

# **IS CALIFORNIA READY FOR ADS ABOUT SCHOOL READINESS?**

## **A REPORT ON AD TESTING FINDINGS**

*CONDUCTED FOR*



PETER D. HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, INC.

APRIL 2003

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## OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

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On behalf of First Five California, Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., conducted four focus group sessions using interactive dial technology from March 4 through 6, 2003, to test six advertisements among diverse target audiences, assessing their reactions to the variety of executions and evaluating their responses to other core elements of the communication strategy.

The purpose of the ad testing was to assess and provide critical feedback for both the overall communication strategy and the specific advertising executions of that strategy. The four sessions used interactive dial technology, which allows participants to give “moment-to-moment” ratings of specific ads. These continuous rankings provide data that can be analyzed by key demographic characteristics, such as racial background, gender, and parental status, thereby providing a very useful research methodology, particularly when testing visual stimuli such as advertising, because the sessions allow for both qualitative and quantitative feedback.

Throughout all three phases of the project, the research included broad cross sections of the California residential population and has been sensitive to racial, cultural, and language differences among the diverse target groups in the state. The focus group and survey stages of the research were conducted in both English and Spanish. The research discussed herein also included ad sessions conducted in English and Spanish (with Spanish-language ads).

In all, the four dial sessions comprised 118 participants, including 61 men, 57 women, 42 whites, 30 African Americans, 38 Hispanics (30 of whom were Spanish-speaking Hispanics), 5 Asian Americans, and 78 total parents (49 parents of children age zero to five, 58 parents of children age six to 12, and 35 parents of teenagers age 13 to 18).

The following table summarizes the general composition of the ad testing sessions.

<b>AD TESTING SESSIONS</b>		
<b><u>DIAL SESSIONS</u></b>	<b><u>LOCATION AND DATE</u></b>	
Non-college-educated cross section, Age 18-39	South San Francisco	3/4/03
College-educated cross section, Age 40-65	Encino	3/5/03
African Americans	Los Angeles	3/6/03
Spanish-speaking Hispanics	Los Angeles	3/6/03

A summary of the various ratings used in this report are explained in the following table.

<b>AD RATINGS</b>	
Moment-to-moment mean	Dial-session participants dial continuously while viewing each ad to indicate their interest in and reaction to each ad. The mean score (on a 100-point scale) is an indication of how appealing the ad is overall by averaging the moment-to-moment scores from the four dial sessions.
Time to involvement ( <i>in seconds</i> )	In the continuous dialing, participants begin at 50, a neutral score on a 100-point scale. The "time to involvement" is the amount of time it takes for participants to dial to 60. The shorter the amount of time it takes for them to dial to this level, the quicker the ad captures their attention.
Interesting, gets my attention	After each ad, participants score (using a scale from zero to 10) how much they agree with the statement "This ad is interesting and gets my attention." A "0" means that they totally disagree and "10" means that they totally agree with the statement. This score combines the results of the four dial groups.
Thought-provoking, makes me think about the point of the ad	Participants also score (using a scale from zero to 10) how much they agree with the statement "This ad does a good job of getting me to think about the point it is making." A "0" means that they totally disagree and "10" means that they totally agree with the statement. This score combines the results of the four dial groups.
Meant to communicate with me	Finally, participants assess whether the ad was meant to communicate with "people like me" or with "a different audience." This score combines the results of the four dial groups.

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## REPORT FINDINGS

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In early March 2003, Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted four panel sessions using interactive dial technology to test and assess the overall communications strategy being developed for First Five California. These sessions tested six ads with various and diverse target audiences and evaluated their responses to the core messages of these communications, including the “tag” or theme lines.

