

PRESCHOOL FOOD INITIATIVE PHASE 2: YEAR 1 REPORT (6-10-15)

This report covers the first year of Phase 2 of the Preschool Food & Healthy Habits Initiative, which began March 1, 2013 and ended February 28, 2014.



Preschool Food and Healthy Habits Initiative (PFI)

Phase #2, Year #1 Report

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Executive Summary

This report covers the first year of Phase #2 of the Orfalea Preschool Food and Healthy Habits Initiative for Santa Barbara County (PFI) which began March 1, 2013 and ended February 28, 2014.

The past year has been very active, reflecting changes made in how the services are delivered. Overall, the program provided training events attended by approximately 1,350 participants (some duplicated) at 19 regional training events and 18 training center-site events.

Looking at overall quantitative results, for the measurement period of approximately 2.5 years, in the thirteen categories that were compared, **there was at least an average double-digit improvement of 15% or more in every category but one;** Physical Activity Policies and Procedures (which started at a very high level) showed no improvement.

Of the 13 items rated, the four with the highest levels of improvement were:

- Recyclable utensils used (+91%)
- Children/families home eating habits improve (+50%)
- Center recycling program in place (+37%)
- Garden curriculum provided year round (+29%)

Despite increases, items that have the greatest opportunity for improvement at this point are:

- Center-wide recycle program in place
- Recyclable utensils & dishes used
- Children/families spend more time outside
- Children/families home eating habits improve

The quantitative data is supported by a substantial body of observational and anecdotal information obtained throughout the year by Initiative staff on the benefits that centers and individuals have received from the project.

The second year of PFI Phase #2 is critical. The matrix data provides specific elements that will be a focus during the year ahead as site visits are completed and PFI trainings are delivered. At the same time, work must begin and be completed for the design of the March – December 2015 transition (PFI #2.5). While the immediate tasks of the current initiative need to be completed, a plan for the transition needs to be developed and set into motion concurrently so that those ten months will be effectively used.

It is currently envisioned that the 2015 transition period will both complete PFI work, and firmly establish an “Orfalea Whole Child” network as a platform from which advocacy, policy and best practice dissemination can be carried out beginning in 2016 based on Orfalea family interests.

Recent Findings

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For many obese adults, the dye was cast by the time they were 5 years old. A major new study of more than 7,000 children has found that a third of children who were overweight in kindergarten were obese by eighth grade. And almost every child who was very obese remained that way.

”

New scientific findings support the importance of addressing food practices and exercise habits with our very youngest children.

In late January, in an article titled “Obesity Is Found to Gain Its Hold in Earliest Years,” the New York Times excerpted results from The New England Journal of Medicine.

This new research reinforces the importance of the work of the Preschool Food & Healthy Habits Initiative, including its content, approach and regional focus, which is unique among health education efforts in the United States.

PFI Background

The Orfalea Preschool Food and Healthy Habits Initiative (PFI) is a quality enhancement initiative that aims to create the permanent transformation of the food and physical activity policies and practices in early childhood education (ECE) centers in Santa Barbara County (SBC).

It increases the knowledge of early childhood educators by providing tools, standards and recognition that support intentional policies and practices.

Building upon the successful implementation of the Outdoor Classroom Project (OCP) in Santa Barbara County from 2009 – 2011, PFI was established to “create centers of wellness” among the child care centers in Santa Barbara County.

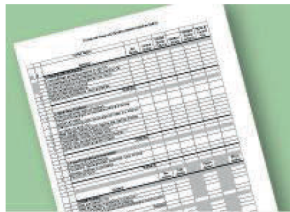
The initial goals of the Initiative were:

1. Improvement in the quality of food children are eating; food that is healthy and tasty
2. Positive modeling behaviors by teachers
3. Gardens that thrive and are vibrant centers of learning
4. Children whose outdoor behavior is physically active
5. Materials such as policies and procedures that guide teachers and parents

During the first two-year period (March 2011 to February 2013), a six-part PFI training series was implemented, as well as workshops focused on preschool gardens and garden-based learning. Ninety centers engaged with the Initiative during the two years. Measurable and significant progress was made in all of the 10 categories of the 50-point PFI evaluation matrix among the 58 centers that completed the matrix.

