

# Satisfaction of Latina Mothers With Supports Received During HIPPY Program Participation

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## Abstract

This study aimed to determine the program satisfaction of Latina mothers who participated in the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program in a large, urban area in the Southwest with the purpose of identifying the specific components of HIPPY that Latina mothers feel best supported them in their role as their child's first teacher. In addition, the study examined areas where they were not as satisfied and didn't feel quite as supported. Thirty-seven Latina mothers whose children were in kindergarten and completing their last year in the HIPPY program completed the HIPPY Satisfaction Survey. Mean ratings on the 13 quantitative questions related to satisfaction with the components of the HIPPY program was 8.67, with a range of 1–10. This indicated that, overall, the Latina mothers completing the survey were highly satisfied with the HIPPY program. Analysis of the first open-ended question ("What specific components of the HIPPY program do you think were the most beneficial to you and your child?") resulted in six themes: general comments about HIPPY being helpful, specific components of the HIPPY program, academic benefits for their child, benefits to their child's social development, changes in their parenting, and changes in their relationship to their child. Analysis of the second open-ended question ("What additional information or training do you feel HIPPY could provide to better support you as your child's first teacher?") revealed themes related to being completely satisfied with no suggested improvements to the HIPPY program, academic changes, and more parenting support.

Key Words: Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, HIPPY program, parent satisfaction, early intervention programs, Latina mothers

## Introduction

Decades of research support the importance of the first few years in the life of a child. They are the foundation that shapes children's future health, happiness, growth, development, and learning achievement at school, in the family and community, and for life in general (Bright & Thompson, 2018; Sayre et al., 2015; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Research also shows several aspects of the home environment, such as home language experiences, maternal education, calmness, and home literacy activities, contribute to children's academic and socioemotional development (Baker, 2014; Luo et al., 2021; Oloye & Flouri, 2021). However, children from low-income, single-parent, and minority families face additional challenges that may lead to their starting school with limited language skills, health problems, or social/emotional problems that interfere with learning (Bright & Thompson, 2018; Campbell et al., 2015; Reardon, 2011).

Latinos are the largest and most rapidly increasing ethnic group in the United States, accounting for 51.1% of the entire U.S. population growth from 2010–2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). About one in four (26%) of all children in the U.S. are Latino (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2021). Statistically, Latino youth are often characterized by high dropout rates, low college enrollment, and a lack of educational attainment, negatively perpetuating the pervasive Latino achievement gap (Ceballo et al., 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). In contrast to these statistics, Latino families tend to be invested in their children's education, beginning in the preschool years (Ackert et al., 2018; Hernandez et al., 2008). As a result, they often value high-quality education for their children in the early years (Hernandez et al., 2008) and have high expectations for their children's educational attainment (Ceballo et al., 2014; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007). One problem is that these expectations do not always translate into the typical view of parent engagement held by most teachers and schools. This typical view focuses on parents' investment of resources such as time, energy, and intellectual or monetary capital to support a child's education (Epstein, 2019; Fishman & Nickerson, 2015; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). It may also include the parent's ability to leverage social or professional networks on behalf of the school (Epstein, 2019; Hayes, 2012).

Extensive research indicates the importance of parental involvement in children's education (Cox, 2005; Epstein, 2019; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019). While

among all ethnic groups, the most significant predictors of school achievement are rooted in the home, Carpenter et al. (2006) found that parental involvement played the most significant role in school success among Latino families. However, the engagement of parents is broader and more complex than researchers previously believed (Jeynes, 2011; Poza et al., 2014; Trumbull et al., 2003; Vera et al., 2012). For many years, parent involvement was conceptualized as a set of deliberate, overt actions, such as frequently attending school functions, helping children with homework, and maintaining rules for schoolwork and leisure (Jeynes, 2011; Poza et al., 2014). However, based on the results of a series of meta-analyses, Jeynes (2011) found the most powerful aspects of parent involvement are often subtle—communication with the child, parental style, and maintaining high expectations. In addition, key qualities for schools to foster parent involvement are providing love, encouragement, and support rather than providing specific guidelines and tutelage that is often offered to parents (Jeynes, 2011).

