Supporting Consistent Attendance in Kindergarten PDG Project

Final Report

Submitted To: Olivia Christensen, PhD
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In an ideal world we would all learn in childhood to love ourselves. We would grow, being secure in our worth and value, spreading love wherever we went, letting our light shine. -Belle Hooks.

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"Family Involvement is more of a doing to while engagement is a doing with"-Larry Ferlazzo

OVERVIEW

Introduction

"Maybe you are searching among the branches for what only appears in the roots"*-Rumi*

This quote, from 13 century poet Rumi, encourages us to consider our actions and to what extent they align with what we hope to realize. Rumi's wisdom certainly applies to how we think about young children's school attendance patterns–especially when those patterns elevate concern.
As state and education leaders lean into understanding recent drops in school attendance rates it's important to make sense of attendance challenges from a holistic point of view. Historically when thinking about school attendance challenges the role of family perspectives has been considered. Yet too often these considerations have been more surface than is useful for gaining an accurate grounded understanding of school attendance and family experiences.

This report outlines the methodology and findings of a qualitative approach to understanding inconsistent kindergarten attendance. The work of this pilot project focuses on making space for the voices of families whose young children are experiencing (or recently experienced) inconsistent school attendance. Our intention is to capture nuances inherent in attendance challenges that can better inform forward movement.

We had the privilege of working with 15 families in the span of three focus groups. Given the power of their voices we frequently share their words and thoughts verbatim on the upcoming pages. Please note in this summary we interchangeably refer to those who participated in the project as Participants, caregivers or families.

We have used our experience in creating trustworthy spaces conducive for authentic and vulnerable sharing to hear more deeply and clearly from both caregivers and young children. We hope that what Participants have shared from a place of authenticity can meaningfully inform how we increase the number of young children consistently attending school in settings that center their needs and celebrate who they are.

Acknowledgements

We'd like to acknowledge many who contributed to the realization of this project. Special thanks to:

Olivia Christensen, Jon Vaupel, Kate Dole and Mike Brown for their recognition of the need for capturing family perspective in meaningful ways and for their trust in us to do so.

Ms. Phylis Sloan and La Creche Early Childhood Center for making physical space available to us. By making physical space available you gave us the opportunity to make an emotionally and psychologically safe space available to participants.

Sarah Swenson from Minneapolis Public Schools for seeing the importance of this work and navigating your systems to help move the work forward.

Stephen Keeler, Patrick Wells, and Laura Seifert from Fridley Public School district for their partnership and willingness to prioritize hearing and learning from families.
Jamesha Hodges from Southside Family Charter school for sharing your unique and important vantage point.

To all caregivers and children who shared their time and hearts in hopes of realizing change for their children and communities.

Get to the root of your problem or stay rooted in your problem -Janet Todd

METHODOLOGY

Project Components

The priority and purpose of this pilot is to ensure that family voice and perspective is available to inform how we understand and respond to inconsistent attendance patterns of young children in school. More specifically we want to capture the nuances of families' insights and situations related to their young children's attendance at school as this more nuanced understanding holds significant potential for meaningful change.
To realize this goal we engaged 15 caregivers raising children who are or have recently experienced inconsistent attendance. We designed three focus groups each with a different focus area and invited all 15 Participants to join as many of the three sessions as they would like. The following are the project components:

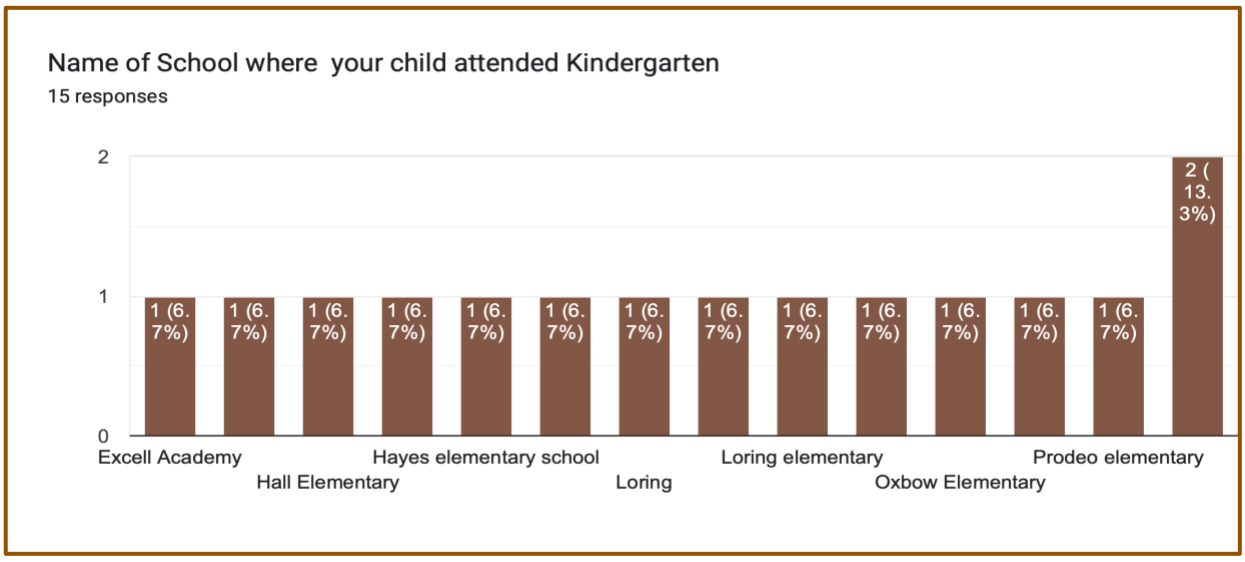
Project Component	Description
In-person focus group (1)	2 hour in person focus group: • Welcome • Establish rapport • Kindergarten attendance big picture
Virtual focus groups (2)	2 90 min virtual meetings • Barriers to Consistent Attendance • Effective Responses
Child questionnaire	1 Guide for caregivers to interview their young children • Guide had 7 questions • Focused on school experiences, feelings on days absent, like and dislikes

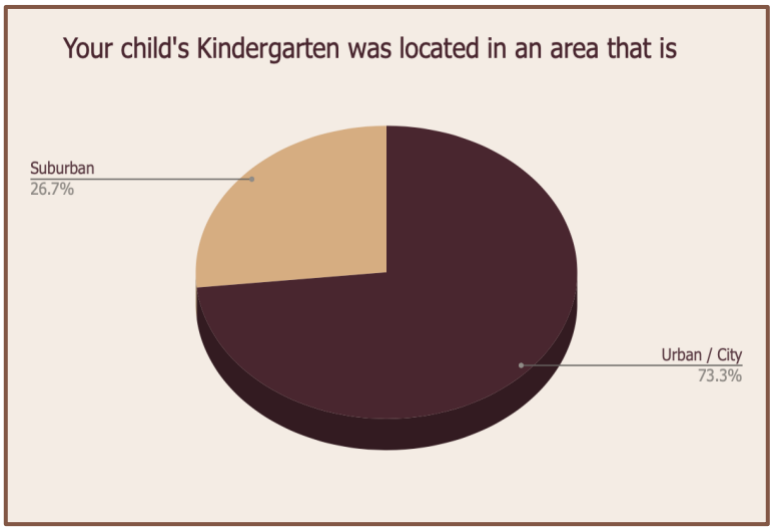
Timeline

Initially the project was set to occur within 6-7 months, however, due to administrative matters the project timeline was reduced to eight weeks. This reduced timeline prompted a reduction in scale of the project. It also created limitations in the breath of our engagement. For example, we would have seen increased participation in the child questionnaire with a longer timeline.

