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Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors Curriculum Evaluation

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Abstract

Encompass Community Services is a nonprofit agency that serves families and their children from pregnancy to age five through their Head Start programs. The majority of low-income families being served are challenged with being fully engaged in their child's education due to economic factors. As a result, many children of low income families are less likely to achieve academic success at an early age. Abriendo Puertas curriculum was designed for peer to peer education on parenting skills. The curriculum evaluation was created to assess the effectiveness of the parenting skills being taught. The expected outcomes of the evaluation was that parents are finding the curriculum useful for their child's education. The evaluation's findings are indicated that 78% of the parents that received the curriculum found it useful. Possible next steps for the agency would be to provide the curriculum in continuous sequential sessions for the recommended time frame, and to utilize the evaluation as a tool for continuous improvement.

Keywords: parenting skills, curriculum, evaluation, low-income families

Agency and Communities Served

Encompass Community Services is a private nonprofit agency that serves low income parent(s) with children between the ages of zero to five years old and their families in the county of Santa Cruz, California. The mission statement of Encompass is that they “build on the strength of people working together to create healthy changes in their lives and community. We deliver quality human services guided by the values of diversity, partnership, and the power of workplace democracy” (Encompass, 2017).

The internship was specifically with Encompass Family and Children Department, with a focus on the program Head Start. Head Start “improves the lives of low-income children and families in Santa Cruz since 1965 through high-quality, comprehensive child development, and family support services” (Encompass Community Services, 2017). Within Encompass, the different programs that are offered are Head Start, Early Head Start, and State Pre-Kindergarten/Family Literacy Programs. The mentor, specifically deals with Head Start and some “blended” State Pre-Kindergarten Programs. The services that Encompass provides are early childhood education, father involvement, literacy, and home visits.

The population that Encompass serves are 56 % of two parent family household and 44% are single family households. Also, 77% of the families have one or two parents that work and only 15% percent of families receive cash aid (TANF). “38% of the nation’s Head Start children are Latino” (Head Start, 2015). The families that are clients for Head Start are working families and they are still considered low-income families. Many of the families that Head Start offers services to are “special needs” families, which means that they require more assistance than “stable” families. The “special needs” families either have children with a disability or are in situations of homelessness or the possibility of being homeless.

Problem Description

The majority of low-income families being served are challenged with being fully engaged in their child's education due to economic factors. As a result, many children of low income families are less likely to achieve academic success at an early age. These problems impact the agency because Encompass's population are low-income families that faced challenges of being fully involved in their child's education for different reasons. Abriendo Puertas is a curriculum that was created for low income Latino families, the majority of the population that Encompass serves. According to Abriendo Puertas, 25% of the nation's children are under five years old and approximately 33% of Latino families with children under the age of eighteen lived below the poverty level (2015). In March 2015, 38% of the nation's Head Start children are Latino (Head Start, 2015). Latino toddlers fall behind Caucasian toddlers by up to six months in understanding words, speaking in complex sentences, and simple tasks (Material and Child Health, 2013). This is often referred as the "opportunity gap" in Latino education.

There are many different causes to the opportunity gap in Latino education. Some economic factors that impact the gap are that parents are working multiple jobs to provide for their families, they may not understand English and they may not know the American school system. Latino children may face a language barrier because they are speaking two different languages, one at home and one when they go to school. This may make cognitive learning harder for the children. Acculturation is another economic factor that can affect a child's learning. "Acculturation is the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group" (CEHD, 2016). This can be difficult for Latino families because it can be difficult for them to assimilate into a new school system where they haven't been taught to communicate with teachers, participate in school activities, and acquire knowledge (CEHD, 2016).

Consequences of the opportunity gap are that less low income Latino children are achieving academic success. By the age of two to three, toddlers begin to fall behind Caucasian middle class children in vocabulary, listening skills, and problem solving skills (Material and Children Health, 2013). The U.S. Department of Education states that twenty Latino students will graduate from college, and seventy-eight students will graduate from high school (2015). This means that Latino children are less likely to get a higher income and better jobs compared to other ethnicities (See appendix A).

