

CLASP
CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY



The Challenges of Change

Learning from the Child Care and Early Education
Experiences of Immigrant Families

by Hannah Matthews and
Deeana Jang

MAY 2007



6. Responsiveness of Child Care and Early Education Programs

Immigrant families face numerous difficulties accessing high-quality child care and early education. Their participation in child care and early education is affected by the extent to which programs and services are responsive to their needs. It's important both to adequately address these barriers to access *and* to improve the quality of all early learning opportunities for children of immigrants, so that their unique needs are met. Merely removing the barriers to enrollment does not guarantee that immigrant families have access to high-quality experiences. Today's early childhood programs must be prepared to serve immigrant families from a diverse set of countries and circumstances.¹

Young children of immigrants need experiences that support their home- and second-language development, that respect their families' culture and traditions, and that offer meaningful opportunities for all parents to be involved.

There are several indicators of quality, factors that encourage conditions in which all children are better able to learn. These include low teacher-to-child ratios, small group sizes, qualified teaching staff, positive teacher-child interactions, parental involvement, and access to comprehensive services such as health care and mental health services.² Wherever children are—whether in formal or informal settings—it is essential that they receive quality educational experiences and that their teachers and caregivers have access to the supports they need to provide the most appropriate and culturally competent care.

Child care and early education programs must be intentional about the services they provide for children of immigrants to obtain all of the potential benefits of a high-quality program.

1 Shonkoff and Phillips (eds.), *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*. See also, Hepburn, *Building Culturally and Linguistically Competent Services to Support Young Children, Their Families and School Readiness*; and National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity*.

2 Schumacher et al., *Meeting Great Expectations*; Bowman et al. (eds.), *Eager to Learn*.

Young children of immigrants need experiences that support their home- and second-language development, that respect their families' culture and traditions, and that offer meaningful opportunities for parents who speak languages other than English to be involved. For children of immigrants, high-quality child care and early education means having staff who speak their language, represent their culture, and are trained to work with culturally and linguistically diverse children. High-quality child care and early education is supported through strong standards that recognize and support the cultural context in which children develop and



through content and curriculum that reflect children's home culture. In this chapter, we look at some of the essential components of quality programs for all children and focus on their particular importance for immigrant families with young children. These include:

- Qualified bilingual and culturally competent providers,
- Culturally competent program and content standards,
- Meaningful parental involvement, and
- Access to high-quality comprehensive services and family supports.

Qualified Bilingual and Culturally Competent Providers

In order for children of immigrants to experience quality early education and to enhance academic and school readiness outcomes, bilingual and bicultural providers are essential. Many immigrant families are seeking programs with staff that reflect their language and culture. Yet, our research found the following:

- Multilingual and multicultural capacity is in short supply;
- A need for additional training and supports for informal care providers;
- Barriers to recruiting, training, licensing, and retaining immigrant providers; and
- A need for professional development and training, for all providers, on working with diverse families and on second-language acquisition.

Multilingual and Multicultural Capacity is in Short Supply

Young children need support in the development both of their home language skills and of their English skills.³ Yet, there is a critical shortage of bilingual and bicultural providers in the

3 Coltrane, *Working With Young English Language Learners*.

early childhood field. A survey of state administrators of early childhood programs found a lack of bilingual staff and insufficient training for professionals to be among the most pressing challenges in serving Latino children and families in particular.⁴ To most appropriately serve children of immigrants, it is important not only that the early childhood workforce be representative of the children it serves but also that providers of all languages and cultures be trained in second-language acquisition strategies and cultural competency.⁵ Supports and materials should also be available to reach out to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers and to lessen their isolation.

There is insufficient demographic data on the early childhood workforce—including data on language proficiency. The early childhood system as a whole lacks a coherent method for collecting this information.⁶ Some states, such as California, collect portions of it.⁷ Information on the ethnic makeup of providers is more common than information on nativity status or language proficiency.

I would really like and want the provider to be bilingual, and I prefer a Spanish-speaking person to take care of my baby. It is important for my baby to learn Spanish and my culture.

—Dominican parent, New York City

From what data are available, it does not appear that the preschool workforce is representative of the young child population. An estimated 78 percent of teachers of three- and four-year-old children are white; 10 percent are African-American; 6 percent are Latino; and only 1 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander.⁸ Head Start may be more representative of the children it serves. In 2006, 48 percent of Head Start staff who worked directly with children (child development staff) were white; 29 percent were African-American; 4 percent were American Indian or Alaskan native; 2 percent were Asian; and 1 percent were native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.⁹ Twenty-seven percent of child development staff were Hispanic, regardless of race; and 29 percent were proficient in a language other than English.¹⁰

4 Buysse et al., *Addressing the Needs of Latino Children*.

5 Chang, *Getting Ready for Quality*.

6 Saluja et al., "Demographic Characteristics of Early Childhood Teachers and Structural Elements of Early Care and Education in the United States."

7 Based on information collected by the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 53 percent of centers and 34 percent of family child care homes have some Spanish language capacity. California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, *The 2005 California Child Care Portfolio*.

8 Saluja, et al., "Demographic Characteristics of Early Childhood Teachers and Structural Elements of Early Care and Education in the United States."

9 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) 2006. Child development staff include teachers, assistant teachers, home visitors, and family child care providers. An additional 2 percent were reported to be "other," and 12 percent were reported as race "unspecified."

10 "Hispanic" is a separate question on ethnicity, asked apart from race, in the PIR. The PIR does not collect data on staff proficiency in specific languages.

The diversity and language ability of the early childhood workforce vary by community. Nearly all providers we visited cited the difficulty of finding and retaining qualified bilingual staff as a

If the provider speaks the same language as the home, it enhances the child's sense of security and own language.

—Russian mother, New York City

major barrier to serving young children in immigrant families. Finding qualified bilingual teachers is particularly challenging for programs that serve families whose primary language is not English or Spanish. In CLASP's site visits, areas with newer immigrant populations—such as Tulsa, Oklahoma and Northwest Arkansas—reported the greatest need for bilingual staff. Yet, linguistic diversity remains an issue in every community:

- In Decatur, Georgia, DeKalb County Schools translates most information into Spanish and Vietnamese and has interpreters for both languages. However, interpretation for smaller language-minority groups, including Somali and Russian, remains a challenge.
- In Atlanta, Georgia, a child care resource and referral agency (CCR&R) reported that a growing challenge was translation and interpretation services for Guatemalan immigrants who do not speak Spanish.¹¹
- In San Jose, California, it is more common to find Spanish-speaking providers. However, meeting the needs of smaller language minority groups, such as Cambodians, remains a challenge.
- Out of more than 1,300 providers in the Tulsa, Oklahoma CCR&R database, approximately 106 have some degree of Spanish-speaking ability. The CCR&R estimated that about five or six providers have fluent bilingual Spanish speakers, and two have bilingual Vietnamese speakers.¹²
- In San Jose, California, First 5 has funded Vietnamese and Cantonese speakers to provide language services in the state pre-kindergarten program. A lack of staff that speak all of the languages represented remains a challenge.
- In Miami-Dade County, Florida, concern about the English language competency of providers was expressed, as much of the early childhood workforce is comprised of monolingual Spanish speakers. These providers have a difficult time accessing the professional development and training that they need in Spanish, and they face difficulties preparing children with the English language skills they need to be ready for elementary school. In Miami, Latina family child care providers reported that there were not enough professional development classes offered in Spanish and during times outside their work hours.

11 Telephone interview with Sharon Maloney, Quality Care for Children, Atlanta, Georgia, January 30, 2006. Spanish is the official language of Guatemala, however, there are dozens of indigenous languages spoken among a large portion of the population.

12 Interview with staff at Child Care Resource Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 13, 2006.

What is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence is a congruent set of behaviors, attitudes, policies, structures, and practices that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system and agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Cultural competence is achieved by identifying and understanding the needs and help-seeking behaviors of individuals and families. Culturally competent organizations design and implement services that are tailored or matched to the unique needs of individuals, children, families, organizations and communities served.

Cultural competence requires that organizations:

- have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.
- have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve.
- incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, service delivery and involve systematically consumers, key stakeholders and communities.

Cultural competence requires individual providers at a minimum to:

- Acknowledge cultural differences
- Understand your own culture
- Engage in self-assessment
- Acquire cultural knowledge & skills
- View behavior within a cultural context

Linguistic competence is the capacity of an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively, and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences including persons of limited English proficiency, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, and individuals with disabilities. Linguistic competency requires organizational and provider capacity to respond effectively to the health literacy needs of populations served. The organization must have policy, structures, practices, procedures and dedicated resources to support this capacity.

From the National Center for Cultural Competence, <http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/>.