Project Participants

School / Early Care Information

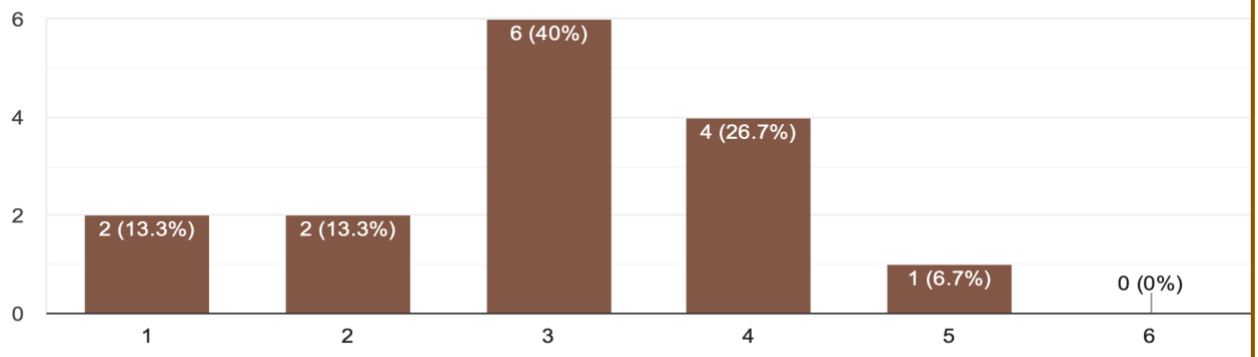




School / Early Care Information cont'd

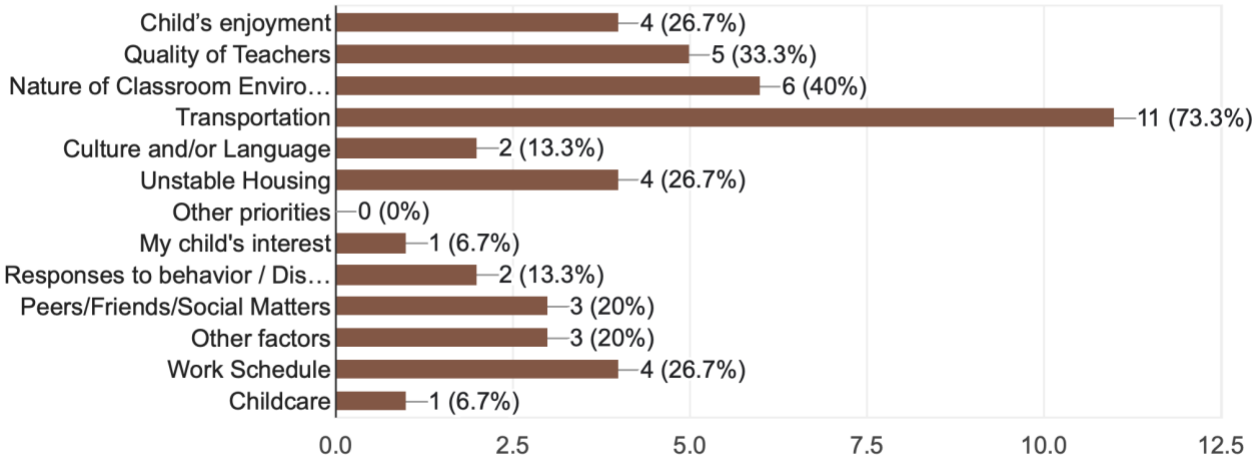
Thinking about your child's experiences in Kindergarten or early childcare experiences–How easy or difficult was it to get your child to school?

15 responses



What accounted for the ease or difficulty in getting your child to school? (Select all that apply)

15 responses



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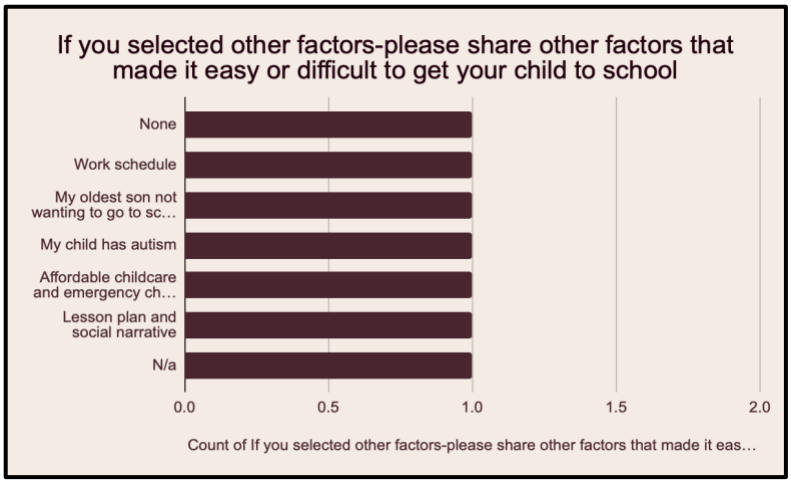

