

Reading Roads/Caminos para Leer *Family Literacy Academy*

The Need for Family Literacy Programs:

Illiteracy is a “time bomb in the workforce” and a social issue that threatens to cripple the U.S. economy in the 21st Century (Bernstein, 2002). Los Angeles County faces one of the lowest literacy rates in the country. According to United Way of Greater Los Angeles’ *Literacy @Work* report (2004), a staggering 53 % of Los Angeles adults test in the lowest levels of literacy, which means that they cannot read a bus schedule well enough to use it. Literacy rates for the next generation are equally disheartening, with only 66 % of LA County 3rd graders reading at grade level (California Department of Education, 2007). How can we intervene in such an educational predicament? Research overwhelmingly supports the premise that “the *single* most important activity for building understandings and skills *essential* for reading success appears to be reading aloud to children” (Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995). Families In Schools developed **Reading Roads/Caminos para Leer**, a family literacy academy, to engage parents of elementary school children in their child’s education through literacy activities.

An Overview of Reading Roads/Caminos para Leer:

There are many roads to the world of literacy. Sometimes the path is reading and sometimes its writing. Speaking and listening are also avenues that lead literacy development. This curriculum serves as a map to help guide families on their literacy journey. **Reading Roads/Caminos para Leer** is a family literacy academy for parents of Kindergarten through 5th grade students. Each lesson has activities for parents to do at home with Kindergarten – 1st Grade children, 2nd – 3rd Grade children, and 4th-5th Grade children. Based in socio-contextual learning, this curriculum has a total 5 lessons which connect to various themes families hold close to their hearts: These themes include:

- Family
- Culture
- Community
- Opportunity
- Celebration

Read with Me/Lea conmigo Impacts Literacy through Community Partnership:

Families In Schools builds partnerships with schools and community agencies to ensure success for families and children. FIS family literacy experts train partner staff in parent involvement and family literacy strategies and provide the curriculum necessary for the program. In turn, the partners conduct weekly family literacy workshops for elementary school parents. Participating schools and agencies can receive technical assistance throughout the year from FIS staff.

Celebrating Literacy with the Million Word Challenge at Feria del Libro:

Every year, **Reading Roads/Caminos para Leer** families are invited to participate in the Million Word Challenge, a Los Angeles County reading campaign that challenges students to read a million words outside of the classroom. Each school selects one winner to receive a \$50 gift certificate to purchase books at the Feria del Libro: A Family Book Fair. This festival is held annually on the grounds of Los Angeles City Hall. **Reading Roads/Caminos para Leer** families join thousands of other families to celebrate the power of reading at this event. The book fair attracts 35,000 people annually to purchase books, meet authors, and participate in literacy activities.