PFI Changes

“
The Matrix will help me a lot to know what else I need to do or change at the center.
”



The PFI Matrix

Several significant changes were made in PFI Phase #2:

- **Matrix:** To enable centers to focus on key elements of highest importance, the original PFI progress evaluation tool for centers, known as the “long matrix,” was reduced from 10 categories to 5 and from 50 items to 10 to create a tightly-focused “short matrix.”
- **Matrix Completion:** Originally, the matrix was filled out by a teacher or director from the center without independent confirmation. Now the matrix is filled out by the site consultant with the center staff person during center visits.
- **Center Visits:** PFI Phase #2 implemented a major shift in service delivery with a focus on center visits and full center staff trainings. A minimum of five site visits per center over the two years was established as our target in order to create and sustain permanent change. As predicted, some centers have needed or wanted more frequent visits, and have been supported as possible.

Centers have been assigned to a specific PFI team member who establishes an ongoing relationship with the center while conducting the visits and trainings. Team members maintain an online database with a portfolio on each center and use it to track, document and support center progress. In addition to trainings and site visits, the PFI team regularly communicates with centers by phone and email.

- **Group and On-Site Trainings:** Training activities are comprised of regional group training events (including repeating the six-part PFI training series for centers that did not previously complete the series), district and organization-specific events, and trainings at centers.

PFI Phase #2 Summary of Activities

Overall, the program provided training events attended by approximately 1,350 participants (includes duplicate attendees).

Regional Training Events: 19 regional training events were held during the past year attended by over 800 participants (duplicated).

Site Visit Training Events: There were 18 training events held at center sites for 545 participants (non duplicated) including:

- Parent/staff event at Discoveries Preschool (150)
- Parent/staff event at Carpinteria Children’s Project at Main (Health Fair) (150)
- Parent/staff garden workshop at SBCEO Los Alamos State Preschool (50)
- Teacher Engagement workshop for Hope 4 Kids (25)
- 11 PFI/OCF trainings for center staff (85)
- 2 PFI workshops for parents & staff (55)
- 1 workshop on staff communications for three Bright Horizons centers (30)

Summary of Activities

Earth Day: The PFI team created a booth with five children's activities at Earth Day weekend in Santa Barbara. Activities were delivered by staff from Outdoor Classroom Demonstration sites. There were an estimated 400 attendees, mostly community parents with their children.

PFI Center Visits: During the first year of Phase Two, 212 site visits were made, leaving 238 site visits to occur during year two.

PFI Phase #2: Impact - Quantitative

The PFI Matrix is the tool used to measure progress of centers working with PFI. The original "long" matrix was completed in 2011 by 58 of our engaged centers. With the start of PFI Phase 2 in 2013, the "short" matrix was instituted to narrow the focus of the Initiative to fewer elements. For this report, the most recent short matrix has been compared to the same elements on the original long matrix completed in 2011.

Overall Results

For the measurement period of approximately 2.5 years, in the thirteen categories that were compared, **there was at least an average double-digit improvement of 15% or more in every category but one** – Physical Activity Policies and Procedures - where no improvement is shown.

While the lack of progress on Physical Activity is noteworthy, it is not surprising because for most centers, this item was a core focus of the Outdoor Classroom Project which was a county-wide initiative for several years prior to the beginning of PFI and the factor was already at a high level (90% of the maximum score possible).

Of the 13 items rated, the four with the highest levels of improvement were:

- Recyclable utensils used (+91%)
- Children/families home eating habits improve (+50%)
- Center recycling program in place (+37%)
- Garden curriculum provided year round (+29%)

These items also had the greatest gap at the beginning of the Initiative from the maximum possible, so they had the most to be gained.

The fact that so many centers report the improvement that is shown in home eating habits reflects how much the initiative has impacted parents and families, as they see the new nutrition policies implemented at their centers. Over and over, the PFI Team hears anecdotes from teachers about conversations they are having with parents that demonstrate how home eating habits have changed as a result of changes at the centers.

Overall, the fact there was positive movement across the entire field of items to be rated indicates that centers are broadly engaged with the PFI subject matter and working in every arena to make progress.

