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# Evaluation of Georgia's Pilot Language and Literacy Endorsement

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# Introduction

In 2020, Georgia’s Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) began piloting a new Language and Literacy Endorsement (the Endorsement) for child care programs that participate in Georgia’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, Quality Rated. The Endorsement was designed to recognize and promote high-quality language and literacy practices by providing professional development opportunities, materials, and financial stipends to child care providers. Eleven center-based child care programs throughout Georgia agreed to participate in the pilot after a formal invitation from DECAL, and eight programs completed the pilot process.<sup>1</sup> All participating programs had a 2- or 3-star rating in Quality Rated.<sup>2</sup>

To better understand the experiences of participating programs, including teachers’ and administrators’ experiences, DECAL partnered with Child Trends to evaluate the pilot Endorsement process. The purpose of this report is to summarize evaluation findings and provide DECAL with considerations to inform future implementation of the Endorsement.

## Key findings

- **Teachers and administrators (e.g., directors and/or owners) found the Endorsement to be a positive and beneficial experience:** 96 percent of teachers described their overall experience as positive or extremely positive, and administrators indicated that they would recommend the Endorsement to other programs.
- **Teachers found the virtual trainings useful and informative.** For example, almost all teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Endorsement helped improve their classroom environment (96%) and their teaching practices (94%).
- **Administrators identified ways that the Endorsement benefitted staff, children, and families,** including immediate improvements to program quality and teaching practices.
- **Administrators appreciated the external recognition of their commitment to quality improvement** and were excited to share the news of the Endorsement with families, funders, and community members.

## Key considerations

1. **Recruit and incentivize a broader array of new programs, including family child care providers, to participate in the Endorsement.** As the Endorsement grows, DECAL will need to consider how to recruit new programs, how to assess program readiness to participate, and how to incentivize participation.
2. **Increase the Endorsement’s accessibility to future participants.** DECAL should consider adaptations to improve accessibility—including providing trainings in other languages, continuing support to facilitate virtual learning, and reassessing timing and time commitments for administrators.
3. **Focus on strengthening school-home connections.** Administrators emphasized the importance of engaging families in their quality improvement efforts. DECAL could develop specific resources aimed at family engagement, including how to message the Endorsement to families.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to outside circumstances, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, three programs had to drop out of the pilot and did not participate in the evaluation.

<sup>2</sup> Programs in Quality Rated receive a star rating ranging from no stars to three stars, with three stars indicating the highest-quality programs.

4. **Consider ways to ensure the sustainability of the Endorsement once it has been awarded.** DECAL should support programs after they have completed the Endorsement, to help sustain continuous quality improvement related to language and literacy practices.

## Endorsement activities

Endorsement activities occurred from February to October 2021, and included:

- **Virtual teacher trainings:** DECAL instructors led a series of four virtual trainings for lead and assistant teachers, with self-study assignments between training sessions. Teachers joined one of two tracks based on the ages of children in their classrooms—infants/toddlers or preschool/PreK students—resulting in a total of eight different training sessions (i.e., four for each track).
- **Leadership training for administrators:** Program administrators participated in an online leadership training from Harvard University that included five modules.
- **Growth planning:** Program administrators completed a Language and Literacy Growth Plan for their program, with support from DECAL's Professional Learning Unit, and received a growth materials package to help implement their plans.
- **Grants and stipends:** DECAL awarded grants for programs to purchase technology and equipment to facilitate virtual learning. DECAL provided teachers and directors with stipends for completing the online trainings and gave a \$500 bonus to programs when the Endorsement was awarded. DECAL also purchased classroom and program materials for teachers to support their language and literacy practices.

## Methodology and Data

Evaluation activities included two rounds of semi-structured interviews with an administrator from each program and a series of online surveys of teachers who participated in the trainings. In this report, 'administrator' refers to someone in a leadership role within the child care program—including program directors and/or owners—who was the main point of contact for the Endorsement.

### Administrator interviews

Child Trends conducted two rounds of phone interviews with administrators from participating programs. The first round took place from December 2020 to January 2021, before Endorsement activities began. The second round took place from November 2021 to January 2022, after the Endorsements were awarded. The first round of interviews focused on goals and expectations for the Endorsement, current language and literacy practices, and programs' capacity to participate. The second round focused on administrators' reflections on their programs' participation, including their plans for using the Endorsement. Seven administrators participated in both rounds of interviews, representing seven out of eight programs (88%) participating in the pilot. Interviews took approximately 30 minutes and participants were given an electronic gift card for each interview they completed.

