

What Do Children Need to Know Before Kindergarten? Latinx Immigrant Parents' Views

Amber Brock¹, Marisa Padeletti¹, Monica Argueta¹, Cassandra Simons¹, Allyson Rennie¹, Susan Sonnenschein¹, Brook Sawyer², & Peggy Kong²

¹University of Maryland, Baltimore County and ²Lehigh University

ABSTRACT

Understanding which skills parents consider necessary for kindergarten is essential because these beliefs drive parenting behaviors and are associated with children's achievement. States are now evaluating kindergarten readiness based on language, mathematics, social, and physical development. However, it is unclear how much parents value and promote these competencies prior to kindergarten.

INTRODUCTION

- Parents' beliefs about which skills are important and how they are fostered may affect their academic socialization practices (Sonnenschein et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2004).
- This is a particular concern for Latinx children from immigrant families where lack of familiarity with U.S. school norms, linguistic, and cultural factors may interfere with a smooth transition into kindergarten (Turney & Kao, 2009).
- Significant early academic gaps exist between Latinx children and their peers at kindergarten entry and throughout school, predisposing them to negative social and educational outcomes (Gandara, 2017; Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011; Nino, 2014).
- This study explored Latinx immigrant parents' narrative accounts of:
 - (1) which of the KRA school readiness domains (language/literacy, mathematics, social, physical growth and motor development) they considered important for success in kindergarten
 - (2) who was responsible for teaching
 - (3) their own roles in fostering said skills

METHOD

Participants

- 26 Latinx immigrant parents from the Baltimore-Washington area with children entering kindergarten in 2018 or 2019

Country of Origin	Frequency
El Salvador	22
Dominican	2
Mexico	1
Ecuador	1

Country of Origin	Frequency
First-generation	21
Second-generation	5

Primary Language Spoken at Home	Frequency
Spanish	20
English	4
Spanish and English	1

Annual Income	Frequency
Less than \$50,000	17
More than \$50,000	9

METHOD (CONTINUED)

