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Evaluation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative: Final Phase I Report

March 7, 2007

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Table of Contents

List of Exhibits

Executive Summary

This executive summary provides an overview of Year 3 (July 2004 – June 2005) and Year 4 (July 2005 – June 2006) of the external evaluation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative. In the following pages, we describe the focus of the evaluation and data sources drawn upon for the analysis, and highlight key findings and recommendations summarized in the Phase I final report.

Overview of the Initiative and Phase I Evaluation

In 2002, the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative provided funding for three interrelated components:

1. Expansion and enhancement grants to 15 family literacy programs throughout LA County providing adult education classes, parenting education classes, early childhood education (ECE) services, and parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA) to families with children birth to age five.

2. The Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN), which provides training and technical assistance to the grantees as well as outreach to other programs in the County and engages in advocacy work for the field of family literacy.

3. A four-year evaluation of the implementation of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative and its impacts on children birth to five and their families.

Phase I of the Initiative-wide evaluation has been conducted through a partnership between the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the Center for Improving Child Care Quality (CICCQ) at UCLA. In the final two years of the Initiative evaluation, the evaluation team continued to investigate many of the themes identified in Years 1 and 2, related largely to process, implementation, and early outcomes. In addition, we examined the quality of instructional components and overall program quality, and continued our investigation of outcomes for participants, including adult learning outcomes and changes in parenting behaviors, and children's developmental progress and outcomes. We also began to link those outcomes to the quality and quantity of services received. Examination of the activities of the FLSN also continued in Years 3 and 4, with increased attention to the impacts of FLSN training and technical assistance on grantee program quality outcomes. We highlight findings in each of the following five areas:

1. Characteristics of program leadership and administration

2. Implementation and impacts of the adult education component

3. Implementation and impacts of the parenting education and PCILA components

4. Implementation and impacts of the early childhood education component

5. Role of the FLSN in supporting continuous quality improvement among grantee programs

To examine these topics, the evaluation drew on a variety of data sources in Years 3 and 4:

- Site visits to all 15 grantee program sites, including program director interviews, staff and parent focus groups, and classroom observations—Year 3

- A survey of program directors—Year 4
- Participant data downloaded from the First 5 LA online data system (e.g., attendance, First 5 LA participant profiles, Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP), California Even Start Performance Information Reporting System (CA-ESPIRS), Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Reading assessment)
- An in-depth child outcomes study (including independent child assessments by trained assessors, classroom observations, parent interviews, and teacher surveys)
- A review of grantee reports and invoices
- A review of Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) deliverables, FLSN site visit notes summaries, and interviews with FLSN staff

Key findings in each of the areas examined and recommendations are highlighted below.

Program Leadership and Administration

Before examining the quality of the individual components—adult education, parenting education and PCILA, and ECE—of family literacy programs, we identified the characteristics of program leadership and administration for the programs as a whole.

Program leadership: *On the whole, program directors are well-qualified and have in place policies to ensure staff quality.*
- All program directors have at least bachelor's degrees, most have a background in early childhood education, and about half have a background in adult education. On average, they have six years of experience in family literacy programs.
- Most programs have policies and procedures in place to ensure staff quality, such as written job descriptions and annual performance reviews. However, only six program directors currently conduct regular classroom observations to ensure quality. Sixty percent of program directors reported relatively high staff turnover, but generally program directors did not cite staffing as a significant challenge for them; only a few described difficulties securing appropriate staff.

Component integration: *Component integration varies by program, though achieving full component integration remains a challenge for many grantees.*
- Program directors report using various strategies for program integration. Three-quarters (77 percent) reported using themes to integrate instructional content in each of the four components.
- Most program directors reported that teachers regularly attend integration meetings, though adult education teachers attend somewhat less.
- Program directors report that full integration (i.e., across all four program components) is still difficult to achieve, and two indicated some uncertainty about what full integration should look like in their program.

Recruitment, attendance, and retention: *Programs have policies in place to ensure participant attendance and have achieved relatively high rates of participation.*
- Eighty percent of program directors indicated that their program has a written attendance policy, and another 14 percent reported that they are creating one.

- Grantees achieved their target attendance rates of 70 percent in Year 4. They also came close to this benchmark in Year 3, even though the requirement was not introduced until Year 4.
- The average family attended program services for approximately 10 months.
- Although most programs do not have plans in place to recruit families for their programs, most report that recruiting families, retaining participants, and achieving high attendance rates are not challenges.

Sustainability: Grantee programs have benefited from First 5 LA funds, though achieving long-term sustainability remains a challenge.
- Program directors report that First 5 LA funds have strengthened program infrastructures and accountability systems, allowed programs to expand and grow, and helped improve sustainability by enabling the leveraging of other funds.
- Program staff and parents all reported that their programs provided a unique set of services not available elsewhere.
- Sustainability remains the greatest concern held by grantees.
- Only 43 percent of programs had a written fundraising plan at the end of Year 4, though another 43 percent were working on one (now required by First 5 LA).

Supporting Adult Learning through Adult Education

Adult education program quality: Programs generally had qualified teachers for the adult education component of their family literacy programs, and many adult education programs were standards-based, but some opportunities for improvement remain in terms of reducing class sizes and offering more opportunities for interaction.
- The majority of adult education teachers have a bachelor's degree (98 percent) and an adult education teaching credential (97 percent).
- Two thirds (64 percent) of program directors reported that their adult education curriculum was based on state or district standards or CASAS competencies.
- Parents reported that they would like smaller ESL classes, with fewer levels combined in the same class, and more opportunities to practice speaking and writing.

CASAS reading achievement: Parents demonstrated significant growth in reading achievement over time, and there is some evidence that attending more hours of adult education is associated with better results.
- In both years, parents showed significant growth on the CASAS reading assessment, and those with lower scores at Time 1 (the first assessment of the year) showed more growth at Time 2 (the last assessment of the year).
- In Year 4, there was a significant positive relationship between the number of hours the parent attended ESL and ABE classes, and CASAS reading scores at the end of the year.

Supporting Parenting Knowledge and Practice

Parenting education and PCILA program quality: Parenting education teachers are also generally well qualified, but emphases and formats of parenting education and PCILA classes vary widely.
- Most parenting education teachers have a bachelor's degree (95 percent), and 77 percent have a general adult education credential or an adult education credential with

a specialization in parent education, while fewer (72 percent) of PCILA teachers have a bachelor's degree.

- Parenting curricula vary widely; 33 percent of program directors reported their curriculum is based on standards. Common topics covered in classes include child development, discipline, nutrition, and communication.
- Parents reported that they enjoyed their parenting classes, though they wanted to have more input on topics and more time in class for discussion.
- Programs also varied in their approach to PCILA activities. Some emphasized teacher-directed activities, while others emphasized free-choice activities, though literacy activities occurred in only half of the PCILA sessions that were observed.
- Teachers modeled behaviors for parents but little feedback or parent coaching was observed.

Parenting outcomes – CA-ESPIRS: Parents demonstrated significant increases in home literacy behaviors over time; and attending more hours of parenting education and PCILA is associated with more positive home literacy behaviors.

- Across all grantee programs, there was statistically significant growth in the proportion of parents meeting or exceeding the Even Start benchmarks from Time 1 (first assessment of the year) to Time 2 (last assessment of the year) on all of the CA-ESPIRS indicators. Specifically, compared to Time 1 assessments, parents at Time 2:
  - Engaged in more reading and writing activities themselves
  - Kept more children's books and other literacy materials in their home
  - Read books and told stories to their children more often
  - Exhibited more interactive reading behaviors (significant in Year 4 only)
  - Were more likely to report having a library card
  - Visited and brought home books from the library more often
  - Limited their children's television watching, and used television as a learning tool more often
  - Were more involved in their children's schools
- In both Years 3 and 4, the more hours a parent participated in parenting education and PCILA, the greater the growth shown on all three parenting outcomes examined: the number of children's books in the home, the frequency with which the parent reads to the child, and the use of four interactive literacy behaviors when reading to the child (stopping reading and asking the child to tell what is in a picture, stopping reading and pointing out letters, stopping reading and asking what will happen next, and asking the child to read with the parent).

Supporting Children's Learning through Early Childhood Education

Teacher qualifications: Teachers in the early childhood education component of the programs were somewhat less well qualified than adult education and parenting teachers, as is typical in the field of early care and education, although they had higher credentials than the state average.

- Program directors reported that just over half (55 percent) of ECE teachers have a bachelor's degree.
- Over half (57 percent) of ECE teachers have a child development Teacher Permit, and 67 percent have at least an Associate Teacher Permit or Child Development Associate (CDA)

Classroom environment and teacher practice. *Overall, grantees offered ECE services with environments rated as "good" using standardized measures, although teachers spent relatively little time engaging children in language and literacy activities and scaffolding their learning.*

- Average ratings on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised (ECERS-R) across the 15 grantees were 5.2, which is classified as "good" on the 1–7 scale.
- Teachers spent very little of their interaction time with children elaborating on their responses or scaffolding their learning.
- Only about 10 percent of class time on average was spent engaged in literacy activities (including reading, writing, working on letters and sounds, and oral language activities).
- Teachers reported using data to adjust curricula when needed, to set goals for individual children, to group children appropriately, and to communicate with parents about children's progress.

Child progress on the DRDP: *Children demonstrated significant growth on the DRDP over time, and there is some evidence that higher levels of participation is associated with higher growth.*

- In both Year 3 and Year 4, children eight months to five years old demonstrated significant growth on each Desired Result in the DRDP:[1]
  - Children are personally and socially competent
  - Children are effective learners
  - Children show physical and motor competence
  - Children are safe and healthy
- We found a significant positive relationship between the total number of hours children in the 3-5 year age group participated in early childhood education, child care, and PCILA, and their growth on all four Desired Results. This indicates that children who spent more time in the family literacy programs showed higher ratings by Time 2 on the DRDP (after controlling for age and Time 1 rating) than those children who spent less time in the program.

Child outcomes in kindergarten: *Children who were followed into kindergarten demonstrated significant growth after leaving the family literacy program, and there is some evidence that more time spent in the program is associated with better outcomes.*

- We found that children's English language skills (as measured by the Pre-LAS) continued to improve after they entered kindergarten. In fact, while most children were assessed in Spanish at Time 1, nearly all were proficient enough to be tested in English in kindergarten. Other indicators of children's literacy skills (story and print concepts; and naming letters, numbers, and colors) also showed significant growth between their first year in the family literacy program and kindergarten. The positive trend in score growth over time suggests that children entered kindergarten ready to learn and continued to improve.
- Child's age at initial enrollment in the family literacy program was associated with kindergarten outcomes, such that, in general, children who were younger at

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[1] Growth for children in the birth to seven months group was not statistically significant, given the relatively small numbers with two assessments.

enrollment had higher literacy scores in kindergarten. This suggests that younger children who have had more time in the program may have benefited more from the family literacy programs.

Children's development and ECE component quality: *Children in programs with higher quality ECE services—especially more language and literacy input—demonstrated more growth.*

- Higher scores on two subscales of the ECERS-R—teacher-child interactions and language and reasoning—were associated with higher ratings for children on Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent) and Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners).
- The percentage of time ECE teachers spent on literacy activities was significantly and positively related to higher ratings on Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent) among children at Time 2.
- Children in the child outcomes study who were observed to engage with books reading or pretending to read more often in the family literacy programs had higher story comprehension scores in kindergarten.
- Somewhat surprisingly, children in the child outcomes study who were read to more often in the programs did not have higher comprehension scores, suggesting that children's active engagement in literacy activities contributed more to story comprehension outcomes than just being read to.

Children's development and parent input: *There is some evidence that parents' home literacy behaviors are associated with positive child outcomes.*

- For children in the 18-35 month age group in Year 4, increases in the number of books in the home and in the frequency that parents read to them were both associated with increases in mean ratings on Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent). However, for three-to- five-year-olds, there were no statistically significant relationships found between parents' home literacy behaviors and either of these outcomes.
- No significant relationships were found in either year for toddlers or preschoolers between parents' CASAS reading score and children's ratings on Desired Results 1 or 2.
- Among child outcomes study participants, parents who reported being more involved in literacy activities at home had children with higher scores on several of the assessments in kindergarten. For example, parents who spent time teaching their children letters and reading skills had children with higher story comprehension scores.

Continuous Quality Improvement and the FLSN

FLSN technical assistance: *In Years 3 and 4, the FLSN focused on using the "Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement" to support grantee program improvement, and grantees reported progress as a result of FLSN assistance.*

- In Years 3 and 4 of the Initiative, there was a shift in the focus of FLSN training and technical assistance, from establishing the four components and completing First 5 LA deliverables to sustainability and using the Framework to improve program administration and the parenting education and PCILA components.

- Though the amount of training provided to grantees has remained consistent throughout the Initiative, the amount of onsite technical assistance provided to grantees in Years 3 and 4 decreased from Years 1 and 2.
- Grantees continued to have overwhelmingly positive responses to FLSN support, particularly in the areas of providing opportunities to network with other family literacy programs, providing opportunities for staff development, and identifying funding sources.
- Grantees demonstrated progress toward model status in several areas and grew increasingly skilled at completing First 5 LA deliverables and identifying their own technical assistance needs. An assessment of grantees' overall progress toward model status reveals some areas for improvement, including increasing parent involvement in curricular planning for parenting education and PCILA, component integration, using data for quality improvement, increasing the literacy focus of activities in PCILA and ECE, and sustainability.
- FLSN staff feel that implementing the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement, as a resource for technical assistance providers as well as grantees, was a major success in Year 4, and although understaffing remains a challenge for the FLSN, grantees find the services provided by the FLSN to be of consistently high quality.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, findings suggest continued growth in learning among children and families and greater growth among families with higher levels of program participation. Although these relationships do not imply causality, they are suggestive, and taken together with findings demonstrating links between program quality and outcomes, we see a pattern of positive connections that we will be exploring further in Phase II.

Some parallels can also be seen between findings from this evaluation and the Third National Even Start Evaluation, published in 2003. The Even Start evaluation also found a relationship between hours of participation and child outcomes as well as linkages between outcomes and the extent to which parents and children participated in literacy services. The report also concluded that there was not sufficient emphasis on language acquisition and reasoning.

Many of the findings presented in this Phase I final evaluation report are encouraging. Given the links between program quality and outcomes and the wide range in observed quality, it is not unreasonable to assume that targeted quality improvements in the family literacy programs will lead to even more positive results for children and families. To this end, we offer of the following recommendations for consideration:

1. *Focus on quality, not just quantity.* We found that families who received more hours of service demonstrate greater growth on outcome measures in each of the component areas, which suggests that some level of intensity is important. However, program quality factors were also associated with positive outcomes. First 5 LA has set minimum levels of service that all grantees must make available to families, thus emphasizing the importance of the *quantity*, or intensity, of services provided. While this is a positive step toward holding grantees accountable to a high standard of service, it is also important to set a standard for the *quality* of family literacy services

provided to families. Quantity without quality is not likely to produce the benefits desired from a family literacy program.

2. ***Increase attention to literacy in the ECE classroom and strengthen teacher-child interactions.*** We found consistent links between teacher practice in the ECE classroom, in particular, the time teachers spent engaging children in literacy activities and actively scaffolding their learning, and children's developmental progress and outcomes. Given the relatively low proportions of time teachers were observed to spend supporting children's learning in these ways, we would expect to see even greater growth if more attention is paid to language and literacy activities and supportive instructional strategies.

3. ***Continue to work on supporting grantee development to enhance parenting education and PCILA.*** One of the key goals of family literacy programs is to provide parents with the knowledge and tools they need to support their children's learning, and this is accomplished through parenting education classes and PCILA time. Although parenting outcomes were positive, we found variation among programs, especially in regard to how PCILA is structured, and relatively little emphasis given to direct coaching of parents to support their learning. This is an area that the FLSN has identified as a focus area for Phase II of the Initiative, and we encourage the FLSN to work with grantees to further refine their approach to PCILA to enhance opportunities for parent learning.

4. ***Maximize the impact of the four components by increasing their integration.*** The family literacy model rests on the assumption that families benefit most when they participate in all four components and when those components are aligned to create a well articulated and coherent experience. However, full integration remains a challenge for many grantees. The extent to which programs have integrated the four components varies, as do interpretations of the term integration. The FLSN's Framework addresses the concept of component integration, but some focused attention, with practical guidelines for how to improve integration, would be a useful next step.

5. ***Extend use of data by grantees to support continuous quality improvement.*** Overall, grantees have demonstrated great progress on their comfort with data – from attendance data to assessment data – and many attribute their progress to the FLSN. However, there is still a need for continued development. In particular, many grantees are not actively analyzing and interpreting their data and using it to support program improvement efforts. If continuous quality improvement is to be a requirement for grantees, using data to support their efforts should also be a (continued) focus of technical assistance and training.

6. ***Continue to support grantee sustainability by providing training and technical assistance to grantees.*** Grantee agencies have benefited greatly from First 5 LA funds, expanding and enhancing their programs over time. With the new matching requirement for grantee funding, though, the pressure on grantee program staff to engage in grant-writing and other fundraising activities will continue to increase, and securing adequate funding for their program has been by far the greatest challenge

reported by grantees. Given this need, we recommend additional attention be given to building capacity among grantees to achieve sustainability.

7. ***Continue to provide customized technical assistance to grantees, especially those with greater program improvement needs.*** There is wide variation in grantee program structures, services, and strengths, and each grantee has its own unique set of technical assistance needs. Although the addition of the new grantees means a total of 22 grantee agencies to serve, we encourage the FLSN to provide support tailored to individual grantee needs to the extent possible. If enhancing the quality of services provided to families is to be a priority for the Initiative, grantees – especially those with the greatest program improvement needs – will need customized technical assistance along the way.

In addition, findings from the first four years of the evaluation suggest several areas for further exploration. In particular, we will continue to assess the linkages between quality and outcomes, focusing more explicitly on each component as well as examining the role of the FLSN in continuous quality improvement efforts. A few design changes are being made in Phase II to support these goals. Phase II of the evaluation will: 1) gather more comprehensive program quality data, especially for the adult education, parenting education, and PCILA components; 2) increase the sample size for the child outcomes study to improve estimates of impacts, 3) collect more detailed data on expected outcomes from the parenting education and PCILA components; and 4) more directly link FLSN technical assistance activities to program improvements.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative is a comprehensive program designed to promote literacy among low-income families in Los Angeles County. There are three parts to the Initiative: 1) grants to family literacy programs to expand or enhance their services, 2) the development of a training and technical assistance provider to support family literacy programs, and 3) an independent external evaluation of the Initiative.

First 5 LA awarded three-year grants to 15 agencies in June 2002. These 15 grantees were identified as promising family literacy programs in LA County, and were selected for their potential to serve as models for other programs. Each program provides services in each of the four components that comprise family literacy: 1) early childhood education (ECE), 2) parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA), 3) parenting education, and 4) adult education. In April of 2005, First 5 LA awarded new five-year grants to 14 of the original 15 agencies (Cohort 1) and 8 additional agencies (Cohorts 2 and 3).[2]

In addition to supporting family literacy services directly through awards to family literacy programs, First 5 LA funded the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) in August of 2002. The FLSN was developed to support grantees in providing quality services and strengthening their organizational capacity, as well as to conduct outreach to non-grantee family literacy programs to support their development, and to advocate for the field of family literacy more broadly. The FLSN was also re-funded for five years in 2005. The revised scope of work for the FLSN continues to include supporting grantees, though it no longer includes conducting outreach or advocacy activities.

In October of 2002, First 5 LA contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and their collaborators at the Center for Improving Child Care Quality (CICCQ) at UCLA to conduct a four-year evaluation of the implementation and impacts of the Family Literacy Initiative. This report presents the findings from the third and fourth years of this evaluation (July 2004–June 2006). Only Cohort 1 grantees were included in the first four years of the evaluation, though a second phase of the evaluation, beginning in the fall of 2006 and continuing through 2010, will include Cohort 2 and 3 grantees. The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of the four-year evaluation, a brief review of the preliminary study findings from Year 2, and a discussion of the focus of the study in Years 3 and 4.

Overview of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the implementation and impacts of the Initiative. The evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the Initiative by addressing 12 primary evaluation questions that focus on process, outcomes, and policy-relevant issues. The following questions, reorganized from the original list of questions and grouped by topic, have guided the four-year evaluation.[3]

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[2] Ten new grants were awarded. One Cohort 1 grantee received one grant as part of the continuation of their original grant and a second grant as part of the expansion of the Initiative. Another Cohort 1 grantee merged with a new Cohort 2 grantee. Thus there are 24 grants in Phase II of the Initiative but only 22 individual grantees.

[3] Evaluation questions were provided by the Commission and simplified slightly for presentation here.

Questions related to *grantee implementation and program quality*:

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

- **Process Question #2**: What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the programs?

- **Policy/Research Question #4**: What role does technology play in increasing access to or effectiveness of program services?

Questions related to *child and family outcomes* for families participating in the Initiative:

- **Outcome Question #1**: What impact have grantees had on children and their families?

- **Outcome Question #3**: What programmatic characteristics were associated with better outcomes for children and families?

- **Policy/Research Question #2**: What is the value of broadening the scope of the adult education component of family literacy programs to include employment skills?

Questions related to the *implementation of the FLSN*:

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

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

Questions related to the *impacts of the Initiative on grantee programs*:

- **Outcome Question #2**: What impact has the FLSN had on the service delivery system?

- **Outcome Question #4**: How have programs been able to sustain themselves and what role has First 5 LA played in that process?

- **Policy/Research Question #1**: What is the value of providing ongoing program support to family literacy programs?

- **Policy/Research Question #3**: How have the First 5 LA grants benefited family literacy programs?

These questions have been addressed over the course of the four-year evaluation, with greater emphasis on implementation questions in Years 1 and 2 and greater emphasis on child and family outcomes in Years 3 and 4.

Overview of Year 2 Findings

The following is a selection of key findings that emerged from our analysis in Year 2 of the study.[4]

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[4] For a complete list of Year 2 findings, please see the Evaluation of the *First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative: Report on Year 2 Findings*, available online at www.first5la.org.

In characterizing the family literacy programs, we found considerable variation across grantees. Several quality indicators were examined:

- ***Teacher qualifications*** varied widely across components. Nearly all adult education teachers (98 percent) reported having at least a bachelor's degree, and 59 percent of ECE teachers reported this level of education. Adult education teachers were also the most likely to be certified; two-thirds of adult education teachers (67 percent) reported having at least one Adult Education Teaching Credential and just over half of ECE teachers (53 percent) and PCILA teachers (56 percent) reported having at least a child development teacher permit.

- The quality of instruction in each of the four components is also dependent on the nature of the ***curriculum*** covered. ECE teachers and adult education teachers are most likely to rely on a formal curriculum, while parenting education teachers are least likely to use a formal curriculum.

- The level of ***integration*** of the four components varied widely by program. One-third (33 percent) of the program directors reported that they regularly held meetings with teachers from each of the four components. In programs where teachers from all four components did not meet, it was usually the adult education teacher who did not participate.

Participant characteristics were similar across grantees, though the level of service families received varied.

- Information on ***participant demographics*** indicated that the majority of families participating in Year 2 were Hispanic or Latino and spoke Spanish as their primary home language. A large majority of parents (79 percent) had no previous school in the U.S. and only 13 percent were employed upon entering the family literacy program. Nearly three-quarters of child participants were three- to five-years old.

- The ***intensity and duration*** of services received varied widely by participant. Parents attended an average of 29 hours of adult education, 7 hours of parenting education, and 10 hours of PCILA each month. Children received an average of 41 hours of ECE and 11 hours of PCILA each month. Across the Initiative, 866 children and 687 adults comprising 660 families participated in grantee programs in Year 2.

Grantee program staff reported a wide range of success and challenges in their efforts to implement their family literacy programs in Year 2.

- Program directors identified numerous ***successes***, including improvements in their programs, providing comprehensive family literacy services to many families—660 families in total—and positive family outcomes in Year 2.

- Primary ***challenges*** noted by grantee program directors and staff included securing adequate funding, finding qualified staff, and securing permanent space or appropriate space.

Analyses of grantee-collected outcome data assessing adult learning, parenting behaviors, and child outcomes revealed positive results for participating families.

- Significant improvements were observed in ***adult education outcomes*** for parent participants. Parents demonstrated statistically significant growth on the CASAS Reading assessment between Time 1 and Time 2, increasing their scores by an average of 6.6 points.

- Parents also demonstrated growth on measures of ***parenting education outcomes***. Parents demonstrated statistically significant growth from Time 1 to Time 2 on 10 of 13 indicators measuring parents' support for their children's learning on the CA-ESPIRS.

- Time 1 and Time 2 administrations of the teacher observation-based Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) revealed positive ***child progress*** across the Initiative in all age ranges.

- Analyses of data from the independent ***child outcomes study*** also revealed significant growth for three- and four-year olds on direct child assessments between the first assessment (Time 1) and the second assessment (Time 2), which was given an average of five months later.

The FLSN worked to support grantee program improvement and disseminate information about family literacy more broadly in Years 1 and 2.

- During Years 1 and 2, the FLSN provided 14 unique ***trainings*** on a variety of topics, several of which were repeated for various audiences, for a total of 24 trainings over the two-year period. While some trainings focused exclusively on the needs of the grantees, others were open to non-grantee program staff.

- Over the course of Years 1 and 2, the FLSN engaged in a variety of ***technical assistance*** activities, the bulk of which occurred during periodic site visits to each of the grantee programs.

- In addition to training and technical assistance, the FLSN engaged in a number of ***outreach, advocacy, and sustainability*** activities in Year 2.

Through their work, the FLSN experienced a number of implementation challenges, but also many successes.

- Interviews with FLSN staff as well as feedback from the grantees suggest several key ***challenges*** faced by the FLSN in Year 2, most notable of which was the staff turnover rate and general understaffing.

- The FLSN has achieved many ***successes***, as demonstrated by the establishment of a more solid infrastructure and high praise from grantee program staff.

- Grantee staff's reports of the ***impacts*** of FLSN support on their programs have been very positive overall, with support for meeting their grant requirements and opportunities to network with other grantees identified as the most helpful aspects of their training and technical assistance received in Year 2.

Focus of the Evaluation in Years 3 and 4

In Years 3 and 4 of the study, the evaluation team continued to investigate many of the themes identified in Years 1 and 2. In addition, we focused to a larger extent on assessing the

quality of instructional components and overall program quality, especially for the ECE component, and relating those features of quality to child and family outcomes.

Program quality was assessed in each of the four areas of the FLSN's Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement (FLSN, 2005)—program leadership and administration, adult education, parenting education and PCILA, and ECE—through direct observation of classes, interviews and focus groups with staff and parents, and program director surveys. The evaluation team also continued to investigate outcomes for participants, including adult learning outcomes, changes in parenting behaviors, and child progress and outcomes. We also assessed the linkages between those outcomes and the quality and quantity of services received.

Examination of the activities of the FLSN also continued in Years 3 and 4, with increased attention to the impacts of FLSN training and technical assistance on grantee program quality outcomes.

A detailed accounting of evaluation activities and findings for Years 3 and 4 is presented in the chapters that follow. Chapter 2 explains the study methodology and data collection activities. Chapter 3 characterizes the level and quality of program leadership and administration. Chapter 4 examines the quality of services offered through the adult education component as well as outcomes for parents attending adult education classes. Chapter 5 describes how programs support parenting knowledge and practices through an examination of the quality of services offered in parenting education and PCILA components and related parent outcomes. Chapter 6 describes the services provided by Initiative grantees to support children's learning and development by assessing the quality of the ECE component and children's progress and outcomes. Chapter 7 characterizes the activities and impacts of the FLSN in supporting grantees' continuous quality improvement. Chapter 8 summarizes main findings from the report and outlines next steps.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The methodology of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative Evaluation has changed over time as the evaluation's focus has shifted. During Year 1 of the study, the evaluation team focused primarily on characterizing the 15 grantee programs, measuring the perceptions of the programs' impacts on participants' lives, and exploring the early implementation of the FLSN. In Year 2, the evaluation focused on implementation of the Initiative, quantifying themes that emerged from Year 1 analyses, and assessing early outcomes for children and families. In Years 3 and 4 the evaluation team maintained a focus on program implementation, but increased attention given to outcomes for children and families. This chapter describes the methodology used by the AIR/UCLA evaluation team during Years 3 and 4 of the study.

Over the course of Years 3 (2004-05) and 4 (2005-06), we collected qualitative and quantitative data from the 15 grantees funded in Year 3 and the 14 grantees funded in Year 4, as well as from the FLSN. A variety of data sources and methods of data collection were used, including:

- Site visits to all 15 grantee program sites, including interviews, focus groups and classroom observations—Year 3
- A survey of program directors—Year 4
- Participant data downloaded from the First 5 LA online data system (e.g., attendance, First 5 LA participant profiles, Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP), California Even Start Performance Information Reporting System (CA-ESPIRS), Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Reading assessment)
- An in-depth child outcomes study (including individual child assessments, classroom observations, parent interviews, and teacher surveys)
- A review of grantee reports and invoices
- A review of Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) deliverables, Year 3 and 4 FLSN site visitors' notes, and two sets of interviews with FLSN staff

The following sections provide further details regarding data collection and analysis activities for the findings presented in this report. There is also a discussion of issues with the quality of data downloaded from the online data system, which, as in prior years of the evaluation, has affected the analysis.

Site Visits (Year 3)

In April and May of 2005 (Year 3 of the evaluation) the evaluation team conducted site visits to each of the 15 grantee programs. 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, as well as to characterize the nature of program activities through classroom observations. While on site, the evaluation team conducted:

- Interviews with program directors

- Focus groups with teachers from each of the four components (i.e., PCILA, ECE, parenting education, and adult education)
- Focus groups with parent participants
- ECERS-R assessments in the ECE classrooms
- PCILA classroom observations

The visits also provided a chance to see the changes that had taken place since the previous site visits in May 2003. The use of standardized data collection procedures and instruments, including interview and focus group protocols as well as observation tools, ensured that common information was captured across all 15 grantees. Interview and focus group protocols focused on how the grantees operate, the staff and families' experiences over the past three years, program challenges and successes, and how the family literacy programs' implementation has developed over time. The site visit teams were careful to accommodate the grantees' needs, including being flexible regarding scheduling and having at least one Spanish speaker on the team.

Exhibit 2.1: Number and type of site visit data collection activities, Year 3

	Number conducted
Interviews and focus groups:	
Program director interviews	15
Parent focus groups	15
Staff focus groups	15
Observations:	
PCILA observations	12
ECERS Observations	15

Notes from all interviews, focus groups, and observations were written up and summarized into a FileMaker database, a software program that helped the evaluation team to organize the data and identify findings from the qualitative analysis. Through careful qualitative analysis, common themes were drawn from the data, triangulated with quantitative data from other sources, and summarized in later chapters in this report.

Program Director Survey (Year 4)

Surveys administered to 14 grantee program directors in May 2006 were a primary source of implementation and program outcome data in Year 4. The program director survey provided us with detailed information about the program director's background and prior experience, as well as any additional responsibilities (beyond the role of program director) within the program or larger organization. The survey also requested information about the program itself, including:

- Program history
- Teacher qualifications and curricula for each of the four components
- Additional services offered by the program on turnover referrals
- Component integration

- Program policies and administration
- Challenges faced by the program
- FLSN support for program improvement
- Areas where programs need additional training or technical assistance

All 14 program directors returned the survey in Year 4. Responses to survey items were coded and analyzed, and results are presented throughout the following chapters. The program director survey is included in Appendix A.

Data Submitted by Grantees (Years 3 and 4)

Grantees are required to collect and report data on their programs and participating families each year. Data from a number of grantee-administered measures were downloaded from the First 5 LA data system for Years 3 and 4, including attendance data for all four components, participant profile forms, the CASAS Reading assessment, the DRDP, and CA-ESPIRS.

Attendance data

As in Year 2, we analyzed attendance data recorded by grantees in the First 5 LA data system for all adults and children participating in Year 3 and/or Year 4 of the Initiative to assess the intensity and duration of families' participation in the grantee programs. For each component, grantees recorded the hours attended by each participant each month, as well as the number of hours of service offered to each participant each month. We analyzed attendance data for families participating in all four components in Year 3 (July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005) and in Year 4 (July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006).[5]

In the Year 2 Report, we noted a number of issues with the downloaded attendance data that have been addressed differently for Years 3 and 4 data. Although many of the issues faced during our analysis of Year 2 data were present again in Years 3 and 4, the magnitude of the problems declined. Year 2 analysis of attendance rates, calculated by dividing the number of "hours attended" by the number of "hours offered" for each individual, were especially problematic. For example, instead of entering zero hours attended out of a set number of hours offered for a participant who was absent during a month, program staff frequently left "hours attended" and "hours offered" blank for that month. To address this issue in our analysis of Year 3 and Year 4 data, we have imputed "hours attended" and "hours offered" for those months in which a participant was enrolled but attendance data were missing. For months in which a participant was enrolled and had missing "hours attended," we assumed the participant did not attend and we imputed zero hours attended for that month. When "hours offered" were missing and the participant was enrolled for that month, we imputed a value by using the modal number of hours offered for that component, by month and program. Due to the variability of program offerings during the summer months, we did not impute hours for June, July, and August. Attendance rates were calculated using both imputed (where appropriate) and non-imputed hours. Not surprisingly, adjusted attendance rates using imputed hours are somewhat lower than non-adjusted attendance rates, though we believe they are more accurate. All attendance rates presented in this report are adjusted.

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[5] Please note that, whereas program Years 1 and 2 ran from June through May; Years 3 and 4 reflect First 5 LA's new program year, which runs from July through June.

Another issue found in Year 2 data was that program staff sometimes entered "extra credit" hours for participants. In some cases, the number of hours a participant attended in a month would exceed the number of hours offered to that participant, resulting in attendance rates greater than 100 percent. To adjust for this, "extra credit" data fields were added to the First 5 LA online data system, and grantees were asked to record the "extra" hours here. For Years 3 and 4 prior to the change, where hours attended exceeds hours offered, we have subtracted the "extra credit" hours and recorded them instead in the new "extra credit" category. All extra credit hours are included when totaling the hours of service received, but they are not included when calculating attendance rates.

Attendance data were used as a primary source of information for all participant data analyses. We calculated the number of hours offered by component, the number of hours attended by component, as well as attendance rates for each component from attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system. In addition, outcome data were analyzed and reported only for families with a child in the birth-to-five age range and participating in all four components, based on attendance data. Results from analyses of attendance data are provided in Chapters 3 through 6 of this report.

Participant profile and follow-up forms

Profile forms were provided by First 5 LA to all grantees in order to obtain information on each family, child, and adult participating in the Initiative. The families' demographic information (e.g., income, family size, language spoken at home) is covered on the family form. Specific questions about the participating adult(s) (e.g., level of education, employment status and history) make up the adult form. The child form covers information specific to the participating child/children (e.g., age, gender, other services received). During Years 3 and 4, programs were also required to administer follow-up forms to participants at the end of each program year or immediately prior to exit. Very few follow-up profiles were actually completed. Only 30 percent of families, 24 percent of adults, and 23 percent of children with completed profiles also had completed follow-up profiles in Year 3. In Year 4, the numbers were slightly higher (37 percent of families, 33 percent of adults, and 29 percent of children), but still too low to make generalizations. This impacts the evaluation team's ability to track changes in areas such as participants' level of income, education, and employment status.

The analysis of the profile data included families who participated in all four components in Years 3 and 4 of the Initiative for whom an original profile was entered into the First 5 LA online data system. Results are presented in Chapter 3. Participant information such as income and level of education was also analyzed in conjunction with the CASAS data. These analyses are presented in Chapter 4. It was also anticipated that change could be assessed by comparing participants' responses on the original profile form to their responses on the follow-up form. However, the number of completed follow-up forms was insufficient for a comprehensive analysis. Profile forms are included in Appendix A.

CASAS Reading assessment

All grantees were to administer the CASAS Reading assessment to all adult participants. This tool is designed to measure adult basic reading skills in English, and was used in our analysis of adult education outcomes.

We examined CASAS Reading scores for adults whose families participated in all four components in Year 3 and/or Year 4 of the Initiative. CASAS assessments administered between May 1, 2004 and July 31, 2005 for Year 3, and May 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006 for Year 4 were analyzed. If possible, we selected the first assessment administered in August, September, October, or November of the program year to be "Time 1." If no assessment was available during this time, we chose the first assessment administered in May, June, or July. If this was not possible, the earliest assessment administered was chosen. The latest assessment administered before July 31, 2005 for Year 3 or June 30, 2006 for Year 4 was designated "Time 2." These rules were established to maximize the number of participants for whom two assessments were available but to minimize influence from activities occurring at the end of the previous program year.[6] In addition, analysis was limited to parents who participated in at least 100 combined hours of English as a second language (ESL) and adult basic education (ABE) between Time 1 and Time 2 in order to allow for sufficient time in the program to demonstrate growth.

Some adults were given the same version of the CASAS assessment multiple times, which threatens the validity of observed growth, although observations were not dropped from analysis for this reason. Many scores (342 in Year 3 and 179 in Year 4) were excluded because they were not in the CASAS "accurate range" for the form being administered— these participants should have been re-tested with a more appropriate CASAS form. (CASAS scores were excluded if they fell well out of the CASAS "accurate range" for the CASAS form being administered. A score was excluded if it was the lowest possible score for the CASAS form administered or the highest possible score for the administered form. Scores were also excluded if they fell completely out of the possible range of scores for the administered form.)

Guidelines provided by the FLSN instruct grantees to administer the first CASAS "when an adult has been continuously attending the program for three weeks." They are instructed to administer a second CASAS assessment after the participant has attended 100-150 hours of adult education. However, many programs do not adhere to these guidelines. In some cases adult schools collaborating with the family literacy program assess students on their own schedule, and grantee programs have little or no influence on adult school testing schedules. In Year 3, there were 313 adults with 2 or more scores within the valid range for the form given. Of these, 157 had at least 100 hours of ESL and ABE between assessments. In Year 4, there were 244 adults with 2 or more valid scores, and 137 of these had at least 100 hours of ESL and ABE between assessments.

To analyze the CASAS data, we examined change in scores from Time 1 to Time 2 for all parents, Beginning Basic Skills parents (those with initial scores below 211), and Low Intermediate to Advanced parents (those with initial scores at 211 or higher). Then, demographic differences between parents who grew the most and least on the assessment, respectively, and other parents were explored. We also looked at the relationship between hours of attendance in ESL and Adult Basic Education classes and CASAS scores, and the

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[6] Although the grant periods extend from July through June, we expanded the timeframe for each year in order to capture pre-tests that may have occurred before the end of the prior year and post-tests that occurred after the end of the current year. (The timeframe could not be extended to July for Year 4 analyses due to analysis time constraints.) In addition, fall assessments were selected as Time 1 measures over prior spring assessments where possible in order to better align with the beginning of the program year.

relationship between teacher qualifications and CASAS scores. These analyses are presented in Chapter 4.

Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)

The evaluation team used Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) data collected by teachers to assess children's progress. The DRDP is an assessment tool designed to measure children's progress toward achieving the four desired results (Children are personally and socially competent, Children are effective learners, Children show physical and motor competence, and Children are safe and healthy). Profiles are available for the following age ranges: birth through 7 months, 8 through 17 months, 18 through 35 months, 36 months through pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten through 7 years.

ECE teachers completed the DRDP for each child from birth to five years of age enrolled in the early childhood education component. (Thus, the kindergarten through 7 years profile was not used.) Two grantees used the DRDP-plus, a tool with a few additional items used by Head Start programs. DRDP and DRDP-plus forms were easily matched by question. According to the FLSN FAQs, the first DRDP profile should be completed after each child has been enrolled and participated in the program for at least three weeks, and before 60 days in the program. The second profile should be completed prior to the end of the year (or earlier if the child is going to move out of the age range of the first profile administered).

The evaluation team analyzed DRDP data from Year 3 (May 2004 through July 2005) and Year 4 (May 2005 through June 2006). As with the CASAS assessment, we used this extended time frame to ensure we maximized the number of pre- and post-tests associated with each program year. We examined the first DRDP administered within this timeframe ("Time 1") and the last DRDP administered in this timeframe ("Time 2"). We excluded any children who only had one recorded DRDP, as well as any children three- to five-years of age who attended fewer than 100 combined hours of ECE, child care, and PCILA between Time 1 and Time 2, in order to be consistent with the Even Start performance indicators. In Year 3, 56 children were dropped for having fewer than 100 hours of participation, and in Year 4, 51 were dropped for this reason. In addition, we excluded any children whose families did not participate in all four components during that program year.

As in Year 2, the evaluation team found some problems with the Year 3 and Year 4 DRDP data. In some cases children were either too old or too young for the form they were given. The evaluation team was unable to determine whether teachers used the wrong form for these children or whether their dates of birth were incorrectly recorded. As in Year 2, DRDP assessment results for these children were not included in the analysis; 122 observations in Year 3 and 104 observations in Year 4 were dropped. However, in the absence of conflicting information about their age, we assumed the correct DRDP form was used for these children and kept them in the analysis. We also dropped children from the analysis who only had one DRDP administered in their age group during the program year, because change over time could not be assessed for children who transitioned to a new age group and new DRDP form. In Year 3, 229 children were included in the analysis for the 3-5 year age group, 75 in the 18-35 month age group, 15 in the 8-17 month age group, and 3 in the birth-7 month age group. In Year 4, 206 children were included in the 3-5 year age group, 72 in the 18-35 month age group, 20 in the 8-17 month age group, and 3 in the birth-7 month age group. Analysis of the

DRDP data is presented in Chapter 6. DRDP forms used by programs are also included in Appendix A.

CA-ESPIRS

The evaluation team also analyzed data from the California Even Start Performance Indicator Reporting System (CA-ESPIRS). This tool was used to assess changes in parents' support for their children's learning and the home literacy environment.

According to the FLSN FAQ, grantees are to administer the CA-ESPIRS to each newly enrolled parent within the participant's first 30 days in the program. A second CA-ESPIRS is to be administered at the end of the year or upon exit. AIR downloaded and analyzed CA-ESPIRS data from May 2004, through July, 2005 for Year 3 and from May 2005 through June 2006 for Year 4. As with the DRDP and the CASAS, we used this extended timeframe to ensure we maximized the number of pre- and post-tests associated with each program year. If possible, we selected the first assessment administered in August, September, October, or November of the program year to be "Time 1." If no assessment was available during this time, we chose the first assessment administered in May, June, or July. If this was not possible, the earliest assessment administered was chosen. The latest assessment administered before July 31, 2005 for Year 3 or June 30, 2006 for Year 4 was designated "Time 2." These rules were established to maximize the number of participants for whom two assessments were available but to minimize influence from activities occurring at the end of the previous program year. In addition, the analysis was limited to parents who participated in at least 50 hours of parenting education and PCILA combined between Time 1 and Time 2 to allow for enough time in the program to demonstrate growth.

In Year 3, there were 416 adults with at least 2 CA-ESPIRS observations. We excluded 117 of these participants because they had fewer than 50 hours of parenting education and PCILA between Time 1 and Time 2, to be consistent with Even Start analyses. In Year 4, 38 out of 366 participants were excluded for this reason. In addition, we found some parents were given the CA-ESPIRS three or more times between Time 1 and Time 2. This frequency of administration may have caused these parents to become more familiar with the CA-ESPIRS questions and the desired responses. However, these participants were not dropped from the analysis. Analysis of the CA-ESPIRS is presented in Chapter 5, and the form itself is included in Appendix A.

Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) Data (Years 3 and 4)

Data on the FLSN came from a variety of sources. The evaluation team reviewed FLSN documents and deliverables and analyzed data from FLSN site visit notes, interviews with FLSN staff, and focus groups with grantee program directors. Each of these data sources is described below; findings are reported in Chapter 7.

Interviews with FLSN staff

To explore the nature of the FLSN's work and learn about its role in supporting grantee program growth, the AIR evaluation team conducted two sets of interviews with FLSN staff. The first set of interviews focused on the FLSN's expected outcomes for their work with grantees, and the second set of interviews addressed the range of FLSN activities within the three objectives outlined in their current scope of work: support all grantees in moving

toward performing status through professional development, technical assistance and peer networking; support the development of five demonstration sites; and develop a parenting education/PCILA investigation project. The interviews also addressed successes and challenges in the implementation of the FLSN. Between the two sets of interviews, six members of the FLSN team (including subcontractors) were interviewed. Senior Project Director Liz Guerra was interviewed twice. Interviews lasted for 45 to 90 minutes and took place over the telephone in the late spring/early summer of 2006 (Year 4). This information was analyzed qualitatively and is summarized in Chapter 7.

Focus groups with grantee program directors

At the end of Year 4 AIR staff conducted two focus groups with grantee program directors designed to gather information about the work of the FLSN. The focus groups addressed grantees' technical assistance needs, the role of the FLSN in supporting grantees, and the perceived impacts of FLSN support. Participants were also given the opportunity to make suggestions to the FLSN. The focus groups lasted about an hour and involved participants from all three grantee cohorts, although only responses from Cohort 1 grantees are included in this report.

FLSN documents

In addition to the data collected through interviews and focus groups, the evaluation team also reviewed various FLSN deliverables. Among the First 5 LA deliverables reviewed were FLSN quarterly and mid-year reports, which include descriptions and notes about the status of FLSN activities. The FLSN scope of work, invoices, and final internal evaluation reports were also useful in understanding the range and nature of FLSN activities.

