

South Windsor County Even Start Evaluation Report

Fiscal Year 2001-2002, Year Seven



August, 23, 2002

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I. Introduction

This evaluation report is for the seventh year of the South Windsor County Even Start program (SWCES), the Fiscal Year period of July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002. The Center for Rural Studies (CRS) at the University of Vermont has worked with SWCES as local evaluators for the seven years that the program has been in service to this area in southern Vermont. This evaluation report provides an overview of the national Even Start legislation, the SWCES program, and evaluation methodology for SWCES. The demographic profile of SWCES clientele are also discussed, followed by the findings of evaluation activities and their implication towards best practices and program outcomes. Results discussed include the major strengths of SWCES, program accomplishments and improvements, program self assessments, focus groups and interviews with SWCES families, family case studies using the standards of Equipped for the Future, Family Self-Assessments, and the Early Childhood Progress survey. This report concludes with a summary and recommendations for future success of the program, based on the findings of this report as well as changes in Even Start legislation.

National Even Start Legislation

Even Start is a national family literacy initiative that was first authorized in 1988 under Even Start Law, Part B of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and reauthorized and amended by the Literacy Involved Families Together (LIFT) Act of 2000 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (information on current Even Start legislation is available at <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg6.html>). Even Start focuses on teaching literacy, parenting, and family skills to eligible families. The goal of the program is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of the Nation's families at the lowest ends of the literacy and economic spectrum. Even Start accomplishes this through the integration of four major components including: adult education (adult literacy or English as a Second Language), parenting education, early childhood education, and parent and child together time (PACT time). The criterion for entrance into the program is based on factors including: 1) existing literacy levels 2) income, 3) age of children, 4) lack of current services, and 5) family composition. Special emphasis is given to teenage parents and English speakers of other languages. Reauthorization of Even Start under the LIFT Act of 2000 and No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has required the following major changes and areas for further emphasis:

- Promote academic achievement/reading readiness
- Instruction programs based on scientifically based reading research
- Prevention of reading difficulties
- Set asides for special groups or activities
- Minimum sub-grant for ninth (and succeeding year) projects
- Consistent definition of "Family Literacy Services"
- Staff qualifications
- Other program elements including: summer services, regular attendance and retention, local evaluation and program application, and continuity of family literacy services.
- Development of Indicators of Program Quality for adults and children

Success of an Even Start program requires collaboration among community resources, such as local service providers, the school system, and families participating in the program. This collaboration is a critical component as service agencies and schools act as a major referral source for potential Even Start families and provide additional services for families external to Even Start services. Through these support services, Even Start offers a comprehensive menu of services to meet family needs.

State Even Start Requirements

In June 2001, Vermont State Even Start at the Vermont Department of Education developed a new management information system, the INVEST (Information Nexus for Vermont Even Start Teachers) system, to meet the needs of federal legislative requirements. Through the INVEST system, the state Even Start office collects the Vermont State Performance Indicator data (Appendix A) from local programs, as required under the reauthorization of Even Start under the LIFT Act of 2000 and No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This change has prompted several staff and evaluation training to use the new system and collect Performance Indicator data, and has changed local program data collection methods. These changes are reflected in the data presented in this report.

Overview of South Windsor County Even Start

The SWCES program is administered and operated out of the Springfield Area Parent/Child Center (SAPCC) in Springfield, Vermont, and offers both home-based and center-based services to families in need. SWCES service area includes: Springfield, Cavendish, Weathersfield, and Windsor. The program has completed seven years of family literacy education and outreach with the renewal of their grant in FY 1999-2000 through June 30, 2003. Vermont Adult Learning (VAL), a major collaborator of Even Start, is also an employer of Even Start staff. VAL staff provide services that support adult goal attainment and enhance parent education and early childhood education components, including Parent and Child Together Time (PACT). For the seventh year, SWCES has outlined seven overarching goals to be met through program activities and services. The seven goals are identified in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Seven Goals of South Windsor County Even Start

1. Assist parents to be full partners in their children's acquisition of literacy skills through parent education and adult education.
2. Ensure that children reach their full potential as learners.
3. Improve economic opportunities of families through increasing the educational level of parents.
4. Strengthen the family's vision of themselves as a learning team.
5. Expand the ability of families to become contributing and self-sustaining members of the community.
6. Continue to serve 20 families while recruiting families identified as most in need of Even Start services.
7. Leave a legacy of intergenerational life-long learners who will positively impact their communities as their communities recognize and commit to delivering family literacy activities beyond Even Start's tenure

The Even Start administrators and staff recruit and obtain referrals for families who are most in need of the program's services and are willing to commit to the rigors of an intensive program. The SWCES Annual Report for FY 02 states that the top three recruiting methods to reach most in need families include: 1) Staff facilitation of groups that target low income and undereducated families, 2) Distribution of new State Even Start brochures to area service providers, and 3) Quarterly Advisory Council meetings with area collaborators, providing information about Even Start eligibility and services. This campaign for enrollment ensures that this program serves the appropriate population. After recruitment and referral procedures, potential clients must apply to the program to see if they fit the program requirements. The eight criteria, presented in Figure 2 are the initial descriptors of all clients in the program, as every client must meet these entrance criteria. Families are selected by a committee comprised of the SWCES Coordinator, VAL Program Manager, and a retired early childhood educator.

Figure 2
Eight Criteria for Participation in South Windsor County Even Start

1. Income – Special consideration is given to families with an income less than 125% of the poverty level.
2. Level of Literacy – The last grade completed is considered, and an informal literacy interview is used to assess current function level in English literacy. Candidates with the lowest literacy are given the most consideration.
3. Age of Children – Families with children ages 0-3 years are given the most consideration. The program serves children from age 0-7 years.
4. Age of Parent – All mothers or fathers below age 18 receive more consideration, followed by parents between the ages of 18-25 who had their first child as a teen.
5. Family Composition – Single parent families receive the most consideration, as well as families with a disabled parent.
6. Level of Isolation – More isolated families (i.e., lack of transportation and telephone service) receive higher priority.
7. Current Services – Families with little or no current services receive the most consideration.
8. Other Need-Related Indicators – Other risk factors are considered that are not included in the above list, but may affect acceptance to the program.

This year, the program maintained intensive services to nineteen families. Some families receive weekly home visits from a parent/child educator and an adult education and are encouraged to participate in the integrated family literacy services offered by the program including playgroups, classes, and programs. Beginning in January 2002, SWCES added a twenty hour a week on-site option, which delivers adult education, parenting skills, work skills, and job-site training. Families that choose this option receive PACT home visits and playgroups. In addition to the integrated family literacy services provided by the program, SWCES relies on collaborators to assist in delivering services to families, such as early childhood education, adult education, parent groups, educational and employment consultation, and mental health counseling.

The SWCES Advisory Council is comprised of many of these providers, along with school, community members, and SWCES staff and parents. The Council meets on a monthly basis to plan and strategize for future program activities, provide updates on past and current projects, and program evaluation. Members of the Advisory Council include: Springfield Area Parent/Child Center, Vermont Center for the Book, Vermont Adult Learning, school representatives, the Department of Health, Health Care and Rehabilitative Services, Head Start,

Southeastern Vermont Community Action, Early Essential Education Coordinators, and other community members. These agencies and organizations make referrals and help in decision making, community development and project planning. The meetings of the Advisory Council help to maintain communication and foster a strong partnership among these organizations, another strength of SWCES program. These meetings also serve as a forum to monitor the success of the program on a regular basis. Other collaborating agencies who attend quarterly meetings include the Department of Social Welfare, the Vermont Council on the Humanities, local public libraries, New Beginnings, and the Visiting Nurses Alliance. This past year, the quarterly meetings were used as a forum for learning and discussion on RUFA changes, homelessness in the area, and celebration of family achievements.

II. Evaluation Methods

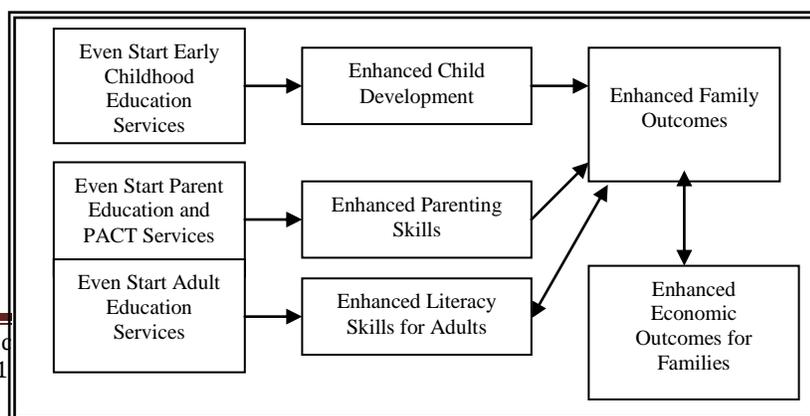
Evaluators from the Center for Rural Studies (CRS) at the University of Vermont have worked with SWCES as local evaluators for the program's seven years of service. The seventh year of SWCES evaluation covers the 2001-02 time/funding period. Due to the evolving nature of the program and changes in national requirements, evaluation is a continuous process, as well as the evolution of the methods employed. Evaluation services are based on needs and priority areas of the program, as determined at the beginning of the fiscal year and recommendations from the previous year.

Evaluation of SWCES focuses on *process* and *outcome*, with evaluation strategies designed to address the seven goals of SWCES. The evaluation is also tailored to provide the program with feasible recommendations for the future success of the program. *Process evaluation* examines the quality of program delivery to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program, best practices, and areas in need of improvement (Scheirer, 1994). *Outcome evaluation* examines whether anticipated changes (both short and long term - i.e. attainment of GED/ADP, employment, improved relationship between parents and schools, etc.) among program participants have occurred as a result of program activities (Affholter, 1994). The evaluation also examines the relationship between program delivery and outcomes of the program on clients.

This year, *process evaluation* components include an analysis of client demographics, program self assessments, program accomplishments and improvements, participant focus groups and interviews, and staff focus groups/Advisory Council meetings. Based on the findings from these methods and data collected over the past seven years, the evaluators have identified seven major strengths of SWCES as well as areas of accomplishments and improvements. These strengths and improvements have provided for high quality of services and success rates among families. *Outcome components* included participant focus groups and interviews, measurement techniques for family case studies using the Equipped for the Future framework, family self-assessment, and the Early Childhood Progress Survey. Evaluation methods employed are both quantitative and qualitative and include survey instruments, focus groups, interviews, and observations.

The overall evaluation of SWCES is based on the model of Even Start's Hypothesized Services and Effects (Figure II-1). This model, presented at the Evaluation Workshop by RMC Research in January 2000, shows how participant outcomes are developed within the four components of the program.

Figure 3. Model of Even Start's Hypothesized Services and Effects (Dwyer, 2000)



Process Evaluation Methods

The following highlights the evaluation methods used to collect program process data for continuous program improvement.

Client demographics

At the beginning of this Fiscal Year in June 2001, Vermont State Even Start at the Vermont Department of Education developed a new management information system, the INVEST (Information Nexus for Vermont Even Start Teachers) system, to meet the needs of federal legislative requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. To allow comparison of SWCES client demographics to the national data, CRS provides an examination of the demographic characteristics of the program. This information was received by SWCES through a demographic questionnaire that was filled out by each family, ensuring complete confidentiality. Section III of this report provides a summary of the SWCES client population generated from this data. This section also discusses the services that Even Start participants are using outside of the program.

Strengths of South Windsor County Even Start

The evaluators have identified seven major strengths of SWCES through program process data collected this year during staff and client focus groups and interviews and Advisory Council meeting observations. This is also supported by data collected from previous evaluation reports.

Program Accomplishments and Improvements

In addition to seven strengths, the evaluators have highlighted several program accomplishments and improvements that have taken place this year. This data was collected during staff and client focus groups and interviews and Advisory Council meeting observations. This is also supported by data collected from previous evaluation reports.

Program Self Assessments

SWCES completed two program self assessments from the Revised *Guide to Quality* (2001). These quality consideration questionnaires included: *Integration of Components* (Appendix B) and *Partnerships and Collaborations* (Appendix C). This data was collected from SWCES staff and collaborators during Advisory Council meetings in October 2001 and January 2002.

Even Start Client Questionnaire

The evaluation team administered the *Even Start Client Questionnaire* (Appendix D) at several client end of year focus groups and interviews in July 2002 (Caudle, 1994; Krueger, 1988). This questionnaire was revised this past year to include questions for participants who completed the Getting Ready to Work portion of the On-Site program. This questionnaire is used to assess participants' progress towards goals, areas in which the program has impacted participant achievement towards these goals, and strengths and areas in need of improvement of the program. Stories from recent Even Start graduates are highlighted.

Outcome Evaluation Methods

Outcome evaluation components include: the Even Start Client Questionnaire, family case studies using the Equipped for the Future framework, family self-assessments, and the Early Childhood Progress Survey.

Even Start Client Questionnaire

The *Even Start Client Questionnaire* (Appendix D), administered at two end of year client focus groups and interviews in July 2002, was used to document family outcomes in addition to feedback on program process (Caudle, 1994; Krueger, 1988). Family outcomes include the goals that participants are working towards and reached this past year through both home based and on-site instruction.

Family Case Studies using the Equipped for the Future Framework

SWCES home based visitors continued to use the *Equipped for the Future Checklist* (Appendix E), developed last year by CRS, with their home visit record. This checklist is divided into the three "Role Maps", including Parent/Family Role Map, Worker Role Map, and Citizen/Community Member Role Map (Appendix F). This year, the EFF Checklist was used to develop two family case studies (Caudle, 1994; Krueger, 1988). The case studies document in graphic and narrative form how the families worked through several of the Role Maps over the past two years, to work towards and achieve their goals. Narrative information on family case studies was collected during the end of year staff focus group and email survey administered in July 2002 (see *End of Year Staff Focus Group Guide 02* in Appendix G)

Family Self Assessment

This year SWCES piloted the use of the family self assessment tool, *A Measure of My Family's Well-being* (Appendix H). This survey was developed based on a survey from the Federal Economic Development Program and designed to reflect the family support matrix used by Reach Up. This survey is designed to document long term change in family well-being over the course of their Even Start involvement. It was administered in the fall of 2001 with SWCES families.

Early Childhood Progress Survey

SWCES administered the *Early Childhood Progress survey* (Appendix I) with teachers of Even Start students in grades K-3. This survey documents the progress of Even Start children in school in the areas of school readiness and progress, social interactions, parent involvement and attendance, and special education eligibility. This survey also collects data for the Vermont State Performance Indicators (Appendix A). This tool was completed by teachers of SWCES children asking them to provide specific information on the child and compare the child to other students who are not in Even Start. Data collected this year was compared to data collected in 2000-01 on two levels: overall comparison of both samples and comparison of students whose data was collected for both years.

This report concludes with a summary of the evaluation and recommendations for the future based on the findings this year and changes in Even Start legislation.

III. Even Start Participant Demographics

Through initial research for Even Start funding and collaboration with other social service agencies in the South Windsor County area, a population with a need for Even Start services was found to exist. To demonstrate that the program is serving this targeted population, the evaluators have provided a description of the South Windsor County Even Start program's client base. The following provides SWCES client demographics, as required by the evaluators as well as Vermont State Performance Indicators.

Family Demographics

Families served and retention rates

SWCES provided service for a total of *nineteen families in the seventh year of service*, with *sixteen families remaining in the program by the end of the sixth year, June 30, 2002 (84% retention rate)*. Three families withdrew from the program before the end of the fiscal year, as two were evicted and moved (enrolled for five years and eight months) and one due to lack of participation (enrolled for one year). SWCES enrolled only 19 families this year (compared to their goal of serving 20 families) because of the transition period when one home visitor left the program, four families graduated, and a new person was hired at the end of last fiscal year.

SWCES continues to have a *high retention rate* of families at 84% (61% in 2000-01) as well as *long term retention* of families, as depicted in Table 1. Forty-two percent (42%, 8) of families have been enrolled for at least two years, and a little over a quarter of the population (26%, 6) having been enrolled from 4 to 7 years, since the onset of enrollment in the program. The Program Coordinator of SWCES states that long term enrollment in the program is based on the need of families (i.e. learning disabilities and in and out of crisis situation). Their retention increases the likelihood that they will eventually meet their goals and graduate.

Highlights of Family Demographics and Success

- ✓ 19 total families served
- ✓ 16 retained
- ✓ 24 adults and 32 children retained
- ✓ High retention rate of 84%
- ✓ High long term retention rate of 42% being enrolled for 2-7 years
- ✓ 46% of adults completed goal of secondary education
- ✓ 53% of adults still working towards goal of secondary education
- ✓ 88% of adults completed job training goal
- ✓ 61% of adults completed employment goal
- ✓ 100% of adults completed post secondary education goal
- ✓ 100% of eligible children achieved the Vermont DRA standard
- ✓ 100% of eligible children met or achieved proficiency on the SERP
- ✓ Three eligible children completed the CORP assessment
- ✓ 63% of children met or exceeded the attendance rate of their peers
- ✓ 88% of students were promoted to the next grade level

Table 1. Number and percentage of families enrolled in SWCES over time

Number of years	N	Percentage
Less than 1 year	7	37%
1 year	2	11%
1.5 years	2	11%
2 years	2	11%
3 years	1	5%
4 years	1	5%
5 years	2	11%
6 years	1	5%
7 years	1	5%

Family focus in Even Start

The focus of the majority of families (89%; 17) involved in the program is to improve upon family literacy skills. Two families are focused on improving literacy skills as well as their English language skills.

Gender, age, children, ethnicity, martial status, and housing

A total of twenty-four adults were involved in the program this year, with 79% (19) female and 21% (5) male (this is similar to last year with 73% females and 27% males). The age of adults ranges from 19 to 48 years old with an average of 37 years. Thirty-two eligible children were involved in the program, with 53% (17) female and 47% (15) male. The age range of children is from 10 months to nine years, with an average age of 4 years old.

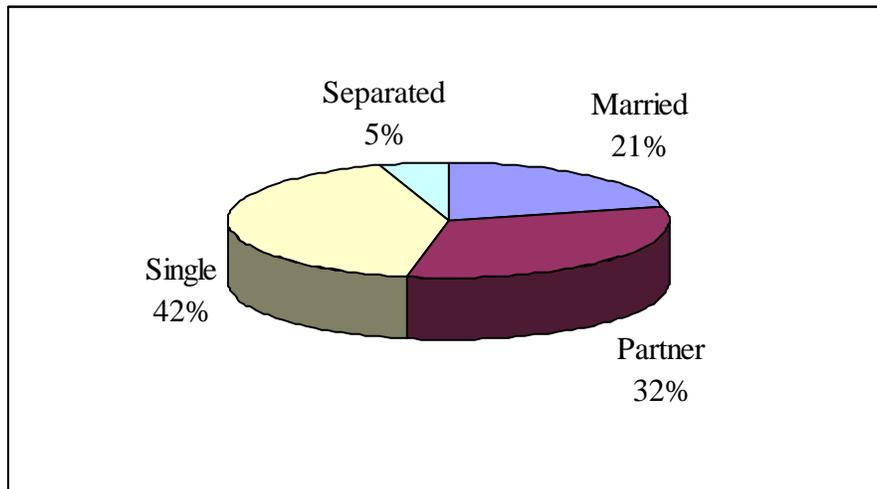
Even Start targets children from birth to age three and supports children through age ten. As depicted in Table 2, nine (47%) of the families in SWCES have 1 child supported by Even Start services, nine (47%) families have two children supported, and one family (6%) has three children supported by Even Start services. Thirty-one percent (6) of the families have children that are older than the target age living in the household.

