



TOYOTA FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM RESEARCH PROJECT

Meta Analysis of the Studies of High Performing Family Literacy Programs

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The resources are scarce, and the need is great. Our schools, our communities, and, most importantly, our families can't afford to invest in educational programs and methods that don't yield results.

So it isn't enough to identify needs, then create and sustain outstanding approaches to dual generation learning. We must track what works and why it's so effective.

In 2003, the National Center for Family Literacy and Toyota created the Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP). Because of the influx of immigrants into America, particularly Hispanic families, NCFL immediately saw the need to provide services to these families that would help the adults improve their English language skills, increase their ability to support their children's education, understand the American schools and the expectations for parents, better prepare themselves for the workforce, and help families to become contributing members of their communities. TFLP sites have been developed in 90 Title I elementary schools located in 30 cities. Local program dollars have been leveraged to open additional TFLP sites.

But we realized it wasn't enough to reach those 30 communities. We needed to document how and why success was achieved, so every school and community could benefit.

To share the insights and learning from the TFLP in a more in-depth way, NCFL invited seven cities, that had implemented TFLP services for immigrant families for a minimum of three years, to be a part of a research project. The selected cities agreed to explore further the achievement of the families involved. The cities represented in the following research paper include Denver, CO; Long Beach, CA; Los Angeles, CA; Mesa, AZ; Miami, FL; Shelby County, AL; and Springdale, AR.

NCFL extends its gratitude to the staff from these cities who worked tirelessly over the past year to analyze and report information that answered some very important questions that were posed regarding parent engagement in their children's education, parents meeting their own educational goals, and the ultimate success of families and schools involved.



Sharon Darling, President and Founder
National Center for Families Learning

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Jeri Levesque served as the primary writer in the analysis and evaluation of the information contained in this synthesis. Research information was submitted by seven selected Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP) cities. Dr. Levesque has served as State Evaluator for Even Start family literacy projects in Missouri and Kentucky. She has worked in additional states and over 60 local family literacy programs, including those that have been supported by Barbara Bush Foundation and federal grants. She has designed, evaluated, and assisted in sustaining family literacy programs all across the country. She also has provided professional development and evaluation for early literacy and learning, parental engagement, math and science partnerships, school reading programs, and adult education. Dr. Levesque's background, coupled with her experience as a university professor, has resulted in her becoming a full time educational consultant and the small business owner of Center of Effort LLC.

ABOUT NCFL

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping adults and children learn together. NCFL creates and deploys innovative programs and strategies that support learning, literacy and family engagement in education. From the classroom to the community to the digital frontier, NCFL collaborates with educators, advocates, and policy-makers to help families construct hotspots for learning wherever they go. For more information on NCFL's 24-year track record, visit www.familieslearning.org.

In November 2013 the National Center for Family Literacy became the National Center for Families Learning. During the time of this meta-analysis, the organization was officially the National Center for Family Literacy and so has been left that way in the text and references.

ABOUT THE TOYOTA FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM (TFLP)

The strength of TFLP originates from its comprehensive and family-centered approach to education. The program model brings students and families together to learn in the children's classrooms. Parents or guardians and their children are asked to identify academic and life goals that can improve their quality of life. Educators and community agencies work with parents/guardians and their children to achieve these goals through the four components of family literacy: Children's Education, Parent Time, Adult Education, and Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®. These components are briefly explained below. It should be noted that a typical parent participant in a TFLP program spends a minimum of 10 hours per week working to reach the full potential of the entire family.

1. Adult Education: Adult Literacy is built on the premise that when parents/guardians increase their own education, the entire family benefits. Adults have hopes and dreams for self-improvement and life success. Participants in the family literacy program identify goals for learning and they work to achieve those goals. Examples of these goals could include: reaching the next language level in adult English as a second language (ESL) classes, GED preparation, being a better supporter of their children's education, college preparation for themselves and for their children, building strong technology skills that support their goals, and getting a job or a better job.

2. Children's Education: School systems and community agencies across the country have high standards for student success. Each day students participate in literacy instruction at the school or community agency they attend. Goals for student literacy are determined by local curriculum objectives. These goals are designed to maximize student academic success and encourage post-secondary planning. Students participating in the family literacy program are expected to work hard in school and be willing to experience the process with their parent or guardian.

3. Parent Time: This component encourages participating adults to be life-long learners. Whether an individual is interested in learning the latest parenting skills or how to help his/her young student use study time more effectively, this component of the program is beneficial for the entire family. Parents/guardians are asked to identify goals that educators and community agencies help them reach. Educators work with individual adults and families on a weekly basis to help insure that individual family needs are met.

4. Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®: PACT Time is the component that brings the entire program together. The national definition of PACT Time was developed by the National Center for Family Literacy and is recognized in federal legislation. Through collaborative planning between parents/guardians, educators, community partners, and students, the family has the opportunity to engage in learning together. This learning can occur in many different ways, including but not limited to: parents/guardians spending time in their children's classrooms, engaging in story-telling, reading a book together, participating in a group activity together, going on a fieldtrip as a family. Project-based learning is also an excellent way to include the entire family in an activity. PACT Time can take place wherever parents and their children can learn together.

Chapter 1: THE QUEST

Catalytic Change and Family Literacy

What are the critical attributes of an outstanding family literacy program? What specific, concrete, and powerful devices prepare, motivate, and support parents to become optimally involved in their children's schools? And, if parents do become engaged in education, do their children achieve more? In what ways does parental engagement change teachers' attitudes about parents' role in education? What aspects of family literacy disrupt the intergenerational cycle of low literacy and poverty? These questions stimulated program staff in seven U.S. cities to probe why and how family literacy affects Hispanic parents, their young children, and schools using the four-component Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP) model.

Chemists know that certain substances known as catalysts cause or accelerate chemical changes without themselves being changed in the process. Educational researchers view catalysts as variables. Variables are the different and changing characteristics and attributes of people and organizations that can be observed and measured. Researchers can stimulate change, much like inserting a catalyst that manipulates the relationships between variables. The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) sought to identify the catalytic mechanisms of the TFLP that prepare children of low income, primarily Hispanic families for college and careers. The study began with four catalysts, fresh questions posed to generate a new perspective about the work and results of family literacy programs. A deeper understanding of catalytic change informs decisions associated with new practices, program designs, and standards of quality.

Corporate Support

The National Center for Families Learning has partnered with Toyota for over 20 years to implement family literacy models. Over the past 10 years, Hispanics have accounted for over 90% of the families served by the Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP). NCFL's partnership with Toyota has helped at-risk families all across the nation improve their education and lives. In addition to a commitment of more than \$36 million, Toyota also has contributed a wealth of in-kind support. Three major multi-year initiatives have evolved through this partnership, and their program models have influenced federal and state legislation, led to successful programs being replicated across the country, and leveraged local dollars to support family literacy. To date, Toyota's investment of \$18.5 million in the TFLP has leveraged over \$100 million local dollars in support of continued and expanded services.

Most recently, 90 TFLP sites in 30 cities across the nation received start-up funding from Toyota to address the growing needs of Hispanic and other immigrant families. TFLP is supporting immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education while increasing their own English language and literacy skills and workforce preparedness.

Selection of Research Sites

Thirty Local Education Agencies (LEAs) initially were considered by NCFL as possible research sites. Beginning with the adage, “Excellence is a better teacher than mediocrity” (Bennis, 1989), NCFL set out to identify and study programs that self-identified strong evidence of positive performance outcomes for parents and their children. Funded by Toyota, NCFL issued a Call for Proposals and solicited grant applications from programs with at least three years of family literacy program implementation. Eligible applicants were program directors who were interested in examining their program design, practices, and outcomes relative to four common research questions. The reviewers sought out programs representing the high quality standards detailed in the TFLP Benchmarks for Program Improvement. Funding supported a systematic effort to gain fresh insights about the critical attributes of effective programs. Selection of LEAs was based on internal review by staff with consideration given to LEAs:

- Accurate and timely data collection during three-year funded family literacy services and outcome results
- District leadership/coordinator of services over three years of implementation
- Trainer reporting through Benchmarks for Program Improvement developed twice yearly by assigned trainers over a three-year implementation process
- Number of Title I elementary school sites providing well-implemented comprehensive family literacy services in each school district
- In-kind support for family literacy services
- Support through the superintendent’s office
- Expectations and capacity to sustain family literacy programs

The seven programs that best met the criteria are not outliers of the 30 TFLPs operating across the nation. They represent common features and outcomes found in all TFLPs. The grantees expressed intrinsic motivation to engage in systematic inquiry by using their archived program data to probe the research questions. The researchers were encouraged to consider how their findings could stimulate new directions for family literacy program implementation.

The TFLP Research Study examined programs that served Hispanic/Latino and other immigrant families of prekindergarten through third grade children located in seven school districts across the nation and in 53 schools. The cities participating in the study are: Denver, Colorado; Long Beach, California; Los Angeles, California; Mesa, Arizona; Shelby County, Alabama; Springdale, Arkansas; and Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the NCFL Toyota Family Literacy Program Research Project is to examine evidence-based responses to the following research questions:

1. Do adults increase their involvement in their child's education within the school, and if so, in what ways?
2. What positive outcomes or changes are attributed to the children as a result of the program (their participation and their parents')?
3. Have teachers' attitudes and behaviors changed about parents' involvement in their children's education as a result of the program?
4. What characteristics/features make the biggest changes in families (adults and children)?

The research responses to these questions will be discussed in this synthesis.

Limitations of the Synthesis

When viewed as applied research, there are several limitations to the seven studies. The data sizes were consistently small across programs and were often unequal between pre- and postmeasures. There were no common, standardized measures of reading and literacy for adults and children that allow for an aggregated analysis of literacy achievement. The researchers were allowed to use mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative analysis) to probe each question. In many ways the researchers executed approaches very similar to differentiated instruction; they provided multiple options for selecting, analyzing, and making sense of data. This approach allowed researchers to be flexible when selecting inquiry strategies across questions. Data were approached from different perspectives to construct analyses most meaningful to the programs.

NCFL project leaders believe that collaborative inquiry involving school and program staff reveals subtle and major changes that evolve over time and profoundly affect schools and families. The TFLP Research Project was not designed to test hypotheses or generate preliminary or moderate evidence of program results. It was designed to promote inquiry in schools where families, educators, and program staff were directly involved in family literacy. The studies represent a cycle of inquiry whereby TFLP staff re-examined archived data to construct new meaning about the context of their work.

The TFLP Research Project may be viewed as the synthesis of a collection of collaborative action research studies that shared a common agenda (Carro-Bruce, 2000). Action research is a disciplined inquiry process conducted by those charged with doing the work in order to better understand and improve that work (Ferrance, 2000). It can lead to reflective practice that is comprised of a greater self-awareness about the nature and impact of that work (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Action research is in effect, a form of professional development. In this study, local staff partnered with evaluators as researchers were charged

to systematically investigate the educational practices of the district and determine how they impacted families and schools. The studies were then collected and synthesized by NCFL to create a new sense of the evolving paradigm of family literacy.

The research questions encouraged local staff to examine and assess their work, pose new questions, and contribute to the decision making associated with program improvement and sustainment. The researchers prepared reports to share with other cities in the study and a broader audience of family literacy practitioners, policy makers, and funders.

The purpose of this synthesis is to determine patterns and trends revealed by the researchers. While the local researchers were not bound to particular theories to test their conclusions, the synthesis utilized theoretical constructs to better data, and analyses were explained by theories to create new understandings about the collective impact of family literacy on schools and families. The quest is to improve family literacy programs so that they prepare low literate families and schools to better meet the demands of a global society in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 2: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Many studies have affirmed that the combination of child, family, and school determines school success (Zigler & Styfco, 2004; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). TFLPs engage parents directly in schools as learners and as supporters of their children's education. Parental engagement is a critical strategy to promote student achievement and prepare families for college and careers. TFLPs support Hispanic parents as they become more actively engaged in their children's education. They provide parenting classes that are aligned with elementary teachers' expectations and curriculum and daily opportunities to learn alongside their children during classroom lessons. TFLPs encourage parental participation in school-based activities and reinforce family literacy in the home.

The first point to consider about the TFLP is that parents attend adult education and English as second language (ESL) classes at their children's school. During the recruitment and enrollment process, parents learn that a condition of enrollment is their commitment to regularly attend adult education classes and set personal goals that they will work toward. Parents must also agree to participate in Parent Time and Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®.

Components of family literacy were described as catalytic mechanisms that link program objectives with expected performance outcomes for parents and their children. As catalyzers, the components can initiate a transformation in families that in turn transforms schools into intergenerational learning centers.

Parent Time

Prior research confirms that parents are more likely to help their children navigate successfully through their education when the parents know what their children need in everyday life, including their school life, and when parents know what it takes to be successful in school (Jeynes, 2011). Parent Time takes place twice a week, for about an hour per session. On any given day parents and staff might discuss topics such as how teachers work to meet each child's unique learning needs, reading aloud to children, and helping with homework. Program staff explain to parents how to set high expectations, focus on their children's progress, and extend learning at home. These sessions prepare parents to engage in school activities, serve as volunteers, better communicate with teachers, and advocate for their children.

Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®

PACT Time is a structured time (four times a week, for 30 minute class sessions) for parents to join with children in their classrooms during the regular school day. PACT Time promotes parents' understanding of the vital role they play as their children's first teachers. PACT Time activities assist adults in affirming, expanding, and transferring the knowledge and the skills

acquired during Parent Time. Parents gain first-hand experience with classroom instruction. They observe how teachers present expectations for their children, such as meeting common core content standards, behavior norms, study habits, and attitudes supportive of learning.

One of the purposes of PACT Time is to develop a culture of lifelong learning where parents take on the roles of learners. PACT Time helps parents form reasonable expectations for their children's achievement. Parents observe when their children struggle with new skills and concepts. They develop an understanding of how their children learn and ways to support that process. Parents see how lessons are taught and how students' work is assessed. By working alongside their children and classmates, they serve as role models to positively affect the classroom learning environment.

Research by the Center for Public Education (2011) found that parents' support of learning in the home has the greatest impact on student performance. An important expectation of the TFLP program is that parents transfer what they learn during Parent Time and PACT Time to their homes. They are encouraged to assist with homework, establish routines for reading aloud with their children, practice English language skills, and add rich vocabulary to family conversations. Parents are inspired to act as role models by reading and writing independently and displaying and sharing print materials in the home.

Quantity and Quality of Parental Involvement

Data from the TFLP Research Project studies affirm that sustained participation positively impacts parental involvement in schools, the extension of learning from school to the home, and children's overall academic achievement. These findings support the importance of establishing positive school learning environments that lead to greater understanding and respect among all involved. This finding is consistent with a meta-analysis of parent engagement studies (Ferguson, Jordan, Wood, & Rodriguez, 2006) that found as parents' confidence and communication skills grow stronger, they become more active in the school community.

When parents and school staff become partners in children's education, parent involvement becomes embedded in the school culture. In schools where parental involvement is strong, principals, teachers, and staff become more responsive to families' needs as well as to class and cultural differences. Findings from the TFLP Research about the ways parents engage in their children's schools are discussed in the next section.

Responses to Research Question #1 by Local Researchers: *Do adults increase their involvement in their child's education within the school, and if so, in what ways?*

Denver, Colorado: The Denver TFLP program, located in four West Denver elementary schools, supports an affirmative response to the parental engagement research question. The researchers held focus groups with parents, who are immigrants and English language learners, to discuss their involvement in their children's schools. The parents were provided with Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, and French interpreters to help them become comfortable

during the focus groups and to ensure the ease of communication among parents and research assistants.

Data analysis revealed a consistent pattern of parents' increased attendance at school events and parent-teacher conferences. During the focus groups, parents credited their enhanced engagement to increasing confidence in their English language skills that helped them to

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understand what the teachers were saying. They also reported asking more questions of school personnel and being actively engaged during PACT Time as they learned with their children. As their self-efficacy grew, TFLP parents volunteered and became more active in the school community (Wycoff et al., 2012).

**Los Angeles County Office of
Education and the Family Literacy
Support Network:** Parental
engagement was quantified in

the Los Angeles study prepared by the American Institute for Research (AIR). The Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN), which provided technical assistance for the Los Angeles County Office of Education - First 5 LA Family Literacy Program reported that 96% of parents in the family literacy program attended school events in which their child was a participant (Quick et al., 2011). They also reported that 78% of parents in family literacy volunteer in their children's classrooms.

Mesa, Arizona: The Mesa Public Schools (MPS) was awarded a TFLP program in 2007 to implement family literacy programs in three schools for families of students in kindergarten to grade three. The MPS School Board, in 2011, announced that because of the impact and importance of the family literacy program, the District was committed to funding and expanding the program from three to 10 sites with Title I dollars.

The researchers conducted interviews with TFLP school principals. Principals reported that when the TFLP was fully implemented the quantity and quality of parent participation improved. Principals observed parents increasing their involvement in leadership roles, such as PTO and community involvement. A principal stated, "Parents now volunteer for the PTO and other committees in school. We have parents attending our Parent Forum meetings each month and [they] volunteer in classrooms much more often. Parents are taking the lead in organizing class parties and supporting class functions" (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012, p. 29).

Principals also noted greater parent engagement in the development of school beautification projects and increasing parental pride in the school. One explanation for parents' interest was their expressions of confidence in their ability to engage with schools. Parents' excitement had a ripple effect as principals observed parents talking to other mothers and getting them to become more involved (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012, p. 29).

The Mesa study helps us to understand the link between family literacy and parental engagement in schools. All of the principals in TFLP schools reported the greatest benefit of family literacy is parents' increased support of their children's education. A principal stated that as a result of being in the TFLP program, "parents understand the educational system much better than families not participating in the program" (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012, p. 26). An example of this support and an important objective of the Parenting and PACT Time components is, according to a principal, "TFLP parents are able to assist their child with schoolwork and have a greater connection with their child's teachers in ways that enhance the school experiences for the child" (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012, p.26).

Miami-Dade County, Florida: The Miami-Dade County Public Schools serve more than 350,000 students annually. The majority (61%) of the student population is Hispanic (Ayala & Paneque, 2012). The target population for the TFLP program was Hispanic/Latino families at three school sites with children in kindergarten through third grade who were enrolled in the TFLP between 2007 and 2011. The research study used a sample of convenience to collect data.

The researcher for the Miami-Dade study developed interview and survey protocols with open-ended questions. Parents overwhelmingly reported an increase in the frequency and type of involvement in their child's education. Parents also reported that in addition to helping their own children during PACT Time, they were able to assist other children (Ayala & Paneque, 2012).

Principals were surveyed about changes in family involvement at their TFLP schools. Four research findings demonstrate positive changes about parental involvement in schools:

1. Parents became more involved in the classroom as well as the school.
2. Parents participated more in school meetings/workshops and by volunteering in classrooms and school-wide events.
3. All TFLP parents became members of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA).
4. High levels of parent involvement at all three schools continued after the funding concluded (Ayala & Paneque, 2012, p. 11).

