READINESS TO LEARN IN MINORITY FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITIES

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is a non-profit research organization, created specifically to develop, field test, and rigorously evaluate new programs. SRDC's two-part mission is to help policy-makers and practitioners identify policies and programs that improve the well-being of all Canadians, with a special concern for the effects on the disadvantaged, and to raise the standards of evidence that are used in assessing these policies.

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1. Report Summary

This report aims to document the implementation of the Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities project (abbreviated title: Readiness to Learn project; formerly the Child Care Pilot Project, CCPP), a demonstration project funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). The Social Research Demonstration Corporation's (SRDC) services were retained to implement, manage, gather and analyze project data. The project tests a preschool daycare program whose objective is to develop a child's language skills, knowledge and use of French, awareness of and identification with the Francophone culture as well as favour his or her preparation for school and overall development. The program is evaluated using a quasi-experimental research design with non-equivalent comparison groups. The research design includes three treatment groups: a program group made up of children enrolled in a francophone daycare offering the new preschool program; a comparison group consisting of children enrolled at a francophone daycare that does not offer the new program; and a comparison group of children who are cared for at home or in an informal family daycare setting. The first comparison group aims to control for the influence of a formal daycare setting on child development, a treatment in itself. The second comparison group controls for the influence of an informal daycare setting on child development. The project includes two cohorts—the first was recruited in 2007 and the second was recruited in 2008.

This report is based on data gathered between May 2007 and January 2010 from participants making up the first cohort, practitioners involved in delivering the two components of the preschool program, and community representatives. Delivery of the program began when the average age of children was three and ended two years later, when all children started school, at the average age of five.

A mixed research design was used to study the implementation of the new preschool program. This approach favoured the use of a variety of different tools, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, taken from several different sources of information, all chosen in function of research objectives. The wealth of information gathered facilitated the triangulation of the research results, thereby ensuring greater validity for conclusions drawn from analyses. Moreover, the complementarity of the data gathered allow us to paint a more complete, nuanced picture of the phenomenon being studied — in other words, the implementation of the program and its impacts on the children.

This report looks at the implementation of the program in the six communities who participated in the project. The various program components are described in Chapter 2. The third chapter discusses the pre-implementation activities necessary to put in place the human and material resources necessary at the start of the program. Chapter 4 examines the various trainings provided to the people who were involved with the children and their parents. The report continues, in Chapter 5, with a brief description of the circumstances of each community in order to better understand how the program was adapted to the particularities of the different regions. The following chapters (6, 7, 8 and 9) present, respectively, the methodology used to evaluate the implementation, the results for the evaluation of the daycare program, the results for the

evaluation of the family literacy workshops and finally, the evaluation of the project's impact on the communities. The report ends with a general discussion of findings.

It should be noted that this report is part of a report series. It follows the *Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities: Reference Report* (Legault, Mák, Verstraete, & Bérubé, 2014), the final version of which was submitted to HRSDC on October 13, 2009. This initial report established the profile of the children, families and communities participating in the Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities project. In addition, the present report is complementary to the *Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities: First Cohort Findings Report* (Thompson, Legault, Lalonde, & Bérubé)[1] submitted to HRSDC on July 31, 2010. A future report, planned for 2011, will present the results of impact analyses and the implementation of the preschool daycare program for the two cohorts of participants combined.

I hope you find this report interesting!

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[1] Formerly titled *Final Comparative Report: Child Care Pilot project.*

2. Description of the Readiness to Learn project and Its Choice Elements

2.1. WHY A PROJECT FOR CHILDREN GROWING UP IN A FRENCH MINORITY COMMUNITY?

In Canada, many francophone families are struggling to maintain their mother tongue in environments were the English language is predominant. Also, according to the last Canadian census, the relative percentage of French in Canada is decreasing. While the percentage was 26% in 1971, it is now at 21%. The latest data taken from the 2006 Census also indicate that 39% of Francophones living outside of Quebec tend to speak English at home (Statistics Canada, 2006). There are more and more exogamous couples, and most are adopting English as the language spoken at home (Gilbert, 2003; Mougeon & Beniak, 1994). In fact, only 20% of exogamous couples choose French as the language in which to raise their 0-4 year old children (Martel, 2001).

As for the language of education for young Francophones outside of Quebec, it varies from one community to the next. In New Brunswick, for example, 83% of children who have one of two, or two francophone parents attend French school. In Ontario, only 51% of children with at least one francophone parent attend French school (Corbeil, Grenier, & Lafrenière, 2007). This is only true for 26% of young Franco-Manitobans (Statistics Canada, 2004). According to the 2006 Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities, 56% of children of "*ayant droit*" parents attend French elementary schools. Yet, the vitality of the francophone community is based on, among other things, the fact that these children will attend French schools throughout their studies and become active participants in the francophone community (Landry, Allard, & Deveau, 2007).

Historically, Francophones growing up in a minority community in Canada show lower results in literacy and numeracy than children of majority linguistic groups. This disparity between the two groups appears in international test results, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), where francophone children enrolled in French school situated in a linguistic minority community obtained lower results in reading compared to their Canadian peers (Bussière, et al., 2001; Canadian Council on Learning, 2008). Likewise, national data indicate that 58% of Francophones outside of Quebec have a literacy level lower than 3 on a 5 point scale, while a level of 3 is deemed necessary to function well in society. In comparison, the percentage of Anglophones outside of Quebec with a low literacy level is 38% and that of Francophones in Quebec is 55% (HRSDC & Statistics Canada, 2005). This gap is also seen in younger children. In fact, in a study published in 2006, kindergarten teachers classified half of the students sampled as having a lower overall French competency than the provincial standard by using a performance grid established by the Government of Ontario (Masny, 2006).

However, these results must be qualified, since the latest data show that Francophones outside of Quebec have now surpassed their Canadian peers in terms of obtaining a post-secondary diploma (D'Amours, 2010). Moreover, in Ontario, young Franco-Ontarians have been showing a constant improvement, to the point where children in grades three and six are now obtaining comparable results — in reading, writing and mathematics — perhaps even higher

results, than Anglophone children, indicating that some actions are possible and effective in improving the situation of Francophones living in a minority community (Office de la qualité et de la responsabilité en éducation, 2009; Education Quality and Accountability Office, 2009).

The main hypothesis issued to explain why some children in a linguistic minority community occasionally experience difficulties with the school curriculum points to children's limited exposure to the French language, thus limiting their development of French language skills. According to Bialystok (2008), children who have a limited understanding of the language of education are certain to experience difficulties both academically and socially. Learning French would be more difficult for these children due to the predominance of English in their immediate environment. This hypothesis is supported by, amongst others, a longitudinal study demonstrating that children in minority communities who are exposed to French at home and in their daycare environment obtain higher results on a receptive vocabulary test, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), and on the communication and general knowledge scales of the Early Development Instrument (EDI), compared to children who are only exposed to French at home (Chartier, Dumaine, Daudet-Mitchell, Gosselin, & Vielfaure, 2008). This is one of the few studies to empirically examine the effect of environments on linguistic development of young Francophones in a minority community.

This study highlights the crucial importance of the first years for child development (Doherty, 2007). The preschool years are of particular importance to linguistic minorities who are anxious to ensure their vitality. The development of young children's mother tongue is seen as the outcome of the socialization process experienced in the home, school or preschool environment and in the socio-institutional environments, hence the idea that the family and social environments are complementary (Landry & Allard, 1997). Formal daycares, junior kindergartens, family daycares, as well as after-school programs, resource centres and French play groups, are all considered as the gateway to entering French school (Gilbert, 2003).

In the face of such findings, it becomes important to closely study the development of children growing up in a French minority environment by introducing an intervention likely to better prepare them for French language school and by extension, improve their chances for success in school and integration in their community. This was the basis for the research question examined within the framework of the Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities project (formerly the Child Care Pilot Project, CCPP).

2.2. THE BEGINNING OF THE READINESS TO LEARN IN MINORITY FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITIES PROJECT

The Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities project (abbreviated title: Readiness to Learn project) is a Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) initiative. The project was announced in the Government of Canada's 2003–2008 Action Plan for Official Languages and continues under the banner of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008–2013 (HRSDC, 2008). This project aims to answer the following research question: *All things being equal, does the new preschool program have a significant impact on children's language skills, identification with the francophone culture, and preparation for school?* Other research questions are also being addressed: *Who benefits the most from the program? Is the program cost effective? Can the new program be reproduced? Which factors*

explain its success? The information collected will serve to inform parents, service providers and communities on the design and delivery of services that help to preserve the French language and culture as well as foster the development of young Francophones in a minority community.

The project tests a preschool daycare program[2], the objective of which was to develop a child's language skills, knowledge and use of French, awareness of and identification with the francophone culture, as well as favour his or her preparation for school and overall development. The tested preschool program has a daycare component that takes place during the day all week long, and a family literacy workshop component, offered to parents and children in the evening or on weekends. The program was evaluated using a quasi-experimental research design with non-equivalent comparison groups. The research design includes three treatment groups: a program group made up of children enrolled in a francophone daycare offering the new preschool program; a comparison daycare group consisting of children enrolled at a francophone daycare that does not offer the new program; and an informal care group of children who are cared for at home, in an informal family daycare setting, or at an English daycare. The first comparison group aims to control for the influence of a formal daycare setting on child development, a treatment in itself. The second comparison group controls for the influence of an informal daycare setting on child development. The reader should take note that the study of the program's implementation is based solely on the first two treatment groups: the program group and the comparison daycare group.

The Readiness to Learn project was implemented in six communities spread across three Canadian provinces (Saint John and Edmundston, in New Brunswick; Orleans, Cornwall and Durham, in Ontario; and Edmonton, in Alberta). Two cohorts of children participated in the project. This report deals with the first cohort, which consists of close to 300 children and their families, recruited in the summer and fall of 2007. The delivery of the daycare program began in September or October 2007 and was provided for one full year in all communities. It continued for a second year in all of the communities except for two, located in Ontario, where children began to attend full-day junior kindergarten at age 4. The family workshop component is only offered in the first year of the program's implementation.

The Readiness to Learn project is based on the premise that a child is influenced by all of the environments in which he/she spends time, as well as the links between these environments, an idea put forward by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979). To influence children's language skills and school-readiness, one of the objectives of the Readiness to Learn project family workshop program was to reinforce the links between the different systems that the child is immersed in. The project was also inspired by several studies on the development of preschool-aged children and the vitality of the French language in minority communities. The two components were designed to assist other communities in setting up a similar program in their region, in order to meet the specific needs of families living in a francophone minority community in Canada (Bigras & Hurteau, 2005).

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[2] Officially known as enriched child care services in HRSDC documents, SRDC, in agreement with HRSDC, will henceforth refer to the program as the ''preschool daycare program''.

2.2.1. Use of a Logical Model to Summarize the Intervention, Its Objectives and the Anticipated Outcome

The use of a logical model helps to summarize at a glance an intervention, its objectives, its components and the expected outcomes. A logical model represents a simple way of defining what the program elements are and explaining how their relationship should enable the achievement of certain results (for a detailed description of the use of a logical model, see Patton, 1997; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001). The evaluation of the Readiness to Learn project required the construction of two different logical models. The first focuses specifically on the daycare program, while the second describes the family workshop program. The two logical models can be found in Appendix A.

The daycare program is built around the following objectives:

- Guarantee that children are ready to attend a French school;
- Improve children's French language skills;
- Increase children's use of French;
- Foster the partnership between educators and parents;
- Strengthen children's knowledge of the French culture;
- Strengthen children's identification with the French culture.

The family workshop program, meanwhile, has the following objectives:

- Educate parents about their role as their child's first educator;
- Stress to parents the importance of offering their child a French environment;
- Provide Francophone families with a place where they can share and learn in French;
- Encourage parents to initiate pre-literacy and pre-writing activities at home;
- Provide children with an opportunity to consolidate their knowledge related to the daycare curriculum;
- Strengthen the partnership between parents and educators;
- Provide parents with access to various French resources (books, educational games, and audiovisual material);
- Present parents with various French resources available in their community;
- Strengthen parents' sense of belonging to their francophone community.

The overlap between the objectives of the two components maximizes the scope of the environments in which the child is immersed, especially the daycare and home environments in this case.

This report presents a description of the activities put in place both components (Chapters 3 and 4), an overview of the program's implementation in each of the communities (Chapter 5), the methodology used to evaluate the project's implementation in each community in the study (Chapter 6), the evaluation results concerning the implementation of the two program components (Chapters 7 and 8) and finally, the profile of early childhood services and programs

in participating communities along with the benefits of the Readiness to Learn project as perceived by community representatives (Chapter 9). The report ends with a general discussion of findings and the implications attached to them. The reader should take note that program impact results are detailed in a complementary document, *Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities: First Cohort Findings Report* (Thompson et al., 2014).

2.2.2. Choice of the Daycare Program

Attending a formal daycare has an impact on children's cognitive and language development, their school-readiness, as well as their behaviour (Cleveland, et al., 2006). We know, for example, that a daycare can be a place of learning, leading to better academic skills. In studies conducted in the United States, daycare attendance was associated with higher scores in reading and mathematics upon entering kindergarten at age five (Howes, et al., 2008). However, the positive influence of a daycare is only observed in high quality daycares. The quality in daycare centres can take two forms: structural quality, which includes factors that can be modified through legislation (educator's diploma, working hours, size of the group, etc.) and process quality, which refers to the child's experience in their daycare environment (quality of activities provided and interactions with the educator; Burchinal, et al., 2000). A growing number of studies document the influence of quality in educational environments on children's development. Hence, the quality of educational support provided by educators (measuring, amongst other things, educators' tendency to encourage reasoning in children and the use of feedback to highlight children's work) is significantly related to the size of children's vocabulary, their knowledge of the letters in the alphabet, their phonological awareness skills, and their pre-numeracy skills (Howes, et al., 2008; Mashburn, et al., 2008).

Among the programs that have been studied is the High/Scope Preschool Program. Studies on this American program have had the most influence on child care practices over the past 40 years. Longitudinal experimental studies (with randomized groups) showed that when they reached adulthood, children from disadvantaged environments who had participated in the High/Scope program: a) committed less crimes; b) used fewer social assistance programs; c) had a higher income; and d) were more likely to be home owners.

The basic principles of this program are:

- The space and furnishings in the rooms are arranged in such a way that the children become active agents of their own learning. **The daycare is divided into learning centres**, each promoting different types of play that provide a variety of learning opportunities (for example, block centre, reading centre, dollhouse centre, sandbox, etc.).

- The day revolves around a **daily routine** that helps to give children a sense of time and to anticipate what will happen during the day.

- **Children and educators are active partners** in the learning process, an approach referred to as "intentional teaching". There is a focus on techniques that encourage learning targeting different child development domains, as well as strategies that help children to resolve their conflicts.

- The curriculum is built around learning activities initiated by the child and the educator and **focused on the 5 developmental domains**: a) Approach to learning;

b) Language, Literacy and Communication; c) Social and Emotional development; d) Physical development, Health and Well-being; and e) Arts and Sciences. The program presents development indicators that enable educators, through observation of the children, to plan and guide their interactions with the children.

- **The program is constantly evaluated** to measure children's progress and the quality of the program.

Based on this program, several initiatives have been introduced in the United States, Canada and elsewhere. Rigorous evaluation of these various initiatives helped identify a series of indicators that make up the key components of an effective daycare program which are now recognized by academia and world organizations (Kagan & Kauerz, 2007). In total, there are seven indicators of program effectiveness, including:

- *Children are active and engaged*. Children need to be active in their learning. They learn through projects or everyday experiences that stimulate them cognitively, physically, socially and artistically.

- *Goals are clear and shared by all*. Program goals are clearly defined so that parents, educators and program administrators can understand them.

- *Educators have frequent, meaningful interactions with the children*. Program implementation relies primarily on educators and the nature of their interactions with children. Educators' involvement with children also allows them to regularly evaluate each child's progress and make adjustments in the classroom if necessary. Effective pedagogical and assessment strategies largely rely on educators' experience and educational backgrounds as well as their ongoing professional development.

- *The program is based on knowledge in the field of child development*. The program should be based on evidence that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically relevant for the children experiencing it. It should be organized around principles that govern child development and learning.

- *The program builds on children's prior learning and experiences*. The content and implementation of the program should build on children's prior learning, be adapted to the age and culture of the children, and be inclusive of children with disabilities. It should also support children whose mother tongue is neither English nor French in order to help them build a solid base for future learning.

- *The program is comprehensive*. The curriculum should encompass all areas of development including children's physical health; well-being and motor development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; language development; cognition and general knowledge.

- *The program corresponds to learning standards and provides suitable evaluations*. The program should be based on the various stages of child development, contain guidelines regarding the contents to be delivered and specify the evaluation procedures to be used to document children's developmental progress.

The program developed for the purposes of the Readiness to Learn project reflects all of these recognized principles. Child development is considered to be a holistic process; several developmental aspects are therefore targeted. The program adopts a preschool or school-

readiness approach. In this type of program, children are asked to achieve specific development objectives directly related to school-readiness and designed to facilitate their academic success. This approach is the opposite of "social" pedagogy where the program provides general guidelines and where each community adopts its elements depending on their specific needs.

The approach used in the Readiness to Learn project daycare program advocates learning through play. According to this approach, "children are seen as independent beings that can actively shape their learning environments. The goal is to enrich and expand new opportunities for learning, based on the educator's knowledge of the child's development, on the observation and documentation of the child's activities, together with the child's family and community environments" (Bertrand, 2007, p. 4).

The Readiness to Learn project daycare program adopts a creative approach that supports the processes, exploration and experimentation. Through the adopted model, the child learns not only from literacy activities, but also through various play activities. The child is encouraged to explore and learn through play, with the ongoing support of the educator who encourages the child and closely observes his or her development. The program has an impact on children's socialization, francization, and overall development (*Programme des prématernelles en garderies, Manuel de formation* [Training manual for junior kindergarten daycare program], 2007). The fundamental principles of the daycare program established within the Readiness to Learn project framework include:

- Place children's needs at the centre of the program and activities;

- Stimulate children's five senses and multiple forms of intelligence;

- Provide an environment rich in oral and written language;

- Use and apply Francization techniques to promote the use of French;

- Promote autonomy;

- Make interesting learning centres available to children and encourage them to make choices;

- Offer children appropriate educational material set up at their height;

- Foster positive interactions with children and parents;

- Complement the daycare program with a family literacy program.

The daycare program was inspired by the *Programme fransaskois de la prématernelle* (Franco-Saskatchewanian preschool program) developed by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2001) for four year old children. Hired by HRSDC, an early childhood consultant adapted the program for the younger Readiness to Learn project population, that is to say, three year old children. She made several changes to the daycare program, adding elements of the *Jouer, c'est magique* program, notably, the daily schedule and the length of time spent at the daycare each day. Finally, using the creative approach concept to learning, the consultant:

- Created or modified evaluation tools, such as the observation grids and the children's portfolio;

- Specified monthly themes and simplified weekly programs;

- Specified how to animate books and songs; and

- Simplified the number of learning centres and their contents.

Given that the Readiness to Learn project is aimed at optimizing the language and overall development of children living in a francophone minority context, the daycare component places a particular emphasis on exposing children to verbal communication through books and songs, while giving them ample opportunities to express themselves and develop their thoughts in French.

2.2.3 Choice of Family Workshops

The family workshop program was developed specifically for the pilot project by ÉDUK, in collaboration with HRSDC and SRDC. The program was designed to meet the Readiness to Learn project objectives and the particular needs of Francophones in a minority context. It aims to achieve several objectives, the most important of which is to support the parents in their role as their child's first educators and to raise their awareness as to the importance of this role. The program also seeks to properly equip parents so that they can support their child's French language, cultural, and identity development, whether they live in a unilingual, bilingual, trilingual or multicultural home. Finally, it aims to raise parents' awareness of the educator's work and the importance of the complementary roles parents and educators play to support children's learning.

The content was inspired by the strengths of major well known Canadians literacy programs, such as:

- *Grandir avec mon enfant* (2002; French adaptation of *Literacy and Parenting Skills*) and its adaptations, including *J'apprends en famille* from Nova Scotia, particularly with regard to activities related to parenting skills and children's needs;

- *Chansons, contes et comptines* [Song, Stories and Nursery Rhymes] and *Grandir avec des livres* [Growing Up With Books], given their emphasis on emergent literacy as well as the francophone cultural component;

- The English program *Learning Together* which was part of a longitudinal study in Alberta (2001 to 2005) and for which the results of children and families are well documented (Phillips, Hayden & Norris, 2006); and

- The *Programme fransaskois de la prématernelle* [Franco-Saskatchewanian preschool program] (2001).

The family workshop program comprises 10 workshops, each presenting several activities centered on a particular theme. The theme of each workshop and a brief summary can be found in Appendix B.

The family workshop program embodies the 10 best practices recommended by the Centre for Family Literacy (2002), a well recognized organization in the field of family literacy. Specifically, successful family literacy programs include the following elements:

- **Intergenerational:** programs addressing parents and children, directly or indirectly, to establish an intergenerational cycle of literacy.

- **Collaboration**: they recognize the importance of collaboration and are developed, delivered, and continually improved based on feedback from participants and the community.

- **Consolidation of Experiences**: programs build on literacy behaviours already present within families by introducing strategies to help them enrich their literacy activities at home.

- **Relevance**: they are flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of families. To enable this practice, it is necessary to first determine the particular needs and interests of the families to whom the program is being offered and adapt it accordingly.

- **Cultural Sensitivity**: they are sensitive to participants' cultures and use resources that are appropriate for specific participant groups.

- **Essence of family literacy**: they focus on the joy of learning.

- **Proven Methods**: they adopt sound educational practices appropriate for the literacy development of children and adults. Practitioners select from a range of documented methods according to the needs of the group.

- **Staff Qualifications**: programs are offered by qualified and trained staff according to the needs of children and adults and according to the specific role and responsibilities defined within the delivery model chosen.

- **Accessibility**: they are held in accessible and welcoming locations. The availability of child care, for example, contributes to creating a favourable environment.

- **Evaluation**: they include a continuous and manageable evaluation process that provides useful information for program development and management.

Within the context of the Readiness to Learn project, the family literacy workshop program was aimed at children's literacy development and not the improvement of parent's literacy level. Consequently, emphasis is placed on knowledge development and an increase in awareness among adults who play a significant role in the child's life, who in turn support the child's development. The activities were designed to support children's various experiences and periods of socialization, whether they are with parents, brothers and sisters, daycare friends or other members of the community.

Recent studies have confirmed the importance of the first five years of a child's life for their skill development, health and well-being (Burns, Espinosa, & Snow, 2003). Adults who surround the child during the first five years will have a determinative influence on the child's development. Thus, adults' level of motivation and abilities for literacy activities (including reading, writing and play activities) influence children's exposure to and interest in literacy (Burns, et al., 2003; Millard & Waese, 2007). Furthermore, the way in which the parent interacts with their child during literacy activities influences the child's reading success (Saint-Laurent & Giasson, 2005). Several studies confirm that the quality and the frequency of family literacy activities have a positive impact on the child's academic success, which in turn will greatly influence the child's future learning, his or her personal development and his or her participation in society (Lemelin & Boivin, 2007; Phillips, et al., 2006).

These various findings were incorporated into the themes addressed during the family workshops. For example, the first workshop was about parent's role as first educator of their child. In addition, parents received advice, resources and training on different aspects of their child's development, in order to help support and encourage them to play an active role in their child's learning process. It should be added that parents also benefited directly from the workshops, which gave them opportunities to speak *in French* with other parents and resource persons on topics that were relevant to their experiences. Emphasis was placed on the joy of learning in French and sharing with other families participating in the Readiness to Learn project.

