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# **Evaluation of Preschool For All Implementation in San Mateo and San Francisco Counties**

## **Year 1 Report**

Submitted to:

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First 5 San Mateo County  
First 5 San Francisco*

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## **Executive Summary**

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is conducting a 3-year joint process evaluation, which began in December of 2005, to assess the implementation of Preschool for All (PFA) in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties. First 5 San Francisco and the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) are serving as the PFA administrating body in each county, respectively. The process evaluation is designed to investigate and document the implementation and the preliminary impacts of PFA on children, families, providers, and the community. In addition, AIR is working with First 5 San Francisco, SMCOE, and First 5 San Mateo County to establish processes and procedures to collect baseline child outcome data, in anticipation of designing and conducting an outcome study to follow the process evaluation.

This Year 1 report reflects the findings from an initial qualitative study, to gather process information on the first year of PFA implementation (2005-2006) in each county. The study examines factors which facilitated implementation and challenges faced by PFA program administrators, providers, and partner agencies, and includes recommendations to enhance the current PFA system as the initiative is expanded.

The goal of PFA is to make high quality preschool available to all four-year-old children by building upon the current early care and education system of public and private providers. PFA is a voluntary part-day program for four-year-old children provided at no cost to families, regardless of income. PFA funds are used to create “new” preschool spaces and to “upgrade” classrooms in existing programs.

**Data Sources.** All of the San Mateo PFA contractors (three publicly-subsidized programs with multiple sites) were included in this study. A sample of PFA providers in San Francisco (eight of the 13 agencies) participated, selected to reflect the mixed delivery system in that county, including private and publicly subsidized center-based programs, as well as family child care providers. Qualitative information was gathered from three respondent groups: (1) PFA providers (program directors, management-level staff, and teaching staff), (2) representatives from PFA partner agencies, and (3) directors of “non-PFA” preschool programs (potentially eligible programs that did not participate in PFA during the 2005-2006 program year). In total, AIR staff gathered feedback from 140 individuals through 89 interviews and focus groups between April and July of 2006.

## **Summary of Findings**

It is important to note that the impacts of PFA presented in this qualitative report are based on feedback from PFA program and partner staff obtained through interviews and focus groups. The process study was not designed to gather quantitative or outcome data on PFA children, families, or providers, but rather to highlight successes and challenges facing the participants in the PFA system in each county in the first full year of program implementation. Although participation in PFA may indeed result in many positive outcomes for children and families, this qualitative examination of process issues is not an appropriate method to detect the subtle changes in teaching and peer relationships in the classroom or quantifiable workforce development progress that may lead to the desired outcomes. Such child-, family-, and provider-level impacts are better

examined using reliable observation tools designed specifically for this purpose. These types of standardized observations and other more objective data collection activities will be included in future phases of the process evaluation.

Other contextual factors to consider when reviewing this report include the design of PFA and the timing of this study. The intent of PFA is to build on the existing diverse system of publicly funded and private programs and upgrade preschool teacher education and quality. The vast majority of program staff interviewed for this study are teachers employed by pre-existing programs that have been “upgraded” by PFA. While a number of these teachers may have been hired specifically to work in PFA programs, PFA does represent a change for upgraded programs, in terms of new requirements for staff qualifications, classroom environments, and other quality standards. Given that PFA implementation has just begun in both counties, feedback from some providers may reflect the “growing pains” associated with the start-up phase of any new comprehensive educational initiative, as the administering agencies, partners, and the participating providers collaboratively identify and address challenges that emerge.

**Motivation to Participate in PFA.** In both counties, providers opted to participate in PFA because they viewed it as a mechanism to improve the quality of their programs. Directors also discussed the additional resources they anticipated PFA would provide to the program, in the form of classroom materials and supplies, access to training and technical assistance, and funds to increase staff compensation. For private providers, PFA was also seen as a mechanism to meet enrollment targets.

**Application Process and External Assessment of Program Quality.** In order to be eligible for PFA funding in both San Francisco and San Mateo Counties, preschool programs must have an external Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition (ECERS-R) or Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS) observation conducted by San Francisco State University – Gateway to Quality. Gateway to Quality is a collaborative effort among city agencies in San Francisco, community-based organizations, institutions of higher learning, and private foundations. Gateway to Quality’s trained and reliable assessors are available to conduct ITERS-R (Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition), ECERS-R, or FDCRS observations and offer technical assistance to programs.

In general, PFA providers in both San Francisco and San Mateo felt the process of preparing for and participating in an external ECERS-R review of their program was beneficial and resulted in improvements to the quality of the classroom environments. A large majority of the programs across both counties commented on the difference between conducting the ECERS-R internally (e.g., through a self-assessment process) and having an external assessment done by a trained and objective ECERS-R assessor. Despite a certain amount of stress and anxiety involved with preparing for the observation, it was ultimately a positive experience for many staff. The specific outcomes of participating in an external ECERS-R review varied across programs. For example, in some Head Start and State Preschool-funded programs already required to meet standards in excess of licensing requirements, improvements based on the results of the ECERS-R assessment were relatively minor. For other programs, the ECERS-R review served as a vehicle to make significant changes to the classroom environments.



**Year 1 Impact of PFA.** One of the primary goals of the qualitative study was to investigate the impact of PFA on the first cohort of participating preschool programs. The ultimate goal of PFA is to ensure a high level of quality among participating programs countywide. Given the variation in the level of implementation of PFA quality standards across programs, the Year 1 impact of PFA funds also varied. San Francisco and San Mateo PFA providers discussed the overall impact of PFA in their first year of receiving funds in five major areas:

- **Outreach and Enrollment.** Providers in both counties discussed the challenges of marketing a “universal” program to families that currently is available in a few school districts in San Mateo and an increasing number of zip codes in San Francisco, based on a strategic decision to begin implementation in high-need areas. In regard to enrollment, publicly-subsidized upgraded PFA programs continued to adhere to family eligibility guidelines associated with other funding streams (e.g., Head Start). In San Francisco, programs with a tuition-based component described how PFA enabled them to reduce parent fees and thereby increase access to preschool for families who may not qualify for other types of subsidized care.
- **Global impacts on program quality.** Many of the providers articulated the effect of PFA in terms of its global impact on program quality. San Francisco directors discussed how PFA has promoted systemic change across program components, ensured equity across classrooms supported by different funding streams, and formalized program activities. In San Mateo, program directors made similar comments, focusing on how PFA has helped to infuse quality throughout their programs. A San Mateo program director explained, “being part of PFA is bringing us to a different level, [PFA is] increasing quality. We welcome it.” Providers from both counties also noted the infusion of technical assistance and other resources for program quality improvement.
- **Changes to the physical environments of the classrooms.** Programs described minor and major enhancements to the physical environment of their programs as a result of PFA funding and participation in the ECERS-R review process. In both counties, one of the main impacts of PFA has been a dramatic improvement in the aesthetics of program settings. Enhancements included new or repaired furniture, new materials and toys to enhance learning centers, and more supplies. Overall, reorganization of classrooms was identified as a common result of participating in the external ECERS-R assessment process. Many of the PFA sites described moving furniture and reorganizing interest centers to enhance children’s learning.
- **Impacts on children’s learning and staff-child interactions.** Some PFA staff commented that children’s experiences have been positively affected by the improvements in the classroom environments afforded by PFA. For example, a PFA program noted that it currently devotes more time supporting staff-child interactions through increased training and mentoring, although staff noted this effort was implemented prior to PFA. Another PFA contractor described increased observation and documentation of children over the last year of PFA implementation, for both PFA upgraded classrooms and non-PFA classrooms operated by the program. Feedback from program staff suggests that PFA has supported children’s learning. However, this qualitative study was not designed to rigorously

determine the impact of PFA on children's outcomes. An outcome evaluation to examine PFA's effect on children's development is planned for the future.

- **Benefits for staff.** In both counties, the vast majority of programs identified positive outcomes for staff as a direct result of participating in PFA. These benefits included increased professional pride among staff, more effective teamwork, and stronger motivation for program improvement. According to staff, PFA has made them feel recognized as a high-quality preschool provider and appreciated for the important role they play in children's development.

**PFA Support Services.** San Mateo and San Francisco provide a variety of training and technical assistance resources to PFA contractors. In San Francisco, these support services include Learning Circles, which are quarterly meetings of PFA providers, and arts and science enhancement activities. PFA providers are monitored by Wu Yee Children's Services, a San Francisco Resource & Referral Agency, which also helps conduct outreach to families and providers and connect PFA providers with available resources. In addition, First 5 San Francisco works collaboratively with a number of agencies including the City College of San Francisco (career counseling, professional development), the Low Income Investment Fund (quality improvement grants, facility enhancements, technical assistance), and the High Risk Infant Interagency Council (child screenings). Other partners with First 5 San Francisco include the Children's Council, the Citywide Child Care Administrator, and the Local Planning Council.

San Francisco PFA sites appreciated the support provided to them through PFA. The science program, Tree Frog Treks, was popular with some PFA sites, although some programs had yet to schedule an event with the agency when data were collected for this study. A number of staff who used the resources found it difficult to engage children in the science kit activities provided by the program, and suggested the activities may not be developmentally appropriate for preschoolers. The Learning Circles were appreciated for the information exchange and networking they provided, although some staff found it difficult to attend the meetings during the day. In addition, staff requested more control over the types of training opportunities available, to better align them with their unique needs. Management staff across the PFA programs praised the help they received from First 5 San Francisco.

In San Mateo, PFA providers received training and support from the PFA Technical Assistance Coordinator, the Early Childhood Language Development Institute (ECLDI), the Raising a Reader® book bag program, and mental health consultation/support from Parents Place of the Jewish Family and Children's Services. PFA also provides paid professional development days for staff to participate in training and complete PFA classroom requirements. In addition, SMCOE works with partner agencies on a number of activities to support PFA providers and to address potential obstacles that may hinder the participation of preschool programs in the PFA system. These partners include the San Mateo Child Care Coordinating Council (PFA outreach, career counseling, and facilities), the San Mateo Community College District (academic counseling, curriculum support), the Redwood City Child Care Coordinator (outreach, facilities), the Professional Association for Childhood Education (outreach, information dissemination), the Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families (school readiness, transition activities), and the San Mateo Human Service Agency (policy guidance, funding).

San Mateo staff were positive about the support services provided to them through PFA. The mental health, ECLDI training, and site-specific TA coordination were well received. The Raising a Reader® program was praised for its benefits and flexibility. Overall, most PFA staff characterized the support of the SMCOE TA coordinator as positive. Some San Mateo PFA contractors emphasized the importance of ongoing dialogue with SMCOE to ensure technical assistance provided is aligned with ongoing efforts that are unique to each program. All of the PFA providers were highly appreciative of the support they have received from SMCOE staff.

**Serving PFA Children with Special Needs.** PFA programs are expected to serve children of all skill and ability levels to fully comply with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and other federal and state civil rights laws. To screen children for developmental delays, PFA programs are required to administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), which is a parent/teacher-completed child-screening tool.

In San Francisco, the primary theme which emerged in regard to the ASQ was that the tool sometimes duplicated existing program screening systems. A PFA program director remarked that the ASQ was helpful, although it replicated the purpose and activities of their established screening and referral system for children with special needs. This was particularly true among PFA school district sites, where staff emphasized that the school district has an existing system in which children are screened and connected to services.

In San Mateo, Head Start classrooms were already using the ASQ prior to PFA. For two of the PFA San Mateo programs, the ASQ was a new requirement. Feedback in San Mateo in regard to the ASQ was generally positive; although staff qualified that the ASQ was a useful tool when they used the paid release time provided by PFA to complete the questionnaire collaboratively with parents. This enabled staff an opportunity early in the school year to get to know both parents and their children better.

San Mateo and San Francisco providers discussed the need to improve the delivery of services to children with special needs. While they appreciated that screening is emphasized through PFA, providers pointed to critical improvements that are necessary in the special education system to ensure children receive appropriate services in a timely manner. Program staff in both counties also expressed a desire for more training, support, and specialized staff to help with serving children with special needs in their classrooms.

**PFA Staff Qualifications and Compensation.** PFA has impacted a variety of issues related to staffing, including educational requirements, pursuit of higher education, and capacity to increase compensation. In San Francisco, the majority of PFA programs were publicly subsidized prior to PFA, as were all PFA programs in San Mateo. Providers were asked to reflect on the impact of PFA's guidelines or requirements regarding staff qualifications and compensation.

- **San Francisco Staff Qualifications.** Minimum San Francisco PFA staffing requirements are based on the Child Development Permit. As a PFA site, the Lead Teacher, at a minimum, must hold (or qualify and have applied for) a Child Development Teacher Permit. The Assistant Teacher(s), at a minimum, must hold (or qualify and have applied for) a Child

Development Associate Teacher Permit. When there are more than 16 children, a third staff person must hold (or qualify and have applied for) an Assistant Teacher Permit. Programs provided feedback on the PFA staffing qualifications in San Francisco, with at least two programs emphasizing the need for additional or alternative standards to benchmark program quality. Management staff suggested the use of waivers for staff who may hold advanced degrees (e.g., masters degree) but lack the appropriate number of early childhood education units. In addition, when PFA is operated by a school district, PFA staff qualifications must be considered in light of union regulations. With a few exceptions, all of the PFA programs in San Francisco reported that recruiting and maintaining qualified PFA staff were significant challenges. However, program directors reinforced that workforce issues impact the ECE field in general and are not unique to PFA.

- **San Francisco PFA Compensation.** In 2005-2006, PFA programs in San Francisco had to adhere to specific wage rates (First 5 San Francisco has since eliminated the wage requirement policy and instead requires contractors to develop program-level staff compensation plans). For 2005-2006 programs, lead teachers had to be compensated at the PFA wage levels for at least 4 hours per day for 175 days per year, or 3 hours per day for 245 days for programs operating full-year programs. Given that PFA is a part-day program, embedding PFA wage rates within a full-day program posed some administrative challenges for at least two of the providers. A director of a PFA program that received Head Start funds reported that she was not willing to increase salaries only for teachers working in PFA classrooms and not for staff teaching at non-PFA sites. As a result, she increased master and lead teacher salaries across the board, drawing on her Head Start and PFA funds. She emphasized that parity across the program was essential for the morale and professional development of the entire staff. Another program director discussed the undesirable impact of varying wage rates for PFA teachers working in a full-day program, where PFA staff received a higher rate in the morning for the PFA program, compared to the afternoon non-PFA funded session.
- **San Mateo PFA Staff Qualifications.** To receive funding, upgraded PFA programs in San Mateo must meet minimum qualifications and full qualifications by 2010 to receive funds. For lead teachers, the minimum qualifications specify that they must hold an AA or AS degree and 24 early childhood education (ECE) units. By 2010, the lead teacher must hold a BA or BS with a Master Teacher Permit (Option 1). New PFA classrooms (i.e. not existing spaces that are ‘upgraded’) must meet full PFA standards at the outset. In the 2005-2006 program year, two of the three contractors entered the PFA system at the fully qualified level.

One of the three PFA contractors in San Mateo experimented with a specific staffing structure and provided feedback on its effectiveness. In this model, a “traveling teacher” serves as the qualified BA PFA teacher, changing classrooms in the middle of the day (e.g., working in the morning as part of the morning PFA session embedded in a full-day program and switching to a State Preschool session in the afternoon). Several issues emerged as a result of this staffing model, including a purported negative impact on teacher morale, loss of a sense of ownership over their classroom, and a disruption of teamwork among staff members in full-day classrooms. San Mateo does not plan to use this staffing model in the 2006-2007 program year.

Teaching staff debated the value of having a BA teacher with 32 ECE units in the PFA classrooms. Some staff suggested that the PFA system should consider alternative staff qualifications to the BA, such as tenure in the field. Other staff supported the idea of having a BA and an AA teacher in the classroom, although they pointed to the limitations of the current teacher education system to train qualified staff.

- **San Mateo PFA Compensation Guidelines.** In San Mateo, the goal of PFA is that lead teachers achieve both education and compensation parity with public kindergarten teachers. PFA contractors must demonstrate that salaries for fully qualified teaching staff are within the same ranges as the public school districts and that salaries for less qualified staff are prorated from this standard. PFA programs must reflect these salary costs in their proposed budgets and expenditure reports. At one program, PFA funds are used to broaden the wage scale among staff, although the program director cautioned other programs who might be interested in becoming a PFA site about doing so. She cited concerns about creating inequity among staff working in non-PFA classrooms compared to PFA classrooms. A management-level staff person from another program also talked about the impact of varying wage rates for teachers working in PFA part-day sessions embedded in a full-day program (e.g., teachers who receive higher pay for a PFA morning session and lower pay in the State Preschool afternoon session).

The other theme related to compensation which emerged focused on the parity of preschool teacher pay with kindergarten teacher salaries that may continue to rise, per district policies. Although PFA management and teaching staff appreciate PFA's emphasis on improving teacher compensation, there are still issues to be reconciled in terms of parity with increases in kindergarten teacher salaries over time and inequities for individual teachers who may split their time between PFA and other preschool classrooms that do not include the same teacher compensation requirements.

These issues relating to staff qualifications and compensation are complex and reflect PFA's underlying intent of building upon the diverse system of existing preschool providers, rather than creating new, stand-alone programs. On the whole, administrators and teachers in upgraded PFA sites agreed that higher levels of teacher compensation are key to attracting and retaining a quality workforce, yet they also acknowledged that these changes were not without their challenges, including staff displacements or reassignments, adjustments to new teaching team configurations, and additional pressures placed on staff to obtain higher-level permits or degrees. In addition, as PFA is phased in by building upon the varied array of existing preschool programs, standardized compensation across all settings cannot occur immediately. Although substantial PFA resources have been used to support teacher education and training and to increase compensation, providers suggested that achieving equity within programs and sustaining higher compensation levels into the future would require ongoing flexibility on the part of staff, creativity on the part of administrators, and secure sources of funding over the long-term.

**Braiding Funding Streams.** For the most part, PFA programs with funding from CDE or Head Start had yet to encounter significant issues in regard to braiding funding streams, although two

programs expressed concern that problems may arise in the future. One San Francisco management staff person reflected on the potential confusion for sites funded by State Preschool, Head Start, PFA, a parent fee component, and vouchers. In San Mateo, PFA providers reported they had not experienced any issues related to braiding funds.

**PFA Reimbursement Rate.** Reimbursement rates vary in San Francisco and San Mateo. PFA funds can be used for staff compensation, substitute pay, training, support staff, equipment and supplies, field trips, accommodations for the inclusion of children with special needs, and enhancement activities. For programs with a parent fee, PFA replaces those fees for the PFA portion of the day.

- **San Francisco PFA Reimbursement Rate.** Feedback on the appropriateness and viability of the PFA reimbursement rate appeared to be related to the level and type of other funding that supported programs. Two private providers felt that the reimbursement rate, while appreciated for being higher than the rate for the State Preschool program or General Child Care, was below the market rate. Other publicly-funded programs reported that PFA provided funds to effectively upgrade program quality.
- **San Mateo PFA Reimbursement Rate.** All of the San Mateo PFA programs reported that the PFA reimbursement rate was satisfactory, particularly as it represented an upgrade to their existing funding levels. For publicly-subsidized programs, PFA funds are not needed to replace parent fees and hence can be used exclusively to enhance program quality. (At the time of the interview, one program had not yet reviewed their year-end budget reports, but estimated that the resources provided by PFA would be adequate, given the expectations of the funding).

**State Preschool Contracts.** PFA programs funded by the California Department of Education (CDE) for State Preschool were asked if PFA had impacted their ability to meet their State Preschool contract. In both counties, providers had not encountered any issues related to their contract, although at least one provider raised concerns on this topic. A San Francisco management staff person explained, “I am concerned that if a child is subsidized, plus gets PFA—how are we going to meet the [state] contract?” Although the CDE has provided technical assistance on how to submit proper financial reports in order to avoid this problem, it appears there is still some anxiety among PFA providers about how to handle this issue.

**Sustainability of PFA.** When asked about the sustainability of PFA, the majority of PFA staff emphasized the importance of the funding to remain stable over the long-term. One director recommended that the early childhood education field collaborate with the business community to secure long-term funding.

**PFA Reporting Requirements.** In general, feedback regarding PFA reporting requirements was similar across San Francisco and San Mateo. In both counties, programs must administer the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and collect demographic, attendance, and other service data for children and families. To varying degrees, program directors and management-level staff in both counties described the current level of reporting required by PFA as a burden. This frustration reflected concern regarding the

cumulative reporting requirements that programs with multiple funding streams faced. Most of the providers emphasized the need to coordinate PFA reporting with the CDE and/or Head Start systems. Concerns about reporting seemed to be related to program auspice, with Head Start and/or CDE-funded programs most comfortable with PFA reporting requirements, compared to their private or other publicly funded counterparts.

## **Recommendations From PFA Providers**

PFA staff offered recommendations to improve the current PFA system and in regard to the expansion of PFA to new zip codes or school districts over time. Their comments are provided below, by county.

### **Recommendations From San Francisco PFA Providers**

- **Improve the Reporting System.** The most common recommendation from San Francisco PFA providers focused on revising the reporting system. Management staff from most PFA sites commented that there was too much paperwork associated with the funding. One program director strongly emphasized the need for the development and implementation of a more efficient system of data collection and reporting. Providers with multiple funding streams recommended that PFA look for ways to coordinate its reporting requirements with those associated with other funding streams. This was particularly true for the school district, where staff emphasized the need to coordinate PFA within existing policies, procedures, and reporting systems.
- **Explore the Alignment Between PFA and the Existing Program’s Unique Philosophy and Practices.** Several PFA programs discussed the need to dialogue with First 5 San Francisco regarding the balance between their own program philosophy and guidance on instructional strategies provided by the PFA system (e.g., through the Learning Circles or through the ECERS-R review process). PFA promotes high-quality preschool programming—staff articulated a need for continued discussion with First 5 San Francisco to define “quality” in terms of the nuts and bolts of implementation. Similar comments were raised in San Mateo, as providers and PFA administrating bodies engage in conversations regarding how PFA and existing preschool programs align.
- **Gradually Implement PFA Expectations Over Time.** A few providers encouraged First 5 San Francisco to take time in requiring full compliance with standards, specifically in regard to staffing requirements and ECERS-R scores. Another provider encouraged First 5 to continue to solicit feedback from providers, in order to ensure that the expectations of First 5 San Francisco align with the current status of the early childhood field. Most PFA staff commented that First 5 San Francisco staff were extremely supportive and receptive to feedback.

### **Recommendations From San Mateo PFA Providers**

- **Support Providers.** Recommendations from San Mateo PFA providers strongly focused on supporting the professional development of teaching staff. A PFA program director emphasized, “Definitely support the staff and be sensitive to the changes that the staff are going through. I think sometimes too, that when you start to make changes and things are

working well, staff will get overwhelmed because people will put more and more on you. You have to be sensitive to the staff.” Other comments around professional development pointed to the need for tuition assistance, additional release time, and more paid prep time (PFA already funds several days of paid release time for staff to fulfill classroom requirements and attend required training).

- **Review the PFA Eligibility Criteria.** Staff from two of the PFA contractors recommended that SMCOE and the PFA community review the current implementation of PFA and consider the future of the program. In particular, several staff—management and teachers—suggested that the San Mateo ECERS-R score requirements be reviewed, recommending that an average across subscales be used, rather than a specific score on each subscale. (Since data collection was conducted for the study, First 5 California has revised the ECERS-R eligibility requirements, due to the advocacy of San Mateo, San Francisco, and Los Angeles)<sup>1</sup>.
- **Explore the Alignment Between PFA and the Existing Program’s Unique Philosophy and Practices.** PFA providers raised concerns that PFA may advocate or prescribe specific teaching strategies in the future that may be in conflict with the program’s local practices. PFA providers emphasized the importance of continuing the existing dialogue with SMCOE to explore the interface between PFA and each program’s individual philosophy regarding instruction. It is important to note that PFA programs, to be eligible to receive funds, must already adhere to a certain level of quality. However, in this start-up period of implementation, programs and PFA administrating bodies are negotiating how to best integrate the quality standards of PFA with the culture and practices of local providers.
- **Include Providers in Discussions Regarding the Long-term Sustainability of PFA.** A program director talked about the long-term future of PFA, particularly given that the PFA statewide ballot initiative failed. Staff suggested that SMCOE plan strategically (such as a facilities fund, increased funding for SaMCARES) in order to support the growth and improvement of current and future PFA sites.
- **Consider the Goals and Scope of the PFA System to Inform Countywide Policy Planning.** One PFA staff person emphasized that PFA can strengthen, but not replace, the efforts of other initiatives (e.g., mental health support, services for children with disabilities, family support services, infant/toddler care). “PFA has a targeted purpose. PFA cannot do it all. PFA can’t do everything.”

## **PFA Partner Agencies**

Representatives from eighteen PFA partner agencies from both counties were interviewed to gain an understanding of their role within the PFA system, the relationships among partners, factors

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<sup>1</sup> The point of entry-level score on the Environment Rating Scale for providers is now a rating of "4" which is obtained by averaging all 43 indicators of the ECERS or averaging all 40 indicators of the FDCRS. Within a period of 24 months, providers must receive an overall score of "5", which is obtained by averaging all 43 indicators of the ECERS or averaging all 40 indicators of the FDCRS. At entry-level and throughout their participation, providers must receive, at a minimum, an average of "3" on each of the seven sub-scales for the applicable environment rating scale.



which facilitated the work of partners, and challenges they have encountered to date. The scope and type of activities conducted by partner agencies varied. Partner agencies included organizations that provided technical assistance with facilities, special needs, the ECERS-R, accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children or National Association for Family Child Care, science, and early literacy and language development. Other functions of partner agencies included career counseling and workforce development, monitoring, and policy and planning. Together, partner agencies form a network of support for PFA providers. Despite the variation among the partner agencies within and across the counties, interviews with staff from these organizations revealed some common themes in San Francisco and San Mateo.

Partner agency staff in both counties discussed the importance of collaboration among key stakeholders in the PFA system and the coordination of PFA with other county-wide initiatives (e.g., mental health, special needs). Partner agencies suggested that they, as a group, continue to identify natural linkages between PFA and other efforts to support providers, children, and families. Staff from partner agencies in both counties also described PFA as an effective vehicle to build the capacity of the early childhood field and increase quality.

PFA partners in San Francisco and San Mateo offered recommendations to support the PFA system. Common themes which emerged in both counties included the following suggestions to:

- Ensure representation from diverse provider groups, including private providers, family child care providers, institutions of higher education, policy groups, training agencies, the business community, and other stakeholders, in the planning and implementation of PFA,
- Consider alternative PFA staff qualifications beyond the BA, such as tenure in the field,
- Focus planning efforts on identifying and removing barriers to the participation of family child care providers in PFA,
- Develop a sustainable fund to support the early care and education community, including low-interest loans or grants to providers to address facility issues,
- Educate the provider community on the role of Gateway to Quality, including the logistics involved with the ECERS-R assessment,
- Link PFA with other county-level initiatives (e.g., mental health, public health, special needs, the Centralized Eligibility List) to collaboratively support quality and timely services for children and families in each county,
- Invest in the assessment and tracking of PFA children through their K-12 school years, to measure their progress and demonstrate the importance of preschool to the public, policy makers, and the business community,
- Invest in the development of a data collection system that is useful for all stakeholders (e.g., informing planning among policy makers and helping providers efficiently comply with multiple reporting requirements),
- Invest in workforce development initiatives,
- Use PFA to strengthen the existing local intermediary agencies, particularly in regard to workforce development,
- Work toward a mixed delivery system for PFA to support parent choice and increased access to full-day care,

- Broaden public support for PFA through an enhanced public relations effort about the program and the importance of early care and education, and
- Ensure periodic review and reflection on what is working with PFA and what is not; revise the PFA system based on emerging findings.

