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# **Evaluation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative: Year 5/6 Report**

May 22, 2009

**Prepared for**

**First 5 LA**  
750 North Alameda Street, Suite 300  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Prepared by**

**American Institutes for Research**  
1070 Arastradero Road, Suite 200  
Palo Alto, CA 94304

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## **Executive Summary**

The First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative, which began in 2002, is a comprehensive program to promote language and literacy development, parenting knowledge and skills, and economic self-sufficiency among low-income families in Los Angeles County through 1) grants to selected agencies providing direct services and 2) funding for the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) to support capacity-building efforts among these agencies and throughout the county. The number of agencies receiving grants has changed over time, with new grantees added in 2005-06. In total, 24 four-year grants were awarded to 22 agencies (grantees). Each grantee provided services through each of their four interrelated family literacy program components: 1) early childhood education (ECE), 2) parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA), 3) parenting education, and 4) adult education.

First 5 LA has contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) since the beginning of the Initiative to evaluate the Initiative's implementation and overall effectiveness. The first four years of the evaluation (Phase I) focused on process, outcomes, and policy-relevant issues (Quick et al., 2007). This executive summary (and the accompanying report) presents findings from Year 5 (2006-07) and Year 6 (2007-08) of the evaluation, which continued to examine family outcomes but also explored in greater detail the relationships between elements of program quality and those family outcomes.

### ***Focus and Approach of the Year 5-6 Evaluation***

Six key research questions guided the evaluation efforts in Years 5 and 6. We addressed three questions related to participant outcomes:

1. How are family literacy program participants growing and changing over time?
2. What is the relationship between program participation and outcomes?
3. What is the relationship between program quality and participant outcomes?

In addition, three questions related to FLSN and grantee program outcomes:

4. What is the range of program quality among grantees?
5. What factors facilitate or impede program quality improvement?
6. What is the relationship between FLSN support and grantee program quality improvement?

To address these questions, as in prior years of the evaluation, we used a mixed-methods design to collect qualitative and quantitative data at all levels of the system. Over the two years, our methods included:

- In-person or telephone interviews with all 22 grantee program directors in Years 5 and 6;
- Surveys of all 22 program directors and 138 teachers in Year 5, and 21 program directors and 157 teachers in Year 6;
- Site visits to eight grantee programs (including observations of eight parenting education classes, eight PCILA classes, and eight parent focus groups) in Year 5;

- Analysis of extant data (including grantee-collected service records, family demographic data, adult reading assessments, parent surveys, and children’s language surveys) in Years 5 and 6;
- An in-depth child outcomes substudy in Year 5 (including direct assessments of 158 children in the fall and 141 in the spring (112 at both time points), classroom observations at 21 programs, 96 parent interviews, and observations of 100 parent-child book-reading sessions); and
- FLSN staff interviews in Years 5 and 6 and extant data analysis, including a review of FLSN staff summaries of notes taken from their Year 5 technical assistance site visits to grantee programs. (Notes from the FLSN’s Year 6 site visits were not available in time to include in the analysis.)

Key findings from the analyses of these data are highlighted below. Although we present results linking programmatic characteristics with outcomes (as well as linking changes in program characteristics with FLSN support), we cannot conclude that there is a causal relationship; other factors may be contributing to positive outcomes observed. (Determining causality requires an experimental design, which was not feasible given costs and First 5 LA’s concerns about randomly assigning families to intervention and control conditions.) Selected programmatic recommendations based on these findings are also presented.

### ***Child and Family Outcomes***

A central focus of the evaluation has been the assessment of child and family outcomes in a range of domains. Overall, we found statistically significant positive growth among parents and children on a range of outcome measures. In addition, in the absence of a randomized design, we examined the relationships between level of participation and growth on outcome measures to capture the potential contribution of the program to child and family outcomes. We found some support for the hypothesis that greater impacts would be observed among families receiving greater levels of service.

### **Adult learning outcomes**

Overall, results from parent assessments and focus groups suggested that programs participating in the Family Literacy Initiative continue to support the English language development and continuing education of the parents participating in their programs.

- As in prior years of the evaluation, we found that parents participating in adult education classes (ESL and/or ABE) through the family literacy programs showed statistically significant growth on their CASAS reading assessment scores over the course of the year.
- Furthermore, we found that parents who participated in more hours of adult education classes showed more growth on the CASAS reading assessment.

### **Parenting outcomes**

Parent reports of their own behaviors at two points in time, direct observations of parent book-reading strategies, and analyses linking time spent in the program to parenting behaviors all suggest that family literacy programs contribute to parents’ knowledge about, and capacity to support, their children’s learning.

- Parents' responses on the parent survey provided evidence that their knowledge of the importance of reading to their children right from birth and their access to literacy resources (the number of children's books in the home and visits to the library) have increased over time.
- Information from parent survey responses and direct observations of parent-child interactions indicated that parents routinely read to their children – even more so at the end of the program year – and use a wide range of strategies to engage their children in the books they read together, though the focus of book-reading discussions among the parent-child dyads we observed seldom extended beyond the literal content of the book.
- Parent survey results and focus group responses alike indicated that parents are learning to value education and hold high expectations for their children as well as for themselves; they are becoming increasingly involved with their child's classroom and school – practices that should support children's success in school into the future.
- Parent survey responses suggested that more households were characterized by low TV viewing by children (less than two hours per day) and high parent involvement in children's TV viewing by the end of the program year, though there was more of an increase in involvement than a decrease in TV viewing.
- Although we found that parents who attended more hours of parenting education and PCILA did not show more growth on a composite scale of language and literacy activities with their children at home – our primary parenting outcome measure – they did show growth on several specific practices, including library use and frequency of reading to their children.
- Greater participation in PCILA was associated with higher levels of several types of parent talk during one-on-one book-reading sessions with their children – most notably talk that goes beyond the literal content of the book, which research has shown to be associated with later reading skills. However, no positive relationships were found between hours of parenting education alone and such parent talk.

## **Child outcomes**

We also found evidence that children are growing and developing in a range of domains throughout their participation in the early childhood education (ECE) component of the family literacy programs.

- English language skills (as measured by the Pre-LAS language screener) increased for 3-to-5-year-olds in the child outcomes substudy, as did receptive vocabulary (as measured by the PPVT) – which indicates that children's English language development accelerated to bring them up to nearly the level of national norms.
- Children demonstrated statistically significant growth on emergent literacy skills; by the end of the year, study children named more letters and colors, and demonstrated greater story comprehension and concepts about print – critical skills that are predictive of later achievement.
- Assessments of numeracy and early math skills showed significant growth for study children in terms of naming numbers and counting objects, but not in terms of problem solving.

## **Program Quality and Participant Outcomes**

Greater emphasis was given to the measurement of program quality in Years 5 and 6 of the evaluation. In addition to assessing indicators of quality, we explored relationships between program quality and family outcomes; we found some evidence that higher program quality is associated with more positive outcomes.

### **Quality characteristics in the adult education classroom**

Drawing on data from surveys of adult education teachers, we found many characteristics of quality reflected in the adult education component of the programs. In addition, several features were associated with more positive outcomes for parents.

- Although we found that credential rates among adult education teachers dropped somewhat from Year 5 to Year 6, teachers are relatively experienced, with 12.5 years of teaching experience, on average.
- Adult education teachers reported utilizing various instructional approaches in order to meet students' diverse learning needs, including using hands-on activities. We found that greater use of these more interactive instructional practices, and less time spent in lecture format, was associated with greater adult learning. However, teacher reports of their use of hands-on activities declined from Year 5 to Year 6.
- Overall, we found that adult education teachers are relatively satisfied with their access to appropriate materials and resources, though there was an overall decline in the reported adequacy of resources from Year 5 to Year 6. This warrants attention since we found that parents in programs where teachers rated classroom resources – both the learning materials and the physical environment – more highly showed more growth in their scores on the CASAS reading assessment.

### **Quality characteristics in the parenting education and PCILA classrooms**

Analyses of survey responses from parenting education and PCILA teachers showed that there is variation in the programmatic approaches to these parenting components as well as variation in teacher qualifications and practices. In addition, we found that several aspects of quality in each of these components were related to positive outcomes for parents.

- Although qualifications (in terms of holding relevant credentials and permits) vary among parenting education and PCILA teachers, the average teacher is relatively experienced, with an average of 7.6 years of experience for parenting teachers and 4.5 years of experience for PCILA teachers. Moreover, having a more experienced PCILA teacher was found to be associated with positive outcomes for parents.
- Parenting education teachers reported using a variety of curricula to guide their instruction, and they reported covering a variety of topics in their instruction, though the most common emphases were on building parents' self-esteem, child development, and strategies for reading with children and supporting their learning. We found that more attention to topics related to children's learning – the original intent of the family literacy model for parenting education – was associated with greater parent growth on the composite measure of language and literacy activity at home.

- Teachers' reports of their instructional methods suggested that they divide their time between lecture, hands-on activities, and discussion. We found that parent involvement through discussion and interactive activities was associated with parent learning; parents in focus groups confirmed that group discussions with the teacher and their peers were the most valuable for their learning.
- Parenting education and PCILA teachers rated the availability and quality of classroom resources as generally adequate, though somewhat less likely to be rated as always adequate were computer equipment, parenting education textbooks, and materials for supporting children with disabilities in the PCILA classroom. We found that having sufficient resources was particularly important for the PCILA classroom, with more adequate resources associated with greater increases over time in parents' use of language and literacy activities with their children.

### **Quality characteristics in the ECE classroom**

We observed significant variation across the 22 grantee programs in terms of the content and focus of ECE classes as well as teacher practices and interactional style.

- ECE teachers are relatively experienced, with an average of slightly less than 10 years of teaching experience. Just under half of ECE teachers surveyed reported having a bachelor's degree, half reported having a degree or coursework in early childhood education, and two-thirds reported holding at least a CDA or associate teacher permit.
- Overall, interactions between children and adults in the ECE classroom were rated by independent observers as being in the "medium quality" range on the CLASS in terms of emotional support and classroom organization. Of greater concern, however, is the "low quality" rating given, on average, for instructional support, which is most predictive of later positive outcomes for children. Teachers were also observed to interact with children most frequently in a didactic manner, with relatively little scaffolding and elaboration of children's responses.
- Regarding the content focus of activities in the ECE classroom, surveyed teachers rated all topics listed as very important. Most likely to be rated by teachers as the top priority, though, were social-emotional development and language development, followed by literacy learning.
- Independent observations of ECE classroom activities indicated that about equal attention was given to language and literacy activities as to "aesthetics" activities (such as art and music) in study classrooms, and most of the literacy time was characterized as having adults read to children.
- The average rating on the ECERS-E literacy subscale was just below "good" quality for ECE classrooms observed, though there was wide variation among grantees. ECERS-E ratings were highest for books and literacy materials, and lowest for writing and sounds in words.
- In the ECE classroom, teachers reported that the quantity and quality of materials and resources were generally sufficient for their needs. Materials for diverse learners, especially for children with special needs, were rated somewhat lower, however.

## **Component integration**

Grantee programs continued to struggle to fully integrate their four components into a coherent system of services for families, though most reported employing a range of strategies, including holding regular integration meetings with teachers from each of the four components and reinforcing core messages across the four components (such as using thematic units to tie the content of each component together).

- Integrating the adult education component continued to be a challenge for programs. Although many adult education teachers reported that they align their curricula with topics covered in the other components, most reported that they have infrequent communications with teachers in other components.
- Although the frequency with which adult education teachers shared and received lesson plan information across components was not significantly related to parent outcomes, we found some evidence of the benefits of greater familiarity with family literacy programming among adult education teachers. Specifically, having adult education teachers with more years of experience teaching in a family literacy context, as well as having classrooms with a greater proportion of family literacy students relative to other non-program adults, were associated with greater CASAS score growth among parents.
- Although one might assume that parenting education and PCILA would be most likely to be well integrated – both with other components and with each other – there appeared to be less communication between teachers across these two components than would be expected, as PCILA teacher reports suggested that they are somewhat surprisingly unaware of what happens in parenting classes. However, results indicated that a higher level of integration of parenting education with the other components of family literacy programs was associated with greater parent learning.
- ECE teachers reported feeling relatively well informed about the activities in the PCILA classroom, but somewhat less aware of the content of parenting classes, and even less aware of what goes on in the adult education classroom. Overall, the majority of ECE teachers reported integrating themes or topics discussed in other components in their classroom activities, and about half reported making some modifications to their curriculum for the purposes of integration.

## **Support for Program Quality Improvement**

The evaluation also explored the FLSN's role in supporting quality improvement efforts, and examined the relationships between FLSN support and changes in grantee program quality characteristics.

### **Focus of the FLSN's work**

The primary role of the FLSN is to provide training, support, and guidance to grantees to facilitate their progress toward becoming model family literacy programs. In addition to trainings and networking meetings, the FLSN provides much of its support to the grantees through customized technical assistance site visits, where FLSN staff discuss grantee challenges, observe program activities, and offer feedback, advice, and resources to move grantees forward.

- As has been the case throughout the course of the Initiative, grantee program directors reported high levels of satisfaction overall with the support and feedback provided by the FLSN. By far the most appreciated benefit of FLSN support, as reported by program directors, was the networking opportunities FLSN events provide.
- Giving priority in Year 5 and 6 to parenting education and PCILA, the FLSN focused one mandatory training each year on these components, and addressed one or the other during more than a fourth of their grantee site visits. Support in these components was highly rated by program directors, and reported grantee needs in each area were somewhat lower by Year 6.
- FLSN staff identified ECE as the component with the most room for improvement and therefore focused one of their mandatory trainings each year on ECE. Less attention was given to this component during the FLSN's customized technical assistance site visits though.
- Compared to other components, support from the FLSN in the area of adult education was not rated as highly by program directors, though reported needs in this area were also not very great.
- According to summaries of FLSN site visit notes, although FLSN staff discussed issues related to quality improvement during the majority of visits, time spent during visits was focused more on administrative issues, such as developing and documenting program policies and discussing data entry procedures..
- The FLSN provided two training opportunities on integration, and overall support from the FLSN on integration was rated highly by program directors; however, according to the Year 5 site notes, component integration was one of the areas addressed *least* frequently during customized technical assistance site visits, and grantee reports of their needs in this area remained high – and even appeared to increase – from Year 5 to Year 6.
- Program directors reported facing significant challenges in fundraising, and identified achieving fiscal sustainability as a major area of need. To address this, the FLSN offered two optional trainings related to sustainability; however, only 1 percent of the needs addressed during site visits concerned fundraising or sustainability in Year 5, and compared to other topics, grantees were less positive about FLSN help in this area overall.

## **Outcomes associated with FLSN support**

In addition to considering grantee perceptions of impact, we examined changes in grantee program quality characteristics from Year 5 to Year 6 and assessed the relationship between these changes and the level of support received from the FLSN in Year 5. In doing so, we found that there are several aspects of program quality that showed greater growth among grantee programs that received more technical assistance site visits from the FLSN.

- We observed an overall decline in grantee reports of their needs for additional support from Year 5 to Year 6, suggesting that grantees were feeling more confident about the quality of their programs in Year 6.
- We found possible evidence of the impact of the FLSN's emphasis on discussions about administrative policies and procedures with grantees during site visits. The number of FLSN

visits was associated with greater reported use of formal policies and procedures (such as having written job descriptions and policies for documenting and following up on referrals) among grantees.

- Consistent with FLSN emphasis on parenting education and PCILA, we also found some changes in parenting education practices related to FLSN support. Specifically, the number of FLSN site visits grantees received was positively associated with changes in parenting education teachers' reports of their focus on topics related to parents' ability to support their children's learning.
- Grantee program directors rated the FLSN's support in the area of ECE as being relatively useful, and we found statistically significant positive relationships between the number of site visits grantees received and changes in three aspects of ECE component quality: teachers' reported use of formal lesson plans, use of curriculum guidelines, and focus on language and literacy skill development in the classroom.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings described above (as well as additional findings described in more detail in the full report), we developed a series of recommendations to support grantee program improvement. A partial list of these recommendations is presented below.

### **Adult education**

1. The FLSN should consider providing (or helping to identify) training opportunities for adult education teachers that address effective instructional strategies for the family literacy population.
2. Programs should evaluate the availability of resources for the adult education classroom and explore ways to enhance the quality of the classroom environment and teachers' access to adequate learning materials and resources where needed.

### **Parenting education and PCILA**

3. Programs should continue to offer opportunities in parenting education classes for parents to share their experiences and discuss issues with the instructor as well as with a group of their peers.
4. Programs should continue to encourage parents to read to their children and talk about what they are reading – pointing out pictures, asking children to count or label objects, or talking about what just happened in the story, for example. But they should also encourage parents to develop their children's concept development and critical thinking skills and enhance their comprehension by going beyond the literal content of the book to engage in higher-level talk – for example, asking children to make predictions, evaluate the story, or make connections to their own experiences.
5. Programs should look for ways to enhance the availability of materials and resources for their parenting and PCILA components, especially by ensuring that parents have the books they need to support their learning and that PCILA classrooms have the space and materials for all parent-child pairs to fully engage in learning activities.

## **Early childhood education (ECE)**

6. The FLSN should continue to support grantee program improvement in the area of ECE and should increase technical assistance attention given to this component during site visits.
7. To enhance teacher-child interactions and support scaffolding of children's learning, the FLSN should consider offering training to provide teachers with strategies for modeling language, expanding on children's responses, scaffolding their learning, and fostering concept development and higher-order thinking skills. The CLASS manual and training videos could be used to support a training and technical assistance initiative in these areas.
8. Although the relative attention to language and literacy activities appears to have increased since Years 2 and 3, more emphasis on these activities, especially going beyond reading to children to address phonological awareness and the development of writing awareness and skills, is warranted.
9. Given the wide variation in ECERS-E scores, the FLSN should consider targeting its technical assistance to grantees that have a particular need for creating more literacy-rich environments and experiences for children.

## **Component integration**

10. The FLSN should expand its focus on component integration, assessing the level of integration among grantee programs and providing direct technical assistance to help individual grantees enhance this aspect of their programs – perhaps even incorporating this into FLSN staff's observation work at grantee sites.
11. The FLSN should consider providing additional training opportunities (such as the Foundations in Family Literacy training) or materials (for staff in partner agencies unable to attend trainings) for:
  - adult education teachers who might be new to family literacy in order to strengthen their understanding of the goals of family literacy, to facilitate integration, and to provide ideas for addressing the unique needs of family literacy parents;
  - parenting education and PCILA teachers to enhance the integration of these two components with the other components and with each other; and
  - ECE teachers to support integration with the other components, especially with parenting and adult education.

## **Other aspects of program leadership and administration**

12. Especially given budget cuts, the funding match, and the Initiative's anticipated "sunsetting" in 2010, the FLSN should increase its focus on sustainability support for grantees. FLSN staff should work with grantees to review their sustainability plans and provide specific guidance during technical assistance site visits, as well as provide targeted networking opportunities for grantees to share promising approaches and funding sources for program sustainability.
13. The FLSN should continue to reinforce the need for grantees to have policies and procedures in place to guide their practice, but FLSN staff should increase their focus on quality improvement in the four component areas.

14. Although the FLSN should continue to encourage and support grantees' use of data for program improvement, time spent on the details of data collection and data entry during on-site technical assistance should be reduced at this stage of the Initiative, so that more attention can be given to program quality improvement. The FLSN should consider ways to revise its data guidance documents to simplify them and make them comprehensive enough to replace some of the one-on-one discussions about data collection details.

## **Next Steps**

The First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative has been supporting children's learning and development, parents' progress toward their adult learning goals, parents' capacity to support their children's learning, and, ultimately, family literacy and self sufficiency over the past six years. In 2010, it is anticipated that the Initiative will "sunset" – or at least a decision about coming to a close will be made by the Commission. In recognition of the Initiative's longevity and in anticipation of the upcoming Commission decision, the evaluation is taking several new directions in the final two years. First, we will take a *retrospective* look at the Initiative. This will involve stepping back and taking a broader perspective on quality and outcomes, analyzing in greater depth data collected over the past six years. Building on the findings presented in this report, we plan to examine patterns of change in the quality of family literacy services as well as in child and family outcomes over a longer period of time. We will also examine best practices for service delivery, including successful component integration and long-term sustainability, and follow up on barriers and facilitating factors related to achieving "model" (or exemplary) program status – the original goal of the Initiative.

Second, we will take a *prospective* look at the Initiative – exploring outcomes for parents and children that endure long after families leave the programs. We will conduct a follow-up study of Initiative alumni – parents who graduated (or exited) from the grantee programs – to explore their continued use of positive parenting practices and their involvement in and support for their children's education. We will also conduct an elementary school follow-up feasibility study to examine children's outcomes in kindergarten and beyond, comparing outcomes for children who participated in family literacy programs to a demographically matched comparison sample of children who did not participate in these programs.

Together, these two approaches to exploring longer-range outcomes – for families and programs alike – will enable the evaluation to characterize the Initiative's history as well as its legacy.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology**

The First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative, which began in 2002, is a comprehensive program to promote language and literacy development, parenting knowledge and skills, and economic self-sufficiency among low-income families in Los Angeles County through 1) grants to selected agencies providing direct services and 2) funding for the Family Literacy Support Network to support capacity-building efforts among these agencies and throughout the county. In the first three years of the Initiative, 15 agencies received grants (Cohort 1); in Year 4 (2005-06), a total of 24 four-year grants were awarded to 22 agencies (grantees), including 14 of the original Cohort 1 grantees, 9 Cohort 2 grantees (one of which also had a Cohort 1 grant), and 2 Cohort 3 grantees. Each grantee provided services through each of their four interrelated family literacy program components: 1) early childhood education (ECE), 2) parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA), 3) parenting education, and 4) adult education.

First 5 LA has contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) since the beginning of the Initiative to evaluate the Initiative's implementation and overall effectiveness. The first four years of the evaluation (Phase I) focused on process, outcomes, and policy-relevant issues. This report, evaluating Year 5 (2006-07) and Year 6 (2007-08) of the Initiative, continues to examine family outcomes but also explores in greater detail the relationships between elements of program quality and those family outcomes.

### ***Summary of Findings from Phase I***

Phase II of the Initiative evaluation was designed to build on the key findings from Phase I and explore in greater depth themes that emerged from the first four years. The central findings from Years 3 and 4 of the evaluation are highlighted below. For more detail about these results please see the final Phase I report (Quick et al., 2007).

We observed variation in characteristics of program quality. ECE services were rated "good" overall, and grantees achieved high participation rates among families, but they confronted some challenges with regard to staffing, component integration, and sustainability.

- Over 90% of adult education and parenting education teachers held bachelor's degrees, but only 55% of early childhood education teachers did, and although recruiting and retaining staff was not reported by program directors to be a significant challenge, high staff turnover was reported by two thirds of the grantees.
- Most programs had policies and procedures in place to ensure quality service delivery in each component; however, regular classroom observations were only conducted by 6 of the 22 program directors.
- On average, grantees offered ECE services whose environments were rated as "good" as measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised.
- Component integration was identified as a challenge for many grantees, as program directors reported that full integration across program components was difficult to achieve
- In Phase I, project directors cited sustainability as their greatest concern, and only 43% of programs had a written fundraising plan by the end of Year 4.

- Programs were successful in recruiting and retaining participants in Phase I; high rates of participation in all components were also reported.

Children participating in the family literacy programs showed growth on developmental outcome measures over the course of their participation as well as into kindergarten, and we found evidence to suggest that greater participation and participation in higher quality services were associated with more positive outcomes overall.

- Children demonstrated significant growth on the DRDP-R over time, with higher levels of program participation associated with higher growth.
- Children in programs with higher quality ECE services – especially those with more language and literacy input – demonstrated more growth.
- Children who were followed into kindergarten demonstrated significant growth after leaving the family literacy program, with a positive trend in score growth over time.

Similarly, parent participants showed significant growth in their English reading skills and in their reported use of positive parenting practices; more growth was observed among parents with higher levels of participation as well.

- Parents in adult learning classes showed significant growth on the CASAS reading assessment in Phase I, and those attending more hours of service demonstrated greater growth overall.
- Parents in parenting classes showed significant growth in the frequency with which they reported using practices to support their children’s literacy development at home. The proportion of parents meeting or exceeding Even Start benchmarks on the CA-ESPIRS indicators also showed growth over time.
- Home literacy practices showed greater increases among parents with higher attendance levels in parenting education and PCILA compared to those who attended these components less.

The FLSN continued to provide training and technical assistance to grantees in Years 3 and 4 in order to support their progress toward model program status. Grantee reviews of FLSN help were consistently positive, and grantees showed some progress, though a few areas for growth emerged.

- While the amount of technical assistance provided to grantees by the FLSN in Years 3 and 4 decreased, the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) focused more strongly on the “Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement”, a guide to program quality in each of the four components.
- Grantees demonstrated progress toward model status in several areas and grew increasingly skilled at completing First 5 LA deliverables. An assessment of grantees’ overall progress toward model status revealed some areas for improvement, including increasing parent involvement in curricular planning for parenting education and PCILA, component integration, using data for quality improvement, increasing the literacy focus of activities in PCILA and ECE, and sustainability.

In response to findings from Phase I, we made a number of recommendations to the grantees, the FLSN, and First 5 LA:

1. *The Initiative should emphasize the importance of quality of services.*
2. *Programs should increase attention to literacy in the ECE classroom and strengthen teacher-child interactions.*
3. *The FLSN should continue to work on supporting grantee development to enhance parenting education and PCILA.*
4. *The FLSN should support grantees' efforts to maximize the impact of the four components by increasing their integration.*
5. *The FLSN should work to extend use of data by grantees to support continuous quality improvement.*
6. *First 5 LA and the FLSN should continue to support grantee sustainability by providing training and technical assistance to grantees.*
7. *The FLSN should continue to provide customized technical assistance to grantees, especially those with greater program improvement needs.*

### **Focus of the Year 5-6 Evaluation**

In Years 5 and 6, the evaluation continued to examine child and family outcomes and added a more intensive exploration of the characteristics of quality programs and the relationships between those characteristics and participant outcomes. Six key research questions guided the evaluation efforts.

We addressed three questions related to participant outcomes:

7. How are family literacy program participants growing and changing over time?
8. What is the relationship between program participation and outcomes?
9. What is the relationship between program quality and participant outcomes?

We also included three questions related to FLSN and grantee program outcomes:

10. What is the range of program quality among grantees?
11. What factors facilitate or impede program quality improvement?
12. What is the relationship between FLSN support and grantee program quality improvement?

Program quality was a primary focus of the evaluation in Years 5 and 6. To assess quality, we began with the identification of critical indicators of quality for family literacy programs. In addition to drawing on the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement (FLSN, 2005) prepared by the FLSN and the Even Start Guide to Quality (Dwyer & Sweeney, 2001), we conducted a review of the research literature on family literacy as well as in the individual fields of early childhood education, adult education, parenting education, and parent-child activities, and identified factors associated with program quality. These factors became the basis for the development of a set of comprehensive quality indicators, which were shared with several experts in the field for review: Christine Dwyer (RMC Research Corporation), Linda Espinosa (University of Missouri), Susan Neuman (University of Michigan), and Timothy Shanahan (University of Illinois). Feedback from these reviewers was used to refine the indicators. The final set of quality indicators (presented in Appendix A) was used to guide the development of protocols and instruments as well as our analysis strategies.

### **Methodology**

As in prior years of the evaluation, we used a mixed-methods design to collect qualitative and quantitative data at all levels of the system. Over the two years, our methods included:

- Interviews with program directors
- Surveys of program directors and teachers
- Site visits to grantee programs (including observations of parenting education and PCILA classes and parent focus groups)
- Analysis of extant data (grantee-collected service records, family demographic data, adult reading assessments, parent surveys, and children's language surveys)
- Child outcomes substudy (direct assessments of children, classroom observations, parent interviews, and observations of parent-child book-reading sessions)
- FLSN staff interviews and extant data analysis

Each of these study components is described below.

### **Program director interviews (Years 5 and 6)**

Each year, we interviewed each of the 22 grantee program directors. In Year 5, the directors were interviewed in the spring – either in person or by phone – using a semi-structured interview protocol. In Year 6 the protocol was updated to reflect additional program quality indicators, and all interviews were conducted by telephone, also in the spring. These interviews were a key source of data relating to how the Family Literacy Initiative is being implemented across programs and the successes and challenges each program confronted in Years 5 and 6.

### **Program director surveys (Years 5 and 6)**

The evaluation team developed and administered a program director survey in Years 5 and 6 to capture quantifiable information about each program. The survey was based on surveys used in prior years of the evaluation, with the addition of new items to capture quality indicators of interest. Surveys were mailed to program directors in the spring of each year. The Year 6 program director survey instrument is included in Appendix B. Twenty-one program directors returned surveys in Year 5 and 22 returned surveys in Year 6, for a 100% response rate. (One program did not have a director at the time of the survey in Year 5.)

### **Teacher surveys**

At the same time that program director surveys were distributed, surveys for teachers in each of the four program components were also administered. Surveys were sent to program directors to distribute to each of their teachers. Once the surveys were complete, teachers returned them to the program director in sealed envelopes to protect their confidentiality. Similar to the program director survey, teacher surveys were developed based on prior surveys used in the evaluation, with new questions added to address the quality indicators. We received surveys from 138 teachers in Year 5, for an overall response rate of 75%. In 2008, we received a total of 157 teacher surveys, for a response rate of 78%. The Year 6 teacher survey instrument is included in Appendix B.

### **Site visits to Cohort 2 and 3 grantee programs (Year 5)**

In Year 5, we conducted one- to two-day site visits to each of the Cohort 2 and 3 grantee programs that were new to the Initiative in the 2005-06 program year. These visits helped us to become more familiar with the eight new programs. We also used these visits as an opportunity to collect

qualitative data that could be used to help interpret other quantitative data being collected across all 22 grantee programs. At each of the eight sites visits, we conducted focus groups with parents and observed parenting education and PCILA classes.

### ***Observation of parenting education classes***

To assess the quality of parenting education classes, we observed one parenting class at each of the eight Cohort 2 and 3 grantees visited in Year 5. To guide these observations, the evaluation team developed an observation tool designed to capture consistent information about the form and content of the class as well as some information on teacher practices. This tool was modeled after the instrument used in prior years of the evaluation, with additional probes added to collect more detailed information about quality indicators identified through the literature review. The parenting education classroom observation protocol is included in Appendix B. Field staff received training on the use of this tool to ensure consistent implementation.

### ***Observation of parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA)***

To evaluate the quality of PCILA activities, the evaluation team developed a semi-structured PCILA observation tool to guide observations of PCILA time conducted at the Cohort 2 and 3 grantee sites in Year 5. This observation tool was adapted from the Goodling Institute's Interactive Literacy/PACT observation tool; it was expanded to include quality indicators identified through the literature review. The PCILA observation protocol is included in Appendix B. Staff received training on this tool and conducted observations of PCILA classes at seven of the eight Cohort 2 and 3 sites (PCILA was cancelled at one site on the day of our visit). Two classes were observed at one site, for a total of eight classes observed.

### ***Parent focus groups***

We also conducted focus groups at the eight Cohort 2 and 3 grantees during our Year 5 site visits. A total of 72 parents participated in focus groups across the eight sites, with group sizes ranging from 2 to 13 parents per site. The focus group protocol was designed to gather information regarding parents' perceptions of the impacts of the programs on their lives and families, their involvement in decision making at the program, and their perceptions of program strengths and areas for improvement.

### **Data submitted by grantees (Years 5 and 6)**

As in prior years of the Initiative, the family literacy grantees were required to collect and report on data on their programs and participating families each year. These data are uploaded to the online data system by grantees, which can then be downloaded by the evaluation team. We downloaded and analyzed data from the following sources:

- Family profile forms
- Service records for all four components (including both hours offered and hours attended)
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) reading assessments
- California Even Start Performance Information Reporting System (CA-ESPIRS) parent survey (Year 5)
- Family Literacy Initiative Parent Survey (FLIPS) (Year 6)

- MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (MacArthur CDI)

Each of these data sources is described below.

### ***Family profile forms***

Profile forms provided demographic information for the family (e.g., income, family size, language spoken at home), each participating adult (e.g., level of education, employment status and history), and each participating child (e.g., age, gender, other services received). Follow-up profile forms were also completed at the end of each year to update this information. (See Quick et al. for examples of the profile forms.)

### ***Service data***

For each individual participating in their program, grantees entered the number of hours offered and attended for each component for each month. We used these data to calculate the average intensity of services offered and received as well as average attendance rates. These data were also used to limit analyses of outcome data (CASAS scores and parent survey responses) to parents who had attended hours beyond a particular threshold set by Even Start thought to be enough participation to show growth (50 hours of parenting education and 100 hours of adult education). The data also enabled us to select for analysis only those families who participated in all four components.

### ***CASAS reading assessment***

All grantees were required to administer the CASAS reading assessment to all adult participants enrolled in adult basic education (ABE) or English as a second language (ESL) classes. This tool is designed to measure adult basic reading skills in English, and was used in our analysis of adult education outcomes. This assessment was given to parents after approximately every 100 hours of adult education instruction they received.

### ***The CA-ESPIRS and the Family Literacy Initiative Parent Survey***

For the first five years of the Initiative, grantees used the CA-ESPIRS parent survey to capture outcomes of the parenting education and PCILA components of their family literacy programs. Based on feedback from grantees, the FLSN, and our own experience analyzing the CA-ESPIRS data, we decided, in collaboration with First 5 LA and the FLSN, to develop a new parent survey to replace the CA-ESPIRS. The new Family Literacy Initiative Parent Survey (FLIPS) includes questions about topics similar to those covered in the CA-ESPIRS survey, but with revised scales to support greater variation in responses and provide more room for growth, as well as some new topics identified as important outcomes for families.

To develop the parent survey, the evaluation team first gathered input from stakeholders, including First 5 LA, the FLSN, and a subset of grantees about key parent outcomes and question structures. We also reviewed parent surveys used in other national and regional studies to identify previously tested items that measured the constructs of interest. Because there is some interest in drawing comparisons with samples of parents from other studies, we endeavored to use items from large datasets that would facilitate such analyses. The survey was translated into Spanish and pilot-tested before being finalized. Beginning in the fall of Year 6, grantees began to administer the survey to parents at program enrollment and again at the end of the program year. The parent survey (with descriptive data on parent responses at Time 1 and Time 2 for parents with two completed surveys) is included in Appendix C.

### ***MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (MacArthur CDI)***

Beginning in Year 6, the evaluation used a new outcome measure for children. As a result of First 5 LA's decision not to use the DRDP/DRDP-R as an outcome measure for the Family Literacy Initiative, First 5 LA, AIR, and the FLSN reviewed alternative tools to provide Initiative-wide information on children's developmental progress for children younger than three years old. The MacArthur CDI was selected because it has been shown to be a valid and reliable tool, it involves low training costs and program staff burden (as it is a parent-completed survey rather than a one-on-one assessment), and because it enables the measurement of language development in both English and Spanish for bilingual children.

Before making a final decision to adopt this tool for the Initiative, we conducted a pilot test with six grantees. These grantees distributed the MacArthur CDI parent survey to a total sample of 34 parents and then completed a brief feedback form summarizing their (and parents') experiences with the instrument. Feedback was received from each of the six grantees, and the feedback was generally positive – that the tool provided useful information without excessive burden. Following the successful pilot, the MacArthur CDI was administered by the 22 grantees in Year 6.

### **Child outcomes substudy**

In Year 5, as in Year 3, our partners at the UCLA Center for Improving Child Care Quality again collected data for the child outcomes substudy, which has been an ongoing component of the evaluation. This substudy included direct child assessments, classroom observations, teacher and parent reports on the children, and observations of a book-reading activity.

#### ***Child assessments***

A sample of children in all programs in the 3-to-5-year-old age range was assessed in both the fall and spring of Year 5. Parent consent forms were distributed to program parents, and children were randomly selected from among those whose parents consented and who were present on the day of assessment. UCLA staff assessed children in the fall, and as many of these children as possible were assessed again in the spring, with additional children added as needed to reach an appropriate sample size. A total of 196 children were assessed: 158 children were assessed in the fall and 148 in the spring; 112 children were assessed at both time points. Assessments included:

- The Pre-Language Assessment Scales (Pre-LAS, Duncan & De Avila, 1985)
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT, Dunn, & Dunn, 1997), version III (English)/Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody (TVIP) (Spanish)
- Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement – Revised (WJ III ACH)/Woodcock-Muñoz III Test of Bateria Woodcock-Muñoz Pruebas de Aprovechamiento – Revisada
- A letter naming measure (developed by the National Center for Early Development and Learning, NCEDL)
- A numerical and counting awareness measure (NCEDL)
- A color naming measure (NCEDL)
- An early writing measure (NCEDL)

- A measure of story and print concepts developed for the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) to measure children's emergent literacy

All of these measures (except the Pre-LAS, which is a screening measure of English ability) were administered in English or Spanish, depending on the child's proficiency in each language.

### ***Classroom observations***

Classroom settings and teacher-child interactions were also observed in the winter of Year 5 to assess the quality of ECE services that each sample child was receiving. Observation measures included:

- The *Emergent Academic Snapshot* (Ritchie, Howes, Kraft-Sayre, & Weiser, 2001)
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System: Pre-K Version (CLASS, La Paro, Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003)
- Literacy subscale of the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Extension* (ECERS-E, Sylva, Sraj-Batchford, & Taggart, 2003)

These measures enabled staff to evaluate a variety of factors associated with program quality, including the amount of time children spent on language and literacy activities and the quality of teacher-child interactions. Classroom observations were conducted in classrooms at 21 grantee programs.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Teacher and parent reports on the children***

UCLA staff also conducted interviews with 96 parents via telephone and asked teachers to complete a survey both about their own background and about each child in the classroom who was assessed (for a total 88 children with teacher reported information). Both of these data collection strategies were designed to gather additional information about the children and their learning environments.

### ***Book-reading activity observations***

In addition, we added a new component to the child outcomes substudy in Year 5 to examine the quality of parent-child interactions for parents participating in parenting education and PCILA. Parent-child pairs participated in a book-reading activity together and were videotaped during this interaction. Parents were given *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (1969) and were asked to read the book to their child as they normally would at home. The book was available in English and Spanish and parents decided in which language to read. On average, book reading sessions lasted 5 minutes, ranging from 2 to 14 minutes. A total of 100 parent-child dyads were videotaped. Among them, 68 dyads read the book in English and 32 read the book in Spanish.

A total of 98 verbal interactions were coded (two dyads were not coded due to audio problems). A coding system derived from Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell (2001) and Hammett, van Kleeck, & Huberty (2003) was used. The list of codes, descriptions, and procedures for coding are included in Appendix D.

### **FLSN interviews and site notes**

Finally, the team also conducted telephone interviews with FLSN staff in Years 5 and 6 to document the activities of the FLSN in each year as well as to gather specific information about grantee needs

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<sup>1</sup> Due to scheduling difficulties, classroom observations were not conducted at one grantee site.

and services provided to address these needs. We interviewed all FLSN staff in Year 5 to gather broad input but focused our efforts on an in-depth interview with the FLSN director only in Year 6. The interview protocol developed in Year 5 was updated in Year 6 according to program quality indicators and themes identified after Year 5.

In addition, notes FLSN staff kept from their Year 5 site visits to grantee program sites<sup>2</sup> were analyzed to understand how frequently technical assistance was provided on different topic areas. These notes were provided to us in the form of Excel spreadsheets, where each record summarized a need addressed during a site visit to a grantee program. These needs were coded using a very detailed coding scheme. The needs were recoded to reflect a simplified coding scheme and the need-level files were reconfigured into site visit-level files so that the emphasis of the FLSN’s work could be characterized by the percentage of visits addressing any given topic.

