Evaluation of the Connecticut Family Resource Center Program

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Submitted by

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Executive Summary

The Yale Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy completed an evaluation of the Connecticut Family Resource Center (FRC) program. The one-year evaluation, conducted under the direction of Matia Finn-Stevenson, Ph.D., was funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to provide a new generation of evidence about the program's operations and its impact on children, families, schools and communities to be used for planning and results-based accountability.

The FRC program is a school-based initiative implemented in 62 schools in the state. Administered by the CSDE, FRCs provide access to a continuum of services that foster the optimal development and education of children beginning at birth.

Established in 1988, FRCs were part of the national movement to promote the importance of early childhood and its link to school achievement. They were also forerunners in the use of the school to provide early childhood education, child care and family support services, a model that has since been widely adopted in several states, most notably Kentucky, which included the Connecticut FRC model in the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA).

Key Findings

The evaluation focused on 2007-08, although some information was collected in 2009. It is based on quantitative data from the 62 FRCs, as well as qualitative data collected through intensive site-based interviews and focus groups in five communities. Findings indicate that the FRC program is highly effective, is aligned with the state's *Ready by 5, Fine by 9* investment framework, and contributes to several programs and initiatives within the CSDE and other state agencies. The findings further show that FRCs:

Increase parental knowledge and skills related to child development and behavior, which allows parents to prepare their children for school. FRCs provide parenting workshops, monthly parent meetings, home visitations and playgroups for children from birth to age 5. The latter enable children to socialize with peers and are valued by parents, who are able to gauge their child's progress and readiness for school as compared with other children. For many parents in the study, playgroups provided the first such opportunity to get together with other parents and children. These and other activities resulted not only in increased parental knowledge but also in improvements in parenting practices and involvement in school, both critical factors essential to promoting children's academic achievement.

Administer developmental screenings of infants and toddlers leading to early identification of developmental delays, followed by services that can prevent or reduce special education needs as the child matures. In 2007-08 alone, the FRCs made 781 referrals for children from birth to age 8, close to half of which resulted in acceptance for service. The high numbers of children receiving intervention services because of FRC referrals is a significant contribution to meeting Connecticut's school readiness goals. It means that children receive appropriate services that address developmental

and learning problems and prevent, or lessen, the need for special education placements. The potential savings are substantial: In Connecticut, the annual cost in special education amounts to nearly $22,000 per pupil.

Provide a single point of entry to programs and services and link schools, families and communities. The FRCs provide a "one-stop shop" for families with young children in need of multiple services. Parents indicated that until they became affiliated with the FRCs, they had no contact with community-based services and were unaware of resources that existed in schools. The FRCs have accumulated so much knowledge of community and school services over the years that they not only link families with needed services but also assist school staff and various community-based agencies that depend on the FRCs' knowledge base and access to families.

Train more than 500 family child care and private providers leading to higher quality care for children in these facilities. This service is specific to FRCs and is of vital importance; national studies show that provider training is critical in reversing poor quality care, which can compromise the development of young children and their ability to learn.

Effectively respond to environmental changes within their schools and communities that have occurred during the past 20-plus years. The FRCs have kept pace with demographic changes and employ linguistically and culturally diverse staff, thereby enhancing their ability to work with immigrant families and assist school staff with translation and understanding how cultural variations influence school-family relations. Seventy-seven percent of the FRCs have bilingual staff and, as a group, staff members are fluent in 15 languages, with two-thirds of them fluent in Spanish.

Provide essential support to schools and other state agencies. The FRCs provide several services that meet the state's goals for children, including school readiness programs and after-school 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC). The FRCs also provide Birth to Three playgroups and developmental screenings and referrals mentioned earlier. In addition, they make referrals for health and mental health services and, beyond their offering of FRC-required services, have embraced such needed initiatives as Consolidated School Health, Raising Readers (which focuses on parent literacy) and Welcoming Schools, providing a context within which to effectively integrate these initiatives in the school. As such, the FRCs contribute to and further the work of several state agencies, including the Departments of Education, Developmental Services, Social Services and the Child Development Infoline (CDI), maintained by the United Way's 211 information and referral program.

Undertake a cost-effective approach to the provision of services. The FRCs provide multiple services but avoid duplication because service provision is based on needs assessments, which most FRCs conduct at least once a year. The FRCs identify service gaps, provide missing services and also indirectly contribute to the effectiveness of other efforts. For example, FRC staff members facilitate parents' enrollment in English as a second language classes and enable parents to participate in adult education and programs to obtain high school diplomas by providing child care when these programs are offered.

Provide a critically important support network. It became apparent in this study that parents benefit not only from specific FRC services for them and their children but also from the network of support that FRCs provide. Parents reported that FRCs represent a safe and secure place for them to congregate,

socialize and network. Some referred to the FRCs as their home and the FRC staff and other parents as their extended family. This support network is important for parents who are new to a community and especially helpful for first time parents, parents who are recent immigrants and parents experiencing challenges, whether personal or professional. Providing a support network is essential in preventing mental health problems and enhancing families' abilities to cope with stressful situations. We regard this as one of the most important outcomes of the FRCs and note that this has implications for children, as well as their parents, since children are influenced by their parents' mental health status.

Funding

The above noted and other findings are impressive but take on added significance when considered within the context of the overall FRC program budget, which in 2007-08 was $6.3 million, for services provided to nearly 20,000 participants.

The ability of the FRCs, each of which received the same grant amount of slightly more than $102,000 (reduced to $97,200 in 2008-09), to meet program requirements is due in part to the FRCs ability to leverage additional support. FRCs receive grants as well as in-kind contributions from schools and community-based organizations, and some generate income from sliding scale parental fees for several services.

Additionally, FRCs use an extensive volunteer corps. Volunteers provided 2,771 hours of service, which, at a conservative estimate of $8 per hour, amounted to a value of more than $22,000 per month. Although significant in terms of the contribution to the budget and program operations, the fact that FRCs attract the interest and involvement of volunteers underscores the important role that FRCs play and their value in the community.

Recommendations

The findings show that the FRC program is aligned with the state's investment in early childhood and school readiness and is effective in providing needed services. Although acute economic conditions are likely to continue to challenge not only the FRC program but other services as well, the following short term recommendations deserve consideration:

1. Emphasize the role of the principal. The educational relevance of the FRC program to affect school achievement is often overlooked, especially among principals new to FRC schools. Therefore, the CSDE should require principals and other educational administrators in FRC schools to attend a minimum of two statewide principal meetings to ensure the opportunity for mutual support and understanding of the role they have in supporting the FRCs.

2. Develop an assessment system to enable FRCs to compile outcome data. Although maintaining data over time and taking the next steps to collect comparison data is both a costly and time-consuming process, we strongly encourage the data be collected for use in demonstrating both short-term and long-term outcomes. The CSDE may require each FRC to devote a percentage of grant funds for evaluation purposes and enable the FRC programs to coordinate local evaluation efforts and establish

and maintain an assessment system.

3. Adopt quality criteria for the provision of Families in Training, preschool and school-age component. The effectiveness of FRC programs and services on students and families, in particular, school achievement, is largely dependent on the quality of service provided. Therefore, we recommend adopting and maintaining program quality guidelines among the core services of the FRC to sustain a consistent level of effectiveness among programs.

Conclusion

In summary, it is evident that FRCs are making a difference in the lives of children and families. Some data collected have implications for and may be used to meet results-based accountability requirements. The value of the FRCs may become even more apparent if resources were dedicated to undertaking regular evaluations and establishing an information system that would compile school record data and other assessments over time, showing the influence of FRCs on children as they progress through the elementary grades.

FRCs do so much with relatively small amounts of money, yet they could become victims of the current economic crisis. If this were to happen, it would severely compromise the state's goal to achieve school readiness for all Connecticut's young children; our findings indicated that the FRCs play an important role in achieving this goal. Also, thousands of families would be left without services and linkages to schools. There may be short-term savings in not funding the FRCs, but the savings would be offset by huge spending in special education in a year or two when children who did not receive developmental screening and follow-up services enter school. Failure to fund the FRCs would also put undue pressure on schools, communities and state agencies currently collaborating with and depending on the work and leadership of the FRCs. It is our recommendation that every effort be made to ensure the continued operation of this vital program.

PART I

STATEWIDE STUDY

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Part 1: Statewide Study

1. Introduction

In 2008-09, the Yale Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy evaluated the Connecticut Family Resource Center (FRC) program. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) funded the evaluation. The goals of the evaluation were to provide a new generation of evidence about how the FRC program operates and its affect on the families, schools and communities involved and to identify performance measures to demonstrate how the FRCs align with Connecticut's early childhood framework, as articulated in *Ready by 5 & Fine by 9* published by the Connecticut Early Childhood Cabinet. Lack of recent evaluations of the FRCs, new developments in the field of child development and family support, as well as the need to prioritize funding based on results based accountability, were among the underlying needs for the study.

2. Background

The Connecticut FRC program is a school-based early childhood education, child care and family support program implemented in 62 schools in the state. Administered by the CSDE, FRCs provide access to a broad continuum of services that foster the optimal development of children, with the underlying notion being that all families should have access to such services beginning at the birth of the child. The program includes seven service components (detailed in Appendix A):

1. Quality early care and education, including education and child care for children ages 3, 4 and 5.
2. School-age child care, including before- and after-school, vacation and summer child care for school-age children.
3. Families in Training, including home visitation, parent education and playgroups.
4. Support and training for family day care providers, including outreach and training to providers in the school's neighborhood.
5. Positive youth development, including recreational and educational opportunities aimed at children in grades 4 to 6, targeted at preventing teen pregnancy, substance abuse and school dropout. These services may be provided during or outside the regular school day.
6. Adult education/family literacy, including support and educational services for FRC families to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent.
7. Resource and referral, including providing information and linking families to needed services.

FRCs may provide direct services for the above-noted components or collaborate with other service providers in the community. Hence, each FRC is unique, reflecting its community. All FRCs, however, report to CSDE on their services, activities and enrollments and they are guided by the underlying concept of the FRC program as a whole.

A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The FRC program was established in 1988. A summary prepared by the Connecticut Office of Legislative Research (see Appendix B) indicates that:

> Family resource centers were established as a pilot demonstration program in 1988. PA 88-331 required [Department of Human Resources (DHR), as it was known at that time], in conjunction with the [State Department of Education], to establish demonstration centers in three public schools: one urban, one suburban and one rural. Centers had to serve those receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children and others who needed services. They were required to charge parents for day care services according to a sliding scale.
>
> In 1992, these centers were made permanent and, in 1993, shifted from the DHR to CSDE. In 1997, the FRCs were incorporated into the state's school readiness program; however, not all FRCs have school readiness programs and the FRC program is now administered within the Division of Family and Student Support Services. Over time, FRC components have been modified to the previously mentioned seven. An example of such a change is the current component of positive youth development, which was previously called teen pregnancy prevention. Since the establishment of the three demonstration sites, the FRC program has grown to 62 sites that have been providing services for varying lengths of time.

B. CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

From its inception, the FRC program was based on the School of the 21st Century (21C) model developed at Yale University. 21C uses the school to provide a comprehensive and continuous system of learning supports, beginning at the birth of the child through age 12, with a focus on both children and their parents. The rationale underlying the development of 21C was the urgent need for good quality child care for both preschool and school-age children and the fact that all families, regardless of income level, at times need support to ensure the optimal development and academic success of children.[1] Studies showing the poor quality of care for children in center-based and family child care homes[2] promoted concern for the development of children and their ability to succeed in school.

The overarching goal of 21C is to promote the *optimal development of all children* through the following services: early care and education; home visitation, guidance and support for parents beginning even before the birth of the child through age 3 and beyond; school-age care; health education and services; training for child care providers; and information and referral services. These services are supported by 21C guiding principles to which all 21C schools adhere: high-quality programming; universal access to programs; non-compulsory programming; strong parental support and involvement; professional advancement opportunities for preschool and school-age child care providers; and a focus on all developmental pathways, including social, emotional, intellectual and physical.

The 21C model is designed to be adaptable to the vision and resources of a given community while meeting the diverse needs of children and families. However, the expectation is that schools play a central role and assume responsibility for the well-being of children and their families, even before they enter school. Commitment at all levels — from the school board and the superintendent as well as from the building principal — is a prerequisite to successful implementation of 21C. Schools interested in implementation receive training and technical assistance from Yale University and, although each site reflects unique characteristics, needs and resources, all abide by the 21C guiding principles.

The Connecticut FRC program was among the first handful of 21C sites; today, there are more than 1,300 21C schools around the country. The FRC program was also the first statewide initiative for 21C/FRC. As such, it was part of the movement to promote the importance of early childhood and its link to school achievement (that link is now known as school readiness). It was also the forerunner in using the school to provide early childhood, child care and other family support services — an approach that has since been widely adopted. Legislation creating the Connecticut FRC program was included in its entirety in the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) which to date operates FRCs as well as youth services centers in schools throughout Kentucky.

United States Congressman John Larson, in his previous role as President Pro Tempore of the Connecticut Senate, spearheaded the idea for the Connecticut FRC program, which was part of a larger effort to establish a work and family agenda for the state. Larson's efforts culminated with appropriations for the FRC program, as well as the establishment of a Senate Select Committee on Family and the Workplace. CeeCee Woods, who was then director of research for the Connecticut Senate Majority Office, Matia Finn-Stevenson and Edward Zigler

of Yale University, Eliot Ginsburg, then Commissioner of Human Resources, and Fredrica Gray, director of the Connecticut Commission on the Status of Women, among others, were involved in developing the legislation that established and continues to govern the FRC program. Interviews with CeeCee Woods and others, along with press releases from that period, indicate that the purpose of the FRCs was to address Connecticut's child care crisis to ensure that all families have access to affordable, high quality care. FRC legislation called for using "existing school buildings to provide child care all day for children ages 3 to 5 and before- and after-school care, on a year-round basis, for children ages 6 to 12. In addition to child care, the FRCs were to include three major outreach services: support for first time parents, including home visitation; support for family day care homes in the school district; and information, resources and referral services to help [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] parents earn high school equivalency certificates and establish teen pregnancy prevention programs." The latter two components are unique to the FRCs and were not included in 21C. Also, provisions for teen pregnancy prevention were later amended and now refer to youth development.

Interviews indicate that the intent was to provide each school $185,000 (1988 value) a year to implement an FRC, but this budget was ultimately cut, leaving the program with less money than needed. Although state agencies were given the directive to govern the FRC program, they were not provided with financial resources. This is not the case in other states with FRC programs. In Kentucky, for example, personal interviews with officials there indicate that the agency administering FRCs receives up to 3.5 percent of the total FRC budget. In addition, Connecticut lawmakers did not set aside any money to evaluate the program, nor for each of the FRCs to implement a system to monitor and evaluate efforts. Notably, in school-based programs in other states, such as Iowa, 1 percent of the total amount awarded to each program is required to be spent on evaluation.

Over the years, support for the FRC program continued. By 1996, the state had 18 FRCs, a growth of 15 from the original three. Today, there are 62 FRC sites statewide. Although the total appropriation for the FRC program increased to support 62 sites, the amount for each site has declined. However, the service requirements represented in the seven components remain the same, so funding cuts impact implementation, as described by Paul Vivian, who was the first to administer the program within CSDE, in his former capacity as program manager: "Over the course of the 22 years since the first Family Resource Centers were implemented, I felt as though there has been a shift in the emphasis from offering all of the components to offering what components are most needed or wanted by a particular community."

C. FRCS' RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Despite funding cuts that decreased the annual grant for each FRC, the FRC program has grown not only in the number of FRCs but also in its operation as a statewide network of programs. This growth occurred at a time when Connecticut and the nation as a whole experienced a number of changes.

The first such change involved enhanced research techniques that provided researchers with insight into and greater understanding of child development. The new techniques enabled researchers to use neurological imaging to obtain evidence on brain growth to support social

science and behavioral research showing that: young children's experiences have a profound impact on early and continuing development; and that parents, as well as others who care for children, play a vital role in the development of children by providing continuity of care, attention and opportunities to interact with loving adults as well as other children.[3] These findings attracted media and policy attention and contributed to public and third sector investment in early care and education, health care and parent support as critical components of the way we can enhance the development and education of children.

In Connecticut, this is reflected in the convening of the Early Childhood Cabinet, which gave impetus to investments in early childhood/school readiness programs. Also, the Discovery initiative was established in 2001 by the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund. This initiative, implemented in 50 communities across the state, had four objectives: to expand the supply of high quality early childhood education; to increase the quality of existing early childhood education; to build strong connections between early care and elementary education; and to improve students' social, emotional and academic performance. As evident in these objectives, the work of FRCs is in direct alignment with the Discovery initiative, so it is not surprising — as will be noted later in the report — that FRC directors play a key role in aspects of the initiative.

The second such change was a significant increase in the number of school-age child care programs. The catalyst was federal and state support through 21st Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) grants for these, brought on by concern for development and education of school-age children requiring before- and after-school supervision while their parents work. Although the value of care and supervision of children is indicated in these programs, they also include a focus on academic enrichment, providing after-school tutoring and educational opportunities for children at risk for academic failure.

Third, the CSDE as well as other agencies have established various programs over the past two decades that are of relevance to the FRCs. Examples include the Coordinated School Health Initiative, Welcoming Schools and Raising Readers. Although these and other relevant programs are not included in FRC legislation, the majority of FRCs have responded to these changes by embracing these and either implementing the programs (as in the case of Raising Readers, as an example), or participating in the implementation, for example, in cases where schools provide coordinated health services. The FRCs role in these services is so extensive, that principals doubt their ability to implement services in absence of the FRCs.

And, finally, the fourth such change was the influx of immigrants, which drastically affected the demographic makeup of communities in Connecticut and other parts of the country. This necessitates hiring staff and making other service accommodations that reflect language and other needs of families new to the community.

These changes represent vastly different conditions within which the FRC program now operates, indicating the need for an evaluation that would demonstrate how the FRCs now function, what services they provide and how they provide them and the impact they are having on the children and families they serve.

3. Methodology

A. DESIGN

Our evaluation design takes into account the context within which the FRCs operate in communities, as well as the broad-based, varied and grass roots nature of the FRC program. It also acknowledges the operation of the FRCs under the overarching umbrella of CSDE and the fact that, as a group, the 62 FRCs form a statewide network.

We used a collaborative study design, which is the approach of choice in evaluating comprehensive community-based services that address multiple client needs and include various different direct services and collaborations.[4] This approach calls for documenting site variations, as well as showing how a group of programs operates as a whole. Hence the study included input from community members, program staff and clients (here referred to as participants), as well as a stakeholders group (Appendix C). This group, convened by CSDE for the specific purposes of this evaluation, met on August 1, 2008, when we introduced the Yale study team, presented study plans and received input on various aspects of the approach. We also interviewed several stakeholders individually during the course of the evaluation.

Another aspect of the evaluation design is the focus on both the process of implementation and outcomes. The research literature underscores the need for both types of studies, noting that knowing what services are delivered and how is critical in interpreting outcome data.[5] For the same reason, the use of quantitative and qualitative data is also advised, the latter important as a means to shed light on the workings of programs and potential areas of impact.[6]

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We identified several research questions, divided into program implementation and program outcomes.

Implementation questions include: What is the policy context within which the FRCs currently operate? What is the scope and quality of services, what direct and collaborative services do the FRCs provide? How do the FRCs contribute to families' access to preschool and school-age care and other services? Are families satisfied with the services?

Outcomes questions include: How are the FRCs making a difference to participating parents and children? What is the school context within which the FRCs operate? Are the FRCs contributing to positive changes in the school? With what other agencies and organizations do the FRCs collaborate and in what ways? Are the FRCs having a positive affect on their communities?

To answer these questions, we designed a two-part evaluation. The first part involved a statewide study of all 62 FRCs, based primarily on quantitative data intended to provide an understanding of how the FRC program operates as a whole, as well as to identify differences and commonalities among the FRCs. We developed and administered several surveys to gather information from program staff, program participants and principals in schools with FRCs and

conducted interviews and reviewed documents to provide historical and policy perspectives.

The second part of the evaluation included a five-site study designed to provide an in-depth perspective on how the FRCs operate at the community and school levels. We based this study on collecting qualitative data and included site visits, observations, interviews and focus groups with several participants, program and school staff and representatives of community-based organizations who work with the FRCs. We intended at the outset to compare schools at these five sites with non-FRC schools in the same communities to ascertain the FRC's impact on children and schools. We were unable, however, to match schools on demographics, availability of community services and other aspects. Additionally, lack of existing assessment data prevented us from comparing FRC students and non-FRC students within the same schools.

We have integrated all significant findings of both studies in this report. In addition, we included a description and findings of the five-site study as a separate companion report.

In addition to answering the research questions, CSDE asked us to align the study with the state's early childhood framework and results based accountability (RBA), a framework for budget presentations that focuses on producing measurable improvements. RBA, adopted by Connecticut during the 2006 legislative session, requires the findings, where possible, to inform the process. We nominated one study group member to focus on RBA during all aspects of the study, including the development of surveys and site study protocols. This aspect of the study will inform evaluation training that we will provide the FRC directors at the conclusion of the study.

C. DATA SOURCES

Statewide Study

The evaluation focused on 2007-2008 data, although some data were collected in 2009. We obtained contextual and historical data through relevant documents and interviews with selected individuals. We collected operational data using surveys completed by 62 FRC site directors, 62 school principals and 1,600 randomly selected parents. Surveys collected information regarding the site, time allocation, program overview, principals and participants. The study team, in consultation with the CSDE and members of the stakeholders group, developed these instruments.

Site Survey

The study team asked FRC directors to complete a computer-based site survey (with a paper-based option) (Appendix D) in the fall of 2008. Surveys collected information regarding basic director and family demographic characteristics, staffing, school partnerships, funding, planning, programs, assessment and evaluation.

Time Allocation Survey

The time allocation survey (Appendix E) required FRC directors to identify the amount of time they spent on FRC activities during the week, for two weeks during October 27, 2008 through November 23, 2008.

Program Overview Chart

In the program overview chart (Appendix F), directors listed the extent and type of services provided for each core component or sub-component, including direct and collaborative services, dates and hours offered, current enrollment, attendance, curriculums used and expected performance outcomes. Additional qualitative questions collected information about director recommendations and the organizational structure of the FRC.

Principal Survey

Principals of each FRC school completed a survey (Appendix G) similar to that of the directors in the fall of 2008. This shorter, computer-based survey included some items identical to those on the site survey to enable comparisons and ascertain levels of agreement between the two groups.

Participant Survey

The study team distributed a participant survey (Appendix H) to 1,600 families participating in 16 FRCs, which included the five-site study sites and 11 others randomly selected. Participants completed these surveys in December 2008. Surveys collected information regarding basic family demographics, FRC services used and requested, barriers to obtaining FRC services and perception of impact and satisfaction. Several survey questions were similar to that of the site and principal questions.

We analyzed quantitative data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0). We used and cited frequencies, correlations and independent sample t-tests where appropriate. We analyzed qualitative data by examining text-based direct quotations for themes and commonalities.

Five-Site Study

Site Selection

We used a quasi-random process to select FRCs in five communities, based on criteria decided upon with the stakeholders group and CSDE leadership. The criteria ensured selecting one FRC within a priority district (identified by the CSDE as a district having the greatest academic need) with only one FRC in the community; a priority district with more than one FRC; a site with indirect administration (FRCs whose funds are administered by a non-school entity); and one with no other government resources (beyond the state FRC grant) to fund FRC-related activities. Moreover, we wanted to include communities that were distributed geographically across the state, were situated in urban and rural settings and represented various district reference groups (DRGs).

Using the randomized list of FRC communities, we selected the first site listed from each of DRG 'G' (Middletown), DRG 'H' (Norwich), and DRG 'I' (New Haven). Since Middletown, Norwich and New Haven are all FRCs with additional resources and Middletown had two FRCs, we then selected the first site appearing in DRG 'B/C/D' with no additional resources (Tolland). Finally, we selected the first site in DRG 'E/F' that used an indirect service model (Plymouth). Because no chosen FRCs represented the western part of the state, however, we replaced New Haven with the next site from DRG 'I' located in the western region (Bridgeport). Since Bridgeport has multiple FRCs (and we already committed to studying both FRCs in

Middletown), we chose the site that served the most bilingual/ESL children and had been in existence the longest to gain an historical perspective.

Thus, we chose the Bridgeport, Middletown, Norwich, Plymouth and Tolland FRCs for the five-site study.

Interview And Focus Group Protocols

We interviewed FRC directors and school principals and conducted focus groups comprised of key FRC and school staff, including teachers, parent outreach workers and school nurses, and families participating in FRC services. We have included the focus group protocol, focus group survey, report template and other study details in a separate report that describes the methods and findings of the five-site study. In addition, we have integrated all relevant findings into this report.

D. STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Statewide Study

Study participants consisted of selected individuals from the study's stakeholders group and CSDE; the FRC director, staff and principal in each of the 62 FRCs; and participants from selected FRCs. Participants were from the five-site study sites and 11 other randomly selected FRCs (excluding sites that had recently surveyed parents for a Parents As Teachers study); 81.2 percent of the sites returned participant surveys. Response rates for specific surveys, ranging from 31.4 to 100.0 percent, are presented below. Although we include the 31.4% response rate for the participant survey, we note that the return rate may be much higher; we calculated it based on each participating FRC site distributing 100 surveys to be completed by parents. Several of the FRC sites did not distribute all 100 surveys and did not keep a record of how many surveys they actually distributed, making it difficult to calculate an actual return rate for this group.

TABLE 1. Statewide Survey Response Rate

Survey Type	Respondents	Response Rate
Site survey	FRC directors	100.0%
Time allocation survey	FRC directors	94.0%
Program overview chart	FRC directors	95.2%
Principal survey	School principals	87.1%
Participant survey	FRC participants	31.4%

Five-Site Study

We conducted 16 focus groups as part of the five-site study and included 76 family members (parents and primary caregivers) and 70 FRC and school staff and community service providers (representatives of community-based organizations collaborating with FRC). In addition, 95 percent of the family members completed a related survey. We conducted six interviews with current school principals, one interview with a past school principal and six interviews with FRC site directors. We conducted the interviews and focus groups between January and March 2009 and provided details of these groups in the five-site study report.

Overall Participant Demographic Information

In the statewide study, 503 participants completed surveys; in the five-site study, 72 family members participating in the focus groups completed a brief survey. The following table lists demographic information about these participants. The socio-economic characteristics of families participating in the five-site study parallel those participating in the statewide study, although the two groups differed on other characteristics.

TABLE 2. Demographic Information For Participant Survey Respondents

Topic	Response Options	Statewide Study (*n*=503)	Five-site Study (*n*=72)
Yearly household income	$20,000 and below	17.5%	19.4%
	$20,001 - $30,000	10.7%	13.9%
	$30,001 - $40,000	11.7%	5.6%
	$40,001 - $50,000	6.6%	1.4%
	$50,001 - $60,000	4.4%	9.7%
	More than $60,000	37.2%	31.9%
	Unknown	11.9%	18.7%
Ethnicity	Black/African American	7.8%	5.6%
	Latino/Hispanic	18.9%	33.3%
	Caucasian/White	17.1%	47.2%
	Asian/Asian American	3.8%	8.3%
	Other Race/multi-racial	45.3	1.4%
	Unknown	7.1%	4.2%
Is English the primary language spoken in the home?	Yes	79.7%	56.9%
What other languages are spoken in the home?	Spanish	13.1%	64.3%
	Creole	0.9%	10.7%
	Chinese	0.6%	7.1%
	Polish	1.5%	7.1%
	Italian	0.6%	3.6%
	Other	3.6%	7.1%
Highest educational level	Grade School	NA[1]	11.1%
	Some High School	NA	11.1%
	Completed High School/GED	NA	37.5%
	Bachelor's Degree (BA/BS)	NA	26.4%
	Master's Degree (MA/MSW)	NA	9.7%
	Unknown	NA	4.2%

[1] Information not available from site surveys

Source: Site survey and five-site participant survey

Participant Involvement in FRCs

We also asked participants to indicate how long they had been involved with the particular FRC. Approximately one-third of respondents in the statewide study indicated they participated in the FRC for more than two years and one-quarter indicated they participated for one to two years.

TABLE 3. Length Of Family Participation in FRC Activities

Options	Statewide survey	Five-site study
Less than 6 months	29.2%	9.7%
6–11 months	9.9%	2.8%
1–2 years	24.3%	15.3%
More than 2 years	32.8%	37.5%
Missing/blank	3.8%	34.7%

Source: Participant survey and five-site participant survey

4. Findings

A. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

1. Scope of Services Provided

The FRC Program Is Aligned With The State's Ready By 5, Fine By 9 **Investment Framework**

The FRC program provides a broad range of services within seven core components as outlined in the legislation. In its components, it meets the legislative intent — to provide early education, child care and a range of family support services. Qualitative findings from the five-site study part of the evaluation demonstrate that parents rely on the FRC early education and child care components, without which many parents indicated they would be unable to work because they have no other alternative for affordable child care.

Although the CSDE requires the FRCs to provide direct or collaborative services within all seven core components, the focus is clearly on infancy and the early childhood years with a major proportion of the budget spent on providing services for children in that age group and their families. In focusing resources primarily on the early years, the FRC program is aligned with the state's current investment framework as articulated by the Connecticut Early Childhood Cabinet, which has the following goal:

> About 42,000 children are born in Connecticut each year. It is the goal of the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet that all of them make timely developmental progress each year from birth to 5, that they stand at the kindergarten door fully ready for the grand adventure of schooling and that they achieve demonstrable early academic success in vital basic skills during their elementary school years. They cannot do this alone. Families, communities, schools, the state and the early childhood work force all have important roles to play in children's development and early learning. Ready by 5 & Fine by 9 sets the course for these essential partnerships and, thus, for a whole new generation of confident, competent and joyful children.[7]

Reported budget expenditures by FRCs by components also line up with the state's Ready by 5, Fine by 9 framework, with 35.1 percent of the total FRC program budget being allocated for Families in Training, which includes playgroups, home visits, education, developmental screenings, and other support for families with children ages birth through 5; 14.9 percent being allocated for preschool education and child care; and 5.1 percent being allocated for child care provider training to ensure that others in the FRC communities who provide child care and education have opportunities for training to enhance their ability to provide good quality programs.

Hence, a total of 55.1 percent of the total budget is allocated for services pertaining to children from birth through age 5.

Yet, the FRCs alignment with *Ready by 5, Fine by 9* extends even further. The FRCs allocate 9.7 percent of their total budget for resource and referral services, which provide families with information on services they may need. FRCs made referrals in nine different categories, 21 percent of which pertained to early childhood education and assessment. In addition, other referral categories such as mental health, health and social services as well as housing/food, are also of relevance to families with young children.

In addition to providing services for infants and preschoolers and their families, FRCs provide child care for school-children to ensure that they have supervision and can engage in recreational and enrichment activities when they are out of school, such as before and after the school day and during summer and other vacations. This provision reflects the continued prevalence of single parent and dual worker families with school-age children (i.e., children ages 5 to about 12) who are in need of supervision while caregivers work. Since parents' workdays extend beyond the school day, the need for comprehensive child care and supervision is paramount. Moreover, research has shown that children who are left alone during critical hours when they are out of school are at risk for engaging in behaviors that can lead to delinquency, pregnancy, substance abuse and school failure.[8]

The FRCs reported allocating 19.5 percent of their budget for the school-age child care component. Here, too, FRCs align with the state's Ready by 5, Fine by 9 investment framework. As is evident in the title chosen for this framework, infancy and the early childhood years represent only part of the focus. Also critical is the developmental period, ages 5 to about 9, when children are in kindergarten through third grade. The nation's experiences with early intervention have shown that focusing on infancy and preschool is necessary but not sufficient. Providing follow-up and continuity is critical if we are to protect the investment in early childhood and ultimately ensure that children have an opportunity to succeed in school. Research findings also indicate that if children are not doing well academically by third grade, they are more likely to be on a downward trajectory that results — for many of them — in school failure.[9]

The FRC program's alignment with *Ready by 5, Fine by 9* investment framework is further evident in the adult education and positive youth development components, for which FRCs allocated 5.2 percent and 10.5 percent of the budget, respectively. The *Ready by 5, Fine by 9* framework prioritizes funding and other decisions on the basis of risk, indicating that the probability of poor outcomes increase with the number of risk factors. Among the children identified as being "most at risk" are children who experience two or more risk factors, such as poverty, low levels of parental education or a single parent household. The adult education and positive youth development components are important for several reasons, one of which is that, indirectly, these support the optimal development of children. Adult education provides educational and training opportunities that would enable families to obtain work and move out of poverty. The positive youth development component is designed, in part, to enhance youths' decision-making skills and discourage behaviors that can lead to delinquency, teen pregnancy and single parenthood.

We have shown here the alignment between the FRC program and the state's Ready by 5, Fine by 9 framework on the basis of budget allocations. In the following pages, as well

as in the companion document which presents the five-site study part of the evaluation, we show that the FRCs and the framework also align on the basis of specific activities in which the FRCs engage (for example, assisting parents and children with transition from preschool to kindergarten), as well as their role in establishing linkages and collaborations among families, schools and community agencies and organizations.

