

Thriving Not Just Surviving

Participant Survey Analysis Report

February 2026 Graduation Cohort

Early Childhood Alliance | Family Voice Initiative & PEACE

Introduction

This report presents the findings from the Thriving Not Just Surviving Participant Survey, administered to the February 2026 graduation cohort. The Thriving Not Just Surviving parent group is a core component of the Early Childhood Alliance’s (ECA) Family Voice Initiative, which centers parent lived experiences and builds leadership capacity among families in Onondaga County’s early childhood system.

The survey was designed to capture both demographic information about participants and their perceptions of the group’s impact across several key domains: peer support, parenting confidence, skill development, belonging, scheduling accessibility, resource relevance, overall well-being, likelihood to recommend, leadership confidence, peer networking, and personal goal attainment. Additionally, three open-ended questions gathered qualitative feedback on childcare support, service improvement, and noteworthy program aspects.

A total of eight (8) participants completed the survey, representing the majority of the graduating cohort (8/9). The survey achieved a 89% completion rate across all closed-ended questions, with five of eight respondents (62.5%) also providing open-ended feedback. The data collection period was February 3–5, 2026. ***It is important to note that of the cohort participants surveyed, one was new to the group and had been present at the last three (3) sessions.***

Part I: Participant Demographics (Questions 1–8)

Questions 1 through 8 capture the demographic profile of the graduating cohort, providing context for understanding the group’s composition and the communities being reached by the program.

Question 1: Age

Age Range	Count	Percentage
Under 25	3	37.5%
25–34	4	50.0%
35–44	1	12.5%
45–54	0	0%
55–64	0	0%
65 or older	0	0%

The cohort skews young, with the majority of respondents (87.5%) under the age of 35. Half of the group falls within the 25–34 age range, and over a third are under 25. This is consistent with the

program’s focus on parents of young children in the early childhood system, and it underscores the opportunity to engage parents at formative stages of both their parenting and potential leadership journeys.

Question 2: Gender

Gender	Count	Percentage
Female	8	100%
Male	0	0%
Non-Binary/Third Gender	0	0%
Prefer Not to Say	0	0%

All eight participants identified as female. While this reflects common patterns in parent support programming, it highlights an opportunity for future cohorts to explore outreach strategies that engage fathers and non-binary parents, particularly in connection with the ECA’s fatherhood workshop programming.

Question 3: Marital/Relationship Status

Status	Count	Percentage
Single	4	50.0%
Married	2	25.0%
Divorced	0	0%
In a Relationship/Partnered	2	25.0%
Widowed	0	0%

Half of the participants are single parents, with the remaining half either married (25%) or in a partnered relationship (25%). The significant proportion of single parents reinforces the importance of peer support structures like this group, which can help reduce isolation and build networks of mutual support for parents navigating caregiving without a co-parent in the household.

Question 4: Number of Children

Number of Children	Count	Percentage
1	2	25.0%
2	3	37.5%
3	2	25.0%
4 or more	1	12.5%

Participants are parenting multiple children, with 75% raising two or more. The most common family size is two children (37.5%). This data point is relevant to understanding the demands on participants’ time and energy, and it further validates the importance of the childcare provision during group meetings.

Question 5: Ages of Children (Check All That Apply)

Age Range	Count	Percentage
0–2 (Infant/Toddler)	6	75.0%
3–5 (Pre-K)	5	62.5%
6–12 (Elementary)	3	37.5%
13–18 (Teen)	1	12.5%
18+ (Young Adult)	0	0%

The vast majority of participants are raising children in the earliest years of development, with 75% caring for infants or toddlers and 62.5% with pre-K-aged children. This strong alignment with the early childhood focus of the ECA confirms that the program is reaching its target population. The presence of some school-age and teen children among participants’ families also reflects the multi-age reality of many households.

Question 6: Employment Status

Employment Status	Count	Percentage
Employed Full Time	1	12.5%
Employed Part Time	4	50.0%
Self-Employed	0	0%
Stay-at-Home Parent	2	25.0%
Unemployed	2	25.0%
Retired	0	0%
Student	0	0%

Employment patterns reveal that only one participant works full time, while half are employed part time. An additional 25% are stay-at-home parents and 25% are unemployed. These findings highlight the economic realities facing participants and suggest that the program’s “off-ramp” connections to partners like CNY Works and Centerstate CEO for workforce development opportunities are well-aligned with participant needs. Note: percentages exceed 100% as some respondents may have selected multiple categories.

