

Kindergarten Bridge Programs

First 5 San Joaquin

January 2011

First 5 San Joaquin funds kindergarten bridge programs to ease a child's transition from their early childhood setting to the elementary school setting by focusing on increasing their social skills, developmental skills, and their familiarity with the kindergarten classroom. Additionally, programs strive to increase parent participation in their child's school activities. Bridge programs are at least one week in length, are typically held on the campus of an elementary school, and are offered the summer before children begin kindergarten.



In the summer of 2010, 64 bridge programs were provided at 33 schools in twelve school districts including Banta, Escalon, Lincoln, Linden, Lodi, Lammersville, New Hope, New Jerusalem, Jefferson, OakView, Stockton, and Tracy¹. With the aim of serving high need, hard-to-reach children, many of the schools that offered programs in 2010 were low Academic Performance Index (API) schools (API ranking one to three). Of the 1,211 children who participated in a bridge program during the summer of 2010, it was estimated that approximately 64 percent had prior preschool or Head Start experience². The average age of children who participated in a bridge program was five.

The vast majority of bridge programs were five days long (88 percent), followed by seven days (three percent), eight days (three percent), ten days (three percent), and 15 days (three percent). The average cost of a five day bridge program in 2010 was \$77.00 per child, with an annual total program cost of \$92,400.

To evaluate First 5 San Joaquin funded bridge programs, a Teacher Survey and a Parent Survey were implemented to determine how programs were helping prepare children and their parents for kindergarten as well as to identify which factors may be associated with program effectiveness. The surveys assessed child characteristics, program characteristics, school readiness skills, child's familiarity with the school, and parent involvement in school activities. At the end of the program, parents were asked to complete the Parent Survey, and teachers were asked to complete the Teacher Survey. Seventy-nine Teacher Surveys were completed³ and 800 Parent Surveys were completed (66 percent response rate).

Key Highlights

- + More than 1,200 children participated in a kindergarten bridge program during the summer of 2010.
- + Over half of bridge programs used a bilingual aide (56 percent) and 24 percent provided health screenings such as vision, dental, and/or hearing.
- + A majority of parents (56 percent) reported speaking a language other than English at home to the child, an increase from previous years.
- + In 2010, fewer children had preschool or Head Start experience prior to participating in a bridge program compared to previous years.
- + From 2009 to 2010, there were some increases seen in the percent of parents who reported receiving information from their child's teacher, including receiving information about their child's progress in the bridge program.
- + From 2009 to 2010, there was an overall decline in parent participation in activities related to their child's school readiness.

¹ In 2010, Manteca Unified School District provided bridge programs, but they were funded by Title 1, not First 5 San Joaquin.

² Estimation based on data collected from parent sign-in sheets from the first day of class.

³ In some classes more than one teacher completed the Teacher Survey and in other classes, not every teacher completed the Teacher Survey.

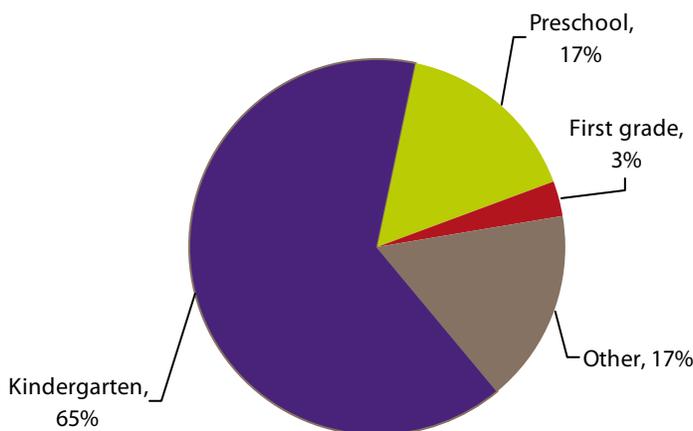
Since 2007, Nearly 8,000 Children Have Participated in a First 5 San Joaquin Funded Kindergarten Bridge Program

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of children served ⁴	2,500	2,780	1,293	1,211

- In 2010, more than 1,200 children participated in a bridge program. The majority of parents reported hearing about the program through their child's elementary school (61 percent), followed by their child's preschool/Head Start teacher (16 percent). Eight percent reported hearing about the program from a First 5 San Joaquin program or staff person.