### Overview of Families

Across the Initiative, hundreds of families received services in each of the four family literacy components: adult education, parenting education, parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA), and early childhood education (ECE). In Year 5, grantees served 784 families, and in Year 6, grantees served 835 families (see Exhibit 1.1).

**Exhibit 1.1: Number of families (and adults and children in those families) participating in all four components, by year**

	Year 5		Year 6	
	Total number of participants	Mean (range) of participants per grantee	Total number of participants	Mean (range) of participants per grantee
Families	784	35.6 (20-54)	835	38.0 (19-62)
Adults	796	36.2 (21-55)	844	38.4 (19-62)
Children	979	44.5 (20-77)	1038	47.2 (23-84)

Source: Year 5 and 6 service data downloaded from the grantee data system.

<sup>2</sup> Notes from the Year 6 FLSN site visits were not received in time to include in the analysis.

**Exhibit 1.2: Demographic characteristics of parents participating in all four components, at program entry, by year**

	Percent (N) of Adults	
	Year 5	Year 6
<b>Parent Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic or Latino	96% (714)	89% (732)
Asian	5% (20)	4% (15)
Black or African American	3% (11)	4% (15)
White	4% (15)	3% (10)
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6% (2)	0.3% (1)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.6% (2)	0.6% (2)
Other	3% (11)	1% (5)
<b>Immigration (Years in the U.S.)</b>		
Less than 1 year	3% (22)	2% (18)
1 to 2 years	7% (51)	5% (41)
3 to 5 years	23% (176)	24% (180)
6 to 10 years	31% (229)	29% (221)
More than 10 years, but not entire life	28% (210)	30% (230)
Entire life/born in the U.S.	8% (62)	9% (69)
<b>Parent education</b>		
8 <sup>th</sup> grade or less	32% (241)	34% (258)
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade, no diploma	36% (554)	38% (291)
High school graduate/GED	18% (133)	16% (121)
Some college, no degree	6% (42)	6% (43)
Associate degree or higher	9% (66)	11% (71)
<b>Household income</b>		
\$10,000 or less	21% (322)	22% (157)
\$10,001 – 20,000	50% (768)	49% (353)
\$20,001 – 40,000	26% (398)	26% (187)
Over \$40,000	4% (60)	4% (30)
<b>Parent gender</b>		
Female	97% (749)	98% (755)
Male	3% (22)	2% (19)
<b>Employment</b>		
Employed at some point in the last year	11% (78)	9% (63)
Unemployed all year	76% (699)	78% (569)
<b>Public assistance received</b>		
Housing support	1% (9)	1% (8)
Health coverage	63% (501)	62% (518)
Child care	1% (10)	2% (13)
Food support	64% (503)	64% (540)
Other assistance	1% (8)	2% (15)

Source: Participant profile data downloaded from the grantee data system. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to non-mutually exclusive categories (for ethnicity and public assistance received) and/or rounding.

**Exhibit 1.3: Demographic characteristics of children participating in all four components, at program entry by year**

	Percent (N) of Children	
	Year 5	Year 6
Child age		
Less than 1 year	9% (86)	9% (84)
1 to 2 years	12% (117)	13% (120)
2 to 3 years	21% (196)	21% (201)
3 to 4 years	28% (264)	28% (266)
4 to 5 years	22% (208)	22% (212)
5 years or older	7% (69)	7% (69)
Child gender		
Male	51% (463)	47% (423)
Female	49% (448)	53% (483)
Child health		
Poor	0.1% (1)	0% (0)
Fair	4% (34)	3% (31)
Good	36% (325)	37% (338)
Very good	37% (329)	33% (303)
Excellent	23% (210)	26% (237)
Child has IEP or IFSP	4% (30)	4% (35)

Source: Participant profile data downloaded from the grantee data system. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Enrollment requirements for families in these programs vary, though services are generally need-based. Parents participating in family literacy programs were most often female and Hispanic or Latino (see Exhibit 1.2). They often had low levels of formal education (72% of the Year 6 parents had less than a high school diploma), low household incomes (71% had a total annual household income of \$20,000 or less), and many received some form of public assistance (62% received food support and 64% received public support for health coverage).

About half of the children participating in the family literacy programs were between three and five years old at the beginning of the program year (50% in both Years 5 and 6). As in prior years, there were about as many girls as boys (with slightly more girls in Year 6, at 53%), and parents reported they were generally healthy (with 60% reporting very good or excellent health in Year 5 and 59% in Year 6). A small number (4% in both years) of participating children had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for an identified special need.

**Organization of this Report**

Detailed findings from the Year 5 and 6 evaluation activities are presented in the following chapters. Chapter 2 presents findings related to indicators of quality for the adult education component as well as adult education learning outcomes. Chapter 3 summarizes findings on indicators of quality for the parenting education and PCILA components as well as parent knowledge and behavior outcomes. Chapter 4 details results from analyses of the indicators of quality for the ECE component and outcomes for children – specifically, language development outcomes for children birth to three, and

preschool children's outcomes. Chapter 5 examines characteristics of overall program quality and the role of the FLSN in supporting program improvement. Chapter 6 presents a summary of key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

## Chapter 2: Adult Education – Indicators of Quality and Outcomes

Family literacy programs offer different types of adult education<sup>3</sup> classes to match the needs of the families they serve. Most offer English as a second language (ESL) classes. Many offer adult basic education (ABE), and some offer GED classes, or vocational education or job training. This chapter describes the characteristics of these adult education services that reflect indicators of quality, and outcomes observed for parents participating in them.

### **Indicators of Adult Education Component Quality**

We begin with an examination of selected indicators of quality in adult education classes, including:

- Intensity of services
- Teacher qualifications and teacher-student ratios
- Instructional strategies
- Classroom resources
- Integration with the other family literacy components

To assess the intensity of services offered, we draw on service data collected by grantees and submitted through the online data system. For other quality indicators, we use information provided through surveys completed by adult education teachers in the spring of Year 6 (with references to results from 51 Year 5 teacher surveys where noteworthy).

### **Intensity of services offered**

The intensity of the adult education component, as measured by the number of hours offered to each parent in each of the four types of classes – ESL, ABE, GED, and vocational education – is an important quality consideration. For example, Comings (2004) notes that although the average time an adult spends in a family literacy program is less than 70 hours over a twelve-month period, at least 100 hours of program participation is necessary for adult students to begin reaching their learning goals. We expect to observe greater impacts for programs that offer more intensive services to parents. In Years 5 and 6, grantee programs offered more hours of adult education classes to the average parent than in prior years<sup>4</sup> and reached the intensity goal set by First 5 LA (see Exhibit 2.1), at least for ESL.

- In Year 6, grantees offered an average of 48.3 hours per month of ESL instruction, 38.4 hours of ABE, 42.3 hours of GED classes, and 39.0 hours of vocational education.
- These numbers reflect an increase since Years 3 and 4, and ESL hours meet the First 5 LA intensity requirement of 48 hours per month of adult education.

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this report, adult education does not include parenting education classes. Parenting education is described with PCILA in Chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> In Years 3 and 4, grantees offered an average of 35.5 and 40.4 hours of ESL, respectively, 21.9 and 16.8 hours of ABE, and 36.0 and 15.4 hours of GED classes. These numbers represent the average number of hours offered to each parent.

**Exhibit 2.1: Mean number of hours of adult education classes offered by programs per month, by type, by year**

	<b>Year 5 Mean (N)</b>	<b>Year 6 Mean (N)</b>
English as a second language (ESL)	49.3 (22)	48.3 (21)
Adult basic education (ABE)	39.1 (10)	38.4 (8)
GED	45.5 (11)	42.3 (8)
Vocational education	39.0 (12)	39.0 (11)

Source: Year 5 and 6 service data downloaded from the grantee data system.

**Teacher qualifications and teacher-student ratios**

Research has emphasized the need for qualified adult education teachers who understand theories of first- and second-language literacy and pedagogical practices and have experience working with adults in diverse communities (Crandall, 1994). Overall, we find that adult education teachers are well educated, with over a decade of experience on average, though certification rates among teachers appeared to decline from Year 5 to Year 6 (see Exhibit 2.2).

Nearly all adult education teachers surveyed (97.8%) reported having at least a bachelor’s degree, with 37.5% indicating that they have completed their master’s or professional degree. More than one third of adult education teachers (43.6%) reported having a degree in adult education.

- Half of the teachers (57.1%) reported having an adult education teaching credential with a specialization in English as a second language (ESL).
- Teachers reported having a wide range of experience in teaching adult education, ranging from 1 to 32 years, with an average of 12.5 years. Teachers reported less experience, 5.3 years on average, teaching adult education in a family literacy context.

Adult education classes varied in size, though they were relatively small on average, and were comprised mostly of parents enrolled in the family literacy program.

- The largest class size reported was 50 students, and the smallest class had three students. On average, classes had 25.9 students, and the average teacher-student ratio was 1:21.
- Adult education classes often combine family literacy students with other adults not enrolled in the family literacy program. For example, students may take their GED class at a partner adult school that serves the entire community. Because of this, the teacher may be less familiar with the family literacy model. On average, family literacy students made up 30% of the adult education classes reported on by surveyed teachers.

**Exhibit 2.2: Percentage of adult education teachers with various qualifications, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Bachelor’s degree or higher	97.9	97.8
Degree in adult education	34.0	43.6
Degree in general education	29.8	31.6
Adult education credential in ESL	76.1	57.1
Adult education credential in vocational education	47.8	20.5
Adult education credential in other subject (including parenting education)	46.7	30.6
Single- or multiple-subject teaching credential	60.5	44.5
CLAD/BCLAD certificate	39.0	13.5
Mean years of experience teaching adult education (in any setting)	11.1	12.5
Mean years of experience teaching in a family literacy setting	9.6	7.5

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

**Curriculum, instruction, and assessment**

Research suggests that adult education ESL students should participate in curriculum development and be involved in determining their learning goals (Auerbach, 1992; Wiley, 1992). For example, one study of an adult ESL program found that the use of learner-centered curriculum and instruction designed to address the unique needs of the class being taught resulted in increased English usage and literacy (Cumming & Jaswinder, 1991). We find that most teachers reported using a formal curriculum and daily lesson plans to guide their instruction, though specific curricula used varied (see Exhibit 2.3).

- Most teachers (90.9%) reported using a formal curriculum in their classroom, and 92.8% indicated that they use curriculum guidelines to help plan instruction and activities to a large or moderate extent.
- Among commercially developed curricula, the largest percentages of teachers reported using Side-by-Side (36.4%), Expressways (21.8%), and Stand Out (16.4%). Many teachers also reported using a self- or program-developed curriculum (34.5%).
- The majority of teachers (84.3%) also reported using a formal lesson plan to guide their instruction for most classes or every class.

**Exhibit 2.3: Percentage of adult education teachers reporting the use of formal curricula and lesson plans to guide their instruction, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Formal curriculum used	96.0%	90.9%
Side-by-Side	28.0%	36.4%
Expressways	22.0%	21.8%
Stand Out	26.0%	16.4%
Other commercial curriculum	68.0%	49.0%
Curriculum developed by self or program	22.0%	34.5%
Formal lesson plan used to guide instruction for most classes or every class	96.1%	84.3%
Curriculum guidelines used to guide instruction to a large or moderate extent	98.1%	92.8%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

Teachers reported utilizing various instructional approaches in order to meet students’ diverse learning needs, including using hands-on activities and rewarding students for meeting their goals (see Exhibit 2.4).

- Most teachers (83.0%) reported using hands-on activities to support student learning, although 44.5% reported using a lecture format most often.
- Students are often more motivated when they can see their own progress (Comings, 2004). Most of the adult education teachers surveyed (74.5%) indicated that students in their classes are rewarded when they meet their goals, and 89.0% believe that their students can see their growth or feel mastery in their classes.

**Exhibit 2.4: Percentage of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing with the following statements about instructional practices**

	Year 5	Year 6
I use hands-on activities to help students learn.	90.2%	83.0%
I use a lecture format most often in class to provide students with important information.	55.2%	44.5%
In my class(es), students are rewarded when they meet goals.	82.0%	74.5%
It is difficult for students to see their own growth or to feel mastery in my class(es).	11.7%	11.0%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

Teacher practice also reflects the use of a variety of assessment tools and data to guide instruction, with most teachers reporting using information from the CASAS reading assessment, as well as reviews of student work and input from students (see Exhibit 2.5).

- When asked to rate the extent to which they used results from the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) or other assessments to help plan instruction, the majority of teachers (75.5%) indicated using this information to a moderate or large extent.

- Even more commonly reported sources of information used to guide their instruction to a large or moderate extent were reviews of student work (98.2% of teachers) and requests or ideas from students (89.1% of teachers).

**Exhibit 2.5: Percentage of teachers reporting they use different sources of information to guide their instruction to a large or moderate extent**

	Year 5	Year 6
Review of student work and participation in class	100.0%	98.2%
Data collected through the CASAS or other assessments	80.0%	75.5%
Requests, suggestions, or ideas from students	98.0%	89.1%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

**Classroom resources**

Research has suggested that classroom resources are positively related to student outcomes (Greenwald, Hedges, and Lane, 1996). For the most part, the majority of teachers described the availability and quality of various resources for their classroom as always being adequate (see Exhibit 2.6). However, we see an overall decline in the reported adequacy of classroom resources from Year 5 to Year 6.

- More than half of the teachers (56.6%) reported that textbooks were always adequate – in terms of quantity or quality – for their adult education classes. Computer equipment and other activity materials were reported as always being adequate by 42.9% and 51.9% of teachers, respectively.
- Just over half of surveyed teachers reported having adequate culturally appropriate (57.1%) or linguistically appropriate (53.1%) materials for their classes. Nearly three-quarters (74.0%) reported having adequate age-appropriate materials for their adult students.
- Just under two-thirds of teachers surveyed reported having adequate classroom space (63.0%), climate control (63.0%), and appropriate furniture for their classroom (61.1%).

**Exhibit 2.6: Percentage of adult education teachers rating various resources as always adequate for their classes, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Materials appropriate for age of parents in class	87.8%	74.0%
Classroom space	77.6%	63.0%
Heat and air conditioning	71.4%	63.0%
Appropriate furniture	77.1%	61.1%
Audio-visual equipment	60.4%	59.5%
Materials appropriate for the cultural background of the parents in class	62.0%	57.1%
Textbooks	66.7%	56.6%
Materials in appropriate languages for parents in class	68.1%	53.1%
Other activity materials and supplies	65.3%	51.9%
Computer equipment and software	45.0%	42.9%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

**Integration**

The integration of the four components – adult education, parenting education, PCILA, and early childhood education – is the hallmark of family literacy. To maximize the impact of services, the focus and goals of program services should be aligned and coordinated (Potts, 2004). We measured the integration of the adult education component by asking teachers about the extent to which they communicate and coordinate with teachers from the other three components. Overall, most adult education teachers told us they are not able to frequently communicate with teachers in other components, although many align their curricula with topics covered in the other components.

- According to survey responses, only about a third of adult education teachers are kept abreast of the content or focus of the other three family literacy components. They are least likely to be aware of what is being covered in early childhood education classes (30.8% said this information is routinely shared with them) or PCILA classes (30.2% said this information is routinely shared with them). Slightly more (35.8%) reported that information regarding the content being covered in parenting education classes is shared with them (or that they also teach this component).
- The majority of teachers (68.5%) reported that they occasionally or frequently adjust their adult education curriculum to align with topics being covered in the parenting education, early childhood education, or PCILA components.
- Topics or themes covered in other family literacy components were cited by 53.7% of teachers as sources guiding their instruction to a moderate or large extent. For example, one teacher described:

*“The ECE teacher gives me vocabulary words being learned in the ECE classroom. I then use those words and [the] ‘book of the week’ to develop my students’ vocabulary.”*

## Adult Learning Outcomes

In Years 5 and 6, we assessed adult learning outcomes for parents by analyzing change over time on the CASAS reading assessment, which was administered on a regular basis to all parents participating in ESL and ABE classes. While observing growth in reading skills does not necessarily mean that participation in family literacy programs is effecting change, it is important to first understand the patterns of change over time. We first examine parents' perceptions of the impact of their participation on their English skills. While not conclusive, their feedback suggests important effects. Second, we examine changes in CASAS reading assessment scores. Third, we examine progress parents are making on their vocational education goals, as documented by programs.

## Parent reports of changes in their English skills

Through focus groups conducted with a total of 72 parents across the eight Cohort 2 and 3 programs in Year 5, parents reported several major impacts of their adult education classes. Many parents (18 across seven programs) noted that their newly acquired English skills contributed to changes in their self-confidence and their ability to engage in everyday activities – such as going to the grocery store or the doctor's office – that were once significant challenges for them.

- Several parents described how their new English skills enabled them to connect with their community and develop new social relationships. For example, one parent reported that she is more social now that she is comfortable speaking English – a sharp contrast to how she felt when she started:

*“When I started I didn’t know absolutely any English. I couldn’t say hello, or good day. People used to greet me and I didn’t even respond. I didn’t know what they were saying to me.”*

- Parents most frequently cited their increased ability to fulfill everyday communication needs, such as filling out forms, talking with salespeople, visiting the doctor, or talking with their child's teacher. Not only do their increased English language skills reduce the anxiety of talking with strangers, but parents described the confidence boost and pride they feel when communicating successfully in their new language. For example, one parent described her experience at the doctor:

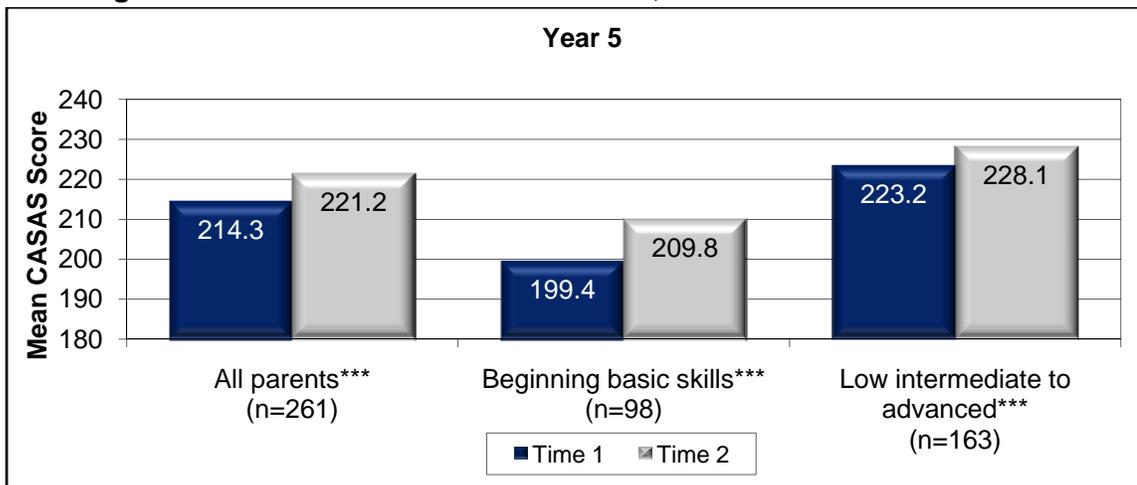
*“This last time I went to the doctor’s office I could talk and understand the whole time in English. My cousin was with me, and she was so surprised – she couldn’t believe I could understand and speak English. When I walked out of the office I felt so excited and proud! I’ve learned so much in these classes. The doctor told me I spoke well.”*

## Growth on the CASAS reading assessment

In Years 5 and 6 we analyzed the change in parents' basic readings skills, as measured by the CASAS reading assessment. As in prior years of the evaluation, analyses of change over time were limited to parents who had participated in ESL and adult basic education (ABE) for at least 100 hours (75% of parents in Year 5 and 79% in Year 6). This restriction, a convention used by Even Start and the Initiative as a whole, allows for sufficient time in the program to demonstrate growth. In both years, the average time elapsed between Time 1 and Time 2 was just over 6 months (6.2 and 6.3 months respectively). Overall, statistically significant score growth on the CASAS reading assessment suggests that parents are becoming more literate in English (see Exhibits 2.7 and 2.8).

- In Year 5, average CASAS scores across all 261 eligible parents with two CASAS scores and at least 100 hours of ESL and/or ABE<sup>5</sup> increased almost 7 points, from 214.3 to 221.2, between Time 1 and Time 2 (ES=0.48).<sup>6</sup> By comparison, participants in the Second National Even Start Evaluation gained an average of 4.2 scale points from pretest to posttest on the CASAS reading assessment (Alamprese, 2004).
- The greatest increase was achieved by parents with Time 1 scores of 210 or lower (classified as beginning basic skills). From Time 1 to Time 2, scores for this group improved by 10.44 points, on average (ES=1.06). Parents who scored 211 or higher (classified as low intermediate to advanced) showed a smaller, but statistically significant, increase of 4.83 points on average (ES=0.47).

**Exhibit 2.7: Mean CASAS reading scores at Time 1 and Time 2 for all parents receiving at least 100 hours of ESL and/or ABE, Year 5**



Source: CASAS reading assessment data downloaded from the grantee data system.

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.0001.

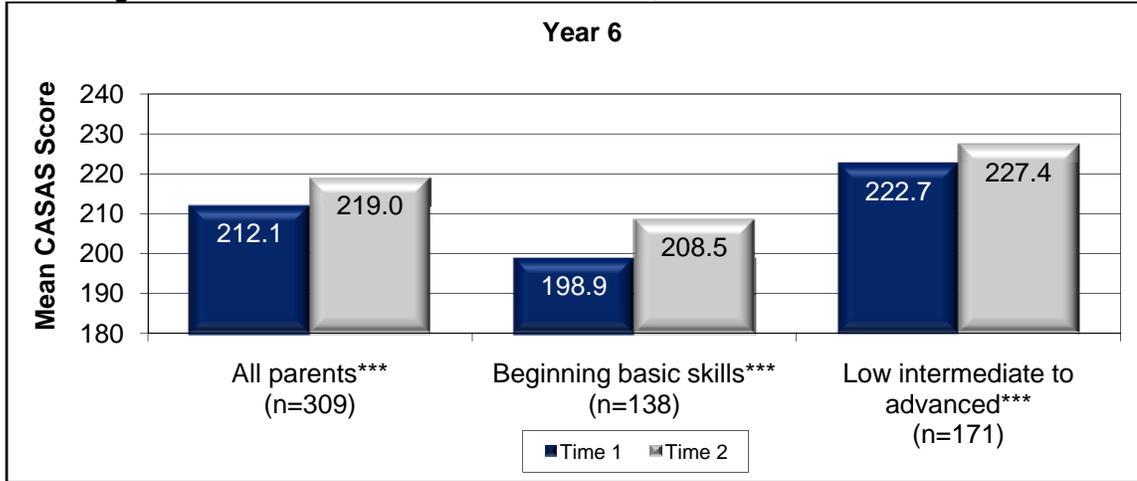
- In Year 6, parents demonstrated similar improvement on the CASAS reading assessment. The average score across all 309 eligible parents with at least two valid assessments and 100 hours of ESL and/or ABE instruction increased from 212.06 at Time 1 to 218.95 at Time 2, a change of 6.89 (ES=0.48).<sup>7</sup>
- Parents who scored in the beginning basic skills range at Time 1 improved by 9.6 points on average at Time 2 (ES=0.97). Parents scoring in the low intermediate to advanced range at Time 1 showed more modest (though still statistically significant) gains of 4.71 points, on average, at Time 2 (ES=0.51).

<sup>5</sup> Of the 797 parents who were enrolled in all four components, 347 had at least two CASAS assessments recorded with scores in the valid score range, and of these, 261 had at least 100 hours of ESL and/or ABE instruction in the program year.

<sup>6</sup> Effect sizes (denoted ES) are reported for outcome analyses throughout this report for context. These effect sizes should be interpreted with caution as this is not an experimental design and thus we cannot interpret significant associations as causal “effects.”

<sup>7</sup> Of the 843 parents who were enrolled in all four components, 391 had at least two CASAS assessments recorded with scores in the valid score range, and of these, 309 had at least 100 hours of ESL and/or ABE instruction in the program year.

**Exhibit 2.8: Mean CASAS reading scores at Time 1 and Time 2 for all parents receiving at least 100 hours of ESL and/or ABE, Year 6**



Source: CASAS reading assessment data downloaded from the grantee data system.

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.0001.

- In Year 5, 79% of parents with “beginning basic skills” (scores of 210 or lower) achieved the Even Start target gain of five points between Time 1 and Time 2 on the CASAS reading assessment. In Year 6, 71% of parents achieved the target gain.
- Similarly, 61% of parents with Time 1 scores of 211 or higher (low intermediate to advanced) achieved the Even Start target of a 3 point gain between Time 1 and Time 2 in Year 5, and 57% of parents reached this target in Year 6.

### Vocational education goals

Beginning in Year 6, programs documented parent goals related to vocational education in the online data system. Whereas in the past, programs used their own system for setting and tracking individual participant goals, we worked with First 5 LA, the FLSN, and the grantees to develop a common tool that could be used across programs to systematically document vocational education goals. This tool, along with the new interface for the online data system, was intended to be used to inform program practice as well as for evaluation and accountability purposes. In Year 6, programs documented vocational education goals for 48 parents but only reported on parent progress toward these goals for 17 parents. It appears from this very small sample of parents that while some parents made progress toward their vocational education goals in Year 6, many continue to work to attain their goals (see Exhibit 2.9).

- Vocational education goals were set for 48 parents, and included objectives such as completing a number of courses or improving a particular job skill.
- By the end of Year 6, 6 of the 17 parents whose progress was tracked by program staff had met their vocational education goal or were making progress toward their goal.
- Of the 17 parents with documented vocational education goals, 10 were identified as having goals “not yet attained” by the end of the year, and 1 changed her goal.

**Exhibit 2.9: Status of participants’ vocational education goals at the end of Year 6**

	<b>Percent (N)</b>
Goal met	2.1% (1)
Progress made	10.4% (5)
Goal not yet attained	20.8% (10)
Goal changed	2.1% (1)
Not updated	64.6% (31)

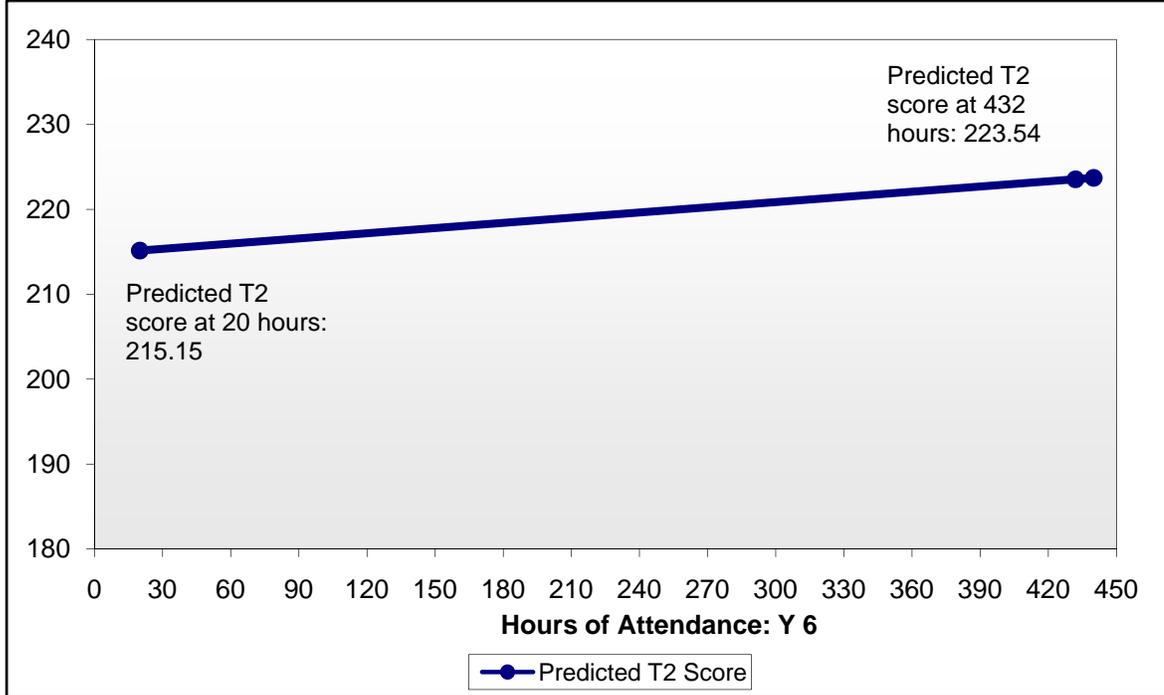
Source: Year 6 goals sheet data, downloaded from the online data system

***Relationships between adult outcomes and program participation***

To estimate the contribution of program services to observed outcomes, we used an OLS regression model to examine the relationships between growth on the CASAS and the amount of adult education services parents have received. This dose-response model, using Time 2 CASAS reading score as the outcome variable, controlling for Time 1 score, explores the hypothesis that parents who receive more intensive ESL and/or ABE instructional intervention will experience greater gains in their CASAS scores. Although causal relationships cannot be determined through our analysis, we do find support for this hypothesis: participating in a greater number of hours of adult education instruction is associated with greater growth in reading skills (see Exhibit 2.10).

- As we saw in prior years of the evaluation, in both 2006-07 (Year 5) and 2007-08 (Year 6), parents who participated in more hours of ESL and/or ABE classes showed greater growth on the CASAS reading assessment. Exhibit 2.9 illustrates this relationship for Year 6; given an average score at the beginning of the year (213.3), parents who participated minimally at 20 hours during the year would have a predicted score of 215.15 at the end of the year. In contrast, parents who participated in 432 hours, the equivalent of participating in all hours offered in a nine-month program year, would have a predicted score of 223.54 at the end of the year (B=0.0204, p< .0001, R<sup>2</sup>=.64).

**Exhibit 2.10: Predicted Time 2 CASAS score by number of hours of ABE+ESL participation, Year 6**



Source: CASAS reading assessment and service data downloaded from the grantee data system.

### ***Relationships between adult education outcomes and quality indicators***

In addition to examining the relationships between intensity of participation and outcomes, we also examined the relationships between some of the elements of program quality described in the first half of this chapter and parents’ growth on the CASAS reading assessment. We used OLS regression to predict Time 2 scores, using each quality indicator, and controlling for Time 1 score and total number of hours the parent attended ESL and/or ABE classes. Participant demographic characteristics were not included in these models as these characteristics do not vary substantially.

Although we cannot conclude that participating in higher quality programs results in greater score growth, given that other factors may also be contributing, we do find some statistically significant associations between growth and program characteristics that warrant highlighting. First, we find that greater familiarity on the part of the teacher with family literacy – having more years of experience teaching in a family literacy context and having a greater proportion of family literacy students in the classroom – is associated with greater CASAS score growth among parents, even after controlling for the intensity of service received.

- In Year 6, we find a positive relationship between the average number of years adult education teachers at the program have taught *in a family literacy setting* and parents’ Time 2 CASAS scores ( $B=0.49$ ,  $p=.008$ ,  $R^2=.62$ ). The number of years teaching adult education in any context was not significantly related to CASAS score growth ( $B=0.09$ ,  $p=.246$ ,  $R^2=.61$ ), suggesting that teachers’ familiarity with the program and the unique needs of the families may facilitate parent learning.

- In addition, when more of the students in a class were family literacy parents (as opposed to adults from the community enrolled in the class but not participating in the other three components), we find significantly greater growth on the CASAS reading assessment, but only in Year 5 ( $B=4.416$ ,  $p=.007$ ,  $R^2 = 0.68$ ).<sup>8</sup>

Second, we find that more interactive instructional practices are associated with greater parent learning.

- In Year 6, we find a negative relationship between frequent use of a lecture format and CASAS score growth ( $B=-0.197$ ,  $p=.012$ ,  $R^2=.62$ ) and a positive relationship between greater use of hands-on activities in class and CASAS growth ( $B=2.70$ ,  $p=.008$ ,  $R^2=.62$ ). This suggests that an interactive approach – perhaps engaging in more conversation or demonstrations – facilitates learning.
- In Year 6, we also detect a negative relationship between overall teacher-to-student ratio and CASAS growth ( $B=-40.35$ ,  $p=.031$ ,  $R^2=.613$ ), indicating greater growth in classrooms with more students. It may be that larger groups of students enable more varied opportunities for conversation, English language modeling, and practice.

Finally, the classroom context also appears to be important for supporting parent learning, with better materials and resources associated with greater growth.

- In Year 6, we find a significant positive relationship between the adequacy of learning materials (including textbooks, computers, audio-visual equipment, and other activity materials) and Time 2 CASAS scores ( $B=3.52$ ,  $p=.019$ ,  $R^2=.62$ ).
- In Year 5, programs rated as having more adequate physical resources – classroom space, furniture, and climate control – show greater growth on the CASAS reading assessment ( $B=2.522$ ,  $p=0.017$  .,  $R^2 = 0.64$  ).

There are no consistent relationships evident between curriculum use or assessment practices (including data use) and CASAS growth.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

In this chapter, we explored quality and outcomes for the adult education component of family literacy programs. Highlights of the main findings and bulleted recommendations are summarized below.

As in prior years of the evaluation, we find that parents participating in adult education classes (ESL and/or ABE) in their family literacy programs show statistically significant growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year on their CASAS reading assessment scores. In addition to these improved reading skills, parents participating in focus groups gave examples of how their English comprehension skills and oral language have improved as well, enabling them to be more comfortable and competent interacting with people they encounter during everyday activities.

In addition, we find that parents who participated in more hours of adult education classes show more growth on the CASAS. Although this finding is not sufficient to prove that participation in family

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<sup>8</sup> The ratio of family literacy students to other students is significant only when total hours of adult education attended is *not* controlled for. When total hours of adult education is included in the model, this variable is no longer statistically significant ( $p=0.1242$ ).

literacy classes improves parents' English reading skills, it does provide evidence to support a relationship.

We also find evidence that characteristics of program quality are also associated with CASAS score growth. First, we find that teachers are relatively experienced, with more than 11 years of experience teaching adult education, on average. Credential rates in Year 6 are down somewhat from Year 5 rates. However, it seems that having adult education teachers with more years of experience teaching in a family literacy context and having classrooms with a greater proportion of family literacy students relative to other non-program adults are associated with CASAS score growth among parents. This suggests that teachers' familiarity with family literacy (and family literacy students' needs) may be important for supporting parent learning.

It also appears that the integration of the adult education component continues to be a challenge for programs. Overall, most adult education teachers told us they are not able to frequently communicate with teachers in other components, although many do align their curricula with topics covered in the other components.

- The FLSN should consider providing additional training opportunities (such as the Foundations in Family Literacy training) or materials (for staff in partner agencies unable to attend trainings) for adult education teachers who might be new to family literacy to strengthen their understanding of the goals of family literacy, to facilitate integration, and to provide ideas for addressing the unique needs of family literacy parents.

Adult education teachers surveyed reported utilizing various instructional approaches in order to meet students' diverse learning needs, including using hands-on activities. Overall, we find that greater use of these more interactive instructional practices, and less time spent in lecture format, are associated with greater adult learning.

- The FLSN should consider providing (or helping to identify) training opportunities for adult education teachers that address effective instructional strategies for the family literacy population.

Evidence from the teacher survey suggests that although the majority of adult education teachers described the availability and quality of various resources for their classroom in Year 6 as being always adequate, with the exception of computers and audio-visual equipment, we see an overall decline in the adequacy of resources from Year 5 to Year 6. This should be a concern for programs, as findings reveal a statistically significant relationship between the availability of resources and parent outcomes. Specifically, parents in programs where teachers rated classroom resources – both the learning materials and the physical environment – more highly showed more CASAS score growth.

- Programs should evaluate the availability of resources for the adult education classroom and explore ways to enhance the quality of the classroom environment and teachers' access to adequate learning materials and resources where needed.

Though parents' vocational education goals likely take more than one year to fully achieve, programs have begun to document parent progress toward these goals over the course of the year. However, programs entered vocational education goals for 48 parents but only tracked parent progress on a third of these parents.

- Programs that offer vocational education services for parents should work with parents to set appropriate goals for their vocational learning and routinely check in on their progress, and update the data system so that parent successes can be tracked across all domains.

Overall, results from parent assessments and focus groups suggest that programs participating in the Family Literacy Initiative continue to support the English language development and continuing education of the parents participating in their programs.

## **Chapter 3: Parenting Education and PCILA – Indicators of Quality and Outcomes**

In its recent report, the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) found that home and parent programs positively impacted children’s oral language skills and general cognitive abilities. The parenting education component and the parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA) component of the Family Literacy Initiative are designed to support parents’ understanding of child development and acquisition of positive parenting skills and practices. Ultimately, the goal is to help strengthen parents’ role as their child’s first and most important teacher and ensure that parents have the tools they need to support their child’s learning and education. In this chapter, we explore the extent to which these two components reflect indicators of quality and are associated with enhanced parent outcomes.

### ***Indicators of Parenting and PCILA Component Quality***

First, we examine indicators of quality for the parenting education and PCILA components. We focus on the following aspects of quality:

- Intensity of services
- Teacher qualifications and experience
- Instructional practice
- Classroom resources
- Integration with the other family literacy components

To assess the intensity of services, we draw on service information as documented by grantee program staff for both the parenting education component and the PCILA component. For the other aspects of quality, we analyze data gathered from two primary sources. First, 36 parenting education teachers and 51 PCILA teachers provided self-reported characterizations of their classrooms through teacher surveys completed in the spring of Year 6. (Notable differences from Year 5 teacher surveys completed by 33 parenting education teachers and 43 PCILA teachers are also highlighted.) Second, we also provide qualitative descriptions of parenting education and PCILA practices from our observations of classrooms in a sample of programs in Year 5.

### **Intensity of services offered**

As noted in Chapter 2, offering sufficient services to families is important for supporting growth and learning over time. Based on an evaluation of Even Start Family Literacy programs, Dwyer and Sweeney (2001) conclude that parents should participate in at least 20 hours per month in parenting-related activities including parent discussion groups and parent-child literacy activities to produce substantial improvements in outcomes for children. To evaluate grantees’ progress toward reaching the intensity goals set by First 5 LA – of 10 hours per month of parenting education and 10 hours of PCILA (20 hours of parenting-related activities in total) – we estimated the average number of hours offered by programs in these two interrelated components. Overall, we find that programs fall just short of the intensity goal for parenting education in Year 6 but exceed the goal for PCILA.

- In Year 5, grantee programs offered 10 hours of parenting education per month on average, but in Year 6, approximately 9.5 hours were offered monthly, falling just short of the intensity goal of 10 hours set by First 5 LA (see Exhibit 3.1).
- Programs offered approximately 13 hours of PCILA each month on average (13.1 in Year 5 and 12.8 in Year 6), surpassing the goal of 10 hours per month.

**Exhibit 3.1: Mean number of hours of PCILA and parenting education classes offered by programs per month, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Parenting education	10.0	9.5
PCILA	13.1	12.8

Source: Year 5 and 6 service data download from the grantee data system.

**Teacher qualifications and experience**

Unlike adult education or ECE, in which there are perhaps more clear pathways for teacher preparation, teachers come to parenting education and/or to facilitating PCILA classes with different backgrounds and experiences. Teacher qualifications have been shown to be related to student outcomes in many educational settings (see, for example, Darling-Hammond, Berry, and Thoreson, 2001), but little attention has been focused on teaching parenting and/or PCILA explicitly. Teacher surveys suggest that while there is overlap between parenting education and PCILA teachers, parenting education teachers tend to have a stronger background in adult education, and, not surprisingly, PCILA teachers tend to have a stronger early childhood background (see Exhibit 3.2). In both cases, however, there is room for greater preparation among teachers.