### Teacher surveys

Child Trends administered 10 online surveys to teachers: a pre- and post-Endorsement survey about their participation in the Endorsement, and eight brief surveys following each of the virtual trainings. Child Trends administered all surveys through REDCap, a secure web application for managing online data collection.

## Pre- and post-endorsement surveys

The first survey (pre-Endorsement) took place in February 2021, before teacher engagement in the Endorsement began. This survey included questions about teacher and classroom characteristics, previous experience with language and literacy training, and goals or expectations for the Endorsement. Before the start of the trainings, 104 teachers were signed up to participate; Child Trends sent each teacher a link to the pre-Endorsement survey. Of these 104 teachers, 61 completed the survey for a response rate of 59 percent. Teachers received an electronic gift card for each survey they completed.

Child Trends administered the second survey (post-Endorsement) in June 2021 after completion of teacher engagement in the Endorsement. The post-Endorsement survey included questions about teachers' experiences with and perceptions of the Endorsement, including barriers and facilitators to their participation. Child Trends sent the post-Endorsement survey to 101 eligible teachers,<sup>3</sup> 89 of whom completed it for a response rate of 88 percent. Due to teacher turnover within programs during the Endorsement, the subset of teachers invited to complete the post-Endorsement survey differed from those invited to take the pre-Endorsement survey. For more detail on survey response rates, see Appendix A.

## Training surveys

Immediately following each virtual training session, Child Trends asked participating teachers to complete a brief survey. Child Trends administered eight training surveys from April to June 2021, corresponding to each of the eight virtual training sessions offered (four for infant/toddler teachers and four for preschool/PreK teachers). The surveys explored teachers' overall experiences and satisfaction with the trainings, along with their understanding of key training outcomes; participating teachers also offered recommendations for improvements to the trainings. Across all eight sessions, teachers completed 301 training surveys.<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A for more detail on the response rate for each individual training survey.

# Findings

## About the respondents

### Administrators

Of the seven administrators who participated in the interviews, three identified as directors, two as owner/directors, one as an owner, and one as an executive director. All administrators had either enrolled in or completed a post-secondary course of study, ranging from completion of some college courses to completion of a doctoral degree; most had been in their current leadership role for more than 10 years. All of their programs served infants, toddlers, preschoolers, Georgia's Pre-K, and school-age students. All participating programs had a 2- or 3-star rating in Quality Rated.

### Teachers

Of the 99 lead and assistant teachers who completed the pre- and/or post- Endorsement survey, the majority had served in their role for five or fewer years (75%) and had either enrolled in or completed a

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<sup>3</sup> DECAL determined eligibility for the post-Endorsement survey. To be eligible, teachers had to have attended at least two of the four virtual trainings.

<sup>4</sup> Because the training surveys were anonymous and disseminated through a public link to maximize response rates, it is not possible to track respondents across the different surveys (e.g., to assess whether individual teachers' knowledge or satisfaction increased over time).

post-secondary course of study (76%).<sup>5</sup> Among teachers who had completed a degree, the most common major was early childhood education (65%). Almost all teachers identified English as their primary language (94%), with a smaller number selecting Spanish. See Appendix B for more detail on the teachers participating in the evaluation surveys.

Most (65%) teachers who responded to one of the surveys worked with preschool-aged children, including children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K. All teachers reported speaking English in their classrooms, and 22 percent also reported speaking Spanish in the classroom. The most common curriculum was Creative Curriculum (66%). See Appendix B for more detail on teacher roles and classrooms.

## Expectations and goals for the Endorsement

### Reasons for participating

During interviews, Child Trends asked administrators about their reasons for participating in the pilot Endorsement. Many administrators emphasized their commitment to continuous quality improvement and saw the Endorsement as a way to build on previous professional development and to strengthen or sustain existing skills. In addition, several administrators had been interested in getting their centers to become one of the first to complete the Endorsement: they liked being at the forefront of new quality improvement initiatives and hoped to be an example for other programs. For example, one administrator said, "We're delighted to be the first to start, make it better, be a model for others, and be a spokesperson."

