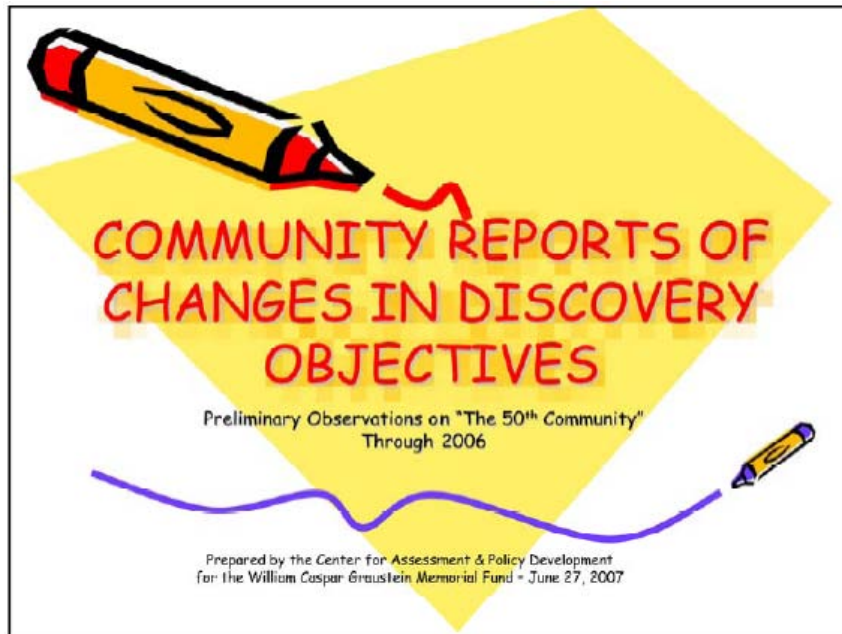

COMMUNITY REPORTS OF CHANGES IN DISCOVERY OBJECTIVES: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON "THE 50TH COMMUNITY" THROUGH 2006



This report was prepared by the Discovery Initiative Evaluation Team based on a presentation to the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund Board of Trustees in June 2007. The information used in this report was collected in early 2007 for the period through 2006. Further details on the data collection are presented in the report.

We appreciate the input and feedback of the Memorial Fund staff and the members and staff of the Discovery community collaborative groups. The analyses and conclusions in this report solely reflect the perspective of the Evaluation Team.

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The Discovery evaluation is looking at the initiative as a whole – the work of the 49 communities that are organized as 47 collaborative groups, the work of statewide and regional organizations, the capacity-building supports provided to both communities and organizations by the Memorial Fund, and the work of the Memorial Fund through its staff and the activities it directly carries out at the state-level. The core questions of the evaluation are:

- Are the Discovery communities developing the infrastructure and capacities needed to make progress toward policy and practice objectives and to continue their work going forward?
- Are the infrastructure and capacities at the state-level for sustained work on early childhood policy issues becoming stronger?
- Are there more points of connection and collaboration among communities, among statewide and regional organizations, between these organizations and communities?
- What changes in practice and policy related to the Discovery objectives are becoming evident in communities and at the state level?
- How are the Initiative’s design and the supports it provides contributing to the development of community and state infrastructure and capacities? To changes in policy and practice related to the Discovery objectives?

The focus of these materials and this phase of the evaluation work is the third area of inquiry, “How has Discovery contributed to process, practice, and policy changes related to the 4 objectives?”

What is Meant by "The 50th Community" in Discovery?

- Social momentum and political capital created by many communities & statewide organizations working collaboratively toward similar goals
 - At the local level
 - Across communities
 - At the state level



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These materials examine the concept of "the 50th community" in the Discovery theory of change and focus specifically on the first part of this definition – the accumulation of experience – strategies and results -- across the 49 communities in working toward the same objectives.

These objectives are:

- Increased supply of quality early care and education services
- Increased quality of early care and education services
- Stronger connections between early care and education & elementary school
- Improved child social-emotional development and early success in school

Guiding Question for this Presentation

Does there appear to be activity & success at the local level in the Discovery communities that could serve as a foundation for "the 50th community"?

- How many communities are seeing change in the Discovery objectives?
- In how many communities has the local Discovery work contributed to those changes?



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Data for this analysis come from the applications submitted for the 2007 community grants. These applications were submitted at the end of January 2007 and asked for community assessment of changes in the Discovery objectives from 2002 through the end of 2006.

For each objective, the application asked for a rating of change between 2002 and 2006 using a 5-point scale – decrease, no change, moderate improvement, substantial improvement, improvement to the ideal level (for example, to where supply met demand, all care was of uniformly high quality, there were strong connections between all early care providers and schools, and children from all groups had improved outcomes). The application then asked for the community to describe the evidence on which this rating was based and how, if at all, the Discovery work in the community contributed to any reported improvement.

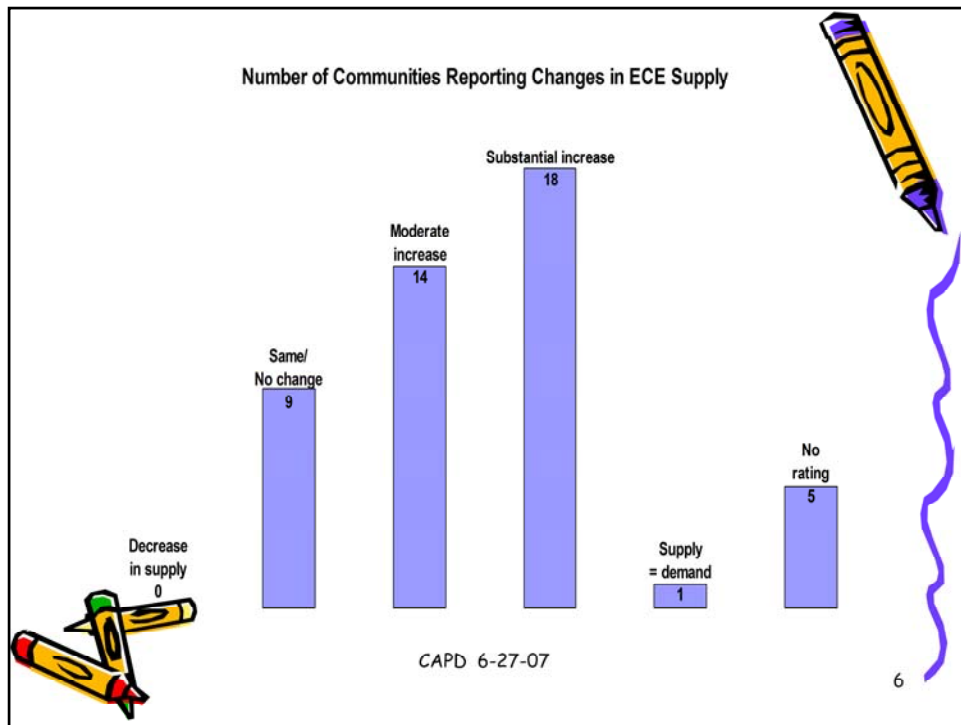
Note that community reports of changes in objectives are not being treated by the evaluation as objective measures of actual change, but as evidence of whether and how communities see their work making a difference. Widespread experience in using strategies that are perceived to have been effective in making change in their communities is expected to provide a critical mass of local experience and social capital that can be mobilized at the regional and state levels.

