
Competence & Confidence of Early Interventionist/Early Childhood Special Educators

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The Center

This study was conducted as part of the Center to Inform Personnel Preparation Policy and Practice in Early Intervention and Preschool Education, that is a five-year project established in January, 2003 and funded by the Office of Special Education Programs.

Information gathered will be utilized to identify critical gaps in current knowledge and design and conduct a program of research at the national, state, institutional and direct provider level to address these gaps. This program of research and policy formulation will yield information vital to developing policies and practices at all levels of government, including institutions of higher education.



Background:

Competence & Confidence of Early Interventionist/Early Childhood Special Educators

- To provide the maximum benefit to children with disabilities receiving services, it is essential that personnel who work with those children have the specialized knowledge of infant and toddler's development and the ability to successfully collaborate with families.
- Although the need for qualified and trained personnel is well established, there continues to be no nationwide certification or standards to ensure appropriate qualifications.



Background Continued:

- Service Delivery System
 - Birth to Three (Part C)
 - In-home and community-based services.
 - Focus on reaching developmental milestones.
 - Family-oriented services.
 - Individualized Family Support Plans (IFSP)
 - Three to Five (619)
 - School-based services.
 - Focus on education and learning.
 - Child-oriented services.
 - Individualized Education Plans (IEP)



Background Continued

- The lack of public policy on personnel qualifications has led to varied training and qualification experiences of personnel; which has influenced how competent and confident these direct service providers are in providing services to families and children.
- The purpose of this study was to conduct research on the level of confidence and competence of personnel working with infants and toddlers with special needs and their families.



Methodology

- State coordinators of service providers were contacted and asked to forward the link to the online survey to service providers working with children ages birth to 5 with disabilities.
 - Approximately 27,700 e-mails were sent to direct providers
 - A total of 1,819 individuals completed the survey
 - Providers working with children birth to three: 1,084 in 44 states
 - Providers working with children three to five: 735 in 38 states
- The survey consists of 47 questions to assess the competence and confidence of service providers in the following areas:
 - Family-Centered Practice
 - Assessment and Evaluation
 - IFSP Indicators
 - Instructional Practice
 - Natural Learning Environmental
 - Collaboration and Teaming
 - Early Literacy Learning



Factor Analysis

- A preliminary exploration of the Competence and Confidence survey was performed using the principal component analysis (PCA) procedure.
 - All survey items were considered, with the exception of those related to early language and literacy.
 - Four principal component analyses were run on six items each.
 - Three of the four scales produced single factor solutions: competence and confidence regarding process items and competence regarding intervention items.
 - A single factor second order solution representing confidence regarding intervention items was produced.
 - Each of the four scales had good internal consistency, with Carmines Theta ranging from 0.6266 to 0.7952



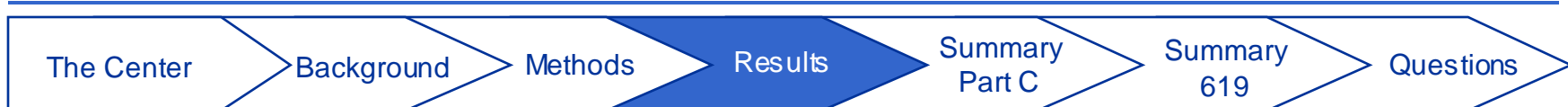
Survey Participant Characteristics

Providers Birth to Three

- Sample Size: $n = 1,084$
- Demographics:
 - female (98%)
 - white (93%)
 - Age:
 - 14% > 30 yrs.
 - 26% $31 \leq 40$ yrs.
 - 30% $41 \leq 50$ yrs.
 - 31% < 51 yrs
- Educational Attainment:
 - BA 33%
 - High School or AA 1%
 - MA 63%
 - PhD 3%

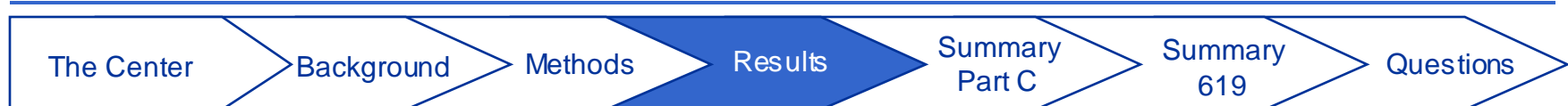
Providers Three to Five

- Sample Size: $n = 735$
- Demographics:
 - female (97%)
 - white (94%)
 - Age:
 - 13% > 30 yrs.
 - 25% $31 \leq 40$ yrs.
 - 28% $41 \leq 50$ yrs.
 - 33% < 51 yrs
- Educational Attainment:
 - High School or AA 1%
 - BA 26%
 - MA 70%
 - PhD 3%

