



Profile of Children Entering Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), Fall 2007

Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) is working to make high-quality voluntary preschool universally accessible to every 4-year-old in Los Angeles County by building upon the existing early care and education system. This brief provides a snapshot of children and families participating in LAUP center-based programs in the fall of 2007, at the beginning of their preschool year. When possible, comparison data are provided in this brief—data on children and families in L.A. County as well as data from studies of low-income preschool populations such as Head Start.

The data presented show that 4-year-olds enrolled in LAUP center-based programs are primarily Latino, most come from low-income families, and they bring diverse linguistic and cultural experiences to their classrooms. When LAUP children entered preschool, they scored within the average range, for the most part, on an array of school readiness measures. “Some of the findings have potential programmatic implications—particularly the differences in language and literacy skills among children from different language backgrounds and the high percentage of LAUP children who are obese.”

This brief is the first in a series based on the Universal Preschool Child Outcomes Study (UPCOS) funded by First 5 LA and conducted through a contract with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

About UPCOS

Los Angeles Universal Preschool¹ (LAUP) is an independent public benefit corporation created in 2004 and funded by First 5 LA, the commission established by Proposition 10. LAUP’s goal is to make high-quality voluntary preschool universally accessible to every 4-year-old in Los Angeles County by building upon the existing early care and education infrastructure. LAUP-funded preschools are located throughout Los Angeles County, and the LAUP system includes both licensed center-based programs and family child-care programs. The data presented in this research brief are part of a larger study: First 5 LA’s Universal Preschool Child Outcome Study (UPCOS), conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) and its partners, Juárez & Associates and American Institutes for Research (AIR).ⁱⁱ The data presented in this brief are based on a sample of 1,586 LAUP children in 98 funded, center-based programs, but is representative of all LAUP children and families.ⁱⁱⁱ The purpose of this brief is to provide a snapshot of the children and families participating in the LAUP center-based preschool programs at the beginning of their preschool year, in the fall of 2007.^{iv}





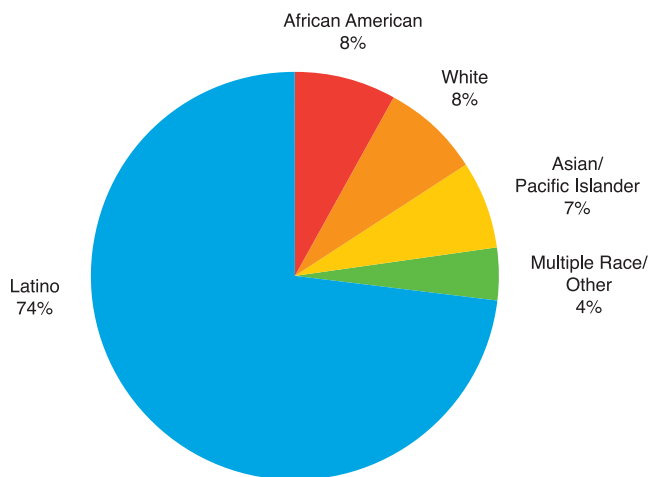
LAUP Children When They Enter Preschool

Children entering LAUP programs are highly diverse in terms of their race/ethnicity, primary language and family income level.

RACE/ETHNICITY

- To set the context, the vast majority (65 percent) of young children in Los Angeles County are Latino,^v unlike in many areas of the country where large-scale preschool initiatives are being implemented.^{vi} Not surprisingly, Latino children are the largest group of children served by LAUP programs.
- Latino children are a traditionally underrepresented group served by center-based early care and education (ECE) programs.^{vii viii}