The Majority of Bridge Programs Were Taught by Kindergarten Teachers

Type of Teacher*, 2010 (n=79)



- When teachers were asked what grade they teach during the school year, 65 percent reported being a kindergarten teacher and 17 percent reported being a preschool teacher. The "other" category includes second grade teachers, after school program teachers, child care providers, and substitute teachers.
- Thirty-seven percent of teachers who completed the Teacher Survey reported being able to speak a language other than English. The most common language reported by teachers was Spanish. Additionally, 56 percent of programs reported using a bilingual aide.

*Due to rounding, percentages do not total 100.

Similar to 2009, thirty percent of teachers reported using a standard or primary curriculum in their bridge program, including Houghton-Mifflin (50 percent), Houghton-Mifflin and another curriculum (20 percent), Project Approach (15 percent), Reggio Emilia (ten percent), and AIMS (Activities Integrating Math and Science) (five percent).

Bridge Programs Provide School Readiness Activities Using a Variety of Methods

Percent of Bridge Program Teachers Who Report Spending Time Every Day on Specific Classroom Activities, 2009 and 2010

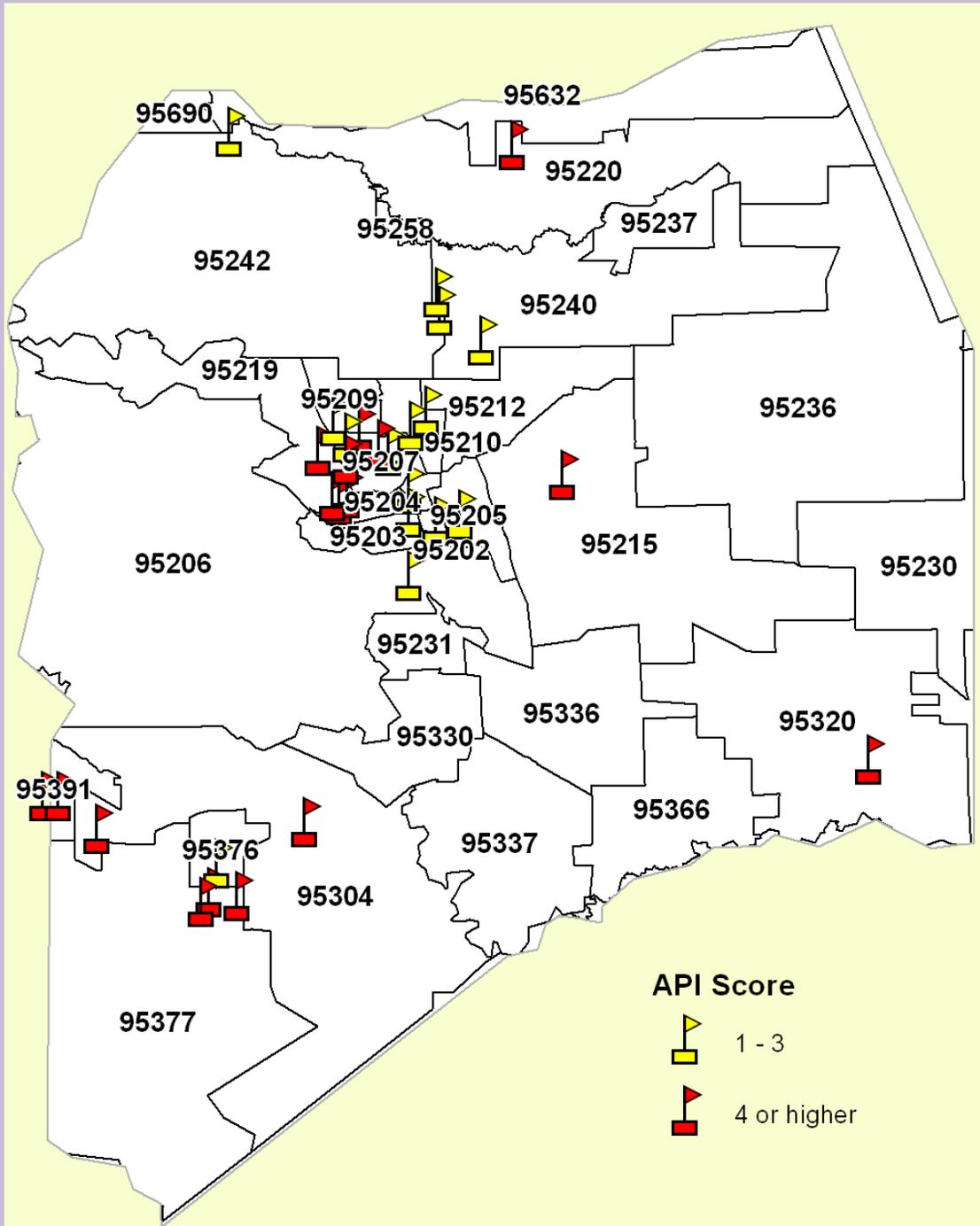
	2009 (n=75-88)	2010 (n=78-79)
Outdoor play	99%	100%
Snack time	96%	99%
Large group activities	99%	95%
Story time	97%	97%
Small group activities	88%	85%
Rest/quiet time	32%	24%