**Non-PFA Providers—Why Are Preschool Programs Not Participating in PFA?** Twenty-four interviews (18 in San Mateo and 6 in San Francisco) were conducted with preschool program directors who are not currently part of the PFA system (the majority of interviews were conducted prior to the California Preschool for All Proposition 82 ballot initiative). When asked about factors which impacted their decision or capacity to become a PFA site, a number of issues emerged: (1) facility limitations, (2) concern about the scope of PFA criteria, particularly the assessment of children and reporting requirements, (3) concern that the PFA reimbursement rate is too low, (4) difficulties meeting PFA staff qualification requirements, (5) miscommunication with PFA staff about the application process, (6) concerns about PFA impacting the program’s ability to meet their state contract, and (7) hesitation to proceed with local PFA before the outcome of the statewide ballot initiative was known. When asked about the potential of becoming PFA providers within two to three years time, however, the majority of non-PFA program directors who were interviewed indicated they would most likely want to participate in PFA.

## **Conclusion**

PFA funding has had far-reaching impacts across participating programs that include benefits for children, families, and providers. In the first full year of program implementation (2005-2006), PFA has resulted in enhanced programming for children, increased access to high-quality care for families, and professional development and support services for preschool providers. Tangible outcomes of PFA funding, in the form of upgrades to classroom facilities, new materials and equipment, and instructional supports and enhancements for teachers were also observed. In addition, teachers reported more subtle benefits, such as increased professional pride, better teamwork, and improved morale.

It is clear that PFA has been an enormous undertaking in both San Francisco and San Mateo counties. First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE/First 5 San Mateo are working to support and monitor the current cohort of PFA providers, coordinate the network of PFA partners, assist non-PFA preschool programs in meeting quality criteria to eventually participate in the system, and plan for a fairly rapid expansion of the initiative in the coming years. First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE/First 5 San Mateo also face the difficulty of marketing a “universal” program that currently is available in a few school districts in San Mateo and an increasing number of zip codes in San Francisco, based on a strategic decision to begin implementation in high-need areas.

Given these complexities and the challenges inherent in the first year of operation for any social service or education initiative, PFA implementation in San Francisco and San Mateo counties has proceeded remarkably well. The reported successes of this first year seem to rest on the strong and collaborative relationships that exist in both counties between and among the PFA administrative agencies, funding agencies, partner agencies, and the provider community. The network of partner agencies that support the PFA providers is also critical. PFA eligibility

requirements are high, and the importance of supporting providers in reaching and maintaining those standards was emphasized by the majority of PFA stakeholders.

Challenges in the PFA system and recommendations for overcoming them were identified by providers and partners, and were relatively similar across these groups and across the two counties. Continuing obstacles for family child care providers and private center-based programs to participate in PFA were mentioned frequently, and providers and partners encouraged First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE to continue to include a diverse group of stakeholders in the planning and periodic review of the PFA system. Comments regarding the PFA staff qualifications reflected a level of division within the field, with some stakeholders supporting the high education standards, and others voicing concerns about the potential loss of effective teachers who may not have or wish to obtain, higher education levels. Continued integration of PFA with existing policies, procedures, and initiatives, such as the Centralized Eligibility List or countywide social service programs, was recommended to ensure that PFA does not become a stand-alone program. Feedback from providers regarding the burden of PFA reporting also illustrates the need to examine how PFA can integrate with data collection, monitoring, and reporting requirements associated with other early care and education funding streams.

PFA has highlighted several issues that impact the early care and education field more generally and which will continue to require a broad-based effort to address. These challenges include the need for significant funding to address facility upgrade issues among center-based and family child care programs, and recruiting, training, and maintaining a high-quality workforce. While these challenges and others were identified by participants in the first year of PFA implementation; overall, providers and partners applauded the efforts of First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE in planning and implementing PFA's initial years so effectively. As one PFA site supervisor reported, "PFA has given us something new to reach for."

### **Recent Policy Changes and Directions for Future Implementation of PFA**

Since data were collected for this study, First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE have addressed many of the challenges that are highlighted in this report and engaged in discussions internally and with partners to address issues that have emerged throughout the initial phase of PFA implementation. Action steps that have been taken include, but are not limited to:

- working with Gateway to Quality to improve communication with PFA sites in both counties,
- more clearly articulating the role of the SMCOE TA Coordinator through increased communication with sites and negotiation regarding the role of the Coordinator in relation to existing program resources, procedures, and preferences,
- eliminating the wage rate requirements in San Francisco,
- reducing the frequency of monitoring site visits to San Francisco programs by Wu Yee Children's Services,
- exploring alternative database systems to be used with PFA sites and streamlining report forms to reduce reporting burden.

First 5 San Francisco, SMCOE, and First 5 San Mateo County plan to focus on a range of activities in 2006-2007 and the coming years. In regard to outreach and enrollment, PFA in San Francisco County is being expanded from four neighborhoods in 2005-2006 to 14 neighborhoods beginning in the fall of 2006. PFA will continue to roll out in additional neighborhoods until it is universal in 2009. In San Mateo County, SMCOE plans to increase PFA services and spaces to approximately 800 children in 2006-2007 and add approximately five new PFA contractors including private, for-profit and family child care providers. In partnership with 4Cs, PFA contractors, and other partner agencies, SMCOE also will increase the scope of outreach efforts to more effectively recruit lower-middle to middle income families to participate in PFA.

In addition to increasing PFA capacity, both counties will expand activities to strengthen PFA services and support providers. In San Francisco County, First 5 San Francisco has established working committees to focus on family engagement and support strategies and enhanced transition activities between preschool and kindergarten. They also plan to design an exempt care pilot to explore how PFA can support children served by exempt providers. In addition, First 5 San Francisco will work to enhance services for children with special needs and support language development efforts for children learning English as a second language. They will also strengthen workforce development strategies, including expansion of the BA completion program to support cohorts of students earning their bachelor's degree through San Francisco State University. First 5 San Francisco will offer citywide technical assistance efforts to support providers, including the provision of site-specific technical assistance to PFA programs. Finally, efforts will be focused on strengthening public awareness about PFA.

In San Mateo County, SMCOE and First 5 San Mateo County are exploring new strategies to support teacher training and degree completion efforts, such as classes and supports to ensure that ECE/CD students are "transfer-ready" (have all the requisite coursework) to smoothly matriculate from the AA/AS into a BA/BS program). Recent surveys in San Mateo County with ECE/CD students and SaMCARES participants have indicated that although a very large number of students indicate an interest in a "AA-to-BA" cohort/fast-track, very few are ready to transfer directly into the San Francisco State University's Child and Adolescent Development program.

In addition, mental health support services, provided through the Jewish Family and Children's Services, will be expanded significantly in 2006-2007 in San Mateo. Training on family engagement and inclusive practices will be offered to PFA providers. SMCOE will coordinate with the Peninsula Partnership to enhance transition strategies between preschool and kindergarten. First 5 San Mateo and SMCOE will continue their focus on quality improvement among the provider community. Capacity-building efforts through the 4Cs Quality Improvement/Accreditation Support Project will be expanded in 2006-2007, as well as technical assistance and informational materials, tools, and processes to address facility needs and barriers among the provider community. Similarly, the long-term sustainability of PFA and strategies to support the PFA infrastructure are being examined.

The evaluation team will continue to solicit feedback from PFA participants and partners, and will monitor implementation, expansion, and quality improvement activities and their impacts on staff and families. The second year of the process evaluation will focus on reviewing administrative data collected from PFA sites, including family and child service data, staff

qualifications and compensation, and professional development activities. The evaluation will focus on classroom-level quality indicators, in addition to the ECERS-R, and gather feedback from families participating in PFA. In addition, AIR will assist with the design of a rigorous longitudinal evaluation that focuses on PFA program outcomes for children and families.



## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is conducting a 3-year joint process evaluation, which began in December of 2005, to assess the implementation of Preschool for All (PFA) in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties. First 5 San Francisco and the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) are serving as the PFA administrating body in each county, respectively. The process evaluation is designed to investigate and document the implementation and the preliminary impacts of PFA on children, families, providers, and the community. In addition, AIR is working with First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE to establish processes and procedures to collect baseline child outcome data, in anticipation of designing and conducting an outcome study to follow the process evaluation.

This Year 1 report reflects the findings from an initial qualitative study, to gather process information on the first year of PFA implementation (2005-2006) in each county<sup>2</sup>. The study examines factors which facilitated implementation and challenges faced by PFA program administrators, providers, and partner agencies, and includes recommendations to enhance the current PFA system as the initiative is expanded.

### **Overview of PFA in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties**

The goal of PFA in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties is to make high quality preschool available to all four-year-old children by building upon the current early care and education system of public and private providers. PFA is a voluntary part-day program for four-year-old children provided at no cost to families, regardless of income. PFA funds are used to create new preschool spaces and to upgrade classrooms in existing programs.

PFA funds are meant to enhance program quality and must supplement (not supplant) costs already covered by other public funds. In San Francisco, PFA includes a 3.5 hour program for 175 days or a 2.5 hour program for 245 days. In San Mateo, PFA must consist of at least 3 hours of preschool experience for 175 days or at least 2.14 hours for 245 days. In both counties, allowable expenditures are those ordinary and necessary expenses directly benefiting or resulting from the PFA program operations, including, but not limited to:

- Parent fee off-set;
- Compensation for staff in PFA classrooms (including salary and benefits);
- Substitute pay;
- Staff training/professional development related to the PFA program (including tuition and expenses for college courses);
- Equipment, supplies and other materials for the PFA program, including some facility upgrades to meet some ECERS/FDCRS requirements;
- Field trips; and
- Enrichment activities (e.g., music, dance, science, computer education)

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<sup>2</sup> In San Mateo, PFA programs received funding in March of 2005, offering approximately 4 months of programming before the 2005-2006 program year began in the fall. In San Francisco, PFA programs were funded beginning in the fall of 2005.

An overview of the PFA program in each county is provided in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1. San Mateo and San Francisco PFA Programs**

	<b>San Mateo</b>	<b>San Francisco</b>
<b>Lead Agency</b>	San Mateo County Office of Education	First 5 San Francisco
<b>Funding Base</b>	Primarily First 5 (State/local), with San Mateo County and David and Lucile Packard Foundation funds	Local county tax funds (Prop H); First 5 California
<b>Program Quality</b>	Programs must have a minimum ECERS/FDCRS score of 4.0, by averaging all 43 indicators; a 5.0 within 24 mos. and no individual subscale lower than a 3.0 (assessed by external Gateway to Quality staff)	Programs must have a minimum ECERS score of 4.5, by averaging all 43 indicators (assessed by external Gateway to Quality staff)
<b>Teacher Qualifications</b>	Lead teachers must have a BA or BS with Master Teacher Permit (Option 1) initially in all “new” classrooms; and by 2010 in “upgraded” classrooms	Lead teachers must have a Child Development Teacher Permit or be eligible and have an application pending, with the goal of BA by 2010
<b>Target Programs</b>	Dually focused on existing programs and creation of new programs	Primarily focused on existing programs, though some new spaces to be created
<b>Type of Demonstration Sites</b>	Licensed, publicly funded (federal Head Start, state Title V State Preschool, and General Child Care) and private centers and large family child care homes committed to achieving NAEYC or NAFCC accreditation within 2-3 years.	Licensed, publicly funded (federal Head Start, state Title V State Preschool, and General Child Care) and private centers and family child care homes
<b>Reimbursement Rate</b> (see Tables 8.1 – 8.4 for detailed information on reimbursement rates).	Maximum reimbursement: \$5,375/ per child per year (for “full quality” unsubsidized programs); free to families	Maximum reimbursement: \$5,025/per child per year (for unsubsidized programs with a BA/24 ECE unit lead teacher); free to families
<b>Launch Date for Services</b>	March/April 2005	September 2005
<b>Age Cut-Off for Enrollment in Preschool</b>	Priority for enrollment for children who are 4-year-olds by December 2. Head Start and State Preschool programs may serve a mix of 3- and 4-year olds; exceptions for older children with special needs	4-year-olds by December 2, exceptions for older children with special needs
<b>Existing School Readiness Assessment at Kindergarten Entry</b>	Kindergarten Observation Form used for past 3 years on samples of children throughout San Mateo County at kindergarten entry. Over-sample in PFA demonstration site beginning 2005.	Brigance used at kindergarten entry in San Francisco Unified School District



**San Mateo PFA**

PFA in San Mateo is supported by funding from First 5 San Mateo, First 5 California, the Packard Foundation, and the San Mateo County Human Services Agency. The initial three-year budget is approximately \$10 million (excluding in-kind support). The San Mateo County Office of Education is the administrator of PFA and the agency works in partnership with First 5 San Mateo to implement the program. First 5 San Mateo funds a half-time position to coordinate PFA, manage other funding streams that support PFA, and work with SMCOE staff. In addition, staff from First 5 San Mateo County’s evaluation department participates in the PFA evaluation meetings with SMCOE, First 5 San Francisco, and the AIR team.

First 5 San Mateo County was the leader in initiating planning for PFA in the county. In 2003, they engaged in a multi-year Universal Preschool Feasibility Study with funding from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. This study led to the development of a PFA Design Group, convened and facilitated by First 5 San Mateo County, which developed the vision, mission, and goals of PFA. First 5 San Mateo eventually released an Invitation to Negotiate for PFA Implementation, which was awarded to SMCOE (with eight partner agencies). Since the contract was executed, First 5 San Mateo has played a critical role in the implementation of PFA and has led the discussions related to the expansion of the program in the county. Staff from First 5 San Mateo and SMCOE characterized the collaborative nature of their relationship as a key strength of their county’s experience with PFA. Staff from the agencies work together to discuss and address implementation issues and larger policy decisions. The current PFA governance structure in San Mateo for PFA is shown in Table 1.2

**Table 1.2. San Mateo PFA Governance Structure**

<b>Governance Groups</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Funding Agency</b>	First 5 San Mateo
<b>Administrative Agency</b>	San Mateo County Office of Education
<b>PFA Oversight Committee</b>	Three First 5 Commissioners meet monthly with the County Superintendent of Schools, SMCOE and First 5 San Mateo staff to review progress and implementation of PFA and recommend funding and policy decisions to the First 5 San Mateo Commission
<b>Partner Group</b>	All PFA contractors (classrooms and non-classroom) meet on a quarterly basis with First 5 San Mateo and SMCOE
<b>Community Forums</b>	First 5 San Mateo and SMCOE have convened community meetings to gather input on PFA and discuss critical infrastructure issues such as workforce, facilities and family support; meetings have been held approximately every 2-3 months.

The three-year goal of PFA in San Mateo County is to serve approximately 800 children per year in two geographic areas selected based on several factors, including the number of schools with low API scores and First 5 School Readiness program sites, and large and diverse child populations. The five-year goal of the demonstration project is to serve 1850 or 70% of 4-year

olds in target communities. The long-term goal is to make preschool available to all children in San Mateo County.

In 2005-2006, SMCOE contracted with three center-based, publicly-subsidized (e.g., Head Start, half-day and full-day Title 5) preschool programs, each with multiple sites, to provide PFA. A total of 616 children were served in the 2005-2006 PFA program year (and 40 additional children are being served at a new PFA site as of June, 2006). PFA provided 592 total preschool slots, in 19 classrooms at 12 different sites. Four hundred and fifty-two of the 592 slots were “upgraded” (pre-existing State-funded or Head Start slots) and 140 were “new” slots (newly created classrooms or slots, including full-day with the option of fee-based wraparound care).<sup>3</sup>

### **San Francisco PFA**

In March 2004, San Francisco voters passed Proposition H, a Charter Amendment, which declared: “It shall be the policy of the City and County of San Francisco to provide all four-year-old children who are City residents the opportunity to attend preschool, and it shall be the goal of the people in adopting this measure to do so no later than September 1, 2009.”<sup>4</sup> Approved by 71% of the electorate, the measure reserves \$3.3 million for Year 1 (2005-2006) with funding increasing annually until appropriations reach \$20 million annually between 2009-2010 and 2014-2015, from the City General Fund’s Public Education Enrichment Fund. Proposition H designated First 5 San Francisco as the body responsible for planning and implementation of the PFA initiative. First 5 San Francisco formed a Planning Advisory Committee to develop a plan for the design of PFA and its implementation. Based on an assessment of preschool need and capacity, four zip codes were selected in San Francisco to begin PFA implementation in 2005-2006. Additional neighborhoods will be added each year until PFA is universal in 2009. The PFA governance structure in San Francisco is shown in Table 1.3.

**Table 1.3. San Francisco PFA Governance Structure**

<b>Governance Groups</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Administrative Agency</b>	First 5 San Francisco
<b>PFA Advisory Committee</b>	An advisory group comprised of representatives from agencies involved in the planning and implementation of PFA who meet to provide feedback to First 5 San Francisco staff.
<b>Learning Circles</b>	Quarterly professional development meetings of PFA providers

In 2005-2006, First 5 San Francisco contracted with 13 agencies to administer PFA, serving a total of 537 children in 41 classrooms at 27 different sites. PFA planners had initially projected funding for 1,000 slots which included San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and non-SFUSD providers for 2005-2006, with new classrooms to be opened by SFUSD. However, the

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<sup>3</sup> 592 preschool spaces accommodated 616 children, due to attrition of children from the program.

<sup>4</sup> San Francisco City Charter SEC. 16.123-2. Public Education Enrichment Fund.

new SFUSD classrooms were not yet operational in 2005-06; consequently, only 537 children were served through existing SFUSD and non-SFUSD providers. Overall, San Francisco's PFA delivery system includes family child care providers, private, tuition-based programs, and programs supported with public funds.

The PFA system in each county also includes a network of partner agencies that deliver resources and supports to providers, such as technical assistance, training, outreach and enrollment support, career counseling, and monitoring.

## **PFA Funding Criteria**

PFA programs must adhere to specific criteria in order to receive funds.<sup>5</sup> The following list provides an overview of the major funding criteria; county-specific details regarding PFA staff qualifications, compensation, Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition (ECERS-R) or Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS) scores, and other program components can be found throughout this report<sup>6</sup>. In general, PFA programs must:

- Be in compliance with California Community Care Licensing regulations,
- Meet PFA teacher qualifications and compensation guidelines,
- Meet a minimum score on the ECERS-R or FDCRS, as evaluated by San Francisco State University – Gateway to Quality,
- Implement a curriculum that meets PFA criteria,
- Offer a family involvement and support program that meets PFA criteria,
- Meet group size requirements and staff-child ratios,
- Administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), which is a parent/teacher-completed child-monitoring tool that screens for developmental delays or disorders,
- Use the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), from the California Department of Education, twice per year to assess children's progress,
- Comply with other reporting requirements, including collecting and submitting data on PFA children and families.

## **Process Evaluation Approach**

AIR's conceptual framework for the design of the process evaluation is a "research to practice continuous feedback loop", in which emerging and intermittent findings will be shared first with First 5 San Francisco, SMCOE and First 5 San Mateo, and then disseminated to PFA sites and other key stakeholders to help continuously improve aspects of PFA implementation and program quality. Specifically, the three-year project will address 10 major research questions:

1. How accessible is PFA to children and families (especially those that are low-income) and providers?
2. What PFA services are children and families using?

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<sup>5</sup> The complete list of funding criteria can be found at <http://www.smcoe.k12.ca.us/cyfs/pfa.html> and <http://www.first5sf.org/pfa.htm>

<sup>6</sup> San Francisco and San Mateo PFA criteria differ somewhat, primarily in terms of the ECERS scores required for eligibility, compensation, and the per child reimbursement rate.

3. What is the frequency, intensity, and duration of services? Who is being served?
4. How does PFA implementation vary across sites? What are the strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement for PFA implementation?
5. Are existing systems (e.g., public schools, community-based organizations, and other community institutions/agencies) and funding leveraged and enhanced?
6. What are the relationships among and the roles of PFA partners? How effective are these relationships in managing PFA?
7. Is program quality improved among PFA providers?
8. How is the PFA early childhood workforce changing (e.g., education, salary, diversity)?
9. Are parents satisfied with PFA?
10. Are children in PFA ready for kindergarten?

### **Year 1 Qualitative Study**

The purpose of the qualitative study is to document the implementation of PFA in each county in its first full program year (2005-2006), identify factors which facilitated implementation and challenges faced by PFA program administrators, providers, and partner agencies, and make recommendations to enhance the current PFA system as the initiative is expanded. In addition, the information gathered through this study will help to refine the methodological approach for addressing the research questions listed above during the remainder of the three-year evaluation. AIR worked with an advisory group of PFA staff from SMCOE, First 5 San Mateo, and First 5 San Francisco to design the qualitative study, including the development of the data collection tools.

**Data Sources.** All of the San Mateo PFA contractors (three programs with multiple sites) were included in this study. A sample of PFA providers in San Francisco (eight of the 13 agencies) participated (a sample of providers was selected by First 5 San Francisco to reflect the mixed delivery system in that county, including private and publicly subsidized center-based programs, as well as family child care providers). Qualitative information was gathered from three respondent groups:

- PFA providers (program directors, management-level staff, and teaching staff),
- Representatives from PFA partner agencies, and
- Directors of “non-PFA” preschool programs (potentially eligible programs that did not participate in PFA during the 2005-2006 program year).

In total, AIR staff gathered feedback from 140 individuals through 89 interviews and focus groups between April and July of 2006.<sup>7</sup> Staff transcribed interview and focus group discussions and used Altas/ti, a qualitative analysis software application, to code and analyze the data. In each section of the report, we describe themes that were common across counties, followed by issues unique to each. To the extent possible and where appropriate for common themes, we have quantified provider responses. However since most providers discussed a range of interrelated issues in relatively free-flowing conversations, it was not always possible to obtain

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<sup>7</sup> Teacher focus groups and interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

reliable counts of responses about particular issues. Thus, the figures included in this report should be considered estimates. Further exploration and more rigorous quantification of respondents' perspectives on key topics will occur in future phases of this study through the use of surveys and other means of quantitative data collection.

The report provides an overview of the first full year (2005-2006) of PFA implementation in each county, including providers' experiences in applying to PFA, the various ways PFA funding was used by programs, the types of support services offered by PFA partner agencies, and how specific program criteria for PFA—such as staff qualifications, compensation, reporting, and others—were met. Recommendations from PFA providers and partners for improving implementation are also presented. Finally, findings from interviews with a sample of non-PFA providers offer insights regarding potential obstacles to participation in PFA.

It is important to note that the impacts of PFA presented in this qualitative report are based on feedback from PFA program and partner staff obtained through interviews and focus groups. The process study was not designed to gather quantitative or outcome data on PFA children, families, or providers, but rather to highlight successes and challenges facing participants in the PFA system in each county in the first full year of program implementation. Although participation in PFA may indeed result in many positive outcomes for children and families, this qualitative examination of process issues is not an appropriate method to detect the subtle changes in teaching and peer relationships in the classroom or quantifiable workforce development progress that may lead to the desired outcomes. Such child-, family-, and provider-level impacts are better examined using reliable observation tools designed specifically for this purpose. These types of standardized observations and other more objective data collection activities will be included in future phases of the process evaluation.

Other contextual factors to consider when reviewing this report include the design of PFA and the timing of this study. The intent of PFA is to build on the existing diverse system of publicly funded and private programs and upgrade preschool teacher education and quality. The vast majority of program staff interviewed for this study are teachers employed by pre-existing programs that have been “upgraded” by PFA. While a number of these teachers may have been hired specifically to work in PFA programs, PFA does represent a change for upgraded programs, in terms of new requirements for staff qualifications, classroom environments, and other quality standards. Given that PFA implementation has just begun in both counties, feedback from some providers may reflect the “growing pains” associated with the start-up phase of any new comprehensive educational initiative, as the administering agencies, partners, and the participating providers collaboratively identify and address challenges that emerge.



## **Chapter 2. Joining the PFA System**

PFA provides funding to enhance preschool program quality and increase access to services for families, particularly those who are low-income. To receive funding, programs must adhere to the PFA quality standards, as noted in Chapter 1. PFA staff described why they decided to join the PFA system and their experiences with the application process.

### **Motivation to Participate in PFA**

In both counties, providers viewed PFA as a mechanism to improve the quality of their programs. A San Francisco provider stated, “I [want to] bring quality to the program, which is why I applied to PFA.” Directors also discussed the additional resources they anticipated PFA would provide to the program, in the form of classroom materials and supplies, access to training and technical assistance, and funds to increase staff compensation.

#### ***San Francisco***

In one San Francisco program, PFA was seen as an opportunity to significantly transform the program’s preschool services, through an intensive renovation of the classroom and an upgrade of materials. Participation in PFA was leveraged with city and foundation funds to transform the program’s preschool classroom from one with fairly limited materials and equipment to one designed to reflect the highest quality ratings on the ECERS-R. The attraction of PFA for another San Francisco provider was that it would serve as an “equalizer” across the program’s mixture of Head Start-supported classrooms and CDE-funded (California Department of Education) classrooms, by enabling staff to implement the more comprehensive Head Start-like services across the entire program. According to two private providers in San Francisco, the motivation to join the PFA system was largely due to declining enrollment in the city, and the potential of PFA to help them meet enrollment targets.

#### ***San Mateo***

In San Mateo, PFA was also viewed as a means to improve program quality and support the professional development of staff. A San Mateo program director reported applying “to get the extra funding that can help us advance our program. That was one of the key motivators. We have always been struggling with our budget and trying to find the money to balance between State Preschool and for the staff. We have always dedicated ourselves to helping staff advance and that is a big thing with PFA...to help staff to advance themselves. We really are able to do that now because of PFA.” Another San Mateo program director talked about PFA within the broader context of the early childhood education (ECE) field, explaining, “It’s been already 30 years that the entire ECE field has not been recognized. We are not babysitters. We are hoping we can make a difference and get more public support with PFA—to get more long-term and recognition of our field.”

## **PFA Application Process**

As noted earlier, preschool programs must comply with a set of criteria in each county<sup>8</sup> to be eligible for PFA funds. These include demonstrating specific scores on the ECERS-R or FDCRS, documented by San Francisco State University – Gateway to Quality, the organization contracted to administer the ECERS-R or FDCRS for PFA sites. In San Francisco, the application process is formal in that providers must submit an application form to First 5 San Francisco. In the 2005-2006 program year, San Mateo had not yet developed a standardized application<sup>9</sup> that was used by the three PFA contractors, although each program had to demonstrate compliance with the PFA criteria to receive funding. Moreover, the leadership from two of the three San Mateo PFA contractors was involved in the planning stage of PFA. According to program directors, “applying” to implement PFA was a natural next step. Providers were asked to comment on the application process, as it existed in their county, and to identify recommendations for improving it.

### **San Francisco**

Among the eight San Francisco PFA providers interviewed, two of them felt the application process was satisfactory and did not offer recommendations for changing any aspects of it. One director described, “The process was very easy. The first year was not a lot of paper work at all if I compare it with other programs. The application process is...less work and paper work than other programs. It’s perfect for me.”

