

Aim4Excellence™

Program Evaluation: 2014 - 2017

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Introduction

This report summarizes an evaluation study conducted by the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University of its Aim4Excellence program from 2014 through 2017. The Aim4Excellence National Director Credential offers an engaging and interactive online professional learning experience that focuses on the core leadership and management competencies that early childhood leaders need. Aim4Excellence is eligible for college credit, supports the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) program accreditation, and aligns with state professional development credentials.

ABOUT AIM4EXCELLENCE

In 2007, the McCormick Center received philanthropic support to develop user-friendly, affordable, online management coursework that could be accessed via the Internet by early childhood administrators across the nation. The Aim4Excellence Online National Director Credential (A4X) was officially launched in 2009. It was designed to deliver high-level content in a user-friendly online format. It was the first national director credential recognized by the NAEYC as meeting the alternative pathway training requirements for directors of centers seeking program accreditation. Since its inception, over 2,000 participants (directors, administrators, teachers, and family child care professionals) have completed one or more modules and over 1,300 have earned the A4X National Director Credential.

The nine modules that comprise Aim4Excellence not only provide the essential basics of early childhood program administration—finance, program operations, and human resource management—but also the essential knowledge and skills that directors need to lead diverse and culturally competent organizations that can thrive in an uncertain social, economic, and political context. Administrators learn to apply principles of effective leadership to create compelling visions for their programs, become agents of change, walk the talk of ethical behavior, and embrace the paradoxes of their roles. Each module is the equivalent of approximately 16 clock hours (or one semester hour) of instruction. The nine modules are:

Module 1 - Leading the Way

Module 2 - Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff

Module 3 - Promoting Peak Performance

Module 4 - Managing Program Operations

Module 5 - Building a Sound Business Strategy

Module 6 - Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments

Module 7 - Supporting Children's Development and Learning

Module 8 - Creating Partnerships with Families

Module 9 - Evaluating Program Quality

Appendix A provides a more complete description of each module.

Modules were delivered in an interactive online format, accessible through any high-speed internet connection. The curriculum for each module promoted active learning outcomes and cognitive engagement. Interactive activities, problem-solving tasks, video clips, and scenario-based assignments were some of the design features embedded in the content to help ensure a deeper understanding of concepts as well as retention of information. Through the nine modules, the McCormick Center provided an attainable model that offered early care and education administrators the tools needed to develop and sustain systems within their programs. Modules aligned with the *Program Administration Scale: Measuring Early Childhood Leadership and Management (PAS)*, a valid and reliable tool used to measure organizational practices in early childhood programs.¹

Each module included practitioner reflections, interactive exercises, quizzes to check for understanding, and field assignments to apply the concepts learned. The various assignments that comprise the student's evidence-of-learning (EOL) total 100 points for each module. Approximately one-half of the points were scored automatically using technology. Using rubrics to assess the quality of the work submitted, qualified scorers graded the remaining items.

As a group, early childhood practitioners tend to have limited experience with technology and lack basic skills and technological literacy. Therefore, Aim4Excellence was designed so that it was easy to navigate, included predictable elements, and engaged the learner. The goal in the design of the online training was to make the technology as straightforward and transparent as possible so that learners could focus on the content and not get side-tracked or frustrated with the demands of interacting in a complex instructional platform. The delivery also was flexible enough to accommodate the busy schedules of early childhood administrators.

FACILITATED COHORT MODEL

While some participants proceeded through the modules individually at their own pace; the majority of participants were part of a facilitated peer learning group (cohort). These groups often functioned as a community of practice, which allowed participants to co-construct knowledge about leadership practice and how it plays out in the field with other program directors. The groups provided a venue for situational learning (knowledge obtained from applied everyday situations) and critical reflection (reflective practice by examining one's competencies, performance, problem solving, and the effects of actions) to improve leadership skills.² Typically, they met regularly (often monthly) to discuss the content in the Aim4Excellence modules and consider implications for their programs.

¹ Talan, T., & Bloom, P. J. (2011). *The Program Administration Scale: Measuring Early Childhood Leadership and Management* (2nd edition). New York: Teachers College Press.

² Buysse, V., Sparkman, K. L., Wesley, P. W. (2003). Communities of practice: Connecting what we know with what we do. *Exceptional Children* 69(3), pp. 263-277.

AIM4EXCELLENCE EVALUATION STUDY

The evaluation study was designed to examine the characteristics and learning outcomes of Aim4Excellence participants from 2014 through 2017. The study also examined effectiveness by measuring change over time in administrative practice—a proxy for leadership skills. Research questions for the study included:

1. What were the characteristics of Aim4Excellence participants and the programs they represented?
2. What was the completion rate for individuals that began the program and each of the modules?
3. How long did it take participants to complete the program and each of the modules?
4. Were there differences in learning outcomes based on participant characteristics or the programs they represented?
5. To what degree did administrative practice improve in programs led by Aim4Excellence participants?

Methodology

Since the Aim4Excellence program is administered online, data were collected directly from participants during the registration process and during their engagement in the program. Data were collected through two online sources: RegOnline (participant registration application) and Mosaic/GEMS (the Aim4Excellence learning management system). Data from both sources were extracted and merged. The data were cleaned to ensure integrity and to produce the most complete dataset possible. Appendix B contains a detailed description of specific dataset transformations and modifications.

PARTICIPANT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE PROGRAM

Descriptive statistics were generated on learning outcomes data for Aim4Excellence participants. Items were examined to determine completion rates, duration per module, assessment scores for each module, and the frequency of resubmissions for the EOL assessments. Resubmission was required for participants who scored less than 70% on an EOL assessment. A total composite score was created by adding each of the assessment scores for each module. The possible maximum composite score was 900 points. The distribution of average scores for each module were also examined. One-way ANOVAs were performed to detect differences among groups of participants based on their characteristics or the types of programs they represented.

CHANGE OVER TIME IN ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE

On-site assessments were conducted, using the PAS, at child care centers in four states (Arizona, Delaware, Illinois, and New Mexico) when participants first began the Aim4Excellence program and again when they completed all of the modules, to measure change in leadership and management practices. The PAS is designed to reliably measure leadership and management practices of center-based programs. Using a 7-point rating scale (inadequate to excellent), the PAS assesses 25 items grouped into 10 categories: human resources development, personnel cost and allocation, center operations, child assessment, fiscal

management, program planning and evaluation, family partnerships, marketing and public relations, technology, and staff qualifications. Twenty-one items from the PAS were used in this analysis. Items in the staff qualifications subscale (items 22 – 25) were omitted because it is unlikely that program directors would be able to significantly affect qualifications during their enrollment and confounding factors may have a greater influence than that of the program administrator. The PAS assessments were administered by certified assessors that conducted the site visits, which included a brief tour of the center, an interview with the administrator, and document reviews. Matched pre- and post-data were available for 30 of 58 centers assessed. Paired sample *t*-tests were used to analyze the average change in leadership and management practice.

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION SURVEYS

Participants provided feedback by completing an evaluation survey at the end of each module and after finishing all of the modules. The survey responses were analyzed and descriptive statistics were computed. The results were examined for trends across the modules and compared with learning outcome results.

Results

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY SAMPLE

This study examined 1,372 individuals enrolled in Aim4Excellence, between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2017. Of these, 704 (51%) individuals enrolled in all nine modules. Table 1 shows the enrollment distribution by year, including the number of individuals who enrolled in all nine modules, and the number of individuals who enrolled in any of three Aim4Excellence courses for College Credit through National Louis University (NLU).

Table 1 | Number of Participants Enrolled by Year (N = 1,372)

Year	Enrollment	Enrolled in All Modules	Enrolled for College Credit		
			ECE 311	ECE 312	ECE 313
2014	364	195	21	23	23
2015	347	243	97	91	92
2016	390	216	191	185	185
2017	271	50	98	94	100
Total	1,372	704	407	393	400

Participants worked for 555 different organizations, in 48 states and Canada. Table 2 shows the distribution of enrollments for each state.