- On average, programs provided three to four hours of instruction per day. The majority of teachers in 2009 and 2010 reported spending time every day on a variety of activities including outdoor play, snack time, large group activities, story time, and small group activities.



⁴The decrease in child participation from 2007 to 2010 was due to a reduction in funding.

Bridge Program School Sites, 2010

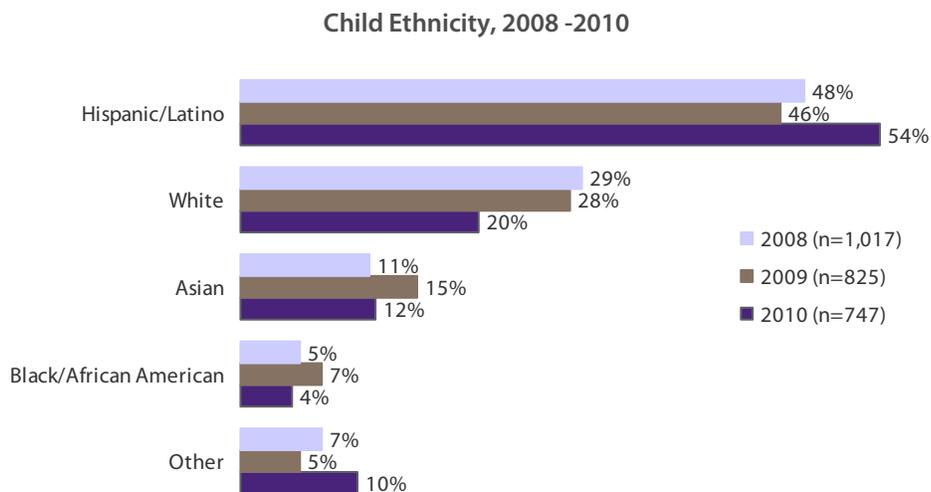


- In the summer of 2010, 64 bridge programs were provided at 33 schools in twelve school districts. Of the 32 schools with API score data available⁵, 15 schools had low API scores (API ranking one to three)⁶ and 17 schools ranked four or higher.

⁵Thirty-two of the 33 sites are mapped with API score rankings; 2008 to 2009 Base API data not available for one of the school sites.

⁶California Department of Education, 2009 Statewide Rank, www.ed-data.k12.ca.us.

From 2008 to 2010, there was an Increase in the Percent of Latino Children Who Participated in a Bridge Program

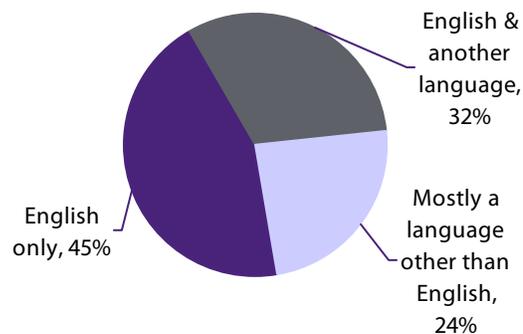


- From 2008 to 2010, the percent of Latino children who have participated in a bridge program has increased from 48 percent in 2008 to 54 percent in 2010, while the percentage of White, Asian, and Black and African American children decreased or remained nearly the same.

