

City Heights Playful Learning Landscapes Project



City Heights Weingart Library
& El Super
Evaluation Report
October 2025





FUNDED BY:



PRESENTED BY:



Center for Excellence in Early Development (CEED)



Sarah Garrity, Ed.D.
San Diego State University
Senior Associate Dean
CEED Co-Director



Saralyn Miller, Ph.D.
San Diego State University
Research Foundation
Research Scientist



Paulina Figueroa
San Diego State University
Research Foundation
Program Coordinator



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Introduction



Project Introduction

Playful Learning Landscapes (PLL) is an initiative that blends early childhood development, education, and urban design to transform everyday public spaces into fun, interactive, and educational learning hubs. The idea is rooted in the science of learning, especially the concept that children learn best through active, engaged, meaningful, and socially interactive play.

Playful learning is grounded in the 6 C's, which research has shown to prepare children for success in the 21st Century (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2016):

- Collaboration (building something together)
- Communication (talking, writing, listening)
- Content (academic skills, learning facts, or acquiring self-regulatory behaviors)
- Critical Thinking (sifting through information and problem solving)
- Creative Innovation (thinking of new and original ways to solve problems)
- Confidence (persisting through failure)

In March of 2024, the City Heights/Weingart Library partnered with PLL, Price Philanthropies, and the San Diego Foundation to install an Early Learning Center (ELC) for children ages 0-5. This installation was part of a larger funding initiative that also expanded the number of programs available at the library for early learners and their families and caregivers.

In alignment with these efforts, and reflecting PLL's goal to create physical and social ecosystems that support young children's development through meaningful interactions in community settings, PLL was also contracted to create an installation at El Super, a supermarket located adjacent to the library. The installation of PLL spaces in City Heights reflects PLL's commitment to equity by ensuring that children and families in under-resourced neighborhoods have access to quality learning opportunities outside of formal schooling.

To evaluate the impact of both PLL installations, the Center for Excellence in Early Development (CEED) at San Diego State University focused on the three key goals:

1. Does the playful learning installation promote healthy child development and learning?
2. Does the playful learning installation promote an accessible and welcoming public realm?
3. Does the playful learning installation create a vibrant and inclusive social environment?

This proof-of-concept evaluation was undertaken to examine the feasibility of PLL installations and to assess their potential to achieve the intended objectives prior to large-scale implementation.

City Heights Weingart Library: ELC Brochure



About Early Learning Center

The Early Learning Center inside the City Heights/Weingart Branch Library was made possible with a grant from the California State Library with matching donations for the San Diego Foundation and Price Philanthropies, to serve families and caregivers with young children ages 0-5. The Center encourages learning through play.

This project was supported in whole or in part by funding provided by the State of California, administered by the California State Library.



Resources:

- ✓ Early Learning Computer Stations
- ✓ Kid friendly space for ages 0-5
- ✓ Library and resource center
- ✓ Art and craft activities
- ✓ Outdoor garden for hands on learning
- ✓ Weekly story time programs
- ✓ Interactive walls to encourage play
- ✓ Parenting Workshops and more!

Join Us to Play,
Discover, and
Learn!



- ☎ 619-641-6100
- 📍 3795 Fairmount Ave
San Diego, CA 92105
- ✉ ctstaff@sandiego.gov
- 🌐 sandiegolibrary.org



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Suggested Activities

Playing and learning do not have to end once you leave our Early Learning Center. Here are some suggested activities that can be done anywhere!

Language Development

Read to your child everyday! Point to signs in stores and places around you! Play I-Spy by describing things you see and have the other person guess the objects.

Mathematics

Numbers, shapes, and basic math are everywhere! Count your food. Describe their shapes and colors. Play hide-and-seek to practice counting from 1-10.

Science

Explore the world through your senses for some hands-on learning experiences. Water play and mud play not only encourage creativity, but they also teach you colors, textures, reactions, and more! Get a bowl of water and put different materials inside, one at a time, to see what floats and what sinks.

Arts and Crafts

Pick up a weekly take and make craft kit at the library to develop fine motor skills! Painting, cutting, and drawing are all great ways to practice eye-hand coordination.

Social Skills

Play simple board games, create a team scavenger hunt to find things around house to promote collaboration and teamwork.



Open for Play

Our Early Learning Center is designed for play. Check out our space. We are open 7 days a week, when the library is open.

The center includes a play area for kids ages 0-5. For older kids, Legos, puzzles, and other toys can be borrowed at the front desk. FREE activity workbook, craft kits, are also available to take home.

We also have an outdoor patio that families are welcome to use to enjoy snacks or let the kids make some noise!

Our outdoor garden space is available for programs and guided play.

El Super: Event Flyer



BACK TO SCHOOL

*While supplies last

300 FREE backpacks* surprises for the whole family!

JOIN US FOR FUN, GIVEAWAYS, AND GOOD VIBES

DATE: Saturday, August. 8th

LOCATION: 4421 University Ave. San Diego

HOURS: 12 PM - 3 PM



Summary of Findings

After the PLL installation at the ELC, observations showed young children, their families and caregivers actively used the space for learning and play. Additionally, survey results indicated that the ELC area was welcoming and valued by the community.

Following the PLL installation at El Super, observations indicated caregivers initiating engagement with the child by pointing, showing, and saying the name of a product or activity, suggesting the efficacy of these installments on increasing caregiver-child engagement.

Overall project findings are summarized in the table below.

City Heights Weingart Library Early Learning Center

Observation Data

Caregiver/Child Language and Engagement	Caregiver and child language and engagement in playful interactions increased by 18% from pre to post installment.
Caregiver/Child Content Language	Caregiver and child content language increased by 20% from pre to post installment.
Literacy Activities	The number of observations in which literacy activities occurred increased by 17% from pre to post installment.
Math Activities	The number of observations in which math activities occurred increased by 12% from pre to post installment.

Survey Data

Neighborhood Convenience	70% of survey respondents live in City Heights, and 49% walk or use public transportation to access the library.
Library Safety	82% of survey respondents feel safe at the library.
ELC Appeal	85% of survey respondents reported the ELC as inviting or very inviting.
ELC Accessibility	72% of survey respondents thought the ELC is accommodating or very accommodating for children with special needs.

El Super

Observation Data

Caregiver/Child Engagement	Caregiver and child engagement increased by 5% from pre to post installment and promotional activities improved occurrences by an additional 7%.
Caregiver/Child Language	Caregiver and child language improved by 14% from pre to post installment. Promotional activities did not improve occurrences.
Caregiver/Child Content Language	Caregiver and child content language improved by 10% from pre to post installment. Promotional activities did not improve occurrences.

Partners

As part of a larger state funding project to promote early learning programs and spaces for children and youth in City Heights, six organizations worked in concert to support the development of an Early Learning Center (ELC) at the City Heights Weingart Library and an installment of activities and PLL signs at the El Super supermarket adjacent to the library. The role of each organization is described below.



The Playful Learning Landscapes team worked with the leadership and staff of the PLL installation sites to design installments that integrate PLL elements into public spaces. They also supported the evaluators with metrics and tools used to measure impact and trained the observer to conduct observations with fidelity.



The City of San Diego City Heights Weingart Library is the site of the Early Learning Center (ELC). Librarians worked with PLL staff to design the installment. Librarians and staff manage the ELC space and designed programming for early learners and their families.



El Super, a supermarket, is the site of a PLL installation. El Super leadership worked with PLL staff to design the installment. El Super leadership and staff also developed promotional activities with PLL elements to encourage children, families, and caregivers' engagement with the installation.



Price Philanthropies introduced the concept of PLL to the Weingart Library and El Super and provided funding for this project. They also organized design meetings with PLL and library staff and were part of the project implementation team. A community relations associate for Price Philanthropies collected observation and survey data and assisted with promotional activities at El Super.



The San Diego Foundation provided funding for this project and staff members were part of the project implementation team.



SDSU's Center for Excellence in Early Development (CEED) created an evaluation plan based on project goals and managed the data collection process. CEED led the program implementation team and provided interim data analysis to make changes for program improvement. CEED also conducted the final data analysis and generated an evaluation report.

Evaluation Methodology

Pre/Post Study Design: Pre/Post Study Design: A pre/post study design was used to assess changes in engagement of children and their families and caregivers with the PLL installments at the library's ELC and at El Super, using an observation protocol used in previous PLL evaluations. A survey was also conducted at the library site to learn more about ELC participants' library use, perceptions of the community, and thoughts about play and learning. Two years of library administrative data was provided by the branch manager to assess whether the newly scheduled programs and ELC installation impacted library attendance and use. Additional information about program measures is provided below.

Observation Protocol: The observation protocol measures the use of the child and caregiver's language (e.g., numeric, spatial, letter), math and literacy activities, physical activity, social interactions, child engagement and levels of the 6 C's. The observer tallied both the number of times content of child and caregiver's language occurred and the number of times math and literacy activities occurred. The observer rated physical activity, social interactions, child engagement and the 6 C's on a three-point scale, high, moderate, or low. For the El Super observation, additional items were added to the observation protocol to captures interactions such as if the caregiver and child discuss healthy eating, turns in verbal interaction, caregiver communication style and emotion of interaction. The community relations associate at Price Philanthropies was trained by PLL staff to conduct observations at the PLL sites using the observation protocol. The observer coded 10 videos and met reliability standards by 91%.

Library Survey: The library survey was designed specifically for this project to gather feedback on how patrons perceive both the library and the ELC installation. The implementation team collaborated to develop questions that reflected the local context and program objectives. The community relations associate at Price Philanthropies used an iPad to administer the online survey to participants in either English or Spanish. Library patrons were offered an incentive for taking the time to complete the survey.

City Heights Weingart Library Administrative Data: The library administrative data was used to determine the impact of two new programs funded by grants received by the library, early childhood classes for children and families, and the installation of the ELC. The administrative data provided includes programming attendance, the number of new library cards issued, and the number of books checked out each month. Data were analyzed from January 2023 to January 2025.

Data collection at both locations took place before and after the PLL signs and activities were installed. Post-installment data collection and analysis occurred in multiple rounds to allow the implementation team to make data-informed changes to the PLL site to encourage children, their families, and their caregivers to engage with the installment. An observation protocol and survey were used to assess program goals.

Evaluation Timeline

The project period for the ELC spanned from March 2024 to February 2025. A timeline of the data collection and activities is presented below.

