“It changed my view of the world”  

Spanish speaking parents reflect on a college preparation workshop

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Latino families in North Carolina

North Carolina cities and towns percent Hispanic/Latino 2010

N.C. municipalities
Percent Hispanic/Latino origin

- Red: 20.01% - 50.32%
- Orange: 8.4% - 20%
- Yellow: 5.01% - 8.39%
- Light yellow: 0% - 5%

Above N.C. average (8.39 percent)
At or below N.C. average

Source: Census 2010
Parents are essential to the high school success and college decisions of their children, but immigrant parents have some barriers to participation in the process.

S. Asheboro Middle School had a group of Latino parents already coming in for English classes on Monday evenings.

We agreed to pilot our 6 week curriculum for the first time with interested HS and MS parents in this group.

Approximately 25 parents attended all 6 weeks, with another 5-10 coming at least 3 weeks.

The topics included knowing your child’s interests, being college ready, selecting the best fit college, understanding admissions, finding financial aid, identifying role models.
Our goals for the curriculum

- Support the parents’ identities as engaged and invested in their children’s future success; strengths-based

- Provide “insider” information on the post-secondary system in the US that they may be missing; acculturation

- Provide opportunities for them to increase their self-efficacy for college planning tasks (i.e., believe they can do it)

- Identify “near peers” who could provide culturally relevant perspective and inspiration

- See how curriculum worked and what needed to be improved
What new information did you learn?

- About scholarships; although we don’t have money, our children can go to the university also
- How I can inform myself via CFNC website
- Speak to the HS counselor early on to be well informed about which classes to take
- How to get credits before entering university
- How to get fee waivers for SAT, and why take it
- Amount of time to study for various careers
- Going to the university can open up new opportunities
What was surprising or impactful from the workshop?

- The testimony of the young man who arrived without documents and now has a master’s degree.
- The time that the 2 teachers dedicated to us, even speaking Spanish and showing they were interested in our lives.
- Understanding my role as a parent in my child’s education.
- We thought it was very difficult to send our children to college, but we learned that it can be done.
- The interests/concerns of the other parents who attended.
- We learned there is a school board of parents in our city.
Suggestions for improving the workshop for the future?

- Visit places where Hispanics are working

- I thought it helped us a lot, to get such good explanations and in Spanish

- I would like to attend another one; have more sessions

- Have more publicity; send flyers with the students or call

- I thought the workshop was perfect
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- The myth of Latino immigrant parents as uninvolved in their children’s education needs to be dispelled.

- The school was so pleased to see sustained attendance from these families, they started to respond in kind.

- We brought food (which the parents usually gave to their kids), but without childcare, it would not have worked.

- There still needs to be sustained follow-up.

- The “presentation” based style of the workshop helped us convey information effectively, but may not work for every group in every setting.
Next steps

- Our next attempt will be a less formal discussion group format based in Spanish-serving church groups

- Need for bilingual presenters who could continue this work (professionals, graduate students, or volunteers)

- Ways to balance personalismo (face to face communication) and more widespread outreach (via facilitated videos?)

- Help communities who have received the workshop to keep their own momentum going