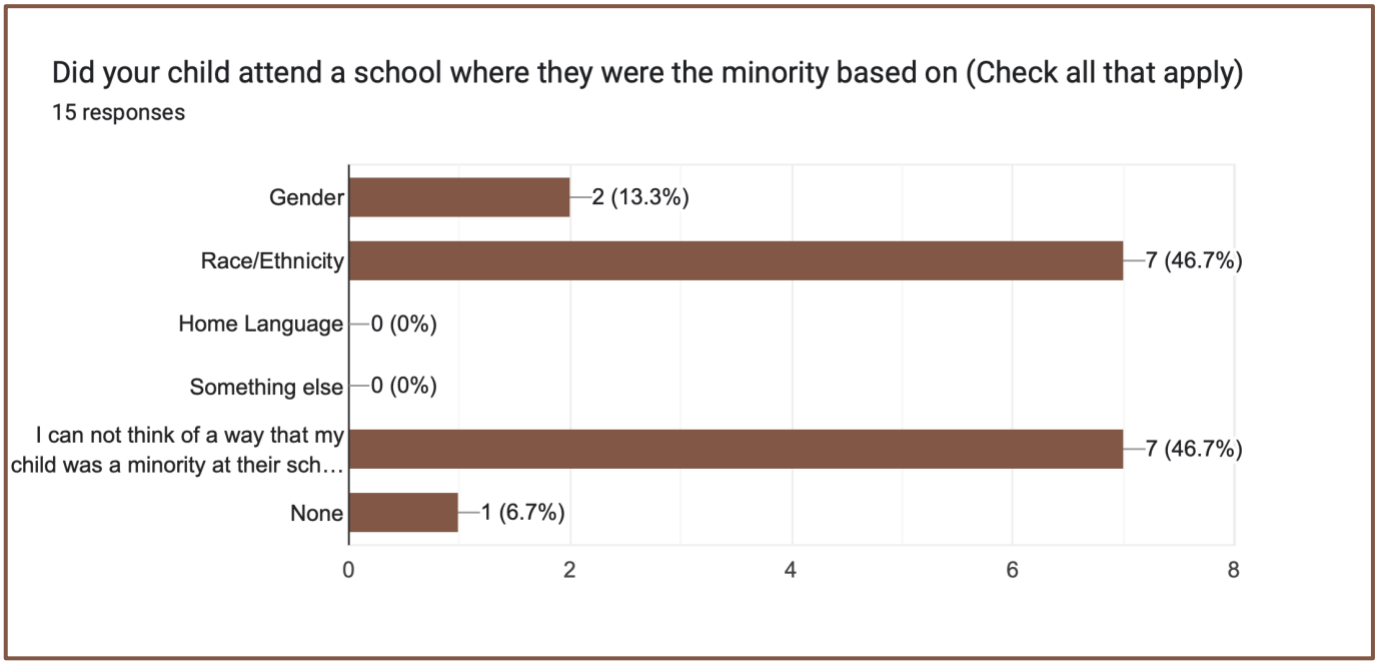

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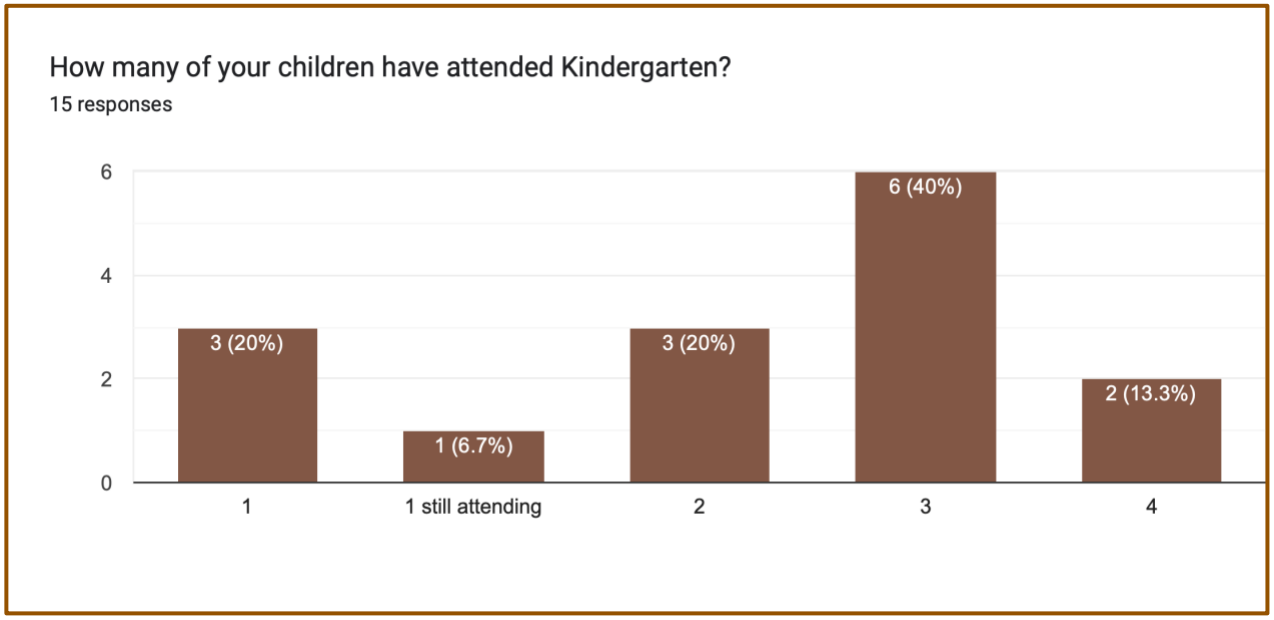

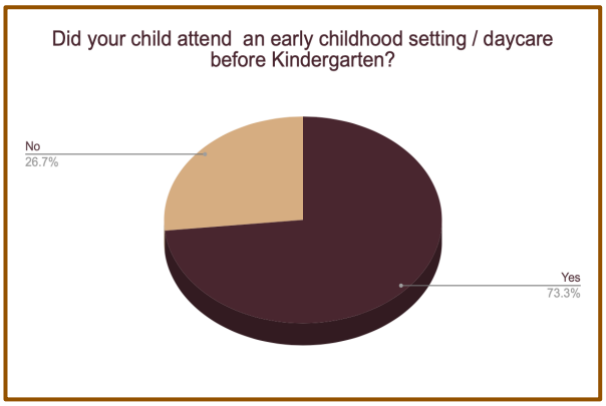

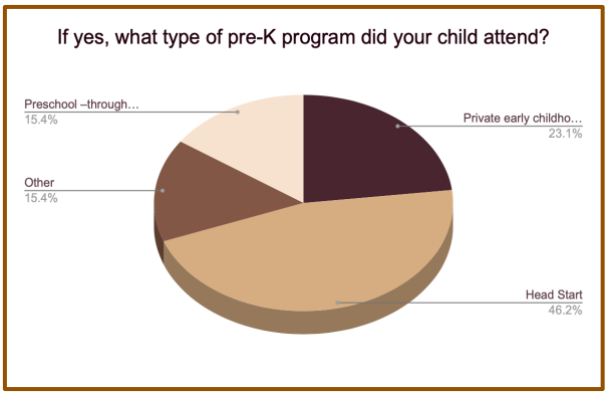

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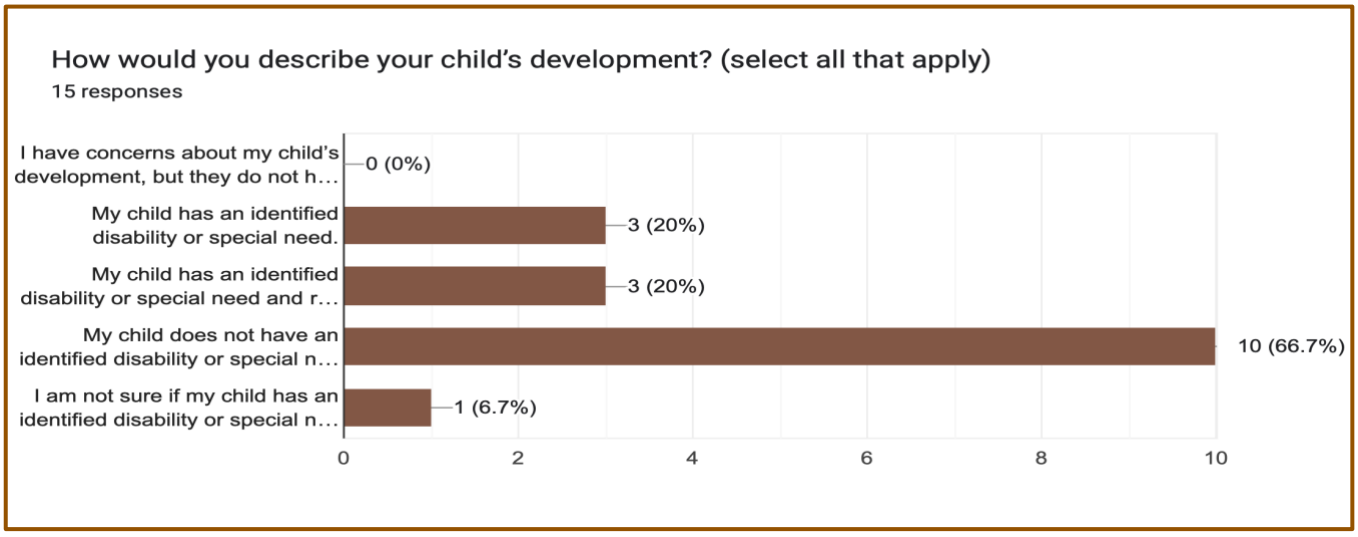

