Our mission is to ensure the optimal development of every child by building a comprehensive support system that links family, school, and community.

Rockland 21C

... Bringing

Families, Schools &

Communities Together!

Volume 10 • Winter 2010

FRC Activities Report

2009-2010

Schools of the 21st Century
Rockland 21C
Collaborative for Children & Youth

Rockland 21C...

Supports schools and FRC programs by:

- Providing professional development through peer meetings, annual conferences, guest speakers, and field trips.

- Identifying and suggesting new strategies and models such as the Parent-Child Home Program, and strategies for helping immigrant families.

- Connecting to national models, notably Yale's "Schools of the 21st Century" program and the Coalition for Community Schools.

- Promoting annual planning accountability and monitoring of program outcomes.

- Fostering inter-district sharing of best practices and nurturing this unique suburban model.

Brokers & leverages community investment by:

- Promoting a county-wide commitment by rallying a varying continuum of support from the county, towns, the state, and nonprofits.

- Looking for opportunities to build capacity such as by partnering with Rockland AmeriCorps, or the Steps program of the health department.

- Partnering or aiding in development of joint grant applications such as the US Department of Education's Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) and New York State Department of Education's Literacy Zone programs.

Facilitates a countywide commitment to children and families by:

- Serving as a recognized intermediary for community partners who wish to share information with schools and families, or whom we represent on initiatives such as Youth Fest, Census 2010 and the Supplemental Education Summit.

- Promoting a vision of the importance of parental engagement and family support to children's school success.

- Promoting community cohesion and understanding that schools are neighborhood assets.

- Gauging Rockland family needs and strengths, and acting accordingly.

School Family Resource Centers

(FRCs) are places for families to participate in programs, get to know other parents and children, find support and information, and access school, community, and government resources.

■ Every FRC encourages family involvement in education, yet each serves unique local goals that help preschool and school-age children to thrive.

■ FRC coordinators also identify, develop or find partners to lead both targeted and school-wide strength-based and preventive programs as needed.

■ Seven school districts and Rockland BOCES now operate FRC programs in more than forty elementary and middle schools across the county.

Family Resource Centers:

BOCES
@ BERC Campus – Nyack
131 N. Midland Avenue
Nyack, NY 10960
845-348-3504

CLARKSTOWN
The Clarkstown FRC Partnership @ New City Elementary School
60 Crestwood Drive
New City, NY 10956
845-639-5619

EAST RAMAPO
Eldorado Elementary
5 Eldorado Drive
Chestnut Ridge, NY 10977
845-577-6150

Elmwood Elementary
43 Robert Pitt Drive
Monsey, NY 10952
845-577-6160

Fleetwood Elementary
22 Fleetwood Avenue
Chestnut Ridge, NY 10977
845-577-6170

Grandview Elementary
151 Grandview Avenue
Monsey, NY 10952
845-577-6260

Hempstead Elementary
80 Brick Church Road
Spring Valley, NY 10977
845-577-6270

Kakiat Elementary
465 Viola Road
Spring Valley, NY 10977
845-577-6100

Early Childhood Center at Kakiat Elementary
465 Viola Road
Spring Valley, NY 10977
845-577-6585

Lime Kiln Elementary
35 Lime Kiln Road
Suffern, NY 10901
845-577-6280

EAST RAMAPO (cont'd)
Margetts Elementary
25 Margetts Road
Monsey, NY 10952
845-577-6190

Summit Park Elementary
925 Route 45
New City, NY 10956
845-577-6290

NANUET
Nanuet FRC
@ George Miller Elementary
50 Blauvelt Road
Nanuet, NY 10954
845-627-4889

Highview Elementary
24 Highview Avenue
Nanuet, NY 10954
845-627-4889

A. MacArthur Barr Middle School
143 Church Street
Nanuet, NY 10954
845-627-4889

NORTH ROCKLAND
Gerald F. Neary Elementary
20 George Street
Haverstraw, NY 10927
845-942-3469