2.2.4. Progress of the Family Workshops

Workshops were offered in daycare classes to provide children with a safe environment adapted to their needs (e.g., tables and chairs were of appropriate size). Also, the daycare was a place the children knew, and consequently, it gave them a greater sense of security, an indispensable factor when trying to optimize their learning process. The family workshop program included ten workshops. According to the schedule, four workshops were to be delivered in the fall of 2007 and six workshops during the winter of 2008. Lasting a total of two hours, each workshop included five components: the greeting component, the parent component, the child component, the joint parent-child component, and the closing component. During the **greeting component** (a period of 15 to 20 minutes), the community coordinator and practitioners welcomed families, who would return the family kits, then the theme song was sung and the practitioners briefly presented how the workshop would unfold.

During the **parent component**, lasting approximately 55 minutes, parents would go into a separate room with the practitioner. The workshop consisted of information transmitted to parents, followed by discussions and exchanges, through which parents shared their experiences to learn from each other. This approach helped to build on the strengths of the families and to valorize parents' existing practices. The practitioner acted as the facilitator to encourage discussions, highlight important points, and direct families to the information that they needed.

The **child component** took place at the same time as the parent component. This component featured at least one form of multiple intelligences and one skill related to emergent literacy, writing or numeracy. Educators animated a story, and children learned new nursery rhymes.

Each workshop would end with the **joint parent-child component** (a period of approximately 30 minutes). This was the time when the parent and child did activities together. They would read a book together, sing, recite nursery rhymes, and take part in optional group activities in line with multiple intelligences. This component enabled parents to put into practise the support strategies discussed earlier in the workshop with the support of the practitioner of the parent component and the educator, in a collaborative, constructive and non-judgemental fashion.

Finally, during the **closing component** (a period of 5 to 10 minutes) parents were invited to complete a short evaluation of the workshop and were informed of the contents of the next workshop. Educational kits were also lent out at this time. They were in cloth bags to be taken home and brought back to the next workshop. Each kit included two of the following French resources: a book for the parent, a music CD, DVD or educational game, as well as material and written instructions for a creative activity to do with the child. There were a total of ten different

creative activities, with one added to the kit at the end of each workshop. The children kept the material. The creative activity was related to the intelligence featured during the week and aimed to reinforce what children had learned at the daycare and during the workshop. Also, families were invited to visit a Resource Centre that had been set up specifically for the workshops. This Centre had more than 300 French resources, including books for children and parents, CDs, DVDs, audio books and games. Each child chose a book and added it to his or her kit.

Lastly, a light meal was offered at the beginning or end of the workshop, depending on the circumstances. Families, the coordinator, the practitioners and educators all took part. This gave everyone an opportunity to share their ideas or to talk informally about a topic related to the activities experienced in the workshop or about their lives. Although the meal was an optional activity, the vast majority of families participated, stating that it was a privileged opportunity to speak in French with other parents. The possibility of having the meal before the workshop began facilitated the participation for families who did not have time to go home for dinner and return to the daycare when workshops were offered at the end of the day. Likewise, when workshops were offered in the morning, the possibility of having lunch before the family returned home was less disruptive to the schedules of young children, who often took a nap in the afternoon.

Several other elements were put in place to reduce barriers preventing families from participating in the workshops. Where the numbers warranted, community coordinators offered drop-in daycare services for siblings of the program group children aged two and a half or older. Families could also receive a fixed compensation for the child care costs incurred for children under the age of two and a half. The coordinators communicated regularly with the families to confirm their attendance to the workshop. Also, before the workshops began again in January, the coordinators made phone calls, sent emails and distributed letters reminding parents that the workshops were starting up again.

2.2.5. Harmonization of the Two Components

To maximize the impact of the Readiness to Learn project on families, the two components, the preschool daycare program and the family literacy program, were harmonized. The preschool program emphasized francization and emergent literacy skills among preschoolers (including sub-themes of reading and writing). The family workshops complemented the preschool program through group discussions aimed at making parents aware of their role as their child's first educators and of the particularities of living in a linguistic minority community. The topics addressed focused mainly on ways that parents could support their child's development, stimulate their learning and pass on the French language and culture. In addition, this component aimed to make parents more aware of the educator's work and the importance of the complementarity of parent–educator roles in the support of the child who is learning.

To link these two components, the family workshop designers worked closely with the early childhood consultant who adapted the daycare program in order to ensure coherence between the different aspects of the Readiness to Learn project, and continuity in the learning process for the child and the parents. The designers took the following into consideration:

- The approach and values underlying the daycare program;
- The francization strategies to be put in practice with the child;

- The themes covered each month at the daycare;

- The list of resources — games, toys and books purchased for the daycare component; the resources proposed for the family workshops complemented those of the daycare component; and

- The developmental stage of preschoolers.

The harmonization of the two components is, in itself, a contribution to child development. Several studies support the idea that there is a close link between school and family environments and child development. Indeed, children whose parents are involved in their education are better adjusted socially and academically than other children in addition to having more positive attitudes toward school and demonstrating greater aspirations for the future, and this, independently of family income and parents' education level (Connors & Epstein, 1995). The same parallel has been established between parents' involvement in preschool and the child's pre-literacy skills. Parents who get involved by having discussions with the educator, by asking questions on how their child's day was and who participate in daycare activities, have children with a larger vocabulary, better phonological awareness and better pre-writing skills (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008). The program established in the daycare and during the family workshops illustrates the importance of a good collaboration between parents and educators. Linking the two components fosters a partnership between the various people involved with the child (educator, parents and others) and aims to reinforce what the child is learning in different areas of his or her life, such as the daycare, his or her family home and the community.

2.2.6. Establishment of the Resource Centre

Once family workshops ended, the community coordinators did an inventory of the Resource Centre and established a book lending system. Resource Centre activities became a part of the regular activities of the new preschool program. A few weeks after the family workshops ended, the coordinators began making weekly visits to the classrooms of the program group children so that they could borrow a book. Once a week, the coordinator would show up at the program daycare at the end of the day to allow parents to visit the Resource Centre with their child and choose among the wide range of available resources, such as books for parents, CDs, DVDs and games for the family.

3. Pre-Implementation Activities

This chapter describes the necessary activities for the implementation and operation of the Readiness to Learn project. At the outset, such a project would not have been possible without the participation of communities and of families willing to invest time and energy into the project. The project began with a wide recruiting campaign to solicit the participation of communities and families. Next, a series of professionals were hired to take part in the project, track its progress and evaluate it. Finally, the establishment of the project required the purchase of material resources to standardize the resources available at each site. The following sections describe the different steps in the pre-implementation period.

3.1. RECRUITING COMMUNITIES

The first step required to implement such a project consisted of contacting communities that were interested in implementing the project and that offered the potential necessary to support the project during the two years in which the program being tested would be delivered. HRSDC anticipated recruiting five communities. In order to ensure the success of the Readiness to Learn project, HRSDC established a list of criteria that the communities had to satisfy to participate in the project. First, the applicant organization had to represent a local community and lead early childhood activities in a francophone minority community. Second, the applicant organization had to offer a non-profit child care service or be associated with such a service. Third, the community had to have a large enough pool of Francophone "*ayants droit*" to allow the recruitment of at least 40 three year old children and be able to provide a description of their language profile. Fourth, to qualify, a community had to identify key individuals willing to get involved in the program. Finally, the applicant organization had to demonstrate that the community had the infrastructures and materials necessary to ensure delivery of the program for the duration of the Readiness to Learn project, as well as the staff necessary to deliver child care services in a daycare setting.

HRSDC launched a request for proposals in order to recruit interested communities. In total, seven communities submitted a proposal. An evaluation of the communities' characteristics revealed that all of the communities appeared to have a large enough pool of three year old children with francophone "*ayants droit*" parents to be able to enrol the 40 children needed for the research project. Of these children, approximately twenty per community would attend a formal daycare that was implementing the daycare program. Six of the seven communities had at least one Francophone daycare where the program group could be accommodated, although it was sometimes located in two separate rooms. A seventh community had a daycare that could accommodate 20 three year old children, but needed to hire a third educator in order to reach this number. Three communities, possibly four, had alternative daycare services that were being provided in French but, in some cases, it was highly unlikely that the services would be located in the same sector. Finally, all of the communities appeared to have an excellent capacity to mobilize early childhood stakeholders.

Every community that submitted a proposal to HRSDC to participate in the project was contacted. The purpose of this phone communication was to confirm that the communities satisfied the selection criteria and had the capacity to ensure the success of the Readiness to Learn project in terms of structural elements. This initial contact was followed by a site visit to verify and confirm the points that had been discussed by phone, and to meet with community partners and present the project to them. The visit also helped to evaluate the community's degree of enthusiasm for the project and its level of cooperation. Community partners and SRDC also took advantage of the visit to identify the daycare that would be offering the new program being studied.

Of the seven communities that submitted an application, two were not retained. The first had a very high potential at first glance, but subsequent information gathered on infrastructure characteristics revealed certain shortfalls. The second was already offering a junior kindergarten program in its daycares; it was the program that inspired the new preschool program being studied. Early on in the project, it became clear that a sixth community would need to be added to obtain the statistical power required to ensure the reliability of the results. Several possibilities were then considered: expand the area in a community already being studied, open a second daycare program at one of the sites, or develop a new site. A decision was made to develop a new site, using ties that had been established with a school board in one of the previously recruited communities, which helped to accelerate the implementation process so that the program could be rolled out in parallel with the other Readiness to Learn project communities. This community also had the advantage of being familiar with the project, having participated in a pilot study earlier in the year.

3.2. RECRUITING FAMILIES

Parents and children were recruited using specific eligibility criteria. Parents and children were eligible for the study if the child was born between January 1, 2004 and January 31, 2005 and if one of the parents was an "*ayant droit*", as defined under section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*[3]. "*Ayants droit*" are:

a) Citizens of Canada who have the right to educate their children at a primary and secondary school level in the language of the minority population for one of the following reasons:

- The first learned and still understood language is that of the French or English linguistic minority population in the province in which they reside;

- They received their primary school instruction in French or English in Canada and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is that of the French or English linguistic minority population of the province.

b) Citizens of Canada:

- Whose child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in French or English in Canada and who has the right, for this reason, to have all their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language.

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[3] The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is available at http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/1.html

The rights of citizens of Canada under paragraphs (a) and (b) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the French or English linguistic minority population of a province:

- Apply wherever in the province where the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant them in their location the provision of, using public funds, instruction in the language of the minority population; and

- Include, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities funded by public funds.

It should be stated that the Readiness to Learn project was open to all children who were eligible to attend a French language school, and not only children who spoke French already or who were already enrolled in a French child care service. Finally, the parent had to have the intention to enrol the child in a French language school, since this was the population targeted by the Readiness to Learn project.

3.2.1. Communication and Outreach Recruitment Strategies for Families

Several means and strategies of communication were used to contact the population in each of the chosen communities. To begin with, a logo was created to represent the Readiness to Learn project, in order to ensure that parents and partners could easily identify and recognize the project. Next, community coordinators approached parents of children born in 2004 or in January 2005, in a diversified manner that was adapted to the characteristics of each of the communities.

In four communities, participants were recruited to make up three treatment groups: the program daycare group, the comparison daycare group and the informal care group. There was no comparison daycare group in the two other communities, since there was a lack of a second francophone daycare that could be used for comparison purposes.

To reach parents for the program group and the comparison daycare group, initiatives were undertaken at francophone daycares in each community. The first contact was with daycare coordinators and directors. The community coordinators directly approached parents of eligible children who were enrolled in the daycare to explain the research project and the benefits of participating, either for the program group or the comparison group. This approach helped to recruit the greatest number of children possible in several communities. The coordinator then met with the parent to present the Readiness to Learn project in more detail and to explain the implications of their participation and that of their child. During this meeting, the coordinator asked the parent to sign an informed consent form and gave the parent the option of completing the baseline survey immediately or during a subsequent meeting. Community coordinators also organized information sessions in some daycares for program groups and comparison groups to better inform parents about the Readiness to Learn project. These sessions helped to provide all of the information necessary on the project and answer parents' questions.

Recruiting parents for the informal care group required a greater diversity of approaches. Indeed, it was necessary to introduce the Readiness to Learn project in various local newspapers, as well as on television and on the radio. Ads were placed in local and regional newspapers, advertising flyer distribution bags, church flyers and community partner Internet sites. Coordinators also passed out information flyers in French schools to reach parents with younger children who might be eligible for the study. Brochures developed especially for the recruitment

campaign were also distributed in hospitals, medical clinics, public health services, francophone community centres and children's stores. Initiatives were taken with family daycare agencies, early childhood education centres and family resource centres. Several parents were approached during meetings at play group centres and at drop-in daycares. Families were also recruited at parks, public pools, libraries and toy libraries. Having coordinators present at popular festivals and fairs helped to make the community aware of the research project, but resulted in very few enrolments in the informal care group. Recruiting in the informal care group proved to be the most difficult in the majority of the communities. In the end, "word of mouth" seemed to be by far the most effective means of recruiting members of this comparison group.

These different strategies helped to recruit the required number of participants for the three treatment groups, the program group, the comparison daycare group and the informal care group. Table 3.1 below illustrates the means that helped to recruit children in each group and the total number of children enrolled in the project as of October 30, 2007.

Table 3.1: Family Recruitment Strategies

Program group	Comparison daycare group	Informal care group
Brochures	Brochures	Radio/newspaper ads, brochures
Contact with daycares	Contact with daycares	Community centres, family daycares, family resource centres
Evening information sessions	Evening information sessions	Public places, play groups, early childhood services, etc.
114 children recruited	99 children recruited	112 children recruited

3.3. HUMAN RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Project implementation required a number of resources, both human and material. These resources enabled both the program implementation and its evaluation. The following sections explain the role played by each of the actors involved in the project.

3.3.1. Role of the Champions

In each community, a champion was identified to sponsor the project. This individual or group of individuals had to have extensive knowledge and understanding of the context in which the Francophone minority community was living and the challenges that it faced. It was important to choose a good communicator and someone who the parents could trust. The champion's support of the project helped to establish the Readiness to Learn project's credibility and contributed to it being seen as an important and beneficial project for the community.

The champion acted as project ambassador with community partners and families. It was highly important for the champion and community coordinator to communicate to the audience that the Readiness to Learn project was not a social program or an allocation of funds for the community, but rather a research project. They were asked to emphasize the long term benefits

of the Readiness to Learn project for the community. For example, the resources and material provided within the framework of the project would continue to be used once the project ended. Also, the training given to early childhood educators and family literacy practitioners would be an asset in moving forward with the program in the community. Finally, the program itself could be adapted to better meet the needs of the community once the project ended. Throughout the project, the champion was asked, if need be, to encourage the community to maintain its commitment to the project and to assist in overcoming challenges.

3.3.2. Role of the Community Coordinators[4]

Community coordinators played a pivotal role in implementing the Readiness to Learn project. The incumbents of this position in the six Readiness to Learn project communities were tasked with the overall coordination of program implementation activities, as well as those associated with the program evaluation. They were the face of the project in their respective community.

Implementation activities: From the outset of the project, the community coordinator had to establish a relationship of trust with each of the project's community partners. Establishing a strong relationship between the community coordinator and the administrative staff at participating daycares was particularly important. Without their engagement, it would have been difficult to contact and recruit families in the program group. Relationships with comparison group daycares were more difficult to establish when the comparison group daycare and the program group daycare did not report to the same organization. The community coordinator had to visit these daycares regularly to remind them of SRDC's appreciation for their efforts. She also had to remain aware of the voluntary nature of the participation in the project of the community partners and champion.

The community coordinator was responsible for recruitment activities. She had to remain attentive to the sociodemographic characteristics of the children in the program group. Wherever possible, the coordinator had to ensure that the children in the informal care group had a profile similar to that of children in the program group, in terms of the number of boys and girls, family income, number of exogamous and endogamous families, and ethnic profile.

Throughout the project, the coordinator made sure to keep parents informed of new developments in the project. She also made an effort to maintain the relationship that had been established with the parent during recruitment. It should be noted that it was this solid relationship that helped to ensure a high rate of retention. Distributing the *L'il updates* newsletter also helped to keep families informed about Readiness to Learn project activities.

The coordinators were also asked to play an active role in the delivery of family workshops. They helped to recruit family literacy practitioners, participated in the preparation of the material required to deliver the workshops and, when necessary, purchased the material. Lastly, they were responsible for arranging meals, overseeing the drop-in daycare service and the Resource Centre.

Evaluation activities: Community coordinators were responsible for coordinating and participating in the various data collections. In addition to obtaining participants' informed consent, the coordinators contributed to training the evaluators and the coordination of the

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[4] In the next few paragraphs, the feminine gender is used to recognize the make-up of this group of individuals.

quarterly child evaluations. They were responsible for the parent surveys that were conducted three times per year. They also ensured that data were collected on daycare and family workshop attendance, and observations were taken for daycare activities and family workshops. Finally, they were responsible for interviewing educators and community representatives.

3.3.3. Role of the Educators

The educators' engagement in the project and enthusiasm for the new program was without a doubt one of the crucial elements that helped to ensure the project's success. In fact, the educators were hands down responsible for delivery of the daycare component of the program. Their high degree of engagement in the Readiness to Learn project inevitably contributed toward ensuring a greater quality in the delivered program. For instance, the educators' engagement facilitated recruitment and retention of parents and their child in the Readiness to Learn project. The educator often encouraged parents who hesitated to enrol their child or who questioned the program methods and implications. These additional explanations and answers provided to parents often made a difference in their choice.

For the purposes of the daycare program, educators had to have extensive knowledge of the program and the targeted learning results. They had to take ownership of the program contents and apply it in a way that was in line with the program approach and philosophy. Thus, the educator had to be familiar with the different stages in the child's language development, and know which activities would help to expand the child's vocabulary, while reinforcing the child's identification with the Francophone culture and community. The lead educator was responsible for planning activities connected to the theme of the month. Using a play-based approach, these activities had to target stimulation of the child's five senses and the development of different multiple intelligences. The francization techniques that were used offered children the possibility of improving and mastering their vocabulary, as well as developing their interest in reading and pre-writing. The program emphasized literacy activities, such as interactive reading and learning nursery rhymes. The educator ensured that children developed a certain degree of autonomy in their social contacts with peers and in choosing activities that were of interest to them.

Educators were also asked to deliver the program within the framework of the family workshops so that children would feel safe. The workshops were designed so that parents and children were together in a common room at the beginning and the end of the workshop, but were separated for the middle part. During this period, parents went to another room where they took part in a workshop that was prepared especially for them. This type of separation had triggered feelings of insecurity in young children in other family literacy programs. The educator's presence near the child helped to make the child feel safe and optimized the child's learning.

Moreover, the support that educators provided to parents participating in the family workshops was a considerable asset in maintaining parents' interest in attending the workshops. The regular reminders of meeting times, of topic that would be discussed and of activities that would be practised with children were means of encouraging parents to attend regularly. The Readiness to Learn project emphasized the importance of daily contact and communication between the parents and educators. Discussions and communications that took place during the family workshop component helped to establish a connection between parents and educators, and fostered the sharing of observations and discoveries concerning the child's progress.

3.3.4. Role of the Family Literacy Practitioners

The family workshop component was facilitated by literacy practitioners who were experienced in delivering workshops to adults, or who came from the adult education field. The family literacy practitioners had to be quite familiar with the program and the targeted learning outcomes. They were responsible for taking ownership of the program content and applying it in a way that respected the adult education approach and philosophy of the program. The practitioners had to create a bond with the parents so that they could understand the difficulties that the parents were experiencing, both in the family and in their community. During the workshops, they also had to encourage discussions so that parents would participate and openly discuss the topics presented. The program philosophy insisted on the importance of respecting each parent. The practitioners were prepared to encourage parents to participate in their child's language and vocabulary development by suggesting activities that could be done at home. The child's long learning process was clearly explained to parents.

In addition, the Readiness to Learn project requested practitioners to be present during meals, to provide support for the parents and talk to them about any additional questions they had, before or after the workshop. Listening to parents' questions and concerns and providing them with regular support helped to ensure their ongoing attendance at family workshops.

3.3.5. Role of the Trainers

SRDC hired the early childhood consultant who had adapted the daycare program to provide basic and on-going training of daycare educators. The trainer's main responsibility was to make any modifications or adjustments necessary so that educators could deliver the program as intended. She also provided ongoing training to educators by offering advice and providing targeted resources based on the training needs that she had observed or those identified by the educators.

SRDC also retained the services of the family workshop program designers to provide basic training and on-going support to family literacy practitioners. The trainers' main responsibility was to ensure that practitioners fully understood the recommended approach, as well as the program values and objectives. When necessary, the practitioners could contact the trainers to obtain clarification on program content and advice on program delivery.

3.3.6. Role of the Evaluators

The hiring criteria for evaluators required that they have the ability to easily establish contact and communicate with children. Therefore, candidates had to have previous experience working with children. The evaluators had to first undergo basic training, which included a theoretical component and a practical component. This training ensured that they had the proficiency required to properly evaluate the children. Second, evaluators were paired up for the first four children evaluated, to give them a chance to familiarize themselves with the tool and to ensure the validity of collected data.

The evaluators also had to be aware of and comply with requirements regarding the confidentiality and protection of information, as well as the proper handling of completed evaluations. They needed to take refresher training before each evaluation period. The purpose of this training was to remind evaluators of procedures to follow when using the measurement

tools, and if necessary, introduce them to the administration procedure of new measurement tools.

Evaluations could take place at the daycare, school, or the child's home. In cases where the evaluation took place at the daycare or school, evaluators would contact parents to advise them of the date that their child would be evaluated. When the evaluation was being held at the child's home, the evaluator and the parent would agree on a suitable meeting date and time. To ensure the quality of the test, the Readiness to Learn project required evaluators to limit themselves to four evaluations per day.

3.4. MATERIAL RESOURCES

3.4.1. Material Resources for the Daycare Program

The early childhood consultant who adapted the daycare program prepared a list of material resources necessary to deliver the program. This list included a kit for each month of the year, with each of the 12 kits relating to a particular theme. There was also an art kit, a science kit and a music kit. The material in the kits included toys, puzzles, books, CDs, musical instruments and material for crafts. All materials were French.

During the winter of 2006, the consultant visited the daycares and met with directors to assess material resource needs. For each daycare that was offering the program, she prepared a list of material required for program delivery. At the end of this exercise, SRDC procured nearly all of the required material resources. In addition to the material that was common to all six communities, a few of the daycares needed to acquire certain resources that were considered basic in several daycares (e.g., a sand bin, a CD player). All of the material resources were successfully delivered to the daycares before the educators began their basic training.

3.4.2. Material Resources for the Family Workshop Program

The trainers (and designers) of the family workshop program prepared a list of material resources that would be required to deliver the workshops. The list consisted of material that was needed to deliver the parent, child and parent-child components. SRDC proceeded to purchase all of the recommended material resources. The material was delivered before the family literacy practitioners began their basic training. The trainers also prepared a list of material required to do the creative activity that was included in the family kit each week.

SRDC and the directors of the daycares offering the program shared the costs of a storage unit where the Resource Centre's material resources could be kept. This unit was given to the daycare at the end of the program. The Resource Centre contained close to 300 resources selected specifically for their suitability for three year old child development or to assist parents and educators with children of this age.

4. Training

4.1. BASIC TRAINING FOR DAYCARE PROGRAM EDUCATORS

A three-day basic training was provided to educators in each of the communities, during the months of April and May 2007. According to the training plan, the first two days were dedicated to theoretical components while the focus of the final day was on the practical application of the concepts introduced. Theoretical aspects presented included the objectives and characteristics of the Readiness to Learn project, the program content, its values and basic principles, francization techniques, and communications with parents. The practical aspects presented included animating a book or a song, and planning themes. Each participant received a manual describing the programming of the daycare program.

