



Family Connections

How Do You Measure Success?

Family Connections has been successful in providing a free, high-quality, parent education and preschool program for over 15 years. We must be doing something right? But how can we prove that our model is effective; that parents and children are really growing, gaining new skills and entering the K-12 school system ready to learn? Testimonials, research conducted at a national level with similar programs, longitudinal studies that began in the sixties? While these methods are useful and have proven to support our efforts over the years, many funders, in particular governmental agencies who are funding prevention programs such as ours, are increasingly looking for "evidence-based" practices; program structures that the organization itself has put into place to ensure effective results.

At Family Connections we have two primary participant groups to measure: our parents and our children. This 15th anniversary year happened to bring us to the end of a very productive 3 year evaluation project with the Children's Health Council (CHC); one in which we not only revised our entire method of measuring our success but in which we also, with the help of CHC, unearthed fascinating research pointing to the effectiveness of our seemingly harder-to-measure, hands-on model of parent education. For the first time we could point to real evidence supporting what we intuitively knew to be true all along,

*Celebrating Fifteen Years of
Parents and Children Growing Together
1993-2008*

REPORT CARD

Fall
2008



The Kickoff to Kindergarten program provides many children with their first real classroom experience prior to entering elementary school.

that parents learn best when they are able to "practice" what they are taught.

Evaluation Redesign

Two key elements emerged from the redesign of our evaluation survey. First, CHC research staff discovered through their work with us, that the actual questions we asked of our parents needed to be culturally relevant and easy to understand. In a research paper submitted to the American Journal of Evaluation, CHC staff used Family Connections as a case study to emphasize that when designing surveys, sitting down with the participants themselves in a focus group setting, enabled agencies to "create and modify a survey instrument that was significantly shaped by parent input, both in terms

of the desired outcomes assessed, and in the design of the questionnaire."

Secondly, in an effort to show results of student learning with our partner, the Sequoia Adult School, we were able to create a new data base that linked the number of hours our parents were attending the program with their survey results. We were pleased to discover that parents who attended our program at least 100 hours during the year, reported higher percentages of learning than those who attended fewer hours. This information reaffirms our belief that learning takes time and that real change in parenting techniques may take several months or more. The results also gave us the needed boost to implement changes that may serve to improve

parent's regular attendance, something that has been difficult for many of our families.

The Case for Our Co-Op Model

During their work with us, Children's Health Council staff found an abstract published in January 2008 by the Centers for Disease Control titled, "Meta-Analytic Review of Components Associated with Parent Training Program Effectiveness." This paper concluded in part that, "While many studies have been conducted on the general benefits of parent training, none had thus far broken down the specific training components and analyzed the effectiveness of the various delivery methods or content."

Of the key findings, the fact that it is the active ingredients that cause behavioral change (i.e. practicing the skill, role playing, etc.) versus the more traditional didactic (lecture) methods of learning, lent credence to our "lab" model of parents learning along side of their children at Family Connections. Indeed, researchers had found that the "program components consistently associated with larger effects required parents to practice new skills with their children during parent training sessions. Now doesn't this sound like a cooperative nursery school environment to you?

We learned a lot this past year about ourselves, our program, how to measure our success and most importantly, how to utilize the feedback and survey results to make program improvements. We'd be happy to share with you the expanded results of our survey, the full copy of the papers cited in this article and any other "lessons learned" from our experience. We are now looking forward to another "successful" school year, growing and learning together at Family Connections.

Note from the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

What a wonderful summer we had at Family Connections this year. Over 40 families participated in our six week summer program at Belle Haven and 100 children attended our Kickoff to Kindergarten program at Belle Haven and Costano schools. Behind the scenes staff were quite busy making repairs to our East Palo Alto facility, working with the Author's Night committee on our special 10th Anniversary event, working slowly but steadily on the opening of our new Redwood City site and crunching numbers as we wrapped up our fiscal year ending June 30th.

