Child Care Professionals Focus Group Results:
New York

Teacher vs. Provider

Generally, the group was more apt to identify as providers, but not all participants felt this way. Some felt that the term provider sounded like the equivalent of babysitter, but there was more pushback on the term "teacher" than on the term "provider".

> "Teacher has more standards. I don't want them put on me."

Nutrition

The group particularly agreed with the aspect of the message that stressed their influence on children, noting that children mimic what they see: What teachers eat and drink, the kids also want to eat and drink. Drawing on that belief was effective in getting participants to agree to the message.

Participants were also keen to point out that a key part of encouraging healthy eating habits is helping children have positive experiences with food. Participants noted that they have a unique opportunity to move beyond simply feeding children to truly engaging with children to have positive experiences with food. The group mentioned that eating meals family style, engaging in gardening or food preparation activities all create positive experiences with food for the children in their care; providers liked the idea of using the phrase "experiences with food" to describe how they do not just feed children but help children learn about food.

One aspect of the messages that tested well was the offering of opportunity–participants appreciated that they could give children opportunities to eat healthy.

Everyone in the room agreed that kids should be eating healthy food, but said there are some things that they could not control. For instance, providers cannot always control what children bring into the environment or, for centers, what the kitchen prepares and serves. However, the consensus was that there should be a baseline for what kids should be eating everyday day and that these aspects of messages will be successful in building agreement that standards are needed.

> "I just wanted to add that the statement, providers are important, and the reason why I agree with that is because with my lunch, we eat lunch with the children, and they start copying what I bring. I always bring a Greek yogurt, and I happen to like lime yogurt, which is unusual. They always, whoever's sitting next to me, they [ask], what kind is that? They ask that because it's green usually or pink or white. So they've never seen green before. They're always, look … I have green yogurt, too."

Active Play

When messaging active play or other items, the group recommended using "incorporate" rather than "require."

> "The message that active play is fun resonated: I like how fun is in there, because it puts a positive spin on being active. And the other thing I'm noticing is that you're putting the positive statement on the teacher/provider first, putting them in the driver's seat, which … gives them a feeling of [being] in control.

> "I don't like required, you know. Incorporate. Standards that incorporate one hour of… Require is, we're from New York. We're required to do too much."

Screen Time

While some in the group believe that no screen time should be available in child care, many felt that the "some screen time" message is good, because it promotes limits and balance.

This group felt strongly that the opportunity for technology use differs depending on the population served in the child care settings. For example, they felt that when teaching in a low income or inner city school where kids don't have exposure to the technology at home, child care can provide children with exposure and opportunity to explore in a safe and structured environment. On the other side of the spectrum, there was concern that in other settings, where there is a lot of access to technology, children may have too much screen time or have high levels of access with low levels of structure from adults; in those cases, technology should be limited. In both scenarios, though, there is a need for adult-supervised and educational engagement opportunities.

> "I think it's a reality. I think that you have to find a balance. I think that it also really depends on the demographic that you're teaching and kind of what their needs are. If you're teaching a low income inner city school where maybe the kids don't have exposure to the technology at home, I think that's a really great thing to bring into the classroom and expose them to and give them the opportunity to explore it."

> "But then on the flip side, if you're teaching in a suburban school where all the parents are on their phones, all the kids have their own tablets or laptops or whatever the case may be, and that's probably what they're doing after school, then I really think that it should almost be the opposite in school and you should kind of steer away from it."