Measures

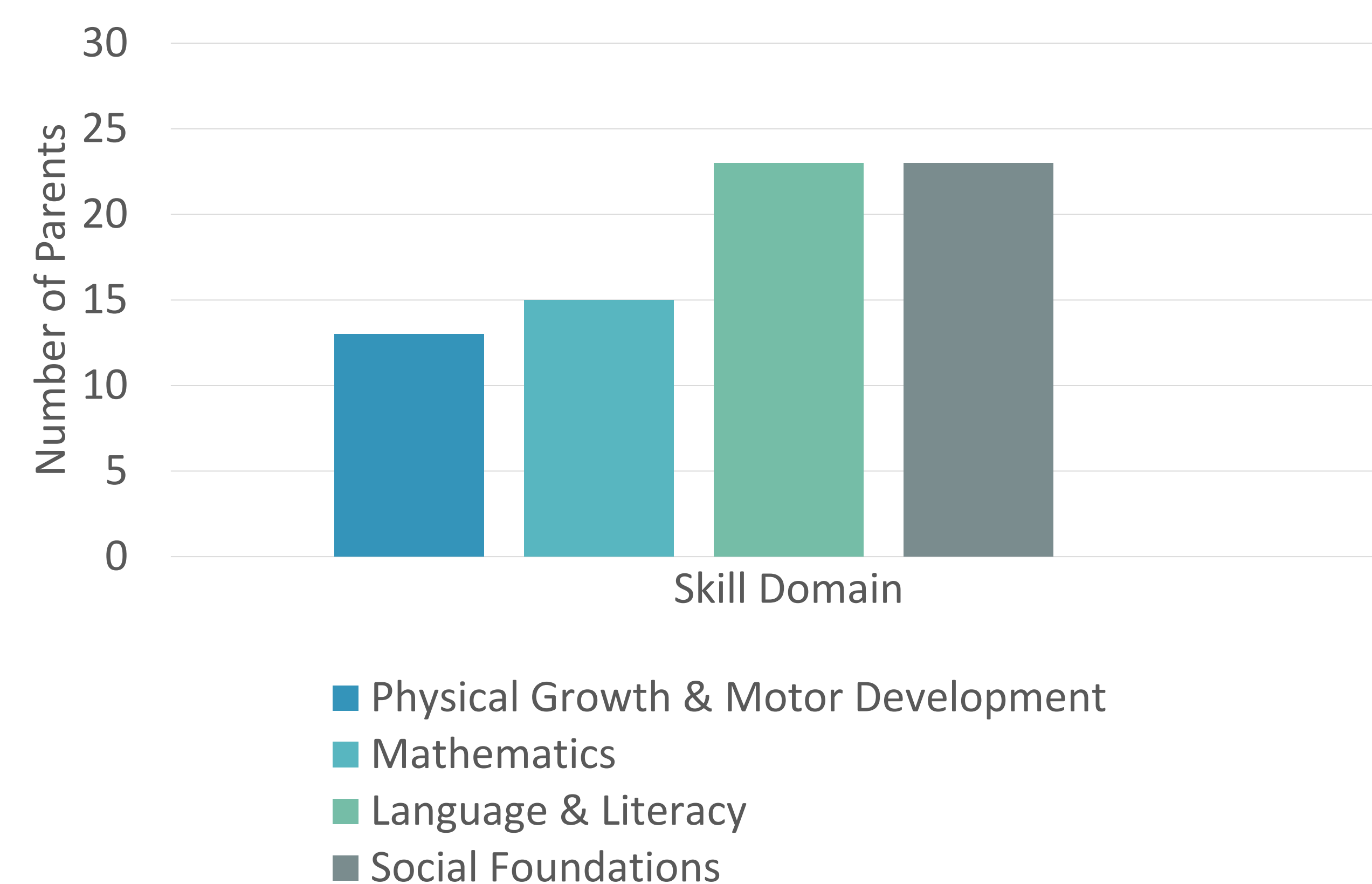
- Demographic information was collected using a demographic questionnaire
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded in the parents' native language, probing their notions about school readiness and how they facilitated it
- Responses were coded according to the domain of the school readiness skill, the responsible party for teaching the skill, the role performed by the parent, and their philosophy of learning

