

Supporting Immigrant Families' Access to Prekindergarten

Julia Gelatt, Gina Adams, and Sandra Huerta



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We thank the local prekindergarten program directors, outreach specialists, English as a second language specialists, state prekindergarten directors, directors of other early childhood education programs such as Head Start, and national early childhood education specialists who generously gave their time to talk with us. The full list of interviewees who assisted us in this project is included at the end of the report. We are grateful to all of these individuals for sharing their experiences and expertise with us.

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Executive Summary

In recent years, many states have expanded their state-funded prekindergarten programs, drawing on evidence that public investments in early childhood education bring substantial returns in children's educational trajectories and a more skilled future workforce. Evidence also suggests that returns to early education may be larger for children of immigrants (defined as children with at least one parent born outside of the United States, including refugees) than for other children. Yet children of immigrants and of English language learners (ELLs) remain underrepresented in early education programs such as prekindergarten. Obstacles such as parents' lack of awareness of available programs, language barriers, logistical barriers to enrollment, and lack of comfort with available programs can all prevent immigrant families from enrolling their children.

Given that children of immigrants form a growing share of the population of young children in the country, policymakers wishing to ensure that their prekindergarten programs are reaching children who could benefit from early education must continue to work to attract and include immigrant families and ELLs. This report is intended to help those interested in improving participation—from program staff to state directors and policymakers—learn from the experiences of other communities about ways to facilitate immigrant families' enrollment in public prekindergarten programs.

To understand what strategies programs can adopt to enroll more children of immigrants, we conducted more than 40 telephone interviews with local prekindergarten program directors, outreach specialists, English as a second language (ESL) specialists, state prekindergarten directors, directors of other early childhood education programs such as Head Start, and national early childhood education specialists in communities and states across the country involved with diverse types of early childhood education programs.

The strategies described to us fall into four main categories: outreach, enrollment assistance, building relationships with parents, and building immigrant-friendly prekindergarten programs. For each strategy, we describe actions used by local programs and regional program directors and discuss some of the policies, funding, and infrastructure at the state level that they identified as being helpful for this work. Some strategies involve substantial investments of resources and staff time, while others are quite simple and inexpensive to implement.

Outreach to Immigrant Families and English Language Learners

One reason that immigrant families may not enroll their children in prekindergarten is because they do not know about the availability of prekindergarten services. As a result, getting the word out about available services is an important step. The experts we interviewed shared their strategies for identifying immigrant families and community needs, reaching out through ads or in person, and sustaining and encouraging outreach efforts.

Identifying Who to Reach

The first step in connecting immigrant families to prekindergarten programs is to find out who the immigrant families are in a community, where they are, the extent to which they enroll in prekindergarten programs, and the issues they face that affect their willingness to access prekindergarten programs. The experts we interviewed mentioned conducting this work by drawing on census data, comparing the characteristics of kindergartners to those of children enrolled in prekindergarten, or building on Head Start's Community Needs Assessment process to learn the demographic makeup of eligible families, as well as other community characteristics, community concerns, and available resources.

Reaching Out

Once providers know more about the kinds of families who are not yet connected to prekindergarten, the next question is how to get the word out to those communities and individuals. Many of the general outreach strategies already in use to attract families will bring in immigrant families as well as native-born families. In addition, the providers and program directors we spoke with offered a wide range of targeted outreach strategies that help them connect specifically to immigrant families, such as participating in community events that draw immigrant families; going door to door in targeted neighborhoods where immigrant families live; reaching immigrant parents where they already go, by posting flyers or setting up information tables at places like grocery stores, doctor's offices, churches, immigrant-serving nonprofits, social service agencies (particularly enrollment offices for Women, Infants, and Children [WIC]), and ESL classes; encouraging immigrant parents to recruit other immigrant parents; and using various forms of mass media, particularly foreign-language media.

Sustaining Outreach

Outreach can be challenged by tight budgets and overall program funding levels, both because any funding or staff time allocated to outreach activities may be perceived as resources taken away from the core mission of providing children with high-quality early education, and because programs already may be full. The experts we interviewed shared strategies for managing cost and staffing demands, including drawing from flexible funding such as outreach funding from Title I grants, Title III funds, or funding from private foundations; using existing staff or hiring designated bilingual or bicultural outreach staff; and evaluating outreach efforts to invest only in the most successful strategies. At the state level, policymakers can encourage outreach to immigrant communities by targeting services to children of immigrants or ELLs, or by weaving outreach to diverse communities into program-reporting requirements or funding-application criteria.

Enrolling Families

Once immigrant families are aware of a prekindergarten program and are interested in applying, they may require extra assistance enrolling in the program if they face language and literacy barriers, transportation and work schedule challenges, or difficulties providing documentation. The experts we interviewed shared their strategies for helping immigrant parents overcome these obstacles. First, programs can help parents overcome paperwork and documentation hurdles by having flexible requirements for how parents can prove their place of residence, children's age, and income (if applying for income-targeted prekindergarten). Programs can also avoid sparking fear among undocumented parents or those living with undocumented family members by avoiding asking for Social Security numbers on application forms. Other strategies, such as offering multiple forms of application (e.g., online, in person, by mail, or by phone), translating enrollment forms, offering enrollment assistance and interpretation, and offering multiple times and days for in-person enrollment can all help interested immigrant families enroll their children in prekindergarten.

Building Strong Relationships with Parents

Programs from across the country all agree that the need for outreach to any particular immigrant community decreases over time, as word gets out and parents tell one another about available, desirable prekindergarten programs. However, this requires building trust and good relationships with parents so that they become ambassadors for prekindergarten programs. Prekindergarten programs have used several strategies to build and cement ties with immigrant parents, including working to inculcate a welcoming attitude in their programs, building relationships with trusted community organizations, and taking proactive steps to engage parents.

A Welcoming Attitude

In the context of long-standing political debates over immigration policy in the United States, and with a complex groundwork of local and state policies and local sentiment toward immigrants, the first step to

building ties with immigrant families often is to reassure them and their communities that prekindergarten is a safe and welcoming place for families from all national origins and all racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, regardless of immigration status. Some programs reported trying to achieve this by communicating to all staff—from bus drivers, to administrators, to teachers—that the program intends to be inclusive of *all* children in the community, whatever their backgrounds. Many programs talked about offering cultural sensitivity training for teachers and staff.

Working with Community Organizations

Building trust with immigrant families can also require working with trusted organizations and individuals to gain community buy-in. Some community-based organizations (CBOs) that work with immigrant families already have strong community ties and conduct outreach to immigrant families about available services and public benefits, and so can easily add information about prekindergarten to their message. In some cases, policymakers have sought to place prekindergarten programs in targeted community-based organizations to reach immigrant groups that are under-enrolled in prekindergarten.

Proactive Parent Engagement and Inclusion

Some programs reported taking additional steps to help parents build comfort with the locations where their children access prekindergarten by inviting parents into their schools for a variety of activities. While such activities are aimed at all parents, immigrant parents sometimes require extra assistance and orientation before comfortably interacting with schools because they may not be familiar with how US schools operate and what schools expect from parents. Activities aimed at building immigrant parent comfort with programs can include orientations, parent-teacher conferences (sometimes conducted in parents' homes), open houses, and parent leadership and advisory roles. Orientations, home visits, and open houses can help create ties between schools and immigrant parents to the extent that parents feel comfortable participating and have positive interactions during these occasions. Some states have built requirements for parent engagement or leadership into state prekindergarten regulations. Programs may need to assess the extent to which immigrant parents show up for such leadership roles and take action to encourage participation if certain communities are underrepresented.

Building Immigrant-Friendly Programs

In addition to creating a specific focus on parent engagement and strengthening ties with parents, there are many aspects of the program design of prekindergarten programs that can increase immigrant families' comfort with the program, and the likelihood that they will not only enroll their children but also encourage other immigrant parents to do the same.¹ These include communication with parents through interpretation telephone lines, in-person interpretation, or simultaneous interpretation by headset for meetings, as well as translating written documents; arranging for transportation for young children to and from prekindergarten programs, independent of their parents; efforts to extend the school day to accommodate parents' work schedules; and building cultural competency in program staff.

In conclusion, our findings suggest that while increasing the enrollment of children of immigrants and ELLs in prekindergarten may be challenging for some communities, a large number of promising models are available. These strategies range in cost, numbers and type of staff required, and community resources on which they draw. Yet providers and states with limited resources and newly arrived, highly diverse immigrant populations offer examples of promising strategies for connecting immigrant families and prekindergarten programs, suggesting that progress can be made even with these challenges.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Expanding early childhood education is a popular policy topic at all levels of government—local, state, and national. Evidence shows, nearly unanimously, that high-quality early education not only improves children’s educational performance and attainment but also improves health, decreases crime, and improves long-term economic self-sufficiency (Camilli et al. 2010; Karoly and Gonzalez 2011; Nelson, Westhues, and MacLeod 2003; Schweinhart et al. 2005). Early childhood education is increasingly seen as an important investment in the country’s future.

While children of immigrants grow as a share of all children in the country, their participation in center-based programs continues, on average, to lag far behind that of other children for a variety of reasons (Karoly and Gonzalez 2011). At the same time, children of immigrants are disproportionately likely to have parents with low educational attainment and to grow up speaking languages other than English at home, leading them to enter the US school system already at a learning disadvantage, though there is substantial variation by national origin group (Fortuny, Hernandez, and Chaudry 2010; Crosnoe and Turley 2011). Existing research suggests that children of immigrants (including refugees) or children whose first language is not English may benefit from early childhood education even more than other children (Crosnoe 2007; Currie and Thomas 1999; Loeb et al. 2007; Magnuson, Lahaie, and Waldfogel 2006).²

As policymakers at all levels consider the importance of extending prekindergarten services to children who may face challenges in school, the children of immigrants become an increasingly important target population. (See *Defining Prekindergarten* box) In many communities, children of immigrants are already forming growing shares of children eligible for prekindergarten. Local providers and state and local policy directors increasingly need to ensure that their programs meet the needs of growing numbers of immigrant families in their communities, and work to overcome the barriers that keep immigrant families from enrolling in prekindergarten.

Why are children of immigrants and ELLs less likely to be enrolled in prekindergarten? While there is little research exploring this question for state-funded prekindergarten specifically, researchers have identified a number of reasons why immigrant families enroll less in early childhood education overall. Some of these reasons are the same as those faced by all parents: waiting lists, locations, schedules that do not cover the full workday, and lack of information about available programs. In addition, because immigrant parents are more likely to have low incomes and nonstandard work hours than US-born parents, they are particularly likely to be affected by schedules. Finally, there are additional barriers particular to immigrant families, such as limited English skills, which can prevent parents from connecting with prekindergarten programs; fear of public institutions among some families; and lack of a US driver’s license, which makes location even more important than for other parents. Research shows that immigrant parents desire early education for their children to the same extent as US-born parents but are simply less able to access such programs (Huston, Chang, and Gennetian 2002; Zucker, Howes, and Garza-Mourino 2007).