Supply of Early Care & Education



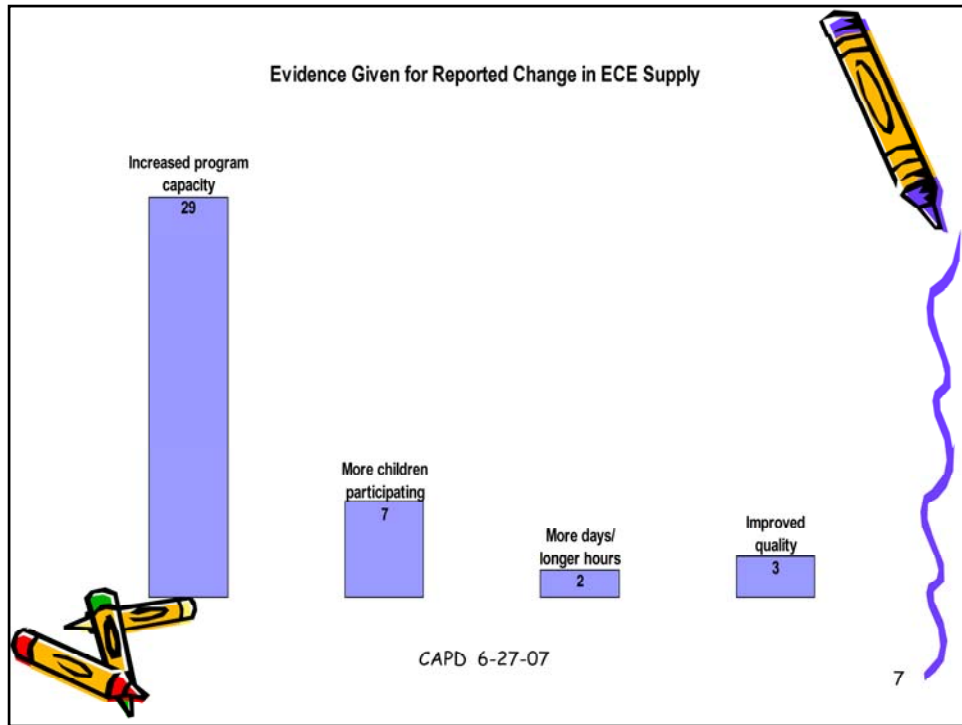
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Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

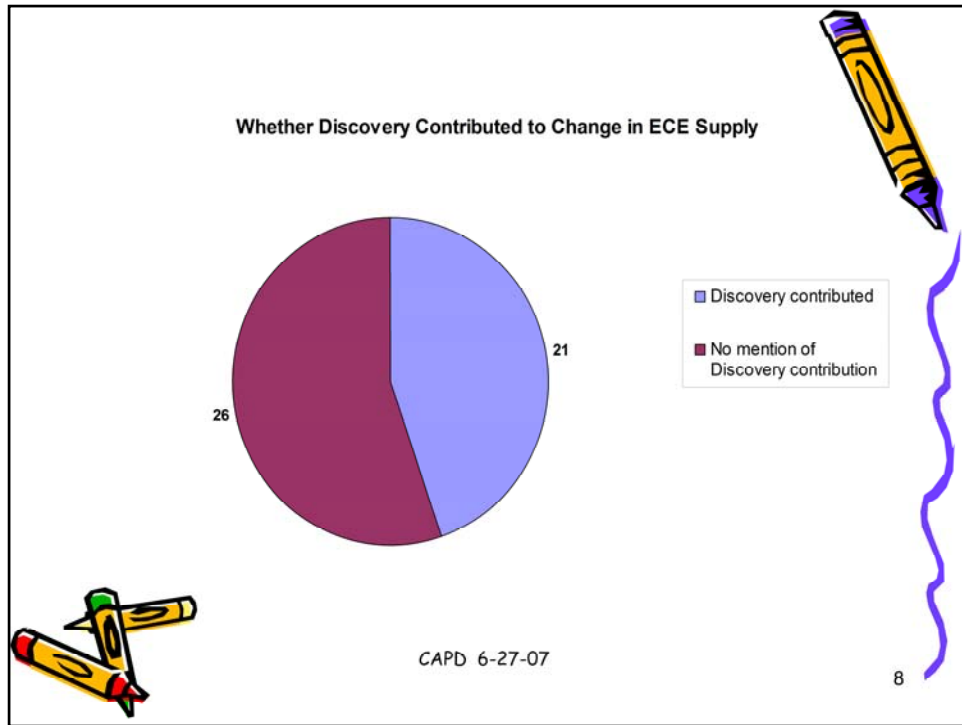
- Change in supply of early care and education:
 - Decrease between beginning of 2002 and end of 2006: 0
 - Same/No change: 9
 - Moderate increase: 14
 - Substantial increase: 18
 - Supply now meets demand: 1
 - No rating of change or insufficient evidence: 5



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

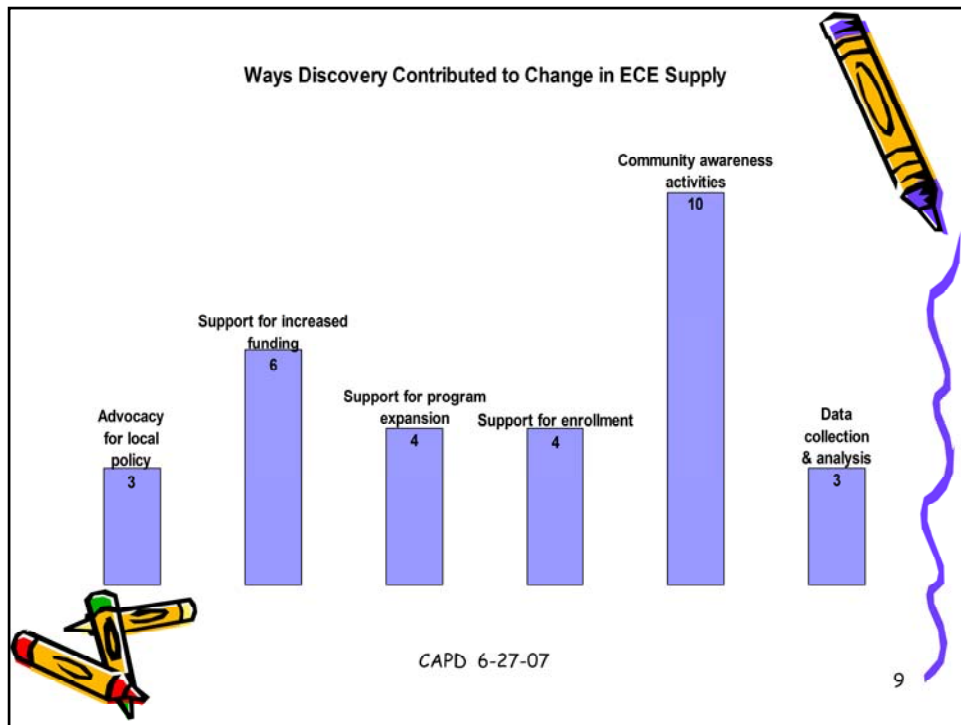
•Evidence for change:

- Increased capacity: 29
- Increased number of participating children: 7
- Increased intensity of program (more days, more hours): 2
- Increased quality: 3



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- Whether Discovery work was perceived to have made a contribution: 21
- Examples of how Discovery work contributed to increases in the supply of early care and education services:
 - Advocacy for local policy change: *advocated to reinstate full-day kindergarten*
 - Support for securing funding: *pushed for application for School Readiness grant*
 - Support for program expansion & quality improvement: *worked with providers to locate additional classroom space*
 - Support for parent information & enrollment: *produced "10 Signs of a Great Early Care and Education Program" brochure*
 - Community awareness activities: *produced position paper on importance of quality early care and education; hosted community forums to discuss plans for new early childhood center*
 - Collection & analysis of data: *conducted unmet need survey*



