

Parents Supporting Academic Achievement

*Los Angeles Unified School District - 2
North Hollywood, California*

A series of workshops to assist parents of under-achieving students helped boost test scores in the Los Angeles Unified School District last year. The Parents Supporting Academic Achievement program also empowered parents, reduced teachers' frustrations, and won praise from many corners of Local School District 2.

Officials developed the parent program in response to teachers' concerns about being told to work harder to improve student achievement, when they knew that they also needed parents' help. They decided it was time to help parents better understand what important partners they are in their children's learning. The district leaders contacted a set of low-performing schools and launched a pilot training program to give parents tools to help their children succeed.

The pilot took place at three schools. After that, the district leaders presented information to all principals in the local district, and initiated the program at schools that volunteered to participate. The program with district leaders for partnerships meeting with an augmented Action Team for Partnership (ATP) that included the principal, an assistant principal, Title I coordinator, literacy coach, math coach, and parent leaders. Teams looked at their student data and selected the grade level and subject area where students needed the most assistance. Team members then created different activities and learning games that parents and children could use to practice and build skills at home.

The parent center director and district facilitator called all parents of students whose scores were either "below basic" or "far below basic," according to state standards. They asked parents what time of day was most convenient for them to attend workshops. Throughout the year, more than 400 parents attended the workshops and gained skills in conducting learning games and activities to

strengthen students' skills in reading and math. Some schools even hosted special Saturday workshops so that students and parents could attend together.

The program saw nearly immediate results. By the end of the school year, teachers also noticed a marked improvement in students' behavior in the classroom. Nearly 90 percent of students who participated in the program improved their test scores and classroom work habits.

"My most disruptive students have become so much more cooperative. I am so glad to have them be a part of this program," a teacher said.

By the end of the year, parents, teachers and administrators heaped praise on the program. "I didn't understand that I had a role to play in my child's learning. Thank you for helping me learn what I could do to help my child," one parent said.

"We have reaped the benefits of a program that shows unlimited potential for improving the achievement level of our targeted students," a principal said.

The district plans to continue expanding the program and is looking at different organizational models to help each school structure its classes around parents' schedules.

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