



2019-2020

END OF YEAR REPORT

Parent-Child Education Program





Since its inception in 1973, AVANCE, Inc. has been dedicated to providing high quality, innovative, two-generation education and support programming for parents and their children across Texas. The local chapters in Austin, Houston, North Texas, and San Antonio are related entities within the network and have their own Executive Director, Federal EIN, and are governed by their own Board of Directors who are responsible for the organization, management, and oversight of their programs. AVANCE, Inc. is the parent organization that holds the 501c3 and provides administrative and programmatic support to the local chapters.

AVANCE-North Texas started in 1996 and is the local chapter that delivers AVANCE curriculum including the Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP).

Data Collection, Measurement, and Reporting

All data for this report was collected from program participants in the North Texas Chapter through Survey Gizmo, an online, encrypted, data collection platform. Participants were sent a link to the AVANCE Parent Questionnaire (APQ) prior to participating in the PCEP (pre-test) and then again after graduation (post-test) to determine the impact of the program over time. The APQ was designed by AVANCE, Inc. and all analyses in this report were conducted by AVANCE, Inc. staff and UT Austin interns.

This report was created by Dr. Teresa Granillo and AVANCE, Inc. staff. The content and language presented are based on a template developed in partnership with Child Trends.

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>North Texas Chapter.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Results.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Appendix A</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Appendix B.....</i>	<i>15</i>





KEY FINDINGS

- A total of 661 parents along with their 775 children were served in the 2019-2020 program year.
- Objective 1: Increase parent knowledge of child development and parenting skills.
- Outcome 1: 83% of program graduates increased their knowledge
- Objective 2: Increase positive parent-child interactions that promote school readiness
- Outcome 2: At program completion, 95% of program graduates reported reading to their child at least three times per week, compared to only 58% at pre-test.
- Objective 3: Increase engagement in activities that will increase economic mobility
- Outcome 3: After completing the PCEP, 78% of program graduates planned to attend at least one type of continuing education.
- Out of 661 participants, 569 graduated (86%).

Introduction

AVANCE is a non-profit, community-based organization first established in the Mirasol Housing Project in San Antonio, Texas in 1973. AVANCE, which derives its name from the Spanish word meaning “to advance or progress,” has four chapter offices, one regional offices, and one licensee across Texas and California. AVANCE aims to unlock America’s potential by strengthening families in at-risk communities through a two-generation, family engagement approach that combines early childhood development and parenting education. In support of this goal, AVANCE developed the Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP). This report documents the 2019-2020 evaluation activities for the PCEP in North Texas, Texas.

Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP)

The PCEP uses a two-generation approach, which addresses the needs of under-resourced children and parents together. The goal is to address the diverse and complex needs of impoverished children and their families in at-risk communities by providing early childhood education and culturally sensitive parenting education, as well as supporting parental empowerment and community building. The PCEP provides services to enhance (a) parenting practices that promote positive parent-child interactions, (b) outcomes for children (such as language development), and (c) adult economic self-sufficiency and psychological well-being. Furthermore, the PCEP curriculum emphasizes that parents are their children’s greatest teachers, and parents should develop the ability to advocate for their own needs, as well as those of their child(ren).

Families attend weekly parenting classes lasting four hours from September through May. Children receive developmentally appropriate education during these classes, and parents learn and practice parenting skills through direct interaction with their child(ren) in class. Monthly home visits are designed to reinforce these skills as well as help ensure a child-safe home environment. In addition, each class incorporates an hour dedicated to toy-making for parents who may not otherwise be able to afford educational toys. Parents also receive training on topics such as child health, parent mental health, positive father or male caregiver engagement, and how to maintain a positive co-parenting relationship. These trainings are supplemented with community resource speakers who provide information about other skills or resources available to parents.