Miami-Dade TFLP parents stated that the primary motivation for enrolling in the program was to become better teachers for their children. The next stimulus was to improve their literacy and English skills. Survey results validate that parents did indeed meet these goals. Parents reported that their children were doing better in school since the family enrolled in the TFLP. Parents specified that their children were: earning higher grades, becoming more independent, and were able to complete their homework without assistance. PACT Time provided opportunities for parents to observe their children in the classroom. Parents noted they saw their children being more attentive and increasing their participation during lessons.

Teacher survey responses confirm the parents' conclusions. The majority of teachers reported that TFLP had a positive impact on children in terms of their academic achievement and social development. Teachers noted that the TFLP students were excited about their parents' involvement and became more confident and engaged in class. Principals (100%)

also reported on their surveys that parents were part of the school routine, and one principal felt the TFLP students had improved their “study habits” and “attitudes toward school” (Ayala & Paneque, 2012, p. 13).

Shelby County, Alabama: In 2005, the Shelby County Schools established the TFLP at three schools serving two communities. Since then, Shelby County Schools has expanded the program to a fourth site serving three

communities. The unique program design allows families from four elementary schools to enroll in the program (Dobbs-Black, Renfro, Panzica, & Ritchie, 2012). Through collaboration with the University of Alabama School of Education, the TFLP program also was replicated in one elementary school in the Hoover School System.

All of the principals in TFLP schools reported the greatest benefit of family literacy is parents’ increased support of their children’s education.

Shelby County teachers were invited to complete a survey about PACT Time. Data analysis revealed that 100% of the teachers at two schools, and 80% of teachers at the third school, reported they saw more confidence in parents of Hispanic students who participated in PACT Time. The same teachers were nearly unanimous that being a PACT Time teacher did not require more work and that there were many benefits for students and parents who shared classroom learning experiences, as well as benefits for themselves.

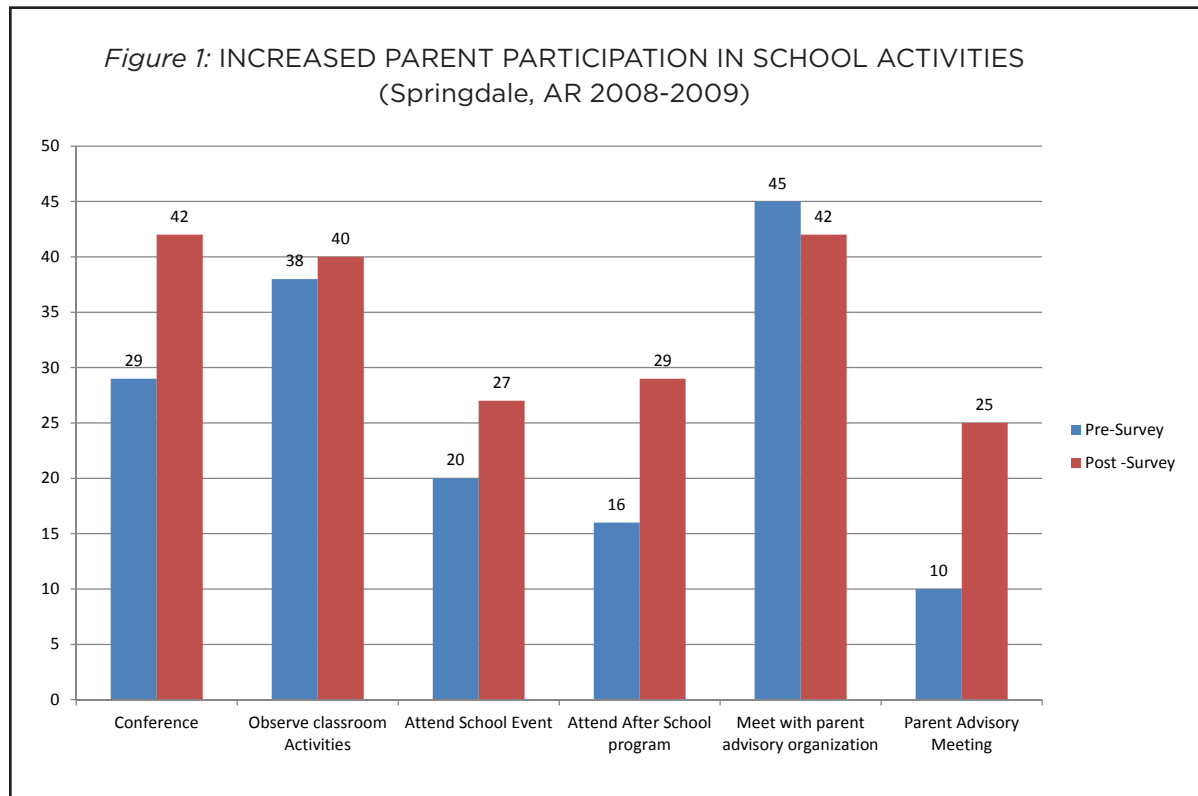
Matching services with adult learning goals is an important aspect of family literacy. When parents enrolled in Shelby County’s TFLP, they were asked to identify the expectations and goals that they hoped to achieve through full commitment to the four components of the program. On the parent survey, a robust 90% of TFLP parents reported that as a result of their participation, they successfully accomplished their educational goals, such as learning English, using parental resources, and helping their children complete homework (Dobbs-Black et al., 2012, p. 3).

Springdale, Arkansas: The Springdale Public Schools received the TFLP grant in 2008 with the intention of increasing the literacy rate of Hispanics and other immigrant families in three schools. Since the program’s inception the number of schools served by the model has expanded to 10 schools, with the most recent program being set in a middle school (Bridgforth, Lucas & Blackford, 2012, p. 2).

The Springdale researchers drew their conclusions from 12 parent interviews, and 12 teacher interviews with parents and teachers who participated in TFLP during the 2008-2009 school year. Data demonstrate that the Springdale TFLP program helped parents acculturate into the school and become more active in their children’s education. Figure 1 (Bridgforth et al., 2012) shows that compared with their participation prior to enrollment, parents were conferencing more with teachers and more frequently attending school events and out of school time programs by the end of their first year in TFLP.

Parents reported how often they attended the parent advisory meetings compared to their attendance in years prior to enrollment in TFLP. Figure 1 shows more than twice the representation of Springdale TFLP parents at parent advisory meetings than before their

enrollment in TFLP. That outcome, in part, accounts for a decrease in the number of parents who met with members of the organization individually, but did not attend the meetings



Changes in parental engagement after program participation are affected by many uncontrolled variables. For example, approximately 25% of the parents surveyed had at one time enrolled in either an adult education program or English as Second Language (ESL) course. They were familiar with structured learning opportunities for adults but were not as actively engaged in their children's learning when they enrolled in the TFLP, as they were a year after enrollment.

A response to an interview question posed to Springdale TFLP teachers exemplifies a recurrent social change theme as to how the program served to bond parents with their schools. A teacher stated, "The parents of these kids are much more comfortable than has traditionally been the norm. They no longer just dropped their children at the door in the morning" (Bridgforth et al., 2012, p. 13). She continued that most of the mothers felt that they became genuine "stakeholders" in the school community and their child's role in school (Bridgforth et al., 2012, p. 13).

Springdale TFLP parents increased the time spent reading aloud with their children. The percentage of TFLP parents reading to their children four times and five times per week increased by 39% and 42% respectively by the end of the school year (Bridgforth et al., 2012, p. 25). On the parent interview, 100% of Springdale TFLP parents reported reading to their children in English more frequently by year's end (Bridgforth et al., 2012, p. 25).

The Springdale researchers probed the effects of parental engagement and student achievement. When results for the Arkansas Benchmark Exam (ABE) were analyzed, the percent of proficient students in the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population had continually increased since the inception of the TFLP. Not only had the percent of proficient LEP students increased, the number of LEP students being served by the TFLP in most schools had also increased. During the 2010-2011 school year, each of the TFLP participating schools had more than 60% of their LEP population scoring proficient or advanced on the ABE. Over the course of the TFLP project some schools increased their proficient LEP population as much as 31 percentage points (Bridgforth et al., 2012).

Longitudinal Impacts of Parental Involvement

[A] long-term impact of family literacy engagement is that parents understand how to advocate for their children with the school.

Family literacy programs are beginning to investigate longitudinal gains and are finding positive trends for impact over time. American Institutes of Research (AIR), a nationally recognized research organization, has conducted the most extensive of these longitudinal studies in Los Angeles County First 5 LA family literacy programs. The First 5 LA program design is consistent with the Toyota Family Literacy Program model. AIR investigated longitudinal impacts on parent engagement, parent understanding of the partnership between school and home, and student indicators including achievement. AIR found that:

Parents participating in First 5 LA-funded family literacy programs increased their involvement in home, school, and community settings throughout their participation in the program, and they maintained or even increased their level of engagement on most measures as their children entered kindergarten and into higher elementary grades.

First, home literacy practices increased substantially. For example, 84 percent of alumni parents surveyed 1-5 years after exiting the program reported at least monthly visits to the library, and 85 percent reported reading to their child at least three times per week – a significant increase over the percentage of parents reporting these activities at program enrollment (55 percent and 70 percent, respectively).

Second, school involvement after program exit was very high among program alumni. A substantial majority of parents surveyed reported attending school events in which their child was participating (96 percent), volunteering in their child's classroom (78 percent), and participating in parent committee meetings such as PTA or school governing boards (90 percent).

Third, parent participants have shown continued commitment to learning and advocacy in their community. For example, the evaluation found that 72 percent of

alumni reported enrolling in college or further adult education classes to continue their own learning (Quick et al., 2011).

Additionally, the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) at the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) reported that parents have become increasingly proactive in voicing concerns affecting their families, schools, and community, as program funding issues have become more dire. Parents have attended a number of policy and funding meetings where they made presentations about the benefits of family literacy program participation, respectfully requesting continued funding and/or support for their local family literacy programs (Guerra & Perry, 2012).

Another long-term impact of family literacy engagement is that parents understand how to advocate for their children with the school. According to the study by AIR, most family literacy alumni parents (1 to 5 years after exiting the program) indicate that they have the basic knowledge needed to support their children in school (Quick et al., 2011). A critical support skill for parents is advocating for their children. AIR (Quick et al, 2011) found a specific, positive (powerful) impact in this area. Most parents (70.7%) in family literacy programs strongly agree that they know whom to talk with if their children are having difficulties at school (Quick et al., 2011).

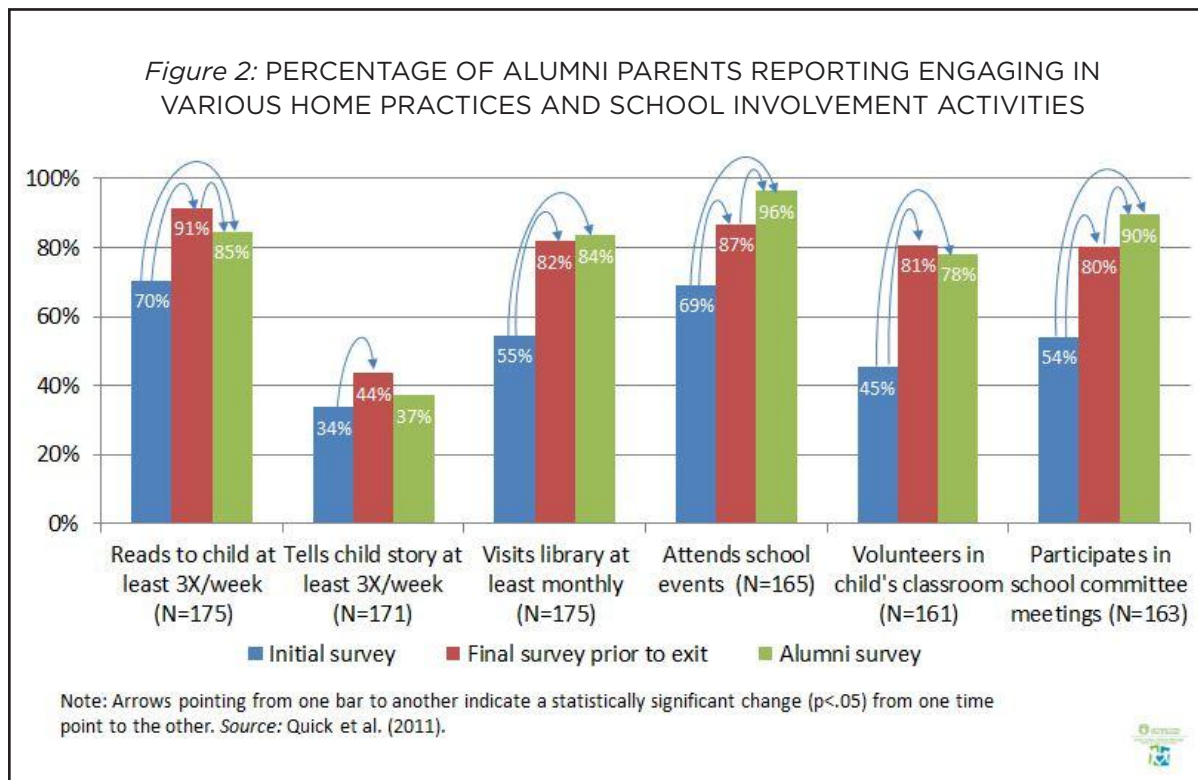
Understanding the scope and sequence of the academic curriculum is a variable that positively affects parents' ability to advocate for their children. The majority of parents surveyed by AIR agreed that they knew the requirements their children must meet to progress to the next grade level (95.2 %) and that they knew how to help their children succeed in school (98.5 %) (Quick et al., 2011). This combination of conditional knowledge with procedural knowledge grounds parents' ability to communicate with teachers and their willingness to openly discuss their children's learning needs.

The AIR study also found that parent involvement in home, school, and community continued after parents ended direct involvement in First 5 LA

family literacy programs across Los Angeles. This conclusion is based on a survey of parents administered one to five years after exiting the family literacy programs. The results show that parents maintained or increased significant levels of engagement on five of six indicators: reading to child, making monthly visits to the library, attending school events, volunteering in the child's classroom, and participating on school committees (Quick et al., 2011). Figure 2 depicts the different ways parents in First 5 LA programs improved on measures of engagement. (Figure 2)

Parents enrolled in the TFLP increase the quantity and quality of their involvement in their child's prekindergarten through third grade experiences in many ways.

Other evidence for continued parent engagement after program participation is cited by a TFLP principal in Mesa who states that school-wide family literacy truly generates parent leaders of the future. She expects lessons learned by parents will be long lasting because parents became more positive, confident, and actively engaged in their children's learning.



Parents' accomplishments improve schools because of their service as volunteers at school events and programs. Data from TFLP cities support this conclusion regardless of the specific measure of data used to substantiate this phenomenon.

Connecting Catalytic Changes in Parents with Children's Learning

The theoretical framework of family literacy is anchored in the belief that when change occurs for any member of a family, the effects are intergenerational. In some way or another, everyone experiences change. The framework is grounded by evidence affirming that changes in the education of parents can improve or harm their children's future. Children's time in a structured learning environment is relatively short. They spend five times as much time outside the classroom as they do in school (Trelease, 2006). TFLPs share a common agenda that aims to strengthen parents' knowledge and skills that are essential for extending school learning beyond the classrooms and into their homes.

Research affirms the importance of extending school learning, such as reading aloud, into the home. Recent findings about 15-year-olds by the Program for International Student Assessment (OECD, 2011) on reading, math, and science accentuates the significance of Mesa's TFLP parent engagement outcomes— "students whose parents regularly read books to them when they were in the first year of primary school scored 14 points higher, on average, than students whose parents did not" (p. 2).

The evidence shared by the research studies affirms the conclusion that parents enrolled in the TFLP increase the quantity and quality of their involvement in their child's prekindergarten through third grade experiences in many ways. The most dominant example of family engagement is that parents increasingly attend teacher conferences and school events. Further analysis reveals that their involvement in schools surpasses traditional expectations to be merely passive yet attentive observers.

In many adult education programs, adults enroll primarily because they lack the educational credentials and requisite skills demanded by employers. In contrast to traditional adult

As parents made progress toward achieving their goals, teachers and principals saw them engaging more directly with teachers, staff, and other families.

education programs, none of the parent surveys across cities identified employment opportunities as the primary motivation for enrolling in the TFLP. Family learning is a goal that begins with the assumption that parents enroll because they expect to gain knowledge and skills that they think are critical for their family's next steps toward educational and career goals.

There is ample evidence across the studies that a primary motivation for parents enrolled in the TFLP is to better support their children as learners. Parents believe supporting their children's schoolwork will ensure academic success. Parents also commit to a school-based intergenerational program because they perceive that in order to help their children achieve success they need to communicate clearly with teachers. For many parents, wanting better communication motivates them to attend ESL classes designed to improve their English language proficiency.

The long-term impact of literacy and parents' support of learning at home on children's preparation for college and careers is promising.

Setting goals at the beginning of the TFLP program enables parents to take ownership of their participation and be proud of their personal accomplishments throughout the school year. Parents' goal setting also informs adult education teachers so they can differentiate learning opportunities across parents. Adult education teachers can assist parents by guiding them to set short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals to sustain motivation and persistence. Ideally, teachers reinforce increments of progress throughout the school year. Parents learn that this is how teachers assess students' progress. They learn how teachers monitor children's progress by using incremental benchmarks of success, such as quiz scores, letter grades, and promotion to the next grade level.

There appear to be connections between being active learners in the adult education component, sharing with others during parenting sessions, experiencing lessons first hand during PACT Time, and parents' English language skills and self-confidence. As parents made progress toward achieving their goals, teachers and principals saw them engaging more

directly with teachers, staff, and other families. Their engagement included asking questions about their children's learning, inquiring about ways to support their children at home, and asking how to volunteer in the school community.

Over time, many TFLP parents became leaders who sat on advisory committees, served on the PTO or PTA boards, forged new partnerships, and raised other parents' awareness about the important role parental involvement plays in children's school success. Parents' self-efficacy and confidence in the school setting grew stronger as they worked on more complex and challenging projects.

The TFLP Research Project reports substantial gains in the number of days parents and children read together, in English and in the family's native language. This is a major program impact that verifies the transfer of literacy skills parents acquire from the TFLP at school to sharing and promoting reading in their homes.

Raising the high school graduation rate and increasing the number of adults with college degrees prepared for middle and high level 21st century employment opportunities is a national priority. The long-term impact of literacy and parents' support of learning at home on children's preparation for college and careers is promising. Parents who nurture their young children's oral language development and early literacy skills (ex., receptive and expressive vocabulary) are at the same time fostering school success (Sticht, 2011). Research by the National Institutes of Health substantiates that "a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future success..." (NIH, 2010). NIH (2010) also found that children of mothers with high levels of education stay in school longer than children of mothers with low levels of education. The TFLP extends parents' education towards high school completion, GED attainment, and English language proficiency. These accomplishments are predictive of success for the children of TFLP parents.

