



★ Valley Star Behavioral Health ★

Promoting Resilience in African American Children

BRIEF REPORT from the Department of Research and Program Practices

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Valley Star's Promoting Resilience in African American Children (PRAAC) program* serves African-American children ages 5-11 and their families in neighborhoods within the San Bernardino Unified School District (SB USD). PRAAC builds upon community members' strengths and experiences to provide mental health services, education and mentoring at school sites, applying an afterschool curriculum and additional, varied programming tailored to the needs of African-American youth, families and communities. This **BRIEF REPORT** highlights participation, programming and initial results, from program year ending June 2015.

Participation:

Participation occurred for each of three levels of Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI):

- There were 2,688 **UNIVERSAL** outreach and engagement contacts with 2,520 individuals across three SB USD elementary schools (Del Rosa, Jefferson Hunt and Juanita Jones) and nearby community locations including pastoral centers and apartment complexes.
- There were 6,913 **SELECTIVE** service contacts involving 367 individuals during afterschool, group, parenting and community programming.
- There were 120 **EARLY INTERVENTION** brief counseling sessions provided to 20 children.

Importantly, there is much attention to community participation and collaboration to guide and resource the various program components. This past year, Valley Star's PRAAC program team established and/or maintained existing strong partnerships with the county's departments of Behavioral Health; Children and Family Services; and school district leadership including the ***District African American Advisory Council***. **There was a very high level of commitment and engagement demonstrated by principals, teachers and other school personnel.** Additionally, many local African American professionals participated in the Meet a Pro component; and, showing great enthusiasm for the goals, values and leadership of PRAAC, the ***Loma Linda University Black Health Professionals Student Association (BHPSA)***, selected PRAAC as their official agency of interest for school year 2015-2016!

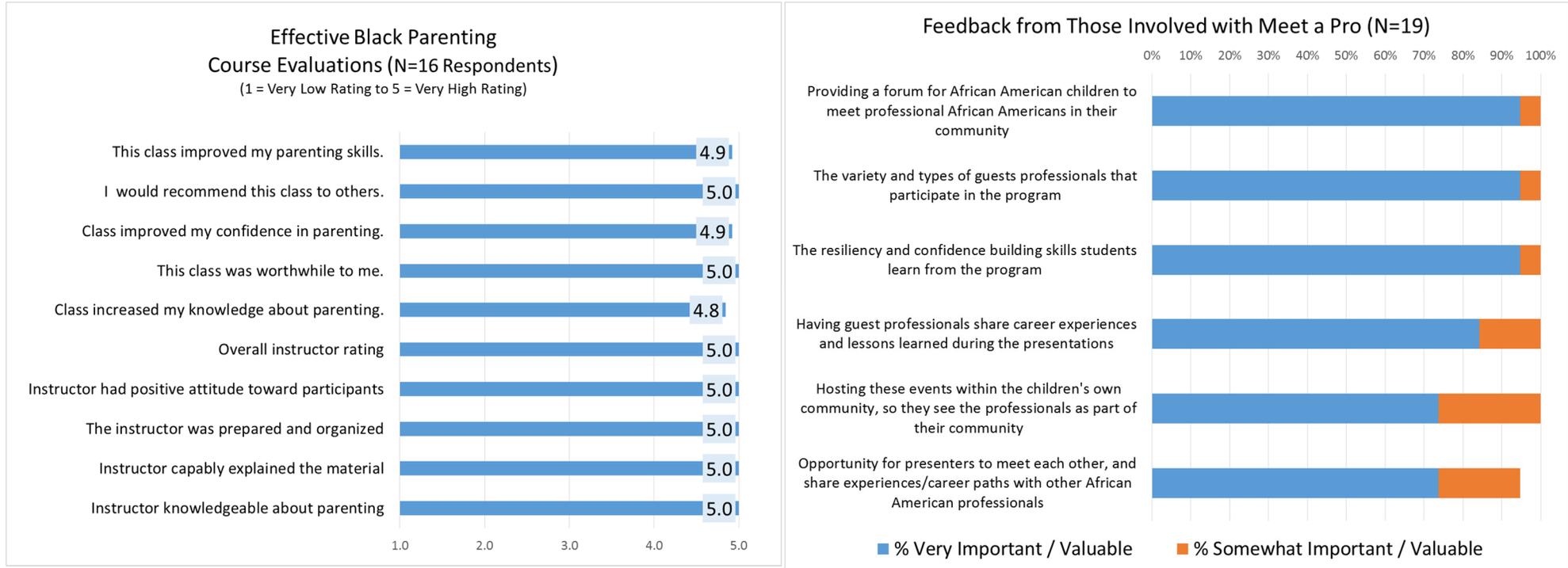
Programming:

