



Exceptional Population Certification

Evaluation Summary

Grecya Lopez, MS Ed
Research and Evaluation Supervisor
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Introduction

Program Description

The Exceptional Population Certification (EPC) Program is an innovative approach to providing early educators who are new to the ECE field with the tools necessary to meet the needs of children with exceptional needs. This program has potential benefits both to children and the workforce.

The EPC Program was created by LAUP and carried out in partnership with Los Angeles City College (LACC). It was funded, in large part, by the Workforce Development Board (WDB) of the City of Los Angeles, with some contributions from the Pearson Foundation. The EPC was designed in response to the need to support teachers who work with children with behavioral, emotional, and/or other special needs, which was documented through years of data collected from participants of LAUP ECE Workforce Development Programs.

The program was offered to individuals, with a minimum of 12 ECE units (as a prerequisite). Participants attended weekly professional development sessions for 13 weeks while concurrently involved in a paid practicum experience for 12 weeks. The professional development was created and delivered by LAUP Quality Support specialists on the LACC Campus. Practicum sites were in the LAUP network during FY 2016-17, and were spread throughout Los Angeles County. Practicum sites provided mentorship, and LAUP provided academic and career advisement to EPC participants.

The goals of the program were participant-focused. Upon successful program completion, participants were expected to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the diverse developmental, cultural, and individual needs of all children
2. Understand the relationships between exceptionalities and children's behavior
3. Have the know-how to create high-quality, inclusive, positive, and nurturing learning environments for young children
4. Demonstrate skillful observation, documentation, and assessment of children's progress
5. Have the know-how to build positive, productive, and reciprocal relationships with children, families, colleagues, and the community
6. Serve as advocates on behalf of young children with exceptional needs and their families to improve the quality of early childhood programs and services
7. Experience greater retention and advancement in ECE or a related field outside of ECE

Introduction

Child Needs

Studies from the Centers for Disease Control, as reported in the New York Times (March 29, 2012), suggest that the likelihood of a child being given a diagnosis of autism, Asperger syndrome, or a related disorder increased by more than 20 percent from 2006 to 2008. The report estimates that in 2008, one child in 88 received a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders by age 8, compared with about one child in 110 two years earlier.

In addition, data indicate that specific groups of children are being disproportionately expelled and suspended from their early learning settings; this is a trend that has remained virtually unchanged over the past decade. Recent data from ED.gov indicate that African-American boys make up 18% of preschool enrollment, but 48% of preschoolers suspended more than once. Hispanic and African-American boys, combined, represent 46% of all boys in preschool, but 66% of preschoolers who are suspended.

Exceptional Needs

- Children with **developmental delays** including autism or Asperger syndrome.
- Children with **physical or medical disabilities/conditions**.
- Children with **emotional and behavioral needs**, including but not limited to children living in high-risk conditions (foster, migrant, homeless, children from families with history of domestic violence, children with incarcerated parents, children of color, etc.)

Introduction

ECE Workforce Needs

The need for certified early childhood special education teachers has dramatically increased, and ECE is ranked among the fastest-growing occupations nationwide.

Professionals in the ECE field have typically held low levels of educational attainment, and low wages in the ECE sector have put higher education, degrees, and programs out of reach for many.

ECE professionals that do manage to return to school are typically non-traditional students with numerous challenges to completing requirements for degrees and permits. These may include: transportation, language barriers, scheduling conflicts, limited access to campus services during the day, limited knowledge of college programs, low familial support, and (ironically) difficulty securing affordable child care for their own children.

Furthermore, specializations in ECE, including early childhood special education, are traditionally reserved for graduate, credit-bearing programs. AA or BA child development degree programs include little to no foundational knowledge for working with children who may require additional support.

In attempting to meet the needs of all the children in the classroom without the proper tools and training, teachers quickly experience “burnout” and increased frustration, which affects classroom management and quality interactions. Some teachers decide to leave the ECE field altogether.