Since 1989 the National Center for Families Learning has engaged over one million families in intergenerational learning. There is much more work to do. America has 30 million parents/caregivers who are not good readers themselves and can be expected to pass illiteracy down to their children.

NCFL has developed an innovative model of family learning and literacy practices in school partnerships supported by its numerous research-based programs, initiatives, and resources that offers families support and enrichment at multiple points in their growth.

Chapter 3: CHANGES IN CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR AND ACHIEVEMENT

Theory of Change

A theory of change defines the inputs and strategies of a project design. The theory explains how a project's components and actions are linked with its objectives and goals. Theories of change describe how variables, program components, and people interact and the extent that these interactions contribute to projected outcomes. The TFLP is a coordinated mix of strategic actions within four program components that interact along a pathway of change. For example, Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time® is coordinated with Parent Time because evidence links parental involvement in school and at home with improvements in student learning.

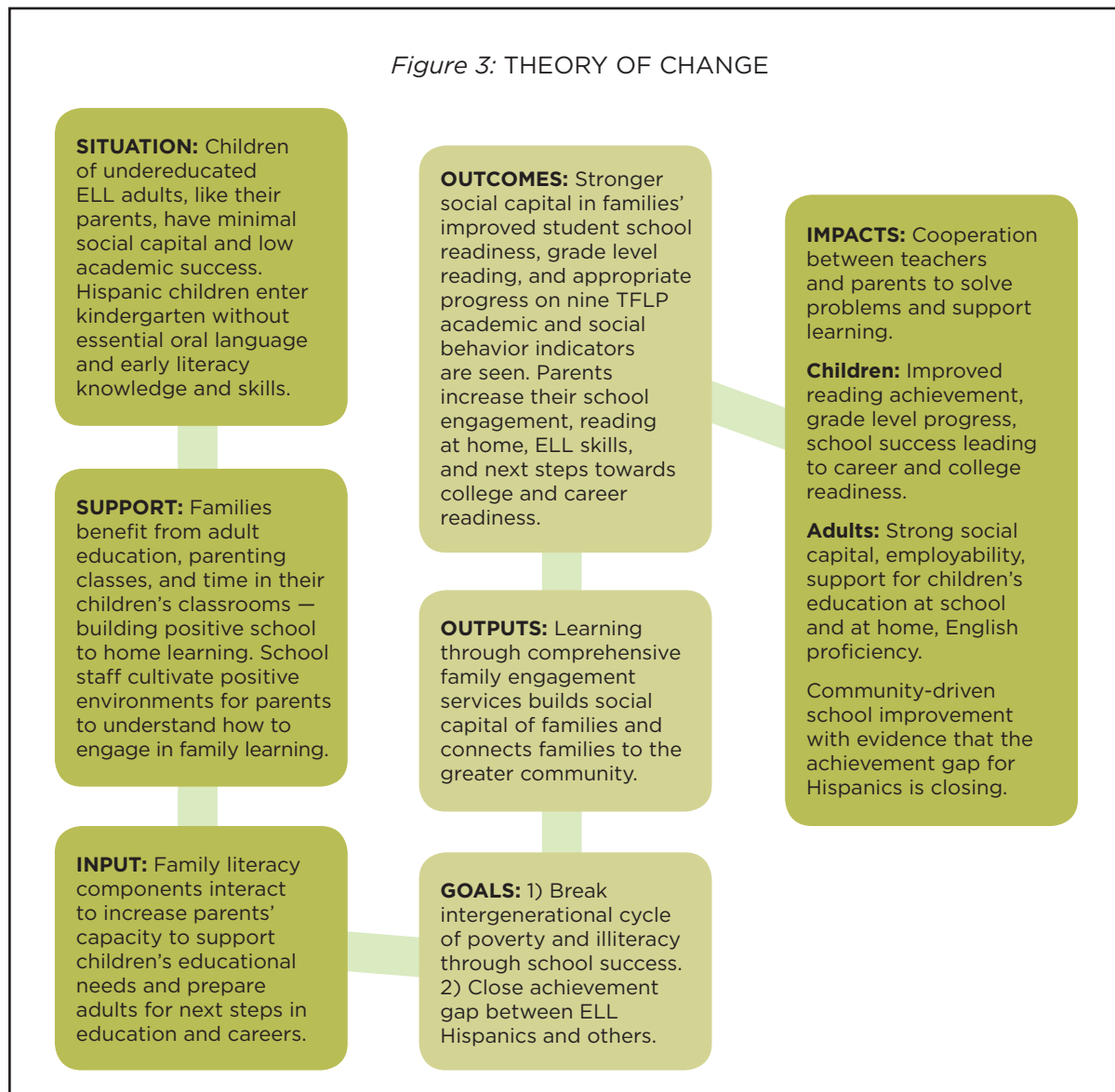
Family literacy is a “two-generation” theory of change where, a) education is the core, and b) economic supports (ex., transportation to and from the program, child care, and free and reduced lunch), and c) social capital (i.e., peer support, familia, learning communities) “create opportunities for and address the needs of both vulnerable parents and children together” (Redd, Karver, Murphey, Moore, & Knewstubb, 2011, p 16).

Parents are children's most important resource. They provide their children with social capital, which makes up the social benefits and information that flow to the family from its networks of relationships that make it possible to gain knowledge, skills, and resources from others. From a family perspective, social capital is the glue (i.e., trust, respect, and love) that holds the generations together. Social capital is the transition from “me” to “we” as parents work to raise their children and network with others in the community to ensure children's safety, health, and success. These connections help the family be resilient, solve problems, and be better able to cope with challenges and frustrations.

The common agenda of the TFLP projects is to consistently implement a program designed to break the intergenerational cycle of low literacy and poverty.

The harmful economic impact of the recession reveals many facets of the theory of change that grounds the TFLP. Children transitioning to kindergarten this year were born during one of the most difficult economic times in recent U. S. history. Dramatic employment layoffs, home foreclosures, business failings, and dwindling tax bases have had a devastating impact on children's educational opportunities. Parents who lack minimal educational credentials and social capital are less employable than adults with more credentials, experience, and social networks who are competing for the same workforce opportunities. Limited education begets minimal employment, slight social capital, and in turn, unemployment and low wages continue an intergenerational pattern of poverty.

The common agenda of the TFLP projects is to consistently implement a program designed to break the intergenerational cycle of low literacy and poverty. The social changes sought and realized through family literacy represent the impact of the complex and dynamic mix of coordinated services. Figure 3 displays the theory of change for TFLP.



The well-being of children served by the TFLP is critical to the nation, in part because immigrant children are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. In 2008, nearly one in four children between birth and age 17 lived with an immigrant parent, a 10% increase since 1990. Mexican-born immigrants accounted for 29.8% of all foreign born residing in the United States in 2009. Mexican-born is, by far, the largest immigrant group in the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2002-2012).

Research on parental involvement has explored how cultural and socioeconomic status (SES) determines how parents define their role in their children's education (Valdés, 1996). Latino families¹ contend with the values and expectations of at least two different cultures as they engage with their children's schools. Rodriguez-Brown (2010) discussed a number of concepts embedded in the Latino culture that affect the way that parents define their

Intergenerational effects are likely to be the result of changes that occur in the family as parents, young children, and the extended familia social units engage in the program.

role in their children's education. She begins with the concept of *familia*, or family, that provides Latinos with a sense of belonging and interdependence across extended families grounded by their sense of loyalty and obligation. Because *familia* extends beyond a single parent in any family, schools and teachers need to understand that there are a number of people who claim responsibility for educating a single child. Each student is connected to the fundamental identity of his or her family and community. Thus schools need to reach past traditional boundaries associated with individual children and develop relationships with the Latino communities where their students are being raised.

The concept of *familia* and its role in family literacy affirms leadership research by Wheatley (2006) that found when any organization or community establishes systems that probe the roles of identity, information, and relationships, awareness is raised. This allows the organization to develop greater capacity within the system. In this way the TFLP is a system that builds family identity through adult education, Parent Time, and PACT Time within the greater system of the school building and district. The families, schools, and community are able to establish connections that build social capital about their understanding of who they are, what they expect from each other, and how to meet these expectations.

Another example of operationalizing the family literacy theory of change is the inclusion of learning opportunities for adults. The Adult Education component compounds the effects of Parent Time and PACT Time by increasing parents' English language proficiency, academic knowledge, and workforce preparedness. Data on the migration and immigration patterns of Hispanic families underscore their need for English language skills that are essential for assimilation into the national workforce. Learning interactions and learning events create social capital that accumulates knowledge and builds identity (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). The combination of program components creates an effect greater than any single component can in the creation of a family's social capital.

It makes good sense to include adult education as a component of family literacy. Research funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has shown that parents' (especially the mother's) education and income are key factors in determining a child's success in school. Furthermore, the study concluded, "a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success..." (Sastry & Pebley, 2010, p. 796). Parents pass on

¹ The term Latino used in the research cited refers to individuals who have emigrated from or are descendants of immigrants from different Latin American countries, with a significant majority of those from Mexico.)

literacy to subsequent generations. A mother's reading ability has a stronger association with her children's achievement than family socio-economic status (SES) inequity. This powerful bond is likely due to the "intergenerational transition of ability and effects of the home learning environment" (p. 796).

The NIH study was designed to identify socio-economic factors that affect children's learning and provide guidance for designers of policies and interventions aimed at improving the learning of disadvantaged children. The long-term goal of the study was to break the intergenerational cycle of low achievement. The study found that children of mothers with high levels of education stay in school longer than those of mothers with low levels of education. It concluded that programs designed to increase the academic achievement of children from low-income neighborhoods could be more successful if they provide adult literacy education for parents, develop high quality early childhood education programs, and offer targeted school-wide programs. The TFLP design has addressed these very factors since its inception over 20 years ago.

Intergenerational effects are likely to be the result of changes that occur in the family as parents, young children, and the extended *familia* social units engage in the program. A family's social structure is likely to change because of the new relationships outside of the familia gained by participating in the Adult Education component. Hayes' (2010) review of family literacy concluded that the, "values, language, behaviors, needs, expectations, relationships, capabilities, and norms of the family unit 'come to school' with the adult" (p. 11). This creates reciprocity of learning opportunities across family members as well as between the family and the school.

Preparing Parents to Support Their Children's Learning

The theory of change discussed earlier is useful for understanding how participation in weekly Parent Time and PACT Time is linked with children's outcomes. Family literacy is a far-reaching strategy with high expectations for parent engagement in children's learning and school experiences. It encompasses changing how families communicate in ways that lead to greater understanding and acceptance of the role education plays in children's development, economic opportunities, and quality of life. Addressing these factors requires a clear vision of how changes impact a child's achievement.

Research about the determinants of children's school success has pointed to the importance of the family in children's development and academic achievement for over 40 years (Weiss & Stephen, 2009). The evidence is clear: When parents are actively involved in their children's education, their children do better in school (Epstein, 1996; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994). The body of research is supported by parents', teachers', and principals' responses collected during the TFLP Research Cities Project, which associate Parent Time and PACT Time with positive effects in children.

Henderson and Berla (1994) analyzed 85 rigorous parent engagement studies. This meta-analysis took place nearly two decades ago and resonates with recent research about the powerful influence parents' support of children's learning plays in school achievement. They

concluded that the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is the extent to which a student's family is able to establish a home environment that encourages learning, that has high expectations for their children's achievement and future careers, and where parents are involved in their children's education at school.

It is important to underscore that parental support of children's learning can look very different in different cultures (Trumbull, Diaz-Meza, Hasan, & Rothstein-Fisch, 2001). Diversity does not imply a deficit of child rearing practices.

Regardless of SES, cultural background, and education, researchers have found numbers of parents who encourage their children, talk with them about school, and help them prepare and transition to higher education. In short, families can and do influence children's educational future (Henderson & Mapp, 2003).

The TFLP model builds on families' strengths while acknowledging barriers to success. The components provide guidance and feedback to parents as they deal with stress, adapt to new relationships with their children and peers, and engage with schools to meet their own goals and ensure success for their children. Staff training, ongoing technical assistance, and meaningful feedback are essential program supports.

There is a powerful association between parents' social capital and children's outcomes (Coleman, 1988; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). The concepts of social capital and the theory of change help educators to understand that immigrant families with minimal English proficiency lack the resources needed to successfully navigate school systems (Gordon, Bridglall, & Meroe, 2005). Given that children are educated at home as well as at school it is important to create an open and trusting flow of communications between teachers and parents (Dodd & Konzall, 2002). These open exchanges can lead to more social capital and common understandings about how children learn, and ultimately, to better student outcomes.

The TFLP model builds on families' strengths while acknowledging barriers to success.

Understanding social capital does not necessarily imply effective action. Researchers have concluded that parenting includes general support, expectations, and school specific involvement that affect children's academic outcomes in varying degrees

(Chen, 2005). There is an abundance of research that declares parental support as essential for advancing children's academic performance. Toyota Family Literacy Programs promote these attributes of parenting by encouraging parental involvement in learning, inviting parents to visit classrooms often, and providing adult learning opportunities. To build social capital, educators need to support family literacy programs by structuring school policies, practices, and resources in ways that are responsive to parents' concerns and respectful of their contributions (Henderson & Mapp, 2003).

Children's academic achievement is a shared responsibility that binds educators and families in a partnership grounded by a common purpose.

Local Responses to the Question: *What positive outcomes or changes are attributed to the children as a result of the program (their participation and their parents)?*

Denver, Colorado: Data were collected on children whose parents participated in the Metropolitan State College of Denver (MSCD) — recently named Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSUD) — Family Literacy Program at four Denver Public Schools. The Denver TFLP reported in that study as Families Learning Together (FLT) examined project outcomes of students and their parents who were English language learners.

The study explored the perceptions of teachers and principals about children's outcomes. Reading progress for grades K – 2 for English speaking students in Denver is measured with the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*. The *DRA2* identifies the level (Independent) at which the student is able to read and comprehend text without assistance. It's used to determine the appropriate text difficulty level for each student that challenges him enough to increase reading proficiency without being overwhelmingly difficult.

The *Evaluación del Desarrollo de la Lectura (EDL)*, the Spanish version of the *DRA*, is used for students whose first language is Spanish and who receive reading instruction primarily in Spanish.

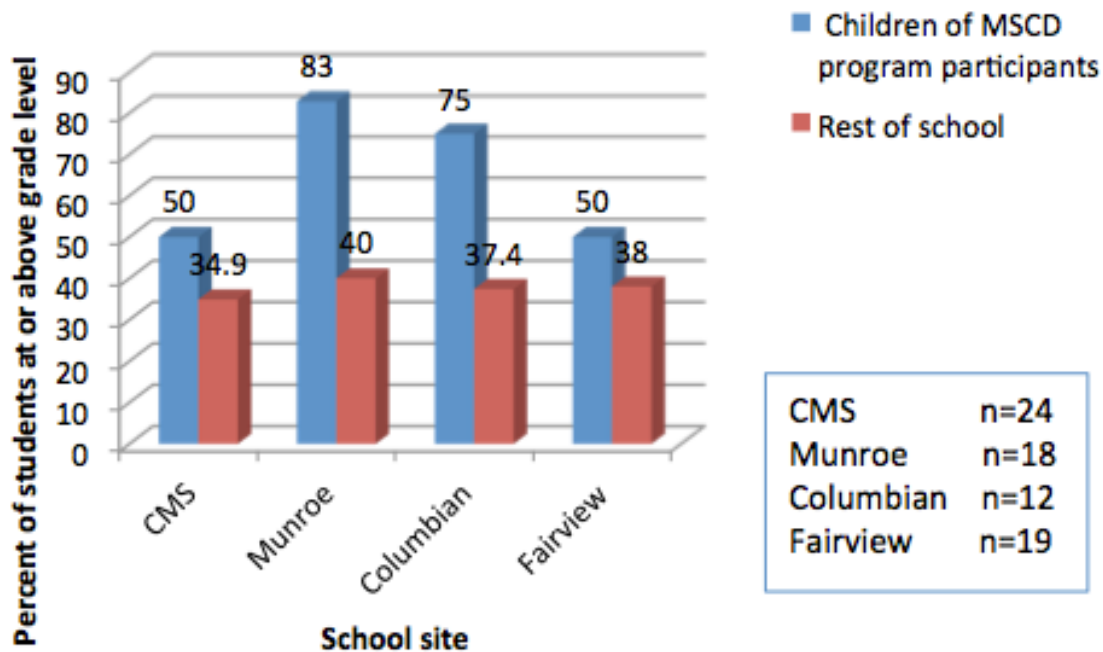
The Denver researchers found that the TFLP students consistently outperformed the comparison students not in the TFLP, in some cases by a very wide margin (Figure 4).

Figure 4 represents a comparison of the grade level status of TFLP students to the grade level information for the other students in the school. Results for students who were either labeled as “proficient” on the Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP) or considered “at grade level” or “above grade level” on the most recent *DRA2* assessment were combined for each school site. Their aggregate percentage was compared to the proficiency percentage reported by each of the four Denver schools.

Figure 4 does not include students who were labeled as “partially proficient” on the CSAP even though partial proficiency is calculated as “proficient” by the state when determining whether or not a school achieves Adequate Yearly Progress. When results for the students described above are included, the gaps increase between students whose parents are involved in the TFLP and those who did not participate. TFLP participants at CMS and Fairview were out performed by Munroe and Columbian. However, significantly more TFLP students were proficient than students not participating in the program.