Question 7: Highest Level of Education Completed

Education Level	Count	Percentage
Less than High School	2	25.0%
High School Diploma or GED	4	50.0%
Some College	2	25.0%
Associate Degree	1	12.5%
Bachelor’s Degree	0	0%
Graduate or Professional Degree	0	0%

Half of participants hold a high school diploma or GED as their highest level of education, with an additional 25% having less than a high school education. Some participants have pursued additional education, with 25% reporting some college and one participant holding an associate degree. This educational profile underscores the potential value of the professional skills development component of the Family Voice Initiative and the partner hand-off pathways to organizations like EOC.

Question 8: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
African American/Black	3	37.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0%
Hispanic/Latino	2	25.0%
Native American	1	12.5%
White/Caucasian	4	50.0%
Mixed/Other	2	25.0%
Prefer Not to Say	0	0%

The cohort is racially and ethnically diverse: 50% identify as White/Caucasian, 37.5% as African American/Black, 25% as Hispanic/Latino, 25% as Mixed/Other, and 12.5% as Native American. This diversity reflects the program’s success in reaching across communities within Onondaga County. Percentages exceed 100% as respondents could select multiple categories, indicating multi-racial identification among some participants.

Part II: Program Experience and Impact (Questions 9–19)

Questions 9 through 19 assess participants’ perceptions of the group’s impact across key outcome areas aligned with the ECA’s Theory of Change. All questions used a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. All eight participants responded to every question.

Question 9: I feel supported by other members of the parent group.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	62.5%
Agree	1	12.5%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	25.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

75.0% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they feel supported by other group members, with 62.5% strongly agreeing. Two participants selected “Neither Agree nor Disagree.” The strong positive response indicates that the group is succeeding in its core peer support mission, creating a foundation of mutual support that aligns with the ECA’s goal of reducing parental isolation.

Question 10: The parent group helps me feel more confident in my parenting.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	62.5%
Agree	2	25.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	12.5%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

87.5% of participants reported increased parenting confidence, with 62.5% strongly agreeing. Only one participant was neutral. This is a strong indicator that the group is achieving its individual-level outcome of increasing parental self-efficacy, a key driver of healthier child development outcomes.

Question 11: I have gained useful knowledge or skills through this group.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	62.5%
Agree	0	0.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	25.0%
Disagree	1	12.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

62.5% of participants strongly agreed that they gained useful knowledge or skills, while 25% were neutral and one participant (12.5%) disagreed. This is the only question where a participant expressed disagreement on skill acquisition, suggesting that while most participants find the content valuable, there may be opportunities to further tailor skill-building activities to the range of needs within the group.

Question 12: I feel a sense of belonging in the parent group.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	62.5%
Agree	2	25.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	12.5%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

87.5% of participants feel a sense of belonging, with 62.5% strongly agreeing and 25% agreeing. One participant was neutral. The high sense of belonging is foundational to the group’s success, as it reflects the trust and relational safety that the Family Voice Initiative prioritizes as essential to authentic parent engagement.

Question 13: Group meetings or activities fit well into my schedule.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	62.5%
Agree	3	37.5%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

This question received the strongest agreement of all Likert items, with 100% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that meetings fit well into their schedules (62.5% strongly agree, 37.5% agree). This is a notable logistical success and reflects intentional program design that accommodates the realities of parents’ lives, including the provision of dinner and childcare.

Question 14: The group offers resources that are relevant to my needs.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	62.5%
Agree	2	25.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	12.5%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

87.5% of participants found the group’s resources relevant to their needs, with 62.5% strongly agreeing. One participant was neutral. This affirms that the program is successfully connecting families with resources that address their actual circumstances, a core component of the “off-ramp” strategy connecting parents to additional opportunities and services.

Question 15: Participation in the group has improved my overall well-being.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	62.5%
Agree	2	25.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	12.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

87.5% of participants reported that the group improved their overall well-being, with 62.5% strongly agreeing. One participant disagreed. The well-being finding is significant given the program’s holistic approach, and the single disagreement warrants attention to ensure all participants are benefiting from the group experience.

Question 16: I would recommend this parent group to others.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7	87.5%
Agree	0	0.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	12.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

This is the highest-rated item on the survey: 87.5% of participants strongly agreed they would recommend the group, with only one participant disagreeing. The near-universal willingness to recommend reflects both satisfaction and a potential organic recruitment pathway for future cohorts. This result is a powerful indicator of program value from the parent perspective.

