

Connecting the Dots: Key Findings from FY 2012-13 Evaluation Activities

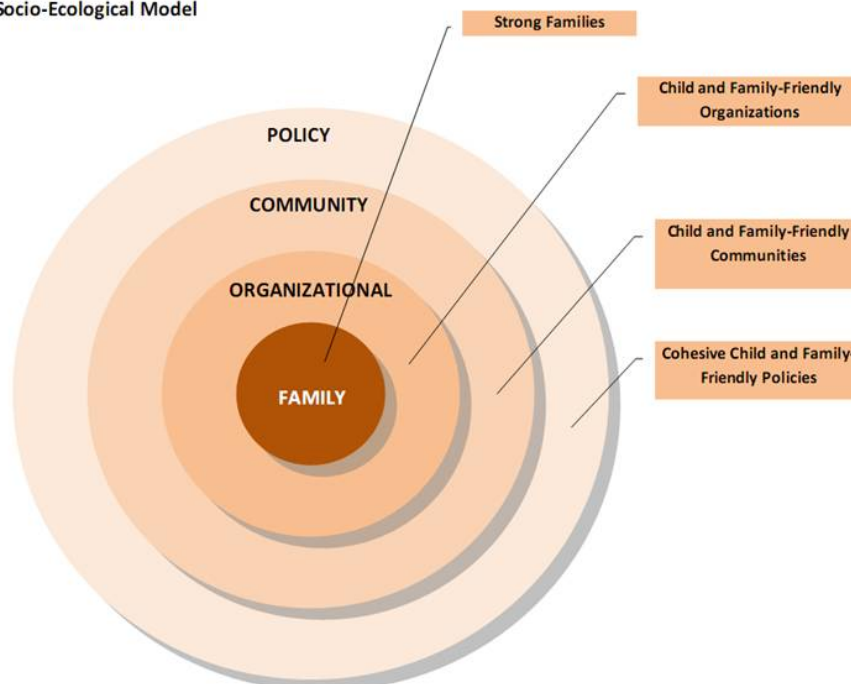
In order to promote their vision of all children reaching their full potential in a family and community that values and respects childhood, First 5 Monterey County (*F5MC*) supports initiatives and funds local programs that benefit children from the prenatal stage to age 5 and their families. In fiscal year 2012-2013, **F5MC supported 40,244 young children, parents, and child care providers**. Listed below are key findings culled from *F5MC*-sponsored evaluation activities during the past fiscal year. To access the full set of evaluation reports, please visit First5Monterey.org or contact David Dobrowski at david@first5monterey.org.

Summary of Findings

- *F5MC* continues to reach the children and families most in need
- *F5MC* parents are making a difference in their children's early learning and school readiness
- *F5MC*-funded programs are increasingly responsive to the needs of the families they serve
- More tailored referral processes are helping close gaps in service coordination, yet other collaborative activities are declining
- *F5MC* is increasingly recognized as a champion for policy change
- Early childhood development is gaining visibility among a cross-section of Monterey County's key leaders

This report addresses the core evaluation questions in *F5MC*'s Strategic Plan (listed in Appendix A). These questions are derived from their socio-ecological model (pictured below), which represents a child's relationship to interconnected and dynamic social systems, visualized as circles of influence:

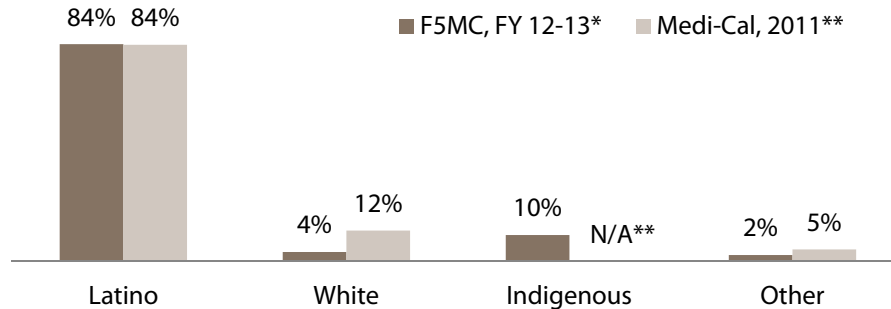
F5MC Socio-Ecological Model



Family: F5MC continues to reach the children and families most in need

F5MC children and families closely resemble the characteristics of families with Medi-Cal funded births in Monterey County. F5MC uses Medi-Cal data to help target services to those families who are most in need.¹ In 2012-13, 84 percent of mothers served by F5MC reported their ethnicity as Latino/Hispanic, which was identical to the percentage of Latina mothers with Medi-Cal funded births in Monterey County.

