



The First 2000 Days Faith Summits Evaluation Report

March 2014

**Prepared by
The Program Evaluation Group, LLC
Under Contract to
North Carolina Partnership for Children**

Introduction

In September and October 2013, the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) hosted The First 2000 Days Faith Summits in Burlington, Concord, Fayetteville, and Greenville. Approximately 450 faith leaders, child care professionals, and community leaders across the regions convened for three hours to discuss the health and learning needs of young children.¹ Congregations that operate child care programs especially were encouraged to participate.

The immediate objective of the Summits was to (1) increase participants' knowledge and understanding of brain development during the first few years of life, and (2) increase faith leaders' awareness of and commitment to high-quality early learning programs. Each Summit provided an overview of the state's quality child care rating system and the advantages of participation. The secondary, long-term objective of the Summits is to increase the number of faith-based child care sites that choose to participate in the NC star rated license. In North Carolina, religious-sponsored child care programs may operate outside of the star rated license system. All other programs receive a star rating that reflects program quality including staff education and program standards.

¹ According to registration and attendance records, 522 people registered to attend the four Summits, and 443 actually attended. A very small number of people (e.g., presenters and state leaders) attended more than one Summit.

NCPC engaged the services of The Program Evaluation Group, LLC (TPEG) to analyze data collected from Summit participants. This report summarizes TPEG’s findings.

Data Collection and Samples

Data were collected from participants in three ways:

- When they registered to attend one of the Faith Summits, all participants were asked to rate their current knowledge of brain development on a 7-point scale from “1 (Poor)” to “7 (Excellent).” A sample of 482 responses was obtained, excluding responses from NCPC staff and other state-level leaders. The sample includes information about Summit location and participants’ roles.
- Before they left the Faith Summit, all participants were encouraged to complete a response card indicating what actions they planned to take to support quality early care and learning in their communities. A sample of 139 response cards was collected, including Summit location and participants’ roles.
- After the Faith Summit, all participants were invited to participate in an online survey. The survey asked them to give feedback about the Faith Summit, rate their knowledge of brain development compared to what they knew before the program, indicate the extent to which the program increased their knowledge about early childhood education, and describe how they planned to support the development of young children in their congregations and communities. A sample of 179 online survey responses was received, including Summit location and participants’ roles.

There are a few notable limitations in these data, primarily regarding how well the different data samples represent participants who attended the four Summits. First, the overall response rates are low (approximately 31% for response cards, 40% for online surveys). Also, the compositions of participants in these two samples are substantially different. Approximately two-thirds of the response cards (64%) were completed by clergy, lay leaders, education directors of religious institutions, and child care/preschool directors. This same group completed slightly less than one-third of the online surveys (29%). See Charts A1-A3 in the Appendix for more details.

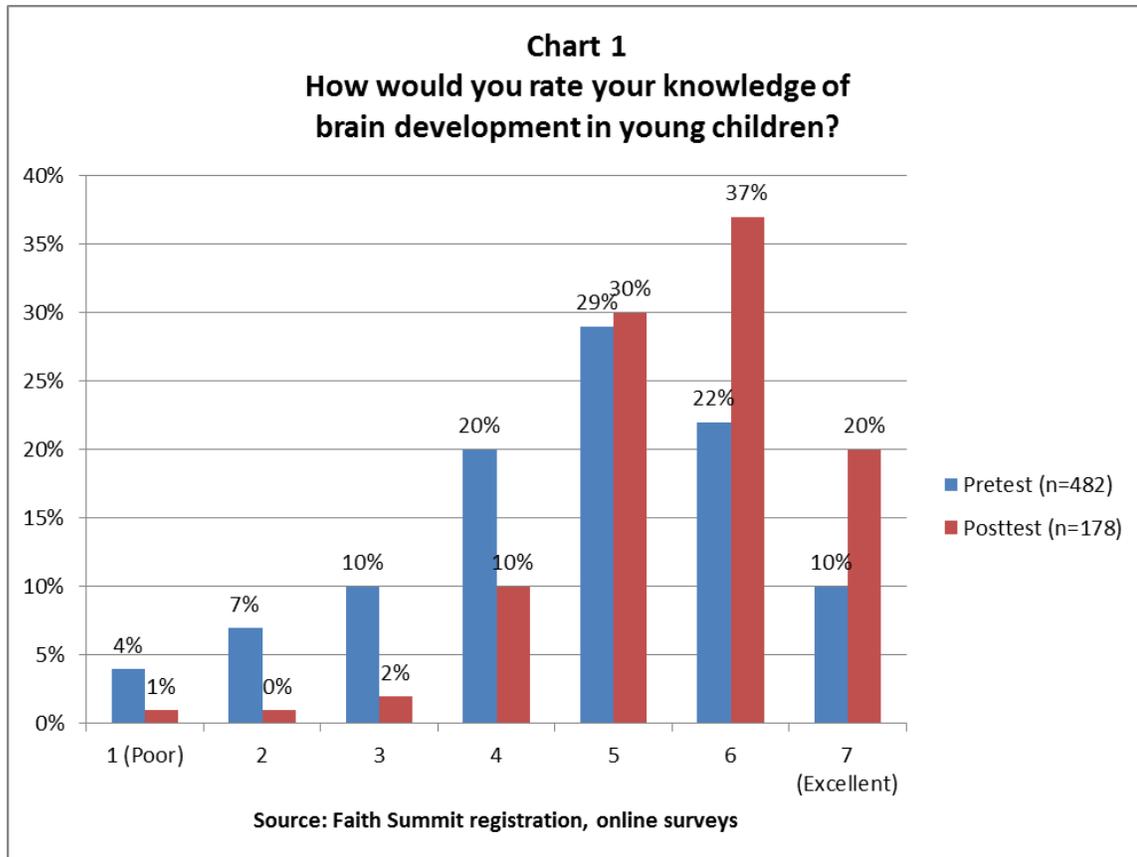
Findings

The analysis of data collected during the First 2000 Days Faith Summits addresses the following evaluation questions:

1. To what degree did participants increase their knowledge of early childhood education?
How do results vary by participants' roles?
2. How do participants intend to use the information they learned at the Faith Summits? How do plans for follow-up action vary by location?

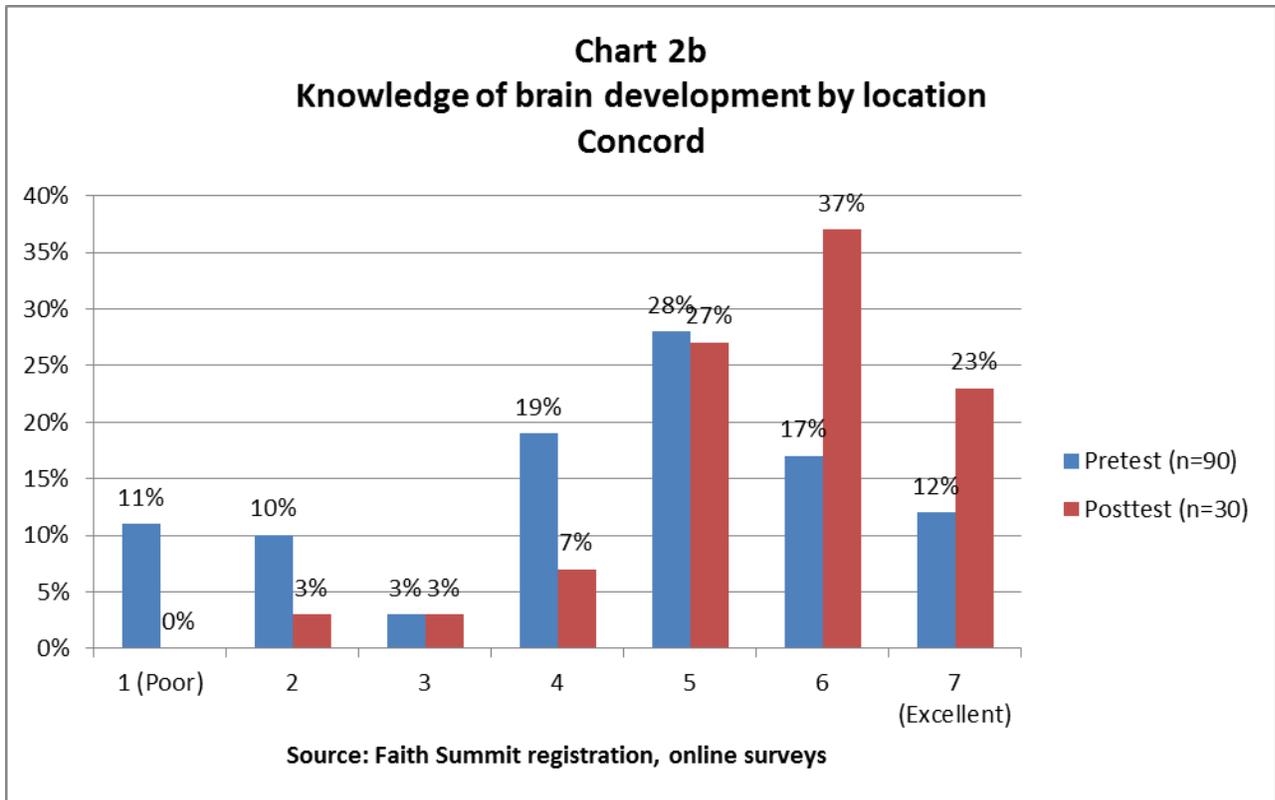
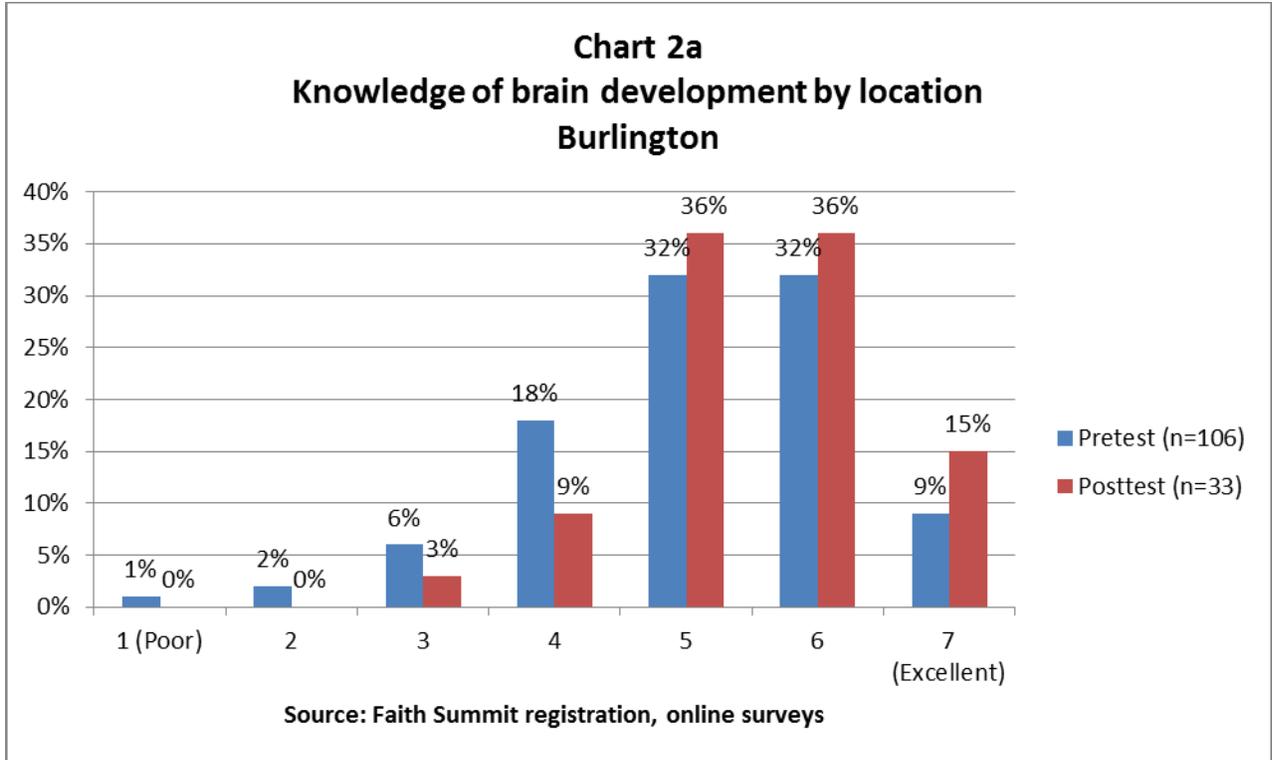
Evaluation findings are detailed on the following pages.

