

## **Parent Engagement among Minority and Low-Income Parents**

### ***Background***

Parents and teachers play an important role in a student's education, which makes the collaboration between parents and teachers crucial. Studies show that Kern County has the lowest college going rate in the State of California (California dept. of Education). In 2010, one out of four graduates in Kern County completed their A-G requirements in order to attend a UC/CSU. Increasing the academic achievement of students is a critical matter because it can impact Kern County's economic future. One solution to this problem is the collaboration between community organizations and institutions in education. Community organizations have the ability to allocate funds toward intervention strategies that focus on specific factors that impact the education of students such as low parent involvement among low-income and minority populations. One organization that strongly advocates parent engagement is the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) in partnership with local k-12 schools and CSU campuses.

PIQE is non-profit organization that offers many programs including the Parent Engagement Education Program, a nine-week workshop at no cost, which encourages parents to get involved in their child's education. Parents who participate in this program learn about the educational system, A-G requirements and about other topics relevant to their child's educational success. As of today, more than 550,000 parents have graduated from the Parent Engagement Education Program and have helped the education of more than 1.5 million students.

### ***Significance***

Increasing the number of Hispanic graduates in California is important due to their low college going rates and college graduation rates at a time in which Hispanics are projected to form the majority of our workforce. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, if this

phenomenon remains the same in the upcoming years there might be a deficit of college educated workers. Educational administrators and organizations such as PIQE must acknowledge the following statistics to tackle this pressing issue in California:

- Only 7% of Latinos ages 25 and older hold a college degree in California
- Only 16% of Latino graduates were taking courses necessary for a UC or CSU
- Nationally Latinos have a 14% lower graduation rate than Whites

A factor that organizations like PIQE, in collaboration with higher education, are focusing on parent involvement because it has proven to be successful in increasing the educational attainment of students. However, one gap in many of PIQE's parent involvement studies there is not a focus on Kern County. Focusing solely on this area can help our local PIQE administrator determine whether their program is successful at the middle school level. This type of knowledge could eventually modify programs or result in new strategies to meet the needs of parents.

### ***Proposed Activity***

I would like to analyze pre and post surveys for Bakersfield's Parent Engagement Education Program offered by PIQE. Some of the information that middle school surveys include are a child's home learning environment, academic support, and parents understanding of the school system. This survey also includes ethnic data and a parent's level of contact with their child's teacher and/or counselor. The only information not included in these surveys is identification data to make the responses of parents confidential and anonymous. Questions in this survey are rated on a likert scale to determine of educational factors that can help students succeed in school.

The plan for this analysis is to focus primarily on Hispanic parents to determine whether they incorporate more educational factors after attending the Parent Engagement Education program. Results from this study will also show which specific factors parents are incorporating into their daily lives and which factors parents are not incorporating into their daily lives. This type of data will let my supervisor know if there are areas that need to be emphasized.

### ***Expected Outcomes for the Community***

Results from this study may exemplify the importance of parent involvement in our community. Educators at all levels may familiarize themselves with the importance of parent involvement techniques, which can help students' succeed. The ultimate expected outcome is to increase the academic achievement of students by conducting a thorough evaluation of PIQE's parent involvement program. This evaluation may highlight potential strengths and weaknesses that need to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of the parent involvement program. As a result of this project, parents will be able to:

- Navigate the k-12 school system
- Encourage high school and college graduation
- Engage and collaborate with teachers, counselors and principals
- Create a home learning environment

The knowledge that parents gain in PIQE's parent involvement program will create a supportive atmosphere for students who are not familiar with the higher education system. Increasing parent involvement may also serve as a form of early intervention for students who are not taking the proper steps towards a college education.