



READY FOR SCHOOL, AHEAD FOR LIFE

Evaluation Report

.....

SUBMITTED TO:

Scholastic

SUBMITTED BY:

Education Development Center, Inc.
Center for Children & Technology

PREPARED BY:

Lauren B. Goldenberg, Ph.D.
Daniel Light, Ph.D.



TABLE *of* CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
INTRODUCTION	3
EVALUATION CONTEXT	5
METHODS	6
FINDINGS	8
CONCLUSION.....	28
REFERENCES	30

Lee y serás® is a national Latino early literacy initiative that empowers and engages families and communities to foster children's literacy development. By providing research-based, in-culture, and bilingual curricula and materials for families, childcare providers and leaders, the program's goal is to create long-term attitudinal and behavioral change in an effort to help close the education achievement gap. Created by and for the community, the initiative is a collaboration of Scholastic, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and Verizon. For more information visit www.leeyseras.net



EDC | CENTER FOR CHILDREN & TECHNOLOGY

Education Development Center, Inc. • Center for Children and Technology
96 Morton Street, 7th Floor • New York, NY 10014-3378
Phone: 212.807.4200 • Fax: 212.633.8804 • TTY: 212.807.4284 • www.edc.org/CCT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from an evaluation of *Lee y serás (Read and You Will Be)*, an early literacy initiative developed and funded by Scholastic that was implemented by the Osceola County School District in Florida. *Lee y serás* (www.leeyseras.net)—a collaborative effort of Scholastic, the Verizon Foundation, and the National Council of La Raza—offers workshops to support early literacy in the Latino community. Workshops for parents (Family Conversations) and PreK instructors, and for family home day care and child care providers (Child Care Provider Conversations) offer strategies for fostering Latino children’s early literacy in Spanish and English. Through the celebration of Latino and Latin American cultures, *Lee y serás* helps participants recognize how their traditions, language, and everyday activities boost the language and literacy skills their children require to become proficient speakers and readers—ready for success in school.

The goal of the evaluation, conducted by Education Development Center, Inc.’s Center for Children and Technology (EDC), was to examine changes in parents’, providers’, and PreK instructors’ attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors—resulting from participation in *Lee y serás*. EDC employed various methods to collect data, including pre- and post-program parent and family surveys, session-by-session feedback forms, observations, and interviews. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted.

The study found that participating in the workshops had several positive outcomes for parents, PreK instructors, and child care providers. For many parents, *Lee y serás* gave them a foundational understanding of the importance of providing oral language activities: pointing out environmental print; reciting rhymes and

singing songs; and reading to their children. For other parents, participation reinforced their existing behaviors; helping them refine the pre-literacy and reading strategies they already used. Because the target audience for the Family Conversations workshops was parents of children participating in a voluntary PreK program, there was a pre-existing emphasis on reading. The fact that the workshops took place in the children’s schools enhanced the parents’ feelings of connectedness to the school and classroom. This was confirmed by the PreK instructors, who reported that the introduction of Latino cultures and Spanish language in their classrooms had a noticeable impact on their relationships with Spanish-speaking parents. Other positive outcomes for parents included the following:

- ▶ *Gaining a new understanding of parenting.* Participants formed a more comprehensive view of their roles as parents. They learned the importance of routines and modeling. They learned that they, too, have the power to act as teachers of their children.
- ▶ *Discovering that learning happens everywhere, all the time.* Parents learned that they could utilize the resources available in their environments and immediate surroundings—whether in their kitchen or in their community—as learning tools to support them in this new role (as teachers). They also discovered that learning can be fun.
- ▶ *Sharing with other parents.* Participants learned from the group discussions that other parents face similar challenges, and they acquired strategies and solutions for addressing those challenges.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moreover, many participants expressed how much they learned from and appreciated being in a class with parents from different countries and cultural backgrounds.

- ▶ *Learning appropriate strategies for different literacy levels.* Even though parents' literacy levels varied, all learned strategies and activities they believed they could implement with their children.

Similarly, child care providers gained an understanding of the importance of the “building blocks of literacy”—oral language, phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, and concepts of print—and how their daily routines with their children could be enhanced to more purposefully incorporate pre-literacy and literacy activities. Participating in *Lee y serás* gave PreK instructors and providers confidence in using the children's first language—Spanish—to promote and enrich children's literacy. Their newfound understanding of the importance of language and culture

also led to improved communication with the parents.

In sum, *Lee y serás* shifted participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about children's early literacy development and their own roles in supporting it. The outcomes of this evaluation indicate that *Lee y serás* holds enormous potential for both participants and their children.

.....

For many parents, Lee y serás gave them a foundational understanding of the importance of providing oral language activities: pointing out environmental print; reciting rhymes and singing songs; and reading to their children.

.....

INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings from an evaluation of the Latino early literacy initiative *Lee y serás*, conducted by Education Development Center, Inc.'s Center for Children and Technology (EDC). The evaluation focuses on an implementation of *Lee y serás* by the school district in Osceola County, Florida. The goal of the evaluation was to determine what changes occurred in the attitudes, knowledge, and behavior of *Lee y serás* participants.

Lee y serás (www.leeyseras.net) was developed by Scholastic and is a collaboration between Scholastic, the Verizon Foundation, and the National Council of La Raza. *Lee y serás* offers two workshops to support early literacy in the Latino community. A primary offering is the *Lee y serás* Family Conversations workshop, a series of six sessions for Latino families. A central aim of this workshop is to support parents and families in fostering their children's early literacy. A second offering is the *Lee y serás* Child Care Provider Conversations—six sessions to help family home day care providers or PreK instructors who work with Latino children in supporting children's early literacy. Another component, which is not included in this evaluation, is the *Lee y serás* Literacy Institute for Leaders, a two-day workshop to engage community leaders in planning how to more effectively support early literacy.

Scholastic partnered with the county education department to integrate *Lee y serás* into Osceola County's efforts to improve the school readiness of incoming kindergartners and to support their long-term academic success. The county offers the program to the parents of children enrolled in its PreK programs, to its school-based PreK instructors, and to the providers participating in a county program to improve the quality of private child care for low-income parents.

EDC's goal was to examine changes in parents', providers', and PreK instructors' attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors resulting from participation in the workshop. The evaluation builds on previous work by EDC for Scholastic (Goldenberg, Light, Heinze, & Delgado, 2008) and seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. After participating in the workshop, what changes occur in parents' perceptions and behaviors regarding their role in supporting their young children's literacy?

- a. Do parents learn about more strategies to support early literacy (in any language)?
- b. Do parents understand the importance of native language and culture in children's literacy development?
- c. Do parents report engaging in behaviors that support early literacy, such as talking about everyday activities, singing, or rhyming?

2. How did instructors' and providers' understanding of how to support early literacy among children from Spanish-speaking homes change after participating in the workshop?

