

PROGRAM:

University of Washington's Parent Academy

OBJECTIVES:

Workshop to help parents prepare their students for college.

LOCATION:

NCEC/Radio KDNA, Granger, WA

DESCRIPTION:

The University of Washington's Parent Academy was held at NCEC/Radio KDNA in Granger Washington on four nights between 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM on April 27-28, and May 5-6, 2009.

At 5:00 p.m. refreshments were served and there was an orientation by Parent Facilitators. Parent Facilitators are persons from the community who have attended two Parent Academy courses and have graduated from the program. Parent Facilitators help to orient new parents to the goals of the academy, which include helping parents gain an understanding of the GEAR UP program, the steps needed to prepare students for college, college financial aid, college scholarships and grants, how to communicate with their students about college, and how to use technology to learn more about college preparation. These same goals are the questions in the Parent Academy Pre-Survey.

At 6:00, Lorena Silva, Parent Liaison, welcomed the participants to the Parent Academy, and made the staff introductions, including introduction of the interpreter. Headphones were available for everyone, and simultaneous translations were made from English to Spanish and Spanish to English. Everyone is encouraged to speak in the language in which they are most comfortable. Responses to questions are answered in the language in which questions are asked.

Lori Febus, of the Granger School District GEAR UP, talked about the importance of parent involvement. Dori Peralta Baker discussed the goals of the Parent Academy, and there was a wall board posting to discuss and explore opportunities for parent study. The evening's session concluded with a class summary and a discussion of the agenda for the next day. Parents completed a survey that asked what they wanted to learn in the workshop, and their wishes and expectations were taken into account in the following three course sessions.

Handouts given during the session included *25 Tips to Get Involved in Your Child's Education*, available in both Spanish and English.

The handout discussed the following:

- Making the home a learning center
- Communicating the school
- Helping the school
- Becoming a leader
- Helping bring the community into the school

The next night, April 29, the Parent Academy had a format similar to the first night. The agenda included a Parent Financial Aid Panel that included three Parent Facilitators. There was a discussion of the Wall Board Parent Expectations List, and a High School and Middle School Student Panel that discussed financial aid and college applications. Important handouts distributed included *Time Management Tips for High School Students*, created by the College Board at www.collegeboard.com

In addition, contact information for dozens of websites for graduation requirements, financial aid, terms and acronyms, were distributed. Expectations for the progress of children from grade 8 through high school were distributed and discussed. Topics included expectations for writing, reading, math and science.

The highlight of the third night's Parent Academy on Tuesday, May 5, 2009, was Rafael Villalobos, Jr., from Central Washington University, who for approximately 1½ hours discussed college financial aid. Handouts included website information on financial aid, and information on writing scholarship essays. Six critical factors in determining 4-year college entrance were discussed, including:

- Grades
- Secondary level coursework
- Extracurricular activities
- Community service experiences
- College Application Essays
- Teacher Recommendations

Parent-Student, Oscar Hernandez did a presentation on the history of Cinco de Mayo and traditional ways the holiday is celebrated here as well as in Mexico. A brief overview and preparation plans for the Parent Trip to UW were also presented. The final night of the Parent Academy, Wednesday, May 6, 2009, included Blanca Bazladua, *Community Outreach Coordinator, Nuestra Casa*, and her discussion of "A Community Support Network," and Noe Gutierrez and Margaret Luera's, (leaders of the local Latino Community), talk about "Having Role Models in Your Family."

A graduation ceremony was held at the end of the program, certificates for completion of the Parent Academy coursework were presented to each participating parent, and they were invited to complete a Parent Post Survey.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE:

PREPARATION ACTIVITIES:

- The instructional model requires organizers who have a deep understanding of the communities they work with.
- In order to recruit successfully, the program organizers need to contact community leaders and volunteers, GEAR UP Program school staff and special interest groups to build a community education program and promote parent involvement.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

- Trip to the University of Washington for parents who have graduated from the Parent Academy.
- Involvement of these same parents in recruiting and educating new parents to the academy.

COSTS OR COST CONSIDERATIONS:

- If serving a cohort with multiple languages, interpreter services for simultaneous interpretation would be needed. Translation of printed material is also necessary.
- Reimbursement for those who present information about financial aid: Major costs can be avoided by using volunteers, and institutional resources such as college financial advisors.
- Printing cost for handouts and program binders.
- Evening refreshments. Costs can be saved by using community volunteers and donations, or in the absence of these, vendors with whom one has an established relationship, and can offer refreshments at a reasonable rate.

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