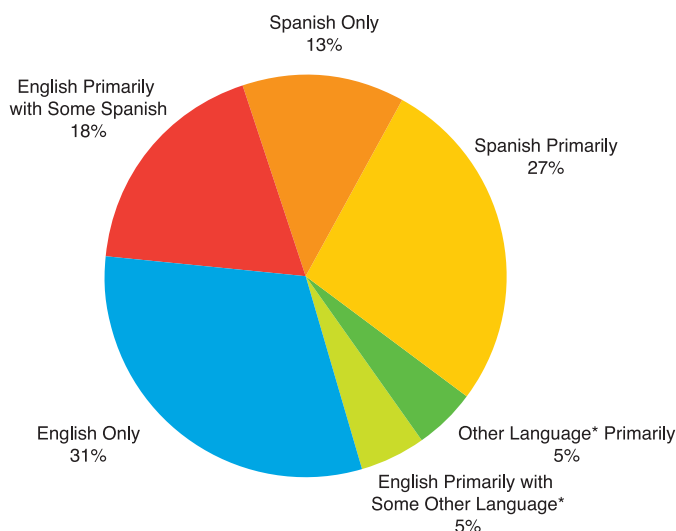
LAUP Children by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2007



PRIMARY LANGUAGE

- There is considerable variability in children’s home languages, as reported by their parents. The majority of children in LAUP programs speak only English or primarily English (55 percent). The remaining children speak Spanish either “all of the time” or “the majority of the time” (40 percent), or a language other than English or Spanish (5 percent). This “other” language group is very diverse—representing 30 different languages—the most common of which are Armenian, Korean and Vietnamese.

LAUP Children by Primary Language, Fall 2007

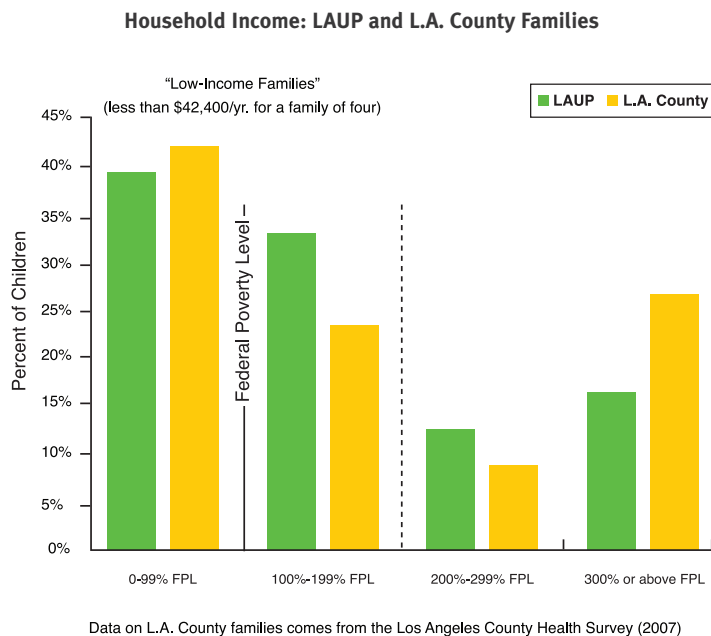


*Other Languages Spoken by Children

Arabic	Croatian	Indonesian	Tagalog
Armenian	Farsi	Japanese	Tamil
Assyrian	French	Khmer	Telugu
Bangladeshi	German	Korean	Thai
Cambodian	Guajarti	Mandarin	Tigrinya
Cantonese	Hebrew	Marathi	Vietnamese
Creolle	Hindi	Russian	Yoruba

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

- LAUP's guiding vision is to make voluntary, high-quality preschool available to all 4-year-old children in Los Angeles County, regardless of their family's income. While children from all income levels participate in LAUP, a majority of children come from low-income households.
- Nearly 40 percent of the children served by LAUP programs live in families with household incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (0-99 percent FPL), which is equivalent to an annual income of \$21,200 for a family of four.
- According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (2007), "Research consistently shows that, on average, families need an income of about *twice the federal poverty level* to make ends meet." Children living in families with incomes below this level are referred to as *low income*.^{ix} The vast majority of children served by LAUP (71 percent) are living in families classified as "low income," including those with incomes below the Federal Poverty Level.



CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS

Children were assessed at the beginning of their preschool year, across five domains associated with school readiness—language and literacy, early mathematics, social-emotional development, approaches to learning and health. The data presented here represent children's school readiness skills at the beginning of their preschool year.

