Evaluation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative

Year 1 Report

Draft Submitted: October 30, 2003

Revised: April 5, 2004

Submitted to:
Katie Fallin, Research Analyst
First 5 LA
333 S. Beaudry Ave, Suite 2100
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Submitted by:
American Institutes for Research
Heather Quick, Project Director,
Megan Rice, Project Coordinator,
Deborah Parrish, Principal Investigator, and
Freya Makris, Gabrielle Phillips, Raquel González,
Regina Waugh, and Carmella Schaecher
Table of Contents

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................ iv
  Overview of the Initiative ........................................................................ iv
  Approach to the Evaluation ........................................................................ v
    Theory of Change ......................................................................................... v
    Data Collection and Analysis ..................................................................... vi
  Emerging Themes from Year 1 ........................................................................ vii
    What is the range of family literacy program characteristics? ............... vii
    What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the programs? ........ viii
    How have First 5 LA grants benefited family literacy programs? .......... viii
    What is the range of activities in which the FLSN has engaged? ............ x
    What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the FLSN? xii
    What were parents’ perspectives on the early impacts of the programs? xiii
  Next Steps: Year 2 Evaluation Activities .................................................. xiv
  Conclusion ........................................................................................................ xiv

Chapter 1: Introduction .............................................................................................. 1
  Review of Research on Family Literacy ......................................................... 2
  Overview of the Initiative Evaluation ............................................................ 3
    Research and Evaluation Questions .......................................................... 5

Chapter 2: Evaluation Methodology ...................................................................... 8
  Site Visits ........................................................................................................ 8
    Site Visit Protocols ................................................................................... 9
    Training for Site Visits ............................................................................. 10
    Site Visit Set-Up and Coordination ......................................................... 10
    Site Visit Write-Ups and Analysis ............................................................ 11
  Extant Data .................................................................................................... 12
    Grantee Documents .................................................................................. 12
    FLSN Documents .................................................................................... 12
    Participant Profile Data ........................................................................... 13
  Stakeholder Interviews .................................................................................. 13

Chapter 3: Grantee Implementation ..................................................................... 14
  Characteristics of the 15 Grantees ................................................................. 14
  Program Goals and Objectives ....................................................................... 16
    Goals for Children’s Growth and Development ....................................... 16
    Goals for Parenting Education ................................................................. 16
    Goals for Parent-Child Relationships ....................................................... 17
    Goals for Adult Learning .......................................................................... 17
  Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Program Goals ......................... 17
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Literacy Services</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education (ECE)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Education</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Family Support Services</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Family Literacy Services</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration and Planning</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Families Participating in All Four Components, Under One Roof</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Themes or Curricular Topics Across Components</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Integration, Shared Planning Time</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lines of Communication</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Challenge of Integrating Adult Education</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Component Integration</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Settings</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges Regarding Program Space</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space Issues for Districts vs. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for Negotiating Space Issues</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Program Space</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Staffing</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Responsibilities and Qualifications</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Development and Training</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Challenges</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Program Staffing</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Retention of Program Participants</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of Family Literacy Participants</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention of Program Participants</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Recruitment and Retention</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships, Collaborations, and Funding Sources</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Partners and Collaborators</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First 5 LA Family Literacy Grants</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Collaborations and First 5 LA Funding</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: The First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative Families</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Characteristics and Experiences</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Goals</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges Families Face</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Family Characteristics and Experiences</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Reported Outcomes of Program Participation</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes for Parents</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes for Children</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Perceived Outcomes</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ Suggestions for Program Improvement</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Program Improvement</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: Implementation of the Family Literacy Support Network

Structure of the FLSN ................................................................. 46
Goals and Activities of the FLSN .................................................. 47
Technical Assistance and Training .............................................. 48
Outreach ................................................................................. 50
Advocacy .............................................................................. 51
Sustainability ................................................................. 51
Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Goals and Activities ......... 52

Implementation Issues and Challenges of the First Year ............ 53
Start-Up Issues and Challenges .................................................. 53
Issues Around Providing and Documenting Services to Grantees .... 54
Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Implementation Issues ...... 55

Grantee Perceptions of the FLSN ............................................. 55
Clarity of the Role of the FLSN .................................................. 56
Reactions to FLSN Activities .................................................... 56
Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Grantee Perceptions of the FLSN .... 57

Chapter 6: Summary and Next Steps ........................................ 58
Emerging Themes from Year 1 .................................................. 58
Process Themes ................................................................. 58
Outcome Themes ................................................................ 63
Policy and Research Themes .................................................. 63
Next Steps: Plans for Year 2 of the Evaluation ......................... 64
Process Data Collection Activities for Year 2 ......................... 64
Outcome Data Collection Activities for Year 2 ......................... 66
Conclusion ........................................................................... 68

References ............................................................................. 69

Appendix .............................................................................. 71
Interview Protocols ............................................................... 72
First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative Evaluation Brochure ............ 84
Map of First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative Grantee Sites ............ 86

List of Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Overview of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative Theory of Change ...... vi
Exhibit 2: First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative Theory of Change .......................... 4
Exhibit 3: Number and Type of Site Visit Data Collection Activities ...................... 11
Exhibit 4: Grantee Characteristics .......................................................................... 15
Exhibit 5: First 5 LA Expenditures by Grantee, Year 1 ............................................ 35
Executive Summary

This executive summary provides an overview of the evaluation of the first year of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative (June 2002 – May 2003).¹ In the following pages, we describe the Initiative itself, the evaluation design, preliminary findings—or emerging themes—and next steps for the evaluation.

Overview of the Initiative

As part of First 5 LA’s 1999-2000 strategic plan, $13 million was allocated to launch a comprehensive Family Literacy Initiative. The Initiative funds three interrelated parts:

1. **Family Literacy Program Grantees** – Three-year grants were awarded to 15 agencies in Los Angeles County that operate four-component family literacy programs for the purpose of expanding or enhancing their family literacy services. Each of these programs must incorporate:
   - intergenerational activities between parents and children that foster learning and appropriate social and emotional development (often referred to as parent and child together (PACT) time);
   - parenting education and training to enable families to provide nurturing and stimulating environments for children;
   - parent literacy and academic training that promotes economic self-sufficiency; and
   - early childhood education (ECE) that prepares children from birth to 5 years to succeed in school and in life.

2. **Training and Technical Assistance** – Three years of funding supports the development and operation of the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN). A collaboration between the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and several consulting agencies, the FLSN is charged with:
   - improving the quality of family literacy services in LA County by developing the 15 grantees into exemplary programs through training and technical assistance;
   - expanding the number of four-component family literacy programs throughout LA County through outreach activities;
   - advocating for program enhancement, replication, and sustainability; and
   - developing its own infrastructure so that it can sustain its services to programs serving families with children aged birth to five.

¹ These dates correspond to the grantee contract year. However, data collected on FLSN activities through September 2003 are also incorporated here.
3. **External Evaluation** – A four-year independent evaluation of the implementation and impacts of the Initiative—the expanded or enhanced family literacy programs as well as the FLSN—is also being conducted. The study addresses process, outcome, and policy-relevant research and evaluation questions and is intended to help First 5 LA learn about the most promising family literacy program models so they can be replicated throughout Los Angeles County and serve as “teaching sites” for future investments.

**Approach to the Evaluation**

In October 2002, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the Center for Improving Child Care Quality at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) were selected to conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative and its impact on children birth to five and their families in LA County. The evaluation is both formative (i.e., interim findings are reported on an annual basis in order to enhance implementation and program results) and summative (i.e., program impacts will be described at the end of three years of program implementation). The first year of the evaluation focused on addressing six key questions:

1. What is the range of family literacy program characteristics?
2. What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the programs?
3. How have First 5 LA grants benefited family literacy programs?
4. What is the range of activities in which the FLSN has engaged?
5. What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the FLSN?
6. What were parents’ perspectives on the early impacts of the programs?

**Theory of Change**

To guide the evaluation, the AIR/UCLA team, in consultation with First 5 LA, the FLSN, and the grantees, developed a theory of change for the Family Literacy Initiative. This model, depicted in Exhibit 1, illustrates the relationships between the various inputs (e.g., funding), outputs (e.g., technical assistance, family literacy program components), outcomes (e.g., child outcomes, program outcomes), and anticipated long-term results of the Initiative. Identifying the various components that comprise the Initiative and the expected linkages between them provides a framework through which the components and the relationships among them can be evaluated.
Data Collection and Analysis

In order to become more familiar with the Initiative, the grantees, and the FLSN, and to assess early implementation and impacts, the evaluation team collected data through three primary research activities in Year 1:

1. Site visits to all 15 grantees in May of 2003, including:
   - observations of PACT time, ECE classes, parenting education classes, and adult education classes;
   - interviews with program directors and executive directors;
   - focus groups with program staff, including teachers from each of the four components (i.e., PACT time, ECE, parenting education, and adult education teachers); and
   - focus groups with adult participants.

2. Compilation of data and reports submitted to First 5 LA by the FLSN and the grantees as part of their grant requirements (e.g., grantee planning phase reports, performance plans, and year-end reports; FLSN quarterly reports, calendars, and Scope of Work).
3. Interviews with First 5 LA staff, a Commissioner, FLSN staff, and family literacy experts to obtain contextual information on the Initiative and the FLSN’s activities.

Data collected from these activities were summarized and analyzed. Through this analysis, a set of common themes emerged. These “emerging themes,” or preliminary findings, suggest areas for further exploration and specification in Year 2 and are described below.

**Emerging Themes from Year 1**

In this section, we highlight the emerging themes that address each of the key research questions covered in Year 1. Where findings are quantified, it is important to note that the number of responses reported represents the frequency with which topics were raised independently by respondents during structured interviews. It is possible that these issues would have been reported by others had we explicitly asked about them. As we move into the second year of data collection, these themes will be examined in greater depth to determine the extent to which they prove to be robust findings over time and across grantees.

**What is the range of family literacy program characteristics?**

To present a single profile of the “typical” First 5 LA family literacy grantee or family literacy program would obscure the important fact that there is substantial variability across grantees. There is no typical family literacy program. Grantees vary in terms of their lead agency, location, years of experience, and many other characteristics. The grantees are divided fairly equally between those whose lead agency is a school district and those affiliated with a community-based organization (CBO). Grantees are distributed throughout most Los Angeles County service planning areas (SPAs). Nine programs are located on elementary or adult school campuses; the other six offer services out of church facilities, private buildings, and community centers.

Though each of the 15 Family Literacy Initiative grantees is unique, they have the shared objective of providing services to families with children birth to five in the form of four-component family literacy programs. Program goals identified by grantee staff center around four common ideas: 1) to promote children’s learning and help them become ready for school, 2) to help parents see that they are their child’s first and most important teacher—their child’s advocate and partner in learning, 3) to help parents develop healthy relationships with their children, and 4) to improve adult literacy, particularly English language skills. In support of these goals, grantees offered a variety of *program services* to families in their communities in Year 1.

- All programs provided ECE services to support preschoolers and, in eight programs, infants and toddlers in their cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development.
- PACT time was a relatively new component for some grantees and appeared to be the most variable across grantees.
• Parenting education activities ranged from staff debriefing with parents about PACT time to classes that provide information on topics such as discipline, communication, and the importance of parent-child interactive play.

• All of the grantee programs provided English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for parents; five also offered Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes and five offered General Educational Development (GED) classes.

• In addition to the four components, most grantees offered supplementary family support services to family literacy participants, such as mental health services or nutrition workshops.

It is the integration of family literacy services that makes family literacy programs unique and, in theory, more effective than programs that offer one or more service components (i.e., adult education, early childhood education, parent education, etc.) that are not part of a comprehensive, integrated, and holistic set of services. In Year 1, we observed substantial variation in both the level of integration and the strategies that programs used to accomplish integration, with adult education the least likely component to be integrated with the other three program components.

• Staff at approximately half of the programs indicated that they used common curricular themes or topics as a way of integrating the four components.

These programs typically selected a theme for a particular week or month and then planned activities around that theme that could be incorporated into the curriculum for two or more program components. For example, one program selected an aquatic theme for one month. For the ECE component, children were learning about fish and eating fish-shaped snacks. In ESL classes, parents did a unit on going to the beach, learning vocabulary that would enable them to talk with their children in English about what they were learning. “The hope is that with knowledge and information they get in other classes,” explained the parenting education teacher, “that parents will be able to discuss it with their kids at home.”

• Though common planning time for staff took place at a few grantee sites, staff from many of the programs reported that they would like to do more shared planning across program components.

Several programs set aside time each day or each week for staff from each of the four components to engage in planning activities and facilitate integration. With this kind of planning, “everyone knows what everyone is doing,” explained one program director.

What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the programs?

Grantees made great strides this year, providing much-needed services to numerous families in their family literacy programs. A number of factors were identified by grantees as major contributors to their successes. For many programs, First 5 LA funds enabled them to fill a gap in their program’s services, increase the number of families
served, or address an important community need. The majority of programs identified the hard work and dedication of their staff as their greatest strength. One program’s executive director explained, “If [the teachers and coordinators] didn’t show the love and concern they show towards parents and kids, the parents wouldn’t return and the kids wouldn’t want to be there either.”

In the course of implementing their four-component family literacy programs, grantees encountered a variety of challenges that made full implementation of their programs more difficult. These challenges involved meeting the multiple and complex needs among the families served, meeting the reporting needs of funders, coordinating with partners and collaborators, and allocating their limited resources.

- **One of the most frequently cited challenges to implementation was obtaining adequate and affordable space—reported by nine grantees.**

  This challenge often affected the number of families programs were able to serve and the range and quality of services that could be offered. One program director reported that due to limited space, they are unable to serve the families on their long waiting list. Another program director mentioned that her biggest challenge is serving children birth to three since they do not have the appropriate facilities.

- **Although many programs counted their staff as one of their greatest assets, 10 of the 15 programs reported challenges related to hiring and retaining adequate staff and integrating new staff into existing programs.**

  Many programs grew in size as a result of their First 5 LA grant, and finding and supporting new staff to meet the needs of their growing programs posed challenges for a majority of programs. One program director reported that her staff “nearly double[d]” in size with their First 5 LA grant.

- **Most grantees reported that adult education was the most difficult component to integrate. Partnering with adult schools that have their own curriculum and numerous non-family literacy program participants contributed to the challenge of integrating adult education with the other three program components.**

  Although many programs would like to link adult education and early childhood curricula, one program director reported that they “need to be sensitive that ESL teachers can’t revise their entire curriculum in order to be aligned with what is happening in the preschool classroom.” Another program director explained that integration is difficult and “not a top priority for adult school teachers” because “there are many adults at the school who aren’t family literacy participants.”

- **More grantee programs reported struggling with retaining program participants than with recruiting them.**

  Recruitment was not identified by program staff as a major obstacle to program implementation, and six programs even had waiting lists. For those programs that needed to recruit new families, word-of-mouth was the most commonly cited recruitment strategy.
On the other hand, seven of the 15 grantees discussed their experiences related to retention of participants in the programs. Staff reported that some parents had difficulty meeting all of the requirements of the four-component program; others had to leave the program because of job responsibilities or changes in family circumstances. Program staff identified a number of factors that promoted retention among participants, however, including a supportive staff, the availability of infant/toddler child care, and the social network that developed among parents. “Parents connect with other parents and stay for years because of this,” explained one staff member.

- **Barriers to family literacy participation included lack of transportation, lack of child care for particular ages of children not served by the program, employment commitments, and family obligations.**

Staff at multiple sites explained that a lack of affordable child care forced many parents with younger children to bring their infants or toddlers with them to adult education and parenting classes. In some cases, parents with infants or toddlers were unable to attend at all. In addition, for parents who work during regular business hours, participating in family literacy services can be a significant challenge, and, as a result, most programs enrolled primarily mothers, many of whom are not employed outside of the home.

While grantees faced a number of challenges, program staff has been creative and persistent in responding to those challenges. In many cases solutions were reached without causing delays or disruptions in program implementation.

**How have First 5 LA grants benefited family literacy programs?**

The 15 First 5 LA family literacy programs were awarded grants ranging from $339,000 to $501,000 and averaging $487,497 per grantee, to be used to expand or enhance their programs over three years.

- **The 15 grantees expanded or enhanced their family literacy programs in a variety of ways, including adding new services such as computer or GED classes, increasing the number of families served, adding evening classes and activities to reach working parents, adding infant and toddler classes, and upgrading facilities and materials.**

All 15 programs used First 5 LA funds to hire additional family literacy staff or to increase the hours of existing staff. By increasing staff hours, programs were able to expand the number of families they served by offering additional ESL and ECE classes, offer new evening programs to reach working parents, or offer classes and care for infants and toddlers to reach more parents as well as more children. Grantees also enhanced program services by offering new courses such as GED or computer classes, providing outreach to families, and by enhancing existing classes, such as adding additional levels of ESL instruction. Staff at three sites indicated that by hiring a family literacy coordinator, increasing a coordinator’s hours, or paying for staff planning time, program staff increased the level of integration across all four components.
In addition to using funds to increase personnel hours, all programs used First 5 LA funds on non-personnel expenditures such as additional classroom space, computers, library materials, playground equipment, and instructional materials.

Grantee staff identified a number of benefits resulting from their access to First 5 LA funds, such as First 5 LA’s flexibility regarding the ways that funds could be used. For one program, one of the greatest benefits of First 5 LA funds was the independence it allowed them from their school district. “The First 5 connection has been excellent,” explained another program director, and “the Network has been fantastic . . . a very big resource.”

**What is the range of activities in which the FLSN has engaged?**

Intended as a key support for grantees, the FLSN initiated a variety of activities in Year 1. In addition to start-up activities, such as putting staff in place and building an infrastructure across multiple organizations, FLSN staff provided services to grantees and performed activities related to outreach, advocacy, and sustainability.

- **Much of the FLSN’s staff time and effort in Year 1 was devoted to establishing its infrastructure, defining the roles of staff and collaborators, and providing staff development experiences for the FLSN team—laying the foundation for sustainable service delivery.**

  Staff from LACOE and LAUSD comprise the core of the FLSN, supported by three consulting organizations: the National Center for Family Literacy, Appel & Associates, and Perry & Associates. Defining roles for each of these contributors was a major focus in Year 1 and was accomplished, in part, through the FLSN leadership team, which includes staff from each of these organizations and meets monthly to guide the work of the FLSN.

- **The primary focus of FLSN activities in Year 1 was on grantee training and technical assistance, with particular attention given to supporting grantees in developing their performance plans.**

  Through their performance plans, grantees identified their own needs, set objectives within each of the four family literacy component areas, and identified resources and supports needed. Performance plans provide a snapshot of grantee status and then evolve as progress is made and needs change. “We need to know where we are and where we’re going,” explained one FLSN team member, and the performance plans help FLSN and grantees to do this together.

- **Addressing a primary need of the grantees (as identified by the FLSN during Year 1), the FLSN developed and provided training on data collection tools that grantees need to use to meet the requirements of First 5 LA and support program improvement.**

  Through training and technical assistance, the FLSN helped grantees navigate their way through the First 5 LA requirements and improve their data management strategies for meeting ongoing reporting needs and supporting program improvements and sustainability. All grantees implemented procedures...
for gathering common participant information upon enrollment, tracking participant attendance by program component, and developing performance plans to fulfill data reporting requirements and support program improvement.

What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the FLSN?

In Year 1, the FLSN had numerous accomplishments. For example, they developed a cross-agency staff and an infrastructure to guide their work throughout the next two years of their grant and beyond. They developed relationships with 15 grantees and provided training and support to them throughout the year. All 15 grantees submitted performance plans, planning phase reports, and year-end reports to First 5 LA under the guidance of the FLSN. The FLSN supported the training of nine individuals (two from the FLSN staff) to become certified family literacy trainers, increasing the number of certified trainers in California from one to 10. But, as with any new organization, the first year was not without its challenges.

- **The greatest challenge faced by the FLSN in Year 1 was recovering from the delayed start of its contract, which came three months after the grantees had received their grants, leaving FLSN staff feeling behind schedule.**

  Originally, separate proposals were submitted by LACOE and LAUSD. After reviewing these separate proposals and determining each had unique merits and complementary strengths, First 5 LA encouraged the two organizations to collaborate and submit a joint proposal. In addition, First 5 LA raised the award amount and asked that the scope of the proposed FLSN activities be extended to provide assistance to non-grantees as well. These changes caused the FLSN to start later than planned. “Starting up late was a challenge,” explained one FLSN staff member. “The minute they let the horses out of the gate, we had to get started working on deliverables. So we had to backtrack to get to know the grantees, find out where they were before the Initiative, etcetera.”

- **Due to the delayed start and initial needs to build their infrastructure and get to know the grantees, the FLSN staff reported having less time available for individualized needs assessment and direct and tailored services to the grantees. They focused instead on working with grantees in group or regional settings to set up assessment and data collection systems.**

  Over time, needs identified in grantee performance plans have been (and will continue to be) augmented with needs identified by FLSN staff and used to develop grantee action plans, which, according to FLSN staff, consist of “a prescription for how to address the needs stated in their performance plans.” This process is in the early stages, however. “An important next step is to put it all together,” explained one FLSN staff member.

- **The absence of an electronic tracking system meant that documenting the activities of the FLSN and its contacts with grantees has been more difficult.**

  FLSN staff reported that documenting their activities during Year 1 was challenging at times, since they have not had an electronic system in place for
recording their activities and interactions with grantees. (An online system is being developed by First 5 LA for use across initiatives, but it has not been available in Year 1.) The absence of this system also made it difficult to accurately depict the level of service that has been provided to the grantees in this report.

Although the FLSN has not had a full year of focused activity directed at addressing the needs of the grantees, grantee perceptions of the FLSN were quite positive in Year 1.

- Program directors—who had the most contact with FLSN staff in Year 1—reported having a clear understanding of the role of the FLSN: to provide training and support.
  
  “They’re the support system,” one program director explained. “They are conveyors of information.”

- Program directors were appreciative of FLSN services and were overwhelmingly positive in their assessments of their support.

  Training provided to the grantees enabled them to create and implement individualized performance plans and collect the data required by First 5 LA. One program director stated that, “[FLSN staff] are extremely helpful and are only a phone call away. Doing the performance plans has helped me to grow, and the Network has helped with that.”

- A few grantees expressed interest in more (and more convenient) support, and having that support more closely aligned to their individual needs.

  Two program directors also mentioned that increased opportunities for grantees to interact with each other—so that veteran programs could share their expertise and newer programs could gather ideas—would be appreciated.

What were parents’ perspectives on the early impacts of the programs?