West Haverstraw Elementary
71 Blauvelt Avenue
West Haverstraw, NY 10993
845-942-3180

NYACK
Liberty Elementary
142 Lake Road
Valley Cottage, NY 10989
845-353-7247

Valley Cottage Elementary
26 Lake Road
Valley Cottage, NY 10989
845-353-7291

Nyack Middle School
98 South Highland Avenue
Nyack, NY 10960
845-353-7214

Upper Nyack Elementary
336 Broadway
Upper Nyack, NY 10960
845-353-7268

RAMAPO CENTRAL
Cherry Lane Elementary
1 Heather Drive
Suffern, NY 10901
845-357-3988 X303

R.P. Connor Elementary
13 Cypress Road
Suffern, NY 10901
845-357-2858 X129

Sloatsburg Elementary
11 Second Street
Sloatsburg, NY 10974
845-753-2720 X214

SOUTH ORANGETOWN
@ William O. Schaefer School
140 Lester Drive
Tappan, NY 10983
845-680-1314

Sampling of FRC Program

53,036 Attendees

11,908 Attendees

Student Development Programs

- Support learning
- Support the development of the whole child and build his/her protective factors
- Provide some primary prevention
- Extend the school building's use and increase its value as a community asset

Before, during recess, and after school enrichment programs and care ■ Girls Circle discussion group ■ Homework Clubs ■ Lunch Time Drop In ■ Lunch Time Math Help ■ Scout programs ■ Garden program ■ Reading programs (Drop Everything & Read, Saddle Up and Read, Kindergarten Read Aloud) ■ Summer Book Club ■ Start Something
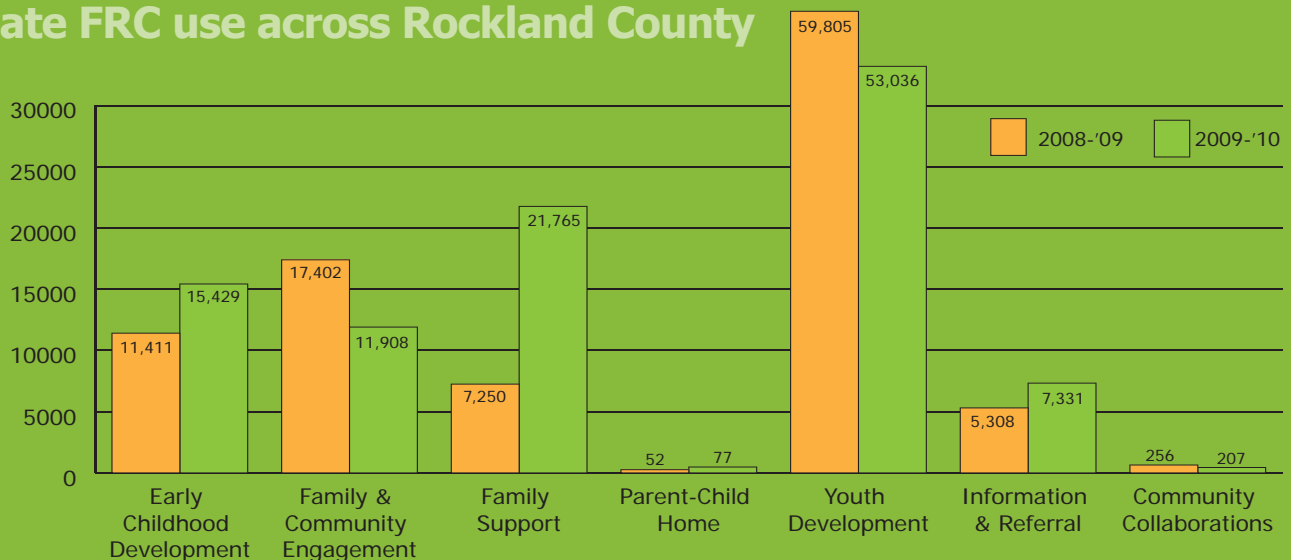
Family & Community Engagement

