



NCPIE Update

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Inside this Issue:

SEDL's New Diversity Synthesis

Spotlight on *The Evidence*

New Survey Results for the Pew Hispanic Center

Illinois PIRC

New Synthesis from SEDL Looks at Roles Families Play in Addressing Diverse Student Populations

Presenters at the May NCPIE meeting included Lacy Wood and Victor Rodriguez of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools.

Lacy and Victor presented SEDL's latest research synthesis titled *Diversity: Schools, Family and Community Connections*. This report focuses specifically on three categories: race or ethnicity, culture (including language) and socioeconomic status. The need to improve academic achievement among "diverse" student populations is one of the most persistent and challenging issues that education faces. This report looks at the roles families can and do play in addressing this issue. Additionally it explores barriers to involvement for minority and low-income families, strategies used to address those barriers, and provides recommendations that local educational leaders can adapt to address their specific needs.

The synthesis identifies 64 studies with focuses and methodologies that met SEDL's basic criteria and came up with seven broad findings that summarize the overall knowledge base related to family, community, and school connections among minority and low-income populations.

Key Findings (in brief):

1. No Matter what their race/ethnicity, culture, or income, most families have high aspirations and concerns for their children's success.
2. Involvement of families from various racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds differs somewhat from the involvement of white mainstream US families.

3. Families and school staff report about the extent of family involvement and of school outreach tend to be inconsistent, with the differences increasing in schools with larger minority populations.
4. Research studies have identified barriers to minority and low-income families' involvement in their children's schooling - barriers that schools often can help to overcome.
5. Research findings are limited and inconsistent regarding the extent to which increased family involvement is linked to improved academic achievement among minority and low-income student populations.
6. Although the research base is thin, some intervention strategies appear to be promising in strengthening family-community-school connections among minority and low-income populations.
7. Some studies suggest that, in seeking to close the achievement gap, it is necessary to address the complex interactions among family, community, and school. Focusing on only one of these factors is not enough.

Recommendations

Recommendations for building relationships among schools, communities and families:

- Adopt formal school and district level policies that promote family involvement, including an explicit focus on engaging families to reflect the full diversity of the student population.
- Demonstrate active and ongoing support from the school principal.
- Honor families' hopes and concerns for their children.
- Acknowledge both commonalities and differences among students and families.
- Strengthen school staff capacity to work well with families.
- Provide supports to help immigrant families understand how schools work and what's expected of both families and students.
- Make outreach a priority; take the extra steps necessary to make it possible for families to get involved at school, as well as at home.
- Recognize that it takes time to build trust.

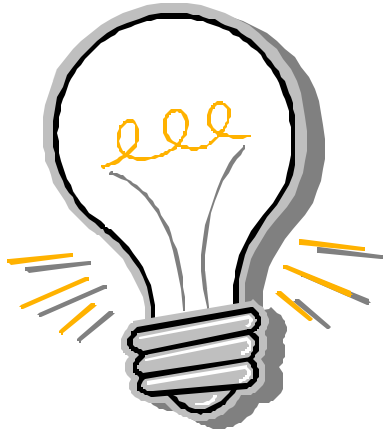
Recommendations for helping families strengthen achievement among minority and low-income students:

- Provide families with training and resources to support early literacy.
- Help families use specific communication and monitoring strategies to support their children's learning.
- Encourage and support student involvement in a range of school- and community-sponsored extracurricular and after-school activities.
- Help low-income families obtain the support and services they need to keep themselves safe, healthy, and well fed.

The Center has published two other synthesis documents addressing research related to school, family and community:

Emerging Issues in School, Family and Community Connections by Jordan, Orozco & Averett
A New Wave of Evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement by Henderson & Mapp.

To obtain these documents go to: <http://www.sedl.org/connections/research-syntheses>.



Spotlight on *The Evidence*

A continuing column highlighting the research from “A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School Family and Community on Student Achievement” by Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp. See pgs 44-46, 140-141.

This month we are spotlighting a 2002 research paper by Karen Mapp originally presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association

Having Their Say: Parents Describe How and Why They are Involved in Their Children’s Education

Mapp’s study is descriptive in nature and sought to learn more about how and why low-income parents are involved in their children’s education.

Conducted at the Patrick O’Hearn Elementary School in Boston, Massachusetts the findings from this research support earlier research on parent involvement and shows that regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status parents have a strong desire to help their children succeed academically.

This study and its findings also emphasize the importance of/on drawing attention to the importance of relationships as they relate to parent involvement. The staff at O’Hearn adopted a process of being welcoming-honoring-and connecting to and with the parents. Mapp called this process the “joining process” and states in her paper that it was this process that helped to create a “school culture and community where parents felt like members of a family” The result being higher levels of participating in their children’s education, activities and events at the school.

A Look At the Case Study Methodology:

The research methodology included interviews with parents and school staff, observations at the school site, and analysis of relevant school data. The O’Hearn school is an urban, full inclusion k-5 school serving a racially diverse student body of 220 students in which approximately 67% qualified for free or reduced price lunch. According to yearly survey data collected by the school, 90% of the parents participated in one or more home or school family engagement activities.