Language and Literacy Skills

Throughout early childhood, language and literacy skills are fundamental to not only children's later academic success but their social and emotional well-being as well. Children who are able to use language effectively are better able to develop meaningful relationships with adults and peers—a critical milestone for children entering school. Similarly, children who enter school with early literacy skills such as identifying letters have a better foundation for later academic success.^x Within the area of language and literacy, children's expressive and receptive language skills were assessed in this study. Receptive language skills represent children's ability to understand spoken language; expressive language skills represent their ability to produce language. Receptive skills generally develop earlier than expressive skills.

Since there was considerable language diversity among the children in LAUP programs, significant effort was made to ensure that a range of children's language abilities were assessed, regardless of the specific language they spoke most often. Given that a large number of children participating in LAUP programs spoke Spanish at least part of the time, children's language skills were assessed in a way that allowed them to respond in either English or Spanish. Children who spoke only Spanish or primarily Spanish (according to their parents) were given the Spanish Bilingual Editions of the Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Text (EOWPVT-SBE) and Receptive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test (ROWPVT-SBE). The bilingual versions of these measures are designed to capture children's knowledge of the underlying abilities, regardless of the language in which the child responds. Thus, children were given credit for correct responses in either Spanish or English.

Most of the children who spoke only or primarily English (according to their parents) were assessed using the English version of the ROWPVT and EOWPVT. Similarly, since there are no equivalent measures available in languages other than English and Spanish, the small number of children (n=93) who spoke only or primarily a language other than English or Spanish were assessed using the EOWPVT and ROWPVT English versions.^{xi}

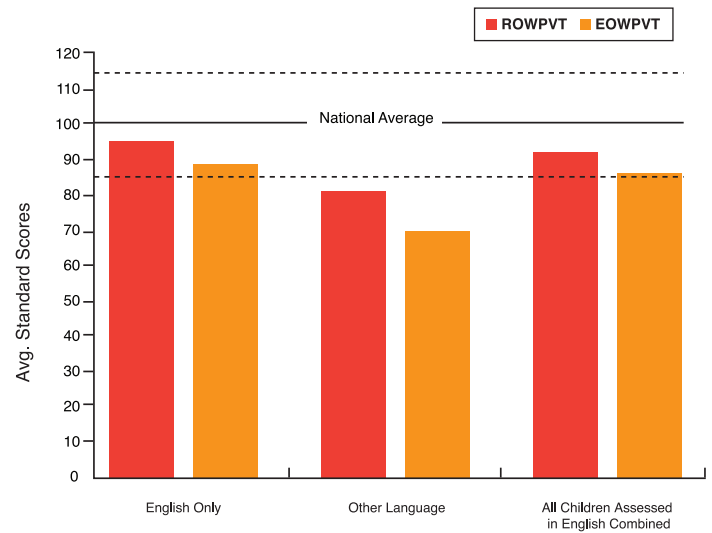
Children Who Were Assessed Only in English

- The total group of LAUP children who were assessed only in English at the beginning of their preschool year scored just below the national average, but still within the average range, in both expressive and receptive language skills. Children who only, or primarily, spoke English scored within the average range, whereas children who spoke a language other than English or Spanish scored below the average range (i.e., more than one standard deviation, or 15 points above or below the average).^{xiii} However, scores for this last group of children most likely underestimated their actual language abilities, since they did not have the opportunity to be assessed in their native language.
- All children performed better on the receptive language test (ROWPVT) than the expressive language test (EOWPVT).

Children Who Were Assessed Using Bilingual Measures

- At the beginning of their preschool year, the total group of LAUP children who were assessed on the Spanish Bilingual version of the language measures scored within the national average range in language skills. As expected, children scored higher in the area of receptive language versus expressive language skills.
- Children from Spanish-speaking homes who spoke English the majority of the time scored the highest on both receptive and expressive language measures. Similarly, this group was the only language group to score above the national average when they entered preschool.
- Children who spoke Spanish most of the time, but also spoke some English, scored just below the national average, but well within the average range. This group had the greatest difference between receptive and expressive language skills.
- The group scoring the lowest overall included children who spoke only Spanish. This group scored below the national average but just within the average range, albeit at the very bottom of the range.