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Even Start supported Children Per Family

	1 Target Child	2 Target Children	3 Target Children
Number of Families	9 (47%)	9 (47%)	1 (6%)

The ethnicity of the families in Even Start is 89% (17) Caucasian, 5% (1) Polish, and 5% (1) Cambodian. Twenty-one percent (21%; 4) of SWCES households are married, 32% (6) have a significant other or partner, 42% (8) of families are single parent households, and 5% (1) are separated. Figure 4 depicts the marital status of SWCES families by percentage. Looking at the housing of families in SWCES, twelve (63%) of the families live in an apartment, 4 (21%) own their own home, one rents a house, one shares a house, and one is homeless.

Figure 4. Marital Status (Self-Reported) of Even Start Families by Percentage



Income source

Table 3 depicts the income source of all adults in SWCES families (24). Similar to income data collected last year, 41% of the families are employed (41% in 2000-01) with 38% of families relying on RUFA (33% in 2000-01). Two adults (8%) receive their income from SSI (Social Security Income), two (8%) from their partner's income, and one (4%) from child support. Thus, there are varying sources of income for the families in this program, reflecting the individual needs of each situation.

Table 3. Income Source of Adults in SWCES Families

Income Source	Number	Percent
Employed	10	41%
RUFA	9	38%
SSI	2	8%
Partner's employment	2	8%
Child support	1	4%

Adult Demographic Data Required by Vermont State Performance Indicators

The following adult demographics are required by the Vermont State Performance Indicators (Appendix A). These include data on family education status, and whether or not the adults worked towards goals relating to job training, employment, and post secondary education and completed their goal. Other goals families achieved this year is also presented.

Education status

Table 4 depicts the education status of adult participants as of June 30, 2002. Two (11%) adults enrolled in the program with less than 9th grade education and are not currently pursuing their GED/ADP or high school diploma. One (5%) participant enrolled in the program with some high school experience but no degree and is not currently pursuing her GED/ADP or high school diploma. Eight (42%) adults enrolled in the program with either an ESL or Special Education high school diploma and are not currently pursuing further formal education.

Thirteen adults (68%) set the goal of pursuing secondary education this year. Six (46%) of these adults completed this goal, with two earning their ADP, two earning their GED, one completing Bridge to College, and one earning her LNA (Licensed Nurses Aide). The remaining seven (53%) adults are currently working on their ADP or GED in Even Start, with two having passed one or two of the GED tests.

Table 4. Education Status of Even Start Adults (N=24)

Highest Grade Level Completed	Number of Persons (%)
Less than 9th grade at enrollment, not pursuing GED/ADP or degree	2 (11%)
Some high school but no degree, not pursuing GED/ADP or degree	1 (5%)
ESL or Special Education High school diploma , not pursuing GED/ADP or degree	8 (42%)
Working on ADP or GED in Even Start	7 (29%)
GED or ADP received during Even Start	6 (25%)

Even Start instructional hours

All adults and children enrolled in the program participate and fulfill their required Even Start instructional hours, regardless of their specific goals. The SWCES Annual Report 02 shows that a total of 2,179 actual hours of adult education were completed this fiscal year. A total of 835.5 actual annual hours of parenting education were completed and a total of 565.5 hours of parent and child together (PACT) time were completed this fiscal year. For SWCES children, a total of 12,598.8 hours of early care and education were completed as well as a total of 832.8 PACT time hours.

Job training

Nine adults (38%) had the goal of achieving job training either through the Getting Ready to Work program or the Employment Preparation Program (EPP). Eight of the nine adults (88%) met their goal, with five people completing the GRTW curriculum, one person completing the EPP program and others attending training for employment.

Employment

Thirteen adults (54%) had the goal of attaining and maintaining employment this year. Eight of these adults (61%) completed this goal of becoming employed or self employed.

Post Secondary Education

One adult set and completed the goal (100%) of post secondary education by completing the Bridge to College course.

Career advancement

One person set the goal of career advancement and did not meet this goal. However she did receive her ADP and has taken several parenting classes this year.

Other Adult and Family Goals Met

Other goals met this year aside from job training and employment included: improving parenting skills (4), owning a home (2), becoming a registered day care provider (1), placing a child in pre school (1), and getting a driver's license (1). As discussed under the sections of family focus groups (p.34) and family case studies (p. 41), families state that assistance from SWCES and other services and the strengths of the program have led to their achievements.

Child Demographics Required by Vermont State Performance Indicators

The following child demographics are required by the Vermont State Performance Indicators (Appendix A).

Child grade level

Thirteen of the SWCES children are at the age to attend either preschool or compulsory education. Grade levels of children enrolled in SWCES range from preschool to third grade. Six (46%) are enrolled in preschool, three (%) are enrolled in kindergarten, two (15%) are enrolled in first grade, two (15%) in second grade, and one (8%) in third grade.

Individual plan

Of those children enrolled in school, three (23%) are on an individual plan.

DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment)

Two children completed the DRA and both their scores (100%) achieved the standard on the Vermont DRA.

SERP (Screening for Early Reading Processes)

Two children completed the SERP assessment with both (100%) meeting or achieving proficiency level. These children completed this six months prior to entering kindergarten, received at least 200 early childhood instructional hours, and whose families have participated in the program for at least two years.

COR (Child Observation Record)

Three children who are age four and have received at least 200 early childhood instructional hours and whose families have participated in the program for at least two years completed the COR assessment. In total, regardless of hours, nine children completed the COR assessment. At the time of this reporting, comparative data for student's scores was not available.

Attendance

Eight students were enrolled in grades K-3 who have participated in the program for at least one full year. Five (63%) of these students met or exceeded the attendance rate of their classmates.

School Promotion

Eight students were enrolled in grades K-3 who have participated in the program for at least one full year. Seven (88%) of the eight students were promoted to the next grade level. The one student not promoted was retained in Kindergarten.

Title I

Of the eight students enrolled in grades K-3 who have participated in the program for at least one full year, four (50%) are Title I. (Serves at risk students enrolled in K-3, such as reading programs)

EEE (Early Essential Education)

Six (35%) of the SWCES children enrolled in school (17) are on a EEE plan. (Age 3-when enter school 5 developmental delays. Many were in FIT from birth to age 3)

FIT (Family/Infant/Toddler)

Two (9%) of the eligible children (22) are enrolled in FIT. (Birth to 3 developmental or medical delays)

CUPS (Children's Upstream Services)

Two (7%) of the eligible children (28) are enrolled in the CUPS program and twenty-six (93%) are not (mental health services for children prior to school entry).

Client Services other than Even Start

Even Start is a collaborative program and would not be successful without productive interactions among families, service providing organizations, and social institutions in the area. Table 5 depicts service providers who clients work with in collaboration with SWCES for 2001-02, differentiated by adults and children (there is some cross over of services). Each service provider plays a key role in the program. Many of the providers make referrals to the program and they are all working with the families to improve the lives of those using the services.

Table 5
Collaborating Service Providers for SWCES Adults and Children, 2001-02

Adult Services	Child Services
Family Advocate	CUPS (Children's Upstream Services)
Family/Infant/Toddler (Parent/Child Center)	EEE (Early Essential Education)
HCRS (Health Care and Rehabilitative Services)	ESL services
Healthy Babies	FIT (Family/Infant/Toddler)
IFBS (Intensive Family Based Services)	Head Start
Individual counseling	Healthy Babies
RUFA (Reach Up Financial Assistance)	Individual counseling
SRS (Social Rehabilitative Services)	Kurn Hattin
Vocational Rehabilitation	Occupational Therapy
WIC (Women/Infant/Child)	Playgroup
	Pre School
	Physical Therapy
	Reading Recovery
	Registered child care provider
	Respite
	Speech and language
	SRS (Social Rehabilitative Services)
	Summer Integration program
	Tutoring
	WIC (Women/Infant/Child)

IV. Major Strengths of South Windsor County Even Start

Through the past seven years of data collection from families, collaborators, and staff, the evaluation team have identified and added to the list of major program strengths of SWCES. The seven strengths highlighted this year stand out above other strong program areas because they provide the "something extra" needed for high quality services and high success rates among families. These strengths include the six identified last year, which are continually improving, as well as a new strength identified this year, the on-site program option. Through these strengths, SWCES continues to work towards their seven program goals and families continue to work towards their individual goals. These areas are consistent with those from Family Literacy Core Values and Quality Considerations as identified by RMC Research Corporation in the Revised *Guide to Quality* (2001).

The On-Site Program Option

Several families and home based instructors have stated that the on-site option through the Getting Ready to Work (GRTW) grant received by the Springfield Area Parent/Child Center (SAPCC) is a new major strength of the program. This has provided the program the opportunity to serve families outside of the four towns. The on-site option provides intensive training, workplace experience, hard and soft life and professional skills development, and a group setting that offers encouragement, motivation and support. Interviews and focus groups with graduates of the GRTW program showed that they experienced gains in employment and professional skills, such as writing a resume and cover letter, interviewing, and "working" at the SAPCC. They also experienced an increase in their social and human capital, including increased self esteem and self confidence, and improved social and interpersonal skills.

Major Strengths of SWCES

1. On-Site Program Option
2. Home-based Instruction
3. Connecting Families with Community Resources
4. Partnerships and Collaboration
5. Program Activities and Events
6. High Retention Rate of Families
7. Long-term Enrollment of Families

Home-based Instruction

The program operates out of the SAPCC and now has an on-site option for families, as discussed above; However, SWCES continues to use home-based instruction services to support families living in rural areas. This service allows the program to reach more rural and isolated families that otherwise might have limited access to quality education and services. Providing services through home-visiting is one of the many strengths of the program, because most of their families live in rural areas and only one third of families have reliable transportation. Families have also identified that home visitor's support, flexibility, and strong commitment to work with families is a major strength of this home based program.

Connecting Families with Community Resources

SWCES further fulfills a need in the community by connecting families with available community resources, including services provided by collaborating agencies. This strength of the program offers families comprehensive services to meet their needs. For example, one parent received her GED, became a certified child care provider, and established her own registered in-home child care business in 2000 through the network of services provided by her Even Start home visitors. An ESL family from Poland became U.S. Citizens in December of 2000 because their adult educator connected them to the necessary services and resources to achieve this goal. Their parent/child educator also connected this family to a Polish speaking physician, who assisted in translation at parent-teacher conferences. This year, a parent child educator worked with a Cambodian family to purchase a home. She was instrumental in helping the family complete paperwork and work with the bank to get their mortgage. Several mothers have become involved with a "Mom's Group" in a nearby town because of recommendations from their adult and early childhood educators. Putting families in touch with necessary resources has promoted parents to become better advocates for themselves and their children. Families also note that connecting them with other resources promotes learning to occur outside of the program.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Over the past three years, SWCES has significantly improved their relationship with collaborating agencies as the program continues to expand and grow. Strong partnerships and collaboration enables the program to continue to recruit and enroll eligible families, build on local resources, minimize duplication of services, provide professional development for area service providers, and assist others who work with the SWCES population to recognize the benefits of family literacy. Ultimately strong partnerships and collaboration strengthen program services to meet family needs in the best possible manner.

Several strategies for improvement that have taken place over the past two years and have evolved this year have been: 1) the expansion of their Advisory Council to other service provider representatives, 2) the addition of quarterly meetings for regional collaborators, several of which focus on important local issues 3) the addition of the on-site program, and 4) monthly EFF study groups.

Program Activities and Events

Focus groups and interviews with families indicate that SWCES continues to improve its services by offering a wide variety of events and activities that serve the needs and interests of families. Participating families speak highly of the program and of the program's impacts on their lives. As many families have been involved in Even Start since the onset, several parents in the project have begun to take an active role in planning and promoting activities this past year and for next year. Parent participation in the planning process is a tremendous breakthrough of the project, suggesting that their involvement in SWCES has assisted in the development and improvement of leadership skills among several clients. Parents also commented on how their

participation in SWCES has facilitated them to connect with other families in their communities. Activities and playgroups have offered parents an opportunity to leave their home, meet new people, and receive needed peer social interaction.

High Retention Rate of Families

SWCES continues to have a high retention rate of families, which is a strength of the program. This past year, SWCES retained 84% (16 of 19) of their families enrolled on July 1, 2002. This is higher than the 61% of families retained in 2000-01. Three families exited the program during FY 02, two leaving because they were evicted and moved and one leaving because of lack of participation.

Long-term Enrollment of Families

SWCES continues to have high long term retention of families, as depicted in Table 1 (p. 11). Forty-two percent (42%, 8) of families have been enrolled for at least two years, and a little over a quarter (26%, 6) of the population having been enrolled from 4-7 years, since the onset of enrollment in the program.

The Program Coordinator of SWCES states that long term enrollment in the program is based on the need of families (i.e. learning disabilities and in and out of crisis situation). Their retention increases the likelihood that they will eventually meet their goals and graduate. The one family who has been enrolled in the program for seven years, since the beginning of the program, is highlighted under the Even Start Focus Group section of this report as a family that has recently graduated from the program after reaching all of their goals. The other family who graduated the program this year was enrolled for three years. Other families with long term enrollment have achieved long term family goals including: U.S. citizenship, starting an in-home registered child care facility, employment, child placed in preschool, GED, ADP, GWRT, and Bridge to College completion, earning a driver's license, improved parenting skills, and purchasing a home.

Data from the National Center for Family Literacy (2001) show that of all families who enrolled in the program in 1997-98, 71% left the program having participated for 12 or fewer months. The long term enrollment of SWCES families is a great success of the program and is a direct result of program strengths that assist families to continue to work towards their goals.

V. Program Accomplishments and Improvements

This year, the evaluators decided to highlight several program accomplishments and improvements of SWCES. These program improvements are a part of the natural progression and growth this program has undertaken as it has become a mature and experienced Even Start program. These changes were prompted by the needs of SWCES staff, families, collaborators, and the local community, as well as the previous six years of learning experience. Program accomplishments and improvement to highlight this evaluation period include the development of the on-site option at the SAPCC, improved staff professional development, and community issues focused quarterly council meetings. The discussion below demonstrates that SWCES is continually evolving and growing to best serve the ever changing needs of their clients and community as well as meet their seven program goals.

The On-Site Program

The vision of the on-site program at the SAPCC has developed over the past few years as a way of providing Even Start families and teen parents an intensive 20 hour a week option to receive education, parenting, and job skills. In January 2002, the SAPCC received grant funding to make the Getting Ready to Work (GRTW) program a part of the on-site program. The GRTW option is comprised of a 12 week series of training modules with 20 hours each week of intensive services. The program is funded to run three cycles of this 12 week series. The on site program is also funded by the Teen Parent Education Program grant. SWCES provides some of the staff for the on-site program, specifically for Even Start services including adult education, family literacy, parenting skills, family dynamics, early childhood education, computer literacy practice, and various risk prevention activities. Most families continue to fulfill PACT time hours during home based instruction. This year, SWCES had four participants during the first session of GRTW training and two in the second session. The addition of the on-site program to SWCES and the SAPCC has led to many successful outcomes for Even Start as a service as well as family success. These outcomes include an increase in the intensity of services available for families and possible expansion of service areas, and family gains in employment and life skills as well as social and human capital.

Areas of Program Accomplishment and Improvements

- ➔ The on-site program
- ➔ Professional development
- ➔ Quarterly Advisory Council meetings as forums for community issues

Increased intensity of services and possible expansion of service area

The on-site program is an exciting new addition to current SWCES services as it has increased the intensity of services in adult education, job training, and parenting education skills. It also may fulfill the Reach Up work requirement of 20-30 hours a week, depending on family status as "pre work" or "work ready". Furthermore, children benefit from the on-site option as most are enrolled in a registered or licensed child care facilities including preschool programs such as Head Start and Learning Partners. Given the rural nature of the program, families continue to use home-based instruction to fulfill PACT time as well as all other required Even Start hours, depending on their transportation, child care, and other needs. In the future, SWCES may develop a way for families to fulfill PACT time hours through center-based work.

In an interview with the Program Coordinator, Gladys Collins stated that one of the impacts of the on-site program is that it enables families to receive the intensity of services comparable to a center-based urban Even Start program. Partly because it reduces the need for home visitors to travel to families home for home based instruction. Furthermore, in a focus group with program staff, they stated that the on-site option may allow the program to expand its services area to several outlying towns if families are willing to commit to the hours required using mostly center-based instruction with supplemental home-based instruction. The on-site option has also acted as a referral source for new Even Start families as eligible people who are not enrolled in Even Start but enroll in the GRTW option may later decide to enroll in Even Start to receive the other components of family literacy. This year, three families were referred to SWCES by other Even Start families in GRTW during the first two sessions. One of these families is currently fully enrolled and two are in the “orientation” phase of the program.

Gains in employment and life skills

This past year, all SWCES families who have participated in the on-site option have experienced success. One Even Start mother passed two of her GED tests and is working on completing the rest. Another Even Start mother is in the progress of completing her ADP, while another is working on the ADP assessment piece to enroll in that program. Several SWCES clients have also shown improvement and progress in various skill areas. One woman who was initially hesitant to join the GRTW program, independently determined to continue the program after completing the "futures" piece of the program (the initial phase of the program where people set goals). She has since completed the program with perfect attendance and has decided to attend the Howard Dean Technical Center for continuing education in the area of gardening and landscape design, an area she focused on during her "employment" piece of the program. Another woman who completed the program worked to improve her child's education by placing him in Head Start and then volunteering to be on the Preschool Policy Committee. GRTW teachers also cite participant gains in employment skills such as learning to use a computer, write a resume and cover letter, conduct a job search, how to have a successful interview. Gains have also been made in life skills including financial management, maintaining good credit, banking, and buying a home. Furthermore, participants have shown gains practical skills such as balancing one's life, conflict resolution, communication skills, and appropriate behavior.

Gains in social and human capital

Michael Sherraden (1991) defines wealth and welfare to include both tangible and intangible assets. Intangible assets include: human capital (intelligence, education, esteem, etc.), cultural capital (the ability to know and practice the behaviors of the dominant group) and informal social capital (family, friends, contacts, etc.). Robert Putnam (1993 and 1993) states that social capital is important for impoverished areas because it raises the standard and quality of living, which provides an environment in which productivity is possible to work towards economic growth.

Gladys Collins discussed that the on-site option of SWCES has enabled rural families to gain social capital as they come out of isolation and work in a group with others in a similar situation towards their goals. Since the start of the on-site program, Collins states that she is convinced of the power of learning in a group setting, as families have found new support with one another and have "blossomed". Families are given the opportunity to work in groups to enhance their networking skills and build social capital. With the intensity of services, people have the

opportunity to work closely with one another and build relationships. This type of bonding is different from the more superficial bonding that takes place during one time on-site activities and field trips, such as cooking classes or field trips to farmer's markets. Through these new relationships, participants have shared parenting and relationship advice to support each other's personal and family life. They have also provided motivational support for one another to attend class, be on time, and complete all required course work. Collins states that there has been a "trickle down" effect of the "can do" philosophy among participants. Many of the participants have also gained more confidence in their ability to succeed because of tangible success they experience with the program. Tangible success includes gaining job experience such as interviewing and getting a job, coming to work, and receiving feedback, etc. through their work experience. Families also show an improvement in social and interpersonal skills as many move from being isolated and withdrawn individuals to being more comfortable in a group setting and dealing with group dynamics and conflict resolution as situations arise.

Overall, SWCES staff cite that the new on-site option has provided families with a different way to participate in Even Start and receive the intensity of services. This program expansion has led to many family gains and staff are excited to work with more families through this option as the program continues to grow, expand, and evolve. Further discussion about the impact of on-site from participants point of view is available in the section of the report on p. 35.

Professional Development

SWCES staff have taken several opportunities this past year for professional development to further their knowledge and understanding of relevant topics to family literacy in efforts to better serve families. Staff have hosted and participated in two "Equipped for the Future" goal setting training sessions to improve the way they help families set goals and continue to incorporate EFF into the program. These trainings prompted staff to hold monthly "EFF study groups" with SWCES staff, VAL, and Reach Up staff to further their study and understanding. These two types of professional development were taken on as a "team", however several individual staff members participated in other professional development opportunities. Staff have also attended several training sessions on using the new state Management Information System, INVEST, for collection of program data as required by state and Federal Even Start legislation.

