

PARENT AND CHILD TOGETHER

Summary of Program Outcomes:
November 2020

Prepared for



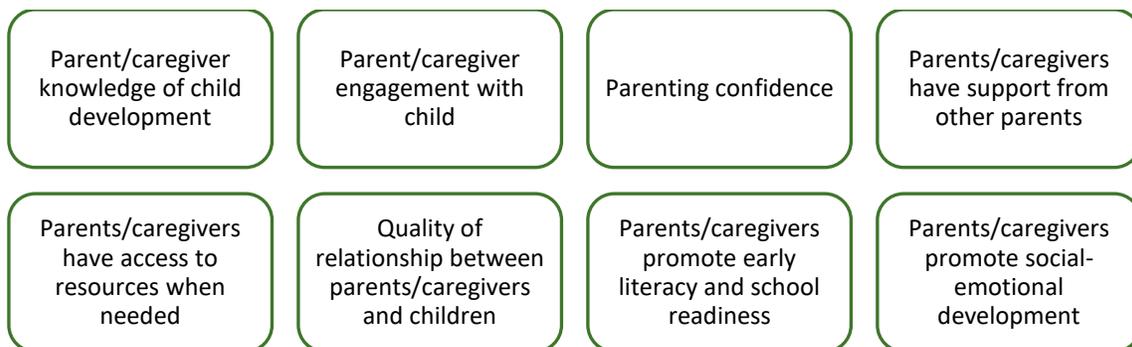
Developed by

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Introduction

Parent and Child Together (PACT) is a locally developed early learning program/playgroup for children ages 0 to 5 funded by First 5 Ventura County. The PACT program provides opportunities for parents/caregivers to engage in structured and unstructured play with their children with the support of a teacher who models developmentally appropriate parenting techniques. Each PACT includes a consistent group of participating parent/caregiver-child dyads who meet on a set schedule with a PACT teacher for several weeks. The program is flexible, allowing PACT teachers to plan and adapt each PACT to meet the needs of participants. PACT was designed to target 8 parent/caregiver outcomes (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1. PACT Outcomes



In 2018, the PACT Program Model was refined and standardized and a pilot evaluation was conducted with the first cohort of participants at 5 locations. PACT is presently operating 13 locations throughout the County. The current report includes data collected at all locations between November 2019 and March 2020.

Methods

The current evaluation utilized two parent/caregiver-completed surveys. The first is a pre- and post-survey (PACT Parent Survey) to assess changes after PACT program participation. The second survey (PACT Program Improvement Survey) was completed only at the conclusion of the PACT program. It assessed the extent to which parents/caregivers believed they changed because of the program and their satisfaction with the program.

PACT Parent Survey

The PACT Parent Survey is a pre- and post-survey designed to assess changes in parents'/caregivers' knowledge, skills, level of engagement with their child, and connections to social and community resources. The pre- and post-surveys contain 21 identical items that assess the 8 outcomes the PACT program was designed to target (see **Figure 1**). Parents/caregivers were asked to rate all items on 5-point scales (i.e., Never to Always; Never to Everyday) with higher scores indicating that parents/caregivers engage in a behavior or experience a feeling or thought more frequently.

The PACT Parent Post-Survey has two additional sections: 1) an open-ended item that asks parents/caregivers to describe how their interactions with their children have changed since participating in PACT and 2) 7 additional items that measure the family's experience with and application of skills learned through PACT. The 7 items are rated on a 5-point scale (i.e., Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) with higher scores indicating higher levels of agreement. Results from the 7 close-ended items are presented in **Appendix A**.

PACT Program Improvement Survey

The PACT Program Improvement Survey retrospectively measures changes in parents'/caregivers' behaviors and feelings after PACT participation. Parents/caregivers rated their level of agreement on a 4-point scale (i.e., Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) with higher scores indicating higher levels of agreement.

The PACT Program Improvement survey also contains participant satisfaction and program improvement questions. 20 close-ended questions asked parents/caregivers to use either a dichotomous scale (i.e., yes or no) or a 4-point scale (i.e., Not at All Helpful to Very Helpful; Very Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied; Very Uncomfortable to Very Comfortable) with higher scores indicating more positive responses. Results from these items are presented in **Appendix B**.