E1. Race/Ethnicity of F5MC Mothers and Mothers with Medi-Cal Funded Births in Monterey County

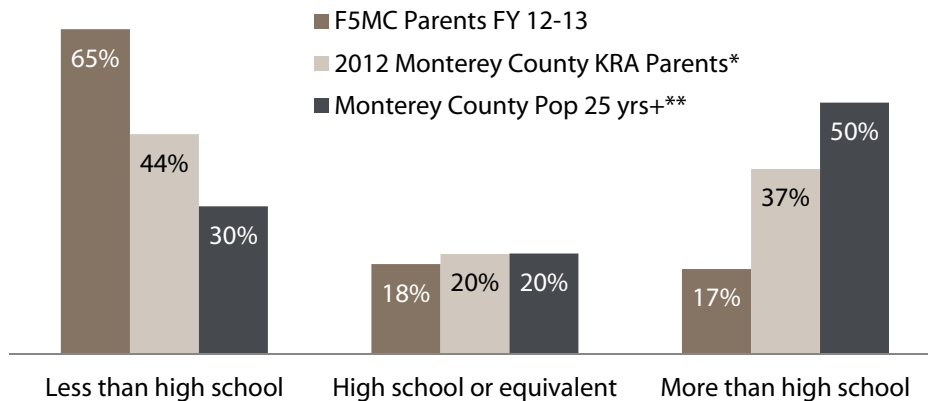


*Source: Client-Level Data from Persimmony

** Source: California Department of Public Health, Health Information and Research Section, Birth Statistical Master Files 2011. Medi-Cal funded birth data do not include an Indigenous/Native American category.

F5MC parents have a lower level of educational attainment relative to Monterey County as a whole. Sixty-five percent of parents served by F5MC services have less than a high school education. Fewer than 20 percent have any formal education after high school.

E2. Level of Education of Parents Served by F5MC and Parents in Monterey County



* Source: Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for Life, First 5 Monterey County, 2013

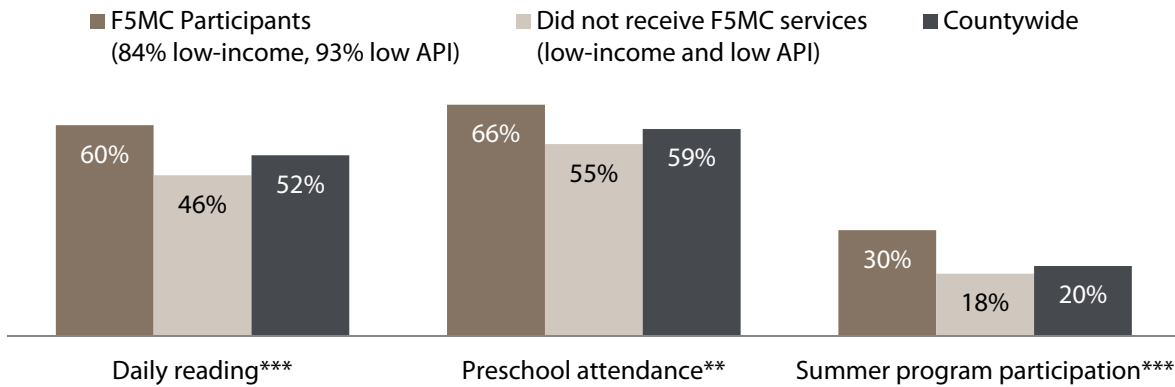
** Source: American Community Survey, 2008-2012

¹ Medi-Cal funded births represent births to uninsured, low-income women, and represent those families most in need of services.

Family: F5MC parents are making a difference in their children’s early learning and school readiness

F5MC parents were more likely than parents countywide to engage in a number of school readiness and early learning activities. Daily reading and preschool attendance are two of the most significant contributors to school readiness². F5MC parents reported higher levels of engagement in these and other developmentally-appropriate home educational activities compared to their peers³ and to parents countywide (see Exhibit 3).

