the time arises.





During our focus groups many parents expressed the difficulties of raising children, and in one case, grandchildren. Below are just a few of the highlights from question #6 during the parent focus groups.

“I want to spoil my grandson, but I also have to be disciplinary and I feel like I’m doing it all over again, it’s exhausting”

“I think I hold a lot of patience”

“being a mom first before a friend”

“I have to go to another place before I go home, stay in my car for at least 30 minutes. If I don’t release myself first, it will take the whole night to get through it everyday”

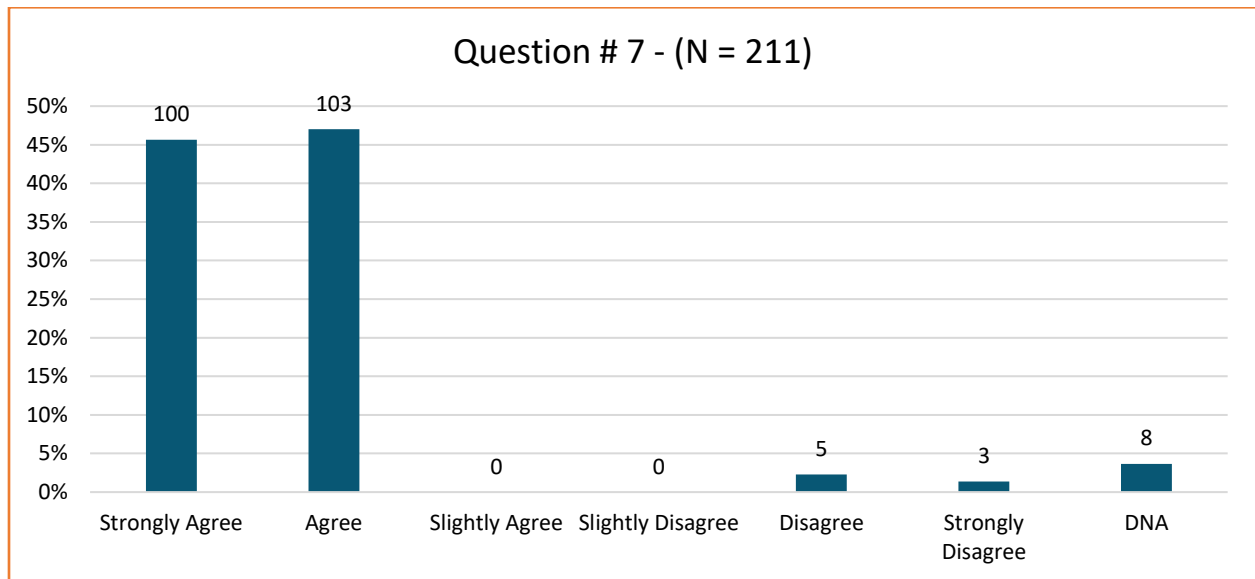
“I wasn’t sure what to do to sign my kids up for school”

“Being a seasoned parent, it is hard to ask for help”

Another thing to note - during one focus group a parent had been talking to someone who works in the school district and had said that even she didn’t know of all that’s available. This comment leads to a conclusion that if an employee in the field did not know herself all available resources to parents then how could parents know?

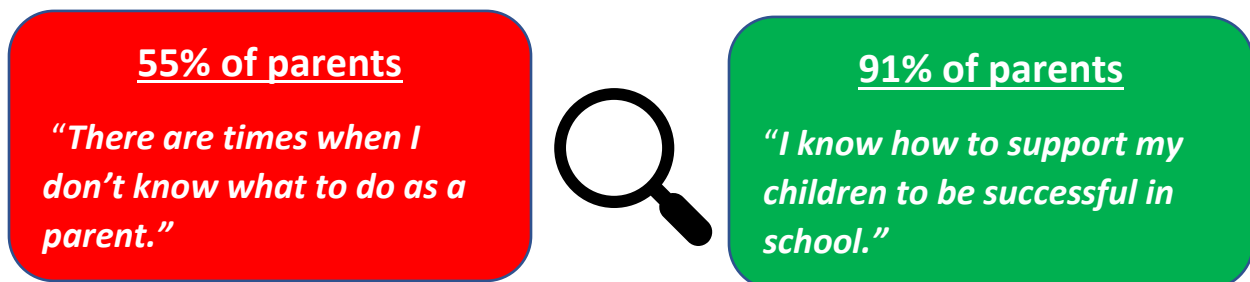
"If I don't know about them then I am sure that there are others out there that don't as well."

Question # 7 – I know how to support my children to be successful in school.



When parents and guardians were asked a contrasting question from the previous question, the answers came with a slight twist. On the opposite end of the spectrum of not knowing what to do as a parent, parents also feel they know how to support their children to be successful in school. Very few respondents disagreed with this question suggesting that most parents feel they know how to support their children to be successful in school.

Dimensions of School Preparedness: Social & Emotional versus Cognitive Understandings



The above infographic may at first seem contradictory, but in fact is explanatory of how parents view education and school preparedness. To professionals it is well known that school preparedness is as much or more so about social, emotional, and physical development as it about learning letters, numbers, and colors, etc. (Britto et al, 2017; Black et al, 2017). The contrast of the two answers above seem to indicate that parents identify and are comfortable with school preparedness in terms of these building blocks of knowledge, but when it comes to the larger picture of raising a socially and

emotionally healthy child, parents have less confidence. This indicates a gap in knowledge and potentially an area for skill building in parents of children age 0-3.

The team felt it important to acknowledge these apparent contradictions when it comes to school readiness and parental confidence. It is a difficult thing to admit as a parent that there are times that we do not know what to do and yet, we know how to support our children to be successful in school.

"I use the lists. It's a daily challenge of knowing what to do"

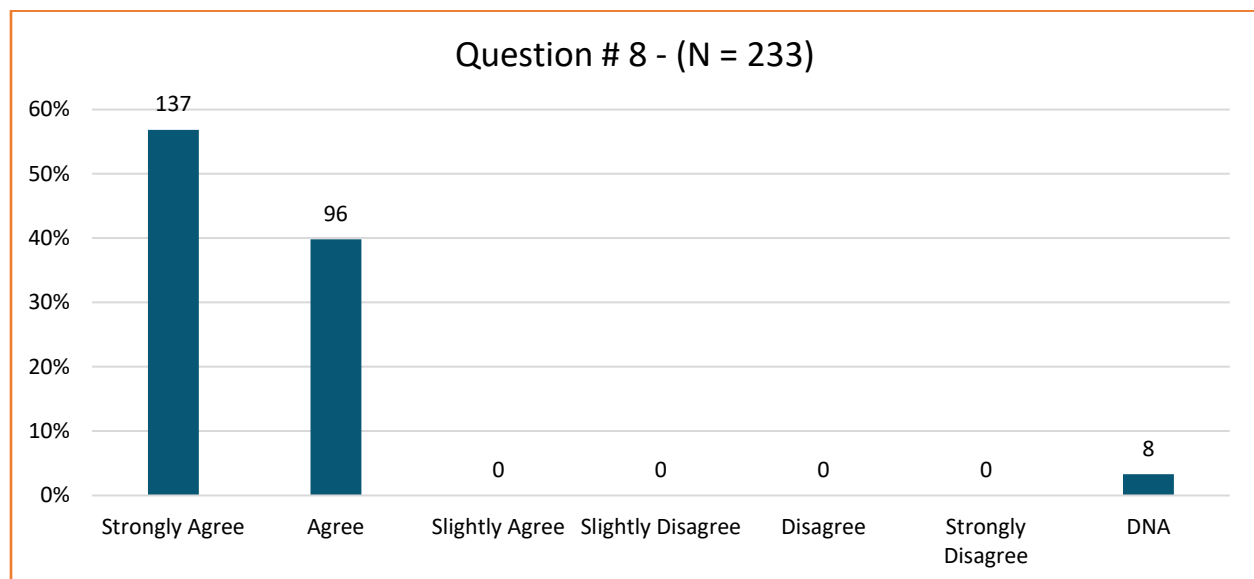
"...it's a tough job"

"I'm not very book smart, just street smart"

"I didn't get to have a child. I had my child when I was seventeen so I'm still learning myself"

Question # 8 – I spend time with my children doing what they like to do.

This was a refreshing question to see that parents and guardians unanimously indicated that they do spend time with their children doing things that their children enjoy doing, not what the parent enjoys doing with the inclusion of the children. No respondents disagreed with this question on any level however 8 parents did choose not to answer.



"I feel bad that I'm not around to watch them because I only can spend a couple of minutes with one then go to another"

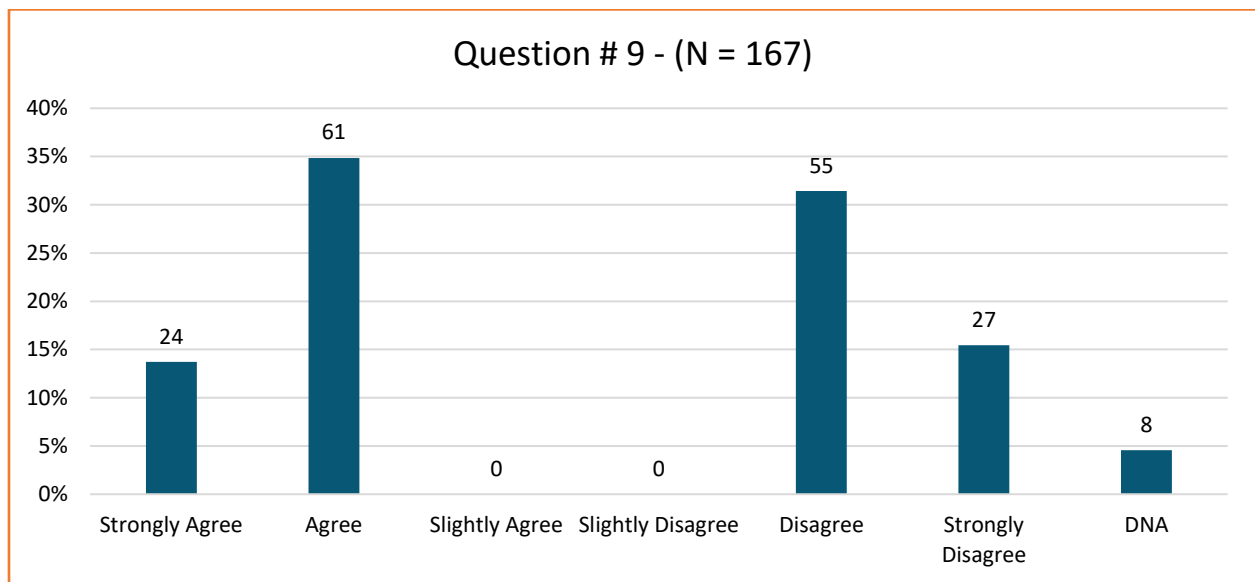
"I feel like it's hard to spend time with work schedules. I wish I had more time"

"sometimes it's kind of hard to do things with him instead of coming home and lying in bed"

I try to find an interest of my son and do that with him"

Question # 9 – There are times as a parent or guardian that I do not feel supported.