Phase	Timeline	Activities
City Heights Weingart Library		
Pre-ELC Installment Data Collection	March 11-14, 2024	Observer completed 31 pre-installation observations, for a total observation time of 2.57 hours.
City Heights Weingart Library ELC Opening Day	March 16, 2024	ELC opening day activities included a celebration of the space with a bubble and puppet show. Complimentary gifts such as books, backpacks and school supplies were distributed.
Post-ELC Installment Data Collection	November 5-December 5, 2024	The survey was administered on an iPad, facilitated by the data collector/observer. 40 surveys were completed in English or Spanish.
	November 15-December 10, 2024	Observer completed 18 observations, for a total observation time of 1.5 hours.
Mid-program Data Analysis	December 12, 2024	Evaluators conducted a mid-program data analysis. The project team met to review the data and made minor changes to the data collection process to ensure efficiency and accuracy.
Post-ELC Installment Data Collection	January 7-February 5, 2025	The survey was administered on an iPad, facilitated by the data collector/observer. 27 surveys were completed in English or Spanish.
	January 13-February 13, 2025	Observer completed 36 observations, for a total observation time of 4.5 hours.
Mid-program Data Analysis	February 20, 2025	Evaluators conducted a mid-program data analysis. The project team met to review the data and decided no additional data collection was necessary at this time.

GRAND OPENING!



Early Learning Center

Saturday, March 16, 2024 at 10am-12pm



**Join us to celebrate our new
Early Learning Center!**

**Free books, backpacks, school supplies, bubble
show, puppet show, and more!**

**City Heights/Weingart Branch Library
3795 Fairmount Ave. San Diego, CA 92105**

EARLY LEARNING CENTER
Plant a Seed and Read

THIS PROJECT WAS SUPPORTED IN WHOLE
OR IN PART BY FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ADMINISTERED BY
THE CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY.



Evaluation Timeline

The EI Super project period spanned from April 2025 to October 2025. A timeline of the data collection and activities is presented below.

Phase	Timeline	Activities
EI Super Supermarket		
Pre-EI Super PLL Installment Data Collection	April 2-April 29, 2025	Observer completed 52 observations for a total observation time of 3.78 hours.
EI Super Installment Opening Week	Jul 23, 2025	All PLL signs are installed.
Post-EI Super PLL Installment Data Collection	July 28-August 14, 2025	Observer completed 51 observations for a total observation time of 3.22 hours. The observer noted that the families were not engaged in the PLL installment, and a series of promotional events and activities were planned to encourage engagement.
Back to School Event & Promotional Activities	August 9, 2025 & September 12-25, 2025	EI Super held a Back to School event and started using promotional activities to encourage engagement in the PLL signs.
Post-EI Super PLL Installment and Promotion Data Collection	September 12-25, 2025	PLL promotional activities were distributed at the entrance. Observer completed 51 observations for a total observation time of 2.73 hours.





ELC Observation Results



CEED

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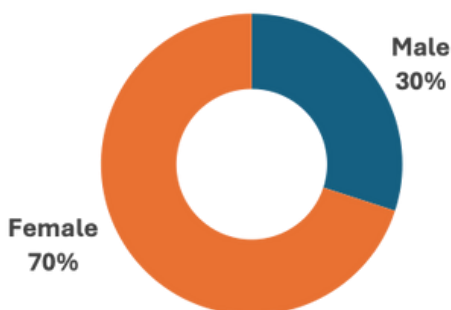
Pre and Post ELC Installment: Observation Demographic Data

Prior to the installment of the Early Learning Center, 31 observations were collected. Demographic data was reported through observation in accordance with the protocol.

The majority of the children observed were ages 0-4 (69%), female (70%), Hispanic (100%) and were in attendance with a parent (92%).

After the ELC was installed, 54 observations were recorded. The majority of children observed were ages 0-4 (87%), female (59%), and attended with a parent (84%). Child and caregiver ethnicity were more diverse than what was recorded in the pre-ELC demographic data. Post-installment data collection of ethnicities was more reflective of the City Heights community.

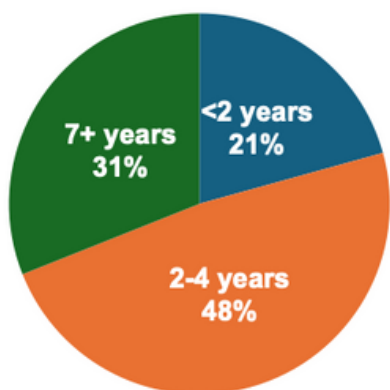
Pre-Installation: Gender of Child in Observation (n=31)



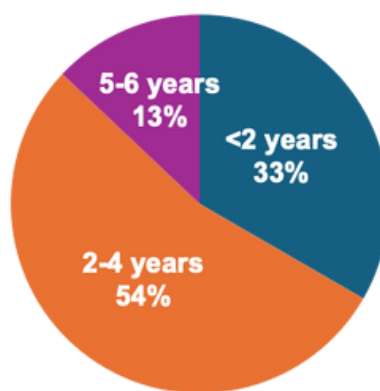
Post-Installation: Gender of Child in Observation (n=54)



Pre-Installation: Age Category of Child in Observation (n=31)

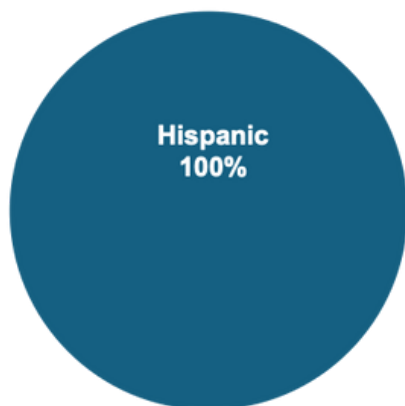


Post-Installation: Age Category of Child in Observation (n=54)

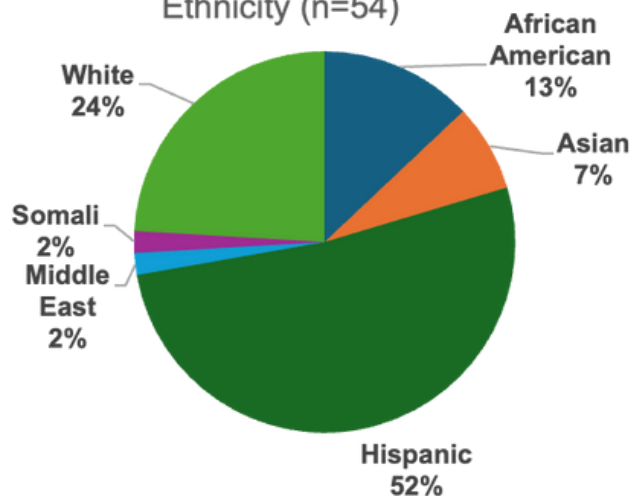


Pre and Post ELC Installment: Observation Demographic Data

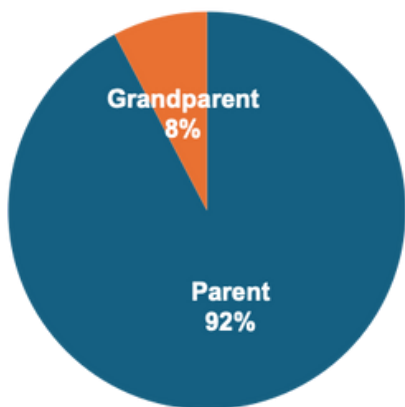
Pre-Installation: Child & Caregiver
Ethnicity (n=31)



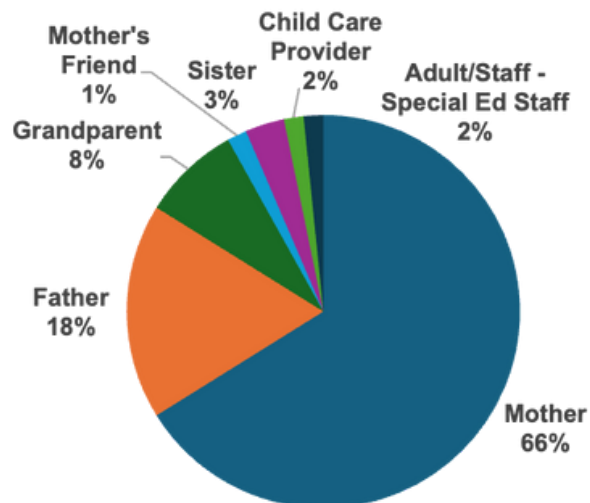
Post-Installation: Child & Caregiver
Ethnicity (n=54)



Pre-Installation: Caregiver Relationship to
Child (n=31)



Post-Installation: Caregiver Relationship
to Child (n=54)



Pre and Post ELC Installment: Observation Results

Child and caregiver language and behaviors were observed and tallied before and after the ELC installation.

From pre to post-installment, there was an increase in the number of observations in which literacy and math activities occurred. Literacy activities increased by 17% and math activities increased by 12%. There was no statistically significant difference in the number of minutes spent on literacy or math activities.

		Pre-Installation (n=31)	Post-Installation (n=54)	
Literacy Activities	Number of Observations in which Literacy Activities Occurred	19, 61%	42, 78%	
	Mean (SD) for Number of Minutes Spent on Literacy Activities	1.69 (1.62)	2.06 (1.71)	$t(65)=-0.997$; $p=0.323$
Math Activities	Number of Observations in which Math Activities Occurred	3, 10%	12, 22%	
	Mean (SD) for Number of Minutes Spent on Math Activities	0.193 (0.572)	0.269 (0.811)	$t(79)=-0.497$; $p=0.621$

Pre and Post ELC Installment: Observation Results

Before the ELC was installed, instances of content language and playful behaviors occurred in 26% of the observations, while after the ELC was installed, instances of content language and behaviors occurred in 44% of observations, reflecting an 18% increase.

The percentage of observations in which content language instances occurred increased by 20% from pre to post-ELC installment. Instances of both child and caregiver letter language increased by 30%. Prior to the ELC installment, neither the children nor the caregivers engaged in letter language instances. However, after the ELC installment, 30% of the observations included letter language for children and their caregivers. Additionally, child numeric language did not occur prior to the ELC installment, and after the installment, there were 13 observations (24%).