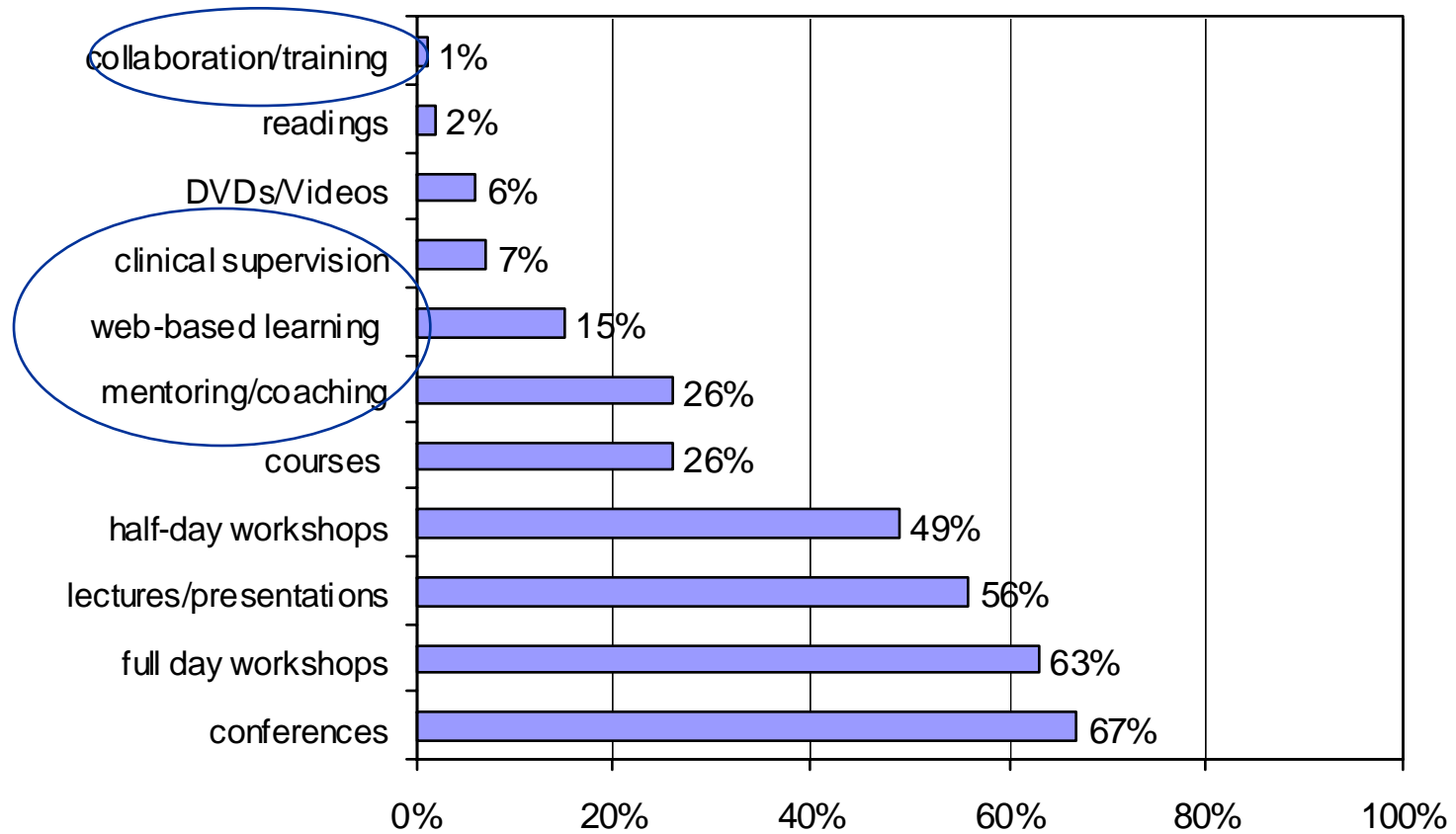


Survey Participant Characteristics

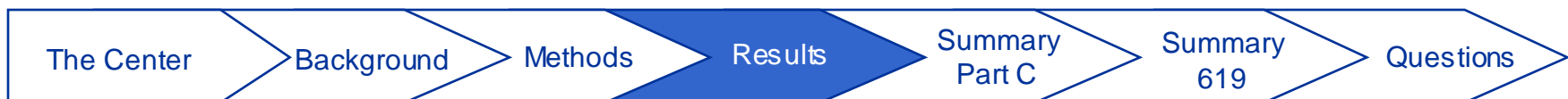
- Most practitioners (80%) report not getting the training they need to work with children with disabilities through professional education programs.
- Only 50% of respondents report being required by their state to complete specialized training to work with children above and beyond their professional credentialing requirements.



