



Evaluation of the ePyramid Module Scale-up Implementation: A Virtual Training with Early Childhood Administrators and Teachers in Georgia

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Executive Summary

In 2022, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) received funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to improve early care and education (ECE) access, quality, and systems on behalf of the state's ECE providers and participating children and families. As part of this initiative, DECAL has rolled out ePyramid Module courses for the ECE workforce to support children's social and emotional skills, create positive classroom climates, and instill trauma-informed approaches for supporting children's behaviors. The online training program¹ was designed by the Pyramid Model Consortium² to give participants an introduction to the Pyramid Model framework while learning at their own pace. In addition to the online modules, DECAL included virtual professional learning communities (PLCs) in the training to facilitate learning and discussion and build communities of practice around social and emotional learning (SEL).

DECAL partnered with Child Trends, a nonprofit research organization, to evaluate a scale-up of two ePyramid Module trainings with administrators and teachers. A 2023 pilot training and evaluation³ preceded the scale-up training and evaluation. The scale-up evaluation was designed to determine whether the training improved SEL knowledge, mindsets, and practices for a broad group of 274 ECE educators from across the state and to identify ways to strengthen the training for future cohorts. The following research questions guided the evaluation:

- RQ1. Did administrators' and teachers' reports of SEL knowledge and self-efficacy improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?
- RQ2. Did administrators' and teachers' perceptions of and responses to children's challenging behaviors improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?
- RQ3. Did administrators' and teachers' reports of their practices related to SEL improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?
- RQ4. In what ways did administrators and teachers apply the knowledge and practices they learned in the ePyramid Module training?
- RQ5. What were administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the ePyramid Module training and related supports?

Methods

Participant survey: Child Trends sent pre- and post-training surveys to all administrators and teachers who participated in the ePyramid Module training. Through the surveys, we collected information about demographic characteristics, program or classroom details, knowledge of social and emotional learning strategies, self-efficacy, practices, and experiences with the training.

Participant focus groups: Child Trends conducted focus groups with subsamples of the administrators and teachers who participated in the ePyramid Module training. In these focus groups, we gathered information about how participants were applying what they learned in the training, as well as how participants felt about the training as a whole and what could be improved in the training.

¹ <https://www.pyramidmodel.org/online-courses-epyramid/>

² <https://www.pyramidmodel.org/>

³ McDoniel, M. E., LaForett, D. R., Gal-Szabo, D. E., Richards, K., Wodrich, H., Keaton, H., & Early, D. M. (2024). *Evaluation of the ePyramid Modules: A Pilot Implementation with Early Childhood Administrators and Teachers in Georgia*. Child Trends.

Key findings

Did participants' reports of SEL knowledge and self-efficacy improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?

The ePyramid Module training was associated with improvements in SEL knowledge and self-efficacy. Both administrators and teachers reported higher SEL knowledge and more self-efficacy.

Did participants' perceptions of and responses to challenging behaviors improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?

Following participation in the ePyramid Module training, teachers reported no change in their perceptions of challenging behaviors. However, administrators and teachers reported using fewer harsh disciplinary responses to challenging behaviors. Administrators reported contacting families less frequently in response to their children's challenging behaviors, and teachers reported sending children to an administrator's office less frequently.

Did participants' reports of their practices related to SEL improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?

Both administrators and teachers increased their interactions with families following the ePyramid Module training. Administrators reported more confidence in interacting with families and teachers reported increased sharing of SEL strategies in their interactions with families. **Teachers also reported improved SEL-related practices.** Specifically, teachers reported increased use of practices around creating a safe learning environment, ensuring predictable transitions, and helping regulate children's emotions following the ePyramid Module training.

In what ways did participants apply the knowledge and practices they learned in the ePyramid Module training?

Almost all administrators and teachers reported using strategies they learned in the ePyramid Module training in and out of classrooms. Many administrators and teachers reported that they completed the training with a renewed focus on building high-quality interactions with parents and families. In addition, teachers reported more self-reflection when interacting with children, families, or their colleagues. **Teachers also reported fewer challenging behaviors in their classrooms,** citing strategies like creating a calming corner and other emotion regulation techniques that help prevent challenging behaviors.

Glossary

Participants: Administrators and teachers who took part in the ePyramid Module training pilot.

Social and emotional learning (SEL): The process of developing skills that support children's social, emotional, and behavioral growth.

ePyramid Modules: Four online modules composed of multiple lessons created by the Pyramid Model Consortium. One Implicit Bias module included videos and training materials about implicit bias and culturally responsive practices; three Birth to Five modules included information about embedding SEL practices in ECE for children birth to age 5.

Professional learning communities (PLCs): Virtual groups created for participants to collaborate and discuss the topics covered by the ePyramid Modules. Two or three DECAL Pre-K, Infant/Toddler, or Inclusion and Behavior specialists co-facilitated each PCL.

Pyramid Model Preschool Classroom Kit: A resource designed by the Pyramid Model Consortium to support teachers in implementing the Pyramid Model framework.

ClassWallet: An application to provide funds to teachers and administrators to purchase supplies at education-based stores.

What were participants' perceptions of the ePyramid Module training and related supports?

Administrators and teachers were overwhelmingly positive about the ePyramid Module training and almost all participants shared that they would recommend the training to others. Administrators and teachers found the ePyramid Module content relevant and engaging. Participants also noted that they enjoyed connecting with fellow ECE educators and found the facilitators helpful. The facilitators made them feel comfortable sharing in their PLCs.

Considerations for future ePyramid Module trainings

- 1. Continue to offer the ePyramid Module training.**
Participants found the ePyramid Module training to be relevant and applicable to their work, informative, and beneficial to their practice.
- 2. Consider offering the training to all staff in a program.**
Some administrators and teachers reported that they had encouraged fellow staff to take the training or had shared knowledge and strategies from the training with their colleagues.
- 3. Provide access to ePyramid Module materials during and/or after the training.**
Participants would have liked more instruction in using the classroom materials, and teachers were interested in having access to the training resources after the training ended.
- 4. Offer continued training or occasional check-ins with previous training participants.**
In focus groups, many participants expressed interest in follow-up trainings or check-ins with facilitators after completion of the ePyramid Module training.
- 5. Provide technology support for ECE staff who may want to access the training outside of work hours.**
Some participants encountered issues with navigating the ePyramid Module platform or using Zoom and mentioned that this could be a barrier for others who may want to participate in the training.
- 6. Consider expanding the options available for the ClassWallet.**
Participants appreciated the ClassWallet funds and found them beneficial for their classroom or program, but many felt that ClassWallet did not offer them enough options, both in terms of stores and materials.

Introduction

Through funding received from the American Rescue Plan Act, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) piloted ePyramid Module courses, which are online training programs⁴ designed by the Pyramid Model Consortium⁵ for the early care and education (ECE) workforce to help support children's social and emotional skills, create positive classroom climates, and instill trauma-informed approaches for supporting children's behaviors. DECAL partnered with Child Trends, a nonprofit research organization, to first evaluate a pilot of two ePyramid Module trainings with administrators and teachers. DECAL offered the administrator pilot training between February and May 2023 and the teacher pilot training between June and August 2023. Following a report of the findings from the pilot implementation⁶ (see Key Findings box to the right), DECAL offered a scale-up of the ePyramid Module training to a wider group of early childhood programs. DECAL offered the administrator scale-up training between October 2023 and January 2024 and the teacher scale-up training between February and May 2024. For the scale-up training, DECAL implemented the content sequence developed for the pilot training (see DECAL ePyramid Module Training box on page 9). This report summarizes Child Trends' findings from evaluating the scale-up of the ePyramid Module training.

Administrator and teacher scale-up evaluation

Following the ePyramid Module pilot, DECAL continued the ePyramid Module training with new cohorts of administrators and teachers, who were invited from a larger group of programs compared to the pilot. DECAL invited 101 programs to participate in the scale-up effort. The 101 programs were selected if they met one of the following criteria: having reached out to DECAL with interest in the training, serving a high percentage of families enrolled in the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, providing services on university campuses, being referred by contacting the Behavior and Inclusion Helpline, and being referred from a DECAL specialist. Thirty-seven of the 101 programs eligible agreed to participate in the trainings (see Table 1 for a breakdown of the participating programs by selection criteria). Participating administrators and teachers came from these 37 programs.

Key Findings from Pilot Evaluation

Who participated in the pilot?

In total, 48 administrators and 211 teachers representing 22 programs or centers participated in the ePyramid Module training. Most participants were women. Over half of administrators identified as White, whereas over half of teachers identified as Black or African American.

How much of the training did pilot participants complete?

On average, administrators completed about 68 percent of the required content of each module prior to each PLC, whereas teachers completed about 88 percent of each module before the corresponding PLC.

Did pilot participants improve in SEL knowledge, self-efficacy, and practices following the training?

DECAL's implementation of the ePyramid Module training was associated with positive changes in reports of SEL knowledge and practices for both administrators and teachers. Teachers reported little change in their use of various management or teaching strategies for challenging behaviors, with two exceptions: participants were more likely to report addressing children's challenging behavior through curriculum modification and less likely to report removing privileges or toys.

How did pilot participants feel about the training?

Administrators and teachers had positive views of the ePyramid Module training. Both administrators and teachers reported forming positive relationships with the PLC facilitators. Most administrators and teachers would recommend the ePyramid Module training to others in their profession and believed that the modules were relevant to their role.

⁴ <https://www.pyramidmodel.org/online-courses-epyrmaid/>

⁵ <https://www.pyramidmodel.org/>

⁶ McDaniel, M. E., LaForett, D. R., Gal-Szabo, D. E., Richards, K., Wodrich, H., Keaton, H., & Early, D. M. (2024). *Evaluation of the ePyramid Modules: A Pilot Implementation with Early Childhood Administrators and Teachers in Georgia*. Child Trends.

Table 1. Characteristics of programs that participated in the scale-up training (n = 37)

Program Inclusion Criteria	Number of Programs
Expressed interest	10
High percentage of CAPS recipients	8
University-based programs	4
Referred from Behavior and Inclusion Hotline	5
Referred by a specialist	10

Source: DECAL participation data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Administrator scale-up training

Administrators completed the ePyramid modules on their own and took part in PLCs to support integrating the module content into their classroom practice. Based on feedback from the pilot training, DECAL offered participants a wider range of times for PLCs and the option between two training schedules: a six-week schedule with weekly PLCs and an eight-week schedule with the six meeting spread across eight weeks. All administrators started the training in October 2023. The six-week training ended mid-December 2023, and the eight-week training ended in January 2024 to account for two weeks off over the winter break. In total, there were 11 PLC groups with 6-12 administrators per PLC. Each PLC met six times, with an additional introduction session before the start of the training. Administrators received \$500 stipends and \$125 through ClassWallet to complete the training.

Teacher scale-up training

Towards the end of the administrator scale-up training, DECAL asked participating administrators to select ECE teachers from their programs who they felt would most benefit from the training. As with the administrator training, teachers completed the ePyramid modules on their own and were offered a range of times to complete the PLCs, including before and after school times, and they had the option to complete the training in six weeks or eight weeks. All teachers started the training in February 2024. Participants who selected the six-week schedule ended their training at the beginning of April 2024 and participants who selected the eight-week schedule finished at the end of April 2024. There were 18 PLC groups with 7-17 teachers per PLC. Each PLC met six times, with an additional introduction session before the start of the training. Teachers received \$500 stipends and \$125 through ClassWallet to complete the training.

Some participants had access to a Pyramid Model Preschool Classroom Kit. Although not part of the scale-up training, DECAL's Pre-K division purchased Pyramid Model Kits for only Georgia's Pre-K classes during the 2022–2023 school year (see the box to the right for more details about the classroom kit). As a result, not all participants had access to a kit during the training, although participants could have applied ClassWallet funds towards the purchase of materials included in the kit at the end of the training.

