



INDIGO
CULTURAL CENTER

*The Arizona Kith and Kin
Project Evaluation*

Brief #3:
*Professional Development with
Family, Friend, and Neighbor
Providers: Implications for Dual
Language Learners*

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Candelen

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Executive Summary

Despite the prevalence of family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) child care (NSECE, 2015), relatively little is known about the characteristics of this type of care, quality of care, and the features of effective quality improvement initiatives for FFN care providers. In general, the early childhood field has remained relatively silent about FFN child care in policy and research discourses surrounding child well-being and quality initiatives (Shivers, 2012; Whitebook et al., 2004).

The overall goal of the analyses described in this brief, Brief #3 in a series of four, was to explore and analyze a growing segment of child care providers in the U.S., Latina Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers, and to contextualize these findings for the children in their care who are dual language learners (DLLs). This large sample was obtained by collecting data from providers involved in a 14-week training-support group intervention known as the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*. The providers in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* represent a critical population of providers who are serving DLLs.

The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* is a program of the Association for Supportive Child Care (ASCC), a nonprofit child care agency that was founded in 1976 to improve the quality of care for Arizona's children. The program was established in 1999 to provide ongoing early childhood training and support to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. The goals of the program are to (1) improve the quality of child care through training; (2) increase caregivers' knowledge and understanding of early child development; and (3) increase caregivers' knowledge and understanding of health and safety issues to provide safe child care environments.

The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* provides a 14-week, two-hour support group training series for Spanish and English speaking and refugee caregivers, with most training-support sessions offered in Spanish. The training-support sessions are held at various community partner locations that are embedded in the daily lives and neighborhoods where FFN providers live and work. On-site child care is provided by teachers, most of whom hold college degrees, who implement a language and literacy curriculum known as *Leaps and Bounds* (Arizona State University).

The evaluation for the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* was an extensive four (4) year project conducted by the *Indigo Cultural Center* and included data and measures not necessarily included in the present brief.¹ The research questions explored in *Brief #3: Professional Development with Family, Friend, and Neighbor Providers: Implications for Dual Language Learners* are the following:

Research Question #1: Are provider-child language and literacy interactions enhanced as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*? (Sample size = 142 provider-child dyads)

Research Question #2: Do children's language and literacy assessment scores increase as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project's* on-site curriculum? (Sample size = 74 children)

Research Question #3: Do providers' home literacy environments and practices change as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project's* literacy coaching pilot? (Sample size = 38 providers)

¹ This brief is the third of four that highlights major findings from the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* evaluation. For copies of the other three briefs, please contact Dr. Eva Marie Shivers: Eshivers@IndigoCulturalCenter.org.

Executive Summary

The data collection protocol for the findings presented in this brief consisted of three distinct forms and phases of data collection with project participants: 1) provider-child dyadic observations (pre/post) using a time-sampling standardized instrument in providers' homes; 2) child-level assessment data collected with children who attended weekly project sessions with their FFN provider and spent that time in on-site child care; 3) standardized observations (pre/post) of providers' literacy environment in their homes with a group of project graduates who participated in a small, pilot project that included a combination of training and home-based coaching.

Analyses only include those providers who reported that the children they serve spoke Spanish or a combination of English/Spanish at child care and at home. In other words, we removed cases where the children only spoke English at home and at child care².

Results

We found statistically significant increases in the following practices:

- Effective teaching practices (standardized observation in provider's home with a focus child)
- Bi-directional communication (standardized observation in provider's home with a focus child)
- Uni-directional communication (standardized observation in provider's home with a focus child)
- Children's pre-literacy skills increased from 'Average Skills,' to 'Strong Skills'
- Providers' *literacy environment* scores increased from 'Poor' to 'Excellent' (standardized observation in provider's home)
- Providers' language and literacy instructional and social supports increased from 'Fair' to 'Above Average' (standardized observation in provider's home)

Discussion



Given that the majority of the FFN providers in this sample are Latina, and 88% speak Spanish with the children in their care, it was important to focus the analyses on the children in their care as there are important implications for supporting the development and early education for Dual Language Learners (DLLs) (Yoshikawa, 2011).

Continued support for culturally responsive, effective interventions like the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* should not only persist, but should undergo a feasibility study for more effective scaling across the state, and most likely across the nation. However, careful attention should be paid to creating policies, standards of practice, and professional development initiatives that are flexible enough to respond to the unique profiles of specific cultural communities.

² To examine within-cultural group trends among Latina FFN providers, we also removed cases where children spoke a language other than Spanish.

Introduction

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care (FFN) and Its Importance in the Child Care Continuum

“Kith and kin”, “informal”, or “family, friend, and neighbor (FFN)” child care is one of the oldest and most common forms of child care (for a comprehensive review see Susman-Stillman & Banghart, 2008). This type of care is usually defined as any regular, non-parental child care arrangement other than a licensed center, program, or family child care home; thus, this unregulated care usually includes relatives, friends, neighbors, and other adults caring for children in their homes (Brandon, Maher, Joesch, & Doyle, 2002). The prevalence of informal child care has been well documented by researchers over the past decade (e.g., Capizzano & Adams, 2003). Scholars estimate that from a third to one half of all children under five are in FFN child care arrangements, rendering this form of care as the most common non-parental child care arrangement for young children in the United States. (Boushey & Wright, 2004; Johnson, 2005; Maher & Joesch, 2005; NSECE, 2015; Porter, Rice, & Mabon, 2003; Snyder & Adelman, 2004; Snyder, Dore, & Adelman, 2005; Sonenstein, Gates, Schmidt, & Bolshun, 2002). Results from a recent national survey (National Survey of Early Care and Education) suggest that the numbers of young children in FFN settings may be even higher than earlier estimations (e.g., up to 70% of children reported to be in child care settings where the provider is “unlisted/unpaid.”) (NSECE, 2015).

The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* Evaluation Brief Series

This brief is the third in a series of four that highlights major themes from a four (4) year study designed to assess the effectiveness of the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* – a 17 year-old community-based, grass-roots child development support and training intervention program. Each of the four briefs explores a salient theme that emerged from the study, including:

- Improving quality of care in family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) child care settings (Brief #1);
- Latina FFN provider characteristics and features of the care they provide (Brief #2);
- Professional development with FFN providers: Implications for dual language learners (Brief #3);
- Increasing cultural and social capital by linking FFN providers to other resources in the early childhood system (Brief #4).