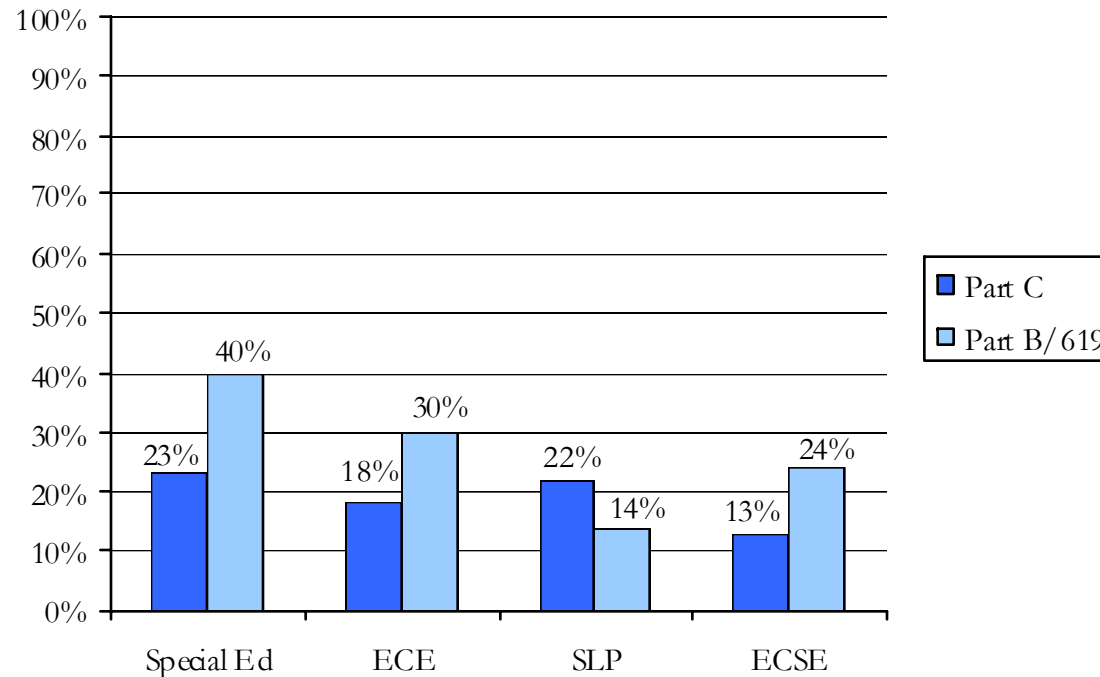
Method of Training



Percent of Respondents

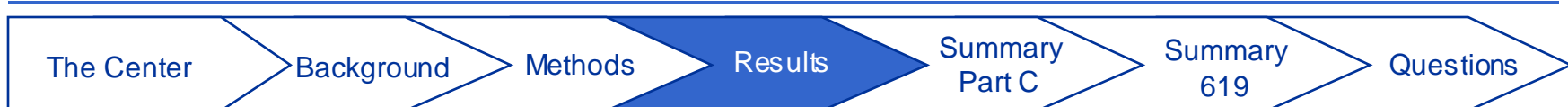


Survey Participant Characteristics

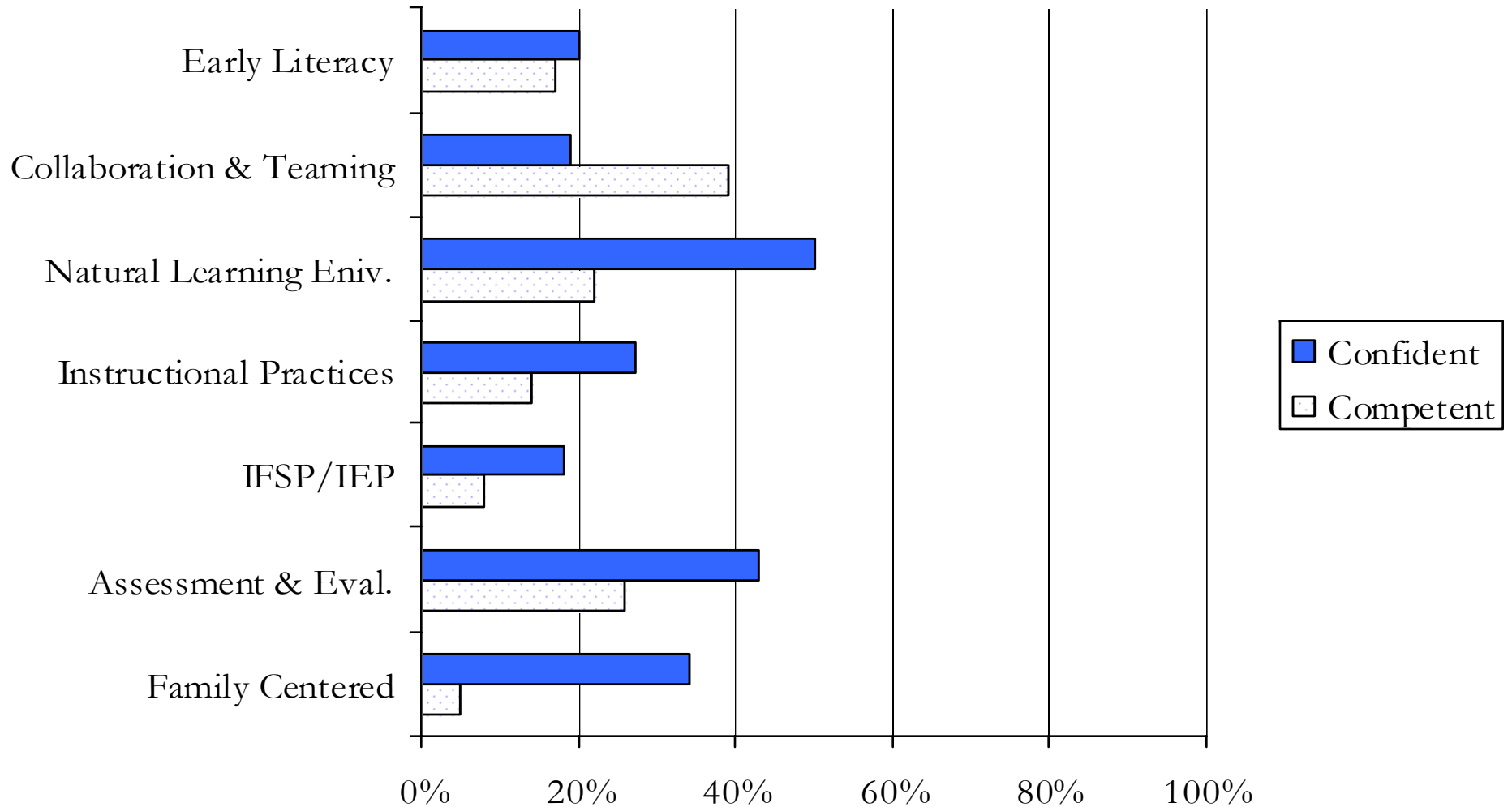


Type of licensure or certification

- Providers birth to three: Education 53%, therapy 40%, and other 22%
- Providers three to five: Education 84%, therapy 22%, and other 8%



Overview: Providers Birth to Five



Family-Centered Practice

Question	0-3	3-5
I am able to get the families I work with to obtain supports and resources on their own	8	8
Families recognize and use their strengths to improve child outcomes because of how I work with them	25	16
Getting families to talk to me about what is important for them to accomplish comes easy to me	55	57
I am pretty sure that the families I work with will become more empowered because of my work with them	55	39

% Reporting Almost always & All of the time

First 2 items represent competence, last 2 items confidence



Assessment & Evaluation

Question	0-3	3-5
I am able to “hit the mark” every time in terms of identifying children’s strengths and needs	40	44
I am especially proficient at helping parents identify their children’s and families’ needs and concerns	42	49
I am almost always certain that I will be able to identify and use children’s personal interests to improve child learning	62	59
I feel sure that my assessments of children’s capabilities are accurate	62	64