The remaining providers felt the application process was satisfactory overall, although some PFA staff suggested the process could be more efficient. Management staff from two PFA programs with multiple sites described the application as involving a significant amount of work at the central level to process information for each site. A program director explained having to spend a good deal of time revising site-level applications to ensure they were accurate, particularly in regard to information about subsidies and children’s age. She also described delays in the application process, which was partly due to having multiple program sites tied together in one application. “If one thing is wrong at one site, we have to wait. Instead of moving forward with one approval for all sites, it would be good to have multiple applications.”

When asked about the application process, two of the eight PFA providers made comments about the ECERS-R observations conducted by Gateway to Quality, and the delay they experienced between participating in the assessment and receiving their ECERS-R scores. When asked directly about their experiences with Gateway to Quality, the vast majority of providers offered more specific feedback, which is described in detail in Chapter 3.

One of the providers described some confusion with the application process, but emphasized that the lack of clarity was due to start-up challenges in the first year of PFA implementation. “Because it is a pilot, I am prepared to be more patient. Situations come up and some you never talk about and I believe that you cannot cover everything.” Many program directors and management-level staff reported that the assistance and support provided by First 5 San

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<sup>8</sup> The PFA funding criteria in San Francisco and San Mateo vary slightly, primarily in terms of staff education requirements, PFA wage rates, and the per child reimbursement rate.

<sup>9</sup> San Mateo has since developed a standard application form for 2006 PFA applicants.



Francisco staff was extremely helpful during the application process and throughout the contract period in sorting through new policies and developing new procedures.

### **San Mateo**

Questions to the PFA providers in San Mateo regarding the application process were complicated by the fact that two of the three contractors had been involved in the planning stage of PFA. Program leadership was therefore already familiar with the PFA funding criteria and SMCOE staff. By “applying” for PFA funds, programs were required to comply with the PFA criteria, yet they did not complete a formal application form that was consistent across programs. One provider said, “When we decided to apply, I don’t think there was anything [an application]. It was at the very beginning when people weren’t even applying.” Current PFA providers in San Mateo suggested formalizing the application process for future applicants (SMCOE has since developed such an application). All three PFA providers characterized their interactions with SMCOE as positive throughout the application period. Similar to San Francisco, comments from San Mateo PFA providers in regard to the application process included feedback on Gateway to Quality, which is presented in the next chapter.



## **Chapter 3. Environment Rating Scales**

In order to be eligible for PFA funding in both San Francisco and San Mateo Counties, preschool programs must have an external ECERS-R/FDCRS observation conducted by San Francisco State University – Gateway to Quality. Gateway to Quality is a collaborative effort among city agencies in San Francisco, community-based organizations, institutions of higher learning, child care providers, early childhood educators, and private foundations. Gateway to Quality’s trained and reliable assessors are available to conduct ECERS-R or FDCRS observations and develop Quality Improvement Plans for programs.

- In San Francisco, programs must demonstrate a minimum classroom score of 4.5 on the ECERS-R or FDCRS, and a minimum site composite score of 4.0 on the ECERS-R.
- In San Mateo, programs must have a 4.5 ECERS-R or FDCRS score or higher on all subscales to be eligible for PFA, and a score of 5 within 12 months of receiving funding<sup>10</sup>.

The following section describes PFA providers’ experiences with Gateway to Quality and the process of participating in an external ECERS-R review. In addition, information regarding challenges programs faced in complying with specific ECERS-R subscales is included. Feedback from providers did not vary significantly by county.

### **Experiences With Gateway to Quality**

In general, PFA providers in both San Francisco and San Mateo felt the process of preparing for and participating in an external ECERS-R review of their program was beneficial and resulted in improvements to the quality of the classroom environments. A program director explained how “PFA came in with a positive attitude—[they] didn’t have an attitude of ‘funding is limited and I have the power to pass you or not’. Our [Gateway to Quality] assessor came in with a totally different attitude and looked at the whole environment. After we got the score we sat down and talked about improvements.” Another program director explained, “We got really good help with the ECERS-R. Having Gateway...having other people come in and be more objective, it reduces the workload on staff [reviewing their own program].” Several programs also commented that having an external ECERS-R evaluator reduced burden on staff who lack the time to conduct such an intensive review. In several sites, the ECERS-R process was a strong motivator for staff to reflect on and improve their classroom settings. In one San Francisco program, teachers met regularly to prepare for the assessment, each taking ownership over a

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<sup>10</sup> Since data collected was conducted for the study, First 5 California has revised the ECERS eligibility requirements, due to the advocacy of San Mateo, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The point of entry-level score on the Environment Rating Scale for providers is now a rating of "4" which is obtained by averaging all 43 indicators of the ECERS or averaging all 40 indicators of the FDCRS. Within a period of 24 months, providers must receive an overall score of "5", which is obtained by averaging all 43 indicators of the ECERS or averaging all 40 indicators of the FDCRS. At entry-level and throughout their participation, providers must receive, at a minimum, an average of "3" on each of the seven sub-scales for the applicable environment rating scale.

portion of the tool. They described the process as extremely motivating, albeit challenging, citing unpaid hours spent in meetings and working in their classrooms to improve the quality of the classroom environment to meet ECERS-R criteria.

A large majority of the programs across both counties commented on the difference between conducting the ECERS-R internally (e.g., through a self-assessment process) and having an external assessment done by a trained and objective ECERS-R assessor. Despite a certain amount of stress and anxiety involved with preparing for the observation, it was ultimately a positive experience for many staff. Gateway to Quality assessors provided “new eyes” on the classroom. A program director reported, “The positive is that it is great for staff—having an outside person giving them ideas. [The process] gives them motivation immediately to make significant changes. It is good support, having an outside person [Gateway] to validate them—that’s a plus.” In San Mateo, one of the PFA providers talked about how PFA has resulted in a better understanding of the ECERS-R among staff, despite the fact that teachers had used the tool previously through a self-assessment process.

For the most part, providers in both counties—particularly teaching staff—tended to discuss the impact of the ECERS-R observations by Gateway to Quality in terms of improvements to the classrooms (e.g., room arrangement, use of new materials, labeling shelves). At least two program directors reported that the ECERS-R experience has promoted stronger staff-child interactions and instructional practices, although they were careful to note that preexisting training and mentoring efforts within the program were also designed to support staff in these areas. A program director reported, “It is more positive—they [the teaching staff] are more interested in the child as a whole and—not that they weren’t before—but PFA has brought a new meaning to them.”

The specific outcomes of participating in an external ECERS-R review varied across programs. For example, in some Head Start and State Preschool-funded programs, improvements based on the results of the ECERS-R assessment were relatively minor. For other programs, the ECERS-R served as a vehicle to make significant changes to the classrooms. Detailed information regarding program changes resulting from the external ECERS-R review are included in Chapter 4.

**Interactions With Gateway to Quality Staff.** Provider experiences with the staff from Gateway to Quality can be categorized in two ways: (1) onsite interactions with Gateway staff during the observation process, and (2) logistical interactions with Gateway to schedule observations and exchange information. For many providers, onsite experiences with Gateway were generally positive and staff felt the assessors provided helpful suggestions to improve the classroom environments. Staff at one San Mateo program voiced a desire to engage Gateway staff in a more interactive two-way feedback and discussion process with regard to their ECERS-R scores once they were received. Overall, comments were mixed, but were generally positive in regard to working with Gateway staff during the observation and follow-up process.

In regard to logistical interactions, PFA staff, particularly program directors and other management-level staff, expressed frustration with Gateway to Quality, citing delays in scheduling observations, receiving their ECERS-R scores, and returning phone calls. A director

summarized the comments voiced by several programs, stating, “The ECERS should have been handled differently. It would have been helpful to have received a letter with a timeline and expectations with things such as how long [the ECERS assessor] would be here, when we would hear the results, etc. We could have been better prepared for it. I had to keep calling to find out why it was longer than the two-week turnaround time promised [for results of the assessment]. We needed the official score to get the funding. It felt disorganized and there was a lack of response.” At least five PFA programs described difficulties in their logistical interactions with Gateway to Quality.

When asked about these concerns, Gateway to Quality readily acknowledged these challenges and described steps taken within the organization to address them, which include stronger supervision of the assessors and an internal reorganization of the staffing structure. In addition, according to Gateway to Quality staff, they have increasingly conducted “up front” work with programs prior to the assessment, including materials with information on ECERS-R items that programs have often misinterpreted or found difficult to meet. For the 2006-2007 program year, Gateway to Quality will hold an in-person meeting with each program to review the process and answer questions, prior to the observation.

**Perception of the ECERS as a “Pass-Fail” Test.** A PFA partner agency raised concerns regarding the growing perception among providers that the ECERS-R assessment is a “pass or fail” process. They recommended that more focus be placed on creating a system in which there are well understood procedures for reassessment for those programs that “fail” the first ECERS-R observation. Emphasis was placed on the need to create formal mechanisms, policies, and timeframes around reassessment that are clearly communicated to providers. A search of the transcriptions of provider interviews indicated that the words “pass” or “fail” were strongly associated with the ECERS-R and used when talking about the Gateway to Quality process. For example, a program director commented that she was not clear on the process if her program or sites did not “pass” the ECERS-R: “I wasn’t sure if there was a system to get reassessed and when I asked would get different answers from different folks.” Since interviews were conducted for this study, Gateway to Quality has instituted a reassessment policy.

**Training on the ECERS-R.** Two of the San Mateo PFA contractors provided other recommendations to improve the Gateway to Quality observation process through training, particularly assistance prior to the official assessment, either from SMCOE or Gateway to Quality. A staff member said, “I think that training would be beneficial. Training on the ECERS for the teaching staff. Training on the ECERS that is not done by your agency staff, but by Gateway staff, so you get the info ‘from the horse’s mouth.’” In addition, multiple staff from one San Mateo program requested greater clarity about the structure and purpose of the debriefing meeting with Gateway to Quality regarding their findings.

### **Challenges Associated with the Environment Rating Scales**

PFA staff were asked to describe challenges their programs face in meeting any of the ECERS-R/FDCRS subscales. Comments in both counties reflected challenges with the same issues: ECERS-R subscales that were related to facilities, items that required programs to allow certain activities or access to materials for a “substantial portion of the day”, and items related to health practices.

**Facilities.** Providers in both counties described problems with their facilities that limited their ability to comply with some ECERS-R criteria (e.g., sufficient space for children, lighting, ventilation, proximity to outdoor space, location of bathrooms). Most site staff who were interviewed felt these limitations were generally out of their control and improvements, if possible, would require any combination of funding, time for construction, and city approval and permits. Many reported that they would have preferred it if the restrictions of their facility had not affected their ECERS-R score when they had made accommodations to address such shortfalls (e.g., a program that lacks an outdoor playground but has made arrangements to transport children to a nearby park). A family child care provider noted that since some aspects of her facility cannot be changed, her efforts to adapt to the circumstances should be taken into account. “I did some things and you should give me credit for that. It is an apartment. They said I don’t [have] space for when a child wants to be by himself. They want to see a corner. When I feel that a child needs his own space, I put this mat out and I make boundaries so that a child can be alone. They should give me credit for doing that. This is an apartment, I cannot have a science area, a reading area, etc. I think my environment is very good. But because it is in the [FDCRS], they have to follow what the book says. I am doing something to meet the needs of the child and I cannot get credit for it.” While both San Francisco and San Mateo are working to support facility enhancements for providers, it remains a significant issue.

**Substantial Portion of the Day.** Many of the ECERS-R items require that materials are accessible or activities (e.g., outdoor play) are available to children for a substantial portion of the day, defined as 1/3 of the program’s operating hours. Teachers from one PFA site described the difficulties in meeting this requirement while maintaining their preferred daily schedule (e.g., conducting small group work, scheduling a specific amount of time for outdoor play). A teacher summarized the feelings of her colleagues, “We want to do more focused things, to provide specific intentional instruction to these children.” A management staff person from a San Mateo provider noted that the substantial portion of the day requirement was especially difficult for part-day programs (e.g., A substantial portion of the day in a four-hour program translates to 1 hour, 20 minutes).

**Health Practices.** In both counties, many sites reported that the handwashing and cleaning requirements on the ECERS-R are difficult for staff to meet. Teachers described the tension between having enough opportunities to engage meaningfully with children and the time needed to fully meet the ECERS-R health practices. A management-level staff person stated, “The most difficult part of the ECERS has been the health and safety—sanitizing sinks—these buildings vary, but they are old. But ECERS has this thing where after a child or a set of children use the sink, it needs to be sanitized. It’s been so disheartening to hear that over and over again. We can have sink police or we can have quality teachers interacting with children.”

Overall, many sites thought that the ECERS-R was a highly valuable tool in improving quality, although it raised challenges for staff and highlighted the need for funding and technical assistance. The ECERS-R process made program staff aware of their strengths and areas for improvement and provided a concrete basis for re-thinking and altering many of their practices in the interest of improving program quality. A San Francisco program director noted “The challenge is not the assessment process [itself] but the preparing for Gateway to come to assess.”

Funding to prepare for ECERS-R or to make improvements based on the resulting ECERS-R scores was requested by providers in both counties.





## **Chapter 4. Year 1 Impact of PFA**

One of the primary goals of the qualitative study was to investigate the impact of PFA on the first cohort of participating preschool programs. The ultimate goal of PFA is to ensure a high level of quality among participating programs countywide. Given the variation in the level of implementation of PFA quality standards across programs, the Year 1 impact of PFA funds also varied. When asked to articulate the impact of PFA funding to upgrade program services, staff highlighted a variety of topics—an overview of their feedback as it pertains to each county is presented in this chapter. Subsequent chapters of this report provide a more detailed look at specific components of the PFA system.

### **San Francisco**

In general, PFA providers discussed the overall impact of PFA in their first year of receiving funds in six major areas: (1) outreach and enrollment, (2) global impacts on program quality, (3) changes to the physical environments of the classrooms, (4) impacts on children’s learning and staff-child interactions, (5) enhanced science activities, and (6) benefits for staff.

#### ***Outreach and Enrollment***

Wu Yee Children’s Services, a San Francisco Resource & Referral Agency, is the enrollment and provider agency for PFA. The organization maintains a PFA phone line for the community, distributes information about PFA, and conducts outreach. Parents seeking preschool services are referred to PFA sites if they are eligible (or referred to other preschool options based on their needs). Parents then visit PFA providers and enroll in the program on-site. Wu Yee staff explained how they are revising the enrollment process for the next program year, by providing “enrollment packets” at each PFA site with all of the documents needed for family and children’s files. Wu Yee also will work individually with each PFA site to provide assistance with enrollment as needed.

In San Francisco, PFA is integrated with the Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) system in that parents can indicate they are interested in programs “other than CDE-funded spaces.” The Children’s Council, the Resource & Referral agency that manages the CEL, then distributes a mailing about PFA to parents who check this option on the CEL and directs them to Wu Yee Children’s Services. Integration of PFA and the CEL is still in a transition phase. The long-term plan is to continue to enable PFA sites, when they have open spaces, to check the CEL and recruit families as needed.

A handful of San Francisco PFA programs that participated in this study include a parent fee component (e.g., one Head Start/CDE-funded program that also operates a parent fee component, two family child care homes, one private center-based program, and one family resource center that offers a subsidized program with parent fees). The impact of PFA on families’ access to affordable preschool was most clearly articulated in a Head Start/CDE program that included a parent-fee program. This provider described how PFA enabled them to reduce parent fees in their tuition-based program and thereby increase access to preschool for families who may not

qualify for subsidized care. “We were able to enroll a lot of children whose parents did not qualify for CDE subsidized care. Cost of living is high in San Francisco. Parents are disappointed when they don’t qualify for CDE funds. With PFA, they get 2.5 hours of PFA free preschool and [we] take that cost off the parents fees and give parents a good discount [for a full-day program]. We are servicing families that we otherwise would not be serving. Most need full-time care because parents are working crazy hours. We were able to adapt our needs to PFA and it has worked out really well. We have several families that are being served that would not be able to be served otherwise.”

A management-level staff at the same program went on to say, “It [PFA] really has changed how we do outreach. It has opened up [and] added to our diversity—[we have more] non-subsidized families because we didn’t have that much before. It has helped us see that going outside the subsidized area has changed the classroom experience. It taught us how to think on our feet on enrollment and eligibility. It is not just poor children and now it’s open to all families. We are expanding our private fee in that way. [There is] more diversity in [the] classroom.” Similarly, a family child care provider described an increasing number of families leaving San Francisco due to the high cost of living, and how PFA has helped fill spaces in her program that might otherwise be left empty.

A program director noted, “I still think PFA is one of the city’s best kept secrets.” Outreach to families, particularly families with children who are English language learners, is needed. She recommended that First 5 San Francisco initiate a citywide public relations campaign as the program expands. Another program director discussed the difficulty of publicizing a “universal” program that currently is only available in a few high-need zip codes. She described receiving calls from parents who asked about “free preschool” and having to inform them about income eligibility requirements for some upgraded PFA sites, and that PFA currently is only available in certain zip codes. Another staff member said outreach to parents could be confusing, in terms of understanding the differences between PFA, CDE, Head Start, and school-based sites.

### ***Global Impacts on Quality***

Many of the San Francisco providers articulated the effect of PFA in terms of its global impact on program quality. PFA has promoted systemic change across program components, ensured equity across classrooms supported by different funding streams, and formalized program activities. One program director reported, “I was so proud to accomplish a vision that was something special for parents and teachers. The opportunities for children to learn were unbelievable. It [the upgraded classroom] was an optimum learning environment.” Other staff talked about the positive impact of PFA on the program as a whole. For example, a management-level staff person said “the PFA process has required [that] the whole site has to pass. Before it was, ‘I’ll take care of my classroom and you take care of your classroom.’ Now everyone has to support each other. Everyone has to help each other. That’s been helpful and more of a systemic movement.”

A San Francisco program director described the far-reaching influence of PFA, including an increase in staff knowledge regarding the use of equipment and materials, improvement in the physical environment of the classrooms, and greater training opportunities. Similar comments were made by a management-level staff person at the program, pointing out how PFA has

affected multiple aspects of the program. “[There were] safety changes, and more teacher trainings. [It] seems like teachers are really responsive to that kind of thing. If someone comes in and does a training they are inspired to make changes. They are very enthusiastic. They give reports after attending conferences. [There is] more interaction with parents and kids. The classrooms were rearranged. More [learning] centers.” For this provider, participation in PFA appeared to have a global reach across program components.

Similar comments were made by a site director, who emphasized how the ECERS-R assessment conducted as part of the PFA eligibility process served as a motivating force to improve many aspects of their program. She said, “We took the ECERS scores and created a challenge for ourselves. Everyone said we are going to do this. We worked on weekends. We got the training for three weekends. Everybody took an area [of the ECERS-R] and made it their own. Everyone was so responsive. It was a good incentive for us to move forward and create a community of learners.”

One program focused on how PFA helped elevate program practices across classrooms to the same standard of quality. A director of a program that operates Head Start- and CDE-funded classrooms reported, “[PFA was] a way to take Head Start principles and apply them to all children. That was always our goal—meet that standard across the board. PFA has helped us raise that standard.” The program now administers the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) for all children, rather than only those enrolled in Head Start classrooms. They were also able to reduce fees in the tuition-based component of their program to increase access for families who did not meet the CDE or Head Start eligibility guidelines.

A small number of PFA private providers participating in the interviews did not receive public preschool or child care funds prior to participating in PFA. Before joining the PFA system, the programs already implemented much of what is comprised in the PFA requirements, although staff now conduct these activities (e.g., parent conferences) in a more systemic way, with more documentation in place (e.g., written lesson plans). Staff from two programs described using the DRDP for the first time and how the tool has refined their approach to supporting children’s development.

### ***Physical Changes to Program Environments***

Upgrades to PFA settings are documented in detail in each program’s Quality Improvement Plan, the action plan developed from the results of the ECERS-R observation conducted by Gateway to Quality. Programs have access to quality improvement grants administered by the Low Income Investment Fund, to enhance classroom settings, based on their ECERS-R assessment. The spectrum of changes to the physical environment of San Francisco PFA classrooms reflects variations in program settings and their compliance with ECERS-R criteria, prior to PFA.

Programs in San Francisco described minor and major enhancements to the physical environment of their programs as a result of PFA funding and participation in the ECERS-R review process. At one extreme, the director of one San Francisco program used PFA as a vehicle to leverage additional funding and complete a significant renovation of their preschool classroom. “The environment was a catalyst for change and the realignment with ECERS. The new space improved access for children and created more opportunities for learning. [Before

PFA] the areas were more cornered and not as many children could have access to play areas at any given time. Now we have more learning areas.” Prior to PFA, “there were no sand and water tables, no exercise equipment.” A teacher added, “The children were bored. The old furniture took up a lot of space. Now there are so many toys, the children are not fighting for toys.” In comparison to this PFA site, other San Francisco PFA programs made more minor changes (e.g., improving a loft area for children, replacing the bathroom door), based on their ECERS-R assessment.

Other program enhancements included new or repaired furniture, new materials and toys to enhance learning centers, and more supplies. A site supervisor was enthusiastic about the materials they were able to obtain through PFA. She reported, “Environmentally, the room is better, the cabinets are lower, the teachers can see the kids better across the room. It has affected the kids, which affects the teachers. It has been very positive, a lot of positive energy.”

Other physical changes included a focus on improving learning opportunities during outdoor play. A PFA teacher described, “We have extended the environment in a better way, that is the big change. For example, indirectly we had certain activities outdoors. Now it is direct [intentional] that we have activities outdoors. Now we have extended literacy, math, science activities. So now, what is indoors is outdoors at the same time, so kids have [access] to them whether they are inside or outside.” Another teacher from the same site said, “Our environments inside and outside of the classroom have improved greatly. Before we may have been closing certain areas [of the classroom] so that we could pay more attention to others, but now everything is taken into consideration with the same amount of care and timing. That [ECERS-R] has pinpointed the things we wanted to work on.” Overall, reorganization of classrooms was identified as a common result of participating in the external ECERS-R assessment process. Many of the PFA sites described moving furniture and reorganizing interest centers to enhance children’s learning.

### ***Impacts on Teaching Practices and Staff-Child Interactions***

It is important to note that the impact of PFA on teaching strategies and staff-child interactions presented in this report is based on preliminary feedback from staff. In future phases of the PFA Evaluation, standardized observation tools designed specifically for the purpose of detecting quality staff-child interactions and other more objective data collection activities will be incorporated.

Some PFA staff in San Francisco commented that children’s experiences have been positively affected by the improvements in the classroom environments afforded by PFA. The teacher at one program reported, “We give the kids more choices, not too structured, accessibility to items, more space to leave things out, more choices to play.” Another program director said, “It is more positive. [Staff] are more interested in the child as a whole and, not that they weren’t before, but PFA has brought a new meaning to them.” At another program, a management-level staff person described how participation in PFA has impacted staff-child interactions. “Teachers are more proactive and aware of what’s happening with the kids. It’s helped people focus on interactions.” A teacher expanded on this idea by stating, “We were doing certain activities with the kids, but somehow we were not expanding it for them outdoors and that created...it kept the kids crowded inside. So now the kids are in smaller groups and that has greatly improved how the kids learn.”

Staff in one PFA program had never used the DRDP prior to their participation in PFA. According to teacher reports, the instrument was a welcome tool to help understand children's individual development. A teacher described, "The standards are much higher. [You are] forced to look at kids on a developmental continuum. You really look at children critically. I had never done the DRDP [before PFA]. It was the indicators. By looking at those children [in the context of the] indicators you get a better sense of where they are at." The teacher explained she is "more aware of what the children are doing. I notice more things that are probably pertinent to their development. I couldn't go back to the other program where I was also teaching [a non-PFA program]."

### ***Enhanced Science Activities***

Several PFA sites in San Francisco discussed the impact of PFA in terms of their participation in the Tree Frog Treks program, a science enhancement program funded through First 5 San Francisco. Tree Frog Treks conducts hands-on science activities in the classroom, professional development for teachers, and science activity kits for classroom use. Provider feedback on Tree Frog Treks is detailed in Chapter 5. An overview is included here, as many San Francisco PFA staff—particularly teachers—described the impact of PFA in terms of enhanced science activities.

Staff from at least 6 of the 8 programs that were contacted characterized Tree Frog Treks as an enhancement to their science curriculum. For example, a San Francisco PFA teacher reported, "Before we received PFA funds, we didn't focus our classes in the science area. This year we had the participation of Mr. Tree Frog, within the science program. In this program the theory is applied to the practice. If we are going to talk to the kids about the reptiles, it's better if the kids can touch them than if we just read about them. In this program kids can touch the animals. They feed them and can see how the texture of their skin is. Mr. Tree Frog comes to the school twice a month with snakes and live animals and stuffed iguanas. He also does scientific experiments, such as how to make an explosion out of vinegar soda and talks about earthquakes. Now the kids are very interested in science. They become little scientists. They ask their mother to bring them to the zoo, they want to know more about animals and they ask us a lot of questions." A management-level staff person at another PFA program also described integrating more science activities in the classroom with the support of Tree Frog Treks as a direct result of PFA.

### ***PFA Impacts on Staff***

The vast majority of San Francisco programs identified positive outcomes for staff as a direct result of participating in PFA. These benefits included increased professional pride among staff, more effective teamwork, and stronger motivation for program improvement. According to staff, PFA has made them feel recognized as a high-quality preschool provider and appreciated for the important role they play in children's development. A program director reported that PFA has made staff feel acknowledged for their work. Another program director described the motivation and buy-in of teachers to PFA. "That has given the extra push and given us some good energy." A site supervisor described the impact of PFA on her morale and that of her staff. "PFA has really helped me. Because looking at all this and seeing all the energy that is flowing

around through the parents and through the staff and the children is just ...it gives me energy to make sure the parents are more involved.”

A management-level staff person at one program reinforced the concept of PFA as a motivating force for staff. “The teachers’ attitudes changed, the teachers’ involvement, it has been a growth for them. Using the ECERS, they want to be more involved now. They look at things differently. They take the ECERS book and try different things. They are more aware of what is appropriate and what is not appropriate because of the ECERS. Of course, no one likes the paperwork. Because our site was chosen for PFA, it boosted their self-esteem and they felt really good that they were doing a great job.”

Staff at one PFA site talked at length about the impact of PFA on teamwork among staff. A management-level staff person said, “Once we got back the scores, it motivated staff after getting scores from assessors. We had lots of meeting around scores. What were we doing well? What were we doing that we needed to expand on?” Teachers began to meet regularly to discuss ways of improving their classrooms, one of whom reported, “We can see that we are having much better communication.” The site director added, “PFA pushed everyone because everyone has different expectations, everyone thinks differently. The energy and the effort that was put into it were amazing, it carries from parent to parent.”

Many providers expressed pride about participating in PFA. A family child care provider commented, “I am proud that I am part of the program. I passed all the requirements. I feel good.” Another family child care provider said, “I think that PFA has made me be more established. Now I can say I have a preschool. I can say I am a PFA site and I can identify myself that way. Before I could only say that I had a day care or that I took care of kids. I didn’t like when people called me a babysitter. I feel more of a professional working with PFA; I identified myself with PFA now. I can write that in the flyers. Sometimes parents don’t know about it, so I explain it to them. I am not a babysitter, here the kids learn something everyday. I don’t turn the TV on, I have a plan for the day.”