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- How Discovery work contributed:
 - Advocacy for local policy change: 3
 - Support for securing increased funding: 6
 - Support for program expansion & quality improvement: 4
 - Support for parent information & enrollment: 4
 - Community awareness activities: 10
 - Collection & analysis of data: 3

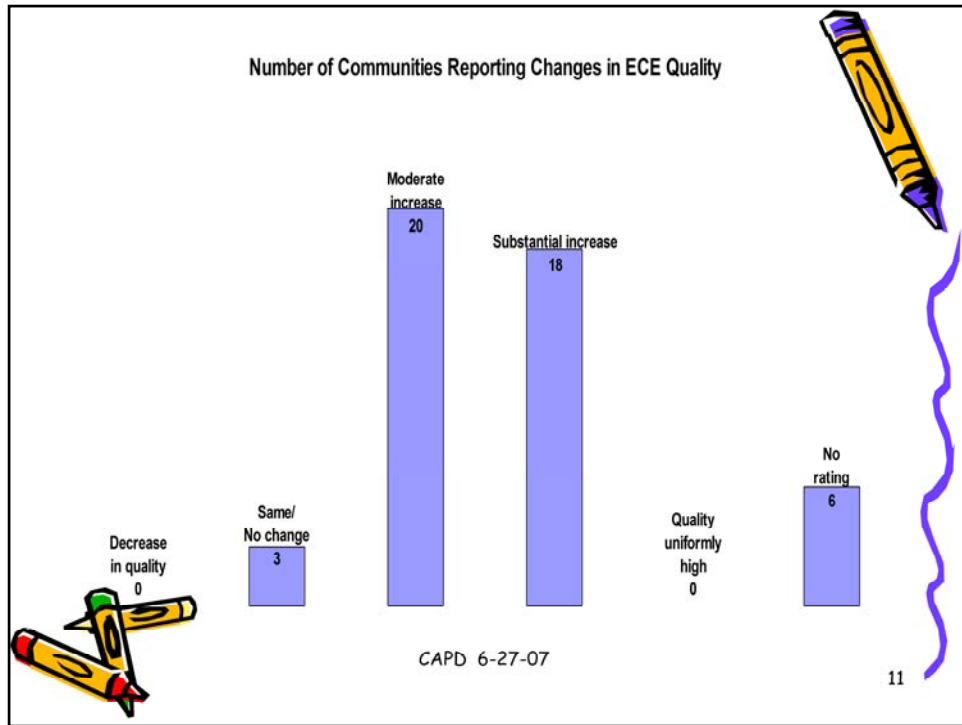
Quality of Early Care & Education



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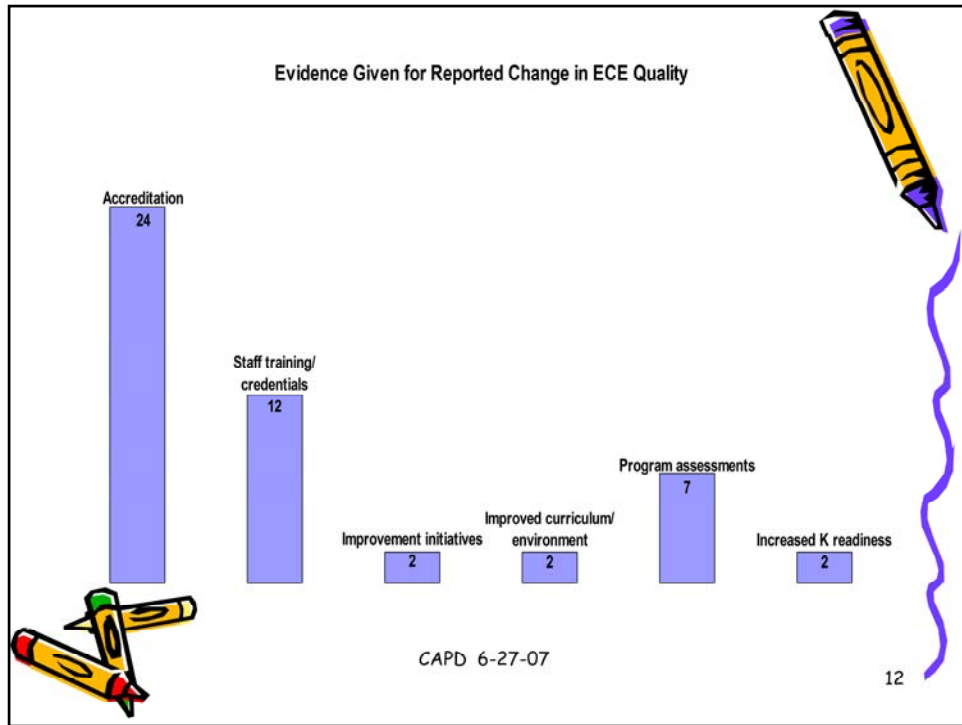
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Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

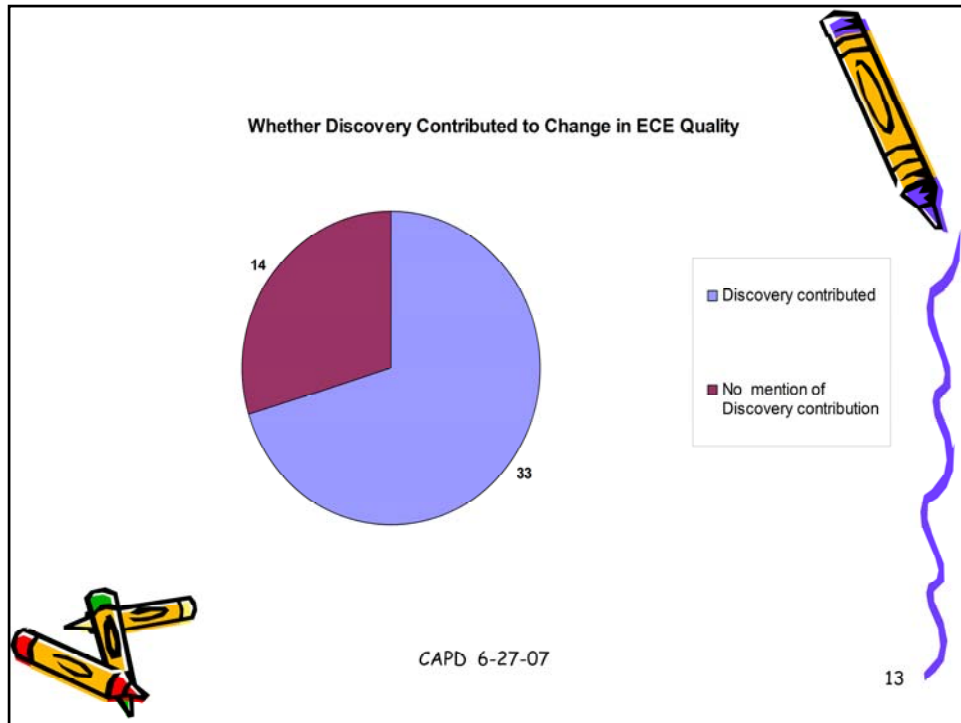
- Change in quality of early care and education:
 - Decrease between beginning of 2002 and end of 2006: 0
 - Same/No change: 3
 - Moderate increase: 20
 - Substantial increase: 18
 - Quality now uniformly high: 0
 - No rating or insufficient evidence: 6