Table 2 | Enrollment by State, Military Address, and International Location (N = 1,372)

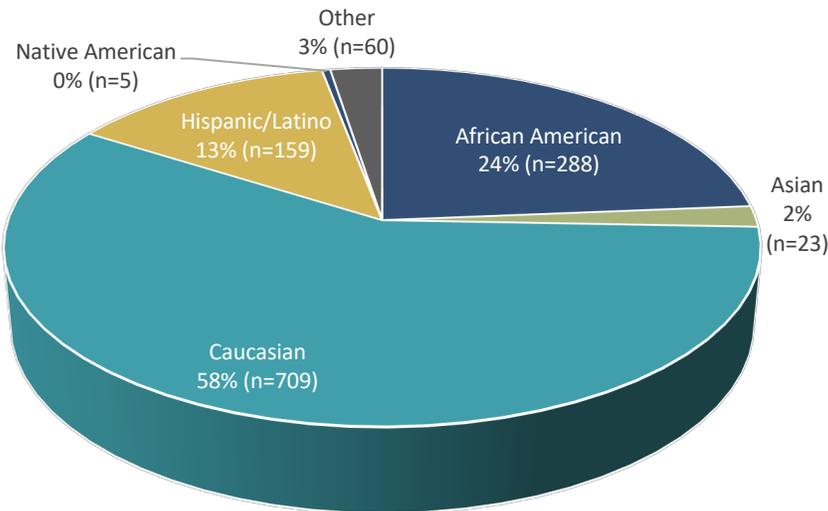
State	#	%	State	#	%
Alabama	1	0.1%	Minnesota	3	0.2%
Alaska	1	0.1%	Mississippi	44	3.2%
Arizona	66	4.8%	Missouri	2	0.1%
Arkansas	1	0.1%	Montana	12	0.9%
California	11	0.8%	New Jersey	2	0.1%
Canada	3	0.2%	New Mexico	3	0.2%
Colorado	30	2.2%	New York	11	0.8%
Connecticut	3	0.2%	North Carolina	5	0.4%
Delaware	298	21.7%	North Dakota	37	2.7%
District of Columbia	2	0.1%	Ohio	11	0.8%
Florida	8	0.6%	Oregon	15	1.1%
Georgia	7	0.5%	Pennsylvania	37	2.7%
Hawaii	4	0.3%	Rhode Island	1	0.1%
Idaho	3	0.2%	South Carolina	22	1.6%
Illinois	459	33.5%	Tennessee	1	0.1%
Indiana	62	4.5%	Texas	120	8.7%
Iowa	33	2.4%	Utah	3	0.2%
Kansas	1	0.1%	Virginia	4	0.3%
Louisiana	1	0.1%	Washington	5	0.4%
Maryland	12	0.9%	West Virginia	1	0.15%
Massachusetts	19	1.4%	Wisconsin	3	0.2%
Michigan	4	0.3%	Wyoming	1	0.15%

*note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add to 100% throughout this report.

Participants' Backgrounds

At enrollment, Aim4Excellence participants reported about their personal demographic information, education, and employment.

Participants self-identified their racial category. Figure 1 shows that the racial composition of the participants was 58% White/Caucasian, 24% Black/African American, and 13% Hispanic/Latino persons.

Figure 1 | Participants' Race/Ethnicity (N= 1,215)

The racial/ethnic composition of the sample differs from that of the United States, which is 61% White/Caucasian, 13% Black/African American, and 18% Hispanic/Latino.³

Of the 1,372 participants, 1,314 (96%) were female and 57 (4%) were male. The average age of Aim4Excellence participants at enrollment was 42 years, ranging from 21 to 76 years-old. Although there was a broad range in participants' educational background, nearly 60% of them had a bachelor's degree or higher. Table 3 shows the distribution of educational credentials and degrees:

³ U.S. Census Estimates July 1, 2017. From: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217>

Table 3 | Participants' Level of Education (N =1,372)

Highest Level of Education	Number of Participants	Percentage
Some college credit in ECE ⁴ or CD ⁵ , no degree	334	24%
Associate's degree in ECE or CD	204	15%
Associate's degree in another field	78	6%
Bachelor's degree in ECE or CD	162	12%
Bachelor's degree in another field	318	23%
Some graduate work	57	4%
Master's degree in ECE or CD	81	6%
Master's degree in another field	122	9%
Advanced degree	16	1%

Participants' Program Characteristics

Participants worked for 555 different organizations and reported program characteristics related to type, Head Start, state-funded preK, and faith-based affiliation. Table 4 shows number and percentages of types of centers. Table 5 shows supplemental funding sources and affiliation of participants' centers.

Table 4 | Types of Participants' Centers (n =949)

Program Type	Number of Programs	Percentage
For-profit organizations	532	56%
Private nonprofit centers—Independent	168	18%
Private nonprofit centers—Affiliated with a social service agency	89	9%
Public nonprofit centers—Affiliated with a government agency	120	12%
Education Institution—College, university, or public school	40	4%

Table 5 | Supplemental Funding Sources and Affiliation of Participants' Centers

	Number of Programs	Percentage
Head Start (n = 1,169)	175	17%
State-funded pre-K (n =1,149)	182	16%
Faith-based affiliation (n = 1,162)	151	13%

⁴ Early Childhood Education

⁵ Child Development

When asked about how the fees for Aim4Excellence were paid, most participants (between 88% and 94%) reported someone else paid their registration or would reimburse them for the costs. Approximately one-third of the respondents (30%) indicated that their employer paid for all or part or all of it, while about 70% indicated a third-party organization (e.g., child care resource and referral agency, foundation, government) paid for part or all of the fees. Table 6 below shows numbers and proportions of different payment sources.

Table 6 | Payment Sources by Module (N = 1,372)

	Client	Someone Else	Employer	Third-party
Module 1	12%	88%	34%	66%
Module 2	12%	89%	32%	69%
Module 3	11%	89%	30%	70%
Module 4	9%	92%	29%	71%
Module 5	7%	93%	27%	73%
Module 6	6%	94%	29%	72%
Module 7	7%	93%	32%	68%
Module 8	7%	93%	30%	70%
Module 9	7%	93%	30%	70%

*Employer and Third-party represents % of those that indicated Someone Else

PARTICIPANT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Among participants who took at least one module, between 78% and 92% passed on the first attempt. The remaining participants were offered the opportunity to resubmit assignments that scored below 70%. Table 7 shows the number and percentage of resubmission requests.

Table 7 | Number of Resubmission Requests (N = 1,372)

	Number of Resubmissions Requests	Percentage
Module 1 - Leading the Way	304	22%
Module 2 - Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff	260	19%
Module 3 - Promoting Peak Performance	242	18%
Module 4 - Managing Program Operations	227	17%
Module 5 - Building a Sound Business Strategy	110	8%
Module 6 - Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments	157	11%
Module 7 - Supporting Children's Development and Learning	307	22%
Module 8 - Creating Partnerships with Families	163	12%
Module 9 - Evaluating Program Quality	155	12%

The Aim4Excellence online program recorded the times that participants signed into the system and when they completed modules. This information was used to compute the duration of time for completion. The time participants spent on completing each of the modules ranged from less than one day to over two years. Roughly one-half of the respondents took between 7 and 30 days to complete each module. On average, it took participants 24 days to complete one module; with a median duration of 28 days. Table 8 shows the frequency of duration (in percentage of participants) for completing each module.

Table 8 | Duration by Module (N = 1,372)

Duration	Module								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>n</i>	1,085	1,095	1,100	977	909	877	895	872	860
0 to 1 Days	8%	7%	12%	11%	11%	12%	15%	13%	13%
2 to 7 Days	7%	6%	9%	7%	9%	11%	12%	13%	15%
7 to 30 Days	51%	45%	47%	43%	51%	53%	50%	52%	53%
31 to 90 Days	33%	41%	31%	38%	29%	24%	22%	22%	19%
Over 90 Days	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Average (days)	30	31	26	30	25	24	20	21	20

In addition to the duration recorded by the system, participants were also asked to estimate the total number of hours they spent on the follow up questionnaire at the end of each module. On average, participants perceived spending between 18 hours (Module 8) and 26 hours (Module 4). The largest proportions (roughly one-half) of participants reported spending between 11 and 20 hours to complete each module. Table 9 shows how much time participants reported spending on each module.