Programs without adequate bilingual staff face many challenges appropriately serving children of immigrants. For example, assessments of young English Language Learners (ELLs) require culturally and linguistically appropriate methodology and assessors.¹³ Assessments done only in English, or without attention to ensure appropriate translation and cultural relevance, may be

13 National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Where We Stand on the Screening and Assessment of Young English Language Learners*.

invalid and unreliable.¹⁴ In Atlanta, a pre-kindergarten program without bilingual staff assessed all children in English. The program staff thought that one Latino child was developmentally delayed. When they linked to a Spanish-speaking early education provider, who assessed the child in Spanish, they discovered that the child, an ELL, in fact knew the concepts.¹⁵

Head Start of Santa Clara and San Benito Counties in California has staff who speak Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Cambodian. The program tries to hire teachers who speak these languages; and, if they are unsuccessful, they hire a bilingual teacher aide. The program includes bilingualism as a requirement in classroom job descriptions and offers a 2 percent pay differential.¹⁷

Head Start regulations require that a bilingual staff member be in every classroom where more than 50 percent of the children speak a particular language other than English. In addition, Head Start programs must be able to communicate with the families they serve, either directly or through a translator.¹⁶ Local programs may set additional policies for requiring bilingual staff and/or interpreters. We found that most Head Start programs had at least one bilingual Spanish teacher or teacher's aide. Often, family

support workers were representative of the languages and cultures of children served—particularly Latino children of immigrants—which facilitated access to comprehensive services for those families. Yet, some sites still reported difficulty recruiting even qualified Spanish speakers. While it can be difficult to recruit bilingual providers, some programs are focusing intentionally on this issue. For example, in 2005, Boulder County Head Start had five staff trainings on second-language acquisition. The program requires teachers to have a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or in a related field (with a minimum of 18 hours of ECE/Child Development).¹⁸ The ability to read, write, and speak Spanish and English is preferred for teachers; it is required for teacher aides. Boulder County Head Start requires at least one bilingual staff member in every classroom; some are lead teachers and some are teacher's aides.¹⁹

It is rarer to find programs with bilingual teachers or other classroom staff who speak languages other than English and Spanish, even in communities with significant language-minority populations speaking languages other than Spanish. We visited a few Head Start programs that did not reflect the diversity of the eligible populations in their service areas. A

14 Scott-Little et al. (eds.), *Assessing the State of State Assessments*.

15 Meeting with parents and SPARK Hub coordinators, La Escuelita, Norcross, Georgia, October 25, 2005.

16 See *Head Start Staffing Requirements and Program Options*, 45 C.F.R. 1306.20(f) (10-1-06 edition).

17 Interview with Adolfo Pando, Head Start of Santa Clara and San Benito Counties, San Jose, California, February 8, 2006.

18 Experience with second-language learners or children with special needs is preferred, and at least one year of preschool teaching experience is required.

19 Interview with Maria Harper, Boulder County Head Start, Boulder, Colorado, November 15, 2005.

lack of bilingual staff in languages spoken by specific immigrant communities corresponded to small numbers of families from those communities seeking or enrolling in the program. For example, one Miami-Dade-area program in a predominantly African-American and Latino neighborhood has only one Spanish-speaking teacher. Staff members call other Head Start centers for assistance with other languages or use children to communicate with limited English proficient (LEP) parents and children. The program reported that only a few immigrant families have enrolled at their center.

Comprehensive information on the language ability of teachers in state pre-kindergarten programs is not widely available. State pre-kindergarten programs have varying rules for teachers' competency in languages other than English. New York, for example, requires pre-kindergarten teachers to have a bilingual certificate extension or license in order to teach LEP children. Teaching assistants and teacher aides in programs for LEP children must have proficiency in the children's home language.²⁰ Some pre-kindergarten programs, however, do not have explicit requirements for bilingual teachers.

Teacher education requirements. Research shows that teachers with higher levels of education and specialized training in early childhood development can improve outcomes for preschool-aged children.²¹ Research is less conclusive about what levels of training and education are needed for infant and toddler caregivers.²² It is the quality of interactions between teachers and children—in terms of responsive feedback and verbal stimulation—that is most important in ensuring high-quality early education settings.²³ For children of immigrants, the teacher-child relationship may be strengthened by shared culture or language.²⁴

Teacher qualifications should reflect the fact that multiple spoken languages and cultural competency are important. There is some concern that without adequate attention to the needs of diverse providers and without adequate resources and support, increased educational requirements could negatively impact the current diversity of the early childhood workforce.²⁵ If institutions of higher education are unable to meet the needs of immigrant providers, increased teacher education requirements could make it difficult for more of these providers to enter and remain in the field.

20 New York Universal Prekindergarten, Staff Qualifications, 8 NYCRR Section 151-1.5.

21 Bowman et al. (eds.), *Eager to Learn*; Whitebook et al., *Who Cares?*; Shonkoff and Phillips (eds.), *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*.

22 Bowman et al. (eds.), *Eager to Learn*.

23 Pianta, "Preschool is School, Sometimes."

24 Chang et al., "Spanish Speaking Children's Social and Language Development in Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms."

25 Calderón, *Achieving a High-Quality Preschool Teacher Corps*; Chang, *Getting Ready for Quality*.

TABLE 7. PRE-KINDERGARTEN LEAD TEACHER EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS IN SELECTED STATES

State	Lead Teacher Degree Requirements	Specialized Training Required
Arkansas	BA/BS (single classroom sites) AA/AS (multiple classroom sites)	Degree in early childhood with P-4 license (single classroom sites) Degree in early childhood (multiple sites)
California	CDA	Meets CDA requirements
Colorado	CDA	Meets CDA requirements
Florida	BA (summer) CDA or equivalent (academic year)	None (summer) Meets CDA requirements (academic year)
Georgia	AA or Montessori diploma	Degree in early childhood or meets Montessori requirements
Maryland	BA	Degree in early childhood plus certification in N-3, -6, or -8 and must be licensed
New York	BA prior to 1978, MA after	Certification in birth-grade 2
Oklahoma	BA	EC certification for pre-K-3

Source: Barnett et al., *The State of Preschool*.

Each state sets its own requirements for state pre-kindergarten teacher qualifications (see Table 7 for requirements in the states CLASP visited). Thirty-five state pre-kindergarten programs require teachers to have some specialization in early education, and 26 states require all teachers to have a bachelor's degree.²⁶ The degree to which pre-kindergarten programs require cultural competency for teachers working with diverse children is not known. Head Start requires 50 percent of teachers to have an associate's degree, and current proposals for reauthorization of the program may require 50 percent of teachers to have bachelor's degrees. Currently, 38 percent of Head Start teachers nationwide have a minimum of a bachelor's degree.²⁷ A survey of center-based preschool settings found that nearly half of teachers of three- and four-year-old children have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Thirty-one percent have a bachelor's in early childhood education, and 13 percent have a master's.²⁸ There is no data on the cultural competency or bilingual capacity of center-based preschool teachers.

26 Barnett et al., *The State of Preschool*.

27 Head Start PIR 2006.

28 Saluja et al., "Demographic Characteristics of Early Childhood Teachers and Structural Elements of Early Care and Education in the United States."

No federal guidelines for teacher education and training exist in child care. States set their own basic licensing regulations to protect the health and safety of children. While all states have some licensing requirements for formal child care providers in centers and in family child care homes, teacher education and training requirements often fall below the state pre-kindergarten standards. Thirty-eight states have no minimum pre-service training in early childhood education requirement for teachers in child care centers.²⁹

Across states, the Child Development Associate (CDA) is the most common minimum requirement, for both child care center directors and lead teachers.³⁰ CDA credentials can be obtained by providers who have at least a high school diploma or GED, along with the requisite hours of experience and training. A bilingual endorsement is available to providers who speak, read, and write in English and another language proficiently enough for parents and children to understand.

Fourteen states currently use quality rating systems (QRS),³¹ which are “a method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in child care and early education settings.”³² These systems often incorporate standards for learning, environment, parent and family involvement, professional development and staff training, and credential and compensation requirements. They also include an evaluation component, which may make use of environmental ratings, such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Family Day Care Environment Rating Scale (FDCRS). A QRS may also motivate programs to achieve accreditation, in order to demonstrate high quality.³³ Many states provide higher child care subsidy reimbursement to those programs that meet additional standards. Many states also have systems in place to inform parents about higher-quality programs.

Each component and level of an environmental rating scale can include cultural competency and linguistic diversity requirements that reflect the needs of the children in the program. LEP parents can be supported through the creation and broad dissemination of translated materials about the QRS and about available programs in their communities that meet the higher standards. New Mexico, for example, has translated information on its quality rating STARS program into Spanish.³⁴

29 National Child Care Information Center, *Teachers in Child Care Centers*.

30 National Association for Regulatory Administration and National Child Care Information Technical Assistance Center, *The 2005 Child Care Licensing Study*.

31 National Child Care Information Center, *Quality Rating Systems*. Quality rating systems may also be called quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS).

32 Mitchell, *Stair Steps to Quality*.

33 National Child Care Information Center, *Common Categories of Criteria Used in State Quality Rating Systems*.

34 New Mexico Department of Children, Youth and Families, STAR flyer, <http://www.newmexicokids.org/Family/index.cfm>.

Compensation. Poor compensation contributes to the problems of attracting and retaining qualified early childhood staff with experience working in immigrant

A Head Start program in Northwest Arkansas noted its frustration with hiring bilingual staff only to have them leave for higher-paying jobs.

communities.³⁵ Adequate compensation is associated with greater staff stability and higher-quality programs.³⁶ Salaries for early childhood professionals—even for those with advanced degrees—are often lower than salaries for elementary education teachers and other professionals. In addition, many programs do not compensate for bilingual ability or include it as a required or preferred skill in teacher position descriptions.

In areas with growing immigrant populations, bilingual workers are in great demand in every sector. Thus child care and early education programs seeking to hire bilingual individuals have to compete not only with higher-paying jobs in K-12

education but also with local businesses, which may also pay higher salaries. A Head Start program in Northwest Arkansas noted its frustration with hiring bilingual staff only to have them leave for higher-paying jobs in the private sector, often outside the early education field. This program reported a 40 percent turnover in staff during a one-year period.³⁷

The Choices for Children’s STEP-UP (Supportive Teaching and Educational Programs for Understanding Preschoolers) program in San Jose, California connects family, friend, and neighbor caregivers to child development training and activities through participation in play groups, workshops, and support groups. A mobile lending library provides books and materials for caregivers to use with young children. The program serves Spanish-, English-, and Vietnamese-speaking caregivers and provides optional assistance to move toward licensing. The program’s partner agencies include a local elementary school, a community college and university, and SIREN, a local immigrant-serving organization. Funding for STEP-UP is provided by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Need for Additional Training and Supports for Informal Care Providers

There is a wide range of education levels, experience, and training among family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. Because of the informal nature of this kind of care, these providers are often disconnected from formal child care agencies and isolated from other child care providers in their communities.³⁸ Immigrant caregivers—particularly those who are LEP—may be even more isolated, due to language barriers or immigration status. Informal caregivers in immigrant communities may be wary of connecting with formal child care systems to receive

training or licensing for many of the same reasons that immigrant parents are wary of accessing child care and early education programs.

