



First 5 San Diego Preschool For All Demonstration Project: Five-Year Summative Report

Key Findings

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Executive Summary

Recognizing the important role of preschool in children’s lives, the First 5 California Children and Families Commission approved the Preschool for All (PFA) projects throughout California in 2003. Locally, a PFA Master Plan (2005) was developed presenting a design to offer universal preschool throughout San Diego County. The long-term goal of PFA was “... providing universal access to quality early education experiences for all 3- to 5-year-old children regardless of income, with sufficient and stable funding on a per child basis.” As a first step, the First 5 Commission of San Diego County provided \$30 million to implement a five-year San Diego County Preschool for All (First 5 San Diego PFA) Demonstration Project. The aim of First 5 San Diego PFA was to test out methods and models to meet both the Commission’s vision of preschool well as to inform the future implementation of PFA on a countywide basis.

First 5 San Diego PFA model was designed to:	Original design key elements included:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Increase access to high quality preschool in San Diego County■ Encourage the active involvement of family/parents■ Encourage workforce/professional development of PFA provider staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Classroom quality■ Parent engagement■ Screening and inclusion■ Professional development■ Collaboration with the community

This report utilizes findings from FY 2006-07 to FY 2010-11 and a variety of data sources in order to evaluate the overall impact of First 5 San Diego PFA.

Key Accomplishments of the First 5 San Diego PFA Demonstration Project

There were numerous accomplishments of this long-term demonstration project. The following are some of the key accomplishments. Additional information is provided throughout this report.

PFA Growth and Diversity

- The project grew from six communities in Year 1 to eleven communities in Year 5.
- The number of children served by First 5 San Diego PFA increased over the last four years and more than tripled in Year 5 compared to Year 1.
- The number of providers grew from 16 providers to 41 providers in Year 5.
- 70% or more of four-year-old children were successfully enrolled and received services in three of the original six communities.
- First 5 San Diego PFA has the most diverse provider-base of any First 5 California Power of Preschool projects, offering services in school-based, public-private center based, Head Start and family child care programs.

Child Results

- The majority of children who participated in First 5 San Diego PFA showed statistically significant developmental gains between fall and spring every year of the project.
- The majority of children received a developmental screening so that the “whole child” would be served (15% in Year 1 to over 80% in Year 5).

Classroom Quality and Teachers

- The quality of classrooms improved throughout the term of the project with greater improvements the longer the provider participated in First 5 San Diego PFA.
- Over 900 of the participating teachers agreed that the First 5 San Diego PFA coaching program helped them learn skills they used in the classroom, assisted them in improving the quality of their program and improved the interaction with their children.
- Provider staff earned 518 degrees, including Associates, Bachelors and Graduate degrees.
- Specialized professional development plans were developed for provider staff and incentives provided to augment their learning, improve their skills and enhance their motivation for improvement.
- Incentives were provided to staff to enhance their motivation for improvement.
- In the last year of First 5 San Diego PFA, 97.7% of the teachers reported attending professional development activities.

Parents

- Overall, parents were provided more expanded opportunities to participate in their child’s preschool experience.
- Over 1,000 parents attended parent education classes in Year 5. (This component was implemented, using an evidence-based curriculum, in Year 5.)

Systems Change

- First 5 San Diego PFA has earned a statewide reputation for providing high quality early care education (ECE) programs, and has informed the development of state systems.
- San Diego County has initiated its transformation into a single system of service delivery and provider support for the diverse system of ECE providers.
- Providers have integrated developmental check-ups into the ECE system.
- First 5 San Diego PFA provider staff has increased confidence and pride in their professional abilities.
- Teaching staff have accepted external raters into their classrooms and have used the classroom reviews to improve their facilities, their teaching and their interaction with children.
- There is an increased use of technology in the classroom, particularly among the family child care providers.
- Providers have become data driven—using the review data to enhance program quality.

Challenges

It is not surprising that during the implementation of the First 5 San Diego PFA Demonstration Project experienced obstacles and barriers, most of which were overcome, as

seen in the extensive list of accomplishments provided above. The following components were not fully implemented:

- **Sustainable Funding:** Long-term funding is not currently available, due in part to the defeat of Proposition 82 (the Preschool for All Ballot Initiative) in 2006 and the unstable economic environment.
- **Saturation:** Not all communities were able to meet the target of serving 70% of four-year-olds.
- **Universal Screenings and Referrals:** The goal of screening 100% of children participating in the First 5 San Diego PFA programs did not occur in any year, although as noted above, the rates of screening improved substantially during the development of the project
- **Kindergarten Transition Services:** Although there was some success at improving these transition services by providing simple tools for providers to use and improving coordination between the First 5 San Diego PFA sites and the appropriate K-12 entities, some barriers still remain.
- **Standardized Parent Education:** No universally accepted, evidenced-based curriculum has been adopted by all providers. Some experts have suggested that implementing varied curricula that are evidenced-based might be more appropriate to match the cultural and linguistic needs of each community being served.

All of these areas will be addressed as the Commission moves forward in its support of high quality preschool. The Commission will use the lessons of the five-year demonstration project as well as connect with new efforts such as *Live Well, San Diego!* in the development and implementation of the First 5 San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative, targeted to begin in 2012.¹

Summary

What began as an idea in a white paper presented to the Commission in 2004 has blossomed into a high quality comprehensive preschool program that is respected and acknowledged in the county and across the state. First 5 San Diego PFA has made a county-wide impact in the early childhood education field by raising the quality standards and image of preschool. The impact of First 5 San Diego PFA on the K-12 system has been positive and significant. The vision and implementation of First 5 San Diego PFA has evolved as the demonstration project has progressed over the past five years. As with any pilot project, it has faced obstacles, yet the program has successfully tested strategies and models while serving eleven communities in San Diego County and over 18,000 preschool children.

¹ *Live Well, San Diego!* is a highly innovative and comprehensive ten-year plan aimed at improving the health and overall well-being of County residents.

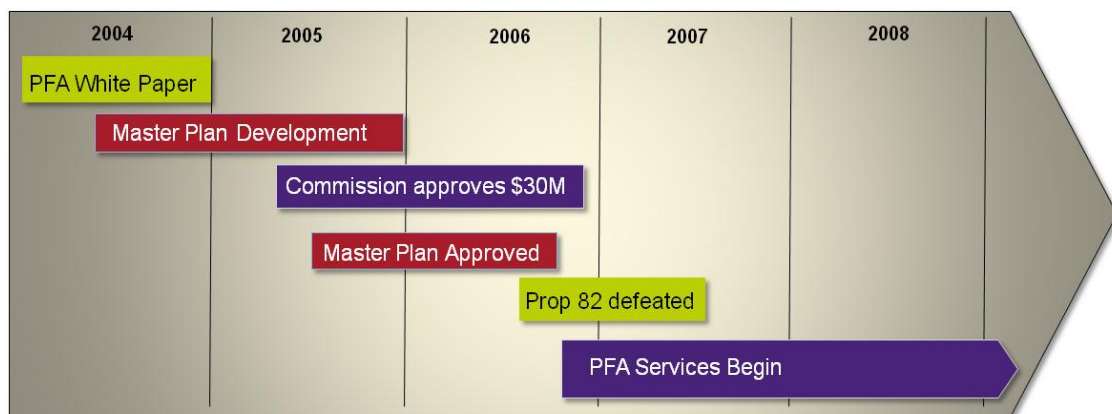
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Original Vision

Research shows that children who participate in high quality pre-kindergarten programs are less likely to repeat a grade, require fewer special education services, and are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.² This research set the course for many communities, including San Diego County, to develop a preschool for all strategy to support its youngest residents. California in general, and San Diego County in specific, responded quickly to the research, and made rapid progress towards developing the plans for a preschool for all system (see Exhibit 1 for the summary timeline of the project).

Exhibit 1. First 5 San Diego PFA Demonstration Project Milestones



Recognizing the important role of preschool in children's lives, the First 5 California Children and Families Commission approved the Power of Preschool (PoP) Demonstration Project in 2003.³ In 2004, the Packard Foundation and the First 5 Commission of San Diego County (First 5 San Diego) funded a San Diego planning process to develop a comprehensive, voluntary preschool program. At the completion of this broad-based community effort, an ambitious Master Plan was developed to guide a voluntary preschool program available to all children across the entire county.

In 2005, the Master Plan planning group approached First 5 San Diego to support the implementation of a Preschool for All Demonstration Project in San Diego County. The Commission responded in 2006 by dedicating \$30,000,000 to fund a 5-year demonstration project, called the San Diego County Preschool for All (First 5 San Diego PFA) Demonstration Project. First 5 San Diego contracted with the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) to coordinate the project and they, in turn, contracted with school-based, non school-based (i.e., for-profit, private non-profit, faith-based, and Head Start), and family child care providers to provide quality preschool in six target communities.

The original targeted communities were:

- Escondido

² Lynch, Robert. *Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation: Public Investment in High-Quality Prekindergarten*. Economic Policy Institute, 2007. Accessed 31 August 2007 http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/book_enriching

³ Changes in First 5 California programming. First 5 California began their program as Preschool For All (PFA). However, after the defeat of Proposition 82, they changed their name to Power of Preschool to differentiate their efforts.

- Lemon Grove
- National City
- San Ysidro
- South Bay
- Valley Center/Pauma Valley

The intention of the demonstration project was to test methods and models to meet both the Commission’s vision that “all children ages 0 to 5 are healthy, are loved and nurtured, and enter school as active learners” as well as informing the implementation of PFA on a countywide basis. An additional goal was to successfully enroll and serve 70% of all four year olds in each of the targeted communities within a five-year period. To assess the attainment of this goal, the Commission directed some of its existing evaluation resources to document the project’s successes and challenges. Each year, extensive data on program impact and outcomes have been collected and analyzed by Harder+Company Community Research. These data are the basis for this five-year study.