In addition, the FLSN provided the evaluation team with numerous internal documents, including calendars, budgets, meeting agendas, site visitors' notes, reports of FSLN activities ("DSIDE" reports), and information on attendance at FLSN training events. These documents provided us with a better understanding of the professional development and technical assistance provided to the grantee programs.

The evaluation team also reviewed materials developed by the FLSN for grantees. The FAQs and FLSN Fact Sheets provided AIR with insight into grantees' methods for collecting data and administering assessments. The Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement was also reviewed and used as a resource for developing survey questions assessing grantee program growth.

Child Outcomes Study

During Year 3 and Year 4, the evaluation team at the Center for Improving Child Care Quality (CICCQ) at UCLA continued conducting the in-depth child outcomes study that started in Year 2. The purpose of this sub-study was to assess the effects of the Initiative on children in a broad range of developmental areas (e.g., social, emotional, language, and cognitive development) using a variety of assessment tools administered by trained, independent assessors. This longitudinal study enabled us to capture developmental growth across time for children participating in the Family Literacy Initiative grantee programs.

Sample

In Year 2, CICCQ staff recruited families and children by visiting each grantee program and providing information about the study and procedures to all families of eligible children. Written consent was collected from parents willing to participate. Among families who agreed to participate, four to eight children per classroom were randomly selected within gender and age categories. That is, children were selected such that there were approximately equal numbers of boys and girls and equal numbers of children in the two age ranges—those who were expected to enter kindergarten in one year (the four-year-old cohort) and those who were two years away from kindergarten entry (the three-year-old cohort). A total of 111 children in 23 classrooms were selected for the study.

Children were assessed at three or four time points, depending on their age. All children were assessed in the fall of Year 2 (Time 1) and in the spring of Year 2 (Time 2). In Year 3, children from the three-year-old cohort were assessed again (Time 3). Children in the four-year-old cohort had enrolled in kindergarten in Year 3, so they were followed into kindergarten and given the same battery of assessments (referred to as the kindergarten assessment period). In Year 4, when the three-year-old cohort had entered kindergarten, they were also assessed for a fourth and final kindergarten data point.

Measures

The same battery of measures, including direct child assessments, classroom observations, and parent interviews, were used at each time point. Each of the measures is described below:

- The *Pre-Language Assessment Scales* (*Pre-LAS*) (Duncan & De Avila, 1985) measures children's oral English language proficiency and consists of six subtests. In this study, three subtests were used to determine whether the child should be assessed in English or Spanish.
- Receptive language was measured by the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (*PPVT*) (Dunn, Dunn, & Dunn, 1997), version III (English)/*Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody* (*TVIP*) (Spanish). These assessment tools are designed to assess children's language development. These are standardized measures.
- *Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement –Revised (WJ III ACH)* is another standardized measure designed to assess intellectual abilities and academic achievement. In this study, we used the Applied Problems subtest to measure children's cognitive development. *Batería Woodcock-Muñoz Pruebas de Aprovechamiento-Revisada* is the Spanish version.
- A *Letter Naming* measure developed by the National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL) for the Multi-State Study of Pre-Kindergarten.
- A *Numerical and Counting Awareness* measure (NCEDL).
- A *Color Naming* measure (NCEDL).
- An *Early Writing* measure (NCEDL).
- A measure of *Story and Print Concepts* developed for the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) to measure children's emergent literacy.

The children were observed in their classrooms using two observation tools. The *Emergent Academic Snapshot* (Ritchie, Howes, Kraft-Sayre, & Weiser, 2001) was used to measure child engagement, adult engagement, and teacher-child engagement. The *Classroom*

Assessment Scoring System: Pre-K Version (La Paro et al., 2004) measured the overall classroom quality.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated in order to give an overview of the sample with regard to family characteristics, program quality, and child outcomes. A series of paired-sample t-tests were then conducted to assess change on each measure from Time 1 to Time 2 and from Time 1 to the kindergarten follow-up. A series of correlations and regressions were also used to examine the strength of associations among family characteristics, program quality, and child outcomes.

Finally, the effects of participation in family literacy programs were calculated using hierarchical multiple regression analyses. For each outcome measure (TVIP, Pre-LAS, story and print concepts, and number of letters named), the following variables or sets of variables were added to models in a series of steps: Time 1 score, demographic variables, and program quantity (hours of attendance) and quality (percent of time engaged in literacy activities) variables. Hierarchical Multivariate Linear Modeling (HMLM), or growth modeling, was also used to examine individual change across the main data collection periods (Time 1, Time 2, Time 3 as applicable, and kindergarten).

Chapter 3: Family Literacy Program Leadership and Administration

Before examining the quality of the individual components—adult education, parenting education and PCILA, and ECE—of the family literacy programs, we examine the leadership and principles that govern the direction of these components and the programs as a whole. Program leadership and administration form the foundation for a successful program, ensuring that services are provided in a manner consistent with the goals of family literacy— ensuring that the program is adequately staffed to provide high quality services to families, that components are effectively integrated to maximize benefits for families, that collaborators and partners are on board with program policies, that families are meeting program requirements and their own goals, that services provided address families needs, and that funding plans are in place for long-term sustainability. As noted in the FLSN's *Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement in Family Literacy Programs* (Family Literacy Support Network, 2005), strength in the area of program leadership and administration "can help strengthen the individual components, component integration, and program sustainability." Because program leadership and administration together are viewed as a basic building block for quality improvement in other areas, this domain was identified by the FLSN as a critical area for self study for all grantee programs.

Characterizing the level and quality of program leadership and administration is the focus of this chapter. In particular, we examine program management and staffing, the integration of the four components, the extent to which grantees address families' unique needs, and grantees' funding and sustainability.

Program Management and Staffing

The success of any organization starts with its personnel. Therefore we begin with a focus on the leadership of the grantee programs—the program directors themselves—and their strategies for staffing programs with qualified personnel.

Program director background

Given the four distinct but related components of family literacy programs and the complexity of coordinating these components effectively, it is important that family literacy programs have strong leaders. In addition to coordinating the four program components, program directors are responsible for establishing staffing policies, working with collaborators, securing and maintaining adequate and appropriate facilities, and managing program budgets, among other duties. This section explores the qualifications and relevant experience of the individuals charged with these tasks.

On the whole, grantee program directors are relatively well educated. When surveyed in Year 4, all 14 program directors reported having at least a bachelor's degree. More than half (57 percent) reported having a master's degree, and 21 percent have taken some graduate-level courses.

Grantee program directors vary in terms of their experience in the role of family literacy program director. On average, program directors reported six years of experience as program director in any family literacy program, and four years of experience in their current position.

Length of time in the current position ranged from 1 to 11 years in Year 4, indicating that programs have experienced some staff turnover in the past few years. In fact, comparing the list of program directors at the end of Year 4 reveals that fewer than half of the program directors have held the same position since the Initiative began in 2002.

Having expertise in one or more of the content areas of family literacy adds to program directors' ability to monitor the quality of program components and contribute to quality improvement efforts. Eleven of the 14 program directors surveyed in Year 4 reported having a major, minor, or special emphasis in a field related to one or more of the components (e.g., adult education, child development). The three remaining program directors had degrees in education administration, social work, and business administration. Twelve program directors reported having teaching experience in one or more of the four components, and 11 of these have taught in multiple areas.

Ten of the 14 program directors (71 percent) reported having a background in early childhood education—either teaching experience (43 percent) or a degree in early childhood education, child development, or human development (64 percent). Half (50 percent) of the program directors reported having a background in adult education; all seven of these reported experience teaching adult education, and five reported having a degree in adult education (three with specializations in ESL education). Nine program directors (64 percent) reported experience as a parent educator, teaching either parenting education, PCILA, or both. These nine have a range of educational backgrounds, including degrees in adult education, ECE/child development, human development, and general education.

Five of the 14 program directors (36 percent) reported that they still teach in one or more of the four components. One serves as an adult education teacher; three teach a combination of either ECE and PCILA or parenting and PCILA; and one teaches ECE, parenting, *and* PCILA—while also directing the family literacy program.

Staffing

In addition to a strong program director, a high quality family literacy program needs staff who are qualified with the appropriate education, training, and experience. In Year 1, program directors identified their staff as one of the greatest strengths of their programs, and program parents often highlight their teachers when asked what they like about their program. Hiring, training, and retaining qualified staff is the responsibility of the program leadership, and strong programs have procedures in place to guide this process. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 describe actual staff qualifications in each of the four components; in this section we explore policies and procedures that underlie staffing decisions and challenges experienced by program directors.

Most programs have procedures in place for ensuring some level of staff quality. For example, on the Year 4 program director survey, 13 grantees (93 percent) reported having written job descriptions and/or expectations for all staff. These job descriptions and expectations may guide hiring decisions as well as staff evaluations. Eleven program directors (79 percent) reported conducting annual job performance reviews for their family literacy staff; one program is working on developing an annual review process. For many programs, however, staff evaluations are not based on actual observations of teaching. Only six program directors (43 percent) reported that they conduct observations of their family

literacy teachers in the classroom on a quarterly basis, though five additional program directors reported that they were working on putting such observations in place.

Generally, staff turnover was high across the grantees. Significant staffing changes between Years 2 and 3 were reported by 9 out of 15 grantees. These changes included new program directors or coordinators as well as changes in staff for the ECE and adult education components. One program director noted that they were forced to reduce the size of the staff overall due to budget cuts.

Despite these changes, most program directors did not cite staffing as a significant challenge for their program in Year 4. Only two program directors reported large challenges associated with staffing their program; both were associated with staffing the parenting education component (see Exhibit 3.1). Four of the 14 program directors (29 percent) reported experiencing moderate challenges associated with staffing their ECE and or adult education components with qualified staff. Compared to program director reports in Year 2, concerns about staffing individual components seem to have decreased somewhat, though staffing the ECE component with qualified staff remains at least a moderate challenge to program directors in four out of ten programs.

Exhibit 3.1: Percentage of program directors reporting staffing challenges, Year 4
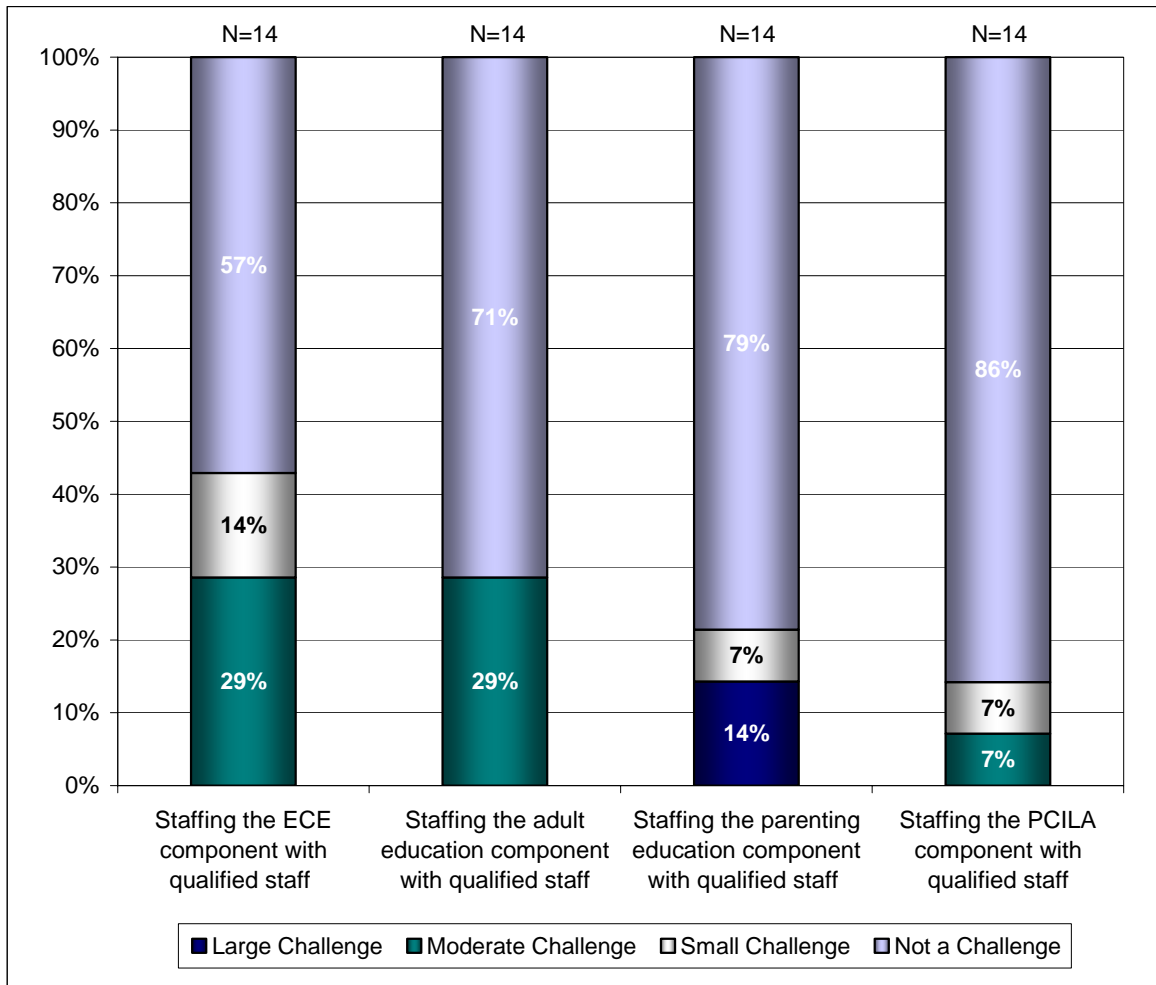
Source: Year 4 program director survey.

Program directors identified several reasons behind the staffing challenges they faced during Year 3 interviews. Several reported that it is difficult to find teachers who are qualified and willing to work for the salaries offered by the programs. Often, though, the nature of the problem varies by program component. For example, for ECE teachers, retention is an issue. One program director noted that because their program is only part-time, they often lose teachers who can get full-time employment at an elementary school. While it is not as difficult to find qualified staff for the adult education component, program directors noted that it is hard to find the right person to teach adult education in the family literacy environment, in which the teacher must address the needs of the entire family and sometimes accommodate children in the classroom. Another program director noted that her program struggles because all of the hiring for the adult education component is done through the adult school, and the family literacy program has no input into the selection of the teachers. In PCILA and parenting education, the primary challenge seems to be finding qualified staff who are also bilingual, a critical skill for this population.

Even with qualified staff, ongoing training is important. The FLSN provides training to the grantees free of charge, and few grantees reported challenges associated with identifying appropriate training opportunities. However, as in Year 2, program directors continued to report struggling to find time (or substitutes) for their staff to attend trainings in Year 4. Five of the fourteen (36 percent) indicated that this was a large challenge and another four program directors (29 percent) identified it as a moderate challenge (see Exhibit 3.2), somewhat higher than the 53 percent of program directors who labeled it a moderate or large challenge in Year 2.

Working within and across agencies

Family literacy programs are typically housed within one lead agency but reliant on multiple service providers across various agencies to meet their families' needs. Eight of the 14 Cohort 1 grantees operate primarily through school districts; the other 6 are community-based organizations (CBOs). Negotiating the relationships between the program and the lead agency and its many partners and collaborators can be challenging; one complication is that programs often must work through their lead agency's hiring or requisition structure in order to hire staff and secure space and funding. More than one-third (36 percent) of the program directors surveyed in Year 4 reported that they experienced some challenges working within their lead agency, though only 14 percent reported experiencing moderate or large challenges with their lead agency. These numbers are consistent with Year 2 reports, suggesting little change in the last two years.

To facilitate relationships with collaborating agencies and to ensure that these partners are fulfilling program needs, the majority of programs (93 percent) have formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) in place to define the relationship and expectations (the one program that does not currently have partner MOUs indicated that they were working on putting such agreements in place). Only 21 percent of program directors reported moderate challenges in collaborating with other agencies or school districts, and none reported large challenges (see Exhibit 3.2). Similar to results reported in Year 2, 57 percent of programs directors indicated that they did not have any challenges with their partners and collaborators.

Exhibit 3.2: Percentage of program directors reporting moderate or large challenges experienced by their programs, Year 4

Challenge	Percent	N
Securing adequate funding for program	71%	N=14
Providing resources that enable staff to attend trainings	64%	N=14
Securing permanent space	50%	N=14
Securing appropriate space	50%	N=14
Interpreting data	46%	N=13
Using data for program improvement	43%	N=14
Using the First 5 LA database system	31%	N=13
Integrating all four program components	29%	N=14
Collecting data required by First 5 LA	21%	N=14
Collaborating with other agencies or school districts	21%	N=14
Working within the program's lead agency	14%	N=14
Finding apt opportunities for staff to receive training	14%	N=14
Retaining families	7%	N=14
Recruiting families	7%	N=14
Achieving high attendance rates	0%	N=14

Percent of Program Directors

Source: Year 4 program director survey.

Component Integration

The integration of the four components is what makes Family literacy programs unique. To maximize the impact of family literacy services, the adult education, ECE, parenting education, and PCILA components must be aligned and focused on meeting the needs of participating families. When asked about the difference between teaching in a family literacy program and teaching in a one- or two-component program, program staff highlighted the sense of community that is created when the learning process is based on the family as a whole, rather than considering the needs of children and adults independently. However, as we see from the program directors' interviews and surveys and staff focus groups, full integration is often difficult to achieve.

First, we find substantial variation in how program staff perceive integration as a concept and also in the strategies they use to achieve integration. When program directors were asked in Year 3 interviews what a fully integrated program should look like, five reported that a family literacy program is integrated when they provide a variety of services to the population they serve, such as health insurance and employment resources. Two program directors understood integration as the use of common themes across program components. Three others reported that integration was achieved through cross-component communication and meetings with teachers from each of the components. One program director explained, "Successful programs deliver all four components in a unified manner so all students, staff, and support services are pretty aware on any given day of what might be going on with ourselves and the clients we are serving… Integration… means staying in touch." In addition, one program director was unclear on the term integration and another was unsure about what it might look like in a setting like theirs.

According to the Year 4 program director survey, 57 percent of grantee programs held a planning meeting at least monthly with teachers from all four components (data not shown). Through teacher focus groups in Year 3, we learned that these meetings are not always attended by individuals from all four components, however, with adult education teachers least likely to be present. The purposes of the meetings also range from planning themes to case management.

Perhaps as a result of these meetings, in Year 3, teachers in all 12 focus groups where the question was asked said they were aware of what other teachers were teaching in other components, though at two programs teachers reported that not all teachers were as informed. In addition to learning about what happens in other components through integration meetings, program staff reported that they also learned about component activities through newsletters, memos, program calendars, and listening to participants discuss what they are learning in other classes.

In Year 4, 77 percent of program directors reported that they use themes to integrate instructional content in each component. When we asked teachers if they adapt their lessons to integrate what other teachers are teaching in their classes, their responses were consistent with the responses of the program directors. That is, teachers in focus groups at most program sites reported that they modify their lessons to incorporate themes from other components, at least to some extent. However, some of the teachers said that themes are integrated across some, but not all four, components. For example, one ECE teacher reported "there are monthly themes prepared by the ESL teachers, but it doesn't include the parenting component."

Exhibit 3.3: Percentage of program directors reporting the use of various strategies for integrating the four components, Year 4

Strategy	Percent	N
Use of themes to integrate instructional content	77%	N=13
PCILA teachers attend regular planning/ integration meetings with teachers across components	77%	N=13
Parenting education teachers attend regular planning/ integration meetings with teachers across components	77%	N=13
Staff across components participate in case management meetings	67%	N=12
ECE teachers attend regular planning/ integration meetings with teachers across components	67%	N=12
Adult education teachers attend regular planning/ integration meetings with teachers across components	62%	N=13
At least monthly planning meetings with staff from all four components	57%	N=14

Percent of Program Directors

Source: Year 4 program director survey.

PCILA is the component that most naturally lends itself to integration. Ten of the 14 program directors surveyed indicated that activities in PCILA are developed based on the activities taking place in the other components, which is not surprising given the proportion of PCILA teachers that also teach another component. For example, in four programs, PCILA activities are linked to the ECE classroom through thematic units and/or parent participation in the ECE classroom. Two program directors highlighted the link between PCILA and the parenting component, and at one program, the evaluation team observed the PCILA teacher and parenting teacher conferring regarding PCILA activities. At two programs, PCILA is based on joint planning between the adult education and parenting education teachers, while at another program, the ECE and parenting education teachers plan PCILA together. Finally, one program director noted that the content of PCILA is based on the thematic units that unite all four family literacy components. In this way, PCILA may serve as the "glue" that ties the other components together.

When asked about challenges experienced by the program, integrating the four components was not high on program directors' lists. Most reported that it was a "small challenge" or "not a challenge" at all (72 percent of challenges); only 7 percent reported that it was a "large challenge" (see Exhibit 3.2). The most common

barriers to fully integrating a program reported by program directors were a lack of funds to organize meetings, teachers that are not willing to change their curriculum, and adult education teachers with classes in which not everyone is part of the family literacy program.

Meeting the Needs of Families

In order to understand the effectiveness of family literacy programs in context, it is also important to document how they are reaching families who need their services. This information comes from program director surveys and profile forms completed by grantees about the families enrolled in their programs.

Reaching families that need family literacy services

In order to maximize the benefit of family literacy services, programs must identify the families that are able to benefit most and that can commit to a minimum level of participation. In this section, we explore grantee recruitment strategies and the characteristics of families that participate in the programs.

Recruitment of families

One tool available to program directors in the recruitment and selection of families is a clear recruitment plan. Program director responses on the Year 4 survey indicate that only 36 percent of programs have a written plan in place that identifies specific target populations and details the methods to be used to recruit participants from those populations. One possible explanation for this relatively low percentage is the feeling among program directors that recruiting families is not a particular challenge. More than half of the program directors surveyed (57 percent) reported that recruiting families is not a challenge at all. While some reported that it is a small challenge, only one identified it as a moderate challenge. The FLSN has pointed out the importance of having such a plan in their *Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement*, and although many program directors have not yet adopted a written plan, 43 percent reported that they are developing one.

According to attendance data, 571 families (578 adults and 742 children) participated in all four components of the First 5 LA family literacy programs in Year 3, and 512 families (519 adults and 646 children) participated in Year 4. The drop from Year 3 to Year 4 is due in part to the loss of one grantee from the Initiative. However, per grantee averages are also slightly lower in Year 4; one grantee reported a 34 percent drop in enrollment. As shown in Exhibit 3.4, grantees vary dramatically in the number of families served in one year, from as few as 12 to as many as 62 in Year 3.

Exhibit 3.4: Number of families (and adults and children in those families) participating in all four components, by year

	Year 3 (15 grantees)		Year 4 (14 grantees)	
	Total number of participants	**Mean (range) of participants per grantee**	**Total number of participants**	**Mean (range) of participants per grantee**
Families	571	38 (12-62)	512	34 (14-60)
Adults	578	39 (13-62)	519	35 (15-60)
Children	742	49 (14-88)	646	43 (17-75)

Source: Year 3 and 4 attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system.

Many grantees also have waiting lists, enabling programs to efficiently fill open spaces when families leave the program without having to start over with recruitment efforts. The majority of programs (86 percent) reported on the Year 4 survey that they maintain up-to-date waiting lists to draw from.

Characteristics of families served

According to the data collected by program staff through the First 5 LA Participant Profile Forms administered at the beginning of the program year or soon after enrollment, families participating in Year 3 and 4 are very similar to those described in Year 2. The vast majority of adult participants are women (98 percent in both years); most were married or living with a partner (90 percent in Year 3 and 92 percent in Year 4) at the time the survey was administered; and most are Hispanic or Latino (96 percent in Year 3 and 95 percent in Year 4) and speak Spanish (92 percent in Year 3 and 90 percent in Year 4) as their primary language at home. Most parents in the family literacy programs were born outside the United States (96 percent in Year 3 and 94 percent in Year 4), though only 9 percent in Year 3 and Year 4 have been in the country for two years or less. Two-thirds (64 percent in both years) immigrated to the U.S. six or more years ago (see Exhibit 3.5).

The family literacy grantees continued to serve an economically disadvantaged population in Years 3 and 4. As Exhibit 3.5 demonstrates, participants generally had little formal education prior to their participation in the family literacy programs. Just over a third (38 percent in Year 3 and 34 percent in Year 4) of the adults participating in the program have an eighth-grade education or less; another third (36 percent in Year 3 and 34 percent in Year 4) have some high school education, but no diploma. In addition, the majority of participants (95 percent in Year 3 and 92 percent in Year 4) have received no schooling once in the United States.

Exhibit 3.5: Demographics for families participating in all four components, by year

	Percent (N) of Adults	
	Year 3	Year 4
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	96% (511)	95% (454)
Asian	2% (8)	2% (11)
Black or African American	1% (6)	1% (7)
White	0.2% (1)	0.4% (2)
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2 (1)	0.0% (0)
Other	1% (6)	1% (5)
Immigration (Years in the U.S.)		
Less than 1 year	4% (24)	3% (16)
1 to 2 years	5% (26)	6% (29)
3 to 5 years	23% (121)	21% (103)
6 to10 years	34% (181)	35% (167)
More than 10 years, but not entire life	30% (160)	29% (139)
Entire life/born in the U.S.	4% (24)	6% (27)
Parent education		
8th grade or less	38% (194)	34% (160)
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	36% (184)	34% (160)
High school graduate/GED	14% (71)	15% (71)
Some college, no degree	6% (30)	7% (31)
Associate degree or higher	7% (36)	10% (46)
Household income		
$10,000 or less	18% (85)	18% (78)
$10,001 to 20,000	58% (270)	57% (252)
$20,001 to 40,000	22% (100)	21% (93)
Over $40,000	2% (9)	4% (17)

Source: Participant profile data downloaded from the grantee data system.

The largest portion of families surveyed (58 percent in Year 3 and 57 percent in Year 4) reported a total household income of between $10,001 and $20,000 a year; another fifth (22 percent in Year 3 and 21 percent in Year 4) of families fell in the $20,001 to $40,000 range at the time of the survey. Three-quarters (75 percent in Year 3 and 78 percent in Year 4) of families reported receiving some form of financial, medical, housing, or food assistance. The two most common forms of support reported by family literacy participants were food assistance, such as food stamps, WIC, food pantry, or other food supports (reported by 64 percent in Year 3 and 68 percent in Year 4) and health care, including MediCAL, Healthy Families, or other publicly supported health coverage (reported by 56 percent in Year 3 and 63 percent in Year 4). On the whole, adults participating in the family literacy programs tend to be women who are not in the labor force. Of the adult participants with profile data, 89 percent reported being unemployed in Year 3, and 90 percent in Year 4).

Though some programs also serve older children, all of the children included in this evaluation were in the birth-to-five age range. Most of the children were in the three-to-five-year age range, though just under one third (28 percent in Year 3 and 30 percent in Year 4) were younger than three. There were about as many girls as boys, and parents reported that they were generally healthy. Most child participants were described by their parents to be in

"excellent," "very good," or "good" physical health; only 3 percent of participating children were described as having "fair" or "poor" health in Years 3 and 4.

Eight percent of children participating in the programs in Year 3 and 11 percent in Year 4 had been identified as having a special need (e.g., health/physical, vision, hearing, language/speech, learning, behavioral). A small number (3 percent in both years) of participating children also had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)—written plans for meeting children's special education needs— at the time the profile form was completed.

Additional services to address family needs

To address the range of needs experienced by families, family literacy programs offer a wide array of services to their participants in addition to services in the four core components. These services include assistance with basic needs, such as helping families gain access to adequate housing, food stamps, and income support; as well as services such as prenatal care, counseling, and immigration assistance.

Program directors reported a wide range of participating families' needs on the Year 4 survey (see Exhibit 3.6). The most common services needed involved assistance interacting with immigration or with the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) (48 percent of families), job training or placement (43 percent), medical care or health insurance (42 percent), and counseling or mental health services (38 percent). However, program directors varied greatly in their responses, with some program directors reporting that none of their families needed a particular service and others reporting that all of their families needed the service, suggesting that families differ from program to program.

Exhibit 3.6: Program director estimates of the percentage of families needing various services, Year 4
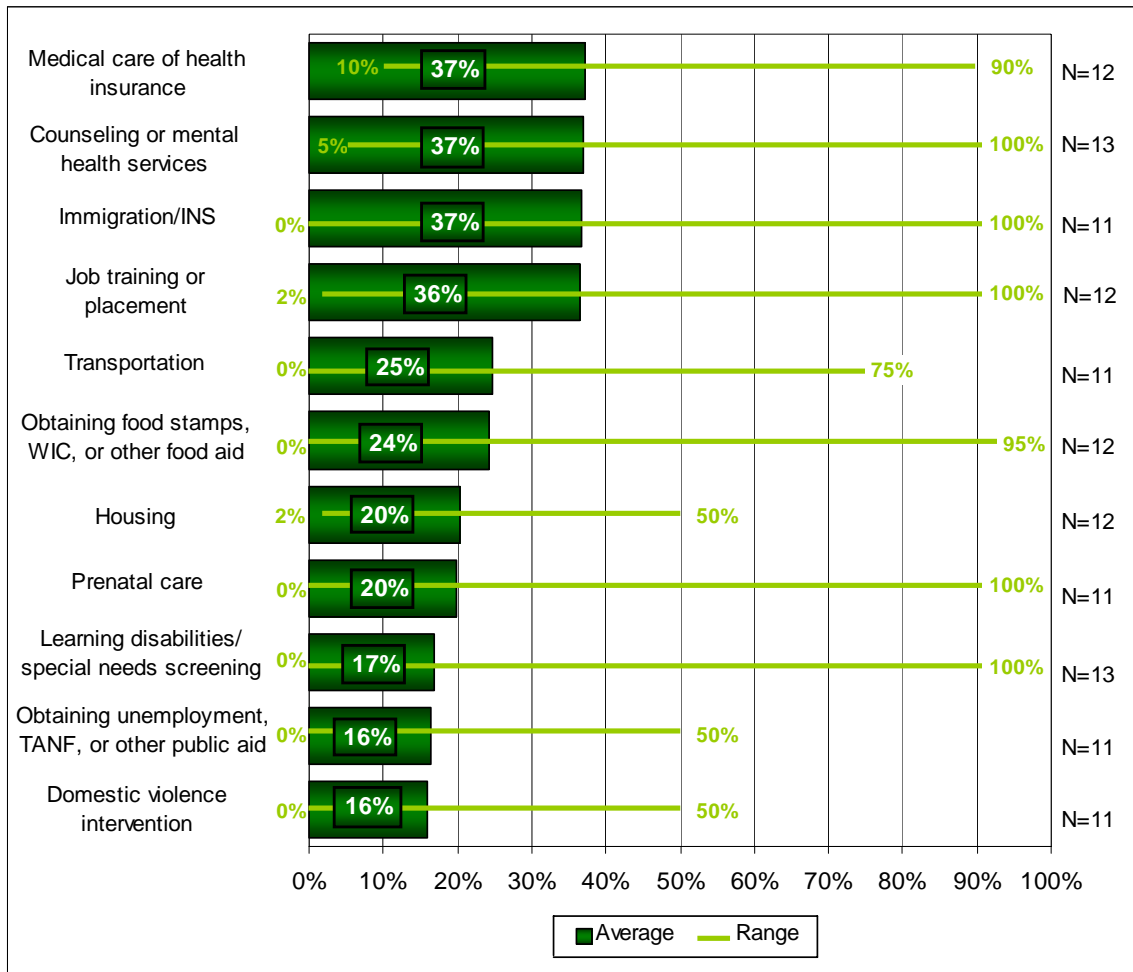
Source: Year 4 program director survey.

Grantees are able to offer many of these services, either directly or through referrals to other agencies. Almost all programs (93 percent) offer (or provide referrals to) counseling or mental health services, screenings for learning disabilities or other special needs, and assistance obtaining food support services such as WIC or food stamps (see Exhibit 3.7). Job training or placement, and assistance with medical care or health insurance are also commonly provided through grantee programs. Overall, program services appear to align fairly well with families needs. In addition, we see some evidence that families are taking greater advantage of social services available to them by the end of the year. While only a small percentage of families (30 percent in Year 3 and 37 percent in Year 4) had completed follow-up profile forms that documented services received, significantly more families were receiving at least one form of support (financial, medical, housing, or food assistance) at the end of the year compared to at the time of enrollment—increasing from 78 percent to 96 percent in Year 3 and from 80 percent to 99 percent in Year 4.

Exhibit 3.7: Percentage of programs offering the following services, Year 4

Service	Direct services	Referral	N
Job training or placement	54%	31%	N=14
Learning disabilities/ special needs screening	38%	62%	N=14
Counseling or mental health services	36%	57%	N=14
Transportation	31%	38%	N=14
Domestic violence intervention	25%	58%	N=14
Immigration/INS	23%	54%	N=14
Prenatal care	17%	58%	N=14
Obtaining food stamps, WIC, or other food support	14%	79%	N=14
Medical care or health insurance	14%	64%	N=14
Housing	14%	57%	N=14
Obtaining unemployment, TANF, or other public aid	14%	57%	N=14

Source: Year 4 program director survey.

Given the degree to which family literacy programs rely on referrals to other agencies, it is important that they have policies and procedures in place for referring families, documenting the number of referrals made for different services, and following up with families afterward. However, only about a third (36 percent) of program directors indicated that they have written procedures in place for making referrals to community services, suggesting a less organized approach. Having a written policy is recommended in the FLSN Framework, and 36 percent reported that although they do not yet have a plan in place, they are in the process of developing one.

More than half of program directors surveyed in Year 4 (57 percent) reported that they have a system for documenting the referrals they make for program participants. An additional 21 percent reported they are in the process of developing a tracking system for referrals. Forty-three percent of program directors reported having a protocol in place for following up on the referrals they make to their participants, and 21 percent reported that they are working on developing a protocol.

Ensuring Sufficient Intensity and Duration of Core Services

Once basic needs are identified and addressed through the additional services that grantees provide and families are "ready to learn," the core family literacy services—adult education, parenting education, PCILA, and ECE—must be provided with sufficient intensity and duration to effect change. Grantees' attendance and retention policies and procedures support this effort.

Attendance policies and rates

To ensure that families attend sufficient hours of service to experience growth, programs implement attendance policies. If parents do not meet attendance requirements, many programs feel they have an obligation to make the space available to a family that will take more advantage of the opportunity. Eighty percent of program directors indicated that their program has a written attendance policy, and another 14 percent reported that they are creating one. Only one program director reported that her program did not have a plan in place and was not in the process of developing one. With increasing accountability to First 5 LA for attendance rates, programs may be feeling greater pressure to demonstrate high attendance.

As shown in Exhibit 3.8, grantees achieved their target attendance rates of 70 percent in Year 4. They also came close to this benchmark in Year 3, even though the requirement was not introduced until Year 4.[7] On average, parents attended 38 hours of adult education (ESL, ABE, etc.) per month in Year 4, up from 30 in Year 3. This is the only dramatic change between Year 3 and Year 4, and may result from the new requirement to offer 48 hours of adult education per month in Year 4. Hours of service received in each of the other components remained relatively stable over the two-year period: parents received 6 to 7 hours of parenting education, children received 41 to 43 hours of ECE, and children and parents attended 11 hours of PCILA per month, on average.

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[7] Attendance rates appear somewhat lower in Years 3 and 4 compared to Year 2, but this is due in large part to an adjustment in the calculation of these rates. Attendance rates are calculated by dividing the number of hours attended by the number of hours offered for each individual participant. Unlike in Year 2, missing information in Years 3 and 4 in the number of hours offered was imputed based on information for other families in the same program. As noted in the Year 2 report, attendance rates in Year 2 were inflated as a result of missing data; we believe these Year 3 and 4 rates are more accurate.

Exhibit 3.8: Mean attendance hours and rates for each component, by year

	Year 3		Year 4	
	Mean hours attended per month (N)	**Mean attendance rate**	**Mean hours attended per month (N)**	**Mean attendance rate**
Adults				
Adult education	30.2 (578)	72.3%	37.6 (519)	73.4%
Parenting education	6.4 (577)	70.3%	7.4 (518)	70.0%
PCILA	10.8 (577)	70.2%	10.6 (519)	71.9%
Children				
ECE	42.7 (685)	71.0%	41.3 (605)	73.5%
PCILA	11.2 (728)	67.5%	10.9 (553)	72.5%

Source: Year 3 and 4 attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system.

In addition, on the whole, program directors reported on Year 4 surveys that achieving high attendance rates was not a significant challenge. Most (86 percent) said that achieving high rates of attendance for their families was a small challenge (see Exhibit 3.2). The remaining two program directors reported that this was not a challenge at all.

Retention

Ensuring that families remain in the program long enough to meet their goals is another potential challenge faced by programs. Family literacy programs serve a relatively mobile population, and with the amount of time that participation requires, it can be difficult for families to maintain their participation over an extended period of time. Over the course of the three-year period for which we have data (Years 2 through 4), enrolled families attended family literacy services for approximately 10 months on average (data not shown). In Year 3, we find that adults attended for approximately eight months, receiving 378 hours of service, and children attended for seven months and receive 332 hours of service. In Year 4, adults received 448 hours of service over an eight-month period, and children received 371 hours of service over the same time period (see Exhibit 3.9).

Exhibit 3.9: Mean duration of families' participation in each component, by year

	Year 3		Year 4	
	Mean hours attended per year (N)	Mean months attended per year (N)	Mean hours attended per year (N)	Mean months attended per year (N)
Adults—total	378 (578)	8 (578)	448 (519)	8 (519)
Adult education	239 (578)	—	305 (519)	—
Parenting education	52 (577)	—	59 (518)	—
PCILA	87 (577)	—	84 (519)	—
Children—total	332 (686)	7 (686)	371 (606)	8 (606)
ECE	307 (686)	—	347 (606)	—
PCILA	84 (729)	—	86 (554)	—

Source: Year 3 and 4 attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system.

Retaining families was identified as a moderate challenge by one program director in Year 4; 43 percent reported that it is a small challenge, while the remaining 50 percent reported that it is not a challenge at all. It is important for programs to understand the pressures that limit families' participation in program services so that they can adjust their services to better meet families' needs. On the whole, it appears that programs are aware of families' circumstances, and the majority of program directors (93 percent) reported on their Year 4 surveys that they document the reasons why families leave the program.

Program Funding and Sustainability

The evaluation team also investigated how programs used First 5 LA funds, resource challenges programs were facing, and what efforts were underway to ensure long-term sustainability. These data came from expenditure reports submitted to First 5 LA from grantees, program director interview, and program director surveys.

Use of First 5 LA funds

Exhibit 3.10 shows the breakdown of how First 5 LA grant funds were used in Years 3 and 4 for all grantees, by category. In Year 3 about two-thirds (67 percent) of First 5 LA funds covered personnel costs for grantee programs. The second highest proportion of funds was spent on indirect costs, at 9 percent. No other cost exceeded 6 percent of total funds spent. In Year 4, an even higher proportion of funds (79 percent) was spent on personnel. No other cost exceeded 5 percent of total funds spent.

Exhibit 3.10: Percentage of First 5 LA funds spent by grantees on various costs, Years 3 and 4
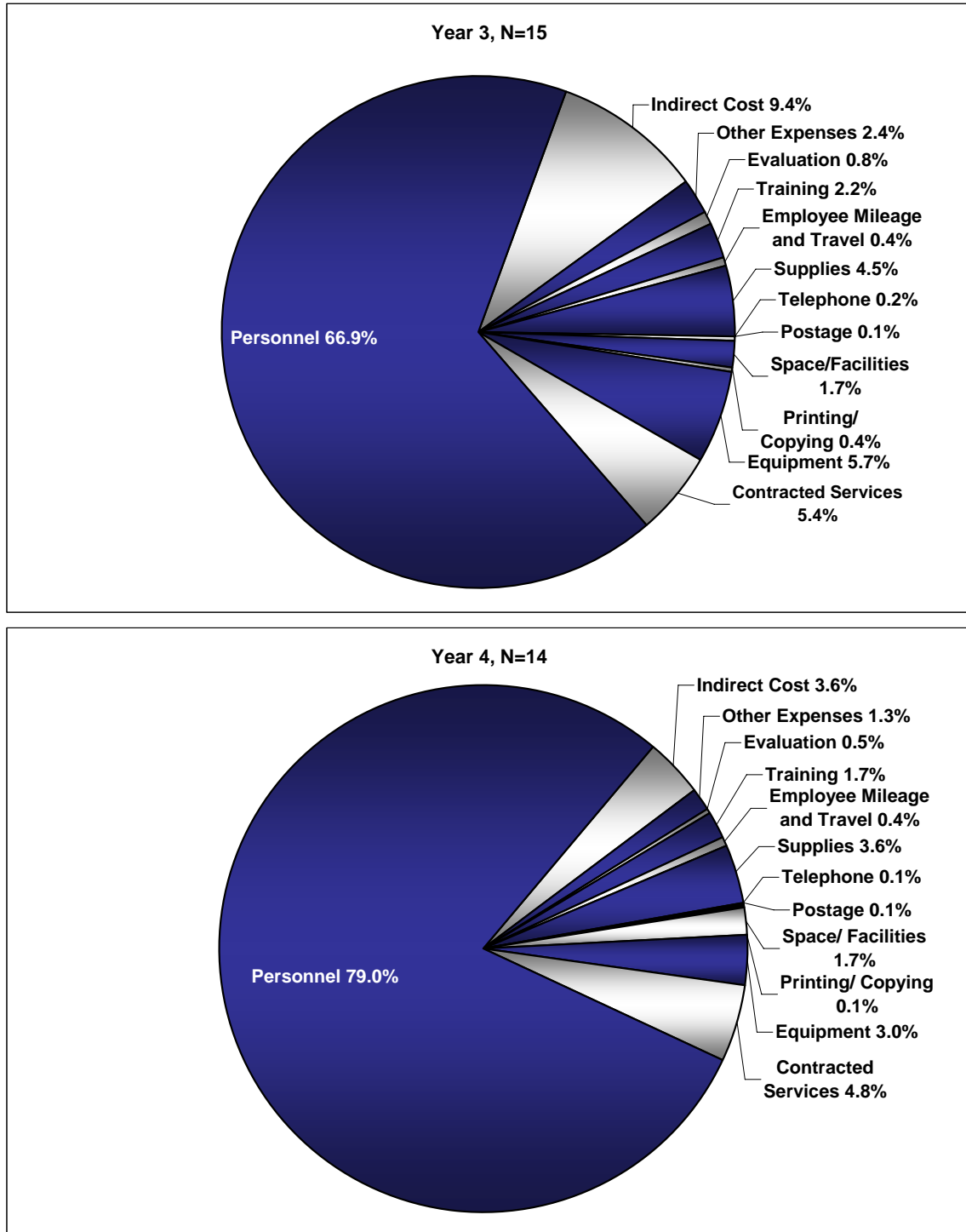
Source: Year 3 and 4 grantee invoices to First 5 LA.

The proportion of funding grantees received from First 5 LA, as reported by program directors, varies widely, from less than 35 percent to 100 percent; however, four program directors did not know what percentage of their funding was from First 5 LA. The most common percentage reported was 65 percent.

When asked what would happen if First 5 LA funding did not continue, four program directors noted that programs for younger children—typically birth to three—would be cut. Two program directors said they would have to cut data management staff. Overall, respondents indicated that without First 5 LA funding, they would find a way to stay open, but that quality would be much lower.

Resource changes and challenges

When asked in Year 3 interviews about changes experienced since Year 2, six program directors reported that their funding had changed. Half of these programs obtained additional grants that provided funds for new books, additional support staff, and field trips. Other services added included an additional ESL class and high school diploma program, a "Mommy and Me" computer class, and an evening program designed to reach more fathers and working parents. Another program reallocated First 5 LA funds that had originally been set aside for other purposes to establish a computer lab, class library, and take-home resources for families.

Two programs experienced a reduction in funding, which required cutting back services. Several programs were forced to reduce their services for one reason or another. For example, one grantee closed a site that offered career transition services, and another closed a Saturday program. For one program, the reduction in ECE and child care services at one of their sites required families to move to the other program site, limiting the number of new families that the program could accommodate.

Several family literacy programs reported changes to the physical space available for their programs; one program lost one of the bungalows used for adult education classes, while another program gained a bungalow to use as a parenting center. In previous years, securing appropriate and permanent space has been a significant challenge to the family literacy programs, and reports from Year 3 and Year 4 indicate that space continues to be one of the areas in which programs struggle the most. Similar to findings in Year 2, 50 percent of program directors surveyed in Year 4 identified finding appropriate and permanent space as moderate or large challenges (see Exhibit 3.2). In Year 3 interviews, program directors noted that with more space they could enroll more parents and offer additional services. For several other programs, holding on to their existing space appears to be a more fundamental problem. One program director noted that she always has to worry about losing the program's space at the elementary school, while two others reported that they have to share their space with other programs. At one program, where a shortage of space has been a chronic problem, the leadership developed a strategic plan to address the issue.

Sustainability efforts

Long-term sustainability is a major concern for grantees. When we visited programs in Year 3, immediately prior to the decision to re-fund the Initiative, many grantees were visibly concerned about their funding situation. Despite their reliance on other community services for referrals and collaborations, program staff and parents both reported that the family literacy programs provided the most comprehensive education services in the community, and that there were few, if any, alternatives. Staff and parents at 14 of the 15 programs visited in Year 3 reported that if their program did not exist, there would be no other place in the community where families would be able to go to access the services that the family literacy programs provided.