### **Why Is Parent Engagement Important?**

The most important benefit of parents who are engaged and involved in their children's education is its positive impact on K–12 students. Research over the past four decades recognizes that parental engagement in all areas of their children's development (cognitive, social, emotional) is essential for the overall achievement of student success (Cox, 2005; Epstein, 2019; Hill et al., 2004/2005; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019). In addition to higher academic achievement, children with involved parents or caregivers also have improved school attendance (Brown & Lee, 2014; McConnell & Kubina, 2014), more positive attitudes toward school (Dearing et al., 2008), better behavior outcomes (Brown & Lee, 2014; Garbacz et al., 2016), and superior social and emotional stability (Warner, 2010) when compared to students without parental support.

In response to the growing body of research on parent involvement, the U.S. passed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001 and later the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. NCLB required Title I schools to have written parent involvement policies and school–parent compacts describing how parents should be involved in schools and how they will take part in improving student achievement. With the passage of ESSA, the emphasis shifted from “involvement” to “engagement.” Although a seemingly insignificant word exchange, the choice was intentional. Merriam-Webster defines involve as “to enfold or envelope” and engage as “to attract” and “to interlock with.” Thus, involvement implies doing to; in contrast, engagement implies doing with (Ferlazzo, 2011). Research has shown that this shift from parent involvement (being present in the school building) to parent engagement (viewing

multiple constructions of how parents are involved) produces better results for children, families, and communities (Smith, 2019).

However, even with this shift in policy, terminology, and focus, Latino parents, especially first-generation parents, often find it difficult to actively participate in school activities, partner with teachers, and work with students on homework (McGill et al., 2011). Latino engagement in schooling often does not include the traditional concepts of parent involvement typical in most early and elementary schools in the U.S. (Jeynes, 2011). This may be due, in part, to the lack of understanding from teachers and schools of different value systems. For example, the dominant culture of the U.S. is individualistic, whereas most immigrant cultures are collectivistic (Trumbull et al., 2020). Immigrant families reported forms of involvement they deemed valuable to their children's learning that are not always considered by teachers and schools. For example, they often will seek out information not only from teachers/staff but also from family, friends, employers, church contacts, and others in their community (Poza et al., 2014; Vera et al., 2012). They will attend school events but also church events, adult education, and parenting workshops. Therefore, important to any involvement strategy is developing a system that engages parents as equal collaborators in their children's education (Poza et al., 2014; Vera et al., 2012).

### **Latino Parents and Parental Engagement**

While parent engagement in a child's life is important for all children, it is particularly important for Latino children, since research has identified several risk factors common to Latino immigrant children in the U.S. and often correlated with low academic achievement (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017). These factors include low levels of maternal education, limited language skills, health problems associated with living in poverty, and limited access to educational supports such as internet access (Bohon et al., 2005; Espinosa, 2007; Marshall, 2006; Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2005). In addition, immigrant families are likely to attend underresourced schools (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017, Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). It is important to note that despite these risk-factors, there are also several protective factors for immigrant children that are very valuable for their education. For example, Latino families often demonstrate the capacity to survive in physically and psychologically difficult circumstances that require strength, determination, and resilience. Latino families emphasize family obligations and strong connections with others that may provide the children with high-quality relationships (Poza et al., 2014; Sibley & Brabeck, 2017). Additionally, Latino immigrant children are more likely to live in two-parent households and multilingual homes, which have been shown to positively impact children's learning (Jeynes, 2011; Sibley & Brabeck, 2017).

However, the parent engagement of Latino families is often misunderstood. For example, first-generation Latino immigrant parents may find it difficult to actively participate in school activities, partner with teachers, and work with students on homework (McGill et al., 2011). Latino parent engagement in schooling may not include the concept of parents acting as teachers in the home or engaging in school activities in traditional ways. For example, in a survey conducted by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (2007), teachers, school administrators, and counselors noted parent–teacher organizations as a form of parental engagement. Yet no Latino parents cited those organizations when describing various ways to participate in their child’s education. Factors such as English language proficiency, discrimination, changes in family functioning, separation from family, fear of deportation, insufficient employment, and intergenerational conflicts may also prevent Latino parents from engaging with schools in ways typically expected from parents in the U.S. (Arbona et al., 2010).