The aim of this third and final phase of the research is to provide First Five California with critical feedback in the days leading up to the launch of its communications campaign aiming to increase awareness about the benefits of children attending preschool. The research findings presented in this report are designed to inform this communications strategy as specific materials are being revised and released.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

After seeing the six ad executions, most participants clearly feel that the ads are both informative and useful. Many think that the purpose of the ads is to make parents and others realize the importance of sending children to preschool, with the ultimate intent of boosting the number of children enrolled in some form of early education. Many, however, including some of those who believe that the ads are meant to increase enrollment in preschool, also view the ads as preparation for a larger policy advocacy effort. They are not certain about the exact goals of such a campaign, but feel that it is just a matter of time after these ads start running before they will be asked to support or oppose some sort of education policy initiative. A small minority of dial group participants raise the possibility that these ads are the beginning of a media campaign organized by a consortium of preschools aiming to increase their profits.

Nonetheless, the ads’ messages are clear. Through a variety of mechanisms—from presenting scientific evidence about brain development to humorously suggesting allowing one child to attend preschool while keeping his brother home—the ads are effective in conveying to Californians that early education can have a real influence on the lives of the state’s young people. At the conclusion of each dial session, the data show that the proportion of each group that believes that it is important for most children to attend a preschool or pre-kindergarten program increased consistently in all four groups. Before viewing the ads, 59% of dial group

participants said that they strongly agree that it is important for children to attend preschool before entering kindergarten. After watching the ads, 69% say that they strongly agree with this position, a quarter (25%) somewhat agree, 4% are neutral, and only 3% disagree. The most significant changes in attitudes on this measure occur among women (60% to 72% strongly agree), African Americans (57% to 77%), Hispanics (61% to 76%)—especially Spanish-speaking Hispanics (60% to 83%), and those with household incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000 (58% to 79%).

In fact, some reveal that they were not seriously considering enrolling their young children in preschool, or were considering enrolling them at age four, but now after seeing the ads they are rethinking their position. Participants say that other positive benefits of the ads include informing parents who are unaware of the ways their children can benefit from attending preschool or pre-kindergarten, and the ads, some believe, might help to make preschool and pre-kindergarten a formal part of the public school system throughout the state. Indeed, more viewers think, after watching the series of spots, that the public schools should offer preschool in much the same way that they provide kindergarten—making it available to everyone on a voluntary basis. Although at the outset of the dial groups, many panelists supported providing government-funded preschool to all children in the state on a voluntary basis, regardless of family income, the ads are persuasive enough that by the end of the groups almost seven in 10 viewers (69%) hold this view, up from slightly more than three in five (63%) when the groups began. Some of the largest movement occurs among men (62% to 71%), Hispanics (66% to 82%), those with incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000 (61% to 77%), and parents (60% to 68%).

Panelists generally understand the ads' themes, intuitively grasping the importance and understanding the advantages of starting children early, and, based on the results of the two previous research phases, we often witness the ads reinforcing previously held beliefs about how much very young children truly are capable of learning. The only ad that even modestly presents a challenge to viewer comprehension is "Three," and this primarily is due to viewer impatience and a need to grasp the ad's purpose immediately. At first viewers are unsure why residents are being interviewed on the street and what the numbers they are suggesting mean. By the middle of the 55-second spot, however, most begin to understand the technique being employed, and start to realize the ad's intent.

Importantly, three-quarters of viewers consider each ad to be meant for people like themselves, along with others. Interestingly, this sentiment is shared not only by participants with children, but also by non-parents, who are almost equally as likely to believe that the ads are meant to communicate with people like them. The glaring exception to this finding is the “New Paradigm” ad among African Americans, who, despite understanding the message, say that showing a white woman applying sunblock to protect her skin suggests that the ad is not really meant for them. Indeed, African Americans are outspoken about the absence of black faces in most of the ads.

As we found in the focus group discussions and the statewide survey, women are much more likely to be engaged by this issue than are men. The dial results show that women react more favorably to these advertisements, becoming interested in the ads more quickly and agreeing in greater numbers that the ads do a good job of getting them to think about its point. The time-to-involvement tabulations also show women becoming engaged with the ads more quickly than men on average. Spanish-speaking Hispanics react much more favorably to the range of spots than do other Californians, also displaying a greater proclivity to become interested in and focus their attention on the ads, as well as a faster average time-to-involvement with each spot. The one ad that is unable to capture either Spanish-speaking Hispanics’ attention or comprehension is “Twins.” We believe that they interpret the ad at face value and that the tongue-in-cheek sarcasm of the spot is lost on this group of participants.

