



**THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF PARENTING™ (BBP)
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

FY1819

*When families, communities and schools work together, students
are more successful and the entire community benefits.*

- U.S. Department of Education

We are grateful to our funders for their support

Hearst Foundation
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Santa Clara County

Introduction

At Grail Family Services, building a strong parent-child relationship is at the core of everything we do.

We believe that when parents are intentional in supporting their child's early development and continued well-being, their children are more likely to be successful in school and in life. As experts put it, "the single best predictor of student success in school is the level of parental involvement in a child's education" (Henderson and Berla, 1994). Regardless of background, children whose parents are engaged in their education do better in school, are more adjusted and are more likely to graduate from high school. Schools with engaged parents also benefit greatly. When parents are involved, teachers understand their students and their needs better, they feel more appreciated and the quality of teaching increases. Schools and other institutions need to be prepared to support parents in these efforts and to partner with parents to support their children.

Over the past several years, as we researched best practices, and worked with teachers, parents and service providers in the area of family engagement, it became clear that there was not a consistent definition of what it means to be an engaged parent. To address this, we brought the community together to understand the needs and challenges of all stakeholders. We also performed an extensive literature review. The outcome was the development of the Building Blocks of Parenting™ (BBP), a set of research-based, community informed strategies and activities that parents can use with their children to support their success in school and in life. Each of the Building Blocks is supported by a body of research that explains why they are important and effective for parents and families.



Yet parents are only part of the equation. Without the support of teachers and school administrators, many parents, especially those in disadvantaged communities, feel unable to support their child's learning. They just don't know what to do. Likewise, many teachers struggle with the best approach to getting their students' parents engaged. How do they start the conversation? How do they partner meaningfully with parents to support their students? This is the gap our training addresses through the BBP Family Engagement Professional Development Program.

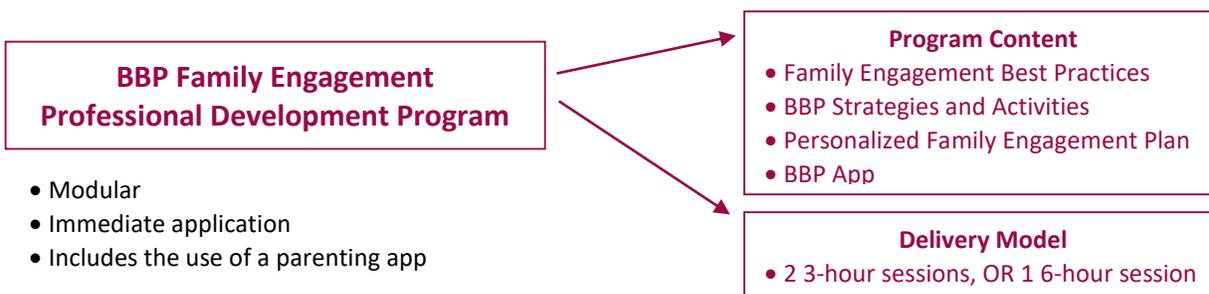
The BBP™ Family Engagement Professional Development Framework

The Building Blocks of Parenting (BBP) Family Engagement Professional Development program was designed to address this gap by creating a culture shift around family engagement, specifically by working with teachers and administrators to support family engagement practices. We seek to support schools and service providers in transforming their interactions with families into meaningful collaborations between parents, teachers, other school staff and service providers. We achieve this by presenting and regularly promoting a consistent definition of family engagement and what it means to be an engaged parent, by providing teachers with practical knowledge and strategies based on family engagement best

practices, and by eliminating barriers among parents, teachers, school administrators, non-teaching staff and service providers to create a strong network of support for young children.

The BBP Family Engagement Professional Development Program helps early childhood educators, teachers, family child care providers, and staff from community-based organizations to support parents in becoming fully-engaged, active participants in their children’s development and education.

Our comprehensive family engagement program provides participants with specific tools to easily interact with the parents of the children they serve. The modular delivery model is tailored to meet the needs of specific audiences, and the follow-up coaching ensures that participants effectively apply their learning and use the program tools and materials.