Knowledge of Early Childhood Education

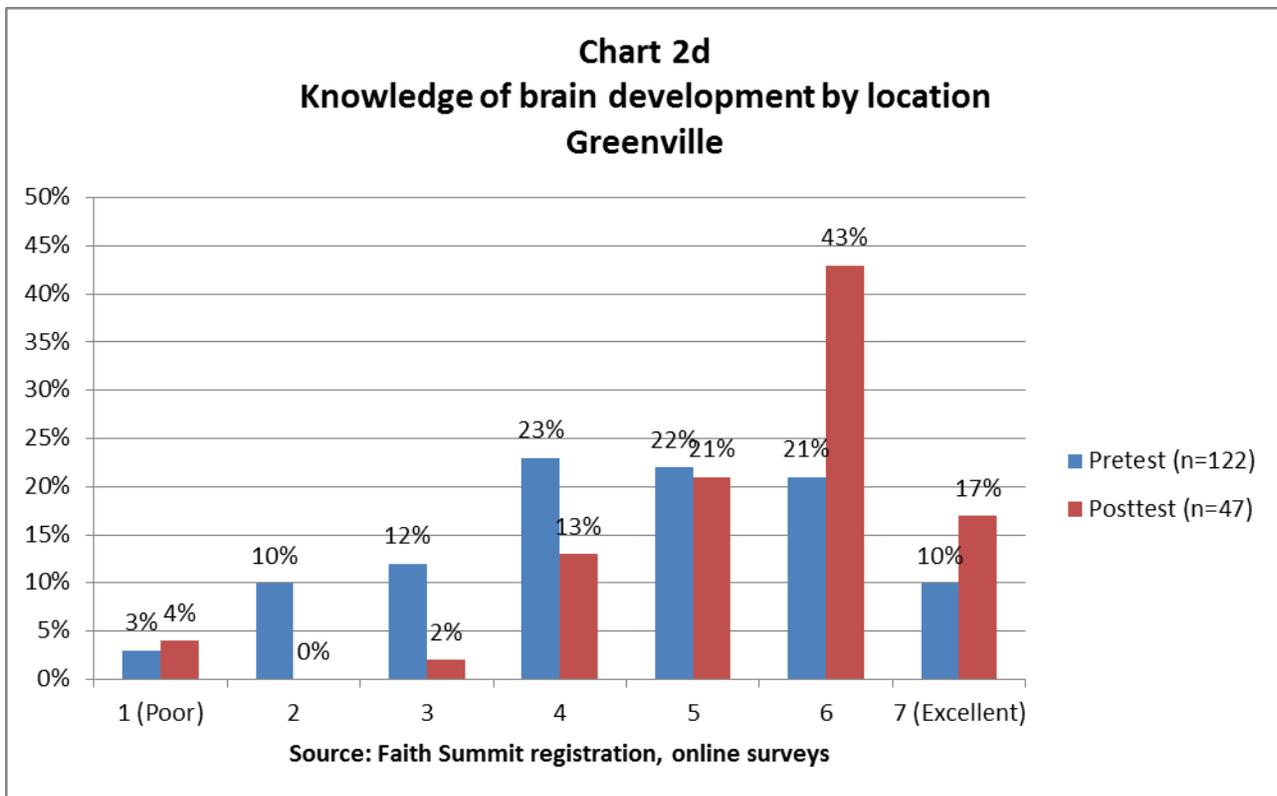
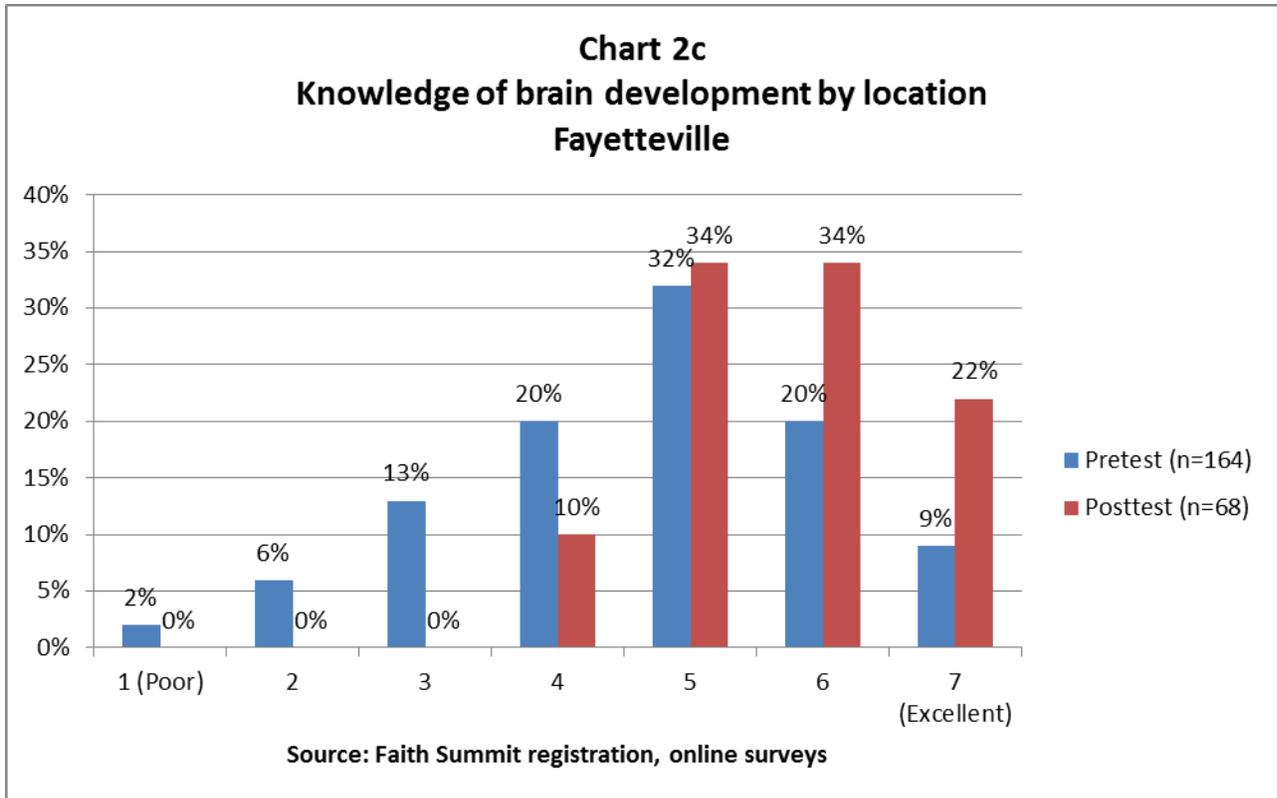


- When participants registered to attend one of the First 2000 Days Faith Summits, they were asked to rate their knowledge of brain development in young children on a 7-point scale. On the online survey they received following attendance at one of the Faith Summits, participants were asked, “Compared to what you knew before the Faith Summit, how would you rate your knowledge of brain development in young children?”
- Chart 1 shows a significant upward shift in participants’ self-ratings of knowledge about brain development from the pretest (registration form) to the posttest (online survey). Further, the difference between mean self-ratings on the pretest (4.68) and the posttest (5.57) is statistically significant ($p=.000$).
- Charts 2a-2d show these results disaggregated by Summit location. Charts 3a-3e show these results disaggregated by selected respondents’ roles (clergy, lay leader, congregational education director, child care/preschool director staff, and other).

