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## **An Analysis of Parental Engagement in Spanish and Bilingual Families**

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An Analysis of Parental Engagement in Spanish and Bilingual Families

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### Abstract

Head Start programs in the United States began in 1965 and are an important part of preparing low income children through education, health, social and other services. The Monterey County Office of Head Start and Early Start serves more than 1,245 families each year. The majority of the families served have Spanish as a primary language. Using a questionnaire, this study examined parental involvement by identifying the skills parents found most important and the amount of time parents spent developing those skills. Twenty-one parents completed the survey. The study found 93% of parents spend time talking to their children about a new activity they learned in school.

Key Words: *Children, Engagement, Head Start, Parents*

**Agency Description**

The Monterey County Office of Education, Head Start and Early Head Start (hereafter, Head Start) was established in 1965 and it is a federally funded program. It is dedicated to provide the highest quality of early childhood education to children 0-5 years of age and comprehensive child and family services (Jaramillo, 2014). The program has been serving families of different races/ethnicities such as serving 37% of Hispanic or Latino's while a 63% is not identified as Hispanic or Latino's (Facts Fiscal 2017). This demonstrates Head Start serves children and families of different nationality making the program culturally diverse. According to Auerbach (2005), "those family literacy programs that focus on teaching parents to do school activities at home and assist children with homework". The parents that support the children with homework at home are the ones that become more successful in life.

Head Start provides an array of different programs and services for children and their families. For example, some of the services include health and safety, food and nutrition, mental health services, family and community engagement and disability Services. Dads in Action is a Program in Head Start helps dads gain the knowledge, confidence, and skills they need at home to successfully bond with their children. Last but not least the Foster Grandparents Program allows adults 55 years of age and older to serve as mentors and tutors for children.

Head Start mainly serves low income children and families in mentally preparing children for kindergarten and higher education. The Head Start program has a half-day program and an extended day program. The half-day program is held in the morning from 8 AM to 12:30 PM and the second group comes in from 1 PM to 4 PM. According to the National Head Start Association (2015), Head Start offers national conferences, manager and director academy, and

policy institutes provide training to more than 6,000 staff, parents and teachers. The training benefits everyone in different ways to assist the children in the program and at home.

Parents not only take advantage of the program because it offers them time to run errands, work, or go to school, but also because Head Start provides children and families with a variety of opportunities to learn and prepare to properly transition to kindergarten. Since 1965 to 2009, Head Start has transitioned from serving 100 to 1,245 children and families” (Head Start, 2014). The program has been useful for many families and their children. As the population continues to grow so does the demand for Head Start.

### **Problem Description**

There is a lack of parental engagement when it comes to making time for parents to be physically involved in their children’s classroom. About 48% of parents stated they talked to their children about what they did at school and how they felt around other children. Parental involvement can be a big impact in the child’s education. According to Dwyer (n.d) “involving parents leads to increased academic achievement for students at all educational and economic levels.” Not only does parental involvement affects pre-kindergarten education but also higher education. Moreover, the child’s history and background also affect their education depending how they were raised at home. According to Ayoub “seventy three percent of substantiated reports involved child neglect, 30 percent involved physical abuse, and 20 percent involved sexual abuse more than one type of maltreatment was possible for each report. “This was an example of number of the percentages of children who were maltreated. When children live in a healthy environment they do not suffer as much as other kids. Wan stated “The reason children parent separation has such devastating effects is because it attacks one of the most fundamental and critical bonds in human biology.” However, parental separation made a huge impact on

children especially when they are at a young age. Young children do not understand why do parents get divorce and this causes them to get stressed.

