



Executive Director Report – December 14, 2023

This report provides programmatic and administrative updates about key activities First 5 California (F5CA) staff have engaged in since the October 19, 2023, Commission Meeting. Program updates include relevant highlights, rather than a summary of all staff work, and are framed by the [Strategic Priority Areas](#) and [Theory of Change System Levers](#).

Please note: Items that will be presented as Action or Information Items during the December 14, 2023, Commission Meeting will not be included in the report below.

1. **Child Health, Education, and Care Summit: Stronger Starts – 25 Years of First 5** **Priority Area:** Child Development, Child Health, Family Support **System Lever:** Convener

The Summit is March 25–27, 2024, and will be held at the Oakland Marriott City Center. The Call for Presentations has closed, and staff have notified presenters. Registration is expected to open in December. For more information, please visit the Summit webpage at [First 5 California Summit](#).

2. **Data and Research** **Priority Area:** Child Development, Child Health, Family Support **System Lever:** Catalyst

In partnership with the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), the following deliverables are underway.

- a. CHIS and F5CA are examining questions to fund that are aligned with F5CA strategic priority areas, pillars, and up and coming indicators.
- b. CHIS and F5CA are collaborating with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to provide data for the *Kit for New Parents* evaluation, as part of evaluation efforts.

3. **Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library Partnership** **Priority Area:** Child Development, Child Health, Family Support **System Lever:** Convener/Connector

We have been working with the California State Librarian and have been focused recruiting for the Imagination Library of California Stronger Readers team. The non-profit board that was created through the \$80 Million investment for the expansion of 3. Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is chaired by Executive Director Wong and includes

statewide leaders such as former First 5 Los Angeles Executive Director Kim Belshe, Laura Fink of Rebelle Communications, and Former Lieutenant Governor Mona Pasqual. The board will be finalizing the Executive Director in the coming weeks and a description of the four Community Engagement Roles with the goal of starting early in the New Year. This will allow staff to better leverage F5CA's PEARLS investment.

The program is now serving over 54,000 children and 11% of those receiving the English/Spanish Bilingual collection. The program has deepened engagement with locals and launched Kern (September) and Mendocino (October). The program is planning to have 2–3 more expansion counties starting in the coming months.

4. Early Math Project

Priority Area: Child Development, Child Health, Family Support

System Lever: Convener/Connector

PBS Southern California (SoCal) - Early Math Project Family Night Collaboration

The first PBS SoCal - Early Math Project (EMP) family engagement night will be held on March 21st. The EMP secured permission from Charlesbridge Publishers to read *The Animals Would Not Sleep* aloud during the event and has developed a book guide and activities that will be shared with the families who attend. The book's author, Sara Levine, will do the story reading. The family engagement night will be offered in Spanish and English.

Spring Seminar

The 2024 EMP Early STEAM Seminar will take place on February 15, 2024. The seminar will focus on early STEAM for children from birth to age 8. Jon Dueck and Lesley Gates will provide the keynote which will center on the importance of early science experiences and how families and teachers can use children's literature to support children's STEAM success and understanding. There will be six breakout sessions offered simultaneously to provide choice to adults who interact with infants and toddlers, preschool age children, Kindergarten, and elementary school age children.

Publishing Proposal

EMP is supporting the efforts of the Early Math Initiative (developed the RFA, dissemination of RFA, participated in webinar, involved in future applicant screening and selection, etc.) that will select a publisher or publishers to develop 16 new STEAM related board books/picture books with Spanish editions over the next four years. Applications are due by December 15th.

Early Math Project Substack Newsletter

EMP team members regularly contribute content to the Early Math Project Substack newsletter. The December newsletter was published on Monday, December 4 and has 2,296 views. It is available here - https://open.substack.com/pub/carolynpfister/p/the-early-math-project-newsletter-0a2?r=ky79x&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web. The team continues to focus on building readership/subscriber for this free Newsletter.

STEAM Resources

EMP meets for an hour each Monday to review team-created book guides and activities that are shared on the EMP website www.earlymathca.org and the Count Play Explore application www.countplayexplore.org. Book guides, activities, and links to a YouTube read aloud of the book are sent to the team in advance for prior review. The team has committed to creating 6 new STEAM guides prior to the Spring Seminar

Math Book Guides and Activities

EMP continues to develop math books guides and activities which are also available on the EMP Website and Count Play Explore Application.

I'm Ready Videos

EMP team members advise on the creation of the I'm Ready Video Series - scripts, filming, final product, etc. We anticipate the next 8 videos will be released in Spring 2024. They were filmed in September 2023.

5. First 5 Network Alignment

Priority Area: Child Health, Child Development, Family Support
System Lever: Convener

For the better part of 2023, staff have been participating in a series of meetings to support F5CA and the First 5 Association of California to uplift and better clarify the role of the First 5 Network and how the two entities will work together to support a state and local early childhood systems change structure. Funded by First 5 CA, an outside consultant has been helping to plan and facilitate these meetings and make recommendations about next steps. The final meeting in this series is scheduled for December. F5CA and the First 5 Association will be discussing the outcomes of this work and soliciting county engagement at the First 5 Association's annual meeting in February.

Additionally, the First 5 Network will be presenting at F5CA's Summit on the Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work that has been a collaborative process between the two organizations for the last several years.

6. Public Policy

Priority Area: Child Development, Child Health, Family Support
Lever: Catalyst, Convener

F5CA's Governmental Affairs Office staff have been meeting with legislative staff as part of their education engagement work to lift up F5CA as a trust messenger and partner on issues pertaining to families with young children. Staff has been consulting staff on their various legislative proposals and attending policy workgroup meeting to prepare for the 2024 legislative session.

7. Media Campaign Update

Priority Area: Child Development, Child Health

System Lever: Broadcaster

In December, F5CA completed the second wave of the toxic stress-focused spots for television. These ads will start airing in spring 2024 along with new radio, web, and social media.

F5CA has also launched its experiential tour. Over the next several months, the tour will stop at public events throughout the state to engage with families directly and provide resources and information on toxic stress.

Personnel Update

- Vernetia Syphax is retiring after 36 years of state service, 16 of which were at F5CA. For well over a decade, Vernetia has been a tireless advocate for children and families throughout the state. She most notably oversaw the successful development, coordination, and distribution of F5CA's signature program, the *Kit for New Parents*. She was also key in developing the layout of the Annual Report, and other graphic design work. Vernetia was a valuable asset to F5CA, and she will be greatly missed by her co-workers and colleagues in the field.
- Two positions have been posted for hiring since the October Commission meeting:
 1. Research Data Specialist II in the Research and Evaluation Office
 2. Administrative Assistant I in the Executive Office

Fiscal Update

Staff met with the Department of Finance to discuss the future of revenue projections. F5CA will receive point-in-time multiyear revenue projections upon the release of the proposed 2024–25 Governor's Budget on January 10th and incorporate in future budget study sessions. Staff will share these projections with Commissioners at our January 2024 Commission Meeting.