COVID-19 Impact and Response

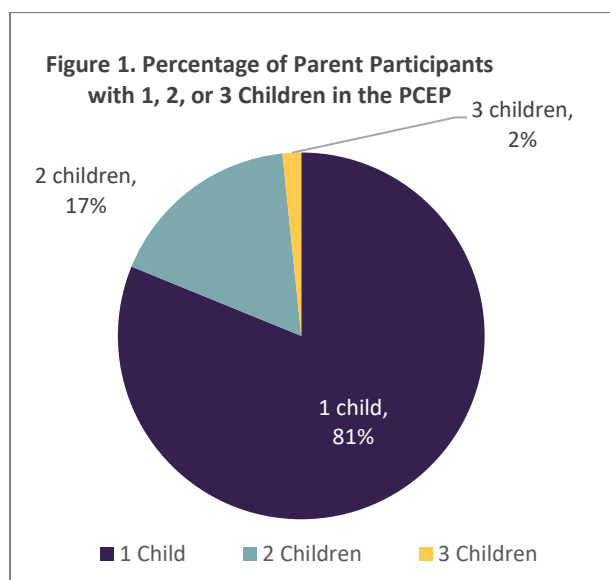
Beginning in March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic presented a unique set of challenges for AVANCE educators and families. Across Texas, shelter-in-place orders were being announced during spring break when AVANCE operations were already closed for the week. In this short time, staff across the AVANCE network convened via video conferencing to develop a plan to continue programming virtually. Once equipment and connectivity had been secured for staff working from home, AVANCE parent educators worked quickly to evaluate remaining curriculum content, select the core elements essential for parents and children, and begin creating content for virtual delivery. Educators turned their homes into classrooms and created video clips of themselves teaching the core lessons and providing toy making instructions. They facilitated “discussion sessions” during normally scheduled class times, during which they would open a group chat on WhatsApp and create a space for parents to connect, ask questions about the lessons, and share resources with each other.



AVANCE-North Texas continued to support parents and their children with campaigns at home while observing social distancing guidelines.

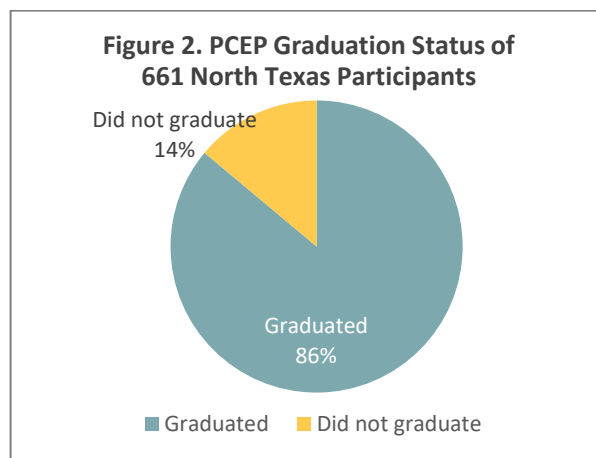
North Texas Chapter Demographics

The North Texas Chapter delivered the PCEP to a total of 661 parent participants, along with their 775 children (see Figure 1). Enrolled parents were assigned to one of twenty-five groups across 22 schools and attended classes with that group throughout the 2019-2020 program year. Of these 661 participants, 551 were new participants, and 110 returned from a prior year.

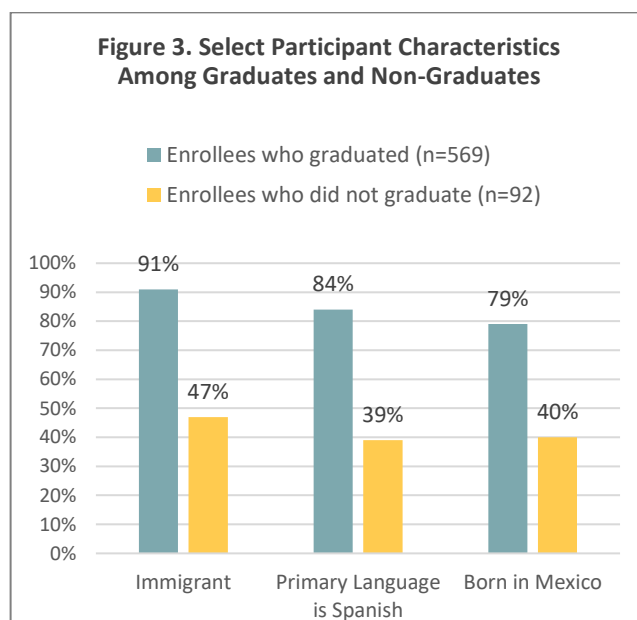


Participants were mostly female (99%) and primarily Latinx (100%)¹. Over three quarters of participants were born in Mexico (74%), and the average age of participants was just under 33 (ages ranged from 18 to 73). Two thirds of respondents were married and living with their spouse (55.4%). Participants reported speaking primarily Spanish (60%), or both English and Spanish (24%) at home. Furthermore, 90% of participants born in the US reported being able to speak English, and 36% of those born outside the US also reported being able to speak English. About half of participants (53%) had completed high school or higher. They also had an average household size of five people and a gross household income of \$30,811. Participants were most often stay-at-home parents (55%), and partners were the primary source of

income in the home for the majority of participants (85%).



A total of 569 parent participants graduated the PCEP, and 92 participants did not graduate (see Figure 2). Compared to non-graduates, a higher percentage of PCEP graduates were immigrants, born in Mexico and spoke Spanish as their main language. (Figure 3).