In the first year of their First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative grants, the 15 grantees served numerous families, most of whom were low-income Hispanic or Latino families with limited English. Although concrete data on program impacts (from assessments) will not be available until Year 2, qualitative data from focus groups with parents were used to explore self-reported impacts. Overwhelmingly, parents reported that they and their children benefited from their involvement in the family literacy programs.

- The majority of parents in focus groups stated that, as a result of participating in First 5 LA family literacy programs, they learned to provide better care and learning opportunities for their children, improved their English skills, increased their self-confidence, acquired a support network, and/or spent more quality time with their children.

Parents noted that they learned the importance of talking with their children and spending time together. One parent commented, “Sometimes when they are small we don’t think that we need to talk with them, but we have learned they need us to talk to them all the time.” The vast majority of parents also reported that they
learned how to be a teacher to their children, reading stories to their children and asking them questions to encourage discussion.

One mother said that as a result of her ESL classes, she is finally able to communicate with her children’s teachers during parent-teacher conferences. Others said that they practice English with their children at home and have begun reading to their children in English.

Another parent reported benefiting from the sharing that goes on during parenting class. “It’s nice to share the experiences so you know that other parents have the same issues and you are not alone,” she explained, “and together you can find a solution.”

- The majority of parents interviewed stated that since enrolling in First 5 LA family literacy programs, their children have learned skills that will prepare them for school, become more social and independent, and increased their self-esteem.

Parents described how their children have learned about colors, numbers, the alphabet, songs and rhymes, art, and computers. In one program, several parents had children in first and second grade who had previously participated in the program. These parents explained that their older children are more advanced than their peers who did not participate in the program. “It really helps to get children ready for school,” a parent stated.

Another parent noticed that during PACT time, “kids feel important that their moms are helping.”

Although most parents had very positive comments about their family literacy program, some had suggestions for program improvements as well.

- Parents’ suggestions for program improvement included altering the length and scheduling of program services to better meet the needs of families, and upgrading of facilities and materials.

- Parents in four programs suggested increasing the number of ESL classes or instructors to serve parents with differing levels of English proficiency.

Next Steps: Year 2 Evaluation Activities

The emerging themes from our Year 1 data suggest further avenues for exploration in Year 2. The evaluation team will again conduct site visits to grantee program sites, review documents and data submitted by grantees and the FLSN to First 5 LA (including new data submitted through the online reporting system), and conduct interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including FLSN staff. In addition, several new data collection activities will be introduced:

1. Program staff surveys will be administered to program directors and program instructors in the spring of 2004 to collect information on a variety of topics (including grantee activities, staff participation in FLSN activities, and staffing structures), and to probe more systematically those issues related to the emerging themes from Year 1.
2. Observations of FLSN meetings and activities will be conducted to understand the nature of the services that the FLSN provides as well as their evolving strategies for program-level data tracking and service delivery.

3. Child outcomes will be assessed for a subsample of children randomly selected to participate in the child outcomes study, which includes direct assessments of children, observation of children in their classrooms, parent interviews, and surveys of ECE or kindergarten teachers. Two cohorts of children will be followed through their kindergarten year to assess the impacts of family literacy program participation on children over time.

4. Outcome data collected by grantees will be reviewed and analyzed. These data include:
   - data on children’s development from the Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP);
   - adult reading performance data from the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) reading assessment;
   - behavioral indicators of adult learning and family stability from the Participant Profile Form; and
   - data on adults’ parenting knowledge and skills from the California Even Start Performance Information and Reporting System (CA-ESPIRS).

5. Additional surveys and/or short interviews with non-grantees who have participated in FLSN activities will be administered to assess FLSN impacts beyond the 15 grantees receiving First 5 LA funds.

Conclusion

Grantees’ implementation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative has encompassed a range of activities, all of which have included some degree of expansion and/or growth, new reporting requirements, and building of new relationships with the FLSN and in some cases, other community agencies. Grantees have been bolstered by the support of the FLSN, which has provided assistance and leadership for grantees in developing and implementing new program performance plans. At the same time as they were providing support to the 15 new grantees, the FLSN succeeded in creating its own infrastructure to enable ongoing delivery of its core service areas, including technical assistance and training, outreach, advocacy, and sustainability.

The emerging themes described in this report represent findings from preliminary data collection activities conducted by the evaluation team, in addition to documents and reports produced by grantees and the FLSN. As First 5 LA data systems linking all of the grantees with the FLSN are implemented over the coming months, a rich database will become available to examine in greater depth the activities and impacts of the Family Literacy Initiative. In addition, the AIR/UCLA evaluation team will be augmenting local data with a focused child outcomes study, periodic site visits, surveys, and interviews. The evaluation team will continue to revisit the emerging themes presented in this report.
in subsequent years to determine the extent to which they can be substantiated through the qualitative and quantitative data to be collected over time. In addition, as new data are collected, more fine-grained analyses will be possible, and new themes and findings will be addressed.
Chapter 1: Introduction

This report presents preliminary findings—or emerging themes—from Year 1 of the Evaluation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative. As part of First 5 LA’s 1999-2000 strategic plan, $13 million was allocated to launch a comprehensive Family Literacy Initiative. Three parts comprise the Initiative: 1) grants to family literacy programs, 2) the development of a training and technical assistance provider to support the family literacy programs, and 3) an independent evaluation of the entire Initiative.

In June of 2002, First 5 LA awarded grants to 15 agencies to expand or enhance their family literacy services. Each family literacy program was required to offer services in each of the four components of family literacy components:

- intergenerational activities between parents and children that foster learning and appropriate social and emotional development;
- parenting education and training to enable families to provide nurturing and stimulating environments for children;
- parent literacy and academic training that promotes economic self-sufficiency; and
- early childhood education that prepares children from birth to 5 years to succeed in school and life.

First 5 LA hopes to learn from these initial investments about the most promising program models so that they can be replicated throughout Los Angeles County and serve as “teaching sites” for future investments.

In addition to supporting direct family literacy services, First 5 LA funded the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) in August of 2002. The FLSN’s charge is to assist the 15 grantees in strengthening their organizational capacity and improving their ability to deliver quality services. The FLSN also performs outreach and advocacy to expand the number of high-quality, four-component family literacy programs throughout LA County.

In October of 2002, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), along with the Center for Improving Child Care Quality at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), contracted with First 5 LA to conduct a four-year evaluation of the impact and implementation of the Family Literacy Initiative, including the 15 grantees and the FLSN. This report describes the activities and preliminary findings from the first year of the Initiative (June 2002 – May 2003) as well as the FLSN’s summer activities (through September 2003). The primary areas of focus for Year 1 evaluation work included gathering basic information regarding the grantees’ structure and scope of services, learning about the families served through the programs, and enhancing our understanding of contextual issues (e.g., family and community demographics), barriers, and facilitating factors that impact grantee implementation. In addition, AIR/UCLA staff
worked closely with the FLSN throughout the year to collaboratively develop evaluation data collection procedures and tools (e.g., participant profile forms), as well as to learn about the FLSN’s role in the Initiative.

This chapter provides a brief overview of current research on family literacy, the research questions to be addressed in this study, and AIR/UCLA’s approach to the evaluation. Subsequent chapters present emerging themes related to grantees’ early implementation activities, the families and children served in the program, and the FLSN.

**Review of Research on Family Literacy**

The First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative is one of many state and national efforts to promote family literacy, including the California Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative, the California Family Literacy Consortium, and Families for Literacy. These efforts build on the growing body of research indicating the positive impacts of family literacy services for both families and children. An examination of evaluative studies on family literacy programs reveal wide-reaching benefits, including the following:

- enhanced children's general knowledge, oral language development, reading achievement, decoding ability, comprehension, writing, mathematics and science achievement, social skills, self-esteem, attitudes toward school, and personal health;
- parents’ greater likelihood of persistence in family literacy programs than in other types of adult literacy programs;
- enhancement of parents’ employment status or job satisfaction; and
- families’ valuing of education, becoming more involved in schools (leading to higher achievement for children), becoming emotionally closer, and reading more (Padak and Rasinski, 1997).

Local programs often adapt goals and services to meet the specific needs of the populations they serve, so several program designs have emerged to improve the literacy of families. These include home-based, center-based, school-based, library-based, and workplace-based programs (Delaney and Finger, 1991). Given the wide range of family literacy programs, researchers have been challenged to define what practices contribute to high quality programs (St. Pierre, Layzer, and Barnes, 1998).

The most comprehensive evaluation of family literacy programs to date is that of the national Even Start program. The goal of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of Even Start’s four core program elements: early childhood education, parenting education, adult education, and parent-child joint literacy activities. Results from the first national Even Start evaluation indicate that Even Start has been effective in providing services to its target population. Even Start children demonstrated significantly greater improvements on the Preschool Inventory (a measure of school readiness) than children in a control group of non-Even Start participants. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT; a measure of verbal ability) and the Emergent Literacy Test (which was developed for the evaluation) were also administered, though gains over control group
children were not found. Participation in adult education programs increased and Even Start parents were significantly more likely than control parents to obtain high school GEDs. Improvement in functional literacy rates for Even Start adults was found to correlate with program attendance. Surveys indicated that Even Start parents provided more reading materials in the home, and were more likely to expect that their children would graduate from high school (St. Pierre, Swartz, Murray, Deck, & Nickel, 1995).

Findings from the third national Even Start evaluation were consistent with the first in that they indicated that the extent to which parents and children participate in literacy services is related to child outcomes. Gains on the PPVT for Even Start children over control group children were again not found. In addition, results from the second evaluation indicate that, overall, families do not take full advantage of the services offered by Even Start projects, participating in a small amount of instruction relative to their needs and program goals (St. Pierre et al., 2003).

Many aspects of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative evaluation mirror those of the Even Start evaluation. For instance, both studies are using some of the same measures, including the CASAS reading assessment for adults and the PPVT receptive language measures for children. The First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative evaluation will also consider family outcomes, as well as contextual data specific to Los Angeles County. We will emphasize implementation, strive to consider family circumstances in our analysis, and include intermediate outcomes (e.g., family stability) that the Even Start evaluation did not, to the extent that data are available. In addition, the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative evaluation will examine the Initiative as a service delivery model designed to promote family and child well-being through grants to family literacy programs as well as to a training and technical assistance provider to support these programs.

**Overview of the Initiative Evaluation**

This section describes our general approach to the evaluation, including the theory of change for the Family Literacy Initiative and the evaluation research questions. To guide the evaluation, the AIR/UCLA team, in consultation with First 5 LA, the FLSN, and the grantees, developed a theory of change for the Family Literacy Initiative (see Exhibit 2). This model illustrates the relationships between the various inputs (e.g., funding), outputs (e.g., technical assistance, family literacy program components), outcomes (e.g., child outcomes, program outcomes), and anticipated long-term results of the Initiative. Identifying the various components that comprise the Initiative and the expected linkages between them provides a framework through which the components and the relationships among them can be evaluated. The model acknowledges that while the grantees may vary in their specific objectives, types of service, and target clients, they share a common set of goals related to family literacy.
Exhibit 2: First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative Theory of Change

**Inputs**
- First 5 LA Funding for Family Literacy Initiative
- Initiative Evaluator
- Family Literacy Grantees
- Family Literacy Support Network

**FLSN Outputs**
- Early Childhood Education
- Intergenerational Activities (PACT)
- Parenting Education
- Adult Education
- Family Support

**Grantee Outputs**
- Technical Assistance/Training
- Outreach Activities
- Advocacy Activities
- Sustainability Activities

**Intermediate Outcomes**
- Program Outcomes
  - Improved services
  - Expanded services
  - Sustainability
  - Increased capacity
- FLSN Outcomes
  - Increased awareness of importance of 4-component family literacy program among programs with fewer components
  - Increased awareness of funding opportunities
  - Sustainability of the FLSN
  - Increased outreach to non-First 5 LA family literacy programs

**Long Term Results**
- Child Outcomes
  - Emergent literacy skills
  - Social and emotional development
  - Cognitive development
  - Physical/motor development
  - Improved health status
  - Positive attitude toward learning
- Adult Outcomes
  - Improved English language skills
  - Improved literacy
  - GED/high school diploma
  - Vocational skills/employment
  - Positive parenting strategies
  - Home literacy activities
- Family Outcomes
  - Increased social network
  - Increased awareness of resources/services
- Program Outcomes
  - Improved services
  - Expanded services
  - Sustainability
  - Increased capacity
- FLSN Outcomes
  - Increased awareness of importance of 4-component family literacy program among programs with fewer components
  - Increased awareness of funding opportunities
  - Sustainability of the FLSN
  - Increased outreach to non-First 5 LA family literacy programs

**Results for Children**
- School readiness across developmental domains
- School success
- Reduced referrals to special education
- Increased rate of high school graduation

**Results for Adults**
- Parent support for children’s learning and development
- Parent involvement in schools
- Long-term stable employment

**Results for Families**
- Achievement of family goals
- Economic self-sufficiency
- Families access community resources as needed

**Results for Communities**
- Increased employment
- Reduced dependency on public support
- Increased school and civic engagement

**Results for Family Literacy Programs**
- Increased number of self-sustaining, high quality family literacy programs
- Increased awareness of effectiveness of family literacy programs
- Increased funding opportunities
As part of the annual refinement of the study design, the AIR/UCLA team will review and revise the theory of change as appropriate, to ensure that it aligns with the scope, goals, and objectives of the family literacy programs throughout the four-year evaluation. This model has been revised to reflect input solicited from grantee and FLSN staff during an August 2003 meeting held to discuss the evaluation. It includes greater detail regarding the FLSN, including its work with agencies other than the First 5 LA-funded grantees, as well as additional information on program outputs, recognizing that the grantees provide family support services beyond the four-components that comprise family literacy. These outputs—and the intermediate outcomes they are expected to produce (e.g., family stability)—are important to include because families might demonstrate changes in this area before changes in other outcomes (e.g., increased literacy) are observed. This revised model also reflects the expectation for long-term results at the broader level of the community.

**Research and Evaluation Questions**

The primary purpose of the Family Literacy Initiative evaluation is to assess the implementation of the Initiative as well as the contribution of the overall Initiative to the well-being of children birth to five and their families in Los Angeles County. Specifically, the evaluation will address the process evaluation questions, outcome evaluation questions, and policy and research questions suggested by First 5 LA presented below. As with the theory of change model, the research and evaluation questions have been revised slightly to incorporate grantee, FLSN, and First 5 LA staff feedback.

**Process evaluation questions**

1. What is the range of program and participant characteristics, including family demographics, program goals and objectives, use of First 5 LA funds, program structure, program staffing, recruitment and retention strategies, instructional strategies, program content, and program intensity and duration?

2. What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the programs?
   2.1. What characteristics and strategies (such as lead agency structure, program structure, program staffing, and recruitment and retention strategies) facilitate implementation of the family literacy programs?
   2.2. What are the barriers to successful implementation of family literacy programs?

3. What is the range of activities in which the FLSN has engaged, including training/technical assistance, outreach, advocacy, and efforts to become sustainable?

4. What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the Family Literacy Support Network?

**Outcome evaluation questions**

1. What impact are the expansion and enhancement grants having on children prenatal to age five and their families in the context of other services provided in the county?
2. What impact is the Family Literacy Support Network having on the service delivery system in the context of other system improvement and capacity strengthening activities underway throughout the county?

3. What programmatic characteristics (such as program intensity and duration, instructional strategies, content, instructor qualifications, range of family support services, community contexts) are associated with better outcomes for children and families?
   3.1. How do program characteristics and strategies differ for different groups of learners?
   3.2. How do outcomes differ for different groups of learners?

4. How have programs been able to sustain themselves and what role has First 5 LA played in that process?

**Policy and research questions**

1. What is the value of providing on-going program support to family literacy programs?

2. What is the value of broadening the scope of the adult education component of family literacy programs to include employment skills?

3. How are the First 5 LA grants benefiting family literacy programs?

4. What role does technology play in increasing access to or effectiveness of program services?

These questions allow for a comprehensive review of the family literacy programs, including an examination of the programs’ activities, characteristics, and impacts on children and families. The research questions also encompass the FLSN, in regard to its role in supporting the activities of the First 5 LA-funded (and non-funded) programs and promoting best practices through technical assistance, outreach, and advocacy activities. Ultimately, the research questions will help First 5 LA determine the overall effectiveness of the Family Literacy Initiative in Los Angeles County. Year 1 of the evaluation did not address all of the research questions listed above, given the lack of outcome data available this year. Those that were not addressed will be covered in future years.

Our approach throughout Year 1 of the study was based on a collaborative process that included First 5 LA, the FLSN, and the grantees. In order to engage and gather feedback from all stakeholders, we participated in periodic onsite meetings with First 5 LA, the FLSN, and the grantees, as well as frequent phone and email contacts with the FLSN and First 5 LA.

Year 1 evaluation activities and emerging themes are presented in the chapters that follow. Chapter 2 explains the study methodology and data collection activities. Chapter 3 describes the 15 Family Literacy Initiative grantee programs. Chapter 4 describes the demographic characteristics and experiences of the families participating in grantee programs, as well as their enrollment and attendance patterns. Chapter 5 summarizes the FLSN’s activities in Year 1. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes emerging themes for each
evaluation question and describes the data collection activities planned for Year 2. Data collection instruments used in Year 1, as well as an informational brochure designed for the study and a map of the distribution of grantees across the county, are included in the Appendix.
Chapter 2: Evaluation Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used by the AIR/UCLA evaluation team during the first year of the Evaluation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative. Our primary goals for Year 1 of the study, as described in the evaluation study design (American Institutes for Research, 2003), were to become familiar with all aspects of the Initiative, to refine the study design as appropriate, and to collect data on early implementation activities. To this end, we collected and analyzed data through various research activities, including:

- on-site observations of parent and child together (PACT) time, early childhood education (ECE) classes, parenting education, and adult education classes;
- telephone and on-site interviews with program directors and executive directors;
- on-site focus groups with program staff, including teachers from each of the four components (i.e., PACT time, ECE, parenting, and adult education teachers);
- on-site focus groups with parent participants;
- extant data collection (e.g., attendance data, planning phase reports, performance plans); and
- interviews with First 5 LA staff and Commissioners, FLSN staff, and family literacy experts.

These data collection activities enhanced our understanding of the Initiative, including the services and activities of the grantees as well as the FLSN. This information facilitated the refinement of the evaluation questions and study design. The data also serve as a baseline for our examination of the implementation and impacts of the Initiative over time.

In preparation for data collection activities and throughout the year, the AIR/UCLA evaluation team participated in several planning and informational meetings with First 5 LA, the FLSN, and the grantees. These meetings helped us get to know the various stakeholders involved as well as oriented them to the evaluation. These meetings also served as opportunities to solicit feedback about our evaluation design and procedures. We will continue to hold such meetings throughout the evaluation.

The remainder of the chapter provides a detailed account of the grantee site visits, extant data sources, and stakeholder interviews.

Site Visits

In May of 2003, the evaluation team conducted site visits to all 15 grantees. Site visits provided opportunities to collect in-depth, qualitative data on the grantees’ implementation activities. The visits allowed evaluation staff to observe the grantees first-hand, enriching our understanding of programs’ operations and staff and family experiences. In addition, the site visits provided an opportunity to hear about the challenges that grantees face in implementing their family literacy programs, as well as
conditions that facilitate effective implementation. The evaluation team was able to explore the perspectives of program and executive directors, other program staff (including ECE, PACT time, adult education, and parenting teachers), and parent participants through structured interviews and focus groups. The sections below describe planning and data collection activities that comprised the site visits.

Site Visit Protocols

The site visits were designed to gather descriptive data from a diverse set of local informants, including both grantee staff and parent participants in a variety of program settings. The use of standardized data collection procedures and instruments ensured that common information was captured across all 15 grantees. The following interview and focus group protocols were developed:

- Executive director interview protocol
- Program director interview protocol
- Staff focus group protocol
- Parent focus group protocol

AIR conducted an Institutional Review Board (IRB) review of the interview and focus group protocols. To comply with IRB requirements and protect study participants, informed consent was obtained from all interview and focus group participants. The protocols included an introductory script describing the purpose of the evaluation, a guarantee of anonymity in the reporting of information obtained through the interview/focus group, and the rights of the interviewee to skip any questions they chose not to answer and to terminate the interview at anytime.

The program staff interview and focus group protocols were organized into the following general categories: respondent’s background and experience, an overview of the program and its services, activities related to the Family Literacy Support Network, program successes and challenges, and concluding thoughts. The parent focus group topics included ways in which parents learned about the program, parents’ personal goals, and the perceived impact of the program on parents and their children. A copy of each interview and focus group protocol is included in the Appendix.

The evaluation team also developed semi-structured observation tools designed to guide the observation of program activities during site visits. The protocols were developed based on current literature specifying critical aspects of ECE, PACT time, adult education, and parenting education that may contribute to effective instruction. The observation protocols were not designed to assess or rate the quality of services; rather, the protocols highlighted important characteristics or aspects of each service component to guide observation.

Observation tools for ECE classrooms (infant/toddler care and preschool) were created based on current child development research as well as existing measures designed to examine ECE services (e.g., the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale). The
observation tools were organized around areas typically known to contribute to program quality, including such dimensions as classroom environment, the presence and nature of literacy-related materials in the classroom, staff-child interactions, and activities promoting physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development. For each dimension, field staff made notes in response to guiding questions to document their observations.

Observation tools for adult education and parenting education were used by AIR field staff to document observations related to the instructional methods and structure of the sessions observed, interactions between participants and staff, characteristics of activities/tasks conducted, the level of student engagement, and classroom management and climate. The PACT observation tool listed guiding questions focusing on the activities and interactions of the parent and child, the role of staff during PACT time, and the primary language used by staff, parents, and children.

In addition to the protocols and observation tools described above, AIR staff developed an informational brochure describing the Initiative and the evaluation (See Appendix). The brochure provided an explanation of the purpose of the study, how data would be collected, and how the results would be shared. Contact information for key staff at AIR, First 5 LA, and the Family Literacy Support Network was also included. This brochure was distributed to grantee program directors and other interested parties during meetings and site visits.

Training for Site Visits

To prepare for the site visits, AIR field staff participated in a half-day training session. The training provided background on the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative, an overview of the site visit activities, and instructions on setting up and coordinating the site visits. To ensure that comparable information was collected across sites, the primary focus of the training session was to review the interview, focus group, and observation protocols. Nevertheless, field staff—all experienced interviewers and focus group facilitators—were instructed to be flexible and recognize when deviations from the protocols were warranted (e.g., if a program director raised issues critical to his/her agency’s implementation which were not specifically included on the protocol). Staff were also reminded to remain objective during the interviews/focus groups and to respect the confidentiality of all participants.