Table 9 | Perceived Duration by Module (self-reported)

	Average Hours			> 10 hours	11 - 20 hours	21 - 30 hours	31 - 40 hours	< 40 hours
	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	%	%	%	%	%
Module 1 - Leading the Way	998	19.6	36	30%	49%	12%	5%	4%
Module 2 - Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff	837	18.7	15	24%	55%	11%	4%	5%
Module 3 - Promoting Peak Performance	756	18.9	18	29%	50%	10%	4%	6%
Module 4 - Managing Program Operations	679	25.9	30	16%	42%	23%	8%	11%
Module 5 - Building a Sound Business Strategy	650	25.3	74	22%	51%	14%	6%	7%
Module 6 - Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments	641	23.7	82	29%	51%	10%	4%	5%
Module 7 - Supporting Children's Development and Learning	663	19.1	48	32%	48%	11%	5%	5%
Module 8 - Creating Partnerships with Families	616	17.9	14	30%	50%	10%	4%	5%
Module 9 - Evaluating Program Quality	625	18.4	18	33%	46%	11%	5%	6%

Of the 1,372 participants who enrolled in the program, 704 individuals (51%) completed all modules. The duration to complete all modules ranged from 3 weeks to 2.75 years; for an average of 8 months. The majority (57%) of participants spent between 7 and 9 months to complete the whole program. Table 10 shows the distribution of time spent for participants to complete all modules.

Table 10 | Duration for All Modules (n = 704)

Duration	Number	Percentage
3 Months or less	39	6%
4 to 6 Months	68	9%
7 to 9 Months	399	57%
10 to 12 Months	103	15%
13 to 15 Months	35	5%
16 to 18 Months	29	4%
19 to 21 Months	16	2%
22 to 33 Months	15	2%

Participants’ successful completions of each module were compared based on the year they first logged in. Of 1,372 participants who completed at least one module, the greatest numbers (1,019 to 1,053) completed modules 1, 2, and 3. The number of participants who completed modules 4 through 9 ranged between 792 and 836. Results indicate that 94% and above of participants successfully completed each of the nine modules. Table 11 shows numbers and proportions of successful completions for each module by year.

Table 11 | Successful Completions by Module

		2014		2015		2016		2017		Total	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Module 1 (<i>n</i> = 1,053)	Pass	263	94%	276	99%	254	96%	219	95%	1,012	96%
	Fail	16	6%	4	1%	10	4%	11	5%	41	4%
Module 2 (<i>n</i> = 1,056)	Pass	269	98%	260	97%	243	98%	260	97%	1,032	98%
	Fail	4	2%	7	3%	5	2%	8	3%	24	2%
Module 3 (<i>n</i> = 1,019)	Pass	262	96%	269	98%	249	98%	206	94%	986	97%
	Fail	10	4%	5	2%	6	2%	12	6%	33	3%
Module 4 (<i>n</i> = 836)	Pass	134	95%	258	97%	215	99%	207	98%	814	97%
	Fail	7	5%	7	3%	3	1%	5	2%	22	3%
Module 5 (<i>n</i> = 854)	Pass	108	98%	259	98%	247	99%	229	100%	843	99%
	Fail	2	2%	6	2%	2	1%	1	0%	11	1%
Module 6 (<i>n</i> = 835)	Pass	92	100%	271	99%	228	100%	239	97%	830	99%
	Fail	0	0%	2	1%	1	0%	2	1%	5	1%
Module 7 (<i>n</i> = 832)	Pass	90	96%	251	100%	226	99%	256	99%	823	99%
	Fail	4	4%	1	0%	2	1%	2	1%	9	1%
Module 8 (<i>n</i> = 808)	Pass	87	98%	245	99%	220	99%	247	99%	799	99%
	Fail	2	2%	3	1%	2	1%	2	1%	9	1%
Module 9 (<i>n</i> = 792)	Pass	85	97%	246	100%	206	99%	245	98%	782	98%
	Fail	3	3%	0	0%	2	1%	5	2%	10	2%

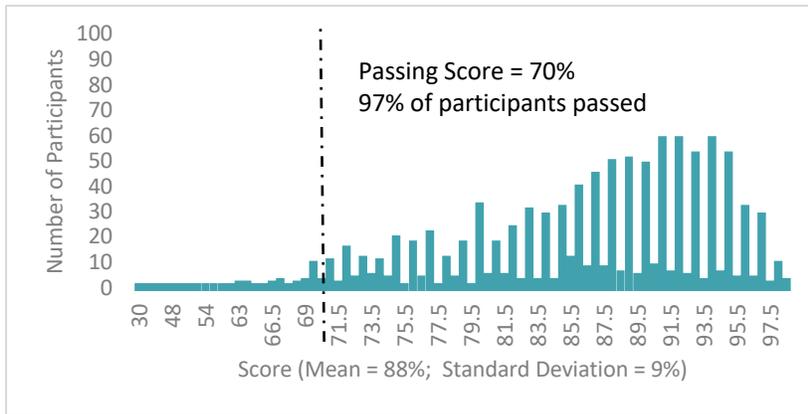
Evidence-of-learning Outcomes

Participants completed several assignments throughout each module to assess their learning. An overall score of 70% was considered passing. The distribution of scores were examined and average scores were computed independently for each module. Average scores ranged between 87% (Module 3) and 96% (Module 5). In Modules 4, 5, and 6, the largest proportions of participants (17% to 52%) achieved the perfect score of 100%. Table 12 shows means, standard deviations, and percentage of participants who passed the EOL assessments for each module.

Table 12 | EOL Results by Module

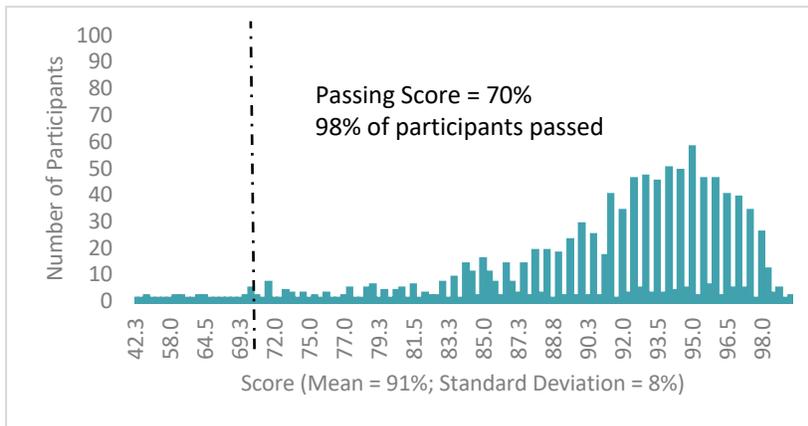
	Mean Score	SD	% Passing
Module 1 - Leading the Way (<i>n</i> =1,064)	88%	9%	81%
Module 2 - Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff (<i>n</i> =1,064)	91%	8%	92%
Module 3 - Promoting Peak Performance (<i>n</i> =1,041)	87%	9%	84%
Module 4 - Managing Program Operations (<i>n</i> =838)	94%	11%	92%
Module 5 - Building a Sound Business Strategy (<i>n</i> =861)	96%	8%	94%
Module 6 - Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments (<i>n</i> =845)	94%	7%	96%
Module 7 - Supporting Children’s Development and Learning (<i>n</i> =869)	88%	7%	88%
Module 8 - Creating Partnerships with Families (<i>n</i> =843)	92%	7%	94%
Module 9 - Evaluating Program Quality (<i>n</i> =822)	90%	7%	92%

Figure 2 | Module 1 - Leading the Way Score Distribution (n =1,064)



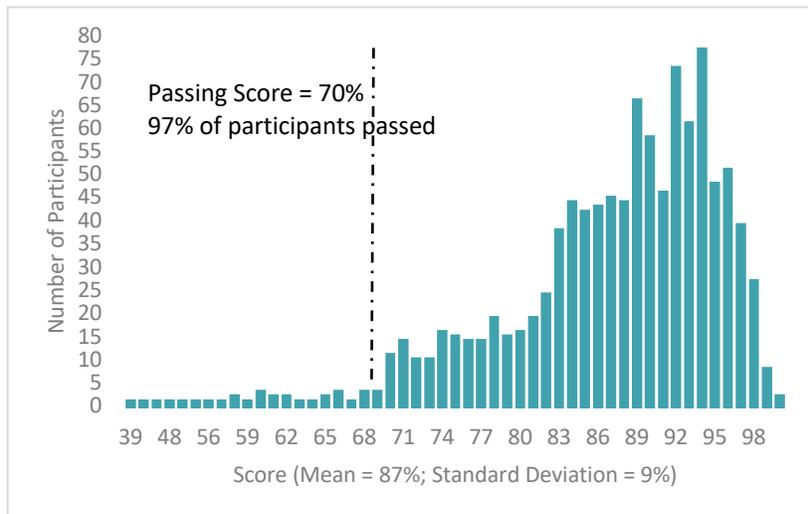
In Module 1 - Leading the Way, scores ranged from 30% to 99%. Average score was 88%, with a standard deviation of 9%. Ninety-seven percent of the participants passed. Figure 2 shows Module 1 score distribution.