Given the unique role that family literacy programs fill in their communities, it is especially important that programs have a plan to maintain their financial viability. When asked about their five-year funding plans in Year 3, programs varied in the degree of planning they had done. Two programs were interested in applying for Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy funds, and one site had already received these funds. Some grantees affiliated with school districts reported trouble competing for funding because of this association for two reasons: the school district may have already received funds from that source, or because funds are often reserved for 501(c)(3) organizations. New efforts from programs in Year 3 were primarily focused on private foundations rather than public funds. Program directors often mentioned that they were concerned about the possibility of reduced availability of federal funds such as Even Start. A group of grantees also formed a collaborative in Year 3 to apply for funding together.

By the end of Year 4, program director survey results indicate that only 43 percent of grantees currently have a written fundraising plan in place to guide their sustainability efforts, and an additional 43 percent are working on developing one. Once the Initiative was re-funded at the end of Year 3, the pressure to put a fundraising plan in place may have been reduced. However, securing adequate funding for their programs remains the number one challenge faced by program directors. Nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of program directors reported that securing funding was a moderate or large challenge in Year 4 (see Exhibit 3.2). Since the Initiative's refunding, having a sustainability plan has become a requirement, so we would expect to find more attention given in this area by the end of Year 4.

When asked how First 5 LA funding has impacted their sustainability, two program directors indicated that First 5 LA funding has strengthened their infrastructure. One of these sites also said that their accountability systems had been strengthened. Another site reported that at least three of their sites would not exist without First 5 LA funds. First 5 LA funds have also allowed some grantees to hire new staff; one site reported that hiring new staff has made the program better, and another was able to hire staff to devote to sustainability and plan writing. One program director said that First 5 LA funding has increased grantees' credibility and thus helped with fundraising, noting that the funding has also made their program less expensive for other funders. Another program director said they "did fine without them," but that First 5 LA funds did provide a new level of stability.

Summary

To assess program quality, we began with an analysis of programs' leadership and administration. On the whole, program directors are well qualified. All have at least bachelor's degrees, most have a background in early childhood education, and about half have a background in adult education. On average, they have six years of experience in family literacy programs.

Most programs have procedures in place to ensure staff quality, such as written job descriptions and annual performance reviews. However, only six program directors currently conduct regular classroom observations to ensure quality. Staff turnover is high, but program directors did not cite staffing as a significant challenge for them; only a few described difficulties securing appropriate staff.

Achieving full component integration remains a challenge for many grantees. Interpretations of component integration varied across programs; two program directors expressed some uncertainty about what integration should look like at their program. Almost two-thirds of program directors reported holding at least monthly meetings with teachers from all four components, though teachers told us that often, not all teachers participate in these meetings. However, teachers reported that they generally know what happens in other components and they do their best to adjust their lessons to incorporate common themes.

Most programs do not have plans in place to recruit families for their programs, though most say that recruiting families, retaining participants, and achieving high attendance rates are not challenges. Overall, grantee programs served 571 families in Year 3 and 512 families in Year 4 and achieved target attendance rates of 70 percent. The vast majority of adult participants are Hispanic or Latina mothers who speak Spanish, are married or living with a partner, are economically disadvantaged, and have been in the U.S. at least two years. Most children served in the programs are in the three-to-five age range, though just under one third (28 percent in Year 3 and 30 percent in Year 4) are younger than three. Families join the programs with a wide range of needs, the most common of which is assistance with immigration issues. Overall, the services and referrals provided by family literacy programs align well with the needs of families.

The proportion of grantees' budgets that come from First 5 LA funds ranged from 35 percent to 100 percent in Year 3, and these funds were vitally important to most grantees. Program directors indicated that without these funds, they would find a way to stay open, but the quality would be much lower. Programs reported that First 5 LA funds have strengthened infrastructure, provided stability, allowed for new sites and new staff, and given credibility to grantees in applying for other grants. However, the biggest challenge programs reported was securing adequate funding.

Chapter 4: Supporting Adult Education

The adult education component of family literacy incorporates a variety of services designed to support adult learning. Family literacy parents have the opportunity to participate in English as a second language (ESL) and adult basic education (ABE) classes, as well as preparation for the general educational development (GED) test. Some family literacy programs also offer college classes and vocational education or job training programs. This chapter focuses on adult education services offered by the family literacy programs.

First, we examine the quality of services offered through the adult education component, summarizing results from analyses of attendance data, program director surveys administered in Year 4, and interviews and focus groups with program directors, staff, and program participants conducted as part of the Year 3 site visits.

We also examine impacts of adult education classes on parents by analyzing data collected by program staff using the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Reading assessment, which measures adult basic reading skills in English. We examine both change over time on the CASAS and also growth with respect to the intensity and quality of program services received to estimate program impact.

Quality of the Adult Education Component

As noted above, the adult education component includes classes to improve parents' literacy, English language, and academic skills. As indicated in Exhibit 4.1, all grantee programs offered ESL classes in Years 3 and 4, and the vast majority of parents (90 percent) were enrolled in these classes. Somewhat fewer programs offered ABE classes (40 percent in Year 3 and 50 percent in Year 4), and GED classes (27 percent in Year 3 and 43 percent in Year 4). In addition, 60 percent of the programs also offered vocational education or job training courses to support parents' employment goals. Although 58 percent of parents reported that improving their chances of getting a job or getting a better job was one of the reasons why they joined the program, only 16 percent in Year 3 and 18 percent in Year 4 were participating in employment skills classes. Enrollment in ESL classes suggests that developing English skills may be a first priority.

To assess the quality of grantees' adult education component, the evaluation team examined program intensity, teacher qualifications, ESL curricula, and teachers' use of assessment data. Each of these is described below.

Exhibit 4.1: Percentage of programs offering (and parents enrolled in) various adult education classes, by year

	Year 3 (15 grantees)		Year 4 (14 grantees)	
	Percent (N) of programs offering	Percent (N) of participants enrolled	Percent (N) of programs offering	Percent (N) of participants enrolled
ESL	100% (15)	90% (524)	100% (14)	90% (483)
ABE	40% (6)	7% (42)	50% (7)	8% (84)
GED	27% (4)	4% (22)	43% (6)	8% (77)
Job training/ vocational education	60% (9)	16% (95)	43% (6)	18% (94)
Other (e.g., college courses)	33% (5)	3% (20)	21% (3)	1% (6)

Source: Year 3 and 4 attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system.

Program intensity

In order to demonstrate substantial progress toward adult learning goals, parents need to participate in sufficient program hours. Starting in Year 4, grantees were required to offer 48 hours per month of adult education to their families. Exhibit 4.2, which summarizes data recorded by grantee staff in the online data system, suggests that not all programs were meeting this intensity requirement in Year 4. During Year 3, family literacy grantees offered an average of 38 hours of adult education classes per month. Overall adult education hours offered increased considerably in Year 4, however, up to an average of 46 hours per month. Participants were offered just over 35 hours of ESL per month, on average, in Year 3 and 40 per month in Year 4.

Exhibit 4.2: Mean number of hours of adult education offered per month by type of class, by year

	Mean hours offered (N)	
	Year 3 (15 grantees)	Year 4 (14 grantees)
Total adult education	38.4 (578)	46.3 (519)
ESL	35.5 (524)	40.4 (483)
ABE	21.9 (42)	16.8 (84)
GED	36.0 (22)	15.4 (77)

Source: Year 3 and 4 attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system.

When we spoke with parents about their experiences in adult education classes in Year 3, we heard a number of comments about the number of hours programs offered services. While the majority of parent comments about their adult education classes were generally very positive, a number of parents reported wanting more adult education hours. For example, parents at four programs indicated that they would like to have longer adult education classes and/or have class more often. These parents reported that the additional time would help them to make greater progress toward their adult education goals.

Teacher quality

Program directors reported that a total of 66 adult education teachers provide instruction to parents in the 14 family literacy programs, averaging 4 to 5 teachers per program, and many of these teachers are employed by a partnering adult school. To assess teacher quality, we look first to their educational backgrounds and prior training experiences.

In their responses on Year 4 surveys, program directors reported that the vast majority of adult education teachers—65 of 66 teachers (98 percent)—have at least a bachelor's degree. This is consistent with data collected on the Year 2 teacher survey in which 98 percent of adult education teachers reported having a bachelor's degree.

Program directors also reported that most of the adult education teachers are certified in the area of adult education. They indicated that 64 of the 66 adult education teachers have an adult education teaching credential (97 percent). Only one program reported that they do not have any adult education teachers with an adult education teaching credential. The percentage of credentialed teachers in Year 4 is substantially higher compared to Year 2 data collected directly from teachers, in which only 67 percent of adult education teachers reported having an adult education credential. It is likely that program directors are not the best source of information on the qualifications of adult education teachers, many of whom are employed by a partnering agency and thus are not directly reporting to the program director.

While teacher education and credentials are important, a teacher's style or general approach may also have a significant impact on parents' ability to engage and learn in the classroom. Overall, parents reported that they feel comfortable in their adult education classes and feel that their teachers are approachable, positive and supportive. Parents reported that they are not afraid to ask questions or make mistakes, and that their teachers and classes make them feel more confident in their abilities, especially in using their English language skills.

The ESL classroom

Since most parents attend ESL classes, we focus on the ESL classroom—the curriculum and instruction, the classroom environment, and the teacher's use of assessment data for monitoring student progress.

ESL curriculum and instruction

The majority of program directors (7 of 11, or 64 percent) who provided information on their adult education curriculum in Year 4 indicated that their adult education curriculum is based on either state or district standards or the CASAS competencies. One program director reported that the adult education instructor determines the curriculum herself. Other program directors reported using various textbooks and other published materials to guide their curriculum, such as *Side-by-Side*, *Expressways,* and *Stand Out* as well as the computer programs *Rosetta Stone* and *Destinations*.

Program directors also described teachers' use of a wide variety of instructional strategies in the adult education component of their program. They reported that teachers engage their students in small group activities as well as independent work, peer tutoring, and teacher modeling of effective strategies.

Though most parents were appreciative of the opportunity to attend ESL classes and felt that they were making progress learning English, in focus groups conducted as part of the Year 3 site visits, parents also provided suggestions for improving the content of their adult education classes. For example, ESL students at several programs indicated that they would like additional instructional strategies to be added to help them improve their English language skills. Among their suggestions were having students listen to the radio, offering additional help with writing in English, and providing additional opportunities to practice their oral language skills.

Classroom environment

During our Year 1 site visits, the evaluation team observed that ESL classes were generally interactive and lively, though they tended to be large, with a relatively high student to teacher ratio. When asked what they liked most about the adult education component, and what could be improved, parents' comments in Year 3 often related to the classroom environment. Some parents provided critical feedback about the size of their classes. Parents at three programs indicated that they would like the program to have more space for adult education, as there are too many students in one classroom, limiting the amount of individual attention available to each student. Parents also commented that having too many different ESL levels in one classroom makes it difficult to receive individualized attention from the teacher. These suggestions echo some of the challenges that program directors acknowledged their programs face in the program director surveys and interviews. As discussed in Chapter 3, lack of appropriate space continues to be a challenge for several grantees.

Assessments

Teachers' use of assessment data to monitor student progress can help them to tailor their instruction and re-focus their curriculum to ensure they are meeting their students' needs. All of the ESL teachers are required to administer the CASAS reading assessment and monitor student progress over time. Teachers participating in Year 3 focus groups reported using CASAS assessment data to varying degrees. Of the teachers who indicated that they made use of the CASAS data, most reported that they use the data primarily to discuss progress with individual students, to identify concepts that require additional review, and to make changes to curriculum and materials to address additional student learning needs. However, several ESL teachers noted that they do not use the CASAS data to guide their instructional decisions at all.

Adult Learning Outcomes

We assessed parent learning outcomes by examining change over time on the CASAS reading assessment, which, as noted above, was administered on a regular basis to all parents participating in ESL and ABE classes. While observing growth in reading skills does not necessarily mean that participation in the family literacy programs is effecting change, it is important to first understand the patterns of change over time. We approach the issue of assessing impact in two ways. First, we examine parents' perceptions of the impact of their participation on their English skills. While not conclusive, their feedback suggests important effects. Second, we examine the relationships between growth on the CASAS and the amount and quality of adult education services parents have received. This dose-response model

explores the hypothesis that parents who receive more (and better quality) ESL and/or ABE instructional interventions will experience greater gains in their CASAS scores.

Growth on the CASAS reading assessment

Change over time in the CASAS reading assessment, which measures adults' basic reading skills in English, was analyzed in Years 3 and 4. We examined CASAS assessments administered between May 1, 2004 and July 31, 2005 for Year 3, and between May 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006 for Year 4, following the methodology described in Chapter 2. Analyses of change over time were limited to parents who participated in at least 100 hours of ESL and adult basic education (ABE) combined between Time 1 and Time 2 in order to allow for sufficient time in the program to demonstrate growth. On average, the difference between Time 1 and Time 2 was 7.0 months in Year 3 and 5.8 months in Year 4.

Overall, parent achievement on the CASAS reading assessment indicates that parents are making progress toward becoming more literate in English (see Exhibit 4.3). In Year 3, parents showed statistically significant improvement on the CASAS between Time 1 and Time 2; at Time 1, the average score was 216.7, while by Time 2, the average score had increased to 223.1. Adults with Time 1 scores of 210 or lower (classified as beginning basic skills) demonstrated a statistically significant increase of 11.1 points, and adults with Time 1 scores of 211 or higher (low intermediate to advanced) showed a statistically significant increase of 3.6 points.

Parents also showed similar progress on the CASAS reading assessment in Year 4. At Time 1, the average score was 215.1, while by Time 2, the average score had increased to 221.4, another statistically significant change. In Year 4, adults with Time 1 scores of 210 or lower (classified as beginning basic skills) again demonstrated a statistically significant increase, but larger than in Year 3 (13.1 points in Year 4 versus 11.1 points in Year 3). Adults with Time 1 scores of 211or higher (low intermediate to advanced) showed another statistically significant increase, but smaller than in Year 3 (2.9 points in Year 4 versus 3.6 points in Year 3).

Seventy-five percent of adults with "beginning basic skills" (scores of 210 or lower at Time 1) achieved the Even Start target gain of five points between Time 1 and Time 2 on the CASAS reading assessment in Year 3, and an even greater percentage (78 percent) did so in Year 4. Fifty-one percent of those adults with Time 1 scores of 211 or higher (low intermediate to advanced) achieved the Even Start target of gaining 3 points between Time 1 and Time 2 in Year 3, and 58 percent did so in Year 4.

Exhibit 4.3: Mean CASAS reading scores at Time 1 and Time 2 for all parents receiving at least 100 hours of ESL and/or ABE, Years 3 and 4

Year 3

	Time 1	Time 2
All parents*** (N=157)	216.7	223.1
Beginning basic skills*** (N=59)	200.2	211.3
Low intermediate to advanced*** (N=98)	226.6	230.2

Year 4

	Time 1	Time 2
All parents*** (N=137)	215.1	221.4
Beginning basic skills*** (N=46)	198.2	211.3
Low intermediate to advanced*** (N=91)	223.7	226.6
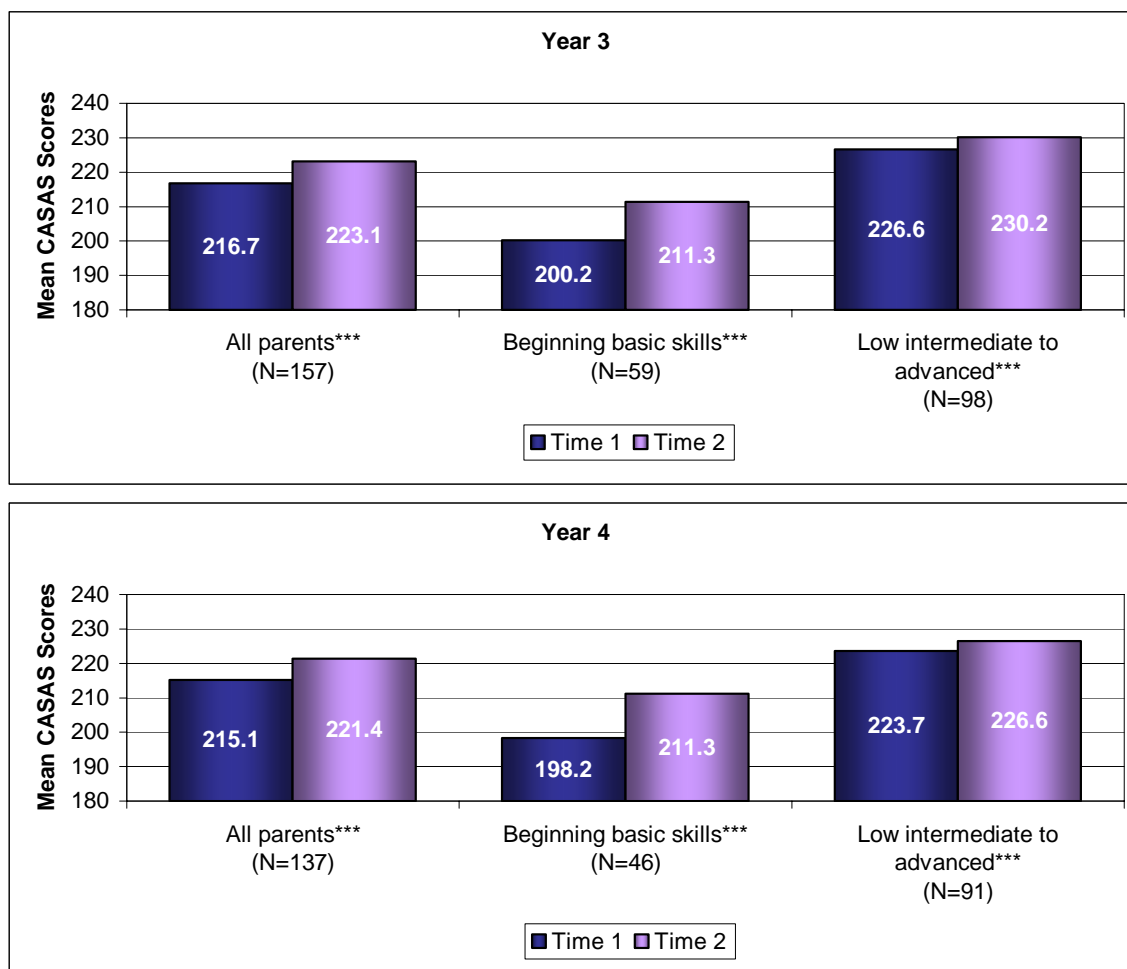
Source: CASAS Reading assessment data downloaded from the grantee data system.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

In addition to assessing overall change from Time 1 to Time 2, we examined characteristics of parents showing high growth on the CASAS to determine if these individuals had experiences that were different from others that enabled them to excel. "High performers" were identified as those whose change in score from Time 1 to Time 2 was in the top 20 percent in terms of growth. "Low performers" were identified as those whose change in score from Time 1 to Time 2 was in the lowest 20 percent in terms of growth.

We observed some demographic differences between these two groups, but they did not tell a consistent story. Most notably, in both years, high performers had a significantly lower pretest score compared to other adults, and low performers had a significantly higher pretest score compared to other adults. In other words, participants who demonstrated the greatest growth entered the program with the most room to grow.

Parent reports of changes they experience

Serving focus groups in Year 3, parents identified several major impacts from their adult education classes. Since an overwhelming number of parents participated in ESL, it is not

surprising that one commonly reported major impact of participation in family literacy was learning English. Participants reported that learning English allows them to communicate more easily in public venues where English is spoken. Parents from 11 of the programs reported that as a result of the ESL classes, they can now communicate with teachers, doctors, store clerks, and others. As a result of their improved English skills, numerous parents also reported no longer needing a translator during visits to doctors. One participant noted that she can now read labels on medication. Increased ease of communication also played out in the home. At three programs, parents noted an increased ability to communicate with their children who would respond to them in English.

At ten programs, participants reported that their improved ability to communicate with English speakers had increased their self-esteem and confidence. When they could not communicate with English speakers, participants reported feeling anxiety, fear, frustration, and embarrassment. Understanding English made daily transactions and experiences such as shopping or riding the bus less stressful for participants. Below are some descriptions of how learning English affected the daily routines of participants.

- Before learning English, one mother described how she would become very nervous at the store if the cashier did not know Spanish; her hands would sweat from her nerves. Now she is more confident; she can explain her needs and respond to the cashier's questions, even if they are in English.

- One mother explained how she avoided situations where she needed to know English. She would not even watch the news on TV, because she did not understand the language and she felt frustrated by this. After participating in the program and learning English, she lost that frustration and is eager to watch television or read because she understands what is happening.

- Learning English gave another mother the feeling of having a new life. When she used to go shopping, she would guess at what unfamiliar items were rather than ask questions, or she would try to communicate with gestures. After participating in the family literacy program, she communicates with teachers, the director, and her doctor. Every day she understands more English, and even her son encourages her, saying, "You speak English now!"

Increased confidence levels and progress toward self-sufficiency were important impacts identified by parents—both key goals of family literacy programs, and likely to impact their lives and their children's lives over the long term.

Parents reported that their ESL classes also had an impact on their ability to participate in their child's education. Parents at 11 programs reported being able to help their children with their homework as a result of learning English. Knowing English allowed parents to answer their child's questions about different words, sing songs the child had learned in preschool, and read to their child (in English). Participants also reported being able to speak with teachers, read notes sent from school, and write notes to the school without the help of their spouse or child.

Participants from five programs reported learning how to use a computer as a result of the adult education component. Another participant said she learned she could not break the

computer just from touching a key. Learning such basic lessons assuaged her fears and gave her the confidence to work on the computer and improve her skills. One mother reported that she could now help her high school daughter with her computer class homework.

Exploring impacts of program participation on CASAS scores

To further understand program impacts on parents, we analyzed CASAS scores at Time 2 in relation to the amount and quality of adult education services parents received. Initial analyses revealed that in Year 3, there were only small and statistically insignificant correlations ($r = .03$) between hours of ESL and ABE classes parents attended and their CASAS scores at Time 2. However, in Year 4, these correlations were stronger and statistically significant ($r = .18$). In other words, parents who participated in more hours of ESL and ABE tended to show more growth on the CASAS at least in Year 4.

To examine these correlations further, we used regression analysis to analyze the relationship between Time 2 scores and hours attended, controlling for the Time 1 score. In both Year 3 and Year 4, the score at Time 1 was a much stronger predictor of the score at Time 2 (indicating that parents with higher scores at Time 1 were more likely to have higher scores at Time 2, compared with those that started out with lower scores at Time 1) than was hours of attendance. However, in Year 4, hours of attendance remained a statistically significant predictor of CASAS scores. Thus, even after controlling for starting scores at Time 1, Year 4 parents who attended more hours achieved higher CASAS scores at Time 2. Exhibit 4.4 shows this relationship between hours attended and predicted Time 2 score. For example, a parent who participated for 432 hours (the equivalent of the required 48 hours per month for nine months) and had an initial score of 215 would be expected to score 225 on the CASAS at Time 2, but a parent who participated minimally at only 20 hours over the course of the year would be expected to score 217 at Time 2.

Exhibit 4.4: Predicted Year 4 Time 2 CASAS score by number of hours of ABE + ESL participation
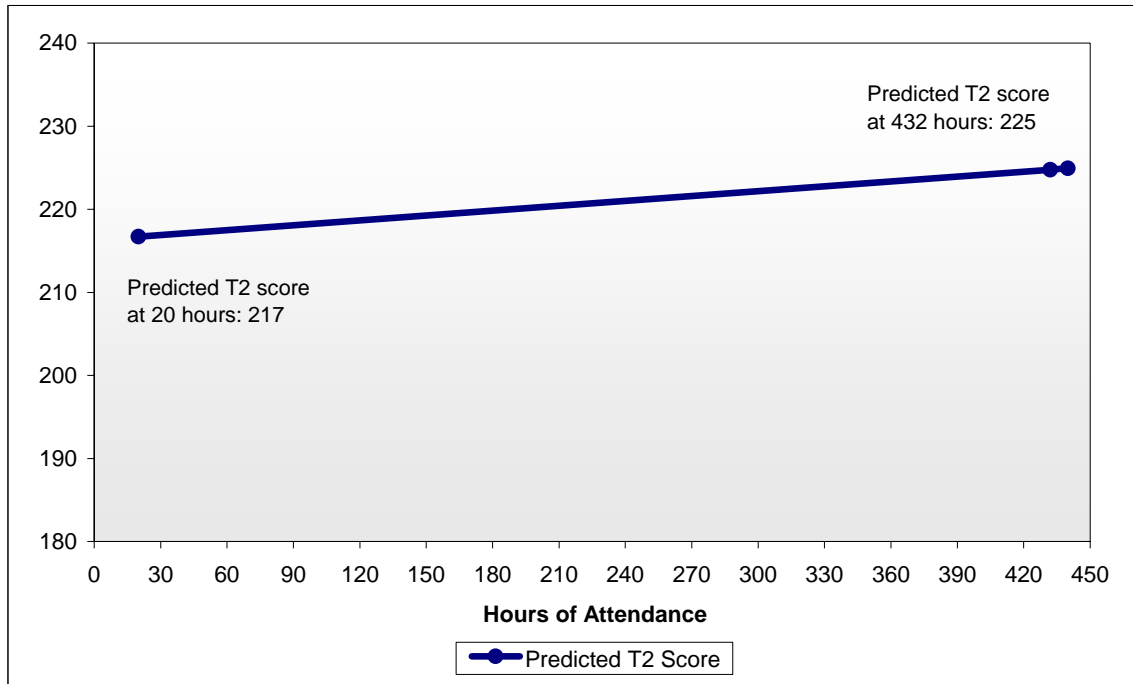
Source: CASAS Reading assessment and attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system.

In addition to exploring the relationships between CASAS growth and the number of hours of family literacy services received, we also hypothesized that parents receiving more high quality adult education would realize greater gains on the CASAS assessment. To test this, we examined the relationships between teacher qualifications—one measure of program quality—and parents' performance on the CASAS. We found that parents who were in programs with a higher percentage of teachers holding an adult education teaching credential or certificate were more likely to have a higher CASAS score at Time 2, even after controlling for Time 1 scores and number of hours in the program. There was very little variation in teacher qualifications, however, this suggests further exploration of program quality characteristics and the relationships between quantity and quality of services received and participant outcomes is warranted.

Summary

All grantee programs offered ESL classes in Years 3 and 4, and many also offered adult basic education (ABE) classes, GED classes, and vocational education or job training courses. To assess the quality of grantees' adult education component, the evaluation team examined program intensity, teacher qualifications, and ESL curricula. Data recorded by grantees indicate that parents were offered an average of 38 hours of adult education per month in Year 3 and 46 hours in Year 4, just under the new Year 4 requirement to offer a full 48 hours per month.

Generally, adult education teachers are well qualified. Most have at least a bachelor's degree and an adult education teaching credential. In addition to these credentials, parents reported that they feel comfortable in their adult education classes and feel that their teachers are approachable, positive, and supportive. Curricula and instructional approaches in ESL classes

vary across programs. Parents reported they were generally satisfied with ESL classes, but they had some requests for smaller class sizes, more writing guidance, and more opportunities to practice oral language skills.

There is considerable evidence that the adult education component of these programs is having some impact on families. One major impact of participation in family literacy often reported by parents was learning English, and therefore an increased ability to participate in their child's education and become more self-sufficient. Parents' CASAS scores also suggest some improvement as a result of the programs. Across all levels, participants demonstrated significant growth on the CASAS in Years 3 and 4. In addition, in Year 4, parents who attended more hours of ESL and ABE scored higher on the CASAS Reading assessment.

Chapter 5: Supporting Parenting Knowledge and Practices

Parenting education and parent and child interactive literacy activities (PCILA) are designed to support parenting knowledge and practices. In the parenting education component, parents learn about child development and are provided with parenting strategies, particularly in the areas of communication and their role as their child's first teacher. The PCILA component allows parents and children to have one-on-one time together to share learning experiences. Ideally, PCILA also serves as an opportunity for parents to practice what they have learned in the parenting education class while receiving feedback and support from program staff.

This chapter provides an examination of the quality of services in each of these components, as well as a discussion of the outcomes and impacts of these services on family literacy parents. For this analysis, we draw on data from program director reports of teacher qualifications and curricula used in each component in Year 4, Year 3 data from focus groups with program staff and parents, and observations in the PCILA classroom. Information on the impacts of parenting education on Year 3 and 4 participants was collected through the grantee-administered California Even Start Performance Information Reporting System (CA-ESPIRS), which measures parenting practices, in particular, parents' support of their children's learning at home. In addition, as part of the child outcomes study, we collected information on parent-child activities at home for the subsample of families participating in this substudy.

Quality of the Parenting Education and PCILA Components

To assess the quality of the two parenting components, we examined several factors identified as quality indicators. We assessed the intensity of the parenting education and PCILA classes, the qualifications of the teachers leading the classes, and the curricula and activities described by program staff and observed by the evaluation team.

Program intensity

Parenting education classes make up the smallest component of participants' family literacy experiences, relative to their time in the other three components. Many program schedules offer adult education classes Monday through Thursday and then hold parenting education class on Friday. Thus, there is comparatively less time for discussion of parenting topics. However, starting in Year 4, grantees were required to offer 10 hours per month of parenting education and 10 hours of PCILA to their families to ensure that families had sufficient time both to learn new strategies and practice them. According to data reported by grantee programs, on average, parents were offered approximately eight hours of parenting education per month in Year 3 and just under 10 (9.6) hours per month in Year 4—substantially less than the time adult education was offered, but meeting the First 5 LA requirement for Year 4, if we round up (see Exhibit 5.1).

Exhibit 5.1: Mean number of hours of parenting education and PCILA offered per month, by year

	Mean number of hours offered per month (N)	
	Year 3 (15 grantees)	Year 4 (14 grantees)
Parenting Education	7.9 (577)	9.6 (518)
PCILA	13.5 (577)	13.3 (519)

Source: Year 3 and 4 attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system.

When asked for feedback on the parenting education component, parents often indicated (as they did with the adult education component) that they would like more time in their classes. Given the limited time spent in parenting education overall, this is not surprising. This suggestion is also consistent with the research on promising practices in parenting education, which emphasizes the importance of "frequent and sustained" contact with parents for effecting change (Powell, 2004, p.163). On the other hand, program staff (and in many cases, parenting education staff, also serving as child education or PCILA instructors) often do have "frequent and sustained" contacts—or at least opportunities for daily impromptu interactions—with parents through the more extended adult and child education program components, since parents are typically on site every day participating in each of the four required program components.

On average, grantees offered somewhat more PCILA hours each month than parenting education hours. Data recorded by grantees indicate that families were offered just over 13 hours of PCILA per month in Years 3 and 4, with some variation across programs. For children, this time is in addition to the time spent in ECE.

When asked for their suggestions about how PCILA could be improved, parents' recommendations largely related to changes to the schedule and/or physical environment. The primary suggestion for changing PCILA, made by parents in three programs, was to extend the amount of time PCILA is offered each day and/or to increase the number of days per week PCILA is offered. Conversely, parents in one program noted that the two-hour block of PCILA time offered in their program is too long for their children to be in one class. Observations of PCILA at this program revealed that children did indeed seem to get restless during this time block. Breaking up PCILA into shorter blocks or rotating activities more frequently might help to resolve this concern.

Teacher quality

Teachers supporting the parenting components in grantee programs are comparable in education level with the adult education teachers. In total, 22 teachers provided instruction for parenting education classes across the 14 grantees in Year 4. Of these, 21 (95 percent) have a bachelor's degree, and 17 (77 percent) have a general adult education credential or an adult education credential with a parent education specialization teaching credential.

Although there are more PCILA teachers—47 teachers in total facilitate PCILA across the 14 grantees in Year 4—as a whole, they are somewhat less educated than the parenting teachers. In Year 4, only 34 (72 percent) had a bachelor's degree; however, 13 of the 14 grantees had at least one PCILA teacher with a bachelor's degree. Consistent with our Year 2 findings,

program directors reported that most PCILA teachers also teach in one or more of the other family literacy components. For example, the majority of PCILA teachers (85 percent) also teach ECE, and many also teach parenting (approximately 36 percent). A smaller percentage (30 percent) also teaches adult education.

Observations of PCILA classrooms conducted during Year 3 site visits revealed teachers who were generally warm and encouraging to both parents and children. Interactions between teachers and the parents and children were generally positive and supportive. In addition, parents reported very positive experiences with their parenting education and PCILA teachers. When asked to provide feedback on these components during focus groups, parents reported that they feel supported by their parenting and PCILA teachers and that they feel comfortable asking questions.

While this was generally true across programs, parents at one program, where the parenting teacher did not speak Spanish, expressed their frustration with their inability to communicate with their teacher without a translator. The language barrier prevented them from having a free-flowing dialog during class, and, as a result, they felt they were not able to get all of their questions answered. This example highlights the importance of teacher characteristics and qualifications that extend beyond degrees and credentials to include cultural competence and linguistic compatibility with families.

Approaches to parenting education classes

Parenting education curricula vary widely across grantee programs. Several program directors identified specific formal curricula, such as the *Now and Future Parent* series, *Parents as Teachers*, and *Virtual Pre-K,* that they used to guide instruction for their program's parenting component. Five program directors specifically reported that their parenting education curriculum is based on district standards. Standards-based curricula ensure alignment between the content of instruction and key learning goals, and are particularly useful if they are tied to the curriculum used with children in the ECE component. However, locally developed curricula based on the characteristics, needs, and interests of the target audience are also important for meeting the often unique needs of family literacy families (Powell, 2004).

In Year 4, program directors reported that parenting education classes are typically structured with weekly topics for lecture and whole group discussion, guest speakers, and/or small group discussion and role play. Topics covered in parenting classes range from child development, discipline, and nutrition, to self-esteem and communication. In some programs, the content of parenting education classes is more closely linked to one or more of the other components than in other programs. For example, in one program, the parenting teacher guides parents through the activities in which their children will be engaging as part of their ECE classes for the week. In another, the parenting teacher provides take-home activities for parents to work on with their children to connect their experiences in parenting classes with PCILA activities. These Year 4 program director reports are consistent with findings from the Year 2 teacher survey, in which 91 percent of teachers reported that significant attention in parenting classes is given to child development, how parents can support their children's learning, and activities they can do during PCILA.

Although parents were generally very positive about their experiences in their parenting classes and reported learning a lot about how to support their child's learning, parents also had suggestions for improving these classes. Parents at several programs noted that they would like to have more input on the topics covered in parenting class and would like to have more time for discussion and to ask questions. Guided discussion on topics generated by parent interest is an effective way to help parents incorporate new beliefs and strategies into their interactions with their children (Powell, 2004).

In addition, parents emphasized the value of talking to the other parents in the class, feeling supported by their classmates, and learning from one another's experiences. These comments underscore the importance of the sense of community that is developed in many family literacy programs.

Approaches to PCILA

As noted above, PCILA provides parents and children with the opportunity to engage in learning opportunities together. PCILA is often the newest component added to the family literacy programs and has the fewest guidelines overall. Not surprisingly, we find that it is also the most informal and most variable component across the grantees.

PCILA curriculum and activities

Five program directors identified specific curricula in use in the PCILA classroom: two reported using *Creative Curriculum*, two use *Virtual Pre-K*, and one uses *Developmental Learning Materials*. Ten of the 14 program directors surveyed indicated that PCILA activities are developed based on the content of other components, which is not surprising given the proportion of PCILA teachers who also teach another component. For example, four program directors reported that PCILA activities build on themes and activities covered in the ECE classroom. Another program director noted that the content of PCILA is based on the thematic units that unite all four family literacy components. In this way, PCILA serves as the glue that holds the four components together.

Observations of PCILA at 12 grantee programs in Year 3 revealed several different approaches to structuring PCILA time. In most programs, PCILA time was divided between free-choice activities for parents and children, where children generally selected the activities they wanted to do with their parents, and a teacher-directed activity that all parent-child pairs were expected to participate in. In only two programs was the entire period observed devoted to free-choice activities.

At several programs, parents and children chose between several activity centers that had been set up prior to class. These included craft projects, such as painting, working with clay, playing with puppets, or reading a book. In some cases, the activities were heavily teacher-directed and parents and children were expected to rotate through each center over the course of the period. In others, children had the option of selecting the activities that interested them most.

PCILA time at 7 of the 12 programs observed also included an organized whole-group activity. These activities were led by the teacher and included singing songs and reading books. Teachers often used this time to set up the activities at the centers and provide instructions.

Given the goals of family literacy, we were particularly interested in how reading and literacy-related activities are incorporated into PCILA time. Literacy-related activities, such as reading or sharing books together, occurred during PCILA in 6 of the 12 programs observed. In three of these programs, the literacy focus was part of the teacher-planned activity centers or whole-group activities. In the other three programs, we observed parents and children selecting reading as an activity during free-choice time. In the six programs that did not have a literacy-focused activity, parents and children primarily engaged in arts and crafts or role-playing activities together.

In addition to in-class activities, four program directors reported having a take-home element to their PCILA program, which provides parents with activities in which to engage their children at home. At three of these programs, this involves take-home backpacks of literacy materials.

Opportunities to support parent learning through PCILA

During observations of PCILA activities in Year 3, the evaluation team observed that, overall, interactions between teachers and parents and their children were warm, attentive, and positive. However, the nature and content of these interactions varied widely across the programs. In the programs in which the activities were more teacher directed, program staff were generally involved in setting up the activities, providing directions, and periodically circulating throughout the class to help parents with the activities. In other programs, teachers spent the PCILA time interacting more directly with the children while they were engaged in activities with their parents, occasionally modeling for parents how they could extend a learning opportunity for their children. Overall, parents appeared to feel very comfortable engaging with the teachers, and interactions between parents and teachers were very positive. However, only isolated incidents of teachers giving feedback to or coaching parents directly were observed. Research emphasizes the importance of teachers working directly with individual parent-child dyads and providing parents with "specific information and explicit feedback…regarding their child's literacy development" (Powell, 2004, p.162). Ideally, PCILA provides opportunities for these kinds of more directed parent learning opportunities to occur.

The majority of parents observed during the evaluation team's observations of 12 programs' PCILA time in Year 3 seemed to be making the most of the opportunity provided by PCILA time to engage one-on-one with their children. In some cases, however, opportunities for one-on-one interactions between parents and children were limited by the nature of the activities in the classroom (whole group or teacher-directed), and in other cases, some parents were less involved with their children, or were distracted by having more than one child demanding their attention during PCILA time.

In addition, parents in focus groups at three programs in Year 3 voiced their concerns about overcrowding in the PCILA classroom. Parents at two programs indicated that the PCILA classroom is too small and another group of parents suggested that PCILA be divided into different classes according to children's ages. For parents with multiple children enrolled in the program, mixed-age groups make it difficult to balance working with each of their children, as observed during our Year 3 site visits.

On the whole, parents participating in focus groups had very positive comments about their experiences in PCILA. Parents in 10 programs noted that their favorite thing about PCILA time was the opportunity it provides them to spend quality time with their children—time that may be more difficult to carve out at home. PCILA also gives parents an opportunity to watch their children learn and to develop a better understanding of what their children can do; parents in four programs highlighted this point during focus groups. The third major benefit of PCILA voiced by parents in three programs was the opportunity to practice what they were learning in parenting class and to receive feedback and support from the teacher.

Programs' use of assessments to measure parent learning

Assessing progress is a critical aspect of instruction, and parenting and PCILA teachers typically assess parent learning using the CA-ESPIRS. In focus groups with program staff during Year 3 site visits, teachers from three programs noted that the results of the CA-ESPIRS helped them realize that they needed to do a better job of connecting program families to the library and to make this resource more accessible. As a result, they organized field trips to the library and made arrangements for parents to get library cards. Staff at another program reported that they learned that parents did not have the range of age-appropriate literacy materials that are described on the CA-ESPIRS (e.g., crayons, markers, paper). To address this need, they created take-home baskets filled with these materials for parents to use at home with their children.

Some program staff were more critical of the usefulness of the CA-ESPIRS. In particular, staff from several programs indicated that the CA-ESPIRS was not a useful tool to measure parenting skills, as parents often give answers that they recognize as being socially appropriate, making it difficult to see growth over time. This is a commonly held concern with this instrument. Together with First 5 LA and the FLSN, we are exploring alternative measures that would be more useful for program staff as well as for the evaluation.

Program quality summary

To better understand program quality in the parenting education and PCILA components of family literacy programs, the evaluation team examined program intensity, teacher qualifications, approaches and curricula, and use of assessments. Parenting education classes make up the smallest component of participants' family literacy experiences; parents were offered approximately eight hours of parenting education per month in Year 3 and just under 10 hours per month in Year 4—meeting the First 5 LA requirement of 10 hours. More PCILA time is offered by programs (13 hours on average in both years). Parents often reported they wanted more time in both parenting education classes and PCILA.

Parenting teachers were found to be relatively well qualified. Almost all parenting education teachers have a bachelor's degree, and most have an adult education or parenting education teaching credential as well. Most PCILA teachers also had a bachelor's degree, although fewer than the parenting education teachers. In the parenting education and PCILA components, parents generally felt comfortable and supported by their teachers, but in one program where the parenting teacher did not speak Spanish, parents expressed frustration with their inability to communicate with their teacher without a translator, emphasizing the importance of cultural competence among teachers and linguistic compatibility with parents.

Approaches to parenting education classes varied, as did specific curricula. Parents generally reported being satisfied with classes, but some noted that they would like to have more input on the topics covered in parenting class and would like to have more time for discussion and to ask questions. The nature and content of PCILA interactions also varied widely across the programs. During classroom observations, parents appeared to feel very comfortable engaging with the teachers, and interactions between parents and teachers were very positive, though only isolated incidents of teachers giving feedback to or coaching parents directly were observed. Some parents expressed concern over overcrowding in the PCILA classroom, but on the whole, parents participating in focus groups had very positive comments about their experiences in PCILA.

All programs use the CA-ESPIRS to assess the parenting skills of parents in their programs. There is some evidence that it provides useful feedback to better work with parents on parenting skills, but many staff were critical of its use because parents can easily detect the "correct" answers. Other measures are being explored for the next phase of the evaluation.

Parenting Outcomes

To assess the impacts of the two parenting-related components—parenting education classes and PCILA—we took several analytic approaches. First, we take stock of the changes that parents themselves have noticed throughout the course of their participation in parenting education and PCILA. Second, we examine changes observed in parent reports on the CA-ESPIRS in Years 3 and 4. Third, we address the question of program impacts more explicitly by looking at the relationships between the amount and quality of parenting services families have received and parenting behaviors as measured by the CA-ESPIRS. Finally, we examine changes in parenting behaviors once children have entered kindergarten, as reported by parents of children in the child outcomes substudy.

Parent reports of the changes they experience

First, we examine parents' own accounts of the changes they attribute to their parenting classes. During the parent focus groups, the participants were full of stories about how their parenting practices had changed as a result of the parenting class. For example, parents reported that the classes had taught them about their child's development and the importance of playing and of spending time with their child. In addition, parents also reported that they learned strategies for how to interact with their children, which included how to discipline them, how to read to their child, and even how to talk with their children about important safety issues. Parents from nine programs reported a change in how they disciplined their child, such as employing time out and not spanking their child. In addition, parents at the programs reported yelling at their children less, and in eight programs parents reported learning to have greater patience with their children. One mother reported that her son had commented on the fact that she no longer screams or fights. Another gave an example of a situation with her children in which she would have previously hit them; she explained that she instead dealt with the interaction calmly, and her children responded very favorably. She proudly attributed her actions to what she had learned from the parenting classes.

Parents also reported that their parenting classes had impacted communication in the family. At 11 programs, parents reported improved communication with their children and spouses. This included anything from learning how to express their love for their child, to learning to listen better. One mother even credited the parenting classes with helping her and her

husband to not separate; she reported talking a lot more with her husband since taking the parenting class. Parents reported that they not only learned to better communicate with their spouses, but also shared the materials and information they learned from the parenting classes with their husbands; this was reported by parents in one third of the programs. One mother said that after she began leaving her parenting book around and accessible to her "machista" husband, he stopped being dismissive and is now interested in what she is learning in the parenting classes.

Parents also reported learning about nutrition, health, domestic violence and other topics in the parenting class. At the same time, the mothers reported building a sense of community and having an opportunity to share about themselves and their family during the parenting class.

Participants overwhelmingly reported positive experiences with PCILA. At 12 programs, parents described the importance of PCILA as a time dedicated to sharing and playing with their child. Some participants reported that this dedicated time made their child feel special and secure, and had made the child more independent and open-minded. As a result of PCILA, some parents reported learning about the importance of playing with their child. As one mother described it (translated from Spanish), "I learned to be a mom; it's more important to play with my kids than to clean and cook." As a result of PCILA, parents at four programs reported that they now play with their child at home as well.

Play time during PCILA was often considered an important learning opportunity for the parents. At eight programs, participants reported learning how to play with their child as a result of PCILA. This included learning to allow the child to make choices during play, to have more patience when playing with the child, and to permit the child to resolve problems during play. Parents also reported that PCILA provided an opportunity for them to learn more about their child: to learn how their child plays and shares with other children, to learn about their child's character, and to witness their child's development.

Observed changes in parenting behaviors (on the CA-ESPIRS)

In addition to parents' reports of changes in their behaviors, we also examine changes in parent responses on the CA-ESPIRS, an in-person survey of parents that measures parents' support of their children's learning and the home literacy environment. We analyzed CA-ESPIRS surveys administered between May 1, 2004 and July 31, 2005 for Year 3, and between May 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006 for Year 4. Following the methodology described in Chapter 2, we compared parent responses on the CA-ESPIRS at Time 1 (the first assessment of the year) and Time 2 (the last assessment of the year). On average, the difference between Time 1 and Time 2 was 8.6 months in Year 3 and 8.7 months in Year 4.

