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# AVANCE-Waco

## Evaluation Report for the Parent-Child Education Program

### Program Year 2002-2003

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#### Introduction

AVANCE is a community-based, nonprofit organization that provides family support and education services to at risk, economically impoverished families. The agency was established in San Antonio, Texas in 1973. Including the AVANCE-Waco Chapter, there are eleven AVANCE Chapter Affiliates in the state of Texas and one in Los Angeles. During the 2002-2003 program year, the AVANCE-Waco Chapter conducted a center-based Parent-Child Education Program. This report describes the program evaluation activities conducted with the AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program during the 2002-2003 program year.

#### Program Goals and Services

The AVANCE program is designed to intervene in the cycle of poverty that many families face in society today. AVANCE strives to provide services for families who are characterized by very low income levels and limited participation in the educational system. It is these families who are experiencing extreme stress brought on by economic impoverishment and whose children face uncertain futures. Children who begin life in the stressful circumstances that are created by poverty are often inadequately prepared for school. When they enter school without the requisite skills for success, they often experience academic failure and gradually become disillusioned with school. Ultimately they end up unemployed or underemployed; ill-equipped to prepare their own children for academic success. In order to break this cycle, AVANCE provides information and support to parents so that they can make a brighter future for their children and themselves.

The AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program has two phases. Phase 1 consists of weekly center-based parenting education classes that continue for nine months. The goal of this component is to enhance the child-rearing skills of parents with young children so that they are better able to foster the optimal development of their children.

The services provided by the Parent-Child Education Program include parenting education, early childhood education, toy-making instruction, home visits, and community resource awareness. Support services include

transportation, emergency food distribution, information and referral, advocacy, and family holiday celebrations.

Graduates from the parent education program are encouraged to continue on to the second phase during which classes in Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, preparation for the General Equivalency Diploma and junior college courses are offered. The goal of the adult education component is to provide parents with educational achievements which will put them in a position to seek employment in better paying jobs and thus, improve their family's standard of living. During both phases, the program works to foster the parent's belief in a better future, as well as her ability to achieve parenting and personal goals and to seek out and benefit from social support.

#### Participants

The information presented in this evaluation report is based on data collected from 88 adults who enrolled during the program year. Project participants consisted primarily of young Hispanic mothers with limited education (see Figure 1). The majority were married or living with a partner. Three in four had immigrated to the United States and spoke primarily Spanish. Nearly half of the mothers first became a parent before they reached the age of twenty. In addition, they live in conditions of severe economic impoverishment (see Figure 2). Three-fourths of the families have a weekly income of less than \$288.

Figure 1

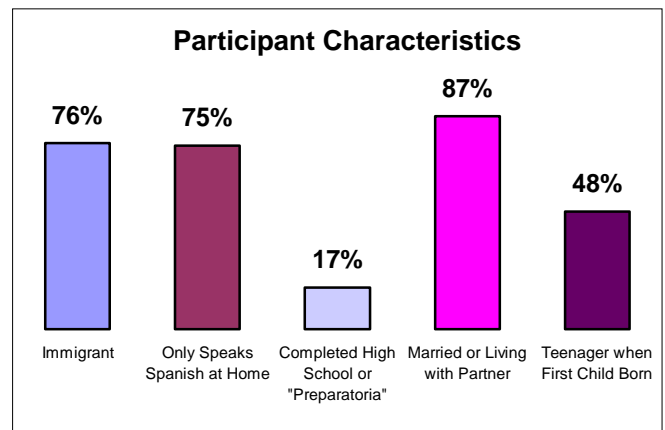
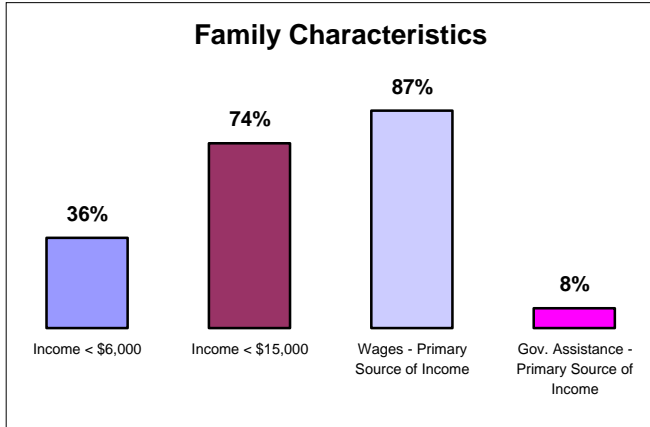


Figure 2



**Results**

The evaluation results reported here focus on the first phase of the program, the parenting education classes. The evaluation activities during this phase of the program are designed to assess attainment of two objectives.

1. Knowledge of child growth and development will increase.
2. Participants will become active readers with their children.
3. Participants will plan to enroll in adult education classes at AVANCE during Phase 2.
4. Participants will demonstrate satisfaction with the program services.

**Objective 1: Knowledge of child growth and development will increase.**

*Performance Measure:* Upon completion of the program, 80% of the graduates will demonstrate increased knowledge of child development and parenting skills.