Site Visit Set-Up and Coordination

Site visits occurred between May 5th and 16th of 2003. AIR staff coordinated with grantee and FLSN staff, to ensure that visits were scheduled at times convenient to grantees and to avoid overlapping with FLSN visits. In order to simplify site visit scheduling and accommodate the preferences of program staff, AIR distributed brief “fax back” forms to grantees, inquiring about their program schedules, staffing information, and preferred dates for a visit. During the initial phone contacts, the grantees were assured that the purpose of the site visits was to learn about the programs, their operation, and factors that help or hinder successful implementation, rather than to evaluate programs for compliance review or judge the actions of particular individuals. AIR sent materials to the program director, describing the study and the data collection activities.
Two AIR researchers were assigned to each site visit. The team was responsible for finalizing the schedule with the grantee, conducting the visits, and then summarizing their field notes. Assigning two researchers per site visit allowed one researcher to lead an interview or focus group while the other took extensive notes or to split up and conduct two interviews or focus groups simultaneously. A Spanish speaker was assigned to site visit teams whenever possible to facilitate focus groups for Spanish-speaking parents.

The composition of the data collection activities varied by site. It was not possible to observe each of the four components in every program, given that ECE, PACT time, adult education, and parenting education were typically not all offered within one day (in many cases, parenting education occurred one to two times per week). In one instance, scheduling difficulties prevented field staff from conducting a staff focus group. Moreover, some executive directors were not available for interviews (e.g., one executive director was on maternity leave at the time of the site visit). Exhibit 3 summarizes the number and type of data collection activities that occurred during the spring 2003 data collection period.

### Exhibit 3: Number and Type of Site Visit Data Collection Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection activities</th>
<th>Number conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews and focus groups:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive director interviews</td>
<td>10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program director interviews</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent focus groups</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff focus groups or interviews</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total interviews and focus groups</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE observations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education observations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting education observations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACT time observations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total observations</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Ten Executive Director interviews were conducted, from a possible total of 14, as two of the family literacy programs have the same executive director.*

### Site Visit Write-Ups and Analysis

Information from the site visits was summarized in brief reports which served as the basis for internal data analysis meetings, at which staff shared their experiences and discussed key issues on which to focus subsequent qualitative analysis. The site visit notes were organized using a software program designed for qualitative data (N5), which allows the
researcher to code the data by topic area and research question as well as identify emerging themes.

**Extant Data**

In addition to conducting site visits, AIR staff gathered extant data on the FLSN and the grantees, including:

- Grantee planning phase reports
- Grantee performance plans
- Grantee year-end reports (including attendance data)
- FLSN quarterly reports
- FLSN schedule of training dates
- FLSN scope of work
- Expenditure data for grantees and the FLSN

**Grantee Documents**

First 5 LA provided AIR with documents submitted to them by grantees as part of the programs’ grant requirements. All of the grantee documents further enhanced our understanding of the family literacy programs, and information from them is summarized in Chapters 3 and 4. These documents included the planning phase reports, the performance plans, and year-end reports. The planning phase reports included information on the challenges/barriers to implementation, programs’ experiences with the FLSN, and activities undertaken during the planning phase (e.g., hiring staff and acquiring equipment). The performance plans enhanced our understanding of program goals, objectives, assessment tools, and data collection plans. The grantee year-end reports provided a summary of issues faced in Year 1 as well as program attendance data.

Preliminary analyses of grantee attendance data revealed inconsistencies that prevent us from reporting the results here. The FLSN is in the process of reviewing the data with the grantees to resolve inconsistencies and improve data quality. Once this process is complete, we will resume analysis and report the findings in a separate document.

**FLSN Documents**

AIR gathered various documents submitted to First 5 LA by the FLSN in order to learn about the FLSN’s operations and interactions with the grantees. These documents included the FLSN quarterly reports, a schedule of FLSN training dates, and the FLSN’s scope of work. In the future, we will also be able to rely on the FLSN service log, which documents contact with, and training and technical assistance provided to, grantees and non-grantees.

The quarterly reports provided some information on the FLSN’s activities, challenges encountered, technical assistance requested, site visits conducted, and a summary of
meetings and training sessions held. The schedule of training provided additional detail on the types of training offered by the FLSN. The scope of work created by the FLSN supplied information on the FLSN’s overarching goals and expected outcomes. Extant data collected about the FLSN were reviewed and data from them are summarized in Chapter 5.

**Participant Profile Data**

AIR developed participant profile forms for First 5 LA to distribute to grantees to use to gather information about each family participating in the programs. In addition to a family form, separate forms were also created for adult and child participants. The family profile form asks for information about how the families learned about the program and family demographics (e.g., size, household income, language spoken at home). The adult profile form asks for information such as the participants’ education, relationship to the child, and employment history and status. The child profile form captures demographic information on the child (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity), as well as the child’s prior educational experiences. Although profile forms were collected during Year 1, AIR did not receive the data due to delays in the implementation of First 5 LA’s web-based reporting system. Therefore results from these data sources are not presented in this report.

**Stakeholder Interviews**

AIR staff conducted interviews with other stakeholders to learn about current issues deemed critical in the field of family literacy by family literacy experts/researchers, First 5 LA staff and Commissioners, and FLSN staff. These interviews provided an opportunity to gain additional insight directly from those most knowledgeable about family literacy and the Initiative. A total of eight stakeholder interviews were conducted in Year 1.

We conducted interviews with two First 5 LA staff and one Commissioner to obtain contextual information for the Family Literacy Initiative. Topics covered during the interviews included First 5 LA’s vision for the Initiative, the goals of family literacy programs, strengths of the Family Literacy Initiative model, key challenges, and communication between First 5 LA, the FLSN, and funded programs.

We conducted interviews with three FLSN staff in order to gather more information on their interactions with the grantees and the Commission and the services they have provided. Interviews included questions regarding their outreach and technical assistance, interactions with grantees, successes, strengths, and challenges facing the programs.

In addition, we interviewed one family literacy expert in an effort to learn about current issues in the field as well as gaps in the research on family literacy. Feedback on First 5 LA’s model for the Family Literacy Initiative was also discussed. We will continue to conduct interviews with various stakeholders throughout the evaluation as another way to explore various issues surrounding family literacy.
Chapter 3: Grantee Implementation

Through a competitive bid process, First 5 LA selected 15 programs to become Family Literacy Initiative grantees, each receiving a three-year grant ranging from $339,066 to $501,081 to expand or enhance their four-component family literacy program. This chapter describes these 15 family literacy programs, including their goals and objectives, services offered, strategies for integrating the four components, program settings, staffing structures, recruitment and retention issues, and community partnerships and funding sources. Challenges faced by grantees during their first year of First 5 LA funding are highlighted throughout this chapter, as are the strategies that programs are using to overcome these challenges.

The information presented draws on data from grantee documents and structured interviews with program staff, who were asked to discuss the issues that were most salient for them at the time. Where findings are quantified, it is important to note that the number of responses reported represents the frequency with which topics were raised independently by respondents. It is possible that many of these issues would have existed for others had we explicitly asked about them. Therefore, in each subsection, “emerging themes” are listed to summarize key issues for further exploration. As we move into the second year of data collection, these themes will be examined in greater depth to determine the extent to which they prove to be robust findings over time and across grantees.

Characteristics of the 15 Grantees

To present a single profile of the “typical” First 5 LA family literacy grantee or family literacy program would obscure the important fact that there is substantial variation across grantees. There is no typical family literacy program; each of the 15 grantees is unique. Although all grantees offered early childhood education, adult education, parenting education, and interactive parent and child activities for families with children age five and younger in Year 1, they varied in many respects. Exhibit 4 displays a range of characteristics that describe the grantees.

Grantees varied in terms of setting, size, years of experience as a family literacy program, specific services offered, and general approach. For example, eight of the programs were operated through school districts; seven grantees were housed in community-based organizations (CBOs). Four of the programs offered services at multiple locations, and five were Even Start programs. Although all programs served families with children in the birth-to-five age range, not all were able to offer services for this entire age range in Year 1. While all programs served preschool-aged children, three programs also served toddlers, and eight served infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children. In some cases, the youngest children were served through home visitation programs, rather than through on-site care.
### Exhibit 4. Grantee characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Type of lead agency</th>
<th>Service Planning Area</th>
<th>Year family literacy program started</th>
<th>Even Start?</th>
<th>Number of locations</th>
<th>Ages of children served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Children's Bureau</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Learning Center</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax Community Adult School/Shenandoah</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Literacy Advocates of Southern California (FLASC)</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbor Community Adult School at 15th Street</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbor Community Adult School at Meyler Adult Learning Center</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawthorne School District</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Street Family Center</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedren Community Health Center</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Tokyo Service Center</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach Unified School District</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Club Community Center</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUENTE Learning Center</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1992*</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reseda Community Adult School/Lemay Early Education Center</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland Unified School District</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0–5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Year three-component family literacy program started.

Grantees also varied in the number of years they have operated as a family literacy program. Programs ranged in age from two to 11 years; in Year 1 the average age across the grantees was just over six years. Although some of the programs were relatively new to family literacy per se many have been providing one or more types services to families for many years. Together, the 15 grantees have brought with them more than 90 years of combined experience offering family literacy services to families in their communities.

Grantees were also distributed across the county, although not evenly. One-third of the grantees were located in Service Planning Area 4 (SPA 4). Four grantees were in SPA 8,
Family Literacy Initiative grantees have the shared objective of providing services to families with children birth to five in the form of four-component family literacy programs. However, each grantee approached this common goal in a unique way. When asked what their programs are trying to accomplish through the services they provide to families, program staff—teachers, program directors, and executive directors—gave a variety of responses. “To contribute to the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children,” said one program director. To “give parents opportunities to help themselves and support their kids,” said a teacher. Although everyone cited slightly different goals, a number of common themes emerged. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, program directors were responding to an open-ended question and were not asked to generate an exhaustive list of goals. Therefore, failure to mention a specific goal does not necessarily imply that the goal was not held by the program. The respondent simply may not have thought to mention it at the time of the interview.

**Goals for Children’s Growth and Development**

Most program staff made specific reference to goals for children’s growth and development. Staff from 11 programs noted that a primary goal was to promote children’s learning and/or help them to become ready for school. One program director said that they strived to “assist children in reaching their full potential as learners.” Another grantee noted that they would like all of their children to achieve “reading readiness for kindergarten.”

**Goals for Parenting Education**

Goals regarding parenting practices were also frequently highlighted by grantee staff. The most common response (given by staff at 12 of the 15 programs) had to do with helping parents to see that they are their child’s first and most important teacher—their child’s advocate and full partner in learning. One teacher explained that the program was designed to “help parents help their children.” Another grantee reported that they wanted “to help parents support their children’s education now and when they go to school, to encourage parents to have books around the home and enjoy reading with their children.” The other three programs described a more general goal of helping their participants to become better parents.

A third of the grantees reported that “empowering parents” was a key goal of their family literacy programs. One grantee explained that their goal was “to empower parents, so they can be advocates for themselves and their children.” Another reported that they were “helping parents to help themselves and support their children.”
Goals for Parent-Child Relationships

Staff from six of the 15 programs made specific reference to helping parents develop healthy relationships with their children—a goal served by parent and child together (PACT) activities. Many of these grantees reported that they envisioned that their family literacy program would help children and parents “work together,” “strengthen family ties,” and would “help [parents] learn how to interact with their children.”

Goals for Adult Learning

Adult learning independent of parenting skills was also highlighted as a goal by many programs. Ten grantees mentioned improving adult literacy, including English language skills, as a primary goal. English as a second language (ESL) classes were common offerings among grantees in Year 1. Adult basic education (ABE) classes were less common, but six of the ten grantees who highlighted adult learning as a goal specifically mentioned improving the literacy or reading skills of their adult participants. One program director reported that a key goal of her program was to reduce the “40 percent illiteracy rate” in her community. Increased literacy skills were viewed as a stepping stone to a better life by many grantees, including one program director who indicated that her program aimed to “break the cycle of poverty by improving literacy.”

Improving job skills was noted by four, and increased self-sufficiency among participants was reported as a goal by five grantees. As one program director described, they “promote self-sufficiency, help[ing] families take control of their lives.”

Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Program Goals

- A primary goal for most grantee programs was to promote children’s learning and help them become ready for school (reported by 11 grantees in Year 1).
- Programs strived to help parents see that they were their child’s first and most important teacher—their child’s advocate and partner in learning (a goal reported by 12 grantees).
- Improving adult literacy, particularly English language skills, was another common goal for grantee programs (reported by 10 grantees).

Family Literacy Services

In support of the goals described above, grantees offered a variety of services to families in their communities. Four primary components comprised each of the 15 First 5 LA family literacy programs: early childhood education (ECE), parent and child interactive activities (often referred to as parent and child together (PACT) time or parent and child interactive literacy activities (PCILA)), parenting education, and adult education. These services were typically available to families throughout the year. Ten of the programs reported offering nearly year-round services (at least 11 months out of the year). The other five programs reported taking a brief hiatus each year, lasting from a month and a half to 3 months.
Although the presence of each of these four components defines a family literacy program, these four types of activities are not the only services offered to families participating in the First 5 LA family literacy programs. A number of additional services were often provided according to family needs. Each of the four components, as well as the range of additional services, is described below.

**Early Childhood Education (ECE)**

Research in early childhood education emphasizes the importance of developmentally appropriate learning experiences for children and the benefits of early intervention, especially with low-income children (Berreuta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein, and Weikart, 1984; Bowman, Donovan, and Burns, 2001; Loeb, Fuller, Kagan, and Carroll, 2004). Each of the 15 grantees offered early childhood education services as part of their four-component family literacy programs in Year 1. All of the programs provided on-site early childhood education for preschool-age children, with over half of the programs also offering care for infants and toddlers. ECE services are often delivered by collaborating agencies such as Head Start, Even Start, and State Preschool.

The grantees’ early childhood education component provided child development services, including activities to support children in their cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development. In addition, ECE services often included an emphasis on literacy. For example, in one Head Start classroom, children had access to hundreds of books in a variety of languages, with literacy materials displayed throughout the room, including joint parent-child projects (e.g., a message board where parents and children wrote notes to each other). Children were read to regularly by ECE staff, as well as by parents during PACT time. In another program, children received take-home book bags each week with developmentally appropriate literacy materials (in different languages, typically Spanish and English), to promote routine reading in the home.

Most grantees offered morning ECE programs, but there were afternoon and evening programs as well. Classes were typically held four to six days per week and ranged in intensity from 8 hours to 21 hours per week during Year 1.

**Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time**

Parent and child together (PACT) time is defined by the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) as “regularly scheduled session[s] during which parents, focusing on their children’s interests and with support from staff, learn how to support their children’s learning through play” (King and McMaster, 2000 as cited in NCFL, 2003). This is an important part of family literacy because research has shown that children who bond with their parents and family are able to learn new information more quickly than children who feel insecure. Reading and talking to children helps them to feel more secure (Dickinson and Tabor, 2000; Enz and Stamm, 2003; Shore, 1997). Research also indicates that parents who talk to their children often and listen carefully when their children talk generally have children who achieve well in language- and literacy-related tasks in school (Hart and Risley, 1995). In observations of effective family literacy programs, researchers from NCFL found that parent-child interactions often helped
parents to learn new skills and techniques for managing children’s behavior and supporting their learning (Potts and Paull, 1995).

Among the grantees, PACT time typically involved a parent-child play activity, followed by or accompanied by feedback from a teacher (often the ECE teacher or the parenting education teacher). For example, parents visited the classroom to work on an ongoing project with their children (e.g., a “zoo book” in which parents and children pasted animal pictures into an art project) or to play a game or activity of the child’s choice (e.g., building blocks, playing with math manipulatives). Teachers “floated” around the classroom observing and talking with parents and children, preparing for activities, and playing with children whose parents were not present. In some cases, teachers provided informal feedback to parents while they played with their child. For example, during an observed PACT time, a parent was attempting an activity with her child that was not age-appropriate. The teacher suggested that the parent instead focus on a child-selected activity. Feedback was delivered informally and did not interfere with the child-parent interaction. Teachers also sometimes met with parents outside of PACT time (e.g., during parenting education classes), to review and reflect on their interactions with their children.

For other grantees, PACT involved parents visiting their child’s classroom several times a week as volunteer aides. Other programs offered PACT time as a combination of parent time in the classroom and weekly “family nights” where parents and children came together to play games or other learning activities. At one program, parents wrote in weekly “PACT journals,” recording the books that they read with their children, the TV programs they watched with their children, school activities parents attended, parent-child play/learning activities, library visits, and story-telling.

In general, PACT time was the most variable of the four components, with each grantee defining it in a slightly different way. For some of the grantees, PACT time was a relatively new component. Program staff reported providing two to ten hours per week of PACT time, but differing definitions of PACT time make strict comparisons difficult. In addition, grantees expressed the most interest in receiving technical assistance regarding PACT time, given that it was a new component for some programs. Training needs identified by program staff included strategies to integrate PACT time into the program, and ways to schedule PACT time to accommodate parents’ schedules.

Parenting Education

According to NCFL (1992), parenting education should provide the following: content driven by self-identified needs of parents, information for family growth, mutual peer support, advocacy and referral services and single point referral, coping and problem-solving strategies, and community collaboration efforts. Typically, grantee programs offered parenting education two to four hours per week, either as a stand-alone class or as part of an adult education class. At one program, parenting education was delivered through a take-home video series available through the local school district. For the other 14 programs, though, parenting education provided an opportunity for staff to debrief with parents regarding their experiences in PACT time and provide information on such
topics as nutrition, child discipline, communication, and the importance of parent-child interactive play. Parents also participated in group discussions, shared stories of their experiences as parents, and role-played various parenting scenarios. Parents had opportunities to problem-solve with staff as well as with each other. Although most parents were receiving ESL services, parenting education classes were usually offered in their native language. Most programs offered parenting classes in Spanish; some offered classes in English as well. If a dedicated parenting education instructor was not available, these classes were often taught by the ECE teacher or the adult education teacher.

**Adult Education**

Over several administrations of the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), results have consistently shown that children with parents who have higher levels of education have higher rates of performance on achievement tests in all subject areas (Donahue, Voelkl, Campbell, and Mazzeo, 1999). Research also indicates that adults learn best when instruction relates to real-life needs (Potts and Paull, 1995). For adult participants in Los Angeles County family literacy programs, English language instruction is often a primary real-life need.

All of the family literacy programs provided ESL instruction in Year 1, with five of the programs also offering adult basic education (ABE) instruction and five offering preparation for the general educational development (GED) test. Parents also had access to computer or job training in at least six of the programs through on-site classes, collaborating adult schools, or referrals to local vocational schools. At two of the 15 programs, adult education was delivered off-site at a separate adult school campus partnering with the grantee. In addition, for many grantees, ESL classes were the primary mode for adult learning, and those students who did not need help in this area (i.e., those proficient in English) sometimes needed to attend classes (e.g., ABE or GED classes) off site. Another two grantees offered adult education via distance learning. Across all grantees, adult education was offered six to 21 hours per week, with parents typically participating in their ESL classes while their children were in the ECE classroom.

In general, observed ESL classes were full, since adult education is often offered to both family literacy participants as well as other adults served through the grantees or their partners. In these cases, it was difficult to discern which participants were “family literacy participants” and which were not. In some programs, ESL classes were multi-level, with students at ESL level 1 through ESL level 3 learning together. At these programs, both staff and students alike expressed frustration with having individuals with a wide variety of abilities in one room. Despite these challenges, observed students were nearly uniformly engaged and motivated to improve their English skills.

**Other Family Support Services**

Staff were asked to describe other services that were available to participants, beyond those provided through the four-components of family literacy programs. Given that

---

3 Although ESL was provided at all grantee sites, one program was unable to offer ESL at a level that was appropriate for most of their families. At this site, only one parent in the program received ESL services.
many of the family literacy grantees are established social service agencies and/or operate programs such as Even Start or Head Start, most participants had access to a variety of supports, in addition those funded by First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative grants.

Typically, these additional resources included mental health services, case management, or home visits; academic assistance; and expanded child care services. For instance, in one program, “case conferences” were held in which case managers (who were also home visitors), teachers, and other program staff jointly discussed families’ progress, unmet needs, and service plans. Other programs provided nutrition and health workshops, referrals for children suspected of having developmental delays or other special needs, and career counseling. Several programs offered wrap-around child care for children participating in the family literacy program or child care or after-school enrichment programs for siblings of these children. One program also operated a kindergarten that children could transition to from the family literacy program.

Additional academic assistance for parents was also available in some programs. For example, one program maintained a math and literacy center for all participants served through the agency, including family literacy participants, while other grantees provided extra tutoring support to participants in adult basic education, GED programs, or ESL. Finally, many programs offered no-cost materials, including books (e.g., a lending library, a “take home book bag” program), as well as other resources and services needed by families (e.g., health services, items such as beds or clothing, toys at the holidays).

Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Family Literacy Services

- All programs provided ECE services to support preschoolers and, in eight programs, infants and toddlers in their cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development.

- PACT time was a relatively new component for some grantees and appeared to be the most variable across grantees.

- Parenting education activities ranged from staff debriefing with parents about PACT time to classes that provided information on topics such as discipline, communication, and the importance of parent-child interactive play.

- All of the grantee programs provided ESL instruction for parents; five also offered ABE classes and five offered GED classes.

- In addition to the four components, most grantees offered supplementary family support services to family literacy participants, such as mental health services or nutrition workshops.

Integration and Planning

By definition, family literacy programs are the integrated efforts of adult education programs, parenting education programs, early childhood education programs, and intergenerational programs. It is this very integration of services that makes family literacy programs unique and, in theory, more effective. “Successful integration is
expected to result in services that are more meaningful and useful to the whole family” (St. Pierre et al., 2003).

During our visits to each of the 15 First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative grantees, we spoke with program staff about the degree to which program components were integrated with each other. We observed substantial variation in both the level of integration and the strategies that programs used to accomplish integration. While some programs were just beginning to think about how to bring the four components together to form a whole service-delivery package, others had very sophisticated approaches to integration. This section describes the range of approaches to integration observed among grantee programs.

**All Families Participating in All Four Components, Under One Roof**

At the most basic level of integration is the bringing together of the four components under one roof and ensuring that all families participate in all four components. In general, most grantees were able to offer all four components on site. Only two grantees did not offer adult education services on site; participants were required to travel to the local collaborating adult school to take their ESL or other adult education classes.

As part of the requirements for First 5 LA funding, families were expected to participate in all four components of the family literacy programs. Indeed, all 15 grantees had families who participated in all four components in Year 1 (although for many grantees, there were some families who participated in only two or three components).