Other behaviors that showed change from pre to post installment included child laughter and instances of the child talking about colors. Before the ELC, 19% of children laughed during the observation, but after the installation, 56% of the observations recorded child laughter. Similarly, while there were no instances of children talking about colors prior to the ELC installment, 37% of post-installation observations noted that children discussed colors.

Instances Being Observed	Number of Observations with Activity	
	Pre-Installment (n=31)	Post-Installment (n=54)
Child Numeric Language	0	13, 24%
Caregiver Numeric Language	5, 16%	13, 24%
Child Spatial Language	2, 6%	16, 30%
Caregiver Spatial Language	5, 16%	24, 44%
Child Letter Language	0	16, 30%
Caregiver Letter Language	0	16, 30%
Child Literacy & Vocabulary Language	14, 45%	35, 65%
Caregiver Literacy & Vocabulary Language	22, 71%	36, 67%
Child Asks Questions	16, 52%	30, 56%
Caregiver Asks Questions	19, 61%	34, 63%
Child Laughs	6, 19%	30, 56%
Caregiver Laughs	9, 29%	16, 30%
Child Talks About Colors	0	20, 37%
Caregiver Talks about Colors	3, 10%	16, 30%
Conversational Turns	24, 77%	43, 80%
Average	26%	44%

Pre and Post ELC Installment: Observation Results

The number of times a child or caregiver were observed using content language or playful behaviors were tallied in both pre and post observations.

Child numeric language was not observed before the ELC was installed ($M = 0$, $SD=0$), but there were instances of child numeric language after the ELC was installed ($M = 0.537$, $SD = 1.02$), a significant increase, $t(53) = -3.86$, $p = 0.003$. The ELC installation did not have a significant effect on caregiver numeric language.

Child ($M = 0.097$, $SD = 0.396$) and caregiver ($M = 0.29$, $SD = 0.739$) spatial language improved from pre to post installment (child $M = 0.519$, $SD = 0.947$; caregiver $M = 0.704$, $SD = 0.924$), a significant increase, child: $t(78) = -2.876$, $p = 0.005$; caregiver: $t(74) = -2.26$, $p = 0.03$.

Child and caregiver letter language was not observed before the ELC was installed ($M = 0$, $SD = 0$), but there were instances of child letter language ($M = 0.704$, $SD = 0.924$), and caregiver letter language ($M = 0.667$, $SD = 1.12$), a significant increase, child: $t(53) = -4.34$, $p = 0$; caregiver: $t(53) = -4.39$, $p = 0$.

Child literacy and vocabulary language improved from pre, ($M = 0.87$, $SD = 1.26$) to post installment ($M = 1.78$, $SD = 1.66$), a significant increase, $t(77) = -2.84$, $p = 0.006$. The ELC installment did not have a significant effect on caregiver literacy and vocabulary language.

The ELC installment did not have a significant effect on the number of times a child asks a question. The number of times a caregiver asks a question from pre, ($M = 1$, $SD = 1$) to post installment ($M = 1.72$, $SD = 1.53$) increased significantly, $t(82) = -2.62$, $p = 0.01$.

The number of instances of the child laughing improved from pre, ($M = 0.484$, $SD = 1.39$) to post installment ($M = 1.20$, $SD = 1.26$), a significant increase, $t(58) = -2.38$, $p = 0.02$. The ELC installment did not have a significant effect on the number of instances the caregiver laughed.

The number of conversational turns also improved from pre ($M = 1.94$, $SD = 1.61$) to post installment ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 3.55$), a significant increase, $t(80) = -3.17$, $p = 0.002$.

Pre and Post ELC Installment: Observation Results

Instances Being Observed	Mean (SD) for Total Number of Instances		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Pre-Installation (n=31)	Post-Installation (n=54)		
Child Numeric Language	0 (0)	0.537 (1.02)	-3.86	0.003*
Caregiver Numeric Language	1.58 (4.07)	0.481 (0.947)	1.48	0.15
Child Spatial Language	0.097 (0.396)	0.519 (0.947)	-2.87	0.005*
Caregiver Spatial Language	0.29 (0.739)	0.704 (0.924)	-2.26	0.03*
Child Letter Language	0 (0)	0.704 (1.19)	-4.34	0*
Caregiver Letter Language	0 (0)	0.667 (1.12)	-4.39	0*
Child Literacy & Vocabulary Language	0.87 (1.26)	1.78 (1.66)	-2.84	0.006*
Caregiver Literacy & Vocabulary Language	3 (3.72)	2.04 (2.31)	1.3	0.199
Child Asks Questions	1.19 (1.47)	1.09 (1.20)	0.33	0.75
Caregiver Asks Questions	1 (1)	1.72 (1.53)	-2.62	0.01*
Child Laughs	0.484 (1.39)	1.20 (1.26)	-2.38	0.02*
Caregiver Laughs	0.484 (1.15)	0.481 (0.841)	0.01	0.99
Conversational Turns	1.94 (1.61)	3.72 (3.55)	-3.17	0.002*

*p<.05

Pre and Post ELC Installment: Observation Results

The observation captures the level of physical activity of the child, as well as the level of child engagement in the activity. Before the ELC was installed, the majority of children who were rated high for engagement in the activity were rated low for physical activity. After the ELC was installed the majority of children who were rated high for engagement were rated low and medium for physical activity.

Overall, high child engagement decreased from pre to post installment, and there was an increase in a medium level of engagement. Also, the medium level of physical activity increased and the low level decreased. These changes could be due to the fact that there are more activities for children to engage in.

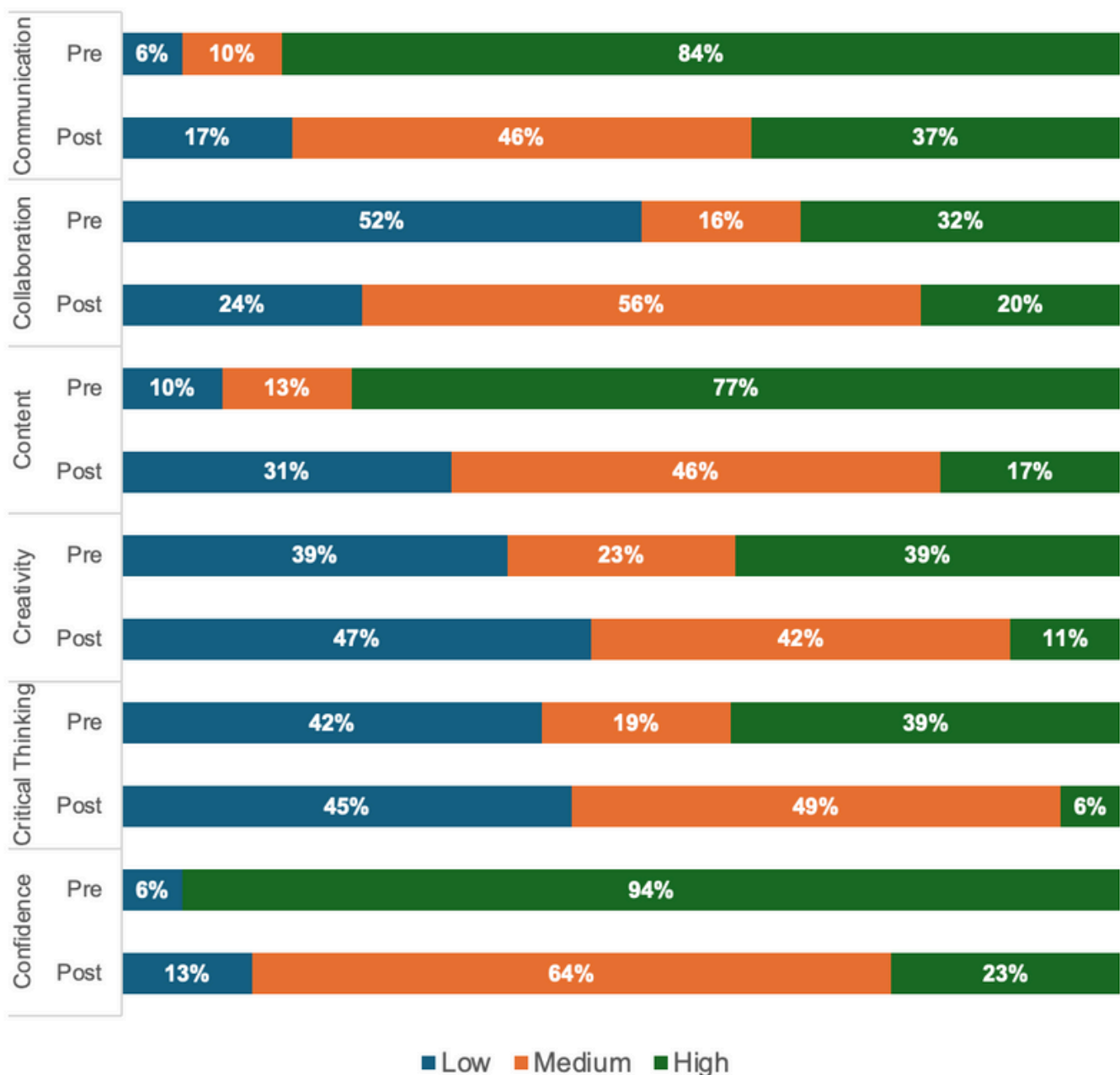
The children are also rated on the amount of social interaction that they have while being observed. High levels of social interaction decreased, but medium levels of social interaction increased.

	Pre (n=31) Post (n=54)	High	Medium	Low
Level of Physical Activity	Pre	23%	19%	58%
	Post	6%	56%	39%
Child Engagement in Activity	Pre	77%	6%	16%
	Post	43%	45%	13%
Amount of Social Interaction	Pre	48%	19%	32%
	Post	11%	51%	38%

Pre and Post ELC Installment: Observation Results

The observation measures the 6 main tenets of the playful learning landscape model. From pre to post installation, a high level of communication, content and confidence decreased by an average of 59%. The level of collaboration, creativity and critical thinking remained relatively balanced from pre to post installment.