Knowing what to do as a parent or guardian within the family unit is one thing but if parents and guardians do not feel supported, parenting can become even more challenging. Even if the support is not the best in the world, feeling supported is an essential human need. Parents that indicate they feel no, or little support can show us how to change.



"Everyone's life is different. I don't have family in my life"

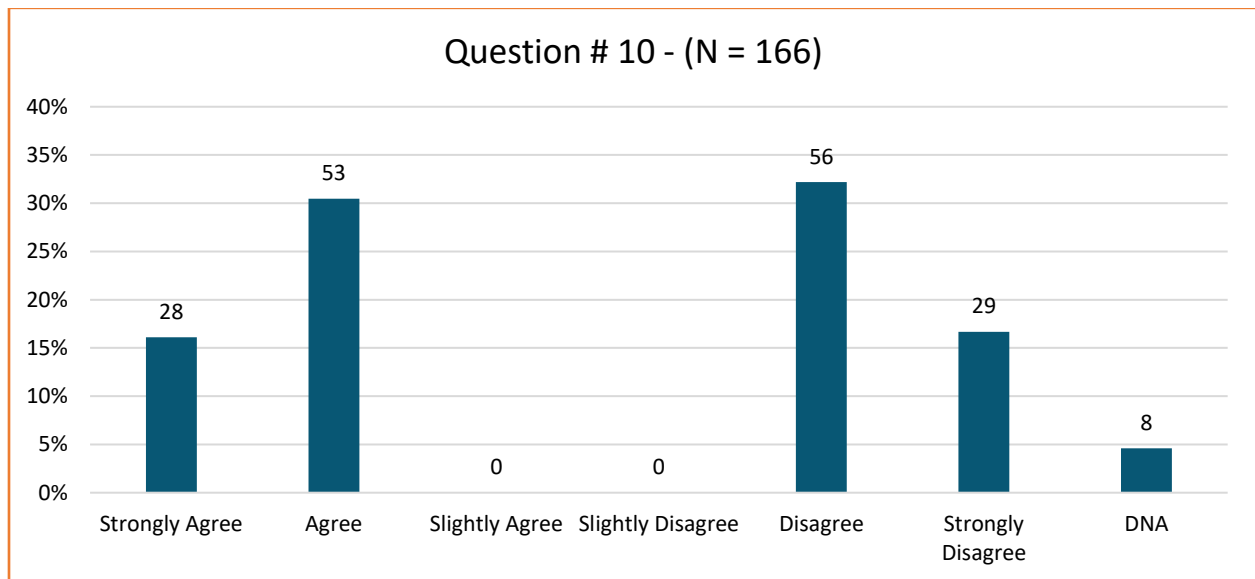
"I don't have anyone to go to, even vent too. My situation is definitely a struggle to feel supported"

"It gets hard when you work in a non-family friendly environment"

"When you're overwhelmed you cannot feel supported"

Question # 10 – There are times when my family needed services but, I didn’t know where to go.

The best of services and resource can be available, accessible, and open for business however if parents or guardians do not know where to go or how to obtain these services they can go underutilized and/or be received by a smaller population of parents and guardians that were able to navigate the system better leaving the majority out in the cold.



“You have to seek out, you have to be proactive, you have to go out”

“When I needed services, I use the internet to find information and do research”

“I reached out to a lot of people; it takes reaching out. Don’t be scared to ask for help. I used to be like that, but I learned how to reach out”

“You have to find that certain person in that position. It takes a special person to get things done, if you find them”

“We knew where to go but didn’t know how to find the time to do it”

“Where is the best place to go when you need to ask for help”

“I had to humble myself and reach out”



One major theme that arose from this question were the many wait lists created for parents needing services, but none were available at that time. Parents that need and qualify for services are often placed on wait lists in order to serve those that requested assistance earlier. Further evaluation may be conducted surrounding the programs and their wait lists. Questions focused on how wait lists are being used, length of wait times, qualifications, management, etc.

Question # 11 – If there were times when your family needed services, what barriers prevented you from receiving services?

Through the course of this grant I have learned barriers are often what keeps families from utilizing the services that are available to them. Barriers can come in many forms both physical and mental. Physical barriers include transportation, money, and time. Time meaning that parents are having a hard time

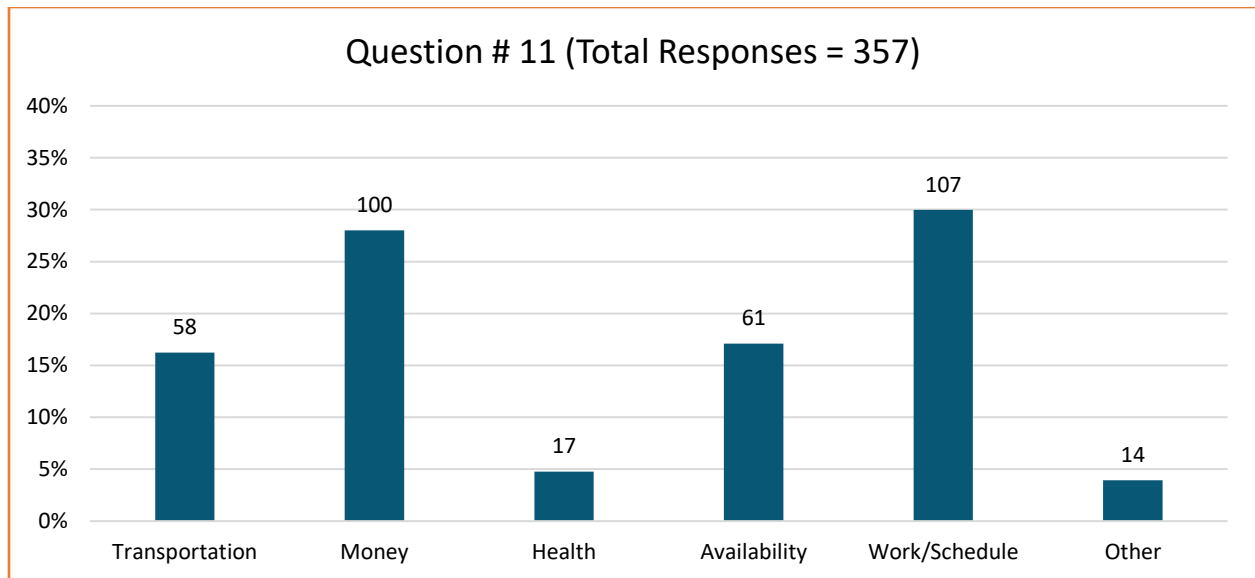


balancing their work schedules and their children's needs. Parents have communicated that they experience hardships from missed income due to time away from work to tend to the needs of their children's education. Barriers include economic struggles whether from a lack of funds or being unable to participate with programs because of work schedules and the inability to miss work.

Mental barriers are important to point out here as well. If a parent believes that the perceived barriers are greater than the intended outcome, then often they will just give up. There are the perceived

barriers with organizations such as the Office of Children's Services (OCS), the school district, and the government in general. Parents do not have much faith in the system and have lost trust, if they ever had it in the first place, that the system has our countries indigenous population's children best interests at heart.

TRUST



“Being told no”

“the biggest barrier today is income; we make too much”

“Just being afraid and unsure if you can trust somebody else”

“She is afraid to ask for help.....OCS”

Question # 12 – Please list up to four of your most serious family needs you have today, if any.

For the last question of the parent/guardian survey asking them to list their most serious family needs they are facing today. The word cloud below shows individual responses from the survey while highlighting the prominent answers to this question.



Teacher/Administrative Surveys & Focus Groups

All questions from the teacher and administrative employee surveys and focus group questions are provided for reference and only relevant questions of the needs assessment have been included in the narrative following. Job responsibilities and places of employment have been left out of this needs assessment report. Quotes from the teacher/admin focus groups have been included in the area that the comment was made.

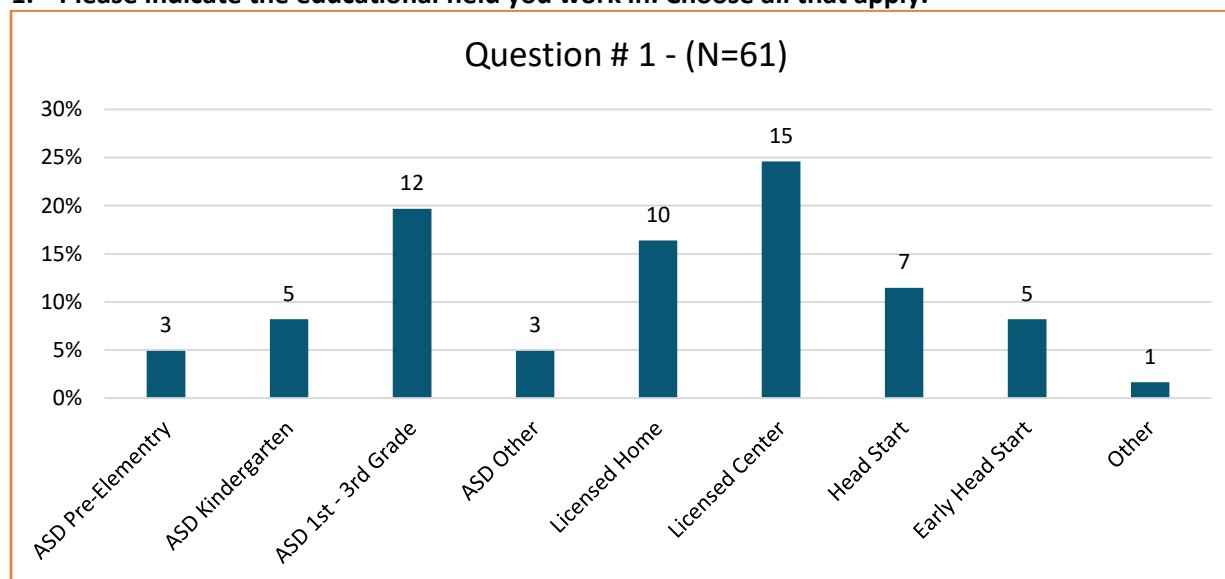
Questions Used in the Teacher/Administrative Surveys & Focus Groups

1. Please indicate the educational field you work in.
2. What is your current role within the early childhood development field?
3. Please choose the current age ranges you currently work with.
4. Please indicate the organizations you currently work for and/or are affiliated with.
5. Please indicate any issues your facility is experiencing or has experienced in the recent past.
6. Please indicate the age groups served by your organization.
7. Most children who attend preschool are prepared for kindergarten.
8. I feel comfortable teaching children from different cultures.
9. I feel supported in learning effective ways of working with children from different cultural groups.
10. I feel the children's behavior in this school (such as noise, horseplay, or acting out) sometimes interferes with teaching & learning.
11. In general, staff always model how they would like the children to behave.
12. In general, I feel staff respect the children.
13. I feel most of my colleagues share the values of the central mission of our organization.
14. Staff share a strong collective vision of what early childhood development looks like at our organization.
15. I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.
16. Please list some ways that you receive support from *parents*.
17. Please list a few ways parents *could have* supported you.

