

# Latino Community Engagement through Family Literacy Programming



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**Latino Community Engagement through  
Family Literacy Programming**

**Master's Project**

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## **Project Introduction**

The Resilient Communities Project (RCP, <http://www.cura.umn.edu/RCP>) of the University of Minnesota acts as a support for communities through a one-year partnership facilitating faculty-supervised course-based projects to expand individual and community capabilities to meet city-identified needs in order to promote general welfare and sustainability. For the 2015-2016 academic year, the community partner for the RCP is Carver County, found in the southwest metro of Minnesota's twin cities. Carver County has been trying to respond to the dynamic shifts in its population demographics and the emergent needs that accompany such changes. The administrative divisions of the county have organized collective efforts to strategize together and with key stakeholders to form the Carver County Comprehensive Plan, currently in an edition drafted with goals for the year 2030. The plan hopes to address the equity, efficacy, and projected course of public services in a diversifying community, with a notably growing Hispanic population in the town of Chaska (Carver County Public Health & Environment Division, 2010). The mission of this project is to promote and uphold public health values of wellness, justice, and inclusion by addressing social determinants of health and cultivating an integrative culture such that minority cultures are equitably represented and raised to the same regard as the dominant culture.

With particular interest in the growing Hispanic population, the RCP-Carver County partnership has seen fit to implement a Latino Community Engagement Project to obtain a practical assessment of community members' expression of values and perceptions of their own needs. This type of investigation is intended to comprehensively reveal the Latino community's attitudes towards the public facilities, services, and activities available from the county. Findings enhance cultural responsiveness in county policies and offerings by identifying gaps perceived

by the community, prompting community member involvement and input for ideas to bridge those gaps, and propagating ownership and self-advocacy for achieving a network of trust between community members and the system of public service providers and an inclusive, unifying atmosphere within the county's public programs that support human flourishing.

One of Carver County's constituents is Independent School District 112. Through the school district, a Family Literacy Program is offered to families with young children (birth to kindergarten age). "Family Literacy" holds a dual connotation. It refers to literacy in the sense that it teaches English to families with a different native language, and it represents understanding family processes and child rearing. This class upholds values of development and sustainability that frame RCP's mission. Due to a curriculum that assists English language learners to enhance parenting skills and optimize child development in the context of their community, it was identified as a platform believed to possess characteristics that inspire community engagement and generation of productive objectives with potential to stimulate favorable outcomes that originate from early childhood education and health.

Socio-ecological theory models a person's and his or her community's perceived roles of self and each other through interdependence between social factors (e.g. education level, employment status, socioeconomic status, access to health care, physical safety, food quality and security, mobility), built structures, and natural surroundings. Family literacy Programs have predicted capacity to strengthen relationships within and among families, interculturally, socio-ecologically, and between public services and community patrons (Friedrich, Anderson, & Morrison, 2014; Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Miano, 2011; O'Brien et al., 2014; Torres & Hurtado-Vivas, 2011; Yildirim, 2014). These relationships factor into social conditions for making healthy decisions stemming from a strong educational foundation and resulting in the

optimization of opportunities to pursue mental, emotional, social, and physical well-being. Family Literacy Program enrollment has not reached its desired amount of at least 12 adult students, so Carver County submitted a query for this project: *What does it take to increase enrollment and attendance of Latino community members in the Family Literacy Program?*

## **Review of Literature**

### *Community Engagement*

In preparation to address Carver County's concerns about insubstantial involvement from its Latino population, a literature review using the search term *Latino community engagement* found three articles with theories and objectives pertinent to this study and discussed separate case studies of community engagement in Latino communities. They had common themes in identifying barriers to community engagement; the importance of capacity building; academic and community partnerships; and sustainability. The use of community engagement has been increasing in the field of public health. Fowler et al. (2013) highlighted the issue of academicians entering partnerships with an agenda based on pre-conceived ideas about the community and its needs rather than letting the needs and agenda emerge from community participants. This is key in developing the academic partner role as a community support rather than as a community savior or director. While Carver County has attempted to anticipate and accommodate barriers (i.e. transportation) to attending the Family Literacy Program that is offered, attendance remains low. Community Education staff hope to host at least 12 adult students per class, but when collecting data for this project, the combination of two classes only amounted to ten students. This partnership with RCP implicitly heeded the findings from the Fowler et al. study and worked to obtain and organize community input rather than relying solely on their own presuppositions regarding the Latino community to which this study is directed.

Lopez-Cevallos, Dierwechter, Volkmann, & Patton-Lopez (2013) presented barriers of trust related to language and cultural differences in a study carried out through the Latino Health Ambassadors Project (Voceros de Salud). Community involvement was limited by time availability. Being constrained by language, trust, and time puts the Latino community at a disadvantage to accessing resources and services. In this case study, the academic partners provided support in the form of training in order to build social capital. There was a realization that training needed to extend beyond the local health department and reach community members who the Latino Health Ambassadors Project hoped would take on a leadership role. Efforts were made to make Latino engagement and participation an integrated part of public processes. This enabled advocacy for the Latino community and helped inform public policy.

O'Neill, Williams, & Reznik (2008) acknowledged the effectiveness of community engagement in overcoming barriers, empowering communities, and building capacity. The issue that they have found in most community based public health efforts is sustaining participation for reasons related to the barriers identified in the study just discussed. To develop sustainable community engagement, time must be invested to create an infrastructure that supports long term capacity building. They suggest an approach that boosts community participation and collaboration for the underrepresented populations, self-advocacy by those populations with external assistance their surrounding community and special interest organizations when needed, then formation of a core leadership team that participates in community governance and fosters future leaders.

As a practice, community engagement requires active involvement, so public health professionals employ tactics that promote utilization of public services, facilities, and events as a means to stimulate intentional behaviors. It is intended to have an effect that offsets social



inequities or underrepresentation – dignity violations – through cultivating leadership in those seemingly discounted populations and offering appealing and relevant services and activities that invite participation. Campbell-Voytal (2009) identifies the break down of structures that support community engagement, which stem from habits, knowledge, and core values, then progress to organized networks and built community capacity. This process develops understanding and awareness among different perspectives within the community, informing approaches responding to community strengths and needs.

To establish the value of community engagement more generally in relation to public health, a broader literature search using the terms *community engagement*, *social capital*, and *public health or social justice* was conducted. Ochoa and Nash (2009) acknowledge the slow progress of addressing racial and ethnic health disparities, endorsing how “a life-course perspective with sustained community engagement takes into account root causes of poor health in minority and low-income communities.” The Family Literacy Program reinforces this idea by engaging members of a minority population at different stages of life by including parents and their children. The Latino community engagement study being conducted addresses a deficit in research and data that is particularly likely for “emerging immigrant communities” and “linguistically isolated communities” (Ochoa and Nash, 2009). The findings from this study will respond to one of Ochoa and Nash’s (2009) top lessons that trust, partnerships, and appropriate interventions stem from community collaboration, which “increase[s] buy-in and ensure[s] that the project’s interventions and strategies meet [the community’s] needs.”