Equipped for the Future (EFF) goal setting trainings

SWCES and VAL sponsored several Family Goal Setting Workshops in the fall and winter of 2002. Presenter Steve Gerard, VAL Director of Program Services, trained staff on goal setting using the Equipped for the Future (EFF) model, with a focus on the ongoing nature of defining, changing and meeting goals. This session, opened up to all SWCES collaborators, was attended by staff from Head Start, HCRS (Health Care and Rehabilitative Services), Reach Up and SEVCA (South Eastern Vermont Community Action). The EFF goal setting training provided staff with some tools and strategies for developing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely) goals with families. It also improved their use of EFF standards and a way to tie it into the program's curriculum. Michelle Perry also held two training sessions on the use of EFF in the Even Start curriculum including goal setting. The idea of an EFF study group developed from these trainings.

EFF study groups

Monthly EFF study group sessions were a direct outcome of the EFF Goal Setting training as a way to help families set goals that were attainable and meaningful. Study group sessions were held for an hour on a monthly basis for 2001-2002 at the SAPCC. They included the entire on-site staff including, SAPCC Reach Up Case Managers, SAPCC Parent Education Coordinator, the teacher/job coach from the GRTW program, in addition to SWCES and collaborating VAL staff. The goal of this group was to study the entire EFF framework to make this framework the "common thread" for the on-site program. It provides staff with common language to use with participants and one another and also guides "outcome" expectations for on-site participants. Facilitation of the group rotates so that all members are equally invested in the outcomes. The facilitator plans the topic for discussion. At one study group session, the facilitators developed a questionnaire for GRTW on-site participants based on EFF indicators in the worker role map. This exercise proved to be a useful tool for on-site participants to reflect on their progress in gaining skills as workers.

Other staff professional development

Gladys Collins reported that the EFF goal setting trainings, Quarterly Advisory Council meetings, EFF study groups, Health Realization, COR and SERP trainings, and staff meetings were completed as a team. Individual professional development trainings were attended on an as needed basis and included Touchpoints, family centered practice, literacy and other appropriate trainings based on staff identified needs for their work. One home visitor stated that she attended training on basic video use and editing with the director of SAPA TV. She hopes she will be able to put these skills to use by promoting the SWCES program in this area through local television. She submitted a "Video of the Week" on the Young Child Celebration, sponsored by the SAPCC, to SAPA TV, which was aired and received a positive response by SWCES families and the community at large.

The Coordinator of the program also provided training on using the COR and SERP assessment tools with a Head Start preschool teacher and a registered child care provider, respectively.

Future professional development opportunities for staff

Through interviews/focus groups and questionnaires with staff, many identified areas in which they would like more professional development. Gladys Collins felt that the program needs more opportunities for training in "scientifically based reading research". Recently, she has emailed school principals and literacy coordinators to find out what might be available to staff this year. As a first step towards professional development in this area, two home visitors are planning to attend a one day "Building Blocks" training from the Stern's Center in September 2002. This training focuses on "scientifically based reading research" materials that relates to pre-reading skills and developing phonological awareness in the preschool population. In addition, the most recent staff member of the SWCES home visiting team will attend the "Parents as Teachers" (PAT) training offered in October 2003. This training has been attended by all other parent/child home instructors. PAT certification requires instructors to receive a minimum of 20 hours of additional trainings in the first calendar year and 10 hours every year thereafter. The trainings must pertain to the birth to three population and their families. Further, one home visitor commented that staff needs assistance in organizing their data collection for local and state requirements to minimize the time spent collecting it. She noted that she feels her

work with families has suffered because of the amount of data required this past year.

Advisory Council Meetings as Community Forums on Local Issues

South Windsor County Even Start held seven Advisory Council meetings this year with three quarterly Advisory Council meetings. SWCES began holding quarterly Advisory Council meetings two years ago as a conscious step to improve collaboration with the community and area service providers, to encourage their attendance at the Council meetings, and encourage involvement and awareness of the SWCES program. When possible, a representative from the evaluation team has been present at these meetings. This past year, several of the SWCES Council meetings were used as a forum for community learning, discussion and problem solving. The Advisory meetings focused on issues that staff found they needed to know more about and felt that the Even Start community at large would benefit.

Reach Up Financial Assistance (RUFA)

At the SWCES Quarterly Advisory Council meeting on **October 23, 2001**, Dan Merrill, a Reach Up supervisor at the local PATH agency was invited as a key guest and presenter on the current changes in **Reach Up policy**. The focus of this meeting was prompted by questions among all area service providers on the new RUFA legislation and language and the need to establish a common ground of understanding of the legislation among collaborators. SWCES staff wanted to assist themselves as well as other service providers to best support unemployed parents as they train and enter the work force. SWCES staff also wanted to better understand how these changes would impact Even Start families. Furthermore, they and other service providers were able to connect and network with Merrill in order to help families reach their full potential as they entered the workforce. Dan Merrill presented information on the legislation followed by a question and answer discussion session

Interviews and questionnaires with SWES staff indicate that this quarterly Advisory Council meeting on RUFA improved the way in which service providers support families who are welfare recipients. All attendees provided positive feedback on the benefits of this meeting and most indicated that they became familiar with the system as well as the new vocabulary to help families move from welfare to gainful employment. SWCES also gained a new Advisory Council member as a result of this meeting.

Homelessness Panel

At the quarterly Advisory Council meeting on **February 26, 2002**, SWCES hosted a **discussion panel on homelessness**, focusing on the eviction and homeless crisis in the Springfield area. They hosted this panel in efforts to educate SWCES staff, collaborators, as well as the general public about the current homeless crisis in the area, issues surrounding the eviction process, and try to work with local housing representatives towards a solution.

The decision to host the homelessness panel grew out of several community indicators of the rising homeless crisis in the area. The initial discussion grew out of staff concern that mass evictions in a local housing project were not based on fair practice. Furthermore, at the November 27, 2001 Council meeting, a representative from the Springfield Family Center reported receiving an increase in the number of calls from families who were homelessness from

ten a month in 1999 to three calls a day in 2001. All of the families that were calling about being homeless had children. SWCES staff noted that the program's number of families were low partly due to evictions of families that took place at a housing complex October 2001.

Prior to the panel meeting, one home visitor decided to learn more about the eviction process in order to aid one of her long term families (and others) with low literacy levels get through the process. She and a VAL Adult Educator researched the process of eviction and found it to be an extremely difficult procedure for families with limited skills. Thus, SWCES and the Advisory Council decided to host the panel on homelessness during a quarterly Advisory Council meeting, and invite Council members as well as representatives from area service providers.

Fifteen representatives from local service provider agencies (most of whom are on the SWCES Advisory Council) attended the Quarterly Council meeting on homelessness. The panel comprised of twelve individuals representing local landlords, schools, shelters, Vermont State Housing Authority, a Land Trust, the Springfield Family Center, and a formerly homeless parent. SWCES videotaped the panel discussion in order to broadcast the meeting on several local television stations. For this reason, staff and service providers developed fourteen suggested questions to ensure that the meeting was organized and all areas of concern were addressed. All meeting attendants were invited to ask these questions. In the final segment of the panel, members were asked to summarize the local problem and efforts to help resolve the issue. At the meeting, it was determined that the eviction process of many families from a local building was justified. However, Gladys Collins stated that the larger problem was that often families have limited resources to prevent eviction, may ignore early warnings, may not be able to read or understand initial warnings, and may not be able to find other housing.

Interviews and questionnaires show that SWCES staff feel that the homelessness panel increased awareness of the issue within the community. However, they are uncertain that it actually provoked any real change in the way that evictions and homelessness is handled in the area. Gladys Collins reported that they received positive feedback from many local community members after the broadcast of the homelessness panel. Some had little or no idea that the problem existed to the extent to which it did. One home visitor reported that since that meeting she has attended a monthly meeting hosted by the Rockingham Area Community Land Trust (RACLT) in the Spring of 2002. This meeting was also attended by representatives from many area service providers. The RACLT reported that a Service Enriched Housing program, modeled after the program in Brattleboro, Vermont was being developed in the area. She continuously attended these meetings and Betty Kinsman, Director of the SAPCC, signed the support of the SAPCC in this project. This home visitor feels that this may be a way to address homelessness and that the panel discussion was very timely. SWCES staff and the Advisory Council felt that overall this meeting served to educate themselves and the public about the eviction process and the plight of homeless families in general.

VI. Program Self-Assessments

This past year, the Advisory Council and SWCES staff completed two program self-assessments: *Integration of Components* (Appendix B) and *Partnerships and Collaborations* (Appendix C). These program self-assessments were part of the process evaluation to examine strengths and weaknesses in program operations, including links between program strategies and outcomes. These surveys were developed by the RMC Corporation, the state wide evaluators of Even Start in New York and are excerpt from the *Guide to Quality: Even Start Family Literacy Program Implementation and Continuous Improvement Volume I, Revised* (Dwyer, 2001). The surveys are comprised of “quality considerations” or statements that indicate program quality. The respondent is asked to indicate how descriptive each consideration is of their program (1=very descriptive, 5=not at all descriptive). These tools are used to generate discussion on program strengths, weaknesses, and areas that local evaluation and program and/or staff development may focus.

Integration of Instruction within Program Components

Six members of the SWCES staff completed the *Integration of Instruction within Program Components* self-assessment (Appendix B) on October 15, 2001 at a staff meeting. The Even Start legislation [Section 1201, 1204, and 14101(15), ESEA] requires local programs to provide families with integrated literacy services. This refers to the integrating of the four major components of the Even Start Family Literacy program including: adult education, parenting education, early childhood and school age education, and interactive parent and child activities. The components need to be integrated to ensure families receive consistent and reinforced messages about the value of education and learning from all staff. This also allows learning to take place in a variety of situations (Dwyer, 2001).

Table 6 depicts the quantitative responses denoted to each quality component. The number in the boxes under the scale from 1 to 5 represents the number of persons who responded as such. Areas in gray indicate that high marks were received, where between five to six respondents rated the area as a one or a two. A brief discussion of each quality component, when provided by respondents, follows this table.

Table 6. Quantitative Responses to Integration of Instruction within Program Components Self-Assessment

Quality Component	Very Descriptive			Not at all descriptive	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. All program components employ a holistic approach to serving families.	3	3			
2. The program has identified common messages that are emphasized across instructional components.	2	2	2		
3. Program staff see integration as an effective instructional strategy that is essential to achieving the desired intensity of services for families.		5	1		
4. The program makes specific connections across program components.	3	3			
5. The program uses an interdisciplinary approach in planning the curriculum for each component			6		
6. The program's management structure is designed to facilitate integration of components.		4	2		
7. The program continues to work on integration of services with local schools when children are enrolled in elementary school.	1	1	2	1	

Based on the quantitative responses of the respondents, SWCES staff view the program as doing well in many quality components relating to the integration of components. “Quality” is indicated when more than three quarters (5 or more) of the respondents rated the area as a one or two, meaning that the quality area is very descriptive of what takes place in the program. The following provides a narrative of staff comments to their ranking denoted to each quality area.

All respondents stated that the *first* quality component of **employing a holistic approach to serving families** is very descriptive of SWCES. The three who noted number 1 stated that one of the programs strengths is meeting and working with families at whatever level and situation they are in. Those who selected number 2 stated that the program is good at discovering family needs but cannot always meet them.

Several of the participants identified that the *second* quality component of **common messages across instructional components** is very descriptive of the program. Two respondents chose 1 stating that common messages have really emerged over the past year, specifically with the EFF study groups and the use of EFF framework language for the on-site program. Two respondents chose 2, however they questioned whether or not their expectations for families and to apply and transfer skills were too high. Two respondents chose 3 indicating that they did not have enough

information to judge this and that the program needs to be more intentional about articulating common messages.

Five respondents gave the ***third*** quality component on **integration as an effective instructional strategy** a number 2 stating that this is evidenced by movement and progress of families. However, they noted that not every home visit is an opportunity for families to learn as it is often difficult to turn a "crisis" into a learning experience. Families need to reflect and review the situation in order to turn learn from a crisis and home visitors stated that they do not always remember or have time to do that. One respondent gave the program a 3 stating that SWCES views integration as an effective instructional strategy but are not sure if collaborators who deliver some of their services do this.

For the ***fourth*** quality component on **making specific connections across program components**, three respondents selected 1, stating that the quality component describes SWCES. Three respondents selected category 2, stating that 4c and d are emerging, however they do not meet regularly with center-based instructors (such as Head Start) to plan for families.

For the ***fifth*** quality component on **interdisciplinary approach in planning the curriculum for each component**, all respondents selected 3 as there was some confusion around the meaning of an "interdisciplinary" approach in planning curriculum for each component. The SWCES Coordinator will clarify this with Wendy Ross and discussion with staff will continue at a later date.

For the ***sixth*** quality component on the **program's management structure**, four of the respondents chose 2 citing that the staff teams meet regularly to discuss and design instructional plans, but all felt that there is not enough time for paperwork, etc. Several felt that although staff meet regularly, they could still use more planning time.

With regards to the ***seventh*** quality component on **integration of services with local elementary schools**, one respondent chose 1 commenting that SWCES have three to four school representatives that regularly attend staff meetings and one that regularly attends the Advisory Council meetings. One respondent chose 2 because she feels that the program is working hard on the integration of services with local schools. Three respondents chose 3 because they did not know or have an opinion. One respondent chose 4 because, although there have been breakthroughs with the schools, she often feels like a stranger in the schools.

Recommendations for improving the integration of components

The following are recommendations for program improvement based on the quality components and staff discussion on the integration of components.

- ✓ The program should continue to employ a holistic approach to serving families. Continue to involve parents in the planning of Even Start events to fit their interests and goals and tailor instruction based on individual need.
- ✓ The program needs to further articulate common messages that are emphasized across instructional components with staff and collaborators. Staff should continue to utilize the EFF study groups and EFF framework to develop a common language for the on site and home based instruction portions of Even Start.

- ✓ Home visitors should work on reflecting and reviewing a crisis situation to ensure that families learn from the situation. Further, the program should continue to have open communication with collaborators through Advisory Council meetings, educating them on Even Start instructional methods, including the integration of services as an effective instructional strategy.
- ✓ Staff should try to meet more regularly with center-based instructors (such as Head Start) to plan for families. The program should possibly utilize time during Advisory Council meetings for planning activities that make connections across program components.
- ✓ Several staff recognized that they could use more planning time for programs. The evaluators recommend incorporating planning time into current staff meeting times and possibly re-distribute staff hours to increase the amount of time available for planning.
- ✓ The program should continue to improve its relationship and integration of services with local schools when children are enrolled in elementary school.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Thirteen members of the SWCES staff and Advisory Council completed the *Partnerships and Collaboration* self-assessment (Appendix C) during a meeting on January 22, 2002. This was a follow up self-assessment to one conducted in 1999-2000. Strong partnerships and collaboration is crucial for SWCES to operate their program and form a network of service providers that, individually and collectively, take responsibility for providing and strengthening family literacy services (Dwyer, 2001). Collaboration improves SWCES services for families, as service providers share the responsibility of meeting family literacy and other needs. Table 7 depicts the quantitative responses given for each area of quality. The number in the boxes under the scale from 1 to 5 represents the number of persons who responded as such. Areas in gray indicate that high marks were received; the majority of respondents rated the area as a one or a two. A brief discussion of recommendations for specific quality areas, when provided by respondents, follows this table.

Table 7. Quantitative Responses to Partnership and Collaboration Self-Assessment

Quality Component	Very Descriptive			Not at all descriptive	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The partners design the program together and periodically review the effectiveness of strategies in meeting desired outcomes.		7	5	1	
2. The LEA takes an active role in the partnership, meaning that the district's central office staff and school principals are knowledgeable about and supportive of Even Start's goals and services.		8	3	2	
3. The partnership develops relationships with a wide variety of agencies .	11	1			1
4. Collaborations are formed with key agencies that provide high-quality services which are directly related to Even Start's core program components.	11	1	1		
5. The program has written agreements with collaborators concerning the nature of the relationship and services to be rendered.	8	3	2		
6. Cooperative relationships are formed with agencies for referral, coordination and external support services.	9	3			
7. The program builds on and does not duplicate high quality community services that are meeting family needs.	9	4			
8. An administrative team of representatives from partner and collaborating agencies meets regularly to ensure good communication and coordination of services.	8		4	1	
9. The partners and collaborating agencies see collaboration as primarily beneficial to families ; there are secondary benefits to the agencies themselves.	12	1			
10. The partners create a governance or advisory board that serves as a bridge and unifying force between partners and collaborators, and the program and community.	6	4	1	1	
11. The program recognizes that staff time is required to attend to building and maintaining collaborative relationships. Communication among agency staffs is frequent and staff visit each others' program sites.	6	4	1	1	

12. Referrals for the program come from collaborators and other agencies. Even Start families are also referred to collaborators for services.	7	3	1	2	
13. The program and collaborators share information about families to improve and tailor services they receive, addressing confidentiality issues.	8	6			
14. The program and collaborators work together to minimize barriers to participation in services.	10	2	2		
15. The program offers training as an incentive for collaborators.	6	3	4	1	
16. Ownership in the relationship with collaborators is built at all levels. Staff are well informed about the roles and missions of the collaborators.	8	5	1		
17. Some Even Start staff have “boundary-crossing” roles with collaborating agencies.	8	3	3		
18. Collaborators have a role in identifying outcomes for local evaluation and an interest in evaluation results .	11	2	1		
19. Families have a role in identifying possible collaborators. Families are encouraged to select resources that are most appropriate for them.	12	2			
20. The partners assume joint responsibility for developing and implementing a continuous improvement plan for program design and services.	3	8		1	1
21. The partners assume joint responsibility for developing a long-range continuation plan for the program by the second year of the grant cycle to ensure continued funding after the grant ends.	4	7	2		1

*Question did not apply to one or more respondents

All of the twenty-one areas of program quality under the *Partnerships and Collaboration* Quality Consideration received high marks from staff and the Advisory Council. This demonstrates an improvement in this area from 1999-00, when this self assessment was first conducted. SWCES Staff and Advisory Council members view SWCES's collaboration with other service providing agencies as a major strength of the program. SWCES has formed a wide variety of relationships with agencies that refer families to the program, as well as fulfill family external needs in collaboration with Even Start. Collaborators provide high quality services consistent with Even Start core components. An active Advisory Council of partners and collaborators meets regularly to discuss program planning and updates, and Council meetings often serve as professional development opportunities for collaborators. Collaborators have a stake in the

success of Even Start and are working with program staff to develop a long range continuation plan through the development of the on-site program. Partnerships and collaborations with area service providers and other continues to be a major strength of the program. Further discussion on this strength is provided in the section of this report on p. 19.

Recommendations for improving partnerships and collaboration

Overall, SWCES is effectively collaborating with service providing organizations to meet the needs and goals of families in the program. Recommendations for specifically quality areas are provided below based on staff responses.

