

**BENEFITS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BY HISPANIC  
PARENTS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF  
HISPANIC STUDENTS**

by

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A Master's Research Project submitted In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY

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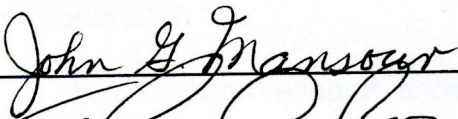

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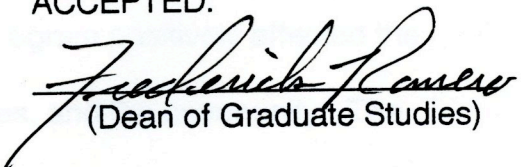
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(Dean of Graduate Studies)

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to assess the parent involvement program at Melvin E. Sine School in the Glendale Elementary School District in Glendale Arizona, to determine if the program enhanced the academic success of the Hispanic children whose parents participated. The research question was: Does participation by Hispanic parents in a school-wide parent involvement program improve the academic performance of the Hispanic students at Melvin E. Sine School? The population assessed was nine staff members involved with the school's program and fourteen parents who participated in the program. The sample was limited to Sine School and varied in age, gender, ethnic background, and educational attainment. The instruments used were a staff questionnaire and a parent survey developed by the researcher.

Even though research shows that academic performance of Hispanic students improved when their parents are involved at school, this study did not have the same results. The Learning In Neighborhood, Child, School program positively affected the students, the school, the families, and the community. The



program was unable to show any affect on students' academic performances. No data was kept on the students but was focused on families. It is recommended that further research be done when data are collected on the students' academic performances.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my family, especially my husband, Dean, and my friends for their support, encouragement, and belief in my abilities throughout my work on this project. I would like to acknowledge Professor Bob Rhoton who provided me with insight and encouragement.

I would also like to thank the staff and parents at Melvin E. Sine School whose cooperation made this project possible.

## **Dedication**

To my Mother who taught me that the Lord  
never give me more than I can accomplish.

To Miss Muffy Marie who remained  
at my side throughout my work  
on this project.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **THE PROBLEM**

### **Introduction**

Parent participation at school is an important component of a student's academic success at school. This study examines parent and staff perceptions as it relates to parent involvement at home as well as at school. For the purpose of this study, Hispanic will mean Spanish-speaking individuals. Adapting to the American educational system, which is different than the European model in effect in Mexico, is important for Hispanic parents.

### **Development of the Problem**

Education in most Latin countries is fashioned after the European model. It is centralized under the Minister of Education. Education is funded by indirect taxation, not by property taxes. Based on this, major educational decisions are made by the Minister of Education with limited or virtually no input by parents. In this system, educators are viewed as professionals in charge of the education of the children and, out of respect, parents commonly do not interfere in school operations. Hispanic parents often feel inadequate about their ability to contribute to school matters, especially if their personal



educational background is limited and they do not understand what their child is learning in school.

The main themes of this study will be how parent involvement programs benefit the Hispanic students, the school, the Hispanic families involved, and the community at large. It will also define the qualities of a good parent involvement program.

### **Need for the Study**

There is a strong need for schools to develop programs of involvement that meet the needs of Hispanic parents to adapt to American schools. Such programs may enhance students' academic success and improve regular attendance at school.

If the Hispanic parents are not involved in parent participation programs, the number of Hispanic children failing at school may continue to increase. Hispanic parents may also remain ignorant of the ways they can enhance their children's educational experiences at home. Without assistance Hispanic children may continue to require intervention programs at school and may continue to experience economic downward mobility.

This study examined the issues of parental involvement of the Hispanic population as addressed by this program and how this program has benefitted the school.

By assessing this program the school may be able to create a better program by evaluating the effectiveness of the current program. Administration will be able to assess the effects the program has had on involved Hispanic parents and determine when these parents are most likely to participate.

The parent participation program, Learning In Neighborhood, Child, School (LINCS), at Sine School is a model of a current program and if this program is truly effective it could be an example for other schools with similar demographics.

This program will be assessed by interviewing the school's administration, staff, the on-site social worker, and parents participating in the program.

According to the LINCS Project grant, of the five largest cities in the Phoenix metropolitan area, the City of Glendale has the greatest percentage (41%) of the households with children under the age of eighteen. According to the 1995 state data, economically disadvantage children, living in families below the federal poverty level, make up 37% of all residents of Glendale. Almost half of the households in central downtown Glendale, the target area for the LINCS grant, have average annual incomes below \$15,000.

In 1994 a "Community that Cares" assessment completed by the Mayor's Alliance Against Drugs and Gangs, showed that

Glendale's central downtown has the greatest number of high risk factors and the fewest protective factors that support the healthy development of youth.

Grant information state that during 1993-1994, this area of Glendale had the highest number of CPS reports in the state. Over half of the area's residents are minorities, as compared with 16% citywide. Many are Hispanic and Asian families who speak English as a second language.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to assess the parent involvement program at Melvin E. Sine School in the Glendale Elementary School District to determine if the program enhanced the academic performance of the Hispanic children whose parents participated.