Most administrators described already feeling confident in their teaching staff's skills and abilities, and shared examples of previous trainings and current high-quality language and literacy practices. They identified areas of strength that included using data to inform improvements, implementing new curricula, and individualizing support to meet the needs of each child. However, administrators also stated that even highly qualified teachers have room for improvement. They viewed the Endorsement as an opportunity for teachers to feel more empowered to implement language and literacy practices in their classrooms with children of all ages, and to equip them with the tools needed to sustain these practices in the long term. Administrators also noted that staff shortages and turnover had increased with COVID-19, and thought that the Endorsement trainings would be especially helpful for new teachers. One administrator described what they saw as the benefits of Endorsement trainings: "Getting [new teachers] up to speed with what language incorporation looks like, what our standards are, having a system in place for teachers starting new so they're off the bat incorporating our strategies."

### Meeting expectations

After the pilot was complete, administrators were enthusiastic about their participation in the Endorsement and agreed that their expectations had been met. They described the Endorsement as part of a broader vision or plan for quality improvement in their programs that laid the groundwork for achieving goals related to language and literacy practices. They also spoke about specific benefits to staff, such as developing and implementing new teaching practices, reinforcing best practices learned in previous trainings, and helping new staff gain experience with promising practices. For example, one administrator said, "The Endorsement took our center to the next level, especially during the pandemic. Not all our teachers went through it, but when you have at least 80-90 percent of teachers understanding the benefits of language and literacy when it comes to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers that is always advantageous for families and communities in general. This experience helped our program reset to the best practices that we learned through LITTLE and gave us insight on new strategies."

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<sup>5</sup> This included respondents who had completed some college, technical or vocational training, an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, or a graduate degree.

On the post-Endorsement teacher survey, almost all respondents indicated that they had a very positive impression of the Endorsement (91%) and that the Endorsement “very much” met their expectations (91%).

## Benefits of the Endorsement

In interviews and surveys, administrators and teachers recalled thinking that the Endorsement might benefit their program, discussed how they planned to use the Endorsement, and talked about how they would ensure the sustainability of any improvements made during the Endorsement process.

Overall, administrators said that they would recommend the Endorsement to other programs. As one director said, “[The Endorsement] changes the way the children learn. And it changes the way that the teachers teach the children. It puts them on a different level—it meets the kids where they are.”

### Benefits to staff, children, and families

Administrators identified several potential benefits of participating in the Endorsement, including benefits for staff, children and families, and the overall program. In terms of staff benefits, administrators described the Endorsement as an opportunity to build on previous professional development opportunities, such as the LITTLE grant,<sup>6</sup> and to help teachers feel more prepared. They agreed that the Endorsement was aligned with existing priorities for staff development and teacher learning goals.

In terms of benefits to children, administrators discussed the creation of rich language environments for infants and toddlers, increased school readiness, and support for dual language learners. Administrators also saw the Endorsement as an opportunity to increase connections between school and home, and to help families understand how to support their children’s language and literacy skills. They explained that the same practices being taught to staff could be adapted for use with parents or other caregivers. For example, one administrator described how Endorsement benefits were intertwined among staff, children, and families: “Once teachers implement best practices in this area, we’ll get our results with kids talking and communicating, and parents will see the results at home. And then families will benefit from talking and learning new strategies that they can use at home as well.”

On the pre- and post-Endorsement surveys, teachers discussed the benefits of the Endorsement and the applicability of the trainings to their teaching practices. In general, teachers had positive perceptions of the Endorsement after participating in the trainings.<sup>7</sup> For example, almost all teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Endorsement could help improve their classroom environment (96%) and their teaching practices (94%). Similarly, most teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their program would be of higher quality after participating (88%) and that the Endorsement would benefit children and families (99%).

### Marketing and outreach

During the interviews, all administrators described plans to use the Endorsement in their marketing and outreach, including highlighting it on websites or social media pages. Administrators saw the Endorsement as a way for parents and families, the community, and potential funders to recognize their accomplishments. For example, one administrator said, “It gives the community insight that we’re professionals and believe in getting our teachers trained, that’s one of the components that stands out to me ... we want our communities to know that we’re well prepared when we deal with language and literacy.” Some administrators thought the Endorsement could impact families’ decisions about where to enroll their children, but noted that these decisions were often much more complicated—especially with COVID-19 impacting availability.

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<sup>6</sup> LITTLE (Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language-rich Environments) grants provide coaching and professional development for child care centers and homes across Georgia to support the language and literacy skills of infants and toddlers.

