

First 5 Ventura County PACT Parenting Ladder Survey September 2022 Data Memo

INTRODUCTION

Parent and Child Together (PACT) is funded by First 5 Ventura through Neighborhoods for Learning (NfLs) in the county. PACT is an early learning program providing structured and unstructured play for parents and children ages 0 to 5. During play, a teacher typically models developmentally appropriate parenting techniques. Implementation is tailored to meet the needs of communities across NfLs. For example, sessions may focus on early literacy skills and/or social-emotional competence.



Applied Survey Research (ASR) was initially contracted to explore data collected by PACT (Parenting Ladder) to provide recommendations on next steps. The first data memo was developed in February of 2021, and featured preliminary findings and recommendations based on data collected in October 2021. The recommendation highlighted the need for continuing to use the existing survey to collect more robust data (larger sample size) while also developing a pre-post approach to data collection if possible, adding demographic data points to the survey, and potentially converting open-ended questions to multiple choice ones.

The current report focuses on additional data collected between April and June of 2022 (N = 144) using the same tool employed in 2021 and provides additional corroboration of the findings presented in the previous iteration (N= 70). Of note, the current sample size of 144 respondents is double the size of the initial sample collected in October 2021. Together, the two samples yielded a robust body of data (N = 214) which increases the certainty in the findings. For ease of comparison, we provide the results split by the two waves of data collection as well as the overall results based on the total data collected between October 2021 and June 2022.



PARENTING LADDER SURVEY SUMMARY

As shown in Figure 1, there were significant improvements after PACT involvement on all items on the parenting ladder survey. Findings across the two waves of data collection remained extremely consistent, with the top three items showing the largest increases relating to knowledge gains: “*Knowledge of how my child is growing and developing,*” “*Knowledge of what behavior is typical at this age,*” and “*know fun activities to help my child learn.*”

Figure 1. Average Scores Reported by Parents Before and After PACT Parenting Ladder– 16 Measures

	Wave 1: Oct 21		Wave 2: June 22	
	Pre 1	Post 1	Pre 2	Post 2
Ability to keep my child safe and healthy.***	6.1	6.7	6.1	6.7
Play with my child frequently. ***	5.6	6.5	5.5	6.5
Confidence I can help my child learn.***	5.1	6.4	5.3	6.5
Ability to recognize when my child is upset.***	5.8	6.7	5.8	6.5
Know fun activities to help my child learn. ***	4.8	6.3	4.7	6.5
Ability to get services that I need for my child.***	5.2	6.3	5.1	6.5
Listen to my child to understand their feelings.***	5.4	6.5	5.3	6.4
Confidence in myself as a parent.***	5.0	6.1	4.9	6.3
Find positive ways to guide and discipline my child. ***	5.0	6.3	5.0	6.3
Knowledge of how my child is growing and developing.***	4.5	6.3	4.5	6.3
Knowledge of what behavior is typical at this age.***	4.6	6.0	4.5	6.2
Ability to get services that I need for myself.***	5.2	6.1	4.8	6.2
Confidence in setting limits for my child.***	4.8	6.2	4.8	6.1
Ability to manage the day-to-day stress of being a parent.***	5.0	6.1	4.7	6.1
Strength of my connections to other families.***	4.7	5.4	4.4	5.5
Number of other families I can depend on for support.***	4.4	5.2	4.2	5.3

Note: PACT Parenting Ladder Survey (2021, 2022). Items measured on a scale of 1 (low)-7 (high). Wave 1 N = 60 - 62, Wave 2 N = 133-138.

*** indicates statistically significant differences at $p < 0.001$. Items in boldface are those showing the highest increases from pre to post, with 1.6 points or more gained.

As seen in Figure 2, parents average daily activities with their children also significantly improved after participation in PACT. These differences were consistent across the two waves of data collection.

Figure 2. Average Weekly Activities with Child Before and After PACT Parenting Ladder

	Wave 1: Oct 21		Wave 2: June 22	
	Pre 1	Post 1	Pre 2	Post 2
Talk or share stories with your child***	5.4	6.4	5.1	6.1
Sing with your child***	5.2	6.2	5.5	6.2
Read or look at picture books with your child***	4.8	5.8	4.8	5.7

Note: PACT Parenting Ladder Survey (2021, 2022). Items measured on a scale of 1 (low)-7 (high). Wave 1 N = 66 - 67, Wave 2 N = 133-135.