See Appendix A for additional figures and Appendix B for more detailed descriptions of participants and their families for the program in North Texas.

¹ Percentages reported are based on the number of participants who provided data for each item; missing data are excluded.

North Texas Chapter Program Results

This report will focus on outcomes for three objectives of the PCEP at the North Texas Chapter:

1. Program graduates will increase their knowledge of child development and parenting skills.
 - Objective met if graduates demonstrate increased knowledge
2. Program graduates will increase positive parent-child interactions that promote school readiness.
 - Objective met if program graduates increase the number of times they read to their child weekly
3. Program graduates will engage in activities that will lead to increased economic mobility.
 - Objective met if program graduates set plans to pursue continuing education, access community resources, and increase social connection

The next sections detail findings for each objective in greater depth. Also described below are responses from graduates about their children's healthy habits, their satisfaction with the program, and their overall experience. All findings reported are from program graduates and are based on valid and non-missing responses to measures drawn from the pre- and post-AVANCE Parenting Questionnaire (APQ) and exit interview, which were collected from participating adults across the North Texas program.



Objective 1: Program graduates will increase their knowledge of child development and parenting skills.

Performance Goal: Upon completion of the parenting program, 85% of the graduates will demonstrate an increase in knowledge of child development and parenting skills.

Parenting is an influential determinant of children's development, and positive parent-child interactions promote the development of children's school readiness. School readiness is a multi-dimensional concept that includes perceptual, motor, and physical development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; language and communication; and cognition. The PCEP aims to improve parents' knowledge of child development and positive parenting practices in these domains in an effort to promote a safe and cognitively stimulating home environment in which children can thrive.

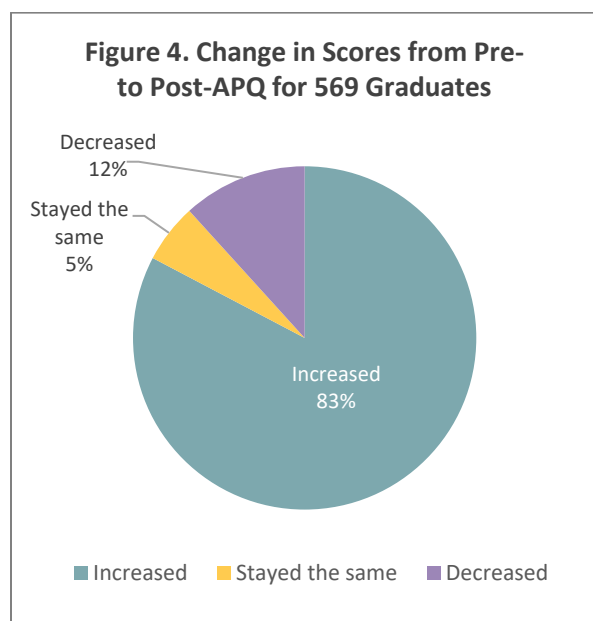
AVANCE, Inc. used scores on the APQ to assess this outcome. Participants completed the APQ at the start of the program (pre-APQ) and upon completion (post-APQ). We assessed performance on this objective by considering:

1. The percentage of graduates whose scores improved from the pre- to post-APQ (primary outcome)
2. The mean change in score from the pre- to post-APQ (secondary outcome)

8 out of 10 graduates improved their APQ scores by the end of the program, and mean scores significantly increased from pre- to post-APQ.

The average number of participants whose scores improved from pre- to post-APQ was just below 85%, with 83% of participants showing increased knowledge of child development and parenting skills after graduating from the PCEP (see Figure 4). Five percent of graduates' scores remained the same and

twelve percent of graduates' scores decreased from pre-APQ to post-APQ.²



Mean knowledge gain also significantly improved from the pre- to post-APQ. On average, program graduates' scores increased from 26.6 to 32.4 by the end of the program (see Table 1).