- Link community assets and services
- Enhance family-school communication
- Help parents/guardians support their children as learners
- Build social support networks

Breakfast with the Principal ■ Family Fun Nights ■ Parent-teacher conference workshops in Spanish ■ Homework Help workshops for parents ■ Child care for parent-teacher conferences ■ Reading Adventure with local library ■ Fit & Fun Night ■ Family Literacy Nights ■ Newsletters ■ EPIC seminar "Help Your Child Succeed" ■ Workshop "Knowing Your Child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)"

Aggregate FRC use across Rockland County

Legend: 2008-'09, 2009-'10

Category	2008-'09	2009-'10
Early Childhood Development	11,411	15,429
Family & Community Engagement	17,402	11,908
Family Support	7,250	21,765
Parent-Child Home	52	77
Youth Development	59,805	53,036
Information & Referral	5,308	7,331
Community Collaborations	256	207

21,765 Attendees

15,429 Attendees

Family Support Programs

- Bring in partners who provide services and programs to families
- Help families function well so their children can succeed
- Allow development of ongoing relationships of sufficient length and intensity to make a difference for some families facing opportunity gaps
- **7,331 Information & Referral Requests handled**
- **313 Robust Family Relationships**

Common Sense Parenting ■ EPIC's Ready, Set, Read workshops in Spanish and English ■ Information Session on Temporary Protected Status for adult education students from Haiti ■ Haitian Support Night ■ Clothing Depot ■ Donation Station ■ Citizenship classes ■ Family Walking Club■ EPIC Fathers workshop series ■ VCS Mothers Group/El Grupo de Madres ■ Communicating with Tweens ■ Translation services

Early Childhood Development Programs

- Assists smooth entry into kindergarten
- Helps parents and children form an early and positive relationship with the school
- Offer families free exposure to the fundamentals of early education
- Connect some children to more intensive supports such as preschool special education services
- Let parents support each other
- **The Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) can enhance interactions between parents and toddlers:**
  - Increased use of positive parenting behaviors.
  - Improved child behaviors related to social-emotional development and self-regulation skills.
  - Increased pre-literacy skills
  - **77 families were served** through PCHP

Preschool playgroup ■ Bi-lingual playgroup ■ Library Story Hour ■ Parent-Child Home playgroups ■ Babies and Me ■ Kinderprep ■ Little Chefs ■ Little Sprouts ■ Meet & Greet at local parks ■ Drama and theater story hour ■ Transition events ■ Q&A session for parents about kindergarten

In the 2009-10 school year, aggregate use of FRC services — counting each person each time he or she participated in a program or made an inquiry — totaled 109,546, an 8% increase from the year before.

Goals & Outcomes
Family Resource Centers

Every year, Family Resource Centers are charged with developing one carefully crafted goal for a specific group of people, and to measure whether they are able to achieve a useful change in belief or behavior. In cases where the goals are not achieved, the scrutiny entailed in monitoring the use of strategies or program improvements should make it possible to tweak and improve the programs for the future. What follows below are outcome statements resulting from this past school year's work, or synopses of other successes.

Neary Elementary: After attending a series of playgroup sessions for preschool students who were finishing or had finished the early literacy **Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP)**, parents reported that they felt more comfortable with the school their child will attend (**63%**), learned new ideas to support their child's development (**75%**), and indicated that their child gained social skills (**75%**). These playgroup sessions act as a 'bridge' that transfers the connection built with the PCHP home visitor to the school, its FRC coordinator, and one another as a social support group. These connections help the families as their children enter school, an alien place to many participants. These playgroups were funded in part by United Way of Rockland County through a grant made to Rockland 21C.