Participants leave the BBP Family Engagement training with a solid understanding of:

- **Research support for family engagement.** Participants learn how family engagement supports children’s outcomes. The training explores what the research tells us about the importance of family engagement, and what role a parent plays as first teacher and secure base from which to learn.
- **How to promote family engagement and overcome common obstacles.** Participants learn the evidence-based strategies that will help them establish successful family engagement. Equally important, they will learn to identify and avoid common obstacles to family engagement.
- **The role of The Building Blocks of Parenting in family engagement.** We designed the research-based Building Blocks of Parenting to give parents specific advice about how to engage with their young children both at home and in the community. This training will show participants how to use this tool to connect with the families they work with.
- **How to develop a plan for family engagement.** We strive to make this training useful. Participants will get the chance to begin working on their own plan for family engagement, integrating the tools, skills, and knowledge acquired throughout the training into a plan they can start rolling out from day one.
- **How to use the BBP App to support family engagement.** The BBP App offers practical, research-based strategies and activities parents can access anywhere/any time to engage with their child and strengthen their bond. The app also includes unique “mindset builders” that increase the benefit of activities by helping parents adopt the right frame of mind before beginning. Participants learn about the content of the BBP App and how they can use it to help parents support their children’s learning at school and at home.

Program Components

1. **Leadership Staff Meeting.** In order to create a culture-shift so organizations can support equal partnerships with parents, and to provide their educators the support they need to create these equal partnerships, it is crucial for the leadership to be on board. We meet with organizational leadership to give them an overview of our Family Engagement Professional Development Framework. This includes a discussion of our working definition of family engagement, the six best practices for family engagement and the BBP App as a tool to support family engagement. Leadership staff who fully understand what it takes to implement a family engagement plan are in the best position to advocate for, and to support, decisions that facilitate successful family engagement practices.
2. **Teacher Workshops.** The program is delivered either as a one-day, 6-hour workshop or a series of three, 2-hour workshops led by experienced facilitators, designed to build teachers' understanding of high-quality family engagement, and to support them in developing their own family engagement plan.
3. **Family Engagement Work Plan.** As part of the training, every teacher will complete a family engagement work plan tailored specifically to the needs of their classroom. During the workshop, teachers are able to critically reflect on their own family engagement practices, assess what is working and what is not working, and design a new family engagement plan accordingly. Through the development of their own family engagement plan, participants have the opportunity to integrate the tools, skills, and knowledge acquired during the training into a plan they can start using day one.
4. **Use of the BBP Family Engagement App Curriculum content and messages.** Teachers and parents will have access to the BBP App and curriculum content and messages to support their family engagement practices. The BBP Family Engagement App offers practical, research-based strategies and activities parents can access anywhere/anytime to engage with their child and strengthen their bond.

FY1819 Program Implementation

For the 2018-2019 fiscal year, we implemented the program with preschool teachers from Santa Clara County Office of Education Head Start, California Young World, Inc., Go Kids, Inc., and partners from the Universal Access to Early Childhood Care, Education and Health, which include San Juan Bautista Child Development Centers, Alum Rock Union School District, Think Together and SOMOS Mayfair. A total of 123 early childhood educators participated in the program this year. The majority of our participants were from San Juan Bautista Child Development Centers, located within the Alum Rock Union Elementary and Franklin McKinley School Districts. Please refer to Figure 1 below for a distribution of participants by organization.

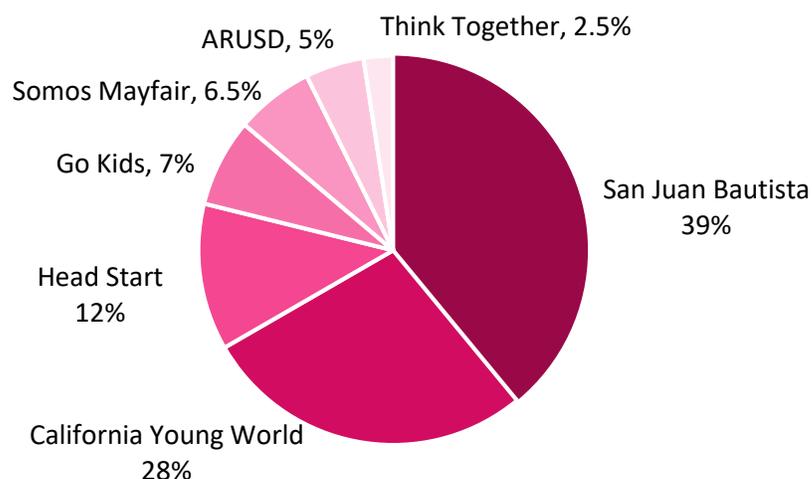


Figure 1: Distribution of Participants by Organization

Program Evaluation

To evaluate the professional development training as well as to understand the impact of the framework at an organizational level, program evaluation included educator and parent surveys.