Nationally, preschoolers are suspended at three times the rate of older children, raising questions about whether all preschool teachers are equipped to handle behavior typical of young children.

Introduction

EPC – Program Details

The Exceptional Populations Certification was developed to equip the ECE workforce with the tools that are necessary, early in their careers, to successfully meet the needs of children with challenging behaviors and exceptionalities.

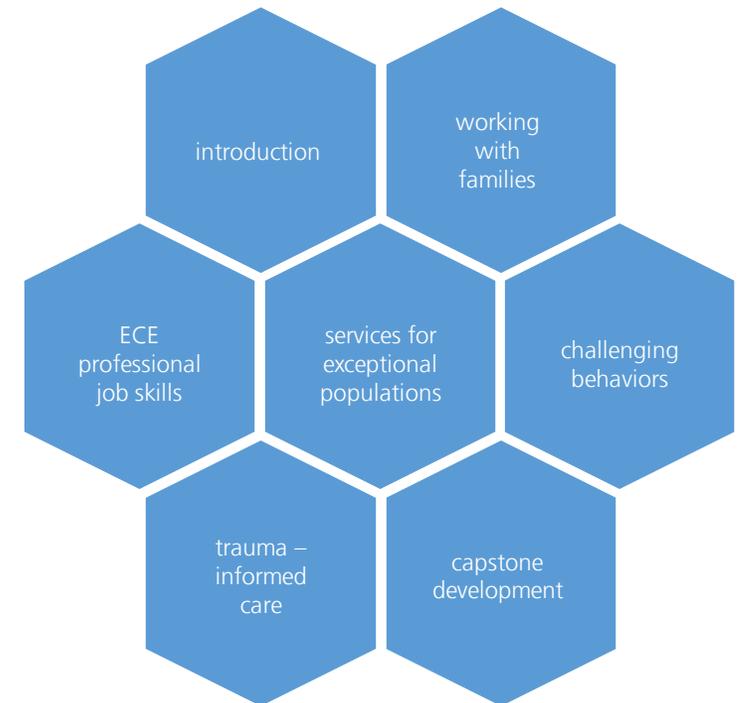
Every participant received:

13 Weeks PD (60 hrs) + 12 Weeks practicum (240 hrs) + 1 Program Advisor + 1 Career Advisor + 1 Mentor

Complete List of EPC Program Components

13- week Professional Development	12- week Practicum with Weekly Objectives
Advisor Office Hours	Mentoring by Practicum Site
Weekly Homework Assignments	Capstone Project (PowerPoint, Poster, Implementation Plan, Reflection)
Course Reader	Presentation of Capstone Project to Peers
Permit Training and Advisement	Cash Award for Program Completion
End of Program EXPO/Networking Event	Optional Workforce Advisement by PD Specialist
Guest Speakers	