In spite of the fact that all six ads generally convey the same message and that viewers usually are able to easily comprehend the messages, the data show that three ads are received much more favorably than are the others. The three ads that emerge as participants’ favorites immediately grab viewers’ interest and attention according to a moment-to-moment analysis of their dial movements, and do the best job of getting them to think about the point the ads are making about children and early education.

## **REACTION TO THE ADS**

Overall, the six ads in both their English and Spanish executions generally are appealing, accessible, and effective at conveying their intended messages. The generally favorable and strong feedback the ads receive bodes extremely well for the campaign as a whole, both in the tone it strikes in its basic approach as well as in the direction it takes in educating the public

about this important issue. In the discussions that follow the ad presentations, participants' comments suggest that their impressions are that the overall effect of the ads is to inform, educate, and move people to action. As these findings demonstrate, nearly all the ads score solidly on a variety of measures, however, some messages and approaches are somewhat more powerful and effective than are others.

We have used both the quantitative and qualitative feedback received from those who viewed all the ads to help refine and inform the critical decisions First Five California will make regarding this communications efforts. The particular strengths and weaknesses of each ad are described in the following pages.

## INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADS

### "What If?"

<b>AD RATINGS: "WHAT IF?"</b>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Hispanics</b>
Moment-to-moment (mean)	63.69	59.07	64.27
Time to involvement (in seconds)	10	18	10
Interesting, gets my attention (mean)	8.24	8.03	8.45
Thought-provoking, makes me think about the point of the ad (mean)	8.56	8.70	8.79
Meant to communicate with me	82.2%	76.7%	84.2%

Viewers' reactions to "What If?" are glowing in both verbal and written form. This is a solid ad that scores strong ratings on all measures of participant assessment—they say that it is interesting, attention-grabbing, thought-provoking, and believe that it is meant for Californians like them. The consensus is that the ad is straightforward, simple, and direct. Participants like that the ad's point is obvious and easy to discern, rather than being somewhat more subtle as in some of the other ads. Viewers not only get the message, but they also feel positive about the ad providing an authoritative source, even in passing, confirming what they intuitively know to be true, that, as one participant from South San Francisco observes, "children start learning from

‘day one’ so why not start education a lot earlier?’ The studies cited in the spot go a long way toward helping underscore the ad’s main point.

The ad’s inclusion of children is very appealing to many viewers. Their comments suggest that they think it helps underscore the primary message of the spot. Moreover, the diversity of races and ethnicities among the children chosen for this ad helps panelists of all backgrounds identify and engage with the ad—African-American, Hispanic, and white parents are able to see their own children among those shown. Some say that the children in the ad remind them of their own kids. This clearly is a factor in panelists’ receptivity to this spot.

The link that the ad’s message makes to future success is stated clearly and entirely credible to participants. Turning the message into a question makes viewers think about the answer even after the ad is over. The notion that preschool can put children on the right path toward college resonates with participants because this is a goal that most have for their own children or for other young people whom they care about. The ad does such a good job of making its point and getting viewers to buy into its premise, that some, without prompting, disclose their earnest hope for a change in California whereby the public school system would make it possible for all children to start school before age five.

The differences among the various groups generally are matters of degree. “What If?” is deemed the most thought-provoking ad in every demographic group, with only slight differences regarding the strength of this sentiment. This ad garners the highest moment-to-moment averages of all six ads among men, parents, whites, and Hispanics, and has the second-highest moment-to-moment average among women. Although it is only the fourth highest-ranking ad among African Americans on this measure, blacks believe that “What If?” is the ad most meant to communicate with people like them, as do men, whites, and viewers with children at home. Among women it comes in second on this measure. Among Hispanics, 83% say that they think “What If?” is meant to communicate with people like them, although it is only the fourth highest-rated ad in this regard among this audience. The findings on this question are a bit misleading relating to the Spanish-speaking Hispanic population because almost all the ads tested receive very high ratings, likely due to the fact that all the ads are in Spanish, leading them justifiably to draw the conclusion that such ads are meant for Spanish-speaking Hispanic residents like themselves.