Introduction

Scholars and policy makers are becoming more aware of how issues related to child care selection and enrollment in early care and education programs can help gain deeper understanding into the experiences and perceptions of marginalized families (Mendez, Crosby, Helms, Johnson, & Rodriguez, 2016; Vesely, Ewaida, & Kearney, 2012). Research also shows that some families, particularly those who are newcomers to the United States, want to use family members for care because of the shared culture, home language, values, and childrearing practices (Brandon, 2002; Espinosa et al., 2013; Fuller, Holloway, & Liang, 1996; Shivers, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2011).



Despite the prevalence of FFN care, relatively little is known about young dual language learners (DLLs) who spend their early years in FFN settings (Mendez, et al., 2016). Young DLLs and their families are a very diverse group with many different languages, countries of origin, acculturation experiences, family circumstances, and cultural backgrounds. The selection of specific child care arrangements can represent family and cultural community-held notions about their host community as well as cultural and social capital (e.g., social support, access to resources; experiences with social institutions; access to information about child care and other social programs) (Vesely, et al., 2012).

The broader evaluation strategy for the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* was designed to enhance the limited body of research on young DLLs in FFN child care and to stimulate additional research questions that can be explored to push the field toward a deeper understanding of FFN professional development models, provider and child outcomes, and ultimately, toward incorporating FFN initiatives into states' larger DLL policy agenda.

Description of the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*

The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* is a program of the Association for Supportive Child Care (ASCC), a nonprofit child care agency that was founded in 1976 to improve the quality of care for Arizona's children. ASCC oversees and coordinates the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* as well as other early childhood programs. The program was established in 1999 to provide ongoing early childhood training and support to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. The goals of the program are to (1) improve the quality of child care through training; (2) increase caregivers' knowledge and understanding of early child development; and (3) increase caregivers' knowledge and understanding of health and safety issues to provide safe child care environments.



The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* provides a 14-week, two-hour support group training-support series for Spanish and English speaking and refugee caregivers, with most training-support sessions offered in Spanish. The training-support sessions are held at various community partner locations such as: Head Start centers, faith-based organizations, public libraries, elementary schools, and local community centers that have an adjoining space for child care. The program provides transportation for caregivers who are located within a five-mile radius of the

training location and on-site child care by experienced and trained child care providers during each training-support session. Most training-support sessions are offered during the day and sometimes in the evenings or weekends. From 2010 to 2015, the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* has offered over 300 sessions, including sessions in Coconino, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Pima, Yavapai, and Yuma counties, and has served a total of 1,670 providers per year.

Over the past 17 years, the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* has developed a statewide and national reputation for their successful recruitment and retention of Latina providers (Porter et al., 2010; Ocampo-Schlesinger & McCarty, 2005). The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project's* approach to participant recruitment is based on a history of developing strong partnerships with other community-based entities that are trusted by the residents of those neighborhoods and communities. Another important strategy for recruitment is involving an individual community partner as a co-facilitator during the training (a more in-depth description of the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* can be found at <http://www.asccaz.org/kithandkin.html>).

In 2010, a four (4) year evaluation study was commissioned to assess the effectiveness of the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*. The overall goals of the evaluation were to: (1) assess whether there would be a change in observed child care practices and quality after providers completed the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* training-support sessions, and (2) provide descriptive information about FFN child care providers' observed child care practices and quality of care. The data presented in this brief was collected over the course of four years.



Description of the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*

Theoretical Framework for Evaluation

The prominent conceptual framework informing the research design and interpretation of findings for all four briefs is *Howes' developmental framework*, which places children's development within ethnic, cultural, historical, and social contexts of communities, as well as within relationships with others (Howes, 2000; Howes, James, & Ritchie, 2003; Rogoff, 2003). Howes posits that providers' beliefs about child care and practices with children reflect the impact of their community's adaptive culture – a group of goals, values, attitudes, and behaviors that set families and children of color apart from the dominant culture (predominantly white, middle-class). Pervasive racism, prejudice, and discrimination in the U.S. have resulted in families of color developing an adaptive culture (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). According to Garcia Coll and colleagues (1996), expression of adaptive culture emerges in socialization practices or “ways of doing things” with children – including selection of child care arrangements that reflect families' goals, values, attitudes, and align with urgent realities such as cost and convenience.

Focus of Brief #3: Professional Development with Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Providers: Implications for Dual Language Learners

Research Question #1: Are provider-child language and literacy interactions enhanced as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*? (Sample size = 142 provider-child dyads)

Research Question #2: Do children's language and literacy assessment scores increase as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project's* on-site curriculum? (Sample size = 74 children)

Research Question #3: Do providers' home literacy environments and practices change as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project's* literacy coaching pilot? (Sample size = 38 providers)

While there has been an explosion of research findings that provide a scientific basis for new policies, instructional and program approaches, and assessment procedures that support the development of young DLLs in early childhood classrooms (Espinosa & Calderon, 2015), there is limited data and corresponding recommendations about young DLLs who spend the majority of their time in family, friend, and neighbor child care settings. As we have noted in previous briefs, there is a shortage of evaluation studies that provide insight into how to improve quality of child care generally, and language and literacy practices in particular, with FFN providers who serve dual language learners.



Research Approach and Methodology

Overall Evaluation Design³

The findings of the present brief are part of a much larger four (4) year evaluation agenda. The evaluation was designed to provide summative and formative data for the project developers. Performance measures were based on the project developers' theory of change and on child care research on effective professional development for early care and education caregivers. The purpose of the overall evaluation was three-fold: first and foremost, it was intended to determine whether the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* met its stated objectives and outcomes. Second, the evaluation was designed to provide insight and feedback to the program's developers as they move forward to bring the program to scale across the state of Arizona. Third, findings from this evaluation were expected to point to other research questions that researchers and future evaluations can explore, to push the field toward a deeper understanding of FFN professional development models, provider outcomes, and ultimately, toward incorporating FFN initiatives within states' larger professional development systems.

