Promoting School Readiness for Latino Children in Boulder County

Combining Best Practices, Family Needs and Preferences, and Community Assets

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INTRODUCTION

In 2002, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation formed a Community Partnership with the residents of Boulder County to improve the school readiness of Latino children in Boulder, Lafayette and Longmont, and especially children from families with low incomes. The hope of the Knight Foundation and its local Community Advisory Committee is that its investment in Latino children’s early years will be one piece of a community-wide effort to narrow the gap in school achievement between white students and minority students in the Boulder Valley and St.Vrain Valley School Districts.

Current research points us to the aspects of nurturing and learning that are most important in helping young Latino children to reach their full potential. Researchers also have identified specific strategies that are successful in preparing Latino children to start school. Many of these concepts and strategies are being used by community agencies in Boulder County and in our county’s licensed preschools and child care settings.

But many community agencies can serve only a limited number of families or are not able to work effectively with Latino families. Although most Latino parents with young children are in the workforce, their children are more likely to receive child care through family or friends, rather than through licensed child care centers or family child care homes. Even when Latino children are enrolled in licensed child care settings, these providers often do not have the skills and resources to meet the children’s cultural and language needs.

To make sure that its resources are being used most effectively in improving school readiness among Latino children, the Knight Foundation joined with the Early Care and Education Council of Boulder County to conduct a research study that would collect information in three areas: 1) Proven strategies for improving school readiness for Latino children, known as “best practices;” 2) The needs and preferences of local Latino families regarding child care and early education for their young children; and 3) The ability of Boulder County’s child care providers and community agencies to meet these needs and preferences using best practices.

The point at which these three pieces come together—where community programs are able to meet the needs and preferences of local families using best practices—is the blueprint for planning and implementing programs and services that will be most effective in promoting school readiness among Latino children in Boulder County.

This report to the community summarizes the research and, based upon the research results, offers recommendations for strategies and investment to advance school readiness for Latino children in Boulder County.

A NOTE ABOUT THE TERM “LATINO”

This report uses the term “Latino” to identify persons in the United States who are of Latin American origin (including Mexico, Central America, South America, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and other islands in the Caribbean). It refers to the heritage, nationality, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. The U.S. Census uses the term “Hispanic,” which includes persons with Spanish heritage, in addition to persons whose origin is Latin American.
A PROFILE OF LATINOS IN BOULDER COUNTY

Data from the U.S. Census and other sources can paint a general picture of the overall population of Latinos who live in Boulder County. In spite of a common origin in Latin America, however, Latinos are a diverse and varied group. There will be differences among individual Latino families in terms of income level, language, acculturation, family size, religious beliefs, and many other factors. It is important to remember that not all Latino families fit the “average” profile described here and that not all Latino children are at risk for poor school performance.

The following information is based upon U.S. Census 2000 unless noted.

General. An estimated 30,496 Latino persons live in Boulder County, which is about 10.5% of the total population. The number of Latinos living in Boulder County has more than doubled since 1990. The largest numbers of Latinos live in Boulder, Lafayette, and Longmont, which has seen the greatest increase in Latino residents over the past 10 years. There are approximately 3,430 Latino children under the age of 6 in the county.

Of foreign-born persons living in Boulder County, 43% are from Latin America. More than 70% of local Latinos are of Mexican descent. About 21,404 Boulder County residents live in households where Spanish is spoken in the home, and more than 50% of this group say that they speak English less than “very well.”

Education and employment. Among Latinos age 25 and over in Boulder County, 58% have at least a high school education. Among Latinos age 16 and over, 77% of males and 38% of females are in the workforce. More than half of Latina women with children under age 6 are employed. Among Latinos who are working, 85% of men and 71% of women say that they usually worked 35 or more hours per week.

Income. The average household income for Latinos in Boulder County in 1999 was $36,039, compared to $58,052 for non-Hispanic whites. However, the per capita (or per person) income for Latinos was $13,623, compared to $31,424 for white, non-Hispanic persons. About 20% of Latino families in Boulder County have incomes below the federal poverty level. For Latino children under age 6, 23% live in families with incomes under the federal poverty level.

Public education. In 2002, 12.8% of elementary school students in the Boulder Valley School District were Latino, while 27% of elementary school students in the St. Vrain Valley School District were Latino. Four elementary schools in each district had enrollments of more than 50% Latino children. For Latino children in the Boulder Valley School District who took the 2003 Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) 3rd grade reading test in Spanish, 62% scored proficient or advanced, compared to 85% of all children taking the equivalent test in English. In the St. Vrain Valley School District, 64% of children taking the CSAP 3rd grade reading test in Spanish scored proficient or advanced, compared to 80% of all children taking the test in English. (Data from the Boulder Valley School District and St. Vrain Valley School District.)

Child care. According to the City of Boulder Children, Youth, and Families Division, Boulder County has approximately 124 licensed child care centers or preschools and 160 licensed family child care homes. No estimate is available on the number of persons who provide child care in their homes but are not licensed by the state. There are no local surveys of the types of child care used by Latino families, but national surveys show that Latino families prefer to use child care provided by family members. When they reach elementary school, Latino children are the least likely of any children to have attended preschool.

Results of Latino Task Force Community Assessment. In 2000, the Latino Task Force of Boulder County conducted a community assessment to collect information on the contributions, needs, and overall quality of life issues for Latinos in Boulder County. The surveys showed that Latinos generally feel they contribute to the broader community through their work, taxes, local spending, and participation in the political arena. They see themselves as good role models for both Latinos and non-Latinos in the community and feel their culture and cultural values contribute to the overall quality of life for all residents. Needs that were identified through the surveys include increased access to several resources, such as education that will allow for increased earnings, health insurance, bilingual education and ESL classes, and affordable housing.
WHAT IS SCHOOL READINESS?

Many people think that “school readiness” means being able to count or recite the ABC’s. But researchers say that we need to look at several qualities and skills that describe the overall development of children to know if they are entering school ready to learn. This study uses a widely-accepted definition of school readiness developed by the National Education Goals Panel, based upon its review of research in child development and early education. According to this panel’s work, the elements of school readiness are:

- **Health.** A child who is not healthy finds it difficult to learn. Good health covers all aspects of physical well-being, motor development and physical abilities.

- **Social and emotional development.** Being socially and emotionally healthy helps a child form relationships and develop behaviors that are needed for a positive school experience. Young children must have stable and secure relationships with adults, and have experiences that build self-confidence and help them learn to be a part of a group, understand the emotions of others, and express or interpret their own feelings.

- **Language development.** Language enables a child to become a part of the social and learning experiences in school. In addition to listening and speaking, a child who is ready for school should show the earliest signs of an interest in reading and writing and some related skills.

