

# School & Family Partnerships District Training

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*Pasco School District  
Pasco, Washington*

The district coordinators in the Pasco School District view training as key to building an effective partnership program. Still new to NNPS, the district's School & Family Partnerships Office wanted to provide training for district staff and members of schools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to help them focus on pertinent partnership issues. To build capacity in district schools, the office planned two training workshops on cultural diversity. Parents were welcome, too.

The first, Reach Out to Families: Cultural Competency Building, was a day-long workshop during the district's Professional Development Day in October. The district's School and Family Partnership Coordinators worked with Reach Out, a Seattle-based training and consulting organization, to develop content tailored to Pasco's needs.

The workshop focused on working with families from diverse backgrounds, because about 65% of the families in the district speak a language other than English at home. The training offered staff and ATP members an opportunity to look at their own cultural backgrounds with an eye to how this affects interactions with others.

The second workshop, Latino Family Literacy, was held on a Saturday morning in April as part of the Bilingual Program's Mini-Conference, a day-long series of workshops for the district's bilingual staff. Perla Rodriguez, principal of Cornelius Elementary School in the Forest Grove School District in Oregon, was the keynote speaker.

Her experiences working with Latino/Hispanic families over many years allowed her to develop innovative approaches to building relationships with families, particularly in developing literacy skills. ATP members were invited to attend her presentation and a follow-up breakout session entitled, Latino Family Literacy in the Classroom.

One of the biggest challenges was ensuring that ATP members attended. Although attendance was good, some could not attend. Therefore, the district coordinators provided all ATP chairs with information and handouts from the trainings to share with their teams. The cost of the workshops, about \$8,000, was provided by Title I and Title III funds, with cooperation between these district offices.

These workshops were designed to help educators increase student success. As the district staff becomes more culturally aware and better equipped to work with families from many different backgrounds, students benefit from more open communications, interactions between families and school and increased parent involvement, even if in non-traditional ways.

The family literacy workshop provided many ideas for activities that teachers could conduct in class to learn more about the culture and history of their students. There also were ideas for interactive homework assignments.

Some activities have already been initiated in the district. The participants enjoyed Dr. Rodriguez so much that plans are already in place to have her speak again. Coordinators are also exploring the possibility of a joint training with the staff from her district and of reaching out to include nearby districts.

*Deidra McCollum & Lorraine Landon  
School & Family Partnership  
District Coordinators  
(509) 546-2683*

*dmccollum@psd1.org, llandon@psd1.org*