

# Core 4

## Mid-Year Evaluation Report

July 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011



January 24, 2012

# **CORE 4 MID-YEAR EVALUATION REPORT**

*January 24, 2012*

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## **Background**

At its September 27, 2011 regular meeting, the Stanislaus County Children and Families Commission discussed a report detailing the countywide 2010-2011 outcomes, outputs, and costs of 9 sites operating the initiative known as Core 4. Because Core 4 is a countywide initiative of the Commission, individual contract outcomes were “rolled up” into countywide results. Some of the significant provisions of the 2011 report included:

- Program design differences between school readiness and Core 4 were more significant and more challenging for sites than expected.
- Rather than a continuation of selected school readiness services, the change from 26 services under school readiness to four services under Core 4 constituted a new program. As a result, Core 4 was more of a pilot program than the continuation of selected parts of an established program.
- It appears that school districts used Core 4 funds to maintain school readiness staff and in many cases used the funds to supplement existing State or local programs already serving low performing groups (State preschool, for example).
- As Core 4 was more of a pilot program than an established program, Core 4 turned out to be more difficult to operate and monitor than staff anticipated. Substantial amounts of staff resources were devoted to Core 4 and its administration.
- Core 4, in its present state, may not be consistent with the Commission’s Strategic Plan’s principles and funding guidelines.
- A substantial investment of staff resources will be needed to address the operational issues noted by staff and evaluators in Strategies 1-3. The Commission’s staffing level could change in the near future as staff considers other opportunities in anticipation of funding reductions in 2012-2013.

At the conclusion of its deliberations on September 27th, the Commission decided to continue funding, through June 30, 2012, the 7 Core 4 sites expressing an interest in operating a 12 month program in 11-12. Additionally, staff was directed to develop a report evaluating the Core 4 initiative for the first 6 months of the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

## **The Issue**

As compared to the 12 months of the 2010-2011 fiscal year when 9 sites were funded, is there a significant difference in Core 4 outcomes, outputs, and costs for the first 6 months of the 2011-2012 fiscal year when 7 sites were funded?

## Discussion

Each of the seven Core 4 sites administered participant evaluation surveys in 11-12 and submitted the results to Commission staff. The data was entered by Commission staff onto spreadsheets developed last year by CSU Stanislaus consultants. The spreadsheets were then reviewed by the sites to ensure the accuracy of the information. Commission staff met with site representatives to review the countywide data compilations on Tuesday, January 17<sup>th</sup>.

Chart #1 contains operational data, including numbers served (planned and actual) and costs for the 9 sites funded in the 12 months of 10-11 compared to the 7 sites operating in the first half of 11-12:

<b>Countywide Totals</b>						
	2010-2011 (9 sites for 12 months)			2011-2012 (7 sites for 6 months)		
	Planned	Actual (% of Planned)	* (% of Actual)	Planned	Actual (% of Planned)	** (% of Actual)
Total Children Served	889	500 (56%)	315 (63%)	181	174 (96%)	106 (61%)
Children Served in Pre-Literacy Program	433	218 (50%)	118 (54%)	114	145 (127%)	95 (66%)
Children Served in Parent-Child Program	333	236 (71%)	64 (27%)	123	154 (125%)	87 (57%)
Children Who Received Behavioral Screenings	500	247 (49%)	**	174	146 (84%)	**
Average Cost Per Child	\$663	\$1,076	\$1,708	\$1,020	\$976	\$1,646