One of the PFA programs described the impact of PFA primarily in terms of improved training opportunities for staff, particularly in the area of literacy. A director noted that her program has a strong training program in place; PFA has provided a means to expand training opportunities for staff and enable more staff to attend trainings (e.g., CAEYC, DRDP). PFA also serves as a motivator to encourage teachers to obtain higher-level child development permits and/or degrees. More details about PFA training and technical assistance are provided in Chapter 5.

### ***Program Auspice in Relation to the Impact of PFA***

For San Francisco PFA programs that receive Head Start funds (which are required to meet standards in excess of licensing requirements), teachers did not articulate significant changes to the day-to-day operation of their programs as a result of their participation in PFA. A teacher said, “[Besides] the ASQ, everything else is the same [as it was before PFA].” Another teacher explained, “They already had a lot of literacy but they enhanced that. So there was a little more focus on what we already had in place but just beefed it up a little.” A management-level staff person at another site reported, “The pay scale has increased due to PFA and the staff have access to resources such as the Learning Circles and Tree Frog Treks, but other than that, things

haven't changed much. Things in the classroom haven't changed much. There is more paperwork." A staff member said, "It's hard to quantify the impact of [PFA], especially in the Head Start context." A program director explained that PFA has not strongly altered daily operations, because they were already meeting the high-quality PFA requirements through their Head Start program. She did note that they have more materials to enhance the learning centers in the classroom: "We have more manipulatives, more painting, more books, more materials."

## **San Mateo**

The three San Mateo PFA contractors described the impact of PFA in ways very similar to providers in San Francisco: (1) outreach and enrollment in PFA classrooms, (2) global impact on program quality, (3) improvements to the physical environment of classrooms, (4) changes in teaching strategies and staff-child interactions, and (5) benefits for staff.

### ***Outreach and Enrollment***

SMCOE and the San Mateo Child Care Coordinating Council (4Cs) facilitate outreach and enrollment for PFA. Multiple outreach strategies have been utilized, including posting PFA application information on the SMCOE and First 5 San Mateo County websites, working with the target school districts to help disseminate applications to families, and conducting a house-to-house PFA mailing to residents of the Ravenswood community. Outreach information about PFA has been integrated into 4Cs referral information, including a brochure for parents. SMCOE staff publicize the program in the county through workshop presentations and community fair materials, and press releases to target communities. In 2005-2006, there were over 20 public presentations conducted for parents, preschool/child care providers and other community groups.

In regard to enrollment, SMCOE manages enrollment of new PFA spaces, whereas the 4Cs and the PFA sites themselves are responsible for enrollment for upgraded PFA classrooms. SMCOE conducts outreach for new PFA spaces and forwards the applications they receive from parents to the 4Cs to ensure families are placed on the CEL as appropriate. Currently, PFA is not part of the CEL system operated by the 4Cs, due to a variety of reasons. Given that 2005-2006 was the first year in which the State mandated the use of the CEL, SMCOE delayed integrating PFA with the CEL until any first-year issues were identified and addressed. In addition, there was concern that the CEL software used at the time would not be compatible with the lottery system used for new PFA spaces (the 4Cs has since changed software programs). Alternatively, 4Cs distributes mailings to parents about PFA who are on the CEL, referring them to the PFA phone line. There is continued dialogue among the 4Cs and SMCOE about how PFA and the CEL can work together. While SMCOE decided to pilot the outreach process for new PFA spaces by their organization in the first full year of program implementation, their long-term plan is to include PFA on the CEL.

Management staff at one program talked broadly about recruitment for new PFA programs. She reported that recruiting a diverse group of families to enroll in PFA was a challenge. "Trying to appeal [to] a lot of socioeconomic classes...it's great when you have that diversity of kids. Ideologically, it is a great idea. Executing that dream, it's difficult." They noted that recruiting families for a full-day program, with PFA embedded in the morning, was challenging, given that

many families could not pay for the wrap-around care. Using CDE funds for the afternoon session entails attending to additional eligibility requirements. A staff person said, “It’s very difficult to enroll a diverse classroom in the way that PFA would like to see.” The challenge of recruiting families to participate in PFA embedded in a full-day program was also identified by First 5 San Mateo and SMCOE as a key issue that must be addressed as they plan to expand PFA in the future. Factors which may hinder enrollment of families in full-day PFA programs need to be examined more fully and strategies developed to encourage or facilitate their participation.

### ***Global Impact on Program Quality***

According to one program director, PFA has served as an effective mechanism to enhance program services. “We raise the bar for the early childhood field. By being a part of PFA, the message it sends to staff about quality. It’s just not about the standards. It’s about staff development, from training to compensation to support. The funding comes [with] a lot of work, but administrative-wide, PFA has helped with elevating the entire field in terms of quality.” The director emphasized that “being part of a PFA is bringing us to a different level, [PFA is] increasing quality. We welcome it.”

Another program director in San Mateo described PFA as a strategic tool to reflect on and enhance various aspects of the program. “PFA helps us to strategize, to give our support differently. To think about ways to have a different approach to staff training, how do we articulate better to staff [about best practices]. PFA really helps us. It’s giving us a lot to think about and make action plans. For us, the benefit of PFA is really the resources, extra pair of eyes, deepen our action plans...giving us more tools and skills.”

A PFA management-level staff person talked about the tangible impacts of PFA across the entire program. “The PFA initiative has led classroom standards higher. ECERS is how we are providing higher quality. We get monitored by [the training and technical assistance coordinator] who comes out and suggested things we should do in the classroom. It is very helpful. Teachers at the sites are in training. The bar has been raised for professional growth. A lot more support has been created for supervisors for professionally developing their staff and we have support to bring in floaters. All teachers have been motivated at our site to start to study. PFA has restructured human resources. There is a lot more staff support. We have the availability of floaters and subs so staff can take classes. [There] are a lot [of] trainings for parents. The language institute training [the Early Childhood Language Development Institute], that has been helpful.”

### ***Physical Changes to the Environment***

All of the PFA contractors in San Mateo described the impact of PFA in terms of physical enhancements to classroom environments. A program director explained that one of the main impacts of PFA has been a dramatic improvement in the aesthetics of their program. Teachers greatly appreciated the new supplies and materials in the classrooms. Several teachers reported that parents had noticed the program enhancements and were very pleased. One teacher reported, “It is amazing, everybody is happy. The parents really like it...the parents of the children are the most happy.” A program director provided feedback on the ECERS-R process and the results of the observations on the program. “The environments were tightened up. They took a critical look at the ECERS and were able to follow it to a tee in a sense. These were state preschool



[classrooms] that were already doing the self-assessments for the ECERS, but the ECERS changed and it became a little more strict. It came hand-in-hand with PFA.”

Action plans for improving program quality based on the results of the ECERS-R scores are documented in Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) developed by Gateway to Quality and the PFA programs. At the time of this study, some San Mateo PFA contractors had not yet completed this process. However, PFA staff highlighted key physical enhancements to the classroom environments that have occurred or are planned over the long term, including:

- Reorganizing classroom furniture and learning centers,
- Ensuring program facilities comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (e.g., replacing round doorknobs with ones operable with limited use of hands, modifying an outdoor play area to ensure all children can access it, etc.),
- Labeling shelves with words or symbols,
- Making water accessible in outdoor play, and
- Acquiring more materials, toys, and, in particular, books.

### ***Teaching Strategies and Staff-Child Interactions***

San Mateo PFA programs discussed changes in their programs that influenced teaching strategies and impacted children’s learning. One PFA program currently is devoting more time to supporting staff-child interactions through increased training and mentoring, although staff noted this effort was implemented prior to PFA. A teacher from the same program highlighted the program’s approach to “substantial portion of the day” (the criterion in the ECERS-R that focuses on children’s access to materials throughout the program day), inferring that children’s experiences in the classroom have been positively impacted, as a result of their participation in PFA.

Another PFA contractor described increased observation and documentation of children over the last year of PFA implementation, for both PFA upgraded classrooms and non-PFA classrooms operated by the program. “We did a whole revamp that went program wide. We didn’t make changes specifically to PFA [classrooms], but we made them to the whole program because of PFA. The rest of the program has benefited because of some of the PFA pieces that are happening.” The third PFA contractor discussed the impact of the PFA staff-child ratio in terms of stronger supervision of children. As noted earlier, findings regarding adjustments in teaching strategies and staff-child interactions are based on staff reports which may not entirely reflect more subtle changes that have occurred in PFA classrooms. Future evaluation activities will be designed to detect, and where possible, measure these types of changes over time.

### ***Benefits of PFA for Staff***

Program directors, management staff, and teachers often described the impact of PFA in terms of beneficial outcomes for staff. For example, each of the three San Mateo PFA programs provided positive feedback on the training and technical assistance opportunities afforded through PFA. A program director reported that PFA has provided more support for staff, particularly through the SMCOE Technical Assistance Coordinator. The Technical Assistance Coordinator works with PFA sites to help them meet or exceed the PFA quality standards by providing training, technical

assistance, and access to resources. In addition, PFA has enabled more staff to participate in professional development workshops. For one program, PFA funds supported the hiring of an education specialist, whose responsibilities included conducting ECERS-R observations for the program's classrooms (both PFA and non-PFA classrooms) and providing technical assistance to teachers. Line staff receive regular one-on-one support from the education specialist, which was described by management as a critical element toward improving and supporting program quality.

PFA in San Mateo provides funds for a mental health consultant to work with programs. This resource was identified as a key support for all levels of program staff. A management-level staff person said, "The other thing is our mental health support. We got to enhance that [with PFA]. We had these pieces in place, they just weren't very well funded." According to staff, the mental health support has had a wide-ranging impact on the program, benefiting the children, families, staff, and program management. Program staff characterized the mental health services as "extremely helpful" both "personally as well as programmatically." These types of comments mirror other feedback from program staff with regard to how PFA has helped to augment existing activities by creating a broader system of support for the program.

The management staff from one PFA contractor described an increase in staff accountability as a result of PFA, including teachers in PFA and non-PFA classrooms across the program. Greater accountability was tied to a number of variables such as the high expectations built into the job descriptions posted for PFA teachers, the screening and hiring process, participation among PFA teachers in a greater number of meetings compared to non-PFA staff, requiring a bachelor's degree for the lead teacher, and enhanced teamwork among teachers. A management-level staff person said, "I think the accountability of staff was increased, so their perception of the work they were doing definitely became more of a requirement, or they became more accountable. Because we were hiring BA-level folks, they were able to see more of an income and so there was more value in the work that they were doing. The teamwork of certain classrooms was excellent and it was nice to see the shared responsibilities between the BA and the AA teacher, which is the model that we always go for."

Staff from one program discussed the benefit of PFA for the workforce, including staff returning to school to advance their education and more mentorship among staff. A project director for a different PFA program talked about the impact of encouraging staff to pursue higher levels of education and the skills they brought back to the program. "I think that even in an indirect way—the work associated with higher levels of education—that has had a broader impact. We have so many of our staff back in school. For staff, they are getting higher pay because of that [and] they are coming back with stronger skills. There is so much writing that is required of teachers right now. In terms of lesson plans, those skills are really critical."

Staff, management, and teachers across the three San Mateo programs commented that PFA has impacted how they view themselves as professionals. A program director reported, "The staff who are doing a wonderful job are feeling very professional about their role as a PFA teacher. I think that is one of the big benefits."

### **Program Auspice in Relation to the Impact of PFA**

Similar to San Francisco, Head Start classroom staff in San Mateo described the impact of PFA on the day-to-day operation of the program as relatively mild, although they discussed the benefits of the material upgrades to classroom settings and participation in the external ECERS-R review. While PFA has provided funds for training, technical assistance, and staffing, Head Start teachers did not necessarily link these enhancements with PFA, as they fit well into the context of Head Start, which has a strong training system. As one teacher described, “[PFA is] the same standard that Head Start already had followed. [With PFA] we have additional people come in to observe our classrooms, but as far as the requirements, there are no changes. We still had the ECERS before and the same high standards. I think it may be more of a difference [impact of PFA] maybe for administrators—for the teacher director—overlooking our job and monitoring our classrooms.” Another teacher added, “I guess we looked more into it [the ECERS-R] and studying it more to be sure that things were there [because of PFA], but...no drastic changes.”

### **Family Partnerships**

PFA providers were asked to describe ways in which PFA has impacted the strategies they employ to partner with families. Funding requirements in both San Francisco and San Mateo stipulate that PFA providers engage parents and families in their children’s preschool experiences. To this end, PFA programs must schedule regular parent meetings, provide regular communication with parents about the progress of their children, connect parents/families to education opportunities, provide verbal and written information to assist families in their efforts at home, welcome family input in all aspects of the program including curriculum and evaluation, promote shared decision-making, and provide individual conferences with parents each year to discuss their child’s progress.

It is important to note that in the 2005-2006 program year, PFA in both counties did not specifically set aside funds to be used toward implementing major family partnership activities or initiatives across grantees (although the PFA-funded training offered by the Early Childhood Language Development Institute includes a series of workshops for parents, as well as staff). In 2005, SMCOE conducted a search with the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center (PCRC) to hire an AmeriCorps\*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) member to support family engagement efforts across some of the PFA sites<sup>11</sup>. Despite an exhaustive search (in which three potential hires were identified, but for various reasons, did not accept the job offer), the effort was not successful. In 2006, SMCOE plans to integrate family engagement activities through the Peninsula Partnership’s School Readiness Initiative and their kindergarten transition specialist.

Each of the San Francisco and San Mateo sites reported that they implemented family involvement and partnership strategies as a central component of their programming prior to

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<sup>11</sup> AmeriCorps\*VISTA provides full-time members to nonprofit, faith-based and other community organizations, and public agencies to create and expand programs that ultimately bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty.

PFA. Programs make referrals, offer parenting classes, provide family support services, support family involvement in the classroom and at home, and hold meetings with parents/guardians. For example, a San Francisco PFA teacher reported, “We have trainings for the parents to understand the curriculum, health classes, and nutrition. They are always invited to come to the classroom. We have, at the beginning [of the program year], home visits.” Head Start PFA teachers pointed to the program’s family partnership component, in which staff engage in collaborative partnerships with families to establish family goals, strengths, and identify necessary services and other supports.

While all of the PFA programs described family partnership strategies that existed prior to their participation in PFA, interviews with providers highlighted some changes that have occurred in this area. For example, staff from a San Mateo program administered the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) at the beginning of the program year. A new tool for teachers, they described the process as providing a valuable opportunity to build relationships with families and learn about the children at the start of the school year. Similarly, a San Francisco program reported that, with PFA, they have begun to formally schedule parent conferences. While they communicated regularly with families prior to PFA, parent conferences have become a more intentional aspect of their program. A San Francisco site appreciated that parents have attended Tree Frog Treks activities in the classroom. “It gives parents some thought about what is happening. It gives them a sense of what the kids are doing. It boosts the parents that want to come and participate.” A San Francisco and a San Mateo site both reported that parents have noticed the changes in the classroom that PFA has afforded. A San Francisco PFA teacher said, “Parents always saw the kids playing with blocks, bicycles—but not really structured—some of the classrooms were doing it but others were not. So finally because we have developed these areas and we have the materials, the parents have noticed it and the parent support has increased because we explain to them why we made the changes.”

In sum, PFA has not resulted in broad or sweeping changes in regard to how staff partner and involve families in their children’s learning and development—nor is PFA currently funded to do so. All of the PFA sites reported that they meaningfully engage with parents and other family members, as they did prior to receiving PFA funds. However, as noted above, participation in PFA has resulted in changes related to family involvement across some PFA classrooms to date, including the additional participation of parents in completing the Ages and Stages Questionnaire with staff, and families’ increased levels of support with regard to new classroom resources (e.g., Tree Frog Treks) and the reconfigured use and arrangement of learning materials and activity centers in PFA classrooms.

## **Chapter 5. PFA Support Services**

San Mateo and San Francisco provide a variety of training and technical assistance resources to PFA contractors. In San Francisco, these support services include Learning Circles, which are quarterly meetings of PFA providers, a bus tour of PFA model sites to promote cross-site learning and networking among staff, arts and science enhancement activities, and literacy support through Raising a Reader®. In addition, PFA providers are monitored by Wu Yee Children’s Services, a San Francisco Resource & Referral Agency, whose staff also link providers to other supports offered to the provider community by Wu Yee, such as the CARES program.

In San Mateo, PFA provides the assistance of the PFA Technical Assistance Coordinator, Early Childhood Language Development Institute training, the Raising a Reader® book bag program, and mental health consultation/support. PFA also provides paid professional development days for staff to participate in training and links to services delivered through the San Mateo Resource & Referral Agency, the Child Care Coordinating Council.

Both counties also partner with other agencies to support PFA programs and address issues that impact the broader ECE community. These include organizations that focus on workforce development, facilities, policy, communication with providers, and quality improvement. This chapter summarizes feedback from PFA providers on the direct training and technical assistance support they generally receive on-site or through their preschool program in some way. A description of all the partner agencies is provided in Chapter 11.

Across both counties, the vast majority of PFA providers characterized the resources available through PFA as highly positive. During discussions with PFA staff, a number of general challenges or impediments to effectively participating in training opportunities were also raised, and are described below.

### **San Francisco**

**Tree Frog Treks.** In San Francisco, most providers stated that Tree Frog Treks was an effective resource to enhance science in the classroom. Staff from many of the PFA sites noted that children and teachers enjoyed the hands-on experiences that “Mr. Science” (the founder of Tree Frog Treks who visits classrooms to conduct activities) brought to the classroom, emphasizing that the children typically do not otherwise have access to these types of opportunities (e.g., touching natural objects, handling a live animal).

In addition to providing services directly to children, Tree Frog Treks serves as a professional development opportunity for teachers. PFA has offered a city-wide Tree Frog Treks training for early childhood education staff. Tree Frog Treks staff also work with PFA teachers during visits to provide guidance on the use of the science kit. One program director explained that it is beneficial for program staff to learn from an expert who comes to the classroom, versus attending an external training.

Several PFA staff members (management and teachers) commented that the activities conducted by Tree Frog Treks in the classroom were not considered developmentally appropriate for preschool children. According to these staff, the science demonstrations are too advanced and adult-directed. In addition, program staff provided mixed feedback on the science kits they received through the program (a kit of science activities, including all of the necessary materials and instructions for teachers). At least four programs liked the science kits and used them in their classrooms with success. One program director noted parents had inquired about how to extend the science lessons to activities that could be done at home. Two programs did not feel the science kits were as useful. A program director suggested that the science kits were too teacher-focused; children could not be meaningfully involved in the science activities, and the program did not use the kits very much. Another program director thought the science kits were difficult for most teachers and suggested diversifying the type of science resources available to staff. Despite these concerns, one program director suggested that there is more demand for Tree Frog Trek services than the organization can currently handle. “There is only one Mr. Science. We have eight classrooms and we are only one center. What about other classrooms, other sites? We have a difficulty trying to schedule him.” During this first year, “Mr. Science” reported that he attempted to visit all classrooms himself in order to launch the program with PFA, but the organization was in the process of training a cadre of additional staff to increase their capacity to deliver the classroom-based services to PFA sites.

**Learning Circles.** The Learning Circles, quarterly meetings of PFA staff at First 5 San Francisco, received high praise. For example, a site supervisor found the exchange of information that occurred during the Learning Circles beneficial, with staff from different PFA sites sharing successful implementation strategies. She reported, “To be able to bring this information and share it with the staff, it makes staff feel that they are being represented and their work is being taken into consideration and appreciated...and that things are moving for the better.” One teacher enjoyed the networking aspect of the Learning Circles. “What I also like about the Learning Circle meetings is that you can compare site by site. You can hear problems other sites are facing and give ideas to each other. They are coming here Saturday [a bus tour organized by First 5 staff for PFA teachers to tour various PFA sites] and we feel proud of that.” When asked if there were ways to enhance the Learning Circles, several staff stated it was difficult to leave their programs to attend the daytime meetings, given the travel time to and from downtown San Francisco, and cited difficulties locating substitutes to cover them in the classroom, and with the expenses involved (e.g., paying for parking or BART).

San Francisco PFA providers expanded on other challenges related to professional development. A common theme across many PFA sites was the need for site-specific training. Staff from one program talked at length about trainings that were duplicative of previous workshops in which they had participated or were not applicable to their particular needs. A site supervisor recommended that sites have local control over the use of TA funds to hire consultants based on their unique circumstances. Another provider suggested that training should be centered on a set of themes, such as art or literacy, in order for participants to select topics that are most interesting and/or relevant to their programs. Overall, San Francisco PFA sites appreciated the supports provided to them through PFA.

Management staff across the programs praised the help they received from First 5 PFA staff. “I think [the First 5 PFA staff] did a fantastic job listening to agencies like us. If I have concerns I call [First 5] and [they] always gives me good support.” Tree Frog Treks was popular with some programs, although some sites had yet to schedule an event with the agency and a number of staff who used the resources found it difficult to engage children in the science kit activities. The Learning Circles were appreciated for the information exchange and networking they provided, but some staff found it difficult to attend the meetings during the day. In addition, staff voiced a need for more control over the types of training opportunities available, to better align them with their needs.

## **San Mateo**

**Mental Health Consultation.** In San Mateo, feedback from providers regarding training and technical assistance funded through PFA was positive. In particular, staff emphasized the value of the mental health services for staff and families provided by Parents Place. Parents Place, a full service family resource center for families with children of all ages, is managed by Jewish Family and Children’s Services (JFCS). Parents Place offers a wide array of services to help improve the retention of children in school and build strong, effective families as parents guide their children to adulthood. Parents Place provides consultation, staff training, prevention and early intervention services to licensed, early childhood programs that serve low-income children and families. In San Mateo, Parents Place works with PFA sites to provide mental health consultation to staff to promote optimal relationships. Parents Place supports “anything within the realm of relationships – parent to staff – staff to staff – staff to child – parent to child” to help improve the quality of services. In the 2006-2007, mental health consultation services will be available at ten PFA sites, compared to four sites in 2005-2006. Given that PFA classrooms operated by Head Start programs have access to their own team of mental health consultants, the expansion of the Parents Place scope of work will mean that mental health support will be available in some form at all PFA programs.

Feedback from Parents Place staff and PFA program management emphasized how JFCS supports teachers in their work. “They feel supported....their sense of efficacy is supported and enhanced...they are given the tools and they develop in themselves that sense that they can manage these complicated behaviors [among children], and manage complicated relationships with parents.” In addition, teachers “feel like they have a place to share their experience and to feel supported through those difficulties.”

PFA provider and partner staff felt that Parents Place supports children who may not receive services elsewhere. Children may not qualify for services through special education or the school district because they demonstrate a mixture of behaviors (e.g., aggressiveness, delays in social emotional development, lack of focus, problems with transitions) or lack a specific or diagnosed issue such as a speech or language delay. Other families cannot effectively access services due to language barriers. According to PFA staff and partners, these children who are not typically served by the special education system are supported by Parents Place, which is also helping to fill a gap in support for teachers.

One management-level staff person said, “With Parents Place, they can also work with the parents. Again, they can be another objective eye with the parents. They are removed,

knowledgeable. They have the trust and the rapport. They can help develop a plan for a child with problems and help the child's emotional health. The counselors are able to work with both personal issues that staff have and they work with kid's issues. And if there are issues between staff, they serve as a mediator. They can observe in the child's home and bring that information back to the teachers." A PFA program director recommended the service be expanded to provide more hours of mental health support to staff each week. For many programs, the mental health support was viewed as a critical support for staff.

**Raising a Reader®.** The Raising A Reader® (RAR) program is designed to foster parent-child bonding and early literacy skills critical for school success by engaging parents in a routine of daily reading with their children. Raising A Reader® fosters a reading routine with children by rotating book bags filled with high-quality picture books into families' homes each week. The books feature artwork, age-appropriate language and multicultural themes. Parents are taught "read aloud" strategies anchored to language development research and story-telling. In San Mateo, RAR has been implemented in approximately 450 sites, including family child care homes, center-based programs, and home visiting programs. RAR staff provide training and materials, including books in English and Spanish, to PFA sites.

The Raising a Reader® program is well regarded in San Mateo County. An education specialist at one PFA program reported, "Any program that you can get kids to engage with books is a great idea. It definitely adds to the quality." A management-level staff person from another contractor appreciated the benefits and the flexibility of the program, given that it could be implemented at any point during the year. "I think that [Raising a Reader] is always very positive. Staff go to the Raising a Reader support trainings. [The RAR trainer] is very easy to work with. We appreciate the Raising a Reader component."

**The Early Childhood Language Development Institute (ECLDI).** The ECLDI offers training for providers and parents to support children in maintaining their home language and culture while learning English. Housed at the SMCOE, the ECLDI is a research-based training program that helps early childhood educators and parents provide a strong foundation in first and second language development and literacy for young children. The ECLDI offers a series of hands-on training for PFA classroom teachers with a follow-up session and workshops for parents. ECLDI also works with other PFA partner agencies (e.g., Raising a Reader®, the community colleges) to train them on bilingual language development and resources they can use in their work with preschool teachers. Management staff were positive about the support provided by ECLDI. Some management staff further qualified that care should be taken to ensure the training is translated effectively into everyday classroom practices. In 2006-2007, there will be more focus by ECLDI on individual mentoring and coaching for PFA staff.

**Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator.** In San Mateo, a PFA Technical Assistance Coordinator, employed by SMCOE, provides technical assistance, professional development, and support to PFA subcontractors, providers, and partners. The Technical Assistance Coordinator has a range of responsibilities, including working with program directors to develop year-long monitoring and technical assistance plans, conducting PFA orientations, assisting with enrollment, monitoring compliance and implementation of PFA quality standards, providing on-site technical assistance, and/or arranging training sessions for PFA staff. In addition, the



Coordinator works with PFA programs to set up systems to collect data, including child and family records, and provides support to PFA staff at SMCOE through participation on commissions and task forces of the project. In 2005-2006, the Coordinator conducted pre-service and in-service meetings, site visits, and individual mentoring and coaching opportunities. Training assistance was provided on the topics such as curriculum, the classroom environment and materials, child screening and DRDP assessments, child observation and portfolio development, and language and literacy.

In addition to the Technical Assistance Coordinator, SMCOE provides reimbursement for a limited number of staff development days (the current standard is four days), individually negotiated with each program. The funding for staff development is to be used for required PFA activities, including PFA-sponsored meetings, trainings and professional development opportunities, and PFA educational/classroom requirements (e.g., completion of ASQ screenings, child assessments, etc.).

Many teachers across the three PFA contractors reported that the support provided by the SMCOE Technical Assistance coordinator was helpful. The Coordinator was described as providing constructive feedback to enhance classroom settings. According to the teaching staff at one site, the TA Coordinator helped them learn about PFA, develop an efficient filing system to maintain children's assessments and other paperwork, make arrangements for trainings, and improve how the classroom was arranged. In another program, the TA Coordinator helped the program develop an effective system to support the observation of children, which was extremely valuable, according to staff.

Other provider feedback suggested that the role of the TA Coordinator should be clarified. For example, one management staff member was confused about the extent to which feedback from the TA coordinator was mandated. "We did not know how to interpret [feedback]—is it a suggestion or a directive?" and was concerned about the possibility that guidance from PFA may come into conflict with the site's own teaching strategies and philosophy. In one large program with an established TA system, management staff discussed the potential for overlapping roles between the TA Coordinator and the program's own staff. Program staff stressed the need to align program-level training systems with technical assistance provided through SMCOE by the Coordinator.

