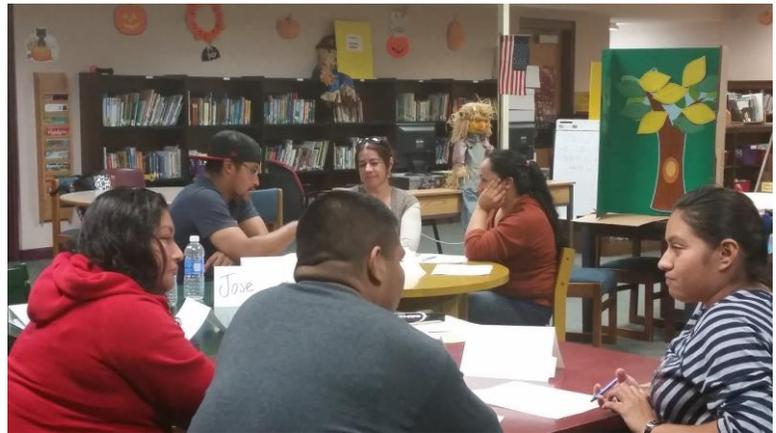


PARTNERING FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS – CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK TRITON AND FARIBAUT MIDDLE SCHOOLS GRANT**Evaluation for Year 3 (May 2015)****BACKGROUND**

CYFAR PSS is a partnership of University of Minnesota Extension, Triton (Dodge Center), and Faribault Middle Schools focusing on two of the major factors related to academic achievement for Latino families – family and school environments. CYFAR PSS includes three integrated components of 1) Family Strengthening Education, 2) Family-School Partnerships (FSP) and 3) the use of Latino School Navigators who act as a liaison between parents, school and resources in the community.



The multi-faceted project design and a strong community engagement model calls for a community-based participatory evaluation that is fluid, timely and informs project improvements along the way. The CYFAR PSS evaluation team works closely with the project management team and core partners to implement the planned evaluations as well as support the design of “just in time” evaluation assessments and providing results back to the program to inform programmatic decision making. The following highlights evaluation processes and results for the three integrated components of CYFAR PSS.

FAMILY STRENGTHENING EDUCATION**Parenting Classes**

“Educación: Nuestra Mejor Herencia” classes help parents understand their role in their children’s education, inform them on how schools work in their communities, and share with them their expected and welcomed role as a partner in their children’s success in school. The parent education curricula include 7 interactive sessions, each of them of about two hours long. The classes were offered to one cohort of parents in each of the first three years of the grant at Faribault and Triton Middle Schools. Thus far, a total of 72 (22 in Year 3) parents have enrolled in “Educación: Conectando familias y escuelas.” The demographic information for parents is reported below. Outcome results are based on responses of 31 parents who completed both the pre and post surveys.

Participant Demographics

The majority of the participants were from Mexico (92.8%), and the rest were from the United States (5.7%) or El Salvador (1.4%). Participants' average age was about 40 ($M = 40.22$, $SD = 6.76$). Participants moved to the United States between 1972 and 2007, with the average year moving being 1996 ($M = 1996.01$, $SD = 7.69$). Participants moved to Minnesota (from other parts of the U.S.) between 1986 and 2014, with the average year moving here being about 1999 ($M = 1998.59$, $SD = 6.60$). Most of the participants identified as female (71%) and the rest identified as male (29%). A vast majority of the participants received some type of schooling and either attended middle school (10.1%), graduated high school or received their GED (55.1%), went to technical school (23.2%), or attended college (10.1%); a small amount did not attend school (1.4%). Majority of the participants were employed (50.7%); others were self-employed (4.4%), stay-at-home parents (36.2%), retired (1.4%), or unemployed (5.8%). Monthly household income ranged from less than \$1,000 (2.9%), \$1,001 to \$2,000 (15.9%), \$2,001 to \$3,000 (44.9%), \$3,001 to \$4,000 (24.6%), and more than \$4,001 (1.4%); others did not share monthly income (10.1%). Participants spoke only Spanish in the home (42.9%), spoke more Spanish than English (33.3%), or spoke both Spanish and English (19.0%) in the home. Less than five percent (4.8%) spoke more English than Spanish in the home. On average, participants had more than 4 people in their household ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.30$). There were a total of 156 children when adding up all of the children of all the participants. The age of children ranged from infancy to age 18, with an average age of 10.44.

Outcomes of “Educación: Conectando familias y escuelas”

Parents completed pre and post surveys measuring key parenting practices, parenting self-efficacy to navigate the schools, as well as trust in themselves and in schools to support their children's school success. The analyses below are based on 31 parents who completed both pre and post-surveys. Specific measures in the surveys are as follows.

