



EL CENTRITO DE LA COLONIA

Oxnard, California

PROFILE

Organization: Bilingual, bicultural community center

Agency Mission: Prepare youth of Oxnard to meet the future, confident in their bicultural heritage, able to utilize educational and career opportunities, and ready to be productive members of the community.

Ages: 3 1/2 - 5 years-old

Poverty Level of Community: 90 percent below poverty level or considered low income.

Ethnicity: Over 96% Hispanic or Latino

CHALLENGE

El Centrito's "School Readiness" program enrolls preschool children ages three-and-one-half to five years old. The program's goal is to promote and increase English literacy skills among children to improve educational outcomes.

Since reading is the cornerstone of education, inadequately prepared children may fall behind as early as kindergarten. School Readiness addresses this limited exposure to reading activities and overcomes the shortfall of pre-literacy preparation in a focused, fun, and effective way. Of the children that enter the program, 75 percent speak either Spanish only or English and Spanish in the home. Most pre-test results were in the range of "no proficiency" for language skills on the Pre-Language Assessment Scale.

SOLUTION

El Centrito implemented the Waterford Early Reading Program™ when it launched its School Readiness program in 1996. Today it has nine computers running the Waterford Early Reading Program. The computerbased instruction adapts to an individual child's learning pace, regardless of primary language or pre-literacy exposure.

El Centrito offers School Readiness twice daily, five days a week. Each class begins with 15 minutes of opening activities, then the class breaks into two groups, each with approximately 33 children. The first group stays in the primary room to do structured activities, while the second group leaves for creative playtime.

Continued

Waterford
Early
Learning™

"We all learn differently at different paces. If you have a child who's pretty quick and picking up the material right away, why would you hold them back? If you have someone who is struggling and needs to hear something many times, why would you cut into their learning by moving ahead? The Waterford program meets each child at their level."

*— Luann Rocha
executive director*

Waterford Early Learning™

“It is so interesting to see the children’s attitudes change from when they first begin with the Waterford program. Initially, many are intimidated by the mouse, but as they gain simple skills, the eagerness with which they approach their daily tasks grows.”

“The children love the animation, color and sounds in the Waterford program, and the songs are catchy, too. It appeals to many different learning styles.”

**— Barbara Price
director, family literacy**

SOLUTION (Continued)

In the primary room, the first group is divided once again. Half move to the computers where they work on Level One of the Waterford Early Reading Program to build reading readiness and emergent skills. The other half work on structured activities related to the Waterford lesson. After 15 minutes, the groups switch. After all the students have completed their time on the computers, they join together again for outdoor play and snack time.

Following snack time, the first group heads out for creative playtime, while the second group returns to the primary room to work on the Waterford program and structured activities. At the end of the class, both groups meet in the primary room to participate in the day’s closing activity.

“It is so interesting to see the children’s attitudes change from when they first begin with the Waterford program. Initially, many are intimidated by the mouse, but as they gain simple skills, the eagerness with which they approach their daily tasks grows,” said Family Literacy Director Barbara Price. “The children love the animation, color and sounds in the Waterford program, and the songs are catchy, too. It appeals to many different learning styles.”

As the children work on the Waterford Early Reading Program for 15 minutes each day, they receive independent, self-paced instruction and encouragement with immediate feedback. The personalized approach, combined with engaging activities, motivates children to concentrate, leading them to become confident and successful readers.

“The Waterford program is very good at providing consistent, daily instruction to develop phonological awareness and literacy skills,” said Executive Director Luann Rocha. “We all learn differently at different paces. If you have a child who’s pretty quick and picking up the material right away, why would you hold them back? If you have someone who is struggling and needs to hear something many times, why would you cut into their learning by moving ahead? The Waterford program meets each child at their level.”

The School Readiness staff uses the Waterford reports to monitor each child’s progress. “The reports are very valuable. They allow us to see who is doing well and who is having a problem, so we can go back and re-address those problems. We use the reports in our regular reporting sessions, which include other aspects of our program as well,” said Price.

RESULTS

From 1997 to 2002, El Centrito conducted a study to measure changes in reading achievement and language development, and to measure parent involvement and education. Twelve cohorts of treatment and control preschool children were pre-tested and post-tested with two instruments to measure literacy and fluency growth. The first instrument was the Early School Assessment (ESA) Language, Visual and Auditory scales. The second instrument was the Pre-Language Assessment Scale (Pre-LAS) English and

Continued



RESULTS (Continued)

Spanish tests. A teacher and parent interview process was also implemented to capture qualitative information about teacher and parent involvement with the program.

The treatment children were enrolled in El Centrito for a nine-month program and used the Waterford Early Reading Program for 15 minutes a day. The control children were volunteers from local schools drawing preschoolers from the same neighborhood. The children were similar in age, gender, and language spoken in the home.

According to the study, the data indicated that children participating in the El Centrito program achieved significant reading success in all tested areas. In addition, the achievement was clearly related to the children's Waterford success rates.

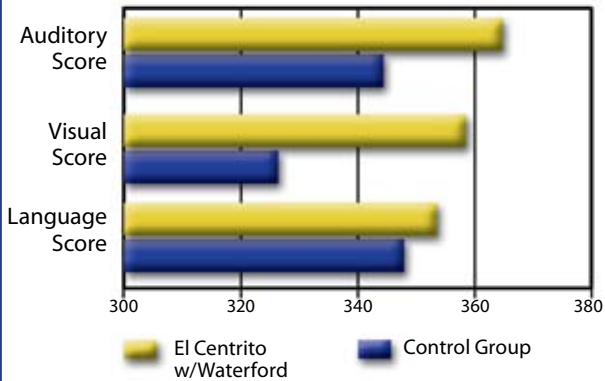
Pre-test to post-test comparisons for the El Centrito and control groups showed statistically significant differences for the ESA test scores in all three areas of the Language, Visual and Auditory scales, with higher test score growth for the treatment preschool group receiving the Waterford Early Reading Program (at $P < .001$ level).

For the LAS instrument, pre-test to post-test comparisons for the El Centrito and control groups showed statistically significant growth in English and Spanish fluency for both groups (at $P < .001$ level).

The study also measured the long-term effects of students' participation in the El Centrito program. Longitudinal comparisons of Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) scores obtained at the end of the children's second grade year (after they had been out of the program for three years) showed that the El Centrito children significantly out scored their control group peers in SAT Language scores.

"Kindergarten teachers have such a positive reception toward our children because they enter kindergarten well prepared. I'm sure a large measure of that is attributable to the Waterford program. Because of the comfort and the ease with which the children learn using the software, the letters of the alphabet and their sounds are no longer a foreign world to them. The teachers are delighted to have our kids," said Price.

Mean ESA Post-test Score Results



Mean SAT Language Scaled Score Results