What can programs do to enroll more children of immigrants? To answer this question, we conducted more than 40 telephone interviews with local prekindergarten program directors, outreach specialists, ESL specialists, state prekindergarten directors, directors of other early childhood education programs such as Head Start, and national early childhood education specialists. We focused our data collection on states such as Georgia and Oklahoma that have large prekindergarten programs; traditional immigrant destinations such as California, Florida, New York, Texas, and Illinois; and new immigrant destinations such as North Carolina and Tennessee. The full list of interviewees who assisted us in this project is included at the end of the report.

The strategies described to us fall into four main categories: outreach, enrollment assistance, building relationships with parents, and building immigrant-friendly prekindergarten programs. For each strategy, we describe actions used by local programs and regional program directors and discuss some of the state-level policies, funding, and infrastructure respondents discussed that could be provided to support this work. After describing strategies within these realms, we then provide examples of how diverse programs across the country, with varying program designs, sizes, and availability of various resources, have created multifaceted strategies for increasing immigrant participation in their prekindergarten programs (see appendix A).

Most of these strategies are not new, and for those who have been serving immigrant families for decades, they may seem obvious. Yet many communities in the United States are seeing substantial inflows of immigrants for the first time in more than a century and lack the infrastructure, funding, and experience to meet these new families' needs. Respondents in our study repeatedly asked what kinds of useful strategies we were hearing about from other interviews. This brief is intended to help those interested in improving participation—from staff to state directors and policymakers—learn from the experiences of other communities about ways to facilitate immigrant families' enrollment in public prekindergarten programs. Program staff are often facing these challenges on their own and inventing new strategies from scratch through trial and error. We hope to provide a bit of support in that process, offering models from a diverse set of programs that can be adopted and adapted to fit each community's particular set of challenges.

It is important to note that this report focuses only on topics related to expanding the enrollment of children of immigrants and ELLs. There are many important considerations about serving immigrant families in early education that fall beyond the scope of this report. We do not focus here on the quality of instruction; issues related to providing language supports to ELLs, such as the relative merits of English, bilingual, or foreign-language monolingual instruction; or related staffing considerations. We also do not focus on topics related to the quality of prekindergarten programs more generally: funding levels, teacher qualifications, curricula, assessments, and so on. Our sense is that these topics have been covered in other places but that the field lacks a clear compilation of strategies that can be used to reach out to immigrant families, help them enroll in prekindergarten, and create programs that are immigrant friendly enough to attract children of immigrants and ELLs.

Defining Prekindergarten

The term *prekindergarten* is used to refer to different types of early education programs. In this report, we use the term to refer specifically to state-funded educational programs for 4-year-old (in some cases, 3-year-old) children. We do not discuss privately funded or tuition-funded preschool or prekindergarten programs, though many of the practices described here could be relevant to such programs. While we draw on lessons from the federally funded Head Start program, we do not include Head Start under the label of prekindergarten in keeping with our focus on state-led programs.

Nationally, about 28 percent of 4-year-olds attended publicly funded prekindergarten in 2012. But the programs attended by these 4-year-olds look very different from one state to another.

- **Enrollment levels:** Ten states do not have prekindergarten programs, while some states have small programs that serve only a small share of 4-year-olds and some states serve the majority of eligible children. Notably, Florida, Oklahoma, and Washington, DC, enroll more than 70 percent of 4-year-olds in state-funded prekindergarten.
- **Eligibility:** While Florida and Oklahoma have prekindergarten programs that are available and free to all 4-year-olds in the state, most states prioritize children in low-income families. This is defined in different ways in different states, including family income up to anywhere from 100 to 300 percent of the federal poverty level or up to 70 to 85 percent of the state median income. Some states with income-eligibility cutoffs make exceptions for children with other risk factors such as developmental delays, teen parents, non-English-speaking families, and a history of foster care involvement.
- **Providers:** In some states only public schools can offer prekindergarten, while in other states programs are offered through public schools, private schools, community organizations, faith-based organizations, and other settings.
- **Quality:** States vary widely in how strongly they regulate the provision of high-quality education for the young children enrolled. Some states require teachers to have a bachelor's degree and early childhood education certification, limit class sizes and adult-to-child ratios, provide supports for ELLs, and provide a range of parent-engagement and family support services, while others have few requirements in place.
- **Funding:** Funding levels for prekindergarten also vary widely, from more than \$11,000 per enrolled student in New Jersey and Connecticut to less than \$3,000 per enrolled student in states with the lowest funding levels.

Source: Data drawn from Barnett et al. 2012.

CHAPTER 2

Background Research: Making the Case for Investing in the Enrollment of Children of Immigrants in Prekindergarten

There are a number of reasons that improving children of immigrants' participation in prekindergarten programs could prove beneficial. First, children of immigrants, on average, enter kindergarten at a learning disadvantage relative to other children. Prekindergarten attendance boosts the school preparedness of children overall, and of children of immigrants in particular, yet children of immigrants from several national origins have disproportionately low rates of attendance in early childhood programs for a variety of reasons. Second, given that much of the growth in the US workforce over coming decades is projected to come from middle- and high-skill occupations, the educational disadvantage of large shares of the children of immigrant population in the country portends trouble not just for the immigrant second generation but also for the US economy as a whole. Further, given increasing emphasis on high-stakes testing, states have an additional incentive to support the early learning of all children in order to raise performance measures.

In this section, we outline the evidence on children of immigrants' prekindergarten enrollment and their school readiness and educational trajectories. On balance, this evidence suggests that investments in the access of children of immigrants to prekindergarten can improve educational outcomes and support the development of a more productive workforce.

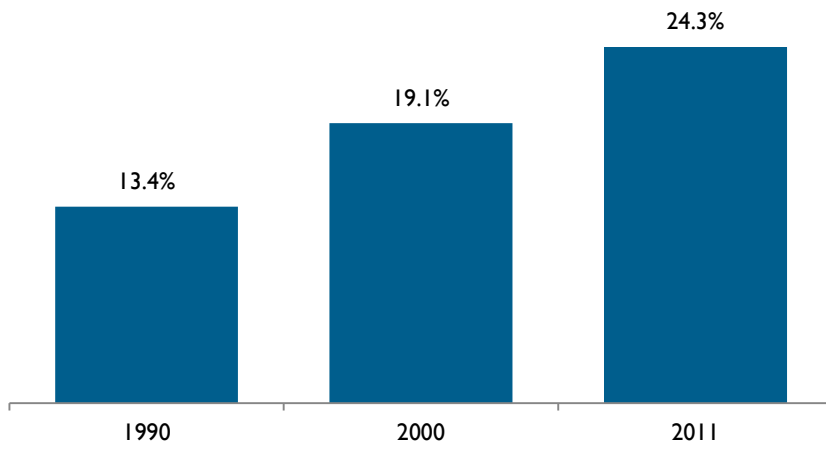
Children of Immigrants Are a Growing Share of the US Child Population

As children of immigrants and ELLs increase as a share of the overall US child population, diversify in their national origins, and spread to an increasing number of US communities, considering the needs of immigrant families is no longer a task that falls only on service providers in the largest urban areas of the United States and the southwestern states, and no longer consists mainly of accommodating Mexican immigrant families. (For more on these demographic changes and the implications for service delivery, see *Immigration and the Changing Landscape for Local Service Delivery*.)

Children of immigrants make up a growing share of the US child population nationwide, having risen from 13 percent of all children under age 18 in 1990 to almost one-quarter of the US child population today, as shown in figure 1 (MPI Data Hub 2012). Looking specifically at young children, in 2011 there were about 5.9 million children of immigrants birth to age 5 in the United States; and about 10 percent of children in US public schools have been identified as ELLs (Batalova and McHugh 2010).³ The great majority (87 percent) of children under age 18 who were born to foreign-born parents are US-born and are US citizens, though about one-third have at least one undocumented immigrant parent.

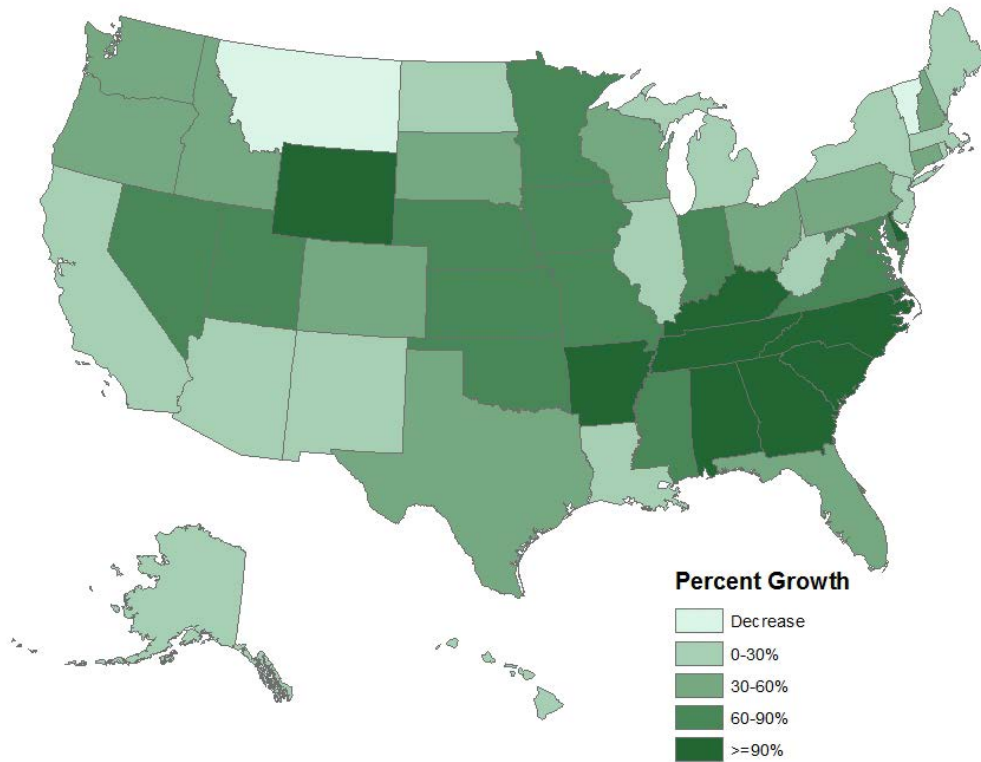
As the number of immigrant families with children in the United States has grown, such families have also spread out across the United States, arriving to areas that have not incorporated foreign-born populations since the turn of the 20th century. States in the US Southeast, such as Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee; Midwest states, such as Nebraska; and western states, such as Nevada and Utah, have all seen very rapid growth in their foreign-born populations in recent decades (see figure 2). Meanwhile, the national origins of immigrants have grown increasingly diverse. Net migration (in-migration minus emigration back to countries of origin) from Mexico has stagnated during the recent downturn in the US economy, while immigration from Central America and various parts of Asia has been on the rise, bringing increasing cultural and linguistic diversity to communities across the United States (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2012, 2013; Pew Research Center 2013).

