



HOW TO DEVELOP PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

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TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

- to present recent research on immigrant families, English Learner youth, and how they make sense of schools in the U.S.
- to (discuss ways to) devise appropriate immigrant parent engagement plans in light of such research



LET'S START WITH A QUICK QUIZ

- True or False? MO's foreign-born population has doubled since 1980.
 - It has grown 179%, from ~85,000 to 232,000.
- How many cities in Missouri have greater than 25% foreign-born?
 - Caledonia Village (38/133; 28%) 80 miles south of St. Louis
 - Noel City (571/2102; 27%) very southwest corner of state
- MO has 114 counties. How many have foreign-born residents?
 - All.



LET'S TALK ABOUT COMMUNITY CLIMATE

- I can make comments about official government business in Spanish at a local city council meeting.
 - False
- If I am foreign-born, but arrived in MO at age 3 and graduated with honors from a MO high school, I can apply for financial aid, and pay in-state tuition to attend UMSL.
 - False (unless you've acquired legal status)
- I can only take the test for a commercial drivers license in English.
 - True



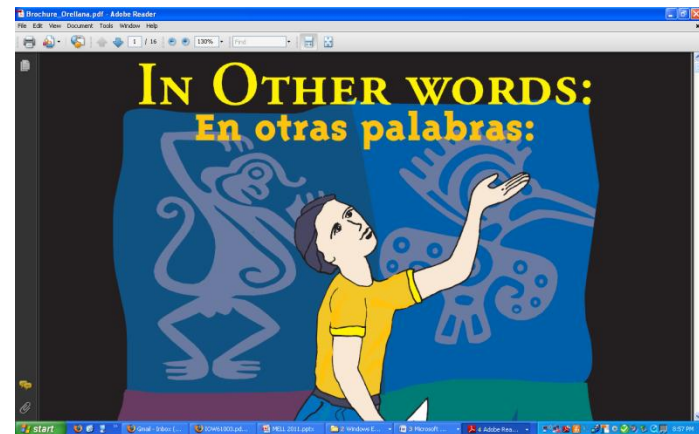
SO . . . WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A “NEW IMMIGRANT” PARENT IN MISSOURI?

- Research using “Photo Voice” with Latinos in Sedalia, Milan, and Branson (Jeanetta, 2008)
 - *“We feel that 75% appears to be okay with us, and 25% could be against us being here. But I am pretty confident that 75% of them support us.”*
 - *“There is also racism. They know very well that you are working like this [without documents] and this is the reason they treat you, like, putting you down a little. They give you the hardest jobs. It’s very difficult. ... They give you the hardest jobs; the ones that the Americans don’t want to do.”*
 - *“When we bought the house, next to us lived an American woman. ... She put signs up on the property division. The signs said things like, ‘Do not trespass.’ ‘Do not litter.’”*



AND WHAT'S IT LIKE TO FIND OUT ABOUT SCHOOLING AND SCHOOL PROGRAMS?

- Research in suburban IL community: How did Mexican immigrant families make choices about a new two-way immersion program?
- Research with Latino children of immigrants, who translate and interpret for their families: What kind of work do children do, and how does it shape their growing up?



ESTELA

- Eldest daughter of 4
- “Right-hand” of the family
- Attended English-only program/school in district that had choice of two-way immersion, succeeded
- Had to make choice for Jasmine, next youngest
- Estela helped parents understand letters/forms
- Parents wanted bilingualism for all kids; discussed with neighbors, family members, etc.
- Parents made decision for Jasmine, in part, based on Estela’s success at English-only school



REVIEW: WHAT'S IT LIKE TO FIND OUT ABOUT SCHOOLING AND SCHOOL PROGRAMS?

- It's hard.
 - Public meetings and information in English.
 - Meeting times conflict with work, family demands.
 - Conflicting information sent to families.
- But it can be done!
 - Conversations about educational policies held at the park, library, church, with friends, family, and especially bilingual advocates.
 - Decisions shaped by social networks AND kids' previous experiences, as well as kids' TRANSLATIONS.



REVIEW: WHAT IS THE SITUATION?

- Immigrant parents . . .
 - ARE and WANT to be INVOLVED in their children's education, and do so at places OUTSIDE of school.
 - are WORKING hard.
 - have CHILDREN who help them understand stuff.
- But many . . .
 - MAY FEAR the 'new.'
 - live in difficult, anti-immigrant times.
 - may face multiple language, life, work, family, and societal BARRIERS.



SO WHAT TO DO: THE LAW ON PARENT ENGAGEMENT PLANS (TITLE 1)

- Parent engagement is:
 - “Regular, two-way, and meaningful communication” about child’s academics
 - Assisting child’s learning [at home]
 - Being actively involved at school
 - Serving . . . in decision-making/on advisory committees
 - (http://www.ncpie.org/nclbaction/parent_involvement.html)
- Must have a written policy, developed with and approved by parents
- Plan should help parents understand assessment, standards, report cards
- Funding could support home visits, transportation, child care, and related items that would assist with parent engagement plan



TURN TO A NEIGHBOR AND DISCUSS

○ Share:

- What is your context like? (School, town, immigrant/migrant family backgrounds, etc.)
- In your context, what does parent engagement currently mean?
 - To you
 - To families
- Together, brainstorm one new thing your schools should or could do to:
 - Collaborate with parents to create a policy
 - OR
 - Work together on child's learning



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Think of “parent engagement” in new ways.
 - *Beyond the Bake Sale (Henderson, et. al, 2006)*
 - *Student-led conferences*
 - *Ask parents what they need or want to know about school.*
 - *Teacher learning, too; engagement is a two-way street*
- Go to families’ spaces, rather than invite families to school spaces.
 - *Partner with the local church where many families attend, or local job site, where many parents work.*
 - *Find and work with a bilingual advocate in the community.*
- Coordinate volunteers from local universities.
 - *Ask for help planning a “reading party” or “breakfast with the teachers” and personally call all parents to attend.*



RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Cambio Center, University of MO-Columbia (<http://www.cambio.missouri.edu/>)
- Center for Applied Linguistics (<http://www.cal.org/topics/ri/profiles.html>)
- Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates (<http://mira-mo.org/wordpress/>)

- Dorner, L. (Forthcoming.) The life course and sense-making: Immigrant families' journeys toward understanding educational policies and choosing bilingual programs. *American Educational Research Journal*.
- Dorner, L. (2010.) English and Spanish “*para un futuro*” or just English? Immigrant family perspectives on two-way immersion. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 13(3): 303-323.
- Dorner, L., Orellana, M. & Li-Grining, C. (2007). “I helped my mom” and it helped me: Translating the skills of language brokers into improved standardized test scores. *American Journal of Education*, 113(3), 451-478.
- Jeanetta, S., Dannerbeck, A., Valdivia, C. & Flores, L. (Forthcoming.) "Integration and Wellbeing: Using Photovoice to Engage Latino Immigrants in Understanding Community Climate." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.
- Orellana, Marjorie Faulstich:
 - <http://marjoriefaulstichorellana.com/wpblog/>
 - <http://centerx.gseis.ucla.edu/xchange-repository/back-issues/fall-2010>
 - In Other Words: Learning from Kids Translating and Interpreting Experiences <http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/orellana/samples/IOW61003.pdf>



QUESTIONS?

- This PowerPoint will be posted at:
- www.lisamdorner.com