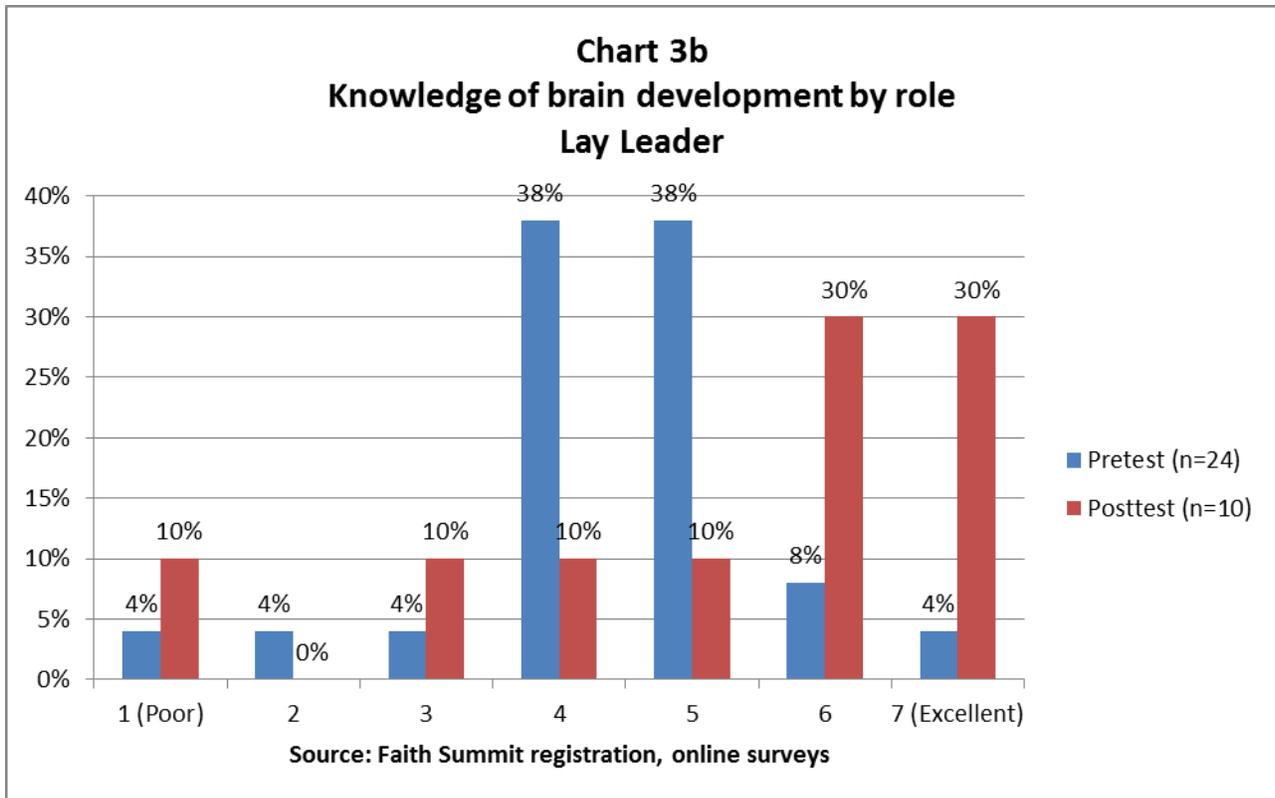
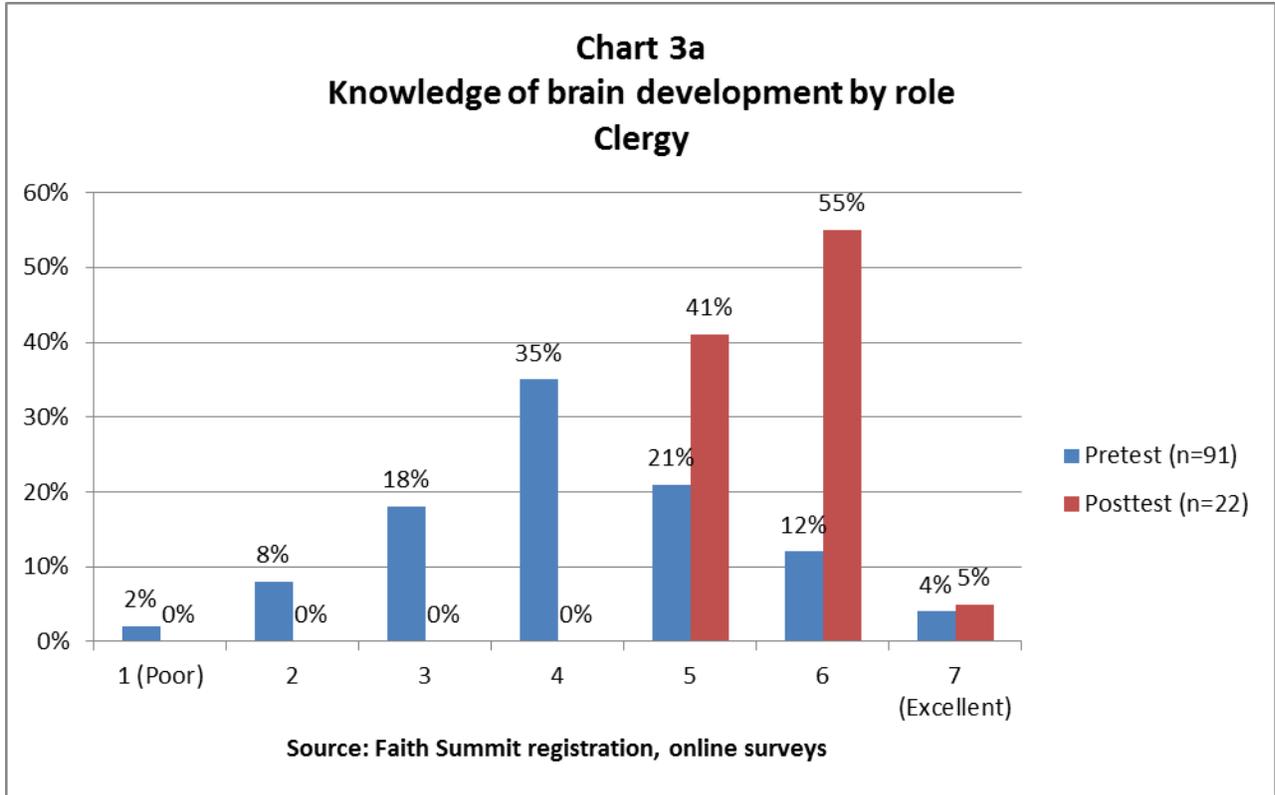
Knowledge of Early Childhood Education



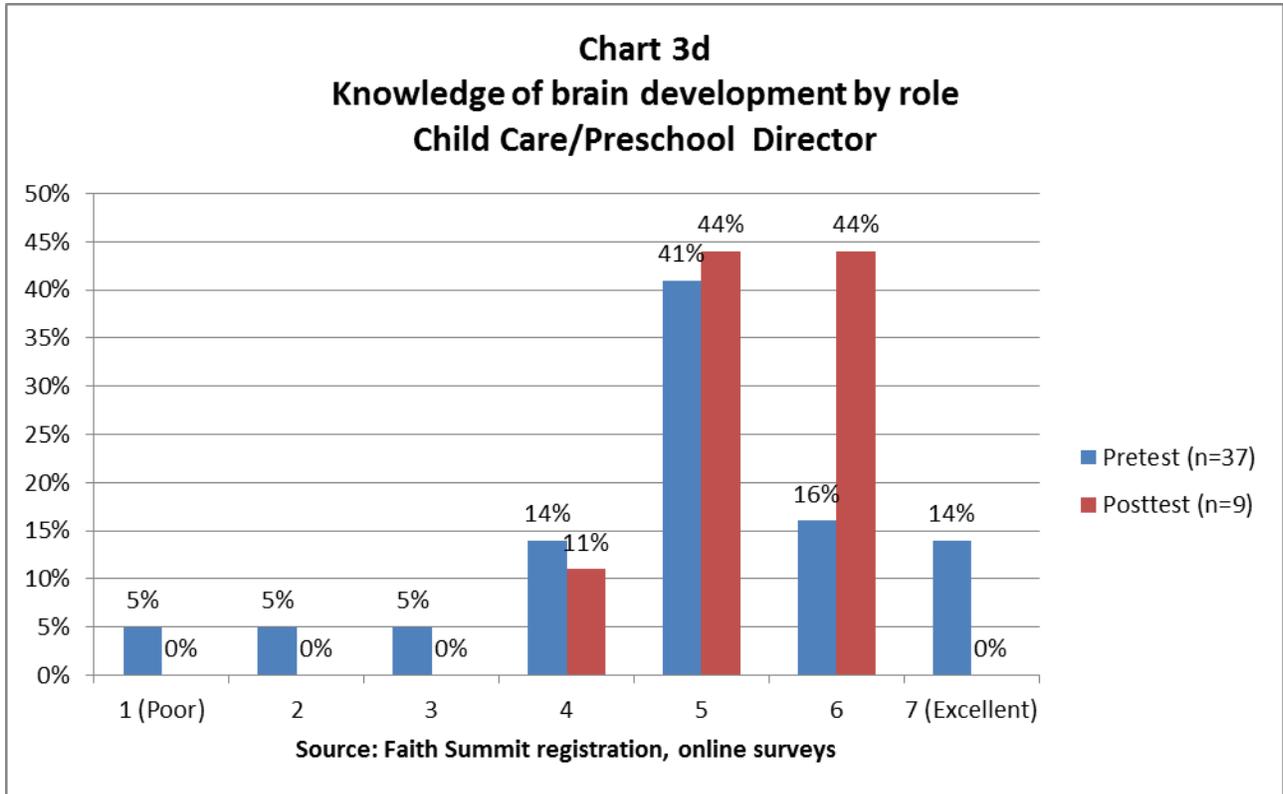
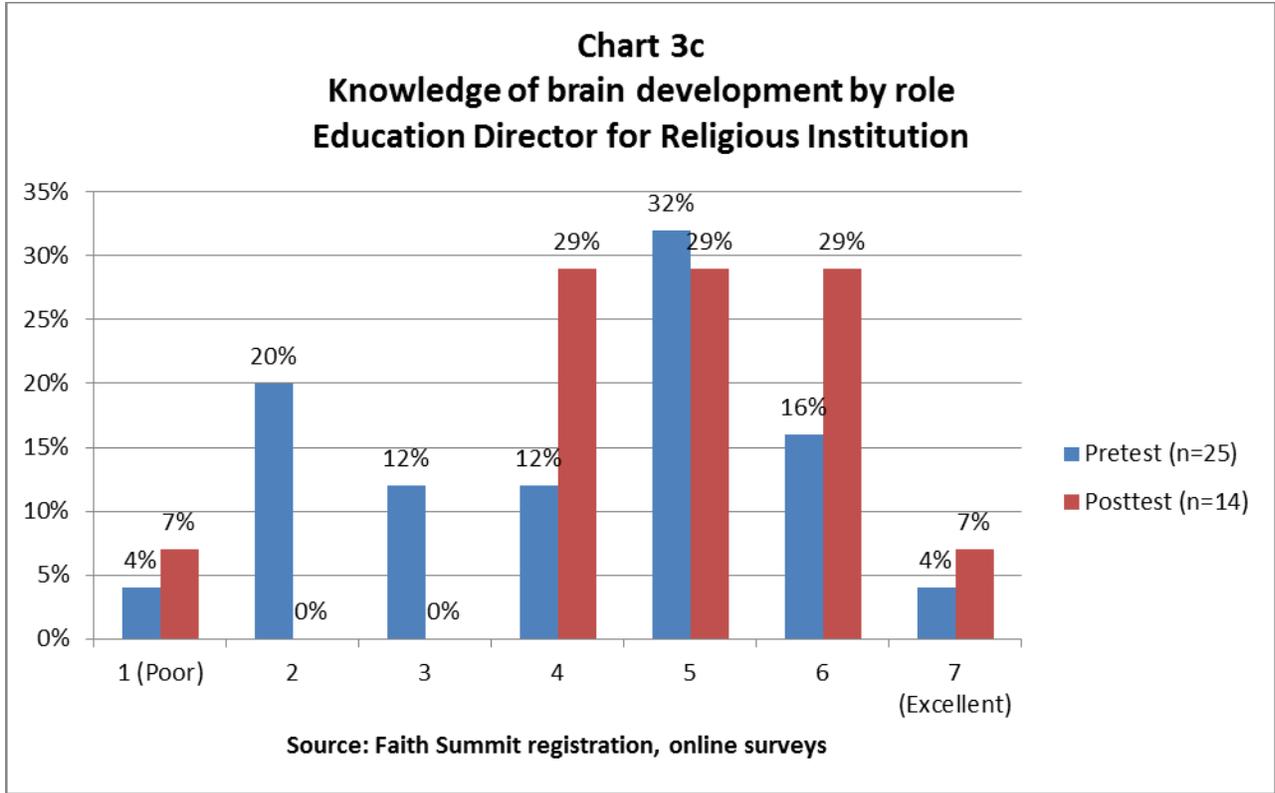
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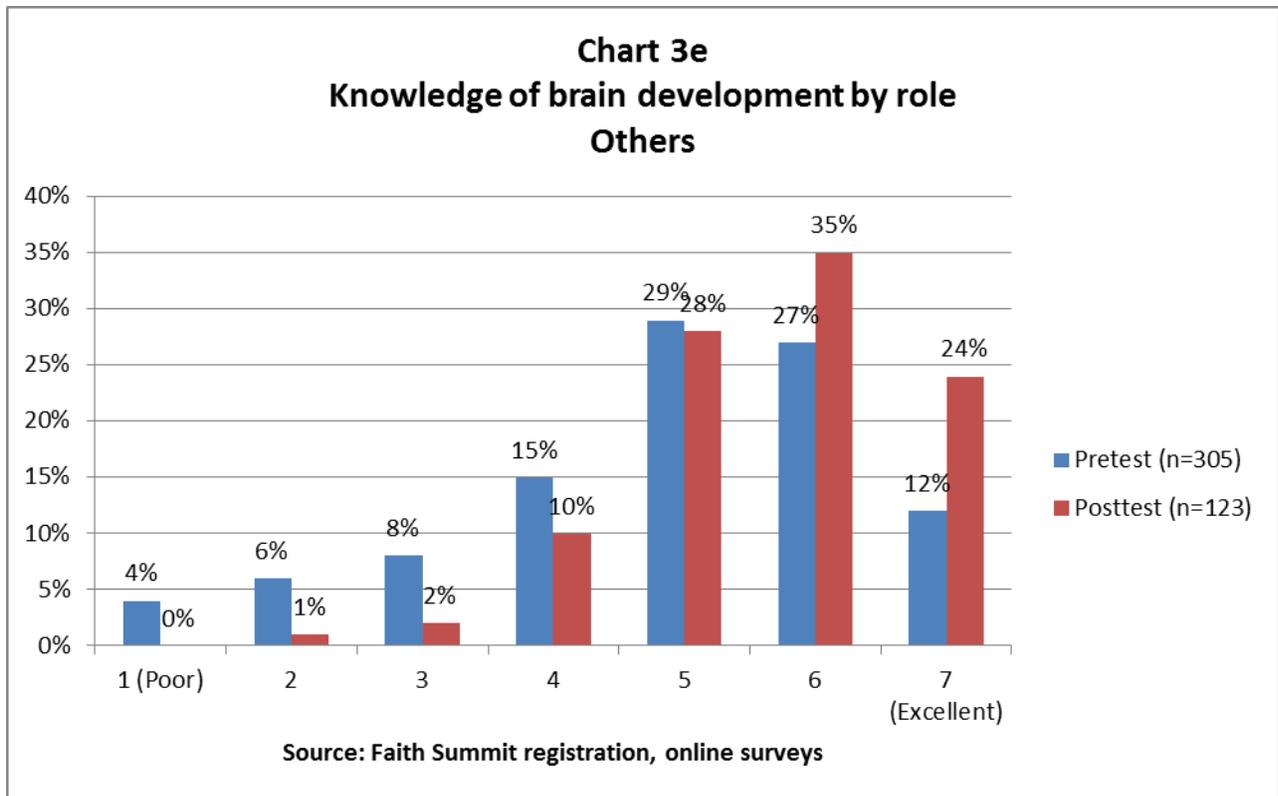
Knowledge of Early Childhood Education