35 Herzenberg et al., *Losing Ground in Early Childhood Education*.

36 Bowman et al. (eds.), *Eager to Learn*.

37 Meeting with staff at Economic Opportunity Agency of Washington County, Fayetteville, Arkansas, April 5, 2006.

38 O’Donnell et al., *Sparking Connections, Phase II*.

Research on family, friend, and neighbor caregivers—not specific to immigrant providers—suggests that many providers are interested in receiving training on child care and child development in the form of informal support groups, written materials, and videos, rather than via more formal professional development opportunities.³⁹ Focus groups of license-exempt care providers in immigrant neighborhoods in San Jose, California found that providers were interested in information, resources and training in child development, and assistance in supporting the school readiness of children in their care. Most providers also expressed interest in information on becoming a licensed provider or child care teacher.⁴⁰

I couldn't find child care that I liked, so I decided to take care of children in my home. I'm ready to register as a family child care home and would be glad to participate in training.

—Iraqi mother, Atlanta

Immigrant and refugee family, friend, and neighbor caregivers in focus groups in Minnesota indicated that they would like information and training to be conveniently located in informal settings, such as community-based organizations, apartment complexes, and individual homes. They also stressed the importance of having bilingual trainers who can provide information in their home languages.⁴¹

Barriers to Recruiting, Training, Licensing, and Retaining Immigrant Providers

One way to increase the supply of qualified, bilingual, and culturally competent child care and early education providers is to encourage and assist immigrant caregivers to gain the skills to become licensed child care providers, pre-kindergarten teachers, and paraprofessionals. For example, Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers in Atlanta work closely with Refugee Family Services to identify and recruit potential early education teachers and assistants.⁴²

Although many immigrants are currently providing formal or informal care to young children, our research found that additional representation from immigrant communities is needed among caregivers, especially from particular immigrant groups and in particular geographic areas. More effort could be put into increasing the training and education of existing child care and early education providers from immigrant communities. Targeted outreach and supports can help immigrant providers access professional development and higher education. This is an essential part of increasing and sustaining the diversity of the early childhood workforce.⁴³

39 Brown-Lyons et al., *Kith and Kin – Informal Child Care*.

40 City of San Jose, California, *Exempt Care Collaborative*.

41 Minnesota Department of Human Services, *Family, Friend and Neighbor Child Care Providers in Recent Immigrant and Refugee Communities*.

42 Refugee Family Services, *Immigrant and Refugee Family Voices*.

43 Chang, *Getting Ready for Quality*.

We found a number of barriers to assisting immigrant providers with licensing, professional development, and training and to helping them obtain higher education to become certified teachers. These include:

- Low educational attainment,
- Restricted access to higher education and financial assistance,
- Limited English proficiency and a lack of higher education coursework in minority languages,
- Insufficient technical assistance, and
- Insufficient language access.

Centro Familia, in Montgomery County, Maryland, runs a continuum of comprehensive training, mentoring, and professional development programs for Spanish-speaking child care providers. Centro Familia provides training and technical assistance throughout the licensing process; offers a home-visiting program that ensures a quality learning environment, alignment with Maryland curriculum standards, and micro-enterprise development; and offers a series of intermediate and advanced training opportunities for providers to continue progressing through a career development ladder. Centro Familia also offers a leadership development program for graduates who want to become early childhood promoters and serve their communities as “multipliers” of information and resources for families with young children. Since 2000, approximately 1,750 providers have participated in Centro Familia’s training and technical assistance programs, and they serve over 5,000 children.

Immigrant providers have varied backgrounds, levels of educational attainment, and English proficiency. Some immigrant providers have training and experience in early childhood education in their home countries and just need licensing and related training and education to be recognized and validated in the U.S. Others need access to higher education and English as a Second Language (ESL) training. Still others with low educational attainment may need basic education and ESL instruction in order to attain a GED.

Low educational attainment. Education levels among the foreign-born population are concentrated on two ends of the educational spectrum. While a slightly higher proportion of immigrants have a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to the U.S.-born population, a larger proportion of immigrants also have less than a high school diploma.⁴⁴ Immigrants with low levels of

formal education face significant barriers to entry into the early childhood profession and to further professionalization. For example, the Child Care Resource Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma obtained funding from Smart Start Oklahoma to help immigrants obtain training and licensing to work as family or center-based child care providers. More than 20 women attended an

44 U.S. Census Bureau, *Educational Attainment of the Population 25 Years and Over, by Citizenship, Nativity and Period of Entry, Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2005*, <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/cps2005/tab10-01.xls>.

initial meeting and expressed interest in participating, but all eventually dropped out. The main barrier to completing the program was the high school diploma or GED requirement—most of the women had less than a sixth-grade education.⁴⁵

Initiatives to increase the number of immigrant child care and early education providers must consider the education and literacy levels of many immigrants. They should include appropriate GED and/or ESL components or partner with other agencies to provide these services. Another important factor is immigrant parents' limited knowledge of indicators of quality in early education. In some immigrant communities, the notion of licensed or accredited child care may be unfamiliar, and outreach will be necessary to attract immigrant providers to the profession.

Restricted access to higher education and financial assistance. In some states, restrictions on resident tuition and access to scholarships may serve as another barrier to some immigrant providers seeking career training in early childhood education. Although federal law does not require them to, many states prohibit undocumented immigrants from qualifying for in-state tuition for community colleges and four-year state colleges and universities.⁴⁶ Access to higher education is severely inhibited by its costs. Many state legislatures are considering allowing immigrant students who graduated from high school or obtained a GED in the state to be eligible for resident tuition, regardless of their immigration status.⁴⁷ Congress has also considered legislation to clarify that undocumented students are eligible for resident tuition.⁴⁸

A lack of access to scholarships and other forms of financial aid is another barrier for low-wage child care workers. Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, only qualified immigrants and victims of trafficking who have evidence from the Department of Homeland Security that they are here on more than a temporary basis with the intent to become lawful permanent residents or citizens are eligible for federal student loans or financial assistance.⁴⁹

- Some states participate in programs to provide financial assistance to early childhood providers, to help with the costs of continuing education. For example: in 22 states—including Colorado and Florida—some child care and early education providers are eligible for scholarships through the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project. The T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Project helps child care and early education teachers achieve higher levels of education and requires and/or provides increased

45 Interview with staff at Child Care Resource Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 13, 2006.

46 National Immigration Law Center, *Basic Facts on In-State Tuition for Undocumented Immigrant Students*.

47 See National Immigration Law Center (<http://www.nilc.org>) for listing of state legislation.

48 The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, S. 2075 was introduced in late 2005 in the Senate and in early 2006 in the House, H.R. 5131.

49 See *General Provisions Relating to Student Assistance Programs, Student Eligibility*, 20 U.S.C. section 1091 and 34 C.F.R. Section 668.33.

compensation. T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships to child care providers, Head Start teachers, and others to partially cover the cost of tuition, books, release time, and travel expenses while pursuing coursework leading to credentials or degrees. Increased education is linked to higher compensation in order to retain qualified providers. Information on T.E.A.C.H. is available on their Web site (<http://www.childcareservices.org>) in English and Spanish. No data is available on immigrant participation in the T.E.A.C.H. program.

- Most of California's 58 counties have implemented a version of the Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) model to "help build and reward a skilled and stable child care workforce." Funding comes from the California Department of Education and from Proposition 10 funds.⁵⁰ Most counties provide stipends or benefits to child care center and family child care providers, including immigrant providers. Some counties conduct outreach to diverse populations by providing materials and personal outreach in other languages, using ethnic media outlets and community events, contacting ethnic family child care associations, and offering bonus stipends to attract participants who speak other languages.⁵¹
- In Santa Clara County, California, the E3 Institute has set up partnerships between community colleges and regional CARES partners, to provide support and assistance to CARES participants as they work on professional development. Providers receive supports as they move from training and professional development at the community level toward advanced training at the community college level. College liaisons help participants navigate the community college system. E3 has also facilitated the creation of Spanish-speaking student cohorts and mentors, the hiring of bilingual staff, and the establishment of Spanish-language classes at community colleges.⁵²

Limited English proficiency and lack of higher education coursework in minority languages. LEP providers may face significant barriers to meeting teacher education requirements. They can be aided by access to coursework in their native language while they are in the process of learning English.⁵³ A survey of California's institutions of higher education (IHE) found that 20 percent of students who speak languages other than English face significant challenges in English-language coursework. The same survey found that one-fourth of California's IHE offer some language support for LEP students.⁵⁴ The National Council of La

50 In 1998, California voters approved Proposition 10, or the California Children and Families Act, which established a tobacco tax to provide funding for a variety of initiatives to improve the well-being of children from birth through age five. For more information, see <http://www.cafc.ca.gov/>.