Evaluation Procedures: Brief #3

The data collection protocols for the findings presented in this brief consisted of three distinct forms and phases of data collection with project participants: 1) provider-child dyadic observations (pre/post) using a time-sampling standardized instrument in providers' homes; 2) child-level assessment data collected with children who attended weekly project sessions with their FFN provider and spent that time in on-site child care; 3) standardized observations (pre/post) of providers' literacy environment in their homes with a smaller group of project graduates who participated in a small, pilot project that included a combination of training and home-based coaching. Detailed descriptions of each phase of data collection is provided in the results section.



³ For a more in-depth description of the overall evaluation methodology – including the logic model and theory of change, please refer to Brief #1 in this series (Shivers, Farago, & Goubeaux, 2016).

Research Approach and Methodology

Data Collection and Instrumentation: Brief #3

Only instruments germane to the current analyses are displayed below.

Table 1: Overview of Evaluation Measures⁴

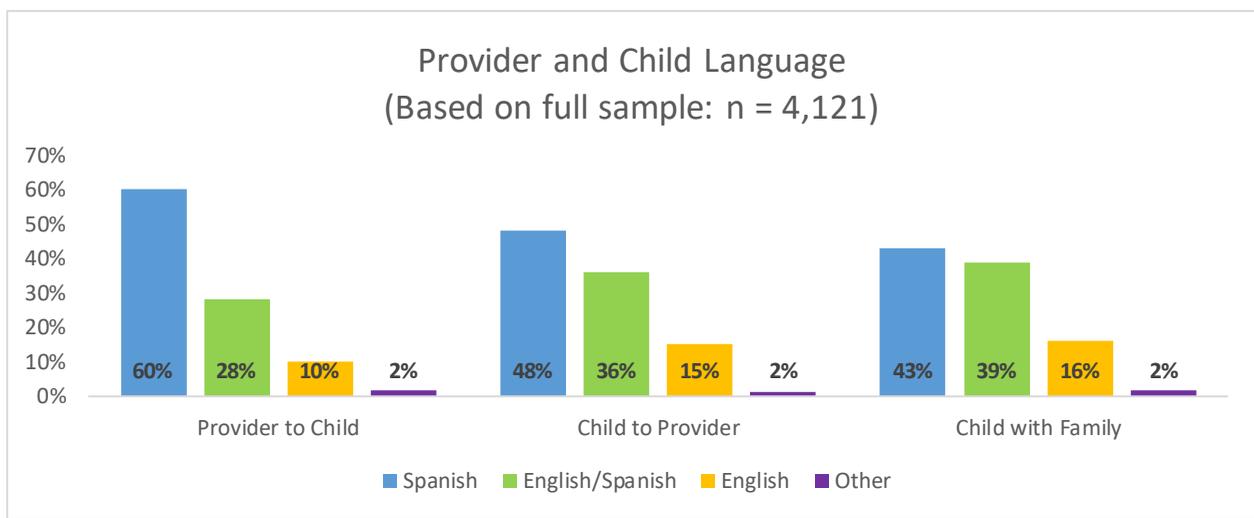
Instrument	Citation	Constructs Measured	Respondent	When Collected
<i>Child Care Assessment Tool for Relatives (CCAT-R) Action and Communication Snapshot</i>	(Porter et al., Institute for Child Care Continuum, 2003)	Time sampling methodology captures caregiver communication with focus child; caregiver action; child language; child interactions with children and adults (Observation completed in provider's home)	Provider-child dyad (n = 142)	Baseline; Completion of program
<i>CCAT-R Behavior Checklist</i>	(Porter et al., Institute for Child Care Continuum, 2003)	Checklist completed after each snapshot page. Categories include: Location; caregiver tone; child tone; child learning activities; toileting/diapering; caregiver interaction with child; behavior management; child safety (Observation conducted in provider's home)	Provider-child dyad (n = 142)	Baseline; Completion of program
<i>Spanish Language-Get Ready to Read</i>	(Lonigan, Farver, & Eppe, 2002)	A 20-item Spanish language screening tool that assesses children's early literacy skills (e.g., print knowledge and phonological awareness)	FFN children attended project's on-site child care (n=74)	Baseline; Completion of program
<i>Child Home Early Language Literacy Observation</i>	(Neuman, Dwyer, & Koh, 2007)	An observation tool specifically designed to rate the early literacy environment, as well as provider's methods and interactions in home-based child care settings.	Graduates of the <i>Arizona Kith and Kin Project – Read On Pilot Project</i> (n = 38)	Baseline; Completion of program

⁴ For more information about these instruments or any of the others listed in the other briefs, please contact the corresponding author, Dr. Eva Marie Shivers: Eshivers@IndigoCulturalCenter.org

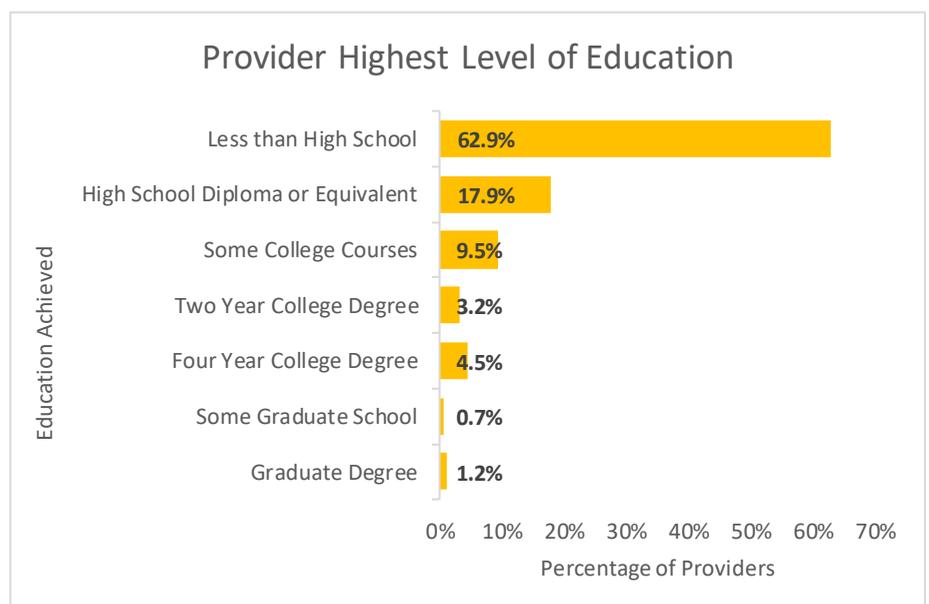
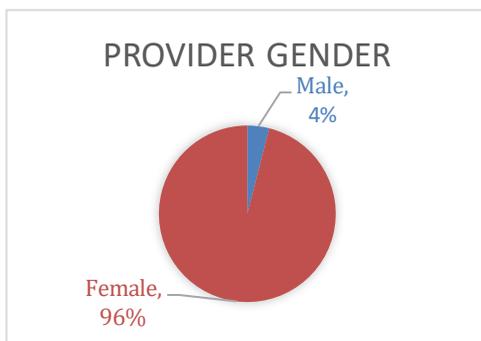
Research Approach and Methodology