To assess **Parenting Outcomes**:

- Parent Acceptance: 8 questions
- Parent Personal Involvement with Children: 5 questions

To assess **School Success Outcomes**:

- Parenting Educational Support Efficacy: 6 questions
- Parent Involvement at School: 17 questions
- Trust Scale – Family-School Relationship Survey
 - Parent / Guardian: 7 questions
 - School: 7 questions
- Comfort Navigating School System: 3 questions

Summary of Results

There was an increase in scores for all key outcomes. Significant positive change occurred for nearly all measures related to school-success outcomes, parent involvement, and parenting. There

was no significant change from pre to post regarding parent comfort navigating the school system, $t(30) = 0.18, p = .861$. All other factors showed significant positive change and are reported below.

Significant Changes

- Parent Acceptance, $t(29) = 4.02, p < 0.001$
- Parent Personal Involvement, $t(30) = 2.77, p = .010$
- Parenting Educational Support Efficacy, $t(30) = 4.89, p < 0.001$
- Parent Involvement at School, $t(28) = 4.94, p < 0.001$
- Trust Scale - Family-School Relationship Survey
- Parent / Guardian, $t(28) = 4.69, p < 0.001$
- School, $t(27) = 2.46, p = .021$

In addition, parents were asked a series of questions about the satisfaction with the classes as well as the extent to which they learned key concepts through the classes. When asked about their experiences and learning in the program, all participants ($n = 31$) reported highly favorable experience ($M = 4.66$ (out of a 5 point scale), $SD = 0.51$) and reported learning from the program ($M = 3.48$ (out of a 4 point scale), $SD = 0.41$).



While parents attended classes with a target child in mind (middle school students), it should be noted parent learning outcomes could have ripple effects when factoring in that participants have a combined total of 156 children living at home.

Booster Classes for Parents who Completed Parenting Classes

Parents who completed parenting classes were offered a series of booster classes to continue their learning. A learning needs assessment survey of parents indicated a host of additional learning needs including (in order of most often mentioned):

- Use of technology (TV, computer, electronic devices)
- Motivating their children for Hs graduation and attending College
- Improving parent-child communication*
- Understanding what your children need to succeed at school*
- Youth risk taking/ bullying*
- How to work with other parents to support each other with school issues*

The topics highlighted by an asterisk (*) are already some of the topics addressed through the parent education classes. Given the results of the needs assessment survey, the project team offered two Technology booster sessions for 29 parents including computer basics as well as use of technology (e.g., iPad) to access school-related information. Parents were then offered classes using the Open Doors with Higher Education curriculum to enhance parents' knowledge, skills and practices for best preparing their children to attend post-secondary education. A pre-post survey was developed to measure key objectives of the 8 weekly session Open Doors with Higher Education classes. The following highlights the results of the evaluation.

Open Doors with Higher Education

Demographics: Evaluations were completed by 16 parents; 11 completed both the pre and post surveys ($n = 11$). The parents provided demographic information about the children they were targeting when they attended Open Doors with Higher Education. Most of the children were male (70.0%) and the rest were female (30.0%) The average age of participants' children was 14.3 ($SD = 1.25$). Parents also described their child's grade level which ranged from seventh to eleventh grade ($M = 8.4$, $SD = 1.17$).

Outcomes: Significant change was observed for parents who completed both the pre and post surveys ($n = 11$).

Parents reported a significant increase in knowledge about high school resources that support higher education, such as an increase in:

- Knowledge of what classes can help their child achieve their goals after high school, $t(10) = 3.28$, $p = .010$
- Feeling informed about the tests required for college, $t(10) = 4.81$, $p = .001$
- Knowing if their child has the opportunity to take college classes in high school, $t(10) = 2.86$, $p = .019$
- Knowing who to contact at their child's school to help plan their education, $t(10) = 3.55$, $p = .006$
- Knowing if after school sports are available for their child, $t(10) = 4.58$, $p = .001$

There was also a significant increase for questions related to financing higher education. Parents reported an increase in:

- Knowledge and skills needed to apply for financial aid, $t(10) = 2.45$, $p = .037$
- Knowing different ways to pay for college, $t(10) = 2.45$, $p = .037$
- Knowing if their child is eligible for state assistance, $t(10) = 3.50$, $p = .007$
- Knowing if their child is eligible for federal assistance, $t(10) = 3.00$, $p = .015$
- Knowing how to search for information about how to pay for higher education, $t(10) = 2.86$, $p = .019$
- Talking to their child about how to pay for higher education, $t(10) = 3.21$, $p = .011$
- Understanding that investments can pay for higher education, $t(10) = 3.67$, $p = .005$

- Understanding that there are additional costs to loans such as interest, $t(10) = 3.88$, $p = .004$
- Talking to their child about managing money, $t(10) = 3.35$, $p = .008$

Parents also reported a significant increase for other items such as:

- Knowledge to help their child complete a college application, $t(10) = 4.71$, $p = .001$
- Knowing where to find community resources to help Latino students plan for higher education, $t(10) = 3.25$, $p = .010$
- Knowing where to find volunteer or intern opportunities, $t(10) = 2.86$, $p = .019$
- Knowing where to find summer enrichment opportunities, $t(10) = 2.59$, $p = .029$

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS (FSP)

At the end of year two, the FSP members at each school came together to assess their progress toward the action plans parents and school staff jointly developed to enhance Latino parents' relationship with the school. These meetings were facilitated by the evaluation team who used clicker technology to get immediate results across members and the facilitated dialogue about what was working and what was not working.



