



LATINO FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT

IMPACT REPORT

PRE-KINDER PREPARATION

The Vital Role of
the Latino Family Literacy Project
for Borrego Springs Families



BASIC ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Executive Summary

The Latino Family Literacy Project, Spring 2025 semester empowered families to build lasting reading habits, fostering stronger connections between parents and children. With a 10% increase in consistency compared to the previous semester, 60% of parents read with their children for at least 10 to 15 minutes, four to five days a week, reinforcing literacy as a shared experience. The program saw a combined attendance rate of 74%, reflecting solid and sustained family engagement in the activities offered during this period.

Understanding the challenges families face in maintaining reading routines, the program introduced a weekly calendar system, inspired by feedback from post-program surveys. Families tracked their reading progress in a visible spot, like the refrigerator, with children marking daily accomplishments. A three-week challenge with small incentives helped establish steady routines. Early literacy is especially crucial for bilingual learners, as strong language foundations before kindergarten boost academic success, comprehension, and confidence. Exposure to books in both their home language and English enhances cognitive development, making the transition to school smoother and ensuring they stay on track.

Families also engaged in hands-on creative activities, including puppet-making, adventure journals, character development, and storytelling exercises. One of the most impactful moments came during the improvisational reading circle, where parents practiced interactive reading techniques by role-playing as children, asking questions about the story and exploring ways to make reading more engaging. To further inspire literacy, staff wore T-shirts featuring the message “Leer es Poder” (“Reading is Power”), reinforcing the program’s mission to promote education and lifelong learning. Families received Dr. Seuss-themed gift boxes filled with books and educational materials. Additionally, ApSeed tablets were distributed to three children who had not previously received one, as well as to children from the Children’s Center, ensuring they all have continued access to literacy tools.

The program’s impact is strengthened by ongoing collaboration with experts at the University of California at Irvine, where a PhD researcher works with the team to fine-tune programming surveys and conduct long-term program analysis. This partnership ensures that the curriculum remains responsive to participants’ needs while continuously improving strategies for literacy development.

The closing ceremony brought families together to celebrate their achievements with certificates of participation, a community meal, games, and a raffle, where parents and children received tokens of appreciation for their dedication. Many parents expressed feeling inspired to continue reading with their children, carrying forward the momentum built throughout the program. To track long-term engagement and progress, all parent participants provide feedback four weeks after the program’s conclusion, helping refine future strategies that support sustained literacy habits at home.

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INSPIRING LITERACY & FAMILY LEARNING: PERSPECTIVES FROM EDUCATORS



**Program Leader & Instructor
Flor Gomez**

"The Latino Family Literacy Project (LFLP) provides the opportunity to create and offer spaces dedicated to the Latino community, fostering community building and collaborative learning. At a group level, the program enriches our reading skills within an atmosphere of respect and cultural appreciation.

It is a family-oriented environment that strengthens community ties and enables the practical application of reading strategies through dynamic activities.

Being part of such a special and meaningful project for the Latino community is deeply rewarding, as it helps address some of its key needs and offers a personalized space for its development. This effort is made possible through the collaborative work of instructors, childcare providers, and school volunteers."

Borrego Springs Middle High School Principal, Victoria Baay

"BASIC's Latino Family Literacy Project (LFLP) is such a valuable part of our community and schools. When parents are given the tools and support to engage in early literacy with their children, it transforms learning into a shared experience. Programs like LFLP not only prepare young learners for school but also empower bilingual families to celebrate language and literacy in meaningful ways. Investing in early literacy means investing in stronger families, more confident students, and a more connected community."

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

BORREGO SPRINGS LEARNERS FACE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

Language Barriers

In Borrego Springs, 89% of students are English language learners (ELLs). Many Latino families face challenges due to limited English proficiency, which can hinder communication with educators and access to resources. This high percentage underscores the critical need for language support and resources to ensure these students succeed academically.

Lack of Resources

Borrego's rural and unincorporated designation poses significant challenges for local families trying to access resources. Without its own municipal government, Borrego Springs lacks access to essential services and resources typically provided by local government agencies. With the nearest large community over an hour's drive away, essential services and support are limited. This geographic isolation makes it difficult for families to find the educational and community resources they need. Many Latino families have limited access to educational resources, such as books and technology, which affects children's learning experiences and outcomes.