- ✓ For the ***first*** quality area on **partner's designing the program**, the evaluators recommend that staff periodically review the effectiveness of strategies in meeting desired outcomes with partners.
- ✓ For the ***second*** quality area on **SWCES relationship with the LEA**, the program should continue to improve SWCES relationship with the LEA, to encourage them to look to the program for early literacy support. Continue to build awareness among the LEA of SWCES services through the use of the ECP survey, Program Coordinator meetings with school members, and Advisory Council meetings. Building this relationship should increase SWCES staff access to school professional development.
- ✓ For the ***eleventh*** quality area on **communication among agency staff**, the program should work to provide more opportunities for staff to interact with collaborators at their location (i.e. site visits).
- ✓ For the ***fifteenth*** quality area on **training as an incentive for collaborators**, the program should continue to use Advisory Council time for professional development and training on current issues. Further the program should continue to advertise relevant trainings to collaborators so they may become more familiar with SWCES approaches.
- ✓ With regard to the ***seventeenth*** quality area on **"boundary-crossing roles"**, SWCES staff should work to improve boundary crossing roles with collaborators other than VAL, the Department of Health, and the PATH agency.
- ✓ With regards to the ***twentieth*** quality area on **implementing a continuous improvement plan**, SWCES should continue to work with collaborators, specifically involving the LEA in the process of program design and services.
- ✓ For the ***twenty first*** quality area on **developing a long range continuation plan for the program to ensure continued funding**, the program should continue to develop and strengthen the on-site program through diversified funding streams. SWCES should also involve all major partners and collaborators with the continuation plan throughout the fiscal year at Advisory Council and other meetings to ensure their support and guidance.

VII. The South Windsor County Even Start Client Focus Groups

In July 2002, the evaluators held two focus groups and conducted interviews with SWCES families to document participants' views on SWCES, including family's progress towards their goals throughout the year, impact of the program on family achievements, and strengths and areas in need of improvement, using the *Even Start Client Questionnaire* (Appendix D). Families were consistent in their responses given last year, in the areas of program impact on family achievements and strengths and ways to improve the program. Two stories of families who recently graduated from the program are provided at the end of this section. This questionnaire is an evaluation tool that serves to document participant outcome and provide feedback to program delivery. It is also a tool to help clients reflect on their year with SWCES.

The following narrative provided by families demonstrates that SWCES has met their program goals, specifically the goals of assisting parents to be full partners in their children's acquisition of literacy skills through parent education and adult education, improving economic opportunities of families through increasing the educational level of parents, strengthening the family's vision of themselves as a learning team, expanding the ability of families to become contributing and self-sustaining members of the community, and leaving a legacy of intergenerational life-long learners who will positively impact their communities as their communities recognize and commit to delivering family literacy activities beyond Even Start's tenure.

Progress Towards Goals - Major Accomplishments of Families

Families were asked to identify major accomplishments they have made this past year. Families discussed goals in which they are working towards and have achieved.

- ❖ One mother is working on her goal of regaining custody of her child from SRS custody. As part of this, she has been very involved in parenting classes. This mother also recently completed a training to become a site supervisor for a summer program at the Springfield Family Center.
- ❖ One mother enrolled her son in Head Start preschool program and is volunteering on the Preschool Policy Council.
- ❖ Three women interviewed completed the 12 week Getting Ready to Work program at the SAPCC.
- ❖ One of the woman who completed the GRTW training is considering taking continuing education courses at the Howard Dean Technical Center, in the area that she specialized in during her GRTW "employment" experience.

Examples of Major Family Accomplishments

- ❖ Completion of training for employment
- ❖ Placement of child in Head Start
- ❖ Volunteering on Pre-School Policy Council
- ❖ Completion of GRTW program
- ❖ Receiving GED
- ❖ Improved credit
- ❖ Purchasing a home
- ❖ Driver's license

- ❖ One father received his GED and is taking computer classes.
- ❖ One family moved into a better housing environment. The father has maintained employment for the past nine months while the mother stays at home to raise their son. They are working with their VAL adult educator to improve their credit rating to purchase a home in the future. This mom also noted that her reading skills have improved and she participates in all book classes offered by SWCES.
- ❖ One ESL mother works during the day, so she works with her home based instructor in the evenings or on weekends and is a dedicated student. She recently achieved her goal of purchasing a home and is working on painting it. Her youngest daughter will start kindergarten in the fall and her oldest daughter is attending college in Newport, Rhode Island.
- ❖ One mother who completed the GRTW program received her learner's permit and driver's license. She has passed the reading test of her GED and is working to complete the other test requirements. Her home visitor stressed that she has made tremendous strides in her life this past year.

Program Impact on Family Achievements

Families also discussed several ways in which the program has impacted or supported their achievements. Similar to the findings last year, families cited examples related to adult education, parenting education, early childhood education, and the positive impact the program has had through connecting families to resources or services in the communities. A new area of impact on families is the on-site program, specifically the Getting Ready to Work training program.

Impact of the On-Site Program

Three parents interviewed participated in the on-site program through the Getting Ready to Work (GRTW) training program. All of them discussed positive impacts that this program had on their lives. During the initial part of the program, called "Futures", participants primarily focused on goal setting, which was helpful to provide direction and motivation to continue with the 12 week intensive course. Participants also spoke about gains in employment and professional skills, as well as experiencing an increase in their social and human capital (Sherraden, 1991, Putnam, 1993 and 1993).

Gains in Employment and Professional Skills

All cited gaining employment and professional skills, including developing a resume and cover letter for applying for a job, gained experience in interviewing for a job and "working" at the SAPCC on a job of their interest to gain practical experience. They noted that this hands on experience of working and being accountable and responsible on the job has encouraged them to either further their education or pursue employment in a specific area. One mother is working towards receiving her Licensed Nurses Aide certificate and one has the goal of being employed in the child care field or as an administrative assistant. One woman said that this program encouraged her to go back to school and take classes at the Howard Dean Technical Center in the

field of landscaping, the area in which she focused during the GRTW "employment" experience. They also gained practical skills such as using a computer and how to put a paper together, which both noted will be helpful in future education or career moves. Furthermore, given the experience of working in a professional setting, they learned a lot about themselves and their strengths. One woman stated that she realized she is extremely organized and timely and is very patient with people. Another felt that she learned how to handle things on her own in an independent manner.

Increased Social and Human Capital

All of interviewees indicated gains in social and human capital skills from being involved in the on-site program. These "soft" skill gains included increased self confidence and self esteem, a positive change in attitude, and building a social network through making connections and friends with others in similar life situations (Sherraden, 1991, Putnam, 1993 and 1993). One mother said that she enjoyed working in the group setting because she realized that other people have similar issues and challenges and was encouraged and motivated by how others worked through them. All of them noted that the group setting helped them to improve their social and interpersonal skills. Most of the group members live in rural and isolated communities and were initially not comfortable speaking and working in groups. One woman said that because of this course, she overcame her discomfort of talking to a large group and gained further understanding of different types of personalities and how to handle conflict between people.

Adult education

Several parents discussed how their participation in the adult education part of SWCES has had a positive impact on the development of their literacy skills. One of the women interviewed is working on getting into the ADP program and one father interviewed just received his GED. All of the other women interviewed have received their GED or high school diploma through Even Start support. One woman commented that her reading skills have improved. This mother is also working with her adult educator to improve her credit in order to purchase a home in the future.

Parenting education

All of the parents talked about the positive impact parenting education has had on their relationship with their family and raising their children. One woman said that her parenting education has provided her more options for raising her children and working with them at a young age. Some areas she mentioned improvement in her parenting skills include: being better able to listen to her children, learning how to say "no" in an appropriate way, how to speak appropriately to her children, how to build her children's self-esteem so they succeed in school, and to let her children try things independently so they may learn from the experience. She commented that receiving her GED and becoming employed has improved her self-esteem. Another mother noted that she has improved in her reading and math skills and is now spending more time with her children reading and playing with them in her spare time.

Several parents indicated that because of SWCES, their parenting skills have improved and they have learned more positive ways to interact and raise their children.

Early childhood education

Several respondents discussed the positive impact of their family's involvement in SWCES on their children's education. One mother stressed that the positive results of her adult education has transferred to her child's education by being better able to read to her son. Parents are also actively taking part in their child's education to work through speech or reading difficulties. One mother and her early childhood educator are working with their son to improve his reading and letter skills. All of the parents indicated that their children enjoy reading and that several children have improved in their attention span because of reading with both parents and the home visitor. Parents have also noticed an improvement in her child's reading skill and vocabulary. All parents appreciated the fact that home visitors bring educational tools, such as a lap top computer, games, books, and toys that benefit their children as well as other children who come over to play.

Several parents noted the "transfer of learning" effect that takes place from adult education to early childhood education. As parents improve their literacy skills they are better able to support their child's literacy skills.

Connecting families to community resources

Home visitors and VAL educators connect families with needed resources in the community so families may continue to make strides towards goals and further their learning. One woman said that her adult educator provided her with information to take the needed steps towards attaining her GED.

Several of the parents interviewed stated that their home visitor connected them to their local library, so they can enjoy going to the library to read books and attend reading programs,

Families stressed the positive impact of the program had by connecting them to needed resources or services in the community, in order to attain their goals or work through a challenging situation.

outside of the program. One parent of a family who recently graduated noted that this connection was important to her to continue working with her children on their reading skills. Furthermore, home visitors have connected parents to necessary services to care for children with special needs. Another parent was connected to resources in the community to complete the application and registration process to establish a successful in-home child care business. Parents have also gotten involved in workshops and support groups, such as the Mom's Group, outside of the program, because of a home visitor's referral.

Strengths of South Windsor County Even Start

Families also identified several strengths of SWCES that have made this an enjoyable program and assisted families in working towards and achieving their goals. Strengths identified by the families correspond to the Family literacy Core Values and Quality Considerations, as discussed in the Revised Guide to Quality (RMC Research, 2001). These strengths are incorporated in the six major strengths of the program, as identified by the evaluation team (see Section IV).

The addition of the on-site program

As discussed above, all of the interviewees who completed the GRTW on-site program stress that this addition is a new strength of SWCES. It provides intensive training, workplace experience, hard and soft life and professional skills, and a group setting that offers encouragement, motivation and support.

Support, flexibility, and commitment of home visitors

All of the parents interviewed expressed deep appreciation and stressed the importance of home visitors' strong commitment to work with families, through both good and bad situations. This program feedback has been consistent since the onset of the program. Several of the women specifically noted that SWCES staff are highly qualified for their role, with strong skills and the appropriate personality to handle all situations. All of the interviewees noted that home based instructors are like family to them, providing a positive support and motivational system. One woman commented that they will "bend over backwards to help you out", from providing information on getting a GED to providing transportation to attend an Even Start event to bring a child to a doctor's appointment. One woman commented that she appreciates the flexibility of her home visitor in scheduling appointments and re-scheduling them on a moment's notice to accommodate for unexpected events. Two families who transitioned to another home visitor when Gladys Collins took on the sole role of Program Coordinator, stated that the transition was very positive and smooth and they are pleased with their new home based instructor.

Family identified strengths of SWCES

- The addition of the On-Site program
- Support, flexibility, and commitment of home visitors
- Promoting parents to be advocates of their children
- Connecting families with other families
- Activities and playgroups
- Promotion of family learning outside of the program
- Providing childcare services

Promoting parents to be advocates of their children

All respondents noted that home visitors promote and encourage parent advocacy among families. Even Start has supported two parents interviewed to become advocates for their children because of speech disorders. Several also noted that their home visitors attend parent-teacher conferences and meetings with teachers and counselors to address the needs of children at school. Home visitors also provide transportation for families, supporting their attendance at school-related and other meetings, such as court appointments and doctor's visits. One mother who lost custody of her children noted that her home visitor has provided tremendous support through working with the court system to regain custody.

Connecting families with other families

Parents also commented on how their participation in SWCES has facilitated them to connect with other families in their communities. This is specifically an outcome of the parents who completed the GRTW training. Activities and playgroups have offered parents an opportunity to leave their home, meet new people, and receive needed peer social interaction.

Activities and playgroups

All of the families speak positively about activities and playgroups offered by SWCES. Favorite literacy related activities include: attending various literacy series, such as the Native American and New England literacy series and the Mother Goose programs. Favorite field trips include: the trip to Fort #4, a sheep farm, and apple picking. Parenting classes on a variety of topics, such as "step parenting" continue to be useful and enjoyed by families.

Promotion of family learning outside of SWCES

Through home visits and attending events such as book classes, families receive education materials to bring home. This encourages parents to work with their children in the development of literacy skills outside of the program. One woman commented that her involvement in SWCES has taught her the skill of how to problem solve and how to get things accomplished, that she has applied in every day life. Those who completed the GRTW program also commented that this program encouraged them to pursue further education or find a job.

Providing child care services

Many of the parents stressed how important it is that SWCES provides child care services at both the Parent/Child Center during special events and during the on-site program as well as during home based instruction. Parents indicated that this service allows them to focus on their studies during home visits or activities at the center, instead of focusing on their child.

Areas for program improvement

Few parents had specific suggestions for program improvement during client focus groups, however the evaluators have made several recommendations based on discussion.

- o All participants who completed the GRTW program suggested that staff encourage other families to take advantage of this opportunity.
- o SWCES should also continue to build on program strengths that families have identified. These strengths include: the addition of the on-site program; support, flexibility and commitment of home visitors, promoting parents to be advocates of their children; connecting families with other families; activities and playgroups; promotion of family learning outside of the program; and providing childcare services.
- o The program should also continue to have parents assist in the planning of events, as many had opinions and ideas on activities in which they would like to be involved. The program should continue to grow on the path it is on, incorporating feedback from parents to best meet their needs.

Family Stories of Recent Even Start "Graduates"

The following highlights the stories of two families who have achieved their goals and have "graduated" from the program. Names have been withheld to protect the confidentiality of family members.

Working closely with her home visitor and VAL educator, one mother has earned her GED and child care certification. Her home visitor also connected her with resources in the community for the application and registration process of establishing an in-home child care facility. She is now running a successful in-home child care business. Her involvement in SWCES has taught her how to problem solve and how to get things accomplished. Her VAL educator has also provided her with material from the Community College of Vermont, as she is considering taking some college courses for further education in home child care. She noted that her son received high scores on his standardized tests because of the early childhood education provided by her home visitor. Furthermore, because she runs a child care program, the other children in her home benefit from educational materials, books, games, and toys that the home visitor brings. This mother continues to run her business and advocates for her child at school. She has recently graduated from the program because she met all of her goals and has demonstrated independence from the program.

This mother of five children noted that she feels all of her children have shown considerable progress in school because of SWCES. All of her children enjoy reading and have learned to use a computer because her home visitor brings her lap top on visits. This mother completed the GRTW training program and is considering taking courses at the Howard Dean Technical Center in the fall of 2002. This mother has also graduated from the program as she met all of her goals and her children are no longer of the target age group. She still has frequent contact with staff and still uses them as a referral sources and support.

VIII. Family Case Studies Utilizing the Equipped for the Future Role Maps Model

The SWCES program began to integrate the Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards into their work with families as a component of the outcome evaluation in 1999. EFF, an initiative of the National Institute for Literacy, recognizes knowledge and life skills of adults that will allow them to carry out their roles and responsibilities in society as workers, parents and family members, and citizens and community members. These standards are useful to the program because it recognizes that literacy instruction is present in all components of the program and can be used in a way that is meaningful and useful to families in their daily lives (Stein, 2000). Since training in 1999, SWCES staff have attended three additional trainings on using the EFF standards in program curricula and family goal setting and have initiated monthly EFF study groups to continue familiarizing themselves with the process (see discussion below).

Background on the EFF Case Study Tool

According to the National Institute for Literacy, the intention of EFF is that learners can set purposeful goals, which form the basis for instruction and assist learners to see the application of the instruction and learning in their every day lives (Curry, 2001). In FY 1999-2000, SWCES staff and evaluators developed the *EFF Checklist* (Appendix E) to document family progress through the three Role Maps: the Parent/Family Role Map, Worker Role Map, and Citizen/Community Member Role Map (Appendix F). The *EFF Checklist* presents the three Role Maps, major categories under each Role Map, and sub-categories under the three or four main categories. The *Checklist* was designed as a tool for family case study short and long term documentation.

The Equipped for the Future assessment shows how focus of home visit instruction and family skills, as identified by home visitors through the use of the EFF Checklist, have allowed them to work towards and achieve their goals.

In FY 2000-01, home visitors piloted the use of the *EFF Checklist* with only one family during home visits. This year, home visitors collected data for all families. In July 2002, the evaluators held a focus group with home visitors to follow up on the use of the tool for this year (*Staff Focus Group Guide* Appendix G). The discussion covered the use of the tool (both successful and unsuccessful uses), how the tool helped families, and ways to improve the tool. Home visitors were also asked to provide examples of how family activities exemplify the different Role Maps. Short “vignettes” will be presented below on all families and how they fit into the various Role Maps depending on their goals. More detailed information, including *EFF Charts* and a narrative, for two specific families is presented below. These families were selected for case study documentation this year, as their involvement in SWCES exemplifies several of the Role Maps and *EFF* data was collected over the past two years. The discussion provides a longitudinal portrayal on how family activities and skills have developed, changed, and grown to work towards and achieve their goals over the past two years.. For confidentiality purposes, all names are withheld in the following discussion.

Uses of the EFF Checklist with Families

The evaluator's objective behind the development of the EFF Checklist was to have a tool that home visitors could use with families, as a way of identifying their goals, tracking their progress, and reflecting upon learning that takes place in both formal and informal instruction. This data would then be used in outcome evaluation to provide family case studies of how learning and skill building from home visit instruction assist families to work towards and achieve their goals. The following provides a discussion of how the EFF Checklist was used by home visitors during the past year, based on suggestions for improvement of the tool that came about in the 2000-01 fiscal year.

Use with families

At the initial EFF staff focus group in 2000-01, all of the home visitors reported that they seldom used the EFF Checklist directly with families for several reasons. All felt that the Checklist was too intimidating to use with people who have low literacy skills. This issue was also compounded by the fact that time is often limited during home based instruction and the priority of the visit did not often lend to the use of the EFF checklist as a means of reflection. In response to this, the evaluators photocopied and laminated each Role Map (original design by Stein, 2000, see Appendix F) onto different color paper, with the goal that this would be more "user friendly" and enable home instructors to use this with families and easily distinguish between each Role Map and skills. Home instructors state that they have used the colorful Role Maps with families on occasion but the use is not systematic. Further, they commented that families are often in one Role Map for a while, specifically the Parent and Family Role Maps, and thus there is no change in information to report. For this reason, the evaluators have made several recommendations regarding the use of the EFF Checklist, which is discussed in the end of this section.

Reflection tool for home visitors to document family progress and movement

Home visitors continue to report that the EFF model and the EFF Checklist has been a useful reflection tool for themselves, documenting a family's movement through the three Role Maps, with different learning activities or life events over time. Several home instructors stated that families are often "stuck" in one Role Map, typically the Parent/Family Role Map, because they have the goal of focusing on their children and family's success. However, this tool helps them to sort out exactly where families are in their learning and when they "break out" of certain roles, such as move from Parent/Family towards a Worker.

EFF as a tool to build a common language for the on-site program and build a common ground with collaborators

In 2000-01, home visitors reported sharing the EFF Checklist with their collaborators during a quarterly Advisory Council meeting. Gladys Collins noted that this tool has helped collaborators better understand the services and spectrum of learning provided by SWCES. This tool has improved relationships with collaborators by providing a common ground of understanding about SWCES.

To continue this common ground of understanding, specifically for the on-site program, SWCES hosted one EFF goal setting trainings, which were attended by VAL and Reach Up staff and attended two EFF trainings to further incorporate it into the curriculum. These trainings

prompted the on site program staff to hold monthly EFF goal setting study groups to further their understanding of the model and process. Study group sessions were held for an hour on a monthly basis for 2001-2002 at the SAPCC. They included the entire on-site staff including, SAPCC Reach Up Case Managers, SAPCC Parent Education Coordinator, the teacher/job coach from the GRTW program, in addition to SWCES and collaborating VAL staff. The goal of this group was to study the entire EFF framework to make this framework the "common thread" for the on-site program. It provides staff with common language to use with participants and one another and also guides "outcome" expectations for on-site participants. Facilitation of the group rotates so that all members are equally invested in the outcomes. The facilitator plans the topic for discussion. At one study group session, the facilitators developed a questionnaire for GRTW on-site participants based on EFF indicators in the worker role map. This exercise provided to be a useful tool for on-site participants to reflect on their progress in gaining skills as workers.