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

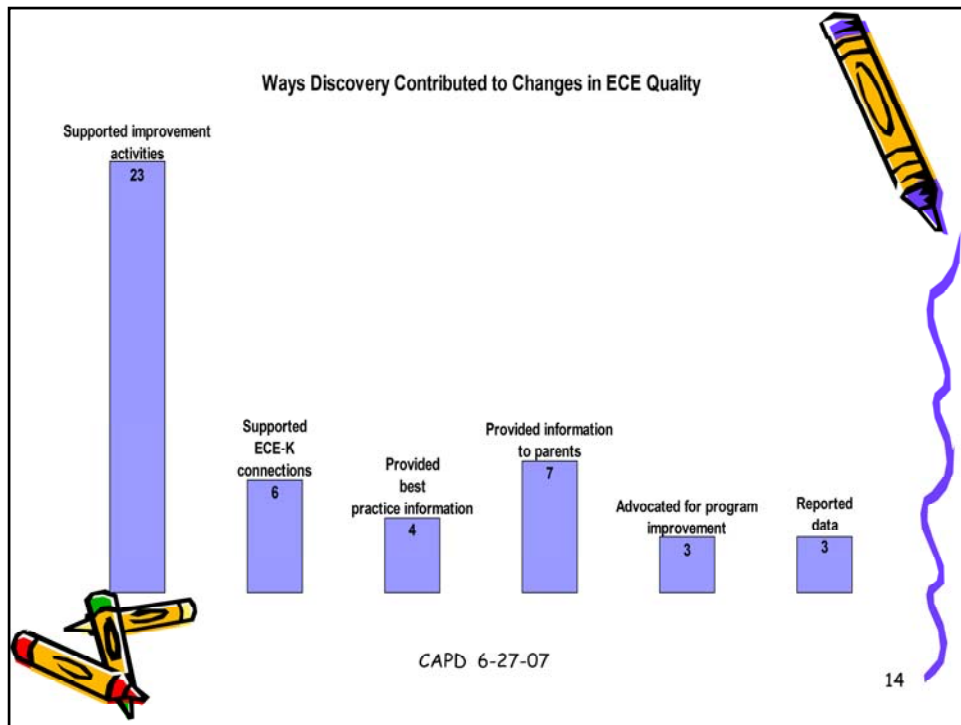
•Evidence for change:

- Programs seeking/achieving accreditation: 24
- Provider staff with additional credentials or training: 12
- Program improvement initiatives: 2
- Improvements in curriculum & learning environment: 2
- Ratings on program assessment: 7
- Increased readiness at K entry: 2



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- Whether Discovery work was perceived to have made a contribution: 33
- Examples of how Discovery work contributed to increases in quality of early care and education:
 - Supported professional development & program improvement activities: *created Valley Directors Network to bring providers together with resources for shared professional development; reimbursed programs for accreditation costs*
 - Supported closer connections between preschool & kindergarten: *hosted "Dine & Discuss" evenings for community and BOE preK & K teachers*
 - Provided information on child development & developmentally appropriate practices: *distributed CT early childhood curriculum framework*
 - Provided information to parents: *developed & distributed resource guide; prepared & distributed "Baby Welcome" packets*
 - Advocated for or secured funding for program improvement activities: *obtained grants that support on-site consultation in preschool programs and professional development workshops*
 - Reported data on program quality or child outcomes: *conducted surveys of center- and home-based providers; implemented new reporting system using CT early childhood framework*



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

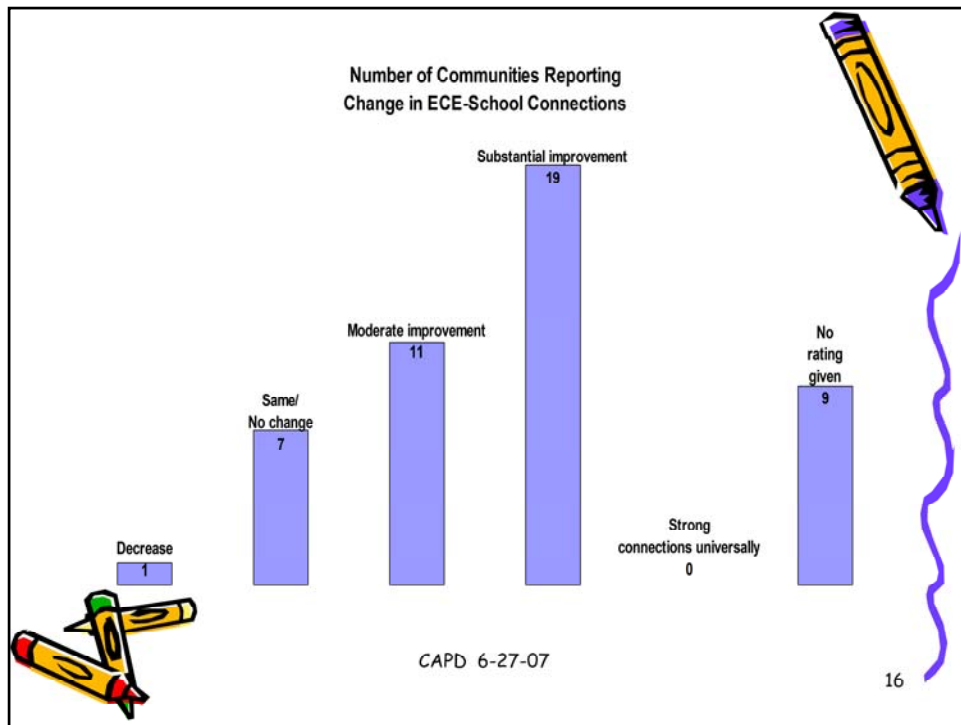
- How Discovery work contributed:
 - Supported professional development & program improvement activities: 23
 - Supported closer connections between preschool & kindergarten: 6
 - Provided information on child development & developmentally appropriate practices: 4
 - Provided information to parents: 7
 - Advocated for or secured funding for program improvement activities: 3
 - Reported data on program quality or child outcomes: 3

Connections between Early Education & Elementary School



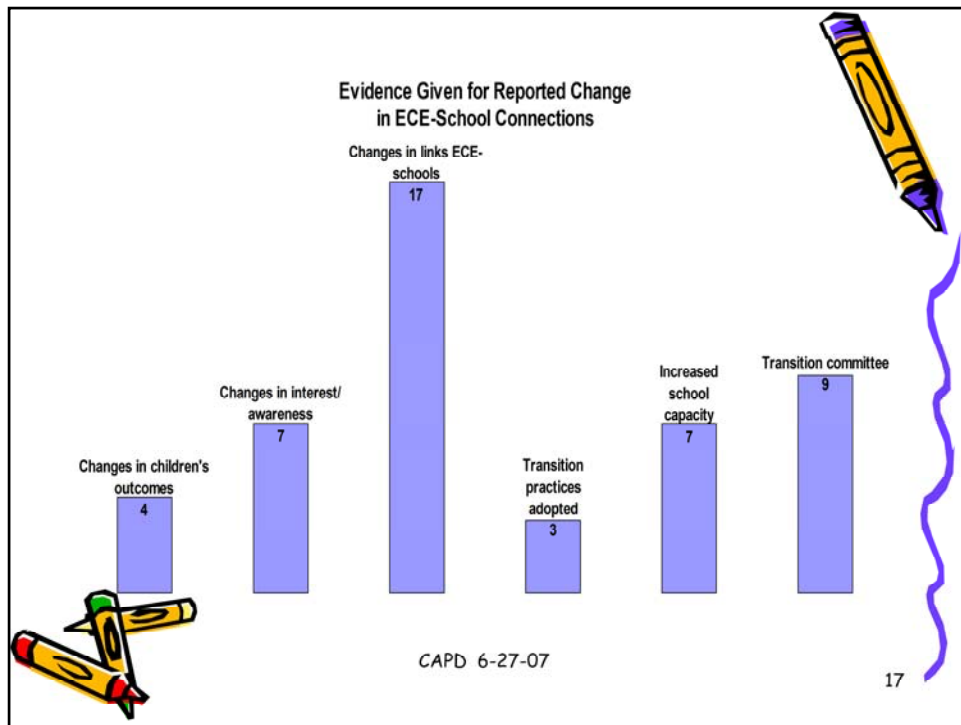
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Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

