

PROGRAM:

Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors)

OBJECTIVES:

The Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors) program was designed to educate parents on how to help their children gain access to higher education. The vision of the program is for all students to graduate from high school and post secondary educational institutions, and become productive, contributing members of society.

LOCATION:

Washington State University Tri-Cities

DESCRIPTION:

Abriendo Puertas Parental Communication Initiative was developed by Texas A&M University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to help parents assist their children in high school completion and college graduation. Abriendo Puertas, Inc., was established as a non-profit organization based in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. It has been based on a well-defined research designed to make parents an integral part of the educational system and thus promote the success of their children. The model used the term Volunteer Parent Educators (Padres Educadores Voluntarios) to describe the outreach work performed by the parent-to-parent model. Volunteers earned this title after receiving 2-3 days of intensive training on the three lesson curriculum provided by Abriendo Puertas certified trainers. The program allowed volunteers to set their own times and schedules to accommodate their job and family commitments.

Abriendo Puertas offers two types of outreach models for effective implementation of the program:

- The **volunteer model** requires a staff member from the collaborating agency to coordinate with the Abriendo Puertas Volunteer Coordinator for the effective implementation of the program, scheduling of training sessions, and monthly meeting program maintenance sessions. Abriendo Puertas trains 20 interested parent volunteers to become Parent Volunteer Educators.
- The **staff and volunteer model** offers an alternative to the volunteer model. The co-sponsoring agency and program staff members are trained to then instruct parent volunteers. This helps the sponsoring agency maintain parent volunteers and oversight of the program. This model provides an additional level of maintenance and supervision provided by paid staff, which consists of program facilitators, site directors, parent liaisons, volunteer managers, or volunteer coordinators. Paid staff members are trained on program goals, volunteer management, program implementation, reporting and evaluation. In this model, the co-sponsoring agency became the central contact for the local program reporting back to the Abriendo Puertas Volunteer Coordinator. Consistent communication and coordination between Abriendo Puertas and the partnering agency has been a highlight of this program.

The designated staff and parent volunteers are trained on the core curriculum comprised of five basic topics: volunteer management, daily supervision, program implementation, documentation of success, and evaluation procedures. The core curriculum stresses the following topics:

- Understanding child/adolescent growth, development, and fostering family communication
- Making the Grade for High School Graduation
- Preparing for College

The volunteer management curriculum is both flexible and comprehensive. Issues addressed are wide-ranging and consist of the following:

1. Orientation to the Abriendo Puertas	11. Networking Skills
2. How to teach other parents	12. Teaching Skills-individual
3. Program Implementation	13. Teaching Skills-group
4. Understanding “No Child Left Behind” legislation	14. Working with Diversity
5. Collaborating with Schools and Organizations	15. Program Development-Planning Special Events
6. Motivating Parents and Students	16. Evaluation Skills
7. Communication Skills	17. Preparing for a Site Visit
8. Teamwork	18. Having a Successful Parent/Teacher Conference
9. Time Management	19. What is the Value of an Education?
10. Identifying Resources	

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE:

PREPARATION ACTIVITIES:

- Step 1: Establishment of Partnership with Abriendo Puertas program
- Step 2: Training for Stakeholders-Acquiring “Buy-in” from Administration
- Step 3: Training for Volunteer Managers/Coordinators
- Step 4: Orientation session for potential parent volunteers and managers
- Step 5: Team Training-parent volunteers/managers on core curriculum
- Step 6: Local Team Planning sessions-scheduling, marketing, lesson preparation
- Step 7: Parent Outreach-educational sessions for parents
- Step 8: Submitting forms and documentation
- Step 9: Volunteer Management –monthly training meetings

An orientation session of Abriendo Puertas was presented to the staff of the collaborating agency along with prospective parent volunteers to give them an opportunity to learn about the program. During the orientation parents interested in becoming Parent Volunteer Educators were asked to commit to the implementation of the program. The recruitment of parent volunteer educators stressed the importance of fully committing to the full training program or postponing involvement until that was possible. This session allowed for everyone to understand the high level of commitment required and how the program functions.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

Following the training, parent volunteers and staff were certified as Abriendo Puertas educators and graduates. A recognition event for program graduates was organized by the partnering agency.

COSTS OR COST CONSIDERATIONS:

<p>The major project cost considerations were the following:</p>
<p>Two to three trainings range from \$35,000 to \$50,000, which included trainings, curriculum, reporting, and ongoing support from Abriendo Puertas headquarters.</p>
<p>The Volunteer Model and Staff/Volunteer Model training cost is approximately the same. The Staff/Volunteer Model has been highly recommended, because it has allowed trained staff members in local agencies to offer the Volunteer Model training during the year without having to incur the expense of having Abriendo Puertas personnel come on site and train another group of Parent Volunteers. This is essentially a “train the trainer” model that encourages sustainability of the program over time.</p>
<p>The Volunteer Model Training can accommodate 20 volunteers per training. It is imperative that interested volunteers in the training understand clearly the commitments and documentation needed to be a Parent Volunteer Educator of the program.</p>

CONTACT INFORMATION

Genoveva Morales-Ledesma
Washington State University, Tri-Cities
Director of Early Outreach Programs
2710 University Drive
Richland, WA 99354-1671
(509) 372-7308
gmorales@tricity.wsu.edu

JR Gomez
Washington State University, Tri-Cities
Latina/o Outreach Program
2710 University Drive
Richland, WA 99354-1671
(509) 372-7288
jrgomez@earlyoutreach.wsu.edu

RESOURCES:

The authors of the Abriendo Puertas program have provided electronic copies of all documents needed to effectively implement the program. These have included various trainings and PowerPoint presentations that help support the co-sponsoring agency in successful delivery of the program. In addition, the program has included evaluation forms, flyers, volunteer applications and curriculum all available in Spanish and English. As a co-sponsoring agency, the program has provided access to all the curriculum and documentation.