It is important to note that the Master Plan is much more expansive than the First 5 San Diego PFA demonstration project. However, the overarching Master Plan’s guiding principles were complementary to First 5’s vision of early education practices (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2. Guiding Principles of the First 5 San Diego Demonstration Project

Guiding Principles

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide universal access • Utilize existing programs and resources • Assure safe and hazard-free environments • Allocate sufficient and stable funding • Interface with existing subsidy programs • Include continuous staff development support for BA level teachers • Parental Choice • Provide research-based curriculum choices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure full inclusion of children with disabilities and other special needs • Provide access to health, mental health, and social services for working families • Interface with K-12, community colleges, and universities • Contain outcome-based evaluation • Educational standards will include: California Pre–K Standards, Pre-K Learning and Development Guidelines, Desired Results and Supporting Early Learning Guidelines |
|---|--|

What is the Mission of First 5 San Diego PFA?

The mission of the First 5 San Diego PFA Demonstration Project was to design, develop, and subsequently establish a multi-tiered service delivery model for preschool that would support the implementation of quality PFA programs at the community, district, region, and countywide levels. The First 5 San Diego PFA model was designed to:

- Increase access to high quality preschool in San Diego County so that children can acquire the skills they need to be successful when they enter kindergarten.
- Encourage the education and active engagement of families/parents in their child’s education through classes, parent/teacher meetings, opportunities to volunteer in the classroom, and home enrichment activities.
- Encourage workforce/professional development of PFA provider staff with higher education, trainings, and workshops.

The key elements of First 5 San Diego PFA, as originally designed, include:

- **Classroom Quality:** Each session (or classroom) is assigned a tier level based on its external review scores and teacher education level.
- **Parent Engagement:** Providers offer opportunities and support for families to be involved in their children’s education to maximize each child’s development and learning experiences.
- **Screening and Inclusion:** Providers offer universal developmental screenings and identification of developmental delays, as well as ensure that children with special needs have the opportunity to participate in PFA and are referred to needed services to promote their development.
- **Professional Development:** Education and training are offered to teachers and administrators to develop a qualified workforce and to meet the needs of the children who are English learners.
- **Collaboration with the Community:** To better serve families, providers build relationships with other agencies in San Diego County, referring families to these agencies as needed.

SDCOE is the lead contractor for providing First 5 San Diego PFA services and has subcontracted with preschool providers to provide high-quality preschool services. The ultimate vision is to provide First 5 San Diego PFA to all children in the county. However, for the First 5 San Diego PFA demonstration project, priority was given to communities with a high percentage of low- Academic Performance Index (API) schools, English Language Learner (ELL), and low-income families.

Additional communities were added in subsequent years. It is of note that some communities designated as First 5 San Diego PFA service areas (e.g. Escondido) include pockets of affluence with moderate to high performing elementary schools (i.e., an API rating above 5). Other communities have large segments of the population faced with poverty and limited preschool options (e.g., Pauma) targeted for First 5 San Diego PFA. Across all First 5 San Diego PFA communities, a diversity of provider types were recruited, including school-based centers, non school-based centers, and family child care sites.

All sessions participating in First 5 San Diego PFA are given a designation based on quality criteria. Each session is classified as either: First 5 San Diego PFA Pre-entry (Tier 0), First 5 San Diego PFA Entry (Tier 1), First 5 San Diego PFA Advancing (Tier 2), First 5 San Diego PFA Quality (Tier 3), or determined to be not yet eligible to be a First 5 San Diego PFA session. The Tier rating is based on: 1) ECERS-R⁴/FCCERS-R⁵ scores and 2) teacher qualifications. SDCOE provided sessions with support and training to enhance the quality and establish changes to their Tier rating over time. Tiers are used to determine reimbursement rates for the provider— the higher the tier level, the higher the First 5 San Diego PFA slot reimbursement.

⁴ Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised. UNC FPG Child Development Institute. Available at: <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>.

⁵ Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised. UNC FPG Child Development Institute. Available at: <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>.

This report utilizes findings from FY 2006-07 to FY 2010-11 and a variety of data sources in order to evaluate the overall impact of First 5 San Diego PFA. Sources include ECERS-R, FCCERS-R, and CLASS⁶ scores, DRDP-R and DRDP-PS⁷ scores, surveys with parents and teachers, and interviews with site directors, stakeholders from the education community.

⁶ Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Teachstone. Available at: <http://www.teachstone.org/>.

⁷ Desired Results Developmental Profile- Preschool. California Department of Education and WestEd. Available at: <http://www.wested.org/desiredresults/training/index.htm>.

Results

Growth

The growth of First 5 San Diego PFA can be marked in three ways. The first marker of growth is the expanded reach of First 5 San Diego PFA into different communities.

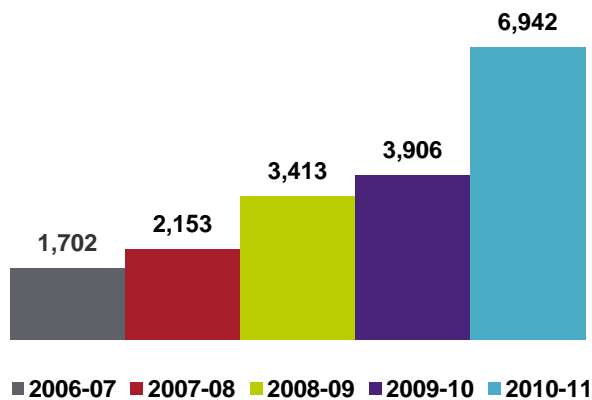
From the initial six communities, PFA expanded its reach to include five additional communities in San Diego County: Borrego Springs, Chula Vista, El Cajon, Mountain Empire, and Vista. As highlighted in previous First 5 San Diego PFA reports⁸, if additional resources are available, future expansion areas should include the areas in the county that show the greatest need (e.g., areas with high rates of poverty).

The second marker of growth is the number of providers participating and sessions offered through First 5 San Diego PFA.⁹ Over the course of the demonstration project, there was a 256% increase in sites participating (16 in Year 1 compared to 41 in Year 5) and 323% increase in the number of sessions offered (103 in Year 1 compared to 333 in Year 5). During Year 1 of First 5 San Diego PFA, SDCOE struggled to find enough providers to qualify as First 5 San Diego PFA sites, as many potential sites had staff who did not meet education requirements or facilities that did not meet requirements. Through such strategies such as adding a pre-entry

Tier to provide interested, but low capacity sites the technical assistance to achieve sufficient quality to meet Tier 1 requirements, SDCOE managed to greatly increase the interest and ability of providers to provide high-quality preschool to their communities. The importance of the number of sites, and diversity of

providers, is a critical element to a quality preschool system (covered in more detail in the following section). The third and most important marker of growth is the number of children served. Exhibit 3 shows the steady increase in children served during the five-year demonstration project, from 1,702 to 6,942 children.

Exhibit 3. Number of Children Served by First 5 San Diego PFA

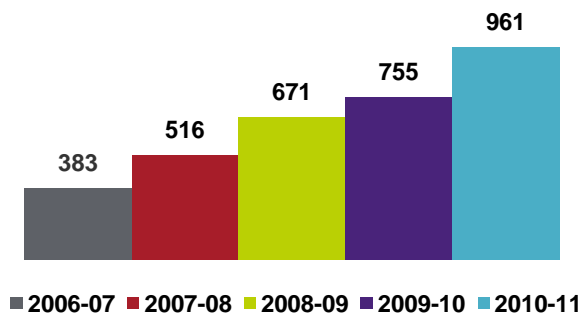


⁸ American Institutes for Research, First 5 Commission of San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative: Final Report: Findings and Recommendations, 2011

⁹ PFA Sessions are 3.5 hours, 5 days a week

The number of First 5 San Diego PFA fully funded slots also increased. As shown in Exhibit 4, the number of fully funded slots steadily increase every year.

Exhibit 4. Number of Fully Funded Slots



In addition to the number of children served by First 5 San Diego PFA, a critical marker of success is whether the goal of 70% of 4-year olds enrolled in First 5 San Diego PFA within an identified

community was met. Exhibit 5

shows the percentage of children enrolled as of April 2011. Half of the original six communities (bolded in Exhibit 5) met or exceeded this original goal. The other two original communities, Lemon Grove and Valley Center/Pauma, began with such low capacity that it may be years until they reach the goal. However, it is also of note that the percent enrollment is expected to increase in the 6th year of the demonstration project (FY 11-12).

Exhibit 5. Percentage of Children Enrolled as of 4/11/2011 for FY 2010-2011**

Community	4 Year Olds Served	% Enrollment of 4 Year Olds
Cajon Valley	568	3%
Chula Vista	1,604	55%
Escondido*	1,423	31%
Lemon Grove*	508	44%
Mtn. Empire	80	60%
National City*	872	80%
San Ysidro*	531	90%
South Bay*	952	79%
Valley Center/Pauma*	335	37%
Vista	1,128	61%

*Original six PFA communities

**These data are based on the Saturation Report created by SDCOE 2011¹⁰.

It is of note that First 5 San Diego PFA, as a demonstration project with limited funds and scope, targets 4-year olds. In San Diego County, all First 5 San Diego PFA supported providers are mandated to fill their allocated slots with 4-year olds first, and then any remaining subsidized slots may be filled with 3-year-old children.

With this mandate in place, many sites still served a significant number of 3-year-old children. In Escondido, for example, 141 3-year-old children were served in FY 09/10. Additionally, all 3 and 4 year old Special Needs children can be served.

¹⁰ The column titled "4- year-olds served" represents only the FY 09/10 Kindergarten Enrollment at elementary schools in the specified PFA Community Catchment Areas. This FY 09/10 Kindergarten Enrollment (the number of 5-year-olds) is used as a "proxy" for the total number of 4-year-old children that should be served in these communities.