Figure 3 | Module 2 - Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff Score Distribution (n =1,064)



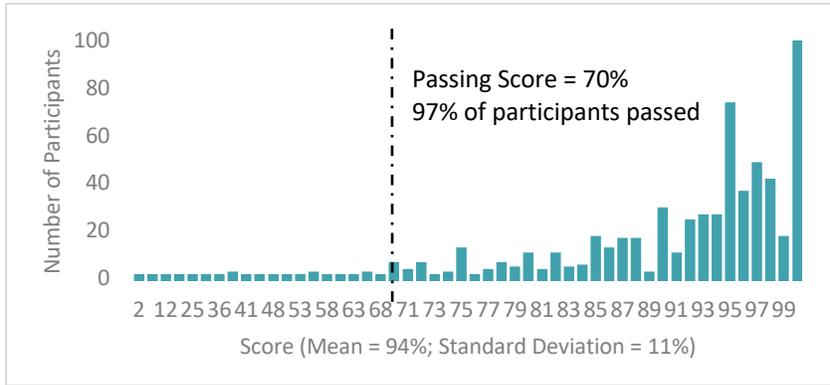
In Module 2 - Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff, scores ranged from 42.3% to 99.5%. Average score was 91%, with a standard deviation of 8%. Ninety-eight percent of the participants passed. Figure 3 shows Module 2 score distribution.

Figure 4 | Module 3 – Promoting Peak Performance Score Distribution (n =1,041)



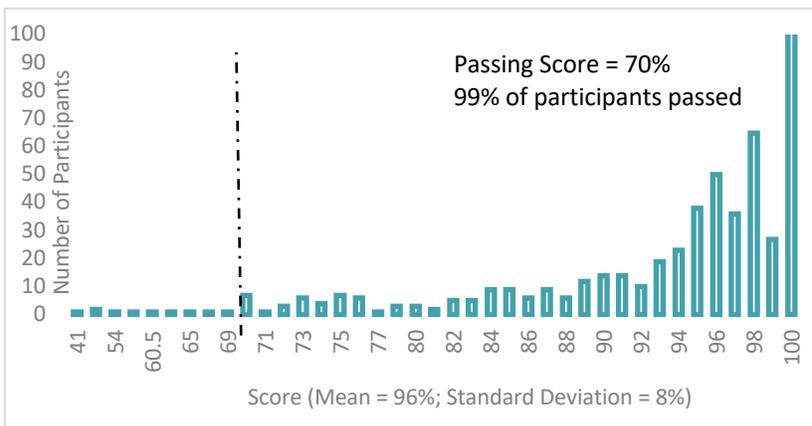
In Module 3 - Promoting Peak Performance, scores ranged from 39% to 100%. Average score was 87%, with a standard deviation of 9%. Ninety-seven percent of the participants passed. Two participants (0.2%) achieved a perfect score. Figure 4 shows Module 3 score distribution.

Figure 5 | Module 4 - Managing Program Operations Score Distribution (n =838)



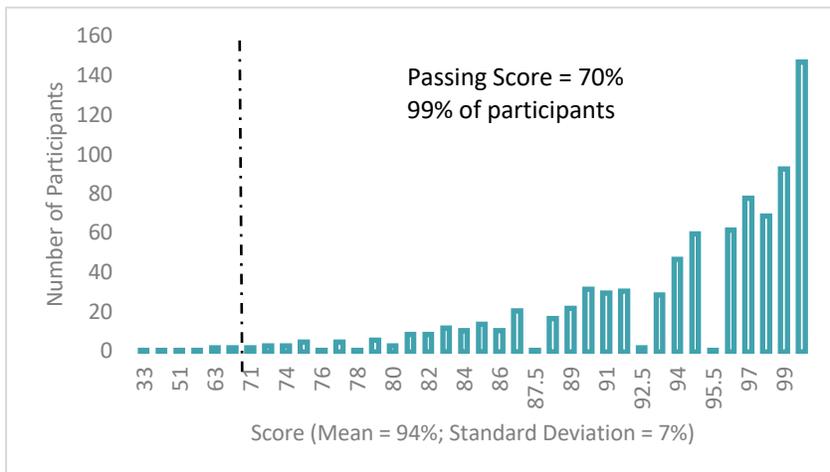
In Module 4 - Managing Program Operations, scores ranged from 25% to 100%. Average score was 94%, with a standard deviation of 11%. Ninety-seven percent of the participants passed. Three-hundred fifty-one participants (42%) achieved a perfect score. Figure 5 shows Module 4 score distribution.

Figure 6 | Module 5 - Building a Sound Business Strategy Score Distribution (n =861)



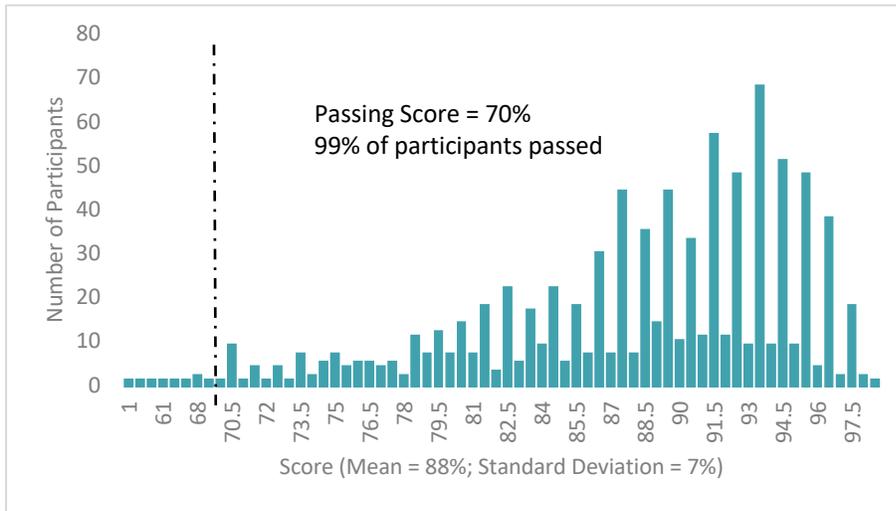
In Module 5 - Building a Sound Business Strategy, scores ranged from 41% to 100%. Average score was 96%, with a standard deviation of 8%. Ninety-nine percent of the participants passed. Four-hundred fifty-one participants (52%) achieved a perfect score. Figure 6 shows Module 5 score distribution.