*I liked it a lot because it says that studies have proven that children who go to preschool will have a better future.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

*More to the point. An ad worth referring to friends with second thoughts about preschool.*

— South San Francisco participant

*I missed some of the early messages, but I sure got the final question! Why should children have to wait until they're five to be educated? Good point – I relate!*

— Encino participant

*The thing I liked most is that it shows children from different ethnic backgrounds.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

*This ad spoke about the children. Opening with shots of children was very good, it drew more attention to the children's plight.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*The cute, happy faces grabbed my attention. Seeing the kids engaged and smiling makes a convincing argument for the benefit of preschool.*

— Encino participant

*The ad showed children (preschool) of all nationalities, all with a single need.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*I really liked this ad. The narrative was done well and insightful, and the video of the kids was perfect.*

— South San Francisco participant

*The asking of the question at the end brings the ad more into focus.*

— Encino participant

*We should pass laws to start education at an early age, maybe two or three years old.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

## “Growing Down”

<b>AD RATINGS: “GROWING DOWN”</b>			
	<u>Overall</u>	<u>African Americans</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
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Moment-to-moment (mean)	62.20	61.82	59.15
Time to involvement (in seconds)	12	14	16
Interesting, gets my attention (mean)	7.93	7.83	8.18
Thought-provoking, makes me think about the point of the ad (mean)	8.20	8.27	8.21
Meant to communicate with me	78.8%	60.0%	89.5%

The charm and effectiveness of “Growing Down” lies not only in that it does a good job verbalizing its point through a well-written script, but also that it further underscores the theme by visually demonstrating the foundation that preschool and pre-kindergarten provide. The primary message for participants is that preschool and pre-kindergarten will improve student performance in the later grades, helping children prepare for and mature into a position in which they will be able to attend college and lead a successful, productive life. A number of viewers say that this ad suggests that preschool is the “foundation” for future academic growth and is the first step in the building process toward becoming a well-educated adult. Although the message is clear, some also believe that the ad is meant to influence residents to support preschool and pre-k in some unknown form.

As with all the ads containing children, participants consider the use of children to articulate the message as a powerful tool and one that they like. Some, however, would prefer a version that includes girls as well as boys, and others, particularly African Americans, would like to see a more diverse community portrayed. Even though some participants have a bit of difficulty understanding the verbal articulation of the final preschool-age child shown in the ad, most react quite positively, approving of its fast pace and clever execution, with some even making positive comments about the ad’s choice of musical accompaniment.

Overall, the moment-to-moment mean score for “Growing Down” is the second-highest recorded among all six ads, and it is first among women (64.14) and African Americans (61.82).

Among Spanish-speaking Hispanics (58.76), this ad's moment-to-moment score ranks third, and it comes in second among parents (63.46). Further, the ad achieves one of the quickest time-to-engagement scores among almost every demographic group. The ad clearly is thought-provoking given its greater than 8.0 mean score among every demographic group except men (7.95) on this measure. The one participant suggestion that could strengthen this ad in their estimation is to include authoritative documentation for the claims in the ad, such as mentioning the findings of a study on early education's effect on the lives and academic success of young people.