We examined changes in parenting practices identified in the 13 former Even Start indicators. In each year, across all grantee programs, there was statistically significant growth in the proportion of parents meeting or exceeding the Even Start benchmarks from Time 1 to Time 2 on each of the 13 CA-ESPIRS indicators. Specifically, compared to Time 1 assessments, parents at Time 2:

- Engaged in more reading activities themselves
- Engaged in more writing activities themselves

- Kept more children's books in their home
- Read books to their children more often
- Told stories to their children more often
- Were more likely to report having a library card
- Visited the library more often
- Exhibited more interactive reading behaviors (significant in Year 4 only)
- Brought home books from the library more often
- Limited their children's television watching
- Used television as a learning tool more often
- Kept more literacy materials in the home
- Were more involved in their children's schools

Each of these changes is described in more detail below.

In both Years 3 and 4, parents demonstrated significant growth in the variety of reading and writing activities in which they were engaged between Time 1 and Time 2. As Exhibit 5.2 illustrates, the proportion of parents reading at least two types of reading materials (e.g., newspapers, books, magazines, or information sent home from the teacher or the school) in a week grew from 89 to 96 percent from Time 1 to Time 2 in Year 3, and from 90 to 97 percent in Year 4, both statistically significant changes. Similarly, the proportion of parents engaging in at least two types of writing activities (e.g., writing notes or memos, recipes, letters, stories or poems, greeting cards, crossword puzzles, or in a journal or diary) in a week grew significantly, from 70 to 87 percent in Year 3 and from 73 to 86 percent in Year 4. These changes indicate that, according to parent reports, parents are increasingly practicing and modeling literacy practices that have been associated with positive literacy-related outcomes for children.

Exhibit 5.2: Percentage (and number) of parents reporting engaging in multiple reading and writing activities in the last week at Time 1 and Time 2, Years 3 and 4

Year 3

Year 4
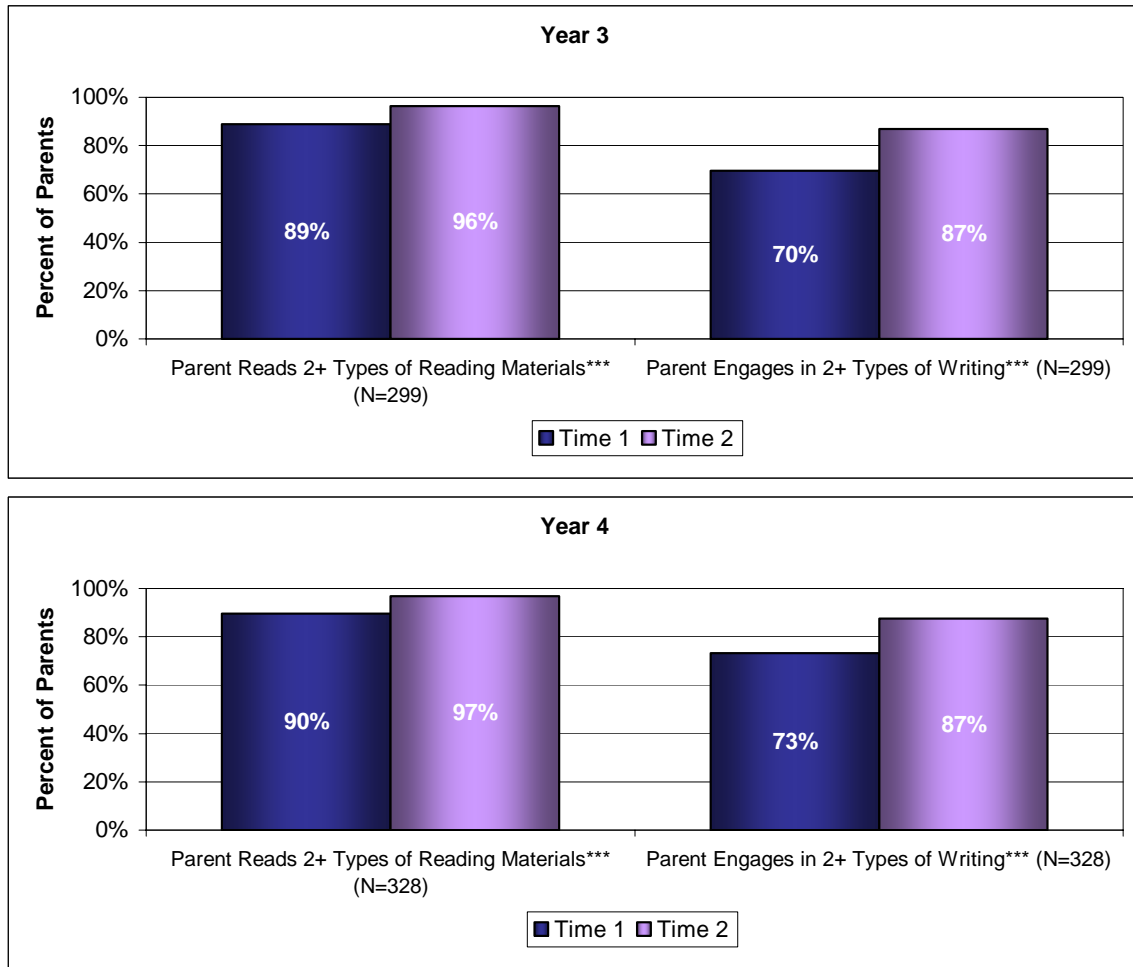
Source: Year 3 and 4 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

A key indicator of parents' support for children's learning is the number of children's books the family has at home. As shown in Exhibit 5.3, there were statistically significant increases from Time 1 to Time 2 in both years in the percentage of parents indicating they have 26 or more children's books at home.

Exhibit 5.3: Percentage (and number) of parents reporting at least 26 children's books in their home at Time 1 and Time 2, Years 3 and 4
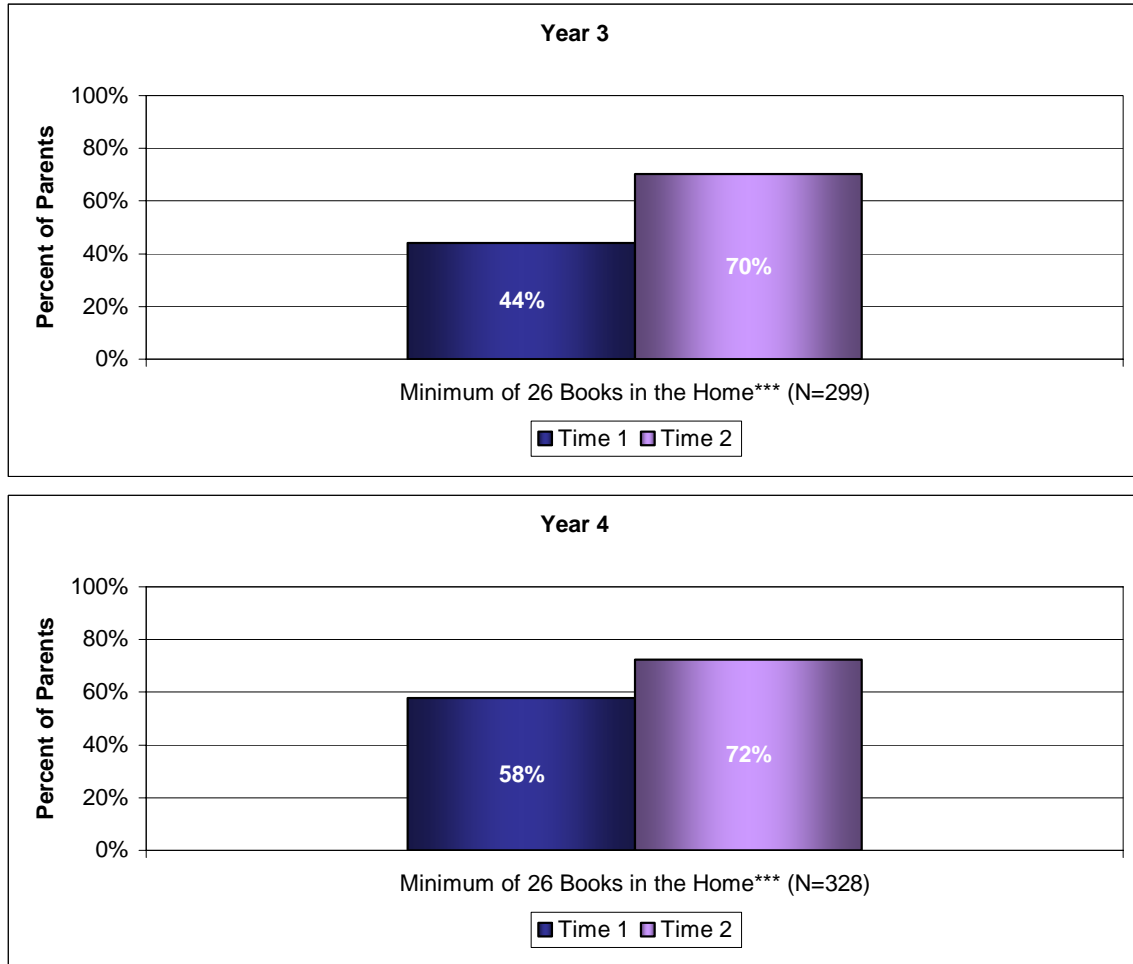
Source: Year 3 and 4 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

In Year 3, parents also indicated that they read and told stories more often to their children at Time 2 than they did at Time 1; there were statistically significant increases in the percentage of parents reading to their children and telling stories at least three times per week. In Year 4, there was significant growth in the proportion of parents who read to their children at least three times per week (from 85 to 89 percent), but not in the proportion of parents who told stories to their children at least that often. The proportion of parents using three or more interactive reading strategies with their children did not increase significantly in Year 3 from Time 1 to Time 2, but the increase was significant in Year 4 (see Exhibit 5.4).

Exhibit 5.4: Percentage (and number) of parents reporting engaging their child in literacy activities at Time 1 and Time 2, Years 3 and 4
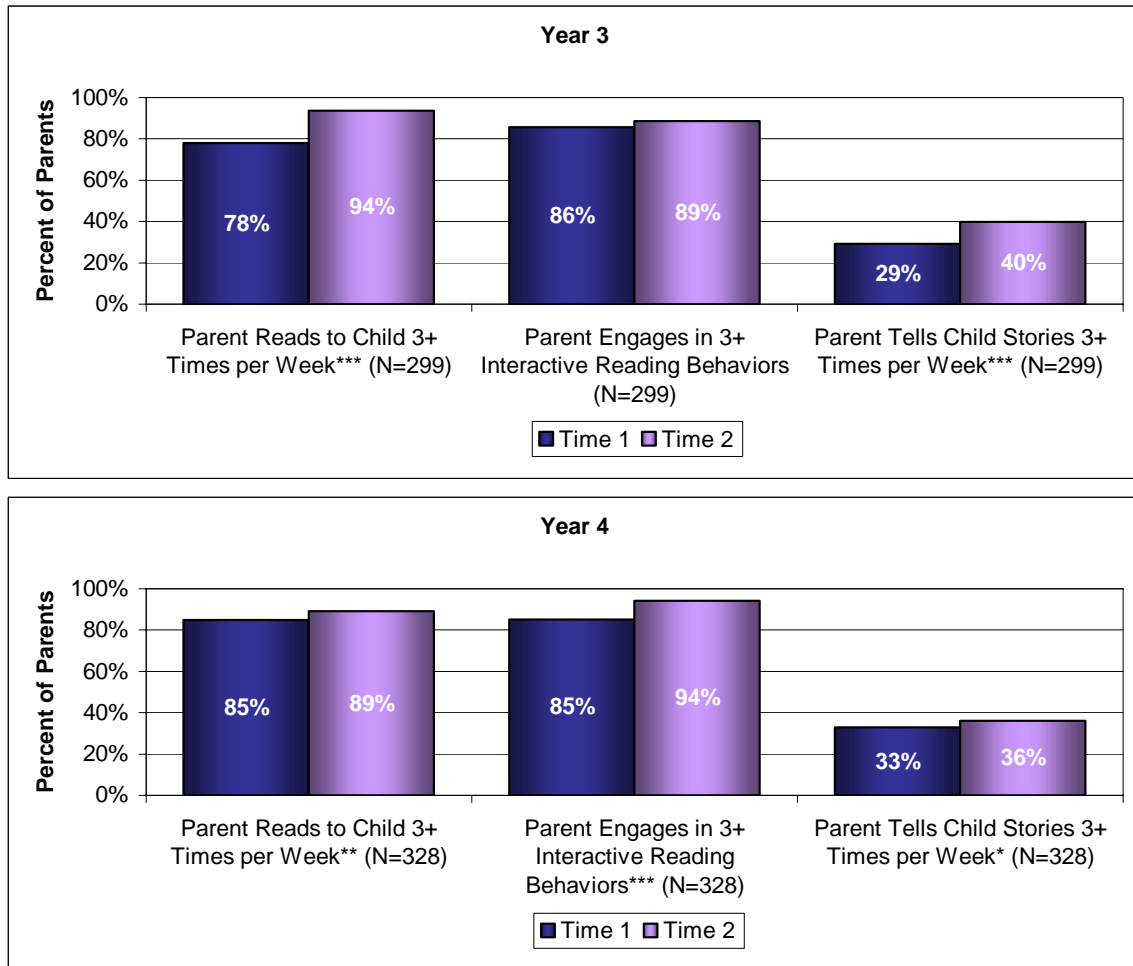
Source: Year 3 and 4 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Parents' support for their children's learning at home was also measured by their access to and use of the library and the availability of age-appropriate literacy materials (such as crayons, magic markers, paints, and paper) in the home. In both Years 3 and 4, parents showed statistically significant growth on all of these indicators. In both years, more parents at Time 2 reported having a library card, visiting the library at least once a month, providing at least three different kinds of literacy materials in the home, and bringing home books from the library, bookmobile, or other source in the past week compared to Time 1 (see Exhibit 5.5).

Exhibit 5.5: Percentage (and number) of parents supporting children's learning at home at Time 1 and Time 2, Years 3 and 4
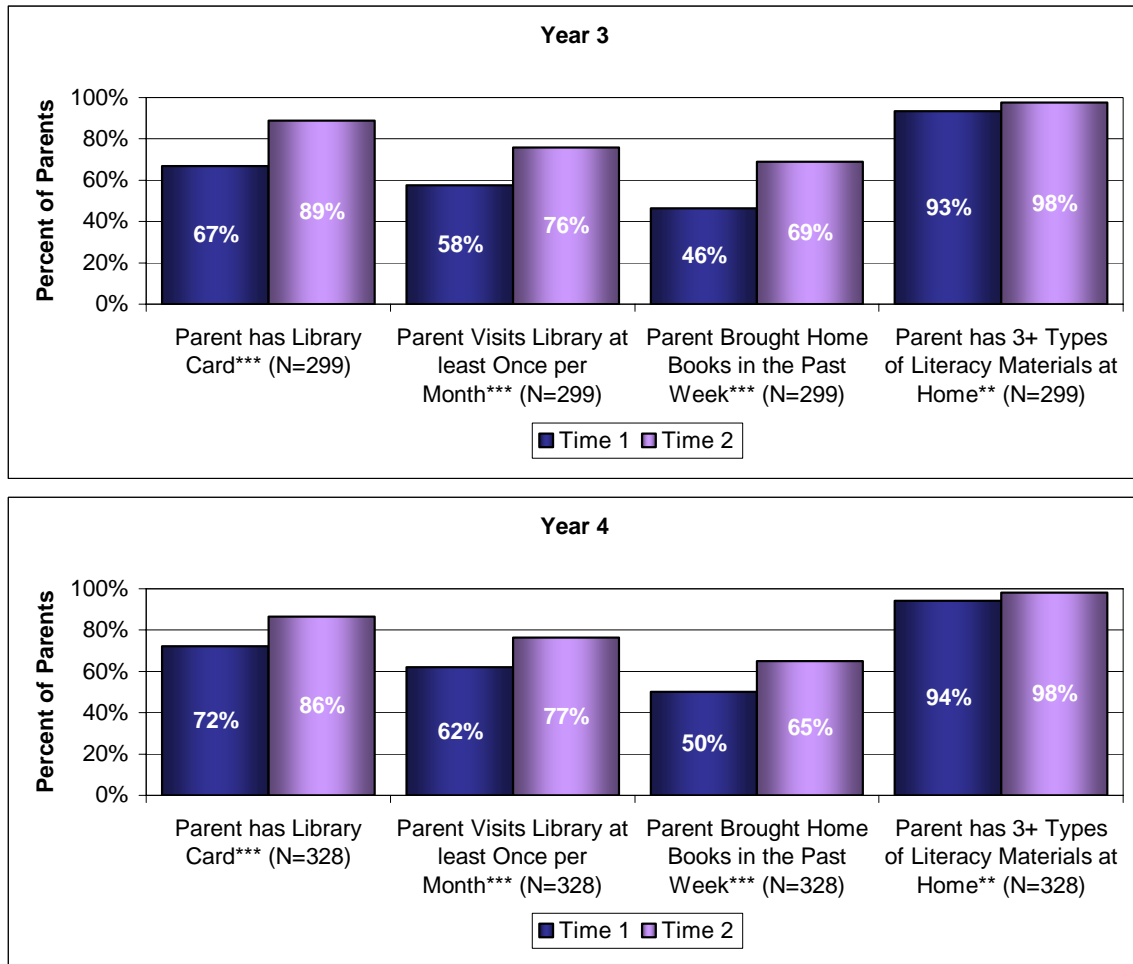
Source: Year 3 and 4 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

The CA-ESPIRS also asks parents about children's television viewing in the home. In both Year 3 and Year 4, more parents at Time 2 than at Time 1 reported restricting the number of hours of television their children watched to less than three hours per day (see Exhibit 5.6). There were also significant changes in the number of parents who reported using television as a learning tool (by selecting their children's television programs, watching television with their children, and asking their children questions about the programs).

Exhibit 5.6: Percentage (and number) of parents reporting positive television use at Time 1 and Time 2, Years 3 and 4
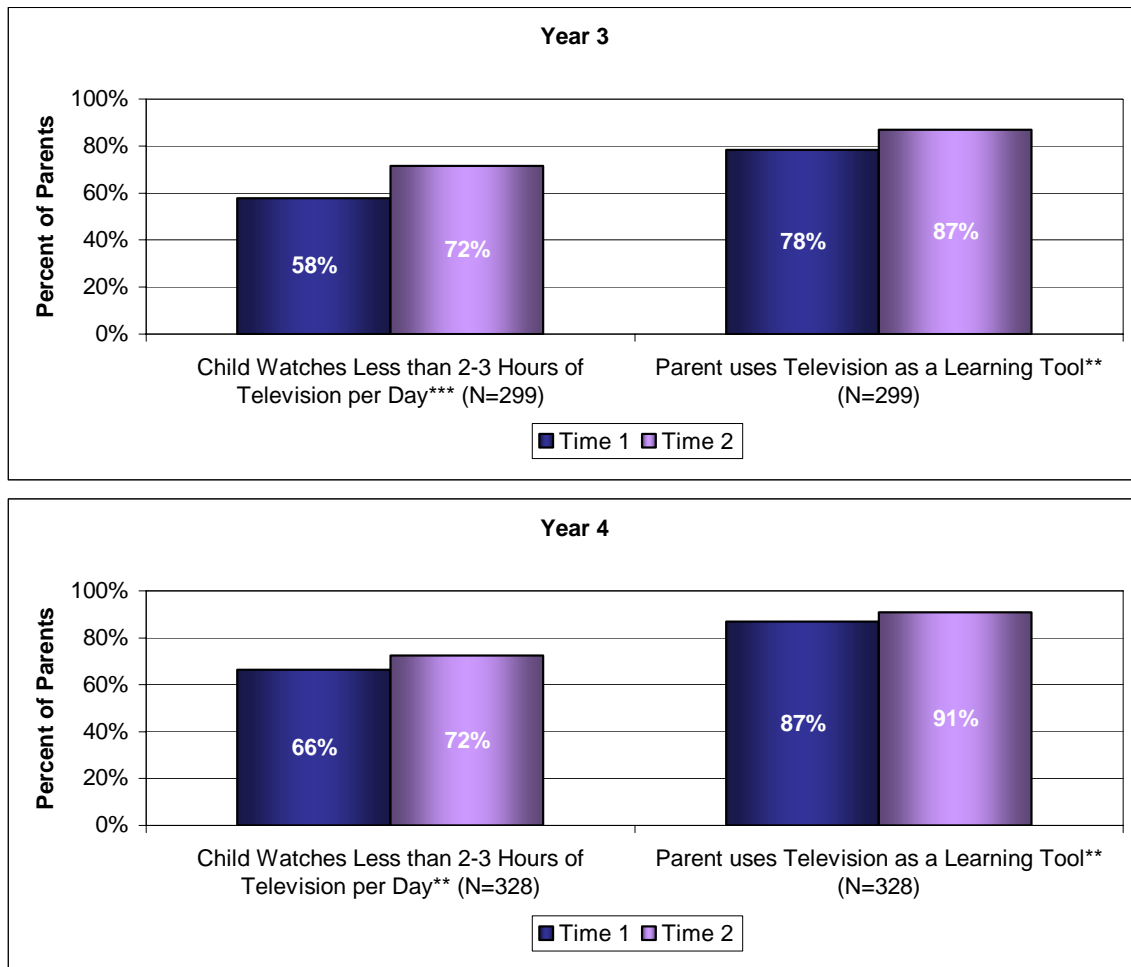
Source: Year 3 and 4 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Finally, parents' participation in their children's schooling increased by the end of each year. In both Years 3 and 4, significantly more parents at Time 2 than at Time 1 reported going to their child's school in the prior year for a conference or informal talk with the child's teacher, director, or principal; to attend a school event; to observe classroom activities; or to volunteer for school projects or trips (see Exhibit 5.7).

Exhibit 5.7: Percentage (and number) of parents reporting participation in various activities at their child's school at Time 1 and Time 2, Years 3 and 4
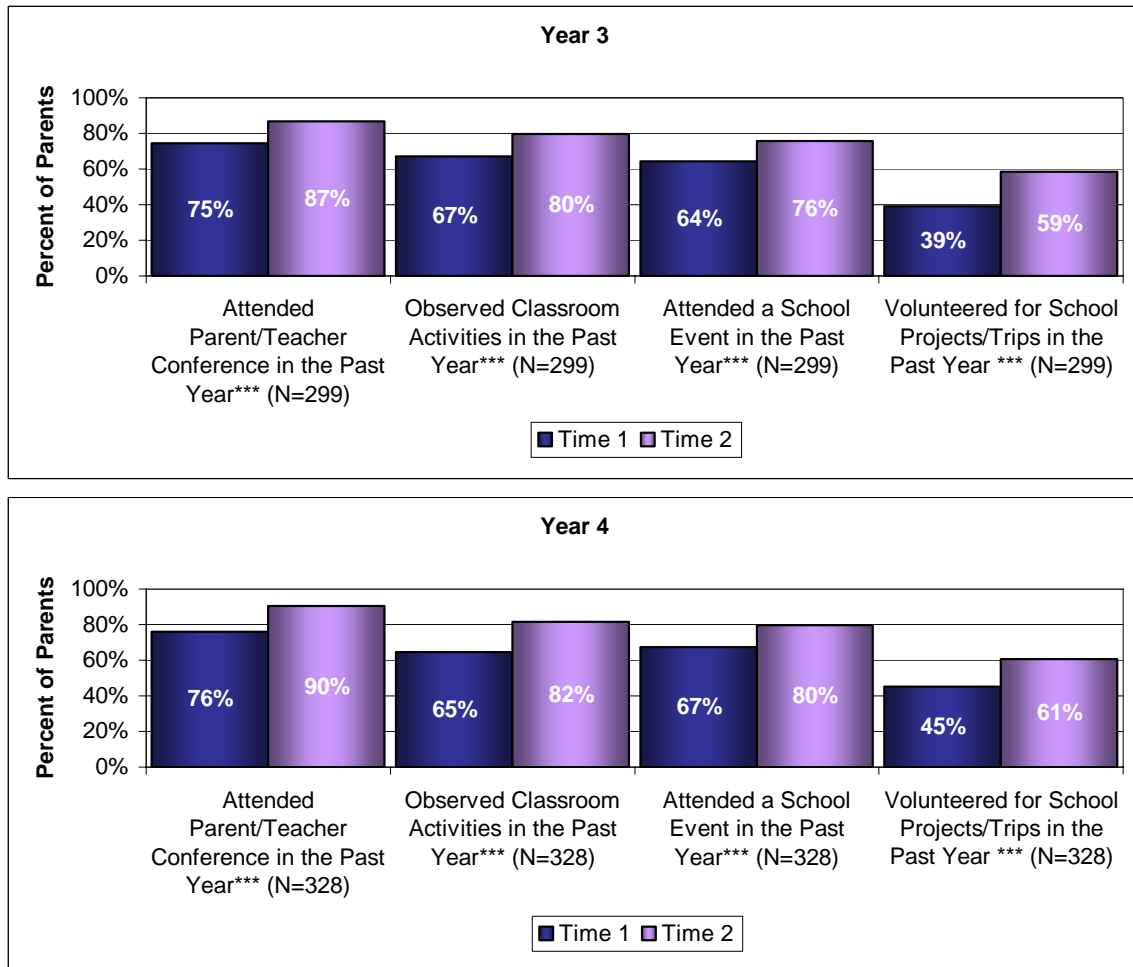
Source: Year 3 and 4 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Parenting behavior changes in parents new to the programs

As can be seen in the previous analysis, a substantial number of parents met each of the Even Start indicators at Time 1. This may be due, in part, to the fact that Time 1 does not accurately represent a "pre-test" in the truest sense. That is, Time 1 does not occur prior to receiving any services. Rather, analyses are conducted by year, and each Time 1 data point represents the earliest assessment in that year. However, many families participate in family literacy programs for longer than one year, resulting in an underestimate of the overall changes parents experience from the start of their involvement in the program (which may be prior to "Time 1") to the Time 2 data collection, as reported for these analyses.

In order to better understand the more immediate changes seen in parenting behavior after a parent becomes a participant in the family literacy programs, we also examined changes on the CA-ESPIRS for the group of parents *who were new to the family literacy program* in each year, a total of 133 parents in Year 3 and 161 in Year 4. Results for this subset are summarized in Exhibit 5.8.

Exhibit 5.8: Percentage of parents *new to the program* who met each Even Start Indicator at Time 1 and Time 2, by year

	Year 3 (N=133)		Year 4 (N=161)	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Parent reads 2 + types of reading materials	82.7%	96.2%***	83.2%	98.1%***
Parent engages in at least two types of writing activities	60.2%	82.0%***	65.8%	86.3%***
Family has more than 25 children's books in the home	32.3%	57.1%***	46.0%	68.9%***
Parent reads to child at least three times per week	66.2%	92.5%***	74.5%	89.4%***
Parent uses at least three interactive reading strategies	82.0%	88.7%	77.0%	93.8%***
Parent tells stories to child at least three times per week	23.3%	33.1%*	32.3%	36.7%
Parent has library card	53.4%	82.7%***	57.8%	85.1%***
Parent went to library at least once in last month	46.6%	74.4%***	51.6%	74.5%***
Parent brought home books from library, bookmobile, etc. in past week	37.6%	55.6%***	34.8%	67.1%***
Family has three or more types of literacy materials at home (crayons, markers, etc.)	91.0%	96.2%	92.6%	98.1%*
Child watches television less than three hours per day	57.1%	73.7%***	64.0%	73.3%*
Parent uses television as a learning tool	73.7%	86.5%**	80.1%	91.3%***
Parent attended teacher conference in last year	56.4%	82.7%***	66.5%	90.1%***
Parent observed classroom activities in last year	47.4%	73.7%***	52.2%	83.9%***
Parent attended school event in last year	45.1%	65.4%***	55.3%	82.6%***
Parent volunteered for school project or trip in last year	20.3%	50.4%***	36.7%	63.4%***

Source: Year 3 and 4 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

In both years, at Time 2, the groups of new parents engaged in more reading and writing activities themselves, kept more children's books in their home, read books to their children more often, visited the library and brought home books more often, limited their children's television watching and used television as a learning tool more often, and were more involved in their children's schools than at Time 1. In Year 3 there was also evidence of growth on the frequency of story telling, and in Year 4 there was evidence of growth on keeping literacy materials in the home and using interactive literacy strategies.

Exploring the impacts of program participation on parenting behaviors

To estimate the impacts of participation in family literacy programs on parents' growth on the CA-ESPIRS, we used regression analysis to take into account some aspects of the

quantity and quality of the parenting education parents received. We focused on three outcomes particularly related to literacy: the number of children's books in the home, the frequency with which the parent reads to the child, and the use of four interactive literacy behaviors when reading to the child—stopping reading and asking the child to tell what is in a picture, stopping reading and pointing out letters, stopping reading and asking what will happen next, and asking the child to read with the parent.

In both Years 3 and 4, the more hours a parent participated in parenting education and PCILA, the greater the growth shown on all three outcomes. For example, Exhibit 5.9 shows the relationship between hours of participation in parenting education and PCILA and the frequency with which parents reported reading to their children at Time 2 (controlling for Time 1 practices), in Years 3 and 4.[8] Similarly, more hours spent in parenting education and PCILA was also associated with significant increases in the number of children's books in the home.

Exhibit 5.9: Frequency of parents reading to their children at Time 2, by hours of attendance
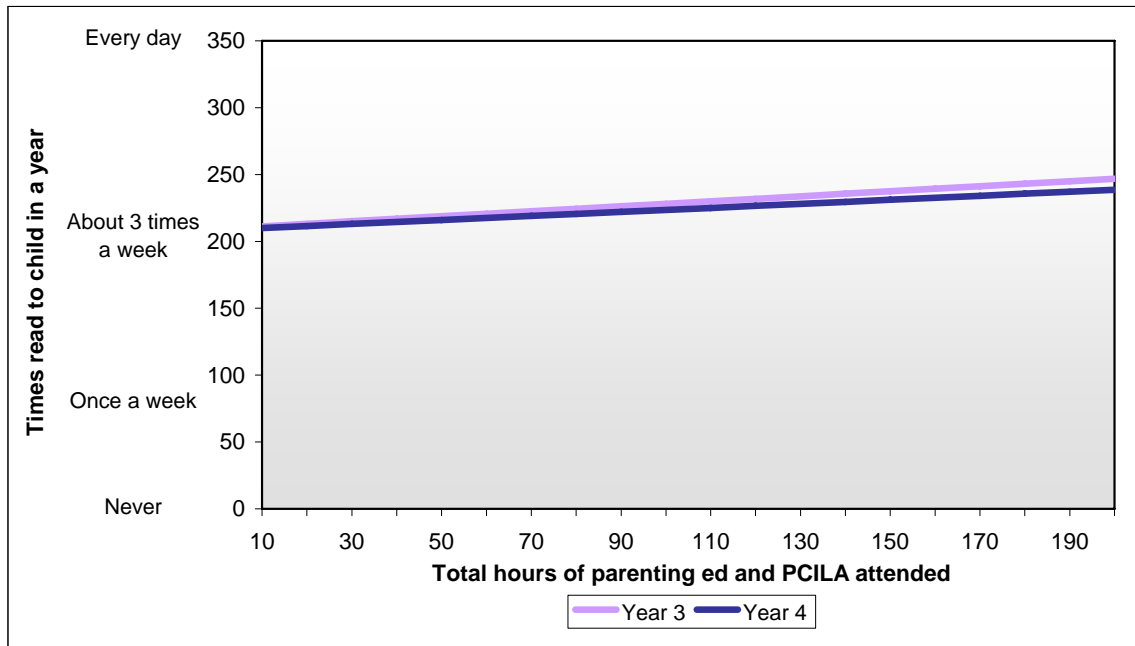
Source: Year 3 and 4 CA-ESPIRS and attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system.

We also tested the hypothesis that parents participating in programs with a greater proportion of high-quality teachers (one indicator of program quality) would outperform parents participating in programs with fewer high-quality teachers, by examining the relationship between the proportion of teachers with a bachelor's degree or a parenting/adult education teacher credential with parent reports of the three literacy outcomes (number of books in the home, frequency of reading to the child, and the use of interactive reading behaviors). We found that parents who were in programs with a higher proportion of parenting teachers

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[8] To graph this, we converted the categorical variable to represent actual number of times per year the parent reported reading, 0-365. Some of the original categories, however, are noted on the graph for reference.

holding a bachelor's degree reported more growth in the number of children's books in their home, even after controlling for attendance hours. However, there was very little variation in teachers qualifications, and other teacher credentials did not show significant relationships with parent literacy behaviors after attendance hours and initial parenting behaviors were controlled for.

Longer-term changes in parenting behaviors

Ultimately, family literacy programs hope to effect life-long changes in parenting behaviors. In particular, it is the hope that parents will continue to support their children's learning once they enter school. To test this assumption, we examine the longitudinal data collected as part of the child outcomes study. Parents of the children assessed for this study also responded to a series of interview questions at each data collection point about the frequency with which they engage their children in learning activities. To examine changes over time, we examine the reported frequency of these activities at Time 1 (at the beginning of the study in the fall of Year 2) and again at the kindergarten follow-up (in Year 3 for the four-year-old cohort and Year 4 for the three-year-old cohort) for the 55 parents that have responses at both time points.

At Time 1, we find that most parents report reading to their child (89 percent) and teaching their child letters, words, or numbers (78 percent) at least three times per week, while fewer than half reported telling their child a story (44 percent) or teaching their child songs or music (45 percent) with this frequency. These questions are worded slightly differently from the comparable items on the CA-ESPIRS, but these numbers are consistent with those data. We find no significant change in the percentage of parents reporting that they engage in these activities at least three times per week from Time 1 to the kindergarten follow-up, however, suggesting that parents maintain (but do not increase) these practices after leaving the family literacy program. The number of parents reporting frequent story-telling drops slightly (marginally significant result) at kindergarten. It may be that parents view this activity as being more appropriate for younger children and thus spend less time telling stories once their children enter kindergarten.

Exhibit 5.10: Percentage of parents engaging in parent-child learning activities at least three times per week for child outcomes study parents interviewed at Time 1 (Year 2) and at the kindergarten follow up (Year 3 or 4)
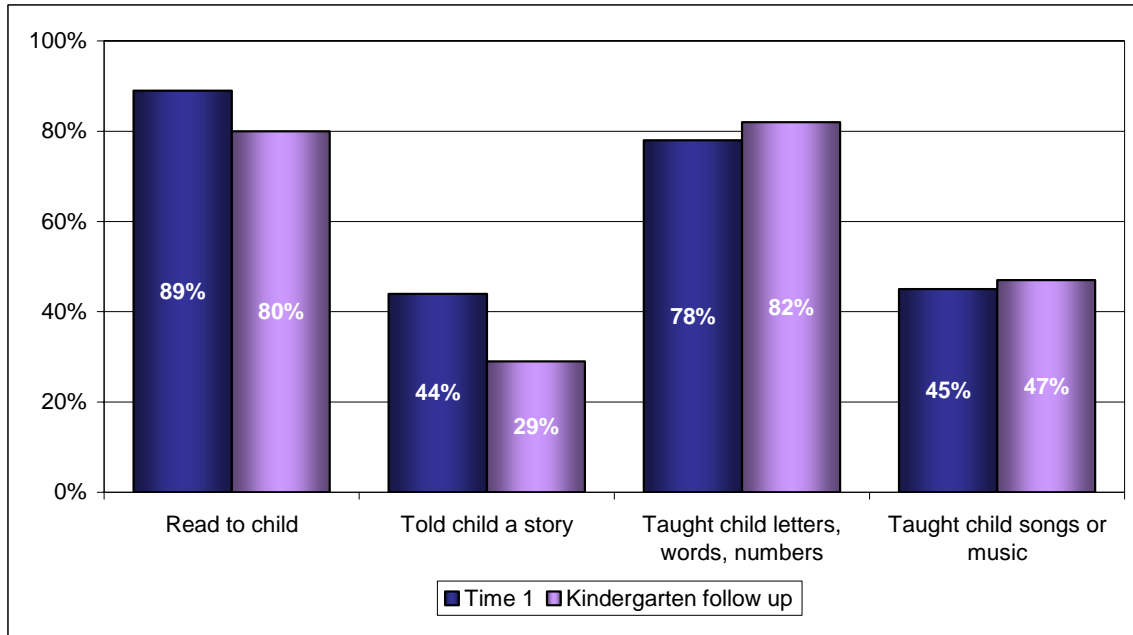
Source: Parent interview data form the child outcomes study.

Parent outcomes summary

Parents reported many positive changes in their parenting skills as a result of the parenting education and PCILA components of the family literacy programs. We also saw these changes demonstrated in CA-ESPIRS data. In both Years 3 and 4, parents showed growth between Time 1 and Time 2 on almost all Even Start indicators, including in the number of books and literacy materials in the home, the frequency with which they read and told stories to their child, their own reading and writing behaviors, library use, using television as a learning tool, and involvement in their children's schools.

We also found that parents who had received more hours of parenting and PCILA had higher growth on all three outcomes examined: the number of children's books in the home, the frequency with which the parent reads to the child, and the use of four interactive literacy behaviors when reading to the child (stopping reading and asking the child to tell what is in a picture, stopping reading and pointing out letters, stopping reading and asking what will happen next, and asking the child to read along with the parent). Additionally, parents who were in programs with a higher proportion of parenting teachers holding a bachelor's degree (one indicator of program quality) reported more growth in the number of children's books in their home.

Data from the child outcomes study also provided information about more long-term changes in parents' literacy practices. Specifically, we examined the frequency with which parents read to their child, taught their child letters, words, or numbers told their child a story, and taught their child songs or music. No significant changes were detected in the frequency of these activities from Time 1 to the kindergarten follow-up, however, suggesting that parents maintain (but do not increase) these practices after leaving the family literacy program.

Chapter 6: Supporting Children's Learning and Development

While their parents attend adult education classes and parenting classes, children from birth to age five attend early childhood education (ECE) programs—infant/toddler programs, preschool programs, and enriched child care. ECE services are intended to support children's learning and development and help them to become ready for school. In addition to their ECE programs, children also participated with their parents in parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA), which give parents and children the opportunity to learn and play together. This chapter examines the quality of the ECE services that children receive as part of their family literacy experience, and explores outcomes for children who have received those services.

We draw on a variety of data sources to assess the quality of grantees' ECE programs. In addition to staffing information collected from program director surveys, and service hours gathered from the online data system, we also collected information on the classroom environment and climate through observations using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised (ECERS-R) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), and on teacher practices through the Emergent Academic Snapshot for all grantee programs. To assess children's progress, we use two different sources of data—information collected by program staff using the Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP) and assessment collected by independent assessors for a sample of children participating in the child outcomes study.

Quality of the Early Childhood Education Component

The quality of early education programs has been shown to be linked to better outcomes for participating children (Peisner-Feinbert et al., 1999). To assess the quality of grantees' early childhood education component, the evaluation team examined program intensity, teacher qualifications, classroom environment, and classroom practices, including teachers' engagement of children in literacy activities. Each of these is described below.

Program intensity

Starting in Year 4, grantees were required to offer 60 hours per month of early childhood education (ECE) and 10 hours per month of PCILA to their families. Exhibit 6.1, which summarizes data recorded by grantee staff in the online data system, suggests that not all programs were meeting this intensity requirement for ECE in Year 4, although they were meeting the requirement for PCILA. During Year 3, family literacy grantees offered an average of 50 hours of ECE classes (for children birth to five years old), almost 31 hours of enriched child care, and 13 hours of PCILA per month. Overall, early childhood education hours offered increased somewhat in Year 4, up to an average of 57 hours of ECE and 14 hours of PCILA per month. The number of hours of enriched child care offered decreased in Year 4, perhaps replaced by more structured ECE classes.

Exhibit 6.1: Mean number of hours of early childhood education offered per month by type of class, by year

	Year 3 (15 grantees; Mean hours (N))	Year 4 (14 grantees; Mean hours (N))
Early childhood education	50.1 (686)	57.3 (605)
Enriched Child Care	30.6 (90)	26.3 (32)
PCILA	13.1 (724)	14.2 (512)

Source: Year 3 and 4 attendance data downloaded from the data system.

Teacher quality

Having highly qualified teachers supporting children's learning in the ECE classroom is a key element of a quality ECE component. Research in the field of early childhood education consistently underscores the role of teacher education and training in supporting better developmental outcomes for children (Whitebook, 2003). To assess teacher qualifications, we examined both ECE teacher education and certification. In Year 4, program directors reported that a total of 51 teachers provided ECE services to the children in the 14 grantee programs, an average of 3 to 4 teachers per program.

Teacher education

Program directors reported that of the 51 ECE teachers in their programs, 28 (55 percent) have a bachelor's degree. This is somewhat consistent with Year 2 findings, in which 59 percent of ECE teachers in grantee programs reported having at least a bachelor's degree. While this is higher than the level of education of teachers in ECE programs across the state and nation (Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005), it is relatively low overall. However, with a relatively low pay standard compared to that of K-12 educators, early childhood programs in general find it difficult to attract and retain highly qualified teachers for their programs.

In addition, although this overall average is low among the grantees, there is variation across programs. For example, four program directors reported that 100 percent of their ECE teachers have a bachelor's degree. Eighty-six percent of programs have at least one teacher with a bachelor's degree; only two program directors reported that none of their ECE teachers has a bachelor's degree.

We also find variation by program type, with school districts employing more teachers with bachelor's degrees. Seventy percent (70 percent) of the teachers employed at programs with a school district as the lead agency have a bachelor's degree, compared to 43 percent (43 percent) of the teachers employed at programs where the lead agency is a CBO.

Teacher certification

While a bachelor's degree is an important benchmark for assessing teacher quality, it is also important that teachers be appropriately certified to provide instruction to young children. Of the 51 ECE teachers, program directors reported that 29 teachers (57 percent) have a child development Teacher Permit, and five additional teachers have an Associate Teacher Permit or Child Development Associate (CDA) credential authorizing them to provide instruction in a child care and development program without supervision (see Exhibit 6.2). In total, 67

percent of ECE teachers hold at least a CDA/Associate Teacher Permit. These findings are comparable to those in Year 2, where 53 percent of teachers reported having a Teacher Permit, and an additional 6 percent reported having an Associate Teacher Permit/CDA credential. Again, there is variation across grantee programs. Eleven of the 14 grantees have at least one teacher with a Teacher Permit. The three programs that neither have teachers with a child development Teacher Permit nor teachers with an Associate Teacher Permit have at least one ECE teacher with a bachelor's degree.

Exhibit 6.2: Percentage of ECE teachers with various qualifications, Year 4

	Percent of ECE teachers (N= 51)
Bachelor's Degree	55% (28)
At least a Teacher Permit	57% (29)
Associate Teacher Permit/CDA only	10% (5)

Source: Year 4 program director survey.

Program structure and environment

We examine several elements of ECE program structure among family literacy grantees, including classroom environment and classroom routines (rated using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R). This information comes from classroom observations conducted by the evaluation team in Year 3.

Classroom environment

The quality of the early childhood classroom has been linked to stronger cognitive and social skills in children through early childhood and into elementary school (Peisner-Feinbert et al., 1999) and is therefore important to examine for this analysis. The evaluation team assessed the quality of the classroom environment using the ECERS-R in one preschool classroom in each of the 15 grantee programs in Year 3. The ECERS-R measures the overall quality of the surroundings in the early childhood setting. This analysis focuses on six subscales that gather information about key aspects of preschool programs that relate to program quality: 1) space and furnishings, 2) personal care routines, 3) language and reasoning, 4) activities, 5) interaction, and 6) program structure. Scores range from 1 to 7, with 7 representing excellent conditions, 5 representing "good" conditions, 3 representing minimal conditions, and 1 representing "inadequate" conditions.

Overall, ECERS-R results for the 15 preschool classrooms observed suggest that grantees offer ECE services with "good" conditions, with an overall average score of 5.2 (see Exhibit 6.3). Scores vary widely from program to program, however. The range across grantee programs was 2.8 to 6.7, indicating that programs vary from close to minimal conditions to close to excellent conditions on the ECERS-R. Although statistical comparisons cannot be made at the program level, it appears that ECERS-R scores also vary with teacher qualifications. For example, only 45 percent of teachers in programs with an ECERS-R score below 5 have a bachelor's degree, compared with 61 percent of the teachers in programs with a score of 5 to 7.