Knowledge of Early Childhood Education

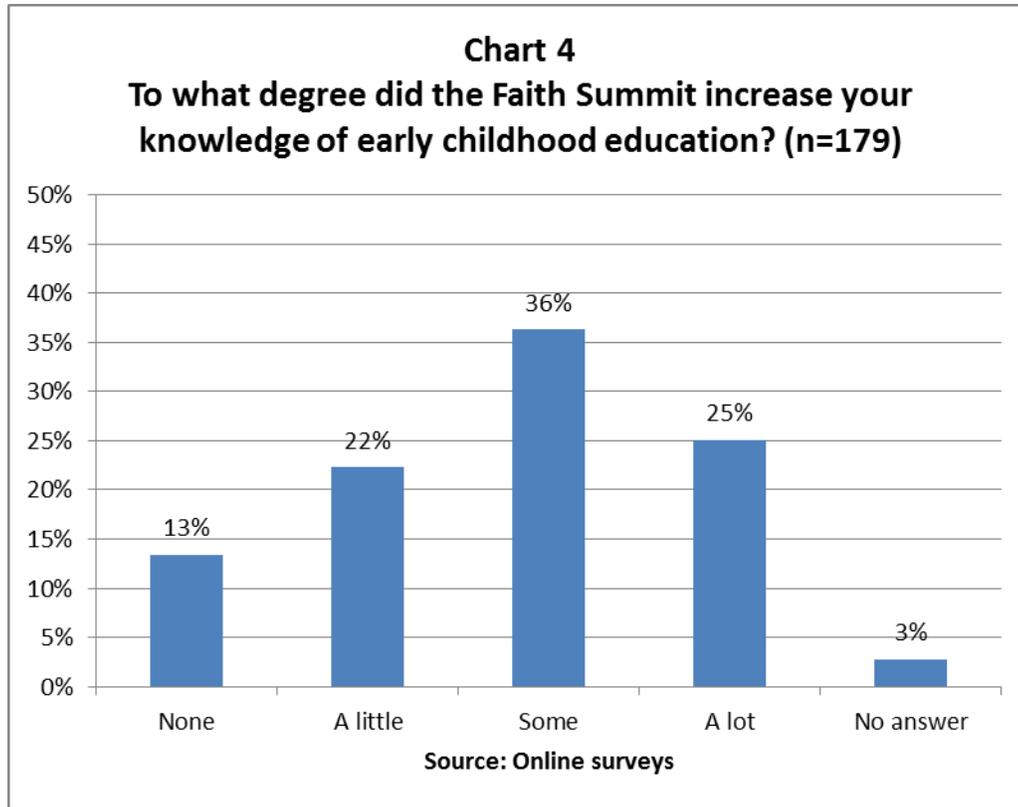


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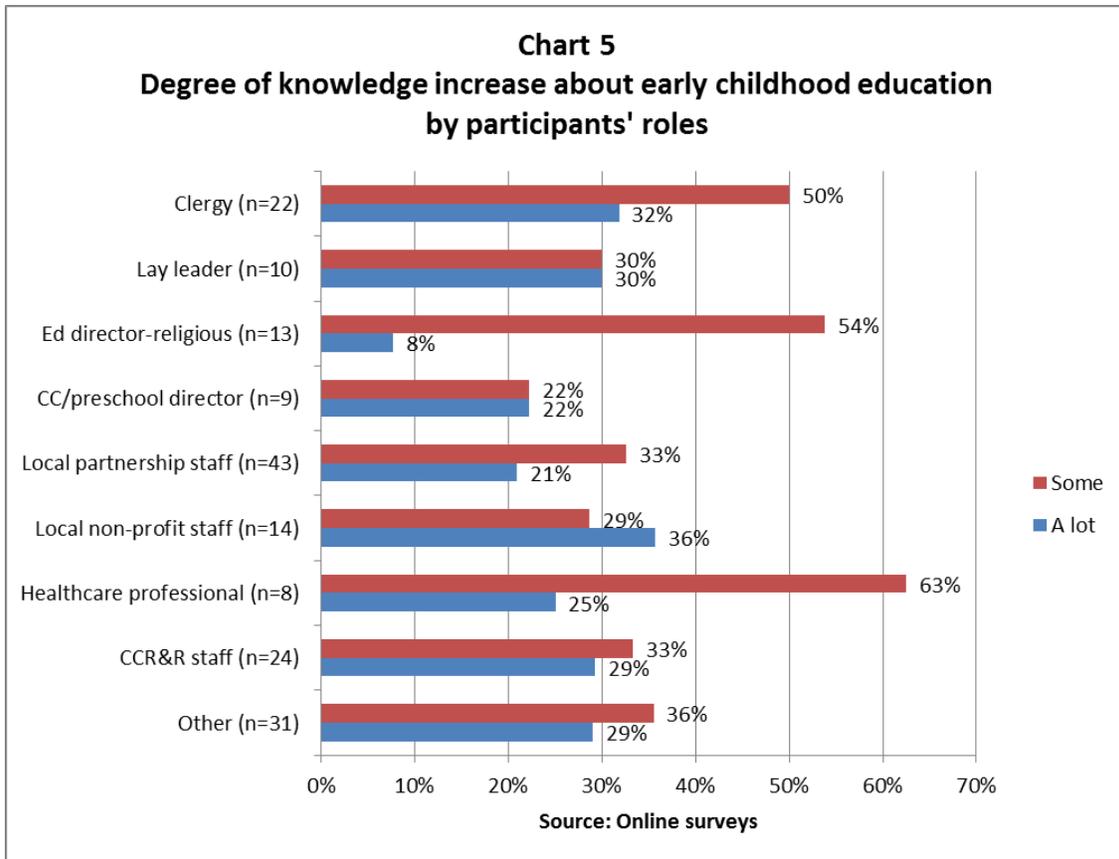
- The online registration tool provided five categories of participants' roles: clergy, lay leader, education director for religious institution, child care/preschool director, and other. Those who checked "Other" included local Smart Start partnership staff, staff of other non-profit organizations, healthcare professionals, child care resource & referral staff, and other community leaders.
- The job titles and descriptions of roles provided by "Other" registrants was insufficient to consistently disaggregate them into more detailed categories. This limitation only affected participants' pre-Summit ratings of their knowledge of brain development.
- For the online survey data (including post-Summit ratings of participants' knowledge of brain development), it was possible to disaggregate responses into more detailed categories of participants. However, for the purposes of making a valid comparison in Chart 6e (above), the original broad category of "other" participants was used for both the pre-Summit and post-Summit ratings of knowledge about brain development.