The issue lies in bridging the gap between the traditional parent involvement expectations in most American schools and Latino parents’ educational expectations and parenting styles. One way to bridge this gap is for U.S. educators to recognize that all families have abundant knowledge that schools and early education programs can learn and use in their family engagement efforts (González et al., 2005; Rodriguez, 2013). In addition, for children from minority families to be successful, schools must be supportive of their cultural differences and integrate their strengths into parent interventions (Rodriguez, 2013).

### **Early Intervention Programs That Encourage Parental Engagement**

While there are many types of intervention programs for children, those designed to improve children’s school adjustment and to prevent later academic problems are most efficient when they occur at school entry or during the preschool years (Hanson et al., 2006). Strategies emphasizing parent–child interactions promote children’s readiness to start school (Bierman et al., 2015; Breitenstein, 2012; Marti et al., 2018). Home visiting is one delivery method for early intervention programs. During the preschool years, most home visiting programs focus on the premise that parents are the first teachers of their children. Home visiting programs also aim to improve a family’s access to resources, meet basic needs, and strengthen family well-being (Duggan et al., 2018). Home visiting has been shown to mitigate the negative effects of adverse childhood experiences on children’s language development (Riggs et al., 2021). By working intensively with families, these programs can help to prepare children for successful engagement with the school environment. One such program, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIP-PY), has shown positive effects on children’s school readiness at kindergarten

and later school achievement (Brown & Johnson, 2014; Brown & Lee, 2014; Goldstein, 2017; Payne et al., 2020).

### **HIPPY Program**

HIPPY is a home-based early intervention program whose primary focus is to support parents with limited formal education to be their child's first teacher. The HIPPY program targets low-income, primarily minority parents through school readiness and parent engagement intervention. The program provides educational enrichment and parent support through home visits by paraprofessionals who are members of the community they serve. Also, the program in the study region includes organized parent group meetings.

In addition to serving as an early education program, HIPPY incorporates features of family support programs. HIPPY is based on an ecological approach that recognizes children's development as powerfully influenced by the families, communities, and societies in which they live (Westheimer, 2003). HIPPY, therefore, aims to create greater continuity between home and school by enhancing children's home learning environments. HIPPY programs are typically funded and administered by local agencies (usually public schools or community-based organizations) that work to develop community support and connections to other community-based organizations (HIPPY International, n.d.).

HIPPY programs are also influenced by the "funds of knowledge" concept. The term "funds of knowledge" refers to the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of this knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (González et al., 2005, p. 133). HIPPY programs use a "funds of knowledge" approach to understanding the overall abilities and strengths of families in order to provide support for families in a way that enriches the family and their child's early learning experiences. For example, HIPPY paraprofessional home visitors live in the same neighborhoods as the parents with whom they work because program designers assumed that paraprofessionals who shared similar backgrounds and lifestyles with the families would be nonjudgmental of the parents and better able to establish rapport and deliver the program materials in a way that was consistent with the lifestyles and cultural belief systems of the families, which in turn would encourage the families to learn and use the skills that were shared (Westheimer, 2003).

HIPPY, like many other family support programs, strives to respect the cultural diversity of the families it serves (HIPPY International, n.d.). One example of this effort is found in the books and activity packs provided for families. These have been revised significantly during the past several years to make them more appropriate for ethnically and culturally diverse families. However,

HIPPY diverges from other family support programs by using a structured approach with parents, with set lesson plans designed to enhance children's cognitive skills. This approach contrasts with the more individualized nature of many family support programs.

Another important aspect of the HIPPY program that encourages a sense of community is the monthly group meetings. During these meetings, parents are able to share their experiences and engage in enrichment activities involving issues related to parenting, employment, school/community/social services, and personal growth. Parents choose the group meeting topics that help them learn how to be more effective parents and members of the community. Childcare is provided during the group meetings, and the children learn to interact socially (HIPPY International, n.d.).

