

AAC Training for Early Childhood Classrooms



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WHY THE TRAINING WAS IMPLEMENTED

- ✦ For many young children with disabilities, AT is a key mechanism that allows them to participate more fully in the early childhood classroom and facilitates their readiness to learn.
- ✦ A major barrier to the implementation of AT is the lack of personnel who possess the necessary knowledge and skills regarding the selection and use of AT.

PHILOSOPHY OF TRAINING

- ✦ Must be competency-based & include ample opportunities for hands-on learning
- ✦ Should include provisions for individualized implementation
- ✦ Must integrate AT devices and services fully into the early childhood curriculum

WHO PARTICIPATED

- ✦ Early childhood personnel including early childhood educators, special educators, SLPs, OTs, PTs, adaptive physical educators, psychologists, and parents.
- ✦ 14 school districts across four states participated in the training.
- ✦ Training activities were provided at the local, state, and national levels.

WHEN AND HOW THE TRAINING OCCURRED

✦ Participants were involved in one of two categories:

- Workshops and on-site trainings
 - 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97
- Workshops only
 - 1997-98 and 1998-99

WHAT THE TRAINING INVOLVED

- ✦ Workshops and on-site training:
 - Initial 3-day workshop & four 1-day workshops
 - On-site coaching and demonstrations biweekly
 - Monthly team meetings
- ✦ Workshops only:
 - Initial 2-day workshop & two 1-day workshops

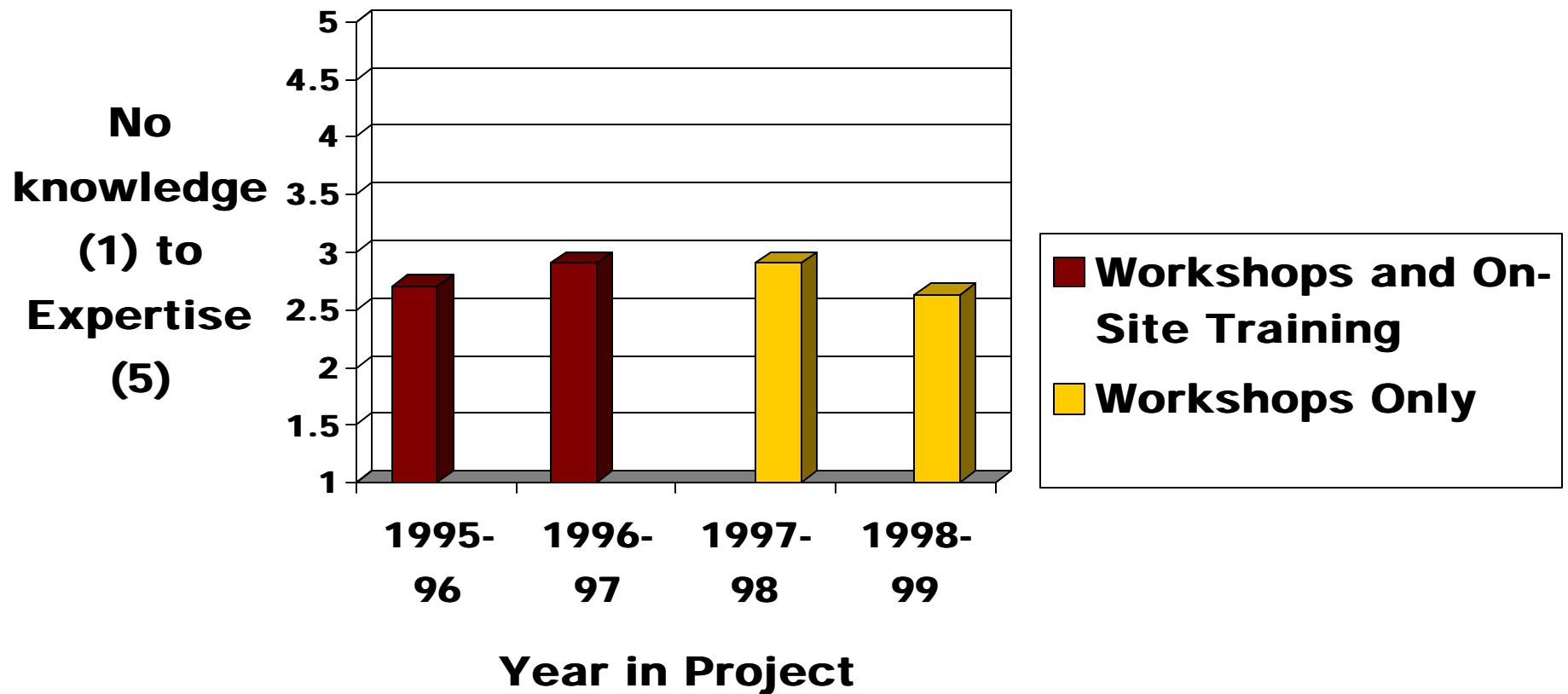
TRAINING TOPICS

- ✦ Information was provided on the following list of areas through on-site training and/or workshops:
- ✦ AT including:
 - AAC
 - switches & positioning
 - literacy
 - low vision
- ✦ Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- ✦ Curriculum Components