Pyramid Model Preschool Classroom Kit Resources:

- Tucker the Turtle kit
- Problem Solver Solution kit
- Super Friends kit
- Classroom Visual Display kit
- Emotional Literacy kit

DECAL ePyramid Module Training and Sequence

Birth to Five Module package (18 hours)

- Module 1: Building Relationships and Creating Supportive Environments (nine lessons)
- Module 2: Social Emotional Teaching Strategies (six lessons)
- Module 3: Individualized Intervention: Determining the Meaning of Behavior and Developing Appropriate Supports (six lessons)

Culturally Responsive Practices to Reduce Implicit Bias, Disproportionality, Suspension & Expulsion Module package (2 hours)

- Culturally responsive practices in education (five lessons)

Virtual PLCs (12 hours)

- Meeting A: Birth to Five Module 1 – Lessons 1-4; Implicit Bias – Lessons 1-3
- Meeting B: Birth to Five Module 1 – Lessons 5-9; Implicit Bias – Lessons 4-5
- Meeting C: Birth to Five Module 2 – Lessons 1-3
- Meeting D: Birth to Five Module 2 – Lessons 4-6
- Meeting E: Birth to Five Module 3 – Lessons 1-3
- Meeting F: Birth to Five Module 3 – Lessons 4-6

Evaluation goals and research questions

Like the initial pilot study, the present evaluation 1) examined if participation in the ePyramid Module training was linked to improvement in educators' social-emotional development knowledge, self-efficacy, and practices in a larger sample and 2) sought to provide DECAL with considerations to improve future training. In addition, the evaluation examined whether the training was associated with improvements in participants' perceptions of children's challenging behavior and application of the knowledge and practices covered in the training, which were not assessed in the pilot evaluation. The following research questions guided the present evaluation:

- RQ1. Did administrators' and teachers' reports of SEL knowledge and self-efficacy improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?
- RQ2. Did administrators' and teachers' perceptions of and responses to children's challenging behaviors improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?
- RQ3. Did administrators' and teachers' reports of their practices related to SEL improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?
- RQ4. In what ways did administrators and teachers apply the knowledge and practices they learned in the ePyramid Module training?
- RQ5. What were administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the ePyramid Module training and related supports?

Methodology and Data

Participants and data collection methods

Administrator sample

Ninety-five administrators enrolled in the administrator scale-up ePyramid Module training. Sixty administrators worked in programs with Georgia's Pre-K classrooms.

Of the 95 administrators, 63 percent (n=60) completed both the pre- and post-surveys. Fifteen participants completed the pre-survey only and two completed the post-survey only, bringing the response rate of people who responded to at least one survey to 81 percent (n=77; see Table 2 for a breakdown of survey completion). We analyzed demographics and research questions (RQs) 1-3 for anyone who fully or partially completed the surveys.

Table 2. Participation in the administrator scale-up surveys

Survey Participation	Number of Participants (n=95)	Percent of Participants (n = 95)
Pre-training survey only	15	16%
Post-training survey only	2	2%
Both surveys	60	63%
Neither survey	18	19%

Source: Administrator survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

On average, administrators had been in the field of ECE for 17 years (range: 1-40). Over three quarters of respondents worked at center-based child care programs (n=60, 78%), including university child care programs, and about one quarter worked for school-based Georgia's Pre-K programs (n=17, 22%).

Most respondents identified as women (n=70, 93%). About half of respondents identified as Black or African American (n=36, 49%), with the second largest group identifying as White (n=30, 41%). Over one third of respondents reported their highest level of education as a graduate degree (n=26, 35%) and another third reported that their highest level of education was a bachelor's degree (n=23, 31%). No administrators had less than a high school diploma. Sixteen percent (n=12) of individuals had a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.

Most administrators had an annual salary of \$40,000 or greater (n=50, 67%); this includes 35 percent of respondents who reported earning more than \$60,000 per year (n=26). Only one administrator reported earning less than \$20,000 per year (1%).

Teacher sample

One hundred ninety-six teachers initially enrolled in the training. Seventy of the initial enrollees taught infants/toddlers and 126 participants taught preschool, ages 3 to 5 or 4 to 5. By the end of the training, 18

teachers dropped out for various reasons, leaving 178 teachers who completed the ePyramid Module training scale-up.

Of the 178 teachers who completed the training, 72 percent (n=128) completed both the pre- and post-surveys. Twenty-four teachers completed the pre-survey only, and five completed the post-survey only, bringing the response rate for people who completed at least one survey to 88 percent (n=157; see Table 3 for a breakdown of survey completion). We analyzed demographics and RQs 1-3 for anyone who fully or partially completed the surveys and did not drop out of the training.

Table 3. Participation in the teacher scale-up surveys

Survey Participation	Number of Participants (n=178)	Percent of Participants (n=178)
Pre-training survey only	24	13%
Post-training survey only	5	3%
Both surveys	128	72%
Neither survey	21	12%

Source: Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

On average, teacher respondents had been in the ECE field for 11 years (range: 0-42). Over three quarters of teachers worked at private child care programs (n=124, 81%), including university child care programs, and less than one quarter worked in public school programs (n=29, 19%).

Nearly all respondents identified as women (n=152, 97%). About half of respondents identified as Black or African American (n=78, 52%), with the second largest group identifying as White (n=48, 32%). Smaller proportions of teachers identified as Asian (n=9, 6%) and multiracial (n=3, 2%). Over a quarter of respondents reported their highest level of education as a bachelor's degree (n=41, 26%); one fifth reported their highest level of education as a high school diploma/GED (n=28, 18%). Three teachers reported having less than a high school education (2%). Only 24 percent (n=37) of individuals reported having a CDA.

Most teachers reported an annual salary of \$40,000 or less (n=97, 73%); this includes 19 percent of respondents who reported earning less than \$20,000 per year (n=25). Only one teacher reported earning more than \$60,000 per year.

Participant surveys and measures

Before and after the ePyramid Module training, we emailed each administrator and teacher a survey through REDCap, a secure data collection and management platform.

Detailed information about all the measures used for this report (e.g., number of items, item examples, response scale) can be found in Appendix A. To learn who participated in the ePyramid Module training, we collected details about participants' demographic and program characteristics. In the surveys, we used the same measures from the pilot evaluation to assess change in knowledge of SEL, self-efficacy, competency with family engagement, harsh discipline practices, training takeaways, perceptions of the training, and estimates of training module completion.

We also added two new measures to the teacher surveys to assess perceptions of challenging behaviors and classroom practices related to SEL. We used an adapted version of the *Preschool Expulsion Risk Measure*

(PERM)⁷ to measure how teachers perceive challenging behaviors in the classroom. In addition, we used the *Checklist of Early Childhood Practices that Support Social Emotional Development and Trauma-Informed Care*⁸ to assess classroom practices related to SEL. The Pyramid Model Consortium initially created this tool to encourage self-reflection among early childhood educators and encourage use of trauma-informed practices with young children. We used their original sections for reflection to create five scales of SEL practices: Nurturing and Responsive Relationships; Create a Safe Learning Environment and Using Positive Directions and Rules; Create Calm, Predictable Transitions; Help Children Regulate their Emotions and Express Their Feelings Appropriately; and Intensive Interventions that Consider Child's Experiences. We also separated out statements on communicating with families into a section called "Interactions with Families." We asked teachers how frequently they used strategies, on a scale from never to always.

Participant focus groups

After the training was completed, we invited all administrators and teachers via email to participate in a series of focus groups which aimed to better understand participants' experiences with the training and any recommendations they had for improvements. Twenty-five administrators participated across seven focus groups and 30 teachers participated across nine focus groups. If a participant could not attend one of the focus groups, they had the option to write in their responses to the questions via email; one administrator and two teachers took this option. We conducted the one-hour focus groups using Microsoft Teams.

Overall, the focus group protocol for the scale-up mirrored that used in the pilot, although there were a few minor changes. For both the administrator and teacher scale-up protocols, we included questions about the ClassWallet, how they applied the Pyramid Model strategies in their classroom or program, and previous trainings they completed. For teachers, we added more detailed questions about changes to their classroom practices, including how they respond to severe behavior incidents.

Data analysis plan

Survey analysis plan

We exported data from the survey software to STATA, where we cleaned and analyzed the demographic variables. For the final analyses, we created overall scores for each measure by averaging responses to all questions on a particular measure (e.g., an SEL knowledge score was created by averaging responses across the nine Social Emotional Development Inventory [SEDI] items). For more detailed information, see Appendix B.

To analyze closed-ended survey questions (e.g., questions in which respondents chose from a set of options), we used descriptive and inferential statistical tests. See Appendix B for a detailed description of all analyses we ran. We conducted descriptive analyses (e.g., mean, range) on participant demographic data. For research questions 1-3, our analysis included statistical techniques to account for missing data, allowing us to maximize data collected from participants with partial survey responses; see Appendix B for more details about techniques for handling missing data. We conducted regression analyses to compare change over time and group differences by program type and by years in the ECE field. For research question five, we report the teacher and administrator perceptions of the training separately.

⁷ Shenberger, E. (2024). *An Evaluation of "Preventing Expulsion in Preschool": A Cognitive-Behavioral, Strengths-Based Teacher Training to Reduce Early Childhood Exclusionary Discipline* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois Chicago], UIC Campus Repository: <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.13475898.v1>

⁸ Pyramid Model Consortium. (n.d.) *Checklist of Early Childhood Practices that Support Social Emotional Development and Trauma-Informed Care*. <https://challengingbehavior.org/document/checklist-of-early-childhood-practices-that-support-social-emotional-development-and-trauma-informed-care/>

We grouped open-ended survey questions into four topic areas (inclusion and behavior support, recommendations for improvement, lessons learned, and additional training) and analyzed the questions through several rounds of theme extraction. We summed the number of responses related to each theme to see which were the most prevalent in the data.

Focus group analysis plan

To analyze focus group data, we developed a coding scheme with the same topics used in the pilot. Two team members coded each set of focus group notes in Dedoose, and we followed the same analysis process for the focus group data as we did for the open-ended survey questions (see above). See Appendix B for more details about the qualitative analysis process.

See the box to the right for a description of how we quantify the focus group findings.

Descriptors for Qualitative Findings

A few: Two to three focus groups.

Several: Four to five focus groups.

Some: Six to seven focus groups.

Many: Eight or more focus groups.

Most: All but one or two focus groups.

Findings

For research questions 1-3, we present overall change on all the outcomes measured and whether the change was significant. When we found significant change, we ran analyses to examine group differences in change by program type and years in ECE. We only present the findings on these group differences when they are significant. For research questions 4-5, we present the findings by high-level themes, supported by examples from focus group discussions and responses to open-ended questions.

RQ1. Did administrators' and teachers' reports of SEL knowledge and self-efficacy improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?