- **Cognitive skills.** Children who are ready for school have general knowledge about things and events around them and how they are similar, different, and otherwise related to each other. These skills show some understanding of logic, problem-solving, broad mathematical concepts, and imagination.

A fifth quality of school readiness, “approaches to learning,” looks at a child’s inclination to use his or her skills and knowledge to become involved in learning. Little has been written about this aspect of school readiness in the research literature. Also, relevant to this study, “approaches to learning” describes a set of behaviors that is likely to vary based upon cultural practices. For these reasons, this aspect of school readiness was not considered in this study.

Since children are wonderfully complex beings, none of the elements of school readiness stands alone from the others. Children who are sick are not able to observe and gain knowledge from the world around them. Children who are emotionally upset won’t be able to concentrate on learning to speak and understand language. Children who don’t develop language skills may get frustrated in trying to make their feelings known. Because these factors are closely related, the best way to encourage school readiness in young children is to use approaches that touch on all of the qualities described above.

Recognizing that children are not able to develop these qualities by themselves, the National Education Goals Panel set objectives that involve parents, child care and preschool providers, and the whole community in preparing children to enter school:

- Parents must be empowered to be children’s first teachers.
- Child care and preschool providers must have the knowledge and skills needed to care for and teach all children.
- The community must have a strong system of services that support the basic needs of families as they raise their children.

The National Education Goals Panel also urged close examination of the readiness and capacity of schools to receive young children. The Panel identified characteristics that indicate schools are ready to support the learning and development of young children, including providing a smooth transition between home and school, striving for continuity between early care and education programs and elementary schools, being committed to the success of every child and to the success of every teacher and every adult who interacts with children during the school day, serving children in communities, and taking responsibility for results.

HOW THIS STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

The Early Care and Education Council of Boulder County contracted with the ALMAR Development Group in January, 2003 to find best practices for promoting school readiness in Latino children and to learn about the needs and preferences of local Latino families for the early care and education of their young children. To identify best practices, ALMAR reviewed research done on school readiness and examined programs from across the country that were proven to improve the school readiness of young Latino children. To learn about needs and preferences in Boulder County, they held thirteen focus group discussions in Boulder, Lafayette, and Longmont with the following groups:

- Latino families with young children.
- Latino fathers with young children.
- Directors of licensed child care centers.

Child care providers who care for children in their homes and are licensed by the state.

- Child care providers who care for children in their homes but are not licensed by the state.
- Staff from community agencies.

In addition, ten Latino families with young children were interviewed in their homes. The focus groups with families and unlicensed child care providers and all home interviews were conducted in Spanish. ALMAR then prepared a report that linked best practices to what Latino parents in Boulder County need and want, and identified barriers to providing those services to families and children. They also recommended strategies for promoting school readiness for Latino children.
RESEARCH ON BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL READINESS OF LATINO CHILDREN

Original sources for the information presented in this section are identified in the ALMAR final report. See page 22 to obtain the report.

Child care and preschool education that is most effective for Latino children will reflect the values and practices of Latino culture. The following concepts and principles have been identified by researchers as being important to the school readiness of Latino children.

- Effective teachers will tap into the knowledge and resources that Latino children and parents bring to the educational process. Too often teachers do not appreciate the positive experiences that Latino children bring with them to the child care or preschool setting.

- Learning will result from social or group activity among children, and not only from a process that is directed by the teacher/caregiver or by a specific curriculum.

- Children’s cultural experiences will be used to make classrooms and care settings relevant and engaging to all children.

- The concepts of familia (family), pertenencia (belonging), educación (learning together) and compromiso (commitment) are central to Latino culture. For Latino children, learning and socialization will be strengthened if the early care and education setting emphasizes relationships with teachers and caregivers, other children, extended family, and the community as a whole. In this way, each child will feel the support of the group as he or she takes part in shared learning experiences and tries out new skills and behaviors. The culturally-responsive teacher or caregiver recognizes his or her position as a highly respected member of the community and becomes an advocate for the rights and interests of families and fellow teachers.

- Strong bonds between the home and the preschool or child care setting will be in place for early education to be effective for Latino children. This means that parents will be directly involved in their child’s care and learning and that teachers will promote activities that parents and children can carry out at home.

- Latino children come to the preschool or child care setting from a variety of language situations. Some children speak only English; others speak only Spanish; still others are bilingual, having some skill and exposure to both languages. The extent to which either language is used in the preschool or child care setting will affect the child’s ability to master either language. In order to identify best practices for language development, then, early care and education providers must decide whether the goal for Latino children is to be bilingual or to shift from Spanish to English.

- For all children, the quality of the early care and education setting matters. Children who receive high quality child care or preschool services have greater success at learning and language than children in poor quality settings. This is especially true for children from families with low income. And for Latino children, the quality of care and teaching will depend on how culture and language are respected in the early education setting. However, other factors such as family income, education level and vocabulary of the mother, home environment, psychological health of the mother, and the child’s temperament are more strongly and consistently related to child development than the quality of child care.

Examples of programs that have been proven to improve the school readiness of Latino children are included under the “Examples of Best Practices” section on page 10.

"Above all, that they don’t lose their heritage or their culture."

"Sobre todo, que no pierdan su herencia o su cultura."
NEEDS AND PREFERENCES EXPRESSED BY FAMILIES, CHILD CARE PROVIDERS AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES IN BOULDER COUNTY

LATINO FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN.

Three focus groups were held with Latino parents of young children (one each in Boulder, Lafayette, and Longmont). In addition, a group including only Latino fathers was held in Boulder. Ten home interviews were conducted with Latino parents of young children.

The needs and hopes expressed by Latino families about their children’s participation and success in school are no different than those of other families. But for the Latino child, parents prefer early learning and child care situations that reflect the family’s language and cultural values. Parents want the chance for their children to learn English, maintain their native language, and be able to function in both cultures.

Latino parents feel that formal child care and preschool settings in Boulder County are not prepared to meet the cultural and language needs of their children. Most centers and homes do not have bilingual teachers or caregivers, nor do they have enough materials in the classroom to stimulate children in their native language. The lack of Spanish books and other materials for teachers and childcare providers to send home with the children makes it more difficult for parents to work with their children on learning at home. Language and cultural differences also make it difficult for parents to know how to use the child care system.

Many parents who have come from Mexico are unaccustomed to leaving their children with someone they don’t know and to paying high costs for child care. Furthermore, when staff or child care providers fail to understand Latino cultural values and practices and can’t communicate effectively with Latino families, a lack of trust results. Other reasons that Latino families are less likely to use formal child care or preschools are an inability to understand and/or meet requirements for entering those programs (for example, birth certificates, Social Security numbers, application processes, etc.), and the feeling that Latinos are given second-class status by child care and other social service providers.