### **Research question**

Does participation by Hispanic parents in a school-wide parent involvement program improve the academic performance of Hispanic students at Melvin E. Sine School?



The term parental involvement may conjured up the image of parents working in the classroom assisting teachers with various tasks, accompanying classes on field trips, preparing treats for holiday parties, serving on committees such as PTO/PTA, or participating on an advisory council. This type of involvement has decreased along with the two parent family, where one parent works and the other parent cares for the children (Ascher, 1987). Educators and parents may need to take a new view of parental involvement. Since the early 1980's parental involvement has shifted from the school site to the home site. The term is now largely used to support parents' efforts to socialize their children at home in both informal and in school-directed learning tasks (Ascher, 1987). The conventional efforts of parent involvement aimed at the traditional family have proven ineffective. Schools may need to overcome societal barriers and empower all parents with opportunities and skills for parental involvement which are crucial to ensuring their children's educational success.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to assess the parent involvement program at Melvin E. Sine School in Glendale, Arizona to determine if the program enhanced the academic success of the Hispanic children whose parents participated. A review of the literature focused on the effects a parent involvement program has on the academic performance of Hispanic students. Also reviewed are the benefits of the program on the school regarding the academic environment, the families involved, and the community of Glendale, Arizona. The information in the review was obtained through research, grant information, and interviews with school staff and parents.

#### **Student Benefits**

Children whose parents perceive education as important are motivated to succeed and therefore usually perform better in school. Parents participating in parent involvement programs convey a powerful message to their children about education. The participation by parents does not necessarily mean being on the school site. A

greater amount of parent involvement needs to occur in the home with the parents assisting their children with learning activities (Flaxman and Ingers, 1991; Epstein, 1985; Henderson, 1981; Walberg, 1984).

Schools that use parents as teachers at home have shown increases in student academic success. These parent involvement programs have developed learning activities that enhance classroom activities but do not duplicate them. These interesting activities incorporate home materials and situations, and focus on the process of learning rather than the product (Olmsted, 1991).

As parents become more familiar with the school, its expectations and goals, they develop a positive attitude about school. This new attitude is then transmitted to their children. Students with positive attitudes and emotional support from home are less likely to be behavior problems, have more regular homework habits, and greater academic success (Krasnow, 1990; Epstein, 1992; Walberg, 1984; Henderson, 1989).

## **School Benefits**

Parent involvement affects schools as well as students. According to a parent survey reported in the newsletter of the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, "parents who are involved at home and at school say that school has a more positive



climate. Even more so, parents who perceive that the school is actively working to involve them say that the school is a good one" (1989, pg. 4). This perception creates a better working relationship between home and school.

Involvement can also lead to feelings of ownership, which leads to increase support of the school (Davies, 1988). This support is exhibited by volunteering to serve in various roles at school, such as a member of the site-council, helping with school projects, or even becoming paid teacher aides (Liontos, 1992).

Through parent involvement at school, parents have gained a more profound and comprehensive understanding of the school, its policies and regulations (Lara-Alecio, Irby, & Ebener, 1997). They also develop a belief in and support of the educational system (Liontos, 1992).

Parent involvement also directly affects the classroom teachers. Parents who are involved tend to rate teachers' interpersonal skills higher, appreciate teachers' efforts more, and rate teachers' abilities higher (Hester, 1989). Parents, therefore, develop a positive relationship with the school's teachers.

Teachers report that the involved parents are more supportive and more willing to be actively involved in their children's education.

Involved parents exhibit a caring and concerned attitude and let the children know they are interested in the quality of their performance at school (Swap, 1990).

Parent programs that train parents to be involved with their children's education have been proven to be very beneficial to the school because programs equip the parents with effective teaching skills that can be applied at home (Liontos 1992). Teachers and parents share their goals for the children's education. When parents begin taking this active role in their children's learning, they are more willing to reinforce good performance in school through rewards at home (Swap, 1990), and are more willing to discuss discipline problems when the circumstance arises. These parents are usually more supportive of the school's discipline policy (Lara-Alecio, Irby, & Ebener, 1997).

### **Family Benefits**

Besides benefitting the students and the school, parent involvement programs have positive benefits on the families involved (Flaxman and Ingers, 1991; Dolan and Haxby, 1991; Cochran and Dean, 1991; Olmsted, 1991; Epstein, 1984). Parents involved in programs where in-home tutoring is a component have shown an



increase in their own self-esteem. Parents who viewed themselves negatively showed signs of believing in themselves. This new self-concept encouraged many parents to return to school and complete their education (Cochran and Dean, 1991; Comer, 1986). With a greater sense of adequacy and self-worth, parents were able to develop a greater appreciation of the importance they play in their children's education (Davies, 1988). Some parents, having improved their self-esteem and increased their literacy level, were able to seek employment or advance to higher paying employment, thus enabling them to free themselves from some social services and become economically stable (Comer, 1986; Goodman, 1996).