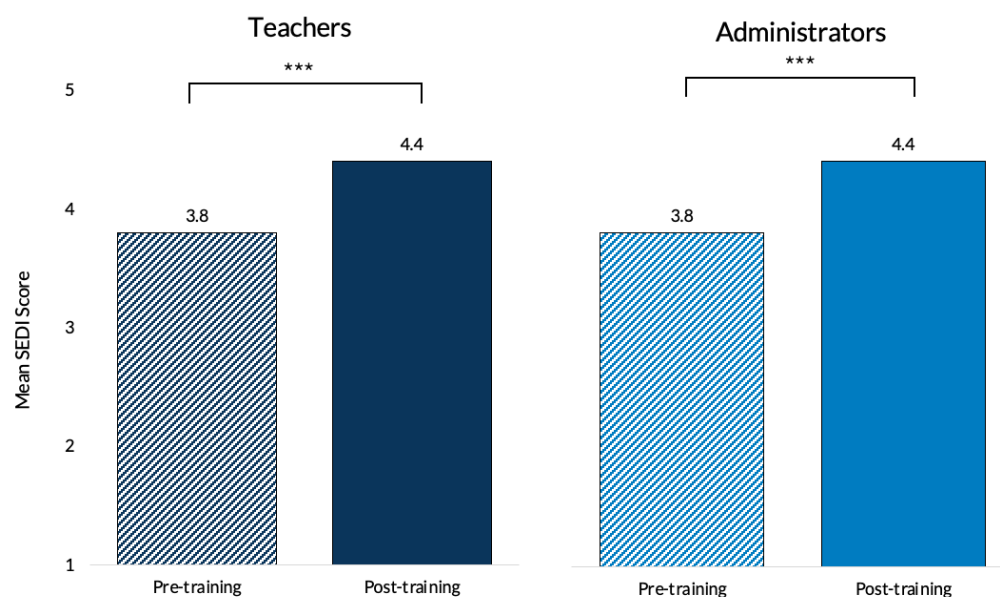
Main takeaway:

Administrators and teachers both improved their SEL knowledge and self-efficacy after completing the ePyramid Module training.

SEL knowledge and self-efficacy

Administrators and teachers improved in SEL knowledge and self-efficacy following participation in the ePyramid Module training, as demonstrated by increases in SEDI and self-efficacy scores. Specifically, both administrators and teachers improved SEDI scores by a half a point from pre-training to post-training (see Figure 1). There was also a significant association between administrator's program type and the extent to which they increased their SEDI and self-efficacy scores following the training. Administrators from school-based Georgia's Pre-K programs showed more improvement than administrators from center-based child care, although administrators from center-based child care programs started with higher means in the pre-survey than administrators in school-based Georgia's Pre-K programs.

Figure 1. Teachers (n=157) and administrators (n=77) had significantly higher SEDI scores after the training.

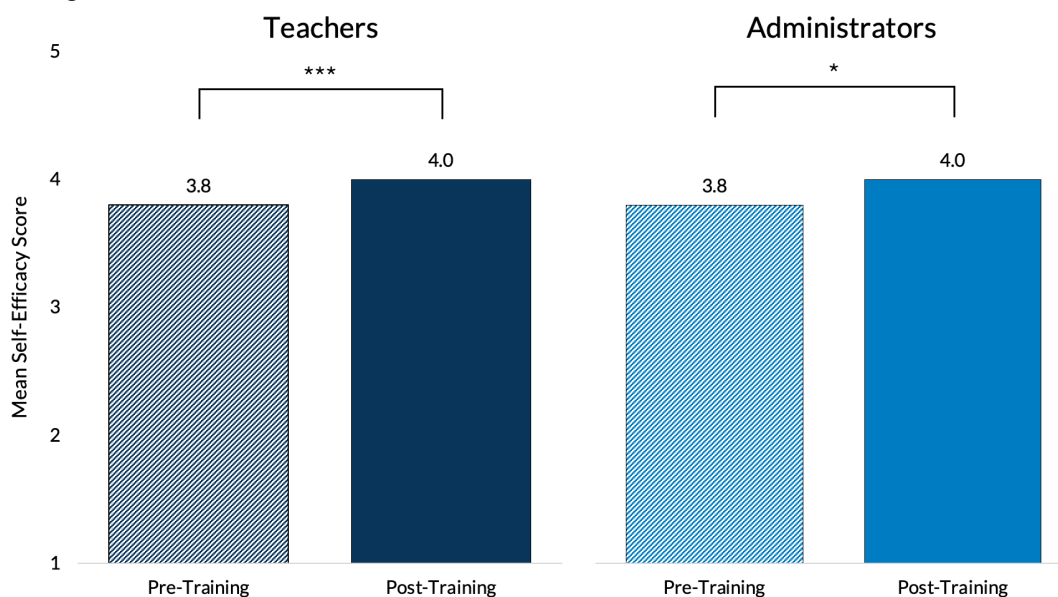


Source: Administrator and teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Note: *** $p < 0.001$.

There was a small, yet significant, increase from pre-training self-efficacy scores to post-training self-efficacy scores for both teachers and administrators (see Figure 2). Additionally, teachers from school-based Georgia Pre-K programs showed more improvement than teachers from center-based child care programs, who also significantly increased their scores.

Figure 2. Teachers (n=157) and administrators (n=77) had significantly higher self-efficacy scores after the training.



Source: Administrator and teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Note: * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$

RQ2. Did administrators' and teachers' perceptions of and responses to children's challenging behaviors improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?

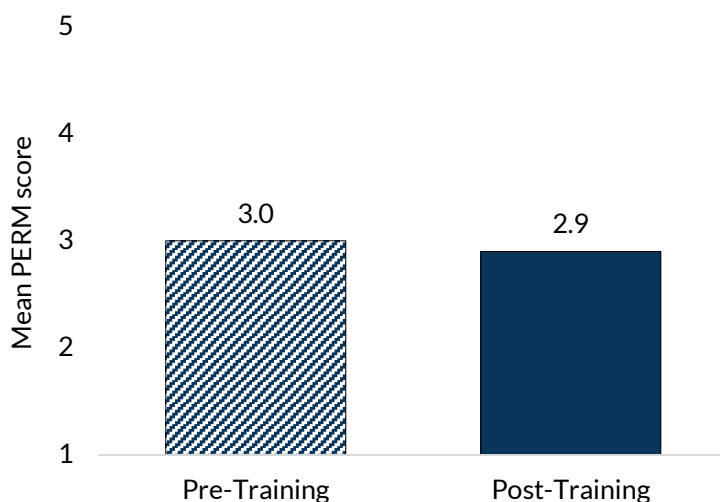
Main takeaways:

- Teachers reported no change in their perceptions of challenging behaviors.
- Administrators reported a reduction the number of children whose challenging behaviors required them to talk with their families.
- Although not significant, administrators did report a decrease in the number of children who received in-school suspension for their challenging behaviors following their completion of the training.
- Teachers reported a reduction in the number of incidents where they then sent a child to an administrator's office in response to a challenging behavior.

Perception of challenging behaviors

There was no change in teachers' perceptions of challenging behaviors following the ePyramid Module training based on the Expulsion Risk Survey. Although there was a slight decrease in scores on the Expulsion Risk Survey, from a score of 3.0 to 2.9, this decrease was not significant (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Teachers' (n=157) perceptions of challenging behaviors did not change after the ePyramid Module training.

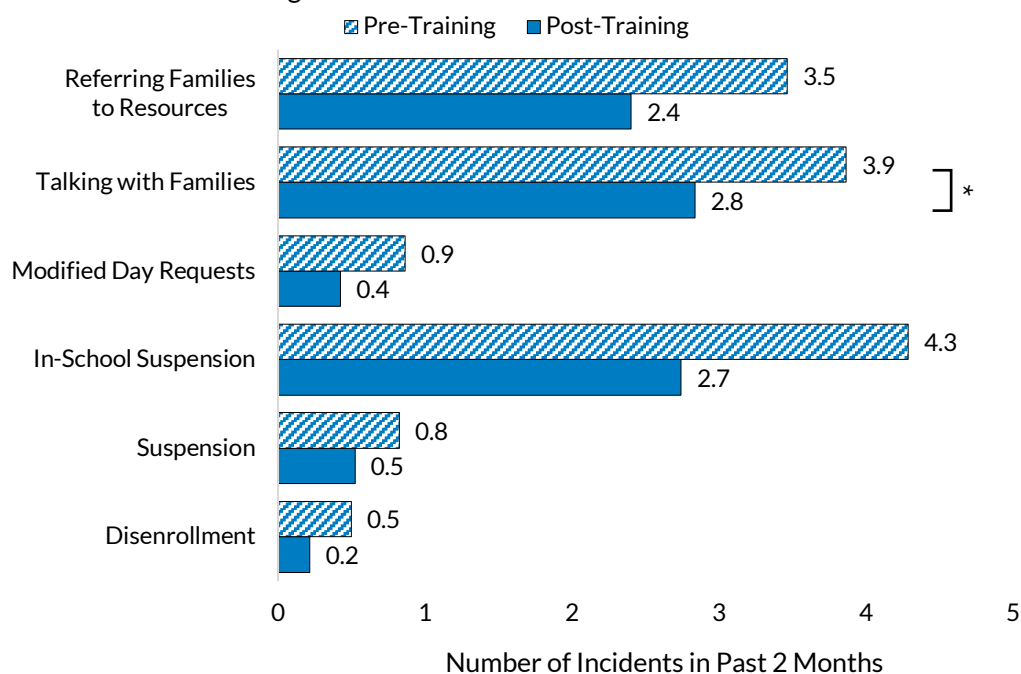


Source: Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Harsh disciplinary actions in response to challenging behaviors

For administrators' responses to challenging behavior, only one of six disciplinary actions had a significant change following training. Administrators reported fewer instances of talking with families in response to challenging behaviors following the training, from 3.9 instances to 2.8 instances in the previous two months (see Figure 4). This seems to be driven primarily by administrators in school-based Georgia's Pre-K programs, who showed a significant decrease in their rate of talking to families in response to children's challenging behaviors, whereas center-based child care administrators did not significantly change their rate of talking to families in response to children's challenging behaviors.

Figure 4. Administrators (n=77) reported talking with families less often in response to challenging behaviors after the training.

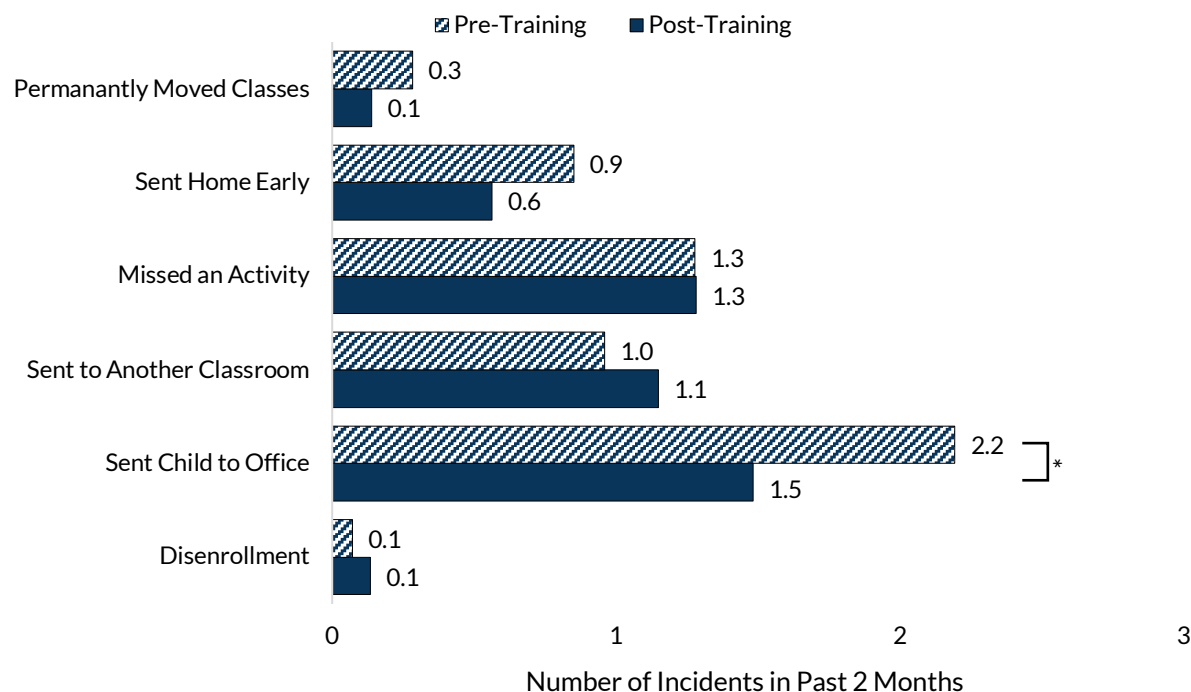


Source: Administrator survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Note: * $p < 0.05$

Similarly, for teachers, only one of the six disciplinary actions showed a significant change in incidences following the ePyramid Module training. Teachers reported a significant decrease in sending children to the office in the previous two months, from an average of 2.2 incidents pre-training to 1.5 incidents post-training. There were no significant changes in the other five harsh disciplinary actions (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Teachers (n=157) reported a reduction in sending children to an administrator’s office after the training.



