



Longitudinal Study Overview: Therapeutic, High Quality Early-Education Helps At-Risk Children Perform Better in School Than Their Peers.

Mi Escuelita, a South Bay Community Services therapeutic preschool, is the only one of its kind designed especially for children affected by domestic violence and abuse to help break the cycle of violence, help children heal and begin the right path for school. Children who have been exposed to domestic violence are more likely than their peers to experience a wide range of difficulties that affect their development, education, and health. Mi Escuelita is funded in part by First 5 San Diego, CalEMA, private donations, student sponsorships, and SBCS Annual Change Their Lives Gala.

SUMMARY

An evaluation study was conducted by UCSD to examine the overall effectiveness of Mi Escuelita on school readiness for these vulnerable and at-risk children. This evaluation addressed the primary research question:

What are the academic achievements of children who received services at Mi Escuelita in elementary school compared to their peers in the CVESD?

The current evaluation includes children who participated in the Mi Escuelita program from the fall of 2006 through the spring of 2012 and who were subsequently enrolled in the Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD). The majority of children were located in the CVESD during kindergarten, though some left the district after participation in Mi Escuelita and later returned. Data for this evaluation was drawn from CVESD academic years 2007-2008 through 2012-2013.

Results from the evaluation clearly illustrate that, across all years, children who participated in the Mi Escuelita program performed equal to, and often better, than their peers on several different academic outcomes. Mi Escuelita students had greater success rates in passing the local area achievement tests in math, reading, and writing in kindergarten, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Mi Escuelita program on school readiness.

In addition, when following the Mi Escuelita children throughout their elementary careers, those early success rates were largely maintained. For example, even while Mi Escuelita children were in the 3rd grade, their scores were still, on average, higher than those in the larger CVESD. Children who had the opportunity to participate in the Mi Escuelita program also had greater success on California State Tests, which begin in 2nd grade, than did their peers.

Mi Escuelita Children	Traumatized Children in the U.S.
Achieve a degree of school readiness as great, and sometimes to a greater degree, than other children in the CVESD	Children exposed to domestic violence between the ages of three & five have reduced verbal ability, impeding school readiness.
Successfully advance to the next grade at a rate equal to their CVESD peers.	35 - 42% of elementary-aged children with trauma experiences repeat a grade (compared to an average of 14% nationwide).
Maintain academic success (i.e. equal to peers) through the early elementary school years.	Score up to 20% lower than non-abused children on statewide standardized tests in grade three.
Nearly equal number of Mi Escuelita children and CVESD children receive special education (approximately the national average of 12%).	23 - 47% receive special education at some point in their schooling.

Background

In January 2005, SBCS and CVESD were awarded a capital grant by First 5 San Diego to build Mi Escuelita - a cost-free, therapeutic, full-day preschool with a curriculum which integrates multiple components including clinical intakes and assessments, children's individual and group counseling, Healthy Development Services and children's mental health services. The stimulating program incorporates the evidence-based Incredible Years and Houghton Mifflin PRE-K curricula.

Children are referred to Mi Escuelita by law enforcement, child welfare services, health centers, domestic violence programs, and other community-based programs. Enrollment has been steady since its opening often with 50+ children on the waiting list at any given time.

During the academic years ranging from 2006 through 2013, Mi Escuelita served more than 200 children and added classrooms and increased enrollment. Currently, the preschool has funding for 72 children ages three to five with three full time therapists on site and specialized staff to provided children a safe place to learn and heal and personalized support for the children's caregivers – parent, family member or foster parents – to help with behavioral issues and learning opportunities when children are away from the classroom.

School Readiness:

KINDERGARTEN TEST SCORES

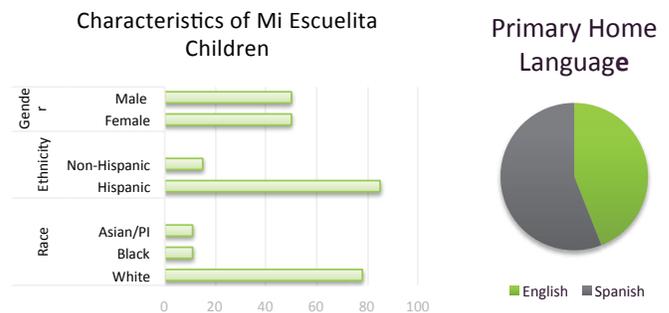
As Mi Escuelita is a program geared toward the school readiness of vulnerable children who face multiple overlapping risk factors, a central outcome of interest focuses on how the Mi Escuelita children fare in comparison to their peers during the kindergarten year of elementary school.