Nyack Middle School, Valley Cottage and Upper Nyack Elementary: An estimated **90%** of middle school parents – and **59%** of attending parents overall – who had not previously tended to participate in school-based activities, did attend Nyack's **Welcome Back to School Night**, during which the presentations were translated into Spanish and Haitian Creole. The event took place in a central, downtown location (the Nyack Center), and was a collaboration of the Nyack schools' FRC coordinators, community translators, principals, the superintendent and other staff, and the Nyack Center, with help from Rockland 21C and the Rockland Ameri-Corps Program. Parents received information about programs and services, met the principals and superintendent, and had an opportunity to ask questions about their child's education. This event expanded upon a previous annual program in which principals met with parents at the Center.

After the parents who attended requested homework assistance, the Nyack FRCs developed **Homework Help** workshops for parents, and the district plans to offer after school homework assistance to English language learner students during the 2010-11 school year.

The Nyack FRC coordinators also responded to parents' requests for information about preparing for parent-teacher conferences by conducting workshops on the topic at their respective schools. School staff at Upper Nyack reported that **92%** of English language learner parents who participated in the workshop **Preparing for Parent-Teacher Conferences** did in fact attend their child's conference, and approximately **75%** of these parents asked their child's teacher questions that had been discussed at the workshop. In addition, **75%** of the families who attended did not tend to participate in school-based activities. Valley Cottage teachers reported that parents who attended the workshops asked excellent questions at their respective conferences. Nyack Middle School's ESL teachers reported that the increase in number of English Language Learner parents who attended parent-teacher conferences was "unprecedented," according to Lisa Retallack, the FRC coordinator.

Please Note... In Rockland 21C's last newsletter, we lamented the removal of Rockland County Department of Social Services staff posted to schools – the school preventive workers – who played an important role in connecting families to the services for which they were entitled but might not otherwise have known about or accessed, possibly losing out on an opportunity to improve their home situations. We neglected to point out that the department shares that sadness, and in fact continues to assign caseworkers to families referred through the schools. DSS's caseload required this efficiency for the time being, but all partners hope to redeploy staff to schools when circumstances permit.

Rockland BOCES:
Parents reported a **75%** increase in knowing and understanding their children's Individualized Education Plans (IEP) after attending the two-hour FRC workshop **Understanding Your Child's Individualized Education Plan**. At the end of the school year, parents who attended the workshop completed a post test survey in which **65%** reported that they felt more comfortable discussing the accommodations and supplementary aids described in their child's IEP with their child's teacher. The school social worker and a special education teacher gave this workshop.

Hillcrest Elementary School: A **50%** increase in attendance at Hillcrest's **Family Walking Club** resulted from the FRC's outreach plan which encouraged families to 'get up and move,' and also promoted increased staff involvement (143 total participants). Parents who attended regularly reported that the Club made it possible for them to engage in physical activity that was free, accessible, and safe. Most parents indicated that they don't always feel safe walking in their neighborhoods because of the lack of sidewalks and gym memberships are prohibitively costly, according to Hillcrest's FRC coordinator, Joanne Robinson-Silas. The Family Walking Club took place in the school's hallways and on two newly designed outdoor walking paths, for six weeks in the evening during the springtime. At the end of each evening walk, healthy snacks were provided. The Club was funded, in part, by an Eat Well Play Hard (EWPH) grant secured by the Rockland County Department of Health.

For the final Club session, Hillcrest FRC coordinated its second fitness night for families in which **attendance doubled** from 2009 (198 participants). After walking inside and out, families convened in the gym for free health screenings, information about community resources, and samples of healthy foods. Freshly prepared smoothies were a hit. Karate classes were offered for children and Boot Camp for adults. Bicycles donated by Walmart, jump ropes and balls, were among some of the raffle prizes given to families.

For student health, the FRC, in collaboration with the school nurse and the principal, coordinated the **Hillcrest Hawk Garden**. 19 students planted lettuce, beans, basil and sugar snap peas, and educated their peers on garden development and care. Students used the lettuce grown in the garden to prepare salads for other students at the school's Harvest Day. This project was also funded by the Eat Well Play Hard grant. Master Gardeners from Cornell Cooperative Extension provided the model and resources to help staff run the garden.

