



## PARTNERING FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS (PSS) – CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK

# Parent School Partnership 2013 – 2014

### BACKGROUND

An important goal CYFAR-PSS is promoting family-school relationships to better support Latino student school success. Latino parents and school personnel came together in the first year of the project in each school (Faribault and Triton middle schools) to learn about each other and plan action steps to improve parent-school partnerships. Over the school year, the partnerships then were facilitated by the respective school liaisons to advance the goals they set. The following describes the evaluation results of the parent-school partnerships over two years of the project.

### ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

A roster in Fall 2012 was created during year 1 which included 32 potential participants at Faribault Middle School and 37 at Triton Middle School (n=69). Participants at the two middle schools included Latino parents (16 fathers, 25 mothers), 16 teachers (e.g., ELL, Special Education), 5 key administrators (e.g., principal, superintendent), 2 Latino Liaisons, and 5 other administrative staff (program coordinators, social worker, LD Paraprofessional, ISS para supervisor).

From the original roster, there were a total of 45 individuals at both sites who completed the year-one survey (17 Faribault, 28 Triton), and 26 individuals who took the year-two survey (9 Faribault, 17 Triton). There were 5 new parent participants at Triton Middle School who did not take the year-one survey but completed the year-two survey. Only 24 individuals took both year-one survey in February/March of 2013 and year-two survey in April/May 2014. Results below are reflective of the 24 individuals who completed surveys for both years.

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2
<b>FARIBAULT</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>
Parent	10	5
Staff	7	4
<b>TRITON</b>		
	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>
Parent	14	7
Staff	14	10



## WHAT WAS MEASURED

There were three evaluation components for the Parent-School Partnership component of the project.

1. Partnering for School Success used the “**Inventory for Creating School-Family Connections**” as the instrument to collect yearly survey data of parents and staff at Faribault and Triton Middle schools. The “Four A’s” provide a way to look at the conditions that enhance productive school-family relationships:
  - **Approach** (8 items) – *Belief that parental involvement in school is very important, belief that working together as partners will benefit the child’s learning and development.*
  - **Attitude** (9 items) – *willingness to share views across home and school, perception of family involvement as essential rather than simply desirable, willingness to look at the whole picture about children by discussing, exploring, and understanding different views.*
  - **Atmosphere** (9 items) – *parents and school trust in each other, use of family and school input to promote positive outcomes for students, variety of communication strategies, meaningful ways and flexible options for parents and students to be involved.*
  - **Actions** (6 items) – *Information is provided to families about school policies and practices, opportunities are provided for home and school to plan jointly and collaborate to resolve concerns or improve learning experiences for students, supports and resources exist for creating and maintaining partnerships.*

This inventory was designed to provide a structure for educators, parents, and other individuals in the school community as they talk about ways to promote positive connections for children’s learning in their school community. Respondents were asked to judge the degree to which each objective stated had been accomplished in their school community over the last year. All items followed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all/Never to 5 = Completely/Always).

2. Participants were also asked to select one of four “**Models of Parent Involvement – Which one represents your school?**” Parents and school staff were asked to select one model that best describes parent involvement at their school. There was space for them to write any comments for the score they provide. Below are descriptions of the four models:
  - **Model 1** – Based on the assumption that parents delegate to schools the responsibility for educating their children. Educators in turn accept the responsibility. Parents hold the school accountable. The school works independent of families to educate children. Parental involvement in decision making and working together is considered inappropriate or unnecessary by the school. There are few, if any, opportunities to share resources or responsibilities.
  - **Model 2** – The school establishes the mission enlisting parents’ support. The school identifies appropriate values and practices for children’s success and believes that success is fostered by similar expectations and values across school and home. The direction is primarily from school to home with little input from parents.



- **Model 3** – The school recognizes the expertise families possess and assumes that interactions between home and school are helpful. One main attitude is that parents and educators each have unique expertise related to education. Educators draw on parents’ knowledge and experiences to enhance instruction. The drawbacks in this model occur when schools: 1) see the curriculum as all important and fixed in place, 2) are not willing to invite parents to be part of curricular decision making, and 3) do not think broadly about bridging school and home resources.
  - **Model 4** – The school works with families to accomplish a common mission for children’s educational success. There is collaboration among parents, educators, and community members. Collaboration occurs through two-way communication, recognizing parents’ strengths, and solving problems together. The school is open to exploring new policies, practices, relationships, and attitudes that foster partnering for children’s school success.
3. In year 1 (early 2013), parents and school staff met and collaboratively created goals to implement to improve Latino parents connection to school at each middle school. Faribault and Triton developed different **goals for their partnership**. Parent School partnership members were brought together one year later to participate in an interactive evaluation data collection process. Clickers were used by parents and school personnel to assess on a Likert type scale- 1 “not done well” to 5 “done very well” the extent to which specific goals were accomplished. The summary results were shown immediately and group discussion occurred about the results.

