



A Summary of Abriendo Puertas: A Parent Leadership Training Program for Latino Parents

July 10, 2009

Meeting Goals

- To provide information about the Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors program structure, funding, and evaluation.
- To provide a model for how to plan and implement programs that are culturally competent and that combine engagement outreach to ethnic and racial minority populations.

Overview

On July 10, 2009, Grantmakers for Children, Youth & Families held a conference call highlighting the Abriendo Puertas/ Opening Doors (AP) program, a parent leadership training program for Latino parents. This call included information about AP's cultural values, strengths, and experiences of Latino parents, innovative tools and resources for parents, cost-effective train-the-trainer approach, and their robust evaluation. The following summary provides highlights from the presentations and discussions.

VIDEO

The Abriendo Puertas/ Opening Doors (AP) program has developed a film that powerfully portrays the importance of the program and the gratitude from parents who are now confident in assuring education and advocacy for their child. Also, in this video, Tony Plana, Actor/Executive Artistic Director and Founder of East L.A. Classic Theatre, Antonio Villaraigosa, Mayor, City of Los Angeles, and Hilda Solis, US Secretary of Labor show their support for the AP program. [Access the video clip.](#)

PANELISTS

Maria A. Casillas

President, [Families in Schools](#), Los Angeles, CA

Maria Casillas provided an overview of the role of Families in Schools (FIS) and the AP program. Families in Schools was developed by Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Challenge Grants/ Project in 2000. The purpose of FIS is to create a portfolio of research based, culturally relevant programs that address the needs of families and schools to work together in support of Latino children. In fact, based on the 2007 Census, 22% of the K-12 population consists of Latinos and approximately 30% of the 0-5 age group population are Latinos, representing the largest minority group in each category and indicating a growing population of Latinos. AP is a comprehensive and coherent program that has rigorously tested and highly developed tools and curriculum.

[Listen to Maria A. Casillas give a brief synopsis of the program.](#)

Sandra Gutierrez

National Project Director, [Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors](#)

Sandra Gutierrez provided detailed information on the AP program. The program curriculum, first developed in Spanish, reflects the input, concerns, and values of Latino parents. Recently refined from evaluation data, AP program still remains true to their population. The AP program was created to address the poor education and reading scores found among Latino students. AP supports parents' aspirations to provide strong education for their children. The program emphasizes health, social and emotional well-being, early learning, and literacy. The AP program consists of 10, 2 hour interactive sessions which use a methodology of popular education commonly observed in Latin America to promote literacy. The AP program teaches parenting, leadership and advocacy skills for parents of Latino children, ages 1-5.

Developed through a participatory curriculum development, focusing on input from parents, the curriculum is culturally relevant. "Vetoes" which frame each program session, are popular folk wisdom passed down through generations, and allow the curriculum to come to life, especially for parents who remember their own childhood and for children who feel connected to their culture. AP aims to improve the outcomes of the nation of Latino children, by building the capacity and confidence in parents to be strong and powerful advocates in the lives of their children. The primary goal of the AP program is to increase the number of Latino children in the US that are school ready and that succeed.

Integral to the curriculum, the learning environment is a parent café style - with music, and a relaxed atmosphere so parents do not feel that they are attending a lecture or a formal classroom. Vignettes of three characters and role playing are techniques used to enforce lessons. To maintain a high retention rate, AP trainers provide high quality child care services while parents are in the course session. In addition, tangible take-away's from each session, including hand outs and other resources for parents to develop their own resource kit are provided. The AP program has made it simple for trainers to organize all ten session and educate others about Latino children and schools. A facilitator kit includes CDs, DVDs, handouts, power points, resource lists, and step by step "how to's". The train-the-trainer model has proven to be cost-effective. Thus far, the program support and evaluation was funded through an anonymous donor. The AP program's next goal is to support and disseminate the program broadly throughout the US.

The following are titles and descriptions of each of the AP program sessions.

Session 1: I am my Child's First Teacher. Our Home is my Child's First School

In this session the trainer introduces the AP program and brings to light the importance of education and parenting by relaying astonishing data on the current status of Latino children. Also, in this session, parents evaluate how they were raised as children and review its effects on their own parenting skills. Lastly, parents begin to define and understand what being a leader in their family means.