One of the strengths of the HIPPY program is the emphasis it places on parents as their child's first teacher. The HIPPY program strives to prepare children for school by supporting their parents and caregivers to be aware of and involved in their child's education by enhancing the home literacy environment, the variety of parent-child verbal interaction, and the parent's ability to help their children learn. One study with primarily Latino families showed that children participating in HIPPY had better expressive language skills, and their mothers showed more parental engagement at home than a control group (Necoechea, 2007). In a more recent study, parents participating in the HIPPY program were more likely to have higher parenting self-efficacy and lower attachment-related parenting stress than a comparison group (Nievar et al., 2012). This same study showed that participating families provided more learning materials, language stimulation, academic stimulation, role modeling, and a greater variety of learning experiences than families who were not enrolled in the program.

Research over the past 30 years indicates children who participate in HIPPY perform better in measures of school performance such as reading ability, language learning, social development, classroom adaptability, and mathematics skills than non-participants (Baker et al., 1999; BarHava-Monteith et al., 2003; Barnett et al., 2012; Brown & Lee, 2014; Johnson et al., 2012; Lopez & Bernstein, 2016). Other studies have shown that HIPPY students had better attendance, more social skills, fewer behavior referrals, fewer suspensions, and higher standardized test scores when compared to students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds (Bradley & Gilkey, 2003; Brown & Lee, 2014; Klein et al., 2001).

While the outcomes for children involved in the program are essential, equally important are the outcomes for the parents involved in the program. Outcomes for both the parents and children involved in any type of

intervention program are often linked to the satisfaction the participants felt with the program itself (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2007).

### **Why Is the Satisfaction of Parents Participating in the HIPPY Program Important?**

The definition of customer satisfaction has been widely debated as organizations increasingly attempt to measure it. Customer satisfaction can be experienced in a variety of situations and connected to both goods and services. It is a highly personal assessment that is greatly affected by customer expectations. Satisfaction also is based on the customer's experience of both contacts with the organization (the "moment of truth" as it is called in business literature) and personal outcomes (Center for Study of Social Policy, 2007). The definition of customer satisfaction is often linked to both the personal interaction with the service provider and the outcomes experienced by service users (Center for Study of Social Policy, 2007).

Measuring customer satisfaction with social service or educational programs began gaining acceptance in the early 1990s (Harris & MacDonald, 2000). It began with the idea that consumers of services, even social and educational services, are citizens, implying rights to equity, representation, and participation (Pollitt, 1998). Therefore, gathering information about both the process (how services were delivered) and the outcome (benefits derived from services) is important when determining the effectiveness of a program (Tilbury et al., 2010).

As the concept of evidence-based practice for social and educational services has evolved, client or participant service knowledge has become a vital piece of information (Tilbury et al., 2010). Clients actively participate in quality evaluation of the types of services received as they use and reflect upon interventions designed to assist them (Johnson & Austin, 2006). That is, "evidence-based practitioners must integrate the best available knowledge about what works with individual client values, capacities, and expectations—what works for whom, in what circumstances?" (Tilbury et al., 2010, p. 80). At a more practical level, client satisfaction data can contribute to better practice and service delivery. It is also argued that the process of being asked for their opinion is empowering, as the agency sends a message about the importance of listening to clients (Baker, 2007).

### **Significance of This Study**

This work focuses on an early intervention program whose aim is to support the parent engagement and academic success of children. In this study, the clients were Latino mothers who participated in the HIPPY program with their preschool-age child. Just as with other social and educational programs, it is



important in the HIPPY program to listen to the voices of these mothers not only as consumers of a service or program but because of the diverse knowledge and experience found in families that can be instrumental to the success of the child. Moll et al. (1992) called such knowledge and experiences “funds of knowledge.” The obvious place to discover the “funds of knowledge” possessed by HIPPY children and families is from the “clients” themselves. By asking the HIPPY mothers participating in the program about their personal experiences and satisfaction with HIPPY, we can gain valuable information about how to better support them as their child’s first teacher. This study is significant as very limited studies on the HIPPY program have evaluated the program from the parent’s perspective.