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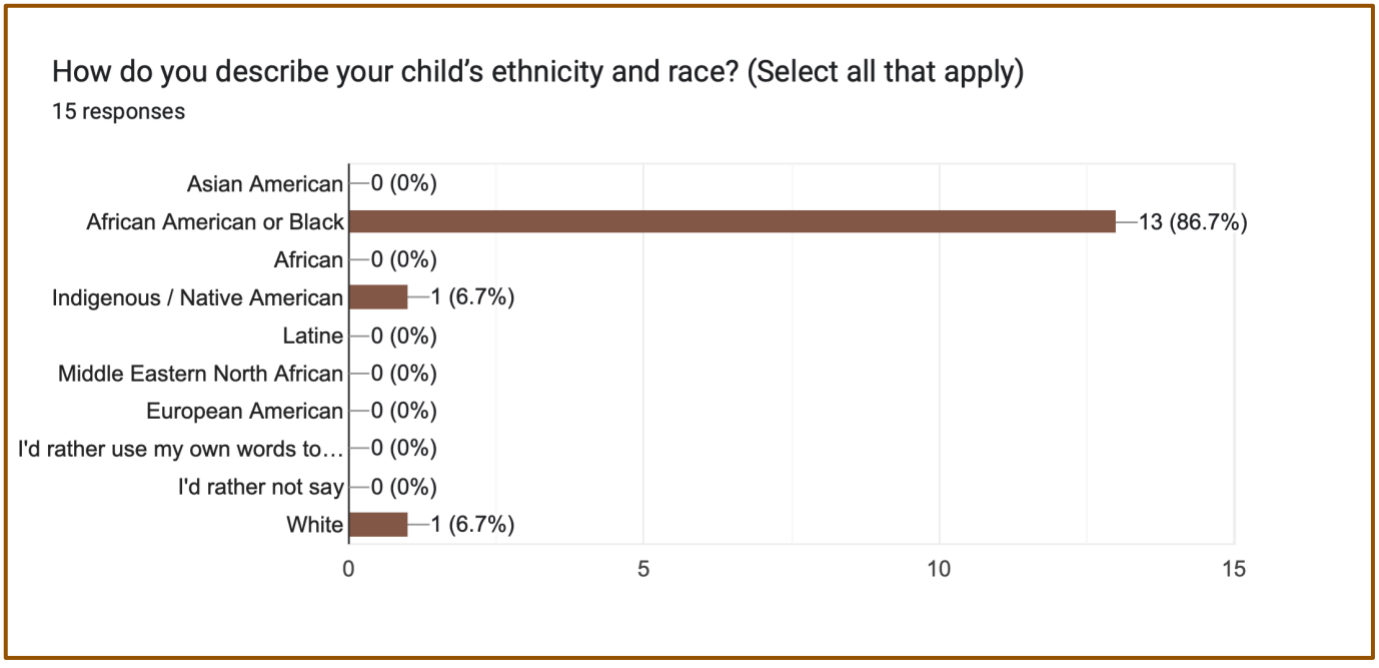
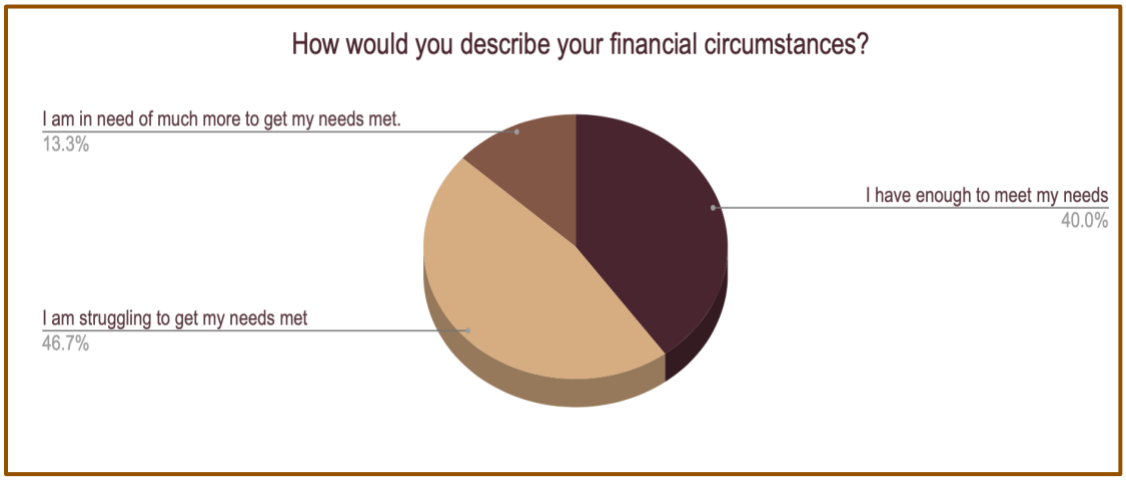
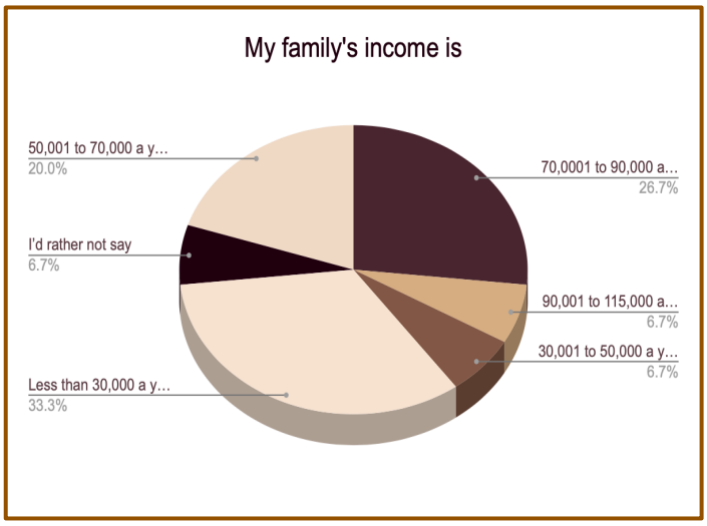
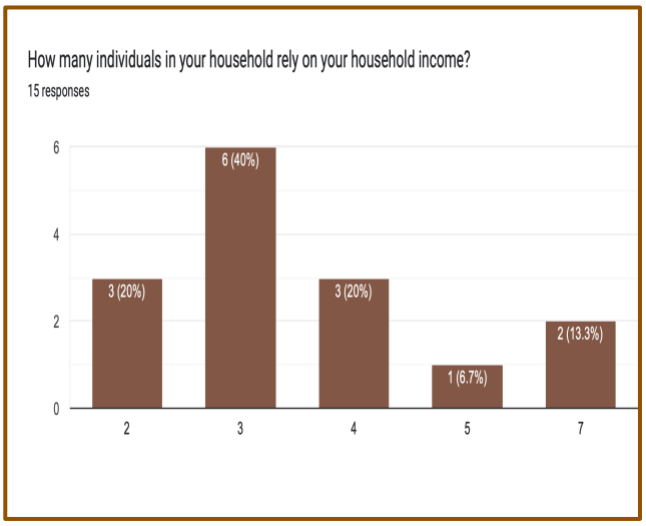