Families also benefit from parent involvement programs because many such programs offer parenting classes. These classes train parents how to be productive tutors and how to be effective parents. The programs help parents develop communication skills to work with their children and provide activities that develop self discipline, study habits, and attention to homework. A change in the parents' behaviors at home enables them to be more supportive, both academically and emotionally (Hester, 1989; Flaxman & Ingers, 1991; Walberg, 1984).

Once these individuals become more effective parents, they become more effective people. They become more willing to

participate on school committees as well as in other community programs outside of school (Cochran and Dean, 1991; Olmsted, 1991).

Another benefit of this positive self-perception is that parents develop a positive attitude about school involvement which gives them more confidence when communicating with teachers and administrators. When parents portray a positive and confident attitude about school, this attitude supports their children to be successful and positive in school (Dolan and Haxby, 1991; Cochran and Dean, 1991; Stanic and Secada, 1989; Benet, 1986).

Some parents have even become advocates for their schools. They regularly attend school board and city council meetings and write letters to city, state, and federal lawmakers concerning education reform and program funding. The advocacy programs reach out to the local community encouraging others to become involved in the schools' parent involvement programs (Olmsted, 1991; Dolan and Haxby, 1991).

## **Community Benefits**

When families benefit directly from parent involvement programs, so does the community. For the purpose of this study, community means not the neighborhood where the students live and attend school, and any neighborhood that influences their learning



and development. Thus, community includes all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in school.

Parent involvement in schools has led to parents becoming more politically aware. This awareness has led them to attend school boards meetings and city council meetings. Such participation leads to more responsible citizens who want to work to improve not only the school but the community as well (Epstein, 1995; Olmsted 1991).

Through school involvement, families are given information about community activities, such as summer camps, library reading programs, and before-and-after-school programs that link learning skills and talents. Families are also given information about community service projects that benefit the school and the community. One such program is the city-wide recycling program in Glendale in which the schools receive a percentage of the profits from the recycling bins located at the school sites.

The community benefit from parent involvement programs because the programs provide parents with information about community health programs and other social agencies. The LINCS program at Melvin E. Sine School has been able to identify at-risk families that had previously interacted with Child Protective Services (CPS). According to the annual report, CPS referrals in the Sine attendance area have decreased of 87.5% in the year ending



September 1997. This decrease is attributed to the increased involvement of parents at school and an increase in parenting skills learned through this program.

### **Components of a Parent Involvement Program**

The parent involvement programs researched for this study share many of the same components, although not all are implemented in the same way. The main focus of many of the programs was to address the barriers to parental involvement in the schools.

In the Hispanic community, the primary barrier to parent involvement is the lack of English language skills. This lack can be addressed by offering parents English as Second Language (ESL) classes which provide them the opportunity to become functional members of the school and community. Through these ESL classes parents receive instruction on the functions of the school and what they expect from them as parents. Parents not only learn English but also gain an understanding of their role as an effective parent and how they can enhance their children's academic success. These classes increase Hispanic parents' self-confidence allowing them to feel more competent about helping their children with homework. As parents become more self-confident and are able to communicate

more effectively with school personnel, the effects of negative past experiences are diminished ( Liontos, 1992; Crespo, 1984).

A very important component of the LINCS programs was to address the needs of the families. These needs may be as basic as food and clothing. This means that the school could collaborate with agencies such as food banks and local agencies that provide school clothes and shoes for children. The school could develop links with local agencies that provide health clinics, substance abuse treatment, resources and referral centers for family social services, job counseling and training, and before-and-after-school child care. These services, though prompted by pressure to relieve the stress of parents, are increasingly seen as educationally beneficial, since what happens before and after school affects a child's learning ( Comer, 1986; Cochran and Dean, 1991; Dolan and Haxby 1991).

When launching a successful program with Hispanic parents, a very important component is a committed and dedicated leadership within the school. The program needs to be well planned, comprehensive and long-lasting (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990; Liontos, 1992; Flaxman and Ingers, 1991; Dolan and Haxby, 1991). The leadership needs to coordinate the effects of the school and the community. It should provide training for teachers to effectively communicate and work with the culturally and linguistically diverse. This training should include effective ways parents can work on easy

home packets which will enhance reading and math development. Leadership should train teachers to bring the home to school by encouraging activities that incorporate family issues, experiences, and cultural traditions (Liontos, 1991; Krasnow, 1990).

Another component of a successful program is making the parent training meetings participatory by providing activities that involve the parents. These activities, such as crafts or games, should provide parents a non-threatening environment to communicate with school staff in a warm, nonjudgmental manner (Krasnow, 1990; Liontos, 1992).

Lastly, programs need to pay attention to the format and scheduling of activities. Program activities need to be planned when the greatest number of parents and families can attend, possibly evenings and weekends. The key word is flexibility. Transportation and child care may need to be provided for some families. Children need to be engaged in fun and meaningful activities, thus enabling the parents to participate without concern (Liontos, 1992; Nicolau and Ramos, 1990).