Child Results

Provider Diversity

PFA is offered at family child care, non school-based centers and school-based centers. These include Head Start centers and faith-based settings. This diversity is critical to providing a preschool system in which parents can choose the site type that best meets the need of their individual child. When interviewed, the majority of the early childhood education stakeholders indicated that First 5 San Diego PFA is successful or very successful (based on a rating scale from Not Successful to Very

Successful) at including a variety of provider type options. This perception is substantiated by fact: growth in diversity of providers occurred among all provider types, as shown in Exhibit 6, with the greatest growth in family child care providers, increasing from 5 to 20 by Year 5.

“... many of our families can be served through state preschool or Head Start, but we still have some [working poor] families [whose] income precludes them from participating. So PFA ... ensures that [these] families ... have access to preschool.”

– PFA Community Stakeholder

Exhibit 6: Number of agencies by Provider Types Across Five Years

Site Type	Year 1 FY 06-07	Year 2 FY 07-08	Year 3 FY 08-09	Year 4 FY 09-10	Year 5 FY 10-11
School-Based	5	5	7	7	8
Non School-Based	6	9	13	13	13
Family Child Care	5	6	6	8	20
Total	16	20	26	28	41

Though data on children served by provider type were not collected in Years 1 and 2, Exhibit 7 displays how, in the final year, non school-based providers grew to serve the majority of children participating in First 5 San Diego PFA. While First 5 San Diego PFA succeeded at recruiting and retaining a diverse pool of provider types, many community stakeholders who were interviewed in FY 2010 reported that in their opinion the quality standards and data reporting requirements of First 5 San Diego PFA were the main barriers to participation. This was particularly true for the smaller family child care providers. SDCOE worked to mitigate this by providing additional support to these providers to help them gain familiarity with the reporting requirements and overcome barriers to data entry.

During First 5 San Diego PFA’s five-year demonstration project over 18,000 children were

Exhibit 7. Children served by three Provider Types FY 2009-10

	Year 3 FY 08-09	Year 4 FY 09-10	Year 5 FY 10-11
School-Based	1,879	2,012	3,206
Non School-Based	1,469	1,795	3,519
Family Child Care	65	99	217
Total	3,413	3,906	6,942

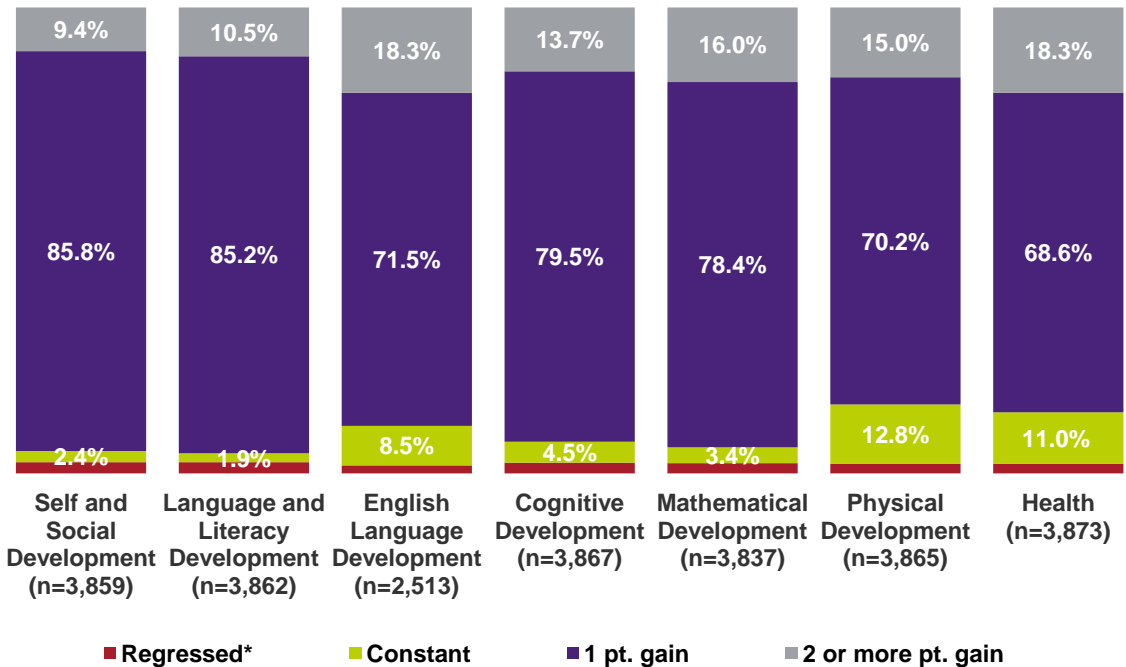
served. However, the more important question is what was the impact of First 5 San Diego PFA on these children?

Developmental Gains

Across the five years, outcomes were measured for the classroom, children, parents, and teachers using a variety of methods and standardized tools. Classroom-based child outcomes are measured through the Desired Results Developmental Profile-Preschool (DRDP-PS) by teachers who assessed children’s competencies in seven domains (Exhibit 8).¹¹ In Years 1-4, a different version of the DRDP-PS was used, but a similar trend of significant developmental gains was exhibited every year. As shown in Exhibit 8, the overall mean score improvements for children assessed in FY 2010-11 exhibited a statistically significant developmental gain (one point gain or more) in all domains from Fall to Spring.

An average of a one point developmental gain or greater was achieved by children in all five years of the demonstration project. The greatest improvement in Year 5 was within the *Self and Social Development* domain in which 85.8% of children gained at least one point, followed by the *Language and Literacy development* domain.

Exhibit 8. Children's Developmental Progress from Fall to Spring for FY 2010-11



* All Regressed percentages are below 2.5%

¹¹ The DRDP is a new instrument used by State Preschool throughout California. The instrument is still under development and is not yet normalized and validated.

Screenings and Special Needs

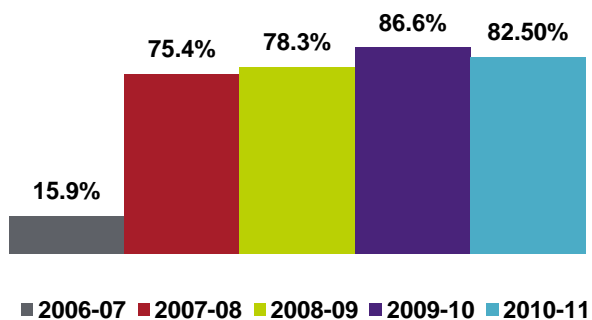
Early identification and intervention for developmental delays is a key goal of all First 5 San Diego initiatives because research has shown that implementing appropriate treatment plans can dramatically improve a child’s health, ability to learn, and social and emotional development.¹² It is estimated that 17% of children ages 0-17 years have a developmental or behavioral disability, and even more have delays in language or other areas.¹³ Yet, less than 50% of these children are identified as having a delay prior to entering school, by which time the delay may become more significant and opportunities for treatment are missed.¹⁴ However, a standardized screening process for children with developmental delays was not a key activity of the Master Plan or within the scope of many First 5 San Diego PFA sites, particularly family child care sites. The low capacity of many of the sites to do screening was evident in the first year, in which First 5 San Diego PFA sites screened only 15.9% of the children served. However, over the following years, First 5 San Diego and SDCOE worked towards the Commission’s overall vision for universal screening.

Developing a Universal Screening Process

The process of developing a universal screening process for First 5 San Diego PFA was a challenge and initially met with some resistance. Some early educators argued developmental screenings were more a health function than a component of early education. Acceptance of the importance of screenings has been a major shift within the project. The other PFA sites around the state as well as the First 5 San Diego health projects all used the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) as their primary screening tool. The First 5 San Diego method for ASQ administration was a partnership between providers and parents. First 5 San Diego PFA administration and providers instead selected a shorter screening tool called the Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) which is a questionnaire completed solely by parents/caregivers and does not require teacher participation. The administration of the PEDS was problematic. Screenings rates were consistently below 80%; the tool was not sensitive enough to adequately identify children with concerns, and children with a developmental concern identified through the PEDS had to be rescreened using the ASQ.

This created a burden for parents and the service system. In the 4th year of the demonstration project (FY 2009-10) First 5 San Diego PFA began using the ASQ (and the Acuscreen for Head Start sites).

Exhibit 9. Percent of Children Receiving Primary Screenings



¹² The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends developmental screenings for children at 9, 18, and 24 or 30 months; prior to entry in preschool or kindergarten; and whenever a parent or provider concern is expressed. See PEDIATRICS Vol. 118 No. 1 July 2006, pp. 405-420.