As can be seen, the Mi Escuelita children consistently outperform or perform at least as well as their peers, across each subject. The success of Mi Escuelita children is particularly notable with regard to math achievement, where

Methodology and Measures

To best evaluate the effectiveness of Mi Escuelita on school readiness for at-risk children, we incorporated a matching design. A matching design addresses the significant confounding and large standard errors that may impact comparison between Mi Escuelita students and those across the entire district. Cases were matched in the current study at the individual level on several attributes – gender, ethnicity, race, date of birth, socioeconomic position, primary language, and the presence of an Individualized Education Plan. Five measures of academic achievement were included as outcome variables: San Diego's local area measures for math, reading, and writing, and California's state standards for math and English. School attendance was also examined as an outcome.

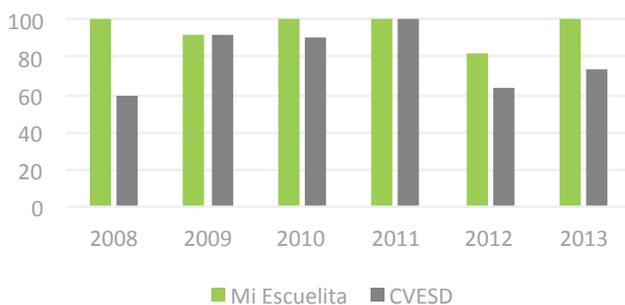
Mi Escuelita Student Profile



UCSD, Program Evaluation, 2014

across the study's years, the Mi Escuelita children meet the LAM standards for math at an average rate of 96%. This is compared to a pass rate of 80% for the general CVESD population. The patterns are similar for reading and writing (though all students meet the standards at lesser levels of success): Mi Escuelita children have an 82% pass rate for reading tests in kindergarten compared to 65% for all CVESD children, and Mi Escuelita children have a 38% pass rate for writing tests in kindergarten compared to 25% for all CVESD children.

Kindergarten:
Met Standard for Math
Achievement



Kindergarten:
Met Standard for Reading
Achievement



Achievement Across the Years:

LOCAL MEASURE SCORES

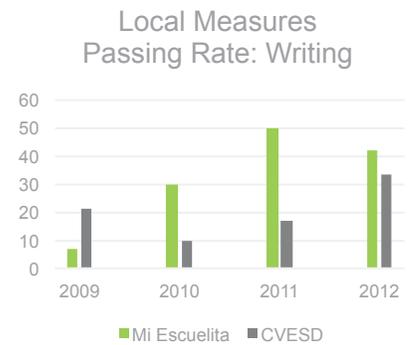
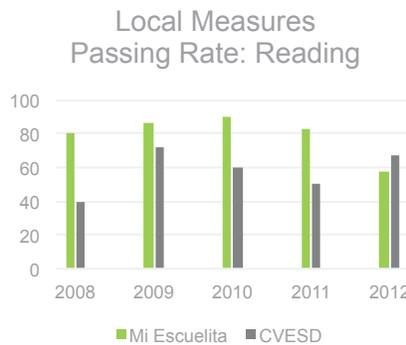
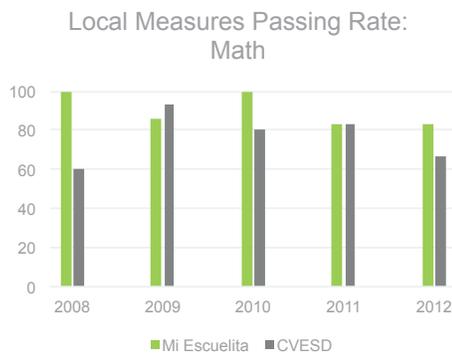
Across all years, children who participated in the Mi Escuelita program had higher success rates in passing the local area achievement tests than did their peers in the CVESD.

Math

The success rate for Mi Escuelita children was most consistent with math scores. From 2008 through 2012, children in the Mi Escuelita program had a minimum of an 83% pass rate, compared to a minimum of 60% for the CVESD. In two years – 2008 and 2010 – Mi Escuelita children had a 100% pass rate for math scores.

Reading & Writing

From 2008 through 2012, Mi Escuelita children also consistently out-performed their CVESD peers on reading and writing measures, passing at an average of 80% to 58% for reading, and at an average of 32% to 12.5% on the writing tests. When following the Mi Escuelita children throughout their elementary careers, we learned that early success rates maintained. For example, even while Mi Escuelita children were in the 3rd grade, their scores were still, on average, higher than those in the larger CVESD. These averages are included in the charts below.



