

## **BUTTE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION (F5B)**

### **SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM SATISFACTION FINDINGS**

DECEMBER 2010

The School Readiness programs in Butte County were selected after a community needs assessment process. This report summarized evaluation findings relative to parent/family satisfaction with four School Readiness programs, primarily examining data gathered in the 2009-2010 school year. This supplements the Raising a Reader Finding of 2007-2009 Report, and will be followed with a study of target schools based on data provide by Wyeth Consulting and a final School Readiness Evaluation Report in June 2011.

#### **Parents as Teachers**

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a home-visiting program that provides parenting information by modeling developmentally appropriate parenting practices for care of newborns through children age five years old. It includes personal visits, developmental screenings, group meetings and referrals. Chico Unified School District (CUSD) and Thermalito Union School District (TUSD) were each funded to provide PAT home visits. Both programs were asked to administer the PAT parent satisfaction survey. The evaluator reviewed case files at both locations and accompanied one home visitor on a home-visit in Chico.

The curriculum is tightly prescribed based on the age of the child. Both districts' case notes documented trained parent educators (PEs) who provided fidelity to the PAT curriculum, use of materials and developmental screenings.

A strong relationship between the PE and the family is essential for appointments to be kept and to provide the appropriate PAT experiences for child and parent. Case loads and rates of filled appointments vary by PE. One CUSD PE had difficulty maintaining her caseload and target rate of filled appointments and has since left the program. The TUSD program lost their one Hmong speaking PE mid-year and did not secure a replacement. Review of case files indicated that in Hmong homes, parents had often left the room where the PAT program is being offered. Case notes also indicated that Hmong families enjoyed activities out of doors such as in gardens, at parks, and by rivers. The second TUSD PE left the position at the close of the 2009-10 school year. Since then, another PE has been hired and trained to serve families with infants and toddlers.

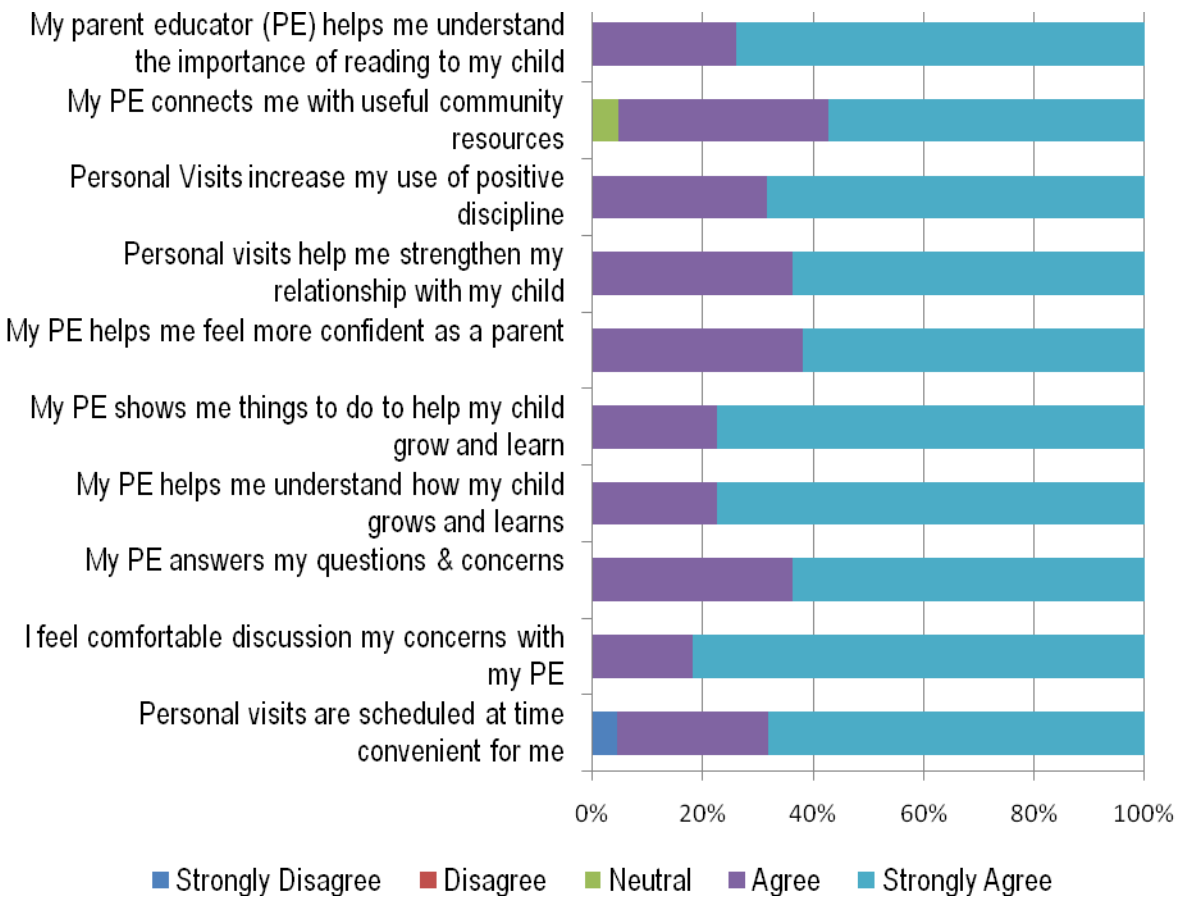
By December 2010, both CUSD and Thermalito reported waiting lists at both schools.