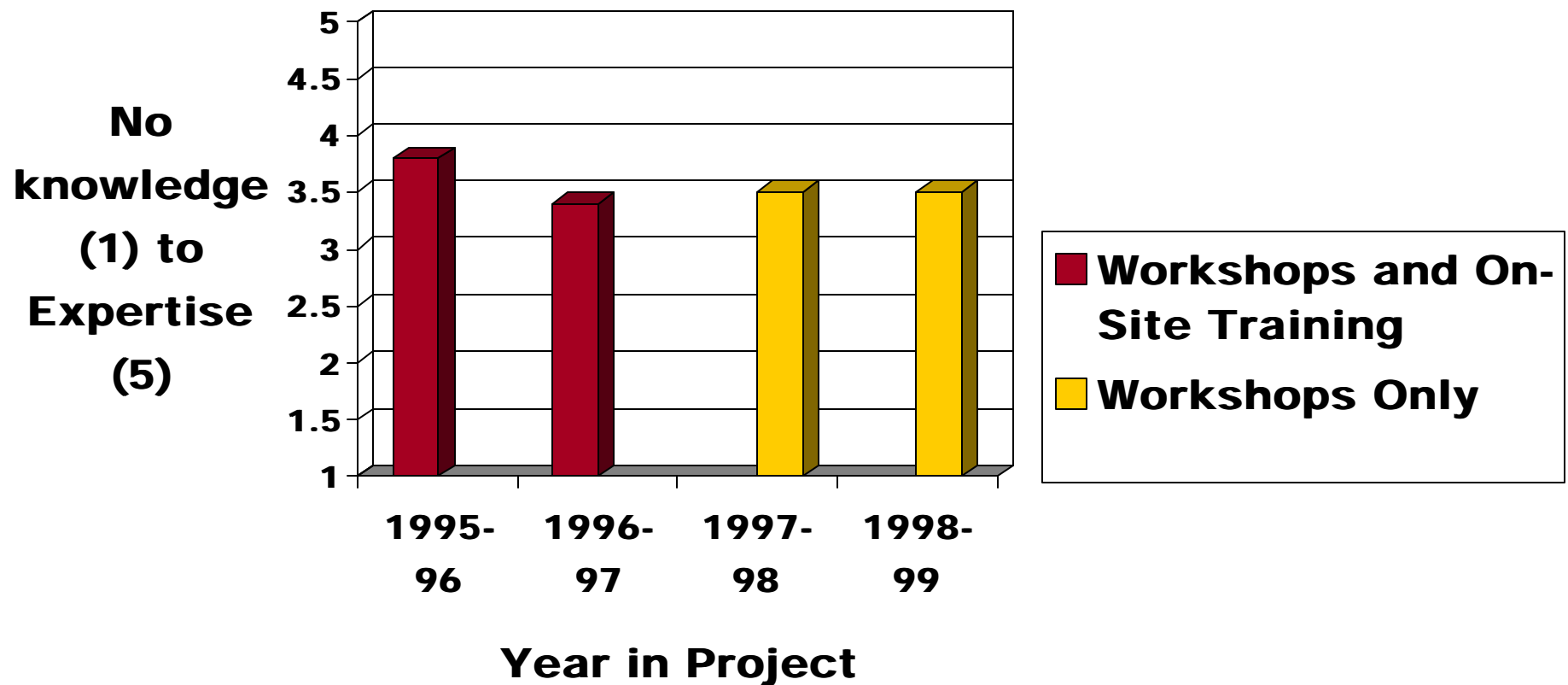
THE RESULTS

- ✦ Preschool personnel:
 - Identified a positive change in the children using AT in their classroom.
 - Recorded an increase in their knowledge base and comfort level in using AT in their classroom.