This study aims to determine the program satisfaction of Latina mothers participating in the HIPPY program in a large, urban area in the Southwest with the hope of identifying the specific components that Latina mothers felt best supported them in their role as their child’s first teacher. In addition, the study examined areas where the participants were not as satisfied or did not feel quite as supported. By identifying these specific areas of strengths and weaknesses, HIPPY and other programs like it can better support Latino parents in engagement with the educational attainment of their children.

### **Research Questions**

- How satisfied are Latina mothers with the services received in the HIPPY program?
- What specific components of the HIPPY program do Latina mothers suggest are the most beneficial to them and their children?
- What additional information or training do Latina mothers feel the HIPPY program could provide to better support them as their children’s first teacher?

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

The study used a mixed-method, descriptive research design. The purpose of descriptive research is to “[cast] light on current issues or problems through a process of data collection that enables [the researcher] to describe the situation more completely than was possible without employing this method” (Fox & Bayat, 2007, p. 45). A mixed-method research design was implemented, first to get a quantitative perspective of the satisfaction of the parents with the services received from the HIPPY Program and then to qualitatively clarify and illustrate results from the quantitative survey. Specifically, the quantitative

questions on the *HIPPY Satisfaction Survey* gave an overall impression of the satisfaction of the parents with the services provided by the HIPPY program, while the open-ended questions provided new insights into how the HIPPY program has been beneficial to them and their children as well as provided insight into any perceived shortcomings of the program. In summary, by integrating different methods, the study yielded better results regarding quality and scope.

### Participants

This study population included 37 Latina, Spanish-speaking mothers of kindergarten children enrolled in the HIPPY program in a large, urban community in the Southwestern U.S. The HIPPY program is not limited to Latino families or to mothers, but it just happened that all of the HIPPY participants who completed the survey with their home visitor were all Latina mothers. HIPPY is offered free of charge to eligible families. While each HIPPY site determines the eligibility requirements for families, sites in the state where the study took place require families to be economically disadvantaged (ED) as evidenced by low socioeconomic status through the free and reduced federal lunch program and academically disadvantaged due to being an English language learner (EL) or homeless (C. Weir, personal communication, November 28, 2021). Table 1 contains demographic information of the mothers and children who participated in this study.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Child's Gender	Male		Female
	26		10
Marital Status of Mother	Single	Married	Divorced
	3	32	1
Mother's Country of Origin	Mexico	U.S.	Chile
	33	2	1
Average Child's Age at Kindergarten Entry	65.6 months		
Average Mother's Age at Child's Birth	22.3 years		
Average Family's Annual Income	\$18,460		

### HIPPY Satisfaction Survey

The *HIPPY Satisfaction Survey* was developed by the HIPPY Director for the state in which the study was located. This survey is given to all parents of HIPPY children at the end of their Kindergarten year. The purpose is to determine the satisfaction of the family with their experience participating in

HIPPY. The survey was available in both English and Spanish and consisted of 13 questions related to the components of the services provided by the HIPPY program. Parents of the study children were asked to indicate their satisfaction with aspects of the HIPPY program on a scale from 1 = “extremely dissatisfied” to 10 = “extremely satisfied.” Scores in the lower quartile (mean scores of 2.5 or less) indicated “low satisfaction,” scores in the middle quartile (mean scores of 2.5–8.5) indicated “average satisfaction,” and scores in the upper quartile (mean scores of 8.5 or greater) indicated “high satisfaction.”

The *HIPPY Satisfaction Survey* also contained two open-ended questions intended to gain insight into the specific aspects of the HIPPY program that support or fail to support Latina mothers and their children. This part of the survey provided qualitative data that were useful in explaining and making inferences from the results of the quantitative analyses. The first open-ended question of the *HIPPY Satisfaction Survey* asked, “What specific components of the HIPPY program do you feel were the most beneficial to you and your child?” The second question of the *HIPPY Satisfaction Survey* asked, “What additional information or training do you feel HIPPY could provide to better support you as your child’s first teacher?”