The FRC Program Responds to Community Changes

Another of our findings reveals that FRCs are in tune with, and respond to, various needs of families. Accordingly, FRCs differ to reflect community differences in client needs and available resources. Each FRC establishes a unique service delivery configuration in the course of accommodating the needs of the community. The resulting differences among FRCs are consistent with the conceptual model underlying the FRC program, which underscores the importance of tailoring services to match community needs and resources.

The FRCs response to families' needs is systematic. When asked, "How often do you assess the needs of families in your community?", 85 percent of the responding FRCs directors indicated that they assess needs on a regular basis, with more than half of respondents indicating that they assess needs yearly if not more frequently. The most common form of collecting needs assessment data was a paper survey, which 79 percent of respondents used, although some FRCs reported also using interviews and telephone surveys.

In addition to providing various services within the core program components, FRCs also tailored activities and services to meet other school-family-community needs. The five-site study provides several examples of how the FRCs respond to families' needs. In some cases, FRCs address primary needs, such as food, nutrition and clothing, of very poor and homeless populations even though this is not mandated by the legislation or program guidelines. The five-site study also highlights FRC efforts to address the needs of immigrant families brought on by recent demographic changes. For example, interview data from the five-site study reveal that FRCs provide ESL classes and other assistance of particular value to immigrant parents. Some FRCs also assisted schools where an influx of immigrant families presents teachers and administrators with challenges such as the need for translating information for parents.

Families Indicate Satisfaction with FRC Services

In anonymous surveys, more than 500 FRC participants reported on their use of, and satisfaction with, FRC services. More than three-quarters of the surveyed participants indicated that they were able to participate in the FRC programs that interested them. Those who could not said that the primary conflict was the time/scheduling of the program.

Participants reported high rates of satisfaction for various aspects of the FRC, such as location, hours of service, type and quality of programs offered and FRC staff. In addition, when asked about their overall satisfaction, 99 percent of respondents indicated that they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the FRC program as a whole. Although client satisfaction is a weak indicator of program efficacy, it suggests that the FRCs have been flexible and adaptable to families' needs.

Interestingly, self-reported satisfaction by parents closely parallels the perception of family satisfaction by both FRC directors and principals (although in general, principals tended to underestimate participant satisfaction), as shown in the table below. Almost all FRC directors indicated that they collect information from participants related to their satisfaction with programming and this may explain their more accurate perception of participants' satisfaction. Principals were slightly less accurate with their perceptions, underscoring the need for FRC directors and SDE to strengthen outreach and training to principals, a point we also make later in the report.

TABLE 4. Family Satisfaction Of Services — As self-reported, compared with FRC director and principal perceptions

Participant Satisfaction With FRCs	Participant Self-Report	FRC Directors Perception	Principals Perception
Very satisfied	84%	74%	67%
Satisfied	15%	21%	27%
Somewhat satisfied	NA	5%	4%
Somewhat dissatisfied	NA	0%	0%
Dissatisfied	1%	0%	0%
Very dissatisfied	1%	0%	2%

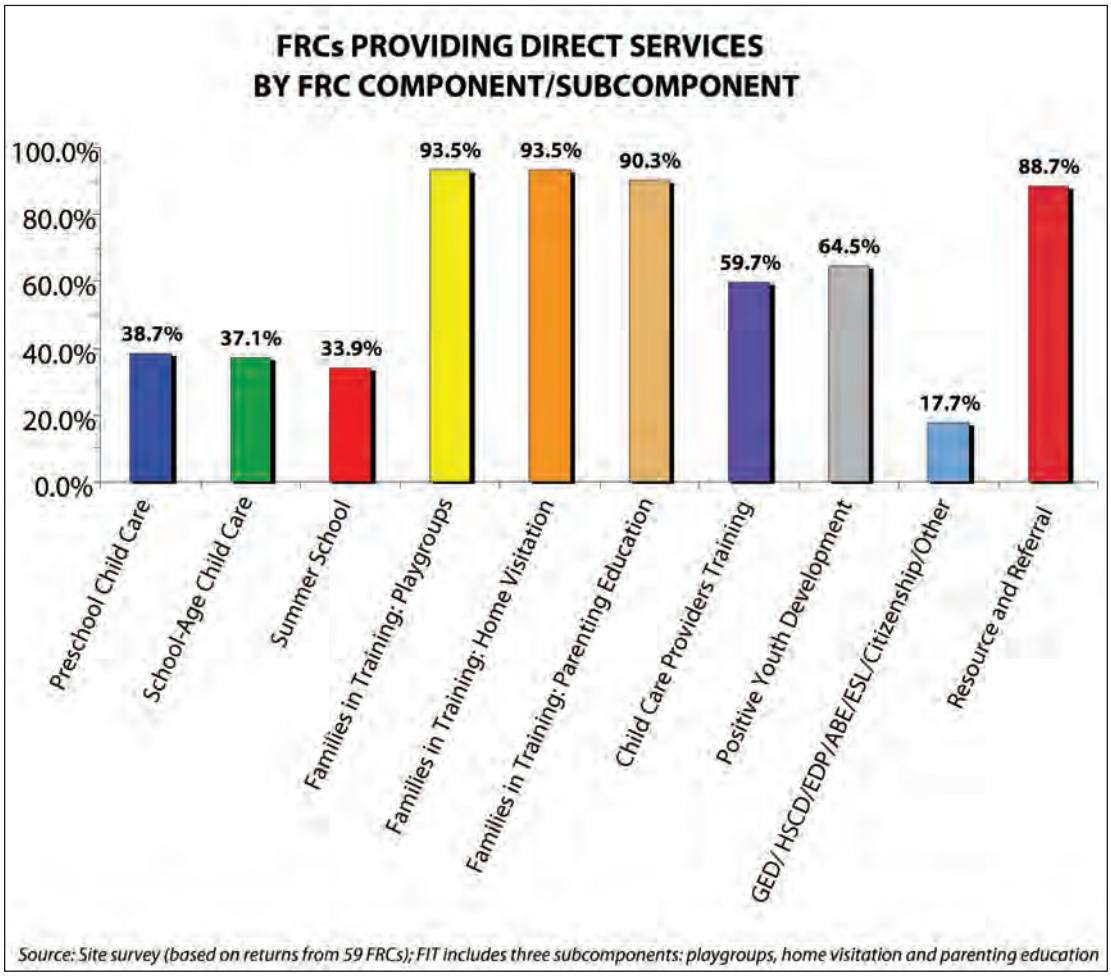
Sources: Participant survey, site survey, and principal survey

FRCs, as a Group, Have Adapted to Changes in Service Landscape and Decline in Funds by Collaborating, as Well as Providing Direct Services

The FRCs' ability to fulfill the seven core component requirements, as well as respond to other child and family needs, is made possible by the fact that FRC program guidelines allow FRCs to provide direct services or to collaborate with another organization to provide services. In a collaboration, the client's need for services may be met, but at no (or low) cost to the FRC. However, the collaborative service may entail some involvement on the part of the FRC. For example, the FRC may provide referrals and other support, such as transportation or child care.

The FRCs reported on the extent to which they provide direct versus collaborative services on the basis of seven components and three subcomponents (where the Families in Training component is broken down into subcomponents: home visits, parent education and playgroups, with some FRCs providing parent education to families with older children as well). Among the 59 FRCs responding to the question on how many direct services they provide, answers ranged from four to nine. Twenty of the FRCs provided six direct services and 16 provided seven out of the possible 10.

As the following chart indicates, Families in Training (and its subcomponents of playgroups, home visitation and parent education), resource and referral, positive youth development and child care provider training were among the components FRCs most often provided as a direct service.



The dual approach to the provision of services is necessitated in part by funding cuts. This point was made earlier and also in the five-site study when FRC staff indicated that decreased grant amounts and the continued expectation to meet all FRC program components brought about compromises.

Although limited resources account, in part, for the decision to collaborate instead of providing services directly, changes in service delivery within communities may be a reason as well. Increased investments in preschool and school-age programs resulted in greater numbers of such programs in communities identified by the state to have a concentration of at-risk children, enabling the FRCs to channel resources to other components. For example, FRCs are in almost all of the 19 priority school districts that receive school readiness funds. Some of these funds, however, are allocated to community-based programs or to school districts where FRCs are located, which results in collaborative provision of these services by these FRCs.

Thus, many FRCs have focused their resources on Families in Training and beginning in school year 2007-08, CSDE formalized this. It established Families in Training as a priority, requiring all FRCs "to demonstrate a solid commitment" to directly provide the Families

in Training component, using parents as teachers (PAT) as the program model. Each FRC is now required to use a minimum of 30 percent of the funds it receives from CSDE "to establish, expand or operate a PAT program that provides high quality parent education and family support serving families throughout pregnancy until age 5."

In collaborating, FRCs do not appear to abdicate their role in the component. In the five-site study, findings indicate the FRCs play a prominent role as advocates and members of advisory committees in early childhood education both at the local and state level despite the fact that a relatively small percentage of FRC provide preschool as a direct service. Nevertheless, the potential of the FRCs to provide continuity of supports is minimized in this approach.

Implementation of the FRC Program as a Whole

The actual implementation of programs and services is important and can make the difference between success and failure in realizing intended program outcomes. Within the limited scope of this evaluation, we could not assess the level and effectiveness of the programs provided by each of the FRCs. However, some of our findings indicate that although the FRC program as a whole is somewhat effective in its implementation, its shift in focus leads us to question fidelity to the model.

As noted, the FRC program as a whole continues to meet the intent of the enabling legislation as it includes all seven core components and, as shown, when considered as a whole, these components align with the conceptual framework of the underlying model (the School of the 21st Century). That is, FRCs provide or collaborate with others to provide services from the birth of the child through age 12. The FRC program is also flexible, enabling the FRCs to be responsive to client and community needs. When examined in light of services directly provided by the FRCs, however, there is a far greater emphasis on one aspect of the program — Families in Training — than others, suggesting the possibility that the FRC program has become, at its core, a home visitation and parent education program. Resource and referral is the second direct service most FRCs provide. Since referral is inherent in the home visitation aspect of Families in Training, the shift in focus becomes even more significant.

The FRC program aligns with the conceptual model in other ways, however, including placing priority on providing good quality preschool and school-age child care, where high quality care and education are essential. While we did not assess the quality of care and education provided by each of the FRCs, the program includes provisions designed to require FRCs to address quality issues. FRCs are required to have National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or other similar accreditation for preschool programs and are encouraged to have accreditation for school-age programs. As the following chart indicates, 82 percent of the 23 FRCs that provide direct preschool services reported that they are accredited and 74 percent of the 35 FRCs that use collaborations for preschool reported that they are accredited. All FRCs reporting early childhood accreditation are accredited by the NAEYC and a few reported additional accreditations.

TABLE 5. Preschool/School Readiness Child Care Accreditation

Accreditation Status	Direct Services Provided	Collaborative Services
Accredited	82%	74%
In process	9%	9%
Not accredited	0%	0%
No response (left blank)	9%	17%

Source: 2007-08 end of year reports

Fewer of the FRCs that provide school-age child care are accredited. To date, 14 percent of those directly providing school-age care and 22 percent of those who collaborate with others to provide this service have received their accreditation. All FRCs reporting school-age accreditation are accredited by the National School Age Alliance National Accreditation.

FRC program requirements also govern staff educational background. Accordingly, FRCs reported appropriate educational levels for various staff indicating, for example, that close to 65 percent of FRC directors have a master's degree and 29 percent a bachelor's degree.

Program guidelines do not specify that FRC staff members are expected to participate in professional development, which is recommended practice in good quality programs. In their year-end reports, however, the majority of the FRCs reported that they attended PAT training[10] related to the Families in Training component. The training, conducted at PAT national center institutes, involves each parent educator completing a specific number of professional development hours each year in the field of parenting or child development to maintain their certification. In the first year after certification, 20 such hours are required; in the second year, 15 such hours; and in the years beyond that, 10 such hours. Parent educators also receive training in the ages and stages questionnaires and are offered mandatory reporter training. This is consistent with program changes noted above, which now indicates an emphasis on the Families in Training. Some reported attending FRC Alliance meetings (discussed in the next section). Professional development of relevance to other components of the FRC program beyond Families in Training should be addressed.

As another indication that the FRC program addresses quality issues, FRCs are maintaining both enrollment and attendance records for child care services, as the CSDE requires. Among the 42 FRCs reporting on school-age child care attendance, the average attendance rate was 93 percent, indicating that the students are interested in the program. Studies[11] on school-age child care often indicate high enrollments and low attendance rates, meaning that children old enough "to vote with their feet" may be enrolled by their parents but simply do not show up and thus cannot benefit from the experience. The high average attendance rate in the FRC school-age program can be taken as an indication of services that capture the interests of students.

The above-noted indications, as well as the sustainability of the FRC program, which this year celebrates the 20th anniversary of opening of its first sites, point to effective implementation of the FRC program as a whole, but with some qualifications:

a. The extent that FRCs collaborate rather than provide direct services may limit access to comprehensive and continuous supports, which is the basis of the conceptual model.
b. Although FRC program requirements focus on some quality issues, what matters is what actually happens at the point of service delivery and this is not included in the FRC program. For example, in the preschool component, recent studies indicate that the quality of interactions between teachers and children is the most important factor in early education quality and outcomes.[12] Assessments of quality at the preschool classroom level would provide an indication of such quality. In another example, national studies on the PAT model, used to meet home visitation requirements of Families in Training, specifies that positive outcomes can only be realized if programs meet PAT standards and have fidelity to the model. ConnPAT, in addition to providing staff training for this component, monitors PAT quality and, using a phase-in approach, is making recommendations for appropriate number of visits provided per family and the number of families per parent educator.[13]

2. Program Administration and Staffing

Program administration and staffing provide the foundation from which an FRC operates and are important at several levels: Governance and leadership impacts programming direction and overall vision and staff commitment determines effectiveness in the provision of services. Moreover, the vigor of each of the FRCs contributes to the strength of the FRC program as a whole and helps position it as a statewide network.

Variations in Program Governance

Most FRC funds (71 percent) are awarded to a local board of education for the FRC to be implemented as part of a specific school. In such cases, we consider the administration of the FRC as "direct." Almost a third of the funds are awarded to non-government agencies (NGOs), which generally are well-established community organizations. We considered this 'indirect' administration of the FRC program. Some programs may be administered by municipal departments other than the board of education. For simplicity, we place these in the same category with other community-based organizations referred to as NGOs. Although the NGOs receive the funds to implement the FRC, the expectation is that there is collaboration with and involvement of a school and that the FRC is within a school building.

We examined the impact that an indirect governance structure might have on the FRC, most specifically related to the relationship between the principals and these FRCs. We found that about two-thirds of all principals (whether administration was direct or indirect) were "very familiar" with the FRC and about half reported that they were "very involved" with the programs, regardless of administration. This suggests that the governance of the FRC funding generally had minimal impact on the relationships between FRCs and their principals.

We did note, however, a few statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between the two groups for questions on the principal survey related to involvement of the FRC in the school plan and professional development, as the following table indicates. We used an independent samples t-test to identify statistically significant differences among the data and a significance level of .05 for all differences reported.

TABLE 6. FRC Governance Impact

Statement	Administration Type Percent Agreement		Level of Significance (p-value)
	Direct	Indirect	
FRC is written into school/district plan	62.3%	27.3%	.004
FRC staff are often/always invited to professional development	59%	36.4%	.021

Source: Principal survey

To gain greater insight into the impact of FRC governance on services and the relationship with schools, we included one randomly selected non-school-governed FRC to participate in the five-site study. We noted that the principal's survey from this site mirrors the finding in the preceding table. However, during the visit to this site, we observed a strong partnership between FRC and school staff. The principal was well informed about the FRC and complimentary about the staff and their capabilities. She described that she and the FRC director have ongoing communication and meet regularly. Moreover, she indicated that FRC staff members are invested in the "school as a whole." She credited the FRC with helping enhance children's school readiness and making the kindergarten transition "seamless." The school principal also acknowledged that the FRC is able to outreach, educate and involve families in a way the school cannot. As she noted, "We don't have the capacity to do that through any other avenue besides FRC."

Sites varied in terms of the principal and staff's engagement. Even at some sites directly administered through the school district, principals were less aware of what the FRC entailed and subsequently less knowledgeable of the value and the potential benefits students, families and staff could gain from participation. Additionally, although all principals were supportive and appeared to welcome the presence of an FRC at their school, the working relationship between principal and FRC director did not always reflect a true collaboration. The findings point to the fact that regardless of the differences between direct and indirect governance in the extent that FRC staff are involved in the school, it appears that not all FRCs are an integral part of the school.

The Role of Advisory Committees

FRC programs use an advisory committee, comprised of parents, teaching/school staff, school administrators and collaborating organization representation to strengthen school, family and community partnerships and provide programmatic direction. We found that among the FRCs, a key function of the advisory committee is to ensure that FRC activities and services address the various needs, strengths and interests of the specific school and its associated families and community. Half of the FRC advisory committees meet quarterly, while 18 percent meet monthly and the remainder use a schedule that meets the needs of their community.

Based on reports from FRC directors, advisory committee meetings covered subjects of relevance to meeting FRC goals, as indicated in the following table.

TABLE 7. Advisory Committees Discussions

Topic	Percent FRC Reporting
Community Collaboration	98.4%
Program Planning	95.2%
Program Effectiveness	90.3%
School Events	87.1%
Children and Families	77.4%
School Readiness	75.8%
Enrollment	75.8%
Funding	72.6%
Needs Assessment	72.6%
Program Assessment	71%
Client Satisfaction	67.7%
School Climate	51.6%

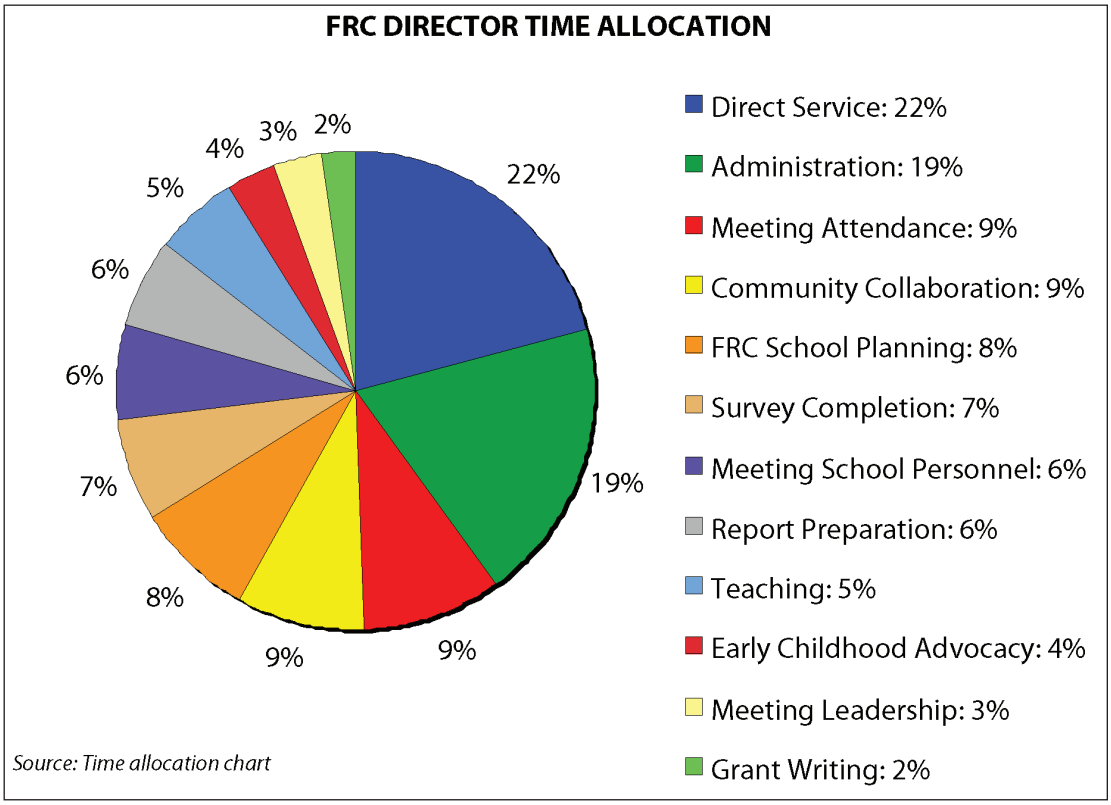
Source: Site survey

The Role of FRC Directors and Staff

Although advisory committee input is critical, families and both school and FRC staff repeatedly acknowledged that personal qualities of directors are integral to the success of an FRC. Several FRC directors and school principals described how leadership changes influenced the FRC-school relationship and the level of staff support. Two FRC directors participating in the five-site study have been in their positions for 10 and 15 years respectively and described how this continuity has influenced the evolution of their FRC programs. During interviews with other FRC directors participating in the five-site study, it was apparent that they view the FRCs as a truly personal endeavor. Their dynamic personalities and genuine enthusiasm and commitment for their jobs clearly contribute to the success of their FRCs.

Others noted the central role of the FRC directors, as well. As one parent indicated, "I think we are very fortunate; within a network of administrators, the organization reflects whoever is at the head of it — [the FRC director] has a lot of experience, she brings such caring to this position, she used to be a teacher. Making sure you find the right person to head an FRC is critical."

FRC directors are responsible for a wide range of functions. For two weeks during October and November, 2008, FRC directors tracked the time they spent on various activities. The results are summarized in the following pie chart. The largest portion, direct service, comprised 22 percent of their time. Remaining items on the legend are depicted clockwise around the pie, indicating the multiple roles directors play within the FRCs, as well as their involvement in school and community activities.



The role of other staff members was also critical. School and FRC staff members discussed the unique experience and expertise of each FRC staff member and their ability to collaborate. One FRC director in the five-site study noted, "Staff is everything. Since we are very low on money, staff members have to be willing to go the extra mile and love what they do."

FRC participants concurred and expressed their attachment to and appreciation of FRC staff. In fact, 62 percent of parents responding to the survey felt that using the FRCs means they have somewhere to turn to and 65 percent felt that the FRC means there is someone who cares.

The diversity in FRC staff mirrors the diversity in the community and the statewide increased number of immigrants from many different countries. Seventy-seven percent of the reporting FRCs have bilingual staff, with 112 staff members speaking at least one other language besides English and 10 percent of them being fluent in more than two languages. Altogether, FRC program staff members are fluent in 15 languages, with two-thirds of staff fluent in Spanish. The cultural and language diversity among FRC staff indicates the FRCs ability to respond to family and community needs. It also benefits their schools, which tap into FRC staff resources for translation at various times, such as meetings and parent-teacher conferences. FRC staff members provide cultural background and assist staff with understanding how families from diverse backgrounds relate to teachers and school.

FRC as a State Network

At the state level, the Connecticut FRC Alliance was created to provide mutual support and cross training among the FRC programs. The Alliance is emerging as a statewide network of FRCs that contributes to the FRCs growth through the provision of staff development and advocacy. Several FRC directors served as the catalysts for establishing the FRC Alliance and, as a group, FRC directors continue to recognize the importance and value of the Alliance through their participation in monthly meetings, with 75 percent attending at least seven meetings a year. Although primarily for FRC directors, FRC staff members also attend occasionally, as indicated in the chart below.

TABLE 8. FRC Alliance Meetings

	FRC Directors	FRC Staff
No. of Meetings Attended	Percent Attending	
0-1	6.6%	70.5%
2-6	18.1%	19.7%
7-9	62.3%	9.8%
More than 9	13%	0%

Source: Site survey

3. Funding

Funding for programs is a topic of much discussion among the FRC directors, legislators and families themselves, especially at this time of economic challenges. We discuss the current expenditures of the FRC programs, how the proportion of their expenditures per component has changed since 1996 — the last time an evaluation of the FRC program was conducted — and how their funding relates to priorities of FRC directors and principals and usage by participants. We also examine the impact of funding cuts and how FRCs leverage funds and resources from other sources.

In 2008-09, Connecticut FRCs received a total of $6,330,000 from CSDE as state FRC funds. These are distributed equally among the 62 FRCs in the state who reported that they provide services to 19,923 participants across the seven FRC components. However, as noted in other parts of this report, FRCs supplement the grant with various other funding and revenue sources.

Funds Proportions Shift over Time

In the 1996 evaluation[14] of the FRCs, FRC directors indicated what proportion of their funds was allocated to various FRC components. In that year, however, 21 percent of the funding went to administration, included program management, staff development, coordinating resource referral sources, building collaborative links with agencies and program planning. The remaining 79 percent was divided among components as indicated in the following table. We included an analogous question in the current evaluation. Responses from both years are provided in the following table.

TABLE 9. Proportion of Funds Per Component

Core Component	Percentage of Funds 1996	Percentage of Funds 2008
Preschool child care	35%	14.9%
School-age child care	19%	19.5%
Child care providers training	3%	5.1%
Families in Training	16%	35.1%
Adult education	5%	5.2%
Positive youth development	9%	10.5%
Resource and referrals	5%	9.7%

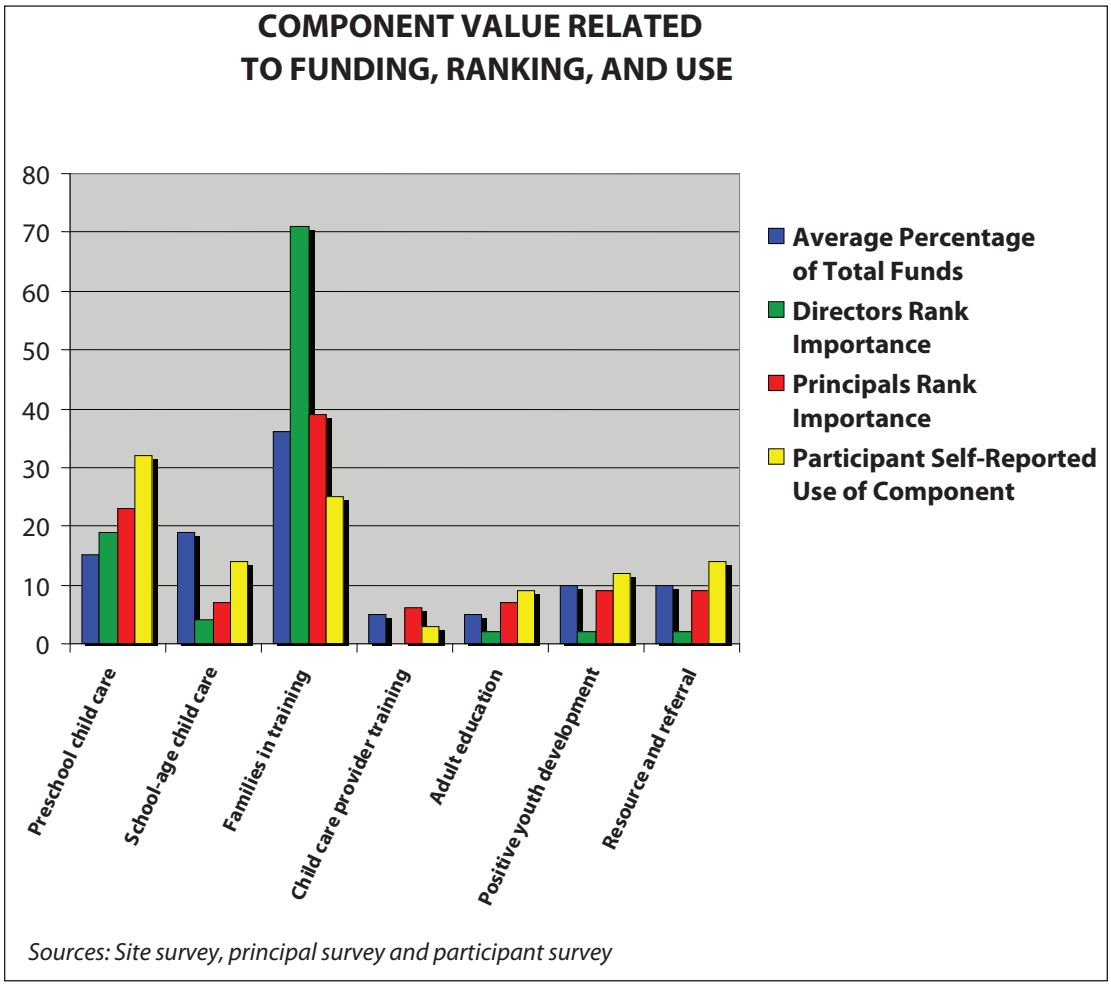
Source: Site survey

Generally, the percentage of funds used for the components has remained stable. The major change since 1996 relates to the percentage spent on preschool and Families in Training. As indicated earlier, the relative drop in the use of the funds for preschool may be due to the availability of school readiness funds to augment preschool funding, given the state's decision to invest in early childhood. This would also explain why the FRC can now spend a greater proportion of their funds for Families in Training. However, this change also reflects a directive from CSDE that all FRCs provide this component and it underscores the point made earlier in the report, that there is a shift in the FRC program that places emphasis on Families in Training.

Funding Reflects Programmatic Priorities

In addition to asking the FRC directors to report on the percentage of their funds used on each of the seven components, we asked them and principals to rank components in order of importance. In the participant survey, we asked participating families to indicate the components they used and the frequency with which they used them.

We used the above noted data to compare the average percentage of total funds per component with three measures of priority: rankings by FRC directors, rankings by principals and self-reported use of components by the participants. Results are displayed in the chart on the next page.



Sources: Site survey, principal survey and participant survey

This chart indicates that the directors allocate the majority of their funds to Families in Training and it is also their highest ranked component (it is also the highest ranked component by principals). Preschool follows as the second most important to both directors and principals, but it is ranked third highest funded. Interestingly, school-age child care, which has the potential to improve academic performance and school attendance, was ranked low by FRC directors and principals. Also, program participants reported using preschool more frequently than Families in Training. This could be a function of who answered the survey — participants in 13 randomly selected FRCs responded to the survey, however, FRCs recently involved in a Families in Training survey were excluded from the 13. It could also be a function of the need for affordable quality early child care and education, which is an issue that needs further scrutiny to ascertain needs and ensure that these are being met.

Sliding Fee Scale for Parent Fees

Twenty-one of the FRCs reported the use of parent fees and tuition to increase their capacity to deliver services. FRC programs are allowed to charge parents on a sliding fee scale. Components most often funded through parent fees are preschool and school-age care programs, although respondents also listed child care provider training, Families in Training, positive youth development, adult education and resource and referral. The amount collected

from these fees ranged from $1,500 to $502,000 per FRC. Reporting FRCs indicated that fees contributed 3 to 85 percent of their budget, which was allocated to FRC components. Since fees are on a sliding scale calibrated on family income, the FRCs ability to use fees as a revenue source is limited by the number of low-income families they serve.

Leveraging Funding Amplifies an FRC's Reach

We found that FRC directors are adept at capitalizing on existing resources and leveraging funding, such as School Readiness, federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC), Even Start and state-funded after-school funds, to extend their programs. FRCs also tap into a range of indirect and subtle sources of revenue and in-kind support to leverage their funds and extend their reach and role in the community, in addition to obtaining foundation support and competitive grants. In this vein, we describe contributions from their school districts, local community organizations, volunteers and government food funding. Likewise, FRCs allow other groups to leverage their funds, as follows:

School Districts

We asked FRCs to report on the monetary value of real and in-kind contributions from the school district for items, such as office space, activity space and other assistance described in more detail in a later section. Many programs indicated a source of contributions but did not provide monetary values; for those who did, school districts provided $2.95 million of real and in-kind contributions. This, however, is a minimum estimate due to the low reporting rate. To provide a sense of the scale of under-reporting, 97 percent of the FRCs reported that the school district provided office space but only 11 percent provided an estimate of the monetary value of this space. On the flip side, school districts can use FRC funds as their match for programs such as adult education and 21CCLC programs.

Focus group and other discussions that were part of the five-site study emphasized the roles of the school in adding funding to the FRCs. In one site, the public school system provides direct supplementary funding to enable the director to receive a full-time salary. In another site, school readiness funds and in-kind contributions from the school district were combined to cover additional classrooms for FRC use without using additional FRC funds.