The TA Coordinator also discussed the importance of understanding each program's unique structure, resources, and systems for technical assistance, and how best the SMCOE could serve as an additional resource. While one of the Coordinator's responsibilities is to ensure that programs implement the PFA classroom requirements, the primary intent of her role is to provide assistance that supports and aligns with program practices and curriculum. Comments by staff that suggested a lack of clarity regarding the role of the Coordinator may be due to start-up challenges in the first full year of program implementation. As PFA moves into the second year, the Coordinator has more tools and documentation in place, as part of the PFA reapplication packet, describing the quality standards and classroom requirements, and how the Coordinator monitors and supports the implementation of those standards. SMCOE staff discussed a continuing learning process for themselves and the PFA programs regarding the role of the TA Coordinator and a desire to adapt and clarify this role over time to best meet the needs of PFA staff.

Similar to San Francisco, PFA providers in San Mateo County also talked about the need for specialized trainings based on the unique needs of each program. Two of the PFA contractors felt the required PFA trainings were not helpful for everyone and there was concern that PFA training would become too prescriptive at some point in the future. One program also noted that PFA trainings can overlap with other training the program already has in place. A management staff person suggested the need for a clearinghouse of training information, noting that teachers often feel overwhelmed by the number and various types of trainings—from multiple sources—available to them. Representatives from several PFA partner agencies also commented that programs can be inundated by the number of announcements from various agencies in regard to training, technical assistance, and other resources available to them.

Overall, San Mateo staff were positive about the support services provided to them through PFA. The mental health, ECLDI, and site-specific TA coordination were generally well received. The Raising a Reader® program was praised for its benefits and flexibility. Overall, most PFA staff characterized the support of the TA Coordinator as positive. Two of the PFA contractors in San Mateo stressed that the role of the Coordinator should continue to be integrated and aligned with ongoing efforts that are unique to each program. Providers also emphasized the need for specialized trainings based on the unique needs or priorities of each program.

## **Chapter 6. Serving PFA Children with Special Needs**

PFA programs are expected to serve children of all skill and ability levels to fully comply with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and other federal and state civil rights laws. PFA programs are required to administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), which is a parent/teacher-completed child-monitoring tool that screens for developmental delays or disorders. Feedback on the ASQ varied across the two counties. Program staff also gave their input on the service delivery system for children with special needs.

### **Ages and Stages Questionnaire**

As noted above, the ASQ is a tool designed to be completed by parents and caregivers, although it relies on parent observations of their children in the home. In addition to screening for developmental delays, the questionnaire provides an opportunity for PFA staff to develop a relationship with parents and learn about their child early in the program year. The tool is currently available in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

### **San Francisco**

In San Francisco, the High Risk Infant Interagency Council (HRIIC), a county-wide parent/professional collaborative concerned with infants and young children with special health care needs, and their families, coordinates the administration of the ASQ among community-based PFA sites (school district PFA sites assume responsibility for the ASQ).

The primary theme which emerged in regard to the ASQ was that the tool sometimes duplicated existing program screening systems. A PFA program director remarked that the ASQ was helpful, although it duplicated the purpose and activities of their established screening and referral system for children with special needs. These types of comments were reinforced by another PFA program. A management staff person said, “The ASQ process has been huge. Even sites that don’t have a Head Start program, we do have a comprehensive screening. We have mental health and social workers at the site and we do our own screening—we have a system. We do referrals through the school district.”

Concerns about the ASQ were echoed by almost all of the school district staff participating in the interviews. They reported that the school district has an existing system in which children are screened and connected to services, known as the Student Success Team (SST). According to SFUSD, the SST is a problem solving and coordinating structure that provides an opportunity for school staff, family members, and community agencies to present their concerns about individual students, and through discussion and study, to plan a positive course of action, assign responsibilities and monitor results.

Staff across several PFA sites discussed the appropriateness of the ASQ. One PFA teacher expressed concern that many of the families enrolled in her program were under-performing readers and/or speak a language other than English. She reported, “you have to hold the hand [of the parent]” to get the ASQ done. The teacher also commented that approximately 80% of the

families from her classroom are Asian, yet the ASQ was not available in any Asian languages. (Since the interviews were conducted for this study, the ASQ has become available in Chinese).

One teacher felt the ASQ was not appropriate for families who may not have certain items at home that they need in order to complete the questionnaire, (e.g., puzzles) As a result, they have to individually guide the parents, which takes about 30 minutes. In his opinion, “For parents, the ASQ is just another form. We have to chase them to get them back. The parents work and most of them cannot be out of work or they lose money from their paycheck. You feel guilty asking them [to take the time to complete the questionnaire].”

Several San Francisco providers mentioned HRIIC’s assistance in coordinating the administration of the ASQ. One staff member described, “I was really glad that someone came to do the ASQ. I was glad. I did facilitate that though [with the staff from HRIIC]. Some parents were concerned about it. We didn’t want to burden parents. We have our own observations and conferences. It was one more thing we had to do with them.”

One San Francisco director remarked that PFA has enabled them to administer the ASQ in their state-funded or parent fee classrooms, rather than only in their Head Start classrooms. For this program, the issue was not the ASQ itself, but the lack of services that were available in a timely manner once a child was screened and a potential need identified. She cited an example of a child who was referred for services in the fall of 2005, but had yet to receive services (as of June, 2006). Many staff, across San Francisco programs, described long delays in accessing services through the district’s special education system.

### **San Mateo**

Head Start classrooms in San Mateo were already using the ASQ prior to PFA. For two of the PFA San Mateo programs, the ASQ was a new requirement. Feedback in San Mateo in regard to the ASQ was generally positive; although staff qualified that the ASQ was a useful tool when they specifically set aside time to complete it collaboratively with parents. PFA sites in San Mateo have four paid release days to participate in PFA professional development opportunities and educational and classroom requirements and may use this time to administer the ASQ with parents. Several teachers from one San Mateo program stated that when they first began using the ASQ, they used the paid PFA release time to schedule appointments with parents to complete the questionnaire. However, in 2005-2006, the release time had been used for other professional development purposes, making it more difficult to find opportunities to complete the tool with parents.

A management-level staff person said, “The ASQ is new to staff. I have not heard too much feedback on the ASQ. Other than it is a valuable tool to get that knowledge of the child in the first month of being in the program. We don’t have to wait until we have the first conferences. We can assess the child right away and get them services they need if there is an issue. It is a great way to get to know the family and the parents—even before school starts—it’s been positive.” A teacher felt the ASQ was a “good tool and a good way to look at the child.” Another teacher reported, “The questionnaire is new. It is good because parents are involved helping us as a team. It is really helpful.”

Based on interviews with program staff, the extent to which the use of the ASQ has resulted in an increased number of referrals to services in San Mateo and San Francisco was not clear. However, anecdotal evidence suggests the ASQ is serving as an effective tool to identify children who may need services. A PFA management staff member reported, “as far as maybe referring children for special ed services like speech or language—probably it [the ASQ] has made more of a difference. So that is actually really nice. It is a lot of paperwork, but it is really nice, because it highlights some issues early on. So, maybe that actually has helped [refer more children to special education services].”

### **Services for Children With Special Needs**

San Mateo and San Francisco providers discussed the critical need to improve the delivery of services to children with special needs. While they appreciated that screening is emphasized through PFA, providers pointed to improvements that are necessary in the special education system to ensure children receive appropriate services in a timely manner once they have been referred.

A San Francisco provider felt their program had an effective system in place to identify special education needs prior to PFA, but reported that the real issue was delivering services to children. A program director said, “We screen children if we see a problem, we were doing that before PFA. We did that [ASQ] but they still don’t have the money to serve kids. The system is backed up as it is. The kids, we don’t want them lost in the process of getting them services they need. It is still a slow process.” A PFA teacher said, “We refer kids to the Unified School District and it has been over a year for one child who has been waiting. It is terrible.” San Mateo providers had similar feedback. “We need support in regard to special education and in terms of getting services for kids.” Another San Mateo PFA staff member explained, “If you make PFA available to all children, you will find more children with special needs and that means you need to bump up the special needs budget. If there is no funding to pay for extra staffing needed to support inclusion, you are not helping the child or the teachers.”

Program staff in both counties expressed a desire for more training, support, and specialized staff to help with serving children with special needs in their classrooms. While PFA staff supported inclusion of children with special needs in settings with typically developing children, they emphasized the need for more training in this area and additional support staff with specialized skills. In both San Mateo and San Francisco, there is a continuing partnership and commitment among key agencies to provide services to children with special needs and to address the types of challenges highlighted by PFA staff. For example, First 5 San Francisco is a demonstration site for the First 5 Special Needs Project. In San Mateo County, SMCOE works with the Redwood City School District to provide a classroom aide and preschool spaces for the inclusion of special day preschool children in PFA settings. Other training and support in regard to special education is provided through partner agencies such as HRIIC in San Francisco and the 4Cs in San Mateo.



## **Chapter 7. PFA Staff Qualifications and Compensation**

PFA has impacted a variety of issues related to staffing, including setting educational requirements, encouraging staff to pursue higher education, and providing funding to increase compensation. Providers were asked to reflect on the impact of PFA’s guidelines or requirements regarding qualifications and compensation. This section also includes themes specific to qualifications and compensation when PFA is administered by a school district.

### **San Francisco**

**Staff Qualifications.** Minimum San Francisco PFA staffing requirements are based on the Child Development Permit matrix. As a PFA site, the Lead Teacher, at a minimum, must hold (or qualify and have applied for) a Child Development Teacher Permit. The Assistant Teacher(s), at a minimum, must hold (or qualify and have applied for) a Child Development Associate Teacher Permit. When there are more than 16 children, a third staff person must hold (or qualify and have applied for) an Assistant Teacher Permit.

Programs provided feedback on the PFA staffing qualifications in San Francisco, with at least two programs emphasizing the need for additional or alternative standards to benchmark program quality. A program director explained, “The requirement is for quality, but we have teachers who have been around for years but don’t have 24 units in City College. They want another new teacher who has those units.” Management staff from two programs reinforced the need to consider the use of waivers for staff who may hold advanced degrees (e.g., master’s degree) but lack the appropriate number of early childhood education units.

A program director talked about the possible consequences of the PFA staff qualification requirements. “The big concern is that if people don’t see PFA as a method of really providing support to improve quality, but rather a mechanism of weeding out people [reference to moving teachers who lack the appropriate PFA qualifications] or mandating or dictating things to people, teachers and staff will be turned off.”

For one program with multiple sites (some PFA and some non-PFA), there was a concern that staff would be transferred from their classrooms because they failed to meet the PFA permit-level requirements. Due to the current contract negotiated with the union, the San Francisco Unified School District can encourage, but not require, staff to obtain child development permits. Currently, the only recourse left to the school district is to reassign staff to PFA or non-PFA classrooms, based on their permit levels. The extent to which programs with multiple sites reassigned staff to their PFA classrooms in order to meet the funding requirements was unclear. One program director reported that she had to “move staff around to meet PFA [education requirements]. I have [multiple] sites, so I was able to change staff. Teachers are being flexible.” Another director explained that PFA had hastened staff reassignments, with the most qualified teachers located at a site with PFA classrooms.

**Recruiting Qualified PFA Staff.** With a few exceptions, all of the PFA programs in San Francisco reported that recruiting and maintaining qualified PFA staff were significant

challenges. However, program directors reinforced that workforce issues impact the ECE field in general and are not unique to PFA. Management staff at one program reported, “Finding qualified staff is so tough. Head Start requirements are similar [to PFA standards], so in most other areas there haven’t been big changes.” A PFA program director said, “One of the problems is that ECE is treated as a vocation. People with AAs are not transfer-ready. The system doesn’t produce people with BAs in early childhood. We can’t expect them to be there overnight.” She added, “Finding qualified staff was a challenge before PFA.”

**Continuing Education.** Many of the PFA teachers reported they were already taking classes towards a higher level permit or degree prior to their program receiving PFA funds. However, a few teachers emphasized that PFA provided an incentive to continue to enroll in classes. A family child care provider said, “It’s not that PFA demands more from me, but I feel I can do better, so I am planning to get my BA.” One teacher explained that PFA motivated her to remain in the classroom as a teacher, rather than become a director. “It’s made me think I can stay in teaching longer [because of the higher PFA wage rates] as opposed to becoming a director.”

Staff described the difficulties they faced due to working and taking classes at the same time. A site supervisor at one PFA site said, “Trying to [get] the BA—it is hard. Most of the staff are single parents. By requiring the BA, some are teachers for a long time and they go back and take college courses, but it is hard to focus in their minds to go back and get a BA. It’s hard for some of them to go back to get a BA when they’ve worked with the parents for so long.” A program director echoed these thoughts and discussed the implications for staff reassignments. “Even though I prepared my staff for 2 [or] 3 years that this [PFA] is coming and we have been talking about it...It is still difficult because most of the teachers they are working more than 5-15 years, one [teacher has worked] for 35 years. New PFA requirements means they cannot be a [lead] teacher any longer, but we cannot terminate them. This is a struggle. When a teacher has been here a while and cannot meet requirements I have to reassign teachers. I have to put in someone who is more qualified to work with an older teacher.” She went on to discuss some of the positive benefits that she has observed among staff. “Everyone is clear who has what responsibility. The attitude is everyone is a team and not [that there is] one head teacher and [the] other [teacher] is less [valued].”

**Need for Substitutes.** As noted previously, securing substitutes to enable staff to attend classes to pursue their education was a significant challenge. Staff from at least four of the eight PFA programs interviewed for the study emphasized the lack of substitutes in the community to enable staff to attend classes and further their education. One program director reported a need for “more staffing across the board. [We need to] identify someone who can handle the paperwork in PFA. [We need] more staffing on the floor. If we are talking about quality. We need release time for staff. We need subs. It’s not a PFA issue it’s a workforce issue.” The same director went on to say, “With PFA we have sub money, but not sub availability. We have a lot of staff, but not enough qualified staff. People are looking for full-time jobs. There are not enough subs.” A site supervisor echoed these comments, “With the BA program that is going on, I’ve got teachers that want to do it...but we don’t have subs. To my understanding there are 8 to 10 of them [subs] in the district, but all the subs are out. I would like them to provide a way out to help the staff go back to school. There needs to be a sub pool somewhere. That would be wonderful. I would love for staff to get their BA, but there are coverage issues.”



**San Francisco PFA Compensation.** In 2005-2006, PFA programs in San Francisco had to adhere to specific wage rates. (Since the data for this study were collected, First 5 San Francisco has eliminated the wage requirements policy for PFA sites). Lead teachers had to be compensated at the PFA wage levels for at least 4 hours per day for 175 days per year, or 3 hours per day for 245 days for programs operating full-year programs.

**Table 7.1. 2005-2006 Minimum Wage Levels for San Francisco PFA Teaching Staff**

<b>Lead Teacher</b>	<b>Hourly Rate</b>
Assistant Teacher Permit	\$10.50
Associate Teacher Permit	\$12.15
Teacher Permit	\$15.02
Master Teacher Permit or AA + 24 ECE units	\$17.20
BA Teacher + 24 ECE units	\$18.56

Staff who received an increase in compensation due to PFA were highly appreciative. However, some program directors described administrative challenges in regard to varying wage rates. Given that PFA is a part-day program, embedding PFA wage rates within a full-day program posed some problems for at least two of the providers. A director of a PFA program that received Head Start funds reported that she was not willing to increase salaries only for teachers working in PFA classrooms and not for staff teaching at non-PFA sites. As a result, she increased master and lead teacher salaries across the board, drawing on her Head Start and PFA funds. She emphasized that parity across the program was essential for the morale and professional development of the entire staff. Another program director discussed the impact of varying wage rates for PFA teachers working in a full-day program. She described a time-consuming process of calculating hourly pay rates for PFA hours and non-PFA hours for a full-day program, with the added burden of having to explain the variation to staff. According to the program director, explaining variations in wage rates to teachers was difficult, as staff often do not perceive any difference in their job duties between the morning (PFA) and the afternoon (Head Start) sessions of their day.

Another program director shared a perspective on the San Francisco PFA salary schedule and the per child reimbursement rate. “The other issue is the fact that you have a high requirement to earn the maximum amount [per child reimbursement rate]. The lead teacher has to have a program director permit in order to earn the maximum PFA reimbursement rate [per child]. If your lead teacher has a program director permit then they should be the program director, not the lead teacher. I can see a supervisory or master teacher be the max. Why would a teacher with a program director permit be a teacher?” They recommended that steps in salary be tied to tenure in the field or other measures of quality or that perhaps a “grandfather” clause could be included that would give some additional recognition to existing lead teachers with many years of experience.

## San Mateo

**San Mateo PFA Staff Qualifications.** Upgraded PFA programs in San Mateo must meet the minimum qualifications and the full qualifications by 2010 to receive funds, as shown in Table 7.2. New PFA classrooms (i.e. not existing spaces that are ‘upgraded’) must meet full PFA standards at the outset.

**Table 7.2. San Mateo PFA Staff Qualifications**

Staff	Minimum Qualifications for Initial Implementation (for Upgraded Classrooms Only)	Full Qualifications (required by 2010 and for All “New” PFA Classrooms)
Site Supervisor or Program Director	Holds or qualifies and applies for Site Supervisor or Program Director permit, has minimum of three years of administrative/supervisory experience.	Has BA or BS degree, holds Site Supervisor or Program Director permit (Option 1)
Teacher A (required for 10 PFA children)	Has AA or AS degree and 24 ECE units including core courses and adult supervision; holds or qualifies and applies for Teacher Permit	Has BA or BS degree, holds Master Teacher Permit (Option 1)
Teacher B (required for 11-20 PFA children)	Has 24 ECE units including core courses; holds or qualifies and applies for Associate Teacher Permit	Holds Master Teacher Permit (Option 1)
Assistant/Aide (required as third staff member in classrooms of more than 20 PFA children)	Participating in approved child development training on ongoing basis until completing 6 units (no ECE at hire); or a parent participating in approved parent training	Participating in approved child development training on ongoing basis until completing 12 units (no ECE at hire); or a parent participating in approved parent training

SMCOE uses the following framework to categorize its PFA contractors as “entry”, “advancing”, or “full quality” programs.

**Table 7.3. Entry, Advancing, and Full Quality San Mateo PFA Programs**

	Teacher A	Teacher B
<b>Entry</b> Both Teachers A & B meet the following requirements:	Has AA or AS degree and 24 ECE units including core courses and adult supervision; AND holds or qualifies and applies for Teacher Permit	Has 24 ECE units including core courses; AND holds or qualifies and applies for Associate Teacher Permit
<b>Advancing</b>	Teachers A & B have at least the Entry level requirements and one or both have more than Entry level requirements but are not yet at Full Quality level	
<b>Full Quality</b> Both Teachers A & B meet the following requirements:	Has BA or BS degree AND holds Master Teacher Permit (Option 1)	Holds Master Teacher Permit (Option 1)

In the 2005-2006 program year, two of the three PFA contractors were “full quality” programs, and one was “advancing.” In other words, the vast majority of PFA lead teachers held a BA or BS degree and Master Teacher Permit (Option 1). As part of the School Readiness Assessment Project conducted by Applied Survey Research, which is a comprehensive study of kindergarten readiness across San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, PFA teachers were surveyed in order to gather demographic information and gain insight regarding their skill level expectations for students transitioning to kindergarten and their perceptions of the readiness skills most important for kindergarten entry. Seventy-eight percent of PFA teachers responded to the survey. Survey findings (based on self-reports) indicated that nearly two-thirds of the PFA teachers had a bachelor’s or graduate degree, and 62 percent had received their Child Development Site Supervisor certificate.

Staff in San Mateo reflected on the PFA staff qualification requirements, surfacing several themes regarding: (1) the use of a “traveling teacher”—a BA/32 unit ECE teacher who moved classrooms during the day to serve as the qualified lead PFA teacher, (2) feedback on the BA requirement for “full quality” programs, (3) the impact of employing a BA/32 unit ECE teacher on teaching teams, and (4) obstacles faced by staff in continuing their education.

One of the three PFA contractors in San Mateo experimented with a specific staffing structure and provided feedback on its effectiveness. In this model, a “traveling teacher” serves as the qualified BA PFA teacher, changing classrooms in the middle of the day (e.g., working in the morning as part of the morning PFA session embedded in a full-day program and switching to a State Preschool session in the afternoon). Several issues emerged as a result of this staffing model, including a negative impact on teacher morale, loss of a sense of ownership over their classroom, and a disruption of teamwork among staff members in full-day classrooms. Teachers reported that the “traveling teacher” lacks ownership over his/her classroom and the staffing model impacts the teachers’ ability to develop and maintain continuity with their peers. A teacher said, “I think the connection of the teamwork gets lost. It looks good on paper but if you look at implementation, it just doesn’t flow like it should. They lose a lot of the cohesiveness and teamwork with teachers bouncing from room to room.” Another staff member said, “Logically it works, emotionally it does not work. They [“traveling teachers”] don’t have their own classrooms. They are supposed to have prep time with their team, but often it was hard to find coverage for the 30 minutes [for prep time] in the full-day program. You are pulling both teachers in the middle of the day.”

Teaching staff debated the value of having a BA teacher in the PFA classrooms. Several teachers felt that PFA should consider alternate qualifications than a BA degree, such as tenure in the field. Other staff supported the idea of having a BA and an AA teacher in the classroom, although they pointed to the limitations of the current teacher education system to train qualified staff. As one staff person explained, “The challenge is the workforce. The education system as it is right now does not make good teachers. It’s not a priority. It’s not offered in the UC system. You have to get your BA first and then go back to Community College to get the practical units. Even now it’s difficult to find teachers. You want to get people fresh out of college [with lots of energy], but they don’t [have] the ECE units.” On a similar note, a program director talked about the need to ensure the quality of teaching at the community colleges.

Many staff talked about the impact of the PFA requirement for a BA/32 ECE unit lead teacher on the teamwork among staff. A “BA-AA teacher team” raised some interesting questions, particularly if the lead BA teacher has less practical experience than the AA teacher. A staff member said, “The flip side to having teachers with higher degrees is that they are forced to teach in a teaching team...they have to work with a team. For this program, the usual design is to have a lead or head teacher and two teaching assistants. You have a built-in hierarchy already, it is clear cut [what the roles are]. When you have a BA teacher and AA teacher, it is a little less clear cut. You have a higher degree for one teacher, but the expectation of PFA is that the two teachers share the responsibility together—that you are on the same playing ground.” Many of the staff, both teachers and management, employed by one of the three PFA contractors talked about the need to support teachers as they grow into their roles within the classroom and in relation to their colleagues.

Teachers in San Mateo PFA programs are pursuing additional education. It appeared that PFA was a motivator for staff, although as one teacher explained, “Some of us are going currently [to school]; we are going anyways if PFA wouldn’t [have] had this requirement.” Staff from all three PFA contractors in San Mateo discussed the challenges facing staff who pursue higher education while working. “When you are expected to work eight hours and a lot of the classes at SF State only operate during daylight hours, [it is] hard to be able to go to school and work at the same time.” Comments from San Mateo teachers echoed the feedback from San Francisco staff, emphasizing the burden of working full-time while concurrently attending school, and the potential dilemmas faced in integrating newly trained but inexperienced BA-level teachers who qualify for PFA lead teacher positions along with more experienced teachers without BA degrees who are then seen as filling a supportive teaching role in PFA classrooms.

**San Mateo PFA Compensation Guidelines.** In San Mateo, the goal of PFA is that lead teachers achieve both education and compensation parity with public kindergarten teachers. PFA contractors must demonstrate that salaries for fully qualified teaching staff are within the same ranges as the public school districts and that salaries for less qualified staff are prorated from this standard. PFA programs must reflect these salary costs in their proposed budgets and expenditure reports.

At one program, PFA funds are used to widen the wage scale among staff, although the program director cautioned other programs who might be interested in becoming a PFA site about doing so. She cited concerns about creating inequity among staff working in non-PFA classrooms compared to PFA classrooms. A management-level staff person from another program also talked about the impact of varying wage rates for teachers working in PFA part-day sessions embedded in a full-day program. She reported, “You have a highly qualified BA teacher—and you drop them [their pay rate] in the afternoon [because it is] too hard to get them to bounce [move classrooms]. How do they explain it from a HR [human resource] perspective? Getting paid one thing in the morning and another thing in the afternoon. They [The teachers] think, ‘I am still the same person, with the same skills.’”

The other theme related to compensation which emerged focused on the parity of preschool teacher pay with kindergarten teacher salaries that may continue to rise, per district policies. Several staff from one PFA contractor compared the number of hours they worked and the

number of children under their responsibility to that of kindergarten teachers. “I think paying teachers more is a good thing, but we do not have the parity yet with the school system. If you were to say in our district, what a preschool teacher makes compared to an elementary school teacher, the elementary school teacher goes up and up, but is that cost figured into PFA?” Thus, although PFA management and teaching staff reportedly appreciate PFA’s emphasis on improving teacher compensation, there are still issues to be reconciled in terms of parity with increases in kindergarten teacher salaries over time and inequities for individual teachers who may split their time between PFA and other preschool classrooms that do not include the same teacher compensation requirements.

These issues relating to staff qualifications and compensation are complex and reflect PFA’s underlying intent of building upon the diverse system of existing preschool providers, rather than creating new, stand-alone programs. On the whole, administrators and teachers in upgraded PFA sites agreed that higher levels of teacher compensation are key to attracting and retaining a quality workforce, yet they also acknowledged that these changes were not without their challenges, including staff displacements or reassignments, adjustments to new teaching team configurations, and additional pressures placed on staff to obtain higher-level permits or degrees. In addition, as PFA is phased in by building upon the varied array of existing preschool programs, standardized compensation across all settings cannot occur immediately. Although substantial PFA resources have been used to support teacher education and training and to increase compensation, providers suggested that achieving equity within programs and sustaining higher compensation levels into the future would require ongoing flexibility on the part of staff, creativity on the part of administrators, and secure sources of funding over the long-term.

### **PFA in School District Programs**

Both San Francisco and San Mateo contract with a school district to administer PFA. School district programs identified challenges related to PFA compensation and staff qualifications:

- **Working With Unions.** One PFA school district program currently is exploring the development of a new performance evaluation system for PFA teaching staff, compared to other district child development staff. Staff emphasized that modifications to the performance review system must be negotiated with the union. Similarly, while PFA requires specific staff qualifications, one school district program emphasized they cannot impose these requirements on their staff, given the current contract that is negotiated with the union. The district’s only recourse is to reassign staff who lack the appropriate PFA qualifications to non-PFA classrooms. District staff discussed the negative ramifications of this strategy, with staff morale impacted by the threat of reassignment.
- **Offering Different Wage Rates for PFA and Non-PFA staff.** For school district programs with multiple sites, some funded by PFA and some not, teaching staff across the program may receive different pay rates. A management-level staff person suggested that in the future, teachers with BAs, yet who do not work in PFA classrooms, may raise objections to the differential pay schedule, arguing their job duties are very similar to those of staff working in PFA settings. While it has not emerged as a problem at this point in time, it was a concern for the future.

- **Integrating PFA With Existing School District Procedures.** School districts have established systems related to screening and assessment, referrals for children with identified needs, facility enhancements, and as noted above, staffing qualifications, performance reviews, and pay schedules. Staff emphasized the importance of being flexible and creative—on their part and on the part of PFA administrative and funding agencies—in order to effectively integrate PFA within school districts. District staff in both San Francisco and San Mateo discussed the need for strong relationships with the union.