Academic Gaps

Latino students often start kindergarten behind their peers in literacy and reading skills, making it difficult to catch up therefore affecting long-term academic success.

Economic Challenges

A significant portion of Latino families in Borrego Springs qualify for free lunch programs, indicating economic hardships that can impact children's educational opportunities.

Parental Involvement

Limited bilingual services and language access can make it difficult for Latino parents to fully engage with their child's education, despite their willingness to be involved.



THE STRATEGY

HOW DOES LFLP SUPPORT PARENTS TO MEET THESE CHALLENGES?

Program Partnership

BASIC's Latino Family Literacy Project (LFLP), recognized as a White House Bright Spot in educational excellence for Hispanics, partners with Lectura Books to offer six to ten 90-minute sessions for parents and children.



PROGRAMS

The **Infant/Toddler program** is designed for parents with children from birth to two years old. It emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first teacher and introduces concepts of language development, child development, and essential parenting skills. Through the program, parents will learn new vocabulary in both Spanish and English, and how to observe and document their child's development. The six-week course culminates in the creation of a handmade book about their infant or toddler.



The **Preschool/Kindergarten program** (I am READY/¡LISTO!) utilizes age-appropriate books for preschool and kindergarten-aged children. Parents are guided on how to read with their children, ask engaging questions, and teach essential school readiness skills. Together, parents and children learn English and Spanish vocabulary for numbers, colors, letters, and more. Parent handouts based on Preschool Standards are provided to make reading and vocabulary enjoyable and educational for both parents and preschoolers.



ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

BASIC's LFLP program specifically targets the challenges faced by Latino learners in Borrego Springs by providing comprehensive support to both parents and children.

Bilingual Education

Instruction focuses on bilingual education, helping parents improve their English and Spanish vocabulary, which in turn enhances their ability to support their children's learning.

Fostering Love for Reading

LFLP fosters a love for reading by providing bilingual books and encouraging daily reading routines.

Culturally Relevant Environment

By creating a culturally relevant and comfortable learning environment, the program ensures that parents feel engaged and empowered in their children's education.

Building Academic Foundations

LFLP helps families build a strong foundation for academic success by promoting early literacy skills and school readiness.



PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Goals and Objectives of the Latino Family Literacy Project



[GOAL] Building a Strong Foundation ***Early Learning Begins at Home***

By fostering a love for reading and improving literacy skills among young children, BASIC's Latino Family Literacy Project ensures that Borrego children start school with a strong foundation. The program empowers parents by involving them in their children's education, thereby creating a supportive learning environment at home. This initiative not only enhances educational outcomes but also strengthens the entire community by building a culture of literacy and learning.



OBJECTIVES

Enhance Early Literacy

Provide a successful transition to kindergarten by strengthening the literacy process for the youngest children at home. This is achieved by equipping parents and family members with essential tools and strategies to support early literacy development.

Engage Parents and Families

Equip parents and family members with the knowledge and skills necessary to actively support their children's literacy journey in a collaborative manner

Promote Reading Habits: The Power of Reading Aloud

Foster an understanding of the value and importance of developing reading habits at an early age, encouraging families to start or continue with reading routines at home for at least 15 minutes per day, 5 days per week. Reading aloud to children is more than just a cozy bedtime ritual—it's a vital activity that significantly enhances a child's cognitive development, language skills, and emotional well-being. Numerous studies demonstrate that children who are read to regularly exhibit higher literacy rates, better comprehension skills, and an increased love for learning. The magic of storytelling fosters a nurturing bond between parent and child, creating a foundation for lifelong learning and curiosity.

Support Bilingual Development

Deliver multicultural and bilingual programs that create supportive spaces for learning new vocabulary. Parents will enhance their English vocabulary related to shapes, colors, numbers, and letters in both Spanish and English.

Facilitate Library Access

Ensure parents obtain a local library card to access additional resources and foster a lifelong love of reading.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Prioritize 80% completion rates for continuous growth.



Timeline and Activities

- **Location:** Borrego Springs Youth and Seniors Center
- **Program Timeline: February 4 - March 25, 2025**
 - Schedule: Tuesdays, 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm
 - Closing Ceremony, March 25th

Sharing Strategies and Tips: LFLP created spaces where, in a family-oriented setting, all participants shared their own experiences and strategies to strengthen the habit and routine of reading at home with their children. During the sessions, they exchanged different creative ideas, which they practiced together as a group and later replicated at home with their families.