South Orangetown: **100%** of the parents who filled out post-event surveys after attending an FRC-sponsored information session about **New York State's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Program** reported that they were better informed about the placement process and knew how to complete the UPK application. This project was undertaken with Child Care Resources of Rockland.

Sloatsburg: A **60%** increase in English language learners' attendance at school-based activities resulted from **Sloatsburg FRC's outreach plan**, which featured intensive relationship-building with individual parents and provision of translation services. These ELL parents attended parent-teacher conferences and the school's Open House, in addition to one or more of the FRC events Kindergarten Read Aloud, Evening Playgroup, Baby and Me Playgroup, and Family Fun Night.

Clarkstown: After attending the FRC workshop **Coping with Daily Stress and Frustrations**, **100%** of the parents who reported out indicated that they changed their daily routine to include personal time to rejuvenate and nurture themselves during the day, and consequently **67%** of them reported that they were better able to respond to their children's needs.

The FRC staff who gave the workshop are trained facilitators for EPIC (Every Person Influences Children) programs. This EPIC workshop provides parents with stress-reducing techniques so they can be more emotionally available to their children and better able to respond to their needs.

**F R C   C o o r d i n a t o r s**

Back L-R: Margaret Umbrino, William O'Schaefer Elem. FRC coordinator; Myriam Saravia, Neary and West Haverstraw Elem. FRC coordinator; Joan Raynor, Rockland BOCES FRC coordinator; Anne Nissen, Rockland 21C's Administrator; Lisa Kloenne, FRC coordinator at Cherry Lane Elem.; Rose Ann Mercado, Nanuet FRC Director; Julie Wolfe, former Clarkstown FRC Director; and Martha Iglody, East Ramapo Central School District Vision Coordinator. Front L-R: Julie Kassel, Valley Cottage Elem. FRC coordinator; Denise Kane, R.P. Connor Elem. FRC coordinator; Becky Christner, Rockland 21C's Operations & Communications Manager.