PFI Report, May 2014

Average Improvement on Matrix Measures From Baseline (mid-2011) to early 2014

Recyclable utensils & dishes used

+ 91%

Children/Families home eating habits improve

+ 50%

Center-wide recycling program in place

+ 37%

Garden-related curriculum used year-round

+ 29%

Children/Families spend more time outdoors

+25%

Center staff is trained in PFI

+ 25%

Lunches brought from home reflect PFI standards

+ 20%

Lunches prepared off- Site reflect PFI standards

+ 19%

Snacks reflect PFI standards

+ 19%

Gardens are pesticide/chemical-free

+ 16%

Year-round, productive garden is in place

+15%

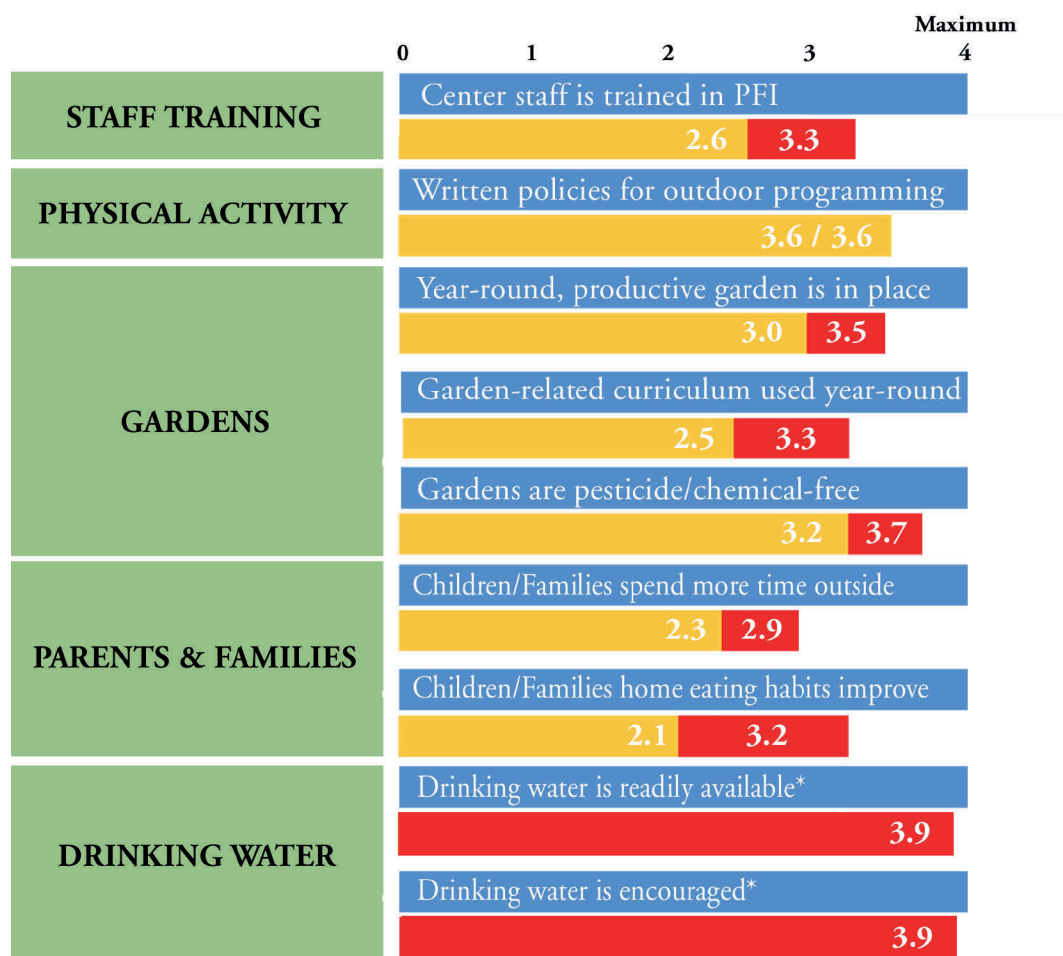
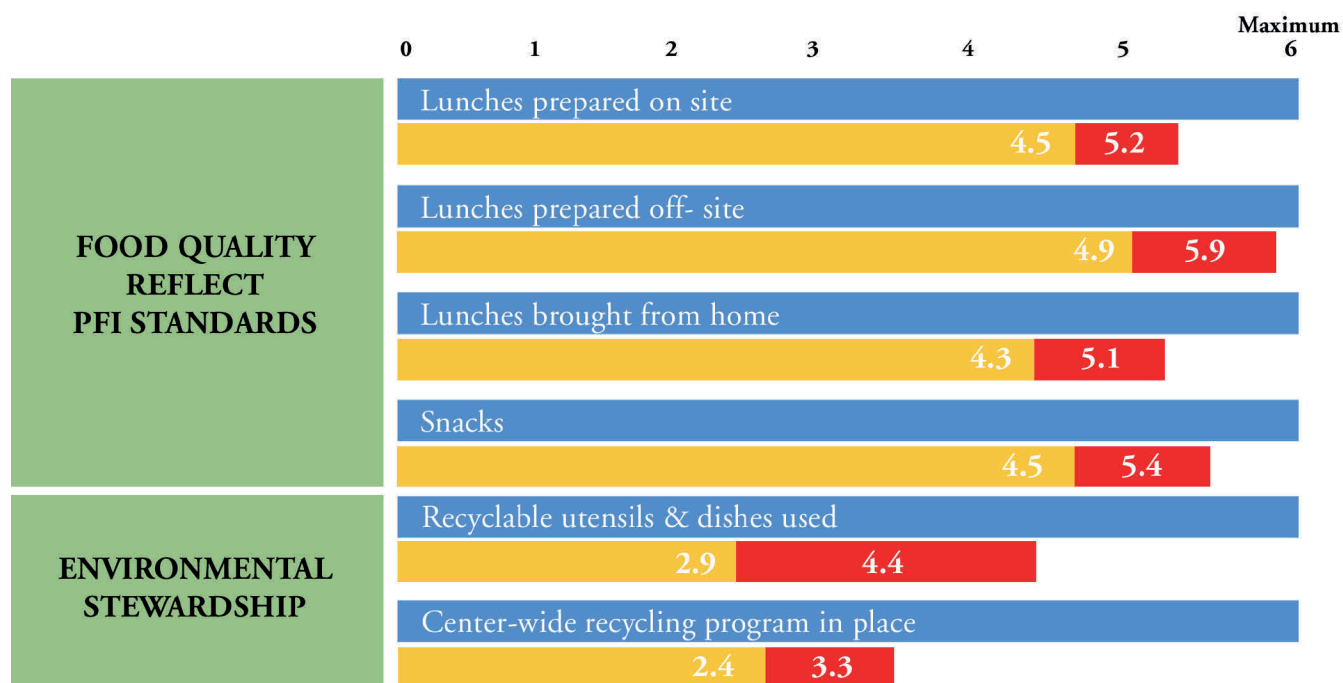
Lunches prepared on site reflect PFI standards