The primary reason why the evaluation is needed “according to 45 CFR § 1302.32, programs must support staff to effectively implement curricula and ‘at a minimum monitor curriculum implementation and fidelity’” (Head Start, 2018). Encompass uses data driven curriculum and training so that there is positive progress of their clients and their employees. While the Abriendo Puertas curriculum was designed to be used for ten two-hour sessions, Encompass has been applying it to 30-minute sessions every other month. Therefore, to determine the efficacy of the altered timeframe and improve the response rate, this project is intended to improve the evaluation process and determine the effectiveness of the curriculum being used. This project will help influence how the curriculum is implemented in the future academic school years.

Project Description

The project that the intern worked on was condensing an evaluation for the curriculum Abriendo Puertas (See appendix B) that Head Start has implemented in their parent meetings. Abriendo Puertas uses a two-generation approach and the popular education approach. Abriendo Puertas was first developed for Latino parents with children between zero and five years old. Abriendo Puertas was created to

promote school readiness, family well-being, and advocacy by addressing best practices

in brain development, key aspects of early childhood development, early literacy, numeracy, bilingualism, health, attendance, civic engagement, parent leadership, goal setting, and planning for family success. (Abriendo Puertas, 2017)

Through the curriculum that Abriendo Puertas offers, their goal is to close the achievement/opportunity gap between low-income families and professional families. “Young Latinos are the fastest growing demographic group in the United States” (Abriendo Puertas, 2017). Ethnic and racial minorities are at a disadvantage with income, education attainment, financial security which impacts their quality of life. Because Latinos are considered a minority they deal with stressors that can negatively impact their lives. “Approximately 33% of Hispanic families with children under eighteen lived below the poverty level” (Abriendo Puertas, 2017).

The intern revised an evaluation that Abriendo Puertas has already created. The evaluation needed to be revised because the agency had received input that when surveys are too long parents do not want to finish and submit them. For this reason, the intern condensed a thirty-question evaluation down to seven questions. The evaluation questions are aligned with Head Starts Family Engagement Outcomes which are: Family Well-Being, Positive Parent-Child Relationships, Families as Lifelong Educators, Families as Learners, Family Engagement in Transitions, Family Connections to Peer’s and Community, and Families as Advocates and Leaders (Head Start, 2018). According to the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, Family Well-being means that families are safe, healthy, have opportunities for educational advances and economic mobility. Positive Parent-child Relationships refers to the beginning of parenthood where families develop warm relationships that nurture their child. Families as Lifelong Educators means that parents will observe, guide, and promote everyday learning for their children. Family Engagement in Transitions refers to parents that encourage and advocate for their child learning

and development. Family connections to peers and Community refers to the connections that families make with peers, mentors, and community members that help them socially and educationally. Lastly, Families as Advocates and Leaders refers to parents advocating for their children and have a leadership role in Head Start and Early Head Start (2018).

Project Implementation

During December 2018, the intern worked on the evaluation so that in February 2019 it could be approved. While working on the evaluation the intern had been doing research on best practices, Abriendo Puertas, Family Engagement Outcomes, Abriendo Puertas Evaluation, and parent meetings. This research has helped her better understand her project and what it was trying to accomplish. In the beginning of February 2019, the intern completed the survey and submitted it to her mentor for approval. The intern gave a presentation to the FSAs about the survey and how they wanted it implemented and when they needed them to submit the surveys. At the end of February 2019, the mentor and other staff members approved the survey and the intern printed and distributed them to the different FSA's. In the beginning of March 2019, the FSA's distributed the surveys in their parent meetings and submitted them by March 15, 2019. The last two weeks of March, the intern visited four centers to distribute and collect the surveys. By the end of March to the beginning of April the intern inputted the data from the evaluations into ChildPlus, a software the agency uses for their data entry.

