



January 2010

Summary of End of Year Play & Learn Participant Results January-December 2009

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Introduction

Child Care Resources contracted with Organizational Research Services (ORS), an independent evaluation consulting company, to evaluate the impacts of Play & Learn participation as part of an overall evaluation for their Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care Initiative. This summary will share the results collected throughout 2009 from Play & Learn Groups, including:

- Who is participating in Play & Learn Groups;
- How often people participate;
- What results have been reported to date; and
- Brief discussion of the end of year results.

Background

An estimated 60,000 children in King County overall and as many as 50 percent of children in refugee and immigrant families are primarily cared for by family, friends and neighbors in lieu of licensed childcare and preschool programs while their parents work or go to school. Many of the children who struggle most in school are likely to be from families using informal yet essential care provided by families, friends and neighbors.

In 2006, Child Care Resources (CCR), in partnership with the King County Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregiving Leadership Team, launched the Play & Learn Network as a way to reach and support caregivers and children in their care. In December 2009 the ever-growing collective was made up of 28 sponsoring organizations that host 65 Play & Learn groups to help families, friends and neighbors get the support and information they need to prepare the children in their care to thrive as learners. The role of Child Care Resources in coordinating the

Network is to provide training, technical assistance, consultation and access to resources to the organizations hosting Play & Learn groups.

At a Play & Learn group, children and their caregivers participate in planned age-appropriate activities. Each group is led by a trained facilitator who not only plans and leads the activities, but also provides caregivers with information and resources to enhance their ability to care for children and help them be ready for success in school. Caregivers have opportunities to interact with one another and the group facilitator to build their social networks. Play & Learn groups typically meet once or twice a week for at least 90 minutes in neighborhood locations, such as community centers, family service centers, libraries, and churches and other religious facilities. Most groups are offered free-of-charge.

Methodology

ORS, in conjunction with CCR staff and Play & Learn Network members, developed a simple one-page feedback form for Play & Learn Groups to use with their participants. The form contains close-ended questions to assess changes reported in specific knowledge, skills and behaviors related to supporting school readiness in children. These questions were also integrated into an existing survey for participants who take part in Play & Learn Groups at City of Seattle-funded Family Centers. Completion of the form, which has been translated into 14 requested languages, is encouraged, though not required. In 2009, CCR and ORS asked all participating organizations to survey participants twice during the year; Family Centers survey their clients three times during the year.¹

ORS examined the frequency distribution of the results overall, by attendance level and by survey language. Chi-square tests were carried out to test for statistical significance among subgroups of respondents.

¹ The City of Seattle is responsible for entering the Family Center data from the completed feedback forms, and CCR carries out the data entry for the other sponsoring organizations. ORS relies on the accuracy of these data for conducting its analysis and does not audit these data.

Play & Learn Caregiver Feedback Form End of Year Results

In December 2009, 22 sponsoring organizations submitted 620 Play & Learn Caregiver Feedback Forms.²

Who Participates?

- 20.2% (124) of all responding participants said they brought a child other than their own to Play & Learn. Of these FFN caregivers:³
 - ✦ 25.8% (32) chose other; most were nannies.
 - ✦ 23.4% (29) were an aunt or uncle.
 - ✦ 20.2% (25) brought a brother or sister.
 - ✦ 19.4% (24) were grandparents.
 - ✦ 13.7% (17) were friends or neighbors.
 - ✦ 29.8% (37) of these FFN caregivers were parents who brought their own child as well as another child to Play & Learn.
- 79.4% (491) of responding participants brought only their own child.⁴
- 36.5% (226) completed surveys in a language other than English, data which may be used as a proxy for participants who speak another language. About three-quarters of translated surveys were in Spanish (74.8%, n=169), 14.6% (33) were in Chinese and 5.3% (12) were in Arabic.⁵

How often do people participate?