SELF-EVALUATION OF SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE: PRE-TRAINING



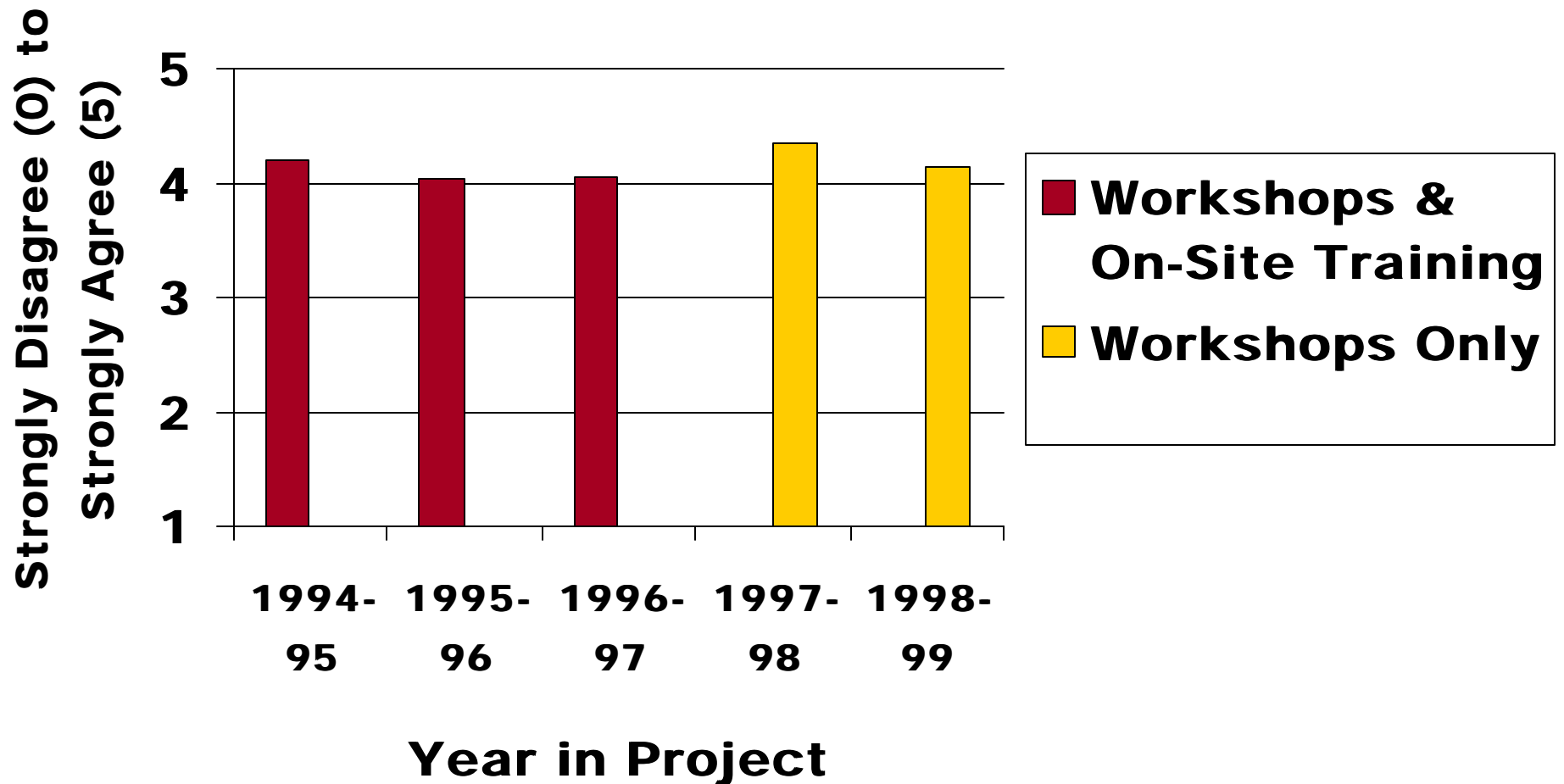
SELF-EVALUATION OF SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE: POST TRAINING



SELF-EVALUATION OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- ✦ Overall participants felt that they had gained more knowledge and experience in the area of AT.
- ✦ Individuals who indicated little or no prior knowledge of AT (i.e., 1 or 2) gained a great deal of experience as their scores increased to feeling more competent (i.e., 3 or 4).