<sup>7</sup> The percentages reported here are from the post-Endorsement survey. Numbers from the pre-Endorsement survey were very similar.

After completing the Endorsement, administrators reported sharing the news with families, funders, and community members via newsletters, websites, parent communication channels, social media pages, and communications with specific funders and boards of directors.

Some administrators indicated that they may need support from DECAL in their marketing and outreach efforts, specifically in terms of how to message the Endorsement to families. One administrator suggested that it would be helpful to have “some materials explaining in layman’s terms what this is to parents.” Similarly, another administrator explained that it took a while for parents in her program to understand what Quality Rated was, so parents might not immediately understand the Endorsement. However, she agreed that it was important for families to know that her program was committed to high quality, saying, “When a family knows you’re going above and beyond to better your curriculum and services they are more prone to trust you.”

## Experiences with the Endorsement

In interviews and surveys, administrators and teachers were asked to share more about their experiences with the Endorsement and provide feedback on implementation of different components, such as the virtual teacher trainings and the Harvard University leadership training.

### Capacity to participate

One of the administrators’ largest concerns prior to beginning the Endorsement was their program’s capacity to participate. Many were concerned about the impact of COVID-19, both directly and indirectly, on their programs. For example, administrators shared initial concerns about their staff’s ability to participate in the Endorsement given the many staffing issues they were experiencing and the lack of available coverage during the work day. One director said, “I’ve heard there could be some trainings during the day, but because of COVID we don’t have teachers to cover another’s class, that would be cross-contamination.” Administrators were also concerned about increased levels of teacher turnover since the pandemic began. For example, one director stated, “Once we lose a teacher who’s been here long term, it takes three to four teachers to find the right fit.”

Prior to the start of the Endorsement, some administrators shared concerns about potential stress and burden. They saw the value of the Endorsement trainings but were worried that participation in trainings might be difficult for them or their staff given other competing priorities. Other administrators identified access to technology—both equipment and reliable internet—as a potential barrier to teachers participating in the trainings.

DECAL took several steps to address these concerns. Teacher trainings were held on Saturdays to avoid the need for classroom coverage, and both teachers and directors were given stipends for their participation in trainings. DECAL also provided technology grants to help programs purchase necessary equipment for virtual learning.

### Timing and duration

In interviews, administrators generally agreed that the time of year at which trainings were offered (April to June for teachers, and March to July for directors) worked well for their programs, and that the Endorsement lasted an appropriate amount of time. Some administrators noted that attending trainings during summer might be more difficult for teachers who end their school year in May.

Child Trends asked teachers responding to the post-Endorsement survey to indicate whether any challenges had impacted their participation and, if so, to select from a list of eight potential challenges. More than two thirds of teachers indicated that they did not have *any* challenges participating in the

Endorsement. Among the small group that indicated challenges, the top challenge was that trainings were not offered at a convenient time (15% of all respondents). An even smaller number of teachers faced the challenge of not having time to complete the independent work between training sessions (2%).

## Teacher trainings

The evaluation team gathered feedback on the teacher trainings in a variety of ways. For example, administrators were asked during the post-Endorsement interview about their impressions of the teacher training series. Many administrators reported receiving positive feedback from staff about the training series and noted that their teachers liked the collaboration and peer learning. For example: “I love how each group worked with other centers that helped the same age bracket. It helped them collaborate with other centers and people in the same field. I think they were excited about continually learning something and the facilitator told them the same things we told them.”

Teachers shared more specific feedback about the trainings. Most teachers who responded to the post-Endorsement survey said that the trainings had the right number of opportunities to interact with other teachers (86%) and practice new skills (89%). In addition, most teachers said there were the right number of opportunities to ask questions (83%) and to plan for and reflect on classroom practices (82%). Teachers also shared the supports that helped them participate in Endorsement activities, selecting from a list of eight potential supports. The three most common supports were “My center was supportive of me participating” (74%), “I saw the value and purpose in participating” (73%), and “It was easy for me to use the technology needed to access trainings” (63%).

Almost all teachers who responded to the post-Endorsement survey had a very positive impression (91%). When asked to explain this impression, responses centered on three main themes: positive opinions of the trainers, learning new skills or information, and opportunities for peer learning. See Table 1 for more detail.