## Satisfaction

Each program asked participating parents to return a standardized PAT satisfaction survey. CUSD collected 18 surveys and TUSD collected 4 surveys. It was particularly challenging for the TUSD program to collect surveys after the loss of their PEs (Table 1). Of those surveys returned, families indicated high satisfaction with PAT in both school districts (Figure 1).

	Target # Children	# Families Served	# Children Served	# Family Surveys Returned	Response Rate
<b>CUSD Program</b>	50	40	41	18	45%
<b>TUSD Program</b>	25	22	22	4	18%

**Table 1:** PAT Enrollment 2009-10 and Survey Response Rates by District (DCN)

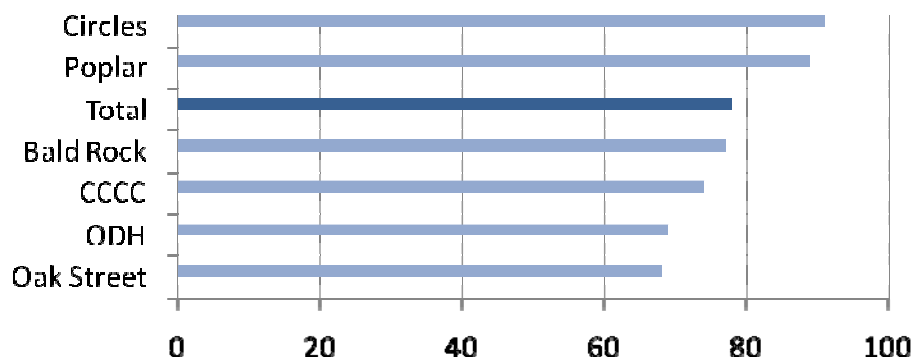


**Figure 1: PAT Satisfaction** - Combined CUSD and TSD Parent Satisfaction Survey Data,  $n=22$ , Spring 2010 (Source: DCN)

## Raising a Reader

Raising a Reader is a program that provides books at preschools for families to take home; trains parents in read-aloud strategies; and introduces families to the county library system. This program is administered by the Butte County Office of Education. The evaluator analyzed pre/post surveys for fiscal years 2007/8; 2008/9; and 2009/10. Summaries of the first two **year's analyses** were submitted to the commission in a report entitled "Raising a Reader Parent Survey Findings 2007-2009." The evaluator visited the Oak Street preschool site in Chico on May 25th, 2010, a day when parents were invited to attend and visit the Literacy Coach; and conducted a staff focus group on August 18, 2011 at BCOE in Oroville.

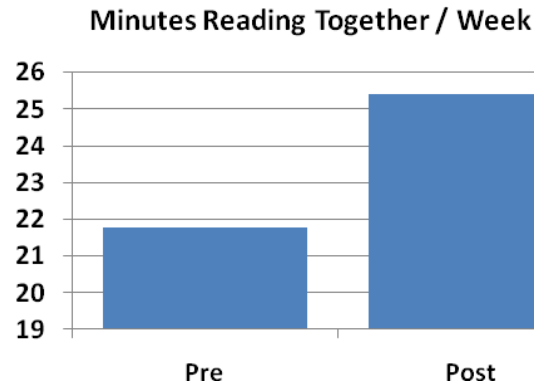
Pre- and post-program parent surveys were administered to the 192 families in the program. In the spring, 150 (78%) were returned by participating families (Figure 2).