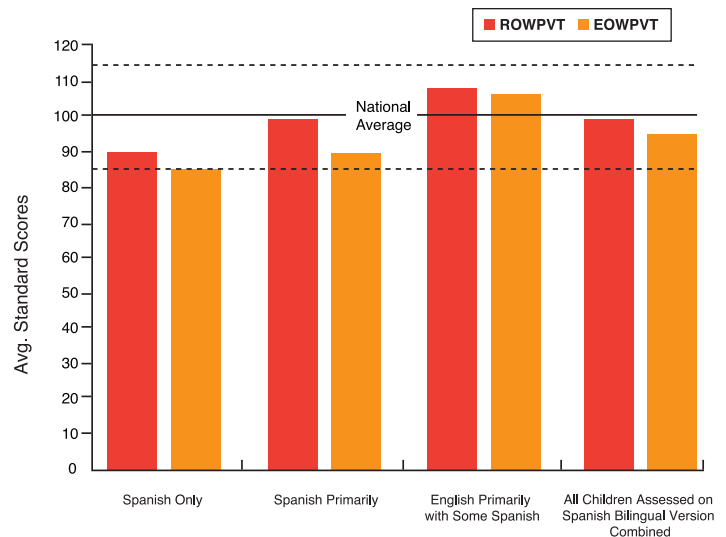
**Expressive and Receptive Language—English Version
Standard Scores by Language Group, Fall 2007**



----- Scores that fall between dotted lines are within one standard deviation of the national average and are within the "average range."

Note: Since the English and Spanish Bilingual versions of these measures were standardized on separate normative groups, it is not possible to compare standard scores across measures.

**Expressive and Receptive Language—Spanish Bilingual Version
Standard Scores by Language Group, Fall 2007**

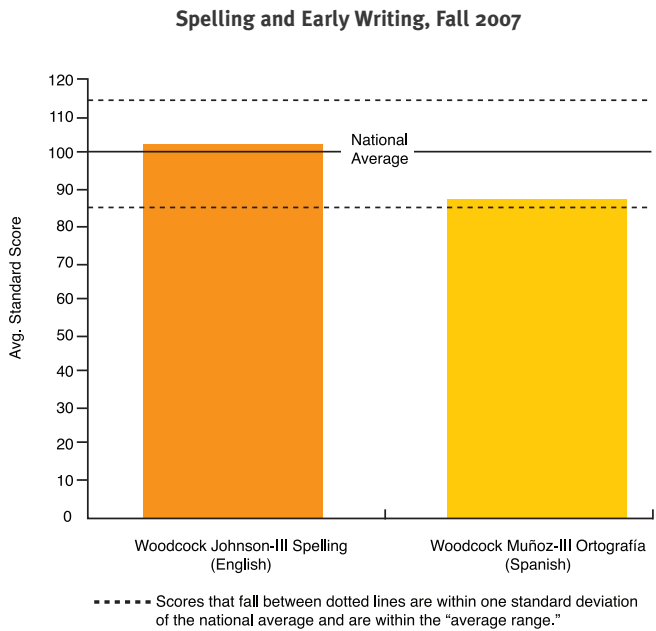


----- Scores that fall between dotted lines are within one standard deviation of the national average and are within the "average range."

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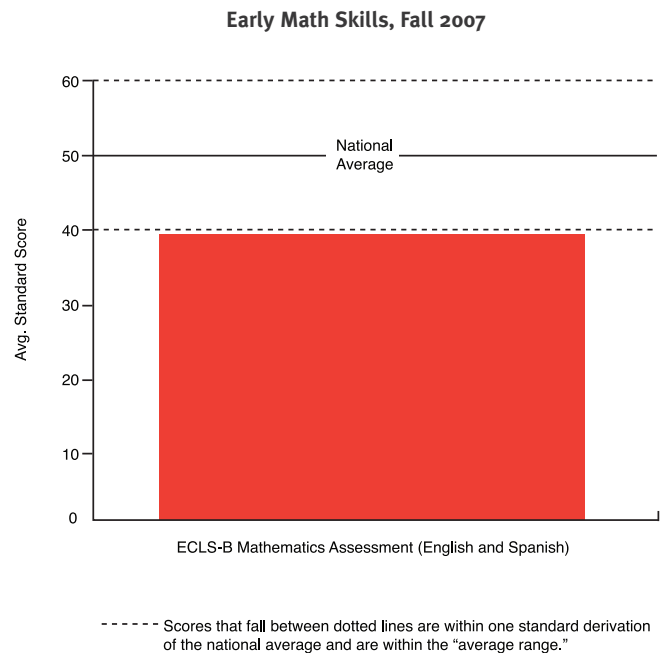
Early Literacy Skills – Spelling and Early Writing