## **Summary**

Parents are clearly a valuable human resource that schools must not overlook. Efforts to secure and maintain partnerships that will support children's learning must be made to enhance the Hispanic



students' academic success. Parental involvement programs benefit the students, the school, the community and the parents.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to assess the parent involvement program at Melvin E. Sine School in Glendale, Arizona to determine if the program enhanced the academic success of the Hispanic children whose parents participated..

#### **Research Design**

This study was conducted using a modified Delphi technique. The Delphi technique encompasses developing and formatting questionnaires and surveys, administering the questionnaires and surveys, and analyzing the data collected. This technique was used by the Rand Corporation to project long-range trends in science and technology and "their probable effects on our society and our world." (Linston, cited in Mirriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 67) This study modifies the Delphi technique since it used local school staff members as experts rather than national experts. This research method required the formation of two structured questionnaires. One questionnaire was administered to school staff members who were serving as the study experts and the other was administered to parents participating in the school's parent involvement programs.

The major disadvantage of this modified Delphi techniques was that it relied on subjective judgements and not on a precise analytical technique.

The research was designed to gather information about Hispanic students whose parents participate in the school's parent involvement programs offered in the LINCS program. The researcher did not manipulate or control the environment in which the study took place.

### **Population and Sample**

The population surveyed and assessed for this study were staff members and parents of students at Melvin E. Sine School. The sample was made up of parents who have participated in one or both of the school's parent involvement programs and staff members directly involved with these programs.

The demographic information that follows was obtained from the school's grant, RFP#E-ACYF 97048. The school's population consists of 800 students enrolled in kindergarten through sixth grades, preschool and Head Start. Of the students enrolled, 49 are children of migrant workers. Eighty-five percent (680) of the school's enrollment qualify for free or reduced lunches.

The average income of the families who participate in the LINCS program was below \$15,000 a year. Sixty0six percent of the parents have not completed high school. Families from ethnic minorities make up 64% of the families the LINCS program attracts .

Nine staff members that participated in this study. Two were administrators with twenty years of combined experience. Two social workers have 6 years of experience between them. Three certified teachers have over 15 years of teaching experience. Two of the teachers are bilingual. The two non certified staff members first participated in the program as parents, then became staff members of the program and school. Both of them are bilingual.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The researcher assumed that the staff questionnaires and the parent surveys were effective in assessing the beliefs and attitudes among the staff and family members. The researcher assumed that both groups reported their responses honestly.

The results of the study were limited to one school and the families and staff who participate in the parent involvement programs.



## **Procedure**

In the Spring of 1997, a modified Delphi technique was employed to elicit responses from nine staff members at Melvin Sine School. The staff members included the principal, assistant principal, social workers, and teachers. Nine questionnaires were completed.

The researcher administered surveys to nine parents at the May, 1998, "Saturday at Sine" session. An interpreter was available at this time for parents who did not speak or write English. An additional parent five surveys were administered by the school's social worker throughout the following week. Data collected from the questionnaires and surveys are presented in Chapter 4.

## **Instrumentation**

The instruments used were a staff questionnaire (Appendix A) and a parent survey (Appendix B). The researcher developed both of the instruments.

The staff questionnaires consisted of nine subjective response questions and two objective responses pertaining to the two parent involvement programs at the school. A letter explaining its purpose accompanied the questionnaire (See Appendix A).



The parent survey consisted of seven questions, six of which required objective responses and one a subjective response. The directions were explained by the researcher and were printed at the beginning of the survey. The researcher or the school's social worker was present at all times during the data collecting process. Parents who were able to read and write English completed the survey themselves. Responses of those parents who could not read or write English were translated by an interpreter and recorded by the researcher or the social worker.

### **Method of Analysis**

The responses were compiled and analyzed by question to determine relative importance to the LINCS program so that recommendations could be made for changes in the program.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **Findings and Results**

This study was conducted to determine if participation in a school-wide parent involvement program by Hispanic parents improves the academic success of Hispanic children. The research surveyed 9 staff members and 14 adult family members at Melvin E. Sine school in Glendale, Arizona. All individuals who participated in the study are actively involved with the Learning In Neighborhood, Child, School (LINCS) program.

#### **Staff Responses**

Sine staff members completed questionnaires consisting of eleven questions.

1. Why was there a need to establish this parent participation program? Two-thirds of the responses indicated that the need for the program was to assist the at-risk families in the school's attendance area. They stated that there was a need to establish a program that would promote self-esteem among these families and teach them more effective parenting skills. Two responses indicated that the

program was established to lower the number of Child Protective Services calls in the area. One response stated the program was established to help the bilingual parents learn about school programs and feel more comfortable at school and in the community.

It is evident from all the responses that the program was established to fulfill the educational, social, and personal needs of the families that participate.