¹³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control. And Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. Accessed 13 August, 2011 <<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/devtool.htm>>

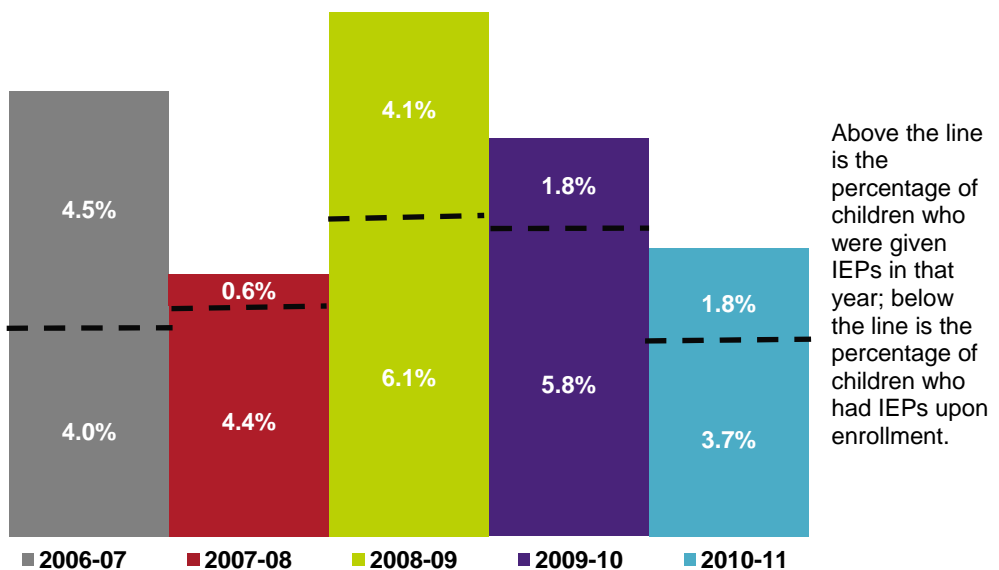
¹⁴ Halfon, N., Uyeda, K., Inkelas, M., Rice, T. "Building Bridges: A Comprehensive System for Healthy Development and School Readiness." National Center for Infant and Early Childhood Health Policy, 2004.

The goal to achieve universal screening has not yet been met by a First 5 San Diego PFA, (even when accounting for children who enter PFA already receiving special needs services and who therefore may not need a primary screening). However, over 95.0% of directors reported that since participating in First 5 San Diego PFA, they have been successful or very successful at screening all children. Approximately half (49.4%) of teachers reported having more success in ensuring that children are referred out to services since participating in First 5 San Diego PFA and 77.8% of agency directors agreed or strongly agreed that SDCOE provided their agency with the support to ensure that children were referred out to services. For these specific services, the survey responses do not agree with the program data.. However, all directors reported different referral procedures indicating that there is not a standardized referral practice. Some directors stated that it was difficult to follow- up and verify whether the child received services. Directors of school-based providers reported having more access to referral resources due to their connection to a school district. Each year since Year 2, at least 75.0% of all children have been screened (Exhibit 9).

Screening Results

The purpose of the screenings is to identify developmental concerns early and refer children to needed services. First 5 San Diego PFA has made dramatic improvements in identifying children with developmental concerns; only 2 of 1,702 (0.6%) were identified in Year 1 compared to 711 (10.2%) in Year 5. As appropriate, these screening can also establish the pathway toward an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The IEP is a critical document for parents of children with special needs because it obligates the school district to provide appropriate developmental services for their children at no cost to the parent. Improving the identification of children with delays was a focus over the course of the demonstration project and as the rate of screenings increased, so did the number of developmental concerns identified. However, trends in the percentage of children with an IEP during the demonstration project show that the number of children with an IEP upon enrollment and at the end of the school year has decreased (Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 10. Percentages of Children with IEPs within each Fiscal Year



The disconnect between percentage of children screened/identified with a concern and the much lower percentage of children with an IEP may be explained by several confounding factors. In some cases, children are referred out of First 5 San Diego PFA for services. In other cases, the child may not complete a full year in First 5 San Diego PFA. In still other cases, a child qualifies and receives services through the district if they obtain an IEP. In either case, sites do not track whether children receive identified services. Of the children with special needs, some are legally qualified for school services, which are documented in an IEP. Thus, it may be that such children seek services outside of First 5 San Diego PFA. This is an issue that needs further exploration. Contractors reported that limited resources at the school districts led to delays in the completion of secondary assessments for speech, hearing and developmental delays - a critical step for obtaining an IEP. Providers also reported some cases in which children enrolled in First 5 San Diego PFA were identified with special needs but were asked to wait until they entered kindergarten to receive needed services.

First 5 San Diego PFA directors were asked to provide input about how screenings work at their agencies. Results were analyzed and are presented in the word cloud. The size of the font is directly related to the number of directors who reported that word in their response. ASQ is the largest font, well above teacher “observations” (how identifying a special need was assessed prior to the advent of a standardized tool) suggesting that the ASQ has gained familiarity with directors.



Including Children with Special Needs in Preschool

Prior to First 5 San Diego PFA, not all participating providers had the training, resources, or experience to offer the preschool experience to children with special needs. First 5 San Diego PFA provided the opportunity for providers to increase their capacity to include children with special needs in their program. Through a combination of the work of the Inclusion Specialist, workshops and coaching for providers and the purchase of resources with the additional PFA funding for sites, there is increased capacity to serve children with special needs in PFA target communities. This support has been especially beneficial for family care and some non school-based sites.

In FY 2010, directors were asked to report their perspective on the function of the Inclusion Specialist and the need to include children with special needs. Results showed that several directors view inclusion as a fundamental value of their agency regardless of PFA participation; reasoning includes: due to their alignment with federal or state programs (Head Start) they are not legally allowed to exit children and many ***directors take pride in ensuring that all children can participate and flourish, regardless of their circumstance.*** The system impact of PFA's goal to include children with special needs is felt by directors, even those providers who previous to joining PFA were already including children with special needs. SDCOE reported that the First 5 San Diego PFA initiative has resulted in significant growth and expansion of inclusive preschool environments, preschool opportunities, and parent choices. Parent involvement is one of the main keys to meeting the needs of children with special needs.

Accessing Special Needs Services

Every child in First 5 San Diego PFA programs should receive a primary screening and children who have an indicated need should also receive a secondary screening. Children who have an identified need should be referred to the appropriate service(s). SDCOE has an inclusion specialist that works closely with providers to ensure children are screened and receive the services they need.

During Year 1 there was an initial lack of awareness and process regarding inclusion and serving children with IEPs. Currently, First 5 San Diego PFA has shown good progress in providing screening for all and referring children with special needs to the appropriate services, however, program providers are unable to offer or link to the appropriate support services (e.g., the Regional Center, the school system, First 5 Healthy Development Services or other services.) The following are key findings from the interviews and surveys completed with First 5 San Diego PFA directors and teachers regarding the process of supporting children with special needs.

- Approximately half (49.4%) of teachers reported having more success in ensuring that children are referred out to services since participating in First 5 San Diego PFA.
- Directors reported having greater success in ensuring that children were referred out to services after joining First 5 San Diego PFA and 77.8% strongly agreed or agreed that the project provided their agency with support to do so.

Including Children with Special Needs

“Many teachers are feeling more confident about including children with special needs and have learned the referral process....We continue to advocate for them...”

-PFA Provider

- All directors reported different referral procedures (indicating that there is not a standardized referral practice). Some reported that it was difficult to follow-up and verify whether the child received the referred service.
- Directors of school-based providers reported having more access to educational resources due to their connection to a school district.

Referrals for Special Needs Children

Ideally, there needs to be full integration between all First 5 health initiatives to ensure that the needs of the whole child are sufficiently addressed. In the future, care coordination could help involve parents.

There is progress being made towards connecting children identified with specific needs to needed services. In FY 2009-10, most directors reported that students with special needs are fully integrated into classrooms and are provided additional services either in the classroom or outside the classroom for a portion of the day if needed. However, there is still a lack of care coordination in First 5 San Diego PFA. Many First 5 San Diego PFA sites do not have the skills or knowledge to manage assisting families with referrals or program navigation. Thus, families of children with identified special needs frequently lack the follow-up required to ensure they fully address any developmental and behavioral concerns.

The structure of First 5 San Diego PFA does allow for referrals to be made to other First 5 initiatives. However, there is no intergrated referral system that allows for follow-ups for children identified with concens. Care coordination services could help lessen the workload of providing referrals. Having only one person assigned as the inclusion specialist is simply not enough for such a large scale initiatative. The support of First 5 San Diego PFA teachers and administrators has come a long way from year one, when not all providers saw a role for early education in providing developmental services. Today, children are receiving developmental screenings and providers are more aware of SDPFA's role in supporting the whole child.

Classroom Quality

Quality of early education is measured in many ways, from the environment in which the children learn to the teacher child interaction to the curricula used. The followings section discusses each of these elements.

Beyond the curricula, the quality of preschool is addressed though both the preschool environment and the quality of interaction between the teacher and child. The following section outlines both of these elements.

Ensuring Quality Classrooms

To measure the quality of First 5 San Diego PFA classrooms, the Demonstration Project uses the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R) for classrooms and Family Child Care Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R) for family care sites. These tools are among the nationally recognized instruments designed to measure various aspects of classroom and childcare site quality. The overall ECERS-R and FCCERS-R score is one of three components that determine a session’s Tier (or quality) rating. Both tools have subscales with roughly comparable categories and include scales from one (inadequate) to seven (excellent). The scores relation to Tier level is as follows:

- PFA Entry sites (Tier 1) must have an average score of 4 or higher
- PFA Advancing (Tier 2), all seven subscale scores must be 4.5 or above
- PFA Quality (Tier 3), all seven subscale scores must meet or exceed 5.5.

The ECERS-R and FCCERS-R are administered by an External Review Team

at all sites. First 5 San Diego PFA sites showed promise during Year 1 with high quality ratings for all areas (Exhibit 12). SDCOE reports that adopting such robust quality criteria was slow to implement, but the data suggest that SDCOE was able to show significant quality improvements. As shown in the following exhibits and in previous First 5 evaluation reports, measures of classroom quality continued to improve throughout the demonstration project.

