



Report from Executive Director
May 22, 2014

I. Update on Administrative Operations

- Staffing Updates
 - **Sam McCoy** has joined our staff as a new Program Manager.
 - Sam comes to us from Northern California where he has worked with non-profit organizations in program development and facilitating partnerships, with an avid interest in social innovation and collective impact initiatives. Sam will be working closely with our Neighborhoods for Learning.
 - **Nani Oesterle** was promoted into a part-time program management position where she will focus on early childhood education.
 - Nani has worked with F5VC for the past year coordinating communication strategies and had previously supported the development of our Business and Community Leaders Alliance.
 - **John Anderson** is transitioning into a new Operations Manager position.
 - John will be responsible for contract management and implementation of the fiscal/contract management module of the new Persimmony data system.

II. Update on Commission Initiatives

- Neighborhoods for Learning
 - Santa Clara Valley NfL
 - NfL hosted a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program site this year, in collaboration with the United Way of Ventura County.
 - VITA program provides free income tax preparation to low and moderate income families and helps families access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).
 - 105 tax returns were filed and accepted by the IRS by the end of March.
 - Aggregate tax refunds for the site totaled \$155,267, which includes \$62,905 in EITC refunds.
- Countywide Strategies
 - Oral Health
 - Fluoride Varnish
 - Participating physicians and clinics provided over 7,000 fluoride varnish applications and oral risk exams in the first 3 quarters of FY 2013-14 (Ventura County Public Health).
 - Volunteer dental professionals provided close to 2,800 fluoride varnish applications and oral risk exams (SB/VC Dental Care Foundation).

- Abuela Storytime
 - 31 young children and their parents joined seniors from the Among Friends Adult Daycare for second session of the inter-generational Abuela Storytime.
 - In partnership with Ventura County Libraries, this project seeks to bring more Spanish-speaking children and families to library story hour by working with native-speaking "Abuelas."
 - Seniors enthusiastically participated in library-hosted training that prepared them to read, sing and use the felt board while sharing stories during library story hour.
- Results Based Accountability
 - Transition to Persimmony Data Collection Software System
 - Initial data transfer to populate the new system with existing program participants, services, and funded partners has been completed.
 - Funded Partner trainings are scheduled throughout the county in June, with a system launch date in July 2014.
 - Date entry and reporting for FY 2013-14 programs will be completed in Persimmony.
 - Newly formed Data Transition Committee, representing funded partners, is working with staff on identifying efficiencies and improving functionalities.
 - EVALCORP Selected as Evaluation Consultant
 - Following a bid process, EVALCORP was selected as evaluation consultant to assist in refining an evaluation plan for the Commission that incorporates a point-in-time parent survey and a series of program survey tools to be used by funded programs for continuous quality improvement.
 - EVALCORP has worked with Ventura County Behavioral Health for many years and was a prior subcontractor involved with F5VC's Annual Evaluation Report.

III. County, Regional and National Updates

- Strengthening Families Leadership Summit
 - First 5, as part of a consortium of eight other community organizations and agencies, co-hosted the Strengthening Families Leadership Summit in April.
 - Over 160 policy makers, managers, and organizational leaders attended, representing health, education, child welfare, law enforcement, mental health, early learning, probation, and other human service providers.
 - Purpose of the summit was to improve outcomes for children and families through greater alignment of policies and programs throughout Ventura County.
 - Planning group will be working to continue momentum generated at the Summit.
- Business and Community Leaders Alliance (BCLA) Workgroup
 - Small workgroup of BCLA members focusing on strategies for expanding early education.
 - Letter sent to school district superintendents on Local Control and Accountability Plans. (see attached)
 - Next steps include development of a policy statement, countywide plan to increase public will through education/advocacy, and consideration of financial solutions.

- Early Childhood – LINC (Learning and Innovation Network for Communities) (see attached)
 - Early Childhood-LINC is focused on accelerating development of community based integrated early childhood systems, and is co-sponsored by the Center for Study of Social Policy in Washington, D.C. and the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County, Florida.
 - First 5 Ventura County selected to join Advisory Team of the national project, on the basis of significant contributions F5VC has made to building a more integrated, early childhood system and dedication to improving results.
 - Staff will be attending a convening in July of all nine participating communities from around the country.
- First 5 California Program Highlights (see attached)
 - CARES Plus fact sheet includes program highlights of state program, citing increased retention and improved teacher effectiveness.
 - Fact sheet includes an anecdote from a Ventura County CARES Plus participant.
 - Fact sheet on the Child Signature Program (CSP) highlights participation across the state and the benefits realized from high-quality environments, highly trained teachers, and effective teacher-child interactions.
- State Budget - Governor’s May Revision
 - Revised budget proposal maintains the commitment to building up the state’s reserves and paying down debt along with covering the higher-than-expected costs of Medi-Cal expansion.
 - Unfortunately, there is a lack of restoration of funding to CalWORKS, childcare, preschool and other programs for low income working families.
- Legislature
 - Several early childcare and education bills are under discussion in the Legislature.
 - SB 837 (Steinberg): Expansion of transitional kindergarten
 - SB1123 (Liu): Child care and development services
 - AB 2107 (Gorell): Preschool tax credit pilot
 - Democratic members of the California Legislative Women’s Caucus released a statement this week calling for a budget that prioritizes the needs of working women and parents and the education of young children as a critical first step to closing the achievement gap.