**Table 1.** Positive teacher feedback on training sessions (n=69)

Theme	Example
<p><b>Trainings were informative, attendees learned something new.</b></p> <p><b>n=46, 66%</b></p>	<p>“The training was informative and gave me a lot of great ideas to use in the classroom.”</p> <p>“It was very positive because it gave me a different perspective on how to incorporate language and literacy throughout the day.”</p>
<p><b>Trainers were supportive, knowledgeable, and helpful.</b></p> <p><b>n=18, 26%</b></p>	<p>“The instructors were very informative, supportive, and made the class fun.”</p> <p>“The trainers ... were absolutely amazing. They were very bubbly, humble, and knowledgeable, making getting up and logging on Saturday morning enjoyable.”</p>
<p><b>Training sessions were interactive and encouraged peer learning.</b></p> <p><b>n=11, 16%</b></p>	<p>“I really like the training and how we were able to do small group with other teachers to put to use what we learned as well as get new ideas on how to make our approach better.”</p>

Source: Teacher post-Endorsement survey, 2021



On the same survey, teachers also shared constructive feedback on what they felt could be improved about the Endorsement. Of the 33 responses provided, more than half (55%) were about the timing or format of the trainings. A smaller number shared feedback about the breakout rooms, including frustrations over a lack of participation from other teachers (33%).

Child Trends also gathered feedback from teachers after each individual training session. In all, teachers submitted 301 responses across the eight sessions. However, just over 100 teachers took part in the Endorsement and these responses represent multiple responses per teacher.<sup>8</sup> Responses were largely similar across sessions, so these are combined here for reporting purposes. Most teachers reported positive experiences with the virtual training series. Across all eight trainings, most teachers described their overall experience as positive or extremely positive (96%). Almost all teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the trainings were easy to join using the online platform (98%) and that the information was presented in an understandable way (97%). Similarly, almost all teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the information was relevant for the ages of children they worked with (98%), and that they could apply what they learned from the trainings in their classrooms (97%). Finally, almost all teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the trainings were engaging (95%) and that they had learned something new (94%).

The individual training surveys also asked teachers to share their favorite and least favorite aspects of each training. Many teachers wrote that their favorite thing was the ability to interact with other teachers in breakout groups. For example, one teacher wrote that they liked “the breakout rooms, interacting with other people, and hearing their ideas.” Most teachers did not share a least favorite aspect of the training. A small number of teachers shared that they disliked aspects of the trainings that involved participation or public speaking. In the surveys following the first two trainings, respondents identified some issues with technology (for example, issues accessing Zoom); however, respondents did not mention this issue in later surveys.

Finally, when asked about ways in which trainings could be improved, the majority of teachers said they couldn’t think of any improvements. However, some teachers indicated that handouts could be improved, in terms of how and when they are sent. For example, one teacher wrote, “Handouts should be sent about two days prior to training so that participants can print out and read over materials before the day of the training.”

## Harvard leadership training

During the post-Endorsement interview, administrators were asked about their experiences with the leadership training from Harvard University, including how the trainings compared to their expectations. In general, administrators found the trainings challenging. Although this met their expectations for a course offered by Harvard University, many commented that the training series took longer than expected and was sometimes difficult to complete on top of their other duties at the center. For example, one director explained, “It was a lot more difficult than I thought it would be. The modules took time and took away from my operational duties. I had to notch out additional time beyond my 50-60 hours a week to do those classes. There were some weeks where it seemed burdensome.”

All administrators we interviewed shared positive feedback about the Harvard trainings, and especially about the opportunity to connect, collaborate, and share resources with their peers. Most administrators found the content of the training series to be applicable to their program. Many stated that they had already taken aspects of the training into their programs to improve their leadership skills. For example, some talked about being more open to listening to staff feedback and input, establishing mentorship opportunities, and engaging in shared decision making. One director said, “I learned to be more inclusive, and follow up with staff after meetings. These things were a part of my center, but I wasn’t always practicing them. So, for

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<sup>8</sup> As noted previously, the training surveys were anonymous, so it is not possible to know how many surveys each teacher responded to.

example, I had Survey Monkey, but I didn't use it. After the Harvard training series, I would add a survey after a staff meeting, so I could get their thoughts. And I think staff feel appreciated for that.”

## Considerations

Administrators and teachers who participated in the evaluation shared very positive feedback about the pilot Endorsement. They noted immediate benefits to program quality and teaching practices and saw ways in which children, families, and their broader communities would also benefit. Specifically, teachers appreciated opportunities to learn new skills and strengthen existing practices related to language and literacy, and administrators appreciated having external reinforcement and recognition of their dedication to quality improvement. All administrators interviewed indicated that they would recommend that other programs participate in the Endorsement if it was offered again.