### **Data Collection**

In order to capture the participants’ experiences during the HIPPY program, responses to the *HIPPY Satisfaction Survey* were collected from the child’s parent during a regularly scheduled HIPPY home visit. The researcher was present to explain the purpose of the study and obtain consent from each parent, with the family’s HIPPY home visitor serving as a translator when needed. Parents were given the option of completing the survey in English or Spanish. Parents were also given the option to have the study read to them with the Home Visitor recording their dictated responses. For this study, 35 of the 37 participants chose to complete the survey in Spanish, and none of the participants dictated their responses. Completed surveys were collected by the researcher and given an ID number to protect the privacy of the participant. The surveys completed in Spanish were later translated into English by a bilingual graduate research assistant, and the translations were verified by an associate professor of bilingual education at the researcher’s university.

## **Analysis and Results**

### **Quantitative Results**

Mean ratings on the 13 quantitative questions related to the parent satisfaction with the components of the HIPPY program were 8.67 with a standard

deviation of 1.20. Since this mean score is higher than 8.5, it indicates that, overall, the Latina mothers completing the survey were “highly satisfied” with the HIPPY program. More specifically, of the 13 questions, the mean scores on seven questions were above 8.5, indicating “high satisfaction,” and the other four were between 2.5 and 8.5, indicating “average satisfaction.” Scores on the individual questions for the *HIPPY Satisfaction Survey* are included in Table 2.

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Items Scores on the HIPPY Satisfaction Survey

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
The academic skills presented in the Activity Packs	9.67	.72	7–10
Role-playing the activities with the Home Instructor	9.61	1.05	5–10
Reviewing your child’s progress with the Home Instructor	9.64	.76	6–10
Specific instruction on being your child’s first teacher	9.51	.56	8–10
Information presented at group meetings	9.61	1.05	5–10
Friendships formed with other HIPPY families	8.19	2.54	1–10
Involvement of other family members in HIPPY activities	7.56	3.47	1–10
Involvement of other family members in other activities such as field trips, celebrations, etc.	7.47	3.32	1–10
Encouragement and instruction on the importance of being involved with your child’s school	9.42	1.44	4–10
Referrals by Home Instructor, or other HIPPY staff members, to resources in the community such as healthcare & nutrition services	8.31	2.66	1–10
Referrals by Home Instructor, or other HIPPY staff members, to economic assistance or job training	6.53	3.68	1–10
Information and support regarding parenting issues	7.97	3.01	1–10
Information and support regarding child development	9.25	1.46	3–10

*Note.* Scores of 2.5 or less indicate “low satisfaction,” scores of 2.5 – 8.5 indicate “average satisfaction,” and scores of 8.5 or greater indicate “high satisfaction.”

### Qualitative Results

Responses to the open-ended questions on the *HIPPY Satisfaction Survey* were analyzed using NVivo to discover patterns and identify themes. These themes and their frequency are discussed below, along with quotes from the mothers.

Analysis of the first open-ended question (“What specific components of the HIPPY program do you think was the most beneficial to you and your child?”) resulted in six themes:

- general comments about HIPPY being helpful,
- specific components of the HIPPY program,
- academic benefits for their child,
- benefits to their child’s social development,
- changes in their parenting, and
- changes in their relationship with their child.

The general comments made up 35.13% ( $n = 12$ ) of all comments and ranged from statements such as, “I think everything that we have done [in the HIPPY program] has been very helpful for me and my child” to even more broad comments such as “Everything with [the HIPPY program] is fine.” Of these general comments, 42% ( $n = 5$ ) related the mothers’ impressions of the HIPPY program as being helpful. For example, one mother stated, “HIPPY helped me know how to interact with my children and with my parenting.” Another mother stated, “I think everything we have done [with HIPPY] has been very helpful for me and my child.”

Four mothers commented on specific components of the HIPPY programs, such as the curriculum, home visits, or group meetings. One mother commented on the convenience of the home visitors coming to her house. Another mother appreciated that the HIPPY program was in Spanish, which meant that her son learned Spanish at home and English at school. Finally, one participant commented on the importance of the home visitor, “the instructor... helps to understand the packages [packets of curriculum materials, books, and games]...to support [my child’s] learning.”