*The music was up-tempo and caught my attention. The ad moved quick and didn't lag! Good job.*

— South San Francisco participant

*When children speak, adults listen, in that way this ad is charming and effective.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*This ad is trying to communicate that children who attend preschool will have a solid academic foundation, which will carry them through to college.*

— Encino participant

*This ad is saying that the state of California should offer a better education at every level so they can be better-prepared for life.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

*The natural progression is a good message. It gets to the heart of the matter.*

— South San Francisco participant

*This ad was great. It made you see as well as hear how the chain works.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*The earlier kids start "school," the better they do in life. Pre-k programs should be available to all kids.*

— Encino participant

*That children who go to preschool have a better future, will be more prepared for their school years.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

*Focuses on the importance of getting off to a great start through preschool. Ad was great! Start building a foundation early!*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*Success in life depends on good education. Education from preschool through college is a continuum; each stage builds on the foundation of the previous one. No stage should be ignored or left out.*

— Encino participant

*I wish this ad were a reality.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

## “Twins”

<b>AD RATINGS: “TWINS”</b>			
	<b><u>Overall</u></b>	<b><u>African Americans</u></b>	<b><u>Hispanics</u></b>
Moment-to-moment (mean)	58.50	60.42	53.25
Time to involvement (in seconds)	18	15	28
Interesting, gets my attention (mean)	7.65	8.10	6.95
Thought-provoking, makes me think about the point of the ad (mean)	8.01	8.60	7.32
Meant to communicate with me	71.2%	66.7%	71.1%

Many participants view “Twins” as a metaphor for the statewide reality of some children being able to attend preschool and get a head start on the rest of their lives, while others are left behind, unable to secure the same advantages. A number of participants do not “get it,” however. They interpret the ad much more literally, causing them to voice a negative impression of the ad overall. Those who take the ad too literally express shock and anger: “How could the state do that? If one is going to school, both should go,” “It’s shocking. Just the idea to use children as laboratory animals is gross. I don’t like the idea of suggesting to experiment with kids.”

The majority of viewers, those who understand the ad’s use of sarcasm, say that its humor helps to grab and hold their attention, and in the end find it quite entertaining. They also tend to interpret “Twins” as a societal statement about the importance of making preschool and pre-kindergarten available to all children. Even given the subset of viewers who do not fully understand the point, “Twins” rates fairly strong as a thought-provoking ad and does fairly well in the moment-to-moment analysis. Indeed, both African-American (8.60) and white (8.19) viewers give this spot high ratings when they assess how well the ad gets them to think about its point, and it is the highest-rated spot among African Americans (8.10) and the second-highest among whites (7.90) in terms of being interesting and getting their attention.

On average, it takes viewers just past the midway point in the 30-second spot to become engaged (time to engagement), but for whites and African Americans, it takes just 15 seconds to reach a moment-to-moment average of 60. “Twins” ranks last overall among all the ads tested on the scale measuring whether participants consider themselves to be part of the target audience for the spot, although the ad is second on this measure among African Americans and tied for fourth among whites. Importantly, women are among the least likely to believe that the ad is aimed at people like them.

*The facetiousness of the situation—separating twins’ education—is a strong visual and mental image. The child with preschool would benefit. Why shouldn’t all children receive preschool?*

— Encino participant

*I really like this ad. If this doesn’t get anyone’s attention, nothing will. This ad shows the importance of equal education for all.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*If people believe that preschool education is a valuable aid to future educational success, why don’t we make it available to all children?*

— Encino participant

*I like this ad. It makes you think about the head start the kid that goes to preschool would get.*

— South San Francisco participant

*This ad was funny, but it didn’t really get the point across to me, as did some of the others.*

— Encino participant

*I think the point was all kids should go to preschool. To not give all children the opportunity is like separating twins.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*This ad shows what a clear disparity it would be to educate one kid over another in preschool. Ad is very effective, humorous, and makes the point very clear about importance of early education for all kids.*

— Encino participant

## **Spanish-language Hispanics**

Among all the participants in the dial groups, the Spanish-speaking Hispanics have the greatest objections to and the least level of understanding of the ad’s use of sarcasm to make its point. The humor is almost completely lost on them. Interestingly though, the mistaken interpretations of some in the Hispanic group still produce the desired effect. Their indignation about sending

one twin to preschool while the other one stays home leads them to the sentiment that it is not fair and that all children should have the opportunity to attend preschool. “It catches my attention because all children should go to school,” and “They can’t decide who goes and doesn’t go to school. All children need to go,” say two viewers in the Spanish-language Hispanic group.

