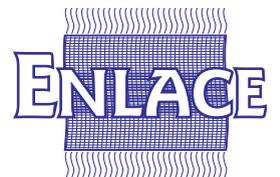




ENLACE

What Parents Need to Know to Support Their Child
on the Pathway to College:

Learning from the ENLACE Experience



Background on the Issue

For U.S. immigrant families, or families that have previously made a living without a college education, the U.S. higher education scene may still be unfamiliar – but not for long. Latino families understand the economic and social benefits of a college degree in today's economy, where workers in all professions need more education, not less.

In fact, Latino parents and students have higher educational aspirations than ever before. In a Pew Hispanic Center survey, nearly all (95 percent) Latino parents said it was “very important” to them that their children go to college.¹ In one study of six U.S. states, over 80 percent of the Latino students surveyed planned to attend some form of postsecondary education.

College enrollment data is beginning to reflect these aspirations: Latinos are the fastest growing college enrollment group in the United States. However, too many Latino students still never get that far. Only 53 percent of Latino students graduate from high schools with the course requirements to enter a four-year institution. Even when they successfully enter college, Latinos are most likely to leave without attaining a degree. Many Latino students are the first in their families to graduate from high school or go on to college. Navigating the complex U.S. educational system is difficult for any family, but particularly challenging when parents have not gone through the process themselves.

ENLACE partnerships determined that parental knowledge and support were key to connecting college aspirations with actual college attainment. Parental motivation and encouragement is not enough; students need useful and accurate information and direction from their parents. So, ENLACE sites designed a host of ways to reach parents with information, all along their child's education pathway. They asked students about their parents' concerns, held parent seminars, trained current college students to visit families with teenagers, and trained parent leaders to be ambassadors of information to other parents. Two especially successful programs are highlighted below.

ENLACE y Avance (Advance) in Santa Barbara: Family Home Visits

Although most Latino parents dream that their child will go to college, taking the steps to make that happen can be unfamiliar territory for Latino parents. The ENLACE y Avance partnership, led by the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), has created an innovative way to reach those parents and students, right in their own homes. A cadre of Latino college juniors and seniors from UCSB and nearby Santa Barbara City

¹ Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation. National survey of Latinos: Education. (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2004), p. 9.



College serve as mentors to families who live in surrounding neighborhoods. These mentors – students willing to learn by performing community service – are invaluable resources to these Latino parents. The mentors get intensive training for their roles, and are closely monitored once they are out in the field. A prime role mentors play is demystifying what it takes to get to college, and providing practical information on how to apply for scholarships and financial aid. Most important, they put the Latino “face” on college and allow parents to see their own children in that role.



Santa Ana Partnership: Padres Promotores

The *Padres Promotores* program in Santa Ana, California, taps the potential of Latino parent leaders. This model of parent advocacy is built on the community health promoter approach. The parent leaders receive 40 hours of initial training in community advocacy and how the higher education system works, followed by continuous monthly training sessions. They then provide information, support, and training to other parents in schools and neighborhoods.

Parent promoters literally go door to door to inform families, answering: How does financial aid work? What courses do my children need to take to get into college? What is the SAT? As one parent promoter described, *“Learning how to help our children succeed in school means so much more coming from a fellow parent than from an administrator... At times I would stay for hours because parents had so many questions and concerns.”* Community talks (or pláticas) reach many families and community groups at once with the valuable information. Over the course of one year, 36 promotores conducted almost 1,600 home visits and over 500 community pláticas.

Information Parents Need to Support Their Child on the Pathway to College

- Where to find local sources for college-going reading material, counseling, and preparation
- What middle school classes set their child on the right course for high school
- What high school courses (year by year, class by class) are required for college admission
- How to direct their children into these appropriate high school courses
- Which degrees translate into which jobs
- How to develop effective communication with teachers and schools
- How to instill a desire for a college education and make it the only possible option





- How to help their child prepare for and take college entrance exams
- How to gather information on options, from local community colleges to four-year universities
- Ways to familiarize the family with various local college campuses and the resources they offer
- How to search for scholarships
- How to apply for financial aid
- How to apply to community colleges and universities
- How to help their child prepare for the transition to college
- How and when to transfer from the community college to university

For more research and good practices on parent support for college-going children, please see:

Padre a Padre curriculum developed by The Santa Ana Partnership's Padres Promotores de la Educacion
www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/sapartnership/Promotores/Padre%20a%20Padre%20curriculum.pdf

Education in the United States: A Parent Primer (English and Spanish versions available), produced by ENLACE, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004
www.wkcf.org/DesktopModules/WKF.00_DmaSupport/ViewDoc.aspx?LanguageID=0&CID=16&ListID=28&ItemID=163378&fld=PDFFile

Spanish language video novellas: These two Spanish-language videos address college-access issues faced by Latinos. Produced by Oxnard College – part of the ENLACE y Avance partnership led by the University of California at Santa Barbara, 2004
www.wkcf.org/default.aspx?tabid=101&CID=16&CatID=16&ItemID=33795&NID=20&LanguageID=0

PALMS (Postsecondary Access for Latino Middle-Grades Students) Parent Outreach Study, launched in September 2004, examines how college access programs across the country work to address the gap in Latino college-going aspirations and actual attainment.
www.palmsproject.net/reach/ A number of ENLACE programs are cited as examples.

To learn about the experience of building parent support for college-going, please contact the following ENLACE sites:
 Albuquerque, NM www.unm.edu/~enlace/;
 Santa Ana, CA www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/;
 Santa Barbara, CA research.ucsb.edu/ccs/enlace



**W.K. KELLOGG
 FOUNDATION**

One Michigan
 Avenue East
 Battle Creek, MI
 49017-4012
 USA
 269-968-1611
 TDD on site
 Facsimile: 269-968-0413
www.wkcf.org

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