### **Causes**

One of the causes of this problem is an absence of parent or children being put in foster care. The absence of a parent is important because the children's parent is not there to discipline them or give them the attention a father or mother would normally give them. It is not the same thing as a grandmother or foster parent because it is not the same love they would receive from a biological parent. The second cause is parents are busy most of the day due to long hours of work and by the time they come home their child is already in bed. There is no time to bond or interact with each other. Substance use and abuse is another cause to the lack of parental engagement because if the parent is involved with drugs and alcohol there is no way they can be involved in the child's life. The three main causes are important because they can impact a toddler's life for a long time without even realizing how much the absence of a parent means. On the research of a "Parent Absent Article it mentioned, "Each child in the situation may have different reaction to the situation depending on the level of love and the security they feel from other sources, their age and maturity and ability to process and understand the circumstances." Meaning if the child was young then it would take time to process the information and understand why parents get divorce.

### **Consequences**

A major consequence is the child being emotionally and mentally affected. If the parents at home are constantly fighting, drinking, and ignoring the children they are most likely going to be traumatized. This is due to from having them experience all this drama and incidents happening at home. The toddlers will be affected emotionally and live their life with fear. Also,

they will be mentally affected because they are not living in a safe and healthy environment. The second consequence is having trouble learning at school and at home. According to Pinantoan, (2016) “students with two parent’s operating in supportive roles are 52% more likely to enjoy school and get straight A’s than those whose parents are disengaged with what’s going on at school.” The parent needs to have patience in order to show the kids techniques to learn and be. Parents need to be able to create activities at home that will interest them in learning new skills. Focusing in school can be a challenge if the children are going through hard moments at home with the parents. The third consequence is delinquent with drugs and alcohol. If the parent is consuming drugs and alcohol the child will observe and think it is normal. They might think it's perfectly okay for them to grow up living that life. Also, when the parent commits a crime and is in and out of home and if child is around this it will affect them because it will be something normal for them to do.

### **Project Description and Implementation**

The name of the project is An Analysis of Parental Engagement in Spanish and Bilingual Families. This project falls under the category of an educational intervention. In the Fall of 2018, a project consisted of organizing an agency event involving Head Start staff and parents on meeting the needs of the children in the program because their learning skills needed to improve. In this project there was a survey for parents to complete and turn back to the intern. Based on the results from the survey it helped demonstrate the level of parental involvement with the children whether it is at home or in school. After the results the intern created a plan to motivate the parents and encourage them to accompany their child to class and participate in activities the kids are doing. This helps both the child and parent to interact and bond. Classroom activities helped engage the children, develop a calmer behavior and positive attitude towards others. In

order for this to happen Head Start staff were brought together to discuss different ideas on how to better help the needy children need and how they could include them in more activities.

Different ideas from the Leadership, Support Coordinator were also being discussed, so there was a positive impact with the children. Parents, for example were more involved with their children's education and by doing this survey they created a closer relationship with their child's educators which at the end it benefits the child.

The purpose of this project is to encourage teachers to teach children different activities while at the same time teaching them new skills. The goal is for teachers to implement different activities and not stick to the same routine. This will allow the child to not get bored and be hesitant to attend school. The agency will receive not only knowledge but also skills that will benefit new children enrolling in the program, as well as the staff. The issue addressed was on how to help improve the teacher's curriculum. It was important to include the mentor in this project because she got to put her input on how the program can be a total success for children. In order to motivate the parents to be more involved with Head Start program a meeting was held with the mentor. We discussed what the children will be doing in class and what the parents will be facilitating in. First, the intern created a plan from beginning to end. The activities the children will be doing since they arrive until they leave will also be determined. Children were given a different activity each day. This helped parents have a better idea of the activities Head Start does and how it impacts children's education. It also helps better equip the children before they make the transition to Kindergarten.

### **Project Implementation Plan**

First there was a meeting with the teacher and explained to her the capstone idea was to teach children some activities that will encourage the children to learn and cope with their



emotions. For instance, the teacher can draw symbols and using different colors for each symbol. This will not only help the children learn their colors, but also different shapes and figures, since they do need to know them when they enter kindergarten. Another example is the children were taught to write their name by implementing different activities. They spelled out their name with wood sticks and paste it on paper with glue. Children also had the opportunity to cut letters and spell out their name. These were activities they were interested in doing and provided motivation. The point of this was for the children to be ambitious and want to learn or be motivated on wanting to do activities and be creative. Included in Appendix B is a detailed scope of work for this project.

