

**PARTNERING FOR
SCHOOL SUCCESS**

www.parenting.umn.edu

**CYFAR conference: Baltimore
May 19, 2009**

Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION



**Partnering for School Success
presenters:**

- Kathleen Olson, Family Relations Educator
kaolson@umn.edu
- Patricia Stoppa, Family Relations Educator
stoppa@umn.edu
- Mary Marczak, Evaluation and Research Specialist
marcz001@umn.edu

University of Minnesota Extension

Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION



**What is important for
children to succeed in
school?**

Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Research background

- Identified environmental influences associated with more successful school learning for youth in grades K-12.
- Identified indicators of better school adjustment: improved attendance, fewer suspensions, increased classroom participation, better social skills, fewer behavioral referrals, and improved self-esteem.
- Secondary level indicators included: enrollment in more challenging academic programs, more classes passed and credits earned, higher graduation rates, going on to post secondary education, and avoiding high-risk behavior.



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Partnering for School Success

- Emphasis on partnerships; parents and school staff working together
- K-12
- Family involvement is strategic
- Cultural differences



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

6 Factors

Expectations	Support
Structure	Relationships
Learning	Modeling



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

What can parents do?

Children do best when parents are connected to their children's school in meaningful ways and when children know their parents and teachers have regular contact with each other.

- Partnership
- Communication
- Common goals



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Ways parents can connect with schools:

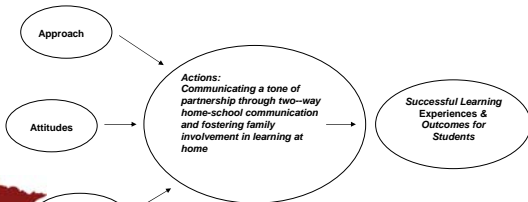
- Introduce yourself
- Attend events
- Show interest to the teacher
- Talk to your child about schoolwork
- Talk to your child about specific behaviors
- Maintain a problem solving attitude



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Pathway to Parent-School Partnerships



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Original question

How can the core concepts (6 factors) be adapted for different groups of parents, including cultural differences?

Conducted 3 focus groups with 32 parents from racially/ethnically diverse groups.



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

What we learned

- The six factors are loaded with culturally-specific meanings.
- The six factors are not the only or even the most critical variables to consider for school success.
- Most parents felt concepts were common sense...and believed already utilizing them at home.
- It appears to blame parents for lack of school success.



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Back to the drawing board: hearing from parents

- Do we know what we don't know? A need for cultural guides.
- Cultural guides: designed the questions, recruited participants, conducted focus groups, analyzed and interpreted results, presented findings, and made recommendations.
- Negotiating our partnership.



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

An excerpt from the memorandum of agreement

Historically the research community has been a detriment to the African American community. The African American community has been and remains suspicious and distrustful of entities that have come into our communities with the intent of conducting "research" under the guise of being helpful and necessary. It is also no secret that this outside "research" has been shown to be extremely destructive to the African American community. Although the Parenting for School Success (PSS) project is not a research project but instead a project about developing materials for parents, distrust can still be a factor...

In order to develop a respectful and equitable relationship and to build a foundation for increased trust, this **Memorandum of Understanding was created.**



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Cultural guide-led focus groups

- 3 focus groups for each cultural group: two with parents - one with service providers working in respective communities.
- Questions: cultural values and expectations around school success; what parents do to promote school success; relationships and communication with schools/teachers; what is needed to better support children's school success; value of 6 factors, missing factors.



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION



EDUCACIÓN,
NUESTRA MEJOR
HERENCIA

6 factores para apoyar a los hijos en sus logros escolares




Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Latino version process

- Three Focus Groups, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Dodge Center. Two with Latino parents in Spanish, one with service providers in English (one more was added later...a need to hear from fathers)
- Discussion and analysis in Spanish of main topics found in the transcriptions
- Themes
- Discussion of suggestions/recommendations
- Planning next steps
- Preparation of materials and curriculum in Spanish



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Latino: themes

- Language & communication
- Parenting self efficacy
- Social class
- What is "success"
- Expectations, hopes and dreams
- Navigating the system*
- Gender roles
- Immigration
- Equality / discrimination




Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Language & Communication

- **Language as part of cultural identity**
 - Parents want their children to learn Spanish
 - *"los chamacos" que nacen de padres hispanos que no perdieran sus raíces enseñadas de sus padres.. (The children that are born from Hispanic parents do not lose their roots taught by their parents)* (Dodge 2, 22)
 - *Teach the children they are Latinos* (Mps 7, 5-10; 21-26)
- **Language**
 - Parents are willing to look for support in the community as well as learn English (Mps 9, 17-24)
 - Variations of Spanish speaking cultures and language (Mps 8,14-17)
- **Communication**
 - Need for interpreters and bilingual materials and homework (Mps. 2/27-30)
 - Use of interpreters and mediators (for children with disabilities) helps (Mps 10, 14-18; 11,13-19; Providers)
 - When there is no interpreter, kids are used to interpret - don't always tell the truth to the parents of what happens at school (Dodge 31,10-21)



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Self-efficacy & Self-esteem

- Parenting bicultural children
 - Using practices from their home country:
 - Role of school and educators.
 - Parents show interest in attending parenting classes.
 - Participants want to be involved in their children's success, but they do not know how.
- Parent's self-esteem
 - Negative tone about their capabilities.
 - One parent felt that their children are ashamed because they are Latinos; parent does not speak English.
"Because I did not study, I had to make the living by working outside, otherwise if I had studied I would take that job..."
(Dodge 9,14) Making a Difference in Minnesota



What is success?

- A need to better understand the concept of success.
"Is the goal of this project to make us all middle to upper middle class?"
- Educational success is one of many other critical success factors.



Social class

- Different socio economic status among Latino families (Providers 1, 25-30)
 - **Those differences affect expectations, needs and hopes** (Providers 1, 30-32)
- Immigration "seniority" affects economic stability (Providers 1, 42-44)
- Education is viewed as a door to improve economic status (Mps 1, 8-11)
- Lack of equality in social classes prevents kids from participating (e.g. summer school costs and tutoring) (Mps 5, 7-13; 12, 12-20)



Immigration

- Migratory status of Latino families:
instability in areas of self esteem, hope, intimidation to navigate the system, transmit insecurities to children; this works as a cycle.
Children lose opportunities in their lives. (Providers 5, 9-17)
- Barrier to be involved in school and other extra curricular activities.
 - Afraid to be a volunteer
- Most parents appreciative when welcome at school regardless of immigration status.



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Latino suggestions:

- List community resources/opportunities, scholarships for higher education
- Bilingual Liaison or Advocate - speaks English and knows diversity of Latino cultures.
- Materials culturally appropriate; include audio and visual components.
- Workshops on leadership for parents and children, how to increase trust and self esteem.
- Help parents to encourage children to have more physical activity; benefit mind and body.
- Develop and pilot testing 8 part lesson on 6 factors, navigating the system, self efficacy, education beyond high school.
- Bookmark, magnet and booklet in Spanish.



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

INDICE

	LAS EXPECTATIVAS.....	2
	LA ESTRUCTURA.....	4
	EL APRENDIZAJE.....	6
	EL APOYO.....	8
	LOS VINCULOS Y LAS AMISTADES.....	10
	EL EJEMPLO.....	12
	LOS PADRES Y EL SISTEMA ESCOLAR EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS.....	14
	INFORMACIÓN ADICIONAL.....	18
	AGRADECIMIENTOS ESPECIALES.....	19

Copyright 2014, Reproduction of this document is prohibited. All rights reserved.



La familia Rojas tiene expectativas sobre cuáles son los logros escolares que quisieran para sus hijos y cómo lo harían. Ricardo, el padre, sabe que esas expectativas deben estar de acuerdo con la realidad para que sus dos hijos no se sientan demasiados presionados. Alicia, la mamá, comprende que las expectativas también deben ser un poco altas, así sus hijos se sentirán motivados por el reto y les guste la superación. También es importante ser claros y precisos sobre qué se espera de Carla y Tony. Para eso, los padres deben saber cuál es la tarea y explicar a los hijos las consecuencias por no cumplir y las recompensas por cumplirlas.

Ricardo y Alicia saben que una buena educación es clave.

"Tony, la escuela es muy importante para tu futuro. Si te gradúas, podrás ir a la Universidad y llegar a ser doctor, como tanto anhelas" Debemos hablar con la maestra y preguntar cuáles son las cosas que ella espera de ti este año y en cada clase".