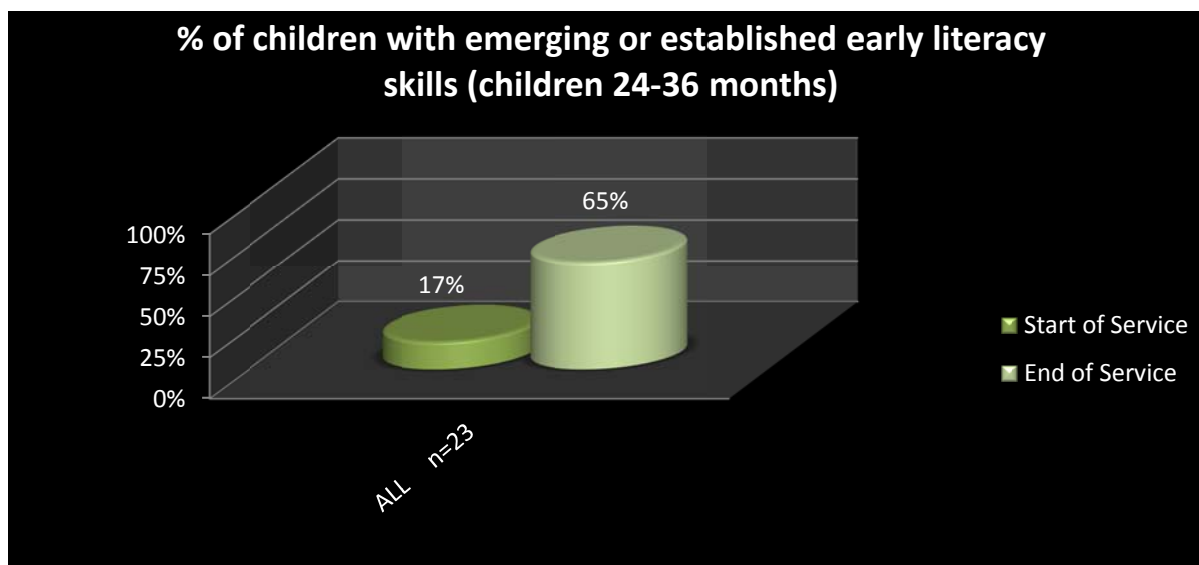
\* Children who met requirements is defined as children who attended at least 2.5 hours of classes and completed a valid pre and post survey.

\*\* No results have been entered in this cell because behavioral screenings do not require a minimum number of hours and a pre and post test is not required.

- The sites appear to be on track to serve a similar number of participants in all four strategies as compared to numbers served in 10-11. It should be noted 7 sites are operating in 11-12 while 9 sites operated in 10-11.
- The 11-12 percentages of actual number of participants served compared to planned are higher than 10-11. However, the planned number of participants to be served in 11-12 is significantly lower than 10-11, even when taking into account the 12 month versus 6 month difference.

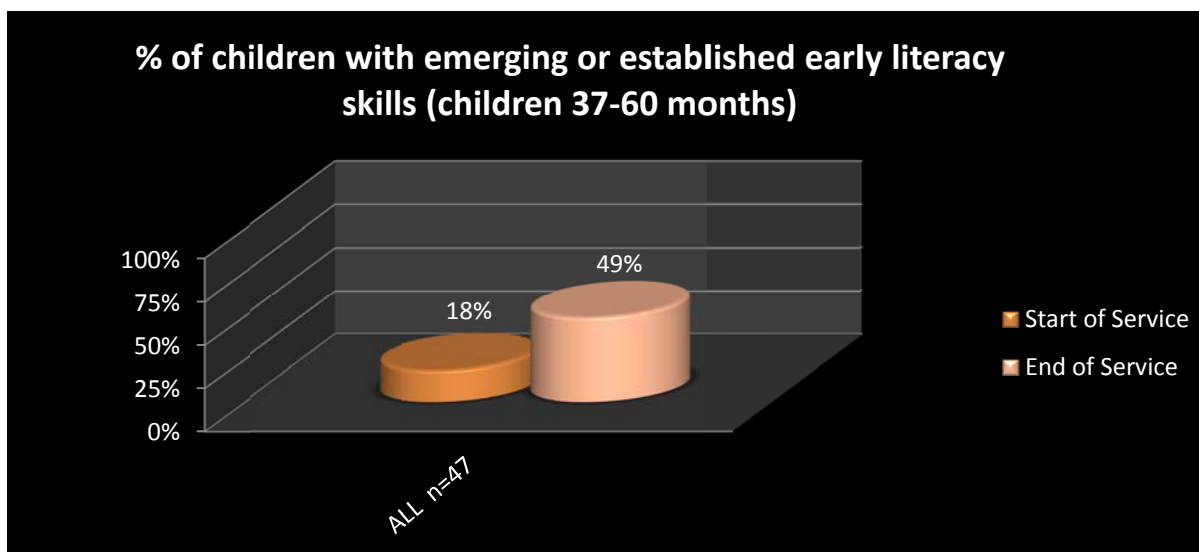
- Sites held classes of varying length (from 30 to 120 minutes) when providing pre-literacy services under Strategy 1. The average number of sessions attended by participants ranged from a low of 6.1 sessions (with sessions running an average of 37 minutes) to a high of 15 sessions (with sessions running an average of 40 minutes).
- Sites held classes of varying length (from 30 to 120 minutes) when providing parent-child interaction services under Strategy 2. The average number of sessions attended by participants ranged from a low of 4.1 sessions (with sessions running an average of 120 minutes) to a high of 15 sessions (with sessions running an average of 40 minutes).
- As reflected in the average number of sessions attended by participants, sites emphasized participant engagement. The increase in participant engagement is also partially due to a more flexible and inclusive definition of engagement in 11-12 that was designed to address the use of different curriculums by sites and to increase the number of participants with useable outcome data.
- In 10-11, the average cost per child for all 4 strategies for 12 months was \$1,076. Sites projected a planned per child cost of \$1,020 for Strategies 1-3 for the first 6 months of 11-12. The actual average cost per child of \$976 is slightly below what was projected for the 6 month period due to lower than expected expenditures rather than higher numbers of participants.