Despite the dense content of the training, the trainer adopted an interactive approach, which encouraged ongoing discussions between participants. These discussions proved useful to both the trainer and SRDC since they helped to highlight the differences and similarities between the program currently in place in daycares and the program being tested. It was also possible to identify the components of the new program that would present particular challenges and those which the educators might resist, and to plan follow-up training sessions according to these insights. This training also allowed the trainer to identify the more specific needs of each educator.

Overall, the training sessions went very well; educators appeared to be receptive and enthusiastic about the program. Among the factors that facilitated participation was the fact that certain educators had a good degree of professional training and already had several years of experience in early childhood education. On the other hand, the training was harder to grasp for those with a lower degree of education and less training in early childhood education. The same was true for educators whose spoken and written French was of a poorer quality. It should be noted that it was easier to provide training when task assignments was well defined at the daycare. In one of the communities, the champion was also the executive director of the daycare, which proved to be a very positive point in terms of the educators' enthusiasm for the program. Educators' engagement in the Readiness to Learn project was also easier to achieve in communities where the staff already knew the community coordinator or when the community champion was directly involved in the daycare environment. Conversely, a lack of leadership of one of the daycare directors was considered to be a barrier in educators' taking ownership of the program.

4.2. FOLLOW-UP TRAINING FOR THE DAYCARE PROGRAM EDUCATORS

Following basic training, the daycare program trainer visited each community regularly to provide educators with follow-up training and support for project implementation. The goal of the initial follow-up training was to facilitate spatial reorganization of the classroom into learning centres and to assist educators in planning activities for the following months. The

trainer then visited communities every two months. During the follow-up training, the trainer observed classroom activities, provided feedback to educators and delivered targeted training. Topics discussed included, among others, thematic planning, children's portfolios, the development of a literacy centre, the integration of literacy and numeracy activities in daily activities and the development of creative drawing in children.

During the final visit, the trainer asked educators to give their impression of the program as well as list the program strengths and areas that could be improved. She also handed out participation certificates to educators who delivered the daycare program within the Readiness to Learn project.

4.3. BASIC TRAINING FOR THE FAMILY LITERACY WORKSHOP PROGRAM

A three-day basic training was offered during the month of October 2007. Each participant received a manual describing the programming for the family literacy component to be delivered in Readiness to Learn project communities. This manual was intended as a road map and offered considerable ongoing support for conducting the family workshops, for both the practitioners and the coordinators. The training helped participants to gain a better understanding of the Francophone minority community, examine the fundamentals of family literacy in a francophone minority community, and explore the particularities of families living in this context. Trainers gave an overview of the ten workshops and presented the particularities of the parent, child and parent-child components. They sought out the active participation of practitioners to illustrate the mandatory activities for each workshop. Trainers also gave tips on managing groups.

The basic training plan established by trainers was followed in the first training session, but was then modified for the second, in order to respect the audience's capacity and particular needs. Learners were less at ease with written information and abstract concepts. Trainers therefore decided to provide more situations in which the participants could practise facilitating workshops and to engage them in more interactive activities. After the first basic training course, changes were also made to the content of one of workshops to lighten its delivery. Lastly, trainers held lengthy discussions with participants on ways to adjust workshop content to meet the particular needs of each community. For example, some practitioners from communities that had many exogamous families expressed their concerns and fears regarding the fact that workshops were held in French only. The discussions helped to define strategies that would enable practitioners to meet the needs of Anglophone parents while ensuring that workshops remained a place where French was preferred and valued.

The training sessions ended with an evaluation. Practitioners expressed their appreciation for the training provided, as well as the trainers' enthusiasm and knowledge. They also appreciated the opportunities that they had been given to practice and to participate in activities that were on the family workshop schedule. It should be noted that community coordinators also participated in the training in order to become familiar with the objectives, the values and the contents of the workshops. Participating in the training also helped coordinators to get to know the practitioners in their community. The training helped initiate teamwork between the coordinator, the practitioners working with the parents and the practitioners working with the children. Everyone

received clarification of their responsibilities in the delivery of the workshops, as well as their role with respect to the children and the parents.

4.4. FOLLOW-UP TRAINING FOR THE FAMILY WORKSHOPS

Once they were back in their respective communities, coordinators met with practitioners a few days before the first workshop, to finalize everyone's roles and responsibilities and go over the workshop planning. Also, when necessary, coordinators led or took part in brief meetings with practitioners at the end of each workshop, to define the needs of future workshops and to evaluate how activities had unfolded. These meetings fostered communication between practitioners, encouraged teamwork, and helped to meet any needs arising in parents and children.

Shortly after the end of the first series of workshops, trainers arranged two teleconference meetings. Practitioners working with parents, and those working with children were all invited to participate in one of the two meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to get an update on how the workshops were progressing, answer any of the practitioners' questions, and suggest solutions for any problems encountered. Trainers also sought feedback on the organization and content of the workshops. They asked practitioners to list the elements that the parents and children had liked the most. They then examined the elements that had been the most difficult in the workshops and suggested possible solutions for the barriers identified. The issue of accommodating Anglophone parents was again addressed. One of the practitioners working with parents offered a few ideas for facilitating the integration of an Anglophone parent. Overall, the consensus was that the workshops were going well.

5. Background of Each Community

5.1.   Selection of a Champion

The call for community proposals required the identification of an organization or a person to act as champion. This requirement was met in four of the six communities. In the two other communities, SRDC found that the applicant organization could not act as a champion, because it did not know the community well enough and did not have the time or resources necessary for successful implementation of the project in these communities. SRDC therefore decided to suspend Readiness to Learn project activities in these two communities until a new local champion could be identified. Two meetings between the new champion of each of the two communities and SRDC, in March 2007 and May 2007, respectively, helped to review the Readiness to Learn project work plan and everyone's respective roles and responsibilities. The pre-implementation activities resumed shortly after these meetings.

5.2.   Selection of the Community Coordinator

The interviews related to the selection of a community coordinator in each community were held from March to May 2007. These interviews led to the selection of a candidate in each community. Four of these coordinators received training in Ottawa. The two others were trained by a member of the research team in their community.

The community coordinators held their positions until the moment when all the field activities were completed in three of six communities. In the fourth, the coordinator quit her post in June 2009. Afterwards, one of the remaining coordinators assured the coordination of the activities of this community. In two other communities, there was a turnover of coordinators. In one of these communities, the coordinator quit her post in December 2007. Following her departure, a person agreed to act as coordinator until April 2008. The position of community coordinator was filled in May 2008 and that person remained in their post until July 2009. In the last community, three incumbents accepted the position of coordinator during the first year only to quit shortly after. A fourth person joined the team in early May 2008. She assumed the responsibilities of the position until October 2009, when the last data was collected.

5.3.   Recruitment and Retention of Participants

The initial work plan included the recruitment of participants in five communities. In four of the five communities, SRDC recruited participants for the three treatment groups (the program group, the comparison day care group, and the informal care group). In the fifth community, participants were recruited for two treatment groups (the programme group the informal care group) because the community did not offer the possibility of recruiting children for the comparison daycare group.

The recruitment period lasted from May to October 2007. The initial target in four communities was 25 children per treatment group, for a total of 75 participating families. The initial target in the fifth community was 25 children per treatment group, for a total of 50 participating families. In July 2007, two of the communities were behind their schedule of recruitment compared to other communities with the same recruitment parameters.

Consequently, SRDC re-examined the recruitment potential in these communities and found that it was unlikely that the project would be able to recruit the number of children planned. In one of the communities, the recruitment targets had to be revised downwards due to (1) the pool of three year old children was smaller than anticipated; and (2) the targeted population was difficult to reach. The new recruitment targets in this community were fixed at approximately 60-65 participants, or a minimum of 20 children in each of the three treatment groups. In the other community, SRDC also had to reduce the target of recruitment for two reasons: recruitment of participants for the informal care group proved to be difficult and the daycare program did not offer the anticipated recruitment potential. The new targets were set at 15 children for the program group and 15 children for the informal care group.

To reach a participation rate that would enable researchers to obtain the statistical power required to ensure the reliability of the study results, SRDC recruited a sixth community. The recruitment targets in this sixth community were established based on the shortfalls in other communities. Specifically, SRDC focused on recruiting 15 children for the program group, 15 children for the comparison daycare group, and 20 children from the informal daycare group, for a total of 50 children.

Table 5.1 presents the number of children recruited in each participating community on October 31, 2007. It also shows the project retention rate of 89% on October 31, 2009. The reasons for project withdrawal were, for the most part, related to the relation of families or personal reasons.

Table 5.1: The Number of Children Recruited and Retention Rate by Community

	Cornwall	**Durham**	**Edmonton**	**Edmundston**	**Orleans**	**Saint-John**
Number of G1 children	22	18	14	19	18	23
Number of G2 children	32	15	14	32	20	-----
Number of G3 children	17	8	10	34	19	10
Total number of children on October 31, 2007	71	41	38	85	57	33
Retention rate percent on October 31, 2009	96%	85%	79%	98%	95%	82%

*Note: G1 signifies the program group, G2 the comparison daycare group, G3 the informal daycare group.

5.4.   Program Delivery Schedule

Alberta

During the first year of the project, the new preschool program was introduced in two separate classes in Edmonton. From the beginning, this daycare saw a high turnover of educators, which disrupted the delivery of the program during the two years. In one of the classes a quality learning environment was observed while, in the other class, the activities were not optimal in terms of structure and degree of exposure to French. In the month of May 2008, the

community coordinator noted that with the exception of one educator, the educators who were delivering the daycare program were all new and had not had benefited from basic training. In light of this, the trainer provided basic training to the educators at the end of May 2008. A new training had to be offered again in September 2008 where all the children in the program group were together in the same class with a team of two new educators.

Unfortunately, the daycare staff continued to experience significant changes in the following months. The instability of the staff hindered the teamwork of educators trained in the new daycare program to a point where the delivery of the program was not always successful in the fall of 2008, the second year of the project. Faced with this situation, SRDC decided not to pursue implementation attempts in this community. Consequently, the children in the program group received a treatment similar to that of children in the control groups.

New Brunswick

Edmundston

The daycare program was delivered over a period of two years, on a full-time basis. The program being tested began in September 2007 and was delivered in three different daycare classes offering the program. The team of educators who had been trained to provide the program remained stable during the first year of implementation. During the second year of the project, there were a few changes in the make-up of the team of educators responsible for delivering the daycare program. The trainer provided basic training to two new educators in August 2008. The make-up of the team of educators remained stable during the second year of implementation. It should be noted that the children in the program group were not exposed to the program during the summer months (July and August) both years, when the trained educators who offered the new daycare program were on vacation. The daycare program ended in June 2009.

Saint John

The daycare program was delivered over a period of two years, on a full-time basis. The program being tested began in September 2007 and was provided in temporary rooms at the daycare until the daycare moved into its newly renovated space in November 2007. The daycare program was delivered in four different daycare classes by four educators. It should be noted that one of the educators trained to deliver the new preschool program had to leave her position before program delivery began. This educator was replaced by an assistant educator, who did not receive basic training on the new preschool program, who benefited from coached by the other trained educators.

Two of the trained educators and two new educators provided the program in the second year of the Readiness to Learn project. The new educators received a short training session in September 2008. It should be mentioned that during the summer of 2008 and 2009, the program was delivered sporadically due to vacations being taken by trained educators, children from different classes being grouped together, and some children in the program group being away for extended periods.

Ontario

Cornwall

The daycare program was delivered over a two year period, full time for the first year and part-time for the second year. Program delivery began in August 2007. During the first year of the project, the daycare program was offered to two different daycare classes by two educators and one assistant educator. In September 2008, the majority of the children in the program group were enrolled in kindergarten part-time.

The arrival of the 2008-2009 school year saw changes in the assignment of educators. Only one of the educators who worked in the daycare program the first year stayed at the daycare. The two new educators therefore received a basic training in October 2008.

The new daycare program officially ended in late August 2009. However, the summer program was disrupted by the vacations of trained educators, consolidation of children from different classes, and the extended absence of some children enrolled in the program group.

Durham

The daycare program began in September 2007 and lasted for one year. Children participated in the program on a full-time basis. The program was offered in one classroom at the daycare by an educator and an assistant educator. In September 2008, the majority of the children in the program group were enrolled in kindergarten full-time. A small number of children continued to attend the program daycare and as a consequence, were exposed to the program during the second year. The team of educators remained with the children in the program group until the end of the program's delivery, at the end of July 2009.

Orleans

The daycare program began in Orleans in October 2007 and lasted for one year. Two educators and two assistant educators delivered the program full-time in two classes at the daycare. In September 2008, program delivery ended because all of the children in the program group were enrolled in kindergarten full-time. Moreover, a large number of the Orleans children did not participate in the new preschool program during the months of July and August 2008 because they were taken out of the daycare for the summer. Hence, it can be estimated that program delivery ended in June 2008.

5.5. Data Collection

Readiness to Learn project data collection included attendance at daycare, family workshops, and Resource centres, the collection of the weekly programs of the new daycare program, observations of the program daycare and family workshops, as well as child assessments and parent surveys. Data collection took place without any difficulties in five of the six participating communities.

The exception was Edmonton where the daycare observations were too sporadic and incomplete to be used to describe implementation in detail. The absence of a coordinator from January to April 2008 and the high turnover of educators both affected observations. Concerning

the family workshops, despite the absence of certain observations, a sufficient number were collected to evaluate the level of quality and the fidelity of its implementation.

In the six communities, the response rate for the child assessments and parent surveys remained very high throughout the project, reaching 90 to 100%.

5.6. The Elements of Success and Challenges in the Implementation of the Readiness to Learn project in the Communities

This section presents the main successful elements and challenges in the implemention of the Readiness to Learn project. The successful elements include the open-mindedness of the educators and daycare administrators toward the new program. There was also a good recruitment level thanks to the enthusiasm and support of daycare program educators and coordinators of comparison daycares. A good participant retention rate, the ongoing commitment of the community coordinator and the champion organization, and organizational stability within the daycare program, facilitated the implementation of the Readiness to Learn project. Daycare educators and coordinators appreciated the basic training and follow-up training, as well as feedback provided by the trainer at each meeting. The daycare program was solid due to the fact that the educators were receptive to proposed changes and were familiar with the concept of learning centres.

As for challenges encountered, several of them were specific to certain provinces. In Ontario, the main problem was with the heads of some school boards who resisted the implementation of the Readiness to Learn project. Some of the daycares in the program group were with one school board while the daycares in the comparison group were in schools that reported to a different school board servicing the same area, which created tensions[5]. This situation called for several meetings and discussions with the school boards in which the comparison group daycares were located before they would agree to allow their daycares to participate in the project[6]. These agreements were also important so that evaluators could assess comparison group children at school and so that coordinators could make observations in the classes. Once agreements were reached, teachers, educators and school administrations were receptive to the community coordinator and evaluators.

With regards to New Brunswick, the minister of New Brunswick's Department of Social Development announced in June 2008 its new 10-year strategy for early childhood education (reference documents: *Be Ready for Success: A 10 year Early Childhood Strategy for New Brunswick* and *Early Childhood Strategy Action Plan 2008-2009*). According to the department's work plan, all staff working at regulated daycares would have to receive, as of September 2008, training on a new educational program developed by the province. The work plan also provided, according to the spokesperson for the minister, a gradual roll-out of the new educational program starting in January 2009 with a goal of having it fully implemented on a

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[5] Funding for Francophone education in the province of Ontario is based on the merging of French school boards. There are four French public school boards and eight French Catholic school boards. Every school board receives a certain amount depending on a complex formula based on the number of students enrolled and their needs. This situation sets up competition between schools that report to different school boards when the schools are not located in the same area.

[6] At this point, daycare staff are managed by child care service providers. School boards purchased child care services from providers both in terms of human resources required by a daycare serving preschoolers and in terms of extracurricular child care services. However, the daycares were located in a space that belonged to the school board, making it necessary to obtain the cooperation of the school boards in which the comparison group daycares were located.

mandatory basis by September 2009. The community coordinator, SRDC, HRSDC, and New Brunswick's Department of Social Development actively shared information leading to the ministry's decision, in December 2008, to allow the continuation of the Readiness to Learn project's daycare program delivery in program daycare classes until June 2009. In fact, delays in implementing the new provincial curriculum in provincial daycares ensured that the daycare program could continue in Saint John until the end of August 2009 and in Edmundston until the end of June 2009.[7]

The communities in New Brunswick also faced the introduction of a second initiative, this time launched by the New Brunswick Department of Education. Indeed, in the spring of 2007 the Department announced that it would be implementing mandatory screening of all four year old children in the province. This screening would be done using an updated version of the same tool being used within the Readiness to Learn project to measure child development. Also, the Department of Education planned to inform parents of the results of the EYE-DA and to invite parents of children identified as at risk to participate in workshops to better prepare their children for school. This departmental plan had two significant consequences for Readiness to Learn project participants. First of all, the evaluation conducted in the fall of 2008 by the Department of Education occurred at the same time as the Readiness to Learn project child evaluation. Therefore, children participating in the project would have two evaluations at the same time, the first evaluation being to satisfy the needs of New Brunswick's Department of Education, and the second being to satisfy the needs of the Readiness to Learn project. To avoid duplication of effort in the evaluation of children enrolled in the project, HRSDC came to an agreement with the Department of Education that SRDC would share the results of the evaluations for children enrolled in project with the Department of Education. The sharing of the evaluation results required parents to sign a new informed consent form. Only one parent refused to sign this form. Next, parents' participation in workshops organized by the Department could possibly affect the actions of parents in the comparison groups. As a result, the agreement between HRSDC and the Department of Education stipulated that SRDC would be advised of the names of any children who were being targeted for an intervention, the nature of these interventions, the content of workshops offered by the Department and parents' attendance at these workshops. These data were taken into consideration during the impact analyses of the program being tested.

From the beginning, participant recruitment for the Readiness to Learn project presented several major challenges: one third of the target population was difficult to reach (e.g., not all of the children in the informal daycare group participated in organized activities); recruitment worked best on a one-on-one basis (requiring a discussion with each parent); and the target population was very specific in terms of age and language (i.e., children of "*ayants droit*" parents, born in 2004 or in January 2005). In communities where Francophones were few (i.e. where Francophones made up less than 5% of the population) the small pool of candidates in the population made it even more difficult to recruit participants. These challenges called for increased monitoring by SRDC to ensure that recruitment objectives were met. At the end of June 2007, the Readiness to Learn project had only reached 50% of its recruitment target. SRDC's review of the capacity of program daycares and comparison group daycares in three communities made it doubtful that Readiness to Learn project recruitment targets could be achieved. In particular, recruitment of the informal care group was proving to be especially

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[7] The daycare program educators are usually on vacation during the months of July and August.

challenging in two communities. Given these findings, SRDC and HRSDC decided, at a meeting in July 2007, to add a sixth community to the Readiness to Learn project. This decision was based on the need to obtain the statistical power required to ensure the reliability of the results.

SRDC then contacted the applicant organization in one of the community to explore the possibility of opening a sixth site. A decision was made to go with a child care service provider in Orleans that had several advantages. The agency, located near SRDC's office in Ottawa, provided child care services at several sites. One of the daycares could accommodate up to 24 children in the age group targeted by the Readiness to Learn project. Also, the community had a good pool of young francophone families. Furthermore, the child care service provider was familiar with the Readiness to Learn project since it had already participated in a small study piloting the child development measurement tool. Recruitment in the sixth community helped to achieve project recruitment objectives.

Finally, one of the greatest challenges to the successful implementation of the daycare program was the constant staff turnover at some of the daycares (by both daycare directors and educators). This high turnover rate meant that basic training had to be provided several times to educators and/or daycare directors. In a few communities, the teamwork that was so necessary for program planning was blocked for several reasons such as a lack of time allotted by administration for planning during work hours. Finally, staff shortage, the lack of support for the trainer in re-arranging rooms or offering ongoing training to educators, tension between management and employees, and the language barrier between some educators and/or the daycare director prevented satisfactory implementation of the program in one of the daycares.

6. Methodology Used to Evaluate the Implementation

6.1. MODEL FOR ANALYZING QUALITATIVE DATA FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

Research has traditionally led us to evaluate the effects of an action under controlled conditions such as in the case of laboratory conditions. The elements to be gathered are clearly stated and data collection follows a systematic procedure (*efficacy assessment)*. Contrary to this type of research, the evaluation of a program applied in a natural setting (*effectiveness assessment*) has particularities which, if not taken into consideration, could adversely affect both the collection and analysis of the results (Dane & Schneider, 1998; Fitzgerald & Rasheed, 1998; Gilliam, Ripple, Zigler, & Leiter, 2000). Durlak and DuPre (2008) analyzed data of five meta-analyses dealing with implementation impacts on the effects of an intervention. They concluded that when results reflected the degree of implementation of an intervention, the effect size was two or three times greater than when implementation was not taken into consideration. The results support the importance of accurately documenting and measuring the degree of implementation of a program being evaluated. A thorough evaluation of program implementation becomes essential in the context where the intervention being studied will inform future practices and policies. The results obtained must be closely linked to the quantity and quality of services obtained by the population, and reflects other factors such as adjustments made to adapt to the environment evaluated.

The importance of evaluating program implementation is therefore no longer debatable. Several research studies have shown the moderating effect of different implementation components on the link between the intervention and its effects. Charlebois and his colleagues (2004) demonstrated that the intensity of an intervention for young children (also referred to as "dosage" of an intervention) is linked to the changes observed in the children at the end of the program. Children exposed to a greater number of workshops would show more of the behaviour targeted by the intervention (in this case, a significant improvement in behaviour and better academic skills).

Another study, conducted within the framework of the *Fast Track* program, showed a link between the quality of the implementation and the effects of the program on the target population (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999). In this study, teachers who demonstrated a better understanding of the key concepts involved in the intervention and applied them more effectively saw a significant drop in the aggression level of children in their class compared to children in classes where teachers had less effectively integrated the ideas promoted by the intervention. In this study, the effects of the implementation quality proved to be more important than the effects of the intensity of the intervention.

There are many factors that qualify the degree of a program's implementation. The first model to have structured these factors is that of Dane and Schneider (1998). This model helps to verify the integrity of a program, based on the following five dimensions: the **fidelity**, which is the correspondence between the applied intervention and planned program; the **quality of implementation** of the program, for example the degree of preparation and enthusiasm shown

by the facilitator; the **dosage**, which is the participants' exposure to the program; the **participation**, which is the participants' response to the program, measured by their degree of participation and enthusiasm; and finally, the **difference between the implemented program and other interventions** (i.e. the program's unique contributions compared to what is already being done).

Two other studies suggest adding elements to this model. Carroll and his colleagues (2007) recommended adding the complexity of the program and the **strategies that facilitate implementation**. Durlak and DuPre (2008) include these factors to the list of dimensions that influence implementation, and propose instead tracking a comparison group, the study of the scope of the program and the adaptation of the program as additional aspects of the implementation. A final dimension added to the model relates to the **impact perceived by participants**. We included this dimension since it provides us with information on the benefits, as perceived by the actors implicated in the program. This perception will affect their desire to continue providing the intervention.

Very few studies have examined all of these components together to measure the implementation of an intervention. A meta-analysis on program evaluation noted the lack of attention given to implementation evaluation. Of the 162 studies reviewed, only 5 examined the association between their results and at least two dimensions of implementation (Dane & Schneider, 1998). Similarly, Domitrovich and Greenberg (2000) reviewed the evaluation of 34 mental health prevention programs for preschoolers. Of these programs, none had examined more than two dimensions of implementation. In parallel, data from a meta-analysis by Durlak and DuPre (2008) on prevention programs for children and teens showed that the majority of the 59 studies examined did not measure any implementation dimensions other than fidelity and dosage of the intervention. Less than a third of the studies took two elements of the implementation or less into consideration. A lot of work therefore remains to be done in order to better evaluate the implementation of programs.