Because only a few Spanish-speaking Hispanic participants understand the intended humor of this spot, they never fully engage with the ad, which is underscored by the full 30 seconds it takes to reach an average group dial rating of 60. Among this audience, “Twins” is the lowest-rated ad on every measure of quantitative analysis—moment-to-moment (51.92), thought-provoking (6.97), interesting, gets my attention (6.47), and meant to communicate with me (70%)—out of all six ads.

*This is the wrong message. You can't do that with your children.*

— Los Angeles, Spanish-speaking Hispanic participant

*I didn't understand it too much. A bit confusing to me.*

— Los Angeles, Spanish-speaking Hispanic participant

*This message is a bit weird and the message was to try to separate the twins to see which one would do better in their studies, the one who goes to preschool or the one who doesn't.*

— Los Angeles, Spanish-speaking Hispanic participant

*Is not right, both children should have the same education.*

— Los Angeles, Spanish-speaking Hispanic participant

*Education should be the same for all children without discriminating, and all children should start at an early age.*

— Los Angeles, Spanish-speaking Hispanic participant

*I didn't like this ad, sounds too cruel, is not informative.*

— Los Angeles, Spanish-speaking Hispanic participant

**“Why?”**

<b>AD RATINGS: “WHY?”</b>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Hispanics</b>
Moment-to-moment (mean)	57.34	60.11	55.36
Time to involvement (in seconds)	23	16	27
Interesting, gets my attention (mean)	7.25	7.37	7.79
Thought-provoking, makes me think about the point of the ad (mean)	7.74	7.50	8.11
Meant to communicate with me	74.6%	56.7%	86.8%

One of the most appealing aspects of “Why?” is that it strikes most viewers as a realistic interaction between mother and child. Participants believe that it recreates a scene that has likely taken place in almost every home with young children. Although the message of this ad—that there is no sound reason why children should have to wait until age five before beginning school—does not convey as easily as other ads’ messages, it may have the unintended benefit of making some viewers realize that children want to begin school much earlier than their parents realize, and often earlier than they are allowed to enroll. Many say that if children are smart enough to ask to go to school, then they are smart enough to be enrolled. Others report that the ad forces them to question why universal access to school does not begin until age five.

Many participants find the mother in “Why?” unappealing because they feel that she does a poor job of responding to her child’s queries, creating a somewhat negative image of mothers in general. They feel that she should have and should provide better answers for her inquisitive little girl. Also, the setting of the spot—in a fairly upscale single-family home—suggests to participants that the financial expense is not the reason why the daughter has not been placed in preschool. Many wonder why a parent who clearly can afford the cost of sending her child to preschool has not already done so.

This ad generates one of the lower moment-to-moment ratings, and takes more than two-thirds of the ad’s duration to significantly engage viewers. Even though participants may not always draw the correct conclusion about the intended message, the ad does very well at making

viewers think about the point it is trying to make. Three-quarters of participants say that the ad is meant to communicate with people like them.

*I think a human brain can start to learn at a very early age.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

*Showing in a real-life situation about the issue of children starting education earlier, using the little girl as a great tool for the message.*

— South San Francisco participant

*I like this one. It's really lifelike and children are more eager to learn and asking more questions nowadays.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*This commercial was awful. Whiny kid, mom is displayed as dumb and uncaring, it was truly awful and condescending to moms. Yes, it says young kids should be in school, but this ad is a turn-off.*

— Encino participant

*Message was that kids are smarter than we may think and given the chance they can excel.*

— South San Francisco participant

*The message of the ad is well taken. Why should a child have to wait to age five to secure their first educational environment out of the home? It asks the question and supports pre-kindergarten education.*

— Encino participant

*A truly excellent ad, kept my attention due to the little girl's questions, which made me ask the same questions she was asking.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*I think the answer the woman gave the girl should have been more clear.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

*Although this ad was about a child who wants to go to school, I don't think it sold me on its main points, preschool education's importance.*