Exhibit 12. ECERS-R and FCCERS-R

Average Scores for Year 1*

space and furnishings = 6.02

personal care routines = 5.86

language-reasoning = 6.49

activities = 6.21

interaction = 6.57

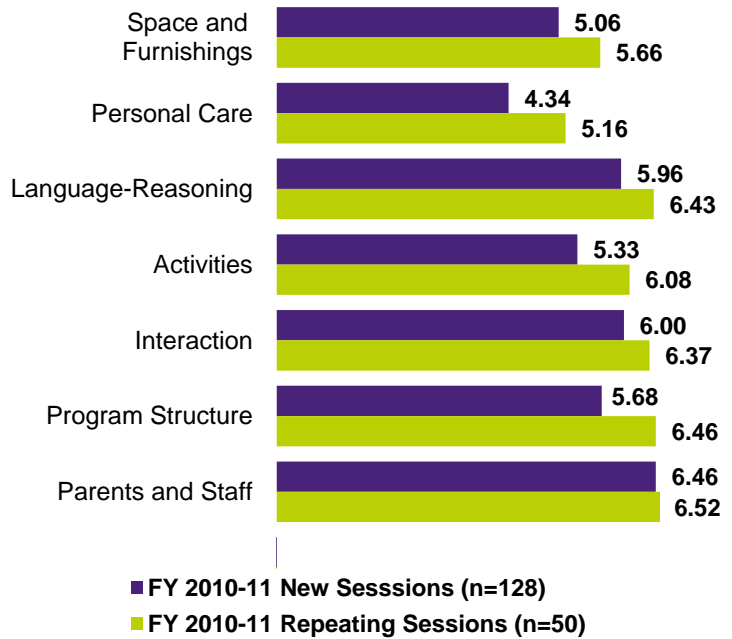
program structure = 6.07

parents and staff = 6.55

** For year 1, ECERS-R and FCCERS-R were averaged together and scores range from 1 to 7*

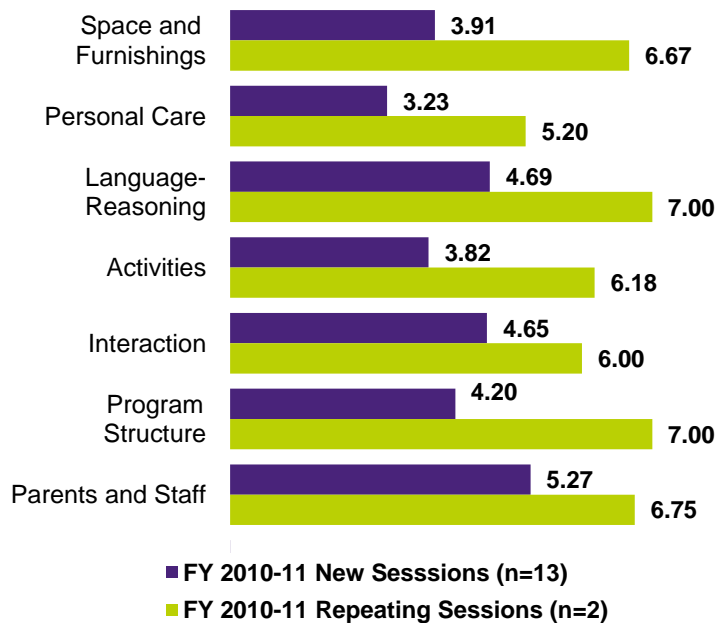
Overall, as shown in Exhibits 13 and 14, the ECERS-R and FCCER-S scores are very high, which is a positive result indicating that children participating in First 5 San Diego PFA funded programs are receiving services in high-quality classrooms. In FY 2009-10 and FY 2010-11, ECERS-R scores for repeating sessions (sessions that have participated in First 5 San Diego PFA for more than one year) were slightly higher than the scores for new sessions. Sites that participate in First 5 San Diego PFA are of relatively high quality to begin with, but continue to improve in quality as they receive coaching and professional development services through the program.

Exhibit 13. ECERS-R Mean Scores



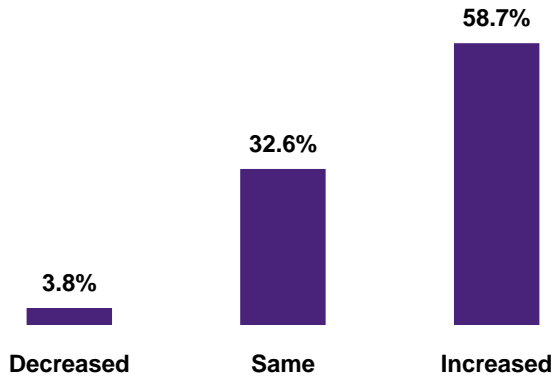
There is a marked difference between repeating sessions and new sessions on the FCCERS-R. Repeating sessions have higher scores in all seven areas (Exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14. FCCERS-R Mean Scores



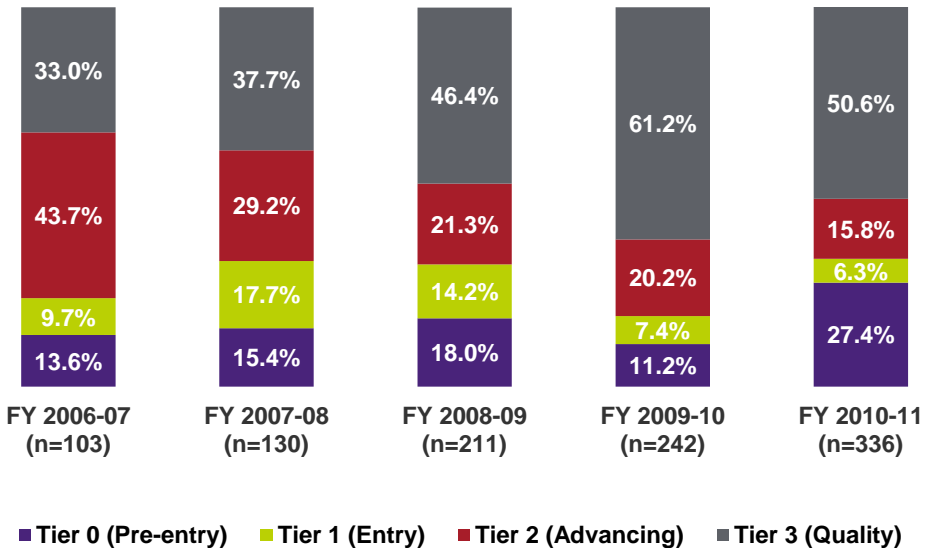
Additionally, as shown in Exhibit 15, First 5 San Diego PFA programs showed significant tier growth across the five years of the demonstration project. Those that remained at the same level from baseline were already at the highest tier level and thus could not register an improvement. Such high levels of tier growth suggest that First 5 San Diego PFA is having a positive impact on the quality of education.

Exhibit 15. Review Tier Growth from Baseline (first year of participation) to Year 5 (2010-11) (n=184)



In all years, the majority of sessions reviewed were rated at either Tier 2 (advancing) or Tier 3 (quality) level (Exhibit 16). External review scores and tier levels for providers typically improve as they continue to participate in First 5 San Diego PFA. These positive gains exemplify First 5 San Diego PFA’s success at improving classroom quality.

Exhibit 16. Percentage of Session at Each Review Tier Level by Year



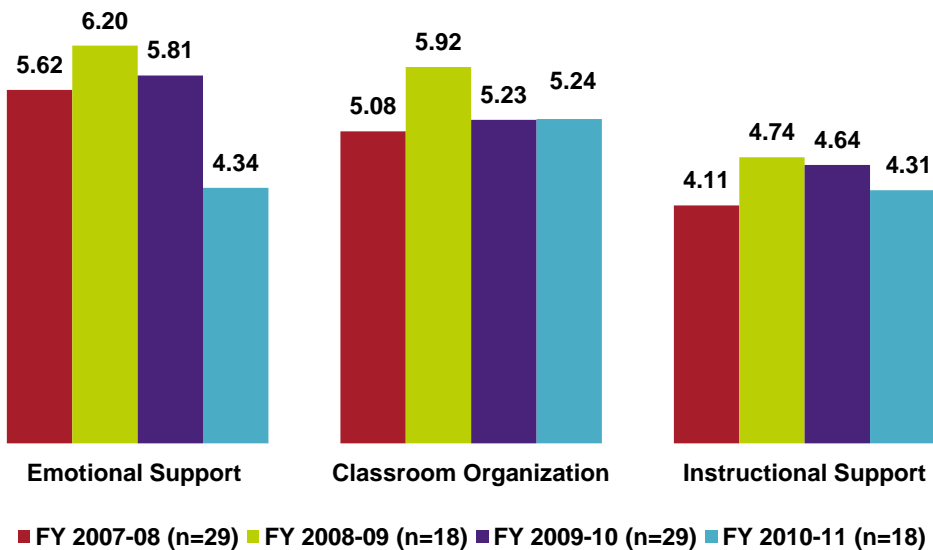
Additionally, to insure a safe and secure environment of each First 5 San Diego PFA facility, a Health and Safety review was conducted on an annual basis. In the past this service was provided annually by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing, but has become less frequent due to ongoing State budgetary restrictions.

Improving Teacher/Child Interaction

At the highest First 5 San Diego PFA level (Tier 3), the environment is of high quality and the focus shifts to the interaction between teacher and child. This interaction is measured through the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Administered every two years, the CLASS focuses on three domains of a high quality preschool: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support.

First 5 San Diego PFA sessions scored fairly high in all three domains on the CLASS, especially in *Classroom Organization* and *Emotion Support* (Exhibit 17). For FY 2010-11, the First 5 San Diego PFA Professional Development Management team planned to improve *Instructional Support* scores further by providing trainings, monthly workshops and professional learning community modules specific to the CLASS; however, scores remain at nearly the same levels.