Family Case Study Documentation

The following discussion provides a documentation qualitative data provided by home visitors during the EFF focus group and quantitative data from the EFF checklists for two families over the past two years. The first part of the discussion provides a general picture of SWCES families through the EFF Role Maps. The second part of the discussion provides detailed information for two families whom home visitors have identified as exemplary of the Role Maps for the past two years.

The following narrative provided by SWCES staff demonstrates that the program has met their goals, specifically the goals of: assisting parents to be full partners in their children's acquisition of literacy skills through parent education and adult education, improving economic opportunities of families through increasing the educational level of parents, strengthening the family's vision of themselves as a learning team, expanding the ability of families to become contributing and self-sustaining members of the community, and leaving a legacy of intergenerational life-long learners who will positively impact their communities as their communities recognize and commit to delivering family literacy activities beyond Even Start's tenure.

SWCES Families and use of the EFF Standards

Home visitors state that, in general, the learning and activities of many families consistently falls in the Parent/Family Role Map. Many families have the goal of improving parenting skills and many home visits focus on child rearing, child education, positive discipline and role modeling for children. However, many home visits, activities and events overlap in the Worker and Citizen/Community Member Role Maps. For example, in the nutrition/cooking classes parents are involved in the planning and preparation of food and simultaneously are communicating with others and becoming informed. This past year, many parents have taken the great stride of assisting in planning activities and events, which involves all three of the Role Maps. Home visitors note that with upcoming reform in welfare and work requirements, they anticipate that families will be moving towards the Worker Role Map.

- One family continues to concentrate on the family's needs, specifically her children's education, as the mother moves towards the worker Role Map. She recently completed the GRTW training. Because of her "employment" experience in the GRTW program as a landscape designer for the SAPCC, she is considering taking courses at the Howard Dean Technical Center to further her development in this area. She has also become more involved in her community by volunteering to be on a committee to decorate the interior of a community recreation hall.
- One mother continues to work on improving her parenting skills under the Parent and Family Role Map as she works to get her children back from SRS custody. She has been very active in her children's education since she lost custody and as been an advocate for them by writing letters to the courts and lawyers on their behalf. The teacher of one of her children noted that she was the only parent to call the school to make sure that everything was OK on September 11, 2001.
- One home visitor stated that six of her families continued to be active in the Parent and Family Role Map by taking parenting classes and requesting that she to bring the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to home based instruction. Two of these families crossed over to the Worker Role Map by focusing on getting and maintaining employment.
- Ten families attend the SWCES Retreat this year to plan for the next year, placing them in the Worker and Citizen and Community Role Maps. This was a record number, with half of the families attending.
- Another mother active in the Citizen and Community Role Map took action to improve the Mom's Group held bimonthly in Windsor. Last summer, this mother wrote a letter to the SAPCC Executive Director, Betty Kinsman, asking for funds to buy materials for Mom's Group. The request was funded and the group was able to purchase craft supplies and food for the entire year.
- Another mother falling into the Citizen and Community Role Map has been very vocal in planning with SWCES. She attended the Annual Retreat and followed through with gathering some materials to aid in an activity that was her husband's idea at one of the summer book programs.
- Several SWCES families were active in the community through the Citizen and Community Role Map by writing articles for "The Green Mountain Eagle", a Vermont Adult Newsletter written for and by adult education students. See Appendix J for an example of their work!

Detailed look at two families and EFF Standards over two years

The EFF Standards and Checklist document the skill building and learning process families go through in order to work towards and achieve identified goals and work through challenging life situations. Adult and Early Childhood Educators have highlighted two families that exemplify more than one of the Role Maps (names of families have been withheld to maintain strict confidentiality). For analytical purposes, the evaluators combined the number of checks for each sub-category to get a total number of times home visits worked on each of the main categories,

under the three Role Maps. The following EFF Charts show the total number of checks received for the major categories under each Role Map (see *EFF Checklist* in Appendix E for further information on major and sub-categories). Specific details are provided in the text.

It is important to note that data from the EFF Checklist is subjective to the perspective of the home visitor, which differs among each individual. Thus, the following charts present a general picture of family progress through the two years. Furthermore, this tool does not represent a beginning and an end but a continuum of learning based on families needs at the current time. This tool should also not be used to compare one family to another. This tool was not used in a consistent manner for the same number of times throughout the two years for each family. In order to compare the data for each family over the two years, the percentage of checks received by families in each category for both years is presented. Each chart shows the Parent and Family Role Map areas in blue, the Worker Role Maps in purple, and the Citizen and Community Role Map in green. The lighter shade of each color represents data collected for 2000-01 and the darker shade represents data collected for 2001-02.

Parent and Family and Worker Role Map - Single mother establishes an in-home registered child care business, works to improve her personal life and child's education, and graduates from Even Start.

One Early Childhood Educator and a VAL Adult Educator discussed how a single mother with one child exemplified the Worker Role Map in 2000-01 and both the Parent and Family and Worker Role Maps this past year. This single mother was initially on TANF when she first enrolled in the program. During the first year of her participation in the program, beginning in May of 1999, she identified that she wanted to start a registered child care business in her home as she was already providing services for many neighborhood families. With the assistance of her home visitor and VAL educator, this woman went through several challenging steps to receive her child care certification and currently run a successful registered child care facility in her home. One important step was to write a business plan to prove to the State of Vermont that her business meets certain work requirements. To meet these requirements, she had to do several things including: have her house inspected for fire safety and other health hazards; complete forms to receive subsidies for food through the state and write up menus and a nutrition plans on a weekly basis; complete a CPR and first aid course; and develop enrollment forms for children in the program. She also took the steps needed to get her eyes checked and purchase glasses and purchase a vehicle to solve her transportation problems.

With these new changes in her personal and professional life, this woman became more confident and organized in her life and more confident in her writing skills (she is dyslexic and has purchased a computerized spell check to assist her). She also became more consistent in making and keeping her home visiting appointments. Furthermore, she became very focused on her child's education. She has also focused on her own education as she has received her GED and is looking into taking some courses at the Community College of Vermont in child care.

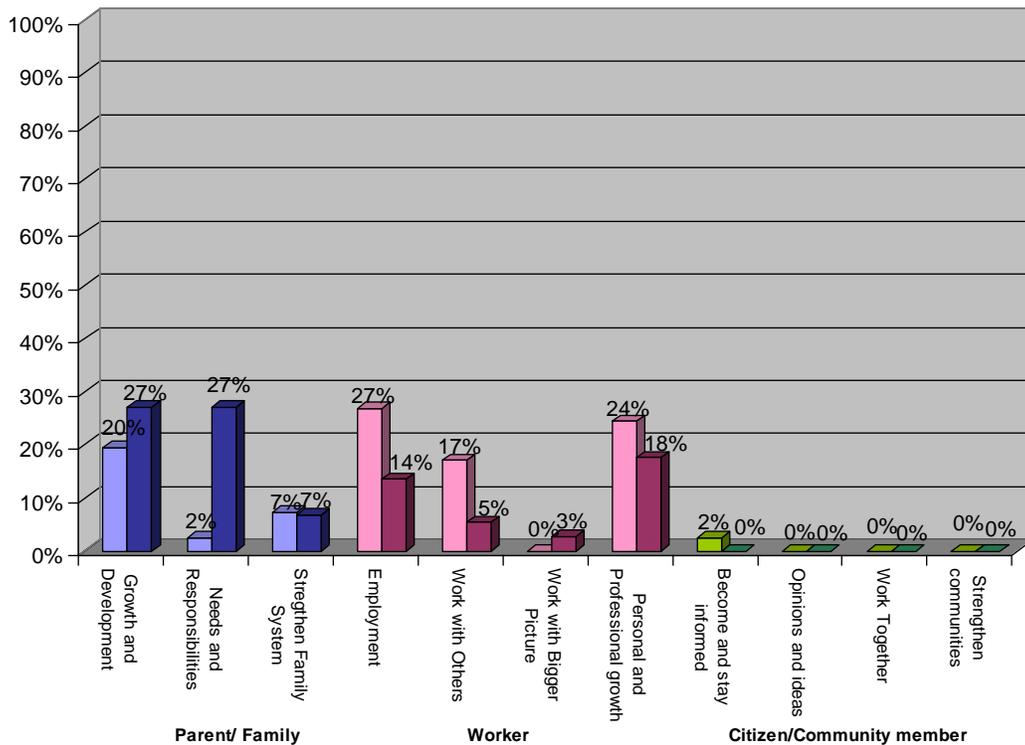
This woman's main goal this year was to continue running her business and, shifting to the Parent and Family Role Map, to focus on her child's education and improve her personal life. Her home instructor noted that she is in frequent contact with her son's teacher. This year she attended a Parenting Class in Windsor, Vermont as part of her parenting education hours. She is often not able to attend the Springfield events because she lives in an outlying town and is busy managing her business. However, she continued to meet on a monthly basis with her home instructor for toys, books, and information about events at the SAPCC and to "check-in" with someone about her life and education. This woman also reached a more personal goal, not directly related to family literacy, of finding a "partner" in life. She has developed a relationship and is working on strengthening her family, which has taken up a lot of her time. She continues to maintain her vehicle as well as paying her bills on time. Overall, she achieved her main goal of attaining her GED and is still considering attending the Community of Vermont. Her business continues to thrive as her day care is always full from word of mouth referrals.

At the end of this year, this woman's home based instructors and the Program Coordinator decided that she was ready to "graduate" from the program as she had met all of her Even Start family literacy goals and has reached an point in her life of independence and self-sustainability.

Figure 5 shows this woman’s movement from the Worker Role Map to the Parent and Family Role Map over the past two year through the EFF Checklist, as she became self-employed in 2000-01 (indicated in lighter shades of each color) and began to improve her family life and become a better advocate for her son in 2001-2002 (indicated in darker shades of each color). This figure indicates that the majority of her home visits in which this tool was used over the past two years, she has moved from the as she completed her goals and graduated from the program.

This EFF chart shows an increase from 20% of checks in 2000-01 (light blue) to 27% in 2001-02 (dark blue) in the area of “growth and development”, and increase from 2% to 27% in the area of “needs and responsibilities” and consistent activity of 7% for both years in the area of “strengthen the family system”. Looking at the areas under the Worker Role Map section, she showed a decrease in activity from 27% in 2000-01 (light purple) to 14% in 2001-02 (dark purple) in the area of employment, as well as a decrease in the areas of “working with others” (17% in 2000-01 to 5% in 2001-02) and “personal and professional growth” (24% in 2000-01 to 18% in 2001-02). She showed a slight increase of 3% in 2001-02 from 0% in 2000-01 in the area of “work within the bigger picture”. Although the EFF Checklist was not used as consistently as desired for this family, the chart still exemplifies the strides taken as a parent and worker to achieve her goal of establishing a successful in- home registered child care facility.

**Figure 5. EFF Family Chart from 1/01-6/02
Parent and Family and Worker Role Maps**



Note: The lighter shade of each color represents data collected for 2000-01 and the darker shade represents data collected for 2001-02

Parent and Family, Worker, and Citizen/Community Member Role Maps - ESL family attains goal of U.S. Citizenship, employment, and works to improve education for children

This two parent family with four children (two children eligible for SWCES services) enrolled in SWCES almost five months after moving to the United States from Poland in 1995. At that time, the parents and youngest daughter did not speak English. The family was seeking a better way of life and a more healthy environment for their children. At this time, their long term goal with the program was to become U.S. Citizens with short term goals of finding full-time employment for the parents and child care services for their youngest son. The family has since met their short term goals and has worked very hard with their adult educator to recently become U.S. Citizens. They have also met their initial long term goals by completing the complicated process of naturalization applications, proper documentation and fulfilling all of the pieces necessary for citizenship, including studying American government and history. This was especially challenging because of the language barrier (through the past five years they have learned some English and are now working to improve their ability to speak and read English, having accomplished their long term goal). They also had to travel to other parts of the state in order to take the required tests.

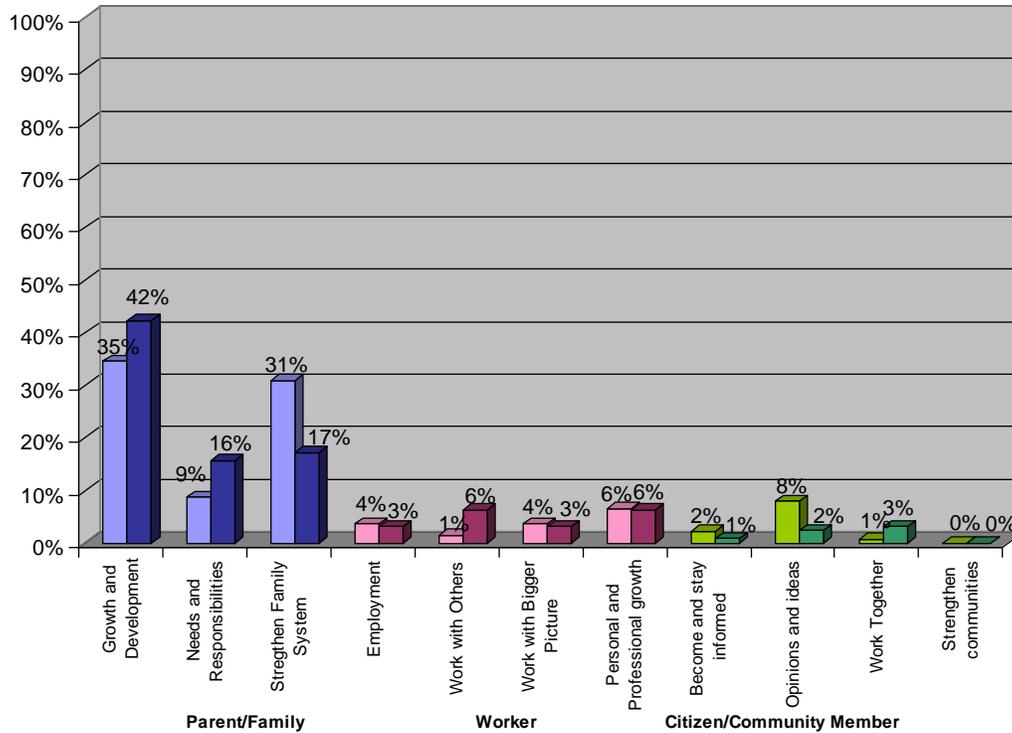
This past year, their goals included finding new employment after the father lost his job last spring/summer and concentrating on the children's schooling. The father was hired by Springfield School District in late Fall last year and has maintained his employment. Recently, he filled out an application for head of maintenance for one of the schools and is waiting to hear back if he received the promotion. Their one daughter enrolled in a parochial school has consistently struggled to work at her grade level. Although the struggle did not get easier for her, she now has a tutor for math and reading over the summer months paid for by Even Start. She was resistant to some of the other summer programming available to her and attended on an irregular basis in the past. The tutoring in her home has been much more appealing and she is following through with it.

Their youngest son has been enrolled in Head Start since September and they have been very pleased with Head Start services. During the winter, this son went through a period where he no longer wanted to attend Head Start on a regular basis. His Even Start Early Childhood Educator was able to work with the family and the school to revise Alex's schedule, to satisfy both Head Start and his needs. In both their children's situations, the parents supported the school's recommendations, with assistance from SWCES. This family fell into the Citizen and Community Role Map when the father had to attend a court session to defend himself.

Figure 6 demonstrates that over the past two years, this family has concentrated their learning in all three of the Role Maps, with a focus specifically in the Citizen/Community Member Role Map in 2000-01 and the Parent and Family Role Map in 2001-02. Examining the Parent and Family Role Map over the past two years, their chart shows an increase in the area of "growth and development" of 35% in 2000-01 (indicated in light blue) to 42% of home based instruction checks in 2001-02 (indicated in dark blue). They have also shown an increase in the area of "needs and responsibilities" from 9% of checks in 2000-01 to 16% in 2001-02. Aside from growth in these areas, this family was fairly consistent for both years. Minor changes are seen in

the categories of “strengthening the family”, “work with others” and “expressing opinions and ideas”. Their home visitor noted that, in general, this family spends most of their time working towards their full-time jobs and their children’s education, as they have a strong work ethic and desire to improve their English speaking skills and life situation for both themselves and their children.

**Figure 6. EFF Family Chart from 8/00 to 6/02
Parent and Family, Worker, and Citizen and Community Member Role Map**



Note: The lighter shade of each color represents data collected for 2000-01 and the darker shade represents data collected for 2001-02

Recommendations for continued use of EFF Standards and the EFF Checklist

As evident in the above discussion, although family learning may focus particularly on one Role Map, based on their goals, both formal and informal learning continually cross over into all of the Role Maps.

The evaluators recommend modifying the use of the EFF Checklist based on the low utilization rate of the Checklist with families in a systematic manner and given the new data collection requirements based on state and national Even Start legislation. The evaluators recommend selecting two to four families to highlight each year as a "Case Study" through collecting data with the EFF Checklist as well as qualitative data from staff and families. It is recommended that staff use the EFF Checklist at a minimum on a monthly basis, with use increasing as family activity shifts or crosses over to other Role Maps. The evaluators recommend continuing to hold EFF focus groups with staff at the end of the year to collect qualitative data for the Case Study narrative. The evaluators also recommend interviewing the individual families selected, if possible, to include their self-reported data in the Case Study narrative. The evaluators recommend that SWCES staff continue to use the EFF model, with the assistance of the Checklist, with families at their discretion, specifically for family goal setting and revision, and self-reflection. Based on the past two years of experience, the evaluators conclude that using this tool for family Case Study documentation, supplemented by staff and family self-reported data will make the best use of the information and the best use of home based instruction time. The evaluators will continue to work with SWCES staff to determine families to highlight for the evaluation Case Studies, as well as the most efficient way to use this tool to suit the needs of families, staff, and evaluation.

IX. Family Self-Assessment Questionnaire

This past year the Evaluation team and SWCES staff conducted self assessments with SWCES families using the tool, *A Measure of My Family's Well-being* (Appendix H). This survey was developed based on a survey from the Federal Economic Development Program and designed to reflect the family support matrix used by Reach Up. This survey is designed to document long term change in family well-being over the course of their Even Start involvement. Families were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 10 with one being concerned and ten being not concerned, their level of concern for fourteen specific areas in life. These areas include: shelter, transportation, nutrition and clothing, finance and income, physical health and safety, children's development and education, social/emotional health, family relationships, parenting, legal, community relations, adult education, employment, and work skills and habits. Families were interviewed by SWCES staff in the fall of 2001, providing a baseline of data on families well being to begin longitudinal analysis. Staff will continue to interview families on an annual basis for the duration that they are enrolled in the program. With the exception of this year, data collected each year will be compared with data from the previous year, providing a pre and post analysis with intervention. The initial data collected will also be compared to the final data collected on families to document long term change in well being as families exit the program.

Fifteen families completed the self-assessment this year, for a response rate of 79%. The data and discussion presented below demonstrates that the program has met and is continually working towards their goals. Goals demonstrated include: assisting parents to be full partners in their children's acquisition of literacy skills through parent education and adult education, ensuring that children reach their full potential as learners, strengthening the family's vision of themselves as a learning team, expanding the ability of families to become contributing and self-sustaining members of the community, leaving a legacy of intergenerational life-long learners who will positively impact their communities as their communities recognize and commit to delivering family literacy activities beyond Even Start's tenure. The goal the program continues to work towards with families is to improve economic opportunities of families through increasing the educational level of parents.

Data analysis

For analytical purposes, the evaluators grouped the scale of 1-10 into three categories, 1-4 being "concerned", 5-7 being "somewhat concerned", and 8-10 being "not concerned". The grouped analysis was conducted because the low N value of the sample did not provide meaningful data when frequency counts were calculated for the full scale. Frequency counts were calculated for the grouped data only. The evaluators calculated the measures of central tendency values (mean, median, and mode values) using the full scale of 1 to 10. The results of the data analysis are presented in Table 8.

