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## **First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative Evaluation, Phase II Year 5 Evaluation Update Report**

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## 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.

In June 2002, First 5 LA awarded three-year grants (2002–2005) to 15 agencies throughout Los Angeles County. 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 family literacy components: 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 (2005–2010) to 14 of the original 15 agencies (Cohort 1) and eight additional agencies (Cohorts 2 and 3).<sup>1</sup>

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, 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 four years in 2005. The revised scope of work for the FLSN focuses more heavily on supporting grantees in their continuous quality improvement efforts, adding a new emphasis on highlighting exemplary programs through their Exemplary Validation Process (EVP).

In October of 2002, First 5 LA contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct a four-year evaluation of the implementation and impacts of the Family Literacy Initiative. Results from Phase I of this evaluation (2002–2006) were presented in a report highlighting Years 3 and 4 of the Initiative. First 5 LA contracted with AIR again in October of 2006 to conduct a second four-year evaluation of the Initiative (Years 5 through 8), which constitutes Phase II (2006–2010).

This report presents an overview of the study design for Phase II, describes key evaluation activities for Year 5, and highlights a few preliminary findings related to parenting outcomes from data collected during the first year of the Phase II evaluation (Year 5 of the Initiative).

## Overview of the Study Design

The overarching goal of the second phase of the Family Literacy Initiative Evaluation (2006–2010) is to expand our understanding of the impacts of the Initiative on children, families, and programs by building on the findings from the first phase of the evaluation (2002–2006);

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<sup>1</sup> Ten new grants were awarded; two Cohort 1 grantees received one grant as part of the continuation of their original grant and a second grant as part of the expansion of the Initiative. Thus there are 24 grants in Phase II of the Initiative but only 22 individual grantees.

gathering additional data on program quality, child development, parent learning, and other family outcomes; and examining the relationships between program participation, program quality, and child and family outcomes.

The following key questions guide the evaluation:

Participant Outcomes:

1. How are Family Literacy program participants growing and changing over time?
2. What are the relationships between program participation and outcomes?
3. What are the relationships between program quality and participant outcomes?

FLSN and Grantee Program Outcomes:

4. What is the range of program quality among grantees?
5. What factors facilitate or impede program quality improvement?
6. What are the relationships between Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) support and grantee program quality improvement?

To address these questions, the study design outlines six main tasks or focus areas:

1. Grantee program quality assessment
2. Child outcomes substudy
3. Analysis of grantee service and participant outcome data
4. Documentation of parent experiences, satisfaction, and growth
5. Assessment of impacts of FLSN support on program quality improvement
6. Reports and presentation

Each of these focus areas is described below.

### **Grantee program quality assessment**

Evaluation results presented in the Final Phase I (Year 3–4) report suggested a relationship between program quality and outcomes for families. In an effort to learn more about this relationship, and to better measure “quality,” the first evaluation task of Phase II was to develop indicators of quality in programs and assess grantee program activities against these indicators through a variety of data collection methods, including teacher surveys, program director interviews and surveys, observations of classrooms, and analysis of grantee service data. Data collection tools developed for this focus area will be used throughout the four-year study.

### **Child outcomes substudy**

Since one of the primary outcomes of interest for family literacy programs relates to children’s growth and development, we are continuing to collect in-depth information about children’s development by administering a battery of assessments to a sample of preschool-aged children across family literacy grantees. Because of the focus on measuring quality, we will also continue classroom observations, focusing on teacher-child interactions and time spent on various activities — particularly language and literacy activities — during the ECE program component .

In addition to observing ECE classrooms and assessing children, the Phase II study design incorporates data collection on a new outcome that was previously missing from the evaluation

— parent-child interactions. To assess parent-child interactions, the study team is videotaping parents participating in a joint reading activity with their preschool children. These tapes will be coded for parent strategies, such as interactive scaffolding, guiding the child’s attention, and providing feedback.

Data will be collected for the child outcomes substudy in Years 5 (2006–07) and 7 (2008–09) with results presented in an interim report in Year 6 (September 2008) and a final report in Year 8 (September 2010).

### **Analysis of grantee service and participant outcome data**

To further explore the relationships between participation and outcomes for all families, we are continuing to analyze grantee data from the online data system, including attendance and enrollment data, family profile and update data, parents’ Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Reading scores, and responses to the parent survey.<sup>2</sup> At the request of First 5 LA, the study team will not be analyzing grantee-collected DRDP-R (Desired Results Developmental Profile – Revised) data. Instead, the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories (MacArthur CDI) will be used with parents of children ages 8 to 30 months to assess early language use and development starting in Year 6 at the beginning and end of each year, or as long as First 5 LA, the grantees, and AIR agree on its usefulness.

Grantee-collected outcome data will be analyzed in conjunction with family participation data as well as data on program quality collected from classroom observations, program director interviews, and teacher and program director surveys to evaluate the relationships between program intensity and quality and the level and nature of participant outcomes. These analyses will be conducted throughout the study and reported on primarily in Years 6 and 8.

### **Documentation of parent experiences, satisfaction, and growth**

Some 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, but are important to capture. To document parents’ voices — their experiences, their satisfaction, and the changes they perceive in themselves, their children, and their families — we are conducting on-site parent focus groups in Years 5 and 7.

### **Assessment of impacts of FLSN support on program quality improvement**

Another critical focus of the evaluation is understanding the role and impacts of the Family Literacy Support Network. Thus, we are continuing to conduct annual interviews with FLSN staff to understand 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 through interviews as well as through summaries of FLSN site visit activities. We will also explore grantee perspectives on the assistance provided by the FLSN through program director interviews and teacher and program director surveys.

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<sup>2</sup> In Year 5, the California Even Start Performance Information Reporting System (CA-ESPIRS) was still used, but a newly developed Family Literacy Initiative Parent Survey will be used beginning in Year 6.