The 6 C's
Pre (n=31); Post (n=54)





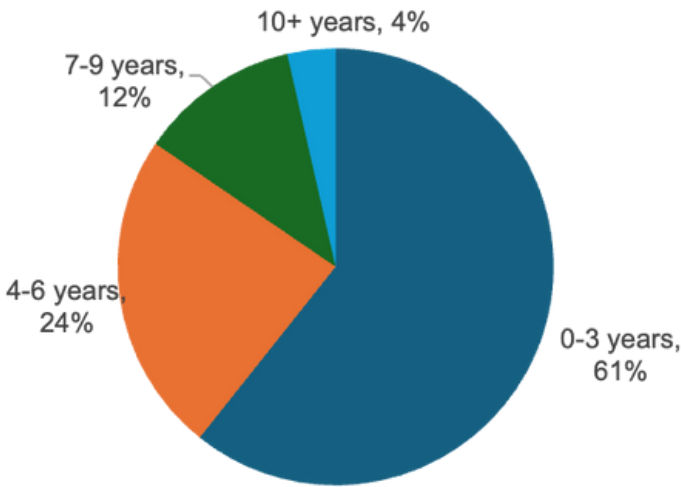
ELC Library Survey Results



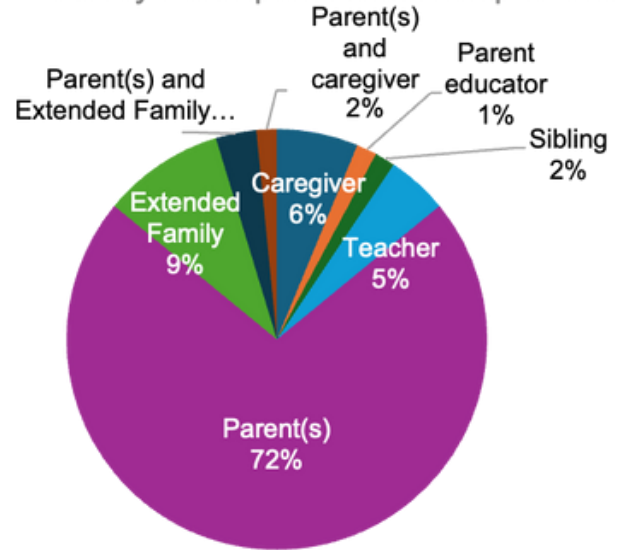
Library Survey: Demographic Data

After the ELC was installed, 67 library surveys were collected. The majority of survey participants reside in the City Heights neighborhood (70%), and 77% of respondents were parents visiting the library with their child. Most of the children visiting were 3 years old or younger (61%). The ethnicity and primary language of the survey participants reflect the diversity of the City Heights community, with the majority identifying as Hispanic (66%) and 52% reporting Spanish as their primary language.

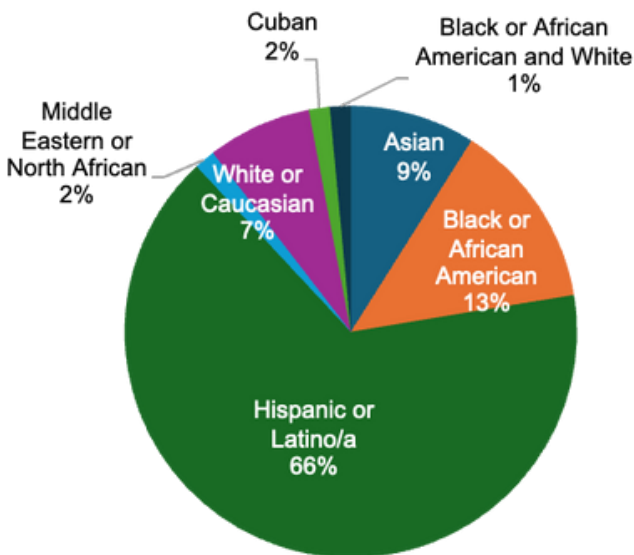
Ages of Children of Survey Participants



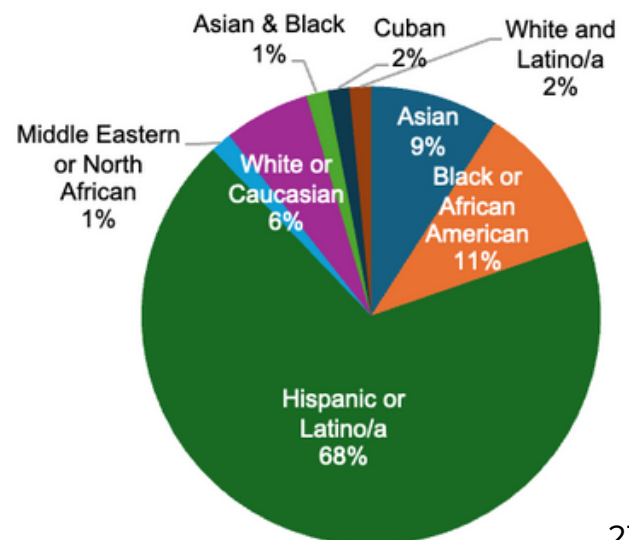
Survey Participant Relationship to Child



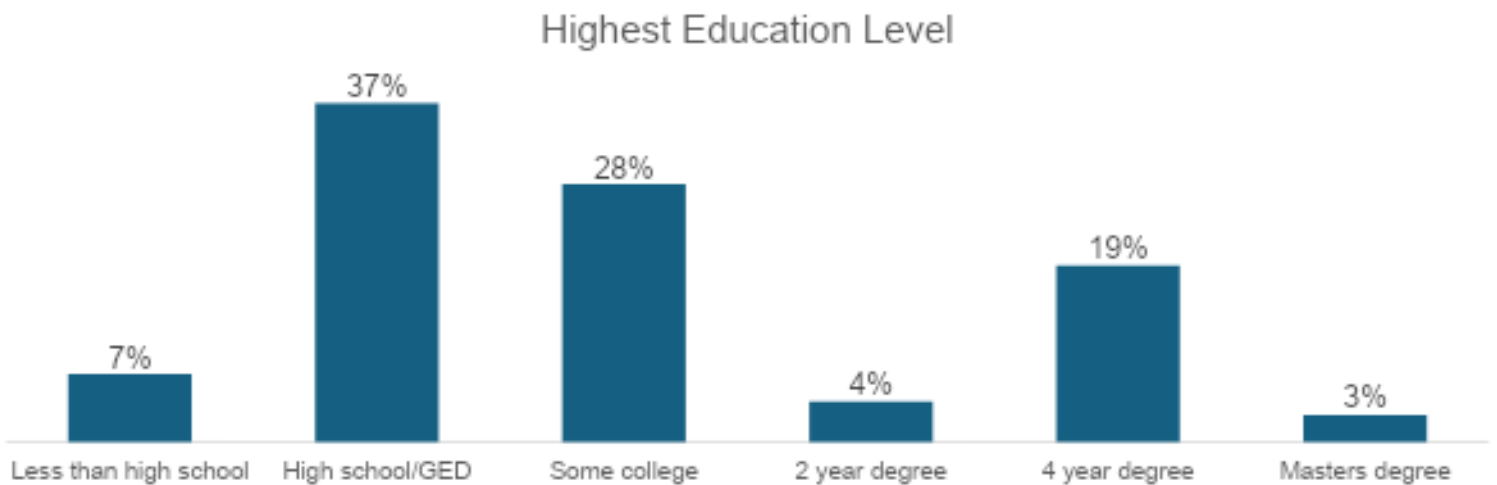
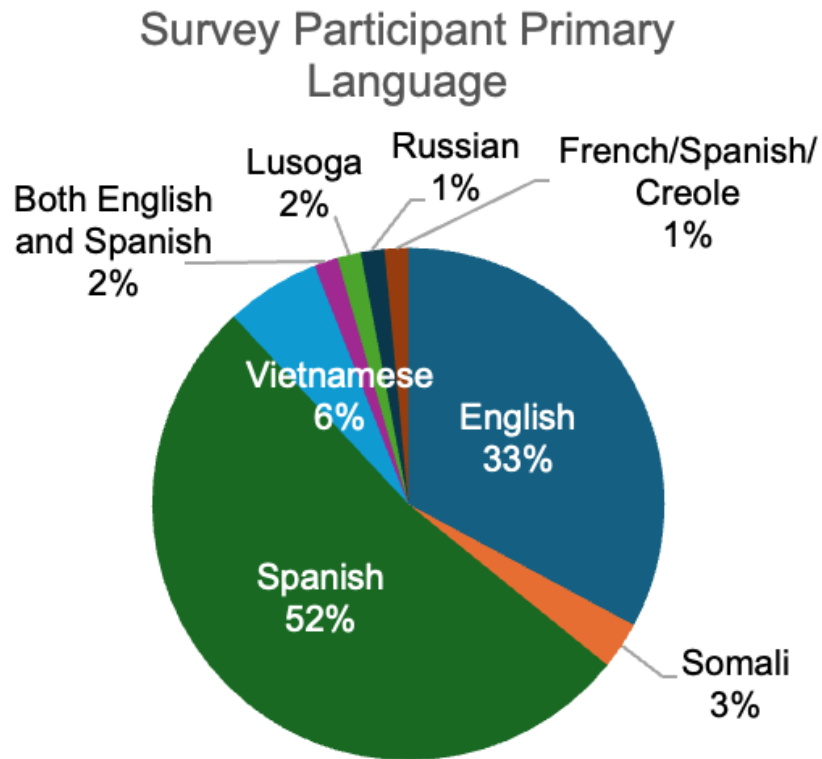
Survey Participant Race/Ethnicity



Child's Race/Ethnicity



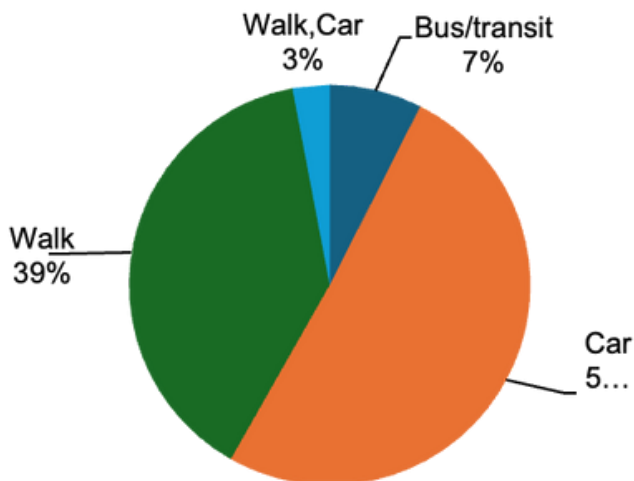
Library Survey: Demographic Data



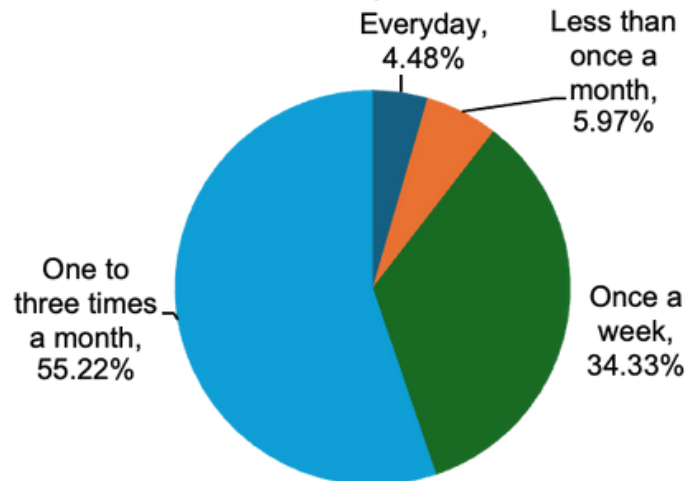
Library Survey: Library Attendance and Enjoyment

Given that 70% of survey participants live in the City Heights neighborhood, it was encouraging to find that many are able to walk or take public transportation to reach the library (46%). A majority of survey respondents have a library card (66%), most are frequent visitors to the library (94% visit at least 1-3 times a month) and 82% of survey respondents reported feeling “very safe” at the library.