Exhibit 6.3: Mean (and range) of classroom quality based on the ECERS-R scale, Year 3
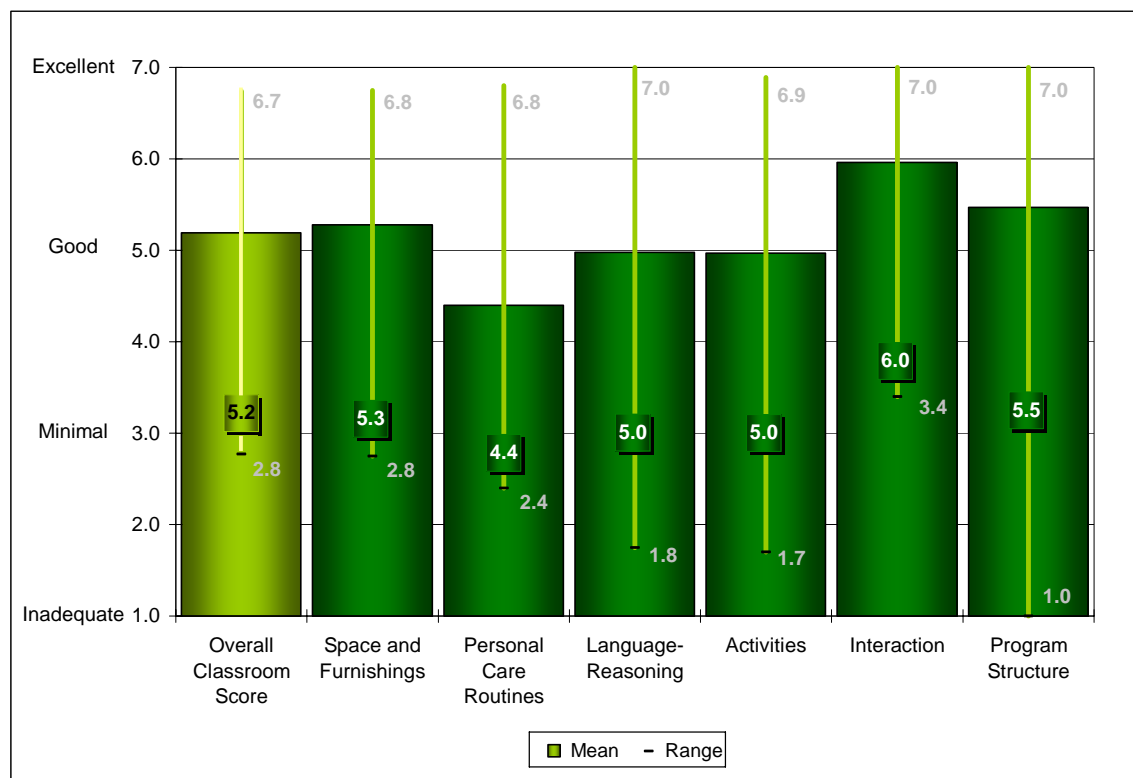
Source: Year 3 ECERS-R observations in 15 programs.

We find even greater variability across the six subscales of the ECERS-R. The family literacy programs scored the highest on the *interaction* subscale (mean score: 6.0, range: 3.4–7.0) and the lowest on the *personal care routines* subscale (mean: 4.4, range: 2.4–6.8). Individual subscales are discussed further throughout this chapter.

It is important to note that some aspects of program structure and space made it impossible for programs to achieve the highest scores on the ECERS-R. This is particularly true in the area of *space and furnishings.* Grantee programs received an average score of 5.3 on this subscale, with a range of 2.8 to 6.8. In general, programs had ample space configured for separate learning areas, as well as space for children to have privacy and safe space for gross motor play, soft furnishings and child-sized furniture, and developmentally appropriate materials. Those programs with lower scores on this subscale often lacked soft, cozy areas for children to have quiet space for resting or time alone. A few programs lost points on this subscale because they did not provide safe outdoor space for children to play—a resource to which some programs just do not have access.

Classroom routines

Beyond the physical environment, grantees organized their ECE programming in different ways. Generally, classroom activities were well structured and organized around familiar routines for the children. On the *program structure* subscale of the ECERS-R, grantee programs scored an average of 5.5 points. This subscale analyzes the schedule programs follow, and determines the amount of time that children have for engaging in different types

of activities and how those activities are selected. Overall, programs provided a good balance between structure and flexibility, allowed children the chance to spend time in self-selected groups, and rotated materials to maintain interest. Program staff also adjusted the schedule to meet individual student needs. On this subscale, grantees ranged from a low score of 1 to a high score of 7. Low-scoring programs often did not provide time for free play or free choice and only offered activities in a whole group setting.

An important part of the children's experience in the ECE classroom involves the *personal care routines* that they follow throughout the day. Grantee programs received an average score of 4.4 on the *personal care routines* subscale of the ECERS-R, with a score range of 2.4 to 6.8. Programs generally had greeting and departure routines that served as an opportunity for program staff to share information with parents and staff that modeled excellent health practices and encouraged children's self-help. Those programs with lower scores, however, often lacked a formal sign-in/sign-out process, did not provide sufficient supervision for children when using the bathroom and washing hands, or did not demonstrate sufficient interaction with children during meal times. Scores on this subscale were typically lower than other subscales which tended to bring overall scores down somewhat, which is common for ECE programs (Cassidy, Hestenes, Hestenes, & Mims, 2004; Tout & Sherman, 2005).

Curriculum, materials, and assessments

The evaluation team also collected information about programs' use of curricula, materials, and assessments. This information was gathered through program director surveys, program staff focus groups, and observations of classrooms using the ECERS-R.

Curriculum and materials

All 14 program directors surveyed in Year 4 reported the use of a formal curriculum in their ECE program component. *Creative Curriculum* was the most frequently cited curriculum; nine program directors (64 percent) reported that this was used by their ECE teachers, either alone or in combination with other curricula. Also frequently cited were *High Scope* (21 percent) and *Born to Learn* (21 percent). Three programs reported using teacher-developed curricula, and two programs reported using district-developed curricula.

Observations of ECE classrooms in Year 3 revealed a wide range of materials and learning activities available for children. On average, grantees received a score of 5.0 on the *activities* subscale of the ECERS-R, which assesses the amount, age-appropriateness, quality, accessibility, and diversity of the materials available for children. Again, we observed substantial variation across programs on this subscale; scores ranged from 1.7 to 6.9. Programs with high *activities* scores offered fine motor, art, music/movement, dramatic play, nature/science, math/number, and computer activities with plenty of developmentally appropriate materials. Programs with lower scores often lacked variety in the materials available for children's use.

Assessments

In Year 3, all 15 grantees reported using the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) in the ECE classroom to measure and track children's growth, as required by First 5 LA for Family Literacy Initiative grantees. In focus groups with program staff, ECE teachers

reported several uses of this assessment to support their instruction. For example, teachers reporting using DRDP results to:

- adjust curriculum and/or materials to focus on areas where children have more room for growth;
- set goals for individual children;
- determine the composition of groups for small group instruction;
- identify children that may need additional evaluation and assessment for learning disabilities; and
- communicate children's progress to their parents and provide parents with information on the skills they can reinforce with their children at home.

However, two program directors noted during interviews in Year 3 that their programs "don't do much of anything with the DRDP data," but instead focus on teacher experience and observation of children to inform ECE instruction. One program director noted "we look at children, not data about children."

Teacher-child interaction

In addition to their use of materials and resources, teachers' interactions with children are important to consider. Teacher-child relationships provide opportunities for children to develop language, cognitive, and social skills. Closer relationships have been shown to lead to better classroom behavior and social skills through early elementary school (Peisner-Feinbert et al, 1999) and better classroom behavior has been shown to lead to better reading skills (Garvin & Walker, 1991).

According to scores on the *interaction* subscale of the ECERS-R in Year 3, ECE teachers had relatively positive interactions with the children. The average score on this subscale was 6.0, and grantee scores ranged from a moderate 3.4 to the highest score possible of 7 on the scale. Overall, interactions between teachers and children were warm, positive and tailored to meet individual children's needs. Children were well supervised and staff helped them solve conflicts. Programs with lower scores on this subscale demonstrated less teacher engagement or were less successful at helping children resolve conflicts and teaching them to be more sensitive of other's feelings.

The quality of ECE teacher interactions was also assessed using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004), an observational measure that assesses the *socioemotional* and *instructional climate* of the ECE classroom. Each scale ranges from 1 to 7, with 1 or 2 indicating low quality, 3 to 5 indicating medium quality, and 6 or 7 indicating high quality.

The *socioemotional climate* subscale assesses five aspects of the classroom environment: positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, over-control, and behavior management. Classrooms with high scores on the *socioemotional climate* subscale are characterized by positive relationships between teachers and children, respect for others, consistent levels of responsiveness to children's needs and questions, free access for children to explore and learn, clearly communicated rules and expectations, and consistent praise for meeting expectations, among other factors. During classroom observations at each of the three child outcomes study data collection periods—Time 1 (Fall of Year 2), Time 2 (Spring

of Year 2), and Time 3 (Spring of Year 3 for children in 7 programs)—grantees demonstrated average *socioemotional climate* scores of about 5.8 across data collection periods, above the medium quality range. There was wide variation among the 15 grantees, however, with classroom scores ranging from 4.2 to 6.5; all classroom scores were at or above the medium quality range (see Exhibit 6.4).

Exhibit 6.4: Mean CLASS scores for classroom climate at Time 1, 2, and 3

	Time 1 Mean (SD) (15 grantees)	Time 2 Mean (SD) (13 grantees)	Time 3 Mean (SD) (7 grantees)
Emotional Climate	5.8 (.4)	5.8 (.4)	5.8 (.2)
Instructional Climate	4.0 (.6)	3.9 (.5)	3.7 (.5)

Source: Observation data from the child outcomes study.

Scores on the *instructional climate* subscale, comprised of five measures (productivity, concept development, instructional learning format, roteness/basic skill development, quality of feedback), were not as high as the *socioemotional climate* subscale. On average, ECE classrooms scored close to the middle of the medium range on the *instructional climate* subscale: ranging from 3.7 to 4.1 among all classrooms. Programs with high *instructional climate* scores have, for example, clearly defined learning activities, provide instruction using various modalities, actively engage children, and focus on the process of learning rather than rote instruction or getting the "right answer."

Interactional style was also assessed using the Emergent Academic Snapshot (Ritchie et al., 2001) for the subset of children in the child outcomes study. Across all time points, we found that ECE teachers were most likely to be didactic in their interactions with children, especially at Time 1 (39 percent) and Time 2 (40 percent) (see Exhibit 6.5).

On average, ECE teachers spent very little of their interaction time elaborating on children's responses (4 percent to 11 percent of the observation time, on average, across the three time points) or scaffolding their learning (8 percent to 13 percent across time points). However, some classes demonstrated high percentages of time when teachers were elaborating on children's responses (46 percent) or scaffolding children's learning (57 percent).

Exhibit 6.5: Mean percentage (and range) of time teachers spent engaging in various interaction styles

	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Teacher elaborates on child's response	10.8%	0-46.0%	9.0%	0-31.0%	4.0%	0-18.0%
Teacher scaffolds child's learning	13.3%	0-57.1%	10.9%	0-35.0%	8.1%	0-18.0%
Teacher engages in didactic manner	38.5%	7.4-67.9%	40.0%	0-88.0%	33%	16-49.0%

Source: Observation data form the child outcomes study.

Support for language development and literacy

Given the nature and mandate of family literacy programs, we were particularly interested in understanding the language and literacy practices in place in the ECE classroom. A language-rich classroom environment is critical for promoting the development of pre-literacy and early reading skills. The *language and reasoning* subscale of the ECERS-R assesses the reading and communication materials available to children and the literacy activities teachers provide for children. Also assessed is the extent to which teachers use their interactions with children as opportunities to expand children's thinking and develop their reasoning skills. The average score on the *language and reasoning* subscale was 5.0, with a range of 1.8 to 7.0. Those programs with excellent *language and reasoning* scores provide children with access to a wide variety of books, use reading as part of the daily routine, and encourage conversations between children and teachers that include questioning to elicit more complex answers and discussions of logical relationships. Programs that had very low scores on this subscale often lack communication props (such as puppets), need more (or more diverse) books and more time for informal reading, or lack in-depth conversations between children and staff.

During classroom observations at each of the child outcomes study's time points, we found that relatively little time was spent engaged in language and literacy activities, although individual variation across programs was fairly wide. For example, children spent less than five percent of the observed time engaging in any of the following: reading or pretending to read, learning about letters or sounds, and writing (see Exhibit 6.6). The percents of time children spent engaging in oral language development and being read to were only slightly higher. On average, children spent about the same proportion of observed class time engaged in literacy activities across the data collection periods. On average, teachers engaged in literacy activities with children for approximately 9 to 11 percent of the observed class time across the three time periods, although at each time point, there were teachers who engaged in literacy activities as much as 29 to 48 percent of the total observed time.

Exhibit 6.6: Mean percentage (and range) of time spent engaging in various literacy activities

	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Mean	**Range**	**Mean**	**Range**	**Mean**	**Range**
Child was being read to	7.1%	0-30.8%	4.8%	0-20.0%	4.9%	0-14.0%
Child was pre-reading/reading	3.9%	0-28.6%	3.8%	0-23.0%	3.0%	0-20.0%
Child was learning about letters/sounds	4.7%	0-38.1%	4.5%	0-28.0%	4.4%	0-13.0%
Child was engaging in oral language development	7.4%	0-38.1%	6.1%	0-26.0%	4.3%	0-13.0%
Child was writing	1.2%	0-9.4%	1.5%	0-16.0%	2.2%	0-10.0%
Teacher was engaged in literacy	10.7%	0-47.6%	10.1%	0-33.4%	8.9%	0-29.4%

Source: Observation data form the child outcomes study.

It is interesting to note that although language and reasoning subscale scores on the ECERS-R were in the moderate range, observed time spent in literacy activities was low. The language and reasoning subscale rates programs on the way staff communicate with children

and encourage them to develop their language skills, and access to books (whether they are available in the classroom at appropriate levels), but the act of reading itself is only listed in the observation tool as one element of a quality program. On the other hand, in classroom observations, time spent in five different activities was recorded, only one of which – engaging in oral language development – overlaps with the focus of the ECERS-R language and reasoning subscale. Thus, it is certainly feasible for programs to receive a moderately high score on the language and reasoning subscale but to spend little time engaged in literacy activities overall.

Program quality summary

To assess ECE program quality, the evaluation team examined program intensity, teacher qualifications, program structure, curricula, teacher-child interactions, and support of language development and literacy. Between Year 3 and Year 4, early childhood education hours offered increased somewhat to 57 hours per month, just under the 60 hour target set by First 5 LA, and the number of hours of enriched child care offered decreased, perhaps replaced by more structured ECE classes.

Teachers in the early childhood education components of the programs were somewhat less well qualified than adult education and parenting teachers, as is typical in the field of early care and education. Just over half of the ECE teachers have a bachelor's degree, which is higher than the state average, and most also hold at least a CDA/Associate Teacher Permit.

Overall, ECERS-R results for the 15 preschool classrooms observed suggest that grantees offer ECE services with "good" conditions, with an overall average score of 5.2. The personal care routines subscale was often the lowest subscale score, and the interaction score was the highest, averaging 6.0 overall. Classroom climate (as measured by the CLASS) scored in the medium range, slightly higher on socioemotional climate and slightly lower on instructional climate. Teachers spent very little of their interaction time with children elaborating on their responses or scaffolding their learning, and only 10 percent of class time engaged in literacy activities.

There is some evidence that teachers in the family literacy programs used the data they collected using the DRDP to inform their instruction. Teachers reported using this data to adjust curricula when needed, set goals for individual children, group children appropriately, and communicate children's progress with parents.

Child Progress and Outcomes

Child progress was measured both indirectly, assessing parent perceptions of children's growth through focus groups and surveys, and directly, by teachers using the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). In addition, child outcomes were measured using direct child assessments administered by trained independent assessors for a sample of children over several points in time.

Parent perceptions of children's growth

In the parent focus groups, parent participants repeatedly reported that the programs had helped prepare their children for school. At seven sites, mothers reported that their children were prepared for kindergarten as a result of the family literacy program's early childhood

classes. A few mothers even reported getting compliments from their children's teachers about how well-prepared the children were. A few mothers also compared their children who participated in the programs to their other children who had not participated, noting that children who had participated were more advanced at their age levels than their siblings had been.

Parents also reported that their children had learned many new things from the programs. At 12 sites mothers reported their child had learned various concepts and skills, including colors, numbers, songs, shapes, counting, the alphabet, some state names and capitals, and how to tie their shoes.

At six sites, mothers reported that their children learned English as a result of the program, and at two sites, mothers commented on how their children's language skills had developed as a result of participation. They reported that their children knew many more words after participating in the program. One mother even noted that her child will not need speech therapy as previously anticipated.

Mothers reported other non-academic changes in their children as well. At nine sites, mothers reported their children were more disciplined as a result of the program. Children learned rules for behavior that they would follow at home, were calmer, and had better manners (such as learning to say "thank you" or pushing in a chair after they stand up). At seven sites, mothers reported that their children were more social as a result of the program. The children were better at sharing and playing with other children. At five sites, mothers reported that their children were more independent as a result of participation, and at three sites, mothers reported that their children were more confident as a result of the program. Several mothers (at three sites) also reported that their children had learned routines, such as washing their hands before meals or cleaning up after play.

Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) Results

In Years 3 and 4, all grantee programs used the Desired Results Developmental Profiles (DRDP), a teacher observation tool that tracks children's development across four desired results:

- Desired Result (DR) 1: Children are personally and socially competent.
- Desired Result (DR) 2: Children are effective learners.
- Desired Result (DR) 3: Children show physical and motor competence.
- Desired Result (DR) 4: Children are safe and healthy.

For each of the Desired Results, ECE teachers assessed children on multiple measures, rating them on a four-point scale: 1: "not yet," 2: "emerging," 3: "almost mastered," and 4: "fully mastered." We compared performance on the first DRDP completed for each child between May 1, 2004 and July 31, 2005, referred to as "Time 1," to the last DRDP completed to each child in the same time frame, referred to as "Time 2." For children aged three- to five-years, we limited the DRDP analysis to children who attended 100 or more hours of ECE, child care, and PCILA combined between Time 1 and Time 2 to allow for sufficient time in the program to demonstrate growth. We did not apply this restriction to children in the other three age groups (birth to 7 months, 8 to 17 months, and 18 to 35 months) due to the small numbers of children with DRDP data in these age ranges. In Year 3, the average difference

between Time 1 and Time 2 was 6.9 months for children in the 3 to 5 year age range, 5.3 months for children in the 18 to 35 month age range, 4.0 months for children in the 8 to 17 month age range, and 2.4 months for children in the birth to 7 months age range. In Year 4, the average difference between Time 1 and Time 2 was 7.1 months for children in the 3 to 5 year age range, 4.8 months for children in the 18 to 35 month age range, 3.4 months in the 8 to 17 month age range, and 2.5 months for the birth to seven month range.

We begin by examining overall growth from Time 1 to Time 2—on each Desired Result, on the percentage of all items fully mastered, and on the 13 "reading readiness" items tracked by Even Start in past years. Second, we examine the relationships between parent outcomes—home literacy behaviors as well as parent literacy—and progress on the DRDP. Third, we explore the links between the quantity and quality of family literacy services received and children's DRDP ratings.

Change in DRDP ratings over time

In both years, children in the oldest three age groups demonstrated significant growth on all four desired results, but growth for children in the birth to seven months group was not statistically significant. We observed significant growth among children on DR 1: "Children are personally and socially competent." For example, in Year 3, the average rating (on a four-point scale) for three- to five-year-olds grew from 2.6 at Time 1 to 3.3 at Time 2. In Year 4, this pattern was similar; the average rating for three- to five-year-olds grew from 2.5 at Time 1 to 3.3 at Time 2 (see Exhibit 6.7).

We also found significant changes on all indicators within each Desired Result for children 8 months to 5 years in Year 3. Children in these age groups showed significant growth on each of the indicators that make up DR 1. For children in the three-to-five-year age range, there are five indicators that make up DR 1, and the largest increase was observed for both Indicator 1 ("Children show self-awareness and positive self-concept") and Indicator 5 ("Children show growing abilities in communication and language") with an average increase of 0.8 points on the four-point scale for both.

In Year 4, children in the oldest three age groups showed significant growth on each of the indicators that make up DR 1. The largest increase was observed for children in the 8-17 month age group on Indicator 1.4, "Children show awareness, acceptance, understanding, and appreciation of others' special needs, gender, family structures, ethnicities, cultures, and languages," with an average increase of 1.3 points on the four-point scale.

Exhibit 6.7: Mean ratings for Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent) at Time 1 and 2 for all ages, Years 3 and 4
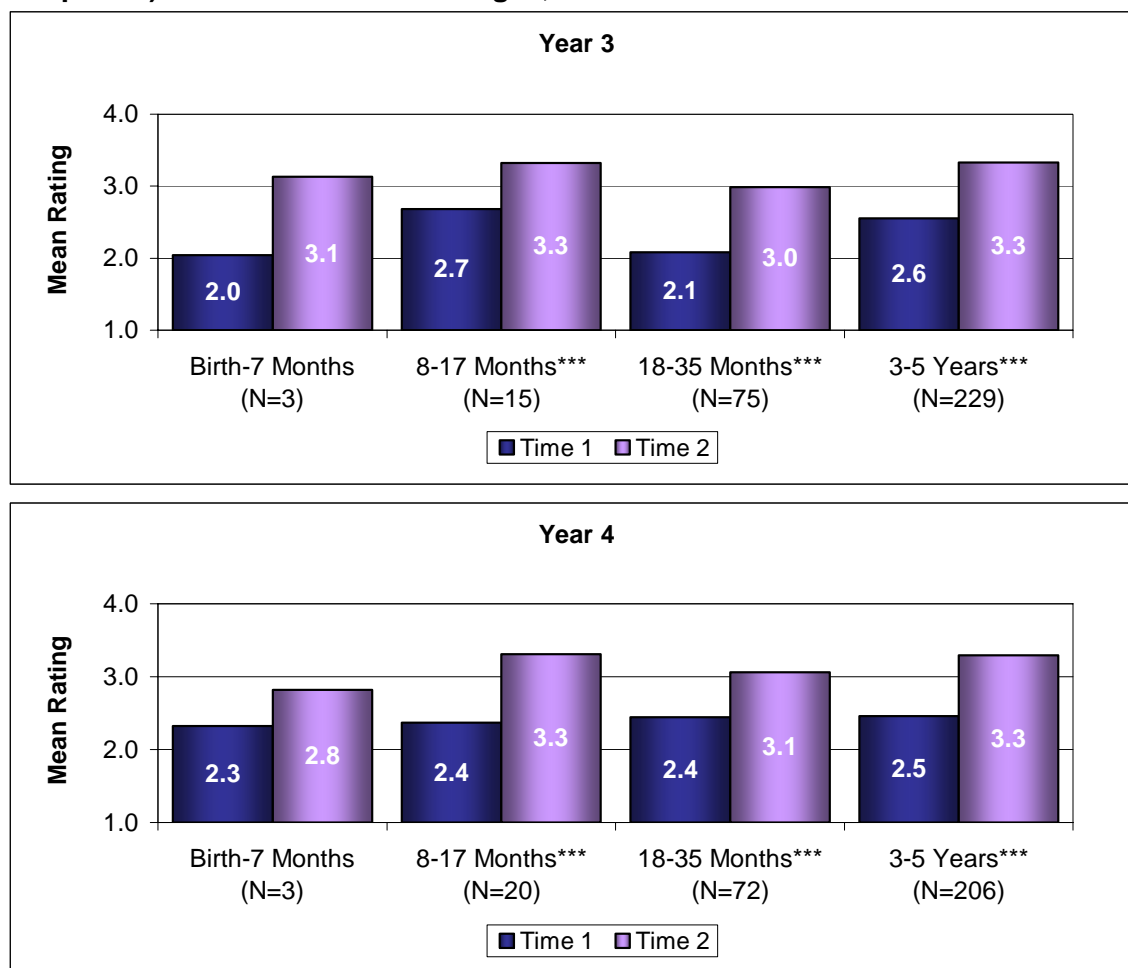
Source: Year 3 and 4 DRDP data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

In Years 3 and 4, children 8 months-5 years also showed significant growth on DR 2: "Children are effective learners." Among three- to five-year-olds, ratings increased from an average of 2.3 at Time 1 to 3.2 at Time 2 in Year 3 (see Exhibit 6.8). In Year 4, average ratings increased from 2.2 at Time 1 to 3.2 at Time 2, a very similar pattern. Children in each of these oldest age groups also showed significant growth on all indicators that make up DR 2 in Years 3 and 4. In Year 3, children in the birth-7 month age group showed significant growth on Indicator 2.3 ("Children show interest in real life mathematical concepts"). This was also the largest increase in rating in Year 3 among all age groups for an indicator in Desired Result 2, with an average increase in rating of 2 points. The largest increase in ratings in Year 4 was observed for the indicator "Children demonstrate emerging literacy skills" for the three-to-five year age group, with an average increase in rating of 1.0 points on the four-point scale.

Exhibit 6.8: Mean ratings for Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners) at Time 1 and Time 2 for all ages, Years 3 and 4
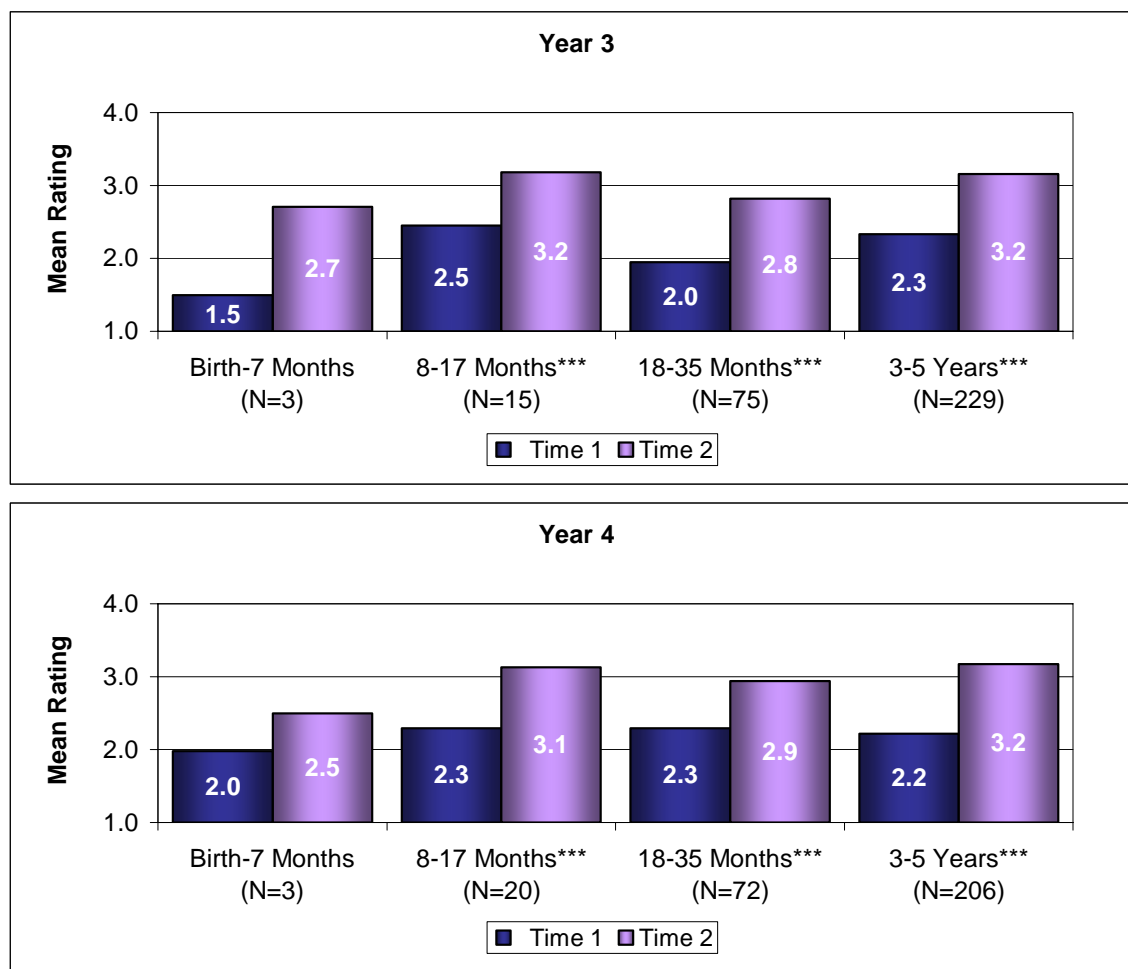
Source: Year 3 and 4 DRDP data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Performance on DR 3 ("Children show physical and motor competence") also improved significantly for children in the oldest three age groups in both years (see Exhibit 6.9). For example, in Year 3, the ratings of children in the three-to-five year age group increased from an average of 2.7 at Time 1 to an average of 3.4 at Time 2. In Year 4, we again see a very similar pattern; the ratings of children in the three-to-five-year age group increased from an average of 2.6 at Time 1 to an average of 3.4 at Time 2. Children in each age group also demonstrated statistically significant growth in both years from Time 1 to Time 2 for DR 4, "Children are safe and healthy", except for children in the birth to seven months age group, for whom Desired Result 4 is not considered appropriate for such a young age and is therefore not measured (see Exhibit 6.10). DR3 and DR4 consist of one indicator each; thus, the average indicator rating is the same as the average DR rating and is therefore not presented here.

Exhibit 6.9: Mean ratings for Desired Result 3 (Children show physical and motor competence) at Time 1 and Time 2 for all ages, Years 3 and 4
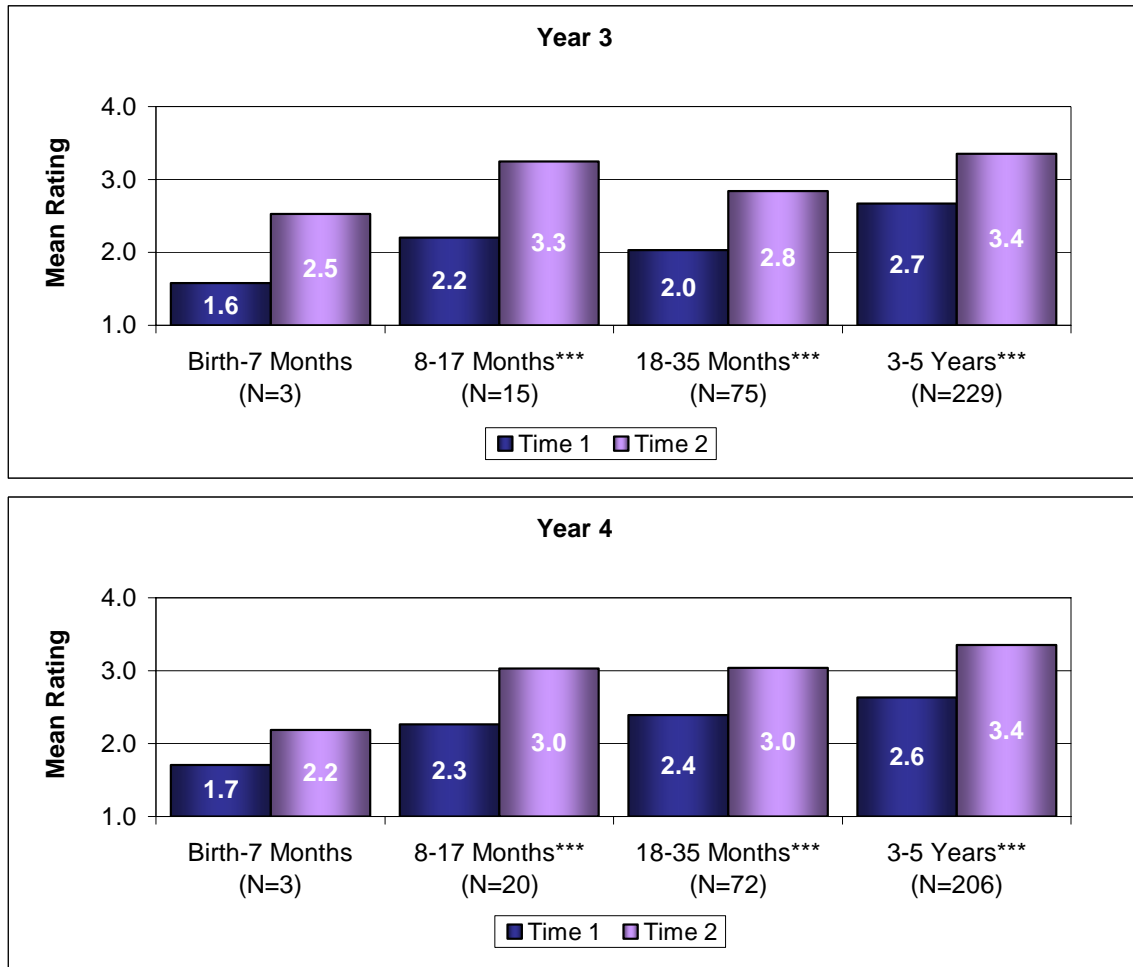
Source: Year 3 and 4 DRDP data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Exhibit 6.10: Mean ratings for Desired Result 4 (Children are safe and healthy) at Time 1 and Time 2 for all ages, Years 3 and 4
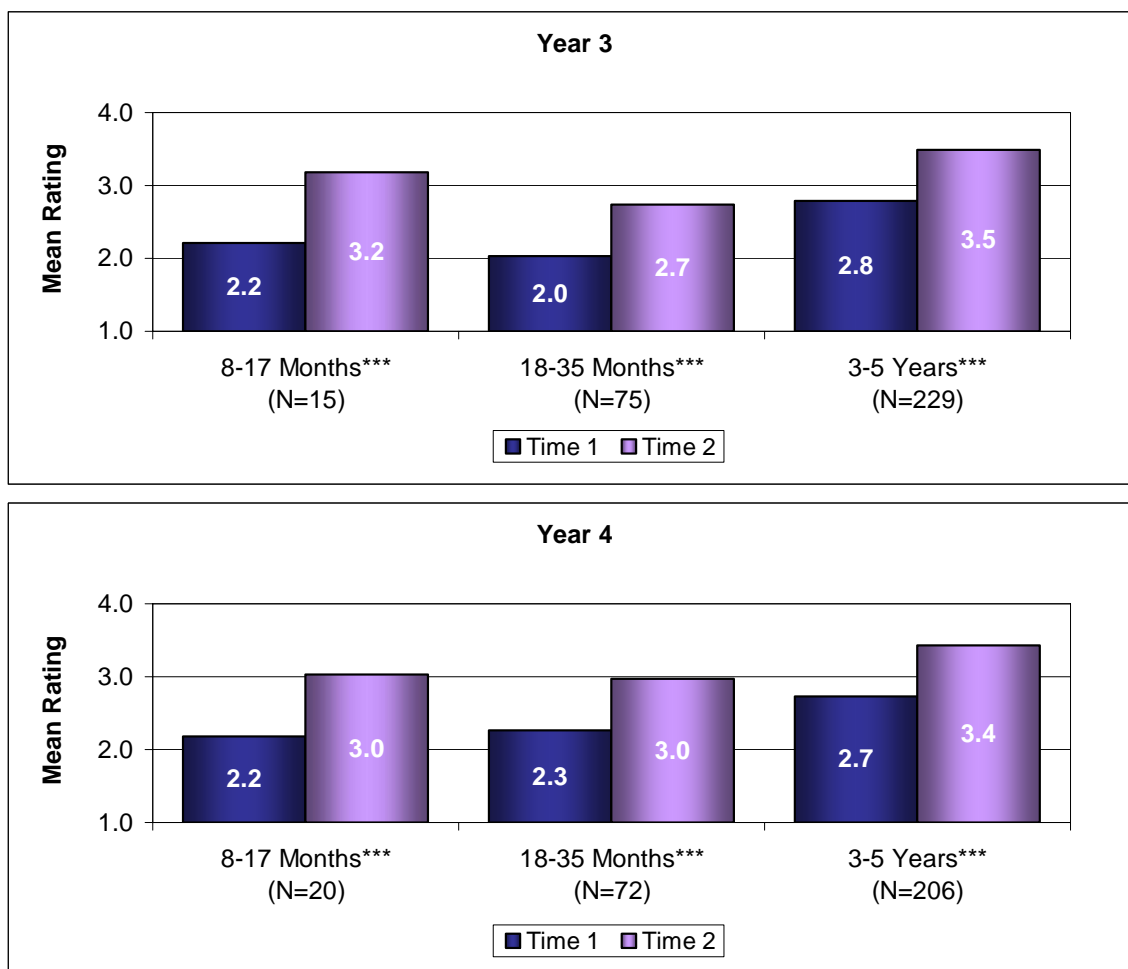
Source: Year 3 and 4 DRDP data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

In addition, for three- to five-year-olds, we conducted further analysis of the DRDP data to explore children's mastery of individual DRDP items. The percentage of items children fully mastered (a rating of 4) increased significantly from Time 1 to Time 2 in both years. In Year 3, children participating in the grantee programs fully mastered an average of 11 of the 55 DRDP items (20 percent) at Time 1, but by Time 2, an average of 29 of 55 items (53 percent) were fully mastered. In Year 4, children fully mastered an average of 9 of the 55 DRDP items (16 percent) at Time 1. At Time 2, an average of 27 of 55 items (49 percent) were fully mastered, a statistically significant change.

For this age group, we also examined a subset of 13 items identified by Even Start that address children's "reading readiness," including language comprehension, language expression, reading skills, interest in books, and writing. Of the 229 children included in the analysis in Year 3, three (1.3 percent) had fully mastered *all* of the 13 reading readiness items at Time 1. At Time 2, 42 (18 percent) had fully mastered all of these items, a statistically significant change. In addition, 19 percent progressed at least one or more ratings (for those items not already fully mastered at Time 1) on all of the reading readiness items between

Time 1 and Time 2. Of the 206 children included in the analysis in Year 4, eight (4 percent) had fully mastered all of the 13 reading readiness items at Time 1, and 40 (19 percent) had fully mastered all of these items at Time 2, another statistically significant change. An additional 32 percent progressed at least one or more ratings (for items not already fully mastered) on all of the reading readiness items between Time 1 and Time 2.

In addition to examining the percentage of children who mastered *all* of the 13 reading readiness items, we reviewed the percentage of children who progressed on each of the five reading readiness subscales individually: language comprehension, language expression, reading skills, interest in books, and writing. In Years 3 and 4, children showed significant increases in average ratings on all five of these subscales. Exhibit 6.11 shows the number of children three- to five-years of age for whom at least two DRDP assessments were administered for each subscale, the Time 1 mean rating, the Time 2 mean rating, and the difference between the two ratings. Ratings could range from 1 ("not yet") to 4 ("fully mastered").

Exhibit 6.11: Mean DRDP Reading Readiness Subscale scores (3-5 year olds), by year

	Year 3 (N=228)			Year 4 (N=206)		
	Time 1	Time 2	Difference	Time 1	Time 2	Difference
Language comprehension	2.57	3.37	.80***	2.46	3.35	.89***
Language expression	2.42	3.25	.83***	2.32	3.23	.91***
Reading skills	2.15	3.06	.91***	2.06	3.08	1.02***
Interest in books	2.43	3.25	.82***	2.29	3.22	.93***
Writing	2.28	3.16	.88***	2.16	3.26	1.10***

Source: Year 3 and 4 DRDP data downloaded from the grantee data system.
* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Between Time 1 and Time 2 in Year 3, children's ratings increased by an average of about 0.9 points for reading skills and writing, and 0.8 points for language comprehension, language expression, and interest in books. These increases were statistically significant. In Year 4, children's ratings increased by an average of about 0.9 points for language comprehension, language expression, and interest in books, 1.0 points for reading skills, and 1.1 for writing. These statistically significant increases are slightly larger than those seen in Year 3.

It should be kept in mind that children are expected to grow and achieve higher ratings on these measures just with time and normal development. Though all growth seen in these analyses is positive, without a comparison or randomized control group, it is not possible to know how much of this change is attributable directly to the family literacy grantees. In the following sections, we use regression analyses to control for age (natural development) and examine the relationships between the quality and quantity (i.e., hours) of family literacy services received and changes in DRDP ratings.

Relating change in DRDP ratings to program participation

Regression analyses suggest that for 3-5-year old children in both Years 3 and 4, after age and initial DRDP ratings are controlled, there is a significant positive relationship between the total number of hours children participated in early childhood education, child care, and PCILA, and the percentage of DRDP items mastered overall, as well as their growth on all four Desired Results. This indicates that children in the 3-5 year age group who spent more time in the family literacy programs showed higher ratings by Time 2 on DRDP items than those children who spent less time in the program. For example, on average in Year 3, a child who spent 630 hours in early childhood education, child care, and PCILA combined (nine months attending the required 60 hours of early childhood education and 10 hours of PCILA per month) would be expected to be rated an average of 3.6 on Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners) compared to 3.1 for a child of the same age with minimal participation at 20 hours in a year. In Year 4, 630 hours predicted a rating of 3.6 compared to 2.7 at 20 hours. Exhibit 6.12 shows the relationship between the number of hours attended and the Desired Result 2 rating at Time 2 in Years 3 and 4, respectively.

No statistically significant relationships were found between hours of attendance and any DRDP ratings for 18-35 month old children in Year 3, but in Year 4, a small *negative* relationship was found between total hours and Desired Results 2, 3, and 4 (Children are effective learners, Children show physical and motor competence, and Children are safe and healthy, respectively). In other words, children in the 18-35 month age group who attended more hours during Year 4 tended to be rated slightly lower on these DRDP items than those who attended fewer hours. It is unclear what the reason for this finding is. One contributing factor could be the fact that the 18-35 month DRDP covers a more limited time frame (and developmental trajectory) than the 3-5 year-old measure, and it is therefore possible that this is simply a ceiling effect pertaining to the instrument.

In addition to assessing the importance of considering the quantity of family literacy services received, we also examine the relationship between growth on Desired Results 1 and 2 and the quality of the ECE services. Using the Emergent Academic Snapshot data collected on ECE classrooms in each of the grantee programs, we found that the percentage of time a teacher spent scaffolding children's learning was positively and significantly associated with preschoolers' higher ratings on Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent) and Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners) at Time 2, after controlling for age and rating at Time 1 (Exhibit 6.13). For example, a 10 percent increase in the amount of time spent by ECE teachers on scaffolding children's learning was associated with a 0.1 higher rating on Desired Result 1 and 2 at Time 2. The percentage of time ECE teachers spent on literacy activities was also significantly related to Desired Result 1, but not Desired Result 2, at Time 2 (Exhibit 6.14). A 10 percent increase in the amount of time spend by ECE teachers on literacy activities was positively and significantly associated with a 0.15 higher rating on Desired Result 1 after controlling for age and Time 1 ratings.

Exhibit 6.12: Relationship between total hours attended and Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners), controlling for age and Time 1 rating, Years 3 and 4

Year 3

Predicted T2 score at 20 hours: 3.14

Predicted T2 score at 630 hours: 3.61

Year 4

Predicted T2 score at 20 hours: 2.67

Predicted T2 score at 630 hours: 3.58
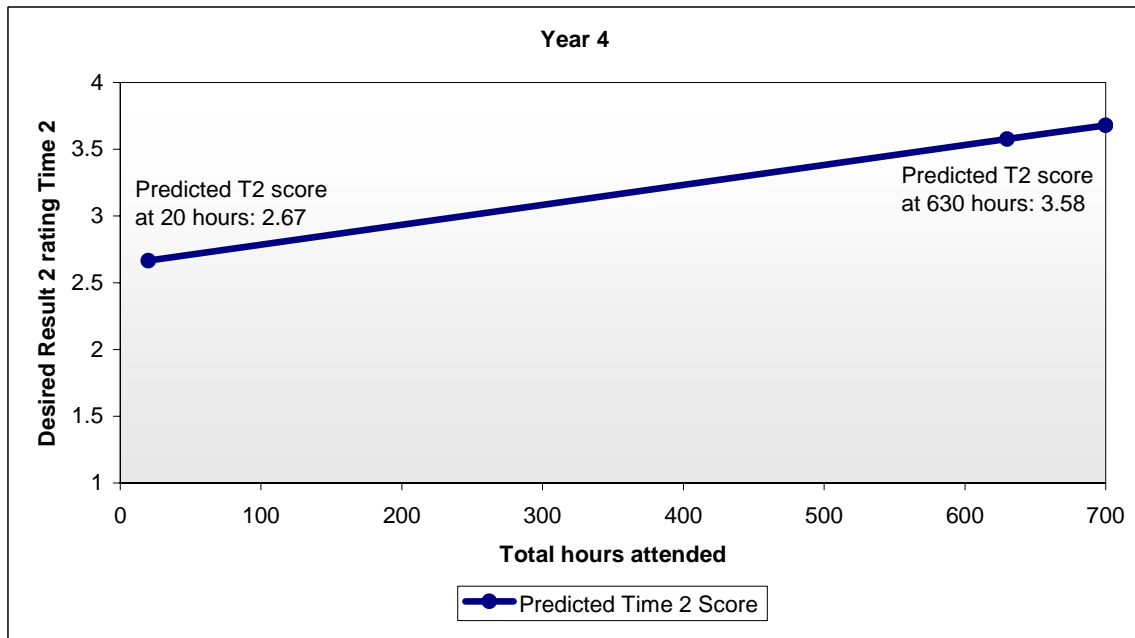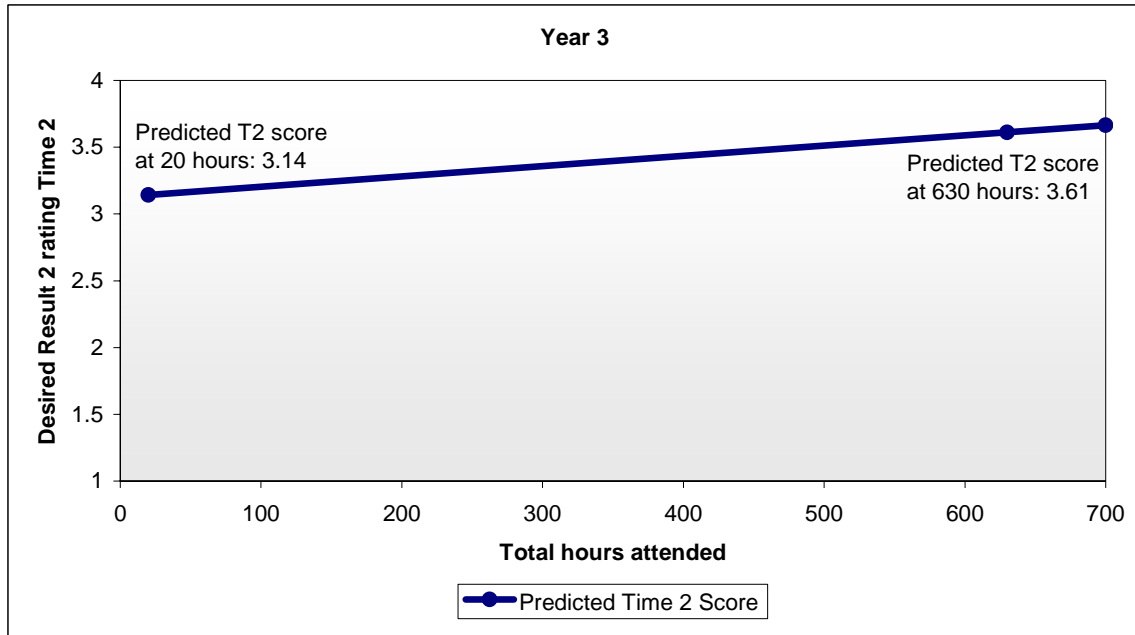
Source: Year 3 and 4 DRDP and attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system.