## **Reports and presentations**

To summarize evaluation activities and findings, we will prepare periodic reports and updates as part of the Phase II Evaluation. We will prepare an interim report in Year 6 summarizing results from the first two years of Phase II, and a final report in Year 8, with summary findings for the Initiative. In addition, we will prepare evaluation updates in Years 5 and 7 (such as this one), which will provide a summary of evaluation activities to date as well as preliminary findings as they are available. These evaluation updates will also serve to keep First 5 LA, the grantees, and the FLSN apprised of our progress and provide opportunities for discussion of areas where mid-course corrections could be made to enhance the achievement of desired program outcomes. We will also present findings to the Commission, First 5 LA staff, the grantees, and the FLSN throughout the evaluation as the findings become available.

## **Activities in Year 5**

During the first year of the Phase II evaluation (“Year 5” or 2006–07), the evaluation team focused on getting to know the Cohort 2 and 3 grantees; developing and testing new measures of grantee program quality and participant outcomes; and gathering data on parent experiences, child outcomes, and the work of the FLSN.

Tool development and data collection activities in Year 5 included:

1. Development of program quality indicators
2. Site visits to programs, including developing protocols and collecting data through:
  - interviews with program directors
  - focus groups with parents
  - observations of PCILA and parenting education classes
3. Development and administration of surveys of grantee program directors and teachers
4. Development of a new survey for parents about their parenting practices, to replace the CA-ESPIRS
5. Telephone interviews with FLSN staff
6. Pilot testing of the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories (MacArthur CDI)
7. Child outcomes substudy data collection, including:
  - direct child assessments at two time points
  - observations of early childhood classrooms
  - observations of parent-child book reading activity

Each of these activities is discussed in more detail below.

Prior to all data collection activities, to ensure participants’ protection, the evaluation team submitted all protocols and data collection procedures to AIR’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review and approval. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and confidentiality was assured in the reporting of information obtained in the data collection activities.

## **Development of program quality indicators**

To guide the development of data collection tools, the evaluation team conducted a literature review to identify indicators of program quality for family literacy programs as a whole as well

as those specific to each of the four program components. For the purposes of developing quality indicators, we followed the structure of the FLSN's *A Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement in Family Literacy Programs*, identifying four substantive components of family literacy programs:

1. Program structure, organization, and leadership
2. Early childhood education
3. Parenting education and PCILA
4. Adult education

For each of these areas, we reviewed the literature and identified common programmatic features that were empirically or theoretically linked to positive outcomes for families. These features, or indicators of quality, were compiled into a comprehensive set of quality indicators (see Appendix) with the purpose of addressing the most relevant and commonly described attributes of quality family literacy programs, reflected in the most current literature reviewed. The resulting indicators formed the basis for the development of the data collection tools that were used in Year 5 and will continue to be used in subsequent years.

### **Site visits to grantee programs**

In Year 5, we conducted site visits to each of the Cohort 2 and 3 grantee programs that were new to the Initiative.<sup>3</sup> In May and June of 2007, the evaluation team visited each program for one or two days. These visits provided the evaluation team with the opportunity to become familiar with the new grantees and to collect in-depth information about their programs from both program staff and participants. It also provided an opportunity to pilot-test new data collection instruments (e.g., observation tools) before using them to collect data from all grantees in Year 7.

At each site, we interviewed the program director, conducted focus groups with parents, and observed PCILA and parenting education classes.<sup>4</sup> Prior to visiting each program, we developed standardized data collection procedures and instruments, enhancing those used in the Phase I evaluation by addressing quality indicators more explicitly. In addition, even though AIR field staff are trained interviewers, observers, and focus group facilitators, additional training was provided to all site visitors on the data collection tools and protocols to ensure reliability. Each of the data collection instruments used during site visits is described below.

### ***Program director interviews***

While on site, we interviewed Cohort 2 and 3 program directors. We also conducted interviews by telephone with each of the Cohort 1 program directors. One semi-structured interview protocol was developed and used for both sets of interviews.

The purpose of the interviews with program directors was to collect qualitative data to supplement the quantitative information gathered through the program director survey administered during the same time period and to follow up in greater depth on issues that arose

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<sup>3</sup> Two programs received two Phase II grants — one continuation of their Cohort 1 grant, and an additional Cohort 2 grant. Since these two grantees were not new to the Initiative, they were not included in the evaluation site visits in Year 5.

<sup>4</sup> PCILA was not observed at one program because the class was canceled at the last minute on the day of the visit.

during phone interviews conducted during Year 4. Interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes and covered the following topics:

- respondent's background and experience
- program expectations for participants
- strategies for ensuring cultural relevance of program activities
- component integration
- use of data for program improvement
- participant attendance and retention
- support from FLSN for program quality improvement
- funding and sustainability
- successes and challenges experienced by programs during the year

Interviews were conducted with all 22 program directors — 14 Cohort 1 grantees (including two grantees that also received Cohort 2 grants), and eight new Cohort 2 and 3 grantees.

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

With the help of grantee program staff, one parent focus group was arranged at each of the eight sites visited with the purpose of capturing the experiences of parents in their own voices. Participation in the focus groups was voluntary, and program staff were responsible for recruiting parents. Focus groups lasted approximately one hour and a total of 72 parents participated (the number of participants varied from two to 13 per site).

Topics covered in the parent focus group protocol included:

- basic background information about parents' participation in the program (including reasons for participating)
- impacts of each program component on participants' lives and their families
- parent perceptions of program strengths and areas for improvement
- parents' goals and expectations for their children and families as a result of their participation in the program
- parent involvement in decision making at the program

### ***PCILA observations***

To capture and evaluate the quality of PCILA activities, the evaluation team developed a semi-structured PCILA observation tool that was used to guide all PCILA observations at the Cohort 2 and 3 sites. The PCILA classroom observation tool was adapted from the Goodling Institute's Interactive Literacy/PACT observation tool<sup>5</sup> and expanded to include quality indicators identified through literature reviews. The observation tool for PCILA is organized into two sections. The first section includes descriptive information about the classroom environment and activities. The second section consists of nine dimensions on which the assessor makes notes in response to probing questions designed to guide their observations about the following practices:

- teacher clearly communicates the purpose of PCILA activities
- teacher incorporates a regular routine into PCILA time
- teacher provides time and space for parent-child interaction to occur
- teacher makes literacy a focus

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ed.psu.edu/goodlinginstitute/pdf/ObservationTool2.pdf>

- teacher provides activities and an environment that reflect individual cultural, personal, family, and language backgrounds
- teacher responds to parent-child behaviors and supports parent learning by coaching and modeling behaviors
- teacher helps parents transfer learned skills to application at home
- parent and child engagement is positive and fun
- teacher integrates knowledge from other classes

A copy of the PCILA observation tool is included in the Appendix. PCILA classes were observed at seven of the eight grantee sites visits.