## **SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

### **Inventory for Creating School-Family Connections**

Across the two sites, there was an increase in scores for all four outcomes. Significant changes occurred on the Attitude measure related to school-family relationships ( $p = 0.029$ ). Although three outcomes did not reach statistical significance, Approach and Action outcomes approached significance and moving in the right direction ( $p=0.092$  and  $p=0.086$ , respectively). Parents scored relatively high at pre-survey in all four outcome areas, making significant change more difficult.

### **Model of Parent Involvement**

Results from the Model of Parent Involvement were analyzed separately by each site. For Faribault Middle School, there was a large shift from between pre- and post-survey. 89% of parents and school staff felt the direction was primarily from school to home with little input from parents (Model 2 at pre-survey) to 56% of parents and school staff feeling that there was strong collaboration and communication (Model 4 at post-survey). Only 33% felt the relationship stayed the same at Model 2.

Triton Middle School had a 33% no response rate for the Model of Parent Involvement portion of the survey. Parents filled out the post-survey at the end of a 2-hour long interactive survey debriefing of the goals they had set for the partnership in the previous year. Despite this, like Faribault, there was a shift from Model 2 to Models 3 and 4.



FARIBAULT	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Model 1	1	0
Model 2	8	3
Model 3	0	1
Model 4	0	5

TRITON*	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
No Answer	1	5
Model 1	0	0
Model 2	4 (3 at 2.5-2.75)	3
Model 3	3 (2 at 3.5)	4
Model 4	2	3

*\*The entire district for Triton Schools in Dodge County participated in a pilot school training in June 2010. The high pre-survey scores for Triton in 2014 could be attributed by already having established a relationship between staff and parents.*

### **Goals for Building and Strengthening the Partnership**

Using Turning Point Clicker software, this interactive evaluation component allowed for parents and school staff to answer privately and honestly about how well each goal was implemented in one year, and after answering each question, participants could see what the results were that led to in-depth discussion about what they were noticing in the immediate results. Respondents were asked to judge the degree to which each goal stated had been accomplished in their school community during their first year of partnership. All items followed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not done well to 5 = Done very well).

#### *Faribault:*

1. **Create a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)** - Participants reported that the school has always struggled with retention of parents to get involved and engaged with the PTO. Currently they reported that there were only two parents on the PTO. Both parents and school staff felt that this can get better because they are taking it into account and is being considered now more than before.



		Responses	
		Percent	Count
Not done well		50.00%	7
		21.43%	3
		0.00%	0
		14.29%	2
Done very well		14.29%	2
<b>Totals</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>14</b>

2. **Spanish on the school website** - Although there were not immediate changes to adding another language (Spanish) completely on the school website, parents did report getting more paper communication sent home with their student.

		Responses	
		Percent	Count
Not done well		38.46%	5
		15.38%	2
		15.38%	2
		15.38%	2
Done very well		15.38%	2
<b>Totals</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>13</b>

3. **Have regular meetings in Faribault for project purposes** - The facilitator for the discussion asked how many meetings in one year were held for Latino parents that did not include attending conferences or the parenting education classes - both parents and school staff did not know how to answer.

		Responses	
		Percent	Count
Not done well		46.15%	6
		7.69%	1
		23.08%	3
		7.69%	1
Done very well		15.38%	2
<b>Totals</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>13</b>



4. **Advertise and promote extracurricular opportunities** – There were more positive comments and suggestions around this goal. Teachers noticed that the Latino students (of parents participating in PSS) were talking more about the student groups that they are involved in. Participants felt that there was good communication about the resources provided (e.g., reduced fees) for families. This was done by having multiple announcements – it was the repetitiveness that got students more involved in extracurricular activities (making daily announcements, having posters hung in the hallways at school.)