- a. What changes in understanding do instructors and providers report?
- b. Do the environments created by providers now include more resources and activities that support early literacy?

3. After participating in the workshop, does the collaboration between parents and instructors or providers change, and if so, how?

This report includes a description of the evaluation context, an explanation of the methods employed to conduct the evaluation, and the evaluation findings,

INTRODUCTION

which are organized around the three research questions. Descriptive portraits of participating parents and providers are interspersed to illustrate key results. The report concludes with some recommendations and a synthesis of the findings and outcomes.

Research shows that early literacy is a strong predictor of reading achievement later in school (Farran, Aydogan, Kang, & Lipsey, 2005). Latino students lag behind their non-Latino peers in reading achievement in both elementary school and high school (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, Haycock & Huang, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 1999); the situation is especially dire for those students who come from non-English speaking homes (Fry, 2007). In the face of these challenges, *Lee y serás* provides an important opportunity.

Studies suggests that an important strategy in laying the foundation for successfully learning to read and for preventing reading difficulties is for children to enter school with adequate literacy-related knowledge and skills in at least one language (Snow & Burns, 1998; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). It is important for children to develop these skills even if they first develop them in a language other than English. Developing oral language and being exposed to print are two key components of readiness to read.

All families have strengths they can draw on to foster children's literacy (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007; Moll, Amanti, Nett, & Gonzalez, 2002). *Lee y serás* is intended to help Latino families and their communities build on these strengths

and to help participants understand that what they are already doing at home—such as telling stories, listening to music, and singing songs together—can contribute to their children's language and literacy development. Participants also learn strategies they can use to further support that development, whether the language spoken at home is Spanish or English.

Latino cultures offer rich histories and strengths families can draw on. Through the celebration of the multiple facets of Latino cultures, the creators of *Lee y serás* hope that participants will recognize how their traditions, language, and everyday activities encourage the language and literacy skills required for their children to become proficient speakers and readers.

.....

Lee y serás is intended to help Latino families and their communities build on these strengths and to help participants understand that what they are already doing at home—such as telling stories, listening to music, and singing songs together—can contribute to their children's language and literacy development.

.....

EVALUATION CONTEXT

The evaluation focused on the implementation of *Lee y serás* in Osceola County, Florida in the 2008-2009 school year. *Lee y serás* is part of a multi-year initiative of the school district to help address the achievement gap for Hispanic children by increasing family involvement. The initiative encompasses workshops for child care providers, PreK instructors, and parents of students in the district's Voluntary PreK (VPK) programs.

The Osceola County School District is a large education system serving a diverse population of students. The county, just south of Orlando, is home to several major tourist attractions and has a substantial leisure and service economy that brings many immigrant families into the area for work. The county also has large areas that remain rural and semi-rural. Overall, half of the county's students are Hispanic; however, Hispanic students in the target elementary schools range from 63% to 74% of the total population.¹

Early childhood education in the county is coordinated by the Early Learning Coalition, which is responsible for the county's early childhood and child care programs. The Early Learning Coalition partners with Community Coordinated Care for Children, an organization known as the 4 C's, to ensure high quality early childhood education and child care programs, with the goal of providing comprehensive services to children from birth to age 5 to assure their readiness to enter kindergarten. The county offers a free pre-kindergarten program to all students known as Voluntary Pre-K or VPK.

The facilitator of *Lee y serás* for parents and PreK instructors is an experienced early childhood educator and former lead PreK instructor. She conducted five workshops for parents in late 2008 and early 2009, which took place in private and public PreK settings while children were in school. The facilitator offered a Spanish-language and an English-language workshop in each public PreK, and a Spanish-language workshop in the private PreK. She worked with PreK instructors in the schools to recruit parents for the workshops and, as part of recruitment efforts, conducted a one-session mini-workshop for families. She also conducted an abridged workshop for PreK instructors on two Saturdays in fall 2009. Nine PreK instructors were trained, all of whom are Latina and speak at least basic English. EDC did not observe these trainings but did interview the PreK instructors about the program at the end of the school year.

The facilitator of *Lee y serás* for child care providers is also an experienced early childhood educator and had worked with providers in the county prior to *Lee y serás*. She conducted the workshop over a six-week span on three Saturday mornings and three Thursday evenings. The workshop was well-attended. Twenty providers completed the sessions, the majority of whom were Spanish-speaking (three participants spoke only English, and one participant's native language was Portuguese). The sessions were conducted primarily in Spanish and partly in English; the facilitator and a few bilingual participants translated for the few monolingual English participants.

¹Demographic data in this section are taken from the project proposal, www.osceola.k12.fl.us; www.elcosceola.org and www.4cflorida.org/Central-Florida.aspx

METHODS

Evaluators employed a variety of methods to collect data, including pre- and post-program parent and family surveys, session-by-session feedback forms, observations, and interviews. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted.

Building on their previous work with Scholastic, EDC researchers developed a parent survey in English and Spanish, a site visit guide and checklist for providers, and interview protocols for PreK instructors, providers, and parents. Researchers also used the feedback forms the facilitator collected after each parent workshop. Data sources are summarized in Table 1.

A total of 33 parents in the five workshops completed pre-workshop surveys, and 24 completed post-workshop surveys, resulting in 23 matched pre- and post-workshop surveys. Researchers used the data from the matched surveys for the evaluation.

The survey asked about the frequency of parents' early literacy practices, their interactions at their children's school, their beliefs about their role as parents and what their children needed to know in order to be ready for

kindergarten. Researchers conducted interviews with four parents several months after the workshop ended, in order to understand some of the survey results and to find out which among the activities that parents had learned in the workshop they continued to implement at home.

Researchers also visited five providers prior to their participation in the workshop. During these visits, researchers interviewed the providers and observed the centers' environment for literacy practices, such as labeling and books.

Researchers interviewed the Child Care Provider Conversations facilitator several times, to find out how she was implementing the workshops. These interviews helped shape the post-workshop interview protocol.

Finally, researchers interviewed PreK instructors who participated in the two-day abridged workshop series in the fall.

Note: Any interview quotes used in this report are taken from field notes and should be considered paraphrases.

TABLE I: DATA SOURCES

Research questions	Data sources	Participants
RQ 1: Parents and early literacy	Pre- and post-workshop surveys Session feedback forms Observation Parent interviews	All parent participants All parent participants Parents who attended informational events Four parents
RQ 2: PreK instructors/ child care providers and early literacy	Pre-workshop site visits and interviews Post-workshop interviews Observation of first workshop session Facilitator interviews conducted pre-workshop, at workshop series midpoint, and post-workshop	Five providers Two PreK instructors, three providers All participants Facilitator
RQ 3: Parent involvement	Pre- and post-workshop surveys Session feedback forms Parent interviews Post-workshop interviews	All parent participants All parent participants Four parents Two PreK instructors, three providers

FINDINGS

The goal of this evaluation was to investigate whether and how the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of *Lee y serás* participants changed. Analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that several shifts did indeed occur. Findings related to each research question are presented below. Interspersed among the findings are vignettes² illustrating the experiences of three parents and two providers.