Community Organizations

FRCs are also obtaining both in-kind and real support from community organizations. In addition, FRCs administered by NGOs rather than by schools use resources from their parent organization or agency to expand FRC resources. About half of the FRCs receive direct and in-kind contributions from community organizations, which range in amounts from $500 to $102,400 per FRC, for a reported total of approximately $300,000. In-kind contributions from community organizations, listed by the percentage of FRCs indicating the category for such contribution, include:

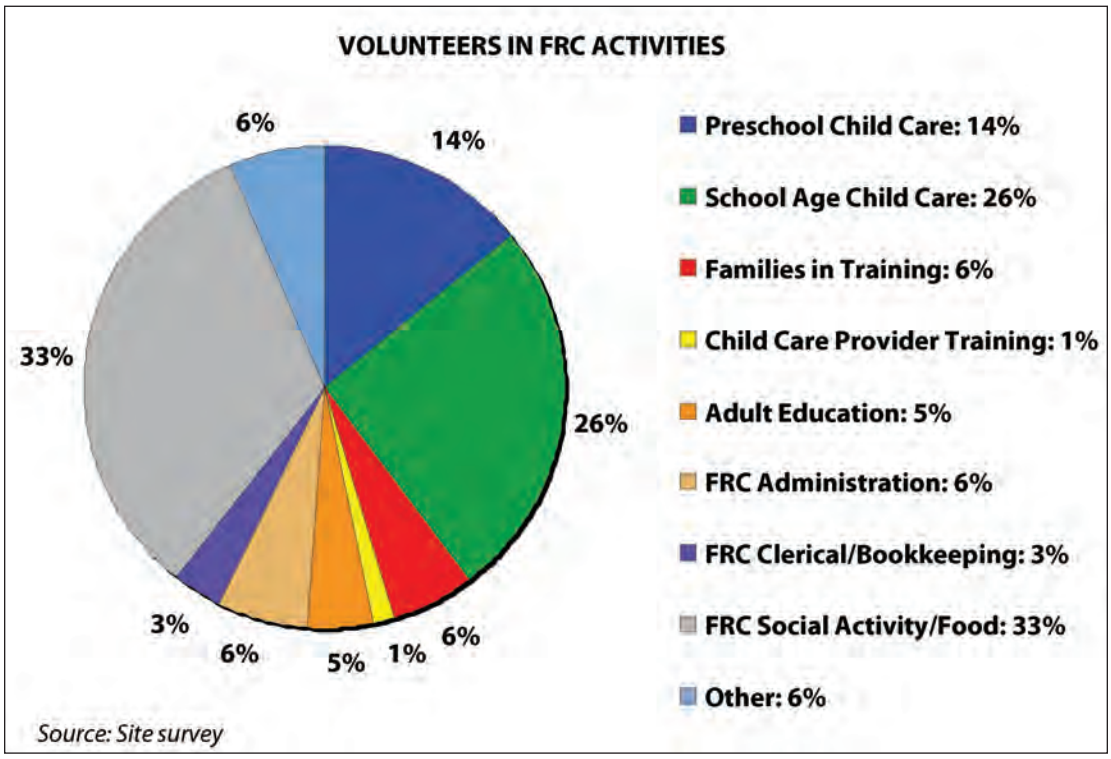
- professional development (60 percent);
- activity space (50 percent);
- classroom/program materials (49 percent);
- professional services (44 percent);
- snacks/food (43 percent);

- promotional support (41 percent);
- teachers (38 percent);
- classroom space (35 percent); and
- special education (32 percent).

Volunteers

FRC programs use volunteers to enhance their capacity to provide services. Volunteers assist in a variety of ways, including working in preschool, assisting with school-age care, helping with office projects and assisting at FRC events. In one month alone, FRC directors reported that almost 575 FRC volunteers provided 2,771 hours of service in FRC programs. At a conservative estimate of $8 per hour, volunteers provide more than $22,000 worth of services per month.

In addition to expanding FRC capacity and providing a means for volunteers to engage in their community, volunteer presence in preschool and school-age care programs increase the ratio of adults to children at any given time. This contributes to program quality and provides children with opportunities for interactions with adults. The pie chart below outlines the proportion of hours that volunteers provide per category (starting at the top of the circle and moving clockwise).



Government Snack Funds

As indicated earlier, FRCs supplement the FRC grant with funds from various federal, state and other grant programs. We asked FRCs if they also used government funding for snacks for either preschool or school-age programs that were offered directly or collaboratively, as this is a potential source of revenue.

The results, presented in the following table, suggest that this is potentially an underused resource that could be explored. Those FRC programs that use snack funds could assist their colleagues in understanding funding restrictions and completing associated paperwork.

TABLE 10. Use of Government Snack Funds

Service Delivery	Component	No Government Snack Funds	Use Government Snack Funds
Direct	Preschool	71%	29%
	School-age care	74%	26%
Collaborative	Preschool	76%	24%
	School-age care	71%	29%

Source: Site survey

In a concurrent study, the Rudd Center at Yale University surveyed a number of child care centers in the state related to their nutrition and food policies. We included several questions from the Rudd study in our FRC site survey and their deputy director provided us with a comparison of FRC results to those of other child care centers. The FRCs are far behind other preschools and child care in the state in regard to having policies related to feeding children. For example, in other child care centers surveyed by the Rudd Center, 72 percent have a written center policy setting nutrition standards for food brought from home for meals and snacks, while only 56 percent of the FRCs have such a policy.

Funding Cuts Impact FRC Services

When asked if their budget was adequate to meet their program needs and the needs of participant families, 85.5 percent of the FRC directors indicated that this was not the case. In addition, 65 percent of their principals indicated that they felt that insufficient funds challenged the successful implementation of FRC programs.

Inadequate funds and timing on the state allocation of funds cause some specific issues across many programs. Twenty-one percent of the FRC directors indicated that they do not provide summer child care due to insufficient funds. In addition, due to fairly regular uncertainty of their budget and timing associated with decisions related to guaranteeing funding, FRCs often find themselves in the position of being unable to offer summer programs because they aren't certain if the funds will arrive; decisions may occur too late to then establish a summer program. In addition, 75 percent of the FRCs indicate that they have a preschool waiting list. When asked how many children were on their waiting list, the total came to approximately 2,000 children among all FRCs.

During discussions at the five sites studied in depth, parents and staff lamented the loss of key programs and staff due to recent budget restraints; several FRC directors and principals commented that the FRC budget has not kept pace with increases in operating costs or families' cost of living. Moreover, at every site, staff acknowledged the growing needs of children and families due to the economic recession and the corresponding decline in available community resources. Across sites, directors listed activities and programs that

they had to eliminate due to lack of adequate funding and identified the need for additional programs based on observed community needs.

When evaluation team members asked families about the impact of FRC funding loss on children, families and the school-community, the word "*devastating*" was used at *every* site. Parents often stated, "I would cry" (which usually resulted in echoes of "Me, too") and would repeatedly come to tears when talking about the potential loss of the FRC and the impact on their family and the community.

B. PROGRAM OUTCOMES

1. Impact on Children and Families

Given our goal to align the evaluation with the state's early childhood investment framework, we present this section on the FRCs' impact on children and families using, where possible, the RBA model adopted by the state. In an RBA session conducted by the study team and Charter Oak Group in September 2008, FRC directors identified a number of core strategies, sub-strategies and performance measures. Two of those core strategies, as of the writing of this report, deal directly with impact on children and families: family support and school success.

A. Family Support

FRCs Increase Parental Knowledge and Skills

We found that the FRCs use various strategies to ensure that families have skills, knowledge and support, thereby enhancing their ability to be involved in and have a positive impact on their children's education. In their response to the participant survey, 51.9 percent of families reported they learned new skills and 41.4 percent of families indicated that they gained more education. In addition, families reported on acquiring specific knowledge pertaining to children and child development, as indicated in the table below.

TABLE 11. Parents Gain Information and Skills

Participants Who Agreed that Using the FRC Means …	Percent Agree
I have learned what to expect of children at different ages	60.6
I have learned new ways to discipline my child	45.7

Source: Participant survey

Similar findings were evident in the five-site study where families reported gaining knowledge about children's development and confidence regarding how to interact with school staff and navigate schools. Parents reported learning information about developmental norms and feeling confident their children were receiving high quality care. Parents also endorsed statements indicating that children were learning skills that helped them academically and socially. Moreover, parents acknowledged that they felt more comfortable in schools and were more able to reinforce children's school learning. Finally, parents reported gaining information and skills that empowered them socially and professionally.

Our findings corroborate studies cited by the national PAT (one aspect of the Famlies in Training component) and indicate that if fidelity to the PAT model is adhered to, the program increases parent knowledge of early childhood development and improves parenting practices.[15]

A report prepared by the Connecticut FRC Alliance pertaining to PAT[16] included findings from several studies involving FRC parents; results indicated that there were statistically significant gains by parents in their competence, confidence and knowledge upon completion of the PAT program. The report also includes the results of a study conducted by the University of Massachusetts in 2005, which found, on the basis of a teacher survey, that FRC parents who participated in PAT "seem to be more connected and involved with their children's schools than a comparison group." Teachers' perceptions on parental involvement survey items that produced significant results included: attend parent/teacher conferences; attend school-related programs and activities; help students with homework; volunteer services at school and show interest in their child's progress. Further evidence is also available from the most recent study on PAT's impact on families participating in FRCs where it was found that PAT participation contributed to improvements in parenting practices.[17]

Study participants underscored the importance of knowledge of child development and the fact that it contributes to positive parent-child relationships, ultimately having an impact on child behavior and education. Responses to the participant survey in this evaluation indicated parents' perceptions of outcomes associated with their gains in knowledge and skills. In fact, 39.4 percent indicated that their children are doing better in school and 28.6 percent indicated that their relationships with their families are better.

Participants also indicated that their children gained beneficial experience and skills from their association with FRCs:

- 83.9 percent agreed that their child has something interesting and fun to do
- 82.5 percent said their child is learning new skills or is taking part in new activities

FRCs Increase Parent Confidence

Parents also indicated that they benefited from participation in FRC activities specifically geared to enhance targeted skills (such as *Raising Readers*, which focus on enhancing parents' literacy and language development) suggesting that the FRCs' impact on parents extends beyond the impact on parent-child and family relationships. The enhanced ability of parents to interact more positively with children, as well as parents' increased knowledge, empowers them to advocate successfully for their families. As one parent in the five-site study indicated during focus group discussions: "[the FRC] has made a difference in my life, too…it has given me confidence." These results parallel the results of the recent survey of PAT participants cited above[18] that indicate an increase in self-confidence related to parenting topics. FRC and school staff members also acknowledged that parents who participated in FRC programs gained both confidence and skills, as one staff member commented, "I think our parents are better informed. We hold our parents to a different set of standards; this is where we expect your child to be, this is what you can do at home.

Our parents are better prepared and more informed than a parent who just drops off their kid or puts a child on bus."

FRCs Provide Families with a Support Network

Parents also benefit from the network of support FRCs provide, particularly the camaraderie of other parents and the collaboration with FRC staff. It became apparent in the five-site study that FRCs provide a safe and secure place for parents to congregate, socialize and network. This network appears essential for parents who are new to a community and especially helpful for first-time parents and parents experiencing challenges, whether personal or professional. Providing a support network is essential in preventing mental health problems and enhancing families' ability to cope with stressful situations. We regard this as one of the most important outcomes of the FRCs and note that this has implications for positive impact on children, as well as their parents, as children are influenced by their parents' mental health status.[19] The FRCs role as a support network is noted not only in the five-site study but also in the participant survey, where respondents indicated the supportive role of the FRCs, not only for them, but for their children as well. As indicated in the chart below, participants regard the FRC as a place to turn to when they need help.

TABLE 12. FRCs as a Support Network

Participants Who Agreed that Using the FRC Means …	Percent Agree
I have somewhere to turn if I need help	62.4%
I am more comfortable in my child's school	56.7%
I have become friends with other parents	65.0%
I feel there is someone who cares about my family	65.0%
My child is in a safe place when I cannot be with him/her	52.7%
My child has made new friends	81.5%

Source: Participant survey

B. School Success

FRCs Increase Communication and Involvement with Schools and Teachers

Participation in the FRC has also contributed to increased parent involvement in school, a point made in another section of the evaluation report. Parent involvement is an essential prerequisite to children's academic achievement; national studies[20] indicate that children are more likely to succeed in school if their parents are involved and engaged in their children's educational experiences. Hence, parent involvement was included in the 2000 National Education Goals.

At every FRC in the five-site study, parents and staff attributed an increase in family involvement to FRC participation. Participants commented on the constant communication between FRC staff and families. Parents also acknowledged that this involvement empowered them to negotiate and advocate for their children — asking questions about and showing an interest in their children's school experiences. Through their involvement with the FRC, parents became familiar not only with teachers, but also with administrators, and they came to know the school building layout and what (and when) services were offered. One

parent explained, "I went to private school for junior and high school…I was a strong proponent for private school…..my involvement with the FRC has changed my opinion about what the public schools have to offer — staff resources, caliber of teachers — I'm very confident about sending my child to school here."

FRCs Positively Impact School Readiness and Transition to Kindergarten

School Readiness. In survey responses, FRC directors shared the view that FRC participation has a significant impact on children's school readiness. Ninety-eight percent of FRC directors reported their perception that FRC programs have a moderate to major impact on providing children with high quality early educational experiences and addressing existing inadequacies in learning opportunities and resources. Directors also indicated that FRC program participation strengthens families and their ability to connect with schools. Sixty percent of directors cited a major impact on family involvement and credited participation in FRC programming with fostering stronger home-school collaboration. One-third indicated that participation has a major impact on reducing challenges families may experience at home.

FRC directors use a variety of methods to assess the impact of FRC programs on children and families. At a third of the FRCs, children enrolled in preschool and playgroups are assigned a school administrative student information (SASI) identification number to facilitate tracking in elementary school, although most use this to track preschool progress. Schools have recently started using the Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework, which again shows progress made during the preschool years. A few FRCs indicated that plans are in progress in the school system to track FRC children's progress in the upper grades. However, all use different systems and criteria, which prevent any mechanism to combine data for a meaningful analysis. FRC directors' desire to track children and explore the impact of FRC participation on later development and achievement is highlighted in several of the responses. As one director noted, "Ideally, if children in PAT were assigned these numbers, we could follow the progress of FRC-enrolled children from the time they were toddlers up through their elementary school years and beyond. We could examine, for example, how well do FRC-enrolled children do on the development reading assessment at the end of their kindergarten year? With only preschool? With preschool and two years of PAT? How well do they do on third and fourth grade and high school statewide tests?"

Transition to kindergarten. The first few days of formal schooling is considered a developmental milestone even among children in school-based preschool programs. The transition from preschool to school is often a source of stress for both young children and their parents, but the experience can be enhanced when schools and parents work together. When students are less anxious, their parents are less anxious and more supportive of the school. In their work on easing the transition from preschool to school, FRCs extend their reach and work with others in the community. The objectives for kindergarten transitions are to develop community partnerships between the public schools and local preschool agencies, including centers, homes and parents. Public schools must provide information and assistance to children and families in the kindergarten transition process.[21] FRCs support this transition to kindergarten by providing several relevant activities, as follows:

- 93.5 percent of the FRCs guide parents on school registration process;
- 96.8 percent inform parents of district kindergarten transition/orientation events;
- 90.3 percent participate in district kindergarten transition events;
- 82.3 percent guide parents on completing forms; and
- 37.1 percent assist directly with kindergarten screenings.

We also found that participation in an FRC eased the transition to kindergarten. In the five-site study, parents and school staff indicated that early exposure to school routines, settings and curriculum prepares children for kindergarten and allows them to "hit the ground running." As one parent said, "My kids have the feeling that this is my school — when they are 3 years old, its 'this is my school, same at 7 years old. They are able to come in and have that ownership of the school right away."

School staff commented that they can detect which kindergarten students have had FRC preschool experience. As one respondent reported, "The kindergarten teachers can tell who has been through our preschool programs and in our FRCs because those children and those families know how to manipulate the system and get through the ins and outs, they've been in the building and they are not intimidated, they are continually coming into the building, so by the time they hit school age they're in, they've met the nurse, they've dealt with the school principal and they realize the staff are just here to help their child." Many FRC and school staff participating in the five-site study described children as "more confident" upon school entry due to the history of participation and increased familiarity with the school setting and staff.

FRCs Provide Early Identification of, and Intervention for, Children with Special Needs

Screening young children for developmental delays is a cost-effective way for professionals to catch problems and start treatment when it does the most good — during crucial early years when the child's brain and body are rapidly developing. Without an intensive screening effort, only a fraction of the children with delays are identified as needing help before school begins. Early diagnosis and treatment of developmental delays can provide academic, social and economic benefits. Studies have shown that children who receive early treatment for developmental delays are more likely to graduate from high school, hold jobs, live independently and avoid teen pregnancy, delinquency and violent crime, resulting in a potential savings to society of about $30,000 to $100,000 per child.[22]

During 2007-08, the FRCs made a total of 781 referrals for early childhood services. Referrals were most often focused on children age 3 to 4 years, as the following chart indicates. The sum does not match the number of referrals, however, because some programs did not completely fill in this chart, but it does show the relative proportion of the ages of children referred. FRCs also reported the number of children that they could confirm as being accepted for services. As indicated in the chart below, the number of families referred to and accepted for services is high and could result in significant savings if special education services are not required as a result. In Connecticut, for 2007-08, for example, the statewide special education per pupil amount is $21,855.[23] In addition, FRCs provide services such as playgroups, that can be used by other agencies in their referral process. For example, Infoline (211) sends parents who contact them to FRCs when they request

support. Unfortunately there is a gap between the number of communities in the state and FRCs that serve them.

TABLE 13. FRC Referrals

Age Group	Number of Children Referred for Services[1]	% of These Children Accepted for Services
Birth to 2 Years	180	42%
2 to 3 years	196	40%
3 to 4 years	175	71%
4 to 8 years	136	18%

[1] The totals in the chart are less than 781 because some FRCs did not provide the breakdown by age.

Source: Site survey

The majority, or 96.8 percent, of FRCs reported using the *Ages and Stages* questionnaire, a child screening and monitoring system designed to identify infants and young children who show potential developmental delays. FRC directors indicated that results from the *Ages and Stages* questionnaire are most commonly used to share information with parents, as well as in other ways, including initiating a referral process (see chart, below).

TABLE 14. FRC Assessment Usage

FRCs Use of Ages and Stages Results	% FRCs Using This Method
Share information with parents	100%
Start referral process	96.8%
Catalyst for further parent education	80.6%
Catalyst for design of parent workshop	56.5%

Source: Site survey

During site visits, parents, teachers and FRC staff members also talked about how participation in FRC programming has led to the early identification of various developmental delays and learning problems. One parent noted, "In play and learn groups we could see differences — at home we couldn't see, but in playgroups, we could see differences [parent became tearful as talking]. FRC was able to point us in the right direction and all these people started coming out of the woodwork to help us." FRC and school staff members also described how the FRCs include children who are English language learners and provide them with additional early intervention regarding language and literacy. Educators and FRC staff expressed the belief that is supported by the research that indicated that this early identification and intervention may prevent many children from being tracked into special education once they enter kindergarten, which would provide the school district with substantial savings.

Overall, our findings on the FRC's impact on children and families are positive and indicate

potential positive impact. However, these findings are based only on the perceptions of participating staff and family members. No consistent outcome data existed among all FRCs to use for purposes of this evaluation. In other of our studies on family resources and other related school-based programs, we are able to collect school record data, such as on absenteeism, tardiness, behavior problems and reading at grade level because in addition to the data, we have knowledge of FRC participants and non-participants. In Connecticut, the use of identifying student information is emerging and if used by the FRCs it would provide a consistent way to assess the FRC's impact on children's development and academic achievement.

2. Impact on Schools

FRCs, even those governed by NGOs, are in a school, which entails potential challenges related to space and other amenities, but it also offers many opportunities. The FRC's focus on providing early education, child care and family support can contribute to positive relationships between schools and parents as well as to educators' efforts to ensure that children have opportunities to benefit from instruction, points made in the previous section. However, there is reciprocity in the FRC-school relationship and several ways that school administrators, teachers and others can enhance the operations of the FRCs.

FRC Principals Overall Are Supportive of FRCs

The extent that a positive and reciprocal relationship exists between the FRCs and the school may depend on the principals. The role of the principal in school-based interventions is noted in the research to be a critical factor in successful implementation.[24] However, we found no specific information regarding the role of the principal in the FRC program requirement, although the principal must sign the grant application indicating their "assurance that the FRC will be an integrated part of the school."

To ascertain the extent that principals are involved in the FRCs, we asked principals and FRC directors several relevant questions. Generally, principals and FRC directors reported a positive connection between the FRC and the school. Three-quarters of the principals indicated that they are "very familiar" with their FRC and 65 percent indicated that they are "very involved" with this program. At the same time, FRC directors indicated that the FRCs are involved in such activities as school improvement plans. For example, the FRCs role was to share information about the plans with parents in 81 percent of responses, attend meetings pertaining to school improvement plans in 68 percent of responses and/or serve on relevant committees in 63 percent of responses.

Overall, 94 percent of FRC directors indicated that the support and services that the FRCs receive from the school are "very good" or "good" (divided equally between these two ratings). Types of support and services most commonly reported by FRCs include:

- activity space (98 percent);
- office space (97 percent);
- classroom space (97 percent);
- utilities (98 percent);
- telephones (78 percent);

- supervision (79 percent); and
- school nurse (76 percent).

Responses from both FRC directors and principals generally indicated the positive relationship between them, as noted above. However, there were a few areas where perceptions between the two on a particular question varied to a degree that was statistically significant ($p < .05$). We used an independent samples t-test to identify statistically significant differences among the data. We used a significance level of .05 for all differences reported. As indicated in the chart below, the greatest disagreement was on the extent of contact between principals and directors. This raises concern about consistent communication between principals and directors, as well as a question about how integrated the FRCs are within the school.

TABLE 15. FRC/School Integration

Topics	% Principal Agreement	% FRC Director Agreement	Level of Significance (p-value)
FRC directors and principals have 'almost daily/weekly' contact	57%	93%	.000
FRC staff are invited to attend professional development held by the school/district	93%	77%	.019

Sources: Principal survey and site survey

There appear to be few, if any, problems associated with the location of the FRC within the school. Recognizing that locating an FRC program within school has the potential to add to an already stretched schedule and space limitations, we asked principals for their perception of various relevant challenges. Of the principals who responded, 65 percent felt that insufficient funds challenged the successful implementation of FRC programs. Beyond this, the majority of principals did not feel that other potential challenges negatively impacted the school. Only space constraints were mentioned as a potential issue, although this still was considered an issue by less than half of the principals.

We also assessed principals' perceptions of school climate using questions from a school climate measure:[25] A low score on this measure may be indicative of a potentially dysfunctional school environment. The findings, however, indicate that the general school climate is good, suggesting that the school environment where FRCs are located is conducive to learning and indicative of good principal-staff relationships.

The FRCs contributions to positive school climate is underscored by principals, the majority of whom indicated that FRCs influenced school staff in positive ways, as one principal noted, "The support that they give us, if I need anything, they are right there. I value that as an administrator. Child care is one example; we would not be able to run a lot of our programs without them. It also helps us get a feel for the kids that are coming in — their feedback to the kindergarten teachers is valuable." The following percent of principals indicated that they "agree/strongly agree" that FRCs provide the following:

- improvement in the overall school environment (94 percent);
- earlier identification and referral of children needing specialized support (87 percent);
- better communication among school staff about needs of children (87 percent);
- improvement in teachers' ability to be sensitive to the needs of families (87 percent);
- improvement in staff abilities to be sensitive to the needs of families (85 percent); and
- influence on other aspects of the school and/or staff (74 percent).

In the five-site study, we found that the FRC and teachers and school staff have forged strong partnerships and work in a coordinated, collaborative manner. One school staff member said,

> "The FRC staff is part of us, they are our colleagues. FRC staff members are typically included with school staff for administrative and social events such as meetings, professional development and holiday celebrations. In one site, the school and FRC staff work hand-in-hand and there is an adult education teacher from the school who provides services exclusively targeted at FRC families."

FRCs Contribute to Positive Changes in Schools

When asked to discuss the impact of having an FRC at their school, principals provided numerous positive comments, such as:

> "Over the last five years, this school has truly become a community of learners and the FRC has had a huge impact on this process. They are seen as an integral part of our school. They are a resource for staff. They have collaborated with many staff to present evening programs. They have worked with the Parent Teacher Organization and the special education PTO to plan activities for children and families."

We asked principals what additional programs or initiatives were available in their schools due to the presence of an FRC in their building. As the following chart indicates, principals identified several key initiatives, programs or services that have been implemented in their school as a result of the FRC:

TABLE 16. FRC Impact on School Initiatives

Initiatives Implemented Due to FRC	% Principals Agreeing
Developing community partnerships	88.9%
Parent involvement strategies/activities	88.9%
Extended learning programs (before/after school, summer programs)	81.5%
Provision of early education/preschool child care	79.6%
Professional development	57.4%
Mentoring for students	50.0%

Source: Principal survey

Both principals and FRC directors also provided their perception of the FRC's impact on a number of educational or other problems. Although there was some disagreement on the extent of the impact, principals and FRC directors both felt that the FRCs had a positive affect on dealing with family problems at home and students coming to school unprepared to learn.

However, the principals and directors had statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) of opinions about the affect of the FRCs on several other problems. We used an independent samples t-test to identify statistically significant differences among the data and a significance level of .05 for all differences reported. In all cases, the directors felt that the FRC had a greater affect than the principals recognized.

TABLE 17. FRC Impact on School Problems

Problem	FRC Major/ moderate Effect		Level of Significance (p-value)
	Principals % Agree	FRC Directors % Agree	
Inadequate learning opportunities for children birth to age 5	84%	98%	.001
Truancy	9%	39%	.002
Lack of parental involvement	77%	94%	.000
Physical conflicts/aggression among students	39%	60%	.007
Student disrespect for teachers	31%	62%	.000
Student apathy	32%	65%	.000
Child abuse	27%	67%	.000

Sources: Principal survey and site survey

This difference in perceptions between principals and FRC directors is underscored in the findings of the five-site study which indicates that, at some sites, principals were less aware of what the FRC entailed and perhaps for this reason less appreciative of the value and the potential benefits students, families and teachers could gain from participation. Principal turnover clearly contribute to this; as one FRC director commented, "[New] principals come in not knowing what the FRC is …. Some principals give a lot of direction; another principal may not give enough direction. I end up having to build a new relationship and adjust to the person."

To address this discrepancy between the principal's and FRC director's perception of the FRC's impact, FRCs need to document and promote their role in fostering children's optimal development and school achievement, especially in cases where principals are new to the school. They should not, however, assume total responsibility for this. We believe that the involvement of CSDE, even in a minimal way, such as sending a welcome letter to new principals and providing information about the FRCs, would highlight the CSDE's support and recognition of the FRC program's educational significance. The FRCs are clearly ready to provide information about the FRCs' impact on schools. We found, for

example, that FRC directors felt that the FRC school-age programs had a positive impact on student academic achievement, a point also indicated in national studies,[26] as listed in the table below. However, they appear to miss an opportunity to document the FRCs' impact and contributions to school achievement; directors indicated that only about 25 percent of the FRCs have collected data to document these perceptions.

TABLE 18. FRC Impact on Student Achievement

Positive Effect by FRC on:	% FRC Directors
Better completion of homework assignments	83.9%
Better school attendance	75.8%
Better reading scores	59.7%
Better grades/GPA	50.0%

Source: Site survey

FRCs Enhance School Capacity to Serve Children

We found that the FRCs enhance the capacity of schools and teachers to serve children in several ways, such as increasing families' level of comfort and trust, improving home-school communication and promoting family involvement.

During focus groups at the five sites, teachers and parents repeatedly commented on their level of familiarity with each other. Parents also reported on how well they know school staff and facilities and kindergarten teachers repeatedly acknowledged that the information they gained about incoming students and their families was particularly helpful in planning curriculum.

3. Impact on Communities

FRCs serve a critical role in connecting their families and schools with community resources to provide an efficient and non-duplicative delivery of services. To perform this function well, FRC staff members develop an astute awareness of services available in their area, they understand the implications of these services and how they mesh with the needs of their families and schools and they serve as the liaison to link providers with participants. By developing relationships with the families and school staff, as well as other organizations, FRCs assume a leadership role in many communities and establish themselves as a community center, or hub, that provides support and evokes trust and security. One school staff member commented, "Partnership and collaboration are the key words; they [the FRC] are in a unique position to see the opportunities for community collaboration; they see the wider community picture and perspective."

FRCs Broaden Their Impact by Working with Community-Based Organizations and Agencies

As an integral part of the school and the community, each FRC builds and develops connections with local agencies to facilitate the implementation of comprehensive, integrated services for children and families. We examined the scope of FRC

collaborations with these groups in relation to several aspects, including breadth, focus on FRC components and reciprocal nature that develops in true collaborations. FRCs reach out to community agencies and organizations and develop relationships that have the potential to further their efforts pertaining to their programs as a whole. FRCs work with a wide range of organizations and agencies, including higher education institutions and community agencies, in this fashion.

A list of organizations and agencies collaborating with the FRCs is included in Appendix I. The extent to which FRCs interact and collaborate with these is impressive. Half of the FRCs collaborate with more than seven community-based organizations and agencies. A third reported that they collaborate with four to seven different groups. Only a few (13 percent) of FRCs reported collaborating with one to three such organizations and agencies.

In addition to the broad view of connecting with community groups, FRCs collaborate with organizations and agencies to ensure the provision of services prescribed by the FRC core components. Key areas of collaboration include preschool, school-age care and positive youth development. This point was made earlier in the report and indicates that it is an efficient serviced-delivery approach that avoids duplication of service.

In addition to working with a broad range of community groups, almost half of the FRCs provide training to staff from these other organizations. This is an important service to those groups.

FRC Directors Are Recognized as Community Leaders

Because of their interactions with this range of agencies and organizations, FRC directors are recognized as a key force and resource in areas that relate to their implementation components. Almost all FRC directors (92 percent) are key members of initiatives related to early childhood education, school readiness and family stability. The vast majority (87 percent) participates at a local level, almost half are involved in state organizations and 15 percent work at the national level. More than half of the FRC directors are on their school readiness council, almost half are on their kindergarten transition committee/task force, and a third are members of the Discovery collaborative initiative in their community (for a brief description of the Discovery initiative funded by the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, see page 4 of this report). In addition, the majority of the FRCs (84 percent) include their colleagues from community-based organizations and agencies on their advisory councils. This reciprocity develops a level of trust and collaboration that helps establish the infrastructure to develop integrated services, avoid duplication of services and coordinate service delivery. This is helpful to staff, but we believe the ultimate beneficiaries are children and families.

FRCs Serve as a Key Resource and Referral Source within the School and Community

FRCs, due to their access to families and their location in the schools, are well placed to serve as a key resource and referral agency for families. FRCs report that they provide more than 20,000 referrals each year. The highest categories of referral are housing/food/clothing, early childhood education, social services and health services.

The FRC high rate of serving as this one-stop shop of referrals for families is especially impressive when considering that Connecticut has an easily accessible telephone referral system (Infoline, 211).

Families clearly rely on FRC staff as critical resources, a point highlighted in the five-site study. Regardless of the issue, parents repeatedly described FRC staff as having the answers or knowing exactly where to go to get the answers to any question they may have. As one parent stated, "The FRC keeps you connected with your community. I lived [here] for years and I had no idea about things going on in the community — now I receive letters about things going on at the firehouse, library, playground; these are great networking opportunities. Now I receive flyers all the time, there is a real sense of the community for our family." In one site, community providers identified the FRC as the expert consultant to the community for any issues related to young children, especially since there are few other birth-to-three resources available in town. In another site, the FRC is regarded as the authority for other child care providers, offering workshops and coordinated trainings for providers as well as maintaining a compilation of local centers and home care providers to offer as referral.

FRCs Function as the Hub or Center of the Community

The five-site study also provided insight into FRCs function as a center or home base within both the school and larger community. In discussion at the five sites studied in depth, families and staff indicated they have a true affinity for FRCs and focus group participants used terms like "home" and "family" in their descriptions. Many focus group participants commented on the "warm" and "welcoming" atmosphere of FRCs and expressed feeling "safe" and "secure" in their relationships with FRC staff. As stated by one parent, "[The FRC director] and all the staff have been really helpful to me and my family, I am very grateful and thank you. They are like family. I can talk to them like my friend."

We included one site due to its rural nature in order to assess any differences between that site and others in more urban areas. The FRC's role as the hub of the community was strong in this rural town. A school staff member in one of the focus groups talked about how there were very few resources for families before the FRC was established. Before the FRC was created, she had

to field questions from families and there were never enough quality preschool slots. In addition, there were always families looking for guidance and services for children with special needs. She described the FRC as providing a "centralized place." Moreover, both school and FRC staff noted that the population of the town had increased substantially in recent years and resources, including child care, had not kept pace. The FRC is the place for training other child care providers; they coordinate all the trainings and serve as a resource for providers.

C. IMPLICATIONS FOR RESULTS BASED ACCOUNTABILITY (RBA)

1. Data from This Study

Several of the study's findings may be used for reporting purposes to meet RBA requirements. In the following table, we present three columns: one indicating possible RBA **Performance**

Measures, another indicating the **Findings** from this study that are related to the measure, and a third indicating the **Data Source** from which the findings were derived.

TABLE 19. Implications for Results Based Accountability

Possible Performance Measure	Findings	Data Source
% of home visitation staff trained to deliver home visitation services	87.3%	Site survey
% of referrals that result in clients receiving services:		
Overall	44%	Site survey
Birth to 2 years	41.7%	Site survey
2 to 3 years	40.3%	Site survey
3 to 4 years	70.8%	Site survey
4 to 8 years	17.6%	Site survey
Parent Perception of % of children doing better in school	39.4%	Participant survey
% of parents reported that they participated in parenting-related programs	58.8%	Participant survey
% of parents reported satisfaction with FRC services	91%	Participant survey
% of parents reported increased knowledge of child development	60.6%	Participant survey
% of parents reported they have gained new skills	51.9%	Participant survey
# of all referrals made to guide families to resources and schools	21,043	Site survey
# of FRC families referred to health care services	1,118	Site survey

We recommend the use of the above findings as baseline, to be reassessed in subsequent years to document progress on performance measures. The standardized use of survey questions that provide the basis for these findings would facilitate follow-up and would show change over time. These surveys are attached as Appendices D and H.