Key Questions

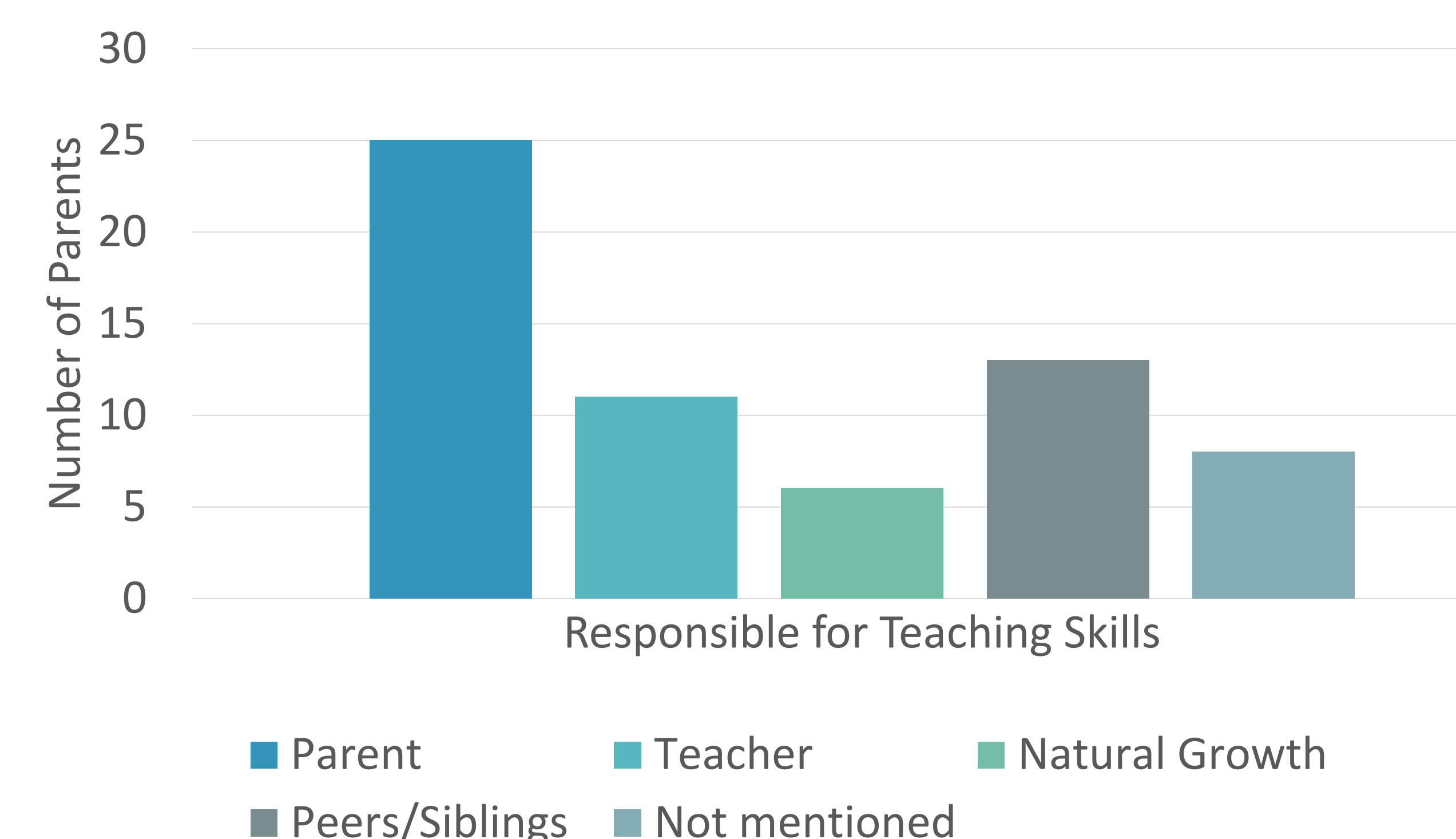
- What is important for your child to know or be able to do before kindergarten?
- How do children learn these skills?
- Who is responsible for teaching the child these skills?

RESULTS

Important Skills for School Readiness



Who is Responsible for Teaching Important Skills



RESULTS (CONTINUED)

- Content analyses were conducted on the semi-structured interview in order to uncover parents' views on the importance of Social Skills, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical growth and motor development.
- The results show that many parents valued social skills (88.5%) as well as language and literacy (88.5%).
- All parents mentioned having a role in their child's skill development, with 91.7% stating they are an active participant (37.5% facilitator; 8.3% role model; 4.2% uninvolved).

What Is the Parent's Role?	Frequency
Active	22
Facilitator	9
Role Model	2
Uninvolved	1

How Are Skills Fostered?	Frequency
Engaging in Activities	15
Practice School Readiness Skills	14
Day to Day Activities	11

CONCLUSION

- The expectation that children should learn various school readiness skills prior to kindergarten has grown among teachers in recent years due to the increasingly academic nature of kindergarten (Bassok et al., 2016).
- The Latinx immigrant parents in this small sample were aware of the need to foster school readiness skills prior to kindergarten and saw themselves as active participants in their children's education.
- However, the importance of mathematics and physical competencies was mentioned by fewer parents than language and social skills.
- The finding that parents mentioned mathematics less frequently than other skills may represent a mismatch between parents' views and state-standards, as well as parents' and teachers' expectations.
- The results of this study suggest that mathematics is not in the forefront of some parents' minds when they think of skills needed for kindergarten.
- Further research is needed to understand how we can share more information about the importance of mathematics and how it can be fostered in early childhood within the Latinx community.