Research Question 1: The Parents

After participating in the workshop, what changes occur in parents' perceptions and behaviors regarding their role in supporting their young children's literacy?

- ▶ Do parents learn about additional strategies to support early literacy (in any language)?
- ▶ Do parents understand the importance of native language and culture in children's literacy development?
- ▶ Do parents report engaging in behaviors that support early literacy, such as talking about everyday activities, singing, or rhyming?

To answer research question 1, researchers used data from pre- and post-workshop surveys, post-session feedback forms, and interviews with selected parents, collected at five *Lee y serás* Family Conversations at three locations: two public PreK settings based at elementary schools, and

one private PreK setting. Three workshops were conducted in Spanish and two in English.

Parents³ reported that they chose to participate because they wanted to be involved in their children's education, help their children do well in school, and better learn how to help them at home. They greatly enjoyed hearing the experiences of other parents and their suggestions.

The majority of parents indicated that the workshop either met or exceeded their expectations; some parents mentioned that they had no expectations going into the workshop, but they found it to be quite valuable. They especially enjoyed interacting with other parents. On the post-workshop survey and on the feedback forms completed after each session, parents reported that attending the workshop helped them learn the following:

- ▶ How to be better parents and better teachers to their children
- ▶ That being more patient with their children, and spending more time with them, helps their children learn
- ▶ The importance of routines for children's learning
- ▶ A variety of techniques and strategies to help children learn

² All names used are pseudonyms to protect participants' privacy.

³ In this report, the term "parents" is used to denote "parents and family members," since participants included step-parents and grandparents.

FINDINGS

Supporting Early Literacy: A challenge and source of anxiety for many non-English speaking parents is helping their children be prepared to do well in an English environment in school. Parents may worry that they will not be able to help support their children because they do not speak English or are not comfortable in English. The program was successful at helping parents improve their knowledge of how best to support their children's early literacy. In interviews, on the survey, and in feedback forms, both English and non-English speaking parents said that they acquired many techniques for helping their children learn through songs, rhymes, speaking, stories, and everyday activities, for example:

- ▶ Taking advantage of learning moments
- ▶ *Varias técnicas de aprendizaje como el canto, la lectura, y los juegos* [Various learning techniques, such as songs, reading, and games]
- ▶ *Aprendí como enseñar a mi hijo con las canciones* [I learned how to teach my child with songs]
- ▶ Creating books with different pictures, and trying to create a positive environment for [my son's] learning experience
- ▶ The importance of repetition of words and storytelling to broaden my child's phonological awareness

These observations are reinforced by the increases seen in parents' reports of the pre-literacy activities they engaged in with their children. Table 2 lists the average pre- and post-workshop scores for pre-literacy activities in three domains: oral language activities, activities that promote phonemic awareness, and activities related to alphabetic knowledge and concepts of print. The data are disaggregated by the primary language that parents reported using in the home. Parents reported increased activity in each area. Households that spoke Spanish saw the greater increases across all three domains, while the greatest overall gain is for activities related to alphabetic knowledge and concepts of print in English-speaking homes.

.....
The program was successful at helping parents improve their knowledge of how best to support their children's early literacy.
.....

**TABLE 2: PRE-LITERACY ACTIVITIES, AVERAGE
PRE- AND POST-SCORES
ON A SCALE OF 1 (LOW) TO 4 (HIGH)**

Oral language activities				Phonemic awareness activities			Alphabetic knowledge and print concepts		
Household language	Pre	Post	Increase	Pre	Post	Increase	Pre	Post	Increase
Spanish	3.08	3.32	.24	2.40	2.67	.27	3.47	3.70	.23
English	3.17	3.26	.09	2.60	2.69	.09	3.56	3.90	.34
Total	3.13	3.29	.16	2.51	2.68	.17	3.52	3.81	.29

Examples of oral language activities include speaking with children during everyday activities, such as cooking or cleaning; telling stories about the family and explaining the family's history or traditions; playing games with children; and talking to them about a television show or school. Oral language activities related to culture include explaining cultural or national traditions and using *dichos* (traditional sayings in Spanish, such as *el vago trabaja doble* [the lazy person works double]). Ideas and techniques that parents reported learning from the workshops include the following comments:

- ▶ *Conversar y leer con mi niña para que ella desarrolle el vocabulario* [Talking and reading with my daughter to develop vocabulary]
- ▶ *Mucha comunicación* [Lots of communication]
- ▶ *Que las historias y los cuentos ayudan más* [That histories and stories can help more]
- ▶ *A tener conversaciones juntos* [To have conversations together]

- ▶ *Lo simple que uno puede hacer una actividad para aprender de una foto* [It's simple to do a learning activity with a photo]
- ▶ *Usar fotos familiares para que aprenden nuevas palabras* [Use familiar photos for learning new words]
- ▶ Ideas for how to incorporate learning opportunities into everyday activities
- ▶ Making it fun no matter where you are at (park, store, or at home)
- ▶ Letting them talk and ask things
- ▶ Telling family stories
- ▶ The true impact of stories about our childhoods, and how they help our children now
- ▶ The importance of storytelling
- ▶ Everything I am doing at home, like cooking, can be a way to help my kids

FINDINGS

- ▶ Listening to my kids, sharing everything with them; dedicating some time to playing with them every day.
- ▶ Making everyday outings/activities/chores more interesting and educational
- ▶ Sharing chores at home for [my child] to learn more vocabulary

Examples of activities that enhance phonemic awareness are singing songs and reciting rhymes together. Although parents in English-speaking homes did not report an increase in their behaviors related to these activities, they noted on feedback forms how much they learned about songs and rhymes: “how songs can help just as much as reading,” “that you can turn just about any thing/activity into a song,” “to make up silly songs to make otherwise ‘difficult’ daily activities more exciting and fun,” and “some nursery rhymes that I can teach [my children].”

Examples of activities that foster alphabetic knowledge and awareness of concepts of print include pointing out environmental print—words and letters on signs, T-shirts, and the like—and helping a child recognize his or her name in writing. Overall, these activities saw the greatest gains in parents’ reported behaviors for both English- and Spanish-speaking households. Participants noted specific techniques they learned in the workshop, for example:

- ▶ *Aprendí que uno les puede enseñar con cosas sencillas que tenemos en casa* [I learned that one can teach with simple things that are around the house]

- ▶ *Enseñarles las letras del alfabeto con las cosas que uno tiene en casa o cuando uno va al supermercado* [You can teach them the letters of the alphabet with things you have in the house or during a visit to the supermarket]
- ▶ Practicing identifying letters, sounds, shapes, textures, numbers
- ▶ Labeling things around the house will help build his word recognition
- ▶ Showing them sounds and letters everywhere, like signs, books, and reading—real-life stories

Another important pre-literacy activity is reading together with children. Almost all participants (21 out of 23 before and 22 out of 23 after the workshop) reported that they read to their children. Interestingly, participants reported a slight increase in reading to children by the parent who didn’t attend the workshop (13 out of 21 before the workshop, and 15 out of 22 after the workshop). See Table 3 and Table 4 for details.