Survey Administration

Parents/caregivers completed the PACT Parent Pre-Survey at the start of PACT. At the conclusion of PACT, parents/caregivers completed the PACT Parent Post-Survey and the PACT Program Improvement Survey.

PACT program staff entered data from both surveys into First 5 Ventura County's database, Persimmony.

Data Preparation and Analysis

Survey data were exported from Persimmony for the current analyses.

Quantitative Data – PACT Parent Survey. In preparation for quantitative analyses, all quantitative data were cleaned and assessed for outliers, missing data, and duplicate responses. Only surveys with a matching pre-survey and a post-survey were included in the sample.

PACT Parent Survey items were grouped together to create composite outcome variables for five of the eight outcomes listed in **Figure 1**. The remaining three outcomes (i.e., engagement with child outside of PACT, support from other parents, and access to resources) were assessed in the with single items (thus creating composite variables was not possible or necessary).

Paired sample t-tests were used to identify statistically significant differences between outcomes before and after participation in the PACT Pilot.

Quantitative Data – Program Improvement Survey. In preparation for quantitative analyses, data were cleaned and assessed for outliers, missing data, and duplicate responses. Percent agreement (“Agree” and “Strongly Agree”) was calculated for each item.

Qualitative Data – PACT Parent Survey. Responses for the open-ended question were coded and themed. All valid responses were included in the analysis.

Results

PACT Parent Survey: Pre-Post Outcomes

Parents/caregivers reported high levels of agreement with most PACT outcomes (**Table 1**). 55-98% of parents/caregivers scored a 4 or above (on a 5-point scale [e.g., very often or always]) for 7 of the 8 outcomes on the pre-survey. A score of 4 or above corresponds with responses of “very often” or “always.”

Parents/caregivers continued to report high levels of agreement with these outcomes on the post-survey.

Pre-survey scores for connection to social/community supports on the pre-survey was more evenly distributed across the range of possible scores. Approximately, one-third of parents/caregivers reported their connection to social and community supports as a 4 or above (on a 5-point scale). At post-survey, almost 50% of the parents/caregivers scored a 4 or above (on a 5-point scale) on connections to social and community supports.

Table 1. Percent of Parents/Caregivers with Scores of 4 or Higher on PACT Outcomes (n=132-141)

Outcomes	Percent Scoring 4 or Higher at Pre-Survey	Percent Scoring 4 or Higher at Post-Survey
High quality relationship between parent/caregiver and child	98%	96%
Parent/caregiver promotion of social-emotional development	92%	85%
Parent/caregiver engagement with child outside of PACT	86%	81%
Parent/caregiver knowledge of child development	84%	82%
Parent/caregiver confidence in parenting abilities	79%	68%
Parent/caregiver promotion of early literacy and school readiness	68%	65%
Parent/caregiver access to resources	55%	63%
Parent/caregiver connection to social/community supports	35%	48%

PACT Parent Survey: Matched Pre-Post Survey Outcomes

Table 2 presents results of the pre-post PACT survey analyses (i.e., paired samples t-tests) for all families with a matched pre- and post-survey. Parents/caregivers scored significantly higher on connection to social/community supports, indicating that after participating in PACT parents/caregivers felt that they had more places in their communities to meet and connect with other parents.

Parents/caregivers rated themselves significantly lower in the post-survey on parenting confidence. This suggests that parents/caregivers felt less confident about their parenting abilities after participating in PACT. Of note, however, average scores for parenting/caregiving confidence on both the pre- and the post-survey were above a 4 (i.e., “very often” feel confident about parenting abilities). There were no other statistically significant differences between pre- and post-survey scores.

Table 2. Average Score Before and After PACT Pilot Participation (n=131-138)

Outcomes	Average Score (5-point scale)	
	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
High quality relationship between parent and child	4.67	4.63
Parent/caregiver engagement with child outside of PACT	4.53	4.43
Parent/caregiver promotion of social-emotional development	4.46	4.48
Parent/caregiver knowledge of child development	4.39	4.37
Parent/caregiver promotion of early literacy and school readiness	4.21	4.16
Parent/caregiver confidence in parenting abilities	4.22	4.05 ✓
Parent/caregiver access to resources	3.75	3.87
Parent/caregiver connection to social/community supports	3.38	3.61 ✓

✓ Indicates a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$)

Identical analyses were conducted using only the data from families with no prior PACT participation (n=42-43). Similar to the analysis with the full sample, parents/caregivers with no prior PACT participation had significantly higher scores on social/community supports after participating in PACT (pre-survey average: 3.27, post-survey average: 3.65).