Figure 1. Share of US children birth to age 17 with at least one foreign-born parent, 1990–2011



Source: US Census 1990, 2000; 2011 American Community Survey.

Figure 2. Percentage growth in the number of children of immigrants by state, 2000–2011



Source: US Census 2000; 2000 American Community Survey.

Children of Immigrants Start School at a Disadvantage

ELLs and children of immigrants, populations that largely overlap, can grow up in particularly vulnerable circumstances, facing disproportionately high rates of poverty, low parental education, and substantial rates of linguistic isolation. For example, 24 percent of children of immigrants live in a household in which nobody over age 14 is proficient in English, and 26 percent live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level (Urban Institute 2013). The estimated 5.5 million children in the country who have at least one unauthorized immigrant parent are most likely to grow up in families with low socioeconomic status (Passel and Cohn 2011).⁴

In part because of this socioeconomic disadvantage, children of immigrants from some world regions start school at a disadvantage relative to their peers, while others show some advantage. Children of Latino immigrants—particularly from Mexico and Central America—who make up the largest share of all children of immigrants, start school less ready, with lower cognitive skills, than their US-born white peers. Children of Asian immigrants, on average, start school with higher skills, and children of black immigrants fall somewhere in between Latino and Asian children, in part driven by the educational profile of immigrant parents from different world regions (Crosnoe and Turley 2011). These generalizations by world region of origin, of course, mask substantial variation in outcomes by specific national origin group, as immigrant families from different parts of Latin America, Asia, and other world regions arrive with widely varying levels of education, English ability, and social and economic resources.

Early Education Boosts School Readiness of Children of Immigrants and of English Language Learners

Evidence has shown that early childhood education helps place children, overall, on a positive trajectory that improves school performance, occupational trajectories, and incomes (Camilli et al. 2010; Karoly and Gonzalez 2011; Nelson, Westhues, and MacLeod 2003; Schweinhart et al. 2005). Most national-level studies have not focused on whether gains extend to children of immigrants, but the few that have suggest that early childhood education is beneficial for children of immigrants as well. For example, attendance in early education programs in general, and Head Start in particular, has been shown to raise reading and math test scores for children of immigrants overall as much as for children of US-born parents (Magnuson, Lahaie, and Waldfogel 2006). Yet, as mentioned above, gains may vary somewhat for subgroups of children of immigrants.

Evaluations of three state prekindergarten programs suggest prekindergarten brings a larger benefit for children of immigrants or ELLs than for children overall. A quasi-experimental evaluation of Oklahoma's prekindergarten program found that gains in math skills were larger for children with parents born in Mexico and for children where Spanish is the primary language spoken at home than for children whose parents were born in the United States (Gormley 2008). Evidence from Georgia's prekindergarten program shows that children with lower English proficiency had larger increases in language, literacy, and math test scores, whether measured in Spanish or in English, and that children with lower English proficiency made greater gains in measured general knowledge than did other children (Peisner-Feinberg, Schaaf, and LaForett 2013). Finally, in Nebraska, ELLs in prekindergarten showed a larger increase in knowledge and skills between the fall and the spring than did other children (Jackson 2012).

Children of Immigrants Attend Early Education Programs Less Than Other Children

While we are not aware of research that looks at children of immigrants' enrollment in prekindergarten specifically, researchers have examined children of immigrants' enrollment rates in early childhood education overall using a variety of nationally representative datasets. This work shows that children of immigrants, on average, have significantly lower rates of enrollment in early childhood education than do children with US-born parents. Four-year-old children of immigrants have enrollment rates in center-based programs anywhere from 4 to 15 percentage points lower than children in native families, depending on the data source used (Fortuny, Hernandez, and Chaudry 2010; Karoly and Gonzalez 2011).

Evidence suggests that lower enrollment rates are likely due to such differences between immigrant and native families as lower parental education and higher rates of poverty, rather than due to immigrant parents' preferences that children stay at home or be cared for by relatives (Brandon 2004; Crosnoe 2007; Fortuny, Hernandez, and Chaudry 2010; Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney 2011; Karoly and Gonzalez 2011; Magnuson, Lahaie, and Waldfogel 2006). Evidence from Oklahoma suggests that when barriers of cost and availability are removed, immigrant families may take advantage of prekindergarten at the same rates as native families: In that state, with its well-funded, free, universal prekindergarten program, children in Latino families enroll in the universal prekindergarten program at the same rate as children in white families (Gormley 2008). Of course, not all Latino families in Oklahoma are immigrant families, but a substantial share are. It remains to be seen if this pattern would be observed across diverse settings, immigrant origins, and prekindergarten program models across the country.

CHAPTER 3

Strategies for Increasing Immigrant Families' Enrollment in Prekindergarten

Prior research has identified a number of reasons why children of immigrants may be less likely to attend prekindergarten than other children, falling into four main categories: lack of knowledge about available programs; problems with proving eligibility and enrolling in programs; lack of comfort with available programs; and logistical barriers that make available programs difficult to utilize (Adams and McDaniel 2012a, b; Benson and De Masi 2008; Kirmani and Leung 2008; Matthews and Jang 2007; US Government Accountability Office 2006; Zucker, Howes, and Garza-Mourino 2007). Below, we outline strategies that programs are using to overcome these myriad challenges, including

- methods for getting the word out to immigrant communities about available prekindergarten programs and their value;
- ways to help immigrant families navigate the paperwork required for enrolling their children;
- methods for building strong relationships with immigrant parents to increase their comfort with programs, ensure programs work for immigrant families, and build self-sustaining word-of-mouth outreach; and
- ways to increase the immigrant friendliness of prekindergarten programs, from addressing communication barriers and transportation issues to building cultural competence in the state's prekindergarten workforce.

While these strategies come from a diverse set of programs across diverse settings—Head Start programs, prekindergarten programs, and privately funded early childhood education in urban, suburban, and rural areas and across new immigrant destination and traditional immigrant destination states—all are applicable to publicly funded prekindergarten. Some strategies involve substantial investments of resources and staff time, while others are quite simple and inexpensive to implement.

Below, we describe each of these types of strategies as discrete activities. Of course, most prekindergarten programs seeking to serve immigrant families undertake several or all of these strategies simultaneously. In appendix A, we provide examples of programs that are combining several strategies for serving immigrant families to show how they can be integrated. We highlight these particular programs to show how strategies can be combined across diverse contexts. Many of the programs we spoke with offer similarly helpful models of serving immigrant families.

Outreach to Immigrant Families and English Language Learners

In areas with new or newly expanded prekindergarten programs, and in areas with new or changing immigrant populations, connecting immigrant families to prekindergarten involves active promotion of prekindergarten programs. We highlight strategies described to us by our respondents for promoting these programs in immigrant communities, including strategies used by local providers or district-level leaders and staff, as well as measures that state directors can implement to support regional and community outreach efforts. We also discuss funding and staffing considerations for completing this work.

Identifying Who to Reach

The first step in connecting immigrant families in the community to prekindergarten programs is to find out who the immigrant families are in a community, where they are, the extent to which they enroll in prekindergarten programs, and the issues they face that affect their willingness to access prekindergarten programs. Discovering the answers to these questions can take various forms, from analyzing census data, to comparing characteristics of children in kindergarten classrooms with those in prekindergarten, to

undertaking more thorough community needs assessments—which may combine these and other information-collection processes—following a model from the national Head Start program.

Census Data

In some states, prekindergarten directors collect and analyze information on prekindergarten attendance rates within counties or local areas and compare it to census data on the total child population in those areas. For example, Georgia allocates funding for new programs in part based on areas with low enrollment rates; they undertake this data collection at the state level, partnering with Georgia State University to help them estimate the number of young children in each county. While this work does not currently allow Georgia to identify the immigration or language characteristics of families, identifying pockets of low enrollment could help to reach the children of immigrants, given their lower enrollment rates. Prekindergarten that is run through public school districts may be able to rely on data collection at the district level. Maryland's Montgomery County prekindergarten program relies on data from the district planning office to learn about the socioeconomic characteristics, language skills, and other characteristics of the children in its service area.

Looking at Kindergarten Enrollment

Since the majority of children attend kindergarten, one easy way to get a sense of the characteristics of children in the community who could be served by prekindergarten programs is to look at the characteristics of children in kindergarten. In Georgia, program administrators in counties that are determined to have low prekindergarten enrollment rates sometimes undertake additional analysis to determine which communities are underserved by comparing the characteristics of children in their prekindergarten programs by race or ethnicity to the characteristics of children in kindergarten programs. If they identify that a particular group of children has a low enrollment rate in the state prekindergarten program, they investigate whether such children are accessing other forms of early education in the community, or whether they are truly underserved.

Community Needs Assessments

Some prekindergarten providers combine these and other strategies to conduct formal community needs assessments on a regular basis, following a model from Head Start. All Head Start grantees are required to conduct community needs assessments every three years to determine the demographic makeup of Head Start-eligible families and kids, including their numbers, geographic locations, and racial and ethnic compositions. These assessments also are intended to provide information on local concerns and community resources. And community assessments help programs to identify and prioritize families most in need. Like Head Start, Washington State requires local prekindergarten programs to conduct community needs assessments every three years. In conducting these assessments, providers are asked to calculate the number of children in the service area by race and ethnicity, migrant or seasonal farmworker status, and home language, among other factors. Some school districts in New Jersey are likewise required to conduct community needs assessments. In other states, regional governing bodies are responsible for determining the characteristics and needs of children in their service area. For example, North Carolina administers its prekindergarten program through local prekindergarten advisory committees, which are charged with identifying children in the community who would qualify for prekindergarten and working with the community to identify ties to those groups.

While these three forms of data collection do not, in and of themselves, incentivize prekindergarten providers or program directors to reach out to the communities identified, once programs are aware of who is in their community and what local organizations have ties with those communities, trying to include new families in prekindergarten is a much easier process.

Reaching Out

Once providers have identified those in their community who are not yet connected to prekindergarten, the next question is how to get the word out to those communities and individuals. Many of the general outreach strategies already in use to attract families will bring in immigrant families as well as US-born families. However, the providers and program directors we spoke with offered a wide range of creative, targeted outreach strategies that help them connect specifically to immigrant families through community events, services parents already access, and mass media.

Community Events and Door-to-Door Outreach

Outreach efforts into immigrant communities can take many forms. Two of the most proactive forms of outreach include participating in or even creating special events for advertising prekindergarten programs and going door-to-door to reach immigrant families at home.