*** indicates statistically significant differences at $p < 0.001$.

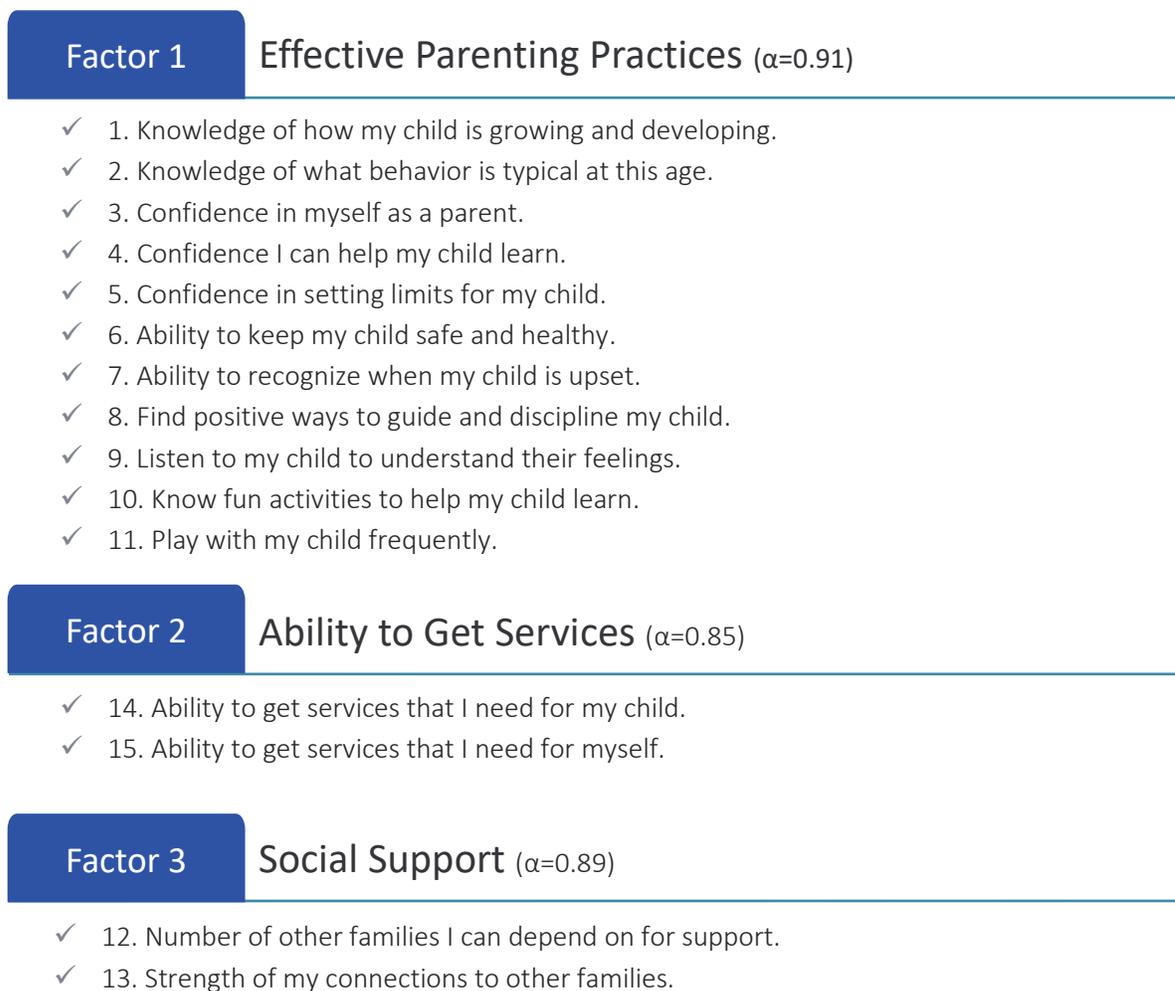
Importantly, there was no statistically significant difference between data collected in wave 1 as compared to wave 2, across all PL items as well as the frequency of activities with child. Therefore, the next set of analysis was conducted on the combined sample of 214 participants.

RELIABILITY OF SURVEY MEASURES

A factor analysis was conducted on the survey items measured. The results of the factor analysis indicate that the 16 PL items can be classified into three overall constructs: a) Effective Parenting Practices, b) Ability to get Services, and c) Social Support.¹ Note that these constructs are somewhat different than the ones ASR arrived at in the initial assessment, yet this time around the data are more robust.