EPC Professional Development Topics*



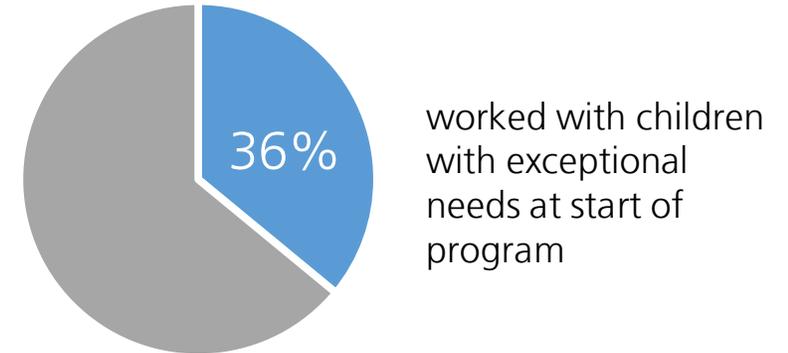
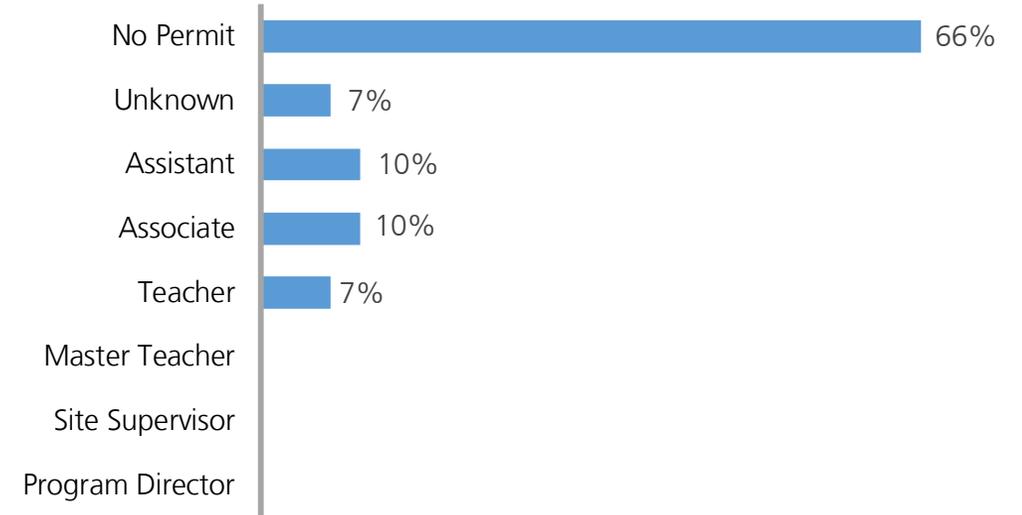
* See appendix for PD timeline.

Select Findings

Participant Data

29 participants enrolled

Gender	90% Female 10% Male					
Race/ Ethnicity	Asian 7%	Black 10%	Hispanic 55%	White 17%	Other 3%	Unknown 7%
Primary Language	Armenian 3.5%	English 62.0%	Farsi 3.5%	Spanish 24.0%	Tagalog 3.5%	Unknown 3.5%
Employment Status	Employed 62%	Unemployed 35%	Unknown 3%			
Highest Degree	HS Diploma 10%	Some College 45%	AA 21%	BA/BS 10%	MA/MS 14%	

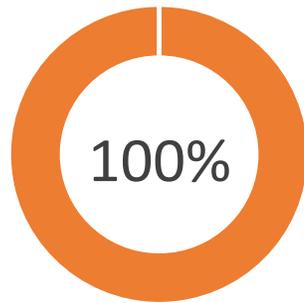


Note: Unknown category includes answers left blank and questions where participants selected "decline to state."

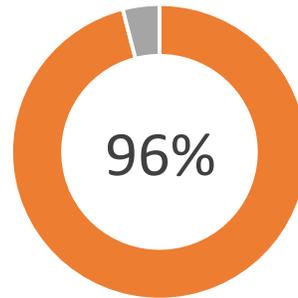
Select Findings

Participant Self-Reported Achievements

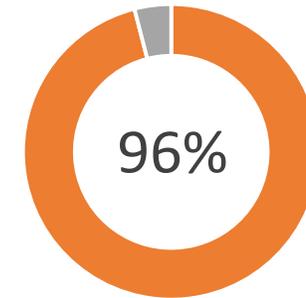
At program's end, EPC participants attributed major achievements to their participation in the EPC program.



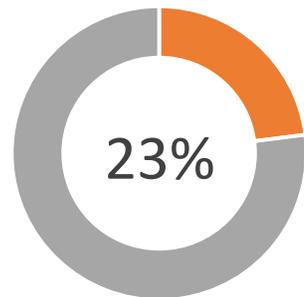
EPC taught me about the early care and education field and helped to clarify my professional goals.



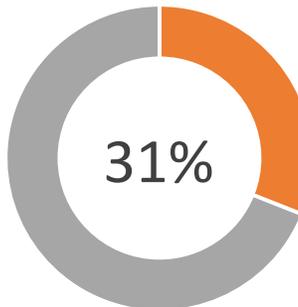
EPC taught me how to better serve children with exceptional needs.