- Participants were divided into four levels of participation:
 - ✦ 11.3% (70) only participated 1-2 times and did not complete additional survey items.
 - ✦ 38.9% (241) participated 3-12 times.
 - ✦ 29.1% (180) participated 13-36 times.
 - ✦ 20.7% (128) participated more than 36 times.⁶

² This represents approximately a 26.3% participant response rate, based on data provided by organizations for the number of participants January-November 2009, and a 78.6% response rate among sponsoring organizations. However, four organizations that submitted data did not provide participant information. At end of year 2008, 18 of 24 sponsoring organizations submitted 784 Play & Learn Caregiver Feedback Forms, representing a 16.8% response rate.

³ Note: percentages may be more than 100 percent because respondents check all that apply.

⁴ Five participants did not complete the question about their role.

⁵ This may underestimate the number of participants whose primary language is not English. Though organizations are instructed to note if they do an oral translation, this may not always happen. In addition, some organizations have shared that their participants may know enough English to complete the survey on their own without a translation even though their first and primary language is another language.

⁶ One participant did not report attendance data.

What outcomes are achieved by participants?

Participants answered 11 questions related to changes they had experienced in knowledge and behavior since participating in Play & Learn on a scale of “A lot more,” “A little more,” “About the same” and “Didn’t learn in Play & Learn.” Results are reported below by the percentage of participants who chose “A lot more” for specific items. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

Outcomes Reported by All Participants

- Overall, the questions with the most participants reporting “a lot more” change included:
 - ✦ Understanding how children learn through play (62.3%); and
 - ✦ Helping the child/ren in my care get along with other children (61.6%).
- **84.2 percent reported changing what they do with the child/ren in their care** “a lot more” in at least one of seven areas because of what they learned at Play & Learn.⁷ This percentage is much higher than the percentages of participants who reported increasing each specific behavior “a lot more” (ranging from 52.3 to 61.6%), evidence that participants are benefitting from Play & Learn in different ways according to their diverse needs.
- **73.4 percent reported increasing knowledge** about their role in helping children be ready for school, what to expect of children at different ages or how children learn through playing “a lot more” in at least one area.⁸
- **55.1 percent reported decreased isolation** through talking or sharing ideas about caregiving/parenting with another adult “a lot more.”

Outcomes by Participant Status

- **Parents’ ratings of their changes were not significantly different from those of family, friend or neighbor caregivers on any individual survey items.** However, a significantly greater percentage of parents than FFN caregivers (75.6 to 64.4%) reported increasing their knowledge “a lot more” in at least one of three areas as a result of what they had learned at Play & Learn.

Outcomes by Participant Attendance

- **A significantly greater percentage of participants who attended Play & Learn Groups 37 or more times report changing “a lot more” in all but one area compared to those who attended 3-36 times.** Between 60.9 and 76.2 percent of high-attending

⁷ To count as a change in behavior, a participant had to rate question 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, OR 14 “a lot more.”

⁸ To count as a change in knowledge, a participant had to rate question 4, 5 OR 7 “a lot more.”

participants changed “a lot more” for each item, compared to between 49.6 and 60.0 percent of lower-attending participants.⁹

- There were also statistically significant differences in all three outcome areas related to Play & Learn between high- (over 36 times) and lower-attending (3 – 36 times) participants.
- We analyzed outcomes achieved by FFN caregivers (n=107)¹⁰ according to their attendance at Play & Learn, and they followed similar patterns to those described above for participants overall. In particular, a significantly greater percentage of high-attending FFN caregivers reported decreased isolation (77.3%, n=17) compared to lower-attending FFN caregivers (48.1%, n=39). However, because of the small sample sizes, most differences were not statistically significant and we did not include detailed findings in this report.