In 2010, 24 Percent of Parents Reported Speaking Mostly a Language Other than English to their Child, an Increase from 2009

- The percent of parents speaking mostly a language other than English increased from 13 percent in 2009 to 24 percent in 2010.
- Eighty percent of parents who reported speaking a language other than English to their child at home spoke Spanish. Other common languages reported by parents included Vietnamese, Punjabi, Tagalog, Korean, Hmong, and Cambodian.

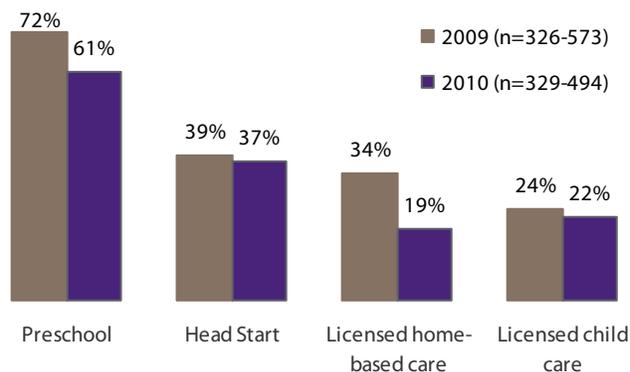
Language Spoken at Home*, 2010 (n=739)



*Due to rounding, percentages do not total 100.

Compared to 2009, Significantly Fewer Children in 2010 had Preschool Experience Prior to Participating in a Bridge Program

Early Childhood Experience Prior to Participating in a Bridge Program*, 2009 and 2010



- From 2009 to 2010, there was a significant decrease in the percent of parents reporting their child had spent time in preschool prior to participating in a bridge program.

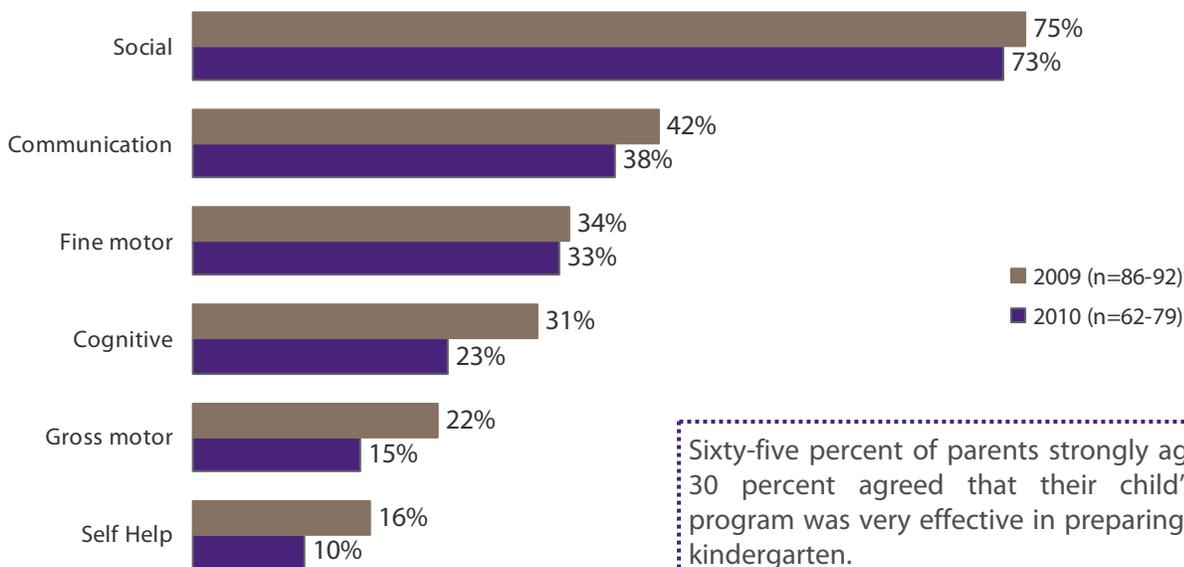
“[Bridge programs] are a great way to introduce kindergarten.”

