

Promoting education within the latino family



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Over the past few years undocumented immigrants have become more common in the United States than ever before. There are nearly 12 million undocumented settlers which means that a large portion of this population is made up of young children and young adults. An important factor to successful development starts with academic achievement which is a insistent issue in the Latino community. It is imminent that schools and communities work together in order to facilitate the best opportunities when it comes to their students. It all starts with overcoming the educational barrier by encouraging the completion of school. By completing a high school education, it can open the doors for many more opportunities such as moving on to higher learning and establishing a place within the work place. Success within the school system can arise from many aspects starting with the family. By establishing a strong support system, it can motivate a child to continue within school. The school also plays a role in what the child will accomplish. The school must be supportive in providing accommodations for low-income families and working with kids in facilitating active learning. Another component to successful schooling is the amount of responsibility the child is taking on. The last factor is how the home and school work together in order to foster success among students. By having a better understanding of all of these factors it can give a better understanding to the individual and tailor the process of education on a case by case basis. This in turn will decrease the achievement gap and provide a positive outlook of success for future endeavors.

Strengthening the Bonds of Social Support

The sociocultural theory outlines the idea that with individual learning comes strong social relationships. In education it is crucial to have validated experiences and strong interactions among teachers, mentors, and family members. During this time, children need reassurance and require encouraging words to facilitate proper learning. When school presents challenges there needs to be a support system ready to help the individual understand how to overcome and move forward. If something proves to be difficult family should be there to encourage them and provide ways to push through, this can affect how the student thinks and ultimately learns. Poza, Brooks, and Valdés (2014) suggested that Latino parents are indeed involved and concerned about their children's education, and that Latino parents ask questions of neighbors and well informed friends in their own communities regarding how to navigate the school systems. Their research found that Latino parents want to understand how to best help their children succeed in their studies, but more importantly are focused on engagement that helps their children develop holistically as people and not just within an academic setting. In many instances, these parents turn to a "culture of power, such as employers, church authorities, or staff of nonprofit organizations about their rights as parents or processes" that will allow them to best assist their children (Poza, Brooks, & Valdés, 2014, p. 132). Latino parents consider engagement in the education of their children as participating in home based activities outside of the school that assist students, and not necessarily on the traditional model of engagement such as fundraising, school activities, and PTA membership. According to the *Journal of Educational Research*, parental engagement in the home makes the greatest difference to student achievement. This can be done through direct modeling because if the child

sees that the parent is putting in time and effort the child becomes more interested in that particular activity. This can be facilitated by taking time to review and ask questions about the child's homework. This gets them excited to talk through what they have learned and will motivate them to complete more homework in order to explain it to the parent in the future. Family support can also be facilitated through reinforcement. The reinforcement theory predicts that children will engage in more behaviors that are rewarded and if this is applied to school components such as studying for tests, attending class, and finishing homework they will be more likely to do well in these areas if compensated. Educational outcomes can also be influenced by direct instruction which requires the parent to take initiative in helping children through direct, closed-ended instruction or direct, open-ended instruction (Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler). This facilitates different means of learning and can take a lot of time from the parent. All of these ideas of parent involvement make it known to the child that the parent is there, whether it be to provide support or encourage learning. This makes the child feel supported and makes them feel like they aren't tackling these tough situations alone. By providing support it is less likely the child will feel the need to drop out and will encourage their learning into higher education opportunities.

Establishing an Understanding School Environment

In order to achieve academic accomplishment, the school system must provide means in order to accommodate every student that is enrolled in their school. There is a large spectrum of what children may need and especially regarding the particular population of Latinos it is becoming

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known that there is lack of culturally competent school personnel that can provide what these students need to thrive. Cultural concept is defined as the set of consistent behaviors, attitudes, and practices that unilaterally form a system across professionals that enables them to work collectively across cultures (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991). The school setting is made up of a variety of people including teachers, various staff, and administration. Each play a role in how learning is facilitated and within this, cultural representation should exist and respect for diverse people and ethnicities should be established. School personnel are responsible for developing and creating an environment where culture is welcomed, diverse values are encouraged and where learning is ultimately facilitated for students. When students are reaffirmed and feel they are respected in the school setting they will become driven to rise to the academic platforms before them. If the adults around them provide a healthy example by providing understanding and taking an interest in their general well-being it will change their involvement in the classroom. Culture should not be overlooked it should be appreciated and integrated into school activities. Ultimately staff should be trained in cultural competent methods that are responsive to diversity and help eliminate bias. It is the job as a teacher to understand each student and be a resource a student can utilize. Students should feel that their teacher is approachable and able to provide the means to promote active and successful learning. Failing to step up as a member of the school staff can create negative student perceptions which in turn discourages the involvement in academic achievement. By creating the foundation for a negative perspective, engagement in academics will severely decrease and will ultimately result in students losing the will to try.

