



Foundations of the CSEFEL Pyramid Model

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OVERVIEW

Between July 1, 2010 and August 31, 2011, Connected Beginnings Training Institute (CBTI) registered over 1800 early education and care professionals in 66 instances of the *Foundations of the CSEFEL Pyramid Model* course (Foundations) across Massachusetts. The trainings were supported through a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC); this initiative was in turn supported through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) received by the Commonwealth through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Information about CSEFEL, the *Foundations* course, and the evaluation methods are provided in the “Background” section at the conclusion of this document.

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE TRAINING?

Agency, Program, and Setting Type: Registered educators in the *Foundations* courses represented 264 agencies and 561 programs, the majority from center-based programs (Figure 1; note that registered educators could choose more than one setting).

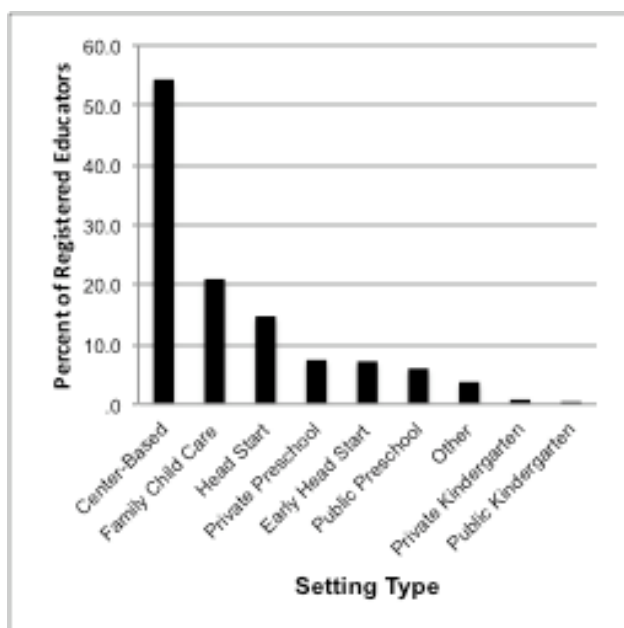


Figure 1. Registered Educators by Setting Type.

Position: The most common positions for registered educators were preschool teacher (21.7%), lead teacher (18.7%), family child care provider (14.4%), toddler teacher (13.5%), and teacher (12.2%) (note that registered educators could choose more than one position).

Length of Years in Early Education and Care Field: On average, registered educators had 12.00 years of experience in the field of early education and care ($SD = 8.93$), with the minimum being 0 years and the maximum 42 years.

Race/Ethnicity: Majority (58.5%) of registered educators indicated that their Race/Ethnicity was White, 17.4% Hispanic, 9.2% Black or African-American, and 11.5% chose not to answer the question. The remaining categories (Other, Asian, Biracial/Multiracial, American Indian or Alaska Native) all had less than 2.5% each.

Languages Spoken: 94.6% of registered educators spoke English and 19% spoke Spanish (registered educators could select more than one language). The remaining categories (Portuguese, Creole, French, Chinese, ASL, Arabic) each reflected less than 2.5% of the registered providers.

Gender: 1749 (96.8%) of the registered educators were female and 58 (3.2%) were male.

Highest Level of Education: 27.3% of registered educators had a Bachelor’s degree, 25.3% some college, 17.4% an Associate’s degree, and 11.5% a Master’s degree.

WHAT DID THE EVALUATION FINDINGS SHOW?

A summary of the key evaluation findings is provided below.

Attendance: A majority of registered educators (51.8%) attended all 15 hours of the course and were therefore eligible to receive Continuing Education Units (CEUs), as authorized by the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children (MAEYC) if requested.

Learning Outcomes: Overall, nearly all participants either “Strongly Agreed” (88%) or “Somewhat Agreed” (12%) that the learning outcomes for the sessions had been met.

Best Features: Participants indicated that the best features of the sessions were the discussions, videoclips, emphasis on socio-emotional content, presenter attributes, learning new strategies/tools, and the session activities.

Usefulness and Satisfaction with Training: More than 95% of participants indicated that the following course components were either “very useful” or “somewhat useful”: Handouts, PowerPoint presentations, small group discussions, large/whole group discussions, session activities, video clips, and structured field experiences. More than 95% of participants indicated that they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with following course components: Organization of the training, content of the training, presentation of information, trainer’s ability to facilitate sessions, explanation of new content, and the amount of time to go through material. Furthermore, 69% of participants indicated that they were “very satisfied” and 26% “somewhat satisfied” with the course overall.

Implementation of CSEFEL-Related Practices: All respondents to the post-training survey indicated that they thought the training was either “very closely related” (71.7%) or “related” (22.5%) to what they did in their work. In addition, almost all respondents to the post-training survey indicated that it was “very likely” (74.3%) or “likely” (22.5) that they would put the new knowledge gained during the training into action in their work.