TABLE 3: READING TO CHILD BY PARTICIPANT,
BY REPORTED HOME LANGUAGE

Household language	YES		NO	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Spanish	9	10	1	0
English	12	12	1	0
Total	21	22	2	0

TABLE 4: READING TO CHILD BY OTHER PARENT,
BY REPORTED HOME LANGUAGE

Household language	YES		NO	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Spanish	3	5	7	4
English	10	10	1	3
Total	13	15	8	7

Among the things participants reported enjoying were making books (“*hacer un cuento para leérselo a mi hijo*” [making a story to read to my son]). Among the things they reported learning were the importance of reading, making reading part of a routine, and specific techniques for reading. Their comments included:

- ▶ *Leer con los niños* [To read with the children]
- ▶ *La lectura es muy importante* [Reading is very important]
- ▶ *Leer más* [To read more]
- ▶ *Terminar de comer y compartir un libro o un cuento* [Finish eating and (then) share a book or a story]
- ▶ How to read books, keep a routine, etc.
- ▶ How to read stories
- ▶ Doing the picture walk before reading
- ▶ The ability to make story books . . . with my child

Bibiana

Bibiana, a mother of two, was born in the Caribbean and grew up in the United States. She is bilingual (English and Spanish) and is married to a Spanish-speaker from the Caribbean; their home language is Spanish. She finished some high school in the United States.

Bibiana was born in a Spanish-speaking Caribbean country and raised in the United States. Her husband is also Spanish-speaking and from the Caribbean. Since taking the workshop, Bibiana has changed the way she interacts with her two children.

She helps her five-year-old son using techniques and materials from the workshop, and has seen improvements in his learning and literacy. As recommended by the PreK instructor, Bibiana now sits with her son before he goes to sleep every night, and practices, for 5 to 15 minutes, what he learned that day in his PreK class (colors, letters, etc.). She reports that her son used to struggle but that she now sees positive results: "*Me sentaba con él y lo practicaba y se [le] quedaba. Y eso nunca lo había hecho*" [I would sit with him and practice and he would remember. I had never done that before]. In another example, she explains that her son had had difficulties differentiating the colors orange and red. Bibiana used a set of materials she received in the course, which shows the different colors; she practiced with him and now says that "*ya lo [ha] aprendió*" [he has already learned them].

Bibiana is doing new activities not only with her five-year-old son but also with her other son, who is three. When she is in the car with her children, she points to a billboard and tells them the starting letter of a word, colors, or shapes; she reports, "*Y ahora mi hijo me los dice a mí*" [and now my son tells them to me]. She never used to bring the children to the supermarket; now she brings both of them. She shows them the products and even asks them, "*Búscame eso y eso*" [Bring me that and that].

From *Lee y serás*, Bibiana learned that making story books helps her children: "*[El curso] me ha ayudado. Y [ellos] aprenden cuando colorean*" [It has helped me. And they learn while they color]. Bibiana now stimulates their imaginations by motivating her children to invent stories. She sits with them and asks them to tell her an invented story and then to draw it. Once the children finish drawing their story, they tell her the story as if they were reading a book.

Bibiana and the PreK instructor are now interacting more frequently; the instructor provides suggestions, and Bibiana tries to implement them at home. Bibiana also asks the instructor for other ideas, besides those she learned in *Lee y serás*, so she can help her son improve.

Bibiana reports that all these new activities, plus the other information she learned—such as the importance of establishing and following through on routines—has resulted not only in better learning for her children but also a more peaceful household, since her children are more independent as a result.

FINDINGS

Language and Culture: Two other goals of *Lee y serás* are related to home language and culture. The curriculum helps make parents aware that promoting oral fluency and pre-literacy skills in any language will help their children be ready to read in English when the time comes. The curriculum, therefore, emphasizes the value of speaking Spanish to children, if Spanish is the parents' native language. The curriculum also suggests activities related to home culture and family traditions.

After participating in *Lee y serás*, parents reported that they increased their use of activities related to language and culture to support early literacy. On a scale of 1 (never), 2 (not yet), 3 (a few times), or 4 (many times), Table 5 shows that parents in both Spanish- and English-speaking homes increased the number of times they engaged in activities related to language and culture with their children, such as singing songs or doing rhymes in Spanish, telling stories about the family, and using dichos (typical sayings).

Another indicator of a shift in parental attitudes is shown in Tables 6-7. The survey asked parents what they felt it was important for their children to know before entering kindergarten. Although parents' attitudes around the importance of children expressing themselves in English did not change (Table 7), there was a slight shift in attitudes toward children expressing themselves in Spanish (Table 6); more parents from both English- and Spanish-speaking households believed this to be *somewhat or very important*.

.....

After participating in Lee y serás, parents reported that they increased their use of activities related to language and culture to support early literacy.

.....

The pattern around the perceived urgency that young children be able to read before kindergarten is slightly different. Teaching a child to read is a more complex activity than speaking and might be a source of anxiety for parents who do not read well in English. These parents may think it is important to teach their child to read but not be able to teach them. The responses on the post survey suggest that parents have begun to understand the importance of the things that they can do with their children to foster the building blocks of reading (and of rich language development) like oral language, phonemic awareness, environmental print, and reading aloud in any language.

Participants commented on their feedback forms that they enjoyed "learning a bit more about Hispanic cultures and how to incorporate them into learning experiences," adding that "[it] helps to learn family traditions."

TABLE 5: REPORTED USE OF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO LANGUAGE CULTURE, BY HOME LANGUAGE

Household language	Activities related to culture		
	Pre	Post	Increase
Spanish	2.45	2.75	.30
English	2.31	2.50	.19
Total	2.38	2.62	.24

TABLE 6: EXPRESS HIM- OR HERSELF IN SPANISH BEFORE KINDERGARTEN, BY REPORTED HOME LANGUAGE

Household language	Not important		Somewhat important		Very important	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Spanish	0	0	3	2	7	8
English	2	0	5	8	6	4
Total	2	0	8	10	13	12

TABLE 7: EXPRESS HIM- OR HERSELF IN ENGLISH BEFORE KINDERGARTEN, BY REPORTED HOME LANGUAGE

Household language	Not important		Somewhat important		Very important	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Spanish	0	0	1	1	9	9
English	0	0	0	0	13	13
Total	0	0	1	1	22	22

James

.....

James, a father of two, grew up in the Southern United States and is new to the area. The family home language is English, and he is a college graduate working in IT.