2. Additional Approaches

In addition to following up on the baseline data, as indicated above, other means of documenting the FRCs influence include a focus on:

School Readiness

Using school readiness as a performance measure, evaluators may document:

- the percent of FRC students who participated in any FRC component who enter kindergarten ready to learn (using a standardized school readiness tool chosen by the state), compared to all other non-FRC students entering kindergarten; and
- the percent of FRC students who participated in the FRC's FIT and Preschool components who enter kindergarten ready to learn, compared to non-FRC students. National studies underscore the value of home visitations followed up with preschool.

Such comparisons would not follow the experimental model as no information would be available on the comparison group, some of whom may have had similar services or there may be demographic or other differences between the comparison and FRC groups. Nevertheless, comparing FRC and non-FRC students on various variables would provide insight on FRCs' impact. Should sufficient funds for an evaluation be available, a survey of all parents who enroll their children in kindergarten may be added and could include questions to ascertain family income level, cultural background and the extent of prior home visits, child care or preschool experiences all students have had, which would make the comparisons more robust.

Use of School Record Data

Depending on the availability of resources, we also recommend utilization of school record data for RBA performance measures. These can provide a valuable means of ascertaining the difference the FRCs are making. Since school records include information on all students in the school, evaluators may document:

- the percent of children enrolled in FRC after-school child care programs or Positive Youth Development, compared with non-FRC students, who show improvement in school attendance, behavior and one or more indicators of academic performance, such as reading at grade level.

3. Recommendations on Tracking Systems

Longitudinal evaluations of the FRCs may be possible if the same data are collected over time and analyzed at regular intervals. We recommend establishing tracking systems as follows:

Using Identifiers

Identifiers may be assigned to children to track FRC participants from a young age. The Pre-Kindergarten Information System or the Connecticut Early Childhood Information Systems are currently being developed, and may be used. Tracking would begin from a young age through the child's school-age years, and may include the use of school record data. Comparisons with FRC participants and non-FRC participants may be possible using the tracking system to examine differences in school attendance, excessive absenteeism, behavior problems and achievement (for example, percent of students reading at grade level).

Documenting Referrals

To ascertain the type of services FRC participants need, records should be maintained to document not only the number of referrals but also the type of services received, by category (early intervention, primary needs, mental health, etc.) and by recipient (child/adult). A standardized follow-up document may be developed that allows for post-referral documentation for each case.

Using School Record Data

To ascertain the FRC impact on the school over time, school record data may be analyzed to document:

- an increase in the number of children who are ready for school (using the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory scores until a better tool is available); and
- a decrease in the number of children in grades K-3 who are placed in special education.

Using Survey Questionnaires

Surveys may be developed to collect data on the following:

- the percentage of parents enrolled in adult education who rely on FRC childcare to complete their adult education programs; and
- the percentage of private providers who participate in FRCs who improve the quality of the services they provide, as indicated in additional education/certification, accreditation, or increased knowledge of child development as determined on pre- and post-test, and the number of providers seeking license or additional courses relevant to the care and education of children. The use of the states Early Childhood Professional registry, currently managed by Connecticut's Chart-A-Course (CCAC), may facilitate identification of providers completing relevant courses.

5. Discussion

The findings documented above are descriptive of the FRC program as a whole, but we found common features as well as differences among the FRCs as they operate at the local level. Given current program requirements, all FRCs provide Families in Training, focusing on home visitations and parent education from the birth of the child through the early childhood years. The FRCs share another common feature: they are an integral part of the community where they are located and they serve as a link among schools, families and the community. As such, the FRCs are an important aspect of the state's early childhood investment framework. Equally important, they are uniquely positioned to move forward community plans developed as part of the Discovery or upcoming initiatives established by the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund.

A. POTENTIAL IMPACT ON SPECIAL EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

This link is best expressed in the FRC component resource and referral, provided as a direct service by the majority of the FRCs. About 20 percent of FRC referrals were made in context of the Families in Training and were based on early identification of developmental problems. We found that a significant percentage (44 percent overall) of these referrals were accepted for service. Early identification and intervention services prevent developmental problems from becoming exacerbated to the point that they interfere with a child's ability to learn and can thus contribute to fewer children being tracked into special education. Although no data were available to document the FRCs' impact on reducing the number of special education placements, we believe this to be an important area to examine, as the potential savings could be substantial. The annual per pupil cost of special education in Connecticut is about $22,000. If each FRC prevented only five special education placements, this would more than pay for the $97,200 annual FRC grant.

Referrals for mental health services constituted another major referral category common among the FRCs. We consider this to be critical. It supports families' ability to cope with difficult life conditions and is likely to impact children as well since they are influenced by their parents' mental health status. A newly released report by the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut underscores the severity of mental health problems among the state's young children, indicating that up to 20,000 children may be entering kindergarten with physical and mental health issues that could seriously impede their ability to learn.[27]

The two potential impact areas indicated above — reductions in the number of special education placements and in the number of children entering kindergarten with mental health issues — are common features among the FRCs and should be considered for inclusion in RBA performance measures for the FRC program.

B. VARIATIONS IN SCOPE OF DIRECT SERVICES

Our findings on the common features that bind the FRCs were striking, as were the operational differences among the FRCs, which varied in the number of direct services they reported. Although there are seven FRC components, we gathered data such that Families in Training was divided into three subcomponents (playgroups, home visitation, and parenting education)

and out-of-school care was separated into school-age care and summer school to total ten possible components. To appreciate the variation in the provision of direct services, consider three FRCs that reported the least number of components provided as a direct service. These three FRCs provided Families in Training and one of two other components, generally resource and referral or positive youth development. At the other end of the continuum, three FRCs offered direct services for nine out of the 10 components/subcomponents, generally excluding either child care provider training or GED. Of significance is the fact that all FRCs received the same grant amount of about $97,200. Where they differed is not only in the efficient use of funds, but also in their ability to leverage additional support.

The extent that FRCs provide direct as opposed to collaborative services raises another issue, namely, the shift in priorities indicated in the decline in providing preschool as a direct service. This decline in preschool services stands in contrast to other findings, which indicated that 75 percent of the FRCs reported a need for preschool in their communities and that 2,000 children are on waiting lists for such services.

The state's current fiscal crisis precludes suggesting additional funds to enable more FRCs to provide preschool. However, providing a link within CSDE between the FRC program and school readiness may make it possible to eventually channel more school readiness funds to the FRCs. Currently, some FRCs are recipients of readiness grants, but many others report that they only provide preschool in collaboration with other organizations in their community receiving such grants. It is not just grant support that is at stake here. Collaborations between these two CSDE initiatives — FRC and school readiness — would also ensure that the FRCs and school readiness programs share similar opportunities pertaining to staff development, assessment and other early childhood efforts undertaken within CSDE.

The role of the FRC program in the state's early childhood investment framework is important not only in the provision of services for infants and preschoolers, but in the provision of these services in context of other school-based services — the notion of comprehensive and continuous learning supports. Evaluations of the Arkansas School of the 21st Century (AR21C) initiative, which is implemented in more than 100 schools across the state, underscore this point. AR21C schools provide preschool child care and education within the context of other services, similar to the FRCs. The preschool component is funded by Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) grants, the state's equivalent to Connecticut's school readiness. A study comparing school-based preschool programs implemented as part of 21C and school-based preschool programs using only state readiness funds without 21C services clearly indicated the value added of providing preschool within the context of additional services: There were significant differences between the two groups, indicating higher scores on all developmental indicators among the children in 21C.[28]

C. INTEGRATION WITHIN THE SCHOOL

Another finding that deserves further examination is related to the use of the school for the provision of FRC services. All FRCs, even those governed by a non-governmental organization, provide school-based services. The use of the school for preschool and other family support programs provides opportunities for continuity of services and support from the birth of the

child through age 12. It can result in a seamless transition from preschool to kindergarten for the child and ensure that the school is ready for and able to accommodate the individual needs of children in the primary grades. Efforts to address early intervention and school readiness are compromised when no follow-through in the primary grades is provided and schools do not build on children's early experiences.[29]

The mere location of the FRC in the school building, however, will not be associated with any benefits; FRCs must be embedded in and operate as part of the school. This point is indicated in the research on other school reform programs.[30] Here we found differences among the FRCs. Whereas some were clearly an integral part of and participated in all school activities along with principals and teachers, other FRCs did not exhibit the same levels of integration.

This may be due in part to the lack of involvement by some principals who acknowledged the value of the FRC but did not always acknowledge its educational relevance. This knowledge base is critical, otherwise, the FRC may be considered as a family support program that has value as a social service rather than an educational initiative. School administrators' failure to recognize the FRCs' potential and educational relevance may be evident in missed opportunities. For example, Title I funds may be used for some FRC components, but only two FRCs indicated this as a source of additional revenue, although clearly all FRCs need to supplement the FRC grant. Since decisions on the use of Title I funds are guided by school officials, FRC directors are likely to have limited input.

Principals' understanding of the FRCs' educational potential can also assist in evaluation efforts. Documentation of the FRCs' impact necessitates the use of school record data to ascertain FRCs' impact on special education and school achievement. Principals can provide access to school records and otherwise facilitate the use of and interpretation of the data. This latter point is of significance. We noted earlier that our findings are limited due to the unavailability of data. Lack of evidence is not unique to the Connecticut FRCs and it stems in part from legislative oversight to dedicate a percentage of the funds for evaluations. This issue may be addressed in current RBA efforts. Although there are several broad areas of impact that FRCs may identify as performance measures, an initial focus on those that are linked to school achievement would underscore the educational relevance of the FRC program and provide direction for evaluation efforts at the local FRC level.

6. Recommendations

Our findings show that the FRC program is aligned with the state's investment in early childhood and school readiness and is effective in providing needed services. Although acute economic conditions are likely to continue to challenge not only the FRC program but other services as well, the following short-term recommendations deserve consideration:

A. EMPHASIZE THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

As previously noted, the FRC's focus on providing early education, child care and support services is designed to affect school achievement, but the educational relevance of the FRC program may be overlooked, especially among principals new to FRC schools. We found that FRC directors promote this aspect of the FRC but believe that they should be joined in this effort by CSDE and thereby recommend:

a. Including the requirement in FRC guidelines that principals and other educational administrators in FRC schools attend a minimum of two state-wide principal meetings; and
b. Convening such meetings to ensure that principals have opportunities for mutual support and understanding of the role they have in supporting the FRCs.

B. DEVELOP AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM TO ENABLE FRCS TO COMPILE OUTCOME DATA

Several opportunities exist to compile data to show short- and long-term outcomes, including:

a. Tracking special education rates in the school and establishing a link to the FRC by having information on the number of FRC students identified and referred for intervention;
b. Ascertaining the difference between kindergarten children who participated in the FRCs and those who did not, on the basis of kindergarten assessments; and
c. Ascertaining differences among students participating in the FRCs school-age child care and summer programs. The latter would require identifying known FRC participants and non-participants and comparing the two groups on the basis of school attendance, classroom behavior, reading at grade level and other data available within school records. This recommendation is based on other studies that show program impact in these areas.

FRCs already must collect and report to CSDE enrollment and attendance data on preschool and school-age components. However, maintaining the data over time and taking the next steps to collect comparison data is a time-consuming process. We recommend that CSDE require each FRC to devote a percentage of grant funds for evaluation purposes. Optimally, increased FRC grant funds will cover this, otherwise the costs will cut into an already strained FRC budget. In addition, we recommend that funds be dedicated at CSDE to enable the FRC program to coordinate local evaluation efforts and establish and maintain an assessment system.

C. ADOPT QUALITY CRITERIA FOR THE PROVISION OF FAMILIES IN TRAINING, PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL-AGE COMPONENT

The potential of the FRCs to affect students and families and, in particular, school achievement, is dependent on the quality of service. We recommend:

a. Maintaining fidelity to the home visitation model being used in Families in Training. ConnPAT is monitoring the quality of the intervention using a phased-in approach, which will address the quality issue related to the number of families served and the number of visits each family receives over the course of a year;
b. Extending preschool program quality guidelines to include the requirement that programs be assessed at the site level, using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale or another assessment tool; and
c. Amending guidelines further to ensure appropriate quality of school-age services.

7. Summary

The FRC program began two decades ago with three FRCs and has since grown to a network of 62 FRCs administered by the CSDE. Although advances in our understanding of brain development have occurred since that time, as well as significant demographic changes, the FRC program continues to be relevant. It is aligned with and contributes to the state's school readiness effort, endorsed by the Early Childhood Cabinet.

In the course of this evaluation, we found that the FRCs have a unique role as an essential link between schools, families and community-based organizations. They provide critical early identifications and referrals that can result in substantial savings in later special education costs. They enhance knowledge of developmental norms for both parents and child care providers, as well as increase parents' involvement in school, which improves children's ability to succeed academically. FRCs provide essential support to schools and other state agencies, navigate families through the complex systems of school, social services and other family support resources.

The amount of money each FRC receives in the FRC grant provides only base support; FRCs leverage additional funds in several ways, including: grants, in-kind contributions (for space, utilities, and resources) from schools and organizations, as well as fees and extensive use of volunteers. FRCs report that funding cuts limit their ability to provide all services directly.

At this time of severe economic challenges, we are not suggesting FRC funding increases. However, we recommend promoting the FRC as an educational initiative, including outreach to new principals, developing an assessment system to facilitate data collection that would lead to definitive statements about the impact of the FRCs and continued focus on the provision of good quality programs.

PART II

FIVE-SITE STUDY

June 2009

Submitted by

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Part 2: Five-site Study

Introduction

The second phase of the evaluation of Connecticut Family Resource Centers (FRCs) involved in-depth case studies at five FRC sites to gain a more comprehensive portrait of individual FRCs and the scope of services they offer. This part of the evaluation builds on information obtained from surveys distributed during the first phase of the evaluation and involved conducting site visits, interviews with key FRC staff and focus groups with families, school staff and community members. The five sites participating in this phase of the study included: Bridgeport, Middletown, Norwich, Plymouth and Tolland. We selected these sites to provide adequate representation of district reference groups, as well as geographic distribution across the state. We also selected participating sites to reflect varying histories and to provide an array of direct and indirect services.

Members of the evaluation team from The Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University visited each of the five sites between January and February 2009. During each site visit, evaluation team members toured the FRC/school facility, interviewed the FRC director and school principal and conducted focus groups with key school (i.e., teachers, parent outreach workers, school nurses) and FRC staff and families participating in FRC services. We asked interviewees and focus group participants to share their views about the impact of FRC services and programs on children and families, the relationship between school and FRC staff and ideas regarding how to enhance future programming. This participatory evaluation approach will enable us to describe the unique configuration of services within FRCs, as well as the overall operation of the FRC program across the state of Connecticut. Moreover, we have involved a FRC stakeholders group comprised of leaders from FRCs and associated programs across the state (such as Connecticut Parents as Teachers), as well as members of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), during every phase of the evaluation to ensure that findings are of relevance and use to FRC staff, families, schools and communities, as well as to the CSDE and policymakers.

The evaluation team developed the focus group protocol in collaboration with the FRC stakeholders group and CSDE leadership (a copy of the focus group protocol can be found in Appendix J). Each of the interviews and focus groups was audio-taped and a verbatim transcript was produced. Then, we analyzed the data using standard procedures for analyzing qualitative focus group data (Krueger, 1994) and aggregated and synthesized the data through careful review of the focus group and interview transcripts and notes. We also asked family focus group participants to complete a brief survey with questions regarding basic demographic information (a copy of the focus group survey can be found in Appendix K).

Methods

SITE SELECTION

Ideally, we would have chosen the five sites for the study randomly since random selection ensures that results from a study can be generalized to a larger population. Five sites, however, are not representative enough to be generalized to any larger population. Because we did not have enough sites for a true random selection process, we used a series of steps to identify five sites that represented the range of FRC types and met our various criteria for inclusion (generated with input from the stakeholders group and CSDE leadership). In designing the study, we wanted to be sure that the selected sites included a range of FRC types, including priority districts with only one FRC; priority districts with more than one FRC; sites with an indirect service delivery model; and sites with no other resources to fund FRC-related activities. Moreover, we wanted to be sure to include communities that were geographically distributed across the state, were situated in urban and rural settings and represented various district reference groups (DRG).

Step One. We used a computer program (EXCEL) to select five communities randomly from the list given to us by CSDE of all communities with FRCs. The sites selected through this process were: East Windsor, Stafford, Norwich, Middletown and New Haven. This list of five communities, however, did not include a site that used an indirect service delivery model. Thus, we then considered dropping New Haven and selecting the first site on the list that used indirect services, which was Bloomfield. Nevertheless, upcoming staffing changes at Bloomfield were likely to complicate the efficient completion of this phase of the study.

Step Two. We grouped all the communities from the CSDE list based on the above criteria (e.g., priority districts with only one FRC; priority districts with more than one FRC; sites with an indirect service delivery model; sites with no other resources to fund FRC-related activities and all remaining communities). We then used a computer program (EXCEL) to select a site randomly from within each group; the selected sites were: Norwich, Norwalk, Hebron, Stonington, and Stafford. All five of these communities, however, are located in Eastern Connecticut providing no geographic variability.

Step Three. We used the original random list of communities with FRCs we had created earlier to select sites from varying DRGs. The sites we selected from this process were: Branford (DRG D), East Windsor (DRG F), Middletown (DRG G), Norwich (DRG H), and New Haven (DRG I). Yet, none of the FRCs selected in this attempt used an indirect service delivery model. Likewise, when we eliminated Branford, the first indirect FRC site was Stonington which left us with FRCs in central and eastern Connecticut only.

Step Four. We grouped together various DRGs and randomly selected one site from each group. We considered DRGs B, C and D as a single group (with a total of eight FRCs) and DRGs E and F as a single group (with a total of six FRCs). We considered each of the DRGs G (14 total FRCs), H (eight total FRCs) and I (seven total FRCs) as a single group. We also wanted to ensure that one site selected from these groupings used an indirect service model and one site had no additional resources. Using the initial listing of randomized sites based on the CSDOE directory of all communities with FRCs, we selected the first site listed from DRG G (Middletown), then the first site listed from DRG H (Norwich), then the first site listed from DRG I (New Haven). Since Middletown, Norwich and New

Haven are all FRCs with additional resources, we then selected the first site appearing in DRG B, C or D with no additional resources (Tolland). Finally, since we had not yet selected an FRC that used an indirect service model, we then selected the first site that appeared in DRG E or F that used an indirect service model (Plymouth).

The stakeholders group perceived this list of sites (Middletown, Norwich, New Haven, Tolland and Plymouth) to be a representative sampling since it included both urban and rural communities, had FRCs with varying histories (e.g., FRCs in existence since the initial creation of FRCs and more recent FRCs) and included some communities with a substantial immigrant population. Once the evaluation team reviewed the list, however, we realized that none of the sites were from the western part of the state. Therefore, we selected the next site from DRG I in the western region (Bridgeport). Since Bridgeport has multiple FRCs, we chose the site that served the most bilingual/ESL children and the site that had been in existence the longest to gain a historical perspective. Thus, the final sites included in the five-site study were Bridgeport, Middletown, Norwich, Plymouth and Tolland.

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

We collected information by interviewing FRC directors and school principals, and conducting focus groups comprised of key FRC and school staff (i.e., teachers, parent-outreach workers, school nurses) and families participating in FRC services. Focus groups are semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one and one-half to two hours each. Each group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a particular topic in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Responses are elicited from all participants in the group, and group members may influence one another as they respond to comments and ideas presented by others (Krueger, 1994). We determined that the focus group methodology would provide an appropriate forum to elicit information about the scope and strengths of current FRC programming and service delivery. We developed the interview and focus group protocol in collaboration with the FRC stakeholders group to elicit the participants' impressions of the role the FRC serves in the community; the FRC model and system of service delivery; impact on children, families, and the community served; and funding implications. A copy of the focus group protocol can be found in Appendix J. Each of the focus groups was audio-taped and a verbatim transcript of the group was produced. We analyzed data using standard procedures for analyzing qualitative focus group data (Krueger, 1994) and aggregated and synthesized the data through careful reviews of interview and focus group transcripts and notes. We also asked family focus group participants to complete a brief survey of questions regarding basic demographic information. A copy of the focus group survey can be found in Appendix K. We also asked evaluation team members to complete a brief report following each site visit; a copy of the report template can be found in Appendix L.

PARTICIPANTS

We conducted 16 focus groups as part of this evaluation, including eight groups comprised of family members; two groups comprised of combined FRC and school staff; two groups comprised of FRC and school staff and community service providers; two groups of FRC staff (only); and two groups of school staff (only). Each FRC site director and their staff recruited focus group participants and gave them onsite child care, if needed, and a snack or meal depending on the time of day. We conducted six interviews with current school principals, one with a past school principal and six with FRC site

directors. A total of 76 family members (parents and primary caregivers) and 70 FRC and school staff and community service providers participated in these focus groups. We conducted interviews and focus groups between January and March 2009. Appendix M includes the schedule of site visits and the number of family members and staff who participated in focus groups across sites and Appendix N contains the completed site visit brief reports for each of the five sites.

Results

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: FAMILY FOCUS GROUP SURVEYS

Demographic Information

A total of 72 family members participating in the focus groups, or 95 percent of focus group participants, completed a brief survey. We asked respondents to provide information about their race/ethnicity, language proficiency, educational level and yearly household income. In addition, we asked their age and how many children and adults currently live in their household. Table 20 shows the number of survey respondents per site and Table 21 displays demographic information for all respondents across sites.

TABLE 20. Number of Survey Respondents across Sites.

Site	n	%
Bridgeport	24	33
Middletown	12	17
Norwich	15	21
Plymouth	14	19
Tolland	7	10
Total	72	100

TABLE 21. Demographic Information for All Survey Respondents (*N*=72)

		n	%
Ethnicity	Black/African American	4	5.6
	Latino/Hispanic	24	33.3
	Caucasian/White	34	47.2
	Asian/Asian American	6	8.3
	Other Race (multi-racial)	1	1.4
	Unknown	3	4.2
Is English the primary language spoken in the home	Yes	41	56.9
	No	29	40.3
	Unknown	2	2.8
Is another language spoken in the home	Yes	33	45.8
	No	33	45.8
	Unknown	6	8.3
What other languages are spoken in the home	Spanish	18	64.3
	Creole	3	10.7
	Chinese	2	7.1
	Polish	2	7.1
	Italian	1	3.6
	Other	2	7.1
Highest educational level	Grade School	8	11.1
	Some High School	8	11.1
	Completed High School/GED	27	37.5
	Bachelors Degree (BA/BS)	19	26.4
	Masters Degree (MA/MSW)	7	9.7
	Unknown	3	4.2
Yearly household income	$20,000 and less	14	19.4
	$20,001 - $30,000	10	13.9
	$30,001 - $40,000	4	5.6
	$40,001 - $50,000	1	1.4
	$50,001 - $60,000	7	9.7
	More than $60,000	23	31.9
	Unknown	13	18.7

Racial/Ethnic Background

Almost half of all respondents were Caucasian/White (47 percent, *n* = 34) and one-third were Latino/Hispanic (33 percent, *n* = 24). Eight percent (*n* = 6) of respondents were Asian/Asian American and 6 percent (*n* = 4) of respondents were Black/African American.

Language Proficiency

Fifty-seven percent (*n* = 41) of respondents indicated that English was the primary language spoken at home; however, almost half of respondents (46 percent, *n* = 33) indicated that another language was also spoken in the home. Spanish was the language most frequently indicated by respondents who reported that they speak a language other than English in their homes, followed by Creole, Chinese and Polish.

Level of Education

More than a third of respondents (33 percent, *n* = 27) indicated that they had completed high school or received a GED, and 26 percent (*n* = 19) indicated they had received a bachelor's degree. Eleven percent (*n* = 8) of respondents indicated they had completed grade school, 11 percent (*n* = 8) indicated they had attended high school and 10 percent (*n* = 7) indicated they had received a master's degree.

Yearly Household Income

Fifty-nine respondents, or 82 percent of focus group participants, provided information about their yearly income; 32 percent (*n* = 23) of such respondents indicated a yearly income of more than $60,000, whereas another one-third (29 percent, *n* = 24) of respondents indicated a yearly income of less than $30,000.

Household Composition

Sixty respondents, or 83 percent of focus group participants, provided information about the number of children living in their household; overall these 60 respondents indicated that 128 children under the age of 18 currently reside in their homes (see Table 22 for information about the number of children in specific age groups).

TABLE 22. Number of Children under the Age of 18 Currently Residing at Home.

Site	Total no. children under 18	Under 2 years	3 – 5 years	6 – 8 years	9 – 11 years	12 – 14 years	15 – 17 years
Bridgeport (*n* = 17)	35	4	8	8	10	3	2
Middletown (*n* = 11)	31	5	7	8	7	3	1
Norwich (*n* = 11)	23	4	10	4	4	1	0
Plymouth (*n* = 14)	29	11	10	4	1	2	1
Tolland (*n* = 7)	10	4	5	1	0	0	0
(*N* = 60)	128	28	40	25	22	9	4

History of FRC Involvement

We also asked participants to indicate how long they had been involved with the particular FRC; 45 respondents, representing 63 percent of all family focus group participants who completed surveys, shared this information and responses ranged from 1 day to 10 years. The average length of involvement

was 38.93 months or 3.24 years.

TABLE 23. Average length of FRC involvement.

Site	Range (months)	Average (months)
Bridgeport (*n* = 11)	1 - 48	22.73
Middletown (*n* = 10)	42 - 120	83.4
Norwich (*n* = 7)	12 - 48	27.43
Plymouth (*n* = 10)	1 - 36	16.89
Tolland (*n* = 7)	30 - 84	46.28

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: COMMENTS FROM INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

We aggregated comments from the interviews and focus groups and synthesized them into major areas that pertained to FRC program development, implementation and impact. The following section includes selected verbatim comments by participants that effectively and succinctly capture the themes expanded upon and echoed by the group as a whole. Only those comments reflective of a consensus of participants are included below; thus not all remarks made by participants are included in the following section.

The qualitative results of the interviews and focus groups are presented in major sections, including:

1. The role the FRC serves in the community, including
    - Strengthening the school-family-community-partnership;
    - Acting as a key resource and referral source; and
    - Functioning as the hub or center of the community.

2. Organization and staffing, including
    - Critical effective leadership;
    - Team cohesion and commitment; and
    - Relationships with school staff.

3. Scope of services provided, including
    - Access to high quality preschool and child care; and
    - Tailoring initiatives to meet school-family-community needs.

4. Effect on children, including
    - Social and educational development;
    - School readiness and kindergarten transition; and
    - Early identification of (and intervention for) children with special needs.

5. Effect on families, including
    - Gaining knowledge and skills;
    - Expanding support networks; and
    - Increasing involvement with schools and teachers.

6. Effect on schools and teachers, including
    - Enhanced capacity to serve children; and
    - More proactive outreach toward diverse families.

7. Funding, including the
    - Capacity to leverage additional funding; and
    - Effect of funding cuts.

The Role the FRC Serves in the Community

FRCs Strengthen the School-Family-Community Partnership

FRCs strengthen the school-family-community partnership and unite families and schools in educating and socializing children. This connection empowers both families and educators; it allows each to feel more capable and confident in their roles as parents and teachers. Focus group participants repeatedly described the FRC as a "bridge" between home and school and a critical way to link parents and teachers. Moreover, this initial connection forms a foundation for continued interaction and involvement throughout children's schooling. School staff acknowledged the ability of FRCs to engage in proactive outreach and gain insight into parents' needs. Likewise, parents' comfort and ease of participation in the FRC seems to promote more trust of educators and, as a result, promotes a greater willingness to become involved with schools. For example, families served by the FRC at Cesar Batalla in Bridgeport, who would be characterized as at-risk by any scale, truly trust the FRC staff; this confidence in FRC staff generates an inherent trust of the school. Accordingly, these families not only feel more connected with the school, but also become more actively involved in the school and their child's education.

> *"FRCs are a critical link and extremely important connection to the learning process."* — School staff member

> *"The difference between schools that have a FRC and don't, they [FRC] are the link between families and schools."* — School staff member

> *"Parents feel more comfortable coming in…I encourage them to register their children for kindergarten and encourage them to get a library card, to use other community resources, and I think these families feel much more comfortable with school systems because of the encouragement and respect. Sometimes parents are afraid because of a language barrier, but they feel comfortable and welcome here."* — FRC staff member

> *"It also helps to instill in the families the value of school…they are connected since the time they were born and this empowers the family."* — FRC staff member

> *"It is important for the children to see the positive interactions between the adults and school staff. The FRC has helped this."* — School staff member

> *"The FRC is a window to the community, helps schools know what is going on with parents."* — School staff member

> *"We are building a relationship for the future that might not otherwise have happened."* — FRC staff member

> *"Partnership and collaboration are the key words, they [the FRC] are in a unique position to see the opportunities for community collaboration, they see the wider community picture and perspective."* — School staff member

"FRC is an advocate for those times when parents hesitate to go meet with a teacher – parents can go to the staff to translate and ease tensions and transitions." — School staff member

FRCs Act as a Key Resource and Referral Source within the School and Community

FRCs act as a resource and referral source for their school-family communities. FRC directors and staff often used the terms "resource" and "liaison" in describing their roles. Although they provide direct information and services, they also provide links to other information, resources and services. Hence the FRC serves to reduce duplication in services while coordinating service providers across the community. This role as resource and liaison is further strengthened by the multiple positions held by the directors and staff; they serve on various community boards and organizations further expanding awareness about family needs, as well as their knowledge about available resources. These interconnections also enhance the efficiency of referrals and strengthen the reach and role of the FRCs within the school and community. Families clearly rely on FRC staff as critical resources; regardless of the issue, parents repeatedly described FRC staff as having the answers or knowing exactly where to go to get the answers to any question they may have. In Middletown, community providers identified the FRC as the expert consultant to the community for any issues related to young children, especially since there are few other Birth to Three resources available in town. Likewise, in Plymouth staff described how they "work for the community" and acknowledged that there were few other early childhood resources or service providers (i.e., hospital or pediatrician) within the town. In Tolland, the FRC serves as the authority for other child care providers; as one FRC staff member noted, "We provide workshops, coordinated trainings, we keep a compilation of local centers and home care providers; we are the resource for information and keeping other day care centers together."

"The FRC keeps you connected with your community. I lived in Norwich for years and I had no idea about things going on in the community — now I receive letters about things going on at the firehouse, library, playground; these are great networking opportunities. Now I receive flyers all the time, there is a real sense of the community for our family." — Parent

"FRC is the touch point for families, not just about education, but also about resources for families within the community." — School staff member

"It starts with some of the home visits, we let parents know about child development and available resources. As a new parent, you don't know what resources are out there and available." — School staff member

"I discovered resources I didn't know existed." — Parent

FRCs Function as the Hub or Center of the Community

FRCs serve as a center or home-base within both the school and larger community. Families and staff have a true affinity for FRCs and focus group participants used terms like "home" and "family" in their descriptions. Many focus group participants commented on the "warm" and "welcoming" atmosphere of FRCs and expressed feeling "safe" and "secure" in their relationships with FRC staff. Families feel a sense of ownership in their FRCs and often view the FRC as a refuge and a place to congregate. A

parent from Plymouth commented, "If it wasn't for this [the FRC], I don't know what I would have done." and parents at several other sites echoed this sentiment. In Middletown, although the North End is characterized by crime and violence, Macdonough school and its FRC are perceived as an oasis. School staff, FRC staff and family members all talked about the warm atmosphere of the school and how much they loved going there. Of note, some parents commented that their own experiences with school were not positive or nurturing, yet they perceived the FRC has as creating an open and welcoming atmosphere. Several interviewees and focus group participants at Farm Hill in Middletown shared the same anecdote about how children would often stop in front of the FRC to wave hello to the site director as they were walking, causing a "domino effect" of students bumping into each other.

> *"This is my second home, the FRC is my extended family, I feel safe, all I need I find here."* — Parent

> *"[The FRC director] and all the staff have been really helpful to me and my family, I am very grateful and thank you. They are like family. I can talk to them like my friend."* — Parent

> *"They [the FRC staff] are emotionally connected to us — it takes a lot to say I'm struggling or pick up and ask but we can."* — Parent

> *"I wish the public school my children went to had a FRC, it provides a sense of security that makes one feel comfortable about coming…I can't see us without a FRC."* — School staff member

> *"FRC staff is like friends that I talk about problems with, they bring help to me. It [the FRC] is like my home."* — Parent

Organization and Staffing

Effective Leadership Is Critical

Families and both school and FRC staff repeatedly acknowledged how the personal qualities of the directors are integral to the success of FRC programming. FRC staff at Plymouth commented how a previous director had very purposefully and skillfully crafted a successful team, while FRC staff at Tolland commented how key personnel changes set a different tone and affected the quality and content of programming. Several FRC directors and school principals described how leadership changes influenced the FRC-school relationship and the level of staff support. FRC directors in Middletown and Bridgeport have been in their positions for 10 and 15 years, respectively, and described how this continuity has influenced the evolution of their FRC programs. After spending multiple days and hours with directors across the five sites, it became exceedingly apparent that site directors view the FRCs as a truly personal endeavor; their dynamic personalities and genuine enthusiasm and commitment for their jobs clearly contributes to the success of their FRCs.