Session 2: Reaching Family Success

In this session parents begin to take the role of leader in their family. To take on this role, trainers discuss how to set goals, good methods of communication, and how to develop a family action plan.

Session 3: My Child Grows

During this session the trainer covers basic ages and stages of child development in an interactive way. In addition, trainers provide information on children with special needs.

Session 4: My Child Talks

In this session the trainer discusses the importance of reading, especially between the ages of 0-5. The trainer engages parents in activities that relay the importance of brain activity and the need for reading as a method to develop their child's brain. Trainers also discuss how to prepare their child for school.

Session 5: Let's Continue Opening Doors

During this session, trainers and parents explore community resources available to families that often go underutilized. Field trips to the library are very popular. Parents are able to apply for library cards and find resources useful to their family and their child. In addition, trainers discuss financial literacy and emphasize the earned income tax credit available to low-income families.

Session 6: Our Health is First, Part 1

During the first part of "Our Health is First" session, the importance of nutrition and exercise are emphasized. Parents learn how to read labels and measure portions. Parents also develop family practice methods to engage in healthy behaviors and prevent negative outcomes.

Session 7: Our Health is First, Part 2

During this session, emotional health of parents and children are addressed. The importance of self esteem is highlighted to promote positive mental health. Parents take away activities to promote self esteem in their children, at home.

Session 8: Let's Go to School

In this session, trainers discuss the importance of the quality in early child care and education. Trainers also emphasize the importance of maintaining a strong line of communication between a child's preschool and child care providers. Parents leave the session understanding the importance and advantages of preschool.

Session 9: Advocating for our future

In this session, parents learn about their rights, their responsibilities, and how to advocate for themselves and their family in the community. Trainers provide communication tips, methods to successfully process complaints, and examples through role playing.

Session 10: Yes we can!

During the last session, parents graduate from the program. Families share their plans for the future and discuss what they will do to ensure plans are met

[Listen to Sandra Gutierrez provide detailed information on the AP program.](#)

Margaret Bridges, PhD

Developmental Psychologist & Research Scientist, [University of California, Berkeley](#)

Margaret Bridges headed the team that evaluated the AP program. As with any evaluation and research, program participants who also partook in the evaluation were thoroughly analyzed for confounders and other statistical anomalies. After conducting surveys, short questionnaires, focus groups, and field observation (evaluator attended at least 8 sessions) during the beginning, completion, and post completion (2-6 months), the evaluation team found promising results. Ms. Bridges reported that AP program participants had:

- Significant increases in confidence about parenting skills
- Significant increases in knowledge and access to available health services in their communities
- Significant increases in community engagement and social support
- Significant increases in building community connection, support, and community involvement
- Significant increases action in and encouraging others to vote, especially on behalf of children

Furthermore, graduated parents were spreading the knowledge gained through AP and essentially advocating for children in their community and neighborhood, making the effect size larger than what has been calculated. Ms. Bridges closed by explaining that these results should be used to further modify and strengthen the program. In areas where effect sizes were not evident or minimal, changes have been made to improve the program.

[Listen to Margaret Bridges explain the evaluation conducted on the AP program.](#)

QUESTION & ANSWER

During the last part of the session, participants were encouraged to comment on or ask questions about the information presented during the conference call. Panelists answered questions and elaborated on topics that arose.

Panelists noted the AP program is program is culturally relevant to Mexican across the diaspora. Not all participants were Mexican. Among evaluation participants, approximately 20% of respondents were from Central and South American countries. The program participants were predominantly the mother of the household. While, there was at least one father figure present in each class, participation among fathers was not high. Advertising strategies and time of program sessions contributed to the low male participation rates. The program was advertised through Head Start and word of mouth. Faith based organizations and other community organization that had a strong base to working with Latino families approached the AP program.

In total, over 400 parents have graduated in the past 2 years. The program will soon be in 12 counties in California. Thus far, it has not been implemented in other states. To bring this program to your community, the AP program can send two trainers to your community to educate community trainers. The costs depends on how many community trainers participate in the train-the-trainer program. But, keeping in mind the number of persons each community trainer serves, the costs eventually are minimal and most often saved by the benefits incurred. Ms. Gutierrez estimated that two AP program trainers training 20 community trainers costs approximately \$40,000.

To obtain marketing or budget details, interested individuals were asked to contact Sandra Gutierrez.