6.2. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Within the framework of the Readiness to Learn project, a wide range of tools, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, allowed information to be gathered on the implementation of the program being tested, from a large diversity of individuals.

6.2.1. Implementation Study of the Daycare Component

An implementation study helps identify discrepancies between theory and practice, any bottleneck effects or other problems with the implementation that need to be corrected, under-utilized elements of the program and the movement of participants between different components of the program. It also helps to identify differences and similarities in the delivery of the program between the six program daycares, and perform comparative analyses between the program being tested and those being offered in the comparison group daycares. Several measures were used, each complementing the other in terms of the information sought, the level of detail and the source of information. This approach enabled us to triangulate information from different perspectives, at times those of the educator, at times those of the observer, or those of the trainer. The following sections discuss, respectively, the details of the measurement instruments

developed to evaluate the implementation of the daycare program, including the daycare observation grid, the in-depth educator interview protocol, the educator journals and children's daycare attendance.

Daycare Observation Grid

The goal of daycare observations was to gather data that were relevant to program delivery (as defined by the Readiness to Learn project objectives). According to Durlak and DuPre (2008), observation measures are more likely to be linked to intervention results than self-reported measures. One of the first elements to observe is the fidelity of the program implementation. This is to ensure that all of the essential program elements were put in place at the daycares. The observation grid therefore, called on the observers to check for the presence of certain elements that were specific to the program being tested (such as the presence of a weekly program displayed where parents could see it, or the presence of a routine chart describing to children what will happen over the course of the day). Observers also had to describe the course of activities that took place, and children's reactions to the various activities.

The observations also made it possible to obtain information on the quality of the various daycare environments. To this end, sub-scales were selected from the scale that has been the most widely used in past studies to assess the quality of daycare environments in North America, namely, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, revised edition, or the ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, & Cryier, 1998). The French version, *Échelle d'évaluation de l'environnement préscolaire* – revised edition (*ÉÉEP-R*) is a validated instrument for evaluating the quality of child care services as defined by early childhood education specialists in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The accreditation criteria defined by NAEYC in the 1980s are based on scientific knowledge of the factors that influence the physical, social, intellectual and emotional development of young children (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1984; Bredekamp & Copple, 1999). The ÉÉEP-R has been used several times in francophone projects to assess the quality of child care services. This scale, whose reliability in terms of internal validity and fidelity is well established, measures the many dimensions of a daycare that contribute to its overall quality. The dimensions covered by the ÉÉEP-R include both structural aspects and processes used at the daycare.

Quality is usually measured according to two dimensions: structural quality and process quality. Structural quality refers to a set of rules put in place to comply with existing regulations and includes elements such as the children/educator ratio, group size, staff education level, staff turnover rate, ongoing educator training and their salaries.[8]

Process quality refers to children's social and educational experiences arising out of interactions with the educators. This dimension explicitly recognizes the important role that the educator plays in creating a rich and stimulating environment where children are motivated to learn. Some studies have argued that interactions involving educators are the single most important aspect to a good quality daycare (Committee for Economic Development Research and Policy Committee, 1993).

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[8] Several elements of this type of quality, such as salary, training and level of education, are difficult to obtain through observation. This information is best obtained through in-depth interviews or by referring to data provided by the educators when they signed the consent form.

For the purposes of the Readiness to Learn project, the study of the implementation of the daycare program required the use of certain indicators that would be representative of the structural quality and the process quality. Since the study was interested in evaluating specific processes inherent to program delivery, observers only completed sub-scales that were most closely connected to the program objectives. As an overall quality indicator, observers gathered information on the quality of the indoor spaces (lighting, ventilation and the amount of space for each child), on elements put in place to ensure the children's health and safety, on the quality of the greeting children received upon their arrival, and on the quality of educator-child interactions.

To measure the educational quality of the daycare environment, observers had to describe the activities observed specifically in terms of which components of child development were targeted and how children had reacted to the activity. Particular attention was given to the use of communication to foster language development in children. Therefore, observations assisted in completing the following ÉÉEP-R sub-scales: Informal use of language, Encouraging children to communicate, and Using language to develop reasoning skills or simply Reasoning. Given that the program placed a lot of importance on exposing children to reading, the sub-scale Books and pictures was also completed.

A decision was made at the outset of the Readiness to Learn project not to use the ÉÉEP-R grid, since this type of observations might be perceived as too intrusive and prevent achieving the full cooperation of the program and comparison group daycares. Recall the difficulties experienced in recruiting comparison group daycares in certain communities (see section 5.6). It was therefore decided that observers would take notes on the different elements of the ÉÉEP-R for the targeted sub-scales. Prior to conducting observations, each observer received training on the elements to be observed, as well as a detailed observation protocol reminding them of the objectives of the observation, the elements to take note of, and concrete examples of excellent, good and inadequate practices. The observations were then validated by comparing the notes of the observers with those of the trainer and by ensuring that the descriptions of each daycare matched. Results of analyses were also presented to observers so that they could confirm that the picture of each daycare environment was representative.

To complete the picture of daycare activities, a lot of data was collected on circle time, a period during which program group educators had to read a story to children. The observations provided us with information on the reading style used, interactive or traditional, and the use of French songs and nursery rhymes. Observations were also done during periods of organized activities and free play. At these times, observers concentrated on the degree to which children were given space to develop their autonomy and their creativity.

Observations were done in both program group daycares and comparison group daycares. These data help us to better understand what new elements the preschool program is introducing into the daycare environments. It was possible that certain practices are already in place in the daycare environments and that the program did not require many changes compared to what was already in place. If that were the case, it might be that children show similar development under both conditions. The comparison between what was being done between the program group and the comparison daycare group enabled us to verify what set the program apart from activities already taking place naturally in daycare environments.

Protocol for Educator Interviews

Educators were interviewed to gather their opinions and experiences with program implementation, both in terms of the daycare component and the family workshop component, for those who participated in them. The interview protocol used was based on a review of existing literature regarding factors likely to influence the implementation of a program and which were not observable or measurable in a quantitative manner. Hence, interview questions were aimed at examining the difficulties encountered by educators in applying the various program components, adjustments made, as well as the assimilation and integration of the new program practices into the daily routine. Interview questions also aimed to obtain educators' reactions to the basic training and follow-up training sessions. Finally, a few questions related to the organizational environment, an important element to consider when explaining the success or failure of a new program. In fact, it is well known that without administrative support, the implementation of a new program is often bound to fail (Chen, 2005).

The following sub-sections describe the procedures for the administration of the in-depth interviews and their contents.

In-Depth Interview: Procedures for the Administration

Interviews of the educators responsible for implementing the program were conducted twice during the Readiness to Learn project's duration in the six sites included in our sample. The interviews were recorded as MP3 audio files. The interviews were 41 minutes long on average, with a range of 22 minutes to 65 minutes. They were then transcribed and the transcripts were validated by an external judge.

Educator Interview Grid Content

SRDC prepared the educator interview grid based on existing documentation regarding factors that could hinder the implementation of a program and which were not observable or measurable in a quantitative manner. The grid served to examine educators' appreciation of the basic training and follow-up sessions, educators' experience with the learning process and the implementation of the new program, the perceived impact on children and parents, as well as educators' perception of their role with children. Emphasis was also placed on the overall work environment. It is clear that program quality is influenced by various factors associated with the management of the daycare itself, and the purpose of these questions was to give educators a chance to speak on the subject. Two key questions were therefore asked on this subject, namely the description of their existing working conditions and their immediate superior's support with respect to the new program.

Educators' Journal

The purpose of the journal was to provide educators with a means of sharing what they were thinking and feeling in the face of the program's implementation (pleasant discoveries, frustrations experienced, etc.). Journals were distributed at the beginning of the implementation in the daycare component. Information was gathered as the project progressed, in other words, educators were invited to jot down their ideas a few times per month. Journals were confidential and completed anonymously. To encourage participation, coordinators regularly reminded the educators about the existence of the journals. This optional activity took the form of sheets

stapled together, notepads and notebooks, depending on the communities. Journals encouraged educators to share their ideas on four themes subsumed in the following statements:

- What I have learned and liked so far about the daycare program?

- What has been the most difficult to put in place or do so far?

- My suggestions for improving the program…

- Other comments I would like to add.

Information entered in journals helped to enrich the data collected through educator interviews.

Daycare Attendance

The number of hours spent at the daycare per week is an important factor to take into consideration if we want to measure the "dosage" or children's "exposure time" to the project introduced in the program and comparison group daycares. This information was already being collected through an attendance record book used by the daycares. Educators had to complete a weekly attendance sheet (with the arrival and departure times of each child). SRDC was able to use these attendance sheets to gather information on children participating in the project. However, the risk that this information included children who were not participating in the Readiness to Learn project made the use of these sheets unsuitable for the purpose (parents of non participating children in the Readiness to Learn project never agreed to have this information shared with SRDC). In order to be vigilant, a new sheet was specifically created for the Readiness to Learn project to record children's attendance (time of arrival and length of stay). This attendance sheet only included the personal identification number (PIN) of children participating in the Readiness to Learn project, with room for indicating arrival and departure dates and times.

Community coordinators were responsible for visiting the daycare two or three times per month to take account of the attendance of children participating in the Readiness to Learn project. They transferred the attendance information recorded in daycare documents onto the Readiness to Learn project attendance sheet. Then they sent the completed attendance sheets to the Ottawa office on a monthly basis.

6.2.2. Implementation Study of the Family Workshops

The implementation study of the family workshops included several measurements, each completing the others in terms of method of data collection and source of information. This approach enabled us to triangulate the information from different perspectives, including information provided by practitioners working with the parents, practitioners working with the children, observers, and parents participating in the workshops. The sections below describe, respectively, the details of the measurement instruments developed for the Readiness to Learn project, including the observation grid prepared for the family workshops, the practitioners' journal, the grid for in-depth practitioner interviews, parent workshop evaluations, the logistics survey completed by the parents, the post-intervention survey completed by the parents, as well as family and staff attendance at workshops.

Observation Grid for Family Workshops

Observations of family workshops assisted in gathering relevant data on program delivery (as defined by the objectives of the Readiness to Learn project and those of the family workshops). The work began by a review of existing documentation in order to identify valid tools to measure the degree of implementation of the family workshop program and its impacts on participants.

To achieve the Readiness to Learn project objectives, a semi-structured grid was created to guide the characteristics to be observed, although the observations themselves were done through informal note taking. The data collected was used to examine which topics were addressed during the workshops, which skills the practitioner displayed while delivering the workshops, and what were parents' reactions to the various topics addressed during the workshops.

Community coordinators and members of SRDC's research team were responsible for making observations during the workshops. In recognition of the newness of the program, all of the workshops were observed. The observation protocol focused more on the parent component than the child or parent-child component.

Literacy Practitioners' Journal

The practitioners' journal served the same purpose as the educators' journal, which was to serve as a tool for communications between practitioners and the SDRC research team. Although this was an optional activity, practitioners were strongly encouraged to regularly record their observations and reactions to how the workshops unfolded. The journal encouraged practitioners to share their reactions to workshops, and to note their observations of parents' reactions toward the workshops. It included four themes subsumed in the following seven statements:

1. What is going well so far during the family workshops?

2. What has been the most difficult to put in place or do so far during the family workshops?

3. What have the parents liked or appreciated?

4. What have the parents liked the least?

5. If I was going to deliver the workshop again, what would I do differently?

6. My suggestions for improving the program (in general)…

7. Other comments I would like to add.

Journals were confidential and completed anonymously. The practitioner was simply asked to record the name of the community, the workshop date for which the journal entry was being recorded and the group that she facilitated (parents or children).

Practitioner Interviews Grid

The purpose of the practitioner interviews was to obtain their opinions and suggestions to improve the program and to see which components worked well and which ones were more difficult to put in practice. In the absence of validated and/or a published interview grid, SRDC developed an interview grid that was largely based on the interview grid used for the educators. The questions included in the grid also came from tools that were developed for the purposes of

other research projects conducted by SRDC and the University of Ottawa. Finally, some of the questions were inspired by the family workshop program training manual.

In-Depth Interview: Procedures for the Administration

All of the practitioners working with parents, as well as a few of the practitioners working with children, were invited to take part in an interview one or two weeks after the workshops ended. This decision was made in recognition of the fact that the program is new and aimed primarily at the parents, hence the importance of interviewing all of the practitioners who worked with the parents. The interviews were recorded as MP3 audio files. They were all conducted either in person or on the phone. Interviews of practitioners who worked with the parents lasted 1 hour and 8 minutes on average (ranging from 47 minutes to 1 hour and 35 minutes). Interviews of practitioners who worked with the children averaged 48 minutes (range 19 minutes to 1 hour and 9 minutes). They were then recorded and transcribed, with the respondents' consent. Transcripts were then validated by an external judge.

Practitioner Interview Grid Content

SRDC designed the practitioner interview grid so that it would capture factors that might influence the implementation of a program and which were not observable or measurable in a quantitative manner. The interview grid helped to examine the following points:

- Knowledge about the Readiness to Learn project, family literacy programs and the family workshop program;

- Initial reactions to the family workshop program;

- Workshop implementation and logistics (i.e., workshop organization, workshop duration and format; barriers and challenges encountered; advantages and disadvantages related to the delivery of each component — parent, child and parent-child; relevance of the material provided);

- Program content (i.e., relevance for parents; relevance for children; usefulness of the material distributed to parents);

- Training and support (i.e., relevance of the basic training; need for consultations and identification of additional resources consulted);

- Program impacts on the practitioner at a professional level; and

- Program impacts as perceived by practitioners or reported by parents, on parents' beliefs, attitudes and habits.

Parents' Evaluation at the End of Each Workshop

Parents were encouraged to complete a brief evaluation form indicating whether or not they enjoyed the workshop content. The workshop evaluations collected parents' reactions on what they had particularly liked in each workshop, what they had liked less or found useful, and what they would like to know more about. The purpose of this workshop evaluation was to advise practitioners and the SDRC research team of the parents' reactions, so that any necessary adjustments could be made for the next workshop. For example, if several parents said that they would like to know more about a certain topic, the practitioner could provide references or

resources at the next workshop. The evaluations were done at the end of each workshop and took approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Logistics Survey Completed by the Parents

At the final workshop, parents completed a short logistics survey on the workshop schedule and how it unfolded, the practitioner's skills as a facilitator, the components enjoyed, the workshop content, and parents' reactions to the workshops. The goal of this logistics survey was to gather information on the delivery of the new workshop series in terms of logistics, flow and content addressed. It should be noted that this survey was completed anonymously to encourage parents to be honest with their feedback. The survey consisted of fifteen questions and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. It was administered at the beginning of the final workshop to the parents in attendance. It follows that the parents who did not attend the tenth workshop did not complete the survey. It should be specified that some of the questions in the logistics survey also appeared in the post-intervention survey given their importance in determining the impact of the workshops on parents and to improve the family workshop program.

Post-Intervention Survey Completed by the Parents

Parents were also invited to answer a series of open-ended questions in the post-intervention survey, after the workshops had ended. For the purposes of the implementation study, two versions of the post-intervention survey were created: one targeted participating parents (those who had attended three or more workshops) and the other targeted non-participating parents (those who had attended two workshops or less). The rule of three or more workshops as a guideline for creating the first group identified as having participated in the workshops was established arbitrarily. It was estimated that after having attended three workshops, parents would have a good enough idea of how the workshops unfolded and of their contents that they would be able to provide knowledgeable feedback on these aspects.

Of particular interest for the implementation study of the family workshops, the inclusion in the post-intervention survey of questions pertaining to the experience of parents participating in the family workshops (e.g., impacts of workshops on parents' daily habits; suggestions or comments on how the program could be improved; facilitators and barriers to participation) while parents who had not participated in the workshops had to answer questions aimed at identifying topics of interest and the underlying reasons for their non-participation (e.g., topics related to child development and school readiness that the non-participating parents would have liked to discuss; suggestions or comments on how the program could be improved; facilitators and barriers to participation). Program implementation was therefore documented through these answers, which provided explanations on barriers or gave reasons why parents were or were not motivated to participate in the workshops. The answers also gave insight into changes needed both in terms of topics addressed and workshop flow in order to encourage greater parent participation.

Family Workshop Attendance

The number of workshops attended by each family is an important factor to measure program "dosage" or "exposure time" received by parents in the program. Community coordinators were responsible for gathering this information. Attendance was recorded for parents, children,

practitioners working with parents, practitioners working with children, assistant practitioners and anyone else involved in delivering services. Recording the attendance of those responsible for delivering the services was important to consider since their presence ensured continuity in the practitioner-participant relationship and certain stability in service delivery.

6.3. DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

6.3.1. Analysis Strategies

Data analysis was inspired by the grounded theory methodology introduced by Strauss and Corbin (1998). This methodology allows for the study of a complex object and how it fits into a given reality. It is therefore possible to organize data and make sense of them, while remaining quite faithful to statements made in interviews or answers to open-ended questions. Also, grounded theory methodology pays particular attention to the social context of the object being studied (Laperrière, 1997).

N-Vivo software was used to facilitate the management of the material gathered. Data were analyzed according to axial coding as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998). An initial vertical analysis was performed, which was an analysis of the contents of each set of data. Analysis categories were established based on blocks of information to assist in data coding according to dimensions. A cross-sectional analysis was then done, comparing the results of the analyses performed on each dimension. This analysis assisted in further defining the particularities of each set of data and in identifying the main topics addressed in all documents.

For example, each observation of the daycare program was read in its entirety and observation elements relating to one of the dimensions of the implementation being studied were grouped together (e.g., all of the passages indicating that the educator posted the children's artwork on the daycare walls were placed in the category *structural fidelity/crafts*). Once all observations were analyzed, a matrix was produced using N-Vivo. Each line of the matrix represents the observations of a class in a given daycare environment. The columns represent all of the categories for this dimension being studied (e.g., for the matrix on structural fidelity in the daycare, the columns represent each element of fidelity chosen for the purposes of the study). The results of the matrix provided us with information on the presence or absence of elements in each class (score 0/1). Finally, the scores obtained can be combined to establish a picture of the program group daycare environments versus those of the comparison group. Table 6.1 illustrates fictional results for a matrix obtained for structural fidelity.

Table 6.1: Fictional Results for a Matrix on Structural Fidelity

Class	Structural fidelity in daycare environments, Period 2: November 2007 – February 2008						
	Centres are clearly identified	Cards displaying a picture and a word	Weekly program is displayed	Activities are planned around a theme	Routine chart is displayed	Routine chart is used	Artwork is displayed
1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
3	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
7	1	0	1	0	1	1	1

In total, the analyses assisted in examining seven dimensions for the purposes of the evaluation of program implementation:

1) Fidelity;

2) Intervention quality;

3) Differentiation between the program being tested and other programs;

4) Participation (participant's response);

5) Dosage;

6) Facilitators and barriers encountered; and

7) Impacts as perceived by the participants.

All analyses were validated at several levels, first to ensure that the contents grouped together in the same category addressed the same theme, and that the title assigned to the category was representative of its content. The content of each category and its title were then validated by a third person. Finally, the matrix results were validated by comparing the results concerning the presence or absence of different elements in the daycare environments with the observation notes of the early childhood consultant to ensure concurrence between the pictures for the same environment established by two different sources. For elements to be put into place in the environment, photos taken in daycare environments were consulted, to ensure that an element considered to be absent did not appear in one of the photos. Finally, the results of the analyses were presented to the observers so that they could confirm that the picture of each daycare environment was representative.

To obtain an overall picture of the implementation of the tested program, we proceeded with the triangulation of data from different sources. To complete the triangulation, we used a three-level mixed research design (Patton, 1990). First, data on a single study object came from different perspectives. We asked participants, practitioners and observers to provide us with information on their experience with the program using the same instrument. Next, data were collected using different measurement instruments to evaluate the same phenomenon. Finally, the study allowed for a triangulation of methodologies. Information, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, was gathered using different mediums.

6.3.2. Calculation of the Fidelity and Quality Indices for the Implementation

Fidelity and Quality Indices for the Implementation of the Daycare Program

Daycare observations served to calculate two indices, one relating to the ***structural fidelity*** of the implementation, reflecting the presence of elements in the environment (such as cards displaying a picture and a word and routine charts) and the other, relating to ***content fidelity,*** indicating the degree to which program elements have been integrated into the daycare programming (such as reading to children during circle time or doing reasoning activities with them). To make the results easier to read, the procedure used to calculate each of these indices is detailed in section 7.1.

Observations also assisted in measuring the quality of the different daycare environments and the activities that were presented using certain sub-scales of the *Échelle d'évaluation de l'environnement préscolaire* – revised (ÉÉEP-R). For the purposes of analyzing impacts, the sub-scales used were combined to create four quality indices. The first index, ***structural quality***, measures the overall quality of daycare environments. It includes the sub-scales ndoor space, Health practices and Greeting/departing. The second index, ***reading quality***, isolates the sub-scale 'Books and pictures, given the particular importance of reading in helping children to build their vocabulary. The third index, ***educational quality***, pays particular attention to activities that encourage children to communicate and enrich their vocabulary. This index combines the ÉÉEP-R sub-scales "Informal use of language", "Encouraging children to communicate", and "Using language to develop reasoning skills". Finally, the sub-scale "Staff-child interactions" was used as an index of ***sensitivity*** to account for the highly important influence of the educator's sensitivity for child development.

The indices were interpreted as follows: the two fidelity indices indicate the percentage of program elements put into place while the four quality indices reflect to what degree essential program elements have been put in place using a 7-point scale where 1 corresponds to care that is well below the requirements for basic child care service and 7 corresponds to high quality personalized care (Harms, Clifford, & Cryier, 1998). These six indices served to establish a connection between the fidelity and the quality of the daycare program in analyzing program impacts on child outcomes during the first year of the program. For analyses conducted on the second year of the program, program impacts on child outcomes were verified using the two overall indices of fidelity and quality. These overall indices consist of the average program fidelity index and the average program quality index.

These indices and the overall indices of fidelity and quality served to validate the results of the main impact analyses of the daycare program. The hypothesis being investigated was that

these quality and fidelity indices represented the mechanism through which the daycare program had an effect on child development. This hypothesis would be confirmed by the lack of impact of the program on the study results when the effects of program fidelity and quality are included in the analyses (i.e., when they are part of statistical control). The reader interested in knowing more information on the use of these indices in the analysis of program impacts and on the results of these analyses should consult the *Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities: First Cohort Findings Report* (Thompson et al., 2014).

Fidelity and Quality Indices for the Implementation of the Family Workshop Program

As was the case for the daycare program, observations of the family workshops assisted in gathering relevant data on the fidelity and quality of the workshops. A ***content fidelity*** index was calculated, where a score of "1" was assigned when the mandatory topics of individual workshops. Conversely, a score of "0" was given when some of the mandatory topics were not covered in each workshop. Once compiled, the information gathered helped to establish an index indicating to what degree the program was delivered in its entirety in each series of workshops delivered.

An index was also created to measure the ***quality*** of family workshop delivery. For each session, observers noted difficulties encountered by the practitioners while delivering workshops, which helped to determine the quality of workshop delivery. Similar to the junior kindergarten program, the two implementation indices were correlated with the effects of the program, which helped to identify the impact of the program on parent outcomes. The reader interested in knowing more information on the use of these indices in the analysis of family workshop impacts and the results of these analyses should consult the *Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities: First Cohort Findings Report* (Thompson et al., 2014).