Key Findings

1. A majority of parents, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status-want their children to do well in school and have a strong desire to help their children succeed. A key finding also indicates that O'Hearn parents understood clearly that their involvement helped their children's educational development

2. Many of the 18 parents interviewed were involved in their children's education in ways that go beyond traditionally recognized forms of engagement. These include volunteering or participation on school governance committees, such as the family involvement committee, and activities at home and in the community

3. Social and School Factors—This finding was the most significant and indicates that, according to the parents interviews, social and school factors influenced how and why they were involved. The social factors included the parent's own experiences and history in educational settings. These factors also included their own parents' involvement when they were students, their beliefs about family involvement as shaped by cultural norms and values, and the burden of their additional responsibilities and time commitments. School factors that influenced involvement centered on school practices that were relational in nature and it was found that the staff at O'Hearn were engaging in caring and trustful relationships with parents that held a significant level of appreciation for and recognition of the parents as partners in the academic achievement of the children. In turn the desire by these parents to be involved was enhanced.

Conclusions

Because this study focuses on parents from one school site and the sample size is small it is impossible to generalize the findings beyond the research setting. However, this study does provide greater insight into family participation in urban schools and suggest that school staff must support a culture of family at their sites where all members of the school community are respected and honored. The findings indicate that "respectful relationships where power is shared between school staff and family members provide the glue that holds the community together and influences parent involvement.

To obtain a complete copy of this research paper, please visit:
<http://www.responsiveeducation.org/pdf/mappArticle.pdf>

PEW Hispanic Center Survey Reveals Latinos are Optimistic about Schools and Education



The second portion of the May meeting was led by Roberto Suro and Rick Fry, both of the Pew Hispanic Center. The two shared with us the results of a recent survey on the attitudes of Latinos towards public schools and a variety of educational issues, including the No Child Left Behind Act.

Titled the 2003 National Survey of Latinos on Education and released in January of this year the survey was conducted by telephone between August 7 and October 15, 2003 among a national representative sample of 3,421 adults,

18 years and older, who were selected at random. The survey also provides substantial comparison samples of whites and African Americans.

The results reveal that in general Latinos offer positive views of their local schools, teachers and educational institutions. And that Latino parents say they are active in their child's school and involved in their education. A significant aspect revealed in the survey are the many clear differences between Latinos born in the US and those who have come from abroad. Specifically, in ratings of public schools, Latinos, especially those born abroad, are more positive about public schools and more optimistic that schools are improving than either whites or African Americans. However, there is a sizeable minority that would give public schools an average or below average rating.

Because Roberto and Rick had so much statistical research to share there is no way it could possibly all be included in this edition of the *Update*, however if you want to access more information about this survey and others conducted by Pew and Kaiser, please visit them online at www.pewhispanic.org. There you will find a complete copy of the survey summary and chartpack, topline, press release, as well as Fact Sheets on Latino College Enrollment, Academic Achievement and others.

In Their Own Words—Illinois PIRC ADI

The Academic Development Institute has served as the PIRC (Parent Information and Resource Center) in Illinois since 1997. ADI provides technical assistance to the state's 140 PAT programs; administers one model parents' center and 14 school-based demonstration programs; offers a Solid Foundation Academy to train school-based teams in four regions of the state; publishes the *School Community Journal*; provides a training model for parents of children with disabilities; and helps schools and community and faith-based organizations reach parents with information about NCLB and state accountability systems.

The NCLB work is new this year. This spring, ADI is hosting seven regional NCLB Institutes, all-day affairs for school personnel, community agency personnel, and parent leaders. The Institutes provide detailed explanation of the NCLB provisions, especially as they apply to parents. Participants leave with materials that enable them to "spread the word" to parents in their schools and communities.

To demonstrate the community-based follow-up, ADI works with five partner organizations. Each of these organizations offers NCLB Community Workshops in their communities and meets with individual families for Family Guidance Sessions to help parents make informed decisions. The five partner organizations are: Interfaith Leadership Project (Cicero); West Town Leadership United (Chicago); Boys and Girls Club (Peoria); Christian Women of the New Wave (East St. Louis); and Child Care Resource and Referral Center (Carterville).

The NCLB Institute held in East St. Louis on Saturday, May 15, drew 400 participants. Speakers included Dr. Jacquelyn Jackson from the U. S. Department of Education, Bob

Witherspoon from RMC Research and a St. Louis native; Sharryon Dunbar from the Illinois State Board of Education; Dr. Phil Hunsberger from MECCA, and Dr. LaRona Morris and Dr. Stephanie Carpenter from the East St. Louis school district.

Bernadette Anderson, ADI's Director of Community Education, coordinates the NCLB Institutes through ADI's regional offices. She also organized the Institute in her home base—East St. Louis—in conjunction with Sherman Fowler, the district's parent coordinator. "Not only did we have a great turnout," Anderson reports, "but I was very impressed with the interest the parents and teachers showed and the way they got down to business in planning how to improve their schools and reach more parents."

Anderson and her staff trained 50 facilitators prior to the Institute so that the facilitators could work with small groups of parents and teachers to make the speakers' information practical to their schools and neighborhoods.

The day began with presentation of the colors by an ROTC youth color guard. The Institute concluded with ten-year-old Corliss Jacobs bringing the crowd to its feet with a rousing rendition of God Bless America.