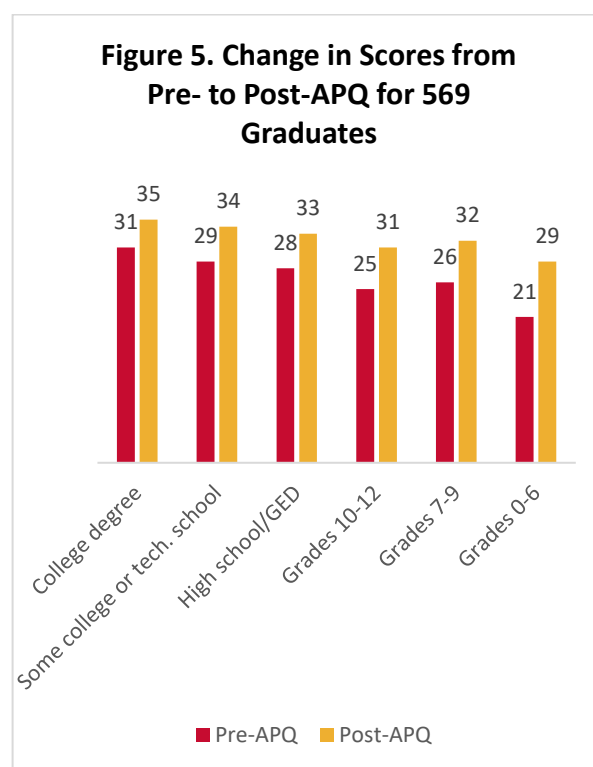
Table 1. Mean change in APQ scores from pre- to post-test

	Mean Score	Min.	Max.	Std. Dev.
Pre-APQ	26.2	3	39	6.7
Post-APQ	32.4	13	41	5.0

** The difference between the pre- and post-APQ was significant*

As shown in Figure 5, graduates of AVANCE with lower education generally scored lower on the pre-test. However, graduates' scores increased regardless of educational background. Graduates of the PCEP who had not graduated high school showed a larger increase in knowledge gain from pre-test to post-test compared with those who graduated high school. At pre-test, graduates who had not completed high school scored an average of 5 points lower than those who had completed high school or higher education; however, at post-test, those who had not completed

high school scored only about 3 points lower than those who had a college degree. These findings suggest that the PCEP successfully led to an increase in parenting knowledge among all parents, regardless of education level, and lessened the gap in parenting knowledge between those who had completed higher vs. lower levels of education.



² 66 graduates were missing pre/post -APQ scores; they were excluded from the analyses.

Objective 2: Program graduates will increase positive parent-child interactions that promote school readiness

Performance Goal: Upon completion of the Parent-Child Education Program, 85% of program graduates will report they read to their child at least three times per week.

Reading to children has been shown to improve a whole host of positive outcomes for children. For example, children who are read to before preschool perform better in school later, and they enhance their speech, communication, and language proficiency. Reading to young children is also related to the development of logical thinking and enhanced concentration, which helps prepare children for academic success later in life. The PCEP aims to ensure that parents regularly read to their children (at least three times per week).

AVANCE, Inc. used scores on the APQ to assess this outcome. We considered the:

1. Percentage of graduates who read to their child at least three times per week (primary outcome)
2. Percentage of families with 10 or more books in the home (secondary outcome)
3. Percentage of graduates who take their child to the library (secondary outcome)
4. Mean increase in the number of times a graduating parent reads to their child from pre- to post-APQ (secondary outcome)
5. Mean increase in the number of times a graduating parent takes their child to the library from pre- to post-APQ (secondary outcome)
6. Mean increase in the number of books in the home from pre- to post-APQ (secondary outcome)

By the end of the program, the vast majority of graduates (95%) read to their child at least three times per week..

The objective that at least 85% of program graduates report reading to their child at least three times per week was exceeded. At the start of the program, 58% of participants reported reading to their child at least three times per week. After program completion, 95% of graduates reported reading to their child at least three times per week (a 64% increase), and more than half of graduates (61%) reported reading to their children five or more times per week.

In addition, both having books in the home and going to the library facilitate child literacy. At the post-APQ, the majority of graduates (75%) reported having at least 10 children's books in the home and half of graduates (50%) reported having at least 20 children's books in the home. More than half (56%) of graduates reported taking their child to the library at least once in the month prior to social distancing requirements. Moreover, nearly half (44%) of graduates reported taking their child to the library two or more times in the month prior to social distancing.

The majority of graduates significantly increased the number of times per week they read to their child, the number of times per month they took their child to the library, and the number of books in their home from the pre- to post-APQ (see Table 2). Thus, many graduates are meeting and exceeding the goals in this domain, and as a whole, graduates are improving relative to where they started.

Table 2. Mean change in promoting reading from pre- to post-test

	Mean Score	Min.	Max.	Std. Dev.
Number of times per week read to child (pre-APQ)	3.2	0	7	1.9
Number of times per week read to child (post-APQ)	4.7*	0	7	1.6
Number of times per month take child to library (pre-APQ)	0.9	0	25	2.4
Number of times per month take child to library (post-APQ)	1.8*	0	25	2.7
Number of books in the home (pre-APQ)	9.8	0	25	8.3
Number of books in the home (post-APQ)	16.4*	2.0	27	8.0

* The difference between the pre- and post-APQ was significant.