Participants were asked to provide comments on the question: “How likely is it that you will be able to put this new knowledge into action in your work?” Below is a small sample of their feedback (note: except for spelling, participant responses are as written by the participant).

- *Every time a new child comes into our family daycare, they need to adjust to their new surroundings, people, and other children. This will help facilitate that more smoothly when put into practice.* – Family Child Care Assistant with two years of experience
- *I think a lot of the ideas are very useful. I will be using the turtle technique. It is so important to have children learn how to control their anger and talk about their feeling.* – Center-based toddler and preschool lead teacher with 12 years of experience
- *I have a few “troubled” students and this information helps so that my staff and I are on the same page in dealing with their children properly. This way*

everyone in the classroom can get what they need.
– Center-based infant and toddler teacher with five years of experience

- *The CSEFEL course taught me the importance of Pyramid Model and it’s benefits when use it consistently with the children and families we serve. The relevance of the social emotional development in children at early age could determine how they will learn and assimilate the self regulation they need to become emotionally balance in all aspect of development.* – Center-based, Head Start supervisor and education coordinator with 16 years of experience
- *During and after the completion of the workshop series of the Pyramid Model I implemented several changes in my daycare such as putting more educational materials which the children can see and read at their high levels, I am more cautious in identifying and understanding the children’s behaviors and more attentive in communicating with the parents of children.* – Family child care provider with 11 years of experience
- *This course and material reassured me that what I am doing for the kids in my class is right. I felt satisfied with the course and that I took a great deal of resources away with me to use at work.* – Preschool teacher with eight years of experience
- *I work with toddlers and the bottom of the pyramid is crucial at this point in their lives. It is so important to be knowledgeable in this area to help these children especially where most of them come from difficult homes.* – Early Head Start toddler teacher with two years of experience
- *I have already changed the environment in the classrooms and made more defined areas. Also, we have been watching a couple of kids behaviors more closely and asking more questions about time spent at home.* – Center-based program director with thirteen years of experience
- *Though it was late in the school year when I attended this workshop, I was able to immediately implement some of the strategies that I learn effectively.* – Public preschool educator with six years of experience
- *Thanks to the resources on the CSEFEL website, I have spent a significant amount of time reading, learning and planning to implement many of these lessons into my coming school year schedule.* – Public preschool teacher with ten years of experience

Participant Comments and Suggestions: Of the participants that provided comments on the session evaluations, a majority (52.2%) expressed enthusiasm for the course and said that they were looking forward to the upcoming sessions. The next most frequent comment (7.8%) was that the trainer was knowledgeable and patient.

The most frequent suggestions from participants were to spend more time on content (10.8%; e.g., the Pyramid Model), revise the format of the training materials (8.3%; e.g., bigger print on the slides and handouts), increase the use of videos (8.3%), and improve technical assistance for trainers (8.3%).

■ SOME LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: It is both an effective and efficient strategy to coordinate trainings centrally, organize trainings locally, and build capacity statewide.

Lesson 2: It is important to train and utilize trainers who understand the needs of their community/region.

Lesson 3: It would be ideal to have a system that is able to support providers in “making up” missed sessions.

Lesson 4: Implementing follow-up mentoring and coaching requires additional planning and support, due to mixed responses from participants to this component of the *CSEFEL Foundations* experience.

- Recommendation 4.1: Raise awareness about the value and benefits of mentoring.
- Recommendation 4.2: Offer CEU hours for mentoring.
- Recommendation 4.3: Provide more emphasis and training to trainers on best mentoring practices.

■ BACKGROUND

What is CSEFEL?

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) is focused on promoting the social emotional development and school readiness of young children ages birth to age 5. CSEFEL is a national resource center funded by the Office of Head Start and Child Care Bureau for disseminating research and evidence-based practices to early childhood programs across the country. Massachusetts is currently a CSEFEL State Partner. For more information about CSEFEL, visit: www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel.

What is the Foundations course?

CBTI developed the *Foundations* course by combining and consolidating the CSEFEL infant, toddler, and preschool modules into one coherent introductory course. The course consists of six two-hour sessions and three one-hour structured field experiences for a total of 15 training hours. Upon completion of all 15 hours of the course, participants were eligible for 1.5 Continuing Education Units (CEUs), if requested, as authorized by the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children (MAEYC). At the conclusion of 15 hours of training, participants were able to attend an additional six hours of follow-up mentoring and coaching with the course trainer. Course participants were charged a nominal \$25 fee to cover the cost of materials.

Throughout the training, participants learned about the CSEFEL Pyramid Model, a multi-level approach to encouraging social emotional growth and preventing and addressing challenging behavior in children birth through five years who have a wide variety of needs. Topics covered included:

- The importance of building nurturing relationships,
- Understanding how children communicate their needs,
- Designing and assessing environments to promote social-emotional growth,
- Strategies for developing social competence in young children, and
- Successful methods for developing targeted plans for children with persistent challenging behaviors.