Exhibit 6.13: Relationship between percentage of time teachers taught using scaffolding techniques and child outcomes on Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent) and Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners), Year 3
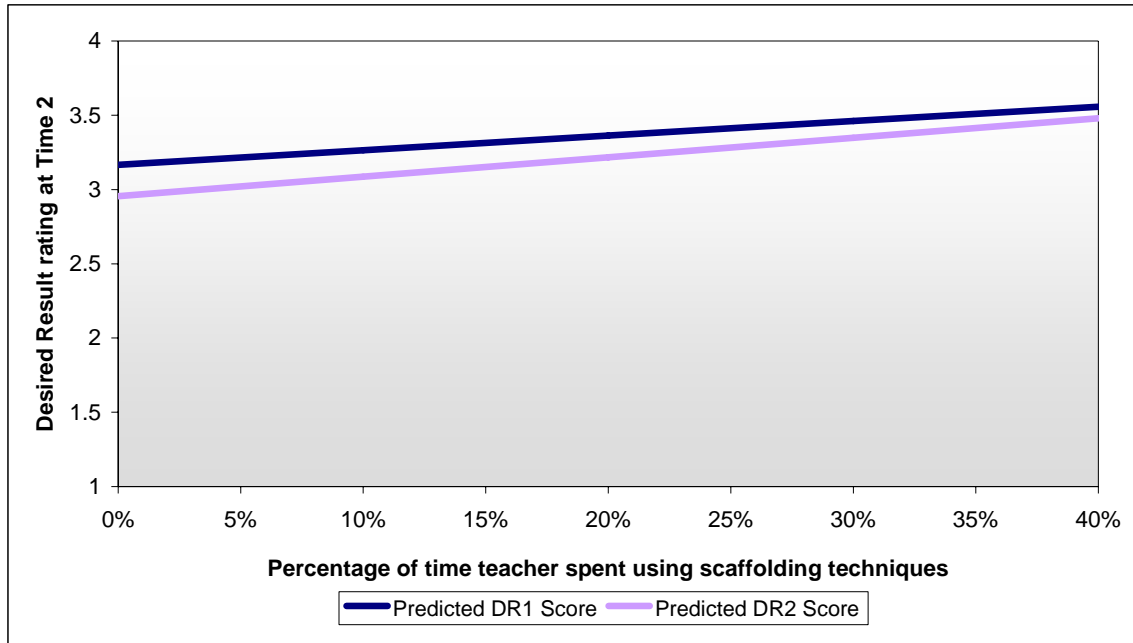
Source: Year 3 DRDP and attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system and observation data form the child outcomes study.

Exhibit 6.14: Relationship between percentage of time teachers spent on literacy activities and child outcomes on Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent), Year 3
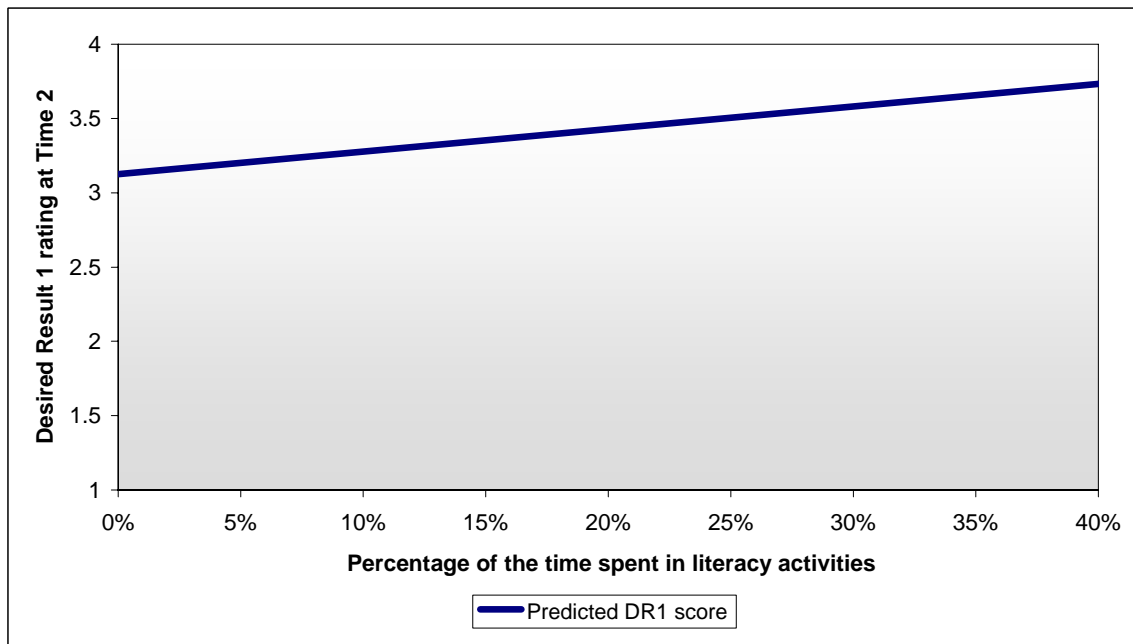
Source: Year 3 DRDP and attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system and observation data form the child outcomes study.

In addition, higher scores on two subscales of the ECERS-R—teacher-child interactions and language and reasoning—were associated with higher ratings for children on Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent). A one-point higher rating on the interactions subscale (on a scale of 1 to 7) was associated with a 0.09 increase in rating on DR 1, and a one-point increase on the language and reasoning subscale was associated with a 0.06 increase in rating on DR 1 (see Exhibit 6.15). There was no significant relationship between the personal care routines subscale score and DR 1 outcomes.

Higher scores on three ECERS-R subscales—interactions, activities, and language and reasoning—were associated with higher ratings for children on Desired Result 2 (children are effective learners). A one-point higher rating on the interactions subscale was associated with a 0.16 increase in rating on DR2, a one point increase on the activities subscale was associated with a 0.08 increase on DR2, and a one-point increase on the language and reasoning subscale was associated with a 0.10 increase on DR2.

Exhibit 6.15: Relationship between selected ECERS-R subscale scores and child outcomes on Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners), Year 3
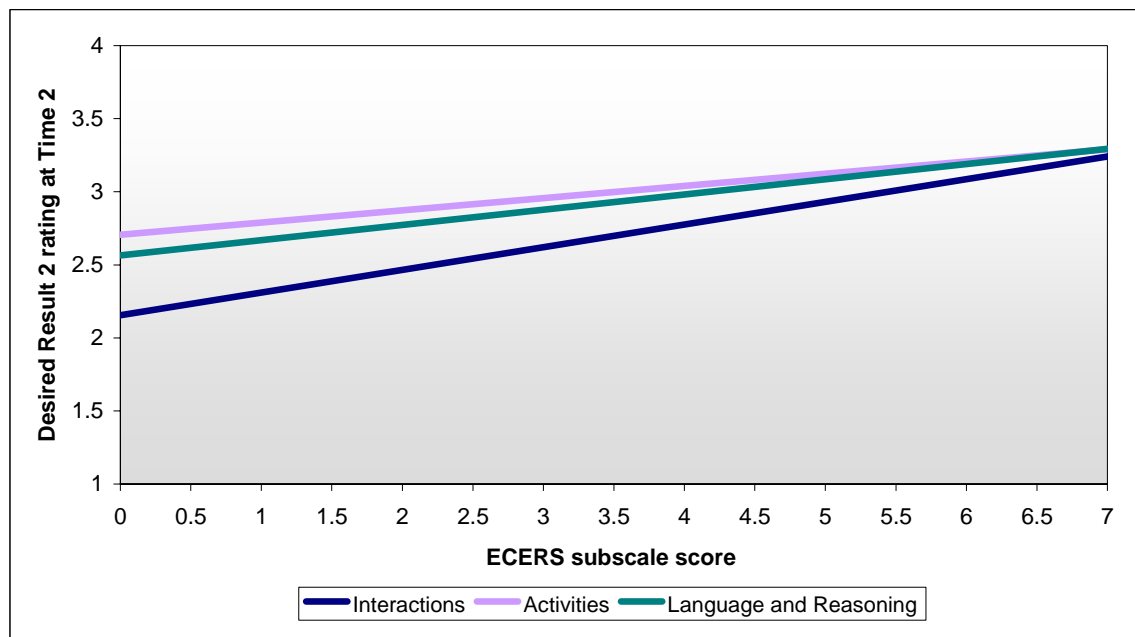
Source: Year 3 DRDP and attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system and ECERS-R observations.

Higher scores on one subscale—activities—were associated with higher ratings for preschoolers on Desired Result 3 (Children show physical and motor competence); a one-point increase was associated with a 0.07 increase in rating on DR 3. A higher space and furnishings subscale score was associated with slightly *lower* DR ratings; a one-point increase was associated with a decrease in rating of about 0.06 on DR 3. This may be an indication that programs with higher proportions of children with special needs have, by necessity, better resources to support children's physical development and motor skills. Finally, we examined the relationship between the personal care routines subscale of the ECERS-R and mean ratings on Desired Result 4 (Children are safe and healthy), but found

no significant relationship. Overall, however, the percentage of all DRDP items pre-school children mastered at Time 2 was positively associated with a higher total ECERS-R score, after controlling for age and rating at Time 1.

In summary, we found significant relationships between both the quantity and quality of family literacy services and children's growth on the DRDP. Next, we hypothesized that children who spent more time in higher-quality programs would demonstrate even greater growth than children who spent less time in high-quality programs. To test this, we focused on Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners), and estimated the interaction between ECERS-R scores (on one of two ECERS-R subscales—activities and language and reasoning) and the number of hours of service received.

We find that the relationship between hours of service and growth in ratings on Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners) depends on the quality of the program. For example, in programs with a low activities subscale score, each hour attended resulted in large DR 2 rating increases, but in programs with very high activities subscale scores, children started with higher ratings, and each additional hour attended resulted in smaller increases. In Exhibit 6.16, for a child of average age and Time 1 rating, the relationship between hours and Time 2 DR 2 rating is shown for several different activities subscale scores.

Exhibit 6.16: Relationship between program activities ECERS-R subscale score, hours attended, and child's rating on Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners), Year 3
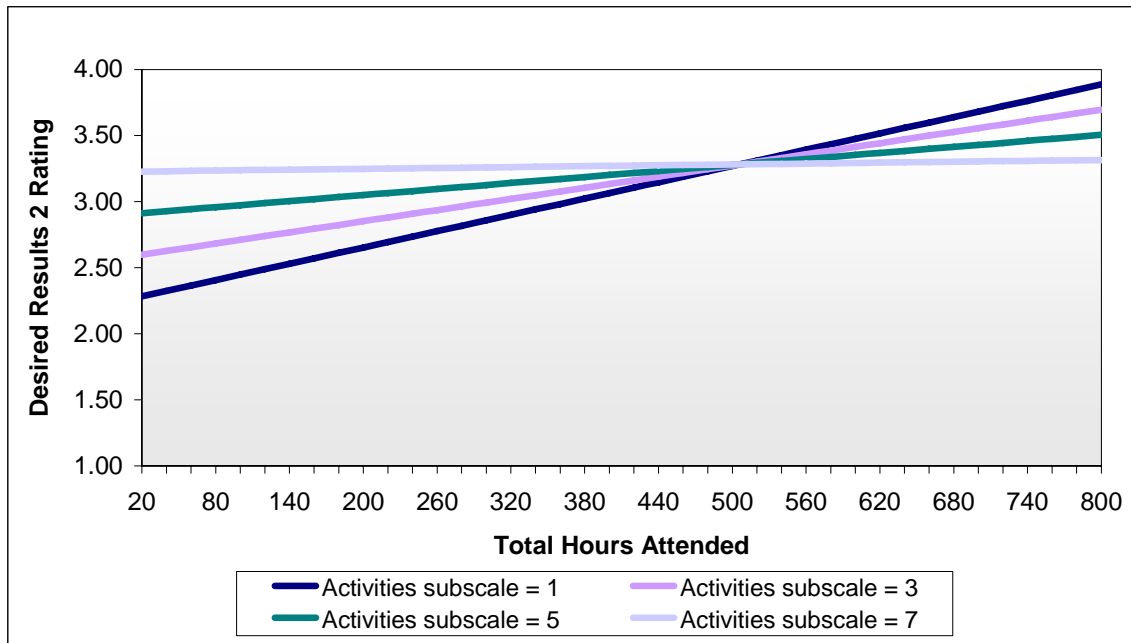
Source: Year 3 DRDP and attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system and ECERS-R observations.

We find a different result when we consider the language and reasoning subscale scores. In programs with low language and reasoning subscale scores (i.e., programs with fewer reading and communication materials and fewer opportunities for children to expand their thinking and develop reasoning skills) children's mean ratings on Desired Result 2 actually *decreased* with each hour attended. However, in programs with high language and reasoning subscale scores, children's ratings increased quite rapidly. This suggests that children in programs with strong language input and support for children to develop reasoning skills benefit from each hour of exposure, but children in programs that lack such input do not seem to benefit from greater exposure. In Exhibit 6.17, for a child of average age and Time 1 rating, the relationship between hours and Time 2 DR 2 rating is shown for different language and reasoning subscale scores.

Exhibit 6.17: Relationship between program's language and reasoning ECERS-R subscale score, hours attended, and child's rating on Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners), Year 3
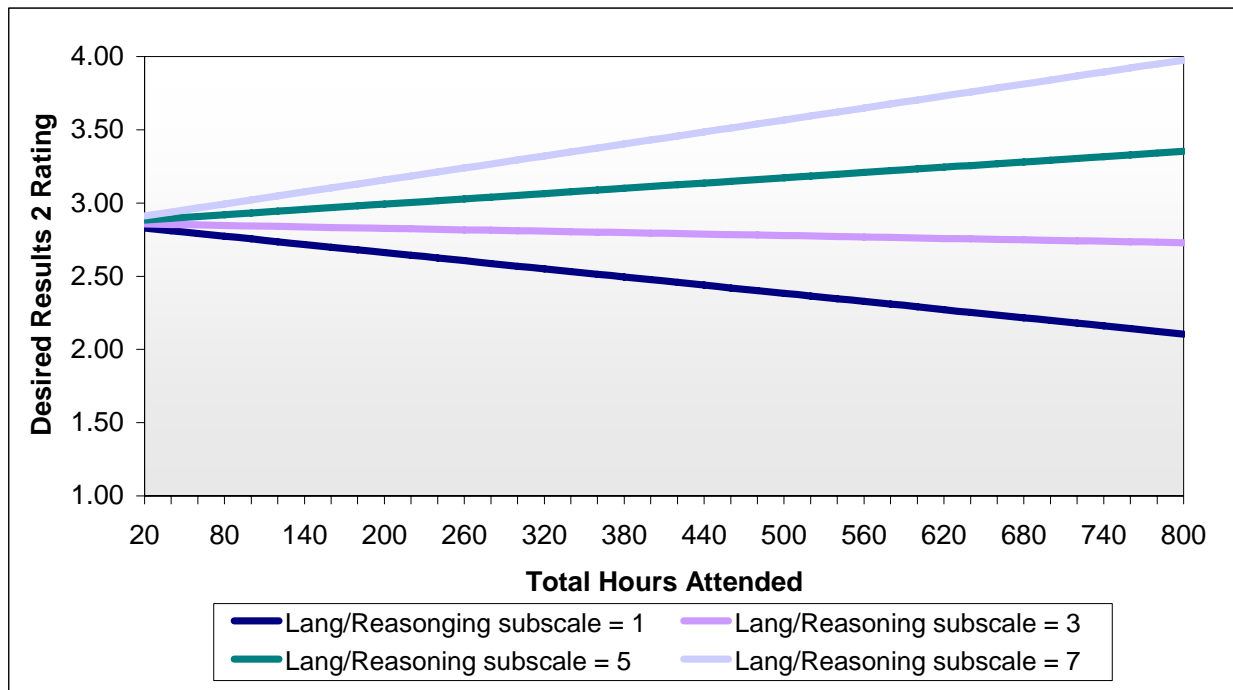
Source: Year 3 DRDP and attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system and ECERS-R observations.

Relating child progress to parent outcomes

In addition to the potential benefits of participating in the ECE and PCILA components, we hypothesized that children would also benefit from their parents' participation in the program. To test this, we used regression analysis to predict children's performance on the DRDP based on parent outcomes (from the CA-ESPIRS and CASAS scores), controlling for age and Time 1 DRDP ratings.

First, we examined the relationship between the three parent literacy practices examined in Chapter 5, and children's ratings on Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent) and Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners). For three-to-five-year-

olds, there were no statistically significant relationships found between changes in the number of books in the home, how often parents read to their children, or the extent to which interactive literacy practices are used and either of these outcomes, in either year, after controlling for age and Time 1 rating. In interpreting these results, the limitations of the CA-ESPIRS (e.g., its tendency to elicit socially appropriate responses) could lead to inflated responses at Time 1 and, consequently, affect our ability to detect a relationship.

For children in the 18-35 month age group, we found no significant relationships between changes in parenting behaviors and changes in child DRDP ratings for Year 3. However, in Year 4, increases in the number of books in the home and in the frequency that parents read to children were both associated with increases in mean ratings on Desired Result 1 (Children are personally and socially competent), after controlling for age and Time 1 ratings. No significant relationship was found for this age group between the extent to which parents used interactive literacy practices and DR 1, and no significant relationships were found between parent literacy practices and Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners).

To test the influence that parents' academic learning (specifically reading scores) might have on child outcomes, we also examined the relationship between Time 2 CASAS scores for parents and children's ratings for Desired Results 1 and 2. However, no significant relationships were found in either year for toddlers or preschoolers.

In summary, total hours attended, and attendance in higher quality programs, seemed to make a difference in children's progress on the DRDP. Parent literacy behaviors also had some minimal impact on children's social and personal competence, but not on DRDP ratings of their ability to learn. Parents' increased CASAS reading scores also did not show any relationship to child progress.

Child outcomes study results

In addition to analyzing children's progress on the DRDP results for all children participating in the program, we continued to analyze data collected from the focused child outcomes study of a subsample of children participating in the original 15 grantee programs. Two cohorts of children were assessed over time. Children in the first group of children were three years old when they were first assessed beginning in the fall of Year 2 (2003, Time 1). These children were assessed again in the spring of Year 2 (Time 2), the spring of Year 3 (Time 3), and finally, in the spring of Year 4 after they had entered kindergarten. Children in the second group of children were four years old in Year 2. They were assessed in the fall (Time 1) and spring (Time 2) of Year 2, and again in the spring of Year 3 after they had entered kindergarten.

The evaluation team was not able to locate and follow up with all children at all time points; as a result, there is some attrition in the sample over time. However, study participants were similar in terms of demographic characteristics over time (see Exhibit 1 and 2 in Appendix B). Study participants were also similar to the overall population of program participants: the majority of participants were Hispanic or Latino, and had parents with less than a high school education, who had immigrated to the United States within the last decade, and had household incomes of less than $30,000 annually.

Short-term impacts: changes observed within one year of participation

In previous sections, we discussed children's growth in each of four developmental domains: personal and social competence, learning, physical and motor competence, and health and safety (as measured by the DRDP). With data from the child outcomes study, we focus exclusively on children's pre-literacy/language and pre-numeracy skills, as measured by several standardized child assessment tools used by trained, independent assessors. To examine the short-term impacts of program participation on children's pre-literacy/language and pre-numeracy skills, we begin by revisiting results reported in the second year of the evaluation (see the Year 2 Evaluation Report for more details).

Focusing on the children who were assessed at both Time 1 and Time 2, we find significant growth on most assessments for the three-year-old as well as the four-year-old cohorts (see Exhibit 6.18 and 6.19). On measures of language and literacy, we find that both three-year-olds and four-year-olds demonstrated significant growth in terms of their English language ability (as measured by the Pre-LAS), their story comprehension skills, and the number of letters and numbers they could name. Children in the three-year old cohort also demonstrated significant growth on the number of colors they could name. However, we find no change in standardized scores of children's receptive language in English (for those assessed with the PPVT) or Spanish (for those who were assessed with the TVIP). Results of these standardized assessments suggest that study children start out somewhat below national norms (not surprising given their high-risk demographic profile), though their rates of growth in vocabulary were the same as rates of normal growth for average children who have not necessarily participated in family literacy programs.

We also observe significant increases in children's mathematics skills, especially for three-year-olds participating in the programs. We find significant growth from Time 1 to Time 2 on both three- and four-year-olds' ability to count objects, and we find significant growth in three-year old children's scores on the Woodcock-Johnson/Woodcock-Muñoz Applied Problems test.

Exhibit 6.18: Mean scores for children in the 3-year old cohort assessed at both Time 1 and Time 2

	(N)	Time 1 (SD)	Time 2 (SD)	t-Value
Pre-LAS	(32)	6.81 (6.78)	15.71 (11.26)	6.45 ***
Story print concept	(38)	2.03 (1.27)	1.92 (1.17)	.40
Story comprehension	(38)	.89 (0 .89)	1.71 (1.14)	3.39**
PPVT	(4)	75.50 (14.39)	91.00 (14.39)	2.87
TVIP	(31)	88.90 (9.12)	89.58 (15.08)	.30
Naming letters	(40)	2.60 (6.33)	5.20 (7.89)	4.13***
Naming numbers	(40)	1.20 (2.77)	2.25 (3.21)	2.63*
Naming colors	(40)	3.72 (3.95)	5.19 (4.05)	2.80**
Woodcock-Johnson/ Woodcock-Muñoz	(38)	84.03 (14.13)	92.08 (12.81)	4.54***
Counting objects	(31)	7.87 (6.53)	12.48 (8.51)	5.31***

Source: Child assessment data from the outcomes study.
*p<.05, **p>.01, ***p<.001.

Exhibit 6.19: Mean scores for children in the 4-year old cohort assessed at both Time 1 and Time 2

	(N)	Time 1 (SD)	Time 2 (SD)	t-Value
Pre-LAS	(35)	13.86 (10.86)	22.89 (9.88)	6.74***
Story print concept	(40)	2.32 (1.27)	2.32 (1.48)	.00
Story comprehension	(40)	1.20 (.82)	2.60 (1.06)	9.53***
PPVT	(4)	91.25 (5.74)	91.50 (10.21)	.05
TVIP	(27)	84.07 (18.13)	83.37 (16.33)	.39
Naming letters	(40)	7.20 (8.59)	14.32 (9.04)	6.12***
Naming numbers	(40)	3.55 (4.02)	5.68 (4.03)	4.13***
Naming colors	(40)	5.93 (3.88)	5.52 (3.88)	.56
Woodcock-Johnson/ Woodcock-Muñoz	(39)	85.82 (18.03)	89.00 (16.05)	1.56
Counting objects	(39)	12.72 (10.02)	17.90 (11.36)	3.43**

Source: Child assessment data from the outcomes study.
*p<.05, **p>.01, ***p<.001.

To assess the potential impact of participation in family literacy on these changes, we focus on the literacy-related outcomes and examine three factors: the number of hours of service children received (quantity); the amount of time spent engaging in literacy activities in their ECE program (program quality); and both the number of books in the home and the amount of time spent engaging with their parents in literacy-focused and other activities (parent input). Significant correlations suggest that the percentage of time spent engaging in literacy activities in the program is associated with the number of letters children could name at Time 1 ($r = .21*$) and Time 2 ($r = .36*$) and children's English level (measured by the Pre-LAS) at Time 2 ($r = .25*$). However, we find no statistically significant correlations between children's language and literacy outcomes and the overall number of hours of service they received, suggesting a greater relationship for quality than quantity.

We also find significant correlations between outcomes and parent input. For example, the number of children's books that the family owns was positively correlated with children's understanding of story and print concepts (at Time 1, $r = .27**$) as well as their English level at Time 1 ($r = .25*$) and Time 2 ($r = .25*$). Parent-child activities, including literacy activities such as telling stories and learning about letters and words, were also positively correlated with children's Spanish vocabulary (as measured by the TVIP) at Time 1 ($r = .24*$). On the whole, it appears that children who had more linguistically stimulating environments at home and in the programs performed better on language/literacy measures.

To examine the relationships between program variables (quantity and quality of services) and children's language and literacy outcomes at Time 2 while controlling for initial performance (Time 1) and family demographics, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses. For each Time 2 outcome measure (TVIP, Pre-LAS, story and print concepts, and number of letters named), we first modeled the impact of Time 1 score. To

assess the added value of including demographic variables, we included either income or immigration (whichever was correlated with the Time 2 score) in a second model. Finally, a third model included Time 1 score, family demographics, and program quantity (hours of service received by children) and quality (percentage of time children spent in literacy activities). Parent input variables were not included because they were highly correlated with family demographic variables and did not add to the model fit. The results of these analyses are shown in Exhibit 6.20.

Exhibit 6.20: Hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting children's language and literacy skills

Variables	B	t-Value	R^2	R^2-change
TVIP (T2)				
R^2 = .61, $F(2,49)$ = 37.59, $P <$ .001				
1. TVIP (T1)	.79***		.55	.55***
2. Immigration	-3.45*		.61	.05*
Pre-LAS (T2)				
R^2 = .56, $F(5,56)$ = 14.03, $P <$ .001				
1. Pre-LAS (T1)	.60***		.46	.46***
2. Immigration	.19†		.49	.03†
3. Family literacy program variables:			.56	.07*
Percent of time in literacy activities	.19*	2.07*		
Low attendance hours	-.14	-1.24		
Medium attendance hours[a]	-.26*	-2.34*		
Number of letters named (T2)				
R^2 = .66, $F(5,63)$ = 23.87, $P <$ .001				
1. Number of letters named (T1)	.67***		.54	.54***
2. Annual household income	.15†		.56	.02
3. Family literacy program variables:			.66	.09*
Percent of time in literacy activities	.19*	2.39*		
Low attendance hours	-.17	-1.93		
Medium attendance hours[a]	-.33*	-3.54*		
Story and print concepts (T2)				
R^2 = .19, $F(5,61)$ = 2.86, $P <$ .05				
1. Story and print concept (T1)	.71	.57	.03	.03
2. Annual household income	.27*	2.26*	.09	.06*
3. Family literacy program variables:			.19	.10†
Percent of time in literacy activities	.17	1.45		
Low attendance hours	-.16	-1.09		
Medium attendance hours[a]	-.35*	-2.42*		

Source: Attendance data downloaded from the grantee data system, and demographic and child assessment data from the child outcomes study.
*$p <$ .05, **$p <$.01, *** $p <$ .001, † $p <$ .10.
[a] High attendance hours is the reference group.

To model TVIP, we included only two variables, which were correlated with Time 2 TVIP scores: Time 1 score and years since the parents immigrated to the U.S. Not surprisingly, the Time 1 score was a significant predictor of the Time 2 score. This means that children who performed well on the TVIP at Time 1 were more likely to score well on the TVIP at Time 2 than those who performed less well. Immigration was entered in the second step and increased the model fit (R^2-change = .05*). Immigration was a negative predictor of TVIP score, indicating that as the number of years in the U.S. increased, TVIP scores (Spanish vocabulary) decreased. These variables together explained a significant proportion of the variance in Time 2 TVIP scores.

To assess the impact of program variables on Pre-LAS scores, we included Time 1 scores, immigration, and family literacy program variables in the model. After controlling for initial English skills (Time 1 Pre-LAS score), immigration was not a significant predictor of English language skills. Entered in the third step, family literacy program variables were significant, increasing the explained variance in Time 2 Pre-LAS score by 7 percent. Specifically, the percentage of time spent in literacy activities in the program was associated with increased Pre-LAS scores at Time 2, even after controlling for initial English fluency and parents' time in the U.S. In addition, compared to children with the most hours of program attendance,[9] children with medium levels of hours attended scored lower on the Pre-LAS at Time 2. Overall, not only do these variables together significantly predict children's English skills, but including the family literacy program variables significantly adds to the fit of the model.

Similarly, the number of letters that children could name at Time 2 was significantly predicted by Time 1 score (entered at step 1), but demographic variables (in this case, household income, added in step 2) did not add any predictive power. Again, when family literacy variables were added (in step 3), model fit increased further. The percentage of time children spent in literacy activities and hours children attended made unique contributions to the prediction of the number of letters children could name at Time 2. As observed for the Pre-LAS results, children whose families received the most hours of family literacy services (compared to the medium attendance group) and who engaged in more literacy activities in the early childhood setting were able to name more letters.

The regression model for story and print concepts also included pretest scores, annual household income, and family literacy program variables. Time 1 score was not a significant predictor, suggesting that there was no association between pretest and posttest scores. (This may be due to the fact that the book used in this assessment was changed at Time 2 to a more culturally appropriate book, thus introducing some discontinuity.) Income was a significant predictor, and family literacy program variables were marginally significant predictors, explaining an additional 10 percent of the variance in Time 2 story and print concepts scores. Of the three family literacy program variables, only the medium service group was significant (and negative), suggesting that children with high attendance hours had a greater understanding of story and print concepts at Time 2 compared to children with a medium number of hours.

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[9] Three groups of children were identified through a latent class analysis: a low attendance group (attending an average of 138 hours of ECE over time), a medium attendance group (291 hours of ECE, on average), and a high attendance group (466 hours of ECE, on average).

Longer-term impacts: changes observed in kindergarten

To address the question of longer-term impacts of program participation, we examined children's performance in kindergarten on the same outcome measures. Overall, we find continued growth on most of the assessments after the children enter kindergarten. In particular, as Exhibits 6.21 and 6.22 indicate, English language skills (as measured by the Pre-LAS) continue to improve into kindergarten. Children's scores on print concepts, story comprehension, and naming letters, numbers, and colors also increased when children were in kindergarten. In addition, matched-pairs t-tests indicate significant growth on each of these measures from Time 1 to kindergarten for the subset of children assessed at both time points (see Exhibit 6.23 and 6.24).

Exhibit 6.21: Mean scores for children's language and cognitive development, Time 1, 2, 3, and kindergarten assessments for all children in the 3-year old cohort

	Time 1 Mean(N)	Time 2 Mean(N)	Time 3 Mean(N)	Kindergarten Mean(N)
Pre-LAS	8.00 (46)	15.24 (33)	31.06 (16)	34.27 (15)
Story print concept	2.04 (49)	1.88 (40)	3.71 (17)	5.53 (15)
Story comprehension	.86 (49)	1.63 (40)	2.41 (17)	3.47 (15)
PPVT	75.50 (4)	86.00 (7)	81.30 (10)	—
TVIP	88.75 (44)	88.91 (32)	71.50 (4)	—
Naming letters	3.35 (51)	5.20 (40)	14.18 (17)	22.20 (15)
Naming numbers	1.53 (51)	2.25 (40)	6.94 (17)	10.13 (15)
Naming colors	3.50 (51)	5.19 (40)	11.47 (17)	10.53 (15)
Woodcock-Johnson/ Woodcock-Muñoz	83.98 (49)	91.62 (40)	80.50 (8)	91.35 (4)
Counting objects	8.69 (39)	11.94 (35)	17.29 (17)	32.67 (15)

Source: Child assessment data from the outcomes study.

Exhibit 6.22: Mean scores for children's language and cognitive development, Time 1, 2, 3, and kindergarten assessments for all children in the 4-year old cohort

	Time 1 Mean(N)	Time 2 Mean(N)	Kindergarten Mean(N)
Pre-LAS	17.00 (55)	23.77 (40)	29.89 (9)
Story print concept	2.32 (56)	2.25 (44)	4.68 (16)
Story comprehension	1.30 (56)	2.59 (14)	3.68 (16)
PPVT	85.87 (8)	84.21 (30)	82.66 (12)
TVIP	87.93 (48)	82.33 (44)	95.50 (2)
Naming letters	8.16 (56)	13.95 (44)	23.37 (16)
Naming numbers	3.58 (56)	5.59 (44)	10.43 (16)
Naming colors	5.40 (56)	5.35 (44)	10.62 (16)
Woodcock-Johnson/ Woodcock-Muñoz	86.70 (55)	88.75 (31)	94.40 (16)
Counting objects	12.52 (55)	17.22 (44)	34.00 (16)

Source: Child assessment data from the outcomes study.

Scores on the PPVT/TVIP appear to remain relatively stable across time points. However, only one of the children who was assessed with the TVIP at Time 1 (that is, his or her English skills were not high enough to be tested with the PPVT) continued to be assessed with the TVIP in kindergarten, so matched comparisons of change over time could not be made. Similarly, none of the children who were proficient enough in English to be assessed with the PPVT at Time 1 remained in the study at kindergarten, so no comparisons between Time 1 and kindergarten can be made with the PPVT. However, scores on the Pre-LAS as well as the shift from the TVIP to the PPVT for so many children indicate that over time children were becoming more skilled in English, thus "screening out" of the need to be assessed with the Spanish version of the PPVT, the TVIP.

Exhibit 6.23: Mean scores for children's language and cognitive development for children in the 3-year old cohort with both Time 1 and kindergarten scores

	(N)	Time 1 Mean(SD)	Kindergarten Mean(SD)	t-Value
Pre-LAS	(15)	6.40 (6.27)	34.27 (3.63)	16.44***
Story print concept	(14)	2.00 (1.30)	5.53 (1.51)	5.21***
Story comprehension	(14)	.79 (.89)	3.50 (1.09)	6.82***
Naming letters	(15)	1.87 (6.42)	22.20 (6.39)	9.61***
Naming numbers	(15)	.87 (2.59)	10.13 (1.81)	11.00***
Naming colors	(15)	3.27 (3.37)	10.53 (2.64)	5.91***
Woodcock-Johnson/Muñoz	(4)	86.50(11.03)	73.25 (7.23)	2.16
Counting objects	(14)	7.14 (6.96)	32.21 (7.71)	11.23***

Source: Child assessment data from the outcomes study.
*p < .05, **p<.01, *** p < .001.

Exhibit 6.24: Mean scores for children's language and cognitive development, Time 1, 2, 3, and kindergarten assessments for all children in the 4-year old cohort

	(N)	Time 1 Mean(SD)	Kindergarten Mean(SD)	t-Value
Pre-LAS	(8)	8.88 (8.51)	28.88 (10.62)	6.93***
Story print concept	(13)	2.77 (1.48)	4.77 (1.42)	4.16**
Story comprehension	(13)	1.15 (.85)	3.84 (.90)	12.92***
Naming letters	(13)	7.46 (7.81)	22.85 (6.39)	5.83***
Naming numbers	(13)	4.31 (3.99)	9.92 (.49)	5.16***
Naming colors	(13)	6.54 (3.53)	10.38 (1.39)	3.42**
Woodcock-Johnson/Muñoz	(15)	86.20 (16.12)	95.27 (14.33)	2.09
Counting objects	(13)	13.92 (11.47)	34.23 (9.65)	5.59***

Source: Child assessment data from the outcomes study.
*p < .05, **p<.01, *** p < .001.

In addition, math scores—both the Woodcock-Johnson/Woodcock-Muñoz and counting—appeared to improve in kindergarten, though matched-pairs t-tests of those children with scores at both Time 1 and kindergarten indicate no significant change on the Woodcock-Johnson/Woodcock-Muñoz.

While standardized assessment scores (PPVT/TVIP and the Woodcock-Johnson/ Woodcock-Muñoz) remained low in kindergarten relative to the population, children continued to demonstrate growth on most measures. The positive trend in score growth over time suggests that children entered kindergarten ready to learn and continued to improve.

To assess the extent to which this growth is associated with participation in the family literacy programs, we examined correlations between children's literacy experiences in the family literacy programs and their kindergarten academic scores (see Exhibit 6.25). There were a number of significant associations indicating that the quality of the earlier experiences was associated with kindergarten scores. First, child's age (in months) at enrollment in the family literacy program was associated with kindergarten outcomes, indicating that, in general, children who were older at enrollment had lower literacy scores in kindergarten. This suggests that younger children may have benefited more from the family literacy programs. An unexplained exception to this trend is an association between age at enrollment and math standardized scores (Woodcock-Johnson/Woodcock-Muñoz), suggesting that children who were older at enrollment benefited more in terms of math skills.

Second, parents who reported being more involved in literacy activities at home had children with higher scores on several of the assessments in kindergarten. For example, parents who spent time teaching their children letters and reading skills had children with higher story comprehension scores. In addition, parents' own reading at Time 1 was associated with children's higher scores on the naming letters and numbers tasks, and parents' reading to their children was associated with higher scores on naming letters, numbers, and colors at kindergarten. The time spent at home (or otherwise apart from the family literacy programs) engaging in parent-child learning activities was associated with children's ability to name numbers at kindergarten.

Several family literacy program activities were also significantly related to performance in kindergarten. For example, children who were observed to engage with books reading or pretending to read more often in the family literacy programs also had higher story comprehension scores in kindergarten. Somewhat surprisingly, children who were read to more often in the programs did not have higher comprehension scores, suggesting that their active engagement in literacy activities contributed more to story comprehension outcomes. Children who had more letter sound experiences in the family literacy programs had higher math scores (on the Woodcock-Johnson) in kindergarten. Children who engaged in more oral language experiences in the family literacy programs had higher story print concept scores in kindergarten.

Finally, children who experienced more elaborated interactions with teachers had higher story print concept scores and higher PPVT scores. Children who more often had their learning scaffolded by teachers had higher story print concept scores as well.

Exhibit 6.25: Correlations between activities and observations at Time 1 and children's academic scores in Kindergarten

| | | | Language and literacy | | | | | Math | |
| | | | Story print | | Naming | | | | |
	Pre-LAS	PPVT	Concepts	Compre-hension	Letters	Numbers	Colors	Wood-cock	Counting
Age of child at enrollment	-.37*	-.11	-.29*	-.14	-.07	-.1	-.15	.64*	-.04
Parent activity									
Parent teaches child literacy	.23	-.12	-.15	.31*	.1	-.15	.09	-.07	.03
Parents' own reading at home	.23	.09	.04	-.05	.38*	.32*	.21	-.17	.12
Parent-child learning activities	-.2	.13	-5	-.03	.11	.33*	.17	.12	.11
Parent reads to child	.15	.13	.1	.07	.49*	.41*	.30*	.02	.05
Program activities									
Teacher reads to child	.01	.01	-.01	-.06	.17	.12	.11	-.12	-.07
Child reads or pre-reads	.25	.1	.04	.27*	.2	.19	.17	.13	.18
Child learning letters/sounds	.01	-.16	.05	-.13	.01	.13	.1	.32*	.17
Child works on oral language	.24	.03	.32*	.15	.18	.08	.06	-.26	.12
Teacher behaviors									
Elaborates on what child says	.14	.30*	.27*	.19	.19	.06	.01	.29*	.04
Scaffolds child's learning	.28*	.07	.38*	.25	.21	.19	.18	.22	.15
Interacts in didactic manner	-.14	.18	.01	-.11	.17	-.15	-.24	-.05	.00

Source: Child assessment, parent survey, and observation data from the child outcomes study.
*p < .05, **p<.01, *** p < .001.

Modeling growth of children's outcomes over time

Growth modeling was used in the child outcomes study to examine the effects of the family literacy program on changes in child outcomes over time (fall and spring of Year 2 in the

family literacy program, Year 3 in the family literacy program when applicable (3-year-old cohort), and spring of kindergarten). The following outcome measures are used in the growth analyses presented here: counting objects, story and print concepts, story comprehension, naming letters, naming numbers, naming colors, and the Pre-LAS. To examine program effects on change over time, we focused on its effects on growth rate, which is defined as the amount of change per month in the outcome measures between the first and the final child assessments.

To examine the effects of family literacy services on change in child outcomes, both literacy-based classroom practices (quality) and hours of service received (quantity) were examined to determine 1) whether engagement in literacy-based classroom practices impacted child outcomes, and 2) whether greater durations of exposure to family literacy services contributed to a faster rate of improvement in child outcomes.

The quality of family literacy services was measured by children's engagement in literacy activities during program time, which was observed at each time point. The variable used in these analyses is a composite of the average percentage of time children were observed to be engaged in any of the following activities: being read to, reading or pre-reading, working on letter sounds, practicing oral language, and writing. More experience in these literacy activities was expected to show better outcomes. The quantity of family literacy services was measured by the total number of hours of attendance across all four program components. Children were categorized into those in families receiving high numbers of hours of service (on average 466 hours of ECE between the first and final assessment time points) (i.e., the "high hours group") and those in families receiving less (i.e., the "low-mid hours group").

Growth modeling results show some effects for both time and engagement in literacy activities across outcome measures (see Exhibit 6.26). The initial status for the high hours group was significantly higher than that for the low-mid hours group for "counting objects," indicating that children in the high hours group were able to count more objects when they were assessed at Time 1 than children in the low-mid hours group. It is not clear why this is, but it could be because children in the high hours group are the same children who have already participated in the family literacy program in previous years. It is not clear why this effect is only apparent for counting objects.

The fact that the growth rate for the high hours group was significantly higher than the growth rate for the low-mid hours group on the counting objects assessment indicates that children in the high hours group grew at a faster rate during the time they were enrolled in the family literacy program than children in the low-mid hours group. In other words, children who participated for more hours improved faster in their ability to count objects.

The effect of engagement in literacy activities was statistically significant and greater for the high hours group than for the low-mid hours group on the naming colors assessment. This indicates that there was a positive effect of literacy activities on children's ability to name colors for the high hours group only. In other words, the percent of time a child spent engaged in literacy activities only impacted her ability to name colors if she was in the high hours group. The results also show that engagement in literacy activities had a significant positive effect on naming letters for the low-mid hours group, and a somewhat stronger, but not significantly stronger, effect for the high hours group, which indicates that all children could name more letters with more time spent engaging in literacy activities. The

relationships between hours attended and engagement in literacy activities on all measured literacy outcomes are summarized in Exhibit 6.26.

Exhibit 6.26: Results of hierarchical linear modeling on the effects of family literacy services on child outcomes

	Language and literacy						Math
		Story print			Naming		
	Pre-LAS	Concepts	Compre-hension	Naming letters	Naming colors	Naming numbers	Counting objects
Intercept							
Low-mid hours group	25.09***	1.45***	1.36***	5.16***	4.10***	2.17***	8.67***
High hours group	24.16	2.12	1.04	5.48	3.94	2.11	13.03*
Growth rate							
Low-mid hours group	1.26***	0.10***	0.11***	0.68***	0.29**	0.32***	0.79***
High hours group	1.44	0.08	0.13	0.92	0.04	0.32	1.26*
Effect of Engagement in Literacy Activities							
Low-mid hours group	-0.02	0.09**	-0.02	0.24*	0.01	0.11*	0.43***
High hours group	-0.28	0.09	0.02	0.11	0.31*	0.10	-0.40**

Source: Attendance data from the grantee data system and child assessment and observation data from the child outcomes study.
*$p<.05$ **$p<.01$ ***$p<.001$

Child outcomes summary

Parents report that the family literacy programs have helped prepare their children for school, helped them learn English, and made children more disciplined. Ratings on the DRDP are consistent with parent perspectives. Children aged 8 months to 5 years showed growth on each of the four Desired Results in the DRDP—DR 1: Children are personally and socially competent, DR 2: Children are effective learners, DR 3: Children show physical and motor competence, and DR 4: Children are safe and healthy. Preschoolers also showed increased mastery of reading readiness items in the DRDP during their time in the programs.

We also examined the relationship between growth on particular Desired Results and the quantity and quality of the ECE services. Overall, children in the three-to-five age range who spent more time in the family literacy programs showed higher ratings at the end of the year. Teachers who spent more time scaffolding children's learning also had children with higher ratings on DR 1 (Children are personally and socially competent) and DR 2 (Children are effective learners). More time spent on literacy activities in classrooms was also associated with higher ratings on DR 1, but not DR 2. Higher program quality as measured by the ECERS-R was associated with more DRDP items mastered by preschoolers. However, the relationship between hours of service and DR 2 ratings depends on the quality of the program. For example, in programs with a low ECERS-R activities subscale score, each hour attended resulted in large DR 2 rating increases, but in programs with very high activities subscale scores, children started with higher ratings, and each additional hour attended resulted in smaller increases. In programs with high language and reasoning subscale scores,

children's mean ratings on DR 2 increased with each hour attended, while those in programs with low language and reasoning subscales actually *decreased* with each hour attended.