### ***Parenting education observations***

Similarly, to assess the quality of parenting education classes, we observed one parenting class at each site visited. To guide these observations, AIR staff developed a parenting class observation tool based on a tool that we created for use in prior years of the evaluation, with the addition of more detail to capture information about quality indicators identified through the literature review. As a first step, the observer documents basic information about the class, such as the number of students and number of staff present, followed by a series of prompts for the observer about the following topics:

- the content of the class
- the instructional approach
- the cultural relevance of the content and materials
- the relationship and rapport between instructors and participants

This tool also includes a series of questions for the instructor about the curriculum and lesson planning. In addition, as a follow-up to the observation and to obtain more context, the evaluation team collected lesson plans and handouts used for the observed classes. A copy of the AIR parenting observation tool can be found in the Appendix. Eight parenting classes were observed during grantee site visits.

### **Program staff surveys**

In order to obtain quantifiable data to characterize all 22 grantee programs, AIR staff developed and administered two staff surveys: a program director survey and a teacher survey. Both are described below.

#### ***Program director survey***

The evaluation team developed and administered a program director survey to capture quantifiable information about each program. The survey was mailed along with a postage-paid return envelope to each of the 22 program directors in June 2007, and AIR staff followed up with grantees as necessary to ensure a strong response rate.

The survey was based on previous surveys used with the Initiative with the addition of new items to capture quality indicators of interest. The following topics are covered in the program director survey:

- Program director background (education and work experience)
- Services provided to families and their needs for additional services

- Duration of family literacy services provided
- Recruitment plan and attendance policies
- Goal-setting strategies for participants
- Component integration
- Sustainability plan
- Implementation challenges
- FLSN support and impacts
- Areas of need for technical assistance

All 22 surveys were completed and returned, for a 100 percent response rate.

### ***Teacher survey***

At the same time that program director surveys were distributed, surveys for teachers in each of the four program components were also administered. Program directors were first asked to provide the names of all of the teachers in each of their program components (adult education, early childhood education, parenting education, and PCILA). Surveys were sent to program directors to distribute to each of their teachers. Once the surveys were complete, teachers returned them to the program director in sealed envelopes to protect their confidentiality.

Similar to the program director survey, teacher surveys were developed based on prior surveys used in the evaluation, with new questions added to address the quality indicators. Surveys included general questions for all teachers as well as specific questions for teachers of different components. Topics in the teacher surveys included:

- Teacher background and experience
- Component integration
- Curricula
- Classroom practices
- Goal setting with families
- Professional development and support from the FLSN

We received surveys from 138 teachers, for an overall response rate of 75 percent.

### **Child outcomes substudy**

Our partners at the UCLA Center for Improving Child Care Quality once again collected data for the child outcomes substudy in Year 5, which has been an ongoing component of the evaluation. Program children in the 3–5 year age range were assessed in both the fall and spring of Year 5. UCLA staff assessed children in the fall, and as many of these children as possible were assessed again in the spring, with additional children added as needed to reach an appropriate sample size. A total of 158 children were assessed in the fall and 141 in the spring; 112 children were assessed at both time points. Assessments included:

- *The Pre-Language Assessment Scales (Pre-LAS, Duncan & De Avila, 1985)*
- *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT, Dunn, & Dunn, 1997), version III (English)/Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody (TVIP) (Spanish)*
- *Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement – Revised (WJ III ACH)/Woodcock-Muñoz III Test of Bateria Woodcock-Muñoz. Pruebas de Aprovechamiento – Revisada*

- A *Letter Naming* measure (developed by the National Center for Early Development and Learning, NCEDL)
- A *Numerical and Counting Awareness* measure (NCEDL)
- A *Color Naming* measure (NCEDL)
- An *Early Writing* measure (NCEDL)
- A measure of *Story and Print Concepts* developed for the Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) to measure children's emergent literacy

All of these measures (except the Pre-LAS, which is a screening measure of English ability) were administered in English or Spanish, as appropriate.

Classrooms and teacher-child interactions were also observed in the winter of Year 5 to assess the quality of ECE services that children were receiving. Observation measures included:

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

These measures enable the evaluation of the range of activities in which children are engaged throughout the observation period, including the amount of time spent on language and literacy activities as well as the quality of teacher-child interactions. Classroom observations were conducted in classrooms at 21 grantee programs.

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

In addition, we added a new component to the child outcomes substudy to examine the quality of parent-child interactions for parents participating in parenting education and PCILA. Parent-child pairs participated in a book-reading activity together and were videotaped during this interaction. The videotaped sessions are being coded for parent behaviors such as interactive scaffolding, guiding the child's attention, and providing feedback. Each participating family will receive a copy of their videotape as an incentive for participation. A total of 102 parent-child pairs were videotaped for the evaluation in Year 5.

### **Development of the parent survey**

For the first phase of the Initiative, including Year 5, grantees have used the CA-ESPIRS to capture outcomes of the parenting component of their family literacy programs. Based on feedback from grantees, the FLSN, and our own experience analyzing the CA-ESPIRS data, we decided, in collaboration with First 5 LA and the FLSN, to develop a new parent survey to replace the CA-ESPIRS going forward.

To develop the parent survey, the evaluation team first gathered input from stakeholders about important parent outcomes to capture with the survey. We refined a list of potential outcomes

and then reviewed numerous parent surveys used in other national and regional studies to identify previously tested items that measure the constructs of interest. Because there is some interest in drawing comparisons with samples of parents from other studies, we endeavored to use items from large datasets that would facilitate such analyses.