"There are many times that, really, you don’t understand because there are people who speak the language but they use different words that someone can’t understand."

"Hay muchas veces que, no, realmente, uno no entiende porque hay gente que habla el idioma pero usan palabras diferentes que alguien no entiende."
"When you take a child to a child care center you don’t know them. But when, for example, the person I take my child to is someone I trust a lot, I know she will take good care of my child."

"My mother watches my daughter who is two years old, and the reason she is watching her is because I have tried to get her into child care and the cost is too much that I feel I can’t pay."

"Day cares are very expensive and it’s hard because of one’s monthly salary."

"Los centros son muy caros y es difícil por el salario mensual de uno."

"Taking him to a child care center where the staff speaks only English is going to be difficult for them to understand our children and take care of them if they need something."

"I told [the clinic] that I needed this because without it my daughter can’t attend school. They said, ‘Well, right now we don’t have any appointments…You can keep calling every day to see if there’s someone who cancelled their appointment.’ I work and I can’t keep calling from work every day at whatever time and can’t get there."

"I believe that if we contribute and pay taxes, we should also have the opportunity to have a child care center that would have…one or two bilingual people. Because for me, the critical thing is my son."
Licensed Child Care Centers and Family Child Care (Home) Providers.

One focus group was held for child care center directors and family child care providers from Boulder and Lafayette. In Longmont, one focus group was held for child care center directors and one focus group for family child care providers.

For the child care providers who attended the focus groups, the issues of caregiving, language, cultural differences, and reimbursement rates are primary concerns. They note that families’ lack of transportation is also a problem. For the most part, child care providers recognize the importance of culture and language in serving Latino children, but admit they have limited ability to offer appropriate services, at least at the present time. Providers are anxious to find strategies to help with cultural competency, language, and materials that show respect for both cultures.

"It was a real learning experience for me in working with these families, and in talking with parents and especially our new immigrant families. They are coming from an environment that parent education and early childhood isn’t an emphasis at all. You send your child to school and it is the teacher’s responsibility to get them ready. They just don’t know what it means to be involved…They are not familiar. And more important, we are not familiar with their values."

Voices of Boulder County Licensed Child Care Providers

"Cultural competency…is those things that open up your mind and make you think about different ways to do things. But a lot of it is really making a big effort to go and receive training to find out about what it means to be culturally competent."

"These families are coming to us and the communication problem is a huge barrier for us…Our children who speak only Spanish are at a loss. They’re with teachers who don’t speak Spanish and they are with a group of friends and children who don’t speak Spanish either…So they’re struggling a bit."

"I had a parent whose child could not be in child care because [the community health center] could not see her for ten days…I didn’t find out until the ten days were over. But that child was now absent for half the month and I won’t be able to bill for the child for those ten days. It’s a cost to us. It’s a cost to the families. And they get so frustrated that they don’t want to go [to the child care center]."

"I think these people, when they first immigrate, you know they’re scared. And if they’re scared, they’re scared to leave their kids."

"These families live with a great deal of stress. They are stressed about getting a job and stressed about finding their baby day care…and then they can’t get a driver’s license…It’s way beyond the early childhood thing."

"These families are really lost. It is a struggle to fit in. I think that there is a trust issue, especially when you are talking about parenting issues or something personal as how I raise my children…There might be some hesitation in terms of being afraid of being judged. Like if I come to a parenting group is someone going to say that I am not a good parent?…Yes, the trust issue is a big thing with families, I think of all cultures, but especially if you are new to the area and do not have a lot of extended family here because you left them behind…But on the other hand, we see these families who don’t know each other talk for you know, thirty minutes in our lobby before they pick up their kids because it’s a connection place."
INFORMAL (UNLICENSED) CHILD CARE PROVIDERS.

Three focus groups were held with informal child care providers (one each in Boulder, Lafayette, and Longmont).

Informal child care providers point to their experience as mothers and grandmothers as preparation for taking care of children. They feel they provide safe and caring environments where children can be comfortable in their native language (Spanish). They teach by example (such as helping toddlers to walk and talking and reading to children) and also feel it is important to teach manners (a ser bien educado—being well educated). They recognize the importance of reading in helping children to learn. These providers make it a priority to communicate with parents about the children in their care.

The informal child care providers express interest in learning more about child development, teaching reading and writing, and discipline. For the most part, they are unable or unwilling to use the support services currently available to child care providers due to lack of trust, lack of information, immigration status, and transportation problems.

COMMUNITY AGENCIES.

Three focus groups were held for representatives of community agencies (one each in Boulder, Lafayette, and Longmont).

Agencies participating in the focus groups provide services such as health care, mental health care, domestic violence intervention, emergency food and shelter, immigration assistance, and youth programs. The agency representatives describe the burden that social, health, legal and financial problems place on Latino families. These stresses of daily life make it difficult for families to focus on the early education needs of their children. In addition, families need advocates to help them know how to use the opportunities available to them through Boulder County’s many service programs.

VOICES OF BOULDER COUNTY INFORMAL CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

“Being a mother, that’s a training with a title. Many years of being a mother [qualifies] me to be able to take care of children...Once one already knows how to watch them, that is more than experience.”

“Ser madre, eso es instrucción con título; muchos años siendo madre me califica para ser capaz de cuidar niños... una vez que uno ya sabe como cuidarlos, eso es más que experiencia.”

“But what they love is reading. From when they are very young, they are inclined to read a story or a book or to color or something like that.”

VOICES OF BOULDER COUNTY COMMUNITY AGENCIES

“The child with hunger cannot learn, the child with the toothache cannot learn, and the child who is sick cannot learn.”

“Most of the families I work with can’t get to any kind of child care so they rely on relatives, family, sharing houses with other people and getting some kind of child care that way.”

“Something that is prevalent in the Latino families...One, they work minimum wage jobs...Two, many of them are in the process of documentation or illegal and so they are afraid to use legal-licensed child care services because they are afraid that...they will call the Migra [immigration]. But since most families make minimum wage, there is no way they can afford to pay for child care anyway.”
DIFFERENCES BY COMMUNITY.

There was an agreement among all communities and participants in the focus groups that being bilingual, having the required training and skills for caring for children, being culturally sensitive, and appreciating the learning that occurs in child care were important to preparing Latino children for school.

When looking at individual communities, the researchers found certain interests that were common among participants in all the focus groups in that community. In Boulder, participants focused on issues mostly related to child development (such as physical health, mental health, and prenatal care). Those in Lafayette were more likely to discuss culture, immigration, and differences in family and school values. The Longmont focus group participants were most concerned about language and cultural issues, immigration, and lack of trust in the education and social service systems.

"Now, the amount of Hispanics that live in Boulder is very large. And no, the agencies did not prepare themselves for this moment. They did not begin to train people, to translate things. Suddenly...there is everyone knocking on the door."

WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE?

The following was developed by the National Center for Cultural Competence and can be found at the Communities Can! website at www.georgetown.edu/research/gucdc/commcan5.html.

Over the years, we have talked about cultural awareness (knowing about the similarities and differences among cultures) and cultural sensitivity (being aware of the needs and feelings of your own culture and other cultures). Now we are talking about cultural competence—changing what we know, what we think and most importantly how we do things to serve and support children and families in our communities from all cultural backgrounds. It is more than hiring one staff member from a different culture or having an interpreter in a service organization or school.

While definitions of cultural competence vary, the National Center for Cultural Competence believes that to become culturally competent, a community system of services and supports for children and families must have the following beliefs:

- There is a defined set of values, principles, structures, attitudes and practices that encompass cultural competency (notice that changing knowledge, values and attitudes is not enough—we must do things in a different way);

- Cultural competence, both at the organizational and individual levels, is an ongoing process of development; and

- Cultural competence must be incorporated at every level of an organization, including policy making, administrative, practice and consumer/family levels (agencies, school systems and other organizations must work on being culturally competent, not just service providers, teachers and others interacting directly with families).

The National Center for Cultural Competence further defines cultural competence at the individual level as having the values, skills, knowledge, attitudes and attributes to work effectively in cross cultural situations.

The use of culturally competent practices and principles demonstrates an acknowledgement of and respect for people of all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The underlying idea of cultural competence is to recognize and accept differences in people and view differences from a strengths perspective when delivering services.

EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Across the country, some programs have been identified as examples of “best practice” for preparing Latino children to enter school. This means that they have undergone careful research to show that they are effective in making positive changes for Latino children in the four areas of school readiness—health, social-emotional development, language development, and cognitive skills. The tables below describe some of those examples of best practices.

But we know from the research and from the voices of families, early childhood professionals, and community agencies in Boulder County that school readiness is about more than just changing children. We must also make positive changes in our child care settings, our schools and our communities in order to help children be ready for school. This includes removing barriers such as cost, indifference to culture and language, and lack of trust in the system that prevent Latino families from using services. Tables with strategies addressing these issues also are included below.

The tables include the following sections:

- “Best practices for Latino children” are programs or services that have been proven through careful research to be effective in achieving specific school readiness goals with Latino children.

- “Best practices for the general population” are programs or services that have been proven to promote school readiness among children in the general population. These strategies are included in this report because studies on best practices for school readiness often do not include Latino children or not enough Latino children to know if the program is effective for this group. The programs listed in this section might need modification to be effective with Latino children (for example, cultural and language considerations).

- “Possibilities” are strategies for school readiness that have not been proven effective through scientific research but seem to show some promise for making a difference in the lives of children and families.

Just as the four qualities of school readiness are related in children, many programs listed below can affect more than one area of school readiness. However, each program is listed only once.
BEST PRACTICES FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION

HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

High quality child care programs are known to be most beneficial to children from families with low incomes. Two programs with proven success in improving overall outcomes for children from families with low incomes are the Perry Preschool Project and the Abecedarian Project. An evaluation of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program (MI) followed graduates through age 27 and found, among other results, higher grade point average and higher test scores, more years in school, lower rates of criminal behavior, and higher monthly incomes as compared to their peers. www.highscope.org Evaluation of the Carolina Abecedarian Project showed that, from the age of 18 months through the completion of the child care program, children in the program had significantly higher scores on mental tests than other children, an effect that was still seen on follow-up assessments completed at ages 12 and 15 years. Children who attended the child care program scored significantly higher on tests of reading and math through the primary and middle grades. www.fpg.unc.edu

POSSIBILITIES

INTEGRATING HEAD START SERVICES INTO EXISTING COMMUNITY PRESCHOOLS

An example of a program that has combined Head Start standards and services with community preschool settings is the KCMC Child Development Corporation, which operates Head Start programs for three counties in the Kansas City area. KCMC integrates Head Start programs into urban and rural child care settings, promoting comprehensive school readiness services for all children, whether or not they are eligible for Head Start. www.aecf.org

BEST PRACTICES FOR LATINO CHILDREN

HEAD START

Head Start and Early Head Start are comprehensive child development programs that provide low-income families with high quality services in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental, and mental health; nutrition; and parent involvement. In addition, Head Start is known for its responsiveness to each child’s developmental, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage and experience. Findings from research on two cohorts of Head Start children show that the gap between Head Start children and the general population of preschool-age children on key components of school readiness narrows during the Head Start year. www2.acf.dhhs.gov

AVANCE (TEXAS)

Avance’s Parenting/Early Childhood program for children 0-3 years of age emphasizes and preserves the child’s culture and integrates appropriate activities at the child care site. Families are recruited to participate in a nine-month parenting course. Former Avance participants are trained and hired as employees of the child care centers, maintaining the cultural integrity of the program. A 17-year follow-up study of the first Avance graduating classes showed high rates of high school graduation and college enrollment for students and continuation of education among mothers. www.avece-elpaso.org

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL READINESS

A few early learning programs provide a comprehensive set of services that combine all aspects of school readiness for children.
**BEST PRACTICES FOR LATINO CHILDREN**

**Prenatal to 3 Initiative (San Mateo County, CA)**
This program uses home visits, parent support groups, and educational sessions to build parenting skills and confidence, identify children’s health and developmental needs, and provide a seamless system of referral to services for the prenatal to three-year-old population. More than 80% of recipients are Hispanic. Evaluation shows improvement in the areas of access to community services, maintenance of breastfeeding, interaction between parents and children, use of books with children, child safety practices, tobacco use by parents, and attention to mental health concerns. www.smhealth.org

**Nurse-Family Partnership**
This program sends specially trained nurses on weekly or bi-weekly visits to low-income, first-time mothers starting as early as possible in pregnancy and continuing until their child’s second birthday. Nurses help mothers improve their health and nutrition during pregnancy, learn effective early parenting skills, and reach goals like completing school and finding employment. Evaluation showed consistent benefits for low-income mothers and their children through the child’s fourth year of life in women’s prenatal health (especially use of cigarettes), injuries to children, rates of subsequent pregnancy among mothers, and use of welfare. www.nursefamilypartnership.org

**BEST PRACTICES FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION**

**Child Find (Part C, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA))**
Child Find is designed to locate, identify, and refer as early as possible young children with disabilities or conditions associated with delays in their development. Baseline data shows that early intervention services increase families’ capacity to enhance their children’s development. Data will be collected in 2003-04 regarding the program’s impact on children’s functional abilities. www.childfindidea.org