18. For the most part, parents work with their children at home to help prepare them for school.
19. I feel I am given the support I need from school administration to work with children with high needs.
20. I feel the school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive.
21. Please list some ways that you receive support from your <i>administration</i> .
22. Please list a few ways administration <i>could have</i> supported you.
23. I am generally satisfied with working at this organization.
24. In your opinion, what are the most serious child/family needs present today? Please list up to six.
25. In what ways do you feel parents can better prepare their children for school?

Sectors & Facilities

1. Please indicate the educational field you work in. Choose all that apply.

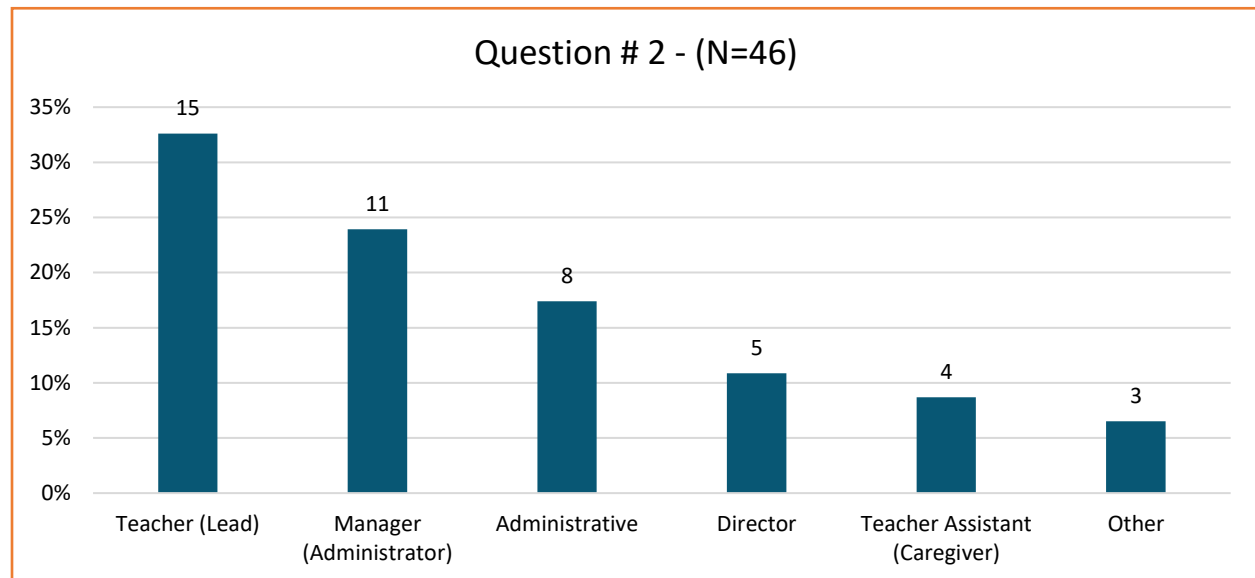


For a general overview of who and where the participants worked in early childhood development, we asked them to list the fields they were currently involved with. Some respondents are serving in multiple organizations surrounding early childhood development. Some listed up to three organizations that they are currently involved with in some form or another.

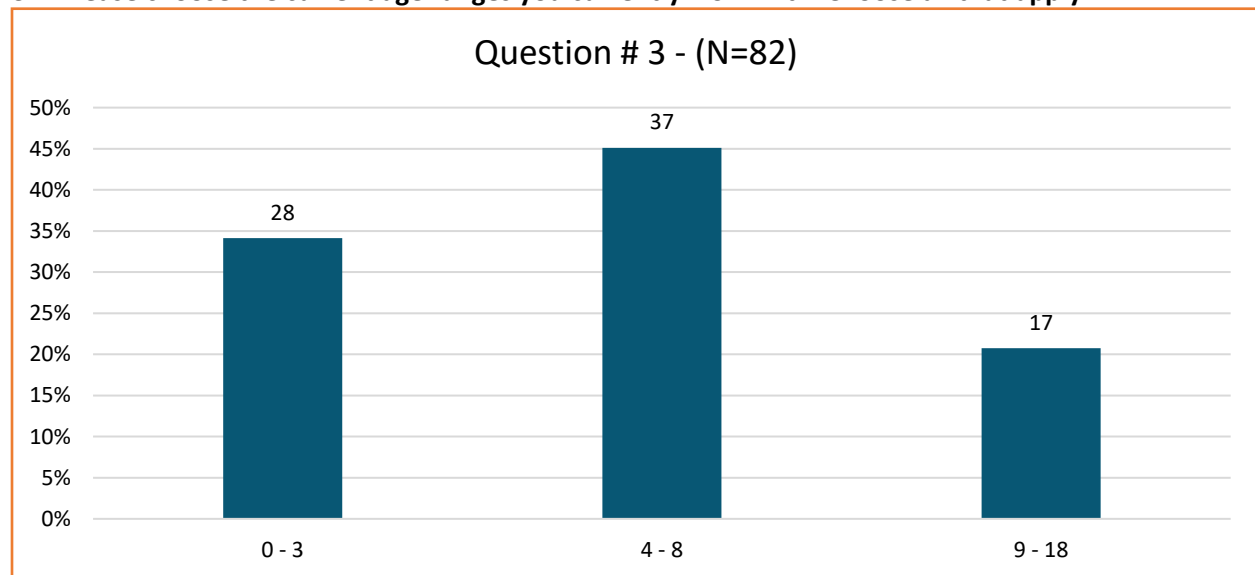
2. What is your current role within the early childhood development field?

The survey and focus groups had a great representation of a diverse group within early childhood

development. Participants ranged from food service employees to Directors of various division in the field.



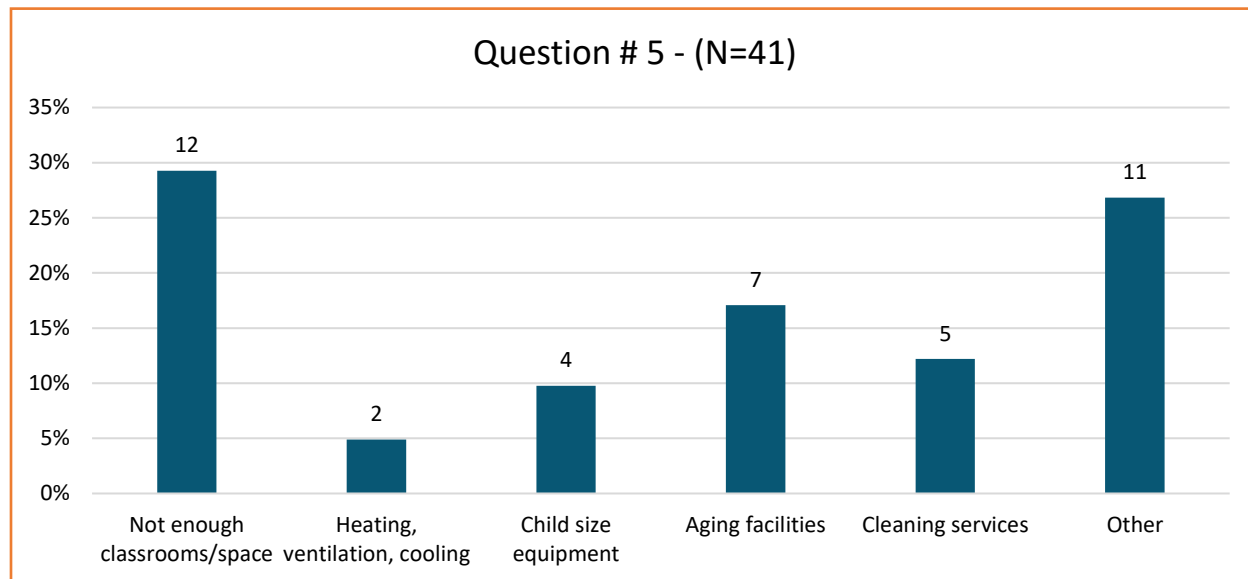
3. Please choose the current age ranges you currently work with. Choose all that apply.



