

The Arizona Kith and Kin Project's Language and Literacy
Technical Assistance Project

Evaluation Report
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Background:

The Association for Supportive Child Care's (ASCC) mission is to enhance the quality of care for children. The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* is a program of ASCC that addresses the need for services and positively impacts communities in Arizona.

Child care provided by family, friend and neighbor (FFN) child care providers is one of the most common forms of child care, particularly in low-income communities. ASCC developed the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* to improve the quality of care provided by kith and kin providers (family, friends and neighbors who care for children). ASCC was one of the first organizations in the country to launch an initiative to train and support kith and kin providers and the program is considered a national model (Porter et al., 2010; Ocampo-Schlesinger & McCarty, 2005). It is also one of the oldest and largest FFN programs in the country and serves approximately 1,670 FFN providers each year.

Currently, the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* offers training-support groups that average 15 to 20 participants and meets for approximately two (2) hours each week for a 14-week session. The providers learn about child development, early brain development, guidance and discipline, health and safety, car seat safety, language and literacy, managing a child care business and related topics. The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* provides transportation and on-site child care free-of-charge to facilitate participation.

The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* also includes a comprehensive health and safety component embedded in the trainings. Providers are able to become First Aid, CPR and AED certified, receive training on home safety and child passenger safety and receive materials including first aid kits, fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, outlet covers, car seats and cribs. In addition, participants are able to attend the program's Annual Health and Safety Training Conference to learn about topics such as stress management, bullying prevention, children with special needs, obesity prevention and others.

Many of the participants in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* groups often see the value of continuing their professional growth and improvement of their child care environments (Shivers, Yang, & Farago, 2016). However, for various reasons, mainly

economic, they are sometimes unable to pursue this goal. The Association for Supportive Child Care is leading system efforts to extend professional opportunities to providers along the entire continuum, with an impressive emphasis on home-based providers like FFN and Family Child Care providers. Many home-based child care providers are serving children who are learning and speaking two languages – Dual Language Learners (DLLs). The providers in the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* represent a crucial population of providers who are serving DLLs (see table below). For more a focused and extended discussion and analyses of DLLs in FFN child care, please read “Brief 3: Professional Development with Family, Friend and Neighbor Providers: Implications for Dual Language Learners” (Shivers, Farago, & Yang, 2016)

Table: Languages spoken by children and providers in the Arizona Kith and Kin Project (n = 3,868 providers)

	Language(s) provider speaks to children (Percent)	Language(s) child speaks to provider (Percent)	Language(s) child speaks with their own family (Percent)
English	10.0	14.9	16.1
Spanish	60.0	47.7	42.9
English/ Spanish	28.2	35.9	39.3
Nepali	.5	.6	.6
Somali	.3	.3	.3
Navajo	.4	.1	.1
Other	.5	.5	.6
Total	100.0 (3,868 providers)	100.0	100.0

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 and 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 *Read On Greater Phoenix* resources to FFN providers – in particular to the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* – has the potential to fill an important gap in opportunity for many young DLLs.

Description of Project:

With the support from Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW), Read On Greater Phoenix, ASCC was able to expand its current scope of services as described above, and implement and offer the "Arizona Kith and Kin Project Language and Literacy Technical Assistance" model, which focused on early language and literacy development in targeted communities. The goals and objectives of the "Arizona Kith and Kin Project Language and Literacy Technical Assistance" model included the following:

1. Increase the knowledge and understanding of kith and kin providers related to language and literacy.
2. Provide one-on-one technical support related to language and literacy in the homes of kith and kin providers.
3. Increase the number of activities related to language and literacy conducted in the home child care environment on a daily basis.

The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project Language and Literacy Technical Assistance* model delivered the following components:

1. Orientation and Language and Literacy Training

Twenty-three (23) kith and kin providers participated in a project orientation. This orientation provided program participants with details related to goals and objectives, participation expectations, time commitment, evaluation related activities, participation incentives and related details.

The Language and Literacy Training took place immediately after the completion of the Orientation Session. Although program participants already completed the Language and Literacy training provided as part of the original Kith and Kin 14-week training-support group session, this additional training offered more in-depth information regarding Literacy.

The Language and Literacy Training consisted of a three (3) hour workshop focused on the following topics:

- Arranging literacy-rich environments;
- Understanding the caregiver's role in literacy, language exchange and interactions with children;
- Best practices in working with dual language learners (DLLs);
- Functions and purpose of print;
- Reading aloud and dialogic reading;
- Early writing;
- Phonological awareness and related topics.

Workshop delivery included the use of small and large group discussions, worksheets and hands-on activities that were designed to be implemented and incorporated into participants' daily child care routines.

The Orientation and Language and Literacy Training were both held on the same day. This minimized the amount of times participants were required to make arrangements for the children in their care and travel related with this component.