7. Results of the Daycare Program Implementation

This chapter presents the results of the evaluation of the daycare program implementation. Section 7.1 provides the details of findings on the **fidelity** of the daycare program implementation. The reported results deal with the *structural fidelity*, which is the implementation of program elements into the environment. This section also describes how structural fidelity indices were calculated and their interpretation. Section 7.2 deals with *content fidelity*, which represents elements that must be present in activities to which the children are exposed. To facilitate the text flow, results for the **quality** of the implementation of program content elements, known as *educational quality* elements (i.e., the educator's degree of preparation and enthusiasm), are presented at the same time as fidelity. Section 7.3 then details the results of the *structural quality* of the observed daycares. Data for analyses presented in the first three sections come from observations done in daycare environments. Since the observations were done in daycares participating in the program and in comparison group daycares, the results provide us with information on the **differentiation**, in other words, the difference between what the tested program uniquely contributes to daycares and what is being done naturally in the daycares without the program. Section 7.4 discusses **dosage**, which is the frequency or quantity of the program received in the various communities. Section 7.5 discusses **facilitators and barriers** encountered during program implementation. Data were primarily taken from interviews with the educators and the early childhood consultant, and were validated through daycare observations. Finally, section 7.6 addresses the **perceived benefits** of the program for children, according to educator interviews.

7.1. FIDELITY AND DIFFERENTIATION OF THE STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS IN THE DAYCARES OBSERVED

Observations conducted by community coordinators helped to verify to what degree program elements were implemented. Coordinators observed 12 classes in the program daycares as well as the 12 classes in comparison group daycares. It should be noted that the observed daycares were located in five of the six communities being studied: Cornwall, Durham and Orleans in Ontario, along with Edmundston and Saint John in New Brunswick. Analyses regarding the implementation of the daycare program do not include data collected in Edmonton, where observations were too fragmented and incomplete to establish a detailed portrait of activities that took place. We begin by describing the strategy adopted to calculate the structural fidelity index. We then present the results of the structural fidelity analyses.

7.1.1. Calculation of the Structural Fidelity Index

Various observations were collected in the program group daycares between August 2007 and June 2008, giving us an overview of what happens over a typical year. The observations were combined into three periods, each four months in length, so that they corresponded with children's evaluations. In fact, some of the program group daycares were observed more than once during a given period. The first period extended from August to October 2007. The second

period extended from November 2007 to February 2008 and constitutes the heart of the program. Finally, the third period extended from March to June 2008.

With respect to observations conducted in comparison group daycares, they took place less frequently given that no specific classroom intervention was planned. Comparison group daycares were observed twice a year. They were all observed during the second period (November 2007 to February 2008) and the majority of them were observed a second time during the third period (7 of the 12 comparison group daycare classes). It follows that the number of observations per comparison group daycare varies from one site to another.

Delivery of the daycare program continued for a second year in four of the six communities in the study. In the fifth community, the program ended because all of the children began school on a full-time basis. In the sixth community, the program was never really implemented due to the instability in the daycare. Given the high turnover of educators delivering the tested program, a decision was made to continue taking observations on a monthly basis in the second year of the program. As was the case for the first year, observations were combined into three periods, each four months in length, corresponding with children's evaluations. In fact, some of the daycares were observed more than once during a given period. The fourth period extended from August to November 2008, the fifth period extended from November 2008 to February 2009 and the sixth period extended from March to June 2009. During the second year, comparison group daycares were only observed once, in either period 5 or 6. It should be noted that in the second year, 8 classes in program daycares were observed compared to 10 classes in the comparison daycares.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to do all of the planned observations in the program daycare classes and the comparison daycare classes over the two years of the program due to schedule conflicts and certain reservations expressed by daycare staff. As a result, the number of observations varied from one site to another for a given period (e.g., from November 2007 to February 2008) and had to be treated based on the context. In the first case, percentages were calculated based on observations done. Classes with missing data were ignored in the calculation of indices. Missing data are identified in the text where applicable. The calculation of percentages therefore depended on the observation made in a class for a given period. In these cases, the class received a score of 0 or 1 for each element evaluated (1 = element observed, 0 = element not observed). In the second case, some of the classes were evaluated more than once in a given period (e.g., two observations were taken in one particular class for period 2, November 2007 to February 2008).

There is more than one strategy for managing multiple observations: a) calculate *the mean* value of the observations (e.g., if an element is present for one evaluation and not for the other, a value of 0.5 is assigned to the class); b) apply *a strict rule* according to which a class receives a score of "1" for an element only if it is always observed and a score of "0" if the element is not observed consistently; and c) apply *a flexible rule* according to which a score of "1" is assigned if the element is present during at least one of the observations. Each approach for treating data has its advantages. The advantage of the first strategy, using the mean value, is that it fully represents any fluctuations observed in applying each of the elements. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 present the mean value of the observations done in terms of percentages that represent *the degree of implementation* of the program.[9] It is also useful to present this information in a way that

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[9] The reader should note that the indices used in the quantitative analyses presented in the *Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities: First Cohort Findings Report* (Thompson et al., 2014) were also based on the mean of the

expresses the results in terms of the *number of classes* that met a given criterion (e.g., 9 of the 12 classes satisfied criterion X). To accomplish this, we simply apply the strict rule or the flexible rule. Unless otherwise stated, the percentages presented in the text are based on the flexible rule. Since the percentages presented in the text and in the tables have been calculated using different methods of calculation, it goes without saying that ***the numbers presented in the tables do not necessarily match those presented in the text.*** The two sources of information reflect distinct yet complementary aspects of the implementation.

7.1.2. Structural Fidelity of the Program

This section begins with a portrait of the various elements put in place during the first and second year of implementation of the program being tested. The percentages reported represent the presence or absence of elements being evaluated (i.e., using the flexible rule). Wherever possible, the results are presented per observation period, allowing for a better understanding of the evolution of the implementation over time. We end with an overall portrait of the classes being studied broken down by year of program delivery and treatment group. This portrait can be used to evaluate the level of fidelity and stability in structural elements put in place in program daycares and comparison daycares. In every case, we treated the classes as a unit of analysis and made the distinction between those in the program daycares and those in the comparison daycares.

One of the first structural elements of the program to be put into place in program daycare facilities was learning centres targeting different types of learning, such as a block centre, an art centre, an imagination centre, a game centre, etc. The presence of learning centres is generally quite widespread in daycares. The particularity of the daycare program was the requirement for ***learning centres to be clearly identified with the help of a picture accompanied by the matching word***. This requirement forced educators to clearly define each centre and made it possible to expose children to the written world using written symbols supplemented by a picture. This was a program element that was implemented in all of the daycares of the group participating in the intervention; from the start of the program (9 of the 12 classes were observed during the first period). Indeed, as of October 2007, 100% of the classes in the program group had clearly identified their learning centres (see Table 7.1). On the other hand, data suggest that classes in the comparison daycares were not in the habit of clearly identifying their centres in this fashion. In fact, although all classes in comparison daycares had learning centres, the centres were only identified with a card displaying a picture or a word in a third of these classes. The second year, centres were clearly identified in all of the program daycares (using the flexible rule), while the practice was widespread in four of the ten classes in comparison daycares.

A second program element concerned the display of different ***cards displaying a picture and a word*** in program daycares classes. These cards exposed children to the written language on a daily basis. Two thirds of classes in the program group had put this element of the daycare program in place from the outset of the intervention. This proportion increased throughout the year. Hence, over the period extending from October 2007 to February 2008, the percentage of implementation rose to a level of 83% and remained stable until the end of the first year of the intervention. In comparison, this practice was present in 42% of the classes in the comparison

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observations since it is important to consider fluctuations in each class. However, quantitative analyses included the mean values for quality and fidelity indices at the daycare level rather than the class level.

group daycares during the same period. During the second year, all of the classes in the program group, with the exception of one, had implemented the cards displaying a picture and a word. Cards displaying a picture and a word were found in seven of the ten classes in the comparison group daycares, reducing the difference between the two groups in this regard.

Another particularity of the daycare program being tested was the fact that educators had to use a *weekly program* presenting the activities to be done with children during the week. Educators for 10 of the 12 classes used the weekly program systematically during the first year. As for classes in comparison daycares, educators in 58% of the classes used a weekly program on a systematic basis. In the second year, it was observed that all of the classes in the program group and three of the ten classes in the comparison group used a weekly program at least once.

In addition to using weekly programs, educators had to *plan their activities around the theme* chosen for the month. Data revealed that educators of 10 of the 12 classes in the program group planned their activities around a theme during the first year. This practice was found in a little over half of the classes in comparison daycares; i.e., seven of the twelve classes (according to the flexible rule). In the second year, educators in all program daycare classes and four of the ten classes in comparison daycares had linked their activities to a theme.

Another component of the program was the use of a *routine chart*. The chart presented children with pictures of the various moments of the day in the order that they were scheduled. Educators had to use this routine chart to help children understand what would happen over the course of the day, help them to anticipate the upcoming activities and, above all, give the children a sense of security. The routine chart was displayed in all of the classes in the program daycares as of the second observation period. However, the routine chart was used to guide children in their daily routine in nine of the twelve classes of the program group during the first year (according to the flexible rule). On the other hand, none of the classes in the comparison daycares displayed or used a routine chart. In the second year of activities, all program group classes, except one, displayed a routine chart, but only half of the classes used the chart. In the classes of the comparison group (according to the flexible rule), a routine chart was displayed in two of the ten classes, and used in only one class to help children follow the course of the day's activities.

The final element to be put in place for the daycare program was the *display of artwork* done by children on the daycare room walls. The display of artwork enables children to develop a sense of belonging at the daycare, in addition to making them feel like their artwork is special. Based on observations, artwork was regularly displayed in ten of the twelve classes of the program group and of the comparison group. Artwork also needed to be displayed *at children's eye level*. Three classes in the program group put this into practice systematically throughout the year, whereas this practice was observed in two comparison daycare classes. Finally, educators had to *write the child's name* on the front of all the artwork so that children start recognizing their name and the letters that make up their name. Children's names were printed on their artwork at least once during the year in all classes in the program group. This practice was in place in ten of the twelve classes of the comparison group. In the second year, all classes in the program group were following program requirements for displaying artwork (according to the flexible rule) while this practice was observed in nine of the ten classes in the comparison group.

Observations were combined by year in order to obtain an overall picture of the two groups in the study. Examination of Table 7.1 reveals that on average, during the first year, classes in

program daycares implemented 82% of the daycare program elements (range 58% to 100%; one element had an implementation level of less than 75%), while these elements appeared in less than half of the classes in comparison daycares (average 34%, range 0% to 64%, with no element scoring higher than 75%). During the second year, the level of implementation in the program daycares was very similar, with an average of 84% (range 50% to 100%). As for comparison daycares, the average was 38%, which was similar to the first year (range 5% to 70%; this time, only two elements had a score close to 75%). Overall, these results suggest that the majority of the program elements were put into place in classes of the program group, in a fairly stable manner. It should also be noted that classes in the program group clearly differed from classes in the comparison group on six of the seven program elements tested during the first year and five of the seven elements tested during the second year of the program.

Table 7.1: Average Percentage of Fidelity of the Structural Elements by Year of Program Delivery and Treatment Group

Fidelity of the structural elements	1st year		2nd year	
	Program group classes n=12	Comparison group classes n=12	Program group classes n=8	Comparison group classes n=10
Centres clearly identified	100%	29%	88%	40%
Cards displaying a picture and a word	79%	33%	88%	70%
Weekly program	86%	58%	94%	30%
Activities are planned around a theme	83%	54%	100%	40%
Routine chart is displayed	92%	0%	88%	15%
Routine chart is used	58%	0%	50%	5%
Artwork is displayed	77%	64%	80%	68%
Average of the 7 elements	**82%**	**34%**	**84%**	**38%**

7.2. FIDELITY, QUALITY AND DIFFERENTIATION OF THE CONTENTS OF THE OBSERVED ACTIVITIES

Given the importance of developing the language skills of children who are living in a francophone minority community, the daycare program placed particular emphasis on exposing children to oral communication through books and songs, while giving them plenty of opportunities to express themselves and develop their thinking. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss each of the elements evaluated and the related results. We will conclude with a summary of the results.

Emphasis was primarily placed on the importance of *reading to children* and making quality books available to children. Indeed, several studies have demonstrated the importance of reading to young children. For instance, Desrosiers and Ducharme (2006) demonstrated that children whose parents read to them regularly showed greater gains in vocabulary than other children. Moreover, as explained by Snow and her colleagues (1998), access to books exposes children to

new vocabulary, in addition to fostering a dialogue between the adult and the child. To ensure access to an environment that stimulated oral communication, program daycares received close to 300 books in addition to other French language resources (e.g., CDs, DVDs). The addition of these resources, as well as the importance the program placed on reading to children, is reflected in the large difference in scores between classes in the program group and those in the comparison group, for the ÉÉEP-R sub-scale "Books and pictures". Classes in the program group obtained a mean score of 5.0 (S.D. = 2.34) for this dimension. ÉÉEP-R results are compiled on a seven-point scale defined as follows: **inadequate** (1) corresponds to care that is well below the basic requirements for child care services; **minimal** (3) corresponds to care that meets basic needs and, to a small degree, the basic needs in terms of child development; **good** (5) corresponds to care that stimulates, to a certain degree, child development; and **excellent** (7) corresponds to high quality personalized care (Harms, Clifford, & Cryier, 1998). Based on observation notes, literacy activities in program daycares were qualified as "good" (5.0, S.D. = 2.34). On the other hand, classes in comparison daycares obtained a score of 1.25 (S.D. = 0.87) suggesting that their environment was inadequate for this dimension. A study conducted in Quebec by Japel, Tremblay, and Côté (2005) help put these results into perspective. The authors reported a quality of educational content index between good (means = 4.44, S.D. = 1.86) in subsidized daycares and minimal in non-subsidized daycares (mean = 3.71, S.D. = 1.91). It therefore appears that the material and its use were deemed of good quality in program classes.

However, it is not enough to ensure access to material, it is also necessary to use it. Community coordinators' observations confirmed that educators in eleven of the twelve classes in the program group read books during circle time. In addition, observations showed that during the second observation period (from November 2007 to February 2008), a quarter of the classes in the program group were reading books to children outside circle time. This percentage increased throughout the year such that by the third period, educators in seven of the twelve classes in the program group were in the habit of reading books to children at other times during the day. With respect to educators in comparison group classes, coordinators' observations revealed that educators of four of the twelve classes read to children during circle time and that educators of two classes read books to children during organized activities. This means that in nearly all program daycare classes, children were exposed to reading at least once a day (according to the flexible rule) while this was the case in only 42% of comparison daycare classes. Moreover, as of the third period, educators in six of the program classes exposed children to reading in at least two different contexts. During the second year, educators in all program group classes read to children during circle time (according to the strict rule) and in four of these classes, educators also read books to children during organized activities. As for comparison daycares, educators in four of the classes took advantage of circle time to read to children, and educators in only one class read during organized activities.

According to research on child development, it appears that reading in itself is not always enough to improve a child's language skills. As shown by Hargrave and Sénéchal (2000), children benefit more from *interactive reading* where the adult gets the child involved in the discussion of story elements and where several questions are asked by the adult to entice the child to elaborate on the story and his or her understanding of it. According to research results, children exposed to this type of reading will have a much wider vocabulary than children exposed to the traditional method of reading. In a study conducted by Wasik and her colleagues (2006), the intervention was taken even further. Books were provided to daycares in thematic

boxes also containing material that would promote activities related to the theme addressed in the books. Educators were trained to reuse vocabulary encountered while reading during activities planned around a theme. They were also made aware of the importance of asking open-ended questions and explaining to the children the meaning of key words before the reading began. Children who participated in this program acquired a broader range of vocabulary than children who were exposed to a traditional method of reading.

The Readiness to Learn project daycare program also recommended the interactive reading method. This method was part of the training given to educators in daycare programs. As in the study done by Wasik and her colleagues (2006), the books were distributed to daycares in thematic kits also containing material that was designed to build activities around a given theme. This arrangement enabled educators and children to reuse and consolidate vocabulary to which they had been exposed during readings. The book reading had to include open-ended questions and discussions around the book. The educator also had to use materials (e.g., puppets, pictures, objects, accessories, etc.) to support the reading, enabling children to better follow the story as it unfolded, all the while maintaining their interest.

Data revealed that, during the first year, all educators in program group classes succeeded in reading a book in compliance with the requirements of the program being tested. However, book reading in two of the classes was not considered to be of good quality as of the second period (from November 2007 to February 2008). It should be noted that it was impossible to compare the implementation of this element with the comparison group due to incomplete data. In the second year, during the final observation period, the interactive reading style was found in seven of the eight classes in the program group, whereas it was observed in only one class in the comparison group.

Another important aspect of the daycare program consisted of providing multiple and various opportunities to ***encourage children to communicate in French***. This objective was achieved in different contexts, both formal and informal. It should be mentioned that all educators had to use francization techniques including, but not limited to, speaking to children in French only and repeating in French whenever a child spoke in English. To quantify this dimension, communications between the educator and the child were observed during periods most likely to foster children's communication. ÉÉEP-R sub-scales were used to qualify the communication.

In order to stimulate children's communication, educators in the program group were encouraged to animate circle time, which consisted of gathering children together to talk about different topics chosen according to the day's events, and related to the current theme. Starting the first year, ***circle time*** was implemented in all program group daycares. As for comparison daycares, 11 classes had circle time during the second observation period, but three classes stopped this practice during the third period. In the second year, circle time was observed in all program group classes and comparison group classes (observations for three classes are missing).

Verbal communication between educators and children in informal settings was measured using the ÉÉEP-R sub-scale "Informal use of language". The criteria for this sub-scale measured to what degree educators encouraged children to express themselves by initiating conversations with children and encouraging them to speak to each other. It appears that the program daycares tended to encourage spontaneous communications more often (6.00, S.D. = 1.48) than comparison daycares (4.67, S.D. = 1.92). It should be noted that 8 of the 12 classes in program daycares obtained the maximum score of 7, which qualifies their practice as excellent, compared

to four comparison daycare classes. The remaining program daycares classes along with six comparison daycare classes obtained a score of 4, indicating that their practices fall somewhere between minimal (3 out of 7) and good (5 out of 7). The main shortfall of these educators was that they encouraged very few children to elaborate during discussions initiated by children, in ways such as adding new elements or asking questions to go more in-depth on the subject.

Observations also focused on ***encouraging communication*** through more formal techniques. For example, educators in the program group were encouraged to use visual material to help children to communicate (e.g. using puppets or small characters to recreate a story or invent a new one). They were also encouraged to create small discussion groups around specific topics. This dimension was measured using the ÉÉEP-R sub-scale "Encouraging children to communicate". Ten classes in program daycares obtained the maximum score for this sub-scale versus five classes in comparison daycares. The mean of the two treatment groups being studied is 6.25 (S.D. = 1.86) for program daycares and 5.33 (S.D. = 1.50) for comparison daycares.

Songs and nursery rhymes also represented unique opportunities to expose the children to new vocabulary and to make them aware of the sounds that make up words, as is the case for songs and nursery rhymes that rhyme. Data for the first year revealed that educators in all classes in program daycares used songs during circle time (100%). Half of them had children sing songs as part of an organized activity (50%) and two thirds used songs during transitions (66%), with the overall average for this dimension being 61%. In comparison daycare classes, two thirds of educators (67%) had the children sing during circle time, 25% encouraged them to sing during organized activities and a high percentage (83%) used songs during transitions, with the overall average for this dimension being 53%. The results therefore suggest that both treatment groups used songs to a fairly similar degree, but spread over different times of the day. In the second year of implementation, all educators of the program group used songs during circle time; in half of the groups, children sung during organized activities and in seven of the eight classes, educators systematically sung with children during transitions (80% overall average). Within the comparison group, all observed educators (observations for four classes are missing) sung during circle time. In one class, the educator sung with children during organized activities (observations for two classes are missing) and in four of the ten classes, educators used songs during transitions (49% overall average).

Activities that encourage ***reasoning*** among children are also linked to the development of language and of logical thinking in children. This type of activity was promoted in daycares, since it represented an opportunity to encourage children to express themselves and elaborate their ideas by talking. Observations assisted in determining how frequently daycares did activities aimed at fostering reasoning skills in children, such as classification activities and activities related to colours and shapes, with no regard for children's use of language during these activities. Educators took advantage of different opportunities throughout the day to develop this skill in children. During observations in the second period (in the first year), educators in 75% of the program group classes used circle time to expose children to reasoning activities (versus 67% of comparison daycare classes). Educators in 58% of program group classes took advantage of organized activities to do this (the percentage for the comparison daycare group was identical), 33% used snack time for this purpose, versus 17% of the comparison group, while 18% introduced different concepts to children during transitions, versus 8% for the comparison group. On average, educators in seven program classes (58%) and educators in five comparison daycare classes (42%) used reasoning in more than one context. However, both groups became

equivalent in the second year, when children were doing reasoning activities on more than one observed occasion in approximately half of program group daycares (63%) and of comparison group daycares (60%).

Observations done in daycares also assisted in studying the quality of reasoning activities by rebuilding the ÉÉEP-R sub-scale "Using language to develop reasoning skills". This sub-scale measures the way in which educators either discussed logic with the children when they were playing with them or provided children with material to help them develop their reasoning skills. The scale also measures to what degree educators encouraged children to explain their reasoning behind an activity. On this ÉÉEP-R sub-scale, program group classes obtained a mean score of 5.08 out of 7 (S.D. = 1.93), which is a score equivalent to good, while the comparison group classes obtained a mean score of 3.67 (S.D. = 2.27), which represents a quality index that is slightly above the minimum.

Another dimension observed concerns exposing children to *pre-writing*. This dimension measures how often children write letters or print their name. These exercises help children to develop their fine motor skills and to recognize the letters of the alphabet. This skill is associated with the ability of school age children to decode a text, a skill needed for learning how to read (Lonigan, Shanahan, Westberg, & The National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). In the second observation period, children in five of the twelve classes in the program group were observed writing or printing their name (versus children in two of the twelve classes in the comparison daycare group). An increase was noted during the third observation period (March to June 2008), when educators in seven of the program group classes encouraged children to write letters. In the second year, educators had children write in all classes observed (in both the program group and the comparison daycare group). O note, children were at the time older, and therefore more likely to be skilled and interested in this activity.

Three final program elements had to be put in place in order to fully implement the curriculum of the program being tested. First, the program placed a high importance on children's *creativity*. In this context, children were encouraged to explore and create themselves according to their understanding of the environment. Children's creativity was particularly encouraged during craft time when children were free to choose from different materials and where the finished product varied from one child to the next. This approach encouraged autonomy among children while making them feel valued. Observations revealed that educators in all program group classes allowed children to explore and be creative in their artwork (according to the strict rule) in the first year, compared to eight of the twelve classes in the comparison group. In the second year, all program group classes, with the exception of one, allowed children to be creative, while this situation was noted in six of the comparison group classes (observations for two of the ten classes are missing).

Second, the program placed a high importance on children's *autonomy*. Observations indicated that opportunities for encouraging the development of autonomy were just as numerous among the comparison group daycares as they were in the program group daycares. In fact, all educators observed over the two years encouraged children to be autonomous by coaxing them to dress themselves or wash their own hands, allowing them to choose their activity during free play, etc. Finally, some educators in both groups put strategies in place to facilitate the *transitions* between activities, another element that was deemed important in the program being tested. However, the manner in which transitions were carried out was qualified as inadequate

(scored "0") in three of the program group classes and five of the comparison group classes (according to the strict rule). In the second year, educators in two classes were still experiencing difficulty during transitions.

To summarize, as presented in Table 7.2, 80% of the program content was respected by program group classes over the two years of implementation. In comparison group daycares, on the other hand, an average implementation of 57% was observed for elements essential to the daycare program being tested. This means that the two environments had several points in common, but that the program group did indeed differentiated itself on certain dimensions.