51 First 5 California, *Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards*.

52 Dukakis and Bellm, *Clearing a Career Path*.

53 Calderón, *Achieving a High-Quality Preschool Teacher Corps*.

54 Whitebook et al., *Time to Revamp and Expand*.

Raza reports that LEP Head Start staff have faced difficulties obtaining bachelor's degrees, leaving them serving as teacher's assistants rather than lead classroom teachers.⁵⁵

A survey of California's higher education programs in early childhood education found the lack of availability of minority-language courses to be a barrier to supporting the education and training needs of current early childhood professionals. The survey also identified a lack of cultural and linguistic diversity among higher education program faculty as a challenge to preparing the early childhood workforce to work with diverse children and to offering coursework in languages other than English.⁵⁷ A national survey found that more than 80 percent of part-time and full-time faculty members in early childhood teacher preparation programs are non-Hispanic white—and that Asian and Hispanic faculty are most likely, by a significant margin, to have part-time positions in two-year institutions.⁵⁸ LEP providers from immigrant communities who are interested in pursuing early childhood preparation may be stymied by the language barrier. We found from our site interviews that IHE offer few or no early childhood courses in languages other than English. There are some areas, however, that are addressing the shortage of higher education coursework for speakers of languages other than English.

The ADELANTE project at Gavilan College in Gilroy, California offers a 17-unit CDA program in Spanish to CARES participants. The project collaborates with Go Kids—a community child care provider that serves as the Santa Clara County CCR&R and is one of the county's CARES partner agencies—to provide educational guidance, tutoring services, and support to participants.⁵⁶

Immigrant providers with foreign degrees. Some immigrant-serving organizations and providers mentioned that there are degreed early childhood professionals in immigrant communities with credentials earned in their home countries but not recognized in the United States. A survey of California's early childhood workforce found that 30 percent of family child care providers with bachelor's degrees and 16 percent of center-based teachers with bachelor's degrees earned their degrees at foreign institutions.⁵⁹

Many providers' credentials, however, do not easily translate to credit at U.S. universities. These providers may need additional language support in order to earn comparable certification in the U.S. Even when a credential *will* translate into U.S. credits, the process is cost prohibitive for many providers. Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers in the Atlanta area provide assistance to these potential providers to get their courses and degrees validated in the United States. Sheltering Arms contracts with two companies, one in Atlanta and the other in

55 Calderón, *Achieving a High-Quality Preschool Teacher Corps*.

56 Dukakis and Bellm, *Clearing a Career Path*.

57 Whitebook et al., *Training the Next Generation of Teachers*.

58 Early and Winton, *Preparing the Workforce*.

59 Whitebook et al., *California Early Care and Education Workforce Study*.

Miami, to provide translation and evaluation services. The cost ranges from \$100 to \$300, depending on the complexity of the services provided and the expediency required.⁶⁰ In Santa Clara County, funding from First 5 Santa Clara County, First 5 California, and the California Department of Education supports a program to help providers have their international

In Long Beach, St. Mary Medical Center was funded by First 5 LA to train Southeast Asian refugees to become family child care providers. At the time the project began, there were few licensed Southeast Asian providers and child care centers in the area lacked Southeast Asian language capacity. Twelve people became licensed as a result of the project. Participants were trained in setting up a facility, basic health and safety standards, licensing requirements, and quality standards that go beyond basic licensing. Participants attended trainings twice a month for three years, including trainings on school readiness and early literacy. Project staff found a high interest in learning what quality child care is and how it contributes to school readiness.

degrees translated and evaluated for their U.S. equivalency.⁶¹ However, not all centers have the resources to provide such services.

Insufficient technical assistance. Immigrant providers may need additional technical assistance and supports to move toward licensing. Licensing can be a step toward participating in state pre-kindergarten programs, in the many states in which community-based providers are eligible to participate, or toward gaining additional certification related to a higher QRS rating. In some cases, low-income immigrant providers may need financial support to start up family child care businesses.

Navigating the child care licensing system can be particularly difficult for immigrant providers; and in many communities, insufficient assistance is available. The CCR&R in Springdale, Arkansas told us

that it lacks the resources to meet the needs of providers who are seeking licensing. The paperwork is not completely translated, making it difficult for LEP individuals; and the process itself is challenging.⁶² We found some initiatives, however, that do provide training and technical assistance to immigrants who want to become child care providers. For example:

- The Latinas Unidas Mejorando el Manana con Amor (LUMMA) program in Boulder, Colorado provides training for Latina child care providers, moving them toward licensing. The program provides referrals for Spanish-speaking families; recruits, trains, and licenses family child care providers; supports professional development for Latina providers, including informal or license-exempt providers; provides health, vision, dental, and hearing screenings for children in LUMMA providers' care; and holds monthly provider support groups.⁶³

60 Elaine Draeger, Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers, e-mail to Hannah Matthews, CLASP, April 6, 2007.

61 Interview with Dolores Terrazas, WestEd, San Jose, California, February 8, 2007.

62 Interview with Michelle Wynn, Northwest Arkansas Child Care Resource and Referral Center, Springdale, Arkansas, April 3, 2006.

63 The LUMMA program was developed and is administered by the Child Care Recruitment and Training Program, Department of Housing and Human Services, City of Boulder.

- Quality Care for Children operates three CCR&Rs in Georgia—in Metro Atlanta, Cartersville, and Macon. Quality Care employs a manager of Latino outreach, three bilingual early care and education specialists, and a bilingual parent counselor; conducts home visits; and provides technical assistance to Spanish-speaking family child care providers. In 2006, the agency offered 418 training hours in Spanish. However, Quality Care noted a shortage of qualified, Spanish-speaking trainers to meet the demand for training.⁶⁴

Insufficient language access. States and localities have differing policies regarding the translation of rules, regulations, examinations, and other licensing information. For example:

- The Colorado Department of Education Web site includes the rules and regulations for family home child care providers in Spanish.
- The Maryland Office of Child Care provides information about child care licensing, in English and Spanish, on the Division of Early Childhood Development Web site.
- In New York City, participation in a 15-hour health and safety course is required to be licensed as a child care provider. The class and all related documents are in English. The State University of New York translated the licensing examination into Spanish, which is useful for Spanish-speaking providers who were trained in their home countries. In order to pass the examination, however, a provider without prior training would have to learn all of the course materials in English. Speakers of languages other than Spanish and English are unable to access either the materials or the examination in other languages. Also, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services has not translated the licensing regulations into Spanish.⁶⁵



Need for Professional Development and Training, for All Providers, on Working with Diverse Families and on Second-Language Acquisition

Cultural competency is critical to providing young children with a quality early education. To be culturally competent, a program must incorporate an understanding of diverse childrearing practices and ensure continuity with how children are cared for in their homes, including eating and sleeping practices. ECERS, FDCRS, and other observational tools include some

64 Sharon Maloney, Quality Care for Children, e-mail to Hannah Matthews, CLASP, April 13, 2007.

65 Interview with Jessyca Feliciano, Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, New York, October 20, 2005.

measures that relate to culture, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation standards include cultural competence and responsiveness to cultures of children and families in the community.⁶⁶

In our interviews, providers discussed the need to have more tools to work with young children in immigrant families and with their parents. Many providers identified the need for cultural diversity training, to address how programs can be made more relevant to people of different

The Crosswalks Project at the FPG Child Development Institute is developing a research-based framework to support early childhood and early intervention faculty and programs in preparing students to work with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. A related toolbox on its Web site (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/crosswalks>) provides resources and instructional tools for supporting cultural and linguistic diversity within the context of state and national standards.

cultures—in terms of food, books, other educational materials, and specific content areas. Some providers discussed unique challenges they face working with young children in refugee families, children who may have been born in refugee camps or are familiar only with living in conditions of war-torn countries. These children—and often their parents—may lack basic skills or knowledge of appropriate classroom behavior in the United States. Many providers mentioned an interest in learning more about the cultures of immigrants in their communities, in order to be more culturally sensitive and to avoid unintentionally offending families or making them uncomfortable.

Providers also need training on second-language acquisition strategies. The National Head Start and Early Head Start Dual and Second Language Acquisition Needs Assessment Project found a significant need throughout Head Start programs for information on dual- and second-language acquisition. The Office of Head Start found that to better serve ELLs in Head Start, all staff needed further training and materials on language development and strategies for teaching ELLs. Recruiting bilingual staff is not sufficient.⁶⁷

Many providers do not have access to the training and support that they seek. Current research suggests that teacher preparation and training programs need to be redesigned to adequately prepare today's workforce to meet the challenges of serving children who are from many cultures and who speak many languages.⁶⁸ A study from New Jersey found that the professional development offerings for current teachers in state preschool programs lack adequate attention to diversity issues. In one school year, fewer than 10 percent of more than

66 See, for example, <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers/> for information about ECERS and FDCRS and <http://www.naeyc.org/academy/standards/> for information about the NAEYC accreditation standards.

67 Len, *Getting a Language Head Start*.

68 Lim and Able-Boone, "Diversity Competencies within Early Childhood Teacher Preparation."

2,300 workshops addressed topics of diversity, multiculturalism, or ELLs.⁶⁹ More research is needed on best practices and curricula for cultural competency for early childhood providers.