> *"I think we are very fortunate; within a network of administrators, the organization reflects whoever is at the head of it — [the FRC director] has a lot of experience, she brings such caring to this position, she used to*

be a teacher. Making sure you find the right person to head an FRC is critical." — Parent

Team Cohesion and Commitment

The commitment and cohesion of FRC staff also contribute to the success of the FRCs. School and FRC staff members discussed how each FRC staff member has unique individual experience and expertise, yet work together as a team in a truly collaborative, coordinated way. FRC and school staff members were incredibly respectful in describing their feelings toward one another and frequently commented about the level of personal and professional commitment each team member exhibits. As a FRC staff member from Plymouth commented, "We genuinely like what we do and each other." FRC staff acknowledged that such rapport and respect among coworkers was unique and resulted in a high level of collegial trust. Furthermore, such camaraderie allowed staff to feel supported, but not scrutinized, in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. FRC staff members noted that frequent informal interaction and face-to-face time may have contributed to the strength of their working relationship. Parents also repeatedly acknowledged the personal qualities of FRC staff and how their level of compassion and commitment make a difference.

"I love the FRC, parents, and the kids. I did not think I would love my job as much as I do. I make sure I am here every day, I don't want to miss a day." — FRC staff member

"This FRC program is the best program, the best employment I have ever had. I am so proud to work here." — FRC staff member

"Staff is everything. Since we are very low on money, you have to have staff who loves what they're doing….staff has to be willing to go the extra mile and love what they do." — FRC director

"This is the most enjoyable job I have ever had because you really get to impact the kids by being with them. The preschool children are just a joy and the after school kids are like a family." — FRC staff member

"I looked for a team – a group willing to work in a team. Not only work within a team, but accept the fact that we have different strengths." — FRC director

"The staff and teachers are fabulous. They go above and beyond, even helping the kids when they go to kindergarten. They will help them get off the bus and go to their classrooms. They don't have to, but they do it." — Parent

"They [FRC staff] go above and beyond their job description."
— Parent

Relationships with School Staff

Overall, FRC and school staff members have forged strong partnerships and work in a coordinated, collaborative manner. FRC staff members are typically included with school staff for administrative and social events, such as meetings, professional development and holiday celebrations. In Bridgeport, school and FRC staff work hand-in-hand and an adult education teacher from the school provides services exclusively targeted at FRC families. When we asked the Plymouth FRC staff what they would do with additional funding, they commented that they would ask the principal which program she wanted to expand. Given how limited current funding is, it was rather striking that the FRC staff considered the needs of the principal and school as a top priority. In turn, the principal at Plymouth was extremely well informed about the FRC and complementary about the staff and their capabilities. She acknowledged that FRC staff members are invested in the "school as a whole" and noted that many of the staff are parents of students, as well.

> *"The FRC staff is part of us, they are our colleagues."* — School staff member

> *"The support that they give us, if I need anything, they are right there — I value that as an administrator. Childcare is one example, we would not be able to run a lot of our programs without them. It also helps us get a feel for the kids that are coming in — their feedback to the kindergarten teachers is valuable."* — School principal

Sites varied, however, in terms of the engagement of the school principal and staff. At some sites, for example, principals were less aware of what the FRC entailed and subsequently less appreciative of the value and the potential benefits students, families, and staff could gain from participation. Although all principals were supportive and appeared to welcome the presence of an FRC at their school, the working relationship between principal and site director did not always reflect a true collaboration. Quite simply, some principals did not recognize the mutual benefits of such a partnership and, as a result, failed to harness the reach and role of the FRC. Although most principals perceived the advantages of the preschool connection, several were less certain about the role the FRC played with students and teachers at higher grade levels. Staff changes and principal turnover clearly contribute to this; as one FRC director commented, "Most of the principals come in not knowing what the FRC is…Some principals give a lot of direction, another principal may not give enough direction. I end up having to build a new relationship and adjust to the person."

Scope of Services Provided by FRCs

FRCs Provide Children and Families with Access to High Quality Preschool and Child Care

FRCs allow families to gain access to high quality preschool and childcare; parents repeatedly acknowledged that without the FRC their children would not gain the academic or social benefits of preschool participation. Furthermore, many families reported that they would be unable to work without access to FRC programming because they had no affordable alterative option. Across sites, family members commented that there was no other option in their community for such comprehensive, affordable and high-quality preschool and child-care services. Moreover, parents acknowledged that no other single program could provide such continuity of care or coordinated services.

"Many families cannot afford a preschool program other than the FRC – parents would not see their kids as much and kids would not be school ready and ready for kindergarten." — Parent

"For me its convenience, I have to be at work early so I can drive here and drop off at before care and she just has one location, so I don't have to worry about how to coordinate between different locations. The other piece is financial, I have on numerous occasions thought about relocating but I can't afford to go anywhere else – it would double to triple the cost to go somewhere else for lesser quality. We have a great ratio, we know our kids are getting great attention. And the summer program runs the entire day regardless of weather so I don't put my job in jeopardy." — Parent

"The kids who use preschool are ready when they come into classroom, and it's less disruptive and healthier that they don't have to be transported to before- or after-school programs. It's a great social place for children and parents, we share resources, we are here after school and can chat with parents or staff, we can also communicate with FRC staff to discuss issues." — School staff member

"If I had to prioritize, the most advantageous factor is that it's all encompassing. This removes the guilt factor that I have a three-year-old and I am away from her, it removes the fear that she is sitting in front of the T.V. Instead she is learning letters, colors and social skills." — Parent

FRCs Tailor Services And Delivery To Meet School-Family-Community Needs

Although all FRCs fulfill the seven key program components (i.e., quality full day child care and school readiness programs, school age child care, resource and referral services, families in training, adult education, support and training for family day-care providers and positive youth development/ teen pregnancy prevention), they tailor initiatives to meet school-family-community needs. Each FRC has created a unique service-delivery configuration to accommodate the needs of families within their community and their funding sources and mandates. At present, the majority of FRCs have too few resources for too many families; thus they use a varying range of services that are flexible and reflect the needs of the community. The FRC at Cesar Batalla School in Bridgeport, for example, provides supplementary services needed by a population of families that have recently immigrated to the U.S. (in addition to the seven core FRC components). Specifically, this FRC provides two levels of ESL classes—a class for beginners and then a more conversational class for advanced English learners to assist parents in their own language and literacy development. In Norwich, many working families rely on the preschool and day care programs to maintain employment and avoid welfare placement; accordingly, the programs start very early (i.e., 6:30 am) so that parents can drop off children on their way to work.

An integral part of the Middletown FRC at Macdonough school is to distribute food on Friday afternoons to families who would not otherwise have enough food to sustain them through the weekend. Notably, FRC staff members try to anticipate potential snow days and distribute food on

Thursdays to ensure that families are not without food. Most of the students in the school come from very poor families and basic services, such as the take-home food program, represent a primary focus since they are vitally needed by families in the surrounding community. It is worth mentioning that the second FRC site in Middletown serves a population that is mostly Caucasian and middle-class and has quite different needs and resources. Families in this community rely on the FRC (and its staff) for guidance and information related to child development and are longstanding and loyal participants in FRC and school programs (many parents in the focus group had been involved for an average of 10 years). Having two sites within this diverse community allows each FRC to further refine and target their program initiatives to meet community needs.

> *"My job is to be very aware of what families might need in the community and trying to find ways to help others."* — FRC director

> *"Year after year, the FRC has the ability to tap into the needs of the community and give them what they need." — School staff member*

> *"We are here to help children, families, and the school — whatever they need." — FRC director*

> *"Whatever your community is, that's what you do." — FRC director*

> *"I don't know what I would do [without the FRC]. They are the ones that help me go to work early in the morning, if I don't have them I would lose my job."* — Parent

> *"Parents continue to flock to the FRC, there is something in the design - people who don't get involved in anything else and who are not part of the system, will go to the FRC. They feel they have someone to listen to them, if they come once they will come again. FRC staff are nurturing, supportive, not scary."* — School staff member

Impact on Children

Social And Educational Development

Educators and families observed improvements in children's social, behavioral and pre-academic skills as a result of their participation in FRC programming. Focus group participants observed children's growing social skills in play groups, emerging language skills in conversations with peers, parents and teachers and an increased comfort and confidence as children navigated the school environment.

> *"Last year my daughter was in a very highly recommended preschool — it ended up being disorganized and we had a bad experience so the local public school recommended the FRC. I was a very wary parent coming into this — my daughter went for a day and we spent some time there, and that was it. The big blessing is that the teachers are so loving and caring — they care for the children as though they are their own. [My daughter's] socialization skills*

have just gone through the roof, she is a happy-go-lucky child, she has just blossomed and grown. I am a full time nursing student, I needed somewhere I could feel that she was safe and learning. I can't say enough about the great things here." — Parent

"I love the teaching style, FRC uses all the learning styles — visual, tactile — they use all those different things in the learning process, so it helps [children] use letters or numbers if musical learner, do visual, do puppets with letters, and that has been something really huge for my daughter, we do road signs and find them in different signs, she will say uh the umbrella, she really connects that and takes that home with her. They use everything to bring it all together and now she is spelling and sounding out everything she uses. And she is so ready for kindergarten and I love that about FRCs." — Parent

"My child was scared to come to school, the FRC helped motivate my child to come to school, my child is now happy at school" — Parent (of note, both the mother and the FRC translator cried together as they told this story)

Parents and teachers also commented that early experiences in playgroups and preschool increased children's exposure to peers from diverse backgrounds and cultures and further improved their social skills and ability to relate to children perceived as different from them.

"When I was growing up there was no diversity here and I wondered am I the only one? My children are coming home with crafts and exposure, awareness to different countries — what they eat at home or what they do? My children don't have the same feeling of being alone, but they have a knowledge base for asking these questions. Now you can openly state and explain." — Parent

"This becomes their normal rather than the abnormal. This diverse representation becomes our normal. And kids bring that home to their parents and that can make their parents think and change. We change as a result of our children." — Parent

"The FRC has allowed me to have great child care and [my children] really are school ready and experiencing these amazing things. My husband is African and he thinks what creates prejudice and racism is when you are not educated. It is really important, we want our children to be educated—there is nothing scary and we can all love one another. That would be such a disadvantage not to experience diversity and not to be school ready." — Parent

School Readiness And Transition To Kindergarten

Educators and families reported that participating in FRC programs enhances children's school readiness and minimizes and/or eliminates transition-related issues. Of note, focus group participants felt that participation in FRC programming minimizes transition and adjustment issues for both children and

parents, as well as fosters more positive attitudes toward school and staff. Children and families with a history of FRC involvement expressed positive attitudes toward school and teachers and felt more comfortable and secure in negotiating the school and teachers. Many parents and teachers described children as "more confident" upon school entry due to the history of participation and increased familiarity with the school setting and staff. Parents and school staff expressed the belief that children experienced a sense of ownership and belonging regarding school during their preschool participation. Moreover, parents frequently commented about their (and their children's) extensive peer networks from ongoing participation in FRC programs and services across multiple years.

> *"This was their school even before they came to kindergarten."* — Parent

> *"It sets that tone, it's priceless. When we drive past, my son says 'That's my school' — at age 2!"* — Parent

> *"My kids have the feeling that this is my school—when they are 3 years old, it's this is my school, same at 7 years old. They are able to come in and have that ownership of the school right away."* — Parent

> *"One benefit is the exposure within the school on all levels. This includes exposure to administrators, teachers, other school staff and other kids. There is great exposure for the younger children who are dipping their big toe into the public school system. It gives these children a sense of belonging."* — School staff member

> *"It's a local program — these are the public schools our children will be attending — children get to know the school they will attend and see the lunchroom, the gym, interact with kindergarten children, classroom and teacher. It helps them to adjust better because nothing is changing; it's such a smooth transition right into kindergarten and moving on."* — Parent

Parents and school staff acknowledged that early exposure to school routines, settings, and curriculum prepares children for kindergarten and allows them to "hit the ground running." School staff commented that they can easily detect which kindergarten students have had FRC preschool experience.

> *"The kindergarten teachers can tell who has been through our preschool programs and in our FRCs because those children and those families know how to manipulate the system and get through ins and outs, they've been in the building and they are not intimidated, they are continually coming into the building so by the time they hit school age they're in, they've met the nurse, they've dealt with the school principal and they realize the staff are just here to help their child."* — School staff member.

> *"When the child hits the door for kindergarten, the kids and the parents are prepared because of the FRC."* — School principal

"Early readiness is important—on the continuum, ones that have attended the FRC are more mature and confident. I don't have data, but this is what I have seen from my experience with the children." — School staff member

"We use the same curriculum as Norwich public schools—so we are readying them even more for kindergarten—there is that collaboration too. Also family, once they come in they are part of that schools family." — School staff member

Early Identification Of, And Intervention For, Children With Special Needs

Parents, teachers and FRC staff members also talked about how participation in FRC programming has led to the early identification of various developmental delays and learning problems. FRC and school staff members also described how FRCs include children who are English language learners and provide them with additional early intervention regarding language and literacy. Educators and FRC staff expressed the belief that this early identification and intervention may prevent children from being tracked into special education once they enter kindergarten and may mediate later learning difficulties. A parent from Plymouth described how staff from the FRC helped identify her child as having special needs and advocated for testing and intervention services. This mother commented that there was "no where else I could have gone, no where else was able to include my child in programming." The Plymouth FRC includes preschool and day care slots for children with special needs; their programs are completely linked with the Plymouth Board of Education and school-staff specialists are available to work in the classroom with children attending FRC programs.

Tolland also includes children with special needs in their programming efforts; the Tolland school system provides special education paraprofessionals who are available during the day and afternoon and can work one-on-one with children. Of note, the FRC absorbs most of the cost of these paraprofessionals. The Tolland FRC also involves other school specialty staff, such as speech and language teachers and occupational and physical therapists, to observe children and demonstrate strategies for parents and classroom teachers. Having on-site specialists also helps parents since they do not have to travel between schools or sites to receive services.

"In play and learn groups we could see differences—at home we couldn't see, but in playgroups, we could see differences [parent became tearful as talking]. FRC was able to point us in the right direction and all these people started coming out of the woodwork to help us." — Parent

"It is a real advantage to children with special needs; they can participate in all these activities because they naturally do accommodations, it's the same with before and after school care. It has opened up a whole new world for these children, they can make friendships and it gets the parents connected to each other so they have a network." — School staff member

"FRC staff members observe children in groups and offer advice to parents about Birth to Three. It didn't enter my mind to contact services." — Parent

"With my second son, he had a potential speech delay and they [FRC] really encouraged us to access Birth to Three. I knew it was out there, but [FRC director and staff] really encouraged me to call them." — Parent

Impact on Families

Gain Knowledge And Skills

Families repeatedly discussed how they had gained knowledge about child development, parenting skills and information about school and community resources. In addition to learning about developmental norms and observing children in groups with their peers, parents also benefit from participation in programs specifically geared to enhance targeted skills such as literacy and language development (i.e., Raising Readers). Yet, parents appear to gain more than just skills related to child-development. In Bridgeport, for example, many families discussed how they had learned English and received skills that helped them obtain employment and health care. Together these broadening skills sets help to empower parents and enhance their ability to support the healthy growth and development of their children and successfully advocate for their families.

"Parents come and can get whatever information they need; it [the FRC] provides parents with a place to learn the norms of preschool development." — School staff member

"I became a stronger parent for just being part of the FRC." — Parent

"This has made a difference in my life, too…it has given me confidence." — Parent

"I think our parents are better informed. We hold our parents to a different set of standards; this is where we expect your child to be, this is what you can do at home. Our parents are better prepared and more informed than a parent who just drops off their kid or puts a child on bus." — FRC staff member

"When you look at [our town], people are more educated, with middle to higher income, but we're just as child-dumb as any community and all those insecurities go along with the territory so those [home visits] were critical visits for our family and that connection to services was key." — Parent

Expand Families' Support Network

Parents also benefit from the network of support FRCs provide; particularly the camaraderie of other parents and the collaboration with FRC staff. In Bridgeport, parents often walk to school with their children and then remain at FRC to have coffee and talk with other parents. FRCs provide a safe and secure place for parents to congregate, socialize and network. This network appears essential for parents who are new to a community (and likely to feel isolated) and especially helpful for first-time parents and parents experiencing challenges (whether personal or professional). Parents of children with special needs also commented on the helpfulness of these connections to other families. Moreover, parents described continuous, long-lasting friendships; many parents cited friendships they forged

during initial playgroups and described how they continue to rely on this network of friends as their children progress through childhood phases. In Middletown, parents commented that both they and their children maintained friendships with peers from the initial playgroups they attended and credited the FRC with helping them acclimate to the community after moving there. Notably, this network also serves as a vehicle for introducing the FRC to new families; parents most often indicated that a neighbor, friend or parent of one of their children's peers referred them to the FRC.

Parents also reported being very comfortable talking with FRC staff about any issue—even those issues that were not school or child related. Many parents commented that FRC staff members were always there to help with any thing, in any way.

> *"Parents meet other parents that speak the same language, bonds that have been lasting for years and those parents met via FRC."* — School staff member.

> *"One thing every parent needs is someone to talk to about resources, food, toys. Parents are under stress and sometimes they just need someone to talk to, it helps them get through the everyday."* — FRC staff member

> *"The FRC has done more for me than [for] my kids, [helped me] professionally and made friends."* — Parent

> *"They keep coming and bringing friends it's the way we evaluate how well we are doing."* — FRC director

> *"We start when they are so little and now we know the families, we can trust families because we have been with everyone so long. It's very welcoming, the FRC staff watched my baby take her first steps."* — Parent

> *"I've done networking with other programs and they end due to holidays or the school year. Here we see the same people, the mothers get to be together while the children are together and playing. Parents talk about what stage they are in and what they need. We talk about other programs you know about and other resources."* — Parent

> *"My wife didn't know anyone and had no way to meet people, so she immediately got involved with daytime play groups. The playgroups addressed two needs; it gives kids the opportunity to interact with other kids, so it was for the kids, but in a selfish way it was also for my wife to meet and interact with other parents and establish a network of friends because she was very isolated out here."* — Parent

Increase Communication And Involvement With Schools And Teachers

At every site, parents, teachers and FRC staff attributed an increase in family involvement to FRC participation; focus group participants repeatedly commented on the constant communication between

FRC staff and families. Parents also acknowledged that this involvement empowered them to negotiate and advocate for their children (via asking questions, serving on governing boards or volunteering). This involvement also led to a greater exposure to school staff and allowed parents to become more familiar with administrators, building layout and what and when services were offered.

> *"Families are more involved with education and the school, they are here more often and more positive about school."* — School staff member

> *"Open communication between home and school. We empower parents, share resources; the classroom is very welcoming and it's a nice transition into the school system. Parents are safe, children are safe and they are empowered."* — FRC staff member

> *"Kids see that mom and dad value education; the presence of parents and that connection—parents as children's first teachers—children see that continuity and it reinforces learning at home and school."* — School staff member

> *"We know how the system in the school works, we know how to solve problems now."* — Parent

> *"Parents feel they have a voice because they are comfortable, FRC staff coaches parents to advocate for their child's education."* — School staff member

> *"Parents are taught to be part of their children's future at a very young age. The parents remain more involved as children continue through the school years. Parents are guided to reinforce homework and work at home with their children during after school hours."* — FRC staff member

> *"In past day care, they sent reports and sometimes would not communicate because of shift changes. With the FRC we get daily reports and the teacher will tell you if your child acts out in circle time, how they do at red light, green light, and if they are making good choices. It's awesome how they are with [my daughter]."* — Parent

> *"I went to private school for junior and high school…I was a strong proponent for private school…..my involvement with the FRC has changed my opinion about what the public schools have to offer—staff resources, caliber of teachers—I'm very confident about sending my child to school here."* — Parent

Impact on Schools and Teachers

Enhanced Capacity To Serve Children

FRCs enhance the capacity of schools and teachers to serve children by increasing families' level of comfort and trust, improving home-school communication, and promoting family involvement. Teachers and parents repeatedly commented on their level of familiarity with each other, as well as school staff and

facilities; this history of interaction reduced barriers to communication and involvement and allowed parents and teachers to discuss and address children's strengths and weaknesses with ease. Moreover, the continuity between preschool and kindergarten strengthened the capacity of both teachers and schools to address the educational and social needs of incoming children and their families. Again and again, kindergarten teachers acknowledged that the information they gained about incoming students and their families was particularly helpful in planning curriculum. Across sites, teachers discussed how parents are often just as nervous about early school experiences (particularly the transition to kindergarten) as their children. Having a preschool within an elementary school provides ongoing opportunities for parents and teachers to meet and talk and for teachers to get to know children. Of note, both teachers and parents viewed these recurring informal exchanges as critical in establishing an alliance and acknowledged there was no other avenue for this kind of interaction.

> *"School success equals connecting and tapping into the needs of the parents, FRCs focus on the parents first, by bringing them in."* — School staff member

> *"It's really important to be in the school, we can go directly to a teacher if a child is having difficulties, we work in the same school so we know the children, the parents, and the teachers. It's better for their education and well-being."* — FRC staff member

> *"Sometimes here, the FRC pushes the school to be better. Our kids are already prepared for kindergarten so you [school and teachers] have to be prepared to meet that challenge. So the teachers have to think what am I going to teach her…what kind of curriculum should follow this? We see a huge difference and speaking to the teachers they see a difference in kids who have been home and those who have gone to a program such as FRC. Other kids have trouble adjusting and may not be ready."* — FRC staff member

> *"We are blessed to have them [the FRC] here."* — School staff member

> *"Feeling comfortable and having history, you can talk to them [parents], you can say it without being intimidating and let them know we are here to help you. Having the services located in the school there is already a foot in the door."* — School staff member

One parent who participated in a family focus group also happened to be a principal in a neighboring community; this parent acknowledged that the presence of the FRC within the school cultivated a sense of community even before children are officially enrolled in the school and made partnering with families a much easier task.

> *"Parents whose children aren't even in the school yet are supportive of the school…I think what the FRC can do is give some of that small town feel where you get to know everyone…Another benefit is the continuity of pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten; because preschool is part of community the communication and collaboration already exists and the transition is a lot*

easier. At the school I am principal of it has to be a much greater effort on our part—we have to go out to the preschools in the community. I would love to bring the FRC model to our school…I think the benefits are tremendous…all the research shows that student success in school is largely contingent on what happens before they even step in…I would love to have one, if you want, send one over." — Parent

More Proactive Outreach Toward Diverse Families

Parents and teachers expressed the belief that the presence of an FRC within a school enables teachers and other staff to be more proactive and accommodating in their outreach to diverse students and their families. FRC and school staff repeatedly talked about how the FRC fostered a "warm" and "welcoming" climate and seemed to invite and encourage families from diverse racial, ethnic, economic and educational backgrounds. Moreover, several FRC staff discussed how they had worked to educate families about social and educational norms in this country and helped parents to navigate social, educational, and occupational issues. During the focus group in Bridgeport (an especially diverse urban community) a parent recounted how initially she was residing here in the United States illegally and subsequently was not compensated for a job she had. A friend of this parent referred her to the FRC because "they would know what to do." Staff members at the FRC connected this parent with an attorney and she was subsequently paid for her work; currently she takes two buses everyday to attend the FRC.

"School is a much more opening and welcoming place. Other schools have a completely different attitude. There is a much more welcoming atmosphere when an FRC is in the building." — School staff member

"People who wouldn't meet in other circumstances talk, learn together and make friends—stereotypes are broken down." — School staff member

"FRCs work really hard to make the families feel welcome, we personally greet them everyday and encourage them to stay and play. It's fun to see when the kids recognize other families. We work hard to communicate every day so parents feel comfortable. In X's class there are lots of language issues and parents who don't speak English, so we work hard to be sensitive to those issues and make them comfortable." — FRC staff member

"Helping people who come from another country where there is a feeling that school and families are separate—and families don't interfere—we change their viewpoint to realize we cannot do our job without a parent's help." — School staff member

"We reach the hard to reach by having them be comfortable and talking to them when there isn't a problem." — School staff member

Funding

Capacity To Leverage Additional Funding

FRC directors are very adept capitalizing on existing resources and leveraging funding to increase their capacity to deliver services. In Bridgeport, for example, the public school system provides direct supplementary funding to enable the director to receive a full time salary. In Plymouth, school-readiness funds and in-kind contributions from the school system were used to obtain additional classrooms for FRC use (without the use of any additional FRC funds). In Middletown, having one FRC director oversee two site coordinators allows for the director to have broad impact within the community while freeing up funding for other programming. Finally, FRC and school staff members often collaborate to obtain supplementary funds for additional programs; in Middletown FRC staff and kindergarten teachers submitted a grant for a creative movement program called Brain Gym. As one Middletown school staff member noted, "The FRC went after the grant—we never could have done it without them, funding-wise or staffing-wise. Their involvement in program was critical for success."

Impact Of Funding Cuts

Parents and staff lamented the loss of key programs and staff due to recent budget restraints; several FRC directors and principals commented that the FRC budget has not kept pace with increases in operating costs or families' cost of living. Moreover, at every site staff acknowledged the growing needs of children and families due to the economic recession and the corresponding decline in available community resources. Across sites, directors listed programs that they had to eliminate due to lack of adequate funding, such as field trips, summer programs, and after-school programs, and identified the need for additional programs based on observed community needs, such as workshops for teenage parents, adult literacy programs and job-training seminars. Furthermore, directors commented that the FRCs are at "maximum capacity" and described how they do everything possible to prevent turning families away. Several FRCs have waiting lists for preschool or child care services, however, and would like to expand programming to accommodate families. When asked about what they would use additional funding for, staff expressed the desire to implement "more of everything" including more preschool programming, more workshops for families, more field trips and enrichment activities for children, more summer programs to enhance the continuity between school years and expanded programming for school age children. Families, staff and community providers commented that the resources and services provided by FRCs are truly invaluable and would not otherwise be available to families within these communities.

When evaluation team members asked families about the impact of FRC funding loss on children, families and the school-community, the word "devastating" was used at every site.

Parents often stated "I would cry" (which usually resulted in echoes of "Me too"), and would repeatedly come to tears when talking about the potential loss of the FRC and the impact on their family and the community.

> *"What would happen if we didn't have an FRC — they [children] have to be taken care of if parents work — we don't know where and what kind of quality, how they would be cared for if we weren't here. Other than coming in without any preschool experience, I think we*

would see a lot more behavioral issues and kids and parents unable to negotiate a classroom. I think it would start an avalanche of problems." — School staff member

"With FRCs we give a promise to the community. If we don't have this, it will be 10 steps backwards, people will retreat, we will go back on our promise that 'we are here for you.'" — School staff member

"I would feel that the door would be closing." — Parent

"It would be very sad to lose an FRC, we find family here and would be basically lost without any support system." — Parent

"I think this community would be devastated without an FRC." — FRC staff member

"It would really be devastating since FRC plays such a large role in this community…You would lose the whole sense of empowerment and the whole way the FRC helps parents become more full partners in their child's life. If they lose the connection of where to find help, it would be taking away a safety net for families." — School staff member

"Without an FRC I would probably be swirling individually, but the whole community, neighbors said go to the FRC you'll be fine. The whole community would be swirling without it, whatever you are going through they are able to assist, often you don't know where to start and this is a central point to start." — Parent

"Please keep this program, not for us, but for a new generation is coming and we really need this program as parents." — Parent

"Don't let them drop funding—do whatever it takes. Let us know what we can do because to see it go would be devastating to all of us." — School staff member

Summary

FRCs are aptly named and truly serve as the core of the school-community; they provide a network of resources and supports that most communities could not otherwise create or sustain. In addition to providing affordable, high-quality preschool and child care programs, they provide entry into the school system and establish the foundation for positive and productive school-family partnerships. Moreover, FRCs connect families with each other and to resources throughout the community. As the principal of a Plymouth school with an FRC noted, "We don't have the capacity to do that through any other avenue besides the FRC." Regardless of race, income, or education level, families look to FRC staff for guidance on children's educational, social and physical development. As one Tolland parent put it, "We might have all kinds of degrees, but when it comes to raising children we are all 'child dumb.'"

Yet, each FRC reflects the unique characteristics of their school-community and has subsequently tailored the programs and initiatives they offer to meet the needs of the children and families they serve. Both FRC and school staff acknowledged that learning about and responding to the needs of children and their families in the community are primary goals. Accordingly, FRC directors and staff prioritize which of the seven key program components (i.e., quality full day child care and school readiness programs, school age child care, resource and referral services, families in training, adult education, support and training for family day-care providers and positive youth development/teen pregnancy prevention) to focus on based on perceived needs and subsequently develop their own unique service-delivery configuration. Furthermore, FRCs supplement these core components with services or programs that address community characteristics, such as the provision of varying levels of English as a second language classes in Bridgeport or ensuring food delivery for disadvantaged families in Middletown. Notably, the two FRC sites in Middletown serve communities with very different characteristics and resources; having multiple sites within one larger community allows for even more refined targeting of programs and initiatives. Differences in the level of support and collaboration with schools and local education boards, as well as funding mandates, also influence how and which programs FRCs implement. Additional funding from the local board of education provides Bridgeport with direct funding for FRC staff salaries, while the Plymouth FRC used supplementary funds to obtain additional classrooms at another school site.

FRC directors and staff also have extensive knowledge regarding other available community resources from their participation in various local organizations and advisory boards, helping them ascertain whether their FRC should provide direct services or strengthen collaborative efforts with other agencies (and thereby reduce duplication of services). FRCs are central to local early education and childcare networks and are recognized by community service providers as both a resource and referral source. FRC staff members understand that fostering children's development extends beyond simply providing preschool programming. FRCs empower families by strengthening their ability to support the healthy growth and development of their children. As a Middletown FRC staff member commented, "It's a shame Connecticut has not invested in an FRC in every school. It's not just urban needy families that need FRC; if we believe in a whole continuum of education, it's a lifetime investment."

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APPENDICES

Connecticut Family Resource Centers

The Connecticut Family Resource Center concept promotes comprehensive, integrated, community-based systems of family support and child development services. Family Resource Centers provide access, within a community, to a broad continuum of early childhood and family support services, which foster the optimal development of children and families. The philosophical foundation is designed to provide the best possible start for children and families of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups living in the communities in which Family Resource Centers are located. Please contact the Connecticut State Department of Education's website for more information or contact Louis Tallarita at (860) 807-2058.

Service Components:

Quality Full-Day Child Care and School Readiness Programs

Quality child care and school readiness programs are offered year-round for children ages three to five. This service operates on a sliding fee scale.

School-Age Child Care

Child care programs are offered for children up to the age of 12 during before and after school hours. Full time care is also available school vacations and summer.

Resource and Referral Services Family Resource Centers act as the primary community resource and referral service for issues concerning the well-being of families.

Families in Training

This program component provides support services to expectant parents and parents of children under the age of 3 with information on their child's language, cognitive, social and motor development, as well as home visits and group meetings.

Adult Education A range of opportunities are offered to parents including training and adult education classes, as well as support and educational services.

Support and Training for Family Day-Care Providers FRC's offer training and technical assistance to providers in the community and serve as an information and referral system for child care needs.

Teen Pregnancy Prevention (Positive Youth Development)

Family Resource Centers provide teen pregnancy prevention programs emphasizing responsible decision-making and communication skills to adolescents. Aimed at children in grades 4 through 6, this component offers a range of recreational and educational opportunities.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS - LEGISLATIVE HISTORY
9660 of document(s) retrieved

Topic:
DAY CARE; FAMILIES (GENERAL); LEGISLATION;
Location:
FAMILIES;
Scope:
Connecticut laws/regulations;

OLR RESEARCH REPORT

September 16, 1999 99-R-0969

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS - LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

By: Judith S. Lohman, Chief Analyst

You asked for a summary of the original law establishing the family resource centers and a summary of subsequent changes in that law.

SUMMARY

The General Assembly established the family resource centers as a demonstration program in 1988 and spelled out most of the required services at that time. Centers were required to provide day care and day care referrals, support for parents, training for day care providers, and teen pregnancy prevention. The original centers had to be located in public schools. Three centers were established to start.

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) was in charge of the program but had to work in conjunction with the State Department of Education (SDE). Center administrators had to meet specific qualifications that included both experience and academic training in early childhood education or child development.

The centers were given the additional duty to provide family training to expectant parents and parents of young children in 1989. The centers were made permanent in 1992. At that time, centers were allowed to be

associated with, as well as located in, public schools and qualifications for center administrators were broadened. In 1993, the program was shifted to SDE from DHR. And in 1997, the centers were incorporated into the state's school readiness program.

The family resource center law was not changed in the 1998 or 1999 legislative sessions.