Table 7.2: **Average Percentage for the Fidelity of Educational Content by Year of Program Delivery and Treatment group**

Fidelity of educational content	1st year		2nd year	
	Program group classes n=12	Comparison group classes n=12	Program group classes n=8	Comparison group classes n=10
Reading during circle time	92%	33%	100%	43%
Reading more than once during an observation	67%	8%	63%	30%
Interactive reading	93%	25%	77%	13%
Circle time	100%	81%	100%	100%
Songs and nursery rhymes	61%	53%	80%	49%
Reasoning	39%	45%	51%	48%
Pre-writing	44%	17%	100%	100%
Creativity	87%	67%	88%	75%
Autonomy	96%	100%	100%	100%
Transitions	85%	71%	75%	85%
Average for the 10 elements	**76%**	**50%**	**83%**	**64%**

Table 7.3 presents the average quality of the educational content observed in daycares broken down by program group versus comparison group. We notice that the quality is higher in the program group for all sub-scales and that this difference is particularly high for the sub-scale Books and pictures.

Table 7.3: Average Percentage for the Quality of Educational Content by Dimension Evaluated and Treatment Group

Quality of educational content (based on ÉÉEP-R sub-scales)	Program group classes (n=12)	Comparison group classes (n=12)
Books and pictures	5.00 (2.34)	1.25 (0.87)
Informal use of language	6.00 (1.48)	4.67 (1.92)
Encouraging children to communicate	6.25 (1.86)	5.33 (1.50)
Using language to develop reasoning skills	5.08 (1.93)	3.67 (2.27)

Note: Indices were calculated based on observations done in the first year of implementation. The number of observations done in the second year was insufficient for calculating these indices.

7.3.   STRUCTURAL QUALITY AND DIFFERENTIATION OF THE OBSERVED ENVIRONMENTS

During the first year, observations in each of the daycare classes participating in the study allowed us to compare the environmental quality on different dimensions. This comparison was done using a few ÉÉEP-R sub-scales relating to the facilities and the health and safety of indoor spaces. By comparing program group daycares to comparison group daycares on these dimensions, we were able to study the differentiation between the practices of the program daycares and those of the comparison daycares.

Daycare facilities, evaluated using the ÉÉEP-R sub-scale "Indoor space", related to the amount of space available for the children, the lighting, the ventilation, and the general maintenance of the class. The scores obtained by both treatment groups on this dimension proved to be excellent, with a mean score of 6.83 out of 7 (S.D. = 0.39) for the program classes and 6.50 out of 7 (S.D. = 1.73) for the comparison daycare classes. A study conducted in Quebec revealed a mean score of 3.26 for subsidized daycares, indicating minimal quality (Japel, et al., 2005). This means that the class arrangements at the daycares participating in the project were of excellent quality.

The daycare scores for "Health practices", as measured by another ÉÉEP-R sub-scale, proved to be just as excellent and similar for both treatment groups. Both daycare groups offered an environment that met standards in terms of contamination prevention, child cleanliness and good hygiene practices (the mean score for the program group was 6.43, S.D. = 1.16; for the comparison daycare group, it was 5.67, S.D. = 1.23).

The evaluation conducted using the ÉÉEP-R sub-scale "Greeting/departing" highlighted the equivalence of the two treatment groups on this dimension. Educators in all classes except for two (one in the program group and another in the comparison group) gave children and parents a warm, personal greeting. The mean score for this scale for the program group was 5.75 (S.D. = 1.71), while for the comparison group it was 5.17 (S.D. = 1.47).

Finally, observations allowed us to compare the quality of "Staff-child interactions" (i.e., the educators' degree of sensitivity). Data revealed that educators in the program group showed a

greater degree of sensitivity toward children than educators in the comparison group. The mean score for the program group was 6.25 out of 7 (S.D. = 1.86) while for the comparison group it was 4.91 (S.D. = 2.43). It should be mentioned that the educators in two of the program group classes and in five of the comparison group classes showed a degree of sensitivity lower than 5, indicating that their interactions with children were of lower quality.

To summarize, as demonstrated in Table 7.4, observations revealed a slight difference in the overall quality of the daycares in the program group daycares' favour. The differences are minor, however, and both groups display good quality (5 and up on a scale of 7) on the dimensions studied.

Table 7.4: Average Score for the Structural Quality in the Observed Daycares by Dimension Evaluated and Treatment Group

Overall quality of the daycare environments	Program group classes (n=12)	Comparison group classes (n=12)
Indoor space	6.83 (0.39)	6.50 (1.73)
Health practices	6.43 (1.16)	5.67 (1.23)
Greeting/departing	5.75 (1.71)	5.17 (1.47)
Staff-child interactions	6.25 (1.86)	4.91 (2.43)

Note: Indices were calculated based on observations done in the first year of implementation. The number of observations done in the second year was insufficient for calculating these indices.

7.4. DOSAGE

As previously mentioned, the program took place for only one year in some communities while it continued for a second year in other communities. Table 7.5 shows when the program began and ended in each of the communities.

Table 7.5: Delivery Schedule for the Preschool Program

Community	Start Date	End Date	Degree of exposure
Cornwall	August 28, 2007	August 24, 2009	Full-time basis for first year and part-time basis for second year
Durham	September 24, 2007	July 31, 2009	One year on a full-time basis for the majority of children (2007 to 2008) and two years on a full-time basis for a few children
Edmonton	September 17, 2007		Implementation failed
Edmundston	September 4, 2007	June 19, 2009	Two years on a full-time basis
Orleans	October 1, 2007	August 29, 2008	One year on a full-time basis
Saint John	September 4, 2007	August 27, 2009	Two years on a full-time basis

On average, children in both treatment groups attended daycare for a similar number of hours per week. Specifically, children in the program group attended daycare for an average of 28.5 hours per week, while children in the comparison group attended for an average of 25.4 hours per week.

7.5. FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

Interviews were done with educators and the trainer, in order to get their impressions on how the daycare program was progressing. Some of the questions asked during the interviews focused on elements of the program that they particularly appreciated, as well as elements that they found more difficult to put into place. It quickly became clear through the comments of educators and the trainer that the presence of an element was a facilitator while its absence was perceived as a barrier to the successful implementation of the program. For example, educators found that having time to plan their activities was a facilitator. Educators who did not have this opportunity indicated that not having enough time to properly plan their activities was a barrier. To facilitate reading, we have presented elements in a positive light; in other words, we are discussing them as facilitators rather than barriers. When reading the text, it is important to understand that the absence of a facilitator represents a barrier to implementation.

Below is the overall picture of the elements considered to be facilitators for the implemention of the daycare program. These elements were mentioned by either the educators or the trainer. They have been combined into three categories.

1) Program components:

- Material provided to daycares;

- Follow-up training (observations and feedback followed by a short training session);

- Program flexibility.

2) Daycares components:

- Good program support by management;

- Time allotted to educators for planning;

- Staff stability.

3) Educator components:

- Educator's experience;

- Openness to feedback and changes;

- Two years of participation in the program.

More precisely, **the first category** relates to program components that facilitated implementation. Providing daycares with several new resources was an element that facilitated the involvement of the daycare centres in the program. Implementation activities included providing each of the program daycares with a vast quantity of material to ensure that everyone had the tools needed to implement all of the program components. This contribution of material was an important asset of the program for several communities.

"I think that [one of the benefits of the program is that it included] a lot of the resources that we received, several books, all of the material that we received; that has been the greatest benefit that I have seen so far, from a tangible viewpoint. Perhaps for the children, there is a double benefit, because not only do they get the material, they also benefit from the knowledge that we can pass on to them, and as they grow up, it might be helpful to them, I think." [Translation]

Next, educators mentioned the importance of the trainer's follow-up visits throughout the project. Educators particularly liked the trainer's positive approach and words of encouragement.

"I really liked that aspect because she would say to us: OK, I see progress in the class. I see the difference. Then she would say: You did that, and I'm going to show the other daycares how it's possible. (…) because we don't often get a lot of encouragement. So, for me, it was the observations and feedback I really appreciated." [Translation]

Furthermore, the trainer contributed a lot of materials and documentation to the daycares to facilitate program implementation. This was another aspect that was greatly appreciated by educators.

"When the trainer came to see us, she was like an encyclopaedia. She brought so much material and knowledge that we never would have gotten elsewhere and that we will never have in the future." [Translation]

Lastly, educators also mentioned that they appreciated the flexibility offered by the program.

The **second category** relates to elements inherent to the daycares. During interviews, educators mentioned the importance of having good support from the management in order to effectively implement the program. The program required an additional investment of time compared to programs educators were following prior to their participation in the Readiness to Learn project. Educators had to plan their activities, and some of the activities, like reading books, required educators to prepare their material in advance. Support from the management became essential, since it meant freeing up the time necessary for educators to plan the required program activities.

"She [the director] took the four-day training course also. Yes, I'm sure that if she had felt that it wasn't worth her time, she wouldn't have done it. She encouraged us a lot (…) encouraged us to look in the kits; she gave us time to make our plans, to make sure that everything was done. If we needed anything, she would help us do a search on the computer also." [Translation]

On the other hand, when this time was not allotted, the workload became harder to bear for educators.

"For sure the ideas were there, but it's more, like I was telling you, you need to invest time and energy in those creative ideas… There are a lot of great ideas in that program. You can explore tons of ideas, but the thing is, you need to have the time to do it, that's the disadvantage of the program." [Translation]

Support from the management was also mentioned by the program trainer as an important element that made a real difference in implementation. It turned out that in only one community

staff were given one hour of planning time per month by management while in all other communities, educators had to plan their activities on their personal time.

With respect to time management, some educators found it difficult to incorporate the program into a daily routine that was already full. It was therefore difficult at times to find the time to incorporate certain activities that were specific to the program.

> *"Sometimes we would want to do activities and it was the lack of time, we would realize, oh, it's that time already. Time was a huge challenge." [Translation]*

Another element that facilitated program implementation was the support that educators gave to each other. In most classes, two educators took care of a single group, varying from 10 to 16 children. A good rapport between the two educators highly influenced the implementation quality. It allowed for better planning of activities, and a more consistent implementation of the program on a daily basis.

Furthermore, staff stability proved to be crucial to the program's success. In one community, the high turnover of educators resulted in the failure to fully implement the program. The program involved a certain degree of complexity that required a period of adaptation which varied in length from one educator to the next. This adaptation proved to be impossible in daycares where there was a constant staff turnover.

The **third category** relates to educators' characteristics. The program appeared to be easier to implement when educators already had a certain degree of experience working with children. They were better able to respond to the demands of the program given their existing knowledge of children's need and how to manage children. Likewise, some of the educators displayed a natural talent with children, which resulted in an easier and higher quality program implementation.

Another element that affected program implementation related to the educators' openness to feedback and new ideas. For a program that included regular follow-up visits, this element was quite important. Educators who were open to receiving feedback benefited from each visit the trainer made and to improve their implemention of the program, which was not the case for educators who were less open. It should be noted that the trainer perceived a lack of openness in at least one of the two educators in five of the six communities. Some educators did not take into consideration the changes suggested by the trainer while others did not seem to understand the particularities of the program. Finally, a few of the educators had a fairly disengaged attitude toward the program and some toward the children as well.

A final element that facilitated program implementation related to the length of participation in the project. Some of the educators were able to participate in the project for two consecutive years. According to both the trainer and these educators, their mastery of program elements was more complete during the second year.

7.6. PERCEIVED BENEFITS

The educator interviews provided us with information on what they perceived to be the benefits of the program for children. Educators also mentioned changes that they had made in their own practices with children.

7.6.1. Perceived Benefits for Children

One of the elements that stood out in the majority of educator interviews was the fact that the program prepared children for school. This preparation encompasses several dimensions. Some of them concern children's ability to follow a routine, meet academic expectations and their developed sense of autonomy.

> *"We tried to introduce them to a routine, to prepare them so that they'd be ready for school, we didn't try to discipline them, we showed them what would be expected of them at school and prepared them, as well as the parents. And, we often had the school's support, because they [the teachers] often told us that the children who came from the daycare, they were children who were prepared, they were independent children, and academically, they were well prepared and we received a lot of encouragement from the management." [Translation]*

Educators also spoke of children's ability to recognize the letters of the alphabet, their own name and those of their friends. They were surprised at how easily the children mastered this skill. Knowledge of the letters of the alphabet is one of the best predictors of a child's future literacy skills (Lonigan, et al., 2008). It is therefore encouraging that educators perceived this change in children who participated in the program.

> *"I was surprised by that, because I didn't think it could happen that quickly (…) in one month a child was capable of recognizing all of the names in the group. (…) By printing the names on the chairs, [on] the responsibility board, all of the children's names were displayed in several locations, even on the coat hooks, I put their photo and their name beside it so that they could see the words. When we posted pictures in the daycare, we put the words beside them, simply so that they got used to seeing printed words. And, within a short time, they were recognizing many things, it was surprising." [Translation]*

Also connected to literacy, educators commented that children displayed a greater love for books and reading thanks to their regular exposure to them within the program.

> *"Yes, the children really enjoyed, like especially having circle time, because they wanted us to read them a story." [Translation]*

> *"The children really, really liked books, for instance. They really love books, stories. […] They love stories that are simple with a lot of action in them." [Translation]*

Finally, some of the educators specifically pointed out that structuring the children's day around a routine chart made the children calmer, helped them to better understand the routine, and to gain a better sense of time and space.

> *"The routine chart is so simple, it's very clear so that at the end I was just giving them the pictures, and they would present them to me because I would often ask what are we doing now, it's circle time now, what are we doing next, what do we do first? You know, they miss their mommy, look mommy brought me here this morning, so it gave them something concrete, we're going to have lunch, and then it's time for a nap, and then after that I will…, the program itself, compared to other daycares, it's more by heart, and they are really in the concrete. The children are immersed in the*

concrete ideas, they are more autonomous, and I really think the program is excellent for this reason." [Translation]

7.6.2. Changes in Educators' Practices

Several educators mentioned that their participation in the program resulted in them giving children more autonomy. This autonomy was mostly shown by allowing children to explore and be creative with their artwork and creations.

> *"I tend to let children do things on their own more and to decide what they want to do, like drawing (…) I give them a lot more leeway in deciding for themselves how they want to do it." [Translation]*

For some educators, the program and follow-up training helped them refresh their knowledge of child development.

> *"There are things, theoretical aspects that she [the trainer] provided which will be useful to educators, since there are always things that we can forget to do, once we get used to a routine. (…) It helps to refresh our memory, well, yes, it's true that I haven't done that for a long time, but it's something that is so important to do with children." [Translation]*

Finally, follow-up trainings reassured some educators as to their abilities and their way of doing things.

> *"Sometimes we have doubts about our abilities as an educator because we never know how parents feel, and we also have a hard time figuring out where we stand with respect to laws and regulations, with respect to a lot of things for that matter, but when we hear someone say that what we're doing is good, and that we're on the right track, well that, that helps us to evolve, to give ourselves new challenges, to continue doing our job which is not always easy." [Translation]*

8. Results of the Family Workshop Program Implementation

This chapter reports the results of the implementation analyses for the family workshop component. The reported results are broken down into two groups. First, results are presented by series of workshops offered in each community. This first series of analyses enables us to better understand the characteristics of a community or practitioner. It should be noted that the implementation analyses for the family workshop program include observations for half of the workshops offered in Edmonton. In total, the family workshop program was given 11 times— two series of workshops in five communities and one series of workshops in the sixth community. Second, results are reported for each workshop, in which case, information from all of the communities has been combined for each of the ten workshops presented. The combining of information gives us an overview of the characteristics related to the contents of each workshop.

Similar to the daycare program, section 8.1 deals with the **fidelity** of the contents, namely the percentage of topics covered at each workshop. Section 8.2 provides detailed results concerning the **quality** of workshop delivery in each community. The evaluation of these first two dimensions is based on workshop observations done by community coordinators. Section 8.3 deals with the **dosage**, or parents' participation rate at workshops in each community. The next section (section 8.4) presents parents' **participation** level at workshops as observed by the community coordinators. Observations were supplemented by parent evaluations at the end of each workshop, an overall evaluation parents completed at the beginning of the tenth workshop, and parents' retrospective evaluation collected during the post-intervention survey administered two weeks after the workshops ended. Section 8.5 discusses the **facilitators and barriers** encountered during program implementation. Data were primarily obtained from the feedback of the practitioners who led the family workshops (interviews or journal), parents (evaluations at the end of each workshop and post-intervention survey) and coordinator observations. The final section examines the **perceived benefits** of the program for the parents, according to their evaluations at the end of each workshop and the post-intervention survey.

8.1. FIDELITY OF CONTENT COVERED IN FAMILY WORKSHOPS

As mentioned in Section 6.1, fidelity refers to the integrity of the applied program; in other words, the correspondence between the applied intervention and the planned program. Observations provide us with information on the compliance of contents delivered by practitioners. Within the framework of the family workshop component, the program included certain topics that were mandatory for practitioners to address, in addition to optional topics. Observations tell us about the topics discussed in each community, for each workshop. This information was supplemented by an analysis of the flip charts used by practitioners during the workshops, so that a topic is reported as not addressed if it does not appear in the observations or on the flip charts. A summary of topics addressed in each of the ten workshops can be found in Appendix B.

To compare the fidelity of one series of workshops to another, and from one workshop to another, the percentage of mandatory topics covered was calculated. Results indicate that the content was well covered in all communities, with an average coverage rate of 96% across workshop series, which represents an excellent coverage. All communities covered at least 90% of the material (see Table 8.1, first two columns on the left, for a summary of the coverage of the 11 workshop series).

Analyses per workshop revealed that the contents of some workshops were less covered than others. Hence, in Workshop 9, entitled ''Living in a Francophone Community'', coverage was complete in four of the eleven workshop series (see Table 8.1, last two columns on the right, for a summary of the coverage per workshop). However, in seven other workshop series on the same topic, the "This is my community" activity was not addressed. It must be stated that, by and large, the workshops offered parents several opportunities to discuss services provided in their community, and on several occasions, practitioners gave parents information and brochures on services offered in the community. Several practitioners therefore felt that it was not relevant to discuss the subject again.

Analyses also revealed that Workshop 7, dealing with communications in the family, was completely covered in five of the eleven workshop series. The activity that was addressed the least in this workshop related to elements of active listening. During this activity, parents had to discuss the support that they seek and obtain when they feel the need to be heard. They also had to discuss elements that would show the support person that they had consulted had understood them. This discussion was different from most of the topics that were covered in the other workshops in the sense that parents were asked to be more open. The delicate nature of this activity is probably why only four practitioners felt comfortable leading it.

In short, the two topics that were covered less were addressed within the scope of other workshops or were less suitable for the types of discussion held in family workshops. These topics could therefore be addressed differently if the family workshop program were given again.

Table 8.1: Content Coverage by Series and Workshop

Series of workshops	% content coverage		Workshop number	% content coverage
1	90%		1	100%
2	91%		2	97%
3	98%		3	98%
4	96%		4	100%
5	93%		5	100%
6	92%		6	100%
7	96%		7	*82%*
8	100%		8	100%
9	100%		9	*86%*
10	98%		10	100%
11	96%		Total	96 %
Total	96%			

8.2. QUALITY OF FAMILY WORKSHOP DELIVERY

Coordinator observations provided us with information on the quality of family workshop delivery. For each workshop, observers noted the difficulties experienced by the practitioners in delivering the workshop. Difficulties were defined as challenges to the delivery which might interfere with the message being clearly conveyed to parents. The main difficulties noted related to the practitioners' delivery style. For example, some practitioners forced answers during discussions, interrupted participants when they were speaking, had trouble conveying the message, covered the content too quickly, or were disorganized.

Observations revealed that three practitioners experienced recurring problems with the workshops. Two of them had a habit of presenting the content too quickly and too formally. The third had a tendency to be disorganized and experienced difficulty in leading the workshops in general. As a result, in these three workshop series, parents did not receive the family workshop program at an optimal level of quality. Speaking to this point, quantitative analyses presented in the *Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities: First Cohort Findings Report* (Thompson et al., 2014) provide us with further information on the impacts of the quality of the family workshop practitioner's delivery skills on parent's knowledge, beliefs and habits.

Another index of the quality of delivery was the ability to offer the workshop within the allotted time. In general, practitioners had trouble staying within the allotted time. Most of them tended to go past the time allotted for each workshop. Delivery of the parent component of the

workshop was supposed to take 55 minutes. Most of the practitioners took 60 to 80 minutes to convey the contents to parents. Given that this practice was very widespread, we might consider that the workshops contained too much material. It should also be mentioned that parents enjoyed talking to each other. The workshops should therefore have longer discussion periods, even if this means that parents are exposed to less material.
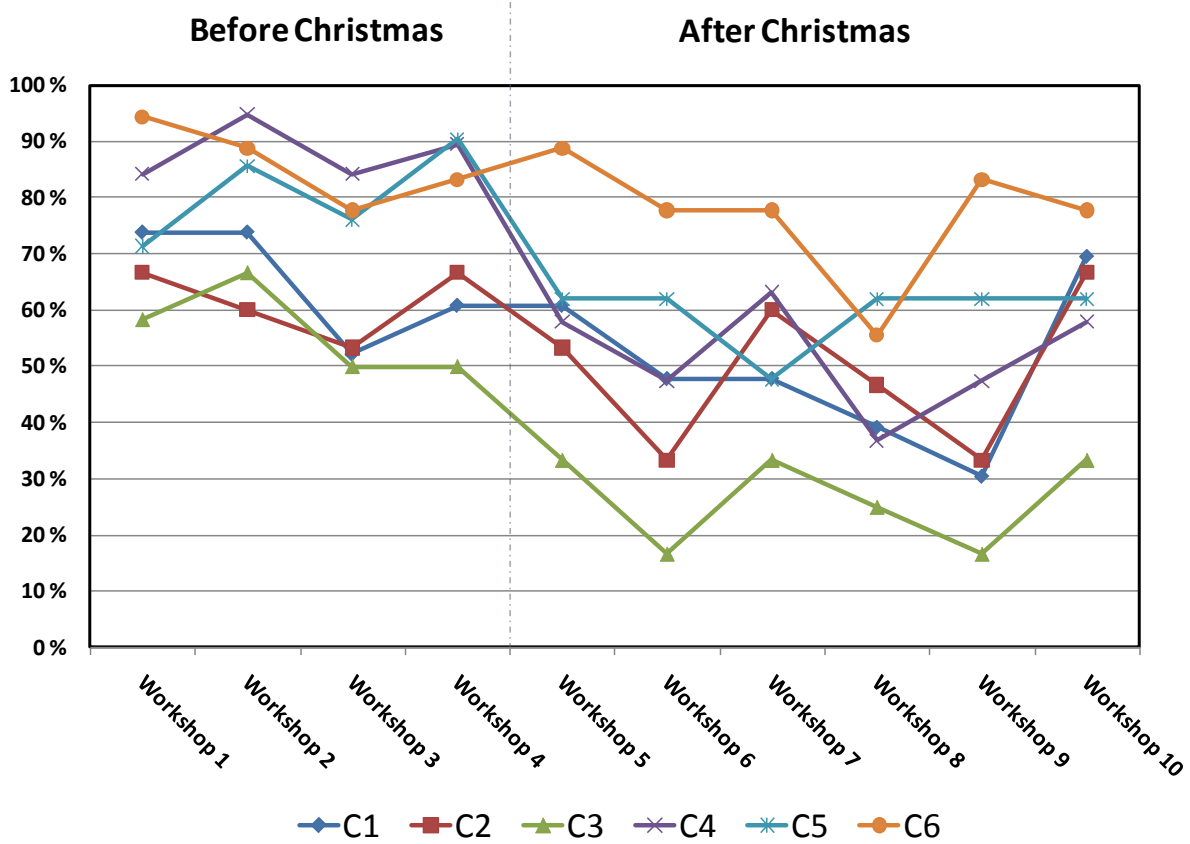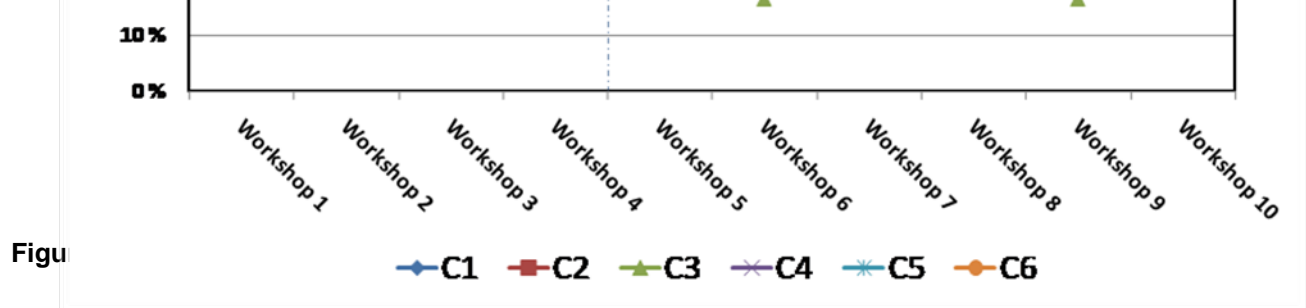
The final quality index for which the observations provided information related to the spatial environment in which the workshops took place. In most communities, participants were seated in a manner that fostered discussion. There was only one community where, on two occasions, both groups of parents joined together to form one single group led by the two practitioners. On these two occasions, parents were seated in two rows, rendering discussions between participants awkward.

