



INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
 MARÍA "CUCA" ROBLEDO MONTECEL, Ph.D., PRESIDENT & CEO
 5815 CALLAGHAN ROAD, SUITE 101
 SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78228
 210.444.1710 • FAX 210.444.1714
 CONTACT@IDRA.ORG • WWW.IDRA.ORG

Highlights from IDRA's External Impact Evaluation of the AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program



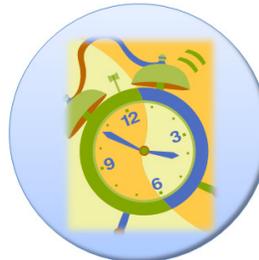
93%
 of children
 school-ready
 when entering
 school



10%
 high school
 attrition rate
 for children
 compared to
 Texas: **25%**



21%
 more mothers
 with high
 school diploma
 than at entry



39%
 higher
 employment
 than at entry



39%
 homeownership
 rate compared
 to **22%** at entry

AVANCE, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit parent-child education and family support organization headquartered in San Antonio, contracted with the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) to conduct an external impact evaluation of its signature Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP) for parents who graduated from the program between the years 1999 through 2006. The evaluation involved interviewing these participants by telephone and face-to-face from April to August 2013.

The evaluation was designed to address the following overarching question: How does the AVANCE PCEP affect two-generation (parent-child) behavior change in the areas of education and socio-economic status? IDRA's evaluation was designed to answer this question from a variety of perspectives.

Participation in AVANCE's Parent-Child Education Program yielded a positive return on the investment in early childhood education for at-risk families.

AVANCE's PCEP provided educational support for parents and children.

AVANCE's PCEP built economic competence through financial classes, information and other support to parents that helped toward getting better jobs or planning for longer-term financial stability.

AVANCE's PCEP bolstered the aspirations parents have for their children.

AVANCE's PCEP created social capital by building parent's strengths to complete their education and ultimately improve their own economic security and stability.

AVANCE's PCEP promote and valued parent's voice to help to change the trajectory of their lives.

AVANCE's PCEP participants seized opportunities to move up the economic and social ladder often breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

General Findings

Young (below 30 years old), minority (98 percent Hispanic), economically distressed (37.1 percent earn less than \$20,000 a year), and under-educated (60.8 percent did not complete high school) mothers constitute the majority of AVANCE PCEP participants. IDRA's external evaluation was based on a sample of 199 mothers who mirror the socio-economic, ethnic and educational characteristics of AVANCE target population.

Knowledge of Child Development & Parenting Skills

At 10.5 percent, the AVANCE families' students had a lower high school attrition rate than the statewide rate for Hispanic students in Texas of 33 percent, according to the 2012-13 IDRA Texas public school attrition study. Moreover, the AVANCE family high school attrition rate (10.5 percent) is lower than the Texas attrition rate for all students (25 percent).

More than 93 percent of the mothers indicated that their children were school-ready when entering school. Of those, almost 91 percent credited AVANCE with helping them get their children ready for school.

Support for Two-Generation Education & Growth

Mothers improved their education since graduating from AVANCE. The number of mothers with higher education degrees increased from six to 19, an improvement of 216.7 percent, while the number of mothers with less than high school education decreased from 103 to 81 or 21.4 percent.

AVANCE provided important practical guidance through several activities to help mothers with the education of their children. Two of these activities were toy-making classes and field trips. Most mothers (95.3 percent) made toys that they used to instill in their children important concepts about the world, their sensory perception as well as their feelings. Many mothers (63.4 percent) participated in field trips organized to acquaint them with the resources available in the community.

Employment & Income Levels

At the time of their graduation from AVANCE, more mothers were employed (29.5 percent) than when they entered AVANCE (17.1

percent); the employment quality also was higher – 17.6 percent of the mothers' employment was full time after graduating from AVANCE, compared to 6.2 percent at the time of seeking its services.

The general trend toward employment improvement continued long after mothers left AVANCE. At the time of the interviews, the employed proportion had increased to 38.8 percent (compared to 29.5 percent when they graduated from AVANCE) – of these, 23.8 percent were full time (compared to 17.6 percent when they graduated from AVANCE).

Homeownership & Entrepreneurship

The data showed a clear trend toward increased homeownership and reduced renting and other arrangements from the time the mothers were at AVANCE to the present. Before graduating from AVANCE, 66.7 percent of the mothers rented their homes, and 11.5 percent had other arrangements. At the time of the interviews, these proportions decreased to 42.2 percent and 4.7 percent, respectively. Homeownership, on the other hand, increased from 21.9 percent before mothers graduated from AVANCE to 53.1 percent at the time of the interviews.

More than half of the mothers (53.7 percent) were involved in their community since graduating from AVANCE. Mothers attributed AVANCE for helping them become leaders in their communities and for their increased involvement in their children's schools and other community institutions, such as the church.

Barriers, Impact & Suggestions for Improvement

Fewer than one third (29.0 percent) of the mothers indicated that AVANCE could have helped them better. They felt AVANCE had done everything they could to help. Participants in the face-to-face interviews were asked to expand on the barriers to participation, but the barriers they mentioned were dealing with their own personal situations (English proficiency, child care, etc.).

When mothers were asked about the best thing AVANCE did for them and their families, three concepts permeated their answers: parenting, communication, and family relationships. The mothers indicated that AVANCE helped them not only be better parents but also how to communicate with their children and their husbands, which resulted in improved family unity, often saving their families from possible dissolution.

About the Intercultural Development Research Association

IDRA is an independent, private non-profit organization, led by María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., dedicated to assuring educational opportunity for every child. At IDRA, we develop innovative research- and experience-based solutions and policies to assure that (1) all students have access to and succeed in high quality schools, (2) families and communities have a voice in transforming the educational institutions that serve their children, and (3) educators have access to integrated professional development that helps to solve problems, create solutions, and use best practices to educate all students to high standards.

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