## **Chapter 8. PFA Funding Issues**

PFA program directors were asked to provide their feedback on the appropriateness of the PFA reimbursement rate, as well as the impact of PFA on braiding funding streams, the ability of CDE-funded programs to fully meet their contracts, and the long-term sustainability of PFA. With the exception of the per child reimbursement rate, feedback from San Francisco and San Mateo is combined below, as input from providers did not vary significantly across counties.

### **Braiding Funding Streams**

For the most part, PFA programs with funding from CDE or Head Start had yet to encounter significant issues in regard to braiding funding streams, although two programs expressed concern that problems may arise in the future. One San Francisco management staff person reflected on the potential confusion for sites funded by State Preschool, Head Start, PFA, a parent fee component, and vouchers. In San Mateo, all but one program reported they had not run into any problems related to braiding funds, although one program emphasized the need for careful budget tracking. A San Mateo program director said, “This is part of the game [braiding funding streams]. We have to develop new software to track each funding stream separately. The funding is not a lot for admin [does not provide very much for administrative support]. But we keep it [PFA funding stream] separately and have a really clear plan. When we submit the budget, you have to [include funding for] a database assistant. We are able to get a little support on that from PFA. You combine resources—it just requires a lot of detailed planning.”

An issue with braiding funds did emerge for one full-day program. The program director of a San Mateo contractor described her attempts to blend PFA with State Preschool in a full-day setting. “[The] dilemma was we had families who were low-income and couldn’t pay the fee for the extended day to wrap around the program.” When they moved forward to use State Preschool for wrap around services, the State raised objections. The program could use general funds to wrap with PFA, but they did not have enough general funds. “That was a lesson learned and we need to really work with the State to make sure that they are being reasonable in how they are allowing people to blend [or braid] funding.”

### **PFA Reimbursement Rate**

**San Francisco PFA Reimbursement Rate.** In San Francisco, the PFA reimbursement rates are calculated according to the following criteria:

- Number of eligible four-year-old children served,
- Whether the program receives public funding for the care of child(ren), and
- Lead PFA Teacher Permit level.

The maximum per child PFA reimbursement rates are listed in the table below. These rates apply to unsubsidized program enrollees and are adjusted according to the criteria listed above.

**Table 8.1. San Francisco Maximum Per Child Reimbursement Rates for Unsubsidized PFA Programs**

Education Level of PFA Lead Teacher	Annual Per Child Reimbursement Rate
Teacher Permit	\$4,125
Master Teacher Permit	\$4,675
AA Degree + 24 ECE/CD units	\$4,875
BA + 24 ECE/CD units	\$5,025

In settings where child care subsidies are in place, the PFA reimbursements are made based on the rates above less any subsidy payments (such as Head Start, CDE) already received. The following table outlines the enhancement funding available for each type of subsidy. For Head Start, the rate varies by site. Average rates are shown in the table.

**Table 8.2. San Francisco Average Per Child Reimbursement Rates for Subsidized PFA Programs**

Education Level of PFA Lead Teacher	Head Start	State Preschool (GPPE-Title V)	General Child Care (GRT-Title V)
Teacher Permit	\$0	\$962	\$658
Master Teacher Permit or AA + 24 ECE	\$396	\$1,528	\$1,224
PFA Teacher BA + 24 ECE/CD units	\$700	\$1,882	\$1,578

Feedback on the appropriateness and viability of the PFA reimbursement rate appeared to be related to the level and type of other funding that supported programs. Two private providers felt that the reimbursement rate, while appreciated, was below market rate. For example, a private provider reported her revenue was decreasing, given that her typical parent fee was higher than the PFA reimbursement rate. However, PFA was helping her to meet enrollment targets, given the declining enrollment she has observed in the city. “PFA is not enough money. [That] may be exclusive to me. The original plan was for eight slots in the morning and eight in the afternoon. That would have constituted the PFA reimbursement, but it would still have been a little shy of a full-time funded slot. For my fee I charge \$850 a month for a full-time slot. \$389.50 is what my PFA reimbursement works out to be per child, so times two (if I had a morning and afternoon child) that is \$779. The majority of money I am getting is going to pay that master teacher employed for four hours a day for PFA. I hired her at a PFA salary. PFA pays three of her four hours. I still have to pay her other hour and I pay it at the PFA level. I can’t get a handle on paying people different figures when they are doing the same work. I am paying salaries out of that money, it doesn’t leave room for anything else.” A family child care provider also felt the PFA reimbursement rate was below the market rate, although PFA has helped her to meet enrollment targets.



A San Francisco family resource center which had been subsidizing preschool services through its existing budget reported that the PFA reimbursement rate was a significant financial relief and allowed major upgrades to the program (although it is important to note that the program director was able to underwrite the program with foundation grants). For publicly-subsidized programs, PFA provided additional funds to enhance program quality, and thus did not replace parent fees.

**San Mateo PFA Reimbursement Rate.** In San Mateo, PFA provides funding for a minimum of 525 hours per year (e.g., three-hour program for 175 days or a 2.14-hour program for 245 days) for eligible four-year-old children. The funding rates are calculated according to the following criteria:

- Number of classes of eligible four-year-old children served,
- Number of children in each class,
- Number of total PFA hours to be provided (minimum of 525 to a maximum of 612.5),
- PFA teacher qualifications (programs receive a prorated amount until PFA teacher requirements are fully met), and
- The actual needs of the program to achieve PFA standards and program requirements.

Reimbursement rates are determined by factors which include the qualification levels of each classroom’s teaching staff. In classrooms that are publicly subsidized by Head Start or CDE (i.e., State Preschool or General Child Care), the PFA reimbursement is based on the rates, as described below, less any subsidy rates already in place. PFA funding is for 4 year-olds only, unless otherwise approved by PFA. Whether a program is an “entry”, “advancing” or “full quality” program is determined by factors which include the qualification levels of each classrooms’ teaching staff (see Table 8.3).

**Table 8.3. San Mateo Maximum Annual PFA Reimbursement Rates for New and Non-Publicly Subsidized Spaces**

PFA Quality Level	Reimbursement Rate
Entry	\$4,569
Advancing	\$4,838
Full Quality	\$5,375

Advancing = 90% of Full Quality rate, Entry = 85% of Full Quality rate

**Table 8.4. San Mateo Maximum Annual PFA Reimbursement Rates for Publicly Subsidized Spaces**

	State Preschool (SPS)		General Center (GCTR)		Head Start
	<i>In AB 1326 Pilot<sup>12</sup></i>	<i>Not in Pilot</i>	<i>In AB 1326 Pilot</i>	<i>Not in Pilot</i>	
<b>Entry</b>	\$1,675	\$1,717	\$3,675	\$4,045	\$747.25 (Negotiated Rate)
<b>Advancing</b>	\$1,774	\$1,818	\$3,892	\$4,283	
<b>Full Quality</b>	\$1,971	\$2,020	\$4,324	\$4,759	

Upgraded PFA classes in accredited, private, tuition-based centers and homes and publicly contracted Title 5 programs which charge a parent fee receive PFA funds to replace the parent fees for the PFA portion of the day and upgrade quality and services to meet the PFA standards. These rates are adjusted according to the criteria listed above and can be as much as \$5,375 per child. State Preschool and federal Head Start spaces that are upgraded to PFA standards receive funding for the difference between their publicly contracted subsidy rate and the PFA funding rate of \$5,375; these rates are adjusted according to the criteria above.

All of the San Mateo PFA programs reported that the reimbursement rate was satisfactory, particularly as it represented an upgrade to their existing funding levels. (At the time of the interview, one program had not yet reviewed their year-end budget reports, but estimated that the resources provided by PFA would be adequate, given the expectations of the funding).

**State-Funded Contracts**

PFA programs funded by CDE for State Preschool were asked if PFA had impacted their ability to meet their State Preschool contract. In both counties, providers had not encountered any issues related to their contract, although at least one provider raised concerns on this topic. A San Francisco management staff person explained, “I am still worried about contract hours. Our contract to a family is eight hours [per day]. PFA is two and a half hours. If you take two and a half hours away from eight hours, that leaves five and a half hours. And that leaves the child part-time [as opposed to a full-time child, from the perspective of CDE] and that means a different reimbursement rate [from the state]. I am concerned that if a child is subsidized, plus gets PFA—how are we going to meet the [state] contract?” Although the CDE has provided technical assistance on how to submit proper financial reports in order to avoid this problem, it appears there is still some anxiety among PFA providers about how to do so.

<sup>12</sup> The Assembly Bill 1326 pilot project allows San Mateo County to address two fundamental concerns: first, that families barely earning enough to meet the high cost of housing in the county are nevertheless considered too high income to qualify for child care subsidies; and second, that the state reimbursement rates for providers contracted to provide high quality child care are so low that providers cannot cover their costs, and therefore, are unable to utilize their full allocation of state and federal child care and child development funds. The plan sets a higher income eligibility threshold for subsidized child care in San Mateo and redirects underused resources to increase provider reimbursement rates. The pilot is being evaluated on a number of criteria, including the retention of contracted providers, income growth and child care stability for families, and an increase in the number of children served in contracted slots in the county.

## **Sustainability of PFA**

When asked about the sustainability of PFA, the majority of PFA staff emphasized the importance of the funding to remain stable over the long-term. One program director recommended that the early childhood education field collaborate with the business community to secure long-term funding. Another program discussed the sustainability of PFA in terms of teacher compensation. “I don’t think it’s sustainable in terms of staff retention and salaries. How they are going [to be] able to grow? We can get things funded at the base level. We start off at the entry level for Kindergarten teachers, but how does that grow from there? Can [we] keep the staff? That isn’t built into the system at all. Does compensation grow with teachers?”



## Chapter 9. PFA Reporting Requirements

In general, feedback regarding PFA reporting requirements was similar across San Francisco and San Mateo. In both counties, programs must administer the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and collect demographic, attendance, and other service data for children and families. San Francisco providers are monitored by Wu Yee Children’s Services, a Resource & Referral agency. Wu Yee staff conducts site visits to providers and serve as a liaison to assist them with the reporting requirements. In San Mateo, SMCOE serves as the monitoring body. Tables 9.1 and 9.2 provide an overview of the reporting requirements in each county.

**Table 9.1. Overview of San Mateo PFA Reporting Requirements**

Report	Timeframe	Overview
Child/Family Intake Forms	Ongoing	Basic demographic information about the enrolled child/family and a parental consent
Enrollment Updates	Monthly (if applicable)	Identification of any children who have been dropped or terminated from the program or transferred between classrooms or sessions.
Attendance Data Entry	Monthly	Data entry of attendance information on a monthly basis into the Proposition 10 Evaluation Database System (PEDS). Counties are currently exploring alternatives to the PEDS database.
Invoices (with Attendance Sheets)	Monthly	Monthly attendance and invoices which are used by SMCOE to reimburse them.
Education Reports	Three times per year	Information about specific child service requirements including the dates on which the ASQ screening and DRDP assessments were performed, Individual Learning Plans were developed, parent-teacher conferences were conducted and any special needs referrals were made.
Mid-Year Narrative Report	Once per year	Updates and feedback on classroom implementation and overall administration of PFA.
Year-End Narrative Report (including staff qualification and demographic information)	Once per year	Updates and feedback on classroom implementation and overall administration of PFA.  Detailed information on the teaching staff qualifications and some basic demographic information (e.g., number of ECE units for individuals holding degrees and any GE units for any staff working on degrees).
Year-End Expenditure Report	Once per year	An accounting of all funds spent over the contract year.
Annual Re-Application (including staff qualification and demographic information)	Once per year	Re-application to continue as a PFA contractor.

**Table 9.2. Overview of San Francisco PFA Reporting Requirements**

Report	Timeframe	Overview
Annual PFA Provider Re-Application	Yearly	Potential PFA Provider: ECERS-R scores with Quality Improvement Plan from Gateway to Quality; number of sites, number of classrooms, number of PFA children to be served, and site-level teacher child development permits.
Enrollment Form	Ongoing	Basic demographic information about the enrolled child/family.
Enrollment Updates	Monthly (if applicable)	Identification of any children who have been dropped or terminated from the program or transferred between classrooms or sessions.
Monthly Classroom Attendance	Monthly	Record of PFA children provided with other monthly reporting.
Waiting List	Ongoing	Wait list for families seeking PFA services: child name, primary caregiver, subsidy information, zip code, date placed on wait list, date removed from wait list and reason for removal of wait list.
Education Verification	Monthly (if applicable)	Site-level data for PFA Lead Teacher and program staff: name, date employed, hourly wage, child development permit, permit expiration, permit application date, transcripts submitted, PFA position, AA w/major, BA w/major, Grad w/major.
Quality Enhancements	Monthly (if applicable)	Site-level data for financial reporting of how PFA funds are being used (other than personnel): amount, description of resources or materials, number of participants served or used, and description of how quality was enhanced.
Parent Fee Statement	Monthly (if applicable)	Requirement for tuition-based programs. Amount of fee reduction for PFA portion-of-the-day.
Self-Study	Yearly	Program Quality Self Assessment Tool submitted at end of program year with Action Plan.

The following section describes issues common to both counties, as well as themes that emerged more strongly in each community. PFA providers in both counties voiced strong opinions regarding the level of reporting they face, particularly for those programs supported by multiple funding streams. The feedback from management-level staff and program directors generally related to administrative reporting requirements, as opposed to comments from teaching staff which tended to focus on the classroom requirements for PFA, such as child observations and screening.

**Level of Reporting.** To varying degrees, providers in both counties described the current level of reporting required by PFA as a burden. In San Francisco, management-level staff from seven of the eight programs expressed concern about various aspects of the PFA reporting requirements. In San Mateo, management staff from all three PFA contractors did as well. Management-level staff voiced a need to streamline PFA reporting and if possible, coordinate it with CDE and/or Head Start reporting requirements. For example, a San Francisco program director stated, “We have to take data from an existing system and put it into PFA sheets. The same information [reference to teacher qualifications] is given to CDE in a different format.”

A San Francisco family child care provider described the inconvenience of the PFA reporting requirements, given she must submit paperwork even when there were no changes in her program or the children enrolled.<sup>13</sup> The provider also placed the PFA reporting requirements in the context of compliance issues she faces for other funding agencies, compounding the burden she was experiencing. A San Mateo program director, speaking to paperwork associated with both administrative and classroom requirements, said, “As far as challenges for staff—staff adapting to changes—having to do the paperwork—it has been huge. Extra paperwork that they have had to work into their schedules. PFA has its own reports that they require. They have to balance that paperwork with the everyday tasks they have to do. There is a plethora of reports to do.” In one case, a San Mateo provider felt that the reporting, while burdensome, had some positive results. A management-level staff person stated, “The paperwork load has increased—it is a mixed blessing. Increased paperwork, it leads to more accountability and a better understanding of where the kid is [developmentally]. But we have 30 minutes of prep time, and it is not enough.”

Overall, the frustration voiced by PFA providers in both counties reflected concerns about the cumulative burden they faced in complying with funding requirements from multiple funding agencies. A San Francisco program director stated, “We don’t want all kinds of new things to do that are some ways repetitive that we are already required to do. What is going to happen? We will have four or five funding streams with each having different requirements. Are they state-funded or PFA-funded or HS-funded or multiple-funded—what do we do? It will be a logistics nightmare. For example, the [XYZ] site will be State Preschool, Head Start, PFA, and some other sites will also have tuition-based money. We will also add a voucher component in there. So, we have five different funding streams with multiple requirements. We will need clear processes and expectations.”

A San Mateo program director described similar concerns regarding the need to align various reporting systems. “We are used to paperwork, but the systems are not complementary even though it is the same information [PFA, Head Start, State Preschool]. It is requiring twice the amount of work for us. The systems don’t talk to each other. We’re giving info in two different places. Even a database that could input and export information [would be helpful].”

### ***San Francisco***

**School District Issues.** Some issues were voiced more strongly in San Francisco County, including the need to align PFA with school district systems. A San Francisco PFA teacher stated, “If PFA and Head Start and the school district could make a standard form...we are doing the same thing over and over. It is a big challenge. It takes a lot of time. We have to take work home. I hear that from everyone at the meetings. And then the deadlines come at all different times. We are doing more paperwork than we should be doing as teachers.”

The need to integrate PFA with school district policies and procedures—many of which have reporting consequences—was repeated often among staff in San Francisco. A PFA staff member stated, that “we have procedures in place that don’t match the birth-to-five system. The school district requires one thing and we cannot deviate from that. Licensing or Head Start wants

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<sup>13</sup> PFA programs in San Francisco submit regular reports to Wu Yee to indicate changes in program enrollment.

[information] but in a different format. Why are we doing the same thing three times?” When probed, the biggest issue seemed to focus on the ASQ, as the school district has a parallel system in place for screening children for special needs.

**Monitoring.** Several San Francisco providers described the quarterly monitoring visits from Wu Yee staff. Across PFA programs, staff greatly appreciated the help of the Wu Yee PFA specialists in helping them understand and comply with the reporting requirements. At least two providers questioned the frequency of visits, commenting that quarterly site visits should be cut back to one to three times a year. They also suggested that the level of documentation required by the monitoring system was overly burdensome. A provider explained, “We report what we have spent for a month [e.g., classroom materials, supplies] but when they do a visit, they want to see what was purchased. It is hard to keep track of supplies because I purchase for eight classrooms. They don’t accept a report from an accountant. That would be easy. They want that enhancement form. The person comes in four times a year, and I have to be there to ask the teacher which items were purchased. I know the person coming to monitor is just doing her job.”<sup>14</sup>

### **San Mateo**

**Release Time to Complete Reporting Requirements.** A large majority of PFA staff interviewed in San Mateo commented on the need for more release time (in addition to the four paid release days that are currently provided through PFA) to complete paperwork. A PFA teacher said, “The paperwork is a lot of work but if we had more prep time it really is a good tool. It forces you to reflect at the end of the day and it is something you can go back to. It helps you a lot, it just takes so much time.” While teachers in her program have 30 minutes in the morning and in the afternoon for paid prep time, parents often “mill about” to talk to teachers during pick up and drop off of children. She explained that she often finds herself having to complete paperwork at home or during her lunch hour. This comment was echoed by many other teachers, portraying a situation in which teachers stated they had to complete paperwork on their own (unpaid) time. Teachers talked generally about all of their responsibilities, including child screening and observations, and the limited time they have available to complete paperwork associated with fulfilling classroom requirements. A teacher explained, “Time is a problem. It is challenging, but it is not just being part of PFA. It is all the programs [State Preschool and Head Start].”

In sum, while a few themes were unique to each county, the majority of the feedback offered by providers in both San Francisco and San Mateo was similar. Most of the providers expressed concern about reporting in general, and the cumulative burden of PFA, Head Start, and/or CDE requirements. Feedback in San Francisco seemed to reflect initial confusion regarding report forms, although many commented that information from First 5 had become clearer and that the lack of clarity was in part due to PFA working through “start-up” year challenges. In addition, to some degree, concerns about reporting seemed to be related to program auspice, with Head Start and/or CDE-funded programs most comfortable with reporting requirements, compared to private or other publicly funded programs. In general, recommendations from PFA providers to improve the reporting system included requests to:

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<sup>14</sup> Since interviews were conducted for this study, the monitoring visits have been reduced to two times per year.



- Develop an efficient system for PFA reporting, with clear deadlines and guidance,
- Coordinate with CDE and Head Start systems, and
- Provide strong support staff who could be available for training program staff and providing feedback on the use of PFA report forms.

SMCOE and First 5 San Francisco/Wu Yee Children's Services have taken steps over the last year to alleviate the level of reporting burden for PFA sites. In San Mateo, SMCOE staff have worked individually with PFA contractors to understand their existing reporting requirements and processes, reporting forms, and data systems and to identify ways to build upon them for the purposes of PFA. For example, San Mateo PFA programs may use other existing reporting forms to provide information on enrollment changes, once they are reviewed by SMCOE staff to ensure they include the information necessary for PFA. SMCOE also has contracted with a consultant to identify alternative database systems to PEDS that could import data from existing systems used by PFA contractors, and thereby reduce the reporting burden for PFA staff. In San Francisco, the PFA specialists at Wu Yee Children's Services described plans to review and revise the PFA reporting forms to make them simpler for providers in the 2006-2007 program year. In addition, First 5 San Francisco and Wu Yee Children's Services have reduced the quarterly site visits conducted to PFA programs to two visits for nine-month programs and three visits for 12-month programs. The intent of the PFA administrators in both counties is to balance the need for data for evaluation purposes with the burden it may place on PFA providers.



## **Chapter 10. Recommendations From PFA Providers**

PFA providers offered recommendations to improve the current PFA system and in regard to the expansion of PFA to new zip codes or school districts over time. Their comments are provided below, by county. In addition, providers discussed their future participation in PFA.

### **Recommendations From San Francisco PFA Providers**

**Improve the Reporting System.** The most common recommendation from San Francisco PFA providers focused on revising the reporting system. One PFA staff person reflected on reporting in the context of first-year start-up challenges. “Because things were being created on an as-needed basis, things were rolled out piecemeal, so hopefully that won’t happen. [In] Year 2 we’ll all know at one time, what the reporting requirements are.” Another provider noted that as PFA expands to more zip codes, “I think they need to rethink the paperwork if they want to be successful. Rethink the monitoring [quarterly site visits], and having to sign new quarterly contracts. Offer a longer period maybe. It is a complex system but they are creating a big bureaucracy which could get in the way of funding.”

One program director strongly emphasized the need for the development and implementation of a system of data collection and reporting. “I think most of these things that we are talking about are systems—implementation of systems. And it’s not really clear what the systems are because they are emerging. I know that some smaller programs said to me, ‘would you help me fill out the application?’ I think they need a support system for applications. When PFA becomes larger, these issues will be absolutely huge.”

Providers with multiple funding streams recommended that PFA look for ways to coordinate its reporting requirements with those associated with other funding streams. This was particularly true for the school district, where staff emphasized the need to coordinate PFA within existing policies, procedures, and reporting systems. A management-level staff person said, “What we have been doing works. Consider what a school district needs versus a non-profit.”

**Explore the Alignment Between PFA and the Existing Program’s Unique Philosophy and Practices.** Several PFA programs discussed the need to dialogue with First 5 San Francisco regarding the balance between their own program philosophy and the guidance provided by PFA. For example, two program directors and some teaching staff talked about their programs’ approach to early literacy development, which differed somewhat from the guidance they have received through the PFA system (e.g., via Learning Circles, site visits, etc.). PFA promotes high-quality preschool programming—staff articulated a need for continued discussion with First 5 San Francisco to define “quality” in terms of the nuts and bolts of implementation.

**Gradually Implement PFA Expectations Over Time.** A few providers encouraged First 5 San Francisco to take time in requiring full compliance with standards, specifically in regard to staffing requirements and ECERS-R scores. A PFA staff person said, “It is the very beginning of PFA. You have to look at how you are going to implement this and you can’t have the bar too high so that people say ‘I don’t even want to try.’ You need to build people along with it. You

need to have realistic expectations for staff [reference to education qualifications]. People are getting concerned because it is starting to look like a K-12 model with things like scores [ECERS-R]. They've never been scored before—it is quite an undertaking.” Another provider encouraged First 5 to continue to solicit feedback from providers, in order to ensure that the expectations of First 5 San Francisco align with the current status of the early childhood field. Most PFA staff commented that First 5 San Francisco staff were extremely supportive and receptive to feedback.

## **Recommendations From San Mateo PFA Providers**

**Support Providers.** Recommendations from San Mateo PFA providers strongly focused on supporting the professional development of teaching staff. A PFA program director emphasized, “Definitely support the staff and be sensitive to the changes that the staff are going through. I think sometimes too, that when you start to make changes and things are working well, staff will get overwhelmed because people will put more and more on you. You have to be sensitive to the staff.” This idea was reinforced by another director, who discussed the importance of supporting teachers through a time of change. “Staff need more time to get oriented to PFA. Maybe some time to observe others’ classrooms. I would love to have some stellar models for people to observe classroom practices and things like that.” One program director suggested, “Bringing PFA staff together as a county, doing a pre-service, or [an] in-service as a whole group. They [PFA teachers] have not had a chance to network and talk about things themselves, my biggest concerns are for the teachers.” Other comments around professional development pointed to the need for tuition assistance, additional release time, and more paid prep time.

**Review the PFA Eligibility Criteria.** Staff from two of the PFA contractors recommended that SMCOE and the PFA community review the current implementation of PFA and consider the future of the program. A director said, “I think that there needs to be a little more reflection on an individual basis about what is working and what is not working.” This comment was reinforced by another management-level staff person: “What [PFA] standards need to be reevaluated? All of the PFA criteria, starting with ECERS score and on-the-floor staffing and qualifications of the team.” In particular, several staff—management and teachers—suggested that the San Mateo ECERS-R score requirements be reviewed, recommending that an average across subscales be used, rather than a specific score on each subscale. (As noted previously, the ECERS-R score requirements have been revised since data collection was conducted for this study).

**Explore the Alignment Between PFA and the Existing Program’s Unique Philosophy and Practices.** The role of PFA in advocating or prescribing specific teaching strategies or classroom settings was also raised in San Mateo. PFA providers suggested continued dialogue with SMCOE to explore the interface between PFA and existing program practices. A management-level staff person commented, “How do you do TA when there is a conflict in personality or culture or how the program should be operating? I think that we are all going to come up with that question.” Similar comments were made specifically in regard to curriculum. Staff suggested that attention be focused on how PFA should provide technical assistance on curriculum, especially if PFA sites are using different curricular approaches or packages.

**Include Providers in Discussions Regarding the Long-term Sustainability of PFA.**

A program director talked about the long-term future of PFA, particularly given that the statewide PFA ballot initiative failed. Staff suggested that SMCOE plan strategically (such as a facilities fund, increased funding for SaMCARES) in order to support the growth and improvement of current and future PFA sites. A program director emphasized that she must always consider and plan for the possibility that PFA funds will be discontinued. “You have to think—what happens if I don’t have those PFA funds, what does that mean?”

**Consider the Goals and Scope of the PFA System to Inform Countywide Policy Planning.**

One PFA staff person emphasized that PFA can strengthen, but not replace, the efforts of other initiatives (e.g., mental health support, services for children with disabilities, family support services, infant/toddler care). “PFA has a targeted purpose. PFA cannot do it all. PFA can’t do everything.”

**Continued Participation in PFA**

All of the PFA programs in both San Francisco and San Mateo Counties reported they planned to continue with the program in the coming fiscal year (2006-2007). Comments from providers included:

- “I have seven children using this program that wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for PFA.”
- “We are thrilled to be a part of it.”
- “The teachers [are] on the PFA path. I don’t know what we would do [without PFA]. We are in.”
- “Yes, we have three teachers who have their AA, who are in the BA program in hopes of becoming one of our PFA BA teachers. We are continuing. We have teachers who are in hopes of becoming PFA teachers. It’s things like that—it’s [PFA] been a good push for other staff.”



## Chapter 11. PFA Partner Agencies

Representatives from eighteen PFA partner agencies from both counties were interviewed to gain an understanding of their role within the PFA system, the relationships among partners, factors which facilitated the work of partners, and challenges they have encountered to date. Table 11.1. provides a brief explanation of the role of each partner in each county.