All children's age ranges were represented in the survey and focus groups and grouped together into three age groups. Ages were grouped in this manner in order to accommodate other needs assessments and evaluations with our community partners. Pre-planning for the inclusion of other community partners and their data needs proved to be very valuable and gave the community more meaningful numbers for each of their projects. The 0 – 3 age group and the 4 – 8 age group will be used for the Indigenous Project LAUNCH needs assessment while the 9 – 18 age group will mostly be used for the

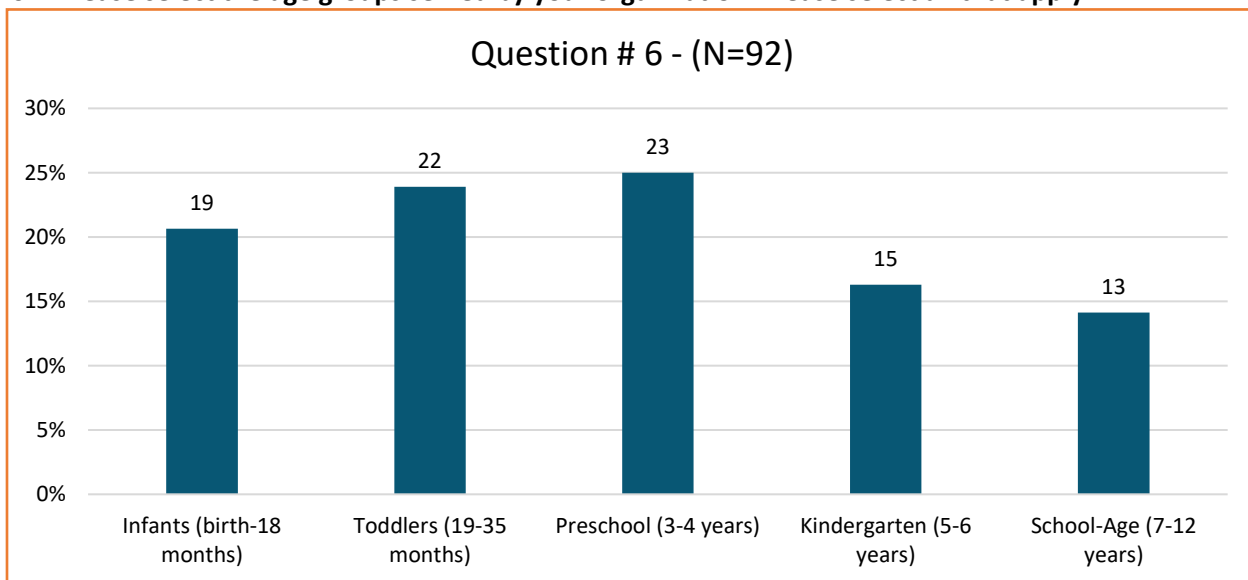
two community partner needs assessment currently in process.

5. Please indicate any issues your facility is experiencing or has experienced in the recent past.



Facilities questions did not expose any concerning factors for this assessment. In my opinion, Alaska facilities in general seem to be kept up and mostly adequate for services rendered. Being an extreme climate state, facilities are generally built right from the beginning and made to withstand extreme climates and earthquakes.

6. Please select the age groups served by your organization. Please select all that apply.

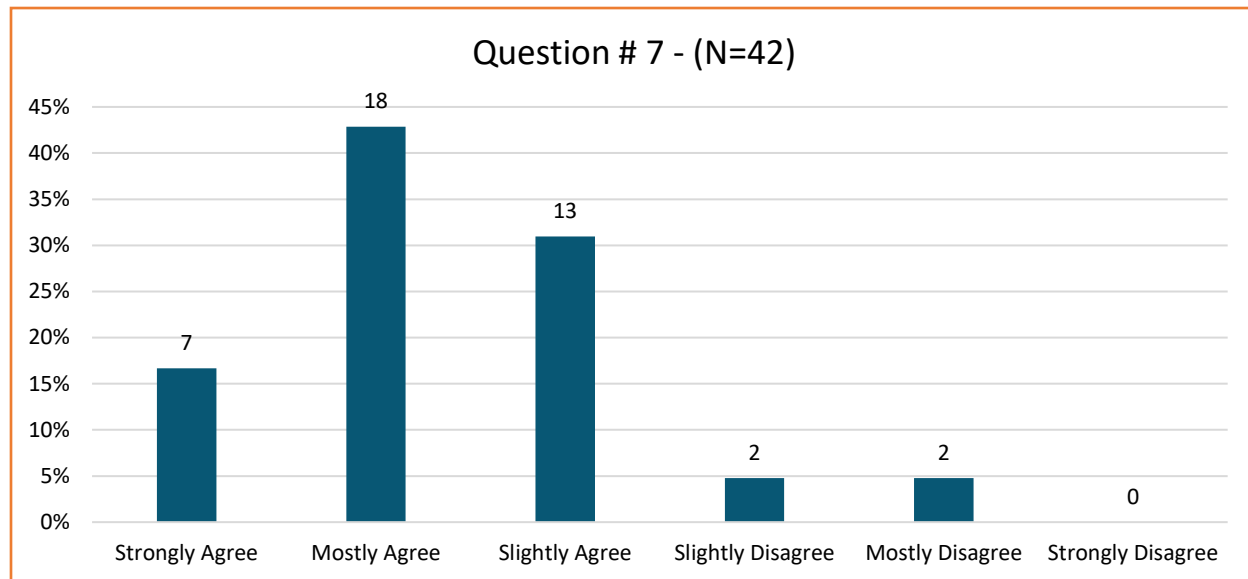


Age groups served by the participants were somewhat prearranged as we did not want data from the workforce serving children above twelve years old. Data from this question is for reference purposes

and mostly aligns with community partner needs assessments currently under way.

Perspectives of Teaching

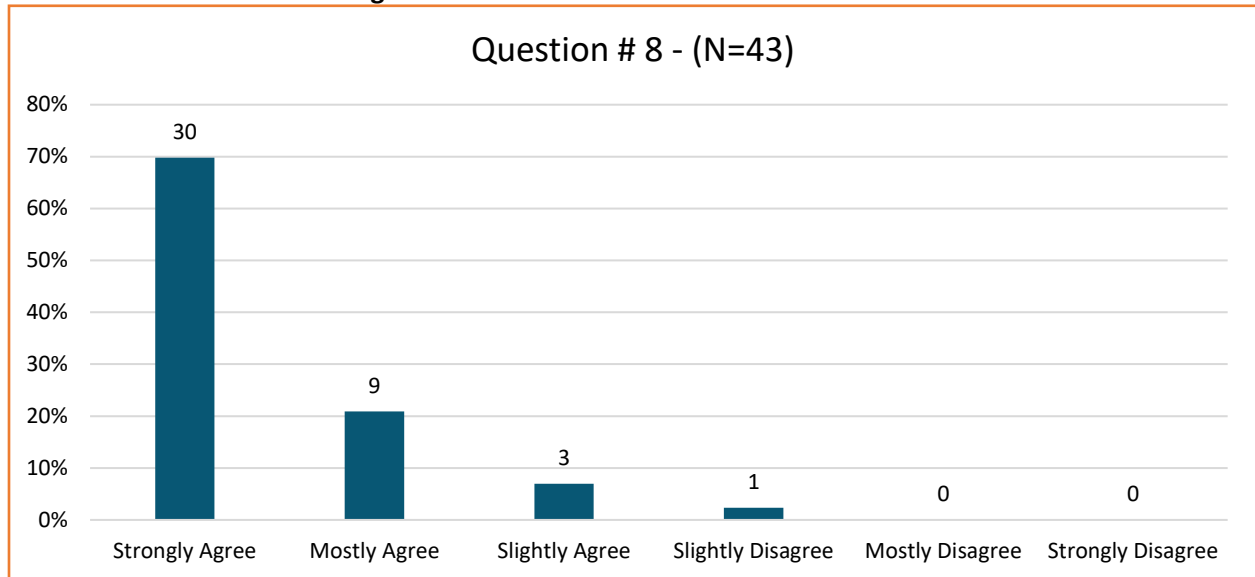
7. Most children who attend preschool are prepared for kindergarten.



This question did not spark as much conversation that I had expected and in general most teachers felt that most children were adequately prepared. The only real negative that came out of this discussion question was the challenge of transitioning to larger class sizes.

“Families are not prepared and transitioning into a larger class size is a significant challenge.”

8. I feel comfortable teaching children from different cultures.

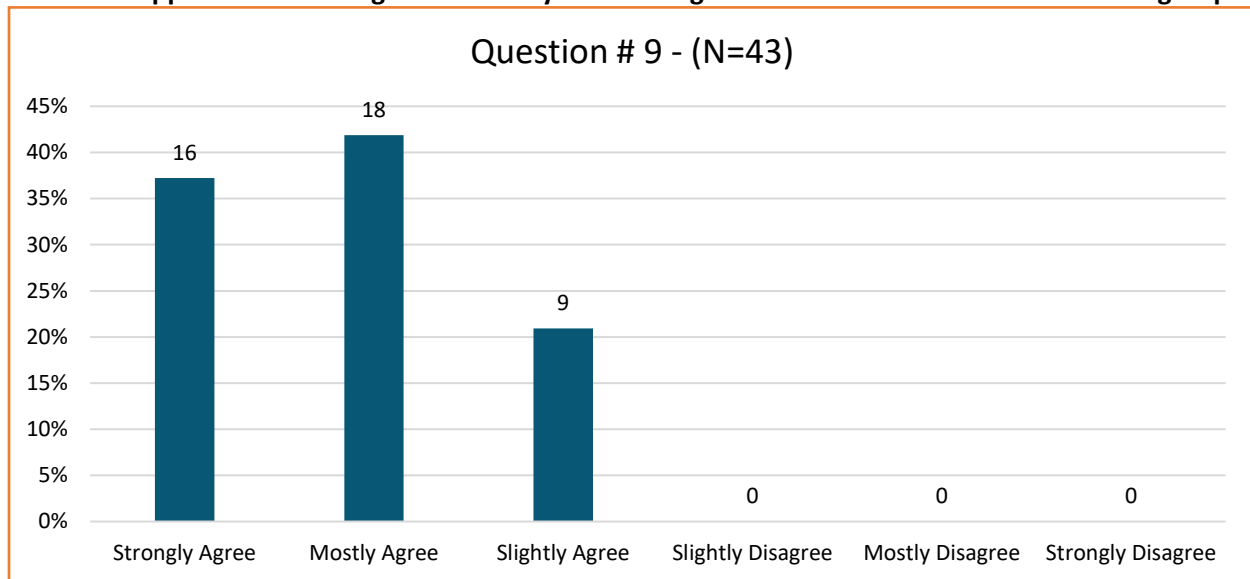


Having the ability to teach and receiving credentials for working in this capacity does not automatically give teachers and administrators the ability to teach children from different cultures. Cultural sensitivity and effectively teaching children of a diverse classroom is a core essential in assisting children to be school-ready. What better way to educate and touch young lives than with an educational journey that includes the child's culture and history?

"We don't look at race, we see the child."