The 16 survey items measured three underlying factors

Figure 3. Survey Item Constructs Resulting from Factor Analysis



Next, we compared the average scores on these three factors before PACT involvement to the average scores following PACT involvement. As can be seen in Figure 4, there were statistically significant improvements after participation in PACT.

¹ A Chronbach's alpha (α) score was used to identify items measuring the same construct. Scores approaching 1.0 indicate higher reliability. That is, items hang together more cohesively. One item – "Ability to manage the day-to-day stress of being a parent" loaded on both Factor 1 and Factor 3 and therefore ASR recommends removing this item from the survey in the future.

Figure 4. Average Scores on Parenting Ladder Constructs



Note: PACT Parenting Ladder Survey (2021, 2022). Items measured on a scale of 1 (low)-7 (high). N = 205 - 209.. *** indicates statistically significant differences at $p < 0.001$.

PROFILE OF PACT FAMILIES

Figure 5 shows PACT intake data including overall client characteristics (N = 508) and characteristics of families matched to a Parenting Ladder Survey (N = 106). The majority of families were Hispanic/Latino, and primarily speak English. There were a few differences between the characteristics of PACT Program families compared with those that responded to the survey. First, there was less representation in the survey for families from low-income households. Additionally, a larger proportion of survey respondents had at least some college experience or obtained a degree (62%) compared to all PACT families who filled out the intake (53%).

Figure 5. PACT Program Demographics, All Intakes and Survey Participants

	PACT Program Overall Intake	Parenting Ladder Survey Respondent
Total N	508	106
Gender		
Males	5%	5%
Females	94%	95%
Unknown	1%	0%
Family Income		
Under \$50,000	39%	28%
\$50,000 or more	26%	27%
Unknown	35%	44%
Highest Education		
Less than high school	16%	9%
High school diploma/GED	21%	19%
Some college/Associate degree	27%	32%
Bachelor's Degree or higher	26%	30%
No answer/prefer not to say	10%	9%
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic	72%	66%
White	16%	18%
Asian	2%	4%
Multiracial	4%	3%
Other	3%	5%
Decline to answer/Unknown	3%	5%
Preferred Language		
English	64%	63%
Spanish	34%	36%
Unknown	2%	1%

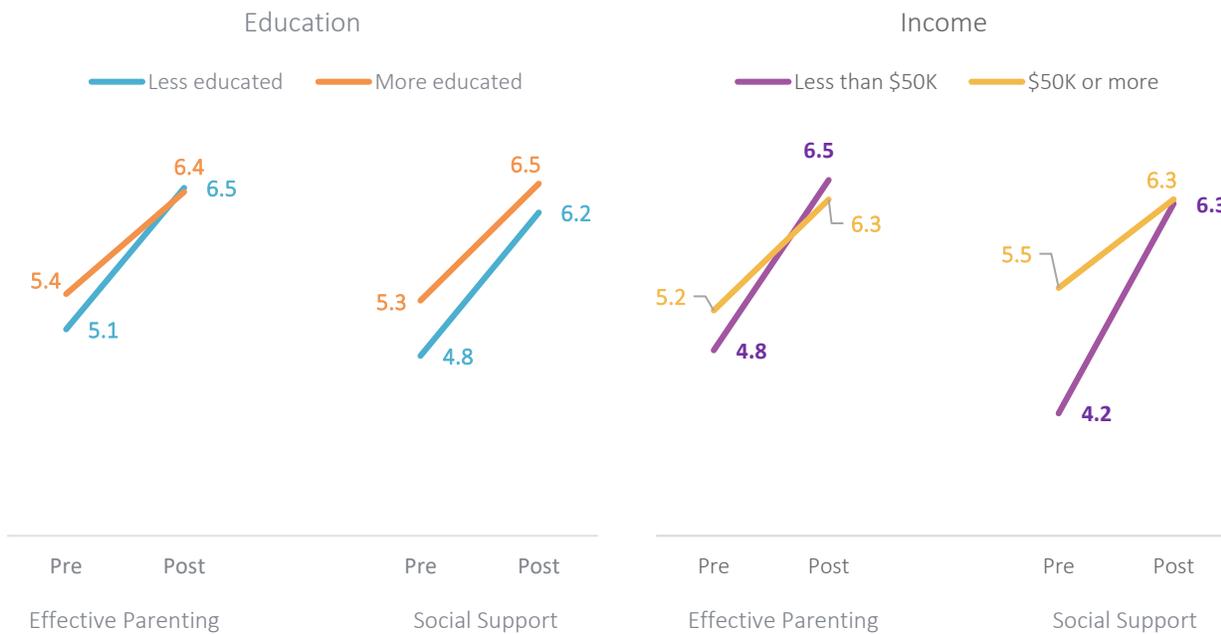
Source: PACT Parenting Ladder Survey (2021, 2022).