- Most parenting education teachers (81.8%) reported having at least a bachelor’s degree, compared with only 51.1% of PCILA teachers.
- The largest proportion of parenting education teachers (38.2%) completed a degree or coursework in child development, human development, or early childhood education; and 11.8% of parenting education teachers completed coursework in adult education. The most common subjects in which PCILA teachers completed degrees or coursework include a child development-related field (reported by 51% of teachers) and general education (reported by 19.6% of teachers).
- Very few parenting education teachers (21.2%) reported having an adult education teaching credential in parent education; another 24.2% reported having a multiple-subject or single-subject teaching credential.
- Just over half (56.0%) of PCILA teachers reported they possess at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or an associate teacher permit.

Teachers vary in terms of their teaching experience, though, on average, with more than 4 or 5 years of experience, parenting education teachers and PCILA teachers in family literacy programs are not new to the classroom.

- On average, parenting education teachers reported 7.6 years of teaching experience, with the newest teacher reporting less than one year of experience, and the most veteran teacher reporting 30 years of teaching experience. On average, these teachers reported 4.2 years of experience teaching in the context of a family literacy program.
- PCILA teachers reported an average of 4.5 years of experience leading PCILA, ranging from less than one to 15 years, with an average of 5.4 years of experience in a family literacy program context. This suggests that PCILA teachers tend to start out teaching other components – typically ECE or parenting education – before taking over PCILA classes.

**Exhibit 3.2: Percentage of parenting education and PCILA teachers with various qualifications, by year**

	Parenting Education		PCILA	
	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5	Year 6
Bachelor’s degree or higher	74.1%	81.8%	61.9%	51.1%
Degree or coursework in child development (ECE or human development)	42.9%	38.2%	65.0%	51.0%
Degree or coursework in adult education	17.9%	11.8%	7.5%	2.0%
Degree or coursework in general education	25.0%	23.5%	25.0%	19.6%
Adult education credential in parenting ed	38.5%	21.2%	16.7%	10.6%
Multiple- or single-subject teaching credential	38.5%	24.2%	13.9%	10.6%
CDA credential/child development associate teacher permit or higher	35.3%	14.7%	74.3%	56.0%
Mean years of experience teaching this component (in any setting)	9.4	7.6	5.7	4.5
Mean years of experience teaching in a family literacy setting	6.8	4.2	4.9	5.4

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

- In parenting education classes, the average teacher-parent ratio was approximately 1:8. PCILA classes were somewhat smaller, with an average teacher-parent ratio of 1:4.

**Instruction in the parenting education classroom**

We examined three aspects of instructional quality in the parenting education classroom: the content and curriculum (what is covered), pedagogy or teacher practice (how the content is covered), and assessment practices (how data are used to guide instruction).

**Content and curriculum**

The specific content and curricula used in parenting education classrooms vary, though the importance of addressing parents’ beliefs regarding child development processes and their role in supporting their children’s learning for contributing to parent engagement in learning opportunities for their children is highlighted in the literature (Powell, 2004). Parenting education teachers surveyed reported using a variety of curricula to guide their instruction and focusing on a variety of topics, though most common were emphases on building parents’ self-esteem, child development,

and strategies for reading with children and supporting their learning (see Exhibit 3.3). Less emphasis appears to be given to explicitly reinforcing what is learned in the PCILA setting.

- Most parenting education teachers surveyed reported using a formal curriculum (86.1%), and 50.0% reported using a formal lesson plan to guide instruction each day. The largest percentages of teachers reported using Parenting for Academic Success (38.9%) and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) course outlines (25.0%) to guide their parenting instruction, while 22.2% of teachers reported using a curriculum developed by themselves or other staff.
- Parenting education teachers reported covering a wide range of topics in their parenting classes. When asked to rate how frequently a number of topics were covered in their classes, at least 75% of teachers reported focusing on child development, how to support children’s learning, techniques for reading with children, and building parent self-esteem several times per month or in every class. Parenting education teachers were less likely to cover anger management (22.3% of teachers reported that they covered this topic at least several times a month) and social services/resources (25.4% reported covering this at least several times per month).
- From Year 5 to Year 6 there seems to be a slight drop in the amount of attention given to PCILA time during parenting education classes – either reflecting on what happened during PCILA or learning about what parents should do during PCILA.

**Exhibit 3.3: Percentage of parenting education teachers reporting the use of formal curricula and lesson plans, and a focus on various content areas, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Formal curriculum used	87.1%	86.1%
Formal lesson plan used to guide instruction every day	56.7%	50.0%
Topics covered at least several times per month		
Building parents’ self-esteem	87.1%	77.8%
How to support children’s learning	83.4%	77.8%
Techniques for reading with children	74.2%	77.8%
Child development	73.4%	75.0%
Problem-solving techniques	64.6%	72.2%
How parents can be an advocate for their children	66.7%	66.7%
Reflecting on what happened during PCILA/PACT	78.6%	61.1%
What parents should do during PCILA/PACT	70.3%	58.3%
Discipline	56.7%	52.8%
Helping parents understand the school system	41.4%	38.8%
Health and nutrition	31.0%	33.4%
Social services/resources	40.0%	25.4%
Anger management	30.0%	22.3%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

- Teacher reports were fairly consistent with independent observations of a subsample of programs’ parenting classes. Parenting classes were frequently observed to include

discussions about child development and parent-child activities, specifically activities to support children’s language and literacy development. However, we observed more attention being given to health and nutrition than was reported by teachers. This could mean that teachers are under-estimating their focus on this topic, or it could be that we observed classes on an atypical day.

**Pedagogy**

Teacher reports of how they present information and engage parents in the parenting education classroom suggest that teachers divide their time between lecture, hands-on activities, and discussion (see Exhibit 3.4). Literature supports the use of a variety of pedagogical approaches to increase parent engagement and learning, including hands-on activities, problem solving, and opportunities for parents to practice skills and receive feedback (Dwyer & Sweeney, 2001; Jacobs, 2004; Hayes, n.d.). Parents in focus groups reported that the group discussions with the teacher and their peers were the most valuable for their learning.

- On average, teachers reported that they spend approximately 28.1% of their time giving a lecture or a presentation. Teachers reported slightly less time (25.3%, on average) spent engaging parents in hands-on activities. This is consistent with independent observations of a sample of parenting classes, which revealed a major focus on providing substantive information to parents to enhance their knowledge as well as providing strategies or guidelines to parents to improve their practices or change or reinforce their behaviors.
- Teachers reported spending 25.6% of class time, on average, leading a class discussion or a question-and-answer session, which parents in focus groups described as particularly valuable. For example, one parent explained:

*“[The parenting education teacher] asks questions, and we give examples. She doesn’t tell us what to do, but gives suggestions. Or tells you if you do this, then this will likely happen. For example, if you use spankings as an immediate solution, then you may have problems with a child who’s going to start hitting to resolve their problems. She’s helped us think it through further.”*

- Peer-to-peer discussions among parents were reported as the focus of approximately 24.8% of class time, on average. Again, independent observations of a sample of classes revealed that a majority of teachers provided an opportunity for parents to share experiences with each other and develop a supportive community.

**Exhibit 3.4: Percentage of parenting education teachers reporting the use of various pedagogical strategies, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Giving a lecture or presentation	31.5%	28.1%
Engaging parents in hands-on activities	26.8%	25.3%
Having a class discussion/Q&A session	33.7%	25.6%
Providing parents time to discuss experiences with each other	27.3%	24.8%

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100 because these are average percentages reported across teachers, and activities could be occurring at the same time  
 Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

- Having the opportunity to share with their peers was one of the highlights of parenting education classes as reported by parents. For example, one parent in a focus group described her experience:

*“I think sharing is a big part of the class. You feed off of each others’ experiences, and you realize that your child isn’t a monster; it’s just a phase that they’re going through. It helps to know the stages that they are in and to share with other parents what your kid is going through – bouncing ideas off each other, how someone else handled a similar situation.”*

- We observed variation in the level of parent participation in group discussions, however, with the greatest participation occurring when the parenting teacher was comfortable communicating with parents in their home language.
- Observations of parenting classes also provided evidence that parenting teachers were skillful at developing rapport with the parents, with the majority of teachers being positive and encouraging to parents and being responsive to parents’ interests and questions.
- The majority of classrooms observed also seemed to incorporate parent questions, concerns, and input into the focus of the classroom discussion. One program reported using a formal survey of parents to gather input from parents about their needs and interests in order to focus the curriculum.

### **Data use**

Monitoring parent learning through routine assessment and using the data to modify classroom practices are important strategies for ensuring that instruction is meeting the needs of students (Powell, 1995; Dwyer & Sweeney, 2001; Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, 2002). Parenting education teachers reported using a variety of strategies, from parent surveys and assessments to their own observations of parents in the parenting education and PCILA contexts.

- Nearly all teachers (94.3%) reported using parent surveys or other parent assessments to help them plan their instruction, with 80.0% of teachers indicating that this information is used to a large or moderate extent.
- Teachers also reported that parent observations were an important source of information for planning instruction and activities in their parenting classes. Most teachers (94.3%) reported using their own observations of parents during their parenting class to plan their instruction to a moderate or large extent, while 71.5% of teachers reported using observations of parent/child interactions during PCILA/PACT time to at least a moderate extent to help plan their instruction.

### **Instruction in the PCILA Classroom**

Instruction in the PCILA classroom is often much less formal than in the parenting education classroom. In this section, we examine teachers’ approaches to PCILA and their use of data to guide classroom activities.

#### **Approaches to PCILA**

The structure and content of PCILA sessions vary widely, though most teachers reported using a formal curriculum (usually an ECE curriculum) (see Exhibit 3.5), and in most classrooms observed, a focus on literacy activities was apparent.

- Most PCILA teachers (86.1%) reported using a formal curriculum in their PCILA classes, and 50.0% of teachers reporting using formal lesson plans to guide their instruction or activities in class on a daily basis.
- Of commercially available curricula, Creative Curriculum (which has been shown by some research to be effective for improving teacher practice, though results from a recent meta-analysis were mixed (Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Consortium, 2008)) was most widely used, with 50.0% of teachers reporting using this in their PCILA classes, and 26.0% of teachers reporting that they use a staff-developed curriculum.
- During observations of a sample of PCILA classes, there was a clear focus on literacy – for example, reading together, relating pictures with words, playing alphabet bingo, or learning about letters – in all but one classroom, where an art project was the focus for the session.
- According to teachers’ descriptions of PCILA sessions, parents and children typically read books or tell stories together, sing songs, participate in circle time, or engage in other educational activities emphasizing literacy and mathematics concepts.

**Exhibit 3.5: Percentage of PCILA teachers reporting the use of formal and curricula and lesson plans to guide their instruction, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Formal curriculum used	87.1%	86.1%
Formal lesson plan used to guide instruction every day	56.7%	50.0%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

Some classes are mostly one-on-one sessions with parents and children working together on a single activity or a variety of learning activities, while other classes are more group focused, with the teacher leading activities. The relatively low attention given to coaching and modeling suggest that the focus of PCILA may be more on setting up opportunities for interaction between parents and children rather than providing explicit learning opportunities for parents.

- When asked about how parents and children spend their time in PCILA, teachers reported that families spend the largest percentage of time (36.4%, on average) engaging in free-choice activities in class. Parents and children reportedly spend about one quarter of their PCILA time in whole-group activities in class (25.62%, on average) and in one-on-one activities in class (23.6%, on average) directed by a teacher.
- Teachers also reported that some PCILA time occurs during at-home activities, such as reading or other learning activities (which accounts for 21.6% of PCILA time, on average), and structured at-home activities developed by the teacher (accounting for 16.2% of PCILA time, on average).
- Very little, if any, time in the PCILA classrooms observed was spent giving parents ideas about how to transfer what they were learning in class to the home setting. In fact, in only one observed classroom was this discussed explicitly, though in two others parents were given forms to help them try out the activity at home.
- While parents and children work together in pairs, teachers reported using techniques to support parents’ learning along the way. For example, teachers reported spending about one

third of their time, on average, modeling strategies for parents (33.5%) and engaging in individualized coaching with parent-child pairs (28.0%; see Exhibit 3.6). Teachers reported that they spent less time engaging parents in discussion about what they were learning in PCILA (approximately 13.6% of class time, on average). Use of these strategies to support parents' learning is down from Year 5, where teachers reported spending more than one-and-a-half times more time on each of these activities.

**Exhibit 3.6: Percentage of PCILA teachers reporting the use of various instructional approaches, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Modeling strategies for parents to use to teach their children	52.8%	33.5%
Coaching individual parent/child pairs by offering suggestions	44.9%	28.0%
Discussing with parents what they learned in PCILA	30.6%	13.6%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

- The lack of attention to coaching and modeling was confirmed through independent observations of a sample of PCILA classes. In only two classrooms did observers note that significant coaching of parents was happening, with teachers providing specific guidance to individual parents during their observations of the dyads working together.

**Data use**

PCILA teachers reported consistent use of assessment data – both assessments of children and parent surveys – and observations of parents and children to help with their planning of lessons.

- Most PCILA teachers (85.1%) reported using data from assessments of children (e.g., DRDP, DRDP-R), and 80.9% of teachers surveyed reported using parent survey responses or other parent assessments to guide their instruction to a moderate or large extent.
- Nearly all teachers (95.7%) reported using information from their observations of parents and children to help guide their instructional activities to a moderate or large extent.

**Classroom resources – parenting education and PCILA**

Parenting education and PCILA teachers were asked to rate the quality and quantity of classroom materials and resources, and, overall, they rated them as generally adequate (see Exhibit 3.7 and 3.8). Somewhat less likely to be rated as always adequate were computer equipment, parenting education textbooks, and materials for supporting children with disabilities in the PCILA classroom.

- PCILA teachers were somewhat more satisfied than parenting education teachers with the learning materials and resources available for their classrooms. For example, less than half of parenting education teachers surveyed reported that textbooks were always adequate (48.0%) – a substantial drop from Year 5 ratings. However, most PCILA teachers reported that writing utensils were always adequate (93.6%), and 83.0% and 76.6% reported that art materials and manipulatives, respectively, were always of adequate quality and/or quantity.
- Computer equipment was given low ratings on average by both groups of teachers – only 45.0% of parenting education teachers and 40.0% of PCILA teachers rated computer equipment and software as always adequate.

- About two-thirds of parenting education teachers reported that materials appropriate for students’ cultural background and language were always adequate in terms of quality and/or availability. More PCILA teachers reported that they always had access to adequate linguistically appropriate materials (76.1%), and 55.3% of PCILA teachers reported such access to culturally appropriate materials. Only 40.0% of PCILA teachers reported that they had adequate materials appropriate for children with disabilities. The availability of these resources seems to have dropped since Year 5 according to PCILA teachers.

**Exhibit 3.7: Percentage of parenting education teachers rating various resources as always adequate for their classes, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Textbooks	80.0%	48.0%
Computer equipment and software	44.4%	45.0%
Other activity materials and supplies	82.8%	75.0%
Audio visual equipment	70.4%	60.0%
Materials appropriate for the cultural background of parents in class	64.5%	62.9%
Materials in appropriate languages for parents in class	71.0%	64.7%
Classroom space	90.3%	80.0%
Appropriate furniture	74.2%	82.4%
Heat and air conditioning	67.7%	71.4%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

**Exhibit 3.8: Percentage of PCILA teachers rating various resources as always adequate for their classes, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Manipulatives	86.0%	76.6%
Computer equipment and software	41.4%	40.0%
Crayons, markers, and paper	97.7%	93.6%
Paints, clays, and other art materials	90.5%	83.0%
Child-sized furniture	88.1%	95.7%
Materials in appropriate languages for children in class	88.4%	76.1%
Materials appropriate for the cultural background of children in class	72.1%	55.3%
Materials for teaching children with disabilities	52.9%	40.0%
Outdoor space	59.5%	62.8%
Classroom space	64.3%	78.7%
Space for parents and children to work together	66.7%	66.0%
Heat and air conditioning	71.4%	72.9%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

- Most parenting education teachers (80.0%) reported always having adequate classroom space, with 82.4% of parenting education teachers also reporting access to appropriate furniture. Most PCILA teachers (78.7%) also reported that classroom space was always adequate (up from 64.3% in Year 5); however, slightly fewer PCILA teachers (66.0%)

reported that they always had adequate space for children and parents to work together. Independent observations of PCILA classrooms also noted that space was sometimes tight to accommodate all parent-child pairs, which may have restricted parent-child interactions somewhat.

## **Integration – parenting education and PCILA**

In many ways, parenting and PCILA should be the easiest components to integrate – both with other components and with each other. In fact, PCILA is in some ways a source of integration in and of itself, bringing together parents and children and giving parents an opportunity to observe what their children are learning and to try out strategies for interacting with their children (as well as new English skills) that they are learning. Although parenting education and PCILA teachers both report using topics or themes covered in other components to guide their instruction, there appears to be less communication than would be ideal, and some PCILA teachers are surprisingly unaware of what happens in the parenting classes.

- About half of parenting education teachers surveyed reported that they frequently modify their parenting education curriculum to incorporate topics being covered in other family literacy components, and 74.3% of parenting education teachers reported that topics or themes covered in other components are used to a moderate or large extent to guide their instruction (see Exhibit 3.9). For example, one parenting teacher wrote:  
*“If the ECE/PACT teacher expresses a need or suggestion for additional information to benefit the parents, I will adjust my curriculum.”*
- Fewer PCILA teachers (26.5%) reported that they frequently modify their curriculum to match other program components, and 60.9% of PCILA teachers reported using topics being covered in other components at least to a moderate extent when planning their instruction; this is a slight decline from Year 5. Independent observations of PCILA classes also provided evidence that little integration is occurring; in only one class was a connection to other components made clear.
- Most parenting education teachers (76.5%) reported that information about what is being covered in PCILA is routinely shared with them (or that they also teach this component and therefore know what is covered) – more so than in Year 5. Parenting education teachers were somewhat less likely to be abreast of the content being covered in early childhood education (62.9% reported that information is routinely shared with them or that they teach this component) and adult education classes (50.0% reported that information is routinely shared with them or they also teach this component).
- PCILA teachers were more likely to be familiar with the content of the ECE component (85.1% reported that information is routinely shared with them about ECE lessons or that they also teach this component). For example, one PCILA teacher wrote:  
*“Both PCILA and ECE are interlinked by a common monthly theme which allows for activities to be combined and/or related.”*
- Only 45.9% of PCILA teachers reported also teaching parent education classes or having information about the parent education component routinely shared with them; this is considerably lower than what was reported in Year 5 (63.4%).

**Exhibit 3:9: Percentage of teachers reporting various indicators of integration for parenting education and PCILA classes, by year**

	Parenting education		PCILA	
	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5	Year 6
Frequently modify curriculum to cover topics from other components	50.0%	52.8%	38.1%	26.5%
Incorporate topics or themes from other components to a large or moderate extent	87.8%	74.3%	79.0%	60.9%
Receive information on ECE lessons	69.0%	62.9%	93.1%	85.1%
Receive information on PCILA lessons	62.1%	76.5%	--	--
Receive information on parenting lessons	--	--	63.4%	45.9%
Receive information on adult education lessons	60.0%	50.0%	27.5%	48.9%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

### **Parent knowledge and behavior outcomes**

To assess the potential contribution of program services to parent learning, we examine parents’ knowledge and behavior patterns over the course of the program year. We draw on data from three sources: the parent survey developed in collaboration with First 5 LA, the FLSN, and grantees, and first administered with families in Year 6; direct observations of 100 parent-child pairs engaged in a joint book-reading activity; and, to provide context, parent focus groups conducted at eight sites in Year 5. Using video recordings of these parent-child pairs, each “utterance” (i.e., a unit of speech bounded by silence, breaths, or pauses) was coded for content/topic (see Chapter 1 and Appendix D for more details). We then compare changes in parent survey responses among parents with different levels of participation in parenting and PCILA classes to estimate the impacts of the program. Finally, drawing on component quality data gathered from teacher surveys and direct observations of parenting education and PCILA classes, we make connections between parent outcomes and the quality of family literacy services received. Results from each of these analyses are described below.

### **Growth on outcome measures**

While observing changes in parent reports of their parenting practices does not necessarily mean that participation in family literacy programs is effecting change, it is important to first understand the patterns of growth over time. Thus, we begin with an examination of parent growth from Time 1 to Time 2 on a series of outcome measures, including:

- Parent knowledge and attitudes
- Availability of home literacy resources
- Reading behaviors
- Language and literacy activities at home
- Attitudes about and involvement in the educational system
- General parenting practices

In the following sections, we report on individual parent survey items that address each of these outcomes as well as composite measures, or scales, created by combining items that capture multiple aspects of the same construct.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Parent knowledge and attitudes***

One of the most striking outcomes focus group parents described from participating in parenting and PCILA classes was an improved knowledge of child development.

- Twenty parents across all eight programs where focus groups were conducted described how their parenting classes had taught them more about what to expect at different ages, how children learn, and how children think differently than adults. For example, one parent told us:

*“[In class], we discuss how to treat your children at different age and stages until they are five. So that made me think that my daughter can learn many things [now], and I don’t have to wait [to teach her].”*

- Another parent described that she had learned that what she previously thought was misbehavior was actually normal exploration and learning:

*“Since coming to this school, I have learned that the children are experimenting, learning, and exploring. Before we thought they were only being mischievous. We have learned to distinguish between when they are actually misbehaving. Now, we know they are experimenting and learning about the world, and I allow them to be that way. I allow them to explore.”*

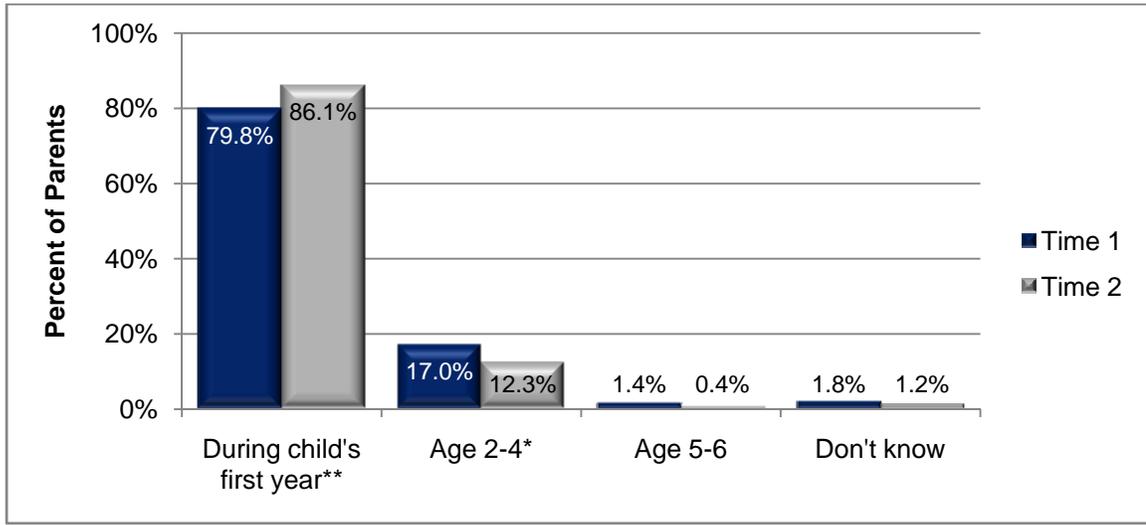
Parent reports on the parent survey also provide evidence that parent knowledge of the importance of reading to their children right from birth also increased from Time 1 to Time 2 (see Exhibit 3.10).

- Although most parents at Time 1 reported that the best time to start reading to children is in the first year of life (79.8%), this increased to 86.1% at Time 2 (ES=0.17).

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<sup>9</sup> Significance levels reported on individual parent survey items refer to mean differences on the original items, rather than to differences in the percentage of parents giving one response or another.

**Exhibit 3:10: Percentage of parents reporting on their views of the best time to begin reading to a child**



Source: Year 5 and Year 6 parent surveys.

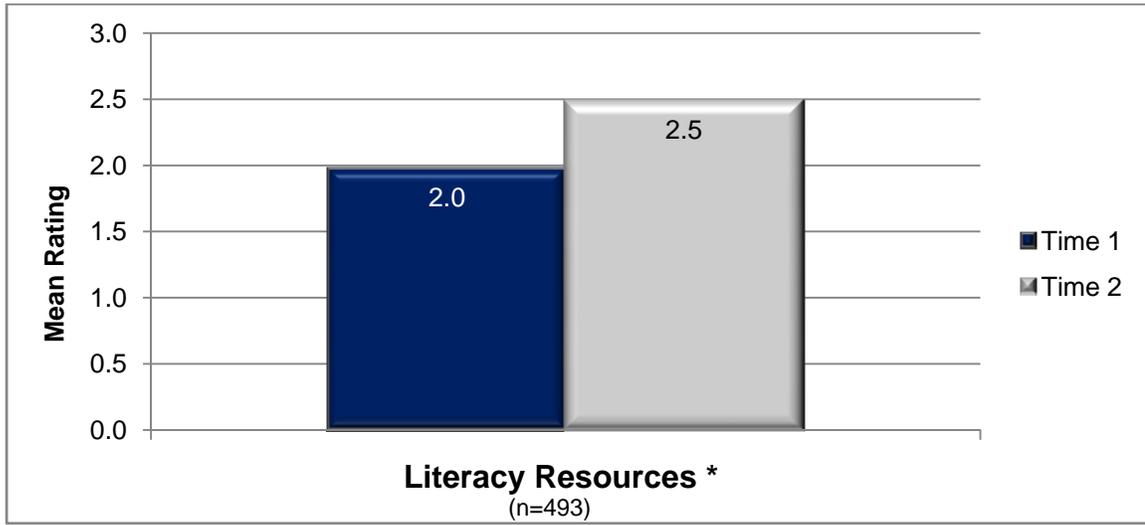
\*p <.05, \*\*p<.01

### ***Literacy resources***

After knowledge of the importance of reading to children, the second critical ingredient necessary for providing children with early literacy experiences is access to literacy materials and resources, such as children's books in the home or access to the public library. Overall, we find that children's access to these materials at home increased from Time 1 to Time 2.

- A composite scale of parent reports of their access to and use of literacy resources – including the number of children's books at home and visits to the public library – showed statistically significant increases from Time 1 to Time 2, indicating that parents were providing more literacy-rich environments for their children by the end of the program year (ES=0.52)(see Exhibit 3.11).

**Exhibit 3.11: Mean rating of parent reports of access to and use of literacy resources (scale of 3 items)**



Source: Year 6 parent survey.  
\*p<.05

- Specifically, we find that by Time 2, parents are significantly more likely to report having more than 25 books in the home, having visited the public library in the past month, and visiting the library for a variety of purposes (see Exhibit 3.12).

**Exhibit 3.12: Percentage of parents reporting access to and the use of various literacy resources, Time 1 and Time 2**

	Time 1	Time 2	N	ES
More than 25 books in the home	56.1	71.6**	492	0.46
Visited the public library in the past month	63.2	80.7**	487	0.40
Visit the library to borrow children’s books at least monthly	61.7	77.4**	491	0.36
Visit the library to participate in children’s activities at least monthly	47.0	63.5**	485	0.37
Visit the library to use the computer at least monthly	34.7	47.5**	484	0.25

Source: Year 6 parent survey.  
\*\*p<.01

Note: Effect size calculations and significance testing were done on item means (not shown).

- Parent reports also suggest that parents were modeling good reading practices more by spending more time reading for themselves. At Time 2, 28.6% of parents reported spending more than 30 minutes per day reading for themselves (excluding time spent reading in the classroom or to their children), up from 22.3% at Time 1.

**Reading behaviors**

With knowledge and resources in place, we examine parent practices with regard to reading to their children. The National Early Literacy Panel’s recent meta-analysis of empirical research reinforces

the notion that reading to children is important for language and literacy outcomes (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). We find evidence that family literacy parents are, in fact, routinely reading to their children and engaging them in discussions about books.

- When asked how frequently they had read to their children in the past week, 58.4% reported at least daily reading at Time 2, significantly more than the 49.3% at Time 1 (see Exhibit 3.13). Moreover, significantly more parents at Time 2 reported reading longer – for more than 10 minutes – the previous day (75.0%) compared to Time 1 (63.2%).
- The percentage of parents at Time 2 reporting frequently following a regular routine for reading (68.3%) and bringing books for children to look at during everyday activities (64.5%) also increased from Time 1 (52.7% and 48.7%, respectively).
- By Time 2, the majority of parents were also engaging their children in interactive discussions about the books they read – for example, asking the child to identify pictures (79.0%, up from 68.1% at Time 1) or make predictions about the story (67.2%, up from 54.5% at Time 1).

**Exhibit 3.13: Percentage of parents reporting the use of various reading behaviors and strategies, Time 1 and Time 2**

	Time 1	Time 2	N	ES
Read to children at least daily over the past week	49.3	58.4**	493	0.22
Read to children for more than 10 minutes yesterday	63.2	75.0**	486	0.25
Follow a regular routine for reading books with children often or very often	52.7	68.3**	486	0.23
Bring books for children to look at during everyday activities often or very often	48.7	64.5**	485	0.20
Asked children to say what is in a picture when reading together at least 3-4 times last week	68.1	79.0**	480	0.25
Asked children what he/she thinks will happen next when reading a story together at least 3-4 times last week	54.5	67.2**	475	0.28

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

\*\*p<.01

Note: Effect size calculations and significance testing were done on item means (not shown).

- Parents in focus groups in Year 5 also described how they have changed their reading practices as a result of participating in the program, taking more time and engaging their children more. For example:

*“[The program] has helped me to have more patience with my children. Before I couldn’t even sit down to read a book with my child. I would just read very quickly and say ‘blah, blah, blah, ok let’s go, we’re done.’ That’s how I did it. Now I sit down with him. We sit closely, the two of us together, and we discuss the book. We talk about what we remember.”*

*“Before the class I would read a story occasionally, and when she would try to get into the conversation or ask questions, I would shush her and tell her to be quiet while I was reading. I learned right away that she’s supposed to ask questions and that I’m supposed to interact with her and elaborate and expand on it.”*

In addition to parent reports on the survey and in focus groups, analyses of direct observations of parent-child interactions (and counts of different types of “utterances” used) during a shared book-reading activity revealed that parents are using a wide range of strategies to engage their children in the books they read together (see Exhibit 3.14).<sup>10</sup>

- One of the most common types of utterances (used an average of 12.5 times during the 5-10 minute book-reading session) was actually reading text.
- The most frequently used type of talk, though, involved statements or questions about the literal content of the book. This “immediate talk” included labeling (e.g., “there’s the caterpillar”), simple prompts (e.g., “what’s he doing?” or “where’s the caterpillar?”), and information recall (e.g., “how many strawberries did he eat?”), and accounted for an average of 45.6 utterances per session. When discussing the immediate content of the book, parents often asked “who” and “what” questions, labeled objects, confirmed the child’s previous statements, and described pictures in the book.
- Non-immediate content talk – utterances that go beyond the immediate content of the text by asking the child to use prediction (e.g., “what do you think will happen next?”), provide explanation (e.g., “why do you think he did that?”), or draw on their general knowledge (e.g., “is that what caterpillars really eat?”) – were less frequently used by parents during the book-reading sessions. This is consistent with prior research, which finds that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds (Dickinson, De Temple, Hirschler, & Smith, 1992; Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002) tend to interact with their children in less cognitively challenging ways. On average, 9.2 utterances were classified as “non-immediate content talk” per session. When parents did discuss the non-immediate content of the book with their child, they were often redirecting the children’s attention to the book. Other examples include asking questions about children’s general knowledge about topics related to the story, and asking the child to evaluate the story or make a prediction. It is this type of discussion that has been shown to extend children’s learning and is associated with the development of children’s reading skills (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that we do not have observation data at two points in time and cannot, therefore, make statements about changes in parent book-reading strategies. In addition, without normative or comparison data, we cannot make claims about how the practices of these parents measure up to a standard or a control group. Instead, we simply describe the nature of parents’ approaches to book reading and note that there is variation and somewhat less attention to the higher-level kinds of talk that are found to be associated with later literacy outcomes.

**Exhibit 3.14: Mean frequency of different types of verbal interaction occurring during parent-child book reading**

	Mean	Range
Reading text	12.53	0.00 – 38.00
Behavioral directives	.38	0.00 – 3.00
Book and print convention	3.05	0.00 – 13.00
Total frequency of letter and word recognition	.50	0.00 – 10.00
Letter recognition	.10	0.00 – 10.00
Word recognition	.40	0.00 – 3.00
Total frequency of immediate talk	45.58	0.00 – 216.00
Labeling	4.89	0.00 – 32.00
Confirmation	7.02	0.00 – 50.00
Total frequency of prompts	16.16	0.00 – 98.00
Prompts – Yes/No	4.02	0.00 – 30.00
Prompts – “Wh-questions”	10.53	0.00 – 68.00
Prompts – Action	1.61	0.00 – 17.00
Clarification	1.17	0.00 – 10.00
Elaboration	.90	0.00 – 7.00
Describe	5.69	0.00 – 28.00
Information recall	2.10	0.00 – 19.00
Total frequency of non-immediate talk	9.16	0.00 – 67.00
Attention	7.64	0.00 – 23.00
Inference	.32	0.00 – 4.00
Prediction	1.45	0.00 – 14.00
Explanation	.65	0.00 – 9.00
Judgment/evaluation	1.79	0.00 – 8.00
General knowledge	3.56	0.00 – 34.00
Association with personal experiences	1.40	0.00 – 29.00
Ratio of immediate talk/non-immediate talk	6.66	1.00 – 24.67

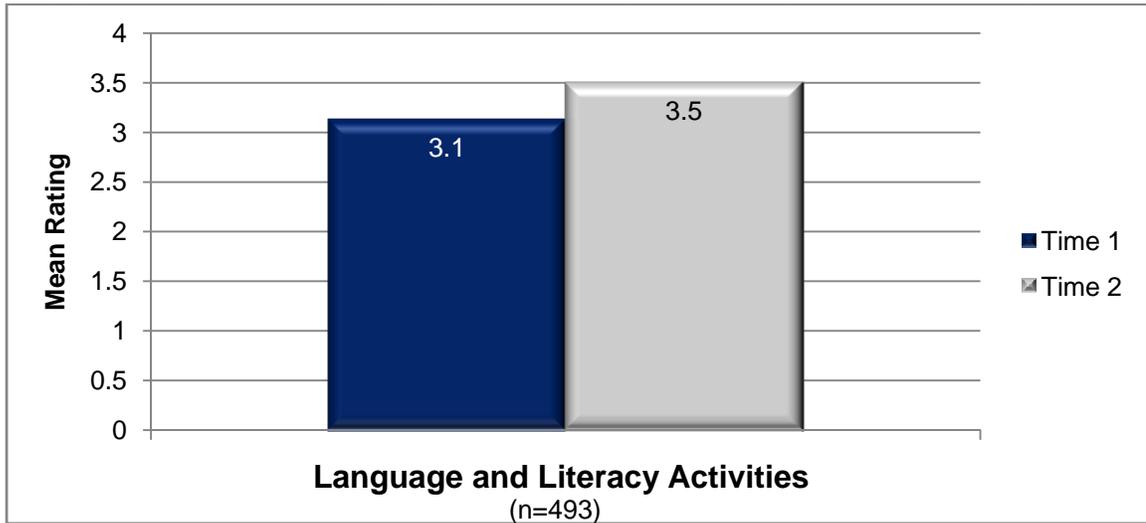
Source: Book-reading observation data from the child outcomes study.

***Overall language and literacy activities***

Parents reported engaging their children in a wide variety of activities that support language and literacy development, and, over time, reported doing these activities more frequently.

- Scores on a composite scale of language and literacy activities – including reading to the child and language activities like singing or telling stories – increased significantly from Time 1 to Time 2, indicating that parents used more strategies for engaging their children by the end of the program year (ES=0.55) (see Exhibit 3.15).

**Exhibit 3.15: Mean rating of parent reports of the frequency with which they engage their children in language and literacy activities (scale of 10 items)**



Source: Year 6 parent survey.

\* $p < .05$

- More than three-quarters of parents at Time 2 reported singing songs or playing music with their children (76.5%), talking with their children about letters of the alphabet (78.3%), or having their children play with crayons, markers, or other writing materials (89.5%) – all significant increases from Time 1 (see Exhibit 3.16).
- Many parents participating in focus groups described new activities and strategies they were using with their children to help support their learning. Four parents across three programs in particular mentioned working with their children on developing language and literacy skills. For example, one parent explained:
 

*“[We are doing more activities at home] such as learning colors. And like today, the use of words. Oftentimes we will name things but don’t always put them in a sentence. Now we look for a way to form a sentence and how to make a word more tangible.”*
- Fewer parents reported engaging their children in story-telling activities – either telling their children a story (52.4% at Time 2) or having their children tell a story (57.3% at Time 2) – but these items also showed the greatest increases from Time 1 to Time 2.

**Exhibit 3.16: Percentage of parents reporting they engage their children in various language and literacy activities at least 3 or 4 times in the past week**

	Time 1	Time 2	N	ES
Had children play with crayons, markers or other writing materials	83.3	89.5**	486	0.22
Talked to children about letters of the alphabet, like pointing out letters on signs or in books	66.7	78.3**	478	0.27
Sung songs or played music with children	67.8	76.5**	484	0.20
Had children tell a story	44.6	57.3**	464	0.25
Told children a story	40.6	52.4**	475	0.30

Source: Year 6 parent survey.

\*\*p<.01

Note: Effect size calculations and significance testing were done on item means (not shown).

- During focus groups, many parents (17 parents across seven programs) also reported engaging in other types of teaching activities with their children, such as counting, learning colors, and helping with homework. These parents said that they now have greater knowledge of learning activities to use with their children and skills to teach them as a result of parenting education classes:

*“I’m trying not to do the work for them, so that they can learn to do it themselves.... [I’m trying] to only give them an idea: ‘Maybe if you try it this way.’”*

*“Parent skills class is very important, because we learn a lot about interacting with our children and doing activities. It helps us help our children.”*

- Four parents across two different focus groups also reported that they learned ways to make daily routines and chores both more enjoyable and learning opportunities for their children by giving them a role or encouraging their use of language. For example, as these two parents said:

*“I learned that PCILA can be in everything that we do. Even like going to the store... ‘Can you tell me where the bananas are? You weigh them. What’s your favorite fruit?’”*

*“For instance, instead of ignoring her when I’m in the kitchen, I can ask her to help me, or give her a task to do.”*

**Parent attitudes about and involvement in the educational system**

In addition to supporting parents’ understanding of child development and helping parents develop strategies for engaging their young children in learning activities, family literacy programs also encourage parents to value education and support their children’s success in school by maintaining involvement as their children transition to kindergarten and beyond. Parent survey results and focus group responses alike indicate that parents are learning to value education and hold high expectations for their children as well as themselves.

- Parent survey responses indicate that parents have high aspirations for themselves and even higher expectations for their children’s educational achievements. At Time 2, 40% of parents

aspired to achieve a bachelor's degree or higher (34% at Time 1, a statistically significant change), and 91% expected their child to earn at least a bachelor's degree (same as at Time 1). In addition, 77% expected their child to earn a master's or other advanced degree (72% at Time 1).<sup>11</sup>

- In focus groups in Year 5, 20 parents across 6 of the 8 programs visited described their new awareness of the importance of education, especially for their children, highlighting the need for education to “get ahead” and achieve their goals. For example, one parent told us:

*“What I would like most is for him to have a healthy emotional and educational development. He gets homework here and is learning that once we leave from here, he has to finish his homework. That is what I hope for the most, for him to continue developing, for him to get ahead and achieve his goals, everything that he wants to do.”*

- Other parents talked about the benefits of pursuing their education alongside their children. For example:

*“I think that if we both continue to take these steps toward our education together, she will be able to go to college and have a better career, if we continue to climb the ladder together...”*

*“In my family, school stopped at 12th grade, and when you graduated you were done. I’m hoping to instill some other beliefs and hopes in my daughter by my graduating from college and continuing to pursue my education.”*

Parent knowledge of and comfort with the school system is also important to support later involvement in their child's education. We find that parents are learning more about the public school system and feel even more confident that they can help their children with the transition to kindergarten by the end of the program year (see Exhibit 3.17).