Many programs mentioned participating in or creating community events as a critical strategy to reach out to the community. A number of respondents highlighted general outreach strategies that could be targeted to immigrant families. For example, North Carolina's Chatham County Partnership for Children brings a "festival in a box" to popular community events. These activities and games for young children naturally draw families from the crowd and open an opportunity to tell parents about available early childhood education. More generally, providers talked about attending and providing information at community events, festivals, or gatherings that immigrant families attend or that take place in targeted neighborhoods. Other programs create their own community events to capture parents' attention. For example, Newark Public Schools holds a "back to school" festival at which they give out backpacks of school supplies to families who need them and also offer information about prekindergarten to reach the younger siblings of school-age children. Conexión Américas in Nashville, Tennessee, creates festivals in apartment complexes with large immigrant populations. Other programs hold fun family events at local institutions such as museums or zoos at a time when parents and young children can attend. In addition to offering families a fun, affordable outing, these events provide the chance to disseminate information about the importance of early education and the availability of early education in the community.

In addition to outreach at community events, a form of more intensive in-person outreach used by some providers is going door to door in targeted immigrant neighborhoods. For example, Newark Public Schools—located in one of New Jersey's "Abbott districts," where all children are eligible for prekindergarten—has held door-knocking campaigns, organizing community leaders to lead teams in door-to-door outreach for prekindergarten. to do outreach for prekindergarten by organizing community leaders to recruit outreach teams. They offer to volunteers a small stipend of \$60 for leaders and \$5 for team members as well as bus tickets, food, and T-shirts that invite passers-by to engage in conversation about prekindergarten.

Reaching Parents Where They Already Go

In addition to attending or creating community events, there are many venues where providers wishing to advertise their programs can pass out information or post flyers through services, organizations, and businesses that immigrant families already frequent. Among the locations mentioned by our interviewees were the following:

- Businesses such as
 - grocery stores,
 - corner stores,
 - fast food restaurants (on tray linings),
 - utilities offices (where families pay utility bills in person),
 - Laundromats, and
 - family-friendly entertainment centers, such as Chuck E. Cheese's.
- Service providers and community organizations such as
 - doctor's offices,⁵
 - churches or other faith-based organizations,
 - community-based organizations,
 - social service agencies,
 - Catholic Charities (particularly their legal assistance offices),
 - public libraries,
 - ESL, adult education, and citizenship classes,
 - Early Head Start, Head Start, or child care programs, and
 - home visiting programs.

Respondents also reported that it is important to not only place fliers and information in the offices of social service agencies, but also work with staff at those agencies to explain available prekindergarten programs and how parents can find out more information and apply. One place mentioned particularly often was offices where families apply for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). WIC is available to children up to age 5, regardless of parents' immigration status, and, therefore, was suggested as being a particularly good location for reaching prekindergarten-eligible children of immigrants.

On the other hand, a few interview respondents cautioned that some immigrant groups, particularly refugee groups, might be best reached through nongovernmental organizations or community leaders, rather than through government programs. Undocumented immigrants and immigrants may be reluctant to interact with public officials because of fear of deportation, while refugees may avoid interactions with public workers because of bad experiences with governments in their home countries.

Nearly everyone we spoke with mentioned reaching immigrant families through immigrant-serving nonprofits. In addition to providing a location where immigrant families can be reached, such community organizations already have deep ties in the community, most have bilingual and bicultural staff, and they can provide guidance on culturally appropriate ways of communicating with each particular community (For more on this, see Adams and McDaniel 2012b).

Parent-Led Outreach

Those we interviewed mentioned that parents particularly rely on information from other parents in deciding whether to enroll their children in early childhood education. Parent-led outreach could be helpful particularly in immigrant communities, where parents can communicate to one another in their home language and in a culturally appropriate manner, and where parents may otherwise mistrust publicly run schools as part of a mistrusted government. We heard a few creative strategies for maximizing the transfer of information from parent to parent. Programs can encourage parents to tell other parents about prekindergarten programs by offering parents some form of official outreach role (whether paid or volunteer) or even a small rewards program to reward those who successfully recruit other parents. For example, the Community Action Project in Tulsa, Oklahoma, has a "captain" program that provides gift packs to parents who successfully recruit other families for the Head Start program. Portland Public Schools in Maine hires immigrant parents to serve as outreach workers. In Chicago, several agencies and organizations have collaborated to create a Head Start Ambassador program, in which parents are trained to reach out to Head Start-eligible families and encourage them to enroll (Adams and McDaniel 2012b). The Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment (PACE), a Head Start provider in California, emphasizes the importance of parent volunteering at the beginning of the year, and they encourage parents to recruit other parents.

Mass Media

In addition to these in-person outreach attempts, programs utilize a variety of forms of mass media to reach immigrant families. These programs draw on traditional forms of media such as television, radio, and billboards; new media such as websites; and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Many programs target advertising to immigrant families by advertising in local foreign-language newspapers, placing radio ads in ethnic media, and placing signs in buses and on billboards in areas where immigrants reside. To facilitate outreach by local providers, Texas has created a media campaign for advertising the importance of early childhood education in English and Spanish, with television ads, radio ads, and posters that communities can air or post and a guide to help parents choose high-quality child care.⁶ Various school systems and private providers mentioned developing collaborations with the Spanish-language television stations Telemundo and Univision to get the word out about early childhood education and about their programs. For example, Los Angeles United Preschool, a network of early education providers in Los Angeles, and Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland both mentioned having staff participate in a brief weekly segment on Telemundo or Univision.

Providers across the country also mentioned that nonprofit organizations in their area had launched advertising campaigns about the importance of early childhood education in general. In Los Angeles, First Five LA has launched a media campaign in several languages that emphasizes, in simple language, why preschool is important for brain development. Conexión Américas in Tennessee mentioned that United Way has a large media campaign to advertise the importance of early childhood education. In areas with

well-funded media campaigns such as these, there may be space for prekindergarten programs to develop partnerships to link general media campaigns to their specific prekindergarten programs. Because immigrant parents may consume media in different ways (radio, TV, Internet, billboards) and have different levels of literacy, it may be ideal to utilize various forms of media at once to maximize the impact.

Sustaining Outreach: Context, Funding, Staffing, and Evaluation

While everyone may agree that it is a good idea to conduct outreach, most programs have tight budgets, and any funding or staff time allocated to outreach activities may be perceived as resources taken away from the core mission of providing children with high-quality early education. Some of the states we spoke with provide funding that is marked explicitly for use in outreach, while most states we spoke with do not allocate separate funding but allow programs to spend some of their funding on outreach, if desired. In our interviews, we asked early childhood education program providers and directors how they managed the tricky issue of funding and staffing outreach; we also asked state directors what they do to incentivize outreach.

Here we first describe some contextual factors that shape the sustainability of outreach. We then describe how programs told us they are managing outreach costs—including evaluating the efficacy of outreach methods to determine which are most worth the limited outreach dollars—and describe reporting requirements that some states have put in place to incentivize outreach.

Contextual Factors

Two overarching contextual factors strongly shape the sustainability of the outreach efforts described above. First, the issue of outreach to immigrant and other groups that are harder to reach and enroll in prekindergarten is very different in states with large, well-funded state prekindergarten programs than in states where there are not enough prekindergarten seats to serve most children. In the face of long waiting lists, and with limited funding for running programs, many early childhood education programs across the country choose to forgo conducting any outreach whether or not the children on the waitlist are representative of the children in the community overall. In states with more generous funding, programs may have more flexibility in allocating some funding to outreach strategies, rather than only service provision; more important, providers have some confidence that if they tap into a previously underserved population, they will be able to serve them.

A few states are funded at levels that support full enrollment, while some even set specific enrollment targets. For example, Florida has a constitutional amendment requiring prekindergarten access for all 4-year-olds and now has an 80 percent enrollment rate. Maryland has a state law that low-income children who qualify for free or reduced price lunch must be guaranteed a seat in a prekindergarten program from the day they show up to enroll, without a waiting list. Because of a state supreme court decision, New Jersey has 30 low-income school districts (called “Abbott districts”) that are required to establish public, free prekindergarten programs, and must reach a target of enrolling in prekindergarten 90 percent of 4-year-olds in the district. In many of these districts, children of immigrants make up an overwhelming share of the overall population of children; as a result, programs in these communities have put substantial effort into mass media and in-person outreach in English and Spanish to reach all families in the area. In a similar vein, Head Start requires that programs maintain an active waiting list so that Head Start seats do not remain unfilled if children move away or exit the program for other reasons. We heard from several Head Start providers that the requirement to maintain a waiting list spurred them to put a strong emphasis on outreach in immigrant communities in order to have full community representation in their program, and enough families interested in early childhood education to create a waiting list.

The second related contextual factor that affects the sustainability of outreach to immigrant families or ELLs is the extent to which programs are targeted to such families. Prekindergarten initiatives that are designed to serve all children in particular areas can give local programs a strong incentive to serve children of immigrants. Yet most states target seats in prekindergarten programs to children in low-income families, while others target both low-income families and children who face potential challenges to their educational performance, such as being in foster care, having teen parents, or being from families with limited English proficiency (Barnett et al. 2012). Directly targeting ELLs can support outreach to such children, while targeting low-income families more generally may or may not encourage outreach to

low-income immigrant families, depending on the strategies used. Other states, such as Georgia, target resources to underserved geographic areas, which may or may not indirectly focus limited resources on areas with large immigrant populations.

Funding

Regardless of the size or funding level of the program, one of the barriers to conducting outreach to immigrants is the cost. Providers we interviewed mentioned a variety of ways that they cobble together funding for outreach strategies. In some states where funding is allocated through a grant process, state directors mentioned that grantees were free to use some of their funding for advertising and outreach. Only two states—both places that offer true universal prekindergarten—mentioned dedicated funding explicitly for outreach (though it was not targeted to immigrant communities). Florida allocates a small amount of funding for outreach and translation or interpretation activities to its 30 regional early learning coalitions, which are made up of local stakeholders and leaders from the public and private sector and are responsible for monitoring and promoting programs in their jurisdiction. In New Jersey, “Abbott districts” receive funding earmarked for outreach in addition to funding for service delivery.

In addition, school district–based providers reported drawing on federal funding streams for outreach activities. Some mentioned using Title I grants, which is funding allocated to local education agencies and schools that serve high numbers of low-income families to help at-risk children meet achievement standards—to the extent that immigrant families reached are low-income, since these funds can be justifiably used for immigrant outreach. Title I funds can be used for many purposes, including parent engagement and outreach. Others mentioned using Title III funds, allocated for education agencies for serving students with limited English proficiency; competitive federal grants for refugee services; a federal Department of Justice program called Safe Start, which works to address children’s exposure to violence in several communities; or, in programs with Head Start or blended prekindergarten and Head Start programs, Head Start’s funding for family service workers. Some programs mentioned supplementing state prekindergarten funding with private funding from United Way or local foundations, some of which might be interested in targeted outreach to immigrant families.