Educator Feedback

To examine the impact of the program on educators, participants completed a survey immediately after workshop participation. This survey asked about how the program content would impact their family engagement practices and knowledge. In addition, educators completed a longer survey before workshop participation as well as at the end of the school year. This second survey included questions regarding family engagement practices both at the level of the individual respondent as well as at the level of the organization. All 123 workshop participants completed the surveys.

Family Engagement Work Plans

As part of the training, all participants completed their own Family Engagement Work Plan. Participants were encouraged to choose the strategies and best practices they think will work best for their families and for their program. We collected and analyzed each participant's work plan as a measure of quality of the work plans completed by workshop participants. All 123 workshop participants completed a work plan.

Parent Feedback

Parents were asked to complete pre and post surveys that requested their feedback on information about the program's family engagement practices. Specifically, the survey included questions regarding the physical environment, communication practices, volunteering opportunities, decision making process, and their overall evaluation of the organization's family engagement efforts. Parent surveys were completed from families from Head Start, California Young World, Go Kids and San Juan Bautista. A total of 164 parents completed the parent surveys.

Program Results

Educator Workshop Surveys

Overall, educators reported a significant increase in their strategies to engage parents, their confidence in their ability to engage parents, and their knowledge on how to support parents so they can support their children both at home and at school. Please refer to Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2: Comparison of Pre vs. Post Survey Responses, n=123