Family involvement in a child's education has consistently been identified as a key factor in school readiness. Studies have associated family involvement with key social-emotional and developmental milestones, including: children's motivation to learn, attention, task persistence, receptive vocabulary skills and low conduct problems. Graduates are asked to rate their involvement in their child's education (on a Likert scale) prior to their participation with the PCEP, and then upon graduation from the PCEP.

At the start of the program, 60% of parents reported they were "involved" in their child(ren)'s education, including 22% who described themselves as "very involved."

Upon completion of the PCEP, 75 % of parents identified themselves as "very involved," indicating a 240% increase. Overall, 96% of parents reported they were "involved" or "very involved" in their child(ren)'s education (a 60% increase).

Objective 3: Program graduates will be exposed to and will engage in activities that will lead to increased economic mobility.

Performance Goal: Upon completion of the Parent-Child Education Program, 85% of program graduates will report they plan to attend some form of continuing education.

Latinx families in the USA still disproportionately experience systemic inequities that perpetuate a lack

of sustained economic mobility. To date, over 57 million Latinx individuals (nearly 20% of the US population) and their families lack access to culturally responsive and necessary social capital, educational opportunities, and economic resources that would help break this cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Children who live in poverty are more likely than those not in poverty to suffer from a multitude of harmful outcomes (e.g., academic failure, social and emotional difficulties, poor health, etc.); these outcomes are even more pronounced when poverty is severe, of long duration, or begins early in life.

Increasing economic mobility may prevent such outcomes. AVANCE as an organization aims to increase the economic mobility of all families we serve by exposing them to the possible (e.g., continuing education and career opportunities), supporting them to set goals, and increasing their social capital and access to resources.

As part of the PCEP, parents receive support to increase education by pursuing a degree (e.g., GED, college) or improving skills (e.g., English as a Second Language course or Adult Education) that can help them enter or re-enter the workforce.

Throughout the program, participants in the PCEP receive information about resources available in their community. This includes information about government benefits available for families and children (e.g., WIC, EITC, and food stamps), as well as programs and family supports, such as early care and education and workforce development. These programs and family supports can enhance child and

family well-being by increasing access to financial resources and exposure to stimulating environments with opportunities for skill development.

Having a sense of community and social network support can also provide people with the tools needed to increase economic mobility, and it can reduce feelings of isolation that contribute to poor mental health. The PCEP aims to improve these connections by providing time for parents to interact with each other, linking parents to community partners, and educating parents on the resources available in their community.

Responses from the AVANCE Exit Interview are used to assess the degree to which the PCEP assisted parents in increasing behaviors that will lead to increased economic mobility. Measures taken into consideration include:

1. Percentage of graduates who report a plan to attend one or more educational courses (primary outcome)
2. Percentage of graduates currently enrolled in one or more educational courses through the PCEP or with AVANCE assistance (secondary outcome)
3. Percentage of graduates indicating utilization of resources in their community that they learned about through the PCEP
4. Percentage of graduates that reported making friends through participation in the PCEP.

Most graduates plan to attend some form of continuing education, and many were already enrolled in continuing education with support from the PCEP or program staff.

The milestone that at least 85% of program graduates report plans to attend some form of continuing education was not met. Overall, 78% of graduates planned to attend at least one type of continuing education (see Table 3); of those, 25% planned to attend two or more types of continuing education.

Moreover, 22% of graduates reported they were already enrolled in at least one educational course as part of the PCEP or with the assistance of program staff.

Table 3. Graduating Participants' Plans for Future Education

Educational Course	Plan to Attend	Already Attending
English Second Language	44.1%	4.1%
Adult Basic Education	7.0%	3.5%
GED Classes	19.5%	3.5%
College or University	13.8%	1.2%
Financial Literacy	10.7%	2.3%
Fatherhood Services	3.9%	0.8%
Other	3.1%	3.1%

Note: The numbers above do not total 100% because many graduates plan to attend or are attending multiple types of education programs.

Participants also reported learning about new community resources through the PCEP. Many graduates reported learning about health care and library resources, which led to utilization. In particular, 35.2% of those who learned about health and health care resources also used them, and 40.2% of those who learned about library resources used them. Less than one quarter of participants who learned about the other resources ended up using them by the end of the program; however, public health guidelines and social distancing may have limited parents' ability to access some resources. Table 4 provides the percentage of participants who reported using the resources they learned about.