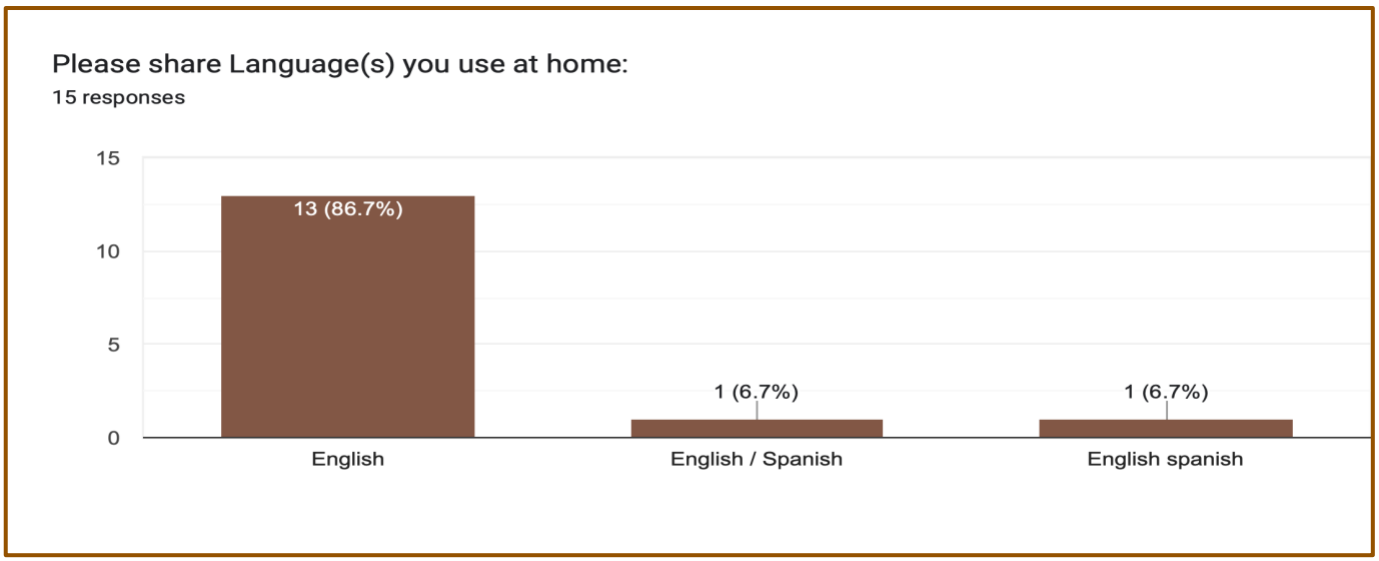
Economic Position

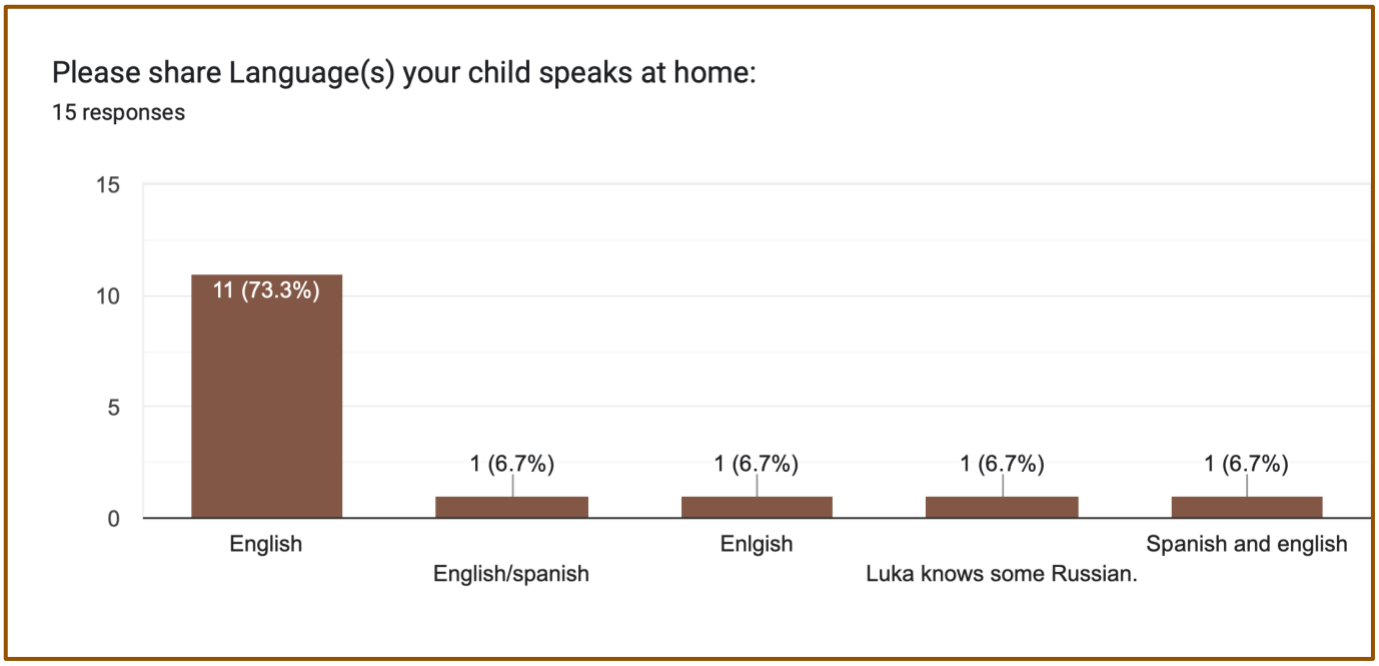




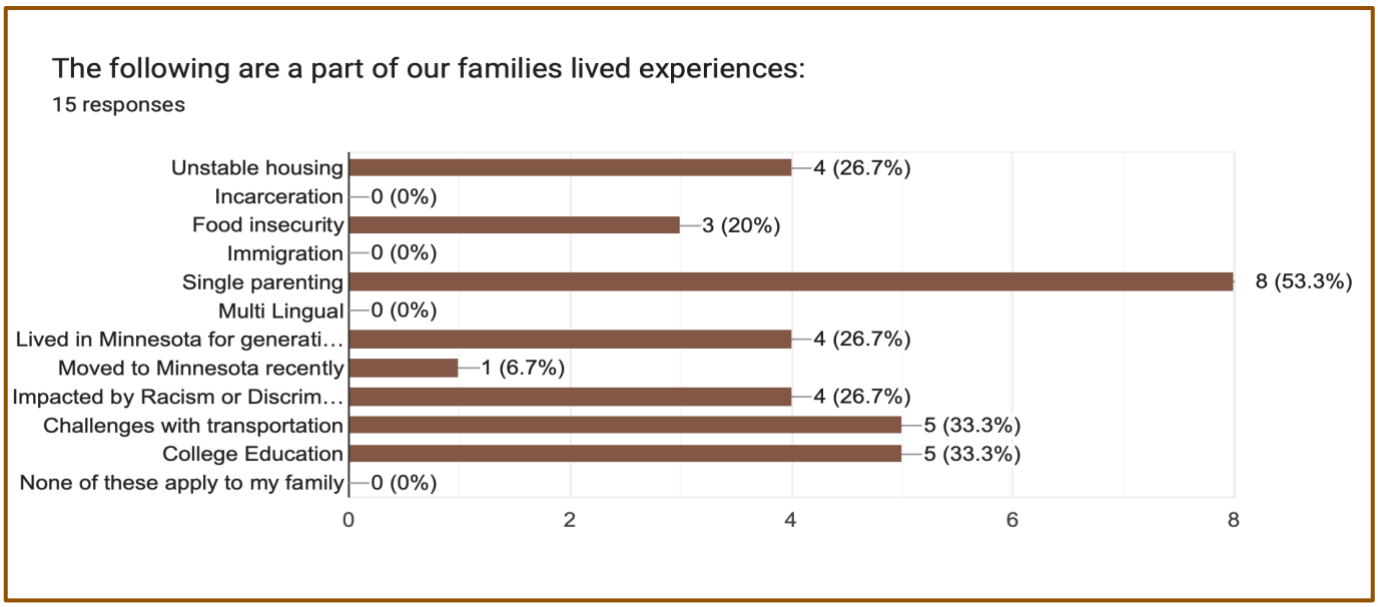


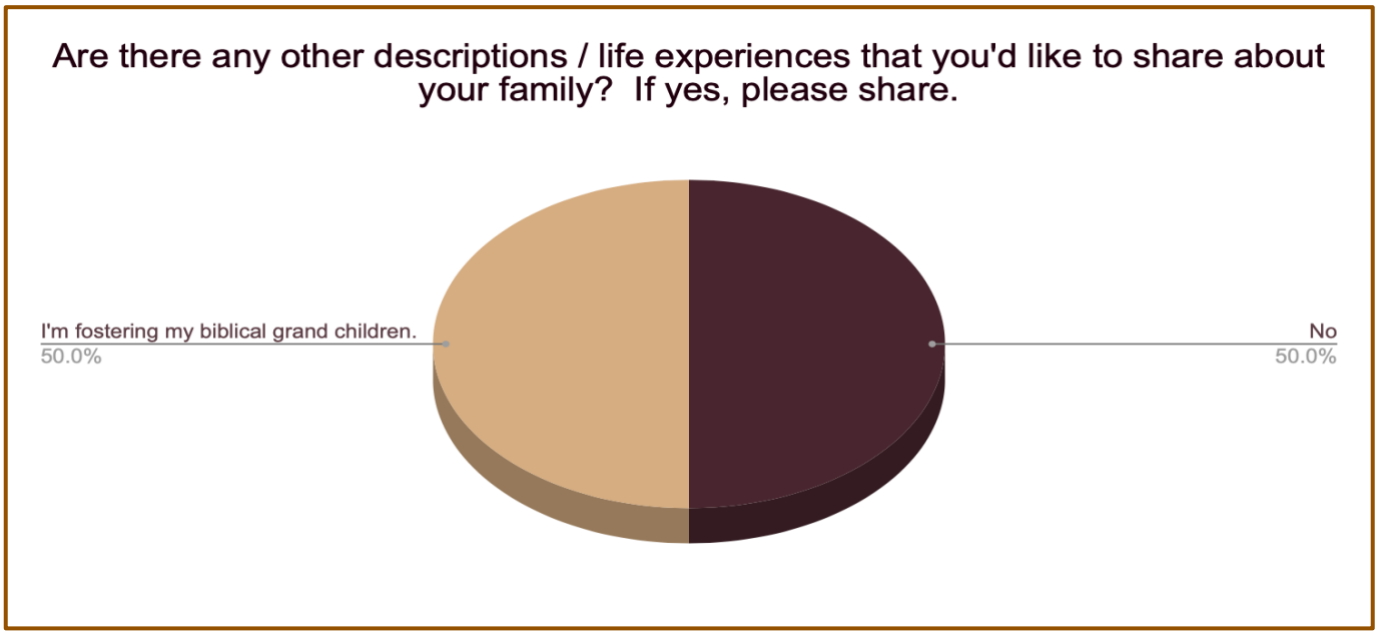
Language


Please share Language(s) you use at home:
15 responses
15
10
5
0
13 (86.7%)
1 (6.7%)
1 (6.7%)
English
English / Spanish
English spanish


Please share Language(s) your child speaks at home:
15 responses
15
10
5
0
11 (73.3%)
1 (6.7%)
1 (6.7%)
1 (6.7%)
1 (6.7%)
English
English/spanish
Enlgish
Luka knows some Russian.
Spanish and english

Family Experiences





LEARNINGS

Below are some our key learnings and insights:

INSIGHT # 1: Areas of Transferable Knowledge:
By considering attendance for areas unrelated to school attendance we can gain insight into what might work well for families as it relates to school attendance. Participating families each named spaces where they demonstrate consistent attendance. In considering the aspects of settings where consistent attendance is occurring, we can gain insight that supports effective problem solving as it relates to school attendance. After being asked *Where do you have consistent attendance and why?* Families named consistent attendance in other settings occurred when their attendance is

1. **Tied to basic, essential needs / livelihood** (shelter restrictions, employment, etc.)

   Participant Insight:
   - *I don't want anything messing up my pay*
   - *I know if I'm ever absent there's more work to do*

2. **Tied to experiences that spark joy, replenish or nurture**

   Participant Insight:
   - *[It's] just something that we've always made happen even if there's bills to pay…it's a break.*
   - *I'm consistent at work but I really don't want to be but church is my safe space so I'm consistent with my attendance there.*

3. **Centered on things that support their children's growth and development**

   Participant Insight:
   - *Whenever [my kids] have extracurricular activities, I like to show up early. I like to be on time and be punctual for that. I like to see when they get out there and not just be home on the computer. I grew up where I used to play outside I like to see them engaged with other people because that's how we build good community– when everybody can understand ok we can interact; we can socialize….I like going to see them have fun–even if they don't know how to do it they're having fun. And I'm punctual. It gives me a sense of joy and a sense of I am seeing them going out and engaging because we tend to lack social interaction.*

4. **Tied to others depending on us**
   - *Where I'm most consistent is being a dance teacher because them kids need me. If I'm not there then they can't learn their dance. That's the extra outlet that kids go to outside of school hours to learn about teamwork and working together and listening….yeah.*
   - *Going to the Vikings game at the VFW. I'm always there and I'm always early because I like to set up stuff and get stuff going.*

Participants also named settings that their children love to frequent. Characteristics that make children want to be in particular settings include:

- Being outdoors and interacting with others
- Being engaged and having lots of things to do to keep their attention
- Opportunities to move and get energy out
- Opportunity to get special, individualized attention
- Space to connect with family members
- Small cozy places

NSIGHT # 2: Barriers: We also gained insight on barriers to consistent attendance–much of which is outlined in the table below. The source of these barriers do not occur in isolation but often overlap. For example, for some Participants leaving work early to pick up children during the day created housing instability.

Barrier to Consistent Attendance	Notes/Examples/Participant Insights