Knowledge of Early Childhood Education



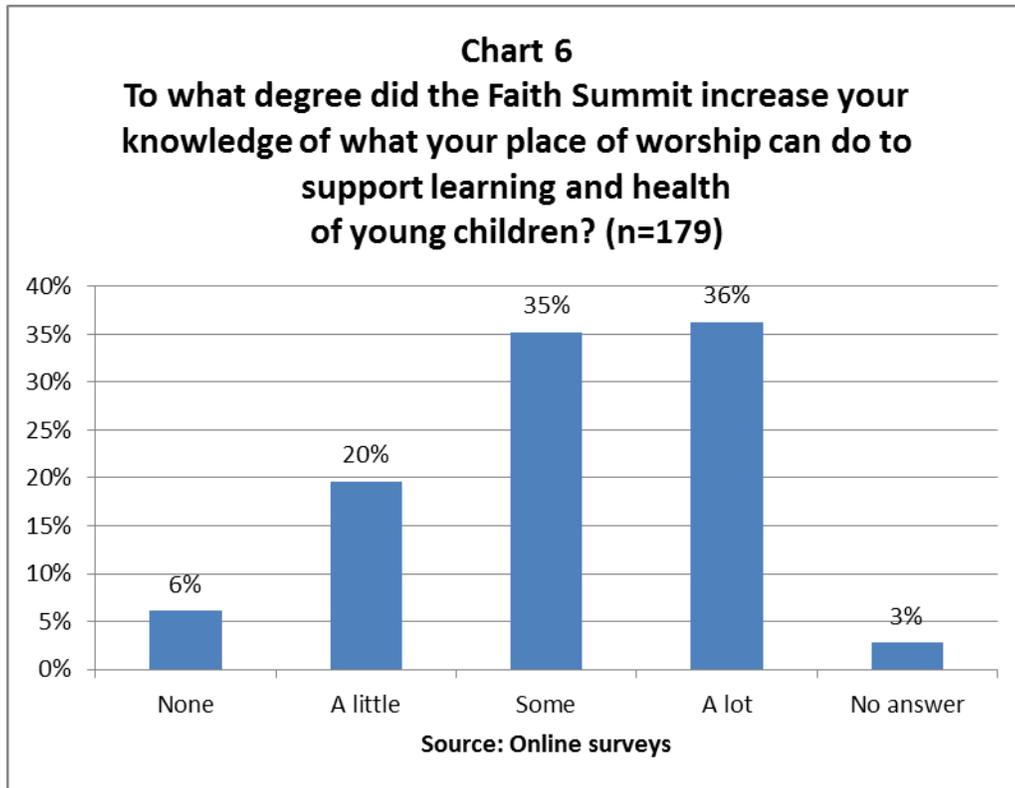
- On the online survey, participants were asked, “To what degree did the Faith Summit increase your knowledge of early childhood education?”
- Chart 4 shows that more than one-third of the participants (36%) felt their knowledge of early childhood education had increased to *some* extent, while one-quarter of them (25%) believed their knowledge had increased *a lot*.
- When we exclude the early childhood professionals in the sample (i.e., preschool directors, local Smart Start partnership staff, child care resource and referral staff), we find among the remaining survey respondents (n=98) that 41% report their knowledge of early childhood education increased to *some* extent, and 27% indicate their knowledge increased *a lot*.

Knowledge of Early Childhood Education



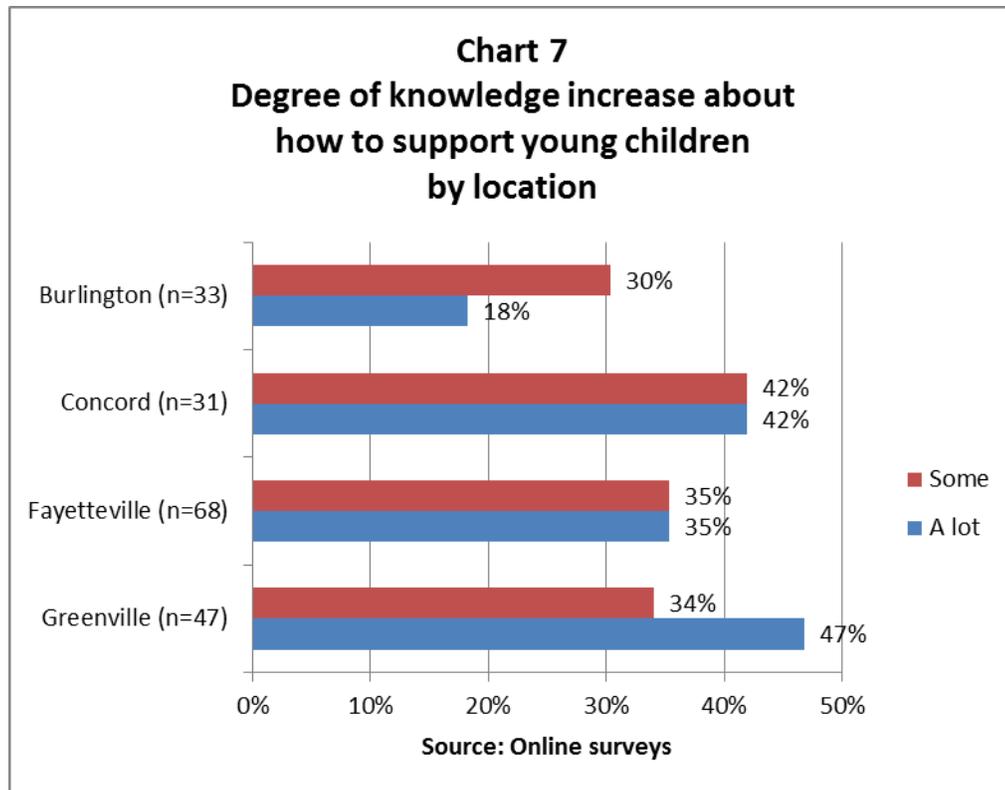
- The results in Chart 5 show how self-reported increases in knowledge vary among the different participant groups.
- Note that the sub-sample numbers for some groups are quite small. A comparison of these groups is useful only for descriptive purposes. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see that large percentages of clergy (82%), education directors for religious institutions (62%), and lay leaders (60%) reported that their knowledge of early childhood education increased to *some* extent or *a lot*.
- Other groups with similarly large percentages reporting *some* to *a lot* of increased knowledge about early childhood education included healthcare professionals (88%), local non-profit staff (65%), other community members (65%), and Child Care Resource & Referral staff (62%).

Plans for Follow-Up Action



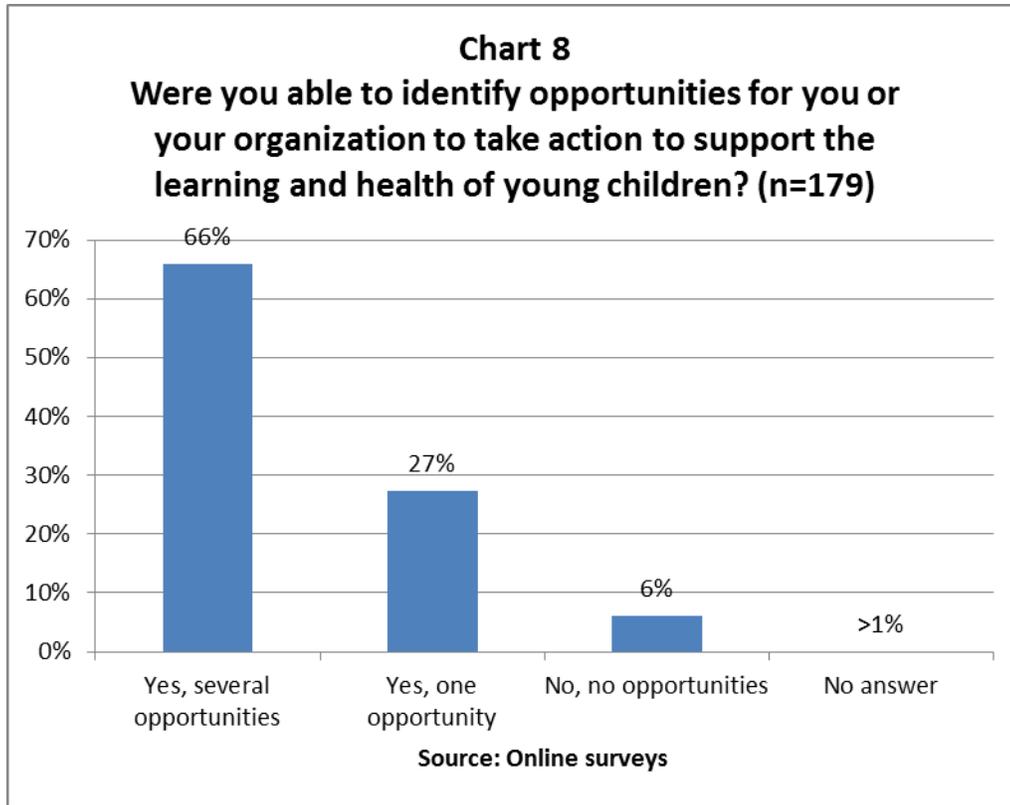
- On the online survey, participants were asked whether the Faith Summit had increased their knowledge of how their congregations could support the healthy development of young children.
- Chart 6 shows that more than one-third of participants (35%) felt their knowledge of what the church could do to support child development had increased to *some* extent, and more than one-third (36%) reported that that their knowledge in this area had increased *a lot*.

Plans for Follow-Up Action



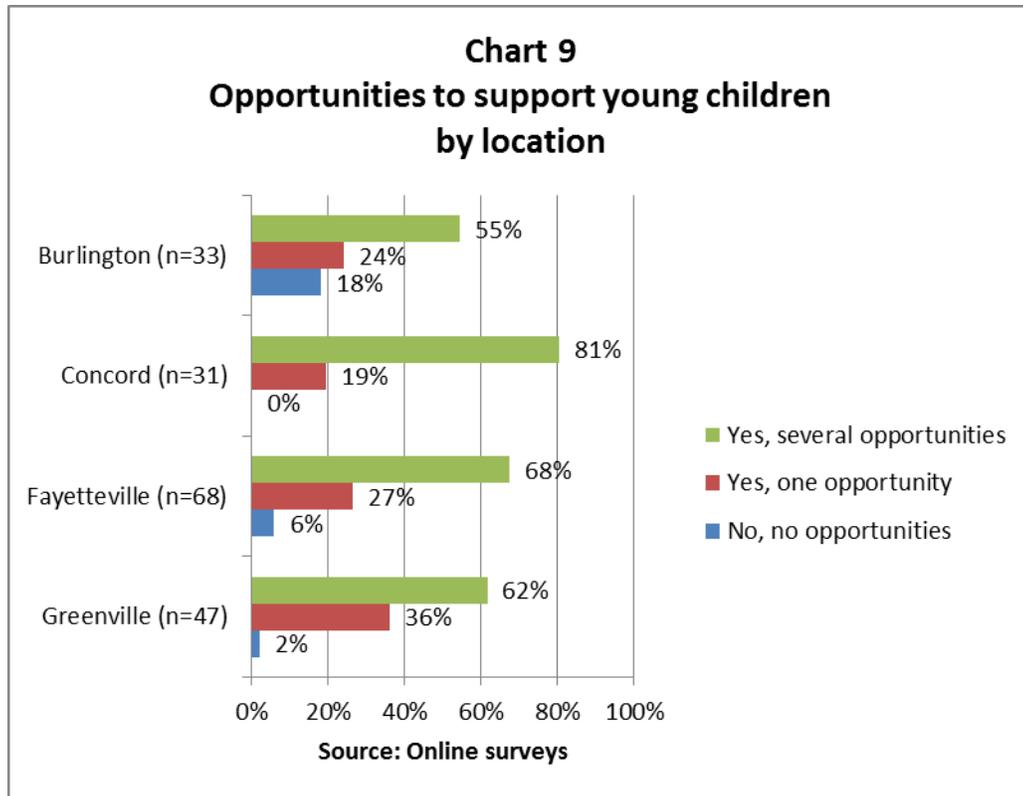
- The results in Chart 7 show that self-reported increases in knowledge of how churches can support child development vary across the four locations in which Faith Summits were held.
- The greatest increase in knowledge about what churches can do were evident among participants from the Faith Summits in Concord (84%, *some* or *a lot*) and Greenville (81%, *some* or *a lot*). Knowledge increase was also strong among Fayetteville participants (70%, *some* or *a lot*).
- A moderate increase in knowledge was reported by survey respondents who attended the Faith Summit in Burlington (48%, *some* or *a lot*).