- Research shows spelling abilities of young children predict later reading outcomes. Knowledge of the alphabet letters and phonological awareness (the ability to distinguish the sounds within words) form the basis of early decoding and spelling ability, and both are correlated with later reading and spelling achievement.^{xiv}
- The Woodcock Johnson-III Spelling (English) and the Woodcock Muñoz-III Ortografía (Spanish) were used to measure children’s early writing and spelling ability .
- The 4-year-old LAUP children who were assessed with the Spelling subtest in English scored at or above the national average, while children who were administered the Ortografía subtest in Spanish scored below the mean, but just within the average range.



Early Math Skills

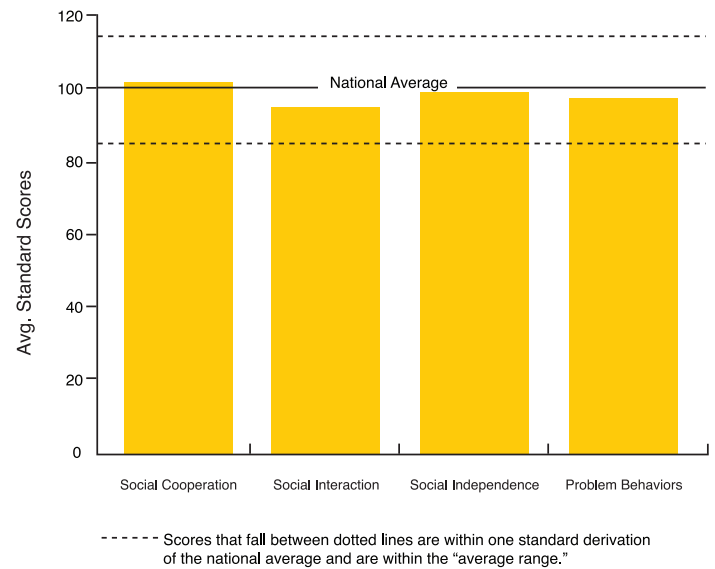
- Young children’s early math skills, such as the ability to recognize shape and size, count verbally, recognize numbers and identify general quantity (more or less), are foundational skills needed to master basic addition and subtraction in early elementary school.^{xv}
- The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) Mathematics Assessment^{xvi} was used to measure children’s early math skills including number concepts, spatial abilities, and measurement. Items were the same in English and Spanish, and children could respond in either language and still get credit for a correct response.^{xvii}
- LAUP children scored, on average, about one standard deviation below the national average on early math skills at the beginning of their preschool year.



Social and Emotional Skills

- One of the fundamental tasks of early childhood is developing the social and emotional skills necessary to establish and maintain positive relationships with other children and adults.^{xviii}
- LAUP teachers rated children’s social-emotional competence across the positive social skills areas of social cooperation, social interaction and social independence, using the Preschool Kindergarten Behavior Scales–2 (PKBS-2).^{xix} They also rated the frequency with which children exhibited common problem behaviors, using the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) Problem Behavior Scale.^{xx}
- LAUP children were scored at the national average in terms of social cooperation skills and just below the national average in social interaction skills and social independence skills, but well within the average range.
- LAUP children scored close to the national average in problem behaviors and well within the average range.