Parents/caregivers with no prior PACT participation reported lower relationship quality with their children after participating in PACT (pre-survey average: 4.64, post-survey average: 4.53). Although scores for this outcome were lower on the post-survey, the average score after PACT participation was 4.53 (out of a maximum score of 5). This suggests that before and after PACT participation parents/caregivers were rating the quality of their relationships with their children very highly.

PACT Program Improvement Survey: Retrospective Parent/Caregiver Outcomes

Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of the retrospective outcome items from the PACT Program Improvement Survey. Most parents/caregivers (82-99%) reported changes in their behaviors and feelings, as well as their children’s behaviors, after participating in PACT.

Identical analyses were conducted for families with no prior PACT participation (n=60). The pattern of results remained the same.

Table 3. Retrospective PACT Program Outcomes (n=142-144)

As a result of this program ...	Agree or Strongly Agree (%)
Quality of relationship between parents/caregivers and children	
I am able to respond to my child’s cues better.	98%
I feel closer to my child.	98%
I get along better with my child.	97%
Parent/caregiver engagement with child outside of PACT	
Parents/caregivers promote early literacy and school readiness	
I spend more time reading and interacting with my child.	99%
I am reading to my child more often.	97%
I have noticed my child develop and learn.	97%
My child watches TV less often.	91%
I go to the library more often.	82%
Parent/caregiver support of socio-emotional development	
I can support my child’s behavior better.	98%

We have better routines at home.	97%
My child's behavior has improved.	95%
Parent/caregiver connection to social/community supports	
I interact with other parents more.	96%
I now have other families I can depend on for support.	83%

PACT Parent Post-Survey Open-Ended Response Outcomes

The open-ended survey item asked parents/caregivers to share how their interactions with their children had changed after participating in PACT. All post-surveys were considered for inclusions in this analysis, regardless of whether a matched pre-survey was available. Of the 159 post-survey completed, 123 parents/caregivers provided an open-ended response.

Parents/caregivers reported numerous positive changes in themselves and their children. Outcomes that were endorsed by 5 or more parents/caregivers are listed in **Table 4** and are grouped by parent/caregiver outcomes and child outcomes.

The response categories of parent/caregiver outcomes closely align with expected program outcomes. 7 of the 8 expected PACT outcomes were reported by parents/caregivers.¹ Only access to resources was not mentioned in the open-ended responses. As demonstrated by the quotes below, parents/caregivers reported enhanced parenting abilities that support their children's development.

"I learned the very first day, that my child is making connections with his brain and that guided me to play with him more and do different activities to promote his development."

"PACT has truly helped me develop as a parent. It has helped me learn how to speak with my child when she is upset. Helped me learn new songs and develop routines with her."

"PACT has been transformative for... my family. My [spouse] and I get weekly advice and updates on best parenting practices... I look forward actively engaging in art, singing, and play [with my child]."

"I'm learning how to speak to my child and bring out the positive in my child. Focus on activities that make it easier for my child to learn and follow directions."

Parents/caregivers also reported numerous changes in their children including improvements in communication and language; exploration and independence; executive function and self-regulation; and sensory and motor development. Children also showed greater frequency of interactions with adults and peers, as well as social behaviors and emotional expression. As exemplified by the quotes below, parents/caregivers often mentioned

¹ Parent/caregiver behaviors in the "high quality relationship between parent/caregiver and child" and the "applied parenting skills" outcome categories both include behaviors that promote children's social-emotional development.

improvements in multiple outcome categories suggesting that PACT enhances development across domains (e.g., communication and motor skills).

“My son is more active and his communication is better. Everytime when he listens to a song he tries to sing. He pays more attention when I talk to him and he also plays with more children.”