Measuring Impact
3 Critical Steps to Consider
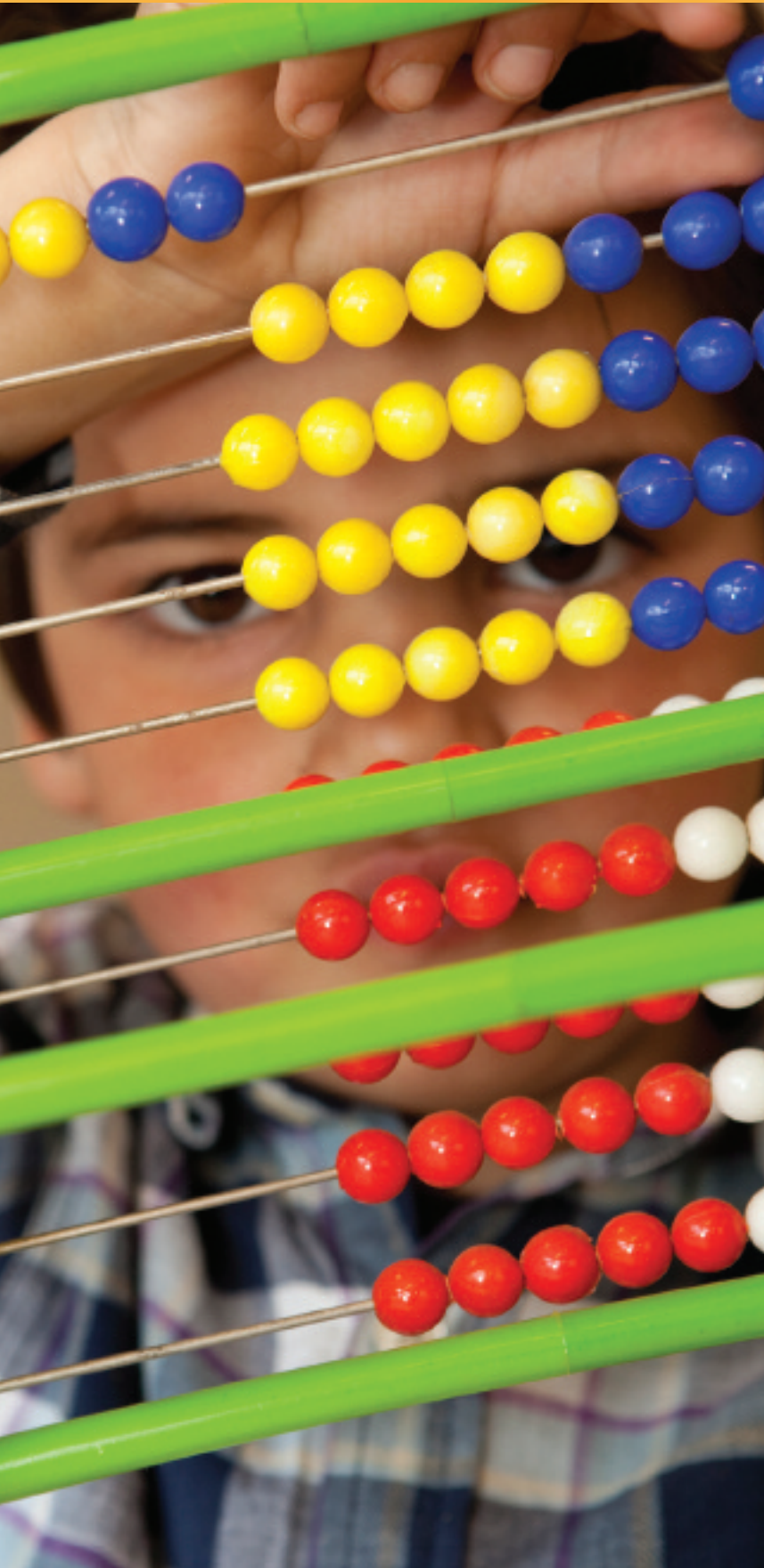
By Edward Fergus

Do the programs, workshops, or activities that you offer achieve the results you intended? How do you know if you accomplished the desired impact? As practitioners, we can sometimes find ourselves offering programs or activities that we believe will produce the results we intend, but we neglect to adequately measure their effects. But these days, with the current state of education focused on accountability, we have to prove programs' positive impacts. Why? Because program impact or effect can determine whether a particular program continues to get outside funding, or a partnership is maintained. It also informs the practice of practitioners, so they know whether they should continue a program or start a new one. So the question becomes, how do we as practitioners develop good measurements for every program we implement? The following represents critical activities any practitioner can and should conduct in order to prepare for examining and demonstrating a program's effect.

Important Questions to Answer When Measuring Impact

1 **Creating a plan or logic model for your program**
- What resources do we need to operate our program?
- Who is our target population?
- What is our outreach plan?
- What are all the program activities we plan to do?
- What changes in belief, behavior, or knowledge can we expect as a result of the program?

2 **Identifying Assumptions or a Theory of Change**
- Who or what is going to change and why?
- How will the change happen and why?
- What activities are going to produce the change and why?

3 **Find good measures**
- What are the important and critical activities we need to measure to ensure we've reached our desired impact?
- How will we weight each activity?
- How many times does the activity need to be measured to show impact?
- What are the different instruments that can show how each activity makes an impact (e.g., pre/post survey, grades, literacy charts)?
- How often does the instrument need to be used in order to track impact (e.g., pre/post, every two weeks, annually)?
- What survey instrument measures the important and critical activities we need to measure?