A similar description by Ellison (2014) is that “community engagement emphasizes empowering community members with the knowledge, opportunity, and capacity to take part in the identification of problems and development of strategies to address issues that they face.” In the

same article, she describes the tension between traditional research objectives of generalizability versus goals of community research to account for nuances of people with different backgrounds in different places. She sees the qualities of community research as “the heart of a justice paradigm” and calls for its practice in addressing health disparities by including the voices of those in an underrepresented community.

### *Family Literacy Programs*

Family literacy programs have shown to be effective for teaching English literacy to diverse cultures all together, including those whose first language is English (Harper, Platt, & Pelletier, 2011; Zhang, Pelletier, & Doyle, 2010). For English language learning families, studies suggest that supporting children in learning their parents’ native language will further promote family interactions towards learning English together (Friedrich et al., 2014; Yildirim, 2013). Research indicates parents who have the opportunity to communicate in their native language while learning English are better prepared to engage with their children and support school transitions and educational success (Zhang et al., 2010).

Past family literacy programs targeting Latino families have been designed as a response to the misguided assumption that Latino families are complacent and uninvolved regarding education, less engaged (Marcella, Howes, & Fuligni, 2014; Miano, 2011; Rivera & Lavan, 2012; Torres & Hurtado-Vivas, 2011). Much of the programming has been described as geared toward mothers, since mothers are typically responsible for attending to a child’s education in Latino culture, and men’s schedules were less accommodating of program participation (Miano, 2011; Rivera & Lavan, 2012; Tilley-Lubbs, 2011; Timmons, 2008). Many programs attempt to exhibit a benevolent approach by putting high value on cultural responsiveness, but those intentions are hampered by an attitude that assumes “fixing” is needed, and culture is the reason

for deficiencies (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006; Rivera & Lavan, 2012; Torres & Hurtado-Vivas, 2011). This one-dimensional analysis discounts that learning gaps might be more simply attributable to communication barriers related to culturally influenced language differences rather than the implied absolute cultural error or dysfunction. Regardless of this seemingly unsophisticated notion, expected outcomes from a family literacy intervention are reasonable and well-founded.

Studies indicate successful family literacy programs empower parents to have confidence in their parenting skills and abilities to assist their children with school work (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Tilley-Lubbs, 2011), despite the initial intimidation and stress from their children's homework (Torres & Hurtado-Vivas, 2011; Zhang, 2010). Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2006) identify parent and school collaboration as the simple foundation for the concept of family literacy, although the process is more complex and builds relationships in the surrounding community as well, having implications on society as a whole rather than just participating teachers and students (see also Anderson & Morrison, 2007). Programs declaring themselves to be successful have met the needs of parents and children equally (Rivera & Lavan, 2011), resulting in parents having a better understanding of public school expectations and improved relationships between schools and families (Ferlazzo, 2009; Friedrich et al., 2014; Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Tilley-Lubbs, 2011). Those programs regarded parents as "cultural experts and capable adults," and parents eventually took ownership of their involvement by making suggestions to improve programming and requesting specific activities to deepen their learning. Timmons (2008) idealizes such a "truly authentic partnership" where parents participate in developing the family literacy program, and McElvany and van Steensel (2009) submit that this

also drives quality of implementation, since family schedules and activities influence the extent to which a family will fully engage in a family literacy program.

### **Background**

The Family Literacy Program in Carver County was conceptualized on the evidence-based premise that a mother's education level is the strongest indicator of her child's success as a student. There are four components to the Family Literacy Program: 1) parent education, 2) parent and child interaction, 3) early childhood education, and 4) adult basic education and English language learning. The parent education component includes two regular monthly speakers from the University of Minnesota Extension and Carver County, who present to parents in the class about topics such as health meals and food choices, exercising and staying fit, dental hygiene, and sleep. The parent education teacher meets with parents individually to discuss parental challenges and helpful options. Children are also screened for early childhood milestones for cognitive, physical, and motor development. Parents may ask for help from the teacher and an intercultural specialist regarding personal issues. The parent and child interaction component involves 30-40 minutes of parents doing activities with their children. This includes playing educational games, singing songs, and reading books. Children and parents are split into separate classrooms after their interactive time. For the early childhood education component, children participate in various activities like learning healthy routines, group play, and singing songs. Meanwhile, parents are in their own class for the adult basic education and the English language learning portion. At this time, the focus is on improving English language proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening, so adults may achieve their educational goals. Examples of educational goals are earning General Education Development (GED) certification, attending a post-secondary educational institution, being able to navigate the community, and

helping their own children with learning. Vocabulary, grammar, parts of speech, and spelling are taught in connection to topics of daily life such as banking and finance, getting a job, giving and getting directions, food, and measurements.

Enrollment eligibility applies to children from birth to kindergarten age with their parents. However, adults without children falling in the early childhood age range may apply to participate in the adult basic education and English language learning component only. The class is advertised in a community education brochure, but word of mouth publicity has been the most successful and relied upon means of boosting attendance. The school district's given reasons for low enrollment are transportation, time of day the class meets, and families who originally expressed interest in enrolling having moved away.

The curriculum for the Family Literacy Program is designed to enhance parent involvement and capabilities to supplement their child(ren)'s learning so that children are better prepared for school. Secondly, the Family Literacy Program curriculum builds a foundation for parents to gain a basic understanding of the American system of education and other public services. The English language learning objective, if met, facilitates independence in accessing public services, so parents can begin to discover how services might apply to their families more personally. More importantly, parents can communicate their needs and suggestions for improving programming to be more inclusive and responsive to a diverse community. Of note, the Family Literacy Program is not only for people of Latino ethnicity in Carver County. There are also students of Somali and Russian ethnicities, although this study is focusing on the Latino community.

## **Methods**

### *Data Collection*

The primary research question for this study is *What accommodations are perceived as effective by the Carver County Latino community for consistently attending a Family Literacy class provided by the Community Education Department of Eastern Carver County?*

This is a descriptive study, qualitative in nature, which uses focus groups and questionnaires to draw out attitudes towards health and the Family Literacy Program from Latino people in Carver County. Latino Community Engagement Exploration is one of the projects outlined in the RCP-Carver County partnership, and hence the target population for this study. The University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted approval for this minimal risk study, waiving written consent but providing oral consent forms translated into Spanish, which included principal investigator, faculty advisor, and IRB contact information should questions or concerns arise at a later time. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions prior to consenting to participate. A Spanish interpreter was on staff and present at all times during the consent and data collection processes to ensure participants understood possible risks and measures taken in the study design and by study personnel to mitigate those risks. The information participants were given prior to consenting to participate includes the purpose of the research study and intended effects, the option to express their opinions and experiences to any extent to which they are comfortable, the ability to withdraw participation at any time without adverse consequences, and that no forms of identification will be attached to data or quotations cited in the final results and discussion. Additionally for focus groups, the expectation was stated orally and in text that each participant shall maintain the confidentiality of what is discussed in the group.