Exhibit 17. Mean Scores for Sessions Receiving CLASS



Using Evidenced-Based Curriculum

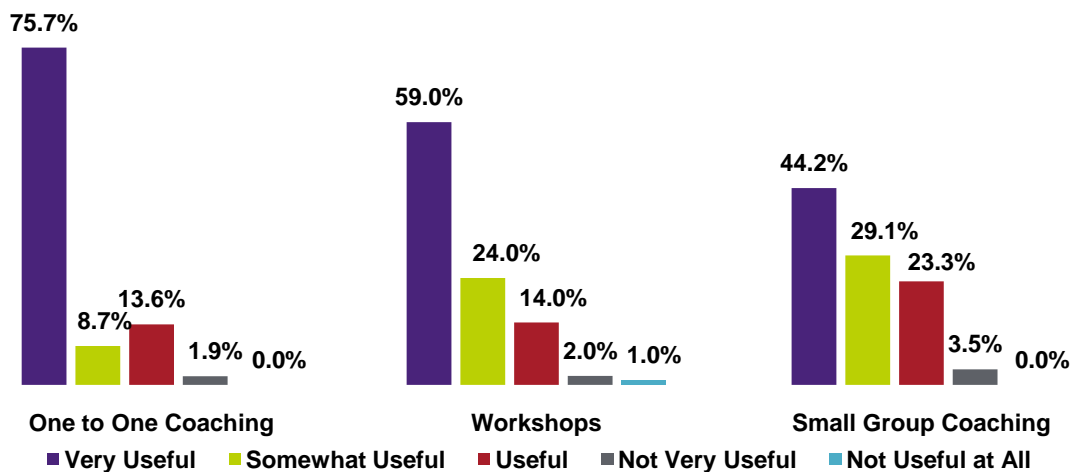
The quality of the curricula was addressed by mandating First 5 San Diego PFA-funded teachers and administrators to use of standardized curricula. Before First 5 San Diego PFA, some sites were providing day care with activities, but without a curriculum. While there are no First 5 San Diego PFA “required curricula,” each provider is required to select curricula that fully align with the California Department of Education “Preschool Learning Foundations and Guidelines.” SDCOE provides a list of evidenced-based curricula for providers that meet these criteria. Some providers reported that participation in First 5 San Diego PFA made them more aware of the importance of using evidenced-based curricula in their programs to augment children’s development.

The professional development of First 5 San Diego PFA teachers and administrators was supported through a number of programmatic mechanisms: coaching and mentoring, generalized workforce development, and stipends for professional development. This section provides an overview of the results of professional development activities during the demonstration project.

Coaching and Mentoring

SDCOE directly administered coaching and mentoring for both the directors and teachers; these services are directly tied to the ECERS-R, FCCERS-R and CLASS assessments. Every year individualized professional development plans were created for both directors and teachers to provide structure and guidance for their professional development. In FY 10-11, 91.8% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that these services were valuable in helping improve their teaching practices and preschool environment (see Exhibit 18). First 5 San Diego PFA coaches and mentors worked with directors and teachers to facilitate improvements in the following areas: external review scores, workforce development, inclusion of children and parent engagement strategies. Based on teacher ratings, this level of detail and coordination has had a positive impact on already high classroom assessment scores.

Exhibit 18. FY 10-11 Lead Teacher Ratings of Coaching Services



In FY 2009-10, First 5 San Diego PFA teachers were surveyed to better understand their experiences with coaching and mentoring. Results showed that teachers gained valuable professional development skills that they could implement in the classroom.

- In FY 09-10, 83.6% of teachers reported having access to the training, coaching and workshops they needed to meet the needs of English Learners in their classrooms and in FY 10-11 the percentage increased to 89.0%.

- In FY 09-10, 92.2% of teachers reported having adequate skills to meet the needs of English Learners in their classrooms; while 81.5% agreed that they had adequate classroom resources to help English Learners.
- Almost all (98.4%) teachers agreed or strongly agreed that professional development is an integral part of their school or center.

While one-on-one coaching is recognized as an effective approach, it is also an expensive model to implement. First 5 San Diego PFA provided 15 hours annually of individual coaching combined for each First 5 San Diego PFA teacher and administrator, regardless of provider type or tier level. Expanding the First 5 San Diego PFA program to new classrooms will require employing and training additional coaching staff.

First 5 San Diego PFA Workforce

The educational requirements for the First 5 San Diego PFA workforce were developed based on research reviewed for the First 5 San Diego PFA Master Plan and noted by other California counties and other states (see Exhibit 19). Teaching experience and retention are an essential part of quality preschool.

Exhibit 19. Education Requirement for Preschool For All Workforce

Position	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
First 5 San Diego PFA Lead Teacher	Master Teacher permit OR AA/AS in Child Development with 24 units including core courses	AA/AS in ECE/CD OR AA/AS + 24 units in ECE or CD including core courses	Master Teacher permit OR proposed Early Education credential OR BA/BS in Child Development OR BA/BS
First 5 San Diego PFA Teacher	Teacher permit	Master Teacher permit	AA/AS in Child Development or AA/AS +24 units in ECE/CD including core courses
First 5 San Diego PFA Associate Teacher	Assistant Teacher permit	Associate Teacher permit	Teacher permit

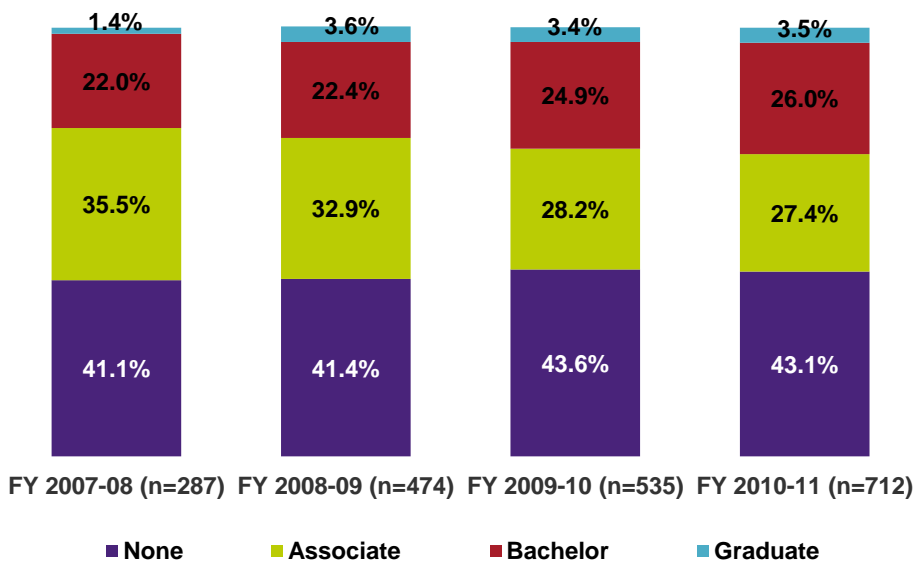
The ratio of class size to teacher is another marker of quality and is key to understanding the workforce. Exhibit 20 shows the ratio of class size to the First 5 San Diego PFA workforce. First 5 San Diego PFA designed an ideal class size of no more than 24 children with a student/teacher ratio of eight to one. The standard California ratios range from 12:1 -14:1. The high teacher to student ratio required by First 5 San Diego PFA further demonstrates First 5 San Diego PFA’s commitment to education and school readiness.

Exhibit 20. Ratio of Class Size to PFA Workforce

Class Size	PFA Workforce
20-24 PFA children Ratio: 8-1	1 PFA Lead Teacher 1 PFA Teacher 1 PFA Associate Teacher
8-12 PFA children Ratio: 8-1	1 PFA Lead Teacher 1 PFA Associate Teacher
6 or fewer PFA children	1 PFA Lead Teacher

Lead teachers and Instructional Assistants who have been participating in First 5 San Diego PFA who have earned degrees are shown in Exhibit 21. First 5 San Diego PFA’s structure and model encourages preschool teachers to further their education and advance in their careers. Even as new teachers join First 5 San Diego PFA, the percentage of teachers with a bachelor’s degree has continued to increase.

Exhibit 21. Percentage of Workforce with Degrees



First 5 San Diego PFA Teacher Professional Development

Professional development opportunities have evolved over the implementation of First 5 San Diego PFA initiative. Whereas the focus of the early years was on degree achievement, there is now more focused efforts on teacher/student interactions, systematic coaching, customized professional development plans, and the inclusion of professional development activities for administrators. The emphasis on professional development has sent the message that teacher development is crucial to the success of a specific program and to First 5 San Diego PFA in general. The focus on administrator development was an evolution from the 2005 Master Plan. For example, there have been significant investments in family childcare administration which has resulted in benefits ranging from the implementation of evidence-based curricula to supporting professional development plans of teachers.

In general, First 5 San Diego PFA has affected the way directors understand the definition of quality. Many directors commented that their programs were good, “but First 5 San Diego PFA has made them great” by improving different aspects of their programs; such as, changing the physical environment, pushing staff to improve their teaching ability, and by providing teaching staff with a tool to see how their children are developing.

Administrators Perspectives

“PFA is a very desirable program.”

“The standards have been raised.”

“PFA has enhanced my school beyond words and although we all have room for improvement, we are very grateful for all that they have provided in their professional and sincere commitment to our school.”

-PFA Directors

First 5 San Diego PFA instituted a number of professional development and retention strategies during the course of the demonstration project. These included stipends, which impacted overall salary, and a professional development team. Each of these is reviewed in turn below.