We hypothesized that children would also benefit from their parents' participation in the program; however, we found no relationships between changes in the number of books in the home, how often parents read to their children, or the extent to which interactive literacy practices are used and Desired Result 2. Some relationships were found between parent literacy practices and Desired Result 1 outcomes for toddlers in Year 4. We found no relationships between parent CASAS scores and children's DRDP ratings.

In the first year of the child outcomes study, children showed significant growth on most assessments—including language, literacy, and mathematics—but no detectable change in receptive language. Percent of time engaged in literacy activities in the program was related to better literacy outcomes for children, but the number of hours they attended the program was not. However, there is some evidence that more hours spent in a family literacy program is related to better English language development, ability to name more letters, and greater understanding of story and print concepts. Still, results suggest that program quality matters more than quantity. Parent inputs were also related to some outcomes; children with a more linguistically stimulating environment at home performed better on language and literacy measures than other children.

Children were followed through kindergarten to understand longer-term impacts of the family literacy programs. Through kindergarten, children continued to show growth on all outcome measures except the Woodcock-Johnson/Muñoz assessment, though standardized test scores (PPVT/TVIP and Woodcock-Johnson/Muñoz) for children who participated in the family literacy programs remained lower than the population.

Early experiences in the programs were found to be associated with positive kindergarten outcomes. There is some evidence that children who began participating in the family literacy programs at an earlier age showed better language and literacy performance in kindergarten. More parent-child engagement in literacy activities was associated with better literacy and math outcomes in kindergarten, and participation in a program with more time spent engaged in literacy activities or with a teacher scaffolding children's learning was associated with better literacy performance in kindergarten. Growth modeling results also show some effects for both time in program and engagement in literacy across outcome measures.

Chapter 7: Supporting Continuous Quality Improvement

Chapters 3 through 6 describe various aspects of program quality and assess the relationships between participation in family literacy programs and child and family outcomes. In addition to providing quality services and supporting the learning of parents and children, family literacy programs are also expected to be working toward continuous quality improvement, enhancing their services to better meet the needs of families. A major component of the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative is the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN), which is designed to support grantees in their efforts to improve service delivery. This chapter examines the role of the FLSN in supporting program improvement through training and technical assistance, as well as the impacts of FLSN support in moving grantees toward model status in several key areas, including each of the four program components, component integration, program sustainability, and the use of data. To assess changes over time, we review the range of FLSN activities and grantee perceptions of the FLSN across the first four years of the Initiative.

We analyzed information from a variety of sources, including interviews with FLSN staff and subcontractors, interviews and focus groups with grantee program staff in Year 3, a survey and focus groups with grantee program directors in Year 4, a table summarizing some of the FLSN site visitors' notes in both years, and various FLSN documents and deliverables, including the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement, FLSN quarterly and mid-year reports, internal evaluation reports, and FLSN calendars and training event agendas.

Role of the FLSN in Supporting Program Improvement

In Years 3 and 4 we see shifts in the focus of FLSN professional development and technical assistance, accompanied by changes in the areas in which grantees report FLSN support to be most helpful. We also see a decrease in the amount of onsite technical assistance provided to grantees. Though the number of training events offered has remained fairly constant from year to year, attendance patterns at these events have changed, as fewer non-grantee agencies were represented at FLSN training events in Year 4 than in Year 3.

FLSN staff expectations for growth

During interviews, FLSN staff were asked about their goals for training and technical assistance work with grantees. We asked FLSN staff members to tell us what changes they expected to see in grantee programs by the end of Year 4 as a result of their support. Though FLSN staff expectations for grantees vary, multiple staff members stated that by the end of Year 4 all grantees should have a fully functioning four-component program offering the requisite number of hours and serving the requisite number of participants. Multiple staff members also mentioned a desire to see grantees more self-reliant when it comes to completing First 5 LA deliverables. One staff member also expected to see grantees improving instructional components, especially parenting education and PCILA, based on their use of the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement and increasing component integration, specifically with regard to integrating parenting education and PCILA with the other components. Within the ECE component, this staff member expected all grantees to be using the DRDP correctly. Another FLSN staff member hoped to see grantees identifying their own specific technical assistance needs. A third FLSN staff member expected that by

the end of Year 4, grantees, with help from the FLSN, would be able to set observable and measurable goals for program improvement, to increase parent participation, and to have acquired the skills to use the data they are collecting to plan for change. The FLSN supported grantees in moving toward these goals through training and technical assistance activities throughout Years 3 and 4.

Training

The FLSN sponsored numerous trainings in Years 3 and 4 on a wide range of topics for grantees and non-grantees alike (see Exhibit 7.1). In Year 3 (July 2004 – June 2005), the FLSN sponsored three mandatory meetings for Cohort 1 grantees—a training on using data, a Year 3 kick-off meeting, and training with AIR and First 5 LA on using a new grantee data system—and a total of 12 optional trainings, networking meetings, and conferences. In Year 4 (July 2005 – June 2006), the FLSN again held three mandatory meetings for Cohort 1 grantees—a Cohort 1 orientation, a meeting to discuss the program administration section of the Framework, and a parenting education/PCILA meeting—and 12 optional trainings, networking meetings, and conferences on a variety of topics. The number of unique training events offered to grantees by the FLSN has remained fairly constant from year to year, increasing slightly from 13 in Year 2 to 15 in both Years 3 and 4. (Note that several of these FLSN training events in each year were offered on multiple occasions, bringing the total number of FLSN-sponsored trainings to 21 in Year 3 and 17 in Year 4.)

Exhibit 7.1: Number of grantee and non-grantee organizations represented at FLSN training events, by year

	Number of Grantees Represented		Number of Non-Grantees Represented
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2/3	
Year 3			
Using Data (July '04)*	15	—	0
Virtual Pre-K (July, Nov '04)	2	—	25
Learning Luau (July '04)	14	—	39
DRDP (September, October, November, December '04, March, April '05)	15	—	59
Adult Education – ESL (October '04)	2	—	4
Year 3 Kick-Off Meeting (October '04)*	15	—	0
Framework Pilot (November '04)	8	—	1
Sustainability (December '04)	12	—	20
Adult Learner-Centered Teaching (February '05)	4	—	3
AIR's Data Training (March '05)*	13	—	0
Second Language Learning (SLL) Training (March '05)	4	—	72
Head Start SLL Training (April '05)	1	—	17
CPIN/FLSN Conference (May '05)	1	—	36
Initiative Celebration/Plans for Next 5 Years (May '05)	12	—	0
CPIN/FLSN Meeting (June '05)	4	—	51
Year 4			
Learning Luau (July '05)	14	—	69
Virtual Pre-K (September, October '05)	7	5	14
Cohort 1 Orientation (September '05)*	7	7	0
Developmental Screening (October '05)	5	1	8
CASAS (October '05)	3	1	3
Component Integration/ Meet & Greet Networking Luncheon (October '05)	6	5	0
DRDP (October '05, February '06)	6	7	28
National Family Literacy Day (October '05)	14	3	0
Program Administration (January '06)*	13	9	2
Foundations in Family Literacy (January '06)	4	8	14
Parent Conference (March '06)	7	0	4
PCILA/Parenting Education (March '06)*	14	10	2
Adult Reading (May '06)	2	2	6
Sustainability (May '06)	11	6	18
Exemplary Validation Process (June '06)	9	2	0

Source: FLSN Year 3 and Year 4 quarterly reports.
* mandatory training for grantees

Topics for FLSN trainings, meetings, and conferences covered a wide range. Several meetings sponsored by the FLSN focused on orienting grantees to FLSN services, the Initiative as a whole, or sharing new processes being introduced by the FLSN. Three meetings in Year 3 and two meetings in Year 4 had such a focus. For example, the Year 3 Kick-Off Meeting provided grantees with an overview of the development of the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement and included reports from the committees responsible for developing each of the Framework's four sections. These presentations were followed by a discussion of how the Framework was to be used by grantees. A subsequent meeting was held to discuss a pilot test of the Framework, during which grantees were trained on how to collect evidence and how to use the information collected for program improvement. Year 3 wrapped up with an Initiative celebration meeting for grantees, during which plans for the next five years were discussed. Year 4 began with another orientation for grantees, which involved an overview of the next five years of the Initiative, as well as a panel discussion on parent advisory boards. A new process for validating exemplary programs was introduced at a final Year 4 meeting for grantees, during which the FLSN described the value of having a validation process and asked for input from grantees.

The FLSN also sponsored a range of meetings to support improvements in each of the four components of family literacy. Five meetings focused on improving ECE services, and services for children with language and learning needs in particular, across Years 3 and 4. As in Year 2, the FLSN again organized the Learning Luau in Years 3 and 4. In each year, the conference focused on early childhood education and English language learners. In Year 3, the FLSN sponsored two networking meetings on second language acquisition in children, which included discussion of the book *One Child, Two Languages*, by Patton O. Tabors. One of these meetings was intended specifically for Head Start sites. In addition, in Year 4, the FLSN sponsored a training on developmental screenings for children with special needs.

The FLSN sponsored three trainings that focused on adult education services in Years 3 and 4. In Year 3, they provided a training on adult ESL instruction, as well as an overview of adult learner-centered teaching presented by Gail Weinstein. In Year 4, through a collaboration with their partners at the National Center for Literacy (NCFL), they sponsored a training on reading strategies in adult education.

Three trainings on parenting education and PCILA were also provided in Years 3 and 4. In each of the years, the FLSN sponsored an overview of the Virtual Pre-K multimedia resource for parents, which outlines activities for parents and children to do together at home. In addition, in Year 4, the FLSN held a parenting education/PCILA meeting that covered Framework descriptions, participant assessment tools, and planning tools for parenting education and PCILA components, as well as expert talks on forms for parent observations, bookmaking with parents, and take-home backpack programs for parenting and PCILA.

In addition to addressing issues specific to individual components, in Year 4, the FLSN also held a "meet and greet" networking meeting where ideas for integrating each of the components were discussed. The Foundations of Family Literacy training, which also has an emphasis on component integration, was also provided by the NCFL in Year 4. Through the second Year 4 mandatory meeting on program administration, the FLSN provided grantees with an understanding of the criteria and evidence listed in the program administration section of the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement and supported them in using the Framework as a self-reflection tool.

The FLSN provided or supported six trainings related to data collection and use across the two years. The FLSN offered several opportunities for grantee staff to attend a two-day training on using the DRDP in Year 3 and two opportunities in Year 4. Also in Year 4, the FLSN sponsored a training on the administration of the CASAS assessment. The FLSN also provided logistical support for data system trainings provided in Year 3 (with AIR) and Year 4 (with JMPT). The FLSN provided one training in Year 3 to support grantees' use of the data collected and entered into the data system. The July 2004 Using Data meeting included a presentation from Grantee Advisor Michele Perry on using data to improve program quality, guide classroom instruction, and promote program sustainability. She also discussed strategies for identifying trends and patterns in data.

To support grantee sustainability, the FLSN provided a networking meeting on sustainability in Year 3 that included a discussion with a panel of experts and three workshop sessions. A second networking meeting on sustainability was offered in Year 4.

Additional offerings from the FLSN included a conference and meeting introducing family literacy to organizations providing early childhood education, including some state preschools and First 5 LA School Readiness Initiative grantees, which was provided by the California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN); sponsorship of the National Family Literacy Day conference; and the second annual Family Literacy and Healthy Parent Conference, which was attended by more than 400 parents, children, and family literacy program staff.

Overall, we see a shift in the focus of FLSN professional development over time, from establishing the four components in Year 2, to using data and data systems in Year 3, to using the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement to improve program administration, parent education, and PCILA in Year 4. We also see changes in attendance patterns at FLSN training events indicative of a decreased focus on outreach in Year 4. As shown in Exhibit 7.1, the FLSN's second language learning trainings and CPIN conference and meeting were large outreach events in Year 3. Comparable events were not offered in Year 4, though attendance of non-grantee organizations at the Learning Luau did increase substantially in Year 4 (from 39 non-grantee organizations in Year 3 to 69 in Year 4).

Technical Assistance

The FLSN conducted a total of 75 onsite technical assistance visits to the 15 grantees in Year 3. The number of visits per grantee varied widely, from two visits to eight visits. According to FLSN staff, the average onsite technical assistance visit was 120 minutes, though that varied as well, from 60 minutes to 180 minutes. The FLSN conducted 49 site visits to the 14 grantees in Year 4. Again the number of visits per grantee ranged from two visits to eight visits, and site visits generally lasted 120 minutes.

Summaries of notes on one third of the FLSN's Year 3 site visits and one half of the Year 4 visits were assembled into a database for the evaluation team's review. Each row of the database corresponds to a grantee need identified by the site visitor.[10] The database also

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[10] Site visitors' notes that did not include a specific identified need were not included in this database. It should be noted that AIR's findings about the FLSN's technical assistance are based on the available information, and not on a complete record of the support provided onsite. Examples of site visit activities

includes brief descriptions of the need or issue addressed, support provided by the FLSN to address the need, and the outcome of the interaction, as well as an indication of whether the need was identified by the FLSN or the grantee. In Year 4, the database also includes the percentage of time for each recorded site visit that was spent addressing each area of the Framework, as well as the amount of time spent preparing for a site visit and debriefing with other members of the FLSN after a site visit. According to this database, FLSN technical assistance addressed a wide variety of topics, the majority of which were common to two or three grantees. [11]

Technical assistance focus in Years 3 and 4

From the site visit notes available to the evaluation team, the most commonly addressed needs in Year 3 concerned sustainability, program administration, and test administration/data collection. The FLSN documented addressing sustainability issues with five different grantees in Year 3. These comprise about 15 percent of the technical assistance needs noted by site visitors. In all but one instance the grantee identified the need for technical assistance around sustainability. Examples of how the FLSN addressed sustainability on site include providing information on potential grants, providing contact information for specific individuals or organizations, such as the City of Los Angeles or the California Child Care Licensing Agency, and discussing grantee applications for funding.

The FLSN documented addressing program administration issues with four grantees in Year 3, which accounts for about 12 percent of onsite technical assistance needs noted by site visitors. As with the topic of sustainability, grantees identified the need for technical assistance in this area in all but one instance. Examples of how the FLSN addressed program administration needs include reviewing performance plans, working with grantee staff to revise an MOU with a collaborator, and discussing parent application forms and the participant registration process.

Test administration and data collection were also frequently discussed topics during site visits. Five grantees needed assistance in this area on one or more occasions, according to site visitors' notes, with the FLSN identifying the need for it in half of the cases. Overall, test administration and data collection made up ten percent of onsite needs noted by technical assistance providers. Examples of how the FLSN provided assistance in this area include advising grantees to use appropriately trained personnel to administer screening instruments and explaining how to select CASAS pre- and post-test scores.

Improving the quality of instructional offerings was documented with four grantees during Year 3 site visits. About seven percent of the grantee needs noted by site visitors involved improving the quality of instruction in one of the four components. The FLSN technical assistance providers addressed component quality by providing information on a pre-k curriculum, recommending visits to other grantee programs, and encouraging a program director to make parenting education more interactive and seek more learner feedback.

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where a need was not identified by the site visitor include classroom observations, debriefing on classroom observations, and grantees giving updates on program activities to the visitor.

[11] To calculate the proportion of needs addressed by the FLSN in any given topic area, we simply divided the number of needs that the FLSN addressed related to that topic area by the total number of needs addressed across all topic areas. (Some recoding of needs was necessary for consistency.)

According to the summary of Year 3 site visitors' notes, the areas addressed least frequently (only once or not at all) include increasing component integration, data analysis, increasing the intensity of offerings, adding instructional offerings, recruitment, retention, and increasing participation.

According to the set of site visitor notes that were available to the evaluation team, the technical assistance needs addressed most often by site visitors in Year 4 were increasing the intensity of instructional offerings, improving the quality of instruction in the four components, and increasing participant attendance. Summaries of site visitors' notes in Year 4 indicate that six grantees received assistance with increasing the intensity of instructional offerings. Overall, increasing the intensity of instructional offerings comprised about 15 percent of the technical assistance needs noted by site visitors in Year 4. Examples of how the FLSN provided assistance in this area include working with grantee staff and a First 5 LA program officer to clarify a program's schedule, and working with a grantee program director to develop a computerized homework log to record parent participation in parenting education and PCILA. The need for assistance with increasing the intensity of instructional offerings was identified by the FLSN in about half of these cases. The FLSN's focus in this area is likely due to increased requirements for intensity of services by First 5 LA in Year 4. Site visitors' notes indicate much of the assistance provided to grantees in this area is around reporting intensity, rather than actually increasing intensity.

Improving the quality of instructional offerings in one of the four components comprised over 15 percent of the technical assistance needs noted by site visitors in Year 4. The FLSN documented providing assistance in this area to three grantees on one or more occasions, and in every instance the component being improved was parenting education or PCILA. FLSN staff advised grantees on parenting education curricula and suggested visits to other grantee sites to observe parenting or PCILA. In all but two instances, the need for assistance improving parenting education or PCILA was identified by FLSN staff.

FLSN staff documented assisting four grantees with increasing participant attendance in Year 4. Overall this comprised just under ten percent of the grantee needs documented by site visitors, and was identified by the FLSN or a First 5 LA mandate in every case. FLSN staff provided assistance by advising grantees to look at scheduling possibilities to improve attendance and reviewing grantee data to revise how hours offered is calculated. As with increasing the intensity of offerings, First 5 LA requirements for participation increased in Year 4, and in most cases the FLSN's support seemed to center around reporting, rather than increasing participant attendance.

For those site visits to grantee sites recorded in site visitors' notes in Year 4, the FLSN spent an average of 70 minutes preparing and 60 minutes debriefing after each visit. Across these site visits, FLSN staff spent over 40 percent of their time addressing issues in the program leadership and administration section of the Framework, over 30 percent addressing the parenting education/PCILA section, and slightly less than 10 percent on ECE and adult education each. The FLSN also spent slightly more than 10 percent of their time addressing "other" issues outside of the Framework.

According to the summary of Year 4 site visitors' notes, the topics addressed least frequently (only once or not at all) include increasing component integration, test administration and data collection, data analysis, and using data.

Changes in FLSN technical assistance over time

FLSN technical assistance providers conducted a total of 124 site visits to Cohort 1 grantees in Years 3 and 4. This represents a significant decrease from the 270 visits conducted in Years 1 and 2, though the addition of nine new Cohort 2 and 3 grantees in Year 4 is likely a contributing factor in this decrease. As the amount of onsite technical assistance decreased, the focus of this assistance shifted as well.[12] In Years 1 and 2, issues around completing First 5 LA deliverables were noted at each grantee site, and accounted for over one quarter of the needs addressed during grantee site visits. According to the summaries of site visitor notes, it comprised less than seven percent of the technical assistance in Years 3 and 4, and was addressed with only five grantees. As described earlier in this chapter, FLSN staff hoped to see grantees becoming more proficient at completing First 5 LA deliverables in Years 3 and 4.

The amount of technical assistance focused on improving component quality also decreased in Year 3. In Years 1 and 2 component quality issues made up roughly 15 percent of those documented in the site visitors' notes. In Year 3 it made up about seven percent, though it should be noted that in Years 1 and 2, FLSN onsite technical assistance in this area generally seemed to focus on a program's weaker component or the component identified in the grantee performance plan as a target of expansion efforts. Therefore a decrease in technical assistance in this area may be indicative of overall improvements in component quality. Improving component quality again became a focus in Year 4, though this support was specific to improving parenting education and/or PCILA.

Across the four years of the Initiative, we see a change in the amount of technical assistance needs that are identified by grantees. As noted above, one FLSN staff person's expectation for grantees in Year 4 was that they would identify their own technical assistance needs more often, and although some needs, such as data collection issues or meeting First 5 LA mandates, are still more likely to be identified by FLSN staff, overall we see grantees recognizing their own needs to a greater extent. In Years 1 and 2, less than 30 percent of the documented technical assistance needs were identified by grantees, whereas in Years 3 and 4, over 40 percent of the documented technical assistance needs were identified by grantees. This is indicative of a trend toward more grantee-directed technical assistance.

Grantee Perspectives on the Usefulness of FLSN Support

We gauged grantees' responses to the training and technical assistance they received from the FLSN in Years 3 and 4 through interviews, surveys, and focus groups with grantee program directors. During Year 3 interviews, program directors were asked whether FLSN support had been "very helpful," "moderately helpful," "somewhat helpful," or "not at all helpful" in a number of areas.

Grantee perspectives on the FLSN in Year 3

As shown in Exhibit 7.2, program directors reported that FLSN support was most helpful for improving ECE. Eight of 11 program directors who answered the question (73 percent) reported that FLSN support was very helpful. One program director described how teachers

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[12] AIR was given summaries of notes for every site visit in Years 1 and 2. As noted above, this was not the case for Years 3 and 4. Discussion of the shift in focus of the technical assistance is based on the information available for Years 3 and 4.

who were originally reluctant to attend the FLSN DRDP training returned from the training eager to make changes to their classrooms. In general, when asked during Year 3 interviews to describe how FLSN support had been helpful, program directors indicated that specific suggestions and hands-on assistance were the most helpful.

Exhibit 7.2: Percentage of program directors' perceptions of the helpfulness of FLSN support, Year 3

Category	Very Helpful	Moderately Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not at All Helpful	Not Received	N
Improving ECE	73%	9%	18%			N=12
Identifying funding sources	73%		27%			N=11
Using data to track participant progress	64%	36%				N=11
Program sustainability	57%	29%	14%			N=11
Improving adult education	42%	17%	33%		8%	N=7
Integrating the four components	36%	36%	18%		9%	N=10
Using data for program improvement	30%	60%			10%	N=10
Improving parent education	30%	30%	10%	20%	10%	N=10
Improving PCILA	20%	50%	10%	10%	10%	N=11

Percent of Program Directors

■ Very Helpful □ Moderately Helpful ■ Somewhat Helpful □ Not at All Helpful ■ Not Received

Source: Year 3 program director interviews.

A majority of program directors also reported that the FLSN was very helpful for identifying funding sources (73 percent) and 57 percent reported that the FLSN was very helpful in supporting efforts to ensure program sustainability. Three program directors specifically mentioned the usefulness of the FLSN's sustainability bulletin that is distributed periodically for this purpose. Not all grantees were satisfied with the support they had received in this area, though. Three grantees rated the FLSN's work in helping them to identify funding sources as only somewhat helpful, with one stating, "I had hoped the FLSN would take a more active role in the LA collaborative" (a group of grantees who have been working together to identify joint funding opportunities). Several grantees mentioned the collaborative, and although they were not asked about networking directly, two program directors mentioned that FLSN events provided good opportunities for networking with other grantees.

Grantee program directors also found FLSN support to be especially helpful in using data to track participant progress. All 11 program directors who answered the question received support in this area and felt the support was very or moderately helpful. Program directors explained, "they steadily check our data," "they brought our attention to things we were not looking at before," and "they keep us on track; we wouldn't do the whole data thing if not for them."

Grantee program directors reported that FLSN support was least helpful in improving parenting education and improving PCILA. Of the ten program directors who responded, two (20 percent) reported that FLSN support improving parenting education was not at all helpful and another felt he or she did not receive any support in this area. One of ten program directors reported that support improving PCILA was not at all helpful, and another did not receive support improving PCILA. One program director reported, "What you do in parenting class should have a direct outcome in PCILA. FLSN has tried to show us how, but their suggestions haven't been practical or concrete."

In general, program directors found less-specific advice and suggestions to be less helpful. One program director said, "They haven't been that helpful with integration. I don't know how they could be more helpful; they've told us what we need to do, but not how to do it given our specific situation." Specific support such as assistance with developing goal sheets for parents, intervening with the school district to obtain participants' CASAS scores, and assisting with First 5 LA deliverables and Even Start funding applications were highlighted by grantees as particularly useful.

Two program directors mentioned a desire for more leadership from the FLSN and perhaps more customized support, with one stating, "We need to look at the role of the Network and its role needs to change. We need their leadership in looking at our needs as an organization and how they can help us fill those needs."

Grantee perspectives on the FLSN in Year 4

In Year 4, grantee program directors were asked on the survey to rate the usefulness ("very useful," "moderately useful," "somewhat useful," or "not at all useful") of FLSN support in helping them to improve their programs in various areas (see Exhibit 7.3). In addition, program directors were asked to identify the three areas in which the FLSN had been most useful for helping grantees to improve their programs (see Exhibit 7.4).

Exhibit 7.3: Percentage of program directors' perceptions of the usefulness of FLSN support, Year 4

Area	Very Useful	Moderately Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not at all Useful	Not Received	N
Networking with other Family Literacy programs	71%	21%	7%			N=14
Finding opportunities for staff development	50%	43%	7%			N=14
Improving PCILA	50%	36%	7%		7%	N=14
Identifying funding sources	50%	14%	36%			N=14
Improving ECE	43%	29%	14%	7%	7%	N=14
Improving parenting education	36%	36%	7%	7%	14%	N=14
Using data for program improvement	31%	31%	23%		15%	N=13
Completing reports for First 5 LA	29%	43%	21%		7%	N=14
Improving adult education	29%	43%	14%	7%	7%	N=14
Integrating the four components	29%	43%	7%	7%	14%	N=14
Interpreting or analyzing data	23%	54%	8%		15%	N=13
Tracking participant attendance	23%	31%	23%	8%	15%	N=13
Administering assessments and collecting data	17%	33%	25%	8%	17%	N=12
Using data to track participant progress	15%	46%	23%		15%	N=13

Percent of Program Directors

■ Very Useful □ Moderately Useful ■ Somewhat Useful ■ Not at all Useful ■ Not Received

Source: Year 4 program director survey.

The largest number of "very useful" responses (10 of 14, or 71 percent) was in the area of networking with other family literacy programs. Eleven program directors (79 percent) also ranked networking as one of the three areas where the FLSN was *most* useful. When asked to explain how FLSN support for networking had helped them to make improvements to their programs, one program director wrote, "Without FLSN we would not have gotten to know other programs. The workshops, meetings, etc. cause us to learn from each other and plan grant writing together." Another wrote, "As a new coordinator, this opportunity has provided me with a lot of support from other coordinators/directors. It has helped me learn about my role as a [family literacy program] coordinator." In focus groups with program directors in Year 4, one program director said, "Having the Network and the opportunity to get together with other grantees has been a big help in saying, 'Oh, I never thought about doing it this way.' The networking has been a definite asset."

Exhibit 7.4: Percentage of program directors perceptions of the top three areas in which FLSN support has been most useful in making program improvements, Year 4

Area	Percent	N
Networking with other Family Literacy programs	79%	N=14
Finding opportunities for staff development	62%	N=13
Completing reports for First 5 LA	21%	N=14
Tracking participant attendance	21%	N=14
Improving PCILA	21%	N=14
Improving parenting education	21%	N=14
Identifying funding sources	14%	N=14
Administering assessments and collecting data	14%	N=14
Integrating the four components	14%	N=14
Interpreting or analyzing data	7%	N=14
Using data to track participant progress	7%	N=14
Using data for program improvement	7%	N=14
Improving ECE	7%	N=14
Improving adult education	0%	N=14

Percent of Program Directors

Source: Year 4 program director survey.

Seven program directors (50 percent) found FLSN support to be very useful in finding opportunities for staff development. In addition, eight program directors (62 percent) reported that finding opportunities for staff development was one of the three areas where FLSN support was *most* useful for improving their programs. In focus groups, program directors had many positive comments on FLSN-sponsored trainings, highlighting the value of this resource. For example, one program director said, "Little agencies don't have a lot of money to get training, so it's been incredibly wonderful…all of the trainings have been quality." Another stated, "They provide the Foundations [in family literacy] training and the DRDP training, so all new personnel get that training, and that helps, because you have to make sure that your new personnel keep getting the required training." "Every one of the meetings I've been to, even though it's hard to get away and get to them, has been very

helpful," another program director reported. "I always share with my staff what I've learned here." None of the program directors gave specific examples of how the FLSN's focus on staff development has led to improvements in their programs; however, they often made comments like, "Numerous workshops have been offered in the past four years by FLSN. There have been opportunities available for growth in all four component areas."

Seven program directors (50 percent) found FLSN support to be very useful in identifying funding sources. During Year 4 focus groups, program directors highlighted the importance of this aspect of the FLSN's work. "They give us lots of resources," one program director explained, "like lists of possible funders." Two program directors also reported that this was one of the three areas where the FLSN was *most* helpful.

Twenty-one percent of survey respondents (three program directors) said improving PCILA was one of the three areas in which FLSN support was *most* useful for helping them to make improvements to their program. One program director wrote, "This year FLSN gave a workshop on best practices in Parent Ed/PCILA that was very helpful. [Our consultant-facilitator] followed up by facilitating our framework self-reflection process on site. We were able to identify our strengths and weaknesses. We made goals for the next year to increase our effectiveness and implement new strategies." Three program directors also reported that improving parenting education was one of the areas where FLSN support was *most* useful.

None of the respondents chose improving adult education as one of the three areas in which FLSN support had been most useful. In addition, in Year 4, grantee program directors reported that they found FLSN support to be least useful in the areas of administering assessments and collecting data and using data to track participant progress. Only two program directors reported that they found FLSN support in these areas to be very useful for helping with program improvement. However, those that did rate these supports highly underscored the value of this support; one program director noted, "Data is what will lead to sustainability." Another stated, "They're able to look at our data and show us things we hadn't noticed before."

Although we did not ask explicitly about their role as advocates for family literacy, seven program directors wrote in "advocacy" as a category in which the FLSN's support was very useful for program improvement. Grantees also seem to appreciate the encouragement they receive from FLSN technical assistance providers, and the availability of FLSN staff to them, stating that this helps them to feel supported. "They already know our programs," explained one program director, "but each time they go, they want to make another connection or network, whether it's teacher or staff, or noticing new books on the shelves." One grantee said of an FLSN staff person, "[Our consultant-facilitator] is like a walking phone book. Whenever something comes up [our consultant-facilitator] just pops up with a resource. That's been very good." During the focus groups in Year 4, each FLSN staff member was mentioned by name, as grantees recognized the specific talents of each. One grantee commented on the value of the combination of the technical assistance providers' skills, stating, "They're a complete package."

Changes in grantee perspectives over time

As noted above, the focus of FLSN training and technical assistance has shifted over the course of the Initiative. Grantee program director perceptions of FLSN support have shifted

as well. Though interview responses from Year 3 indicate FLSN support was not particularly helpful in improving PCILA, with the FLSN's increased attention to PCILA in Year 4, we see an increase in the number of grantees reporting that this support was useful on the Year 4 survey. Year 3 interview responses also indicate FLSN support was particularly helpful in using data to track participant progress, as data was a focus of two of the mandatory trainings in Year 3. Survey results indicate program directors felt FLSN support in this area was less helpful in Year 4, when it was not a particular focus of the training or technical assistance.

Likewise, we see changes in program director perceptions of the usefulness of FLSN support when comparing Year 2 survey data with Year 4 survey data. In Year 2, program directors felt FLSN support was most helpful in completing reports for First 5 LA. Fewer program directors reported that FLSN support with deliverables was useful in Year 4, perhaps as a result of grantees becoming familiar with First 5 LA reports and requiring less assistance in this area. Across all years, program directors reported that the FLSN was especially helpful in providing opportunities to network with other family literacy programs and providing opportunities for staff development.

During the Year 4 focus groups, grantees also recognized improvements in the FLSN's training and technical assistance over the course of the Initiative. In Year 3, one grantee commented, "It's nice that they can help but not imperative to success." In Year 4, we heard:

> I've seen tremendous growth in the support that FLSN has provided the grantees. I think at the very beginning they were, like everyone else, trying to figure out their role. And we really saw them as a hindrance at the beginning, because it was additional time. They didn't see the difference between support and being another boss. They were just another layer in between that was extra work, but now they understand what their role is. They look to see what we really need and they provide it. I think it makes a world of difference because we do feel that we're very encouraged and supported. The trainings are wonderful and they are doing the kinds of training that help.

Assessing the Impacts of FLSN Support

This section outlines grantees' perceptions of their programs' growth and assesses grantees' overall progress toward model status. Areas where grantees need additional support are also identified.

Progress toward "model" status

During Year 3 site visits, the evaluation team asked grantee program directors and staff to comment on the extent to which they view their programs as model programs. Across grantee sites there were different interpretations of "model program." Program directors and staff at some grantee sites stated that their programs were models because they have had many visitors observe them. One program director indicated a desire to do more mentoring for staff from other programs, stating "I like to train people….From the beginning of the First 5 LA grant, that was what it was all about, and we haven't been called upon enough to do that. Being a model is not just about showing off, but assisting." Highly qualified and knowledgeable program staff, strong individual components, and high levels of parent engagement were also mentioned several times as indications of progress toward model status. Program directors and staff at two grantee sites said that strong support services, such

as mental health or transportation services, are critical to their programs' success. One program director mentioned well-integrated components, and another mentioned high attendance and retention rates as evidence of model status. One program director stated, "I don't know what a model is; I don't know what the measure is." Staff from several sites noted that being a model program is "an ongoing process," and "there is always room for improvement."

Adult Education

According to the FLSN Framework, characteristics of an exemplary adult education component include a planned curriculum with a comprehensive set of measurable objectives aligned with state adult education standards and a variety of instruction methods in use. As noted in Chapter 4, 7 of 11 program directors who provided information on their adult education curriculum reported that it was based on state standards, district standards, or CASAS competencies. Program directors also described a wide variety of instructional strategies used in the adult education component, from independent and small group work to peer tutoring and teacher modeling.

Though technical assistance focused on adult education was not documented in either Year 3 or Year 4, the FLSN supported grantees in improving adult education through two voluntary trainings in Year 3, Adult Education – ESL and Adult Learner-Centered Teaching, and a voluntary training in Year 4, the NCFL Adult Reading training. One program director reported that the FLSN Framework was useful for helping her program to improve the adult education component, saying,

> At our location, the Framework was extremely helpful. I was hesitant because I was new to the position and I was worrying about what I got myself into, but it has proven to be so helpful that we have drastically changed some of the areas of our adult ed program. I'm now sitting in on meetings with our school administrators. I work with seven ESL teachers in the morning who have students in their classrooms. That was extremely helpful.

As shown in Exhibits 7.2 and 7.3, however, improving adult education was not among the areas in which grantees found FLSN support to be most useful. In fact, none of the grantees selected improving adult education when asked to select the top three areas in which FLSN support had been most helpful in making improvements (see Exhibit 7.4). However, when asked about areas where additional support would be desired in Year 4, none of the grantees reported that they would like additional support from the FLSN in this area to a large extent (see Exhibit 7.5), though 31 percent reported needing additional support in this area to a moderate extent.

Exhibit 7.5: Percentage of program directors reporting the extent to which additional support is needed in various areas, Year 4
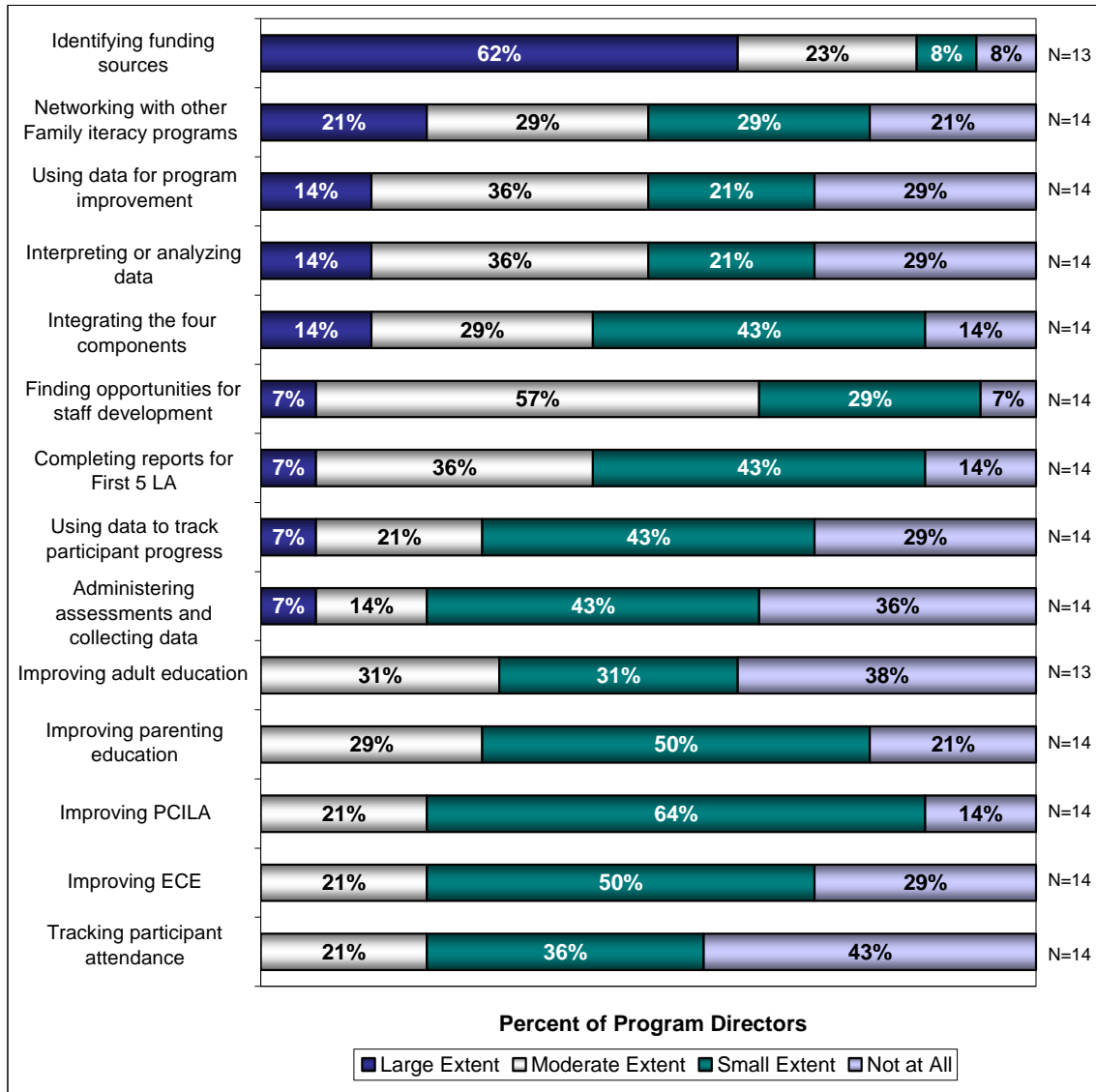
Source: Year 4 program director survey.

Parenting Education and PCILA

According to the FLSN's Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement, many factors make up exemplary parenting education and PCILA components, including having a comprehensive planned curriculum with objectives addressing skills that support children's language and literacy development, and engaging parents in curricular planning. As described in Chapter 5, we found during our Year 3 site visits that parenting education curricula vary widely across grantee programs, and parents from several programs noted a desire to have more input into topics covered in parenting class, suggesting that this is an area for improvement at many grantee sites.

The FLSN's Framework also states that parent-child literacy activities should be intentionally linked to parenting education skills and activities, that there should be plans for independent practice and a transfer of skills to the home environment, and that there should be opportunities for teachers to provide individualized assistance and guided instruction to all parents. As was described in Chapter 5, literacy-related activities, such as reading books, were observed during PCILA in 6 of the 12 programs observed in Year 3. Generally, teachers spent the PCILA time interacting more directly with children while they engaged in activities with their parents, and only isolated incidents of teachers giving feedback to parents were observed. Four program directors also reported having a take-home element to their PCILA program, which provides parents with activities to work on with their children at home.

In Years 3 and 4, the FLSN supported grantee progress toward the use of an appropriate comprehensive curriculum through training and onsite technical assistance. As was noted above, a large proportion (15 percent) of the technical assistance documented in Year 4 addressed improvements in parenting education and/or PCILA. Much of this technical assistance centered on curricula; the FLSN documented e-mailing information on curricula to parenting education teachers, explaining the importance of lesson plans to program directors, and suggesting visits to other programs to observe components where a specific curriculum is in place. The FLSN also offered several trainings on Virtual Pre-K in Years 3 and 4, though these were more highly attended by non-grantees than grantees. The FLSN's work in this area will continue in the coming years with their PCILA Investigation Project, which is described in more detail below under Next Steps. Though parent involvement in parenting education and PCILA did not appear to be a major focus of their technical assistance in Years 3 and 4, the FLSN did document two cases of working with grantees to collect more parent feedback in Year 4. Linking parenting education skills and activities to PCILA activities and ensuring that both center on supporting children's literacy became a focus for the FLSN in Year 4, and one of the three mandatory trainings for grantees focused on both areas.

As noted above, improvements to parenting education and PCILA were among the FLSN's stated goals for grantees in Year 4, and we see an increase in grantees finding FLSN support to be useful in this area from Year 3 to Year 4 (see Exhibits 7.2 and 7.3). In Year 3 focus groups, one parenting education teacher emphasized the need for more professional development on parenting education. Another teacher at the same site agreed, saying that she went to the FLSN parenting education training but felt it was not specific enough, and did not make clear what things should look like in her classroom. Though improving parenting and PCILA were not areas in which program directors reported they needed additional support to a large extent in Year 4, three and four program directors, respectively, reported that these were areas in which moderate support was still needed. During focus groups in Year 4, several grantees also made requests for additional trainings on PCILA and working with parents.

Early Childhood Education

The FLSN's Framework outlines several characteristics of an ECE component at an exemplary family literacy program. Among these characteristics are a comprehensive planned curriculum and a high quality classroom environment. As described in Chapter 6, all 14 program directors surveyed in Year 4 reported the use of a formal curriculum in their ECE component, and ECERS-R results for the 15 preschool classrooms observed in Year 3 suggest that grantees offer ECE services in "good" quality environments. However, relatively

little time in ECE classrooms was spent engaged in language and literacy activities. During Year 3 focus groups with teachers, one teacher indicated a desire for more literacy and reading trainings—specifically more advanced training going "beyond the basics" to help increase this focus in the classroom.

As noted before, improving the quality of the ECE component was not a particular focus of FLSN technical assistance in either Year 3 or Year 4. In both years, however, the FLSN supported the grantees in improving ECE by sponsoring the Learning Luau conferences, which provided grantees with opportunities to attend workshops and presentations on various aspects of early childhood education. FLSN staff also conducted observations of grantee program classrooms. Debriefings on these observations may have addressed the classroom environment and/or ECE curriculum.

As shown in Exhibits 7.2 and 7.3, program directors reported that FLSN support was especially helpful to them in improving ECE in Year 3 and, to a slightly lesser extent, in Year 4 as well. In Year 3, several ECE teachers reported improving their practice as a result of participation in FLSN trainings. For example, one teacher reported that what she had learned in the FLSN's DRDP trainings helped her to better recognize students with developmental delays. Another teacher mentioned rearranging her classroom to better meet the needs of the children in her classroom. As shown in Exhibit 7.5, the majority of program directors in Year 4 (79 percent) reported that they did not need additional support improving ECE or needed support only to a small extent.

Component Integration

The importance of component integration in family literacy programs is underscored in the literature and noted in the FLSN Framework, which describes an exemplary site as one with a written plan that guides specific skill and content connections across instructional components and common planning time for staff. As discussed in Chapter 3, when asked about the strategies they used to support component integration, program directors in Year 4 cited a wide range of strategies, from thematic units across components to special events involving the whole family. Although 71 percent reported that they regularly hold meetings for joint planning and component integration, only 62 percent reported that adult education teachers attend weekly or monthly meetings with teachers from other components for joint planning/integration. In addition, only half of the grantees reported that they had a written plan to guide component integration in Year 4, suggesting that this is an area for improvement for many grantees. Component integration, however, was not a focus of FLSN onsite technical assistance in Year 3 or Year 4, though it was the topic of a non-mandatory grantee training in Year 4. Component integration was also addressed during the NCFL's Foundations in Family Literacy training in Year 4.

As shown in Exhibits 7.2 and 7.3, integrating the four components was not among the areas where grantees reported FLSN support was most helpful in either Year 3 or Year 4. However, staff from several grantees mentioned the utility of the Framework and Foundations training for improving program integration. One program director said of the Framework in Year 4, "It helped our teachers to get a picture of what a quality program looks like. The Framework is very descriptive, so having it helps them see the pieces that we need to have. It was good for all of our staff to see those mental pictures." Another program director stated, "Because of the Network when we became grantees all of our staff now has

been trained in the Foundations. That was a big thing so that everyone is on the same page." After attending the Foundations in Family Literacy training, one ESL teacher reported in Year 3 that it was a good introduction to PCILA and that she began gearing lesson plans toward helping students to become teachers to their children at home. An ECE teacher from another program also described integrating PCILA into her lessons, inventing new games for parents to take home and play with their children to bring parents into their child's ECE experience.

Exhibit 7.5 shows that 6 of 14 grantees (43 percent) would like additional support from the FLSN with integrating the four components to a large or moderate extent. Grantees also made requests in Year 4 focus groups for additional support integrating adult education with the other components, as this is often the most difficult component to integrate.

Use of Data

A key strategy for program improvement highlighted by the FLSN Framework is the use of data to guide instruction and decision making. As discussed in Chapter 4, adult education teachers participating in Year 3 focus groups reported using CASAS assessment data to varying degrees. Though some teachers made use of the CASAS data, several teachers noted that they do not use the CASAS data to guide their instructional decisions at all. As described in Chapter 6, many ECE teachers reported using the DRDP to guide their instruction, though two program directors noted that they "don't do much of anything with the data." Some improvements in data quality observed by the evaluation team may also be attributed to program staff's greater familiarity with the data entry protocols and quality monitoring.