Ricardo que no tuvo la suerte de tener padres que hablaran con él cuando era niño, entiende lo importante que es hablar con sus hijos. Él sabe que lo escuchan, aunque su adolescente no lo demuestre mucho. Seguirá preguntándoles sobre sus planes y hablando con ellos. Alicia comprende que el esfuerzo para estudiar es muy importante y hay que reconocerlo a los hijos. Pero ella no les da dinero por la nota, porque eso sería darle más importancia a la nota y no al esfuerzo.

"Qué bien, Tony, pusiste todo tu esfuerzo! Si no sacas la mejor nota esta vez, lo lograrás la otra porque pones todas tus ganas!"

PARTNERING FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

AFRICAN AMERICAN

Making a Difference in Minnesota

Process - African American

- Three focus groups. Two parent groups - St. Paul and Minneapolis.
- One service provider – metro area.
- Discussion and analysis of main topics
- Themes
- Discussion of suggestions/recommendations
- Planning next steps

Making a Difference in Minnesota

Themes from focus groups

- Children's educational future; higher education, finish high school
- What parents and educational system could do differently
- Expectations from the educational system
- Challenges for parents to support kids; barriers
- Parent/educator relationship
- More diverse staff and curriculum; culturally sensitive educators
- Respect
- More access to learn other languages



Making a Difference in Minnesota



What could be done differently:

- Improve value of cultural differences
- Better diagnosis/treatment of ADHD
- Motivate children more
- More parent participation
- More African American educators
- Curriculums more inclusive, creative and culturally sensitive
- More cultural sensitivity training for educators
- African American children not perceived as "problems"



Making a Difference in Minnesota



Challenges and barriers:

- Socio economic status – no affordable after school programs
- Condescending communication; use of language 'over the head'
- No respect
- Educators not trained to deal with kids with different needs or different cultures
- Parents' own bad experiences with educational system
- Lack of culturally inclusive curricula
- Parents' lack of time to engage with activities (single parents)
- Lack of communication between parents and educators



Making a Difference in Minnesota





PARTNERING FOR
SCHOOL SUCCESS

SOMALI

Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION



Themes

- Parents understood their role for child's success.
- Communication disconnect between parent and school.
- Parents' low literacy.
- Age vs. academic competency placement.
- Social and discipline differences.
- Cultural and religious differences.

Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION




Some thoughts....

- Adult basic education
- More communication, especially oral
- Lack of community culture and history in school curriculum
- Male and female roles

Making a Difference in Minnesota


UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION





PARTNERING FOR
SCHOOL SUCCESS

HMONG



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Themes: initial

- Parents need to communicate with schools more
- Parents need to communicate with their children more about school
- Parents want the best for their children
- Schools should value and respect their children
- Language barrier




Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

**Parents matter:
3 kinds of parents**

- Need only a suggestion or information
- Need information plus attention to a specific family concern
- Need information and ongoing support to make education a priority



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

What cultural challenges do you see for parent-school connections?



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Some key lessons learned through this process

- Never take words, concepts, objectives at face value...these things are loaded with multiple meanings and values. What is "success"?
- Some Minnesota norms do not apply well to other cultures (e.g. coming to consensus, starting from commonalities).



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

More lessons

- Do not take things personally. It is not about you!
 - often times, it's about our past.
 - university is not trusted by some groups.
- Understand that in certain cultures it is an offence to disagree with you
 - this one is pretty self-explanatory. @
- Failure is a must.



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

More lessons

- Go into it with a spirit of exploration!
- Relationship ethic is more important than work ethic!
 - don't come to meetings with an agenda—you'll just be disappointed.
 - you might have to collect data at a fiesta!



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

More lessons

You are never done!

- Don't go into the community thinking you will get what you need and get out.
- If you don't intend to be there for the long haul, think twice about going in.



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

"No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speak subject, and you now at the center of my talk."

Bell Hooks (1990) on a hypothetical conversation between researcher and a participant. (Quoted in Mertens, 1998, p. 176).



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Parent School Connections

When teachers reach out to and involve parents, they view parents more positively and stereotype parents less than those teachers who do not involve parents.

(Epstein & Sanders, 2000)



Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION



For more information on parenting:

www.parenting.umn.edu

Thank You!

Making a Difference in Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION