



The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

EVALUATION REPORT

2024-2025



University of Nebraska
Medical CenterSM

MUNROE-MEYER INSTITUTE



Buffett
Early Childhood
Institute
at the University of Nebraska

Acknowledgements

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan (SECP) is an initiative of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute in collaboration with the 11 School District Superintendents and the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. The annual evaluation of the SECP is conducted by the Munroe Meyer Institute (MMI) within the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) under contract with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. The following report represents MMI's full and comprehensive evaluation of programmatic activities that took place during the 2024-2025 academic year.

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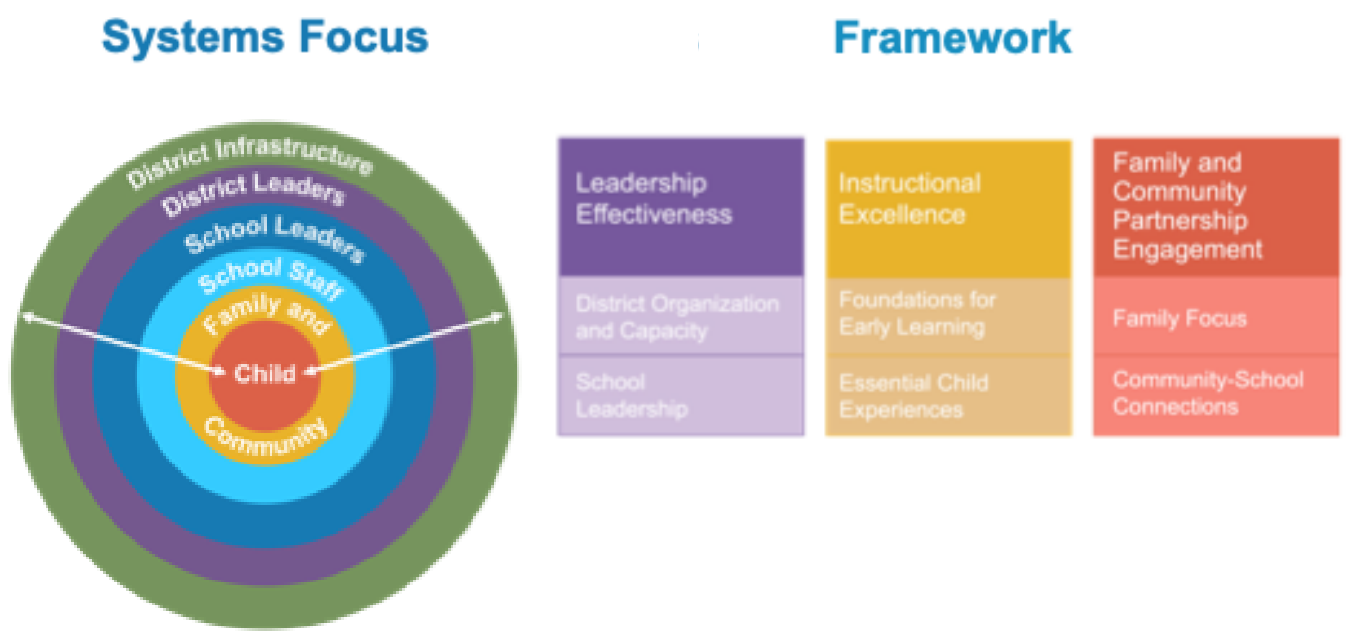
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Program Overview

The Superintendents’ Early Childhood Plan (SECP) was introduced in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties in the fall of 2015. It offers an innovative, comprehensive approach to reducing achievement gaps for young children from birth through Grade 3 in the Omaha metro area. The 2024-2025 school year marks the 10th program year of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. The program is guided by the School as Hub Birth through Grade 3 approach. This framework serves as flexible resource, allowing districts to tailor their approach based on their unique needs and ongoing process. There are School as Hub sites in ten elementary schools across six school districts in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. The evaluation was grounded in a value-engaged approach with primary outcomes of focus on program improvement and program quality assessment. A combination of assessments and methodologies was used to evaluate the collaborative relationship between BECI and school districts, as well as district-level and school-level changes. Specific focus was given to assessing the various components in the School as Hub framework, see the figure below for additional details.

School as Hub Approach



Evaluation Overview



Child-Level Outcomes

- How does engagement in the SECP influence students' academic growth within School as Hub sites?
 - **Measure: Academic Achievement Reflections**
- How does engagement in the SECP influence students' social-emotional development within School as Hub sites?
 - **Measure: Ages & Stages Questionnaires**



Family-Level Outcomes

- What is the influence of family engagement programming on perceptions of support?
 - **Measure: Family Interviews and Family Engagement Staff Focus Groups**
- What is the level of collaboration among families, communities, and schools within School as Hub sites?
 - **Measure: Family Engagement Survey**



Systems-Level Outcomes

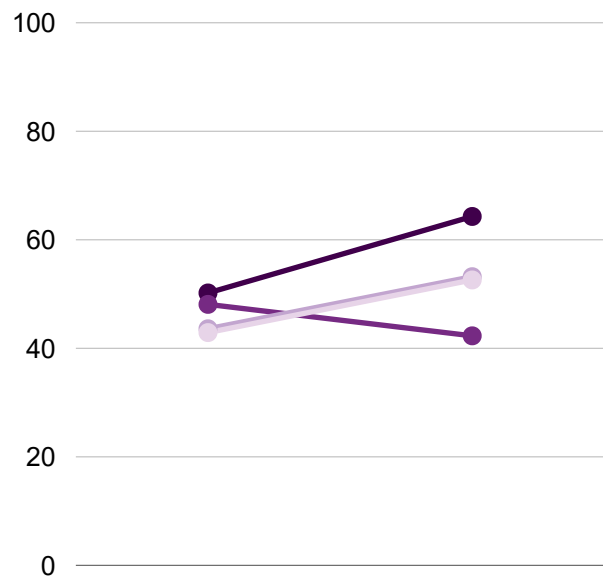
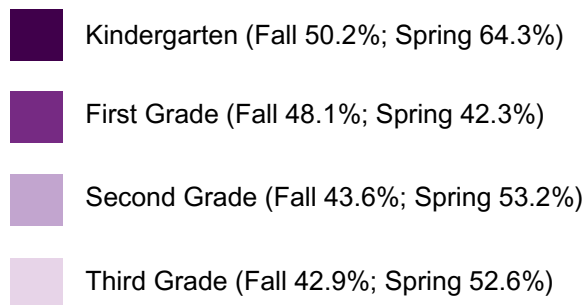
- What are the barriers and facilitators to collaboration between district stakeholders and Institute staff members?
 - **Measure: Collaboration Survey**
- How much progress was made towards district-level action plan goals?
 - **Action Plan Focus Groups**
- What was the depth of learning from participants engaged in professional learning opportunities?
 - **Professional Learning Survey**
- How did engagement in SECP communities of practice influence teacher and principal perceptions of self-efficacy for teaching and leadership?
 - **Self-Efficacy Surveys**
- To what degree are principals able to develop and foster partnerships with families and communities and ensure opportunities for all?
 - **NAESP Survey**

Academic Achievement Reflections

Principals at each School as Hub site and 1 district leader* were asked to report the percentage of students that were on track for reading and math in Fall and Spring based on the District's chosen assessment tool (e.g., FastBridge, MAP). Principals were then asked to reflect on whether growth was achieved at each grade level as well as how engagement in the SECP supported academic achievement at their school. Finally, principals were asked what is needed from the SECP to achieve academic goals for the 2024-2025 school year.

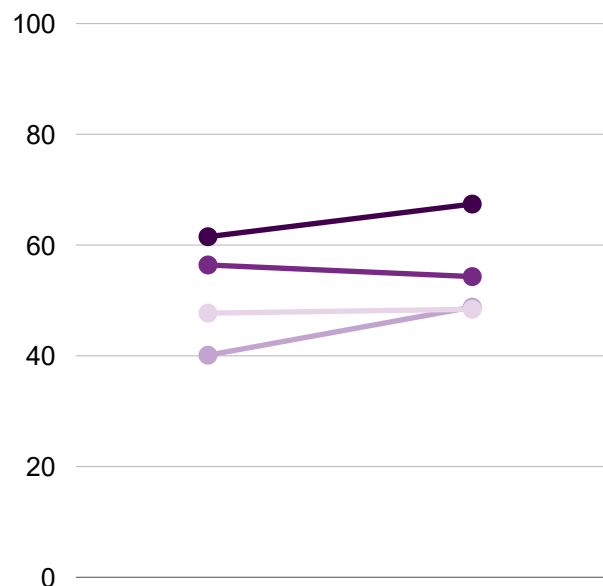
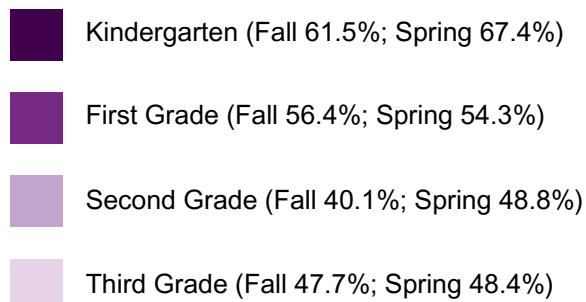
Percentage of Students On Track for Reading by Grade Level

Fall and Spring mean scores for reading are reported below by grade level. Overall, growth was seen from Fall to Spring for all grade levels except first grade. The largest increase of on track students from Fall to Spring was observed in Kindergarten.



Percentage of Students On Track for Math by Grade Level

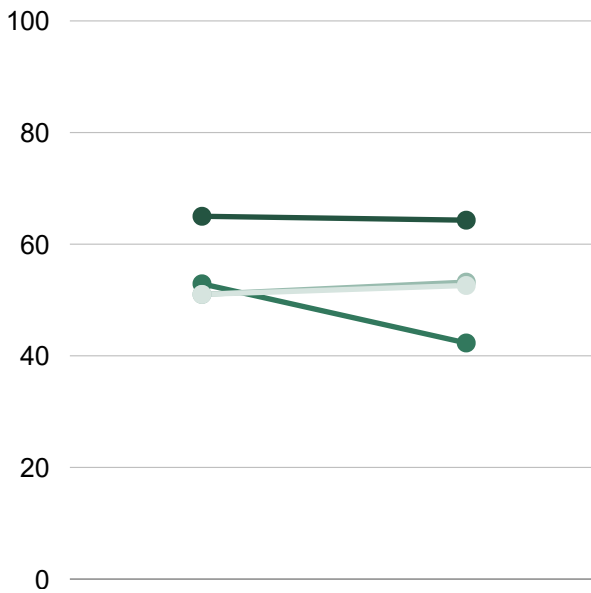
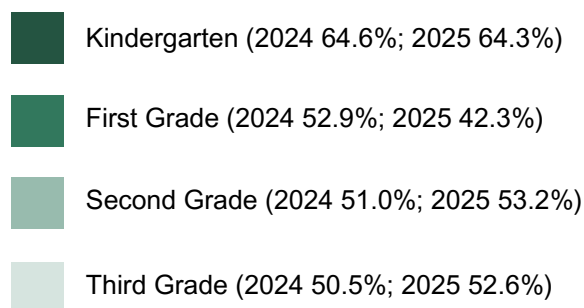
Fall and Spring means for math achievement scores are reported below by grade level. Overall, growth was seen from Fall to Spring for all grade levels except first grade with second grade representing the largest increase from Fall to Spring.



Academic Achievement Reflections Year to Year

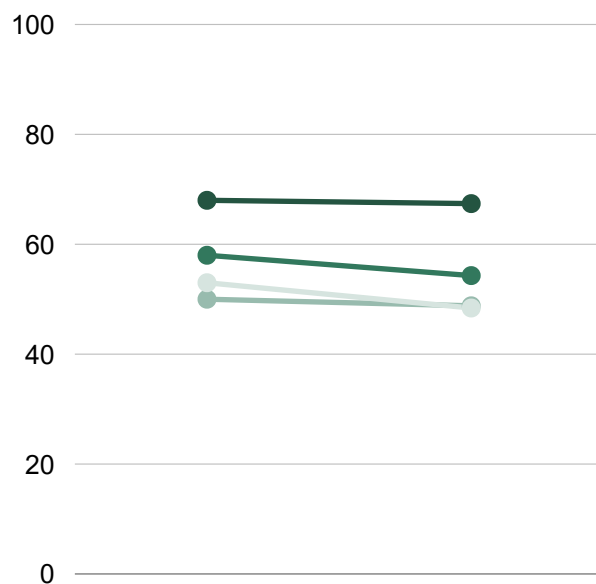
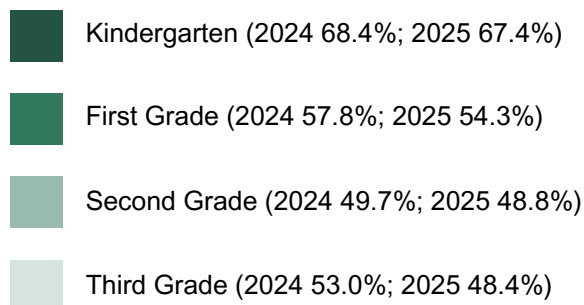
Percentage of Students On Track for Reading by Grade Level, Spring 2024 to Spring 2025

This chart shows the percentage of students on track for reading by grade level, comparing Spring 2024 cohorts to Spring 2025 cohorts. Kindergarten remained essentially unchanged. Second and third grades saw small increases, while first grade showed a notable decrease.



Percentage of Students On Track for Math by Grade Level, Spring 2024 to Spring 2025

When comparing math scores, Kindergarten and second grade percentages stayed nearly the same, while first and third grades each showed small decreases from the prior year.



*Please note: These results compare different cohorts of students in each grade level from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025, rather than tracking the same group of students over time.

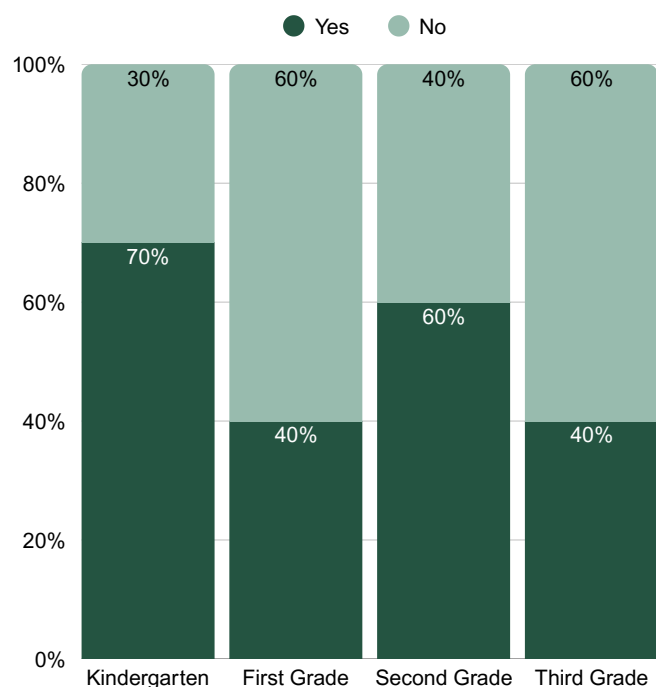
Academic Achievement Reflections

Academic Achievement Discussion of Growth

Individuals were asked to reflect on whether their schools met academic growth goals in math and reading over the past year, broken down by grade level. In kindergarten, 70% of classrooms reached their reading goals and 80% met their math goals. Among first-grade classrooms, 40% achieved reading growth targets and 30% met math targets. In second grade, 60% of classrooms met reading goals and 50% met math goals. Finally, 40% of third-grade classrooms reached reading goals, while only 20% met math goals. Principals were then asked to describe the growth that was or was not achieved related to academic achievement over the past year.

Reading

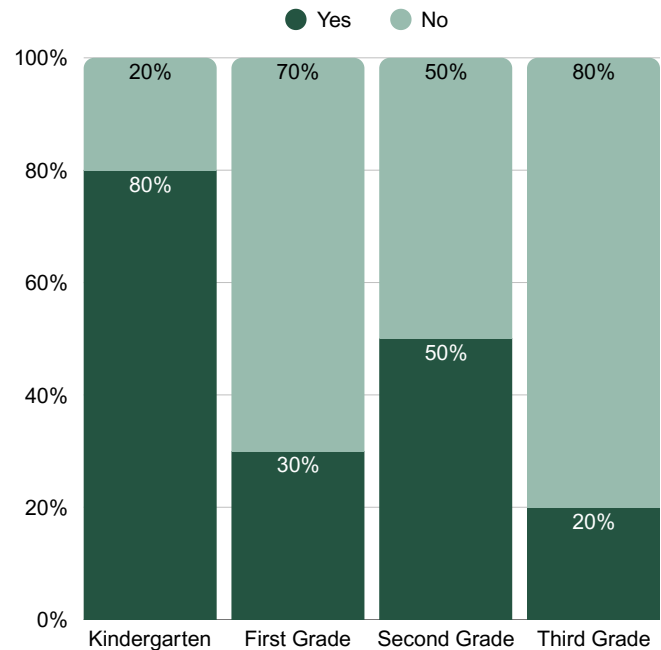
Principals reported there was varied progress among grade levels in relation to reading scores, with some schools reporting growth while others continued to face challenges meeting proficiency. Many schools noted improvements such as increases in the percentage of students reading at or near grade level, reductions in achievement gaps, and gains in math assessment scores. However, concerns were raised about persistent underperformance in certain grades, particularly first grade, and indications that overall reading growth had plateaued in some areas. Principals highlighted the importance of instructional supports, including curriculum enhancements, coaching, and targeted interventions. Schools that implemented new strategies or strengthened teacher support structures often saw positive results, while those lacking consistent interventions experienced limited progress.



Academic Achievement Reflections

Math

A review of principal responses revealed two main themes related to math achievement. First, several schools reported overall growth, especially in early and upper grades, with many meeting or exceeding MAP math goals. Principals felt new math curriculum and targeted instruction contributed to gains, particularly in preschool and grades K–3. However, progress was uneven, with some grades and classrooms falling short, and ongoing challenges noted across sites. Second, curriculum and instructional shifts played a key role in driving improvement. Principals felt that full adoption of new curricula, professional development, and leadership efforts supported positive outcomes related to math achievement.



Academic Achievement Reflections

How the SECP Currently Supports Academic Achievement

Principals reported that engagement in the SECP supports academic achievement through two key pathways: building staff capacity and strengthening alignment across the birth–grade 3 continuum. Principals shared that SECP funding allowed for targeted coaching, professional learning, and leadership development, with Teacher Leadership Network members and specialists providing classroom modeling and strategy refinement. Monthly meetings, coaching, and professional learning structures kept instructional practices consistent and focused. Additionally, principals noted that SECP engagement enhanced family and community partnerships through family events, home communication tools, and support for varying language needs. This helped foster alignment between preschool and elementary efforts, ensuring district priorities, especially in reading, were reflected in home visits, classroom instruction, and leadership planning.

“The Family Facilitator/Home Visitor led the coordination of 8 or 9 family engagement events this year. Of those, 4 were specifically focused on reading... ensuring they were aligned with school goals and provided meaningful opportunities for families to connect with their children’s learning.”

- School Administrator

How the SECP Can Support Academic Achievement in 2025-2026

Principals shared that SECP can best support academic achievement in 2025–2026 by continuing to provide targeted coaching, professional learning, and cross-grade alignment, especially in early literacy, math, and transitions from preschool to elementary. They emphasized the value of sustained Communities of Practice, the Teacher Leadership Network, and support from specialists to strengthen instructional consistency and collaboration. Equally important, principals noted that SECP’s role in deepening family engagement through events, home-school communication, and culturally responsive outreach helps build trust and supports learning from birth through grade 5.

“It’s been helpful to have [program specialist] more available for coaching, allowing teachers to focus on planning”

- School Administrator

“Strengthen efforts to gather meaningful feedback from families by creating more opportunities for dialogue and connection. Increase family involvement by inviting them into the building and fostering conversations about what’s happening in classrooms. Ensure families feel heard and valued.”

- School Administrator



Ages and Stages Questionnaires

How the SECP Supports Social Emotional Development

The SECP advances children's social-emotional growth through both home visitation and family-facilitation programs, organized around three core activities: individual engagement, group engagement, and transition planning.

- **Individual Engagement:** Recruit and work with families of children from the prenatal stage through school entry via scheduled in-home visits. A structured curriculum guides each family in setting and achieving personalized social-emotional development goals.
- **Group Engagement:** Convene families for facilitated learning sessions, using a family-learning curriculum to plan and deliver interactive activities that build social-emotional skills among children and caregivers.
- **Transition Planning:** Develop and facilitate customized transition plans and supports that help children and families move smoothly between different early care and education settings.

Findings for ASQ-SE

- A total of 117 observations were recorded across six districts and 12 schools, representing 77 unique students (with 18 students assessed twice and 11 students assessed three times).
- Approximately 87% of observations were screened as No-to-Low Risk, 9% Monitor risk, and 3% Referral risk.
- Percentage of observations at No-to-Low Risk by year of program participation:

Years of participation	1	2	3+
Sample size	43	51	22
% No-to-low risk	74.4%	98.0%	86.4%

*Combined 3,4,5,6 years due to small sample size

- Approximately 90% of female student observations and 83% of male student observations were screened at No-to-Low Risk.
- Approximately 15% of observations were conducted in Spanish.

Survey Information

The Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) and the Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE) are complementary screening tools designed to help caregivers and professionals monitor young children's development.

The **ASQ-SE** screens social and emotional behavior for children aged 1–72 months using 9 questionnaires and scoring sheets. Its cut-off scores categorize children into Referral, Monitor, or No-to-Low Risk.

The **ASQ** provides broad developmental screening for children aged 1–66 months using 21 questionnaires and scoring sheets. It assesses five domains, Communication, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Problem Solving, and Personal-Social, each classified by cut-off scores into Developmental Concern, Borderline, or Typical.

Ages and Stages Questionnaires

Findings for ASQ

- A total of 175 observations were recorded across 6 districts and 13 schools, representing 104 unique students (with 41 students assessed twice and 15 students assessed three times).
- Across the five ASQ domains, 65%–76% of student observations were screened.

	Communication	Gross motor	Fine motor	Problem solving	Personal-social
Typical	65%	76%	72%	69%	67%
Borderline	8%	5%	7%	9%	11%
Development Concerns	11%	2%	5%	6%	5%

- Percentage of observations at Typical by years of program participation:

Years of participation	1	2	3+*
Sample size	63	74	38
Communication, % Typical	58.1	72.6	63.2
Gross motor, % Typical	74.2	78.1	76.3
Fine motor, % Typical	67.2	75.0	73.7
Problem solving, % Typical	60.0	75.3	71.1
Personal-social, % Typical	56.7	72.6	73.0

*Combined 3,4,5,6 years due to small sample size

- Approximately 68-77% of female student observations and 60-76% of male student observations were screened at Typical across the five ASQ domains.
- Approximately 17% of the student observations were conducted in Spanish.



Family Engagement Survey

Survey Information

An adaptation of the Road Map Family Engagement Survey (Ishimaru & Lott, 2015) was used to assess families' perceptions about collaboration among families, communities, and schools. Twelve items addressed six domains: Parent/Family Knowledge and Confidence, Welcoming and Culturally Responsive School Climate, Parent/Family Influence and Decision-Making, Family-Educator Trust, Family-Educator Communication, and Principal Leadership for Engagement. Parents ranked items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Surveys were distributed to families in the six districts with School as Hub sites in an online format. Families that had been enrolled or were currently enrolled in home visiting or family facilitation also received the surveys (n=98). The survey was available in 19 languages to accommodate the language needs of all the families at the participating schools.

A total of 455 families with at least one child aged birth to grade 3 responded to the survey across 10 schools, with 90 (19.8%) of these families reporting that they speak a language other than English in the home. The majority of the families reported their race as White (n=299; 66.2%). The next largest race category reported was two or more races (n=31; 6.9%), followed by Black (n=28; 6.2%), Asian (n=20; 4.4%), and American Indian or Alaska Native (n=7; 1.6%). Just over a quarter of the families (n=119; 26.1%) reported their ethnicity as Latinx. Just under half of the families (n=202; 44.4%) reported that they qualify for the Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) program, with 26 families (5.7%) preferring not to answer this question. Across the schools, the number of families responding to the survey ranged from 12 to 79 per school.

On a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high), families rated schools very positively, with item averages ranging from 5.6 to 6.4 out of 7. The highest-rated items across the schools were "I know who to talk with at school regarding my concerns about my child's education and development" (6.4/7.0) and "I know how well my child is doing academically in school (6.4/7.0)." The lowest-rated item, while still very positive, was "I have opportunities to influence what happens at this school" (5.6/7.0).

Comparison of the survey scales from the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years revealed no significant differences from year to year; however, scale scores remain high. Among families engaged in home visiting/family facilitation, families that have been engaged in home visiting or family facilitation services for 0-1 years had a mean level of agreement of 6.5; those who have been engaged for 1-2 years had a mean level of agreement of 6.3; those who have been engaged for 3-5 years had a mean level of agreement of 6.6 and those engaged for greater than 5 years had a mean level of agreement of 6.8.

Family Engagement Survey

Ratings of Family School Partnerships

The principal at this school seeks and uses parents' ideas and suggestions to improve the school.

6.0

The principal at this school makes a conscious effort to make parents feel welcome.

6.3

I know someone at this school who will assist me and my family in our home language in resolving questions and concerns regarding my child.*

6.0

My child's teachers, home visitors, or family facilitator help me understand what I can do to help my child learn.

6.3

The school staff at this school work hard to build trusting relationships with my family.

6.2

I feel my input is valued by most of my child's teachers, home visitor or family facilitator.

6.2

I have opportunities to influence what happens at this school.

5.6

School staff work closely with me to meet my child's needs.

6.3

My home culture and home language are valued by this school.

6.3

I am greeted warmly when I visit or call this school.

6.1

I know who to talk with at this school regarding my concerns about my child's education and development.

6.4

I know how well my child is doing academically in school.

6.4

Strongly
Disagree (1)

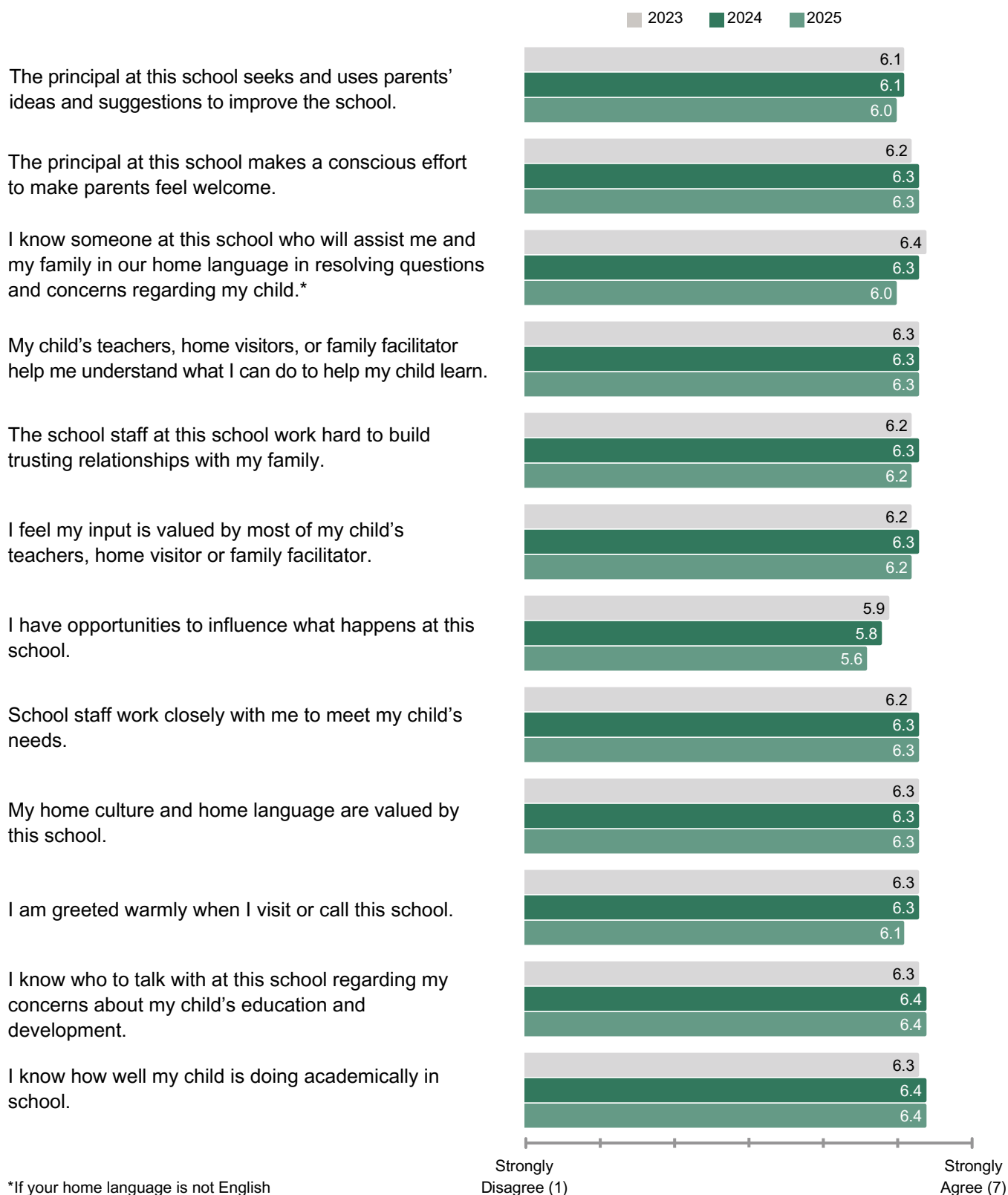
Strongly
Agree (7)

*If your home language is not English



Family Engagement Survey

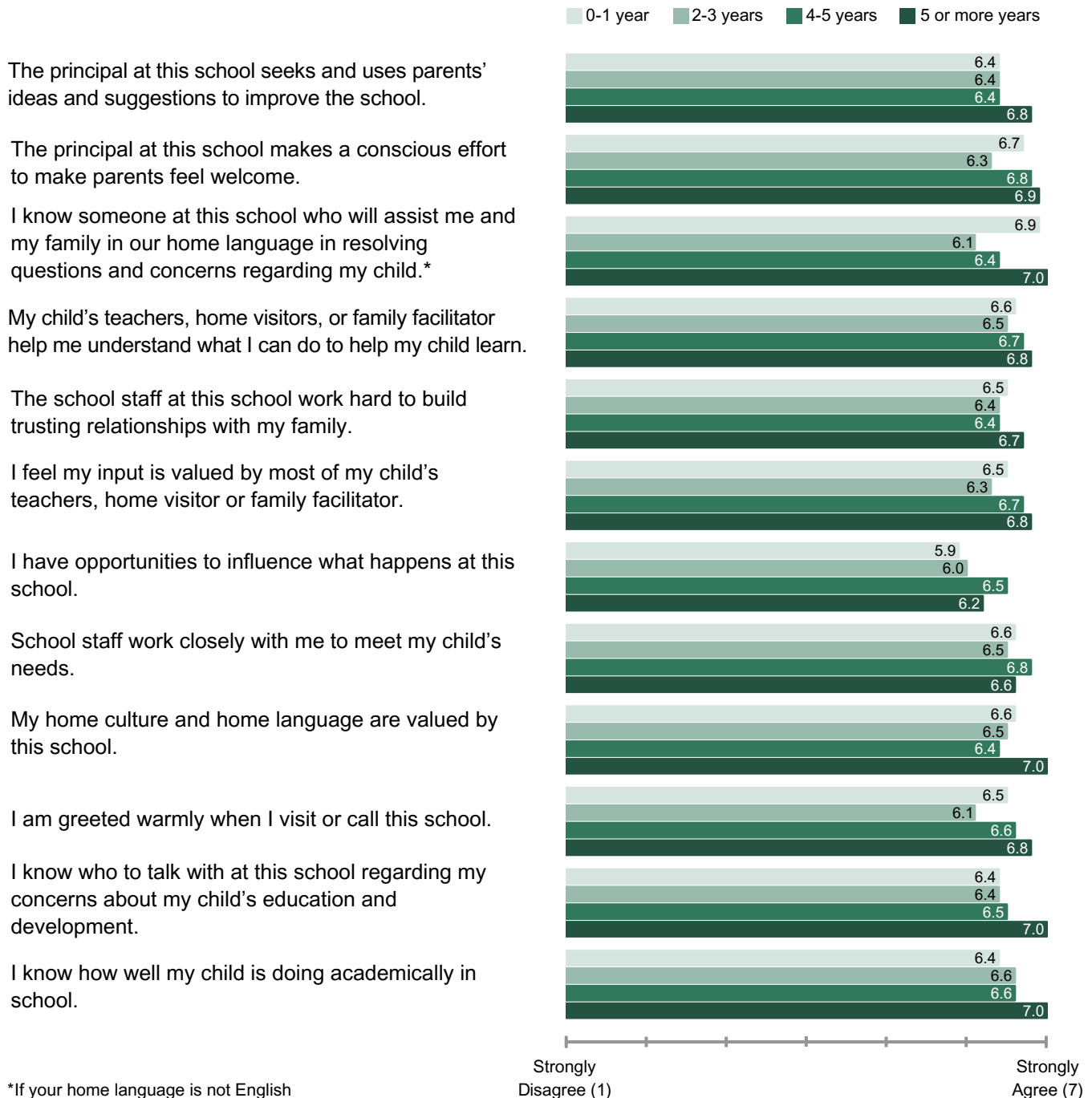
Family Ratings Comparison Year to Year



Family Engagement Survey

Families Engaged in Home Visiting and Family Facilitation

A total of 190 individuals who completed the survey reported that their family was engaged in home visiting and/or family facilitation at their school. A majority of these individuals reported being engaged for 0-1 year (45.8%), followed by those with 2-3 years of participation (32.1%), 4-5 years of participation (12.63%), and those who had been engaged for more than 5 years (9.5%).



*If your home language is not English



Family Engagement Interviews

Perceptions of Social Support Among Family Engagement Staff and the Families They Serve

In the Spring of 2025, Evaluators within the Munroe-Meyer Institute conducted interviews and focus groups with family engagement staff and families within the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan (SECP). A total of 26 family interviews took place with family representatives (e.g., parents, legal guardians) who had at least one child enrolled in an SECP home visiting and/or family facilitation program at a School as Hub site. When possible, interviews took place in the family's primary language with the assistance of an interpreter. Interviewees identified their primary language as one of the following: English, Spanish, African Dialect, Karen, Karenni, or Vietnamese. Family engagement staff (i.e., family facilitators and/or home visitors) perceptions were also captured via three focus groups (n=12). Interview and focus group questions were designed to address two primary evaluation questions: (1) How does engagement in family engagement programming influence how a family receives social support? (2) What are the primary support types that engaged families are currently receiving? Questions were guided by Social Support Theory, and definition constructs can be seen below. Qualitative data was analyzed via a process of immersion/crystallization using deductive content analysis. Primary findings from families and family engagement staff are identified in this report.

SOCIAL SUPPORT THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS

Instrumental Support	Informational Support	Appraisal Support	Emotional Support
Tangible aid and service	Advice, suggestions, and information	Information that is useful for self-evaluation	Expressions of empathy, love, trust, and care
Examples: food, diapers, activity materials and children's books	Examples: pamphlets, step-by-step instructions, teaching about new topics	Examples: asking questions about a person's values, identifying strengths,	Examples: listening without judgement, comforting words, validating emotions

Family Engagement Interviews

Instrumental Support: Family Engagement Staff Perspective

Family engagement staff emphasized that the School as Hub model plays a vital role in supporting the community, often serving as a primary access point for basic needs. However, they noted that limited budgets constrain their ability to fully meet families' needs, particularly when it comes to providing linguistically appropriate materials. Family engagement staff also pointed to ongoing gaps in broader support systems, especially in housing, transportation, and mental health services, which further limit families' access to comprehensive care.

(1) Schools and Community are Seen as Essential Hubs of Support

Family engagement staff emphasized the critical role of schools in providing tangible aid such as food, clothing, and transportation. Family engagement staff reported that partnerships with community organizations were seen as essential to meeting families' basic needs.

"I would say when we say school as a hub out here, we really are. We are the food pantry. We are the clothing closet. The biggest thing I have is a need for helping people get transportation, cars, cars repaired."

"The best way to support families in this sense is connecting with your community, building partnerships."

(2) Budget Constraints Limit Access to Essential Materials

Family engagement staff felt limited funding restricts the ability to purchase linguistically appropriate materials, such as bilingual books.

"It's very, very difficult to get bilingual books because of the fact that we cannot go to anywhere to buy these books.. We have to go to specific places like Scholastic, which don't have a large option of bilingual books."

(3) There are Gaps in Services for Housing, Transportation, and Mental Health

Family engagement staff identified systemic service limitations: particularly in housing, transportation, and mental health as major barriers to supporting families with young children. Language access and provider availability (e.g., Medicaid-accepting therapists) were also significant challenges.

"There's not enough services because the age group that we serve 0 to 5, there's not a specialty service. So even finding a therapist in the community that takes perhaps Medicaid or on a pro-bono or sliding fee as a challenge, along with the family."



Family Engagement Interviews

Instrumental Support: Family Perspective

When considering the perspective of families, there were three primary themes related to the provision of instrumental supports. These themes included: (1) staff providing personalized engagement, (2) families receiving tangible support and opportunities to engage, and (3) staff increasing access to community connections.

(1) Family Engagement Staff Provide Personalized Engagement

Families described the support they received based on conversations about their specific needs, including books and activities selected because of their children's developmental milestones and interests. Some families mentioned that their home visitor or family facilitator regularly checked in via text or in person to ask about upcoming needs or offer new resources that could be beneficial.

"They customize the curriculum for where he's at and his development and then follows up on different conversations that we've had and provide the resources."

(2) Families Receive Tangible Support and Opportunities to Engage

Families provided examples of concrete resources and supports they received during home visits or at facilitation events, including food, winter coats, books, and age-appropriate learning activities. Many also discussed the benefits of accessing socialization opportunities and family events hosted by their programs.

"Whenever she comes and does the home visit at our house, she brings over an activity for the kids to do and explains everything thoroughly. And she provides several opportunities a month to meet with her, with the other kids in the groups and with the people that are in the whole [school district] for us to all get together."

(3) Family Engagement Staff Increase Access to Community Connections

Multiple families discussed community resources and programs they heard about based on referrals from their home visitors/family facilitators (e.g., holiday gift programs and food pantries). In addition to raising their awareness, families also received help in applying for programs and navigating language barriers.

"One of our big things with older sister has been potty training. That's been years in the making at this point. She's found a lot of things that we could attend in the community, just like different professionals and stuff to help with that."

Family Engagement Interviews

Informational Support: Family Engagement Staff Perspective

Family engagement staff identified three key ways informational support is or could be strengthened within the Superintendents' Plan: (1) families sharing knowledge and resources within their networks, (2) leveraging early insights and technology to support school readiness, and (3) simplifying and personalizing information to improve accessibility.

(1) Families are Serving as Informational Bridges

Family engagement staff noted the growing impact of families sharing independent referrals and resources with one another, creating informal yet powerful knowledge networks through relationships formed in programming.

"Something I find interesting, families are talking with each other and passing on independent referral sources amongst themselves."

"Those are very powerful things that are occurring because of relationships that are forming, relationships that are forming from our programming, that we are doing."

(2) Staff Work to Simplify and Personalize Information for Accessibility

Efforts to adapt information, such as simplifying curriculum content or tailoring resources to families' language and learning needs were seen as essential to ensuring families could use and relate to what they receive.

"One for me is that our curriculum is pretty massive. So sometimes we have to simplify things. So, for me, it would be like finding ways to simplify more of that information, to be able to provide it to families so that for them it'll be easier, and they can relate to."

(3) Staff Support School Readiness Through Early Insights and Resources

Family engagement staff report home-based observations provide unique insight into children's behaviors and needs prior to school entry, while technology (like websites or interpretation services) offers additional ways to deliver relevant, on-demand information.

"We are catching [children], like these two [staff members] are catching them [children] at home where they're hidden and nobody really sees them. So they're being able to see them at home and in their own environment. We see them at centers, and we're able to catch both of these children before they get into school."



Family Engagement Interviews

Informational Support: Family Perspective

Three primary themes emerged related to informational support: (1) varied and ongoing information sharing, (2) open lines of communication with trusted staff, and (3) staff provide tailored information to support children's development.

(1) Information Sharing is Varied and Ongoing

Multiple families mentioned receiving informational text messages between their regular meetings with family engagement staff. Typically, these texts were because FES found information they thought families would be interested in or followed up on families' concerns. Families also discussed information provided through group or one-on-one conversations, screenshots, website links, articles, and handouts.

"If we're visiting, she just tells me or shares some social links, or by text. And if we're not together, she can call me and let me know and send [a text message]."

(2) Open Lines of Communication with Trusted Staff

Families discussed family engagement staff's responsiveness to their questions and concerns. Many families shared that they felt comfortable reaching out via text message, phone call, or email, and trusted their home visitor/family facilitator to share information or research to find the answers they needed.

"She's really good about checking in. I think that's the main thing. The texts, the little flyer she hands out. She's excellent at that."

(3) Staff Provide Tailored Information to Support Development

Many families said that their home visitor/family facilitator tailored information to meet their child's needs and interests. Examples included potty training, speech, parent-child play strategies and activities, special education services, and preparation for school. Some families shared about receiving information specific to their children's ages and developmental levels, which they said helped manage their expectations about milestones and age-appropriate behaviors.

"And she's always send me home with flyers for kids, and where they should be and different strategies to encourage independent play or helping around the house or developing a routine or just what they should be doing at their age. She's always just like, 'Here's some information for this kid.'"

While most feedback related to instrumental supports was positive, one family discussed long waits for responses to texts, and another mentioned the time and attention demands that family engagement staff face with large caseloads.

Family Engagement Interviews

Appraisal Support: Family Engagement Staff Perspective

Family engagement staff emphasized the importance of building trusting relationships that honor families' strengths and goals. FES report their approach focuses on empowering families by recognizing their daily efforts, supporting family-led goal setting, and centering families' voices in planning for their children's development.

(1) Family Engagement Staff Recognize Efforts and Intentions in Parenting

Family engagement staff report trying to help parents recognize the value of their everyday efforts and intentions in supporting their child's development, focusing on the process rather than just the end result.

"I think more than anything, being very genuine and also just always commenting not on the outcome, but the process of that, and making sure they're aware of that more."

(2) Family Engagement Staff Support Family-Led Goal Setting and Progress

Family engagement staff report supporting families by helping them set goals that reflect their own needs and priorities, both for the family as a whole and for their children.

"I think some of this comes even from individual family goals, child goals, checking back in with families to see where do they stand in that."

"So let's see, where is the child meeting standard-wise and if they are meeting okay, then let's move beyond that. Or is this an area where we need to spend a little bit more time and allowing that to help them make those decisions around what to focus on for their child, I think it's very helpful. And in the same respect, with those family goals, coming back to them in those three times that we do those outcomes is just saying, all right, you know, we'll review these are the things that you said were an area before. Gosh, here you keep saying that this need around food keeps resurfacing. What can we do?"

(3) Navigating Differences in Parenting Beliefs and Backgrounds

Family engagement staff shared that offering appraisal support can be difficult when parenting beliefs differ due to generational patterns or socioeconomic backgrounds. Parents often revert to how they were raised, and staff work to gently guide them toward new strategies. These efforts are sometimes complicated by class differences, which can create misunderstandings between staff and families.

"It can be generational things. And so, you can continually talk to a parent about e-parenting. We can be working on it. We can be and they can be even aware of it. But it's so deeply ingrained that you know the punishment and we're going to spank, which is like their decision. It's not like I have no judgment on that. But then it's like constantly kind of bringing them back to like, like, hey, let's think about what happened, you know, before the behavior and talking that through."



Family Engagement Interviews

Appraisal Support: Family Perspective

Collaborative planning based on assessment and family priorities emerged as a theme related to the appraisal support provided to families enrolled in family engagement programs.

(1) Collaborative Goal Setting with Families

Families discussed the ways that family engagement staff involved them in goal setting and identifying topics for future visits. Some mentioned completing and reviewing developmental assessments like the Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ®) as a tool for planning. Others shared examples of prompting questions that invited them to share their concerns and priorities related to child development, parenting, and behavior.

“I like that towards the end of our visit, she’s always like, ‘Okay, so what do you want to work on next? What do you want to focus on?’ so that it makes me feel like I have a say in what we do... Say I’m worried about my son [because he doesn’t] have a pencil grasp. So okay, then she would plan a lesson around that. So it makes me feel like what he needs is being met.”

“We always did like the ASQ questionnaire. She had this book that went through all the stages of development for every age group. She had activities for every stage of development.”



Family Engagement Interviews

Emotional Support: Family Engagement Staff Perspective

Family engagement staff reported playing a vital emotional support role by building trusting, responsive relationships with families. Through consistent presence, active listening, and celebrating families' progress, FES created a safe space where parents feel seen and supported. While family engagement staff felt they offered essential emotional support, they also voiced a growing need for expanded access to mental health services, a concern that was echoed in previous years' evaluations.

(1) Building Trust Through Consistent Emotional Support

Family engagement staff emphasized that strong relationships are built through consistent communication, showing up every week, and truly listening to families, especially when parents may not have other sources of support. FES reported striving to create a safe, nonjudgmental space where families feel heard and valued.

“Also, empathy by trying to understand the position that the parent is in and being non-judgmental is another way that we can provide emotional support. Just really trying to be in the here and now with that parent where they're at, and relating to them and what they need. I think it's really important.”

“Whether they just need somebody to vent to, maybe they're going through things, perhaps they didn't have other family support system or friends. So, us being there like every week or every month and having that connection.”

(2) Celebrating Milestones and Moments of Growth

Family engagement staff described the importance of celebrating with families, both big and small achievements, as a way to provide emotional support and encouragement.

“Emotional support by being there with the family, celebrating with them every step of the way. Whether it's when we're talking about, you know, the growth and, social development milestones that the children are meeting.”

(3) Being Present and Responsive to Family Needs

Family engagement staff highlighted the importance of meeting families where they are by following their lead and focusing on what they need in the moment. They described their role as a parallel partnership that is family-driven and family-led.

“And I'm very much a person who follows the lead of my families as well.”

(4) Recognizing the Need for Mental Health Support

Family engagement staff expressed a strong desire for more resources to help families access mental health therapy and counseling. While they strive to provide emotional support through listening and building trusting relationships, FES acknowledged the limitations of their role and the growing need for professional mental health services.



Family Engagement Interviews

Emotional Support: Family Perspective

Three primary themes emerged related to informational support: (1) genuine interest in families, (2) encouragement, and (3) trust and consistency.

(1) Family Engagement Staff Have Genuine Interest in Families

Families shared ways that family engagement staff showed care for them and their children as individuals. Examples included remembering birthdays, checking in during emergencies and high-stress times, connecting with and sending updates about their school-age children during the school day, and ensuring they feel welcome at socialization and school events. Some families said that they saw their home visitor/family facilitator as a friend or family member.

“We had the power outage... She checked in, made sure we were okay. She's like, ‘Hey, I heard the power's coming back up.’ So it just she just makes it really easy to trust her. I guess just more like a friend.”

(2) Family Engagement Staff Build Confidence Through Encouragement

Many families discussed feeling encouraged and supported by the feedback provided to them and their children. Examples of feedback included encouraging caregivers to keep trying when learning new skills, reminding them that they are good parents when they are self-critical, and praising children's efforts and accomplishments during visits (e.g., listening to instructions). While most shared examples of verbal support, some families mentioned feeling encouraged by their home visitor/family facilitator's positive attitude.

“I feel like sometimes like I'm not a good enough mom or a good enough wife and she would like, say, ‘No, this is what you do. And you know, this is what is great.’ And so it does, it's like a little pat myself on the back.”

(3) Family Engagement Staff Provide Trust and Consistency

Families discussed the importance of trust in their relationships with family engagement staff. Some families shared about initial hesitation to share private information when joining their programs, and that early conversations about confidentiality—paired with demonstrations of protecting their information—built their trust and encouraged them to open up more. Some gave examples of their home visitor/family facilitator checking in about their comfort level with the program, communicating about changes, and listening without judgment or agenda.

“I feel like she's never, like, told anybody, like, our business and whatnot, which is something that I would say I can trust, especially with how much we have going on. I know sometimes that can be hard. Like not to tell people like, “Oh, they can't come because of X, Y and Z,” but that's never been the case before.”

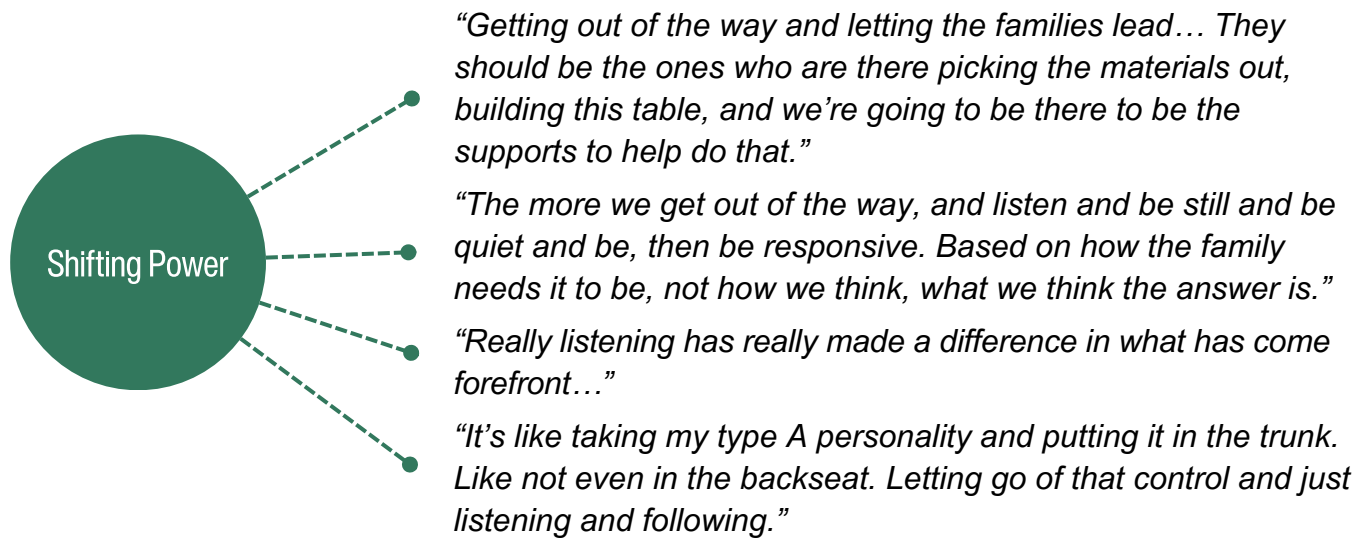
Family Engagement Interviews

Greatest Accomplishments: Family Engagement Staff Perspective

Two prominent themes arose when family engagement staff were asked to share the greatest accomplishments associated with family engagement programming: (1) shifting power to families and following their lead and (2) building trusting, long-term relationships with families and schools.

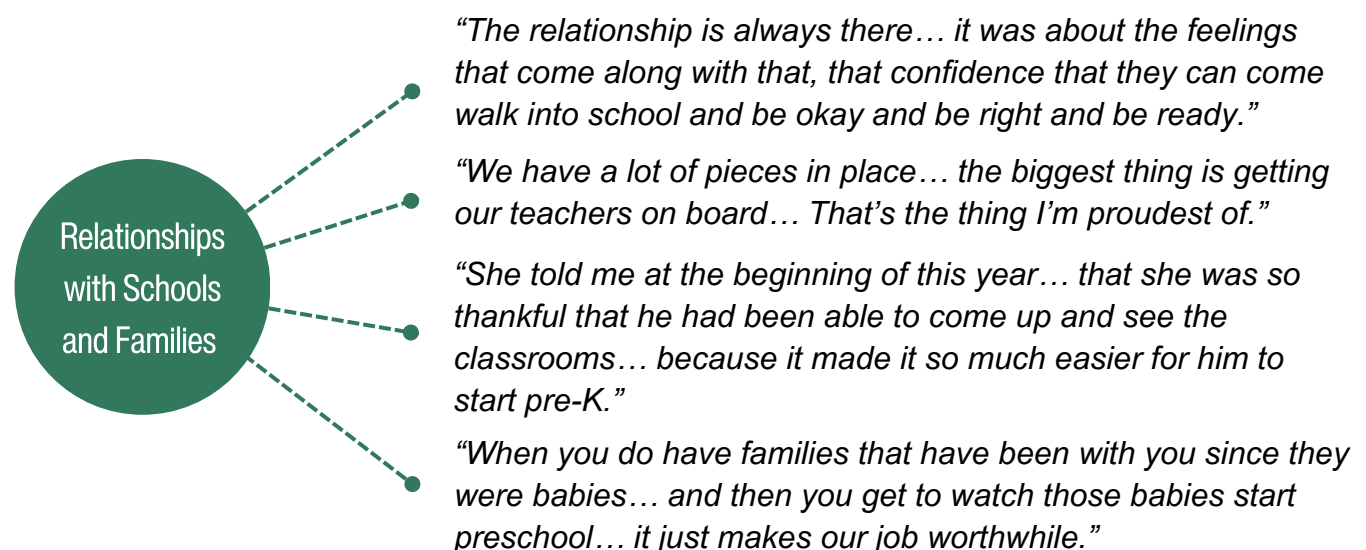
(1) Shifting Power to Families “Getting out of the way” and Following Their Lead

Family engagement staff consistently emphasize a paradigm shift from professional-driven programming to family-led decision-making.



(2) Building Trusting, Long-Term Relationships with Families and Schools

The second dominant theme is the pride in cultivating deep, enduring relationships with families and within school communities. Family engagement staff highlight their roles as connectors and trusted anchors between families and schools.



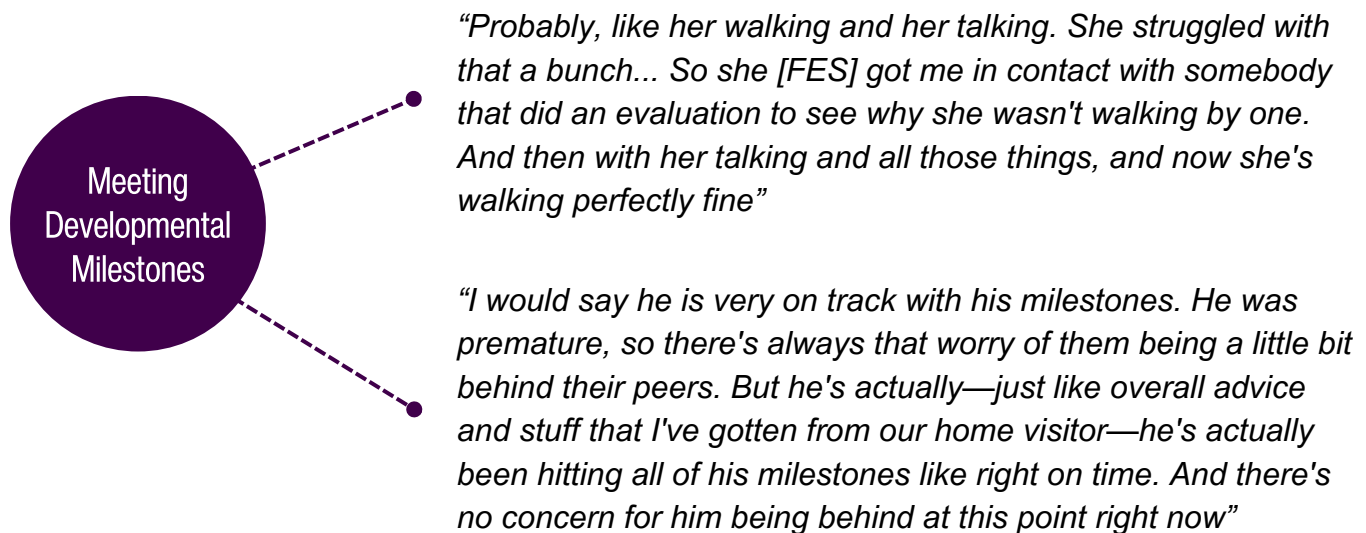
Family Engagement Interviews

Greatest Accomplishments: Family Perspective

Four prominent themes emerged when interviewees were asked to share their child's greatest accomplishment related to participation in family engagement programming: (1) staff support of children meeting developmental milestones, (2) improved parent-child interactions, (3) improved relationships between families and school staff, and (4) children's increased confidence in social settings.

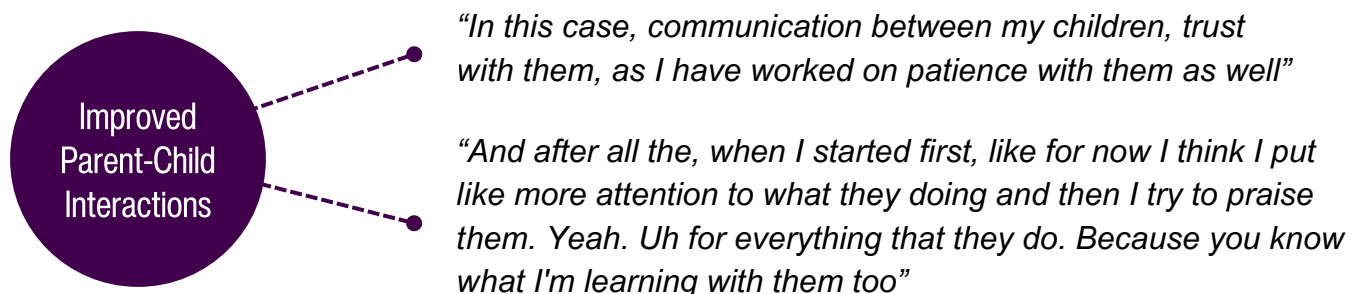
(1) Staff Support of Children Meeting Developmental Milestones

Many families shared that their children were reaching developmental milestones. Some also described how family engagement staff provided helpful resources, such as parent seminars, school-based services, and activity ideas in response to concerns or observations raised during visits, which supported their children's development.



(2) Improved Parent-Child Interactions

Some families shared accomplishments in their everyday interactions with their children as a result of knowledge and skills gained through their participation in family engagement program. Examples included having a better understanding of child development and age-appropriate expectations, greater patience, and intentionality in their interactions.



Family Engagement Interviews

(3) Improved Relationships Between Families and School Staff

Some families noted that they and/or their children had better relationships with school staff because of their participation in the program. Reasons for families' improved relationships included family engagement staff's advocacy for their children, having a connection beyond their child's classroom teacher, and knowledge of the school from attending socializations and drop-in play times. Improved child relationships were attributed to experience building relationships with family engagement staff and familiarity with the building before starting school.

Improved Relationships with School

"So just having her here the bounce ideas off and be a liaison, really helped because this year now, after all the communicating she helped me do with the school last year, this year he's thriving. Like he's had only like five behaviors here when last year it was like 100"

"Having a connection and being there for my daughter has been very helpful for her and for me, too"

"I think it just helps his overall development of just being comfortable with...a different adult who's not related. And that really helped the transition. Honestly, I think for school in general, just because we were so used to going in the school to do home visiting when they started school, they seriously the first day did not even look back and say goodbye. I was like, aren't you supposed to be crying?"

(4) Children's Increased Confidence in Social Settings

Many families said that they noticed changes in their children's behavior with peers, saying that their children were notably less shy around other children and were more likely to approach and play with others at socials.

Increased Confidence in Social Settings

"He more have a confidence. Before he's too shy to, like, play with other people, until the home visitor went to the school and do like to go to the play and learn group. And then he also kind of, more like, interact with other children"

"And it's it's made her blossom and be more social and more interactive with other kids because she used to be closed off. Um, you know, that's just been amazing there"

"He's pretty shy, so he's come out of his shell a little bit. And especially with the socials that they do at the school or she'll bring everyone into the school, has been a huge help for him developmentally"



Family Engagement Interviews

Common Findings Between Staff and Families

This section highlights common themes identified by both family engagement staff and families, offering a comprehensive look at how families experience support and how FES navigate their roles. Findings illustrate strong alignment in recognizing the value of the School as Hub model, the importance of clear and personalized communication, and the critical role of trusting relationships. Alongside these strengths, both groups pointed to key areas for improvement including the need for more accessible materials, expanded mental health services, and stronger infrastructure to support housing, transportation, and information sharing. Primary strengths and areas for growth are outlined below.

Areas of Strength

- Family engagement staff effectively help families access essentials like food, clothing, and learning materials.
- Family engagement staff have effective and valued communication strategies. Families appreciate the personalized communication. FES recognize the need to continue to simplify materials and access to information.
- Family engagement staff build strong relationships by listening, encouraging families, and being consistently present.

Areas for Improvement

- Increase access to culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, such as bilingual books and translated resources.
- Simplify and streamline educational content to make it more understandable and usable for families with varied literacy and learning needs.
- Expand mental health support options, including access to affordable, Medicaid-accepting providers and counseling services.
- Strengthen communication tools to allow for the sharing of timely information.
- Address gaps in housing and transportation services, which remain major barriers for many families.
- Provide additional training for staff to support goal setting and emotional well-being in culturally responsive ways.
- Ensure consistent funding and resources to maintain and grow personalized, high-impact services for families.

Professional Learning Opportunities

Survey Findings

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute hosted 49 learning opportunities throughout the 2024-2025 academic year. At the end of the event, attendees were presented with a QR code and asked to complete a post-evaluation survey. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on a scale of 1-5 (1, low; 5, high) regarding how the information they learned would help them in their current role and the extent to which the format of the professional development was an effective way to receive helpful information. Respondents were asked to identify specific strategies or pieces of information they found most helpful and asked what additional support they would need to apply what they had learned. In addition, an experiencing scale was included to evaluate how engaging in professional learning opportunities influenced experiential learning based on the Kolb cycle of learning. The experiencing scale is a 20-item instrument that asks individuals to rate their experience across several constructs (Stock & Kolb, 2021). The scale assesses learning through a process of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. The scale is meant to assess the learner's novelty, presence, and embodiment.

989

Educators engaged in professional learning opportunities

437

Post-program surveys completed by attendees

91%

of participants somewhat or strongly agreed that the information learned during the professional learning opportunity could help them in their current role.

90%

of participants somewhat or strongly agreed that the format of the professional learning opportunity was an effective way to receive helpful information.



Professional Learning Opportunities

Qualitative Findings

What specific strategies or pieces of information did you find most helpful from this professional learning opportunity?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on Guided Play: Importance, implementation, tools, and teacher reflections. | <p><i>"Learning how to incorporate play within my classroom setting and different techniques to add play alongside with the curriculum."</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on Guided Play: Importance, implementation, tools, and teacher reflections. | <p><i>"I enjoyed learning about how the development of child and their needs starts at a young age, and how everything affects them."</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Collaboration and Engagement: Benefits of collaborative learning, personal reflections, and active engagement. | <p><i>"I learned to continue to be open minded when approaching all situations as a learning moment."</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical Applications and Activities: Hands-on activities, strategies implemented, and real-life examples. | <p><i>"The brain architecture game was very helpful in giving us a hands on example of how a child's mind really works and the importance of our roles in that development."</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): Importance, strategies, and specific examples like Pyramid Model. | <p><i>"Learning about the pyramid of how trauma compounds to affect children over time."</i></p> |

What additional support do you need to apply what you learned today?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time for planning and collaboration | <p><i>"More time! I would love to be able to collaborate with my team on this, but time is needed for that."</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and materials | <p><i>"We are looking at more materials that are needed in our classroom to better support our students."</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and guidance | <p><i>"I would like to be able to shadow a someone else who is a community facilitator that is already established at their schools program."</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration and engagement | <p><i>"I would like to see examples of teachers and how they do play...it would be beneficial to see colleagues engaged through videos or pictures."</i></p> |

Kolb Cycle of Learning Survey Findings

Survey respondents (n=437) completed the Experiencing Scale in August 2024 (Stock & Kolb 2021). Items that represent Novelty are highlighted in green, items representing Presence are highlighted in orange, and items representing Embodiment are highlighted in brown. Mean scores on a reverse order scale of 1-7 (1, low, 7, high) are reported. The mean score for novelty items was 5.51; the mean score for presence items was 5.67, and the mean score for items reflecting embodiment was 4.76.

MEAN

5.54	My views did not change	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I saw things in new ways
5.25	It was pretty much as I expected	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐	It was fresh and new
5.75	I didn't learn anything new	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I learned something new
5.60	I was uninvolved	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I was deeply involved
5.78	I was easily distracted	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I was alert and aware
5.83	I did not participate	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I actively participated
5.63	My senses were not engaged	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	My senses were engaged
5.79	I was somewhere else	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I was fully present
5.71	I felt resistant	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I was "in the flow"
5.76	I felt connected and whole	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	My attention was focused
5.69	I felt scattered	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I felt connected and whole
5.72	I was in the there and then	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I was in the here and now
5.81	I was on "automatic pilot"	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	I responded to what was happening
5.48	I was self-absorbed	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐	I was not self-conscious
5.24	I was aware of time passing	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐	I didn't notice the passage of time
4.97	I did not feel a connection with the natural world	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐	I felt a sense of oneness with the natural world
4.68	I had no bodily sensation	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐	I felt the experience in my body
4.63	I had no emotional reactions	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐	The experience was emotional



Teacher Self-Efficacy

Survey Findings

In the Fall of 2024 (n=25) and Spring of 2025 (n=17), teachers who were engaged in coaching and/or consultation within the Superintendents’ Early Childhood Plan completed the short form of the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). The survey items utilized can be seen below. Items related to each domain are highlighted as follows: (Student Engagement; Instructional Strategies; Classroom Strategies).

How much can you do?

1

Nothing

3

Very Little

5

Some Influence

7

Quite A Bit

9

A Great Deal

How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?

How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?

How much can you do to help your students value learning?

How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?

To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?

How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?

To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?

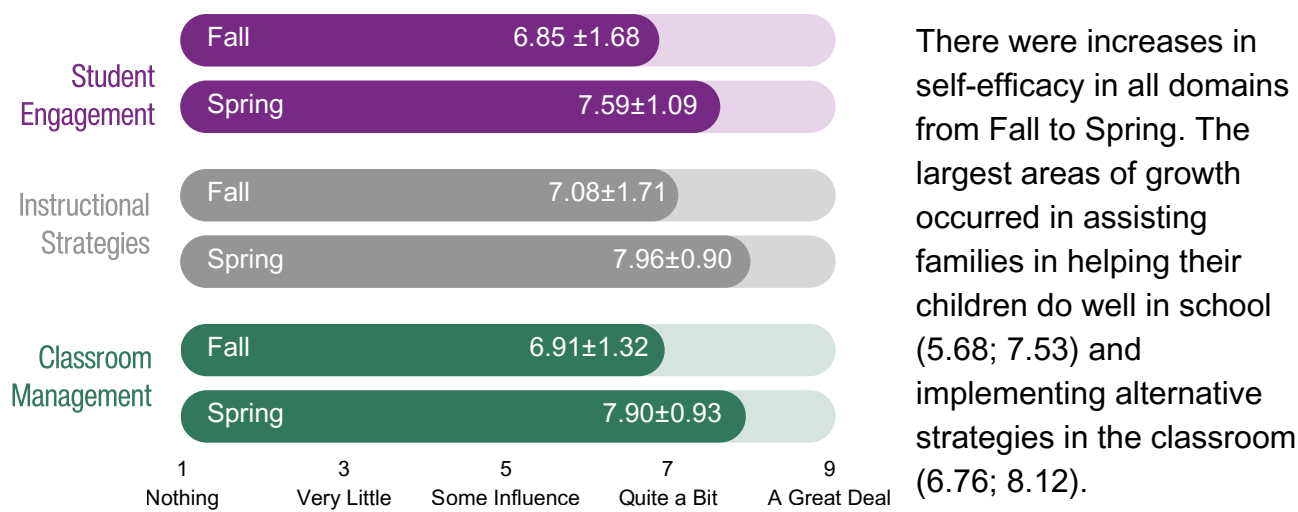
How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?

How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?

How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?

How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?

How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?



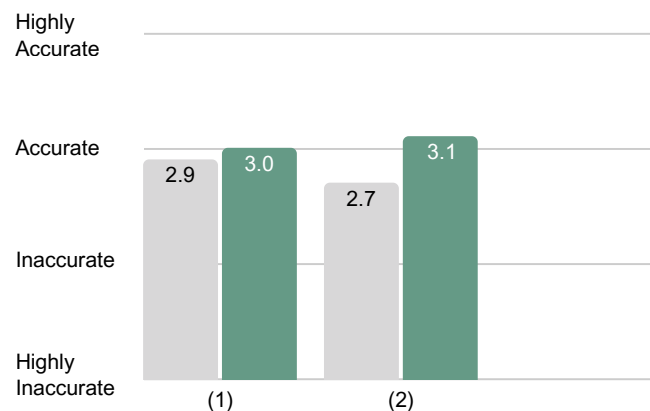
Leadership Effectiveness

Principal Leadership

In Fall 2024, Principals from 10 Omaha-based schools participated in a community of practice focused on NAESP competencies. Principals were asked to complete a self-reflective assessment at two time points (January & May). Reflective assessments provided several constructs and asked respondents to rate themselves on a scale of (1) highly inaccurate, (2) inaccurate, (3) accurate or (4) highly accurate. Example questions are highlighted below. Full report details are available upon reasonable request. Aggregated scores are reported below at each time point: (1) Fall 2024=Grey; (3) Spring 2025=Green.

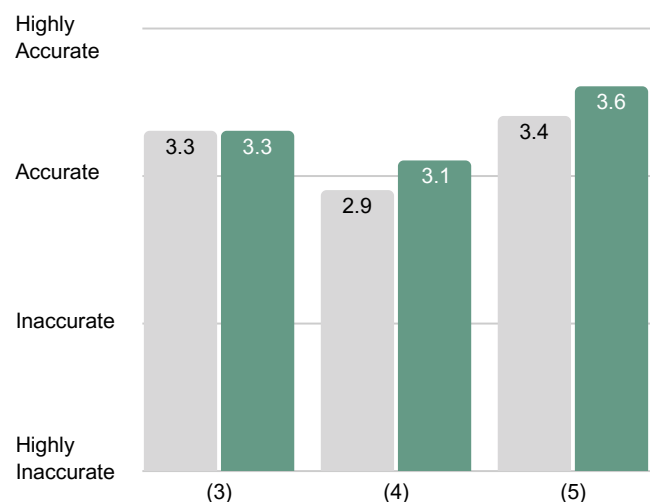
→ **Strategy 2.2:** Establish relationships and support collaboration with early care and education, including home visitors. Birth to entering school (ECE) programs in the community.

- (1) I am familiar with and have established relationships with ECE programs in my community.
- (2) Our school provides opportunities and supports to kindergarten teachers to meet with ECE teachers and staff (both those on-site and in community-based programs and including home visitors).



→ **Strategy 2.3:** Ensure smooth transitions for students and families not only between the variety of ECE programs and kindergarten, but also across the birth through 3rd grade continuum.

- (3) Our school has a transition plan in place to welcome and embrace students and families new to our school.
- (4) We reach out to and partner with ECE programs and community organizations to support the transitions of students and families.
- (5) We have a well-defined, manageable, and shared process to help parents register at our school. (i.e., supportive of languages other than English)



Leadership Effectiveness

Principal Self-Efficacy

Principals (n=10) engaged in the SECP community of practice were asked to rate their leadership self-efficacy across 5 domains. Enhanced feelings of self-efficacy were seen across each domain from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025.

Develop Goals

1. Develop clear goals and expectations for teaching utilizing the School as Hub approach
2. Develop a strategic plan for achieving goals within the School as Hub approach
3. Develop clear and achievable goals using the School as Hub approach

Guide Teachers

1. Guide teachers about educational matters using the School as Hub approach
2. Observe teaching and provide helpful feedback using the School as Hub approach
3. Using school-based self-assessment to improve teaching and learning using the School as Hub approach

Create a Positive and Safe Learning Environment

1. Promote a safe school environment for students which is free from bullying using a School as Hub approach
2. Ensure a learning environment in which students feel safe using the School as Hub approach
3. Promote a good teacher-student relationship using the School as Hub approach

Motivate Teachers

1. Create enthusiasm and engagement among teachers using the School as Hub approach
2. Motivate teachers for teaching and instruction using the School as Hub approach
3. Motivate teachers to commit to goals using the School as Hub approach

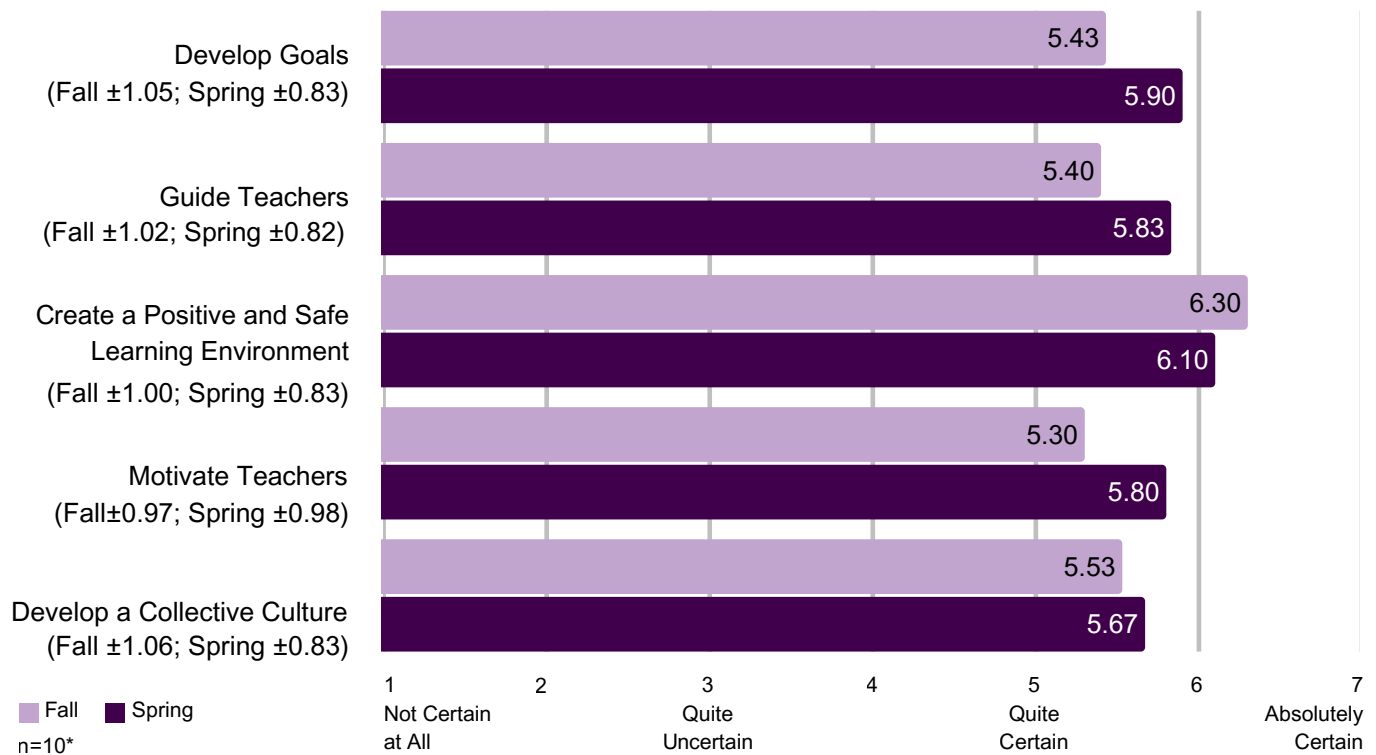
Develop a Collective Culture

1. Develop a collective culture in which everyone works to achieve shared goals using the School as Hub approach
2. Develop a culture in which teachers support one another using the School as Hub approach
3. Promote a shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching using a School as Hub approach

Leadership Effectiveness

Principal Self-Efficacy

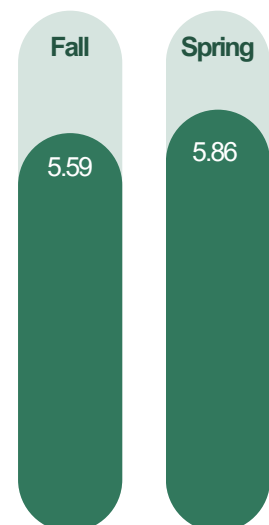
Domain mean scores on a scale of 1-7 can be seen below. Growth was seen in all domains.



Greatest Growth Areas

- Developing clear goals and expectations for teaching using the School as Hub approach (Fall: 5.3; Spring: 5.9)
- Using school-based self-assessment to improve teaching and learning using the School as Hub approach (Fall: 5.3; Spring: 5.9)
- Creating enthusiasm and engagement among the teachers using the School as Hub approach (Fall: 5.3; Spring: 5.8)
- Motivating the teachers for teaching and instruction using the School as Hub approach (Fall: 5.3; Spring: 5.8)

Overall Scale Mean Scores



*Some respondents chose not to answer all of the questions



Action Planning Progress

During the annual Action Planning Retreats within the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, focus groups were held with members of each District team. District team members from Bellevue Public Schools, DC West Community Schools, Omaha Public Schools, and Millard Public Schools were asked to reflect on their engagement in the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan over the past year. A 5-question semi-structured interview guide was utilized to evaluate progress, challenges and future directions within the three primary program domains of **Leadership Effectiveness**, **Instructional Excellence**, and **Family & Community Partnerships Engagement**. Scores below represent the mean level of progress districts felt they made across domain areas from a scale of 1 to 100.

Leadership Effectiveness



AREAS OF PROGRESS

- Stronger staff commitment and active involvement in action plan efforts
- Expansion of leadership teams and access to monthly professional development
- Improved communication and more effective goal-setting resulting in enhanced collaboration

CHALLENGES

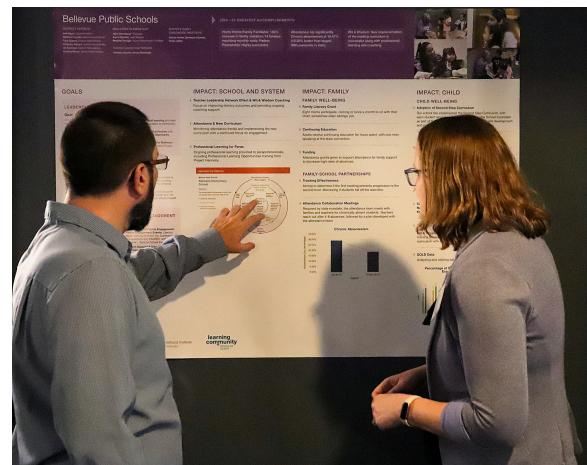
- Constraints on staff time reduced opportunities for meetings and peer collaboration
- Ambiguity in school staff responsibilities and ongoing changes in organizational focus
- Administrative limitations and communication gaps between districts and Institute staff

FUTURE PLANS

- Enhance range of resources to support effective leadership and project implementation
- Clearly define staff roles and increase staff support to reduce role strain
- Provide more opportunities for teacher feedback on action plan goals

"They [Principal] encourage and support our programming and our work."

"There's so many things we want to do just to make sure it's not a checkbox for us but continuing to reevaluate and deepen that goal or outcomes that we're looking for."



Action Planning Progress

Instructional Excellence

82

1

100

AREAS OF PROGRESS

- Building a strong social-emotional foundation for students
- Enhanced teacher capacity to create responsive learning environments that meet the varying needs of students
- Improved instructional planning and devotion to intentional curriculum work

CHALLENGES

- Ongoing shifts in curriculum disrupted continuity and hindered instructional consistency
- Educator fatigue due to repetitive nature of scripted literacy instruction and lack of adequate support for classrooms
- Barriers in communication, time restraints, and systematic use of data in instructional planning

FUTURE PLANS

- Formulate a more efficient teaching plan to support new curriculum implementation
- Strengthen instructional planning by integrating qualitative and quantitative data into regular team discussions
- Increase access to bilingual and relevant curriculum materials
- Broaden staff access to coaching and professional development

"I think we've done a good job of the Responsive Classroom and making sure everyone's on the same page and really helping kids socially, emotionally before we can really worry about academics."

"That's really important and developmentally appropriate that kids have that opportunity to have that free play. So, understanding that maybe kindergarten is not going to always look like worksheets and that kind of thing, that they should be up and should be interacting with toys and that kind of stuff, that is my opinion."

Family and Community Partnerships Engagement

91

1

100

AREAS OF PROGRESS

- Establishment of safe and welcoming environments to promote family/child engagement and satisfaction
- Increased opportunities for socializations and family engagement in the school community
- Expansion of partnerships between childcare, schools, and families

CHALLENGES

- Lack of time and consistent opportunities to build meaningful relationships with families
- Difficulty connecting with families or caregivers working nonstandard hours
- Gaps in communication resources for outreach to families with limited English proficiency

FUTURE PLANS

- Establish organized and accessible support systems to meet family engagement needs in and outside of the classroom
- Strengthen partnerships with community resources and childcare providers to support transitions and consistency
- Improve flexibility around scheduling to boost engagement at family events.

"The relationships, the collaboration...and the communication, and I think it starts with these traits here. Like the positive things that they bring every single day."

"I think it's the time to build those relationships... You can't just walk in."



Districts & Institute Collaboration

In the Spring of 2025, evaluators within the Munroe Meyer Institute and the University of Nebraska at Omaha conducted an external collaboration evaluation between the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and its key partners within the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan (SECP). The two primary objectives of the evaluation were (1) to determine the level of collaboration between the Institute and plan stakeholders within school districts and (2) to determine the barriers and facilitators for collaboration between the Institute and plan stakeholders.

A total of 70 surveys were completed by plan stakeholders across 10 school districts (6 full-implementation districts, 4 customized-assistance districts) and the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. Survey respondents included 3-to-5-year-old classroom educators/paraprofessionals (n=14), home visitors/family facilitators (n=12), school-based leaders (n=18), district-based administrators (n=20), and Institute staff (n=6).



Districts & Institute Collaboration

Survey Findings

A survey was developed in collaboration between a Munroe Meyer Institute Education and Child Development Faculty member and the Buffett Early Childhood Institute Research and Evaluation Staff. The District survey was comprised of closed/open-ended questions and included an adapted version of a previously validated "Level of Collaboration" scale.* Questions were developed based on the Action Plan program domains of focus noted below. Respondents were asked to identify the level of collaboration they believe they had with Institute Staff and with other Districts within the SECP in each of the following areas. Institute staff members were given a similar survey and asked to identify the level of collaboration with districts as a whole.

PROGRAM DOMAINS OF FOCUS

Leadership Effectiveness	Instructional Excellence	Family and Community Partnership Engagement
District Organization and Capacity	Foundations for Early Learning	Family Focus
School Leadership	Essential Child Experiences	Community-School Connections

LEVEL OF COLLABORATION

Networking 1	Cooperation 2	Coordination 3	Coalition 4	Collaboration 5
- Loosely defined roles - Little communication - All decisions are made independently	- Provide information to each other - Somewhat defined roles - Formal communication - All decisions are made independently	- Share information and resources - Defined roles - Regular communication - Some shared decision-making	- Share ideas, information, and resources - Regular and focused communication - Frequent shared decision-making	- Frequent and strategic communication - Mutual trust - Shared decision-making in all decisions - Consensus reached in all decisions

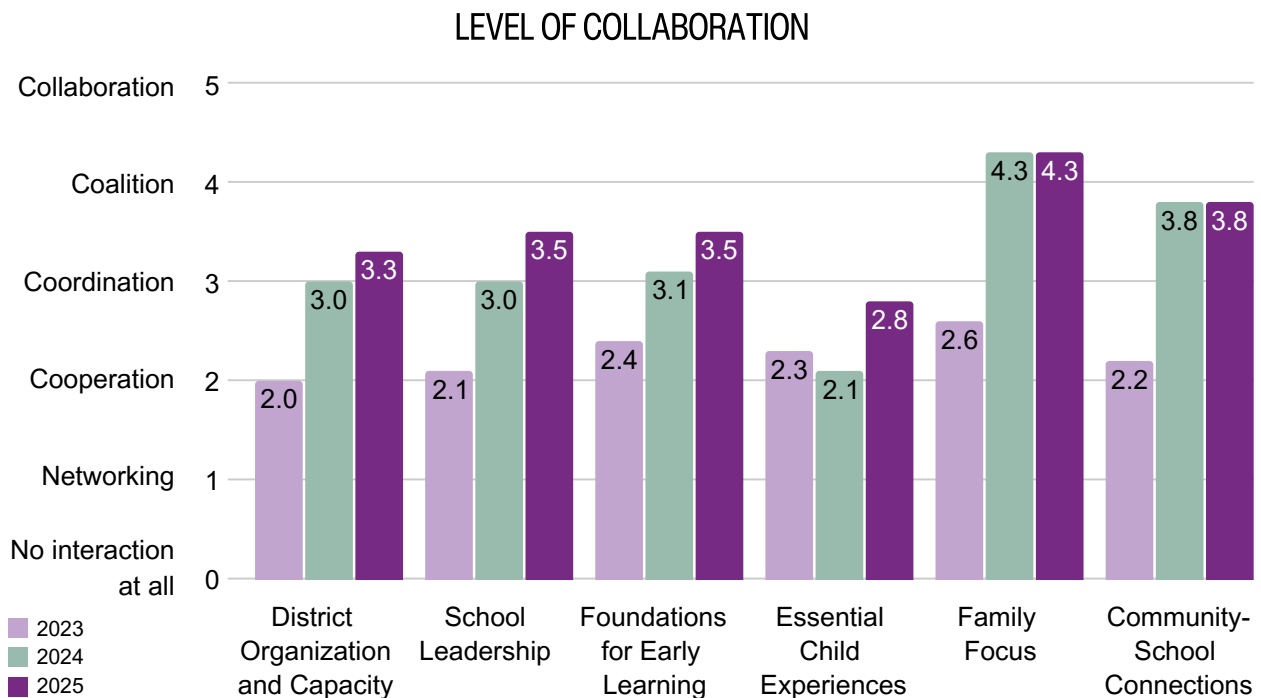
*Survey adapted from: Frey, B. B., Lohmeier, J. H., Lee, S. W., & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring collaboration among grant partners. American journal of evaluation, 27(3), 383-392. Please note only respondents who identified as engaged in the action planning process or engaged in domain-specific goal setting completed the collaboration scale.



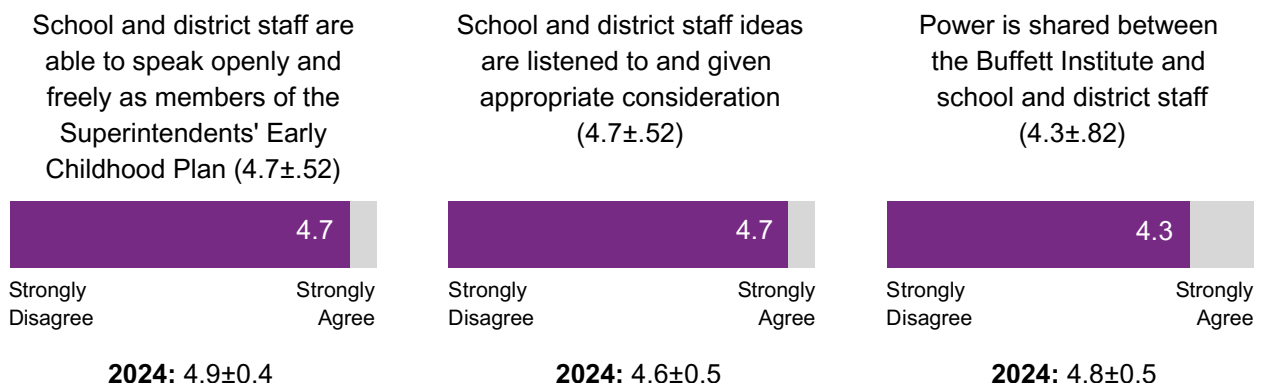
Districts & Institute Collaboration

Institute Staff Survey Findings

Institute Staff members (n=6) were asked to identify the level of collaboration they have with all district/school stakeholders on a scale of 0-5 (0=no interaction at all; 5=collaboration) across the action plan domain constructs. Institute collaboration perceptions had a mean of 3.5 in 2025, compared to a mean of 3.7 in 2024, indicating a level of Coalition (i.e., share ideas, information, and resources; defined roles; regular and/or focused communication; and frequent shared decision-making).



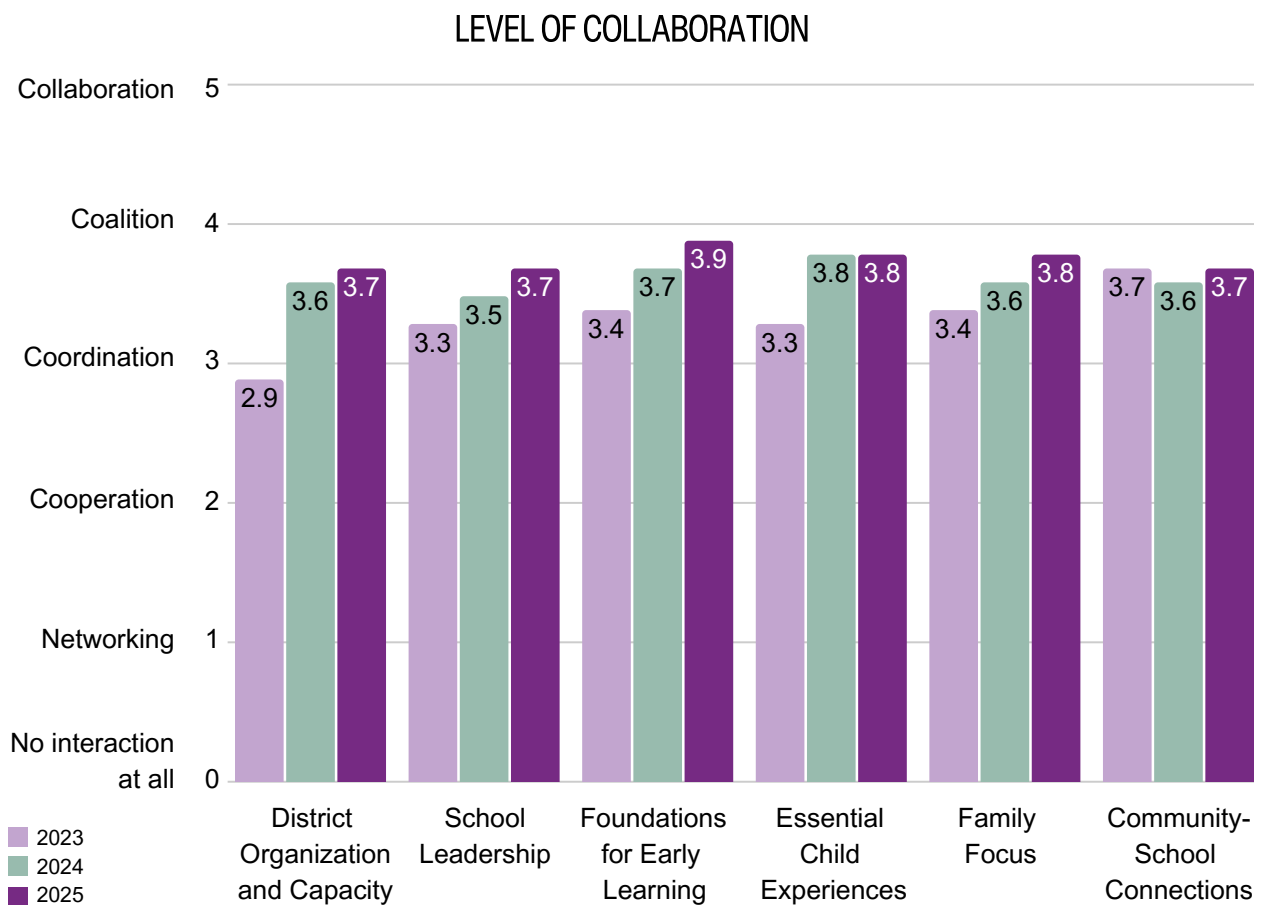
Institute staff (n=6) were asked to rate the level to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements. Agreement was based on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).



Districts & Institute Collaboration

Full Implementation Districts Survey Findings: Collaboration with the Institute

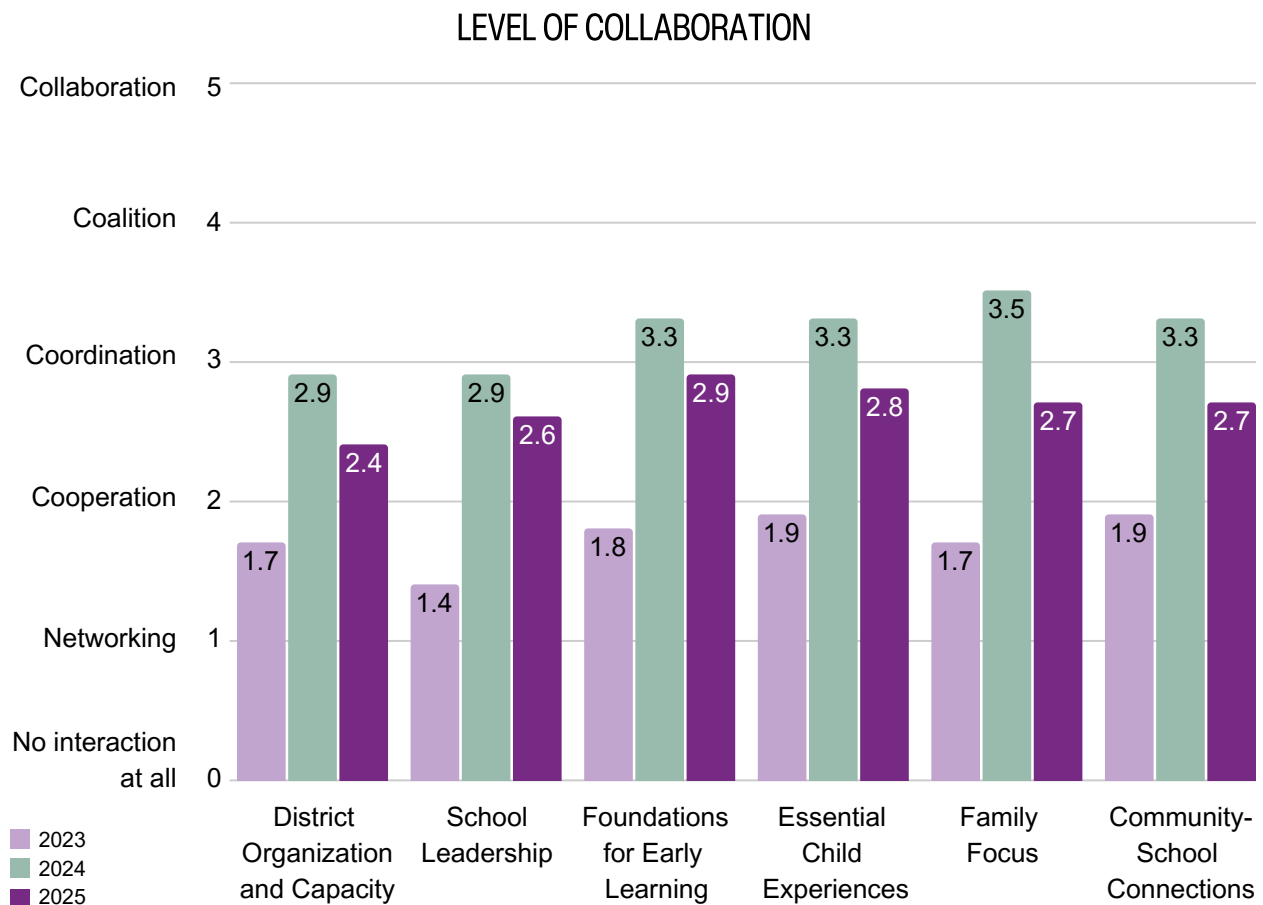
School/district program stakeholders from full-implementation districts were asked to reflect on their level of collaboration with the Institute using a scale of 0-5 (0=no interaction at all; 5=collaboration) across the action plan domain constructs. Findings for district stakeholders (n=58) can be seen below in dark purple, compared to findings from the 2023-2024 school year (green) and the 2022-2023 school year (light purple). Respondents came from the following districts: Bellevue Public Schools, DC West Community Schools, Millard Public Schools, Omaha Public Schools, Ralston Public Schools, and Westside Community Schools. District stakeholders identified a mean of 3.8 for 2025, which increased slightly from 2024 (M=3.6). Responses for 2025 indicated a level of coalition (i.e., share ideas, information, and resources; regular and focused communication; and frequent shared decision-making).