Description of Participants: Brief #3

The bar chart below describes language use among the larger sample (n = 4,121). In order to explore research questions focused on dual language learners, we conducted our analyses with only those providers who reported that the children they serve spoke Spanish or a combination of English/Spanish at child care and at home (n = 3,295). In other words, we removed those cases where the children only spoke English at home and at child care, or any other language different than Spanish.



Background Characteristics of Providers Serving Spanish-Speaking Children (n = 3,295)



Research Approach and Methodology

Provider Household Income⁵

		Frequency	Percentage
100% U.S. Federal Poverty Level \$24,300*	Less than \$10,000	772	26.1%
	\$10,000-\$14,999	559	18.9%
	\$15,000-19,999	391	13.2%
	\$20,000-24,999	330	11.2%
	\$25,000-29,999	176	5.9%
200% U.S. Federal Poverty Level \$48,600*	\$30,000-34,999	125	4.2%
	\$35,000-39,999	87	2.9%
	\$40,000-44,999	36	1.2%
	\$45,000-49,999	22	0.7%
	\$50,000-59,999	17	0.6%
	\$60,000-74,999	5	0.2%
	\$75,000-99,999	1	0.0%
\$100,000 or more	3	0.1%	
	Decline to answer	435	14.7%
	Total	2,959	100.0%

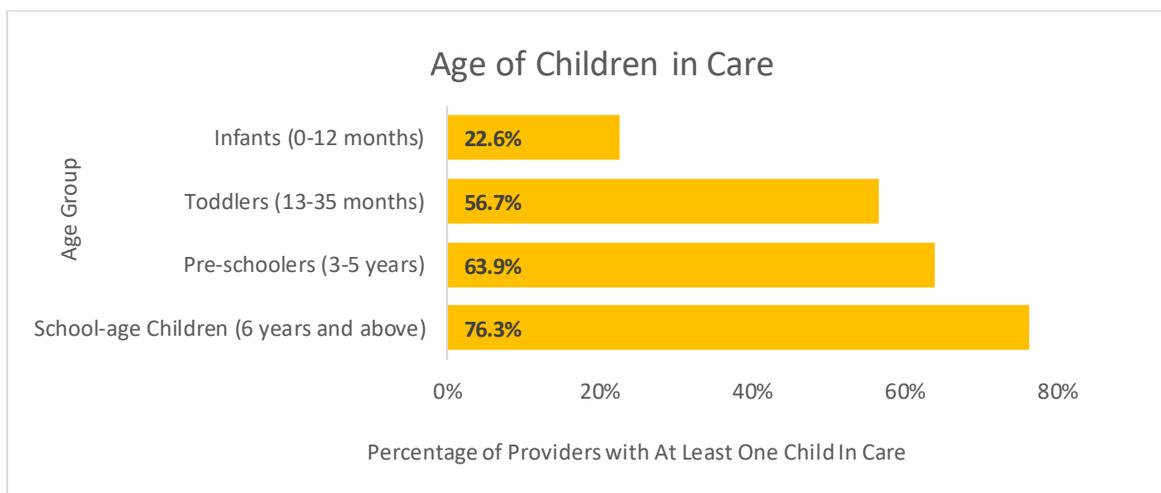
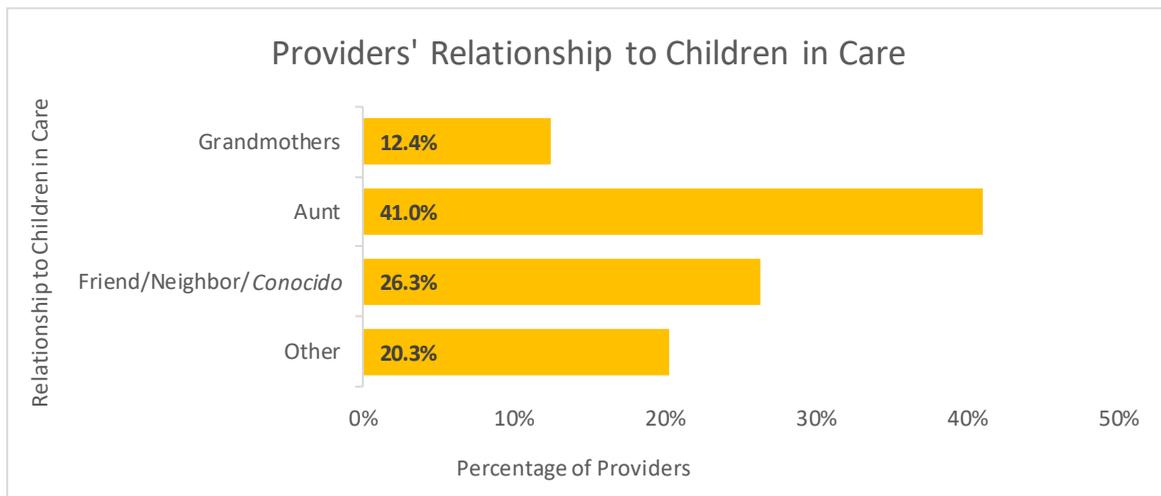
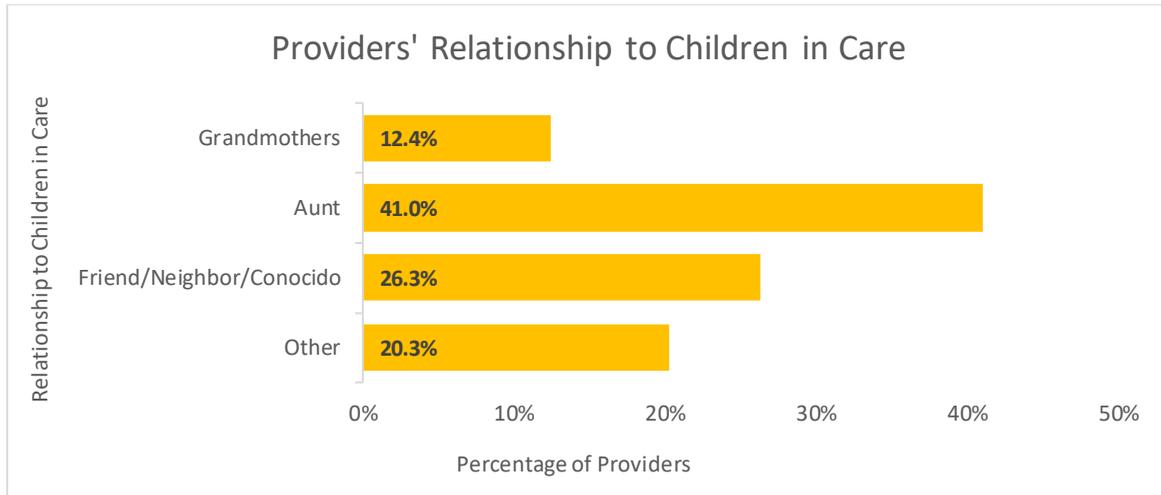
Other Background Characteristics of Providers