**Common Themes or Curricular Topics Across Components**

A deeper level of integration occurs when common curricular themes or topics are used across components. The third national Even Start evaluation found that Even Start program staff frequently used a theme to unify lessons and units across core components. Themes were shared in multiple ways, such as in similar decorations in adult and child classrooms, joint arts and crafts projects, or lessons coordinated to use common vocabulary words or activities (St. Pierre et al., 2003).

Staff from approximately half of the grantees indicated during our interviews that using common themes or topics was a key aspect of their efforts to integrate the four components, and they accomplished this integration with varying degrees of success. These programs typically selected a theme for a particular week or month and then planned activities around that theme that were appropriate for children and adults. For example, one program selected an aquatic theme for one month. During ECE, children were learning about fish and eating fish-shaped snacks. In ESL classes, parents did a unit on going to the beach, learning vocabulary that would enable them to talk with their children in English about what they were learning. Parents and children also visited the local aquarium as a PACT activity. “The hope is that with knowledge and information they get in other classes,” explained the parenting education teacher, “that parents will be able to discuss it with their kids at home.” “—in English,” chimed in the ESL teacher at this program.
In other programs, children and parents read books on similar topics so they could share with each other what they were learning. This continuity is expected to help develop a foundation for interactive conversations at home. One parenting education teacher explained that she tells the parents that “if you talk to [your children] at home, you reinforce the learning, and if they are learning at home, that's good.” In one program, parents and children actually read the same books, as part of an integrated curriculum for adult and child learning.

**Staff Integration, Shared Planning Time**

Having common themes across components requires ongoing involvement of staff from each of the four program components and shared planning time. Researchers at NCFL found, in observations of successful family literacy programs, that “the most effective programs integrate the components, weaving themes, issues, and ideas into each period of the day. To accomplish this, the staff must become a team by meeting together to discuss their assessments, observations, and ideas and incorporating them into integrated lesson plans” (Potts and Paull, 1995).

We noted substantial emphasis on shared planning and cross-component articulation at several of the grantee programs. One program, for example, set aside time each day for staff from each of the four components to engage in planning activities. Regularly scheduled planning meetings, more commonly held on a weekly basis for these “planning-focused” grantees, likely facilitated the establishment of a cohesive team and supported the integration of program components. One program included all staff in these meetings, even administrative and support staff who might be considered more peripheral to the actual delivery of service but, in fact, had contact with families and were seen by the program as key players for meeting program goals. “Everyone knows what everyone is doing,” emphasized the program director.

Two of the grantees that reported substantial shared planning took a case management approach to meeting the needs of their families, taking component integration one step further. At these sites, meetings with staff from all four components occurred periodically to discuss individual families in an effort to address their unique needs.

About half of the grantees mentioned that they do some planning but have not been able to fully realize the goal of comprehensive planning across all four components. “We do some shared planning, but we would like to do more,” was a common sentiment among these grantees. “We meet, but it’s hard to get the planning time,” said one program director. Not having enough time was, in fact a recurring complaint from programs. Staff were busy, and schedules did not always overlap.

**Lines of Communication**

In addition to—or, in some cases, in lieu of—staff meetings, grantees reported a variety of strategies to communicate with program staff in order to make sure that everyone was “on the same page” and to encourage integration. In at least a few cases, communication across some of the components was made unnecessary by the fact that staff had responsibility for multiple components. That is, the parenting education teacher was
sometimes also the ECE teacher or the adult education teacher. It was not uncommon, in fact, for the staff person responsible for leading PACT time to be the parenting education teacher and/or the ECE teacher as well.

In other cases, the program director or one of the component leads served as a conduit for the sharing of information across components. It was often the program director or family literacy coordinator who would meet with individual staff members or subsets to share ideas, plans, or other programmatic information. At one site, coordinating the instructors schedules so that all could meet together proved difficult, so an elaborate plan was developed to ensure that staff from all program components were in the loop: 1) the parenting education teacher would meet with the ECE teacher to work on curriculum integration; 2) the parenting education teacher would then meet with the program director; and 3) the program director would, in turn, meet with the ESL teacher.

Another communication strategy used by a number of grantees was the publication of periodic family literacy newsletters. At least three grantees mentioned using written bulletins as a tool for communicating with their staff and to facilitate integration. This strategy was seen as a particularly useful way to inform adult education teachers about the theme of the week in the ECE classroom in hopes that they too would incorporate this theme into their lessons. One program director admitted that this strategy was not always very successful though: although the themes were clearly posted in the bulletin, “if an adult ed teacher integrates, it’s idiosyncratic.” When asked about her program’s newsletter, one ESL teacher was unaware that the newsletter even existed, even though it was posted in her classroom. (Adult education teachers often share classroom space and therefore may not be responsible for everything posted on their walls.)

**The Challenge of Integrating Adult Education**

The adult education component was the most difficult to integrate, and many grantees struggled with how best to accomplish this. Ten of the grantees reported that integrating this component with the other three was a challenge. A number of reasons were cited for this challenge, many of which stemmed from the fact that adult education services were often provided by a collaborating adult school.

Since adult education was often provided by an autonomous organization, linking the curriculum to the other three components was sometimes difficult. Five grantees expressed frustration with this challenge. Partnering with an adult school often meant adopting the adult school’s curriculum. “We encourage the ESL teachers to talk about mammals if that is what is happening … in the ECE classroom,” explained one program director. “It’s good and certainly a step in the right direction. We need to be sensitive that ESL teachers can’t revise their entire curriculum in order to be aligned with what is happening in the preschool classroom.”

One program director lamented that her inability to influence the adult education curriculum severely limited integration. Although staff did what they could to bring together ECE, parenting education, and PACT time, the program director reported that “integrating into the adult school classes is almost impossible” because of their lack of
influence over the adult education curriculum. An ESL teacher acknowledged this challenge and reported that she tried to incorporate family-related topics into her lessons, although she was pressured by her district to use the district-approved curriculum. Partnering with another organization also made it challenging to schedule joint meetings for planning or coordinating.

Since family literacy programs were often part of a larger set of services offered by the grantee (or its partners), in many cases, the adult education teachers also served individuals who were not participating in the other three components. Six grantees cited this as one of the reasons why integrating the adult education component was so difficult. “There are many adults at the school who aren’t family literacy participants,” explained one program director, “so integration is difficult, and not a top priority for adult school teachers.” “A given ESL teacher may only have one or two First 5 students,” reported another. In a classroom of 30 or 40 students, it was difficult for an ESL teacher to justify modifying the curriculum to meet the unique needs of such a small number of students.

Results from the third national Even Start evaluation (St. Pierre et al., 2003) confirm that the integration of adult education with other components (especially early childhood education) is more difficult. The study found that nearly three-quarters of the family literacy programs studied reported that staff have formal arrangements for sharing information (e.g., planning time) across the parenting education and early childhood education, whereas only 56 percent reported having formal arrangements for sharing information across early childhood education and adult education.

Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Component Integration

- Most grantee programs were able to offer all four components at the same location.
- Staff at approximately half of the programs indicated that they used common curricular themes or topics as a way of integrating the four components.
- Though common planning time for staff took place at a few grantee sites, staff from many of the programs reported that they would like to do more shared planning across program components.
- For grantees that were not able to schedule joint planning time, program directors often served as the conduit through which information was shared with component staff.
- Most grantees reported that adult education was the most difficult component to integrate. Partnering with adult schools that had their own curriculum and numerous non-family literacy program participants contributed to the challenge of integrating adult education with the other three program components.

Program Settings

Nine grantees had programs located on school campuses. Most were on elementary school campuses, although three grantees had programs located on adult school campuses or career centers and an early education center. The other six grantees offered services
out of church facilities, private buildings, and community centers. Having convenient locations and comfortable environments for families were cited by program staff and families as important factors for success.

Moreover, staff members at six of the 15 sites highlighted the convenience for families of including all components in one location as one of their strengths. One teacher called her program “a one-stop shop,” providing a number of social services and resources in addition to the education programs. By having all components on site, one executive director noted that the transportation burden on the parents was eased: “parents can stay all on the same campus for all services.” Another mentioned that the sheer proximity of the classrooms to one another helped make the program successful; having everyone in the same building enabled the staff to communicate with each other and share ideas on a regular basis.

**Challenges Regarding Program Space**

Finding adequate space to meet program needs was identified as a challenge for many programs. In fact, one of the most common challenges noted by programs related to space. Nine of the 15 grantees reported that obtaining adequate space, locating affordable space, or adjusting their existing space to the changes in the program as a result of First 5 LA funding were challenges their programs faced.

For several programs, challenge regarding space were encountered primarily during the planning phase. One program director noted that in the first six months, the biggest challenge was locating and securing a place to expand the program to an afternoon session. The site the program originally found did not meet licensing standards and was too expensive. Another program originally planned to divide their space into a classroom area and an office area, but it soon became clear that this would not be an effective strategy. A third had to perform major renovations before the program began when plumbing problems were identified that were much more extensive and expensive than originally anticipated.

Not only was space identified as a challenge for a majority of the programs, it was often their primary concern. This was because space constraints affected the number of families they were able to serve and the range and quality of services that could be offered. One program director reported that due to limited space, they were unable to serve the families on their long waiting list. Another program director mentioned that her biggest challenge was serving children in the birth-to-three age range since they did not have appropriate facilities. Another grantee wanted to offer services for toddlers, but found it impossible to have them in the room with the rest of the students and did not have the space to hold a separate class.

**Space Issues for Districts vs. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)**

Although having adequate or appropriate space was an issue for both district-based and CBO-based grantees, the challenges were somewhat different. Some grantees reported advantages to being affiliated with a district. For example, program directors at two district-based grantees noted that, in addition to providing their programs with rent-free
space, their districts also helped with cleaning and maintenance—an advantage to programs with limited staff capacity. Another grantee cited “good cooperation from the schools for facilities” as a benefit to being affiliated with a district. On the other hand, two district-based grantees reported that their space problems were part of larger space struggles within their districts, leaving them with little hope for growth. One program director explained that their family literacy program was “a guest on the school campus” and that they were “lucky” to have space. She reported that their space was not secure; they could be moved should the school need their classrooms. Another program director whose program is located at a school site explained, “we need to really have a full center-based family literacy program—[there’s] just no room at school sites.”

Grantees located in community centers, churches, or other neighborhood buildings reported their own space issues. One program director noted that the services they provided were limited because they had to share their space with another program, and any expansion of services required approval from the other program in that space. Program directors at CBO-based programs often cited the cost of space as an additional problem. Paying for their facilities was a huge expense for such programs, and finding the resources to do so was an added hardship. Other CBO-affiliated programs benefited from donated classrooms and other facilities.

**Strategies for Negotiating Space Issues**

Program staff drew on a variety of resources and developed creative strategies to address their space needs. Several programs negotiated to rent additional rooms at their existing sites. Others purchased additional storage cabinets that could reside outside the classroom space or reconfigured classroom furniture to accommodate more students. One program director noted that for them it was a matter of “being flexible in regards to sharing work space and adjusting work schedules.” Indeed, being flexible and creative proved to be successful strategies for overcoming space-related challenges.

**Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Program Space**

- Program settings varied from grantee to grantee: nine were located on elementary or adult school campuses; the other six offered services out of church facilities, private buildings, and community centers.
- One of the most frequently cited challenges to implementation was obtaining adequate and affordable space—reported by nine grantees.
- Although their issues were somewhat different, district- and CBO-based grantees both reported experiencing challenges regarding program space.

**Program Staffing**

Given the variation in program size and diversity of program offerings, it is not surprising that staff structures also varied from grantee to grantee. Some programs were relatively small, with the program director taking major responsibility for one or more of the program components. Others had large staffs comprised of a leadership team, coordinators, teachers, and support staff.
Ten of the 15 programs specifically highlighted their staff as key to the successful implementation of their family literacy programs. One program director noted how “committed and passionate” her staff was about family literacy. Another program’s executive director pointed to the teachers and the coordinators as the key to their program’s success: “If they didn’t show the love and concern they show towards parents and kids, the parents wouldn’t return and the kids wouldn’t want to be there either.”

This section explores the roles and qualifications of program staff, training opportunities available to staff, and staffing challenges faced by programs.

**Staff Responsibilities and Qualifications**

All programs had an executive director—an agency representative who oversaw the administration of the family literacy program, often among many other responsibilities. Some executive directors had more “hands-on” involvement, while others dealt primarily with funding and other high-level administrative duties. Executive directors across the 15 grantees reported having a variety of qualifications, including masters degrees and/or many years of experience within the agency or school district. Not all executive directors had direct expertise in the area of family literacy per se, but instead with one or more of the program components. For example, many reported experience as administrators, principals, or teachers in the K-12 or adult education systems.

All of the programs also had a program director or family literacy coordinator who was typically responsible for the day-to-day activities of the program, supervising the teachers, and ensuring that all went smoothly with the service delivery. At three of the programs, the program director or family literacy coordinator was also responsible for teaching at least one of the four components. At one program, in fact, the program director was also the lead teacher for three of the four components.

Program directors’ credentials ranged from associates degrees to masters degrees in early childhood education, human services, English, Spanish, and education. Program directors reported having extensive teaching experience at either the preschool, elementary, or adult level. Several directors described growing into their positions over a period of five or more years, beginning as teachers, gradually moving on to being coordinators, and finally taking on the role of program director.

Teacher qualifications varied from grantee to grantee as well as from component to component. The majority of programs noted that adult education teachers (primarily ESL instructors) were certified teachers. For some programs associated with a school district, certification was a requirement. Several programs also noted that these teachers tended to have many years of teaching experience. Early childhood education (ECE) teachers also tended to have related credentials or were pursuing the appropriate credential or degree, though this was not always the case. One program emphasized that it was very difficult to find ECE staff to support the early childhood teacher in the classroom, since they receive minimum wage and are not eligible for benefits. Her present ECE support staff had no related training.
The qualifications of parenting education instructors and PACT time leaders were less consistent. In some cases, parenting teachers were employed by an adult school and were credentialed instructors. In other cases, though, the ECE teacher doubled as the parenting education teacher. This role sharing was even more common among PACT time leaders who usually served as the ECE teacher, the parenting education teacher, or the program director as well.

Programs also drew on the adults in their program for future staff members. In two of the programs, staff noted that one or more of their teachers started out as parents participating in the program, and through community college courses, they became ECE or parenting education instructors.

Staff Development and Training

Ongoing staff development opportunities related to the operation of their family literacy program—many of which were provided by the Family Literacy Support Network—were available to staff in most programs. Fourteen of the 15 programs reported that their staff received some type of training throughout the year. Twelve of the 15 programs stated that some or all staff attended an NCFL training. One program director noted that her staff did not attend the conference because they all had families and it was difficult for them to make a three-day commitment. Nine of the programs stated that program staff attended trainings on assessment tools, such as the Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP) and the California Even Start Performance Information Reporting System (CA-ESPIRS). Several program directors noted that staff attending these trainings provided cross training for other staff when they returned to ensure that all staff could benefit.

In addition to these trainings, five of the programs also reported that they provided in-house trainings such as a one-time writing class to assist teachers in writing evaluations, a staff retreat to cover assessment and evaluation, weekly collaboration time to discuss issues and problems, and monthly meetings during which staff presented information on a variety of topics to one another. Additionally, staff cited various off-site trainings on such topics as emergent literacy, Parents as Teachers (PAT), reading methods, family math, and an arts workshop.

Staffing Challenges

Although many programs counted their staff as one of their greatest strengths, program directors reported a number of challenges associated with staffing. Ten of the 15 programs reported challenges related to hiring and retaining adequate staff and integrating new staff into existing programs.

The most commonly reported challenge related to staffing was not having enough staff. This, combined with lack of space, often resulted in limitations on services offered to families. This problem was most frequently noted with regard to adult education classes such as ESL. “We really have so many different [ESL] levels,” explained one program director; “[we] could use another instructor.” Another program director, expressing the same sentiment, commented that “it is difficult to provide quality instruction in multilevel
classrooms.” Some of the programs with staffing shortages relied on students who had been in the program for a while to tutor other students who were struggling to keep up in multi-level classrooms. They also utilized volunteers to maintain the facilities and recruit families.

Having too few staff and program schedules that were often hectic led a few staff to report that working at the program was “tiring and overwhelming.” One program director acknowledged that “people wear multiple hats” and that teachers were “putting in more than 40 hours per week.” “There is no time for us,” explained one teacher who regularly worked through her lunch break. Lack of time also made it difficult for staff to meet and plan, and many program directors noted that trying “to get a grasp on everything” and finding “time to do everything” was a major challenge.

Growth associated with the First 5 LA grant may have exacerbated staffing needs in some programs. Recruiting and hiring qualified staff—staff that met district requirements, in some cases—to provide expanded services was a challenge reported by several programs. Some programs also struggled to find staff to fulfill the data collection requirements of the First 5 LA grant.

Program directors who were able to fill the staff positions that were needed to expand their programs confronted the challenge of integrating these new staff into their teams. One program director, whose staff “nearly double[d]” in size with the program’s First 5 LA grant, faced the challenges of “providing opportunities for team building and space accommodations.” Another program director noted that incorporating “a new program into an existing one” and establishing new “lines of authority and communication” between new and existing staff was a challenge. The director of another program reported that “the human relations/personnel issues involved in administering a program that has this many job roles and responsibilities that cross and overlap is a challenge.”

Grantee staff developed strategies for addressing these concerns. In response to the influx of additional staff members with new First 5 LA funds, several programs formalized their meeting times in order to manage a much larger staff. One program director “held various management and planning meetings [as well as] teamwork workshops.” Another program director relied on the staff training provided by the FLSN to quickly bring new staff members “up to speed.”

**Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Program Staffing**

- Staff roles, backgrounds, and qualifications varied across grantees and components, with the greatest variation observed among parenting education teachers and PACT time leaders.
- On going staff development opportunities—many of which were provided by the FLSN—were made available to staff in most programs.
- Although many programs counted their staff as one of their greatest assets, 10 of the 15 programs reported experiencing challenges related to hiring and retaining adequate staff, and integrating new staff into existing programs.
Recruitment and Retention of Program Participants

Recruiting families and retaining them for long enough to have an impact is a key concern for family literacy programs. Inherent in the definition of family literacy is that services must be of a sufficient duration and intensity to be effective. In a case study of a family literacy program in an English language learning community, researchers found that word-of-mouth and school or community organization, referrals were the most effective methods for recruiting participants. Trusted and knowledgeable community liaisons also facilitated recruitment and retention of participants (Rodriguez-Brown, 2003). This section describes the recruitment and retention issues faced by the 15 Family Literacy Initiative grantees.

Recruitment of Family Literacy Participants

Grantees were asked to describe their experiences recruiting participants for the family literacy programs. Recruitment strategies included word-of-mouth (reported by 5 grantees); referrals from other agencies, such as elementary schools or social service organizations (3 grantees); open houses or presentations at schools or other agencies (e.g., adult schools) (3 grantees); brochures and flyers (3 grantees); outreach by community liaison staff (1 grantee); and “in-house” referrals to the family literacy program by agency staff (e.g., parents approaching the agency with interest in the Head Start program and is also referred to the family literacy program) (1 grantee). The third national Even Start evaluation also found that word-of-mouth was the most common recruitment strategy for family literacy programs, with 76 percent of all Even Start projects reporting that they relied on this method in 2000-2001. Other Even Start programs relied on referrals from collaborating agencies (65 percent), from other community agencies (52 percent), from public schools (49 percent), or from Head Start (41 percent) (St. Pierre, et al., 2003).

Of the 11 family literacy programs that provided information regarding recruitment, only two of them specifically characterized recruitment as a challenge. One grantee required additional staff to be able to conduct recruitment activities. Another site experienced difficulties associated with their attempts to recruit parents from those enrolled in the agency’s ECE programs (e.g., Head Start, child care). Since parents were already getting care for their children through this program, they could not use child care as an incentive for participation in the family literacy program.

A related issue emerged during discussions with several other grantees. Staff described their efforts to recruit participants for their family literacy program from parents who were enrolled in other agency services. Staff explained that it was difficult to ask parents to add to their current responsibilities (e.g., requiring parents to participate in daily PACT time in addition to ESL). Staff often stated that the four-component program required fairly significant time commitments from parents. “Sometimes we have families that want to sign up in this component but aren’t interested in all components,” explained one staff member. “They want their kids in ECE but they don’t want to go to adult education. Sometimes that is a challenge.” This point was raised by several grantees. “The biggest problem is getting parents to commit to their requirements.”
In some cases, making the community aware of family literacy was the first challenge to overcome. “The challenge now is doing more community awareness about parent learning,” explained one program director. “Family literacy is a foreign concept to parents and educators.” Another commented, “Getting information [to parents is] difficult with families who have no knowledge of family literacy…to [help them] really understand the intensity and level of commitment required.”

In several other cases, program directors acknowledged that it was often family commitments and expectations (particularly those of husbands) that made it difficult for mothers to get involved in the programs. One program director noted, “many husbands don’t want [their wives] to work.” According to another, “some fathers [don’t] want their wives studying and working.” One program added evening classes “so that dads and working parents can participate more.” As a result, they had couples coming to class together. Another program offered both daytime and evening classes, allowing some flexibility for parents whose job schedules fluctuated over time. Offering transportation was another strategy reported by one grantee to encourage participation in the program.

One program turned to the FLSN for suggestions on ways to improve recruitment. As a result of their consultations, staff from the program incorporated a variety of new strategies into their recruitment activities, including posting flyers and banners and advertising at back-to-school nights and open houses at the elementary school.

Recruitment was not a concern for all programs. A staff member at one program stated, “Up till this point, we have not had a hard time with recruitment … some families just fell into the family literacy program.” In fact, staff from six grantee programs indicated that there were waiting lists for their programs, and stated that there was no need to actively recruit participants.

**Retention of Program Participants**

Retention seemed to be a greater issue for grantees than recruitment. Seven of the 15 grantees discussed their experiences related to the retention of participants in the programs. Of these, two grantees identified issues that influenced the extent to which parents stayed in the program over time. These issues were very similar to those that affected recruitment of participants. For example, some parents had difficulty meeting all of the requirements of the four-component program. Others left the program because their children entered kindergarten, or job responsibilities interfered with parents’ ability to stay in the program. Pregnancy and the arrival of a new child resulted in some mothers’ permanent exit from the program as well.