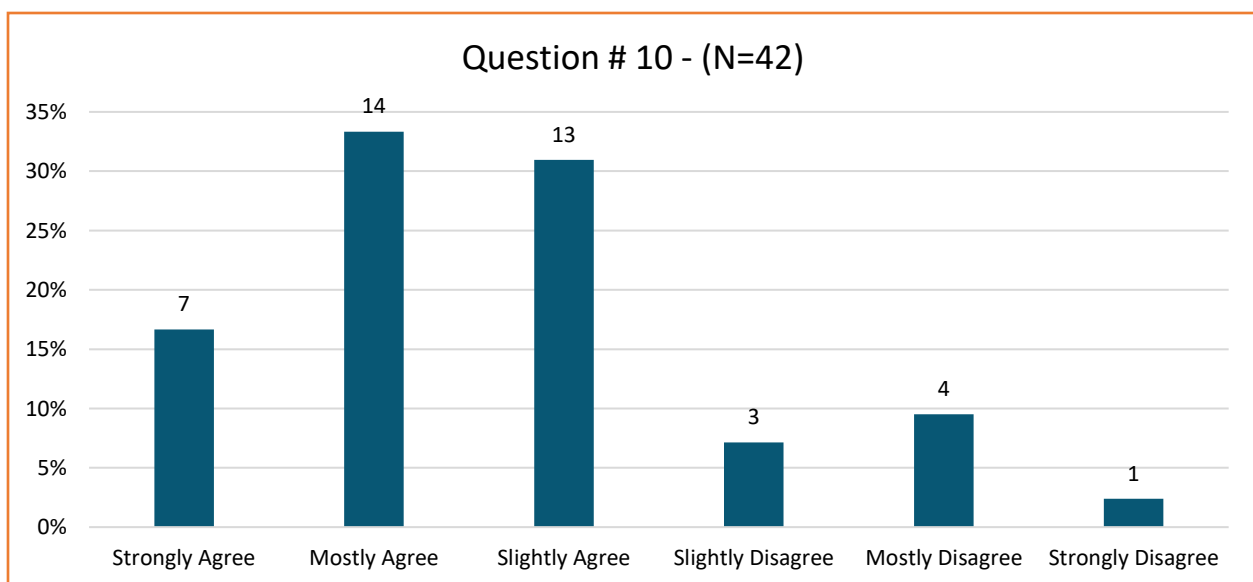
"We have cultural training so that we can understand and respect them. We are sensitive to all cultures."

9. I feel supported in learning effective ways of working with children from different cultural groups.



All staff agreed when it came to support in furthering their skills in working with children from different cultures and backgrounds. Having facilitated these focus groups I can tell you from firsthand experience that these teachers do genuinely feel supported. Recently statistics have shown that a “feeling of support” and/or “feeling useful” and having a purpose were more important in the workplace than income or benefits.

10. I feel the children’s behavior in this school (such as noise, horseplay, or acting out) sometimes interferes with teaching & learning.



This question probably sparked the most discussion during our focus groups. Staff discussed how difficult it can be to teach those children that are there and ready to learn when one or more children

are displaying behavioral issues. Through the many conversations with various members of the early childhood development workforce this may be the underlying root of most classroom difficulties.

It seemed apparent that most of the teachers felt they needed more resources in the classroom. They are undertrained and unprepared to handle many of the behavioral problems faced with today in their classrooms which poses the question: How does behavioral issues in the classrooms align with children and families being school ready?

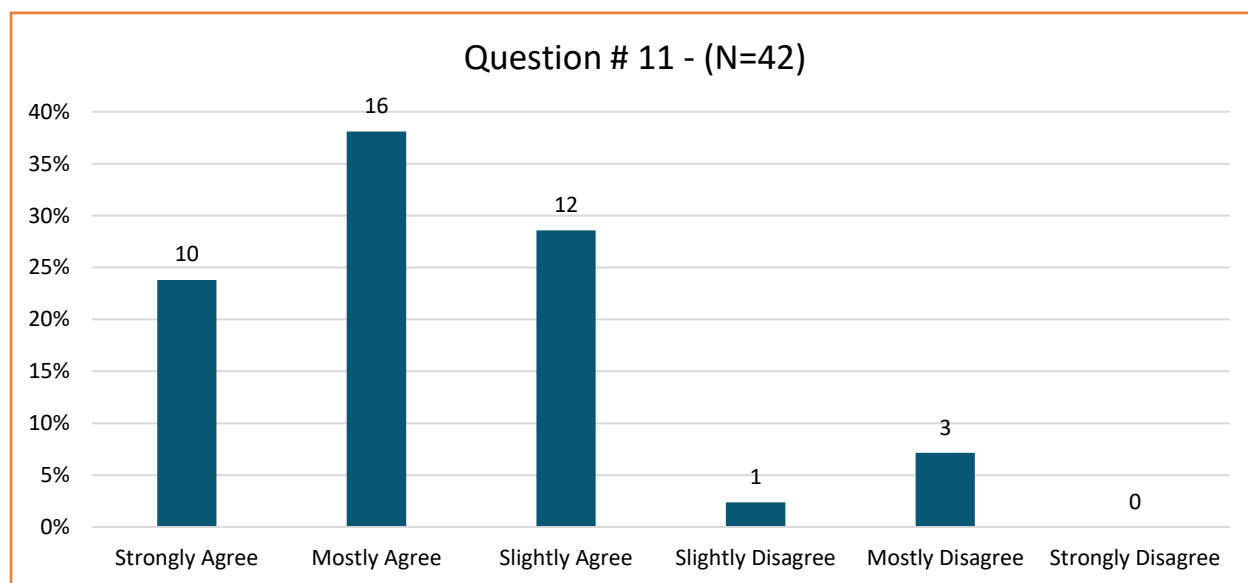
“When you have a child screaming at the top of their lungs it is extremely difficult and draining.”

“We have had multiple trainings however, sometimes the behavior is extreme, and more support is needed.”

“We are not even acknowledged that when children are hitting or spitting at us.”

“Ratios are really affecting the children. Going from a class of eight students and three teachers as opposed to one teacher with thirty students.”

11. In general, staff always model how they would like the children to behave.



Children are always watching, and the importance of modeling is crucial to early childhood development. It was said that if you ever wondered what kind of character a person has you would just need to observe their children for a while. Children can become mirror images of the environments as they are learning and growing at a rapid rate. Outside influences play a big role in this and by modeling how you would like your children to behave or your classroom is perhaps one of the best methods that

can be used.

“As a home-based teacher, I am able to help model a certain behavior with the children.”

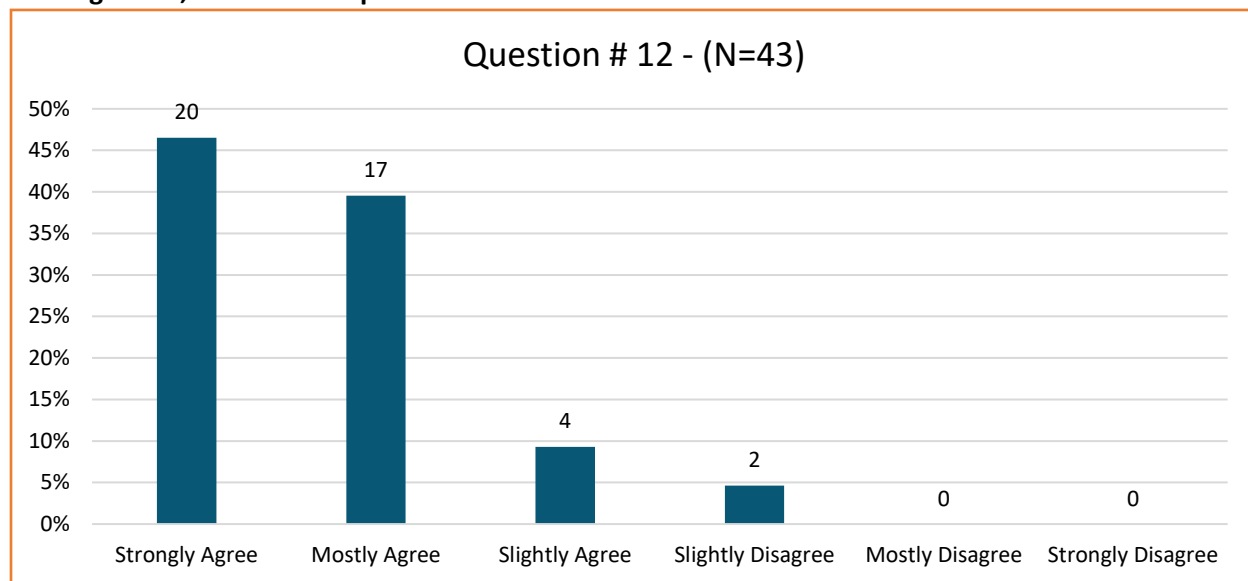
“We do offer Parent University; parents are hungry to learn and grow. They are so hungry and don’t always realize that it’s not just them who are going through a tough time. They are dealing with a variety of abuse. In our demographic we face a lot of challenges. In our program we face a lot of challenges so they can be successful in those environments.”

“We do a lot of role play.”

The second quote above gives a better understanding of the realities teachers face within these same constraints that the parents are experiencing. It all revolves around the child and everyone that has a hand in the child’s development needs to be part of the equation and hopefully the answer.

Teachers and employees of the workforce are also dealing with life challenges and perhaps their own children. While the focus is on the child everyone that has something to do with the child’s early development needs to be considered for the system as a whole to be successful.

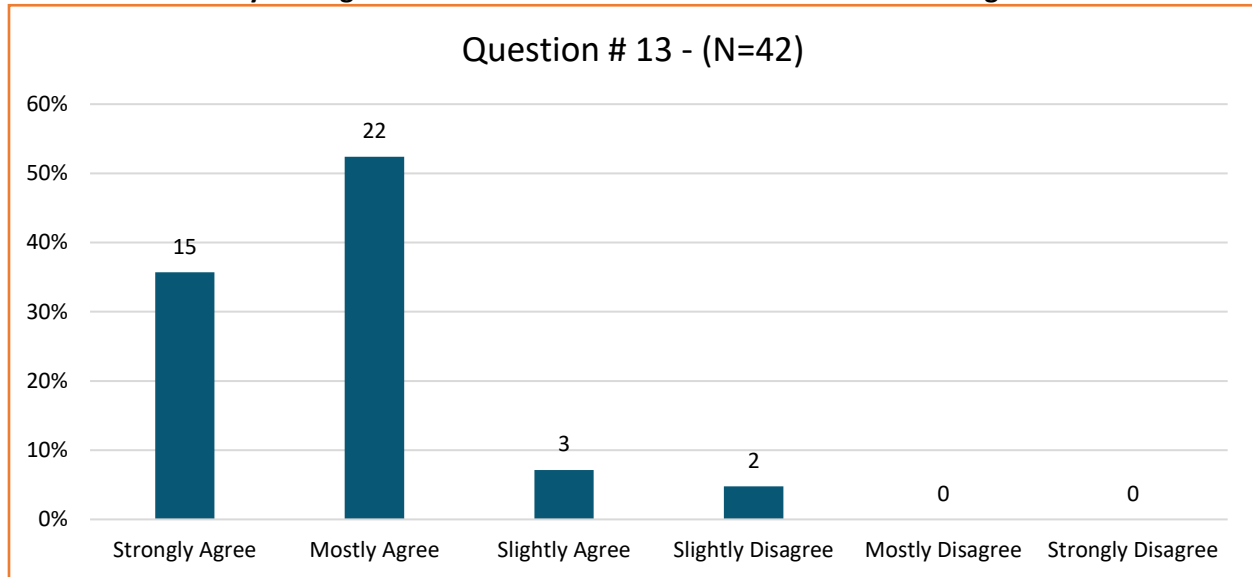
12. In general, I feel staff respect the children.