Staffing

Programs relied on a diverse set of individuals to do the work of conducting outreach. Some had program administrative staff do the outreach, particularly when such staff had the language skills necessary to communicate with immigrant parents. The director of the multicultural center for Portland Public Schools in Maine mentioned that it was important to have a designated staff member, hired from within an immigrant community, who could serve as a cultural broker to advise on designing outreach as well as conducting bilingual outreach. Some programs, such as North Carolina’s Chatham County Partnership for Children, are able to hire designated community family outreach staff with expertise conducting outreach in diverse communities. District-run programs could often rely on districtwide or schoolwide family services workers, bilingual parent liaisons, or family engagement specialists who serve all grade levels to conduct outreach on prekindergarten as well. Tulsa Public Schools in Oklahoma uses Title III funding to hire paid parent liaisons from a local social service organization. As mentioned above, other programs hire parents to conduct outreach activities.

Assessing the Effectiveness of Outreach Investments

Given that most programs have to work to stretch available funding if they hope to do any active outreach, it makes sense for programs to limit their outreach spending to only the most effective methods. A few individuals we interviewed mentioned conducting formal or informal assessments of their outreach efforts to determine which were most effective. For example, at the Community Action Project (CAP) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the enrollment form asks parents to document how they heard about the program. PACE, in Los Angeles, conducts surveys of parents to ask where they heard about the program. Both programs heard that word of mouth was most common and so invested further in incentivizing parent-led outreach.

Reporting Requirements

Respondents we spoke with in several of the states emphasized the importance of outreach to diverse communities through funding application processing or program reporting requirements. Many states

allocate funding to local schools or programs through a competitive grant process; they vary in the information they collect and consider as part of this competitive process. Other states ask localities to report on certain metrics in applying for recertification; in some cases, these application or reporting requirements touch on outreach to diverse communities, including immigrant families. For example, Washington State's application process for prekindergarten contractors requires them to report on their plans for outreach in the underserved communities they identify in their community needs assessments. Tennessee asks programs applying for prekindergarten grants to report on how they get the word out about the program to at-risk populations. In North Carolina, local prekindergarten planning committees and contract administrators are required to develop and implement a coordinated process for recruiting, identifying, and placing 4-year-old children who are at risk, and must have a written plan for working with children and families with limited English proficiency.

Enrolling Families

As described above, even once aware of a prekindergarten program and interested in applying, immigrant families may require extra assistance enrolling in the program due to language and literacy challenges, transportation, work-schedule logistical challenges, and difficulty meeting application documentation requirements. Below, we first outline each type of documentation requirement that can present challenges to immigrant families, and methods of overcoming those barriers. Then we highlight strategies and policies that can facilitate enrollment more generally and ensure that immigrant families are provided assistance in overcoming any obstacles.

Documentation Processes

In states or school districts where prekindergarten is available to all children, enrollment in prekindergarten generally requires proof of children's age and residence in the relevant jurisdiction and proof that children have obtained any required health screenings and immunizations—the same process required for children to enroll in school more generally. In states that target prekindergarten to low-income children or other selected populations, families may need to document their income or other family circumstances as well. And, as explained below, in limited cases programs sometimes ask for children's Social Security numbers.

Documenting Residence and Children's Age, Obtaining Health Screenings

All prekindergarten programs require that families document that they meet basic eligibility criteria—generally that families reside in the community, that children meet the age eligibility criteria for the program, and that children meet requirements for health screenings and immunizations (Barnett et al. 2012). While these requirements are standard procedures for enrollment in US schools, some immigrant families struggle to meet them. In some communities, immigrant families live doubled up with other family members, do not have their names on a lease or on utility accounts, and so cannot prove their residence in the usual way. In response, some prekindergarten programs we interviewed allow parents to obtain a notarized letter from whomever they live with to document their residence in the service area, while others allow parents to use an affidavit. In Newark Public Schools, as an example, children may enroll for up to 30 days while parents work on obtaining this documentation.

Further, parents do not always have access to their children's birth certificates to prove their children's age, either because the child was born abroad and the certificate is difficult to access or because unauthorized immigrant parents lack the federally approved identification documents that are sometimes required to obtain a copy of a child's birth certificate in the United States. In such cases, some programs call the relevant authorities to help parents gain access to US birth certificates. Other programs allow parents to use a variety of documents, from baptismal records or hospital records to parents' attestation, to prove that children are the right age for prekindergarten.

Finally, because immigrant families are more likely to lack health insurance than US families overall, some immigrant families may struggle to afford the cost of taking children to the doctor for the health screenings and immunizations required by most prekindergarten programs. Many programs, however, mentioned they are able to help families over this hurdle by connecting families to partners who provide low-cost or free healthcare to young children.

Documenting Income

As described earlier, more than half of all states target their prekindergarten programs to serve low-income families, while a handful also include ELLs in their prioritization criteria (Barnett et al. 2012). Programs that do not have income requirements overall, or accept ELLs regardless of family income, are easiest for immigrant families to access. The processes for proving income eligibility can be complicated in immigrant families in which parents are more likely to have nonstandard work arrangements. When income documentation is required, many programs have developed flexible processes to help parents document their incomes. For example, many programs we spoke with allow a wide range of documents to be used for verifying income, including pay stubs, income-tax statements, unemployment insurance documentation, or even handwritten statements of salary. Some mentioned allowing parents to self-certify their incomes, while others require a letter from the parents' employer. CAP Tulsa, which provides broad services in addition to Head Start, helps parents file taxes around tax time (and helps unauthorized immigrant parents obtain individual taxpayer identification numbers so they can file taxes), which has the added benefit that parents can then use their tax stubs to document their income for program-eligibility purposes.

State or local policies that include children of immigrants and ELLs in targeting criteria without requiring them to meet income requirements can also help in this arena by eliminating the need for immigrant parents to prove their incomes to enroll their children. District of Columbia Public Schools, for example, observed that until they blended their funding streams into one program, children with immigrant parents in low-income families sometimes enrolled in prekindergarten, which is open to all children, instead of Head Start, which is open to those who can document low incomes.

Social Security Numbers

Asking for Social Security numbers at enrollment can create fear if parents or children are unauthorized immigrants and lack such numbers. Most children of immigrants are US-born and can obtain Social Security numbers, but such questions still may make unauthorized immigrants, or those who live with unauthorized immigrants, nervous. Even though the prekindergarten programs we spoke with generally do not require students to have Social Security numbers or other documentation of immigration status, we heard that families are sometimes asked for Social Security information for other purposes. For example, some school-based and private prekindergarten programs use parents' or children's Social Security numbers as unique identifiers within their record-keeping systems rather than assigning numbers to children, and so ask for Social Security numbers at enrollment. Other programs blend funding streams, drawing on federal funding for child care subsidies, for example. Unlike many prekindergarten programs and all Head Start programs, child care subsidies are open only to children who are qualified, legal immigrants or US citizens. Therefore, programs that blend funding streams may include a space on application forms for parents to list children's Social Security numbers, though federal law requires that this be listed as optional (Matthews 2010).

Many of the programs we spoke with try to clearly indicate on paper forms, and clearly explain to parents applying in person, that providing Social Security numbers is optional (Adams and McDaniel 2012a). Developing processes that omit the need for parents to provide Social Security numbers whenever feasible can provide even greater reassurance to parents.

Application Forms and Enrollment Processes

Programs serving diverse populations have worked in various ways to streamline and facilitate the enrollment process for families. This can involve simplified application forms, enrollment assistance, and flexible times and locations for enrollment. While helping all parents, these strategies may particularly help immigrant parents who face particular barriers to enrolling their children in prekindergarten.

Enrollment Forms

Several states have developed simplified statewide application processes for families seeking prekindergarten for their children. In some cases, these processes are designed to facilitate immigrant inclusion, such as not asking for parents' or children's Social Security numbers; translating forms, related web sites, and informational materials into common languages spoken by immigrant parents; allowing flexibility in the types of proof of residence required; not requiring proof of income unless necessary; and

allowing for multiple modes of application—online, in person, by mail, and by telephone—to facilitate applications for those with limited access to computers and the Internet, limited literacy, or limited transportation.

On the other hand, states' attempts to simplify access by creating single application forms for enrollment in multiple benefits for young children can present obstacles for immigrant families if some benefits require detailed proof of income or lead programs to list children's Social Security numbers as an optional item on enrollment forms. Separating prekindergarten enrollment forms from other public benefit determination forms would avoid putting immigrant parents through the potentially scary process of declining to provide a Social Security number but would impose a greater paperwork burden on families who are eligible for multiple programs, so tradeoffs must be considered carefully.

Enrollment Assistance

Immigrant parents with limited English proficiency, with limited literacy, or who struggle to document their income or residence may need extra assistance enrolling their children in prekindergarten (Adams and McDaniel 2012a). Programs mentioned having their family outreach workers or interpreters attend registration to assist with this, or parents may receive assistance from community organizations to which they are already connected.

One strategy discussed by some school district–based prekindergarten programs was to move in-person registration to a single location for the whole district. On the one hand, this could create logistical challenges for parents in terms of work schedules and transportation; on the other hand, centralizing registration allows programs to have immediately available a full set of interpreters, health providers who can complete required health screenings, and representatives from social service agencies who can respond to any broader family issues that might arise in the enrollment process.

Enrollment Times and Locations

Immigrant parents disproportionately work long hours at jobs with inflexible schedules (Bernhardt et al. 2009), and many face transportation challenges (Perreira et al. 2012). Therefore, providers seeking to help immigrant parents enroll their children have used a variety of strategies to make enrollment convenient for parents. Many try to announce when registration will happen far in advance, so parents can adjust their work schedules accordingly. Some programs have registration on a regular basis (such as monthly), at the same time, so parents can plan ahead and have many opportunities to enroll their kids. Maryland's Montgomery County Public Schools tries to offer enrollment on different days and times, including evening hours, hoping that parents will be able to attend at least one of the days and times offered. Some localities, such as District of Columbia Public Schools, are moving registration online. Internet-based applications may create barriers for immigrant parents who have limited access to computers and the Internet but, at the same time, could also make it easy for community organizations to assist parents in enrolling. North Carolina's Chatham County Partnership for Children offers registration at a variety of locations, including prekindergarten sites, online, and at partner government agencies.

Building Strong Relationships with Parents

Programs from across the country all agreed that the need for outreach to any particular immigrant community decreases over time, especially once word gets out and parents tell one another about available, desirable prekindergarten programs. Building this form of self-sustaining outreach, in which parents naturally inform other parents of available programs, takes time and requires building trust and good relationships with parents so that they become ambassadors for prekindergarten programs. Sustainable programs require strong connections among prekindergarten programs and parents and communities. Below, we highlight some strategies that prekindergarten programs have used to build and cement ties with immigrant parents.