The issue of retention is made even more difficult for programs since there are multiple individuals involved. For example, some staff struggled with the notion that, regardless of whether parents remain in the family literacy program, their children may still be enrolled in the agency’s early childhood services. In most cases, the child’s enrollment in care preceded the parent’s participation in the family literacy program, and staff were hesitant to base the child’s continuing eligibility for ECE services on the parent’s level of participation in the other three program components. As one staff member stated, “we
can’t force families to stay in the family literacy program, and we can’t kick their child out of child care.”

In addition to discussing the challenge of retention, staff also identified a number of factors that promoted retention among participants, including a supportive staff, the availability of infant/toddler child care, and the social network that developed among parents. A staff member remarked, “Parents connect with other parents and stay for years because of this.” Staff from another program emphasized the critical role of collaborative partnerships with community groups in connecting parents to additional services and supporting their general well-being.

While staff from many programs found that the best way to retain families was to make the program itself feel like an extended family, others had to find more formal solutions to the competing priorities of classes, work, and home responsibilities. To do this, staff from one program surveyed parents “to identify the obstacles to their participation” and then altered class schedules “to better meet their educational needs and time constraints.” In order to ensure continued participation in all components, staff from another program reported holding “a probationary period before families actually enroll” which gave them “30 days to look at what’s required. They need to meet minimum attendance required during that period” in order to stay in the program. Parents were also given a handbook that “outlines and details what the program is and what they can expect and what is expected of them.” To encourage mothers out on maternity leave to return to the program, staff from one program “call all the pregnant moms and invite them back for a baby shower, and give them baby blankets.”

Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Recruitment and Retention

- Recruiting through word-of-mouth was the most commonly cited strategy for bringing new families into the programs.
- More grantee programs reported struggling with retaining program participants than with recruiting them.
- Programs reported that families viewed the time commitment required for participation as a barrier to enrolling and remaining in their programs.

Partnerships, Collaborations, and Funding Sources

Family literacy programs bring together a wide range of resources and collaborators to offer a variety of services to families. In Year 1, the Family Literacy Initiative grantees collaborated with local adult schools, Community Based English Tutoring (CBET) programs, Head Start programs, and other agencies and funding streams to meet the needs of families. This section describes grantees’ involvement in these partnerships as well as their experiences with First 5 LA and their use of First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative funds.
Working with Partners and Collaborators

To reduce redundancy and capitalize on existing resources in their communities, many grantees partnered with other agencies that could provide a service to their families that they might not otherwise have had the capacity to provide. These partnerships enabled the family literacy programs to offer a more complete package of services. Collaboration with other agencies brought with it a variety of challenges for the grantees as well. Bringing together organizations with different structures, goals, and policies is not a simple task, and staff from seven of the 15 grantees reported on the challenges this presented for their programs in Year 1.

Like the 51 percent of Even Start sites nationwide that rely on adult schools to staff their adult education component (St. Pierre et al., 2003), many of the 15 First 5 LA grantees partnered with adult schools. Many of the grantees would not have been able to provide a full complement of services to parents without the support of the local adult school. Adult schools provided space, instructors, materials, and other resources to family literacy programs. One of the adult education teachers interviewed noted that because they worked closely with the adult school in the district, they were able to take advantage of a distance learning component, sending sequential materials home if a student was unable to attend classes.

However, “dealing with the adult school” was identified as one of the biggest challenges by at least one program. In many cases, integrating the adult education component into the larger program was difficult because the adult school providing this service was an autonomous organization with its own policies and procedures. Three grantees described these collaborations as challenging. Communication, coordination of curricula, and administrative dealings were highlighted by grantee staff as challenging aspects of collaborating with adult schools.

Other partners that grantee staff reported collaborating with included elementary schools, Even Start, Head Start, community colleges and universities, NCFL, volunteer centers, churches, arts agencies, and community organizations. These agencies and organizations provided direct services to families, training, materials, and a variety of in-kind contributions to family literacy programs. For example, one program solicited donations from neighborhood vendors to provide free lunch and snacks for children and parents. Many grantees acknowledged the importance of these collaborations for the success of their programs.

First 5 LA Family Literacy Grants

As noted at the start of this chapter, the 15 First 5 LA family literacy programs were awarded grants averaging $487,497 to be distributed over three years (Exhibit 5). Fourteen of the grantees were awarded grants between $483,246 and $501,081. One grantee requested and was awarded considerably less: $339,066. Fourteen grantees received planning funds in June of 2002 and spent from $9,234 to $93,158 (an average of $20,992) of First 5 LA funds during the June-through-December planning phase.
### Exhibit 5: First 5 LA Grant Expenditures by Grantee, Year 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Approved Three Year Budget</th>
<th>Planning Period Expenditures</th>
<th>Total 2002-2003 Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Children's Bureau</td>
<td>$499,879.92</td>
<td>$14,287.00</td>
<td>$123,787.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Learning Center</td>
<td>$499,917.04</td>
<td>$16,864.00</td>
<td>$32,913.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax Community Adult School/Shenandoah</td>
<td>$499,959.00</td>
<td>$15,572.00</td>
<td>$92,551.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Literacy Advocates of Southern California (FLASC)</td>
<td>$500,000.00</td>
<td>$18,457.00</td>
<td>$155,287.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbor Community Adult School at 15th Street</td>
<td>$499,998.44</td>
<td>$16,548.00</td>
<td>$99,519.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbor Community Adult School at Meyler Adult Learning Center</td>
<td>$500,000.04</td>
<td>$16,126.00</td>
<td>$120,570.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawthorne School District</td>
<td>$500,000.00</td>
<td>$13,349.00</td>
<td>$86,214.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Street Family Center</td>
<td>$483,246.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$95,353.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedren Community Health Center</td>
<td>$496,414.00</td>
<td>$18,594.00</td>
<td>$209,521.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Tokyo Service Center</td>
<td>$339,066.43</td>
<td>$9,234.00</td>
<td>$89,004.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach Unified School District</td>
<td>$500,000.26</td>
<td>$14,341.00</td>
<td>$150,390.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Club Community Center</td>
<td>$492,908.19</td>
<td>$12,148.00</td>
<td>$113,212.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUENTE Learning Center</td>
<td>$501,080.60</td>
<td>$14,375.00</td>
<td>$172,330.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reseda Community Adult School/ Lemay Early Education Center</td>
<td>$499,984.87</td>
<td>$20,833.00</td>
<td>$69,697.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland Unified School District</td>
<td>$500,001.19</td>
<td>$93,157.70</td>
<td>$115,836.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditure data provided by First 5 LA.

While three of the grantees were able to “expand or enhance” their programs immediately and began serving new families or offering new services in July, about a third of the programs spent the planning period developing their expanded or enhanced services before bringing in new families. Planning activities included hiring new staff, recruiting new families, and constructing new facilities. These grantees began serving families in their expanded or enhanced programs in September. A few others experienced delays and initiated new services or enrolled new families later in the fall or winter.

In addition to the planning funds, all 15 programs received Year 1 funding as part of their grants. Grantees spent from $32,913 to $209,521 (an average of $115,079) during their first year of First 5 LA funding. These funds were used to expand and enhance grantee programs in a variety of ways. All 15 programs used First 5 LA funds to hire additional family literacy staff or to increase the hours of existing staff. By increasing staff hours,
programs were able to expand the number of families they served by offering additional ESL and ECE classes, offering new evening programs to reach working parents, or offering classes and care for infants and toddlers to reach more parents as well as more children. Grantees also enhanced program services by offering new courses such as GED or computer classes, providing outreach to families through home visitors or social workers, offering additional family literacy activities in the evening, and by enhancing existing classes, such as adding additional levels of ESL instruction. Staff at three sites indicated that by hiring a family literacy coordinator, increasing a coordinator’s hours, or paying for staff planning time, they were able to increase the level of integration across all four components.

In addition to using funds to increase personnel hours, all programs used First 5 LA funds on non-personnel expenditures such as computers, playground equipment, library materials, book backpacks, and other instructional materials. One site also used funds to build an infant/toddler room to serve children of family literacy parents who are too young for Head Start (which provided the program’s ECE component). Another site planned to use funds to construct a portable building to house the adult education class as well as an infant care center to alleviate overcrowding.

**Working with First 5 LA**

Staff from three of the grantees cited the flexibility they had in using the First 5 LA family literacy grants to expand or enhance their family literacy programs as a benefit of working with First 5 LA. For one grantee, First 5 LA funds supported additional staff and gave program staff “flexibility with hiring and firing, as opposed to working with [the district].” In addition, program staff from six of the grantees had especially positive comments about their interactions with First 5 LA and the FLSN. One director stated that “everyone is very helpful,” and another found that “overall the program folks associated with the Initiative are very helpful, accessible, [and] informative.” Another program director felt that her experiences with First 5 LA had been positive and appreciated the FLSN as an “outstanding resource.” Another program director echoed this statement, saying that “the First 5 connection has been excellent,” and that “the Network has been fantastic… a very big resource.”

Though there were numerous benefits associated with the Initiative grants, working with First 5 LA also presented challenges for some of the grantees. While only one program’s staff found the initial process for applying for funds “difficult and unclear,” staff at multiple programs identified meeting First 5 LA data collection requirements as a challenge. As one interviewee noted, “it was very difficult and an overwhelming task for us to complete all required profiles and assessments in a timely manner.” Program staff at several programs felt that this challenge was exacerbated by the fact that data collection training did not come until “very late in the year.” Staff from two other programs commented on the amount of paperwork required by First 5 LA. One program director noted that “it takes away from the time [we] should be putting in with participants” and another felt that First 5 LA just “added more requirements and paperwork and meetings.” Though the data collection requirements were a challenge for some grantees, many staff felt that, after training and experience, the subsequent rounds of data collection would be
easier. In addition, many staff relied heavily on the FLSN for advice and assistance with this aspect of the program and found FLSN staff readily available to assist them.

**Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Collaborations and First 5 LA Funding**

- Common partnerships for grantee programs included collaborations with adult schools, CBET programs, Head Start, and Even Start programs.

- Collaborations often allowed grantees to offer more comprehensive services to families, though communication and coordination across multiple organizations was cited as a challenge at seven sites.

- The 15 grantees expanded or enhanced their family literacy programs in a variety of ways, including adding new services such as computer or GED classes, increasing the number of families served, adding evening classes and activities to reach working parents, adding infant and toddler classes, and upgrading facilities and materials.

- Project staff reported that the benefits of working with First 5 LA, included flexibility in use of First 5 LA funds and the creation of FLSN as a resource for grantees.

- Project staff reported that the challenges of working with First 5 LA, included the data collection requirements and the paperwork associated with the family literacy grants.
Chapter 4: The First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative

Families

Every family is unique, and families participating in the family literacy programs supported by First 5 LA funds in Year 1 varied widely within and across grantee programs. During interviews and focus groups, program staff were asked to describe the demographic characteristics of participating families, as well as the types of challenges those families faced. Parents’ reasons for joining a family literacy program, what they hoped to accomplish through their participation, and their perceptions of how their families were benefiting from family literacy services were explored through parent focus groups in May of 2003. Information from these focus groups is presented below.

Family Characteristics and Experiences

Staff at all 15 programs stated that the majority of the family literacy participants they served were Hispanic or Latino. The majority of programs also served smaller numbers of families from other populations, including African-American, Russian, and Arab families. In general, families across all programs were described as economically disadvantaged. In fact one program director indicated that 85 percent of the families in her program lived on a household income below $20,000 a year. For many participating families, the parents were first-generation immigrants with little or no English proficiency. Preschool-aged children were more likely to participate in family literacy services, though more than half of the grantee programs also provided services to infants and toddlers.

Families reported different reasons for joining family literacy programs and had different experiences in the programs as well. This section describes some of the reasons parents gave for joining their family literacy program, the goals they hoped to achieve through their families’ participation, and some of the obstacles they faced along the way.

Participation Goals

Parents were asked to describe their reasons for joining the family literacy program, as well as what they hoped to achieve by participating. Overwhelmingly, parents stated that their primary goal for themselves was to learn to read, write, and speak in English. Parents explained that they wanted to learn English in order to prepare for the GED, become a U.S citizen, qualify for a good job with benefits, be involved in their communities, or go to college. Several parents also stated that they had a general desire for “a better future” or “to get ahead,” and offered this as a reason for joining or a goal for their participation.

Parents also said they wanted to learn how to better care for and teach their children, spend quality time with them, or be more involved in their schooling. With respect to what they hoped their children would accomplish by participating, the majority of parents said that they wanted their children to be prepared for school. Other goals parents
mentioned included helping their children to develop self-esteem, to feel comfortable in child care, and to have opportunities to socialize with other children.

**Challenges Families Face**

As mentioned above, many of the families served by grantee programs were low income, and participating families faced a number of challenges associated with financial instability. Program directors stated that many families lacked adequate medical insurance, affordable child care, transportation to family literacy or other needed services, and stable housing arrangements. Staff at several sites also indicated that inadequate medical care and poor housing conditions led to a high rate of health conditions (such as asthma) among participating families. Staff from at least two programs also cited domestic violence as a challenge encountered by participants. (These programs worked with local shelters to refer appropriate cases.)

Staff at some sites explained that a lack of affordable child care forced many parents with younger children to bring their infants or toddlers with them to adult education and parenting classes. In some cases, parents with infants or toddlers were unable to attend at all. Expansion of children’s services to include infants and toddlers allowed some programs to better serve parents and families as a whole.

For parents who worked during regular business hours, participating in family literacy services proved challenging. While some grantee programs were successful in involving both mothers and fathers in program activities, the majority tended to primarily involve mothers, many of whom were not employed outside of the home. Program directors and teachers at several grantee sites explained that among participants from two-parent households, it was common for the women to attend, but men who work outside the home were often unable to participate.

Coordinating job and program schedules was a challenge that both participating parents and family literacy program staff worked to overcome. According to one program director, working mothers and fathers managed to participate in her program by arranging their work schedules around their family literacy responsibilities. For grantee programs in which participating families were not able to rearrange their work schedules, however, other strategies—such as offering evening programs, Saturday classes, and designing family activity nights to include all members of the family—were used to reach working fathers and mothers.

Program directors stressed that balancing work and program commitments was an ongoing challenge for families. Working parents who attended evening sessions in one program did not leave until 10 p.m. At another site, due to the temporary nature of their work, several parents had to switch back and forth between the daytime and evening sessions as their work hours changed. Nonetheless, the attendance rates presented below indicate that the majority of parents were able to overcome these challenges. As one program director stated, “Our students are very inspirational because of the obstacles they overcome to be active participants in the community.”
Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Family Characteristics and Experiences

- Though programs served a variety of participants, low-income Hispanic or Latino families were predominant in the First 5 LA family literacy programs. In addition, mothers and preschool-aged children were the most likely to participate.

- Parents’ goals for their own participation in family literacy programs included increasing their English skills and learning how to provide better care and learning experiences for their children. Parents also hoped that their children’s participation in family literacy services would better prepare them for school.

- Barriers to family literacy participation included lack of transportation, lack of child care for particular ages of children not served by the program, employment commitments, and family obligations.

Parent-Reported Outcomes of Program Participation

Parent focus groups, ranging in size from approximately three to 25 parents, were held in English and in Spanish at all 15 First 5 LA family literacy programs during the Year 1 site visits. When asked about their participation in the family literacy program—including how the program has benefited them, what they have learned, how participation has affected their interactions with their children, and what changes they have noticed in their children—parents’ perceived outcomes largely matched or exceeded their stated goals.

Outcomes for Parents

When describing how participating in the family literacy program has benefited them, the majority of parents in focus groups stated that they learned to provide better care and learning opportunities for their children, improved their English skills, increased their self-confidence, acquired a support network, and/or spent more quality time with their children. Each of these parent outcomes is discussed below.

Providing care and learning opportunities for their children

Parents in focus groups at all 15 programs described how the family literacy program has helped them to provide better care and learning opportunities for their children. For example, parents noted that they learned how to be patient, solve day-to-day problems without fighting with family members, and discipline their children in more appropriate ways. One mother noted that because of what she learned in her parenting classes, she did not yell as much and found it is easier to talk to her children. Another mother said that although she still got mad at her children, she was not as angry as she was before participating in the program. She stated that she used to explode, but she learned to calm herself down and talk to her children instead. “We have learned how we should treat [our children],” summarized another parent.

Parents also noted that they learned the importance of talking with their children and spending time together. One parent commented, “Sometimes when they are small we don’t think that we need to talk with them, but we have learned they need us to talk to
“them all the time.” Many parents also related how much they enjoyed PACT time, stating that it taught them that children need uninterrupted time alone with their parents. Several parents said that since joining the program they felt closer to their children and enjoyed spending time together more frequently.

The vast majority of parents also reported that they learned how to be teachers to their children. Many parents said that through their participation in a family literacy program they learned how to read properly to their children. One mother noted that she reads books to her children more dramatically now, and another said she is careful to show her child the book. Another mother described reading stories to her daughter and then asking her daughter to answer questions about the story.

One parent stated that prior to joining the program she did not have a library card and did not know how to access the library. She said that after joining the family literacy program, though, she frequently visited the library and used it as a resource “to get all sorts of free materials.” Her children also enjoyed going to the library and asked to go often.

Learning how to be a teacher to their children helped many parents to develop an understanding of how children learn. One parent described how she used to see her daughter playing with playdough and assumed she was “just playing.” This mother reported learning in her parenting classes that such play is important in the sensory development of children. Another mother said that she acquired ideas for different learning activities to do with her children at home, including counting forks, identifying colors, and looking at shapes.

**Improved English skills**

Parents in focus groups at 12 of the 15 programs stated that another important outcome of their participation was learning to speak, read, and write in English. Many parents reported that acquiring English skills allowed them to help their children with schoolwork. One parent said that she was now able to help her older children with school assignments because she understood the instructions on their homework. Another said she was finally able to communicate with her children’s teachers during parent-teacher conferences. A mother even described being better able to communicate with her own school-aged children, who spoke English more than her native language. Some parents said that they practiced English with their children at home, and had begun reading to their children in English.

**Increased self-confidence**

Parents in focus groups at eight of the 15 programs stated that their participation in the family literacy program also resulted in increased self-confidence and self-esteem. Parents emphasized that becoming more proficient in English increased their self-confidence both at home and in their communities. Parents in one program described how learning English helped them to feel more “outgoing and independent.” Parents developed the skills to speak with their children’s doctors, with clerks at stores, or with people on the bus. “One feels very proud about learning,” a parent explained.
**Improved support network**

Parents in focus groups at seven of the 15 programs indicated that an increase in self-confidence resulted from the support they received from peers and program staff. For example, one parent explained that in the parenting class they “share a lot” and that “it’s nice to share the experiences so you know that other parents have the same issues, and you are not alone. And together you can find a solution.” A parent explained that the program taught her to “think positive” and that she could “be better and do anything she wants to.” Several single mothers emphasized how important a support network was for them because it introduced them to other adults who are dealing with similar issues.

**Spending more quality time with their children**

Another outcome of participation described by parents in focus groups at five of the 15 programs was increased quality time spent with their children. Parents said that they learned how to take time to play with their children and to talk with them, both at the program and at home. One parent explained that prior to participating in the program, she thought she was too busy to dedicate much time to playing with her child. The program helped her to see how important it was to make that time. Parents at one grantee site said that at home there were many distractions, but when they were at the program they could dedicate time entirely to their children.

In addition to these outcomes, parents noted several other program benefits, including learning how to use a computer, feeling more involved with their children’s care, saving money on child care, learning about community services, and learning how to increase communication within their families.

**Outcomes for Children**

The majority of parents interviewed stated that since enrolling in the family literacy program their children had learned skills to prepare them for school, become more social and independent, and developed increased self-esteem. Each of these child outcomes is described below.

**Developing school readiness**

When asked about the impacts of programs on their children, parents in focus groups at all 15 programs emphasized the various skills their children had learned that will prepare them for entering kindergarten. Parents described how their children learned about colors, numbers, the alphabet, songs and rhymes, art, and computers. One parent noted that her daughter’s vocabulary had increased and that her movement had become more coordinated. In one program, several parents had children in first and second grade who had previously participated in the program. These parents explained that their older children were more advanced than their peers who did not participate in the program. “It really helps to get children ready for school,” a parent stated. Overall, parents felt that their children were more excited about learning. Parents described their children asking to be read to and watching less television. Several parents said that their children loved going to the program and even asked to go on the weekend or during vacations.
Developing social skills and independence

Another outcome described by parents in focus groups at 14 of the 15 programs was increased opportunities for their children to share, socialize, and make friends. Several parents said that their children used to cry when they first started attending early childhood education classes, but they eventually grew more confident and became comfortable with their parents attending adult classes nearby. Said one parent of her son, “After he learned [he] can stay, he says ‘goodbye’ now.” Another parent explained that her son was not used to being outside of his house when he began the program. “Now he likes being here” she said, and noted that he has become more outgoing and independent from her. Another parent said, “Now my son expresses his feelings—before he was scared and worried and shy.” Two parents with children who had special needs said the program helped their children to meet and get along with other children. Parents also reported that in addition to helping their children feel comfortable and make new friends, participating in the program taught their children to follow rules and to behave more appropriately.

Increased self-esteem

Parents in focus groups at six of the 15 programs stated that their children demonstrated an increase in self-esteem as a result of program participation. Several parents described how the program staff celebrated students’ accomplishments and created a sense of community and belonging. A parent noted that because of the program design, children felt proud that their parents were going to school. Another parent noticed that during PACT time, “kids feel important that their moms are helping.” Parents emphasized that children not only had increased self-esteem from participating in the program, but that the program specifically taught parents the importance of fostering self-esteem. One parent explained, “If you have low self-esteem, your child will have low self-esteem. And if you are positive, your child will also be positive.” Overall, parents reported that their children were happier and more confident.

Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Perceived Outcomes

- The majority of parents in focus groups stated that, as a result of participating in First 5 LA family literacy programs, they learned to provide better care and learning opportunities for their children, improved their English skills, increased their self-confidence, acquired a support network, and/or spent more quality time with their children.

- The majority of parents interviewed stated that since enrolling in First 5 LA family literacy programs, their children have learned skills that will prepare them for school, become more social and independent, and increased their self-esteem.

Parents’ Suggestions for Program Improvement

In addition to the perceived benefits of program participation, parents in focus groups were also asked for recommendations about how the program could be improved or changed. Parents across the 15 programs raised a variety of issues, including the length of
the program, the availability of child care, the condition of facilities and materials, and the organization and content of ESL classes.

Parents in six out of the 15 programs noted issues related to the length of specific program activities or the time commitment required for their participation. Several parents reported that various components of the program were too short. One parent explained that sometimes just as her children were getting really interested in an activity, it was time for them to leave the ECE class. Other parents said that they would like to spend more time in ESL classes or in PACT time activities. Conversely, some parents said that the program sometimes felt like a big time commitment. Rather than lengthen or reduce the time commitment required in the program, parents suggested that two shifts of the program should be offered, or that certain classes should be offered at different times during the year.