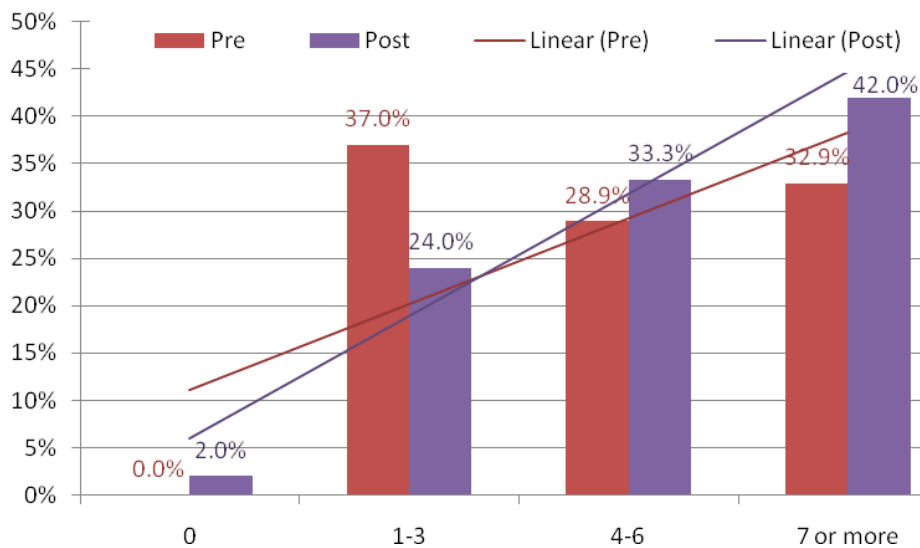
**Figure 2:** RETURN RATES of family surveys collected in Spring 2010 by percentage of participating families (Source: DCN)

Comparing pre- and post-surveys, improvements were found in:

- Reading Duration - Raising a Reader average reported minutes of pre/post reading duration increased by 3.67 minutes from 21.76 to 25.4, as seen in Figure 3.
- Reading Frequency - Raising a Reader pre- and post-reading frequency trends showed increases from an average of 6.08 times per week to 6.45 times per week. When looking at ranges of reported reading frequencies (Figure 4), a full 9% of families joined the ranks of daily readers.

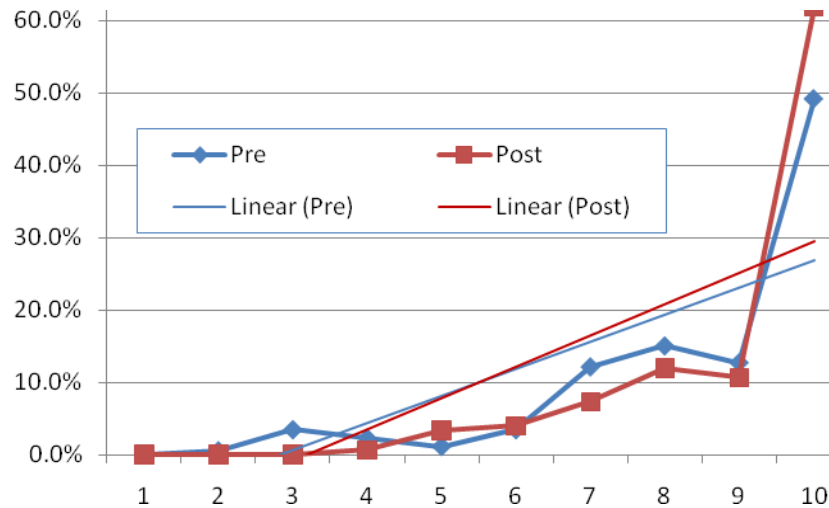


**Figure 3: READING DURATION.** Raising a Reader average reported minutes of pre/post reading duration increased by 3.67 minutes from 21.76 to 25.4 (Source: RAR survey, responses to “How many minutes do you or other people in your household usually spend with your child each time you look at books together?” analyzed by DCN)



**Figure 4: READING FREQUENCY.** This graph shows the percent of survey respondents reporting reading in each of four frequency ranges. The red bar represents the pre surveys and the purple bar represents the post surveys. Raising a Reader pre- and post-reading frequency trends showed modest increases from an average of 6.08 times per week to 6.45 times per week. The linear trendlines demonstrate an increase in the percentage of families reading more frequently. A full 42% reported reading at least daily and another 33.3% reading 4-6 times per week. (Source: RAR survey, Q “Last week, how many times did your child look at books with you or other people in your household?” analyzed by DCN.)