Source: Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Note: * $p < 0.05$

Finally, we asked administrators in both the pre- and post- survey to report how many times they had contacted the Inclusion and Behavior Support Helpline in the last several months and to describe the situation in which they had called. Administrators who reported that they called the helpline gave similar reasons for calling across the two time points, with several noting that this was a last resort or for extremely severe behavior; administrators also noted the strain on teachers and that they called to receive support for their teachers.

RQ3. Did administrators' and teachers' reports of their practices related to SEL improve after participating in the ePyramid Module training?

Main takeaways:

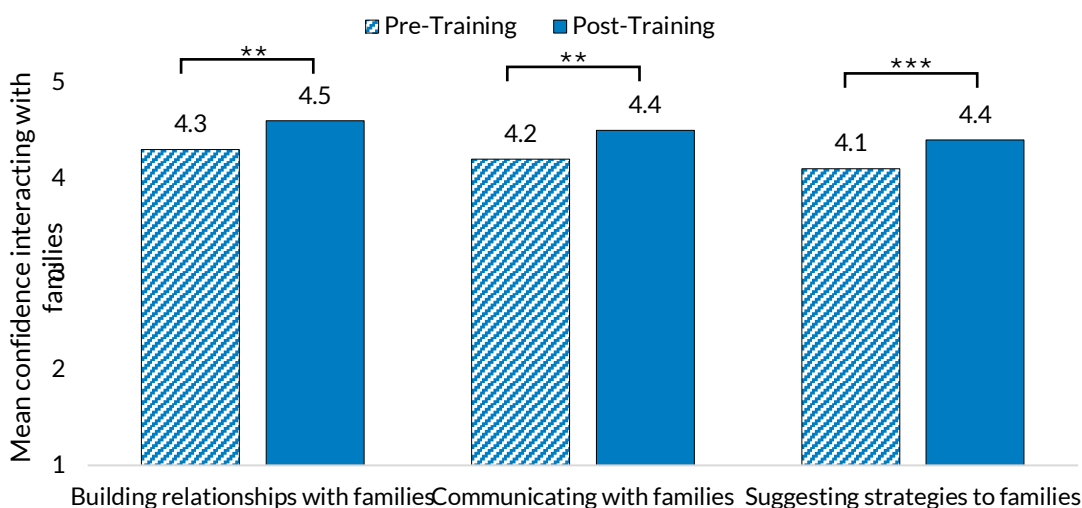
- Administrators reported more competence interacting with families.
- Teachers increased how much they talked about ePyramid Module strategies in their interactions with families.
- Teachers reported more frequently using practices that create a safe learning environment, predictable transitions, and help regulate children's emotions.

Interactions with families

Administrators reported feeling more confidence in supporting families, as shown by a significant increase in building relationships with families, communicating with families, and suggesting strategies to families (see Figure 6). There was a significant association between administrator's program type and the extent to which they increased their confidence suggesting strategies to families. Specifically, administrators from school-based Georgia's Pre-K programs showed more improvement in this skill following training compared to administrators from center-based child care programs, although both groups showed significant improvement.

There also was a significant association between the number of years administrators had been in the ECE field and the extent to which they increased their confidence communicating with families. Specifically, administrators who have been in the field of ECE longer showed more improvement in this skill following training, whereas those in the field for a shorter period of time reported less improved confidence.

Figure 6. Administrators (n=77) reported more confidence in family interactions after the training.

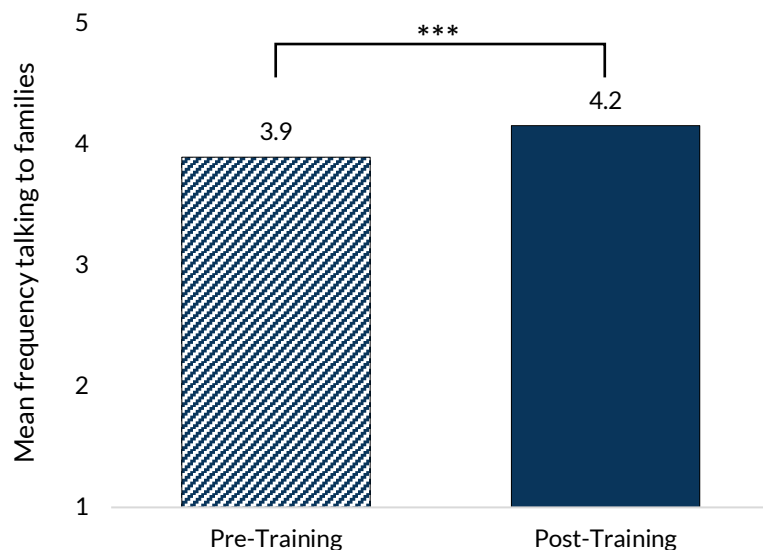


Source: Administrator survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Note: ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Additionally, teachers reported more often talking about ePyramid Model strategies when interacting with families following ePyramid Module training (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Teachers (n=157) reported talking about ePyramid Model strategies more often in interactions with families after the training.



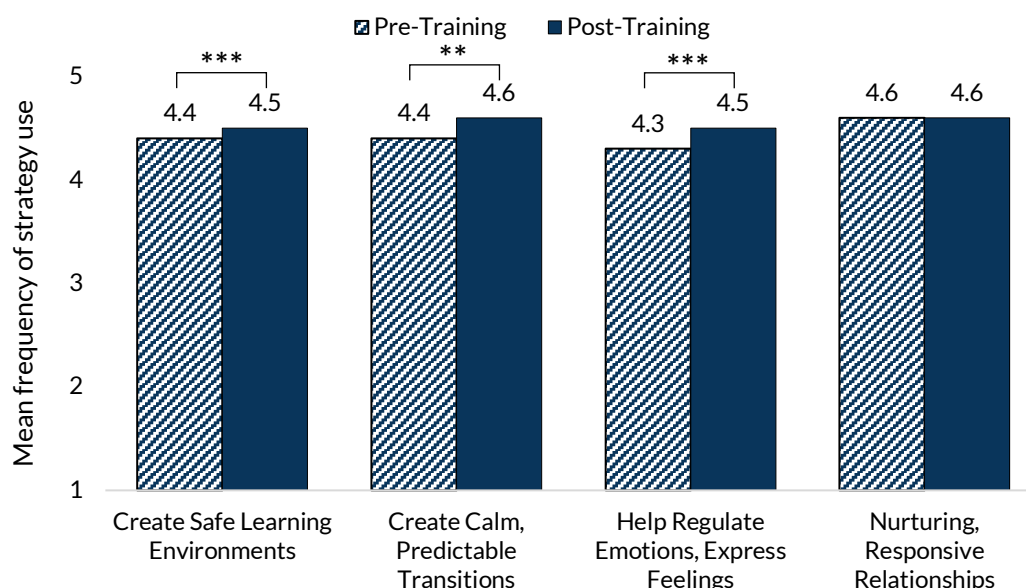
Source: Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

Early childhood practices that support social-emotional development and trauma-informed care

Teachers reported using several new strategies and practices following the ePyramid Module training. They more frequently reported using strategies to create a safe learning environment; to create calm, predictable transitions; and to help children regulate their emotions. The frequency of teachers' reported use of nurturing and responsive relationships strategies did not increase following the ePyramid Module training (see Figure 8). However, we suspect that this is due to the high prevalence of these practices and strategies at the start of the training. Furthermore, although teachers in all settings reported an increase in using strategies to help children regulate their emotions and express feelings, teachers in school-based Georgia's Pre-K showed a greater increase in using these strategies compared to teachers in center-based child care.

Figure 8. Use of early childhood practices that support social-emotional development and trauma-informed care. (n=157)



Source: Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Note: ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

RQ4. In what ways did administrators and teachers apply the knowledge and practices they learned in the ePyramid Module training?

Main takeaways:

- Administrators and teachers reported using strategies they learned in the ePyramid Module training both in and out of the classrooms, with children and adults.
- Teachers reported more self-reflection when interacting with children, families, or their colleagues.
- Administrators and teachers reported that they finished the training with a renewed focus on building quality interactions with parents and families.
- Teachers reported fewer challenging behaviors in their classrooms, and cited using strategies like creating a calming corner and other emotion regulation techniques that help prevent challenging behaviors.

Changes to program or classroom environment

Teachers and administrators both discussed sharing and modeling the strategies they learned in the classroom and noted changes they had made that improved their program and classroom environment. During the focus groups, administrators and teachers reported sharing the information learned in the

training with their coworkers and demonstrating strategies to manage challenging behaviors. As one administrator described, “We’ve also had the opportunity to do coaching in the classroom and modeling the appropriate behavior. We don’t just go in and tell the teachers, we actually show them, do a roleplay experience between the two of us.” Administrators discussed increasing the focus on adult and teacher well-being and emotion regulation, and administrators across several focus groups reflected that they had noticed an improvement in the program climate and environment (see Figure 9). Teachers in several focus groups were using the strategies learned to foster a more positive classroom environment. In focus groups and open-ended survey questions, both teachers and administrators discussed using strategies such as deposits/withdrawals, transitions and timers, conversation starters, behavior intervention response plans, and hot buttons. Administrators in one focus group planned to incorporate the information they learned into trainings for teachers.

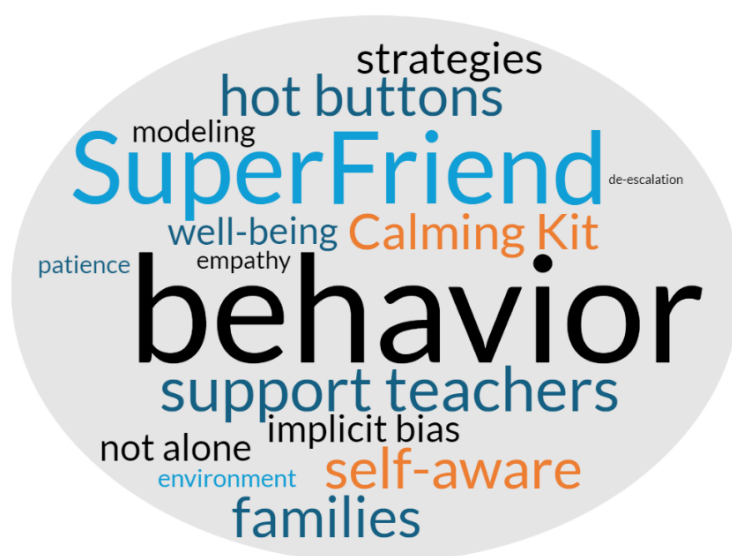
Self-reflection and connection with fellow trainees

Participants reflected on the positive influence of the Hot Button discussion⁹ on their daily life, noting that they felt they were **more self-aware, better able to self-regulate, and more empathetic**. Teachers and administrators across some focus groups felt they were more aware of their hot buttons and cultural biases. The training also offered an opportunity for self-reflection for teachers in several focus groups, with the Hot Button discussion being particularly impactful. One teacher said, “That was one of my favorites, the hot buttons. Learning how to take my time and pace myself and learn my triggers and stop allowing that to take over my whole day.” This sentiment was echoed in an open-ended survey question, in which many teachers noted that their self-regulation had improved as a result of the training. Overall, participants enjoyed having a space to share techniques and strategies with others.