In five of the programs, parents cited concerns over the availability of child care. Several parents who were pregnant noted that they would have to drop out later in the year because the program did not offer child care for infants. In several programs, parents were allowed to bring infants to the ESL classes, but parents reported that they would rather have had a child care option in order to devote their full attention to the class. Parents of school-age children also noted that during spring break, or during the frequent breaks in year-round schools, they were unable to attend the program because there was no child care for their school-aged children. Parents also said that sometimes child care staff arrived late, which caused them to miss the class, or that child care was not available everyday.

Parents in five programs noted issues with program facilities or materials. These parents said that the children needed a bigger building and/or a bigger room for their ECE classes. In one program, parents noted that a group of children attended ECE classes outside and that it would be nice to have an additional room for the family literacy program. One parent noted that the carpet where the children sat during PACT time and the materials, such as crayons, were worn out. In addition, parents stated that some of the programs had limited supplies of certain materials, such as construction paper. One parent said she noticed how the Head Start programs always had new toys whereas a lot of the toys in the family literacy classes were old and worn. Parents in another program noted that because the toilets were outside of the ECE classroom, it was difficult for staff to take the children to the restrooms. As a result, children have had accidents in class.

Another area for program improvement discussed by parents in four programs was the structure of the ESL classes. Parents in some programs reported that having students with varying levels of English ability in one ESL class made learning more difficult for them. Parents explained that the ESL teacher could not provide individualized attention, and, as a result, parents were not able to practice as much English as they would have liked. Parents noted that it would be better to have an extra teacher or to have more classes targeted at different levels. Parents also said that they would prefer more formal ESL classes that covered vocabulary, verb conjugation, writing, and pronunciation. Parents
reported that some of the adult education classes focused too much on other topics, such as mathematics, without directly providing English lessons.

Parents in four out of the 15 programs also made suggestions about other classes or workshops that the program offered. Parents stated that they would like to see classes on discipline and to have a cooking class in Spanish. Overall, parents said that they would like to see more parenting workshops, fieldtrips, and activities.

Other areas for program improvement that parents in one or two programs cited included less strict attendance requirements, more formal school readiness activities (such as report cards or graduations), more special needs training by staff, increased outreach, stricter enforcement of rules about sick children staying home, and help with transportation burdens.

**Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Program Improvement**

- Parents’ suggestions for program improvement included altering the length and scheduling of program services to better meet the needs of families, and upgrading of facilities and materials.
- Parents in four programs suggested increasing the number of ESL classes or instructors to serve parents with differing levels of English proficiency.
Chapter 5: Implementation of the Family Literacy Support Network

In August of 2002, First 5 LA awarded a three-year grant of just under $4 million to a collaborative effort of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to form the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN). Initially, independent proposals were submitted by both organizations, with each organization proposing its own team and its own plan to conduct the work of the FLSN. After reviewing these original proposals and determining that each had unique merits and complementary strengths, First 5 LA encouraged the two organizations to submit a joint proposal. In addition, First 5 LA raised the award amount to $3.97 million and asked that the scope of the proposed FLSN activities be extended to provide assistance to non-grantees as well. The contract to the LACOE Division for School Improvement was approved in September, and the FLSN was formed.

In Year 1 of the Initiative (from June 2002 through May 2003), the FLSN spent 18 percent of their three-year budget on a variety of start-up activities, including putting staff in place and building an infrastructure across multiple organizations; providing services to grantees; and performing activities related to outreach, advocacy, and sustainability. This chapter describes the basic structure, goals, and activities of the FLSN; some of the implementation issues confronted by FLSN staff during the first year of operation; and grantees’ preliminary perceptions of the FLSN.

Structure of the FLSN

When the two organizations came together to undertake the work of the FLSN, they brought with them the subcontractors that had been proposed in their individual submissions. Therefore, the FLSN includes the contributions of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), Appel & Associates, and Perry & Associates.

Staff from LACOE and LAUSD comprised the core of the FLSN in Year 1, with Liz Guerra, Senior Project Director, managing the FLSN by providing leadership, overseeing the budget, submitting reports to First 5 LA and LACOE, and coordinating the activities of the staff and all of the partners. Ms. Guerra also oversaw the work of three consultant/facilitators who worked closely with individual grantees, guiding them through the First 5 LA requirements, answering questions, providing support, and identifying resources to facilitate the successful implementation of the grantees’ programs. Two of the facilitators—Judy Carey and Faith Bade—were responsible for the majority of the grantees (six each). Judy Sanchez (who stepped in toward the end of the first year when one of the original facilitators left for maternity leave) took responsibility for working with two grantees, and Ms. Guerra also worked with one grantee. Ms. Sanchez also had some responsibility in Year 1 for outreach to other family literacy programs.

---

4 The FLSN received their contract from First 5 LA in August of 2002, so this figure does not represent a full year of expenditures.
programs in the county and for developing strategies for ensuring long-term sustainability of the FLSN.

Eloise Appel, of Appel & Associates, was the internal evaluator for the FLSN and a liaison between the FLSN and AIR, though her responsibilities in Year 1 also involved helping to develop the FLSN infrastructure. Dr. Appel provided training for the consultant/facilitators and assisted in developing a system for providing technical assistance to the grantees. This involved working directly with grantee staff to develop their performance plans and supporting grantee data collection activities required by First 5 LA. She also worked with the developers of the online data collection systems to ensure that accurate grantee data, as well as information about the FLSN’s activities, can be reported to First 5 LA.

Michele Perry, of Perry & Associates, was the grantee advisor and provided guidance to grantees on developing and implementing performance plans and supported grantees in their efforts to reach exemplary program status. Her responsibilities included regular site visits to grantee programs and documentation of grantee progress toward their self-identified goals.

Bonnie Lash Freeman and Kathy Zandona, of NCFL, provided content expertise in the area of family literacy and assistance in developing the FLSN infrastructure. They were responsible for providing training and materials to FLSN and grantee staff and will continue to work on developing a needs assessment tool for grantees.

These individuals, together with other senior staff at LACOE (Carol Bakken and Henry Mothner) and LAUSD (Dolores Diaz-Carrey), comprised the FLSN’s leadership team. The leadership team met in person every other month and by conference call in alternate months to guide the work of the FLSN. Leadership team meetings generally included representation from grantee programs and First 5 LA as well.

**Goals and Activities of the FLSN**

The purpose of the FLSN, as stated in the original Request for Qualifications (RFQ), was to provide “training and technical assistance for the Commission’s family literacy grantees throughout Los Angeles County, in order to strengthen their organizational capacity and ability to deliver quality family literacy services.” This was expanded by First 5 LA to include the following four primary areas of focus:

- technical assistance and training,
- outreach,
- advocacy, and
- sustainability.

This section describes each of these service areas, outlining the goals for each and the Year 1 activities intended to support those goals, as reported in FLSN quarterly reports and interviews with FLSN staff.
Technical Assistance and Training
The first focus of the FLSN was to improve the quality of family literacy programs in Los Angeles County by supporting the development of the 15 grantees into model or “exemplary” family literacy programs. To accomplish this, FLSN staff worked to: 1) increase the ability of grantee staff to develop performance plans for purposes of continuous quality improvement and program evaluation, 2) assist grantees with data management and analysis, 3) improve communication among grantees to share best practices, and 4) establish the characteristics of exemplary programs. In their first year, FLSN staff took steps in each of these areas.

Developing Performance Plans and Addressing Grantee Needs
The wide variation in grantee programs (described in Chapter 3) resulted in a similar variation in grantee needs. FLSN staff used a number of strategies to address these needs, with an emphasis in the first year on addressing the common needs across grantees. The greatest need, according to FLSN staff, was in the area of data collection and use of data for purposes of quality improvement and sustainability. A second need identified by the FLSN was improving the quality, intensity, and integration of the four program components. Another need identified by the FLSN was in the area of recruitment and retention. However, one FLSN team member noted that “the major needs of each grantee up to this point differ”.

Through training and technical assistance, the FLSN helped grantee staff develop performance plans for their programs in which they identified their own needs, set objectives within each of the four family literacy component areas, and identified resources and supports needed. Performance plans were described by FLSN staff as “living documents” that provide a snapshot of grantee status and then evolve as progress is made and needs change. “We need to know where we are and where we’re going,” explained one FLSN team member.

Over time, needs identified in grantee performance plans were (and will continue to be) augmented with needs identified by FLSN staff through site visit observations, documented in extensive field notes. Once the performance plans were developed, the grantee advisor began working with grantees to create action plans, which, according to FLSN staff, consisted of “a prescription for how to address the needs stated in their performance plans.” This process was in the early stages in Year 1, however. “An important next step is to put it all together,” explained one FLSN staff member.

Monthly on-site meetings with grantees, including time spent observing program components, were intended to provide the grantee advisor and consultant/facilitators with information about grantees’ progress toward their goals. FLSN staff worked with grantee staff to move them forward. According to one FLSN team member, these meetings might have involved questions such as “Have you hired an ESL teacher to replace the one you lost?” and “Have you increased intensity in parenting? …What’s stopping you, and what can we do to facilitate this?” FLSN staff helped grantees strategize and identify additional resources when necessary. The grantee advisor was always accompanied at site meetings by the consultant/facilitator, who was responsible for follow-up after the
meetings. At the end of Year 1, a regular monthly routine had not yet been established, and meetings occurred with somewhat less frequency. And, as one FLSN team member explained, meetings primarily focused on “getting to know the grantees, helping them to meet First 5 deliverables [and] set up data collection systems.”

In Year 1, the FLSN also began to form study groups around key questions that grantee staff identified in their performance plans as areas for further investigation, and held one meeting to get these discussions started (the “Learning Luau”).

**Grantee Data Management and Analysis**

Much of the work of the FLSN over the past year focused on supporting grantees in establishing their data collection systems. This received considerable attention because it was identified by FLSN staff as the greatest need among grantees and in the field of family literacy more broadly, and because grantees needed to fulfill a series of data collection requirements for First 5 LA, including data required for the Initiative-wide evaluation. FLSN staff provided training on the data collection tools that grantees were required to use, including the California Even Start Performance Information Reporting System (CA-ESPIRS), the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) and the Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP).

In addition to providing training on these tools, FLSN staff worked on the development of data collection tools. They developed an Excel database in which grantee staff could record monthly attendance rates for all of their participating families. Training on the use of this database was also provided to grantee staff. FLSN staff also worked with AIR and First 5 LA staff to develop and pilot test the participant profile form, which collects intake data about participating children and adults that are critical for the Initiative-wide evaluation.

Through training and technical assistance provided directly to the 15 grantees, FLSN staff helped the grantees navigate their way through the First 5 LA requirements and improve their data management strategies for meeting ongoing reporting needs and support program improvements and sustainability.

**Facilitating Communication Among Grantees**

The FLSN hosted a number of Initiative-wide events to which staff from all grantees were invited in order to facilitate communication among grantees. By gathering all grantees together, program staff had the opportunity to share their experiences—their challenges as well as the strategies they used to overcome those challenges—and make connections with other family literacy service providers throughout the county. Program directors were often encouraged to bring one or two of their staff members to these meetings, which extended the networking opportunity beyond the level of the program directors. As will be discussed in the section on grantee perceptions, grantee staff expressed their appreciation of these occasions and requested more opportunities to learn from and share with each other.
In addition, the FLSN sponsored one networking meeting, specifically designed to enable grantees to share ideas. At this meeting, grantee staff prepared poster presentations for the National Conference on Family Literacy. The FLSN also hosted three regional meetings at grantee sites to accommodate program schedules, and additional networking meetings were planned for Year 2.

**Establishing Characteristics of Exemplary Programs**

FLSN staff also began to tackle the fourth component of the technical assistance and training focus: establishing the characteristics of exemplary programs. The FLSN leadership team, together with First 5 LA staff, began to explore the qualities of exemplary programs, and once these are established, FLSN staff can begin to provide guidance to the grantees to help them incorporate these qualities.

**Outreach**

The second major focus of the FLSN was to expand the number of four-component family literacy programs throughout LA County. Encompassed within this long-term goal were several shorter-term goals: 1) expanding awareness of family literacy and its benefits, 2) identifying processes and tools for developing two- or three-component family literacy programs into four-component programs, and 3) improving the quantity and quality of family literacy information disseminated to all practitioners and new providers.

In order to accomplish this goal, the FLSN engaged in a number of outreach activities in LA County and throughout the state. For example, the FLSN developed a relationship with the California Department of Education (CDE) and provided trainings to Even Start grant applicants statewide. Ten programs in LA County received Even Start funding after submitting the proposals on which FLSN staff offered guidance, and this success may lead to expanded work for the Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center, a collaborator of the FLSN. This relationship with CDE also enabled the FLSN to promote and facilitate the certification of nine individuals throughout the state as Foundations in Family Literacy trainers discussed under the section on sustainability below.

The FLSN also invited grantee staff to attend outreach activities at the National Conference on Family Literacy (sponsored by NCFL and the CDE) and coordinated poster presentations by several grantee staff as well as FLSN staff. The FLSN hosted a reception and gave an oral presentation with First 5 LA about the Family Literacy Initiative at the conference.

According to FLSN staff, approximately 120 contacts were made with non-grantee agencies and organizations—school districts as well as CBOs. FLSN staff also met with Reading Excellence Act staff to discuss outreach strategies, collaborated with Head Start Staff to organize a literacy fair, attended the National Title I Conference, and presented at the LAUSD adult education fall conference. FLSN staff served on the California National Even Start Association Board, and joined the LA City Child Literacy Collaborative and the First 5 LA Universal Pre-K Committee. The FLSN also plans to work with libraries, faith-based programs, and a teen parents program.
Another outreach goal was to communicate a clear definition of family literacy (i.e., comprehensive four-component programs), since people have different ideas about what comprises family literacy. “We want everyone to think of the same thing when they hear family literacy,” explained one FLSN team member. To facilitate a shared understanding, FLSN staff began to develop a family literacy awareness training module.

**Advocacy**

The third major focus of the FLSN was to advocate for program enhancement, replication, and sustainability. In the short-term this included 1) assisting grantees with grant writing efforts, 2) enhancing linkages with local education agencies, 3) increasing coordination and collaboration with regional and state organizations, 4) increasing awareness of family literacy and its benefits among policy makers, and 5) enhancing the family literacy research base.

Examples of FLSN advocacy activities in Year 1 included offering training sessions on advocacy and how to work with policymakers, meeting with Lucia Mar Unified School District to discuss replicating the Initiative, and arranging for two grantee site visits by participants at the National Conference on Family Literacy. FLSN plans in this service area for the future include working with school readiness and universal preschool advocates, as well as policy makers, to incorporate family literacy into those movements.

**Sustainability**

The fourth major focus of the FLSN was to develop its own infrastructure so that it could sustain its services to programs serving families with children birth to five. Short-term steps to accomplishing this goal included: 1) establishing a leadership team to guide and support FLSN activities, 2) establishing an FLSN Board, 3) developing a cadre of local, certified family literacy trainers, 4) supporting the evaluation contractor, and 5) seeking additional sources of support to sustain the FLSN and its services beyond the First 5 LA three-year funding period.

As might be expected during the first year of any new organization, the FLSN invested substantial time in Year 1 to developing its infrastructure. New staff were hired, weekly staff meetings and ongoing meetings with the internal evaluation staff were scheduled, roles were defined for the FLSN’s collaborating agencies, and policies and procedures were established. To guide their efforts, FLSN staff put together a leadership team (as described under Structure of the FLSN) and met with NCFL president Sharon Darling to discuss plans for establishing the FLSN Board and determining its role.

FLSN staff attended LACOE professional development sessions, and two facilitators obtained NCFL Trainers certification to move toward the goal of developing a cadre of local, certified family literacy trainers. This was a major investment for the FLSN, as training required one week each month of the facilitators’ time, limiting their ability to provide direct service to grantees. However, having internal trainers would enable the FLSN to provide the Foundations of Family Literacy training to grantee and non-grantee staff locally (so programs would not have to send staff to Kentucky where the majority of
trainings had been held in the past). In addition, the NCFL training was provided to seven other individuals outside of the FLSN staff, increasing capacity throughout the state. Prior to this training, there was only one certified trainer in California.

Another step toward meeting the sustainability goal involved supporting the Initiative-wide evaluation, and FLSN staff did so in a number of important ways. In particular, FLSN staff facilitated the exchange of information between the evaluation team and the grantees, hosting informational meetings for grantee staff and alerting the AIR/UCLA team to potential issues and concerns that grantee staff might have had regarding the evaluation. FLSN staff have also provided ideas and suggestions to the evaluation team to facilitate our interactions with grantee staff, and have invited us to attend FLSN meetings and events to support our understanding of the work of the FLSN.

In addition to supporting the external evaluation, the FLSN also planned to carry out its own internal evaluation. At the end of Year 1, FLSN staff were in the process of refining their scope of work, identifying key evaluation questions and outcomes, and developing an evaluation strategy to aid in ongoing self-assessment and improvement of service delivery.

Ultimately, the FLSN hopes to grow into a California-wide family literacy institute, broadening its scope to encompass the entire state. One strength of being at LACOE is that the FLSN is in the same division as the Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center that already provides technical assistance to Title I schools and High Priority schools, and is working with CDE on a contract basis to provide support to Even Start programs statewide. Staff at the FLSN and the Center started to coordinate and collaborate to increase outreach, awareness, and support in Year 1. In addition, FLSN staff began developing products to market their services in the future.

Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Goals and Activities

- The primary focus of activities in Year 1 was on grantee training and technical assistance, with particular attention given to supporting grantees in developing their performance plans.
- Addressing a primary need of the grantees (as identified by the FLSN during Year 1) the FLSN developed and provided training on data collection tools that grantees need to use to meet the requirements of First 5 LA and support program improvement.
- FLSN staff did some work in the area of outreach, including organizing a poster presentation and a reception at the National Family Literacy Conference sponsored by NCFL and the CDE, and reaching out to potential collaborators at the local, state, and national levels.
- Much of the FLSN’s staff time and effort in Year 1 was devoted to establishing its infrastructure, defining the roles of staff and collaborators, and providing staff development experiences for the FLSN team—laying the foundation for sustainable service delivery.
Implementation Issues and Challenges of the First Year

As noted above, the FLSN is a completely new organization, and one would expect the first year to be full of challenges. FLSN staff faced a number of start-up issues in Year 1 as well as issues that influenced decisions about contacts with grantees. The issues discussed in this section emerged from discussions with FLSN and First 5 LA staff in response to questions about implementation challenges faced in Year 1 and from discussions in meetings with FLSN staff and collaborators.

Start-Up Issues and Challenges

Launching the FLSN and implementing first-year activities to address its four major areas of focus (training and technical assistance, outreach, advocacy, and sustainability) was an ambitious undertaking. Staff at the FLSN overcame a number of issues during the first phase of the FLSN’s development.

Getting off to a Late Start

During interviews with FLSN staff, the most frequently cited challenge encountered during Year 1 was the delayed start of their contract. The FLSN was not able to get off the ground until three months after the grantees had been funded. By the time they got started, they were already behind schedule. “Starting up late was a challenge,” explained one staff member. “The minute they let the horses out of the gate, we had to get started working on deliverables. So we had to backtrack to get to know the grantees, find out where they were before the Initiative, etcetera.”

Unlike the grantees, who each already had a program with staff and procedures to which First 5 LA funds were to be added, the FLSN was a newly formed entity. Staff had to be hired, roles had to be defined, and the entire infrastructure had to be put in place. Moreover, this new organization was actually the collaboration between two large bureaucracies, which brings strengths as well as challenges. In addition, each agency in the collaboration had its own personnel policies and reporting requirements that did not match the expectations of First 5 LA. Although the hiring issues were resolved, it became clear that starting a new organization within a very large pre-existing agency was not an easy task.

The Senior Project Director came on board on September 13th, two consultant/facilitators were hired, and staff and collaborators began to work on defining their roles. Later in the year, though, when the FLSN team was ready to augment its staff, LACOE had a hiring freeze, delaying the hiring of an administrative analyst and a third consultant/facilitator. Eventually these positions were filled, although one of the original facilitators left for maternity leave, causing a need to restructure the facilitator assignments. By the end of Year 1, the team had stabilized somewhat and roles for each team member had emerged.

Defining the Role of the FLSN and Coordinating with First 5 LA

The process of defining the role of the FLSN and negotiating its scope of work required ongoing conversations with First 5 LA. First 5 LA staff needed to be clear about their definitions of terms like “technical assistance,” “training,” and “evaluation,” which were
at risk of being interpreted differently by FLSN staff. Making explicit their assumptions and expectations was necessary for everyone to come to agreement about the role of the FLSN.

In the first year, FLSN staff relied heavily on the support and guidance of First 5 LA staff, especially Angel Roberson, the grantee and FLSN Program Officer. In the beginning, Ms. Roberson helped FLSN staff define their goals and make decisions at every step of the way, with almost daily phone calls. Communication became less frequent when First 5 LA restructured, leaving First 5 LA staff with less available time, and as FLSN staff established their own infrastructure. FLSN staff still required timely input from First 5 LA throughout the year, though. For example, all of the grantee deliverables were submitted directly to First 5 LA for review and eventual distribution to FLSN staff to be used to inform their work. This indirect line to the FLSN delayed their receipt of grantee deliverables, which are key sources of information for their work with the grantees.

In addition to coordinating with First 5 LA and the grantees, FLSN staff also coordinated with the third prong of the Family Literacy Initiative—the external evaluator. Initially, there was some confusion about how the role of the evaluator was different from the data collection and internal evaluation responsibilities of the FLSN. The FLSN worked to clarify those distinctions and coordinate with the evaluation team whenever possible.

Issues Around Providing and Documenting Services to Grantees

In addition to facing these start-up issues, providing and documenting services to grantees offered its own set of implementation issues.

Balancing the Service Needs of Grantees with Other External Pressures

The initial contract delays experienced by the FLSN and the time spent building infrastructure meant that FLSN staff were not able to provide direct services to the grantees immediately. Direct service began in the third month of FLSN operation. Balancing the needs of some of the newer family literacy grantees with the need to have clear processes, lines of communication, and organizational structures was difficult, and FLSN experienced this tension. Another concern expressed by both FLSN and First 5 LA staff that may have limited grantee contact with the FLSN in Year 1 was the risk of overwhelming the grantees with too many site visits. In addition to FLSN visits, the grantees were also contending with visits from First 5 LA, the Initiative evaluation staff, and other local funders and collaborators. Building trusting relationships with the grantees was a priority, and fewer or less frequent visits to grantee sites than FLSN staff may have desired might have been the price to pay for developing these relationships.