A written questionnaire was translated in Spanish and administered to current enrollees in the Family Literacy Program, whose responses would serve as a comparison for data found in

focus groups. The questionnaire was written by the principal investigator, asking about respondents' attitudes on the Family Literacy Program curriculum, need within the community, barriers to attending, and the decision to commit to attending. Since the Family Literacy Program was chosen as a platform to explore the intersection of health and its social determinants – education and community engagement specific to this study – study participants were also asked to describe general and personal health perceptions. As the curriculum covers topics on health and development, responses to the questions posed reveal deficits in health literacy and potential for opportunities to improve health and foster further human flourishing. In terms of community engagement, the patterns of Family Literacy Program enrollment might parallel how community members access other social services for public welfare.

The questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice and open-ended questions determining frequency of attendance, satisfaction with the class, patterns of class publicity, curriculum pertinence, and general and personal health perceptions. All participants' Spanish literacy was proficient to read and respond to the questionnaires. Responses were given in short answer and list form at a basic enough level where the principal investigator did not need translation services. For the convenience of data collection, the teachers of the Family Literacy classes arranged a single occurrence of organizing all their students of Latino ethnicity (n=10) into a combined class session, the only time during which the questionnaire was administered. This ensured the ten responses came from separate respondents, rather than being duplicated by a single respondent.

Intercultural Specialists (school district staff whose roles involve continuous interaction with their respective ethnic populations, Latino for this study) arranged to convene focus groups and recruit participants from planned events open to the target population. Supplemental

recruitment methods (i.e. door to door encounters and posting flyers throughout neighborhoods densely populated with Latino people) were proposed to Eastern Carver County's Community Education staff for determination of cultural acceptability, but they deemed it most appropriate and convenient to gather participants at community events. Invitations to the events were directly extended by the Intercultural Specialists or by mothers known to be active in the community who the Intercultural Specialists appointed. Members of the community were invited to participate in focus groups if they self-identified as meeting the eligibility criteria (parents with children birth to kindergarten age) for attending the Family Literacy Program but were not presently enrolled. An incentive to attend a focus group session was in the form of a \$20 gift card awarded to one participant per group selected by a raffle drawing. Only two events were held, and therefore two focus groups involving two participants each were convened, with a total of four focus group participants. A request to attempt to convene additional focus groups was declined by Carver County. Each focus group lasted between 45-60 minutes.

Focus group discussion was facilitated using a semi-structured interview of eight open ended questions that prompted participants to express their attitudes and expectations on the Family Literacy curriculum, need for the class in the community, barriers to attending, decision to commit, and necessary accommodations. Data collection was done through audio recording. Identities were protected by making introductions and obtaining consent prior to beginning the recording. An in-person interpreter for English and Spanish was utilized during the focus groups in order to minimize communication errors or misunderstandings that would be related to lack of fluency in either language. The interpreter took notes during the discussion, writing key words and phrases to recall long orations as completely as possible.



Two questions about participant health perceptions were posed identically on the questionnaire and in the focus groups. One question sought participants' conceptualizations of what determines general health. The other question solicited their personal actions to achieve the concept of health they described. In both forms of data collection, participants provided real examples of accepted services, engagement abilities, barriers to utilization, expectations, and other concerns and needs from a perspective authentic to their context within the county, culture, and customs. Please see appendices A and B for the questionnaire and focus groups question guide.

### *Data Analysis*

Data were manually organized and analyzed using a matrix system. Key words, phrases, and ideas were transferred to the matrix and grouped by question. For questionnaires, each question served as an umbrella category to identify the topic to which the respondent was referring. Differing ideas per question were separated into underlying themes. As each respondent's answers were reviewed, phrases were compared and contrasted to the responses that had already been transcribed. If a phrase were to match the idea of a prior documented response, these were grouped into one theme. A phrase unrelated to themes already established resulted in originating its own theme.

Focus group data were similarly analyzed. Conveniently, all participants answered the same question before the group was moved on to a new topic. This created umbrella categories while listening to and transcribing key words, phrases, and ideas that were emerging from the data. Themes were formed as matching ideas emerged from separate respondents. When a new idea was presented and unrelated to any prior mentioned, it began its own theme.

### **Results**

*Questionnaire*

Ten adult Latino students were enrolled in the Family Literacy Program at the time we administered questionnaires, and all students completed the questionnaires. Gender distribution of students was gathered by observation. There were nine females and one male. The first half of the questionnaire items were multiple choice to gather baseline information about patterns of attendance, medium of hearing about the Family Literacy Program, how community interest and relevance translate to enrollment, and personal satisfaction with the curriculum. Table 1 displays the responses given to the multiple choice questions. Nine students have attended class four or more times. For the tenth student, this was the third time attending a class session. The most common method by which participants learned about the class was word of mouth. This was true for nine participants. One participant indicated receiving information about the Family Literacy Program by mail. Five respondents indicated they know someone who might benefit from the class and is interested in attending, while six respondents indicated they know someone who might benefit from the class but is uninterested.

**Table 1 – Enrollees’ Personal Characteristics and Perceptions About Community Interest**

<b>Total Participants</b>		<b>n=10</b>
Frequency of attendance	Participants who have attended 4 or more classes	9
	Participants who have attended 3 classes	1
Medium of exposure	Participants who learned of the Family Literacy Program by word of mouth	9
	Participants who learned of the Family Literacy Program through the community education catalog received in the mail	1
Positive relevance but negative interest	Participants who know someone they think might benefit from the Family Literacy Program but is not interested in attending	6
Positive relevance and interest without enrollment	Participants who know someone interested in the Family Literacy Program and might benefit from it, but is not enrolled	5
Satisfaction	Participants satisfied with the class thus far	10

The remaining items on the questionnaire were open-ended to assess the participants' perceptions of the class curriculum and perceptions of the concept of health and what it takes to attain it. Each question separated student perceptions into categories of topics of benefit, topics of interest, enrollment motivation, conception of health, and personal actions for obtaining health. The categories are further subdivided into themes of student responses. Themes are presented in order of descending prevalence. The supporting quotations for each theme are taken from responses that were written in list or narrative form, therefore narrative quotations might be partial, where an elided portion fits into a separate theme. These have been translated from Spanish for the thematic summary below. The same participant may be responsible for multiple quotations listed. Some responses were identical due to the list format used by some participants. Answers given by more than one respondent are denoted by a parenthetical indication of how many shared the response, which will follow the listed item. For example, "Sample Statement (3)" means three respondents listed the same sample statement.

