

PASITOS PLAYGROUPS

by Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County

Region 9 • Santa Rosa, California

www.caponoma.org



Children • School Readiness • Spanish-Speaking Families

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

The goal of the Pasitos Playgroups program is to increase school readiness for low-income, Spanish-speaking families in Sonoma County. **Pasitos Playgroups are structured, educational, evidence-informed groups that served over 300 families each year across the county. The no-cost groups provide parents and their children between the ages of 1 ½ -4 years with information to promote optimal child development and their child's readiness to enter kindergarten.** For the children, the weekly groups provide fun and engaging opportunities to enhance skills that are essential to entering school ready to succeed, including fine motor, early literacy, and social/emotional skills.

We have successfully implemented this program for the past 14 years and currently have ongoing funding from First 5 Sonoma County, Sonoma County Vintners' Foundation, and Santa Rosa City Schools Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) funds. We have partnered with over 15 school districts and other community-based organizations including Burbank Housing. We have developed a survey that tracks parents' knowledge and shows each year substantially increases their understanding of their role as first teacher as well as such important aspects of parenting such as increased reading, importance of routines, knowledge of resources, and use of positive parenting techniques.

LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED BY INITIATIVE

In Sonoma County, the Pasitos Playgroups program is designed to address the well-understood "opportunity



gap" for English learning for Latinx children who make up an increasing percentage of children entering school. Only 30% of Latinx students met or exceeded the third-grade reading standard compared to 60% of white children while making up 45% of school enrollment.

The '18-'19 Road to Early Achievement and Development for Youth (READY) report from Sonoma County Human Services Department shows that children from Spanish-speaking households were 25% less likely to enter kindergarten "ready to go," compared to 40% of their English-speaking classmates. "School readiness has effects beyond the first few months of kindergarten; children with higher levels of school readiness at age five are generally more successful in grade school, are less likely to drop out of high school, and earn more as adults..."(Brookings Report, 2012). When children graduate from high school, their future economic and educational options are increased. The READY report also showed that children who have

participated in the Pasitos Playgroups program score higher as they enter kindergarten than children of the same demographics.

ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

Over the last several years, CSBG has funded the administrative costs of the Pasitos Playgroups Program which includes overall program supervision and the data management system used to assess agency programs. CSBG funds are also used to conduct our biannual community needs assessment and the strategic planning process when needed.

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

The Pasitos Playgroups program was developed by CAP Sonoma to meet the needs of the low-income families who wanted an opportunity to help their children be ready for school success, and it has been implemented in Sonoma County since 2006.

It is based on the Strengthening Families framework, stressing the 5 Protective Factors (parental resilience, social connections, concrete supports in time of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children). These protective factors decrease the odds of child abuse and neglect.

The Pasitos Playgroups model is designed (and service-marked) to help families prepare their children for success in school. Studies show that children who enter kindergarten “ready” are more likely to be able to read at a proficient level by the third grade, and then are more likely to graduate from high school. They will have more postsecondary options for future economic stability. The program is also designed to help low-income, Spanish-speaking parents who make up 26% of the county’s population (20+% live in poverty) increase the strength of their families by increasing social connections/social capital and providing information and referrals to CAP services at the Via Esperanza Family Resource Center to increase economic assets and access to adult education classes community resources.

Families that are stable and nurturing can give their children a strong start and Pasitos Playgroups plays an important role in the agency’s Whole Family Approach. Parents and children learn together, while parents build social capital, knowledge of health and wellbeing, and access to the Agency’s financial classes and economic supports.

EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

Pasitos Playgroups has been accepted in Sonoma County’s Upstream Portfolio. To achieve this distinction, the program submitted its manual with curriculum, and policies, and procedures, a literature review about the efficacy of playgroups, a scope of work, comprehensive logic model, and an evaluation plan. The data that has been collected over the past years of implementation has defined it as an evidence-informed practice.

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EQUITY LENS

Pasitos Playgroups addresses the needs of under-served Latinx population that generally has been less successful in the County of Sonoma schools. Each year, the program has served hundreds of families who are eager to learn about school expectations and what they can do to help their children succeed. It is presented in a culturally competent manner by bilingual, bicultural leaders who have been trained in working with both adults and young children. **The Pasitos Parent Survey and the READY study show that the program supports parent engagement and provides information and models to enhance school readiness.**

CUSTOMER VOICE

Pasitos Playgroups conducts parent surveys. Parents have shared their experience with the program.

My name is Norma R. I am a mother of three children: two boys and a girl. My oldest son never had this amazing opportunity, to attend this wonderful program but my youngest son did. I was able to see the difference between my two boys. When my youngest son started preschool, I noticed how comfortable he felt. He was able to identify the colors, numbers, and shapes. He was also able to write his name. This is one of the reasons I decided to enroll my daughter in this program so that she could also have the same opportunities and experiences of my youngest son.

I want to let you know I cannot be more thankful with this program. I really want this amazing program to continue serving families because it is making a big difference in children's lives.

My daughter started this program at three years old. She is now five years old and well prepared to start kindergarten.

Thank you,
Norma R.

Thanks, Pasitos! I liked the time in the program because I learned how important it was to spend time playing with my son. He learned new things such as singing, dancing, playing, and sharing. These things helped him to interact with other children. I know that he is now ready to take a step forward into preschool.

Luisa B

Parent engagement is the essence of Pasitos. It is a parent-child education program. With a two-generation approach, the impact is intensified. Pasitos is focused on building a child's school readiness skills by directly working with the child and simultaneously showing parents how to teach their child. Engaging the parent is instrumental to helping children be ready for kindergarten.

Angie Dillon-Shore, M.A., M.Ed.
Executive Director

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