The CMS students also increased their attendance figures over the three-year period. The only site that did not demonstrate increased attendance over time had implemented only two

Figure 4: PERCENTAGES OF MSCD FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL



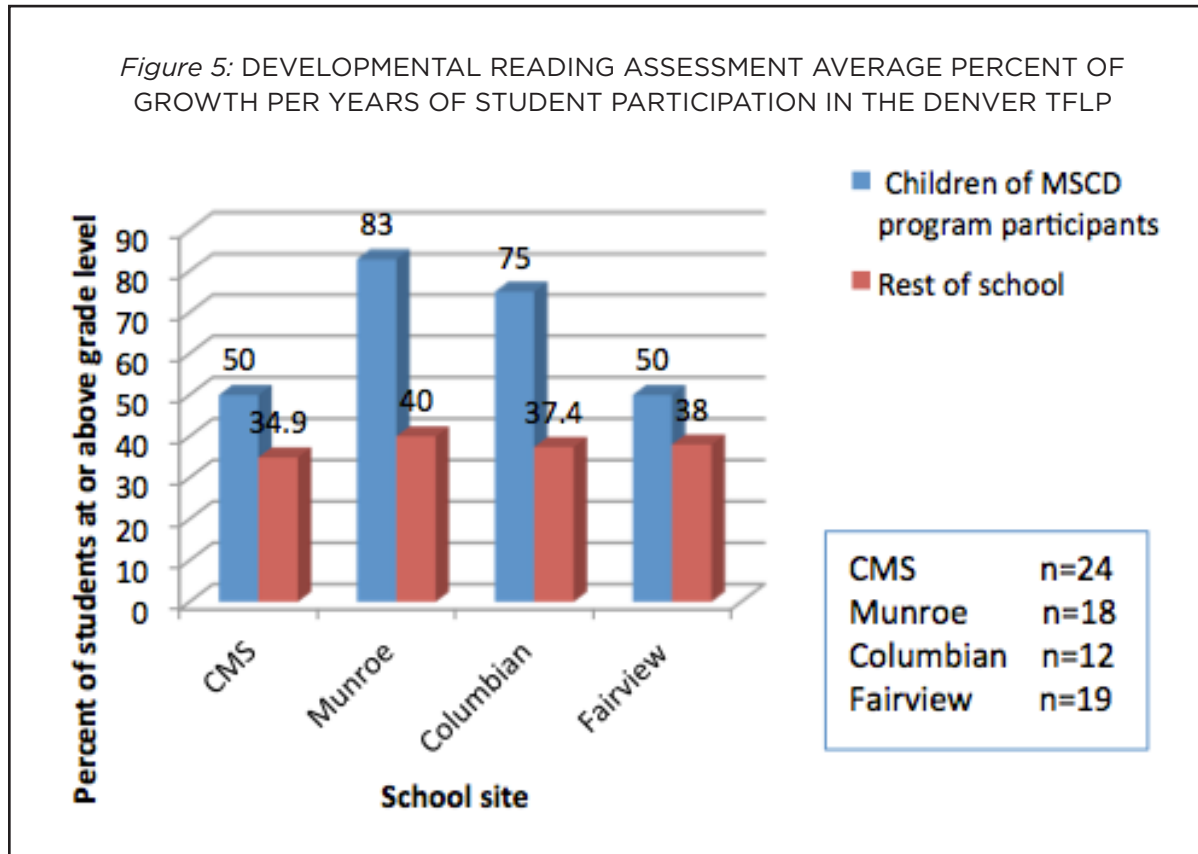
TFLP program components. The lower performing Fairview school population includes many parents and some older children who had no formal education in their native African countries.

The longer parents remained in the family literacy program, the more children's reading skills developed.

Figure 5 shows that the longer parents remained in the family literacy program, the more children's reading skills developed. For example, the children of adults engaged in the program for one year showed an average growth of 9.1 points on the DRA. Children of parents engaged in family literacy for two years achieved average growth of 11.3 points (Figure 5). The average growth was 15 points on the DRA for children of parents involved in the program for three years (Wycoff et al., 2012).

TFLP teachers and principals were asked to compare the attitudes, behavior, and academic achievement about students in their classroom whose parents did not participate in the program. The response choice to each probe was "no difference," "some difference," and "much different."

Teachers' and principals' responses were tallied by school and aggregated across the Denver TFLP program. A robust 91.6% of the educators reported that they had seen at least

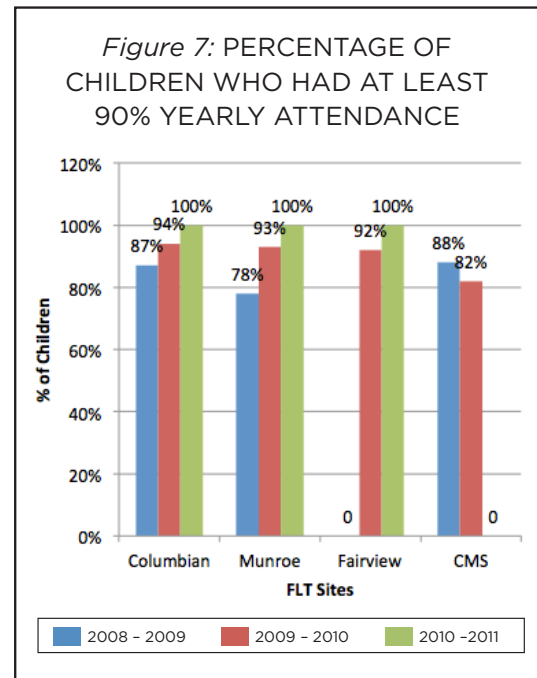
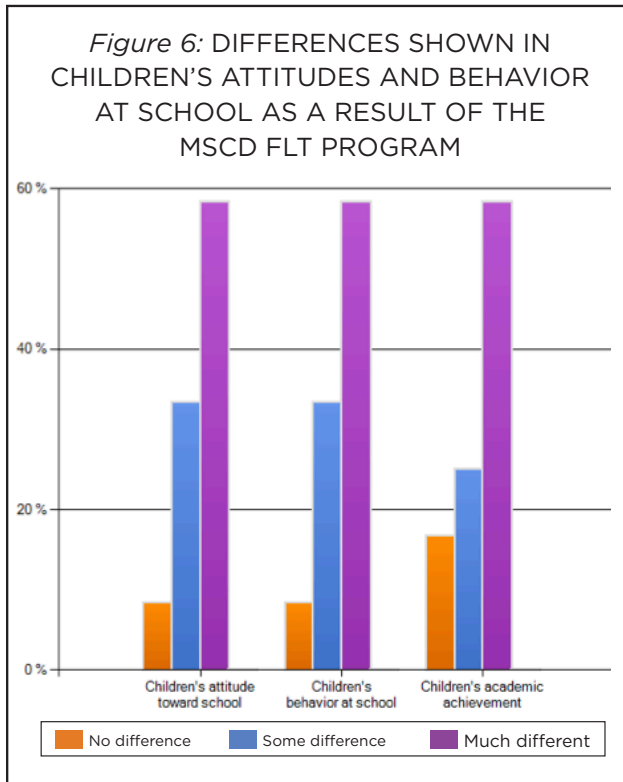


some difference in the children's attitude and behavior toward school (Wycoff et al., 2012). They attributed those effects to parents' involvement in the TFLP. More than half (58.3%) of principals and teachers reported that the children's attitudes and behaviors were much different in a positive manner than they were prior to having parents in the family literacy program (Figure 6).

The Denver TFLP tracked student attendance rates over the three-year period. One school only partially implemented the program. Attendance rates for the other three elementary schools show that at least 78% of the TFLP students demonstrated an attendance rate of 90% or higher (Figure 7).

The Denver study exemplifies the overwhelmingly positive changes in students' achievement, behaviors, and attendance. Principals and teachers attribute this impact to the strong presence of parents in the TFLP who engage in school activities, participate with their children during lessons, and transfer supportive strategies to their homes.

Long Beach, California: TFLP evaluation analysis in Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) measured the progress of students enrolled in second and third grade through the California Content Standards Test (CST) scores. Students who achieve a score of "proficient" or "advanced" are considered to have met their grade level standards in English language arts and mathematics. The CST data were analyzed to determine the percent of program

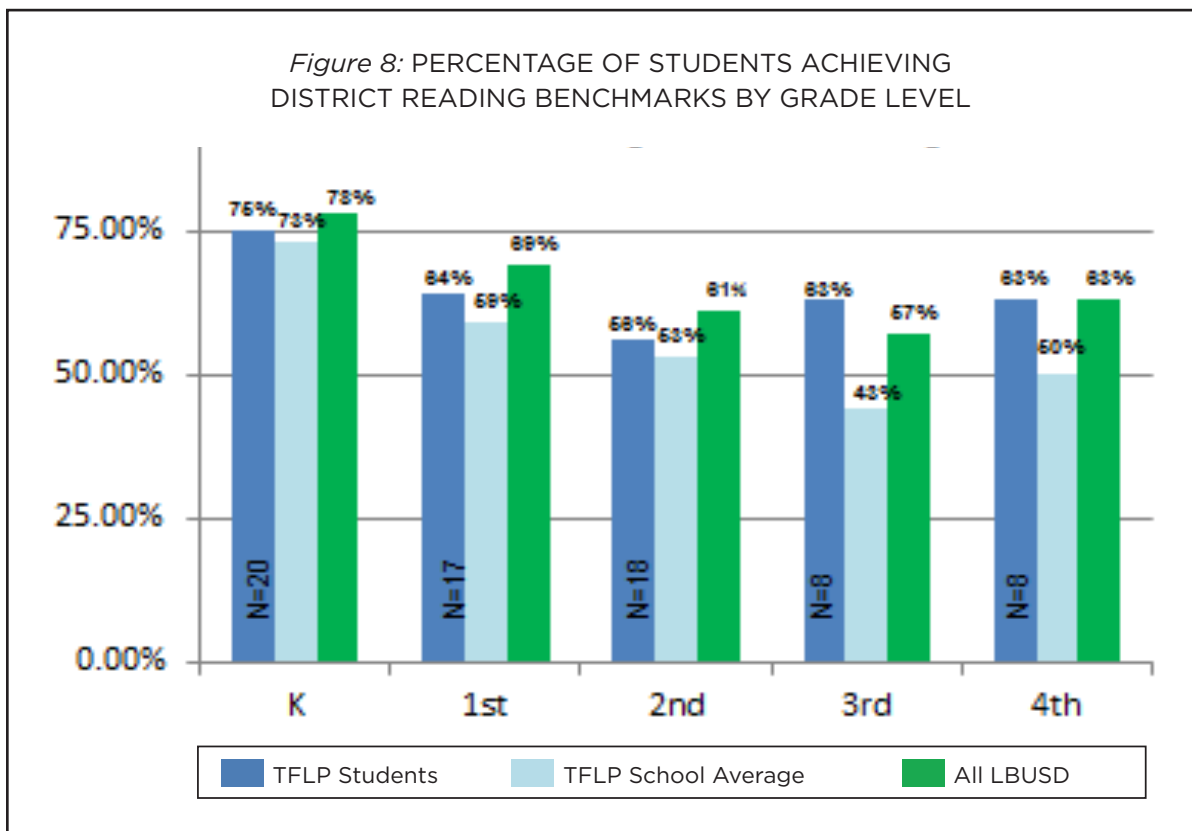


students who achieved a score of “proficient” or higher in reading and mathematics on the CST. The percentage of TFLP students rated proficient was compared to the percentages of English language learners and economically disadvantaged students enrolled in LBUSD schools and to the percentage of students in the district who achieved a score of “proficient” or higher for each level (Lanterman & Appel, 2012).

Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11 display Lanterman and Appel’s (2012) quantitative analyses of TFLP students’ grade level achievement compared to percentages of other economically disadvantaged LBUSD students and to the percentage of students district-wide.

A higher percentage of TFLP students achieved their grade level reading benchmarks compared to the average percentage of other students enrolled in the TFLP schools (Figure 8). It is not uncommon for kindergarten outcomes to be more robust than subsequent years. Learning to read becomes more complex as students progress through grade levels. Rapid gains between benchmarks are expected in kindergarten because many children experience their first formal exposure to alphabet letters and connections between the letters and sounds. For some of the TFLP students, as with many children representing low-income demographic groups, kindergarten provides their first exposure to rhyming and handling books. For most students, kindergarten provides their first opportunity to become aware of patterns within words.

Figure 8 shows a dip at second grade in the percentage of students proficient regardless of whether the data represent TFLP, school, or district mean percentages. The rationale

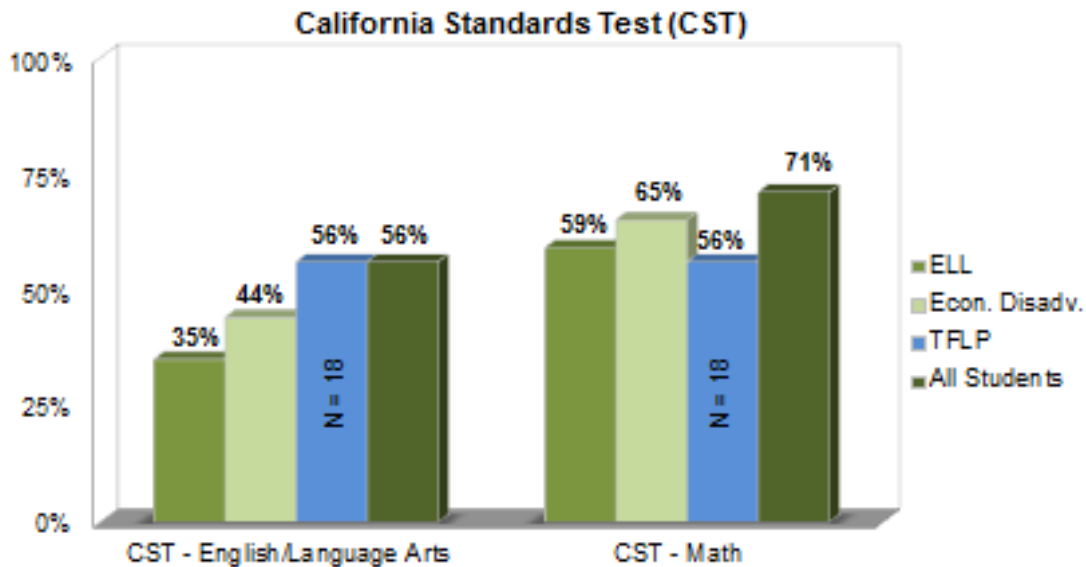


for this phenomenon is common in reading development. Decoding and vocabulary instruction spiral in complexity during second grade when students are constructing meaning and learning new things by reading. Students are expected to read passages with many words composed of complex structures (i.e., multiple syllables, prefixes, and suffixes) and new vocabulary. Although many students become proficient in the essential reading constructs (phonemic awareness, decoding print, vocabulary, and fluency), many transition from second to third grade while continuing to be challenged (Schnell et al., 2007).

Long Beach student progress in reading was maintained at subsequent grade levels when the reading curriculum became more challenging. TFLP students enrolled in the third grade outperformed their school peers and met the district average.

Comparisons of the Long Beach CST data suggest that TFLP second grade students performed at a higher level (classified as “proficient”) than their ELL and economically disadvantaged peers in English Language Arts and were comparable to the district average. Results were not strong for third grade TFLP students as none achieved a score of proficient in reading. At the same time, seven of the eight TFLP third grade students were classified as proficient in mathematics. The pattern changes for fourth grade students (Figure 9) as TFLP English language skills became equal to the district average number of students scoring proficient on the CST subtest for English Language Arts and English skills.

*Figure 9: PERCENTAGE OF SECOND-GRADE STUDENTS SCORING AT PROFICIENT OR ABOVE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS ON THE 2010-11 CST
COMPARISON OF TFLP STUDENTS AND LBUSD SUBGROUPS*



The Long Beach TFLP study compared the percentage of TFLP students and LBUSD subgroups achieving “proficient or advanced” on the California Standards Test, for second and third grade, in reading and mathematics (Figure 10). The progress of students enrolled in second and third grade was documented through their California Content Standards Test (CST) scores. The CST is a standardized achievement test administered annually to California students in grades 2 and above. According to Lanterman and Appel (2012):

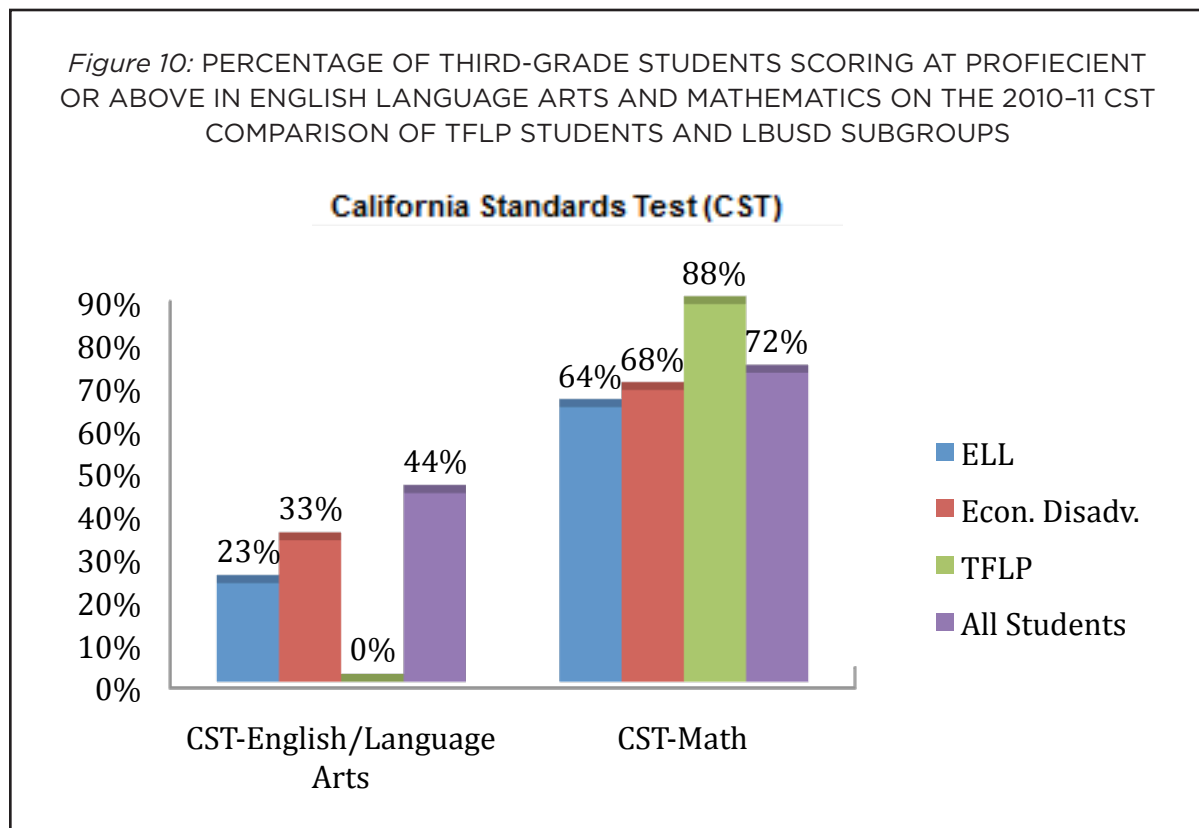
The CST data were analyzed to determine the percent of program students who achieved a score of “proficient” or higher in reading and mathematics on the CST. The percentage of TFLP students rated proficient was compared to the percentages of English language learners and economically disadvantaged students enrolled in LBUSD schools and to the percentage of students district-wide who achieved a score of “proficient” or higher for each grade level (p. 3).

There are significant differences in student scores as measured by proficiency standards for the LBUSD reading curriculum and performance on the state achievement test (CST). One difference is that while 63% of the TFLP third graders (Figure 8) met the curriculum benchmark for reading, none of these students achieved a score of proficient in English Language Arts/ and English language learning on the CST (Figure 10). At the same time, seven of the eight TFLP students were classified as proficient in mathematics (Figure 10).

TFLP fourth grade students performed at a higher level (classified as “proficient”) than their ELL and economically disadvantaged peers in English Language Arts (Figure 11).