“My child is more outgoing and interacts with other kids when around them. He developed on speaking a lot way more. Same with his feelings he tells me when he is sad, happy, excited etc.”

“She has learned to share and play nicely with others to take turns, treat toys and friends with respect and to pay attention to teachers, sit quietly when appropriate and follow directions.”

“helped [child] with... language development, social skills, problem solving, sharing, and being more empathetic towards other children. [Child] have been singing and dancing more, and sharing better with other children.”

In response to the open-ended question, parents/caregivers also complimented PACT or stated that they would recommend it to others (n=23), thanked the program (n=12), praised specific teachers or stated that they hoped to be selected for another round of PACT programming (n=5).

Table 4. Parent/Caregiver Identified PACT Outcomes (n=123)

Outcome	n
Parent/Caregiver Outcomes	
Parent/Caregiver Engagement with Child outside of PACT Parents/caregivers reported increased use of activities they learned during PACT classes (e.g., songs, sensory activities, dancing, spending time outside).	32
High Quality Relationship between Parent/Caregiver and Child Parents/caregivers reported improved relationships with their children including better communication; giving their children more attention; being more patient, soothing and responsive; and increased quality time.	30
Parent/Caregiver Knowledge of Child Development Parents/caregivers reported increased knowledge of child development (including developmental milestones) and high-quality parenting practices/techniques.	22
Applied Parenting Skills Parents/caregivers reported promoting their children’s independence and exploration; observing their children to better understand/support children’s needs and interests; parenting more consistently over time; and developing routines for family/children.	16
Parent/Caregiver Promotion of Early Literacy Parents/caregivers reported that the read or sang more with their children.	11
Parent/Caregiver Confidence in Parenting Abilities Parents/caregivers reported being a better or more confident parent/caregiver.	5
Parent/Caregiver Support Parents/caregivers reported benefiting from opportunities to interact with other parents/caregivers in PACT and build networks outside of PACT. Other parents reporting sharing PACT materials or discussing what was learned during PACT with a co-parent.	5
Child Outcomes	
Interpersonal Relations – Peer Specific Children played or interacted with other children more frequently. Parents also reported that children were more comfortable interacting with their peers.	36
Social Behaviors and Emotional Expression Children displayed more patience, increased sharing/turn-taking, or emotional expression (e.g., using words to describe feelings). Some children showed empathy towards others.	26
Communication and Language Children showed increased or improved talking or singing. Children showed greater enjoyment or frequency of reading with parent/caregiver.	23
Exploration and Independence Children explored their environments more and participated in activities with greater frequency. Parents may have also reported higher levels of child independence, confidence, or activity.	15
Executive Function and Self-Regulation Children showed longer attention spans or enhanced abilities to follow directions or rules.	14
Interpersonal Relations – General Children were more social generally or with non-parental adults.	10
General Positive Change Parents/caregivers reported overall improvement in their child after PACT participation.	9
Motor and Sensory Development Children showed improved gross or fine motor skills or increased comfort touching different textures.	6

Summary of Findings

A pre-post survey, retrospective survey questions, and open-ended/qualitative data were used to investigate the benefits of PACT participation. In summary:

- The matched pre-post analysis found that parents/caregivers reported significantly higher levels of connections to social/community supports after PACT participation. This finding was replicated in the analysis of first time PACT participants.
- In two outcome areas, matched pre-post analyses suggested that parents/caregivers had lower levels of desired outcomes after PACT participation. First, in the full sample, parenting confidence was lower after PACT participation. Second, among first-time PACT participants, parent/caregiver-child relationship quality was rated as lower by PACT participants. However, average scores for both outcomes remained above a 4 on a 5-point scale.
- There were no identified differences in pre-post scores for the remainder of the PACT outcomes.
- In response to retrospective close-ended questions, high numbers of parents/caregivers reported changing their parenting behaviors after PACT participation. Many of the post-participation benefits align with planned program outcomes including improvements in parent-child relationship quality, engagement with the child outside of PACT, promotion of early literacy and promotion of socio-emotional development, and connections to community and social supports.
- Parents/caregivers mentioned 7 of the 8 planned program outcomes in their open-ended responses. Parents/caregivers also reported program benefits for their children in variety of areas including interpersonal relationships, communication, executive functioning, and exploration and independence.