**Table 11.1. PFA Partner Agencies**

<b>San Francisco</b>	<b>Role</b>
Children’s Council of San Francisco	Manages the Centralized Eligibility List which includes PFA
Citywide Child Care Administrator, San Francisco Dept. of Children, Youth & Families	Partners with First 5 San Francisco to support quality in early childhood education; involved in PFA planning
Gateway to Quality (works with both SF and SM)	Conducts ECERS-R assessments and provides technical assistance
High Risk Infant Interagency Council	Coordinates the training and dissemination of the ASQ with follow-up to the ASQ if providers/families require support.
Low Income Investment Fund	Provides quality improvement grants up to \$3,000 per classroom to PFA programs every two years.
San Francisco Early Childhood Professional Development Project, City College of San Francisco	Provides counseling and recruitment for ECE students, dual language classes and coursework
San Francisco Local Planning Council	Involved with PFA since its planning stages, including helping to communicate policy to the child care community.
Tree Frog Treks	Provides science curriculum, training for staff on implementing science programs, and materials needed for on-going science activities during school year.
Wu Yee Children’s Services	Serves as the provider and enrollment agency for PFA

<b>San Mateo</b>	<b>Services</b>
Child Care Coordinating Council (4Cs)	Facilitates outreach to parents, coordinates SaMCARES and career counseling for PFA providers, offers a technical assistance project to support providers towards accreditation, connects PFA programs with other resources, conducts facilities assessments, and develops recommendations for targeting facilities investments.
Early Childhood Language Development Institute	Offers training for providers and parents to support children in maintaining their home language and culture while learning English.
Jewish Family and Children's Services/Parents Place	Provides mental health counseling at PFA sites for children, families and staff.
Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families	Systems Integration Develops articulation strategies/action plans for ensuring smooth transitions from preschool to kindergarten
	Evaluation Conducts/provides results from county Kindergarten Readiness Assessment
Professional Association for Childhood Education (PACE)	As a professional association, provides training, technical assistance, and professional development opportunities.
Raising a Reader®	Supplies PFA sites with lending libraries for families, a book bag for each PFA child at year end and early literacy training to PFA classrooms and staff.
Redwood City Child Care Coordinator	Identifies and develops facilities to house PFA programs and improve the quality of child care in preschool facilities; facilitates parent outreach and education efforts and assists in provider outreach and recruitment.
San Mateo Community College System	Convenes a workforce development task force to address recruitment, diversity, and articulation issues related to PFA; a college counselor works with ECE students to provide them with academic and career advice to assist them in getting their permits and certificates.
San Mateo Human Service Agency	Provides additional funding for classroom services and/or quality improvement activities at PFA sites.

\*SMCOE also collaborates with the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center regarding family engagement activities, although in 2005-2006 they did not have a formal contract in place with the organization.

### **San Francisco Partner Agencies**

First 5 San Francisco collaborates with a number of agencies to support PFA providers specifically and the broader ECE community in the county. The majority of partner agencies in San Francisco have worked collaboratively on early childhood education issues for many years and many have served on PFA planning and advisory committees. A summary of the activities conducted by partner agencies in regard to PFA implementation in San Francisco is provided below.



**Children’s Council of San Francisco.** The Children’s Council is a Resource & Referral Agency that provides free child care resource and referral listings in English and Spanish; child care subsidy assistance to low-income families; technical assistance, training, and professional development to child care providers; health and nutritional services and food subsidies; child care resources and options for children with special needs; and advocacy, public education, and support to the child care community. The Children’s Council also administers the Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) for San Francisco County. The Children’s Council has worked with First 5 San Francisco to develop a system to coordinate outreach to families and integrate PFA on the CEL. In addition, the Children’s Council provides mailings about PFA to eligible families and connects them with Wu Yee Children’s Services (the PFA provider and enrollment agency) as appropriate. In the future, the Council will continue to collaborate with First 5 San Francisco in regard to PFA policy issues, including how PFA can work with the voucher system (e.g., are there ways PFA can support a child with a voucher that is enrolled in a non-PFA program?).

**San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).** The Department of Children, Youth and Families supports San Francisco’s children and youth through innovative partnerships with parents and youth, community organizations, city departments, schools, funders and the private sector. Through the Children’s Fund and the city’s General Fund, DCYF funds over 140 community-based organizations and city departments. Often leveraging private, state and federal dollars to complement city funds, DCYF creates and facilitates citywide projects addressing issues such as child care, youth and family support, adolescent health, and youth employment. DCYF has provided funds for and has been involved with many initiatives to support the early childhood community, including the San Francisco CARES (Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards) Initiative, Wages Plus, the High Quality Child Care Initiative, the High Quality Child Care Mental Health Consultation Initiative, the Family Child Care Initiative, the Child Care Facilities Fund, and the Centralized Eligibility List. The Child Care Administrator at DCYF partners with other city departments on county-wide planning issues and works directly with early childhood programs on a variety of issues (e.g., identifying professional development opportunities, supporting facility enhancements, etc.). The Child Care Administrator collaborates with First 5 San Francisco, participating in policy and funding issues and providing a city-wide perspective for PFA within the context of the broader early childhood community.

**High Risk Infant Interagency Council (HRIIC).** HRIIC is a county-wide parent/professional collaborative concerned with infants and young children (ages birth through five) with special health care needs and their families. HRIIC is part of the First 5 San Francisco special needs project and funded by First 5 California. HRIIC works to ensure that these children in San Francisco receive family-centered services in a timely and coordinated manner through interagency collaboration. HRIIC works to foster interagency collaboration and effective services by:

- facilitating interagency efforts to coordinate and improve services, including coordinating the Round Table (an interagency process for exploring which agency or agencies might best meet the needs of children and families),

- providing a forum for new ideas, information exchange and networking between public agencies, private organizations, families of children with special needs, early intervention and preschool programs, and the medical community;
- providing public awareness and outreach activities to parents, professionals and the community; and
- assessing and reviewing the program needs for children with special health care needs within the San Francisco early childhood community.

HRIIC supports the use of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire among the community-based PFA sites (school district PFA sites are responsible for coordinating the administration of the ASQ themselves). HRIIC conducts trainings with PFA staff on the ASQ and provides individualized assistance to programs based on their needs. HRIIC helps refer children identified with possible special needs to appropriate services in mandated agencies through its “Round Table”, as described above. As PFA expands over the next few years, HRIIC will explore ways to increase their capacity to support the PFA sites, including training staff on the use of the ASQ. In addition, the agency will continue to focus on increasing access to timely services for PFA children, working collaboratively with other agencies in the county.

**Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF).** LIIF fosters healthy communities by providing a bridge between private capital markets and low income neighborhoods. By investing capital and providing technical assistance to community development organizations, LIIF spurs economic advancement for the very poor. As a contractor to DCYF, the Low Income Investment Fund launched the Child Care Facilities Fund (CCFF), a strategic public/private partnership that works to increase, improve and preserve quality child care spaces for every child in San Francisco. CCFF offers child care providers in San Francisco financing for planning, pre-development, and construction of new and expanding child care facilities, child care facility improvements and renovations, start-up operating costs for new and recently expanded licensed spaces, and resolution of urgent health, safety and accessibility issues at child care sites. CCFF provides child care operators with training, unit-bearing classes and one-on-one consultation with experts in facility development and maintenance, accounting and fiscal management, operations, fundraising and board development, and computer software. LIIF supports PFA applicants, following their ECERS-R/FDCRS assessment by providing technical assistance and grants (\$3,000 per PFA classroom for improvements and \$20,000 for programs that have greater needs) and providing training and support as needed. In addition, LIIF is working in conjunction with City College to sponsor an ECERS-R course.

**The San Francisco Early Childhood Professional Development Project, City College of San Francisco.** The overall goal of the Professional Development Project at the City College of San Francisco is to increase quality child development services in the county through the promotion of recruitment and retention in the early care and education workforce. Project activities include comprehensive career resources, academic advising, information on training opportunities, and a partnership between the Community College and San Francisco State University. The project also serves as a voice for professional development, career resource issues, early childhood workforce compensation, and public policy. Through the project, bilingual career advisors provide assistance regarding the child development permit matrix and coordinate with the San Francisco CARES program to encourage individuals to advance their education. City College

also developed a literacy course focused on language acquisition and early literacy practices for providers, available in the fall of 2006. In addition, PFA has partnered with City College, San Francisco State University, and San Francisco Head Start to support a bilingual BA-completion cohort of 36 preschool teachers. As PFA expands, City College will continue to address workforce development issues, including how to support students in obtaining their General Education units, which has been identified as a significant challenge for ECE students.

**San Francisco Local Planning Council (LPC).** The LPC serves as a representative advisory and planning body to maintain, expand and improve local child care services in San Francisco. The LPC also provides links between government and community to work to maximize the amount and impact of local, state, federal and private resources and funding for child care in San Francisco. In regard to PFA, the Local Planning Council recommended individuals to First 5 San Francisco to participate on the PFA Advisory Committee. In addition, LPC staff serve as a link with the early childhood community to help disseminate information about PFA.

**Tree Frog Treks (TFT).** Tree Frog Treks contracts with First 5 San Francisco to support science education at PFA sites by providing training and technical assistance to PFA teachers and working directly with PFA children, introducing them to live rescued reptiles and amphibians, offering fun, hands-on science and art programming, and exploring nature. In 2005-2006, Tree Frog Treks provided science resources to 25 preschool sites (36 classrooms). TFT staff conduct an in-person consultation with PFA teachers, in which they provide and explain how to use a free kit containing 12 different hands-on experiments that cover chemistry, biology, physics, and science. Tree Frog Treks staff also offer two visits per classroom to work directly with the children, showing them animals, conducting simple experiments, and presenting other science activities. Tree Frog Treks trainers conduct a scan of the classroom to identify ways the PFA site can enrich science instruction. A “green map” is provided to programs, identifying areas in their neighborhoods that can be used for outdoor science activities. In addition to working with PFA sites, Tree Frog Treks conducts city-wide trainings available to all early childhood teachers in the city. The program is “trying to empower teachers to define science in their own world so that it is doable all the time.” Detailed provider feedback on Tree Frog Treks is presented in Chapter 5.

**Wu Yee Children’s Services.** Wu Yee Children’s Services contracts with First 5 San Francisco as the provider and enrollment agency for PFA in San Francisco. Wu Yee offers a range of support services to the early care and education community in San Francisco. For example, the agency administers SF CARES, a community-based program designed to promote the compensation, professional development and retention of the child development workforce; the Family Center, which is a resource and referral clearinghouse which connects families to services they need; the Child Development Program which provides comprehensive child development services to families through six centers throughout San Francisco; and the Joy Lok Family Resource Center which provides a hub of services for parents and caregivers of children birth to five years.

Wu Yee holds a contract with First 5 San Francisco to carry out enrollment and fiscal monitoring activities of the PFA sites, coordinate PFA reimbursement to providers, and assist with outreach and enrollment of PFA providers and families. Wu Yee operates a phone line for families

interested in PFA. If they are eligible, Wu Yee staff provides families with referrals to PFA sites that meet their needs, and each program then enrolls families on-site. PFA providers are required to submit monthly updates on enrollment, attendance, the education status of teachers, class lists, changes to the waiting list, and any quality enhancements. Wu Yee's PFA specialists monitor the information to ensure it is accurate, through site visits, and confirm that the classroom requirements (e.g., DRDP and the ASQ) are being implemented.

Wu Yee has viewed PFA as a catalyst to reexamine its organization and reflect on how to integrate and leverage PFA into a comprehensive support system for providers. The agency offers a wide range of services to the provider community and is interested in coordinating each of these resources into a more effective system of support, including staffing and structures within Wu Yee. For example, Wu Yee staff have discussed plans to reorganize its staff into three groups: child development services, family support services, and provider services in order to optimize available resources.

### **San Mateo Partner Agencies**

In 2005-2006, San Mateo contracted with a set of partner organizations to form a network of support for the PFA system. This group of non-classroom contractors conducts a diverse set of activities, including providing direct assistance to PFA sites and addressing broader issues such as workforce development and facilities planning. A summary of activities conducted by partner agencies in regard to PFA implementation is included below (similar to San Francisco, many of the partner agencies were also intensively involved in PFA planning).

**Child Care Coordinating Council (4Cs).** This Resource and Referral Agency is involved in outreach to families and providers, training, program quality improvements, and facilities development. PFA information is incorporated into 4Cs resource and referral protocols, including standard referral counseling, "Choosing Preschool" handouts, workshop presentations and community fair materials. 4Cs staff provide information about PFA to parents seeking child care/preschool and conduct mailings about PFA to families on the Centralized Eligibility List. In addition, 4Cs communicates information about PFA to providers, emphasizing a key message that PFA provides high-quality services and operates under high standards for children and families. (In addition to 4Cs, SMCOE staff conducted extensive outreach to providers, children and families, and the community. SMCOE coordinates outreach and enrollment for new PFA spaces, conducts public presentations, and mails PFA applications to target neighborhoods, among other activities).

PFA also funds a career counseling position at the 4Cs. This bilingual (English/Spanish) counselor provides career advice to anyone who is interested in working in the ECE field in San Mateo County, guides them to available resources, and helps them obtain their child development permits. 4Cs counselors work closely with SaMCARES, ensuring eligible participants have access to all the services available to them.

The 4Cs implements the Quality Improvement/Accreditation Support Project, which is designed to support providers through accreditation and the ECERS-R/FDCRS review process. 4Cs staff have been trained by Thelma Harms and Gateway to Quality on the ECERS-R/FDCRS to ensure reliability on the observation tools between the two organizations. In 2005-2006, four

preschool/child care centers and five family child care homes participated in the project. Services include a bi-monthly meeting to provide support around the Environment Rating Scales, development of quality improvement plans, and technical assistance. The program aims to increase the potential of PFA sites throughout the county to meet PFA quality standards. In 2005-2006, one of the participating centers received accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and three are in the process of doing so. All five child care homes have applied for accreditation from the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). The project is viewed by 4Cs staff as a critical and strategic resource to expand the capacity for PFA in the county.

Finally, PFA partners with 4Cs to leverage existing resources in the community to support facility enhancements among PFA providers. The 4Cs supports two facilities enhancement and expansion programs, both of which receive funding and support from community partners. These include the Peninsula Quality Fund (PQF) for Early Childhood Facilities and SmartKids. Launched in the Fall of 2001 by 4Cs, with initial funding from United Way of the Bay Area and corporate partners, the PQF offers grants for facility improvements to licensed, non-profit child care centers serving low-income children in San Mateo County. PQF partners with Rebuilding Together Peninsula, which harnesses volunteer expertise, labor and materials to augment small PQF renovation grants to complete projects. In 2005, First 5 San Mateo County made a three-year commitment to fund the PQF at \$50,000 annually. SmartKids, San Mateo County's Child Care Facilities Expansion Fund, invests in child care centers and family child care homes to increase the supply of child care in the county. SmartKids issues grants to help with start-up costs, training, facility repairs and renovations, and equipment purchases. Initial funding for SmartKids was provided by the Human Services Agency of San Mateo County, with significant on-going funding contributed by First 5 San Mateo County. In addition to these two programs, a facilities task force was formed by the 4Cs in 2005-2006 which distributed surveys to schools, church congregations and real estate brokers to assess facility needs in target communities.

**Early Childhood Language Development Institute (ECLDI).** As described in Chapter 5, the ECLDI provides training to PFA staff and parents on supporting children's first and second language development and cultural diversity. The training is designed so that providers and parents support their children in maintaining their home language and culture while learning English. The curriculum is research-based and includes hands-on and practical strategies for PFA staff and parents. In addition to working with PFA sites, ECLDI trainers have conducted an in-service workshop with faculty at Cañada and Skyline colleges to offer resources and provide strategies for training students in language development. According to partner staff, "It's really wonderful that [ECLDI] have these formal connections [as a result of PFA]. Through these other agencies, we can access the target population." ECLDI seeks to identify links between their training content, PFA quality standards (including the ECERS-R), and the priorities of local programs. In the coming year, ECLDI will focus more strongly on on-site mentoring and coaching at PFA sites to help translate training into practice.

**Jewish Family and Children's Services/Parents Place.** As noted in Chapter 5, Parents Place offers a wide array of services to help improve the retention of children in school and help build strong, effective families as parents guide their children to adulthood. Parents Place provides consultation, staff training, prevention and early intervention services to licensed, early

childhood programs that serve low-income children and families. Specifically, Parents Place establishes ongoing relationship with the teachers and staff, including the site director, program director, and other staff as appropriate (e.g., family advocates) to discuss and addresses issues related to mental health. According to Parents Place staff, often there are issues relating to one child that the program, which then become applicable to a larger number of children in the classroom, expanding the value of their services to the program in general. All of the consultants are mental health clinicians, whether they be marriage and family therapists, masters in family social work, licensed or pre-licensed, and all have background in mental health and child development. PFA has increased their capacity and their services will be expanded in the 2006-2007 program year to a greater number of PFA sites.

**Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families.** The Peninsula Partnership is a joint effort by public and private organizations to improve the well-being of children from birth to eight in San Mateo County. With a focus on school readiness, the Peninsula Partnership works on strengthening articulation between preschool and kindergarten through shared professional development opportunities between preschool and kindergarten teachers, efforts to align standards and curriculum frameworks between pre-k and kindergarten, and development of school-specific and child-specific transition plans. In 2005-2006, parent training and activity packets for summer kindergarten transition activities were piloted at select PFA sites by the PFA Technical Assistance Coordinator.

**Professional Association for Childhood Education (PACE).** Established in 1955, PACE is a professional association with a network of center-based licensed child care providers throughout California. PACE also operates an Alternative Payment Program, a child care subsidy program serving low-income families and their child care providers in 25 counties in Northern and Central California. The organization provides technical assistance, conducts annual conferences, provides resource books, and hosts regional and county meetings. PACE serves as a voice for the private provider community in relation to PFA and has helped to share information via their regular communication mechanisms.

**Raising a Reader® (RAR).** As noted in Chapter 5, The Raising A Reader mission is to foster healthy brain development, parent-child bonding and early literacy skills critical for school success by engaging parents in a routine of daily “book cuddling” with their children from birth to age five. Early childhood professionals are taught ways to engage parents in “read-aloud” strategies anchored to language development research and storytelling traditions. These approaches are designed to inspire low-literacy or limited English-speaking families to share books with their children. The program and its materials are age-appropriate and tailored to suit the diverse cultural traditions and ethnic and linguistic demographics of children and families.

Raising a Reader operates at a total of 450 sites in San Mateo County, and all of the PFA sites. Some of the PFA programs already implemented Raising a Reader® prior to PFA, although they each received updated materials or training over the 2005-2006 program year. In addition, RAR provides training to staff on how to effectively implement the program. According to RAR staff, PFA is a “great partnership for Raising a Reader.” They describe the program as “such a simple notion that goes over so well” with teachers, families, and children.

**Redwood City Child Care Coordinator.** In addition to the 4Cs, the Redwood City Child Care Coordinator is involved with facilities planning and outreach. The Coordinator has a contract with SMCOE to provide information and technical assistance on facilities, resources, and funding opportunities to both current and potential PFA contractors. In 2005-2006, the Coordinator also mapped preschool programs by school district boundaries and pilot tested a facilities scan designed by the Low Income Investment Fund and the Packard ABCD project in one school district. In addition to her facilities work, the Coordinator is involved with provider outreach, connecting with potential PFA programs to explain the program and how they might participate. The Redwood City Child Care Coordinator has a long history with the provider community and has served as a vehicle to share information about PFA, address concerns and misunderstandings about the PFA eligibility requirements, and encourage providers to participate in the PFA system.

**San Mateo Community College District.** PFA funds a career and academic advising position at Cañada College (and at the 4Cs, as described below) to work directly with ECE students/professionals to provide counseling on career and academic pathways, development of individualized education plans, and assistance with child development permit applications, foreign transcript reviews, placement tests, and transfer requirements for university/bachelor-degree programs. The Cañada College career counselor works specifically with ECE students, many of whom are working at PFA sites. The counselor tracks their progress through the ECE system, provides career advice, and encourages them to work towards their certificates. The demand (in the first year, the counselor served 239 students from September 2005 through May 2006), according to community college staff, “really has demonstrated the need for specialized counselors who are familiar with the certificate program and the ins and outs of the ECE field.”

In addition to the career counselor, PFA has funded other activities, including a new math class based on ECE content that will be offered in the fall of 2006 which is designed to help ECE students overcome the challenge of earning GE units. The ECE curriculum at Cañada College was reviewed and revised to better support PFA goals and objectives and align with the PFA quality standards (e.g., incorporation of cultural diversity principles into all ECE curriculum content, child observation and assessment, environment rating scales, etc.).

**The San Mateo Human Service Agency.** The San Mateo Human Service Agency is involved in PFA policy and funding issues in the county. The agency provided funds (\$1.7 million) for PFA preschool spaces. The Human Service Agency is committed to identifying and leveraging funding to support children’s well-being in the county. A representative from the Human Service Agency participates in the on-going meetings of PFA partners.

### **Partner Agency Collaboration**

As described, the scope and type of activities conducted by partner agencies varies. Partner agencies include organizations that provide technical assistance with facilities, special needs, the ECERS-R, NAEYC/NAFCC accreditation, science, and early literacy and language development. Other functions of partner agencies include career counseling and workforce development, monitoring, and policy and planning. Together, partner agencies form a network of support for PFA providers. Despite the variation among the partner agencies within and

across the counties, interviews with staff from these organizations revealed some common themes in San Francisco and San Mateo.

Partner agency staff in both counties discussed the importance of collaboration among key stakeholders in the PFA system. In San Mateo, staff from partner agencies described long-standing relationships among organizations that facilitated their PFA work. In particular, they appreciated the contracts with SMCOE that formally defined their PFA scope of work. In San Francisco, several representatives from partner agencies commented that they wore “more than one hat” and that “the same people sit at the table” for numerous committees and task forces within the county. One partner organization commented that planning and collaboration was sometimes informal in San Francisco, yet stakeholders were able to implement highly effective support services for the provider community. In particular, the Local Planning Council was identified as a key vehicle for coordinating PFA planning among stakeholders in San Francisco.

In both counties, the importance of coordinating PFA with other county-wide initiatives (e.g., mental health, special needs) was underscored. Partner agencies suggested that they, as a group, continue to identify natural linkages between PFA and other efforts to support providers, children, and families. The critical role of collaborative relationships—among partner organizations and with the provider community—was emphasized by stakeholders in both San Francisco and San Mateo. Finally, partner agencies in both counties described PFA as an effective vehicle to build the capacity of the early childhood field and increase quality. A partner agency representative in San Mateo explained, “PFA has given us a platform to talk about the big systemic issues that often are not talked about.” A San Francisco PFA partner stated, “I think [PFA] is a great opportunity to bring in the different policy makers to think of innovative ways to shore up our system.” Other comments included: “PFA has opened many door that we might not [otherwise] be able to go through.” In particular, partners discussed the role of PFA in strengthening and creating new linkages with the K-12 system and higher education institutions.

## **Recommendations from San Francisco Partner Agencies**

PFA partners in San Francisco offered the following recommendations to support the PFA system. Some comments underscore the importance of current activities, while other feedback suggests improvements for PFA as it expands:

### ***Preschool Planning***

- Ensure lead time to effectively plan for the expansion of PFA to new zip codes,
- Ensure representation from diverse provider groups, including private providers, in the planning and implementation of PFA,
- Involve institutes of higher education in preschool planning to ensure PFA can be supported by a trained, high-quality workforce,
- Engage the business community by sharing information about the importance of early childhood education, including the long-term cost-savings of such investments,
- Involve the Local Planning Council in PFA policy discussions,
- Strengthen relationships with Family Resource Centers through PFA, and
- Include a HRIIC representative at the Learning Circle meetings, to increase their visibility among providers and facilitate training and administration of the ASQ.



### **Support the Provider Community**

- Provide technical assistance to providers as small business owners,
- Provide low interest loans or grants to providers to address facility issues,
- Provide one-on-one TA for PFA applicants to prepare for the ECERS-R assessment, in addition to offering group training,
- Educate the provider community on the role of Gateway to Quality, including the logistics involved with the ECERS-R assessment and Gateway’s “reassessment” policy (e.g., how can a program get reassessed by Gateway after their first assessment? How often and on what timeframe?),<sup>15</sup>
- Identify ways to alleviate “pass/fail” anxiety among providers that is increasingly associated with the ECERS-R assessment,
- Use trained ECERS-R assessors who are a linguistic and cultural match with the programs they observe,
- Coordinate dissemination of information among agencies and programs (e.g. Wages Plus, CARES, PFA, LIIF, Department of Children and Families, First 5, R&R agencies, etc.) to ensure that providers are not overwhelmed by information for resources and do not inadvertently miss any opportunities,
- Tailor technical assistance to family child care providers, recognizing their unique needs compared to center-based programs, to help increase their participation in the PFA system,
- Offer training and technical assistance to support positive staff-child interactions and relationships, and
- Train PFA sites, before the program year begins, on the ASQ and how it can be used to partner with families.

### **Review Policies and Procedures to Plan for Future Implementation**

- Explore how the voucher system can be integrated with PFA,
- Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the ASQ in the PFA system; dialogue with the school district system about how the ASQ duplicates existing processes,
- Determine the capacity of HRIIC to support PFA as the program expands to new zip codes in the city,
- Consider alternative PFA staff qualifications beyond the BA, such as tenure in the field, and
- Focus planning efforts on identifying and removing barriers to the participation of family child care providers in PFA.

### **Coordinate PFA with Other Support Services and Initiatives**

- Link PFA with other county-level initiatives (e.g., mental health, public health) to collaboratively support quality and timely services for children and families across the county,
- Avoid duplication of effort across county-wide initiatives; link PFA with other programs to provide services (e.g., health, special needs, resources for providers), rather than ‘reinventing the wheel’, and

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<sup>15</sup> Recommendations regarding the role and services of Gateway to Quality apply to both San Francisco and San Mateo Counties.

- Balance PFA with other needs in the early care and education system, ensuring that children birth to three years are also supported.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

- Invest in the assessment and tracking of PFA children through K-12 school years, to measure their progress and demonstrate the importance of preschool to the public, policy makers, and the business community,
- Track the PFA workforce to determine if the infant/toddler community is losing staff to the PFA and elementary schools, and
- Invest in the development of a data collection system that is useful for all stakeholders (e.g., informing planning among policy makers and helping providers efficiently comply with multiple reporting requirements).

### ***Public Support for PFA***

- Broaden public support for PFA through an enhanced public relations effort about the program and the importance of early care and education.

## **Recommendations from San Mateo Partner Agencies**

Similar themes emerged from the feedback gathered from partner agencies in San Mateo:

### ***Preschool Planning***

- Ensure a broad range of stakeholders continue to provide input on PFA planning, and
- Include private providers, particularly family child care providers, in preschool planning.

### ***Support the Provider Community***

- Fund facility improvements in the early care and education community; provide low interest loans or grants to providers,
- Invest in workforce development initiatives; offer community college classes in alternative settings (off-campus, throughout the community) and times (e.g., weekends) to help providers, particularly family child care providers, enroll in classes,
- Offer training that complements program activities (e.g., tie training to the assessments or observation tools that programs use) so that providers can see the connection between the resources and their work in classrooms,
- Enhance training at community colleges on family involvement and engagement, and
- Invest in intensive coaching and mentoring support for teachers, in addition to training offered in group settings.