“We’re doing a lot of compliments and we’re seeing a change in not just [children’s] behaviors but also in conversations with each other...We’re really trying to create a more positive culture in language.”

– Teacher from a center-based child care program

Figure 9. Word cloud illustrating what administrators learned and strategies they implemented.



Source: Administrator survey data and focus group responses, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

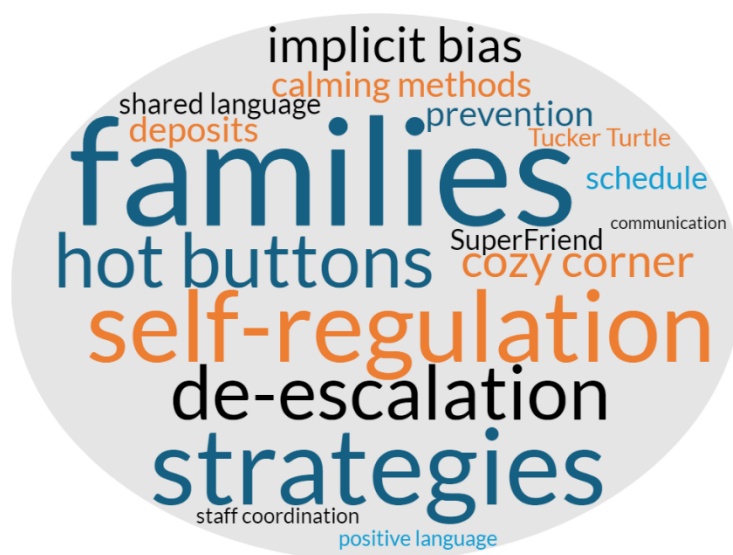
⁹ In the Hot Button activity, participants are asked to identify behaviors that “push their buttons” and the emotions they feel when these behaviors occur.

Interactions across the school community

Some administrators believed the training improved their abilities to assist their teachers. Administrators across several focus groups reported that they were better equipped to support their teachers to handle challenging behaviors in the classroom. Teachers in several focus groups reported that they were coordinating more with other teachers and improving communication with each other. Furthermore, in response to one of the survey questions, both teachers and administrators discussed that the training had helped improve their communication with and support of fellow staff.

Both teachers and administrators described an increased focus on the quality of their interactions with parents. Administrators in a few focus groups noted that they were focusing on family engagement and relationships with parents, and a couple had noticed an improvement in the conversations between teachers and parents. Participants across several teacher focus groups appreciated the opportunity to learn to work with parents (see Figure 10). As one teacher described, “I did the deposits more with some of the parents. Because with the children that we were having issues with that just keep having the same core behavior choices every day, I tried to make the deposits with the parents and talk with them see what they do at home, and that really and truly turned out to be very helpful.”

Figure 10. Word cloud illustrating what teachers learned and strategies they implemented.



Source: Teacher survey data and focus group responses, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Interactions with children

Participants noticed improvements in challenging behavior and in children’s experiences in the classroom. Teachers found calming techniques such as “smell the flower, blow out the candle” to be helpful in the classroom and felt that they better understood the reasons behind children’s behavior. Administrators in a few focus groups noticed that challenging behaviors had improved in some of their classrooms and that teachers were able to use the strategies they learned to help children exhibiting these behaviors, resulting in more positive classroom environments. In response to an open-ended survey question about what was most helpful to learn during the training, both administrators and teachers cited behavior management and improved communication with and support for children.

The implicit bias training was also helpful for understanding how cultural differences can affect perspectives of children’s behavior and allowed participants to be more understanding of their children. One

administrator said, “One thing I took away was taking my own cultural beliefs out and understanding just because I believe children should behave or respond a certain way, sometimes you have to take that out because that might not have been how they were raised. That doesn’t mean that they are being disrespectful or being rude or they’re not communicating the right way. Everybody’s cultural backgrounds are different, and how you were raised or what your expectation is with your own children, it’s totally different.”

RQ5. What were administrators’ and teachers’ perceptions of the ePyramid Module training and related supports?

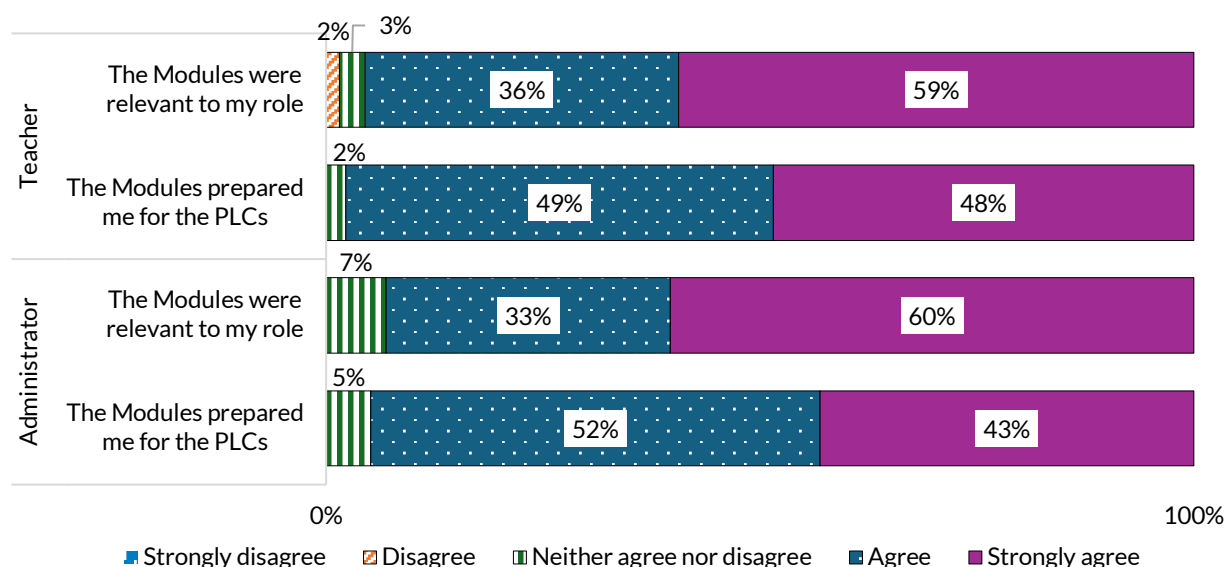
Main takeaways:

- Administrators and teachers were overwhelmingly positive about the ePyramid Module training.
- Almost all participants shared that they would recommend the training to others.
- Administrators and teachers found the ePyramid Module content relevant to their roles and engaging.
- Administrators and teachers noted that they enjoyed connecting with fellow ECE educators.
- Almost all participants felt that the facilitators made them feel comfortable sharing in their PLCs.

Modules: format and content

In the post-training survey, over 95 percent of administrators and teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the modules prepared them for the PLCs and that the modules were relevant to their specific role. See Figure 11 for the specific percentage agreement with each question for teachers and administrators combined.

Figure 11. Administrators’ (n=58) and teachers’ (n=132-133) agreement with statements related to the modules



Source: Administrator and Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

In focus groups, most administrators found the time commitment for the modules reasonable and manageable, the materials useful, and the modules well-organized. Across several focus groups, administrators reported that they did not have challenges finding time to work on the modules and that they appreciated that lessons were broken up into smaller chunks. **Teachers particularly appreciated the self-paced nature of the training, as they were able to fit the modules into their daily schedules and take their time on certain lessons.** Teachers in a few focus groups also reported that they enjoyed learning from the videos. A few participants offered some suggestions to improve the modules, such as including captions or transcriptions for the videos. One administrator felt that the training should be offered concurrently with the teacher training.

Participants in focus groups reported that the content in the modules was both relevant and applicable, and although some information was repetitive or basic, they appreciated the examples and resources provided. Teachers and

administrators in some focus groups discussed how useful the information was to their work, as one teacher noted, “A lot of it felt relevant in my classroom. I’ve had a lot of SEL needs. I have the inclusion classrooms, so not just my special needs babies, even my general education kids I’ve used a lot of it. I’ve seen a lot more social-emotional [issues] this year than I ever have in the past.” However, some teachers and administrators felt the information could have been more targeted. Administrators in one focus group thought that the information could have been more relevant to their role as directors, while teachers in a few focus groups felt the modules could have been more relevant to the age group they served. One teacher focus group also discussed how the modules needed more real-world or in-depth examples.

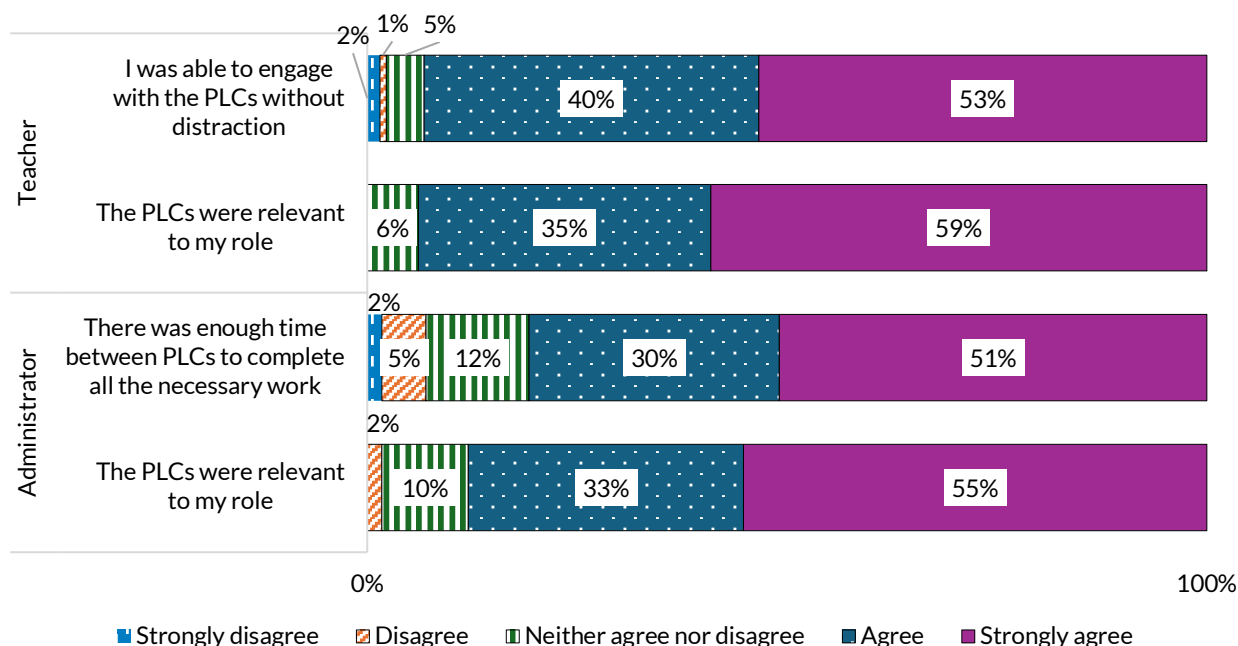
“We as directors and owners are not in the classroom as much as the teachers, so some of that information—like ‘go try this and come back’—is teacher-directed. Maybe a little bit more leadership position would be great for directors...Most of the time, we are the last resort.”