Plans for Follow-Up Action



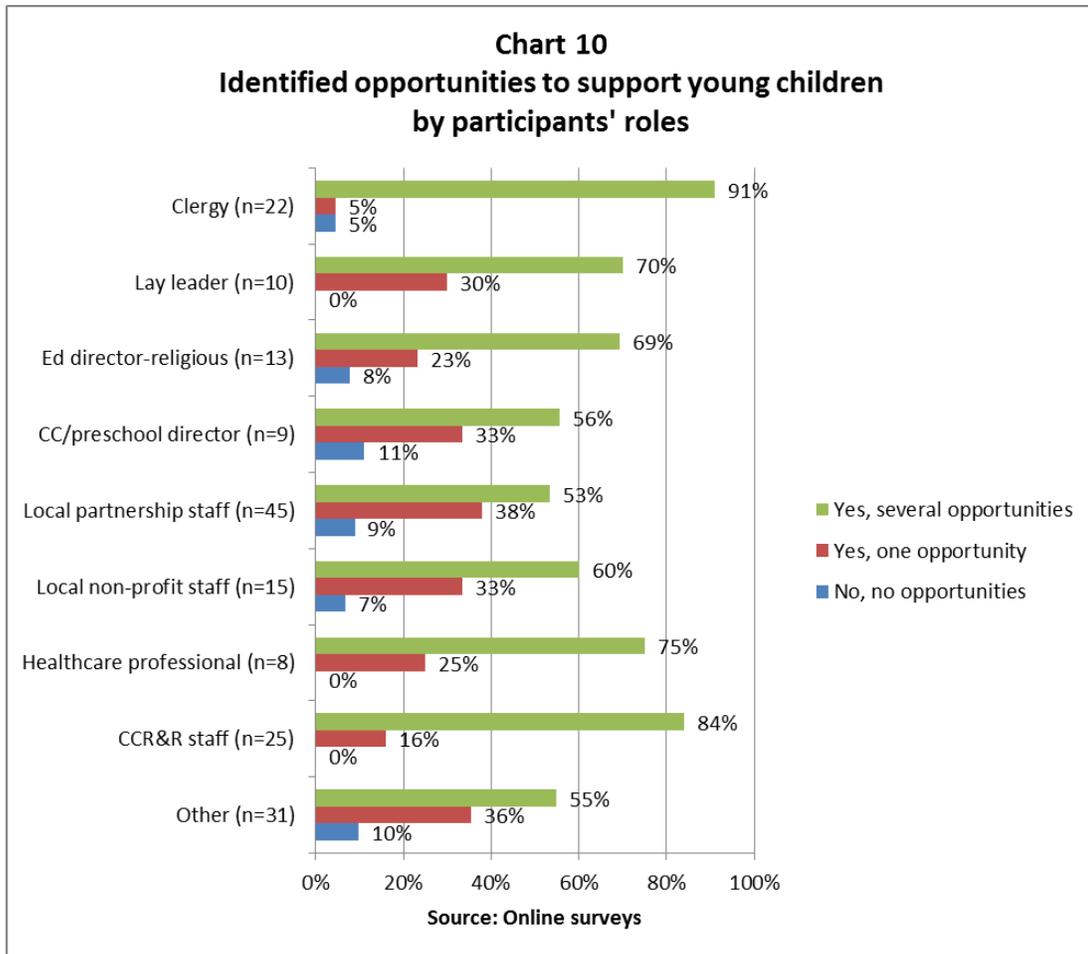
- When asked if the Faith Summit made them aware of specific opportunities to support the learning and health of young children, the majority of participants (93%) replied, “Yes.” About one-quarter of survey respondents (27%) reported identifying *one* opportunity for taking action, while two-thirds (66%) indicated that they were able to identify *several* opportunities to take action (see Chart 8).
- When asked to give examples of what they planned to do to support child development in their congregations and/or communities, two-thirds (66%, n=118) responded. Half of these people (52%) described plans to advocate for young children and raise awareness of their developmental needs in their congregations, communities, and work organizations. About one-quarter (26%) planned to initiate, expand, or improve programs and services offered through their congregations and work organizations. About one-fifth (21%) planned to continue reaching out to the faith community as part of their regular work roles. A few expressed interest in hosting a local Faith Summit.

Plans for Follow-Up Action



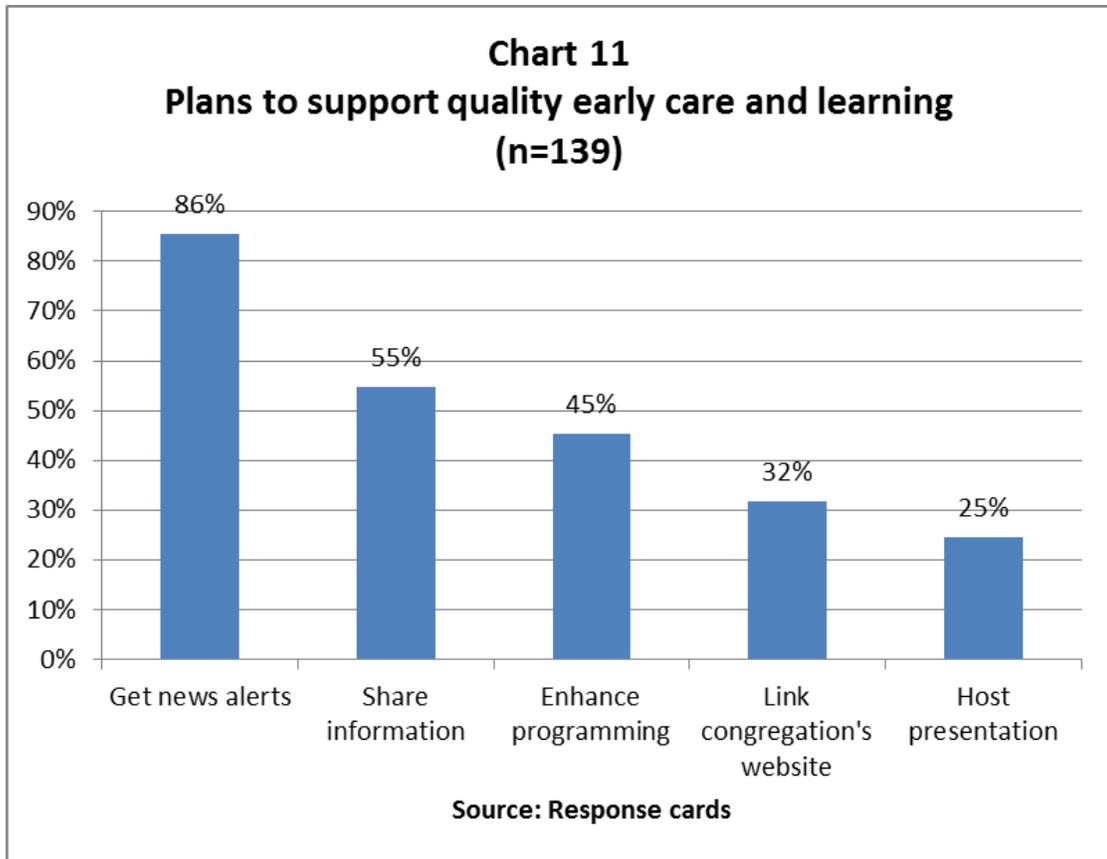
- Chart 9 shows the breakdown of perceived opportunities by Faith Summit location. As expected based on the results shown in Chart 8, all or most survey respondents from each location (79-100%) were able to identify one or several ways that they or their organizations (church, community, work) could support the development of young children.
- The only difference of note is the relatively higher percentage of Burlington participants (18%) who were not able to identify any opportunities to take action. Considering also this group's merely moderate increase in knowledge about how to support children (see Chart 7), it appears that either (1) the Faith Summit experience in Burlington *may* have been qualitatively different from experiences at the other locations or (2) the survey respondents who attended the Faith Summit in Burlington *may* differ in some way from other survey respondents.