- While only half of parents surveyed reported that they understand how the public school system in the U.S. works at Time 1, two-thirds did at Time 2 – a statistically significant increase.
- Most parents reported that they feel confident in their ability to help their children with the transition to kindergarten at Time 1, though we see even greater numbers reporting they feel this way at Time 2 (a statistically significant increase).
- Only about one quarter of parents surveyed reported that they feel intimidated by the public school system at Time 1, and a similar number reported having these concerns at Time 2, indicating no real change over time.

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<sup>11</sup> Unless noted, these changes were not statistically significant, but still illustrate the high educational expectations parents have for themselves and their children.

**Exhibit 3.17: Percentage of parents agreeing (or strongly agreeing) with various statements about their knowledge and comfort with school and the transition to kindergarten**

	Time 1	Time 2	N	ES
I feel confident that I can help my children with their transition to kindergarten	80.8	86.0**	484	0.20
I understand how the public school system in the United States works	49.3	65.9**	481	0.39
I feel intimidated by the public school system.	25.9	27.1	479	-0.11

Source: Year 6 parent survey.

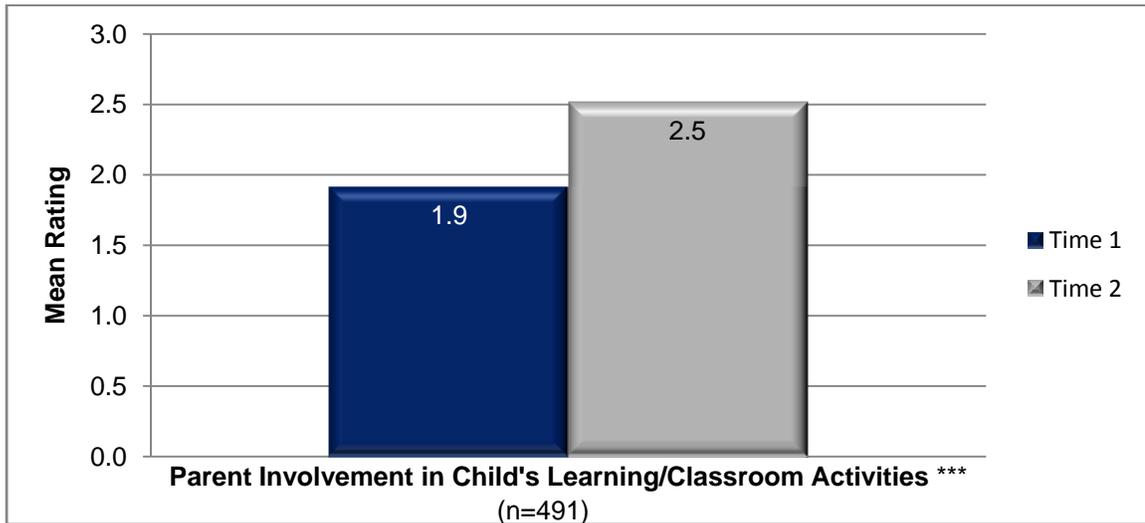
\*\*p<.01

Note: Effect size calculations and significance testing were done on item means (not shown).

Critical for ensuring that children succeed in school in the long run, parent responses also suggest that parents are becoming increasingly more involved with their child’s classroom and school, even beginning to take an active role in the larger community.

- Scores on a composite measure of parents’ involvement in their child’s learning and classroom activities (where 0 indicates no involvement, and a higher score indicates participation in more classroom activities, such as volunteering in the child’s classroom) show relatively high levels of involvement at Time 1 and statistically significant increases from Time 1 to Time 2 (ES=0.59) (see Exhibit 3.18).

**Exhibit 3.18: Mean rating of the frequency with which parents take an active part in child’s learning and classroom activities (scale of 4 items)**



Source: Year 6 parent survey.

\*\*\*p<.01

- Approximately two-thirds of parents at Time 2 reported talking to their child’s teacher often or very often about what their child is learning (66.2%) or about what they can do at home to support what their child is learning at school (66.0%; see Exhibit 3.19) – significantly more

than at Time 1. This level of involvement in their child’s education goes beyond attending parties and social functions, though these activities are also important and show increases over time as well.

- Parents in focus groups described how they have learned to become more involved in their child’s learning and to be an advocate for their child’s education. For example:

*“[Our teacher] says we have to have courage, and she says we need to speak up. She lets us know that we have rights, and that we are our children’s advocates, and if at any moment we feel that our children are being treated badly, we have every right to go and find out what is going on and why. She always speaks to us about education and how it works, and the [power] we have as parents for our children.”*

- Another parent described how she talked to her child’s teacher and requested a special learning opportunity for her daughter because her daughter was too shy to volunteer:

*“If you speak up, they listen ... If I hadn’t spoken up, who would have come in to tell the teachers what my daughter wanted? Only us as parents.”*

**Exhibit 3.19: Percentage of parents reporting engaging in various parent involvement activities often or very often**

	Time 1	Time 2	N	ES
Participation in child’s learning and classroom activities				
Go to child’s school to attend school events that child is participating in, like a play, art show or party	53.4	70.8**	455	0.55
Talk to child’s teacher about what child is learning	52.6	66.2**	479	0.33
Talk to child’s teacher to learn about things to do at home to support what child is learning	50.1	66.0**	485	0.41
Volunteer in child’s classroom	39.5	57.6**	436	0.49
Participation in school/community service				
Participate in parent committee meetings at child’s school such as PTA meetings, parent advisory committees, or school governing boards	36.1	44.7**	421	0.28
Volunteer at school events like fundraisers	23.7	38.7**	413	0.60
Help organize or lead activities at the family literacy program or in the community	18.1	25.3**	399	0.31
Volunteer at community activities like cleaning up litter in neighborhood	16.1	22.9**	410	0.40

Source: Year 6 parent survey.

\*\*p<.01

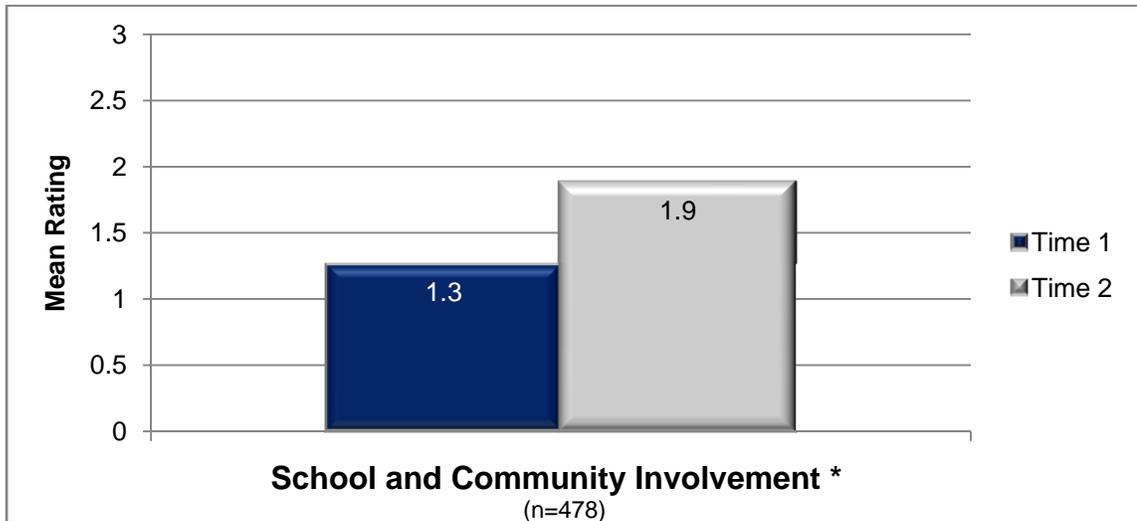
Note: Effect size calculations and significance testing were done on item means (not shown).

- Similarly, on a composite measure of parents’ involvement in school and community service activities, parent responses show statistically significant increases from Time 1 to Time 2,

though responses are somewhat lower on this measure compared to the classroom-level measure (ES=0.65) (see Exhibit 3.20).

- Focus group parents described their increasing involvement in the family literacy program, taking leadership for supporting other parents who may be new to the program. For example: *“Before, I didn’t participate at all, now I participate in all of the activities [at the program], and if I can I help other mothers with different things... It has helped me very much.”*

**Exhibit 3.20: Mean rating of the frequency with which parents participate in community and school activities (scale of 4 items)**



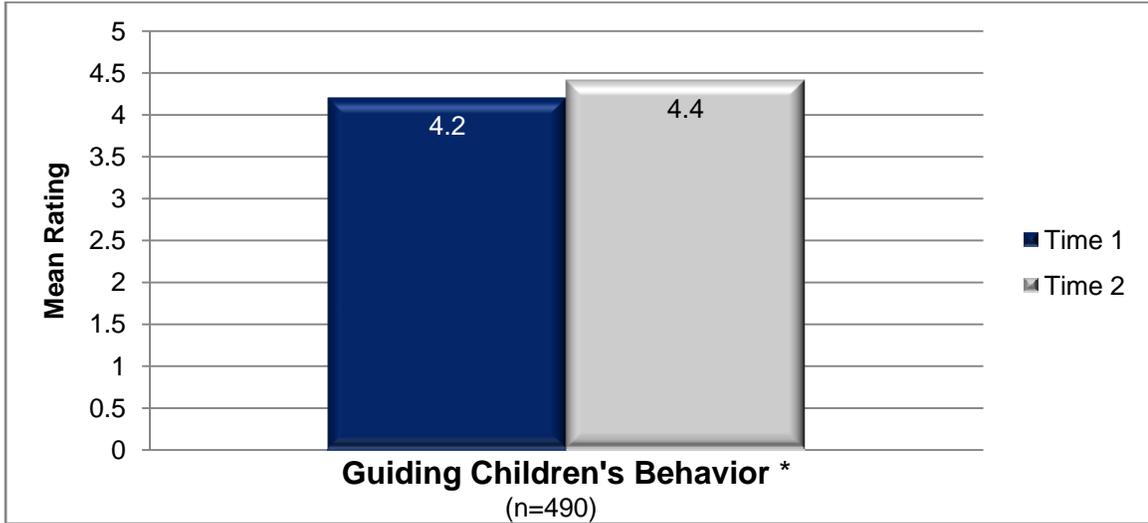
Source: Year 6 parent survey.  
\*p<.05

**General parenting practices**

One of the most commonly reported impacts of the programs highlighted by parents concerned discipline – learning different strategies for guiding children’s behavior as well as controlling their own tempers.

- On a composite measure of parents’ use of effective strategies for supporting children’s positive behavior, we find statistically significant differences from Time 1 to Time 2, indicating that by the end of the program year, parents were more likely to report consistently using strategies such as following routines and setting rules and consequences to guide children’s behavior (ES=0.25) (see Exhibits 3.21 and 3.22).

**Exhibit 3.21: Mean rating of parent reports of their use of appropriate strategies for guiding children’s behavior (scale of 3 items)**



Source: Year 6 parent survey.  
\*p<.05

**Exhibit 3.22: Percentage of parents agreeing (or strongly agreeing) with various statements about guiding children’s behavior**

	Time 1	Time 2	N	ES
During most days, I follow regular schedules and routines for my children at home	78.0	86.8**	468	0.32
I use a variety of strategies for guiding my children’s behavior when they misbehave or act up	77.7	87.2**	484	0.28
I have set rules and consequences for my children	79.5	84.0**	482	0.18
I praise my children when they do something good	84.7	87.8*	490	0.15

Source: Year 6 parent survey.  
\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

Note: Effect size calculations and significance testing were done on item means (not shown).

- Twenty parents across all eight programs visited in Year 5 referenced learning how to manage their own behavior in order to create a more positive environment for their children. Parents often mentioned not only developing their patience, but also learning to control their temper and actions during parenting and around the house. Two parents described their experiences this way:

*“Well, they have helped me a lot because a person isn’t born knowing how to be a parent. There are some things that you learn from your parents when you were a kid, and you do with your kids. And sometimes I notice things that I do not like, such as yelling, or hitting. These aren’t good. There are other things you can do to help them change [their*

*behavior]...if, for instance, he starts a tantrum, I don't give him too much attention with that. I wait until he is calmer, and then I talk to him."*

*"Basically what we have learned is to have more patience. Most importantly, we have learned to have control of ourselves."*

- Parents' use of praise also increased from Time 1 to Time 2, and several parents in one program also reported that they learned how to praise their children appropriately. For example, one parent reported:

*"[We learned] the art of effective praising, instead of just 'good job.'...It was how to do it in a motivational way, instead of just patting them on the back for throwing the trash away in the garbage – being descriptive of what they were doing and how that would even expand their vocabulary. It was really awesome."*

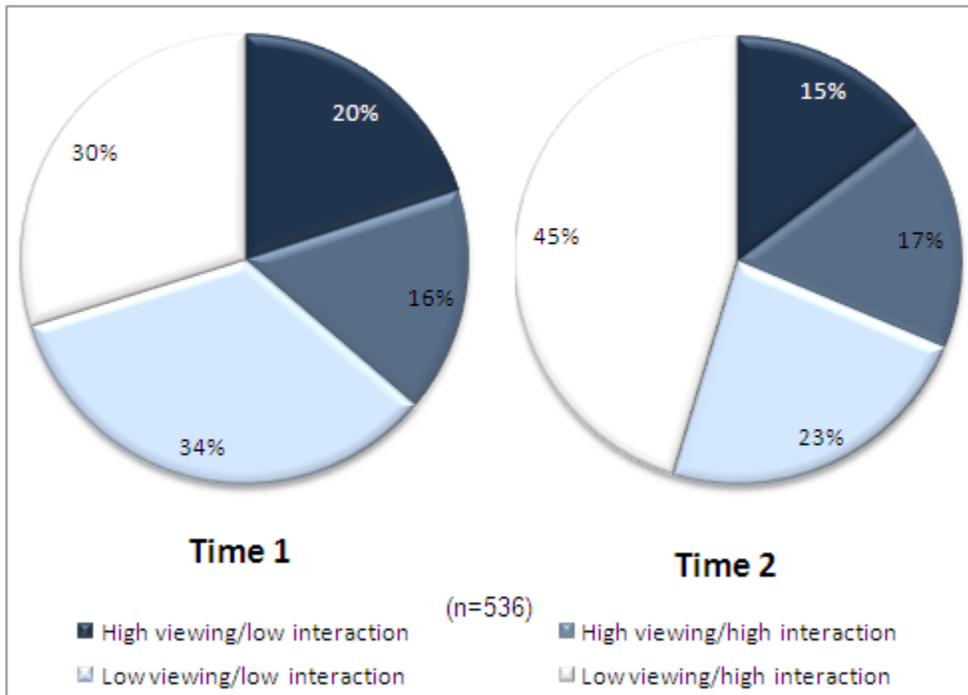
Monitoring children's television viewing is an important role for parents; according to recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics (1999), children's television viewing should be limited, and children under 2 should not watch TV at all. More than one third of parents at Time 1 reported that their children watch more than two hours of television each day. It is also important to consider how parents are involved in their children's TV watching, so we examined four different groups of families:

- High TV viewing children (those who watch more than 2 hours per day) with low-involved parents (those who infrequently select the programs, co-view the programs, and discuss the programs with their children),
- High TV viewing children with high-involved parents,
- Low TV viewing children with low-involved parents, and
- Low TV viewing children with high-involved parents.

The last category would be considered most in line with recommended practice. Overall, we find that over the course of the program year, parents have moved into the low viewing/high involvement category, though most of the change appears to involve increasing involvement rather than decreasing TV viewing ( $\chi^2=142.4$ ,  $p<.0001$ ).

- Whereas 30% of parents at Time 1 reported that their children viewed less than 2 hours of television per day and they were routinely involved in their children's television viewing activities, 45% reported such levels of viewing and involvement at Time 2 (see Exhibit 3.23).
- Most of the parents who changed their reported behaviors came from the low viewing/low involvement group. Only 4% of those reporting high levels of TV viewing at Time 1 reported low levels of TV viewing among their children at Time 2.

**Exhibit 3.23: Percentage of parents reporting different levels of children’s TV viewing and parent involvement in children’s TV viewing**



Source: Year 6 parent survey.

### Relationships between parenting outcomes and participation

To estimate the impacts of family literacy services on parent learning and behaviors, we examined the relationships between hours of service in family literacy components and parent behaviors – both growth on parent reports of language and literacy activities at home, using OLS regression models, and observed parent behaviors during a book-reading session with their child, using statistical correlations.. In OLS regression models, we predict Time 2 scores from each quality indicator, controlling for Time 1 score and total number of hours the parent attended parenting education and/or PCILA classes. As with adult outcomes models, participant demographic characteristics were not included in these models as these characteristics do not vary substantially. Again, though causal relationships cannot be determined through our analysis, we find several statistically significant relationships worth noting.

First, although we find no statistically significant relationship between hours of attendance and growth on the composite measure of language and literacy activities parents use at home, we do find that parents who attend more parenting education and PCILA classes show more growth on several specific language and literacy activities with their children at home.

- We find no statistically significant relationship between the number of hours parents participate in parenting education and PCILA and growth on the composite measure of language and literacy activities parents use at home. In other words, there was no difference between parents who attended more hours and those who attended less in their use of language and literacy practices overall, as measured by the composite scale.

- However, we do find a statistically significant relationship between the number of hours parents participate in parenting education and PCILA and several specific literacy practices that comprise the scale, including increased frequency of visiting the library (B=0.001, p=.023, R<sup>2</sup>=.18), reading to children (B=0.002 p=.024, R<sup>2</sup>=.26), telling stories to children (B=0.001, p=.038, R<sup>2</sup>=.21), and following a regular reading routine (B=0.002, p=.003, R<sup>2</sup>=.31).

Second, we find that time spent in adult education classes is positively associated with parent talk during joint book-reading activities. Findings are consistent with those in the Study of Classroom Literacy Interventions and Outcomes in Even Start (CLIO) study, which found that including parenting with early childhood education within an Even Start program improved parent interactive reading skills and parent responsiveness to their child (Judkins et al., 2008).

- Parents who attended more hours of adult education were observed to spend more time actually reading the text of the book during the book-reading session with their child. Although with data at only one point in time, we cannot assess growth on this measure, this may be an indication that parents are becoming more comfortable with their own reading skills through their adult education classes.
- Similarly, parents with more hours of adult education were observed to elaborate more on the book text and ask “wh-” questions, again, perhaps reflecting more comfort with books and their language skills.

**Exhibit 3.24: Correlations between hours of participation in family literacy components and parent book-reading strategies**

Parent book-reading strategies	Adult education	PCILA	Parenting education
Reading the text	.26*	.12	.10
Book and print conventions	.20	.23*	.04
Frequency of immediate talk	.15	.37**	-.04
Frequency of labeling	.01	.35**	-.02
Frequency of letter and word recognition	.02	.03	-.05
Frequency of prompts using “wh-” questions	.14*	.44**	-.10
Frequency of non-immediate talk	.06	.28**	-.08
Frequency of elaboration	.30**	-.05	.19
Frequency of explanations	.11	.26*	.06
Frequency of connections to general knowledge	.08	.46**	-.24*

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01

As might be expected, we find that participation in PCILA activities is most closely related to parent talk during joint book-reading sessions, with attendance significantly related to several types of parent talk – most notably talk that goes beyond the literal content of the book.

- Parents who spent more time in PCILA were observed to discuss book and print conventions with their children during their book-reading session.

- Overall, parents who attended more PCILA hours were observed to engage in more immediate-content talk. That is, they talked about the literal content of the book more often. Specifically, parents were observed to engage in more labeling of objects and asking children “wh-” questions (e.g., “What’s he doing?”). These strategies – asking the child to identify an object in a picture or ask what just happened in the story – are a common focus of PCILA classes.
- What appear to be most important for the later development of higher-order thinking and reasoning skills, however, are the examples of talk that focus on the “non-immediate” content of the story, such as making predictions or providing explanation. We also see significant correlations between parents’ use of non-immediate content talk – specifically their use of explanation and connecting the story to children’s general knowledge – and the number of hours of PCILA classes they have attended. Although we do not have sufficient data to assess change over time, these relationships could suggest that PCILA classes are also addressing this higher-level approach to engaging their children in conversation about books.

Finally, we find evidence that the direct connections between parenting education and parent talk during book-reading sessions are less strong than the relationships between PCILA attendance and parent talk. Findings suggest that classroom instruction and discussion about interactive book-reading strategies (through parenting education classes) must be combined with the actual practice and coaching time during PCILA to support parents’ use of these behaviors.

- Somewhat surprisingly, parents who participated in more hours of parenting education were observed to make *fewer* connections between the story and real world knowledge (for example, identifying a train in the book and telling the child that trains run on tracks like the ones near their home) during the parent-child book-reading session.
- However, we also found a negative correlation between parenting education attendance and PCILA attendance hours, indicating that parents who receive *more* hours of parenting education receive *fewer* hours of PCILA. This suggests that programs may be making a tradeoff between hours offered for these two components, given limited program time, and that the negative relationship between parenting education and this outcome actually reflects the reduced PCILA attendance that goes hand in hand with higher parenting attendance. Indeed, the negative relationship disappears when we control for PCILA hours.
- Parents who spent more total time in parenting education classes *and* PCILA were also observed to engage in more immediate and non-immediate talk, including connecting the story to real world knowledge.

### **Relationships between parenting outcomes and quality indicators**

To examine the relationship between parenting outcomes and program quality characteristics, we use OLS regression models using parents’ Time 2 response as the outcome variable and the program characteristic of interest as the independent variable, controlling for Time 1 response and total hours of parenting education and PCILA attended in Year 6. As in adult education outcomes analyses, demographic characteristics of participants were not included in these models as they do not vary substantially. Though our analysis does not allow interpretation of results as causal, we do find that some program characteristics are associated with greater growth on our composite measure of parent

support for children's language and literacy development. First, teacher experience is important for PCILA; having a more experienced PCILA teacher is associated with positive outcomes for parents. However, it appears that access to an experienced teacher is not sufficient; having enough peers available to share experiences may also support parent learning. Specifically:

- Parents in programs where the PCILA teachers have more years of experience teaching in a family literacy program – and thus more experience working with families like their own who are confronting similar challenges – show greater growth in their use of language and literacy strategies at home ( $B=0.026$ ,  $p=.003$ ,  $R^2=.36$ ).
- Somewhat surprisingly, we found that a higher parenting education teacher-to-student ratio (that is, fewer students per teacher) in the classroom was *negatively* associated with parent growth on language and literacy activities at home ( $B=-0.848$ ,  $p=.0004$ ,  $R^2=.36$ ). That is, having fewer students in the classroom was related to less growth. It may be that peer sharing – an activity that parents value so highly – is inhibited if there are too few students to identify with an individual's experience and share ideas for responding to challenges. We also found that higher PCILA teacher-to-child ratios were negatively associated with parent growth on language and literacy activities at home.

Consistent with the above interpretation, we find that parent involvement through discussion and interactive activities is associated with parent learning.

- In addition to having more students in the classroom, we find that greater parent involvement in parenting education classes – more time in group discussion, question and answer sessions, peer sharing, and hands-on activities – is associated with greater growth on parent support for children's language and literacy activities at home ( $B=0.010$ ,  $p=.006$ ,  $R^2=.36$ ).
- We find mixed results with regard to the relationship between using data to inform instruction and parent outcomes. Specifically, parents' use of language and literacy practices was *positively* related to parenting education teachers' use of parent observations and parent survey responses to inform instruction ( $B=0.220$ ,  $p=.002$ ,  $R^2=.36$ ) but *negatively* related to PCILA teachers' use of parent survey responses for instructional planning ( $B=-0.073$ ,  $p=.032$ ,  $R^2=.37$ ). Perhaps it is more important for PCILA teachers to use research-based strategies to coach and model interactive literacy activities than is true for parenting education classes, where it is more important to reach parents and motivate learning by incorporating their everyday needs and concerns into the curriculum

The content of parenting education classes is also important. More attention to topics related to children's learning – the original intent of the family literacy model for parenting education – and better integration of content with that of other components does seem to be associated with greater parent growth on our composite measure of language and literacy activity at home.

- Greater emphasis in the parenting education class on topics related to supporting children's learning – including parent involvement activities at the elementary school level – was also associated with greater growth in parents' reported use of language and literacy activities at home ( $B=.010$ ,  $p=.006$ ,  $R^2=.36$ ). More time spent on topics such as: child development, how to support children's learning, particular techniques for reading with children and interacting with them during PCILA, reflecting on what happened during PCILA, and helping parenting understand the school system and how to be advocates for their children was positively related to parent learning.

- Parents in programs where teachers reported that information from other components was more often shared with them and who reported discussing topics from other components or changing their curriculum to match what was being covered in other components showed greater growth on the composite language and literacy activities measure ( $B=0.255$ ,  $p=.0004$ ,  $R^2=.37$ ).

Finally, having sufficient resources appears to be important for the PCILA classroom, with more adequate resources associated with greater parent growth over time.

- PCILA teachers' overall rating of the adequacy of classroom resources – from the availability and quality of manipulatives and art materials to having enough classroom space for parents and children to move around in – was associated with greater growth in parents' reported use of language and literacy activities at home ( $B=0.341$ ,  $p=.0003$ ,  $R^2=.38$ ).<sup>12</sup>

## Summary and Recommendations

In this chapter, we explored the quality of and outcomes for the parenting education and PCILA components of family literacy programs. Highlights of the findings and bulleted recommendations are presented below.

### Parent knowledge and behavior outcomes

Parent perceptions, parent reports of their own behaviors at two points in time, and analyses linking time in the program to observed behaviors all suggest that family literacy programs are contributing to parents' knowledge about, and capacity to support, their children's learning. For example, parents in focus groups pointed to their improved knowledge of child development as one of the greatest impacts of their participation in parenting classes and PCILA activities. Parent reports on the parent survey also provide evidence that parent knowledge of the importance of reading to their children right from birth has increased over time.

Parent survey responses also suggest that visits to the library and the number of children's books at home have increased, improving children's access to literacy resources so critical to developing early literacy skills and a love for reading. Parents also are routinely reading to their children and engaging them in discussions about books – even more so at the end of the program year. In addition to parent reports on the survey and in focus groups, analyses of direct observations of parent-child interactions (and counts of different types of “utterances” used) during a shared book-reading activity revealed that parents are using a wide range of strategies to engage their child in the books they read together. In particular, parents were observed to frequently engage their children in discussion about the literal content of the book; much less talk went beyond the literal to encourage children to make predictions, to evaluate the story, or use other types of “non-immediate” content talk.

- **Recommendation:** Programs should continue to encourage parents to read to their children and talk about what they are reading – pointing out pictures, asking children to count or label objects, or talking about what just happened in the story, for example. But they should also encourage parents to develop their children's concept development and critical thinking skills and enhance their comprehension by going beyond the literal content of the book to engage

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<sup>12</sup> A comparable scale measuring resources in parenting education classes was not used because the scale was not reliable.

in higher-level talk – for example, asking children to make predictions, evaluate the story, or make connections to their own experiences.

In addition to increases in parents' understanding of child development and use of strategies for engaging their young children in learning activities, parent survey results and focus group responses alike indicate that parents are learning to value education and hold high expectations for their children as well as for themselves. Parent survey responses also indicate that parents are learning more about the public school system and are becoming increasingly involved with their child's classroom and school – practices that should support children's success in school into the future.

One of the most commonly reported impacts of the programs highlighted by parents concerned discipline – learning different strategies for guiding children's behavior as well as controlling parents' own tempers. Parent survey responses also suggest that more households are characterized by low TV viewing by children and high parent involvement in children's TV viewing by the end of the program year, though most of the movement is from lesser to greater involvement, rather than from greater to lesser TV viewing.

### **Parenting education and PCILA quality, participation, and outcomes**

To estimate the impacts of family literacy services on parent learning and behaviors, we examined the relationships between hours of service in family literacy components and parent behaviors. We find that parents who attend more hours of parenting education and PCILA do not show more growth on the composite scale of language and literacy activities with their children at home, although they do show growth on several specific practices, including library use and frequency of reading to their children. Greater participation in PCILA is associated with greater levels of several types of parent talk during one-on-one book-reading sessions with their children – most notably talk that goes beyond the literal content of the book, which research has shown to be associated with later reading skills. In addition, time spent in adult education classes is also positively associated with parent talk during joint book-reading activities, suggesting some influences across components as well. However, no positive relationships were found between hours of parenting education alone and such parent talk.

- Given limited program time and the associations found between PCILA and parenting outcomes, programs should ensure that time in classroom-based parenting education sessions does not take away from time parents spend practicing what they have learned in the PCILA setting.

The quality of parenting education and PCILA components, which varies by program and by dimension, seems to matter as well. First, we find that although teachers vary in terms of their teaching experience, on average, both parenting education and PCILA teachers have more than a few years of experience teaching in their respective component. Furthermore, analyses relating quality to outcomes suggest that having a more experienced PCILA teacher is associated with positive outcomes for parents. However, there is room for greater preparation among teachers, with relatively few holding relevant teaching credentials or permits.

- Programs should evaluate the qualifications of their teaching staff for the parenting education and PCILA components and seek out opportunities for professional development to support teachers with less formal training.

Parenting education teachers reported using a variety of curricula to guide their instruction and focusing on a variety of topics, though most common were emphases on building parents' self-esteem, child development, and strategies for reading with children and supporting their learning. Analyses linking quality indicators to outcomes suggest that more attention to topics related to children's learning – the original intent of the family literacy model for parenting education – does seem to be associated with greater parent growth on our composite measure of language and literacy activity at home.

Teacher reports of their instructional methods suggest that they divide their time between lecture, hands-on activities, and discussion. Analyses linking quality indicators to outcomes suggest that parent involvement through discussion and interactive activities is associated with parent learning. Parents in focus groups confirmed that group discussions with the teacher and their peers were the most valuable for their learning.

- Programs should continue to offer opportunities in parenting education classes for parents to share their experiences and discuss issues with the instructor as well as with a group of their peers.

Though the structure and content of PCILA sessions vary widely, most teachers reported using a formal curriculum (usually an ECE curriculum), and in most classrooms observed, a focus on literacy activities was apparent. Some classes are mostly one-on-one sessions with parents and children working together on a single or a variety of learning activities, while other classes are more group focused, with the teacher leading activities. The relatively low attention given to coaching and modeling suggests that the focus of PCILA may be more on setting up opportunities for interaction between parents and children rather than providing explicit learning opportunities for parents through coaching or modeling effective parent-child interactions.

- In addition to providing time for parents and children to engage with each other during PCILA, programs should consider providing more guidance to parents – through teacher modeling and direct coaching of parents – to guide and reinforce learning in context. In particular, PCILA teachers should model and coach parents on the importance of specific research-based dialogic reading skills that are predictive of later positive literacy outcomes for children.

Parenting education and PCILA teachers rated the availability and quality of classroom resources as generally adequate, though somewhat less likely to be rated as always adequate were computer equipment, parenting education textbooks, and materials for supporting children with disabilities in the PCILA classroom. Analyses linking quality indicators to outcomes suggest that having sufficient resources are important for the PCILA classroom, with more adequate resources associated with greater parent growth over time.

- Programs should look for ways to enhance the availability of materials and resources for their parenting and PCILA components, especially by ensuring that parents have the books they need to support their learning and that PCILA classrooms have the space and materials for all parent-child pairs to fully engage in learning activities.

Although one might imagine that parenting and PCILA would be most likely to be well integrated – both with other components and with each other – there appears to be less communication than would be ideal, and PCILA teachers are somewhat surprisingly unaware of what happens in the parenting classes. In addition, analyses linking quality indicators to outcomes suggest that a higher

level of integration of parenting education with the other components of family literacy programs is associated with greater parent learning.

- The FLSN should consider providing additional training on integration strategies, especially to enhance the integration of parenting and PCILA components with the other components and with each other.

## **Chapter 4: Early Childhood Education – Indicators of Quality and Outcomes for Children**

Supporting children’s learning through early childhood education (ECE) is the fourth component of family literacy programs. Early childhood services – from infant and toddler programs to preschool classes – support children’s development in multiple domains and build school readiness skills. In this chapter, we explore the extent to which the ECE component of programs supported by the Family Literacy Initiative reflects indicators of quality, and we then assess growth on various outcome measures for children participating in these programs.

### ***Indicators of ECE Component Quality***

We begin with an examination of the indicators of quality for the ECE component. We focus on the following aspects of quality:

- Intensity of services
- Teacher qualifications and teacher-child ratios
- Teacher-child interactions
- Curriculum and assessment
- Support for language and literacy development
- Classroom resources
- Integration with the other family literacy components

To assess the intensity of services, we draw on service data collected by grantees and submitted through the online data system. For the other aspects of quality, we use information from two primary sources: surveys completed by 68 ECE teachers in the spring of Year 6 (with references to results from 58 Year 5 teacher surveys where noteworthy) and observations of 22 ECE classrooms in the winter of Year 5 through the child outcomes substudy.

### **Intensity of services offered**

As with other components, the intensity of the early childhood education component, as measured by the number of hours offered, is an important quality consideration, and First 5 LA set intensity goals for programs. On average, hours offered to children through the ECE component as well as through the PCILA component exceed the First 5 LA recommendation for intensity (see Exhibit 4.1).

- Grantee programs offered 69.4 hours of early childhood education per month on average in Year 5 and 67.1 hours per month in Year 6, comfortably meeting the intensity goal of 60 hours set by First 5 LA.
- Family literacy children also were offered approximately 12 hours of PCILA activities per month as well, which, like the PCILA hours offered to adults reported in Chapter 3, exceed the First 5 LA intensity goal of 10 hours per month.

**Exhibit 4.1: Mean number of hours of early childhood education and PCILA offered to children per month, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Early childhood education	69.4	67.1
PCILA	12.1	12.0

Source: Year 5 and 6 service data downloaded from the data system.

### Teacher qualifications and teacher-child ratios

Teacher qualifications – in terms of overall education level as well as qualifications specifically related to early care and education – have been shown to be associated with positive outcomes for children in a number of ways (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000; Whitebook, 2003; Fuller, Livas, & Bridges, 2005). Overall, we find that teachers are relatively experienced (see Exhibit 4.2), and though many lack bachelor’s degrees, this is quite common in the field, given the relatively low pay scale among early childhood programs in general.

- Fewer than half (45.9%) of all ECE teachers surveyed reported having at least a bachelor’s degree. Although many recommend a bachelor’s degree for ECE teachers (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006), only 14% of center-based ECE educators in the Los Angeles metropolitan area had this level of education in 2000 (Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005). Another study, however, reported that 42% of children in center-based preschool programs statewide have a lead teacher with a bachelor’s degree or higher (Karoly, Ghosh-Dastidar, Zellman, Perlman, & Fernyhough, 2008).
- Similarly, 50.8% of the ECE teachers surveyed reported having coursework in child development or a field related to early childhood education, an indicator of teacher qualifications also emphasized in the literature (Maxwell & Clifford, 2006; Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006).

**Exhibit 4.2: Percentage of ECE teachers with various qualifications, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Bachelor’s degree or higher	43.9%	45.9%
Degree or coursework in child development (ECE or human development)	59.6%	50.8%
Teacher permit or higher	58.5%	47.7%
Associate teacher permit/CDA only	26.4%	16.9%
Mean years of experience teaching ECE (in any setting)	9.8	9.6
Mean years of experience teaching in a family literacy setting	5.0	5.4

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher survey.

- Of the ECE teachers completing the survey, 16.9% reported having an associate teacher permit or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.

- Teachers reported a wide range of teaching experience – the newest teacher reported teaching ECE for less than a year, and the most veteran teacher reported 26 years of experience. On average, teachers reported 9.6 years in the ECE classroom, and 5.4 years teaching in the context of a family literacy program specifically.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) makes recommendations for teacher-child ratios, according to child age and group size. For example, for a classroom of six infants, the ratio should be 1:3; for a classroom of eight infants, the recommended ratio is 1:4. Recommendations for classrooms of 3-5 year olds range from ratios of 1:6 to 1:10, depending on the group size. The California Department of Education (CDE; Title V, Section 18290) recommends similar ratios. Generally, we find that teachers reported ratios that were somewhat lower than these recommendations.

- Family literacy teacher-child ratios were 26% below the recommended ratio for any given age group. For example, on average, a classroom of 18 3-5 year olds would have a ratio of 1:12 in the family literacy program, 26% lower than the recommended ratio of 1 teacher for every 9 children.<sup>13</sup>

## Teacher-child interactions

We assessed teacher-child interactions using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2007). There is a large body of research that highlights the importance of adult-child relationships for supporting children’s healthy development and building readiness-related skills, such as language skills and reading competence (Mashburn et al., 2008; Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta, & Howes, 2002) and children’s social competence (Mitchell-Copeland, 1997). The quality of teacher practices supports cognitive development, and close teacher-child relationships in preschool are associated with better behavior and social skills in early elementary school (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1999). At-risk students in classrooms with strong instructional and emotional support have been shown to outperform children from less supportive classroom environments (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Results show that ECE classrooms in the family literacy programs rate in the “medium quality” range on emotional support and classroom organization but in the “low quality” range on instructional support (see Exhibit 4.3) – the subscale most predictive of academic outcomes.

- Observed classrooms were rated in the “medium quality” range (scores of 3 to 5 on a scale of 1 to 7) on the *emotional support* subscale of the CLASS, with a mean of 4.22, somewhat below the statewide average of 5.5.<sup>14</sup> This subscale summarizes the emotional tone of the classroom, assessing positive and negative aspects of the classroom climate (emotional connection and warmth versus negativity), teachers’ sensitivity to children’s academic and emotional needs, and their regard for children’s perspectives.

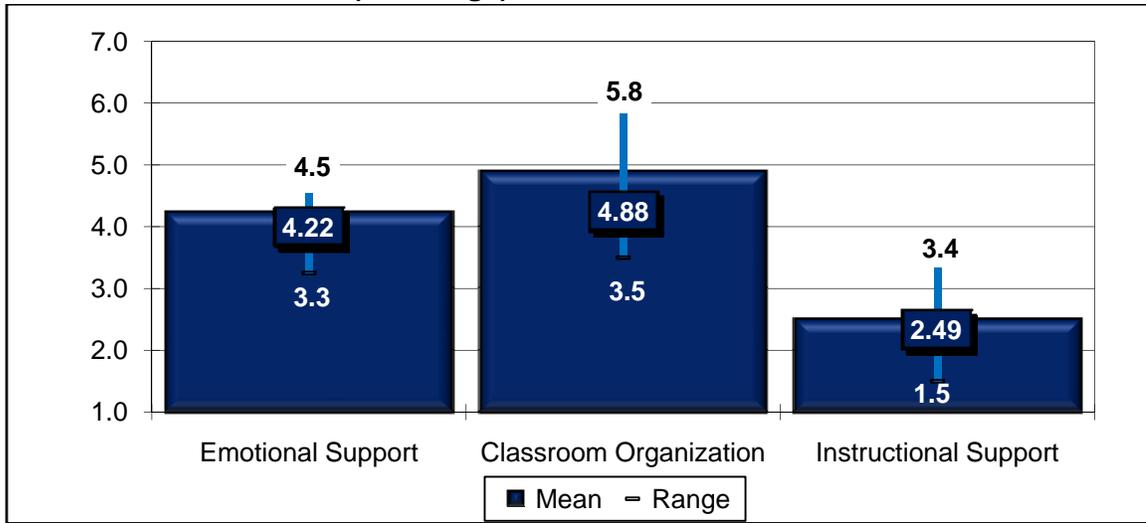
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<sup>13</sup> Because teacher-child ratios vary by age and group size, and some classrooms were mixed-age groups, average teacher-child ratios cannot easily be calculated across classrooms and programs. Instead, we consider the group size of each classroom and the proportion of children in different age groups, and calculate the deviation from NAEYC recommendations (as a percentage above or below the recommended ratio for age and group size).