– Child care administrator

PLCs: format, content, and facilitation

Most administrators and teachers agreed that the PLCs were relevant to their specific roles (see Figure 12). Respondents also agreed that the timing of the PLCs worked for them; 81 percent of administrators agreed that there was enough time between PLCs to complete the work and 93 percent of teachers agreed that they were able to complete the PLCs without distraction. Additionally, administrators overwhelmingly agreed that the virtual format worked well for them (95%).

Figure 12. Administrators' (n=57-58) and teachers' (n=132-133) agreement with statements related to the PLCs



Source: Administrator and Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

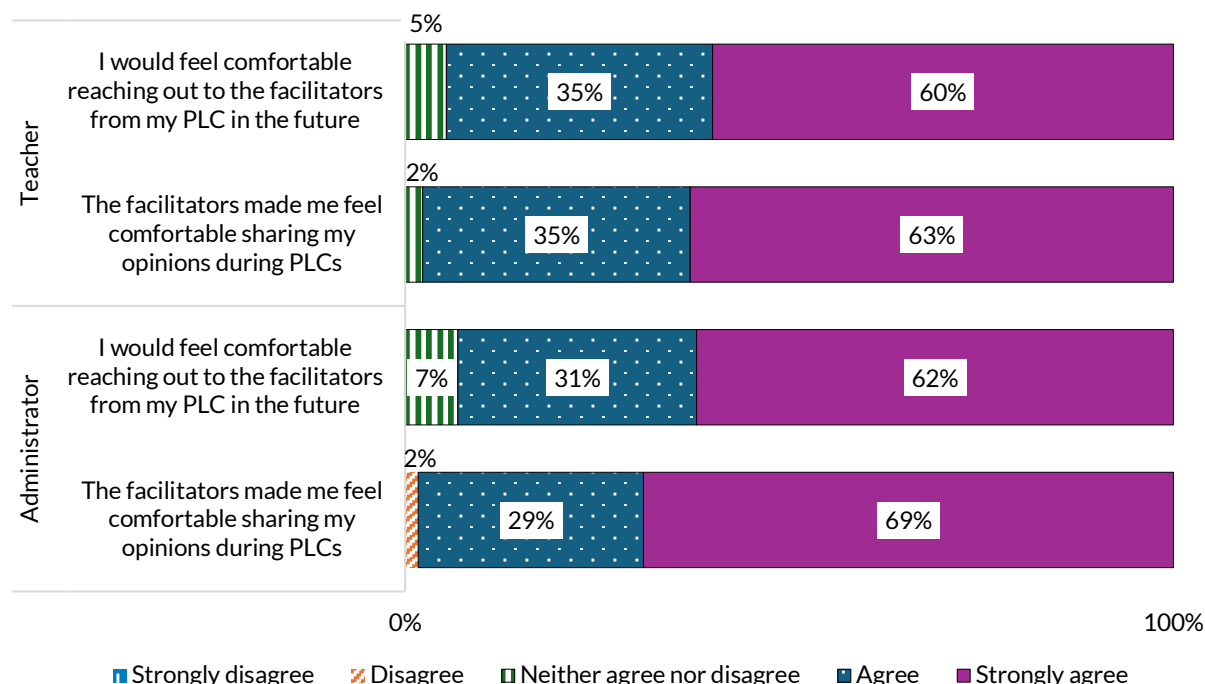
Participants in the focus groups overwhelmingly reported positive feelings toward the virtual setting, which they felt was more convenient and still allowed for connections with others. Across several focus groups, participants felt that the timing and length was manageable and appropriate, although other participants had critiques of the length of the PLCs. Teachers and administrators in several focus groups felt that the sessions' length was too long, and administrators in a few focus groups felt that there were too many lessons covered per PLC. Similarly, in the survey some teachers and administrators suggested offering flexible or additional timeslots. Participants enjoyed the breakout rooms, although a few teacher focus groups reported that their breakout rooms were all participants from one program, and they would have liked to engage with teachers from a mix of programs. A few teacher focus groups also appreciated the different avenues for engagement, such as Jamboard and the chat. Some administrators thought that DECAL should offer the program at a different time of year, although there was not a consensus on what time of year would be best, as some felt that summer would be better while others recommended the fall or spring.

PLCs offered the opportunity for new perspectives, to learn new strategies and techniques from peers, and to better retain information from the modules. One teacher said, "With all different school teachers' experiences, they're sharing all the information, all the techniques with how to deal with kids, I learned so many things. It's helping me a lot." Similarly, administrators in a few focus groups thought that the mix of locations, age groups, and program types enhanced the discussions in the PLCs. A few administrator focus groups noted that the discussion of hot buttons and cultural biases was particularly helpful. Additionally, the PLCs helped participants feel less isolated in the challenges they faced, as noted by both administrators and teachers in some focus groups. Teachers across several focus groups felt that the PLCs fostered connections with other teachers, and they enjoyed the relationships they built during the training. One recommendation for improvement was to include a social-emotional focus on adults and staff. One administrator had a negative experience with the PLCs and did not feel that they were valuable to her or a good use of time.

In the post-training survey, both administrators and teachers reported very positive feelings towards their facilitators. Almost all respondents said their facilitators made them feel comfortable sharing during the

PLCs and that they would feel comfortable reaching out to their facilitators after the series concluded (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Administrators' (n=58) and teachers' (n=130-132) agreement with statements related to the facilitators.



Source: Administrator and Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Similarly, focus group participants reported that **facilitators were knowledgeable and kept the group engaged, and they created a safe, comfortable atmosphere to freely participate.** Both teachers and administrators across some groups expressed overall appreciation for the facilitators. Administrators in a few focus groups felt that the facilitators did well in presenting the information, such as presenting the information in a fresh way, including real-world experiences and examples, and tying the PLCs to the content of the modules. Participants in some focus groups also noted that the facilitators often offered support to participants by following up after sessions to answer any lingering questions, checking in to make sure everyone understood the content, and asking how certain strategies had worked for participants.

However, one administrator, who did not enjoy the PLCs as reported above, felt that the facilitators were unprepared, did not integrate information from the modules, and lacked knowledge about the content.

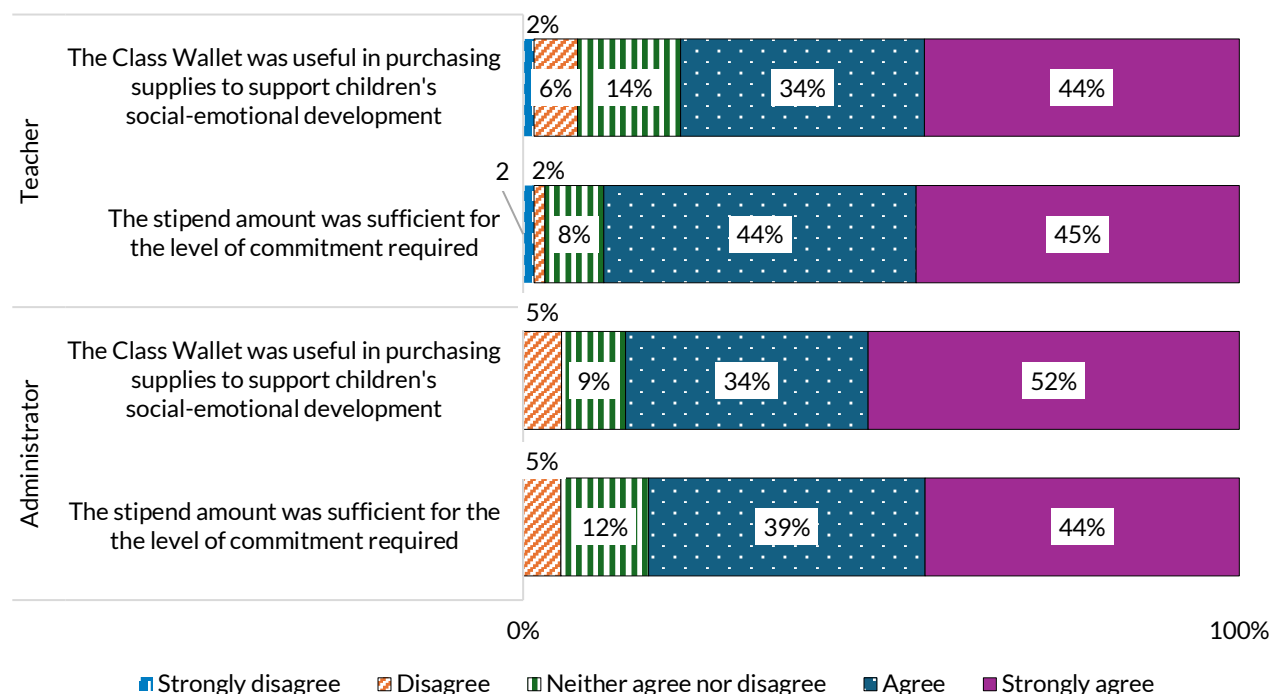
"I liked both facilitators a lot. They were respectful, kind, supportive and made everyone feel special and appreciated for their thoughts and/or opinions. They created a safe space for people to share and helped us to create some rules that we would all [follow] when coming online to share and debrief with other teachers on the things we have learned."

- Teacher from a school-based Georgia's Pre-K program

ClassWallet

Overall, respondents in the post-training survey agreed that the ClassWallet was useful in purchasing supplies. Additionally, both administrators and teachers agreed that the stipend amount was sufficient for the level of effort of the training (see Figure 14).

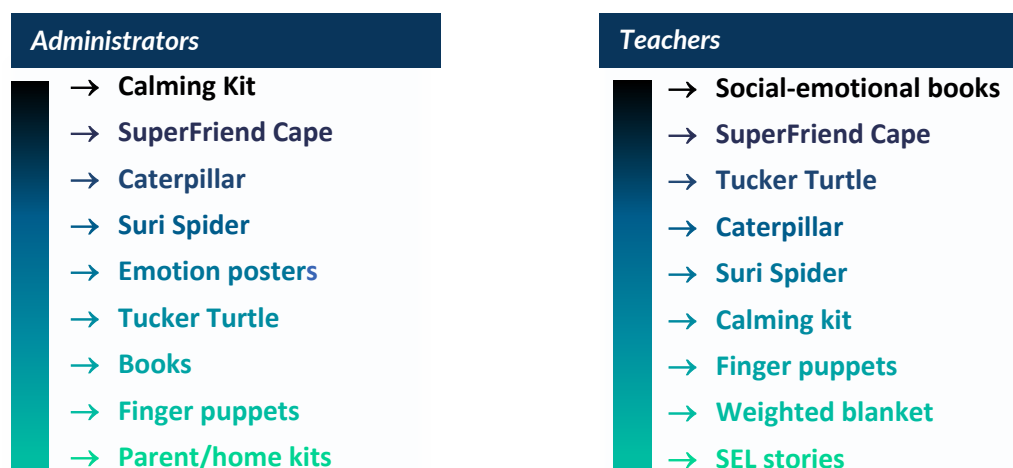
Figure 14. Administrators' (n=56-57) and teachers' (n=132-133) agreement with statements related to the stipend and ClassWallet.



Source: Administrator and Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

In focus groups, participants generally appreciated having access to the ClassWallet but encountered issues accessing funds and felt that the options were too limited. Teachers and administrators in a few focus groups noted that shipping was very expensive, and administrators in several groups found it challenging to calculate final costs and spend all of the funds. Participants in many focus groups wanted more options for the items they could purchase, or alternatively, wanted more stores to be available from which to purchase. As one teacher noted, “We have almost all of the materials [available on the store], so what I ended up getting was just the stuffed animal, like the weighted caterpillar, because we had all the other paper materials.” Participants in some groups also felt that more funds were needed; one suggestion was to allow teachers from the same program to combine funds. Additionally, teachers in several groups reported challenges accessing their funds. Figure 15 describes what items participants most often reported purchasing with ClassWallet funds.