% Reporting Almost always & All of the time

First 2 items represent competence, last 2 items confidence

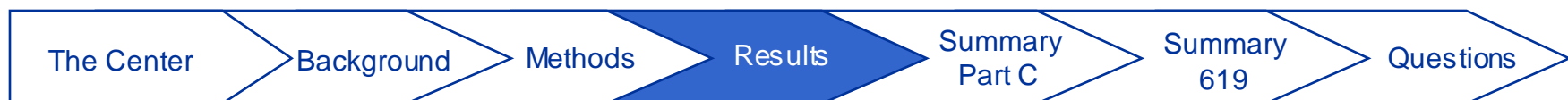


IFSP/IEP

Question	0-3	3-5
The children with whom I work achieve the majority of their IFSP outcomes in six months or less	12	31
I am able to get the families I work with to be key players in identifying IFSP outcomes for their children and themselves	33	16
Writing IFSP outcomes that are functional and meaningful child behavior is a breeze	27	26
It is easy for me to know which child and parent IFSP outcomes are most important to the families I work with	53	45

% Reporting Almost always & All of the time

First 2 items represent competence, last 2 items confidence



Instructional Practices

Question	0-3	3-5
Because of my efforts, parents and other caregivers are better able to use responsive instructional practices with their children	25	20
My efforts getting parents and other caregivers to promote child engagement with people and objects are very successful	28	45
It is easy for me to get parents and other caregivers to use prompting and prompt fading procedures with their children	15	58
It makes me feel good when I see parents using child-initiated and child-directed learning activities	90	77

% Reporting Almost always & All of the time

First 2 items represent competence, last 2 items confidence



Natural Learning Environments

Question	0-3	3-5
I am able to get parents I work with to use everyday family and community activities as sources of child learning opportunities	25	36
I am almost always certain that I will be able to identify and use children's personal interests to improve child learning	31	24
I find parents' use of natural child learning opportunities that we identified together professionally rewarding	66	56
I feel that the children I work with benefit a great deal from everyday informal learning opportunities	72	75

% Reporting Almost always & All of the time

First 2 items represent competence, last 2 items confidence

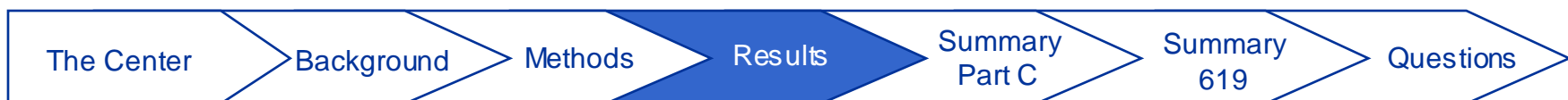


Collaboration & Teaming

Question	0-3	3-5
I am able to successfully implement interdisciplinary interventions taught to me by professionals from other disciplines	49	53
Jointly planning and implementing interventions with other professionals insures that the children I work with get the right kind of practices	68	72
Helping other team members do what I do best (role release) makes me feel good about the interventions children and families receive	58	71
I am able to get the families I work with to be key players in identifying IFSP outcomes for their children and themselves	37	33