<sup>14</sup> Comparison data for the CLASS come from a recent study of preschool programs throughout California (Karoly et al., 2008).

- Teachers’ approaches to behavior management and maximizing children’s engagement and learning opportunities in the classroom are measured through the *classroom organization* subscale of the CLASS. Observed classrooms received an average score of 4.88 on this scale, which is at the higher end of the “medium quality” range and comparable to the statewide mean of 4.9.
- Classrooms received relatively low scores on *instructional support*; the mean score was 2.49, which is at the upper end of the “low quality” range. This subscale assesses teachers’ use of strategies to support the development of higher-order thinking skills and understanding, the extent to which teachers provide feedback that extends children’s learning, and the level of language modeling and stimulation provided by the teacher. Although the statewide average is not much higher (2.6), low ratings on this measure are a concern, since it has been shown to be an important predictor of cognitive achievement (Mashburn et al., 2008).

**Exhibit 4.3: Mean scores (and range) on the CLASS, Year 5**



Note: The CLASS scoring rubric ranges from 1 to 7, where a score of 1-2 represents “low quality,” a score of 3-5 represents “medium quality,” and a score of 6-7 represents “high quality.”

Source: Observation data from the child outcomes substudy.

Additional information on the specific nature of teacher-child interactions was captured using the Emerging Academics Snapshot (Ritchie et al., 2001). Generally, we find that teachers used various interaction strategies to support children’s language development and learning, but the teachers most frequently used a didactic approach, spending relatively little time elaborating on children’s responses and scaffolding their learning (see Exhibit 4.4).

- Teachers were observed using a didactic approach – engaging children in interactions that lead to one correct answer, such as looking for precise words – 33% of the time.
- Teachers elaborated on children’s responses 5% of the time, on average. This included asking questions, giving a child a chance to express her/his interests or ideas, playing interactively with the child, or expanding play by suggesting additional materials or new ideas for a game or learning activity.

- Teachers were observed to scaffold the children’s responses by showing an awareness of an individual child’s needs and responding in a manner that supports the child’s learning 10% of the time. This could include asking open-ended questions, expanding on the child’s answers and thoughts, and linking classroom activities to the child’s life experiences.

**Exhibit 4.4: Mean proportion of time ECE teachers engaged in various interaction styles, Year 5**

	Mean proportion of time (0-1) (SD)
Teacher elaborates on child’s responses	.05 (.23)
Teacher scaffolds child’s responses	.10 (.30)
Teacher engages in didactic manner	.33 (.47)
Teacher engages in discourse in second language	.08 (.28)

Source: Emerging Academics Snapshot data from the child outcomes substudy.

**Content, curriculum, and assessment**

To gauge the content or subject-matter emphasis of classroom activities, and the formality of the curriculum and assessment strategies used to support content learning, we asked teachers a series of questions about their classroom practices. In terms of curriculum usage, we find that the vast majority of teachers use a formal curriculum, though the specific curriculum cited varies widely (see Exhibit 4.5).

- Consistent with statewide results (Karloly, et al., 2008), nearly all family literacy ECE teachers surveyed (95.6%) reported using a formal curriculum in their classroom, and 94.1% reported relying on curriculum guidelines to plan their instruction to a large or moderate extent.
- Although most ECE teachers reported using a curriculum, there was substantial variability in the specific curriculum cited. The largest percentage of teachers reported using Creative Curriculum (61.8%); others reported using High Scope (13.2%), Houghton-Mifflin Pre-K (13.2%), or a curriculum developed by staff (16.2%).
- The majority of ECE teachers (72.3%) reported using a formal lesson plan to guide their instruction for every class.

**Exhibit 4.5: Percentage of ECE teachers reporting the use of formal curricula and lesson plans to guide their instruction, by year**

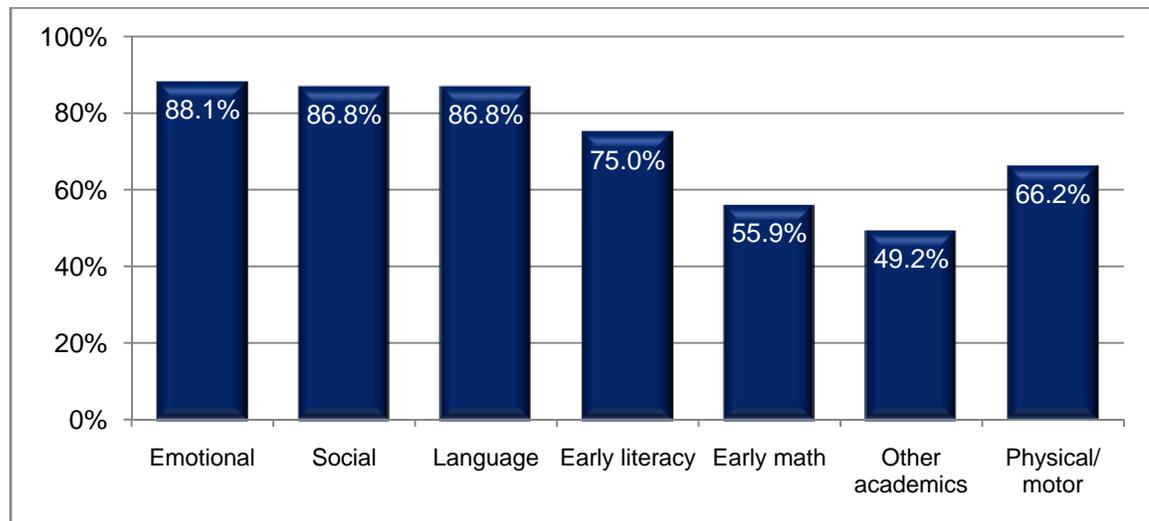
	Year 5	Year 6
Formal curriculum used	98.2%	95.6%
Creative Curriculum	62.5%	61.8%
Curriculum developed by self or program	8.9%	16.2%
High Scope	12.5%	13.2%
Houghton-Mifflin Pre-K	2.2%	13.2%
Opening the World of Learning (OWL)	1.4%	8.8%
Open Court	2.2%	8.8%
Sing, Spell, Read, & Write	1.4%	4.4%
Born to Learn	7.1%	2.9%
Formal lesson plan used to guide instruction every day	73.6%	72.3%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher surveys.

We also explored teachers’ relative emphasis on supporting children’s development in different skill areas. When asked to rate the importance of various skill areas for the focus of their ECE instruction, the majority of teachers rated them all as at least very important, with social-emotional and language skills rated most highly, followed by literacy skills (see Exhibit 4.6).

- The social-emotional skill areas were the most highly rated, with 88.1% indicating that affective or emotional development was one of their top focus areas, and 86.8% reporting that social skills development was one of their top areas of focus.

**Exhibit 4.6: Percentage of ECE teachers rating the development of various skill areas as the top priority for their ECE instruction, Year 6**



Source: Year 6 teacher survey.

- Language development was also highly rated by teachers, with 86.8% reporting this was one of their top focus areas. Literacy development was somewhat lower, with 75.0% identifying

this as one of their top priorities. Even fewer cited early mathematics skills (55.9%) or other academic skills (49.2%) as top priorities in their instruction.

Teachers reported using a variety of strategies to assess the progress of children and guide their instruction, including formal assessments (like the Desired Results Developmental Profile – Revised (DRDP-R)) as well as informal observations of children’s behavior.

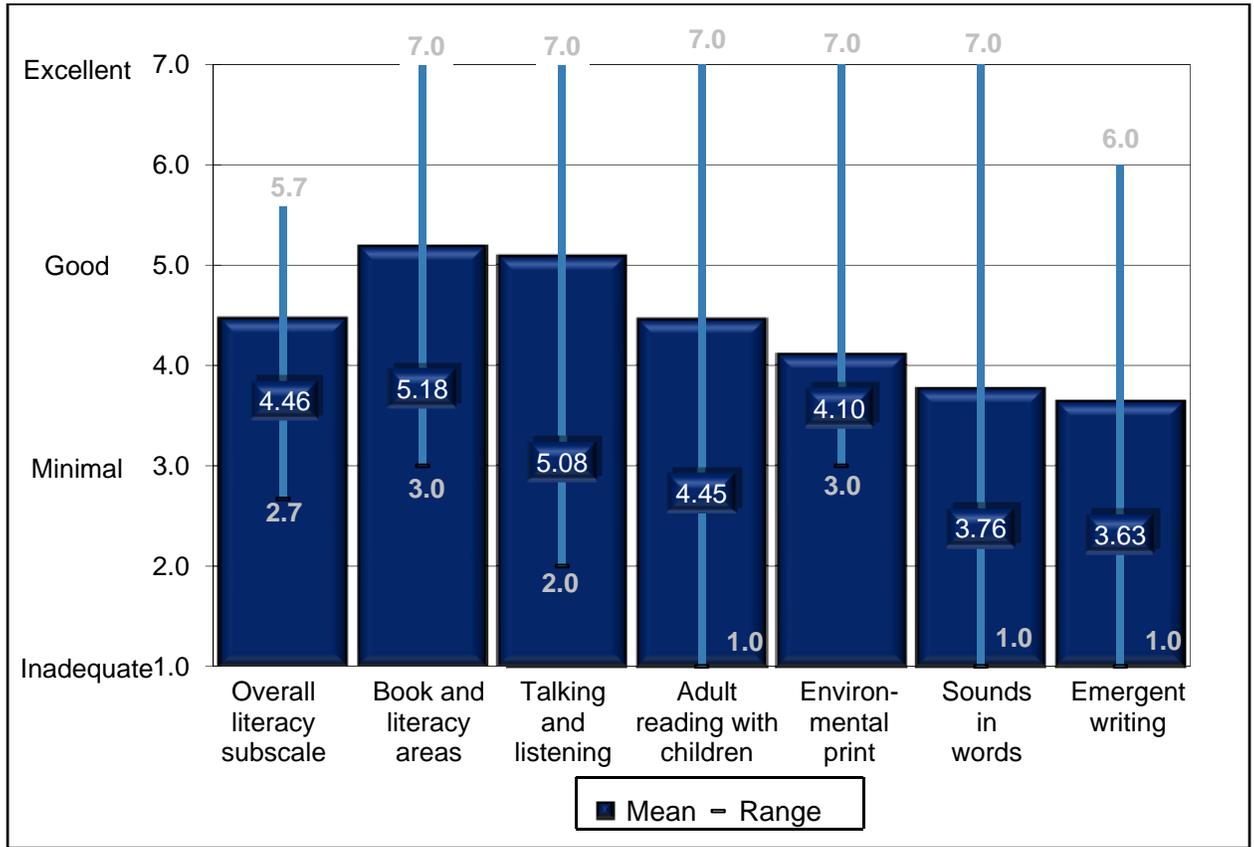
- All teachers reported using their own observations of the children in their classroom to help guide their instruction to a large or moderate extent. Most teachers (94.1%) reported using DRDP or DRDP-R data to guide their instruction to a large or moderate extent; 79.4% reported using other assessments to help plan their instruction.

### **Support for language development and literacy**

An important focus of family literacy programs is supporting children’s language development and early literacy skills. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Extension (ECERS-E) is a relatively new tool that was developed to extend ECERS-R to tap into the dimensions of quality associated with pre-academic learning in four content areas: literacy, numeracy, science, and diversity. The ECERS is viewed as a comprehensive measure providing a straightforward way of assessing the extent to which certain classroom variables support child development (Dickinson, St. Pierre & Pettengill, 2004). The literacy subscale, used in 22 family literacy program classrooms for this study, assesses six aspects of quality: environmental print, book and literacy areas, adult reading with children, sounds in words, emergent writing, and talking and listening. Overall, we find high variation in ECERS-E scores (see Exhibit 4.7). The average score is just below the “good” rating, with the highest ratings for books and literacy materials and adult-child conversations, and lowest ratings for writing materials and activities.

- On average, the global quality of the classroom literacy environment was rated 4.46 – just below “good” (a score of 5 on a scale from 1 to 7) on the ECERS-E literacy subscale, indicating that teachers provide some support for children’s literacy development in print recognition, reading, and writing. Classroom scores ranged from 2.67 to 5.67.
- Mean ratings were somewhat higher on the *book and literacy* item (averaging 5.18), which assesses the variety and accessibility of books, the comfort level of the literacy area, and the extent to which book use is encouraged; and the *talking and listening* item (averaging 5.08), which measures the nature and frequency of adult-child conversation and support for child talk and peer conversation.
- Just below the “good” range were mean ratings on *environmental print* (assessing the presence of printed words around the classroom, recognition of letters and words outside of books, recognition of children’s names, etc.) and *adult reading to children*, which assesses the frequency of adults reading to children; discussion of letters, print, and the content of books; encouragement of repetitive words and phrases in the text, etc.
- Lower ratings were given to the *sounds in words* item (averaging 3.76), which assesses the use of rhymes, alliteration, syllabification, and linking letters to sounds, and to *emergent writing* (averaging 3.63), which relates to the accessibility of writing materials and a writing area, adults writing down what children say, displays of children’s writing, etc.

**Exhibit 4.7: Mean scores (and ranges) on the ECERS-E, Literacy Subscale, Year 5**



Source: Year 5 ECERS-E observations in 21 classrooms.

The Emerging Academics Snapshot was also used to measure the relative proportion of time spent engaged in various literacy activities. Observed time spent engaged in language and literacy was slightly greater than other content areas, like math and science, and generally involved adults reading to children (see Exhibit 4.8).

- On average, children were observed to be engaged in language and literacy activities approximately 21% of the day. Approximately 7% of time was spent being read to; 4% was spent engaged in reading or pretending to read, 6% was spent learning about letters and sounds (such as learning rhymes, talking about letter-sound relationships, identifying letters, or sounding out words), 3% was spent engaging in oral language development (such as interacting with a teacher who was asking open-ended questions, helping children expand their thoughts, or helping them learn or practice new vocabulary), and 2% was spent in writing activities. In comparison, the National Center for Early Development and Learning’s Multi-State study of Pre-Kindergarten and Study of State-wide Early Education Programs found that children in classrooms studied were observed to spend 5% of their time being read to, 3% engaged in reading or pretending to read, 4% learning about letters and sounds, 7% in oral language development, and 2% in writing activities (Early et al., 2005).
- Children spent the rest of their time engaged in activities in other content areas such as math (11%), science (17%), or social studies (14%); or in aesthetics activities like art or music

(18%) or other fine (7%) or gross (9%) motor activities. In comparison, children in the Multi-State study were observed to spend about 8% of time on math, 10% on science, 16% on social studies, and 16% in aesthetics activities (Early et al, 2005).

**Exhibit 4.8: Mean proportion of time children spent engaging in various areas in the ECE classroom, Year 5**

	Mean proportion of time (SD)
Child’s overall engagement in literacy activities	.21 (.16)
Child was being read to	.07 (.06)
Child was reading or pretending to read	.04 (.07)
Child was learning about letters/sounds	.06 (.07)
Child was engaging in oral language development	.03 (.04)
Child was writing	.02 (.03)
Child’s engagement in math activities	.11 (.08)
Child’s engagement in science activities	.17 (.13)
Child’s engagement in social studies activities	.14 (.10)
Child’s engagement in aesthetics activities (e.g., art, music)	.18 (.13)
Child’s engagement in fine motor activities	.07 (.06)
Child’s engagement in gross motor activities	.09 (.10)

Source: Emerging Academics Snapshot data from the child outcomes substudy.

Note: N = 72 child-level observations

- In response to an open-ended question about strategies used for language and literacy development, surveyed teachers cited a wide range of classroom learning activities. The most common strategies included reading, telling stories to the children, and singing songs. Many teachers also mentioned using poetry and rhymes to support language development, using deliberate modeling of language and encouraging child talk by asking open-ended questions, and asking children to identify and describe objects or repeat new words. One teacher described her practices this way:
- “I always talk to [the children]. I use words. I read books. We sing. We play games that include words, letters, and numbers. Each week we give the children books so they can read at home. And in the classroom they read for 20 minutes every day.”

**Classroom resources**

In prior years of the evaluation, we have assessed the quality of the overall classroom environment and resources by using the ECERS-R, where scores have typically fallen in the “good” quality environment range. In Years 5 and 6, we asked teachers to provide their perceptions of the adequacy of classroom resources (in terms of quality or quantity). Generally, teachers reported that materials and resources were adequate for their classrooms, though materials to support diverse learners were rated somewhat lower (see Exhibit 4.9).

- Teachers largely reported having adequate learning materials in their classrooms. Most teachers (91.0%) reported that writing utensils (crayons, paper, and markers) were “always adequate”; 85.3% gave a similar rating for their manipulatives and 78.8% rated their art materials this way. Fewer teachers (41.7%) reported having adequate computer equipment and software.

**Exhibit 4.9: Percentage of ECE teachers rating various resources as always adequate for their classes, by year**

	Year 5	Year 6
Crayons, markers, and paper	88.0%	91.0%
Child-sized furniture	94.2%	86.6%
Manipulatives	92.3%	85.3%
Classroom space	73.1%	79.4%
Paints, clay, and other art materials	76.5%	78.8%
Materials in appropriate languages for children in class	88.5%	76.9%
Heat and air conditioning	58.5%	75.4%
Materials appropriate for cultural background of children in class	56.6%	69.1%
Outdoor space	55.8%	65.6%
Computer equipment and software	40.6%	41.7%
Materials for teaching children with disabilities	42.9%	36.6%

Source: Year 5 and 6 teacher survey.

- The appropriateness of their materials for different learning needs was rated somewhat lower by teachers. While most teachers (76.9%) rated the availability of linguistically appropriate materials as always adequate, slightly fewer teachers (69.1%) rated the cultural appropriateness of materials as always adequate. Materials for teaching students with disabilities were rated as being always adequate by only 36.6% of teachers.
- Nearly 8 out of 10 teachers surveyed (79.4%) reported that classroom space was always adequate, and 65.6% reported that outdoor space was always adequate.

## Integration

As noted throughout this report, the greatest benefits for families should come when all four components are fully integrated (Potts, 2004). In terms of communication among teachers and cross-component awareness, the ECE component appears to be relatively well integrated with the PCILA component, but less so with the parenting component, and not well integrated with adult education at all.

- Two-thirds of ECE teachers reported that information about what is being covered in PCILA classes is routinely shared with them (or they teach PCILA in addition to ECE and therefore know what is being covered). They are somewhat less likely to stay abreast of what is being covered in parenting classes (26.2% said that this information is routinely shared with them or they also teach this component) or adult education (7.8% said information about what is being covered in adult education classes is shared with them).

- Two-thirds of ECE teachers reported using topics or themes covered in other family literacy program components to guide or help plan their instruction, though only 53.0% said they modify or adjust their ECE curriculum at least occasionally to cover topics that are being covered in one or more of the other components.
- Teachers who reported that they modify their curriculum described making changes based on the theme or topic of the month, based on a holiday or special event, or in response to needs and interests raised by parents or teachers during discussions in other components. For example, one ECE teacher wrote:

*“ECE teachers and adult ed teachers talk about the curriculum, and we plan together according with the theme we have, and if some of us need to modify an activity then we all try to modify.”*

## **Children’s Learning Outcomes**

While observing change in children’s outcomes over time does not necessarily mean that participation in family literacy programs is the cause of this change, understanding what growth is occurring is again an important first step. Thus, we begin by examining, children’s learning over time. We draw on two sources of data for these analyses. As in past years, we analyze data from direct assessments of a sample of preschool-aged children collected through the child outcomes substudy. To supplement these data, we also analyzed data collected by grantees on the language development of children birth to three using a parent survey. We turn first to the analyses of the data from the younger children.

### **Language development for children birth to age 3**

For the youngest children – ages 8 months to 30 months – we assessed growth on the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (MacArthur CDI). Since so few children had completed inventories at two points in time, we only examined the vocabulary portion of the assessment and did not limit our analysis to only those children with a minimum number of hours of attendance – instead, all children with two assessments (a total of 104) are included. Results indicate that children’s vocabularies are growing, but, as is common for children in low socioeconomic circumstances and learning two languages simultaneously, percentile scores are relatively low, and, on the whole, do not reveal accelerated language acquisition (see Exhibits 4.10 and 4.11).

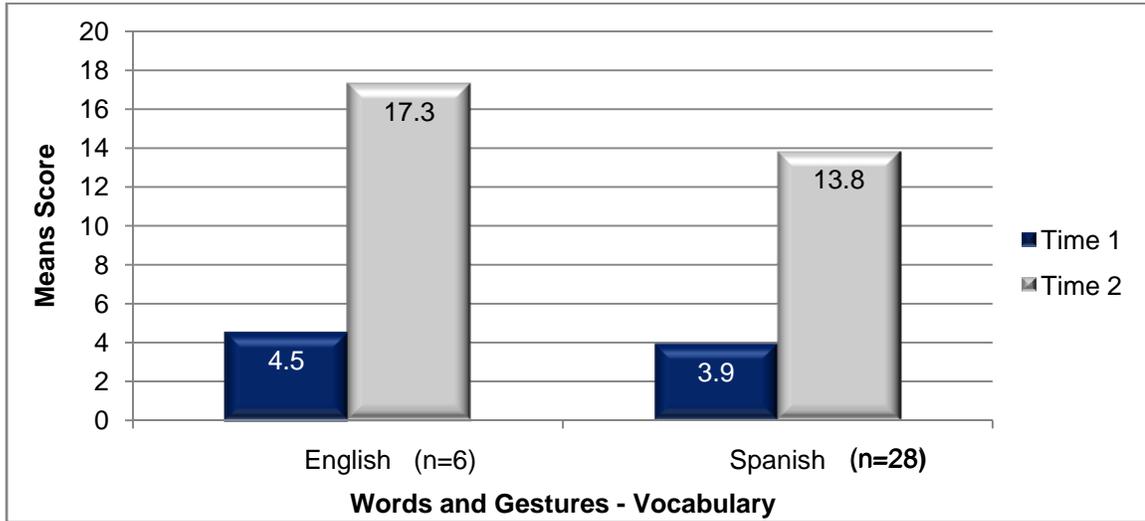
- On average, children in the 8-to-18-month age range (who received an average of 547 hours of ECE over the year) understood and could say 4.5 English words at Time 1 and 17.3 English words at Time 2. Children whose parents reported on their Spanish language skills understood and could say 3.9 Spanish words at Time 1 and 13.8 Spanish words at Time 2, on average.
- While raw scores indicate that children’s vocabularies are growing, they are not developing at a faster rate than their peers in the norming sample.<sup>15</sup> In fact, although the numbers are too small to say for certain, it appears that family literacy children are not keeping pace with

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<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that although the sample of children used for developing norms for both MacArthur forms was relatively large and more diverse than the original norming sample (now 26.9% non-white, with 31.5% of mothers having a high school education or less), it was made up of primarily middle- and upper middle-class children. It is therefore not unexpected that children from lower socio-economic segments of the population would score at lower percentiles than the norming population (Fenson et al,2007).

children in the norming sample (which is, admittedly, demographically more advantaged than family literacy participants). Specifically, English scores put children in the 58<sup>th</sup> percentile at Time 1 and the 35<sup>th</sup> percentile at Time 2, and Spanish scores put them at the 52<sup>nd</sup> percentile at Time 1 and the 36<sup>th</sup> percentile at Time 2.

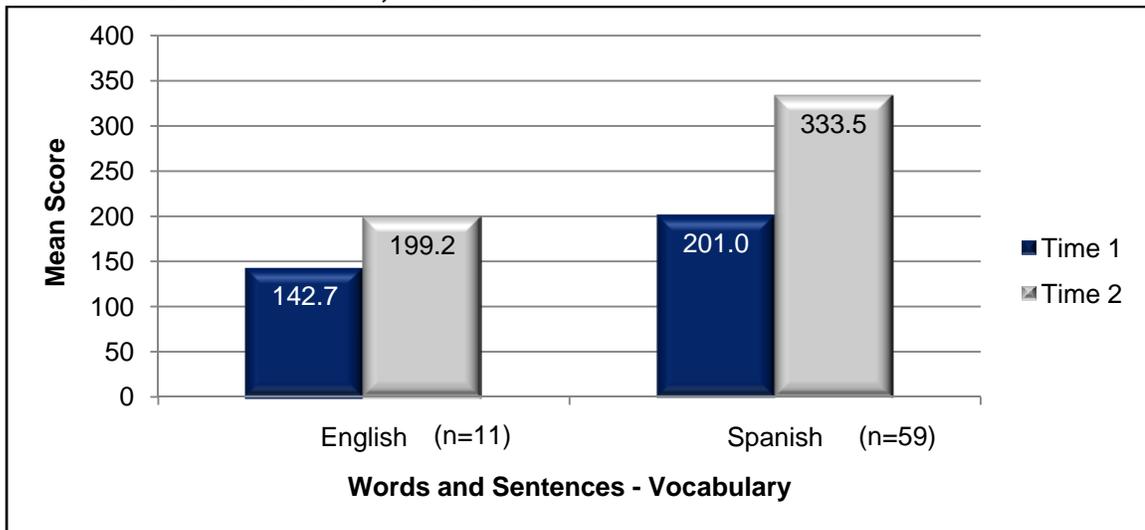
**Exhibit 4.10: Children’s growth on the vocabulary portion of the MacArthur CDI, Words and Gestures form, Year 6**



Source: Year 6 MacArthur CDI data downloaded from the data system.

- Children in the 16-to-30-month age range (who received 442 hours of ECE services, on average, over the year) understood and could say 142.7 English words at Time 1 and 199.2 at Time 2, on average. On the Spanish form, children understood and could say approximately 201.0 words at Time 1 and 333.5 words at Time 2, on average.

**Exhibit 4.11: Children’s growth on the vocabulary portion of the MacArthur CDI, Words and Sentences form, Year 6**



Source: Year 6 MacArthur CDI data downloaded from the data system.

- Again, raw scores suggest growth in children’s vocabularies, but percentile scores are essentially the same at Time 1 (36<sup>th</sup> percentile) and Time 2 (34<sup>th</sup> percentile), at least for English. For Spanish, we see slight growth (approaching significance at  $p=.0847$ ) from Time 1 (33<sup>rd</sup> percentile) to Time 2 (39<sup>th</sup> percentile).

## Preschool children’s outcomes

For a sample of 3-to-5-year-olds, we assessed knowledge and skills in a number of domains – English language skills, receptive vocabulary, emergent literacy, and emergent math – using standardized tools in one-on-one sessions with trained assessors. One hundred children were assessed in both the fall and spring of Year 5 on each of the measures to assess growth over time. Some comparisons with studies of children of comparable ages in Early Head Start (assessed just before entry to kindergarten) (Love et al, 2005),<sup>16</sup> State Preschool (assessed in pre-kindergarten) (Early et al., 2005), and First 5 LA School Readiness Initiative programs (assessed at the end of the year prior to kindergarten enrollment) (Quick, Hauser, & Parrish, 2008) are made where relevant.<sup>17</sup>

### *Language development*

Preschool-aged children’s English proficiency was assessed using the Pre-LAS (Duncan & DeAvila, 1998) English screener to determine whether they should be assessed in English or Spanish. Results indicate that the English language skills of the average child assessed were not sufficient for further assessment in English, though by Time 2, English proficiency had increased significantly (see Exhibit 4.12).

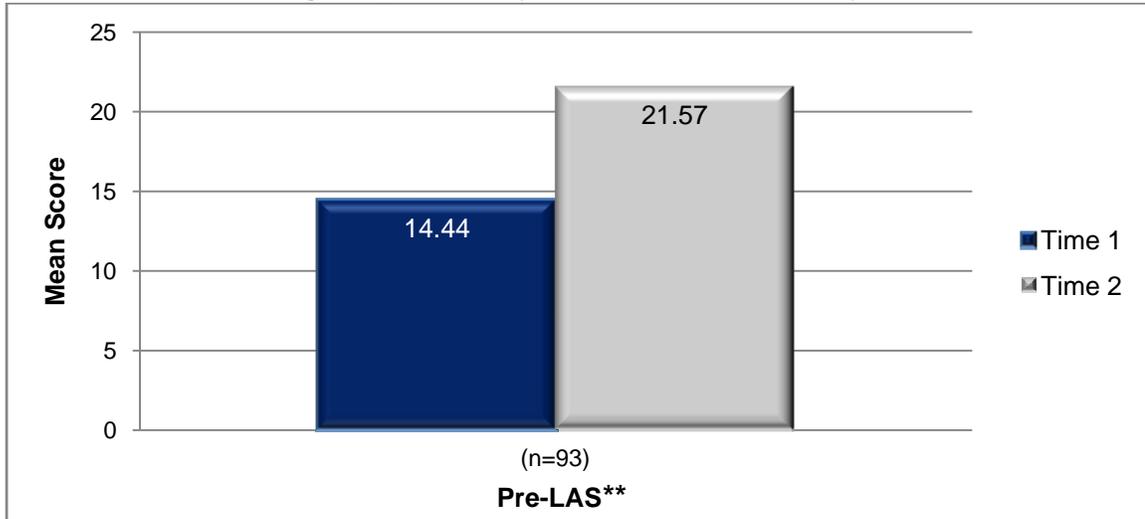
- Consistent with results from prior years, children showed statistically significant growth on English language skills as measured by the Pre-LAS English screener. The mean Time 2 score was 21.57, significantly higher than the mean Time 1 score of 14.44. Scores at both time points were well below a “passing” score of 31, and, as a result, the majority of children were assessed in Spanish rather than English on each of the other outcome measures.

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<sup>16</sup> Data from both the treatment and control groups from the Early Head Start study are included in the comparison sample.

<sup>17</sup> Significance testing to determine whether family literacy children’s scores were statistically different from scores of children in the comparison groups was not conducted. These comparisons should be used for reference purposes only, rather than for drawing conclusions about the relative impact of each intervention.

**Exhibit 4.12: Mean English proficiency scores as measured by the Pre-LAS, Year 5**



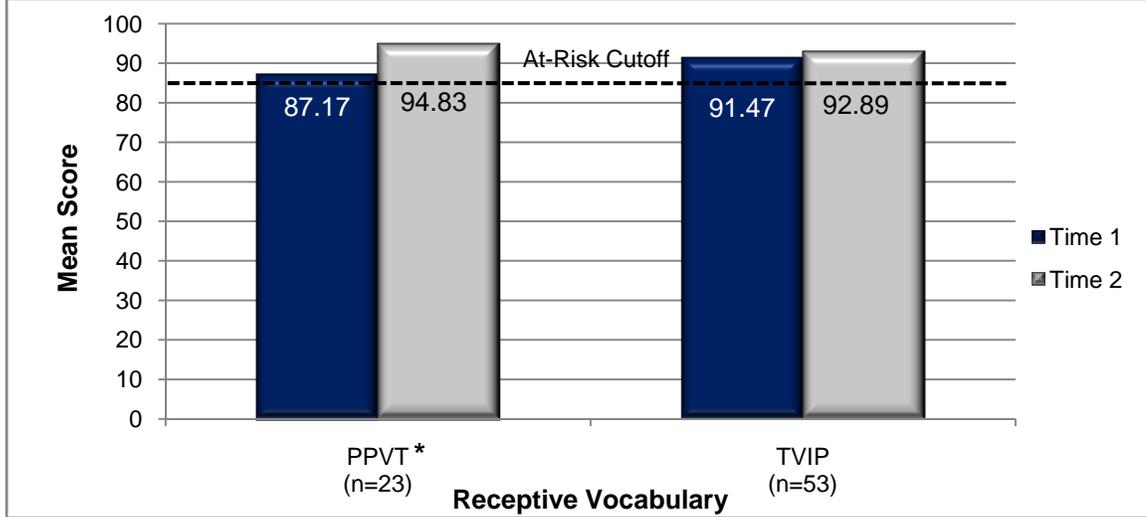
Source: Child outcomes substudy.  
\*\*p<.01

- The mean Time 2 score appeared to be somewhat lower than the end-of-year scores for the School Readiness study (25.90) but higher than scores from the State Pre-K study (18.22).

Children’s receptive vocabulary was assessed using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (PPVT-III) (Dunn & Dunn, 1997) for English, and its Spanish version – the Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody (TVIP) (Dunn, Lugo, Padilla, & Dunn, 1986) – was used to assess receptive vocabulary in Spanish. Analyses of the PPVT data indicate that children’s English language development showed statistically significant growth, bringing their average scores nearly up to nationwide norms, revealing an *acceleration* in family literacy children’s receptive vocabulary development (see Exhibit 4.13).

- Children’s average receptive vocabulary scores (on the PPVT) show statistically significant growth from Time 1 (87.18) to Time 2 (94.83). While we would expect to see growth as a result of natural development on most of the other assessments described in this section, the PPVT is standardized, and scores are therefore adjusted for the age of the child. Growth on this measure indicates an *acceleration* of vocabulary development above and beyond what one would expect as a result of maturation.
- It is also important to note that scores at both time points are above the 85 point cutoff for being considered “at risk,” which means that the assessed children are within one standard deviation of the norms for their age. Furthermore, by Time 2, children were scoring quite close to the national norm of 100 points.

**Exhibit 4.13: Mean receptive vocabulary scores as measured by the PPVT and TVIP, Year 5**



Source: Child outcomes substudy.

\*p<.05

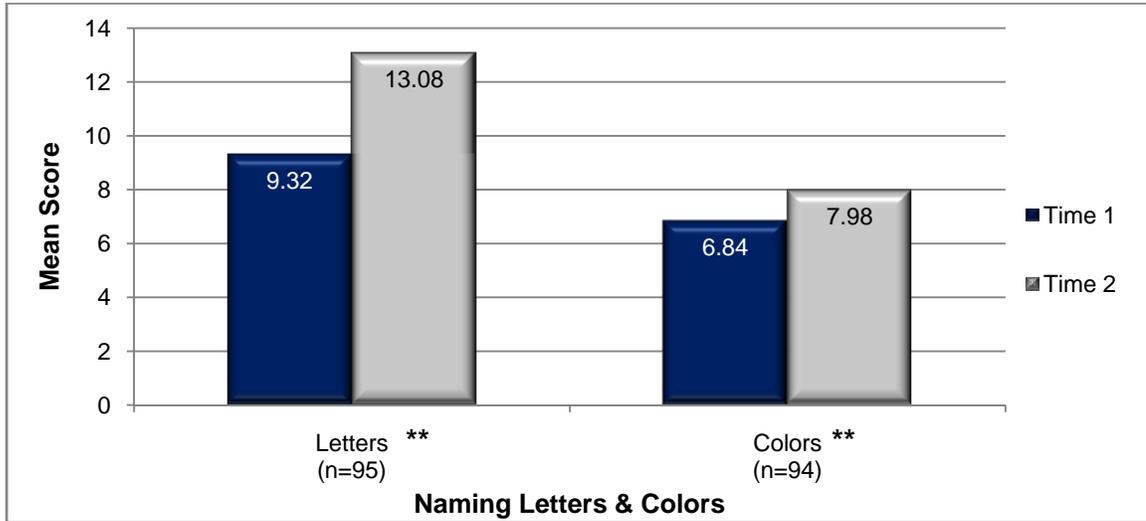
- In addition, as a point of comparison, the Time 2 mean score (94.83) appeared to be somewhat higher than comparable scores from the School Readiness (89.61), State Pre-K (89.52), and Early Head Start (89.07) studies.
- On the other hand, scores on the TVIP – the Spanish language equivalent of the PPVT – did not show statistically significant growth from Time 1 to Time 2, although scores at both time points were above the “at-risk” cutoff.

***Emergent literacy skills***

In a recent review of 300 peer-reviewed research articles, the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) reported that there was strong evidence that preschool performance on alphabet knowledge tasks and naming of letters, numbers, colors, or objects (in addition to writing and phonological awareness and memory) predicted later reading and writing skills (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Using a series of naming tasks to assess children’s performance on these skills, we find significant growth in children’s ability to name letters and colors over the course of the program year (see Exhibit 4.14).

- Children showed statistically significant growth on their ability to name letters, increasing from 9.32 out of 26 letters at Time 1 to 13.08 letters at Time 2, on average. This was close to the 14.9 letters that School Readiness children could name but apparently higher than the 10.02 letters that State Pre-K children could name.
- Children also were able to name more colors at Time 2 (7.98 out of 10) compared to Time 1 (6.84), on par with State Pre-K children (who named 7.99 colors) and perhaps slightly lower than School Readiness children (who named 8.72 colors at the end of the program year).

**Exhibit 4.14: Mean number of letters and colors children named, Year 5**



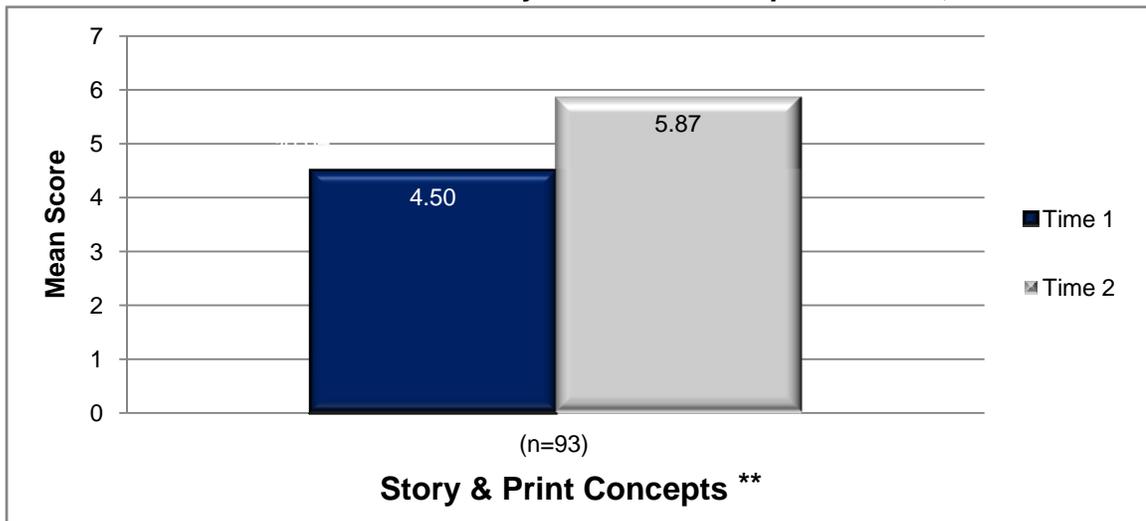
Source: Child outcomes substudy.

\*\*p<.01

In addition to emergent language skills, alphabet knowledge, and color identification, we assessed children’s emergent literacy skills – specifically their knowledge of books, print conventions, and story comprehension – using the Story and Print Concepts test. Overall, children’s concepts of print and comprehension skills improved significantly over time (see Exhibit 4.15).

- Over the course of the program year, children showed statistically significant growth – from a mean score of 4.50 to a mean score of 5.87 – on the Story and Print Concepts measure of their concepts about print and story comprehension.
- Scores were comparable with School Readiness study children (5.76) but perhaps somewhat lower than Early Head Start children (7.54).