While much progress was being made in terms of Spanish-language websites, phone and written communications in Spanish, and improved parent-teacher conference experiences, in both school, there was a clear lack of progress in developing Latino Parent Teacher Organizations or incorporating Latino parents into existing PTOs. During the recorded discussion about the lack of progress relative to this action plan it was noted that: 1) having authentic voice through a formalized process or an organized entity such as a PTO is critical for Latino parents; 2) given the often unique experience of Latino parents, that incorporation of Latino parents into existing organizations may not be most effective; and 3) Latino parents need supports to learn leadership skills and having a voice in making change.

Parents also reinforced to school staff that they really want change and are very passionate about making suggestions and felt that it is important for schools to work with the parents to make change happen. On the flip side, the parents also agreed amongst themselves that “parents have to be actively involved and cannot just complain about things.” Parents were also quick to point out that FSP, and other efforts by their schools to build better relationships with Latino parents are being noticed beyond their school district. One parent noted, “Other districts realize how lucky our school is and wonder why nothing is happening in their town.”

The feedback loop between evaluation results and programmatic decisions played a role in the development of a two-day leadership program for Latino parents and school staff in the FSP to co-learn leadership skills, decision-making, action planning for change, and understanding difference in group processes. The training was developed with support from the University of Minnesota

Extension Center for Community Vitality that had a strong Latino leadership development training in place. A post-training evaluation tool was developed to assess training effectiveness. The trainings are being offered May of 2015 so results of this evaluation will be reported in Year 4.

LATINO SCHOOL NAVIGATORS

In addition to review notes from key project personnel meetings, the Latino school navigators were interviewed regarding their roles. Some highlights of the impact of their work include:

- Becoming a critical resource to Schools- navigators at both schools report being accepted by key school staff as an important resource. At a recent meeting, the principal of one of the schools noted, “For any questions about Latino families, we go to [the school navigator]. She’s our go-to person for all things concerning Latino families.”
- They are able to directly connect CYFAR program activities to schools and inform parents and school staff who are not part of CYFAR. For example, at each school, the school offers a bulletin board in a highly visible area to showcase project activities and to advertise CYFAR PSS program activities. They are also offered key mode of communication used by schools to inform parents about CYFAP project activities and upcoming opportunities.
- Connect CYFAR PSS participants to other existing Extension programs: Working with the Center for Community Vitality to develop Latino parent leadership training is one example. Another example includes recruiting students of the parent participants to start their own “4-H club.” A highlight for the students was submitting projects to the local county fair. A navigator noted “Students were extremely excited to showcase their projects at the county fair. They wanted to know what’s next for their 4-H club.”
- Continuous learning and growing for navigators is a “value-added” to the local community. Navigators noted that any knowledge and skills they learn through CYFAR professional development conference and their work with CYFAR will remain in the community and will add to the skill-set for the Latino community. Both navigators live, work and raise children in their respective CYFAR communities. A concrete example is the navigators being trained to deliver the parent education, “Educación: Conectando familias y escuelas.” This has a reciprocal benefit in which the navigators are learning to teach a key parent education curricula, while Extension is benefiting by improving the likelihood of sustaining the program beyond the tenure of the CYFAR grant.

During the interview, navigators were asked about things that were not working well or they could use more supports around. They discussed the difficulty recruiting and talking to parents, and how to better advocate for the parents. Again, showcasing the evaluation-project feedback loop, given this information, the project director brought in a coach to work monthly with the navigators. The purposes of the monthly seminars include: 1) to provide diversity training specific to school navigators (i.e., developing knowledge of and skills in using concepts such as culture, cultural stereotypes, deficit thinking, cultural ‘translation,’ etc.) 2) to provide “soft skill” (professional disposition) training specific to the school navigator role; and 3) to provide tools for sustainable learning and practice in leading and facilitating cross-cultural discussions, particularly around the broad goal of improving Latino students’ educational experiences and opportunities. By the end of the coaching sessions, navigators will be able to:

- Lead use of ‘norms of agreement’ tool for group meetings

- Bring up problems and issues related to culture, race, ethnicity, language, and other differences in diverse settings to improve Latino school success
- Recognize and discuss possible cultural (not just individual) differences and patterns (i.e., assumptions and meanings around food) to improve cross-cultural communication
- Recognize and discuss positive and negative cultural stereotypes
- Use strategies to advocate for one's role within an organization (i.e., can use a tool to lead discussions around an issue, including the navigator role)
- Help facilitate cultural understanding across different groups (i.e., students, parents, teachers, school staff, university staff, etc.)
- Empower other people in their confidence and ability to bridge racial, ethnic, language, and other differences
- Identify important school navigator 'soft skills' (i.e., the balance between being a 'chameleon' and 'true-to-self,' or assertive communication)
- Have greater awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses as a school navigator, and opportunities and strategies for professional growth

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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