2. How many families are involved in this parent participation program? The staff respondents indicated that between 7 to 15 families participate in each program, "Saturday at Sine" and summer "Twilight Camp". Over half of these families attend both programs. The number of families is intentionally kept low so that staff can meet the individual needs of each at-risk family. Families tend to participate for approximately two years, with new families being invited as the other families become more self-sufficient.

3. How long have you been involved with the LINCS program? Staff participation in the LINCS program based on total years of experience is shown in Table 1. The staff has collectively eighteen years worth of experience in the LINCS program



**Table 1****Staff Demographics**

Staff Positions	Number of Participants	Years with LINCS
administrators	2	5
teachers	3	4
social workers	2	4
non-certified	2	6

4. In your opinion, what is the most significant benefit to the family for participating in the program? The staff respondents stated that the most significant benefit to the families participating in the program was the positive interaction that creates stronger family bonds. The interaction includes activities such as eating a meal together without the TV, and learning inexpensive crafts and games that can be done or played at home. Another benefit has been the friendships the families have built with other families and individuals in the community. Learning about social services available to the families such as assistance with food, clothing, medical and dental care, counseling, and holiday gift programs has also benefitted many of the families. The families have learned that school is a safe caring place for children and their families.



The benefits to the families varies from family to family. The staff indicated that all the families had created stronger relationships within their own family and with new friends. Families have also benefitted from the informational programs that have assisted them in creating stronger and healthier families.

5. What specific benefits does the program offer the children?

Staff responses indicated that the children have benefitted in various ways. The most significant benefit being the quality time the families spend together while attending the program. The children have benefitted because they acquired a different view of school. They have learned that school can be a place to have fun with their families as well as a place to learn. The children see that parents are fun people to be with and this boosts their self-esteem.

Another benefit is that the children have learned games and activities that they can do with their families and friends when they are not at school. They have also learned to interact with adults and other children of various ages who are not part of their family. When the family is working on a project that requires the family to work together, the children learned that their opinions and ideas were important. This has encouraged the children to learn better

communication and social skills. All the staff responses indicated that the program has been a positive influence on the children.

6. How does this program specifically benefit the school? The staff respondents all stated that the school has benefitted directly from the program because it has fostered positive attitudes among the parents and students about school. Parents have a greater trust in the administration and teachers and therefore feel they can ask questions about the school and its programs.

The staff noted the parents are more willing to attend parent-teacher conferences because they feel more secure about talking to the teachers. The staff also noted that many of the parents who participate in the program are volunteering at school and in the classrooms.

The program also benefitted the school because families that need help are shown where to get help or are given direct help. In several cases this assistance has meant that students came to school healthier, happier, and dressed appropriately. These changes improved their performances in the classroom.

7. What parenting skills has the program taught? The number preceding the skill indicates the number of responses out of nine participants.



- 9 - behavioral skills for children
- 8 - setting limits and consequences for children
- 6 - behavioral modification for ADD/ADHA students
- 9 - Nutritional meals and food
- 8 - Safety in the home
- 8 - safety around water
- 9 - family bonding
- 9 - skills to strengthen a family's strengths
- 9 - developing positive relationships with the school and staff
- 9 - family games that include all family members
- 7 - networking with other families
- 8 - how to complete and file DES/AHCCCS paperwork
- 9 - how to locate community resources such as housing, food, utility and rent assistance
- 9 - how to locate counseling
- 6 - employment skills and obtaining employment
- 9 - crafts for everyone in the family
- 9 - how to plant a garden

In actuality, all of these parenting skills have been taught. The reason for discrepancy maybe based on the fact that not all staff

members have worked with the program the three years it has existed.

8. In your opinion, who is the program targeted for, the parents or the children? Is this targeting effective? Four of the nine staff responses stated that both the parents and the children were targeted by this program. They felt the program was effective because the two groups learned different skills and these skills led to more positive interaction within the families.

The other five staff members felt that the parents were the target group but that the skills parents learned and knowledge they received benefitted the entire family.

9A. Have the students whose parents are involved with the program been more successful in school since the program started? Six of the nine staff members responded yes and the remaining three were not sure.

9B. Check the areas that have shown improvement.

- Improved attendance
- class participation
- improved grades
- greater comprehension
- others

Five of the nine respondents indicated that students attendance had improved among the students who parents



participate regularly. Five of these responses came from teachers and administrators that have daily contact with the children. The other response came from the social worker who is often asked to contact parents when absenteeism becomes a problem for a child.

The five responses that indicated that class participation had improved came from the staff members that work with these children in the classroom, mainly teachers and teacher aides.

The two responses that indicated students' grades had improved came from classroom teachers that have access to student files and have Hispanic students in their classrooms.

Three respondents noted that students had greater comprehension. Two felt that this was due to families learning English and practicing at home.

There was no response to "others".

Information is based solely on respondents observations since not all staff members have access to student files.

10. Are the parents involved with the program more supportive of the school's efforts to educate their children? If so, in what way? All nine staff members surveyed stated the parents were more supportive of the school's efforts to educate their children. They felt that the new communication skills that the parents have learned

enable them to communicate more effectively with teachers and administrators. Parents are more comfortable coming to school for various activities.