Question 17: I feel confident in my leadership skills.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	62.5%
Agree	2	25.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	12.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

87.5% of participants feel confident in their leadership skills, with 62.5% strongly agreeing and 25% agreeing. One participant disagreed. This is an encouraging finding for the Leadership Development component of the Family Voice Initiative. The single disagreement may point to opportunities for differentiated support for parents at earlier stages of their leadership development journey.

Question 18: I have increased my network of peers.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	62.5%
Agree	0	0.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	37.5%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

62.5% of participants strongly agreed that they have increased their peer network, while 37.5% were neutral. No one disagreed. The substantial neutral response suggests that while many participants built strong connections, some may not have experienced the same degree of network expansion. This could inform future programming around intentional community-building activities.

Question 19: I've met at least one of my goals.

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	4	50.0%
Agree	1	12.5%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	25.0%
Disagree	1	12.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

62.5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they met at least one of their goals (50% strongly agree, 12.5% agree). Two participants (25%) were neutral and one (12.5%) disagreed. As the most outcome-specific question, this result is positive overall but indicates room for strengthening goal-setting support and follow-through, potentially through the one-on-one coaching component.

Summary: Likert Scale Results at a Glance

The table below summarizes the combined agreement rate (Strongly Agree + Agree) for all program experience questions.

Question	Agree + Strongly Agree	Percentage
Q9: I feel supported by other members of the parent group.	6/8	75.0%
Q10: The parent group helps me feel more confident in my parenting.	7/8	87.5%
Q11: I have gained useful knowledge or skills through this group.	5/8	62.5%
Q12: I feel a sense of belonging in the parent group.	7/8	87.5%
Q13: Group meetings or activities fit well into my schedule.	8/8	100.0%
Q14: The group offers resources that are relevant to my needs.	7/8	87.5%
Q15: Participation in the group has improved my overall well-being.	7/8	87.5%
Q16: I would recommend this parent group to others.	7/8	87.5%
Q17: I feel confident in my leadership skills.	7/8	87.5%
Q18: I have increased my network of peers.	5/8	62.5%
Q19: I've met at least one of my goals.	5/8	62.5%

Part III: Open-Ended Responses (Questions 20–22)

Five of eight participants (62.5%) provided open-ended responses. Their voices offer rich qualitative insight into the program’s impact and areas for growth.

Question 20: How did the childcare option during dinner support your participation/experience?

Five respondents answered this question. Responses are presented below:

- *“Being able to put my full attention into what I was there for, instead of having to multi-task, and parent at the same time, made the experience more personal.”*
- *“My son loves coming to group and meeting friends.”*
- *“Tremendously.”*
- *“It 100% helped because I was able to focus and connect with other moms and was able to openly talk about what I felt and what troubles I was having. I was able to be comfortable in the group setting without feeling pressured and overwhelmed, instead I felt calm, safe, and wasn’t worried because my children were safe with Head Start teachers that have become familiar with us through PEACE.”*
- *“The childcare provides my child a safe place to learn and grow. Make new friends and have fun.”*

Childcare emerged as a critical enabler of full participation. Parents described being able to focus, connect authentically, and feel safe knowing their children were in trusted care. Notably, one participant specifically referenced the continuity of Head Start teachers through PEACE as a trust factor. This finding strongly validates the program’s investment in on-site childcare and underscores that removing barriers to participation is essential to creating the conditions for genuine engagement.

Question 21: How might we improve our services or better meet your needs in the future?

Five respondents answered this question:

“I think everything is going just as it should thus far.”

“N/A.”

“Ask direct questions to the group so the shy members have a reason to speak and feel heard. Sometimes it isn’t easy to just budge into another conversation being held by others.”

“I think everything provided is wonderful!!”

“A clothing or toy exchange would be great.”

Most respondents expressed high satisfaction with the program as-is. The two substantive suggestions are valuable: one participant recommended more structured facilitation to ensure quieter members feel included, and another suggested a clothing or toy exchange. The facilitation feedback reflects an awareness that equitable voice requires intentional practice—an insight that aligns with the program’s own values around inclusive participation. The toy/clothing exchange idea represents a tangible, community-building addition that could strengthen the mutual support dimension of the group.

Question 22: Were there any specific aspects or services that you found particularly noteworthy?

Five respondents answered this question:

“The genuine care coming from the amazing women running the group makes it feel like a truly safe space.”

“Love meeting new moms and having conversations.”

“The Lyft codes and dinner—loved that idea.”

“The resources, the connections, the advice, the comfortability within the safe space—everything is absolutely perfect and I wouldn’t change a thing.”