1988

Family resource centers were established as a pilot demonstration program in 1988. PA 88-331 required DHR, in conjunction with the SDE, to establish demonstration centers in three public schools: one urban, one suburban, and one rural. Centers had to serve those receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children and others who needed services. They were required to charge parents for day care services according to a sliding scale.

The act required the centers to provide:

1. all-day child care for children aged three to five,

2. before- and after-school care (and all-day care on holidays and during school vacations) for children up to age 12,

3. support services for parents of all infants,

4. support and educational services for parents,

5. day care training and referral services, and

6. teenage pregnancy prevention services that emphasized responsible decision making and communication skills.

Support services for parents of infants had to include assessments of their needs; referral to other programs; and, if necessary, education in parental skills. Support and educational services could be given only to parents interested in a high school equivalency diploma whose children were receiving childcare from the center.

The act allowed parents and their pre-school children to attend classes on parental and child learning skills together to promote the mutual pursuit of education and enhance parent-child interaction. Day care training and technical assistance had to be provided to family day care providers. Centers were required to act as day care information and

referral services and to coordinate their activities with other day care providers in their communities.

The act allowed the DHR commissioner to give grants to municipalities, boards of education, and child care providers to administer the centers. The commissioner had to determine how to choose the programs to receive grants. The centers had to employ program administrators with at least two years' experience in childcare or early childhood education and master's degrees in child development or early childhood education.

The act took effect July 1, 1988.

1989

PA 89-55 expanded the scope of the centers' services to include family training to expectant parents and first-time parents of children under age three. The training had to include

1. information and advice on the development of language, cognitive, social, and motor skills;

2. routine visits to each family's home;

3. group meetings at the center for parents of young children in the neighborhood; and

4. a reference center for parents whose children needed special help or services.

The centers had to recruit parents and conduct the new program within available appropriations. PA 89-55 took effect October 1, 1989.

1990

PA 90-128 allowed the DHR commissioner to accept gifts or grants for establishing or expanding a family resource center and to hold and use them for that purpose. It subjected the gifts to the existing law requiring approval from the governor and the attorney general.

The act also required the centers to establish families-in-training programs as described in PA 89-55, within available appropriations. It took effect October 1, 1990.

1992

PA 92-49 made the centers permanent and allowed all parents of children under three, instead of just expectant and first-time parents, to participate in their families-in-training programs.

The 1992 act also eliminated the requirement that the centers be located in public schools, instead allowing them also to be associated with public schools. Finally, the act liberalized qualifications for center administrators, allowing them to have at least two years' experience in public administration and a master's degree in a field related to early childhood education or child development. The 1992 changes took effect October 1, 1992.

1993

PA 93-353 shifted the primary responsibility for the centers from DHR to SDE, requiring the latter to coordinate with the former rather than vice versa. Another act (PA 93-262) incorporated DHR into the newly created Department of Social Services (DSS). These changes took effect July 1, 1993.

1997

The law establishing a state school readiness program (PA 97-259) required SDE, within available appropriations and with representatives from the centers, to develop guidelines for center programs that included quality and design standards and identified short- and long-term results for participating families. SDE had to provide copies of the standards to each center, which was to use them to develop a yearlong improvement plan that included goals for measuring improvement. Each center had to submit its plan to SDE, which must use it to monitor the center's progress. Every three years, the department must contract for a longitudinal study of the centers.

The 1997 act gave centers that existed on July 1, 1997 preference for SDE or DSS school readiness grants and for Connecticut Higher Education Finance Authority and DSS loans and DSS loan guarantees. The act (1) requires resource centers to provide school readiness programs, in addition to day care, for children over age two who are not enrolled in school and (2) specifies that the sliding fee scale they must use for childcare services is to be developed in consultation with DSS.

These changes took effect on July 1, 1997.

JSL: lc

Appendix C: Stakeholders Group

STAKEHOLDERS GROUP August 20, 2008	
GROUP REPRESENTED	INDIVIDUAL
FRC/Adult Education	Cathy Batista (Meriden)
FRC/Early Childhood	Linda Fosco (Killingly)
FRC/School Aged CC	Sonia Hall (Hartford-MLK)
FRC Leadership	Midge Pych, FRC Director & Jeanne McCarrol, Principal (East Windsor)
Parents As Teachers	Pam Langer (CONNPAT)
IDEA Part C	Eileen McMurrer (CT Birth to 3)
Evaluation Stakeholder	David Bechtel (Holt, Wexler & Farnam)
CSDE Stakeholder	Judy Carson (Parent & Even Start Consultant)
CSDE Stakeholder	Jacqueline Kelleher (SPED Consultant)
CSDE Stakeholder	Greg Vassar (Bureau Chief/Information Tech)
Early Childhood Cabinet	Joy Staples (Office of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet)
Graustein Foundation	Carmen Siberon (Graustein)
Former Director of Research for the CT Majority Office	CeeCee Woods

Appendix D: FRC Site Survey

Family Resource Center Site Survey
Fall 2008

This survey is part of the evaluation of Connecticut Family Resource Center (FRC) Programs conducted by The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University for the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDOE). To be completed by each one of the state-funded FRC sites, this survey represents one aspect of the data gathering process, and is designed to provide information on ways FRCs operate, and on your perceptions of the program. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be analyzed and reported in the aggregate, so that no individual, FRC, or school, will be identified.

As you may be aware, findings from this evaluation are eagerly anticipated. Your perspective and accurate reporting is critical to its success. Please take the time to answer **all** questions.

We have designed the survey in a way that allows you to check boxes and provide very short answers. It moves along very quickly. In fact you can start right now and finish the first section. Save the document, keep it open, and answer a question whenever you have a little time. We hesitate to say how much time it will take; that depends upon information available to you. However, it should not be overly time consuming.

To assist you in completing the survey, we are sending it to you electronically. We are also sending a version that you can print and respond in a hard copy (in PDF format), if this is your preference. Once you complete the survey, please be sure to save the document and retain or print a copy for your files. Email the completed questionnaire to Alina.Yekelchik@Yale.edu **no later than November 5, 2008**. If you completed a hard copy of the survey, please mail it to Alina Yekelchik, School of the 21st Century, Yale University, 310 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

If you have any questions, please leave a message at (203) 432-9944, and we will get back to you with a response in a timely fashion.

Thanks in advance for your participation!

The FRC Evaluation Study Team

DIRECTIONS: The questions in this survey require that you either check one or more boxes or provide short answers. Please make certain to complete the two charts sent in a separate document. Please select only one response per question unless instructed otherwise. If you need to make a correction, please erase the previous response and enter the new response.

1. FRC Name Tel # 2. What is your title?

STAFFING

3. How long have you been a FRC coordinator/director? ☐ Less than one year ☐ Years

4. What is your educational background?

☐ Associate's Degree
☐ CDA
☐ Bachelor's Degree
☐ Other:

5. What are the educational background/certification and additional training certifications held by each staff member or teacher working at the FRC? List and provide details for **ALL** staff members.

Staff Position	Educational Background/Certification	Additional Training (e.g. CPR)

6. Does the FRC use volunteers? ☐Yes ☐ No *If NO, Please skip to Question 7*

6a. If Yes, please indicate how many volunteers you have in each program component per month. There may be some volunteers who work in more than one component. Include them in the number for each component where they work, but count them only once in "Total Volunteers."

Component	Number of Volunteers	Estimated Number of Hours per Month per Volunteer
Preschool Child Care		
School Age Child Care		
Families in Training		
Child Care Provider Training		
Adult Education		
FRC Administration		
FRC Clerical/Bookkeeping		
FRC Social Activity/Food		
Other:		
Other:		
TOTAL VOLUNTEERS:		

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

7. How would you rate the support and services that the FRC receives from the school/district?

- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very Good

8. What real and "In Kind" contributions does the school or district provide to the FRC? Highlight the appropriate type of contribution in Column 2, labeled, "Type of Support." In Column 3 enter a monetar amount if appropriate and if the information is available. If you are unable to calculate a monetary valu please leave Column 3 blank.

1. Support, Service or Funding from School and/or District		2. Type of Support			3. Monetary Value
		None	In-Kind	Real	
a.	Funding	☐	☐	☐	$
b.	Office space	☐	☐	☐	$
c.	Building renovation	☐	☐	☐	$
d.	Classroom space	☐	☐	☐	$
e.	Activity space	☐	☐	☐	$
f.	Utilities	☐	☐	☐	$
g.	Telephone	☐	☐	☐	$
h.	Administrative supplies	☐	☐	☐	$
i.	Classroom/program materials	☐	☐	☐	$
j.	Transportation	☐	☐	☐	$
k.	Snacks/food	☐	☐	☐	$
l.	Promotional expense	☐	☐	☐	$
m.	Professional development for staff and volunteers	☐	☐	☐	$
n.	FICA, Insurance	☐	☐	☐	$
o.	Professional services	☐	☐	☐	$
p.	FRC salaries	☐	☐	☐	$
q.	Supervision (i.e. principal, program director)	☐	☐	☐	$
r.	Teachers (i.e. preschool, summer program)	☐	☐	☐	$
s.	School nurse/health services	☐	☐	☐	$
t.	Special education services	☐	☐	☐	$
u.	Other	☐	☐	☐	$
v.	Other	☐	☐	☐	$
w.	Other	☐	☐	☐	$

8a. What real and "In Kind" contributions do community organizations provide to the FRC? Highlight the appropriate type of contribution in Column 2 "Type of Support." If appropriate, enter a monetary amount in Column 3. If you are unable to calculate a monetary value, please leave Column 3 blank.

1. Support, Service or Funding from Community Organizations		2. Type of Support			3. Monetary Value
		None	In-Kind	Real	
a.	Funding	☐	☐	☐	$
b.	Office space	☐	☐	☐	$
c.	Building renovation	☐	☐	☐	$
d.	Classroom space	☐	☐	☐	$
e.	Activity space	☐	☐	☐	$
f.	Utilities	☐	☐	☐	$
g.	Telephone	☐	☐	☐	$
h.	Administrative supplies	☐	☐	☐	$
i.	Classroom/program materials	☐	☐	☐	$
j.	Transportation	☐	☐	☐	$
k.	Snacks/food	☐	☐	☐	$
l.	Promotional expense	☐	☐	☐	$
m.	Professional development for staff and volunteers	☐	☐	☐	$
n.	FICA, Insurance	☐	☐	☐	$
o.	Professional services	☐	☐	☐	$
p.	FRC salaries	☐	☐	☐	$
q.	Supervision (i.e. principal, program director)	☐	☐	☐	$
r.	Teachers (i.e. preschool, summer program)	☐	☐	☐	$
s.	School nurse/health services	☐	☐	☐	$
t.	Special education services	☐	☐	☐	$
u.	Other	☐	☐	☐	$
v.	Other	☐	☐	☐	$
w.	Other	☐	☐	☐	$

9. How often do members of the FRC staff/administrator communicate with the school(s') staff/administrator?

School Personnel	**No Contact**	**Rarely**	**Monthly**	**Weekly**	**Almost Daily Contact**
Principal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Workers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Guidance Counselors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classroom teachers and Para-professional	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Special Education Services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School Nurse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School Secretary and Other Staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School Custodian	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School Librarian	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Food Services Personnel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Are you **invited** to school staff meetings? ☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Do you **attend** school staff meetings? ☐ Yes ☐ No

12. Are you **invited** to attend professional development held by the school/district? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. Do you **attend** professional development held by the school/district? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13a. If Yes: List the last 3 professional development workshops offered by the school that you attended.
1.
2.
3.

14. Are you or your staff invited to school celebrations such as holidays, end-of-year parties, and baby showers? Or does your staff participate in "cheer fund" type activities?

☐ Yes
☐ Yes, but seldom attends
☐ No

15. Is the principal on your advisory board/committee? ☐ Yes ☐ No

16. Does the Advisory Council meet on a regular basis?

☐ Monthly
☐ Every two months
☐ Quarterly
☐ Other:

17. Which topics are discussed by the Advisory Council? *Check all that apply*

- ☐ Funding
- ☐ School climate
- ☐ Program planning
- ☐ Academic achievement
- ☐ Needs assessment
- ☐ Staffing
- ☐ Program assessment
- ☐ Children and families
- ☐ Program effectiveness
- ☐ School readiness
- ☐ Client satisfaction
- ☐ Enrollment
- ☐ Community collaboration
- ☐ School Events
- ☐ Other:
- ☐ Other:

18. Describe FRC staff involvement in the development and management of the district or school improvement plan? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ No Involvement
- ☐ Attend Meetings
- ☐ Present at School Board Meeting
- ☐ Share Information with Parents
- ☐ Serve on Related Committees (Please list committees on which FRC staff serve)
- ☐ Have Leadership Role on Committees (Please list committees on which FRC staff have a leadership role)
- ☐ Other:

PLANNING

19. What framework, theory, or model guides the work of your FRC, helps you to set priorities, determines what services your FRC delivers, and how these services are implemented? *Check the two most important frameworks that you use.*

- ☐ CT Curriculum and Assessment Framework
- ☐ CT FRC Guidelines
- ☐ Community Needs Assessment
- ☐ Parent Input
- ☐ School Mission or Planning Document
- ☐ Specific Educational Philosophy, Model or Book. Describe:

20. Outside of the FRC, are you (or key staff members) involved in any policy, practice, planning or evaluation initiatives related to early childhood education, school readiness, and family stability?

☐ Yes ☐ No

20a. If Yes, check all that apply.

- ☐ Local
- ☐ State
- ☐ National
- ☐ Other (*please describe)*

20b. In which local planning groups are you and/or FRC staff involved? *Please check all that apply.*

- ☐ School Readiness Council
- ☐ Discovery
- ☐ Discovery/School Readiness (one and the same group)
- ☐ Transition to kindergarten committee/task force
- ☐ Other:
- ☐ Other:

20c. For each initiative or planning group FRC staff are involved in, please specify the person, organization, and role the staff member plays. We are especially interested in any leadership roles the staff might play in setting policies around early childhood education, school readiness and family stability. We recognize that one FRC staff person may participate in several organizations.

FRC Staff Position	Organization/Program	Position in the Organization

21. Enter the exact number of FRC Alliance meetings you attended last year? (September 2007 and June 2008)

21a. Enter the exact number of FRC Alliance meetings your staff members attended last year? (September 2007 and June 2008)

22. Does your FRC have a Strategic Plan? ☐ Yes ☐ No

FUNDING

23. What percent of the FRC budget is spent on each of the core component programs, including the administrative and staffing allocation to that component? *Enter a percentage for each program component offered. Enter 0 if the component is not offered. Enter close approximate percentages if exact numbers are not available.*

Core Component	Percentage of Total Funds
Preschool Child Care	%
School Age Child Care	%
Child Care Providers Training	%
Families in Training	%
Adult Education	%
Positive Youth Development	%
Resource and Referrals	%

24. Explain the funding sources for each of your Core program components and for any subprograms that have a specific funding source. There can be multiple funding sources for a core component or sub-component.

Core Component/ Sub-Program	Primary Funding Source	Amount	Other Funding Source	Amount
Preschool child care		$		$
School age child care		$		$
Child Care Providers Training		$		$
Families in Training		$		$
Adult Education		$		$
Positive Youth Development		$		$
Resource and Referral		$		$
Other:		$		$
Other:		$		$

25. Is your budget adequate to meet program needs and the needs of participant families? ☐ Yes ☐ No
25a. If No, please explain

CORE PROGRAMMING: In addition to the information you will be providing in the attached "FRC Core Program Overview Chart," we have a few questions about core program components.
26. For the year ending June 2008, what was the total number of participants enrolled in sustaining program components? This is the number entered as total Enrollment for 2A on the June 2008 monthly report.

27. For the year ending June 2008, what percent of all participants are enrolled in the following sustained programs?

Core Component	Percent of Participants enrolled in Core Component Programs. (Total can be greater than 100%)
Preschool Child Care	%
School Age Child Care	%
Families in Training	%
Adult Education	%
Child Care Providers Training	%
Positive Youth Development	%
Resource and Referral	%

28. Rank your perception of the importance of major components available to families at your FRC from 1 to 7, with 1 being the most important and 7 the least important. If the FRC does not offer the service, enter 0.

Core Component	Rank Importance
Preschool Child Care	
School Age Child Care	
Families in Training	
Adult Education	
Child Care Providers Training	
Positive Youth Development	
Resource and Referral	

29. What is the total number of referrals made by FRC staff for the year ending June 2008?
30. For the year, how many referrals did you have in each category?

Referral Type	Number of Referrals for Year	Referred to Agency or Individual
Adult Education Services/Training Programs/Higher Learning		
Early Childhood Assessment		
Early Childhood Education		
Social Services		
Health Services		
Mental Health		
Housing/Food/Clothing		
Other:		
Other:		

30a. For Early Childhood Assessment referrals listed above, how many children in each age group were referred for assessment and who were accepted for services?

Age Group	Number of Children Referred for Services	Number of Children Accepted for Services
Birth to 2 years		
2 to 3 years		
3 to 4 years		
4 to 8 years		

31. Do you provide any training to preschool providers? ☐ Yes ☐ No

31a. If yes, please list all training programs offered in 2008. (You may attach a list if you already have one.)

32. Are the children who are enrolled in FRC preschool programs and playgroups assigned a state unique educational identifier (SASID)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

32a. If yes, explain any research you are conducting that tracks the academic or developmental progress of the children.

_____

32b. If No, are they assigned any ID that will facilitate future tracking of an individual student's academic progress?

☐ Yes ☐ No *Please explain why or why not.*

33. How many children with identified developmental delays are included and/or enrolled in playgroups, classrooms or PACT at the FRC?

34. What certifications does your preschool program hold? *Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ NAEYC
- ☐ NEASC
- ☐ AMS

35. Is there a preschool waiting list in your community? ☐ Yes ☐ No

35a. If Yes, approximately how many children are on that list?

36. Do you use the Ages and Stages questionnaire? ☐ Yes ☐ No

36a. If Yes, how often is the questionnaire administered?

- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Biannually
- ☐ Yearly
- ☐ Other:

36b. If Yes, how are the results typically used? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Share information with parents
- ☐ Start referral process
- ☐ Catalyst for further parent education
- ☐ Catalyst for design of FRC workshop
- ☐ Parent Educator research
- ☐ Other:
- ☐ Other:

37. Check the ways in which the FRC supports transition to kindergarten. *Please check all that apply.*

- ☐ Guide parents on registration process
- ☐ Inform parents of district kindergarten transition/orientation events
- ☐ Participate in district kindergarten transition events
- ☐ Guide parents on completing forms
- ☐ Assist with kindergarten screenings
- ☐ Other:

38. How many newsletters does the FRC publish each year for Child Care Providers?

39. Check the ways in which the FRC interacts with or reaches out to Child Care Providers in your community.

- ☐ Share information
- ☐ Offer workshops
- ☐ Provide resources and referrals
- ☐ Include in transition meetings
- ☐ Include in community early childhood meetings
- ☐ Other:
- ☐ Other:

40. Do you provide any other training to staff from other organizations or teams in the community?

☐ Yes ☐ No

40a. If Yes, please provide a list of trainings offered.

41. Are community-based organizations/agencies represented on your advisory council? ☐ Yes ☐ No

42. How many community-based organizations/agencies does the RFC collaborate with?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3 Organizations/Agencies
- ☐ 4-7 Organizations/Agencies
- ☐ More than 7 Organizations/Agencies

43. What is your perception of the impact of the FRC school-age programs on student academic achievement? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ No impact
- ☐ Better school attendance
- ☐ Better grades/GPA
- ☐ Better reading scores
- ☐ Better state proficiency scores
- ☐ Better completion of homework assignments
- ☐ FRC or school has collected data to document improvement
- ☐ Other:
- ☐ Other:

44. Does the FRC provide summer childcare? ☐ Yes ☐ No

44a. If the FRC **does not** provide summer childcare, please indicate the reason why it does not. Check all that apply.

- ☐ No demand for summer school childcare
- ☐ No funding
- ☐ No collaborator
- ☐ No space
- ☐ Other:
- ☐ Other:

45. What, in your opinion, is the most important goal of the FRC?

46. What changes in the FRC, the school, or community have you seen since you have worked here?

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

47. What is your perception of family satisfaction with the overall components the FRC provides?

- ☐ Very Dissatisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat Dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat Satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Very Satisfied

48. Do you collect and use data about family and participant satisfaction with FRC programs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

48a. If No, explain:

49. Do you assess how well your staff adheres to the early childhood curriculum? ☐ Yes ☐ No

49b If yes, please describe how you conduct this assessment.

50. How often do you assess the needs of families in your community?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Biannually
- ☐ Yearly

50a. How do you collect needs assessment data? Please check all that apply and attach copies of any documents or protocols from your most recent needs assessment.

- ☐ Paper survey
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Face-to-face
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Other:

51. To what extent have the FRC programs had an impact on meeting these challenges? *Please select one response that most closely reflects your opinion.*

Problem		Major Impact	Moderate Impact	Minor Impact	No Impact
a.	Student tardiness	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Student absenteeism	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	High student mobility	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Truancy	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Physical conflicts/aggression among students	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Vandalism	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	Student possession of weapons	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	Student disrespect for teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
i	Student apathy.	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Lack of parental involvement	☐	☐	☐	☐
k.	Poverty	☐	☐	☐	☐
l.	Students coming to school unprepared to learn	☐	☐	☐	☐
m	Poor student health	☐	☐	☐	☐
n.	Teacher absenteeism	☐	☐	☐	☐
o.	Large class sizes	☐	☐	☐	☐
p.	Size of school	☐	☐	☐	☐

51 continues . . .
To what extent have the FRC programs had an impact on meeting these challenges? *Please select one response that most closely reflects your opinion.*

Problem		Major Impact	Moderate Impact	Minor Impact	No Impact
q.	Number of ESL students	☐	☐	☐	☐
r.	Family problems at home	☐	☐	☐	☐
s.	Inadequate learning opportunities for children prior to school entry	☐	☐	☐	☐
t.	Child abuse	☐	☐	☐	☐
u.	Substance abuse	☐	☐	☐	☐
v.	Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐

Nutrition and Health

52. Can you tell us something about food and nutrition in your FRC? *Please check one box for each question or statement.*

	No policy	Informal policy (spoken but not written)	Written policy (*not included* in parent handbook)	Written policy (included in parent handbook)
a. Is there a center policy addressing the accommodation of special dietary needs (e.g., food allergies, diabetes)?	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Is there a center policy addressing food safety (e.g., safe food preparation, preventing choking)?	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Is there a center policy setting nutrition standards for food brought from home for **meals and snacks**? (*Do not include food allergy or food safety policies)*	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Is there a center policy setting nutrition standards for food brought from home for **onsite celebrations** including children? (*Do not include food allergy or food safety policies)*	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Is there a center policy addressing the types of food and beverages that staff members consume in front of children?	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Is there a center policy addressing staff use of food as reward for children's behavior (e.g., getting a treat when children are quiet)?	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Is there a center policy addressing physical education and/or physical activity?	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Is there a center policy addressing limits for children's time using computers (including educational games)?	☐	☐	☐	☐

53. Do you receive government funding to provide snacks/meals? ☐ Yes ☐ No

53a. If Yes, which source provides your funding?

54. Is there a health clinic in your school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

54a. If Yes: How would you characterize your relationship with the clinic? *Check all that apply:*

- ☐ No relationship
- ☐ Referrals by FRC staff to clinic (# per year)
- ☐ Referrals from clinic to the FRC (# per year)
- ☐ Regular communication regarding provision of care to ensure that children are being served

54b. Is there a health clinic in another school in the school district? ☐ Yes ☐ No

54c. If yes: How would you characterize your relationship with the clinic at the other school? *Check all that apply.*

- ☐ No relationship
- ☐ Referrals by FRC staff to clinic (# per year)
- ☐ Referrals from clinic to the FRC (# per year)
- ☐ Regular communication regarding provision of care to ensure that children are being served

Family Demographics

55. Does your FRC collect socioeconomic information about families who use the FRC? ☐ Yes ☐ No

55a. If Yes: How and when is the information collected?

56. What percent of the families are:

% African American
% Asian American/Pacific Islander
% Caucasian
% Hispanic
% Native American/Alaskan Native
% Other:

57. What is the primary language spoken in the homes of participant families?

% English
% Spanish
% Other:
% Other:
% Other:

58. How many people on the FRC staff speak a language other than English?

59. What language do they speak? How many speak each language?

Enter Language	Number of People who speak this language

This is the End of this part of the evaluation!! Well Done.

Please save a copy of this document for your records. Email the completed survey by NO LATER than **November 5th** to Alina.Yekelchik@Yale.edu

If you completed a hard copy of the survey, please send a copy to
Alina Yekelchik
The School of the 21st Century
Yale University
310 Prospect Street
New Haven, CT 06511

There are two charts sent in another document. Please complete those and send separately by November 20. They may be sent via email or regular mail. See separate instructions.

Appendix E: Time Allocation Survey

FRC Time Allocation Chart - October 27 - November 2, 2008

FRC Name:

Click on the appropriate worksheet below to designate the week that applies.
This Worksheet Includes: Week 1 October 27 - November 2, 2008

Directions: This Excel file has four worksheets. There are 4 tabs at the bottom of the Excel document. Each tab represents a different week. To see these tabs you may need to minimize the Excel window. Click on a different tab to access a different week. **You only need to complete worksheets for 2 weeks and you may select any 2 weeks.** We need data that gives us a representative picture of the work that you do. Be sure that you are working in the correct worksheet (tab) for the two weeks that you select. Email the completed chart to Alina.Yekelchik@Yale.edu no later than November 25, 2008. If you worked at an activity, indicate the number of hours/minutes that you worked on each activity for each day of the week in 30 minute segments.

Each 30 minutes is represented by the value .5
30 minutes = .5
1 hour = 1.0
1 & 1/2 hours = 1.5
2 hours = 2.0

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Report Preparation							
Grant Writing							
Direct Service							
Teaching							
Meeting Attendance							
Meeting Leadership							
Meeting School Personnel							
Administration							
Community Collaboration							
Early Childhood Advocacy							
Survey Completion							
FRC School Planning							

FRC Time Allocation Chart - November 3- November 9, 2008

FRC Name:

Position:

Click on the appropriate worksheet below to designate the week that applies.
This Worksheet Includes: Week 2 November 3- November 9, 2008

Directions: This Excel file has four worksheets. There are 4 tabs at the bottom of the Excel document. Each tab represents a different week. To see these tabs you may need to minimize the Excel window. Click on a different tab to access a different week. **You only need to complete worksheets for 2 weeks and you may select any 2 weeks.** We need data that gives us a representative picture of the work that you do. Be sure that you are working in the correct worksheet (tab) for the two weeks that you select. Email the completed chart to Alina.Yekelchik@Yale.edu no later than November 25, 2008. If you worked at an activity, indicate the number of hours/minutes that you worked on each activity for each day of the week in 30 minute segments as follows.

Each 30 minutes is represented by the value .5
30 minutes = .5
1 hour = 1.0
1 & 1/2 hours = 1.5
2 hours = 2.0

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Report Preparation							
Grant Writing							
Direct Service							
Teaching							
Meeting Attendance							
Meeting Leadership							
Meeting School Personnel							
Administration							
Community Collaboration							
Early Childhood Advocacy							
Survey Completion							
FRC School Planning							

FRC Time Allocation Chart - November 10 - 16, 2008

FRC Name:

Position:

Click on the appropriate worksheet below to designate the week that applies.
This Worksheet Includes: Week 3 November 10 - 16, 2008

Directions: This Excel file has four worksheets. There are 4 tabs at the bottom of the Excel document. Each tab represents a different week. To see these tabs you may need to minimize the Excel window. Click on a different tab to access a different week. **You only need to complete worksheets for 2 weeks and you may select any 2 weeks.** We need data that gives us a representative picture of the work that you do. Be sure that you are working in the correct worksheet (tab) for the two weeks that you select. Email the completed chart to Alina.Yekelchik@Yale.edu no later than November 25, 2008. If you worked at an activity, indicate the number of hours/minutes that you worked on each activity for each day of the week in 30 minute segments as follows.

Each 30 minutes is represented by the value .5
30 minutes = .5
1 hour = 1.0
1 & 1/2 hours = 1.5
2 hours = 2.0

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Report Preparation							
Grant Writing							
Direct Service							
Teaching							
Meeting Attendance							
Meeting Leadership							
Meeting School Personnel							
Administration							
Community Collaboration							
Early Childhood Advocacy							
Survey Completion							
FRC School Planning							

FRC Time Allocation Chart - November 17 - 23 2008

FRC Name:

Position:

Click on the appropriate worksheet below to designate the week that applies.
This Worksheet Includes: Week 4 November 17 - 23, 2008

Directions: This Excel file has four worksheets. There are 4 tabs at the bottom of the Excel document. Each tab represents a different week. To see these tabs you may need to minimize the Excel window. Click on a different tab to access a different week. **You only need to complete worksheets for 2 weeks and you may select any 2 weeks.** We need data that gives us a representative picture of the work that you do. Be sure that you are working in the correct worksheet (tab) for the two weeks that you select. Email the completed chart to Alina.Yekelchik@Yale.edu no later than November 25, 2008. If you worked at an activity, indicate the number of hours/minutes that you worked on each activity for each day of the week in 30 minute segments as follows.

Each 30 minutes is represented by the value .5
30 minutes = .5
1 hour = 1.0
1 & 1/2 hours = 1.5
2 hours = 2.0

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Report Preparation							
Grant Writing							
Direct Service							
Teaching							
Meeting Attendance							
Meeting Leadership							
Meeting School Personnel							
Administration							
Community Collaboration							
Early Childhood Advocacy							
Survey Completion							
FRC School Planning							

Appendix F: Core Program Overview Chart

Evaluation of the Connecticut Family Resource Centers: Family Resource Center Site Survey: Fall 2008

60. **FRC Core Program Overview Chart:** The data from this chart will provide a quick summary of the Core Component Programs provided by the FRC. In Columns 2, 4 and 5 simply enter an X in the appropriate column to indicate how the FRC provides the service. In Column 3, enter an X if appropriate along with the name(s) of any preschool collaborators. **In Column 9,** for all children's programs enter percent of currently enrolled students who attend at least 75% of the days the program is available and open. For all other columns, enter the specific information if applicable and available. If the FRC does not offer a program, leave that line blank. We do not expect you to have all of this information. Also, there are three questions on the next page. *Mailing instructions are at the end of the chart.*

Core Component or Sub-Component	**2. Direct Service Provided**	**3. Provided by Collaborator Enter name**	**4. Referral with support**	**5. Referral only**	**6. Dates Offered**	**7. Hours Offered**	**8. Current Enrollment**	**9. %High Attendance***	**10. What Curriculum is Used?**	**11. List Expected Outcomes or Performance Indicators**	**12. List Evaluation Methods**
Preschool Child Care											
School Age Child Care											
Summer School											
Families in Training -Playgroups											
Home Visitation											
Parenting Education											
Child Care Providers Training											
Positive Youth Development											
GED/HSCD EDP/ABE/ESL Citizenship/ Other											
Referral Process											

You may submit this chart along with the Time Allocation Chart either via email or on paper via US mail on November 20.

61. Are there any changes you would like to see made to your FRC, or the larger FRC program?

62. What do you like most about your position?

63. In order for us to understand your staff structure, please provide a diagram, table or chart of the organizational structure of your FRC including the titles, and responsibilities, of **ALL** staff members, and an indication of their reporting structure. (*If you have an organizational chart you can attach it to this survey or send it as a separate attachment with the email submission of the survey.)*

To assist you in completing the survey, we sent it to you electronically. However you choose to complete this chart electronically or on paper, please be sure to either save the document and retain or print a copy for your files. Or copy the completed paper chart. **No later than November 20, 2008**. Email the completed charts to Alina.Yekelchik@Yale.edu or mail the charts to Alina Yekelchik, The School of the 21st Century, The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University, 310 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511-2187

If you have a question, please leave a message at 203 432 9944 - one of us will get back to you with a response.

Thank you for a job well done!!!!

The FRC Evaluation Study Team

You may submit this chart along with the Time Allocation Chart either via email or on paper via US mail on November 20.

Evaluation of the Connecticut Family Resource Centers

Family Resource Center Principal Survey
Fall 2008

This survey is part of the evaluation of Connecticut Family Resource Center (FRC) Programs conducted by The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University for the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDOE). To be completed by the principal at each state-funded FRC site, this survey represents one aspect of the data gathering process and is designed to provide information on ways FRCs operate and your perceptions of the program. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be analyzed and reported in the aggregate so that no individual, FRC, or school will be identified.

As you may be aware, findings from this evaluation are eagerly anticipated. Your perspective is critical to its success and the extent that the report accurately reflects the operation and impact of the FRCs. Please take the time to answer **all** questions.

We have attached two versions of the survey. First, a WORD document is attached that can be completed and emailed back to us. To answer questions in this version use either a mouse click or the tab key to move from question to question. The mouse click will enter an 'X' in the selected box. More instructions are provided as part of the survey itself. Second, a PDF version is provided for anyone having difficulty with the WORD document or who wishes to use a printed paper version. The PDF version must be printed and completed by hand. If you use the PDF, please allow sufficient time to mail us your surveys so that we receive them by November 14th.