### **Category A: Benefits From Topics Already Covered**

This category includes subject matter presented to students in class that they found beneficial.

#### **Theme #1: Learning English language communication**

This theme was the most prominent from respondents, with a variety of components of the English language.

#### **Specific Items from Written Responses:**

-to learn English

-better understanding of the English language; my doubts have been resolved

- I've learned a lot of English, but I need to learn more; I am no longer afraid of speaking
- to learn to speak English
- to learn to understand English better when someone speaks to me, and I can respond because I learned to communicate in English a little bit
- word pronunciation
- to read and write more, and how to pronounce in English
- The opportunity of being able to come to learn English...also has been very useful reading and writing in my classes
- how to ask questions
- reading (3)

**Theme #2: Child-oriented**

The majority of respondents also brought up the impact the Family Literacy Program has on their children.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- to learn family education that we are given so our families can pass it on to our kids
- how to help our kids with how to share with other children...my kids have learned a lot
- how children interact in the playroom
- ...at the same time care for my babies...
- how to help the kids with their homework
- how to read a book to kids asking questions

**Theme #3:** Miscellaneous lifestyle and wellness resources

This theme captures ancillary information included in the curriculum directed toward fundamental knowledge for promoting optimal wellness.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- They give us helpful information of what is available around us and to learn to cope.
- dental education
- the amount of sugar we consume, how much sugar is in drinks

**Category B:** Topics of Interest

This category captured student ideas for what they would like to learn better or would find helpful as part of the curriculum. Two respondents did not provide additional topics. Instead, one expressed current satisfaction, and the other wrote that it was too soon to comment due to feeling too new to the class and unfamiliar with covered topics.

**Theme #1:** Further development of improved English communication**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- grammar
- speaking (2, one respondent specified “without penalty”)
- to write well in English (2)
- to read well in English (2)

Themes 2-4 emerged with equal prevalence.

**Theme #2:** Varying practical and vocational skills

This theme contains unrelated skills that have practical utility in daily life.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- cooking
- cut hair
- computers (2)

**Theme #3:** Utilization of community services

This theme expresses respondents' desires to learn how, when, or where to access specific community resources.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- [when to go to] clinic or hospital (2)
- when to go to the store
- beauty salon
- soccer field

**Theme #4:** Interaction with children

This theme is indicative of aspirations to positively influence, interact with, and raise children.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- how to do other activities with our kids
- to know how to teach our kids much of their homework

**Category C:** Motivation to Enroll

This category describes driving considerations that led to the decision to participate in the Family Literacy Program.

**Theme #1:** English communication skills

This theme explains the contexts of how students in the Family Literacy Program foresaw using what they learned in class.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- to learn English
- to know all basic terms in the whole English language
- learn how to communicate with people
- so I can communicate better with people who only speak English
- as parents we communicate with other parents, and learning basic English helps communicate independently
- so I can communicate with coworkers
- learning English is a tool for my work
- my English is very poor, and [family responsibilities] have kept me from prior opportunities to learn since I've been here

**Theme #2:** Children-oriented

This theme frames the way respondents have made intentional decisions due to how their involvement will benefit their children.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- so I can help my daughter with her homework
- so my kids can interact with other children and learn more
- to help my kids with what I can

- to bring my baby to learn to develop and cope
- mostly for my daughter, so she can develop and learn to be ready for kindergarten

**Category D: Concept of Health**

This category portrays how respondents understand and conceptualize what it means to be healthy.

**Theme #1: Physical factors**

This theme accounts for responses that describe influences on somatic functioning.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- eating well
- eat healthy (3)
- eat a variety of fruits and vegetables and a balanced diet
- exercising (2)
- don't have a sedentary life, be active
- being physically well
- care for your body, like being active
- life

Themes 2-4 emerged with equal prevalence.

**Theme #2: Socialization**

This theme includes responses that represent involvement with the community and other people.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**



- staying busy
- help others
- being with family
- it is important to be healthy for my family

**Theme #3: Cognitive factors**

This theme contains responses that suggest the mind is a fundamental component of health.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- positive thinking
- being mentally well
- no stress

**Theme #4: Self-concept and Actualization**

This theme draws together responses that represent measures of positive personal development.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- do productive activities
- achieving my goals
- being myself

**Category E: Personal Actions to Obtain Health**

This category demonstrates how respondents seek to achieve health in their own lives. The themes in this category correspond with specific actions respondents take to realize their concepts of health.

**Theme #1: Physical actions**

This theme was part of every response received. Bracketed text refers to qualifiers some participants used to expand on their exercise regimen.

**Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- eat a little better
- eat well (2)
- eat healthy (3)
- eat a variety, like fruits and salads
- cook at home, no canned goods, lots of fruits, vegetables, and water, little or no sugar, no processed foods
- drink water
- [try to] exercise [2-3 times per week] (6)
- be active
- stay active through household chores
- walk

**Theme #2: Social actions****Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- communicate with the family
- live with more people
- be active in different activities

**Theme #3: Cognitive actions****Specific Items from Written Responses:**

- reading

-be happy or try to be

Note: Actions related to self-concept were not mentioned in any responses.

### *Focus Groups*

Four community members participated in focus groups. Two focus groups took place, having two participants each. Only women were present. Three out of four participants had attended the Family Literacy Program in the past. Upon this discovery, some of the questions were adjusted to ask about pre-enrollment perceptions and post-withdrawal perceptions. Although this study was intended to discover marketing and program weaknesses that inhibit Latino community engagement and transitively impede favorable health outcomes, the narrow breadth of recruitment measures agreed to for this study reinforced the inherent shortcomings of the approach Carver County currently employs. Due to the prior attendance of most participants, their anecdotes frequently referred to their past experience with the Family Literacy Program, and implications of the data shifted to quality of implementation rather than marketing approach. The data were applicable to five different categories, which were organized according to the questions that were asked during the group. Those categories refer to publicity and marketing strategies, conception of the Family Literacy Program operations and curriculum, enrollment barriers, concept of health, and personal actions for obtaining health.

Participants provided suggestions for improving advertising strategies about community programs. They agreed, though, that there are many people in the community who know about this particular program for family literacy, but barriers and deterrents to enrolling still remain. Time and transportation were commonly mentioned barriers. Anecdotal accounts heavily focused on shortcomings of programming and curriculum, which provided valuable insight into a disconnection between course objectives and actual outcomes. Participants acknowledged that

the class offers benefit to its students, but the investment of time required to attend is greater than the value of what they learn. If methods of instruction improved in efficiency, participants believe attending the Family Literacy Program would support their abilities to provide their families with healthy opportunities and habits. A detailed account of the opinions supporting these findings is presented below. Some quotations were applicable to supporting multiple themes, and those are followed by (+).