A major goal of the Parent-Child Education Program is to provide an environment for children in which optimal development is encouraged and supported. Since the parents are the chief architects of the child's environment, the program strives to increase their knowledge level in the areas of parenting and early childhood development through the provision of the parent education classes.

Attainment of this objective was evaluated with the AVANCE Parenting Questionnaire (APQ); an instrument designed to assess the retention of information taught in the parent education classes. The percentage of participants whose scores improved on the APQ between the beginning and end of the program was used as the criterion for attainment of this objective.

The objective that 80% of the graduates would improve their knowledge of child growth and parenting skills during

Phase I of the program was attained. Overall 92% of the participants received higher scores at the end of the program.

Analyzing the change in the APQ's mean scores between pre and post also provides a measure of program impact. The change in the mean scores on the APQ between pre and post was statistically significant (see Table 1). Overall, participants' scores rose from an average of 16.0 to an average of 20.9 out of a possible 25 indicating that the participants demonstrated a significant gain in the level of knowledge of child development and parenting skills.

**Table 1. AVANCE Parenting Questionnaire Results**

Improved APQ	Pretest Mean <sup>1</sup>	Posttest Mean	t score	p value	d.f.
92%	16.0 (4.3)	20.9 (3.3)	-11.0	.000*	48

<sup>1</sup>Standard deviation in parentheses

\*Statistically significant difference in mean APQ scores

**Objective 2: Participants will become active readers with their children.**

*Performance Measure:* Upon completion of the program, 75% of the graduates will report that they are reading to their child at least three times a week.

Parents play the primary role in preparing their children for school. This can be accomplished most effectively through the provision of a home environment that stimulates learning. The third objective (next section) addresses the modeling role that parents can provide through the pursuance of their own educational goals. The objective addressed here concerns parents reading to their children. Active parent involvement in preliteracy activities with their children is stressed in the parenting classes. Reading regularly to young children is an excellent way of developing preliteracy skills and engendering a love of reading.

The APQ includes several questions that address reading behavior that are used to assess attainment of this objective. It was expected that 75% of the participants with a child between the ages of one and seven would report reading to their child three or more times per week. The results surpassed the goal. At the end of the program, 81% of the participants reported reading to their children at least three times per week. One in four parents (26%) were reading on a daily basis. The families demonstrated some progress in the provision of books for their children. The percent of families with less than ten children's books dropped from 64% at program entry to 47% at graduation.

**Objective 3: Participants will plan to enroll in adult education classes at AVANCE during Phase 2.**

*Performance Measure:* Upon completion of the program, 80% of the graduates will report that they plan to attend ABE, GED, ESL, or college classes.

At the end of the parenting classes, participants were asked about their plans to attend adult education classes at AVANCE in the future. Eighty-nine percent of the participants had already begun attending Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED, or English as a Second Language (ESL) classes while participating in the parenting program. The objective of eight in ten participants planning to attend at least one type of adult education class at AVANCE in the future was surpassed. Overall, 96% of the graduates planned to continue pursuing their education through AVANCE programs in the future. Three-fourths indicated plans to participate in ESL classes while one in five planned to attend GED classes. Some intend to participate in more than one type of program. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the responses.

**Table 2. Participant Future Educational Plans**

Educational Program	Overall
English as a Second Language	75%
Adult Basic Education	11%
GED Preparatory Classes	21%
College	6%
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One or more of the above courses	96%

Note: Some participants indicated more than 1 program.

- ❖ At the end of the program year, all of the participants expressed satisfaction with the classes; 94% indicated that they were *very satisfied*.
- ❖ All of the participants reported that they would recommend the AVANCE classes to other mothers
- ❖ All of the participants reported that they had made at least two friends through their participation in the program. More than eight in ten (83%) had developed four or more new friendships.
- ❖ In addition to providing information and other services for the parents, AVANCE strives to create a supportive environment in which participants feel free to approach staff when they feel in need of emotional or material support. Ninety-four percent of the participants reported that they needed support during their participation. All reported that they had received the needed support.

**Conclusion**

The program met or exceeded all four of the objectives. Upon completing the parent education component, participants knew significantly more about child development and parenting skills, were reading to their child on a regular basis, were satisfied with the program, and had plans to pursue their own education.

The AVANCE-Waco program had an excellent first year. In addition to attaining all of its program objectives, the program’s staff did an excellent job of completing the documentation required for the evaluation. Forty-nine parents completed the APQ at pretest and posttest and 47 completed the Exit Interview.

**Objective 4: Participants will demonstrate satisfaction with the program services.**

*Performance Measure:* Upon completion of the program, 100% of the graduates will report that they were satisfied with the program’s services.

At the end of the program year, participants are asked about their satisfaction with the program services and recommendations for change using the Exit Interview. The overall objective of 100% satisfaction was met. Program participants demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the services as evidenced by their rating of the program and their willingness to recommend the program to other parents. They also reported that the program was a source of networking and support. The specific findings are presented here.