The mentor was part of this program including teachers from the Head Start, site supervisors and the coordinator of the program. They discussed the multiple ideas of what would benefit the agency. However, the community and staff were also involved with the project, they were notified about the survey that was going to get hand out within the next week. The surveys were in English and Spanish and it was given to the parents at the time they picked up their child from school and collected before they left. Since there are some parents who do not have an email it was easier to hand out the survey in hard copy rather than sending it through email. Also, at the time of these changes there was a consent for parents to sign if they were okay with the new changes in the program or if they wanted it to stay the same. It was important to know from where the materials were coming from and what materials were needed in order to make any of these activities happen. Furthermore, this project needed personnel time to organize the activities and plan them a day before the child came to class, so everything would be ready for the next day.

### **Participants**

Of the 40 surveys handed out only 27 participants took their time to fill out the survey and returned it back to the intern. The reason why others did not complete it was because they were in a rush to go to school or work. The workshop provided the following Tuesday was for those who were interested in learning new techniques to better assist their child. Another person who participated in the program is the leader from Head Start, she assisted the intern with any questions about the training. The mentor was also a supporter and aware of this training. In the first-class session the therapist, introduced the parents to the training and informed them what they were going to cover in the six weeks. For instance, every week she discussed a new topic and the first week she demonstrated a video about parenting to the class.

### **Expected outcomes**

The goals of this project were to implement new and different activities to the program and encouraged the children to participate with those activities. Also, it helped educators cope with the children's behavior by acquiring new skills on how to calm the child when they have anxiety or behavior issues. It also depended on the child's background and environment. The primary objective of this project was to get the teacher and students attention by learning different skills in the classroom and getting them prepared for kindergarten. Some of these activities took place before the implementation which were met with the mentor, staff, and site visits. All these activities were needed to accomplish the project to help the program become successful and educate the children.

These resources were needed for the project. A reserved classroom is needed every Tuesday for two hours approximately to conduct trainings. The classroom needed to be reserved for a month and a half for one day a week. Another resource needed is snacks, and waters for the participants in the training. Also, an overhead projector for the first week to play the DVD for

the class. The last resource is class materials for the parents to do their activities. The leader of Head Start along with the Coordinator, and the therapist, will assist the intern with any resources needed to meet the trainings.

### **Project Description and Implementation Process**

The capstone project was a one-day outreach event for the parents from Head Start and Early Head Start (hereafter, Head Start). First the intern created flyers and handed it out to the parents a week before so the parents were aware of the surveys and could donate 5 minutes of their time to the intern. In the flyer mentioned that the survey was going to be anonymous and no more than 5 minutes. The surveys were given to the morning group and the extended day group, they were collected the same day from both groups. Also, was a workshop held for the parents on March 12, this workshop is called “Raise Emotionally Healthy Children” and its every Tuesday for six weeks from 10:30am to 12:30 pm in the conference room at the Head Start Center. The workshop displayed the parents how to cope with their child’s behavior at home and how to interact with them in a healthy way. After the training was completed, they received a certificate of achievement for the program. The intern created a flyer which were handed out on March 6, a week before the classes start. The intern and Family and Marriage Therapist, tried to recruit at least 10 parents from Santa Rita Head Start (hereafter), to come join the workshop. While doing the workshop there was coffee and snacks for the parents. This benefited the parents as well as the community because they knew new techniques to be a better parent in the future.

### **Project Assessment process**

One of the outcomes the agency accomplished was 10 participants to complete the training and attend 6 classes. It was only two hours one day a week. It was a challenge because not all parents could complete the training due to work or other commitments they had to do

while the kids were in class. The second outcome was most parents worked in the morning which interfered with their work schedule. Also, the class is only provided for Spanish speakers because the last training was for bilingual. It was a little complicated for the therapist to translate from Spanish to English and vice versa.