In the spirit of continuous quality improvement, this section offers considerations for improving the Endorsement and expanding it to reach more programs, teachers, and children across Georgia.

### 1. Recruit and incentivize a broader array of new programs to participate in the Endorsement.

The eight programs who completed the pilot Endorsement are not representative of all Quality Rated programs in Georgia. This was by design: DECAL selected these programs to participate based on a history of close involvement with quality improvement and/or literacy initiatives. The goal was to pilot the Endorsement with a group that was likely to take full advantage of the supports—even during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic—and provide useful input for future iterations. Administrators were motivated to participate in the pilot not only for the potential gains within their own programs, but for the opportunity to improve their communities and advance quality across the state. Some administrators specifically mentioned their willingness to be on the cutting edge of new initiatives and to pave the way for other centers in the future.

As the Endorsement grows, recruitment of new programs may become more challenging, especially given child care programs' competing priorities. DECAL will need to consider which programs to recruit, how to reach them, and how to incentivize their participation.

Specific ideas include:

- **Engage administrators from the pilot cohort to serve as ambassadors.** Directors and owners who have completed the Endorsement could be a resource for other programs to help with recruitment and answer any questions about participation.
- **Assess programs' readiness to participate.** To ensure that programs can commit to and complete the Endorsement, it may be useful for DECAL to develop a set of readiness criteria. For example, are there existing professional development trainings that could be considered a prerequisite?
- **Support the involvement of family child care programs.** Consider how the Endorsement components could be adapted to work for family child care providers. For example, creating a separate training series that reflects the unique environments of family child care, where providers support smaller numbers of children across a wider age range. These providers may also benefit from dedicated opportunities for peer learning and networking.
- **Continue to provide financial incentives to teachers.** Funds for teacher stipends are important to include in future planning for the Endorsement. These incentives allow teachers to participate in trainings outside of work hours when they are otherwise not being compensated for their time. The incentives may also help buy-in and rates and quality of participation.

## 2. Increase the Endorsement’s accessibility to future participants.

Some of the biggest challenges identified by teachers and administrators participating in the pilot Endorsement were time constraints, staffing, and technology. As the Endorsement expands, these challenges may become even more acute. DECAL should consider small changes to the components of the Endorsement to ensure that they are as accessible as possible to a wide range of participants.

Specific ideas include:

- **Provide trainings in languages other than English.** While most teachers participating in the pilot identified English as their primary language, this is not true across all early care and education programs in Georgia. To be as inclusive as possible, DECAL should offer trainings in other languages that are spoken by providers in the state (e.g., Spanish), interpretation services during live trainings, and translated written materials wherever possible.
- **Continue to offer technology grants to facilitate virtual learning.** Although the original plan for the Endorsement involved in-person trainings, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 forced trainings into a virtual format. This format may remain useful for delivering Endorsement trainings in the future, as it makes them accessible to people who otherwise find it challenging to travel to an in-person event (e.g., due to distance, cost, or family obligations). To ensure that participants can fully engage in a virtual format, we recommend that DECAL continue to offer technology grants to programs or participants to purchase necessary equipment. This may be especially important as DECAL considers ways to engage family child care homes.
- **Reassess the time commitment for administrator trainings.** Although administrators who participated in the pilot had very positive feedback about the content of the training series from Harvard University, many were overwhelmed by the time commitment, intensity, and pace. As the Endorsement expands, DECAL should consider other training options for directors that are less time intensive.

## 3. Focus on strengthening school-home connections.

Throughout the evaluation, administrators emphasized the benefits of connecting language and literacy practices in classrooms with those at home. Administrators clearly identified ways in which the Endorsement could benefit parents and families, and expressed their desire to engage more intentionally with families about language and literacy using what they learned in the Endorsement. Administrators were also interested in using the Endorsement in their marketing and outreach efforts with families, noting that they may need help from DECAL around making the Endorsement easy for families to understand.

Specific ideas include:

- **Develop family engagement materials and resources.** While the Endorsement emphasizes improving teacher or classroom practices, DECAL could develop additional materials and resources for a family engagement component.
- **Provide sample outreach or marketing materials to programs.** To share news of the Endorsement with current and prospective families, programs may benefit from sample language. DECAL could create a short guide for programs on explaining, in simple terms, what the Endorsement is, what it means for children and families, and how families can support these efforts at home.