Figure 7 | Module 6 - Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments Score Distribution (n =845)



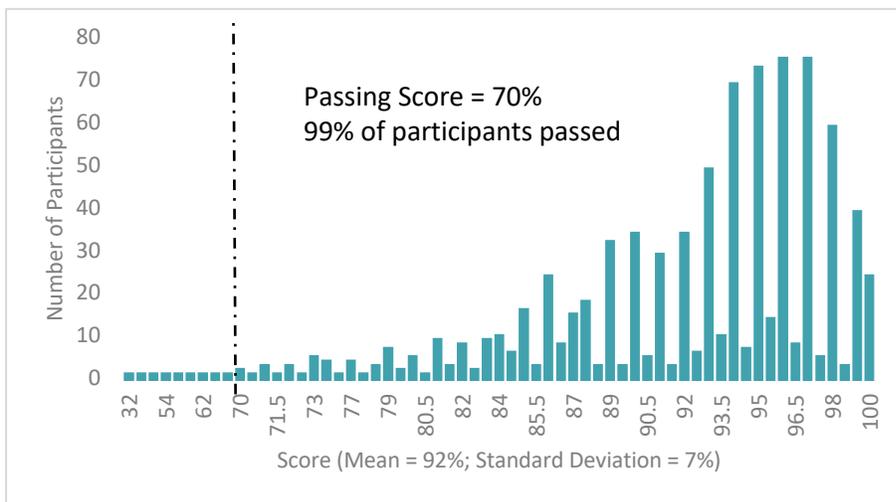
In Module 6 - Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments, scores ranged from 33% to 100%. Average score was 94%, with a standard deviation of 7%. Ninety-nine percent of the participants passed. One-hundred forty-seven participants (17%) achieved a perfect score. Figure 7 shows Module 6 score distribution.

Figure 8 | Module 7 - Supporting Children’s Development and Learning Score Distribution (n =869)



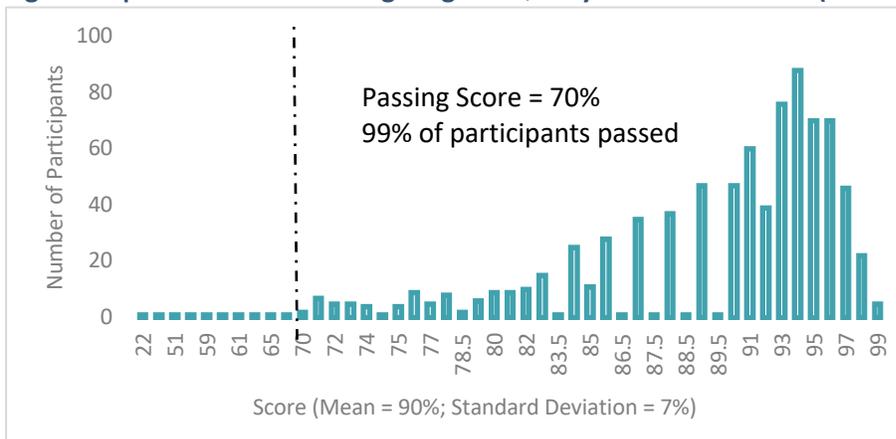
In Module 7 - Supporting Children’s Development and Learning, scores ranged from 52.5% to 99.5%. Average score was 88%, with a standard deviation of 7%. Ninety-nine percent of the participants passed. Figure 8 shows Module 7 score distribution.

Figure 9 | Module 8 - Creating Partnerships with Families Score Distribution (n =843)



In Module 8 - Creating Partnerships with Families, scores ranged from 32% to 100%. Average score was 92%, with a standard deviation of 7%. Ninety-nine percent of the participants passed. Twenty-four participants (3%) achieved a perfect score. Figure 9 shows Module 8 score distribution.

Figure 10 | Module 9 - Evaluating Program Quality Score Distribution (n =822)



In Module 9 - Evaluating Program Quality, scores ranged from 22% to 99%. Average score was 90%, with a standard deviation of 7%. Ninety-nine percent of the participants passed. Figure 10 below shows Module 9 score distribution.

Participant Perceptions of Module Difficulty

After completing the program, participants were asked to rate the difficulty of each module. A 3-point scale was used with the following indicators: 1=piece of cake, very easy; 2=challenging but not overwhelming; 3=very difficult and challenging. In eight of the nine modules, over 80% of respondents rated the modules as challenging but not overwhelming. However, Module 4 – Managing Program Operations was different in that 57% of respondents reported it was challenging but not overwhelming and 42% reported the module was very difficult and challenging for them. Although participants perceived Module 4 as more difficult, EOL test results do not support this perception – the average Module 4 test score of 94% was actually the second highest of the nine modules. Table 13 shows participant perceptions of the difficulty of each module.

Table 13 | Participant Perceptions of Module Difficulty

	<i>n</i>	Piece of cake, very easy %	Challenging but not overwhelming %	Very difficult and challenging %
Module 1 - Leading the Way	954	9%	87%	3%
Module 2 - Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff	837	6%	90%	4%
Module 3 - Promoting Peak Performance	756	5%	88%	6%
Module 4 - Managing Program Operations	679	1%	57%	42%
Module 5 - Building a Sound Business Strategy	650	7%	83%	9%
Module 6 - Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments	641	18%	82%	1%
Module 7 - Supporting Children’s Development and Learning	663	12%	85%	3%
Module 8 - Creating Partnerships with Families	616	9%	87%	4%
Module 9 - Evaluating Program Quality	622	8%	84%	8%

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

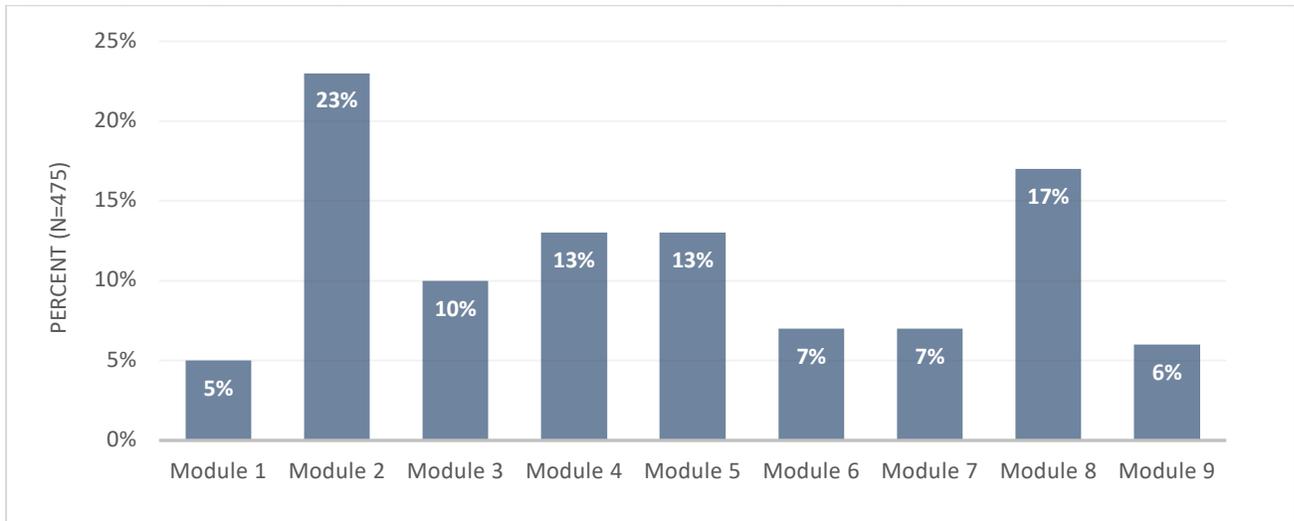
Participants rated their satisfaction on each of the nine evaluation items with regard to the content and organization of each module. The surveys used a Likert-type 5-point scale that ranged from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. In general, participants provided high ratings for each of the evaluation items. Across all modules, participants provided the highest ratings when asked whether the module challenged them to consider new and different viewpoints ($M=4.44$, $SD=0.73$) and provided the lowest ratings when asked whether the video segments, Internet links, and audio pieces worked smoothly ($M=4.20$, $SD=0.98$). In addition, participants rated Module 2 ($m=4.40$, $sd=0.75$) and Module 9 ($m=4.39$, $sd=0.75$) the highest across all items in the questionnaire, whereas participants rated Module 4 ($m=4.22$, $sd=0.80$) the lowest. Table 14 below shows means and standard deviations for participant satisfaction ratings in each of the modules.