Though use of assessment data was not documented as a focus of technical assistance in Years 3 or 4, the FLSN provided three data-related trainings to grantees in Year 3, two of which were mandatory. They also provided numerous trainings on administering and using the DRDP in both years and a training on administering the CASAS in Year 4. As noted earlier in this chapter, one FLSN staff person hoped to see improvements in programs use of the DRDP as a result of FLSN support. Teachers at two grantee programs in Year 3 mentioned the usefulness of the FLSN's DRDP trainings, one reporting that after the training, DRDP profiles became more accurate. A program director at another grantee program emphasized how much she had learned about data and how to use it over time, "When I started I didn't know anything about data. I know about data now. I'm starting to know how to evaluate it a little better. I know the ESPIRS; I know the DRDP; I know why they're important. I'm starting to think big picture."

Overall, grantees reported that FLSN support was especially helpful in using data to track participant progress in Year 3, but in Year 4 felt FLSN support was least useful in using data to track participant progress, administering assessments and collecting data, and interpreting or analyzing data (see Exhibits 7.2 and 7.3). Though one FLSN staff person expected to see grantees using the data they collect for program improvement by the end of Year 4, program directors still recognize this as an area for improvement; half reported that they would like additional support using data for program improvement and interpreting or analyzing data to a large or moderate extent (see Exhibit 7.5). Teachers in focus groups in Year 3 also suggested more training on the data system and generating reports, training on how to interact with parents, and training hours that could be used toward renewing a teaching credential. One program director involved in a staff focus group said, "Using data for

program improvement is the next step, they have brought us to this point, now we hope this is what the next five years is about."

Sustainability

The FLSN Framework indicates that an exemplary site has a realistic plan in place to sustain services after their current funding ends. As described in Chapter 3, when asked about their five-year funding plans in Year 3, program directors' responses varied greatly, and some were unsure they would be able to continue offering the same level of services should the Initiative not be re-funded. In Year 4, six program directors reported having a written fundraising plan and five others reported working on developing such a plan.

The FLSN supported grantees in moving toward sustainability through technical assistance and training efforts in Years 3 and 4. Over 15 percent of the documented onsite technical assistance in Year 3 focused on sustainability issues, as did one FLSN training in each year. Though grantees felt FLSN support was particularly helpful in identifying funding sources in both Years 3 and 4 (Exhibits 7.2 and 7.3), they continue to want additional support in this area. As shown in Exhibit 7.5, 62 percent of program directors reported that they would like additional training or technical assistance on identifying funding sources to a large extent. An additional 23 percent (three program directors) would like this assistance to a moderate extent. Help in this area was by far the most frequently cited need.

Changes in grantee needs over time

Results from the Year 2 program director surveys show that program directors continued to want additional support in many of the same areas in Year 4 that they did in Year 2, including identifying funding sources and networking with other family literacy programs. Finding opportunities for staff development, however, became less of a concern for grantees over the course of the Initiative. In Year 2, 36 percent of grantees felt they needed additional assistance in this area to a large extent, whereas in Year 4 only seven percent of grantees felt they needed it to a large extent. As is noted in Exhibit 7.3, finding opportunities for staff development was one of the areas in which grantees found FLSN support to be most useful to them in Year 4. This trend suggests FLSN support in Years 3 and 4 responded to a stated grantee need in Year 2.

FLSN Achievements, Challenges, and Next Steps

This section discusses aspects of the FLSN's implementation that facilitate or hinder effective service to grantees.

FLSN successes and challenges

During interviews in Year 4, FLSN staff outlined their key successes and biggest challenges over the past year. Several staff members cited implementation of the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement as a major success in Year 4, noting that it helps guide their technical assistance process and makes goals for program improvement clearer to them and to grantees. Staff members feel that by specifying the characteristics of exemplary family literacy programs, the Framework has helped technical assistance providers and grantees develop a common understanding of what they are striving for. Staff members also feel improvements have been made to their internal note-taking process, stating that notes taken during site visits have been shortened and streamlined such that they are easier to review and

summarize. Staff feel that continuing to improve the note-taking process will allow them to better document the technical assistance they provide in the future.

In addition to these successes, the FLSN experienced some challenges in Year 4. Understaffing and staff turnover are consistent challenges. When asked about the cause of the turnover, staff members cited the instability of the organization prior to the Initiative being re-funded and difficulties establishing a common agenda and effective communication among team members. As noted above, grantees perceive FLSN support as being of consistently high quality, in spite of the high rate of staff turnover.

Next steps

As described above, several areas for improvement emerge from an assessment of grantees' progress toward model status: increasing parent involvement in curricular planning for parenting education and PCILA, increasing the literacy focus of ECE and PCILA activities, integrating the four components, using data, and achieving sustainability. Grantees also gave suggestions for improvements during Year 4 focus groups that might be helpful for the FLSN to consider. For example, several grantees commented that it was initially difficult to distinguish the FLSN from First 5 LA. One grantee commented, "If anything, that's one of the areas I'd say that needs to be a little bit adjusted. Because when you first get introduced into this system, they seem to switch places or be one another, but it's not for a little while that you start figuring out the characters and who provides what." This might be especially important to consider for the Cohort 2 and 3 grantees.

The FLSN is also looking toward further supporting grantees in their efforts to become model, or exemplary, programs. In Year 4 the FLSN began developing the voluntary Exemplary Validation Process. This will involve inviting five grantees to apply to participate in a review of their progress towards developing the characteristics of an exemplary site as outlined in the Framework. Though the specifics of the process have not been finalized, it is expected to involve a peer review of evidence (e.g., assessment data, attendance records, curriculum) from the participating grantee sites. In the coming years of the Initiative the FLSN will also continue working on a PCILA investigation project. Initially conceived as a matrix that would show grantees how various parenting education and PCILA curricula align with the Framework, the investigation may shift towards documenting best practices in PCILA in the coming years. As their match requirement from First 5 LA increases, sustainability is expected to increasingly become an area of focus for the FLSN.

Summary

In Years 3 and 4 of the Initiative, we see a shift in the focus of FLSN training and technical assistance, from establishing the four components and completing First 5 LA deliverables to sustainability and using the Framework to improve program administration and the parenting education and PCILA components. We also see a decrease in the FLSN's attention to outreach and advocacy. Though the amount of training provided to grantees has remained consistent throughout the Initiative, the amount of onsite technical assistance provided to grantees in Years 3 and 4 decreased from Year 2.

Grantees continued to have overwhelmingly positive responses to FLSN support, particularly in the areas of providing opportunities to network with other family literacy programs, providing opportunities for staff development, and identifying funding sources.

Grantees demonstrated progress towards model status in several areas and grew increasingly skilled at completing First 5 LA deliverables and identifying their own technical assistance needs. An assessment of grantees' overall progress toward model status illustrates some areas for improvement, including increasing parent involvement in curricular planning in parenting and PCILA, component integration, using data, increasing the literacy focus of activities in PCILA and ECE, and sustainability. The need for additional support from the FLSN in these areas was confirmed by grantees' perceptions of where additional support is needed.

FLSN staff feel that implementing the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement, as a resource for technical assistance providers as well as grantees, was a major success in Year 4. Though understaffing remains a challenge for the FLSN, grantees find the services provided by the FLSN to be of consistently high quality.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Next Steps

In the third and fourth years of the Initiative evaluation, we continued to investigate many of the themes identified in Years 1 and 2. In addition, we examined the quality of instructional components and overall program quality, through direct observation of classes, interviews and focus groups with staff and parents, and program director surveys. The evaluation team also continued to investigate outcomes for participants, including adult learning outcomes and changes in parenting behaviors. We assessed child progress with grantee-collected child observation data, and assessed child outcomes through the focused child outcomes study conducted with a subset of children participating in the programs. We also began to link those outcomes to the quality and quantity of services received. In addition, examination of the activities of the FLSN continued in Years 3 and 4, with increased attention to the impacts of FLSN training and technical assistance on grantee program quality outcomes.

This report describes the evaluation activities undertaken in Years 3 and 4 and summarizes findings from analysis of the data we collected. This chapter summarizes the key findings, describes implications for the second phase of the evaluation, and presents recommendations based on the Family Literacy Initiative's first four years.

Findings from Years 3 and 4

Drawing on data from surveys of program directors; interviews or focus groups with program directors, teachers, parents, and FLSN staff; grantee and FLSN documents; attendance and assessment data downloaded from the online data system; and data from the child outcomes sub-study; we addressed the evaluation questions outlined by the Commission at the beginning of the evaluation. In this section, we highlight key findings, aligned with clustered sets of evaluation questions, that emerged from our analysis.

Findings related to grantee implementation and program quality

Although greater focus was placed on implementation of grantees' family literacy programs in Years 1 and 2, we continued to examine implementation issues, especially as they influenced program quality in Years 3 and 4. Three evaluation questions guided our exploration of implementation and program quality:

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

- Process Question #2: What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the programs?

- Policy/Research Question #4: What role does technology play in increasing access to or effectiveness of program services?

Characteristics of families served

As in the first two years of the Initiative, grantees continued to serve economically disadvantaged families, the vast majority of whom are Hispanic or Latino and speak Spanish as their primary language. Most of the participating adults are mothers who are married, have low education levels (fewer than 75 percent have high school diplomas), immigrated to the U.S. six or more years ago (64 percent), are not employed (approximately 90 percent), and

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have a household income of $20,000 or less per year (approximately 75 percent). All of the children served with First 5 LA funds are in the birth-to-five age range, though some programs serve older children as well. Most of the children are in the three-to-five-year age range (72 percent in Year 3 and 70 percent in Year 4), though 10 of the 14 Year 4 grantees also serve children birth to age three.

Families join family literacy programs with various goals in mind and with various needs to be addressed. On average, program directors estimate that almost half of all families need assistance with immigration issues (48 percent), job training or placement (43 percent), or help accessing medical care or obtaining health insurance (42 percent), and about three-quarters of the grantee programs offer support in these areas, either through direct services or referrals to other agencies.

Adult education

As discussed in Chapter 4, grantees offer a range of services as part of their adult education component. All grantees offer ESL classes, and 90 percent of adult participants are enrolled in these classes. Several grantees also offer adult basic education (ABE) classes, general education development (GED) classes, and vocational education or job training programs. To assess the quality of grantees' adult education components, we examined program intensity, teacher qualifications, and ESL curricula.

Starting in Year 4, grantees were required to offer 48 hours per month of adult education to their families. Although average monthly hours offered in adult education increased from 38 hours in Year 3 to 46 hours in Year 4, most grantee programs were just shy of the 48-hour requirement. As a point of comparison, California Even Start programs statewide showed a wide range of hours offered of adult education and ESL classes in the 2004-05 school year. Half of the Even Start programs reported offering 358 hours per year or more of ABE instruction (approximately 30 hours per month) and 461 hours per year or more of ESL instruction (approximately 38 hours per month) (Appel & Russell, 2006).

Teacher qualifications are relatively strong in the adult education component. Most adult education teachers in the programs have at least a bachelor's degree and an adult education teaching credential. In addition to these credentials, parents reported that they feel comfortable in their adult education classes and feel that their teachers are approachable, positive and supportive.

Curricula and instructional approaches in ESL and ABE classes vary across programs. Parents reported they were generally satisfied with ESL classes, but they had some requests for smaller classes, more writing guidance, and opportunities to practice their oral language skills.

Parenting education and PCILA

Chapter 5 examines the quality of the parenting components of family literacy programs—parenting education classes and parent-child interactive literacy activities (PCILA)—by assessing program intensity, teacher qualifications, and instructional approaches and curricula. Parenting education classes make up the smallest component of participants' family literacy experiences; parents were offered approximately 8 hours of parenting education per month in Year 3 and just under 10 hours per month in Year 4—meeting the

First 5 LA requirement of 10 hours. This is somewhat consistent with California Even Start programs statewide, half of which offered 95 hours per year or more of parenting education (approximately 8 hours or more per month) (Appel & Russell, 2006). More PCILA time is offered by programs (13 hours on average in both years). Parents in First 5 LA programs often reported that they wanted more time in both parenting education classes and PCILA.

Almost all parenting education teachers have a bachelor's degree, and most have a general adult education credential or an adult education credential with a specialization in parent education teaching credential as well. Most PCILA teachers also have a bachelor's degree and teach in one or more other family literacy components. Parents reported that they generally felt comfortable and supported by their parenting and PCILA teachers, and highlighted the importance of teachers' cultural competence and linguistic compatibility with parents.

Approaches to parenting education and the use of curricular materials varied across programs, and though parents generally reported being satisfied with their classes, some noted that they would like to have more input on the topics covered in parenting class and more time for discussion and questions. The nature and content of PCILA interactions also varied widely across the programs. During classroom observations, interactions between parents and teachers were positive and supportive; however, only isolated incidents of teachers giving feedback to or coaching parents directly were observed. In some cases, opportunities for one-on-one interactions between parents and children were limited by the nature of the activities, and some parents had concerns about overcrowding in the PCILA classroom.

Early childhood education (ECE)

In Chapter 6, we examine the quality of the ECE component by considering program intensity, teacher qualifications, program structure, curricula, teacher-child interactions, and support of language development and literacy. Between Year 3 and Year 4, early childhood education hours offered increased somewhat, and the number of hours of "enriched child care"[13] offered decreased. In Year 4, grantees were expected to begin offering 60 hours of early childhood education per month; on average, programs offered 57 hours of ECE and 26 hours of child care. In comparison, half of California Even Start programs statewide offered 537 hours per year (approximately 45 hours per month) or more of ECE for 3-5 year olds in the 2004-05 school year (Appel & Russell, 2006).

Although teacher qualifications in the early childhood education component are not as high as the other components, just over half have a bachelor's degree, which is higher than the state average. Two-thirds of ECE teachers also hold at least a CDA/Associate Teacher Permit.

Overall, results from the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised (ECERS-R) for the 15 classrooms observed (one classroom per grantee) suggest that grantees offer ECE services with "good" environmental conditions, with an overall average score of 5.2, though

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[13] Enriched child care does not have a consistent definition across the Initiative, but, generally, grantees use this term to classify services that are supplemental, that do not have an explicit education emphasis, that do not require the same level of teacher qualifications, or that do not have the same level of intensity as ECE services.

scores ranged from a low of 2.8 to a very high 6.7 (scores range from 1 – "inadequate" to 7 – "excellent"). Scores on the interaction subscale were highest, averaging 6.0; and the personal care routines subscale was the lowest, averaging 4.4. According to the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which measures the quality of teacher-child interactions, ECE classrooms were rated in the medium range overall, with ratings of instructional support solidly in the medium range and ratings of emotional support slightly higher.

Teachers relied on a variety of curricula and practices to support children's learning. Overall, though, the evaluation team observed that, on average, teachers spent very little interaction time with children elaborating on their responses or scaffolding their learning. In addition, despite the focus on literacy goals in family literacy programs, during structured classroom observations conducted by researchers, teachers only spent approximately 10 percent of class time engaged in literacy activities (including reading, writing working on letters and sounds, and oral language activities).

Implementation successes and challenges

At the end of four years, grantees have experienced many successes. Across the 15 grantees in Year 3, 571 families were served, including 578 adults and 742 children; the 14 grantees funded in Year 4 served a total of 512 families, comprising 519 adults and 646 children. Overall, program directors reported that recruiting families, keeping them enrolled in the program, and achieving relatively high attendance rates are not difficult. Parents enjoy and appreciate the programs and continue to attend to meet their learning goals. Attendance rates reflect families' dedication to the programs, averaging about 70 percent across components, which is substantially higher than those found in the Third National Even Start Evaluation, which were well under 50 percent (St. Pierre et al., 2003).

Part of grantees' success may lie in the wrap-around services that support and enhance families' experiences in the four core family literacy program components. In addition to adult education, PCILA, parenting, and early childhood education, the majority of grantee programs offer (directly or through referrals) counseling or mental health services (94 percent), special needs screening (94 percent), food supports like WIC or food stamps (94 percent), access to medical care or health insurance (78 percent), and domestic violence counseling (71 percent), among other services. These additional services support family stability and increase the likelihood that children and parents arrive at the program each day "ready to learn." In addition, as detailed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 and described below, child and adult program participants demonstrated significant growth on learning outcomes in each of the three areas assessed—adult learning, changes in parenting behaviors, and child development.

Grantee programs also face ongoing implementation challenges. As noted above, not all ECE teachers have bachelor's degrees or teacher permits, though generally qualifications are higher than state averages. In addition, staff turnover is high, but program directors did not cite staffing as a significant challenge for them; only a few described difficulties securing appropriate staff.

Full component integration, in which the four components are aligned to create a well articulated and coherent experience for the family, remains a challenge for grantees. Program

directors' interpretations of integration varied, with two indicating that they lacked clarity about what it should look like in their program. Almost two-thirds of program directors reported holding at least monthly meetings with teachers from all four components, but teachers told us that often not all teachers participate in these meetings. This notwithstanding, teachers reported that they generally know what happens in other classes and many do their best to modify their curriculum to cover topics from other components. The most common barriers to integration reported by program directors were lack of funds to organize meetings, and teachers who were reluctant to change their curriculum to align with thematic topics covered in other components.

Grantees also experienced challenges related to collecting data to track participant progress and using this information for program improvement. Though this remains a challenge, the fact that all grantees have been collecting attendance data, demographic data, and progress data for children and parents and reporting results over the last four years is an accomplishment. Over time, program staff have become more comfortable with the data system and have made greater use of the information. The new online data system is easier to use and produces results that are easier for grantees to utilize. Understanding families' needs through tracking attendance patterns and performance on assessments can help program staff adjust their services to better meet these needs. Several programs reported that they were actually using what they learned from their data to update attendance policies, enhance attendance rates, adjust the timing of course offerings to match families' schedules, and more appropriately place parents in classes. In this way, technology is supporting grantee efforts for program improvement. However, there is room for growth in this area.

By far the greatest challenge reported by grantees was securing adequate funding for their program—71 percent of program directors reported that this was a large or moderate challenge in Year 4. By the end of Year 4, only 43 percent of the grantees had a written fundraising plan in place (though sustainability plans have since become a First 5 LA requirement). Related to the funding issue, securing appropriate and permanent space was also top on grantees' lists of challenges that remained in Year 4.

Findings related to child and family outcomes

The primary focus of evaluation activities in Years 3 and 4 was on assessing Initiative outcomes, particularly those experienced by children and their families. This work was guided by three evaluation questions related to participant outcomes and program impacts:

- Outcome Question #1: What impact have grantees had on children and their families?

- Outcome Question #3: What programmatic characteristics were associated with better outcomes for children and families?

- Policy/Research Question #2: What is the value of broadening the scope of the adult education component of family literacy programs to include employment skills?

Adult learning and family self-sufficiency

As Chapter 4 describes, there is considerable evidence that the adult education component of these programs is having some impact on families. One major impact of participation in family literacy often reported by parents was learning English. In addition to parent reports, we found significant growth on parents' English reading skills as measured by the CASAS

Reading assessment, both for parents at the beginning basic skills level and the low intermediate to advanced level. Parents' CASAS scores also suggest some improvement as a result of the programs; in Year 4, parents who attended more hours of ESL and ABE scored higher on the CASAS Reading assessment.

Parents reported many benefits of their improved English skills. Most notably, parents indicated they were better able to communicate with others—their own children as well as teachers, doctors, store clerks, and others. Parents felt their English skills enabled them to be more independent, to communicate directly with those in critical service areas without the need for a translator. Increased confidence levels and progress toward self-sufficiency were important impacts identified by parents—both key goals of family literacy programs, and likely to impact their lives and their children's lives over the long term. Parents also reported that their developing English skills increased their ability to participate in their child's education, another important goal of family literacy programs.

In addition to ESL classes, 16 and 18 percent of parents (in Years 3 and 4, respectively) attended vocational education or job training classes as part of their adult education experience, with the goal of enhancing their job skills and improving their employability. Overall, 58 percent of parents reported that one of their main reasons for participating in the family literacy program was to improve their chances of getting a job or to get a better job. Only a very small percentage of parents (11 percent in Year 3 and 10 percent in Year 4) reported being employed when they enrolled in the program. Although we do not see a significant change in parents' employment status at the end of each program year, so few parents (24 percent in Year 3 and 33 percent in Year 4) had complete information about their employment status at the end of the year that it is impossible to say whether this is representative of all participants. To better assess the benefits of providing job training programs on parents' ability to secure employment, we recommend that grantees endeavor to collect and report these data more consistently.

Changes in parenting behaviors

As described in Chapter 5, parents described many positive changes in their parenting behaviors as a result of the parenting education and PCILA components of the family literacy programs. Parents reported improving their understanding of their child's development and the importance of playing and interacting with their child at home. Parents also reported making changes in the ways they discipline their children, talking to them or using "time out" rather than yelling or spanking.

We also saw these changes reflected on parents' CA-ESPIRS surveys. Parents showed significant growth on all Even Start indicators, including the number of books and literacy materials in the home, the frequency with which they read and told stories to their child, their own reading and writing behaviors, library use, using television as a learning tool, and involvement in their children's schools. For example, whereas only 44 percent of parents reported having at least 26 children's books in the home at the beginning of Year 3, 70 percent reported having at least this many books at home at the end of the year. Similarly, the percentage of parents who reported reading to their child at least three times per week grew from 78 percent to 94 percent in Year 3. No long-term changes were detected in the frequency with which parents engage their children in interactive literacy activities among parents who were interviewed again after their children entered kindergarten (as part of the

child outcomes study), suggesting that parents maintain (but do not increase) these practices after leaving the family literacy program.

Although many factors influence parents' behaviors, there is some evidence to suggest that the family literacy programs support positive parenting practices. For example, parents who attended more hours of parenting education classes and PCILA demonstrated higher growth on all three outcomes examined: the number of children's books in the home, the frequency with which the parent reads to the child, and the use of interactive literacy behaviors when reading to the child.

Child outcomes within the program

As Chapter 6 describes, children in families participating in the family literacy programs demonstrated significant growth on a variety of measures, from parent and teacher reports to standardized measures of pre-literacy and pre-numeracy.

Parents reported that the family literacy programs had helped their children to learn English, to become more disciplined, and to become prepared for school overall. Teacher reports of children's progress on the DRDP support parent reports. Children across all age groups from birth to age five showed significant growth on each of the Desired Result areas of the DRDP—DR 1: Children are personally and socially competent, DR 2: Children are effective learners, DR 3: Children show physical and motor competence, and DR 4: Children are safe and healthy (rated for children eight months of age and older only).[14] Children in the three-to-five age range also showed increased mastery of reading readiness subscales on the DRDP—language comprehension, language expression, reading skills, interest in books, and writing—during their time in the programs.

Consistent with teachers' ratings based on child observations, children's performance on direct assessments administered by trained assessors also showed significant growth. In the first year of the child outcomes study, children showed significant growth on most assessments—including English language skills and emergent literacy and mathematics skills—but we found no detectable change in children's vocabulary.

To assess the impact of the program on children's development, we examined the relationship between the amount and quality of service received and growth on outcome measures. We found significant effects of attendance on selected measures. For example, children in the three-to-five age range who spent more time in the family literacy programs showed higher ratings on Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners) at the end of the year. In addition, there is some evidence that spending more hours in a family literacy program is related to better English language development, ability to name letters, and greater understanding of story and print concepts, as measured by independent assessors for the child outcomes study.

In some cases, the relationship between hours of service and outcomes differs depending on the quality of the program. For example, in programs with a low ECERS-R activities subscale score, each hour attended resulted in relatively large DR 2 rating increases, but in

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[14] Children in the birth to seven months age range appear to make progress on all Desired Results, however, too few children were assessed at two points in time to detect significant results for this age range.

programs with very high activities subscale scores, children started with higher ratings, and each additional hour attended resulted in smaller increases, suggesting a leveling in outcomes achieved. In programs with high language and reasoning subscale scores, children showed higher growth on DR 2 ratings, while those in programs with low language and reasoning scores actually showed *decreased* DR 2 ratings with each hour attended. Overall, higher program quality, as measured by the ECERS-R, was associated with more DRDP items mastered by three-to-five-year-old children.

Teacher practice seems to be particularly important for children's outcomes. Children whose teachers spent more time scaffolding their learning had higher ratings on DR 1 (Children are personally and socially competent) and DR 2 (Children are effective learners), even after controlling for age and rating at Time 1. In addition, more time spent on literacy activities in the classroom was associated with higher ratings on Desired Result 1. The relationships between literacy activities in the classroom and children's outcomes also held up in analyses of data from assessments administered by independent assessors in the child outcomes study. The percentage of time children spent engaging in literacy activities in the program was significantly related to children's English skills and the number of letters they could name, even after controlling for demographic characteristics and Time 1 score.

We also found that parent inputs were related to some outcomes, suggesting that children also benefit from their parents' participation in the program. Overall, children with a more linguistically stimulating environment at home performed better on language and literacy measures than other children. For example, the number of children's books in the home was significantly related to children's understanding of story and print concepts and their overall English proficiency level. Relationships with the DRDP were less consistent. For example, we detected no relationship between parent literacy behaviors and DRDP scores for 3-5-year-olds. However, we found that for children in the 18-to-35-month-old age group, increases in the number of children's books in the home and the frequency with which parents read to their child were associated with higher mean ratings on DR 1 (Children are personally and socially competent). We found no relationships between parent CASAS scores and children's DRDP ratings.

Child outcomes beyond the program

Children were followed through kindergarten to examine longer-term impacts of the family literacy programs. Through kindergarten, children continued to show growth on all outcome measures in the child outcomes study except the Woodcock-Johnson/Woodcock-Muñoz Applied Problems assessment. Scores on standardized assessments (PPVT/TVIP and Woodcock-Johnson/Muñoz) for children who participated in the family literacy programs continued to be lower than the population norms.

Early experiences in the family literacy programs were also found to be associated with kindergarten outcomes. There is some evidence that children who began participating in the family literacy programs at an earlier age showed better language and literacy performance in kindergarten. More parent-child engagement in literacy activities during program participation was associated with better literacy and math outcomes in kindergarten. In addition, participation in programs with high quality indicators—having a teacher who scaffolds children's learning more and spending more time in literacy activities—was

associated with better literacy performance in kindergarten. Growth modeling results show some effects for both time in program and engagement in literacy across outcome measures.

Findings related to FLSN implementation

The FLSN was created to support grantee program quality improvement, with the intention that the original 15 grantees would become model programs and teaching sites for other family literacy programs in Los Angeles County. Though the primary focus of the evaluation was on participant outcomes, we continued to explore the implementation of the FLSN. Our efforts in this area focused on two evaluation questions:

- <u>Process Question #3</u>: What is the range of activities in which the FLSN has engaged?

- <u>Process Question #4</u>: What were the successes and challenges in the implementation of the FLSN?

Training and technical assistance

The FLSN sponsored 15 unique trainings in each of Years 3 and 4, many of which were organized or led by FLSN staff or collaborators. In addition, the FLSN conducted a total of 75 onsite technical assistance visits to the 15 grantees in Year 3 and 49 visits to the 14 grantees in Year 4. The number of visits per grantee varied widely, from two visits to eight visits per year. Compared to Years 1 and 2, in Years 3 and 4 of the Initiative, we saw a shift in the focus of FLSN training and technical assistance, from establishing the four components and completing First 5 deliverables to sustainability and using the Framework to improve program administration and the parenting education and PCILA components. We also saw a decrease in the FLSN's attention to outreach and advocacy.

In Years 3 and 4, the FLSN sponsored a range of meetings to support *improvements in each of the four components* of family literacy. Five meetings focused on improving ECE services, and services for children with language and learning needs in particular, across Years 3 and 4; three trainings focused on adult education services, and three trainings covered parenting education and PCILA across the two years. In addition, the FLSN provided direct technical assistance to grantees to support their efforts to improve individual program components, with an increasing focus on this in Year 4. In Year 3, helping grantees to improve the quality of instructional offerings comprised about seven percent of the grantee needs addressed by site visitors, and in Year 4, this topic comprised over 15 percent of the needs addressed during site visits.[15] Although the focal component varied in Year 3, in every case in Year 4, the component targeted for improvement during site visits was parenting education or PCILA. In addition to addressing issues within components, the FLSN held two meetings where component integration was one agenda topic. However, integration was one of the areas of least attention according to technical assistance site visit notes reviewed in both years.

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[15] To determine the level of FLSN emphasis in a given area (e.g., improving individual program components), we analyzed data from the FLSN that enumerated each need addressed during technical assistance visits to grantee sites. To calculate the percentage of needs addressed by the FLSN in any given topic area, we simply divided the number of needs that the FLSN addressed related to that topic area by the total number of needs addressed across all topic areas. (Some recoding of needs was necessary for consistency.)

Although no explicit trainings were conducted on *program intensity and attendance*, in Year 4, the FLSN also worked with grantees through technical assistance visits on increasing the intensity of their instructional offerings in each of the four components and increasing attendance rates. In Year 4, data from the FLSN indicate that approximately 15 percent of the grantee needs addressed through technical assistance in Year 4 concerned the intensity of instructional offerings, and just under 10 percent concerned participant attendance. Site visitors' notes indicate that much of the assistance provided to grantees in these areas centered around reporting intensity or attendance figures, rather than actually increasing intensity and attendance.

The FLSN provided two networking meetings on *sustainability*—one in Year 3 and one in Year 4. In addition, attention to sustainability issues made up about 15 percent of the technical assistance needs addressed in Year 3. Less attention was given to this topic in Year 4, perhaps because the Initiative was re-funded at the end of Year 3 and grantee concerns about funding were greater prior to this decision.

General *program administration* issues accounted for about 12 percent of onsite technical assistance needs addressed in Year 3, and included support such as reviewing performance plans and working with grantee staff to revise MOUs with partner agencies.

Data collection and use was addressed in six trainings provided or supported by the FLSN in Years 3 and 4, and support with test administration and data collection made up ten percent of onsite needs addressed by technical assistance providers. In both years, though, the topics of data analysis and using data for program improvement were given little attention during onsite technical assistance meetings.

Successes and challenges

The FLSN experienced a number of successes in Years 3 and 4, from providing numerous successful trainings to developing a more efficient system for documenting their work. Grantees continued to have overwhelmingly positive responses to FLSN support, particularly in the areas of providing opportunities to network with other family literacy programs, providing opportunities for staff development, and identifying funding sources. FLSN staff reported that implementing the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement, as a resource for technical assistance providers as well as grantees, was a major success in Year 4. Though understaffing remains a challenge for the FLSN, grantees found the services provided by the FLSN to be of consistently high quality.

In addition to these successes, the FLSN experienced some challenges in Year 4. Understaffing and staff turnover are consistent challenges. When asked about the cause of the turnover, staff members cited the instability of the organization prior to the Initiative being re-funded and difficulties establishing a common agenda and effective communication among team members. As noted above, grantees perceive FLSN support as being of consistently high quality, in spite of the high rate of staff turnover.

Findings related to impacts of the Initiative on grantee programs

Together, grants provided to the Family Literacy Initiative grantees and support from the FLSN were intended to help grantees expand and enhance their services to families and

become model, or exemplary, family literacy programs. To assess impacts on grantee programs, we considered four evaluation questions:

- Outcome Question #2: What impact has the FLSN had on the service delivery system?

- Outcome Question #4: How have programs been able to sustain themselves and what role has First 5 LA played in that process?

- Policy/Research Question #1: What is the value of providing ongoing program support to family literacy programs?

- Policy/Research Question #3: How have the First 5 LA grants benefited family literacy programs?

Networking among grantees

One of the greatest impacts that the Initiative and the FLSN have had is in the establishment of a network of family literacy programs, each striving to meet similar goals. The FLSN has brought grantees together through each of its trainings and meetings, and, in response to requests from grantees, has offered opportunities for networking and sharing among grantees. One significant benefit of the networking meetings has been the development of the grantee collaborative—a group of grantees working together to seek joint funding opportunities. Seventy-nine percent of grantee program directors ranked networking as one of the three areas where the FLSN was *most* useful.

When asked to explain how FLSN support for networking had helped them make improvements to their programs, one program director wrote, "Without FLSN we would not have gotten to know other programs. The workshops, meetings, etc. cause us to learn from each other and plan grant writing together." Another wrote, "As a new coordinator, this opportunity has provided me with a lot of support from other coordinators/directors. It has helped me learn about my role as a [family literacy program] coordinator." In focus groups with program directors in Year 4, one program director said, "Having the Network and the opportunity to get together with other grantees has been a big help in saying, 'Oh, I never thought about doing it this way.' The networking has been a definite asset."

Continuous quality improvement

At the beginning of the Initiative, there was an expectation that grantees would be model programs, but there was no clear definition of "model program." With the FLSN's development of the Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement, which describes characteristics of programs along a spectrum toward exemplary status, the Initiative made significant advances in the field of family literacy. Several program staff have mentioned the utility of the Framework for guiding program quality efforts. One program director said of the Framework in Year 4, "It helped our teachers to get a picture of what a quality program looks like. The Framework is very descriptive, so having it helps them see the pieces that we need to have."

In Years 3 and 4, the FLSN gave more attention to program quality improvement efforts among grantees. Linking parenting education skills and activities to PCILA activities and ensuring that both are aligned to support children's literacy became a focus for the FLSN in Year 4, and one of the three mandatory trainings for grantees focused on these two

components. Three grantees reported that improving parenting education was one of the three areas in which the FLSN has been most helpful in assisting them in program improvement; three additional grantees ranked improving PCILA among their top three.

Although improving the quality of the ECE component was not a particular focus of FLSN technical assistance in either Year 3 or Year 4, in both years, the FLSN supported the grantees in improving ECE by sponsoring the Learning Luau conferences, which provided grantees with opportunities to attend workshops and presentations on various aspects of early childhood education. Grantees' early childhood programs were rated "good" overall on the ECERS-R and somewhat higher on the subscale that assesses teacher interactions. However, relatively little classroom time was spent engaging children in literacy activities. Those children who had greater exposure to literacy activities showed stronger outcomes overall. This might be an area where further attention by the FLSN is warranted.

Sustainability

The FLSN Framework indicates that an exemplary program has a realistic plan in place to sustain services after their current funding ends. As described in Chapter 3, when asked about their five-year funding plans in Year 3, program directors' responses varied greatly, and some were unsure they would be able to continue offering the same level of services should the Initiative not be refunded. The FLSN supported grantees in moving toward sustainability through technical assistance and training efforts in Years 3 and 4. Though program directors reported that FLSN support was particularly helpful in identifying funding sources in both Years 3 and 4, they continue to request additional support in this area. In fact, this was the single greatest need identified by grantee program directors in Year 4.

Because achieving sustainability is such a large challenge for grantee programs, it is not surprising that program directors ascribe significant benefits to the funding provided by First 5 LA. The proportion of grantees' budgets coming from First 5 LA funds ranged from 35 percent to 100 percent in Year 3, and most grantees considered these funds to be vitally important to their operations. Program directors indicated that without these funds, they would find a way to stay open, but the quality would be much lower. Programs reported that First 5 LA funds have strengthened infrastructure, provided stability, and allowed for the expansion to new sites and hiring of new staff. One program director said that First 5 LA funding has increased grantees' credibility and thus helped with fundraising, noting that the funding has also made their program less expensive for other funders.

Use of data

A final area in which First 5 LA and the FLSN have helped to move the service delivery system in a positive direction is grantees' use of data. Grantee program staff now collect and update demographic data for all children, parents, and families; collect monthly attendance data for all participants; and routinely assess parents and children in each of three outcome areas (adult learning, parenting behaviors, and child development). First 5 LA has established a customized online data system in which grantees can enter their data, monitor participant and family progress, identify problem areas, and generate results to present to potential funders.

Program staff emphasized how much they have learned about data and often credited the FLSN for their growth. One program director explained, "When I started I didn't know

anything about data. I know about data now. I'm starting to know how to evaluate it a little better. I know the ESPIRS; I know the DRDP; I know why they're important. I'm starting to think big picture." However, program directors still recognize this as an area for improvement; half reported that they would like additional support using data for program improvement and interpreting or analyzing data. One program director said, "Using data for program improvement is the next step, they have brought us to this point, now we hope this is what the next five years is about." Ultimately, with additional training and guidance, grantees will be using their data routinely to guide program improvement and sustainability efforts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from Years 3 and 4 of this evaluation, we suggest the following recommendations:

1. ***Focus on quality, not just quantity.*** We found that families who receive more hours of service demonstrate greater growth on outcome measures in each of the component areas, which suggests that some level of intensity is important. First 5 LA has set minimum levels of service that all grantees must make available to families – 48 hours of adult education, 10 hours of parenting education, 10 hours of PCILA, and 60 hours of early childhood education – thus emphasizing the importance of the *quantity*, or intensity, of services provided. While this is a positive step toward holding grantees accountable to a high standard of service, it is also important to set a standard for the *quality* of family literacy services provided to families. Quantity without quality is not likely to produce the benefits desired from a family literacy program. In fact, in at least one case, quantity without quality showed negative relationships to children's learning – children's ratings on Desired Result 2 (Children are effective learners) actually decreased with more time spent in programs with ECERS-R Language and Reasoning subscale scores of 3 or below. The FLSN's Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement identifies some characteristics of exemplary family literacy programs, and this could be used as a basis for setting guidelines for program improvement for grantees. The next phase of the evaluation will take up the issue of program quality in greater detail in order to further explicate the links between quality and outcomes.

2. ***Increase attention to literacy in the ECE classroom and strengthen teacher-child interactions.*** We found consistent links between teacher practice in the ECE classroom, in particular, the time teachers spent engaging children in literacy activities and actively scaffolding their learning, and children's developmental progress and outcomes. For example, children in classrooms with teachers who spent more time engaging in literacy activities showed greater growth on the number of letters they could name, their English language ability (as measured by the Pre-LAS) and on DR 1 (Children are personally and socially competent). However, we found that programs are spending very little time (about 10 percent of the time) actively engaged in language and literacy activities with children (such as reading aloud to children, letting children interact with books, and engaging children in writing, oral language development, and phonemic awareness activities).

Similarly, we found positive relationships between the time teachers spent scaffolding children's learning – for example, asking open-ended questions, providing prompts or cues to guide the child, and helping the child to expand on her answers and thoughts – and growth on DR 1 (Children are personally and socially competent) and DR 2 (Children are effective learners). But teachers spent less time engaged in interactions that scaffolded children's learning and more time engaged with children in didactic ways – for example, providing instructions or rules of conduct, demonstrating the "right" way to do something, or asking closed-ended questions that have one correct answer.

Given the connections between these indicators of quality in the ECE classroom and positive developmental outcomes for children, increased attention to these areas should result in even greater increases over time. Although the FLSN has provided professional development opportunities for program staff, focusing explicitly on these areas with classroom teachers would be helpful.

3. ***Continue to work on supporting grantee development to enhance parenting education and PCILA.*** One of the key goals of family literacy programs is to provide parents with the knowledge and tools they need to support their children's learning, and this is accomplished through parenting education classes and PCILA time. We found significant growth on nearly all measures of home literacy resources and parenting activities, and increases in time spent in these components are associated with increases in all three outcome measures examined. However, we found variation among programs, especially in regard to how PCILA is structured, and relatively little emphasis given to direct coaching of parents to support their learning. This is an area that the FLSN has identified as a focus area for Phase II of the Initiative, and we encourage the FLSN to work with grantees to further refine their approach to PCILA to enhance opportunities for parent learning.

4. ***Maximize the impact of the four components by increasing integration.*** The family literacy model rests on the assumption that families benefit most when they participate in all four components and when those components are aligned to create a well articulated and coherent experience. However, full integration remains a challenge for many grantees. The extent to which programs have integrated the four components varies and is often limited to three out of four of the components (with the adult education component least likely to be integrated). There is also variation in programs staff's understanding of the term "integration." Only 29 percent of program directors viewed integration as a significant challenge for their site, yet interviews revealed that program directors across grantee sites defined integration quite differently, with two program directors expressing confusion over what integration should look like. Moreover, 86 percent of grantees reported that they would like additional support in this area. The FLSN's Framework addresses the concept of component integration, but some focused attention, with practical guidelines for how to improve integration, especially when the partner adult school is less flexible, would be a useful next step.

5. ***Extend use of data by grantees to support continuous quality improvement.*** Overall, grantees have demonstrated great progress on their comfort with data management and use – from attendance data to assessment data – and many attribute their progress

to the FLSN. While a few grantees have a longer history of tracking their families' and monitoring their progress over time, for most, the introduction of the requirement to collect and track participant data meant a new way of thinking about their programs and services. Although grantees have made progress in the area of data use, there is still a need for continued development. In particular, many grantees are not actively analyzing and interpreting their data and using it to support program improvement efforts. Supporting grantees' data use was a central focus of the FLSN's work in the first two years, though less attention was given to explicit applications of the information. While many program directors reported that FLSN support in this area was useful, only one ranked "interpreting or analyzing data" and "using data for program improvement" as one of three most helpful areas of support, and nearly three quarters reported that they would like more help in these areas. If continuous quality improvement is to be a requirement for grantees, using data to support their efforts should also be a focus of technical assistance and training.

6. ***Continue to support grantee sustainability by providing training and technical assistance to grantees.*** By far the greatest challenge reported by grantees was securing adequate funding for their program—71 percent of program directors reported that this was a large or moderate challenge in Year 4. Many grantee agencies rely heavily on First 5 LA funds, and when the Initiative was drawing to a close at the end of Year 3, many program directors were concerned about how they would replace those funds. Grantees expanded and enhanced their programs with their First 5 LA grants, but without other funding sources to replace the First 5 LA dollars, grantees were facing the possibility of making reductions in the size or range of offerings in their programs. Although the Initiative was refunded, with the new matching requirement for grantee funding, the pressure on grantee program staff to engage in grant-writing and other fundraising activities has increased sharply. In Year 4, 50 percent of grantees felt that FLSN support in identifying funding sources was very useful. Yet, grantees consistently reported that the area in which they most needed direction was in identifying funding opportunities. Given this interest and the increasing pressure on grantees to secure additional funds, we recommend additional attention to building capacity among grantees to achieve sustainability.

7. ***Continue to provide customized technical assistance to grantees, especially those with greater program improvement needs.*** There is wide variation in grantee program structures, services, and strengths, and with the addition of the new Cohort 2 and 3 grantees, this variation increases even further. While identifying funding sources was a consistent area of need among grantees, each grantee has its own unique set of circumstances and needs. Although the addition of the new grantees means a total of 22 grantee agencies to serve, we would encourage the FLSN to provide support tailored to individual grantee needs to the extent possible. If enhancing the quality of services provided to families is to be a priority for the Initiative, grantees – especially those with the greatest program improvement needs – will need customized technical assistance along the way.

Implications for Phase II of the Evaluation

Findings from the first four years of the evaluation suggest several areas for further exploration.

Grantee program quality assessment

Although we have gathered information on program quality throughout Phase I of the evaluation, we plan to develop a more comprehensive program quality measurement system. Findings suggest that there is wide variation in quality across grantee programs and program components and that quality as well as quantity of services make a difference when it comes to producing positive child and family outcomes. Quality indicators will focus primarily on services offered in each of the four components, though some indicators of program-wide service integration and leadership will also be important to measure. The FLSN Framework will be used as a starting point to guide the design of the quality measurement system, and research on best practices as well as other outcomes studies and input from experts will be used to specify indicators. Data on quality indicators will be collected through a variety of methods, including program site visits, teacher surveys and interviews and/or focus groups, program director surveys and interviews, reviews of grantee documents and online data, and reviews of FLSN documentation of individual grantee needs and progress. Obtaining sufficient data on the quality of the family literacy programs will enable the evaluation to accomplish two goals: 1) document program improvement efforts in which grantees are engaging and that are supported by the FLSN, and 2) more clearly specify models linking program services to desired child and family outcomes.

Parent, child, and family outcomes

The child outcomes sub-study has been a critical piece of the Phase I evaluation, and we therefore will be continuing and expanding this work in Phase II. Findings highlight the importance of a quality ECE program and also the important role of parents in supporting their child's learning and development. A key challenge faced by the child outcomes study in Phase 1 was maintaining a large enough sample of children over time to detect subtle relationships. To improve the sensitivity of our analysis, we will be selecting larger samples at two points in time during the program year, to be able to relate program quality measures (and changes in program quality) to children's outcomes more generally for two separate cohorts of children. In addition, a parent-child book reading activity will capture the impact of parenting education and PCILA on parent-child interactions and subsequent child outcomes.

We will examine the relationships between program quality, children's level of participation in the programs, and children's growth on the outcome measures. We will also examine the relationships between parent participation in parenting and PCILA, parent book reading, and child outcomes. We will also explore using the amount of time participants have engaged in the program as a predictor of child outcomes.

In addition to the child outcomes sub-study, which provides in-depth and objective assessments of children's outcomes, we will continue the analysis of grantee-collected service and outcome data in Phase II to assess impacts of the Initiative on all children and families. Because some critical impacts of family literacy programs—such as parents' increased confidence, gains in job-related skills, or feeling supported by a social network—

are difficult to measure with assessments, we will continue to obtain parent feedback directly to assess their perceptions of changes over time.

Assessment of the impacts of FLSN support on program quality improvement

Finally, we plan to continue our focus on the role of the FLSN in supporting grantee program quality improvement. Phase I of the evaluation addressed the implementation of the FLSN and explored grantee perceptions of the support they were receiving from the FLSN. With the increased emphasis on outcomes in Phase II, we will examine more systematically the changes that grantees are making in the quality of program services and the role that the FLSN plays in helping them to make those changes. In order to make linkages between the FLSN's work and grantee changes, we will collect grantee-specific data from the FLSN, including their identification of grantee needs, plans for making changes, and actual support provided to grantees.

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