Outcomes by Primary Language of Participant

- **A significantly greater percentage of participants who completed feedback forms in languages other than English reported changing “a lot more” in all areas compared to those who completed English forms.**
- There were also statistically significant differences in the overall knowledge, isolation and behavior outcome areas between non-English and English survey participants.
- Interestingly, more than four-fifths of participants who completed feedback forms in languages other than English reported changing “a lot more” in their understanding of the role they have in helping the children in their care be ready for school (84.0%, n=173) and how children learn through playing (82.7%, n=167), and both percentages are significantly higher than those for English survey participants. Play & Learn may have a particularly strong impact for non-English survey participants in these two knowledge areas.
- We also analyzed outcomes achieved by FFN caregivers according to the language of the feedback form they completed (English or another language).¹¹ Consistent with the pattern for all participants, significantly more FFN caregivers who completed a non-English form reported changing “a lot more” in all but one area and in two out of three outcome areas, compared to FFN caregivers who completed a non-English form.

⁹ There was not a significant difference between the percentage of parents (23.9%, n=105) and FFN caregivers (21.5%, n=23) who were high-attending. However, a significantly greater percentage of participants who filled out a non-English form were high-attending (31.9%, n=66) compared to those who filled out an English form (18.1%, n=62; p<.05).

¹⁰ 17 additional FFN caregivers attended Play & Learn less than three times and therefore did not complete survey items related to outcomes.

¹¹ About forty percent of parents completed a form in a language other than English (39.2%, n=172) compared with 31.8% (34) of FFN caregivers. However, this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 1: Percent of Participants Reporting They Changed “A Lot More” by Group¹²

	All Forms (549) ¹³	Parent (442)	FFN Caregiver (107)	Attended 3-36 times (421)	Attended 37 or more times (128)	English form completed (342)	Non-English form completed (207)	FFN who completed English form (73)	FFN who completed non-English form (34)
4. I understand the role I have in helping the child/ren in my care be ready for school. ¹⁴	58.3 (309)	60.0 (253)	51.4 (54)	52.7 (213)	76.2* (96)	42.0 (136)	84.0* (173)	36.6 (26)	82.4* (28)
5. I know what to expect of children at different ages.	54.5 (289)	56.6 (240)	46.6 (48)	50.0 (203)	69.4* (86)	41.8 (137)	75.2* (152)	33.8 (24)	75.0* (24)
6. I have talked to or shared ideas about caregiving/parenting with another adult.	55.1 (293)	55.2 (235)	54.4 (56)	50.7 (206)	69.0* (87)	47.9 (157)	66.7* (136)	51.4 (36)	60.6 (20)
7. I understand how children learn through playing.	62.3 (332)	64.0 (272)	56.2 (59)	60.0 (246)	69.9* (86)	49.8 (165)	82.7* (167)	44.4 (32)	81.8* (27)
8. I have helped the child/ren in my care learn a new skill, such as recognizing letters or numbers or counting.	53.0 (285)	53.3 (228)	51.4 (55)	50.5 (207)	60.9* (78)	39.8 (132)	74.3* (153)	38.4 (28)	79.4* (27)
9. I help the child/ren in my care get along with other children.	61.6 (332)	61.5 (264)	61.7 (66)	58.9 (242)	70.3* (90)	50.8 (169)	79.1* (163)	52.1 (38)	82.4* (28)
10. I spend more time talking or doing activities with the child/ren in my care.	55.1 (298)	55.9 (241)	51.4 (55)	51.3 (212)	67.2* (86)	42.8 (143)	74.9* (155)	43.8 (32)	67.6* (23)
11. I read or look at books with the child/ren in my care.	52.3 (281)	53.5 (229)	47.2 (50)	49.6 (203)	60.9* (78)	38.7 (128)	74.3* (153)	36.1 (26)	70.6* (24)

¹² Participants rated how they had changed for each item since participating in Play & Learn on a scale of “A lot more,” “A little more,” “About the same” or “Didn’t learn in P&L”

¹³ This number represents the maximum number of respondents in each group. Total Ns vary by item because respondents did not always answer every question.

¹⁴ Questions on the survey start with “4” because Questions 1-3 are demographic and participation questions.