James decided to participate in the *Lee y serás* workshop series because he wanted to be more involved in his daughter's schooling. This was one of the few opportunities he found that allowed him to spend time getting to know the school better. As a new resident of the area, the workshop also allowed him to get to know other parents. His wife, a teacher taking time off to stay at home with their two-year-old daughter, was not able to attend because they did not have child care for her.

For James, the workshop reinforced things that he and his wife already did with their children, and made him think about those things more deeply. One of his favorite parts of the workshop was the books. He said, "We already have a lot of books—that's one thing we try to do, read aloud. [My daughter] would get excited, getting a new book, especially because of where it came from . . . she thought it was neat that I was at her school." He reported that he paid more attention to reading with inflection, as well as pointing out all the different parts of a book, such as the title, author, and illustrator: "It made me think a little more about parts of the book, looking more at her experience reading the book, as far as what she would get out of it." Once he started doing that, his daughter went through a phase of wanting to read every word in a book, including the biography of the author and the blurb on the back cover.

Attending the workshop made James consider not only how he read the books to his daughter, but what he was reading. Before, he thought that any book reading was beneficial, but through the workshop he realized how to better judge a book's quality - for the child's interest and the message it communicates. The workshop caused him to go through the many books his family had accumulated and purge some, such as a book about visiting a candy store. "It wasn't challenging, it wasn't helping her read," he said.

Apart from reinforcing and refining things that he and his wife already did with their children, James began doing some new pre-literacy activities as a result of the workshop, such as pointing out letters and words in the environment and reciting nursery rhymes. The workshop also reinforced the idea of the importance of routines, and gave him ideas for new routines to incorporate into his family's life. He and his wife got a calendar to use with their daughter. He reported that now she better understands the concept of days and weeks.

"Maybe we'll do things differently with our two-year-old," James said. "[The workshop] helped us . . . make a more conscious choice with our two-year-old. Other parents also made that comment: 'Gee, I wish I had done that with this child.' Others with younger kids said, 'We're starting now and doing it differently.'"

James enjoyed the opportunity to get to know other parents. A monolingual English speaker, he especially liked learning about the cultures and traditions of his Latino neighbors.

FINDINGS

Parents' Role

A major program goal of *Lee y serás* is to help parents view themselves as an important part of their children's education—to recognize their role as their children's first teacher and to be more aware of community resources that can help their children learn. *Lee y serás* appears to be successful in fulfilling this goal. On the post-workshop survey, parents stated that their outlook on how to approach their children's education changed as a result of participating in the workshop and gave specific examples of what they learned. Overall, parents thought that what they learned would affect how they'd proceed with their children's future educational endeavors, how they would interact with their younger children, and how their spouses would participate in their children's education. One parent wrote, "*Todos podemos poner de nuestra parte para enseñarles a los niños*" [Everyone can do their part to teach the children]. Another wrote, "[It was] very important to learn that teachers are also interested that parents take the initiative to teach so that their child knows the importance of education." One explicitly stated that she learned "that I am my child's first teacher."

The survey asked parents whom they considered to be their children's *first* teacher as well as their children's most important teacher. Almost all parents agreed that they were their children's first teacher, both before and after the workshop. However, post-workshop, there was an increase in the number of parents who considered themselves their children's *most important* teacher (Table 8). We disaggregated the data by household language and found that this shift occurred primarily among parents from English-speaking households (Tables 9 and 10). On feedback forms, parents noted specific things they learned, including, "I should take my kids to the library more often" and "Ways to involve other family members to help my child learn things."

.....
"*[It was] very important to learn that teachers are also interested that parents take the initiative to teach so that their child knows the importance of education.*"

—Participant

.....

**TABLE 8: FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER,
ALL HOUSEHOLDS**

	Parent		Teacher		Both	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Who do you consider your child's first teacher?	22	23	1	0	NA	NA
Who do you consider your child's most important teacher?	4	10	1	1	18	12

**TABLE 9: FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER,
SPANISH-SPEAKING HOUSEHOLDS**

	Parent		Teacher		Both	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Who do you consider your child's first teacher?	10	10	0	0	NA	NA
Who do you consider your child's most important teacher?	1	2	0	0	9	8

**TABLE 10: FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT TEACHER,
ENGLISH-SPEAKING HOUSEHOLDS**

	Parent		Teacher		Both	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Who do you consider your child's first teacher?	12	13	1	0	NA	NA
Who do you consider your child's most important teacher?	3	8	1	1	9	4

Laura

.....

Laura has one child and has lived in the United States for almost a decade. She and her husband are both from South America and finished high school there. Both parents are bilingual, and the home language is Spanish.

Laura attended the workshop with her husband, Manuel. She said that they tend to be impatient with their daughter and get frustrated when she does not learn as fast as they expect. The workshop taught them that children learn through repetition and that parents need to provide more detailed explanations, more repetition, and different types of explanations. She learned "*cómo algo tan simple, para los niños, no lo es; las cosas son más complejas*" [how something very simple is more complex for small children].

Before *Lee y serás*, Laura says, she and Manuel had constant arguments about educating and raising their daughter. The workshop provided them with opportunities and strategies for talking without arguing. They now refer to the opinion of a third party, "a professional" (the course facilitator), which helps them discuss what to do. According to Laura, "*Es bueno que una tercera persona intervenga*" [It's good to have a third person intervening].

Laura and Manuel have also changed the way they approach their homework help. In the past, when their daughter did not quickly complete a math or English activity, or did not know the correct answer right away, they both would sit with her for long periods of time until she completed the activity. From their course facilitator, they learned that four-year old children do not have long periods of concentration. Says Laura, "*Una cosa que se me quedó mucho: si en los primeros 15 minutos no aprendió nada, déjelo en paz. Tiene sentido. Antes estábamos tres horas cuando no entendía*" [Something that stuck with me: if in the first 15 minutes she did not learn anything, let it be (i.e., change activities - etc.). It makes sense. Before when she didn't understand something, we would be with her for three hours].

Although Laura's daughter has always helped Laura with baking, she is now starting to read the recipes and the ingredients by herself. Laura says that she used to do this herself but that she now lets her daughter do it alone, and Laura steps in only when needed: "*Me di cuenta que hay que dejarla crecer un poco*" [I realized that we need to let her grow a little].

FINDINGS

Research Question 2: The Instructors and Home Care Providers

How did instructors' and providers' understanding of how to support early literacy among children from Spanish-speaking homes change after participating in the workshop?

- ▶ What changes in understanding do instructors and providers report?
- ▶ Do the environments created by providers now include more resources and activities that support early literacy?

To answer research question 2, researchers used visits and interviews with providers before the program, observation of the providers' initial workshop session, multiple interviews with the facilitator during the workshop, and follow-up interviews with child care providers and PreK instructors.

All the participants interviewed had very positive opinions about the program, reporting that *Lee y serás* helped them understand the role of oral language and culture in early learning, introduced them to new pre-literacy and literacy practices and activities, and helped them develop closer relationships with the parents in their programs.