**Asking Parents About Concerns for Their Children’s Development**
Several studies show that parents are usually reliable and accurate in noticing developmental problems in their children. The use of a checklist or questionnaire can help to remind and guide physicians in asking about parents’ concerns. If needed, the physician can then follow up with a more formal and culturally-appropriate assessment tool, such as the PEDS or Denver II. An example of this practice is found in the Guilford Child Health pediatric practice (NC) where parents complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire when their child is 6, 12, 24, 36, and 48 months old. The questionnaire is used as a teaching tool as well as a means to identify developmental problems. (Evaluation of this specific program is underway.)

www.cmwf.org

**POSSIBILITIES**

**Increasing Access to Health Screening and Dental Services**
www.childtrends.org

**Providing Reminders and Financial Incentives for Immunizations**
www.childtrends.org

**Giving Parents Videos on Parenting Skills and Child Development**
www.childtrends.org

**Coordinating Dental Services with Other Health Services**
www.childtrends.org

**Child Health Liaison Program**
(Boulder County Public Health)

Services to improve the health status of young children can be provided through community settings, in the home, and through child care centers or family child care homes.
STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Services that help with the social and emotional needs of children and families are often integrated into early care and education settings.

BEST PRACTICES FOR LATINO CHILDREN

Dare to Be You (Colorado)
This program works with preschool-age children and their families to improve communication, problem-solving, self-esteem, and family skills. Services include: a 12-week family workshop series and semi-annual reinforcing workshop; training and support for teachers and child care providers; and training for community agency staff who work with target families. Proven results include increased parental effectiveness and satisfaction, increased appropriate parental limit setting, decreased parental child blaming and harsh punishment, and increased child development level. 
http://modelprograms.samhsa.gov

BEST PRACTICES FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION

The Incredible Years
This program brings children, parents and teachers together in a prevention strategy that has been shown to reduce child behavior problems, promote positive discipline, and improve school performance. Components of the program include: circle time with children 2-3 times per week focusing on anger management, problem-solving, emotional competence, empathy, and developing friendships; weekly discussion groups for parents for support and skill-building activities; and training of teachers in classroom management strategies.
www.incredibleyears.com

Parent Services Project
This program integrates family support services into child care settings. Parents work side by side with staff in the child care center to shape services and initiate activities through which they gain support, skills, and confidence. A longitudinal study to examine outcomes in a Delaware Parent Services Project program called FACET found that participants increased their use of family and community resources, parents’ isolation decreased, family adaptability and cohesion increased, parents’ leadership and decision-making skills increased, and child care center staff skills, training, and retention improved.
www.parentservices.org

Parent Education to Enhance Parent-Child Interactions.
Successful interventions in this area include discussions with mothers during well-child medical visits to encourage sensitive and responsive interaction with infants, and providing videotapes of effective communication. Positive outcomes include more favorable interaction and communication with infants.  

POSSIBILITIES

Using Federal Programs as a Springboard for Other Services
An example of a program that uses this strategy is the Family Strengthening Partnership in Doña Ana County, NM, which uses the existing relationship between parents and the WIC program to promote parenting education among low-income families with young children. WIC staff are trained on child development and parenting techniques. www.nccp.org

Mental Health Consultation in Child Care Settings.
In this approach, mental health professionals work in the child care setting to provide services to children and families and training to child care staff on children’s behavioral and emotional concerns. Examples are the Mental Health Center of Boulder County’s Kids Connect program and similar programs in Cleveland, San Francisco, and Westchester County, NY.
www.nccp.org

Parent Education to Enhance Parent-Child Interactions.
Successful interventions in this area include discussions with mothers during well-child medical visits to encourage sensitive and responsive interaction with infants, and providing videotapes of effective communication. Positive outcomes include more favorable interaction and communication with infants.  

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BEST PRACTICES FOR
LATINO CHILDREN

PARA LOS NIÑOS EARLY LITERACY PROJECT
This program provides multiple opportunities for Spanish-speaking 4-year-old children to engage in reading and writing activities at the child care center, at home, and in the community. The focus is on creating environments that promote literacy. Children who participated in the project as four-year-olds scored, on average, at or above grade level for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade according to standardized measures of early literacy. www.paralosninos.org

ENCOURAGING READING THROUGH PEDIATRIC SETTINGS
Through these programs, physicians and other health care staff encourage parents and children to engage in reading activities by providing age-appropriate books, written information on how children of different ages respond to reading activities, and personal guidance in reading with children. The most common of these programs is Reach Out and Read. Evaluation indicates that parents participating in these programs are more likely to read books with their children at least three times a week, to report that reading books was one of their three most favorite things to do with their child, and to have a greater number of children’s books at home. www.reachoutandread.org

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
Issues of language are especially critical for young Latino children in preschool or child care settings.

BEST PRACTICES FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION

TEACHING AWARENESS of words and letter sounds during shared reading time (as opposed to the “whole language” approach, by which children are taught to focus on the meaning and context of the text in learning to read). www.childtrends.org

ENCOURAGING SHARED BOOK-READING between parents and children through a variety of settings, including providing books and encouraging use of the library. www.childtrends.org

WATCHING EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION, such as Sesame Street and other programs that stress letters, numbers, and vocabulary. The impact of these programs for 2-year-olds includes improvements in school readiness, letter and number skills, and vocabulary. www.childtrends.org

POSSIBILITIES

PARENT AND CHILD TOGETHER (HOLYOKE, CO)
This example of a two-generation literacy program uses hands-on methods to allow parents and children to learn from each other and opens communication within the family. Various methods are used to convey English lessons, allowing even those with very limited English to participate. Field trips and special service providers help to make participants more comfortable using services of the school and community.

PROVIDING RICH LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES in child care settings through use of “non-immediate” talk, which leads children to talk about events or things that are not observable and therefore must be described through language. www.ccf.edc.org
**BEST PRACTICES FOR LATINO CHILDREN**

**SER Child Development Center (Dallas, TX)**
This preschool program is a model of a bilingual and multicultural child development program that has been proven to guide and prepare children for success in primary and secondary education. The center provides certified teachers and on-site, in-depth training, parent-teacher conferences, screening for developmental delays, an immunization clinic, field trips, a nutrition program, vision and hearing screening, and senior volunteers.

**BEST PRACTICES FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION**

**Family Literacy Programs**
These programs bring parents and children into the learning environment together. They combine adult education (basic education, life skills, workplace skills, English as a Second Language, etc.), children’s education, interactive parent and child literacy activities, and time for parents to learn about and discuss child development and learning. As a result of participating in family literacy programs, parents pursued additional education, became employed, and advanced in literacy. Participating children show increased advancement in several aspects of school readiness. www.famlit.org

**POSSIBILITIES**

**Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)**
This 2-year home-visiting program is designed to help parents with limited formal education prepare their 4- and 5-year-old children for school. Home visitors are usually paraprofessionals who live in the same neighborhood as the parents they visit. Parents and home visitors attend group meetings led by professional coordinators. The program focuses on activities to be done in the home with parents and children that promote literacy, encourage quality parent-child verbal interaction, and help parents help their children learn. www.hippyusa.org

**STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS**
This was a key need identified by Boulder County families, child care providers, and community agency representatives.