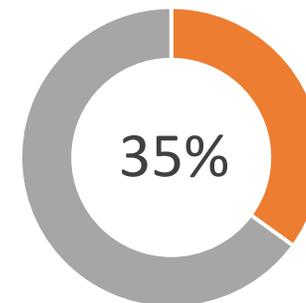
EPC prepared me to meet the needs of all children if I decide on a career in ECE.



EPC allowed me to renew my permit.



EPC allowed me to move up on the Child Development Permit Matrix.



EPC allowed me to obtain my child development permit for the first time.

Select Findings

Participant Growth

From program's start to end, EPC program participants self-reported growth in their understanding of the diverse developmental, cultural, and individual needs of all children. This was supported by their Capstone Projects as well as by interviews with practicum site mentors.



On average, participants reported a greater degree of preparedness to meet the diverse developmental, cultural, and individual needs of children with exceptionalities at the end of the program (8.2) than when they started (6.4) on a range of 1-10.

78% of EPC participants demonstrated an understanding of diverse developmental, cultural, and individual needs of all children in their [Capstone Project](#)

81% of EPC practicum site mentors felt that EPC trained participants to work with children with exceptional needs

Select Findings

Participant Growth

At program's end, EPC program participants demonstrated proficiency in all program goal areas, as demonstrated in their Capstone Project and as supported by interviews with EPC mentors at practicum sites.

67% of EPC participants demonstrated their proficiency in creating high-quality, inclusionary, positive, and nurturing learning environments for young children in their end-of-program [Capstone Project](#)

81% of EPC participants demonstrated an understanding of the relationships between exceptionalities and children's behavior in their end-of-program [Capstone Project](#)

88% of mentors at practicum sites felt that they were personally able to manage their classroom better when EPC participants were present

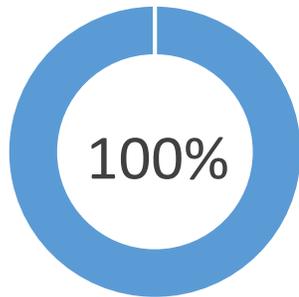
70% of EPC participants demonstrated skillful observation, documentation, and assessment of children's progress in their end-of-program [Capstone Project](#)

Select Findings

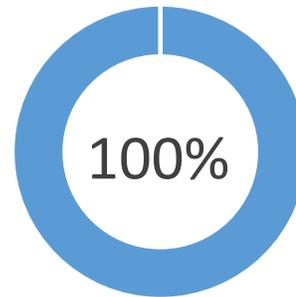
Participant Growth

From program's start to end, EPC program participants showed a statistically significant growth in knowledge and demonstrated the skills to build positive, productive, and reciprocal relationships with children, families, and colleagues. However, these skills appeared not to extend to the communities at participants' assigned practicum sites. This finding was supported by our interviews with program mentors.

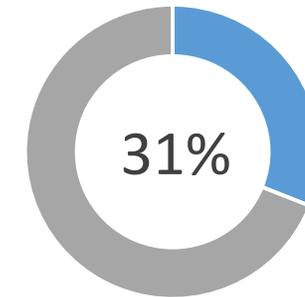
"She got to know the children and she actually had a good demeanor with parents. The parents talked to her. So when the parent walked in, she would greet the mom and the mom would give her an update on the child's home life. The child would seek her out. The child became very comfortable with her. That was amazing!" – EPC Mentor



of mentors at practicum sites felt that EPC participants demonstrated ways of building positive, productive, and reciprocal relationships with children during practicum.



of mentors at practicum sites felt that EPC participants demonstrated ways of building positive, productive, and reciprocal relationships with colleagues during practicum