Familial Responsibilities and Values

It's important to understand what Latino culture tends to value more than education because this can affect the ultimate result of scholastic participation. Above all family is the most important aspect because this is where the most support and reassurance stems from. Even though family is highly valued this can affect a student's academic performance. In many cases Latino students suspend their academic opportunities in order to be present in helping economically in family matters. In a Pew Hispanic Center study, nearly 74% of respondents explained that their studies were hindered by a need to work in order to provide economic support for their families (Lopez, 2009). This means that more than half of the Latino student population has different priorities than fulfilling a deadline. It must be acknowledged that in the child's eyes it is not a choice it is a requirement to help out the family whether it be financially, emotionally, or socially. A culture that values family first will have distinct ideas on how school is approached. Latino family values, which include "familismo, respeto, and educación" all interact to impact achievement (Woolley, 2009, p. 9). Familismo has a strong impact on Latino students because it is a sense of commitment to abide to the strong ties of the family, no matter what. Respeto is what is expected of the child by the elders in the Latino community. It is known that respect should be given to each and every person that is interacted with. Forming strong relationships is something that is important because it is known that a quality like this will be taken far in life. Educación is the duty taken on by the family to impart all of the knowledge that is known to the eager-to-learn youth. The ideal that learning

does not simply take place in a school setting establishes that learning is a constant process, which is primarily done by the parents. By understanding these values, it gives an insight as to why youths may prioritize certain aspects of life above others. This can be seen as needing to work to provide financial influx to the family, which could lead to absences or missing work. It could lead to children staying home in order to take care of their younger siblings. Instead of kids being punished for these values they should be understood and accommodated for. If this is not done, then the drop-out rates will continue to increase for Latinos.

The Bond Between the Home and School Environment

To ensure the highest outcome of student success it is crucial that the home environment is able to have an open form of communication with the school system to provide an equal balance of learning and support. The school and the home should be seen as a partnership each working together to ensure the success of the individual. It is vital in understanding the cultural factors that might arise in establishing a strong bond between school and home. Most have concerns with language barrier, struggling to find proper child care, and the connection with the teacher. It is common that when either a question or problem arises Latinos will turn to the most trusted people in their circle. This can be classified as other family members or even other community members such as neighbors. These family members or other various valued members can be used as a resource to establish a bond of trust by making connections with the people that are closest with them. By school systems reaching out and making it known that their child is valued it will encourage parents to rely on teacher and administration more in order to

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facility scholastic success. The language barrier is also a prominent concern because it could cause parents to feel insecure about asking questions or hinder their involvement in school events. This can result in the parent feeling powerless in guiding their child to make the best decisions within the system. By being understanding, patient, and reaching out to various resources to help breakdown the language barrier it will make the parent understand that the student is truly valued.

Making a change to Latino Learning

In order for change to be made, parents must be encouraged to get involved and be an active participant in their child's learning, while at the same time receiving support and accommodations from the education system. By solidifying these objectives, it will provide equal opportunity for Latino students, who are eager to learn, to move forward on their education journey. It starts with taking a step back and having acceptance for others and coming to the realization that each individual has their own values and have their own way of learning that is unique to them. By considering this we can facilitate progress in parental engagement and school understanding. As parents become aware that they need to be an advocate for their child's learning the school will know what they need to shift in order to facilitate learning. As this occurs the school can adapt to parent and student needs, which in turn will encourage students to apply themselves by putting more effort into something that is right for them. A beneficial idea is opening the line of communication between parents to help each other understand what is working and what isn't. This provides a community where opinions can be expressed and systems can be tailored.

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The achievement gap of Latino students is far less than that of their Caucasian counter-part. Why is this? Why are more opportunities given to those who don't need it? It's all about understanding, which is something that a lot of school systems are lacking. They are unable to identify the needs of all of their student populations within their schools and provide what is required. It's about communication with parents and tailoring programs to the individual instead of creating a mold that not everyone can fit into. It's about overcoming barriers and encouraging parents to be an active partner in their child's learning. These things must be done on the families' terms and their ideals should be used as a guideline to help future students. Facilitating parental involvement takes time but with patience school performance increases in a positive manner. It's time to stop turning a blind eye to children who are suffering from the education system and provide academic intervention to promote overall success.

Resources

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