**Category A: Strategy Effectiveness for Raising Public Awareness of Community Programs**

This category explores how people find out about community programs.

**Theme #1: Referral**

The most common situation for finding about community programs has been through an intermediary person or institution.

**Subtheme:** Cultural liaisons (the term used by participants to refer to Intercultural Specialists)

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-[She] is very helpful. She gives us the information we need.

-We call her when we want to get information.

-We collaborate with them because we need to be aware of what is going on. They know what is going on and they are in contact through phone calls.

-She finds a way to let us know because she knows our language is Spanish. +

-She takes the time to inform us, or we can call her.

-She refers us to other resources of where to find information and also teaches us how to use resources. +

**Subtheme:** Through other public services

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-I belong to the program WIC, and sometimes we can get information through that program.

-Usually some of the information comes with our kids from the school if they're in the younger grades, but for some reason the information does not get to us when the kids are in a higher grade level. Usually, if it's in kindergarten or the primary grades, that information gets distributed through them.

-When we go to the health centers, usually they have more detailed information.

**Subtheme:** Peers or other personal relationships

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-We know some people that do participate in adult education.

-We have friends and family who have heard and tell us.

-Our kids let us know too. We find information from our kids.

**Theme #2:** Accessibility of program information

While there might be different forms of disseminating information about community programs, there are barriers for someone to independently discover that information.

**Subtheme:** Language accommodation

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-It's hard to access because it's in English.

-But that information is in English

-She finds a way to let us know because she knows our language is Spanish. +

**Subtheme:** Knowledge and capability

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-We know there are catalogs and information, but we don't access them. -

-We don't know how to get that information.

-We know that we can find information on the district website.

-The information is easy to find on the internet.

-She refers us to other resources of where to find information and also teaches us how to use resources. +

**Theme #3:** General community surroundings

This encompasses indirect, non-personal forms of media that provide information about community programs.

**Subtheme:** Non-specific media

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Here in Chaska it's more difficult. Shakopee has more information out in the community.

-We can see advertisements at schools, theatres, community centers, and libraries.

**Subtheme:** Circulating literature

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

- They find out through community catalogs.
- It would be nice to receive more information through the mail.
- Sometimes we can find it in the local newspaper.
- We find announcements in school bulletins.

### **Category B: Conception of Family Literacy Program**

This category captures participant ideas of what makes the Family Literacy Program interesting and appealing.

#### **Theme #1: Pre-enrollment expected benefits**

Since most participants had attended a Family Literacy Program in the past, they gave their input about what they hoped to gain from being part of the class before initial enrollment.

#### **Subtheme: Parent assimilation**

##### **Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

- I wanted to learn English
- They would show us daily tasks.
- Trying to learn the language
- I think we would have better results in work, family, and community.+
- They wanted us to learn about daily life.
- I want to learn.
- To learn English from the beginning, from zero and onward.
- I wanted to learn English; how to say a sentence, how to ask a question.

#### **Subtheme: Child socialization**

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-They would teach our kids how to interact with other kids

-I wanted my child to learn to collaborate

**Theme #2:** Experienced benefit

Having been enrolled in the Family Literacy Program in the past, parents describe positive outcomes from participating.

**Subtheme:** Parent-child relationship

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-It enriched my time with my daughter. We learned together, and we both benefited. It was a nice distraction from our regular routine.

-We learned how to be more active with our children for school and friends.

**Subtheme:** Parent language and academic development

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-I learned English

-At first, I didn't know anything, but now I feel confident. This led to pursuing my GED.

**Subtheme:** Child's cognitive and social development

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-For preschool, they were ahead of the game. They could collaborate with other kids.

-We have more aware, confident, and happy kids.

-They go to school ready.



-I liked the group because it also helps my kids

**Theme #3:** Motivation to attend and curriculum relevance

The participants were well informed, often from past experience, about what the Family Literacy Program intends to achieve. This theme considers their opinions on why attending the Family Literacy Program would be worthwhile.

**Subtheme:** Community relationship

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-We are trying to learn the language to have better results in work, family, and community. +

-Because of language, we feel apart. These programs help with this, to be more involved in the community.

**Subtheme:** Family dynamics

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-We realize when our kids start getting older, that's when we need to know English and to be able to speak it and write it.

-Right now there is a father attending the family literacy program, and that's pretty amazing because usually the information is geared toward moms, but it's nice to know that husbands can go too, and so that they also know that this information is available for them.

-In our culture, [balanced healthy eating] is very difficult because our eating or our foods do not include a lot of vegetables, and that is a problem for our kids. But it's hard for kids. They typically don't want to eat it or they eat may be two out of the three [servings I set out]...I was there when

these presenters were talking about health and giving resources about medical insurance and other health resources, talking about healthy eating and healthy food choices, and they would give us really good ideas.

-This is our community. It should be for men and women. It is not that [men] don't want to attend, but their work hours prevent them.

**Subtheme:** Parent educational advancement

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-I need to be able to practice what I learn.

-I want to attend again to learn English and be equipped to earn my GED. I also want for my child to learn.

-Some of us don't have a high school education, so to be able to continue our education through this program, to at least get a high school education, obviously in English, but having that option. Learning to speak and write [English]. All of these things would give us enthusiasm to attend.

**Subtheme:** Child academic preparation

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Our kids will learn more to be ready for preschool. Our kids would learn colors, shapes, animals, so that they are prepared.

-They help kids with basics, so they gain confidence, especially in academics.

-I want my child to be ready for preschool, so she can collaborate with kids and teachers.

**Theme #4:** Recommendations

Based on their backgrounds and past experiences with the Family Literacy Program, this theme takes suggestions from participants on how the program can improve its operations.

**Subtheme:** Class structure

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-For me, I don't understand anything. What do words mean? How to pronounce them. It would be nice if they could, as they're instructing, go from one language to another. For example, saying in Spanish and then saying it in English.

-It would be nice to have three levels.

-Another aspect is having quality teachers.

**Subtheme:** Reciprocal accountability

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-It would be great if you could ask the students why they feel they are not advancing.

-Instructors give us rules and expectations, like no absences, etc. Can we ask or have expectations from them? I like to voice my opinion, and they have given us expectations as students, and I feel we need to have expectations of them as well.

**Subtheme:** Inclusion

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Another option is to have classes for parents who don't have younger kids. It seems like this particular program is for families with young kids.

It would be nice if you could go if you didn't. +

-It would be nice to have a program tailored to husbands too, and to accommodate their hours.

**Subtheme:** Class activities

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-All I need is practice. It would be nice to have a program with groups, like reading groups or dialogues to practice. I am not working right now, but I would like to be in an environment where English is spoken.

-It would be convenient to have a combined class that prepares us for the GED, so we don't need to accommodate different times of classes.

### **Category C:** Circumstances Impeding Enrollment

This category describes reasons that people choose not to or are unable to enroll in the Family Literacy Program.