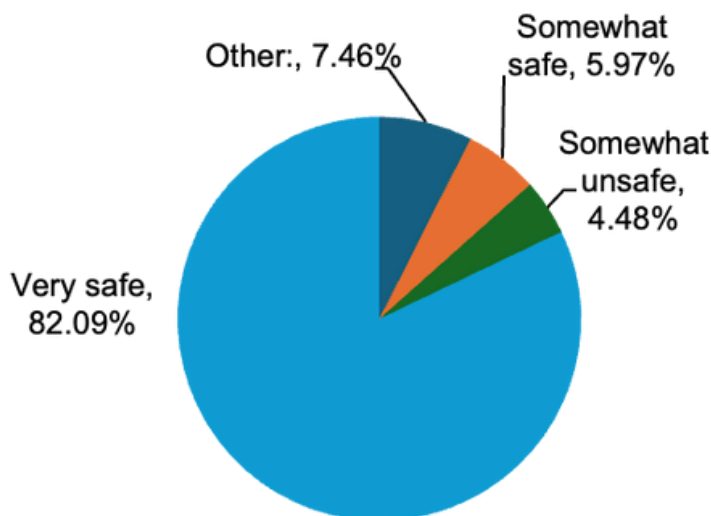
How did you get to the City Heights library?



Generally speaking, in the last month, how often have you come to the City Heights library?



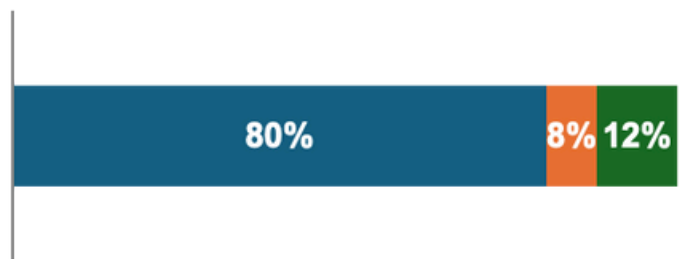
Generally speaking, how safe do you feel at the City Heights Library?



Library Survey: Community Impact

Survey respondents were asked about the impact the neighborhood and City Heights Weingart Library have on their community and family. Overall, families expressed highly favorable views regarding the library’s environment and its positive impact on the neighborhood. However, respondents were less optimistic about the availability of safe spaces for children to play in the neighborhood. This suggests that while the library is seen as a safe and welcoming space, there is a need for more play areas for children in the surrounding community.

What kind of impact do you think the City Heights Library has on this neighborhood?



■ Very Positive Impact ■ Somewhat Positive Impact ■ Other

I feel confident in helping my children learn when I'm at the library.



My neighborhood has enough safe areas in which children can play.



Generally speaking, the City Heights library provides a multicultural environment for me and my family.



I feel engaged with my child(ren) when I'm at the library.

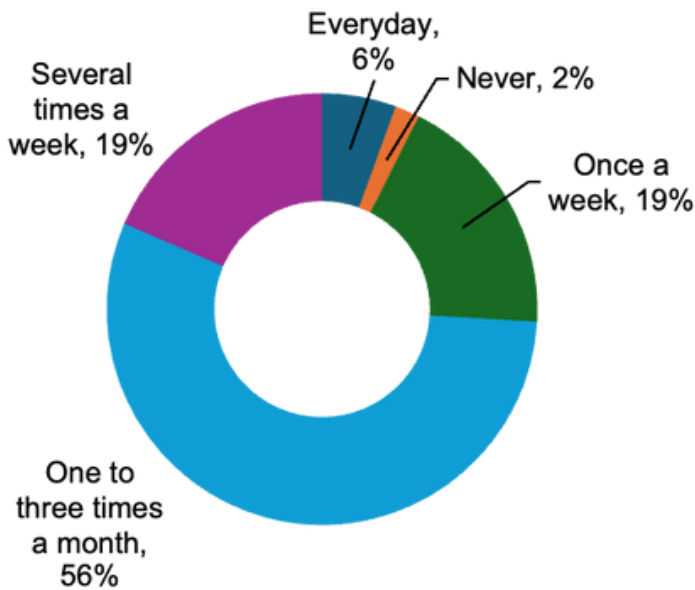


■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

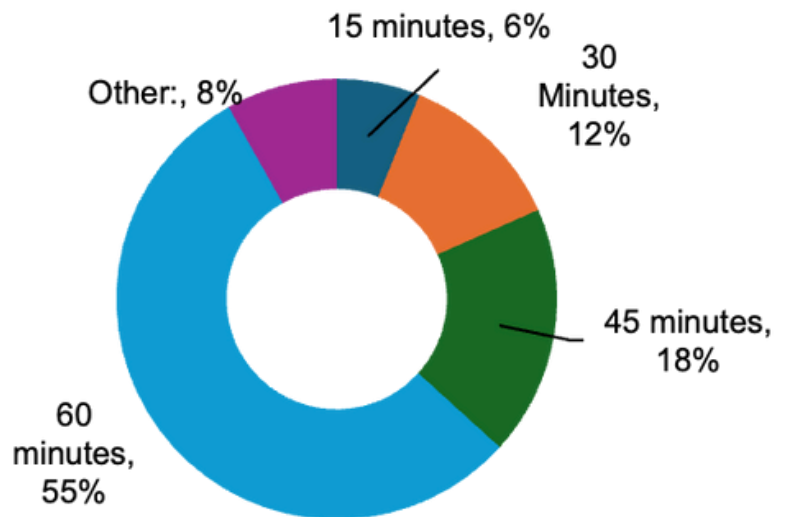
Library Survey: ELC Attendance and Accessibility

Survey respondents were asked about their experiences using the ELC. Overall, most were regular visitors with many spending at least an hour in the ELC during each visit. Additionally, 85% of respondents described the ELC as either “very inviting” or “inviting”, and 72% found the ELC to be either “very accommodating” or “accommodating”.

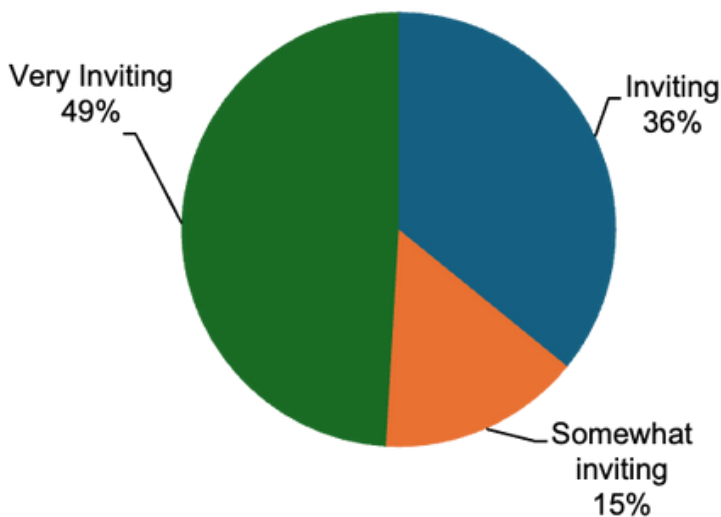
How often do you visit the ELC?



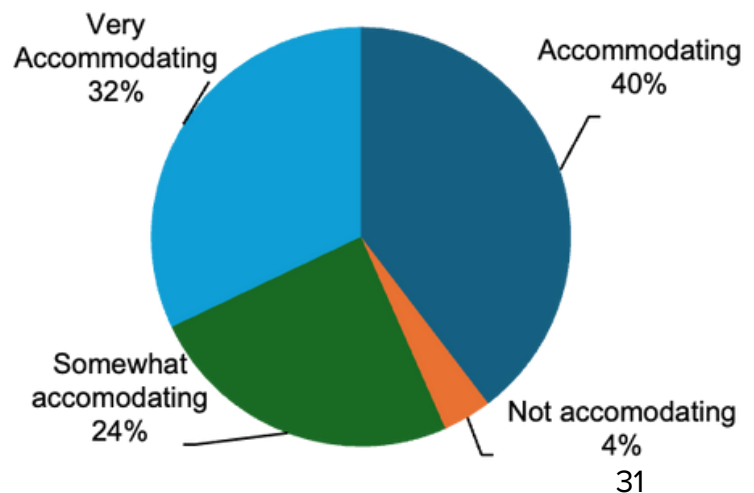
How long do you and your child spend at the ELC?



