



Then & Now: Belinda Rodriguez-Aguilar

On Saturday, June 6th, over 200 AVANCE-Austin graduates received their diplomas at the Allan Early Childhood Center after nine months of dedication and commitment in the Parent-Child Education Program. The class of 2015 all possessed one thing in common: the keys to unlock their full potential.

As the graduates held their diplomas up proudly, these children and parents were certain this would not be their last graduation ceremony; their journey had just begun.

Sixteen years ago, parents and children in AVANCE-Austin's class of 1999 walked across the very same stage at Allan Elementary, where they had completed classes in toy-making, English instruction, and childhood development. Among these proud parents was Belinda Rodriguez-Aguilar with her 1 year old son, Juan. At AVANCE, Belinda discovered a passion for giving back to her community. She became an AVANCE teacher the following year. Belinda worked with infants and toddlers on early learning activities.



(Left to right): Belinda and Juan beginning their journey;
Proud mother (Middle) of Brandon, 21 (L) and Juan, 17 (R)

As a former participant, she enjoyed watching the mothers gain confidence and form long-lasting friendships. In her free time, she took courses in Child Development to build upon her skills. She explains the experience not only helped her as a mother, but as a teacher as well. "Working as an infant

teacher and taking child development classes taught me that every child is unique and that each one deserves special attention."

After working at AVANCE-Austin for a couple of years, Belinda carried her passion to the City of Austin, where she currently screens mothers for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and

helps conduct monthly cooking classes. Her son, Juan is now 17 years old and is a rising high school senior, where he is a member of ROTC, plays football and maintains good grades. Along with her 3 other children, he has a bright future ahead of him.

She keeps in touch regularly with AVANCE mothers and is proud to be part of a strong support network, where they take care of each other in times of need.



in their English-speaking skills, and reported feeling an increase in self-confidence over all." – Hope Williams, Early Childhood Instructor.

"Dia De Los Ninos was my favorite event this year. We had over three times the amount of families in attendance than last year, and different sites all over Austin gathered together. Along with the parents making connections with each other, they were able to see that AVANCE-Austin is something bigger than just their classroom, and there is actually a whole community of parents wanting to invest in their families." - Elva Avalos, Family Literacy Instructor.

We are proud of our dedicated program staff, educators, and everyone who helped make this year the best yet. We look forward to the growth and potential the future holds at our new location, the Allan Early Childhood Center.

Memories & Milestones Celebrating the Class of 2015

This year was full of milestones, memories, and empowering family connections that will last for a lifetime. We asked some of our program staff and educators to share the highlights and milestones of the year:

"One of the most dramatic changes I saw this year was the success of our ESL Classes. Testing results have indicated that the majority of our parents advanced at least two or more levels



Marie's Corner

As we come to the close of another successful program year, I am overwhelmed with pride and honor to be part of AVANCE-Austin. I am deeply inspired by the hard work and dedication of the more than 200 families who graduated from our program and keenly aware of what circles of support are needed to help AVANCE families achieve such an important milestone. I want to say thank you to our supporters for helping our families create successful visions for their futures and developing the confidence to achieve their goals.

It has been the strength of our partnerships that has allowed AVANCE-Austin to grow and thrive as an important part of the educational and social services network in our community for 19 years. This year, we served 25% more individuals than last year. Still, there exists significant need for programs that provide high quality family support services and early childhood development.

We will begin the next program year with more children and families eager to build their self-confidence as individuals, as parents and caregivers of their young children, and as present and future members of a strong workforce, community, and state. With your continued partnership and investment, we will graduate yet another successful class of AVANCE-Austin graduates in 2016.

"What you do for yourself in this life dies with you but what you do for others lives on." Thank you for all you do to help break the cycle of trans-generational poverty through education and individual development. Have a great summer!

Partnership is a key element in the success of AVANCE-Austin and the children and families who choose to be part of the program. These partnerships are with our determined families, our dedicated and compassionate AVANCE teachers, our committed school partners, our Board Members and our community of supporters. We all join together to celebrate the impact that working together has on our families and our communities. We are stronger because we are together.