Parental enjoyment and perception of the importance of reading was high both before and after the program (Figures 4 and 5).



**Figure 5:** Pre and Post Parental enjoyment in reading with their child. (Source: RAR survey, responses to question “Please rate how much you enjoy reading with your child,” with a 1-10 Likert scale with 1 being “not at all” and 10 being “very much”.)

Upon review of FY ’09-’10 data, staff observed that for some participating families, this was the second year they had participated in RAR. The survey for FY ’10-’11 was redesigned to indicate child’s birth-date, and three year olds will be analyzed separately from 4-year olds.

### Incredible Years

The Incredible Years (IY) program promotes positive parenting and social competence in children. It is typically offered in a 12-week and 8-week series. Sessions are 2.5 hours in duration and include childcare, parent education, and dinner.

In FY 2009-2010, Pioneer Unified School District administered one fall 12-week series and a spring 8-week series at Berry Creek Elementary School. Valley Oak Children’s Services (VOCS) provided attendance logs for two 12-week and one 8-week series. They offered a Spanish language program in the fall and English language programs in the spring for families whose children were expected to enroll at Oakdale Heights Elementary School.

DCN arranged site visits with each program in the spring of 2010 to observe a session and conduct family focus groups. Program administrators were contacted and asked which days

were best for them and the program. The evaluator scheduled visits on those days. In addition to the focus groups, each site collected outcome and satisfaction surveys.

The overall content of the program was the same for both sites. DCN staff was warmly greeted, offered a meal, and found rooms outfitted for supervised play for children and an organized participatory “lesson” for parents.

### **Oakdale Heights Parent Feedback**

Only one parent was in attendance the evening of the focus group. The one parent who attended the focus group reported that she looks forward to the program. She said she always learns very practical tools for supporting her children as well as more effective ways to manage their behavior.

The remaining 7 registered parents were called at least three times to get personal feedback. Three of the seven registered class participants were reached by telephone.

All three participants remembered participating in at least one session.

- When asked “Why did you decide not to continue?” all reported scheduling conflicts. One is a family child care provider outside the Oakdale Heights neighborhood who could not provide transportation for the children in her care. Another has started babysitting a child who was still in diapers and too young to participate in the IY childcare program.
- When asked “What would be a better time of day?” one suggested directly after school; another said it’s an overly long program that just doesn’t accommodate her other obligations as a working mother; and the third reported that the time of day was not the problem.
- When asked “What would be a better location?” the family care provider who operated outside the school neighborhood said “Walking distance from home.” The other two liked having it at the school.
- When asked “What did you think of the program you attended?” they said that it was quite enjoyable and useful. One commented that she enjoyed how it combined playing and learning.
- When asked “How did you hear about the program?” one identified a flyer from the preschool. The other two could not remember.

VOCS reported use of flyers to area preschools in the first two quarters, and expanded their outreach strategies to include the school newsletters, website and through the family resource center.

### **Berry Creek Feedback**

During the focus group, when asked “Can you describe one way this program may have changed how you parent?” parents said:

- “I learned how to play games with my child. I can now let my kids make up the rules.”
- “I give limited options.”
- “I went home and tried what Gay Lynn suggested. It worked.”
- “We see the benefits over and over.”
- “I look at the tip of the week on my bulletin board.”
- “I learned to ask my child to do one task at a time.”
- “I’ve learned to let my child save face.”
- “I wait till my child is calm before I address the behavior.”
- “I learned a better frame of mind to do a time out.”
- “Once it’s over, it’s over.”
- “I realized my kids messed up because they don’t have the skill yet.”

When asked about suggestions or barriers to participation, parents said:

- “I love how the program is set up. I’m hungry when I get here and my children and I are fed. The information is about stuff I use every day.”
- “Not everyone has gas money to drive here. We try to car pool, but don’t have enough car seats.”
- “Our community lacks medical services.”

### **Pre- /Post -Parent Practice Interview**

Both sites collected a “Pre- /Post- Parent Practice Interview” survey in 2008. Significant improvement was found across the program in reduction of harsh discipline for young children, more consistent and appropriate discipline, use of positive parenting, and clear expectations.