How inviting is the ELC? (clean, nice, place to sit, maintained)

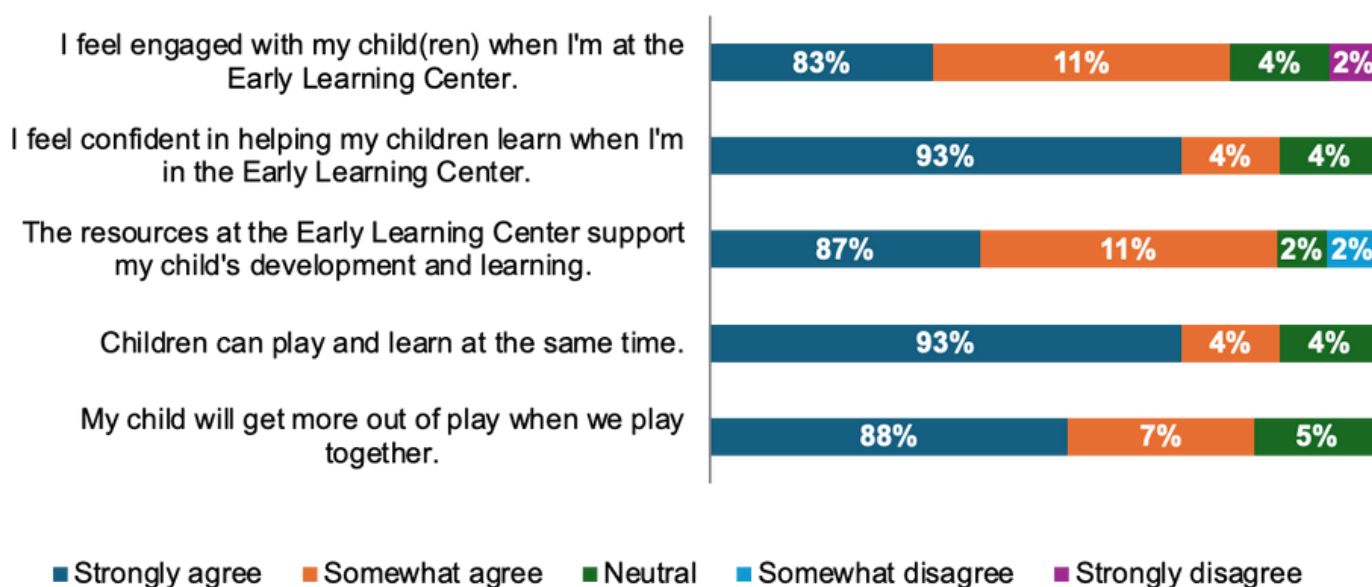


How accommodating is the ELC for children with special needs?



Library Survey: Caregivers' Perception of Play, Learning, and Engagement

Survey respondents were asked about the impact of the ELC on the child and their family. Overall, the feedback regarding the ELC's environment and its effect on both the child and family was positive. Respondents also expressed favorable views regarding play, with many indicating that playing with their children is an important way to support their learning and development.





ELC Library

Administrative Data

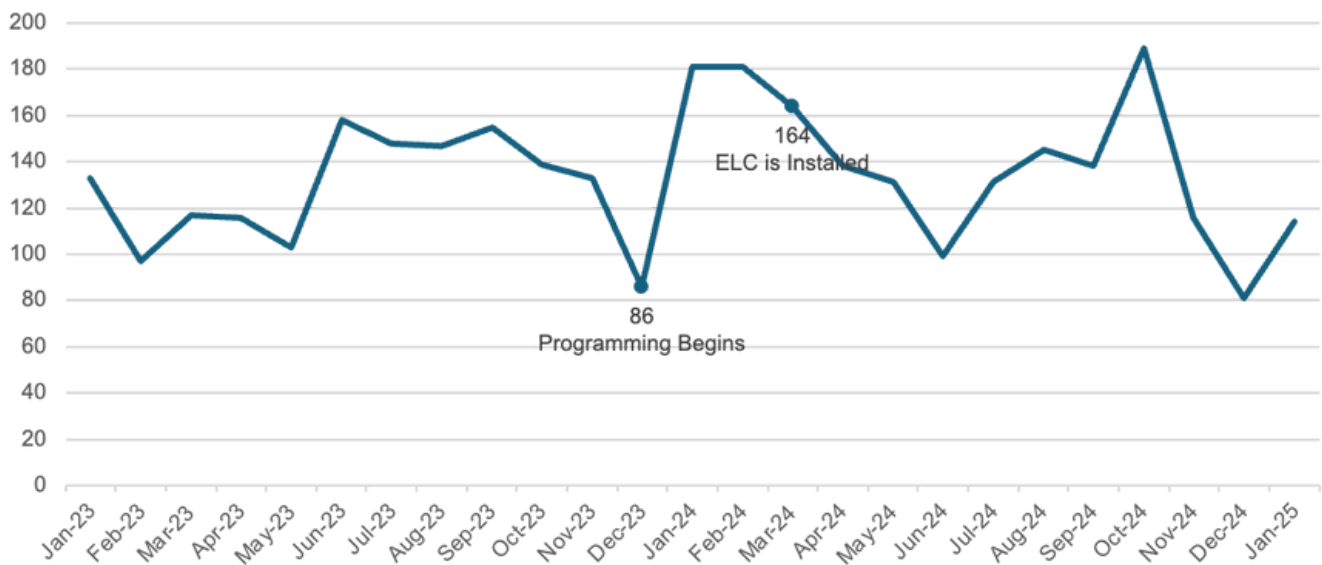


Pre and Post ELC Installment: New Library Cards and Book Circulation Data

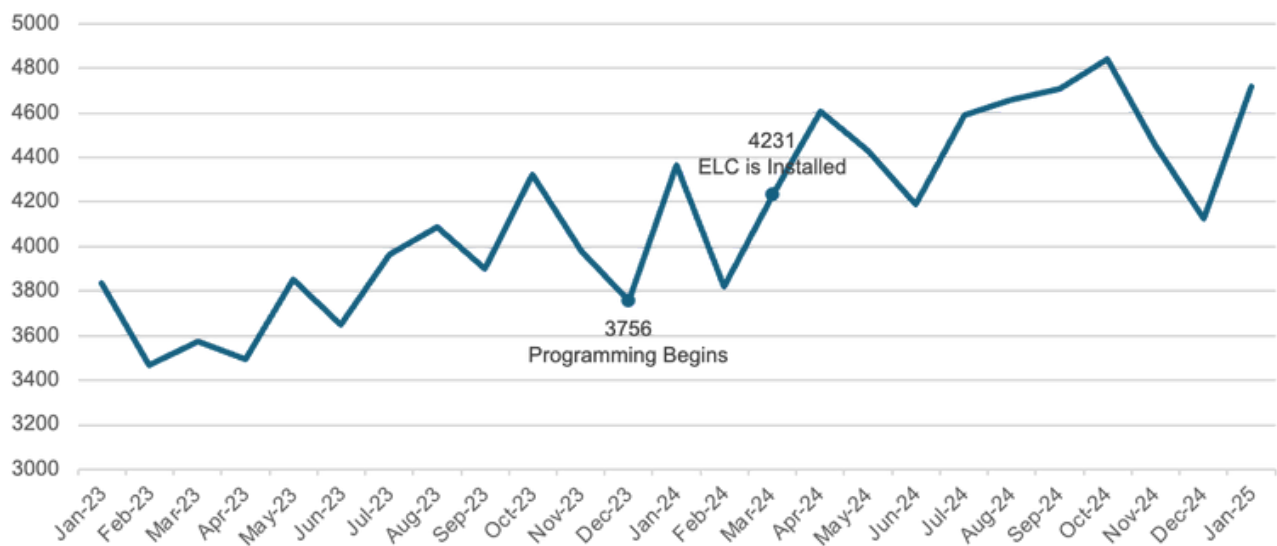
Two new programs funded by grants – early childhood classes for children and families and the installation of the ELC– were implemented during the project period. To measure the impact of both programs on the library’s day-to-day operations, the number of new library cards issued and the number of books checked out each month were analyzed from January 2023 to January 2025.

The average number of new library cards issued over time remained steady, with a small drop in December and January, which could be due to the holiday season. The average number of books checked out over time saw a steady and gradual increase as programs were added and as the ELC was installed.

Number of New Library Cards Issued Each Month

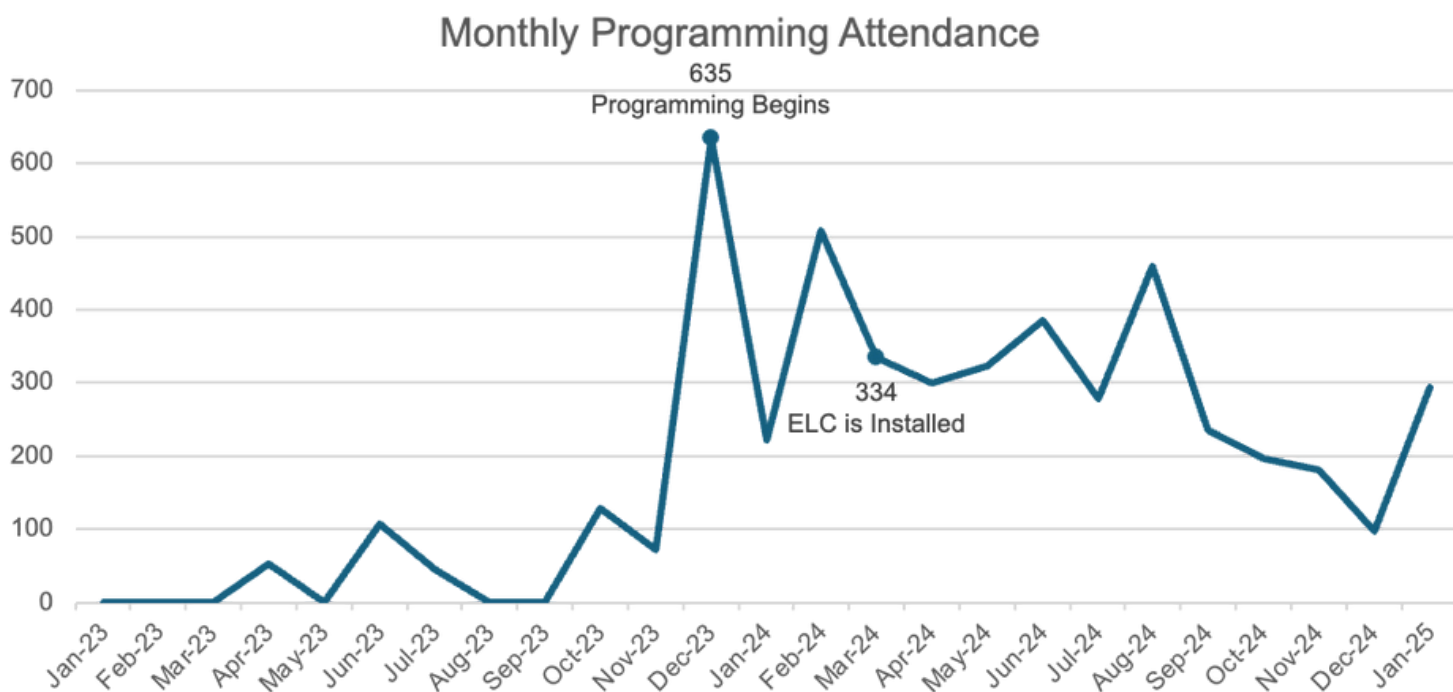


Number of Books Checked Out Each Month



Pre and Post ELC Installment: Programming Attendance

Additionally, the library tracked patrons coming into the library and attendance at the early childhood classes. Following the implementation of the grant funded programs, the library staff approximated that about 50 more patrons entered the library each day and a sharp increase was observed in the number of families participating in the early childhood classes.