- **Reading 101:** The most appropriate way to begin reading was explained, including:
 - Giving time and space without interruptions.
 - Setting a routine, for example, every night before going to sleep.
 - Starting the book by reading the title, the writer, and the illustrator on the cover.
 - Pointing with our finger to the words in rhythm with our reading, so children can concentrate and continue reading easily.
 - [Newly added Spring 2025] Implementation of weekly reading calendars that allow families to track progress and actively motivate their children to maintain and strengthen their reading routine.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS



Based on the philosophy that food can serve as a path to healing, the shared snacks and refreshments helped reinforce the connections between food, culture, and identity. Parents further enriched this experience by bringing their own salsas and favorite dishes, adding to the variety and fostering a deeper sense of camaraderie. On certain occasions, full meals were also provided, featuring favorites such as tostadas, tacos, horchata, and pizza—a universal staple enjoyed by all. Research supports this approach, highlighting its effectiveness in creating a sense of belonging and comfort. During the sessions, parents enjoyed pleasant conversations over a soothing cup of coffee, savory tortilla chips with salsa, seasonal fruit with dressings, and the cherished homemade dishes they contributed. These gatherings, enhanced by the shared meals and snacks, turned into warm, communal experiences that deepened connections and celebrated cultural traditions.

Beyond nourishment, food plays a vital role in fostering literacy habits and early education. Research shows that shared meals create an atmosphere of comfort and connection, making learning environments more engaging and welcoming. Conversations around food naturally encourage vocabulary development as parents and children discuss flavors, traditions, and preparation methods. These interactions strengthen language skills and reinforce the value of storytelling. Additionally, structured routines—including shared meals and reading sessions—help children develop consistency and positive associations with literacy. Multisensory experiences, such as enjoying a warm meal while listening to a story, further enhance cognitive engagement. By integrating food into literacy programs, families deepen their connections, build a sense of belonging, and turn reading into a shared, enjoyable experience rooted in culture, tradition, and routine.

REFINING PROGRAM STRATEGIES WITH EXPERT CONSULTATION

Long-term, the program continues to evolve in consultation with experts at the University of California, Irvine. A PhD researcher has worked closely with the team to fine-tune programming surveys, ensuring they accurately reflect participant experiences and outcomes. Their ongoing program analysis provides valuable insights, helping refine strategies that support literacy development and engagement among families.

Free Bilingual Books

Providing free bilingual books is essential for Spanish-speaking families, helping bridge the language gap while promoting literacy in both Spanish and English. These books support children in maintaining their cultural heritage while strengthening their English skills, ensuring they enter school prepared and confident. They also help families build home libraries, offering a crucial resource for those facing economic challenges. Access to a diverse collection of books fosters literacy development, encourages reading outside of structured programs, and nurtures a lifelong love for learning. These books are distributed through two main sources:

[SOURCE 1]

Lectura Books: One to two books were offered at each session during the program. Participants' favorites included:

“Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?” Parents appreciated the book's vibrant colors and large illustrations, noting that it brought back fond memories of when their children were younger.

“Baby, Let's Eat” Recognized for its durable, child-friendly material and the strong color contrasts in its illustrations, making it especially engaging for younger children.

“Paletero Man” Celebrated for its multicultural themes, bright and playful visuals, and engaging wordplay. In the heat of the desert, on an especially hot day, children cooled off with paletas (Mexican popsicles), mirroring the joyful spirit of the book and making the experience even more memorable.



[SOURCE 2]

Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL): Enrolled parents will continue to grow their home libraries well beyond the program semester, ensuring their children have lasting access to books. Through this initiative, children aged 5 and under receive a new book each month, building a family collection filled with stories to spark curiosity and learning. This will allow parents to carry forward the tools and strategies gained from each class, by weaving reading into their daily routines and strengthening the habit at home—turning simple moments into lifelong literacy foundations.

Free Educational Children's Tablets by ApSeed

Each child in the program, including those at the Children's Center, received a "Seedling" tablet, an engaging and interactive learning tool designed to support early childhood development. These tablets offer a variety of educational content, including math, music, literacy, and arts, presented through fun and stimulating games. More than just entertainment, Seedlings enhance cognitive skills and provide children with a strong foundation for future academic success.



Culturally Familiar Space

The program environment was decorated to resemble home and reflect the participants' culture. This familiar setting helped participants feel more comfortable and engaged, promoting a better learning experience.