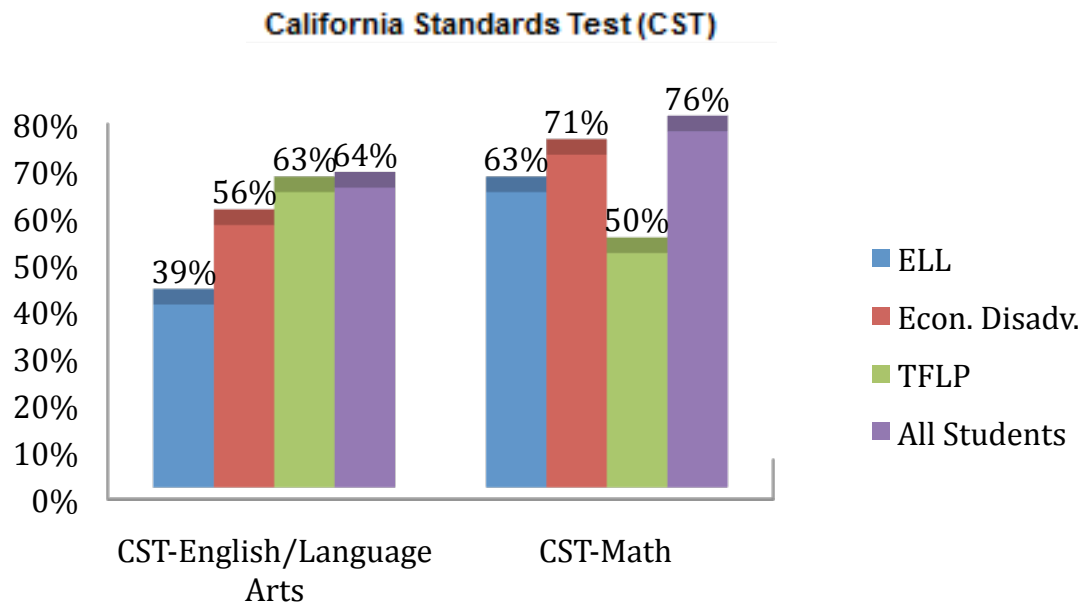
Similar to second grade students, fourth grade students' math proficiency rates were lower than the district average and the ELL and economically disadvantaged peers (Lanterman & Appel, 2012, p. 8).

Los Angeles, California: The Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) provided technical assistance to programs that were included in the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative. Like all Toyota programs, the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative promotes language and literacy development, parenting knowledge and skills, and economic self-sufficiency. FLSN, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), the First 5 LA Family Literacy evaluator and partners at UCLA examined all of the First 5 LA data to answer NCFL's research questions to support the TFLP study. The research methodology was extensive. AIR used a mixed-methods design to collect qualitative and quantitative data at all levels of the system including:



(see Figure 11 next page)

*Figure 11: PERCENTAGE OF FOURTH-GRADE STUDENTS SCORING AT PROFICIENT OR ABOVE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS ON THE 2010-11 CST
COMPARISON OF TFLP STUDENTS AND LBUSD SUBGROUPS*



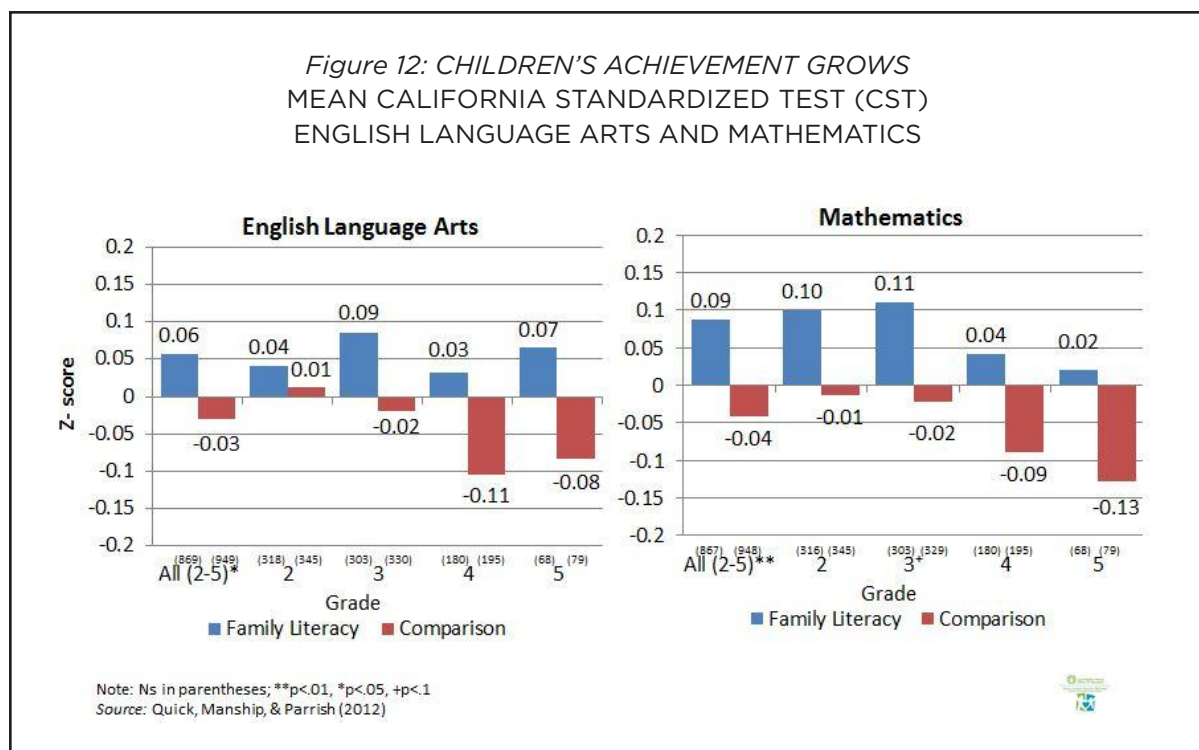
- In-person or telephone interviews of all grantee program directors
- Surveys of all 22 program directors and 138 teachers in Year 5, and 21 program directors and 157 teachers in Year six
- Site visits to eight grantee programs (including observations of eight parenting education classes, eight Parent-Child Interactive Literacy Activities (PCILA) classes, and eight parent focus groups) in Year five
- Direct assessment of 158 children in the fall and 141 in the spring (112 at both time points)
- Classroom observations at 21 programs
- Ninety-six parent interviews and extant data analysis
- A review of FLSN staff summaries of notes taken during technical assistance visits (Quick, Manship, & Parrish, 2012, p. 1)

The AIR researchers found significant growth on English language skills among preschoolers (age 3 to 5) and acceleration in children's vocabulary. Students' progress reflected national norms. AIR also examined the achievement of elementary school children participating

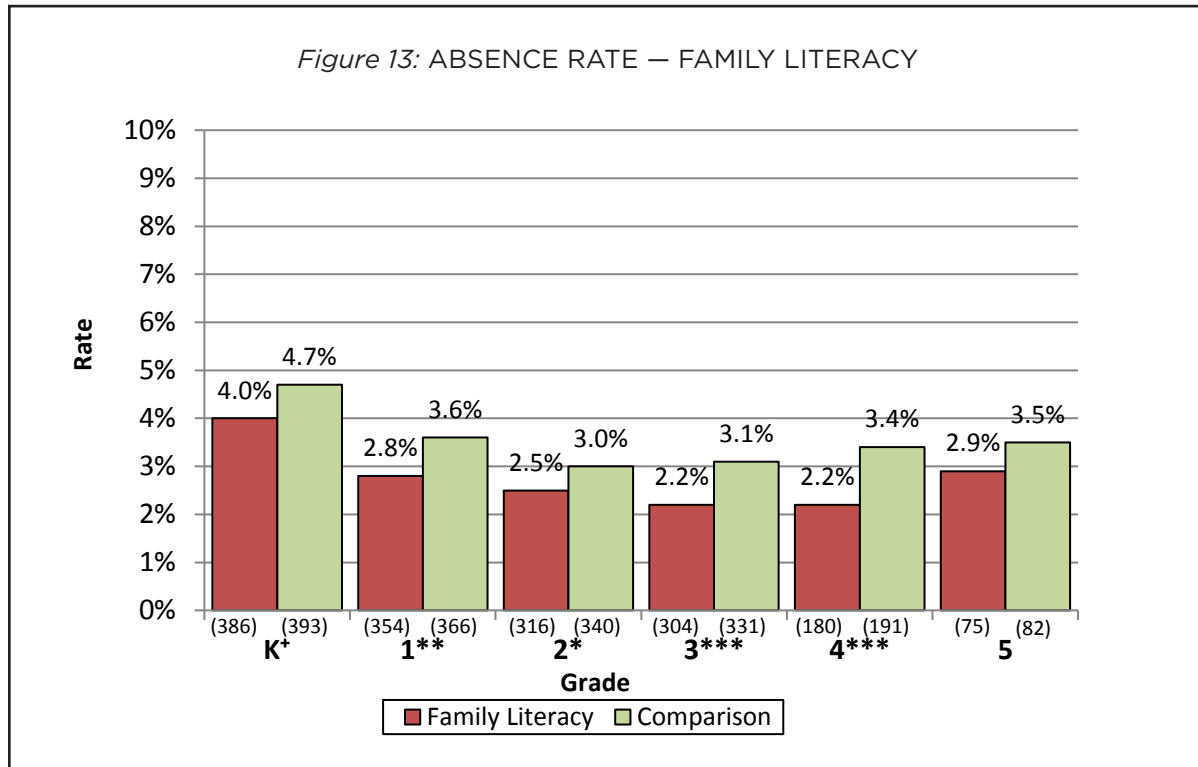
in First 5 LA and compared those outcomes with the achievement of a demographically matched comparison group of children who had not participated. The researchers reported reliably positive results for family literacy children. First 5 LA students (including those funded through TFLP) outperformed the comparison groups on the California Standards Test in both English language arts and math for grades 2-5 combined (Quick et al., 2012).

The family literacy students in Los Angeles had statistically lower absence rates across kindergarten through fifth grade (Figure 13) compared to a matched set of students with the variables controlled for the study (Quick et al., 2011).

Further exploration of the NCFL research question reveals that children enrolled in First 5 LA-funded family literacy were well prepared for transition to kindergarten. FLSN technical assistance provided support for teachers as they prepared families with children to transition from preschool to kindergarten. FLSN introduced and reinforced strategies that coordinated efforts by parents and teachers to help the children transition smoothly. Three key strategies developed by FLSN to ensure families' preparedness for kindergarten are knowledge of:



- Expected behaviors for kindergarten students (ex., sitting attentively for longer periods of time)
- Key elementary school staff (principal, kindergarten teacher, nurse, etc.)
- Basic school readiness skills that help children's self-esteem (Guerra & Perry, 2012)



The First 5 LA family literacy study of Los Angeles' schools concluded that the positive outcomes of children participating in family literacy can be expected to continue past kindergarten through the elementary school years. These outcomes will be found by examining gains in students' reading and mathematical assessments.

Mesa, Arizona: The literacy development of school-age children with families participating in the TFLP program in Mesa, Arizona (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012), was probed with the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS)*. *DIBELS* is a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development. They consist of short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills. The measures are based on the essential early literacy domains discussed by the National Early Learning Panel (2008) and National Research Council (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). *DIBELS* monitors students' development of phonological awareness, alphabetic understanding, and automaticity and fluency with the code.

DIBELS scores sort students into three different levels of risk; at risk/deficit, some risk/emerging, and low risk/established. For all grades other than kindergarten, the End of Year (EOY) Benchmark for Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) is used to assess risk.

Niven and Kuriakose (2012) reported that EOY scores in 2009 showed 56% (n=5) of the students at risk. At the other end of the scale, 44% (n=4) of the students (K - 3) met the ORF EOY Benchmark and were assessed as low risk. In 2010, results improved and fewer (30%) of students were at risk, 20% at some risk, and a robust 50% (n=10) who met the EOY ORF Benchmark were at low risk.

In 2010 in Mesa, the reading development of 20 students in first through fourth grades was assessed using the *DIBELS* assessment of student progress. Progress monitoring is aimed at supporting teachers' decision making to inform instruction for individual students in general and special education about their academic skill development in the elementary grades.

On the EOY ORF, 30% (N = 6) of the students were categorized by their scores as At Risk, 20% were at Some Risk (N = 4), and 50% (N = 10) met the grade level Benchmark and leveled as Low Risk. Enthusiasm for the results is tempered by the knowledge that while the ORF Benchmark is normed per grade level there are no data to determine the risk levels of students at any single grade. There are no comparisons to other ELL students by risk level per classroom of the TFLP students. However, half of the total number of students whose parents participated in the TFLP were on target for expected growth in reading at the end of the 2010 school year.

Kindergarten and first grade students of families participating in the Mesa TFLP demonstrated the strongest *DIBELS* results. The EOY Benchmark for kindergarten and first grade is Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF). A phoneme is the smallest contrastive unit in the sound system of a language. Phoneme segmentation is the ability to segment three- and four-phoneme words into their individual phonemes fluently. For example, when a child breaks a word into its separate sounds, saying each sound as she taps out or counts it. The PSF measure is a good predictor of later reading achievement (Kaminski & Good, 1996).

The PSF is administered for the first time at the middle of the kindergarten year (MOY) with a benchmark set at 18 phonemes. The benchmark increases in difficulty by the kindergarten EOY for the segmentation of at least 35 phonemes. The first grade Benchmarks set at 35 phonemes is the same for Beginning of Year, MOY and EOY. The Mesa data combine the results for 15 students in 2010 on the PSF. Data show that 93% (N = 14) were at Low Risk by the end of the school year. While the Mesa student sample is small, students' early literacy success is a positive program outcome.

Miami-Dade County, Florida: The researchers examined school records for 59 students in three TFLP schools during the 2010-2011 year, one of whom was placed in a special education program. All of the other students earned As, Bs, and Cs on their report cards for the content areas and were promoted to the next grade. Data show that in one school, 68% of the TFLP students were on the honor roll (Ayala & Paneque, 2012). Furthermore, 72% of the TFLP students in that school had perfect attendance. Data also show that at the school with the fewest TFLP students on the honor roll (one of 12 students), that student was the only one with perfect attendance.

Principals were surveyed about their perceptions of changes in the academic performance, behavior, and attitudes of students in the TFLP. All three reported positive impacts on students, such as better study habits, being comfortable in the school environment, and having positive attitudes about learning. Teachers who were interviewed support these observations. Their TFLP students developed a better understanding of homework expectations and as a result, completed more homework. A number of teachers reported that TFLP students grew their self-confidence, increased their peer relationships, and became more engaged during class as the year progressed.

Shelby County, Alabama: Three schools in two communities with high percentages of families for whom English is a second language were selected to participate in the Shelby County TFLP. The researchers compared the annual progress of students whose families

Principals reported TFLP made positive impacts on students, and teachers who were interviewed support these observations. Their TFLP students developed a better understanding of homework expectations and as a result, completed more homework.

participated in TFLP with those who did not on the district's standardized measure of language acquisition. Scores show that 72% of the TFLP students met the performance objective (.5 increase on the *WIDA-ACCESS for ELLs*) compared with 60% of nonparticipating students who met the objective. Forty-seven percent of the TFLP students scored proficient in Language Acquisition compared with only

23% of nonparticipating students scoring proficient (Dobbs-Black et al., 2012).

Additional data reported indicate that the reading levels of the TFLP students increased while the reading performance of their ELL peers decreased. The researchers probed this phenomenon further by studying the reading behaviors of the TFLP parents in the ESL class. Those findings will be reported in a later chapter.

Springdale, Arkansas: In Springdale, results for the reading development of TFLP children participating were analyzed with the state's *Reading Measure of Academic Progress (MAP)*. Results of the Reading MAP exam for grades 2-5 were analyzed using a two-way ANOVA with repeated measures as one of the factors. Reading means for the fall and spring tests did not differ greatly for the TFLP participants and the non-participants grades 2-4. It is noted that the two groups were not equivalent at the benchmark (fall) as the TFLP student mean was higher than the mean for non-participants. Nonetheless, the TFLP students scored higher than the comparison group at the end of the school year (spring).

When results for the *Arkansas Benchmark Exam (ABE)* were analyzed, the percent of proficient students in the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population had continually increased since the inception of the TFLP. Not only did the percent of proficient LEP students increase, the number of LEP students increased. As of the 2010-2011 school year, each of the TFLP participating schools had more than 60% of their LEP population scoring proficient or advanced on the ABE (Bridgforth et al., 2012). During the three years of the TFLP project, some schools grew their proficient LEP population by as much as 31 percent (Bridgforth et al., 2012). The Springdale schools increased the percent of LEP students scoring proficient annually since the TFLP program was implemented. The lack of a significant difference between TFLP participants and other students in grades 2 - 5 suggests the program may have positive indirect effects on other LEP children in TFLP classrooms.

Discussion

When parents pursue their own educational goals while engaging with their children's learning at school and at home, those changes reflect social capital with the potential to enhance children's academic performance. The research reviewed here suggests that patterns of low achievement and poverty within families that took generations to establish can be altered within a single school year.

School personnel and administrators put a heavy premium on student achievement data. State achievement tests that assess student performance relative to core standards are rarely sensitive to the performance of relatively small samples within a larger population.

TFLP research at the building and district levels looks at samples within a subpopulation within a much broader population. Therefore, the sample needs to be larger to create an "effect" size. Examining the scores of 10 students out of 5,000 students does not yield a sample strong enough to generate results that can be inferred from program effects.

School programs are typically put together with the expectation for large short-term gains.

The theory of change that frames family learning and literacy can be stated simply. When change occurs for any member of a family, the effects are intergenerational.

The rationale is that small changes reap a big impact. It's similar to expecting a 10% gain on a six month financial investment when mortgages are set at 2% over 30 years. Contrasting this approach is the long-term approach to change sought by family literacy providers. TFLP strives to achieve intergenerational broad changes using complex multi-faceted strategies over an extensive period of time.

This type of change exhibits short-term gains, but more importantly, it strives to make fundamental change that will impact not only the single student, but also all members of a family. Furthermore, the anticipation is that broad underlying changes achieved today will change the growth pattern in the future and therefore create exponential growth over time for the student.

Consider a hypothetical study of TFLP at Ex Libris Elementary School in a large metropolitan district. Because of the intensity of the TFLP, participation at Ex Libris is limited to 25 ELL families per year. The program evaluator wants to examine the end of year results for third grade students assessed on reading because the superintendent is curious about the program's impact.

While the total student population in the Ex Libris TFLP program is 25, only 3 of these students are third graders. In reality the evaluator has a problem because state assessment protocols require a population of 30 assessments (by elementary grade level and/or subject) to be reported before analysis is conducted. Test results for the three students become

immersed in the scores for 54 ELL students who are part of Ex Libris School's total of 60 third graders. Next, another eight schools that enroll a total of 400 ELL students in third grade absorb the results from Ex Libris. When the superintendent looks at the district's results, the power of the three TFLP students is negligible for determining how impactful the program is on ELL learning.

The challenge for family literacy evaluators is to conduct analyses on relatively small samples and limit generalizations while at the same time setting forth a compelling argument that the program is an effective intervention. Only by using matched samplings procedures, which are part of the TFLP data collection protocol, can evaluators make any generalizations at all. Their generalizations are limited to students with the same demographic characteristics and academic considerations. Sampling involves matching each focus child with an ELL student who has equivalent reading abilities and has had the same opportunities that year to learn how to read, but whose parents were not enrolled in family literacy.