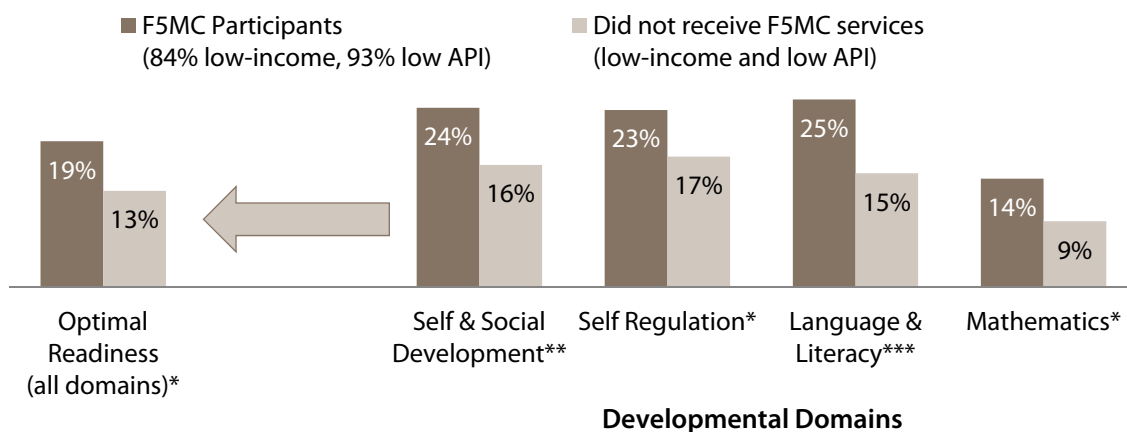
E3. School Readiness Activities



Note: asterisks indicate statistical significance of F5MC participants vs. low-income low-API group: * p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

F5MC children demonstrated greater school readiness than their peers. Children who participated in F5MC services were more likely to be optimally ready for kindergarten than their peers (19 percent versus 13 percent, respectively; see Exhibit 4). They were also more likely than their peers to enter kindergarten having achieved mastery of each developmental domain.

E4. Children with Mastery of School Readiness Domains, Percent of Total



Note: asterisks indicate statistical significance of F5MC participants vs. low-income low-API group: * p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

² As reported in the 2012 Countywide Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

³ F5MC “peers” refers to families who are low-income and whose children attend low-ranking Academic Performance Index (API) schools; 84 percent of F5MC families are low-income, and 93 percent of F5MC children attend low-API schools for Kindergarten.

Organizational: F5MC-funded programs are increasingly responsive to the needs of the families they serve

The racial and ethnic composition of executive directors and line staff is responsive to that of the community.

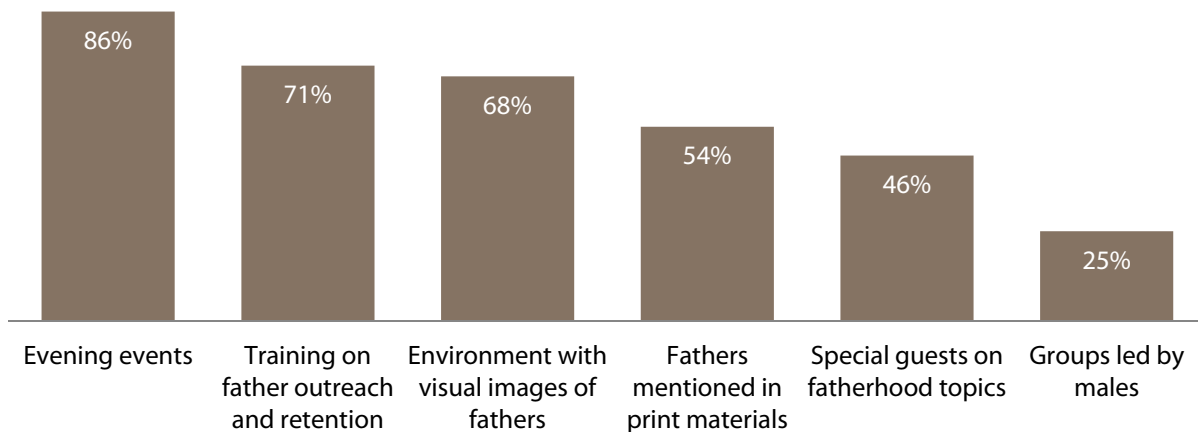
The proportion of funded partners with Latino/Hispanic executive directors increased from 40 percent in 2008-09 to 52 percent in 2012-13. During the same period, the proportion of agencies with Latino/Hispanic line staff increased from 85 percent to 93 percent. However, the proportion of Indigenous staff (Executive Directors, program coordinators, and line staff) decreased during this time, comprising three percent of all staff in 2012-13.