To provide a visual portrayal of the areas that are of low, medium, and high concern to families, the evaluators highlighted the *frequency counts* of the areas that received between 20% and 49% in turquoise and 50% or greater in yellow. Depending on the category, "concerned", "somewhat concerned", and "not concerned", blue or yellow marks may be a positive or negative indication (discussed below). For the *measures of central tendency values*, the evaluators highlighted the

mean value of 6.9 or less in red, indicating areas that are of high concern to most families, 7.0-7.9 in gray, indicating medium concern, and 8.0 to 10.0 in green, indicating areas that are of low concern to most families that responded to the survey. The areas of well-being are presented in order of their mean value. Finally, the evaluators framed the four sections of the table in different colors to differentiate the areas of low concern (blue border), moderate concern (light green border), high concern (red border) and most concern (red border with gray filling).

The following provides a discussion of the areas of well-being that families ranked to be of low, moderate, high, and of most concern.

Table 8. Family Self Assessment Table

Assessment Area	Frequency Counts Based on Grouped Responses			Measures of Central Tendency Based on Full Range of Responses		
	1-4 Concerned % (N)	5-7 Somewhat concerned % (N)	8-10 Not Concerned % (N)	Mean Value	Median Value	Mode*
Areas of Low Concern						
Nutrition and Clothing	0	20% (3)	80% (12)	8.6	9	3
Physical Health and Safety	13% (2)	13% (2)	73% (11)	8.3	9	10
Parenting	7% (1)	7% (1)	87% (13)	8.2	8	8
Areas of Moderate Concern						
Children's Development and Education	7% (1)	27% (4)	67% (10)	7.9	9	10
Family Relationships	20% (3)	13% (2)	67% (10)	7.9	9	10
Community Relations	0	47% (7)	53% (8)	7.7	8	8
Social and Emotional Health	13% (2)	20% (3)	67% (10)	7.6	9	10
Work Skills and Habits	20% (3)	13% (2)	67% (10)	7.6	9	9, 10
Areas of High Concern						
Legal	27% (4)	13% (2)	60% (9)	7.1	8	10
Shelter	20% (3)	20% (3)	60% (9)	7.1	8	8, 9, 10
Adult Education	20% (3)	27% (4)	53% (8)	7	8	10
Transportation	33% (5)	13% (2)	53% (8)	6.3	8	10
Areas of Most Concern						
Employment	21% (3)	43% (6)	37% (5)	6.6	6	6
Finance/Income	27% (4)	67% (10)	7% (1)	5.5	6	3, 7

*Multiple modes given

Keys:

Table Border and Fill	
	Areas of low concern
	Areas of moderate concern
	Areas of high concern
	Areas of most concern

Grouped Frequency Counts	
	Received value of between 20-49%
	Received value of 50% or greater

Measures of Central Tendency	
	Received median value of 6.9 or less
	Received median value of 7.0-7.9
	Received median value of 8.0-10.0

Areas of low concern

Three areas, **nutrition and clothing, physical health and safety, and parenting** received high marks from families with mean values ranging from 8.2-8.6. More than 73% of families (range of 73%-87%) indicated that these three areas were not of concern to them (indicated in yellow). Twenty percent of families reported that nutrition and clothing is somewhat of a concern, however, no families indicated high level of concern. The other two categories received less than 20% (range of 7-13%) for both the concerned and somewhat concerned categories (indicated in blue). This indicates that these areas are of little concern to many Even Start families and of moderate to high concern to only one or two families. These three categories are framed in the blue border in Table 8.

Areas of moderate concern

The areas of **children's development and education, family relationships, community relations, social and emotional health, and work skills and habits**, received moderate marks from families with mean values ranging from 7.6-7.9. All of these areas received yellow marks in the "not concerned" category, signifying that these are not of concern to more than 50% of Even Start families who completed this survey. These areas are considered of moderate to high concern to some Even Start families (from 3-7 families), however, because between 20% and 49% of families (blue marks) reported that they were "somewhat concerned" or "concerned". These categories are framed in the green border in Table 8.

Areas of high concern

The areas of **legal, shelter, adult education, and transportation**, received the lowest mean values ranging from 5.5-7.1 and are considered of high concern to between 3-5 families and of somewhat concern to between 3-6 families who responded to this survey. Combining the values received for the "concerned" and "somewhat concerned" categories, a total of between 5-10 Even Start families or 33%-66% of the survey respondents expressed high or moderate concern for these areas. Only three of the areas, shelter, adult education, and transportation, received yellow marks (50% or more) in the category of "not concerned". These categories are framed in the red border in Table 8.

Areas of most concern

The areas of **employment and finance and income** were considered by families to be of the most concern of all the areas of well-being, receiving a mean rank of 6.6 and 5.5 respectively. The category of employment received blue marks in all three categories, with the majority received (43%) in the "somewhat concerned" category. Finance and Income received only 7% in the category of "not concerned", a yellow mark or 67% in the category on "somewhat

**"A Measure of My Family's
Well-Being" -
Family Self Assessment**

Areas of low concern:

- Nutrition and clothing
- Physical health and safety
- Parenting

Areas of moderate concern:

- Children's development and education
- Family relationships
- Community relations
- Social and emotional health
- Work skills and habits

Areas of High Concern:

- **Legal**
- **Shelter**
- **Adult education**
- **Transportation**

Area of Most Concern to the most Even Start Families:

- ➔ **Finance and income**
- ➔ **Employment**

concerned" and a blue mark or 27% in the category of "concerned". Combining the values received for the "concerned" and "somewhat concerned" categories for the two areas, 9 families (64% of respondents) expressed some level of concern for concern for employment and 14 families (93% of respondents) expressed some level of concern for finance and income. This indicates that these areas are of the most concern to the families. These areas are framed by the red border and highlighted in gray in Table 8.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the family self-assessment tool, "A Measure of My Family's Well-Being", showed that the areas of **nutrition and clothing, physical health and safety, and parenting** are considered to be of *least concern* to most families. The areas of **children's development and education, family relationships, community relations, social and emotional health, and work skills and habits** are considered of *moderate concern* to most families. The areas of **legal, shelter, adult education, and transportation** are considered of *high concern* to many families, and the areas of **employment and finance and income** are considered of *most concern* to many families.

Overall, many families in the SWCES program consider their families to be in a good state of well-being, as more than half of the survey respondents indicated low concern for all of the areas of well-being. This is with the exception of the areas of employment and finance and income, as most families indicated that they are concerned or somewhat concerned with these areas.

SWCES staff should continue to work closely with families on an individual basis to determine their family goals based on their areas of concern as well as their areas of strength. Using these goals, staff should continue to work with families to develop a plan of action or steps to work towards and complete their goals in effort to reduce their level of concern for specific areas of well-being. The new Getting Ready to Work Program should be discussed with families that expressed concern about their employment and financial status, as well as adult education. This program offers families a new opportunity to build their skill base through the Even Start program and possibly provides experience, focus, and motivation to pursue employment or further training and education in a specific field. Staff should also continue to refer families to collaborators (such as VAL for adult education concerns) or other service providing organizations to meet other needs, such as legal, shelter, and transportation.

X. South Windsor County Even Start Early Childhood Progress Survey

The SWCES staff administered the *Early Childhood Progress (ECP) survey* (Appendix I) in June 2002 to teachers of SWCES students, to continue to document the progress of these children in school in comparison to their peers who are not in Even Start. This year, teachers of SWCES students enrolled in K-3 only were asked to assess these students in the areas of school readiness and progress, social interactions, parent involvement and attendance, and special education eligibility. Vermont State Performance Indicators 1, 2, 4, and 5 were also addressed on this questionnaire (Appendix A). This year, teachers of students in preschool were not surveyed because of the time required for professional development to incorporate changes in Vermont State data requirements. For this reason, the third Vermont State Performance Indicator is not addressed in this report because it pertains to Child Observation Record (COR) scores of four year old children (report on this State Indicator is available in the SWCES Annual Report).

Eight of the nine teachers completed the survey, for a 89% response rate. Data on student promotion and attendance was collected for one child from the school by the SWCES Coordinator. This questionnaire provides a means for collecting data for the Child Vermont State Performance Indicators. It also assists home visitors in improving the early childhood education portion of the program to meet specific needs of the children. Further, involving teachers in SWCES youth assessment also establishes a link between SWCES and the school systems. The continued high response rate of teachers (87% response rate in 2001) is a positive indicator of a growing relationship between the program and the schools.

The following provides data for the second year of data collection to be compared with baseline data collected last year (June 2001) to assess students progress as individuals and to measure change over time for SWCES students in general. As the 2001-2002 survey was modified from the 2000-01 survey, comparative analysis is made where applicable. Frequency counts for all applicable questions are compared for 2001 and 2002 data. A Paired Sample T-test analysis is also conducted to compare the change in mean (average) ratings (on a lichert scale from 1-5) in the six major academic, personal development, and parent involvement areas for the six students for which data was collected in both years.

The following information demonstrates the SWCES has met their program goals of assisting parents to be full partners in their children's acquisition of literacy skills through parent education and adult education, ensuring that children reach their full potential as learners, and strengthening the family's vision of themselves as a learning team.

Student demographics

Five of the children surveyed live in Springfield, three live in Windsor, and one lives in Perkinsville, Vermont. Three of the children attend Park Street School, three attend State Street School, one attends Kurn Hattin, one attends Ludlow Elementary, and one attends Weathersfield Elementary School. Two students are in first grade, three are in second, one is in third, and three are in Kindergarten. The students ages range from 6-8 years old.

Even Start Youth School Status

The first part of the survey asked teachers to respond with a yes or no answer regarding students school status, attendance, special education, IEP, and special services.

Center or home based program

One hundred percent of the teachers reported that students attend a Center based program.

Full/part time status

Teachers reported that all of the students were enrolled full time in a school program. This is higher than last year (77% full time) because teachers of pre-school students were not surveyed this year.

Attendance

Vermont State Performance Indicators requires that children enrolled in grades K-3 whose families have participated in the program for at least one full year will have attended school at a same or better rate than the average for their school buildings, as reported by their schools. Eight students were applicable to this indicator and five (65%) *met* or exceeded the attendance rates of their classmates. Three of the students applicable to this Indicator attended school below the attendance record on their classmates. One teacher noted that her student had an attendance rate below other students because of asthma and will hopefully attend more regularly in the future. This report is slightly lower than last year as all of the teachers who responded to this question in 2001 noted that their student attended at the same or better rate compared to students not in Even Start. (Vermont State Child Indicator #4 - Did not meet the Vermont State Indicator)

Student promotion

Vermont State Performance Indicators requires that among children enrolled in grades K-3 whose families have participated in the program for at least one full year, 90% will be promoted to the next grade as reported by the children's schools. Eight of SWCES students were applicable to this Indicator. All but one of the children (88%) were promoted to the next grade level. One student (13%) was retained to repeat Kindergarten. (Vermont State Child Indicator #5 - Did not meet the Vermont State Indicator) (The evaluators note that the because of the low N value of the sample (8), it is more appropriate to analyze this data using qualitative means rather than quantitative to determine if the program met the state indicator).

Special education

Four of the children have not been referred to Special Education (44%), however five students were referred (56%). The number of referrals to special education is higher than last year as only 30% of the teachers noted referrals in 2001.

IEP (Individualized Educational Programs)

Six (67%) of SWCES children were not on an IEP while three (33%) of them are on IEPs. This is also higher than last year as only 20% of teachers indicated their students were on IEPs.

Special services

Four (44%) of the students are receiving special services, while six (66%) are not. This is consistent with results from last year. Students that are receiving special services are involved in after school tutoring, being monitored by the Educational Support team, O.T., Title I, Speech, reading support, and ESL.

SERP (Screening for Early Reading Processes) scores

Vermont State Performance Indicators requires Even Start programs to report student SERP scores for children six months prior to entering Kindergarten. This Indicator is applicable only for children who have received at least 200 early childhood instructional hours and whose families have participated in the program for at least two years. This year, two children were applicable for this Indicator and both met or achieved proficiency level on the SERP Pre-K Sections 1, 2, and 3. (Vermont State Child Indicator # 2- Met Vermont State Indicator).

POA (Primary Observation Assessment) scores

Two teachers reported that their students achieved above their median school district level for POA test.

DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) scores

Vermont State Performance Indicators requires Even Start programs to report DRA scores of second grade students whose families have participated in the program for at least two years. Two students were applicable to this Indicator and their teachers reported one received a score equal to the median of the supervisory unions served by Vermont's comprehensive family literacy programs and one exceeded the median standard. (Vermont State Child Indicator #1 - Met Vermont State Indicator).

Even Start Students Compared to Non-Even Start Students

Similar to last year, the last section of the ECP survey asked teachers to evaluate student performance in comparison with classmates using the following lichert scale from 1 to 5:

- 1 = much below other children**
- 2 = somewhat below other children**
- 3 = about the same as other children**
- 4 = somewhat above other children**
- 5 = much above other children.**

The areas of focus included: academic performance, motivation to learn, parent involvement, relations with other students, classroom behavior, and self-confidence. Teachers were also asked to provide an explanation or comments on why any of the areas received a score of 1 or 2 (new for 2002).

Data analysis

For analytical purposes, the evaluators grouped the five response categories of the ECP into two categories: 1 and 2 = “below other children” and 3 through 5 = “same or above other children”, as depicted in Table 9. Frequency counts are provided for the full range of responses in the discussion below. A comparative analysis of frequency counts for 2001 and 2002 using the grouped analysis are reported in the narrative as well as in the figures below. A Paired Sample T-test was conducted for the six students for which data was collected for both 2001 and 2002 to measure change in mean rank value over the two years. Because of the low N value of the sample, none of the T-test analyses showed significance, however a discussion of change in means is provided below.

Table 9. Original and revised categories of responses

Original Five Categories	Revised two categories
1= much below other children 2= somewhat below other children	1 and 2= below other children
3= about the same as other children 4= somewhat above other children 5= much above other children.	3-5 = same or above other children

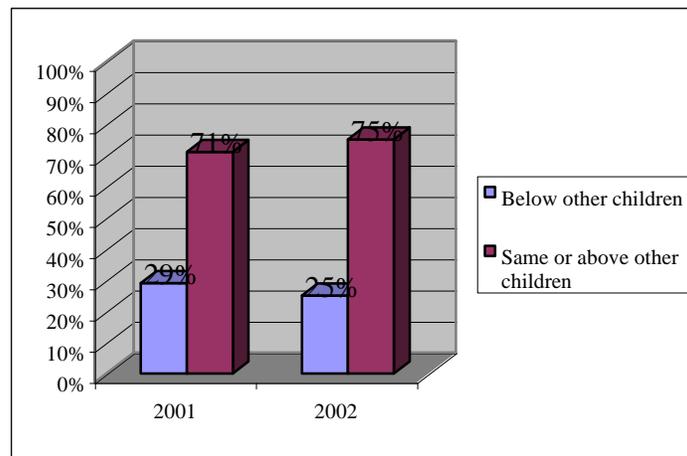
Academic performance

Seventy-one percent (75%; 6) of the teachers indicated the academic performance of SWCES youth to be about the same (62%; 5) or somewhat above (13%; 1) other children. Another 25% (2) placed the youth somewhat below (Figure 7). These findings are consistent with last year as 71% of teachers reported academic performance to be the same or above other non-Even Start children and 28% placed SWCES students to be below other children. This year, however, none of the teachers placed the youth's academic performance "much below" other children, as one teacher did in 2001.

This indicates that the majority of SWCES youth in kindergarten through grade three are performing at the same or above other non-Even Start students, with the exception of a few youth. It should be noted that both of the students whose teachers reported their academic performance to be below other students have been referred to special education and one of these youth is also on an IEP plan and receiving special services including speech and language and occupational therapy. This child's teacher also noted that they had severe emotional issues and a low attention span. The three other children who are referred to special education, and the two on an IEP, and receiving special services were assessed to be performing at the same academic level as their non-Even Start peers.

The Paired T-test analysis, comparing the average rank of the six students for which data was collected in both 2001 and 2002, showed a slight decrease in average rank from 2001. The average rank in 2001 was 3.0 and the average rank in 2002 was 2.8.

Figure 7. Academic performance of SWCES youth compared to other children, 2001 and 2002



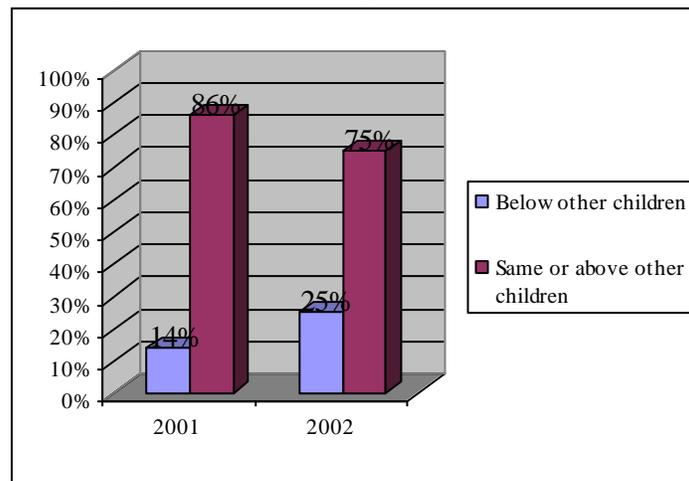
Motivation to learn

In evaluating SWCES youth's motivation to learn compared to non-Even Start youth, 75% (6) of the respondents placed the youth at about the same (50%; 4) and somewhat above (25%; 2) other children. The remaining 25% (2) deemed their motivation levels as somewhat below non-Even Start youth (Figure 8). These results are somewhat consistent with the findings from 2001 as 85% of teachers assessed SWCES student's motivation to learn to be about the same, somewhat above, and much above other peers and only 15% indicated that their motivation levels are somewhat and much below other non-Even Start youth.

One of the youth whose teacher indicated that they were somewhat below other youth has been referred to special education, is on an IEP plan and receiving special services including Speech and language and occupational therapy. This child's teacher also noted that they had severe emotional issues and a low attention span. The other student who had lower motivational levels also had an attendance rate below their peers. The teacher noted that this child was motivated in some ways but had difficulty staying focused and completing work in a timely manner.

The Paired T-test analysis, comparing the average rank of the six students for which data was collected in both 2001 and 2002, showed a slight decrease in average rank from 2001. The average rank in 2001 was 3.5 and the average rank in 2002 was 3.1.

Figure 8. Motivation of youth to learn compared to non-Even Start youth, 2001-2002



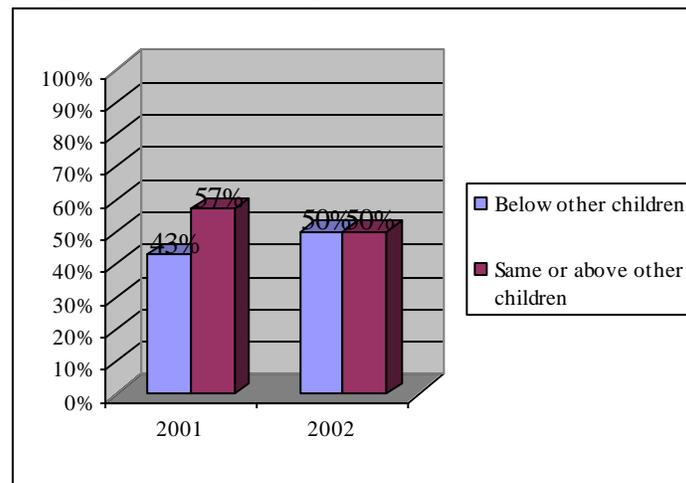
Peer relations

Fifty percent (50%; 4) of the teachers considered peer relations of SWCES youth to be about the same (25%; 2) or above (25%; 2) those of non-Even Start youth. The remaining 50% (4) of the teachers reported the youth relations to be somewhat below other children (Figure 9). These results are somewhat consistent with 2001 as 57% of teachers indicated that youth peer relations are about the same to somewhat above other non-Even Start youth and 43% indicated that their skills were somewhat below to much below other youth.