**Theme #1:** Time

Time was the most prominent barrier to attending the Family Literacy Program, and the participants identified various priorities that interfered with being a student in the Family Literacy Program at the time it meets (Mondays through Thursdays from 1:30pm-3:30pm during the district's academic session).

**Subtheme:** Schedule conflicts

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

- I stopped attending because the hours were very difficult for me
- It seems like they're programming their classes so that it works for them and not for us. I know a lot of people who would want to attend, but again, the hours make it difficult.
- Husbands want to attend, but again, their hours conflict.
- But with [husbands] it gets a little bit more difficult because of their work hours.
- It is not that [men] don't want to attend, but their work hours prevent them. +
- I would like to attend, but I'm focused on getting my GED right now

**Subtheme:** Family responsibilities

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

- I feel that the hours are very difficult because a lot of us have more than one child, and so the hours, for example, you'd get out [of class] between 3:30pm or so, and we have to be home for when our kids get off the bus from their regular school. We're there for them, so it's a conflict of time.
- The hours are hard. It's not conducive for our families.
- In my opinion, from my understanding, many people don't attend because of work. A mother may be getting the home ready and then [parents] take turns in the home. Both parents are contributors in the home, and that's why the program hasn't grown.

-My child has medical issues, so she needs a lot of care. She needs a lot of attention and medicine. She gets sick a lot and needs emergency care. I have to care for her and this would make me miss a lot of classes.

-My husband would like to attend, but he comes home from work and he has to watch the little ones, and I have to work. Again, that time factor is an issue.

### **Theme #2: Transportation**

Transportation was one of the barriers more difficult to overcome, since the school district has limited passenger space to provide. Other foreseeable solutions, such as students driving themselves, walking, or accessing public transportation services require additional resources and time that are beyond the school district's control. The issues of transportation and time are associated in impeding enrollment, since children are dismissed from school around the same time the Family Literacy class concludes each day, and parents must be present for their children's arrival home.

#### **Subtheme: District limitations**

##### **Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Transportation would be one of them. They said it was full, and I had to find a way to transport myself to the class.

-Even with transportation, when they offer it, they have you wait a long time, and when it's cold it's kind of tough. Well the good thing is, the transportation is right outside your house.

#### **Subtheme: Student limitations**

##### **Translated Quotation from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-I can't drive.

**Theme #3:** Quality of programming

There were multiple mentions that the program needs to be more organized. While the premise of the program and its intended objectives are appealing and interesting, enrolling in the class is not perceived to realistically enable a student to achieve those objectives.

**Subtheme:** Teaching style

Instruction was illustrated to be directionless and overly flexible, detracting from students progressing through subject matter and meeting course objectives because those were ill or undefined.

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-There is not consistency of instruction. I feel that a lot of parents feel that they're bored. And again, I think that is because there is no continuum of instruction. Everyday is something different. There isn't – you know, you start a lesson and you continue to the second and third – like with kids when they go to school, there's a specific lesson, and there's a continuum of instruction. [In the literacy classes], it's one day one thing and another day another thing.

-I feel that, again, there is no continuum or consistency between classes.

-We know in the beginning group the current teacher speaks a little bit of Spanish and students can actually say a word in Spanish, and he can say, "Well, this is how you say it in English." For me, that is helpful because I don't understand any English, and then at least I can speak to him in

Spanish, and he can show me what it is in English, so that's the advantage of having that. When the teacher doesn't know any Spanish, you're just sitting there and you're not knowing what it is they're saying. So it is nice to have a teacher who speaks both Spanish and English because I don't speak English. But if they speak Spanish, we can at least have that interchanging of languages.

-In the beginning class they would show verbs and nouns with the original teacher, but then in the advanced class, they wouldn't elaborate on using verbs and how to manipulate sentences and how to join phrases.

-I think that people don't feel [the class] is important because they feel the teachers need to know what they're doing and what they're going to be teaching.

-It is important to have a teacher that speaks both languages, who has a goal or knows what the outcome of the lesson is going to be, so that there is consistency and a continuum of instruction.

-I don't think we are receiving quality instruction.

-There is, again, no continuum of lesson and no final objective as to where the lessons are going.

**Subtheme:** Insufficient gradient/scale of progression

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-There are two groups in the class. There's a beginning and advanced group in terms of English language. There is not an intermediate group. I requested to be changed to a different level, but they said I couldn't



because I had not passed the exam. I understood what was in the exam because my reading ability is stronger than my speaking ability, but they still did not want to pass me.

-I took the test again. I passed it, but I was put from beginning to advanced, and it was too difficult. Everyone was reading. Everyone was writing. Everyone was speaking. It was very tough. I wanted to change group. If there was not going to be an intermediate group, I wanted to change at least to the beginning. But they didn't change me to that group. I was very frustrated. I couldn't speak it. I could understand what they were saying. I could read what they were saying, but I couldn't speak it, and it was becoming very frustrating for me. This is difficult, so I decided not to continue...I've been to other groups in different places, and they have a beginning, intermediate, and advanced [class].

**Subtheme:** Relevant topics but irrelevant lessons

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-In the class I was attending, they would bring store advertisements, and then this lesson was about managing coupons. I know how to manage coupons. I've been living here a long time. I use coupons on a daily basis. Coupons even have pictures on them, so it's not something that's language heavy...I would have liked the lesson, instead, about if you go to the market, and you have a specific question about a specific item, how do you ask that question to a store employee? That would have been a better lesson.

-Another lesson was how to fill out a work application. I don't need to learn this. I've been here a long time. That I know how to do, and this was in the advanced class.

-I feel that if the purpose is for the kids to interact with others and playing games, then that's what they should be doing. This year, the new model is that they go in and take a nap. I don't like this... The whole point is for them to interact and show them learning games and songs. If napping is going to be the thing, then I'll just have my kid nap at home.

-But the way they are running now, we don't see that you will ultimately get your GED. The way the classes are organized is not conducive to that.

-Parents don't go because they are not learning.

-[Someone] who has been there for [multiple] years, very consistent and doesn't miss class but still in the beginning group...can't pass the test.

#### **Theme #4:** Eligibility exclusion

Many people know about the Family Literacy Program and its learning objectives, but they do not meet eligibility requirements to enroll, so they are unable to avail of this service.

##### **Subtheme:** Having no interactions with young children

##### **Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-It seems like this particular program is for families with young kids. It would be nice if you could go if you didn't. +

##### **Subtheme:** Having interactions with young children but not guardianship

##### **Translated Quotation from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Yes, they know, but like it was mentioned before, there are some families or people who would like to attend but they don't have young kids anymore. There are grandmothers who take care of younger kids, but they're not their own younger kids, so they can't attend. They're not their own immediate guardians. So then they can't attend. It would be nice to not have that as a barrier.