Districts & Institute Collaboration

Full Implementation District Survey Findings: Collaboration With Other Districts

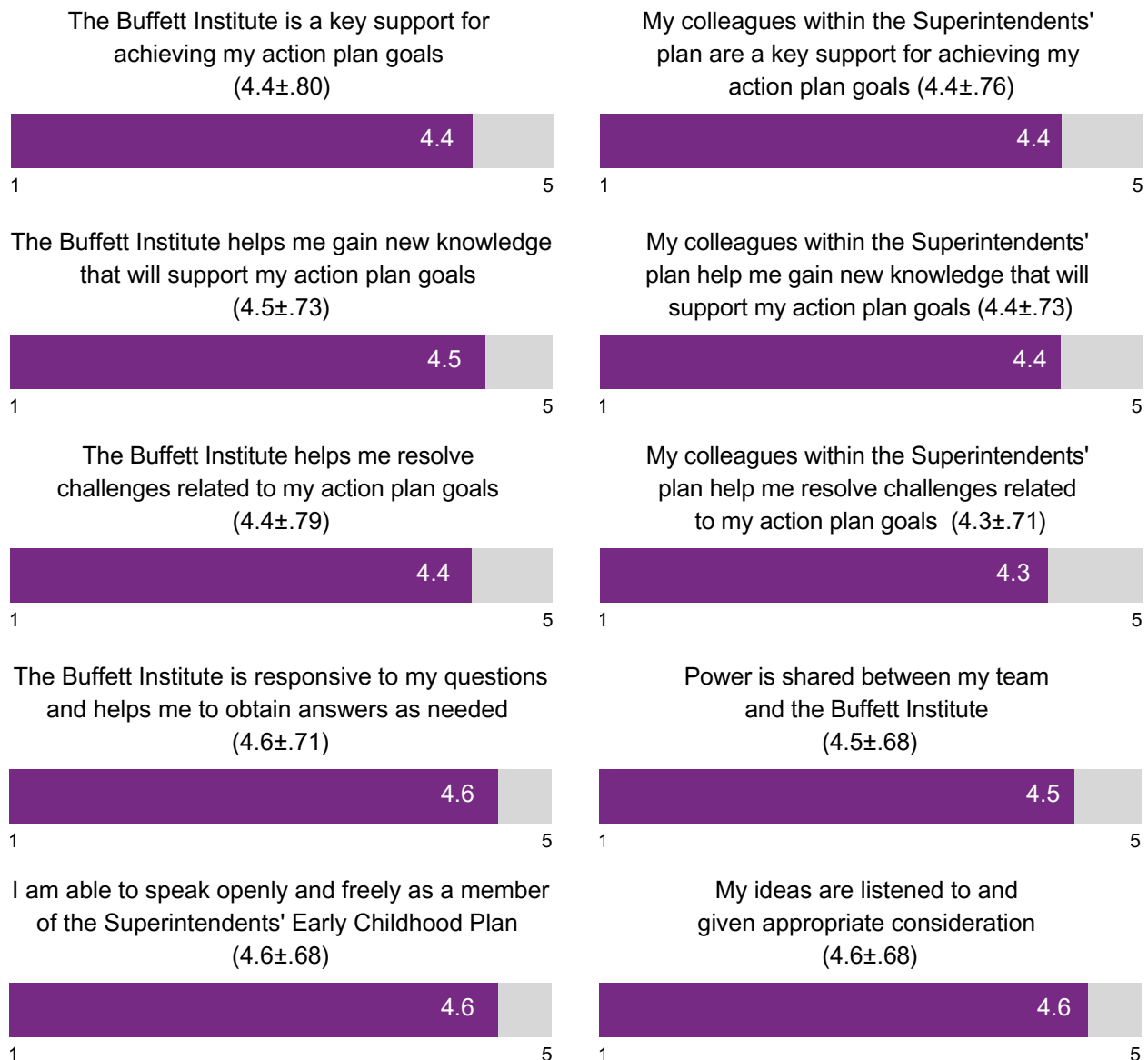
Respondents from full-implementation districts (n=58) described their level of collaboration with other districts in the SECP (0=no interaction at all, 5=collaboration). Only individuals who self-identified as a workgroup member or a participant in an Institute led Community of Practice (COP) answered this set of questions. Overall, the average response mean was 2.7, indicating that staff from full-implementation districts typically reported coordination with other districts.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

Full Implementation Districts Survey Findings: Levels of Agreement

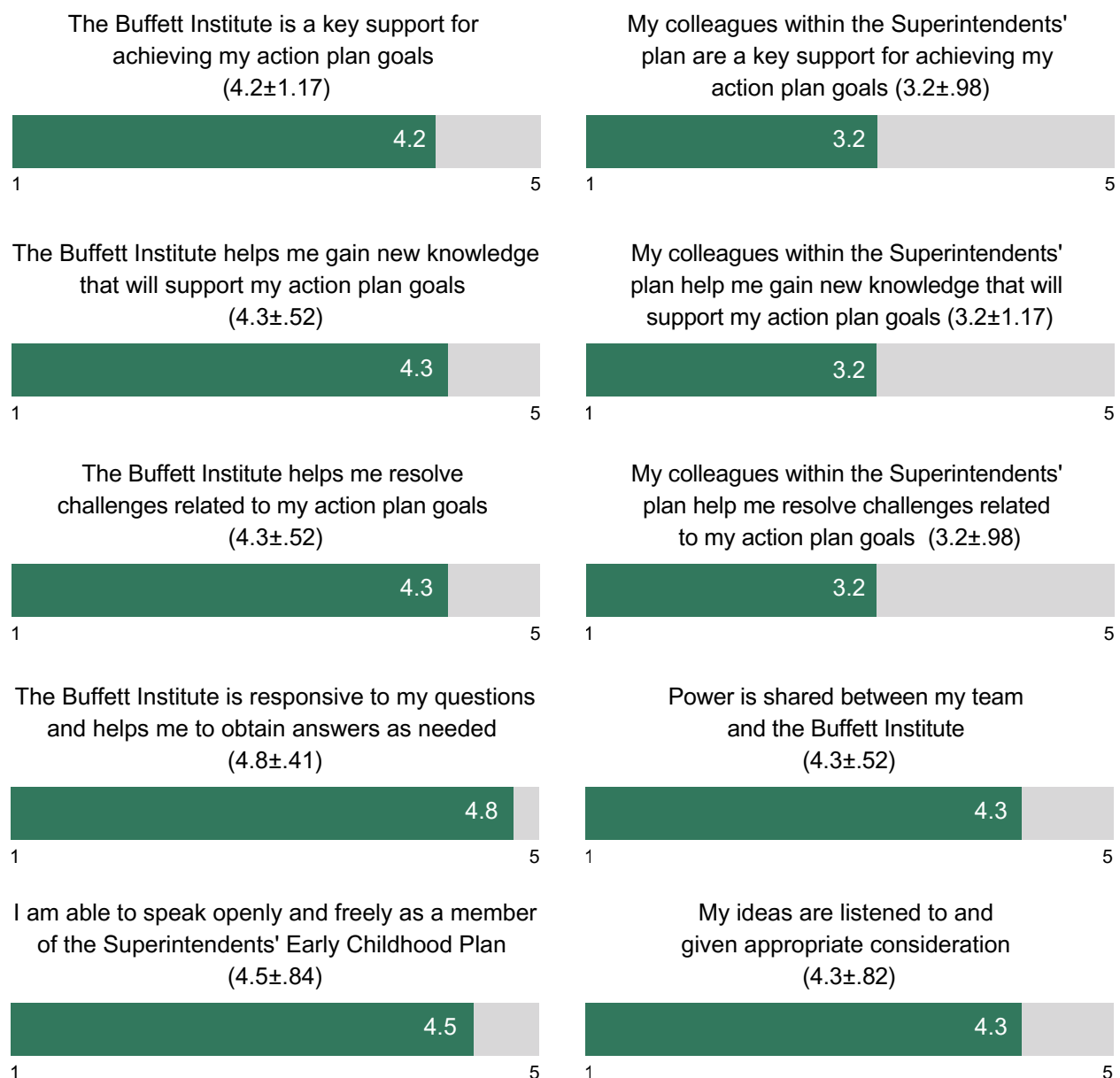
Plan stakeholders from full-implementation districts (n=58) were asked to rate the level to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements. Agreement was based on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The strongest levels of agreement were related to ideas being listened to and given appropriate consideration ($M=4.6\pm.68$), district staff's ability to speak openly ($M=4.6\pm.68$), and Institute responsiveness to questions ($M=4.6\pm.71$). The lowest level of agreement was noted in the following statement: Colleagues within the SECP help resolve challenges related to action plan goals. ($M=4.3\pm.71$), although responses were still at the level of "somewhat agree." Additional mean and standard deviation findings are reported below.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

Customized Assistance District Survey Findings: Levels of Agreement

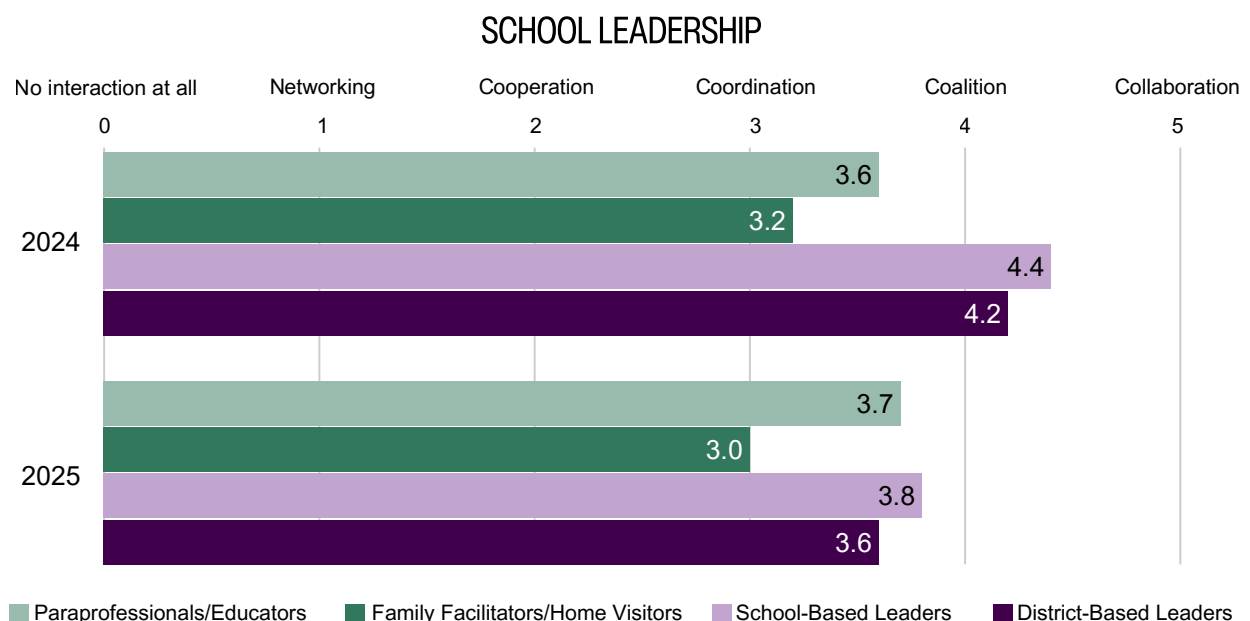
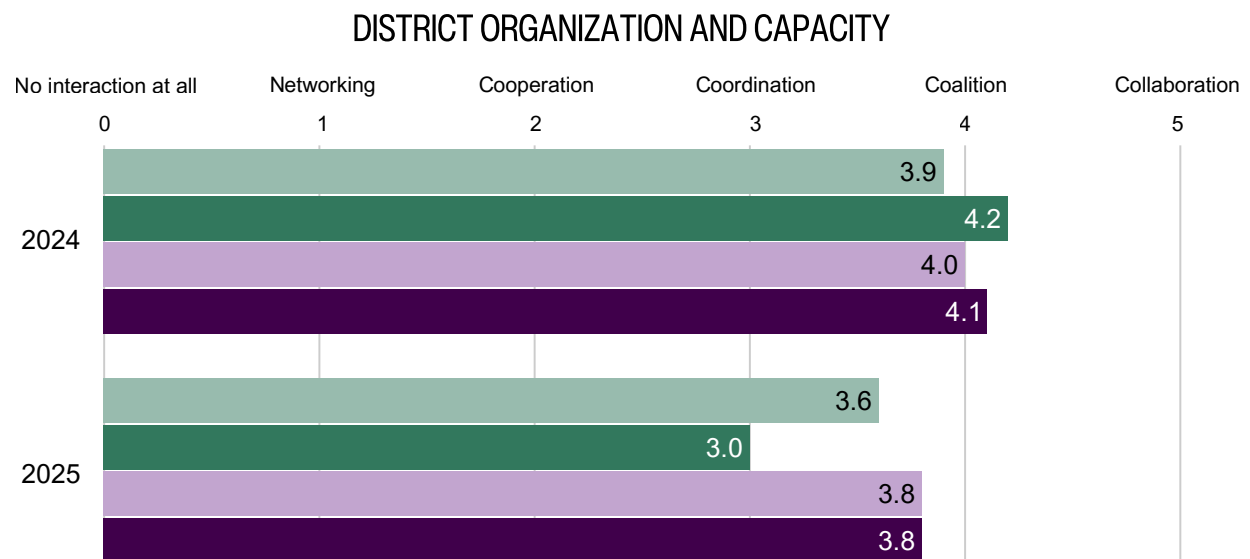
Plan stakeholders from customized-assistance districts ($n=6$) were asked to rate the level to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements. Agreement was based on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The strongest level of agreement was related to the Institute being responsive to questions and helping obtain the answers as needed ($M=4.8\pm.41$). The lowest levels of agreement were related to colleagues within the SECP being a key support for achieving action plan goals ($M=3.2\pm.98$), helping gain new knowledge that support action plan goals ($M=3.2\pm 1.17$), and helping resolve challenges related to action plan goals ($M=3.2\pm.98$). Additional mean and standard deviation findings are reported below.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

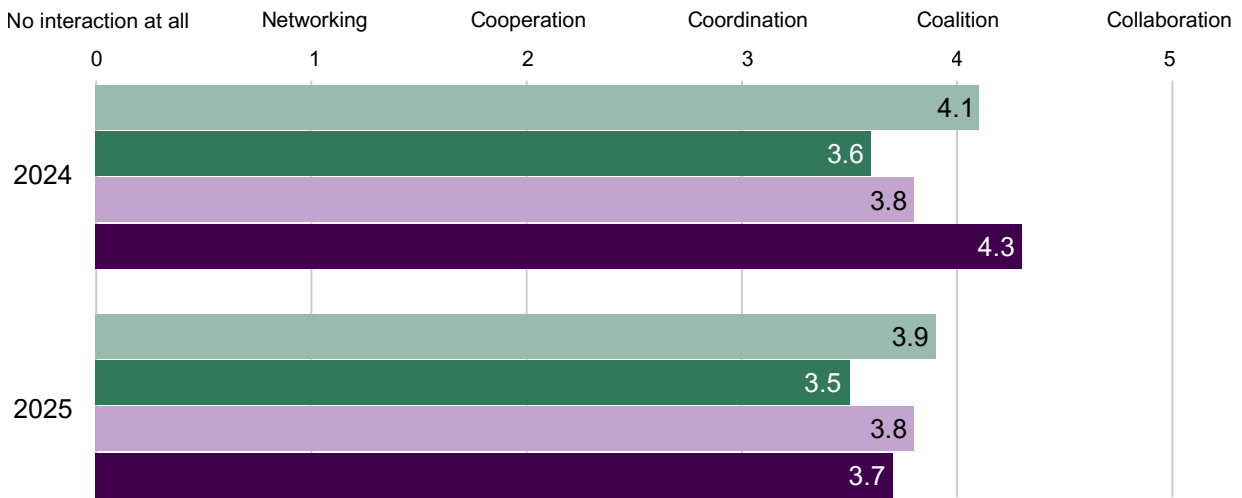
Comparison of Findings by Stakeholder Type

A comparison analysis for the level of collaboration between the Institute and all districts (full-implementation and customized-assistance) for the action plan domains was completed across district stakeholder types. Responses were split into four groups: (1) paraprofessional/educator (n=14), (2) family facilitator/home visitor (n=12), (3) school-based leader (n=18), and (4) district-based leader (n=20). Only individuals who self-identified as engaged in the action planning process answered the collaboration scale questions. Mean findings were based on a scale of 0-5 (0=no interaction at all, 5=collaboration).

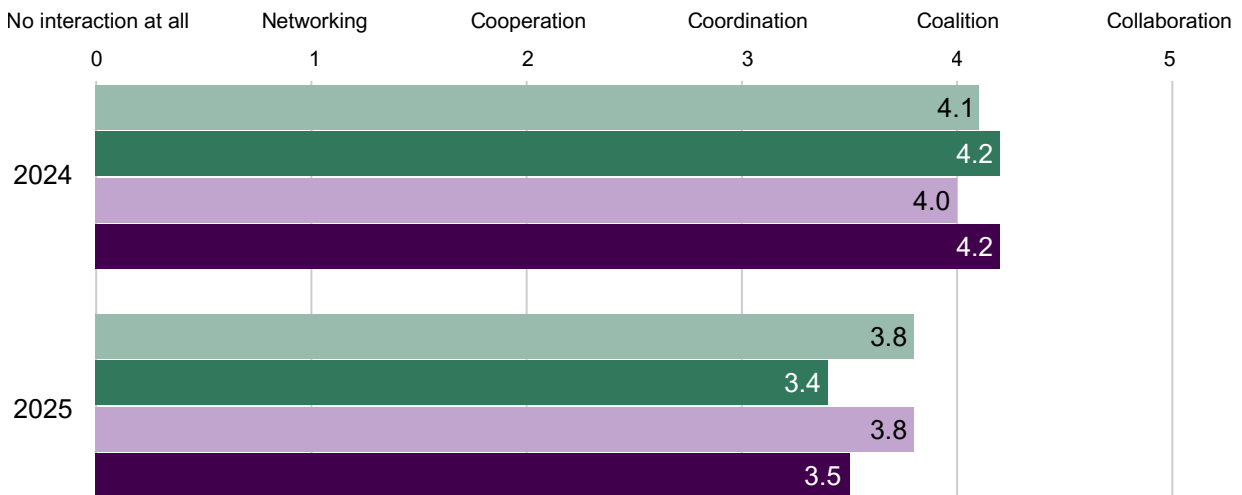


Districts & Institute Collaboration

FOUNDATIONS FOR EARLY LEARNING



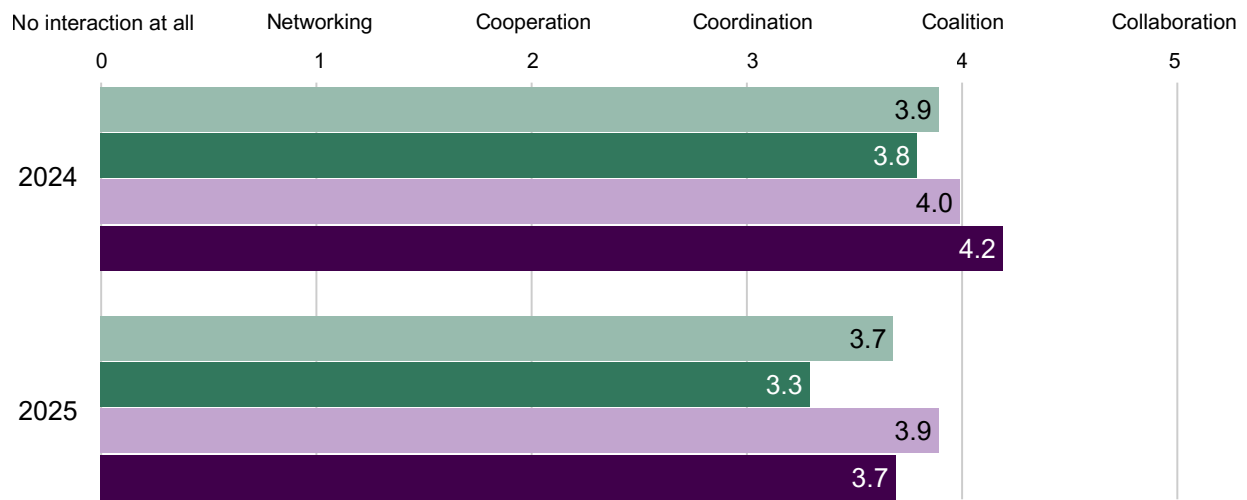
ESSENTIAL CHILD EXPERIENCES



■ Paraprofessionals/Educators
 ■ Family Facilitators/Home Visitors
 ■ School-Based Leaders
 ■ District-Based Leaders

Districts & Institute Collaboration

FAMILY FOCUS



COMMUNITY-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS



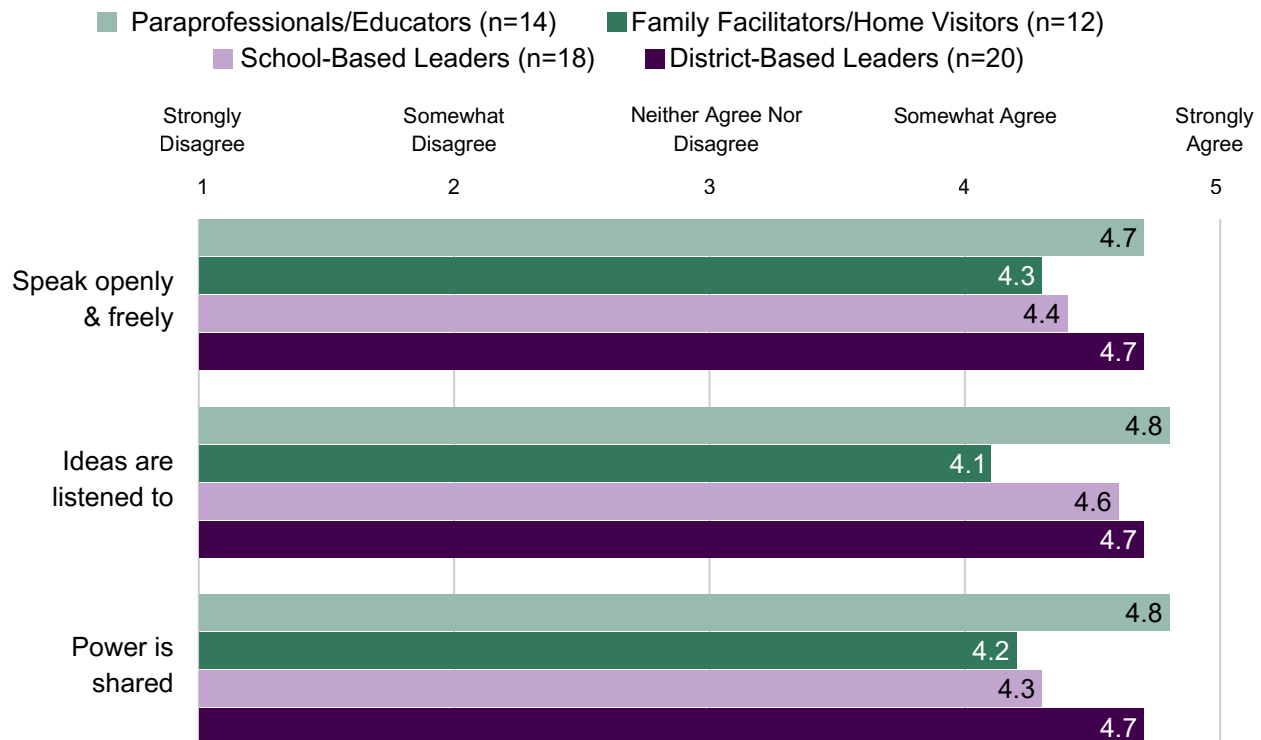
■ Paraprofessionals/Educators
 ■ Family Facilitators/Home Visitors
 ■ School-Based Leaders
 ■ District-Based Leaders