Three of the children whose teachers indicated that their peer relations are below others have been referred to special education, are on an IEP plan and receiving special services. Another child who shows lower peer relations skills is receiving just special services and one child has an attendance rate below that of their peers. Three teachers commented on their students rated below other children. These comments include: the child seeks adult attention and can be very silly, has difficulty working out problems with peers, and is too hands on and aggressive.

The Paired T-test analysis, comparing the average rank of the six students for which data was collected in both 2001 and 2002, showed a slight increase in average rank from 2001. The average rank in 2001 was 2.7 and the average rank in 2002 was 2.8.

Figure 9. Youth peer relations compared to non-Even Start youth, 2001-2002



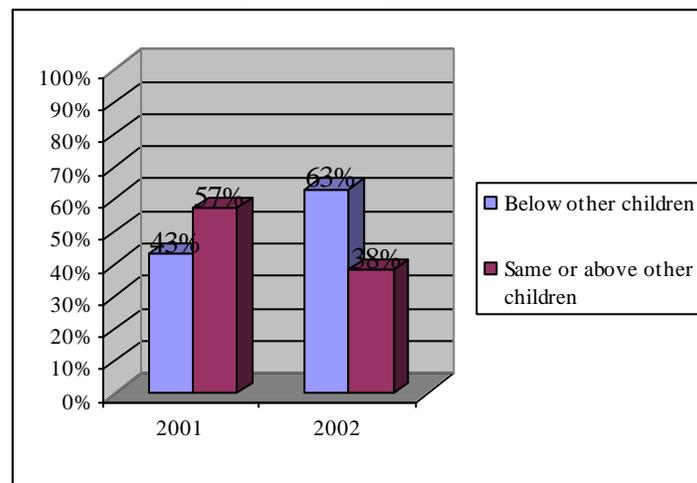
Classroom behavior

Thirty-eight percent (38%; 3) of the teachers assessed SWCES youth classroom behavior to be about the same (1) or somewhat above other non-Even Start children (2). Sixty-three percent (63%; 5) remarked that the SWCES students are somewhat below other children (4) or much below other children (1) (Figure 10). These results are lower than 2001 as 57% assessed SWCES student classroom behavior to be at or above the level of other children and 43% noted that the youth were somewhat or much below other children.

Two students whose teachers noted that they are somewhat below others in terms of classroom behavior noted that this child has been referred to special education, is on an IEP and receiving special services. Their teachers commented that they require very close monitoring and redirecting of actions and that they are silly, easily distracted, and have sensory issues and ADHD. One student is only receiving special services. Another child who is somewhat below other children in regards to classroom behavior has a less than average attendance rate. Their teacher commented that this child often fools with things at their desk and has inappropriate conversations. The child whose teacher indicated that they are much below other children noted that they have a below average attendance rate and have been referred to special education. This teacher commented that this child is very needy of teacher attention, interrupts class discussion, and has difficulty complying with a request and following a routine.

The Paired T-test analysis, comparing the average rank of the six students for which data was collected in both 2001 and 2002, showed a slight *increase* in average rank from 2001. The average rank in 2001 was 2.5 and the average rank in 2002 was 2.7.

Figure 10. Classroom behavior of youth compared to non-Even Start youth, 2001-2002



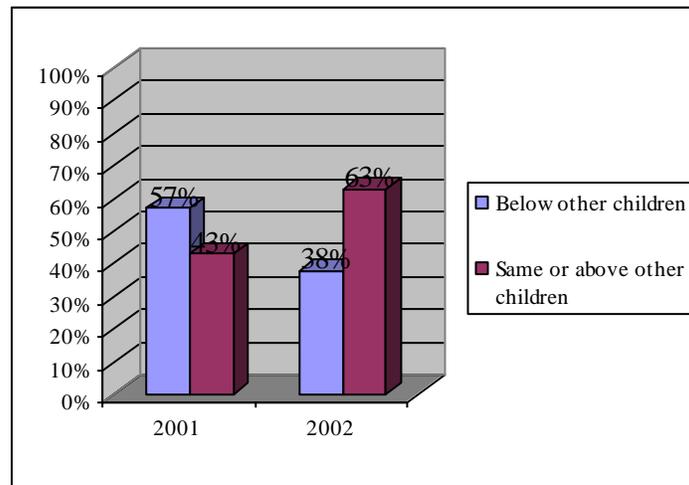
Self confidence

Sixty-three percent (63%; 5) of teachers reported that SWCES youth self confidence levels to be about the same (4) and somewhat above other children (1). Thirty-seven percent (37%; 3) assessed that SWCES youth self confidence to be somewhat below other children (2) and much below other children (1). These results are higher than 2001 as only 43% of teachers indicated that their students had about the same self confidence levels compared to non-Even Start youth and 57% indicated that their self-confidence was somewhat and much below other youth (Figure 11).

One of the children whose teachers reported them to have self esteem levels somewhat below other children have been referred to special education, are on an IEP and receiving special services. Their teacher commented that this child gives up easy, is a perfectionist, and likes to have things done for them. The other child who was reported to have self esteem levels somewhat below others has a less than average attendance rate and has been referred to special education. This child's teacher commented that they appear to be unsure of themselves and does not always want to try, especially new things. The one child whose teacher indicated that they are much below other children noted that they have been referred to special education, are on an IEP and receiving special services. This teacher noted that they have been working on this child's self esteem and they have shown improvements.

The Paired T-test analysis, comparing the average rank of the six students for which data was collected in both 2001 and 2002, showed a slight increase in average rank from 2001. The average rank in 2001 was 2.2 and the average rank in 2002 was 2.3.

Figure 11. SWCES youth self confidence compared to non-Even Start youth, 2001-2002



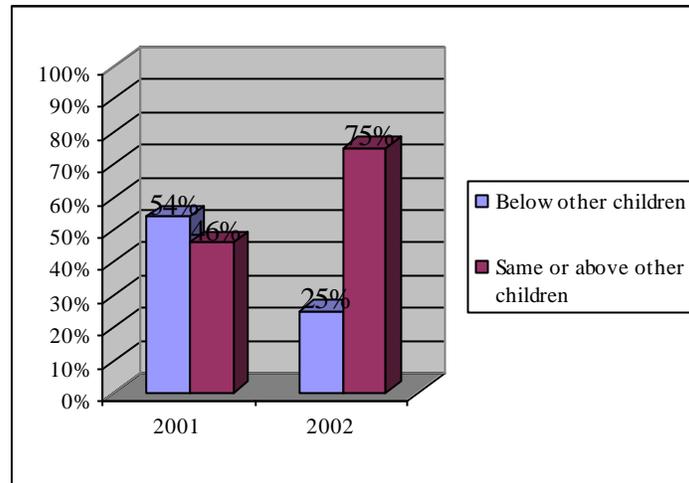
Parent involvement

Seventy-five percent (75%; 6) of the teachers reported that parent involvement of the SWCES youth is about the same as other children (5), somewhat above other children (2) and much above other children (1). Twenty-five percent (25%; 2) noted that parent involvement is somewhat below other children. None of the teachers noted that parent involvement is "much below" other parents. These findings are much higher compared to 2001, as only 46% indicated parent involvement was the same or above other non-Even Start parents and 54% reported parent involvement to be somewhat below or much below other parents. Furthermore the two teachers that indicated parent involvement to be low commented that one parent tries to support but has limited English speaking skills and the other biological parent is not involved in her child's life due to legal issues but the foster mother is very active and involved.

These results indicate that SWCES parents are more involved in their children's school and activities compared to 2001. The majority is involved at the same or better rate as other non Even Start parents and those who have a low level of involvement have barriers to their involvement including legal issues and limited English speaking skills. Both of these parents are working on to improve their situation and skills, which may in turn increase their involvement in their child's school (Figure 12).

The Paired T-test analysis, comparing the average rank of the six students for which data was collected in both 2001 and 2002, showed a slight *decrease* in average rank from 2001. The average rank in 2001 was 3.7 and the average rank in 2002 was 3.0.

Figure 12. Parent involvement of youth compared to non-Even Start youth, 2001-2002



Conclusions and Recommendations

Comparing the changes seen from 2001 to 2002 for the entire data set (15 children in 2001 and 8 children in 2002) to the Paired T-test data set (six youth for which data was collected for both years), there is an increase in *academic performance* for the entire set but a decrease in academic performance for the six children from 2001 to 2002. Both the entire set and the Paired data set showed a decrease in *motivation to learn* from 2001 to 2002. Furthermore, there is an increase in *parent involvement* for the entire set and a decrease for the Paired set from 2001 to 2002. Regarding *peer relations*, there is an overall decrease among the entire population while there is an increase in peer relations among the six children, from 2001 to 2002. Youth *behavior* showed a decrease in percentage among the entire data set and an increase for the Paired youth. Finally, both the entire set and the paired set showed an increase in *self-esteem* from 2001 to 2002.

Comparing the changes in the entire data set from 2001 to 2002, several trends in the six major areas of SWCES Early Childhood survey can be noted.

The areas of *academic performance* and *motivation to learn* continued to receive high responses in the “same or above other children” category, which are consistent with results from 2001. This suggests that these are areas of strength in SWCES youth in comparison to their peers.

- SWCES staff should continue to work with youth in grades K-3 on their **academic skills** through early childhood education intensive services, and address issues and make appropriate referrals as needed.
- The findings indicate that the majority of SWCES youth are **motivated to learn** at the same or better level compared to non-Even Start youth, with the exception of a few youth with emotional issues and low attendance rates. SWCES staff should consider working specifically with these children to address these issues and make referrals to other collaborating services as appropriate.

Furthermore, an increase in responses in the category of “same or above other children” was seen in the area of child *self-confidence*, suggesting that SWCES staff have effectively been working with children during home and center based visits to achieve and experience success and accomplishment, which lead to building of one's self confidence.

- Although most of the youth were reported to have average or higher self confidence levels, SWCES staff should continue to encourage youth **self confidence** through planning activities (both home and center based) that can provide children with a sense of success and accomplishment to build their self esteem in learning and life. Further, they

Summary of Findings from the Early Childhood Progress Survey Comparing 2001 to 2002

Areas that received high marks consistent from 2001-2002:

- Academic Performance
- Motivation to Learn

Areas that showed positive change from 2001-2002:

- Self-confidence
- Parent involvement

Areas that showed negative change from 2001-2002:

- Peer relations
- Classroom Behavior

should encourage all parents to help build their child's self esteem at home on a daily basis.

The category of *parent involvement* has shown improvement this past year with high responses from teachers in the "same or above other children" category. This suggests SWCES staff have been effectively working with parents to be advocates for their children's education.

- SWCES staff should continue to and encourage and support **parent involvement** in children's schools, in ways such as encouraging parents to attend school meetings or attending these meetings with parents, assisting parents to advocate for their children, and encouraging them to take an active role in their child's lives through intensive PACT time hours. SWCES should also continue to address parent's needs and barriers relating to low parent involvement and refer parents where appropriate.

Similar to 2001, the areas of *classroom behavior* and *student relations* received the majority of responses in the "below other children" category. This suggests that this area continues to be in need of improvement.

- Although many SWCES children are reported to have average or higher peer relation skills, these results suggest that SWCES should consider working with children in Kindergarten to third grade on their **peer relations**. Staff could either provide support on a one-on-one basis or possibly hold more child-focused events where children can gain more experience in interacting with their peers in a positive learning environment.
- Similar to the category of peer relations, results on **classroom behavior** indicate that several of SWCES youth between the grade levels of K-3 have poor classroom behavior skills compared to their peers. SWCES staff should continue to address this issue on a one-on-one basis during home visits for early childhood education services and PACT time hours. This issue should also be addressed during any center-based group activities and field trips as needed.

Overall, the evaluators recommend that home visitors continue to work with SWCES children towards more positive behavior, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence through early childhood education and PACT time at both home and center based activities. Likewise, SWCES staff should continue to encourage and integrate parent involvement in their child's education into parenting and adult education and PACT time.

XI. Conclusions

The Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont has provided evaluation services for SWCES since the program's inception in 1994. This evaluation report is for the seventh year of the South Windsor County Even Start program (SWCES), the Fiscal Year period of July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002. The Center for Rural Studies (CRS) at the University of Vermont has worked with SWCES as local evaluators for the seven years that the program has been in service to the South Windsor County area in southern Vermont. This evaluation report demonstrates that SWCES continues to provide quality program services, as indicated by positive client reviews, identification of program strengths and the progress many families have made in working towards and achieving goals, as well as working through challenging life situations.

SWCES Goals

The conclusions highlighted below, discussed in detail throughout this report, demonstrate that SWCES has met all seven of the program's goals this year. Family demographic data, Vermont State Performance Indicator data, student performance data, and family success stories and examples of goals met presented through the two family case studies and several focus groups, interviews, and self-assessments show that the following goals have been met. These goals include:

1. Assist parents to be full partners in their children's acquisition of literacy skills through parent education and adult education.
2. Ensure that children reach their full potential as learners.
3. Improve economic opportunities of families through increasing the educational level of parents.
4. Strengthen the family's vision of themselves as a learning team.
5. Expand the ability of families to become contributing and self-sustaining members of the community.
6. Continue to serve 20 families while recruiting families identified as most in need of Even Start services.
7. Leave a legacy of intergenerational life-long learners who will positively impact their communities as their communities recognize and commit to delivering family literacy activities beyond Even Start's tenure

Client Demographics

In analyzing client demographics over the past seven years and comparing this data to national reports, this program has been consistent in providing services to a population in need of these services. This past year, the program provided services for nineteen families enrolled in the program. Currently, sixteen families have remained in the program, with a total of twenty four adults and thirty eligible children.

Family successes this past year include:

- ✓ Continued high retention rate of 84%;
- ✓ High long term retention rate of 42% being enrolled in SWCES for 2 to 7 years;
- ✓ 46% of adults who set a goal of secondary education completed this goal, and 53% of these adults continue to work towards this goal;
- ✓ 88% of adults who set the goal of job training completed this goal;
- ✓ 61% of adults who set the goal of employment completed this goal;
- ✓ 100% of adults who set the goal of post secondary education completed this goal;
- ✓ 100% of children eligible for the DRA achieved the standard on the Vermont DRA;
- ✓ 100% of children eligible to take the SERP met or achieved proficiency;
- ✓ Three children completed the COR assessment;
- ✓ 63% of children met or exceeded the attendance rate of their peers;
- ✓ 88% of students were promoted to the next grade level.

Major Strengths of South Windsor County Even Start

Through the past seven years of data collection from families, collaborators, and staff, the evaluation team have identified seven major strengths of the SWCES program that have provided for high quality services and high success rate among families. These strengths include the six identified last year, as well as one new strength identified this year, the on-site program option, as the program continues to grow and improve its services. Through these strengths, SWCES continues to work towards their seven program goals and families continue to work towards their individual goals. These **strengths** include: the on-site option, home-based instruction, connecting families with available community resources, strong partnerships and collaboration, program activities and events, high retention rate of families, and long term enrollment of families. These areas are consistent with those from Family Literacy Core Values and Quality Considerations as identified by RMC Research Corporation in the Revised *Guide to Quality* (2001).

Seven Major Strengths of SWCES

1. The on-site option
2. Home-based instruction
3. Connecting families with available community resources
4. Strong partnerships and collaboration
5. Program activities and events
6. High retention rate of families
7. Long term enrollment of families.

Program Accomplishment and Improvements

This year, the evaluators highlight several program accomplishments and improvements that SWCES has made to their program. These include:

- ❖ The addition of the **on-site program** to SWCES and the SAPCC has resulted in many successful outcomes for both Even Start services and family success. The on-site option has enabled the program to increase the intensity of services available for families and may result in the expansion of it's service area. Families involved in the on-site program report gains in employment and life skills, as well as social and human capital.

- ❖ SWCES staff have taken several opportunities this past year for **professional development** to further their knowledge and understanding of relevant topics to family literacy. The on-site staff hosted and participated in several Equipped for the Future framework and goal setting trainings to develop a common language for the on site program and help families set SMART goals. These trainings prompted staff to hold monthly "EFF study groups" with the on-site staff to further their study and understanding and build a common language for on-site program outcomes.
- ❖ Several of the SWCES **Quarterly Advisory Council meetings** were utilized as a forum for community learning, problem solving, and discussion. Two major Advisory Council meeting topics included a presentation on the *changes of the Reach Up legislation* in terms of work requirements for families, and a *homelessness panel* represented by local landlords, schools, shelters, Vermont State Housing Authority, a Land Trust, the Springfield Family Center, and a formerly homeless parent. The homelessness Council meeting was videotaped and aired on several local television stations. Positive feedback was received for both of these Council meetings, indicating that they raised awareness and educated SWCES staff and other area service providers about current issues facing their clients and community.

Areas of Program
Accomplishment and Improvements

- ➔ The on-site program
- ➔ Professional development
- ➔ Quarterly Advisory Council meetings as forums for community issues

Program Self Assessments

SWCES staff and Advisory Council members conducted two program self assessments from the Revised *Guide to Quality* (2001) during two of their Council meetings. They decided to examine the Quality Consideration of *Integration of Components* and revisit the Quality Consideration of *Partnerships and Collaboration* as a follow up from 1999-2000.

- ❖ Almost all of the **Integration of Components** Quality areas received high marks from staff. All respondents agree that program employs a holistic approach to serving families. Furthermore, common messages across program components have really emerged over the past year, specifically with the EFF study groups and the use of EFF framework language for the on-site program. The program continues to effectively integrate the components of the program as an effective instructional strategy, as evidenced by the movement and progress of families. The program also continues to make specific connections across program components, however staff does not meet regularly with center-based instructors (such as Head Start) to plan for families. SWCES staff teams do meet regularly to discuss and design instructional plans, but most staff feel there is not enough time for paperwork and planning time. Furthermore, the program continues to work on the integration of services with local schools when children are enrolled in elementary school, however improvements can still be made in relationships with schools.

- ❖ All of the twenty-one areas of program quality under the **Partnerships and Collaboration** Quality Consideration received high marks from staff and the Advisory Council. This demonstrates an improvement in this area from 1999-00, when this self assessment was first conducted. SWCES Staff and Advisory Council members view SWCES's collaboration with other service providing agencies as a major strength of the program. SWCES has formed a wide variety of relationships with agencies that refer families to the program, as well as fulfill family external needs in collaboration with Even Start. Collaborators provide high quality services consistent with Even Start core components. An active Advisory Council of partners and collaborators meets regularly to discuss program planning and updates, and Council meetings often serve as professional development opportunities for collaborators. Collaborators have a stake in the success of Even Start and are working with program staff to develop a long range continuation plan through the development of the on-site program.

Examples of Major Family Accomplishments

- ❖ Completion of training for employment
- ❖ Placement of child in Head Start
- ❖ Volunteering on Pre-School Policy Council
- ❖ Completion of GRTW program
- ❖ Receiving GED
- ❖ Improved credit
- ❖ Purchasing a home
- ❖ Driver's license

Client Focus Groups

The *Even Start Client Questionnaire* was administered in July 2002 through focus groups and interviews with families. Several families discussed goals they have reached and continue to work towards this past year, as a result of their participation in SWCES.

Examples of family and individual **goals** include: parenting classes, working to gain custody of children, enrolling son in Head Start, being active on a Preschool Policy Council, completing the Getting Ready to Work program, the attainment of a GED, moving, improving literacy skills, purchasing a car, purchasing a home, children attending primary school and college, and earning a driver's license.