This newsletter focuses on the theme of "Measuring our Success". At Family Connections we believe we are successful in many areas of our work. From the parents and children who attend our program and show real progress and learning during their time with us, to the steady increase year to year in the number of individuals who contribute financially to our organization. I feel personally, that we are most successful in an area that is not talked about enough, our volunteer and in-kind support. Woven throughout our program, our volunteers are the backbone of Family Connections. In addition, the in-kind support that we receive every year has helped us to maintain very low overhead while providing a high-quality program. Too numerous to list individually, this strong core of donated labor and in-kind support comes to us in all shapes and sizes. Although with each newsletter we highlight one of our volunteer groups or larger in-kind contributions, we would like everyone to know right now that the staff of Family Connections thanks each of you most sincerely!

Please mark your calendar for Wednesday, November 5, 2008, our 10th Anniversary Author's Night event. Returning from our very first year will be author Thatcher Hurd in addition to other fabulous author/illustrators detailed on the back of our newsletter.

Cooperatively Yours,



Renée Zimmerman, Executive Director

Upcoming Family Connections Promos/Events

October 2008

Annual Campaign begins
Open House, Oct. 16, 4-7PM
East Palo Alto Site

November 2008

Author's Night 10th Anniversary
Nov. 5, 6-9PM

February 2009

Redwood City Rotary Car Raffle begins

March 2009

Family Connections Spring Newsletter

Growth Takes Time...A Conversation with Parent Indra Barragan

Indra Barragan returned to Family Connections this past school year for the third time. She came to Family Connections with her first child, Ivan, who is now nine years old, then with Isaias, who is now six, and she is back with us this time with her youngest son Isaac who is two. In a conversation with Indra she shared some of the ways in which she has benefited from attending Family Connections over the years.

As a mom, Indra has been able to learn the importance of spending quality time with her children. Indra shared that she has sometimes found it difficult to spend one-on-one time with her children at home. Indra feels that coming to Family Connections provides her with the opportunity to focus on her children without other distractions. However, through her years with the program, Indra has also learned to find fun ways to incorporate her children into her daily activities such as engaging them in cooking activities.

One of the most important things Indra has learned is a new approach to discipline. Indra took the tools and techniques that she learned in class and shared them with her husband. Indra says that it was not easy to change the ways in which they used to discipline their children; that she and her husband needed to spend a great amount of time picking and choosing aspects of their culture that they valued and other aspects that they wanted to change. While positive discipline has become part of their daily life, she admits that it was a long process.

Another aspect of growth that Indra has experience has been in the way she now feels she can express her ideas. She remembers how shy she was initially, and reflects on the way in which she now shares her thoughts with other parents in the classroom.

Indra is very thankful to Family Connections, and she considers our program the place where she can come and always feel a sense of support and continuity in her growing process as a mom, as well as an individual.



Indra Barragan with her children, Isaias and Isaac.



Palo Alto Kiwanis members help out at our East Palo Alto site. Pictured from left to right: Pat Farris, Marty Deggeller, Brian Dahlquist, Daryce Peterson, Rob Ruskin, Mark Cairns, and Jim Stinger

Corporate Corner

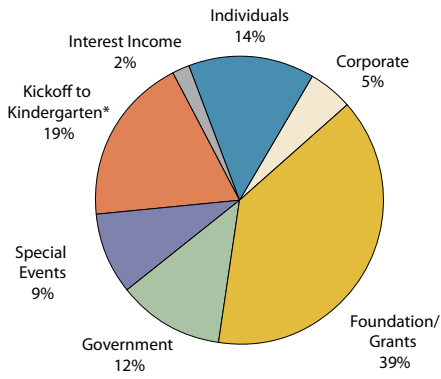
Ask any non-profit director with an aging facility what resources they value most next to direct funding and chances are they would answer, "skilled labor." Oh, to have someone who could re-plumb our badly leaking sink or repair that broken gate. Family Connections was very fortunate these past few months to have had two groups of highly skilled volunteers undertake major repairs and upgrades to both our Redwood City location and our East Palo Alto facility.

In April, as a Rebuilding Together grant, employees from DES Architects and Engineers spent a day performing upgrades to our soon-to-open facility on 4th Avenue in the North Fair Oaks neighborhood of Redwood City. Included in the day-long project was a new fence, back porch landing, repairs to the front porch and interior painting. Special thanks to project leaders, Rod Torkelson, Heather Stearns, Patrick Sanchez and Danielle Del Carlo from DES and Hank Nourse, formerly of Rebuilding Together Peninsula, for their outstanding commitment to our program.