The retrospective quantitative and qualitative results are complementary and suggest that the program is beneficial to participating families. However, the pattern of findings from the pre-post data is more complex with a mix of positive, negative and neutral findings.

A limitation of the pre-post data are the high pre-survey scores (i.e., ceiling effects) for most of the outcomes. High scores at pre-survey may prevent the identification of participation-related changes. Most outcomes impacted by ceiling effects were mentioned by parents/caregivers in the open-ended question. For some of these outcomes, parents/caregivers also reported changes via the retrospective survey items.

The pre-post analysis did not find evidence of enhanced access to resources. Unlike other outcomes, no retrospective items addressed this outcome area. In addition, although parents did not mention access to resources, the open-ended prompt (i.e., how have your interactions with your child changed?) seems unlikely to elicit information about this outcome. Future data collection efforts may benefit from including specific questions about this outcome area.

Connection to social/community supports did not have ceiling effects in the pre-post data. In addition, evidence for enhanced connection to social/community supports was found in all three data sources (i.e., pre-post, retrospective, and qualitative). The pre-post data further enhances retrospective and qualitative evidence that PACT participation is associated with increased social/community supports.

Taken together, the pattern of results suggests that PACT may be beneficial to families in multiple outcome areas. The findings also highlight the value of using multiple measurement strategies to assess and understand program outcomes. While the pre-post assessment did not yield all expected results (potentially due to ceiling effects), parent/caregiver changes post-PACT participation were identified through retrospective survey items. These findings were complemented by qualitative data, which provided rich descriptions of PACT-related parent/caregiver and child changes.

Appendix A: Parent/Caregiver Experience with PACT and Application of Skills

The post-survey contains 7 items that are not present on the pre-survey. These items measure the family's experience with PACT and the application of the skills learned through PACT. Parents/caregivers reported consistently positive experiences with the PACT program (**Table 5**).

A small number of respondents (n=10) disagreed with any of the experience/application items. In these cases, respondents typically disagreed with one or more items in this question set, but not all of the items, suggesting that they may not have benefitted from a specific aspect of the program, but found the program to useful in other ways.

Table 5. PACT Parent Post-Survey: Parent/Caregiver Experiences with PACT (n=152-153)

	Agree or Strongly Agree (%)
Participating in the PACT was a positive experience for me.	96%
Participating in the PACT was a positive experience for my child.	96%
My child's development was enhanced by participating in the PACT.	95%
I use activities with my child that I learned at PACT.	94%
My PACT teacher was knowledgeable about child development.	93%
My PACT teacher was knowledgeable about parenting.	92%
I learned important parenting skills during the PACT.	91%

Appendix B: Participant Satisfaction and Program Improvement

The PACT Program Improvement Survey contains 20 items that measure participant satisfaction with and areas for program improvement.

Table 6. PACT Program Satisfaction (n=142)

	Satisfied or Very Satisfied (%)
Overall, how satisfied are you with this program for you and your family?	100%
	Yes (%)
Would you recommend this class to others?	99%

Table 7. Satisfaction with Program Environment and Timing (n=143-144)

	Yes (%)
Was the environment pleasing and inviting?	100%
Was the location of this program convenient for you?	98%
Was this program offered at times that were convenient for you?	97%

Table 8. Satisfaction with Program Staff (n=142-144)

	Comfortable or Very Comfortable (%)
Overall, how comfortable are you with the program staff?	100%
How helpful have the Program Staff been with ...	Helpful or Very Helpful (%)
Talking with you about what you think is important for your child and family?	100%
Listening to what you had to say?	100%
Working respectfully with your child?	100%
Working respectfully with you?	100%
Respecting your culture and traditions?	100%
Showing you the importance of reading often to your child?	100%
Communicating with you in your language?	99%
Connecting you with other parents?	99%
Showing you different ways to play and interact with your child?	99%
Sharing ideas on how to support your child's behavior?	99%
Pointing out things to do that help your child learn and grow?	99%
Asking you about your family's strengths and interests?	99%
Giving you useful information about your child's development?	97%
Giving you useful information about how to help your child learn new skills?	97%