Table 14 | Average Participant Satisfaction Ratings

	Module									Overall Item Rating (n=954)
	1 (n=954)	2 (n=837)	3 (n=756)	4 (n=679)	5 (n=650)	6 (n=641)	7 (n=663)	8 (n=616)	9 (n=625)	
	<i>m</i> (sd)									
Expanded my knowledge and expertise	4.44 (0.72)	4.47 (0.71)	4.39 (0.77)	4.30 (0.69)	4.38 (0.66)	4.28 (0.78)	4.39 (0.66)	4.41 (0.67)	4.42 (0.69)	4.39 (0.71)
Logically and coherently organized	4.42 (0.76)	4.48 (0.69)	4.36 (0.80)	4.22 (0.75)	4.39 (0.66)	4.35 (0.75)	4.44 (0.65)	4.41 (0.68)	4.42 (0.70)	4.39 (0.72)
Challenged me to consider new and different viewpoints.	4.52 (0.75)	4.50 (0.73)	4.47 (0.79)	4.41 (0.71)	4.42 (0.67)	4.34 (0.80)	4.32 (0.71)	4.43 (0.70)	4.45 (0.69)	4.44 (0.73)
Assignments helped me apply the concepts presented to real-life management situations	4.35 (0.77)	4.41 (0.72)	4.36 (0.79)	4.22 (0.78)	4.42 (0.68)	4.34 (0.79)	4.39 (0.67)	4.44 (0.68)	4.45 (0.69)	4.37 (0.74)
Assessment criteria were clearly presented	4.26 (0.82)	4.31 (0.78)	4.27 (0.83)	4.12 (0.84)	4.29 (0.70)	4.31 (0.80)	4.35 (0.72)	4.35 (0.72)	4.38 (0.75)	4.29 (0.78)
Resources provided were interesting and informative to read	4.38 (0.76)	4.39 (0.74)	4.34 (0.83)	4.12 (0.85)	4.34 (0.69)	4.36 (0.78)	4.44 (0.66)	4.38 (0.72)	4.34 (0.75)	4.34 (0.76)
Slides and graphics helped clarify the information presented	4.26 (0.83)	4.28 (0.76)	4.30 (0.82)	4.20 (0.80)	4.34 (0.70)	4.29 (0.79)	4.38 (0.70)	4.31 (0.74)	4.35 (0.73)	4.30 (0.77)
I was able to navigate easily	4.36 (0.88)	4.44 (0.78)	4.44 (0.83)	4.16 (0.92)	4.30 (0.82)	4.39 (0.86)	4.38 (0.81)	4.38 (0.80)	4.43 (0.76)	4.37 (0.84)
Video segments, Internet links, and audio pieces worked smoothly.	4.24 (0.96)	4.33 (0.88)	4.22 (0.99)	4.27 (0.85)	3.95 (1.10)	4.15 (1.02)	4.15 (1.01)	4.17 (1.00)	4.26 (0.95)	4.20 (0.98)
Overall Module Rating	4.36 (0.81)	4.40 (0.75)	4.35 (0.83)	4.22 (0.80)	4.31 (0.74)	4.31 (0.82)	4.36 (0.73)	4.37 (0.75)	4.39 (0.75)	

Participants also completed an overall evaluation survey at the end of the program (n=475). When asked which of the modules they found most valuable, the greatest number of respondents identified Module 2—Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff (23%) and Module 8—Creating Partnerships with Families (17%). Figure 11 below shows proportions of respondents who found each module most valuable. These findings could reflect needs in early childhood education, such as high staff turnover rates and increased awareness of the importance of family engagement in early learning programs.

Figure 11 | Participant Rating of Modules as Most Valuable at Program Completion



When asked to rate their overall Aim4Excellence experience, participants provided ratings on a 3-point scale with the following anchors: 1=A waste of time—The content did not challenge me and expand my level of competence as I hoped it would; 2=Worthwhile—I expanded both my knowledge and skill in early childhood program management; 3=Very worthwhile—The learning experience really elevated my expertise and competence in early childhood leadership and management. Overall, about two-thirds of respondents (71%) provided a rating of 3, while the remaining 29% gave the program a rating of 2 (average rating = 2.71 on a 3-point scale.)

CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Paired sample *t*-tests were used to examine the average change in leadership and management practice. Table 15 shows the change in the average overall PAS scores and nine subscale scores. Statistics include the pretest and posttest means and standard deviations, as well as the statistically significant change (*t* score) from the beginning to the end of the training.

Table 15 | PAS Subscale Scores of Participants' Centers (n = 30)

	Pretest <i>m</i>	<i>SD</i>	Posttest <i>m</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Human Resource Development	2.45	1.00	2.96	1.42	<i>ns</i>
Personnel Cost and Allocation	1.68	1.12	1.63	.89	<i>ns</i>
Center Operations	1.80	1.05	2.30	1.16	2.43*
Child Assessment	1.70	1.08	2.57	1.65	3.15**
Fiscal Management	2.25	1.75	2.46	1.93	<i>ns</i>
Program Planning and Evaluation	1.43	.66	1.89	1.36	<i>ns</i>
Family Partnerships	2.80	1.61	3.20	1.30	<i>ns</i>
Marketing and Public Relations	2.57	1.11	3.30	1.48	2.34*
Technology	4.84	1.07	5.36	.87	2.66**
Overall PAS Score	2.16	.65	2.60	.84	4.26***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

On average, the *Overall PAS* scores increased .44 points (on a 7-point scale) or .19 standard deviations. Four of the subscales improved significantly: *Center Operations*, *Child Assessment*, *Marketing and Public Relations*, and *Technology*. All of the other subscales showed an increase except for *Personnel Cost and Allocation*, which slightly decreased (non-significant). A medium effect size was found for the *Overall PAS Score*, Cohen's $d = .59$. Effect sizes for the four subscales with significant differences were small to medium, ranging from $d = .45$ to $d = .62$. Although these are positive findings about the change in administrative practice, the small sample size should be considered before generalizing these results.

Change over time of 21 PAS items was computed in addition to the subscales. Table 16 shows the average scores and standard deviations for each of the PAS items, as well as the statistically significant change (t score) from the beginning to the end of the training.

Table 16 | PAS Item Scores of Participants' Centers ($n = 30$)

	Pretest <i>m</i>	<i>SD</i>	Posttest <i>m</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Staff Orientation	2.11	1.34	2.89	1.37	2.87**
Supervision and Performance Appraisal	1.89	1.10	2.21	1.64	<i>ns</i>
Staff Development	3.36	1.62	3.79	2.03	<i>ns</i>
Compensation	1.50	1.29	1.43	1.07	<i>ns</i>
Benefits	1.29	.94	1.25	1.01	<i>ns</i>
Staffing Patterns and Scheduling	2.25	1.84	2.21	1.87	<i>ns</i>
Facilities Management	2.36	2.16	3.43	2.38	2.38*
Risk Management	1.79	1.17	1.86	.89	<i>ns</i>
Internal Communications	1.25	.70	1.61	1.34	<i>ns</i>
Screening and Identification of Special Needs	1.50	1.32	2.36	2.15	<i>ns</i>
Assessment in Support of Learning	1.89	1.52	2.79	1.71	3.05**
Budget Planning	2.36	1.93	2.57	2.19	<i>ns</i>
Accounting Practices	2.14	2.14	2.36	1.95	<i>ns</i>
Program Evaluation	1.46	1.23	1.82	1.36	<i>ns</i>
Strategic Planning	1.39	.63	1.96	2.05	<i>ns</i>
Family Communications	1.93	1.70	2.07	1.74	<i>ns</i>
Family Support and Involvement	3.68	2.09	4.21	1.50	<i>ns</i>
External Communications	3.04	1.48	3.79	1.99	<i>ns</i>
Community Outreach	2.11	1.66	2.79	1.91	<i>ns</i>
Technological Resources	6.68	.95	6.89	.57	<i>ns</i>
Use of Technology	3.00	1.74	3.89	1.79	2.64*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Significant improvement was found with four PAS items: *Staff Orientation*, *Facilities Management*, *Assessment in Support of Learning*, and *Use of Technology*. Effect sizes were small to medium, ranging from $d = .40$ to $d = .58$.

DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING OUTCOMES AMONG PARTICIPANT GROUPS

Participant's Role. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the participants total composite test scores among groups based on their role in the program. The maximum composite score was 900 points. Significant differences were found among the participant groups $F(5, 780) = 5.18$, $p < .001$. The effect size was calculated at $\eta^2 = 0.03$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the differences occurred between family child care providers ($m = 793$, $sd = 39$) and four other groups: directors ($m = 825$, $sd = 39$), education coordinators ($m = 825$, $sd = 45$), teachers ($m = 821$, $sd = 41$), and other roles ($m = 834$, $sd = 29$). Table 17 shows the distribution, means, and standard deviation for each group.