In July a stealth crew of six Palo Alto Kiwanians spent a Saturday in the sweltering sun to build a much needed gate, repair kitchen cabinets, hang new bathroom doors and restore and paint our children's much-beloved wooden train play structure. The team was led by Brian Dahlquist, Marty Deggeler, and a former Sequoia Parent Nursery School participant and Kiwanian, Daryce Peterson. Family Connections extends its sincere appreciation for all of their hard work.

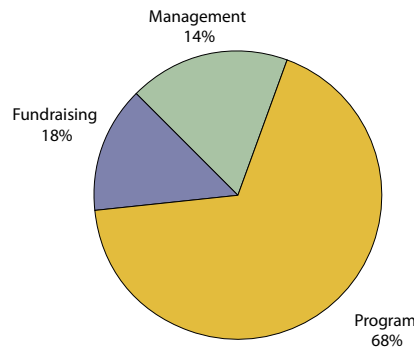
2008/09 Family Connections Agency Profile

FY 08-09 Planned Funding Support
Total Income of \$524,006



*Special Contract with Silicon Valley Community Foundation

FY 08-09 Planned
Functional Expenses

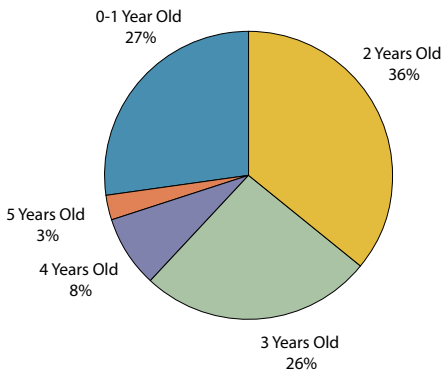


220 Volunteers

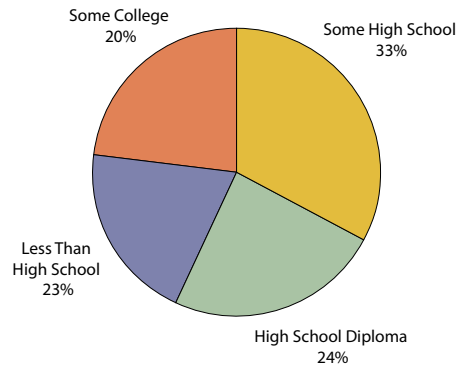
**Donated
2,277 Hours
In-Kind Support
\$62,000**