Plans for Follow-Up Action



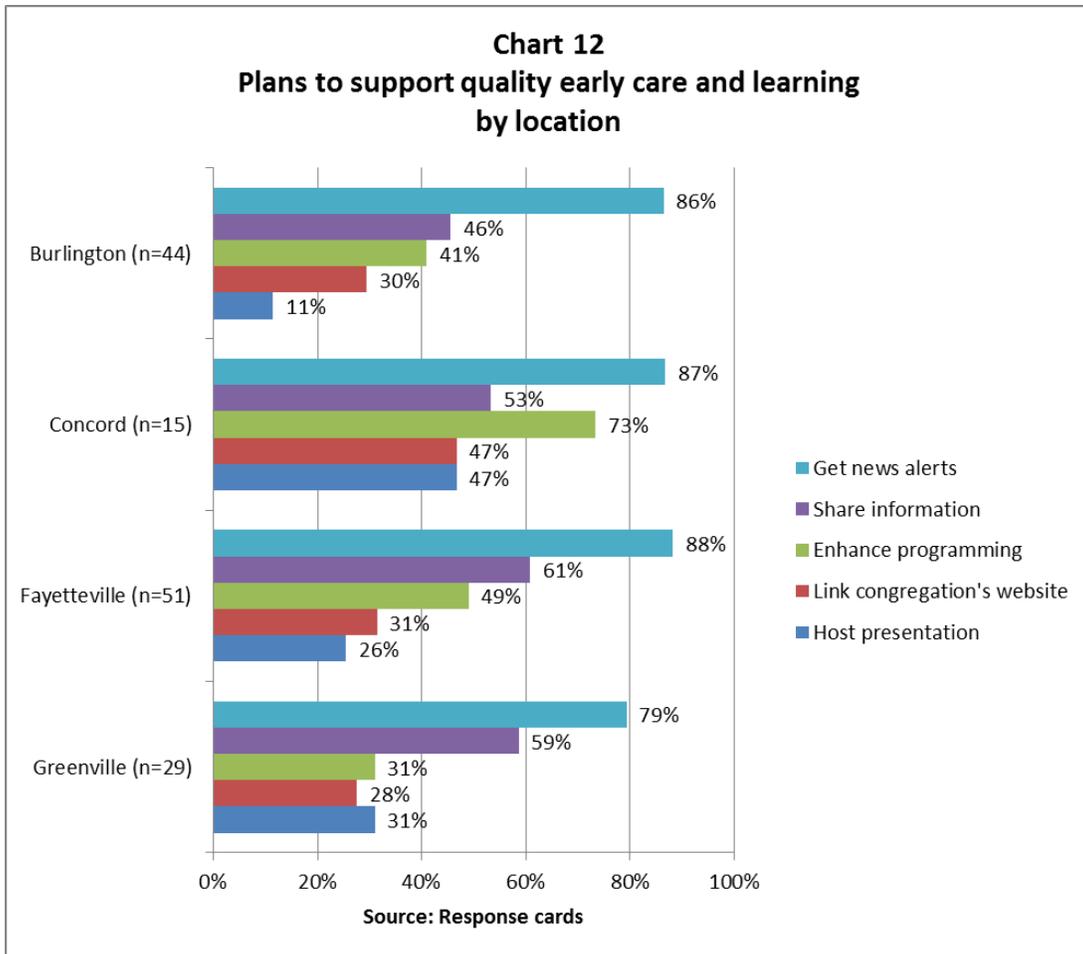
- Chart 10 shows that a majority of participants in each role category identified at least one opportunity for their organizations to take action to support the learning and health of young children.
- The groups that gained the most (i.e., reported identifying several opportunities for taking action) were clergy (91%), child care resource and referral staff (84%), healthcare professionals (75%), lay leaders (70%), and education directors for religious institutions (69%).
- Small percentages of participants from the following groups reported that they did *not* identify any opportunities for taking action: child care/preschool directors (11%), “other” community members (10%), local partnership staff (9%), education directors for religious institutions (8%), local non-profit staff (7%), and clergy (5%).

Plans for Follow-Up Action



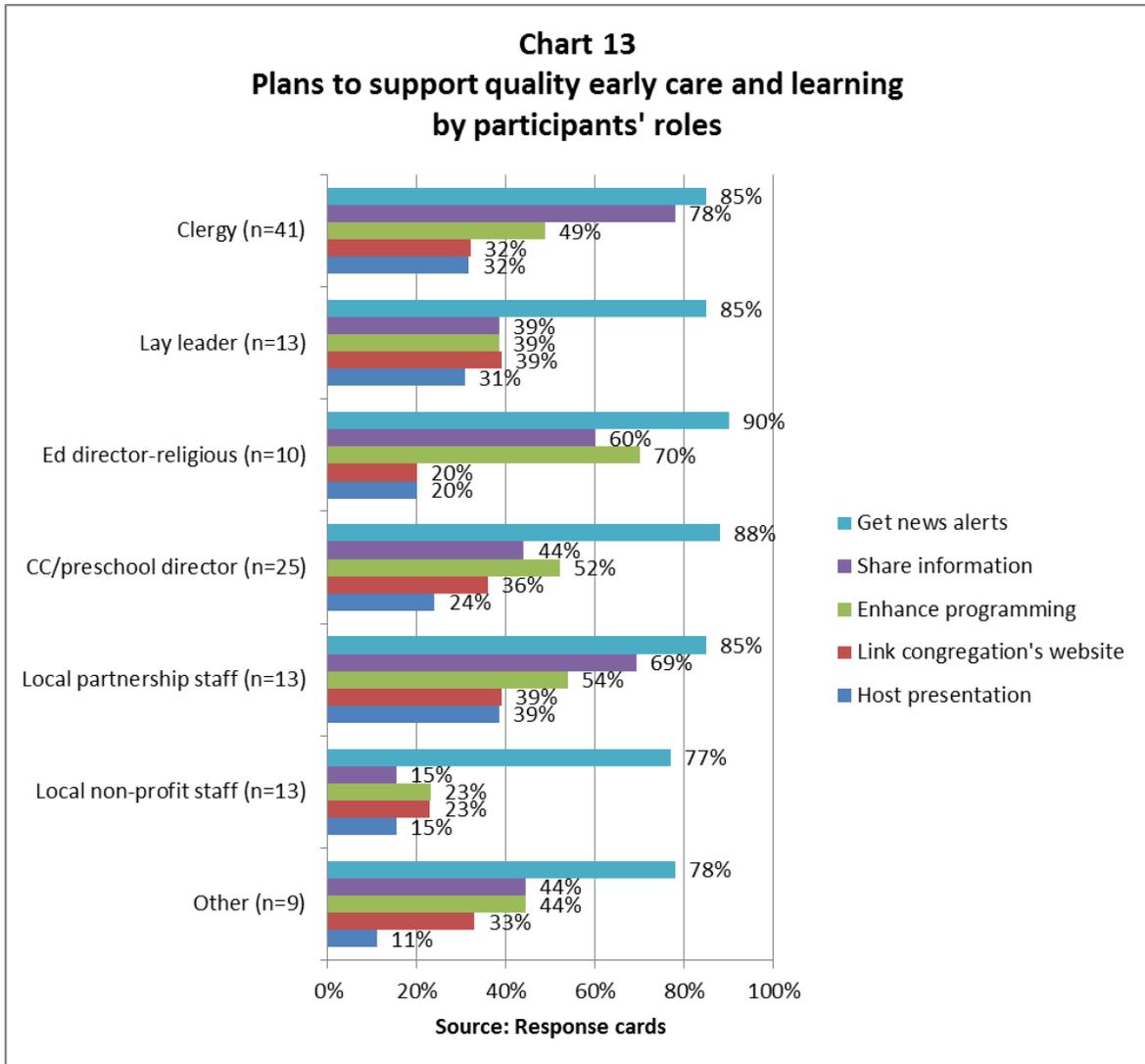
- As they exited the Faith Summits, participants were encouraged to complete a response card indicating their plans to support quality early care and learning in specific ways. Feedback was requested regarding five possible action steps (see Chart 11).
- Most of the respondents (86%) planned to stay up-to-date on early childhood news with alerts from The First 2000 Days.
- A little more than half of the respondents (55%) planned to share The First 2000 Days information with their congregations in sermons, bulletins, web sites, newsletters, and social media. A little less than half (45%) planned to review and enhance early childhood and family programs.
- One-third (32%) planned to link The First 2000 Days website to their congregation's website, and one-quarter (25%) thought they would host a First 2000 Days presentation at their congregation.

Plans for Follow-Up Action



- Chart 12 shows that the patterns of interest in specific action steps across the regions look very similar to the pattern for all participants who completed response cards (compare to Chart 11). In general, respondents from each location were most interested in keeping up with The First 2000 Days news alerts and least interested in hosting a The First 2000 Days presentation for their congregations.

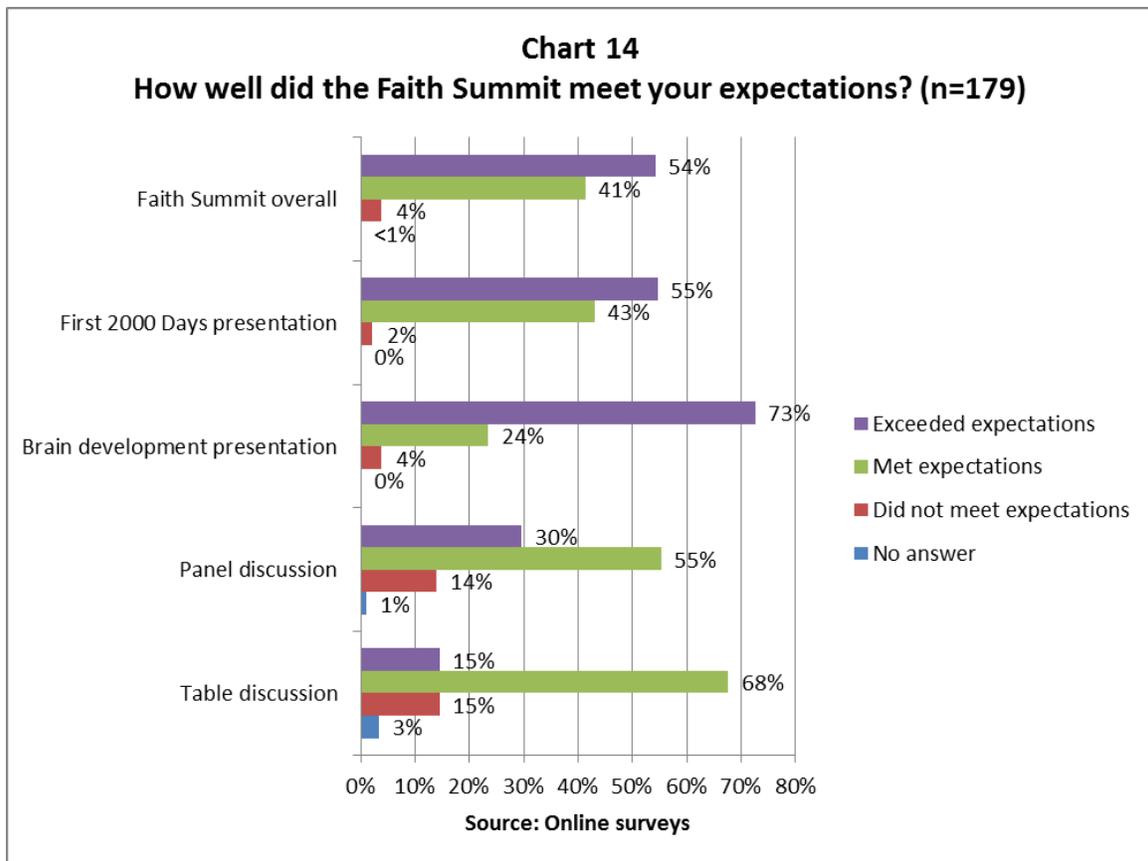
Plans for Follow-Up Action



- Chart 13 shows that participants in every role category were most interested in keeping up with The First 2000 Days news alerts and least interested in hosting a The First 2000 Days presentation for their congregations.
- A majority of participating clergy members were interested in keeping up with The First 2000 Days news alerts (85%) and sharing The First 2000 Days information with their congregations (78%). A majority of education directors for religious institutions planned to get The First 2000 Days news alerts (90%), enhance early childhood and family programs (70%), and share The First 2000 Days information with their congregations (60%).

Additional comments

Survey respondents also were asked to provide feedback about the Faith Summit by indicating whether the Summit overall and specific sessions met their expectations. Chart 14 shows that most participants' expectations were met or exceeded. Approximately one-half to three-quarters of the survey respondents indicated that the brain development presentation (73%), The First 2000 Days presentation (55%), and the Faith Summit overall (54%) exceeded their expectations. The panel discussions and table discussions were slightly less well received than other sessions; 14-15% reported that these sessions did not meet their expectations.



