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Jarma Wrihten: Yadaira, thank you for coming today. We're happy to have you at the ECLKC Parent Place. And when I offered this up to everyone and say, "Please come and share your story," I notice you all were really excited about it, so I'm more excited that you did come today. And I'd like you to start off by telling me a little bit about yourself and how you became involved in Head Start, and share a little bit about your son or daughter.

Yadaira Sanchez: Thank you, and it is a privilege to be here. I just want to start off by saying I am a community representative at the present time. I served a year as a vice-chairperson. I served my second year as a chairperson, and this is my third and final year as a chairperson for the Head Start Policy Council committee. Jarma: And which program is it you said?

Yadaira: It is the Head Start of Ventura County; the agency is Child Development Resources. Jarma: Out of where?
Yadaira: In Ventura County.

Jarma: In Ventura County, okay, great. So now that you've shared that piece -- that you are in Policy Council -- I want to hear a little bit about your son and all the exciting things that he's doing.

Yadaira: Yes. My son now is 14. He is a freshman in high school. He started with the program when he was three years old. He had the benefit to be in a full-day program. At that -- at that present time, I was going through a divorce and I was a single mother, so that helped me out so much. He did two years of the program, went to kindergartener, and the teachers right away saw his achievements. Now, at the present time, he is enrolled in all college prep courses.

He is in the gifted and talented education program, as well as all his courses are honors courses. So we are so proud of him and I know I owe it all to the Head Start program. My five-year-old son was in the program for two years and his report card is also excellent. My daughter is six years old. She was also in the program for one year. Her report card is also excellent. She will be tested for the gifted and talented education also, and I owe the success to the Head Start.

Jarma: And you also owe it to yourself. Head Start is so grateful to have you because you've brought all of your children through and they have made -- accomplished major milestones. We appreciate you as a parent first because you are the first and most important teacher. And now that they -- you know, you've gotten the 14-year-old off to a good start, you have your six-year-old and now you have the last one in Head Start, what are some together time things that you all do as a family?

Yadaira: Well, what we do is we have a set date, which is Tuesday evenings. We -- [Coughs] sorry -- we have -- [Coughs] sorry. Jarma: You're doing good.

Yadaira: We have a game time. After dinner each week, each child chooses a different game. Even though it might not be so appropriate for the age difference, we -- I still integrate it so the young ones could work with my older son and so my older son could work with the younger kids.

And it's just a learning environment. And their best game that they all enjoy is La Loterĩ½a, which is kind of BINGO in Spanish, and -- and they just love that game because there we -- I give them pennies so they could mark their cards and I give them coins, dimes, nickels, and quarters. So they're -- my younger ones are learning how to recognize the money and the difference and the importance of knowing their mathematical adding up and...

Jarma: I love that. It seems that you have really been inventive in the way that you integrate their learning skills in the home. So now it sounds like your home is a real powerful learning environment because you've added a lot of good things for -- for them to do. So, if you were going to share some of your ideas with other parents, what would be some

of the things that you'd tell them that they -- they should do to help their child learn and be ready for school?

Yadaira: Yes, I believe that every parent should be a part of their child's education. Go out to those centers, be there for them, because when you are there for them, even if it's one day out of the month, your child feels so special that mommy or poppy is there with them helping out the other kids. The other kids also enjoy you as a parent. Jarma: And so do you often -- you and your husband -- do you guys both go to the Head Start programs and volunteer sometimes?

Yadaira: Well, my children are not in the program anymore, but I used to go to -- maybe twice a week, I would go help out the children at least an hour or two. I would stay for breakfast and sometimes stay for their lunch. And my husband wanted to take out his -- he drives a semi. So he wanted to give the kids that opportunity to sit on the driver's side, see and look at how the semi is from a close-up version, give them that different experience. Because, of course, semis are -- you know, you just see them on the road, yes, very dangerous.

Jarma: Yes. [Laughs] Yadaira: And I don't like to drive near them. Jarma: And intimidating sometimes, but... Yadaira: Yes, yes. Yes, and they got that opportunity to -- to see what it looks like from the inside. Jarma: And that's a good learning experience though, because how many of us would have typically on a regular everyday...

Yadaira: Yes. Jarma: ...be able to be exposed to something as large as that? Yadaira: Yeah. Jarma: And then for kids, that's just like, "Whoa look at this." Yadaira: Yes.

Jarma: It's a phenomenon. Yes, so what's the one key message you would leave -- actually, what's the one key message you would want your child to know as you are that first and most important teacher? What are things you want them to know so that as they continue to grow, transition on from one setting to another -- what is it that you want them to know?

Yadaira: The one thing that is in my most everyday conversation is, "You need to go to school so you could go to the university." And I push the university as opposed to pushing a community college because when I... My background was -- my parents were working out in the fields. My parents were not home. They would leave really early, and, you know, we would be taken care of by strangers. And I know, at one point, I did go to preschool.

And I just -- it was somewhere out here in Sacramento, I just don't know where -- I can't remember where. And my parents would take us out to the fields so we would need to wake up three, four in the morning to be with them. We would stay in the car and get back home pretty late. So I knew I wanted to further my education so my kids' education would not be so limited. So I did -- I do have my Associate's degree, and now I am working towards...

Jarma: Good for you. Yadaira: ...my Bachelor's degree. Jarma: That's a major accomplishment. Yadaira: Yes.

Jarma: So talk about setting personal goals for yourself and then reaching higher standards. So you've raised the bar for your children. Yadaira: Yes. Jarma: Not to say that this is all been all you can have -- ou can have more... Yadaira: Yes.

Jarma: ...if you continue to dream -- and dream big, really. Yadaira: Yes, yes. You've got to really... I do incorporate that to them because, I mean, yes, college is perfect, but once you're in the university, it's a whole different structure. I think they'll get their degree done faster and, you know, they'll have their Bachelor's or their Master's sooner.

Jarma: So you're a firm believer in education. Yadaira: Yes, I am.

Jarma: Well, we want to thank you so much for participating with us today, and I want to give you one little resource from the ECLKC, our Learning to -- Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, so that you can share it with other parents, as well. And we call that our Seven Super Things that Parents and Caregivers Can Do, and we'd like you to visit the web site. I'm sure that you're already doing all seven and you can add to this list.

Give us some advice on some more super things parents and caregivers can do. So we want to stop online -- visit us online and visit all of the different domains that are available. We have a wonderful area for parents, as well as for the

families and family and community partnerships, and other areas for disabilities and so forth. So we really want to thank you today because we need to keep more parents like you in the forefront and we need your voices.

Yadaira: Yes, yes. Jarma: And so continue to keep up doing the good work that you're doing. Yadaira: Thank you, thank you. And I also do want to thank Barack Obama because he has given us an opportunity for more children to get that opportunity of their education. Jarma: Mm hmm.

Yadaira: If it wasn't for Barack Obama, you know, we might not be able to serve maybe 100, 200, or 300 more students. So I really do appreciate Barack Obama giving us some of that expansion money so we could expand our schools and our sites. Jarma: And we will continue to keep fighting that fight... Yadaira: Yes, yes.

Jarma: ...so that we can have those monies and dollars for our children, because education is key... Yadaira: Yes, yes. Jarma: ...and I know he's a firm believer in that educational system. Yadaira: Yes. Now, I do also want to thank the directors... Jarma: Mm hmm.

Yadaira: ...and the board members because without them we wouldn't be able to have those grants, because they're the grant writers and they're the ones that bring the money to teach our children.

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