Email the completed questionnaire to Alina.Yekelchik@Yale.edu **no later than November 14, 2008**. Hard copies may be mailed to Alina Yekelchik, The School of the 21st Century, Yale University, 310 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

If you have a question, please leave a message at (203) 432 9944 - one of us will get back to you with a response.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

The FRC Evaluation Study Team

FRC PRINCIPAL SURVEY

DIRECTIONS: The questions in this survey require that you either check one or more boxes or provide short answers. The mouse click will enter an 'X' in the selected box. Select only one response per question unless instructed otherwise. If you need to make a correction, erase the previous response and enter the new response.

1. Name of School
2. Your Title Telephone
3. How long have you been a principal at this school? years
4.

	Not	Somewhat	Very
a. How familiar are you with the FRC?	☐	☐	☐
b. How involved are you with the FRC?	☐	☐	☐
c. How involved are your teachers with the FRC?	☐	☐	☐

5. What, in your opinion, is the most important goal of the FRC?

6. What changes in the FRC, the school, or community have you seen since you have worked here?

7. To what extent are FRC staff members invited to the following school activities?

Activity	Never	Rarely	Often	Always
a. School events	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Professional development	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. School management team meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Are you a member of the FRC advisory council? ☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Is the FRC written into the school or district's plan? ☐ Yes ☐ No
10. How did you or any school personnel participate in the development of the FRC grant?
    - ☐ No involvement
    - ☐ Attend meetings
    - ☐ Provide support documentation for grant
    - ☐ Serve on grant committees
    - ☐ Help with grant writing
    - ☐ Recruit collaborative partners
    - ☐ Other:

11. How often do you meet with the FRC director?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ At least once a month
- ☐ Every couple of months
- ☐ Only when circumstances require action

12. When you meet with the FRC director, what topics do you discuss? *Please check all that apply.*

- ☐ Funding and budget issues
- ☐ Program planning
- ☐ Needs assessment
- ☐ Staffing
- ☐ Children and families
- ☐ School events
- ☐ Program assessment
- ☐ Program effectiveness
- ☐ Client satisfaction
- ☐ Enrollment
- ☐ Community collaboration
- ☐ School climate
- ☐ School readiness
- ☐ Academic achievement
- ☐ Other:
- ☐ Other:

13. Has the FRC influenced school staff? *Please check the box that reflects your disagreement or agreement with the following statements.*

SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree; A – Agree; SA – Strongly Agree

The FRC Program has led to:	SD	D	A	SA
a. Earlier identification and referral of children needing specialized support	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Better communication among school staff about needs of children	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Improvement in teachers' ability to be sensitive to the needs of families	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Improvement in staff abilities to be sensitive to the needs of families	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Improvement in the overall school environment	☐	☐	☐	☐

13a. In addition to the options presented above, has the FRC influenced other aspects of the school and/or staff? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13b. If Yes, please describe.

14. We are interested in the importance you place on various goals, programs, and activities of the FRC. *Rank the following list of activities from 1 to 7, with 1 being the most important, 2 being the second most important to 7 being the least important. If the FRC does not offer the service, enter 0.*

Component	Rank
Preschool child care	
School-age child care	
Child care provider training	
Families in training	
Adult education	
Positive youth development	
Resource and referral	
Other	

15. What is your perception of the success of each core program component of the FRC? If the FRC in your school does not include one of the components, please indicate N/A.

Program Component	No Success	Just Beginning	Halfway There	Almost There	Goal Reached	N/A
a. Preschool child care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. School age child care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Child care provider training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Families in training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Adult education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Positive youth development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Resource and referral	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. What do you see as the greatest impact the FRC has had on your school, its students and their families?

17. What is your perception of family satisfaction with the overall programs the FRC provides? *Please select one.*

☐ Very dissatisfied
☐ Dissatisfied
☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ Very satisfied.

18. Are there needs in your school and community that the FRC may be able to address, but are not addressing currently? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If No, skip to question 19.*

18a. What programs or services could the FRC provide to address those needs?

19. What real and "In Kind" contributions does the school or district provide to the FRC? Mark the appropriate type of contribution in column 2 "Type of Support." In column 3, enter a monetary amount, if appropriate and available. If you are unable to calculate a monetary value, please leave column 3 blank.

Support, Service or Funding		Type of Support			Monetary Value
		None	In-Kind	Real	
a.	Funding	☐	☐	☐	$
b.	Office space	☐	☐	☐	$
c.	Building renovation	☐	☐	☐	$
d.	Classroom space	☐	☐	☐	$
e.	Activity space	☐	☐	☐	$
f.	Utilities	☐	☐	☐	$
g.	Telephone	☐	☐	☐	$
h.	Administrative supplies	☐	☐	☐	$
i.	Classroom/program materials	☐	☐	☐	$
j.	Transportation	☐	☐	☐	$
k.	Snacks/food	☐	☐	☐	$
l.	Promotional expense	☐	☐	☐	$
m.	Professional development for staff and volunteers	☐	☐	☐	$
n.	FICA insurance	☐	☐	☐	$
o.	Professional services	☐	☐	☐	$
p.	FRC salaries	☐	☐	☐	$
q.	Supervision (i.e. principal, program director)	☐	☐	☐	$
r.	Teachers (i.e. preschool, summer program)	☐	☐	☐	$
s.	Other:	☐	☐	☐	$
t.	Other:	☐	☐	☐	$
u.	Other:	☐	☐	☐	$

20. How are FRC funds used to support the overall mission and activities within the school? For example, school teachers and staff might attend FRC sponsored professional development workshops, or the FRC might provide food and child care for PTO meetings.

21. To what extent do you feel the following challenges impede successful implementation of FRC programs? *Please check one box per challenge named.*

Challenge		Not At All	A Little	Quite a Bit	Very Much
a.	Insufficient funds	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Inadequate communication between school staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	Inadequate family support in student learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Class size	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Insufficient support from the district or state	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Time constraints	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	Space constraints	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	Staff shortage	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	Lack of enthusiasm or commitment from staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Student mobility	☐	☐	☐	☐
k.	Student absenteeism	☐	☐	☐	☐
l.	Number of students learning English as a second language	☐	☐	☐	☐
m.	Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐
n.	Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐
o.	Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐

22. Are there any challenges to having an FRC in your school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

22a. If YES, have you attempted to address or overcome these challenges? ☐ Yes ☐ No

22b. Please explain **how** you have attempted to address or overcome the challenges OR why no attempt has been made to do so.

23. List any recommendations for changes in the structure, funding, or policies that would help the future operation of the FRC.

24. Please indicate whether each of the initiatives, programs or services listed have been implemented in your school as a result of the FRC.

		YES	NO
a.	Extended learning programs (before/after school, summer programs)	☐	☐
b.	Provision of early education/preschool child care	☐	☐
c.	Hiring support staff (counselors, nurses, parent coordinators/liaisons)	☐	☐
d.	Hiring additional instructional staff, including aides	☐	☐
e.	Individualized/small group reading instruction	☐	☐
f.	Individualized/small group math instruction	☐	☐
g.	Developing community partnerships	☐	☐
h.	ESL instruction	☐	☐
i.	Parent involvement strategies/activities	☐	☐
j.	Professional development	☐	☐
k.	Mentoring for students	☐	☐
l.	All day kindergarten	☐	☐
m.	Other:	☐	☐
n.	Other:	☐	☐
o.	Other:	☐	☐

25. To what extent is each of the following a problem in your school?

Problem		Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a Problem
a.	Student tardiness	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Student absenteeism	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	High student mobility	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Truancy	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Physical conflicts/aggression among students	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Vandalism	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	Student possession of weapons	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	Student disrespect for teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	Student apathy.	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Lack of parental involvement	☐	☐	☐	☐
k.	Poverty	☐	☐	☐	☐
l.	Students coming to school unprepared to learn	☐	☐	☐	☐
m.	Poor student health	☐	☐	☐	☐
n.	Teacher absenteeism	☐	☐	☐	☐
o.	Large class sizes	☐	☐	☐	☐
p.	Size of school	☐	☐	☐	☐
q.	Number of ESL students	☐	☐	☐	☐
r.	Family problems at home	☐	☐	☐	☐
s.	Inadequate learning opportunities for children birth to age five	☐	☐	☐	☐
t.	Child abuse	☐	☐	☐	☐
u.	Substance abuse	☐	☐	☐	☐

26. To what extent have the FRC programs had an impact on meeting the following challenges?

Challenge		Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a Problem
a.	Student tardiness	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Student absenteeism	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	High student mobility	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Truancy	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Physical conflicts/aggression among students	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Vandalism	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	Student possession of weapons	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	Student disrespect for teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	Student apathy.	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Lack of parental involvement	☐	☐	☐	☐
k.	Poverty	☐	☐	☐	☐
l.	Students coming to school unprepared to learn	☐	☐	☐	☐
m.	Poor student health	☐	☐	☐	☐
n.	Teacher absenteeism	☐	☐	☐	☐
o.	Large class sizes	☐	☐	☐	☐
p.	Size of school	☐	☐	☐	☐
q.	Number of ESL students	☐	☐	☐	☐
r.	Family problems at home	☐	☐	☐	☐
s.	Inadequate learning opportunities for children birth to age five	☐	☐	☐	☐
t.	Child abuse	☐	☐	☐	☐
u.	Substance abuse	☐	☐	☐	☐

27. Can you tell us something about food and nutrition in your school? *Please check one box for each question or statement.*

	No policy	Informal policy (spoken but not written)	Written policy (not included in parent handbook)	Written policy (included in parent handbook)
a. Is there a school policy addressing the accommodation of special dietary needs (e.g., food allergies, diabetes)?	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Is there a school policy addressing food safety (e.g., safe food preparation, preventing choking)?	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Is there a school policy setting nutrition standards for food brought from home for **meals and snacks**? (*Do not include food allergy or food safety policies)*	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Is there a school policy setting nutrition standards for food brought from home for **onsite celebrations** including children? (*Do not include food allergy or food safety policies)*	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Is there a school policy addressing the types of food and beverages that staff members consume in front of children?	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Is there a school policy addressing staff use of food as reward for children's behavior (e.g., getting a treat when children are quiet)?	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Is there a school policy addressing physical education and/or physical activity?	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Is there a center policy addressing limits for children's time using computers (including educational games)?	☐	☐	☐	☐

28. Do you receive government funding to provide snacks/meals? ☐ Yes ☐ No

28a. If Yes, which source provides your funding?

☐ CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program)
☐ NSLP (National School Lunch Program)
☐ Other
☐ Other

29. We are interested in gathering information about your perspectives regarding students and families within your school community. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by checking the response that most closely reflects your opinion. Please answer as openly as possible – Your answers will be confidential.

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; NS = Not Sure; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	NS	D	SD
a.	Students at this school are unwilling to learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Students here fight a lot.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	Parents rarely attend school activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Students at this school have good self-control.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Teachers are often disrespected by students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Behavior of students at this school is good.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	Staff at this school believe that very few of their students will make it to college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	Our students are willing and eager to learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	At this school, staff members agree that there is little hope of a good future for their students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Most staff at this school expect many of their students to go to college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k.	Most staff here agree that many students at this school will not complete high school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l.	Parents visit this school on a regular basis.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m.	It is easy to guide the behavior of students at this school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n.	Students at this school do not care about learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o.	Rules are frequently broken by students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
p.	Teachers at this school expect many of their students to pursue some kind of higher education beyond high school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
q.	Staff at his school see a bright future for their students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
r.	Students are orderly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
s.	Students here are caring people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
t.	Parents attend Parent-Teacher Association meetings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
u.	At this school, students help one another.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
v.	At this school, parents frequently volunteer to help on special projects.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
w.	Rules are obeyed by students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
x.	There is good discipline at this school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

This is the End of the survey – Thank you!

Please save a copy of this document for your records.

Email the completed questionnaire to Alina.Yekelchik@Yale.edu **no later than November 14, 2008**. Hard copies may be mailed to Alina Yekelchik, The School of the 21st Century, Yale University, 310 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

Appendix H: Participant Survey

Date: ____/____/_____

Family Resource Center Participant Survey

We want to learn about your family's experience with the Family Resource Center (FRC). Please answer the questions below as best you can. Most questions are easy and only ask you to check boxes or provide very short answers. It moves along very quickly. English and Spanish copies are available at the FRC. Answering any question is voluntary and you do not have to sign your name. This survey is sponsored by the Family Resource Centers of Connecticut and the Connecticut State Department of Education in order to improve the quality of education to all children in the State. ***Please return your completed survey to the FRC by December 12, 2008.***

1. Which Family Resource Center (FRC) do you or your family use?
   (Town or school name) _____

2. How long have you or your family participated in FRC activities?
   ☐ Less than 6 months ☐ 6 – 11 months ☐ 1-2 years ☐ More than 2 years

3. Below is a list of programs commonly offered at Family Resource Centers. Your FRC may offer all or only some of these programs. For each program listed below, please check the box that describes how often you or a member of your family used the Family Resource Center program during the last year.

		REGULARLY	OCCASIONALLY	NEVER
a.	Preschool child care	☐	☐	☐
b.	Before and after school child care	☐	☐	☐
c.	Adult Education classes/tutoring	☐	☐	☐
d.	Parents as Teachers (parenting classes, parent/child play groups, home visits)	☐	☐	☐
e.	Positive Youth Development activities (mini courses, clubs, organized sports, field trips)	☐	☐	☐
f.	Training for family day care providers	☐	☐	☐
g.	Resource and Referral (FRC staff giving you information and referrals to local agencies for medical, housing, child care, employment and other needed services)	☐	☐	☐
h.	Other programs (please name): _____	☐	☐	☐
	_____	☐	☐	☐

4. What other services (if any) would you like to see offered by your Family Resource Center? (Please list below)
   _____

5. Does the Family Resource Center offer programs your family would like to participate in but is unable to? ☐NO ☐YES

If yes: Which program (s)? _____

What has prevented you from participating in programs you are interested in?
(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Time/schedule of program
- ☐ Cost of program
- ☐ We do not have transportation
- ☐ We do not feel welcome
- ☐ Program has no openings
- ☐ Other reasons: _____

6a. Please check **ALL** the statements **THAT APPLY** to you and your family.

Using the Family Resource Center means …

- ☐ I miss less work or school because child care is available.
- ☐ I worry less about my child because I know he/she is getting quality child care.
- ☐ I have somewhere to turn if I need help.
- ☐ I have learned new skills.
- ☐ I have learned what to expect of children at different ages.
- ☐ I have learned new ways to discipline my child.
- ☐ I am more comfortable in my child's school.
- ☐ I have gained more education.
- ☐ I have received training and home day care licensing information.
- ☐ I have become friends with other parents.
- ☐ I got a new job.
- ☐ I feel more comfortable in the school.
- ☐ I feel there is someone who cares about my family.
- ☐ Relationships in my family are better.
- ☐ My child is in a safe place when I cannot be with him/her.
- ☐ My child has something interesting and fun to do.
- ☐ My child his learning new skills or is taking part in new activities.
- ☐ My child has made new friends.
- ☐ My child had a better transition to kindergarten.
- ☐ My child is doing better in school.
- ☐ My neighborhood feels closer together.
- ☐ My neighborhood is improving.
- ☐ Other (please describe): _____

6b. Please put a star ***** by the **ONE** statement in 6a. above that has been the **MOST** important to your family.

_____

7. Please check the **ONE** box that **BEST** describes how satisfied you are with the following aspects of the Family Resource Center.

	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
Convenience of location	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hours of service	☐	☐	☐	☐
Types of programs offered	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of programs offered	☐	☐	☐	☐
Family Resource Center staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall rating of FRC	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Are you still participating in FRC activities? ☐NO ☐YES
If No, why not: _____
_____
_____

To help us learn who is served by the Family Resource Centers, please complete the questions below.

9. How many children and adults in each age group below are living in your household?

AGE	HOW MANY?	AGE	HOW MANY?
Infant – 2 years	_____	12 – 14 years	_____
3 – 5 years	_____	15 – 17 years	_____
6 – 8 years	_____	18 years or older	_____
9 – 11 years	_____		

10. What is the primary language used in your home?
☐ English ☐ Other (specify)
☐ Spanish _____

11. What is your families ethnic group (please check all that apply)?

☐ African American ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native
☐ European (not Hispanic) ☐ Hispanic
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander ☐ Other

12. What is your yearly household income?

- ☐ $20,000 or below
- ☐ $20,001-$30,000
- ☐ $30,001-$40,000
- ☐ $40,001-$50,000
- ☐ $50,001-$60,000
- ☐ Over $60,000

13. If you have any other comments you would like to make about the Family Resource Center, please write them here. If you need more space, please use the back of this page.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14. How did you learn about the FRC?

- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Child
- ☐ School office
- ☐ Flyer
- ☐ Website
- ☐ Poster in the school
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

Please return your completed survey to the FRC by December 12, 2008.
Thank you for your help.

Appendix I: FRC Collaborators

Collaborators by Component

End of Year Reports 2007 – 2008

Preschool Collaborators

A Child's World
ABCD Child Care
Bloomfield Early Learning Center
Board of Education - Early Childhood Dept.
Bright Horizons Family Solutions
Bristol Board of Education
Bristol Family Center
Care Around the Clock
Catholic Family Services
Center Congregational Preschool
Champions Preschool
Chase CDC
Child Care Learning Center
Children's Center of Greater Waterbury Health Network
City of Hartford Early Learning Center
CRT Head Start Program
Early Childhood Dev. Center
East Hartford Head Start
EASTCONN Vernon Head Start
Easter Seals Child Development Center
Family Childcare Support
First Church Early Learning Center
First Congregational Church
Forest Court Head Start
Groton Board of Education
Hall Neighborhood House, Inc.
Hartford Board of Education PreK
Hartford Public School PreK Program
Hayden's Little Haven
Head Start
Headstart
Hockanum Valley Child Care/School Readiness
Jefferson Human Resources Agency Head Start
Kiddie World Child Care Center
Kindercare
Kindergarten Learning Center
Kingdom Little Ones Academy
Manchester Early Learning Center
Meriden Board of Education Preschool
Middlesex Community College
Middletown Public School Preschool
Naramake FRC
New London Public Schools Special Needs Pre-School Programs
Northwest CT YMCA Preschool Program
Ocean Community YMCA - Mystic Branch
Plainville Community Schools
Plainville Day Care
Plainville Family Resource Network
Room to Grow
Salvation Army - The Right Place
School Readiness Program
Side by Side Community School
Silva's Youth of Today
Smalley Human Resources Agency Head Start
South Farms Nursery School
St. Mark's Daycare Center, Inc.
St. Stan's Child Daycare
Stamford Public Schools
Torrington Child Care Center
Town of Enfield Child Dev. Center
West Hartford Public Schools
West Hartford School Readiness Council
West Haven Board of Education
Winsted Area Child Care Center, Inc.
Women & Families Center
Women's League Child Development Center
YMCA Meriden Childcare

School Age Child Care Collaborators

A Child's World
ABCD
Bloomfield Extension Program
Bristol Board of Education - Cubs Corner
Bristol Family Center
Bristol Park & Recreation
Camp Hand in Hand
Care Around the Clock
Early Childhood Development Center
Educational Resources for Children
Good Shepherd Day Care and East Shore Day Care
Greater Waterbury YMCA
Hall Neighborhood House, Inc.
Hayden's Little Haven
Hebron Parks and Recreation
Horizons Student Enrichment Program
Indian Valley YMCA
Jefferson Extended School Hours Program
Latchkey Program
Licensed Home Day Care Centers
Lighthouse Before and Afterschool Programs
Little Jackets
Little White House Learning Center
Maritime Magic
Meriden Boys and Girls Club
Middletown Parks and Recreation
New Britain YMCA
New London Board of Education - Jennings After School
Northern Middlesex YMCA
Northwest CT YMCA
Norwalk A.C.H.I.E.V.E
Norwalk Public Schools
Ocean Community YMCA - Mystic Branch
Once Upon A Time Learning Center
Organized Parents Make a Difference
P.F. Camp
Plainfield Recreation Department
Ralphola Taylor Community Center
School Aged Child Care Program, Branford Public Schools
Silva's Youth of Today
Smalley Extended School Hours Program
St Mark's Day Care Center, Inc.
Stonington Community Center
Stratford YMCA
Town of Enfield Child Development Center
Town of Manchester Parks & Recreation Department
Tutor Time Child Care and Learning Center
Waltersville School After School Program
Washington School
Waterbury YMCA
West Haven Community House
WHEE (West Hartford Extended Experience)
Wheeler Afterschool Program
Wheeler Regional YMCA
Winsted Area Child Care Center, Inc.
Winsted Recreation Dept. Summer Program
Women & Families Center
Women's League Child Development Center
YMCA Before/After School Program
YMCA of Norwalk
YMCA Preschool Program (full day)
YMCA Prime Time Program
YWCA - Summer Program

Adult Education Collaborators

ASPIRA of CT
Bloomfield Continuing Adult Education Program
Branford High School
Bridgeport Adult Education
Bridgeport Board of Education
Bristol Adult Education
Child Guidance Parenting Class
Clifford Beers Guidance Clinic
Consolidated School District of New Britain Parent School Liaisons
CT Puerto Rican Forum
East Hartford Adult Education
EASTConn
EASTCONN Adult Learning Center
Enfield Adult Education
ERACE
Even Start and Middletown Adult Education
Foothills Adult Education & Continuing Education
Fox Run/Side by Side FRCs - Parent Workshops
Groton Adult Education
Hamden Adult Education
Hartford Public Library
Hartford Public Schools Adult & Alternative Education
Linking Family Literacy Class
Literacy Volunteers
Literacy Volunteers of Central CT
Literacy Volunteers of New Haven
Literacy Volunteers of Northern CT
Literacy Volunteers of Stamford/Greenwich
Maple Street School
Meriden Adult Continuing and Career Center
Milford Public Schools - Department of Education
Motheread/Fatheread - Connecticut Community Foundation
New Britain Adult Education
New Britain Discovery Collaborative
New Haven Reads Community Book Bank
New London Adult Education
Northwest CT Community College Continuing Education
Norwalk Early Childhood Council - Parent Workshops
Norwalk Public Library
Norwich Adult Education
Parent Leadership Training Institute
People Empowering People
Plainville Community Schools Adult Education
Putnam Public Schools
Raising Readers
RHAM High School
Richard Barton - Educational & Personal Dev. Program
School Based Health Center Wellness Zone
Stamford Public Schools Adult & Continuing Ed Dept.
Stonington Adult Education
Stratford Public Schools Adult & Continuing Education
UConn Extension Service
University of CT Extension Services - Nutrition Classes
Vendors Brought in for Special Parent/Child Workshops
Vernon Adult Education
Vernon Regional Adult Basic Education
Washington School
Waterbury Adult Education
WERACE Adult Education
WERACE Even Start
West Hartford Adult Education
West Haven Adult Education
West Haven Community House
Wilson Library
Windham Adult Education
Windsor Adult Continuing Education

Families in Training (FIT) Collaborators

Catholic Charities - Grandparent Support Group
Child Plan, Inc.
Department of Health
Dr. Cindy Bess/Dr. Rodolfo Rosado
Generations Health Center
Hispanic Health Council
Infoline
Norwalk Public Library
Norwalk Smiles Dental Health Clinic
Ocean Community YMCA - Mystic Branch
Stepping Stones Birth to Three Providers
Synergy Alternative High School
The Health Clinic
United Way Info Line
West Haven Community House

Child Care Provider Training Collaborators

211 Info Workshop at MacDonough
211 Infoline
211 Infoline: Nutrition
A Second Chance CPR First Aid Training, LLC
American Red Cross: Infant Child First Aid/CPR
Bristol School Readiness Council
Child Plan, Inc.
Child Psychologists
CT Humanities Council - Motheread/Fatheread
CT SDE Bureau of Educational Equity; Multicultural & Diversity Workshop
Danbury School Readiness Council
Dept. of Children and Families
Discovery Collaborative of Manchester
Early Care Education and Training Institute
East Hartford School Readiness Council
EASTCONN
ECETI
Family Child Care Providers Association of Manchester
Hamden's Partnership for Youth Children
Hartford Public Schools - Susan Davis Workshop
Head Start
Health Care Connection, Inc.
Hockanum FRC
Housatonic Community College
Killingly FRC
Kith and Kin
LEARN
Manchester Family Care Association
Manchester School Readiness Council
New Britain Discovery Collaborative
New Haven School Readiness Council
North Branford Public Libraries
Northeast Discovery Group
Northeast School Readiness Council
Northeast Regional Discovery Professional Development Committee
Norwalk Fox Run FRC
Plainfield FRC
Plainfield Recreation Department
Putnam FRC
Putnam/Killingly FRC
Resource Reader
School Based Health Clinic - Wellness Zone
School Readiness Workshops
Stafford Public Library
Stamford Public School Readiness Program
State Department of Health: Licensing Support
United Way (Parent Workshops)
Waterbury School Readiness
Witness Protection

Positive Youth Development Collaborators

Adult Education Center - Young Parent Program
Benjamin Franklin Elementary School After School Activities
Beth El Center
Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Boy Scouts of America
Boy Scouts of American Connecticut Yankee Chapter
Boy/Girl Scouts - Scout Troops
Branford Counseling Center
Branford Public Schools
Bridgeport Area Youth Ministries
Bridgeport Bilingual Dept. Interdistrict Grant
Bridgeport Fire and Police Dept. (DARE)
Bridgeport Health Dept.
Bridgeport Reading Dept. Grant
Briggs High School - Education Program for Teen Mothers
Center for Women and Families Program
Charles Smith Center
Church Street School PTA
City of Hartford - Double Dutch Program
Community Health Center
CSDNB
CT State Department of Education
DARE
Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Enfield Youth Services
Extension Program Enrichment Activities
Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) Mediation
Girl Scout Council of Southwestern CT Inc.
Girl Scouts of Connecticut
Green Street Program
Indian Valley YMCA
John Barry Elementary School After School Activities
Kids in Crisis Safetalk Program
Kids in the Middle
Lao Association of CT
Loomis Chaffee School
MADD/Prospect Student Presentation
Main Street Singers
Meriden Adult, Continuing and Career Education: Young Mother's Program
Middle School of Plainville After School Program
Milford Health Department
Milford Hospital
Music and Arts Center
New Haven Parks and Recreation
North Branford High School
North Branford Intermediate School
Northern Middlesex YMCA
Norwich Youth Services Bureau
Organized Parents Make a Difference (OPMAD)
Overtime Athletic
Overtime Athletic
P.A.S.S. Program
Park and Recreation
PFRN Before/After School Enrichment Programs
Plainfield Public Schools
Plainfield Recreation Department
Plainville Youth Services Bureau
Preparing for Excellent Program (PEP)
Putnam Housing Authority
Putnam Public Schools
Putnam Recreation Department
Regional Workforce - Youth at Work
Roosevelt School Guidance/Social Service Dept. (YAR Girls & Peer Mediation)
Roosevelt School Social Service (Girl Support Group)
S.C.O.R.E., Killingly Public Schools
SACC
Save The Babies
Savin Rock Community Afterschool Enrichment
School Based Health Clinic
School Guidance Counselor
School Social Worker and Intern
Social and Youth Services
Social Development
Social worker-etiquette program
Soundwaters
Stonington Human Services
Stonington Public Schools
The Bridge Family Center
Tolland School System
Tolland Youth Services
Town of Winchester Police Department DARE Program
Town of Windsor Social Services
Union Baptist Church - CLEP Tutoring Program
United Services
Waltersville After School Program
Waltersville Light House Program
West Haven Community House
Willimantic Police Department/ Community Services
Wilson School Teachers
Winchester Youth Service Bureau
Young Parent Program

Appendix J: Interview and Focus Group Protocol

CT FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER EVALUATION
SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Hello. My name is _____ from the Zigler Center in Child Development in Social Policy for at Yale University. First of all, we want to thank you all very much for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here today.

I'd like to take a few minutes to review the purpose of this focus group meeting. The Zigler Center in Child Development in Social Policy at Yale University is conducting an evaluation of the CT Family Resource Center (FRC) Programs in conjunction with the Connecticut State Department of Education. The goals of this evaluation are 1) to describe the scope and quality of services provided by FRCs; 2) identify the impact of FRCs on families, schools, and the community; and 3) enhance the capacity of FRC staff to collect and use data to inform program development and implementation.

As part of our evaluation efforts, we are conducting in-depth case studies at five FRC sites to gain a more comprehensive portrait of individual FRCs and the scope of services they offer. This part of the evaluation builds on information obtained from surveys distributed during the first phase of the evaluation and involves conducting site visits, interviews with key FRC staff and focus groups with families, school staff and community members. [Sites were selected randomly and provide adequate representation of district reference groups, as well as geographic distribution across the state. Participating sites also have varying histories and provide an array of direct and indirect services.]

The purpose of these group interviews/focus groups is to learn about your experience with the FRC and how your involvement with the FRC has affected the children, families and schools in your community.

My role here is to ask questions and listen. Your participation in the group is completely voluntary. You should feel free to talk with one another. I'll be asking about a dozen questions and I'll be moving the discussion from one question to another. There is a tendency in these discussions for some people to talk a lot and some people not to say much. We would really like to have the opportunity to hear from everyone. Please be assured that there are no wrong answers. Different FRCs/schools/families operate differently. Feel free to share your point of view even it if differs from what others have said.

To make sure we don't miss any of your comments, we will be tape recording the discussion and taking detailed notes. We have provided name tents for everyone that are in front of you so that we can call each other by our first name. The transcript that is made of this focus group will not use your names but will identify each person by a code number.

At the end of the focus group, we will ask you to complete a one-page survey so that we know the characteristics of participants and how the information can be relevant to other families and caregivers. Your name will not appear on that information sheet.

We greatly appreciate your taking the time to share your experiences with us. Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

Questions for FRC Directors

Scope of services provided

What role does the FRC serve in the school/community?

► Probe for why/how the FRC is important for children, families, teachers/school and the greater community

What do your FRC programs aim to do?
What are the overarching/underlying themes and connections among the FRC's many programs and initiatives?

► Probe for multiple purposes and impacts of programming – e.g., a parent workshop promotes family involvement, early literacy development and school readiness

How would things be different if the FRC was not in existence?

► Probe for families who would not receive services a/o be involved, how interrelationships among service providers might be different, losses to school a/o community

*****In exploring the above questions, it may be helpful to follow-up on answers to several questions from the survey including:

Q. 19 – describing more about the framework/theory/model that guides the work of the FRC
Q. 28 – Ranking the importance of the major FRC components; probe for how directors determine the priority of core components and why they perceive these as the most important
Q. 45 – what is the most important goal of the FRC

School and community partnerships

How does partnering with the school affect how your FRC services are implemented?

► Probe what would change if you were not located in/affiliated with a school
► Probe how children and families benefit from your collaboration/partnership with the school(s)
► Probe for what works in the school/FRC partnership and what doesn't
► Probe how relationship with school could be improved if described less positively and probe what makes the partnership successful if described positively

How has your relationship with the school(s) evolved while you have been FRC director?
What do you know about the prior/early history of the FRC and/or its relationship with the school-community?

Affect on families, school(s), and the community
Note. The following questions in this section may already have been addressed as part of the first section related to scope of services provided

What do you perceive as the greatest benefit of your FRC on children and families? The school(s) you are affiliated with? The larger community? Why, how do you know?

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

► May probe how does the FRC (or how could the FRC) publicize this?

How do you think your FRC affects/influences families' ability to support the healthy growth and development of their children?

► Probe for affect on knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

► May probe how does the FRC (or how could the FRC) publicize this?

Do you think families are satisfied/pleased with the services your FRC offers? Why, how do you know?

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

What else (other programs or services) do you think families in your community want or need?

►Probe for whether this is supported by any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

Organization and staffing

What about your staff contributes to the success/affect of your FRC?

►Probe for staff composition, training, commitment and dedication, individual staff member characteristics

What additional staff would/could assist with FRC organizational structure a/o service delivery? What would you need to fulfill desired staff positions?

►Probe for funding resources as well as characteristics of desired staff including background, training/experience, availability, salary requirements

Funding

How have budget/funding cuts affected your programming and service delivery?

►Probe for impact beyond program loss – such as impact on families and schools

Have you had to suspend or cut any programming in the past year?
What was scope and affect of the programming?
What would be required to re-activate or continue it?

Finally, is there anything we have not asked about your FRC that you think is important for us to know?

►Probe if there are any changes you would like to see made to your FRC or the larger program (follow-up to survey question 61)

Questions for FRC Staff

Scope of services provided

What role does the FRC serve in the school/community?

► Probe for why/how the FRC is important for children, families, teachers/school and the greater community

What do FRC programs aim to do?
What are the overarching/underlying themes and connections among the FRCs many programs and initiatives?

► Probe for multiple purposes and impacts of programming—e.g., a parent workshop promotes family involvement, early literacy development and school readiness

How would things be different if the FRC was not in existence?

► Probe for families who would not receive services a/o be involved, how interrelationships among service providers might be different, losses to school a/o community

School and community partnerships

How does partnering with the school affect how FRC services are implemented?