Transportation to and from the orientation and training location was offered to program participants to eliminate a potential barrier to participation.

2. Self-Study and In-Home Technical Assistance

For this aspect of the project, a Kith and Kin Program Specialist and/or a Kith and Kin Child Care Specialist were assigned to work with each participant (there were 23 who participated in this project) 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 Kith and Kin Program Specialists completed an initial assessment of the environment using the Child/Home Early Language and Literacy Observation (CHELLO) Tool. This tool served as baseline data and also assisted participating 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 kith and kin provider – guided by the program Specialist – self-assessed specific areas of strengths as well as areas of needed improvement. This included but is not limited to observations of staff and child interactions, use of language and books, inclusion of language and 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 Kith and Kin Program Specialist and child care provider utilized to make improvements to the environment. In addition, this information was utilized to determine additional training and technical assistance needs to ensure participating child care providers are confident in their use of materials, activities and enhancements made to the environment. Providers experienced a total of four (4) technical assistance visits within a period of 2.5 months.

3. Mini Grants for Home Libraries and Reading Corners

Although the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* child care providers attend training support group sessions and receive information and materials needed to improve quality, financial constraints are often a barrier for providers to make additional adjustments and improvements to their home based child care environments. Through this component of the Read On pilot project, providers had the opportunity to receive a “mini grant” of up to \$500. The mini grants assisted providers in purchasing materials, equipment and/or supplies to incorporate and/or enhance book libraries, reading corners and/or writing centers in their home based child care environments such as bookshelves, books, soft sitting areas, etc. These purchases were guided by the baseline self assessment experience using the CHELLO. As mentioned above, the Kith and Kin Program Specialists followed up with a technical assistance visit to make sure participants were using their new materials and equipment in a way that would

facilitate maximum use and learning for children in their care. Concepts discussed in the initial training session were incorporated throughout the technical assistance visits.

A final CHELLO assessment was completed at the end of the project, and Kith and Kin Program Specialists used the new scores to discuss areas where the provider made improvements as well as those areas where the provider might still need some work. Referrals for additional training and support were given to those kith and kin providers who demonstrated interest in pursuing additional professional development.

Summary of Evaluation Participants and Methods:

- Participant Summary: 23 kith and kin providers participated in this project. They were all graduates of the 14-week Arizona Kith and Kin Project. They were all female and all Latina. Nine providers spoke a combination of Spanish and English with the children in their care. The remaining 14 providers spoke Spanish only with children. The number of children they cared for ranged from 1 child to 7 children (average number of children in care = 2.78 children at Time 1 and 3.74 children at Time 2).
- Kith and Kin Program Specialists were trained by Dr. Shivers (Indigo Cultural Center) on collecting data with the Child/Home Early Language and Literacy Observation (CHELLO) Tool (Brookes Publishing) in home-based child care settings.
- Prior to training and orientation, baseline data was collected with 23 kith and kin providers using the CHELLO.
- Post assessments were conducted using the CHELLO.
- Telephone feedback interviews with participants were conducted after the project was completed. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes, was conducted in Spanish and transcribed and translated into English.

Findings:

There were statistically significant increases on the overall CHELLO scores and on all sub-sections and subscales. The table below presents the mean scores for the whole sample at Time 1 (baseline) and Time 2 (follow up after the intervention).

2016 CHELLO Scores Pre and Post	Mean Score
Sub-sections	
Physical Environment for Learning subtotal Time 1	5.80
Physical Environment for Learning subtotal Time 2	13.59***
Support for Learning subtotal Time 1	10.07
Support for Learning subtotal Time 2	13.37***
Adult Teaching Strategies subtotal Time 1	15.93
Adult Teaching Strategies subtotal Time 2	27.49***
Main Sub-scales	
Literacy Environment Checklist score Time 1	7.00 ("Poor")
Literacy Environment Checklist score Time 2	23.00*** ("Excellent")
Group/Family Observation score Time 1	31.79 ("Fair")
Group/Family Observation score Time 2	54.34*** ("Exemplary")
Overall CHELLO score Time 1	38.13
Overall CHELLO score Time 2	77.30***

*** = difference in scores is statistically significant at the .001 level.

Findings from Provider Interviews

After all the technical assistance visits were completed and materials delivered to providers, the Indigo Cultural Center evaluation team conducted telephonic interviews with each of the project participants. Interviews were conducted in Spanish, then transcribed and translated into English. The interviews lasted approximately 30-40 minutes, and participants were assured that their responses were voluntary and confidential. The most salient themes from the interviews are highlighted below.

What was your main motivation for participating in the Kith and Kin Language & Literacy project?

- To increase the materials I have to offer the children in my care. •
To become more professional.
- To learn a better way of interacting and teaching.
- To learn how to promote a love for books among the children in my care.

