



Early Education Emergent
Leaders Program
Evaluation Executive Summary 2008

Prepared for



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Introduction

Over the past decade it has become increasingly evident that the leadership provided by child care center Directors and Administrators are an important element of a high quality program. In fact, effective leadership is crucial to establishing a high quality early childhood program (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1995; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney & Abbott-Shim, 2000; Talan & Bloom, 2004). The Director shapes the work environment for the teaching staff that, in turn, provides the critical link to children’s developmental outcomes. However, there are still very few programs in the State of Arizona that provide specialized training and support to child care directors and administrators in a systematic manner.

The *Chase Early Education Emergent Leaders Program* was designed to address the need for leadership development in Arizona by recognizing that by training and mentoring early care and education program Administrators and Directors, we can enhance the quality of their programs while simultaneously developing leadership skills that will poise participants for statewide and community leadership positions.

2008 marked the fourth cohort of *Chase Early Education Emergent Leaders* (CEL). The two partners in coordination were *Southwest Human Development* and *The Governor’s Office for Children, Youth & Families*. This year’s CEL was an 8-month program that began in January 2008 and ended with a “Graduation Ceremony” in September 2008.

Program Overview

The purpose of the *Chase Emergent Leaders Program* is to increase the capacity of professionals in early care and education programs through training, networking and technical assistance, and to actively create, support and advocate for quality early childhood programs.

Program Design

Using adult learning theory as a base, The Chase Emergent Leaders program had four major components:

1. Cohort Learning Model

The program was an 8 month-long cohort experience which sought to build a learning community, providing participants with opportunities to share resources and strategies and develop relationships that provide ongoing support to child care Directors, their programs, and their staff. This opportunity to network and build relationships with other child care center directors from throughout Arizona – including Emergent Leader Alumni, as well as state leaders in early care and education, helped directors feel less isolated in their own programs and built a base of resources that support their day-to-day work with children and families.

2. Mentor Support

Each director was assigned a mentor who supported and guided the Director through the year-long experience. The mentor’s role was to assist the director in implementing concepts, ideas and

information presented in the workshops by establishing a planning process which builds on strengths and identifies areas of challenge.

3. Director’s Project

Directors developed an Individual Project for their centers with training and technical assistance from CEL coordinators and their Mentors. Each Director had the opportunity to identify a center need, articulate a goal, develop steps to meet the need, implement the plans at their centers, and measure the impact of their Project. Directors were then charged with presenting their Individual Project in the form of a poster-presentation at the CEL Graduation Ceremony.

4. Workshops with National and State Experts:

Workshop topics were designed to help Directors address realistic challenges and problems that are encountered in the child care community. The Chase Emergent Leaders (CEL) program included nine training sessions with national and local early care and education professionals. These workshops were designed to help program directors access and build their leadership styles and skills, and provide information on critical areas of program quality. The workshops addressed key components of program administration, provided introduction to a number of assessment instruments, and provided opportunities to meet and learn from national experts in early care and education. In addition, each session involved learning new content, an opportunity for discussion and networking among participants, and discussion with the presenter(s).

Chase Early Education Emergent Leaders Program Objectives
1. Enhance Directors’ leadership skills
2. Expose Directors to new tools and resources
3. Help Directors appreciate and value the mentorship experience
4. Inspire Directors to replicate a mentoring model with their own staff
5. Encourage learning from peers
6. Extend Directors’ professional network
7. Identify areas for improvement in center/program
8. Implement quality improvement in Directors’ programs
9. Increase Directors’ understanding of the legislative process
10. Develop Directors’ skills and ability to communicate ECE issues with legislators and other policy-makers
11. Motivate Directors to think of themselves as an agent of “change” through active leadership and advocacy in broader community
12. Become involved with community networking and advocacy efforts in an “active” manner

Evaluation Components

The major outcomes and indicators that were measured as a part of the pre/post evaluation design included:

- Administrative skills (Program Administration Scale, Talan & Bloom, 2004)
- Director’s assessment of leadership vision and organizational climate (Carter & Curtis)
- Director’s self-efficacy
- Director’s connection to Early Childhood community
 - Social support network

- Professional activities in ECE community
- Connection to larger systems
- Involvement with other quality-enhancing programs and projects

In addition, data on directors’ background characteristics and their program characteristics – including a baseline quality (ECERS-R, Harms, Clifford, & Cryer) score – were collected in order to determine whether there are any statistical associations between background characteristics and outcomes measures.

