



*Soaring to Success Through Books and Play...*

# The Parent-Child Home Program

SINCE 1965

**Testimony before the Massachusetts Early Education and Care Board  
Andresa Crescencio, Parent-Child Home Program Parent  
January 12, 2010**

Good afternoon, my name is Andresa Crescencio, I am 24 years old and I have lived in the US for about 10 years. When I was in the high school I got pregnant with my daughter who is now four-years old. I have been working very hard to survive and to put food on the table so my priorities were always work, work and work. I always made sure my daughter was being well cared for and for me it meant: food and shelter, basically.

When I met Fernanda (Somerville, MA Parent-Child Home Program Coordinator) who knocked on my door and talked to me about The Parent-Child Home Program *in my language*, I found it interesting as an opportunity to receive toys and books, things I could not afford. My daughter was with a friend baby sitter during the day and in front of the TV at home, and probably at the baby sitter's house too. I did not know about more qualified childcare, how to look for or if I qualified.



*Andresa Crescencio reads a Program book to her daughter*

I started receiving home visits after I got home from work. At the beginning, the 30 minute home visit seemed long to me because I wanted to cook, clean and prepare for the next day. I am not ashamed to say, I was always looking at the clock. I did not find time to read with my child. This was not important to me.

I am a good mother, but in my culture kids play with kids, we do not really take time to “prepare them for school”, read books or go to playgroups. They are all raised by the whole family and friends, here I only have my mother with me and we are all working long hours.

After a couple of months receiving the home visits, twice a week for 30 minutes each visit, I started to have fun sitting, playing and reading. I did not know we could do this and have fun. My Home Visitor showed me how to read books. Even if I can not read the words in English, I can read the pictures. I am learning English with these books; I feel more confident; I can do it. I did not know about all the activities you can do with your child, even free stuff you can find in Somerville. My Home Visitor gave me the information.

**I can tell you that it was my relationship with the Home Visitor, her patience and the home visits every week that made me change. Now my daughter asks me to read to her, we play together with no stress of finishing quick to cook. I think she is addicted to books. I changed; I take the time to sit and enjoy a book with her; we talk more often. We have fun together and I am not always in a hurry.**

The Parent-Child Home Program connected me with English classes, playgroups, field trips and now I am in the process of registering my daughter for preschool. I live in a housing development and I am raising my daughter alone. She is an American citizen and I am in process of becoming one too. This is the country I chose to live in. My daughter is going to start school and as soon as I can, I want to go to college to give my daughter a better life.

Now I am working as a part time outreach worker for The Parent-Child Home Program because I can help too. I tell all families I know with young kids about the Program. Thanks for all of your work in keeping these programs alive and available to us.

Please click to return to [www.parent-child.org](http://www.parent-child.org)



*Soaring to Success Through Books and Play...*

# The Parent-Child Home Program

SINCE 1965

**Testimony before the Massachusetts Early Education and Care Board**

**Fernanda Villar, Coordinator, The Parent-Child Home Program & Joint Family Support Program,  
Somerville, MA January 12, 2010**

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to share our experiences with you. My name is Fernanda Villar and I am the Coordinator of The Parent Child Home Program and Joint Family Support Program in Somerville, two components of the Somerville Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Program. I have been working with The Parent-Child Home Program for 10 years now. I was a volunteer, a Home Visitor, assistant Coordinator, and now am the PCHP/JFSP Coordinator.

In those ten years I have seen families from different backgrounds, cultures or ethnicities and with different needs in our Program. In Somerville we have a very large immigrant community. Our Parent-Child Home Program focuses on those families whose native language is not English. Living in the two public housing developments, these are low-income working families, most of the time very isolated and at high risk for educational failure.

Most of those families come from cultures where play as education is not valued, they are multi-stressed with work, trying to keep the food on the table, and learning English. They don't understand the educational system in United States and have no idea in how to navigate this system. There are so many things going on in their lives, that they don't even consider taking time to read to their kids or learn about the importance of language and talking. Who can blame them?

In the first weeks of the home visits, we see families trying to do something else while the Home Visitor, who most of them call the "teacher", is there for the visit. They think the visit is just for their kids. No, the Program is for parent and child to learn together. At the beginning they are distracted, they are reluctant because they think they will need to read in English for their kids and they don't know how to. But they want their kids to get the best, to succeed in school; **they just don't know how important their presence is in this process.** After a few weeks, they don't try to do something else while the Home Visitor is at their home, the home visit is their time also, to learn how to read and have fun with their kids. Cooking and everyday chores becomes secondary, their kids' education is the priority.

It is the consistency of the twice-weekly home visits over two years, the relationship between the family and the Home Visitor, and the supervision of the Coordinator, who is always assessing the needs of the family and serves as a referral contact with other programs that make this Program so successful. It gives us great results for very little money.

The Program **prepares** parents to actively participate in their children's education. It is the first step in their educational lives. When kids graduate from the Program they receive a certificate that says: "Ready for Pre-School" and we help the parents to register their kids for pre-school. We do all the referrals necessary and follow up. Without this program those kids are at home in care of friends and neighbors, most of the time in front of the TV with no social-educational experiences at all. They start school without the ability to sit, listen, follow directions, or hold a book.

Over the past year we have strengthened our ability to serve families enrolled in The Parent-Child Home Program through the newly consolidated CFCE model. This includes Somerville PCHP, JFSP, CPC and MFN programs. In Somerville we are able to deliver services to young families in a coordinated efficient fashion due to the CFCE collaborative system. Program staff have long connections with this diverse community, represent many of the linguistic groups in the city and are working together to build a system that meets the specific needs of Somerville families.

The Parent-Child Home Program forms deep relationships with families who struggle with multiple challenges and is a critical component of the continuum of services that can lead to school success. Please feel free to visit us in Somerville.

Please click to return to [www.parent-child.org](http://www.parent-child.org)