**POSSIBILITIES**

**El Comienzo (CA)**
This program recruits, trains, and provides support and technical assistance to Spanish-speaking family child care providers (home-based) in communities throughout California.

**National Latino Research Center’s Head Start Cultural Competency Program (San Diego County, CA)**
To promote and increase the cultural awareness and sensitivity of local Head Start teachers, the NLRC provides translation, interpretation, needs assessment, curricula development, academic counseling, course instruction, and program evaluation services. www.csusm.edu/nlrc

**Distribute Educational Materials** on culturally and linguistically appropriate practice to early childhood programs and professionals. Sample materials can be found through the Education Development Center’s Improving Access and Opportunities for Latinos in Early Childhood initiative. www.ccf.edc.org

## STRATEGIES SPECIFIC TO INFORMAL CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Little, if any, research has been done on the effectiveness of strategies to assist informal child care providers in improving the school readiness of the children in their care.

### POSSIBILITIES

#### CHILD CARE PROVIDER NETWORKS

A sample network is Educare (Kansas City, MO), which employs a respectful approach in providing training and resources to child care providers by meeting in local neighborhoods, using word of mouth to build the network, and basing training and resources on needs identified by the participants themselves. [www2.kclinc.org](http://www2.kclinc.org) A second example is the Foundation Center’s Family Day Care Effort (CA), which used a network approach to linking family child care providers to comprehensive services, Montessori training and resources, and support. [13 www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)

#### USE OF READER-FRIENDLY NEWSLETTERS

To provide tips on safety, child development, and learning activities to in-home relative caregivers. An example is “Child Care Chatter” distributed by the Child Care Resource Center in Cambridge, MA. [www.cccrinc.org](http://www.cccrinc.org)

#### SUPPORT GROUPS

[14 www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)

#### EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS AND WRITTEN MATERIALS

[www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)

## STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ACCESS BY REDUCING COST

Many Boulder County families indicated that the cost of formal child care is a barrier to using licensed child care centers, preschools, and family child care homes.

### POSSIBILITIES

#### PROVIDE PARENTS WITH SUBSIDIES

To pay part or all of the cost of child care or preschool services.

#### IMPLEMENT SLIDING FEE SCALES

In child care or preschool settings.

#### INFORM PARENTS ABOUT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

For early care and education available in the community.

#### ENCOURAGE USE OF TAX CREDITS

Available to individuals and businesses that contribute to early care and education programs.
Do examples of best practices for school readiness exist in Boulder County? What local programs could be used as foundations on which to build best practices for Latino children? The lists below include programs on-going in Boulder County that address the four areas of school readiness. By reviewing the inventory of programs already existing within the county, we can identify areas where additional investment of resources might make a difference in the school readiness of Latino children. Comparing the lists helps to point out where services could be enhanced through sharing of resources, expertise, or earned trust of Latino families.

While the lists are not all-inclusive, they include the primary community agencies that provide relevant services to Boulder County families with young children in the fall of 2003. For the most part, the programs are trying to serve Latino families through hiring of bicultural or bilingual staff, recruiting bicultural or bilingual volunteers, providing interpreters, translating written program materials, and other means. However, the degree to which programs are culturally competent and have won the trust of Latino clients varies widely, for reasons discussed in this report. Most programs are able to serve only a limited number of families or individuals. Many have eligibility requirements or cost that limit access for certain Latino families. Some services may end after a period of time due to a loss of funding or other reasons.

Programs serving young children in Boulder County benefit from the financial support of a range of local, state, and national sources. Foundations and private investors, such as Social Venture Partners Boulder County, the Community Foundation Serving Boulder County, Foothills United Way, the Daniels Fund, the Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation, the Rose Community Foundation, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, are generous supporters of local early care and education programs. Other programs are supported by government sources including Boulder County, City of Boulder, City of Longmont, State of Colorado, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Contact information for most programs listed below can be found in The Parent’s Directory to Boulder County, a guide to local services that is available through the Parenting Place (303-449-0177) and Boulder County Public Health (303-441-1100). The directory is available in English and Spanish.

**Comprehensive School Readiness**
- Boulder County Head Start (covers Boulder Valley School District).
- Longmont Children’s Council (Head Start for Longmont).
- A few private or nonprofit preschools, child care centers and family child care homes in Boulder County can be considered culturally competent and of high quality.
- Colorado School Readiness Program (through the Early Care and Education Council of Boulder County): Technical assistance, resources, and health screenings to assist selected child care centers and family child care homes move toward quality services.

**Health**
- Community health centers: People’s Clinic in Boulder, Clinica Campesina in Lafayette, Salud Family Health Center in Longmont, and Columbine Health Center in Nederland.
- Developmental screening programs: Child Find (ages 0-5, St. Vrain Valley School District), Child Find and Child Find Español (ages 0-5, Boulder Valley School District). Support, coordination, advocacy, and cultural mediators for families whose children are served by Child Find are provided by Kids Connections.
- Dental care: Dental Aid clinics in Boulder, Lafayette, and Longmont.
- Child Health Liaison Program (through Boulder County Public Health): Promotes health and safety practices, provides health education for families and staff, and arranges health, dental, and developmental screening for children in selected child care centers.
- Nurse Family Partnership (through Boulder County Public Health): Nurse home visits for first-time parents over a 2-1/2 year period, beginning during pregnancy.
- Children with Special Needs Program (through Boulder County Public Health): Information, referral and specialized nursing services for families with children with special health care needs (ages birth through 20).
- EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program, through Boulder County Public Health): Provides early identification and treatment of medical, dental, vision, hearing, mental health, and developmental problems for children ages birth-20 who are on Medicaid.
Community Infant Program (through Boulder County Public Health and the Mental Health Center of Boulder County): In-home services by nurses and mental health therapists for high-risk families to promote healthy attachments between parents and infants. Circulo de la Vida Familiar is the bilingual/bicultural component of this service.

WIC (Supplemental Food and Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, through Boulder County Public Health): Nutrition and breastfeeding education, growth check-ups, and vouchers for nutritious food for low-income pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and children under age 5.

GENESIS (through Boulder County Public Health): Promotes healthy parenting practices among teen parents through social work intervention and health education.

Bright Beginnings: Home visits to parents of newborns to provide information on health, safety, community resources, and early brain development.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Parenting Place: Support groups and play groups for families, including new immigrant parents and those who are more acculturated.