—Parent of child in bridge program

*Early childhood experience categories are not mutually exclusive

Teachers Report that Children have the Greatest Increases in Social Skills After Participating in a Bridge Program

Bridge Program Teacher Ratings of Large Increases in Skills Upon Program Completion, 2009 and 2010

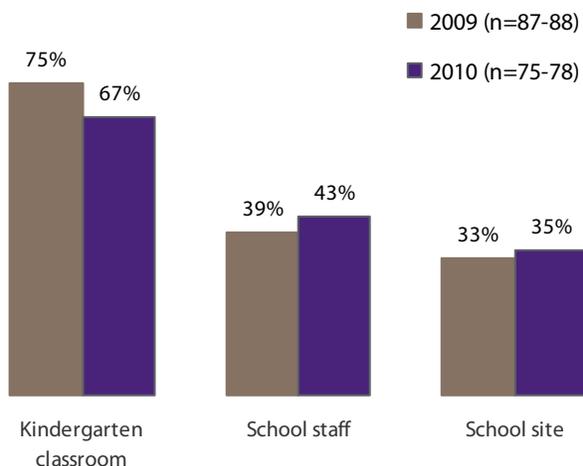


Sixty-five percent of parents strongly agreed and 30 percent agreed that their child's bridge program was very effective in preparing them for kindergarten.

- In order to prepare children for kindergarten, bridge programs aim to help children develop their social skills by teaching them how to be comfortable in the classroom (away from their parents), to follow classroom directions/routines, and make friends.
- As in 2009, the greatest percentage of teachers in 2010 reported seeing large increases in social skills among their bridge program participants.

The Majority of Bridge Program Teachers Reported their Students Were Extremely Familiar with a Kindergarten Classroom After Bridge Program Participation.

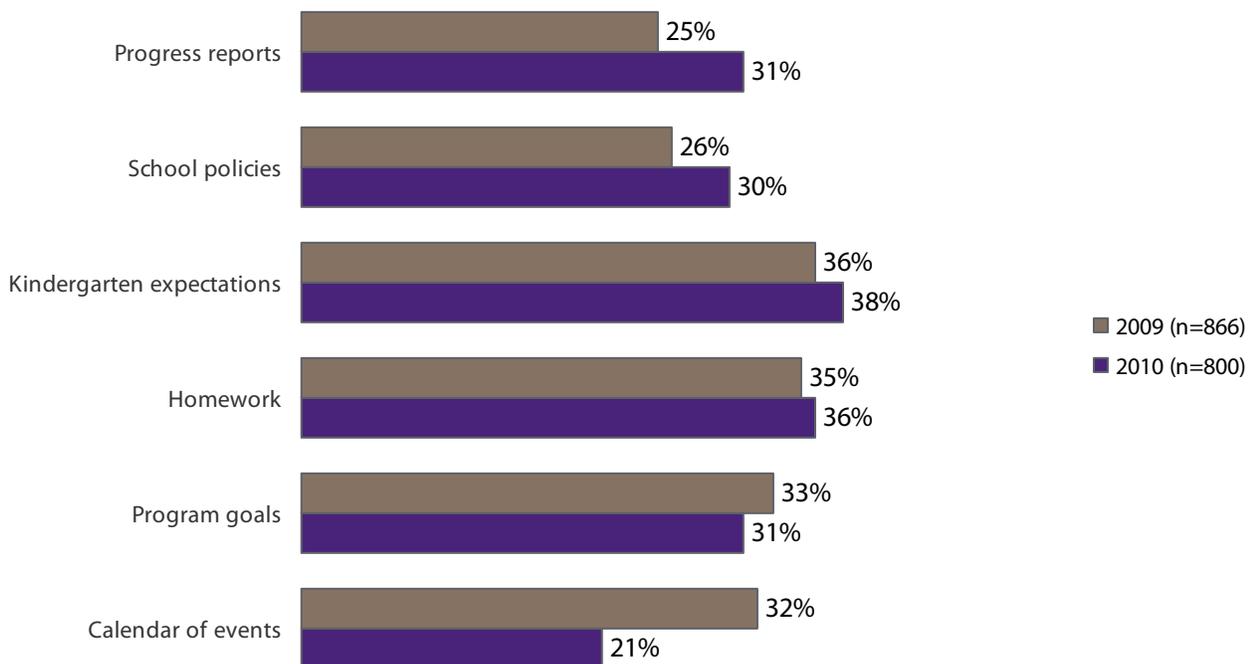
Teacher's Report of Children who are Extremely Familiar with the School After Participating in a Bridge Program, 2009- 2010



- One of the primary goals of the bridge program is to familiarize children with the kindergarten classroom.
- In 2009 and 2010, more than 65 percent of teachers reported the majority of their students were extremely familiar with a kindergarten classroom upon program completion, however in 2010, this percentage decreased from 2009.
- From 2009 to 2010, the percent of teachers reporting children being extremely familiar with school staff (teachers, assistants) and the school site (location of library, computer lab, playground, bathroom) increased.