Table 17 | Differences among Participant Groups by Role (*n* = 787)

Role	<i>n</i>	%	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
Assistant director	111	14%	817	51
Director	417	53%	825	39
Education coordinator	31	4%	825	45
Family child care provider	34	4%	793	46
Teacher	127	16%	821	41
Other	67	9%	834	29

Taken together, these results suggest that family child care providers did not score as well as other early childhood leaders participating in Aim4Excellence. However, these differences represent a small effect, indicating that the participants' role can be associated with only about 3% of the total variance among scores.

Participant's Education. Participants were asked to provide information about their education at the time of enrollment in the Aim4Excellence program. They indicated the highest level of education (high school/GED, some college, Associate degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, some graduate work, and advanced or doctoral degree). For the Associate, Bachelor's and Master's degrees, they also indicated whether the degree was in early childhood education (ECE) or in another discipline. Table 18 shows the distribution, means, and standard deviation for each group.

Table 18 | Differences among Participant Groups by Education (*n* = 787)

Highest Level of Education	<i>n</i>	%	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
High School/GED	29	4%	791	46
Some college credit in ECE or CD , no degree	142	18%	808	46
Associate's degree in ECE or CD	130	17%	813	43
Associate's degree in another field	44	6%	826	40
Bachelor's degree in ECE or CD	94	12%	830	37
Bachelor's degree in another field	199	25%	830	41
Some graduate work	33	4%	840	24
Master's degree in ECE or CD	42	5%	837	28
Master's degree in another field	67	9%	833	36
Advanced degree	7	1%	835	23

The assumption of homogeneity of variance was not met for these data; therefore, the Welch's adjusted *F* ratio was used to detect group differences. Significant differences were found in total scores based on the participants' highest level of education, Welch's $F(9, 777) = 7.92, p < .001$. The effect size was calculated at $\eta^2 = 0.08$. There were no other significant differences found among the other group comparisons. Post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test indicated which comparisons were significant. Table 19 shows the mean differences between each pair of groups (ns = non-significant).

Table 19 | Significant Mean Differences among Participant Groups by Education Level (*n* = 787)

Highest Level of Education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
High School/GED	***	ns	ns	35.4	39.3	38.6	45.6	41.8	49.4	43.7
Some college credit in ECE or CD , no degree		***	ns	ns	22.2	21.4	28.4	24.6	32.3	ns
Associate's degree in ECE or CD			***	ns	17.6	16.9	23.9	20.1	27.7	ns
Associate's degree in another field				***	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Bachelor's degree in ECE or CD					***	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Bachelor's degree in another field						***	ns	ns	ns	ns
Some graduate work							***	ns	ns	ns
Master's degree in ECE or CD								***	ns	ns
Master's degree in another field									***	ns
Advanced degree										***

Overall, this analysis suggests that participants with a Bachelor's degree or higher had better learning outcomes in the Aim4Excellence modules. These differences represent a medium effect, indicating that level of education can be associated with about 8% of the total variance among scores.

Race/Ethnicity. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was not met for these data; therefore, the Welch's adjusted *F* ratio was used to detect group differences. It was significant, Welch's $F(5, 713) = 15.70, p < .001$. Post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test indicated that the differences occurred between Caucasian participants ($m = 834, sd = 37$) and both African American ($m = 825, sd = 39$) and Hispanic/Latino ($m = 825, sd = 45$) groups. The effect size was calculated at $\eta^2 = 0.14$. There were no other significant differences found among the other group comparisons. Table 20 shows the distribution, means, and standard deviation for each group.

Table 20 | Differences among Participant Groups by Race/Ethnicity (*n* = 719)

Race/Ethnicity	<i>n</i>	%	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
African American	160	22%	807	42
Asian	8	1%	784	57
Caucasian	438	61%	834	37
Hispanic/Latino	89	12%	802	43
Native American	4	1%	813	37
Other	20	3%	820	37

Overall, this analysis suggests that African American and Caucasian participants do not score as high as Caucasian participants on the graded Aim4Excellence modules. These differences represent a medium effect, indicating that race/ethnicity can be associated with about 14% of the total variance among scores.

Program Type. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the participants scores among groups based on the type of program where the Aim4Excellence participant worked. Significant differences were found among the groups $F(3, 594) = 5.02, p < 0.01$. The effect size was calculated at $\eta^2 = 0.03$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the differences occurred between private nonprofit organizations ($m = 835, sd = 36$) and two other program types: private for-profit entities ($m = 820, sd = 43$) and public nonprofit organizations ($m = 818, sd = 39$). Table 21 shows the distribution, means, and standard deviation for each group.

Table 21 | Differences among Participant Groups by Program Type ($n = 595$)

Program Type	<i>n</i>	%	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
Corporate - For-profit	124	21%	826	47
Private - For-profit	202	34%	820	43
Private nonprofit	169	28%	835	36
Public nonprofit	100	17%	818	39

Similar to the group differences by the participants' role, the variance in scores among these four groups was small and could only account for about 3% of the total variance. However, these results do suggest that participants from private nonprofit organizations scored higher than participants from private for-profit companies and public nonprofit organizations.

Other Group Comparisons. Binary group comparisons using one-way between subjects ANOVA were also performed for participants whose programs received Head Start funding, were faith-based organizations, received state preK funding, and for gender. Participants from organizations that received Head Start funding scored lower ($m = 820, sd = 34.93$) than participants from programs that did not receive Head Start funding ($m = 829, sd = 35.31$). Participants from faith-based organizations scored higher ($m = 840, sd = 28.65$) than participants from programs that were not faith-based ($m = 824, sd = 36.06$). No significant differences were found based on gender or whether the participant's program received preK funding. Table 22 shows the distribution, means, and standard deviation for these other groups.

Table 22 | Differences between Participant Groups Related to Gender and Funding Sources

	<i>n</i>	%	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
Gender	787			
- Female	761	97%	823	41
- Male	26	3%	814	60
Head Start Funding	712			
- Yes	128	18%	813	44
- No	584	82%	825	41
State PreK Funding	711			
- Yes	114	16%	821	41
- No	597	84%	823	42
Faith-based	707			
- Yes	97	14%	838	34
- No	610	86%	821	42

Discussion

Findings from the study suggest Aim4Excellence participants were largely successful in completing the modules and their early childhood programs improved during the time they were engaged in the program. Because Aim4Excellence is administered online, the availability of reliable and consistent data was greatly enhanced. A robust sample of 1,372 participants over a four-year period is a strength of this evaluation. Evidence to address each of the five research questions was discovered in the course of the study and frames the discussion of the results.

1. What were the characteristics of Aim4Excellence participants and the programs they represented?

Aim4Excellence participants worked in nearly all of the U.S. states and Canada with large representation from Arizona, Delaware, Illinois, and Texas. They worked for a variety of program types with more than half coming from the for-profit sector. The racial/ethnic background of the sample was different from the U.S. There were more Black/African American participants and less White/Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino than in the rest of the country. The participants were well educated for the early childhood field with a majority earning a bachelor's degree or higher.

Enrollment during the four-year period of this study remained consistent, except for a decrease in 2017. This could be partially explained by a decline in Race-to-the-Top funding that contributed to Aim4Excellence support, including a large cohort from Delaware, which ended in September 2016. The percentage of Aim4Excellence participants that enrolled in the program for college credit increased dramatically during the study.

- 2. What was the completion rate for individuals that began the program and each of the modules?** Performance in Aim4Excellence was strong with at least a 97% completion rate for each module. Results also indicated that a majority of participants completed all nine modules. The average scores on the EOL assessments for each module were very high (ranging from 87% to 96%).