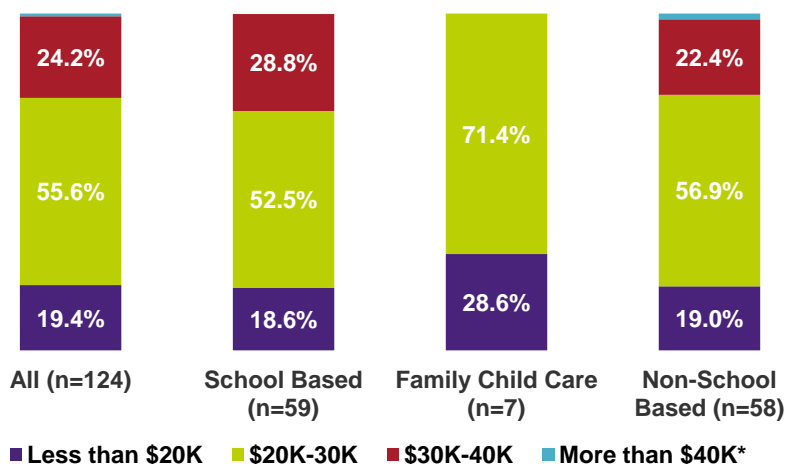
Stipends

One of the main goals of the stipends is to provide the financial incentives for teachers to improve education levels and ultimately, assist in retaining a high-quality workforce. Over the course of the demonstration project, a total of 518 degrees were earned, including associate, bachelor and advanced degrees (see Exhibit 19). First 5 San Diego PFA teachers receive stipends based on their education and performance, an incentive which many program directors believe has a positive impact on classroom quality.

Salary

Salary also plays a role in teacher retention. Exhibit 22 shows teacher salaries without stipends. As might be expected, teachers with more experience were more likely to earn higher salaries. No teachers with less than two years preschool teaching experience reported

Exhibit 22. First 5 San Diego PFA Teacher Salaries (Excluding Stipend)



*Less than 1.8% of teachers made \$40k

earnings above \$30,000, while 31.8% of teachers with more than five years experience earned more than \$30,000. However, regardless of experience, teachers working in family care setting received lower salaries.

Education v. Professional Development

A key element of improving the quality of the preschool workforce is both educational attainment (which requires a financial investment by the participant) and professional development (which does not require financial investment, but does not result in an accreditation or degree). Nearly all sites reported offering professional development and most teachers reported participating in professional development (97.7% in FY 10-11). Yet, while most teachers participated in professional development activities, directors reported that some teachers were resistant to them because they felt it was outside of their scope of work and did not understand the value of professional development plans.

The Hub

The hub was a concept that originated in the Master Plan. In this plan, there was to be a hub for each region that would monitor site and provide professional development services. For the demonstration project, only one hub in North County San Diego was implemented for a select group of providers who were physically distant from the centralized office of SDCOE. Recipients of these services reported positive reviews of the hub. However, SDCOE assessed that the hub was not meeting the needs of the entire First 5 San Diego PFA community. Because of the location of the Hub it was difficult for all First 5 San Diego PFA providers to gain access to hub services. SDCOE modified the hub in year five; it now only provides professional development services regarding ECERS/FCCERS and CLASS.

There are conflicting reports of the usefulness of the hub:

- SDCOE indicates that it is not cost-effective to invest in this regionalized center.
- One of the six directors interviewed who received hub services indicated that the hub met all requests.
- Four other directors reported that the hub provided quality coaching services.

First 5 San Diego PFA directors and teachers were also asked to provide input “on the most useful practice SDCOE has implemented.” Results were analyzed and are presented in the following word cloud. The size of the font is directly related to the number of directors who reported that word in their response.



Parents

Research indicates that parent involvement and empowerment are essential for promoting positive child development, and ongoing parent involvement is critical to a child's success in school. Parents and caregivers play an essential role in children's development and success in the early care environment. Thus, it is critical to understand their specific needs to develop and deliver a comprehensive parent engagement program that effectively engages parents from diverse backgrounds with multiple barriers.

Parent Engagement

Most agencies offered some parent involvement activities prior to their First 5 San Diego PFA participation, but First 5 San Diego PFA has formalized the process and encouraged those who did less than the standard to do more.

According to directors, parent participation varied greatly depending on the agency. Some agencies reported that only 20% of parents volunteer, while at other agencies, up to 80% participate in some way. Directors reported that families from lower socio-economic status tended to volunteer less, especially if both parents worked. Therefore, programs must offer a variety of options for parent participation including parenting classes, parent nights, field trips, graduation, holiday events, and home activities. The goal for most agencies is to make participation easy for parents. For example, at one agency where fewer parents have the ability to volunteer, the director noted that they make information available to keep busy parents informed.

There are also structural barriers to parent participation such as requirements for tuberculosis testing and background checks which parents must pay for at some agencies. All agencies recognize the importance of parent involvement and engagement.

For the first three years, First 5 San Diego PFA did not have a standardized approach to parent engagement and relied on each site to engage parents in a way they felt was appropriate to the parents they served. In Year 4, a K-12 parent engagement approach called the Epstein Model was modified for use in the preschool environment and introduced

into First 5 San Diego PFA. The Epstein model provides a framework that helps providers develop a comprehensive approach to parent engagement using six principles. Administrators were fully invested in the planning and implementation of parent engagement using the Epstein principles. While awareness of the Epstein model is widespread among First 5 San Diego PFA directors, it is less well-known among teaching staff and implementation varies. This is clearly illustrated in the FY 2010-11 director survey results which showed:

- 84.6% of PFA directors reported having knowledge of the Epstein Model
- 69.2% of directors have implemented the Epstein Model at their agency
- 46.2% of PFA directors reported that the Epstein Model has improved their agency
- 34.0% of teachers reported not being familiar with the Epstein Model

“I was never able to volunteer [before], but now that I have the opportunity, it's neat because these programs do help you. Not only that, but you get to meet the parents of the other kids and it just becomes like a little network.”

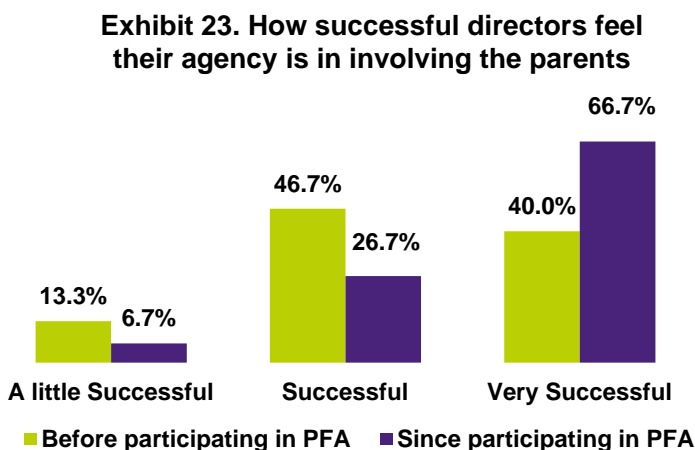
-PFA Parent

- Only half (49.2%) of teachers are familiar with the Epstein Model, suggesting a lack of familiarity with the Epstein Model among teachers¹⁵

Directors who completed the FY2010-11 survey were asked to rate how successful their agency was in involving the parents of children attending their site. The majority reported that they are very successful at involving parent and even more so after joining First 5 San Diego PFA (see Exhibit 23).

To further understand if the parent engagement strategies that First 5 San Diego PFA provides are what parents’ desire, two parent focus groups were conducted in FY 2010-11 to gather parent feedback on parent workshops and level of involvement. Overall, parents reported that they would like an increase in the

quantity and diversity of workshops. They would also like to see more parent involvement, and suggested it would be useful to recruit parents to participant in the development of specific outreach strategies to increase parent involvement.



Parent Education

At the onset of First 5 San Diego PFA, many sites had some type of parent education component. Throughout the first 4 years of First 5 San Diego PFA, sites continued with their own unique programs. In Year 5, First 5 San Diego PFA employed a contractor to present an evidence based parent education curriculum; 1,088 parents attended at least one of these parent education sessions.

First 5 San Diego PFA did initiate parent engagement and parent education programs, though these were launched late in the term of the 5-year project. This represents a lost opportunity to implement robust parent partnership components into the program. Parent commitment and involvement in a child’s education is a sustainable outcome that is critical to that child’s continued success in school.

¹⁵ To identify the specific sites researchers would infringe on the confidentiality promised to the respondents. It is not always possible to identify why sites are not using the model.

Systems Change

A key aim of First 5 San Diego PFA is to improve the quality of early childhood education in San Diego County, develop a more comprehensive system that supports the development and the needs of young children and families and enhances the coordination between the early childhood education (ECE) and K-12 system and other systems. According to interviews with ECE stakeholders conducted in FY 2010-11, First 5 San Diego PFA has improved the perception of and created a higher standard for quality preschool in San Diego County. First 5 San Diego PFA has increased the connection between preschool and the K-12 system by increasing contact between teachers in both fields. In addition, PFA providers have increased referrals to health providers, in particular, to other First 5 initiatives such as Oral Health and Healthy Development Services. However, PFA should continue to strive to improve the connection between all of these systems.

Changes to the Early Care System

One of the intentions of the PFA Demonstration Project was to introduce core changes into the early childhood education system in San Diego County. Early care educators, SDCOE staff, and others were asked to reflect on the history and accomplishments of the five years of the First 5 San Diego PFA demonstration project. Their input shows both intended and unintended systems changes, summarized below:

- The most dramatic change has been that the ECE field in San Diego County has started its transformation into a single, unified system of service delivery and provider support for the diverse system of ECE providers: state funded preschools, Head Start providers, private providers, both non-profit and for profit organizations and family child care providers.
- First 5 San Diego PFA has earned a statewide reputation for providing high quality ECE programs. The project leadership has been particularly influential in the development of the California Early Learning Quality Improvement System (ELQIS) project.
- First 5 San Diego PFA has developed relationships with State agencies, Preschool California, Children Now, the Childcare Planning Council, and the business community. SDCOE has developed outreach strategies for law enforcement, presentations for business organizations and has reached out to state legislators to tour quality preschool sites. This work has deepened awareness and broadened support throughout San Diego County for the value of preschool.
- The provider workforce has increased confidence in themselves and have increased their pride in their professional abilities.
- The PFA workforce has developed a shared vision of the importance of the project, and have become more effective advocates for quality early education.
- Teaching staff have accepted external raters into their classrooms. They are using the classroom reviews to improve their facilities, their teaching and their interactions with children.