From 2009 to 2010, there were Some Increases in Parent Report of Information Received from their Child’s Bridge Teacher

Parent Report of Information Received from Teachers 2009 and 2010



- There was a slight increase in parent report of information received from teachers from 2009 to 2010 including receiving information about their child’s progress in the bridge program (25 to 31 percent), information about school policies (26 to 30 percent), information about kindergarten expectations (36 to 38 percent), and homework to complete with their child (35 to 36 percent). Fewer parents reported receiving information about bridge programs goals/curriculum or receiving a calendar of activities.
- In 2010, 32 percent of parents reported receiving three or more pieces of information from their child’s bridge teacher. The average number of pieces received, 1.9, was similar to previous years (2.0 in 2008 and 1.9 in 2009).
- Parents who reported having a teacher or aide who spoke the child’s primary language were significantly more likely to report receiving three or more pieces of information from their child’s bridge teacher.

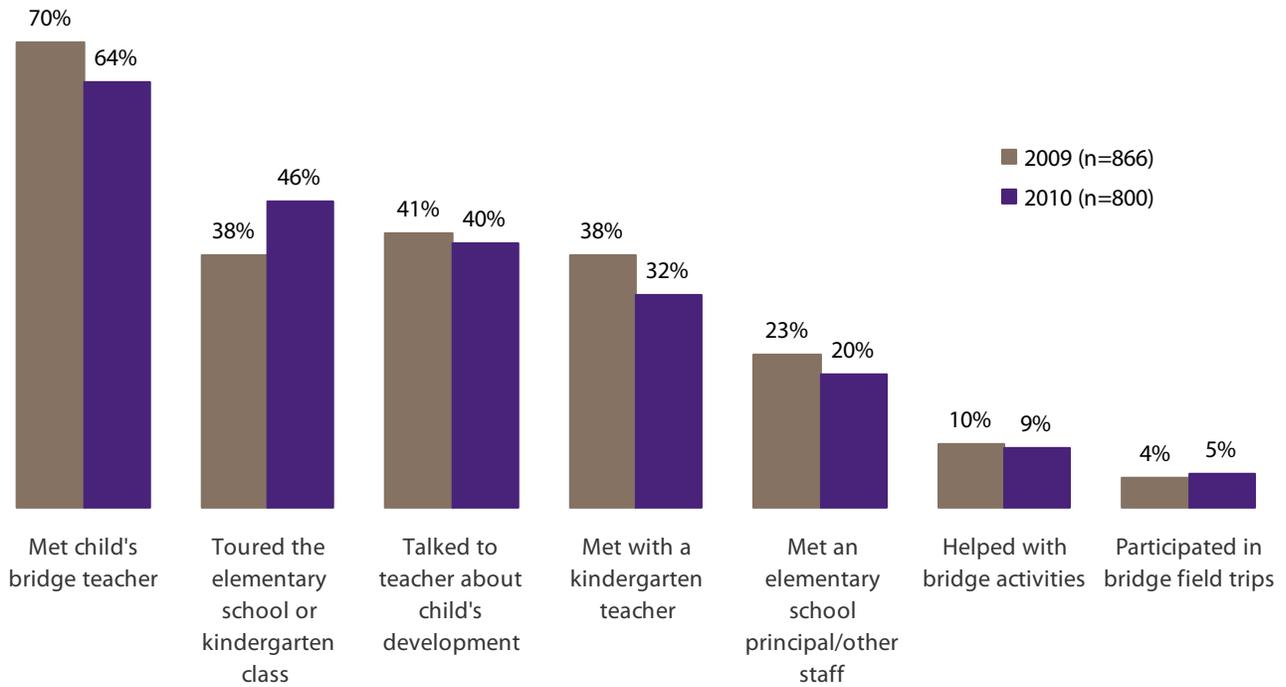
Information Provided to Parents as Reported by Teachers and Parents, 2010

	Teachers (n=79)	Parents (n=800)
Kindergarten expectations	76%	38%
Program goals	66%	31%
School policies	60%	30%
Homework	42%	36%
Calendar of events	35%	21%
Progress reports	19%	31%

- With the exception of progress reports, more teachers reported providing information to parents compared to the percent of parents who reported receiving information from teachers. This finding is consistent with that reported in previous years.