E5. Race/Ethnicity of Staff, FY 2008-09 to FY 2012-13

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Agencies					
	Executive Director		Program Coordinator		Line Staff	
	2008-09	2012-13	2008-09	2012-13	2008-09	2012-13
White	50	41	50	35	50	35
Hispanic/Latino	40	52	55	51	85	93
Indigenous	15	3	5	3	20	3
Asian/Pacific Isl.	-	7	5	10	25	13
African American	-	-	-	3	5	10

F5MC programs are taking steps to encourage fathers and male partners to take a more active role. In 2012-13, 86 percent of funded partners held events in the evening and 71 percent provided staff with training related to engaging fathers. A smaller proportion of funded partners had activities in place to specifically promote the active participation of males in service delivery – 46 percent invited special guests on fatherhood related topics and 25 percent ensured that some groups are led by males.

E6. Activities to Encourage Father Participation



Agency staff are exposed to cultural competency activities. Since 2010-11, there were substantial increases in the percent of agencies reporting that they “often” sponsor trainings on gathering client input and incorporating it into programs (from 54 percent to 75 percent), as well as those that sponsor cultural competency trainings for staff (from 46 percent to 66 percent).

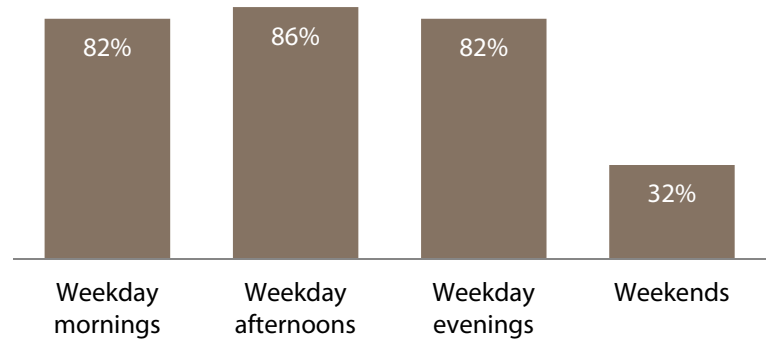
E7. Cultural Competency Activities: 2010-11 and 2012-13

Activities	Percent of Agencies That Engage in Activities “Often”		Increase % points
	2010-11	2012-13	
Sponsor training for program staff on gathering and incorporating client input in program design and/or implementation	54	75	21
Sponsor cultural competency trainings for program staff	46	66	20

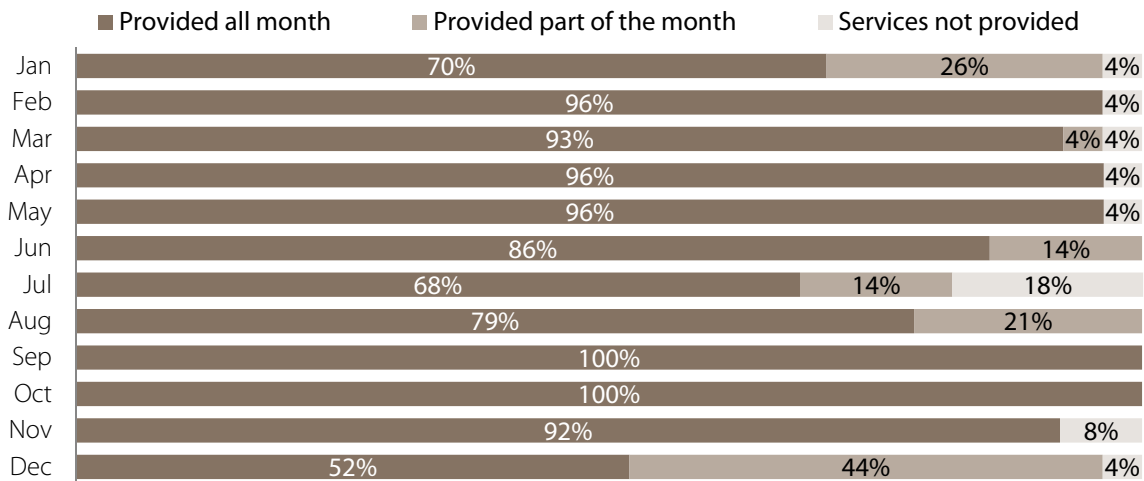
While programs’ hours of operation meet the needs of many families, some would benefit from additional activities on evenings, weekends, and year-round.