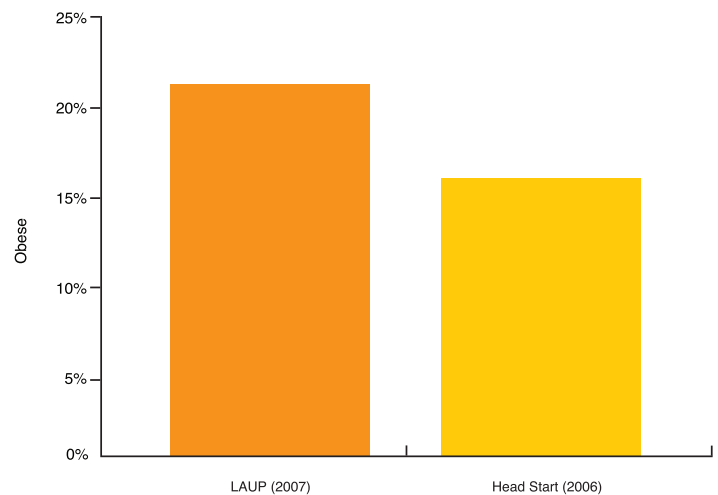
Social and Emotional Skills, Fall 2007



Health

- Children’s health status and access to medical care impact their ability to learn. The majority of LAUP children were covered by some form of health insurance (91.8 percent).
- Despite the fact that not all LAUP children had health insurance, the vast majority of children were receiving health care. Nearly 98 percent of parents reported that their children had seen a doctor in the past year, and nearly 76 percent reported that their children had seen a dentist in the past year. According to the 2005 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), 75 percent of children ages 3 to 5 in Los Angeles County had seen a dentist in the previous year, indicating that the rate among LAUP families is similar to that of the county as a whole.
- The majority of parents (76 percent) reported that their children were in “very good” or “excellent” health, which is similar to the perceptions reported by parents of 4-year-olds in the Los Angeles County Health Survey (2007), where 77 percent perceived that their children had “excellent” or “very good” health.
- Nearly one-fifth of LAUP children (21 percent) were “obese” (95th percentile or higher) when entering preschool, which is higher than the rate for preschool-age children in Head Start (16 percent).^{xxi}

Obese Children in LAUP (Fall 2007) and Head Start (Fall 2006)



LAUP Families

FAMILY COMPOSITION

- Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of children enrolled in center-based LAUP programs live with both parents and have an average of five family members in their home.
- LAUP children live in households with an average of 2.4 adults, most likely indicating that many children live with one or more extended family members such as grandparents or other relatives.

PARENT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

- A majority of LAUP families include at least one parent born outside the United States (63 percent) and the majority of those parents were born in Mexico (60 percent).
- Of those parents who immigrated to the U.S., most of the mothers and even more of the fathers have lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years. A relatively small portion of mothers and even fewer fathers have been in the U.S. for five years or less.

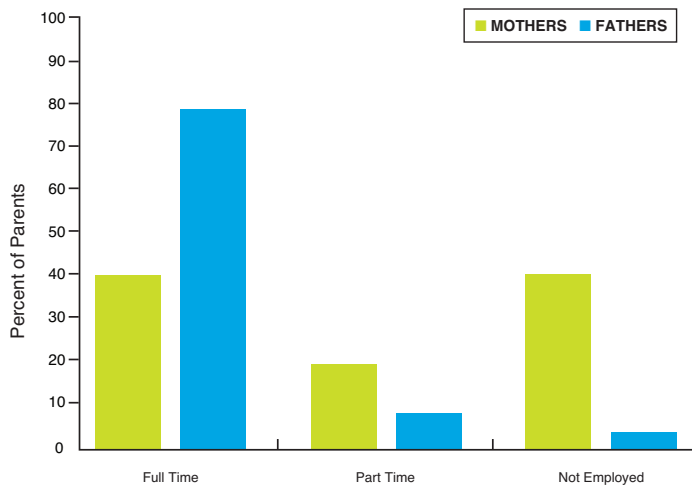
PARENT EMPLOYMENT

- The majority of fathers reported working full time, whereas fewer than half of mothers reported working full time.