Figure 15. Items purchased using the ClassWallet, from most to least mentioned.



Source: Administrator and teacher focus group responses, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Useful supports

In focus groups, participants most commonly reported that the weekly reminder emails with the agenda and resources were a helpful support. Additionally, administrators in several focus groups found the stipend to be beneficial, while teachers in several focus groups appreciated the flexibility and that facilitators responded quickly to questions. Administrators and teachers in a few groups also appreciated the materials and resources offered.

Both teachers and administrators had little to report in terms of supports offered by their own program, but some did discuss ways that their programs supported them. One administrator received technological support to complete the training. In addition, several teachers mentioned that their program designated time during the day during which teachers could be away from the classroom to take the training.

Additional supports needed during and after training

Several teachers requested additional technology support throughout the training, primarily on how to navigate the eModules as well as the Zoom meetings. Administrators in a few focus groups also thought staffing coverage for teachers or administrators would be very helpful. Other additional supports needed include all classrooms receiving the kit and increased accountability to participate in the training.

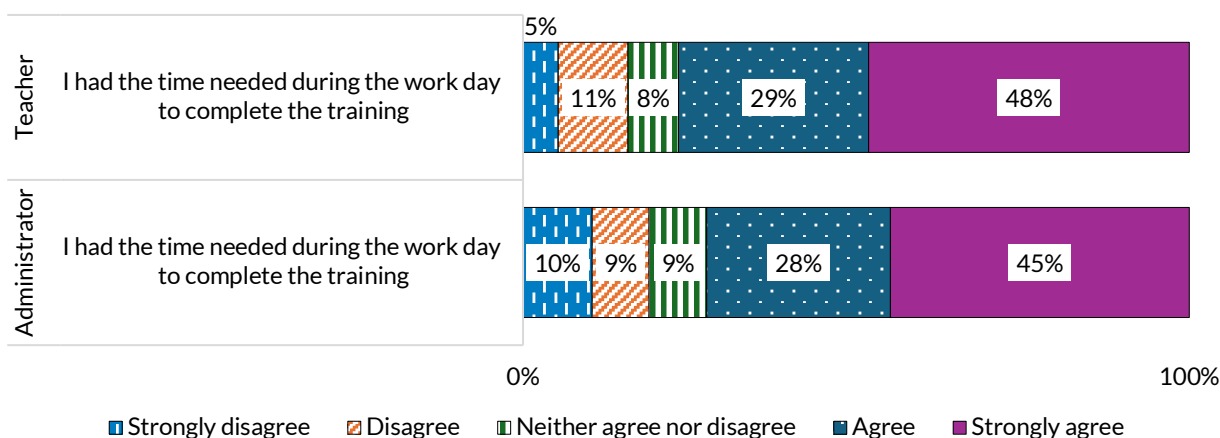
One of the most common post-training supports reported was a content refresher or check-in after the training. Participants in some focus groups requested additional coaching and additional training that builds upon what they learned. Teachers in several focus groups also requested that resources be made available after the training.

Barriers to completing the training

Time commitment was one significant challenge to completing the training, but several other issues came up for teachers and administrators. Administrators in a few focus groups believed it would be challenging to find coverage for the teachers at their program who were taking the training. Across a few focus groups, teachers struggled with using technology and accessing the modules.

Additionally, although most administrators and teachers in the post-training survey agreed that they had the time needed to complete the training during their workday, this was the item with the lowest amount of agreement for each group (see Figure 16). Most respondents agreed that DECAL accurately described the level of commitment necessary for the training.

Figure 16. Administrators' (n=58) and teachers' (n=133) agreement with statements related to their time.

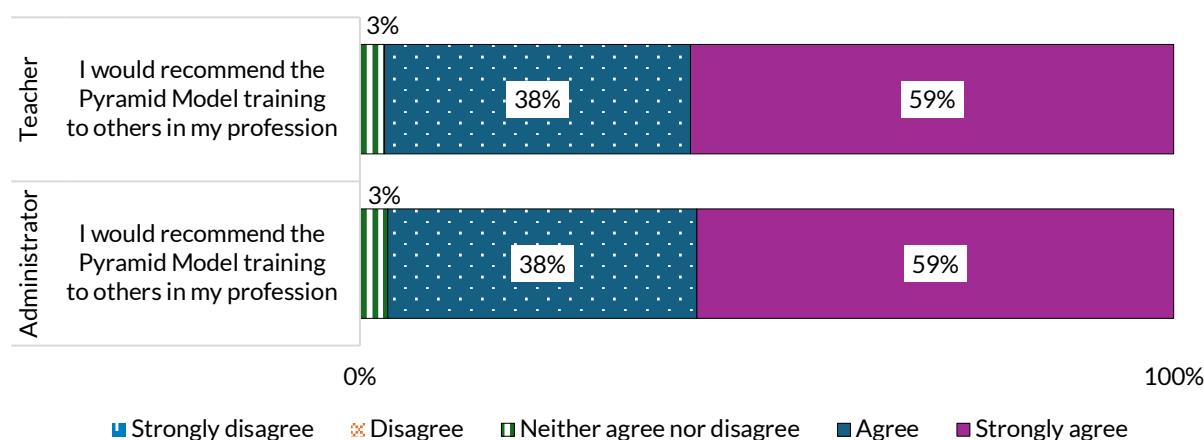


Source: Administrator and Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Overall impressions of the training

Almost every respondent in the post-training survey said they would recommend the ePyramid Module training to others in their profession (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Administrators' (n=58) and teachers' (n=133) agreement with recommending the training to others.



Source: Administrator and Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Many participants believed that the training should continue to be offered, and that every program or staff member should engage in it. Participants felt that the training was valuable and some mentioned that they encouraged fellow staff to participate.

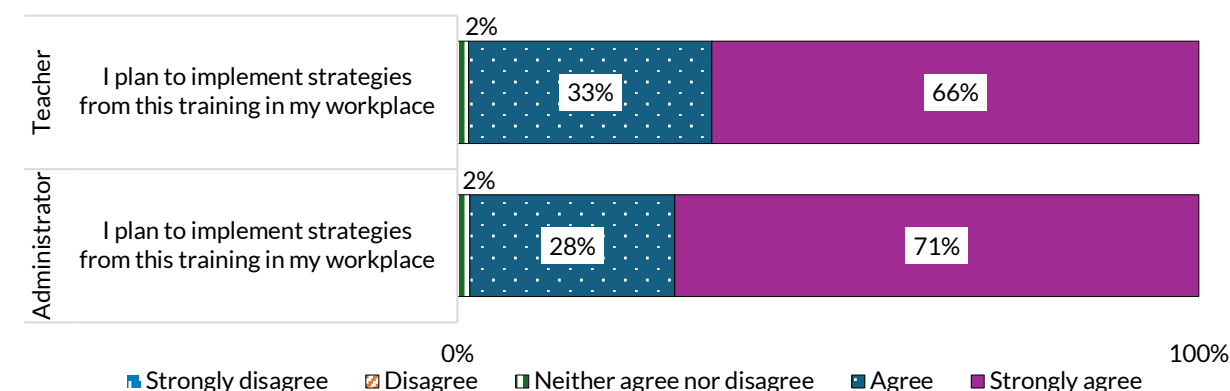
Administrators across several focus groups appreciated the community that they built with their peers. Teachers in a few focus groups reported that the training was beneficial and felt that it had changed their perspective. One recommendation was that DECAL should conduct additional outreach to encourage more programs to participate, while another was that DECAL should ensure that the certificates are sent weekly.

Almost all administrators and teachers agreed that they plan to implement strategies from the ePyramid Module training in their workplace (see Figure 18). Additionally, most administrators reported they had already been implementing some strategies in their workplace and that these strategies were making a difference (see Figure 19).

“I feel like it should be offered across the board. With the child care industry and daycare in general, there’s so much of a turnover rate because people get frustrated so easily and they’re burned out, but this breaks things down where I feel like it wouldn’t be a problem-solver, but I feel it would open their eyes to be a little more understanding and empathetic to the children and hopefully push them to be in the position longer.”

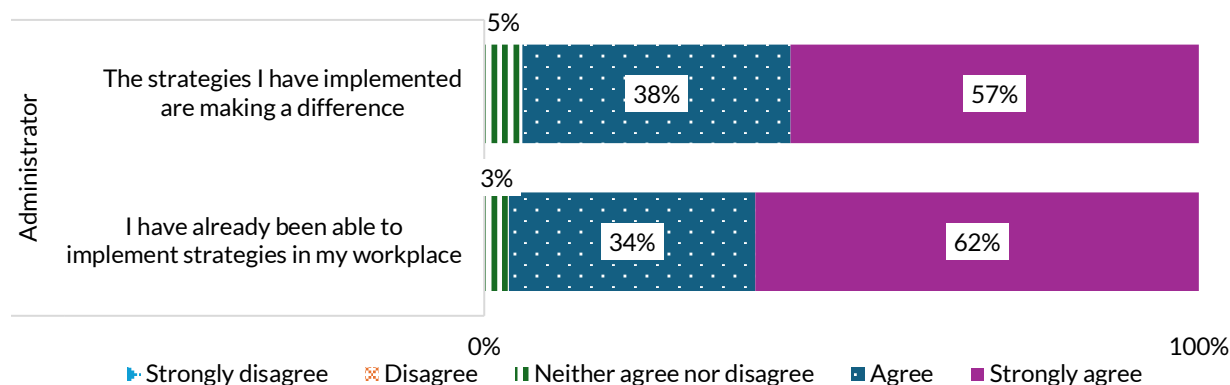
- Teacher from a center-based child care program

Figure 18. Administrators’ (n=58) and teachers’ (n=131) agreement with statements related to implementing strategies.



Source: Administrator and Teacher survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Figure 19. Administrators’ (n=56-58) agreement with statements related to implementing strategies.



Source: Administrator survey data, Georgia ePyramid Module Training Scale-Up Study, 2023-2024.

Study Limitations

The primary limitation of the scale-up study was the use of self-report to understand the change in practices as a result of the training. Future work on the ePyramid Module training should consider using classroom observations to corroborate changes in self-reported practices.

In addition, the scale-up evaluation improved on one limitation noted in the pilot evaluation; the selection of programs, administrators, and teachers to participate in the training. Unlike the pilot where all programs were selected by DECAL to participate in the training, more than half of the programs in the scale-up were selected for outreach about the training from a larger list of programs that fit certain criteria (e.g., high CAPS enrollment). This recruitment strategy allowed for more programs to participate in the training that represented key characteristics, such as higher CAPS enrollment, university settings, and previous outreach for challenging behaviors.

Discussion and Future Considerations

In this scale-up evaluation, we found that overall, **DECAL's second iteration of the ePyramid Module training was associated with positive change in teachers' and administrators' SEL knowledge, self-efficacy, and self-reported practices related to SEL.** These findings are consistent with those from the pilot evaluation. Following the training, administrators reported feeling more competent in supporting families, while teachers reported that they were more frequently using strategies to create a safe learning environment, create calm, predictable transitions, and to help children regulate emotions. In focus groups, administrators and teachers reported using strategies they learned in the ePyramid Module training both in and out of the classroom, in addition to modeling the strategies for fellow teachers. There also was a decrease in using harsh disciplinary actions in response to children's challenging behaviors, with administrators reporting a reduction in talking with their families about children's challenging behaviors and teachers reporting sending children to an administrator's office less frequently. There was no change in teachers' perceptions of challenging behaviors.