*Asterisked and bolded items denote a statistically significant difference at $p \leq .05$ between groups.

	All Forms (549) ¹³	Parent (442)	FFN Caregiver (107)	Attended 3-36 times (421)	Attended 37 or more times (128)	English form completed (342)	Non-English form completed (207)	FFN who completed English form (73)	FFN who completed non-English form (34)
12. I use community/neighborhood activities or resources to help the child/ren in my care learn and be healthy.	57.2 (302)	57.2 (242)	56.9 (58)	52.7 (212)	71.4* (90)	47.0 (156)	74.5* (146)	47.2 (34)	80.0* (24)
13. I provide opportunities for the child/ren in my care to try things on their own.	58.9 (313)	59.6 (254)	55.9 (57)	56.7 (229)	66.1 (84)	47.4 (158)	78.3* (155)	47.2 (34)	76.7* (23)
14. I help the child/ren in my care talk about and understand their feelings.	55.1 (290)	56.6 (239)	48.5 (49)	51.0 (204)	68.3* (86)	42.2 (139)	76.6* (151)	36.1 (26)	79.3* (23)

Table 2: Percent Reporting Changes in Outcome Areas

	All Forms (549)	Parent (442)	FFN Caregiver (107)	Attended 3-36 times (421)	Attended 37 or more times (128)	English form completed (342)	Non-English form Completed (207)	FFN who completed English form (73)	FFN who completed non-English form (34)
Increased knowledge “a lot more” in at least one area because of what they had learned in Play & Learn	73.4 (392)	75.6* (323)	64.4 (67)	69.4 (283)	86.5* (109)	79.0 (263)	92.7* (190)	52.9 (37)	88.2* (30)
Changed behavior “a lot more” in at least one area because of what they had learned in Play & Learn	84.2 (453)	83.9 (360)	85.8 (91)	81.7 (335)	92.2* (118)	63.4 (208)	89.3* (184)	80.6 (58)	97.1* (33)
Decreased isolation “a lot more” by talking with another adult about caregiving	55.1 (293)	55.2 (235)	54.4 (56)	50.7 (206)	69.0* (87)	47.9 (157)	66.7* (136)	51.4 (36)	60.6 (20)

* Asterisked and bolded items denote a statistically significant difference at $p \leq .05$ between groups.

Discussion of End of Year Results

- **Play & Learn participants are experiencing positive outcomes.** The majority of all participants are reporting changes in the areas Play & Learn seeks to affect, including helping children get along with other children, understanding how children learn through play, and knowledge and behaviors that support children’s school readiness.
- **Compared to 2008, a slightly smaller percentage of participants reported being family, friend and neighbor caregivers,** 20.2 percent compared to 22.2 percent at the end of last year. However, this percentage falls within the expected range of between one-fifth and one-quarter of Play & Learn participants representing FFN caregivers. Since 2008, the percentage of various types of FFN participants has also changed, with a smaller percentage of caregivers attending Play & Learn with grandchildren, friends or neighbors and their own as well as another child, but a larger percentage of caregivers attending with brothers or sisters, nieces or nephews and children for whom they nanny.
- **Increased participation in Play & Learn appears to produce stronger outcome results.** We explored the relationship between attendance and results across time and found that, in general, more participation in Play & Learn is associated with greater likelihood of achieving all outcomes. At 37 or more visits, about two-thirds or more participants are achieving outcomes (in terms of changing “a lot more” on individual items and in outcome areas), which makes a strong case for continuing to regard 37 visits as a meaningful attendance threshold.¹⁵ Current data continue to demonstrate a roughly linear relationship between attendance and outcome achievement, as the positive results seen overall are particularly strong for those who have participated most frequently.
- **Participation appears to be very beneficial for those who may represent diverse linguistic and cultural groups.** There are statistically significant differences in level of change in all areas measured for those participants that completed feedback forms in languages other than English as compared to those who completed English-language forms. We found similar differences in all but one area for FFN caregivers who completed a non-English form compared to those who completed forms in English. However, these findings should be viewed with some caution, since using the translated survey is an imperfect proxy for identifying participants whose dominant language is not English and likely under-represents this population.