+ 15%

Written policies for outdoor programming

+ 0%

Actual Scores By Matrix Items



BASELINE

EARLY 2014

* Baseline not available

Opportunities

Based on our statistical data, the greatest opportunity for improvement lies with the areas of environmental stewardship and improvement in families' home behaviors. Fostering greater involvement in recycling will be one area of focus in our site visits, and continuing to support improvement in families' home behaviors will be another.

Furthermore, the PFI team will also focus on impacting the food quality of lunches brought from home, and PFI staff training. This evaluative data also provides a baseline that can be shared with centers as they assess how their practices compare with others in their cohort.

PFI Phase #2 Impact - Qualitative

PFI team members receive a steady stream of anecdotes on the impact of PFI on center programs and individuals' lives. Following is a sample of feedback.

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“Since we began PFI, we have implemented a new snack menu. We serve fruits and vegetables, make salad and couscous. We are now more careful about ingredients in breads such as sugar and syrup. As suggested in the PFI trainings, we have a nutrition board for parents with different topics and resources. Making changes with staff has been challenging but has made a huge difference. We no longer allow outside food bags, sodas in fast food cups, etc. at the school. The

staff is much more aware about what they are putting into their body around the children. They also have signed a food commitment with the school that they will adhere to all food guidelines, and really get on board with the school's mission to set a good example and mold the children's ideas about food.””

The Learning Den

Impact - Qualitative

“

A belated "thank you" for the wonderful Culinary Training that you organized. I cannot express my gratitude enough. I learned so much and had such a great time working with all of you. This morning I was making the granola bars and several of the children were clustered outside the kitchen window out on the playground. I had the kitchen window open and I heard one of the teachers ask the children to come over and join her. One of the children said, "no thanks, we are waiting here for Ms. Shelley's cooking today." It was so great to see them enjoying the smells and trying to guess what I was making.

”

SBCEO Zaca Center

CAC Coronel Center

After hearing of the need for more hydration for children at the PFI trainings and of the successful strategies of other centers in Santa Barbara County incorporating individual water bottles for the children at their centers, Site Supervisor Marilyn I'Anson provided individual water bottles for the children at CAC Coronel. The children have immediate access to more water and are more aware of their own hydration needs.

SBCEO LEAP-Special Needs Program

Since attending the PFI trainings, Lead Teachers have incorporated the information they received in their home visits to parents. They use the handouts on reducing sugar, reading labels, healthy snacks and lunches, etc. to educate the families they work with. The PFI information has provided a tremendous support to both teachers and families that they otherwise would not have had. The availability of the information has produced a marked improvement in the types of lunches the children bring from home.