Supporting Early Literacy: *Lee y serás* was successful at helping providers and instructors improve their knowledge of how to support early literacy. In interviews, instructors and providers said that they learned the building blocks of literacy (oral language, concepts of print, alphabetic knowledge, and phonemic awareness), the value of routines, and strategies for sharing their new knowledge with parents.

They also mentioned that they had learned many Spanish-language activities for promoting early literacy, for example:

- ▶ Reading and bilingual story time
- ▶ Bilingual environmental print (i.e., the incidental language people see and read in daily life, such as signs, flyers, and labels)
- ▶ Everyday activities (e.g., cooking, shopping, or going for walk)
- ▶ Making books and inventing stories

The PreK instructors, generally, were already using these strategies but were excited to learn that they could do these activities in Spanish as well as in English. The instructors spoke about learning many new songs and stories in Spanish to do with the children. The children, they reported, enjoyed the new songs, often commenting that their mother or abuela sang the same songs. Initially, instructors had concerns that the parents, even the Spanish-speaking parents, would complain about Spanish being used in the classroom, but none of the parents complained. In fact, the Spanish-speaking parents seemed to understand that the activities in Spanish were helping to develop their children's language ability. The instructors reported that even the English-speaking parents were pleased that their children were learning a few words of Spanish.

The providers also responded positively to the idea of doing activities in Spanish. As part of the county home day care program, providers are required to use a specific curriculum that is only in English. Even if they and their

FINDINGS

children do not speak English very well the providers have attempted to use this curriculum. Many providers expressed relief at the idea that they could now do some activities in the language that they and their children are most comfortable with.

While many providers might already have been doing such activities as reading and singing songs, they were not familiar with the pedagogical theories of how these activities help develop pre-literacy and literacy skills. The *Lee y serás* facilitator stressed the pedagogical underpinnings of many activities, reinforcing the building blocks of literacy in every session. As a result, providers noted specific improvements they had made to the way they did some of their usual activities, and reported an increased awareness of how the activities fostered early literacy. For example, instead of simply reading a story to the children, providers now used strategies to support oral language skills and the concepts of print, such as pointing out the author and title, using different voices for the characters, and stopping periodically to ask the children what they see on the page or what they think might happen next.

Providers also reported taking better advantage of the daily activities in their centers. For example, not only are they using typical foods from the children's home environment, they are making cooking into a lesson. One provider explained, "[The] day before we start cooking, we name all the ingredients, and the children become familiar with them." The next day the group makes the meal, as the providers explain each step. One provider even makes a simple science lesson out of dissolving salt in water: "Before, we would have just cooked and incorporated all the learning and talking beforehand." Providers also reported integrating Spanish into the environmental print

resources in their centers, with bilingual signs, reminders, and posters.

Another activity that providers reported doing more frequently was having the children invent stories and make books together. One provider had her children invent stories to go with pictures of animals, which later went up on the wall. She reported that her children now play on their own in the puppet corner, inventing stories by themselves. Another provider shared an example of her children collecting leaves and making a book out of them.

The *Lee y serás* workshops stressed the importance of routines for PreK children and helped instructors and providers learn how to encourage parents to develop routines as well. One provider started sending a book in Spanish home with each child for a week, with instructions for parents to read the book aloud to their children before bedtime. Other providers began sending home letters sharing suggestions for bedtime routines.

.....

The Lee y serás workshops stressed the importance of routines for PreK children and helped instructors and providers learn how to encourage parents to develop routines as well.

.....

Ruth

.....

Ruth has lived in the United States for many decades, but she grew up and went to professional school on the Caribbean island where she was born. Ruth speaks only English.

Ruth is an English-speaking immigrant from the Caribbean who has run a day care center for many years—she now has children of former students in her care! The center, which she runs from her home, is open from 7 am to 6 pm. She cares for six children ranging in age from 15 months to 5 years. Two of them come from Spanish-speaking homes, but most are from Ruth’s Caribbean and African American neighborhood. Ruth prepares meals for the children and provides a variety of learning activities throughout the day.

Even though Ruth does not speak Spanish, the *Lee y serás* facilitator and other providers helped her with the language, and she enjoyed the workshop, which she found to be a great sources of ideas: “There was nothing that wasn’t useful. Everything fit into my day care.”

One activity that Ruth now does a lot more is to make books with the children. For example, one day the children collected leaves during their walk around the neighborhood. At the center they learned about leaves being soft or crumbly, big or small, and then they made a leaf book. They glued leaves to the pages of a book and then added stories and words about the leaves and their walk.

In particular, Ruth valued the suggestions for ways to bring culture into the learning environment: “What I liked most of all [was] how we could incorporate our culture into the classroom in different domains.” For example:

- “In the dramatics area, where we used to use dress-up clothes, now I bring in African attire—which even helps [their] fine-motor skills because the children have to wrap and tie the cloth.”
- For music: “I bring in instruments like the drums, different kinds of drums, reggae type of music. It makes them move more. I incorporated different kinds of music. It gives them balance.”
- For reading, she now includes some readings in Spanish and helps the children learn about the various dialects of English spoken in their community. One of the Spanish-speaking parents reads aloud in Spanish for half an hour each week, which both the children and the parents enjoy.

Ruth also tells the children about the Jamaican dialect and the other ways people in the community might speak: “We go outside and walk around in the neighborhood. [...] My three-year-olds, from reading the stories, can understand that we can meet different people in the neighborhood, speaking different languages. They were excited because they could recognize that people speak different languages. They ask, ‘Are you speaking Spanish?’, ‘Are you from Jamaica?’”

FINDINGS

Language and Culture: *Lee y serás* was successful in helping instructors and providers integrate the children's home language and culture into their program activities, and using language and culture to create rich learning opportunities for the children. Prior to the program, the use of Spanish was limited or the language of last resort when a child or parent failed to understand English (in both PreK classrooms and child care settings). All written communication with the parents was in English. None of the providers visited had signage in Spanish, not even those where both the provider and the children spoke mostly Spanish. At some providers, there were a few books in Spanish but no books about Latino cultures or the culture of any Latin American country.

Introducing Spanish as Another Language of Instruction: The instructors had concerns about using Spanish in the classroom; *Lee y serás* helped them understand that the use of Spanish would make children feel more at home and would ultimately develop their oral fluency in both Spanish and English. One instructor said, "*Uno siempre tiene el temor de que si habla español sería malo, pero aprendí que puedo hacerlo en el idioma nativo de los chiquitos*" [One is always a little afraid that speaking Spanish is bad, but I learned that I can speak in the children's native language] and added that her children now talk to one another in both Spanish and English. This instructor also has two girls who speak Hindi and, to the extent possible, she has incorporated all three languages into the classroom; the other children have even learned a few words in Hindi.

The providers who speak Spanish and have many Spanish-speaking children also began to communicate

more in Spanish with parents and children and to introduce more activities in Spanish. Especially for those providers who are not fluent in English, communicating in Spanish enabled them to use a broader vocabulary and to engage the children in a wider range of activities than they had previously done when they felt compelled to use only English in their centers.