Number of years in the U.S., Mothers and Fathers



Parent Employment Status



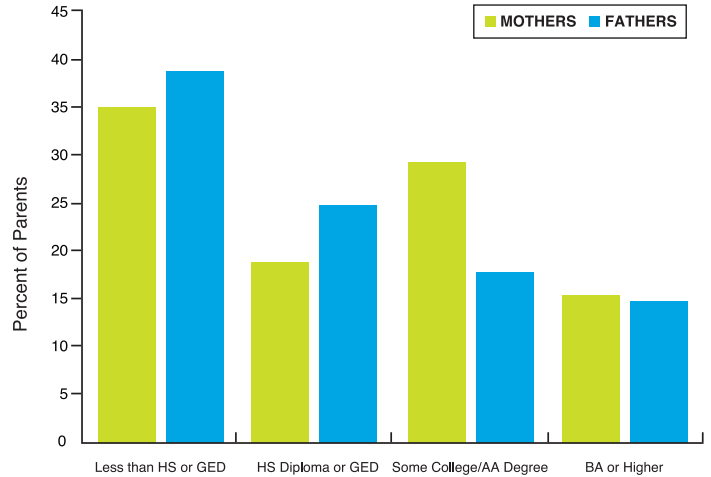
PARENT EDUCATION

- A large proportion of LAUP parents had less than a high school education. Over one-third of fathers and of mothers had less than a high school diploma or GED. In comparison, approximately 25 percent of all parents in L.A. County have less than a high school diploma, according to 2007 Los Angeles Health Survey estimates.

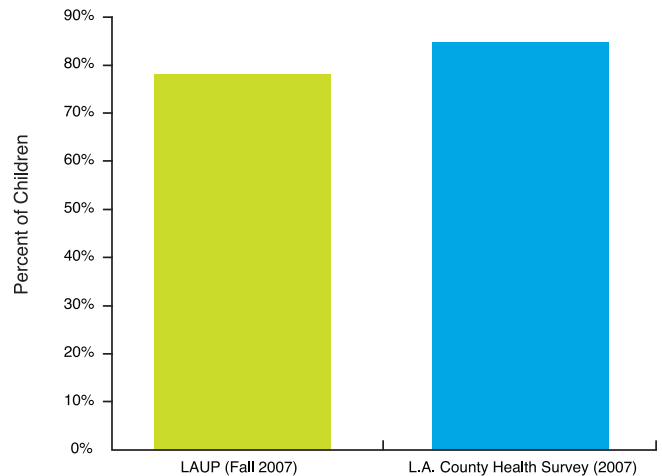
HOME LITERACY ACTIVITIES

- Research shows that the more time parents spend in home literacy activities with their children (i.e., talking, reading, telling stories), the greater the benefits to children’s school readiness skills and abilities.^{xxii} Children whose parents read to them tend to have a larger vocabulary and more positive approaches to learning,^{xxiii} and perform better in school.^{xxiv}
- While the vast majority of LAUP children are read to at least three times a week, the percentage is not as high as for all 4-year-old children in Los Angeles County.

Parent Educational Attainment



4-Year-Old Children Who Were Read to Three or More Times per Week: LAUP and L.A. County