AIR's draft parent survey was reviewed by First 5 LA, the FLSN, and a subset of the grantees. Feedback was integrated and a second revision was once again distributed and reviewed. At this stage, the survey was translated into Spanish. To ensure that the questions were appropriate for the targeted parent population, we pilot-tested the draft with approximately 18 parents at four different grantee programs, including cognitive interviews with five parents to talk to them about what they were thinking during each question and to identify questions where interpretations differed from what was intended. Feedback from the pilot test was analyzed and additional revisions were made to the survey draft. Prior to finalizing the survey, this last draft was again circulated to First 5 LA and the FLSN for final comments. The final survey (see Appendix) includes a range of items covering the following key topic areas:

- Use of public libraries
- Books and reading at home
- Activities parents do with their children
- TV viewing habits
- Involvement and leadership in the community and in the programs
- Educational aspirations
- Knowledge of the school system
- Child rearing practices

Starting in the fall of Year 6, grantees will begin using the new parent survey. All parents participating in all four components of each program will be given the survey at program enrollment and again at the end of each program year.

### **Pilot test of the MacArthur CDI**

In addition to a new parent survey, the evaluation will also be relying on a new outcome measure for children. As a result of First 5 LA's decision not to use the DRDP/DRDP-R as an outcome measure for the Family Literacy Initiative, First 5 LA, AIR, and the FLSN looked together for an alternative tool to provide Initiative-wide information on children's developmental progress for children younger than 3 years old. The MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (MacArthur CDI) was the best option identified. The MacArthur CDI has low training costs and program staff burden, because it is a parent-completed survey, rather than a one-on-one assessment, and it enables the measurement of language development in both English and Spanish for bilingual children.

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

## **FLSN interviews**

Finally, the team also conducted telephone interviews with all FLSN staff in September 2007 to document the activities of the FLSN in Year 5 as well as to gather some specific information about grantee needs and services provided to address these needs. Each of the interviews lasted about 60 minutes. The following topics were covered:

- staff background and experience
- technical assistance provided to each grantee
- perceived impacts as a result of the TA provided
- other activities related to the FLSN scope of work
- challenges and successes

Five FLSN staff were interviewed. We are also working with FLSN staff to collect summaries of grantee site visits conducted by the FLSN to capture in greater detail the needs assessment and technical assistance work of the FLSN with grantees.

## **Preliminary Findings on Parent Outcomes and Experiences: Evidence from the CA-ESPIRS and Parent Focus Groups**

Although Year 5 was primarily focused on data collection rather than data analysis, we did conduct some preliminary analyses of the data gathered over the course of the year. Here we focus on analyses of parent outcomes using two sources of data: grantee-collected data on all participating parents using the CA-ESPIRS, and focus group data collected during site visits to the Cohort 2 and 3 grantees.

First, we examined changes in parent responses on the CA-ESPIRS, an in-person survey of parents that assesses the home literacy environment and parents' support of their children's learning. We analyzed CA-ESPIRS surveys administered between May 1, 2006 and July 31, 2007. We compared parent responses on the CA-ESPIRS at Time 1 (fall of the program year, if available) and Time 2 (the last assessment of the year).<sup>6</sup> On average, the difference between Time 1 and Time 2 was 7.7 months. This is slightly less than that for parents included in the Phase I Year 3 (8.6 months) and Year 4 (8.7 months) analyses. However, unlike the Phase I analyses, *all* parents were included in the analysis this year, not just those with 50 or more hours of parenting education during the program year. In the Year 6 Interim Report, this restriction will be used, but all parents are included here in order to show preliminary results. Without this restriction, the average time parents participated in the program is expected to be lower, as demonstrated here.

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<sup>6</sup> A set of rules were used to select the most appropriate Time 1 and Time 2 surveys to show growth associated with the program year 2006–07. If a parent had only two surveys given during the time period of May 2006-July 2007, the first survey was counted as Time 1 and the second as Time 2. The only exception to this rule was if these two surveys both occurred during the summer of 2006 (May-September 2006); in this case, the participant was not included in the analysis as we did not believe this growth reflected changes during the program year. If a participant had more than two surveys during the time period, Time 1 assessments were selected in the following order of priority: a survey completed between September and November 2006; if not available, a survey completed in the prior summer, May through August 2006; if not available, the earliest of other surveys. The last survey completed in the time period was always set as Time 2.

Second, we also analyzed data from focus groups with parents at the eight Cohort 2 and 3 grantee sites. To analyze these data, we coded and sorted parents' responses to questions to understand what changes parents reported and how they were learning to support their children's learning and development. Specific examples reported by parents of the lessons they had learned and the changes they had experienced are described in this section.

Results from each of these sets of analyses are presented below. **Please note that these results are preliminary, and updated results of the CA-ESPIRS data with attendance restrictions will be presented in the Year 6 report.**

### **Knowledge of child development**

One of the most striking outcomes parents described from participating in parenting classes and PCILA time was an improved knowledge of child development. Twenty parents in focus groups across all eight programs described how their parenting classes had taught them more about what to expect at different ages, how children learn, and how children think differently from adults. For instance, one parent told us:

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

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

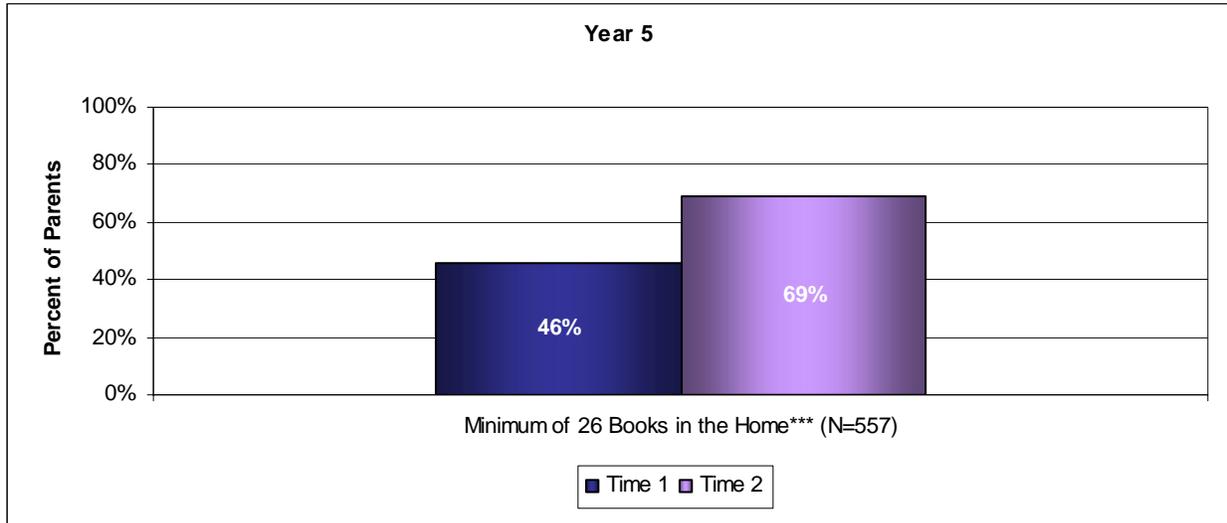
“Since coming to this school, I have learned that the children are experimenting, learning and exploring. Before we thought they were only being mischievous. We have learned to distinguish between when they are actually misbehaving. Now, they are experimenting and knowing the world and I allow them to be that way. I allow him to explore. In my case, I let him, and that is what I have learned.”

### **Supporting children's language and literacy development**

Parents in focus groups also told us about things they were doing with their children to support their language and literacy development. One parent summed up a key message programs often try to convey: "It's true what the teacher says, we are [our children's] first teachers." In fact, many parents described new activities they were doing with their children and strategies they were using to help support their learning, especially in the areas of language and literacy. The importance of reading and interacting with books was a major lesson learned by parents.

A key indicator of parents' support for children's learning on the ESPIRS is the number of children's books the family has at home. As shown in Exhibit 1, 46 percent of parents indicated they had at least 26 children's books at home at Time 1, and by Time 2, 69 percent reported this. This is a statistically significant increase.

**Exhibit 1: Percentage of parents reporting at least 26 children's books in their home at Time 1 and Time 2**

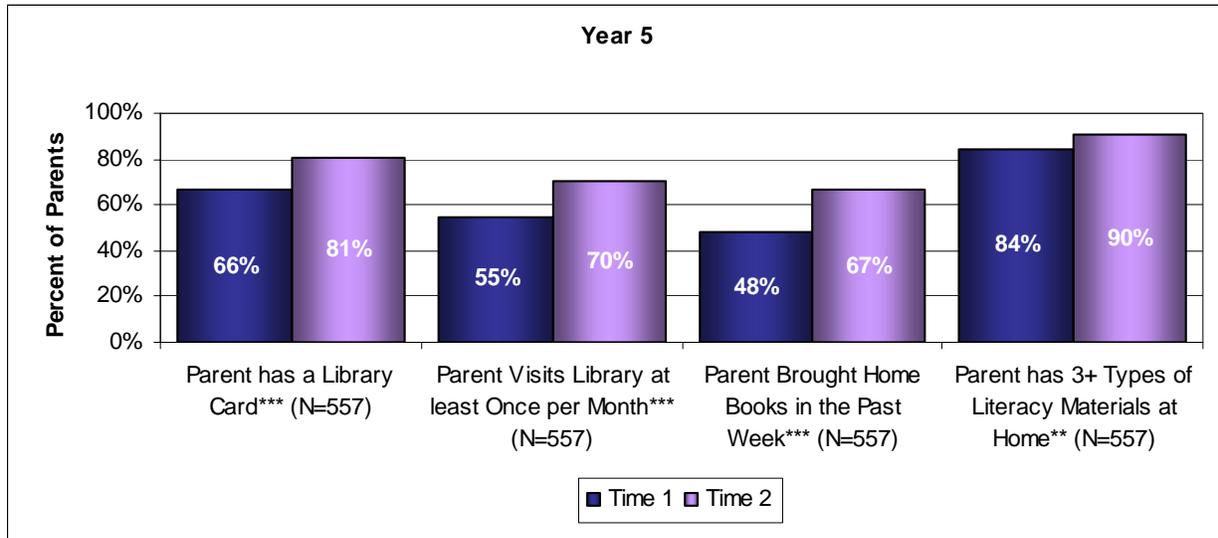


Source: 2006-07 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

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. Parents showed statistically significant growth on the ESPIRS on all of these indicators; 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 2).

**Exhibit 2: Percentage of parents supporting children's learning outside of the classroom at Time 1 and Time 2**



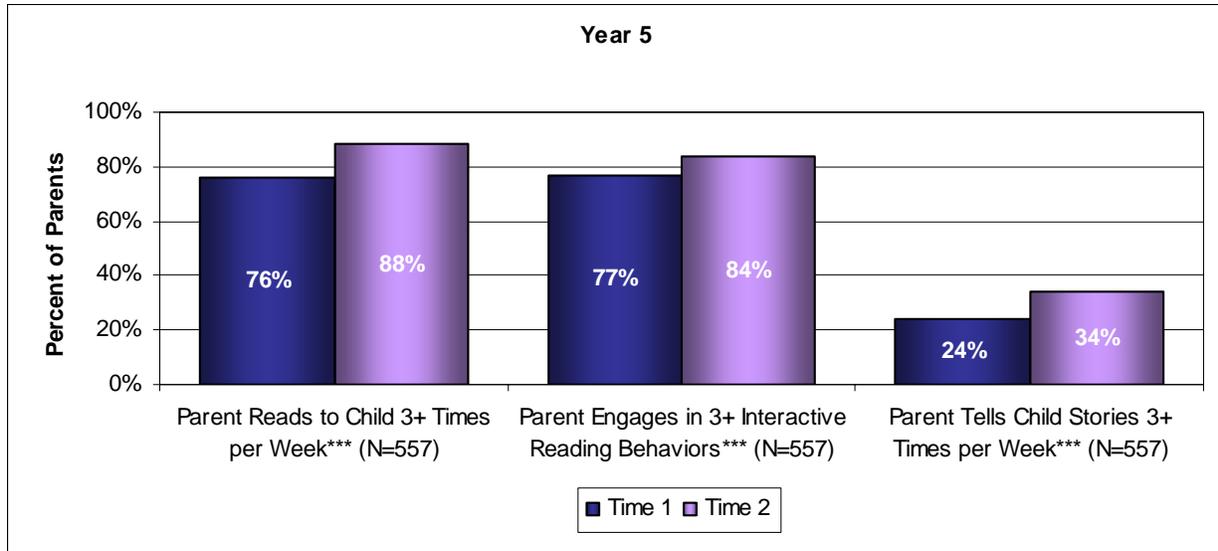
Source: 2006-07 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.