Childcare Services

Hosting the program at the Children's Center provided a structured, distraction-free space where parents could fully engage in activities while their children participated in meaningful educational play in separate areas. The childcare area was equipped with learning materials like area rugs and toys featuring numbers, letters, and colors, fostering engagement and development. Caregivers Irma and Cheryl played a vital role in creating a nurturing environment, ensuring children felt safe and supported. Parents were so appreciative of their dedication that they presented them with thoughtful gifts at the semester's conclusion, highlighting the strong connections formed and the lasting impact of their care.



Spanish-speaking Instructors

With Flor and Blanca, former program participants, leading as Spanish-speaking instructors, parents engaged more confidently in literacy-building activities. Their firsthand experience allowed them to connect deeply with families, fostering trust and encouraging participation. By learning from instructors who had once been in their shoes, parents felt empowered to apply new strategies, improving their ability to support their children's literacy development at home.

IMPLEMENTING ENGAGING SESSIONS

To effectively meet the program's objectives within the limited seven -week semester, it is crucial to optimize time and tailor session plans to the specific needs of the group. Each class session is meticulously planned to achieve optimal development by organizing time, space, materials, and fun and engaging activities.



Group Reading and Fostering Community

Group readings were conducted, sharing practical techniques for promoting reading at home. This created a space of camaraderie and family, which is very important in the Latino community. Although welcoming to all caregivers, the Spring 2025 sessions were made up entirely of mothers. This fostered warm and engaging conversations, providing an opportunity for all to share their real-life experiences in the home, allowing participants to connect on a personal level. One of the highlights included creating a family photo album, capturing moments from their daily lives with their children. This initiative has not only strengthened community bonds but also enriched lives through shared stories and memories.



ENRICHMENT PROGRAM THROUGH CRAFTS

During the sessions, a variety of creative activities were introduced to align with participants' interests and learning styles, enriching their overall experience. These hands-on projects encouraged engagement, artistic expression, and skill-building, reinforcing both literacy and family learning in a dynamic way. These activities proved to be highly supportive in enhancing the group's overall learning experience.

Both children and adults participated in a variety of engaging, hands-on activities that encouraged creativity and storytelling. From puppet-making and mural decorating to crafting adventure journals, developing characters and short stories, and designing picture frames, each activity provided a unique opportunity for artistic expression and literacy growth.

One of the most impactful experiences was the improvisational reading circle, where participants took turns engaging in guided reading. To make the activity more interactive, the rest of the group acted as children, asking questions about the story as if they were young learners. This role-playing exercise helped parents anticipate different reading scenarios, share strategies for keeping children engaged, and explore ways to make storytelling more dynamic and enjoyable.



These activities focused on the group's love for creativity, particularly using materials like watercolors. Due to high participation, conversation time was extended to allow in-depth discussions on topics of interest. This flexible approach ensured participants had ample opportunity to share experiences, advice, and strategies for developing children's reading skills from a multicultural perspective, which was crucial for the program's objectives. Prioritizing conversation time while respecting the overall class duration proved valuable.

THE OUTCOMES

GROWTH BY THE NUMBERS

Total participants hosted
[Parents] 6
[Children] 14

Total tablets provided
[LFLP] 3
[Children's Center] 12

Total books provided
101

Total meals served
138

Total library card enrollments
6



PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE



Of the total participants, 33.33% of the adults attended at least seven out of the eight scheduled sessions, demonstrating a strong commitment to the program, while 50% attended between five and six sessions, reflecting consistent participation throughout the semester. When considering both adults and children, the combined attendance rate was **74%**, indicating solid and sustained family engagement in the activities offered during this period.

To help maintain this active participation, several strategies were implemented, including sending reminders one day before each session with brief, motivational messages encouraging continued attendance. Additionally, each session concluded with a brief recognition of the importance of ongoing participation, reinforcing that these classes are created by and for them. Finally, each session included new and creative reinforcement activities designed to help both children and adults enjoy reading in a dynamic and meaningful environment.

Promoting Reading Habits

This initiative fostered a powerful reading habit among families, resulting in a 10% increase in consistency compared to the previous semester. In fact, **60%** of parents read with their children for 10 to 15 minutes at least four to five days a week, reinforcing both literacy and family connection. This outcome reflects the program's effectiveness in adapting to the daily realities and challenges faced by parents, particularly in time management and organizing daily activities.