One thing is for sure. The people that make up the early childhood development field here in Alaska are dedicated individuals with a calling. While there are always those that are only there for the paycheck, it did not feel this way while collaborating with these individuals and organizations. They all seemed to have a genuine desire to better the early childhood development system and its participants. They didn’t always know how but they did know they were a part of it somehow.

"This is a high stress job and we all have a calling."

13. I feel most of my colleagues share the values of the central mission of our organization.



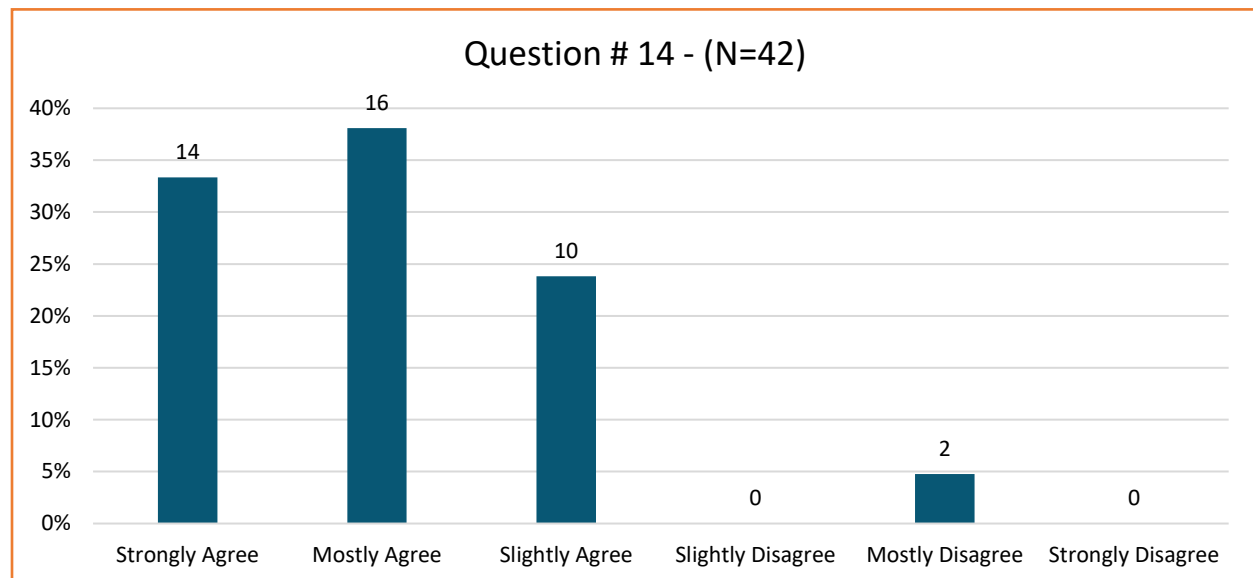
It was a relief to learn that most teachers and workforce employees felt that they and their colleagues shared the same vision. Often, we come across employees who are dejected and feel they are all alone in this early childhood development world and have zero support. It was refreshing to hear that they were part of a larger collective and from the top down seemed to have the commitment needed for change.

"Management will ask on a regular basis to see if they need trainings or have goals to reach. We are a family and work together."

"We work in relationships with the families and teachers."

"Mission is to strengthen families."

14. Staff share a strong collective vision of what early childhood development looks like at our organization.



Support alone doesn't always get the workforce to an effective place in this field. It is important that organizations staff share a collective vision of what early childhood development should look like at their organization. Without a shared collective vision staff would simply be on their own agenda making it even more difficult to unify and make progress with the current landscape.

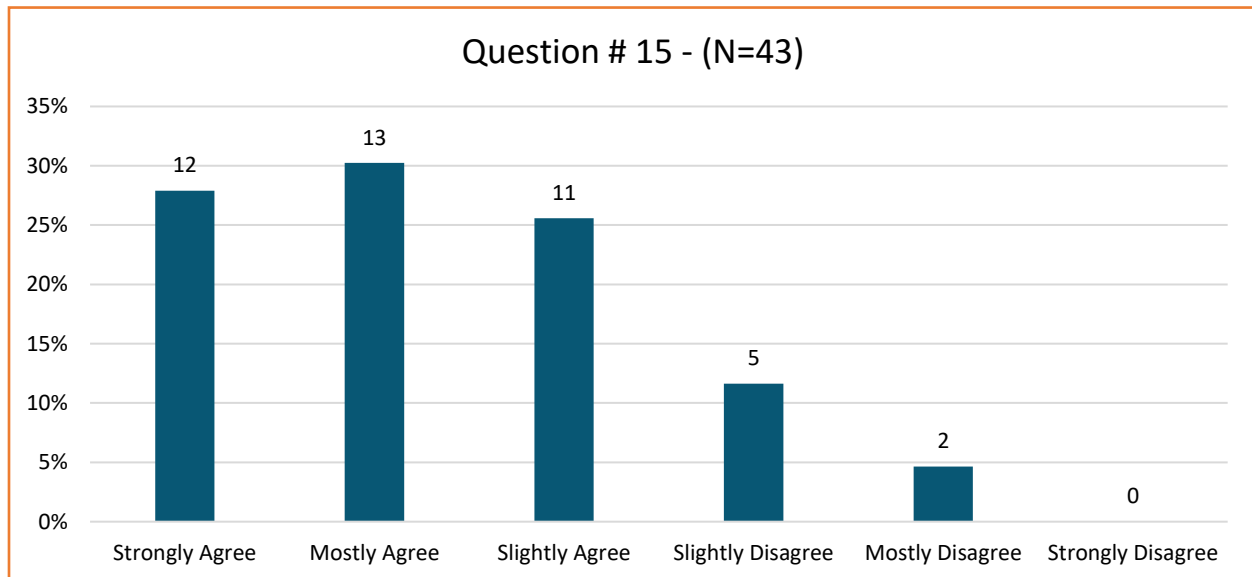
"We have a goal that we want to meet however we are not always on the same page on how to achieve that goal."

"Good early childhood learning should be more readily available."

"If it is universal as other countries. They have more early childhood opportunities."

Parent Involvement

15. I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.



It was great to see that teachers receive direct support from the parents of the children they have in their classrooms. Up to this point we had heard that generally parents drop their children off at the school and expect the staff to fix their children. We did not hear very often, if at all, that teachers are feeling supported from parents for the work that they are doing.

I found it interesting the assumptions found about teachers being on the front lines of early childhood development and not being supported were essentially not true. Not until we started talking with the teachers that we learned they do feel supported by parents. This is an important finding as it is very hard to work in a capacity of passion and effectiveness when you are alone.

"We have a variety of families who are simply using us as a baby-sitting service and are not supportive of their children."

"If I see something that happens in the classroom then I discuss the classroom situation and they help to support the situation at home. The parents give feedback."

"Culturally they are not always supported."

"I work in the kitchen and when the children do not always have food we will give them the leftovers and try and support their needs."

"Now parents come in and thank them every day."

16. Please list some ways that you receive support from *parents*.

Drawing from over 100 listed items for this question the top answers are listed below for reference.

- Family Night Attendance
- Communication
- Volunteering
- Input on Cultural Values
- Verbal Support
- Reading at Home
- Saying Thank You
- Daily Check-Ins
- Sharing About the Child
- Words of Encouragement
- Parent Involvement
- Help with Homework

“Sometimes we need them to be more comfortable with the teachers. If there are certain students having trouble at home, it would be helpful to know at school.”

“They are willing to share troubles on social media yet not to their children’s teacher.”

17. Please list a few ways parents *could have* supported you.

Ways parents could have supported their children’s teacher and classroom did not differ much from the previous list of ways that parents do support their children’s teachers. The below list depicts other ways teachers and staff want support from parents.

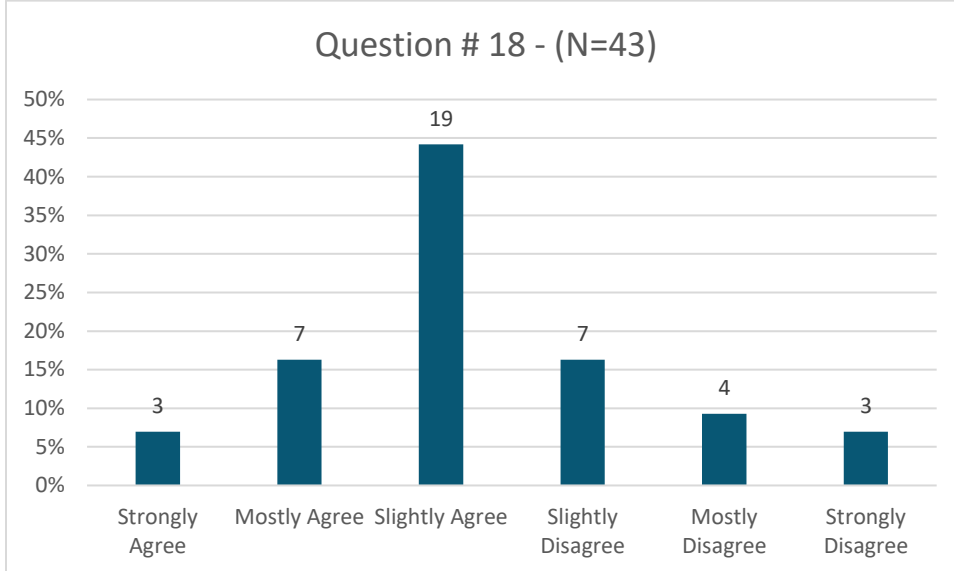
- Follow-Through at Home
- Modeling
- Attend Meetings
- Punctuality
- Reinforce Rules
- Follow the Family Handbook
- Keep Sick Children at Home
- Education Valued at Home

“Attendance is important, and it is important that they are on time.”