This training course was designed for professionals who work with young children in a variety of roles and settings.

Foundations courses were implemented across Massachusetts in three ways: (1) a program contacted CBTI to request a *Foundations* course limited to their program staff (a “restricted” training), usually held at a program’s site; (2) CBTI targeted a specific under-served area of the state and found a trainer who helped to secure a site for the training (a “public” training); or (3) a trainer contacted CBTI with a desire to hold a training in a particular area of the state (also a “public” training).

Additional information about the *Foundations* course and access to course materials in both English and Spanish can be found on the CBTI website at: <http://connectedbeginnings.org/professional-development/training/csefel>.

Where were the courses held?

Foundations courses were held across the state and in all six EEC regions (Figure 2).

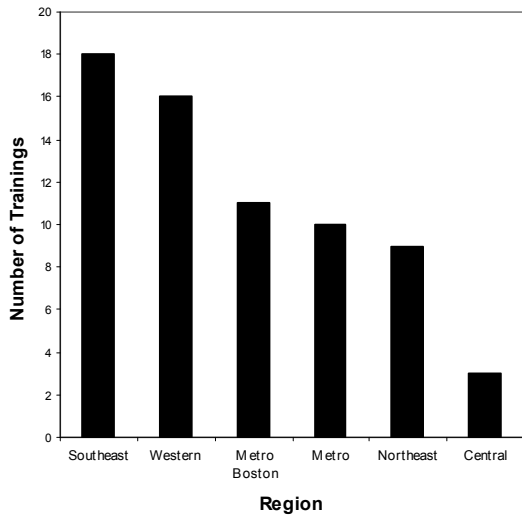


Figure 2. CSEFEL Foundations trainings across Massachusetts by region.

How were the courses evaluated?

The evaluation of the *Foundations* courses was comprised of questions required by EEC, questions required by MAEYC for the awarding of CEUs, and questions created by CBTI in order to better understand the impact of the course on early education and care professionals.

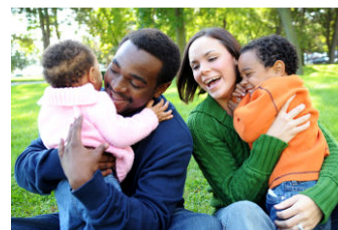
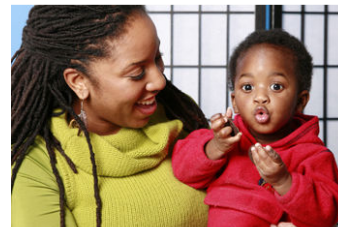
Participants were asked to complete the following items:

- (1) *An online registration form* (required): included contact and demographic information
- (2) *An online pre- and post-training survey* (optional): focused on participants' perceived knowledge of, competence in, and beliefs about children's development at both the start and conclusion of the course. The post-training survey also included participants' feedback regarding their satisfaction with the course and usefulness of components of the course.
- (3) *Post-session paper evaluations* (required by MAEYC): completed at the conclusion of each of the six course sessions; reflected on the learning outcomes for the session and provided space for comments and suggestions. At the end of Session Six, additional questions regarding overall perceptions of the course were included.

Trainers were required to keep attendance records asked and to complete an online mentoring log.

ABOUT CONNECTED BEGINNINGS TRAINING INSTITUTE

Connected Beginnings Training Institute provides, coordinates, and evaluates professional development and training efforts aimed at enhancing the social and emotional well-being of young children within their families, their communities, and their early care and education programs.



Mission

A project of Wheelock College's ASPIRE Institute since July 2011, Connected Beginnings Training Institute (CBTI) was launched by the United Way of Massachusetts Bay/Merrimack Valley, Inc. (UWMB) in 2006 to build the capacity of infant and early childhood practitioners to engage in nurturing relationships with the very young children in their care. As research has revealed, positive, supportive, enriching and nurturing relationships with adults and other children are critical to young children's social and emotional well-being, mental health, evolving brain architecture and capacity to learn.

Vision

Every child will start life with loving, responsive, and affirming relationships with parents and caregivers to provide a healthy foundation for life-long learning and connections with other people.

Who We Serve

Early care and education providers, teachers, social workers, nurses, pediatricians, allied health professionals, paraprofessionals, Massachusetts state agencies and not-for-profit agencies, and anyone interested in learning more about nurturing the social and emotional well-being of young children.

"Connected Beginnings addresses core professional development needs for program staff across a broad range of early childhood settings. The critical importance of training focused on the emotional and social development of young children cannot be overstated."
Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D., Director, Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, 8/2011

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For more detailed information regarding the evaluation or implementation of the *Foundations* courses, please contact Laura Beals, Manager for Research, Evaluation and Instructional Technology at Connected Beginnings Training Institute at lbeals@wheelock.edu.