It was also noted by two teachers who have children that participate in the program in their classrooms, that parents have become more willing to assist the children with their homework and monitor its completion.

#### 11. What has been the program's greatest success?

According to the staff's responses, the program has had many successes. Families have interacted and bonded as a result of the program thus creating greater self-esteem among the participating parents and their children. There has also been a significant decrease in the CPS reports over the last three years the program has been in force. This is attributed according to the social workers' report to parents' lower stress levels because of their willingness to ask for assistance from the school which is able to provide community support through participating agencies.

After participating in the program some parents have been motivated to resume their education and obtain GED certificates. Others parents have entered the work force thus lessening their dependence on welfare.



Five of the parents who have participated in the LINCS program have been hired at the school in non-certified positions. Two of the parents are now working as staff members of the LINCS program.

All nine staff respondents felt that more trusting relationship between parents, school and the community had been established. This is evident because the same families keep returning and bringing new community members with them. In general, the respondents indicated that participating parents are taking a more active role in school and their children's education.

### **Parent Responses**

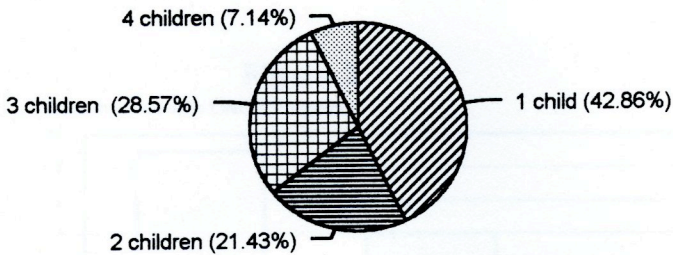
The parents that participated in this study all have children that attend Melvin E. Sine School in Glendale, Arizona. The parent survey consisted of seven questions.

#### **1. How many children do you have that attend Sine School?**

Of the fourteen families who participated in the survey, families with only one child make up the largest percentage , about 43%. Families with two children make up about 21%, while families with 3 children compose about 27%. Only one family ( 7%) had four children attending Sine School. See Figure 1.

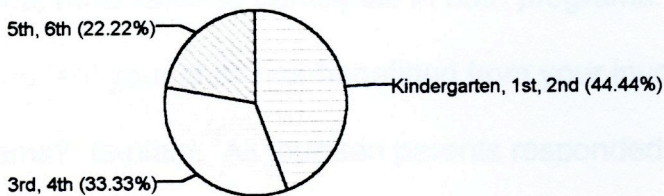


**Figure 1**  
Number of Children per Family



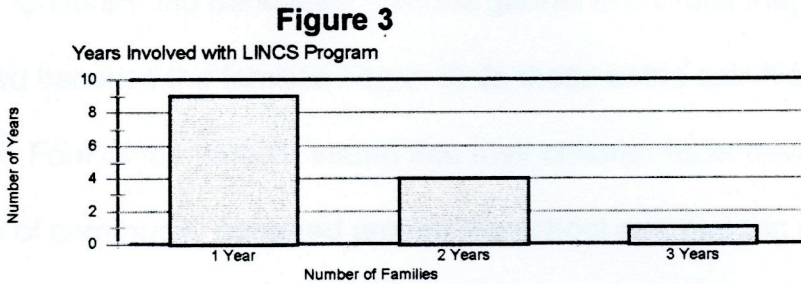
2. How many of your children are in grades (K,1,2), (3,4), or (5, 6) ? About 45% of the students that participate in the program are in kindergarten, first and second grades. About 43% of the children are in grades third and fourth, and only 22% of the children are in fifth and sixth grades. See Figure 2.

**Figure 2**  
Distribution of Children by Grade



3. How many years have you attended "Saturday at Sine"? Nine of the fourteen families indicated that this was the first year that they have participated . Four families have been involved for two

years and only one family has been involved for the three years the program has existed. See Figure 3.



The social worker explained that the purpose of the program was to constantly bring in new families that need assistance. The average family attends for two years before they become more self-sufficient. The program was not meant to be a long term program.

4. Have you also attended "Twilight Camp" during the summer? 86% of the families responded yes, and 14% said no. Finding show that most families participate in both programs.

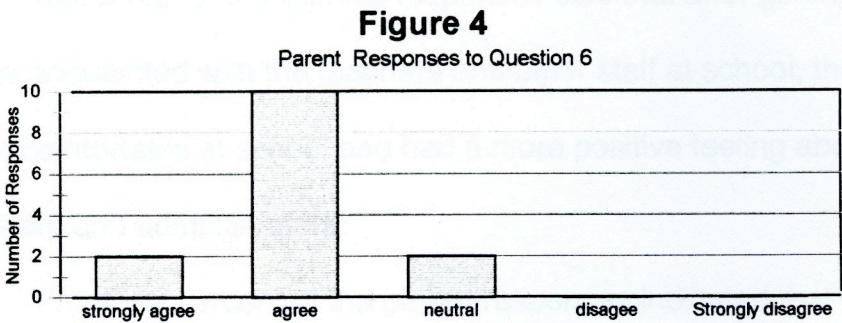
5. Do you feel your child has benefitted from your involvement in these programs? Explain. All fourteen parents responded positively to this question.