92% of providers were younger than 49 years-old. Seventy-two percent (72%) were between the ages of 20-40. The average number of adults in the home was 2.58 (*SD* = 1.25), and the average number of children living in the home with the provider was 2.67 (*SD* = 1.44). The average number of years providers reported living in the United States was 13.95 years (*SD* = 7.66).

⁵ 86% of providers reported 2-4 adults living in the household (*M* = 2.59; *SD* = 1.26). 79% of providers reported living with a partner. U.S. Federal Poverty Levels notated above are based off of a four-person household.

Research Approach and Methodology



Research Approach and Methodology

On average, providers have cared for other people's children for approximately 7 years ($M = 6.94$, $SD = 7.52$). On average, the largest number of children in care who were under the age of 6 was 2.40 ($SD = 1.87$). Sixty-eight percent (68%) of providers reported taking care of children during traditional child care hours (i.e., weekdays between 7 am - 6 pm), and an additional 19% reported providing care during traditional and non-traditional hours (e.g., weekends, late evenings).

Limitations of the Study: Brief #3

1. A major limitation to the study includes the possibility of a self-selection bias insofar as the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* was a service for which FFN providers volunteered. It may be that seeking out this type of experience is a characteristic of providers who are more inclined to pursue growth opportunities and are ready to learn, and are not necessarily a representative demographic of Latina providers and dual language learners in FFN settings in Arizona.
2. The evaluation was based on a pre-post non-experimental design, with the same group of providers and children serving as their own comparison group. There is no randomized control group, which makes causal and generalizable statements harder to ascertain than when using randomized recruitment and an experimental design.
3. The same Specialists who facilitated the training and coaching sessions collected observational data in providers' homes. Gaining trust and entry into FFN providers' homes is one of the most challenging aspects of conducting research and evaluation with them (Porter et al., 2010). To successfully recruit a sample of providers who would allow us into their homes, we had to use data collectors whom they already knew and trusted. As a result, providers' training facilitators collected all of the Time 1 observational data. As a rule, a different Specialist collected Time 2 observations. In some instances providers would only allow their own training facilitator into the home at Time 2. Although this potential bias was controlled for in the analyses (M. Burchinal, personal communication, 2010), there is a possibility that the results were impacted by this limitation in the study implementation.
4. The sessions provided by the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* Specialists were designed to be adapted according to the ebb, flow, and interests of the providers present at each session. The hallmark of effective adult learning strategies, and indeed one of the unique features and strengths of the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project's* design, is tailoring the mix and intensity of activities and discussion to the unique needs of the providers present in each session (Kruse, 2012). Consequently, there was variability in program implementation at all sites⁶.

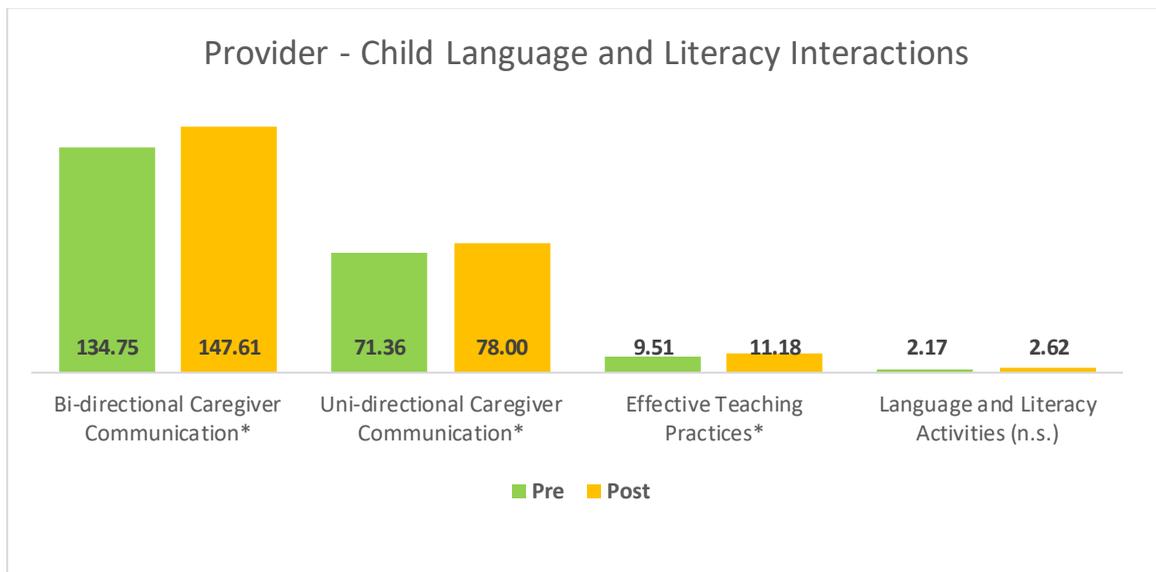
⁶ At the time of the drafting this report, the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* started the process for a fidelity study.