— South San Francisco participant

**“New Paradigm”**

<b>AD RATINGS: “NEW PARADIGM”</b>			
	<u>Overall</u>	<u>African Americans</u>	<u>Hispanics</u>
Moment-to-moment (mean)	57.71	58.65	54.12
Time to involvement (in seconds)	22	22	25
Interesting, gets my attention (mean)	6.89	5.97	7.18
Thought-provoking, makes me think about the point of the ad (mean)	7.02	5.97	7.84
Meant to communicate with me	73.7%	60.0%	86.8%

The fairly sophisticated argument that “New Paradigm” presents is most easily grasped by the college-educated viewers in the four dial group sessions, who are best able to articulate the analogies the ad draws. Those who understand the analogies more quickly and easily embrace their messages; those who do not have a difficult time connecting with this ad. During the discussions about the spot, many viewers think that the ad makes an excellent point about the evolution of human knowledge and how important it is to incorporate these new learnings into our societal culture. A number of participants, however, including some of those who understand the analogies, feel that many of the comparisons the ad makes are extraneous to the underlying educational mission of the spot.

A majority of participants find the ad visually stimulating, but others are distracted by the multiple images. The Spanish-language version of the ad creates a good amount of confusion for Hispanic participants about the connection between tobacco and cigarette smoke and early education, and the English version raises some questions about the relationship between sunbathing and preschool. In fact, many viewers erroneously conclude that these images and analogies really are the ad’s underlying point. One Spanish-speaking participant writes, “The main message is about the damage cigarettes do to our children’s education,” and a participant in South San Francisco writes, “I don’t know what those seniors applying lotion have to do with this... It doesn’t get to the point.” For viewers with short attention spans, this ad may touch on more topics than they can easily comprehend in one sitting, sometimes causing the spot’s true theme to be lost.

Overall, the images are visually pleasing and once viewers take the time to reflect on the ad they usually are able to understand the point. Nonetheless, “New Paradigm” takes quite a bit of its allotted 30 seconds to engage viewers, and many of the African Americans tune out once the image of the woman applying sunblock appears, feeling less personally engaged in the ad and its message because they assume that this is an ad meant for someone else. Overall, this ad ranks near the bottom in terms of the “interesting, grabs my attention” measure, and according to participants, it does not do the best job of making viewers stop and think about the importance of early education for young children.

*I think this ad shows us how, just because we believed things were the way they were in the “old days,” they are not always true—just like the old tobacco ads.*

— South San Francisco participant

*This ad was interesting as far as the visuals, it took a while to get to the point.*

— South San Francisco participant

*As we have learned, our attitudes have changed, so why has it not changed regarding early childhood education?*

— Encino participant

*The ad got the point across, but it took a while and at first it didn’t tell us what it was saying.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*It invoked thoughts of things that we “took for granted,” i.e., without thought, and asked that since we have become wiser in acknowledging truths on those subjects, why not acknowledge our thinking about preschool could be wrong.*

— Encino participant

*Ad #3 is very important since it is showing two points of view. The first one is how damaging it is to smoke near the children and the other one is that classes should be offered to those under five years of age.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

*I’m not sure if the connection between suntan lotion and preschool adequately expresses the message. The message was lost.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*We change opinions/behavior when we learn new information. We should change our approach to preschool education because of the studies which show its effectiveness.*

— Encino participant

*We have done so much to change how we live, why not also change the education and where it starts?*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

*You lost me from the beginning. The ad flipped around to too many subjects. I already went to the kitchen.*

— South San Francisco participant

*Evolution, map, old people sunbathing to mother wiping sunscreen on child to kid and blocks. Idea was not clearly and precisely presented.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

## “Three”

<b>AD RATINGS: “THREE”</b>			
	<b><u>Overall</u></b>	<b><u>African Americans</u></b>	<b><u>Hispanics</u></b>
Moment-to-moment (mean)	53.48	47.61	59.67
Time to involvement (in seconds)	35	33	33
Interesting, gets my attention (mean)	6.12	5.30	7.47
Thought-provoking, makes me think about the point of the ad (mean)	6.64	6.00	7.87
Meant to communicate with me	73.7%	66.7%	76.3%