During the Spring 2025 semester, a new strategy was introduced in direct response to participant feedback from post-program surveys. Many parents shared that, despite their best intentions, busy schedules and daily demands often made it difficult to maintain a consistent reading routine. To help overcome these challenges, each household received a printed weekly calendar, designed to be placed in a visible spot—often the refrigerator—as a daily reminder for reading time. Children took an active role, excitedly marking the calendar each time they completed a session, transforming reading into a habit rather than a task. Families also participated in a three-week challenge, where a small reward was given at the end of each week for maintaining consistent reading habits. Over time, parents and children established a steady routine of reading 4 to 5 days per week, setting a strong foundation for daily engagement that would continue beyond the program.

To further inspire reading habits, staff wore T-shirts featuring the message "*Leer es Poder*" ("*Reading is Power*"), reinforcing the program's mission to promote literacy and education within the community: Developing these habits early is essential—not just for improving vocabulary and comprehension, but for fostering a lifelong love of learning. When families make reading a regular part of their lives, children grow up seeing books as a source of knowledge, adventure, and possibility rather than just another school requirement.

To ensure continued progress, all parent participants provide feedback four weeks after the program concludes, helping track their reading consistency and identify ongoing challenges. This follow-up allows the program to refine strategies that support sustained literacy habits at home, ensuring families feel equipped and motivated to keep reading together long after their sessions have ended.

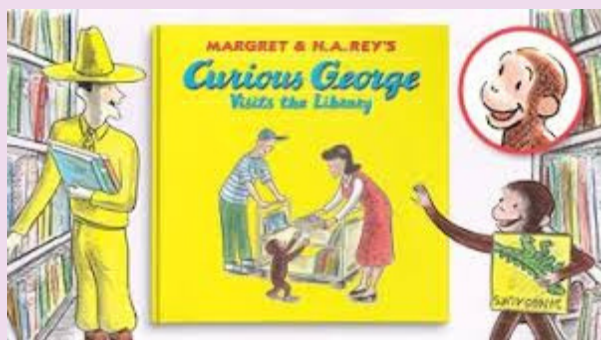
Sixty (60%) of parents read with their children for at least 10 to 15 minutes, four to five days a week. Thanks to new strategy, this is a 10% improvement over the prior semester.

Facilitating Library Access

Adventure at the Library: Field Trip & Card Sign-Up!



The Latino Family Literacy Project achieved an impressive **100% success rate** in ensuring that all participating parents obtained a local library card, expanding their access to valuable literacy resources beyond the program. This milestone complemented the home libraries already built through program sessions and DPIL, further enriching the reading opportunities available to families facing economic challenges.



During the library field trip, parents and children engaged in a bilingual reading session of *Curious George Visits the Library*, a book provided through the program. Learning alongside George the curious monkey made the experience engaging and relatable, encouraging participants to embrace the library tour with enthusiasm rather than hesitation. The youngest readers, already developing fluency, excitedly took turns reading short passages alongside older children and adults, applying reading strategies they had learned—such as asking key questions and adjusting voice levels for an immersive experience. Parents enjoyed guiding their children through the process, listening to their insights, and watching their confidence grow. This experience reinforced the library as a vital tool for continued learning, supporting families in their lifelong literacy journey.

Six (6) out of six (6) parents now hold a library card

Enhancing Early Literacy

Over the course of the sessions and at the Closing Ceremony, **a total of 101 books** were distributed to families. Additionally, all child participants aged 0-5 were enrolled in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, a monthly book program. These resources are instrumental in fostering a love for reading and helping to build a home library.

100% of children were enrolled in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library



Supporting Bilingual Development

All six (6) participating parents successfully expanded their English vocabulary, learning essential words related to shapes, colors, numbers, fruits, vegetables, and animals in both Spanish and English. To reinforce their learning, each parent created personalized index cards, allowing them to practice and track their progress week by week. Over time, instructors observed noticeable improvements in their written skills, with parents demonstrating increasing confidence and accuracy in their vocabulary use. This achievement highlights the program's effectiveness in fostering bilingual education and equipping parents with valuable tools to support their children's literacy development.

100%, six (6) out of six (6) parents improved their English vocabulary



Participants created their own vocabulary by writing new words on index cards, which made it easier to memorize them.

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

"I really enjoy attending these classes, sharing my experiences with other mothers, and learning new reading strategies."