### **Conclusion and Personal Reflection**

The knowledge I learned from the program is to start the internship early and do not procrastinate and leave it for the last minute. Also, being in the program for one year has gave me the opportunity to learn about capstone program and have an idea in what concentration I want to work in when I graduate. Another thing I learned was to focus on the problem of the project and know how to meet the deadlines. Writing all these papers step by step has helped me have a better understanding of the project. However, a challenge I had was brainstorming ideas for my capstone project. At the beginning I did not know what I wanted to focus on for my capstone project. It was difficult because I had to come up with a plan a and plan b incase my mentor did not agree with my first project; I had a second project to work on.

### **Learning Goals**

The experience the intern gained was reaching out to the parents by creating flyers and getting comfortable handing them out. It was challenging because before the intern did not know how to interact professionally with the parents. Also, before the intern handed out the flyers, she had to run it by the mentor to get it approved and send the message out. This really pushed the intern out of her comfort zone. Speaking to parents and explaining the process of the program was something she was not used to doing. Therefore, Xia stated, “By understanding the student behavior, their learning styles, their expectation, and motivation to learn, the quality of teaching can be improved.” The goal of this paper was to study the survey and data of parents who do not

participate or interacted much with pre-k children in the classroom. However, the intern was able to convince the parents to visit the classroom and feel welcome when stopping by even if it was for 10 minutes.

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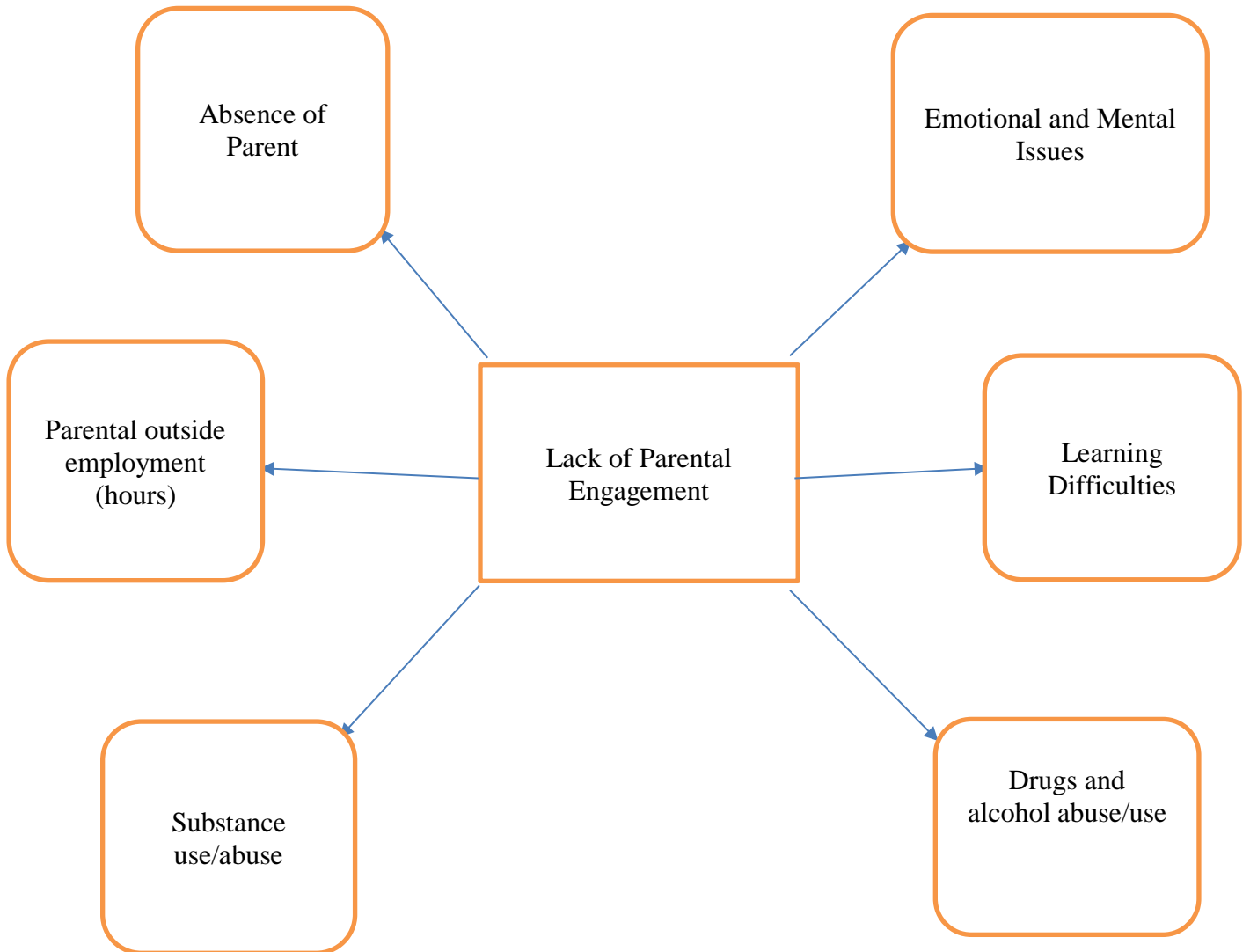
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Appendix A