% Reporting Almost always & All of the time

First 2 items represent competence, last 2 items confidence

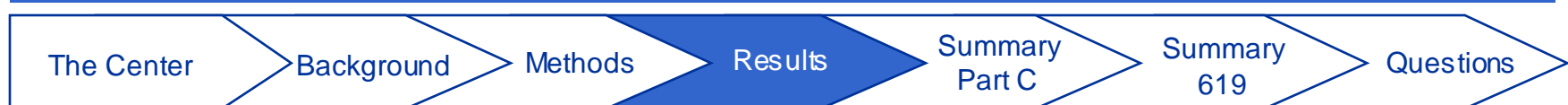


Early Literacy Learning

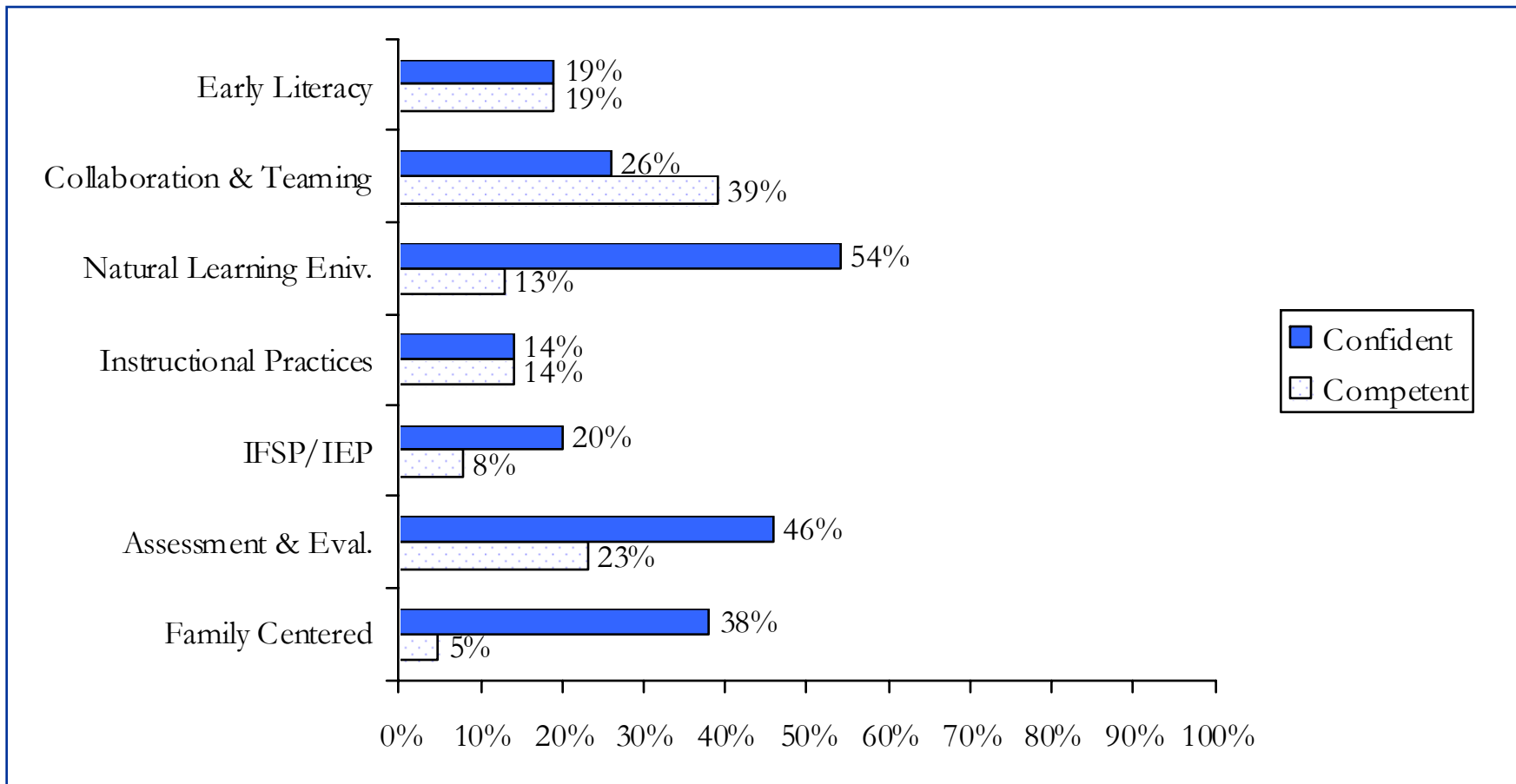
Question	0-3	3-5
I make sure I help parents and other caregivers understand and use emergent literacy learning activities with their children	41	40
I am able to get parents to understand why parent/child sound and word games are important for children's early literacy learning	26	22
I am pretty good at helping parents provide their children early literacy learning experiences	49	50
Including pre-reading and pre-writing outcomes on children's IFSP/IEPs comes natural to me	25	39