The distinct yet complementary components of PRAAC include:

- ★ ***School-wide Assemblies*** and educational activities focused on African American cultural themes and contributions at each participating school.
- ★ Referred students meet twice a week at each school during an ***After-School Program*** for academic tutoring, health and wellness education, exercise classes, music and science activities. A cultural enrichment element fosters awareness, positive self-concept, and provides fun, positive socialization activities wherein students learn about African American history and contributions to society.
- ★ ***Teaching Students to be Peacemakers*** offers groups of students who are identified by school personnel, or through program contacts, a different approach to violence prevention, conflict resolution, positive peer interactions and social skills development.
- ★ In ***Meet a Pro***, African-American professionals visit with students to talk about their careers and to nurture students' future dreams, hopefulness and sense of possibility.
- ★ Parenting skills training with the children's caregivers uses the ***Effective Black Parenting Program***, a curriculum that addresses both culturally specific (e.g., "Pyramid of Success", addressing racism, pride, "Modern Black Parenting", etc.) as well as general parenting strategies and skills with proven effectiveness for African American families (e.g., use of praise and rewards, planned ignoring, time outs, family/ household rules, etc.).
- ★ Involved students' get to go on ***Community Field Trips*** within the local community and beyond that expose them to many positive experiences that are culturally relevant and meaningful. This year, examples of field trips included going to the movies, a UCLA football game, the African American Museum, Lewis Playhouse Theater, and a Cal Poly Dance Class.
- ★ Early intervention ***Brief Counseling*** is available to those students who are in need of individual support and unlikely to receive such from another source.

Initial Results:

PRAAC developed a multi-component program evaluation plan this past year, and began to systematically implement the components which include metrics related to students' school adjustment and behavior, attendance and academic achievement, student experiences of the program, and participants' feedback about other aspects of programming. Currently, initial data are available regarding the later aspect only; participant feedback about Effective Black Parenting classes and Meet a Pro, which are both valued by caregivers and professionals in the community, respectively.



From these surveys, examples of adult participants' comments were:

- ★ "I believe PRAAC is doing a wonderful job enriching students' lives by providing them with a sense of self pride, feeling a part of their community, and helping them value their education and themselves."
- ★ "Meet a Pro is a must for African American children. The children get to see how important a dream is to them."
- ★ "This is a great program! I hope to see it expand and continue for many years to come!"

Looking ahead, our program review and report to the county for continuous quality improvement emphasizes:

- Persist with actively problem-solving engagement and retention issues related to the parenting classes and enrollments into brief counseling. Consider hosting one or more strategy sessions with local African American academic, program and/or community consultants. Are there other social media strategies that might help?
- Persist with data collection for evaluation, per the evaluation plan.
- Keep up the heart and hard work! The program is doing amazing things with community building! This takes time!

* PRAAC is a Prevention and Early Intervention program of the San Bernardino Department of Behavioral Health, funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). Another program, offering similar services, is operated by Young Visionaries Youth Leadership Academy, Inc., a partner agency in the county. Valley Star Behavioral Health is a part of *Stars Behavioral Health Group* (SBHG), a statewide provider of behavioral health care and related educational and social services to children, adolescents, young adults and adults and their family members.