PROVIDER ANECDOTES

“Parent Inspiring Parents” Leadership Training – Two Stories

1. “I received a phone call from a case manager that recommended a parent to the training series. When the parent signed up she said that she would try her best to make it to even the first session because she doesn’t have transportation. However, the case manager said that she went to see her client today and that she is a transformed person with only a few sessions - that normally this parent is not as outspoken or involved and that now she couldn’t stop talking about how inspired she is. She said that she was so inspired that she would like to start inviting her teen daughter to join her in the sessions in order to grow together.”
2. “Parents went all out to attend these trainings, as we saw with one young mother. Her baby was due any day, but she did not want to miss our Saturday training. While walking to the session with fellow parents, she went into full labor and was taken by ambulance to a local hospital, where her healthy baby arrived soon after.”

Fluoride Varnish – Ventura County Public Health

One of the services we provide at CHDP (Child Health and Disability Prevention Program) is a follow up with our clients after their well-child exams. During a routine follow-up call, a mother told our Community Health Worker (CHW) that her other child, a 4 year old sibling of the client, was awake the previous night crying in pain from a toothache. They didn’t have dental coverage and couldn’t afford to pay for treatment, so the mother was desperately trying to comfort the child with home remedies and distraction.

Our CHW told the mother that she might qualify for services through the SB/VC Dental Foundation and provided her with the referral. The mother was elated and grateful, telling our CHW that she had not known the importance of starting preventive oral health care with the appearance of her child’s first tooth.

As a result of this network of care, the child received the dental treatment needed, the mother now has all of her children connected to a dental home, and the family now has the knowledge and readiness to do the preventive care for their teeth.

Oxnard NfL – Ramona Preschool

Ramona preschool recently completed an Environment Rating Scale (ERS) classroom quality assessment. The assessment recommended that teachers integrate more informal reading into the school day. Teachers committed to achieve this goal and to infuse reading, books, and literacy into as many parts of the day as possible. Teachers at Ramona worked together to develop strategies for their curriculum, structure, and classroom environments that would increase children’s exposure to literacy and reading. Teachers recognize that building pre-literacy skills and cultivating a love of reading will propel students’ future learning and therefore can’t be limited to the formal Storytime and library area.

Teachers have created environments that encourage spontaneous reading by offering a selection

of thematic books in each of the classroom's learning centers. For instance, in the science area, the book selection also focuses on science themes, and this alignment has inspired students' inquiry. Recently, when reading a book about insects, the students asked questions about the insects' anatomy and began studying the pictures carefully with magnifying glasses as part of their investigation. Teachers also offer a selection of books during outside play, and students eagerly read to each other. They even incorporate reading into their dramatic play. Now, it is not uncommon to see children take on the role of teacher reading to their pupils and mimicking funny voices and asking questions like, "What do you think will happen next?", or "How do you know that?"

During Free Choice, one teacher is designated to float among the students as they explore different centers within the classroom, and she also invites students to read if they choose. At first, teachers initiated the informal story times, but now children start reading on their own; they select their favorite books and eagerly ask the teacher to read to them. Students are motivated by seeing their classmates reading, so the informal reading groups grow quickly.

In addition to the infusion of books throughout the classroom, teachers utilize puppets, flannel boards and other props to make reading come to life. One of the students' favorite books is "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?", which includes a flannel board set, and the children love to help put the animals on the flannel board during the story and predict what animal will appear next.

Overall, teachers have observed growth in students' vocabularies, their ability to comprehend stories, and their interest in reading. Now, when teachers put new books on display, students' curiosity is piqued immediately. The students love to hear new stories and share stories from their own lives that relate to events in the books.

Teachers have also been inviting parents into the classroom to participate in Storytime, either as readers, or just to listen to the story. Teachers are hopeful that as parents observe their children's love of reading they will also develop a daily reading routine that will continue to feed their child's imagination and fuel their emerging literacy skills.