1 **Develop a clear logic model and theory of change. Any program that is developed inherently contains a logic model and a theory of change.**

A logic model is a planning tool to clarify what your project intends to do and its presumed impact. It provides a linear outline of four key factors that practitioners put into action:

- Inputs, which are the resources necessary to adequately operate the program.
- Activities or Processes are the activities of the program.
- Outputs are the quantifiable results of those activities, such as the number of reading group sessions or number of sessions with parents, and
- Outcomes, which are the expected changes in belief, behavior, or knowledge that are intended to result from the prior three steps.

For example, if you are providing a series of play-group sessions for parents of English Language Learners on strategies for practicing vocabulary with their children, your inputs can include materials and staff and your activities would involve the details of the playgroup sessions. The outputs would include the amount of time spent on each session and the number of parents participating, while an outcome could be improved parent use of strategies for practicing vocabulary with their children.

Also critically important to develop is a theory of change. Though the logic model provides a step-by-step outline of what occurs, it does not articulate the assumptions or surrounding theory behind each step. At its most basic, a theory of change predicts who or what is going to change, over what period of time, and by how much. It also describes how and why change is expected to happen, and articulates the assumptions about the process through which change will occur. Outlining a theory of change for any program is an important step in the measure-

ment development process because it says why you expect a program to make a change.

For example, providing a reading program that focuses on building fluency through silent reading assumes fluency can be improved through silent reading. Identifying such assumptions allows practitioners to recognize how they view different program elements and perceive their connections to each other. Developing programs such as literacy and math nights for parents assumes that exposing parents to the curriculum will enable parents to support their children while they are doing their homework. The assumptions or theories are that one or more curriculum nights such as these will translate into change in specific parent behaviors related to homework (e.g. use of modeled strategies) and that the parents' sense of comfort with teachers and the academic program will lead them to enhance the climate for learning that they create in the home. Does this prove to be true?

Building a theory of change and a logic model allows for such assumptions and linear progressions to be clearly articulated. They allow practitioners to consider whether the inputs and activities of a particular program will actually result in the desired outputs and outcomes. Finally, they indicate what types of questions you need to ask.

For more information
on building a logic model and theory of change:

The Centers for Disease Control's
Logic Model Resources
www.cdc.gov/eval/resources.htm#logic%20mode

Theory of Change
www.theoryofchange.org

2 Measuring what is measurable can help tell an effectiveness story. After developing a well-defined logic model and theory of change, you now have the outline of your effectiveness story – because, if your assumptions are strong and all goes well, your program should reach its intended effectiveness level.

The next step is to identify ways to measure each input, output, and outcome. Most activities conducted by a program can be measured – the question is to what degree will the measure yield anything that can help tell your effectiveness story. For instance, can you confidently say that because you held three Family Reading Nights focusing on different literacy skills, three-quarters of the parents who attended each night thereafter spent more time each night reading together with their children? That would be a powerful and complete story.

There are many program developers and providers who offer a slew of activities which are considered to be "best practices," or important precursors to getting to a desired outcome. For example, afterschool staff may provide students with opportunities to accelerate their literacy capacity through Harry Potter reading groups. They may provide snacks as a transition for youth from the school-day program to the afterschool program. Of course snacks by themselves do not have a direct correlation to students' literacy outcomes. This does not mean to not provide snacks; however, in a theory of change or logic model, snacks should not be measured or weighted in the same way as the quality and fidelity of a reading group to its design is weighted, or as the capacity of the reading specialist may be assessed. The point is – Expend energy in measuring the activities that are important or critical levers in helping to tell your effectiveness story. This is also important when programs have limited resources for collecting information regarding program activities and outcomes.

Dr. Edward Fergus is the Deputy Director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at New York University. Dr. Fergus has been a secondary school history teacher, evaluator of state and federal programs, and program director of out-of-school time programs. Dr. Fergus serves on the board of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and was recently appointed by the New York State Governor to the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, a federally legislated board. Fergus has written extensively on matters of race and equity. He has also conducted research and evaluation studies on school violence, magnet schools, special education and bilingual education.

3 Find good measures. There is no need to struggle over finding good program measures. A multitude of organizations and journals that provide measurement examples exist.