St. Vrain Valley Parenting Center: Parent support/play groups, including a group in Spanish.

Kids Connect (through the Mental Health Center of Boulder County): Mental health consultation services for child care centers; links family child care homes to services through participating centers; provides health and developmental screenings.

Los Padres: Support and training for Latino fathers of young children.

Becoming a Love and Logic Parent: Parenting skills training, including courses presented in Spanish.

Exceptional Families: Support group for parents of special needs children.

Child and Family Services (through the Mental Health Center of Boulder County): Individual and family counseling, including in Spanish.

Families and Schools Together (FAST): 10-week social and educational program for parents and children to increase parents’ involvement in children’s elementary education.

Parent Leadership Training Program (through Boulder County Community Action Programs): Helps parents gain the skills needed to become more involved in preschool and elementary schools.

The Incredible Years: Program for prevention of behavioral problems based in child care centers, with activities geared toward children ages 3-8, their parents, and teachers.

Parents as Teachers (through Boulder Housing Partners): Parent education and family support program serving families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten, designed to enhance child development and school achievement.
**Language Development**

- Bilingual child care or preschool services are available through a small number of family child care homes and child care centers in Boulder County.
- Library services: Boulder, Lafayette, and Longmont libraries have Spanish language materials for children and adults. The Boulder and Lafayette libraries hold bilingual or Spanish story hours and English conversation classes for adults whose first language is not English. The Boulder Library offers a Community Cultural Outreach Program to assist with city services and immigration issues. The Lafayette and Longmont libraries have learning software in Spanish on computers.
- Reading programs in health care settings: A Reach Out and Read-type program is available through People’s Clinic in Boulder and Clinica Campesina in Lafayette.
- Moving On (through Bright Beginnings): Home visit to parents of 1-year-olds to provide information and tools for language development.

**Cognitive Skills**

- Family Literacy Program (through Boulder Valley School District): Home visits, training in ESL and parenting skills for parents, literacy activities for children, and parent-child activities.
- Educare Colorado: Technical assistance to family child care providers to improve quality of care.
- Some Boulder County child care centers are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which emphasizes developmentally-appropriate practice.
- Some Boulder County family child care homes are accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care, which emphasizes developmentally-appropriate practice.

**Access-Cost**

- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP): Child care subsidies for families with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level.
- Child Care Certificate Program (covering City of Boulder and City of Longmont residents): Supplements fees to child care providers for children receiving CCCAP; provides child care subsidies for low-income families who are not eligible for CCCAP (Boulder only).
- Sliding fee payment scales are available through a number of child care centers and family child care homes in Boulder County.
- Children’s Services (through City of Boulder Children, Youth, and Families Division): Resource and referral services for families in need of child care.

**Access-Cultural Competence**

- A few child care centers and family child care homes provide bilingual and/or bicultural services.
- Child care pre-licensing training in Spanish (through City of Boulder Children, Youth and Families Division): Training, support, and resources for Spanish-speaking persons interested in becoming licensed child care providers.
- Diversity training: Annual series through New Horizons Preschool; other training sessions offered periodically in the community.

**Services for Informal Providers**

- First aid and CPR classes offered in Spanish through Heart Smart.
- On-line training in early care and education topics offered on-line in Spanish through various sources.

**Basic Services and Advocacy**

- El Centro Amistad (Boulder): Information and referral, support, and advocacy services for Latino families.
- Sister Carmen Center (Lafayette): Food bank and other emergency assistance.
- Emergency Family Assistance Association (Boulder and Lafayette): Food, shelter, transportation, furniture, prescriptions, and rent assistance for families in crisis.
- OUR Center (Longmont): Assists with households in crisis that are unable to meet basic needs, including a food bank.
- El Comité (Longmont): Information, referral, and advocacy on legal, immigration, and other issues.
- City of Longmont Community Relations: Assists Longmont residents in accessing community resources and services and works to promote cultural sensitivity throughout the community.
- St. Vrain Valley Latino Coalition (Longmont): Connects families with community services.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The ALMAR research report presents the following recommendations for action to promote school readiness of Latino children. The recommendations are organized according to the major themes that emerged from the literature review of best practices and focus groups with Boulder County families, child care providers, and agencies.

POVERTY, TRUST AND COMMUNICATION FACTORS

- **Develop partnerships** involving families, child care providers, and community agencies that focus on building bridging strategies that deal with the question, “How can I/we help in preparing the child for school?”

- **Build trust** (confianza) between/among child care and service providers and the broader community: The use of an asset-based approach should be adopted as the cornerstone for building the relationships necessary to utilize the gifts bestowed upon the community. Inventorying the existent assets in the community can be an effective strategy for building relationships.

- **Develop cultural brokers**: Parents, families and agencies would benefit from the development of a program wherein cultural brokers could create linkages between and among the entities involved. The purpose of the cultural brokers would be to outreach to communities, provide information, initiate communication and provide linkages between the families and the service providers. They could assist families in how to navigate the many systems that are available for consumption.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL FACTORS

- **Analyze language policy issues**. Inventory the linguistic practices and policies within community and early child care agencies that serve the immigrant Latino and to the extent feasible, encourage the development of practices and policies that can meet the needs of this population.

- **Provide cultural competency training**. Provide ongoing cultural competency training for community service agencies, educational and social service providers, and child care providers.

- **Conduct community outreach**. Celebrate all cultures within the community. Coordinate cultural awareness dialogue between/among communities and service providers.

- **Hire bilingual/bicultural professional staff**. Encourage community agencies and child care agencies to recruit and retain bilingual/bicultural staff at all levels of agencies’ staff. Where necessary, provide significant additional compensation for bilingual ability.

- **Hire interpreters**. Establish minimum standards for interpreter training, competency, and other continuing education efforts. Make a concerted effort to increase and foster appropriate training relative to the services being offered through national conferences, information clearinghouses, technical assistance and start-up grants. Provide courses designed to train providers to work with interpreters. Encourage the use of trained interpreters and reimburse them for their services.

- **Offer language skills training for existing staff**. Support the development of bilingual skills for all staff members at community and child care agencies serving immigrant Latino families. Offer Spanish classes as part of child care licensing. Establish clear goals and realistic expectations for Spanish language courses, including idioms.

- **Develop English as a Second Language classes**. Increase opportunities for Latino families to learn English.

- **Create a community phone-based interpreter network**. In partnership with community, medical and child care agencies, establish a network of phone-based interpreters that can assist in providing translation services for monolingual Spanish-speaking Latino families.
Offer written translator services. Develop a resource and referral-type of system that assists community and child care agencies with Spanish language written materials such as intake forms, consent forms and educational materials.