Studies suggest that the higher education system is ill equipped to appropriately prepare early childhood professionals to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse young children. For example:

- A national study of early childhood teacher preparation programs at four-year universities found that programs require an average of eight semester hours of diversity coursework—or 13 percent of the total hours required. More than half of the programs require only one hour *or less* of coursework that includes an issue related to diversity in the course title. References related to immigrant status were the least common among topics in diversity coursework.⁷⁰
- A national study found that 43 percent of both two- and four-year early childhood teacher preparation programs at IHE require an entire course or more on working with children and families from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. More than 10 percent of four-year programs and more than 8 percent of two-year programs require an entire course or more on working with bilingual or LEP children.⁷¹
- A study of New Jersey's early childhood teacher preparation programs found that 70 percent of four-year colleges and universities with early childhood teacher preparation programs require coursework on working with ELL children, while 95 percent of all programs require some coursework on working with diverse families. Several programs, however, do not offer any coursework addressing these two topics. While most community colleges address diversity issues as

The Unified Transformative Early Education Model (UTEEM) at the George Mason University is a master's degree program that infuses attention to diversity and multiculturalism throughout all core curriculums. The program integrates the perspectives of early childhood education, multicultural education, bilingual education, and early childhood education. By design, the program offers an approach that is supportive of home language development, inclusive practices, collaboration, family-centered practices, and developmentally appropriate practices, with a focus on issues of social justice that impact young children and their families, particularly those who are immigrants and those who live in poverty. Students are prepared to work with culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse children and their families in schools and community settings. Four different internships give students direct experience with immigrant families and the opportunity to learn from stories of family adaptation and resilience.

69 Lobman et al., *Educating Preschool Teachers*.

70 Ray et al., *Preparing Early Childhood Teachers to Successfully Educate All Children*.

71 Early and Winton, "Preparing the Workforce."

topics within required courses, only 12 percent of schools offer an entire course on working with children from diverse cultures, and only 6 percent offer an entire course on working with ELLs.⁷²

- Tulsa Community College (TCC) infuses diversity and multiculturalism throughout its coursework. However, its child development program includes no specific courses on cultural competency or working with ELL children, though the latter may be addressed as part of a course on language development. The community college does offer a one-credit conversational Spanish course with a focus on basic child care and early education terminology. TCC is working with the “Conecciones” Hispanic Education and Workforce project of the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa, with the intention of preparing more bilingual early childhood teachers and providing education that better prepares early childhood teachers to support the needs of ELLs.⁷³

One possible source of resources for training is Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) quality funds. States are required to spend a minimum of 4 percent of CCDBG funds on initiatives to improve quality and expand access to child care. Several states report using quality funds for the translation of parent education materials and of training and professional development materials for providers. Examples of initiatives related to language and cultural competency that may improve the quality of care for children in immigrant families and the provision of training for LEP providers include the following:

- Arkansas uses quality funds to support the “Welcome the Children” project, which provides training and technical assistance to child care staff on issues related to cultural sensitivity and appropriately serving ELL children. Two training modules—on “Cultural Diversity” and “Second Language Development and Assessment in Early Childhood”—are being presented statewide, and additional training models are being developed. The Welcome the Children project trains community teams in local areas as future trainers, to ensure future sustainability.⁷⁴
- The California Department of Education is developing a training manual and accompanying video on working with ELLs and will conduct statewide train-the-trainers sessions for preschool staff. Another initiative, the University of California’s “Family Child Care at Its Best” project, provides training and technical assistance to family child care providers. Topics include child development, health and safety, language, literacy, and

72 Lobman et al., *Educating Preschool Teachers*.

73 Interview with Dawn Parton, Tulsa Community College, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 13, 2006; Parton, e-mail to Hannah Matthews, CLASP, May 8, 2007.

74 Arkansas Department of Human Services, *FFY 2006-2007 Child Care And Development Fund Plan*, <http://www.state.ar.us/childcare/DCCECE.htm>. See <http://www.uams.edu/welcomethechildren/> for more information on the Welcome the Children project.

cultural sensitivity. Training is offered in Cantonese, English, and Spanish; and Russian-language training is being developed.⁷⁵

Currently, there is no process to share these resources across states, which would broaden their impact.

Culturally Competent Program and Content Standards

Standards are important tools to help improve the quality of all early learning settings for all young children and to support their healthy development across a range of measures. In order to most effectively meet the needs of young children of immigrants and their families, attention to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families must be infused throughout all standards. Program standards are requirements for early childhood programs that ensure conditions in which children are more likely to learn. These include child group size, teacher-to-child ratio, teacher qualifications, required curriculum, and the nature and intensity of comprehensive services. Content standards, or early learning guidelines, are expectations for what children should learn and be able to do by certain stages of development.

To enhance early learning, view children holistically—as members of families and communities, and as participants in their culture.

—Betty Emarita, *Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices*

Both types of standards play a key role in supporting children’s development in early education. Strong, culturally competent standards should be supportive of children and providers from all backgrounds and should address the needs of children of immigrants, through attention to second-language acquisition strategies and culturally appropriate curriculum. Again, however, given the diversity of immigrant communities, strategies to address their needs have to be tailored to the specific circumstances and experiences of individual communities.

Forty states and the District of Columbia have developed early learning guidelines for preschool-age children, and an additional 10 states are in the process of developing them.⁷⁶ These guidelines are voluntary expectations for young children’s approaches to learning and skills at certain stages and across all developmental domains. Seventeen states have developed guidelines for children birth to three.⁷⁷ More research is needed on the extent to which early learning guidelines are culturally appropriate for children of immigrants.

75 California Department of Education, *FFY 2006-2007 Child Care And Development Fund Plan*, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/stateplan.asp>.

76 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, *Child Care and Development Fund*.

77 National Infant and Toddler Child Care Initiative, *Keys to High Quality Child Care for Babies and Toddlers*.

Early learning guidelines must be implemented with an awareness of the multiple and diverse ways in which children can demonstrate competence in particular skills. Children from different cultures will approach learning and demonstrate competence in different ways, based on diverse childrearing practices and concepts of normative behavior. The expectations that parents have for their children at various stages of development are culturally rooted. This

It [would] be a perfect program if they can read not only American stories but also Vietnamese stories at the reading hours.

—Vietnamese parent,
Tulsa, Oklahoma

should be considered when assessing children’s development, as assessment is often done along continuums defined by the dominant culture.⁷⁸

For example, in some immigrant groups, children learn social relationships and appropriate interactions by observing and participating in large, extended family networks that are traditional in their culture. Different cultures will have different expectations for

children’s role in these networks, expectations that will contribute differently to children’s emotional development and concept of self. When children observe family members speaking in two languages, they learn that there are multiple acceptable ways to express ideas and that both languages have value. If child care and early education settings reflect the values and practices of children’s homes, then they will reinforce the ideas that children learn in the home.⁷⁹

In states that allow state pre-kindergarten to be delivered in non-school settings, state pre-kindergarten policies have the potential to strengthen the quality and program standards of community-based child care programs. State child care licensing standards focus primarily on ensuring basic health and safety protections, although many states also require limited program activities related to general educational content.⁸⁰ State pre-kindergarten programs, on the other hand, establish program standards that all providers must meet in order to be eligible to participate in the pre-kindergarten program. These standards typically exceed state child care licensing requirements for quality, such as teacher education levels and curriculum requirements; but in general they are required only during the hours funded by the pre-kindergarten program.

Several states have policies that call attention to the need for staff development and/or teacher training to prepare educators to work with ELLs. In the states we visited, some state pre-kindergarten policies and standards contain references to cultural diversity and the specific needs of ELL children. However, most policies that address the needs of immigrant and ELL children are vague; and it is difficult to determine whether and how they will be enforced. For example, terms such as “linguistically appropriate” may be unenforceable if it is not clear

78 Emarita, *Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices*.

79 *Ibid.*

80 Schumacher et al., *Meeting Great Expectations*; Bowman et al. (eds.), *Eager to Learn*.

what, specifically, they mean. State policies are not always specific as to whether this requires translation of all materials, a bilingual teacher, or other requirements. States must go beyond these generalizations to create policies that are explicit and that truly support families. Some examples of current state policies include:

- California’s 2005 Funding Terms and Conditions and Program Requirements for pre-kindergarten require that a participating program’s philosophy, goals, and objectives reflect the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the families enrolled in the program. The program is required to be culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- The Colorado Preschool Program Act requires staff development to address the education of ELL children. The Colorado State Content Standards recommend that classrooms reflect the diversity of students in the program and in the community.
- Georgia’s Pre-kindergarten Program Operating Guidelines require schools and teachers to plan for children who do not speak English. To do so, the guidelines explain, materials should be available in the child’s native language. They also recommend that children be encouraged to speak English when they are ready, and that culturally diverse reading and music materials be used in the classroom.
- The New York Universal Pre-kindergarten program requires programs to meet the diverse needs of children with limited English proficiency, from diverse cultures, and with special learning needs.

Advisory committees at several Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers in the Atlanta area have representatives from local immigrant serving organizations, including Refugee Family Services, Catholic Social Services, the Latin American Association, and the Chinese-American Association. The committees also include parents, as well as private community members.

Head Start programs are required to meet federal Program Performance Standards to provide services focused on the “whole child.” These services include early education addressing cognitive, developmental, and socio-emotional needs; medical and dental screenings and referrals; nutritional services; parental involvement activities and referrals to social service providers for the entire family; and mental health services. More than 20 of the standards refer specifically to home language, learning English, or the cultural background of families and children. Programs are required to meet the needs of ELL children and their families in multiple service areas, including education, family partnerships, and health and developmental services.⁸¹ The Head Start Multicultural Task Force has issued a set of multicultural principles for Head Start programming, which could serve as a model for other early education programs.

81 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, *Head Start Bulletin*.

Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs

1. Every individual is rooted in culture.
2. The cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Head Start program are the primary sources for culturally relevant programming.
3. Culturally relevant and diverse programming requires learning accurate information about the culture of different groups and discarding stereotypes.
4. Addressing cultural relevance in making curriculum choices is a necessary, developmentally appropriate practice.
5. Every individual has the right to maintain his or her own identity while acquiring the skills required to function in our diverse society.
6. Effective programs for children with limited English speaking ability require continued development of the primary language while the acquisition of English is facilitated.
7. Culturally relevant programming requires staff who reflect the community and families served.
8. Multicultural programming for children enables children to develop an awareness of, respect for, and appreciation of individual cultural differences. It is beneficial to all children.
9. Culturally relevant and diverse programming examines and challenges institutional and personal biases.
10. Culturally relevant and diverse programming and practices are incorporated in all components and services.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. The complete principles can be accessed at <http://www.headstartinfo.org>.