“Knowing more about what they are going through. We are just guessing and trying to best help the child.”

“Some of our families are dealing with their own mental health and not realizing how this is affecting their child. They don’t have time to teach the ABCs because they have so much trauma.”

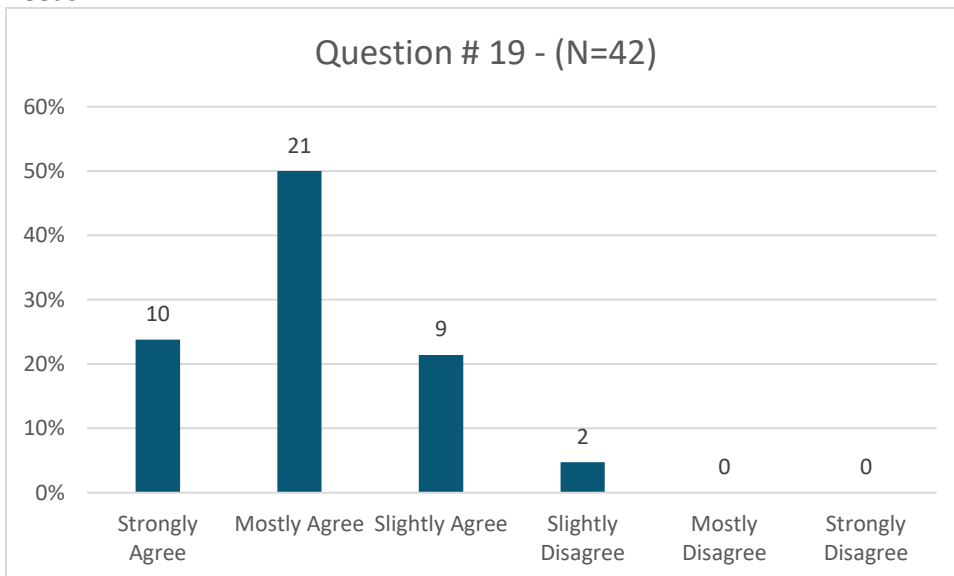
18. For the most part, parents work with their children at home to help prepare them for school.



Much like question # 15, teachers expressed how much they felt that parents are working with their children at home to help prepare them for school. While some of the teacher participants did feel that parents did not work with their children at home a larger portion did. Perhaps even more important than supporting teachers for the work they do is working with children at home doing things that will create momentum to excel in school and beyond.

Administration Support

19. I feel I am given the support I need from school administration to work with children with high needs.



One of the advantages of conducting focus groups over surveys is the emotional factors that can come out during conversation. With careful word emphasis and observation a lot can be learned from a focus

group that sometimes cannot be interpreted through surveys.

At first glance the quotes below from two focus groups do not coincide with the answers from the survey. This is why it is important to balance qualitative and quantitative results together to create an accurate picture of the landscape and this needs assessment has captured both.

Teachers definitely felt support from management and parents but the realities of working with “high needs children” (a term used by participants) comes out in the classroom and as teachers and employees pondered this question during the focus groups you could see the remembrance coming out from current and previous classroom experiences. As they remembered different circumstances related to their classrooms, they began to remember how hard it is as expressed in some quotes below.

“I am new, and I don’t have enough training.”

“We work with a lot of community partners, ASD. (Anchorage School District) They are only here for a couple of hours for a couple of days per week. They are trained to address and document the issues however with the limitations it’s not always easy.”

“Some have special needs such as dietary, medical and behavioral needs and are barely touching the actual needs with the resources we have.”

“There is a definite need to have someone in here full time to serve the students.”

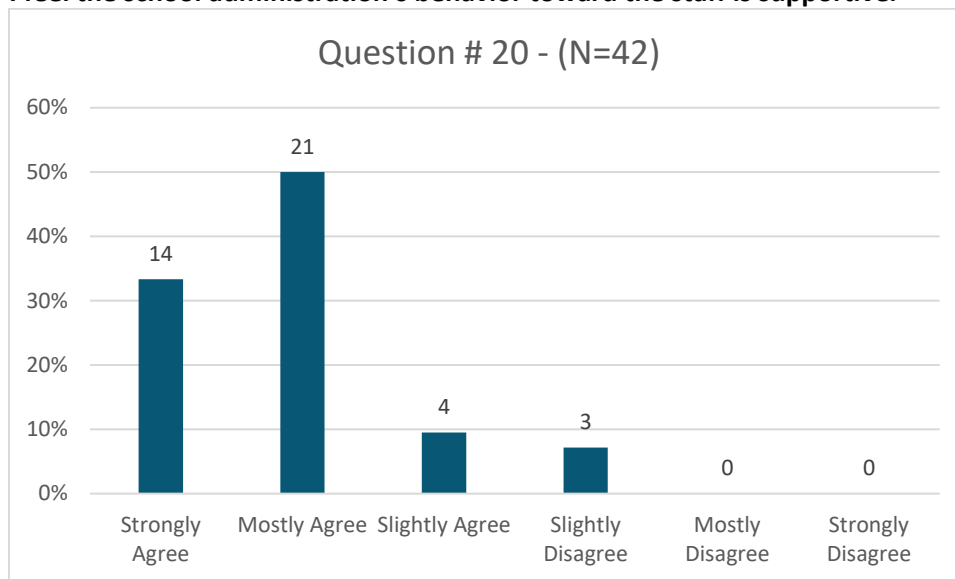
“We do not have the support we need.”

“It would be helpful to have a BH (Behavioral Health Consultant) on staff full time.”

“They are expecting for us to work with high needs children without proper training.”

“We used to have a BH clinician and he was a great example and could model the behavior that we should portray.”

20. I feel the school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive.



"They want to support but they don't have the support to train....."

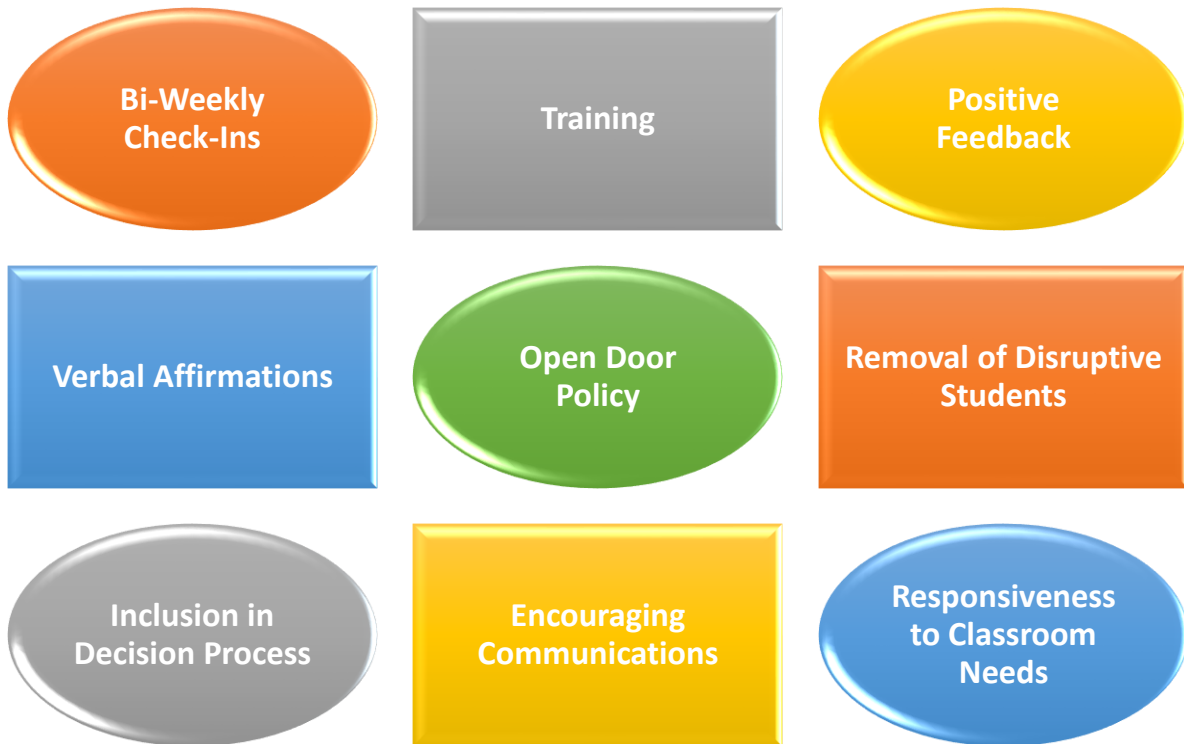
"The management doesn't even have the necessary training."

Even when teachers and childcare employees feel that their organizations want to support them it is not always a given that the support is there. Wanting to support staff in the classroom and with preparing children is not enough. Support through words alone helps but again is not enough support.

Through several interviews with managers and administrators in the field aside from the surveys and focus groups we learned that management desire to support their staff, students, parents, and families outweigh the actual support happening. Resources often dictate how and when support is given.

21. Please list some ways that you receive support from your *administration*.

Listed in no particular order are some of the top ways teachers and staff receive support from their organization's administration.



22. Please list a few ways administration *could have* supported you.

We also asked teachers and staff of ways they thought administration can support teachers in the classroom. This is a good balancing question as it builds on previous questions on how they are supported and then gives them an opportunity to communicate how they feel they can or could be supported.

In the table below are some of the top ways staff felt they could be supported from administration.

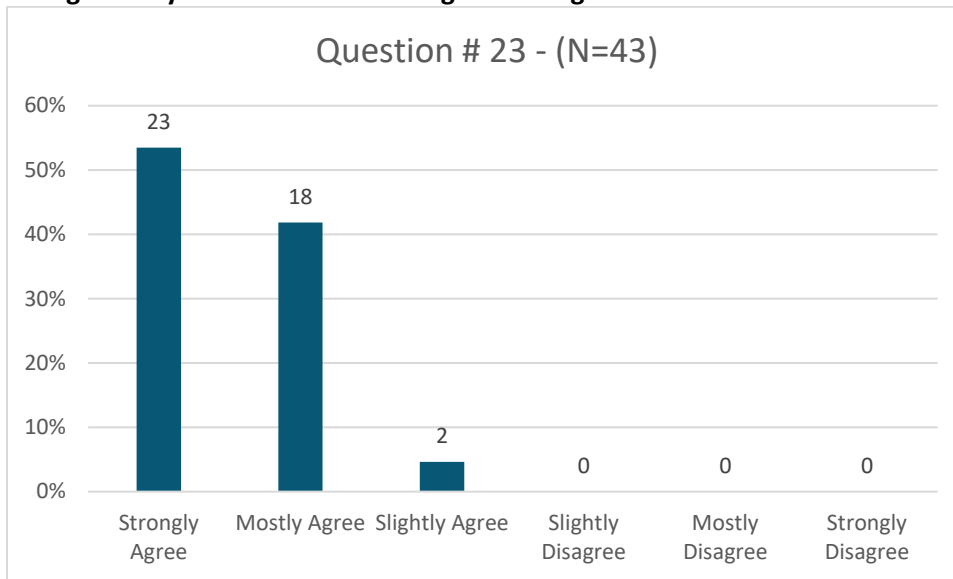


“If you can’t train a parent in a way that they can understand then it is not helpful. We need to work on our approach with the parent. Not just showing a video but actually getting involved with the families.”