In general, participant perceptions of this scaled up implementation of ePyramid Module trainings aligned closely with perceptions of the pilot trainings. **Participants overall had positive experiences with their fellow trainees and with their facilitators; they also found the content of the trainings engaging and relevant to their roles.**

Participant recommendations did not change drastically between the pilot training and the scale-up training evaluated in this report. Overall, time remained the most important barrier to completing the training. While participants generally liked the virtual format, several suggested that DECAL provide technological support for participants (e.g., laptops or tablets to take home). Further, while participants appreciated the ClassWallet, many reported issues accessing the funds and recommended expanding the materials available for purchase. **Nearly all survey respondents agreed that they would recommend the training to others, and participants in focus groups felt that it was important that DECAL continue to offer the training to more programs and ECE educators.**

Based on the data from surveys and focus groups, we offer the following considerations to DECAL:

1. Continue to offer the ePyramid Module training.

Participants found the ePyramid Module training to be relevant and applicable to their work, informative, and beneficial to their practice, and the training was associated with increases in SEL knowledge and practices as well as self-efficacy.

2. Consider offering the training to all staff in a program.

Some administrators and teachers reported that they had encouraged fellow staff to take the training or had shared knowledge and strategies from the training with other staff. Participants who took the training with colleagues found it helpful to have a shared language around SEL and children's challenging behaviors.

3. Provide support in accessing and using Pyramid Model materials during or after the training.

Participants would have liked more instruction in using the classroom materials that corresponded to the Pyramid Model Classroom Kits. While some participants had access to the kits before the training began, many only received materials through the ClassWallet at the end of the training and reported they would have liked more instruction in using the materials. Further, teachers were interested in having access to the materials and resources from the ePyramid Modules after the training ended.

4. Offer continued training or occasional check-ins with previous training participants.

In focus groups, many participants expressed interest in follow-up trainings or check-ins with facilitators after the completion of the ePyramid Module training. We recommend that DECAL provide these opportunities to programs and educators who have completed the training.

5. Provide technology support for ECE staff who may want to access the training outside of work hours.

Some participants encountered issues with navigating the ePyramid Module platform or using Zoom. Access to technology outside of school hours could be a potential barrier for ECE educators who would otherwise want to complete the training.

6. Consider expanding the options available for the ClassWallet.

Participants appreciated the ClassWallet funds and found them beneficial for their classroom or program, but many felt that ClassWallet did not offer them enough options, both in terms of stores and materials. Some also felt that the shipping was overly expensive and struggled to spend all of their funds. Consider allowing ClassWallet funds to be spent at local stores or providing additional funds to cover shipping costs.

Suggested Citation

McDoniel, M. E., Keaton, H., Richards, K., Wodrich, H., LaForett, D. R., Gal-Szabo, D. E., & Early, D. M. (2024). *Evaluation of the ePyramid Modules Scale-up Implementation: A Virtual Training with Early Childhood Administrators and Teachers in Georgia*. Child Trends.

Appendix A: Study Measures

Table A1. Study measures used to answer research questions 1-3

Research Question	Measures	Number of Items	Administrator Survey, Teacher Survey, or Both	Item Example	Scale
RQ1	Social Emotional Development Inventory (SEDI)	9	Both	<i>I know multiple strategies to promote children's social emotional development.</i>	1 (Strongly Disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly Agree)
	Self-Efficacy Survey	12	Both	<i>If I keep trying, I can find some way to reach children with even the most challenging behaviors.</i>	1 (Strongly Disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly Agree)
RQ2	Expulsion Risk Survey	12	Teacher survey	<i>Certain children's classroom behaviors interfere with my ability to teach effectively.</i>	1 (Strongly Disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly Agree)
	Harsh discipline practices	6	Administrator survey	<i>In your program in the past two months..... How many children have been asked to leave your program permanently because of challenging behavior?</i>	Count of children
	Harsh discipline practices	6	Teacher survey	<i>Please indicate how many times the following incidents occurred in your classroom in the past two months: A child was sent to the directors' or principal's office because their behavior was disruptive</i>	Count of incidents

Research Question	Measures	Number of Items	Administrator Survey, Teacher Survey, or Both	Item Example	Scale
RQ3	Competency with family engagement	3	Administrator survey	<i>I feel competent in... Building relationships with all families in my program.</i>	1 (Strongly Disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly Agree)
	Nurturing and responsive relationships ^a	6	Teacher survey	<i>Speak to children in a warm, positive, calm, AND supportive manner</i>	1 (Never) 2 (Rarely) 3 (Sometimes) 4 (Often) 5 (Consistently)
	Create a safe learning environment and using positive directions and rules ^a	7	Teacher survey	<i>Encourage children to engage in developing rules and expectations for the class</i>	1 (Never) 2 (Rarely) 3 (Sometimes) 4 (Often) 5 (Consistently)
	Create calm, predictable transitions ^a	5	Teacher survey	<i>Children are reminded of upcoming transitions with a consistent approach (i.e., at every transition the teacher says “5 more mins” or sings the same transition song every day)</i>	1 (Never) 2 (Rarely) 3 (Sometimes) 4 (Often) 5 (Consistently)
	Help children regulate their emotions and express their feelings appropriately ^a	7	Teacher survey	<i>Respond to children’s feelings and expressions by commenting on their facial expressions, body language etc. (e.g., “You look worried”)</i>	1 (Never) 2 (Rarely) 3 (Sometimes) 4 (Often) 5 (Consistently)
	Interactions with families ^a	8	Teacher survey	<i>Ask families about strategies they use to comfort their child and help them feel soothed and safe</i>	1 (Never) 2 (Rarely) 3 (Sometimes) 4 (Often) 5 (Consistently)

Note: ^a Scales and items derived from Checklist of Early Childhood Practice that Support Social Emotional Development and Trauma-Informed Care¹⁰

Open-ended survey questions

The post-training survey asked teachers to describe one or two things that they have taken from the ePyramid Module training and applied to their classrooms (RQ4). We also asked all participants to estimate what percentage of each module they completed before the corresponding PLC (RQ5). To capture participants’ perceptions of the training, we asked them to respond to twelve statements about their experience with the training, including, “DECAL accurately described the level of commitment required to

¹⁰ <https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/Informed-Care-Checklist.pdf>

participate in the Pyramid Model training,” and “I had the time needed during the work day to complete the training.”

Participant focus groups

During the focus groups, we asked participants about their experiences, preferences, and lessons learned from the training (RQ4, RQ5). The protocol was split into five sections that focus on the following content: the online modules, the PLCs, the experience of applying the training to the classroom or program and how this training built on previous training, the ClassWallet, and supports and barriers to participation. The section focusing on applying the training to the classroom/program aimed to answer RQ4, while the remaining sections focused on answering RQ5. We asked participants to describe what they liked or appreciated about different aspects of the training, as well as any recommendations they had to improve the training. The focus group protocol for the teachers and administrators were almost identical except for one question for the teachers, in which they were asked how their approach to handling severe behavior incidents had changed.

Appendix B: Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis plan

Survey analysis data plan

We exported data from the survey software to STATA, where we cleaned and analyzed them. We created demographic variables using responses from both pre- and post-surveys for final analysis. After reverse-scoring items when needed (i.e., four of the Self-Efficacy Survey items), we created overall scores for each measure by averaging responses to all questions on a particular measure (e.g., an SEL knowledge score was created by averaging responses across the nine SEDI items).

To understand participants' perceptions of the ePyramid Module training (RQ5), on the post-training survey participants indicated the extent to which their expectations were met (1=not at all to 5=I learned everything I hoped to learn). They also responded to 11 items regarding the modules and PLC facilitation (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

To analyze closed-ended survey questions (e.g., where respondents chose from a set of options), we conducted several descriptive and inferential statistical tests. First, we calculated intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) to assess if respondents' program of employment had an impact on their survey responses. We found no significant ICCs in the administrator sample, indicating administrators' responses were not influenced by their program. We found similar results in the teacher sample. We computed descriptive analyses (e.g., mean, range) on participant demographic data.

The team examined participant responses that looked out of the ordinary (e.g., a number that was three standard deviations away from the mean of responses, someone who answered all "neutral" to every single question in the set); responses were nullified if the response was deemed appropriate. Additionally, we also nullified cases where more than 20 percent of a measure was missing. In total, four administrators had all measures dropped, and 11 teachers had all measures dropped.

To limit the impact of the missing data present in our analyses, from both partial survey responses and data nullification, we used regression-based analyses with Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimations. FIML is a statistical technique that uses full and partial data to estimate a measure, thus making missing data less of a worry. To conduct these analyses, we first checked that the missing data did not follow a pattern using Little's Missing Completely at Random test, which was found to be significant.

For RQ1, we analyzed the main effect of time (pre-training and post-training) by correlating pre- and post-training scores together, estimating the average scores using FIML, and comparing the difference in scores against zero. In general, higher scores on the SEDI reflect more SEL knowledge and high scores on the self-efficacy measure reflect higher perceived efficacy. Thus, a higher post-training score than pre-training score, with a difference that is significantly different from zero, suggests that participants significantly increased their knowledge or feelings of efficacy following the ePyramid Module trainings. To examine if there were differences by program type and years in the ECE field, we conducted subgroup analyses by regressing the difference in score (i.e., the difference of one's pre-training and post-training scores) onto program type and years in the ECE field.

For RQ2, we analyzed teachers' perceptions of challenging behavior using the correlation and difference comparison method described previously to examine potential change following the training. This time, higher scores on the expulsion risk measure indicate more negative perceptions of challenging behavior in the classroom, which we would expect to decrease following the ePyramid Module trainings. Again, we

conducted subgroup analyses to determine if post-training perceptions varied by teachers' program type or years of experience in the field. We analyzed use of harsh disciplinary actions for both administrators and teachers; we asked survey respondents how many children received a disciplinary measure (e.g., how many children were given in-school suspension), and respondents gave a numeric response. A higher number indicates more children being given harsh disciplinary actions.

For RQ3, we conducted the same correlation and difference comparisons to examine administrators' self-reported skills in competency with family engagement, with follow-up subgroup analyses. Higher scores indicate more perceived competency with each strategy. For teachers, we analyzed aggregate scores for each domain of the Pyramid Model Checklist of Early Childhood Practices using the correlation and regression approach, with sub-group follow-up tests. Higher scores indicate more reported use of Pyramid Model strategies. For RQ5, we conducted descriptive analyses of post-survey opinion questions.

We grouped the open-ended survey questions into four topic areas (inclusion and behavior support, recommendations for improvement, lessons learned, and additional training). We then analyzed each grouping through several rounds of theme extraction. The first round aimed to summarize the themes present in a given response, while each subsequent round sought to simplify and synthesize the themes across responses. Once analysis was complete, we summed the number of responses that were related to each theme to see which were the most prevalent.

Focus group analysis plan

To analyze the data gathered from the focus groups, we developed an a priori coding scheme. We organized the coding scheme by topic, and the topics mirrored the focus group protocol, with additional child codes to capture details about participants' responses. We cleaned the notes from the focus groups, exported the notes into Dedoose, a software for coding qualitative data, and coded excerpted sections of the notes using the coding scheme. Two team members coded the focus group notes; to establish reliability, the coders met prior to coding to review the coding scheme and coded one set of notes together. Both coders then separately coded another set of notes and met to review the codes applied and come to consensus. They then coded the remaining notes separately.

After coding was complete, we exported the codes and their associated excerpts into an Excel sheet for analysis. We then analyzed each excerpt through several rounds of theme extraction. The first round aimed to summarize the themes present in a given response, while each subsequent round sought to simplify and synthesize the themes across responses. Once analysis was complete, we summed the number of responses that were related to each theme to see which were the most prevalent.