Results

Research Question #1: Are provider-child language and literacy interactions enhanced as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*? (Sample size = 142 provider-child dyads)

This smaller, targeted sample involved observations in providers' homes within the first three weeks of participation in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*, and then again for a post observation visit within 3-4 weeks of completing the project⁷. The measure included in the present analysis was the *Child Care Assessment Tool for Relatives – CCAT-R* (Porter et al., Institute for Child Care Continuum, 2003). We specifically included two sections from the *CCAT-R*: the *Action-Communication Snapshot* and the *Behavior Checklist* in this analysis.

We conducted paired sample t-tests in order to detect changes in scores over time. Overall, results indicate that provider-language and literacy interactions improved as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*. Specifically, t-tests indicate that there was a significant increase in effective teaching practices and caregiver communication as a result of participation. Providers' bi-directional communication increased by 12.90 points (SD = 59.36; $t(141) = 2.58, p = .011$), uni-directional communication increased by 6.60 points (SD = 31.46; $t(141) = 2.50, p = .014$), and effective teaching increased on average by 1.67 points (SD = 6.62; $t(141) = 3.00, p = .003$) from Time 1 to Time 2. Language and literacy subscales scores did not significantly increase from Time 1 to Time 2.



* $p < .01$ significance level

The **Bi-directional Communication** subscale was comprised of items from the Action/Communication Snapshot and included the following items: provider responds to focus child; provider repeats what child says; provider engaged with child; child talks with provider; child interacts with provider.

⁷ For a more in-depth description of the methodology used for this targeted sample, please refer to Brief #1 in this series (Shivers, Farago, & Goubeaux, 2016).

Results

The **Uni-directional Communication** subscale was comprised of items from the Action/Communication Snapshot and included the following items: provider makes a request of focus child; provider directs; provider names or labels something; 'other-talk.'

The **Language and Literacy Activities** subscale was comprised of items that came from the CCAT-R Behavior Checklist and included: tells stories; rhymes; sings; interacts with books and other print materials; musical/rhythm activity.

The **Effective Teaching** subscale was comprised of items that came from the CCAT-R Behavior Checklist and included: encourages concept learning; encourages experimentation with object; encourages independence/autonomy; demonstrates; uses routines as learning opportunities; imitates infant's gestures and sounds.

Research Question #2: Do children's language and literacy assessment scores increase as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project's* on-site curriculum? (Sample size = 74 children)

In this section, we analyzed child-level data based on pre- and post-assessments of children's pre-literacy skills using *Spanish-Language Get Ready to Read*⁸. These assessments were completed with children in the care of FFN providers who participated in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*. The children who participated in the assessments attended the two-hour weekly sessions along with their child care providers and spent those two hours in the project's on-site child care where a university-based literacy curriculum known as "Leaps and Bounds" was implemented for the full 14 weeks of the project. We recruited children aged 3, 4 and 5 years-old through parental informed consent. A trained assessor (whose native language was Spanish) conducted the assessments in children's primary language (either Spanish or English) during on-site child care sessions. If children were uncomfortable at any time during the assessment, the assessment ended and the assessor assisted the child in returning to the class.

The Office of Youth Preparation in partnership with Arizona State University's Department of Early Childhood Education and New Directions Institute for Infant Brain Development created *Leaps and Bounds: A Kindergarten Readiness Program* to provide education and support to families underserved by other agencies in the Phoenix metropolitan area. This research-based program provides practical knowledge on helping children prepare for kindergarten to a community primarily comprised of Spanish-speaking parents and caregivers with low incomes. The family-friendly activities included in the program use items found in the home to promote three learning areas: logic and mathematic knowledge, language-literacy development, and social competence. The activities align with the Arizona Early Childhood and Kindergarten Readiness Standards (Rhodes, Enz, & LaCount, 2006).

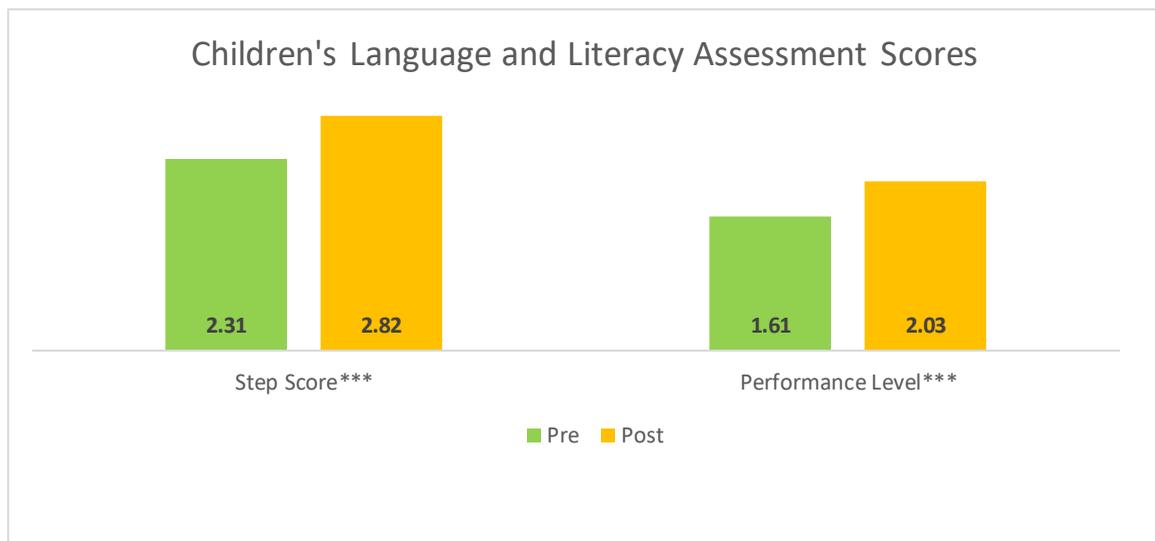
On-site child care teachers working with the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* were trained on tailoring and implementing the *Leaps and Bounds* curriculum for the children who attended the project with their FFN

⁸ The main author of the *Spanish-Language Get Ready to Read* assessment (Lonigan, 2003) completed a validation study in 2003. The results of that study suggest that *S-GRTR* provides a relatively unbiased means to assess Spanish-speaking children's emergent literacy skills (Farver, Nakamoto, & Lonigan, 2007).