**Exhibit 4.15: Mean scores on the Story and Print Concepts measure, Year 5**



Source: Child outcomes substudy.

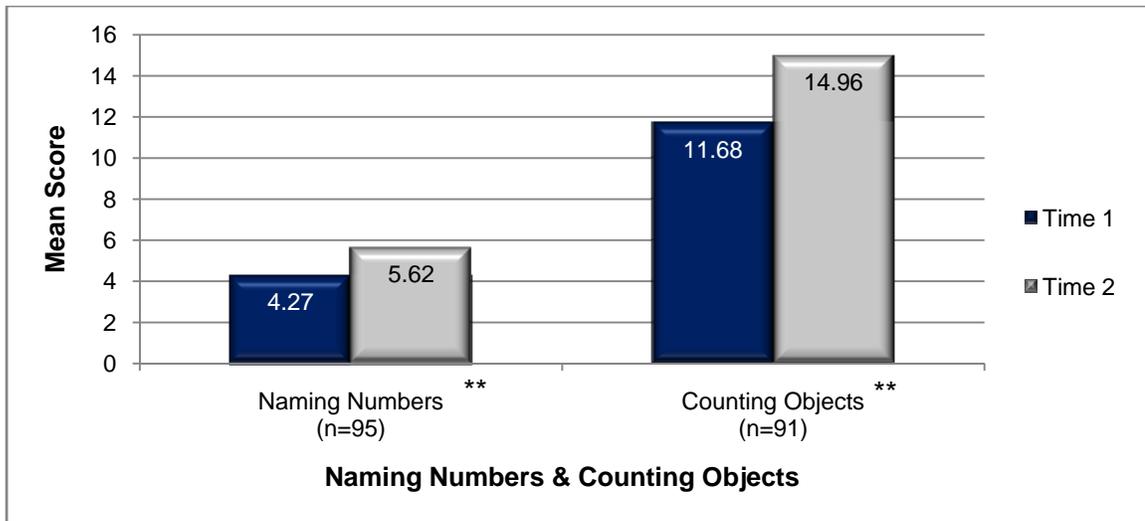
\*\*p<.01

**Emergent mathematics skills**

Beyond language and literacy development, the development of numeracy and other early mathematics skills are also important for preparing children for school, and are an important focus of family literacy programs. These skills were assessed with number-naming and object-counting tasks and a problem-solving assessment – the Woodcock-Johnson/Woodcock-Muñoz Applied Problems Subtest (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001). Family literacy children showed statistically significant growth in number naming and object counting (see Exhibit 4.16), though no significant growth was observed on the higher-order problem-solving assessment (see Exhibit 4.17).

- Children participating in family literacy programs showed statistically significant growth on their ability to name numbers, naming 5.62 numbers (out of 10) by Time 2, similar to State Pre-K children (who named 5.64 numbers, on average), though perhaps a little lower than School Readiness children (who named 6.68 numbers, on average).
- Children’s ability to count objects also demonstrated a statistically significant increase from Time 1 to Time 2, increasing from 11.68 to 14.96. It appears that this is somewhat lower than the mean score of 17 for School Readiness and 16.93 for State Preschool.

**Exhibit 4.16: Mean number of numbers children named and objects children counted, Year 5**

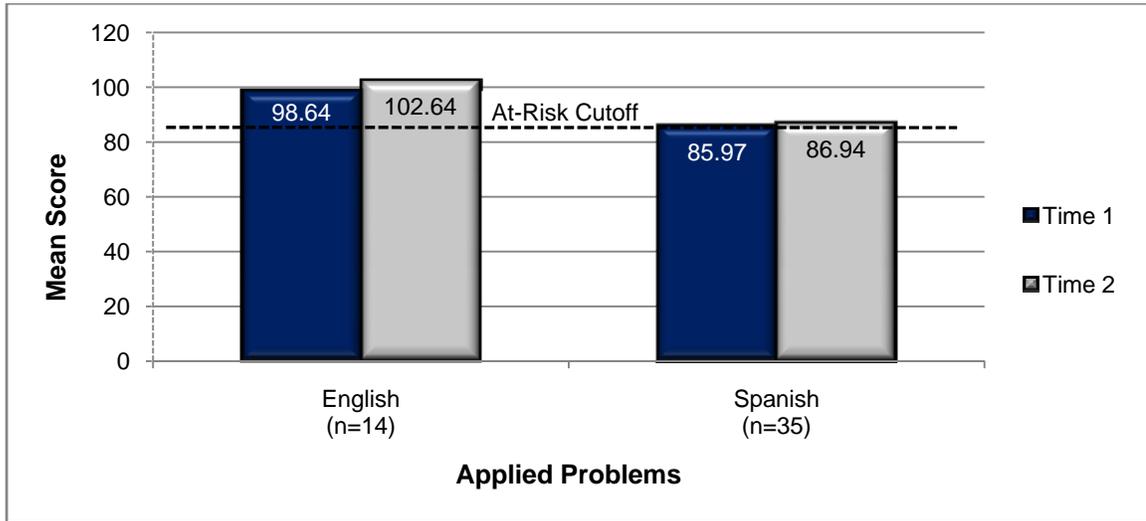


Source: Child outcomes substudy.

\*\*p<.01

- Neither children completing the English nor the Spanish version of the Applied Problems subtest of the Woodcock-Johnson/Woodcock-Muñoz showed statistically significant gains on this measure. Spanish speakers scored just above the “at-risk” cutoff, though English speakers’ scores were essentially equivalent to the national average score of 100 (98.64 at Time 1 and 102.64 at Time 2).

**Exhibit 4.17: Mean scores on the Woodcock-Johnson/Woodcock-Muñoz Applied Problems subtest, Year 5**



Source: Child outcomes substudy.

- Compared with School Readiness children (whose average year-end score was 97.4 for English and 83.88 for Spanish) and State Pre-K children (whose average year-end score was 96.46 for English and 79.51 for Spanish), family literacy children appeared to outperform comparison samples on the Spanish version by the end of the year but scored slightly lower on the English assessment.

### **Relationships between child outcomes and quality indicators**

We also explored the relationships between children’s outcomes and the quality of the early childhood classroom environment and learning experience, and we find a few significant correlations. In particular, we find positive links between children’s receptive vocabulary and literacy-rich environments and experiences for children.

- We find a significant correlation ( $r=.35, p<.05$ ) between scores on the ECERS-E literacy subscale and PPVT scores at Time 2, suggesting a positive relationship between the support provided for children’s literacy development in print recognition, reading, and writing and their receptive vocabulary in English.
- We also find significant correlations between the amount of time children spent learning about letters and sounds and their receptive vocabulary ( $r=.49, p<.05$ ) as well as with their ability to name colors at Time 2 ( $r=.30, p<.05$ ).
- The amount of time children were being read to was positively correlated with their ability to count objects ( $r=.33, p<.05$ ) at Time 2.
- No significant relationships were observed between CLASS scores and children’s outcomes.
- There were also no significant relationships between the quality indicators and children’s normed scores on the MacArthur CDI at the end of the program year, though, again, sample sizes were very small.

## **Relationship between parent behaviors and children's outcomes**

In addition to direct impacts on children through ECE services, family literacy programs also strive to impact children's learning and development indirectly through effecting changes in parent knowledge and behaviors. To examine these indirect links, we assessed the relationships between parent behaviors and children's outcomes, and find some significant correlations. First, we find that certain home literacy activities – namely reading together at home and working together on learning numbers, letters, or words – are associated with more positive children's outcomes.

- We find statistically significant correlations between parent reports of reading to their children at home and children's ability to count objects ( $r=0.32$ ,  $p<.05$ ).
- Parent reports of engaging their children in learning about numbers, letters, or words is significantly related to objective assessments of children's ability to name letters ( $R=0.29$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and numbers ( $r=0.32$ ,  $p<.05$ ), indicating a real connection between what parents are doing and children's developing skills.
- Parents working on learning numbers, letters, or words with their children at home was also significantly related to oral language skills in English ( $r=0.35$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and children's concepts about print and story comprehension skills ( $r=0.55$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

In addition to connections with parent reports of their behaviors at home, we find significant correlations between parents' observed behaviors during a parent-child book-reading session (described in more detail in Chapter 3) and children's outcomes.

- We find significant correlations between the amount of “immediate content” talk – that is, parents' talk about the literal content of the story (for example, asking the child to identify what is in a picture) – and children's oral language skills ( $r=0.35$ ,  $p<.05$ ).
- Parents' use of specific prompts to engage their children is associated with children's receptive vocabulary ( $r=0.44$ ,  $p<.05$ ).
- We do not see significant relationships between parents' use of “non-immediate content” talk – talk that goes beyond the literal content of the story to extend the child's learning – and children's outcomes. As noted earlier, we observe relatively low levels of this kind of talk, which is associated with the development of reading skills later on. Instead we find that the relative emphasis on immediate talk compared to non-immediate talk is associated with the very concrete outcomes of naming colors ( $r=0.26$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and numbers ( $r=0.26$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

## **Summary and Recommendations**

In this chapter, we explored quality and outcomes for the ECE component of family literacy programs. Highlights of the findings and bulleted recommendations are summarized below.

### **Indicators of quality in the ECE component**

The nature and quality of the early childhood education component varies from program to program. On average, across the Initiative, ECE programs reflect some aspects of quality, but could be strengthened in other areas. Teachers – the most important resource in the ECE classroom – are relatively experienced, with slightly less than 10 years of teaching experience, on average. Just under half of ECE teachers surveyed reported having a bachelor's degree, 50.8% reported having a degree or coursework in early childhood education, and two-thirds reported holding at least a CDA or

associate teacher permit. Teacher-child ratios were lower, on average, than those considered optimal – 26% lower than NAEYC recommendations, which are similar to CDE regulations for Title V programs; this warrants some attention.

- Given the relatively low teacher-child ratios, programs should consider exploring options for increasing the presence of well-trained adults in the classroom to ensure that children are getting the level of attention considered optimal to scaffold their learning.

Interactions between children and adults were rated in the “medium quality” range on the CLASS in terms of emotional support and classroom organization. Of greater concern, however, is the “low quality” rating, on average, for instructional support, which is most predictive of positive outcomes later. Teachers were also observed to interact with children most frequently in a didactic manner, with relatively little scaffolding and elaboration of children’s responses.

- To enhance teacher-child interactions and support scaffolding of children’s learning, the FLSN should consider offering training to provide teachers with strategies for modeling language, expanding on children’s responses, scaffolding their learning, and fostering concept development and higher-order thinking skills. The CLASS manual and training videos could be used to support a training and technical assistance initiative in these areas.

Use of a formal curriculum and formal lesson planning are widespread, and teachers reported using a variety of strategies to assess children’s learning and development. Regarding the content focus of activities in the ECE classroom, teachers rated all topics as very important. Most likely to be rated as the top priority, though, were social-emotional development and language development, followed by literacy learning. Independent observations of classroom activities suggest that about equal attention is given to language and literacy activities as to “aesthetics” activities (such as art and music), and most of the literacy time was characterized as having adults read to children. The average rating on the ECERS-E literacy subscale was just below “good” quality, though there was wide variation among grantees. ECERS-E ratings were highest for books and literacy materials, and lowest for writing and sounds in words.

- Although the relative attention to language and literacy activities appears to have increased since Years 2 and 3, more emphasis on these activities, especially going beyond reading to children to address phonological awareness and the development of writing awareness and skills is warranted.
- Given the wide variation in ECERS-E scores, the FLSN should consider targeting its technical assistance to grantees that have a particular need for creating more literacy-rich environments and experiences for children.

Overall, teachers reported that the quantity and quality of materials and resources were sufficient for their needs. Materials for diverse learners, especially for children with special needs, were rated somewhat lower.

- Programs should consider targeting resources toward learning materials for children with special needs as well as linguistically and culturally appropriate materials to ensure that diverse learning needs are met and that all children feel represented in the classroom.

ECE teachers reported feeling relatively well informed about the activities in the PCILA classroom, but somewhat less aware of the content of parenting classes, and even less aware of what goes on in the adult education classroom. The majority of ECE teachers reported integrating themes or topics

discussed in other components in their classroom activities, and about half made some modifications to their curriculum for the purposes of integration.

- The FLSN should consider offering training or technical assistance to program staff on specific strategies for integrating ECE with the other components, especially with parenting and adult education.

## Outcomes for children

Comparisons of assessment data from Time 1 to Time 2 provide evidence that children are enhancing their language skills, especially in English. Pre-LAS scores increased for 3-5-year-olds in the child outcomes substudy, as did PPVT scores – which indicates that children’s language development *accelerated* to bring them up to nearly the level of national norms (which were developed from a more advantaged sample). Sample sizes for the MacArthur CDI were too small to make general statements about language development for the 8-to-30-month-old children, though the children in the sample are continuing to develop their language skills as well.

- To adequately assess the progress of children in the birth-to-three age range, we recommend that programs use the MacArthur CDI with all of their 8-to-30-month-old children and follow administration guidelines to ensure that pre- and post-tests are administered on time and with the correct form.

Children demonstrated statistically significant growth on emergent literacy skills as well. By the end of the year, children could name more letters and colors, and demonstrated greater concepts of print and story comprehension. These are important skills that are predictive of later achievement.

Assessments of numeracy and early math skills showed significant growth in terms of naming numbers and counting objects, but not in terms of problem solving.

- Given the lack of accelerated growth on the measure of problem-solving skills and the comparatively lower reported (and observed) attention to mathematics in the ECE classroom, programs should consider strategies for integrating more opportunities for mathematical and scientific exploration and thinking for children in their classrooms.

Finally, we find that certain home literacy activities – namely, reading together at home and working together on learning numbers, letters, or words – are associated with more positive children’s outcomes.

## **Chapter 5: Additional Characteristics of Program Quality and FLSN Support for Improvement**

First 5 LA funds are intended to help grantees expand or enhance their family literacy programs with a focus on improving the quality of their programs and services. In addition to providing direct funding in support of this notion, First 5 LA also funded the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) to provide assistance – through training and technical assistance – to grantees for such program improvement activities. This chapter explores issues around program quality improvement. Specifically, we examine:

- Aspects of overall program quality – indicators of quality that go beyond individual program components, which are described in detail in Chapters 2, 3, and 4
- The FLSN’s work to support grantee program improvement
- Grantee perceptions of their own program improvement needs and their satisfaction with FLSN services
- Relationships between FLSN support and grantee program improvement
- Barriers to program improvement

Data for this chapter come from several sources. Program quality data come primarily from Year 6 surveys and interviews of program directors, though some information from Year 5 surveys is also used for comparison purposes. Data on the FLSN’s activities come from interviews with FLSN staff, program director interviews and surveys, document reviews, and FLSN’s summaries of their site visit notes.

### ***Aspects of Overall Program Quality***

Previous chapters of this report focused on the quality of the individual components of the family literacy programs – including adult education, parenting education, PCILA, and ECE. In this section, we draw on program director surveys and interviews to explore overall program quality – that is, factors that cross individual component areas. We began the process of exploring overall program quality by asking program directors to reflect on factors that contribute to effective family literacy services.

Program directors discussed the elements of high-quality family literacy programs, identifying factors that cross individual components. The majority of directors emphasized the importance of teacher quality, which included teachers who value parents, are culturally competent, and are responsive to the needs of children. According to program directors, teaching quality is supported by regular staff evaluation and professional development opportunities. In addition, directors discussed the need for quality instruction across components, the use of evidence-based practices, and environments that promote learning for both children and adults.

Parent involvement was also described as the foundation for effective family literacy programs. Program directors indicated that staff should work in partnership with parents, promote and encourage their involvement in their children’s experience in the program, and support parents’ roles as their child’s first teacher and advocate. Moreover, directors described how staff should engage

parents in shared decision-making and program governance, and gather their input regarding the services they and their children receive.

Other factors that impact quality, according to program directors, include regular communication among all stakeholders, including staff and parents; component integration; use of data; the provision of referrals to needed services and supports; strong program leadership; financial stability; and collaborations with other community organizations.

The remainder of this section delves deeper into many of these issues cited by program directors as critical to overall program quality of the family literacy grantees. We focus specifically on:

- Program leadership and personnel practices
- Recruitment, attendance, and retention practices
- Component integration
- Family goal setting and referrals
- Cultural competence
- Parent leadership
- Use of data
- Sustainability

### **Program leadership and personnel practices**

Program staff – teachers and program leaders – are a family literacy program’s greatest resource. Having a qualified program director and policies and practices that support staff development and commitment to quality are important for effective family literacy programs. In our examination of program director experience, we find that, overall, program directors are relatively well educated, with experience teaching in one or more family literacy components. More than a third also juggle teaching responsibilities in addition to their director responsibilities.

- Nine out of ten (90.9%) program directors reported having at least a bachelor’s degree, and 77.3% reported having a graduate degree or some graduate coursework.
- The majority of program directors have a background in general education, special education, or psychology (71.4%), and many have degrees in administration, business, or education policy (42.9%).
- Almost half (47.6%) of the program directors have a degree in a field related to early childhood (ECE, child development, or human development), and a similar number (45.5%) have taught ECE.
- More than two thirds (68.2%) have taught parenting education or PCILA classes.
- Just under one quarter (23.8%) of program directors have an adult education or ESL background, and 40.9% have taught some form of adult education classes.
- A significant minority of program directors (38.1%) reported holding a teaching position in one or more of the four components in addition to the director role in Year 6.

Although staffing the four component areas with qualified staff and accessing appropriate training opportunities did not appear to be significant challenges for grantee programs as reported by program directors, other findings indicate that there may be some challenges in regard to staff quality, including infrequent observations of teaching staff, limited paid planning time for staff, and difficulty providing coverage for staff to attend training.

- Staffing the four components with qualified staff did not appear to pose a significant challenge for the majority of program directors: 22.7% of directors indicated it was a moderate or large challenge for the adult education component, 18.2% said so for the parenting education component, 13.6% said so for the ECE component, and only 9.1% indicated so for the PCILA component.
- Most programs have written job descriptions or expectations for all staff (86.4%) and conduct annual reviews of job performance for staff (72.7% reported doing so), but far fewer conduct quarterly observations of teaching staff (18.2% reported doing so).
- Just under half (45.5%) of all program directors reported providing weekly paid planning time for teachers.
- Almost half of the program directors (45.5%) indicated that providing staff time and/or substitutes so teachers could attend training was a moderate or large challenge. However, identifying appropriate training opportunities and putting into practice what staff have learned from trainings were not identified as major challenges for the majority of programs.

### **Recruitment, attendance, and retention**

Recruiting the families best suited for family literacy services, encouraging high levels of participation, and retaining these families throughout the year are important for maximizing impact on the population targeted by family literacy programs. The majority of programs appear to have successful recruitment strategies – most have recruitment plans and up-to-date waiting lists, and report experiencing only minor challenges recruiting families.

- Only 18.2% of program directors indicated that recruiting families was a moderate or large challenge.
- Just under two-thirds (63.6%) of programs reported having a written recruitment plan specifying target populations and recruiting methods, and 77.3% have a waiting list that is kept up to date.

Grantees were also successful in Years 5 and 6 in achieving high attendance rates – higher even than in prior years. Most programs have in place policies to support high levels of participation and reported that achieving high attendance rates was not a major challenge.

- Most programs have a written attendance policy for parents (86.4%) and provide an orientation to parents to convey clear messages about what to expect from the program (77.3%).
- A minority of program directors (27.3%) reported that achieving high attendance rates was a moderate or large challenge.

- Mean attendance rates for all components in Years 5 and 6 were higher than in prior years, at over 80%.<sup>18</sup>

**Exhibit 5.1: Mean attendance hours and rates for each component, by year**

	Year 5		Year 6	
	Mean hours attended per month (N)	Mean attendance rate	Mean hours attended per month (N)	Mean attendance rate
<b>Adults</b>				
Adult education	38.5 (795)	81.1%	42.2 (842)	81.8%
Parenting education	7.6 (796)	81.3%	7.6 (844)	80.2%
PCILA	11.3 (796)	84.0%	11.6 (843)	83.7%
<b>Children</b>				
ECE	50.7 (975)	81.1%	50.9 (1036)	82.1%
PCILA	11.0 (969)	83.5%	11.0 (966)	81.8%

Source: Year 5 and 6 service data downloaded from the grantee data system.

Retaining families also does not seem to be a major challenge for programs, though once families do leave the family literacy programs, few program directors reported following up with them to provide ongoing support or assistance.

- Only 18.2% of program directors reported challenges regarding retention. On average, families participated in program services for more than seven months in Year 5 and more than seven months in Year 6. Over the two-year period, adults remained in the program for 9.6 months and children for 9.3 months, on average.
- Most program directors (81.8%) reported documenting the reasons why participants leave the program, but only 40.9% reported that they provide ongoing support or follow-up for families after they leave the program.

<sup>18</sup> Attendance rates are calculated by dividing the number of hours attended by the number of hours offered for each individual. Mean hours offered are presented in Chapter 2 (for adult education), Chapter 3 (for parenting education and PCILA classes), and Chapter 4 (for ECE).

**Exhibit 5.2: Mean duration of families' participation in each component, by year**

	Year 5		Year 6	
	Mean hours attended per year (N)	Mean months attended per year (N)	Mean hours attended per year (N)	Mean months attended per year (N)
Adults—total	440.6 (796)	7.3 (796)	475.3 (844)	7.6 (844)
Adult education	297.0 (795)	—	326.5 (842)	—
Parenting education	57.8 (796)	—	58.0 (844)	—
PCILA	86.2 (796)	—	91.7 (843)	—
Children—total	454.6 (975)	7.2 (975)	474.0 (1,036)	7.3 (1,036)
ECE	373.8 (975)	—	394.6 (1,036)	—
PCILA	81.4 (969)	—	85.2 (966)	—

Source: Year 5 and 6 service data downloaded from the grantee data system.

## Component integration

Programs vary in the extent to which and ways in which they integrate services across component areas, with fewer than half following formal integration plans. One of the most common approaches to support component integration is to hold regular integration meetings with teachers from each of the four components, an activity required of grantees by First 5 LA. As we found in past years, adult education teachers are least likely to participate in these meetings.

- Only 40.9% of program directors reported they have a written plan that guides component integration.
- Half of the family literacy programs conduct planning meetings with teachers from all four components at least monthly. One program director described their approach this way:
 

*“[...We] have a site supervisor and an adult school coordinator that work very closely together, and the teachers meet once a week – and that means all teachers from the four components. We pay additional money for them to come in and articulate and write lesson plans together thematically.”*
- According to program directors, PCILA teachers and parenting education teachers are most likely to attend these weekly or monthly meetings to support joint planning and integration (86.4% report PCILA teachers attend to a large or moderate extent, and 81.9% report parenting teachers attend to a large or moderate extent).
- Nearly as many program directors report that ECE teachers attend (77.3%), but only 63.7% of program directors report that adult education teachers attend these integration meetings.
- In many cases, when holding meetings with teachers from all four components is not feasible, the program director or family literacy coordinator serves as the conduit through which information is shared among teachers of each component – 86% of program directors reported using this strategy to a large or moderate extent.

**Exhibit 5.3: Percentage of program directors reporting having a written integration plan and holding regular meetings to support component integration**

	Year 5	Year 6
Written plan guides integration	57.1%	40.9%
Program holds monthly planning meetings with teachers from all four components	52.4%	50.0%
PCILA teachers attend regular integration meetings to a moderate or large extent	85.7%	86.4%
Parenting education teachers attend regular integration meetings to a moderate or large extent	71.4%	81.9%
ECE teachers attend regular integration meetings to a moderate or large extent	76.2%	77.3%
Adult education teachers attend regular integration meetings to a moderate or large extent	61.9%	63.7%

Source: Year 5 and 6 program director surveys.

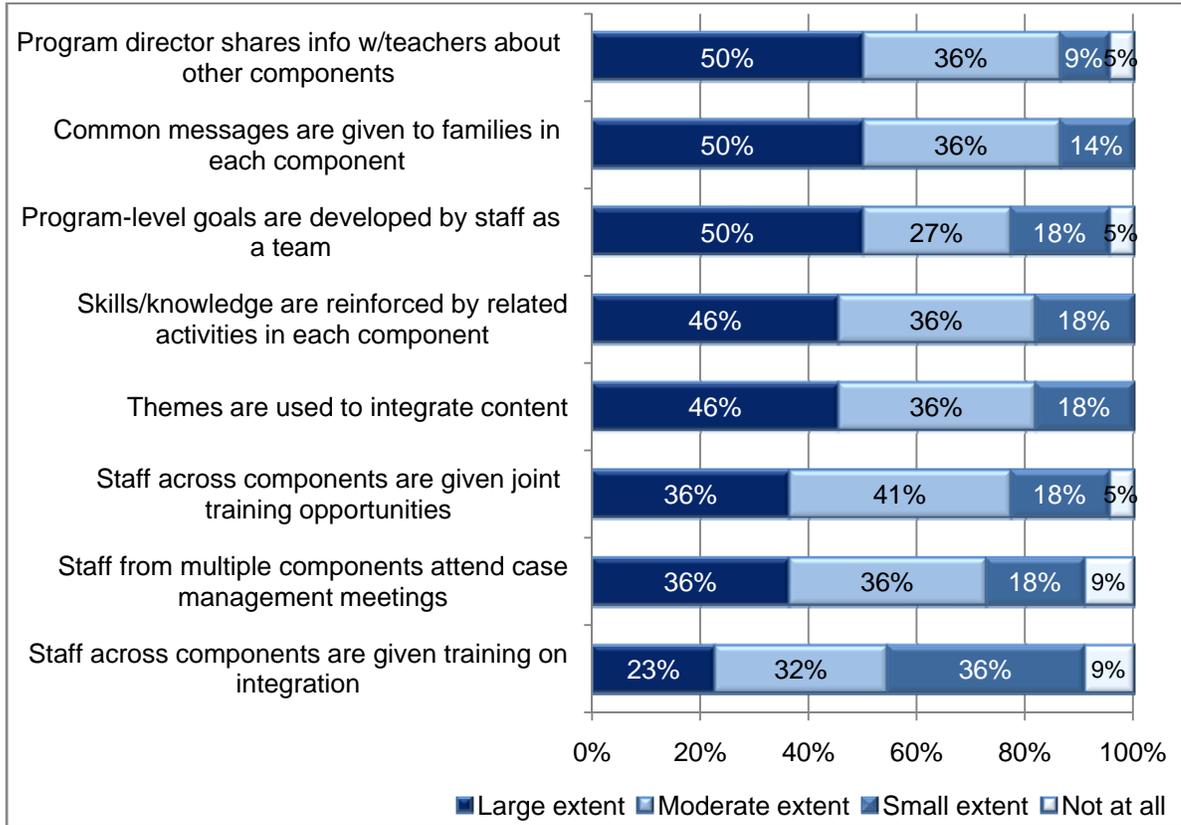
Another common approach is to reinforce core messages across the four components, for example, by using thematic units to align the content presented in each component with that of the other three components. Grantees are required by First 5 LA to “develop activities and materials that are coordinated across components” (Family Literacy Initiative Scope of Work).

- Approximately half of program directors reported conveying common messages and learning expectations to families in each component (50%), reinforcing skills and knowledge by related activities in each component (46%), and integrating instructional content by using themes (46%) to a large extent. More than 80% reported using at least one of these strategies to at least a moderate extent.
- Program directors described their approaches to using themes in different ways:

*“We’ve integrated PCILA and ECE this year and integrated some of the pieces of parenting. Next year we’ve actually adopted a new parent ed. curriculum... and so we will integrate that thematically, and perhaps in terms of vocabulary, so that all of the components match. We will give adult ed. an outline of vocabulary and key concepts being learned in those three components so they can mirror that in their ESL activities.”*

*“The themes are discussed across the different classes. We teach [the teachers] how to make activities out of the themes. We talk about these themes all week and incorporate them into learning concepts.”*

**Exhibit 5.4: Percentage of program directors reporting various strategies for component integration**



Source: Year 6 program director surveys.

A somewhat less common strategy for supporting component integration is through training opportunities. Even with the FLSN providing training to grantee staff, program directors reported relatively little attention to training around integration.

- Just over three-quarters of program directors provide staff across components with joint training opportunities to a moderate or large extent. Only a third reported they do this to a large extent.
- Providing training specifically on strategies for integration was the least commonly reported strategy for improving integration – only 23% reported doing this to a large extent, and 32% reported doing this to a moderate extent.

When asked, only one program director considered her program to be fully integrated, and integration continues to be a challenge across grantees. Program directors described a range of barriers to integration, including inflexible curricula, resistant teachers, and limited funding for joint planning meetings.

- Survey results indicated that 45.5% of program directors rated “integrating all four components of the program” as a moderate or large challenge.

- The adult education component is notably the most difficult to integrate, due to inflexible curricula or teachers who are unwilling to make adjustments. For example, one director described her situation:

*“The ESL teachers are the ones that have the hardest time integrating because they have their own curriculum, and they’re used to doing it that way, and they’re really focused around language. They just get a little stuck in their ways.”*

- Another program director described how other teachers have been reluctant to integrate across component areas, though it is beginning to improve:

*“I didn’t anticipate how staff would see their own limitations and how that would hinder integration. People think ‘that’s not my area.’ But we need to make people open to learning how to embrace it [integration] and make this part of your area because we work with families, and our jobs don’t just end with children or parents. I see the staff really starting to understand.”*

- Another director indicated that there were limited funds to pay teachers to participate in cross-component staff meetings.

## **Meeting family needs: Goal setting, referrals to services, and leadership opportunities**

The importance of family engagement is a value that is embraced across all components of the family literacy programs. The following section focuses on specific factors related to meeting the needs of families, including family goal setting, referrals to services and follow-up, and parent leadership opportunities.

### ***Goal setting***

Many programs engage families in a goal-setting process to encourage their growth and development. Programs vary in regard to how they work with families to identify goals and develop a plan to achieve them.

- A majority of program directors reported that program staff meet with families to set goals for parents (77.3%), for children (63.6%), and for the family as a whole (72.7%).
- Goal setting sometimes occurs in the context of a workshop as part of the parenting class or in a one-on-one session at intake. In many programs, all of the teachers, across components, are aware of families’ goals, whereas in some programs, only the parent education teacher or family advocate is involved in the process.
- A majority of program directors also reported that routine meetings occur with families to reassess these family (68.2%), parent (77.2%), and child (59.1%) goals – at least twice a year, but sometimes as often as monthly or on an individualized basis.

### ***Referrals to additional services***

Meeting the needs of families includes ensuring they have access to services beyond the four component areas of the program. Grantees are required by First 5 LA to provide referral and follow-up between collaborative agencies, documenting these agreements with memoranda of understanding

(MOUs). Survey results indicated that while programs help parents connect to a wide variety of needed services, not all maintain formal mechanisms for documenting referrals and follow-up.

- Many program directors (59.1%) reported having written procedures in place for referring participants to community services.
- Programs provide referrals to a wide range of services, including transportation, immigration services, health care and mental health services, and food assistance, among others. Some programs also provide these services to families directly, often in collaboration with partner agencies that bring services to the program site, such as with health or immigration workshops.
- Nearly three-quarters (72.7%) of program directors reported having a system in place for documenting referrals, but only 40.9% reported having a protocol for following up on referrals to confirm that the additional services are received and appropriate.

### **Parent leadership**

Parent leadership can result in a number of benefits; for one, parents' self-esteem and confidence can increase as they succeed in new activities. They can also gain confidence in their role as advocates for their children, enhancing their ability to support their children's learning and growth. Most family literacy programs offer opportunities for parents to be involved in program governance and other leadership activities.

- Survey findings indicate that 8 out of 10 programs (81.8%) maintain a parent advisory council or board.
- Directors discussed how parents are involved in a variety of program governance, shared decision-making, and other leadership opportunities at their programs. Some programs have very formal leadership positions for parents:

*"They [parents] have elected representatives from each of the three sites. They [help make] any decisions that involve the program, from scheduling concerns to anything involved in the management of the program. Parents are very involved."*

*"They are truly involved in all areas of the program – looking at the assessment survey, establishing goals and objectives, establishing and reviewing the budget, as well as the hiring process. They select a personnel committee and screen and interview everyone who gets hired at the program... They are involved in all types of ways – truly involved.... looking at written plans and how to deliver education services...."*

- Other programs have less formal opportunities for parents to participate in decision-making:

*"They do a lot of planning of activities... they take on leadership roles, they help in the classroom, they make decisions... If they don't like something, they tell us. They take ownership of their learning."*

*"They are advocates for themselves. They say, 'we do or don't like such and such.'"*

### **Cultural competence**

All of the program directors emphasized the importance of cultural competence in meeting the needs of families and providing high-quality programming across components. Program directors discussed

a range of strategies they employ to be inclusive of the various languages and cultures of the children and families they serve. The most common strategies reported involved providing bilingual materials for the classroom and organizing cultural activities.

- Most program directors described providing bilingual materials for both parents and children, including bilingual curricula, classroom resources, newsletters, and books for use at home.

*“We have things about different cultures in dramatic play, things for children to explore, things that children would see possibly in their own home. And parents sometimes help us by providing us with different cultural materials that they would like to contribute as well. Plus we have different music we provide in the classroom, different cultural music, books in different languages, and we have several different languages that our staff speak here also.”*

- Program directors described activities that acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of linguistic and cultural backgrounds of families served by the program.

*“We try to provide multicultural activities. We try to have activities that reflect the culture of the children, and we have celebrations. For example, yesterday we had the Mother’s Day celebration... We had it earlier for them because it’s early in Mexico. That was out of respect for their cultures.” “They [the parents] did poetry in Spanish and English... I [the program director] made a presentation to one of the women’s groups, and I read some of the poems, and they were practically in tears. I think it reflects the immigrant experience and how they are like everyone else. We’re all just the same, trying to deal with daily challenges.”*

Cultural competence includes maintaining a workforce that reflects the diversity of the children and families participating in the family literacy program. Most sites indicated that they employ staff with the appropriate bilingual skills to effectively communicate with participants, and in general, programs aim to build and strengthen parents’ and children’s English skills, while maintaining their home language.

- Most programs have staff with appropriate language skills to facilitate communication with families. In cases where bilingual staff are not available, the program identifies someone who can translate, such as another parent.
- Most programs operate using a mixture of English and other languages, with some classes primarily in English (ESL), and others, such as the ECE and parenting components, using a mixture of English and families’ home language.

In addition, many program directors reported that staff have received training in cultural competence from a variety of sources. For example:

- Head Start programs host annual diversity trainings, ECERS-R trainings include discussions of cultural competence, and LAUSD teachers are required to complete cultural diversity classes in order to be certified.
- Other program directors discussed their participation in the California Department of Education, Child Development Division sponsored training, "Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy and Learning." The trainings are conducted by WestEd, Center for Child and Family Studies in collaboration with the California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN).

## Sustainability

With the progressive funding match required by First 5 LA for all family literacy grantees, achieving fiscal sustainability is of paramount importance to grantee agencies. Grantees reported exploring a range of funding options, though not all have formal fundraising plans in place.

- Only two-thirds of all program directors (68.2%) reported having a written fundraising or sustainability plan, although a written sustainability plan is required by First 5 LA. The remaining program directors indicated they were working on developing such plans.
- Most program directors (86.4%) reported having written agreements or MOUs with collaborators and partner agencies that support the development of a sustainable system of services for children and families.
- Programs continue to seek grants and supports, and many programs are looking for grant writers to help them diversify their sources of funding. Some programs that are housed within community-based organizations (CBOs) indicated that their organization as a whole, as opposed to the family literacy program alone, needs to expand its funding base.
- One program mentioned that being part of the FLSN's Exemplary Validated Program process (see text box: Exemplary Validation Program (EVP) Process) helped them to get more grants and recognition from the district.

Program directors report facing significant challenges achieving sustainability; district-based programs reported finding this particularly difficult.

- The majority of program directors (77.3%) indicated that securing adequate funding for the family literacy program was a moderate or significant challenge.
- School district-based grantees discussed the challenges of fundraising, given their association with the district, as compared to CBOs. One director described their efforts in raising additional funds:  
*"We applied for three state preschool [contracts] and that is on hold from the state. We applied for private foundation grants, but they do not give money to school districts. Otherwise, we are just waiting."*
- One program director mentioned that budget cuts were affecting the quality of services, space, and recruitment of families.

## **FLSN Support for Grantee Program Improvement**

The FLSN's role is primarily to support grantee programs, providing training opportunities and ongoing technical assistance. In Years 5 and 6, the FLSN continued to focus on supporting grantee continuous quality improvement by providing research-based technical assistance, professional development, and other products and services for grantee use. At the heart of this work is the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement, which describes different levels of quality across a range of domains for programs at different stages of development. FLSN staff use the framework to help grantees target areas of focus, and then they work with program staff to move the program along the continuum toward exemplary status. FLSN Director Liz Guerra described the framework this way:

*“I always said the framework was the centerpiece, and I think many of our grantees and staff would agree that’s a common message – our focus for everybody. That’s our roadmap. Some people have referred to it as the bible. It’s something that has helped all of us.”*

## Technical assistance

The FLSN provides much of its support to the grantees through customized technical assistance site visits. During these visits, FLSN staff meet with grantee program staff to give them updates on upcoming FLSN events as well as First 5 LA requirements and deliverables; learn more about program operations, issues, and challenges; and offer guidance, support, or resources to move grantees forward.

- In Years 5 and 6, the FLSN endeavored to offer quarterly site visits to each of the grantees for technical assistance, although the number of visits each grantee received varied from 2-11 times per year, according to the FLSN. FLSN staff reported that the number of actual visits was determined by grantee interest and requests. They offered to visit each grantee four times, but some grantees took more advantage of their services than others.
- FLSN staff explained that the site visits are expected to help grantees reflect on the activities they offer families and work toward enhancing their programs. According to one FLSN staff member, their role with the more experienced grantees has become more advisory than explicit teaching.
- As part of these technical assistance site visits, the FLSN also conducted classroom observations. In Year 6, FLSN staff became more intentional and systematic in their observations of classrooms from each of the components. They developed common tools for all FLSN staff to use to capture what is observed and identify strengths as well as areas for continued work. Programs receive feedback on the observations, and follow-up steps are identified for the next visit. Parenting education and ECE were of particular focus for FLSN’s observations in Year 6.

FLSN staff carefully documented their work by taking notes during site visits and summarizing and coding their notes after the visit. Their summaries were then assembled into a database and provided to AIR for review and analysis of the nature and focus of the visits. Each row of the database corresponded to a grantee need discussed or addressed in some way by the site visitor.<sup>19</sup> The database included brief descriptions of the need or issue addressed, the area of the framework corresponding to the need, the support provided by the FLSN to address the need, the outcome of the interaction, and an indication of whether the need was identified by the FLSN or the grantee. In total, 83 on-site technical assistance visits to the 22 grantees were included in the database for Year 5.<sup>20</sup> The number of visits per grantee varied from one to eight visits.

Analysis of the site visitor notes database indicates that FLSN technical assistance addressed a wide range of grantee issues; grantee needs were coded by FLSN staff with one or more codes from a list of more than 70 codes. In order to consolidate the FLSN’s many need category codes, we recoded

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<sup>19</sup> Site visitors’ notes that did not include a specific identified need were not included in this database. It should be noted that findings regarding the FLSN’s technical assistance are based on the available information, and not on a complete record of the support provided onsite. Examples of site visit activities where a need was not identified by the site visitor include classroom observations, debriefing on classroom observations, and grantees giving updates on program activities to the visitor.

<sup>20</sup> Year 6 site visit notes will be analyzed for the final report.