Overall, Parent Participation in School Readiness Activities Decreased from 2009 to 2010

Parent Participation, 2009 and 2010



- Overall, there was a decline in parent participation in activities related to school readiness in 2010 compared to 2009. Parents reported participating in an average of 2.3 activities in 2010, compared to 2.6 in 2009. The only area that increased from 2009 to 2010 was the percent of parents who toured the elementary school or visited a kindergarten class with their child (38 percent in 2009 compared to 46 percent in 2010) and the percent of parents who participated in a bridge program field trip (four percent in 2009 and five percent in 2010).
- Similar to the trend noted on the previous page for parent receipt of information, factors that were significantly associated with parent participation in three or more activities included parents who reported speaking English to the child at home, as well as having a teacher or instructional aide who spoke the child's primary language.



UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2009 NEWSLETTER

In the 2009 Kindergarten Bridge Program Newsletter, two recommendations were made to assist with program improvement. Since that time, First 5 San Joaquin and kindergarten bridge programs have made some strides in implementing these recommendations, as described below.

Recommendation 1: Continue to target children who may benefit the most from bridge programs.

Update: Data from previous newsletters demonstrated that children who have little or no preschool experience, children whose primary language is not English, and children who are eligible for Head Start may benefit the most from bridge programs. Additionally, because research has shown that children who are less likely to attend preschool are Hispanic, Asian, and African American, and/or are low-income, First 5 San Joaquin has been working with its funded programs to provide bridge programs in low API (one to three) school attendance areas. Data from the 2010 newsletter demonstrated that from 2009 to 2010 there was an increase in the percent of Hispanic/Latino children who participated in a bridge program and that the percent of parents who reported speaking mostly a language other than English to their child also increased. Additionally, significantly fewer children in 2010 had preschool experience prior to participating in a bridge program compared to 2009.

Recommendation 2: To increase parent involvement, continue to provide information and resources that meet the needs of bridge children and their parents, especially those whose primary language is not English.

Update: Parent involvement has consistently shown a positive effect on school readiness outcomes, although data suggest that parent involvement is low and decreasing over time. Additionally, data have shown that parents who primarily speak a language other than English are less likely to receive information from their child's bridge teacher or be involved in school readiness activities. First 5 San Joaquin has made efforts to increase parent involvement in their child's education by funding the addition of optional layers of service for preschool programs, including family literacy classes for non-English speaking parents.

CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- + Continue to support programs in low API schools and use additional criteria to target children who may benefit the most from kindergarten bridge programs.** In July 2010, First 5 San Joaquin began targeting bridge programs in low API schools in an effort to serve high need, hard-to-reach children. Data in this report demonstrated that from 2009 to 2010 there were increases in the percent of Hispanic/Latino children served, as well as increases in the percent of non-English speaking children. Additionally, from 2009 to 2010 there was a significant decrease in the percent of children who participated in a bridge program that did not have prior preschool experience. In order to continue to target children who may benefit the most from bridge programs, First 5 can also use additional data sources such as the California Department of Education school site Ethnic Diversity Index, percentage of English Language Learners, and percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (demonstrating high percentage of low income students).
- + Continue to offer bilingual classroom staff in an effort to engage and educate parents and revise data collection tools to accurately capture parent involvement in school readiness activities.** Overall, parent involvement in bridge programs has been low, and the rate of involvement has decreased over the years. Interestingly, parents reporting having a teacher or aide who spoke their child's primary language were significantly more likely to report participating in three or more activities and receiving three or more pieces of information from their child's teacher. As programs increase efforts to target children from diverse backgrounds, it will be important to continue to offer bilingual classroom staff to engage and educate parents in school readiness activities. Additionally, data collection efforts may need to be revised in order to collect information about the types of activities that parents are participating in, as the activities currently listed on the surveys may no longer be relevant.