**Title**  
Head Start and Early Head Start: An Analysis of Parental  
Engagement in Spanish and Bi-lingual Families





## Appendix B

**The scope of Work and Timeline**

<b>Table 1. Draft Scope of Work</b>			
<b>Title:</b> Head Start and Early Head Start: An Analysis of Parental Engagement in Spanish and Bilingual Families			
<b>Project description:</b> In this project the intern created a survey to demonstrate how much time parents spend a week with their child outside of Head Start Program			
<b>Goal:</b> Encouragement of parental involvement outside of the head start program			
<b>Primary objective of the project:</b> Receive at least 20-30 surveys back from both morning and afternoon program			
Activities		Deliverables	Timeline/deadlines
1	Discuss Capstone ideas with primary, secondary, mentor	Final Capstone idea approved by mentor	Oct 9, 2018
2	Gather resources for support in the survey	Create survey	Oct 10, 2018
3	Create a flier give parents	Finalize flier and have mentor revise it	Oct 17, 2018
4	Handout the Surveys to the parents at Head Start both groups A.M/P.M	Handout the surveys to the parents	Oct 31, 2018
5	Collect the surveys, analyze them	Apply feedback	Nov 13, 2018
6	Complete requirements	Final agency and Capstone reports	Nov 14, 2018
7	Prepare Capstone project with collected data from surveys	Instructor approval and dress rehearsal of capstone	Nov 15, 2018
9	Completed reporting requirements	Final agency and capstone reports	May 3, 2019
10	Prepared capstone presentation	Present at Dress Rehearsal	May 8-10, 2019
11	Final preparation for Capstone Festival	Capstone Festival!!	May 16, 2019

## Appendix C

**Parental Support Survey**

This survey will help Head Start and Early Head Start understand parental involvement to better help structure programs and services. Your answers are confidential, we will not collect names or any other information about you.

1. Which language is mostly spoken at home?

Circle one: English Spanish Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which of the following skills do you think are the most important for your child to learn before they start kindergarten?

\_\_\_ Shapes

\_\_\_ Number recognition

\_\_\_ Colors

\_\_\_ Letter recognition

\_\_\_ Cutting

\_\_\_ Paying attention

\_\_\_ Writing

\_\_\_ Following directions

\_\_\_ Letter recognition

\_\_\_ Sounding out letters

3. How many hours per week do you spend helping your child at home with each of the following skills?

Check the box for each category.