Use of Non-Developmentally Appropriate Practices	Child was sent to "purple room" -- a place where he was isolated for behaviors like sitting under the table. Child would sit under the table when he felt overwhelmed. This response caused the child to start having accidents. Participant Insight: *How are you guys talking to my kids at school? If you working at a school, I'm trusting that you work with CHILDREN. Not talking and yelling at them because you're frustrated…sure kids aren't gonna listen. It's about how you approach them. Adults using harsh tone.*
Transportation Issues: • Bullying • Activating for kids on the spectrum • Unsafe drop off locations for young children	Children described as "on the spectrum" by their caregivers are often activated by getting on the bus or prior to getting on the bus which creates a stressful and difficult process of 'simply' getting the child on the bus and to school. Not getting on the bus creates a ripple effect of challenges like missing breakfast and the child is not well positioned to learn due to high stress levels. If children have appointments and the caregiver does not have a car, it's difficult to get children to school. Children being bullied on the bus made them complain about going to school or in some cases refuse to go to school.
Classroom Environment	Caregivers described concerns about the classroom environment that impacted their child's attendance. Examples include:

• Inappropriate behavior unaddressed • Adultification / Age Compression • Harsh Tone	• Educators reluctant or unwilling to share about student conflicts involving their child/ren • Reports of unkind words being spoken to or about children • Use of harsh tone to correct behavior–in some instances children were stressed by educators' use of harsh tone with other children in the classroom Participant Insight: *The adults that are supposed to be trusted are just not doing their part in making me and my husband feel heard. [My child] had a situation in kindergarten where she was being harassed by another student–more so sexually harassed. She would come home and just be quiet for hours–I had finally made the decision to send her to an MPS public school and she was being harassed. This boy was asking to see her body parts, asking like to kiss her…really inappropriate stuff. They just assumed oh little brown girl–she's gonna be exposed anyway.* *It was really hard and she would miss school because of that. I didn't want to have her in that environment where she didn't feel safe. We expressed our concerns to the staff, and they dismissed us. It's not that I'm nit picky but I'm like if you're gonna have my daughter for eight hours a day I need to be able to trust you and trust the environment that she's in. It's not the students; it's the staff. If I can't trust the staff, she's just not gonna be going.*
Parent/Caregiver Perspective of Kindergarten	In this group of 15 caregivers no one expressed a perspective that Kindergarten was less important or less of a priority. Several caregivers expressed an unwillingness to prioritize school attendance when they perceived it to be a harmful tradeoff for their child's overall well being. Participant Insight: *They called me and were like you're about to get truancy. And I said until you guys can fix your behaviors with my child, I'm not sending my child back to school. It took my stepfather to come in and help at the IEP meeting to correct their actions. After that my child had wonderful days in school.*
Unstable Housing	Being in shelter–and school is not located nearby-causes delays or challenges with getting to school according to more than one participant. Participant Insight: *Having that balance of being in shelter and their school is way across town. At the time I didn't want to feel like I needed someone to help with resources so I didn't talk to anybody about that i was in a shelter help; I know they have Mckinney Vento where you can get help with transportation but I didn't want anybody in my business so I tried to do what I could traveling from one side of town to the other so they would get to school a little bit late.*
Health	• Child has a disability which caused him to be at the doctor a lot.