"I really like the books; they are very colorful and the illustrations are beautiful, which sparks interest in my children."

"I really enjoy the activities; they are very creative, as well as the family reading circles."



"These classes are very interesting and help us, as parents, to continue promoting reading at home with our children."

CLOSING CEREMONY

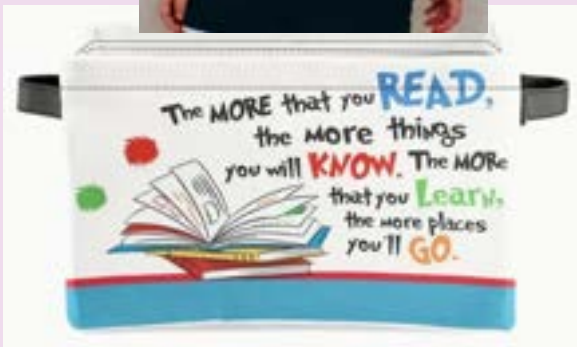
CELEBRATING OUR JOURNEY OF GROWTH, OUTCOMES, AND COMMUNITY

The closing ceremony began with a warm welcome to all participants, followed by heartfelt appreciation for the generous funders who made the program possible: Dr. Seuss, the San Diego Foundation, ApSeed, and all contributing partners. Their support ensured that families had access to the support needed to foster literacy and educational growth. The significance of the program was emphasized, celebrating the remarkable progress made by parents in strengthening their English and Spanish literacy skills. Throughout the semester, parents actively expanded their vocabulary and reading fluency, equipping themselves with the tools to confidently support their children's learning at home.

To honor their commitment, parents and children were awarded certificates of participation recognizing all for their attendance and engagement in classroom activities. Each family received a Dr. Seuss-themed gift box, inscribed with the inspiring words: *"The more that you READ, the more things you will KNOW. The more that you LEARN, the more places you'll go."* These boxes, included additional reading materials provided by the program. All parents, children, and staff also received a Dr. Seuss-themed T-shirt that read, *"Oh, the places you'll go when you READ,"* commemorating their participation and inspiring continued learning. Additionally, three children in the program who had not previously received one, along with children from the Children's Center, were provided ApSeed tablets, further advancing efforts to place these valuable learning tools in the hands of every Borregan aged 0-5.

All then shared a meal, fostering connection and warmth, reflecting the deep tradition of gathering over food to mark meaningful moments. The main dishes included beef tostadas and pizza, along with a variety of desserts contributed by the attendees. In the Latin community, sharing a meal is a deeply valued tradition, and this occasion was no exception, with contributions of cakes, sauces, and salads. Excitement filled the room as families joined in games and activities, starting with rounds of Lotería (Mexican Bingo)—one for children and another for adults—bringing laughter and friendly competition. Children raced through musical chairs, eager to claim chocolates and lollipops as prizes. The festive atmosphere was enhanced by traditional children's music and vibrant decorations, creating a joyful environment for all. A lively prize drawing followed, with participants receiving tokens of appreciation, such as kitchen utensils and personal care items. Finalizing the evening, families came together for group photos, celebrating their achievements and shared commitment to literacy.

Distribution of Awards





BASIC'S LATINO FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT TEAM

— SPRING 2025 —

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of our dedicated participants for their unwavering commitment and hard work. Your efforts are the backbone of our success and are deeply appreciated.

Staff

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Blanca Rodarte/ Instructor
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Cheryl Armstrong/ Childcare
Nidia Meza / Program Assistant
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Additional thanks to

Ken Collard
Mateo Mamea
Sue Vescera
Kathleen Kearns
Martha Deichler
Victoria Baay
Francisco Ramirez



LATINO FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT, SPRING 2025

DONOR HONOR ROLL

PROGRAM FUNDERS

Thank you

Dr. Seuss
Foundation



San Diego
Foundation



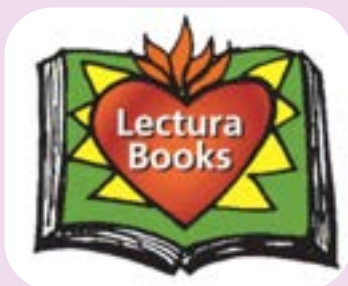
ApSeed
Early Childhood Education

BASIC thanks our many donors and contributors.
Together we are preparing Borrego Springs children for educational success!



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