“The Help Me Grow survey sent toys that were educational. I wouldn’t think to buy them to help my child grow, and the feedback helped her fine motor skills improve.”

Participants highlighted several noteworthy elements: the genuine care and safety created by program facilitators, the value of peer connections and conversation, practical supports like Lyft codes and dinner, the comprehensive resources and safe space, and the developmental benefits of Help Me Grow materials. **These responses paint a picture of a program that succeeds across multiple dimensions—relational warmth, practical barrier reduction, meaningful content, and tangible family outcomes.**

Emerging Themes

1. Safety and Trust as Foundation

Across both quantitative and qualitative data, the theme of safety and trust stands out as the program’s strongest asset. Participants described the group as a “truly safe space” where they could speak openly without pressure. The high rates of agreement on peer support (75%) and belonging (87.5%) reinforce that the group has successfully built the relational foundation that the Family Voice Initiative identifies as essential to authentic parent engagement.

2. Barrier Removal Enables Authentic Engagement

The provision of child care, dinner, and transportation (Lyft codes) emerged as more than logistical conveniences—they are structural conditions that make genuine participation possible. Participants explicitly connected child care to their ability to focus, connect, and share openly. The 100% agreement on scheduling accessibility further confirms that the program’s design intentionally accommodates the realities of participants’ lives.

3. Strong Parenting Confidence and Well-Being Outcomes

The survey reveals meaningful self-reported gains in parenting confidence (87.5% agreement), overall well-being (87.5% agreement), and leadership confidence (87.5% agreement). These outcomes align directly with the Theory of Change’s individual-level goals of increasing skills, confidence, and self-efficacy among parent leaders.

4. Peer Connection as Both Outcome and Mechanism

Peer support functions as both a program delivery strategy and a measurable outcome. Participants valued meeting other mothers and having authentic conversations. However, the 37.5% neutral response on peer network expansion suggests that connection depth may vary, and that some participants may benefit from more structured opportunities for relationship-building.

5. Equity of Voice Requires Intentional Facilitation

One participant's feedback about shy members needing direct questions to feel heard is a critical insight. It points to the ongoing work of ensuring that group processes do not inadvertently privilege more vocal participants. This aligns with the program's commitment to hearing from all parents, especially those not already connected.

6. Concrete Family Benefits Beyond the Group

The Help Me Grow reference demonstrates that the program's impact extends beyond the group setting into families' daily lives, with educational materials directly supporting child development. This cross-program connection illustrates the ecosystem-level impact envisioned in the Theory of Change.

Key Takeaways

1. **High overall satisfaction:** 87.5% of participants would strongly recommend the program, and 100% found the scheduling accessible. The program is delivering a valued experience that parents want to share with others.
2. **The program is reaching its target population:** Young parents (87.5% under 35) raising infants and toddlers (75%), many of whom are single (50%), employed part time or not working (75%), and navigating economic constraints..
3. **The cohort is diverse:** With representation across multiple racial and ethnic identities, the program is successfully engaging a cross-section of the community.
4. **Childcare is not optional—it is essential:** Open-ended responses make clear that child care is not a perk but a prerequisite for the kind of deep, authentic engagement the program seeks to foster.
5. **Peer support and belonging are strong:** with most participants reporting increased confidence, support, and connection.
6. **Areas for continued attention include:** ensuring all voices are heard through facilitation strategies, strengthening goal-setting and follow-through support, exploring ways to deepen peer network expansion for all participants, and considering tangible community-building additions like resource exchanges.
7. **The qualitative data is especially powerful:** Participant voices—particularly around safety, focus, and trust—provide compelling narrative evidence for storytelling and, reporting.

Conclusion

The Thriving Not Just Surviving February 2026 graduation cohort survey results tell a compelling story of a program that is working. Parents feel supported, more confident, and connected to a community that values their voices and experiences. The program's intentional design—including childcare, transportation, meals, and trauma-informed facilitation—is creating the conditions for genuine engagement rather than tokenistic participation.

At the same time, the data points to meaningful areas for growth: deepening facilitation to include quieter voices, strengthening individualized goal support, and exploring new ways to build peer networks beyond the group setting. These are not shortcomings but natural next steps in a program that is committed to continuous improvement through parent input—the very co-design process at the heart of the Family Voice Initiative.

Most importantly, the words of the participants themselves—about feeling safe, being able to focus, and seeing their children thrive—provide the strongest evidence that the Thriving Not Just Surviving program is living up to its name. These voices are the foundation upon which the Early Childhood Alliance can continue to build authentic parent leadership and systems-level change in Onondaga County.