**Communication Between Service Providers and Families**

- Develop Spanish language materials. Provide materials in the Spanish language to families.
- Develop Systems 101 classes. Develop training programs that provide families with skills on how to navigate the many systems that are available in Boulder County. These classes would be in Spanish and provide description of services, eligibility criteria, service provider location and transportation information.

**Communication Between Parents and Teachers**

- Establish parent-teacher activities. Create group dynamics to strengthen the communication between parents and teachers.
- Train-the-trainer. Develop a “training the trainers” model wherein teachers can learn how to work with the parents. This mentor model should include training teachers to learn from parents.

**Language Development and Emergent Literacy**

- Library outreach. Develop a Library Outreach Program where families and children are encouraged to visit the library. Provide books in Spanish.
- Home visitation programs. Develop a home visitation program on family literacy and child health.
- Intergenerational family literacy programs. Establish family literacy programs within the three communities that emphasize grandparent, parent and child literacy.
- Train parents on literacy. Train parents with limited English, stressing reading books or sharing oral history so that a literate environment is created in the home.

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**To supplement the recommendations from the research report, the Early Care and Education Council of Boulder County offers the following recommendations for implementation of programs and policies resulting from this study:**

- Identify a core planning/coordinating group with responsibility for translating the recommendations into action steps; fund and support staffing for this group; involve the Latino community in every aspect of the planning and implementation.
- Ensure that issues of cultural competence, trust, and partnership with the Latino community are addressed prior to developing new programs or enacting new policies.
- Approach new child development services from a starting point of families’ needs and life experience.
- Examine existing community programs within each of the domains of school readiness to identify cultural/linguistic capabilities, gaps, overlap, and possible efficiencies and synergies.
- Identify and establish relationships with unlicensed child care providers in the Latino community for the purpose of assessing their needs and increasing their access to school readiness resources.
- Facilitate discussion and cooperation between preschool/child care providers and elementary school personnel.
- Develop supports and incentives for Latinos to enter the early care and education profession.
- Assess the need for further research on issues raised through this study, such as utilization of early care and education programs by local Latino families and the needs of informal child care providers.
- Identify indicators of school readiness for children and for community institutions; develop an evaluation plan to measure the impact of current and planned programs and policies relative to the indicators.
- Coordinate local early care and education system and policy development with ongoing national, state, and professional efforts.

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**CONCLUSION**

Boulder County’s growing Latino population brings important cultural, social, and economic assets to our communities. The Knight Foundation and its local Community Advisory Committee are committed to nurturing these assets into the future by ensuring that Latino children growing up in Boulder County are prepared to enter school.

As an important first step in this process, they have supported this research study which explores best practices for school readiness of Latino children, the needs and preferences of Latino parents regarding early care and education for their young children, and the range of community programs that serve families with young children in Boulder County.

This report seeks to bring these factors together as a foundation for community action to promote school readiness for Latino children. The recommendations presented here are the beginning of an action plan for adapting existing community programs or developing new services that will offer Latino families opportunities and options for developing a range of knowledge and skills in their children. The hope is that a meaningful action plan will stimulate further investment of resources in proven or promising strategies for preparing Latino children to enter school.

The Early Care and Education Council of Boulder County welcomes partnerships with families, early care and education providers, community agencies, and local leaders in giving all children an equal opportunity to learn and grow.
SOURCES


2. Latino Task Force of Boulder County. 2001 Community Assessment.


About the Early Care and Education Council of Boulder County

The Early Care and Education Council of Boulder County is a community planning and coordinating body for local early care and education services. Its members are nonprofit organizations, government agencies, child care and preschool providers, and interested individuals who are working together to improve the system of child care and early education for Boulder County families. For more information on the ECE Council, call (303) 441-1913, or visit the Council’s website at www.bouldercountyece.org.

About the Knight Foundation Community Partners Program

The Knight Community Partners Program aims to improve the quality of life in 26 U.S. communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. For more information on the Knight Foundation Community Partners Program in Boulder County, visit the Foundation’s website at www.knightfdn.org.

As part of its commitment to its 26 communities, the Knight Foundation works with local community foundations to build the long-term funding capacity in an area. Locally, this partner is the Community Foundation Serving Boulder County. To learn more about the Community Foundation, see the Foundation’s website at www.commfound.org.

How to obtain copies of The Boulder County Child Care and Early Education Needs Assessment of Latino Families (prepared by the ALMAR Development Group)

English and Spanish versions of the Executive Summary of the ALMAR research report can be downloaded from the ECE Council website at www.bouldercountyece.org.

Printed copies of the Executive Summary and full Final Report can be obtained by calling the ECE Council at (303) 441-1913.
SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

ELEMENTS OF BEST PRACTICE FOR SCHOOL READINESS OF LATINO CHILDREN

■ View culture as an asset rather than as a problem.
■ Stress belonging to family, group and community, and emphasize group learning.
■ Maintain strong bonds between home and the care setting.
■ Have a clear language policy.
■ Maintain high quality of care and teaching, including respect for language and culture.

NEEDS AND PREFERENCES OF FAMILIES, CHILD CARE PROVIDERS, AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES IN BOULDER COUNTY

■ Latino children should maintain culture and language while becoming ready for bilingual school situations.
■ Trust is an issue for parents as they learn to deal with licensed child care facilities.
■ Cost, discrimination, and difficulty in using the child care system are barriers for Latino parents.
■ Most formal child care providers lack the skills and tools for providing bilingual/bicultural care and learning.
■ Families with children in child care have many stresses beyond the education of their children. Basic needs must be met before parents can focus on school readiness.
■ Informal child care providers are preferred because they are known and trusted, have experience with children, and can offer shared language and culture.
■ Informal child care providers are open to learning about child development and other school readiness issues.

EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE FOR SCHOOL READINESS

■ There are several examples of programs that have undergone careful research to show that they are effective in helping Latino children be prepared to enter school.
■ Many other programs have been proven successful for promoting school readiness in children in the general population; these programs may be effective for Latino children if modified to meet culture and language needs.
■ Less research has been done on strategies to support informal (unlicensed) child care providers, improve cultural competence in community settings, and increase families’ access to early care and education services by reducing cost, although sample programs in each of those areas have been identified.

COMMUNITY ASSETS FOR SCHOOL READINESS IN BOULDER COUNTY

■ Boulder County has a wealth of programs that address the four areas of school readiness discussed in this report.
■ The programs attempt to serve Latino families through hiring of bicultural or bilingual staff, recruiting bicultural or bilingual volunteers, providing interpreters, and translating written program materials. However, the degree to which programs are culturally competent and have won the trust of Latino families varies widely.
■ Families’ access to programs may be limited by the number of families or children able to be served, eligibility requirements, or unstable program funding.

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