Many survey respondents (42%, n=76) provided additional comments related to their experiences at the Faith Summits.

- Most of these comments (60%) expressed general praise for the Faith Summit overall or praise for specific presenters (e.g., Cooper, Irons, Mansfield, Zimmerman) and other

features of the meeting (e.g., the opportunity to network with others in the early care and faith communities). For example: *“Great day of networking with several members of the Faith Community from across the state!”* *“It was wonderful to pull people from different sectors of the population and be able to discuss together those issues that affect our children.”* *“I absolutely loved every minute of the Summit. Meeting people from other Partnerships and seeing how impressed they were with the event was inspiring to me.”* *“The Faith Summit was an awesome experience. I enjoyed it and hope the Smart Start will continue to host many more.”*

- About one-third of the comments (35%) included suggestions either for future gatherings or continued support of faith-based organizations to impact child development. Regarding future Faith Summits, suggestions include: convene more local summits and reconvene periodically to check on progress, allow more local control of the program to address specific community interests, provide more printed materials to take away after the meeting, invite church staff as well as church leaders, invite parents, and allow time on the agenda for churches to share what they are doing to improve early childhood education. Participants also wished for more information about how to address child development issues outside of child care programs, including how to work with parents on these issues.
- A small percentage of remarks were negative or critical of some aspect of the Faith Summits and their intentions (14%). There were a few comments about the panel discussion being *“unclear”* or *“unfocused”* and a table discussion being dominated by the moderator. A few participants expressed disappointment that the presentations were less about faith than they were about getting GS-110 child care sites licensed under the NC Star Rated system. One participant wrote: *“I don’t feel like our center has to be star rated to provide excellent quality care for children...and I feel like you missed an opportunity to reach out to GS110 facilities and support us by providing learning opportunities and ideas that would help us continue or increase our ability to provide excellent quality care while continuing to remain GS110.”* This same participant expressed doubt that it was possible to *“be star rated and keep our principles of faith.”*

On the opposite side of the argument, another participant wrote, “*Centers without a star rated license should not receive subsidy.*”

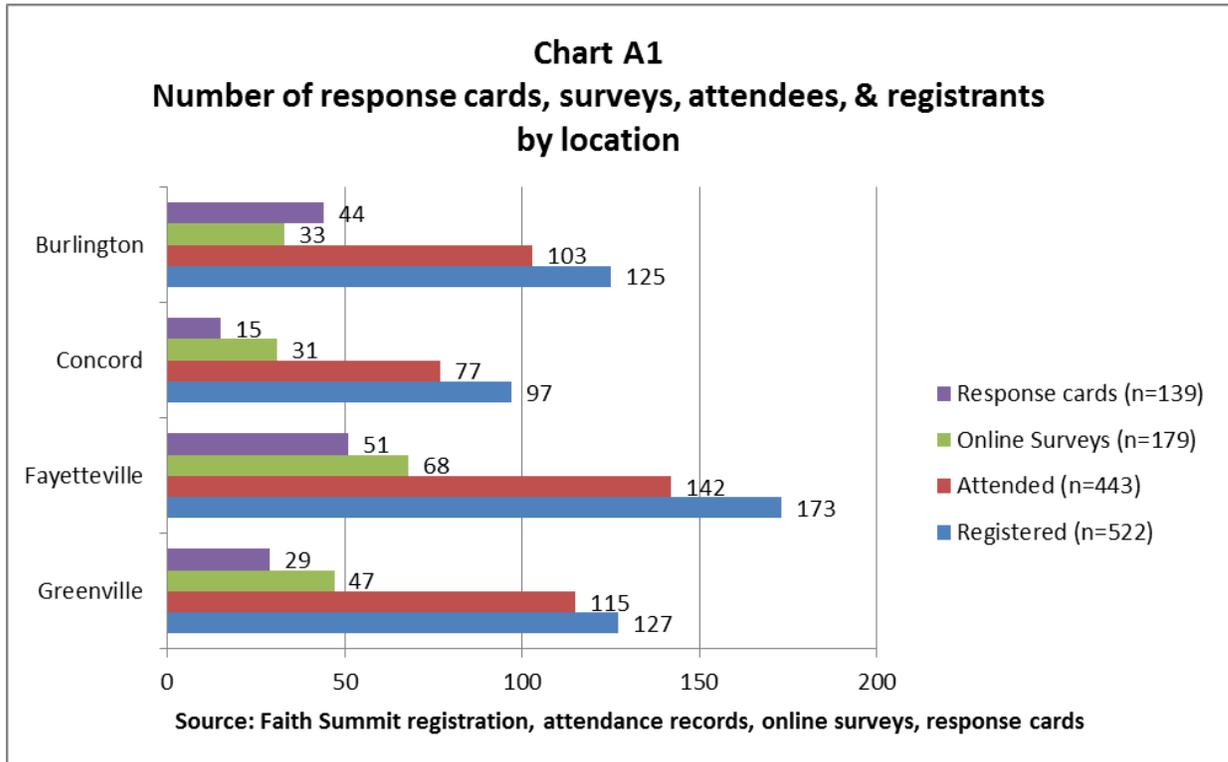
Conclusion

The data collected in relation to four regional Faith Summits provide descriptive information about the experiences of some participants. Because of low response rates on end-of-Summit response cards and post-Summit online surveys, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the outcomes for all participants. Nevertheless, the data do reflect that the experience was positive and worthwhile for those who chose to respond.

Self-reported ratings of knowledge about brain development and early childhood education indicate that many participants believe they gained valuable knowledge and understanding in these areas. Many participants also reported increased understanding of how their organizations can support healthy child development and identified one or more specific ways they could take action. Plans for future action include continuing to advocate for young children and raise awareness of their developmental needs, initiating or improving programs and services for children and families, and making use of information from The First 2000 Days to achieve these and other objectives.

Appendix: Response Rates

Chart A1 shows the number of online surveys and response cards received in each region, compared to the total number of registrants and attendees from that region.² Note that the numbers of registrants and attendees in each region include NCPC and other state level leaders who were not included in the response card and online survey samples.³

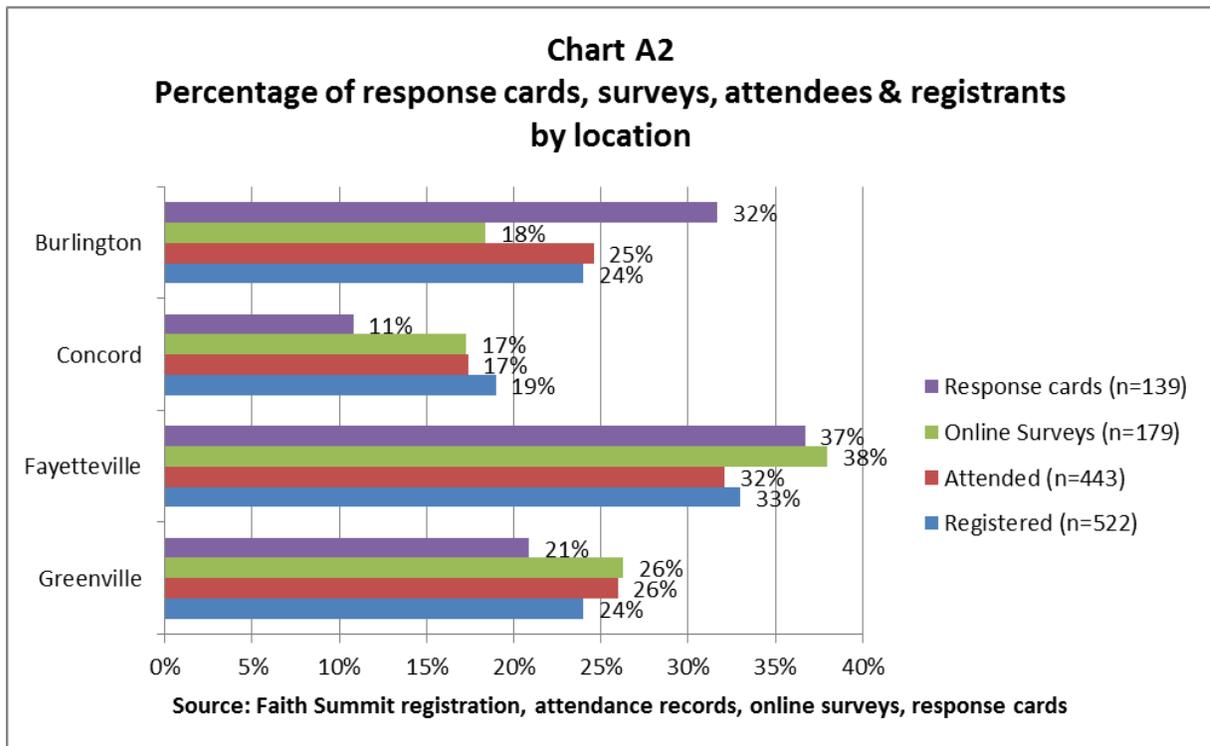


² We have limited information about the counties represented by participants at each location. According to information provided on the response cards: **Burlington** participants came from Alamance, Caswell, Chatham, Durham, Guilford, Orange, Person, Rockingham, Stokes, Wake, and Yadkin counties; **Concord** participants came from Anson, Cabarrus, Iredell, Mecklenburg, Stanly, and Union counties; **Fayetteville** participants came from Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Lee, New Hanover, Richmond, Robeson, and Scotland counties; and **Greenville** participants came from Craven, Dare, Edgecombe, Lenoir, Nash, Onslow, Pamlico, Perquimans, Pitt, and Washington counties.

³ This means that response rates for each location will be slightly under-estimated if calculated using these numbers of participants.

Appendix: Response Rates

Chart A2 compares the percentage of response cards received from each region, the percentage of online surveys completed in each region, and the percentages of total registrants and attendees that attended a Summit in a particular location. The purpose of this chart is to show how representative the samples are for each location. Though some over- and under-representation is evident, the margins are relatively small.⁴



⁴ In the response card sample, Burlington and Fayetteville are over-represented by five to seven percentage points, while Concord and Greenville are under-represented by five to six percentage-points. In the online survey sample, Burlington is under-represented by seven percentage-points, and Fayetteville is over-represented by six percentage points. Representation in Concord and Greenville is proportionate to participation in those locations.

Appendix: Response Rates

Chart A3 indicates important differences in the mix of participants who completed response cards and online surveys. On the one hand, nearly two-thirds of all response cards were completed by clergy (30%), lay leaders (9%), education directors for religious institutions (7%), and child care/preschool directors (18%). On the other hand, less than one-third of the online surveys were completed by participants in these same roles: clergy (12%), lay leaders (6%), education directors for religious institutions (8%), and child care/preschool directors (5%).