Responses to the specific benefits of HIPPY largely centered around the children’s academic learning and school readiness, with 58.33% ( $n = 18$ ) of the participants commenting on academics and cognitive skills. Several parents, 35.14% ( $n = 13$ ), mentioned specific activities that yielded academic benefits for their children, such as “the learning walks that are also useful for the learning of the child,” “science activities and math and games,” and “learning letters while reading.”

Other parents, 21.62% ( $n = 8$ ), talked about the results of the HIPPY activities and how those activities changed their children’s school readiness. For example, one mother responded, “It [HIPPY] helps my son greatly to develop his motor skills and his imagination. It prepared him for school, which allowed him to be at a more advanced level compared to the rest of his classmates. It is an excellent program.” Other parents focused on school achievement. For example, “Yes, my child didn’t go to PreK, and this year in kindergarten [because

of HIPPY] he knows many things, and the program helped him so much.” Another parent commented on early literacy skills, “[HIPPY] helped my son have greater knowledge in letters and in learning how to read.” Others mentioned developing children’s imagination, math learning, and understanding stories.

In addition to academic benefits, two mothers (5.40%) stated how HIPPY helped improve their child’s social and emotional development. For example, one mother mentioned her son’s ability to self-regulate, “The program helped my child because he is learning much and his mind focuses itself more quickly.”

Several parents, 10.81% ( $n = 4$ ), also responded that HIPPY supported their parenting and their bond with their child. For example, one mother explained how her parenting changed as a result of the program, which led to her child’s improved academic skills: “I prepared him for school, which allowed him to be at a more advanced level compared to the rest of his classmates.” Another mother pointed out the commitment required for parents to work with their child each day on activities, “It has helped him a lot since he is at a higher academic level, and this is thanks to the program and the commitment that we put into this.”

Other mothers, 16.22% ( $n = 6$ ), remarked how the HIPPY program supported their relationship with their child and changed the way they discipline their child. For example, one mother commented, “Thanks to this program [HIPPY], we have managed to have a very good relationship. It has helped us to communicate and to have a closer relationship. Two parents discussed how HIPPY changed the way that they discipline their children: “I am pleased most that HIPPY has helped me have more patience with my children” and “I feel what was most beneficial was the fact that, when I correct her, I do not say ‘no.’ Instead, I ask her questions in order for her to get that understanding, or I explain it to her.” One parent clearly showed the connection between responsive, supportive parenting and children’s learning. She remarked that improvements in parent–child interaction showed benefits for general learning skills: “I have... learned to talk to my children more so they can learn better.” This insight emphasizes the importance of relationships in young children’s learning.

Analysis of the second open-ended question (“What additional information or training do you feel HIPPY could provide to better support you as your child’s first teacher?”) yielded the following themes:

- completely satisfied with no suggested improvements to the program,
- wanting academic changes
- more focus on parenting.

The majority of the mothers (62.16%,  $n = 23$ ) said that the HIPPY program was fine as it is and did not give specific feedback as to possible improvements. Several mothers (27.03%,  $n = 10$ ) indicated that they wanted changes to the

academic focus of the HIPPY programs. For example, three mothers specifically asked for more mathematics-related materials and activities, for example, commenting, "More interaction with math, with addition, and games with numbers." Another mother indicated she would like to see art activities and sports incorporated into the HIPPY curriculum. One mother indicated she wished the program offered home visits for younger children (children age 3–5 and their families are eligible to participate in HIPPY). Another mother wished that HIPPY provided an afterschool program for her kindergartener. Finally, one mother spoke to the academic rigor of the HIPPY program, indicating that she felt the activities were repetitive by the kindergarten year, "In the last age of HIPPY it is very repetitive."

Like with the first question related to the benefits of HIPPY, a few mothers, 8.11% ( $n = 3$ ), responded with specific suggestions for improvement that focused on themselves and their parenting rather than just on their children. One mother specifically indicated that she would like more opportunities to interact with other parents: "More participation with the other parents in the program." Also, two mothers indicated that they would like specific classes on parenting and programs to help them even more with the relationship with their child: "Classes or programs to improve our relationship with our children" and "I wish that HIPPY would help me be able to talk to my daughter."

## Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the satisfaction of Latina mothers with services received through the HIPPY program, the specific components they found most beneficial, and areas where they felt the HIPPY program could provide better support. The overwhelming majority of the mothers who participated in this study were satisfied with the HIPPY program. The responses to the qualitative questions reflected the mothers' perceptions of their children's school readiness and academic achievement. Also, several of the mothers indicated that the HIPPY program had helped them in their parenting skills and their relationship with their children. Perhaps even of more interest than the positive responses to what the mothers felt were the benefits to the HIPPY program are the topic they indicated as suggestions for improvement. While 62.16% of the mothers did not give suggestions for improvement, the participants that did provide suggestion for improvement gave an interesting perspective into the expectations for their children's education. Of the parents who made specific suggestions for improvement, 69.23% indicated that they would like to see improvements to the academic rigor of the HIPPY program. All of these comments related to the desire for additional academic materials

and activities for their child. One parent indicated they would like the program to begin earlier so younger children could participate, and another comment felt the program was repetitive by the kindergarten year.

These findings are significant as the mission of the HIPPY program is to support the parent engagement and academic success of children. A wealth of research conducted over the past 30 years has found that Latino parents have high expectations for their children's education and want to participate in their academic success (Ada & Zubizarreta, 2001; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Moles, 1993; Nieto, 2004). This desire for rigor and additional academic materials and activities for their children is consistent with research indicating that Latino families desire a high-quality education for their children, beginning in the early years (Hernandez et al., 2008).

School systems across the country are looking for strong early childhood programs that focus on increasing the school readiness and parent engagement for at-risk children. In doing so, it is important for these educators not to overlook the unique needs of the nations' fastest-growing population, Latino children and their families. One way to ensure the unique strengths and needs of Latino children are not overlooked is for American educators to recognize that all families have abundant knowledge that schools and early education programs can learn and use in their family engagement efforts (González et al., 2011). Research suggests that when families are engaged in their children's early education, children are more likely to be successful in school (Cox, 2005; Epstein, 2019; Hill et al., 2004/2005; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019). This research on the importance of school readiness and parent engagement in a child's future academic success has prompted a wide range of early childhood programs and initiatives. As mentioned earlier, national policy (specifically ESSA, previously known as NCLB) requires schools to support and educate parents as well as include them in every aspect of their child's education. Schools that fail to do so not only marginalize a large portion of children, but they can face serious consequences from the state and national departments of education (ESSA, 2015).

The results of this study indicate that Latino parents feel more involved in their child's education after participating in the HIPPY program. Programs like HIPPY, which incorporate features of family support programs, aim to expand and enrich the traditional American expectations of parent engagement in school by supporting children and families by enhancing children's home learning environments. The findings of this study suggest that schools can improve the ways in which they engage with Latino families by incorporating programs, such as HIPPY, that embrace families "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992).



Just as with other social and educational programs, it is important in the HIPPY program to listen to the voices of their participants, not only as consumers of a service or program, but because of the diverse knowledge and experience found in families that can support the success of the child. School and program personnel learning more about the existing resources or “funds of knowledge” children and families (their clients) already possess better equips them to support their clients. The results of this study uniquely provide useful insights into the perspectives of the mothers who participated in the HIPPY program as well as areas for potential improvement.

During the past several decades, the American public has begun to recognize the importance of the first few years of a child’s life and the impact their earliest experiences have on future success. However, children and youth from Latino families still tend to have lower achievement test scores (Crow, 2022), higher dropout rates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022a), lower scores on college entrance exams (Smith & Reeves, 2020); and lower college attendance (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022b) compared with European and African American children. While Latino families often have high educational expectations for their children (Ackert et al., 2018; Ceballos et al., 2014), these expectations do not always translate into traditional parent engagement activities in the schools and thus may not be recognized or valued, and the majority of research on parent engagement has addressed school-based parental engagement activities (Fan & Chen, 2012). This disconnect has led many researchers to call for new studies to examine parental engagement in education as a multidimensional construct (Fan & Chen, 2012). Through this current study, we have added information on an early home intervention program—aimed to strengthen parent engagement and child achievement—to the research base, from a Latina mother’s perspective.

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