



# On the Move: Parent University & Early Learning Initiative

*Moving ideas to action*



## What we do:

The Early Learning Initiative provides parents in Sonoma Valley with an array of classes that support their children's academic success with concrete tools and skills.

The program tailors classes to meet the needs of individual families and forms collaborative relationships among schools and organizations. The resulting educational opportunities serve as a gateway to highly effective parent engagement in the lives of Sonoma Valley children and their schools.

## Our start:

On The Move is a nonprofit that incubates initiatives based on the interests, passions, and commitment of young adults, who represent the diversity of their North Bay communities and who have been trained to become the leaders of tomorrow. Together, they identify programs that can address urgent needs currently unmet by the community.

In 2009, On The Move and Queen of the Valley Medical Center identified parent education as an urgent need and partnered to create Napa Valley Parent University. Today more than 80 classes are offered bilingually to help parents (particularly Latino parents) engage in the school and community lives of their children.

Due to the success in working with this population, On The Move was invited to expand the program, establishing the Early Learning Initiative working with parents of preschoolers in Sonoma Valley.

## A single story:

Maria's daughter, Yessenia, had fallen behind in school and was required to repeat second grade. Much of this was due to Yessenia's challenges with reading and her own struggles with the English language. She often felt hopeless as a parent, not knowing how best to help her child grow academically. Maria was also intimidated by the idea of getting involved at the school – as is often the case when both language and cultural barriers are present. After discovering the Parent University's Latino Family Literacy Project class, Maria felt she had found exactly what she needed for both herself and Yessenia. Through the project's classes, Maria developed her own reading skills, including specific strategies for reading to children. She established a daily family-reading routine using the children's books provided by the class. Her daughter's reading began to improve, and she became more successful in other academic subjects at school as well.

The most rewarding outcome occurred when the school announced to Maria that Yessenia would be allowed to continue on to third grade earlier than planned. *"Thanks to this class, my daughter and I learned together. I learned how to make reading interesting, and my daughter learned to improve her reading at school, and now she's been rewarded. I am so proud!"*

Parent University means having the opportunity to grow as a parent and person as well as learning new skills that can be applied to everyday life. Parents are also helping more with their children's homework and are participating more in the classes.



**Impact100 Sonoma**  
has awarded two  
Community Grants to

On The Move: \$15,000 for foster care transition (2013) and \$15,000 to test a pilot Parent University (2014) and a \$100,000 Impact Grant to fully implement the Parent University program (2015).

## Our future:

In its pilot year, the Early Learning Initiative provided classes to 100 preschool parents at both El Verano and Sassarini Preschools. Our goal is to provide the Early Learning Initiative at every preschool in Sonoma Valley serving low-income young children.