► Probe what would change if you were not located in/affiliated with a school

► Probe how children and families benefit from the collaboration/partnership between the FRC and the school(s)

► Probe for what works in the school/FRC partnership and what doesn't

► Probe how relationship with school could be improved if described less positively and probe what makes the partnership successful if described positively

How has the relationship between the FRC and the school(s) evolved while you have been a staff member?
What do you know about the prior/early history of the FRC and/or its relationship with the school-community?

Affect on families, school(s), and the community
Note. The following questions in this section may already have been addressed as part of the first section related to scope of services provided.

What do you perceive as the greatest benefit of the FRC on children and families? The school(s) you are affiliated with? The larger community? Why, how do you know?

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

How do you think the FRC affects/influences families' ability to support the healthy growth and development of their children?

► Probe for impact on knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

Do you think families are satisfied/pleased with the services your FRC offers? Why, how do you know?

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

What else (other programs or services) do you think families in this community want or need?

►Probe for whether this is supported by any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

Organization and staffing

What about this staff contributes to the success/affect of your FRC?

►Probe for staff composition, training, commitment and dedication, individual staff member characteristics

What additional staff would/could assist with FRC organizational structure a/o service delivery? What would be needed to fulfill desired staff positions?

►Probe for funding resources as well as characteristics of desired staff including background, training/experience, availability, salary requirements

Funding

How have budget/funding cuts impacted FRC programming and service delivery?

►Probe for impact beyond program loss—such as impact on families and schools

Have you had to suspend or cut any programming in the past year? Why? What was scope and affect of the programming? What would be required to re-activate or continue it?

Finally, is there anything we have not asked about your FRC that you think it is important for us to know?

►Probe if there are any changes you would like to see made to your FRC or the larger program (follow-up to survey question 61)

Questions for School Principals

Scope of services provided

What role does the FRC serve in the school/community?

► Probe for why/how the FRC is important for children, families, teachers/school and the greater community

What do FRC programs aim to do? What is your understanding of the mission and purpose of the FRCs?

► Probe whether principal perceives overarching a/o underlying themes, as well as multiple purposes and impacts of programs

What do you think are the most important services offered by the FRC? Why?

Are you pleased/satisfied with the scope and quality of services your FRC offers?
If yes, why?
If no, what other services do you think children and families in your school community could benefit from? What could the FRC do to provide or coordinate such services?

How would things be different if the FRC was not in existence?

► Probe for families who would not receive services a/o be involved, how interrelationships among service providers might be different, losses to school a/o community

School and community partnerships

How would you describe your school's relationship with the FRC?
How would you describe the support and services your school receives from the FRC?

What has contributed to the success of your relationship with the FRC?

What challenges have you experienced in working/collaborating with the FRC?

How does partnering with an FRC affect the services (including educational, social and health) your school provides?

► Probe what would change if the school were not affiliated with an FRC

How has your relationship with the FRC evolved while you have been principal?
What do you know about the prior/early history of the FRC and/or its relationship with the school-community?

Affect on families, school(s), and the community

Note. The following questions in this section may already have been addressed as part of the first section related to scope of services provided.

What do you perceive as the greatest benefit of having an FRC in your school OR affiliated with your school?

Do you think families are more involved in their children's education because of the FRC? How, why?

► Probe for observations, anecdotes or data that supports

How do you think the FRC affects/influences children's school readiness and ability to learn?

► Probe for observations, anecdotes or data that supports

How do you think your FRC affects/influences families' ability to support the healthy growth and development of their children?

► Probe for impact on knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this, and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

Do you think families are satisfied/pleased with the services the FRC offers? Why, how do you know?

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

What else (other programs or services) do you think families in your community want or need?

► Probe for whether this is supported by any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

Finally, is there anything we have not asked about your FRC that you think it is important for us to know?

Questions for School Staff
(including teachers, parent outreach workers, school nurses, etc.)

Scope of services provided

What is your involvement with the FRC?

► May probe when and how did you first learn or hear about the FRC?

What role does the FRC serve in the school/community?

► Probe for why/how the FRC is important for children, families, teachers/school and the greater community

What do FRC programs aim to do? What is your understanding of the mission and purpose of the FRC's?

► Probe whether staff perceive overarching a/o underlying themes, as well as multiple purposes and impacts of programs

What do you think are the most important services offered by the FRC? Why?

Are you pleased/satisfied with the scope and quality of services your FRC offers?
If yes, why?
If no, what other services do you think children and families in your school community could benefit from? What could the FRC do to provide or coordinate such services?

School and community partnerships

How does the FRC fit in with your school?
How would you describe your school's relationship with the FRC?

What has contributed to the success of your relationship with the FRC?

What challenges have you experienced in working/collaborating with the FRC?

How does partnering with an FRC affect the services (including educational, social, and health) your school provides?

► Probe what would change if the school were not affiliated with an FRC

How has the relationship between the school and the FRC evolved while you have been a staff member?
What do you know about the prior/early history of the FRC and/or its relationship with the school-community?

Impact on families, school(s) and the community

Note. The following questions in this section may already have been addressed as part of the first section related to scope of services provided.

What do you perceive as the greatest benefit of having an FRC in your school OR affiliated with your school?

Do you think families are more involved in their children's education because of the FRC? How, why?

► Probe for observations, anecdotes, or data that supports

How do you think the FRC affects/influences children's school readiness and ability to learn?

► Probe for observations, anecdotes, or data that supports

How do you think the FRC affects/influences families' ability to support the healthy growth and development of their children?

► Probe for affect on knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

Do you think families are satisfied/pleased with the services the FRC offers? Why, how do you know?

► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

What else (other programs or services) do you think families in your community want or need?

► Probe for whether this is supported by any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

Finally, is there anything we have not asked about the FRC that you think it is important for us to know?

Questions for Participating Families

Scope of services provided

How are you and your family involved with the FRC?
What services do you and your family use?

What do you think are the most important services offered by the FRC? Why?
What services do you and your family find most helpful?
What other services would you like to see offered by your FRC?

► Probe whether anything complicates or interferes with participation (such as timing, schedules, transportation, cost, attitude of staff, etc.)

What is your understanding of the mission and purpose of the FRCs?
What do FRC programs aim to do? OR What role does the FRC serve in the school/community?

► Probe for why/how the FRC is important for children, families, teachers/school and the greater community

► Probe whether staff perceive overarching a/o underlying themes, as well as multiple purposes and impacts of programs

How would things be different for you and your child if the FRC was not there?

Impact on families, school(s), and the community

What new knowledge or skills have you gained as a result of your participation in the FRC?

(*The following questions can be used as follow-up questions or prompts based on answers to the above question about new knowledge or skills*)

How has participation in the FRC changed/influenced your parenting style and practices?

How has participation in the FRC changed/influenced your involvement in your child's education/school?

How has participation in the FRC changed/influenced your awareness of programs and services within the school and community?

How has the FRC helped you make new connections in the community, with other services/programs or with other parents?

How has the FRC changed/influenced your child's readiness for school (kindergarten)?

►Probe for ability, behavior, attitude about school.

►Probe for FRC assistance in registering for kindergarten

Finally, is there anything we have not asked about your FRC that you think it is important for us to know?

Questions for Community Service Providers

Scope of services provided

What is your involvement with the FRC?
► May probe when and how did you first learn or hear about the FRC?

What role does the FRC serve in this community?
► Probe for why/how the FRC is important for children, families, teachers/school and the greater community

What do you think are the most important services offered by the FRC? Why?

Are you pleased/satisfied with the scope and quality of services your FRC offers?
If yes, why?
If no, what other services do you think children and families in your school community could benefit from? What could the FRC do to provide or coordinate such services?

Community Partnership

What has contributed to the success of your relationship with the FRC?

What challenges have you experienced in working/collaborating with the FRC?

How does partnering with an FRC affect the services (including educational, social and health) your organization provides?
► Probe what would change if your organization were not affiliated with an FRC

How has the relationship between your organization and the FRC evolved while you have been a staff member?
What do you know about the prior/early history of the FRC and/or its relationship with the school-community?

Affect on families, school(s), and the community
Note. The following questions in this section may already have been addressed as part of the first section related to scope of services provided.

What do you perceive as the greatest benefit of having an FRC affiliated with your organization?

Do you think families are more involved in their children's education because of the FRC? How, why?
►Probe for observations, anecdotes or data that supports

How do you think the FRC affects/influences children's school readiness and ability to learn?
►Probe for observations, anecdotes or data that supports

How do you think the FRC affects/influences families' ability to support the healthy growth and development of their children?

- ► Probe for impact on knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.
- ► Probe for what data or evidence supports this and inquire about any assessment or evaluation efforts or findings.

Appendix K: Family Focus Group Participant Survey

FRC Site _____ **Date** _____

What is your date of birth? **For how many years have you have been involved with this FRC?**

Your race/ethnicity: (Please check only one): If Multiracial, check "Other" and please specify

1. ☐ Black/African-American
2. ☐ Caucasian/Euro-American
3. ☐ Latino/Hispanic
4. ☐ Asian/Asian American
5. ☐ Native American
6. ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Is English the primary language used in your home? 1. ☐ Yes 2. ☐ No

Is another language spoken in your home? 1. ☐ Yes 2. ☐ No

If yes, please specify: _____

How many children and adults live in your household?

Age	How many?
Infant – 2 years	_____
3 – 5 years	_____
6 – 8 years	_____
9 – 11 years	_____
12 – 14 years	_____
15 – 17 years	_____
18 and older	_____

What is your highest educational level? (Please check only one)

1. ☐ Grade school
2. ☐ Some High School
3. ☐ Completed High School/ GED
4. ☐ Bachelors Degree (BA/BS)
5. ☐ Masters Degree (MA, MSW)
6. ☐ Ph.D./Psy.D./MD/JD

What is your yearly household income?

1. ☐ $20,000 and less
2. ☐ $20,001 - $30,000
3. ☐ $30,001 - $40,000
4. ☐ $40,001 - $50,000
5. ☐ $50,001 - $60,000
6. ☐ More than $60,000

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix L: CT FRC Evaluation Five-Site Study Visit Brief Report Template

Site _____ Evaluator _____

Date(s) and time(s) visited _____

Activities conducted (please check all that apply)

__ Toured FRC
__ Met with FRC director
__ Met with school principal
__ Met with FRC staff
__ Met with school staff
__ Met with families receiving FRC services
__ Toured school
__ Conducted interview with FRC director
__ Conducted interview with school principal
__ Conducted focus group with FRC staff
__ Conducted focus group with school staff
__Conducted focus group with families

Description of FRC/school setting and community served

Organization and staffing
(describe organizational structure of FRC, characterize working environment and identify key staff, describe any recent staff turnover)

Scope of services provided
(highlight core services and programs, identify and describe any overarching framework or orientation, characterize role of FRC in school-community)

School and community partnerships
(describe relationship between the FRC and school, describe history of relationship)

Affect on families, school and the community
(highlight impact of FRC on children and families, identify assessment or evaluation findings, characterize community satisfaction with services provided by FRC)

Funding
(describe funding sources and address whether changes in sources/streams have impacted programming and service delivery)

Areas of strength

Issues to follow-up on

Please note any significant changes to staff, contact information, programming/services or funding sources

Appendix M: CT FRC Five-Site Study Site Visit Schedule

Date	Site	Activities Conducted	# FRC and school staff / # Family members	Participating Yale Staff
1/14/09	Middletown - Macdonough	Family focus group FRC staff focus group School staff focus group Interview w/school principal Interview w/FRC director	10 staff / 7 family members	Paul Vivian Gwen Fisher
1/15/09	Middletown – Farm Hill	Family focus group Staff focus group (FRC & school) Interview w/school principal Interview w/FRC director	10 staff / 7 family members	Paul Vivian Sue Vivian
1/22/09	Norwich	Family focus group Focus group with staff (FRC & school) and community providers Interview w/current school principal Interview w/former school principal Interview w/FRC director	16 staff / 15 family members	Paul Vivian Michelle Albright
2/5/09	Bridgeport	Family focus group Focus group with staff (FRC & school) and community providers Focus group w/members of the parent advisory board Interview w/ community providers Interview w/assistant principal and director of social work Interview w/FRC director	15 staff / 26 family members	Paul Vivian Sue Vivian
2/11/09	Tolland	Family focus group FRC staff focus group School staff focus group Interview w/school principal Interview w/FRC director	12 staff / 7 family members	Michelle Albright Paul Vivian
2/26/09	Plymouth	Staff focus group (FRC & school) Interviews with family members Interview w/school principal Interview w/FRC director	7 staff / 20 family members	Michelle Albright Catherine Bradshaw

CT FRC Evaluation
Site Visit Brief Report

Bridgeport: Cesar Batalla School

Activities conducted

x Toured FRC
x Met with FRC director
x Met with school principal
x Met with FRC staff
x Met with school staff
x Met with families receiving FRC services

x Toured school
x Conducted interview with FRC director
x Conducted interview with school principal
x Conducted focus group with FRC staff
x Conducted focus group with school staff
x Conducted focus group with families

Description of FRC/school setting and community served

The FRC is located at Cesar Batalla School, a 3-year old, state-of-the-art school (the FRC is located just off the main entrance and is adjacent to the preschool and kindergarten classrooms). Cesar Batalla is a K-8 school with a population of 1,105 students in the West End of Bridgeport. The West End abuts I-95 and is a highly industrialized section of the city with many warehouses and factories.

Cesar Batalla has a very diverse student population, represented by more than 90% minority groups. Students and families speak many languages; accordingly the parent focus group was comprised of parents from Mexico, Columbia, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Guatemala and Bangladesh, to name a few. Because more than 90% of enrolled students are eligible for the free and/or reduced school lunch program, the Bridgeport public schools have decided to serve free breakfast and lunch to the entire school population.

Organization and staffing

The FRC at Cesar Batalla School is one of four FRCs in the Bridgeport public schools. The school system funds the program directly to support the staffing of the FRC, as well as through in-kind contributions (i.e., materials, copying). The FRC has a full-time director, two full-time parent educators and a program assistant. All of the staff is bilingual

Scope of services provided

The key word in describing this FRC is flexibility. In addition to the seven core FRC components, this program provides a variety of services needed by a population of families that have recently immigrated to the U.S. For example, this FRC provides two levels of ESL classes – a class for beginners and then a more conversational class for advanced English learners. The FRC serves as a refuge for parents, many of whom walk with their children to the school. The FRC is the place where parents congregate and have a cup of coffee with other parents. Parents

seek resource and referral information from the FRC staff about diverse issues ranging from basic needs like food and shelter, to interventions for domestic violence and substance abuse.

School and community partnerships

FRC staff exhibit very strong relationships with the administrative and teaching staff of the school. Moreover, the school has a variety of service providers that work hand-in-hand with the FRC staff, i.e., school psychologist; two school social workers, a school-home outreach worker. Grade level teachers feel very comfortable stopping by the FRC for a cup of coffee and to discuss issues with the FRC staff regarding children in their classrooms. This also gives the teachers an opportunity to meet parents and for the parents to feel comfortable with them.

In addition, an adult education teacher, working in conjunction with the FRC, is at the school to provide two levels of ESL classes to family members. Finally, the FRC director serves on many boards outside of the school and is also a key member of the Student Assistance Team (SAT).

Affect on families, school, and the community

The FRC has a huge affect on the families in this community; this program exemplifies the intent of the School of the 21st Century and provides a safe, trusted place where families can go to receive a variety of child development and family support services. The FRC has focused on building relationships with the families in the surrounding community and is very flexible in its attempt to meet their needs. Regardless of the issue, parents repeatedly describe the FRC staff as having the answers or knowing where to get the answers to any question. Families served by this FRC, who would be characterized as at-risk by any scale, truly trust the FRC staff; this confidence in FRC staff generates an inherent trust of the school. Accordingly, families not only feel more connected with the school, but also become more actively involved in the school and their child's education.

Funding

In addition to the state grant, the FRC receives funding from the Bridgeport Public Schools that augments staff salaries and enables the FRC to cover full-time salaries for the FRC coordinator and outreach worker. The retention rate for the FRC staff at this site is very high. The FRC director and one parent educator were hired 15 years ago when the program began and have remained at the FRC. Recent state budget cuts have lead to reductions in program materials and supplies.

Areas of strength

- Excellent, bi-lingual staff that has developed a strong sense of trust with the families
- Very comfortable center space that has space for children, comfortable seating for families, and also contains a "Clothes Closet," where families have access to free clothing in a non-stigmatizing way
- Great relationship between school and FRC staff

Issues to follow-up on

None

Please note any significant changes to staff, contact information, programming/services or funding sources

None

CT FRC Evaluation
Site Visit Brief Report

Middletown: Macdonough School

Activities conducted

x Toured FRC
x Met with FRC director
x Met with school principal
x Met with FRC staff
x Met with school staff
x Met with families receiving FRC services
x Toured school
x Conducted interview with FRC director
x Conducted interview with school principal
x Conducted focus group with FRC staff
x Conducted focus group with school staff
x Conducted focus group with families

Description of FRC/school setting and community served

Macdonough School is located in the North End of Middletown, an area characterized by poverty and high unemployment. Seventy-five percent of students enrolled at Macdonough qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. The school, although very old, is a warm and inviting place; it is truly an oasis within this neighborhood. The area surrounding the school is densely populated, marked by very small single- and two-family homes on very small lots. The principal described this area as dangerous as there have been a number of shootings within close proximity of the school.

The FRC is a very warm, sunlit space that is located within the school. An integral part of the FRC is to distribute food on Friday afternoons to families who would not otherwise have enough food to sustain them through the weekend. As stated above, most of the students in the school come from very poor families and everyone interviewed commented on the importance of the food delivery service.

Organization and staffing

In Middletown, one FRC director supervises two school sites (Macdonough School and Farm Hill School). The FRC director has been there for 10 years and was described by the community's School Readiness Coordinator as an "Early Childhood Guru." Each school site also has a director and a family liaison provides outreach services for families. School staff spoke very positively of the FRC staff and the services they provide. Families described the FRC as the primary provider of services within the North End community and commented that if the program were to ever close due to budget constraints, the results would be devastating.

Scope of services provided

- Families in Training—The FRC conducts play groups for young children and their families and home visits are also used to serve some families.
- Parenting education
- Child care providers training

- Resource and referral information for families
- School-age child care in collaboration with the YMCA and the Park and Recreation Dept.
- Preschool child care in collaboration with the Middletown school readiness program
- Positive youth development is provided by both FRC staff and Park and Recreation Dept.
- Adult education in collaboration with the Middletown Adult Education Dept. and the Even Start Program

The playgroups for families with young children were identified as the common entry point to FRC programming. In addition, Middlesex Community College provides a preschool program on-site, and the YMCA provides a much-heralded after school program at the school. Several programs at Macdonough focus on promoting literacy, including a Raising Readers program and a Book Club for older elementary students that is highly regarded by students and school staff (i.e., one mother spoke of how difficult it was for her to get her son to read until he became involved in the Book Club and then she would "catch him reading" all the time). Moreover, many of the Positive Youth Development programs focus on reading.

The Macdonough FRC is also linked with the Middletown Adult Education Department's Even Start Program and there is a cross-referral system in place between both programs.

School and community partnerships

As described above, the FRC collaborates with the YMCA, Park and Recreation Dept., Middletown School Readiness, Middletown Adult Education Dept., and the Even Start Program. Partnerships also exist with the Middlesex Hospital Maternal and Health Advocacy Program, the Community Health Center, Opportunity Knocks (another hospital program), the Middletown Public Library, and the Rushford Center.

Affect on families, school and the community

The Macdonough FRC provides a wide variety of child development and family support services; however basic services such as the take-home food program represent a primary focus since they are vitally-needed by families in the surrounding community. Although the North End is characterized by crime and violence, the school is perceived as an oasis for everyone. School staff, FRC staff, and family members all talked about the warm atmosphere of the school and how much they loved going there. Of note, some parents commented that their own experiences with school were not positive or nurturing, yet they perceive the FRC has as creating an open and welcoming atmosphere. Parents described how the FRC has helped them continue their education, obtain employment, and serve their families in a multitude of ways.

Funding

State funding cutbacks have resulted in a decrease in positive youth development programs.

Areas of strength

- Continuity of high quality staff

- Site coordinator's relationships with parents and families
- Members of the Middletown community have high respect for the FRC director
- The model of one FRC director and two site coordinators allows for the director to have high impact within the community and frees up funding for programming

Issues to follow-up on

None

Please note any significant changes to staff, contact information, programming/services or funding sources

The school principal has been there less than 2 years.

CT FRC Evaluation
Site Visit Brief Report

Middletown: Farm Hill School

Activities conducted

x Toured FRC
x Conducted interview with FRC director
x Met with FRC staff
x Met with families receiving FRC services
x Toured school
x Conducted interview with school principal
x Conducted focus group with school staff
x Conducted focus group with families

Description of FRC/school setting and community served

Farm Hill School is in a relatively rural/suburban section of Middletown. The student population is mostly Caucasian and middle-class. The FRC at Farm Hill School is adjacent to the main office in a spacious and well-lit area. However, families must either climb one flight of stairs or use an elevator to access the FRC.

Organization and staffing

In Middletown, one FRC director supervises two school sites (Macdonough School and Farm Hill School). The FRC director has been there for 10 years and was described by the community's School Readiness Coordinator as an "Early Childhood Guru." Each school site also has a director and a family liaison provides outreach services for families. The Farm Hill site director actually initiated the program and has been in her position for 10 years; she is well regarded by both school staff and families. Many of the interviewees shared the same anecdote about how children would often stop in front of the FRC to wave hello to the site director as they were walking causing a "domino effect" of students bumping into each other.

Scope of services provided

- Families in Training - The FRC conducts play groups for young children and their families and home visits are also used to serve some families.
- Parenting education
- Child care providers training
- Resource and referral information for families
- School-age child care in collaboration with the YMCA and the Park and Recreation Dept.
- Preschool child care in collaboration with the Middletown school readiness program
- Positive youth development is provided by both FRC staff and Park and Recreation Dept.
- Adult education in collaboration with the Middletown Adult Education Dept. and the Even Start Program

School and community partnerships

As described above, the FRC collaborates with the YMCA, Park and Recreation Dept., Middletown School Readiness, Middletown Adult Education Dept., and the Even Start Program. Partnerships also exist with the Middlesex Hospital Maternal and Health Advocacy Program, the Community Health Center, Opportunity Knocks (another hospital program), the Middletown Public Library, and the Rushford Center.

Affect on families, school and the community

Families perceive the FRC as creating a warm sense of community and support; many families have been involved with the FRC for 10 years. Parents commented that both they and their children maintained friendships with peers from the initial playgroups they attended and credited the FRC with helping them acclimate to the community after moving here. Moreover, several parents mentioned that FRC staff assisted them with finding employment. Parents looked to the FRC to support their children in school and used staff as a consultation resource for difficult phases. However, parents also became more involved in school and many went on to participate on the PTA. Parents expressed the belief that children had higher levels of comfort with grade transitions because of their involvement in the FRC.

School staff described how efficient and effective FRC staff was at fostering home-school connections and commented on their professionalism and flexibility.

Community providers identified the FRC as the hub of the community for any issues related to young children, especially since there are few Birth to Three resources available in Middletown.

Funding

State funding cutbacks have resulted in a decrease in positive youth development programs. The Farm Hill FRC also uses school readiness funding for child care provider training.

Areas of strength

- Continuity of high quality staff
- Site coordinator's relationships with parents and families
- Members of the Middletown community have high respect for the FRC director
- The model of one FRC director and two site coordinators allows for the director to have high impact within the community and frees up funding for programming

Issues to follow-up on

None

Please note any significant changes to staff, contact information, programming/services or funding sources

The school principal has been there less than 2 years.

CT FRC Evaluation

Site Visit Brief Report

Norwich – Wequonnoc School

Activities conducted

X	Toured FRC	X	Toured school
X	Met with FRC director	X	Conducted interview with FRC director
X	Met with school principal	X	Conducted interview with school principal
X	Met with FRC staff	X	Conducted focus group with FRC staff
X	Met with school staff	X	Conducted focus group with school staff
X	Met with families receiving FRC services	X	Conducted focus group with families

Description of FRC/school setting and community served

The FRC is in the Wequonnoc School in the Taftville section of Norwich. Taftville is an old mill town with many wooden, multi-family homes surrounding the school. It is a depressed area with a high crime rate and many of those interviewed related stories about drug deals and violence occurring in the neighborhood adjacent to the school.

Organization and staffing

The staff of the FRC is comprised of a director, a home visitor and before- and after-school personnel. The FRC operates an after-school program in a total of three schools. Staff members relate extremely well with the families they serve and parents repeatedly acknowledged this during the focus group. Community providers, who took part in the focus group with school staff, described the staff as crucial to the success that the FRC has experienced, specifically with "hard-to-reach" families.

Scope of services provided

The FRC at Wequonnoc School provides before- and after-school care, play groups and a preschool program (located in a classroom at the school). As stated above, the FRC also administers after-school programs at two other elementary schools.

School and community partnerships

The FRC enjoys a strong partnership with the Norwich Adult Education Dept. and the School Readiness Program. The FRC director is seen as a key person in any issues relating to children and families in Norwich. The FRC was described as a "hub" for early care and education services for the community.

Affect on families, school and the community

The family focus group was attended by a diverse group of parents, many of whom indicated that English was not their primary language. These parents were not representative of the "typical" types of parents who feel comfortable within a school (i.e., they were from varying ethnic groups, they spoke a language other than English, they were employed full-time). Yet, these parents repeatedly acknowledged that the FRC is a focal point in their lives. Parents also identified the FRC and its programs (such as the preschool program and its extended and flexible hours) as integral to their ability to maintain employment; several parents stated that they would not be able to work and would likely need to go on welfare if they could not access FRC services.

Funding

Funding from the state provides the primary source of support; cuts in funding have led to a reduction in playgroups and programs offered to parents.

Areas of strength

The greatest strength is the FRC's ability to connect with and link "hard-to-reach" families with services throughout the city. Staff is very proactive and flexible in reaching out to families, attempting to meet their needs, and assisting them with educational, social, behavioral, and occupational issues.

Issues to follow-up on

The school principal would benefit from increased interaction with other school principals who have a FRC at their school to better understand the benefits of having an on-site FRC.

Please note any significant changes to staff, contact information, programming/services or funding sources

None

CT FRC Evaluation
Site Visit Brief Report

Plymouth – Plymouth Center School

Activities conducted

x Toured FRC
x Met with FRC director
x Met with school principal
x Met with FRC staff
x Met with school staff
x Met with families receiving FRC services
x Toured school
x Conducted interview with FRC director
x Conducted interview with school principal
x Conducted focus group with FRC staff
x Conducted focus group with school staff
x Conducted interviews with families

Description of FRC/school setting and community served

The FRC is at Plymouth Center School, a school housing approximately 535 students in pre-kindergarten through grade five (the FRC is downstairs along the same hallway as the preschool and kindergarten classrooms). Plymouth is a rural community in western Connecticut comprised of mostly working middle-class families (as noted by the FRC director, the community is not particularly diverse).

Organization and staffing

The FRC at Plymouth Center School is one of two FRCs in the Plymouth public schools (the other is at Fisher Elementary School). The FRC has a full-time director and a full-time parent educator; staff members collaborate with preschool teachers and teacher assistants at both FRC school sites. The school and FRC staff work very closely together; the FRC director and parent educator have worked together for four years and several school staff members are parents who formerly participated with their children in FRC programs.

Scope of services provided

The FRC provides play-and-learn groups, a preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds, home visits, summer-camp programs (for preschool children), a parent-child book club (Eager Readers) and a parent education literacy series (Raising Readers) and a variety of family workshops. As stated above, the FRC also administers a preschool program at another elementary school.

School and community partnerships

The FRC enjoys a strong partnership with the school principal and staff; in a collaborative effort, they recently received funding to create an outdoor play/garden space at the school. The FRC has a strong leadership history; current staff credited the past director establishing a successful foundation and assembling an effective core team. Staff members participate (and have leadership roles) in several organizations, such as the Plymouth Early Childhood Council, the

Parent-Teacher-Association (PTA), and the Special Education Parent-Teacher-Association. Furthermore, the FRC is administered by Education Connection, which has a strong resource network throughout the area.

Affect on families, school and the community

Members of the Yale Evaluation Team participated in a play-and-learn group and family day (where family members are invited to attend class with their child). Participating parents repeatedly described the FRC as a hub for activity and an integral resource for child development. Many parents acknowledged that without the FRC they would not have enrolled their child in preschool services or established such strong social networks. Several parents also noted that the FRC helped them to get services for their children with special needs.

Funding

Funding from the state provides the primary source of support, as well as in-kind contributions and assistance (i.e., materials, space, etc) from the school system. Cuts in funding have led to a reduction in programs offered to children and parents – particularly those programs aimed at school-age children.

Areas of strength

There is a very strong partnership between FRC and school staff; the school principal acknowledged that the FRC is able to outreach, educate and involve families in a way the school cannot; as she noted, “We don’t have the capacity to do that through any other avenue besides FRC.” The Plymouth principal was extremely well informed about the FRC and complementary about the staff and their capabilities. She also described how she and the FRC director have ongoing communication and meet regularly. Moreover, she described how FRC staff members are invested in the "school as a whole" and noted that many of the staff are parents of students, as well. She credited the FRC with helping enhance children's school readiness and making the kindergarten transition "seamless." Staff members are very proactive and flexible in reaching out to families, attempting to meet their needs, and assisting them with educational, social, behavioral, and occupational issues. Staff also acknowledged that FRC programs are completely linked with board of education initiatives.

When we asked the FRC staff what they would do with additional funding, they mentioned focus more on the school-collaboration and see if there were any programs the principal wanted to expand. Given how tight funds are right now, it was rather striking that the FRC staff thought of the school/principal's needs as a top priority. Moreover, many of the staff discussed how they "work for the community" and acknowledged that there were few other early childhood resources within the community (i.e., there is no hospital or pediatrician within the community, and only one primary physician).

Issues to follow-up on

None

Please note any significant changes to staff, contact information, programming/services or funding sources

None

CT FRC Evaluation
Site Visit Brief Report

Tolland – Bush Grove School

Activities conducted

X Toured FRC	x Toured school
X Met with FRC director	x Conducted interview with FRC director
X Met with school principal	x Conducted interview with school principal
X Met with FRC staff	x Conducted focus group with FRC staff
X Met with school staff	x Conducted focus group with school staff
X Met with families receiving FRC services	x Conducted focus group with families

Description of FRC setting and community served

Birch Grove School is a K-2 school with 730 students in the fast-growing community of Tolland. The main school building is 10 years old; however an additional wing was added just 1 year after completion because the school had already become overcrowded. The FRC is housed within two classrooms in the newer wing of the building adjacent to the kindergarten classrooms.

Tolland is a rural community near the UConn Storrs campus and about 30 minutes east of Hartford. Tolland would best be described as a middle- to upper-middle-class community; although families in need are present, they remain fairly hidden from the rest of the community.

Organization and staffing

The FRC director is paid through the grant but is in the teacher's union; she formerly taught first grade at Birch Grove School and has been teaching for 18 years. The FRC staff also includes a parent educator and approximately 25 part-time staff who conduct the various before- and after-school programs and the preschool program.

Scope of services provided

The FRC functions as the hub for services and activities for families of young children. Parents in the focus group described the FRC as "the" place to get information regarding any parenting or child-development related issues. As one parent put it, "We might have all kinds of degrees, but when it comes to raising children we are all 'kid dumb.'"

Services include a preschool program within the school and a school-age child care program that serves approximately 70 children and is at the intermediate school. The FRC also conducts the parents as teachers program and provides home visits for families with children ages Birth to Three. The FRC also runs "Learn and Play" groups; these groups were described as an effective vehicle for isolated parents to meet other parents and gain friendship and support. The "Learn and Play" groups also helped assess children with potential developmental delays; these groups

provide an arena for parents to witness their child's development as compared to other "typical" children and allow FRC staff to determine eligibility for the Birth to Three program.

The FRC program is extremely well respected and supported; when rumors of a state budget cut began circulating, the Advisory Committee of the FRC sponsored a legislative breakfast which 125 parents attended, as well as the two legislators that serve Tolland.

School and community partnerships

The FRC-school partnership is very strong; this bond was strengthened by the fact that the FRC director was a former teacher in the Birch Grove School and was well thought of by both academic and administrative staff.

Of note, this FRC has mandated that the FRC director be a certified teacher.

Affect on families, school, and the community

Families that use this FRC are vocal proponents of the program. Many families in this community are well educated and include two working parents; families rely on the FRC for social support and school age child care. One of the parents who participated in the parent focus group is a school principal in a neighboring community and was able to speak to the value of the program as both a parent and administrator. He also commented that he wished the school where he worked had an FRC, as well.

Funding

In addition to receiving state funding, the Tolland FRC is able to collect fees for the school-age child care program which provides additional funds that help support the other work of the FRC.

Areas of strength

- School-age child care
- Outreach to families, specifically to families who have children with special needs
- Connection to the public school system

Issues to follow-up on

None

Please note any significant changes to staff, contact information, programming/services or funding sources

It is important to note that the surplus collected from fees for the school-age child care program helped offset the 5 percent budget cuts incurred by all FRC.