## 4. Consider ways to ensure the sustainability of the Endorsement once it has been awarded.

Administrators identified many examples of how the Endorsement had improved the quality of their programs. They also developed growth plans, with the support of DECAL, to outline how their programs would continue to make improvements related to language and literacy practices. However, in interviews, administrators also shared concerns about sustaining these improvements, and about continuing the momentum from trainings among staff. While much of this sustainability and accountability may rest within individual programs, DECAL could also consider ways to support these efforts.

Specific considerations include:

- **Create guidelines for onboarding new staff.** Staff turnover remains very high, due in part to the ongoing impact of COVID-19. Programs may benefit from specific guidance about how to ensure that new staff provide the same level of quality in their language and literacy practices as those who took part in the Endorsement.
- **Offer ongoing refresher courses.** Teachers and directors may benefit from attending periodic refresher courses aimed at strengthening existing skills and developed for a more experienced audience.
- **Create checklists for continuous quality improvement.** DECAL could develop a list of language and literacy best practices (including teaching practices, classroom environments, and family engagement strategies) so that programs can assess their own strengths and areas for improvement to guide ongoing improvement.

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# Appendix A: Survey Response Rates

## Pre- and post-endorsement surveys

Child Trends invited 104 teachers to participate in the pre-Endorsement survey. After the virtual trainings, Child Trends sent the post-Endorsement survey to 101 teachers. Because of teacher turnover within programs during the time between the two surveys, the subset of teachers invited to complete the post-Endorsement survey differed from those invited to take the pre-Endorsement survey. Table 1 shows the sample of eligible teachers and corresponding response rates for each survey.

**Table A1.** Pre- and post-Endorsement survey response rates

Survey	Number of Teachers Who Received the Survey	Number of Teachers Who Completed the Survey	Response Rate
Pre-Endorsement Survey	104	61	59%
Post-Endorsement Survey	101	89	88%
Pre- or Post-Endorsement Survey	124	99	80%
Pre- and Post-Endorsement Survey	81	51	63%

Source: Pre- and Post-Endorsement Surveys, 2021

## Training surveys

Child Trends developed a brief online survey for teachers to take following each training session. To maximize the potential response rate, DECAL staff shared the survey link directly with teachers at the end of each virtual training. Because of the single common link to the survey, Child Trends was unable to track who responded to each survey. This has two important implications for analysis: 1) It is not possible to analyze responses over time (e.g., to track whether participants' satisfaction changed over time); and 2) duplicate survey responses were possible (e.g., the same teacher could click the link and complete the survey more than once). The evaluation team considered these potential limitations in consultation with DECAL before administering the surveys. Table 2 shows the response rates from each individual survey.

**Table A2.** Training survey response rates by session

Session	Response Rate (n, %)
Infant Toddler, Session #1	15, 28%
Preschool, Session #1	21, 41%
Infant Toddler, Session #2	35, 66%

Session	Response Rate (n, %)
Preschool, Session #2	45, 88%
Infant Toddler, Session #3	36, 68%
Preschool, Session #3	42, 82%
Infant Toddler, Session #4	42, 79%
Preschool, Session #4	65, 128%*

Source: Individual Training Session Surveys, 2021

\*Note: A response rate >100% was recorded due to duplicate survey responses. Because the survey was shared with teachers through a single common link, it is not possible to identify which responses were duplicate.

## Appendix B: Teacher and Classroom Characteristics

Teachers who participated in the Endorsement shared information about themselves and their classrooms on either the pre- or post-Endorsement survey. Because respondents were able to skip questions, the number of responses varied from question to question. The tables below display the valid percentages for each question, meaning that they are based on the number of non-missing answers.