A Welcoming Attitude

In the context of long-standing political debates over immigration policy in the United States, and with a complex groundwork of local and state policies and sentiment toward immigrants, the first step to building ties with immigrant families often is to reassure families and communities that prekindergarten

is a safe and welcoming place for families from all national origins and from all racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, regardless of immigration status.

Providers told us that the simplest, most basic step toward this goal is to make sure that all parents and children who interact with prekindergarten staff are treated in a friendly manner and with respect. Even if staff do not have the language skills to communicate with immigrant parents, one program director we interviewed emphasized that learning how to say hello in a parents' language can go a long way toward building good rapport between parents and schools. If programs can afford to have a trained interpreter who shares the cultural background of the parents, that is even better for building strong communication between parents and programs. In places where many residents might have mixed feelings about the immigrant population in the area, such as in certain new immigrant destinations, providers emphasized that it is important to clearly communicate to all staff, from bus drivers to administrators to teachers, that the program intends to be inclusive of *all* children in the community, whatever their backgrounds. Many programs talked about offering cultural sensitivity training for teachers and staff.

Some providers we spoke with mentioned that the local context around immigration affected the relationship between parents and early childhood education providers. We heard from providers that parents' prior experiences with other government programs can bleed into perceptions of prekindergarten. In cities where new immigration enforcement laws are passed, immigrants may have interactions with public officials that lead to mistrust of government institutions, including school-based prekindergarten programs. While prekindergarten directors, teachers, and staff have little influence over local or state policies toward immigrants, programs can be cognizant of these outside influences and consider redoubling outreach and parent-engagement efforts when they may be competing against influences that harm the perception of prekindergarten.

Working with Community Organizations

Building trust in immigrant communities can also require working with trusted organizations and individuals to gain community buy-in. But among the public school providers we spoke with, many mentioned building ties to community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve immigrants as a way of reaching immigrant families through a trusted mediator. CBOs often already build on strong community ties to conduct outreach to immigrant families about available services and public benefits, and so can easily add information about prekindergarten to their message. For example, Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland mentioned that outreach through CBOs helps build trust with families (such as undocumented immigrant families) that might not view the public schools as safe places to disclose personal information that could potentially reveal parents' immigration status. The director of early childhood education for Newark Public Schools mentioned that she is frequently invited to speak at local community organizations, and she feels this is a vital piece of their outreach strategy. Respondents at immigrant-serving CBOs in Chicago mentioned that they can serve as a two-way conduit of information, reaching out to immigrant families about prekindergarten but also relaying information back to prekindergarten providers about how the prekindergarten program is working for families, or what barriers they face to enrolling their children (Adams and McDaniel 2012b).

A different strategy is to locate prekindergarten programs in trusted community organizations—in the majority of states, prekindergarten programs can be offered through nonprofit organizations (usually child care centers) as well as through public schools or other settings (Barnett et al. 2012). We spoke with some nonprofits that offer prekindergarten as well as other family services that reach immigrant families. This also can be a direct strategy used by the state—for example, in order to increase prekindergarten enrollment among certain immigrant groups, Georgia is currently working to place prekindergarten programs within community-based organizations trusted by refugee communities that may not be comfortable accessing prekindergarten in other settings.

Proactive Parent Engagement and Inclusion

Many programs take additional steps to help parents build comfort with the locations where their children access prekindergarten, inviting parents into their schools for a variety of activities. While such activities are aimed at all parents, immigrant parents sometimes require extra assistance and orientation before

comfortably interacting with schools, because these parents may not be familiar with how US schools operate and what schools expect from parents.

First, most programs have orientations for parents and children. The Perth Amboy school district in New Jersey makes orientation for their prekindergarten program mandatory for parents; if parents do not attend one of several orientations offered, then their children cannot enroll in the program. While this could be challenging for some parents and result in their not participating, the school district feels it is a positive strategy to connect with parents. Another strategy identified by respondents was holding parent-teacher conferences, which sometimes take place in parents' homes. One provider reported that her experience was that having in-home meetings is important for helping teaching staff understand immigrant families' circumstances and culture. (Home visits are a regular part of the national Head Start model.) In addition to basic orientation at the beginning of the year, many programs have an open house during the year to bring parents into the school and highlight what the children have been doing during the year. Orientations, home visits, and open houses can help create ties between schools and immigrant parents to the extent that parents feel comfortable participating and have positive interactions during these occasions.

In some schools, open houses are a more frequent affair. These events can help build ties to all parents and can be tailored more specifically to build inclusion of immigrant parents—for example, North Carolina's Chatham County Partnership for Children's "cultural nights," where parents can share food from their home country. Conexión Américas draws parents into the school by hosting a monthly breakfast, where parents can stay at the school after dropping off their kids, enjoy some food, and hear from a local celebrity, such as someone from the local news station. Others invite parents into schools to attend a variety of educational and informational sessions, covering topics such as children's health and discipline, children's early brain development, and the importance of early education; such programs could be focused on topics of particular interest to immigrant parents. Other programs colocate early childhood education with more extensive educational and job training programming for parents, such as ESL, general education development (GED), or workforce training, or offer programming on how parents can support their children's at-home and school learning through programs such as Parents as Teachers or Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors.

Another way in which programs involve parents more deeply in their programs is through the creation of parent leadership roles. This concept is another drawn from Head Start: Head Start requires grantees to maintain a policy council and a policy committee and also requires that Head Start centers have a parent committee, all of which must include parents of enrolled children. This idea is also built into Title III, the federal funding stream for supports for ELLs, which encourages school district–level ELL parent advisory committees. Such leadership roles allow parents to help shape prekindergarten programs to meet their particular needs, and to give ongoing feedback about what is working well for them and their children and what reforms can be made. Programs serving communities with shifting demographics may need to do additional work to ensure that the parents on their advisory council remain representative of the community (for more on this topic, see *Immigration and the Changing Landscape for Local Service Delivery*).

State Standards for Parent Engagement and Leadership

Most states have built into their state program model requirements for some form of parent engagement. While this requirement is not targeted to engaging immigrant families, encouraging parent engagement overall, such parent engagement and support activities can potentially help to build comfort with the school system for immigrant parents, and can help to build communication between schools and parents who might require extra encouragement to actively participate in their children's schools. This is particularly true if programs are given assistance in designing immigrant-friendly parent engagement activities. State requirements range from a general call for parental involvement to specific requirements for home visits, parental job training, kindergarten transition activities, parent advisory committees, or referral to support services. Washington State prekindergarten programs must have family support specialists on staff and provide at least three hours a year of engagement with parents in setting goals and inviting parental participation. New Jersey's "Abbott" school districts also must have family involvement specialists. Prekindergarten programs in Nebraska must include at least two home visits, a standard drawn from Head Start, and must have a written plan for two-way communication and engagement with parents. Some states, such as Washington, require programs to have advisory boards, which often must

include parents. One of our interviewees noted, however, that programs should regularly assess which parents are showing up for educational, leadership, or advisory opportunities, and take action if certain immigrant communities' voices are not well represented. In some states, those seeking state funds for prekindergarten are required to report on parent engagement activities; for example, Tennessee requires year-end reports from programs that discuss parent engagement activities and volunteer opportunities for parents, and Nebraska requires programs to develop a written plan for parent engagement beyond the minimum requirements.

Building Immigrant-Friendly Programs

In addition to creating a specific focus on strengthening engagement and ties with parents, many aspects of the program design of prekindergarten programs can increase immigrant families' comfort with the program, and the likelihood that they will not only enroll their children but also encourage other immigrant parents to do the same. In this section, we do not aim to cover all aspects of early childhood education that support the education of ELLs and children of immigrants, but rather describe aspects of prekindergarten programs that can build comfort for immigrant families and encourage enrollment. We focus particularly on translation and interpretation for communication with parents, efforts to overcome logistical barriers for families to participate in prekindergarten, and building cultural competence into programs. Some states have begun to codify immigrant-friendly program requirements into their state prekindergarten programs or develop programs to increase funding and staffing for immigrant-inclusive early education. We review some of these state requirements and efforts as well.

Building Staff Capacity for Communicating with Immigrant Parents

The best way for programs to build comfort with immigrant families is to communicate with them in their preferred languages. As discussed earlier, this work begins with ensuring that outreach and enrollment materials are translated into parents' languages. Having either bilingual staff or interpreters who can help parents enroll their children is also important. Once children are enrolled, the extent to which parents are able to communicate with prekindergarten providers about their children's needs and logistical matters can shape whether parents feel comfortable with the program. Programs handle these interpretation needs in various ways. Some programs, particularly in communities with a longer history of immigration or where prekindergarten is provided through immigrant-serving organizations, are able to hire bilingual administrative staff; others rely on interpreters. In school district–based programs, there may be district interpreters available for the school system, while others are able to fund prekindergarten-specific outreach and translation and interpretation staff. Other programs are able to share interpreters with Head Start programs in the community. Sometimes programs invest in multiple-listener interpretation systems so that parents can listen to simultaneous interpretation in a way that does not disrupt other parents. We talked with two school districts—in Portland, Maine, and in Montgomery County, Maryland—that use more complicated and costly United Nations–style simultaneous interpretation services at community events and parent-teacher association meetings; both districts serve parents who speak a wide variety of languages, and these systems allow parents to hear a simultaneous interpretation of a speaker in the language of their choosing.

When such staff and systems are not available or there is not funding to support them, programs sometimes rely on parent or community volunteers to provide interpretation. Tulsa Public Schools in Oklahoma sometimes holds parent-teacher meetings in the community, such as in apartment complexes with heavy concentrations of immigrant families, to facilitate assistance by interpreters from the community. This strategy can be particularly helpful for languages that are rarer within a geographic location, and with immigrant groups that have concentrated residence patterns. While this method makes good use of available resources and is low cost, interviewees mentioned that care must be taken to ensure that confidentiality is maintained when talking about potentially sensitive family issues through a nonprofessional interpreter. Chatham County Partnership for Children in North Carolina mentioned they had established a clear policy that children (such as older siblings) are not to be used for interpretation purposes, as such a strategy can place an unfair burden on children and affects parent-child relationships. In communities where interpretation is very hard to find, or in situations that are too pressing to wait to find an interpreter, many programs make use of a language access line—two-way interpretation from an

off-site interpreter via telephone—which is also helpful in talking with parents who speak a language less common in the community.

Given that immigrant parents have different levels of literacy, even in their home languages, a program director from the Migrant Head Start program, which serves farmworker families, cautioned that materials used to advertise to parents or communicate with parents should contain lots of pictures to communicate clearly to those who cannot read complex text. Others talked about working with literacy specialists to simplify the language in their English outreach materials before having the materials translated into other languages.

