Spanish-Speaking Preschools Fare Better When Teachers Speak Some Spanish

A new study finds that Spanish-speaking preschoolers are better adjusted in class when their teachers speak at least some Spanish, compared to children whose teachers speak only English.

The key finding of the study, by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, refutes conventional wisdom that English-only pre-kindergarten programs help close achievement gaps among children from different racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups.

"Many early childhood programs are moving toward a system that may isolate children who are learning English, leaving them at risk for social and language problems," Gisele Crawford, a research associate at the institute and an author of the study, which appeared in the April issue of Early Education and Development.

Researchers found that compared to English-only teachers, teachers who included Spanish said their Spanish-speaking students experienced less aggression, bullying and teasing by their classmates. Not surprisingly, researchers also found that Spanish-speaking teachers spoke more often with their students and had better teacher-student relationships.

Study participants included 345 Spanish-speaking preschoolers in 161 pre-kindergarten programs. Almost 90 percent of these students live below 150 percent of the federal poverty level and 61 percent did not speak English at home.

For more information about the study, click here.
May 25, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.: The Natural Laws of Breastfeeding: New Paradigms and Teaching Tools presented by the Breastfeeding Taskforce of Greater Los Angeles, Northridge Hospital Medical Center, 18300 Roscoe Blvd., Northridge. Call Debbie Cowley at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org.

June 7, 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.: PAC/LAC Annual Conference - Quality of Life for Families XI: Improving the Outcomes of Pregnancy at the Burbank Airport Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, 2500 Hollywood Way, Burbank 91505. Visit www.paclac.org or contact (818) 788-6850 or info@paclac.org.

June 16, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.: American Diabetes Association’s Diabetes Expo at the Long Beach Convention Center 300 East Ocean Blvd., Long Beach 90802. Free health screenings, entertainment and more. Visit www.diabetes.org/losangelesexpo.

June 6-8: Infant/Toddler Training Institute for Higher Education Faculty: California’s Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines and Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations at the Ayres Hotel in Hawthorne, CA. Fellowships available. Contact Amy Schustz at (415) 289-2303 or aschust@wested.org. Open solely to California higher education faculty teaching courses in early childhood development and care.

To commemorate this year’s Week of the Young Child, First 5 LA, LAUP and the Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families joined with city officials to recognize community members who have demonstrated unwavering dedication to improving children’s education and quality of life.

"Every child deserves a champion - be it a parent, teacher or community leader - who is committed to nurturing and developing that child's talents and character," said Evelyn V. Martinez, Executive Director, of First 5 LA. "First 5 LA and our partners honor these dynamic champions."

The ceremony included a performance by preschoolers from the Joy Picus Childcare Center and concluded with the unveiling of an art exhibition by preschoolers showing what they wanted to be when they grow up. Art from the exhibition, entitled "Building my Future", can be viewed at www.laup.net.

The Week of the Young Child aims to show that investing in early childhood will lay the foundation for children’s success in school and later life. Originated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in 1971, it also works to recognize the families and teachers who support early learning programs. For more information click here.

Safely Surrendered Baby Law Saves Lives

Among the human tragedies that abound in the media, few are as poignant as the story of a baby abandoned and left to die. Since 2001, the law has provided women who have just given birth a safe way to give up their infants. California’s Safely Surrendered Baby law has saved the lives of 56 newborns in Los Angeles County.

Now a move is underway to expand from 72-hours to 30 days the window period in which a woman may safely surrender her baby.

Democratic Assemblymember Alberto Torrico reintroduced legislation, Assembly Bill (AB) 81, to dramatically extend the safely surrender time period. The bill also would provide $5 million for outreach efforts. AB 81 is currently in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Current law allows a parent or anyone authorized by a parent to confidentially surrender an infant within three days of birth to any hospital or fire station. The law guarantees anonymity and freedom from prosecution if the newborn bears no signs of abuse or neglect. The newborn is then placed with a family for adoption by the Department of Children and Family Services.

Since January 1, 2007, ten infants have been safely surrendered in Los Angeles County, including one in Valencia, one in West Covina, and one in Los Angeles in the last few weeks. Another earlier was found abandoned and deceased.
Now that we're well into the spring season, let's take advantage of the fair weather to encourage children to abandon the living room couch for some fun in the sun. It's also important for parents to join in their children's outdoor play.

With video games, television, and hand-held media toys keeping children indoors and on the couch, the fun sports and physical activities that start in spring have a lot of electronic competition. But outdoor play has important benefits, including sun exposure, our primary source of vitamin D, which helps us absorb calcium for stronger bones. Playing outside also contributes to weight management, combating the growing prevalence of obesity in children.

To encourage an active lifestyle for children, First 5 LA recommends:

- Family exercise and play a minimum of one hour a day
- Reward your child with an activity, not food
- Give gifts that are fitness oriented
- Encourage your young child to walk instead of using a stroller

Also, remember that 'they do what you do' - so when parents are active, children will follow. If you don't exercise regularly, try to add a walk or a bike ride to your daily routine. A little bit of modeling can go a long way with a child. To find your local park go to www.healthycity.org or call 1-888-FIRST5LA.

First 5 LA led a county-wide task force in a $500,000 public information campaign to educate the public about the law, and continues to do outreach by providing information to hospitals, fire stations, and other county organizations. For free SSB materials feel free to contact Katie Kurutz at kkurutz@first5la.org.

For more information about the law visit www.babysafela.org.

CHAMPION PROFILE
Deborah Brownstone Leads The Way For At Risk Families

Deborah Brownstone is Program Director for Project SAFE, which brings supportive services to at-risk families. One of eight First 5 LA-funded Partnership for Families Programs, Project SAFE is part of the Help Group, a non-profit agency in the San Fernando Valley servicing children with special needs. In its first year of implementation, the program has shown great success.

A License Clinical Social Worker, Deborah brings over 25 years of experience in various roles that support children and families through substance abuse counseling, child abuse and neglect prevention, family preservation, and mental health services. Deborah has worked with diverse communities in both California and New York.

A graduate of the State University of New York at Albany's MSW program, Deborah has also worked as a statewide trainer and consultant for Healthy Families America, a national child abuse prevention initiative of Prevent Child Abuse America. Deborah moved to California in 2001.

What makes you happy?
Cake... good cake.

Angry?
Insufficient resources devoted to education, health care and community development.

Which historical figure do you most admire?
Margaret Sanger, because she fought for change that benefited women and children's health.

What is the greatest challenge faced by LA County children and families?
Poverty and the lack of affordable housing.

Which living person do you most admire and why?
The parents that I have been privileged to meet who struggle to provide their children with love, understanding and a better life.

Who was your favorite teacher?
Jacki Brownstein, a former supervisor in NY who challenged me and encouraged me to grow.
What is your motto?
Nothing ventured, nothing gained.