Project Assessment

The expected outcome of the curriculum evaluation was to see how effective the curriculum is from the parents point of view. Since Encompass has not distributed an evaluation on the curriculum Abriendo Puertas any information that was gathered has been helpful for the agency. While most of the tasks the intern and mentor had planned for the completion of the

project went as planned there were some changes that had to be made. The first change that was made was when the intern learned that their project had to be completed by the first of May 2019. The survey was originally going to be distributed during the second week of May 2019, so the intern and mentor had to discuss how they were going to distribute it with the new information. The second change that needed to be made was when the survey hadn't been approved yet, so they couldn't be distributed when they were planned to go out.

Findings

There were one hundred and forty-nine surveys collected by the end of March. Out of those surveys, the most amount of surveys collected from a center were twenty-one and the least was one. Forty parents stated that they would be interested in attending a ten-week series of the curriculum and the other one hundred and nine either did not response or stated no. About 78% of the families that filled out the survey said that they found it helpful to their family in some way.

Recommendation

The intern recommends that the agency distributes the survey at the beginning of the school year and at the end. The intern feels that by implementing the survey this way they will gather more data. The intern also recommends that the FSA explain what a "10-week series" is. The intern observed that many families were confused and not sure what the question meant on the survey. The intern recommends that the FSAs explain what this questions means, so that the staff can receive information on this subject. The project helped the agency because they found out that the parents that receive the curriculum are benefitting from it. The project helped the community because the curriculum is trying to bridge the educational gap that many people face.

Conclusion

While I have been at the internship for one and a half years, there are many different Major Learning Outcomes (MLO) that have helped my professional and personal growth. The list can be extensive because all thirteen MLOs have helped me grow in some way. The major MLOs that have impacted the intern the most were Collaboration, Cross Cultural Competency, Leadership, and Professional Communication. Without these four different MLOs, I wouldn't have a Capstone project. I was able to come up with a project because of leadership, collaboration, and professional communication because I was able to talk with my mentor and professor to come up with an idea that helped the agency and that I had an interest in. The project addressed cultural differences that are in the agencies clients by having a curriculum that was made for the Latinx community but is also accessible to everyone because of the language and activities it uses.

When I look back at this opportunity I was given, I will remember the communication and patience it took to complete my project. Without the help of my professor and mentor I would not have grown and learned from different mistakes and accomplishments. Because of the reflections I did in class I am able to understand my thoughts, feelings and what I want from my future. Without the CHHS program I would not have been able to grow into the person that I am.

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Appendix A. PROBLEM MODEL

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Project Title: Abriendo Puertas/ Opening Doors Curriculum Evaluation | | |
| CAUSES TO AGENCY PROBLEM | AGENCY-SPECIFIC “MICRO-LEVEL” PROBLEM ADDRESSED BY PROJECT | CONSEQUENCES TO AGENCY |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parents/families not being enrolled in preschool · Parents/families not attending Parent Meetings · Parents/families not communicating with their child’s teachers/FSA | <p>Many children are less likely to achieve academic success at an early age.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Agency not receiving information about parent’s involvement with agency |
| · CAUSES/RISK FACTORS TO BROADER HEALTH PROBLEM | BROADER “MACRO-LEVEL” HEALTH/SOCIAL PROBLEM | CONSEQUENCES TO SOCIETY |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Opportunity gap in Latino education · Parents/families working multiple jobs/hours · Parents/families not understanding American school system · Parents/families not understanding English language | <p>The majority of low- income families being served are challenged with being fully engaged in their child’s education</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Higher drop-out rate for this population · Less job opportunity · Less education |

Appendix B. Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors Survey

Encompass Head Start
Survey of Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors Introduction