Creating a local program evaluation in family literacy programs that yields statistically meaningful evidence that allows for generations beyond the local setting has been problematic for a long time. Studies that provide high standards of

evidence are difficult to conceptualize, hard to operationalize, and expensive to implement. One reason that few valid studies have been published is due to the nature of an intensive intergenerational education intervention.

NCFL has extensive data that affirm parents' overwhelming endorsement of Parent Time and PACT Time that empower them to build fresh relationships with other parents and their children's teachers.

There are numerous research variables that are impossible to control and threaten the validity of the research. The programs serve relatively small populations of families with children that span the educational continuums with varying sample sizes. For example, a comparison of four third grade students is not likely to impact a superintendent's thinking about the value of family literacy when there are 140 third graders in the district. That is not to say the evidence does not impact school boards, superintendents, and other key stakeholders. As seen in the TFLP Cities Research Project, the beliefs and attitudes of parents, teachers, and principals are more indicative of program quality and meaningful short term performance outcomes that are often reported as attitudes and behaviors such as motivation to succeed academically and reading aloud to children at home every day.

NCFL has extensive data that affirm parents' overwhelming endorsement of Parent Time and PACT Time that empower them to build fresh relationships with other parents and their children's teachers. Between 2004 and 2007, NCFL surveyed parents about their perceptions of PACT Time. Of the 667 respondents, 94.1% "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" that they were more involved in their child's education (National Center for Family Literacy, 2007). The following chart displays the PACT Survey for Parents results.

PERCENT OF PARENTS RESPONDING “STRONGLY AGREE” OR “AGREE”
ON THE PACT SURVEY

Guidance and support of child’s learning is valued	95.7
More involved in child’s education	94.1
Encouraged to ask questions about child’s work	89.5
Better able to help child with homework	91.8
Better understanding of development of early literacy skills in children	92.9
Child likes parent to attend PACT Time	92.8
Better understanding of child’s curriculum	93.1
More knowledgeable about child’s learning needs	87.9
Child’s grades have improved	90.9
Comfortable in child’s classroom	95.0
Teacher helps prepare adult for PACT Time	86.7
Whole family spends more time reading	90.1
Debriefs with teacher after PACT Time	86.5

TFLP parents attended rigorous adult education and ESL classes throughout the school year. They attended parenting classes at least twice a week to strengthen their understanding about teachers’ expectations for children’s learning. Four times a week parents went to PACT Time with their children and observed first-hand what happens in classrooms. They also volunteered in classrooms, attended parent-teacher conferences, joined task forces and parent associations, and assumed leadership roles. These connections between learning events and informed parent behavior exemplify catalytic changes that improve the social capital of families and change the conditions of learning in schools for the better, and ideally, for good.

Principals and teachers expected parents to transfer what they learned at school during adult education, Parent Time, and PACT Time to their homes. This expectation is grounded by the assumption that what happens at home concerning learning and literacy profoundly affects how well children do at school. When school achievement is coupled with supportive home behaviors, it is apparent that parents who understand teachers’ expectations for their children’s learning, behavior, and attitudes are more inclined to model supportive behaviors.

The TFLP researchers examined the effects of family literacy on children’s learning using mixed methods of inquiry. The findings concur that parental engagement in family literacy promotes student achievement, appropriate behaviors, and regular attendance. Evidence provided by the seven studies confirms that the children of parents engaged in TFLP came to school regularly with enthusiasm and appropriate behaviors in hand. Many TFLP students earned honor roll recognition and became more proficiently skilled in English language

usage. Over time, increasing percentages of students engaged in family literacy became proficient in reading and math.

The current findings are supported by previous research about student performance in the TFLP (Sénechal, 2007). NCFL's researchers collected data from teachers about their perceptions of the TFLP students compared to a matched comparison group composed of classmates whose families were not in the program. The principals randomly selected the comparison children (non-TFLP) and distributed the teacher surveys. Using a five point Likert scale, teachers reviewed the students on nine domains:

- Overall academic performance
- Motivation to learn
- Support from family
- Relationships with other students
- Attendance
- Classroom behavior
- Self-confidence
- Involvement in class activities
- Likelihood of future school success

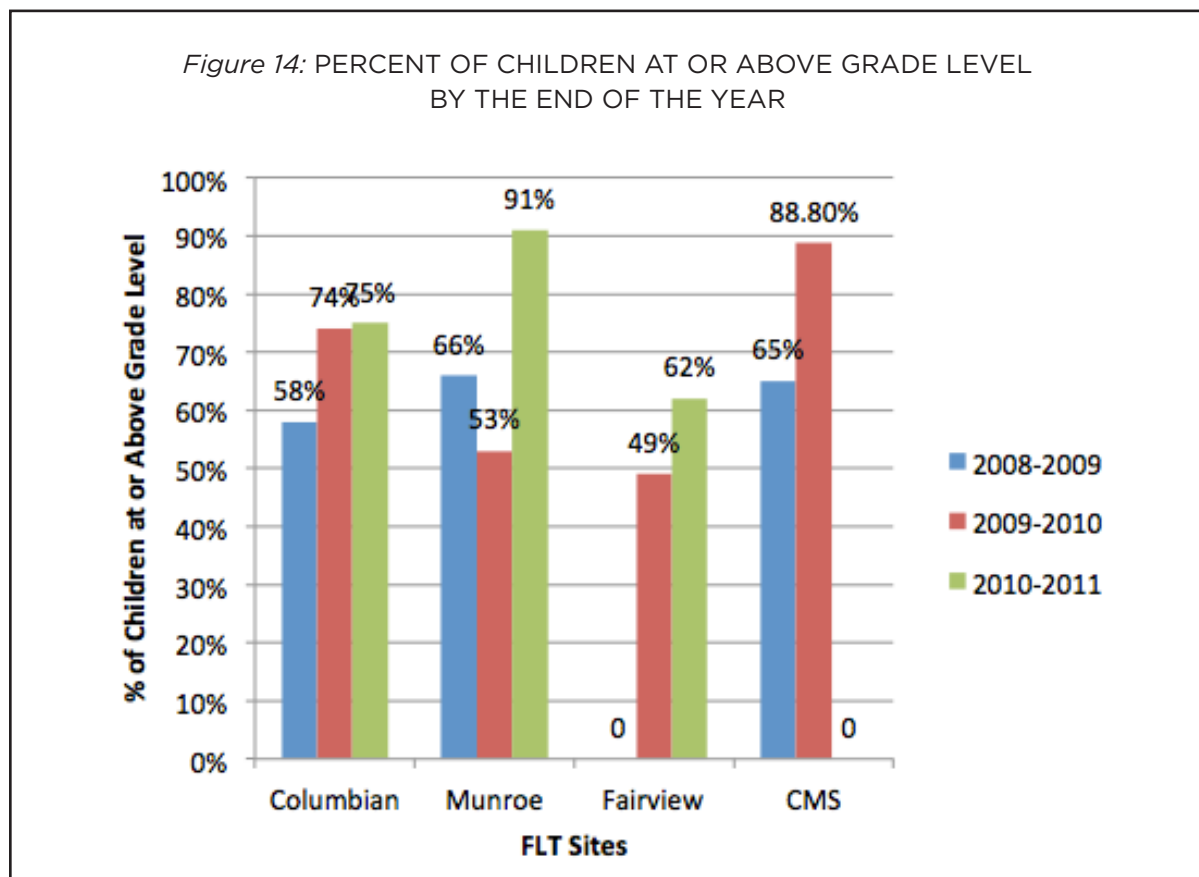
Teachers also reported current reading levels, special needs students, and whether the child had repeated a grade. The teachers rated TFLP students significantly higher than the comparison children in their classrooms on all nine domains. Consistent with survey data in the TFLP Research Project, teachers rated children in TFLP higher on overall academic performance. TFLP students also exceeded their non-TFLP peers on social factors such as self-confidence and classroom behavior.

The Denver (Wycoff et al., 2012) results are consistent with the Sénechal (2007) conclusions. Denver teachers routinely referred families to TFLP whose children were struggling academically or behaviorally, or had poor attendance. Yet, at one school, after the families participated in family literacy for a school year, all of the TFLP students measured by the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2)* scored at or above grade level, as did 75% of participating students at a second school (Wycoff et al, 2012). The results exceed historical achievement patterns for ESL students at both schools. Progress accelerated for TFLP students after each subsequent year.

The Denver data represent a great stride forward in students' literacy development. Student performance at the Denver TFLP schools has been historically low; the majority of students in grades K – 5 score below grade level in reading. However, when the TFLP students were assessed at the end of the school year with the *DRA2* between 50% and 90% (Figure 14) were

at or above grade level (Wycoff et al., 2012). The two schools with the strongest results had the most comprehensive implementation of the program model, as measured by the Benchmarks tool developed by NCFL to determine implementation and technical assistance needs.

Data similar to the Denver TFLP findings are reported throughout the seven studies. While most of the studies lacked sophisticated quasi-experimental research methodologies, the researchers analyzed a great deal of distribution frequency data. For example, 72% of the students in the Shelby County, Alabama, project who were below grade level at the beginning of the school year met the benchmark for Adequate Progress in Language Acquisition by the end of the 2010-2011 school year.



AIR and partners at the University of California at Los Angeles conducted the most comprehensive quasi-experimental research. The Los Angeles study determined that preschool children in the family literacy program transitioned to kindergarten with strong language skills and vocabulary. The quasi-experimental, longitudinal studies determined that achievement among school age children with parents in family literacy approached national norms and those students outperformed the comparison groups on the California Standards Test in both English language arts and math for grades 2-5 (Quick et al, 2011).

Providing educational support is a challenge for parents who do not speak English, who attended little schooling in their native country, or who dropped out of an American public school. The contrast between families who cannot or do not exhibit family literacy traits and those who do is clear. Mothers

with solid reading skills are more likely to read often to their children, have children's books in their homes, and enjoy reading themselves. All of these behaviors support and enhance children's language development and reading achievement. However, parents with minimal literacy who have the motivation to support their children's learning need to develop these skills for themselves. To achieve that goal, they require educational opportunities that bridge their vision of success for their children with adult basic education knowledge and skills.

Previous NCFL studies demonstrate that families hand down literacy generation by generation to the extent that literacy accelerates or constrains children's learning. This is evident in TFLP Research Project findings. Parents, at the time of enrollment, were enduring challenges that limited their ability to support children's learning. Most had little educational success prior to enrollment and few were proficient in English language skills. They resided in communities with low social capital and numerous barriers to economic prosperity. Their children were performing at the low end of the traditional achievement gap.

The situation improved in a relatively short time frame for TFLP families studied. The changes reported by the teachers and principals demonstrate that parents were able to overcome barriers to success and engage in ways that better supported children's learning. All of the studies found positive changes in participating children's achievement, school-

appropriate behaviors, and attendance.

TFLP parents transferred what they learned in the family literacy program to what they did at home. They read aloud with their children, set-aside time to help with homework, practiced their new English reading and speaking skills, and advocated the importance of education.

The TFLP is designed to support and accelerate family literacy in Hispanic families. This is a growing population in American schools. About three-quarters of Mexican immigrants in 2008 were limited English proficient (Migration Policy Institute, 2002-2012). Closing racial and ethnic gaps in schools is an important issue predictive of an uncertain future for children and their immigrant parents in the seven research cities. Achieving social integration and economic mobility depends on the degree of access low income Hispanic, immigrant, and minority families have to quality education from preschool through college.

The results of the TFLP Research Project demonstrate that family literacy programs provide the essential supports necessary to advance parents' English language proficiency and

educational levels essential for supporting children's learning. At the same time, parents become more acculturated within the community and better prepared for the workforce.

TFLP parents transferred what they learned in the family literacy program to what they did at home. They read aloud with their children, set-aside time to help with homework, practiced their new English reading and speaking skills, and advocated the importance of education. Over the course of each school year, TFLP families' literacy levels grew and the learning patterns of two generations were elevated. Parents reported that by the end of the school year their children's achievement, behaviors, and attendance improved. Most importantly, the level of literacy for parents and the extent to which they directly engaged with their children's learning altered the intergenerational pattern of school failure within the course of a single academic year.

The seven studies reported increasing numbers of children from immigrant families who benefit from their parents' engagement with their teachers, principals, and classmates at school as well as personal support and guidance that extends their learning to home. As a result of the combination of parents' support at school and at home, the children in TFLP are thriving learners who represent a break in the intergenerational cycle of poverty and low education. Like their parents, the children of TFLP are becoming better prepared for a future where they will experience success in their choices of colleges and careers.

Chapter 4: CHANGES IN TEACHER ATTITUDES ABOUT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TFLP SCHOOLS

Culturally Responsive Teaching

TFLP researchers probed teachers' and parents' perceptions about their relationships and how those relationships changed over time within the context of the school-centered family literacy program. Education does not take place in a vacuum. Students reflect the diverse socio-cultural variables of their homes and communities. The cultural heritages of different ethnic groups within a community are "legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and should inform content to be taught in the formal curriculum" (Gay, 2000, p.29).

Students and their families represent the local community, but teachers often commute to work from neighborhoods with different social, economic, and cultural ways of life. In these situations the cultural heritage of teachers and students is likely to be very different. While diversity is certainly a community asset, it can pose a barrier to parental engagement and student achievement. Teachers have reported that they lack sufficient skills to meaningfully involve parents in children's learning in schools that are located in communities of color and/or where a language other than English is spoken (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

Family and community involvement are viewed as powerful supports for establishing more equitable and culturally responsive schools (Auerbach, 2009; Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006). Parental involvement can be defined differently in different cultures (Niemeyer, Wong, & Westerhaus, 2009). For example, many Hispanic parents report being more involved at home with their children's learning than at school. Even though research affirms

*PACT Time levels the field for parents
and teachers to openly communicate
about common experiences.*

that support of learning at home has a stronger relationship with learning outcomes (Ferguson, 2008), Hispanic parents may be seen as being less involved with their child's education (Niemeyer et al., 2009).

The ways that parents and teachers approach learning vary across cultures. Ordonez-Jasis & Ortiz (2006) assert that the effects of community and culture, as well as family history and education shape learners' understanding of the world. These factors affect how learners use and make meaning from print. Given differences between the life experiences and socio-cultural perceptions of teachers and their students, researchers suggest, "bridging home-school differences in interaction patterns or styles can enhance students' engagement, motivation, and participation in instruction" (August & Shanahan, 2008, p.8).

Connecting with students' cultural heritage and learning styles requires a broad variety of instructional strategies to connect abstract academic constructs with real-world knowledge

and skills. This requires culturally responsive teaching that Gay (2000) defines as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them. This teaches to and through the strengths of these students.

TFLP is designed to help Hispanic/Latino parents to acculturate into the school community while simultaneously advancing their own language skills (and education) and supporting their children's education. Parents have daily opportunities to engage directly in their children's classrooms during Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®. Parents learn first-hand how teachers disseminate new information, build on students' prior knowledge, and extend learning across the content areas. PACT Time levels the field for parents and teachers to openly communicate about common experiences.

Adult learning, Parent Time, PACT Time, and children's education are interwoven components of the TFLP multi-generational approach to intergenerational education. The program design is affirmed by the research of Weiss, Bouffard, Bridgall, and Gordon (2009) on children's success in school and in life that concludes:

To be successful in school and in life, children must have access to multiple supports, including enriching early childhood experiences, effective schools, out- of-school time programs, and nurturing families. Emerging research suggests that these supports can be more effective when they are intentionally connected to each other (p. 4).

The TFLP draws upon the social capital of the Hispanic community to create a high quality learning environment for diverse student bodies. Research suggests that when low- income, immigrant Latino parents are approached from a strengths-based perspective, parents are more likely to participate in their children's school (Orozco, 2008). Rather than focus on teaching "other peoples' children" (Delpit,1995), during PACT Time teachers and parents collaborate to help "our children" become proficient learners. A teacher in a Mesa TFLP school explained, "I truly am amazed at how fast parents are learning. I'm also thrilled to see how their children are making so much progress in their learning as well." (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012, p. 21).

Local Responses to the Question: *Have teachers' attitudes and behaviors changed about parents' involvement in their children's education as a result of the program?*

Denver, Colorado: The Denver TFLP is directed through the Metropolitan State College of Denver (MSCD) that has the mission of preparing underserved and disadvantaged populations in the Denver Metro area through outreach programs that prepare them for successful transition to college and careers. The TFLP, operating as the MSCD Family Literacy Program (MSCD/FLP) is one of those efforts. MSCD/FLP is grounded by a social justice platform that seeks to "arrest the cycle of poverty and illiteracy in families by providing home and classroom based, intergenerational, bilingual educational services to families that are primarily immigrant and low-income" (Wycoff et al., 2012, p.2).

MSCD/FLP teachers who had PACT Time in their classrooms and principals were electronically surveyed about their views of the family literacy program. Teachers reported positive changes observed in parents who participated in the TFLP program, including increased self-confidence. Parents expressed a feeling of security to the teachers about their

ability to support learning and observed more motivation in their children's attitude toward learning. Parents shared new perceptions about schooling with teachers and principals (Wycoff et al., 2012). Teachers attributed these changes to parents' daily interaction with the school curriculum and their collaboration with school staff. Another critical program component was having ESL teachers available on site to communicate with parents, translate, and enhance parent involvement.

Parental engagement in Denver was linked with student learning. This practice is affirmed by research (Henderson & Mapp, 2003) asserting that linking parent and community involvement with efforts to improve student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement such as volunteering and fundraising.

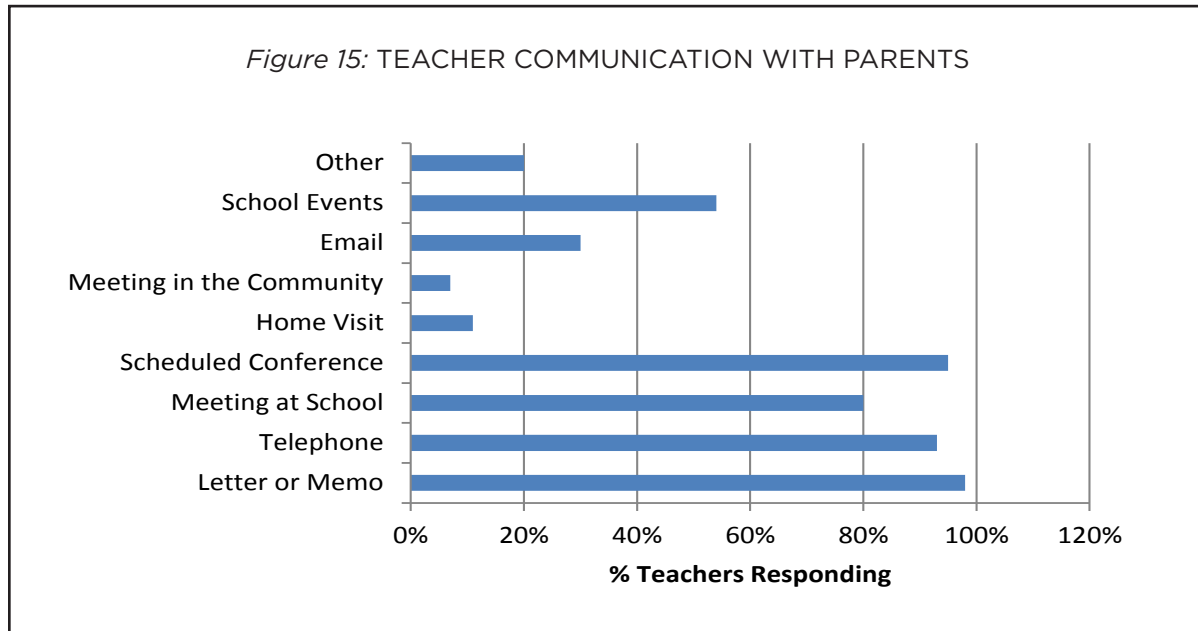
Parents participating in MSCD/FLP focus groups described how learning about school policies, observing classroom instruction, and understanding the curriculum – all contributed to their increased motivation and confidence to assist their children with school-work in the home. These new connections between school and home are predictive of positive student outcomes in the near future, as confirmed by Henderson and Mapp (2003) who found that engaging families in supporting their children's learning at home is the hallmark of the most effective school, family, and community programs and interventions.