**Category D:** Concept of health

This category portrays how respondents understand and conceptualize what it means to be healthy.

**Theme #1:** Wholeness and integrity

Participants described health as multidimensional, listing different dimensions of health. They mentioned mental, physical, and emotional components, which make up complete health. They also used the terms "lifestyle" and "establish a good routine" as means for maintaining health.

**Subtheme:** Physical factors

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

- Nutrition
- Eating
- Overall eating healthy
- Not consuming alcohol or drugs
- Fresh air
- Being outdoors

- Exercise
- Movement
- Getting a physical
- Dental checkups
- Regular checkups

**Subtheme:** Socialization

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

- Emotional
- Good relationships
- Having and giving help

**Subtheme:** Cognitive factors

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

- Mental
- Having curiosity

**Category E:** Personal actions to obtain health

This category demonstrates how respondents seek to achieve health in their own lives.

**Theme #1:** Physical factors

Participants described their actions to protect the body and maintain its optimal functioning.

**Subtheme:** Movement and body mechanics

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

- Exercise

-Walking

-In the summer it's easier to stay active. We go walking and do sports.

**Subtheme:** What goes into the body, ingestible substances

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Having healthy, natural food for my children and husband.

-Drink water.

-Healthy eating for kids; keeping that a balance.

-Trying to stay clean and make sure the foods we eat are clean.

Specifically when eating vegetables, making sure our vegetables are clean.

+

**Subtheme:** Cleanliness

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Maintaining a clean environment.

-Having clean hygiene, washing hands, or using sanitizer.

-Trying to stay clean and make sure the foods we eat are clean.

Specifically when eating vegetables, making sure our vegetables are clean.

+

**Subtheme:** Recovery

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Having a sleep routine.

-Getting good rest.

-Relaxing

-Sleeping well.

-Helping our kids sleep well.

**Theme #2:** Cognitive development

Participants expressed the importance of discovery, particularly in terms of encouraging their children to keep learning about the world around them.

**Subtheme:** Intrinsic control

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Concentration

-Staying alert

**Subtheme:** Nurturing activities

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Reading. This helps stay away from electronics, makes them inquire, and builds vocabulary

-Having good habits with my daughter, doing recreation. Showing her.

**Subtheme:** Conducive conditions

**Translated Quotations from Transcribed Focus Group Discussion:**

-Not staying at home too much.

-Not too many electronics.

-Stay away from electronics.

**Discussion**

*Findings*

As far as community awareness, the most common method by which enrolled students learned of the Family Literacy Program coincides with how focus group participants indicated they find out about community programs. From the focus groups, we were able to gather other

preferred methods of outreach for good measure. Focus group participants, however, suggested community awareness was likely not a major barrier to getting students enrolled. From questionnaires, this was supported by half of respondents indicating they knew someone interested in enrolling in the Family Literacy Program.

Feedback from focus group participants confirmed two of the external barriers to enrollment that Family Literacy Program staff predicted: time and transportation. Together, time and transportation amplify schedule-related barriers, indicating an oversight in planning and consideration of scheduling conflicts between adults attending the Family Literacy class and the time children are dismissed from school and arrive home. The third predicted barrier, departure of Latino community members who had originally expressed interest in the program, is unverifiable. In addition to time and transportation, focus group participants expressed exasperation regarding internal structural issues from teaching inconsistencies and poorly aligned progress measures for students including mismatching of skill levels (requests for intermediate class). This was unexpected, considering all currently enrolled students indicated they are satisfied with the Family Literacy Program thus far. Despite the frustrations described, there was a general consensus among all study participants that there was an amount of benefit gained from attending the Family Literacy Program, especially if operations were more organized and teachings more structured.

### *Limitations*

The study was limited by time, which created major constraints on the study's methodology. The recruitment process was dependent on attendance at community events hosted by Eastern Carver County Community Education, in which community engagement is already deficient. Predictably, this perpetuated the pattern of recycling through a population that has

already been reached by the school district's efforts. Although the research team made multiple suggestions for alternative recruitment, the school district's choice to persist with essentially the same strategy in place for the Family Literacy Program precluded participation to an expanded pool of community members. Inclement weather played a role in interfering with opportunities to host events. Cold weather was also a deterrent to community members from attending the events where recruitment was taking place. Time constraints required efficiency in data collection and analysis. The amount of data collected was less than desired, however focus group recruitment was discontinued due to the trend of non-attendance at community events, a lack of community events planned by the study's deadline for completion, and recruitment fatigue on the school district with little return on invested time.

Data analysis and categorizing was done solely by the principal investigator, without being cross-checked for reliability. Another limitation in data analysis pertains to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire, where written responses were given in list form and sometimes lacked context from what exactly the respondent was trying to convey. In terms of target population, only one respondent had no experience with Family Literacy Program – hence constraints placed on the recruitment approach did not capture the population most untapped and most desired. Findings from this study may lack generalizability to minority populations in other defined regions, since it is focused on Carver County's dynamic relationship to its Latino community and specific to the Family Literacy Program. Such specificity creates saturation in the community perceptions that we have gathered, so it is considered a strength for this study. Despite this, feedback concerning the program itself as a lived experience generated often consistent themes indicating issues to be addressed once a participant is enrolled.

### *Recommendations*



Based on the feedback from questionnaires and focus groups, there are many topics of interest that are not currently covered in the Family Literacy Program. Having these suggested topics can aid in the creation of lesson plans to use in class. Study participants expressed a desire for greater depth from the lessons they are given. Standardizing lesson plans will create clarity about learning objectives and outcomes. Asking students what they desire out of their classes will help create more relevance to the lessons given, define progress markers, and create a reciprocal accountability between students and teachers. A sense of trajectory across lessons was highly desired. In addition, an intermediate level class is desired to promote continued learning at appropriate difficulty once a student has mastered the English language beyond the beginner level.

Until recently, the class was perceived to be offered for women with children, since there weren't any men enrolled. Focus group participants have suggested a more inclusive marketing approach that publicizes course options for fathers, mothers, and others who do not have young children of their own. Time has been a barrier, especially for men, to attending the Family Literacy Program. It may be beneficial to survey the community for convenient times to hold the class or to offer the class at varied times during the week to accommodate different work shifts. When considering how to reach out to the community, language accommodations should be deliberate, since the target population, particularly for the Family Literacy Program, is English language learners.

As programming changes to accommodate the considerations Latino community members presented during this study, the most proximate outcome to track is program enrollment. It is hoped, furthermore, that additional studies will stem from this to observe trends in the effects of a more general sense of community engagement and inclusion. Possible

outcomes to associate with class enrollment in follow-up studies are educational attainment levels, employment rates, and health literacy. The results from this study come from adult perspectives. Children were appropriately mentioned in responses and discussions considering the program targets families. Children's outcomes and benefits from participating in the Family Literacy Program were expressed in terms of their parents' observations, perceptions, and values. Future studies might consider following children who have been part of the Family Literacy Program using objective measures for developmental and academic success. It will also be essential to explore subsequently how to consider these findings in relation to other minority groups, particularly Russian and Somali, since there are people of those ethnicities already enrolled in the class.