Using Culture: The biggest impact of communicating in Spanish may be the rich vein of culturally relevant and appropriate activities and resources that instructors and providers can now tap into for their Latino children. The preliminary interviews and visits with the providers indicated that providers seldom used the children's culture as a source for learning activities. As mentioned above, their centers contained few books relevant to Latino and Latin American cultures, few images or photos reflecting Latino cultures, and no Latin American music. The providers did not talk about or celebrate any specific holidays from Latin America, and only one center had a few traditional dress-up clothes, which the children wore when they performed an Andean folk dance.

In the follow-up interviews, providers and instructors said that among the most exciting aspects of *Lee y serás* were the strategies to incorporate the children's cultures. Many spoke of going to the library to find more books and resources in Spanish and about the families' countries of origin. One PreK instructor described how she started reading to the children in both English and Spanish and getting library books about a variety of cultures so that her class "became more about the children hearing things from their home cultures." Many providers reported similar transitions. One began using online resources, such as

FINDINGS

El Huevo de Chocolate (<http://www.elhuevodechocolate.com>), to find nursery rhymes and games from around the Spanish-speaking world. Providers also began celebrating a wider variety of holidays with the children, including Cinco de Mayo and the various traditions of Semana Santa (Holy Week). Many providers started actively collecting rhymes, stories, and family recipes from the parents.

Food became an important theme for the providers, since many of them cook for the children. Providers now saw meal preparation as an opportunity to teach vocabulary in Spanish and English and to talk about the different names some ingredients have in different countries. One provider collected recipes from the families, and each child made a book titled *Recetas de la Abuelita: País _____* [Granny's Recipes: Country _____], with pictures and stories made up by the children around a recipe from their family's home country. One grandmother even came in to make arroz con leche (rice pudding) and tell stories of her childhood in Puerto Rico.

Sharing Cultures: The Spanish-speaking children learned about the cultures and language from other Spanish-speaking Latin American countries through stories, songs, and foods from different countries. But the benefits of incorporating culture into the learning environment were not limited to the Spanish-speaking children, nor were the benefits only from children seeing their culture reflected in the learning activities. The sharing of culture and using cultural artifacts to stimulate children's learning helped all the children regardless of their home language.

Sharing languages, words, customs, stories and foods became a rich source of learning. As the instructors and providers brought in aspects of the cultures of all their

.....
The sharing of culture and using cultural artifacts to stimulate children's learning helped all the children regardless of their home language.
.....

children, the children become aware of the diversity and richness of the society they live in. One instructor shared how her class had English and Spanish-speaking children but she also had Hindi-speaking children, and that all the children learned to say, at least, a few words in Hindi and Spanish as they learned to play together. One provider from the West Indies who has children mostly from the English-Speaking Caribbean, said, "What I liked most of all [was] how we could incorporate our culture into the classroom in different domains." As described in the vignette, she incorporated African attire in her dress-up corner and integrated drums into her music activities as well as music from the Caribbean. As her children go on walks through the neighborhood, they now understand that people come from many backgrounds, and they are excited to ask people if they are speaking Spanish, or if they're from Jamaica or another Caribbean island.

FINDINGS

Research Question 3: The Collaboration between Parents and Instructors and Providers

After participating in the workshop, does the collaboration between parents and instructors or providers change, and if so, how?

To explore research question 3, researchers used the interviews with parents, instructors, and providers, and the parent survey data.

Instructors and providers reported that the introduction of culture and language had a noticeable impact on their relationships with parents. The introduction of Spanish meant that Spanish-speaking parents were more comfortable interacting with the instructors and that parents could do school assignments with their children at home. The incorporation of culture as a valued theme within the classrooms created a dialogue between parents and instructors and providers, regardless of the parents' home language or culture. Also, culture as a new source of educational activities gave parents a much larger pool to draw from in terms of activities to do with their children.

Instructors and providers noticed that their Spanish-speaking parents who did not speak English well became more comfortable interacting with them. Making Spanish an acceptable language of instruction removed any stigma parents might have felt around speaking Spanish with their children's instructors. Additionally, since instructors and providers were now offering options for Spanish language activities at home, these parents felt like they were more a part of their children's education. One instructor explained that in the past, when activities were in English only, many of her parents could not help their children practice the alphabet or learn their numbers, but now, because of the

.....
Instructors and providers reported that the introduction of culture and language had a noticeable impact on their relationships with parents.
.....

use of Spanish, "*se sienten más cómodos*" [they feel more comfortable].

Lee y serás offers a number of strategies to reach out to parents regarding their culture and cultural traditions, which providers utilized to great advantage. At least five providers created surveys or questionnaires to gather cultural information from their parents, such as holiday customs, favorite foods, typical sayings (dichos), or nursery rhymes. They reported that parents were initially wary of the surveys but really opened up once they realized that the goal was to incorporate and value these traditions in the center or classroom. Some providers also developed parent newsletters that highlight the activities from different countries that they do with the children, and this further encouraged parents to share their traditions. Some providers reported an ongoing relationship with the parents, who share stories, snacks, music, dances, and a variety of other cultural influences that can be integrated into the children's learning.

Some providers reported using ideas and concepts from *Lee y serás* to create their own parent workshops, which encourage parents to do the following:

- ▶ Share stories from their own childhoods and home countries

FINDINGS

- ▶ Use daily activities as opportunities to help their children develop oral fluency, learn vocabulary, or learn their letters
- ▶ Develop consistent routines for their children

The inclusion of Spanish as one of the languages of instruction, combined with the integration of culture and cultural traditions into the classroom, encouraged instructors and providers to invite parents to come in to read to the children or to share their own traditions and stories. One provider reported that a number of parents and grandparents had read to the children in Spanish or told stories of celebrating Easter in their homeland, and shared typical sweets.

In interviews, parents also said that their participation in the workshop helped them feel more connected to the school. Bibiana, for example, received advice from her son's instructor about reinforcing at home what her son was learning in the classroom (see page 13). Laura and her husband spoke of talking with the instructor to help them

.....

In interviews, parents also said that their participation in the workshop helped them feel more connected to the school.

.....

resolve a disagreement they were having about discipline issues (see page 19).

The survey responses suggest that this effect was more pronounced among the Spanish-speaking families than the English-speaking ones. Survey responses showed a gain in the average amount of parent-involvement activities in Spanish-speaking households to move them closer to the degree of connection reported by English-speaking parents (Table 11). The survey showed no gain among English-speaking households. This finding resonates with the instructors' and providers' observations that making Spanish welcome in the classroom had a noticeable affect on non-English speaking parents.