% Reporting Almost always & All of the time

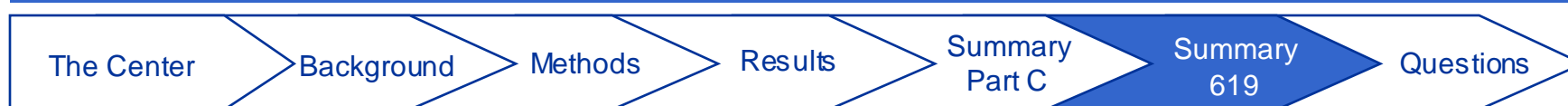
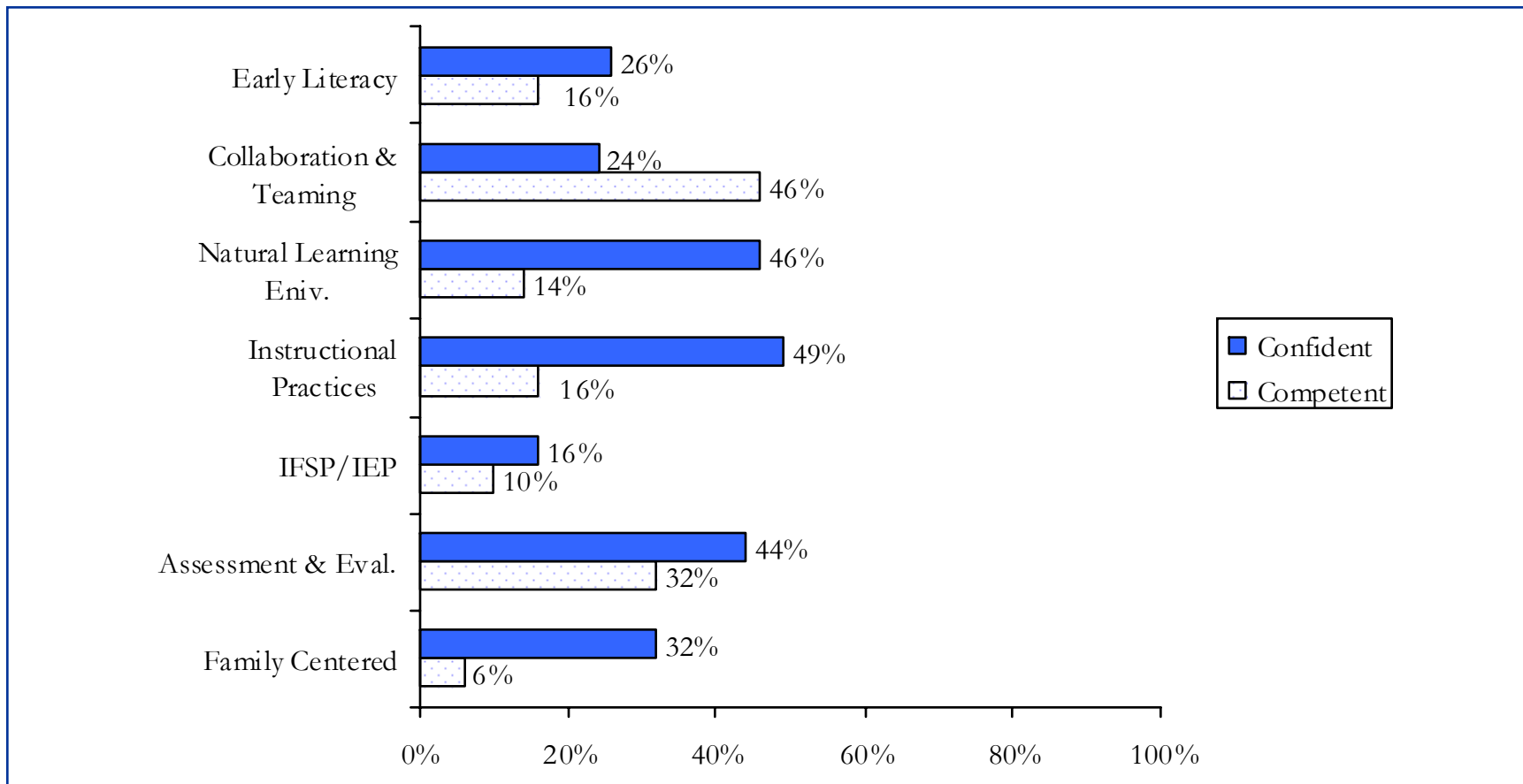
First 2 items represent competence, last 2 items confidence



Overview of Competence and Confidence (Providers Birth to Three)



Overview of Competence and Confidence (Providers Three to Five)



Conclusions

- A more comprehensive training model for personnel working with young children with disabilities
- Using training methods that we know work for adult learners
- Despite reported training needs, practitioners show many areas of strength in supporting children with disabilities and their families:
 - ❑ Family-Centered Practices
 - ❑ Assessment & Evaluation
 - ❑ Collaboration & Teaming
 - ❑ Instructional Practices



Questions?

Center Information

- <http://www.uconnucedd.org/>

Data Reports

- http://www.uconnucedd.org/projects/early_childhood/publications.html



Contact Information

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