### *Conclusion*

Study participants identified the value of having increased capacity to communicate in English, invest in child development, enhance family interactions, and boost community engagement. These central themes fit the premise but not always the curriculum of the Family Literacy Program, reflecting its relevance but also deficits in appeal to the Latino community. Assuming the general Latino population would find the class to be an asset, programming must be adjusted for the barriers deterring community members from enrolling and for internal structural issues.

Concepts of mental, physical, and social health expressed by study participants are realizable for them and their children through progressing in their capacities supported by attending the Family Literacy Program. The process of developing these capacities for health and wellness is complex but likely to occur, even incrementally, through experience and reflexive adaptation. Presenting fundamentals of English language and communication using lessons that

build vocabulary and a factual knowledge base around traditional health topics in turn develops verbal literacy along with health literacy. Students are further prepared with practical strategies towards optimized physical health and body functioning for all family members through elements of nutrition and activity. Equipping parents in the Family Literacy Program with this information and skills set is especially critical, since early childhood stages of development are the most vulnerable to harm and having long term repercussions.

Mental health capacity development is represented by gains in English proficiency, educational and career advancement, and the sense of purpose and esteem which secure a person's self-concept. Self-concept, behavioral health, and academic performance mutually influence each other. As children begin to understand relationships, that they are separate from others, and whom they trust, the Family Literacy Program benefits them by supporting their cognitive development and mental health.

Family Literacy students expressed a growing confidence, which supports the Latino community in extending its interactions beyond its own cultural pocket. Improved communicative ability assists parents in seizing opportunities for social interaction for them and their children, influencing feelings of acceptance and belonging. Children learn about interpersonal relationships from watching others. Family interactions introduce children to socialization patterns, so promoting the healthiest possible dynamics between family members positively impact relationships children develop with other members of the community. The positive social experiences children have with each other and their families as a result of attending the Family Literacy Program shape their lifespan interactions and willingness to engage with others and their surrounding communities. Despite its limitations, initial engagement through the Family Literacy Program acts as a springboard toward becoming more

involved with community activities and utilizing Carver County's services, however more effective outreach in marketing, schedule accommodation, and alignment of student-teacher expectations are needed to realize its potential.

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**APPENDIX A***Questionnaire*

**Please check this box to verify that you have not completed this questionnaire during a prior class**

1. How many Family Literacy classes have you attended (including today)?
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4 or more
  
2. How did you hear about the Family Literacy Class?
  - a. Word of mouth (someone told you about it)
  - b. Received the Community Education catalog in the mail
  - c. Internet
  - d. Advertisement
  - e. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Do you know someone who you think might benefit from the Family Literacy Class but is not interested in attending?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
4. Do you know someone not enrolled in the Family Literacy Class, who might benefit from it and is interested in attending?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
5. Has the Family Literacy Class met your expectations about what you would learn so far?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
6. Please describe topics, information, or skills that have been particularly helpful in the Family Literacy Class so far.
  
7. Please describe any topics, information, or skills you would like the Family Literacy Class to cover in upcoming classes.
  
8. Please describe how or why you decided to enroll in this class.
  
9. What does it mean *to you* to be healthy?
  
10. And what are some things you do to be healthier?

*Cuestionario Español*

**Por favor marque esta casilla para verificar que no ha completado este cuestionario durante una clase antes.**

1. ¿Cuántas clases de Educación Familiar ha atendido (incluyendo hoy)?
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4 o más
  
2. ¿Cómo se enteró de la Clase de Educación Familiar?
  - a. palabra de boca (alguien le dijo)
  - b. Recibió el catálogo de Educación de la Comunidad en el correo.
  - c. Internet
  - d. Anuncio
  - e. Otro (Por favor especifica) \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. ¿Conoce a alguien quien cree usted que se podría beneficiar de la Clase de Educación Familiar pero no está interesado en atender?
  - a. Si
  - b. No
  
4. ¿Conoce a alguien quien no está inscrito en la Clase de Educación Familiar quien beneficiará y quisiera atender?
  - a. Si
  - b. No
  
5. ¿La clase de Educación Familiar ha cumplido sus expectativas acerca de lo que pensó que iba aprender?
  - a. Si
  - b. No
  
6. Por favor describa los temas, información o habilidades que han sido particularmente útiles en la Clase de Educación Familiar hasta el momento.
  
7. Por favor describa cualquier tema, información o habilidades que le gustaría aprender en las próximas clases de Educación Familiar.
  
8. Por favor describa cómo o por qué decidió inscribirse en esta clase.
  
9. ¿Qué significa para usted ser saludable?
  
10. ¿Cuáles son algunas cosas que hace para mantenerse más saludable?

## **APPENDIX B**

### *Focus group question guide:*

1. What does it mean to you to be healthy?
2. And what are some things you do to be healthier?
3. From where do you get your information about community programs and services?  
Through which media?
4. Do you know about the Family Literacy Class? If yes, how did you hear about it and what do you know about it?
5. Describe what you would expect from a Family Literacy Class.
6. This is what the Family Literacy Class is meant to do [explanation]. Would this be relevant for your life? What about it sparks your interest? What about it seems useful? Any aspects that do not seem relevant?
7. What would it take for you to make the commitment to attend the Family Literacy classes (can suggest to get them started, if necessary: topics, child care, time, transportation, language, incentive)?
8. What obstacles could you foresee in attending the Family Literacy classes (can suggest to get them started, if necessary: disinterest, transportation, time, location, language)?

*Spanish focus group question guide:*

1. ¿Qué significa para usted ser saludable?
2. ¿Y cuáles son algunas cosas que hace para mantenerse más saludable?
- 3. ¿De dónde obtiene la información sobre los programas y servicios de la comunidad? A través de qué medios?
4. ¿Sabe usted acerca de la clase de Educación Familiar? En caso afirmativo, ¿cómo se enteró y que sabe usted al respecto de la clase?
5. Describa lo que usted esperaría de una Clase de Educación Familiar.
6. Esto es lo que la clase de Educación Familiar tiene la intención de hacer [explicación]. ¿Esto sería relevante para su vida? ¿Qué le interesa? ¿Qué se parece útil? ¿Hay aspectos que no parecen relevantes?
7. ¿Qué sería necesario para que usted haga el compromiso de asistir a las clases de Educación Familiar? (por ejemplo: temas, cuidado de niños, el tiempo, el transporte, idioma)?
8. ¿Qué obstáculos podría prever en asistir a las clases de Educación Familiar (por ejemplo: el desinterés, el transporte, hora, lugar, idioma)?