CENTER: _____ DATE: _____

Please circle the corresponding number: 1 = Poor | 2 = Good | 3 = Very good | 4 = Excellent

| 1. How helpful was Abriendo Puertas in setting goals for your family? | Score | | | |
|--|-------|---|---|---|
| <i>Comments:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. How helpful was Abriendo Puertas in increasing your knowledge around how your child learns? | | | | |
| <i>Comments:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. How helpful was Abriendo Puertas in giving you ideas on activities to do with your child at home? | | | | |
| <i>Comments:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. How helpful were the Abriendo Puertas sessions to you as a parent? | | | | |
| <i>Comments:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

5. Would you be interested in a 10 week Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors series? YES NO

Encompass Head Start
Encuesta de Introducción de Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors

CENTRO: _____ FECHA: _____

Por favor circule el número correspondiente: 1 = Malo | 2 = Bueno | 3 = Muy Bueno | 4 = Excelente

| 1. ¿Qué tan útil fue Abriendo Puertas para establecer metas para su familia? | Puntuación | | | |
|---|------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Comentarios:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. ¿Qué tan útil fue Abriendo Puertas para aumentar su conocimiento sobre cómo aprende su niño? | | | | |
| <i>Comentarios:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. ¿Qué tan útil fue Abriendo Puertas en darle ideas sobre actividades que puede hacer con su niño en casa? | | | | |
| <i>Comentarios:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. ¿Qué tan útiles fueron las sesiones de Abriendo Puertas para usted como padre? | | | | |
| <i>Comentarios:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

5. ¿Estaría interesado en una serie de 10 semanas de Abriendo Puertas? SI NO

Appendix C. Scope of Work

| | | | |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Scope of Work Template | | | |
| Title: Abriendo Puertas /Opening Doors Evaluation | | | |
| Project description: creating and implementing an evaluation for the parenting curriculum Abriendo Puertas | | | |
| Goal: Measure effectiveness of curriculum | | | |
| Primary objective of the project: Data driven effectiveness of curriculum Abriendo Puertas | | | |
| Activities | | Deliverables | Timeline/deadlines |
| 1 | Discuss capstone project ideas with mentor | Final capstone project idea approved - Completed | Oct 26, 2018 |
| 2 | Review the Abriendo Puertas Program | Program description in Capstone report - Completed | October 2018 |
| 3 | Research Family Engagement Outcomes | FEO explanation in Capstone report - Completed | October 2018 |
| 4 | Preview the current Abriendo Puertas Program Evaluation | | End of Oct – beginning of Nov. 2018 |
| 5 | Attend parent meetings | Attendance at meetings - Completed | Nov. 7, 2018 |
| 6 | Research effective methods in program evaluation | Reference list - Completed | November 2018 |
| 7 | Analyze minutes, attendance, topics discussed at parent meetings | Data analysis - Completed | January/February 2019 |

| | | | |
|----|---|---|----------------------------|
| 8 | Condense existing evaluation and align questions with the Family Engagement Outcomes | Revised list of questions - Completed | Beginning of November 2018 |
| 9 | Create a pre-evaluation and distribute the evaluation to the Family Service Advocates (FSA) and train FSA's on survey | Completed pre-evaluation distributed to FSA's - Completed | Early February 2019 |
| 10 | Review the results | Data analysis of pilot survey results - Completed | Mid-February 2019 |
| 11 | Revise final evaluation | Final evaluation survey - Completed | End of February 2019 |
| 12 | Distribute final survey to parents | Distribution of survey - Completed | March 2019 |
| 13 | Collect and analyze data from final survey results | Data analysis of final survey results - Completed | End of March 2019 |
| 14 | Complete reporting requirements | Final agency and capstone reports - Completed | May 3, 2019 |
| 15 | Prepare capstone presentation in selected format | Present at Dress Rehearsal for grading - Completed | May 8-10, 2018 |
| 16 | Final preparation for Capstone Festival | Final presentation at Capstone Festival!! - Completed | May 15 or 16, 2019 (TBD) |