While there is a need for additional research on effective models that improve outcomes for young children in immigrant families,⁸² available research points to the importance of valuing a child's home culture and home language, as well as infusing multiculturalism and diversity throughout early learning content. Many immigrant parents are looking for a program that will respect and value their culture. Moreover, the ways in which children learn are rooted in their

82 National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, *Para nuestros niños: Expanding and Improving Early Education for Hispanics*.

families' culture.⁸³ At a minimum, developmentally appropriate curriculum should be supportive of children's home language and culture.⁸⁴

Most of the child care and early education providers that we interviewed did not use specific curricula that addressed the experiences of immigrants, other than "heroes and holidays"—that is, simply adding holidays and heroes from other cultures to their existing curriculum, rather than transforming the curriculum in partnership with representatives of diverse communities, including immigrants.⁸⁵ To be truly meaningful, multiculturalism should be infused throughout the day-to-day content of early education programs. Programs also need curricula or specific resources to use with ELL students, an area in which the Office of Head Start has an initiative.⁸⁶

Research points to the importance of supporting young children's home-language development.

Most providers mentioned that young children in immigrant families acquire English skills rapidly. Some expressed concern as to whether children will maintain their home languages. While most providers understand that language skills need to be developed in the home language concurrently with learning English, we did not find specific curricula that address this issue. Many parents simply assume that children will maintain their home languages—because it is what they speak at home—and believe that the focus of the early education program should be on learning English.⁸⁷ Parents often lack information on the benefits of bilingualism, and some fear that using two languages will result in confusion and language delays for their children.⁸⁸

The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have an interagency workgroup focusing on young children who are English language learners. The workgroup will review the federal programs that support early childhood education and provide strategies for collaboration, analyze the current research on ELL children from birth to five, and develop an agenda for further research.

Research suggests that there are three primary methods of teaching young ELLs: English-only classrooms, first language-only classrooms, and bilingual or dual-language classrooms. Research is inconclusive as to the single best instructional method but points to the importance

83 Emarita, *Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices*.

84 National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice; Tabors, One Child, Two Languages*.

85 See Lee et al. (eds.), *Beyond Heroes and Holidays*.

86 The Head Start English Language Learner Project (HELLP) provides training and a toolkit for Early Head Start and Head Start programs. See <http://www.hellp.org/>.

87 Meeting with child care providers at Provider, Training, Resource and Activity Center (P-TRAC), San Jose, California, February 7, 2006.

88 King and Fogle, *Raising Bilingual Children*.

of supporting young children’s home language development in any setting.⁸⁹ Literacy instruction in a child’s home language may help ELL children with English-language

I want to make sure my child learns Korean and English....

I want to be there every precious moment of my child’s life, and if I were not able to communicate and know how she thinks and feels, I would be devastated.

—Korean parent, New York City

acquisition.⁹⁰ A comparison of English-only immersion and dual-language immersion preschool classrooms found that the dual-language classroom produced greater language and literacy gains for both English- and Spanish-speaking children.⁹¹

Three states—Arkansas, California, and Massachusetts—have enacted laws prohibiting bilingual education in public schools.⁹² In Arkansas, however, the English-immersion requirement applies only to K-12 education and not to preschool programs. Other states have passed English-only laws, but for the most part they are not implemented in

public programs—because, regardless of state law, programs that receive any federal funds must comply with federal civil rights laws by providing meaningful access to their programs for persons with limited English proficiency.⁹³ For preschools located in public schools, bilingual education bans and English-only laws make it difficult for teachers to promote maintenance of children’s home languages.

Meaningful Parental Involvement

Partnerships with parents and other family members are a crucial component of any high-quality early learning setting. Research shows that parental and family involvement can positively affect children’s cognitive and socio-emotional development and contribute to school success.⁹⁴ Parental and family involvement can have additional benefits for immigrant families, as it may be an opportunity for parents to learn English and literacy skills themselves and to receive an introduction to the formal education system from the beginning of their child’s experience. While the majority of all parents are involved in their children’s school at some level, immigrant parents participate at lower rates than native parents.⁹⁵

Most of the providers and immigrant-serving organizations we interviewed agreed that the most effective programs—especially for immigrant families—are those that address the whole

89 FPG Child Development Institute, *Prekindergarten Policy Framework*; Tabors, *One Child, Two Languages*.

90 August et al., *Transfer of Skills from Spanish to English*.

91 Barnett et al., *Two-Way and Monolingual English Immersion in Preschool Education*.

92 In 2005, Colorado voters rejected a ballot initiative to outlaw bilingual education.

93 See U.S. Department of Justice, Commonly Asked Questions and Answers Regarding Executive Order 13166, <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/Pubs/lepqa.htm>.

94 Henderson and Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence*. See also Weiss et al., *Family Involvement in Early Childhood Education and Naughton, English Language Learners, Immigrant Children, and Preschool for All*.

95 Nord and Griffin, “Educational Profile of 3- to 8-Year-Old Children of Immigrants.”

family and not just young children. As YWCA staff in Tulsa, Oklahoma told us, “the emphasis has to be on ‘family,’ not just services for children.”⁹⁶

Early childhood programs should be inclusive and welcoming of the participation of extended family members, as many play prominent roles in the lives of young children as their caregivers. Many providers report that once parents are participating in child care and early education programs, they learn about other services available in their communities. This is often the link to introducing immigrant families to the assistance that they need as they are getting settled in this country.

Some of the barriers to parental involvement are the same ones that immigrant families face accessing programs in general—including language, culture, work schedules, and transportation. Language barriers prevent parents from communicating about their children and learning from providers about how best to help their children. Programs that lack bilingual staff or access to interpreters have difficulty communicating with parents about their children. Some programs we visited dealt with this issue by hiring family outreach specialists, often from immigrant communities, but parents still expressed frustration with not being able to communicate with their child’s teachers directly.⁹⁷

If immigrant parents are to be encouraged to participate, they must be included as equals and encouraged to participate at the same level as all other parents. If English-speaking parents are involved in literacy activities in the classroom, immigrant parents who speak other languages should also be encouraged to read or tell stories in their native language—an activity from which all children can benefit. Some schools and programs have invested in headsets for simultaneous interpretation so that all parents and teachers, regardless of the languages they speak, can sit around the same table and communicate. It’s important that immigrant parents

In Boulder, Colorado, “El Grupo de Familias” is a parent education and support program for young Latino children, with and without identified disabilities, and their family members. Families that speak Spanish as their first language participate in a series of sessions focused on enhancement of language and literacy learning with their children. Families learn how to read, talk, and play with their children in ways that support early development and school readiness as bilingual learners. Families make connections with other families in the community. They also learn about preservation of home language and culture, community resources, and how to navigate the school system. This program represents a prevention and early education focus in supporting families to facilitate their child’s growth and development at home and in the community. (See <http://www.landlockedfilms.com> for a video on how to start an “El Grupo de Familias” in another community.)

96 Interview with staff at YWCA, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 14, 2006.

97 Interview with mothers at Tara Elementary School, Morrow, Georgia, October 27, 2005.

not be made to feel that they must sit apart from the other parents, or that their participation is not equally valued.

Ongoing communication between school and home is critical to fostering relationships with families. Analysis of data from the National Household Education Survey, which is administered in Spanish and English, found that Spanish-speaking parents were less likely than English-speaking parents to report receiving certain forms of communication from schools.⁹⁸ A survey of Michigan state pre-kindergarten programs found language barriers between the school and home to be a common concern among program staff. Major concerns include difficulty sending information home, translating materials for both children and parents, and reaching

Parent meetings held in apartment complexes or community buildings convenient to where immigrants live may have higher rates of participation.

parents in an emergency.⁹⁹

Even the translation of written materials is a problem for many providers—particularly smaller child care centers, which may not benefit from being part of a larger school district, which can distribute some of the costs of translation. Most programs have limited or no translated materials—particularly in

languages other than Spanish—and many parents do not get the information about program rules and their responsibilities. A lack of language assistance also affects parents' awareness of programs that could benefit their children. At one site we visited, a letter concerning a summer reading-enrichment program for older children was sent home only in English. The school acknowledged that children of immigrants—especially those in LEP households—would particularly benefit from the program; yet parents may not have been aware of it.

For a program to be effective, there must be regular in-person communication with parents. Just as with initial outreach efforts, even when families are enrolled in a program there remains a need for face-to-face communication, in addition to translated documents. Some programs have found creative ways to engage immigrant parents and facilitate participation. In one Atlanta school, the principal hosts a monthly “Café con Leche” hour specifically designed to give Spanish-speaking parents an opportunity to talk informally to her or other school staff. A school district in Georgia acknowledged that pre-kindergarten parent meetings have much higher rates of participation when they are held in apartment complexes or community buildings convenient to where families live.¹⁰⁰

98 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *School and Parent Interaction by Household Language and Poverty Status*.

99 During the spring of 2004, the state pre-kindergarten administrator in Michigan asked local Michigan School Readiness pre-kindergarten directors to report on their experiences with immigrant families in an informal survey.

100 Interview with administrators at International Community School, DeKalb County School District, Decatur, Georgia, October 26, 2005.