As noted earlier, FLSN staff have had to spend time getting to know the grantees and their needs before providing training and support tailored to the individual needs of the grantees. Some steps were taken by FLSN staff toward identifying needs, but formal needs assessments per se were not used. NCFL began developing a needs assessment tool for the FLSN to use with the grantees, however, as a next step. In the meantime, much of the training grantees received was designed to meet global needs, and all grantees—new
and veteran programs alike—received the same trainings. Some individualization occurred though, especially in helping grantees to complete deliverables and meet First 5 LA requirements.

Some of the work that the grantee advisor did, in particular, was intended to identify needs and tailor services to meet those needs. As noted earlier, though, these on-site meetings involving grantee staff, the grantee advisor, and the consultant facilitator did not occur on a regular (i.e., monthly) basis during Year 1.

**Documenting FLSN Activities**

FLSN staff also stated that documenting their activities during Year 1 was challenging at times, since they did not have an electronic system in place for recording their activities and interactions with grantees (the online system to be developed by another First 5 LA contractor was not available in Year 1). As a result, FLSN staff relied primarily on paper documentation organized in various files and reports, which made writing quarterly reports difficult, according to FLSN staff, since “the information is everywhere.”

Given the challenges that the FLSN staff faced in documenting their work, it was also difficult to accurately depict the level of service that was provided to the grantees in this report. When the online system becomes available, it is anticipated that it will serve as a tool for documenting Initiative-wide training sessions, as well as individual contacts with grantees. This will serve the monitoring needs of the FLSN as well as the needs of the evaluation.

**Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Implementation Issues**

- The greatest challenge faced by the FLSN in Year 1 was recovering from the delayed start of its contract, which came three months after the grantees had received their grants, leaving FLSN staff feeling behind schedule.

- The first year of the FLSN involved frequent communication with First 5 LA, defining expectations and assumptions about the role of the FLSN.

- Due to the delayed start and initial needs to build infrastructure and get to know the grantees, the FLSN staff reported having less time available for individualized needs assessment and direct and tailored services to the grantees. They focused instead on working with grantees in group or regional settings to set up assessment and data collection systems.

- The absence of an electronic tracking system meant that documenting the activities of the FLSN and its contacts with grantees has been more difficult.

**Grantee Perceptions of the FLSN**

While conducting site visits to grantee programs in May of 2003, AIR field staff asked grantee staff to comment on their understanding of the role of the FLSN and their experiences with the FLSN to date. Although it was early in their experiences with the FLSN—seven or eight months at most—grantee staff had begun to form very positive impressions.
Clarity of the Role of the FLSN

We first asked grantee program directors and executive directors about their understanding of the role of the FLSN. Although not all interviews addressed these questions, all eight of the program directors who were asked stated that the role of the Family Literacy Support Network had been made clear to them. Several perceived the role of FLSN to be to provide support, training, and technical assistance. One program director said, “They’re the support system. They are conveyors of information.”

Interviewees from the staff at three of the grantee sites stated that FLSN staff were able to answer questions for them about program implementation, First 5 LA requirements, and the Initiative-wide evaluation. Three respondents mentioned that FLSN served as a mediator between First 5 LA and the grantees. One program director said, “They are liaisons between First 5 and us. They give technical support and help with all the requirements, like paperwork and reports.” All seven executive directors who were asked this question also reported that they had some understanding of the role of the FLSN, although two indicated that they had limited contact with the FLSN, and one reported some lingering questions.

Program staff—teachers of each of the four components—were also asked about their experiences with the FLSN. Staff at six of the 11 programs where this question was asked had some familiarity with the FLSN or with the consultant/facilitator assigned to their program. Staff at one grantee site described attending trainings that sounded as if they were probably sponsored by the FLSN, but those staff did not make the connection. This is not surprising, given the limited interactions that FLSN staff had with program teachers as of our interviews in May of 2003. FLSN staff had more contact with program staff over the summer, and we might expect them to be more familiar with the role of the FLSN when we survey them in the spring of 2004.

Reactions to FLSN Activities

Overall, grantee program directors appreciated the services and resources provided by the FLSN and spoke positively of their experiences with FLSN staff. One program director stated that, “[FLSN staff] are extremely helpful, and are only a phone call away. Doing the performance plans has helped me to grow, and the Network has helped with that.”

For many of those interviewed during grantee site visits, the most salient interactions with the FLSN were trainings for their staff, and, in a few cases, one-on-one technical assistance. One program director commented on how much she appreciated local family literacy training, as staff formerly had to go to Kentucky for such training. Another commented on the helpfulness of having FLSN staff visit the program and make recommendations based on their observations. A program director at a third site described the FLSN as “magnificent,” “working hand-in-hand” with program staff.

Most grantee staff interviewees did not make explicit suggestions for improvement of the services provided by the FLSN; however, a few ideas emerged during our visits. For example, several commented that trainings for staff would be easier to attend if they were offered in more locations or at the grantee site itself, and would be more beneficial if they were tailored to individual grantee needs. Two program directors also mentioned that
increased opportunities for grantees to interact with each other—so that veteran programs
could share their expertise and newer programs could gather ideas—would be
appreciated.

**Summary: Emerging Themes Related to Grantee Perceptions of the FLSN**

- Program directors—who had most contact with FLSN staff in Year 1—reported
  having a clear understanding of the role of the FLSN: to provide training and
  support.
- Program directors were appreciative of FLSN services and were overwhelmingly
  positive in their assessments of their support.
- A few grantees expressed interest in more (and more convenient) support, and
  having that support more closely aligned to their individual needs.
Chapter 6: Summary and Next Steps

The first year of the evaluation focused on learning about the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative—its 15 family literacy program grantees and the Family Literacy Support Network—and exploring the early phases of implementation. Through reviews of grantee and FLSN documents and data submitted to First 5 LA; site visits to all 15 grantees; and interviews and meeting with grantees, the FLSN, and First 5 LA; we collected a body of information reflecting the first year of the Initiative’s implementation. This report describes our first year’s activities and summarizes some of the themes that emerged from analysis of the data we collected. This chapter summarizes these emerging themes and describes plans for the second year of the evaluation.

Emerging Themes from Year 1

Data collection and analysis activities were driven by the theory of change presented in Chapter 1 and the evaluation questions outlined by First 5 LA. Although we presented findings in Chapters 2 through 4 organized by agent (grantees, families, and the FLSN), this chapter summarizes emerging themes as they relate to the First 5 LA evaluation questions. In Year 1, our major focus was on addressing the process evaluation questions, so most of the emerging themes we report are within this category. Some of the outcome and policy/research questions will be addressed in Years 2, 3, and 4, and are therefore not discussed here.

Process Themes

A number of themes emerged that address process questions 1 through 4, described below.

Process Question #1: What is the range of program and participant characteristics?

Program and participant characteristics are described in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. The following section highlights emerging themes from these chapters.

Grantee Program Characteristics

We observed tremendous variability from grantee to grantee, in terms of lead agencies, locations, years of experience, and many other characteristics. The grantees were divided fairly equally between those with district lead agencies and those affiliated with community-based organizations (CBOs) and were distributed throughout LA County service planning areas (SPAs), covering all SPAs except 1 and 5. Grantees had been providing family literacy services to families from two to 11 years, though not all had included four fully-formed components (i.e., early childhood education, adult education, parenting education, and intergenerational activities) for this long.

Programs varied in terms of the specific goals that they emphasized, though common goals included promoting children’s learning and helping them become ready for school; helping parents see that they are their child’s first and most important teacher—their
child’s advocate and partner in learning; and improving adult literacy—particularly English language skills.

Program services varied across grantees, though each offered some level of service classified in each of the four family literacy components. ECE services were provided to support preschoolers, and, in some cases, infants and toddlers, in their cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development. PACT time was a relatively new component for some grantees and appeared to be the most variable across grantees. Parenting education activities ranged from staff debriefing with parents about PACT time to classes that provide information topics such as discipline, communication, and the importance of parent-child interactive play. All grantee programs provided ESL instruction for parents, five also offered ABE classes and five offered GED classes. In addition to the four components, most grantees offered supplementary family support services to family literacy participants, such as mental health services or nutrition workshops.

Programs also varied in the extent to which they integrated all four components of their family literacy programs into a complete service package. At the most basic level, most grantee programs were able to offer all four components at the same location. Staff at approximately half of the programs indicated that they used common curricular themes or topics as a way of integrating the four components. Though common planning time for staff took place at a few grantee sites, staff from many of the programs reported that they would like to do more shared planning across program components. For grantees that were not able to schedule joint planning time, program directors often served as the conduit through which information was shared with component staff. The use of written newsletters was also identified by three grantees as a strategy for communicating across program components. Adult education was the least likely component to be integrated.

Program settings and staffing structures also varied across grantees. Nine programs were located on elementary or adult school campuses; the other six offered services out of church facilities, private buildings, and community centers. Staff roles, background, and qualifications varied across grantees and components, with the greatest variation observed among parenting education and PACT time leaders. On-going staff development opportunities—many of which were provided by the FLSN—were made available to staff in most programs.

Grantees often relied on a number of partnerships with other agencies and organizations to deliver services to their families. Common partnerships for grantee programs include collaborations with adult schools, CBET programs, Head Start, and Even Start programs.

Recruitment was not identified by program staff as a major obstacle to program implementation, and six programs had waiting lists. For those programs that needed to seek out new families to bring into their programs, recruiting through word-of-mouth was the most commonly cited strategy.
Family Characteristics

The 15 grantees served a wide variety of families, though most were from communities with high poverty and large numbers of English language learners. Most programs serve predominantly low-income families from Hispanic or Latino backgrounds, the majority of whom were non-native speakers of English. In addition, given traditional gender roles and the intensive time requirements for the programs, mothers—many of whom were not employed outside of the home—were more likely to participate than fathers. Children ranged in age from infants to age five, but most were preschool-aged children.

Overwhelmingly, parents stated that their primary goal for their own participation in family literacy programs was to learn to read, write, and speak in English. Parents explained that they wanted to learn English in order to prepare for the GED, become a U.S citizen, qualify for a good job with benefits, be involved in their communities, and/or go to college. Parents also said they wanted to learn how to better care for and teach their children, spend quality time with them, and be more involved in their schooling. With respect to what they hoped their children would accomplish by participation, the majority of parents said that they wanted to ensure that their children were prepared for school.

Challenges associated with attending family literacy services include lack of transportation, lack of child care for particular ages of children not served by the program, employment commitments, and family obligations.

Process Question #2: What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the programs? What characteristics and strategies facilitate implementation? What are the barriers to successful implementation?

Grantees made great strides in Year 1, providing much-needed services to numerous families in their family literacy programs. A number of factors were identified by grantees as major contributors to their successes. For some programs, working with a school district, or other collaborators, was described by staff as key to the successful implementation of their family literacy program. For many, First 5 LA funds enabled them to fill a gap in their program’s services or address an important community need. Other program staff felt that their program’s strengths lied in the convenience of having all of the components in one location, and in the strong sense of community shared by families and staff. The majority of programs identified the hard work and dedication of their staff as their greatest strength.

In the course of implementing their four-component family literacy programs and fulfilling the requirements associated with First 5 LA funding, grantees encountered a variety of challenges that made full implementation of their programs more difficult. These challenges involved meeting the multiple and complex needs among the families programs served, meeting the reporting needs of funders, coordinating with partners and collaborators, and allocating their limited resources.

One of the most frequently cited challenges to implementation was obtaining adequate and affordable program space—reported by nine grantees. Although their issues were somewhat different, district- and CBO-based grantees both reported experiencing
challenges regarding program space. Many programs counted their staff as one of their greatest assets, though ten of the fifteen programs reported experiencing challenges related to hiring and retaining adequate staff, and integrating new staff into existing programs.

Most grantees reported that integrating the adult education component was the most difficult aspect of providing a fully-integrated family literacy program. Partnering with adult schools that had their own curriculum and numerous non-family literacy program participants contributed to this challenge. Seven grantees noted that although collaborations often allowed programs to offer more comprehensive services to families, communication and coordination across multiple organizations made collaborating with external agencies challenging.

Recruiting new families was not widely identified as a challenge; more grantee programs struggled with retaining program participants than with recruiting them, although these two issues are clearly related. Programs reported that families tended to view the time commitment required for participation as a barrier to enrolling and remaining in their programs. This may also have affected attendance rates among participants, although some parents in focus groups suggested they would like longer sessions for some of the program components.

In addition to these challenges reported by program staff, parents’ made suggestions for program improvement, including altering the length and scheduling of program services to better meet the needs of families, upgrading facilities and materials, and increasing the number of ESL classes or instructors to serve parents with differing levels of English proficiency.

While grantees faced a number of challenges, program staff were creative and persistent in responding to those challenges. In many cases solutions were reached without causing delays or disruptions in program implementation. Flexibility on behalf of the programs and staff proved to be effective for overcoming the barriers they faced.

**Process Question #3: What is the range of activities in which the FLSN has engaged?**

The purpose of the FLSN, as stated in the original Request for Qualifications (RFQ), is to provide “training and technical assistance for the Commission’s family literacy grantees throughout Los Angeles County, in order to strengthen their organizational capacity and ability to deliver quality family literacy services.” This was expanded by First 5 LA to include the following four primary areas of focus: technical assistance and training, outreach, advocacy, and sustainability.

The primary focus of activities in Year 1 was on training and technical assistance, with particular attention given to supporting grantees to develop their performance plans. The FLSN provided other opportunities for training and technical assistance as well. For example, addressing a primary need of the grantees, as identified by the FLSN, the FLSN developed and provided training on data collection tools that grantees need to use to meet the requirements of First 5 LA.
FLSN staff did some work in the area of outreach, including organizing a poster presentation and reception at the National Family Literacy Conference sponsored by NCFL and the CDE and reaching out to potential collaborators at the local, state, and national levels. Activity in the area of advocacy in Year 1 was limited, but this may become a greater focus in Years 2 and 3. Much of the FLSN’s staff time and efforts in Year 1 was devoted to establishing the FLSN infrastructure, defining the roles of staff and collaborators, and providing staff development experiences for the FLSN team—laying the foundation for sustainable service delivery.

**Process Question #4: What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the FLSN?**

In one short year, FLSN staff had many accomplishments. For example, they developed a cross-agency staff and an infrastructure to guide their work throughout the next two years of their grant and beyond. They developed relationships with 15 grantees and provided training and support to them throughout the year. All 15 grantees submitted performance plans, planning phase reports, and year-end reports under the guidance of the FLSN. They supported the training of nine individuals (two from the FLSN staff) to become certified family literacy trainers, increasing the number of certified trainers statewide from one to ten.

As with any new organization, the first year was not without its challenges. A variety of issues emerged from discussions with FLSN and First 5 LA staff in response to questions about implementation challenges faced in Year 1 and from discussions in meetings with FLSN staff and collaborators. The greatest challenge faced by FLSN staff in Year 1 was recovering from the delayed start of their contract, which came three months after the grantees received their grants. In addition, the first year of the FLSN involved frequent communication with First 5 LA, defining expectations and assumptions about the role of the FLSN.

Due to the delayed start-up and the initial need to build an infrastructure and get to know grantees, FLSN staff had less time available for individualized needs assessment and direct and tailored services to the grantees. Although FLSN staff were reluctant to overwhelm the grantees with too many site visits during the first year, a few grantees expressed interest in more (and more convenient) support that was more closely aligned to their individual needs.

In addition, the absence of an electronic tracking system meant that documenting the activities of the FLSN and their contacts with grantees has been more difficult. It is expected that the new online system will be up and running in Year 2, however, which will improve the FLSN’s ability to document their work and use the data to improve their service delivery.
Outcome Themes
Although most of the data needed to answer the outcome evaluation questions will not begin to be available until Year 2, qualitative data from program staff and parents were used to explore perceived initial impacts.

Outcome Question #1: What impact are the expansion and enhancement grants having on children prenatal to age five and their families in the context of other services provided in the county?

During the first year of their First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative grants, the 15 grantees served numerous families through their programs. Data from focus groups with parents participating in grantee programs suggested a number of areas where participation in the programs positively affected the lives of parents and children. Overwhelmingly, parents reported that they benefited from their involvement in the family literacy programs. For example, the majority of parents in focus groups stated that, as a result of participating in First 5 LA family literacy programs, they learned to provide better care and learning opportunities for their children, improved their English skills, increased their self-confidence, acquired a support network, and/or spent more quality time with their children.

In addition, parents’ reports of impact on their children suggest that children were receiving a number of benefits from their participation in the family literacy programs. The majority of parents interviewed stated that since enrolling in First 5 LA family literacy programs, their children have learned skills that will prepare them for school, become more social and independent, and increased their self-esteem.

Outcome Question #2: What impact is the FLSN having on the service delivery system in the context of other system improvement and capacity strengthening activities underway throughout the county?

Although FLSN staff have not had a full year of focused activity directed at addressing the needs of the grantees, grantee perceptions of the FLSN were quite positive. On the whole, program directors—who had most contact with FLSN staff in Year 1—reported having a clear understanding of the role of the FLSN. They understood this role to be to provide training and support to the grantees. Moreover, program directors reported great appreciation of FLSN services and were overwhelmingly positive in their assessments of the support they received. Training provided to the grantees enabled them to create and implement individualized performance plans and collect the data required by First 5 LA. Over time, we will be documenting how specific FLSN services have led to concrete impacts on grantees.

Policy and Research Themes
During Year 1, we began to address one of the policy and research questions posed by First 5 LA.
Policy/Research Question #3: How are the First 5 LA grants benefiting family literacy programs?

First 5 LA funds were used by grantees to expand or enhance their family literacy programs in a variety of ways. Programs added new services such as computer or GED classes, added evening classes and activities to reach working parents, added infant and toddler classes, and upgraded facilities and materials. Many programs also added new families, expanding the number of families served overall.

Grantee staff identified a number of benefits resulting from their access to First 5 LA funds, such as the support they received from the FLSN. Others noted their appreciation of First 5 LA’s flexibility regarding the ways that funds could be used. For one program, one of the greatest benefits of First 5 LA funds was the independence it allowed them from their school district. Some grantees reported challenges with working with First 5 LA as well. In particular, staff reported that the data collection requirements and the paperwork associated with the family literacy grants were burdensome.

Next Steps: Plans for Year 2 of the Evaluation

The emerging themes from the data collected for the evaluation during Year 1 suggest further avenues for exploration in Year 2. In addition, in order to begin to address the outcome and policy/research questions that could not be answered with Year 1 data, a few new data collection activities will be introduced. For example, as we enter Year 2, we will need data from objective measures of child and adult outcomes. We also plan to explore additional family outcomes (such as increases in family stability) and the services extending beyond the four family literacy components that are intended to foster those outcomes.

Implementation issues that we plan to explore further include the nature of grantees’ many partnerships and collaborations with external agencies and organizations. Grantee expenditure data were received too late to do a full analysis, but this is an area in which we plan to focus further attention in Year 2.

In addition, now that FLSN activities are well under way and are likely having greater impacts on grantee programs, we will increase our focus on the FLSN—its implementation and effects on grantee and non-grantee programs.

This section describes the data collection activities planned for Year 2.

Process Data Collection Activities for Year 2

The evaluation team will continue to learn about grantee and FLSN activities and their implementation challenges and strategies through a variety of data collection strategies, including reviewing extant data sources, visiting program sites, observing FLSN and grantee activities, and interviewing FLSN and program staff and families.
Extant Data
To minimize burden on the Family Literacy Initiative grantees, we will continue to collect “extant data”—data submitted to First 5 LA, including updates to grantee performance plans, quarterly and/or year-end reports, attendance data, budgets and invoices. In addition to these data sources, we will also be reviewing participant profile data and data from the FLSN service log—both anticipated to be available through the online data collection system in Year 2.

Program Staff Surveys
There are some topics that are best addressed through written surveys. Since it is often easier to complete a short survey than to find time for a one-on-one interview, we will be administering surveys to program directors and program instructors this year to collect basic information on a variety of topics, including grantee activities, their participation in FLSN activities, and staffing structures. Surveys will be sent to grantees in the spring of 2004.

Grantee Site Visits
We will continue with grantee site visits in Year 2 to observe component activities and talk face-to-face with program staff and families. Similar to the site visits conducted in Year 1, ongoing site visits will include interviews and/or focus groups with program staff, observations of program activities, and focus groups or interviews with parents. In Year 2, special attention will be given to progress grantees make in program implementation and the evolution of their relationship with the FLSN. Site visits will take place in the spring of 2004 and will likely occur at all 15 grantees. To provide a more comprehensive picture of grantee programs, we may select a few sites for more in-depth site visits instead of visiting all programs.

FLSN Interviews and Activities
In Year 2, we will be collecting data on FLSN activities on a more regular basis, including conducting interviews with staff and collaborators. We will also periodically attend FLSN activities—training and technical assistance events and leadership team meetings—to better understand the nature of the services that the FLSN provides as well as their evolving strategies for service delivery.

Interviews with Other Stakeholders
We will also conduct interviews with a range of additional stakeholders. For example, we will interview First 5 LA staff periodically to collect additional information on the implementation of the Family Literacy Initiative as well as explore First 5 LA’s views on the successes and challenges of the three-part model of the Initiative. To better understand how the Family Literacy Initiative fits into the broader community context, we will also identify community informants to provide information on the context of the family service delivery system in Los Angeles County. Finally, interviews with experts in the field of family literacy will be conducted as needed throughout the four-year evaluation.
Outcome Data Collection Activities for Year 2

To assess the multiple levels of program impact, outcome measures will be used to collect data on both child and adult participants. In addition, we will also collect information from grantees and non-grantee programs about the impact of the FLSN.

Child Outcomes Study

Data collection for the child outcomes study—a focused study on the impacts of family literacy participation on children led by the Center for Improving Child Care Quality at UCLA—will begin in Year 2 and will include direct assessments of children, observation of children in their classrooms, parent interviews, and teacher surveys.

Child Assessments

We will administer assessments to a sample of children across programs using a longitudinal design to facilitate the measurement of growth over time. Parents of children in the three to five year-old age range will be given information on the study and invited to participate. Approximately 120 children will be randomly selected from among those whose parents have given consent for their child’s participation, approximately equally split between those who plan to enter kindergarten in one year (ages 4 to 5) and those who are two years away from kindergarten entry (ages 3 to 4). Approximately eight children will be drawn from each of the 15 programs.