Chart #2 demonstrates the countywide impact of Core 4 on children 24-36 months by measuring the number of children with emerging or established early literacy skills:



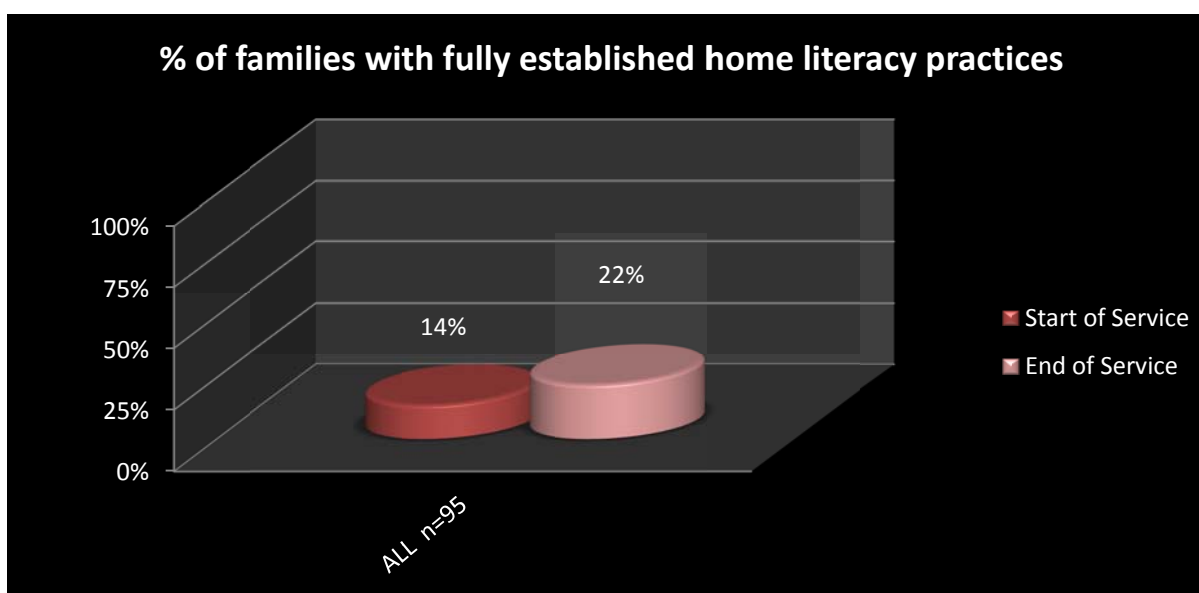
- Twenty-three children 24-36 months participating in pre-literacy classes completed a valid pre and post survey. The number of children with emerging skills increased from 17% (4 children) at the start of the program to 65% (15 children) after attending at least 2.5 hours of classes – an increase of 11 children countywide.

Chart #3 demonstrates the countywide impact of Core 4 on children 37-60 months by measuring the number of children with emerging or established early literacy skills:



- Forty-seven children 37-60 months participating in pre-literacy classes completed a valid pre and post survey. The number of children with emerging skills increased from 18% (9 children) at the start of the program to 49% (23 children) after attending at least 2.5 hours of classes – an increase of 14 children countywide.