Programs must be prepared to reach out to families regardless of country of origin or language spoken—outreach that, to be successful, should vary by cultural and ethnic group.¹⁰¹

Immigrant parents may view their involvement in ways that are different from providers' expectations. Many immigrant providers described how in some communities, education is seen as the responsibility of teachers, and parents are not seen to have a role. Some immigrant and refugee parents may be very involved in their child's education at home and may feel that education that happens in other settings is not their domain.¹⁰² Teachers need to be sensitive to these differences and to avoid mistakenly interpreting parents' hesitancy to get involved as an indication of their views on the importance of education.



It is also important for programs and providers to understand the learning activities that all families do in their home and to recognize that some immigrant families may have home childrearing practices or behaviors that are unique but that also support their children's learning.¹⁰³ Children develop social skills—the foundation of early learning—in the contexts of their unique homes, families, and cultures.¹⁰⁴ Often, immigrant parents are not comfortable with an unfamiliar education system that differs significantly from what they may have experienced in their home country. For example, a study of primary school in Mexico found that parental involvement there is largely limited to administrative issues and extracurricular and social activities.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, providing social and informal opportunities to be involved in the classroom may be an effective starting place to build upon Mexican immigrant families' participation in education programs.

Most states include policies intended to facilitate parents' involvement in their children's pre-kindergarten education. For immigrant families, these policies vary from distributing documents in parents' native languages, to offering ESL classes for parents, to supporting parent committees that are representative of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the student body. The New York Universal Pre-kindergarten program identifies the need for parental

101 Diamond et al., *African-American and Chinese-American Parent Involvement*.

102 Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, *Involving Refugee Parents in their Children's Education*.

103 Volk and Long, "Challenging Myths of the Deficit Perspective"; Emarita, *Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices*.

104 Emarita, *Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Best Practices*.

105 Jensen, "Culture and Practice of Mexican Primary Schooling."

participation activities to be conducted in the language that the parent best understands. Support services for a child's participation in the pre-kindergarten program also must be available in the home language, as well as in English.¹⁰⁶

Access to High-quality Comprehensive Services and Family Supports

High-quality child care and early education can serve as a link to comprehensive services for young children in immigrant families, as well as for other family members. Young children of immigrants are more than twice as likely as children of U.S.-born citizens to be in fair or poor

health and to lack a regular source of health care. They are also more than twice as likely to be uninsured.¹⁰⁷ Once a family has established trust with an early education provider, the provider often becomes that family's resource for services in the community. Many providers told us that families have asked about immigration issues, domestic violence, employment, and health care needs.

Without Head Start, it would be much different for families. Families would not be able to access needed services on their own. You have to know what to do, where to go, and [immigrant parents] don't have access to the same resources.

—Head Start provider, Miami

Head Start programs are required by regulations to adhere to federal Program Performance Standards, which include ensuring that each child has a source of continuous and ongoing medical care and linking children to medical, dental, nutrition, mental health, and other

services.¹⁰⁸ Head Start providers reported that without their program, families would not be receiving the same services they currently are able to access through Head Start.¹⁰⁹

State pre-kindergarten programs vary in the extent to which they provide comprehensive services. Thirty-four states require programs to provide vision, hearing and health screenings, and referrals or additional support services. Twenty-three states require programs to provide a meal to participating children.¹¹⁰

Having staff whose primary job is to facilitate the provision of comprehensive services and family support is critical. A study of Georgia Pre-K's resource coordinators found that programs with resource coordinators were more likely to refer students for outside health and support

106 New York Universal Prekindergarten regulations, Subpart 151-1.3(b)(2) and (b)(3).

107 Capps et al., *The Health and Well-Being of Young Children of Immigrants*. Seven percent of children of immigrants are reported by their parents to be in poor or fair health, compared to 3 percent of children of U.S.-born citizens; 22 percent of children of immigrants are uninsured, compared to 11 percent of children of U.S.-born citizens.

108 Head Start Program Performance Standards, 45 CFR, 1304.20.

109 Interviews with staff at KIDCO, Miami, Florida, December 14, 2005 and Maria Harper, Director, Boulder County Head Start, Boulder, Colorado, November 15, 2005.

110 Barnett et al., *The State of Preschool*.

services, were more successful in accessing needed language assistance for LEP children, and had higher rates of parental engagement in the classroom.¹¹¹ For resource and family support coordinators to effectively assist immigrant families, the coordinators must be culturally and linguistically representative of participating families.

Immigrant, child care, and early education service providers frequently cited health and mental health services as needs of immigrant families. Many programs reported that recently arrived immigrants are unaware that services are available at little or no cost or don't know how to access them. We found that linkages to these services are an integral part of some programs, while others do not emphasize connecting families to additional services. Frequently mentioned challenges include the need for bilingual, culturally competent providers—especially mental health professionals—and finding health care providers who accept Medicaid. Even if a child is a U.S. citizen, finding a physician who accepts Medicaid and speaks the language of the parent can be difficult, especially in communities that have few bilingual providers. Other barriers include fear of deportation, transportation issues, and cost of care and prescriptions. Maintaining benefits is also a challenge, as families receive letters regarding redetermination of eligibility for benefits in English and thus are not always aware of any steps they are required to take to maintain their benefit.

I want my children to stay at home with me until they are four years old to learn our language and culture, and then I want them to go to Georgia's Pre-K...I enjoy the visits with the Parents as Teachers parent educator, and my children are learning shapes and numbers. I would like the play and learn group to continue so that I can learn more things to do with my children and so that they can socialize with other children before they go to pre-K.

—Somali mother, Atlanta

Some providers reported that undocumented parents will not apply for any benefits, even if their children are U.S. citizens. Some are reluctant to apply for universal child health programs, needing reassurance from a trusted source. Some providers who are aware of the anti-immigrant sentiment in the community or at the benefits agency will not encourage immigrant families to apply for benefits, even if the child or other family members are eligible. Many families also are wary of public charge issues and fear that accessing any government service might jeopardize their immigration status.

Home Visiting and Family Support

Programs that incorporate home visits can encourage parent involvement and facilitate access to comprehensive services. Many parents are not able to participate in activities at program sites because of work schedules, transportation, and lack of child care. Home visiting models also reach families with infants and toddlers who are not in formal child care arrangements and parents who choose to stay home with their children, or prefer for their children to be in

111 Rickman et al., *Report of The Findings From The Resource Coordinator Study*.

the care of relatives, but are seeking additional information on education and preparing their children for school. However, mandatory home visits may also be off-putting to immigrant families. One Head Start program in the Atlanta area mentioned that some immigrant families are embarrassed by poverty or reluctant to have people come to their home because of their or other household members' undocumented status. In Miami, during a heightened period of immigration enforcement, some immigrants were afraid to even answer their doors to social service providers.¹¹² This highlights the need for providers to be sensitive to the hesitancy immigrants may feel about home visiting, the importance of initially building trust with families, and the need to continually monitor what events may be affecting immigrant communities.

For the most part, however, home visiting programs provide a way to reach parents, grandparents, and family child care providers who would have difficulty attending parenting, family literacy, or other classes or activities—because of transportation or scheduling—or who choose not to participate in other formal early education programs.¹¹³ The Good Beginnings Never End program at Long Beach Community College in California provides early education information and parenting support to licensed and license-exempt family child care providers,

Sudanese refugees in the Atlanta area enjoy play and learn activities that they can do together with their children. Families in one public housing complex have formed a cooperative program to take care of each other's children. The parents report that they welcome any home-based opportunities for advancing their children's development, as well as additional group opportunities.¹¹⁵

stay-at-home parents, and grandparents in low-income, primarily immigrant communities in their homes. The program also assists in linking providers to community resources, such as public libraries. It has resulted in an increase in children enrolled in Head Start and other early education programs; in immunizations; in providers' awareness of nutrition, dental hygiene, and home safety issues; and in providers' knowledge of how to facilitate children's social and emotional development.¹¹⁴

The Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPPY) program is used in Arkansas, as well as in other states and internationally. HIPPPY is a home-based early childhood education school readiness program for parents of three-, four-, and five-year-old children.¹¹⁶ The programs can be sponsored by school districts, education service cooperatives, Head Start agencies, and community-based organizations and include home visits as well as parent group meetings. The HIPPPY program in Rogers Public

112 Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, *Final Report for Breaking Down Barriers*.

113 Hamm et al., *In Our Own Backyards*.

114 Interview with Yvonne Gonzalez-Duncan and staff at Good Beginnings Never End, Long Beach, California, November 10, 2005; Petsod et al., *Investing in Our Communities*.

115 Refugee Family Services, *Immigrant and Refugee Family Voices*.

116 See the HIPPPY USA Web site, <http://www.hippypusa.org/>.

Schools is provided in Spanish for LEP parents and ELL children. Fifty percent of the participants are Spanish speaking. The program includes ESL classes that parents can access through some of the district's elementary schools or the Adult Education Center of Northwest Arkansas Community College, parent involvement in teaching their preschool children the skills and concepts that will help them to be successful when they begin school, group meetings with activities for children and parents to do together, and preschool classroom activities for the children. The group meeting also includes enrichment activities for parents—which may include parenting, child development, and nutrition information, as well as other topics that parents choose—and role-play of that week's HIPPY curriculum.¹¹⁷

The “Parents as Teachers” program, another model that has been used successfully with immigrant families, provides parent education and parenting support. Although Parents as Teachers is not specifically targeted to immigrant parents, cultural competency is a core value of the model, and it addresses some of the barriers raised about awareness of child development and the role of parents.¹¹⁸ The SPARK program in the metro Atlanta area, which sponsors “play and learn” activities for refugee parents and their young children, uses the Parents as Teachers model.¹¹⁹

I learned skills in parenting education. I learned to not yell at my children and to not treat my children as I was. I learned how to play with my children and keep them engaged, and I'm learning English. My husband is also learning English. He became a citizen and he's attending college now.