\* p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

Eleven parents participating in focus groups representing all eight programs also reported bringing home books from the program and reading with their children, mirroring the CA-ESPIRS results above.

Parents also seemed to recognize the importance of interactive reading. On the ESPIRS, parents 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. The proportion of parents using three or more interactive reading strategies with their children also increased significantly from Time 1 to Time 2 (see Exhibit 3).

**Exhibit 3: Percentage of parents reporting engaging their child in literacy activities at Time 1 and Time 2**



Source: 2006-07 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.  
 \* p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

In addition, parents in focus groups described how they have changed their reading practices:

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

Eight parents in six programs also reported that their children show a new or increased interest in reading, particularly as a result of PCILA time.

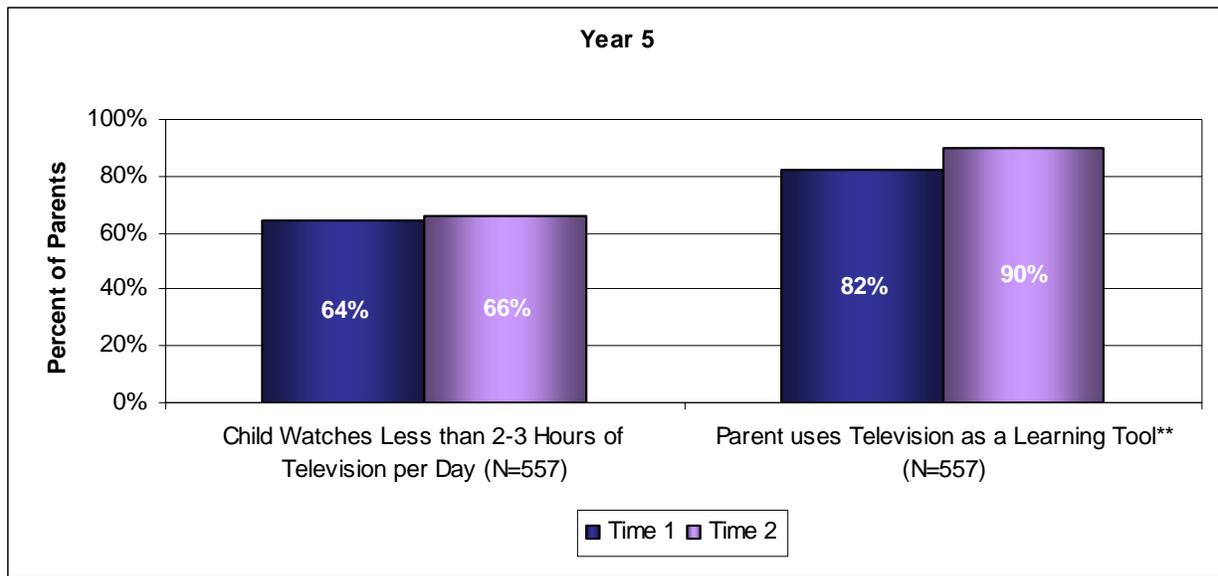
Language development was also an important focus for several parents. Four parents across three programs mentioned working with their children specifically on activities that involve language building, such as singing or learning new words. One parent described how she learned new strategies for helping her child build her vocabulary:

"Oftentimes we will name things but don't always put them in a sentence. Now we look for a way to form a sentence and how to make a word more tangible."

## Supporting children’s learning in other ways

Parents learned to support their children’s learning in other ways — especially doing everyday activities — as well. For example, the CA-ESPIRS also asks parents about children’s television viewing in the home. There were 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). However, there was no significant change in the number of parents who reported restricting the number of hours of television their children watched to less than 2-3 hours per day (see Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4: Percentage of parents reporting positive television use at Time 1 and Time 2**



Source: 2006-07 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.

\* p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

Many parents (17 parents across seven programs) also reported engaging in other types of teaching activities with their children, such as counting, learning colors, and helping with homework. These parents said that they now have greater knowledge of learning activities to do with their children and skills to teach them as a result of parenting education classes. For example, one parent explained:

“I’ll just wake up and we’ll take off to the zoo ... it’s just me and her, talking about the different animals. Just driving from Ontario to Pomona, we’ll count how many big rigs are on the freeway or something.”

Four parents in two programs also found they were able to transfer the skills and knowledge learned from PCILA to make daily routines and chores more educational and enjoyable for both parent and child:

"I learned that PCILA can be in everything that we do. Even like going to the store." She asks her child, "Can you tell me where the bananas are? You weigh them. What's your favorite fruit?"

Parents also found themselves able to involve their children in daily chores: "For instance, instead of ignoring her when I'm in the kitchen, I can ask her to help me, or give her a task to do."

