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



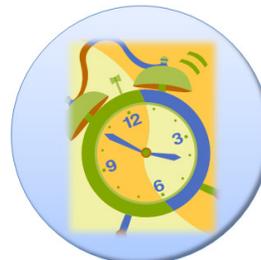
**93%**  
 of children  
 school-ready  
 when entering  
 school



**90%**  
 stayed  
 in school  
 compared to  
 Texas: **67%**



**216%**  
 increase in  
 mothers with  
 higher education  
 degrees



**127%**  
 increase in  
 employment



**143%**  
 increase  
 in home  
 ownership

AVANCE, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit parent-child education and family support organization headquartered in San Antonio, contracted with the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) to conduct an external impact evaluation of its signature Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP) for parents who graduated from the program between the years 1999 through 2006. The evaluation involved interviewing 199 participants by telephone and 24 face-to-face in San Antonio, Houston, Austin, Dallas, and El Paso from April to August 2013. The evaluation was designed to address the following overarching question: How does the AVANCE PCEP affect two-generation (parent-child) behavior change in the areas of education and socio-economic status? IDRA's evaluation was designed to answer this question from a variety of perspectives.

### Participation in AVANCE's Parent-Child Education Program...

- Yielded a **positive return on the investment in early childhood education** for at-risk families.
- **Provided educational support** for parents and children.
- **Built economic competence** through financial classes, information and other support to parents that helped toward getting better jobs or planning for longer-term financial stability.
- **Bolstered aspirations** parents have for their children.
- **Created social capital** by building parent's strengths to complete their education and ultimately improve their own economic security and stability.
- **Promoted and valued parent's voice** to help to change the trajectory of their lives.
- **Helped participants seize opportunities to move up the economic and social ladder** often breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

# General Findings

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

## Knowledge of Child Development & Parenting Skills

More than 93 percent of the mothers indicated that their children were school-ready when entering school. Of those, almost 91 percent credited AVANCE with helping them get their children ready for school. Nearly 90 percent (89.5 percent) of the AVANCE families' children stayed in school 10 years after their mothers participated in AVANCE. This compares favorably to the 67 percent of Hispanic children who stayed in school this past school year, according to the 2012-13 IDRA Texas public school attrition study, which found a high school attrition rate of 33 percent for Hispanic students in Texas. Moreover, the AVANCE family high school attrition rate (10.5 percent) was lower than the Texas attrition rate for all students (25 percent).

## Support for Two-Generation Education & Growth

Mothers improved their education since graduating from AVANCE. The number of mothers with higher education degrees increased from six to 19, an improvement of 216.7 percent, while the number of mothers with less than high school education decreased from 103 to 81 or 21.4 percent. AVANCE provided important practical guidance through several activities to help mothers with the education of their children. Two of these activities were toy-making classes and field trips. Most mothers (95.3 percent) made toys that they used to instill in their children important concepts about the world, their sensory perception as well as their feelings. Many mothers (63.4 percent) participated in field trips organized to acquaint them with the resources available in the community.

## Employment & Income Levels

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

(17.1 percent). The general trend toward employment improvement continued long after mothers left AVANCE. At the time of the interviews, the employed proportion had increased to 38.8 percent (compared to 29.5 percent when they graduated from AVANCE). Of these, 23.8 percent were full time (compared to 17.6 percent when they graduated from AVANCE). In total, there was a 127 percent increase (33 to 75) in the number of mothers who were employed from the time they started in the AVANCE program to the time of the interviews.

## Homeownership & Entrepreneurship

The data showed a clear trend toward increased homeownership and reduced renting and other arrangements from the time the mothers were at AVANCE to the present. Before graduating from AVANCE, 66.7 percent of the mothers rented their homes, and 11.5 percent had other arrangements. At the time of the interviews, these proportions decreased to 42.2 percent and 4.7 percent, respectively. Homeownership, on the other hand, increased from 21.9 percent before mothers graduated from AVANCE to 53.1 percent at the time of the interviews. In total, there was a 142.9 percent increase in the number of AVANCE families who owned their homes (42 to 102) from the time they entered AVANCE to the present. More than half of the mothers (53.7 percent) were involved in their community since graduating from AVANCE. Mothers attributed AVANCE for helping them become leaders in their communities and for their increased involvement in their children's schools and other community institutions, such as the church.

## Barriers, Impact & Suggestions for Improvement

Fewer than one third (29.0 percent) of the mothers indicated that AVANCE could have helped them better. They felt AVANCE had done everything they could to help. Participants in the face-to-face interviews were asked to expand on the barriers to participation, but the barriers they mentioned were dealing with their own personal situations (English proficiency, child care, etc.). When mothers were asked about the best thing AVANCE did for them and their families, three concepts permeated their answers: parenting, communication, and family relationships. The mothers indicated that AVANCE helped them not only be better parents but also how to communicate with their children and their husbands, which resulted in improved family unity, often saving their families from possible dissolution.

### About the Intercultural Development Research Association

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

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