The IY programs also administer a standardized Parent Satisfaction Survey. These results indicated that:

- 86% reported that the bonding/attachment that they feel with their preschooler since taking this program is either improved or greatly improved.
- 100 % reported that improvement in the behavior problems they have tried to address in their child using the methods presented in this program.
- 100% reported that feeling satisfied or greatly satisfied with their child's social, emotional and academic developmental progress.
- 67% reported that the Incredible Years parenting program helped with other personal or family problems not directly related to their child (for example, their marriage, their feelings of support in general).
- 29% percent would recommend and the remaining 71% strongly recommend the program to other families.
- 100% found the format useful or extremely useful.

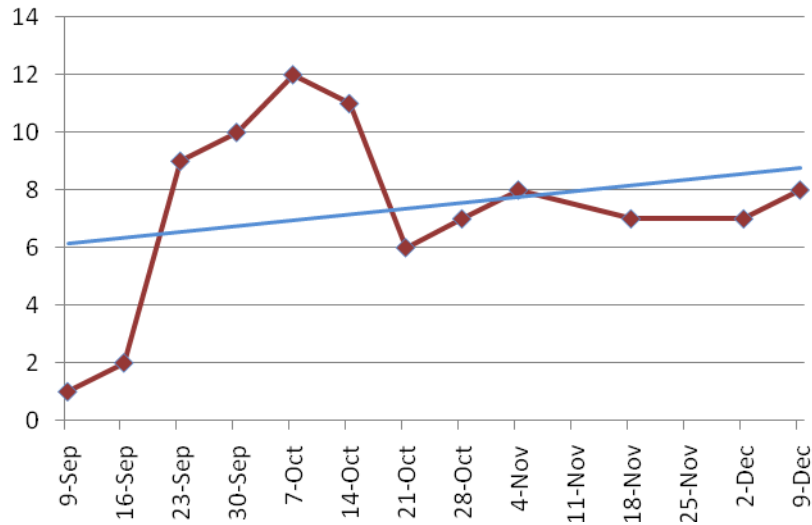
## Attendance

Attendance is perhaps the greatest proxy indicator that a multi-week program is meeting the needs of the families served. This is an intensive evening program which, as the telephone interviews indicated, is not convenient for all families. Berry Creek consistently retained its participants, while the Oakdale Heights program struggled in 2009 but improved in 2010 (see Table 2). VOCs reported that additional outreach and recruitment efforts yielded higher numbers of participants in the 2010 sessions.

	<b>PAT Series Offered</b>	<b># Weeks in Series</b>	<b>Spanish or English</b>	<b># of Adult Participants</b>	<b>Average # per Class</b>	<b># Attending &gt; 50% of Class Sessions</b>	<b>% Attending &gt;50% of Sessions</b>
Oakdale Heights	Sept-Dec 2009	12	S	7	3-4	3	43%
	Jan-April 2010	12	E	10	3	2	20%
	April-June 2010	8	E	18	6-7	7	39%
	Sept-Dec 2010	12	E	17	7-8	8	47.1%
Berry Creek <sup>1</sup>	Fall 2009	12	E	4		4	100%
	Winter/Spring 2010	8	E	5		5	100%

**Table 2: FY 2009-2010 Attendance Rates** of parents in Incredible Years Program program by school location. (Source: Program Attendance Logs)

<sup>1</sup> Berry Creek data was from First 5ers and staff memory. Administrative staff has changed and program staff is researching backup documentation at the time of this report.



**Figure 6: Fall 2010 Oakdale Heights IY Program Attendance.** Y axis is total number of parents present. The red line is the actual number of adults present for each date. The blue line is a trend line for the 12 week period. (Source: Program Attendance Logs.)

### IY Interaction with Literacy Coach

Both sites are entitled to invite the Literacy Coach to school sites in conjunction with their programs. In FY 2009-2010, Oakdale Heights made three and Berry Creek made two requests. Programs reported that a total of 31 families attended Literacy Coach Events at Oakdale Heights and 23 at Berry Creek. No parents attended the last day of the Spanish IY program at Oakdale Heights.