Results

providers. At the end of each weekly session, FFN providers also learned key activities from the *Leaps and Bounds* curriculum, with the idea that the activities children were learning and experiencing during the on-site child care program were reinforced during their daily experiences with their FFN provider.

For purposes of this brief, only children whose primary language was Spanish were included in the present sample and analysis. Overall, results indicate that children's language and literacy scores significantly increased as a result of the *Leaps and Bounds* curriculum used as part of the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*. Specifically, children's STEP Score significantly increased by 0.51 points (from an average score of 2.31 to 2.82) and Performance Levels significantly increased by 0.42 points (from an average score of 1.61 to 2.03) from Time 1 to Time 2 ($p < .001$). In terms of STEP scores, children who score "2" have a basic understanding of books and print and can recognize some letters, while children who score closer to "3" have gone beyond the basic understanding of books and print, are learning to identify letter-sound associations. This means that children in this sample have improved their understanding of books and print and have begun to learn to identify letter-sound associations as a result of program participation. In terms of Performance Levels, on average, performance increased from "below average" (score of 1) to "average" (score of 2)⁹.



*** $p < .001$ significance level

⁹ The average performance of children is similar on the *English-GRTR* and the *Spanish-GRTR*. Unlike the development sample for *English-GRTR* in which Hispanic children scored significantly lower than other children (i.e., mean score of 6.86; see Whitehurst, 2001), these results suggest that *Spanish-GRTR* provides a relatively unbiased means to assess Spanish-speaking children's emergent literacy skills. Consequently, the same interpretive scale for scores developed for the *English-GRTR* should be used for the *Spanish-GRTR* for Spanish-speaking children.

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Research Question #3: Do providers' home literacy environments and practices change as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project's* literacy coaching pilot? (Sample size = 38 providers)

In the final part of our analysis, we explored whether graduates of the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* increased their literacy home environment (as measured by the *Child Home Early Language Literacy Observation – CHELLO*) after participating in a small pilot project where providers attended a 4-hour training on language and literacy and then received weekly in-home coaching for 4 weeks and a mini-grant for materials and equipment.

For this aspect of our project, an *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* Specialist was to work with each participant to provide one-on-one technical assistance, training and support through a self-study model delivered in the provider's home child care environment.



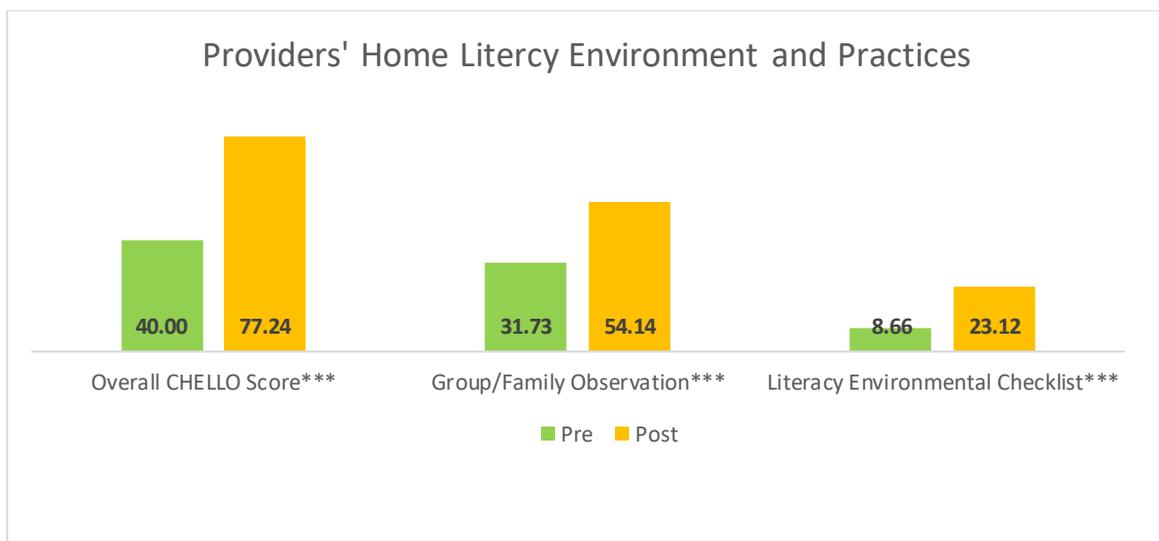
During the initial visit in the home, the child care provider in partnership with the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* Specialists completed an initial assessment of the environment using the *CHELLO* Tool. This tool served as baseline data and also assisted child care providers in becoming familiar with the components of the self-assessment process. Self-assessment was deliberately designed to serve dual purposes: as intervention as well as evaluation. During this process, the FFN provider – guided by the program Specialist – self-assessed specific areas of strengths as well as areas of needed improvement. This included but was not limited to observations of staff and child interactions, use of language and books, inclusion of language and

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literacy activities in the daily schedule, environmental print, physical environment, and health and safety components. While completing the *CHELLO* as a self-assessment, the participants became familiar with the scope of work that is involved in making program improvements and enhancing aspects related to literacy.

This initial assessment was the foundation that the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* Specialist utilized to make improvements to the environment. In addition, this information was utilized to determine additional training and technical assistance needs to ensure child care providers are confident in their use of materials, activities and enhancements made to the environment.

Overall, results indicate that there was significant improvement in providers' home literacy environment and practices as a result of participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project's* literacy coaching pilot program. Specifically, scores on the *CHELLO* significantly increased by an average of 37.24 points ($SD = 9.60$; $t(37) = 23.91$, $p < .001$). Group/Family observation scores increased by an average of 22.41 points ($SD = 6.40$; $t(37) = 21.60$, $p < .001$). Literacy Environment Checklist scores increased by an average of 14.46 points ($SD = 4.85$; $t(37) = 18.37$, $p < .001$).



*** $p < .001$ significance level

The *Literacy Environment Checklist* is a quick inventory to examine the literacy resources in the home-based child care environment. Scoring rubric for the *Literacy Environment Checklist*: Poor= below 11; Fair= 11-20; Excellent = 21-26.