Hours and Transportation

Immigrant parents particularly are likely to work nonstandard hours, work long hours, and have inflexible work schedules that do not allow adjustment to children’s school schedules (Bernhardt et al. 2009; Enchautegui 2013). Further, immigrant parents may be less likely to drive compared with other US parents (Chatman and Klein 2013). As a result, logistical obstacles facing most low-income parents, such as a prekindergarten program’s hours or location and the availability of safe, reliable transportation for children, may affect immigrant families particularly strongly. Addressing these barriers can assist the enrollment of low-income families overall and immigrant families in particular.

Many immigrant families struggle with transportation either because low incomes preclude the cost of cars, gas, and insurance or because parents are undocumented immigrants and do not have the right to hold a driver’s license in most states. Outside of dense urban areas, public transportation may not be available. Some local providers have been able to work out solutions to these obstacles on their own. School-based programs may be able to rely on district-funded buses and drivers to transport young children to prekindergarten. Portland public schools in Maine mentioned organizing “walking trains” to gather children from a neighborhood together to walk to school, with adult supervision. Some states are able to support these efforts by providing funding for programs to provide transportation to and from prekindergarten, but several state directors mentioned that this is a complicated task as transportation is expensive and care must be taken to provide a safe system for young children.

Immigrant parents particularly are likely to struggle with the limited hours of care offered by most prekindergarten programs, and may face extra challenges transporting their children back and forth to school (Adams and McDaniel 2012a; Perreira et al. 2012). While many prekindergarten programs are shorter than the full working day, states or localities can make services more accessible to working parents by allowing prekindergarten to be operated in child care programs, funding wraparound services, or blending funding from different early education and child care sources. To provide just a few examples, Georgia and Florida both allow child care centers to operate prekindergarten programs; New York City blends state prekindergarten dollars with Head Start and child care dollars to provide an 8- to 10-hour day of care to qualified 3- and 4-year-olds within its contracted child care system; and Washington, DC, allows programs to use Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding to provide wraparound services to qualified families. Some states have also worked to build formal arrangements to blend other funding streams with prekindergarten funding in order to extend the length of care provided; for example, Georgia draws on Child Care and Parent Services funding to extend the day for families that are qualified for Child Care and Parent Services assistance.

Cultural Competence

In addition to language access, building cultural competence in prekindergarten programs can increase immigrant families’ comfort with programs, ensuring that prekindergarten instruction supports families’ cultural beliefs and practices and that program staff communicate with parents in a culturally appropriate manner. Programs reported working toward more culturally competent programs through two main strategies: hiring from within diverse communities and training existing staff. Some prekindergarten programs are able to hire credentialed staff from the immigrant communities they serve to support culturally competent instruction to children, though many programs do not have a pool of diverse, trained early childhood educators from which to draw. In these cases, communities are working to increase the supply of trained early childhood teachers from within the communities they serve. For example, a Migrant Head Start program mentioned that their own staff had completed requirements to become qualified as instructors of early childhood education so they could then train parents in the community to

become credentialed early childhood educators. Other programs build cultural competence (and also community ties) into their programs by hiring bicultural assistant teachers who work with the teacher in providing instruction and support. When this is not possible, programs seek other staff from the community, such as administrators, outreach workers, family service workers, or even janitors and cooks. Alternatively, bringing parent volunteers into the classroom can support cultural competency.

Some states have developed statewide initiatives to increase cultural competence among their early education workforce. For example, Texas has a large bicultural workforce but is also working to build skills for supporting ELLs for their entire early childhood workforce; the state's validated web-based professional development training program for early childhood instructors includes a module on working with diverse classrooms and ELLs. Florida offers teachers a three-hour course on working with ELLs in the classroom, and Kansas has provided teacher training on working with ELLs. To start this training earlier in the pipeline, in some places Head Start and prekindergarten directors are working with local colleges to add cultural competence into education programs.

Other Considerations for Parent Comfort

A number of other issues may affect parents' willingness to enroll their children in prekindergarten programs; among these is the language of instruction in the classroom. Research has shown that some immigrant parents are reluctant to enter their children in early education if they think their children will lose their home language in the process (Kirmani and Leung 2008), while other immigrant parents desire English-only instruction under the belief that it will accelerate their children's English-language acquisition. Some programs employ the model of adding additional language resources for several months at the beginning of the year, while others have a true dual-language model. Tulsa Public Schools in Oklahoma mentioned that including dual-language programs—a growing trend around the country—strengthened immigrant parents' satisfaction with their prekindergarten program and improved communication. Given parents' different feelings about this issue, however, it is unclear whether this same outcome would be found in all communities. More generally, prekindergarten programs generally decide on the language of instruction to offer while considering how to best support children's learning, rather than how to attract immigrant families. Given the complexity of such decisions, we are not able to give just consideration to this topic here.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

As children of immigrants form a growing share of the population of young children in the country and reach an increasing number of US communities, and as policymakers at all levels of government seek ways to ensure that children at risk of facing challenges in school can get quality early childhood education, more and more programs will be looking for ways to connect immigrant families to prekindergarten programs. Our findings suggest that while such work may be challenging for some communities, there are a large number of promising models available from traditional immigrant destinations and new immigrant destinations alike. These strategies range in cost, numbers and type of staff required, and community resources on which they draw. Yet even providers and states with limited resources and newly arrived, highly diverse immigrant populations offer examples of promising strategies for connecting immigrant families and prekindergarten programs.

The strategies detailed in this report include specific examples on how to locate and identify immigrant families and reach those families with necessary information on available prekindergarten, as well as ideas about funding streams that can be used to fund outreach work and strategies for staffing this work with parent or community volunteers. Our respondents described strategies to create partnerships with community organizations, television stations, foundations, local businesses, and others to expand their reach. And both state and local directors and program staff mentioned various efforts for building infrastructure to increase their ability to reach and retain immigrant families.

Our conversations also uncovered many ways that state prekindergarten leadership can support and incentivize the inclusion of immigrant families in prekindergarten programs. Such work can range from simply providing leadership on the importance of including and accommodating all communities in the state, to targeting programs in areas with the lowest enrollment rates in order to reach underserved communities (including immigrant communities), to requiring programs to document their outreach strategies and strategies for serving diverse families in funding applications or annual reports. States can also provide support by centralizing some of the tasks required for serving immigrant families, such as developing appropriate advertising materials, providing translation for written materials, and creating statewide, immigrant-friendly enrollment forms and processes.

The challenges faced by states, communities, and providers in locating and reaching out to diverse immigrant and ELL populations in their service area, providing enrollment assistance, and building parent comfort with programs are many. But this work is important in ensuring the academic progress of all the country's children, including the most vulnerable. As the programs we spoke with have demonstrated, with some creativity and determination, programs of all sizes and funding levels can work toward increasing immigrant access to and participation in their programs.

Appendix A: Examples of Programs Integrating Several Strategies for Including Immigrant Families

The following are selected examples of programs that undertake multiple strategies for including immigrant families in their programs. This is not meant to be an exhaustive description of everything these programs do. The purpose of these examples is to highlight some unique strategies and approaches used to serve the diverse populations in their communities.

Portland Public Schools, Maine

Maine's Public Preschool Programs (PPP) provide early childhood education to 32 percent of the 4-year-olds in the state. The Portland Public Schools are part of the 47 percent of public elementary schools that offer PPP. Portland, Maine, has been a refugee community since the early 1980s, when Southeast Asian refugees began arriving following the Vietnam War. The population has shifted over the years with some groups moving out and others coming in. Currently the largest groups in the community are African refugees from Burundi, Somalia, and Sudan, as well as those from Cambodia, Vietnam, and Iraq. The district has 2,300 language-minority students speaking 60 different languages. With such diversity, efforts are made at the local level to properly serve these children. The school district is able to draw on a number of district-level resources in supporting immigrant enrollment in prekindergarten offered through Portland Public Schools.

Enrolling families. The enrollment process, which also serves as a mini orientation for newly arrived refugees, occurs through a centralized intake registration system. During registration, a legally required Home Language Survey is given to all student registrants. If it is indicated that another language is spoken at home, an English-language proficiency assessment is administered to identify if a student is an English language learner (ELL) and determine an appropriate program of support. An interpreter is provided to explain the services and assist with the registration paperwork. Since refugees arrive any time during the year, registration is ongoing throughout the year.

Language access. There is a district policy on translation and interpretation for language access. If at least 50 children in the district speak a particular language, all essential school documents such as enrollment forms, report cards, health forms, and handbook are automatically translated in those languages. Currently, the district has seven languages with an enrollment of 50 or more students. When hiring bilingual staff, they must also be bicultural and know how to negotiate both the American culture and the target culture. School openings, open houses, parent-teacher conferences, and other important school messages are translated and sent out through the phone system as reminders for parents; this information goes out in seven languages. Bilingual and bicultural parent community specialists conduct parent outreach, serve as cultural brokers between the school and parents, and help conduct workshops on educational issues requested by parents. A United Nations–style simultaneous language interpretation system is used for large meetings and trainings to provide language access at the same time. Bilingual paraprofessionals in Maine are also available as teacher aides.

Transportation. Transportation is available for prekindergarten. Some schools have a regular walk-to-school troop for students that live in close proximity, which parents alternate in leading.

For more information, please contact

Grace Valenzuela, Director
Multilingual and Multicultural Center
Portland Public Schools
valeng@portlandschools.org

Tulsa Public Schools, Oklahoma

Oklahoma offers free, voluntary preschool to all 4-year-olds, with 99 percent of school districts participating. The universal program is well funded and serves about 74 percent of all 4-year-olds in the state. The Tulsa Public Schools serve a large Hispanic population. In the district, 27 percent of students speak a language other than English in the home, with 93 percent speaking Spanish.

Outreach to immigrant families and ELLs. To reach immigrant families and ELLs, the district has partnerships in place with Spanish media outlets, churches, Head Start, and other community organizations that facilitate outreach and the provision of comprehensive services. The district does not have an advertising budget, but its partners advertise with fliers or set up booths with information about pre-enrollment for school. This is driven by the schools and not directed by the district.

Enrolling families. The district is moving toward a common intake service and enrollment in one location. They recently hired two Spanish-speaking clerks in their accountability office to assist families with enrollment, as well as two Spanish-speaking district language interpreters. The district language interpreters also assess the language competency of and provide interpreter training to staff and volunteers that provide language assistance at school sites in order to increase capacity to provide professional services and accurate, appropriate language assistance. The district recently implemented language assistance training for all staff to increase the understanding of why services are provided, how to notify parents of services, and how to access services.

Building strong relationships with parents. The district has conducted cultural competency training with leadership. It also tries to train staff and teachers, even bus drivers, to be advocates for children and parents, regardless of their background and work, in partnership with those families to get the word out on the importance of education for children.

