

Skagit Valley College  
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# NEWS

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## **Head Start Employee and Early Childhood Education Graduate Earns National Award**

Francis Garcia, of Mount Vernon, and Infant - Toddler Specialist at Skagit-Islands Head Start, has received the 2009 Higher Education Hispanic-Latino Head Start award for outstanding graduate in Early Childhood Education (ECE). The award is presented annually to three students from around the country who are employed by Head Start and have graduated with an AA or a BA in Early Childhood Education.

In addition to Ms. Garcia receiving the award in 2009, a Skagit Valley College (SVC) graduate has received this award in each of the last three years. "Our ECE program is a model for its work in Dual Language Teaching and Learning in our college and the communities we serve," said Department Chair Barbara Martinez-Griego. "Our graduates' successes are a benefit to our whole community."

Francis Garcia joined the Early Childhood Education program at SVC in 2002. While working full-time and attending college part-time, she used the knowledge and skills she gained from her early childhood education courses to serve the Early Head Start children and their families. She earned her GED in 1968 as the fourth of thirteen children in a family of migrant farm workers. She attributes her college graduation and professional

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achievements in part to the Head Start Higher Education Hispanic - Latino grant, authored and administered originally by Dr. Marilyn Chu of Western Washington University and currently by ECE Department Chair Barbara Martinez-Griego, for supporting her educational goals. Ms. Garcia states, "The early childhood education college classes taught me about the importance of bonding and attachment, brain development, children's songs, early literacy, recording observations for progress, to name only a few areas."

As an infant-toddler specialist, "I would continue to use or share everything I learned with families who I was working with daily. Together we would plan and execute activities for successful child outcomes." Last week, Ms. Garcia traveled to Washington, D.C. to speak before the Office of Head Start and university faculty from all over the United States. Francis says, "The reason that I was successful was the way so many people jumped in to support me. Support came from the college and Head Start mentors who believed in me and consistently encouraged me, when I was down, to keep going. My co-workers who had already been there for me and were able to help me meet my class obligations and my family who also helped out a lot by never letting me forget who I was doing this for, the children."

The SVC Early Childhood Education program prepares students for positions working with young children and families. Students may pursue an Associate of Technical Arts degree, a one-year certificate, or an Associate in Applied Science Transfer in Early Childhood Education. In addition to Head Start centers, graduates of the Early Childhood Education Associate in Technical Arts degree are often employed as lead teachers, family home visitors, or administrators in childcare programs.

For more information on the ECE program, contact Barbara Martinez-Griego at [barbara.martinez@skagit.edu](mailto:barbara.martinez@skagit.edu) or (360) 416-7787. # # #