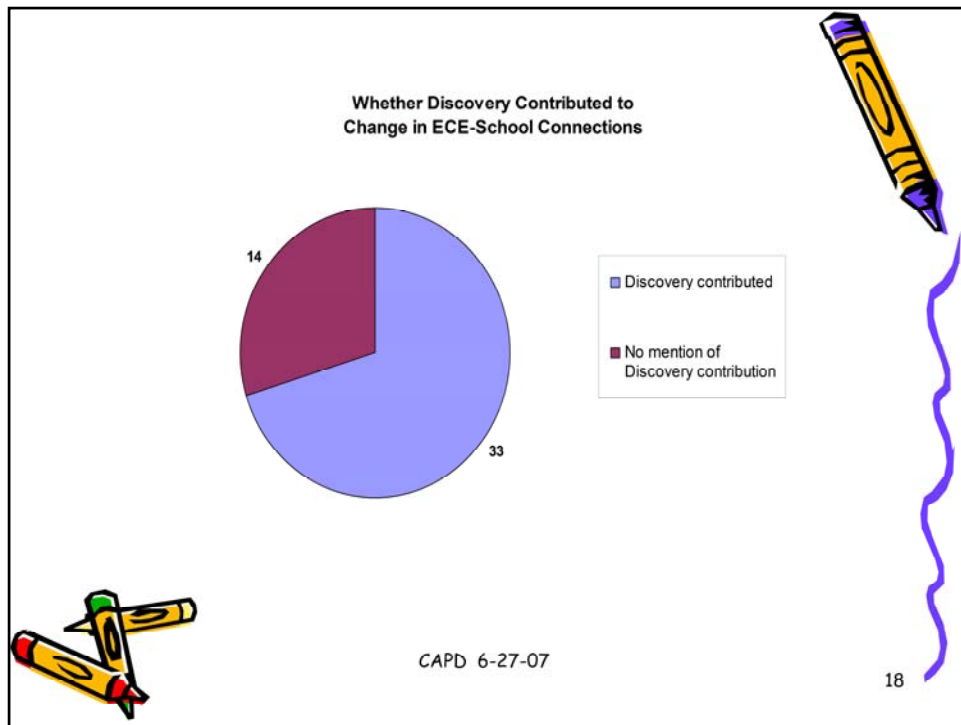
- Change in strength of connections between ECE and elementary education:
 - Decrease between beginning of 2002 and end of 2006: 1
 - Same/No change: 7
 - Moderate increase: 11
 - Substantial increase: 19
 - Strong connections between all ECE providers and elementary education: 0
 - No rating or insufficient evidence: 9



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

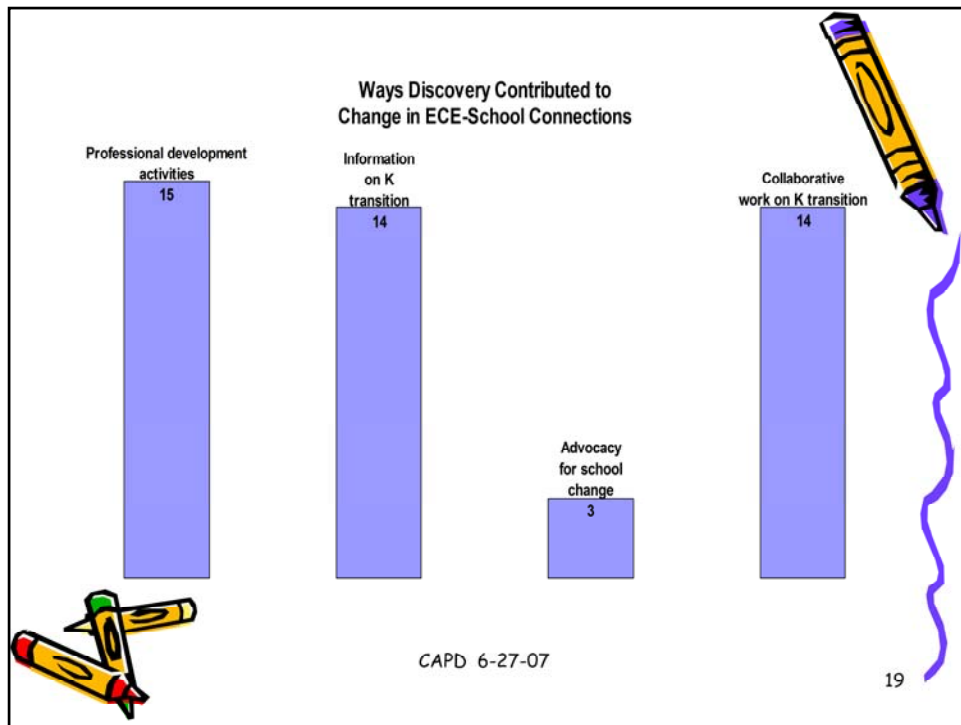
•Evidence for change:

- Changes in children's experiences & outcomes: 4
- Changes in family/community awareness & interest: 7
- Changes in links between ECE & schools: 17
- Transition practices for children & families adopted: 3
- Change in public school capacity: 7
- Transition committee or task force formed: 9



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- Whether Discovery work was perceived to have made a contribution: 33
- Examples of how Discovery work contributed to stronger connections between early care and education & elementary schools:
 - Supported/Provided professional development, networking, information sharing activities for ECE providers and/or school staff: representatives from early care providers, schools and various city agencies meet monthly
 - Supported/Provided information to families & community on K transition: *assisted with resource fair to bring information about K to families; set up 5 "Readiness Desks" in the community; created K Transition packet*
 - Advocated for changes in school policies, practices, capacities: *Transition to K Action Plan which included preschool student visits to elementary schools and sharing of student information between preschool & K teachers; advocated for district hiring of early childhood specialist;*
 - Participated in/Developed collaborative work on K transition: *involved in Mayor's K Transition Task Force; participation in K Transition Institute was critical*



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- How Discovery work contributed:
 - Supported/Provided professional development, networking, information sharing activities for ECE providers and/or school staff: 15
 - Supported/Provided information to families & community on K transition: 14
 - Advocated for changes in school policies, practices, capacities: 3
 - Participated in/Developed collaborative work on K transition: 14