“PFA has raised the bar for quality and financial support for teachers.”

-Early Childhood Education Stakeholder

- There is increased use of technology by First 5 San Diego PFA providers, especially among family childcare providers.
- First 5 San Diego PFA providers have become data driven – looking at the ECERS, FCCERS, CLASS and DRDP data to guide decision making and program design and gauge the quality of their programs.
- First 5 San Diego PFA has expanded the number of places where children with special needs can attend preschool, and the program has created better support for including children with special needs in a typical preschool setting.
- Additional resources and support have been developed to assist English language learners.
- Additional resources and support have been developed to assist family childcare providers with parent communications, administration, technology, and providing services to children with complex needs.
- Turnover is far lower among First 5 San Diego PFA providers compared to the ECE field in general.
- With the Preschool Learning Foundations and ELQIS requirements, there will be vertical integration with the K-12 system.
- The PFA funds have improved facilities, -- they are cleaner, safer, have more developmental appropriate learning toys and activity centers and have better security (locking gates, etc.).

Challenges to Creating Systems Change

As noted earlier, the First 5 San Diego PFA demonstration project was responsible for launching an effort unprecedented in San Diego County. In addition, another purpose of the demonstration project was to test new methods and ideas. As such, it was expected that there would be efforts that would be very successful and others that would need to be adjusted or even abandoned. Some of the key challenges and barriers seen over the five years of the demonstration project are noted below:

- The failure of Proposition 82 (the Universal Preschool Initiative in 2006) has hampered the possibility of identifying a stable source of funding for quality preschool. With current State budget challenges, preschool is seen by some as a diminished priority.
- As a demonstration project, data collection, analysis and reporting were key. Especially in the early years, providers were challenged to understand and complete the required reporting. Most directors are now more accustomed to the reporting as it becomes more routine. The data have also become an important tool for guiding their program design, defining professional development plans and for demonstrating the value of the project.
- First 5 contractors have stated that the lack of a standardized referral process has hampered their ability to successfully refer children to needed developmental services. However, the First 5 San Diego PFA program has provided classroom teachers with new opportunities to learn about the variety of services that are offered in their local communities.
- Not all First 5 San Diego PFA providers are familiar with the full range of First 5 services offered in their areas.
- Provider staff from rural sites have had some challenges meeting with SDCOE because of travel constraints.

- Some kindergarten teachers working with children who had attended First 5 San Diego PFA were not able to describe the program; some expressed a desire to engage more with First 5 San Diego PFA preschool teachers.
- Family childcare and non school-based providers typically do not have the same strong connections to the K-12 system as compared to school-based providers.

Has First 5 San Diego PFA Improved Kindergarten Transition?

PFA has had success in improving kindergarten transition. 58.4% of teachers reported that they are more successful in preparing children for kindergarten since joining First 5 San Diego PFA and 100% of directors reported being either very successful or successful in implementing kindergarten transition practices since joining First 5 San Diego PFA, compared to 63.5% of directors prior to joining First 5 San Diego PFA. Past annual evaluation reports show that school-based providers typically participate in more kindergarten transition activities than other provider types, although for some activities like creating a portfolio, family child care providers have higher participation. In FY 2010-11, five of six kindergarten teachers interviewed either strongly agreed or agreed that children from First 5 San Diego PFA are more prepared and have greater success compared to those who did not participate in First 5 San Diego PFA. Due to their proximity to campus, school-based providers have fewer barriers to implementing successful kindergarten transition programs. Many teachers (41.6%) reported having the same level of success at preparing children for kindergarten since joining First 5 San Diego PFA.

- While 88.2% of directors agreed that SDCOE has specific standards regarding kindergarten transition practices, 58.8% of directors strongly agreed or agreed that there were challenges in implementing these practices.
- There were no formal kindergarten transition criteria until 2009.
- A major barrier to providing detailed information to kindergarten teachers has been confidentiality issues and institutional privacy policies.
- SDCOE staff, directors and kindergarten teachers all report a general lack of dialogue and understanding between the preschool and the K-12 systems.
- All kindergarten teachers reported wanting to meet with preschool teachers to discuss the children who would be entering their classroom and how to improve preschool curriculum to best ready children for kindergarten.
- All kindergarten teachers who had PFA sites near their classrooms (7 of 7) indicated that attending a PFA quality preschool program was a tremendous benefit for those children who would be coming to their school the next year. These kindergarten teachers also wanted more information about the incoming children.

Five-Year Expansion

How did First 5 San Diego PFA's original vision evolve?

In the first half of 2005, over 150 stakeholders participated in a planning process to develop a comprehensive Master Plan aimed at achieving the vision that, “Within five years, PFA will be available in San Diego providing universal access to quality early education experiences for all 3 to 5 year old children regardless of income, with sufficient and stable funding on a per child basis.” Since its inception, the First 5 San Diego PFA demonstration project has grown in size and influence, and has evolved beyond the initial vision. After five years, First 5 San Diego PFA is now the second largest PoP program (second only to Los Angeles County).

First 5 provided the first substantial investment to begin implementation, however, the unaccommodating political and economic climate was a major barrier to securing the sustainable funding needed to expand the project countywide. In June of 2006, the Preschool For All ballot initiative failed in a statewide vote (60.8% no vote). This was followed by an economic recession that affected potential funding from the philanthropic sector as well as the public sector. Consequently, First 5 San Diego PFA was unable to diversify its funding base and the program became entirely reliant on First 5 (both San Diego and California). Additionally, there were evolutions in the program model as the First 5 San Diego PFA demonstration project developed. Key changes are detailed below:

Tailored professional development approach

A number of key elements were improved upon over the course of the project:

- **Maintained focus on degree acquisition and improved quality of student interaction.** This was accomplished through the development of professional development plans, which were ultimately linked to stipends. First 5 San Diego PFA also developed a systematic coaching system informed by the use of the CLASS (a tool to measure teacher/student interaction).
- **Additional assistance for family child care.** The original Master Plan identified that family care sites would need a more tailored approach to increase quality. They also noted that many of the administrative responsibilities of First 5 San Diego PFA would be difficult for family childcare sites to adhere to resulting in difficulties recruiting family care sites to participate in the program. Throughout the implementation of the project, the First 5 San Diego PFA Professional Development Team ensured that Family Childcare centers received appropriate coaching and access to professional development opportunities.
- **Development of administrators.** Over time, First 5 San Diego PFA identified that administrators also needed support and development to establish a strong, quality preschool system. This was not an original focus in the PFA Master Plan.

Standardization of parent engagement

Most agencies provided opportunities to engage parents prior to their First 5 San Diego PFA involvement, but over time, First 5 San Diego PFA created more concrete standards (based on the Joyce Epstein model) and encouraged those who did less than the standard to do more.

Expanded definition of “child development”

First 5 San Diego PFA began with a more narrowly defined definition of what developmental services First 5 San Diego PFA sites should provide: classroom teachers were not required to implement developmental screenings or maintain referral logs for child needs. As First 5 San Diego continued to integrate services across all initiatives to ensure that the “whole child” would be served, First 5 San Diego PFA sites were challenged to provide referrals for services. This has required both a change in how First 5 San Diego PFA providers view their role and has uncovered site capacity issues.

Balancing provider type options with standardization

First 5 San Diego PFA has worked toward finding a balance between standardizing programs so that they offer both quality and choice. Throughout the demonstration project, First 5 San Diego has encouraged standardization with the recognition that services provided must also be culturally competent and driven by the needs of the community being served.

Finding a balance between standardizing programs so that they are of high quality and simultaneously offering choice may be a challenge. Agencies have unique philosophies and curricula but the use of the ECERS & FCCERS assessments provides an incentive to standardize the programs. In some ways, standardization of programs may limit the types of settings offered because not all sites can accommodate or desire the rigors of standardization. This dynamic has been mediated by providing coaching to pre-entry classrooms and the financial incentives have made this transition more feasible for some sites.

Challenges

Although the current structure of First 5 San Diego PFA is making a significant positive impact in the community, there are a few elements that were not as successfully implemented.

- **Sustainability.** Program providers and teachers reported wanting to learn about other funding streams and reported not having an adequate sustainability plan. At this time, neither providers nor parents provide any matching funding. Thus alternative sustainability plans need to be created because there are currently no other additional public funding sources for the First 5 San Diego PFA Quality Preschool Program.
- **Universal Screenings and Referrals.** Overall, screening rates improved substantially from Year 1 and an appropriate tool was implemented in Year 5. However, the initial goal of screening 100% of children served *has not* yet been met.
- **Kindergarten Transition.** PFA has had some success in improving kindergarten transition, but many more improvements are needed to fully prepare families for Kindergarten. For example, creating a pipeline between First 5 San Diego PFA programs and the K-12 system in order to better prepare parents for the expectations of Kindergarten.

- **Parent Education.** There was a slow start to providing a standardized parent education program; providing opportunities for parent involvement; and implementing a parent engagement model. The Epstein model and its modified versions have been implemented by most providers. However, providers need more guidance on developing culturally competent parent education and parent engagement strategies.

Summary

Over the course of the five-year First 5 San Diego PFA Demonstration Project: 18,116 children attended high quality preschool, over 45 school-based, non school-based and family child care providers improved their classroom quality, providers earned 518 degrees, thousands of children were screened and referred for developmental delays, hundreds of teachers participated in coaching and mentoring, numerous families were positively impacted and the early childhood education system in San Diego County was improved. At this time, primarily due to First 5 San Diego PFA, San Diego County has earned statewide recognition for providing high quality ECE programs. This demonstration project has shown that it is possible to provide high quality preschool to children in San Diego and the resonating impact of First 5 San Diego PFA will continue to be seen in the years to come.