¹⁵ In addition, 37 visits makes practical sense as an indicator of regular and sustained participation since it corresponds to about weekly or more visits to Play & Learn over the span of about nine months (the length of a school year).

- **Results are consistent with earlier evaluation findings, and participation in the evaluation appears to have increased compared to last year.** Prior evaluation results showed similar results, including mid-year findings prepared from data collected through May 2009. At end of year 2009, a greater percentage of organizations and participants turned in caregiver feedback forms than in 2009.
- **CCR and ORS are working on updating the Caregiver Feedback Form and survey administration process in the next couple years.** ORS is working with CCR, Play & Learn Network members (including program managers and group facilitators), representatives of funding organizations and other stakeholders to get feedback on their experiences with and needs from the Play & Learn evaluation that will inform an update of the Caregiver Feedback Form and survey administration process in the next couple years. In addition, we are working on developing and testing fun and interactive methods that are appropriate for collecting outcomes data from all Play & Learn participants regardless of home language, literacy level or cultural background. These methods will also inform and possibly supplement the Caregiver Feedback Form process to increase the validity of data collected from diverse populations as well as the engagement of organizations and participants in the evaluation process.
- **ORS, CCR and the Play & Learn Network are also collaborating on a research-based outcomes study to help move the Play & Learn model towards becoming recognized as an evidence-based practice.** This process involves data collection through standardized and validated research methods with English- and Spanish-speaking participants from a small number of groups. While the study will provide valuable data about the impact of Play & Learn on participating caregivers and children, it is not intended to be scaled out across the Play & Learn Network.

Appendix A: Play & Learn Network Caregiver Feedback Form

Play & Learn Network Caregiver Feedback Form

Please take a moment to fill out this short feedback form. This information will help us learn about the benefits of this program. No one will know who completed this form, so please give your honest opinions.

1. **Who do you bring to the Play & Learn Group?** Please check all that apply:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My own child | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend's or Neighbor's child/ren |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Niece/Nephew | <input type="checkbox"/> Brother/Sister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandchild | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |

2. **When did you start attending Play & Learn?** (Month and Year) _____

3. **How many times have you attended Play & Learn Group?** (Please check one. Best guess is fine!)

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times
<i>(stop taking survey now)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times | <input type="checkbox"/> 5-7 times | <input type="checkbox"/> 8-12 times |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12-24 times | <input type="checkbox"/> 25-36 times | <input type="checkbox"/> 37-52 times | <input type="checkbox"/> Over 52 times |

Please check the column that best describes how you have changed in these areas compared to BEFORE being in Play & Learn. Since participating in Play & Learn (P&L):	A lot more	A little more	About the same	Didn't learn in P&L
4. I understand the role I have in helping the child/ren in my care be ready for school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I know what to expect of children at different ages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I have talked to or shared ideas about caregiving/parenting with another adult.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I understand how children learn through playing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Because of what you've learned at Play & Learn (P&L), how much have you changed what you do with the child/ren in your care? Please indicate how often you do the following activities NOW compared to BEFORE Play & Learn.	A lot more	A little more	About the same	Didn't learn in P&L
8. I have helped the child/ren in my care learn a new skill, such as recognizing letters or numbers or counting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I help the child/ren in my care get along with other children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I spend more time talking or doing activities with the child/ren in my care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I read or look at books with the child/ren in my care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I use community/neighborhood activities or resources to help the child/ren in my care learn and be healthy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I provide opportunities for the child/ren in my care to try things on their own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I help the child/ren in my care talk about and understand their feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please include any comments or suggestions on the back of this sheet. Thanks for your feedback!