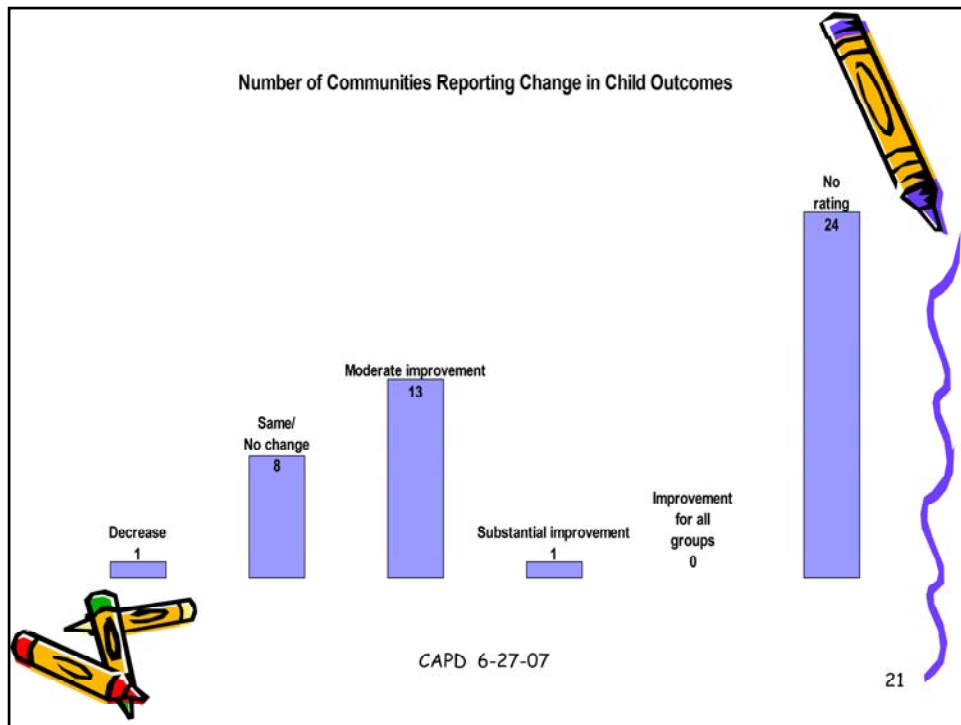
Improved Social-Emotional Development & School Success



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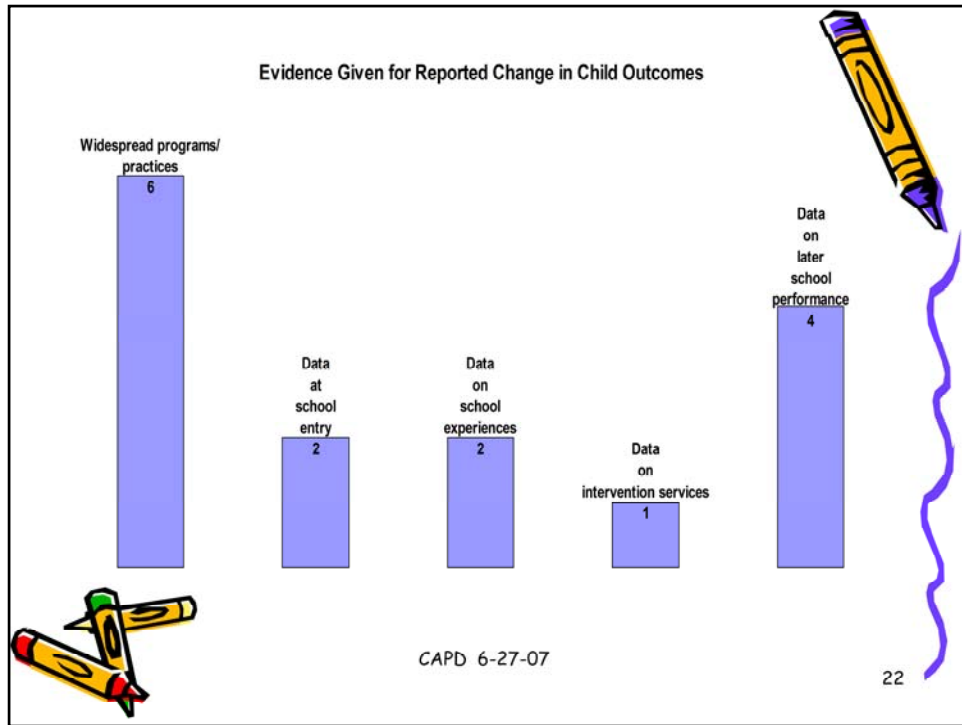
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Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

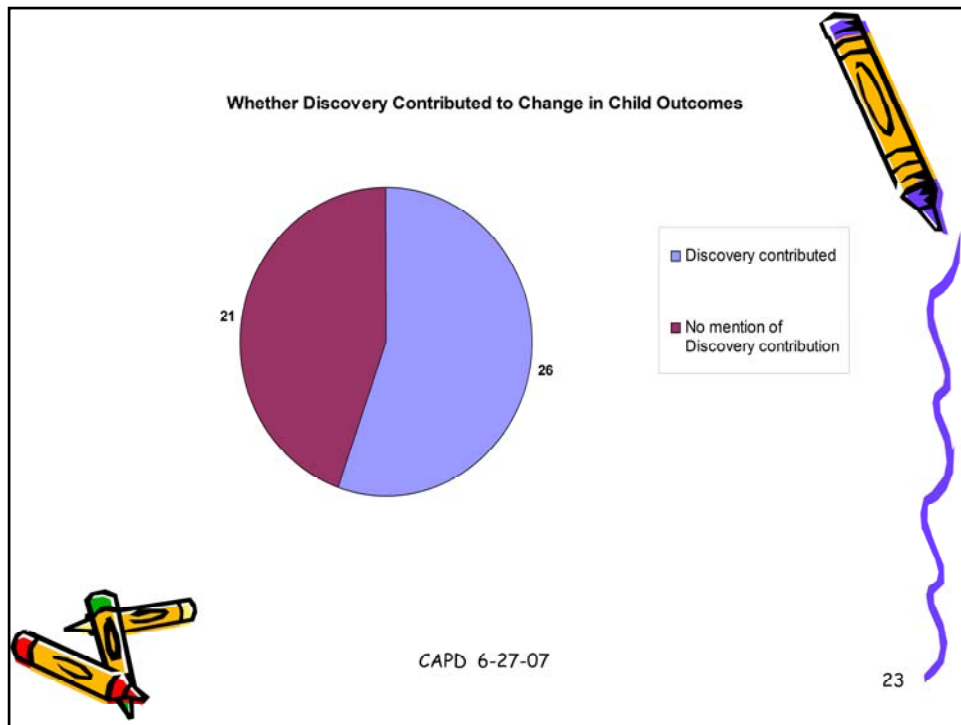
- Change in child social-emotional development and early school success:
 - Decrease between beginning of 2002 and end of 2006: 1
 - Same/No change: 8
 - Moderate improvement: 13
 - Substantial improvement: 1
 - Considerable improvement for all groups of children: 0
 - No rating or insufficient evidence: 24