In their explanations most parents stated that their children now enjoy going to school since they had met new people and made new friends. Their children felt more comfortable talking to the

teachers and administrator since they had interacted with them during the program.

Children had benefitted from the games and crafts they learned because the families began to do these same activities at home. Four of the parents stated that their children have developed a sense of community centered around the school and that the children have more school spirit and wish to be involved in more school activities.

6. I feel more comfortable helping my children with their school work because of this program. Explain. Eighty-six percent of the fourteen parents responded positively to this question. See Figure 4.



The question only concerned a single program, the LINC'S Program, at one school, Sine School. Therefore the information may not generalize.



Most parents stated that through the program they have learned new parenting skills that make it easier to assist their children with school work. Many parents have established homework time. They also stated that they have learned techniques to encourage and reward completed assignments and how to establish positive communication between themselves and their children.

7. How has the program benefitted you? Forty-three percent of the parents stated that they have learned about local agencies that provide families with improved living conditions, Christmas gifts, medical and dental assistance, food, and clothing for the children. They also indicated that they have learned skills such as how to talk to their children and how to discipline them .

About half of the parents responses said that after getting better acquainted with the teachers and other staff at school, they felt more comfortable at school and had a more positive feeling about the teachers and administrators.

Fourteen percent of the parent responses indicated that they had benefitted from the program because they learned about adult educational opportunities in the community, such as GED classes and English classes. Respondents also stated that they have benefitted from the quality time they spend as a family playing games, doing

crafts and other activities, and making new friends.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this study is to assess the parent involvement program at Melvin E. Sine Elementary School in Glendale, Arizona, to determine if the program enhanced the academic success of the Hispanic children whose parents participated. Parents are clearly a valuable human resource that schools must not overlook. Efforts to secure and maintain partnerships with the Hispanic parents that will support the children's learning must be made to enhance the Hispanic students' academic success. The report studied the issues of involvement by Hispanic parents and how the program has benefitted the students, the family, the school, and the community.

A modified Delphi technique was used in the study. Data was collected from staff and parent participants at Sine School. The survey and questionnaire instruments used were developed by the researcher. The staff questionnaire consisted of nine questions requiring a subjective response and two objective response questions. The parent survey consisted of 7 responses, only one of



which required a written subjective response. Participants responses were categorized by staff responses and parent responses.

## **Conclusion**

Information derived from the two assessment tools failed to conclusively answer the research question: Does participation by Hispanic parents in a school-wide parents involvement program improve the academic success of the Hispanic students at Sine School? Information from the respondents indicated that the students had benefitted in various ways but proof of academic success was not established. In the past, the program made no attempt to track the academic performance of the children involved.

Data showed that the students have benefitted from the program because they were able to spend quality time with their families. They also experienced school as a place to have fun, meet new people and learn games and crafts outside of the classroom setting. Both staff and parent respondents felt that children participating in the program had greater self-esteem, improved their attendance at school, and learned how to communicate more effectively with adults. The school also benefitted from the program because it fostered feelings of trust and friendship between the

parents and the school's staff. Both groups of respondents felt that new and stronger channels of communication had been established.

Parents are now more supportive of the school's efforts to educate their children and are more understanding of the school's policies and regulations. The school has benefitted from the skills and knowledge the parents have obtained through the program. Better parenting skills have helped create happier children who come to school on a regular basis and come with completed homework. Participating parents are instilling in their children the importance of school and getting an education. Children and parents have developed a greater school spirit and a greater sense of community centered around the school.

Families who participate in the LINCS program have benefitted in many ways. They have learned the importance of bonding as a family and activities that promote such bonding. Families have also bonded with other families and have established strong friendships that extend outside the program activities.

Parents have shown the initiative to improve themselves. Some have done this by furthering their education and obtaining their GED certificates. Other parents have taken advantage of the



employment skills taught by the program and have obtained employment which has financially benefitted the family.

Acquiring knowledge of social services available to them has benefitted many of these at-risk families. At first they were very dependent on the school's social workers. They are now becoming more confident in their own abilities to seek out assistance they need through agencies that participate in the program.

Parents feel that their involvement has made it easier to communicate with the teachers and administrators. They have a greater respect for the school's staff and are more supportive of the efforts to educate and discipline their children. Many feel that school is a friendly and caring place where their children feel safe and are learning.

Families benefit from the parenting skills that have been taught . They have learned about safety around the home, around water, and the importance of nutritional meals and foods. Parents have been shown how to set limits and consequences for their children thus creating more effective discipline practices. This is probably the greatest factor contributing to the reduction of the CPS reports in this area of Glendale.