ELC Insights and Recommendations for Next Steps



ELC Insights and Recommendations for Next Steps

Insights

- The ELC installation clearly stimulated literacy, math, and playful behaviors (letter language, numeric talk, color discussions, laughter). This suggests strong potential for scaling in communities seeking academic enrichment through play.
- Increases from zero baseline behaviors (letters, numbers, colors) indicate that the installation sparked new opportunities for learning and expression that weren't present before.
- The drop in communication, content, and confidence scores suggests that while children engaged more in specific content-rich behaviors, broader interactional qualities may need intentional support.
- The community survey results show the library is well-placed to serve as a hub: residents live nearby, already visit, and feel safe. This supports sustainability and scalability if programming and installations expand.

Recommendations for Next Steps

- **Deepen Strengths**
 - Build on the gains in literacy and math by adding rotating prompts, challenges, or interactive signage to keep engagement fresh.
 - Leverage positive emotional responses (laughter, color talk) as indicators of sustained interest.
- **Address Gaps in Playful Learning Dimensions**
 - Investigate why communication, content, and confidence decreased (e.g., measurement issue, crowding, need for scaffolding by adults).
 - Train facilitators or provide “play guides” for adults to help scaffold richer communication and confidence during play.
- **Scalability**
 - The increase in new behaviors from zero to measurable levels suggests installations can activate dormant learning opportunities in other sites.
 - Consider piloting in similar walkable, high-safety, community-based settings first, as accessibility and safety seem critical to uptake.



El Super Observation Results





Pre and Post El Super Installment: Observation

The observation protocol was used to observe children and their caregivers before the El Super installation, after the installation, and after promotional activities were instituted.

The original evaluation plan only included pre and post installment observations; however, because the observer noted in the post-observations that the caregivers and children were not engaging with the PLL signs, it was decided that the installation needed to be promoted to encourage engagement. The El Super leadership held a Back to School event to kickoff the promotion of the signs and activities, and an activity sheet (displayed below) was designed and printed for children to fill out as their families or caregivers shopped. The activity sheet was turned in at checkout to be entered into a monthly raffle. A final round of observations was completed following the promotional activities.

PANCHO has a fun activity for your kids while you shop!
It's easy and helps them learn colors and numbers!

¡PANCHO tiene una actividad divertida para tus niños mientras haces tus compras, es fácil y les ayuda a aprender los colores y los números!

STEP 1: LOOK FOR PANCHO
He is hiding in the fruit and vegetable section.
Paso 1: ¡BUSCA A PANCHO!
Está escondido en el departamento de frutas y verduras.

STEP 2: SOLVE THE PUZZLE
Flip over the passport and help Pancho answer the questions.
Paso 2: TERMINA EL JUEGO
Voltea el pasaporte y ayuda a Pancho a contestar las preguntas.

STEP 3: ENTER TO WIN
Drop off your answers in the ballot box near the entrance for a chance to win a prize.
Paso 3: PARTICIPA PARA GANAR
Deja tus respuestas en el buzón cerca de la entrada y tendrás la oportunidad de ganar un premio.

**What's in your basket?
How many...**
¿Qué hay en tu carrito?
Cuántas...

**How many fruits
can you find that have
a 4 in the price tag?**
¿Cuántas frutas ves que tengan
un 4 en la etiqueta del precio?

**Which apple colors
do you see?**
¿Cuáles colores de manzana ves?

bags bolsas

cans latas

boxes cajas

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

red rojo

green verde

yellow amarillo

El Super

Pre and Post EI Super Installment: Observation Demographic Data

Prior to the installment, 52 observations were recorded. The majority of the children observed were ages 6-10 (62%), Latinx (69%), and attended with a parent (91%). During the initial round of post observations, 51 observations were recorded. The majority of the children observed were ages 6-10 (50%), Latinx (88%) and attended with a parent (92%). During the round of observations after promotional activities, 51 observations were recorded. The majority of the children observed were ages 2-5 (38%), Latinx (76%), and attended with a parent (88%).

Observer Reported Demographics			
	Pre-Installment (n=52)	Post-Installment (n=51)	Post Promotion Activities (n=51)
Child Age Group			
0-1 years old	7%	9%	9%
2-5 years old	24%	38%	38%
6-10 years old	62%	33%	33%
11-15 years old	7%	20%	20%
Child & Caregiver Ethnicity			
African American	23%	12%	12%
Asian	2%	8%	8%
Haitian African American	2%	0%	0%
Latinx	69%	76%	76%
White	4%	4%	4%
Caregiver Relationship to Child			
Mother	77%	82%	78%
Father	14%	10%	10%
Grandparent	9%	8%	8%
Aunt/Uncle	0%	0%	2%
Child Alone	0%	0%	2%

Pre and Post EI Super Installment: Observation Results

The average duration for the pre-observations was 3.8 minutes, 3.2 for the first round of post observations and 2.7 for the second round of post observations.

The percentage of observations in which targeted observed behaviors occurred are displayed in the following table. From pre to post promotion activities, overall caregiver and child engagement increased by 12%. The percentage of children that point or read the signs increased by 12% post installation and the promotional activities encouraged more engagement with the signs by an additional 11%. The percentage of children and caregivers from pre to post-promotion activities that point/gesture to a product/object increased by 11% and the percentage of caregivers that take a product/object and show it to the child increased by 28%. The installations encouraged caregiver and child interaction with the signs and grocery produce as designed.

Overall, caregiver and child language improved by 14% from pre to post installation, but decreased by 8% from post installation to post promotion of activities. Also, the majority of targeted observation language occurrences were not positively impacted by the promotional activities. However, in alignment with caregiver and child engagement findings, the percentage of caregivers that say the name of the product/activity also increased by 28% from pre to post promotion activity.

There was a 14% increase in the number of observations in which caregivers asked questions about a product/object/activity and a 16% increase in observations in which caregivers provided a description, information or explanation of the product. However, the data did not show a similar increase in the percentage of children who asked questions or provided a description indicating that the caregivers led the interaction.

Overall, caregiver and child content language increased by 10% from pre to post installation. Caregiver and child talking about letters and sounds improved with each round of observations. Child talks about letters and sounds increased by 4% from pre to post-installation and by 11% from post-installation to post promotion activities for an overall increase of 15%. Caregiver talks about letters and sounds increased by 6% from pre to post installation and by 15% from post installation to post promotion activities for an overall increase of 21%. There was also a 26% increase in caregiver use of numeric language from pre to post installation; however, the child's use of numeric language only increased by 9%.

The mean engagement, language and content language was averaged for caregiver and child occurrences. Overall, the increases in caregiver engagement, language and content language, were larger than child engagement, language and content language.

Pre and Post EI Super Installment: Observation Results

Percentage of Observations in which Activity Occurred						
	Pre-Installment (n=52)	Post-Installment (n=51)	Post Promotion Activities (n=51)	Change from Pre Installment to Post Installment	Change from Pre Installment to Post Promotion	Change from Post Installment to Post Promotion
Caregiver/Child Engagement						
Child Asks to Stop	23%	10%	14%	-13%	-9%	4%
Caregiver Stops in Designated Area	98%	96%	100%	-2%	2%	4%
Child Points to/Reads Sign	35%	47%	58%	12%	23%	11%
Caregiver Reads Sign to Child	21%	31%	39%	10%	18%	8%
Child Points/Gestures to a Product/Object	69%	67%	80%	-3%	11%	14%
Caregiver Points/Gestures to Product Activity	60%	67%	71%	7%	11%	4%
Caregiver Takes Product/Object and Shows it to Child	37%	57%	65%	20%	28%	8%
Average Caregiver/Child Engagement	49%	54%	61%	5%	12%	7%
Caregiver/Child Language						
Child Asks Questions About a Product/Object/Activity	50%	51%	43%	1%	-7%	-8%
Caregiver Asks Questions About Product/Object/Activity	29%	43%	37%	14%	8%	-6%
Child Provides Description, Information, or Explanation	31%	37%	24%	6%	-7%	-14%
Caregiver Provides Description, Information, or Explanation	29%	45%	33%	16%	4%	-12%
Caregiver Says Name of Product/Activity	27%	35%	55%	8%	28%	20%
Child Talks About Colors	13%	38%	24%	25%	11%	-14%
Caregiver Talks About Colors	10%	27%	24%	18%	14%	-3%
Child Talks About Healthy Eating	0%	14%	2%	14%	2%	-12%
Caregiver Talks About Healthy Eating	0%	27%	2%	27%	2%	-25%
Average Caregiver/Child Language	21%	35%	27%	14%	6%	-8%