“My first home visit we walked in the door and visited for 10 minutes then, went to my net visit on my own from then on.”

“She does not have enough training to be in those homes. We are not offering enough support and documentation for these families.”

23. I am generally satisfied with working at this organization.



Perceived Needs/Barriers of Families

24. In your opinion, what are the most serious child/family needs present today? Please list up to six.



25. In what ways do you feel parents can better prepare their children for school?

"As teacher we are here to help them. We need them to understand that."

"Be more positive in their education. Making positive statements about school."

The Magic Wand

Often at the end of a focus group or discussion I will ask the group at the end of the session the following question:

“If you had a magic wand and could change just one thing in early childhood development, what would it be and why?”

The resulting comments are below without any emphasis added.

“More teachers.”

“More resources in access and options.”

Change the environment. When you have digital distractions, it takes away from the family.”

“Have the child be the child.”

“They have had troubles with transitions..... good for somebody to go into the home to see if the children are ready to go into the classroom.”

“We have parents that are in survival mode. I would like to see more support for parents.”

“parents don’t have time. They need more assistance with their children and duties.”

“having more consistent and reliable child care.”

“More funding for the child and support for the teachers in school.”

“Having the children here every day.”

Joint Task Force Meetings

In the short time that SCF has been involved with Project LAUNCH, the team has met with and collaborated with multiple community organizations in the field of early childhood development and education. Since then SCF has now become part of senior leadership on the Joint Task Force and have hosted two large working meetings. The vision and mission

Below is a table of community Joint Task Force members organizations they represent.

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Anchorage Municipality (Office of the Mayor) | • Parent Representative/Public Health Nursing |
| • Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) | • Women's, Children's and Family Health (WCFH) |
| • Women's, Children's & Family Health (WCFH) | • Parent Representative/Hope Community Resources |
| • Child Care Program Office (CCPO) | • Child Care Program Office (CCPO) |
| • Parent Representative | • Best Beginnings |
| • Clare Swan Early Learning Center | • Senior and Disability Services |
| • Stellar Group | • System for Early Education |
| • Alaska Mental Health Trust | • thread |
| • Southcentral Foundation | • State Capacity Building Center |
| • Help Me Grow | • Agnew Beck |
| • Alaska Association of School Boards | • All Alaska Pediatric Partnership (A2P2) |
| • Cook Inlet Native Head Start | • Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) |

Indigenous Project LAUNCH (IPL) meets with the Joint Task Force leadership every week on Fridays for 1.5 hours and to date have had two large community Joint Task Force working meetings.

Each large Joint Task Force meeting has been hosted here at SCF in our Nuka Wellness Center located in Anchorage Alaska. These Joint Task Force meetings have been working all day meetings with multiple topic discussions around early childhood development in the landscape of Alaska. I have included a very brief overview of the last Joint Task Force meeting below.

Meeting Agenda 4/24/2019

- Welcome, Introductions, Overview
- Needs Assessment Review and Discussion
- Governance Review and Discussion
- Working Lunch
- Overview of the Strategic Planning Process
- Wrap-Up

There will also be a resources table. Please feel free to bring your agency resources to share with your fellow Joint Task Force members.

During the second meeting held on the SCF campus on April 24, 2019 the Joint Task Force spent the entire day collaborating, brainstorming, questioning, answering, and visualizing what we, as a collective, can do to change the arena of early childhood development in Alaska. It was exciting to be welcomed



and included so quickly with the people that have been working in the field of early childhood development, some for many years. Decades of experience were represented in this full-day meeting and everyone in that room had a passion for improving the systems that support and operate Alaska's educational system. There was so much industry representation and great ideas that at times it felt overwhelming. The meeting hosted members ranging from parents from our parent advisory board to political representation from the mayor's

office.

During this last JTF meeting the groups were all asked to address the following questions and discuss them as a group. Group seating arrangements were prearranged in order to spark conversations surrounding these topics from multiple organizational visions and goals.

Joint Task Force Feedback & Recommendations

How do you see yourself or your organization using the three needs assessments coming from this group?

"Shared vision and baseline data to use for telling our story and have shared goals that we are collectively working on."

"Want this to be the statewide plan that the state can use for future funding."

"This needs to be the plan for EC (early childhood) in the state and their needs to be a stable governance body who can lead the charge for years to come."

"Use the data to be better advocates."

"We are working on an environmental scan of the early childhood systems. There is a need for better data on the condition of children and families."

“We have collected a ton of data. We are now creating a framework to tell the story.”

“We are trying to coalesce data that is currently sitting in silos. The data is terrific, but it is sitting in silos. What story does the data tell us when We put it all together?”

Access Framework

“We like the detail in this framework because it shows the challenges of access to services for children and families.”

“We really like the inclusion of “acceptance” and the cultural aspect of access.”

“The definition of quality is not sufficient. Quality is not really quality. It is basic, minimal requirements when it comes to childcare. What about high quality, can we define that?”

What might be missing?

“What about the workforce availability? What do they need so they are able to staff programs? Without the workforce there are no slots. The workforce availability is missing early childhood educators, mental health consultants, and health care.”

“We would like a parent and peer review of the definition of quality. Quality to parents and peers may not mean the same thing as quality does to the professionals in the room.”

“Add a definition of high quality. For access maybe a minimum standard of quality is okay, but it’s worth a definition of access to high quality. Tentative high quality in in the Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS) This is quality, not high quality. That definition can now go under availability. It’s just a definition of a “slot”. We need to define slots in availability.”

“Communication is important to how we tell the story of quality. How will we be communicating with providers, teachers, and families about quality? Is there going to be a communication plan?”

What about Alaska's governance model is working? What is making it work? What caused this success?

"We have committed professionals and partners across the state who are committed to improving the system and services on behalf of children and families."

"There is leadership occurring at multiple levels and at both the public sector and private sector. This reflects a desire to collaborate."

"Passion causes success."

What might we do differently to improve our governance model?

"Develop a shared leadership approach to think bigger. The AECCC has not coalesced under a shared, galvanized voice or vision for our early childhood system. As a system, we are very reactive, responding to funders. We are not proactively developing a shared vision for what we want for children and families. We are not driving to any destination. Hence, we are always scrambling when replying to federal or private sector opportunities when we should be optimizing these opportunities in service of our vision."

"Do we have the right people at the table?"

There have been many Joint task Force type groups addressing the needs of early childhood development in Alaska. When asked of the group to address what we might do differently moving forward the resulting comments were captured.

What might we do differently to improve our governance model?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarify roles• Develop a shared leadership approach to think bigger• Identify & articulate the specific boundaries of authority• Tighten-up membership protocols & practices• Cultivate high level champions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invest in infrastructure & capacity to implement purpose & mission• Improve legitimacy• Improve the power to act through communication• Integrate or coordinate the AECCC with other governing bodies that serve similar populations |
|--|---|

Findings and Conclusions

The SCF LAUNCH Needs and Readiness Assessment provided valuable insights of the scope of early childhood development in Alaska. While some of the data was disheartening, it was also enriching to see and hear about all the different organizations tackling this ongoing issue, school readiness. There are so many players with great ideas on how to better our early childhood learning experience opportunities for families.

Major themes developed out of this needs and readiness assessment surrounding the families and mental health topics. Families need more support in a multitude of areas while teachers and staff feel they need full-time behavioral health specialists on location and ready to address the children's and their family's needs.

At first it seemed difficult as there were dozens of apparent issues swirling about while gathering data however after all was in place and moving forward the swirling issues began to evolve into larger issues that fostered the smaller apparent ones. Through the course of this assessment I believe the below topics should be considered for further evaluation and possible avenues to take moving forward.

Full-time behavioral staff on-site: Almost all teachers feel that having a qualified behavioral specialist on-site and ready to go when the need arises. On-site can be defined as being in the location or building of the classroom during regular business hours and available to assist when the need arises. More discussion has taken place on this topic about the effectiveness of this approach. This scenario has worked well in some instances and not for others. The main difference between the affective behavioral specialists and the non-affective behavioral specialists was their approach and attitude. Some behavioral health specialists, or whatever title they prefer, spent their time sitting in an office and waiting for an issue to arise. Others spent their time in the classrooms interacting and observing the children and their parents or caregivers.

Behavioral specialists that observed the children in the classrooms and spent their days interacting with the children and their parents had the highest praises from teachers and staff. Specialists that sat in their offices waiting for an issue to arise were the least effective at their jobs. They need to be on the front lines, in the classrooms with the students and teachers as well as meeting with parents as they come and go as well as regular check-ins.

Accessibility: We came across so many programs and dozens of warriors in this field ready and willing to help children and their families successfully enter the school system however if barriers hinder or stop families from accessing these resources then what good are they? Resources need to be used in order to be effective.

The "Strengthening Families" training mentioned in previously came from firsthand experience and was not just a story regurgitated. I personally reached out to the organization training the trainers and was unable to get any information on anyone or anywhere that was providing this training to the end users, the parents.

Accessibility is key. Some sort of information booth, a starting point, a guide for parents showing them available programs in their area and how to access them.

Awareness

This question seemed to cause the most interest with stakeholders and community providers. At first glance the early childhood development scene in Alaska looked hopeful however after surveying parents and conducting focus groups other developments emerged that may indicate that parents and guardians can, at times, feel lost on what to do as parents or guardians. Regardless of how many resources and services may be available, if a parent or guardian does not know how to access them or even what to do during the day-to-day activities of raising children then those resources and services go underutilized.

Gaps: Several gaps were identified through the assessment and described in more detail earlier in this report. Addressing gaps found within the field could alone propel the work of early childhood development in Alaska and solving an overlying root problem can be extremely difficult when there are gaps found within the current processes.

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