### ***Review Policies and Procedures to Plan for Future Implementation***

- As PFA rolls out, consider the capacity of partner agencies to effectively serve a growing number of providers and plan accordingly,
- Streamline the quarterly PFA partner meetings by focusing on key issues to be addressed; consider written updates in place of verbal presentations; keep the group on task and the conversation relevant to the diverse group of partners,

- Invest in the community college system to ensure they have the capacity to meet the demand for qualified teachers,
- Integrate PFA into the CEL to streamline the application process, create more visibility for PFA with a wider range of families (income-wise), and potentially diversify the families participating in PFA,
- Continue to fund the specialized ECE academic and career counselor at Canada Community College who is familiar with the child development permit matrix; replicate this role at Skyline College,
- Review the roles of the 4Cs and the Redwood City Child Care Coordinator to determine if there is duplication of effort; as appropriate, identify ways of integrating the work,
- Use PFA to strengthen the existing local intermediary agencies, to help “raise the entire ship” particularly around workforce development,
- Consider alternative staff qualifications beyond the BA, such as tenure in the field, and
- Work toward a mixed delivery system for PFA to support parent choice and increased access to full-day care.

#### ***Coordinate PFA with other Support Services and Initiatives***

- Develop linkages between PFA and existing provider support projects, particularly those focusing on children with special needs, and
- Continue to support PFA staff with mental health services and consultation.

#### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

- Monitor the rate of turnover among PFA classroom teachers and its impact on training the PFA workforce; discuss the capacity of TA partner agencies to continually train new staff, and
- Ensure periodic review and reflection on what is working with PFA and what is not; revise the PFA system based on emerging findings.

#### ***Public Support for PFA***

- Increase marketing and public awareness campaign to build public support for PFA, and
- Explore how to raise public awareness about a “universal” PFA program that is only currently available in a handful of neighborhoods in the county.



## **Chapter 12. Non-PFA Providers—Why Are Some Preschool Programs Not Participating in PFA?**

Twenty-four directors of preschool programs currently not participating in PFA were interviewed (six in San Francisco and eighteen in San Mateo) to solicit their feedback about the perceived impact of PFA on their programs and communities and to understand the factors which may limit their capacity to participate in the PFA system. Program directors also were asked to estimate the likelihood of pursuing participation in PFA in the future and to identify the type of support they may need in order to do so.

The non-PFA preschool directors were selected for the interviews by First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE. All of the program directors had communicated with First 5 San Francisco or SMCOE in the last year, to some extent, regarding the possibility of participating in PFA. It is important to note that the program directors were not randomly selected and therefore the feedback summarized below cannot be generalized to the entire non-PFA provider community in each county. The majority of interviews (22 of the 24) were conducted prior to the June 6 statewide PFA ballot initiative.

### **Anticipated Impact of PFA**

San Francisco non-PFA providers were asked to speculate about the impact of PFA in their community. Three program directors provided feedback:

- **PFA will increase families’ access to high-quality preschool programs.** Two providers felt that PFA will have a positive impact on the county, by enabling families, whose children might otherwise be at home or in lower quality care, to enroll them in high-quality PFA programs. Providers also noted the high cost of living in San Francisco, and how PFA will help low-income families access preschool services to support their children’s learning and development.
- **PFA will provide needed services to families, but may have a negative impact on providers’ motivation to work in the early childhood education field.** A family child care provider believed that PFA will be good for the community over the long term, but is concerned that programs may be primarily motivated to participate in PFA for the funding, rather than as a resource to provide high-quality services to children.

San Mateo non-PFA providers offered the following feedback regarding the perceived impact of PFA in their community:

- **PFA will be good for the community.** Seven of the preschool directors stated that PFA will promote positive outcomes for children and families. One provider said, “I can’t imagine that it won’t have a positive impact.” Other comments focused on PFA as a means to support school readiness and a strategy to create more choice for families.

- **The current early childhood education system will not support a high PFA participation rate among families.** One provider was concerned that the current early childhood field does not have the capacity to meet the need that PFA would create. She also noted that space for new child care facilities is limited across the county.
- **Teachers who lack the appropriate PFA education requirements will lose their jobs.** When asked about the potential impact of PFA in her community, one provider was concerned for staff who have worked in the field for many years and who are not likely to return to school for a higher degree. Another director was concerned that the education requirements associated with PFA (i.e., the BA) will discourage people from entering the early childhood education field. When asked directly about workforce issues, many of the program directors interviewed provided feedback, which is described in detail in the following section.
- **PFA may put family child care providers out of business.** Three providers (a mixture of center-based and family child care providers) speculated that PFA will have a negative impact on the family child care community. A director said, “We don’t want to be that program hunting for kids because most of them are in PFA.” Another director commented, “Those programs are going to be hurt financially, they are women-owned businesses and it will have a negative impact on women-owned businesses and minority-owned businesses. Children will be placed in other programs.” A director summarized concerns she has heard from the family child care field, suggesting that providers are nervous that PFA may “decimate” their programs. “You know the older children subsidize the younger ones because you need fewer teachers because of ratios. So those 20 four-year-olds really help the budget. So private providers are really concerned that due to free PFA they are going to lose their four-year-olds.” One family child care provider did not feel that PFA would impact her ability to recruit families for her program, stating that families seek out family child care for different reasons than a center-based program, such as providing a more intimate environment and serving siblings within the same setting.
- **PFA will “level the playing field” among providers.** One provider hoped that the funds provided to programs through PFA will help increase their competitiveness, by enabling them to enhance their classroom environments and improve the quality of their programs overall.

### **Potential Obstacles to PFA Participation**

In addition to describing how they envisioned PFA would impact their community, program directors identified the major factors that influenced their capacity or desire to participate in PFA. Program directors were then asked to reflect and comment on the major aspects of the PFA system (the ECERS-R/FDCRS, staff qualifications, etc.). When possible, for each topic below, we summarize the number of program directors who identified that factor as a major hindrance to their participation in PFA, followed by broader input from providers who were asked specifically to comment on each area. Since many providers discussed a range of issues, the figures included below should be considered estimates. Feedback is provided by county.

## **San Francisco**

**Participating in an External ECERS-R Review.** When asked to identify the factors impacting her decision to participate in PFA, one director talked about the challenges she experienced with the ECERS-R process. She described her frustration regarding the lack of follow-up from an ECERS-R assessment conducted for her program several years ago. When she moved forward to apply for PFA funds for two of her program sites, she encountered similar problems. In particular, new, high-cost issues relating to the facility were identified. “These items are the building manager’s responsibility and will cost a lot of money to fix. I am very discouraged. Those are the kinds of things where I threw up my hands and said we will never pass [the ECERS-R]. I have become very discouraged about pursuing PFA for our center.”

When asked to comment specifically on the ECERS-R criteria, a total of four of the five non-PFA providers in San Francisco provided feedback, all of them having previously participated in an external ECERS-R review. Three of these providers felt they could successfully comply with the San Francisco ECERS-R/FDCRS requirement (an average score of 4.5) to be eligible for PFA funds, while the provider described above expressed concern about facility upgrade costs.

**Fiscal Implications of PFA for Family Child Care Providers.** A family child care provider reported that the PFA reimbursement schedule would cause problems. “You have to wait three months to receive the reimbursement payments, which is too long for me to wait for payment. My families pay me on the first of the month.” Another family child care provider was worried about the potential tax consequences of PFA, concerned that PFA will require family child care homes to pay themselves a specific salary and ultimately raise their taxes. The provider explains, “Because we are a family day care, we have to pay ourselves a salary [as a PFA provider]. Our income is our own income [what we earn over our costs constitutes our income]. If we had PFA we would have to pay ourselves a salary, that income has to be taxed. We would be double-taxed then because we are self employed.” Since the data were collected for this report, First 5 San Francisco has implemented a policy change and removed the PFA wage requirements.

**PFA per Child Reimbursement.** According to two of the private non-PFA providers interviewed in San Francisco, the PFA per child reimbursement amount is one of the major factors hindering their participation in the system. One preschool director estimated she would lose \$1,000 per child/per year as a PFA site. A family child care provider also felt the reimbursement fee was too low, although she qualified: “They [PFA] don’t really pay a lot of money. That [finances] is not a priority because I have been working with low-income families for years because I like to help the families, but it [PFA reimbursement] is not enough.”

**Communication Issues With First 5.** A lack of effective communication was a factor that impacted two providers’ decision not to apply to PFA. They described a lack of timely response from First 5 San Francisco and confusion over the application process (e.g., missing documentation).

**Scope of PFA.** The sheer scope of PFA requirements was a factor that impacted one provider’s decision not to pursue PFA. She felt the requirements associated with PFA are too burdensome. “I wasn’t sure if PFA was exactly what I wanted. I participated in their training and they gave

me the list of what was needed. For me it was a huge list. In our [as a family child care provider] case, we have to prepare meals, clean the place, we have to do things that centers have staff to do. It is a lot. We have to take care of everything. They [First 5] are going to start calling me, visiting my program, adding extra paperwork. It is too much.”

Other San Francisco providers offered comments on the reporting requirements associated with PFA. A private provider anticipated the paperwork for PFA would result in a heavy burden on staff, while another provider disagreed, stating that PFA reporting could align with the current funding source’s reporting requirements which her program meets.

**PFA Education Requirements.** One provider in San Francisco was concerned that PFA would require teachers to have a BA. “I don’t think a BA tells the whole truth about what’s available at that place [a preschool program]. A lot of people won’t be able to get a BA and they are truly qualified.” The provider recommended that tenure in the field should be considered as part of the PFA requirements. When asked specifically to share their thoughts regarding staff qualifications, three of the non-PFA program directors offered feedback. While one program felt the PFA requirements were fine, two providers emphasized that many highly effective teachers have worked in the ECE field for decades, yet lack BAs.

### ***San Mateo***

Eighteen non-PFA program directors were interviewed in San Mateo to gather their input on the factors impacting their ability or desire to participate in PFA, and to solicit their general comments on the major components of the PFA system.

**Staff Qualifications.** Six preschool directors stated that the PFA teacher qualifications were a significant obstacle to their participation in PFA. Directors were concerned about staff who have worked in the ECE field for years and do not hold bachelor degrees. “I think that there should be some kind of grandfather thing to acknowledge these people so that the new people that are coming into the field should have the education.” Another provider recommended that PFA award credit to teachers for their tenure in the field, concerned she may lose quality teachers due to the 2010 BA and 32 ECE unit standard. When asked directly about the PFA education requirements in San Mateo, a total of 16 program directors commented, reflecting the broader debate among preschool directors on this topic. Eight of these program directors, or half of the total number of program directors who provided feedback on this issue, did not express particular concerns about the PFA BA requirement for upgraded programs by 2010. “I strongly believe that our best and brightest teachers should be working with our preschool and early elementary children. I strongly support the requirement that teachers have BA and AA degrees.” The remaining eight program directors, including those noted above, did voice some hesitation about the BA requirement.

**Universal Program for Four-Year-Old Children.** Three providers in San Mateo talked about the focus of PFA for all families with four-year-old children as a factor impacting their decision to participate in the system. A preschool director said, “You don’t want to sacrifice one group for another group when in all actuality we should be able to serve all groups and serve them well. That is good for four year olds but you still need to serve three-year-olds as well.” Another program director was under the impression that she would be required to separate three- and



four-year-old children into different classrooms. “We have been in operation for almost 30 years now. We’ve always done things that way. We were willing to look at a change, but the fact that PFA is for four-year-olds only, was really difficult for us to handle.” One provider raised concerns that PFA was a free program for all families, regardless of income. “I have a lot of families that are high income families and I think there are children in San Mateo City (not county) that cannot afford preschool, and I feel that PFA should be for parents that cannot afford it and not just for all four-year-olds.”

**Reporting.** The sheer scope of the PFA requirements was an impediment for one preschool director. She expressed concern that there seemed to be “new rules or restrictions every couple of months.” She explained, “First they just came and looked at my program, then I had to write a long proposal, first it was teachers had to have 16 general ed units and had to have a teacher permit and now they have to have a BA. And first they were going to help us upgrade our program and now we had to go through a full ECERS evaluation and get 5’s on everything and then our facility wasn’t up to par.” Another provider discussed the level of reporting she anticipated would be required for PFA. She said, “Don’t need it [PFA], why would we recruit more work? We are a thriving business.” She commented on the child-level screening and assessment that are required by PFA. “We do observations now of children and conferences with families which follow NAEYC standards, but not like the testing or assessments that are required by PFA.” When asked directly about reporting requirements, a total of 14 providers offered feedback on this issue, with seven providers stating the anticipated PFA reporting requirements were fine, and seven stating that the reporting would be too burdensome.

**Fiscal Implications of PFA.** The fiscal implications of PFA and its long-term sustainability was a significant concern for three providers. Providers expressed apprehension about the outcome of Proposition 82, the Preschool for All ballot measure, and how the program would be funded if the initiative failed. Another provider was worried the PFA reimbursement rate may not cover all of the costs involved with the program, including teacher training, compensation commensurate with the K-12 teacher schedule, and administration costs. One director described her frustration with the alternative payment program, and was concerned similar issues may emerge with PFA: “...our contract with our clientele is that they pay for holidays and a few staff development days and two weeks out of the year that we are closed for vacation. The alternative payment programs only pay for certain holidays that they choose. Our agreement is that our parents give us 30 days notice for termination. The alternative program is only contracting a month at a time so there is a whole lot of instability.”

**ECERS-R Requirements.** The San Mateo ECERS-R requirements (in 2005-2006, a score of 5 or above on all subscales within 12 months of receiving funding and 4.5 for eligibility) were identified as a potential obstacle to PFA participation for one provider, although when asked directly about the ECERS-R/FDCRS criteria, five program directors expressed concerns that their program would not be able to meet the ECERS-R scores as required by PFA. Two of these five programs suggested that SMCOE should use an average ECERS-R score, rather than require a specific score on each ECERS-R subscale. This was a particular issue for programs who faced significant facility problems and were worried that that low scores on some scales would pull down their total ECERS-R score. Additional or alternative means of measuring quality in a preschool program were suggested. “You are going to exclude some quality programs from PFA

just because the criteria of the ECERS could not be reached. You could still have a beautiful classroom and the program could be lousy. There needs to be another way of measuring quality of the program and not just with that instrument.” Nine other non-PFA programs in San Mateo reported that meeting the ECERS-R eligibility guidelines would not be a significant obstacle to participation.<sup>16</sup>

**Facilities.** Related to the more general issue of the PFA ECERS-R requirements, facility issues or potential facility issues were mentioned as hindering programs’ participation in the PFA system. When asked directly about facility issues, eight of the sixteen non-PFA directors who provided feedback suggested that facilities could be a problem in meeting the PFA eligibility requirements. Several of these directors inquired whether PFA would provide funding towards rectifying any facility upgrade needs.

**PFA Per Child Reimbursement.** When asked to identify the major factors that may hinder their participation in PFA, one program director expressed concern over the amount of the per child reimbursement, given her program operates a lower staff-child ratio than PFA requires. When asked to comment directly on the PFA reimbursement rate, eight non-PFA providers felt the San Mateo PFA reimbursement rate was adequate. Three providers wanted the rate to be increased, particularly if it turned out to be less than what they currently collected from families. Six providers were unsure if the PFA reimbursement rate would be satisfactory.

Other questions raised by up to four preschool directors included the following:

- How will PFA impact programs’ ability to meet their state preschool contract?
- How can Montessori teacher training programs fulfill PFA staff qualification requirements?
- Many parents specifically seek out faith-based programs—how can they participate in PFA?
- How will PFA impact outreach and enrollment processes? In particular, will family child care providers have control over who they accept to their program?
- Will parent coops which are exempt from licensing be able to obtain a waiver regarding this PFA requirement?
- How can large preschool programs (e.g., national programs), which have a centralized management structure and a large bureaucracy, prepare for and participate in PFA in a timely manner?
- How can private programs with sites across county lines, ensure parity in compensation, when they may be required to pay different wage rates for qualified teachers in San Mateo, but not for equally qualified teachers in other counties?

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<sup>16</sup> As noted earlier, since data were collected for this report, the San Mateo ECERS eligibility requirements have been revised. Within 24 months, PFA programs must demonstrate an average score of 5 or above across all the subscales, rather than a 5 on each subscale.

## Future Plans to Participate in PFA

Non-PFA programs were asked to estimate the likelihood that they would pursue becoming a PFA provider in the coming fiscal year and in two to three years time. Each provider was asked to rate their likelihood of participation in PFA on a four-point scale: will definitely pursue PFA, will probably pursue, will probably not pursue, or will definitely not pursue. Responses are shown by program funding: programs receiving a form of public funding (with one exception, all of these publicly funded programs also included a parent fee component), and programs supported entirely by parent fees (no public funds). While a total of 24 providers were interviewed, some providers were unsure of their likelihood of participation and did not answer either one or both questions.

**Table 12.1. Non-PFA Providers: Likelihood of Becoming a PFA Site**

Program Funding	Will Definitely Pursue PFA	Will Probably Pursue PFA	Will Probably <u>Not</u> Pursue PFA	Will Definitely <u>Not</u> Pursue PFA
<b>... in the Coming Fiscal Year:</b>				
<b>Publicly subsidized (9)</b>	4 (44%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)
<b>Private fees only (14)</b>	3 (21%)	1 (7%)	6 (43%)	4 (29%)
<b>Total (23)</b>	<b>7 (30%)</b>	<b>4 (17%)</b>	<b>7 (30%)</b>	<b>5 (22%)</b>
<b>... in the Next 2-3 Years:</b>				
<b>Publicly subsidized (8)</b>	5 (63%)	2 (25%)	1 (13%)	0
<b>Private Fees Only (8)</b>	2 (25%)	5 (63%)	1 (13%)	0
<b>Total (16)</b>	<b>7 (44%)</b>	<b>7 (44%)</b>	<b>2 (13%)</b>	<b>0</b>

For the upcoming fiscal year, approximately half (11) of the 23 providers were probably or definitely planning to pursue PFA, and approximately half (12) stated they would probably or definitely not do so. Responses varied across programs in terms of their funding types. There were a total of nine publicly subsidized providers who responded to this question, with seven of the nine providers (77%) reporting they would definitely or probably pursue PFA. Among programs that were entirely supported by parent fees, 72% stated they would probably or definitely not pursue becoming a PFA site in the coming fiscal year.

When asked about the likelihood of providers pursuing PFA in the next 2-3 years, almost all providers (14 out of 16), public and private, who responded to this question reported that they definitely or probably would pursue PFA in the next two to three years. Only two of the 16 programs stated they would probably not pursue PFA.

In summary, non-PFA providers were not as confident that they would pursue PFA this upcoming year due to issues such as the outcome of Prop 82, finding funds to address building issues, and their unfamiliarity with PFA requirements. Over the next two to three years, however, non-PFA providers who were interviewed seemed to be more confident that they will be able to manage these issues and would be interested in pursuing participation in the PFA system.

### **Support Needed by Non-PFA Programs**

Non-PFA programs were asked to identify the type of supports they would need in order to meet the PFA eligibility criteria. Their responses clearly reflect the types of issues they raised in regard to challenges to their participation in PFA. Feedback did not vary significantly by county and included the following:

- Training on child screening and assessment and support in using the ASQ and the DRDP,
- Technical assistance and funding to address facility issues,
- Financial support to purchase classroom materials and equipment,
- Training on the ECERS-R,
- Training to understand the PFA funding requirements,
- Support in complying with the PFA reporting requirements,
- Professional development, particularly for staff who have worked in the ECE field for many years and need support to move towards meeting the PFA qualification requirements, and
- Assistance with tuition and books.

Many of the challenges identified by the non-PFA providers are currently being addressed by SMCOE and First 5 San Francisco and through the work of their partners. Communication about PFA with the provider community is an ongoing challenge and First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE staff conduct regular outreach to potential new providers to explain what it means to be a PFA program and describe the supports available to help programs participate. They have also engaged in conversations with private providers to understand and respond to their feedback regarding the eligibility requirements and to identify ways to include them in the PFA system. For example, the 4Cs Quality Improvement/Accreditation Support Project helps build the capacity of non-PFA programs to meet the PFA quality standards. The Low Income Investment Fund provides technical assistance and funds to enhance program environments to assist providers complying with the PFA eligibility requirements. Workforce development efforts in both counties include career counseling and other investments in training and professional development. These are just a few of the ways in which both First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE are developing networks among partner agencies to collaboratively support PFA planning, implementation, monitoring, and technical assistance, as well as the development, training, and retention of the early childhood workforce.

## **Chapter 13. Conclusion**

PFA funding has had far-reaching impacts across participating programs that include benefits for children, families, and providers. In the first full year of program implementation (2005-2006), PFA has resulted in enhanced programming for children, increased access to high-quality care for families, and professional development and support services for preschool providers. Tangible outcomes of PFA funding, in the form of upgrades to classroom facilities, new materials and equipment, and instructional supports and enhancements for teachers were also observed. In addition, teachers reported more subtle benefits, such as increased professional pride, better teamwork, and improved morale.

It is clear that PFA has been an enormous undertaking in both San Francisco and San Mateo counties. First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE are working to support and monitor the current cohort of PFA providers, coordinate the network of PFA partners, assist non-PFA preschool programs in meeting quality standards to eventually participate in the system, and plan for a fairly rapid expansion of the initiative in the coming years. SMCOE and First 5 San Francisco also face the difficulty of marketing a “universal” program that currently is available in a few school districts in San Mateo and an increasing number of zip codes in San Francisco, based on a strategic decision to begin implementation in high-need areas.

Given these complexities and the challenges inherent in the first year of operation for any social service or education initiative, PFA implementation in San Francisco and San Mateo counties has proceeded remarkably well. The reported successes of this first year seem to rest on the strong and collaborative relationships that exist in both counties between and among the PFA administrative agencies, partner agencies, and the provider community. According to providers and partners, PFA has served as a vehicle to bring together stakeholders to address challenging issues impacting the PFA community and the broader early care and education field.

The network of partner agencies that support the PFA providers is also critical. PFA eligibility requirements are challenging, and the importance of supporting providers in reaching and maintaining those standards was emphasized by the majority of PFA stakeholders. In particular, the role of Gateway to Quality in conducting external reviews of program quality based on the ECERS-R or FDCRS has been instrumental in supporting program improvement. The process of preparing for and participating in an external ECERS-R or FDCRS review resulted in improvements to program settings and served as a motivator for most staff. The provision of training and technical assistance to help prepare for and follow-up on the external review was also viewed as a key component of the PFA support system; providers in particular recommended that training on the ECERS-R/FDCRS be enhanced.

Challenges in the PFA system and recommendations for overcoming them were identified by providers and partners, and were relatively similar across these groups and across the two counties. Continuing obstacles for family child care providers and private center-based programs to participate in PFA were mentioned frequently, and providers and partners encouraged First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE to continue to include a diverse group of

stakeholders in the planning and periodic review of the PFA system. Comments regarding the PFA staff qualifications reflected a level of division within the field, with some stakeholders supporting the high education standards, and others voicing serious concerns about the potential loss of effective teachers who may not have or wish to obtain, higher education levels. Continued integration of PFA with existing policies, procedures, and initiatives, such as the Centralized Eligibility List or countywide social service programs, was recommended to ensure that PFA does not become a stand-alone program. Feedback from providers regarding the burden of PFA reporting also illustrates the need to examine how PFA can integrate with data collection, monitoring, and reporting requirements associated with other early care and education funding streams.

PFA has highlighted several issues that impact the early care and education field more generally and which will continue to require a broad-based effort to address. These challenges include the need for significant funding to address facility upgrade issues among center-based and family child care programs, and recruiting, training, and maintaining a high-quality workforce. While these challenges and others were identified by participants in the first year of PFA implementation; overall, providers and partners applauded the efforts of First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE in planning and implementing PFA's initial implementation so effectively. As one PFA site supervisor reported, "PFA has given us something new to reach for."

### **Recent Policy Changes and Directions for Future Implementation of PFA**

Since data were collected for this study, First 5 San Francisco and SMCOE have addressed many of the challenges that are highlighted in this report and engaged in discussions internally and with partners to address issues that have emerged throughout the initial phase of PFA implementation. Action steps that have been taken include, but are not limited to:

- working with Gateway to Quality to improve communication with PFA sites in both counties,
- more clearly articulating the role of the SMCOE TA Coordinator through increased communication with sites and negotiation regarding the role of the Coordinator in relation to existing program resources, procedures, and preferences,
- reducing the frequency of monitoring site visits to San Francisco programs by Wu Yee Children's Services,
- eliminating the wage rate requirements in San Francisco,
- exploring alternative database systems to be used with PFA sites and streamlining report forms to reduce reporting burden.

First 5 San Francisco, SMCOE, and First 5 San Mateo County plan to focus on a range of activities in 2006-2007 and the coming years. In regard to outreach and enrollment, PFA in San Francisco is being expanded from four neighborhoods in 2005-2006 to 14 neighborhoods beginning in the fall of 2006 and will continue to roll out in additional neighborhoods until 2009. In San Mateo, SMCOE plans to increase PFA services and spaces to approximately 800 children in 2006-2007 and add approximately five new PFA contractors including private, for-profit and family child care providers. In partnership with 4Cs, PFA contractors, and other partner

agencies, SMCOE also will increase the scope of outreach efforts to more effectively recruit lower-middle to middle income families to participate in PFA.

In addition to increasing PFA capacity, both counties will expand activities to strengthen PFA services and support providers. In San Francisco County, First 5 San Francisco has established working committees to focus on family engagement and support strategies and enhanced transition activities between preschool and kindergarten. They also plan to design an exempt care pilot to explore how PFA can support children served by exempt providers. In addition, First 5 San Francisco will work to enhance services for children with special needs and support language development efforts for children learning English as a second language. They will also strengthen workforce development strategies, including expansion of the BA completion program to support cohorts of students earning their bachelor's degree through San Francisco State University. First 5 San Francisco will offer citywide technical assistance efforts to support providers, including the provision of site-specific technical assistance to PFA programs. Finally, efforts will be focused on strengthening public awareness about PFA.

In San Mateo County, SMCOE and First 5 San Mateo County are exploring new strategies to support teacher training and degree completion efforts, such as classes and supports to ensure that ECE/CD students are "transfer-ready" (have all the requisite coursework) to smoothly matriculate from the AA/AS into a BA/BS program). Recent surveys in San Mateo County with ECE/CD students and SaMCARES participants have indicated that although a very large number of students indicate an interest in a "AA-to-BA" cohort/fast-track, very few are ready to transfer directly into the San Francisco State University's Child and Adolescent Development program.

In addition, mental health support services, provided through the Jewish Family and Children's Services, will be expanded significantly in 2006-2007 in San Mateo County. Training on family engagement and inclusive practices also will be offered to PFA providers. SMCOE will coordinate with the Peninsula Partnership to enhance transition strategies between preschool and kindergarten. First 5 San Mateo and SMCOE will continue their focus on quality improvement among the provider community. Capacity-building efforts through the 4Cs Quality Improvement/Accreditation Support Project will be expanded in 2006-2007, as well as technical assistance and informational materials, tools, and processes to address facility needs and barriers among the provider community. Similarly, the long-term sustainability of PFA and strategies to support the PFA infrastructure are being examined.

The evaluation team will continue to solicit feedback from PFA participants and partners, and will monitor implementation, expansion, and quality improvement activities and their impacts on staff and families. The second year of the process evaluation will focus on reviewing administrative data collected from PFA sites, including family and child service data, staff qualifications and compensation, and professional development activities. The evaluation will focus on classroom-level quality indicators, in addition to the ECERS-R, and gather feedback from families participating in PFA. In addition, AIR will assist with the design of a rigorous longitudinal evaluation that focuses on PFA program outcomes for children and families.