FLSN's categories into a smaller number of broader categories for more concise presentation of the data, and then calculated the proportion of needs (and visits) that addressed each topic.<sup>21</sup>

According to the set of site visitor notes that was available to the evaluation team, the technical assistance needs addressed most often by site visitors in Year 5 concerned organizing data and data entry issues, improving the quality of instruction and the learning environment, and working on aspects of the framework.

- Summaries of site visitors' notes in Year 5 indicate that 18 of the 22 grantees received assistance with organizing data and data entry issues. Overall, data issues comprised just over 25% of the technical assistance needs noted by site visitors, but were addressed at some level in almost half of the FLSN visits to grantee programs. Examples of how the FLSN provided assistance in this area include working with grantee staff to correctly enter attendance data, and instruction on using data for analysis purposes.
- The need for assistance with improving the quality of instruction and the learning environment was identified for 17 of the 22 grantees and comprised 19% of the identified needs. Examples of how the FLSN provided assistance in this area include working with grantee staff to make a library more accessible to adult education students and providing information on a Pre-K curriculum.
- Seventeen grantees also received assistance on needs related to the framework, which comprised 19% of the technical assistance needs. Examples of this type of assistance include working with grantees on Exemplary Validation Program (EVP) process requirements. Many assistance activities related to the framework were also categorized as a particular component or as part of program leadership and administration. In total, 38% of FLSN visits addressed needs related to the framework.
- Other need categories that were addressed include improving program leadership and administration (16% of needs overall; 31.5% of visits). Examples of how the FLSN provided assistance in this area included helping to improve internal communication and helping to improve communication with collaborators.
- Needs regarding staff development and teacher qualifications made up 10.9% of all the needs addressed by the FLSN in Year 5. Examples of assistance in this category include help with staff recruitment and exploring professional development opportunities in the area of English language learners.
- Parent involvement and interaction, which includes issues such as facilitating the creation of a parent advisory board and exploring ideas for getting parents more involved in their child's classroom, comprised 10.9% of the needs and were addressed during 24.7% of the visits. Engaging parents in a parent advisory board and holding meetings at least four times per year is a First 5 LA requirement for grantees.

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<sup>21</sup> To calculate the proportion of needs addressed by the FLSN in any given topic area, we simply divided the number of needs that the FLSN addressed related to that topic area by the total number of needs addressed across all topic areas. (Some recoding of needs was necessary for consistency.) To calculate the proportion of visits that addressed each need, we collapsed the need-level database into a visit-level database (such that each record represented one visit) and divided the number of visits in which any given need was addressed by the total number of visits.

According to our analysis of the Year 5 site note summaries, the areas addressed least frequently included increasing component integration and needs related to fiscal or sustainability issues.

- The FLSN worked with seven grantees on integration issues. This work represented only 6.0% of the needs addressed by the FLSN, and this issue was addressed at only 14% of the visits in Year 5.
- Similarly, sustainability needs comprised only 1.1% of the needs addressed by the FLSN in Year 5, and this work occurred during only 4.1% of the site visits. In total, the FLSN responded to sustainability needs during site visits to 3 grantees.

**Exhibit 5.5: Distribution of support provided by the FLSN across various grantee needs during site visits, Year 5**

	Percentage of needs with this code (N=184 needs)	Percentage of visits that addressed this need (N=83 visits)	Number of grantees that received support for this need
Data collection, entry, and analysis	25.5%	48.0%	18
Instruction/learning environment	19.0%	39.7%	17
Framework	18.5%	38.4%	17
Program leadership and administration	16.3%	31.5%	15
Parent involvement/interaction	10.9%	24.7%	13
Staff – qualifications, development	10.9%	21.9%	10
Recruitment/retention	10.3%	20.6%	9
Integration	6.0%	13.7%	7
Fiscal/sustainability	1.1%	4.1%	3

Source: Year 5 summaries of FLSN site visit notes.

The FLSN also documented the framework area (or areas) – program leadership and administration (PLA), adult education, parenting education/PCILA, and ECE – that was the focus for each need. According to analyses of FLSN site notes in which a particular framework area was documented, FLSN staff spent the majority of their time addressing PLA; fewer needs were addressed that were related to the individual components.

- Almost 45% of the needs addressed were related to the program leadership and administration section of the framework. This included all but one of the 22 grantees.
- Thirteen percent of grantee needs addressed the parenting education/PCILA section of the framework (11 grantees), 9% of the needs addressed adult education (7 grantees) and approximately 8% of the needs addressed the ECE component (10 grantees).
- Just over one quarter of the needs addressed by the FLSN concerned “other” issues outside of the framework, such as help with First 5 LA deliverables, use of the data system, and other administrative tasks.

**Exhibit 5.6: Distribution of support provided by the FLSN across various grantee needs (coded by framework area and quality focus) during site visits, Year 5**

	Percentage of needs with this code	Percentage of visits that addressed this need	Number of grantees that received support for this need
Adult education	8.6%	16.4%	7
Parenting education/PCILA	13.0%	26.0%	11
Early childhood education	7.6%	17.8%	10
Program leadership and administration	44.3%	64.4%	21
Other	25.9%	57.5%	20
Quality-focused needs	38.6%	57.5%	21

Source: Year 5 summaries of FLSN site visit notes.

As discussed above, technical assistance work addressed a wide range of grantee needs, from improving instructional practice in the classroom to purely administrative details. In order to evaluate the relative focus of FLSN technical assistance on quality improvement efforts, we recoded the FLSN site note summaries to characterize them as either quality-focused or more administrative in focus. While the majority of visits addressed at least one need related to quality improvement, the majority of needs addressed were related to more administrative tasks.

- Almost 40% of the *needs* addressed by the FLSN were related to enhancing the quality of the program, and all but 1 of the 22 grantees had a need addressed that was related to enhancing program quality. Other needs addressed during technical assistance site visits focused on more administrative details such as data entry issues.
- Almost 60% of the *visits* from the FLSN addressed at least one need related to enhancing the quality of the program.

The role of the FLSN in identifying grantee needs and providing services accordingly has changed somewhat over the years, with more effort given in Year 6 to diagnosing grantee needs and making recommendations for areas of focus for program improvement.

- In Year 5, more than 60% of the needs addressed by the FLSN were identified by grantees, while 26% were identified by FLSN staff. Approximately 11% were identified collaboratively by both FLSN staff and the grantee.
- Historically, the FLSN has allowed the grantees to select the areas of focus for technical assistance. The FLSN director explained that in prior years the strategy involved:
 

“... listening to what the grantees have to say, what they need assistance in, and the priority was on generally helping grantees to identify needs.”
- However, in Year 6, the FLSN reported taking more initiative on need identification. Now, the FLSN director explained,
 

“... it’s probably about 50/50. With some sites it requires that we take the lead, and with other sites they have their list.”

- Reviews of grantee data are one important source of information used to help identify grantee needs. In particular, the FLSN compiled results from outcome data for each grantee to determine which grantees would be invited to become EVP sites, and shared these data with grantees as a way of helping grantees to identify their needs. The FLSN director explained, *“This year at the grantee kickoff, each of the programs will get their data in an envelope that will show them what we looked at to decide to see who gets invited to EVP. And we are hoping that will help them get more excited either for next year or to see where there are gaps. But I think one of the strategies that we have worked really hard at having them use is to look at their data to decide what we should focus on.”*

## Training, products, and services

In addition to direct technical assistance, the FLSN provided training opportunities to grantees on a range of topics, in several different formats. According to FLSN staff, topics were selected based on grantee need. The FLSN offered three mandatory meetings in each year – one focused on ECE, one on parenting education and PCILA, and an initial meeting each year on a more general topic – as well as several voluntary trainings and regional meetings.

- At the beginning of each year, the FLSN provided a mandatory training to grantees on general Initiative issues. In Year 5, focusing on the program leadership and administration framework area, the FLSN introduced the Exemplary Validation Program (EVP) Process (see text box on page 97) and Evidence-Based Portfolios (EBP). In Year 6, the FLSN’s first mandatory training gave an overview of the framework and guidance on using it for program improvement.
- Over the course of Years 5 and 6, the FLSN provided two mandatory trainings related to early childhood education. In Year 5, this training included a focus on early language and literacy through the Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE), the transition to kindergarten, and documenting ECE practices through EBPs. In Year 6, the focus of the ECE training was on language and literacy – using teachable moments to support reading and writing, supporting language and literacy for grantees who partner for ECE, and creating an optimal learning environment for language and literacy.
- The FLSN also provided one mandatory training each year on the parenting education and PCILA components. In Year 5, the parenting education/PCILA training included presentations from three grantees on promising practices (“showcases”), and breakout sessions on parenting education/PCILA integration and documenting practices through the EBP process. In Year 6, the training topics included program goals and parent goal setting, partnerships with parents, coaching, and parent strategies for supporting phonological awareness. FLSN’s director explained the reason for the focus on parenting and PCILA integration:

*“There was always an issue on a national level that a lot of our family literacy programs do parent ed as a standalone kind of thing and [they do] a standalone PCILA kind of thing. So research has always shown that the linkage between parent ed and PCILA leads more to the application of those strategies as well as higher student outcomes. That was our big focus...”*

- FLSN staff also provided optional trainings and regional meetings on parent advisory boards, using data (two meetings), sustainability (two meetings), collaborating/component integration (through NCFL), the Language/Literacy Project, and birth-to-three services. They also hosted a conference open to the public with invited speakers and breakout sessions – the “Learning Luau.”

### **Exemplary Validation Program (EVP) Process**

In 2006, the FLSN began development of the pilot Exemplary Validation Program (EVP) process, designed to support grantees in becoming exemplary program models that can be replicated in other communities. Through the EVP process, grantees establish an internal workgroup, including program leadership, staff, and parents, to develop an Evidence-Based Portfolio (EBP) that documents their achievements. The FLSN provides in-depth technical assistance to EVP sites to help them reflect on and document their “evidence-based” practices. The EVP system places an emphasis on on-going program quality improvement. Grantees identify areas for growth and strategies to continually expand their capacity to effectively serve children and families.

The development of the EVP process began with inviting high-performing grantees to help structure the system. Collaboration between the FLSN and the EVP pilot sites “*required working through a very detailed and rigorous plan of where the grantees need to go in terms of using the FLSN framework for program improvement and quality.*” The development of the pilot program required grantees to think critically about their practices. A FLSN member reflected on the first year of the EVP process: “*The programs were being asked to think. The programs and the TA team looked at the research on evidence-based practices...on how programs could best tell their story using qualitative and quantitative data...on how experts can most effectively interact with programs in the field. So all this was built from the ground up. There were not guidelines originally. This was a process of critical thinking.*”

In the second year of the process, the FLSN worked with experts in the family literacy field to refocus the EVP system, in order to make it a more effective tool to promote replication of program models in other communities. In addition to identifying evidence-based practices, grantees describe their organizational growth toward exemplary status, including the resources and strategies they felt were critical in their development. As one FLSN member described the ongoing conversation with grantees, “*We really want you to tell how you got there. We know you’re great, but what did you do to get there?*”

In addition to technical assistance and formal trainings and meetings for grantees and other agencies, the FLSN provided additional products and services intended to support (or celebrate) grantee program quality and capacity building, ranging from an email newsletter to a large-scale parent conference.

- FLSN staff cited their Annual Family Literacy and Health Parent Conference as the highlight of their work in this area. The purpose of this annual conference is to provide information to parents about ways to support their children’s learning and healthy development. The conference was attended by more than 300 parents and staff each year.
- Because not all programs qualified for an invitation to become an EVP site, but the FLSN believes that all programs have strengths to share, the FLSN developed a model for highlighting the best practices of all grantees. The “showcase” concept was designed to share strategies grantees have implemented to improve the quality of their programs as well as practices and systems that could be replicated by other programs in the field. Participation is

voluntary; several grantees presented showcases of their work at FLSN trainings and meetings. The FLSN director described grantee reactions this way:

*“A lot of the grantees are excited they get to participate in the showcase if they didn’t qualify for EVP because it is an opportunity for them to highlight the good things they’ve been doing.”*

- The FLSN organized a “mini-grant” program to give programs without grant-writing experience an opportunity to write a grant. Through this program, grantees also had the opportunity to experience the other side of the grant writing process – by evaluating proposals and choosing which programs to fund. The FLSN director described the purpose of this program as:

*“... a way of getting people thinking about sustainability and giving them experiences both as the writer and the reader so that they can get going with their grant writing skills.”*

- To provide additional guidance to programs for improving their parenting education and PCILA components, the FLSN developed the *Parent Education and PCILA Idea Book*. This compilation of lesson ideas for parenting education, “extension activities” for PCILA, and related resources aims to provide programs with ideas for helping parents to support their children’s language, literacy, and early mathematics skill development. The FLSN director explained:

*“I think this field is really appreciative of seeing that compiled and their ideas along with the research and strategies tied to it.”*

- Finally, the FLSN prepares a monthly “E-News” newsletter with updates for grantee staff and parents. It contains reminders about trainings and professional development opportunities organized by FLSN and other organizations, information about the EVP process, resources for families and programs, and funding opportunities to support grantee sustainability.

### **Perceived Grantee Needs and Satisfaction with FLSN Support**

As noted earlier, grantees have their own perspective on their quality improvement needs, and generally report that the FLSN has been helpful in addressing those needs. As has been the case throughout the course of the Initiative, grantee program directors reported high levels of satisfaction overall with the support and feedback provided by the FLSN. One program director noted about the FLSN:

*“They’ve been supportive, especially this year. They have provided us with a lot of guidance whenever necessary. Sometimes we didn’t have to wait to call them; they shared a lot of their knowledge and expertise whenever we needed it. They were familiar with some of the things we wanted to improve on.”*

Another program director explained:

*“Their feedback can also be very helpful. It’s good to hear feedback from another person.”*

Program directors also cited FLSN staff’s creative problem solving skills and the wealth of information and resources they provide as beneficial to their programs. In particular, many programs mentioned the framework as an important tool provided by the FLSN to help them improve their program. Program directors reported that the framework has been useful in many ways, including

helping them to reflect on program data, enhance component integration, improve component quality, and strengthen overall management of the program. Regarding the framework, one program director said:

*“I won’t lie – it’s been very time consuming. It takes a lot of time. It’s been very beneficial though. We incorporate it into our regular reflection. We were able to find some areas for improvement... based on the framework. We always thought we had a strong ECE component, but when we added more hours, we realized how we can maximize our impact rather than doing the same thing for just more hours. The idea of maximizing came through the framework.”*

For the remainder of this section, we draw on data from program director surveys and interviews to describe grantee perspectives on their needs for additional support as well as their perceptions of the usefulness of the support they received from the FLSN in each of the following areas:

- ECE component quality
- Parenting education and PCILA component quality
- Adult education component quality
- Component integration
- Use of data
- Sustainability
- Opportunities for networking and training staff
- First 5 LA reports and requirements

For each of these areas, we describe survey results characterizing program director reports of the usefulness of FLSN support received in Year 6 (Exhibits 5.7 and 5.8) and the extent to which they felt they had needs in each area in Year 5 and Year 6 (Exhibit 5.9).

### **ECE component quality**

From the FLSN perspective, ECE may be the component with the most room for improvement, especially for programs that added this component to their existing adult education programs. FLSN staff noted that there is always room for growth in this area, however, even in EVP programs. Grantee program directors reported small to moderate needs in this area and rated the usefulness of FLSN’s support in this area relatively high.

- Seventy-three percent of program directors rated FLSN support for improving ECE generally as very or moderately useful, and 27% ranked this as one of the most useful supports received.
- In particular, support for enhancing the language and literacy emphasis of instruction in ECE was very highly rated in terms of usefulness. Half of all PDs (50%) reported receiving this help and finding it very useful. An additional 23% found it moderately useful, and 40% of grantees rated this support as one of the three areas where the FLSN has most helped them to improve their program.

- Grantees continue to report small to moderate needs in the area of improving their ECE component, including in terms of enhancing their language and literacy instruction, however only 13% of grantees attended the FLSN's Language/Literacy Project training in Year 6.

### **Parenting education and PCILA components**

Program directors reported their appreciation for the support from the FLSN in improving parenting education and PCILA. Support in this area was highly rated, and program directors reported somewhat lower needs by Year 6.

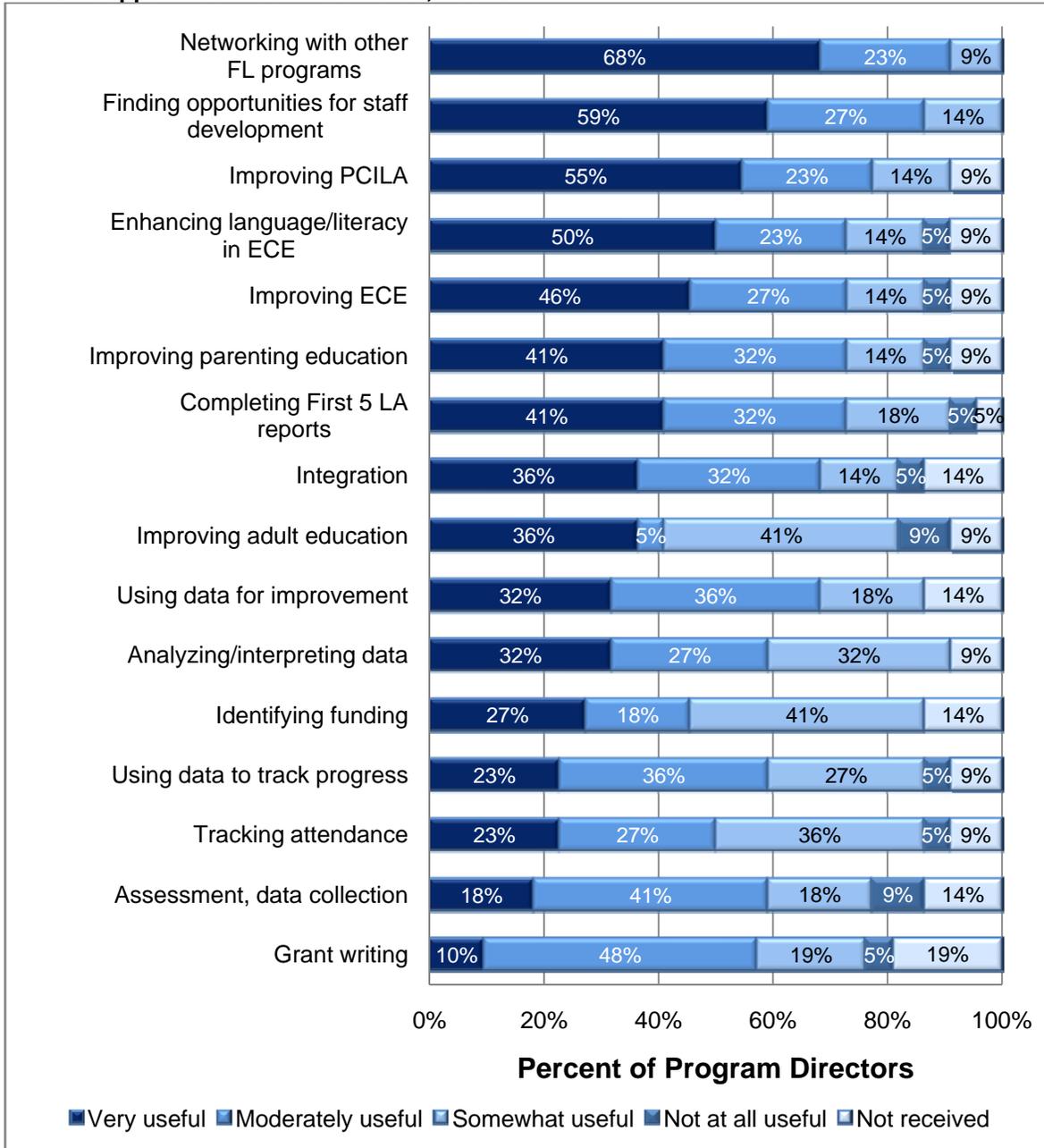
- Grantees reported finding FLSN support in the area of improving PCILA instruction to be quite useful overall – 78% of program directors reported receiving support in this area and finding it very or moderately useful. However, only 9% (2 grantees) ranked this area of support among the three most useful for program improvement.
- Similarly, 73% reportedly received FLSN support for improving parenting education instruction and found it to be very or moderately useful, but only 9% ranked this as one of the three most useful.
- Program directors continue to report having some needs in the areas of improving parenting education and PCILA instruction, though there appears to be a drop in reported needs in this area from Year 5 to Year 6.

### **Adult education component**

Support in the area of adult education was not rated as highly by program directors, though reported needs in this area were also not very great.

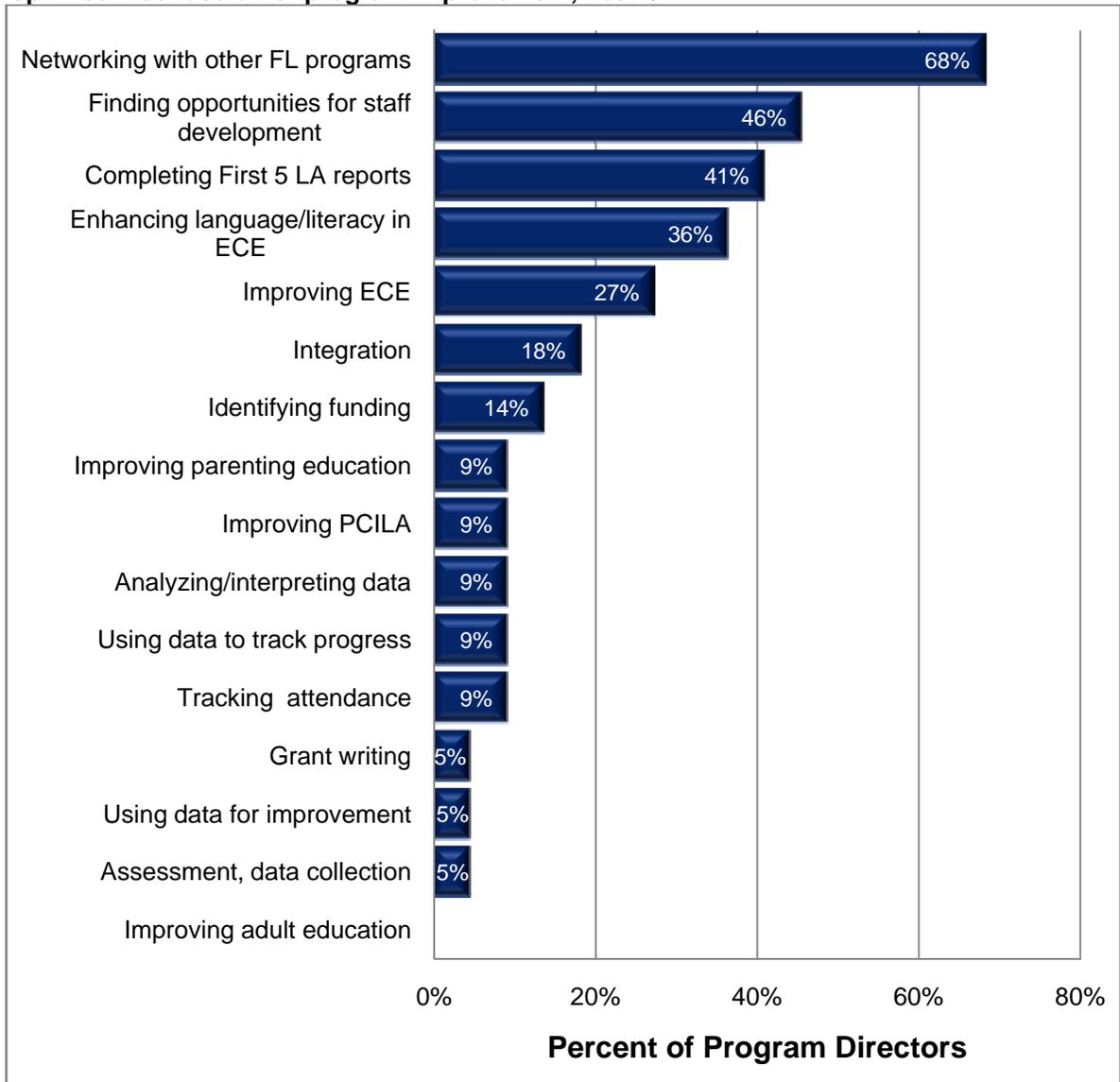
- Grantee program directors rated the usefulness of the support they received for improving their adult education instruction comparatively low, with 41% receiving this support and rating it as very or moderately useful. In addition, none of the program directors identified support for adult education as one of the top three most useful aspects of the FLSN's work.
- This may be because grantees do not identify improving adult education as a major area of need either. Program directors' reports of needs in this area were relatively low in Years 5 and 6.

**Exhibit 5.7: Percentage of program directors assigning various ratings of “usefulness” to FLSN support received in each area, Year 6**



Source: Year 6 program director survey.

**Exhibit 5.8: Percentage of program directors ranking various FLSN supports as one of the top three most useful for program improvement, Year 6**



Source: Year 6 program director survey.

### Component integration

FLSN support to grantees for improving the integration of their program components was rated highly by program directors, though needs in this area remain high – and even appear to increase from Year 5 to Year 6.

- Grantees reported finding FLSN support useful with regard to integrating the four components, with 68% indicating that support received in this area was very or moderately useful, and 18% ranking it one of the three areas most helpful for program improvement.

- However, needs in this area remain high – higher even than grant writing and improving the quality of individual components. In addition, this is the one topic where needs from Year 5 to Year 6 show a very slight increase.<sup>22</sup>
- Despite apparent growing needs for help with integration, only 29% of grantees attended the FLSN supported NCFL training on collaborations and component integration in Year 5. It may be that the FLSN’s greater attention to the importance of component integration over the past two years has served to raise awareness among program directors as to their needs in this area.

## **Use of data**

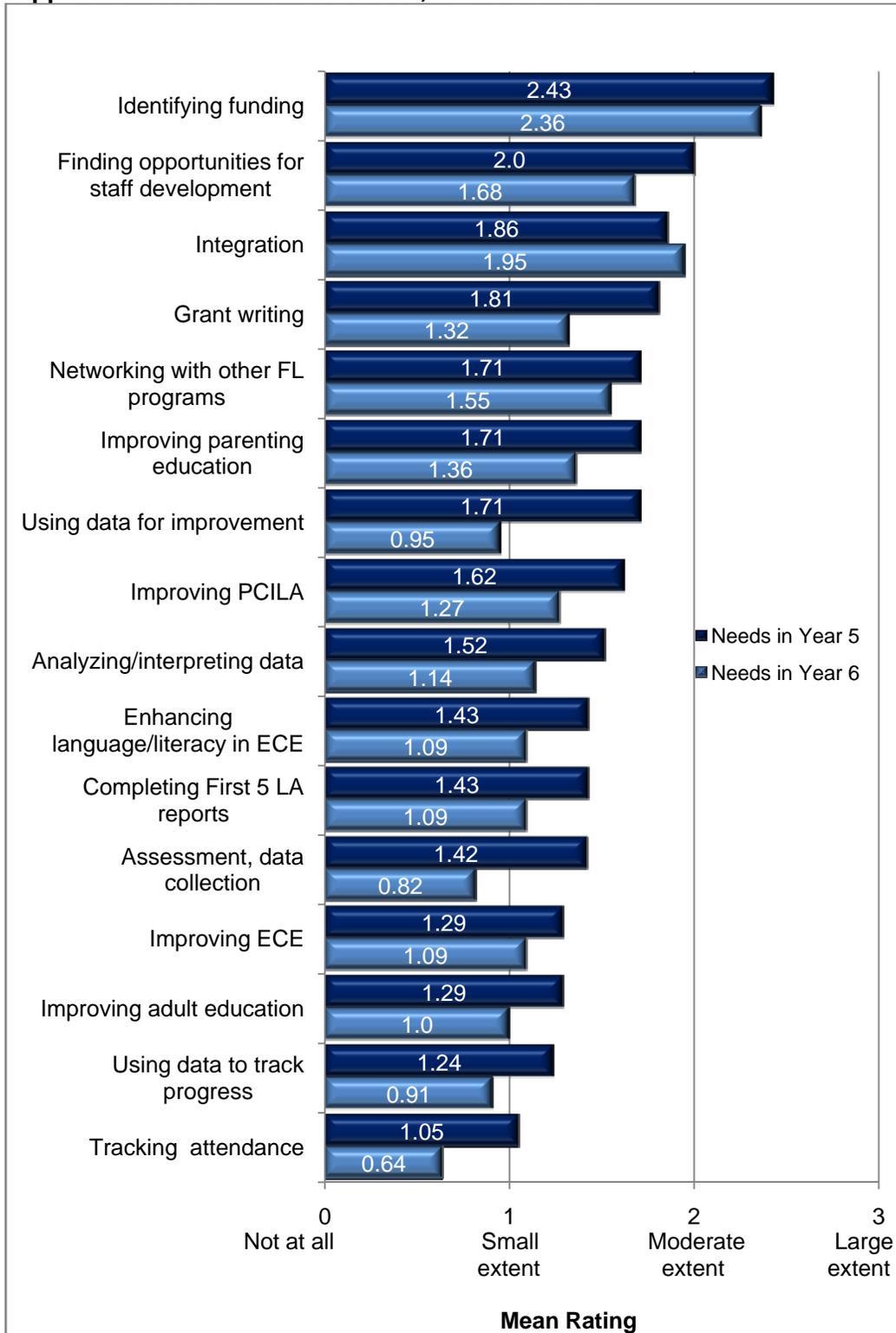
Program director reports suggest that grantees feel fairly confident in their ability to collect assessment data and use data to track participant attendance and progress; and grantees rated the usefulness of FLSN support in these areas as less useful compared to other areas.

- Reported needs in the areas of analyzing data and using data for program improvement are somewhat higher than the more basic data-related processes, though needs in these areas seem to have declined in Year 6. In fact, the reported need for support in the area of using data for program improvement shows the largest decline from Year 5 to Year 6.
- Grantees rated data-related supports somewhat lower than supports in other areas in terms of usefulness, with only 59% of grantees receiving support in interpreting or analyzing data and rating it as very or moderately useful. Slightly more grantees rated the help they received in the area of using data for program improvement as very or moderately useful (68%).
- Only one to two grantees rated any of the data-related topics as one of the three most useful supports received from the FLSN.
- Grantee attendance at the FLSN’s “using data” training also seemed to decline from Year 5 (when 42% attended) to Year 6 (when 30% attended).

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<sup>22</sup> Statistical significance testing was not done on these data, and given the very small magnitude of the difference and the small N, it is likely that this difference is not significant. However, given the general trend for needs to be lower in Year 6, this exception is noteworthy.

**Exhibit 5.9: Mean program director ratings of the extent to which additional support is needed in various areas, Years 5 and 6**



Source: Year 5 and 6 program director survey.

## Sustainability

As noted earlier, sustainability continues to be a challenge for grantees. Program directors identified this as a major area of need, and though FLSN staff offered some support in this area (mostly through trainings), grantees were less positive about their help in this area relative to other areas.

- Identifying funding was rated as the greatest area of need in Years 5 and 6. The need for grant-writing assistance was also rated highly in Year 5, though grantee reports of their need in this area appear to have decreased in Year 6.
- Grantees' perceived need for support with sustainability is also evidenced by the relatively high attendance rates at the FLSN's optional sustainability trainings in Year 5 (when 58% of grantees attended) and Year 6 (when 61% attended). These were the best attended optional trainings provided by the FLSN in Years 5 and 6.
- Grant writing was the lowest rated support in terms of usefulness – only 10% of grantees reported that they received this support and found it very useful; 48% found it moderately useful, and 19% reported not receiving such help.
- Help identifying funding sources also received low ratings in terms of usefulness – 45% rated it as very or moderately useful, and 14% reported not receiving help in this area.
- Grantees may have somewhat unreasonable expectations for what the FLSN can do in terms of help with obtaining funding, however. Program directors expressed an interest in more hands-on support – beyond providing ideas for where to apply for funds and feedback on grant proposal drafts, but it is probably not feasible for FLSN staff to engage in the grant-writing process jointly with grantees, nor is this part of their scope of work. They are in a position to provide support and guidance but not to take on programs' fundraising activities.
- The EVP process is also viewed by some program directors as a potential avenue through which the FLSN supports grantee sustainability. This process involves working with grantees to document their successes (see text box on page 95 for more details), and has already resulted in some program recognition that could ultimately lead to additional funding for EVP sites. For example, as one program director explained:

*“It [EVP process] was worth it. It was a rigorous process. Since then we were recognized by the state of California, and we got a model program award from the Dollar General Pro Literacy Initiative.”*

## Opportunities for networking and training staff

By far the most appreciated benefit of FLSN support, as reported by program directors, is the networking opportunity, with opportunities for staff development the second most appreciated support.

- All but two grantees (91%) received and rated the networking aspect of the FLSN's work as very or moderately useful, and 68% of grantees identified this area as one of the three most useful for program improvement.
- Grantees continued to report networking needs, with little change from Year 5 to Year 6.
- Another useful aspect of the FLSN's work, according to program directors, is the help finding opportunities for staff development, with 86% reporting that support received in this

area was very or moderately useful, and 46% rating this among the three most useful areas of FLSN support for making program improvements. Finding opportunities for staff development continues to be one of the highest-rated areas of need for grantees, however.

### **First 5 LA reports and requirements**

FLSN staff continue to help grantees with their reports and other deliverables necessary to meet First 5 LA requirements, and this aspect of their work is highly valued by grantees.

- Overall, 73% of grantees rated help received on completing reports and deliverables as very or moderately useful, and 41% ranked it among the three most useful aspects of the FLSN's support.
- However, grantees continued to report needing moderate assistance in the completion of their reports.

### ***Evidence of the Relationship between FLSN Support and Grantee Program Improvement***

As noted throughout this report, there is variation among grantees in terms of the various quality indicators. However, all grantees are working toward continuous quality improvement, and one of the primary goals of the FLSN is to support grantees in their program improvement efforts. Grantees report that they have grown in many ways. Most notably, grantees reported using data for decision making – on a student level as well as on a program level – more often. Several grantees also noted using the framework to guide their thinking about program improvement. Program directors also reported establishing parent advisory boards and increasing parent involvement, perhaps as a result of the First 5 LA requirement for such boards and the FLSN training on how to create them. Other areas of improvement cited by grantees include improving the content of the classes to better address the needs of families, strengthening the leadership of their program, improving the clarity of staff roles, and enhancing their program environments.

In this section, we look beyond grantee perceptions and satisfaction to explore changes in grantee program quality indicators from Year 5 to Year 6 in an effort to understand how the FLSN is supporting actual program improvement outcomes.

### **Overall changes in grantee program quality**

First, using data from program director and teacher surveys administered in Year 5 and Year 6, we examined program-level changes in quality characteristics over the two-year period. We compared ratings for each of the following aspects of quality:

- Overall program policies and procedures
- Teacher qualifications
- Teacher-student ratios
- Use of a curriculum and formal lesson plans
- Instructional practices
- Teachers' use of assessment data/parent input

- Classroom resources
- Component integration

We find very few changes that are statistically significant. We find some minor changes in adult education teachers' instructional practice, though, again, these changes are not large in magnitude.

- We see slight decreases in adult education teacher reports of their use of hands-on activities in the classroom and decreases in reported use of parent requests or suggestions to plan their instruction, though these differences are small. Although the decrease is small, the use of hands-on activities was found to be associated with more CASAS growth in Chapter 2 and therefore the decline is worth noting.

It is important to remember that these are program-level comparisons, and therefore the N is only 22, which makes finding statistically significant results difficult. However, given that the mean differences are generally quite small and are close to evenly divided across positive and negative values (that is, approximately half of the quality indicators examined have higher values for Year 6 and half have lower values in Year 6), it is difficult to argue that there are real differences that we are simply unable to detect due to the small sample size. One year is a relatively short period of time to examine program-level changes, though; we will continue to explore evidence of change – positive or negative – when we expand this analysis in Year 7.

### **Changes in program quality among grantees receiving high levels of FLSN support**

As noted earlier, there also has been variation in the level of support that the FLSN has provided to each grantee, and thus looking at change across all grantees may be obscuring the impacts experienced by those receiving more support. Therefore, we used grantee-specific information on FLSN's technical assistance site visits in Year 5 to compare changes in quality (from Year 5 to Year 6) among those who received more or less direct support from the FLSN during Year 5. That is, we explored the relationship between the level of change on each quality indicator and the level of support received from the FLSN (as measured by the number of technical assistance site visits). For this analysis, we focused on the following aspects of program quality:<sup>23</sup>

- Overall program policies and procedures
- Use of a curriculum and formal lesson plans
- Instructional practices
- Teachers' use of assessment data/parent input
- Classroom resources
- Component integration

We found statistically significant relationships between the number of site visits grantees received and changes in five aspects of program quality. Three of these five significant results concerned ECE

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<sup>23</sup> In order to limit the number of comparisons made, we selected the aspects of program quality that we felt were more easily influenced by FLSN support. For example, we did not compare changes in teacher qualifications and teacher-student ratios, assuming that these characteristics might be more dependent on agency policy and less likely to be influenced by FLSN support.

practices – in particular, the use of formal lesson plans and curriculum guidelines and a focus on language and literacy skills.

- Compared to ECE teachers in programs that received two or fewer technical assistance visits from the FLSN in Year 5, ECE teachers in programs receiving three or more visits showed greater increases from Year 5 to Year 6 in their reported use of both formal lesson plans and curriculum guidelines to guide their daily instruction.
- Consistent with the FLSN’s reported focus on working with ECE teachers to increase the language and literacy focus in the classroom, we find that teachers in programs receiving more technical assistance site visits show greater growth in their reported emphasis on language and literacy in the classroom from Year 5 to Year 6.

Consistent with FLSN staff’s reports of their attention to parenting education in Year 5 and their observations of grantee improvements in this area, we find some changes in parenting education practices related to FLSN support – specifically with regard to focusing instruction on topics related to parents’ ability to support their children’s learning, which was also found to be related to greater learning outcomes among parents.

- Compared to those receiving fewer visits from the FLSN in Year 5, programs receiving at least three technical assistance site visits were more likely to show increases in parenting teacher reports of their emphasis on topics related to children’s learning (for example, child development, how to support children’s learning, particular techniques for reading with children and interacting with them during PCILA, and reflecting on what happened during PCILA). This is especially noteworthy, given that a focus on these topics was also found to be related to greater growth in parent reports of engaging their children in language and literacy activities at home (see Chapter 3).

The final aspect of program quality that we found to be associated with FLSN support was related to program leadership and administration. In particular, grantees’ reported use of program policies and procedures advocated in the FLSN’s Framework for Quality Improvement was associated with the frequency of FLSN site visits.

- Grantees receiving more site visits from the FLSN in Year 5 were more likely to report an increase in implementation of various program policies and procedures (such as having a written integration plan, a sustainability plan, or job descriptions; conducting regular classroom observations; or having procedures for documenting and following up on referrals) compared to grantees receiving fewer site visits.
- One of the two areas where the FLSN director felt grantees showed the most growth from Year 5 to Year 6 was, in fact, regarding program leadership and administration. Specifically, she gave the example that many grantees reported that they are putting policies into place on such things as recruitment, attendance, or retention, and creating family orientations or strategies for working with staff.

*“The word policy is in a lot more places than we have ever seen it, and I would like to think that is because of the framework. You know after reviewing it they realize they don’t have it, and they are working really hard to improve their program. We think attendance policies lead to improved outcomes. We don’t know how that link happens, but I think that a lot of our*

*programs really do believe that, so when they put a policy in place, it will be exciting to see: will their outcomes get better?"*

Although we only found five statistically significant differences between the high-visit group and the low-visit group in terms of quality improvement, recall again that our sample size is small – only 22 grantees. Moreover, although most comparisons were not statistically significant, of the 30 outcomes tested, all but 3 were in the expected direction. This provides additional evidence of the relationship between FLSN support and grantee program improvement.