Mesa, Arizona: Eighty-six TFLP classroom teachers in 10 Title I schools completed an online survey, and of these, 28 participated in focus group interviews. Changes in teacher, parent, and student attitudes and behavior were attributed in part to training and communication about PACT Time. Teachers emphasized the importance of making sure that everyone involved in the project knows what to expect and how to follow procedures before the program gets underway. Preparation involved setting schedules for PACT Time, classroom set up, and providing opportunities for teachers and parents to clarify understanding and resolve concerns. Parents and teachers also need to prepare children for the inclusion of other adults in the classroom.

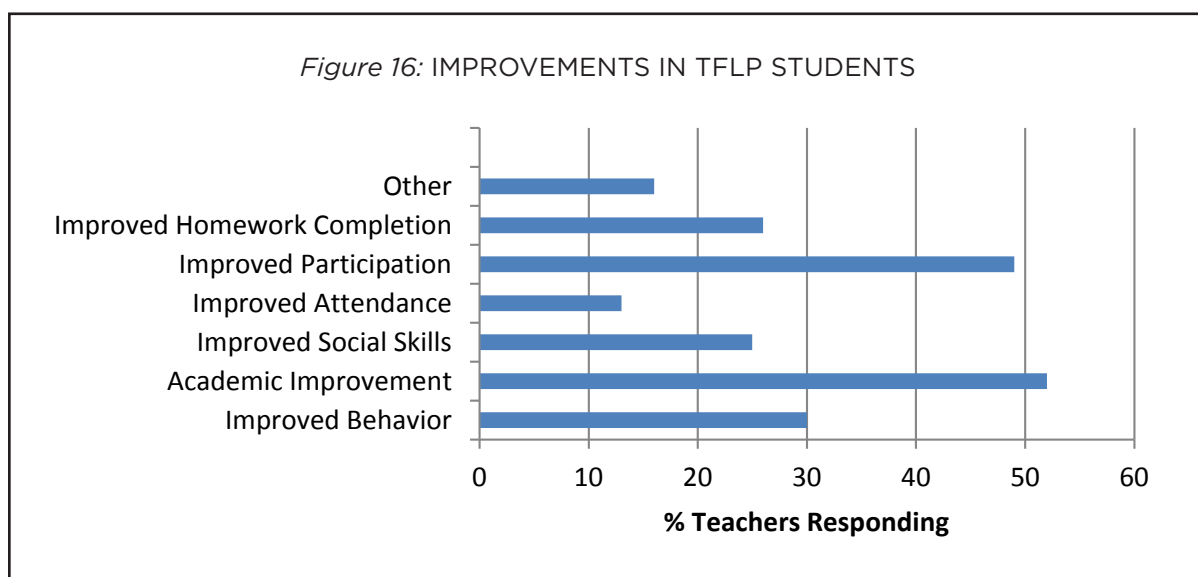
The Mesa study revealed barriers to parent engagement, the most powerful of which is the language barrier. While parent-teacher communication was an important theme for parents and teachers, 41% of teachers felt it was the most significant constraint to parent engagement with schools. Some teachers credited parents' English language limitations as an excuse for not being more involved. One teacher stated, "They (the parents) say, "I don't speak English so I can't help my child" (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012, p. 23).

Some teachers were critical and charged that parents held the schools solely responsible for educating children and were not at all helpful. Teachers used many strategies to communicate with parents as shown in Table 15 (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012, p. 19).

Some survey responses revealed teachers' lack of comfort when relating to parents whose language and culture differed from their own. Parent Time provided opportunities to discuss sensitive subjects such as self-efficacy and culture during weekly meetings with parents and TFLP staff. Participants were able to confront barriers and build on parenting strengths. The themes and insights that emerged from these sessions were shared. Classroom teachers learned that many parents didn't know how to support their children in ways expected by their American teachers.



Mesa teachers in turn, developed empathy as they came to understand how many parents had struggled in school or had minimum educational experiences before assuming responsibility as the family's primary provider. Teachers began to show parents strategies to practice at home with their children, such as reading aloud, asking questions, and reviewing homework. Cultural sensitivity and meaningful communication between teachers and parents built new relationships across cultural boundaries. These changes strengthened the TFLP program and promoted positive student attitudes, behavior, and achievement (Table 16).



PACT Time increased teachers' exposure to Spanish speaking parents, and with the assistance of interpreters and daily interaction with parents, enhanced teachers' confidence to engage in conversations. One teacher attributed this to the parents and her own commitment to the program as "stick-to-it-tiveness – my mom doesn't give up, so I can't either" (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012, p. 20). Teachers outgrew negative attitudes generated from previously frustrating experiences with the language barrier. They found other ways to communicate with parents who had limited English-speaking skills. Mesa teachers felt that as parents became more engaged and present in the schools, the school climate evolved with a greater sense of community. As the partnership grew, teachers saw students' participation, attendance, and motivation improve. Data suggest there were mutually beneficial changes that occurred in the relationships between teachers and parents.

Teachers described common themes about changes in their perceptions of having parents engaged in PACT Time while they taught their regular lessons. Responses centered on parent leadership, improvements in the school community, benefits of parents as role models for their children, and addressing the language barrier. Each theme is briefly discussed in this chapter.

Teachers reported greater involvement in the PTO by TFLP parents. For example, they raised the profile of the PTO to the school level. Parents used the PTO as a vehicle for communicating with each other and an opportunity to exercise leadership skills.

Teachers reported that they enjoyed engaging with parents on campus. Teachers developed stronger appreciation for the unique needs and perceptions of the TFLP families despite a persistent language barrier. On one hand, teachers identified the language barrier as the primary factor that inhibits parent participation in schools. However, teachers candidly revealed that prior to the TFLP at their school, they did not communicate with Spanish speaking parents directly because of the language barrier.

By the end of the program year, teachers reported that 95% of the TFLP families attended scheduled parent-teacher conferences and 90% of the teachers felt the parent participation in those conferences was better or the same as other parents. At the same time, teachers reported that the majority of TFLP parents showed more interest and support of their children's education than other parents. Teachers estimated that 77% of the TFLP parents helped their children with homework (Niven & Kuriakose, 2012, p. 18).

Miami-Dade County, Florida: Teachers overwhelmingly reported increases in the frequency and type of parent involvement in schools that included an increased awareness of expectations for student achievement and behavior. One principal stated the change simply, "Parents were more visible at school" (Ayala & Paneque, 2012). The survey data affirm that TFLP had a positive impact on teacher attitudes about the benefits of parental involvement in children's education. A principal explained, "Teachers who were once hesitant to welcome parents into their classrooms quickly witnessed advantages to exposing parents to what goes on in their classrooms" (Ayala & Paneque, 2012, p. 14). Parents also affirmed that their engagement with the schools improved their English language skills that in turn enhanced their support of children's learning at home.

Shelby, Alabama: The goal of the Shelby County TFLP, known as the Learning English and Parenting Skills (LEAPS) Family Literacy Program, is to empower its diverse student body so

that it reaches its full potential through an innovative educational system. The researchers analyzed interview data from 34 teachers, of which 25 completed surveys (Dobbs-Black, Renfro, Panzica, & Ritchie, 2012). Sixteen parents completed surveys about their program experiences. Teachers unanimously saw benefits from PACT Time, especially in parent confidence about their own learning and essential role in their children's education.

The LEAPS program is another example of the two-generation successful outcomes of family literacy. Almost all of the parents (91%) enrolled in the adult education classes reported that they met their personal

goals (Renfro et al., 2012, p. 3). Their successes included obtaining American citizenship, enrolling in Business English classes at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, and starting a small business.

Teachers unanimously saw benefits from PACT Time, especially in parent confidence about their own learning and essential role in their children's education.

Survey responses indicate that more than 90% of the parents felt LEAPS Family Literacy helped them to understand their children's schoolwork. Half of the parents requested and received additional teacher support to enhance their understanding and fulfillment of teacher expectations for student work.

Springdale, Arkansas: A recurring theme in the teacher and parent interviews is that the parents and school staff bonded as a result of the family literacy experience. When the program began, teachers erroneously believed that the lack of greater engagement by Hispanic parents was a cultural effect rather than a public relations challenge. Teachers candidly revealed that when the TFLP began, they believed traditional Hispanic culture mandated a domestic role for mothers that minimized their role in children's education at school. To their surprise, as parents developed more fluent English language skills in the adult education classes, they also gained self-confidence and engaged in more conversations with the teachers. The trend continued across families over time, and the mothers began assisting the teachers during PACT Time. Several fathers became involved by volunteering to do some school maintenance, where appropriate.

Teachers reported that the TFLP set up conditions where school staff created a welcoming environment. Over the course of the school year more parents became involved and shared conversations with staff, and in turn, the teachers developed a better appreciation for the daily challenges families dealt with as part of their assimilation into the community.

Teachers witnessed the exponential growth of parents' English language skills, increased self-confidence, and obvious comfort when engaging in school activities. The effect of Springdale teachers' endorsement of parent engagement is summed up by a parent's observation during an interview, "Our teachers always remind us that we belong in this school as much as everyone else, including our children." She added, "Schools will do for us what we want to do for us. We will work to better ourselves and our children" (Bridgforth et al., 2012, p. 18).

Discussion

Perhaps the most powerful conclusion drawn from the TFLP studies is they conclusively show that Latino parents care deeply about their children's academic success and are eager to learn how they can support their children's education at home.

The TFLP research confirms Henderson & Mapp's (2003) assertion that schools need to create a welcoming environment for parents and provide more meaningful options for parental involvement that are directly connected to learning. The TFLP teachers and parents grew more adept at communicating across cultures that created culturally responsive learning environments (Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007; Gay, 2000).

Parents' Commitment to School Engagement: A separate study by NCFL (2012) of TFLP demonstrated the conviction of parents to program and school engagement. Data collected on 268 families found a total of 37,900 hours that parents spent in the four component program during one school year. This included an average of 22 hours spent in classrooms during PACT Time. The additional exposure and engagement with core subjects enhanced parents' English in an authentic context.

NCFL's (2012) study found that participating parents' reading, measured by CASAS, improved significantly ($p < .00$) for High and Advanced ESL as well as on the exit criteria. A robust 31.1% of the adults advanced one level on the National Reporting System (NRS) and 17.8% of their scores increased two NRS levels between pre-and postmeasures. The majority (63.7%) of parents made at least one ESL level gain based on the NRS criteria (NCFL, 2012, p.5).

Self-Efficacy and Parental Engagement: The effects of parents' increased English language and reading fluency were passed on through their beliefs and role modeling to their children. The NCFL study (2012) examined parent's self-efficacy through interviews and surveys. Self-efficacy lessons are not part of the TFLP curriculum. Self-efficacy is a by-product of a person's self-concept, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

The extent to which individuals value their capacity for thought and action is a powerful influence on how they can predict events and control those events that affect their lives. For mothers in a family literacy program, self-efficacy involves understanding the powerful role that their education and attitudes have on shaping their children's futures, and that cannot be understated. If a mother credits her academic progress to hard work rather than something she was born with, then her children can learn that actions such as paying attention in class and doing homework are how to "get smart."

TFLP parents made significant increases in their self-efficacy scores.

TFLP parents made significant increases in their self-efficacy scores. As they acquired new skills and knowledge during the school year, teachers observed more involvement in their children's learning and increased numbers of parents were involved in more ways more often at school. The greatest change for parents was that 46.5% increased their participation

across all school activities. Parents who were active in TFLP and out of school time (OST) activities had children whose daily attendance increased significantly ($p > .00$, $(d) .35$) more than a matched sample of children not involved in TFLP.

Changing Beliefs: Hispanic/Latino families are playing a significant role in shaping America's future. The 2010 U.S. Census revealed that Hispanic/Latinos are a national presence living in every region of the nation. The total population of 50.5 million accounts for nearly a fourth (23%) of children in the country who are under 18 years of age. The combined influences of community networks, school infrastructures, and *la familia* (extended family) should prepare Hispanic/Latinos students for a successful transition to postsecondary education and successful careers.

Changing teacher beliefs about parental engagement led to more culturally responsive instructional practices in TFLP. Teacher-parent-school partnerships were strengthened as parents communicated more openly and assumed leadership roles. Teachers became more appreciative of the critical role parents, peers, and *la familia* play in academic achievement of immigrant students (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, 2008).

The TFLP schools provide a contrast to schools where only educators are experts in children's education and families' cultures and backgrounds are discounted (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). Teachers' beliefs about the value Hispanic parents bring to schools affirm research findings (Orozco, 2008) that Hispanic parents are far from apathetic regarding their children's learning, but rather they are not only interested but willing to invest significant time and effort to learn how to best support schools.

The relationship teachers have with students and their families compose the core of social and cultural influences. Data from teacher surveys across TFLP cities yielded positive affirmations of teacher beliefs that student participation, attendance, behaviors, and achievement improved as a result of increasing involvement of parents in family literacy and school. However, there was scant evidence of statistically significant growth in student reading and mathematics achievement reported by the TFLP studies.

What does this mean? Why do teachers and principals overwhelmingly support parental engagement and family literacy despite limited evidence of sustained student growth and achievement? Perhaps it is because school experts measure achievement and success by sophisticated quantitative analysis while some front line providers of schooling, like many parents, analyze student success qualitatively.

Attitudes are difficult to count. Springdale teachers described how as a result of the family literacy program more parents were acculturated into the school and became involved in the academic life of their children. Miami-Dade principals felt parents became more visible in school and regional settings. A Mesa teacher echoed this sentiment by stating, "... talking to (parents) instead of just plowing by, you know, hi, how are you?"

Attitudes can count in decision making and performance appraisal even when they are not clearly defined. In Denver, 91% of teachers surveyed felt children's attitudes and behaviors toward school changed as a result of their parent's involvement in the family literacy program (Wycoff et al., 2012, p. 12) while never explicitly identifying any discrete student

attitudes considered essential for student achievement. The Shelby County teachers viewed kids' excitement, stronger student confidence, and younger siblings being better prepared for school as adequate proof of an effective educational intervention. They felt this evidence counted and the program was expanded to neighboring schools and communities.

The key to understanding the results of the analysis of the research question, "Have teachers' attitudes and behaviors changed about parents' involvement in their children's education as a result of the program?" is the question's focus on *beliefs and attitudes*. Beliefs are rarely grounded by concrete proof that allows a belief to be proved conclusively.

The individual TFLP studies offer evidence of teachers' belief that the more parents serve as contributing and supportive partners in children's education the better it is for all concerned. "Believing" this statement to be true is accepting the proposition that teachers become stronger believers in the positive impact of Hispanic/Latino parental involvement in children's learning when they engage with parents over time and communicate in trustworthy ways that are respectful of cultural differences.

Researchers will confirm that the probability that this belief being true is less than 100%. Yet, the strength of anecdotal evidence of teachers', principals', and parents' beliefs that affirm the positive effects of family literacy were sufficient proof for many of the exemplary districts to replicate and fiscally support their programs after NCFL funding ceased. The institutionalization of family literacy, in part, is the development of culturally responsive schools that incorporate, as Gay (2000) advised, multicultural information, resources, and materials in all subjects that are taught to students and their parents.

These subjective conclusions lead to the final research question that probes family literacy program characteristics/features that make the biggest changes in families (adults and children). That question is investigated in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS AS CHANGE CATALYSTS

Indicators of Family Literacy Program Quality

The Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) in the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) has provided technical assistance to the First 5 LA-funded family literacy programs serving low-income families in Los Angeles County. The First 5 LA comprehensive program promotes language and literacy development, parenting knowledge and skills, and economic self-sufficiency in families.

The FLSN provides training, technical support, and guidance to local sites to assist the development of program quality. FLSN provides customized technical assistance site visits. The site visits provide staff with opportunities to candidly discuss the successes and challenges that accompany efforts to coordinate complex program components and address the challenge of serving diverse families. FLSN staff provide feedback after observing classroom activities and help program staff learn new strategies to enhance program quality. FLSN also organizes events for networking opportunities that encourage sharing best practices.

In 2005, FLSN developed the FLSN Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement in Family Literacy, A Program Self-Reflection Tool (*Framework*). In addition to the *Framework*, FLSN created the FLSN Exemplary Validation Process (EVP) and identified the following characteristics of high quality family literacy programs:

- High aspirations for families
- High expectations for staff
- A systems approach
- High levels of administrative involvement
- A focus on collecting, using, and sharing data
- Sharing what works with the field (FLSN, 2005)

The *Framework* is grounded by the requirements for a number of family literacy and early childhood federally funded programs (ex., Even Start, Head Start). It provides criteria and behaviors for a program to assess the quality of services and assure that strong leadership and administration guide operations. The Framework serves as an organizer to review the other TFLP Research Project investigations of program quality.

High Aspirations for Families and the Role of Self-Efficacy

NCFL developed the *Initial Family Interview* to ascertain parents' demographic status and goals for program enrollment. Setting and pursuing goals is essential for self-efficacy, which is a person's judgment of whether he or she is capable of performing a particular activity successfully. Understanding self-efficacy is important in family literacy when "high aspirations for family" is identified as a primary attribute of high quality programs.

NCFL (2012) recently studied parents' beliefs and found that TFLP had a remarkable and positive influence on parents' beliefs about their capacity to support their children's education. Research (Schunk, 1984) has long held that self-efficacy is an important variable to understand as a facet of motivation and other achievement behaviors. For example, assessing self-efficacy can reveal how confident a parent feels about being able to learn English, help his/her child with homework, and become active in school events.

High self-efficacy in one's ability to become a fluent speaker of English does not assure an equal measure of self-efficacy related to being a homework helper or PTO president. It is a task-specific belief. When parents' self-efficacy is high in relation to their capacity to support children's learning they are more likely to engage in their children's schools and help with homework at home.