Site	#	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
<b>Oakdale Heights</b>	Scheduled Visits	0	1	1	1	3
	Families Attending	0	0	7	24	<b>31</b>
<b>Berry Creek</b>	Scheduled Visits	1	0	1	0	2
	Families Attending	13	0	10	0	<b>23</b>

**Table 3:** Reported number of scheduled Literacy Coach visits to Incredible Years program sites and reported number of families in attendance by quarter in FY 2009-2010 (Source: First 5ers Milestones)

## Literacy Coach

**Literacy Coach** is a motor coach that brings literacy activities and donates books to Berry Creek and Oakdale Heights school communities, mostly in conjunction with the School Readiness program. On May 25, DCN visited the Literacy Coach while it was parked outside the Oak Street Children’s Center. The visit was pre-arranged with both RAR and library staff. The coach had been invited to add to the year-end “blue book bag” festivities which close the Raising a Reader program year. Small groups of children boarded the coach and heard a story, participated in an art project and received a gift book. The literacy staff had arrayed gift books for parents, but few parents participated. The one parent who came aboard while the evaluator was present was thrilled with her book, but was not aware that adults were also offered books.

While participation in the literacy coach events as reported by school readiness partners was minimal, the coach reported higher participation when present at community events such as the Berry Festival in quarter one and the “Kindergarten Round-Up” in quarter four at Oakdale Heights.

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
<b>Berry Creek</b>	Parents & Children	105	16	67	90	<b>278</b>
<b>Bald Rock</b>	Children’s Books Distributed	49	8	36	8	<b>101</b>
	Family literacy books distributed	6	8	13	30	<b>57</b>
<b>Oakdale</b>	Parents & Children	0	0	12	141	<b>153</b>
<b>Heights</b>	Children’s Books Distributed	0	0	8	91	<b>99</b>
	Family literacy books distributed	0	0	4	54	<b>58</b>

**Table 4:** Literacy Coach Participants and Books Distributed (Source: Literacy Coach Milestones.)

## Conclusions

**Parents as Teachers** is an intensive service. With the right match between family and parent educator (PE), there is very high satisfaction. Recruitment and retention of families with programs administered through both districts did not meet its targets in FY 09-10. The loss of a Hmong speaking PE impacted the Thermalito program last fiscal year, but there is insufficient support that the PAT home visiting model is culturally appropriate for Hmong families. Further experimentation, with possible shorter duration commitment held in times of year suitable for meeting out of doors may be worth pursuing.

**Raising a Reader** has demonstrated a favorable impact on family reading behaviors. Surveys indicate that utilization of the public library remains limited, but that families in the book bag program believe reading is important and are reading more with their children. It can be

assumed that given the low library utilization and the high degree of importance families place on reading, that that families value the program.

**Incredible Years** has met the needs of a small group of parents in the isolated community of Berry Creek. Its teacher, Gay Lynne Trumm has established long-standing relationships and trust in the community. The program at Oakdale Heights struggled to attract and retain participants in 2009. This is not due to program quality. It may have been for lack of requisite program allies within the school culture, school leadership and neighborhood. With additional outreach, their enrollment improved significantly in 2010.

**Literacy Coach** has reached families at large public events and has offered structured literacy activities for children as an adjunct to preschool programs. The large public events reach the most families. Coach activities targeting parents from school readiness programs require greater coordination and collaborative promotion.

Overall, during the time period in which these school readiness programs have been participating in evaluation activities, there appears to be an increased focus on meeting performance targets, particularly in participant recruitment. By fall 2010, both PAT programs had developed wait lists, and Thermalito had initiated a PAT program at Pioneer High School for teen mothers and fathers. Outreach efforts have been expanded and attendance has improved for Oakdale Heights. RAR showed greater success securing returned surveys.

It has also been noted that the struggling programs initiated more collaborative processes as they entered the 2010-11 school year. It appeared that some programs expanded their focus from delivery of contracted services to more active recruitment and retention of participants. They have invested additional effort to identify, build relationships and engage school and community partners. VOC has been working more closely with the family resource center. Terry Quinto, the CUSD PAT Coordinator has worked closely with school site personnel. The Chico and Thermalito PAT programs share and support one another.

### **Evaluator's Recommendations**

As the commission considers future school readiness investments, DCN suggests that they include a community strengthening approach and ask their grantees to demonstrate established relationships and collaborative strategies within the communities they seek to serve.

It is a belief of DCN that clear and effective evaluation procedures are a powerful administrative incentive. The First 5ers online "Milestones" tool has been awkward and inadequate to capture accurate and comparable indicators of program performance. DCN suggests

coordination with F5B staff to ensure sufficient contract monitoring tools are in place for the continuing SR programs.

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