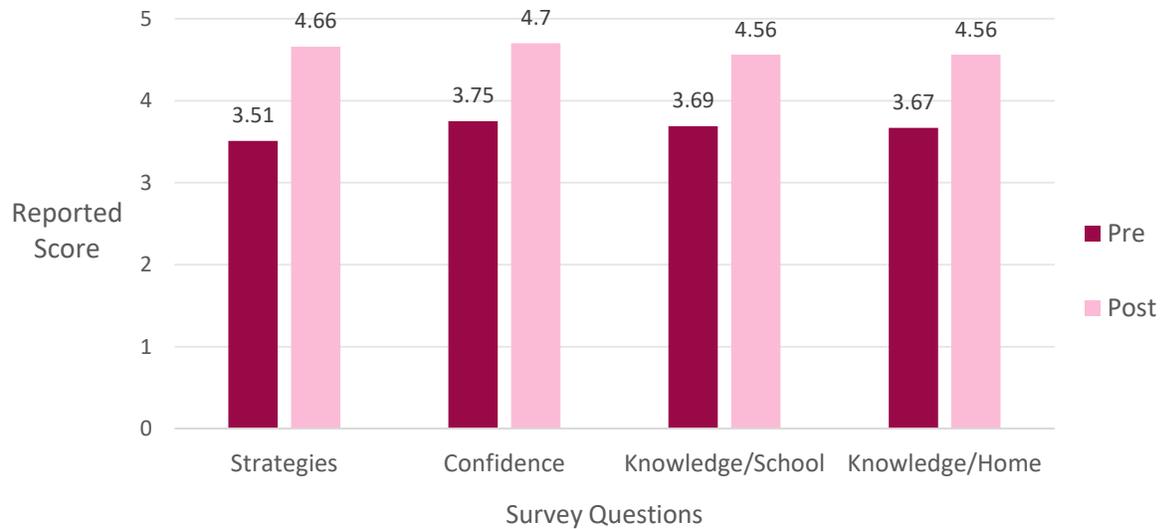
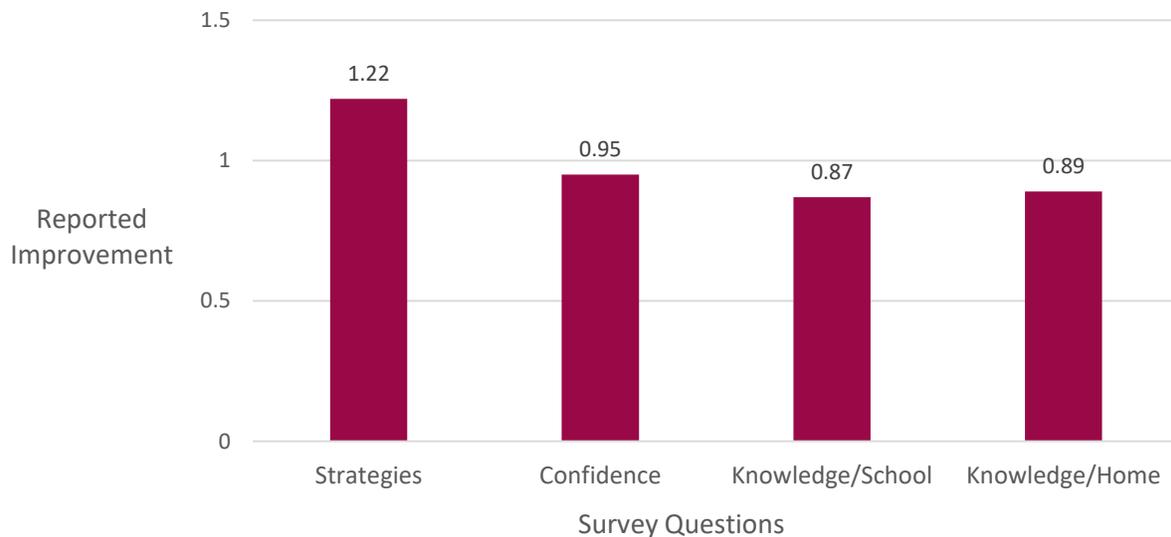
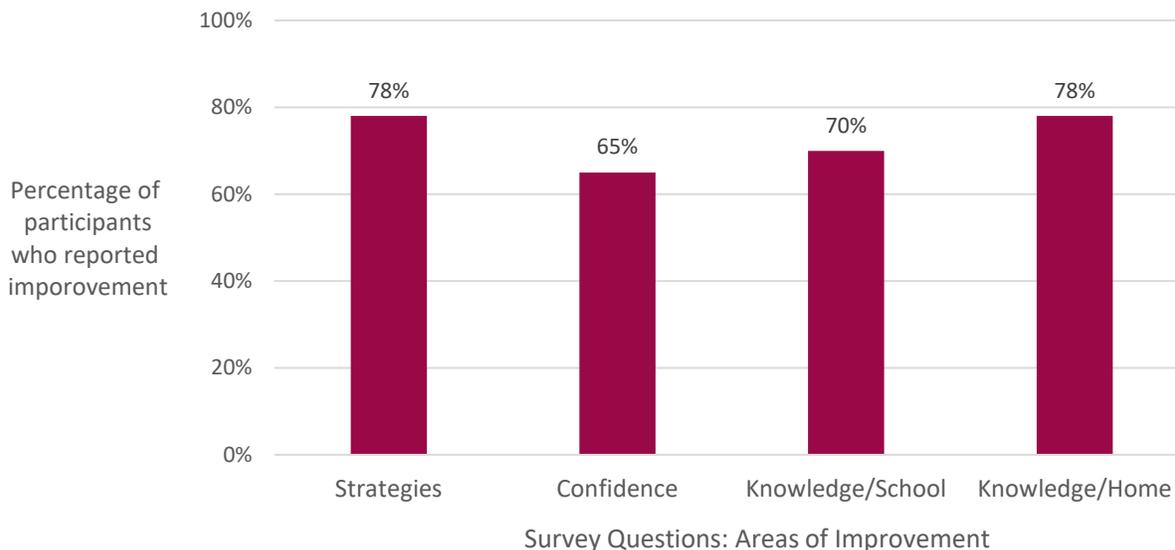


Figure 3: Participant reported improvement from Pre to Post Survey Responses, n=123