8.3. DOSAGE

Participation Rate by Community

The average participation rate in the six communities was 60% and varied from 38% to 81% (see Figure 8.1). When the participation rate is examined at the community level, the first community had a workshop participation rate varying between 30% and 74%, with an average rate of 56%. It was also observed that two of the 23 families (9%) participated in two workshops or less. In the second community, the workshop participation rate varied between 33% and 67%, with an average rate of 54%. In this community, four of the 15 families (27%) participated in two workshops or less, and of this number, three families did not participate in any of the workshops. In the third community, fewer families participated in the workshops than in other communities with a comparable number of parents enrolled in the program group. The practitioner working with the parents in this community had to be replaced three times due to a high staff turnover rate. The workshop participation rate in this community varied between 17% and 67%, with an average rate of 38%, which is considerably lower than other communities where workshops were attended by at least half of the parents. Moreover, four of the 12 families (33%) attended two workshops or less.

Many parents in the fourth community attended the family workshops. In fact, 19 of the 20 families enrolled in the program group participated in workshops. Only one family (5%) did not participate in any workshop. The workshop participation rate varied between 37% and 95%, with an average rate of 66%. In the fifth community, workshop participation rate varied between 48% and 90%, with an average rate of 68 %, which represented the second highest average participation rate in the Readiness to Learn project communities. Only one family (5%) attended two workshops or less. Finally, the sixth community had the highest family participation rate. The workshop participation rate varied between 56% and 94%, with an average rate of 81%. Only one family (6%) attended two workshops or less.

10 %

0 %

Workshop 1 Workshop 2 Workshop 3 Workshop 4 Workshop 5 Workshop 6 Workshop 7 Workshop 8 Workshop 9 Workshop 10

Figu

◆ C1 ■ C2 ▲ C3 ✕ C4 ✳ C5 ● C6

Before Christmas   **After Christmas**

100 %
90 %
80 %
70 %
60 %
50 %
40 %
30 %
20 %
10 %
0 %

Workshop 1 Workshop 2 Workshop 3 Workshop 4 Workshop 5 Workshop 6 Workshop 7 Workshop 8 Workshop 9 Workshop 10

◆ C1 ■ C2 ▲ C3 ✕ C4 ✳ C5 ● C6

Participation Rate by Workshop

Figure 8.2 provides details on the average participation rate per workshop. An average participation rate of 62% was observed, with the rate being higher before Christmas (74%) than after Christmas (53%). As expected, the highest participation rates were for workshops 1 (76%) and 2 (80%), when participants were considering the relevance of the workshops. The eighth workshop stood out from the rest as having the lowest participation rate (45%).

Figure 8.2: Parent Attendance by Workshop
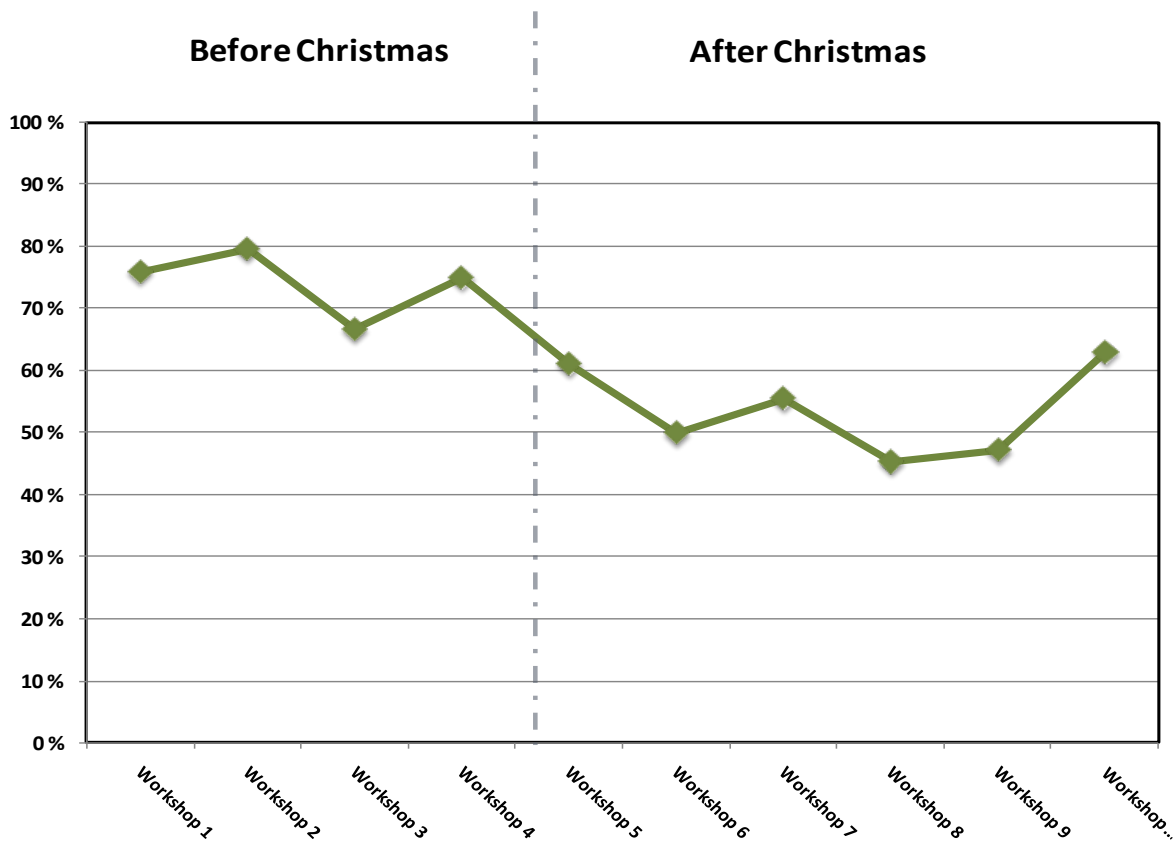
8.4. PARENTS' PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKSHOPS

Parents' participation in workshops was measured in different ways. First of all, the community coordinator described parents' reactions to the various topics covered. Most of the workshop topics sparked a positive reaction in parents. Observers described parents as engaged, attentive, relaxed or enthusiastic during most workshops. The workshop that incited the most positive reaction in parents was the one on early literacy (Workshop 3), during which parents showed a higher level of participation than in other workshops.

Conversely, parents experienced more negative reactions, such as lack of understanding, resistance, weak or zero participation, disinterest or disagreement, during the first two workshops and Workshop 5. It should be noted that the first two workshops were meant to introduce the project, the family workshops, and the notion of the parent as the child's first educator, while Workshop 5 dealt with the development of self-discipline in the child. With respect to the first two workshops, newness and shyness might be factors that could help explain parents' unenthusiastic reaction. Some parents did not seem to be convinced of the day-to-day benefits of the workshops in their lives, which translated into low participation levels for a few parents, and resistance for others. As for Workshop 5, parents indicated in evaluations that they appreciated

the information that they received in the workshop although it was a topic that raised a lot of emotion and discussion since it confronted their parenting style.

Parents' participation was also measured using the evaluations completed by parents at the end of each workshop. These evaluations helped determine parents' opinion about each workshop on a timely basis. Specifically, parents were asked to express their opinions about what they had enjoyed in the workshop, what they had learned and what they would have liked to learn. Parents also had to answer a short survey two weeks after the last workshop (post-intervention survey). Parents' answers indicated that they had particularly enjoyed discussions with other parents. This element was mentioned by the greatest number of parents, both in the evaluations at the end of each workshop and in the post-intervention survey. The second most mentioned element was children's attendance and the parent-child component. Parents really enjoyed having spent time doing an activity with their child. Several parents even said that they would have liked to see more time allotted to the parent-child component. Moreover, parents said that they appreciated the content of the workshops. They particularly enjoyed discussions about communications between the parent and the child—specifically, ensuring that a message is communicated effectively so that the child understands, and the importance of active listening when speaking with the child (a topic in Workshop 7). The other topic parents liked was autonomy and discipline (Workshop 5). This last result was interesting, given that parents' immediate reactions to this workshop were rather negative (according to observations). Although this workshop caused parents to react on the spot, it appears to have given them long term benefits.

8.5. FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

A comprehensive review of all the data collected during the family workshops revealed the main facilitators and barriers. These findings are from data collected from the practitioners delivering the family workshops (through interviews and journals), the parents (through workshop evaluations and the post-intervention survey), as well as observations done by the community coordinators.

8.5.1. Facilitators

A few of the strategies used to help attract parents to the workshops and maintain their attendance were successful. Providing a meal for them was one of those strategies. For the evening workshops, parents arrived at the daycare after their workday and a meal was served. This allowed parents to spend time with their child, talk with their child's educator (who was also at the table) and have a casual conversation with other parents.

A second facilitator was the parent-child component. Children were delighted to have time to show their parents the work they had done during the child component of the workshops and to do a new activity with them. The fact that children attended also encouraged some parents to stay at the end of the day, since children were enthusiastically waiting for them to share the meal.

A third facilitator was the educators' attendance at the workshops. This gave parents and educators a chance to share information on the child, discuss the child's progress at the daycare and at home, and to get to know each other better, thus improving their relationship.

Lastly, parents quite liked the fact that workshops gave them access to resources via the kits. Moreover, after the workshops, children and parents could borrow a French resource for the week, that is, a book, CD, DVD or board game.

8.5.2. Barriers

The main barrier to parents' participation was the weekly requirement of attending while juggling work and family life. Several parents suggested that spacing workshops further apart would have helped address this issue. Some parents noted that they would have preferred workshops to be spread over two years, which would have allowed them to participate over a longer period of time, but at a less intense pace. Some parents found that their child was too tired during workshops, especially when workshops were at the end of the day. In fact, some workshops lasted until 8 p.m. and parents said that their child was too tired at that point to fully benefit from the workshop. Lastly, some parents highlighted that sometimes there was too much material being covered in the workshops.

8.6. PERCEIVED BENEFITS

In the evaluations at the end of each workshop and in the post-intervention survey, we asked parents what they learned during the workshops and what they had applied afterward. The most common answer was that they had used the various strategies learned to communicate with their child. These strategies were discussed in the workshop on communication (Workshop 7). During this workshop, among other things, parents participated in a role-play situation, the purpose of which was to teach them the importance of putting themselves at the child's level so that the child had a good understanding of the message being conveyed. Several parents adapted how they communicated with their child after this workshop.

A second common answer was that parents learned the importance of exposing their child to French. Introduced in Workshop 6, this was more apparent in the post-intervention survey than in the evaluations at the end of each workshop. Thirdly, parents reported that they had gained insight into emotion management and discipline for children (Workshop 5). Lastly, a number of parents reported that they liked learning new strategies at the workshops. Many found that the workshops helped them find practical solutions to the challenges involved in managing children, achieving work-family balance and learning French in a minority situation. Parents said they learned a lot in this regard from parent discussions. The opportunity to talk to other parents was one of the best aspects of the family workshop component.

9. Community Backdrop

The Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities project is part of the Government of Canada's 2003-2008 Action Plan for Official Languages and is continuing with the *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013: Acting for the Future*. This initiative aims to strengthen the ability of communities to foster the development of young children growing up in official language minority communities. *The Roadmap* aims to:

- Ensure multi-year funding to help official language minority communities better understand early childhood development;

- Foster collaboration and the establishment of networks to share best practices;

- Ensure that early childhood development tools and resources, in either official language, are adapted to official language minority communities and made available to them.

To do this, one strategy adopted by the Government of Canada (and particularly Human Resources and Skills Development Canada) is to support a research project to better understand the effects of programs aimed at supporting children's linguistic and cultural development as well as their academic success.

In this regard, the Readiness to Learn project has helped reach some of these targets in participating communities. According to the community representatives interviewed, the project has served not only to implement an intervention and examine its impact, but has promoted partnerships between the various community organizations to address the importance of early childhood development in minority francophone communities.

The following sections take a look at how each community has progressed over the past two years regarding factors influencing early childhood development in minority francophone communities. Section 9.1 presents the details of the interviews with community representatives, namely in terms of the interview grid and the sample of those interviewed. Section 9.2 reports the perceived changes in each community over the last two years. Section 9.3 details the benefits of the Readiness to Learn project for communities, according to the community representatives. The chapter ends with sections 9.4 and 9.5, respectively looking at the elements of success in the various communities in terms of early childhood services, and the dreams and hopes of the community representatives for their community.

9.1. INTERVIEWS WITH THE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

The interview grid developed for the community representatives was inspired by the *Appreciative Inquiry* theory of Preskill and Catsambas (2006). This theory allows for the study of an organization (a francophone community organization in this case) by focusing on its positive aspects and strengths. According to this philosophy, the inquiry process allows participants to take stock of the levers of their organization (or community) and think of positive ways to pursue their mission (Coghlan, Preskill, & Catsambas, 2003). Appreciative inquiry is a

field of practice in itself. Within the context of the Readiness to Learn project, we limited ourselves to developing an interview grid inspired by this philosophy in order to identify changes that occurred over the past two years, determine the strengths of each community and obtain an overall picture of aspects that are helpful to young francophone children and their families.

Eighteen interviews were conducted with representatives from the six communities that took part in the project. The choice of representatives depended on the central role they played in the field of francophone services or their involvement in early childhood in their community. Some of them had been designated champions in implementing the Readiness to Learn project in their community. Others collaborated on the Readiness to Learn project to varying degrees because of their key role in their community's early childhood services. Some also helped recruit the families participating in the project. Lastly, some representatives witnessed the Readiness to Learn project activities in their community but did not participate in them.

In total, nine of the 18 community representatives (nine representatives from four different communities) were involved in delivering child care services for francophone children in their community. Four representatives were involved in family resource centres, three were from an organization supporting the francophone community in their area and three others provided special services related to early childhood development (prenatal and postnatal health services, language development, and early intervention programs).

Most representatives surveyed had lived in their community for more than 10 years. Three had settled there less than five years earlier. Almost all respondents (16 out of 18) answered the first community representative survey in 2007.

For the majority of respondents, the project was part of their organization's mission, either because their mission targeted early childhood development, or because they worked with the francophone minority population. Three respondents stated that their organization's mission was not in line with that of the Readiness to Learn project.

9.2. CHANGES IN THE COMMUNITY AS PERCEICED BY COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

At the outset, community representatives were asked to share their impressions of the changes that had taken place in their community during the past two years.[10] This question targeted a number of services provided to young francophone children and their families, including child care, literacy activities (e.g. libraries, book clubs), early childhood education resources (workshops, play groups, resource centres), social, educational and health services, as well as sport, cultural and recreational activities.

According to these community representatives, the past two years have been marked by an increased offer of child care in all communities. In some communities, new daycares opened, while elsewhere the number of spaces in current daycares increased. Moreover, several communities witnessed an increase number of francophone students enrolled in schools, and in some areas, new schools were even opened to meet the demand. At the same time, a number of representatives talked about improved relations between elementary schools and preschool

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[10] It should be noted that the changes reported by the community representatives are not necessarily related to or caused by the fact that the Readiness to Learn project was conducted in these communities.

services. Representatives felt that early childhood services were more recognized, and that they received more support from the schools.

> *"For example, we opened a satellite site this year (…) in partnership with the school board that had made a request (...) to free up some francophone daycare spaces, so how should I say (…) so we have seen greater interest on the part of the school board since 2007 (...) and the Fédération des conseils scolaires francophones [federation of French-language school boards] in supporting preschool services in French." [Translation]*

Furthermore, some schools are now accommodating parents to a greater extent. This was the case for two schools in one of the communities, which have become community schools.

New literacy projects have also been launched in a number of communities. Literacy activities, such as reading stories to children, have been added to the organizations' current programs. In some communities, a children's corner has been added to the municipal library. In another community, several schools have opened their library to preschoolers so that they can borrow books with their parents. Some community representatives also spoke about the influence the Readiness to Learn project had on the development of new resource centres where parents could borrow books for their children.

> *"We're trying to build a team to carry on the book lending that is part of the pilot project. So that's something we discovered, that the staff found the parents really liked the book lending and you, you saw it too, books, CDs, videocassettes, it's something we'd like to continue." [Translation]*

However, in terms of early childhood education resources, there seemed to be some instability in services offered. Many representatives mentioned programs that no longer existed, although they added that some programs with similar goals had replaced them. This was also the case for parent workshops and play groups in various communities. It appears that there is a lot of turnover of this type of activity. One representative talked about the positive impact of the long-term funding they received in 2007 for their activities:

> *"Since 2007, there have been many changes in our community through family and child support centres, which could really develop from that time on because of the recognition we got from the province (…) This gives us long-term funding and therefore allows us to offer activities for a substantial period of time. And therefore, we've really been able to enhance literacy activities, educational resources, programs for parents and children (…). In total, at the level of activities, programs and resources, we're now offering 35 activities and programs on an ongoing basis in our community." [Translation]*

In terms of health and social services, the situation seems to have been relatively stable since 2007. In one community however, a French-language health centre opened in the same building as the daycare, thereby facilitating access to French resources through the grouping of the two.

Regarding the evolution of services in the field of sports, leisure, and culture, representatives from two communities spoke of changes that had happened since 2007. In the first community, there were more opportunities for young francophone children to participate in various sports activities with their family. In the second community, there were more French promotions to announce the various activities being offered. The city's activity guide is now also provided in

French, whereas it used to be only available in English. In other communities, a continuation of the activities offered in 2007 was noted.

9.3. PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE READINESS TO LEARN PROJECT FOR COMMUNITIES

Community representatives were then asked to say what, according to them, were the benefits of the Readiness to Learn project for their community. Several of those interviewed indicated that, above all, the Readiness to Learn project allowed their community to establish new partnerships in the field of the development of young francophone children. For some, the program represented an opportunity to raise awareness among francophone parents of services offered in their community.

> *"It's hard to measure, but this pilot project has first allowed us to form partnerships within our community (…). So, on the one hand, it has strengthened the partnerships between the various organizations interested in the early years. The project has made it possible to create new partnerships (…) to help support parents in terms of their parenting skills. In turn, these partnerships (…) have made it possible to develop other services for young children and francophone families." [Translation]*

Representatives also emphasized that these partnerships helped get daycares more involved, while giving them the credibility they sometimes lacked. Several representatives highlighted that daycares were often seen as secondary players in child development. The Readiness to Learn project helped afirm the importance of these centres in the development of young children growing up in a minority community.

> *"I think that it might have given us some validity. You know, maybe some organizations in the community saw us more as babysitters, as caregivers. And now, maybe they see us more as providers of early childhood education." [Translation]*

> *"Specifically in relation to the pilot project, it's certain that one of the great successes pilot was the partnership that was built between the school (…) and the daycare (…). It was a huge success both for the school community and the francophone community (…) It allowed la Francophonie to became more visible, and what's more, to be in a somewhat better position to meet the needs and provide better guidance to our francophone parents, who come here to keep them more connected, truly believing that la Francophonie is alive." [Translation]*

> *"I think it that the impact it had, was more at the level of the recognition given to early childhood services. It makes teachers, among others, more aware of the importance of the role, what is accomplished before the child enters school, and I think this is the most professional aspect, up until now, the impact it has had on the rest of us." [Translation]*

Always in line with daycares, some community representatives highlighted that the program helped enhance educators' skills through the training they received throughout the program.

Lastly, according to two community representatives in two different communities, the Readiness to Learn project had an impact on children's development. These two representatives believed that the children involved in the Readiness to Learn project in their community were

better prepared for school. A representative from a third community added that the program results reinforce the recommendations of a provincial commission stipulating that children need to learn French at an early age in order to arrive prepared for school. Thus, results of the Readiness to Learn project could help in seeking funding to better serve young francophone children.

> *"We have the Commission on Francophone Schools…and one of the things that came strongly out of this Commission was the need to Frenchify our children as early as possible, so that they arrive at kindergarten already having knowledge, then, at that moment, if the study shows that the enriched program is indeed beneficial, which I'm sure will happen, it will give ammunition for this Commission to justify provincial spending in this area, because the province is now trying to see, to test the waters, seeing how it can make improvements, that's why the benefits, I see them more as long term."* [Translation]

Note that according to six representatives from four communities, the program had no significant benefits for their organization or their community. However, other representatives from these same communities reported that the Readiness to Learn project had positive impacts. This difference in representatives' perceptions can be partly attributed to their level of involvement in the early childhood dossier.

9.4. ELEMENTS FAVOURING SUCCESS

During interviews, we asked representatives to name their community's greatest successes in terms of services and resources targeting young francophone children and their families. In four of the six communities, representatives cited the presence of a hub of services specifically designed for francophone families as a key success factor. One of the representatives interviewed described it as follows:

> *"(…) a centre that responds to a number of family needs and one that becomes a hub of integrated services that allows us to reach some families that may not have been seen yet in certain systems and that can refer these families to a set of varied services available in the community, in different domains. So it's a wonderful success for the community."* [Translation]

Similarly, building partnerships between various organizations represents a winning success factor in communities. Representatives emphasized that some of the activities could not be maintained in the community without the existence of collaboration between various partners. A number of community representatives highlighted that in addition to working with various existing players, each community should involve families to develop services that are truly in line with their needs.

A third success factor of increasing importance within the communities is the presence of francophone daycares. In fact, this was one way to bring together a large number of young francophone children and give them the chance to speak French at an early age. Francophone daycares are increasingly recognized as an important contribution to child development. More and more, schools want to work with these centres because this cooperation often increases their enrolment numbers once children reach school age. In one community, the establishment of a daycare helped justify the introduction of a new elementary school.

"Well, the daycare services (…) imagine it, we had 75% of our Francophones (…) who were in the English system (…). That's why we opened a daycare, and then a school for kindergarten, and then a grade 1, and then, we met with the Minister of Education last week, and now we're going to have a grade 2, and a school." [Translation]

Finally, it is interesting to note the extent to which representatives of various communities took the opportunity provided by the Readiness to Learn project to demonstrate that early childhood services are an integral and important part of child development, as well as an asset in the development of an entire francophone minority community.

9.5. DREAMS OF WHAT COULD BE[11] …

Lastly, community representatives told us what they would do if they had more resources. The comments gathered highlighted promising projects representatives would like to establish in order to continue meeting their community's needs. Several representatives spoke of the importance of investing more in early childhood services. They also spoke of the need to offer parents good quality child care in French. In some communities, this would mean opening up new spaces to reach more families. In other communities, they would like to be able to provide affordable services to all families in the community. Finally, a number of representatives indicated that educators' working conditions should be improved and that they should have access to better training in order to have qualified staff working in the domain of early childhood.