Districts & Institute Collaboration

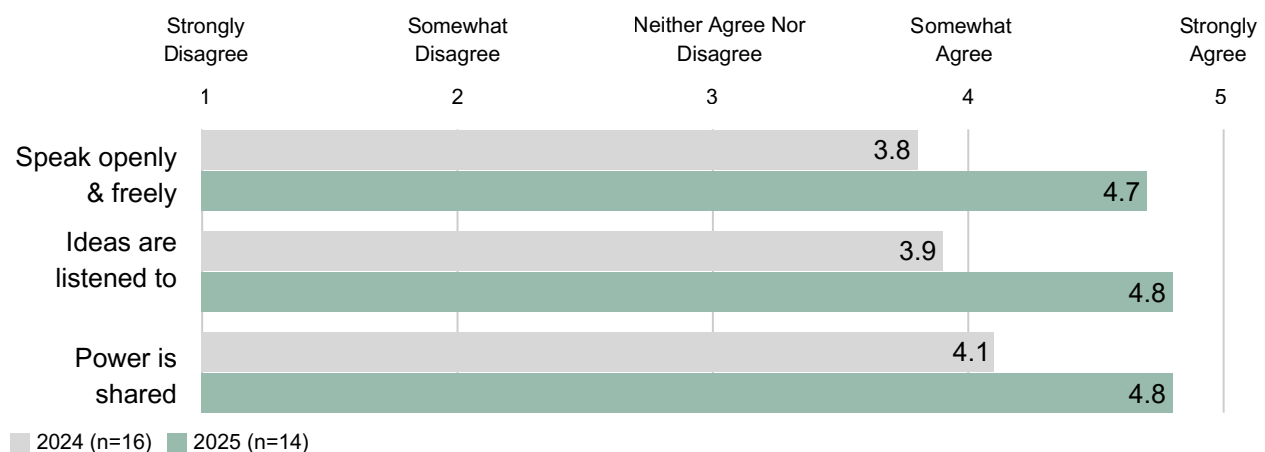
Level of Collaboration Findings by Stakeholder Type: 2024 & 2025 Comparisons

Findings are separated by district stakeholder type for the following: (1) School and district staff are able to speak openly and freely as members of the SECP, (2) School and district staff ideas are listened to, and their ideas are given appropriate consideration, and (3) Power is shared between the Buffett Institute and school and district staff. Agreement was based on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

2025 FINDINGS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

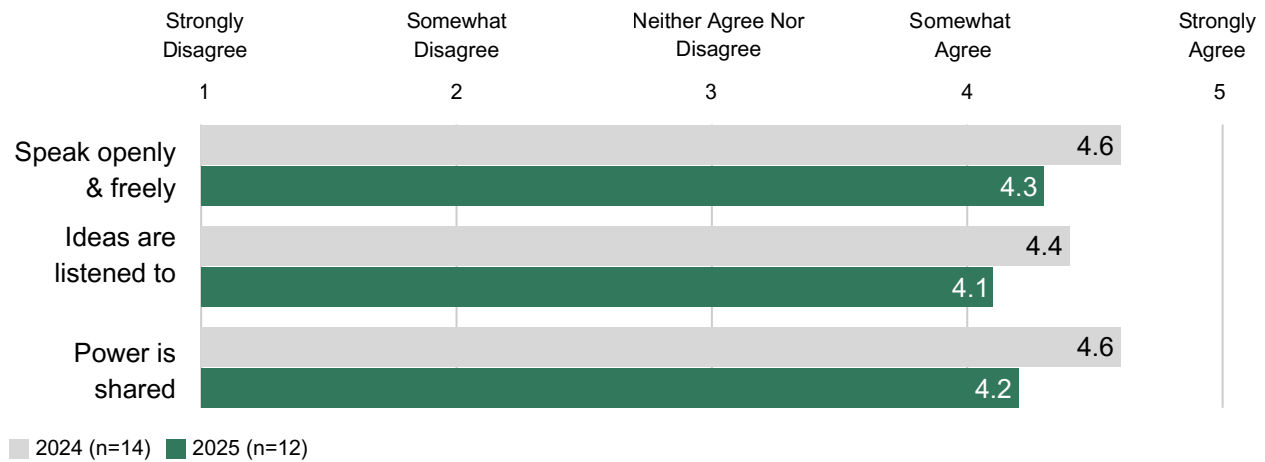


PARAPROFESSIONAL/EDUCATOR FINDINGS: 2024 AND 2025

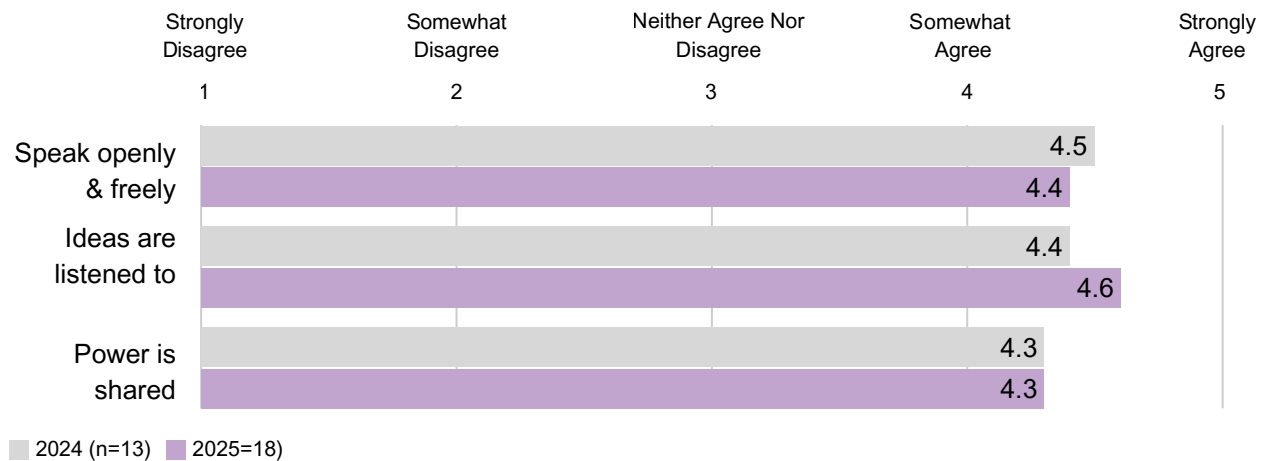


Districts & Institute Collaboration

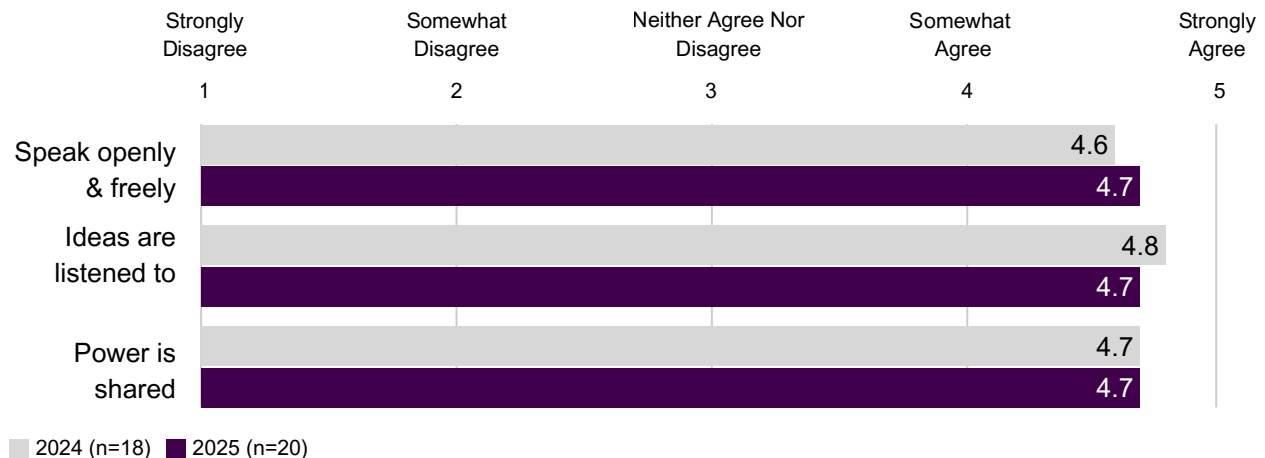
FAMILY FACILITATOR/HOME VISITOR FINDINGS: 2024 AND 2025



SCHOOL-BASED LEADER FINDINGS: 2024 AND 2025



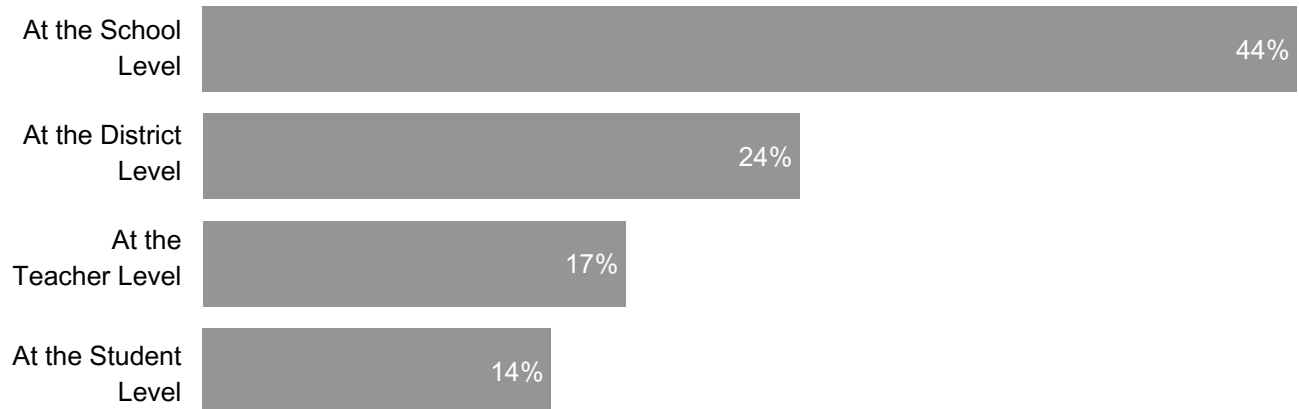
DISTRICT-BASED LEADER FINDINGS: 2024 AND 2025



Districts & Institute Collaboration

District Perceptions of SECP Impact: Where is the SECP Making the Biggest Difference?

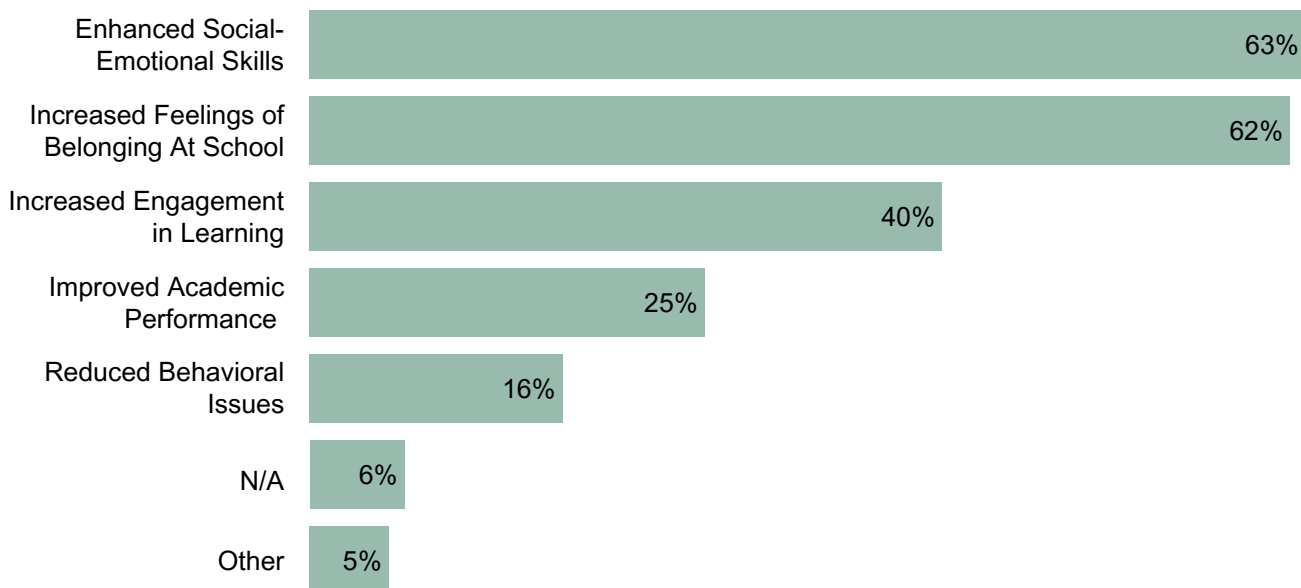
The chart below illustrates district stakeholders' (n=63) perspectives on where the greatest changes have occurred as a result of participating in the SECP. It was most common for respondents to report that the greatest changes took place at the school level (44%), followed by the district level (24%), the teacher level (17%), and the student level (14%).



Districts & Institute Collaboration

District Perceptions of SECP Impact: Student Outcomes

Stakeholders (n=63) were asked to share how engagement in the SECP has influenced student outcomes. The most common impacts noted by respondents were enhanced social-emotional skills (63%) and increased feelings of belonging at school (62%), followed by increased engagement in learning (40%), improved academic performance (25%), and reduced behavioral issues (16%). A few participants responded that there was no impact on student outcomes (6%). Participants who reported other impacts (5%) highlighted improved school readiness skills, stronger collaboration with families (which supports student outcomes), and more structured processes across the district.



Respondents were asked to share specific examples of changes in student performance or behavior since engaging in the SECP, and two primary themes emerged. First, respondents felt that there have been overall improvements in social-emotional skills and curriculum. Second, they reported stronger relationships with families and improved parent involvement and buy-in.

“

Parents having more opportunities to engage with the school before their child even attends has created more ease and connection between our school and families. Socializations have also created more opportunities for families and children to practice social and emotional skills within a group setting at our school.

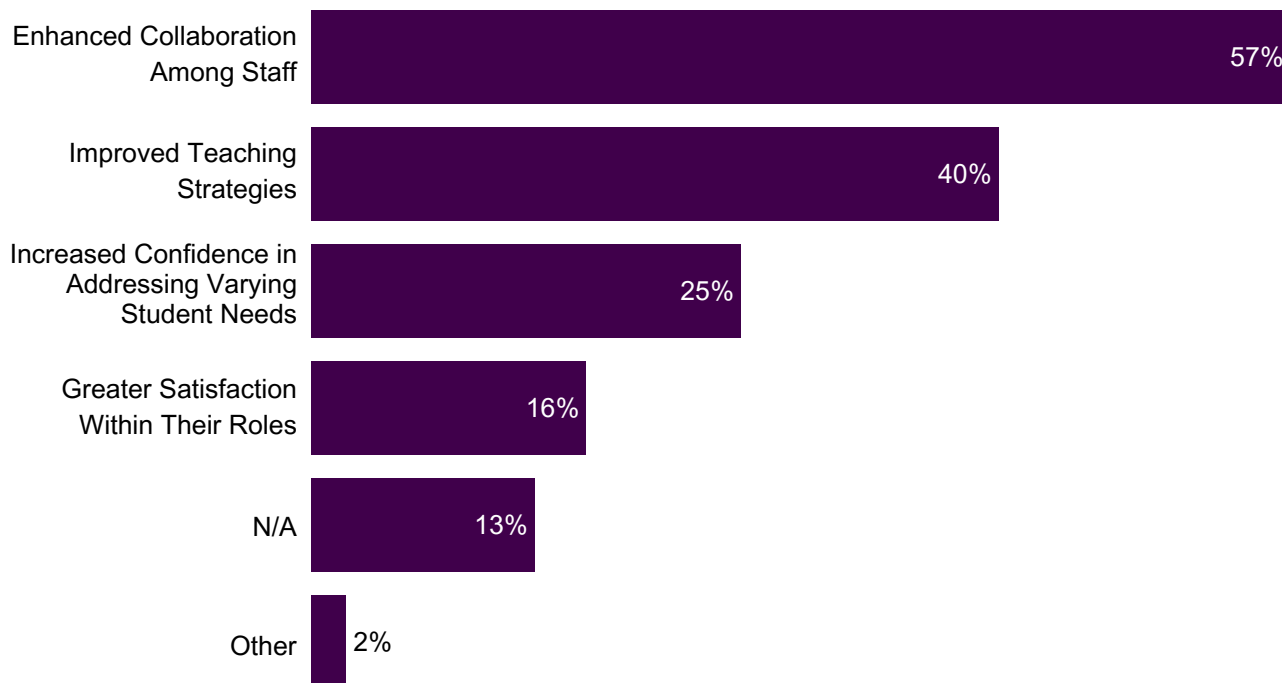
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Districts & Institute Collaboration

District Perceptions of SECP Impact: Teacher Impact

Participants (n=63) were asked how the SECP has impacted teachers. Enhanced collaboration among staff was the most common response (57%), followed by improved teaching strategies (40%), increased confidence in addressing varying student needs (25%), and greater satisfaction within their roles (16%). Thirteen percent of respondents felt there had been no impact on teachers.



Respondents were asked to share what professional development or resource provided by the SECP had the most significant impact on teachers, and two primary themes emerged. First, respondents felt that the Responsive Classroom and social-emotional curriculum training and resources had the largest impact on teachers. Respondents also felt that having more collaboration and meeting time with their team members had a significant impact.



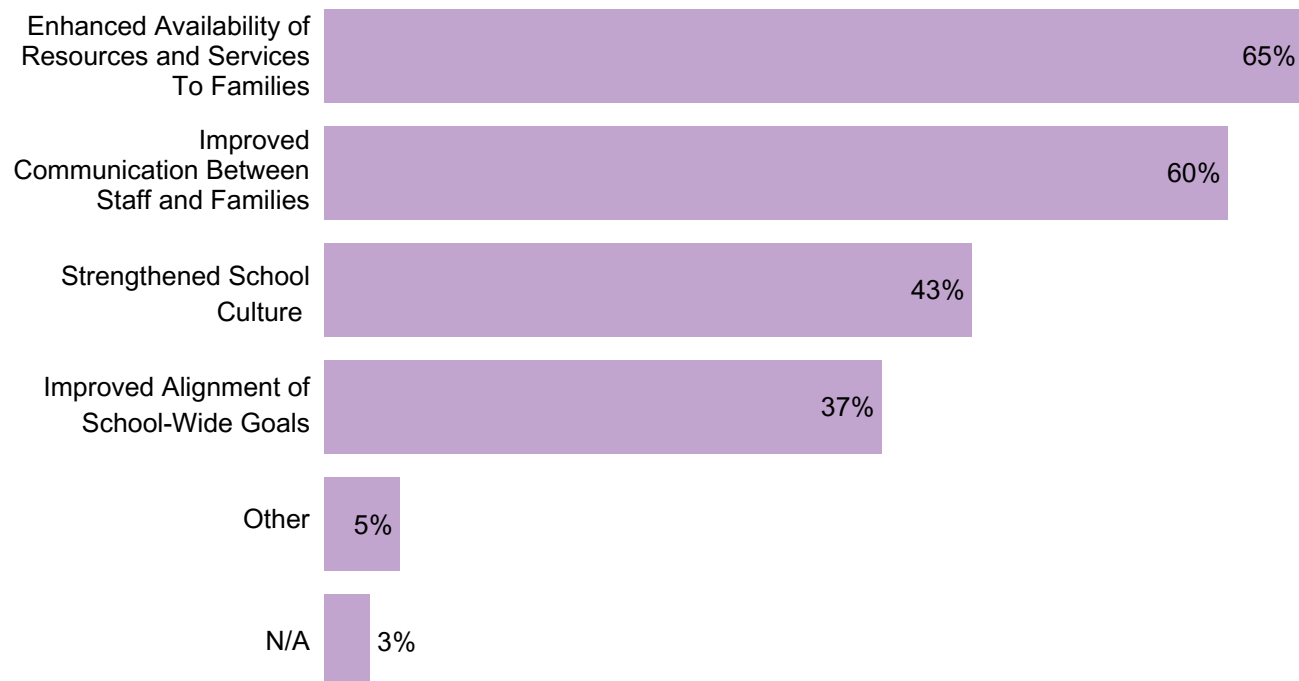
Buffett has really helped with targeting para training, which improves teaching strategies for paraprofessionals. I've also been able to collaborate more with our staff that is participating within the Teacher Leadership Network.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

District Perceptions of SECP Impact: School Impact

District survey participants (n=63) were asked about impacts at the school level related to participation in the SECP. Sixty-five percent of respondents reported enhanced availability of resources and services to families, followed by improved communication between staff and families (60%), strengthened school culture (43%), and improved alignment of school-wide goals (37%). Three percent of respondents felt there had been no impact at the school level. Other responses included improved systems.



Respondents were asked to describe any noticeable changes in their school environment or operations due to engagement in the SECP. Two primary themes emerged: (1) respondents felt that there had been improved family connections and engagement, which some specified was a result of the home visiting program, and (2) they also felt that, overall, social-emotional development strengthened across schools.

“

Our schools definitely view collaboration with families in different and more positive ways as a result of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. We are seeing families through a strength lens.

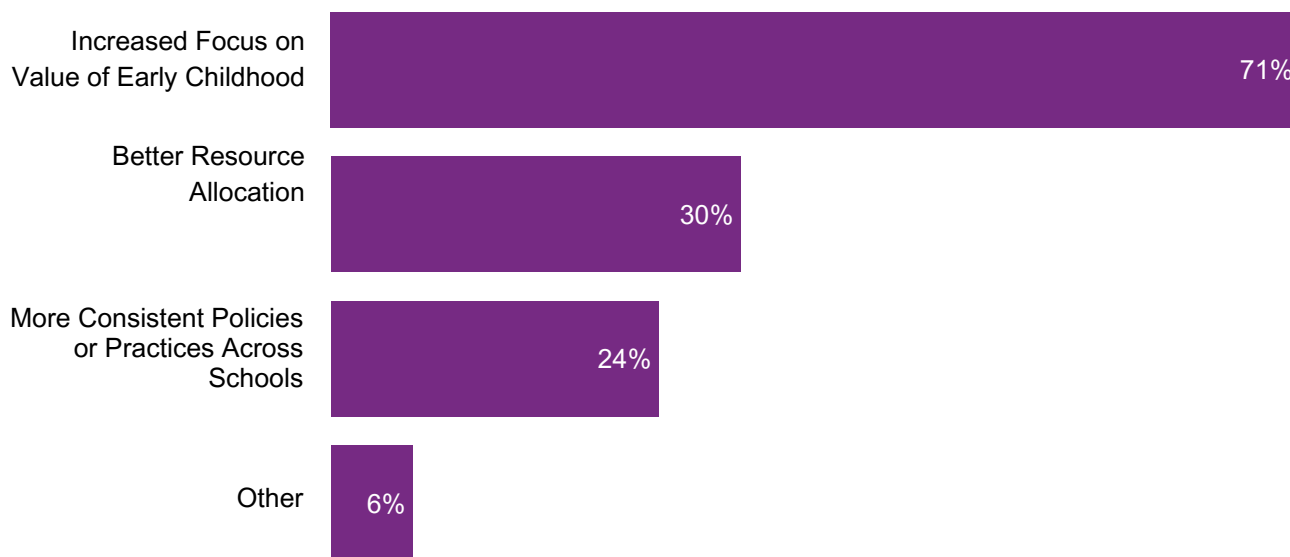
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Districts & Institute Collaboration

District Perceptions of SECP Impact: District Impact

Participants (n=63) were asked to select impacts they had observed at the district level as a result of SECP participation. Increased focus on the value of early childhood was the most commonly reported impact (71%), followed by better resource allocation (30%), and more consistent policies or practices across schools (24%). Other responses included teacher leadership and district systems being more aligned as a result.



Respondents were asked to describe any noticeable changes in their district environment or operations due to engagement in the SECP, and a primary theme emerged. Respondents felt that, overall, there has been a stronger focus and emphasis placed on early childhood programs, young learners, and their families.



Admin from the district office are truly supporting Early Childhood by involving representation on the ground level of planning, collaboration and enhancing current practices in the classroom. By extending resources to the preschool level, including a commitment to strengthening teachers' capacities in teaching preliteracy and language skills, there is a sense of renewed interest and excitement which trickles down to the students!



Districts & Institute Collaboration

Summary of Quantitative Findings

Institute staff members identified the average level of collaboration between the Institute and districts involved in the SECP as being at the Coalition level (i.e., share ideas, information, and resources; regular and focused communication; and frequent shared decision-making). Staff at full-implementation districts also rated their average level of collaboration with the Institute as Coalition.