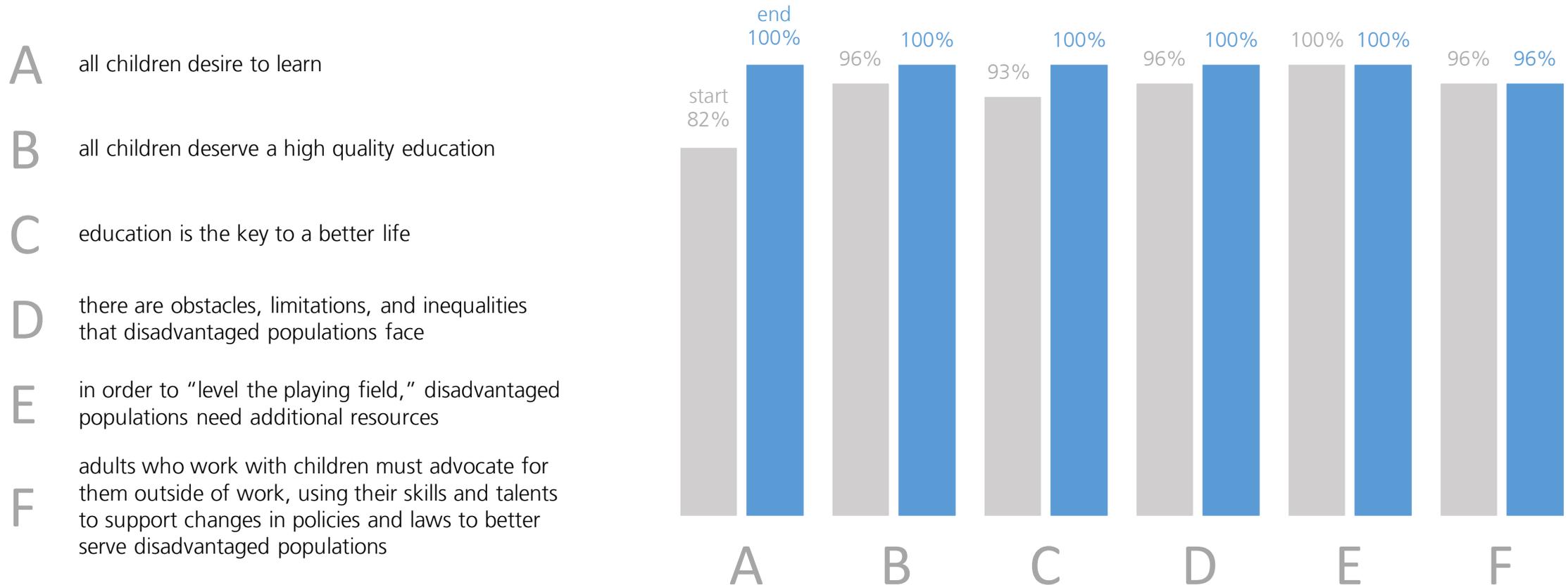


of mentors at practicum sites felt that EPC participants demonstrated ways of building positive, productive, and reciprocal relationships with the community during practicum.

Select Findings

Participant Advocacy for Children With Exceptional Needs

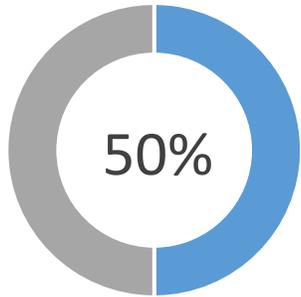
From program's start to end, EPC participants demonstrated positive attitudes about social justice. They also increased dispositions to serve as advocates of children and families of children with exceptional needs in many areas.



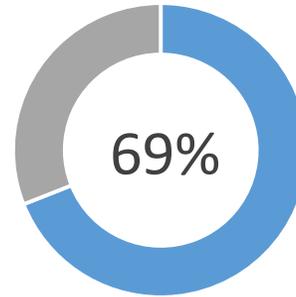
Select Findings

Participant Advocacy for Children With Exceptional Needs

At program's end, a majority of mentors at practicum sites agreed that EPC participants were ready to advocate for children and families of children with exceptional needs.



of mentors agree that EPC participants have demonstrated that they are ready to serve as advocates for families with exceptional needs children