Table 4. Graduating Participants' Reports of Utilizing New Resources

Type of Resource	Used
Health and Health Care Resources	35.2%
Library	40.2%
Benefits (EITC, TANF, Food Stamps)	11.2%
Workforce Development	21.8%
Early Childhood and Youth Resources	14.1%
Safety	6.9%

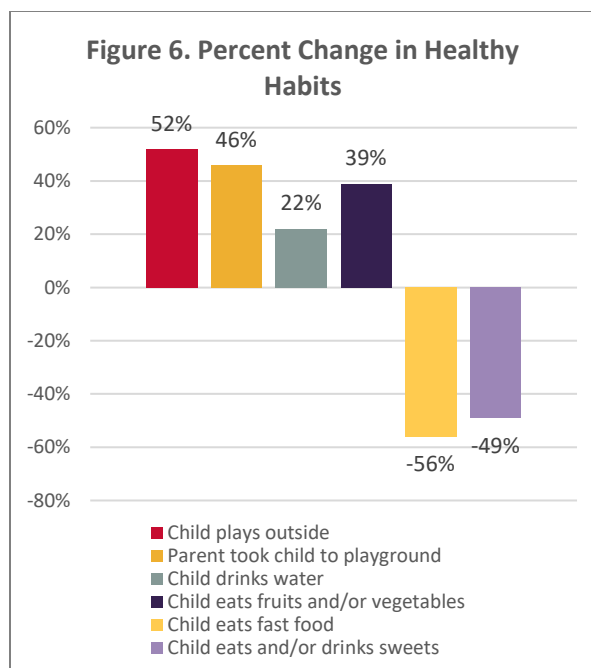
Note: The numbers above do not total 100% because many graduates learned about and used multiple new resources

Participants also reported making friends as a benefit of PCEP participation. 17% shared they made 1-2 friends, 25% reported making 3-4 friends, and 54% of participants noted making five or more friends on account of their participation in the PCEP.

Additional Analyses

Healthy Habits

Lifelong healthy habits start in childhood. The PCEP collects measures of several different nutrition and physical activity habits, such as playing with the child outside, eating fast food, eating fresh fruits and vegetables, eating sweets, drinking water, and playing on playgrounds. These behaviors lay the foundation for lifelong well-being. As shown in Figure 6, children of AVANCE graduates showed improvements in a variety of healthy behaviors from the start of the PCEP to the end of the program. For example, 52% of children play outside more often, and 56% of children eat fast food less often.



Program Feedback

Graduates completed several items on the exit interview related to their satisfaction with the PCEP, the program's usefulness, and aspects of the program that could be improved.

Graduates were asked if they would refer other parents to register in the PCEP for next year. Of the graduates, 17% referred a friend, family member, or acquaintance.

In addition to being asked to provide some suggestions for ongoing improvement of the program, graduates were asked if they ever considered dropping out and why. Among the key findings:

- Only 14% of graduates considered dropping out of the program at some point, even with the additional stresses of Covid-19 and a shift to virtual programming
- Among the graduates who considered dropping out, over half (74%) reported they chose to remain in the program due to the importance of the content and the support from the PCEP staff.
- About a fourth of these graduates (24%) considered dropping out because of conflicting school or work schedules.
- Roughly one third (34%) considered dropping out on account of their child crying when being left in the early childhood classroom; however, 63% reported their child stopped crying when being left in the classroom and thus they remained in the program.

COVID-19 Response

Despite COVID-19 and social distancing requirements, 96% of PCEP participants reported feeling supported during the transition to a virtual learning environment for the completion of the program. Of those participants, 57% reported feeling "very supported" and 39% reported feeling "supported."

Additionally, 74% of participants identified they would be "likely" or "highly likely" to continue to participate in AVANCE virtually if given the opportunity

Conclusion

Through the PCEP, program participants in North Texas increased their knowledge in child development and parenting skills, their positive parent-child interactions that promote school readiness, and they engaged in activities that increase economic mobility. Specifically, 8 out of 10 graduates showed increased knowledge of child development (83%) and reported reading to their child three or more times per week (95%). In addition, 78% of graduates had plans to attend at least one type of continuing education, such as attaining a GED or attending ESL classes.

Among the 83% of graduates that significantly improved their knowledge of child development over time did so by an average of five points on the APQ. In addition, as with last year, the program helped close the gap in APQ scores between participants with very low education levels and those with a college education.

The PCEP in North Texas was effective at meeting the majority of specified goals and satisfying graduates of the program.

Notably, graduates increased the amount of time spent with their child in activities that promote literacy. At the end of the program, the average graduate reported reading to their child nearly five times per week and taking their child to the library nearly two times as much as at the beginning of the program. In addition, graduates reported having an average of 16 children's books in the home at the end of the program (compared with about 10 at the beginning).