	• Families with multiple children deal with illness passing from one child to the next. In many instances one child being ill can complicate getting any children to school.
Employment	Kindergarten timing/schedule that does not align with caregivers' work schedules. Participant Insight: *My biggest issue was the offering of Kindergarten. Hitting age 5-is like yes you can go to kindergarten! and then there were kindergartens that were half days; I work a full 8 hours. Then worrying about the childcare either before or after–that was a big…a huge hurdle. You're happy that you don't have to pay for daycare anymore but if there is only a half day Kindergarten you still have to pay that fee and then the transportation to and from in the middle of the day…and then finding those full day kindergartens having a waitlist and waiting. That was one of the bigger issues for me.*
Food insecurity	• It's important not to send kids to school hungry–so if they missed breakfast, it can take a lot of resources to ensure kids aren't hungry at school • Caregivers are working hard to pay high rent costs and providing food can be a struggle. . • Drive and go get kids breakfast before school because that's when the paycheck came through. Participant Perspective: *You're working and rent is so high. First comes the rent and then you gotta figure out food and all that. Just like the day to day sometimes…making sure the kids had breakfast, so I had to go drive and get the kids something to eat [which delayed them getting to school] because the money came through [that] day.*
Disabilities not appropriately accommodated for	• Lots of doctor appointments due to disabilities. • Zoning changes disrupted the student's ability to attend school where she was experiencing multiple years of success in early childhood programming as a special education student. • Inflexible structures around transportation, behavior and meals at school exponentially impact students with disabilities Participant Perspective: *When they changed zoning–[her former school] was a part of our home school [zone] but then they changed it. So, then she needed to transfer to her [new] home school. That change really messed up her need for normalcy, schedule and routine. And she hates it. It is a struggle almost every single day to get her to go to school. And it's not because she doesn't like the learning and the environment but the sense of community that was built for her and the things that were set up for years for her [as a*

	special education student] is not there for her anymore. And then it's a struggle when she comes home. She was thriving and now she's regressing.
Not Enough Sleep • School start and end times • Single parent Caregivers human limits • Sleeping Challenges for students with disabilities	• Caregivers needing to wake kids up at six am to get on the bus on time makes it hard for kids to get recommended 12 hours of sleep. • School start time is later than caregivers work start time • Hard to have any quality time with kids when end of day is later and kids have extracurricular activities. Spending quality time with kids might mean a later bedtime. • Caregivers parenting without a partner face exhaustion from working, school, meal prep, etc. Sometimes run out of energy to fight kids who are begging not to go to school or who are struggling to wake up. Parent perspective: *My daughter was falling asleep during the middle of the school day and the teachers didn't even tell me until conferences. And when they asked me about it it was obvious that they assumed I was like partying or doing crazy stuff and my child was up late because of that. She clearly had some movie script playing in her head. But it's really hard to get my daughter to bed. And if they had more respect for me and less biased assumption, they would have brought the matter to me so I could try to fix the situation.*
Sibling Factor	Children missing school due to situations relating to their siblings: • Calls to pick up child early for behavior or health reasons prompt many parents to pick up all their children as returning to school isn't feasible • Children arriving at school late because their sibling had appointments or other scheduling matters • Children arriving at school late because sibling is tired, slow to wake up, etc. Participant Perspective: *My son is on the spectrum. I had to leave work and stuff and that's part of the reason I'm in a shelter is because my son is having issues in the morning or in the afternoons and I'm having to get him and then I have to pick up my [other child]. [If] I'm there for one kid I'm not gonna come back for the other one…and my other son misses school too.*

INSIGHT #3 Power of Peer Support Groups: The power of meaningful connection with peers is an impactful intervention. In a short period of time Participants engaging in the focus groups created a strong sense of community. Even though our team referred to the sessions as focus groups many of the participants independently began referring to the sessions as a support group.

Our team was encouraged to see our efforts to develop trustworthy sessions conducive for authentic sharing were bearing fruit. However, we weren't fully expecting the focus groups to become a useful intervention supporting consistent attendance in and of itself–which is what we found.

Several Participants expressed that they found comfort in hearing from one another:

- *My first takeaway [from today's session] is that I'm not alone in this.*
- *There are other parents out there that go through things and advocate for their kids. It's nice to know that there are other parents out there that protect their kids the way I do*
- *[I appreciate] Having this to be able to tell our stories and what we go through and that we have space to tell our stories.*

Many Participants shared ideas about how how spaces like the sessions could be a resource:

- *Just hearing other people's experiences gives you insight and perspective on what to look for. The person next to me's experience could be mine [someday]. So if I'm going through it I'll know what to do.*
- *Leaders can take a step back–kind of how we do the grounding thing before this meeting–so they can take a step back so that all of our children's needs can be met not just one or this bunch or that bunch but all of them*
- *I love this sense of community. I love the fact of listening and being relatable. I think there is power in numbers and us talking and thinking about how we can fix that. Well to piggyback on what was said Hey your kid needs a ride to school; I noticed we can help one another. [State Leaders] are looking at the numbers but having the story to explain would be helpful. As the people who are experiencing truancy-we can help each other and lower those numbers.*
- *I think this is a really good space because as parents or even educators once you realize the signs of truancy you can do things to help another family or parent. I think talking about these things –where each one can reach out and say "hey I noticed your child wasn't here today, how can I help?" I've learned a lot from listening to the stories that people are sharing.*
- *I have something else to say. If we had more support like families or parents like maybe we could carpool if there's an issue with transportation with the bus; you know even our kids becoming friends they can be together after school doing homework so you know maybe if we have the support group as parents the attendance could be better…we could support each other if the bus broke down, if a kid was sick, if a parent was sick then you could take that kid to school if you're in the same district. I think this support group is actually very beneficial.*

Several Participants articulated shifts in their behavior around attendance between sessions. All three sessions were held within the span of 1 week. Participants reported the following behaviors because of participating in prior sessions:

- Checking in with their child about how they're feeling
- Making a point to get up earlier than child
- Decided to check in with child's teacher and school admin
- Slowing down to check on people at child's school and not being in such a rush
- Spending more 1:1 time with their children
- Holding themselves more accountable to press through morning challenges and getting to school.

One participant reflects upon her on shifts in between session 2 and session 3 (held four days apart from one another):

Participant Perspective:

- *It's like Hey, what you doing? Get on your business; what are we doing? Make sure you doing what you gotta do: Follow up with staff, making sure you have that 1:1 time with your kid. We a storefront. We together in this. We all have our own stuff. That's how [participating in this group] made me feel I was on business after that.*

- *Being in connection helps you be accountable*.

INSIGHT #4: Range of Responses. Children have a range of responses to their school settings–even when school settings are problematic.

Some caregivers report their children request to avoid going to school when their school experience is negative. Yet, other caregivers report children still wanting to go to school even amid harsh or even harmful circumstances. This insight can support us looking at the circumstances, not just a child's reaction. In addition, children's resilience can offer us hope as we work to support their needs being met.

Feedback from the child questionnaire suggests that many children focus on the aspects of their school experience that matter most to them. For example, a child who really connected with her teacher defined what she liked and didn't like about kindergarten based on the experience she perceived her teacher to be having.

Parent Perspective:

She knew that there were problems because she would come home and tell us but it didn't register. She still wanted to go back. She was like I don't want that to happen, but I still want to go back.

INSIGHT #5: Under Resourced Caregiving. Realities of under-resourced caregivers snowball in ways that impact attendance rates of young children. Families that don't have all the resources they need are positioned to make choices to keep multiple priorities going. One area of lack can easily create additional vulnerabilities that impact attendance. Participants mentioned:

- addressing family needs when parenting without a partner positions caregiver and children to get home late and to bed late.
- Prioritizing children's well-being results in being late for work and losing work or missing opportunities
- School settings not properly addressing students with disabilities results in calls for caregiver to leave work and pick up child/ren resulting in job loss and loss of housing.

Participant Perspective:

- *Single mom going to school and working sometimes you get don't home until 9pm, still have to feed the kids, help them with their homework. There were times when they went to bed late because of those things. Could be extra-curricular activities. When your kindergartener doesn't want to get up you're like you know what I'm not gonna fight this battle.*
- *There was a day last week where I was like get up, get up, get up. And they were like toasted. Done. I don't have another parent to drive them to school and I have to work from home.*

INSIGHT #6: **Child Well-being is top priority**. Participants are willing to prioritize what they perceive to be their child's well-being over many other things. Within the participating families in this study child well-being is essential–in some cases more essential than employment ease or school attendance. Examples include:

- Quitting a job to ensure their child could stay at their preferred neighborhood school. This allowed the caregiver to drive the child to school.
- Being tardy for work when their child with disabilities is overstimulated by getting on the bus.
- Stopping to get children breakfast before school even when resources are limited.