IMPACT OF PACT ON FAMILIES FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS

The current sample size of PL survey respondents for which demographic data is available (N = 106) allows for more sophisticated analyses looking at the relationships between demographic characteristics and improvement on the key PL measures. Specifically, we used Structural Equation Modeling to assess the effects of the PACT intervention from pre-program to post program on families with different ethnicities, income, education, and marital status. Analyses revealed the following associations between parents’ progress in the program and their demographic characteristics.

First, lack of college education and lower household income were associated with greater improvements in the Effective Parenting and Social Support factors. As can be seen in Figure 6, at the start of the program, families with higher socio-economic status showed more effective and supportive parenting than their less advantaged peers. Importantly, however, by the end of the program, these differences were no longer observed.

Figure 6. Improvement from Pre to Post on PL Factors by Education and Income

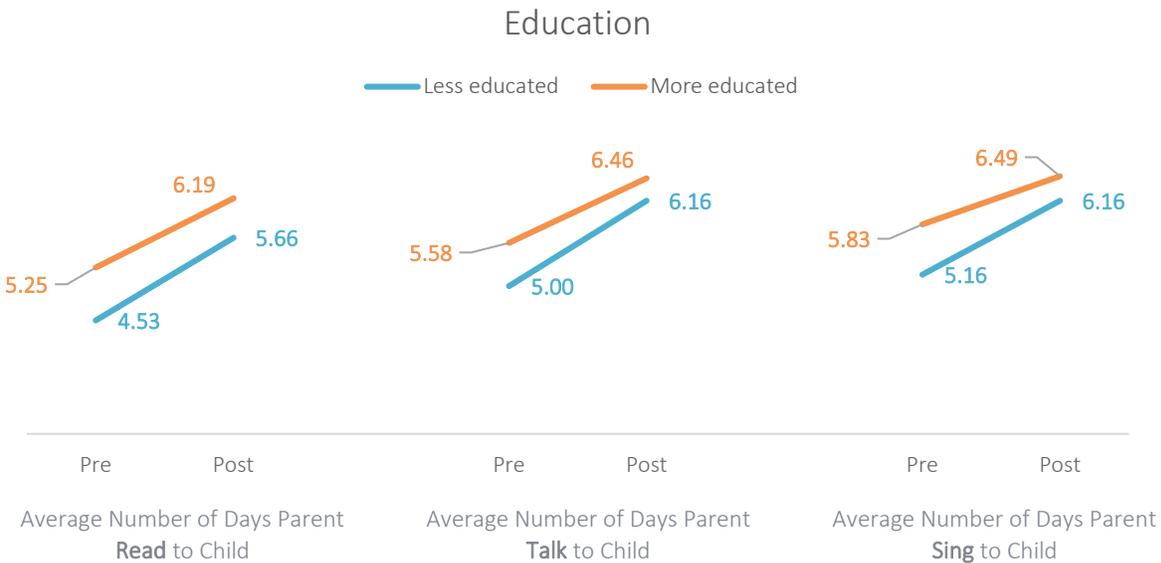


Note: PACT Parenting Ladder Survey (2021, 2022). Items measured on a scale of 1 (low)-7 (high). N = 106.



In addition, lack of college education was associated with higher frequency of cognitively stimulating positive parent-child interactions (singing, reading, and talking to children); See Figure 7. Similarly, by the end of the program, differences between more and less advantage families narrowed and were no longer statistically significant.

Figure 7. Improvement from Pre to Post on Parent-Child Interactions by Education



Note: PACT Parenting Ladder Survey (2021, 2022). Items measured on a scale of 1 to 7 days per week. N = 106.

Importantly, compared to White participants, non-White families (of which over 80% were Hispanic) were 7 times less likely to have any college education and 15 times less likely to make over \$30. Thus, these findings point to the existing inequalities in income and education for families of color. Lack of opportunities to pursue college education means that going into the program, these families know less about child development and positive parenting strategies. Program participation erased these gaps, “leveling the playing field” for participants from different socioeconomic backgrounds. **In conclusion, these findings illuminate program effectiveness in narrowing education- and income-related racial disparities that affect parenting, pointing to a powerful potential of the program to promote equity in diverse communities.**