Participant Profile

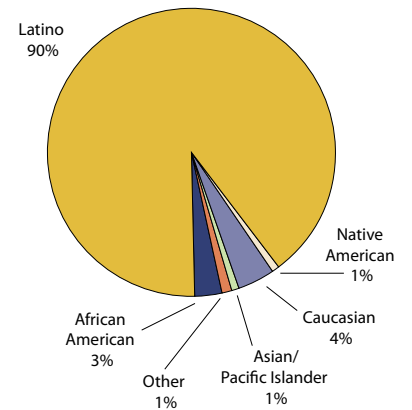
Ages of Children
in the Program



Parents' Education Level

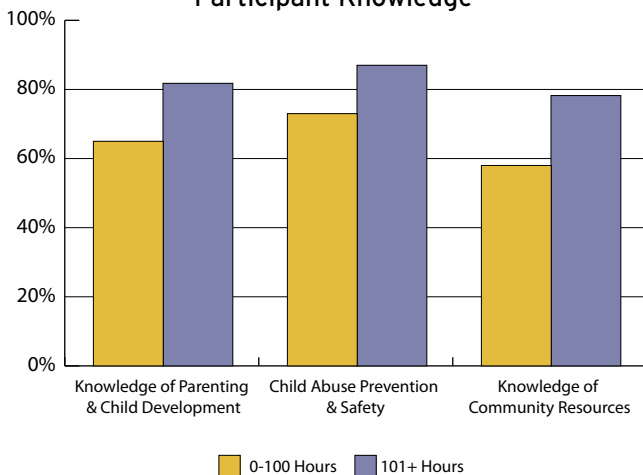


Participant Ethnicity

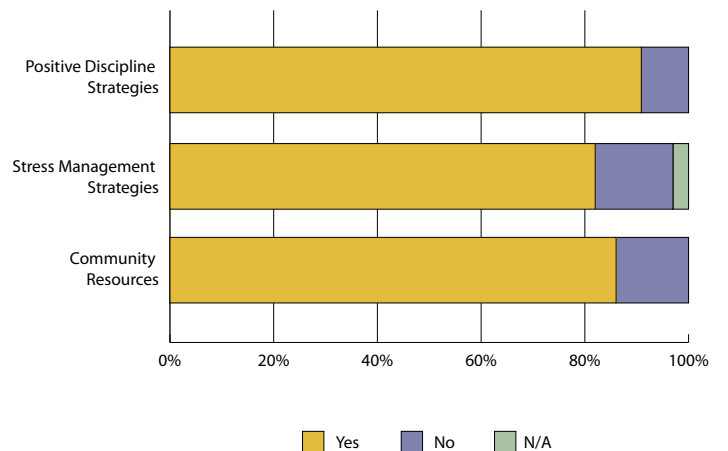


Survey Results

Percentage of Increase in
Participant Knowledge



Percentage of Participants Who Used New
Strategies Learned at Family Connections



Annual Giving Campaign

The following individual donors contributed to our 2007/08 Annual Giving Campaign and/or one of our newsletter solicitation requests. (Excludes donations to support special events and fundraisers.)

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*Celebrating Fifteen Years of
Parents and Children Growing Together*

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Family Connections

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If you know of someone who would be interested in receiving the Report Card, please let us know. Or, if you received this newsletter and would like your name removed from our mailing list, contact us at 650.369.6467 or director@familyconnections.org. Thank you to LOOK Design for our newsletter design and layout.

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10th Anniversary "An Evening with Children's Authors" Set for November 5, 2008

Our 10th Anniversary "An Evening with Children's Authors" fundraising event promises to be a special evening with three award winning authors/illustrators scheduled to speak and personally sign your books. The event will be held at the Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos on Wednesday, November 5, 2008 from 6 to 9 pm. Our 2008 Authors Night Chair, Betsy Carter, would love to see you there so mark your calendars now for this fun annual event.

Picture book author and illustrator **Anna Grossnickle Hines** clearly understands the emotions of young children. Hines was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and decided at an early age to write children's books. Her books include the award-winning DADDY MAKES THE BEST SPAGHETTI and 1,2 BUCKLE MY SHOE. These books are realistic, reassuring and perfectly tuned to young listeners. She has over fifty books to her name. Ms. Hines lives in Gualala, California.

Jeanne DuPrau was born in San Francisco and grew up an avid reader of books set in imaginary worlds. She stormed into the world of fiction writing with the publication of her novel THE CITY OF EMBER. The book was an immediate success and led to three more books about Ember, THE PEOPLE OF SPARKS, THE PROPHET OF YONWOOD and most recently THE DIAMOND OF DARKHOLD: THE FOURTH BOOK OF EMBER. All of her books explore a world in which young people are more clear-eyed about the future than the adults in power. Jeanne DuPrau writes her intriguing, exciting novels in Menlo Park, California.

Thacher Hurd, a guest author at our very first author's night, was born in Vermont and grew up in a household where the business of the day was writing and illustrating books for children. His book MAMA DON'T ALLOW, won a Boston Globe Horn Book Award for illustration in 1985. Toddlers delight in the funny, rhythmic board books CAT'S PAJAMAS and ZOOM CITY (a New York Times best illustrated book). Most recently his picture books take young readers out of this world in MOO COW KABOOM! and SLEEPY CADILLAC: A BEDTIME DRIVE. Thacher Hurd lives and works in Berkeley, California.

Go to www.familyconnections.org for more information and an order form for tickets.

Get your tickets early—our event traditionally sells out!



Our Mission

At Family Connections, a parent participation preschool for low-income families, parents learn positive parenting skills while their children develop the skills necessary to succeed in Kindergarten and beyond.

Our vision is that involved parents and well-prepared children will be able to participate successfully in their families, communities, and schools.

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