The *Group/Family Observation* is an observation of language and literacy instructional and social supports. Scoring rubric for the *Group/Family Observation*: Deficient = below 21; Fair = 22-32; Basic = 33-43; Above average = 44-54; Exemplary = 55-65.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

In this third research brief – in a series of four – we focused on family, friend, and neighbor providers serving young dual language learners (DLLs) and examined changes in provider and child-level outcomes that took place as result of participation in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* intervention. There were statistically significant improvements on nearly every language and literacy outcome. Based on time sampling observations in providers' homes (using the *Child Care Assessment Tool for Relatives – CCAT-R*), we found statistically significant increases in the following practices with focus children:

- Effective teaching practices (e.g., encourages concept learning; encourages experimentation with object; encourages independence/autonomy; demonstrates; uses routines as learning opportunities; imitates infant's gestures and sounds)
- Bi-directional communication (e.g., provider responds to focus child; provider repeats; provider engages with child; child talks with provider; child interacts with provider)
- Uni-directional communication (e.g., provider makes a request of focus child; provider directs; provider names or labels something).

We did not find statistically significant increases in observed practices that we labeled "Language and Literacy Activities." This subscale of the CCAT-R was comprised of the following variables: tells stories; rhymes; sings; interacts with books and other print materials; musical/rhythm activity.

In the second part of our findings, we analyzed child-level data based on pre- and post- assessments of children's pre-literacy skills (using *Spanish-Language Get Ready to Read*). These assessments were completed with children in the care of FFN providers who participated in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project*. The children who participated in the assessments attended the two-hour weekly sessions along with their child care providers and spent those two hours in the project's on-site child care where a university-based literacy curriculum known as *Leaps and Bounds* was implemented for the full 14 weeks of the project. We found that after only 14 weeks, children's pre-literacy skills increased from a mean score of 11.47 ('Average Skills') at the beginning of the project to a mean score of 15.45 ('Strong Skills') at the end of the project.

In the final part of our analysis we explored whether graduates of the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* increased their literacy home environment (as measured by the *Child Home Early Language Literacy Observation – CHELLO*) after participating in a small pilot project where providers attended a 4-hour training on language and literacy, and then received weekly in-home coaching for 4 weeks and a mini-grant for materials and equipment. We found significant increases in the following domains:

- The *Literacy Environment Checklist* (an inventory to examine the literacy resources in the home-based child care environment). Providers' mean scores increased from 'Poor' to 'Excellent.'
- The *Group/Family Observation* (an observation of language and literacy instructional and social supports). Providers' mean scores increased from 'Fair' to 'Above Average.'

A large part of the project's success can be attributed to the culturally responsive strategies in its design. For example, the project's hiring strategies include an explicit and serious attempt to hire bilingual and bicultural

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Specialists and staff that share the same cultural heritage as the majority of participants. Specialists are also trained to facilitate discussions in a non-didactic manner that values and builds on providers' experiences. In addition, the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* model is intentionally designed and implemented in a way that is flexible and responsive to the needs and desires of the providers who participate in any given group. Research demonstrates that agencies are successful at engaging participation from marginalized cultural communities when approaches for FFN training and support are flexible, voluntary, customized, and demonstrate respect for the inherent strengths of FFN care, cultural differences, and the essential personal relationships of FFN providers (Chase, 2008; Kruse, 2012; Powell, 2008).

In summarizing key findings from the current analyses in this brief, it may be tempting to characterize this group of providers as homogeneous, and we urge caution in interpreting the results as an endorsement of such. There is an increasing body of literature which details and explores the remarkable heterogeneity and variations among caregiving beliefs and practices of Latino families and caregivers of Mexican-heritage (Howes, Wishard Guerra, & Zucker, 2007). Phenomena such as migration history, acculturation, access to resources, and participation in specific cultural communities shape the way caregivers organize their practices and beliefs about children and development (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Howes et al., 2007; Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, & Tseng, 2015).

Policy Recommendations

Similar to Briefs #1 and #2 of this series, it remains the authors' main contention that there is an urgent need for more systemic investment in this group of child care providers – as recent national research demonstrates, even greater numbers of children are in family, friend and neighbor child care settings than previously estimated (NSECE, 2015). There is an increasing recognition of the urgency to address professional development needs of those providers who are serving young dual language learners (Policy Statement, US Department of Health and Human Services & US Department of Education, 2016). The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* effort is an example of a promising initiative that can be scaled up to address the ever-growing needs and desires of FFN providers to move along the professional development continuum; thereby addressing developmental needs of young DLLs. Based on our focused analyses with a sample of Spanish-speaking providers and children, we offer several policy and program recommendations below¹⁰:

- Provide more resources and education designed for home-based providers (including both licensed family child care as well as family, friend, and neighbor child care) – who tend to be matched culturally and linguistically with the families they serve – about moving along the continuum of child care. This includes other professional development opportunities and hands-on technical assistance with the licensure process.
- Offer community-based resources and culturally responsive technical assistance for providers to obtain more formal education (e.g., G.E.D., Child Development Associate's degree).

¹⁰ The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* has already begun to implement many of these recommendations.

Discussion

- Provide specific training based on the latest research for supporting the development of young children who are dual language learners.
- Consider extending home-visiting services to FFN providers, since such a high percentage are also caring for their own children along with other families' children.

The positive findings from these analyses highlight the advantages of designing programming that takes into account the specific cultural community and diverse contexts in which children and providers are embedded. Too often, our professional development approaches remain one-size-fits-all and tend to be dominated by mainstream, hegemonic values and practices. We argue that not attending to the specific needs, histories, and features of cultural communities can further marginalize low-income communities of color, which already struggle with the myriad consequences of historic institutional and systemic racism (Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, & Tseng, 2015).



An increasing number of ECE stakeholders share a vision of creating inclusive, effective systems that not only benefit each and every child, but also confront inherent biases in our society; thereby closing the achievement and outcomes gap. An important step in operationalizing this vision is to explore data and quality interventions involving specific groups of marginalized communities (Annie E. Casey Foundation, Race Matters Collection, 2008). Given that the population of children growing up with two languages who are entering school in the United States (U.S.) has grown by 40% in the last decade (Garcia & Jensen, 2009), and that there continues to be no appreciable reduction in the achievement gap for these children as compared to their monolingual, English-speaking peers (Wiley, Lee, & Rumberger, 2009; Gandara & Hopkins, 2010), early care and learning environments for children from linguistically and culturally diverse families continues to be a major concern of all human service systems serving this population. Extending and leveraging professional development resources to FFN providers – in particular to providers participating in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* – has the potential to fill an important gap in opportunity for many young dual language learners.

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