Madre of the Month: Guillermina Rodriguez

Stories of Inspiration and Success from the Parent-Child Education Program



On the first day of AVANCE classes, twenty infants and toddlers were reluctant to be away from their mothers for the first time and they were making it known. Through the first day chaos, one could see a calm and curious 2-year-old, Samantha. She looked around at the colorful walls of the toddler

classroom with pictures of her favorite animals, their names written in English and Spanish. She found a new classmate, Regina, and the two began playing. They would be come best classmates during the nine-month program.

Before joining AVANCE, Guillermina describes Samantha as being very shy. She was used to playing by herself. Because she had hearing problems it was difficult for her to interact with the children in her neighborhood. As a single working mother, Guillermina worked a busy schedule while taking her daughter to speech therapy appointments. Samantha's therapist recommended AVANCE-Austin to help her socialize with children her age. Nine months later, the mother and daughter gained self-confidence and a lifelong love for learning. During class, Samantha loved to sing, dance, and play with new friends. Guillermina also met special friends of her own. She describes her life before having Samantha and entering the AVANCE program as lonely. "When I gave birth to my daughter, my life changed for the better. I remember my time at AVANCE with happiness."

Guillermina credits AVANCE not only for helping her daughter play and interact with other children, but also learning the basics of reading and writing and the importance of nutrition. "Before the program began, my daughter only ate chicken nuggets. Samantha now loves fruits and vegetables!" Guillermina hopes her daughter will grow up to be an independent and strong person. She plans to enroll Samantha in preschool in the fall where she will continue to meet new friends.

Our Board of Directors

Rosie Mendoza, CPA, Board Chair
R. Mendoza & Company, PC

Elma Cantú Aldrete, Vice Chair/
Treasurer
St. Edward's University

Glo Villarreal, Secretary
Community Volunteer

Valinda Bolton
Community Volunteer

Susana Carbajal
Austin Bergstrom International Airport

Kathleen Vale-Castillo
Texas Commission of Environmental Quality

Jo Cassandra Cuevas
AT&T

John Philip Donisi
Drenner Group, PC

Dulce Ruiz,
Home Away

Barbara Rush
Travis County
Chief of Staff, Commission Brigid Shea

Amber Taylor
Wells Fargo Bank

AVANCE-Austin appreciates gifts from the following supporters from **April 1 to June 1, 2015**.

Austin ISD
The BNI Foundation
Valinda Bolton
Mandy Dealy
Del Valle ISD
Baile and Beverly Griffith
Stephen and Stephanie Griffith
Donald D. Hammill Foundation
HEB Tournament of Champions
The Lowe Foundation
Maria Lozano
Manor ISD
Beau and Leslie Thorne
Samsung Semiconductors
The Shield-Ayers Foundation
Travis County
Vera Villarreal
The Lola Wright Foundation

Special thanks to the following for help and donations during Graduation

Ben White Florist
Little Helping Hands
Mi Tradicion Bakery
ACE AmeriCorps



*A Very
Special Thank
You*



We extend a very special thank you for Kendra Scott's donation of 20% of the proceeds during the Kendra Gives Back event on June 30, 2015 at both locations. Thanks all who shopped for a good cause!

Save the Date

AVANCE-Austin
Annual Luncheon

October 22, 2015

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Four Seasons Hotel

Silent auction, great lunch, great friends, great cause!
For sponsorship, table and ticket information contact Marie Felan at
(512) 841-4686

Sharing the joy of reading: AVANCE-Austin celebrates Dia de los Niños



On Saturday, April 25th, AVANCE families celebrated Dia de los Niños with book giving, reading circles, piñata fun, delicious raffle prizes from Springdale Farms & Amy's Ice Creams, face-painting, and educational games. It was a great time to connect and kick off Spring!

Event
Sponsor



Thanks to the following for their generous donations!