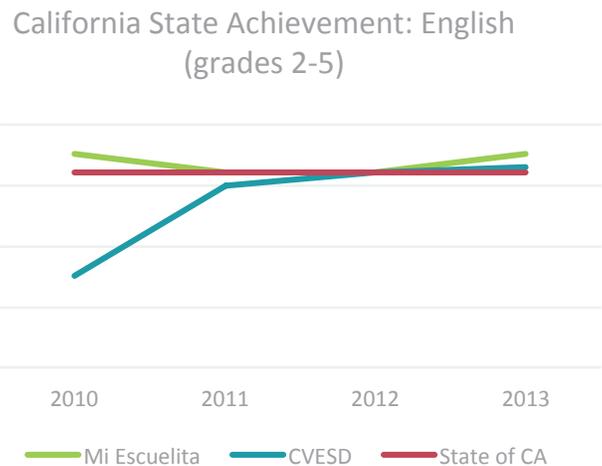
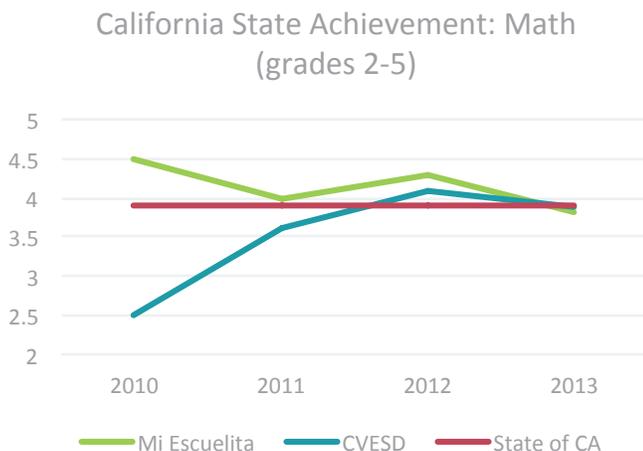
Achievement Across the Years:

STAR SCORES

Children who had the opportunity to participate in the Mi Escuelita program also had greater success on state tests than did their peers. California State Tests begin in the 2nd grade, and while the scores for all students converge in the later years, it is a testament to the Mi Escuelita program that their students continue to fare as well, or better, than their peers on the state standards.

As such, from 2010 through 2013, Mi Escuelita children scored an average of 4.25 out of 5 on the math test, compared to an average score of 3.45 for the CVESD children.

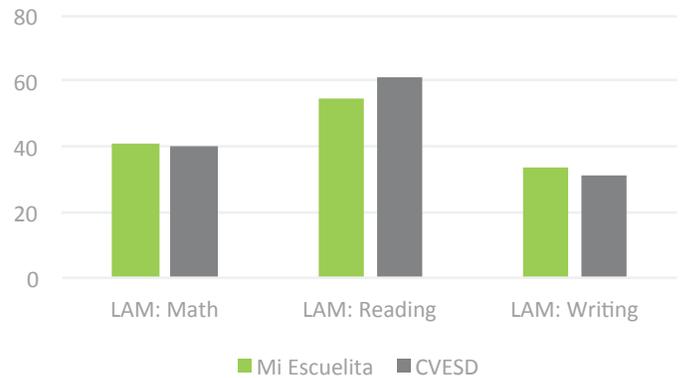
English scores averaged 3.65 across the four-years for Mi Escuelita children, compared to 3.15 for CVESD children.



Achievement Across the Years: Common Core State Standards

Notably, significant changes were made to the “passing” standards of the local measures in the 2012-2013 school year. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) assessments, designed specifically as indicators of college and career readiness, are more rigorous than the prior framework of the California Blueprint Standards. These changes resulted in all children in the CVESD passing at a substantially reduced rate than in prior years. Even so, the Mi Escuelita children continued to perform as well as, or slightly better, than their peers, across all grades.

2013 Common Core Standards:
Passing Rates



SUMMARY PROFILE

Taken together, the Mi Escuelita program demonstrates clear benefits to children who may otherwise fall quickly and unsparingly behind with regard to school readiness. The participants in the program face severe, and often multiple, risk factors that have historically led to poor academic outcomes.

While it is impossible to know the continued circumstances surrounding the lives of Mi Escuelita children as they age and move through the elementary years, there is solace in recognizing that these children, who faced significant, traumatic life experiences at very young ages, continue to perform as well on key indicators of academic success as their peers who did not experience the same types of events.

Continued commitment to the Mi Escuelita program and the children it serves cannot be underplayed. The therapeutic, developmental, and educational opportunities that the program affords its children appear pivotal for their downstream educational successes.



Evaluation study was conducted by University of California, San Diego for South Bay Community Services in partnership with Chula Vista Elementary Unified School District. A full report of the study is available upon request.

Mi Escuelita Therapeutic Preschool is funded in part by First 5 San Diego, CalEMA, private donations, student sponsorships and SBCS Annual Change Their Lives Gala. For more information about Mi Escuelita and how you can support contact SBCS at 619.420.3620



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