The community has benefitted from the school's parent participation program. The number of CPS reports has decreased in the last three years. These at-risk families are taking advantage of the services that help create healthier families and provide recreational and additional learning experiences for their children.

The researcher was unable to prove that Hispanic children whose parents participate in this school-wide program have had an increase in their academic success. The children who participated appear to be more self-confident and secure at school. Their attendance has also improved. Therefore the researcher concluded that these Hispanic children have benefitted even if academic success can not be proven. It is quite possible that they are showing academic success because they are feeling better about themselves, their families, and their school experiences.

## **Recommendations**

The research confirmed the importance of parent involvement programs that target at-risk families, especially Hispanic families by increased parent participation, developing trust among staff and parents, and assisting families to become aware of available social services. Programs such as the LINC program need to keep

records on the children participating to confirm that the program has affected their academic success. These records would confirm that family participation has a direct effect on student outcomes. An awareness by the business community concerning positive improvements could convince businesses in the area to become more involved and supportive of the school's efforts to impact the children and the family.

The LINCS program needs to involve more school personnel, primarily teachers who work with the Hispanic children in the classroom, to give parents and teachers an opportunity to interact outside the classroom setting. These teachers would then be able to collect data concerning the involved students.

The program could be enhanced by providing more community services that will teach families to become more active in the community to enable these parents to become more politically involved in their neighborhoods. Programs need to be established that will empower the parents to set up block programs and seek help from local law enforcement agencies to eliminate gangs and drugs in the area.

A more in depth study of this program is recommended once

the program has been in force for a greater length of time and it has begun to record the students' academic progress at school.



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# **Appendix A**

## **Staff Letter and Questionnaire**

Fellow Sine Staff Members,

In January, I started working on my Master's Research Project. My thesis question is "Does participation in a parent involvement program by Hispanic parents improve their students' academic success?" As part of my research, I need to collect information from staff members who have been involved in the *Saturday at Sine* program and the summer *Twilight Camp*. Would you be so kind as to fill out the accompanying survey and return it to me by Friday of this week, April 24? You may return this survey to my mailbox or to Room 137. Your input will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Jan Barnholdt

## STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Why was there a need to establish this parent participation program?
2. How many families are involved in this parent participation program?
3. How long have you been involved with the LINC'S program?
4. In your opinion, what is the most significant benefit to the family for participating in the program?
5. What significant benefit does the program offer the children ?
6. How does this program specifically benefit the school?
7. What parenting skills has the program taught? Check the skills you know have been taught.
  - \_\_\_ behavioral skills of children
  - \_\_\_ setting limits and consequences for children
  - \_\_\_ behavioral modification for ADD/ADHD children



- \_\_\_ nutritional meals and food
- \_\_\_ safety in the home
- \_\_\_ safety around water
- \_\_\_ family bonding
- \_\_\_ skills to strengthen a family's strengths
- \_\_\_ developing positive relationships with the school and staff
- \_\_\_ family games that include all family members
- \_\_\_ networking with other families
- \_\_\_ how to complete and file DES/AHCCCS paperwork
- \_\_\_ how to locate community resources such as housing, food, utility and rent assistance
- \_\_\_ how to locate counseling
- \_\_\_ employment skills and obtaining employment
- \_\_\_ crafts for everyone in the family
- \_\_\_ how to plant a garden

8. In your opinion, who is the program targeted for, the parents, or the children? Is this targeting affective?

9-A. Have the students whose parents are involved been more successful in school since the program started? \_\_\_\_\_

9-B. Check the areas that have shown improvement.

- \_\_\_ improved attendance
- \_\_\_ class participation
- \_\_\_ improved grades
- \_\_\_ greater comprehension
- \_\_\_ others \_\_\_\_\_

10. Are the parents involved with the program more supportive of the school's efforts to educate their children? If so, in what way?

Appendix B

Parent Survey

11. What has been the LINCS program's greatest success?

# **Appendix B**

## **Parent Survey**



**PARENT SURVEY****Name** \_\_\_\_\_**Directions: Choose only one response to all questions except #2, and #7.**

1. How many children do you have that attend Melvin Sine School?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 child

\_\_\_\_\_ 2 children

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 children

\_\_\_\_\_ 4 or more children

2. How many of your children are in the following grades?

\_\_\_\_\_ K, 1, 2

\_\_\_\_\_ 3, 4

\_\_\_\_\_ 5, 6

3. How many years have you attended **Saturday at Sine**?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 year

\_\_\_\_\_ 2 years

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 years

4. Have you also attended **Twilight Camp** during the summer?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

5. Do you feel your child has benefitted from your involvement in these programs?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

Explain.

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6. I feel more confident in helping my children with their school work because of this program?

\_\_\_\_\_ strongly agree

\_\_\_\_\_ agree

\_\_\_\_\_ neutral

\_\_\_\_\_ disagree

\_\_\_\_\_ strongly disagree

Explain your response to #6.

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7. How have these programs benefitted you?

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