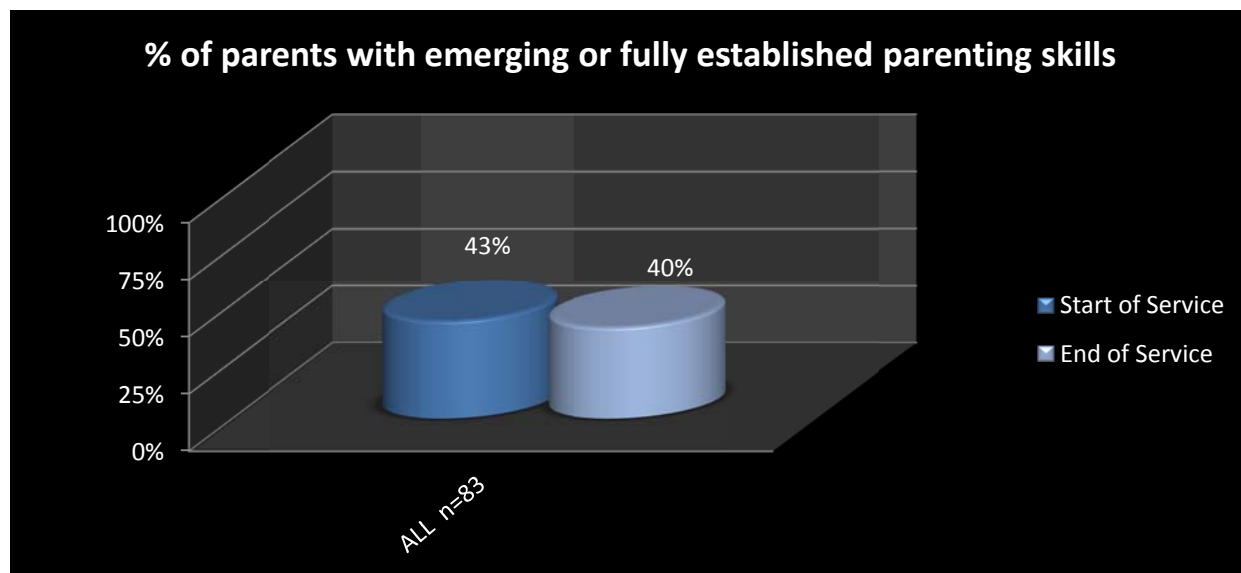
Chart #4 demonstrates the countywide impact of Core 4 on families by measuring the number of families with fully established home literacy practices:



- With ninety-five families completing valid pre and post surveys, the percentage of families with fully established home literacy practices rose from 14% (13 families) at the start of the program to 22% (21 families) at the end of the program – an increase of 8 families

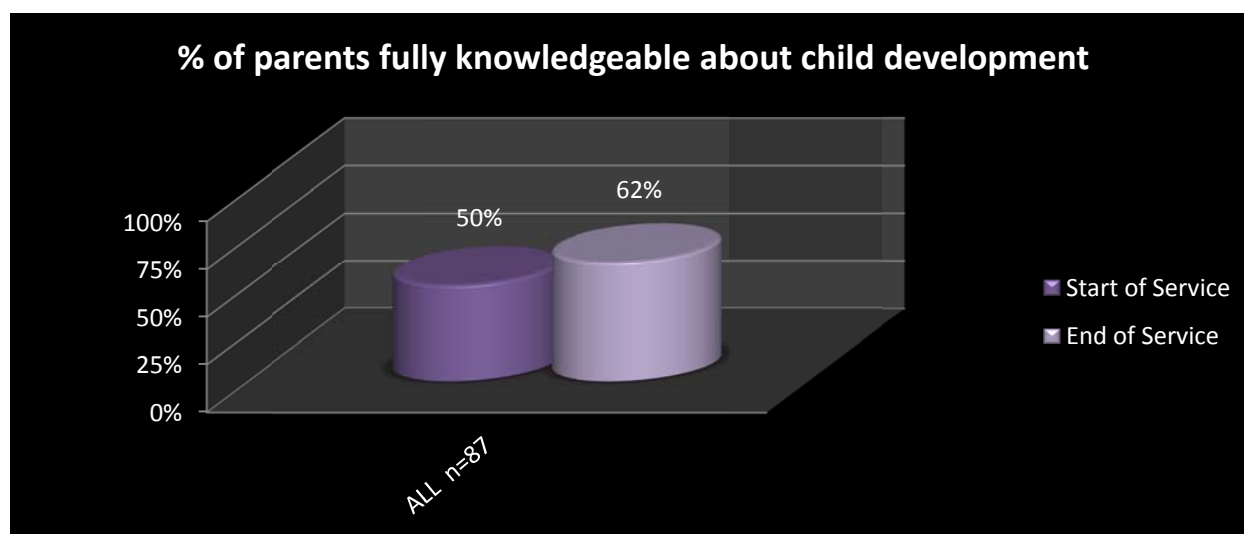
countywide. However, 21% of the scores measuring home literacy practices for the ninety-five families surveyed decreased from the start to the end of the program. There is no clear reason as to why.