When asked their level of agreement on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree), Institute staff, on average, strongly agreed that school and district staff are able to speak freely as members of the SECP ($M=4.7\pm.52$) and that district staff ideas are listened to and given appropriate consideration ($M=4.7\pm.52$). Institute staff somewhat agreed that power is shared between the Institute and districts ($M=4.3\pm.82$). Full-implementation district respondents, on average, strongly agreed that power is shared between the Institute and districts ($M=4.5\pm.68$), district staff ideas receive appropriate consideration ($M=4.6\pm.68$), and school and district staff can speak freely ($M=4.6\pm.68$). Customized-assistance district respondents strongly agreed that school staff can speak openly and freely ($M=4.5\pm.84$). They somewhat agreed that the Institute and districts share power ($M=4.3\pm.52$) and their ideas receive appropriate consideration ($M=4.3\pm.82$).

Full-implementation district staff and customized-assistance staff strongly agreed that the Buffett Institute is responsive to their questions and helps them find answers as needed. Full-implementation respondents typically reported higher levels of agreement than respondents from customized-assistance districts, with the largest differences in agreement found in items regarding the impact of SECP colleagues on gaining knowledge, resolving challenges, and achieving action plan goals. Full-implementation participants, on average, somewhat agreed that their colleagues were helpful, while respondents from customized-assistance districts neither agreed nor disagreed that their colleagues were helpful.

Institute respondents identified the domain of Family Focus ($M=4.3$) as allowing for the greatest level of collaboration between districts and the Buffett Institute, while full-implementation districts identified Foundations for Early Learning ($M=3.9$) as the domain allowing for the greatest level of collaboration. Institute respondents reported the construct of Essential Child Experiences ($M=2.8$) as the area with the lowest level of collaboration, while full-implementation participants reported the lowest levels of collaboration to be tied to the domains of Organization and Capacity, School Leadership, and Community-School Connections ($M=3.7$).

Now in the third year of collaboration survey data collection, findings continue to demonstrate stable and positive collaboration between BECI and participating school districts. Institute and district staff consistently report strong communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making, indicators of sustained, high-quality partnerships that support early childhood systems change.



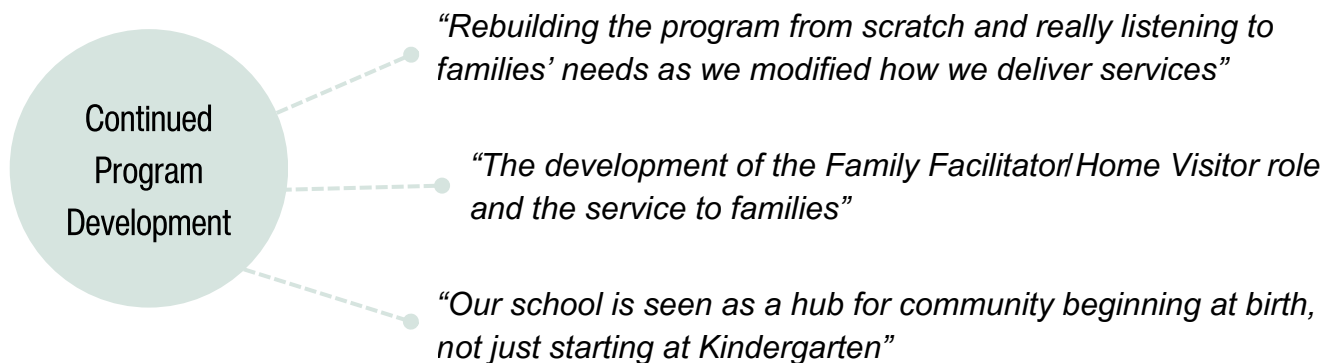
Districts & Institute Collaboration

Greatest Accomplishments of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan: District Perspective

Four primary themes emerged when participants identified the SECP's greatest accomplishments: continued program development, district-Institute collaboration, enhanced professional learning, and advocacy for early childhood. Responses highlighted a comprehensive approach to enhancing childhood education through structural improvements, strategic partnerships, and policy-driven initiatives.

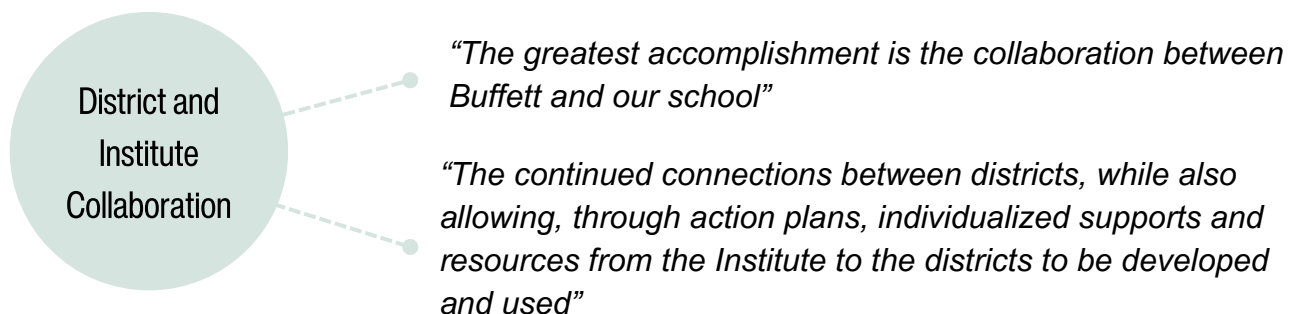
(1) Continued Program Development

A significant achievement identified was the growth and refinement of early childhood programs, with respondents emphasizing efforts to listen to families and adapt services accordingly. Additionally, expanding home visiting programs was identified as pivotal. Many responses emphasized the value of the "School as Hub" approach.



(2) District and Institute Collaboration

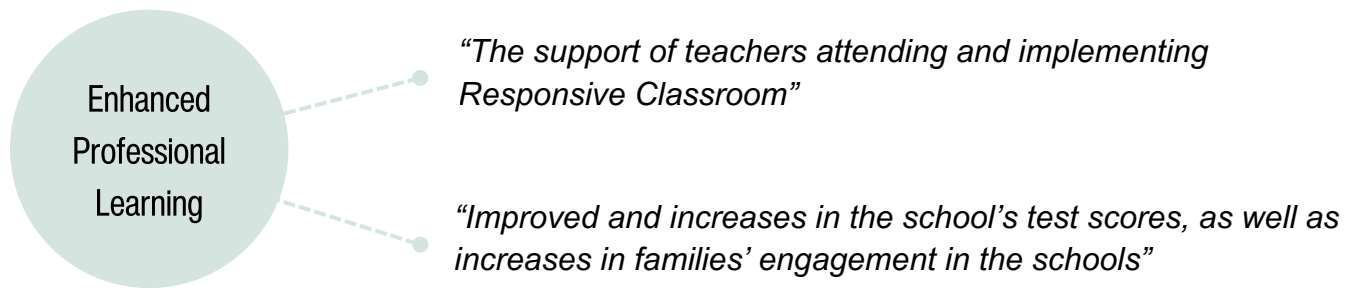
Participants reported collaboration between their district and the Institute played an integral role in the plan's success. Others highlighted efforts to align individualized supports.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

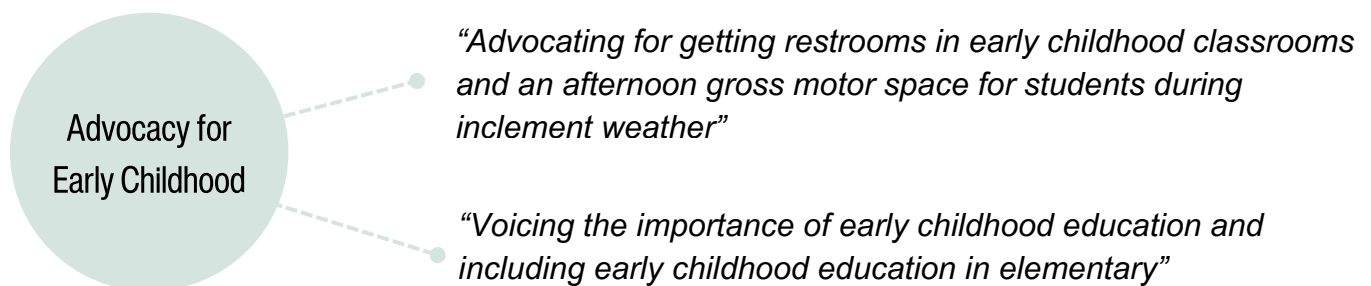
(3) Enhanced Professional Learning

Respondents emphasized how enhancing educational outcomes and professional development has been a priority. Improvements in school culture and instructional strategies, particularly through training initiatives like Responsive Classroom, were highlighted. Emphasis was placed on how these efforts have led to tangible results in educational outcomes.



(4) Advocacy for Early Childhood

Policy advocacy and infrastructure improvements were identified as central to the SECP. Respondents shared that the plan has influenced practical changes in schools. Others highlighted the broader policy impact of the plan.



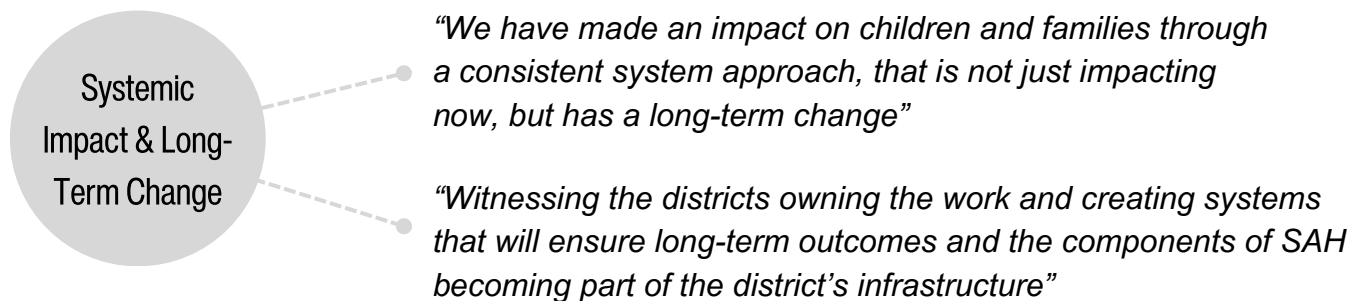
Districts & Institute Collaboration

Greatest Accomplishments of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan: Institute Perspective

Participants identified three primary accomplishments of the SECP: systemic impact and long-term change, role clarity, and strong connections with schools.

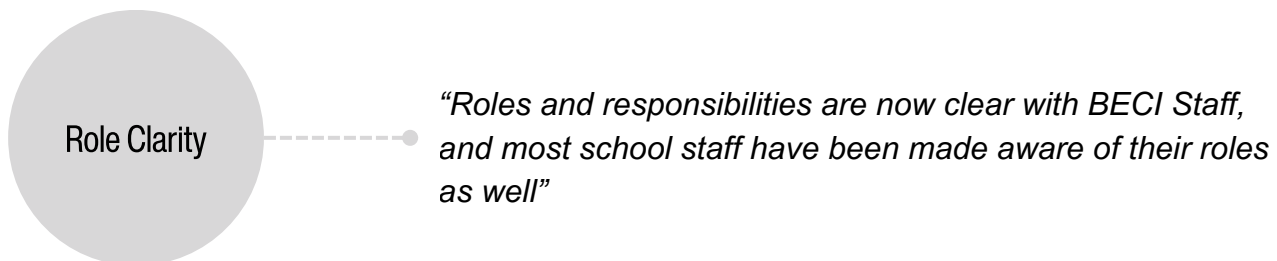
(1) Systemic Impact and Long-Term Change

A recurring theme in the responses was the broad, lasting impact of the plan on children, families, and school systems, with many respondents reinforcing the long-term vision of the Institute.



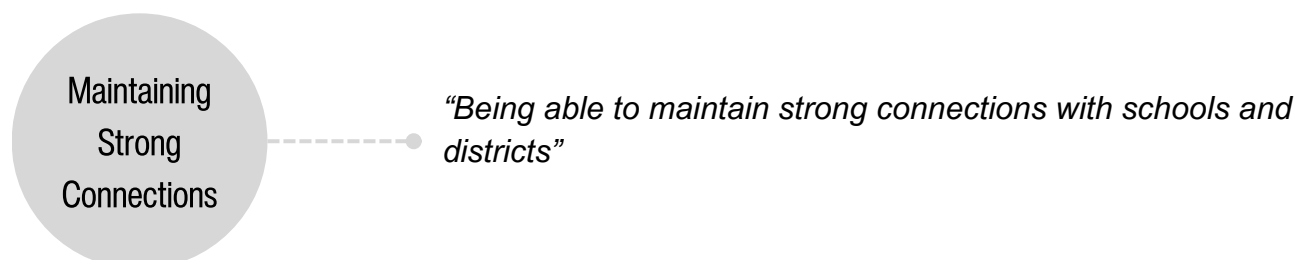
(2) Role Clarity

Another major accomplishment identified was the clarification of roles and responsibilities among BECI staff and district personnel.



(3) Maintaining Strong Connections

Strength of relationships between the SECP and participating schools and districts was emphasized throughout responses.



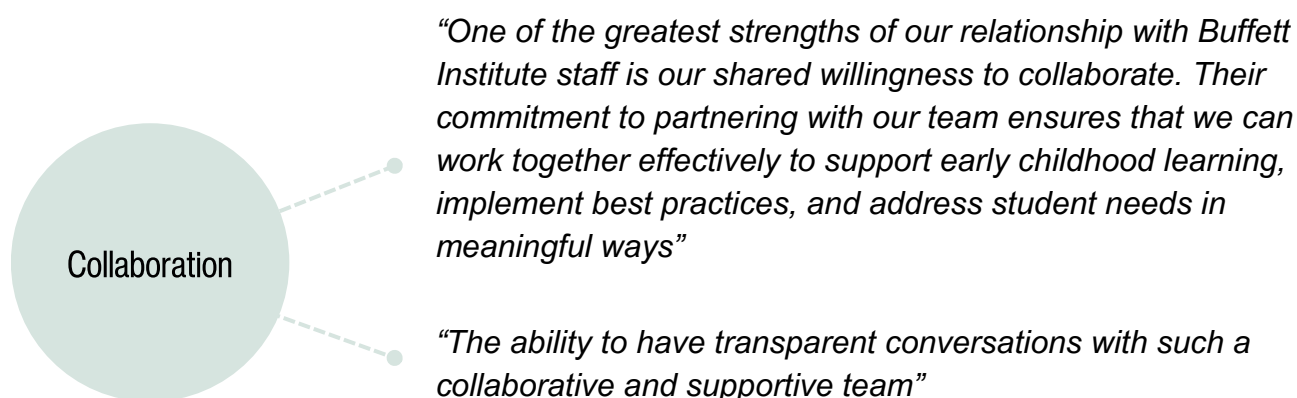
Districts & Institute Collaboration

Greatest Strengths of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan: District Perspective

Participants reported the greatest strengths of the SECP to be collaboration, communication, trust, professional support, and a shared commitment to early childhood education.

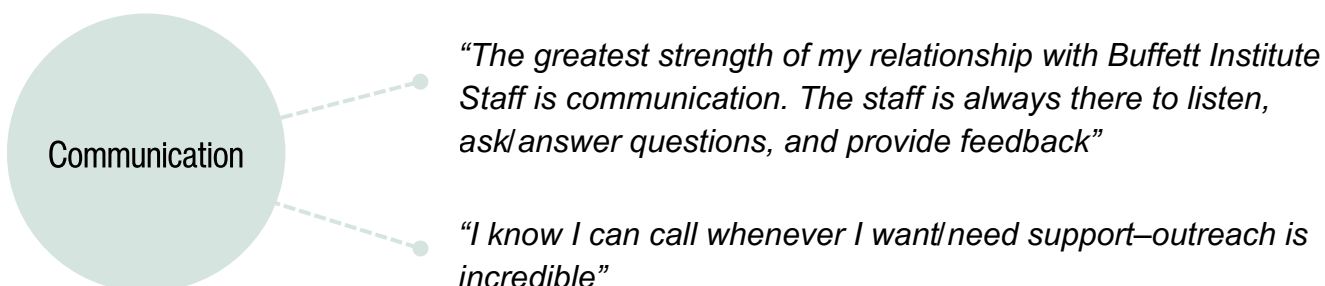
(1) Collaboration

A dominant theme was the collaborative nature of the partnership between districts and the Institute. The value of mutual respect and idea sharing within the partnership was heavily emphasized.



(2) Communication

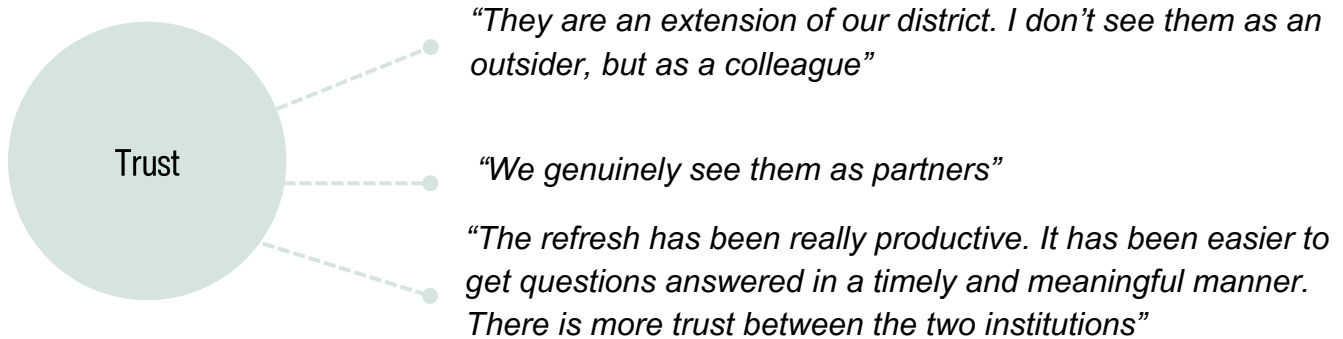
Open and effective communication was another identified strength. Many respondents noted that Buffett Institute staff are readily available, responsive, and engaged in problem solving. There was emphasis on the openness and accessibility of the Buffett staff.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

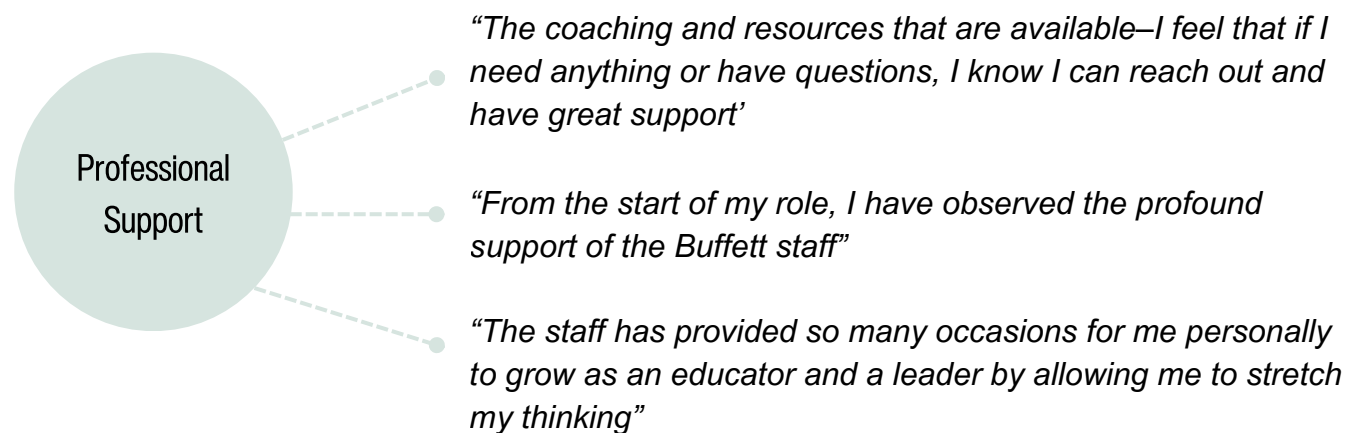
(3) Trust

A high level of trust was also evident, with many respondents describing Buffett Institute staff as an extension of their district, rather than outside consultants. Several respondents pointed out how trust has strengthened over time, particularly when there have been staffing transitions.



(4) Professional Support

Professional support including coaching, resources, and training opportunities was another frequently mentioned strength. Respondents noted that Buffett Institute staff provide thoughtful coaching and help educators navigate challenges. Participants emphasized the value of professional development.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

(5) Commitment to Early Childhood Education

A shared commitment to early childhood education was identified as a key strength. Respondents expressed appreciation for the Buffett Institute's dedication to supporting young learners and creating systemic improvements. Some respondents highlighted how Institute staff help districts align efforts with research-based strategies.

Commitment to
Early Childhood
Education

"We are all truly on the same page. We want to improve outcomes for children and families, engage more meaningfully with families and communities, and provide vital support"

"Sharing and collaboration, research-based strategies, and support for our professional growth"



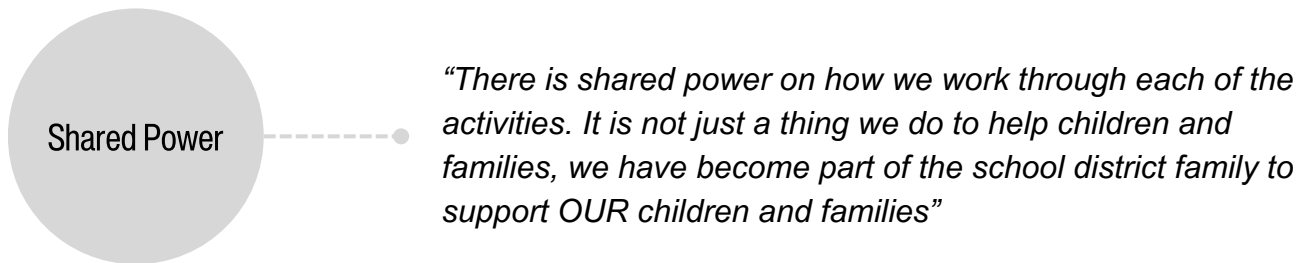
Districts & Institute Collaboration

Greatest Strengths of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan: Institute Perspective

Institute staff identified key strengths of the SECP, including collaboration and shared power, open and honest communication, and trust-based relationship-building.

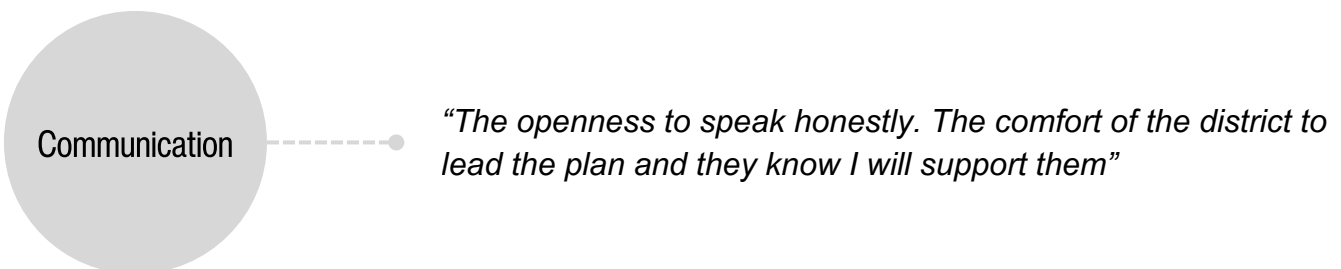
(1) Shared Power

A prominent theme in the responses was the sense of shared ownership over the work. Respondents emphasized that the plan is not just an external initiative but an integrated part of the school district's efforts.



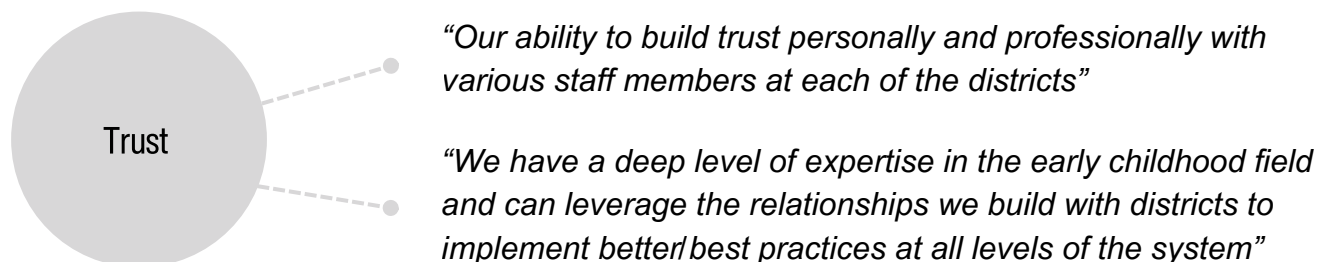
(2) Open and Honest Communication

The ability to have transparent and candid discussions was another strength identified in the responses.