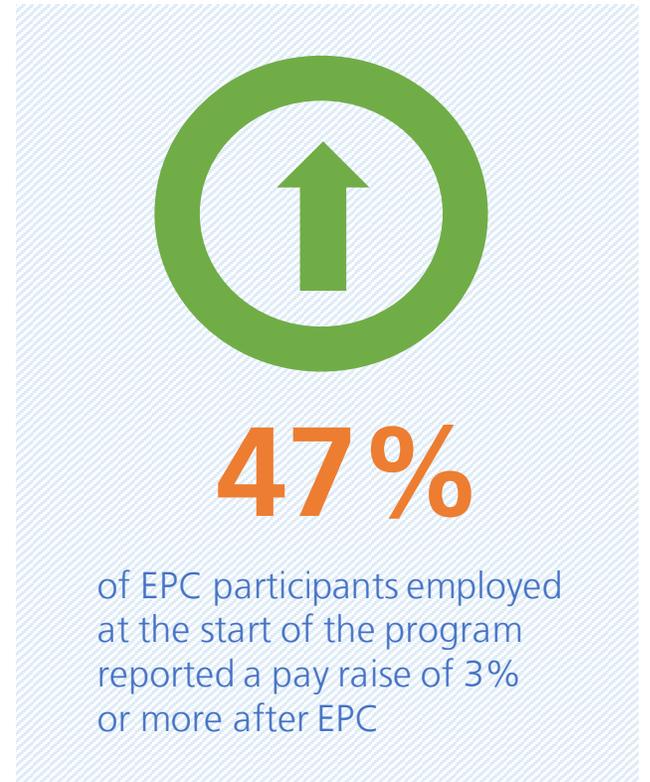
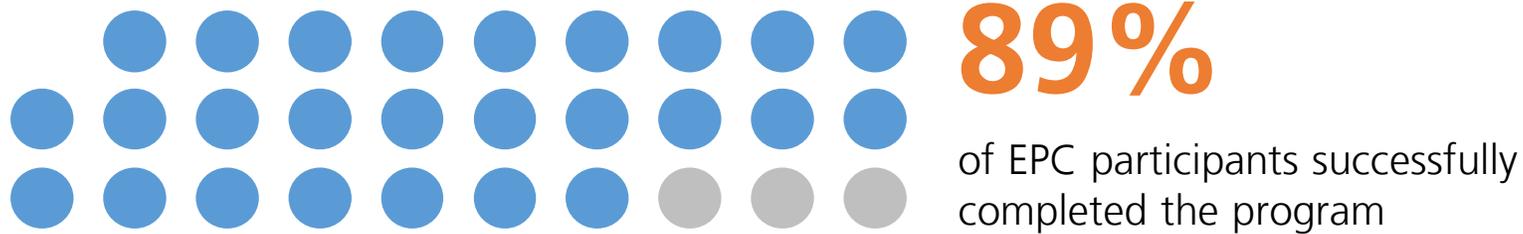
of mentors agree that EPC participants have demonstrated that they are ready to serve as advocates for children with exceptional needs

“They have a better understanding of the challenges and with that, they can better advocate for [the children].”
–EPC Mentor

Select Findings

Career Advancement and Retention

EPC had a high participant completion rate, and over one-fifth of program completers became employed in the ECE field after the program's end.



Source: LAUP R&E 2-Months Out Follow-Up Interview

Select Findings

Career Advancement and Retention

A majority of EPC program completers have continued to pursue higher education and one-fifth have established a career choice in ECE or a related field.

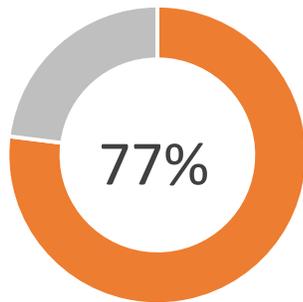


Because of the program, I want to be a behavioral therapist.

