Connecting the Dots: A Parent-Student-School Collaboration Towards Student Academic Success and College Readiness

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“For me Parent University has been a motivation to believe that our children can become a better version of ourselves.” (Rocio)

“Parent University is a unique opportunity because we are creating new knowledge that helps our present and future”. (Esteban)
Potholes of Parental Readiness

LANGUAGE & CULTURE
EDUCATION
ACCULTURATION
COMMUNITY/SCHOOL
MOBILITY
LINGO
IMMIGRATION
What Makes This Model Different from Others?

FOCUS IS ON PARENT!
“Ways of Knowing as a for of EMPOWERMENT!
A Parent University Philosophy: Why?

- Regards parenting as an ongoing and lifelong learning process
- Designed to appeal to parents of all ages of children, social background, and educational status
- Provides parents with resources and education in a non-threatening environment
- Empowers parents to take a more active role in their children’s education, especially parents who must deal with cultural, financial, and language barriers
Objective:
To provide a learning community that will increase parents’ personal, professional and leadership development to support and encourage their students’ academic success and transition to post-secondary education.

Goal:
To strengthen a college going culture in Latino families
Parent University: A Parent-Centered Model

**Target Audience:** Latino parents of students attending DeKalb and Sycamore public school districts

**Program:** Delivers a series of workshops to assist Latino parents in three main areas:
1. Personal, leadership and career development
2. Parental relationship with children
3. Parental school/education engagement

**Recruitment:** Grass-roots approach
- Curriculum nights
- Presentations (ELL classes, BPAC meetings)
- Informational sessions at Public Libraries
College Readiness, Parent Readiness or Both?
## Parental Readiness: Tri-fold approach

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Overlapping Spheres: School-Family-Community

- Parenting
- Communicating
- Volunteering
- Learning at Home
- Decision-making
- Collaborating with the Community

(Epstein et al., 2002)
Parenting

Helping families (e.g., parents and extended family members) to become aware and knowledgeable about child development, and providing resources that enable them to establish home environments that can enhance student learning.
Parents’ Quotes

“It is an experience that provides the opportunity to learn with an Excellent group dynamic to find out about aspects around our community”. (Juan)

“Being part of Parent University has enriched me as a person because we have cover in depth different topics like education, health, family, etc. I now feel that I have more tools to continue to grow. Thank you for motivate us! (Soledad)
Communicating

Effective, appropriate, relevant, two-way contact about school events (e.g., open houses, conferences, testing workshops), student academic or personal development and progress, and/or insight (e.g., success or challenges) within the home environment.
Volunteering

Organizing and participating in activities initiated by school personnel (e.g., parent-teacher association) or generated by community members aimed at supporting students and school programs, such as service-learning projects, Big Brothers Big Sisters programs, or violence-reduction assemblies.
“After living in DeKalb for almost six years I was not aware of resources; thanks to this program I am now aware of opportunities for our children.” (Anabel)

“It has put in our hands knowledge and resources that if we learn how to take advantage of them will make us, as immigrants, not only persons with stronger self-confidence; but also, a stronger community.” (Alejandro)
Decision – making: Including parents and family members from all backgrounds as representatives and leaders on school committees.
“It meant a lot to me because I was able to share my experience of being part of Parent University where we are learning how to encourage our children and families to move forward.” (Maria)

“It is important that parents and teachers know about these kinds of groups where they can organize to receive this kind of support and get information on how to improve our lifestyle.” (Soledad)
Collaborating with the community: Identifying and integrating resources, services, and other assets from the community to help meet the needs of school personnel, students, and their families.
Parent University: Partners

• DeKalb and Sycamore school districts’ administration team
• Northwestern Medicine Kishwaukee Hospital
• Kishwaukee Community College
• Northern Illinois University Departments
• Northern Illinois University student volunteers
• Local businesses
  – Restaurants, grocery stores
  – Immigration Law firms
Lessons Learned:

• Involve parents in the process
• Strengthen/Develop Partnerships with:
  – Schools
  – Community groups/agencies
• Recognize and address barriers “think outside the box”
  – Location, time and day
  – Language
  – Childcare is of extreme importance
• Respect parents’ needs
• Curriculum based on parents’ needs assessment
• Develop sense of belonging/community
• Foster a learning community
• Be flexible
• Connection to community resources & share of information
• Keep administration happy - COMMUNICATION
Parent University: First-year Outcomes

- **Community Resources**: Connected parents with resources to strengthen their personal development and confidence to engage in their children’s education.

- **Sense of belonging**: Parents’ felt part of a learning community where they felt comfortable to express their opinions and participate in conferences as presenters despite their level of education, English language skills, or immigration status.

- **Empowerment of Parents**: Parents found self-validation and engaged in opportunities to develop personal leadership and professional/vocational goals.
PARENTS AS AGENTS FOR CHANGE
Partners and Sponsors

Northern Illinois University
Kishwaukee College
DeKalb School District 428
Rochelle High School District 212
Rochelle Elementary School District 231
Sycamore School District 427
Cabrera Capital Markets
Softwater City, Inc.
First Midwest Bank
HyVee
Thankyou!
¡Gracias!

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