Parents also discussed learning patience as a useful skill when supporting their children's learning:

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

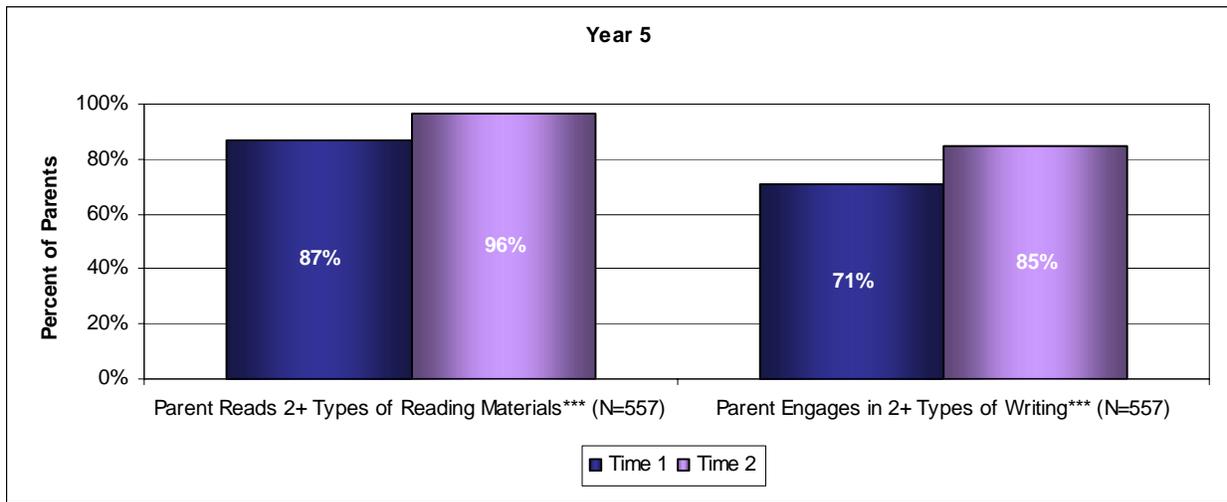
"I'm trying not to do the work for them, so that they can learn to do it themselves. To only give them an idea 'Maybe if you try it this way.'"

### **Becoming a role model**

Some of the mothers who participated in the focus groups also told us that they were learning to be models for their children. One parent commented, "I've always heard that, 'Oh, you're a role model.' But the significance holds a different meaning for me now."

On the ESPIRS, parents demonstrated significant growth in the variety of reading and writing activities in which they were engaged between Time 1 and Time 2, serving as models for their children. As Exhibit 5 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 87 to 96 percent from Time 1 to Time 2, a statistically significant change. 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 71 to 85 percent. 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: Percentage of parents reporting engaging in multiple reading and writing activities in the last week at Time 1 and Time 2**



Source: 2006-07 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.

\* p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

Parents discussed their role as a model for their children in a variety of ways. Five parents described daily behavior that their children mimic. One parent described how she had learned this lesson, “I’d see my daughter scolding her dolls, and I’m like, “Oh, she looks exactly like me.” I realized that had a lot to do with what I was doing to her.”

Four parents in three programs mentioned modeling the importance of education, homework, and reading for their children. Parents said:

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

“I’m modeling that I understand that homework isn’t always the most fun thing to do, but we’re going to get something out of it. It’s nice so it’s not just me telling him to do homework. We do it together, so it’s just time to do homework.”

Three parents in two programs also said that they hope their children can learn from their mistakes, and that they can model changes they would like to make instead of just telling the child. For example, one parent noted, “This program has helped me to reflect on any mistakes I have made in the past and to speak to my daughters about not making the same mistakes.”

### **Discipline and supporting children’s appropriate behavior**

Sixteen parents at six programs described how they had learned effective techniques for guiding their child’s behavior from their parenting classes, including redirecting and using time out and appropriate discipline strategies. Specifically, four parents at four different programs reported that they learned alternatives to yelling at their children, and seven parents at six programs said they learned not to hit their children. One parent described what she’d learned this way:

“Well, they have helped me a lot because a person isn’t born knowing how to be a parent. There are some things that you learn from your parents when you were a kid, and you do with your kids. And sometimes I notice things that I do not like, such as yelling, or hitting. These aren’t good. There are other things you can do to help them change [their behavior]...if for instance he starts a tantrum, I don’t give him too much attention with that. I wait until he is calmer, and then I talk to him.”

Many other parents (seven at four programs) described what they learned about the importance of rules, explaining rules to their children when necessary, and following through on them consistently. For example, one parent said:

“They also taught us, for example, when you say to your kids, ‘do not run!’, you are just saying that; you are not explaining why, so the kid just keeps the idea of ‘don’t run’, so they don’t know why they shouldn’t be doing that, or what they should be doing instead, you do not explain and say ‘do not run here, here you have to walk’ or ‘don’t shout, here you have to talk’, all of that, really, were things I did not know.”

Three parents at one program also described how they learned to effectively praise their children. For example, one parent said:

“[We learned] the art of effective praising, instead of just ‘Good job.’...it was how to do it in a motivational way. Instead of just patting them on the back for throwing the trash away in the garbage, being descriptive of what they were doing. And [we learned] how that would even expand their vocabulary. It was really awesome.”

Overall, 20 parents across all eight programs referenced learning how to manage their own behavior in order to create a more positive environment for their children. Parents often mentioned not only developing their patience, but also learning to control their temper and actions at home, especially when dealing with behavioral issues. As one focus group parent described, “Basically what we have learned is to have more patience. Most importantly, we have learned to have control of ourselves.” Many parents discussed their newfound ability to control their temper when around their children:

“I have learned to control myself. I have a 14 year old and a 3 year old. I never hit them but I yelled at the 14 year old a lot. With the younger one, I have learned not to yell and [instead] speak calmly.”

### **Quality Time with Children**

In addition to these changes in parent knowledge and behaviors, parents also reported that they were happy to have PCILA time set aside each week simply for spending quality time with their children. Nine parents in five programs described how they’d learned to spend more quality time with their children outside of the program as well. Specifically, two parents from different programs reported that they now pay more attention to their children when they tell them something. One parent described this benefit of PCILA time:

“We have learned how to dedicate time to the children, read with them. Some of us have more children and distractions at home and it’s really difficult to dedicate time to each individual child. For me, it’s really quality time here where you can draw pictures with them, and talk to them, and read to them. If you make time here, now you’ll have more individual time at home with your other children. The children are content, and that is the important part.”

