

Working with Hispanic Families

A Course Module
by Dr. Judith A. Marquez

Module Objectives

1. Identify ways to address possible barriers to family involvement for Hispanics.
2. Identify essential elements of literacy projects involving Hispanic families.

Working with Hispanic Families Pre-Test

Please answer the following questions True or False.

1. The definition of parent involvement is best described as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving students' academic learning and other school activities.
2. School's expectations for parent involvement should be limited to the following: school volunteer, homework helper, and fund-raiser.
3. Research evidence exists that family involvement leads to improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduces dropout rates, but these improvements are limited to middle class families.
4. Parents tend to be more involved during their children's first years in school.
5. Affluent communities have more positive family involvement than economically distressed communities.
6. Since Hispanics as a cultural group are very family-oriented, schools have very few problems forming meaningful partnerships with Hispanic families.
7. The Hispanic Policy Development Project (HPDP) which tested strategies to increase Hispanic parental involvement in the schooling of their children found that schools that believed that poor Hispanic parents should begin to get involved in school by joining existing parents' organizations were very successful.
8. If a school is serious about creating partnerships with Hispanic families, staff will need to identify several sources of additional funding since the effort can be expected to take a great deal of money.
9. One strategy to get parents to school meetings and programs is to consult with families about the agendas and meeting formats so that every meeting is viewed by parents as responding to some of their needs or concerns as well as to the school's agenda.
10. Successful family involvement programs begin with school staff reviewing available research and then examining their own attitudes for the possibility of hidden biases toward certain parent groups.

Working with Hispanic Families Post-Test

Please compare your answers from the pre-test.

1. The definition of parent involvement is best described as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving students' academic learning and other school activities.

Correct Answer

True - This definition of parental involvement comes from language found in current federal legislation (NCLB legislation, 2002). Having a successful family involvement program has been a mandate for Title I schools for many years; current legislation requires schools to document outreach activities and requires the expenditure of federal funds for this purpose.

2. School's expectations for parent involvement should be limited to the following: school volunteer, homework helper, and fund-raiser.

You Answered

Correct Answer

False - Effective family involvement program cause parents to feel they are valued partners in their children's education and their contributions to decisions about their children are welcomed. Their input is also sought on school advisory committees.

3. Research evidence exists that family involvement leads to improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduces dropout rates, but these improvements are limited to middle class families.

Correct Answer

False - Research by Flaxman & Inger (1996) showed that improved school achievement, better school attendance and reduced dropout rates were shown by students whose families were actively involved in their education regardless of economic, culture, or racial status.

4. Parents tend to be more involved during their children's first years in school.

Correct Answer

True - Parents do tend to be more involved during their children's first years of school. Two implications for schools are: take advantage of that window of opportunity to build strong relationship through active outreach programs when students first enter school and tailor involvement to the specific needs and interests of students and families at each grade level.

5. Affluent communities have more positive family involvement than economically distressed communities.

Correct Answer

True - Unfortunately, this is true UNLESS schools develop programs that take into account the challenges that students and their families are experiencing AND balance positive communication with parents to offset and negative feedback about grades, attendance, etc. School staff must be perceived as supportive and non-judgmental in their relationships with struggling families.

6. Since Hispanics as a cultural group are very family-oriented, schools have very few problems forming meaningful partnerships with Hispanic families.

Correct Answer

False - While a strong family orientation is generally true for Hispanic families, it is also true that there are also some barriers that must be overcome to engage these parents in their child's education. First, educators must understand that many Hispanics view the educators as the "experts" to whom they trust their child's education. Language and cultural background may also cause some parents to be shy about asking questions or to feel they are unprepared for participation in activities for parents. These factors can cause some educators to mistakenly assume that such parents are not interested in their child's education.

7. The Hispanic Policy Development Project (HPDP) which tested strategies to increase Hispanic parental involvement in the schooling of their children found that schools that believed that poor Hispanic parents should begin to get involved in school by joining existing parents' organizations were very successful.

Correct Answer

False - Successful programs recognized and responded to the barriers to participation such as lack of transportation and childcare. First meetings with parents were social events, off-campus at a site familiar to parents and communication was in the language of participants.

8. If a school is serious about creating partnerships with Hispanic families, staff will need to identify several sources of additional funding since the effort can be expected to take a great deal of money.

Correct Answer

False - Without considering the needs, cultures and interests of the families in the school community, well-funded intentions are not sufficient to develop successful family involvement programs. Successful programs are more often a question of "skill and will" on the part of educators than the amount of funding available.

9. One strategy to get parents to school meetings and programs is to consult with families about the agendas and meeting formats so that every meeting is viewed by parents as responding to some of their needs or concerns as well as to the school's agenda.

Correct Answer

True - Once educators tap into the potential that parents offer for generating ideas for activities and programs, parents will respond to those programs in a very positive way.

10. Successful family involvement programs begin with school staff reviewing available research and then examining their own attitudes for the possibility of hidden biases toward certain parent groups.

Correct Answer

True - Reviewing research can help in a couple of ways. First, it can shed light on some of the misconceptions staff may have about certain parent groups. This process can also identify the characteristics of successful programs for particular groups and/or families with special challenges. A successful outreach to families, however, comes when they believe they are respected and programs are designed to include their ideas and address the needs that are important to them.