While most agencies regularly offered services on weekday mornings (82 percent), afternoons (86 percent), and evenings (82 percent), only 32 percent of agencies regularly offered services on weekends. While all agencies reported providing services “all month” in September and October, only 52 percent of agencies were open all of December – and during the summer month of July, 18 percent of agencies reported providing no services at all.

E8. Regularly scheduled F5MC-funded services



E9. Services Provided during Part or All of Each Month



Hours of operation may make it difficult for some families to consistently participate in *F5MC*-funded services. In a preliminary analysis of families who discontinued participation in playgroups, only 64 percent agreed that program hours “made it easy for me to participate in services” – compared to 88 percent of similar families who continued attending playgroups. Similarly, 44 percent of parents who stopped attending playgroups indicated that they did not have enough flexibility in their schedule to attend.

The Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Caregiver Technical Assistance Program

The FFN Caregiver Technical Assistance program uses playgroups designed to offer comprehensive support, guidance, information, and child development services to FFN caregivers in their own communities and in an informal setting. The use of readily available materials for child development activities helps FFN caregivers build upon everyday routines and learning opportunities in their home. The TA approach has developed intentionality and structure since 2010. In collaboration with *F5MC* staff, programs have incorporated a number of distinct strategies including:

- Before the program begins, FFN caregivers register for a specific playgroup at a specific location. In addition to verifying their eligibility, the **registration process** documents the names and contact information for all participating caregivers and children.
- As a result of registration for a specific playgroup for the year, caregivers meet in a **consistent group every month** to support continuity and relationship building.
- The **orientation at the start of the year** helps all FFN caregivers understand that the playgroups are designed for their active participation in order to help them learn more about caregiving. At the orientation, participants are given a binder containing: a welcome letter for the FFN caregivers, a letter for the parents of the children they care for, playgroup schedule, playgroup policies, proposed dialogue topics for the year, and child development materials.
- In the pilot year, reflection time occurred up to four times in the year in meetings that were held separately from the playgroups. Now, **the second hour of each playgroup is dedicated to reflection** and journaling, supporting caregivers to provide responsive care to children. During reflection time, FFN caregivers contemplate experiences from the playgroup and areas in which they would like more guidance.
- Together with project staff, the playgroup participants all meet together at an **end-of-year ceremony** that celebrates their accomplishments for the year. At the ceremony, FFN caregivers share reflections about what they’ve learned and also have the chance to connect with caregivers from other playgroup sites.

FFN caregivers have described early outcomes in the children in their care, including:

- Children are **communicating more and expressing how they feel**. Through playgroups, caregivers learned to engage children in dialogue more often and encourage them to talk about how they feel.
- Children have **more positive peer interactions**. Through playgroups, children have the opportunity to interact with other children, and are more comfortable in social situations.
- Children are exhibiting **greater self-esteem** and carry themselves with greater confidence. FFN caregivers note that they have learned how to help children develop a sense of confidence.
- Children are **better prepared for the routine of school**. By attending a structured playgroup, FFN caregivers feel that children are more prepared for the routine and structure of a school environment.

Organizational: More tailored referral processes are helping close gaps in service coordination, yet other collaborative activities are declining

Referral methods, tracking, and follow-up are improving. In 2012-13, 58 percent of funded agencies reported using Persimmony, *F5MC*'s management information system, to make referrals, a 20 percentage point increase from 2010-11. Fifty percent of agencies that felt their referral tracking was working "very well," an increase of 23 percentage points since 2010-11. Additionally, 50 percent of agencies reported that they "always" followed up on referrals in 2012-13, compared to only 27 percent in 2010-11.

E10. Referrals, 2010-11 and 2012-13

	Percent of Agencies		Increase % points
	2010-11	2012-13	
Use Persimmony to make referrals to other agencies	38	58	20
Referral tracking is working "very well"	27	50	23
"Always" follow up on referrals	27	50	23

Collaborative activities among funded partners are declining. With the exception of one activity—"facilitates regular meetings with other *F5MC*-funded partner agencies aside from the collaborative meetings convened by *F5MC* staff"—collaborative activities declined among the 12 funded partners who have been continuously funded from 2007-08 and 2012-13. Turnover among management and line staff within agencies and less intentional focus on the part of *F5MC* may have caused interruptions or setbacks in the process of strengthening of collaborative relationships.