TABLE II: MEAN PRE- AND POST-WORKSHOP SCORES ON PARENT-SCHOOL CONNECTION ITEMS, BY HOUSEHOLD LANGUAGE

(1 = NEVER, 2 = NOT YET THIS PAST MONTH, 3 = A FEW TIMES THIS PAST MONTH, 4 = MANY TIMES THIS PAST MONTH)

Home language	Parent-School Connections		
	Pre	Post	Increase
Spanish	2.17	2.61	.44
English	2.79	2.75	-.04
Total	2.52	2.70	.18

Tomasa

.....

Tomasa was born in South America, where she graduated from university. She has lived in the United States for eight years and has had her day care for four.

Tomasa runs a licensed family day care center in her home, and she cares for children while their parents are working. The number of children in her care varies throughout the day as children come and go; some arrive by 7:30 am, others come later, and a few stay as late as 6 or 7 pm. Tomasa might have six or seven children at one time. She cares for them, provides learning activities, and prepares meals for them. Tomasa speaks only a little English, and all of the children in her care are Spanish-speaking.

Lee y serás helped Tomasa improve the quality of the service she provides and build stronger relationships with the parents. Tomasa always encouraged parents to get involved in the day care. After the course, she now emphasizes more of the parents' and children's culture. The course motivated her "*para involucrarme más en la cultura—de los padres y niños*" [to involve myself more in the parents' and children's culture]. She tries to do more culturally relevant activities in the center and invites parents to come in and share: "*Ahora lo hago más, involucrar más a los padres. Que vengan a participar en el day care de sus vivencias. Que les hablen mucho del país en sus casas*" [Now I involve parents more, to come to the day care and share their experiences. [I encourage them] to talk to the children about their own countries in their homes]. She also encourages parents to tell their children stories from their home countries.

Tomasa asked parents to send in recipes from their home countries, which led to a guest appearance:

A grandmother came in to talk about different recipes and to cook *arroz con leche* [rice pudding] for the children. This became another project for Tomasa and her children: Each child made a book titled "*Recetas de la Abuelita: País Puerto Rico*" [Granny's Recipes: Country Puerto Rico] with their family recipes and pictures they chose.

Tomasa is also bringing in more resources around culture and language for the children. She has borrowed library books on the parents' countries, and she does Web searches for Spanish children's songs and rhymes that she sings in class.

Tomasa has even put together backpacks with a puppet and a book for each child that she sends home weekly so parents can read to their children. Before *Lee y serás*, her approach was simply to tell parents that they needed to read to their children: "*Ahora les preparo la mochila con el cuento de esa semana*" [I now prepare the backpack with a book for the week].

CONCLUSION

This evaluation found that participating in *Lee y serás* produced positive outcomes for parents, providers, and PreK instructors in terms of enhancing their awareness of pre-literacy strategies, the importance of language and culture for learning, and family-school connections.

For many parents, *Lee y serás* gave them a foundational understanding of the importance of providing oral language activities, pointing out environmental print, reciting rhymes and singing songs, and reading to their children. For other parents, participation reinforced their behaviors and helped them refine the pre-literacy and reading strategies they already used. Because the target audience for the Family Conversations was parents of children participating in a voluntary PreK program, there was a pre-existing emphasis on reading. The fact that the workshops took place in the children's schools enhanced the parents' feelings of connectedness to the school and classroom. This is confirmed by the PreK instructors, who reported that the introduction of Latino culture and Spanish language in their classrooms had a noticeable impact on their relationships with parents. Other positive outcomes for parents included the following:

- ▶ ***Gaining a new understanding of parenting.*** Participants formed a more comprehensive view of their roles as parents. They learned the importance of routines and modeling. They learned that they, too, have the power to act as teachers of their children.
- ▶ ***Discovering that learning happens everywhere, all the time.*** Parents learned that they could utilize the resources available in their environments and immediate surroundings—whether in their kitchen or in their community—as learning tools to support them in this new role (as teachers). They also discovered that learning can be fun.
- ▶ ***Sharing with other parents.*** Participants learned from the group discussions that other parents face similar challenges, and they acquired strategies and solutions for addressing those challenges. Moreover, many participants expressed how much they learned from and appreciated being in a class with parents from different countries and cultural backgrounds.
- ▶ ***Learning appropriate strategies for different literacy levels.*** Even though parents' literacy levels varied, all learned strategies and activities they believed they could implement with their children.

Similarly, PreK instructors and providers gained an enhanced understanding of the importance of the “building blocks of literacy”—oral language, phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, and concepts of print—and how their routines with children could be refined to more purposefully incorporate pre-literacy and literacy activities. Participating in *Lee y serás* gave PreK instructors and providers confidence in using Spanish to promote and enrich the literacy of their Spanish-speaking charges. In addition, their newfound understanding of the importance of language and culture—plus strategies to capitalize on children’s home cultures to promote literacy—also led to improved communication with the parents.

As in a previous evaluation of *Lee y serás* (Goldenberg et al., 2008), parent participants had several suggestions for making the program more widely known and easier to attend. This group offered the following suggestions:

- ▶ Providing alternate meeting times, perhaps in the evening
- ▶ Providing child care for younger children
- ▶ Integrating the PreK instructors more fully in parent outreach efforts

.....
Participants learned from the group discussions that other parents face similar challenges, and they acquired strategies and solutions for addressing those challenges. Moreover, many participants expressed how much they learned from and appreciated being in a class with parents from different countries and cultural backgrounds.
.....

In sum, *Lee y serás* shifted participants’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about children’s early literacy development and their own roles in supporting it. The outcomes of this evaluation indicate that *Lee y serás* holds enormous potential for both participants—and for their children.

REFERENCES

- Farran, D. C., Aydogan, C., Kang, S. J., & Lipsey, M. (2005). Preschool classroom environments and the quantity and quality of children's literacy and language behaviors. In D. Dickinson & S. Neuman (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research*, Vol. 2. New York: Guilford Publications, Inc.
- Fry, R. (2007). *How far behind are English language learners in math and reading?* Technical Report. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.
- Goei, V.P. (2005). *Lee y serás* Family Conversations. New York: Scholastic
- Goldenberg, L., Light, D., Heinze, J., & Delgado, I. (2008). *Lee y serás* evaluation report. New York: Scholastic.
- Haycock, K., & Huang, S. (2001). Are today's high school graduates ready? *Thinking K-16*, 5(1), 3–17. Washington, DC: The Education Trust.
- Moll, L., Amanti, C., Nett, D., & Gonzalez, N. (Spring 2002). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(1), 132-41.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). *The condition of education*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2005). *The nation's report card: Reading 2005*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Robles de Meléndez, W., & Geist, E. (2005). *Lee y serás* Child Care Provider Conversations, New York: Scholastic
- National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics. (2007, March). *Para nuestros niños: Expanding and improving early education for Hispanics*. Tempe, AZ: Author.
- Snow, C., & Burns, S. (1998). *Starting out right: A guide to promoting children's reading success*. Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences.
- Snow, C., Burns, S., & Griffin, P. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences.