### **Network of Support**

Another benefit of parenting classes highlighted by parents in focus groups was the built-in network of support from other parents that came with their participation in the program; seven parents across five programs mentioned this benefit. One other parent described the support she gets from program staff, who are always available to talk to her. Regarding support from the network of other parents, one focus group participant said:

“In my case, I was depressed, being closed in at home and with the pressure of raising children. Coming here and socializing with others helps us alleviate stress and even with depression, as happened with me.”

Another described how helpful it had been for her to participate in parenting classes with other parents:

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

### **Other impacts**

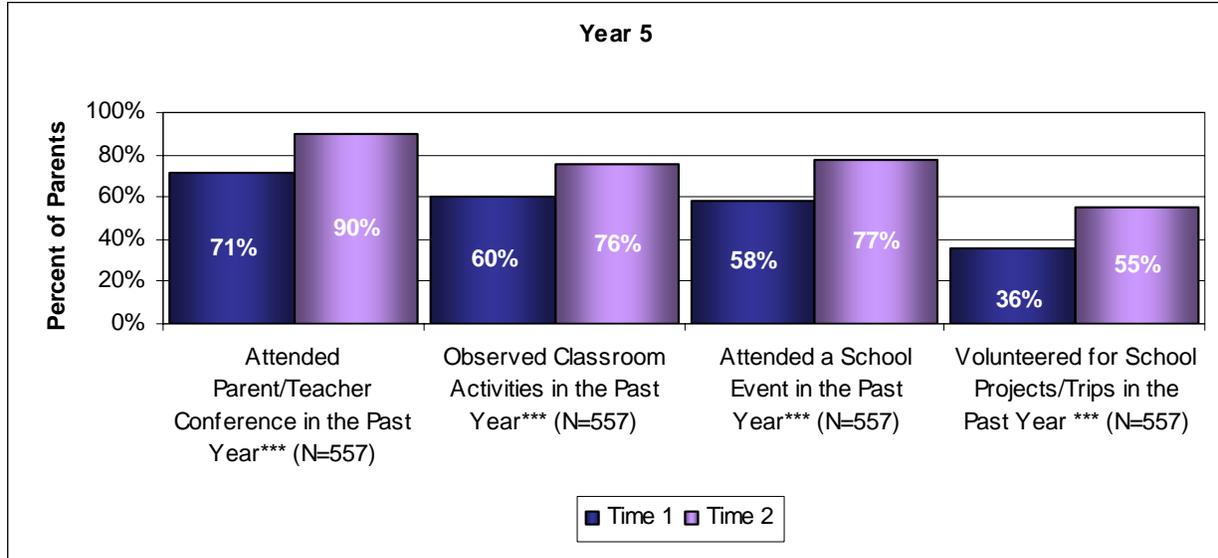
Parents also told us about other topics covered in their parenting classes, including nutrition, AIDS awareness, and how to advocate for their children in the public school system. Two parents in two different programs described how they are now more involved in their children’s schools than they used to be. Another parent told us how she is learning to be a better advocate:

“Our teacher talks to us about our rights in terms of the school district. Sometimes one wants to speak to the principal but then feels intimidated about speaking to them. One is afraid or intimidated and the teacher always tells us about the rights that we have. She says we have to have courage and she says we need to speak up. She lets us know that we have rights and that we are our children’s advocates and if at any moment we feel that our children are being treated badly, we have every right to go and find out what is going on and why. She always speaks to us about education and how it works, and the [power] we have as parents for our children.”

On the ESPIRS, parent reports of their participation in their children’s schooling increased over the year as well. 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 6).

**Exhibit 6: Percentage of parents reporting participation in various activities at their child’s school at Time 1 and Time 2**



Source: 2006-07 CA-ESPIRS data downloaded from the grantee data system.  
 \* p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

Some parents participating in the focus groups also said that participating in parenting classes had helped improve their family’s communication, both among adults and among children. For example, two parents in two programs said that their children are now better able to get along with each other, and four parents across three programs described how their children are now better able to communicate with them. One parent also said that she is now better able to communicate with her husband about why certain parenting practices are important. In fact, many mothers reported they had seen changes in their husbands; five mothers in three programs described how the parenting classes have helped their husbands become more involved with their children.

## Summary

Overall, parents had very positive things to say about their experiences in the parenting classes and PCILA time. A typical parent explained: “Parent skills class is very important, because we learn a lot about interacting with our children and doing activities. It helps us help our children.” Parents seem to have gained skills and knowledge in several different aspects of parenting. CA-ESPIRS data, although preliminary, provide continued evidence of parent learning and development through their participation in the family literacy programs. Parents also reported indirect positive benefits of their involvement, such as the value of having a network of other parents for support and learning information about other topics relevant to their lives.

The full Year 2 report will provide further analysis of changes attributed to other components, changes attributed to the program in general, and suggestions for improvements from parents.

## **Plans for Year 6**

In Year 6, the evaluation team will refine quality measures developed in Year 5, including classroom observation tools, surveys, and interview protocols. We plan to interview all program directors once again and ask teachers and program directors to complete surveys to understand how practices at the program are changing each year.

A major emphasis of Year 6 will be analyzing the data collected in Years 5 and 6, including classroom observations, program director interviews, teacher and program director surveys, FLSN documents, child outcomes data, and grantee data entered into the online data system. We will examine the relationships between program quality and child and adult outcomes. Program quality indicators will be assessed from data collected during classroom observations and from teachers and program directors, such as teacher-student interactions, teacher-child ratios, teacher qualifications, and classroom practices. Data on child and adult outcomes will come from child assessments conducted as part of the child outcomes sub-study, CASAS scores, and parent responses to the newly developed parent survey. Analysis of classroom observations, child assessments, parent-child interaction videotapes, and parent interviews from the child outcomes sub-study will also be analyzed to understand changes observed in families over time. The Year 6 interim report will be submitted in September 2008.

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