Pre and Post EI Super Installment: Observation Results

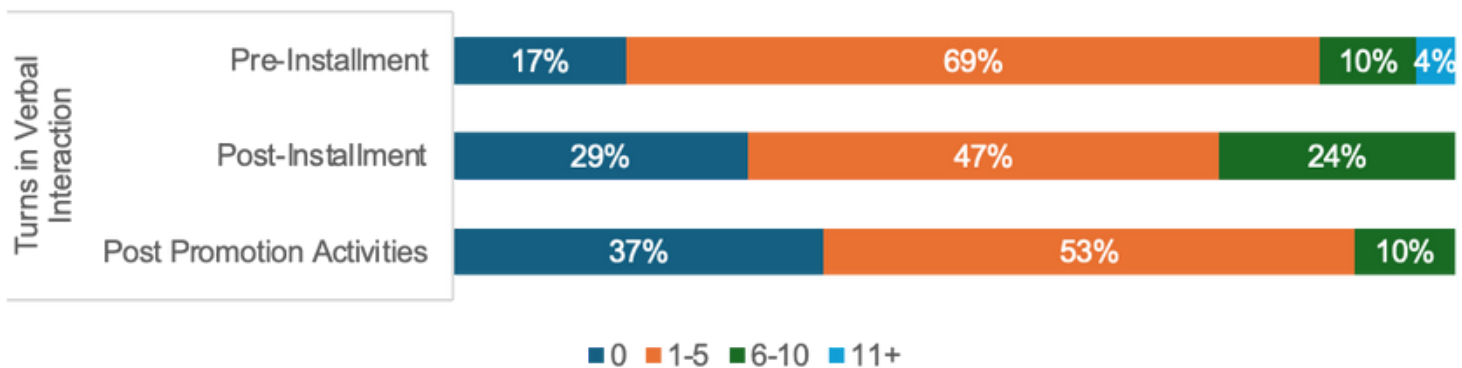
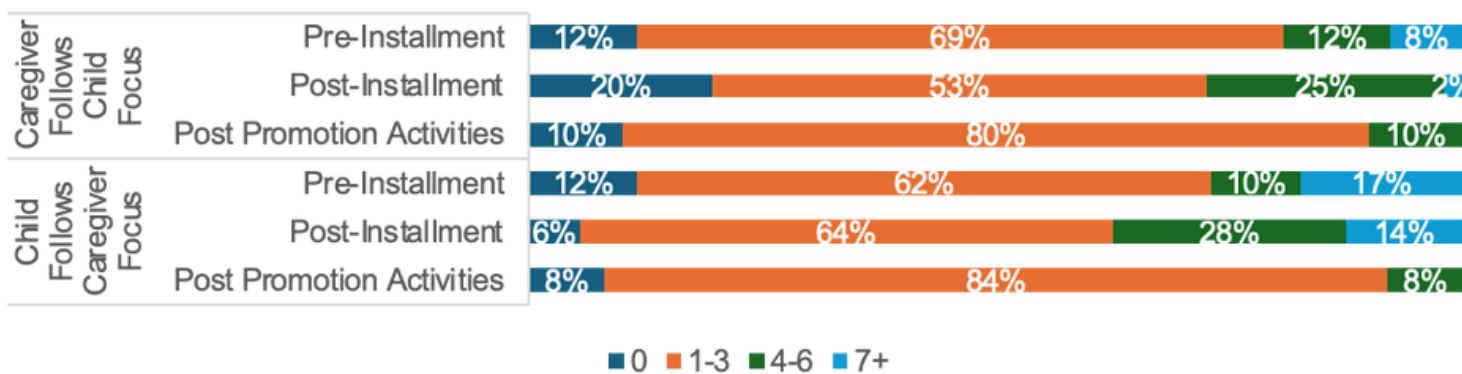
Percentage of Observations in which Activity Occurred						
	Pre- Installment (n=52)	Post- Installment (n=51)	Post Promotion Activities (n=51)	Change from Pre Installment to Post Installment	Change from Pre Installment to Post Promotion	Change from Post Installment to Post Promotion
Caregiver/Child Content Language						
Child Uses Numeric Language	46%	55%	40%	9%	-6%	-15%
Caregiver Uses Numeric Language	31%	57%	53%	26%	22%	-4%
Child Uses Spatial Language	37%	43%	27%	7%	-10%	-16%
Caregiver Uses Spatial Language	38%	49%	49%	11%	11%	0%
Child Talks about Letters and/or Sounds	12%	16%	27%	4%	15%	11%
Caregiver Talks about Letters and/or Sounds	6%	12%	27%	6%	21%	15%
Average Caregiver/Child Content Language	28%	39%	37%	10%	9%	-1%
Child Laughs	33%	39%	71%	7%	38%	32%
Caregiver Laughs	12%	29%	47%	18%	35%	18%
Child Technology Use	10%	6%	14%	-4%	4%	8%
Caregiver Technology Use	10%	6%	0%	-4%	-10%	-6%
Average Engagement and Language Targeted by Observation						
	Pre- Installment (n=52)	Post- Installment (n=51)	Post Promotion Activities (n=51)	Change from Pre Installment to Post Installment	Change from Pre Installment to Post Promotion	Change from Post Installment to Post Promotion
Child Engagement	42%	41%	51%	-1%	8%	10%
Caregiver Engagement	54%	63%	69%	9%	15%	6%
Child Language	24%	35%	23%	12%	0%	-12%
Caregiver Language	19%	36%	30%	17%	11%	-5%
Child Content Language	31%	38%	31%	6%	0%	-7%
Caregiver Content Language	25%	39%	43%	14%	18%	4%

Pre and Post EI Super Installment: Observation Results

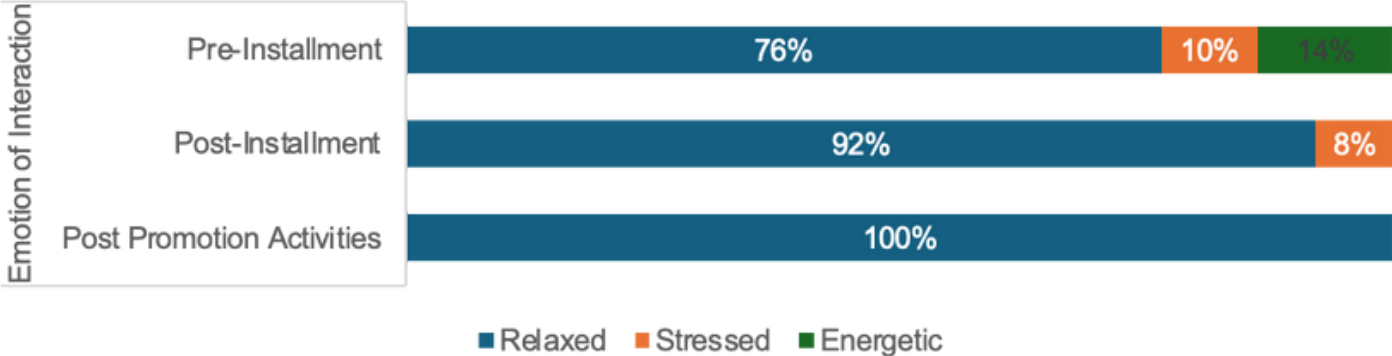
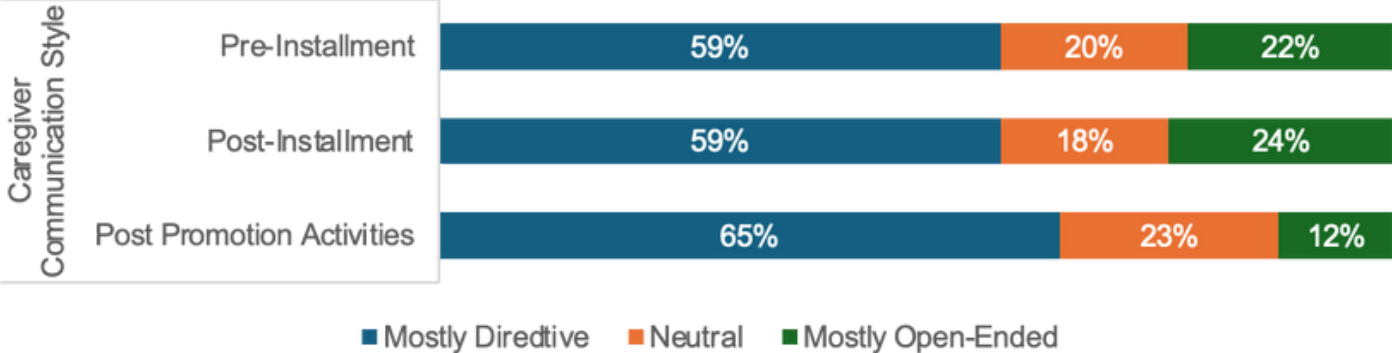
The observation also captured the frequency that the caregiver followed the child's focus and the frequency that the child followed the caregiver's focus. Caregiver and child focus remained relatively consistent across the three rounds of observations.

The number of turns in verbal interaction was also counted. The number of observations in which no turns in verbal interaction occurred increased by 20% from pre to post promotion activities.

The observation captured the caregiver communication style, and this stayed consistent across the 3 rounds of observations. The emotion of interaction within the observation was also notated and the majority of observations within each round were relaxed.



Pre and Post EI Super Installment: Observation Results





El Super Insights and Recommendations for Next Steps



El Super Insights and Recommendations for Next Steps

- **Insights**

- The promotion of activities successfully boosted overall engagement (adults and children), particularly through joint attention behaviors like gesturing, showing, and naming. These are critical precursors to learning.
- While general language use dipped after promotion, content-specific talk (letters and sounds) steadily increased — suggesting that targeted activities may encourage deeper, more focused language at the expense of broader conversation.
- The 28% rise in adults naming objects/products suggests promotions are especially effective in prompting adult modeling of language, a key factor in child learning outcomes.

- **Recommendations for Next Steps**

- Capitalize on Strengths
- Continue designing promotions that explicitly encourage adult modeling and joint attention behaviors (pointing, naming, showing).
- Emphasize letters and sounds, since both adults and children are showing consistent growth here.

- **Address the Language Dip**

- Explore why overall language declined after the promotion
- Introduce “**open talk prompts**” or signage encouraging adults to ask questions (“What else could we do with this?”) to sustain broader language use.

- **Scalability**

- Because results point to the efficacy of installations combined with targeted promotions, promotions should be part of replication efforts from the start of the project
-
- Standardize a cycle of install → promote → refresh prompts to avoid declines in broad language.



Antes de pesarlo, ¡adivina cuánto pesa!



¡Pésalo y checa qué tanto te acercaste!

El Super

MANGO GRANDE
99¢

AGUACATE GRANDE
2 \$3.00

Conclusions

The purpose of this proof-of-concept evaluation was to examine the feasibility of PLL installations in the City Heights ecosystem and their potential to transform everyday public spaces into fun, interactive, and educational learning hubs. Data collected as part of this evaluation points to the efficacy of PLL installations and suggests that the PLL model has strong potential for scalable, community-based impact. Future iterations should take into account the efficacy of implementing promotional activities and consider the use of trained facilitators or “play guides” to scaffold and model how materials can be used to support playful learning.