References

- ⁱ For more information about LAUP, visit the Web site at www.laup.net.
- ⁱⁱ The study encompasses two phases. In the first phase of the study, spring 2007, we examined the feasibility, reliability and validity of child development and classroom quality measures for the culturally and linguistically diverse population of children served by LAUP-funded programs. The second phase of the study, fall 2007 and spring 2008, investigated questions about the quality, intensity and overall implementation of LAUP programs and how these factors were related to developmental outcomes of children by the end of their preschool experience.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The data provided for sampling was representative of children in LAUP programs as of June 2007, and therefore may not be representative of “all LAUP children.”
- ^{iv} The representative sample includes 1,586 children from 98 center-based programs (no family child care programs). The sample was drawn in May 2007 and represents those center-based programs that were receiving LAUP funding and were fully operational at the time.
- ^v Data from Los Angeles County Health Survey, 2007.
- ^{vi} For example, NCEDL Multi-State Preschool Study and the Study of Statewide Early Education Programs (SWEET) reported that 28 percent of their sample was Latino. Diane Early, Oscar Barbarin, Donna Bryant, Margaret Burchinal, Florence Chang, Richard Clifford, Gisele Crawford, Wanda Weaver, Carollee Howes, Sharon Richie, Marcia Kraft-Sayre, Robert Pianta and W. Steven Barnett. *Pre-Kindergarten in Eleven States: NCEDL's Multi-State Study of Pre-Kindergarten & Study of State-Wide Early Education Programs (SWEET) Preliminary Descriptive Report*; (May 24, 2005).
- ^{vii} M.E. Zarate and H. Pachon, “Education,” *2006 Latino Scorecard: Road to Action*, (Los Angeles, CA: United Way of Greater Los Angeles, 2006).
- ^{viii} V. Buysse, D. C. Castro, T. West and M. Skinner, “Addressing the Needs of Latino Children: A National Survey of State Administrators of Early Childhood Programs,” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* (2005), 20(2), 146-16318.
- ^{ix} S. Fass and N. K. Cuthen, *Who Are America's Poor Children? The Official Story*. (National Center for Children and Poverty, November 2007), http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_787.html#1.
- ^x National Research Council Institute of Medicine, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development, Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development*. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds., Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).
- ^{xi} Since the Spanish Bilingual and English Versions of these measures were standardized separately, it is not possible to compare standard scores across measures. Two children were not able to be assessed in either English or Bilingual versions of these measures.
- ^{xii} For analysis purposes, we narrowed the six groupings from the language routing process into four groups based on the children's performance on some of the direct assessments. The Spanish Only and Spanish Primarily groups performed differently, particularly in their knowledge and use of English, so we kept them separate. Three other groups (English Only, English Primarily and English Only with Other Language) did not differ from each other in their performance, so we combined them into a single group for analysis purposes.
- ^{xiii} National mean for standard scores is 100 with a standard deviation of 15.
- ^{xiv} D.S. Strickland and T. Shanahan, *Laying the Groundwork for Literacy. Educational Leadership*: 61, 74-77.
- ^{xv} National Research Council, *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers. Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy*. Barbara T. Bowman, M. Suzanne Donovan and M. Susan Burns, editors; Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2001).
- ^{xvi} Jerry West, *Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort, Project Summary*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).
- ^{xvii} The ECLS-B Preschool Mathematics Assessment data was not available for this brief.
- ^{xviii} National Research Council Institute of Medicine, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development, Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development*, Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds; Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).
- ^{xix} Kenneth W. Merrell, *Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales: Second Edition*. (Austin, TX: Pro-ED, 2002).
- ^{xx} Frank M. Gresham and Stephen N. Elliott, *Social Skills Rating System* (Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service, 1990).
- ^{xxi} Department of Health and Human Services, *Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES): New Research on Head Start Outcomes and Program Quality* (December 2006).
- ^{xxii} Alan L. Mendelsohn, Leora N. Mogilner, Benard P. Dreyer, Joel A. Forman, Stacey C. Weinstein, Monica Broderick, Karyn J. Cheng, Tamara Magloire, Taska Moore and Camille Napier, “Inner-City Preschool Children; The Impact of a Clinic-Based Literacy Intervention on Language Development in Inner-City Preschool Children,” *Pediatrics* (2001): 107;130-134.
- ^{xxiii} Department of Health and Human Services, *Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES): New Research on Head Start Outcomes and Program Quality* (December 2006).
- ^{xxiv} C. E. Snow, S. M. Burns and P. Griffin, Editors, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, Chapter 4: “Predictors of Success and Failure in Reading.” National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences. (Courtesy of National Academy Press, 1998).



Good Manners

Little Miss Muffet
sat on a tuffet
in a tree and when
there came a spider
that drew himself
across Miss Muffet's seat



This research brief describes the work done for First 5 LA by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) and its subcontractors, Juárez and Associates and American Institutes for Research (AIR), to conduct the First 5 LA/LAUP Universal Preschool Child Outcomes Study (UPCOS). We would like to thank Michael López from National Center for Latino Child & Family Research; John Love, Cheri Vogel, Sally Atkins-Burnett, Susan Sprachman, Margaret Caspe and Kathy Sonnenfeld from MPR; and LAUP staff and coaches, especially Kim Hall, Jessica Brauner and Susan Cooper for their considerable input and participation. The current brief summarizes key findings from the fall 2007 baseline data collection. For more information on this study please go to <http://www.first5la.org/research/UPCOS>.



Champions For Our Children

First 5 LA

First 5 LA is a unique child advocacy organization created by California voters to invest tobacco tax revenues in programs for improving the lives of children in Los Angeles County, from prenatal through age 5. First 5 LA champions health, education, and safety causes concerning young children and families. For additional information about First 5 LA, our partners and programs, visit www.first5la.org or email F5LAResearch@first5la.org.

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