Graduates not only planned to continue their education, but they had already taken steps to advance their knowledge, particularly of English and of financial literacy. Specifically, three out of four graduates reported they planned to attend at least one type of continuing education at the conclusion

of the PCEP. One fifth of graduates were already attending an additional educational course.

Graduates also learned about and used new resources throughout the course of the program. For example, of those that learned about health and health care resources, 35% utilized them. Similarly, of those that reported learning about library resources, 40% utilized them.

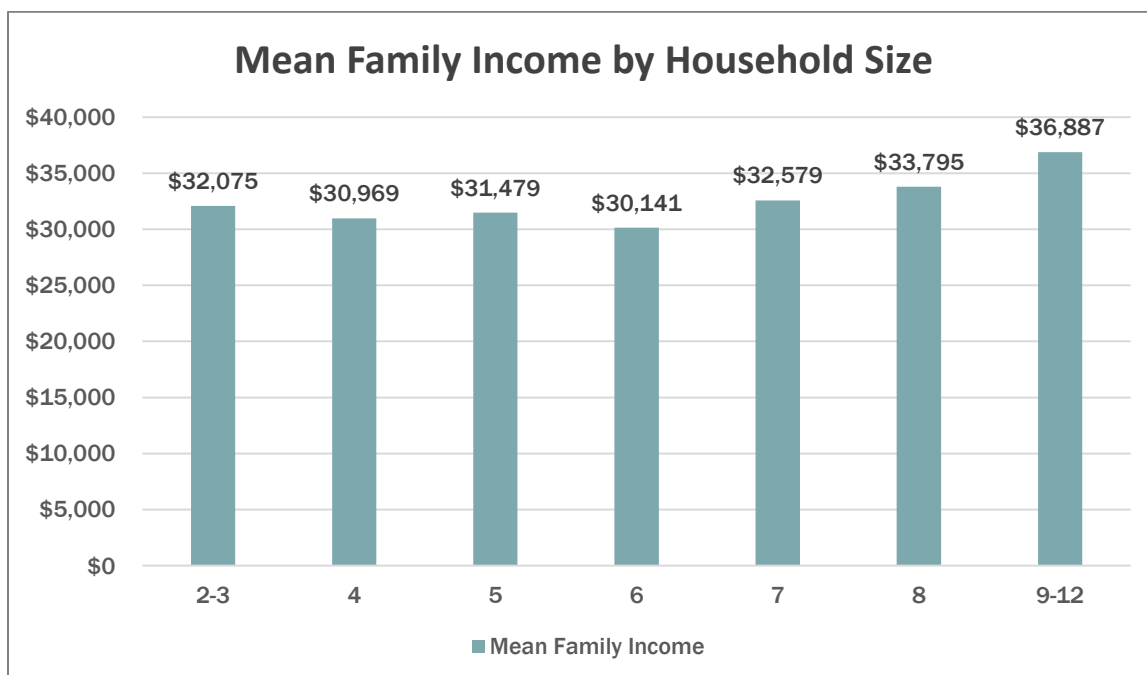
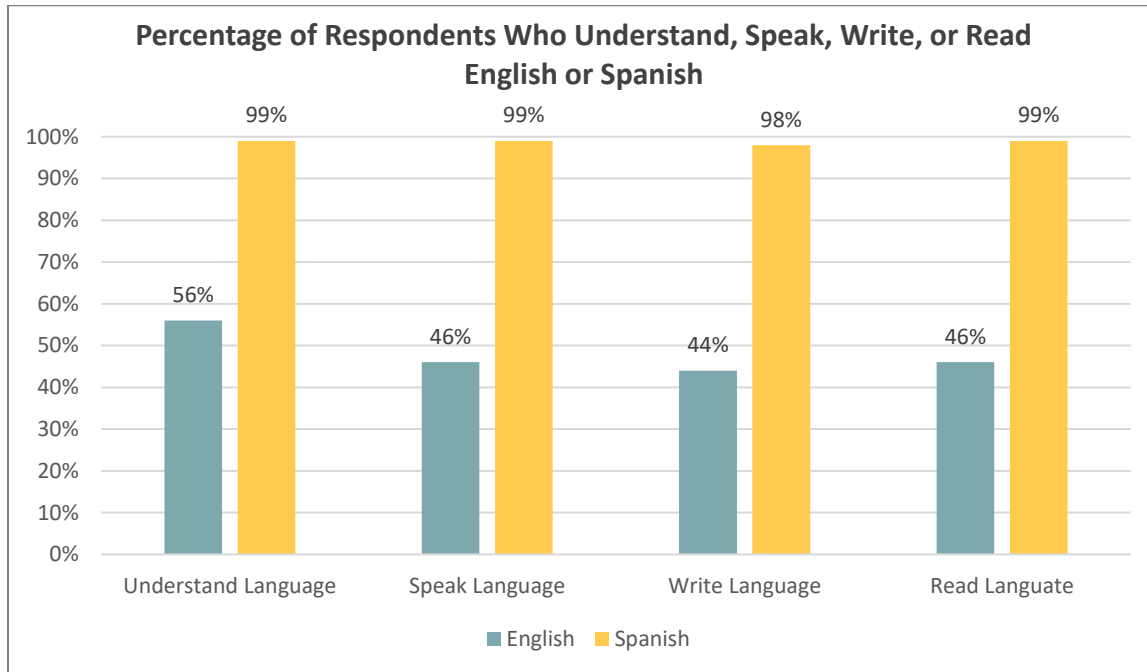
Graduates also increased their social capital through the PCEP. Over 54% of participants made five or more friends through their participation in the PCEP.