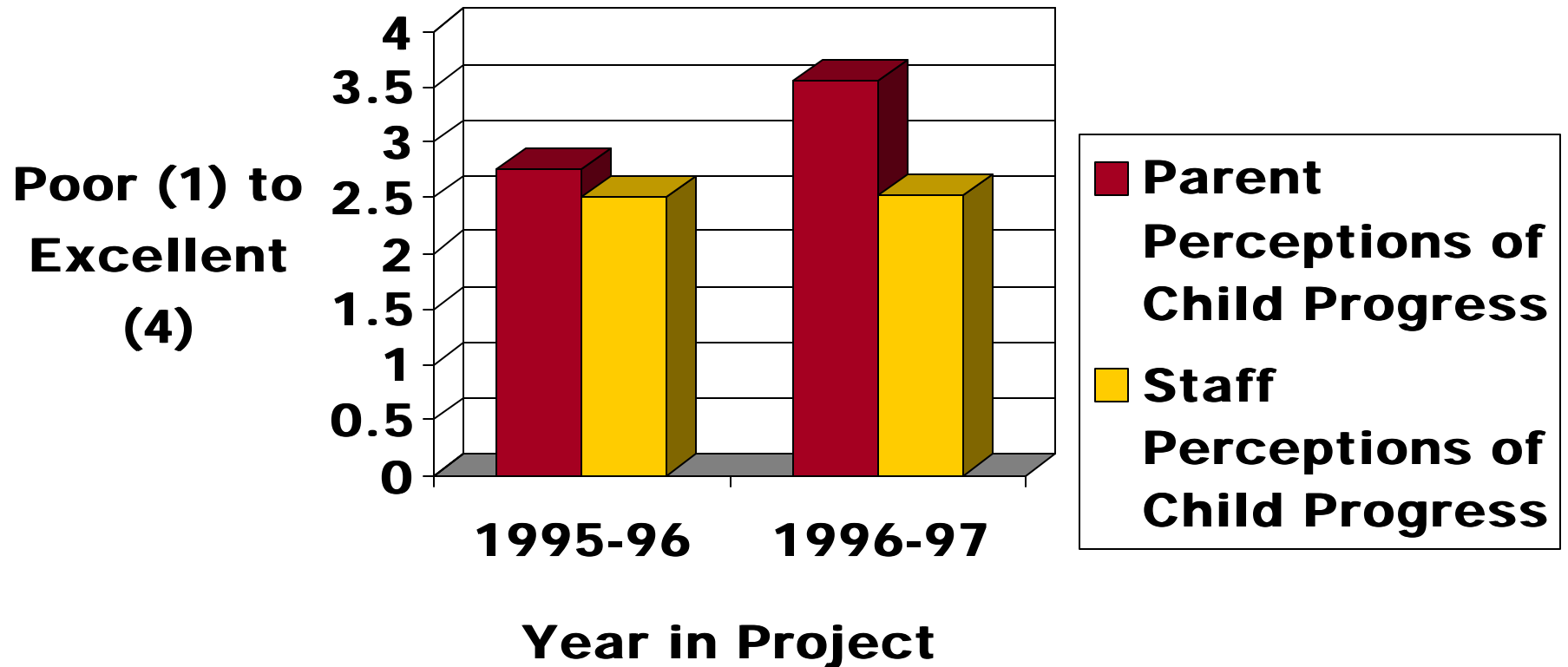
WAS THIS TRAINING EFFECTIVE?



PERSONNEL SATISFACTION WITH TRAINING

- ✦ Overall, participants agreed that they were satisfied with the training they received whether or not they received on-site training.
- ✦ Participants reported the project:
 - Helped their team work together successfully,
 - Assisted in the development of Comprehensive AT Integration Plans, and
 - Assisted in the implementation of Developmentally Appropriate Practices.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD PROGRESS



PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD PROGRESS

✦ STAFF

- Overall reported fair to good progress.
- Strengths in areas of how well typical children responded to use of AT, usefulness of AT on child's progress, & the educational development of child.
- Areas of need included lack of parent involvement & assistance in incorporating parents in the AT process.

✦ PARENTS

- Overall reported fair to good progress.
- Strengths in areas of the parents' understanding of AT as it benefited their child & social interaction with family members.
- Areas of need included reducing the level of frustration of both the child & parents & parents who did not believe that AT was appropriate for their child.

HOW PARTICIPANTS SHARED THEIR AT KNOWLEDGE

✦ Discussions with colleagues	93%
✦ Sharing materials and resources	93%
✦ Advocating for student needs	86%
✦ Parent-Teacher conferences	75%
✦ Staff development training	64%
✦ Member of AT Team	54%
✦ Input to school district policy	43%
✦ Designated AT liaison	21%

TRAINING MANUALS

- ✦ Two training manuals were developed during this project:
 - “Assistive Technology : Tips, Tools, and Techniques”
 - Information for those new to AT, especially parents
 - “Assistive Technology and Early Childhood Education”
 - Includes information on training staff

IMPLICATIONS OF PROJECT

- ✦ On-site technical assistance was an effective strategy in assisting participants in understanding & implementing the ideas presented in the training sessions.
- ✦ Participants who participated in the workshop only phase of the project benefited from the information. However, they commented that classroom visits would have provided feedback on their use of AT.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- ✦ Need to develop a stronger home-school connection to more fully integrate AT into a child's life.
- ✦ Increase awareness of and training in the use of AT for other school personnel, particularly those in elementary schools.