—Mexican mother, Gilroy, California
Paraphrased from Spanish

Family Literacy Programs

Family literacy programs can combine early education for young children with adult education and literacy classes. We visited a number of these programs at each site, in settings including public schools, immigrant-serving organizations, and migrant centers. Many of the programs we visited were funded by the federal Even Start Family Literacy Program. Even Start is a U.S. Department of Education program for low-income adults and their children under age eight. Even Start supports integrated adult literacy (including adult basic education and ESL), parenting education, early education, and joint literacy activities between parents and children.¹²⁰ Several state evaluations of Even Start programs show positive outcomes for ELLs in particular.¹²¹

117 Interview with Linda Russell, HIPPY Rogers Public Schools, Rogers, Arkansas, April 6, 2006.

118 See <http://www.parentsasteachers.org/site/pp.asp?c=ekIRLCMZJxE&b=272093>.

119 SPARK, a national initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is intended to help communities address school readiness through partnerships aimed at creating “ready children,” “ready schools,” and “ready communities.” See <http://www.wkkf.org> for more information.

120 In fiscal year 2007, Even Start was funded at \$82 million. President Bush has, in several budget requests, proposed eliminating the program.

121 Calderón, *William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program*.

The Even Start program in Homestead, Florida serves 53 migrant families, mostly from Mexico and El Salvador. The children range in age from six weeks to five years. Parents attend ESL or basic math classes twice a week, during the pre-kindergarten sessions, and family literacy



classes once a week. Evening classes are offered for parents who work during the day. The program includes home visits, as well as onsite individual speech and language therapy. Even Start also partners with other agencies and provides transportation to off-site services.¹²²

Family literacy programs have the dual advantage of benefiting both young children and their parents. Many immigrant parents are eager to learn English and to develop literacy skills to help their children prepare for school. In some cases, family literacy programs are run by immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations. For example:

- The Mexican American Community Service Agency (MACSA), a multi-service community agency in San Jose, California, runs an Even Start Family Literacy program in nearby Gilroy that serves 64 families. Board members and staff not only speak Spanish but also reflect the community, being comprised of Mexican-Americans and former program participants. Women in the program told us that they appreciate the opportunity to learn how to help their children be ready for school, the opportunity to access additional social services, and the sense of community they feel being part of a program in an unfamiliar country.
- The Cambodian Family Literacy Program, in Long Beach, California, is funded by Even Start and the California Department of Education and operated, at two school sites, by the Cambodian Association of America. The program is open to any Cambodian parent who lives in Long Beach and has a child under age eight; at the time of our interview, 31 families were enrolled. The half-day program includes adult education, ESL, and beginning GED; parenting education; parent and child interactive literacy; and child care and after school care for older children. All of the program's staff are bilingual in English and Khmer, and activities are done in both languages as appropriate and according to research-based techniques. The adult participants include mothers, grandmothers, fathers, and other relatives.

122 Interview with Sonja Montas-Hunter and Deborah Cherubini, Barry University Office of Migrant Education and Special Projects, Homestead, Florida, December 15, 2005.

- The International Rescue Committee, a refugee-resettlement agency in Decatur, Georgia, holds a family literacy class for parents with young children. Originally, the class was intended to make ESL classes accessible for parents who lack child care, but the program expanded to include a school-readiness component for young children. Parents and children participate in joint activities as well as separate literacy activities. The classes also provide parents with information on additional community resources, including issues such as navigating the medical system, domestic violence, reproductive health, and nutrition.

Transition to Kindergarten

A high-quality preschool program can also serve as a bridge to K-12 schooling. This can be particularly important for children of immigrants and their parents, who may be unfamiliar with the U.S. education system. Head Start Program Performance Standards require Head Start programs to “establish and maintain procedures to support successful transitions” from Head Start to elementary school or other early childhood programs.¹²³

In order to address the transition, the preschool programs that we visited had varying degrees of formal or informal relationships with the public school system. Before the kindergarten year, some programs take their children to visit the public school, meet the kindergarten teacher, and participate in activities such as eating in the cafeteria. Some programs invite kindergarten teachers to come meet the children and parents. Some assist parents in enrolling in kindergarten and navigating the public school system. An evaluation of Georgia’s pre-kindergarten program found that employing resource coordinators contributes to low-income children’s successful transitions to kindergarten.¹²⁴

In Gwinnett County, Georgia, a team of early education providers is working to expand its transition program. The transition team includes Head Start, community-based pre-kindergarten providers, and the local elementary school, as well as private funders. In the summer of 2005, Meadowcreek Elementary School held its first “Kindercamp” program for children who would be entering kindergarten in the coming school year. Many of the children participating were ELLs, as Meadowcreek is in a district that has a rapidly growing immigrant population, predominantly from Latin America. The program provided transition activities for both children and parents. Parent workshops included information on expectations for Kindercamp and kindergarten; activities to do with a backpack full of literacy materials; and information on navigating the education system, parent-teacher conferences, and taking the school bus. All workshops used Spanish-speaking staff interpreters or parent volunteer interpreters. After a successful Kindercamp program, the transition team is now looking at a

123 Head Start Program Performance Standards, 45 CFR, 1304.41

124 Rickman et al., *Report of The Findings From The Resource Coordinator Study*.

curriculum exchange for the coming year. Elementary school staff and early education staff are planning visits to each other's sites and joint meetings between preschool and kindergarten teachers.¹²⁵

Strategies That Work

Providers and policymakers in many communities are working to make child care and early education more responsive to the needs of immigrant families and to ensure that children of immigrants receive high-quality early education, regardless of setting. Strategies include:

- **Increasing bilingual and bicultural staff.** The pool of qualified, bilingual, and culturally competent child care and early education staff can be increased both through the recruitment and compensation of qualified providers from immigrant and language-minority communities and by increasing culturally relevant training for staff currently working with immigrant families. Recruiting and retaining linguistically and culturally diverse staff will require a range of supports, including scholarships, incentives, and partnerships between community-based organizations and IHE. Professional development standards for current staff should include access to training in cultural sensitivity and second-language acquisition strategies.
- **Providing training and technical assistance to informal caregivers.** In many communities, young children of immigrants are in the care of informal caregivers. Communities can conduct joint trainings with licensed and informal caregivers, to ensure that all providers who are serving children of immigrants have access to the information and training they need. Trusted messengers can help build relationships and connect informal caregivers to training and supports.
- **Tailoring programs to the needs of diverse immigrant families.** Immigrant communities should be involved in the design and development of early learning programs and content. All programs should respect the home languages and cultures of all children served and find meaningful ways to incorporate diverse languages and cultures into everyday curriculum.
- **Providing access to comprehensive services.** Access to comprehensive services is a critical component of high-quality child care and early education for immigrant families. Providers who have established trust with immigrant families may be able to facilitate access to additional services by passing along this trust to other service providers. To be most effective, comprehensive services must be linguistically and culturally appropriate, as well as easily accessible in neighborhoods where immigrants live.

125 SPARK transition meeting, Meadowcreek Elementary School, Norcross, Georgia, October 25, 2005.

- **Family literacy programs.** Programs that involve both children of immigrants and their parents have the dual benefit of providing young children with quality early education and providing their parents with the services they need, including parenting education and ESL and GED classes. Some immigrant and refugee groups may prefer activities that focus on parents and children together, especially for infants and toddlers.
- **Licensing, monitoring, and technical assistance.** State licensing regulations should include standards that require providers to develop practices that support children from different cultures. Local providers serving immigrant families may use nontraditional practices and materials that represent the cultures of the families they serve. State and local licensors should be trained to recognize these practices and to understand how they meet licensing rules. At the same time, licensors trained in cultural competencies can help providers serving young children from immigrant families understand the diverse needs of these families, as well as to use site visits to raise issues of cultural competence.
- **Quality rating systems (QRS).** These systems are designed to collect information on the quality of programs and to incorporate standards, outreach, technical assistance and support to programs, financing incentives, and supports for parents. States can use these systems to incorporate new standards into child care and early education programs, in order to encourage the recruitment of bilingual and bicultural providers, create and implement culturally appropriate standards and practices, and provide financial supports to programs to help them meet these goals. In addition, a QRS can be used to educate and inform parents and other advocates about high-quality programs. To truly reach families, information provided through a QRS should be appropriately translated and disseminated to communities and to immigrant-serving organizations.

Key Findings: RESPONSIVENESS

To ensure high quality, child care and early education must be responsive to the diverse needs of young children of immigrants and their families.

However, CLASP found:

- A shortage of bilingual and bicultural providers, particularly among those serving children of immigrants of backgrounds other than Latino and who speak languages other than Spanish.
 - Providers are interested in training in cultural competency and second-language acquisition, but currently training is insufficiently available.
 - There are multiple barriers to recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and providers from immigrant communities, including limited English proficiency, insufficient access to higher education, and limited technical assistance to assist providers with licensing.
 - Few child care and early education programs have standards or curricula that explicitly address the needs of young children of immigrants or second-language learners.
 - Parental involvement strategies must be targeted to diverse immigrant communities and must provide meaningful opportunities for LEP parents to be involved.
 - Access to comprehensive health services and family supports is critical for immigrant families, yet not all programs provide these services or facilitate access to additional services. Those comprehensive services that do exist are not always linguistically and culturally accessible.
 - Home-visiting and family literacy programs offer promising opportunities to provide high-quality early education and family supports to young children of immigrants and their families—provided they are done in culturally appropriate ways and trust is established between providers and families.
-