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

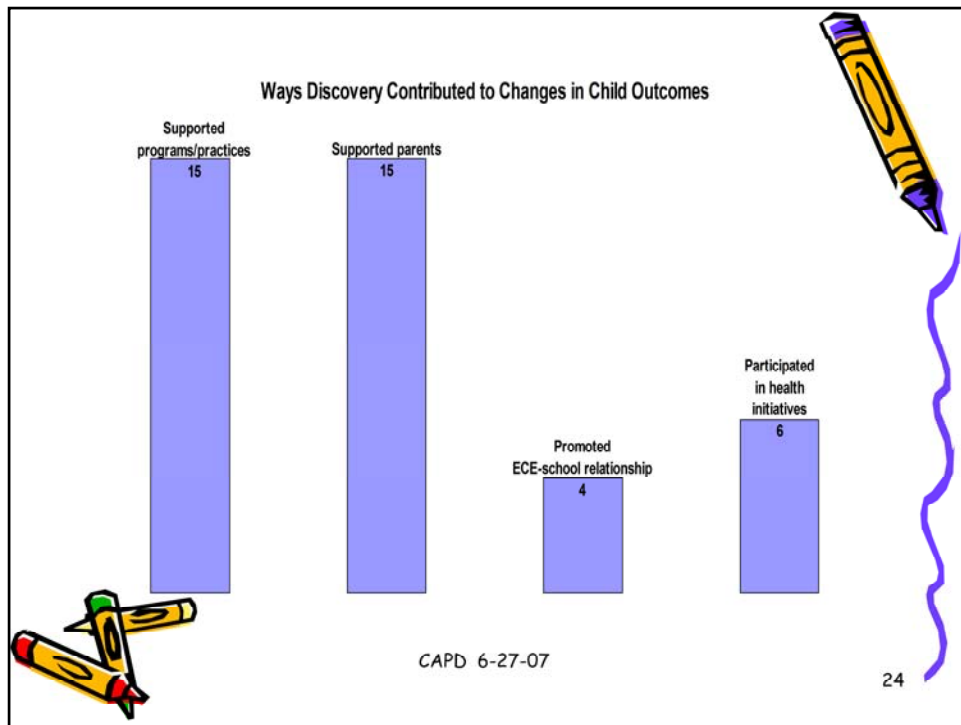
•Evidence for change:

- Widespread implementation of programs & practices to improve child outcomes: 6
- Data about development & school readiness at K entry: 2
- Data on child experiences in school: 2
- Data from use of intervention services: 1
- Data about school performance in later grades: 4



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- Whether Discovery work was perceived to have made a contribution: 26
- Examples of how Discovery work contributed to improvements in child social-emotional development and early school success:
 - Supported implementation of ECE/school programs or practices to improve child outcomes: *supported use of Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment system; provided professionals with an overview of the Bingham Prosocial Curriculum*
 - Supported parent information, training, and involvement: *advocated for inclusion of parenting courses in School Readiness budget; bringing PLTI into the community; provided training to parents on Raising Readers program*
 - Promoted preschool-school relationships: *held preschool-kindergarten teacher sharing forum; supported development of kindergarten transition process*
 - Participated in other initiatives with a health focus: *federal grant provides funding for more mental health services; participated in Eat Smart Grow Healthy Initiative*



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- How Discovery work contributed:
 - Supported implementation of ECE/school programs or practices to improve child outcomes: 15
 - Supported parent information, training, and involvement: 15
 - Promoted preschool-school relationships: 4
 - Participated in other initiatives with a health focus: 6

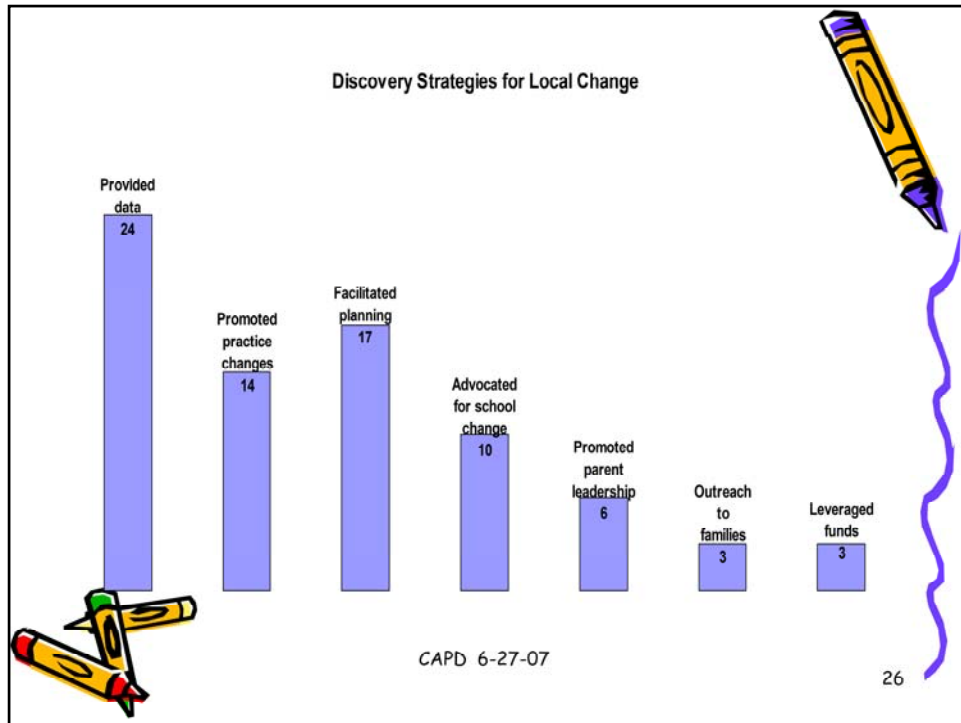
Community Practice & Policy Changes



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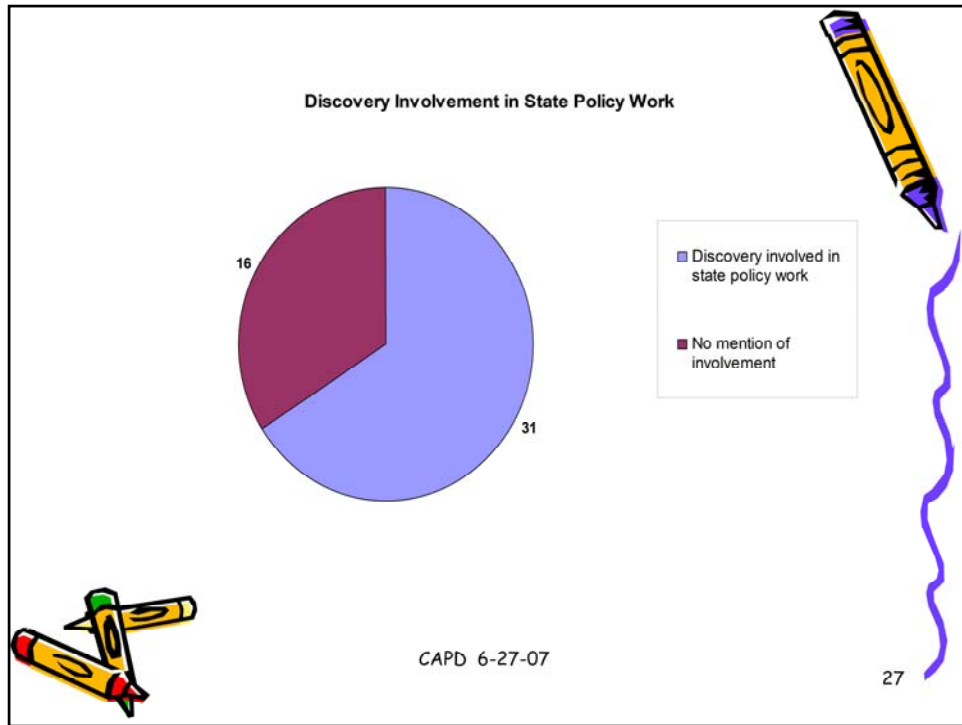
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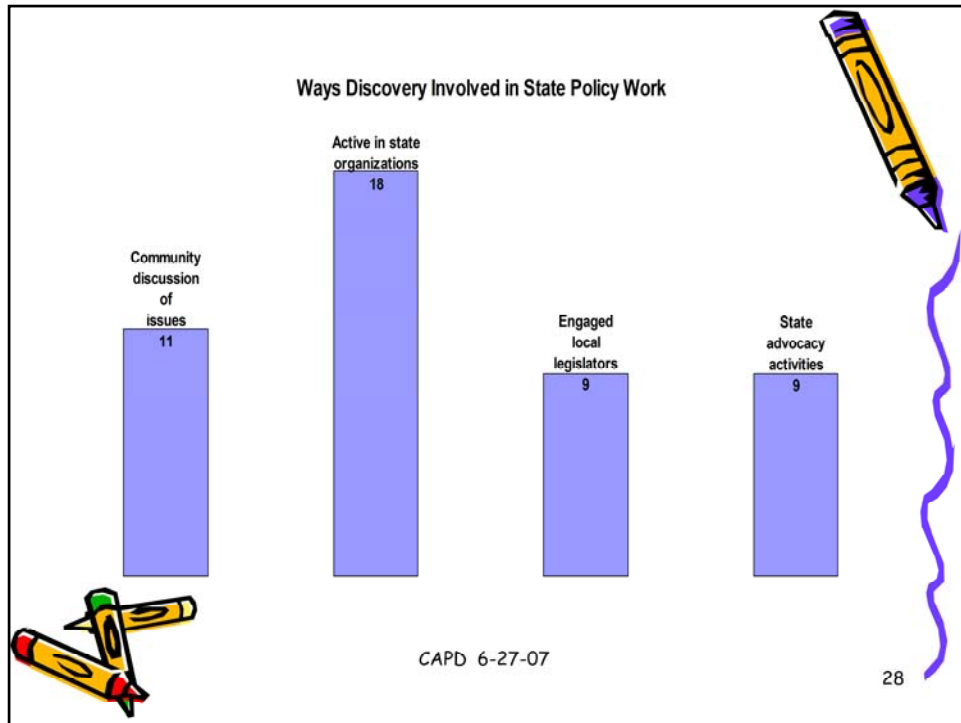
Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- Local strategies used by Discovery for local practice & policy change:
 - Provided information, data: 24
 - Promoted/supported programmatic/practice changes: 14
 - Facilitated planning & collaboration: 17
 - Advocated for school district policy change: 10
 - Promoted parent leadership: 6
 - Involved in outreach & recruitment of families: 3
 - Leveraged funds: 3
- Examples of local strategies used by Discovery for local practice & policy change:
 - Provided information, data: *identified training needs of professionals; developed parent survey; created map for BOE of neighborhoods in which children typically did not have preschool experience; provided data on taxpayer views of full-day kindergarten*
 - Promoted/supported programmatic/practice changes: *sponsored workshops & training for ECE providers; pursued staff training in CT early childhood assessment framework*
 - Facilitated planning & collaboration: *instrumental in developing early childhood community plan; acted as hub for information exchange & partnership development*
 - Advocated for school district policy change: *was catalyst for school district adopted K transition practices; supported proposal for full-day kindergarten; advocated for early childhood specialist position within BOE*
 - Promoted parent leadership: *offered PLTI & PEP*
 - Involved in outreach & recruitment of families: *produced & distributed resource guide; sponsored PreK Expo*
 - Leveraged funds: *organizations who are members of collaborative committed funds to carry out planning activities; supported fundraising for local project*