**Table B1.** Teacher experience and paid hours (n = 99)

Survey Item	n, %
<b>Years in Role</b>	
1 – 2 Years	45, 46%
3 – 5 Years	29, 29%
6 – 10 Years	13, 13%
11+ Years	12, 12%
<b>Hours of Paid Work in Current Role Per Week</b>	
0 – 19 Hours	5, 5%
20 – 39 Hours	12, 12%
40 Hours	78, 79%
41+ Hours	4, 4%
<b>Hours of Unpaid Work in Current Role Per Week</b>	
0 Hours	57, 58%
1 – 5 Hours	24, 24%
6 – 10 Hours	10, 10%
11+ Hours	6, 6%

Source: Pre- and post-Endorsement surveys, 2021

**Table B2.** Classroom characteristics

Survey Item	n, %
<b>Ages of Children in Classroom (n = 99)*</b>	
Infants	19, 19%
Toddlers	45, 46%
Preschoolers, not in GA Pre-K	27, 27%
Georgia’s Pre-K	38, 38%
School Age	6, 6%
<b>Classroom Enrollment (n = 97)</b>	
5 – 9 Children	<b>26, 27%</b>
10 – 14 Children	35, 36%
15 – 19 Children	26, 27%
20+ Children	10, 10%

Survey Item	n, %
<b>Language Spoken in Classroom (n = 98)**</b>	
English	<b>98, 100%</b>
Spanish	22, 22%
Other	2, 2%
<b>Curriculum Used (n = 80)***</b>	
Abeka Curriculum	3, 4%
Creative Curriculum	53, 66%
Frog Street Curriculum	5, 6%
HighScope Curriculum	2, 3%
Kaplan Connect4Learning	2, 3%
Pinnacle Early Childhood	1, 1%
WINGS Curriculum	8, 10%
Locally-created/theme-based curriculum	5, 6%
Other	8, 10%

Source: Pre- and post-Endorsement surveys, 2021

\*Respondents could select all that apply; 24 respondents selected multiple ages

\*\*Respondents could select all that apply; 23 respondents selected multiple languages

\*\*\*Respondents could select all that apply; seven respondents selected multiple curricula.

**Table B3. Teacher Characteristics**

Survey Item	n, %
<b>Years in Field (n = 97)</b>	
1 – 5 Years	44, 45%
6 – 10 Years	19, 20%
11 – 15 Years	11, 11%
16 – 20 Years	11, 11%
21+ Years	12, 12%
<b>Level of Education (n = 99)</b>	
Some high school	3, 3%
High school diploma or GED	18, 18%
Some college	24, 24%
Technical or vocational training	11, 11%
Associate degree (AA, AS)	13, 13%
Bachelor’s degree or equivalent (BA, BS)	22, 22%
Graduate degree (MA, MEd, PhD EdD)	6, 6%
Other	2, 2%
<b>Major (n = 52)*</b>	
Early childhood education	34, 65%
Elementary education	4, 8%



Survey Item	n, %
Special education	1, 2%
Child development	5, 10%
Psychology	1, 2%
Social work	1, 2%
Infant/Toddler Care	2, 4%
Other	14, 27%
<b>Technical Education</b>	
CDA (n = 98)	35, 36%
TCC (n = 99)	20, 20%
Technical College Diploma (n = 97)	12, 12%
<b>CDA Area (n = 34)</b>	
Center-based, preschool	<b>19, 56%</b>
Center-based, infant/toddler	15, 44%
<b>TCC Area (n = 20)</b>	
Early Childhood and Education Basics	13, 65%
Child Development Specialist	4, 20%
Infant Toddler Child Care Specialist	2, 10%
Other	1, 5%

Source: Pre- and post-Endorsement surveys, 2021

\* Respondents could select all that apply; nine respondents chose more than one major.

**Table B4.** Teacher Demographics

Survey Item	n, %
<b>Age - Generational Cohort (n = 97)</b>	
Baby Boom (1946 - 1964)	12, 12%
Generation X (1965 - 1980)	30, 31%
Millennial (1981 - 1996)	38, 39%
Generation Z (1997-2012)	17, 18%
<b>Gender (n = 99)</b>	
Female	<b>94, 95%</b>
Male	4, 4%
Prefer not to answer	1, 1%
<b>Race, Ethnicity, Origin (n = 99)*</b>	
Asian	1, 1%
Black or African American	63, 64%
Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish Origin	13, 13%
White	23, 23%
A race, ethnicity, or origin not listed here	2, 2%

Survey Item	n, %
Prefer not to answer	2, 2%
<b>Primary Language at Home (n = 99)</b>	
English	<b>93, 94%</b>
Spanish	5, 5%
Other	1, 1%

Source: Pre- and post-Endorsement surveys, 2021

\*Respondents could select all that apply, and five respondents selected multiple categories. Response options included in the survey but not selected by respondents include American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, North African or Middle Eastern.