Parents also mad suggestions about where they could advertise extracurricular opportunities for those parents who are not part of the PSS project.

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Not done well	16.67%	2
	16.67%	2
	16.67%	2
	41.67%	5
Done very well	8.33%	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>12</b>

5. **Parent Education** – Parents were excited to share that the parent education sessions gave them more motivation to motivate their families and themselves to be more engaged with the school. The challenge was how to get more families involved when barriers such as work, time, and general interest of parents are already limited.

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Not done well	38.46%	5
	0.00%	0
	23.08%	3
	30.77%	4
Done very well	7.69%	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13</b>

*\* Some staff who answered this question was not aware of this programming taking place. At Triton, staff did not answer this question.*

*Triton:*

1. **Increase communication with school** – Triton Middle School staff and parents had implemented a "suggestion box" for families to write down their suggestions. This is available for everyone at the front of the school, and parents know that the suggestion box exists, however, time to respond to suggestions in the box are slow. Parents also reported that the communication they receive is via word of mouth, through other parents who are volunteers or work at the school (Latina Liaison), and that other modes of communication (papers/flyers, emails, newsletters) are not necessarily the way they become aware of events.

Although parents thought the suggestion box was a step forward, they expressed wanting a full-time interpreter on campus to respond to issues immediately and minimize administrative misunderstandings such as attendance issues.

		Responses	
		Percent	Count
Not done well		28.57%	6
		19.05%	4
		19.05%	4
		19.05%	4
Done very well		14.29%	3
<b>Totals</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>

2. **Improve Parent/Teacher Communication** – No participant responded that communication between parents and teachers had not been done well. Communication has increased tremendously between parents and teachers in the one year at Triton. The most salient example was parent involvement in parent-teacher conferences. The school had implemented a new way for parents to participate in conferences a day in advance from the actual conferences where more time is spent talking about their student. There was also a phone-call system implemented where automated messages were delivered to all families in Spanish, and text messages would get sent out, as well. There was a major improvement in communication with this automated-system, especially during the Winter season where school would be closed due to the cold and winter storms. Latino parents had made complaints that they would find out school was closed after everyone else - when it was too late (they would drive to the school or wait for the bus only to find out school had been closed since the night before, and some would receive messages in English first and get the same message in Spanish the next day). Triton responded to this situation immediately and changed the automated-system so that Spanish messages would get sent out at the same time as they would in English.

Parents are also able to access the website and able to email teachers directly. Only very few parents reported getting too many reminders via text, phone calls, emails, and flyers. This may be due to having multiple children enrolled at the same school so messages get sent more than once.

Parents gave a suggestion to develop a school-based application on their smart phones to get instantaneous access to information about students and school-based events.



Responses		
	Percent	Count
Not done well	0.00%	0
	9.52%	2
	33.33%	7
	14.29%	3
Done very well	42.86%	9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>

3. **Enhancing Parent Involvement** – It was reported during this goal that a Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) was going to be implemented for the first time with Latino parents the week after this evaluation was administered. The results reflect that there may be room for improvement, but both parents and school staff became aware during this evaluation question that new things were going to be implemented.

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Not done well	26.32%	5
	5.26%	1
	42.11%	8
	10.53%	2
Done very well	15.79%	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19</b>

4. **Provide homework help** – There were mixed feelings around this goal. There was an increase in resources being provided for all students in Triton Middle School. There used to be limited time after school for homework help, but the school has increased how many days of the week students can stay after school *and* have bus transportation provided for those students who stay after for homework help. Parents and teachers made several suggestions of how to improve this even further by having more transportation options and more resources disposable for them when students are in the home away from school, peers, and teachers.





Responses		
	Percent	Count
Not done well	22.22%	4
	16.67%	3
	33.33%	6
	11.11%	2
Done very well	16.67%	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>18</b>

5. **Parent Education** – Only parents were asked to answer this question. Parents again were excited to share their experiences with the parenting classes and how it has motivated them to become more actively engaged with the school, teachers, administration – all for the future educational success for their child(ren).

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Not done well	12.50%	1
	0.00%	0
	12.50%	1
	0.00%	0
Done very well	75.00%	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8</b>

For information, contact:

Kathleen A. Olson

Program Director, Partnering for School Success

[kaolson@umn.edu](mailto:kaolson@umn.edu)