Family identified strengths of SWCES

- ➔ The addition of the On-Site program
- ➔ Support, flexibility, and commitment of home visitors
- ➔ Promoting parents to be advocates of their children
- ➔ Connecting families with other families
- ➔ Activities and playgroups
- ➔ Promotion of family learning outside of the program
- ➔ Providing childcare services

Consistent with family reports from previous years, families stress the combination of family literacy services and program strengths have enabled them to work towards and attain their goals. Specifically, the on-site program, adult, parenting, and early childhood

education, and connecting families to community resources supported their work this year. **Family identified strengths** of the program include: the addition of the on-site program; support, flexibility, and commitment of home visitors; promoting parent advocacy; connecting families with other families; activities and playgroups; promotion of learning outside of the program; and providing childcare services.

Equipped for the Future and Family Case Studies

The SWCES program has successfully integrated the *Equipped for the Future* (EFF) standards in their work with families since 1999. This year, home visiting staff used the EFF Checklist with all families.

- ❖ **Use with families** - home visitors reported that they seldom used the Checklist directly with families, as families found it intimidating and confusing upon introduction. Home visitors also stress that the focus of visits is typically on instruction or working through a family crisis, thus they do not like to overwhelm families with a lot of paperwork. However, the tool has been helpful in documenting and reflecting on family progress and movement towards their goals.
- ❖ **Use as a tool to build common ground** - the EFF framework has been shared with on-site program staff and collaborators to build common ground of understanding of SWCES services and on-site program expected outcomes. On-site staff attended several training sessions on the EFF standards and held monthly EFF study groups. This has provided on-site staff with a common language for the on-site program and how these standards relate to the home, workplace, and community.
- ❖ **Family Case Studies** - EFF Checklist data and staff interviews were used to present two family case studies, highlighting families whose activities and goals crossed over into two or all three of the Role Maps. EFF Charts and a narrative depict how family activities within each Role Map have assisted them in working towards and achieving their goals. Recommendations for modified use of the EFF Checklist as a Case Study tool only have been made.

Family Self-Assessment Questionnaire

SWCES staff piloted the use of a family self-assessment tool, "A Measure of My Family's Well-Being" in the fall of 2002. Families will be followed up with in the fall of 2003 to provide comparative data.

- ❖ Results showed that the areas of nutrition and clothing, physical health and safety, and parenting are considered to be of **least concern** to most families;
- ❖ The areas of children's development and education, family relationships, community relations, social and emotional health, and work skills and habits are considered of **moderate concern** to most families;
- ❖ The areas of legal, shelter, adult education, and transportation are considered of **high concern** to many families;

"A Measure of My Family's Well-Being" - Family Self Assessment

Areas of low concern:

- Nutrition and clothing
- Physical health and safety
- Parenting

Areas of moderate concern:

- Children's development and education
- Family relationships
- Community relations
- Social and emotional health
- Work skills and habits

Areas of High Concern:

- Legal
- Shelter
- Adult education
- Transportation

Area of Most Concern to the most Even Start Families:

- ➔ *Finance and income*
- ➔ *Employment*

- ❖ The areas of employment and finance and income are considered of **most concern** to many families.

Overall, many families in the SWCES program consider their families to be in a good state of well-being, as more than half of the survey respondents indicated low concern for all of the areas of well-being. This is with the exception of the areas of employment and finance and income, as most families indicated that they are concerned or somewhat concerned with these areas.

Early Childhood Progress Survey

The SWCES staff administered the Early Childhood Progress (ECP) survey in June 2002 to teachers of SWCES students in grades K-3. This survey documents the progress of these children in school in comparison to their peers who are not in Even Start. **Students are assessed in the areas of:** school readiness and progress, social interactions, parent involvement and attendance, and special education eligibility. **Vermont State Performance Indicators 1, 2, 4, and 5** were also addressed on this questionnaire. Eight of the nine teachers completed the survey, for a 89% response rate.

Comparing the changes in the entire data set from 2001 to 2002, several trends in the six major areas of SWCES Early Childhood survey can be noted.

- ❖ The areas of **academic performance** and **motivation to learn** continued to receive high responses in the "same or above other children" category, which are consistent with results from 2001. This suggests that these are areas of strength in SWCES youth in comparison to their peers.
- ❖ Furthermore, an increase in responses in the category of "same or above other children" was seen in the area of child **self-confidence**, suggesting that SWCES staff have effectively been working with children during home and center based visits to achieve and experience success and accomplishment, which lead to building of one's self confidence.
- ❖ The category of **parent involvement** has shown improvement this past year with high responses from teachers in the "same or above other children" category. This suggests SWCES staff have been effectively working with parents to be advocates for their children's education.
- ❖ Similar to 2001, the areas of **classroom behavior** and **student relations** received the majority of responses in the "below other children" category. This suggests that this area continues to be in need of improvement.

Summary of Findings from the Early Childhood Progress Survey Comparing 2001 to 2002

Areas that received high marks consistent from 2001-2002:

- Academic Performance
- Motivation to Learn

Areas that showed positive change from 2001-2002:

- Self-confidence
- Parent involvement

Areas that showed negative change from 2001-2002:

- Peer relations
- Classroom Behavior

Overall, the evaluators recommend that home visitors continue to work with SWCES children towards more positive behavior, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence through early childhood education and PACT time at both home and center based activities. Likewise, SWCES staff should continue to encourage and integrate parent involvement in their child's education into parenting and adult education and PACT time.

This 2000-2001 evaluation report demonstrates that SWCES continues to serve the South Windsor County community with quality program services and activities, connecting families to needed resources and services in the community. Through the strengths of this program, SWCES continues to have a positive influence in participant's lives, as families work towards and reach goals and work through life situations. The following recommendations are made for both program improvement as well as changes in evaluation strategies towards more outcome based methods.

XII. Recommendations

The evaluators have made the following recommendations for continuous program improvement and changes in evaluation strategies for the eighth year of SWCES. Recommendations are based on this evaluation report and as well as changes in Even Start legislation and Vermont state data collection requirements.

Recommendations for Program Improvement

The program should continue to build on its six major strengths that provide the backbone of program quality. Staff, collaborators, and evaluators should also continue to examine areas in need of improvement and discuss strategies to make positive changes in these areas. The following recommendations have been made in the area of program improvement, based on data collected and presented in this report.

✓ *Program Accomplishments and Improvement*

The following recommendations have been made for program improvement, building on identified program accomplishments and improvements.

- o SWCES continue with all efforts towards developing the on-site option, based on family feedback and growing/changing needs.
- o The program should continue to offer staff needed time for professional development based on needs, specially in the areas of "scientifically based reading research" and organizational skills for effectively managing all of the new data collection requirements.
- o The program should continue to focus one or two Quarterly Advisory Council meetings on pressing community topics to educate SWCES staff, area service providers, and the general public, and provide a forum for discussion, learning, and problem solving. The topics should address pertinent community issues as identified during informal discussion with staff as well as formal discussion at Advisory Council and other meeting/networking events.

✓ *Recommendations for Improving the Integration of Components*

The following are recommendations for program improvement based on the quality components and staff discussion on the integration of components.

- o The program should continue to employ a holistic approach to serving families. Staff should continue to involve parents in the planning of Even Start events to fit their interests and goals and tailor instruction based on individual need.
- o The program should further articulate common messages that are emphasized across instructional components with staff and collaborators. Staff should continue to utilize the EFF study groups and EFF framework to develop a common language for the on site and home based instruction portions of Even Start.

- o Home based instructors should continue to work on reflecting and reviewing a crisis situation with families, so they may learn from the situation. Further, the program should continue to have open communication with collaborators through Advisory Council meetings, educating them on Even Start instructional methods, including the integration of services as an effective instructional strategy.
- o Staff should try to meet more regularly with center-based instructors (such as Head Start) to plan for families. The program should possibly utilize time during Advisory Council meetings for planning activities that make connections across program components.
- o Several staff recognize that they could use more planning time for programs. The evaluators recommend incorporating planning time into current staff meeting times and possibly re-distribute staff hours to increase the amount of time available for planning.
- o The program should continue to improve it's relationship and integration of services with local schools where children are enrolled in elementary school.

✓ ***Recommendations for Improving Partnerships and Collaborations***

Overall, SWCES continues to effectively collaborating with service providing organizations to meet the needs and goals of families in the program. Recommendations for specific quality areas are provided below based on staff responses.

- o The evaluators recommend that staff periodically review the effectiveness of program strategies in meeting desired outcomes with partners.
- o The program should continue to improve SWCES relationship with the LEA (Lead Education Agency), to encourage them to look to the program for early literacy support. The program should continue to build awareness among the LEA of SWCES services through the use of the ECP survey, Program Coordinator meetings with school members, and Advisory Council meetings. Building this relationship should ultimately increase SWCES staff access to school professional development.
- o The program should work to provide more opportunities for staff to interact with collaborators at their location (i.e. site visits).
- o The program should continue to use Advisory Council time for professional development and training on current issues. Further the program should continue to advertise relevant trainings to collaborators so they may become more familiar with SWCES approaches.
- o SWCES staff should work to improve boundary crossing roles with collaborators other than VAL, the Department of Health, and the PATH agency.
- o SWCES should continue to work with collaborators, specifically involving the LEA in the process of program design and services.

- o The program should continue to develop and strengthen the on-site program through diversified funding streams. SWCES should also involve all major partners and collaborators with the continuation plan throughout the fiscal year at Advisory Council and other meetings to ensure their support and guidance.

✓ *Even Start Client Questionnaire*

Few parents had specific suggestions for program improvement during client focus groups, however the evaluators have made several recommendations based on discussion.

- o All participants who completed the GRTW program suggested that staff encourage other families to take advantage of this opportunity.
- o SWCES should also continue to build on program strengths that families have identified. These strengths include: the addition of the on-site program; support, flexibility and commitment of home visitors, promoting parents to be advocates of their children; connecting families with other families; activities and playgroups; promotion of family learning outside of the program; and providing childcare services.
- o The program should also continue to have parents assist in the planning of events, as many had opinions and ideas on activities in which they would like to be involved. The program should continue to grow on the path it is on, incorporating feedback from parents to best meet their needs.

✓ *Family Self-Assessment*

The following recommendations have been made based on family self assessments and areas of concern.

- o SWCES staff should continue to work closely with families on an individual basis to determine their family goals based on their areas of concern as well as their areas of strength. Using these goals, staff should continue to work with families on developing an action plan or steps to work towards and complete their goals. This should be done in effort to reduce family level of concern for specific areas of well-being.
- o The new Getting Ready to Work Program should be discussed with families that expressed concern about their employment and financial status, as well as adult education. This program offers families a new opportunity to build their skill base through the Even Start program. It also provides individuals with experience, focus, and motivation to pursue employment or further training and education in a specific field.
- o Staff should also continue to refer families to collaborators (such as VAL for adult education concerns) or other service providing organizations to meet other needs, such as legal, shelter, and transportation.

✓ *Early Childhood Progress Survey*

The following recommendations were developed based on the results of the two year analysis of the *Early Childhood Progress Survey*.

- o SWCES staff should continue to work with youth in grades K-3 on their **academic skills** through early childhood education intensive services, and address issues and make appropriate referrals as needed.
- o The findings indicate that the majority of SWCES youth are **motivated to learn** at the same or better level compared to non-Even Start youth, with the exception of a few youth with emotional issues and low attendance rates. SWCES staff should consider working specifically with these children to address these issues and make referrals to other collaborating services as appropriate.
- o Although most of the youth were reported to have average or higher self confidence levels, SWCES staff should continue to encourage youth **self confidence** through planning activities (both home and center based) that can provide children with a sense of success and accomplishment to build their self esteem in learning and life. Further, they should encourage all parents to help build their child's self esteem at home on a daily basis.
- o SWCES staff should continue to and encourage and support **parent involvement** in children's schools, in ways such as encouraging parents to attend school meetings or attending these meetings with parents, assisting parents to advocate for their children, and encouraging them to take an active role in their child's lives through intensive PACT time hours. SWCES should also continue to address parent's needs and barriers relating to low parent involvement and refer parents where appropriate.
- o Although many SWCES children are reported to have average or higher peer relation skills, these results suggest that SWCES should consider working with children in Kindergarten to third grade on their **peer relations**. Staff could either provide support on a one-on-one basis or possibly hold more child-focused events where children can gain more experience in interacting with their peers in a positive learning environment.
- o Similar to the category of peer relations, results on **classroom behavior** indicate that several of SWCES youth between the grade levels of K-3 have poor classroom behavior skills compared to their peers. SWCES staff should continue to address this issue on a one-on-one basis during home visits for early childhood education services and PACT time hours. This issue should also be addressed during any center-based group activities and field trips as needed.

Overall, the evaluators recommend that home visitors continue to work with SWCES children towards more positive behavior, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence through early childhood education and PACT time at both home and center based activities. Likewise, SWCES staff should continue to encourage and integrate parent involvement in their child's education into parenting and adult education and PACT time.

Program Evaluation Recommendations

The following recommendations pertain to activities of program evaluation, based on the findings of this report. Changes in evaluation strategies are designed to improve current measures of program quality and participant outcomes. Further, they will enable the program to better meet the needs of participants. Subsequently, it is anticipated that the recommendations will provide for appropriate changes to move the program towards sustainability.

→ *Periodic Staff Focus Groups*

The evaluators recommend holding periodic focus groups with SWCES staff, specifically at the beginning and the end of the year to plan and follow-up on program improvement and evaluation.

- o One of the focus groups should be held during a quarterly meeting to include collaborators in planning and follow-up. The fall 2002 staff focus group (planned for mid-September) will discuss priority areas for the next FY evaluation, as influenced by current recommendations. The focus will include the use of the Early Childhood Progress Survey, revision and use of the EFF Checklist, priority area(s) for program Self-Assessment (considering Quality Consideration areas from the Revised Guide to Quality), protocol for documenting state program indicators of quality, revised areas for evaluation, and revision of evaluation questions and goals.
- o The end of year focus group (Spring, 2003) should follow up on the discussion from the September focus group (what changes were made, what worked or did not work); areas of program accomplishments and need for improvement in program services, professional development, and recommendations for future program improvement strategies and evaluation activities.
- o Other focus groups with staff will include the EFF Focus Group (May or June, 2003) and a possible a focus group to conduct a program self-assessment. Needs for other focus groups will be identified at the initial staff meeting and as the year unfolds.

→ *Client Focus Groups and Interviews*

- o The evaluators recommend to continue to hold focus groups and interviews with clients at the end of the Fiscal Year (July 2003), using the Even Start Client Questionnaire. The evaluators may revise the questionnaire further to include specific questions about family feedback and goals related to the four specific components of the program.
- o The evaluators also recommend interviewing individual families selected for EFF Case Study Documentation to collect self-reported data on their growth and change over the year. Need for other client focus groups will be determined at the Fall 2002 staff focus group.

→ ***Collection of State Program Indicators of Quality***

SWCES staff is required to collect data on the Vermont State Performance Indicators through the new management information system, INVEST. The evaluators recommend that SWCES staff submit this information to the evaluators at the end of the Fiscal Year, including additional family demographic information not required by the state.

- o These demographics include: family goals met; income source for all adults; number of Even Start target and supported children in the household; number of children over Even Start target and supported age; housing status; marital status; other services both children and adults receive; exit date; and reason for exit.

→ ***Track Even Start Student Development Through Early Childhood Progress Survey***

The evaluators recommend that staff continue to administer the Early Childhood Progress Survey, ensuring that teachers understand the purpose of the ECP survey and the importance of its completion. This questionnaire provides a means for collecting state Performance Indicators and assists home based instructors in improving early childhood education services. Involving teachers in SWCES youth assessment also builds on the link between SWCES and the school systems.

- o Data collected next year will be compared to the two years of data reported in this evaluation report. This tool will quantitatively document SWCES children performance in school as compared to other classmates who are not in the program. Analysis will provide a generalization for the children in the program and may also be used on an individual basis by home visitors to meet specific needs of the children.
- o SWCES staff will take responsibility for accessing and coordinating use of this tool within the school system. The evaluators recommend that staff continue to survey teachers of students in K-3 and possibly include pre-school teachers next year, if possible. CRS will provide the analysis of the data. The evaluators will discuss the continued use and any possible revision of this tool with staff at the Fall, 2002 focus group.

→ ***Utilize the EFF Checklist and EFF Standards***

The evaluators recommend modifying the use of the EFF Checklist based on the low utilization rate of the Checklist with families in a systematic manner and given the new data collection requirements based on state and national Even Start legislation.

- o The evaluators recommend selecting two to four families to highlight each year as a "Case Study" through collecting data with the EFF Checklist as well as qualitative data from staff and families. It is recommended that staff use the EFF Checklist at a minimum on a monthly basis, with use increasing as family activity shifts or crosses over to other Role Maps.
- o The evaluators recommend continuing to hold EFF focus groups with staff at the end of the year to collect qualitative data for the Case Study narrative.

- o The evaluators also recommend interviewing the individual families selected, if possible, to include their self-reported data in the Case Study narrative.
- o The evaluators recommend that SWCES staff continue to use the EFF model, with the assistance of the Checklist, with families at their discretion, specifically for family goal setting and revision, and self-reflection.

Based on the past two years of experience, the evaluators conclude that using this tool for family Case Study documentation, supplemented by staff and family self-reported data will make the best use of the information and the best use of home based instruction time. The evaluators will continue to work with SWCES staff to determine families to highlight for the evaluation Case Studies, as well as the most efficient way to use this tool to suit the needs of families, staff, and evaluation.

➔ *Self-Assessment of SWCES*

The evaluators recommend that staff and collaborators consider conducting one or two Quality Considerations for program self-assessments, based on the changing need of the program.

- o Focus of program self-assessments could include the Family Literacy Core Values and Quality Considerations, as discussed in the *Guide to Quality for Even Start Family Literacy Programs Implementation and Continuous Improvement Volume I, Revised* (2001, RMC Research Corporation). Self-assessment tools are available in this guide for each area.
- o The evaluators will consult with staff to determine the focus area and make this evaluation process more formal and systematic at the Fall focus group.

➔ *Continue to Improve Communication*

CRS recommends that the program continue to improve communication between evaluators, staff, and collaborators. This is essential to ensure that all partners share a common focus and message.

- o The evaluators will collaborate with staff this year in renewed efforts to continually re-examine the program process. Improved communication should help monitor how the grant goals are being met and facilitate program improvement. Moreover, the development of an action plan for the eighth and future years of funding will emerge. This is also essential to enhance the discussion of strategies for program sustainability.
- o CRS would like to re-emphasize our previous efforts to have more contact and discussion with other evaluation teams around the state of Vermont. Each Even Start program has its own team of local evaluators. It would be appropriate to collaborate with these evaluators in order to share evaluation strategies and program success stories. All Even Start teams would benefit from the meeting of local evaluators. This could occur on a quarterly or semi-annual basis.

As SWCES program has matured over the past seven years, the recommendations discussed above coincide with changes in the grant goals and needs of the program as recognized over time. These methods will allow the program to more effectively track and monitor family literacy and education as they progress through the program and after graduation of the program. This will not only document and measure the effectiveness of the program but will enable the program to meet the needs of its participants and make appropriate changes for continued grant funding and program sustainability.

Appendix K shows a tentative timeline for evaluation activities for FY 2001-2002, as developed by staff and evaluators. This timeline serves as a guideline for activities and will be revised as needed.

XIII. Works Cited

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XIV. Appendices

- A. Vermont State Performance Indicators
- B. Integration of Components Quality Consideration
- C. Partnerships and Collaboration Quality Consideration
- D. Even Start Client Questionnaire
- E. Equipped for the Future Checklist
- F. Equipped for the Future Role Maps
- G. Staff focus group guide and email questionnaire
- H. A Measure of My Family's Well-Being survey
- I. Early Childhood Progress Questionnaire
- J. Examples of family work in the *Green Mountain Eagle*
- K. Tentative Timeline for South Windsor County Even Start Evaluation, 2002-2003