	Less than 1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4-5 hours	More than 5 hours
Shapes						
Colors						
Cutting						
Writing						
Following directions						
Letter recognition						
Sounding out letters						
Number recognition						
Reading Readiness						
Paying attention						

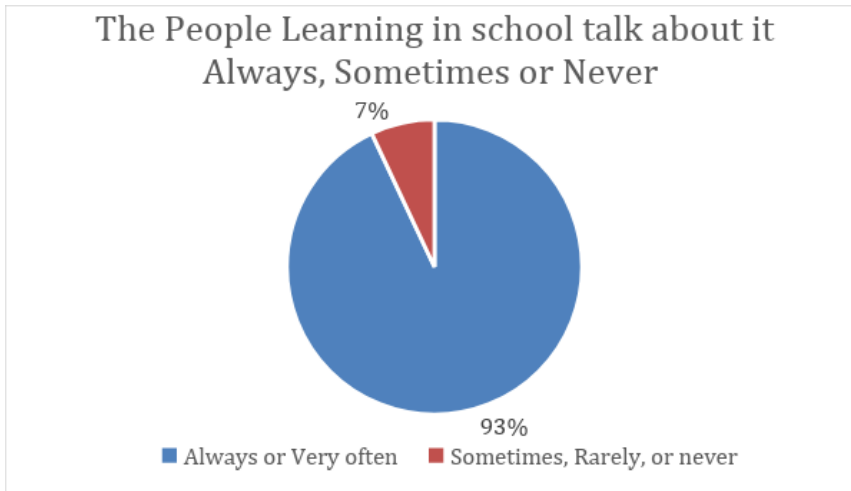
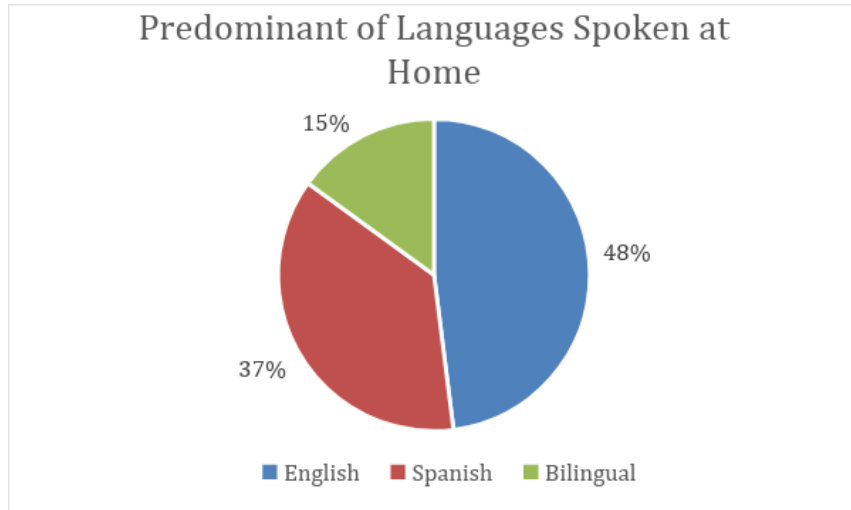
4. How often do you have talk with your child about what his / her class is learning at school?

Circle one: Always    Very Often    Sometimes    Rarely    Never

5. How often do you talk with your child about problems he / she is having with others at school?

Circle one: Always    Very Often    Sometimes    Rarely    Never

Appendix D



## Appendix E

**Head Start and Early Head Start Flyer**

On Friday December 7<sup>th</sup> a survey will be handed out to be completed by parents. The survey will be confidential. Please take 5 minutes of your time to fill out the survey.

Thank You,

Student of CSUMB

Marielena Villicana



El viernes 7 de Diciembre se entregará una encuesta para ser completada por los padres. La encuesta será confidencial. Por favor tome 5 minutos de su tiempo para completar la encuesta.

Gracias,

Estudiante de CSUMB

Marielena Villicana