Chart #5 demonstrates the countywide impact of Core 4 on parents by measuring the number of parents with emerging or fully established parenting skills:



- With eighty-three parents completing valid pre and post surveys, the percentage of parents with emerging or fully established parenting skills decreased from 43% (36 parents) at the start of the program to 40% (33 parents) at the end of the program – a decrease of 3 parents countywide. Additionally, 33% of the scores measuring parenting skills for the eighty-three parents surveyed decreased from the start to the end of the program. There is no clear reason as to why.

Chart #6 demonstrates the countywide impact of Core 4 on parents by measuring the number of parents fully knowledgeable about child development:



- With eighty-seven parents completing valid pre and post surveys, the percentage of parents fully knowledgeable about child development increased from 50% (44 parents) at the start of the program to 62% (54 parents) at the end of the program – an increase of 10 parents countywide. However, 14% of the surveyed parents indicated a decrease in child development knowledge from the start to the end of the program. There is no clear reason as to why.

## **Conclusion**

- Due to the dedication, focus, and hard work of Core 4 contractors and Commission staff, the quality of data improved during the first 6 months of 2011-2012.
- Core 4 sites clearly heard the September message of the Commission and a substantial effort was made to engage participants. For example, in 2010-2011, consultants reviewing the information supplied by contractors concluded that the average number of sessions attended by participants was around 3. The lowest average number of Strategy 1 or 2 sessions attended by participants at a site in 11-12 was 4.1.
- Based on scopes of work, 10-11 data, and data from the first 6 months of 11-12, it is projected that the total number of participants served in 2011-2012 will be close to the number served last year (which was 500). This is significant as there are 2 fewer sites in 11-12.
- Based on scopes of work, 10-11 data, and data from the first 6 months of 11-12, it is projected that the cost per child for 12 months of the 11-12 fiscal year will be close to the \$976 cost per child recorded during the first 6 months of 11-12. Costs for participants who attended 2.5 hours of classes, which by definition is the minimum needed to effect change, decreased slightly from \$1,708 in 10-11 to \$1,646 in 11-12.
- Participant engagement, as measured by attending 2.5 hours of classes, has improved due to the efforts of sites and due to relaxed, more inclusive definitions of participation.
- When viewed as a percentage, some measurements of skills and practices show slight to significant improvements (see Charts #2, #3, #4, and #6). However the number of participants reflecting those improvements is small for a countywide program – ranging from 8 participants to 14 participants.
- One measurement actually showed a decrease in the number of participants who had emerging or fully established parenting skills after parents participated in the program (see Chart #5).
- In Charts #4 and #6, even with an increase in the number of participants with fully established home literacy practices and child development knowledge, 21% of the participants had decreased levels of home literacy practices and 14% had decreased levels of child development knowledge.
- The starting points in Charts #5 and #6 indicated that participating parents already had relatively good skills and knowledge in those areas – 43% and 50%, respectively.

In summary, 2011-2012 mid-year Core 4 program results show some improvement in numbers served, participant engagement, and cost per participant. However, participant numbers remain

relatively low, the gross number of recorded countywide behavior, skills, and knowledge changes is small, and program costs remain relatively high. Despite focused, concentrated efforts, as compared to the 12 months of the 2010-2011 fiscal year when 9 sites were funded, there appears to be only a slight improvement in Core 4 outcomes, outputs, and costs for the first 6 months of the 2011-2012 fiscal year in 7 funded sites.