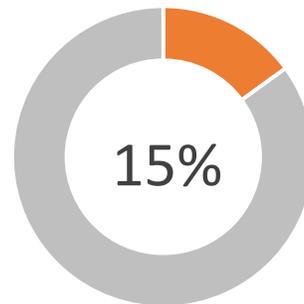
-EPC Participant



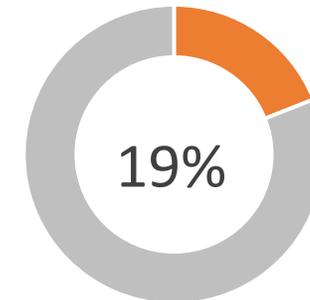
Since the end of EPC:



of EPC program completers have enrolled in college



of EPC program completers have been accepted into a degree program



of EPC program completers have established a career choice in ECE or a related field

Source: LAUP R&E 2-Months Out Follow-Up Interview

Select Findings

Services Most Valued By Participants

EPC Participants valued the weekly trainings developed and delivered by LAUP Quality Support Staff the most.

1

“Trainings in general”

2

Tie between “Challenging Behaviors” and “12-week Practicum with Weekly Objectives”

3

Tie between “Working with Families” and “Mentoring by Practicum Site”

Select Findings

Participant Quotes on Benefits of the EPC



Some of the highlights that have resulted from my experience with the EPC program are: how helpful the advisors and the information they gave [were], all [of] the resources that I learn are out there for children, being able to talk and hear other people's ideas and experiences really helped me to expand my knowledge in the career path I want to take and in the field as well. Some accomplishments would be just finishing the program, but most importantly, learning more about the exceptional populations. Also, being able to get my permit thanks to the information we [got].

-EPC Participant



Major Themes

- learning about how to best serve children
- learning observational methods
- seeing growth in children's development and feeling proud of it
- thankfulness



I am grateful to have been paired with my mentor at the practicum site. She was very knowledgeable about children with exceptional needs and carried herself professionally. I learned a lot from observing her and the staff in the room. It was great to witness the child make progress throughout [my] time at the site. Every accomplishment he made was a highlight for me.

-EPC Participant



Findings

EPC Evaluation Highlights

- EPC had a high participant completion rate and over one-fifth of program completers became employed in the ECE field after the program's end.
- Most EPC program completers have continued to pursue higher education and one-fifth have established a career choice in ECE or in a related field.
- EPC participants valued the weekly trainings developed and delivered by LAUP Quality Support Staff the most.
- EPC participants self-reported growth in their understanding of the diverse developmental, cultural, and individual needs of all children. This finding was supported by their Capstone Projects as well as by interviews with practicum site mentors.
- EPC participants demonstrated proficiency in all program goal areas, as demonstrated in their Capstone Project and as supported by interviews with EPC mentors at practicum sites.
- EPC participants showed a statistically significant growth in knowledge and demonstrated the skills to build positive, productive, and reciprocal relationships with children, families, and colleagues. Change in knowledge in other areas were found but were not statistically significant.
- EPC participants demonstrated positive attitudes about social justice. They also increased dispositions to serve as advocates of children and families of children with exceptional needs.
- A majority of mentors at practicum sites agreed that by the program's end, EPC participants were ready to advocate for children and families of children with exceptional needs.

Appendix: Timeline of EPC PD Sessions

- 1 **March 6, 2017**
Introduction to EPC; Part 1
- 2 **March 13, 2017**
Introduction to EPC; Part 2
- 3 **March 20, 2017**
Challenging Behavior; Part 1
- 4 **March 27, 2017**
Capstone Development
- 5 **April 10, 2017**
Challenging Behavior; Part 2
- 6 **April 17, 2017**
Working With Families
- 7 **April 24, 2017**
Trauma Informed Care
- 8 **May 1, 2017**
Services for Exceptional Populations; Part 1
- 9 **May 8, 2017**
Services for Exceptional Populations; Part 2
- 10 **May 15, 2017**
PD Skills; Part 1
- 11 **May 22, 2017**
PD Skills; Part 2