People acquire information about their self-efficacy from self-performances, for example, studying for and passing an exam. Success raises self-efficacy, which fortunately, once firmly established in a person's mind, is not greatly diminished by an occasional failure (Bandura, 1982, 1993). People have to think about their goals and the ability, effort, task difficulty, and unanticipated factors that can be attributed to their success or failure (Weiner, 1979). During program orientation, parents have opportunities to discuss expectations for their effort and commitment while also coming to know how participating in each program component will contribute to successful goal achievements.

In learning situations, perceptions of one's self-efficacy are often filtered through the lens of others who provide verbal feedback. Teachers who encourage their students to persist and praise their success have a profound impact on students' self-efficacy. However, self-efficacy is quickly diminished when minimal success is soon followed by failure in a similar situation. Efficacy is developed when learners work to complete a task and experience a degree of success. Efficacy is reinforced when teachers help learners to understand how effort and persistence has made them more capable learners who can master ever more challenging tasks.

Springdale parents were encouraged to set goals and to rank them in order of importance. Five goals were most frequently set by parents; get a better paying job, earn a GED certificate or high school diploma, improve literacy and/or English language skills, pass the U.S. citizenship test, and become a better teacher of their child (Bridgforth et al., 2012). The most frequent first choice was to become a better teacher for their child followed by improved literacy and English language skills.

Springdale's Adult Best Literacy Assessment pre-and posttest comparisons show that by the end of the year scores were significantly higher on the posttest ($t(95) = 15.89, p < .001$) (Bridgforth et al., 2012, p. 22). The contribution of this success to the parent's self-efficacy

is noteworthy. Similar growth was demonstrated by their school age children who scored as well as their ELL peers on reading measures.

Springdale's school age students also demonstrated increasing fluency with English language skills. When the program began in 2007, end of year benchmarks showed the percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students who were Proficient or Advanced in Literacy ranged from 28.9% to 56% across nine schools. By the 2010-2011 academic year LEP students Proficient or Advanced in Literacy ranged from 60.1% to 74.5%. Six of the nine schools reported more than 70% of their LEP students scored proficient or advanced (Bridgforth et al., 2012, p. 22).

The Springdale principals credited nine program characteristics to the success celebrated by teachers, parents, and students (Bridgforth et al., 2012, p. 19). These features correlate to the FLSN program qualities (within parentheses):

- Quality teachers (high expectations for staff, high levels of administrative involvement)
- PACT Time (high expectations for staff)
- Relationships/trust (high expectations for staff)
- Building level leadership teams (a systems approach, high levels of administrative involvement)
- Adult English language classes (high aspirations for families)
- Relevant content during Parent Time (high aspirations for families, high expectations for staff)
- Parent-centered programming (a systems approach) and
- Celebrations of program success

Parents and teachers reported that PACT Time had the most impact on adults' and children's outcomes for at least two reasons. First, parents were better able to help their children because of the things they learned in their classrooms (priority goal set by parents). Second, not only did parents acquire new content knowledge and skills, they had regular opportunities to practice English (their second priority goal). PACT Time helped parents build self-efficacy about assimilating into the school and being more active in their child's academic life.

Springdale TFLP parents' feelings about self-efficacy and responsibility were measured by a 19-item survey with a six-item scale from 1-disagree very strongly to 6-agree very strongly. A paired samples t-test was used to analyze pre-and postsurvey results. The analysis found statistically significant differences between the parents' feeling of self-efficacy before and after participating in TFLP during the 2008-2009 school year, $t(51) = 5.22, p < .001$. The analysis also revealed statistically significant differences between parents' feeling of responsibility about their children's education before and after participating in the

program, $t(51) = 2.40, p = .020$ (Bridgforth et al., 2012, p. 28). Three years later the measure was administered to a new group of parents. No significant differences between pre-and postmeasures were detected.

However, the mean ratings for the self-efficacy pretest were higher (4.7) for 2010-11 ratings than mean pretest ratings in 2008-09 (3.33) as were the 2010-11 postmean ratings (4.82) compared with 2008-09 (3.68) postmean ratings (p. 28, 42). On the measure of feelings of responsibility, 2008-2009 pre-and postmean ratings were slightly higher than 2010-2011 ratings. The evaluator did not test data for statistical significance between pre-and postmeans.

Parents' self-efficacy is clearly linked with overall program outcomes in Springdale. The program originated in three schools and quickly expanded to nine elementary schools and one middle school in the district. The message was clear. Parent involvement increased in every school in a variety of ways. Parents reported reading more often to their child at home and in English after participating in family literacy. Parents became frequent visitors to their children's school observing lessons, attending parent-teacher conferences, and exercising leadership on parent advisory committees. They became true stakeholders in the learning community. Parents and school staff bonded comfortably and shared their enthusiastic endorsements of TFLP and the schools with nonparticipating Hispanic families.

As a result of the TFLP, the school climates were culturally relevant with high aspirations for success across generations of learners, high expectations for staff competence, replete with meaningful learning opportunities, and endorsement by the district's administration in a systematic fashion.

High Expectations of Staff

While Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time® was most often cited by teachers and parents as the most powerful aspect of the TFLP, it presents challenges for teachers. Miami-Dade teachers reported that scheduling PACT Time had to be flexible enough to fit into parents' availability while meeting the needs of all students in the class. Lessons were routinely arranged to expose parents to important content and concepts. Teachers were disappointed when parents were not in attendance after planning for their participation. They also acknowledge the importance of making parents comfortable with classroom routines and having clear expectations for their involvement. Teachers conceded that one shortcoming that diminished program satisfaction was their own lack of skills for crossing cultural and language barriers with parents. Another common concern reported on teacher surveys was teachers' general frustration over the erratic participation of some parents. As with students in general, poor attendance rarely leads to great strides in learning.

A Systems Approach

All of the TFLP Research Project programs were located in large, unified school districts. Administrative leadership and support were essential for selecting schools with appropriate

populations. Denver and Mesa insisted that building principals with a history of solid educational leadership who agreed to provide staff buy-in should be the priority settings for programs. Without local leadership, fidelity to the TFLP program design could be jeopardized. Another consideration was equitable allocation of grant monies and other resources. Staffing considerations, including appropriate credentials for working with adults, building space, instructional resources, and scheduling mandated a coherent approach to program management.

Administrative Involvement

The support of building principals is an essential condition for high quality family literacy programs. The FLSN/LACOE (2005) research reported three ways administrative support contributes to program success through time, resources, and personnel. Program directors and administrators of lead agencies need time to work together and make sure staff time is adequately allocated over time to align activities and strategies with project goals. Staff need time to accommodate and assimilate changes in their practices as they implement PACT Time and Parent Time and spend more time communicating with parents.

Resources have been severely compromised during budget cuts associated with the recent economic depression. Telling staff to do “more with less, because doing less is better than doing nothing at all” is a weak strategy to motivate greater effort and fiscal responsibility. The project director working with lead agencies in the community may use asset mapping to leverage additional resources to support the family literacy program over time.

Staff competencies, credentials, and experience are hallmarks of highly qualified professionals. Recruiting adult educators with bi-lingual language skills, empathetic dispositions, and solid pedagogical skills is a challenge. The lesson learned over time in the majority of family literacy programs is that parents “vote with their feet.” If they are uncomfortable with a classroom teacher, they may skip class, or leave the program. When adults feel that an adult educator is not respectful, they avoid confrontation or simply drop out. When staff provide clear feedback and encouragement in ways that are culturally sensitive and indicative of a trusting relationship, adults respond in a similar manner.

Focus on Data

NCFL provides TFLP directors with an *NCFL Data Collection System* that insures consistent use of measures and data collection strategies. The survey and interview protocols for parents, teachers, and principals include clear directions for administering the instruments in English and Spanish. Data are submitted according to a common schedule and analyzed by an external evaluator.

Sharing What Works With Others

Promising practices for adult educators and early childhood teachers when shared openly advance the field of family literacy and parental involvement in schools. FLSN described its work to develop a “culture of quality” in family literacy programs (Guerra & Perry, 2012). These programs regularly engage in reflective practice to put theories into practice and transfer thinking into action.

Participants at the NCFL 2012 annual conference represented the culture of quality. Researchers and program directors from the TFLP Research Project shared their findings at a closed research symposium during the 2012 NCFL conference. Each project gave a presentation about program impacts on adults, children, schools, and their communities. The researchers and program directors shared abstracts, compared implementation and evaluation strategies, and discussed results. The researchers made no judgments about the methodologies others used to ground their studies or contested the findings shared. They listened to each other, spoke openly, and learned.

The symposium members concurred that there is a great need for a common tool to measure elementary student literacy. While time consuming and intrusive, without a consistent measure of literacy and analyses strategies that can be aggregated across schools and programs, family literacy as a field will be compromised by small samples from individual school districts and minimal power to generalize results beyond the local setting. The researchers are hopeful that with the transition to Common Core State Standards, consistent measures are forthcoming that will be agreed upon and adopted by all states.

The researchers also called for common operational definitions used to describe student and adult outcomes. Terms like attendance and behavior are defined at the state rather than national level. They recommended that terms used to describe program components, expectations, and performance outcomes be communicated in lay language using common vocabulary rather than academic jargon.

Symposium researchers advised that staff make data and other information meaningful for parents. Just as teachers are charged with making assessment driven decisions about what to teach to whom and in what ways, parents need to understand how student scores determine the type of help their child needs at home and in the classroom. One suggestion was that a portion of Parent Time each marking quarter of the academic year be devoted to understanding student scores and interpreting children's progress.

Excessive paperwork is problematic in programs that blend different education agencies that require duplicative reporting. The symposium participants agreed that online data collection should be streamlined and if possible be transferred (with permission) to cooperating partners. This would involve the creation of a database that is accessible to program directors and evaluators.

NCFL contracted with an external research and evaluation specialist to work with the seven research projects as they prepared for the symposium and completed their research reports. The evaluator communicated with all of the researchers to clarify portions of their studies, resolve data dilemmas, and amplify objective conclusions about their studies. She

then synthesized their work with scientifically based research on family literacy, parental involvement, and educating English language learners. She also connected the studies to theories of change, collective impact, culturally responsive teaching, and other relevant constructs. This compendium of information is taken from four major research questions posed by NCFL and explored by the seven TFLP research cities. Each city's exploration of those questions comprises the research synthesis.

Chapter 6: FROM CATALYSTS TO SYNTHESIS

Summary of Findings from the TFLP Research Studies

The first finding responds to the age old question, does parental engagement in children's learning make a difference in children's achievement? TFLP Research Projects provide evidence that programs narrowed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA (economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities). The studies demonstrated program success contributed to increasing student achievement.

The second finding affirms that parents enrolled in TFLP became more engaged in their children's schools. TFLP studies demonstrate significant improvements in parental engagement in their children's learning and education. An important goal of the TFLP is to get parents optimally involved with their child's school. To measure this, the *NCFL Initial Family Interview* was administered to parents to determine the frequency and reasons they visited their child's school before and after participating in the TFLP. Data suggest that TFLP parents were more likely to conference with teachers and attend school events and after school programs after participating in the TFLP.

The third finding connects literacy with learning. Intergenerational literacy is the cornerstone of TFLP. Reading to and with young children accelerates oral language development, expands receptive and expressive vocabularies, stimulates attention to print and letter sounds, and builds knowledge that serves as an essential framework for comprehension. When parents read children's books aloud they not only help their children, they are practicing decoding and other skills that boost their own literacy levels. The bonus here is that "a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future success..." (Sastry & Pebley, 2010).

Parents reported having read to their children more times per week on the postsurvey compared to the presurvey with the exception of reading to their child every day. The high frequencies of this response on the presurvey could be a result of an experimenter expectancy effect where the parents felt they needed to be reading more often to their children and thus marked they read to their child every day. As their trust in staff and the examiners grew they became more comfortable when describing their personal reading habits. Additionally, many parents who reported they were unable to read to their child or they did not read to their child on the presurvey reported reading to their child after participating in the TFLP. Additionally, more parents reported reading to their children more frequently in English on the postsurvey than reported on the presurvey across studies/cities.

The final finding is that TFLP partnerships with the private sector and matching funds brought family literacy to scale. NCFL has an excellent track record for working with cities to support their successful implementation of multi-year initiatives through public and private partners. NCFL has had long-term partnerships that include Toyota, the Verizon Foundation, and MetLife Foundation, as well as other partnerships. These partnerships require intensive and ongoing collaboration as well as a deep understanding and evaluation of mutual goals, objectives, and deliverables.

In the next section of this chapter collective change and impact will be discussed in order to project how these findings may be synthesized to inform and guide practitioners, policy makers, and funders interested in preparing parents and schools for greater family engagement in children's learning.

Collective Change

Children born two decades ago entered a world where life was different for both the affluent and the impoverished. There were fewer modes of communication. Bill Gates was celebrated for inventing software that made smart typewriters. Few people imagined that in the near future they would be typing messages with their thumbs on smart phones that are smaller than a deck of cards.

Technology has revolutionized communication. Yet decades after the infusion of personal computers and the Internet, children still enter kindergarten already labeled at risk for failure because their parents can't communicate in English or demonstrate literacy. Regardless of smart phones, social media, and a global marketplace, closing the divide between rich and poor is still in part dependent on building the educational and literacy success of adults who are parents of young children.

Within two years of the recent economic downfall 36 states made major budget cuts to education (Johnson, Koulisch, & Oliff, 2009). Today educators must do more to improve achievement outcomes while at the same time being allocated fewer fiscal resources. The seven research studies represent smart, equitable corporate and public investments in education that have begun to reduce inequalities associated with the achievement gap. The seven school districts have redesigned ways to link families with their schools and communities by creating a common agenda that calls for a sustainable, equitable future.

The TFLP research studies describe positive impacts of family literacy on parents' goals and teachers' expectations for students and their families. The TFLPs are catalysts for change in families and schools. Each program component is a disciplined effort to translate "lofty aspirations into concrete reality" (Collins, 1999, p. 1). The seven studies provide evidence that identify program components as powerful tools to link objectives with performance and aspirations for a good education with high quality schools. The TFLP research has helped to clarify the power of catalysts, social network and social change theories, and culturally responsive learning environments to empower families to help prepare children for college and careers.

The theories explained in each chapter allow other researchers to examine connections between parents and teachers, parents and their children, and children and their teachers. New knowledge about these social networks may assist practitioners so that they can better understand the connections between the will of a parent to become involved in his or her child's education and increments of change that impact the family, school, and community. The research synthesis sought to explain what it takes to make a good family literacy program a great one.

What can be learned from these studies is that great family literacy programs are the products of highly capable staffs where everyone contributes to the best of their ability to the organization. What is true for the educators is also true for parents and their children. Good work habits beget great results worthy of honor and respect. This requires a long term and persistent commitment to the goals and a sense that they are met one family at a time. Breaking the cycle of low education and achievement requires reframing the way many parents view school and the way many educators think about families' roles in schools.

TFLPs "work" when everyone on staff trusts that change is possible and that the educational forecasts for disadvantaged and immigrant children can be altered in the near future. These beliefs can radically reform the social network, leverage social capital, and change the beliefs and behaviors in an educational system. To this extent, the seven exemplary programs can serve as "tipping points" to reaffirm the power of literacy and what Gladwell (2000) describes as "the potential for change, and the power of intelligent action" (p. 219).

The studies suggest that increases in student achievement have yet to demonstrate large enough effect sizes due to small samples and the need for stronger evaluation designs. However, the studies provide evidence that combined catalysts of parent participation in learning in children's classrooms, increasing parents' English language skills, enhancing the home literacy environment, and greater parental engagement in schools are connected with positive learning outcomes. Changes in Hispanic students' general achievement in the TFLP schools showed growth within a single program year. The TFLP is grounded by the goal of breaking the intergenerational cycle of low literacy and poverty that took years to establish. While long-term studies of student achievement in TFLP schools was not the focus of this research project, further investigation is recommended.

Collective Impact

When school personnel and parents commit to a common agenda to solve a problem such as the achievement gap, their collaboration is an example of collective impact. TFLPs stimulate collective impact when the program operates as a "disciplined effort that includes a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants" (Kadia & Kramer, 2011, p. 38). Each of the seven cities demonstrates that fidelity to the comprehensive program design is complex, slow, and work that encompasses parents, adult educators, classroom teachers, administrators, and students.

One shortcoming of the studies is that the local designs were not strong enough to produce generalizable, statistically significant findings regarding program effects on children's reading achievement. There are no common measures of students' reading development or achievement that could be collected across all participants to ensure that the TFLP efforts are aligned with grade appropriate achievement expectations. As the Common Core State Standards are adopted nationally it is expected that common measurements will emerge and allow for state to state comparisons. At this time NCFL provides TFLP programs with its Data Collection System to measure a number of parent and child behaviors and attitudes.

Teachers, principals, and parents interviewed in the studies voiced the importance of continuous communication. Collective impact is dependent on consistent, open communication across social networks that builds trust and creates common motivation (Kadia & Kramer, 2011). Communication helps all stakeholders in family literacy to assure mutual objectives.

The final condition of collective impact is for the effort to have backbone support. The TFLP was created and is managed by NCFL. Program implementation across schools was assessed with the Benchmarks tool to assure fidelity to the project design. NCFL coordinates professional development for participating school districts to channel change in a consistent, meaningful way.

Synthesizing Social Innovation and Parental Engagement in Schools

Change is often the product of passion rather than information (Wheatley, 2006). Social networks are created by an open exchange of information whereby people learn from each other and with each other. Information that is meaningful to the network spreads rapidly. When parents share their experiences with schools, the stories of despair and joy impact the thinking and behaviors of other parents. When teachers rave about positive changes in their students, school boards become curious and want to locate the root source of those changes so that they can be replicated and sustained.

This study represents local and national support of a long term process of social change. When the studies were initiated the answers to the questions were not identified in advance. The researchers gathered data individually. Each program city gave greater focus to some questions over others because they were perceived as more relevant to their program. The researchers were encouraged to steer their own inquiry with a mixed methods approach and allowed to present their findings in styles that were most meaningful to their stakeholders. Each program city hired an outside researcher to manage the program evaluation in each participating city.

There is a sense of urgency for change as family literacy programs compete for resources in educational systems. NCFL champions family literacy as a viable, cost effective strategy to close the achievement gap and prepare families for college and careers. The collective impact of this synthesis of the research began with the seven school districts that are sustaining family literacy as a school improvement strategy. The studies describe how schools and families benefit from the increasing social capital among Hispanic families.

Effectively coordinated programs align services with adults' literacy levels and barriers to their success. They focused on common educational goals. These family literacy programs reflect the Nigerian Igbo proverb "Ora na azu nwa" – it takes a village to raise a child. The shared understanding across family literacy service providers, educators, and families is that we are all part of the village; all students are our children; and we educators and parents share the responsibility for their future. Working together, in and out of schools, we can create a future with equitable educational opportunities across economic levels, communities, and generations.

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