The lengthiest spot tested, “Three” is understood by virtually everyone who views it. The main drawback to this ad, according to participants, is that it takes too long to make its point, and viewers lose interest before the theme and message become apparent. Some panelists react negatively to the advertisement’s man-on-the-street format, saying that it reminds them of a campaign ad typically run during election season. Others say that the point of the ad—that children should start school earlier than they do now—is so important that the more relevant opinions are those of teachers, doctors, or other “experts” in the field of child development. Showing everyday people giving their opinions on such a weighty topic leaves some asking, “Why should we listen to these people?” This sentiment is particularly true regarding the comments of the older residents in the ads, because some panelists feel that members of this audience are too far removed from having young children to have a pertinent view on this matter. Last, since the main point of the spot is intended to be about children, a number of viewers think the ad would be better, both as a stylistic point and as a way to make the ad more memorable, if it included images of young children.

*Ad was trying to state that 'three' is the age that children should start schooling, and it makes them better, more successful when they mature.*

— South San Francisco participant

*That younger non-school age children will do better later in life if they attend preschool. I agree it worked for my sons.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*Since the point of the early interviews is not clear until the ad proceeds into dialogue section, I might have lost interest in the beginning.*

— Encino participant

*I didn't like this commercial because it seems to be boring. It took a while to get to the point.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

*Ad was boring, and who are those people that we should value their opinion? Are they educators? This was boring like a political ad. I would turn off the TV.*

— Encino participant

*At the beginning it was confusing. I did not [know] what they were talking about. They did not show any kids on ad. Persons giving opinions were a little older to have preschoolers.*

— South San Francisco participant

*Not anything to me. I'm trying to change the channel. No black people.*

— Los Angeles, African-American participant

*There were children missing from this ad.*

— Los Angeles, Hispanic participant

## **TAGLINES**

Often, the last few images or words in an advertisement can be the most memorable part of a spot because they sum up the primary message or leave viewers with a thought to ponder or an action to take. The six ads tested in these four dial groups end with one of three phrases:

*Join the conversation at First 5.org. And remember, your choices shape their chances.*

*Something to think about, from First 5 California.*

*Learning starts day one—why should education wait five years?*

Near the end of the groups, we asked participants to talk about these taglines to assess which they feel are the most memorable and effective at engaging viewers in the issue. A strong

majority in every group indicate that the tagline “Learning starts day one—why should education wait five years?” is the one that works best. The advantage of this tagline over the other two, according to participants, is that it sums up the entire theme of all the ads in a succinct and straightforward phrase. If viewers are uncertain about the message of any of the ads, as we witnessed to varying degrees with “Twins,” “New Paradigm,” and “Three,” this tagline gives them a final opportunity to grasp the spot’s theme. The other advantage panelists’ see in this tagline is that it is not necessarily suggesting that education should take place in a formal setting such as preschool or pre-kindergarten, but it includes reading to children at home as well as other activities that parents and children can engage in together to further learning.

The tagline, “Join the conversation at First 5.org. And remember, your choices shape their chances,” emerges as a distant second choice. Many participants raise the possibility that a good number of residents do not have Internet access, and thus providing a Web site address would not be useful. Although most think that providing an 800-number is a better alternative or a useful complement to the Web site address, this option still is not viewed as a better choice than the tagline with the embedded message. Many participants indicate a willingness to call if an 800-number were provided or to visit the FirstFive.org Web site.

Although many say that they would call or visit the site initially out of curiosity over who is behind the ads and what their agenda might be, they also say that if they did follow up via these modes they would most likely be searching for very specific information. Most say that they would hope and expect to find information they could use to locate good preschools for their children—hopefully ones that are affordable or even free, pamphlets about the benefits of early education, or information about the studies referenced in some of the ads.

The third tagline, “Something to think about, from First 5 California,” is the least favorite in every group. Participants consider it to be too nondescript and it does nothing to further the message of the ads or to engage viewers on the topic of early education.