Notable Quotes:

"I only want to offer the best child care service I can give."

"My biggest reason for joining is to get my children to fall in love with books."

"I do want to become more formal and professional in my business of child care, so I need to start with the right foot and set my house the way it needs to be."

What was the most useful part of this experience for you?

- I learned specific teaching practices to engage children in learning (example: how to promote a child's interest without imposing or commanding; how to help children make connections between language and spelling; how to change my daily routine so children don't get bored).
- I learned how to organize materials more effectively, and appreciate the dedicated space for learning
- I learned how to be creative with materials and use simple things around the house to extend learning
- I feel more confident that I can prepare children for school and for life.

Notable Quotes:

"... because this is not just about caring for them, it is about teaching them to be better prepared for the world, for school."

"We don't need expensive things to be able to imagine. We only need the interest, the passion and the creativity."

"I feel we are more integrated, we can communicate better and share time together. It is a constant learning."

"I share what I've learned with all my friends, and they are happy with this."

What is the most challenging about your work with children and integrating the new knowledge?

- Helping children get accustomed to our new schedule and sticking to our new routines.
- I can't read the English books to the children, and I don't want to confuse the children by mixing English and Spanish, so I feel I can't read to them.
- Communicating effectively with children who have challenging behavior.
- Discipline and not giving into the children's demands.

Notable Quotes:

"I find it very hard to make a schedule and follow it. Kids sometimes don't want to do what I planned, so I have to be flexible and improvise."

"My English is very poor, so I don't know how to read them books in English without sounding awful. I use more the images than the words, and I mix Spanish, but I don't want to confuse them."

"I believe that discipline, positive discipline, is the most challenging aspect. It is really hard for me to make them listen and cooperate, and doing this without raising my voice."

Do you have suggestions for next year's program?

- Perfect just the way it is!
- It should be a longer program and provide more information and coaching about discipline and communication.
- It should be offered twice a year, to reach more people.

- We need many more books in Spanish. The children’s mothers are asking for Spanish books too.
- We need more opportunities to expand education and training.

Notable Quotes:

“Reach a broader audience so more mothers and providers can take the benefits of the program.”

“I would love to see more providers being able to go to school and get an education at the same time that they are providing child care.”

“The teachers are excellent. It should reach more and more families.”

All of the providers expressed strong interest in continuing with their professional development.

Discussion:

Overall, kith and kin providers in this pilot project made dramatic changes in their language and literacy environments¹. Given the short time frame in which to complete this pilot project, it was wise to leverage and align project training and technical assistance (T/TA) with a tool like the CHELLO.

Most notably, CHELLO scores on the *Literacy Environment Checklist* had the most dramatic changes over the course of the project as this sub-scale was heavily dependent on materials and equipment in the environment. The mini-grants provided to kith and kin child care providers made a dramatic impact on the physical environment.

Also impressive were the increases on other CHELLO sub-scales that involved observations of how providers helped children use the materials in the environment captured under *Adult Teaching Strategies*.

¹ See the appendix for dramatic ‘before and after’ photos of the literacy environments.

The sub-section that had the least amount of increase over time was *Adult Support for Learning* (e.g., adult affect; adult-child language interaction; management strategies). Although the changes on this CHELLO sub-section were still statistically significant, the relatively smaller gains in this category point to an implication that perhaps additional, on-going technical assistance is needed for those areas of instruction that are harder to impact through T/TA, and those areas of provider-child interaction that are also subject to more influence by other background factors such as stress; previous education levels; and levels of emotional, material and instrumental support.

Recommendations based on these preliminary findings² would be to work to bring this program to scale and continue to align with the *Arizona Kith and Kin Project* as an extension of professional development for their “graduates.” In order to maximize the potential for impact, a strong recommendation would be to offer additional technical assistance sessions with more emphasis on the indicators that fall under *Support for Learning* (e.g., adult affect; adult-child language interaction; management strategies).

Findings from the interviews also indicated that there is a desire for more training and support regarding positive discipline and communication. Or alternatively, to point providers in the direction of additional professional development resources that focus more heavily on this aspect of provider-child interactions, and leverage existing T/TA opportunities. Another strong recommendation is to spend more time training and supporting providers about the needs of the DLLs in their care. Accordingly, it will be very important to provide more books in Spanish.

There is an increasing recognition of the urgency to address professional development needs of those providers who are serving DLLs. The *Arizona Kith and Kin Project Language and Literacy Technical Assistance* 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.

² For more information about this project and evaluation, please contact Sarah Ocampo Schlesinger at ASCC or Dr. Eva Marie Shivers at the Indigo Cultural Center.

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APPENDIX

Before and After Photos from Kith and Kin Providers' Homes