1-28-2008

Promoting ELL Parental Involvement: Challenges in Contested Times

Beatriz Arias
Center for Applied Linguistics, barias@cal.org

Milagros Morillo-Campbell
Arizona State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.colorado.edu/nepc

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

This Policy Brief is brought to you for free and open access by Centers and Research Institutes at CU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in National Education Policy Center by an authorized administrator of CU Scholar. For more information, please contact cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu.
PROMOTING ELL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:
CHALLENGES IN CONTESTED TIMES

Executive Summary

January 2008

EPRU | EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH UNIT

Education Policy Research Unit
Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
College of Education, Arizona State University
P.O. Box 872411, Tempe, AZ 85287-2411
Telephone: (480) 965-1886
Fax: (480) 965-0303
E-mail: epsl@asu.edu
http://edpolicylab.org

Education and the Public Interest Center
School of Education,
University of Colorado
Boulder, CO 80309-0249
Telephone: (303) 492-8370
Fax: (303) 492-7090
Email: epic@colorado.edu
http://education.colorado.edu/epic

This policy brief is available online at: http://epsl.asu.edu/epru/documents/EPSL-0801-250-EPRU.pdf
One of a series of Policy Briefs made possible by funding from the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.
Promoting ELL Parental Involvement:
Challenges in Contested Times

M. Beatriz Arias and Milagros Morillo-Campbell,
Arizona State University

Executive Summary

This policy brief analyzes factors related to the implementation of effective parental involvement with English Language Learners (ELLs). As the largest growing segment of the student population, ELLs have increased in all states over the last twenty years. At the same time, parents of ELLs face daunting barriers as they try to become informed or involved in their child's school. These barriers, which include the inability to understand English, unfamiliarity with the school system, and differences in cultural norms and cultural capital, can limit parents' communication and school participation. Research supports the importance of parental involvement for improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates regardless of socioeconomic background or ethnicity. Accordingly, and given the achievement gap between ELLs and English proficient students, it is very important to identify practices that may improve ELL parental involvement and thus student achievement. Yet many programs make little effort to promote ELL parental involvement, defining parental involvement only in terms of the schools’ needs or in terms of a deficit-based perception of ELL families.

This brief analyzes characteristics of the ELL student and parent population; barriers to ELL family engagement with schools; and characteristics of traditional and non-traditional parental involvement models. Diversity in ELL parents and their communities speaks to the need for both traditional and non-traditional models for ELL parental involvement. With a dual-model approach, variation in language proficiency is acknowledged, communication is facilitated and maintained, and communities are recognized and integrated within the school culture. Accordingly, it is recommended that policy makers:

- Support the implementation of traditional parental involvement programs that are culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate.
- Fund the implementation of non-traditional parental involvement programs that reflect a reciprocal involvement in the school/parent community.
- Support the professional preparation of teachers who can identify community funds of knowledge for curricular development and school outreach.
Promoting ELL Parental Involvement

- Support community-based education programs that inform parents about school values and expectations and work with parents to help them become advocates for their children.