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- Any involvement in state policy work: 31
- Examples of ways in which local Discovery collaboratives were involved in state policy work:
 - Engaged community in discussion of state policy issues: *held listening forums on Cabinet proposals; held community conversation on universal preK*
 - Active in statewide policy organizations or groups: *collaborative member on state FRC alliance; coordinator co-chair of statewide group; member on EC Cabinet; member on EC Research & Policy Council; parents encouraged to join CT Parent Power*
 - Engaged local legislators: *state legislators on collaborative; hosted legislative breakfast*
 - Conducted state advocacy planning or activities: *developed annual legislative agenda; spearheaded initiative to pass legislation to require districts to report on parent involvement; advocated for improved access to dental and health care*



Numbers of community collaboratives reporting, out of 47 total:

- Ways in which local Discovery collaboratives involved in state policy work:
 - Engaged community in discussion of state policy issues: 11
 - Active in statewide policy organizations or groups: 18
 - Engaged local legislators: 9
 - Conducted state advocacy planning or activities: 9

Is Local Activity Serving as a Foundation for "the 50th Community"?

- Across the state...
 - many communities are seeing some changes in the Discovery objectives - particularly around quality & connections between ECE & schools
 - local Discovery work is seen as making contributions to many changes at the local level
 - strategies for linking communities to state policy work are being implemented



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These observations indicate that collaborative work at the local level is seen as effective in improving conditions for young children. This should reinforce continued and expanded public interest & support for change in many communities throughout the state. Further, local involvement in state policy work appears to go beyond the participation of individual collaborative members to organized activities involving the broader community. These widespread experiences suggest that a critical mass of local capacity and social capital is being built that can be mobilized at the regional and state levels.

The Discovery community collaboratives reported relying primarily on four main types of strategies so far in their work:

- Providing information to organizations, parents, and the community at large
- Convening community forums for discussion of issues
- Facilitating relationship building & collaboration
- Supporting improvements in early care and education programs and school practices

The strategies that were most often reported to have made a contribution were the result of Discovery bringing people and institutions together – parents, providers, teachers, and school officials – to develop shared knowledge & common practices among professionals, to give parents more information and support for their role as their child's first teacher and best advocate, and to involve community members in discussing issues related to early education and school success. Some communities are beginning to take on the role of organizing people to address systemic practice and policy issues -- this has been encouraged by the Initiative in the past and is receiving more attention now.

Is There Other Evidence for the Emergence of "the 50th Community"?

Other evidence comes from...

- observation of increasing interest across communities in work at the regional level
- community participation in statewide organizations like EC Alliance & CT Parent Power



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Though there are few current examples of strong regional work, communities are beginning to show interest in joint work with shared resources. At each of the four recent community forums on the application for 2008-2009 grants, several communities inquired about submitting joint applications for regional work and encouraged the Memorial Fund to consider supporting both local and regional work.

Community representatives have also expressed interest in increasing communication with the statewide and regional grantees. Preliminary results from a survey of Discovery listserv members indicate that Discovery community collaborative members are overwhelmingly in support of inviting statewide organizations to participate in the exchange of ideas, questions, and information on the Discovery listserv. Additionally, community representatives have voiced a desire to learn more about the work of the statewide and regional grantees and how it might support their own work.

As noted on the previous page, community representatives are participating in leadership roles in statewide and regional organizations, as well. At least 5 Discovery grantee communities are members of and play a leadership role in the Early Childhood Alliance. One Discovery community representative is the co-chair. Connecticut Parent Power currently consists of 15 "Delegate" communities. Parent Delegates from these communities represent the interests of local parents in the decision-making within Connecticut Parent Power, and they also bring information about state legislation and children's issues to parents in their communities. Twelve of the 15 communities are Discovery grantee communities. The Executive Director of Parent Power credits two Discovery communities with the establishment of Parent Power.

What are Some Next Questions for the Evaluation?

- How do community collaborative infrastructure & parent engagement relate to Discovery strategies & contributions to change?
- How do communities connect their work across town lines?
- What do local stakeholders see as the value of participating in a multi-community initiative?
- Do state-level stakeholders see the work of the Discovery communities as creating political interest and momentum for change?



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Analysis of the correlations of community collaborative infrastructure and parent engagement with these reports of Discovery strategies and contributions to change will draw upon data collected in the 2007 application and in the 2006 survey. These analyses will be carried out this fall.

Also, this summer and early fall the evaluation will be conducting individual and group interviews in each of the Discovery communities and will collect a range of information including data on cross-community work.

This fall the evaluation will interview a number of state-level stakeholders about the contribution of the Discovery community and the organizational grantees to the results of the recent legislative session and to preparing the groundwork for sustained attention to early childhood issues in the future.