Building immigrant-friendly programs. The Title III Office works with schools across the district to ensure that information reaches second-language learners in homes where English is not spoken. Since Spanish is common, all important documents are translated into Spanish; schools may use an on-demand phone interpretation service for other languages. One strategy adopted by a particular school within the district is having parent-teacher conferences at an apartment complex in a common area, where bilingual parents and grandparents are available to help translate.

For more information, please contact

Laura Grisso, Title III Administrator
Tulsa Public Schools
grissla@tulsaschools.org

Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland

The State of Maryland offers preschool to all economically disadvantaged and at-risk 4-year-olds in the state. In 2012, preschool served 35 percent of all the 4-year-olds in the state. Montgomery County Public Schools serve more 150,000 students, with students from more than 157 countries speaking 138 languages. Approximately 63 percent of students in the district in early education (prekindergarten or Head Start) qualify for ELL services, but many more speak more than one language in the home. Spanish is the most common language, followed by French, Vietnamese, and Chinese. Children eligible for free or reduced meals are automatically eligible for prekindergarten in Maryland and must be served immediately, regardless of the time of the year, without a waiting list.

Outreach to immigrant families and ELLs. Montgomery County has a very large outreach campaign for prekindergarten, using print, radio, and television in multiple languages as well as community events to advertise and target immigrant populations. They also work in conjunction with other community groups, such as churches, pediatricians, and organizations that offer citizenship information and adult ESL programs. They also partner with the local Department of Health and Human Services to get fliers into offices where families apply for WIC or other benefits.

Sustaining outreach. The school district has a long-range planning office that conducts demographic work for community assessments. Drawing on this centralized data source makes it easy for prekindergarten teachers and neighborhood prekindergarten providers to access information about demographics in their service area, allowing them to assess where immigrant populations are located and what services are needed to serve them.

Enrolling families. The district has centralized registration for prekindergarten and Head Start at the county early education division offices, where family service workers who represent various backgrounds and languages are available to help families enroll and connect them to other services they may need. Open registration starts in March. The district selects times for evening and Saturday registration at various community locations in order to make enrollment more accessible for working parents. There is also an international student admissions office, which helps to identify younger siblings to enroll.

Language access for parents. Schools have bilingual instructional specialists as well as family service workers that represent different backgrounds and languages. The district also provides ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) outreach staff to assist, along with a language line with interpreters available to help on the phone. All materials are translated into seven languages. The ESOL office has a translation unit that handles translation and interpretation for all schools.

For more information, please contact

Janine Bacquie, Director
Division of Early Childhood Programs and Services
Montgomery County Public Schools
Janine_G_Bacquie@mcpsmd.org

Early State Childhood Education Grant Program, Nebraska

Nebraska's Early Childhood Education Grant Program serves 22 percent of 4-year-olds in the state. The programs must use 70 percent of funds to serve children who are ELLs, are eligible for free or reduced lunch, have teen parents, were born premature, or have parents who have less than a high school education. At the preschool level, parents do not need to prove the child meets one of these categories, but the community must show a need.

Funding. In Nebraska, state aid is provided through a compensatory formula. In determining funding to districts, the state considers a variety of factors, including the number of ELLs in the program.

Reporting requirements. Districts must report on how they will meet the needs of ELLs when applying for a grant. They are also judged on how well they partner with outside organizations.

Language support for children. If the majority of children enrolled in a classroom use a common language other than English, then one staff member fluent in that language must be there to interact with the children. If a variety of languages are spoken, then a staff member, community member, or parent must be identified as a resource for the program. When fluent staff is not available, the program must identify someone in the community to serve as a volunteer.

For more information, please contact

Melody Hobson, Administrator
Office of Early Childhood
Nebraska Department of Education
melody.hobson@nebraska.gov

Early Childhood Education and Assistant Program, Washington

Washington State's Early Childhood Education and Assistant Program (ECEAP) program is run by the Department of Early Learning. In 2012, it served 8 percent of all 4-year-olds in the state.

Children are eligible for ECEAP in their two years before kindergarten if they

- are from families with annual incomes at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level (\$25,905 for a family of four),
- qualify for school district special education services, or
- have developmental or environmental risk factors that could affect school success (this could include ELLs or children in refugee families).

Outreach to immigrant families and ELLs. The state requires community needs assessments every three years as part of the program performance standards. Outreach and enrollment strategies are determined based on the community needs assessment. Local ECEAP programs partner with other agencies in the community that connect with families. This includes schools, health and human service organizations, public benefit eligibility staff, libraries, and faith-based settings. An example of working with community partners who already have ties to immigrant families includes partnering with the Parent-Child Home Program in Washington's King County, which connects interested families involved in that program to an available prekindergarten program.

For more information, please contact

Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer
Head Start State Collaboration Office Program Administrator
Washington State Department of Early Learning
Jennifer.Jennings-Shaffer@del.wa.gov

Judy King
Strengthening Families Washington Administrator
Washington State Department of Early Learning
Judy.King@del.wa.gov

Nicole Rose
PreK-3/ECEAP Administrator
Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)
Washington State Department of Early Learning
Nicole.Rose@del.wa.gov

Appendix B

List of Interviewees

We would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this report.

Phil Accord
President/CEO
Chambliss Center for Children

Susan Adams
Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K
Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Christine Alvarado
Director of Program Operations
East Coast Migrant Head Start Program

Nana Ofusu Amaah
Director of Family Engagement
Office of Early Childhood Education at the New York City Department of Education

Rachelle Pastor Arizmendi
Director of Early Childhood Education
Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment

Celia C. Ayala
Chief Executive Officer
Los Angeles Universal Preschool

Janine Bacquie
Director, Division of Early Childhood Programs and Services
Montgomery County Public Schools

Maria Benejan
Associate Commissioner, Program Development
New York City Administration for Children's Services

Teri Brecheen
Executive Director of Literacy
Oklahoma State Department of Education

Caren Calhoun
Executive Director
Tulsa Educare

Nayibe Capellan
Early Childhood Specialist
Newark Public Schools

Connie Casha
Director, Voluntary Pre-K
Office of Early Learning, Tennessee State Department of Education

Robert Crosnoe
The Elsie and Stanley E. (Skinny) Adams, Sr. Centennial Professor in Liberal Arts
Population Research Center & Department of Sociology
University of Texas at Austin

Steven Dow
Executive Director
Community Action Project, Tulsa

Khari Garvin
Director
Head Start State Collaboration Office, North Carolina

Shan Goff
Executive Director
Florida Office of Early Learning

Amy Goldwasser
Family Services Team Lead
Head Start Program at District of Columbia Public Schools

Laura Grisso
Title III Administrator
Tulsa Public Schools

Sandra Gutierrez
Abriendo Puertas National Director
Families in Schools

Melody Hobson
Administrator
Nebraska Department of Education Office of Early Childhood

Kayla Hindman
Literacy Director
Oklahoma State Department of Education

Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer
Head Start State Collaboration Office Program
Administrator/Department of Early Learning
Tribal Liaison
Washington State Department of Early Learning

Judy King
Strengthening Families Washington
Administrator
Washington State Department of Early Learning

Susan Landry
Director and Founder, Children's Learning
Institute, Michael Matthew King Memorial
Professor in Pediatrics; Albert & Margaret Alkek
Chair in Early Childhood Development
The University of Texas Health Sciences Center at Houston

Myung Lee
Deputy Commissioner of Early Care and
Education
New York City Administration for Children's Services

Antonia Lopez
Director of Early Childhood Education
National Council of La Raza

Hilda Magaña
Child Development Center Director
El Centro de la Raza

Roberta Malavenda
Early Learning Consultant
Clarkston Development Foundation

Hannah Matthews
Director of Childcare and Early Education
CLASP

Andrew McKenzie
Assistant to the Superintendent for Early
Childhood Services
Tulsa Public Schools

Genevieve Megginson
Executive Director
Chatham County Partnership for Children

Elizabeth Miranda
Assistant Director
Tulsa Educare

Lyn Morland
Director
Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services

Cristina Pacione-Zayas
Education Director
Latino Policy Forum

Sharon Rencher
Community Partnership Development Manager
New York City Department of Education

Cynthia Rice
Senior Policy Analyst
Advocates for Children of New Jersey

Ann Rivera
Social Science Research Analyst
*Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation,
Administration for Children and Families*

Sandra Rodriguez
Director, Office of Early Childhood
Newark Public Schools

Nicole Rose
PreK-3/ECEAP Administrator
Washington State Department of Early Learning

Jackye Russell
Senior Director of School Readiness and VPK
*Miami Dade Early Learning Coalition of
Miami-Dade/Monroe*

Annetta Seecharan
Director of Policy and Advocacy
United Neighborhood Houses

Fatima Shama
Commissioner
New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Stacey South
Enrollment Services Manager
Community Action Project, Tulsa

MaryJo Sperlazza
Supervisor of Early Childhood Education
Perth Amboy School District

Gayle Stuber
Early Childhood Coordinator
Early Childhood, Special Education, Title Services, Kansas State Department

Evelio Torres
President/CEO
*Miami Dade Early Learning Coalition of
Miami-Dade/Monroe*

Martin Torres
Senior Policy Analyst
Latino Policy Forum

Grace Valenzuela
Director
*Multilingual and Multicultural Center
Portland Public Schools*

Cristina Villarreal Smith
Family Resource Center Coordinator
Conexión Américas

Tom Vitaglione
Senior Fellow, Health and Safety
Action for Children

JuLee Wells
Recruitment Manager
Community Action Project, Tulsa

Cynthia Wheeler
Manager, Early Education Unit
*North Carolina Department of Health and
Human Services*

Ellen Wolock
Director
*New Jersey Department of Education's Office of
Preschool Education*

Sharon Yandian
Director, State TA Division
Office of Head Start

Notes

1. There are many aspects of program design that can support the education of ELLs and children of immigrants, but we will focus on those elements of prekindergarten programs that can reduce barriers for immigrant families and thereby encourage enrollment.
2. Children of immigrants and children who grow up speaking a language other than English at home are overlapping groups and face many similar barriers to prekindergarten, so we generally talk about these two groups together throughout this report. However, it should be noted that some children of immigrants grow up speaking English at home, and that some ELLs—sometimes also called dual language learners—may have US-born parents.
3. Not all ELLs have foreign-born parents, however, and not all children of immigrants are ELLs.
4. We use the terms *unauthorized* and *undocumented* interchangeably to describe immigrants who have overstayed a legal visa or who entered the United States without authorization.
5. Texas has worked with a national nonprofit called Reach Out and Read to disseminate information about prekindergarten and Head Start through doctors who conduct checkups for children birth to age 5. Doctors are asked to “prescribe” books to parents of young children and teach parents about the importance of reading to children, and, in Texas, they also disseminate information about the state prekindergarten program and Head Start.
6. University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, 2014, *Little Texans Big Futures*, accessed February 24, <http://www.littletexans.org/>.

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