(3) Trust

Trust, particularly in the professional and personal relationships built through the plan, was a recurring theme in responses. Depth of expertise among the plan's members and the ability to leverage these relationships was also noted.



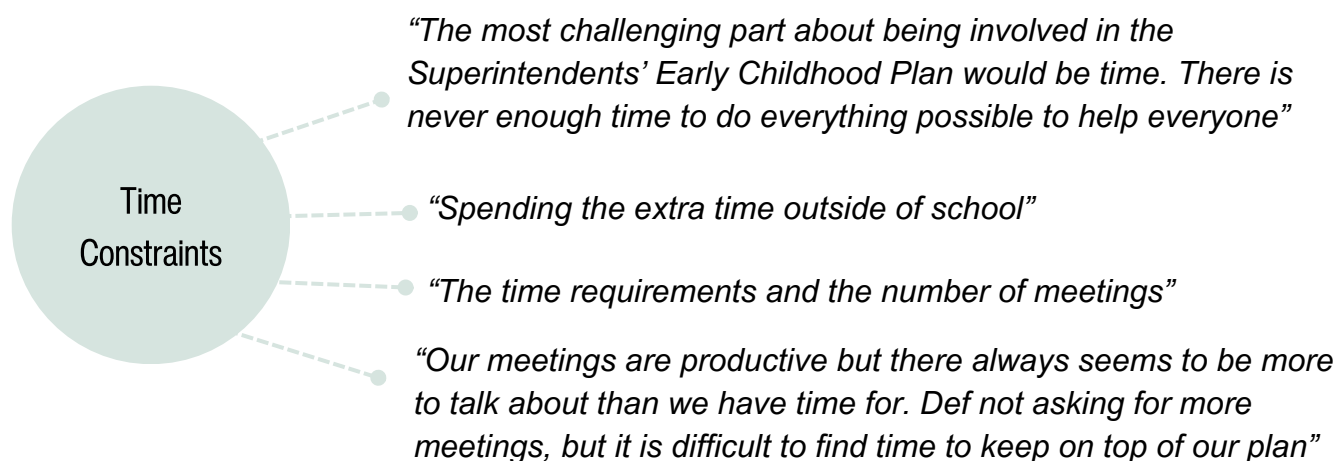
Districts & Institute Collaboration

Greatest Challenges of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan: District Perspective

Respondents were asked to identify challenges in working with Institute staff, as well as broader challenges related to the SECP. Their responses highlighted several key obstacles, including time constraints, misalignment with district priorities, communication difficulties, implementation barriers, and shifting expectations, all of which hinder engagement with the SECP.

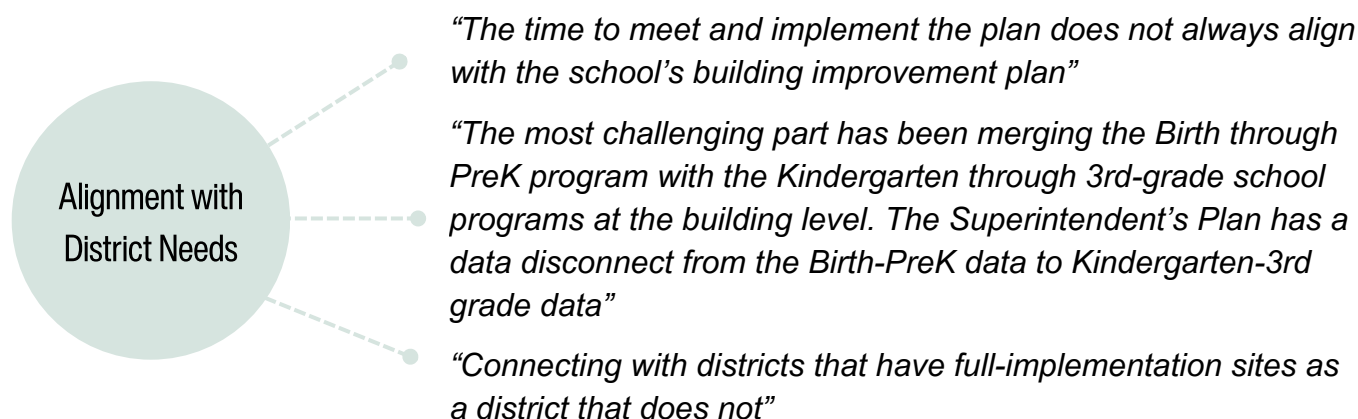
(1) Time Constraints

The most frequently cited issue was time, with respondents expressing that the demands of the plan add to an already overwhelming workload. The challenge of balancing commitments was emphasized.



(2) Alignment with District Needs

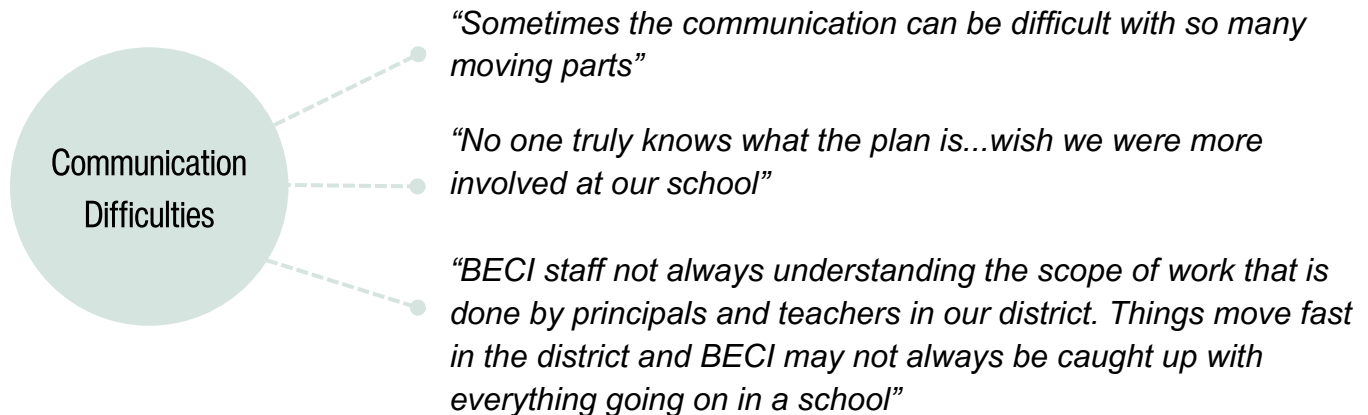
Another prominent challenge shared was alignment between the plan and district priorities, with some respondents noting mismatches between expectations and the realities of school implementation. Respondents highlighted the frustration and difficulties with these variations. Some participants also noted the issues with the transition from early childhood to K-3 programs.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

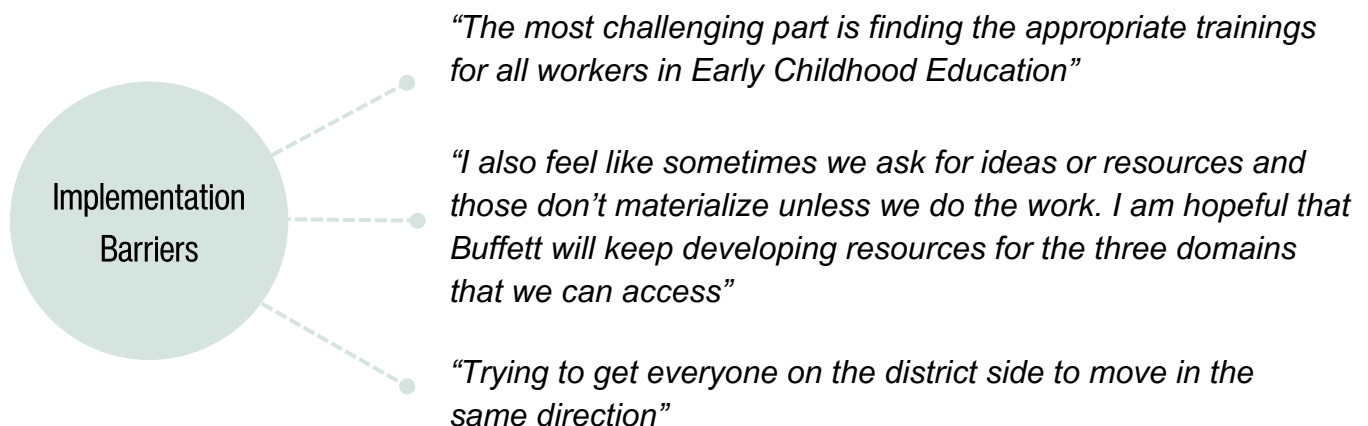
(3) Communication Difficulties

Communication difficulties emerged as a challenge, particularly with multiple stakeholders and shifting priorities. Participants stated that staff do not always feel fully informed about the plan and that Institute staff do not always fully grasp the realities of school operations.



(4) Implementation Barriers

Implementation barriers, particularly access to training and resources, were another concern. Some respondents expressed that there is not enough training available for early childhood staff. Other participants highlighted a lack of follow-through on resource requests and pointed to challenges of ensuring all staff are working toward the same goals.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

(5) Evolution of the Plan

A few respondents voiced concerns about the evolving nature of the plan, acknowledging that while changes can be positive, they also create challenges. Some respondents also noted the challenge of transitioning from learning about the plan to leading its implementation.

Evolution of the
Plan

"It is constantly evolving, which is a good thing, however, sometimes shifting to new ways of doing things can be bumpy (case in point: the shift from Community of Practice to Professional Learning Opportunity)"

"My biggest challenge has been transitioning between foundational learning of the early childhood plan to being able to lead and facilitate our goals"



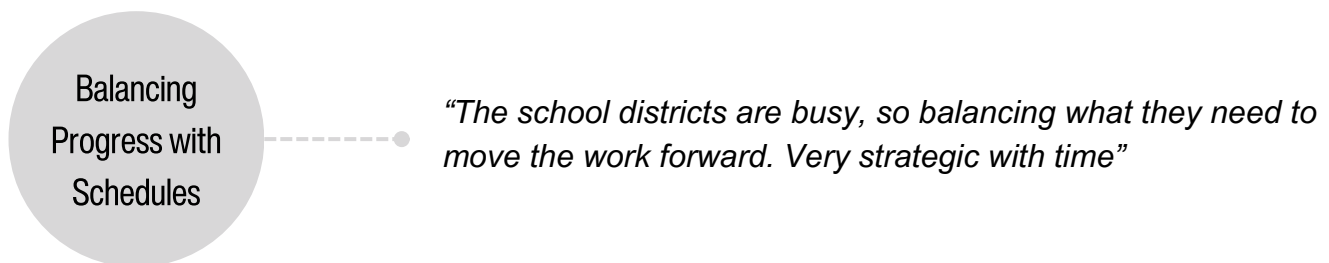
Districts & Institute Collaboration

Greatest Challenges of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan: Institute Perspective

Respondents were asked to identify challenges in working with schools within the SECP. Their responses indicated that the biggest obstacles include balancing progress with school schedules, overcoming communication issues and misunderstandings, and managing the influence of various partners when working with districts.

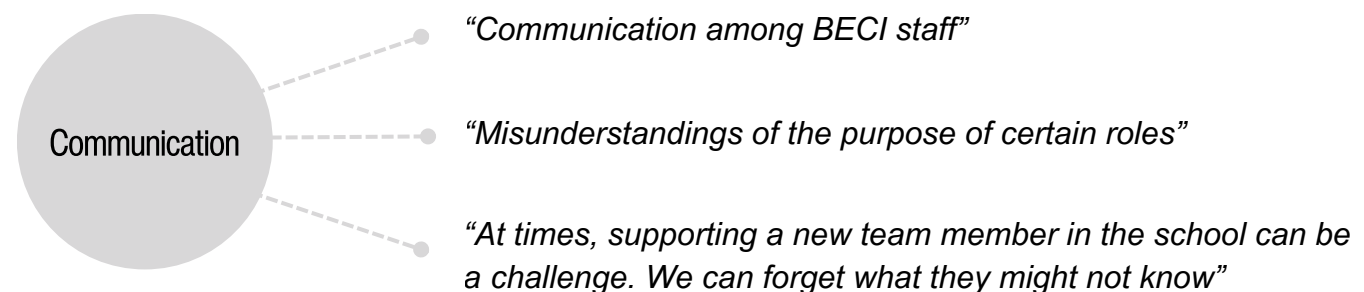
(1) Balancing Progress with Demanding Schedules

One of the biggest challenges identified by Institute staff was related to ensuring that early childhood initiatives move forward while respecting the demanding schedules of school districts. Institute staff reported that the challenge lies in aligning early childhood priorities with the existing workload of educators and administrators, ensuring that support is both effective and realistic within the constraints of district schedules.



(2) Communication and Misunderstanding

Staff members identified communication as a weakness, both internally with Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI) staff and externally with districts. Some respondents highlighted that internal coordination may sometimes create barriers to effective support. Additionally, misunderstandings about roles create further challenges. Respondents pointed out that new team members in schools may struggle with onboarding and understanding their responsibilities.



Districts & Institute Collaboration

(3) Navigating Partner Influence

BECI staff reported that navigating the limits of partner influence can be a challenge. Staff noted that, ultimately, they function as partners rather than decision-makers in school districts. This can create challenges when district decisions do not always align with best practices recommended by early childhood experts.

Navigating
Partner
Influence

“That we are ultimately always their partner and therefore if they make decisions that seem counterproductive or less strategic than we would prefer, we cannot force decisions around staffing or practice”



Districts & Institute Collaboration

What Improvements Can Be Made to the SECP?: District Perspective

Stronger Onboarding for New Staff

“Strong onboarding to new school staff in positions that impact families”

“Clarity on how to better support new staff that are a part of the EC plan (Family Facilitator/Home Visitor)”

Greater Flexibility for Families

“Flexibility in the model to allow families to dictate services they do and do not want to experience”

“Having better resources for families that speak different languages”

Improved Alignment Between Programs

“Connect Birth-PreK programs and data with Kindergarten-3rd grade programs and data”

Simplified and Accessible Training for Early Childhood Educators

“Trainings for early childhood that are more simply and easy to follow”

Structural Changes in General Education Preschool and Special Education Supports

“We NEED BECI in our schools because other leadership we work with don’t see issues in having general education rooms that have 60%+ special needs population”

Greater Awareness and Engagement Among School Leaders

“More involvement—I’d like our principals to know what it is. I think if they were asked what it was, they’d look at you with a blank stare. Not sure they are even aware there is a plan”

More Collaboration Opportunities Across Districts

“Collaborative conversations about what other schools as hub districts are doing”

Increased Resource Availability and Communication about Existing Resources

“Start building resources we can tap into around the domains. If that is in the works...communicate it and then keep doing it”

Districts & Institute Collaboration

What Improvements Can Be Made to the SECP?: Institute Perspective

Varying Range of Voices for Decision-Making and Implementation

"I would like to continue to expand the amount of voices that are included in decision making and ongoing work and making sure it is being built into the overfall fabric of how the district/building operate versus tied to a 'team' that is operationalizing the work"

Improving Internal Processes for Smooth Implementation

"I think the shifts we have currently made in the internal workings of the SECP team have been improvements. Projects and operationalize the processes of the SAH model are allowing for the model to be developed with efficacy"



Districts & Institute Collaboration

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The SECP continues to be valued by Institute and district stakeholders. District respondents identified collaboration, communication, trust, and professional support as strengths of their partnership with Buffett Institute staff. Many described the Institute as an integral part of their district rather than an external consultant, praising staff for their accessibility and responsiveness. District respondents identified the greatest accomplishments of the SECP to be continued program development, district-Institute collaboration, enhanced professional learning, and advocacy for early childhood.

However, challenges remain, particularly around time constraints, alignment with district priorities, communication gaps, and implementation barriers. Educators and administrators struggle to balance SECP commitments with existing workloads, and some respondents noted difficulties in fully integrating SECP efforts into district improvement plans. Limited training opportunities for early childhood educators and a lack of consistency in communication across stakeholders were also cited as areas for improvement.

Regarding collaboration with Institute staff, most respondents shared positive experiences, though some reported challenges related to clarity of expectations, scheduling conflicts, and structural alignment between district operations and SECP initiatives. Some expressed a need for more visibility and awareness of SECP within their schools and districts. Suggested improvements included stronger onboarding for new staff, better alignment between Birth-PreK and K-3 programs, simplified training opportunities, increased resource availability, and reduced meeting frequency to ease scheduling burdens. Greater engagement from school leaders was also recommended to ensure SECP is fully integrated into district priorities.

From the perspective of Buffett Institute staff, the SECP's greatest accomplishments include systemic impact, long-term change, and improved role clarity within districts. Staff emphasized the plan's growing integration into district operations and the development of strong partnerships. Challenges, such as balancing early childhood priorities with district workloads, internal and external communication gaps, and navigating differences in implementation approaches were noted. Moving forward, enhancing communication, improving alignment with district structures, and ensuring ongoing collaboration across all stakeholders will be critical to sustaining and expanding SECP's impact.

Customized Assistance Programming

In Spring 2025, BECI partnered with Bellevue Public Schools and DC West Community Schools to support strategic initiatives aligned with their District 2.0 goals. In partnership with the University of Nebraska at Omaha, BECI provided programmatic support and technical assistance to enhance early learning transitions, educator wellness, and family-school partnerships. This summary highlights findings from three district-led initiatives supported by BECI: the Smart Start Backpack Program, the Educator Wellness and Child Needs Survey, and the Family Liaison Survey with Spanish-speaking families.

SMART START Backpack Program (DC West Community Schools)

Goal

Support the transition to kindergarten by promoting positive parent–child interactions and foundational skill development through take-home activity kits.

Program Activities

- Materials: Families received take-home backpacks that included developmentally appropriate items.
- Participation: Families used the materials at home for one week and completed a survey and/or interview to determine program feasibility.

Key Findings

- 92% of families found the materials easy to use
- 71% said it fit well into their routine.
- Most families liked hands-on activities like the Nature Scavenger and a bridge-building kit.
- Top challenges included time constraints (50%) and unclear instructions (21%).
- Caregivers suggested clearer instructions, seasonal timing adjustments, and theme expansion for future backpacks.

The activities were simple enough... if we had 10, 15, half an hour, we could do them."

- Parent Participant

"It allowed them to just be creative... I like that creative kind of open play aspect of it."

- Parent Participant

Customized Assistance Programming

Educator Wellness and Child Needs (Bellevue Public Schools)

Goal

Assess preschool educator wellbeing and understand perceived child development priorities to align supports.

Method

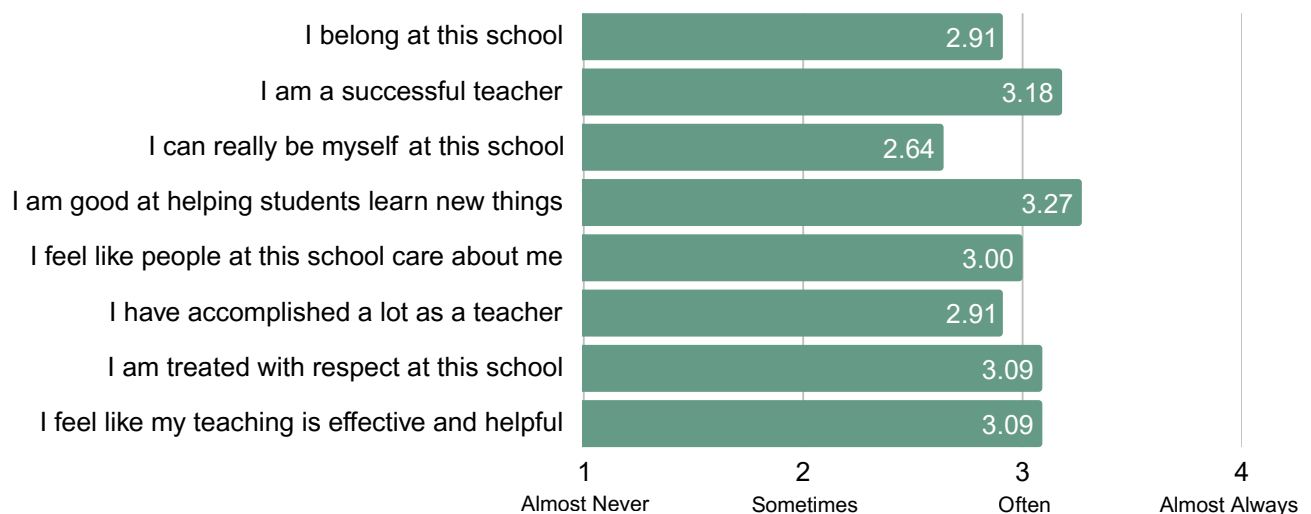
- A survey was distributed to Bellevue Public Schools preschool educators (n=11) to assess their mental health, physical/emotional wellbeing, professional support, and perceptions of child needs.

Key Findings

- Most preschool teachers reported wellbeing scores similar to other adults in the general population. However, survey scores identified the greatest needs were needing to support energy, fatigue, and physical pain.
- Teachers generally felt confident in their teaching skills but were slightly less likely to feel strongly connected to their school community.
- All teachers said social-emotional and communication skills were the most important areas of development for young children. Many said they wished they had more time to focus on helping children build these skills.

Future Programmatic Activities

- To support teacher wellbeing, wellness resources have been created and will be shared with educators in August, October, and February.
- To help children continue building social-emotional skills at home, classrooms will receive social-emotional learning kits to share with parents during the 2025-2026 academic year.



Customized Assistance Programming

Family Support for Spanish Speaking Families (Bellevue Public Schools)

Goal

Understand Spanish-speaking families' experiences with school communication, support services, and engagement within Bellevue Public Schools.

Method

- A survey was distributed to Bellevue Public Schools Spanish-speaking families (n=20) to better understand how they engage with and receive information from their child's elementary school.

Key Findings

- Families primarily received school information via email and in-person staff conversations
- One-third of respondents reported experiencing translation challenges when obtaining school information
- Half of the respondents cited work as a barrier to event attendance
- Lack of bilingual staff was a recurring concern among respondents
- When asked about the type of programming they wish they had, the most common responses included:
 - To better understand how to support their child's learning at home
 - More support in communicating with school staff
 - More support to find parenting classes or workshops
 - Help finding community resources such as housing, food, and medical resources

"Me gustaría que hubiera personal bilingüe en la escuela de mi hijo, porque tengo miedo no entender toda la información que me puedan mandar." [I would like to have bilingual staff at my son's school, because I'm afraid I won't understand all the information they might send me.]

- Survey Participant

"A mí lo que me gustaría es que siempre este disponible un intérprete que hable español para poder participar en la educación de mi hijo." [What I would like is for a Spanish-speaking interpreter to always be available so I can participate in my son's education.]

- Survey Participant

Definitions & References

Definitions

ASQ: The Ages & Stages Questionnaires are screening tools designed to help caregivers and professionals monitor young children's development in various areas like communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem-solving, personal-social skills, and social-emotional behaviors.

ChildPlus: The database used by the Institute to track participant engagement across programmatic activities.

earlyReading Assessment™: A norm-referenced screening test designed to identify reading problems.

FastBridge: An assessment tool designed to identify students' academic and social-emotional behavior needs

MTSS: Multi-tiered systems of support is a framework used by schools to identify immediate intervention for students with academic and behavioral needs.

MAP Assessment: A child assessment tool utilized by districts to measure achievement and growth in K-12 math, reading, language usage, and science.

NAESP Survey: The National Association of Elementary School Principals survey is designed to assess various competencies focused on advocacy and support for elementary-level principals.

PD: Professional Development

Responsive Classroom: A student-centered approach to teaching and discipline to create safe and engaging classroom communities.

School as Hub: A school identified by its district due to unique risk factors. The school serves as a "hub" for complex learning systems, connecting children and families to resources within and beyond school walls.

SECP: Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

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