Exploring the Impact of Parent Mentoring Programs on Latino Parent Engagement and Empowerment

~Marlene Batista~

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Why this study?

Background
PROBLEM

Correlation between parental involvement and student achievement
(Epstein, 1995; Jeynes, 2005; Lee & Bowen, 2006)

- Academic Challenges faced by Latinos in American Schools
- Trends in parental involvement
  - Parental Involvement Programs aimed at Latino parents
- Types of Parental Involvement Programs
  - Traditional
  - Leadership
  - Mentoring
What do we already know...

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<th>Student Achievement and Parental Involvement</th>
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**Most research has heralded parental involvement as way to increase student achievement.**
(Cook-Cottone, 2004; Epstein, 1991; Hover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Smith et al., 2008)

**Defined as programs and activities initiated by schools with the intent of getting parents to participate in the education of their children either at school or home.**
(Boncana & Lopez, 2010; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Jeynes, 2005)

**Parental involvement: sends message school is important; positively influences self-confidence and self-esteem; correlates to better attendance, positive attitudes, decreased drop out rates and improved student behavior**
(Boncana & Lopez; Canicio, West & Young, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009)

**Socioeconomic status can impact parental involvement ~ Schools in affluent communities have more positive traditional forms of involvement on average.**
(Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Lee & Bowen, 2006)
What else is research telling us...

Lack of invitation from school

Fundamental Barriers:
• Limited English
• Inflexible work schedules
• Lack of transportation
• Lack of daycare

Barriers to Latino Parental Involvement

Different perceptions of parental involvement

Teachers view Latino parents with deficit thinking
Have any of these programs worked?

Impact of Latino Parental Involvement Programs

To create effective programs for Latino parents schools must:
- be culturally responsive
- understand barriers

Problems faced because schools:
- see parents through deficit lens
- do not acknowledge “funds of knowledge”
## LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

- Develops leaders with skills to take on community issues (Hong, 2011)
- Change parent perspectives to being advocates for all children (Corbett & Wilson, 2008)
- Many started as grassroots movements within community not necessarily in schools (Catone, Chung & Oh, 2011)

## MENTORING PROGRAMS

- Offers parents opportunity to socialize, form bonds and help one another (Hong, 2011)
- Increases social capital and networks for parents giving them access to resources (Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2011)
- Challenges traditional role of parents as learners and places them as trainers and mentors.
Theoretical Framework

Theory of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977)

Social Capital

Resources developed through participation in social networks that benefit an individual (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988).

Cultural Capital

Experiences brought from home and the ability to transform them into capital that can be used for social advantage within dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1988).

Impact on Student Success

- Viewed as “culturally poor” ~Latino families need to conform to school’s system (Yosso, 2005).
- Social class differences have implications for family-school relationships (Lareau, 1987).

Schools draw unevenly on the social and cultural resources of members of society (Bourdieu, 1977).
Program Studied

- Project 2-Inspire
- A 3-tiered parent mentoring program offered through CABE

Setting & Data Sources

- 1 Elementary and 1 Middle school in Palm Springs Unified
- Data derived from:
  - Interviews
  - Focus Groups
  - Observations
  - Review of Documents

Who?

- Latino Parent Mentors
- Latino Parent Program Participants
- Administrators
  - site administrators
  - district parent coordinator

So what did I do….
Three-tiered program

First two levels similar to other programs – Increase parent knowledge about schooling to ensure that parents have vital information about high quality education options for their children.

Tier 3 – Expert level is all about training parents to be facilitators and teachers

Parents completing expert level teach the Level 1 classes to other parents

Training for staff and administrators is also available through the program
KEY CONCLUSIONS:

- Barriers - Fear Factor
- Mentors as Key Component
- Administrator Role/Impact
- Self-Sustaining/Long Term
Fear of: not knowing the school system, interacting with staff, language as a barrier

- "el miedo de levantar el teléfono esperando que uno que, pensando de que alguien en el otro lado del teléfono va hablar inglés."

- "Por allí es adonde viene el de no saber las reglas de la escuela..."

- "también tienen la información incorrecta..."

- "Porque no tienen el conocimiento..."

- "bicho raro"
MENTORS – KEY COMPONENT:

◆ The relationship built between the parent mentors and the other parents is by far the biggest component to successful Latino parent involvement.

"Entonces mi trabajo como papa promotor es ayudar a los demás para que le den esa alfombra roja a todos [los padres], a todos, porque todos somos iguales."

"Como nosotros estamos ya un poquito más capacitadas de cómo trabaja el sistema escolar y cómo mantener relaciones con los maestros..."

"It’s made those parents definitely more active and more empowered as far as getting other parents in the door."

“No exigir si no nada más abogar por lo que quiero.”
ADMINISTRATOR ROLE/IMPACT:

- Not surprising administrators play a huge part in Latino parental involvement.

- "Allí sí la directora es toda bien dispuesta a apoyar y ayudar...

- "Es su actitud porque ella quiere ayudar. Porque no lo hace porque le pagan, lo hace porque lo quiere hacer."

- "El otro director siempre estaba allí y si uno quería hablar con él estaba disponible."

- "Creating a school culture where parent involvement is not only accepted but valued." – Ferguson 2005
Through social networking in mentoring programs Latino Parents gained empowerment to get more involved and expanded the program to other sites encouraging other parents to become mentors.

"...no es nada más saber como trabajar el sistema escolar si no como padres en casa cuales son sus trabajos y que no solo es más allá que también es involucrarse en la comunidad."

"Me indentifiqué más con Project 2INSPIRE porque en este tú participas, como el ambiente que se crea allí de motivación, de que una con otras nos apoyamos, no lo tiene el otro programa."

"...esos padres sacar otros líderes para hacerlo en otras escuelas..."
COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP:
- The need to train administrators and staff in building the collaborative relationship is essential

- Without administrator and staff buy in collaboration is impossible.

- The administrator must be a role model in the expectations for parental engagement

- Parent collaboration is a double edged sword, staff must be ready to be open to truly engaged parents who question and participate fully.
RECOMMENDATIONS:
- Create networking space
- Give them a place to call home!
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Assign a key person who is bilingual – Parent Liaison
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Offer opportunities for parents to be leaders
- Use parents’ expertise to support programs
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create a welcoming office environment – think Cheers
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Administrator attitude – build those relationships
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Use parents to involve each other
- Ask them what they want - survey
RECOMMENDATIONS:

❖ COMMUNICATION-overkill!!

✧ FaceBook, Peachjar, Blackboard connect, Marquee, Flyers
CONCLUSION

Latino parent engagement & empowerment - the critical piece of the puzzle

Questions?
Dr. Marlene Batista  
Principal  
Dos Caminos School  
661.947.1849  
661.575.2710 Fax  
39174 Palm Tree Way  
Palmdale, CA 93551  
MBatista@palmdalesd.org  
www.palmdalesd.org