Impact - Qualitative

“

On Friday, a mother at the center told me that she did not know that her son, who is 18 months, should not be watching TV. She went on to report that he often watched TV during the day. After our PFI training, she limited his access to the television. She also took him for a walk and played ball with him. She went on to say that he went to bed that night without fussing. During this tale, she had a smile on her face and was so happy that she had made a positive change for her son.

”

SBCEO Lompoc Cal Safe

CAC Los Adobes

The Family Service Advocates set goals with each family annually and supports them to achieve their goals. This year, our Family Advocate had several families who wanted to lose weight. Gina, our Site Supervisor, went



Sharing the Harvest at SBCEO La Honda State Preschool, Lompoc

right to the PFI Binder and pulled out several resources – sugar shockers, label reading, etc. and gave them to the parents. Gina noted that it was quick and easy for her to meet the needs of the parents; she knew right where to look for the perfect information to share with them.

CAC Maple

The center recently implemented center-wide recycling, AND included their families and used it as a fundraiser. Parents brought in their recyclables and sorted them into bins. On their first trip, they netted \$200!



“Rethink Your Drink” Bulletin Board at Valley Christian Preschool, Santa Maria

Valley Christian Preschool

After attending PFI Training, the director created a “Rethink Your Drink” Bulletin Board. Parents started commenting on how surprised they were with the amount of sugar in processed foods. The Church shares the preschool space with the Sunday School and a Spanish Ministry each weekend, and those parents also started commenting on the display board.

Impact - Qualitative

Montecito YMCA

The Montecito YMCA is making the most of what it is learning through its participation in both OCP and PFI. On every visit, it has a number of activities to report in both arenas. In the most recent visit they shared the following implementation actions they had taken since the prior visit a few months earlier:

- They spent a month working with a group of children and taught them all how to ride two-wheelers; the activity included bringing in a guest speaker who gave away free safety helmets.
- Parents bring the snacks in this program. The parents have been very successful in following the PFI Healthy Food Guidelines which have been established.
- Use of real utensils has been a recent implementation.
- The director has personally experienced a transformation in both her eating habits and preferences. She commented “Now I’m eating fresh peppers, celery and even kale, and really enjoying it!”

Next Steps

PFI 2 Year 2, March 2014 – February 2015

The second year of PFI Phase #2 is critical. As noted previously, our matrix data provides specific elements that will be a focus during the year ahead as we complete our site visits and deliver PFI trainings. At the same time, work must begin and be completed for the design of the March – December 2015 transition (PFI #2.5). While the immediate tasks of the current initiative need to be completed, a plan for the transition needs to be developed and set into motion concurrently so that those ten months will be effectively used.

Activities for the second year of Phase #2 will include a PFI #4, #5 and #6 series, each held in South County and in North County. As site visits #3, #4, and #5 are made at the centers, performance data will be gathered during the visits to provide a summary report at the end of the project. In addition to moving the centers forward on the matrix, our work with them this year will focus on creating a sustainable culture that embodies the progress achieved over the preceding years.

Part of our sustainability focus will require evolving the work of the Orfalea ECE's OCP and PFI initiatives into a "Whole Child" quality initiative. Design and integration of this concept into the current initiative will need to occur concurrently with this year's activities.

This "Whole Child" effort dovetails with concern about pending legislation to mandate "transition kindergartens" in all California public school systems. Unsolicited feedback from center directors includes requests for support in responding to the school readiness emphasis and potential loss of four year-old students from existing preschool programs.

The Transition: PFI Phase #2.5, March 2015–December 2015

It is currently envisioned that the 2015 transition period will both complete PFI work with all 90 participating centers, and **firmly establish an "Orfalea Whole Child" network as a platform from which advocacy, policy and best practice dissemination can be carried out beginning in 2016 based on Orfalea family interests.**

Work with centers will include creating individual center sustainability plans so that centers can be successful in continuing their focus on Outdoor Classroom and Preschool Food and Healthy Habits Initiative elements into the future.

Currently, we envision that we will hold concluding visits with all of the centers and have a concluding county-wide gathering at the end of the year to both encourage centers in their future endeavors and to acknowledge their accomplishments.

The content and budget for PFI Phase #2.5 will be proposed to the Orfalea Fund Board at its Fall 2014 meeting.