Graduates showed gains in ensuring that their family is healthy. For example, 52% of graduates reported that their children play outside more often, and roughly half reported that their child ate fast food or ate or drank sweets less often at the end of the program (56% and 49%, respectively).

Overall, North Texas continues to demonstrate extremely positive program results even despite the difficulties of operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of graduates, 96% felt supported during the public health crisis, and 74% indicated that they would be likely to continue with a virtual PCEP model. A majority of graduates responded positively to the shifts in programming that the North Texas team made to support families' basic needs and continue on to complete the PCEP in a user-friendly and technologically innovative manner. A clear majority of graduates left the PCEP having increased their knowledge of parenting practices and the time they spend with their children in literacy-promoting activities. Graduates also planned to or were currently pursuing additional educational opportunities.

Appendix A.

Additional figures of English/Spanish fluency and mean family income by household size



Appendix B.

Participant and child characteristics at AVANCE North Texas³

PARTICIPANT STATUS AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS	North Texas Total
Total number of parent participants	661
New participants (percent)	83.4%
Returning participants (percent)	16.6%
Graduated (percent)	86%
Total number of children participating	775
Mean household size	5.4
Mean number of adults in the household	2.9
Mean number of children in the household	2.5
Mean gross family income	\$30,811
Percent with government assistance as part of family income	69.0%
CHARACTERISTICS OF FOCAL PARTICIPANTS	North Texas Total
<i>Mean Age</i>	32.6
<i>Gender (percent)</i>	
Female	99%
Male	1%
<i>Ethnicity (percent)</i>	
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	100%
<i>Country of Birth (percent)</i>	
El Salvador	4.8%
Honduras	3.3%
Mexico	74.4%
Puerto Rico (USA territory)	0.2%
USA (state, non-territory)	15.0%
Other	2.3%
<i>Mean number of years in the US (for those born outside the US)</i>	13.3
<i>Highest grade completed (percent)**</i>	
Grades 0-6/Primaria	10.6%
Grades 7-9/Secundaria	18.6%
Some grades 10-12 (not graduated)	13.8%
Graduated high school/Preparatoria or obtained GED	22.7%
Some college or technical school	15.6%
College degree	9.5%
<i>Percent pregnant at intake</i>	7.2%
<i>Mean age at birth of first child</i>	22.9
<i>Percent with medical insurance</i>	24.1%

<i>Employment status (percent)**</i>	
Full-time job	16.5%
Part-time or seasonal job	14.8%
Retired or disabled	0.6%
School/educational program	2.0%
Stay-at-home parent	55.1%
Currently seeking employment	8.2%
<i>Marital status (percent)**</i>	
Married and living with spouse	67.0%
Widowed	0.1%
Separated or divorced	4.1%
Living with partner (unmarried)	23.9%
Single/never married	4.4%
<i>Language spoken at home</i>	
Speak primarily English at home	6%
Speak primarily Spanish at home	60%
Speak both English and Spanish at home	24%
CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN IN AVANCE	North Texas Total
<i>Ages of children in years (percent)**</i>	
Age 0	0%
Age 1	3.1%
Age 2	11.7%
Age 3	36.8%
Age 4	36.2%
Age 5+	12.2%
<i>Gender (percent)</i>	
Female	50.5%
Male	49.5%
<i>Country of Birth (percent)**</i>	
USA (state, non-territory)	95.3%
Mexico	4.0%
Honduras	0.3%
El Salvador	0.3%
Other	0.1%
<i>Percent with medical insurance at beginning of program</i>	77.5%
<i>Percent of parents concerned about child's health or development at beginning of program</i>	15.2%

³ Some participants did not answer every question, leading some sums to be <100%

*Responses above are from valid responses only (missing excluded)