Another dream shared by some communities concerned the importance of having strong partnerships and providing centralized services to parents. Also underlying this type of partnership is the importance of having a common vision of a community's needs.

"My three wishes are, planned financial resources, pooled and targeted based on the needs and data we have validated and collected, and not simply on creative or incisive projects. Hence, the importance of a project like this one [the Readiness to Learn project], where we have some data on which to base our decisions, visions and future actions, precisely so that we don't waste our energy on projects that don't produce the results we want." [Translation]

Some representatives said that there could be more specialized services in French, particularly with respect to health-related services. Access to these services is seen as fundamental, especially during the early years, when children are developing so quickly.

"Often our young children and even families are often faced with English-only services, which is just, and take for example, speech therapy, or physiotherapy, or occupational therapy, whatever, these are essential services for our children who are at risk, to become functional citizens, and who, if we offer them in French, at an early enough age (…). The importance of raising large financial and human resources for children at a young age, the importance of early childhood is crucial. It is necessary to have all of the services needed by children who are at risk must be at your fingertips and readily available." [Translation]

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[11] "Rêver mieux" in French, was taken from the album of singer Daniel Bélanger.

Beyond these dreams of better services shared by more than one community, representatives spoke of the specific needs of their community. For one of them, they wanted to put a family literacy centre in place, another indicated they needed transportation arrangements to facilitate access to various activities, whereas a third hoped for greater involvement of francophone parents. In many cases, the Readiness to Learn project provided a model for solving future problems.

10. What Should We Learn From This Adventure? Observations and Closing Remarks

What are the main findings of the assessment of the implementation of the program tested in the Readiness to Learn project? This two component program is based on early childhood and family literacy best practices. The program implementation study served a number of purposes. First, it provided a good understanding of how a program that was developed on paper is put into practice. Typically, assessment of the implementation is used to understand the barriers, facilitators and adjustments needed to make it easier for the community to take ownership of the program. It also serves as an important tool to better understand and qualify the effects of the program. Also, an increasing number of studies show that the level of implementation of an intervention is related to the observed effects on the participants (Charlebois, et al., 2004; Conduct Problem Prevention Research Group, 1999; Dane & Schneider, 1998; Durlak & DuPre, 2008). The program will not have the same effect if several components have not been implemented and if the quality of the implementation is mediocre. On this point, Durlak and DuPre (2008) concluded, based on data from five meta-analyses, that the effect size of an intervention was two to three times greater when the degree of implementation is taken into consideration during impact analyses.

Beyond the approach taken in the study, an overall picture of the Readiness to Learn project's implementation was formed from the triangulation of data from various sources. This triangulation was made possible by a three-level methodological design (Patton, 1990). This means that we took advantage of different measurement tools, both quantitative (e.g., fidelity and quality scales) and qualitative (e.g., interviews with participants). This approach, also known as a *mixed-method model*, has the advantage of documenting a program's impact in several ways, thus allowing for a more comprehensive program assessment (Patton, 2008). The methodology used also included input from various players, thereby offering different perspectives on the program implementation. Next, data were collected through various measurement instruments to assess the same phenomenon. This variety of data strengthens the validity and reliability of findings because of the complementarity of the data collected.

The following observations take into account the integrity of the program implementation, first in the daycare component and second in the family literacy component. The key findings on the benefits of the project to the community follow. The chapter ends with a reminder of the conditions needed to successfully implement such a program and the main strengths of the current study.

10.1. DAYCARE PROGRAM

The daycare program under evaluation is innovative in many respects. The results of the implementation analyses highlighted that the tested program contains a significant amount of new elements both in the structural environment and in the content. These elements were not necessarily observed in comparison group daycares. Seven dimensions were used to examine the integrity of the daycare program: 1) structural fidelity, that is to say, the relationship between the

applied intervention and the planned program; 2) fidelity and 3) quality of the program educational content, for example, elements that needed to be included in the activities and the quality of their implementation; 4) dosage, participants' exposure of the program; 5) differentiation between the implemented program and other interventions, i.e. the benefits of the new program in relation to what was already being done; 6) strategies that facilitate implementation; and 7) perceived benefits for participants, that is to say, benefits for the children. Although all of these dimensions had been looked at, the discussion mainly revolves around the dimensions included in the structural fidelity and fidelity and quality of the educational content in the project implementation, that is, the central elements of the study. We will also focus on the similarities and differences between the tested program and the programs offered in comparison group daycares.

The **structural fidelity** analyses revealed that the elements making up this dimension were implemented more than 80% of the time in program daycares compared to 36% in comparison group daycares, and their implementation was relatively stable over a two-year period. Note that the elements pertaining to structural fidelity were relatively easy to set up in program daycares. These were static elements that were put into place in the environment (such as cards showing a picture and a word, the presence of a routine chart, etc.).

In terms of **fidelity** and **quality of the educational content**, the implementation required educators to change some of their practices (e.g. read to children more often or use francization techniques). Overall, it involved changes that were more difficult to implement and apply systematically. In general, program group daycares managed to implement 80% of the daycare program components over a period of two years (compared to an average implementation of 57% in comparison group daycares). In particular, *reading* was encouraged more often (i.e. in more than one context) and the quality of *literacy activities* (e.g. use of interactive reading) was higher in program group daycares compared to comparison group daycares. Moreover, the material and its use in literacy activities were considered to be of good quality in program daycares compared to comparison group daycares, where the quality of literacy activities was found to be inadequate (as measured by the ÉÉEP-R). Findings of a study by Japel and her colleagues in 2005 situate the results of the Readiness to Learn project. The authors concluded that the level of quality ranged from minimal in non-subsidized daycares to good in subsidized daycares in Quebec.

These findings point to the difficulty daycares in a minority language situation have in accessing resources in French, both in terms of quantity and quality. Moreover, observations done within the scope of the Readiness to Learn project revealed that half of comparison group daycares have few books available for children. However, conditions were better in program group daycares, thanks to the hundreds of French books and resources sent to each of the participating daycares. In addition, parents said that they really appreciated having access to a resource centre to borrow French books. Recall that this centre was created with the family workshop resources. Several parents also said that they took advantage of workshops to exchange information on how to get quality French resources for their children. Furthermore, several community representatives mentioned that the books provided through the project have enriched their community.

Daycare observations also revealed that educators and children in the program group *communicated in French* both in formal and informal situations. We observed that program group educators received an excellent rating for communication in both formal and informal

situations. In comparison, a little less than half of educators in the comparison daycare group received an excellent score on these dimensions (as measured by the ÉÉEP-R). Thus, the program prompted educators to further encourage children to speak French, and give them a greater opportunity to reinforce and build their French vocabulary.

In general, activities encouraging children's *reasoning* were somewhat more difficult to implement (e.g. classification of shapes and sizes, logic sequences, time sequences, etc.). Less than half of the educators, both in the program group and in the comparison group, systematically exposed children to this type of activity during the first year. In the second year, when children were four or five years old, a somewhat larger proportion of classes in program daycares and comparison daycares did reasoning activities with children, as it if it were more natural to do them as children got older.

The same goes for exposing children to *pre-writing*. During the first year, a gradual increase was observed in the number of program group children participating in activities giving them the opportunity to write letters. This was the case for a minority of comparison group classes throughout the year. However, in the second year, all children in the program and comparison daycares were observed taking part in pre-writing activities. Thus, this signifies that the Readiness to Learn project program allowed children to be exposed to this type of activity at an earlier age. Note that this skill usually emerges around the age of two and translates into action around age three, when children become aware that they too can draw symbols on a page, symbols that will eventually become letters or grocery lists (Steffer & Critten, 2008).

Lastly, the quality of *educator-child interactions* is a determining factor in both the social and cognitive development of young children (Peisner-Feinberg, et al., 2001). Through the ongoing training, the program helped some educators become more sensitive to children and to better meet their needs. This work had an impact on the program group educators, where most were observed to show good to excellent sensitivity towards children compared to a relatively smaller number of educators in the comparison group. The significance of this dimension in the overall development of children highlights the need to provide ongoing training, support and continuous follow-up for educators.

Overall, two things marked the daycare program's success, that is, the basic and follow-up training of the educators and the material sent to the daycares. Without these two things, the implementation could not have had such high fidelity or such good quality.

10.2. FAMILY WORKSHOP PROGRAM

Six dimensions were used to assess the integrity of the family workshop program, including: 1) content fidelity, the proportion of the program covered during the workshops; 2) the quality of workshop delivery by practitioners; 3) dosage, parents' workshop attendance rate; 4) parents' reactions to the workshops; 5) facilitators and barriers encountered during the implementation of the program; and 6) benefits of the program for parents and educators. The results of the analyses for each of these dimensions are presented below.

The assessment of family workshop **fidelity** revealed that the program was well implemented. The material that needed to be presented was well covered in all of the communities, and this, despite the presence of many topics that needed to be addressed in a short

period of time. Several practitioners had a hard time keeping within the 55 minutes allotted to deliver the workshop. The workshop content could be shortened somewhat in the future, especially since parents were just as pleased with the time they were given to discuss together.

In terms of **quality**, observations of the family workshops revealed the importance of an adult education approach for the delivery of the workshop content, in a way suited to an adult audience. As revealed by observations, workshops were delivered well overall. Only three practitioners experienced repeated difficulties during the workshops (e.g. using a lecture style). Parents participating in these three workshop series likely did not benefit from the content to the same extent as parents participating in higher quality workshops.

Most of the topics covered in the workshops raised positive **reactions** from parents. The workshop on early literacy received the most positive reaction outright. After the family workshops, parents reported that they especially liked the workshops on parent-child communication and self-discipline. Note that this last topic was the least popular immediately following its delivery. The opportunity to talk with other parents was an aspect mentioned by the greatest number of parents. Parents also really liked the parent-child component of the workshops, indicating that they enjoyed having the time to do an activity with their child. Several suggested lengthening the period of time for the parent-child component.

Among the **facilitators** to participation, providing a meal to the families was the first winning factor. It gave them time to talk among themselves, share with the educator, and to spend time as a family. The parent-child component was the second winning factor for all. Children were very happy to show off their latest creations and parents could appreciate the activities their children had done during the day at the daycare.

One **barrier** to participation mentioned by a number of parents was the frequency of the workshops; many indicated that they found the schedule to be exhausting. Recall that these workshops were offered on a weekly basis. Also, many parents would have preferred the workshops to be spaced further apart so that they could benefit from them over a longer period of time. A review of the documentation shows that there is hardly any data to establish the optimal frequency in terms of number of workshops (Sénéchal & Young, 2008). All family literacy studies instead emphasize the importance of an ongoing process with parents, as well as the fact that parents benefit more from short sessions than long ones. This observation is consistent with parents' suggestion to offer the workshops over a longer period of time. There might be a way here of encouraging greater parent participation.

One of the principal **benefits** of the family workshops was the strengthened relationship between parents and educators. Having the educators at the workshops not only resulted in the workshops running more smoothly by allowing children to have an adult they loved and knew well with them, but it also allowed parents and educators to talk and get to know each other better. Furthermore, the educators' presence at the family workshops strengthened the complementarity of the two program components.

Lastly, the family workshops conveyed two important messages to parents. The first concerned parents' role as their child's first educator, that is, the importance of doing activities with their child which will prepare them for school (e.g. reading). The second message concerned the importance of exposing their child to French in order to counterbalance the primarily anglophone environment. While the first message applied to most parents, the second

did not affect all parents in the same way. Depending on the family, this was a rather significant awakening. Also, some endogamous families living in an environment where few people spoke English found the message interesting, but not very relevant to their situation. For other families, it was something quite new. Finally, some parents of exogamous families were shocked by the emphasis placed on French in the workshops. Therefore, it is important that the message be adapted to the clients participating in the workshops and that parents understand that additive bilingualism (being able to speak two languages or more well, and not one to the detriment of the other) is instead very valuable to their child.

10.3. THE READINESS TO LEARN PROJECT AND COMMUNITIES

The main benefit of the Readiness to Learn project for communities was that it highlighted the role early childhood services play in maintaining a vibrant francophone community. Community representatives confided that the project confirmed early childhood services were a credible and important partner in the francophone minority community. Moreover, the Readiness to Learn project gave several community players the opportunity to reiterate to what extent services in French for young children were not only a way to strengthen language acquisition among children, but also a way to maintain the entire family's involvement in the francophone community. As Gilbert (2003) aptly puts it, early childhood services in French are the gateway to French schooling, and, consequently, they ensure the survival and vitality of francophone communities in a minority setting.

Overall, the Readiness to Learn project had short-term impacts in the francophone communities by exposing a group of children to more French activities, both in a daycare setting and at home. The project also had medium-term impacts, because it made parents and early childhood practitioners aware of the importance of exposing children to French at an early age. Lastly, the project already seems to have some longer term impacts, because the communities involved were able to develop new partnerships and consider daycares as key players in building a rich and lively francophone community.

10.4. CLOSING REMARKS

The purpose of the Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities project is to understand how a program aimed at children in linguistic minority communities can help children master their language of schooling and thus have greater success at school. In order to obtain such results, the program requires contributions from a number of resources, certain materials, but more significantly, human resources. Indeed, such a program could not be implemented without parent participation. Parents need to attend the workshops in addition to being involved at home so that their children get the maximum benefit from environments where French is spoken and valued. The program's success also depends on the engagement of daycare workers who are involved in setting up the program in full (as intended) and of quality, otherwise the children may not benefit from its effects. Finally, the community is partly responsible for the program's success. The more key early childhood players are engaged in the program, the more likely the program is going to have a long-term impact on mobilizing the francophone community around the children who will ensure its future.

One limitation of this study is that the implementation was described using open observations. The use of systematic grids at the sites would have facilitated data collection and ensured its consistency. This shortcoming was offset by setting up several counter-validations of the results to ensure the validity and reliability of the observations. For example, the assessment of each element of fidelity and quality of the daycare program implementation was validated with the observers, confirmed by analyzing the notes of the early childhood consultant, and checked by means of photographs of the daycares when it was a matter of setting up items in the environment.

One of the main strengths of the implementation study is that it provides information for setting up similar programs through the survey of implementation facilitators, the barriers that must be overcome to ensure that the program runs smoothly, and the adjustment needed to facilitate the community's ownership of the program. Its second strength lies in the use of ratings for fidelity and quality of the two program components tested in the impact analysis. Specifically, observations of the implementation were translated into quantified scales, so that the fidelity and quality of the implementation could be introduced as mediators of the project's impact. A complementary report, entitled *Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities: First Cohort Findings Report* (Thompson, Legault, Lalonde & Bérubé, 2014), demonstrates the relationship between the Readiness to Learn project and its effects on children and their families.

In short, the Readiness to Learn project is a complex project and its success required the active participation of several players in each community as well as the cooperation of a large number of individuals. The information collected will be used to inform parents, service providers and communities about developing and providing services that help preserve the French language and francophone culture and that foster the development of young Francophones in minority communities. The project continues, asking a complementary research question, namely: *Will the Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities project allow francophone children growing up in a minority community to be better prepared to succeed in reading and mathematics, which are vital to academic success?* In this new phase, children will be followed from when they enter school until the beginning of grade 2, at which time they will be about 7 years old. The results of this new phase will be the subject of future reports.

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Appendix A: Readiness to Learn in Minority Francophone Communities Project Logic Model

Programme de la prématernelle fransaskoise [Franco-Saskatchewan pre-kindergarten program]						
Objectives	**Resource Inputs**	**Activity Outputs**	**Implementation Activities**	**Short-term Results (changes program makes in educators)**	**Medium-term Results (initial observable changes in children)**	**Long-term Results (observable changes in children after program)**
Improve the children's French language skills Increase the children's use of French	Early childhood consultant to develop a new daycare curriculum Trainer prepared to teach the new program to the daycare staff Daycares prepared to implement the new program Educators willing to implement the new program	Development of daycare curriculum and enriched activities Implementation of new daycare program Training and monitoring of educators and assistants Addition of French resources in daycares Establishment of resource centre	Adherence to program (fidelity) Frequency of participation (dosage) Quality of program implementation Differentiation (difference between program and status quo) Participation (response from program participants)	More automatic use of French with children and among staff members*+ Use of appropriate communication strategies with children*+	Increase in the number of children speaking French at the daycare*+ Children's enhanced French language skills (knowledge of the alphabet, phonological awareness, vocabulary)+/-	Decrease in the rate of children needing to learn French in kindergarten+
Ensure that the children are prepared to start school in French				Increase in the number of literacy and numeracy activities in daycare*+ Increase in the number of activities fostering creativity and independence in the children*+	Children have better numeracy skills+/- Higher percentage of children ready for school+/-	Children have better academic success+/-
Improve the partnership between parents and educators				Greater significance placed on parent/educator partnership by educators *	Greater partnership between parents and educators	Better school/parent partnership+
Strengthen the children's knowledge of Francophone culture Strengthen the children's sense of belonging to Francophone culture				Increase in the use of Francophone cultural elements (books, songs and nursery rhymes) *+	Reinforcement of the children's engagement and Francophone cultural identity*+	Children's ongoing engagement and sense of belonging to the Francophone culture*+

*pre-post comparison +measured against comparison groups—trajectories

Implementation Measures	Short-term outcome measurements (changes program makes in educators)	Medium-term outcome measurements (first observable changes in children)	Long-term outcome measurements (observable changes in children after program)
Adherence: Observations by the community coordinators and trainer Weekly programs *Frequency:* Children's attendance at the daycare *Quality:* Observations by the community coordinators and trainer *Differentiation:* Observations of comparison daycares Interview with trainer *Participation:* Observations by the community coordinators and trainer Interviews with educators *Program barriers and facilitators:* Observations by the CCs and trainer Interviews with educators	Monthly observations in program daycares Post-program interview with educators Weekly programs Use of resource centre (by educators and parents)	Daycare observations Measurement of the children's knowledge of the alphabet, their phonological awareness and expressive vocabulary Measurement of children's numeracy skills EYE-AD in French	Number of children going to a Francophone kindergarten class without first attending a class to learn French
		Measurement of school-readiness (EYE–AD) • Language skills • General knowledge of self and environment • Cognitive skills • Motor skills Measurement of children's prosocial behaviours (parent survey)	Performance on tests of academic success in French and mathematics
		Parent survey question on parent/educator partnership	Questions on family/school relationship (parent survey)
		Measurement of children's engagement and cultural identity (EYE–AD and parent survey)	Measurement of children's engagement and cultural identity (EYE–AD and parent survey)

Family Literacy Program						
Objectives	**Resource Inputs**	**Activity Outputs**	**Implementation of Activities**	**Short-term Outcomes (changes in parent beliefs and attitudes)**	**Medium-term Outcomes (changes in parent behaviours)**	**Long-term Outcomes (changes in children)**
Reinforce with parents the importance of providing a French environment for their child Provide Francophone families with a place where they can share and learn in French Encourage parents to do pre-literacy and pre-writing activities at home Make parents aware of their role as their child's first educator Give children an opportunity to reinforce what they learn at the daycare Enhance the partnership between parents and child care providers Give parents access to various resources in French (books, educational games and audiovisual materials) Introduce parents to various Francophone resources in their community Strengthen the parent's sense of belonging to the Francophone culture	Training program adapted to the reality of young parents in a minority language situation Program practitioners trained and prepared to give family workshops Appropriate materials to be distributed (handouts, brochures, etc.) Family kits Meeting room	Development of a family literacy program including ten two-hour workshops *1 – Learning in French, introduction to the project; children at age 18* *2 – Role of the child's first teacher; scaffolding; parenting styles; multiple intelligences* *3 – Early literacy; what children learn before being able to read and write; choosing a good book, shared reading* *4 – Learning: stimulating a children's senses; children learning at home* *5 – Children's quest for independence; self-discipline to develop self-esteem; the role emotions play in learning* *6 – Children's language, cultural and identity development* *7 – Communication* *8 – Children's needs; values to pass on to our children* *9 – The Francophone community: activities, resources and services* *10 – Celebration and assessment*	Adherence to program (fidelity) Frequency of participation (dosage) Quality of program implementation Participation (response from program participants)	Recognition by parents of the importance of exposing their children to French* Parents recognize more fully the importance of doing literacy and pre-writing activities with their children* Parents' recognition of their role as the child's first educator* Increased knowledge of the children's needs and development* Stronger partnership between parents and educators Parents gain awareness of Francophone community resources*+ Use of resources available at the resource centre+	Increase in the use of French at home*+ Increase in the literacy and pre-writing activities initiated by parents*+ Better relationship between parents and educators*+ Better knowledge of Francophone stories and songs*+ Increased use of Francophone services by parents*+ Reinforcement of the children's engagement and cultural identity*+	Improvement in the children's French language skills+/- Decrease in the percentage of children needing to learn French in kindergarten+ Improved language skills in children: knowledge of alphabet, phonological awareness, vocabulary Better numeracy skills+/- Children experience greater academic success+/- Reinforcement of the children's engagement and Francophone cultural identity*+ *pre-post comparison +measured against comparison groups — trajectories

Implementation Measurements	Measurement of Short-term Outcomes (changes in parent beliefs and attitudes)	Measurement of Medium-term Outcomes (changes in parent behaviours)	Measurements of Long-term Outcomes (changes in the children)
Adherence: Workshop observations *Frequency:* Attendance *Quality:* Workshop observations Parent survey *Differentiation:* Parent survey Interviews with program practitioners Interview with trainers *Participation:* Workshop observations Parent survey Interviews with program practitioners *+ Barriers and facilitators:* Workshop observations Parent survey Interviews with program practitioners	Comparison between the pre- and post-workshop survey findings for questions on: Children's language development	Comparison of pre- and post-program survey of parents (baseline survey): Language used when speaking to child (*family-school indicator*)	Number of children going to a Francophone kindergarten class without first attending a class to learn French Measurement of the children's knowledge of the alphabet, their phonological awareness and expressive vocabulary and their numeracy skills
	Parent's role as child's first educator Overall development of the child	Frequency of literacy activities initiated by parents	Measurement of school-readiness (EYE–AD) • Language skills • General knowledge of self and environment • Cognitive skills • Motor skills Measurement of children's prosocial behaviours (parent interview) Performance on tests of academic achievement in French and mathematics
	Partnership between parents and educator	Relationship between parents and educator	Parent survey question on parent/educator partnership
	Knowledge of community resources	Engagement and integration into the Francophone culture Number of French books and songs children exposed to by parents	Measurement of children's engagement and cultural identity (EYE–AD and parent survey)

Appendix B: Summary of Family Workshop Topics

No. 1 – It's Fun to Learn French!

- Introduction to the Readiness to Learn project
- Our children at 18

No. 2 – I Am My Child's First Educator

- Your role as your child's first educator
- Scaffolding
- Parenting styles
- Different forms of intelligence

No. – Early Literacy

- What children learn before they read and write
- Choosing a good book
- Shared reading

No. 4 – Learning: Stimulating Children's Senses

- Stimulating children's senses
- Overall development
- How to stimulate your child's learning at home

No. 5 – My Child's Quest for Independence

- Self-discipline leads to self-esteem
- The role of emotions in learning and life success
- Strategies to help children develop self-discipline, such as naming emotions

6 – My Child's Language, Cultural and Identity Development

- The importance of songs, stories and nursery rhymes
- Additive bilingualism
- Varieties of French
- How to stimulate language at home

No. 7 – Communication

- Facilitating communication
- Verbal and non-verbal communication
- The role of physical position and attitude in communication

No. 8 – Family Well-being

- Family changes
- Children's needs (according to Maslow)
- Values worth passing on

No. 9 – Living in a Francophone Community

- Activities, resources and services in the Francophone community
- Knowledge of La Francophonie
- Differences between the French-language school and immersion

No. 10 – Celebrations

- Review of what was learned in the family workshops
- Traditions
- Celebrations are an integral part of the family

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