We might expect to find even stronger results if we examine the relationship between the focus of the site visits and changes in particular aspects of program quality (for example, we might expect grantees who received more visits related to ECE to have more improved ECE components). As described earlier, FLSN staff provided summaries of their site visit notes that specified the focus of each site visit. However, when we included this level of detail in the analysis, the results described above disappeared. It may be that the specific need codes that were used to characterize the focus of the FLSN visits were not well enough aligned with the quality indicators to show a relationship.

### **Barriers to program improvement**

Grantees reported confronting a number of obstacles as they worked to improve their programs. Funding challenges were reported as the largest obstacle to making program improvements, followed by limited staff time to provide services and implement program changes.

- Lack of funds was the most commonly reported barrier to program improvement among grantees, with 65% of grantees who responded to an open-ended question highlighting this as a key reason for the difficulty of making changes to their programs. Grantees cited budget cuts and earmarked funds as significant barriers to making improvements to their programs and services. For example, one program director explained that reallocating funds to improve a particular aspect of the program was difficult:

*“Cost allocation makes it difficult because we have to be careful that the funds we get are put towards what they are supposed to go towards. It’s hard when we have limited funding for different areas...”*

- Program directors also pointed out that limitations in funding also affected staffing decisions. Two program directors specifically cited challenges in hiring qualified staff needed to enhance program quality as a result of budget cuts, and two program directors noted that they were cutting their hours back to cover other staff, so there was insufficient administrative time to focus on program improvement efforts.
- Time was a barrier reported by 41% of grantee program directors responding to an open-ended question in interviews. Program directors reported needing more staff time to offer services, for teacher planning, for recruiting families, and for implementing what they learn from the FLSN. One program also noted that parents have limited time, so adding another activity to enhance the program can also be a burden to families that struggle to meet the program’s attendance requirements.
- A structural feature of family literacy programs – the collaborative partnerships with other agencies providing one or more of the four components – can also make program improvement difficult. Program directors and FLSN staff both noted that it is difficult to make improvements to components for which they do not have direct oversight. Improving

component integration can also be a challenge when one or more components (often the adult education component) is provided by a partner agency.

FLSN staff also cited a number of challenges in their work that may limit their ability to effect change in grantee program quality indicators – most notably variation in grantee needs, limited resources, and a lack of concrete quality benchmarks against which to measure grantee progress.

- The FLSN is charged with helping all 22 grantees move along the continuum toward exemplary program status, though grantee needs for assistance vary widely. The FLSN recognized this challenge and began to hold break-out sessions at the large mandatory meetings to meet the range of grantee needs.
- One of the greatest challenges noted by FLSN staff is the absence of specific quality indicators for each component provided by First 5 LA. In particular, the FLSN director explained that when the new parent survey was introduced, it was not accompanied by cutpoints on items to help them support grantees' progress toward a specific goal. This, they feel, would enable them to provide better feedback to grantees. However, the research is so varied that a concrete benchmark is difficult to define and back up. The FLSN created its own quality indicator to use for the EVP process, but it does not carry the weight of an Initiative benchmark.
- Insufficient time and funds to provide the level of support to grantees that the FLSN would like is another challenge cited by FLSN staff and perhaps another barrier to program improvement. FLSN staff noted budget cuts and balancing multiple demands on their time as challenges. In particular, documenting their work (especially summarizing the site visit activities) was mentioned as being especially time consuming.
- The FLSN also highlighted challenges around grantees' use of data. The FLSN reported difficulties around training as a result of staffing changes at grantee agencies (especially among data clerks) and challenges using the data system, as well as variation in grantees' comfort with data and interest in improving their data use skills. The FLSN director noted:  
*“We tried a regional training, trying to get programs excited about using data, so that they would focus more on when it gets time to collect it and enter it. And some of our programs – we feel like they are really interested and ready for that... I think we had 8-10 people show up for the regional, which was good. But we continue to look for strategies on how can we make it easier for them to pull the data and use it on a day-to-day basis.”*
- In addition, limited attendance at FLSN training activities and limited requests for technical assistance might also affect grantees' ability to make program improvements. The FLSN director suggested several reasons for the low attendance rates at some sessions: some programs think they do not need the training because their programs are strong or they feel they are “moving along fine”; others do not have the resources to send teachers to all trainings, or have scheduling conflicts.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

In this chapter, we explored factors that contribute to overall program quality and the FLSN's efforts to support the enhancement of these characteristics. Highlights of the main findings and bulleted recommendations are summarized below.

## **Role of the FLSN**

The primary role of the FLSN is to provide training, support, and guidance to grantees to facilitate their progress toward becoming model family literacy programs. In addition to trainings and supplemental programs like the Exemplary Validated Program (EVP) process, the FLSN provides much of its support to the grantees through customized technical assistance site visits, where FLSN staff discuss grantee challenges, observe program activities, and offer feedback, advice, and resources to move grantees forward. The role of the FLSN in identifying grantee needs and providing services accordingly has changed somewhat over the years, with more effort given in Year 6 to diagnosing grantee needs and making recommendations for areas of focus.

As has been the case throughout the course of the Initiative, grantee program directors reported high levels of satisfaction overall with the support and feedback provided by the FLSN. In addition, we see an overall decline in grantees' perceived needs for additional support, suggesting that grantees are feeling more confident about the quality of their programs. By far the most appreciated benefit of FLSN support, as reported by program directors, is the networking opportunity.

- The FLSN should continue offering networking opportunities for grantees and encouraging grantees to draw on the experiences of others in the Initiative; the network of grantees may become even more important after the anticipated “sunsetting” of the Initiative in 2010.

## **The four components**

In terms of the quality of each of the four components, from the FLSN perspective, ECE may be the one with the most room for improvement. Accordingly, FLSN staff focused one of their mandatory trainings each year on the ECE component, but they addressed ECE issues on only 18% of the site visits. Grantee program directors rated the FLSN's support in this area as being relatively useful, and we found statistically significant relationships between the number of site visits grantees received and changes in three aspects of ECE component quality: teachers' use of formal lesson plans, teachers' use of curriculum guidelines, and a focus on language and literacy skills. Program directors reported small to moderate levels of needs in the area of ECE, and in supporting language and literacy in the ECE classroom in particular.

- The FLSN should continue to support grantee program improvement in the area of ECE and should increase technical assistance attention given to this component during site visits.

The FLSN also focused one mandatory training each year on parenting education and PCILA, and addressed one of these components during 26% of site visits. Support in this area was highly rated by program directors, and reported grantee needs were somewhat lower by Year 6. Consistent with the FLSN observations of grantee improvements in this area, we find some changes in parenting education practices related to FLSN support – specifically with regard to focusing instruction on topics related to parents' ability to support their children's learning, which was also found to be related to greater learning outcomes among parents (see Chapter 3).

- The FLSN should continue to emphasize enhancing the quality of the parenting education and PCILA components, including the importance of focusing on what parents can do to support children's learning.

Support in the area of adult education was not rated as highly by program directors, though reported needs in this area were also not very great. Although we do not find much evidence that indicators of program quality changed significantly from Year 5 to Year 6, we do find some minor changes in

adult education teachers' instructional practice: teachers' use of parent input to plan instruction and use of hands-on activities in the classroom *decreased* from Year 5 to Year 6. Although these changes were not large in magnitude, the observed relationship between use of hands-on practices and CASAS score growth makes this decrease worth noting. As noted in Chapter 2:

- The FLSN should consider providing (or helping to identify) training opportunities for adult education teachers that address effective instructional strategies for the family literacy population.

Grantee programs continue to struggle to fully integrate their four components into a coherent system of services for families, though most employ a range of strategies, including holding regular integration meetings with teachers from each of the four components (though adult education teachers do not attend in many cases) and reinforcing core messages across the four components (such as using thematic units to tie the content of each component together). Fewer program directors reported offering cross-training opportunities to staff or training explicitly on integration. The FLSN provided an optional training (through NCFL) on integration (in addition to a breakout session on parenting education and PCILA integration at one of the mandatory trainings), and overall support from the FLSN on integration was rated highly by program directors. According to the summary of the Year 5 site notes, however, component integration was one of the areas addressed *least* frequently during customized technical assistance site visits, and grantee reports of their needs in this area remain high – and even appear to increase – from Year 5 to Year 6.

- The FLSN should expand its focus on component integration, assessing the level of integration among grantee programs and providing direct technical assistance to help individual grantees enhance this aspect of their programs – perhaps even incorporating this into FLSN staff's observation work at grantee sites.

## **Program leadership and administration**

Overall, family literacy programs reflect a number of characteristics of program quality: program directors are relatively well educated and experienced; most programs work with families to set individualized goals; all programs offer a wide variety of services on site or through referrals; most offer opportunities for parents to be involved in program governance and other leadership activities; attention to cultural competence is high; and overall, programs achieve very strong attendance rates. There appear to be some obstacles with regard to supporting staff quality, though, including infrequent observations of teaching staff, limited paid planning time for staff, and difficulties providing coverage for staff to attend training.

- Grantee programs should reexamine their approach to supporting staff quality and look for ways to facilitate professional learning through on-the-job coaching, providing time for planning and collaboration, and attending FLSN trainings.
- Given grantees' limited discretionary funding, First 5 LA and the FLSN should also look for ways to provide trainings to staff that do not require programs to provide substitute teachers to cover attendees' classrooms, perhaps offering trainings in the evenings or on weekends and providing a small stipend or other type of incentives to encourage attendance.

According to FLSN site notes, FLSN staff spent the majority of their time during technical assistance site visits addressing these and other program leadership and administration (PLA) issues, and while the majority of *visits* addressed at least one need related to quality improvement, the majority of

*needs* addressed were related to more administrative tasks. In other words, the time spent during visits was focused more on administrative issues despite the fact that at least some time was spent discussing issues related to quality improvement during the majority of visits. We found some evidence of the impact of this policy focus, however. We found that FLSN visits were associated with greater reported use of formal policies and procedures (such as having written job descriptions and policies for documenting and following up on referrals) among grantees.

- The FLSN should continue to reinforce the need for grantees to have in place policies and procedures to guide their practice, but FLSN staff should increase their focus on quality improvement in the four component areas.

According to FLSN site visit notes from Year 5, the specific technical assistance needs addressed most often by site visitors concerned organizing data and data entry issues. However, program director reports suggest that grantees feel fairly confident in their ability to collect assessment data, and use data to track participant attendance and progress; and grantees rated the usefulness of FLSN support in these areas as less useful compared to other areas.

- Although the FLSN should continue to encourage and support grantees' use of data for program improvement, time spent on the details of data collection and data entry during on-site technical assistance should be reduced at this stage of the Initiative, so that more attention can be given to program quality improvement. FLSN staff should consider ways to revise their data guidance documents to simplify them and make them comprehensive enough to replace some of the one-on-one discussions about data collection details.

With the progressive funding match required by First 5 LA for all family literacy grantees, achieving fiscal sustainability is of paramount importance to grantee agencies, and program directors reported facing significant challenges achieving sustainability. Program directors identified this as a major area of need, and though the FLSN offered two optional trainings related to sustainability, only 1% of needs addressed during site visits concerned fundraising or sustainability in Year 5, and compared to other topics, grantees were less positive about FLSN help in this area overall.

- Especially given budget cuts, the funding match, and the Initiative's anticipated "sunsetting" in 2010, the FLSN should increase its focus on sustainability support for grantees. FLSN staff should work with grantees to review their sustainability plans and provide specific guidance during technical assistance site visits, as well as provide targeted networking opportunities for grantees to share promising approaches and funding sources for program sustainability.

One of the greatest barriers to program improvement, both for grantees and for the FLSN's work, is time. Program directors highlighted this as a challenge, and the FLSN struggles to address the individualized needs of all 22 grantees plus maintain the same level of record-keeping needed to document its work.

- In consultation with First 5 LA and the evaluation team, the FLSN should consider reevaluating its technical assistance documentation system. Reducing the complexity of the coding scheme applied to the site visitors' notes could help streamline the process and free up staff time that could be used for direct technical assistance activities.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations**

In Years 5 and 6 of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative evaluation, we continued to examine outcomes for parents and children participating in the Initiative. Using survey and assessment data collected by grantees, we measured growth in parents' English reading skills as well as changes in parenting behaviors and practices over time. We also used observations of parents and children reading together to assess parents' use of interactive reading practices. From data collected by trained assessors engaging a sample of children in one-on-one assessments in a range of developmental domains, we examined children's progress over the course of their participation in family literacy services. We also analyzed data gathered through classroom observations, interviews with program directors, surveys of teachers and program directors, and parent focus groups to characterize the quality of program services and relate features of quality to outcomes. In addition, we examined the work of the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN), with a particular focus on their role as technical assistance providers and the links between their support to grantee programs and program quality improvement. The reader should be reminded that although we present results linking programmatic characteristics with outcomes (as well as linking changes in program characteristics with FLSN support), we cannot conclude that there is a causal relationship; other factors may be contributing to positive outcomes observed. (Determining causality requires an experimental design which was not feasible given costs and First 5 LA's concerns about randomly assigning families to intervention and control conditions.)

This report described the evaluation activities undertaken in Years 5 and 6 and summarized findings from analyses of the data collected. This chapter highlights key findings and recommendations that emerge from each of the chapters in this report, organized around the central research questions guiding the evaluation. A complete listing of the recommendations is also presented in Appendix E. We conclude with implications for the next steps of the evaluation.

### ***Child and Family Outcomes***

A central focus of the evaluation has been the assessment of child and family outcomes – assessing growth on a range of outcomes and linking that growth to participation in program activities. Two primary research questions guided our examination of these outcomes:

- How are family literacy program participants growing and changing over time?
- What is the relationship between program participation and outcomes?

We discuss findings related to these questions for each of the components.

### **Adult learning outcomes**

Overall, results from parent assessments and focus groups suggest that programs participating in the Family Literacy Initiative continue to support the English language development and continuing education of the parents participating in their programs. As in prior years of the evaluation, we find that parents participating in adult education classes (ESL and/or ABE) in the family literacy programs show statistically significant growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year on their CASAS reading assessment scores. In addition to these improved reading skills, parents gave many examples of how their English comprehension skills and oral language have improved as well,

enabling them to be more comfortable and competent interacting with people they encounter during everyday activities.

## **Parenting outcomes**

Parent perceptions, parent reports of their own behaviors at two points in time, and analyses linking time in the program to observed behaviors all suggest that family literacy programs are contributing to parents' knowledge about, and behaviors and capacity to support, their children's learning as well. For example, parents in focus groups pointed to their improved knowledge of child development as one of the greatest impacts of their participation in the parenting education and parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA) components. Parent reports on the parent survey also provide evidence that parent knowledge of the importance of reading to their children right from birth has increased over time.

Parent survey responses also suggest that visits to the library and the number of children's books at home have increased, improving children's access to literacy resources so critical to developing early literacy skills and a love for reading. Parents also are routinely reading to their children and engaging them in discussions about books – even more so at the end of the program year. In addition to parent reports on the survey and in focus groups, analyses of direct observations of parent-child interactions (and counts of different types of “utterances” used) during a shared book-reading activity revealed that parents are using a wide range of strategies to engage their children in the books they read together. In particular, parents were observed to frequently engage their children in discussion about the literal content of the book; much less talk went beyond the literal to encourage children to make predictions, to evaluate the story, or use other types of “non-immediate” content talk.

- **Recommendation:** Programs should continue to encourage parents to read to their children and talk about what they are reading – pointing out pictures, asking children to count or label objects, or talking about what just happened in the story, for example. But they should also encourage parents to develop their children's concept development and critical thinking skills and enhance their comprehension by going beyond the literal content of the book to engage in higher-level talk – for example, asking children to make predictions, evaluate the story, or make connections to their own experiences.

In addition to increases in parents' understanding of child development and use of strategies for engaging their young children in learning activities, parent survey results and focus group responses alike indicate that parents are learning to value education and hold high expectations for their children as well as for themselves. Parent survey responses also indicate that parents are learning more about the public school system and are becoming increasingly involved with their child's classroom and school – practices that should support children's success in school into the future.

One of the most commonly reported impacts of the programs highlighted by parents concerned discipline – learning different strategies for guiding children's behavior as well as controlling parents' own tempers. Parent survey responses also suggest that more households are characterized by low TV viewing by children (less than two hours per day) and high parent involvement in children's TV viewing by the end of the program year, though most of the movement is from lesser to greater involvement, rather than from greater to lesser TV viewing.

## Child outcomes

We also find evidence that children are growing and developing in a range of domains throughout their participation in the early childhood education (ECE) component of the family literacy programs. Comparisons of assessment data from Time 1 to Time 2 reveal that children are enhancing their language skills, especially in English. Pre-LAS scores increased for 3-5-year-olds in the child outcomes substudy, as did PPVT scores – which indicates that children’s language development accelerated to bring them up to nearly the level of national norms (which were developed from a more advantaged sample). Sample sizes for the MacArthur CDI were too small to make general statements about language development for the 8-to-30-month-old children, though the children in the sample are continuing to develop their language skills as well.

Children demonstrated statistically significant growth on emergent literacy skills as well. By the end of the year, children could name more letters and colors, and demonstrated greater concepts of print and story comprehension. These are important skills that are predictive of later achievement.

Assessments of numeracy and early math skills showed significant growth in terms of naming numbers and counting objects, but not in terms of problem solving.

- **Recommendation:** Given the lack of accelerated growth on the measure of problem-solving skills and the comparatively lower reported (and observed) attention to mathematics in the ECE classroom, programs should consider strategies for integrating more opportunities for mathematical and scientific exploration and thinking for children in their classrooms.

## Program participation and outcomes

In the absence of a randomized design, we examined the relationships between level of participation and growth on outcome measures to assess program impacts. We hypothesized that greater impacts would be observed among families receiving greater levels of service. On the whole, we find support for this hypothesis. For example, we find that parents who participated in more hours of adult education classes show more growth on the CASAS reading assessment. Although this finding is not sufficient to prove that participation in family literacy classes improves parents’ English reading skills, it does provide evidence to support a relationship.

Although we find that parents who attend more hours of parenting education and PCILA do not show more growth on the composite scale of language and literacy activities with their children at home – our primary parenting outcome measure – they do show growth on several specific practices, including library use and frequency of reading to their children. In addition, greater participation in PCILA is associated with greater levels of several types of parent talk during one-on-one book-reading sessions with their children – most notably talk that goes beyond the literal content of the book, which research has shown to be associated with later reading skills. However, no positive relationships were found between hours of parenting education alone and such parent talk. In fact, a negative correlation between parenting education and PCILA hours suggests that programs may be making a tradeoff between hours offered for these two components, given limited program time.

- **Recommendation:** Programs should ensure that time in classroom-based parenting education sessions does not take away from time parents spend practicing what they have learned in the PCILA setting.

We also find some connections between the components. For example, we find that time spent in adult education classes is also positively associated with parent talk during joint book-reading

activities, suggesting some influences across components. Finally, we find that parent outcomes related to certain home literacy activities – namely, reading together at home and working together on learning numbers, letters, or words – are associated with more positive children’s outcomes.

### **Program Quality, Outcomes, and Improvement Efforts**

Greater emphasis was given to the measurement of program quality in Years 5 and 6 of the evaluation. In addition to assessing indicators of quality, we explored relationships between program quality and family outcomes. We also explored the FLSN’s role in supporting quality improvement efforts and examined impacts of FLSN support. In this section, we review findings and provide recommendations related to the following research questions:

- What is the range of program quality among grantees?
- What is the relationship between program quality and participant outcomes?
- What is the relationship between FLSN support and grantee program quality improvement?
- What factors facilitate or impede program quality improvement?

We begin with an overview of the role of the FLSN and then discuss indicators of quality related to program leadership and administration, staff qualifications, instructional content and practice in the four components, classroom resources, component integration, sustainability, and use of data. We also highlight reported barriers to program improvement.

### **Role of the FLSN in supporting program quality improvement**

The primary role of the FLSN is to provide training, support, and guidance to grantees to facilitate their progress toward becoming model family literacy programs. In addition to trainings and supplemental programs like the Exemplary Validated Program (EVP) process, the FLSN provides much of its support to the grantees through customized technical assistance site visits, where FLSN staff discuss grantee challenges, observe program activities, and offer feedback, advice, and resources to move grantees forward. The role of the FLSN in identifying grantee needs and providing services accordingly has changed somewhat over the years, with more effort given in Year 6 to diagnosing grantee needs and making recommendations for areas of focus.

As has been the case throughout the course of the Initiative, grantee program directors reported high levels of satisfaction overall with the support and feedback provided by the FLSN. In addition, we see an overall decline in grantees’ perceived needs for additional support, suggesting that grantees are feeling more confident about the quality of their programs. By far the most appreciated benefit of FLSN support, as reported by program directors, is the networking opportunity.

- **Recommendation:** The FLSN should continue offering networking opportunities for grantees and encouraging grantees to draw on the experiences of others in the Initiative; the network of grantees may become even more important after the anticipated “sunsetting” of the Initiative in 2010.

### **Program leadership and administration**

According to FLSN site notes, FLSN staff spent the majority of their time during technical assistance site visits to grantee programs addressing program leadership and administration (PLA) issues, and while the majority of *visits* addressed at least one need related to quality improvement, the majority

of *needs* addressed were related to more administrative tasks. In other words, the time spent during visits was focused more on administrative issues despite the fact that at least some time was spent discussing issues related to quality improvement during the majority of visits. We found some evidence of the impact of this policy focus. We found that FLSN visits were associated with greater reported use of formal policies and procedures (such as having written job descriptions and policies for documenting and following up on referrals) among grantees.

- **Recommendation:** The FLSN should continue to reinforce the need for grantees to have policies and procedures in place to guide their practice, but FLSN staff should increase their focus on quality improvement in the four component areas.

## Staff quality

In our assessment of staff quality, we found variation across components. Overall, though, family literacy program directors are relatively well educated and experienced, and attention to cultural competence among staff is high. There appear to be some obstacles with regard to supporting staff quality, though, including infrequent observations of teaching staff, limited paid planning time for staff, and difficulty providing coverage for staff to attend training.

- **Recommendation:** Grantee programs should reexamine their approach to supporting staff quality and look for ways to facilitate professional learning through on-the-job coaching, providing time for planning and collaboration, and attending FLSN trainings.
- **Recommendation:** Given grantees' limited discretionary funding, First 5 LA and the FLSN should also look for ways to provide trainings to staff that do not require programs to provide substitute teachers to cover attendees' classrooms, perhaps offering trainings in the evenings or on weekends and providing a small stipend or other type of incentives to encourage attendance.

In the adult education component, although we find that credential rates dropped somewhat from Year 5 to Year 6, teachers are relatively experienced, at least in terms of the number of years they have been teaching adult education. In addition, we find a connection between teacher experience and CASAS reading scores. Specifically, having adult education teachers with more years of experience teaching in a family literacy context is associated with CASAS score growth among parents.

Teacher quality in parenting education/PCILA also appears to be important for family outcomes. First, we find that although teachers vary in terms of their teaching experience, on average, both parenting education and PCILA teachers have more than a few years of experience teaching in their respective component. Furthermore, analyses relating quality to outcomes suggest that having a more experienced PCILA teacher is associated with positive outcomes for parents. However, there is room for greater preparation among teachers, with relatively few holding relevant teaching credentials or permits.

- **Recommendation:** Programs should evaluate the qualifications of their teaching staff for the parenting education and PCILA components and seek out opportunities for professional development to support teachers with less formal training.

ECE teachers are also relatively experienced, with slightly less than 10 years of teaching experience, on average. Just under half of ECE teachers surveyed reported having a bachelor's degree, half reported having a degree or coursework in early childhood education, and two-thirds reported

holding at least a CDA or associate teacher permit. Teacher-child ratios were lower, on average, than those considered optimal – 26% lower than NAEYC recommendations, which are similar to CDE regulations for Title V programs; this warrants some attention.

- **Recommendation:** Given the relatively low teacher-child ratios, programs should consider exploring options for increasing the presence of well-trained adults in the classroom to ensure that children are getting the level of attention considered optimal to scaffold their learning.

## **Instructional content and practice in the four components**

Critical to an understanding of program quality is an examination of what happens in the classroom – the content of instruction and/or classroom activities as well as teacher practices. We explored a range of indicators of quality instruction and teacher practice in each of the four components.

### ***Adult education***

Adult education teachers surveyed reported utilizing various instructional approaches in order to meet students' diverse learning needs, including using hands-on activities. Overall, we find that greater use of these more interactive instructional practices, and less time spent in lecture format, are associated with greater adult learning.

Compared to other components, support from the FLSN in the area of adult education was not rated as highly by program directors, though reported needs in this area were also not very great. Although we do not find much evidence that indicators of program quality changed significantly from Year 5 to Year 6, we do find some minor (but statistically significant) changes in adult education teachers' instructional practice: teachers' use of parent input to plan instruction and use of hands-on activities in the classroom decreased from Year 5 to Year 6. Although these changes were not large in magnitude, the observed relationship between use of hands-on practices and CASAS score growth makes this decrease worth noting.

- **Recommendation:** The FLSN should consider providing (or helping to identify) training opportunities for adult education teachers that address effective instructional strategies for the family literacy population.

### ***Parenting education and PCILA***

Parenting education teachers reported using a variety of curricula to guide their instruction and focusing on a variety of topics, though most common were emphases on building parents' self-esteem, child development, and strategies for reading with children and supporting their learning. Analyses linking quality indicators to outcomes suggest that more attention to topics related to children's learning – the original intent of the family literacy model for parenting education – does seem to be associated with greater parent growth on our composite measure of language and literacy activity at home.

Teacher reports of their instructional methods suggest that they divide their time between lecture, hands-on activities, and discussion. Analyses linking quality indicators to outcomes suggest that parent involvement through discussion and interactive activities is associated with parent learning. Parents in focus groups confirmed that group discussions with the teacher and their peers were the most valuable for their learning.

- **Recommendation:** Programs should continue to offer opportunities in parenting education classes for parents to share their experiences and discuss issues with the instructor as well as with a group of their peers.

Though the structure and content of PCILA sessions vary widely, most teachers reported using a formal curriculum (usually an ECE curriculum), and in most classrooms observed, a focus on literacy activities was apparent. Some classes are mostly one-on-one sessions with parents and children working together on a single activity or a variety of learning activities, while other classes are more group focused, with the teacher leading activities. The relatively low attention given to coaching and modeling suggests that the focus of PCILA may be more on setting up opportunities for interaction between parents and children, rather than providing explicit learning opportunities for parents through coaching or modeling effective parent-child interactions.

- **Recommendation:** In addition to providing time for parents and children to engage with each other during PCILA, programs should consider providing more guidance to parents – through teacher modeling and direct coaching of parents – to guide and reinforce learning in context. In particular, PCILA teachers should model and coach parents on the importance of specific research-based dialogic reading skills that are predictive of positive child literacy outcomes.

Giving priority to these two components, the FLSN focused one mandatory training each year on parenting education and PCILA, and addressed one of these components during 26% of site visits. Support in these components was highly rated by program directors, and reported grantee needs in each area were somewhat lower by Year 6. Consistent with the FLSN observations of grantee improvements in this area, we find some changes in parenting education practices related to FLSN support – specifically with regard to focusing instruction on topics related to parents’ ability to support their children’s learning, which was also found to be related to greater learning outcomes among parents.

- **Recommendation:** The FLSN should continue to emphasize enhancing the quality of the parenting education and PCILA components, including the importance of focusing on what parents can do to support children’s learning.

### ***Early Childhood Education***

We observed significant variation in the content and focus of ECE classes as well as teacher practices and interactional style. Overall, interactions between children and adults in the ECE classroom were rated in the “medium quality” range on the CLASS in terms of emotional support and classroom organization. Of greater concern, however, is the “low quality” rating, on average, for instructional support, which is most predictive of positive outcomes later. Teachers were also observed to interact with children most frequently in a didactic manner, with relatively little scaffolding and elaboration of children’s responses.

- **Recommendation:** To enhance teacher-child interactions and support scaffolding of children’s learning, the FLSN should consider offering training to provide teachers with strategies for modeling language, expanding on children’s responses, scaffolding their learning, and fostering concept development and higher-order thinking skills. The CLASS manual and training videos could be used to support a training and technical assistance initiative in these areas.

Use of a formal curriculum and formal lesson planning are widespread, and teachers reported using a variety of strategies to assess children’s learning and development. Regarding the content focus of activities in the ECE classroom, surveyed teachers rated all topics listed as very important. Most likely to be rated as the top priority, though, were social-emotional development and language development, followed by literacy learning. Independent observations of classroom activities suggest that about equal attention is given to language and literacy activities as to “aesthetics” activities (such as art and music), and most of the literacy time was characterized as having adults read to children. The average rating on the ECERS-E literacy subscale was just below “good” quality, though there was wide variation among grantees. ECERS-E ratings were highest for books and literacy materials, and lowest for writing and sounds in words.

- **Recommendation:** Although the relative attention to language and literacy activities appears to have increased since Years 2 and 3, more emphasis on these activities, especially going beyond reading to children to address phonological awareness and the development of writing awareness and skills, is warranted.
- **Recommendation:** Given the wide variation in ECERS-E scores, the FLSN should consider targeting its technical assistance to grantees that have a particular need for creating more literacy-rich environments and experiences for children.

In terms of the quality of each of the four components, from the FLSN perspective, ECE may be the one with the most room for improvement. Accordingly, FLSN staff focused one of their mandatory trainings each year on the ECE component, but they addressed ECE issues on only 18% of the site visits. Grantee program directors rated the FLSN’s support in this area as being relatively useful, and we found statistically significant relationships between the number of site visits grantees received and changes in three aspects of ECE component quality: teachers’ use of formal lesson plans, teachers’ use of curriculum guidelines, and a focus on language and literacy skills. Program directors reported small to moderate levels of needs in the area of ECE, and in supporting language and literacy in the ECE classroom in particular.

- **Recommendation:** The FLSN should continue to support grantee program improvement in the area of ECE and should increase technical assistance attention given to this component during site visits.

## **Classroom resources**

The availability of classroom materials and resources is also an important quality indicator – in each of the four components. Overall, we find that teachers are relatively satisfied with their access to appropriate materials and resources, though there are some issues that warrant attention. For example, evidence from the teacher survey suggests that although the majority of adult education teachers described the availability and quality of various resources for their classroom in Year 6 as being always adequate, with the exception of computers and audio-visual equipment, we see an overall decline in the reported adequacy of resources from Year 5 to Year 6. This should be a concern for programs, as findings reveal a statistically significant relationship between the availability of resources and parent outcomes. Specifically, parents in programs where teachers rated classroom resources – both the learning materials and the physical environment – more highly showed more CASAS score growth.

- **Recommendation:** Programs should evaluate the availability of resources for the adult education classroom and explore ways to enhance the quality of the classroom environment and teachers' access to adequate learning materials and resources where needed.

In addition, parenting education and PCILA teachers rated the availability and quality of classroom resources as generally adequate, though somewhat less likely to be rated as always adequate were computer equipment, parenting education textbooks, and materials for supporting children with disabilities in the PCILA classroom. Analyses linking quality indicators to outcomes suggest that having sufficient resources is important for the PCILA classroom, with more adequate resources associated with greater parent growth over time.

- **Recommendation:** Programs should look for ways to enhance the availability of materials and resources for their parenting and PCILA components, especially by ensuring that parents have the books they need to support their learning and that PCILA classrooms have the space and materials for all parent-child pairs to fully engage in learning activities.

In the ECE classroom, teachers reported that the quantity and quality of materials and resources were generally sufficient for their needs. Materials for diverse learners, especially for children with special needs, were rated somewhat lower, however.

- **Recommendation:** Programs should consider targeting resources toward learning materials for children with special needs as well as linguistically and culturally appropriate materials to ensure that diverse learning needs are met and that all children feel represented in the classroom.

## Component integration

Grantee programs continue to struggle to fully integrate their four components into a coherent system of services for families, though most employ a range of strategies, including holding regular integration meetings with teachers from each of the four components and reinforcing core messages across the four components (such as using thematic units to tie the content of each component together). Fewer program directors reported offering cross-training opportunities to staff or training explicitly on integration.

The FLSN provided an optional training (through NCFL) on integration (in addition to a breakout session on parenting education and PCILA integration at one of the mandatory trainings), and overall support from the FLSN on integration was rated highly by program directors. According to the Year 5 site notes, however, component integration was one of the areas addressed *least* frequently during customized technical assistance site visits, and grantee reports of their needs in this area remain high – and even appear to increase – from Year 5 to Year 6.

- **Recommendation:** The FLSN should expand its focus on component integration, assessing the level of integration among grantee programs and providing direct technical assistance to help individual grantees enhance this aspect of their programs – perhaps even incorporating this into FLSN staff's observation work at grantee sites.

Support for integrating the adult education component is particularly needed, as it appears that integrating this component continues to be a challenge for programs. Overall, most adult education teachers told us they are not able to frequently communicate with teachers in other components, although many do align their curricula with topics covered in the other components. In addition, as noted earlier, it seems that having adult education teachers with more years of experience teaching in

a family literacy context, as well as having classrooms with a greater proportion of family literacy students relative to other non-program adults, is associated with greater CASAS score growth among parents. This suggests that teachers' familiarity with family literacy (and the learning needs of family literacy students) may be important for supporting parent learning.

- **Recommendation:** The FLSN should consider providing additional training opportunities (such as the Foundations in Family Literacy training) or materials (for staff in partner agencies unable to attend trainings) for adult education teachers who might be new to family literacy to strengthen their understanding of the goals of family literacy, to facilitate integration, and to provide ideas for addressing the unique needs of family literacy parents.

Although one might imagine that parenting and PCILA would be most likely to be well integrated – both with other components and with each other – there appears to be less communication than would be ideal, and PCILA teachers are somewhat surprisingly unaware of what happens in the parenting classes. In addition, analyses linking quality indicators to outcomes suggest that a higher level of integration of parenting education with the other components of family literacy programs is associated with greater parent learning.

- **Recommendation:** The FLSN should consider providing additional training on integration strategies, especially to enhance the integration of parenting and PCILA components with the other components and with each other.

ECE teachers reported feeling relatively well informed about the activities in the PCILA classroom, but somewhat less aware of the content of parenting classes, and even less aware of what goes on in the adult education classroom. The majority of ECE teachers reported integrating themes or topics discussed in other components in their classroom activities, and about half made some modifications to their curriculum for the purposes of integration.

- **Recommendation:** The FLSN should consider offering training or technical assistance to program staff on specific strategies for integrating ECE with the other components, especially with parenting and adult education.

## **Sustainability**

With the progressive funding match required by First 5 LA for all family literacy grantees, achieving fiscal sustainability is of paramount importance to grantee agencies, and program directors reported facing significant challenges in doing so. Program directors identified this as a major area of need, and though the FLSN offered two optional trainings related to sustainability, only 1% of needs addressed during site visits concerned fundraising or sustainability in Year 5, and compared to other topics, grantees were less positive about FLSN help in this area overall.

- **Recommendation:** Especially given budget cuts, the funding match, and the Initiative's anticipated "sunsetting" in 2010, the FLSN should increase its focus on sustainability support for grantees. FLSN staff should work with grantees to review their sustainability plans and provide specific guidance during technical assistance site visits, as well as provide targeted networking opportunities for grantees to share promising approaches and funding sources for program sustainability.

## Use of data

According to FLSN site visit notes from Year 5, the specific technical assistance needs addressed most often by site visitors concerned organizing data and data entry issues. However, program director reports suggest that grantees feel fairly confident in their ability to collect assessment data, and use data to track participant attendance and progress; and grantees rated the usefulness of FLSN support in these areas as less useful compared to other areas.

- **Recommendation:** Although the FLSN should continue to encourage and support grantees' use of data for program improvement, time spent on the details of data collection and data entry during on-site technical assistance should be reduced at this stage of the Initiative, so that more attention can be given to program quality improvement. The FLSN should consider ways to revise its data guidance documents to simplify them and make them comprehensive enough to replace some of the one-on-one discussions about data collection details.

Over the years we have found that the quality of data entered into the online data system has improved greatly. That said, there are two areas in which missing data limited our analyses. First, as noted earlier, sample sizes for the MacArthur CDI were too small to make general statements about language development for children in the birth-to-three age range. Children in this age range make up a significant proportion of the clients served by family literacy programs, and assessing their language development outcomes early on is critical for documenting progress and for identifying language learning needs.

- **Recommendation:** To adequately assess the progress of children in the birth-to-three age range, we recommend that programs use the MacArthur CDI with all of their 8-to-30-month-old children and follow administration guidelines to ensure that pre- and post-tests are administered on time and with the correct form.

The second area where missing data limited our analysis concerns vocational education. Though parents' vocational education goals likely take more than one year to fully achieve, programs have begun to document parent progress toward these goals over the course of the year. However, programs entered vocational education goals for 48 parents but only tracked parent progress on a third of these parents. Thus we can say very little about the vocational education achievements of this group of parents.

- **Recommendation:** Programs that offer vocational education services for parents should work with parents to set appropriate goals for their vocational learning and routinely check in on their progress, and update the data system so that parent successes can be tracked across all domains.

## Program improvement challenges

Finally, one of the greatest barriers to program improvement, both for grantees and for the FLSN's work, is time. Program directors highlighted the lack of time to implement changes as a challenge, and the FLSN struggles to address the individualized needs of all 22 grantees plus maintain the same level of record-keeping needed to document its work.

- **Recommendation:** In consultation with First 5 LA and the evaluation team, the FLSN should consider reevaluating its technical assistance documentation system. Reducing the complexity of the coding scheme applied to the site visitors' notes could help streamline the process and free up staff time that could be used for direct technical assistance activities.

## **Next Steps**

The First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative has been supporting children’s learning and development, parents’ progress toward their adult learning goals, parents’ capacity to support their children’s learning, and, ultimately, family literacy and self sufficiency over the past six years. In 2010, it is anticipated that the Initiative will “sunset” – or at least a decision about coming to a close will be made by the Commission. In recognition of the Initiative’s longevity and in anticipation of the upcoming Commission decision, the evaluation will take several new directions in the final two years. First, we will take a *retrospective* look at the Initiative. This will involve stepping back and taking a broader perspective on quality and outcomes, analyzing in greater depth data collected over the past six years. Building on the findings presented in this report, we plan to examine patterns of change in the quality of family literacy services as well as in child and family outcomes over a longer period of time. By looking over the history of the Initiative, we can estimate the number of families that have been reached, the associations between participation and outcomes, and the impact of the Initiative on program quality improvement. We will also examine best practices for service delivery, including successful component integration and long-term sustainability, and follow up on barriers and facilitating factors related to achieving “model” (or exemplary) program status – the original goal of the Initiative.

Second, we will take a *prospective* look at the Initiative – exploring outcomes for parents and children that endure long after families leave the programs. We will conduct a follow-up study of Initiative alumni – parents who graduated (or exited) from the grantee programs – to explore their continued use of positive parenting practices and their involvement in and support for their children’s education. We will also seek to identify unanticipated challenges faced by parents once they leave the program that could be incorporated into program curricula. We will also conduct an elementary school follow-up feasibility study to examine children’s outcomes in kindergarten and beyond, comparing outcomes for children who participated in family literacy programs to a demographically matched comparison sample of children who did not participate in these programs.

Together, these two approaches to exploring longer-range outcomes – for families and programs alike – will enable the evaluation to characterize the Initiative’s history as well as its legacy.

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