The rate of individuals who were asked to resubmit the EOL assignments (scoring below 70%) was low. Module 5 – *Building a Sound Business Strategy* had the lowest resubmission rate (8%); Module 1 – *Leading the Way* and Module 7 – *Supporting Children’s Development and Learning* each had a resubmission rate of 22%. A higher resubmission rate for Module 1 could be explained because most participants begin the program at this point and they may not be as familiar with completing the EOL test for the first time. A large percentage of participants achieved the perfect score of 100% in Module 4 – *Managing Program Operations*, Module 5 – *Building a Sound Business Strategy*, and Module 6 – *Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments*. Additional study to determine the reasons for such a high number of perfect scores may be useful.

- 3. How long did it take participants to complete the program and each of the modules?** On average, it took participants 24 days to complete one module and eight months to completed all of the modules. Assuming participants enrolled in the Aim4Excellence modules in sequence, the average duration was highest at the beginning of the program, with the exception of Module 3 – *Promoting Peak Performance*, and substantially less (about 5 to 10 days) for the last five modules.
- 4. Were there differences in learning outcomes based on participant characteristics or the programs they represented?** Several differences were found among participant groups based on program type, education level, and race/ethnicity. Family child care providers did not score as well as other early childhood leaders participating in Aim4Excellence. As one might expect, participants with a Bachelor’s degree or higher had better learning outcomes than those with less formal education. Racial/ethnicity disparities were found between both African American and Hispanic/Latino groups when compared with their Caucasian peers. Individuals who worked in private nonprofit organizations scored significantly higher on the EOL tests than participants from private for-profit entities or public nonprofit organizations.
- 5. To what degree did administrative practice improve in programs led by Aim4Excellence participants?** Significant changes were seen in the leadership and management practices of the programs of Aim4Excellence participants, with an improvement of .19 standard deviations in overall PAS scores. Improvements were also found in *Center Operations*, *Child Assessment*, *Marketing and Public Relations*, and *Technology* subscales. This is especially meaningful considering the average duration for completing the entire program was eight months and about half of the participants enrolled in only some of the modules.

There are some limitations to this study that should be considered in interpreting the results. Complete data for all variables were not available for all participants. Since participants were not required to enroll in all of the modules, the participation rates were unequal across modules. Although the large sample size greatly overrides these differences. Data about cohort participation was not available at the participant level so comparisons between groups (those that participated in cohorts and those that did not) could not be made. Furthermore, differences between the support provided in various cohorts could not be examined. The sample size ($n = 30$) for the change over time analysis in leadership and management practices was small and should be considered when making conclusions about the results. However, medium effects were found for the overall improvements and some of the subscales for this portion of the evaluation.

Conclusions

This evaluation study provided substantial evidence of the efficacy of the Aim4Excellence program through learning outcomes and change in administrative practice over time. Furthermore, participant satisfaction was very positive and reflects the motivation for learning that contributed to the remarkably high completion rates. We can be confident in the results of this study because of the large number of participants from across the U. S. and representation of diverse demographic groups. The strength of the study is also validated by examining Aim4Excellence participation over a four-year period and a distribution of over 500 early childhood programs.

Learning outcomes for leadership development were demonstrated by high scores on the EOL assessments administered at the completion of each module. Results also suggest that leadership and management practice improve in programs when their administrators participate in Aim4Excellence. Finally, participants were very satisfied with their experience in the program and indicated they expanded their knowledge and expertise, were challenged to consider new and different viewpoints, and found the resources interesting and informative.

Appendices

Appendix A: Aim4Excellence Module Descriptions

Module 1 | Leading the Way

This module looks at leadership as a way of thinking about your role and the important work you do on behalf of children and families. You will learn about the importance of self-awareness and understanding your core values as you identify your unique leadership style. You will be introduced to a model of facilitative leadership as a way to empower staff and support shared decision making at your center. And you will learn how to apply the principles of effective leadership to create a compelling vision for your program, become an agent of change, walk the talk of ethical behavior, and embrace the paradoxes inherent in your role.

Module 2 | Recruiting, Selecting, and Orienting Staff

Successful employment practices are a critical component of administering high-quality early care and education programs. This module provides a framework for effective recruitment, selection, and orientation practices. You will experience a shift in paradigm from thinking of recruitment as a dreaded event to a continuous process of community outreach. You will learn about “right fit” criteria and how to use these criteria for finding the right person for the job and for your organization. You will learn win-win strategies to empower staff and support shared decision making at your center. Simultaneously, you will increase the likelihood of finding and keeping the right person for the job opportunities you have to offer.

Module 3 | Promoting Peak Performance

The heart of effective staff relations is recognizing and appreciating individual differences. This module provides a comprehensive model for supervising staff, promoting their ongoing professional development, and creating a strengths-based team. You will learn about the importance of tailoring your supervisory style and professional development strategies to the individualized needs of each staff member, how to use performance appraisal as the catalyst for growth and change, and how to nurture a positive work climate that promotes peak performance.

Module 4 | Managing Program Operations

This module introduces you to operations management and looks at the director’s critical role in managing the day-to-day operations of the program. You will learn about the necessary components of effective operations management, including: systems and the importance of systems thinking; stakeholder analysis and management; the strategic planning process; how systems, policies, and procedures are interconnected and how they impact your ability to manage the program effectively and efficiently; and tools for making systems work and for taking charge of program operations instead of being managed by them.

Module 5 | Building a Sound Business Strategy

This module examines the key issues pertinent to managing a fiscally responsible early childhood business. You will study the legal requirements and tax implications that relate to the operation of programs with differing ownership status. You will be introduced to the language of accounting and work with budgets, calculations, and financial reports to practice making informed business decisions that are aligned with your program’s values and purposes. And you will learn strategies for promoting and maintaining a positive public image that is specifically targeted to the existing and potential customers of a local child care market.

Module 6 | Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments

This module considers the importance of the physical environment in early childhood programs. It begins with an overview of the essential elements of environments and how to design and equip indoor and outdoor environments to support children's development and learning. You will then learn how to ensure that the environment welcomes all children and adults, promotes health and ensures children's safety, and is aesthetically pleasing. Finally, you will learn how to create support spaces for adults, including administrators, teachers, families, and other ancillary staff.

Module 7 | Supporting Children's Development and Learning

Supporting children's development and learning is at the heart of why early childhood programs exist. In this module, you'll learn about the interactive environment, how to ensure continuity of care, and the advantages and disadvantages of different grouping and staffing patterns. You'll then examine the many facets of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and the role of play in early childhood programming. Finally, you'll learn how to design and implement curriculum and the importance of observation and assessment in achieving program goals.

Module 8 | Creating Partnerships with Families

This module will help you work with families in ways that empower them to partner fully with your program and become skilled, effective first educators of their children. It begins with an overview of the essential components of family-centered early childhood programming. You will explore the director's role in planning and implementing family involvement programs, learn specific strategies for welcoming and working with diverse families, and consider new approaches to nurture open, two-way communication. Finally, you will be introduced to tools for evaluating the effectiveness of your family involvement efforts.

Module 9 | Evaluating Program Quality

Program evaluation plays an important role in the administration of high-quality early care and education programs. This module provides a framework for understanding and implementing effective evaluation practices. You will learn how to select appropriate evaluation tools to achieve your program goals. You will learn how to implement continuous quality improvement, the leadership practice of assessing program needs, defining desired outcomes, developing an action plan, and evaluating outcomes. Rather than being threatening, you will discover how evaluation can help you celebrate program strengths, increase staff collaboration, and improve your program's quality.

Appendix B: Data Cleaning and Transformations

- Score data and personal information data for participants were collected from two different sources: Mosaic/GEMS and RegOnline. The data from these sources were merged.
- Participants who initially enrolled and subsequently cancelled their registration, as well as participants that did not submit any learning outcomes data, were filtered out.
- String variables (all demographic information variables and module completion variables) were recoded into numeric variables using the SPSS auto-recode command. Blank values were recoded as missing.
- For each of the modules, Module Duration was calculated using the SPSS date wizard tool, computing the difference between the First Login and the Last Login dates. Module Duration was reported in days, months, and years where appropriate.
- A new variable, “Total Composite Score,” was created to compare participant scores across all modules. Total Score is the sum of nine module scores. The maximum score was 900 points.
- Outlier scores were identified for nine participants who received a score of 20% or less on a module learning outcomes test. These outlier scores were removed from the analyses.