E11. Interaction Characteristics, 2007-08 and 2012-13 (among the 12 funded partners who have been continuously funded)

Interaction Characteristics	Percent of Agencies That Engage in Activities "A good deal/A lot"		Decline % points
	2007-08	2012-13	
Regularly gathers and shares effective or "best" practices with other <i>F5MC</i> -funded partner agencies	71	25	46
Collaborates effectively with other agencies NOT funded by <i>F5MC</i>	90	60	30
Develops goals and work plans (i.e., scopes of work) that are complementary with those of other <i>F5MC</i> -funded partner agencies	70	44	26
Provides orientation and training for other funded agencies	48	26	22
Retains partnerships/collaborative agreements with other <i>F5MC</i> -funded partner agencies over time	80	60	20
Is aware of the roles & responsibilities of other <i>F5MC</i> -funded partner agencies	81	61	20
Has a written MOU with other <i>F5MC</i> -funded partner agencies	58	42	16
Has standard operating procedures with other <i>F5MC</i> -funded partner agencies	55	46	9
Facilitates regular meetings with other <i>F5MC</i> -funded partner agencies aside from the collaborative meetings convened by <i>F5MC</i> staff	43	43	-

Policy: F5MC is increasingly recognized as a champion for policy change

F5MC is strengthening its reputation as a primary advocate for early childhood development. The number of countywide key influencers who recognize F5MC as a policy advocate grew from 64 percent in 2012 to 76 percent in 2013. Sector leaders described F5MC as a “very strong advocate” and “clearly the number one organization” for promoting early childhood development policy.

F5MC’s policy and advocacy efforts are important to funded partners. In 2012-13, 96 percent of funded agencies reported that they regarded F5MC’s role in policy change as *important* or *very important* to its overall mission. Furthermore, the agencies themselves report greater comfort in advocating for policy change as evidenced by an increase of 18 percentage points in those who feel “very comfortable” between 2009-10 (48 percent) and 2012-13 (66 percent).

FY 2012-13 Policy Accomplishments

- The Monterey County Board of Supervisors proclaimed 2013 “Year of the Child” and identified early childhood development as a legislative priority.
- The Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) was launched in 2012 by the Monterey County Children’s Council, with financial support from multiple and varied sources (including the Board of Supervisors, Packard Foundation, and Community Foundation of Monterey County).

Policy: Early childhood development is gaining visibility among a cross-section of Monterey County’s key leaders

Professor James Heckman’s presentation has an enduring impact. The March 2012 event, co-hosted by F5MC and the Rotary Club of Monterey, was attended by local business leaders, elected officials, public officials, and leaders of community-based organizations. In his talk, Heckman addressed the need for evidence-based early childhood development programs, noting their positive and sustained return on investment. More than a year later, sector leaders in Monterey County continue to reference the Heckman event as they articulate the connection between early childhood development and their higher-priority policy issues, including violence and economic development.

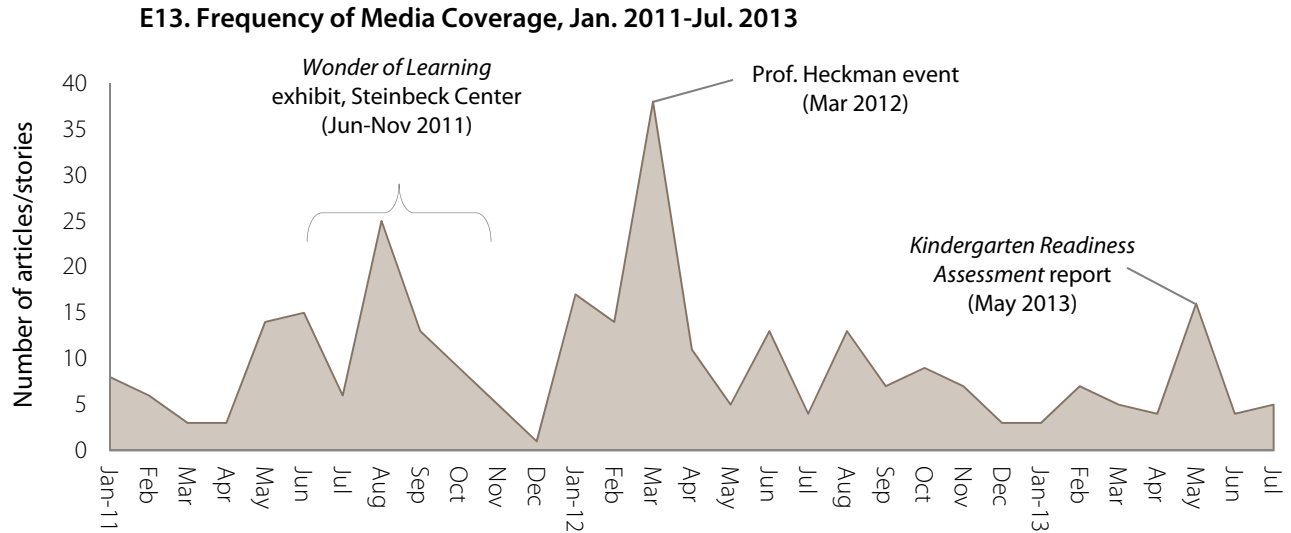
F5MC is working to reframe early childhood development as an issue with greater relevance to the community at large. Because ECD still does not rank as a top tier policy issue in Monterey County, F5MC continues to focus its policy activities and messaging on how long-term investments in ECD are related to top tier issues – especially violence and economic development:

E12. Priority Policy Issues Identified by Sector Leaders in 2013 (n=43)

1. Violence
2. Land use/water
3. Economic/workforce development

The Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) was launched by the Monterey County Children’s Council, in September 2012 in order to encourage investment in early childhood development and develop a countywide strategic plan for early childhood development. In 2013, the majority of sector leaders (71 percent) reported that they were aware of the Initiative.

F5MC activities are influencing media coverage of early childhood development. An analysis of local print⁴ and broadcast⁵ news media highlights the frequency of coverage within a pre- and post-Heckman event timeframe and incorporates other key early childhood events in Monterey County:



⁴ Sources: news media archives and LexisNexis (Monterey County Herald, Salinas Californian, MC Weekly)

⁵ Source: Universal Information Services (KION, KSBW, KSMS-TV (Univisión), KCBA-Fox, KMUV-Telemundo)

Recommendations

Based on the above key findings from FY 2012-13 evaluation activities, we offer the following action items for the *F5MC* staff, funded partners, and Commission:

Children, Families, and Community

- **Investigate and address the challenges that prevent some parents from feeling competent and capable of supporting their children with activities such as reading.** (*F5MC* staff)
- **Continue to provide specific training for funded partners about giving fathers and male partners a greater voice in the design, implementation, and evaluation of funded services.** (*F5MC* staff)
- **Focus on the essential characteristic of flexible hours by encouraging and supporting funded partners to offer programming during nontraditional times, including evenings, weekends, and the summer.** (*F5MC* staff, funded partners)
- **Continue to invest in programs that encourage parents to establish positive relationships with their children and support their development.** (Commission)

Systems Navigation

- **Strive to deepen inter-agency collaboration by proactively connecting newer funded partner staff members to other funded partner agency staff and encouraging all staff to share resources and information and formalize relationships.** (*F5MC* staff, funded partners)

Policy and Advocacy

- **Build funded partners' capacity to become involved in advocacy and policy decisions by providing them with tools and support (e.g. talking points, information about the relationship between early childhood and top policy issues in Monterey County, platforms to foster regional collaboration).** (*F5MC* staff, Commission)
- **Reach out to media outlets to raise the awareness of early childhood development investments and importance.** (*F5MC* staff, Commission)
- **Continue to expand community education about the policy priorities of *F5MC* and focus on how early childhood development is linked to other top policy areas in Monterey County.** (*F5MC* staff, Commission)

Appendix A: Core Evaluation Questions

Evaluation activities aim to answer the following core evaluation questions as set out in *F5MC*'s Strategic Plan:

- To what extent are funded programs reaching the appropriate target population(s)?
- To what extent are funded programs improving their capacity to serve young children and their families?
- To what extent are funded programs providing services that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate?
- How have individual *F5MC* programs/services improved the lives of young children and their families?
- How has Early Learning Opportunities (ELO) as a whole impacted the lives of young children and their families?
- How do impacts vary according to key demographic characteristics (i.e. income, ethnicity, language)?
- How has *F5MC* assisted in building the capacity of community groups and area programs?
- How successful has *F5MC* been as a community convener and catalyst?
- To what extent are programs collaborating?
- To what extent are programs including clients in decision-making activities?