Most people do not have the psychometric background to develop a good survey, so it is important to rely on the experts who do. The following are suggested professional sites in which to find papers on survey measures:

- **American Evaluation Association**: www.eval.org
- **Harvard Family Research Project:** www.hfrp.org .

For those seeking synopses of evaluation tools for out-of-school time and family engagement/involvement programs and activities, the following research briefs provide good summaries and give sources through which the instruments can be obtained for free, for a fee, or in journals:

- "Measurement Tools for Evaluating Out-of-School Time Programs: An Evaluation Resource" by Christopher Wimer, Suzanne Bouffard, Priscilla M.D. Little, Claire Brown Goss (2008): www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/out-of-school-time-evaluation-snapshots/measurement-tools-for-evaluating-out-of-school-time-programs-an-evaluation-resource

- "Data Collection Instruments for Evaluating Family Involvement" by Helen Westmoreland, Suzanne Bouffard, Kelley O'Carroll, Heidi Rosenberg (2009): www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/data-collection-instruments-for-evaluating-family-involvement

Two surveys in the public domain are:

- **Parent And School Survey (PASS):** Measures six dimensions of family involvement for grades K-6. www.adi.org/journal/fw05/RingenbergFunkMullenWilfordKramer Fall2005.pdf

- **Parent as a Teacher Inventory (PAAT):** Surveys parents about their interaction with children ages 3-9 by measuring parents' feelings about creativity, motivation, control, play, and teaching and learning. Translated into multiple languages. http://ststesting.com/FI.html

Also administrators of community school initiatives donated surveys that they use to the Coalition for Community Schools. This "Data Collection Tools Guide" can be found at: www.community schools.org/resources/data_ collection_instrument_ guide.aspx (Click on the numerals.)

Overall, these are some critical steps to understand so you can use measures to tell your effectiveness story. Engaging in these measurement activities will help practitioners in explaining the type of impact their programs are having on the intended populations.

Summit Park Elementary School:
256 people attended **Math Night** in which children and parents participated in math games that families could easily play themselves at home.

Nanuet:
The FRC reached an estimated **75%** of the Spanish-speaking families from George Miller Elementary School after offering **nine new ELL programs and services** designed to encourage the parents' engagement in their children's education. Many of the programs and services involved significant commitments of energy on the part of staff and parents, including regular play-groups that helped bridge the home-to-school connection, attendance at and creation of enrichment classes for students, and PCHP home visits; as well as more singular occurrences such as translations and distribution of gently used clothes and donated supplies; and programs given in tandem with partners, including EPIC's Ready Set Read program, and Rockland County Psychiatric Center's Common Sense Parenting workshop series.

Grandview Elementary School:
Over **500** people attended **Grandview's Health Fair** at which families ate healthy foods and snacks, received information from community organizations, and had access to various health screenings, including dental and vision. Some of the organizations that participated were Affinity Health Care, Eat Smart New York, Monsey Fire Department, and Rockland County Sheriff's Child Passenger Safety program.

West Haverstraw:
The number of robust family relationships between the FRC coordinator and parents doubled as a result of an FRC plan to **increase awareness of the Center's services and programs** after the FRC program was closed for a year and a half. **100%** of the English language learner families received translation services through the FRC so that they could participate in parent-teacher conferences, meetings with the principal, and the school's Kindergarten Transition and Welcome to Third Grade.

Hempstead Elementary School:
225 parents and children attended **Family Night** at the school for dinner and a movie. The evening helped families connect to the school, administrators, and the FRC. The theme of the night was civic participation. While children enjoyed the movie, parents received information from the Board of Elections on the voting process in Rockland County. Resources were distributed in both Spanish and English.

Some schools had staff transitions during the 2009-10 school year that impeded outcome work or reporting.

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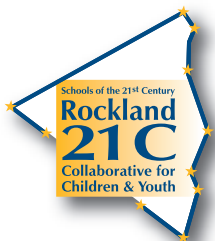
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