Caregivers who talked about centering their children's needs preferred to keep their children home with them if their needs would not be met at school. This is not because they don't understand the importance of school but because they don't have the resources to reconcile what they see as the school's inability to understand the importance of their child's needs.

Participant Perspective:

- *Do these schools have any leeway to buffer a situation that a child is going through? If I see my child breaking down like that I'd rather let her stay home with me. At the end of the day she's gonna go there frustrated and adding all that extra stress to her. I'm not gonna put her through that stress; she's not gonna be productive if she go to school in that vibe.*
- *I have two kids who are on the spectrum. Most of my jobs I've had I give them the heads up. It's difficult to get my two kids out of bed…cause I have a six-year-old she will go off because she don't want you to wake her up that early in the morning. She will go off [I tell my employer] Yo dude, I'm gonna be late. Sometimes it depends on the employer if they want to work with it…Because my kids come first to be real with you. To wake them up early it always cause this big drama to get them on the bus. My daughter she's just not feeling it right now. What I have to do is calm her down, make sure she good, give her chocolate milk. Do I get reprimanded for tardiness? Um yes, sometimes they will.*

INSIGHT #7: Effective / Ineffective Interventions

- Two of the fifteen families found attendance award programs to be motivating. No families voiced that attendance award programs were problematic–overall perception of such programs seemed to be neutral.
- Many families voiced that truancy letters and alarming language about tardiness stress invoking and unhelpful. Several families shared examples of not responding to truancy letters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following outlines possibilities for effective responses that could increase consistent attendance patterns for young children. Many of these recommendations come directly from families participating in the project.

REC #1: EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE FAMILIES:
While many educational systems are aware of the importance of family engagement, it's critically important that systems are both aware of and using the type of engagement strategies that engage families. This includes:

- **Prioritizing relational strategies** over strategies like written word, automated calls, etc. Relationship oriented strategies may differ per situation but often include phone calls or visits from school staff who have the strongest relationship with families. During this project we worked with school district partners and leaders to let families know about the focus groups we were holding. When our partners initially sent out emails there was little response; when school staff made phone calls families were responsive and interested in engaging.

- **Investing in the creation of spaces that are more likely to yield authentic discussion/sharing from families**. Moving focus beyond just creating space for engagement. Focus on cultivating engagement spaces that yield trust building and authentic sharing.

- **Recognizing the impact of shame.** When caregivers feel embarrassed or unworthy of connection, they can avoid school settings all together. Avoid developing policy or attendance programming that even unintentionally induces shame in the pursuit of behavior change. For example, reframe how systems and leaders think about time–take on more flexible interpretations of time to move away from shaming undertones.

- **Creating pathways to gather authentic feedback from young children**. We can learn a lot from asking children for their perspective if we format the engagement in ways thoughtfully consider their development.

REC #2 CREATE SYSTEMS AND PROGRAMMING USING A FAMILY-CENTERED, ASSET BASED LENS

Create more flexible pathways and systems to determine / gather attendance data. In many cases a caregiver is busy or even overwhelmed if a child is not at school. Calling to excuse an absence can easily be forgotten. It's important that systems that make it easy for caregivers to correct inaccurate attendance data.

Engage in holistic measures to support under-resourced families. School and attendance teams can invest time in thinking creatively about the effective ways to consider the realities and needs of under

resourced caregivers. Doing this well includes recognizing the assets caregivers bring to the table and proactively building strong connections with those families.

- Investing in staff time to building meaningful connection
- Offering before and after school care
- Partnerships with local early childhood settings to support Kindergarten learning for children in half day programs
- Innovation around pick-up and drop-off times:
    - Collaborate with local employers to standardize employment and school start and end times
    - Consider multiple start and end times within one school or one district.

Seriously consider school transportation reform. Prioritize innovation and long-term commitment to child-centered bussing. Possible considerations:

- Partnerships to create early childhood internships–to increase adults on buses
- Reframing bus mapping and creating distinct standards for young children

Replace current language about attendance with more asset-based and accurate language to scaffold our ability to use a lens of asset and better see components of attendance rates that are structural. In addition, language less activating for caregivers will increase likelihood of caregiver engagement. Consider alternatives for terms like Truancy, Tardy, Chronic Absenteeism.

Work to reframe shortcomings of under resourced caregivers from judgement to support. Work to move away from defining a caregiver's limitations as personal shortcomings (ie how can we help this caregiver to understand the importance of getting up for school) and towards understanding limitations as human limitations (i.e. how can we support caregivers having breaks or opportunities to replenish?)

REC #3: SUPPORT, ADVOCATE AND COMMIT TO THE CREATION OF CHILD-CENTERED CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS

Advocate for flexible school systems that are responsive to kids' needs–especially neurodiverse kids and kids with disabilities

More flexible policies in relationship to physiological needs: flexible breakfast time policies, tolerance of a range of emotional regulation, a range of school start and end times within one district or within one school, collaboration with local employers to standardize employment and school start and end times,

Develop and Implement Developmentally appropriate approaches to school engagement for young children:

Prioritize effective justice/equity-oriented training for educators.

REC #4: RECOGNIZE AND VALIDATE THE RECENT AND FAR HISTORY THAT WARRANTS MISTRUST AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

Given that many caregivers have lived experiences involving marginalization or harm, education systems need to take intentional steps to build trust with families and practice repair to reinstate trust after breaks. Respect is given however trust must be earned.

Ensuring communication pathways that align with families' communication expectations and preferences can help to build trust.

PARTICIPANT VISION / RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants were asked if they could have a magic wand to create the ideal kindergarten what would kindergarten look like. Again, we can align forward movement and strategies with the essential elements of these responses:

If you had a magic wand and could make the kindergarten experience whatever you wanted it to be, what would it look like? What would be involved in that.

Ideal Kindergarten	Potential Recommendations
Uniforms - • No uniforms because my child likes to dress and express herself. • Uniforms because it creates stability and routine	Offer options that match different preferences within one school setting or one district. Take on uniform approaches that have generous space for personalization. Keep in mind the getting children ready for school inform ease or difficulty of getting to school
• Have teachers and administrators that "give a crap" and lead the environment as if it was an environment for their kids. • Having teachers that actually care. • Educators get paid more so they can offer more quality education.	Create metrics to continually understand how and to what extent school leaders and educators are expressing care Create professional development that includes families' perspective and definitions regarding teachers that follow through and center children and families
• Kids would be kind (not jerks) • Effective Anti-bullying programs in schools.	Prioritize funding to Continue or re-engage in effective anti-bullying culture Innovate ways to
• Have more intimate opportunities to get to know educators. A way to build relationships between teachers and students. Open house and other school events don't give me a sense of who teachers really are.	Invest in relational family engagement opportunities that go beyond the surface.

• I'd be able to participate in school more. Less limitations on me volunteering in the classroom	Consider expanded ways to involve families / invite families into the classroom
• Classroom environments that would have sun shining, lots of plants, possibly pets, primary colors, calming room–everything needed to inspire children to be great. Bright space to create memorable moments.	Gather data on whether characteristics of high-quality classroom have a relationship with consistent attendance Include recommendations regarding physical classroom environment within attendance teams and strategies.
• Good Food in the cafeteria–instead of jail food. Don't treat kids in the urban areas like they're in prison. • Healthy options for food-no or limited options • Gardening for children that builds community	Learn more about how or if healthier food informs school enjoyment and attendance.
• Would be able to have quality education but still be with kids that look like you–from the same culture as my child. • Having Black teachers teaching Black kids.	Kindergarten classrooms led by adults with cultural competency can strengthen trust with families and overall experience for students.
• My child would get dropped off by the bus right in front of my house.	Innovate transportation reform Begin to consider long-term goals/plans for reform

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