A variety of measures assessing a broad range of children’s developmental outcomes, including receptive language, letter and number awareness, and emergent writing and literacy will be used. All are available in Spanish as well as English. Each session with individual children will take approximately 20 to 25 minutes, and assessments will occur twice in Years 2 and 3—once in the fall, and once in the spring. In Year 3, children will be followed longitudinally to the extent that they remain in the programs and/or have moved into local kindergartens. The sample may be replenished with additional preschool-aged children as necessary in Year 3 to retain the projected sample size. In Year 4, the remaining children who have entered kindergarten will be assessed.

In addition to these direct measures of child outcomes, the children will also be observed in their classrooms to assess child engagement, adult engagement, and teacher-child engagement.

Parent interviews and teacher survey

Additional information on children’s social skills and behavior will be collected through interviews with parents. Researchers will ask parents questions about their child’s behavior, family activities involving the child, and about the family’s background.

Self-administered questionnaires will also be given to the ECE teachers of each child being assessed. These surveys will collect additional information about children’s classroom behavior and academic skills as well as background information about teachers and their practices. In addition, kindergarten teachers of children who enter kindergarten
in Years 3 or 4 will be given a brief questionnaire to complete about the child’s readiness for school—a key goal of the Family Literacy Initiative.

**Extant Sources of Outcome Data**

In addition to the child outcomes study, we will also analyze child and adult outcome data collected by programs.

**Supplementary Child Outcomes**

We will use data from the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) to assess children’s progress towards achieving the four desired results for children (children are personally and socially competent, children are effective learners, children show physical and motor competence, and children are safe and healthy).

**Adult Education Outcomes**

Adult education outcomes will primarily be assessed using data from the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) reading assessment acquired through the grantee online data collection system. This system will also include data on behavioral indicators of adult learning, such as the acquisition of a GED or employment.

**Parenting Outcomes**

We will examine information on adults’ parenting knowledge and skills through the CA-ESPIRS, accessed via the online data collection system, as well as through the parent interviews that are part of the child outcomes study and parent focus groups during site visits.

**Family Outcomes**

In addition to specific child and adult outcomes, we are also interested in examining outcomes for families. For example, family stability and access to community resources may be key factors that enable parents and children to be “ready to learn” and hence demonstrate gains on the adult and child outcome measures described above. We will explore possible approaches to collecting data on these indicators with grantees, the FLSN, and First 5 LA.

**FLSN Outcomes**

Assessing the impact of the FLSN on the grantees as well as other family literacy programs in the county also requires targeted data collection activities. Program staff surveys (discussed in the process data collection section) will incorporate questions about grantees’ experiences with the FLSN and will ask grantee staff to reflect on the ways that their participation in the event has affected their program. We will also use the FLSN service log to identify other programs in the community whose staff have attended FLSN events and will administer short surveys or conduct brief telephone interviews with a sample of these individuals, asking similar questions about perceived impacts.
Conclusion

During Year 1 of the evaluation, we have become familiar with the range of program and participant characteristics among the programs that comprise the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative. Implementation by grantees has meant a range of activities, all of which have included some degree of expansion and/or growth, new reporting requirements, and building of new relationships with the FLSN and, in some cases, other community agencies. Grantees have been bolstered by the support of the FLSN, which provided assistance and leadership for grantees in developing and implementing new program performance plans. At the same time as they were providing support to the 15 new grantees, the FLSN succeeded in creating its own infrastructure to enable ongoing delivery of its core service areas: technical assistance and training, outreach, advocacy, and sustainability.

The emerging themes described in this report represent preliminary findings from data collection activities conducted by the evaluation team, in addition to documents and reports produced by grantees and FLSN staff. As First 5 LA data systems linking all of the grantees with the FLSN are implemented over the coming months, a rich database will become available to examine in greater depth the activities and impacts of the Family Literacy Initiative. In addition, we will be augmenting local data with a focused child outcomes study, periodic site visits, surveys, and interviews. We will continue to revisit the emerging themes presented in this report in subsequent years to determine the extent to which they can be substantiated through the qualitative and quantitative data to be collected over time. In addition, as new data are collected, more fine-grained analyses will be possible, and new themes and findings will undoubtedly emerge.
References


Appendix

1. Interview protocols
2. First 5 LA Family Literacy Evaluation Brochure
3. Map of First 5 LA Family Literacy Grantee Sites
Interview Protocols
*Family Literacy – Executive Director Protocol*

Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me this morning/afternoon. Before we start, I’d like to provide a little background on our work and answer any questions you might have for me.

As you may know, I work for an independent, non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research (AIR). We have been asked by First 5 LA to evaluate the Family Literacy Initiative, which, as you know, has provided some funding to [specify site visit program] and 14 other family literacy programs in the LA area. We are exploring the ways that the Family Literacy Initiative is being implemented across programs and trying to understand how it is affecting programs and families.

I want to assure you that all information obtained today will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. We will not use your name or program name, and we will not attribute any quotes when we report our results. We also will not share what you and I discuss with other people in the program or with First 5 LA.

*General Background and program information.*

*1. Can you tell me a little about your background and your position here at [specify site visit program]? How long have you been in this position?*

*2. Tell me about your Family Literacy Program. Overall, what are the goals of this program? What are you trying to accomplish?*

Can you tell me how this program fits into the broader goals of your organization?

*3. To what extent are the four components of the Family Literacy Program integrated with each other? For example, are families getting four discrete types of services or is their involvement seen as one complete package? Please explain.*

*4. How are the First 5 funds helping the Family Literacy Program to accomplish its goals? What have the funds enabled the Family Literacy Program to do?*

*5. Do you feel this Family Literacy Program has adequate resources to accomplish its goals? For example, in terms of funding and facilities?*

*6. Does your organization receive any additional funding from First 5 LA, outside of the Family Literacy Initiative?*

*7. Tell me about your experiences with First 5 LA, in terms of applying for funding, obtaining funds, and meeting their requirements.*

*8. Do you have any recommendations for how this process might be improved?*
* Family Literacy Support Network.

*9. Would you say that the role of the Family Literacy Support Network has been made clear? What is your understanding of the role of the Network?

*10. Have you had any interaction with the Network? If so, can you tell me about your experiences with them to date? What support or services did they provide? With whom have you had most contact at the Network?

*11. Has the Network helped you or your staff to find ways to integrate the four components of the Family Literacy Program?

*12. Do you feel that you (or the program) have benefited from your interactions with the Network? In what ways?

*13. Do you have any suggestions for how the Network could be improved?

*Challenges.

*14. What are some of the biggest challenges that you face in terms of running the Family Literacy Program or integrating it with the larger organization?

*15. What have you done to overcome these challenges? What strategies have been effective? To what extent has the Network provided support in this regard?

*Program Success and Final Thoughts.

*16. Would you call the program a success? Why or why not? What are some of your achievements?

*17. In general, what are some factors that enable a Family Literacy Program in LA to become successful?

*18. What do you see for the future of your First 5 Family Literacy Program, over the next three years and beyond?

*19. What do you need in order to ensure that your program will be successful for many years to come?

*20. Are there things you would like to share anonymously with First 5 LA, the Network, or other family literacy programs or agencies interested in starting up a family literacy program?

*21. Is there anything else you would like to share that I have not asked about?
**Family Literacy – Program Director Protocol**

Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me this morning/afternoon. Before we start, I’d like to provide a little background on our work and answer any questions you might have for me.

As you probably know, I work for an independent, non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research (AIR). We have been asked by First 5 LA to evaluate the Family Literacy Initiative, which, as you know, has provided some funding to this and 14 other family literacy programs in the LA area. We are exploring the ways that the Family Literacy Initiative is being implemented across programs and trying to understand how it is affecting programs and families.

I want to assure you that all information obtained today will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. We will not use your name or program name, and we will not attribute any quotes when we report our results. We also will not share what you and I discuss with other people in the program or with First 5 LA.

*1. Can you tell me a little about your background? How did you come to be the director of this program? How long have you been here? What is your role?*

*2. How did you learn about the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative?*

*General information about the program and the use of First 5 funds.*

*3. Tell me about your First 5 Family Literacy Program. Overall, what are the goals of your program? What are you trying to accomplish?*

*4. In your performance plan, the following key activities are listed as being part of your First 5 Family Literacy Program: [insert key activities]. Is this accurate? Are any of the proposed services not being offered? [If so,] Which ones? Are any other services available to First 5 Family Literacy participants? [If so,] Would you tell me about them?*

*5. To what extent are activities in each of the four components integrated with each other? For example, are families getting four discrete types of services or is their involvement seen as one complete package? Please explain. Is there shared planning time for teachers of the different components?*

*6. Can you tell me about the program staff for each of the four components? (For example, their background and training?)*
7. Has training been offered to your staff within the last year

[If so.] Would you tell me about it?

8. How are the First 5 funds helping you to accomplish your program goals? What have the funds enabled you to do?

Can you tell me more specifically how you are using the First 5 funds?

9. Do you feel this program has adequate resources to accomplish your goals? For example, in terms of funding and facilities?

10. We will be conducting an analysis of the costs associated with running a family literacy program as part of our evaluation of the Initiative. As part of this we will be collecting information from each of the 15 grantees, including personnel rosters, FTE and salary information, and teacher qualifications. Is this information readily available to you? What would be the easiest way for you to provide this to us? Do you have a budget that specifies all of the expenditures for your family literacy program? [We do not need to collect this information now. We can follow up with more specific information later.]

11. Tell me about your experiences with First 5 LA, in terms of obtaining funds and meeting their requirements. Have you confronted any challenges in this regard? What has made this process difficult or easy?

12. Do you have any recommendations for how this process might be improved?

Participants.

13. How many of your families participate in all four components (early childhood education, parenting ed., adult ed./ESL, and parent/child interactive activities) of your First 5 Family Literacy Program?

14. Are families required to participate in a minimum number of components to be considered “part of the family literacy program?”

15. What are the requirements for families participating in your First 5 Family Literacy Program?

16. Are families expected to participate in the program for a certain number of weeks or months?

On average, do they do this?

17. How many days and hours per week are program services offered? Of these hours of services that are offered, how many hours per week are families expected to attend?
Is the average family in your program able to do this?

*18. How are data on attendance collected? Is this information entered into a database of some kind? How frequently is this information recorded? Now that you’re having to submit this information to First 5 LA, are you having to enter the data retrospectively, or did you already have a system in place for collecting attendance data?

*19. What other information do you collect about your participants (for example, demographic or test data)?

*20. Can you tell me about the families you serve? For example, in terms of economic background, ethnicity, language group, etc.

*21. What are the main challenges facing the families you serve, both in terms of their participation in the program and in general?

*22. How do families learn about your program? How do they become involved?

*Successes and challenges.

*23. What are some of the biggest challenges that you face?

*24. What have you done to overcome these challenges? What strategies have been effective?

*25. Has recruitment been a challenge for your program? Why do you think this is the case? What strategies have you used to recruit participants?

*26. Has retention been a challenge for your program? Why do you think this is the case? What strategies have you used to retain participants?

*27. Have you encountered any challenges staffing the program for all four components? Or any challenges ensuring that all staff received adequate training?

*28. Would you call the program a success? Why or why not? What are some of your achievements?

*29. In general, what are some of the factors that have enabled your family literacy program to become successful?

* Family Literacy Support Network.

*30. Would you say that the role of the Family Literacy Support Network has been made clear? What is your understanding of the role of the Network?
*31. Can you tell me about your experiences with the Network to date? Have you had any other experiences with the Network? What other supports or services have they provided? With whom have you had most contact at the Network?

*32. Have you sought out help from the Network, in terms of training, technical assistance, or something else? Tell me about this. Have Network staff been available to you when you needed them?

*33. Has the Network helped you or your staff to find ways to integrate the four components of your Family Literacy Program?

*34. Do you feel that you (or the program) have benefited from your interactions with the Network? In what ways?

*35. Do you have any suggestions for how the Network could be improved?

Program success and final thoughts.

*36. What do you see for the future of your First 5 Family Literacy Program, over the next three years and beyond?

*37. What do you need in order to ensure that your program will be successful for many years to come?

*38. Are there things you would like to share anonymously with First 5 LA, the Network, or other family literacy programs or agencies interested in starting up a family literacy program?

*39. Is there anything else you would like to share that I have not asked about?
**Family Literacy Project – Program Staff Focus Group**

Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me this morning/afternoon. Before we start, I’d like to provide a little background on our work and answer any questions you might have for me.

I work for an independent, non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research (AIR). We have been asked by First 5 LA to evaluate the Family Literacy Initiative, which has provided some funding to this and 14 other family literacy programs in the LA area. We are exploring the ways that the Family Literacy Initiative is being implemented across programs and trying to understand how it is affecting programs and families.

I want to assure you that all information obtained today will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. We will not use your name or program name, and we will not attribute any quotes when we report our results. We also will not share what you and I discuss with other people in the program or with First 5 LA.

*1. What type of classes do you teach in the First 5 LA family literacy program? Do you have any other responsibilities/roles in the program in addition to teaching? How long have you been working at this family literacy program? Are you employed full-time by the program?*

*2. Can you tell me a little bit about your background and experience in teaching?*

*3. Tell me a little bit about the students in the First 5 LA family literacy program.*

*4. What are the goals (informal or formal) of the First 5 LA family literacy program (for parents, children, and families)? What does the program do to help participants reach these goals? How do your classes fit into these overall goals? Is there anything else the program could do for participating families?*

*5. Thinking about your classes specifically, what goals do you have for your students? What do you hope they will leave your classes knowing? What strategies seem most effective? Which ones are not as effective? What types of challenges, if any, have you encountered with your students?*

*6. To what extent are activities in each of the four components integrated with each other? For example, are families getting four discrete types of services or is their involvement seen as one complete package? Please explain. Is there shared planning time for teachers of the different components?*

*7. To what extent are families able to participate in all four components of the family literacy program? What, if anything, makes it difficult for them to do this?
*8. Are you familiar with the Family Literacy Support Network? Can you tell me about your experiences with the Network? What do you see as the role of the Network? What would you say are the strengths of the Network? Areas for improvement?

*9. Have you noticed a change in the family literacy program since your site received First 5 LA funding? If yes, can you tell me a little bit about the changes? What were the positive effects of this funding and what challenges did the site encounter in implementing the changes?

*10. Overall, what are some of the things that have made it easier to run the First 5 LA family literacy program at this site? What are some of the things that have made it easier to run your classes?

*11. Overall, what barriers and challenges does the program face? What are the challenges, if any, for you as a teacher in this family literacy program?

*12. Overall, what type of effect has the program had on participants (children, parents, families), if any? Can you give me some examples? What is the biggest strength of the First 5 LA family literacy program? What areas still need improvement?

*13. Is there anything else you would like to share about the First 5 LA family literacy program or your classes that I have not asked you about?
*Family Literacy Project – Parent Focus Group*

Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me this morning/afternoon. Before we start, I’d like to provide a little background on our work and answer any questions you might have for me.

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo para hablar conmigo esta mañana/tarde. Antes de comenzar, me gustaría darles un poco de información acerca de nuestro trabajo y también me gustaría responder a cualquier pregunta que ustedes tengan para mí.

I work for an independent, non-profit research organization called the American Institutes for Research (AIR). We have been asked by First 5 LA to evaluate the Family Literacy Initiative, which has provided some funding to this and 14 other family literacy programs in the LA area. We are exploring the ways that the Family Literacy Initiative is being implemented across programs and trying to understand how it is affecting programs and families.

Yo trabajo para el American Institutes for Research, una organización independiente y sin fines de lucro que realiza estudios de investigación. First 5 LA nos ha pedido que realicemos una evaluación de la Iniciativa para la Alfabetización Familiar (Family Literacy Initiative), la cual ha proporcionado algunos fondos a este y otros 14 programas en el área de Los Ángeles. Nosotros estamos examinando la forma en que se está implementando la Iniciativa para la Alfabetización Familiar a través de todos los programas y también estamos tratando de entender el efecto que esta iniciativa está teniendo en los programas y las familias que participan en estos programas.

I want to assure you that all information obtained today will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. We will not use your name or program name, and we will not attribute any quotes when we report our results. We also will not share what you and I discuss with other people in the program or with First 5 LA.

Quiero asegurarles que toda la información obtenida este día será tratada de manera confidencial y solamente será utilizada para los propósitos de este estudio. No usaremos sus nombres ni el nombre de su programa, y no les atribuiremos ningún comentario cuando reportemos nuestros resultados. Tampoco compartiremos con otras personas en el programa o en First 5 LA lo que ustedes y yo comentemos.

If you don’t mind, I would like to record this interview simply for note-taking purposes. No one will hear the tape, outside of our research team; it would just be for my own reference. If you would like me to turn off the recorder at any point, just let me know. Would that be ok?

Si ustedes están de acuerdo, me gustaría grabar esta entrevista, más que todo para ayudarme a tomar notas. Nadie, aparte de los miembros de nuestro equipo de estudio, escuchará la grabación y esta solamente servirá para mi referencia. Si en algún
momento, alguien desea que apague la grabadora, solamente hágamelo saber. ¿Está bien que grabe nuestra conversación?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

¿Tienen alguna pregunta antes de que comencemos?

*1. How did you hear about the program? What made you decide to join? How long have you been in classes here?

¿Cómo supieron acerca de este programa? ¿Qué les hizo decidirse a participar? ¿Por cuánto tiempo han estado atendiendo clases aquí?

*2. What types of classes are you (and your family) involved in? Can you tell me a little about these classes (e.g., what you are learning, how often do you and your family attend)?

¿En qué tipo de clases están participando ustedes (y sus familias)? ¿Pueden decirme algo acerca de estas clases (por ejemplo, ¿Qué están aprendiendo? ¿Con qué frecuencia atienden el programa ustedes y sus familias?)

*3. What do you like most about each of the family literacy component activities that you and your family are involved in? Please tell us what you like most about adult ed, parenting ed, and parent and child interactive activities. And what about the early childhood classes that your children participate in? Why do you like these particular features?

¿Qué es lo que más les gusta acerca de cada uno de los componentes y actividades del programa de alfabetización familiar en que ustedes y sus familias están participando? Por favor, diganos, ¿Qué es lo que más les gusta del programa de educación para adultos, educación para los padres, y las actividades en que interactúan los padres con sus niños? ¿Qué es lo que más les gusta acerca de las clases de educación temprana en que participan sus hijos? ¿Por qué les gustan estas características en particular?

*4. What do you like least about the activities you and your family are involved in? What could be done to make the program better for you? If you could make one recommendation to the program about something that could be improved or changed, what would it be?

¿Qué es lo que menos les gusta acerca de las actividades en que están participando tanto ustedes como sus familias? ¿Qué se puede hacer para mejorar el programa para ustedes? Si ustedes pudieran dar una recomendación al programa acerca de algo que podría mejorarse o cambiarse, ¿Cuál sería su recomendación?

*5. What do you want to be able to do by the time you finish the program? What do you want your children to be able to do by the time they finish the program?
¿Qué es lo que ustedes desean poder hacer al concluir su participación en el programa? ¿Qué es lo que desean que sus niños puedan hacer al concluir su participación en el programa?

*6. How has the program benefited you? Your family? What have you learned so far from the program, if anything?

¿Cómo les ha beneficiado el programa? ¿Cómo ha beneficiado a sus familias? ¿Qué han aprendido en el programa hasta este momento?

*7. Have you used what you have learned from your parenting education classes and the parent and child interactive activities at home? Do you interact differently with your child or children as a result of what you have learned? If yes, please give some examples.

¿Han usado en sus casas lo que han aprendido en las clases de educación para padres y en las actividades interactivas con sus niños? ¿Han cambiado su forma de interactuar con sus hijos como resultado de lo que han aprendido acá? En caso positivo, por favor, denos algunos ejemplos.

*8. What changes have you seen in your children since they began participating in the program?

¿Qué cambios han notado en sus hijos desde que comenzaron su participación en el programa?

*9. Is there anything else you would like to say about this program?

¿Hay algo más que les gustaría decir acerca de este programa?
What is the purpose of the evaluation?

The main purpose of the evaluation is to examine the benefits and impacts of the Initiative on family literacy programs and their participating families. The evaluation will also address the successes and challenges of implementing the Initiative.

The results of the evaluation will be used for multiple purposes including:

- to identify effective approaches to implementation,
- to share best practices across programs and facilitate the development of other model programs, and
- to improve the three-part approach to First 5 LA initiatives.

How will results be shared?

Results of this evaluation will be shared with First 5 LA, the FLSN, family literacy programs, and other stakeholders. AIR/UCLA will distribute annual reports, including summaries of the evaluation activities and key findings of the study.

How can I get more information?

For more information about the First 5 LA Family Literacy Evaluation, please contact:

Heather Quick, Project Director
American Institutes for Research
1791 Arastradero Road
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 843-8130
hquick@air.org

For more information about the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative, please contact:

Katie Fallin, Research Analyst
First 5 LA
(213) 482-9489
kfallin@first5.org

or

Angel L. Roberson, Program Officer
First 5 LA
333 South Beaudry Avenue, Ste 2100
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 482-9387
aroberson@first5.org

For more information about the Family Literacy Support Network, please contact:

Liz Guerra, Senior Project Director
Family Literacy Support Network
Division for School Improvement
9300 Imperial Hwy. ECC 3106
Downey, CA 90242-2890
(562) 922-8781
Guerra_Liz@lacoe.edu

Los Angeles County Office of Education
What is the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative?

In 2002, First 5 LA launched a comprehensive Family Literacy Initiative that includes three components:

- 15 family literacy grantees intended to become “model” programs in LA County
- The Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) which provides training, technical assistance, and other support services to the family literacy grantees and other providers in LA County
- A four-year comprehensive evaluation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative

Who is conducting this evaluation?

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the Center for Improving Child Care Quality at UCLA have been hired by First 5 LA to conduct an independent evaluation of the Family Literacy Initiative.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is an independent, not-for-profit organization with extensive experience in research and evaluation in child development, adult literacy, and early childhood education.

The Center for Improving Child Care Quality at UCLA participates in research and evaluation partnerships with community programs and agencies in order to improve the lives of children.

How is the study being conducted?

The AIR/UCLA team will work closely with First 5 LA, the Family Literacy Support Network, and the grantees throughout the evaluation. Our goal is to conduct a rigorous and independent evaluation of the Initiative, without over-burdening grantee staff and program participants.

Whenever possible, we will rely on data already being collected by the family literacy programs. Additional evaluation activities include:

- site visits to all 15 grantees in spring 2003, with additional visits to a sample of sites in the following years;
- parent interviews, teacher surveys, and assessments of a sample of participating children;
- annual surveys of family literacy program directors; and
- interviews with First 5 LA staff, FLSN staff, and family literacy experts.

All information collected for the evaluation will be summarized and reported without identifying individual families or programs.