Please see the full Evaluation Report for an in-depth description of the participants in the evaluation, procedures, instruments, and data analysis procedures.

Mentors

Another component of the evaluation included examining 1) Directors’ experiences with their Mentors and 2) Mentors’ professional development.

Evaluation for the mentoring component of Emergent Leaders includes examining the following indicators:

- Mentors’ background characteristics
- Self-ratings and assessments of efficacy and knowledge
- Mentors’ assessment of their professional development activities in EL
- Directors’ ratings of Mentors’ efficacy

Evaluation of Program Coordination

One of the overarching evaluation questions we asked was *how do participants rate their experience in the Chase Emergent Leaders program?* Therefore, we also assessed participants’ response to different elements of the overall program – including their assessment of the program coordination. This portion of the evaluation asked participants to rate:

- How well the program met its major objectives
- Their experience with the workshops
- Their experience with their Director’s Projects
- Their experiences with their Mentors
- Coordinators’ efficacy

Participants were also asked to provide feedback on areas of improvement on all aspects of the Chase Emergent Leaders program.

Findings

The Chase Emergent Leaders participants responded overwhelmingly that their experience with their Mentor, the CEL Coordination and training was highly positive. Average ratings based on CEL program objectives and CEL

“Because of my participation in Emergent Leaders, I have become more connected within the state and also feel a deeper commitment to the cause of early childhood education. I don’t think I would have been able to accomplish all that I did last year and what I am working on this year without the support of the Emergent Leaders program.”

~CEL Director

Effectiveness were “exceeding expectations” and “highly effective.” Directors’ qualitative responses mirrored the positive ratings. Directors responded favorably to each of the cornerstone elements of CEL – Training, Mentoring and Individual Projects. In addition, we found significant increases in almost all of Directors’ outcome measures from Time 1 to Time 2. These findings demonstrate that the Chase Emergent Leader model for delivering leadership training is working very well, and could most likely be expanded and replicated to achieve similar results.

Implications for Next Year’s Programming

The box below highlights the major programming recommendations that flow directly from the findings of the CEL evaluation:

Key Recommendations:

1. Training—continue as is; make explicit whether the focus of CEL is leadership development, administrative training, or both.
2. Mentoring—strong aspect of CEL experience; present and use a framework for Mentoring; Directors want more time with Mentors
3. Director’s Projects—more discussion of projects during CEL training sessions; shift CEL schedule so that projects are completed in the Spring
4. Coordination—develop professional development objectives for Mentors

Implications for Future Funding

Based on the evidence contained in this report, we propose three major recommendations for the future funding of Chase Emergent Leaders. First and foremost, this program has achieved success on many different dimensions and should not only continue, but should be expanded to include more Directors and more Mentors. Second, the key to success seems to be highly trained and experienced Mentors and an inspiring training component. There is a clear need to continue to foster support to increase training for the Mentors. Investing in more training and support for the Mentors will likely yield even greater returns, and will move us closer to having an impressive capacity of highly skilled Mentors, consultants and coaches throughout the entire state. In order to coordinate this extra dimension of training and support, more infrastructural funding would be required. Third, findings from both Directors and Mentors point to the desire for more in-person communication between Mentor and mentee, which would also require additional funding.

Conclusion

States, like Arizona, that are in the midst of developing comprehensive early learning systems have to simultaneously ensure that a strong community infrastructure is in place. Successful early learning

systems are seamless when communities are equipped to raise public awareness, identify existing resources and unmet needs, deliver quality services, and document evidence of success. For the past four years, the Chase Emergent Leaders program has helped pave the pathway to a quality early learning system by nurturing new voices of change.

“I am eternally grateful for the leadership and intense focus on self-realization and quality that the Emergent Leader program has allowed me. The ripple effect goes beyond anything we may see immediately. Investing in a human being is an investment that cannot be quantified - for the impact is never ending.”

~CEL Director

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For a copy of the full evaluation report, please contact Alan Taylor: ataylor@swhd.org