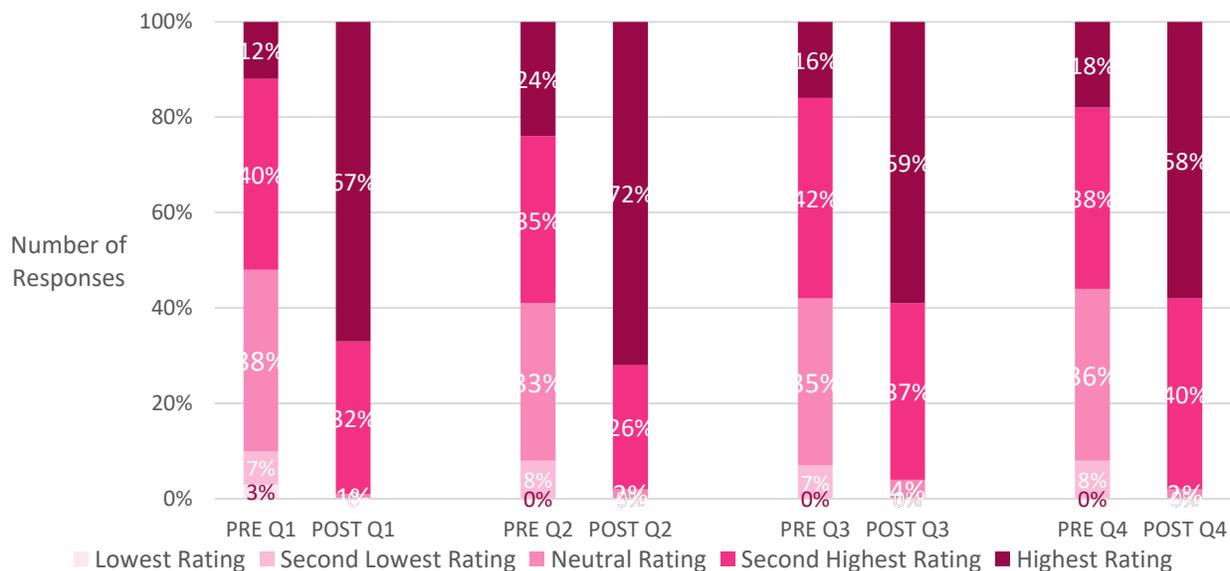
A high percentage of participants reported improvement in their strategies to engage parents, their confidence in their ability to engage parents, and their knowledge on how to support parents so they can support their children both at home and at school. Please refer to Figure 4.

Figure 4: Percentage of participants who reported improvement on the survey questions, n=123



The distribution of responses in the pre vs. the post surveys also shows significant improvement in participants' strategies to engage parents (Q1), confidence in their ability to engage parents (Q2), and knowledge on how to support parents so they can support their children both at home (Q3) and at school (Q4) after the training. Please refer to Figure 5.

Figure 5: Comparison of pre vs. post distribution of responses on the survey questions, n=123



Family Engagement Work Plans

Each participant included two or more activities under each of the best practices. The activities varied, which means that participants were able to select activities that were tailored to their own needs. Common activities included requesting and incorporating parent's feedback into the program,

strengthening communication efforts, more personalized communication, and positive communication about the child on a regular basis. In addition, participants included the following activities as part of the plan: providing volunteer opportunities that match parents interests and availability and incorporating parent's voice in the classroom. Also, being mindful of biases and making an effort to understand families before passing judgement. Providing information about community resources and how parents can support children at home with presentations from community organizations that serve families in the area. Highlights of the changes implemented by teachers include an increase in opportunities to communicate with parents, being more intentional about providing parents with more frequent positive feedback about their child, and setting regular meetings for parents to feel heard by being able to voice their concerns, ask questions and give feedback to the teachers.

Teacher Family Engagement Practices Surveys

Teachers reported areas of strength as having an open door policy, being able to communicate with parents in different ways and communicating with parents so they feel welcome and valued. Teachers identified areas of improvement as needing to be more intentional about integrating families' culture into the program, understanding parents' strengths/preferences in order to match them to volunteering opportunities. Another area of improvement identified is bringing community resources to parents and helping parents understand how they can support their children at home. Post surveys indicated that teachers reported improvement in the areas of communication, understanding the importance of knowing parents' strengths and preferences, and being able to support parents to they can support children at school and at home.

Parent Family Engagement Practices Surveys

Pre and post surveys completed by families revealed strengths as well as areas of improvement regarding family engagement practices by these educators. Most parents reported that teachers make them feel welcome and valued and that they feel comfortable communicating with their child's teacher. An area for improvement mentioned at pre-test by the majority of parents was teachers did not incorporate parent voice into program decisions and did not use information about parent's strengths, talents and preferences for program improvement. These areas were significantly higher on the post surveys. In addition, when asked if they had seen a change from how teachers worked with them before the training vs. after, the majority of parents reported an improvement in the quality of communication from teachers.

Discussion

Overall, the feedback we received from educators and teachers demonstrates that the program has been a success. Educators are able to adapt family engagement best practices to implement strategies that allow them to better engage with parents. Highlights of those changes include, improving their communication practices with parents, utilizing families' strengths to enhance volunteering opportunities, and setting aside a regular time to meet with parents to discuss their questions and concerns. Importantly, the changes parents report after teachers have participated in the program parallel those reported by teachers.

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