

# 2013-2014 Parent Mentor Program Evaluation Highlights

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In July 2014, Collective Impact Consulting completed a comprehensive evaluation of the Parent Engagement Institute's 2013-2014 Parent Mentor Program. The evaluation used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data that came from monthly reports, weekly workshop evaluations and periodic surveys of parent mentors and teachers, especially a pre-survey and a post-survey. In addition, the research team did self-administered surveys with key stakeholders including principals and people working at the 13 community organizations coordinating the program under the ISBE grant.

Overall, the evaluation found that the Parent Mentor Program has been very effective at meeting its goals of parent engagement in schools, which in turn contributes to academic success of children and youth. Among the findings are:

- Parents significantly increased the amount of time they participated in school activities and volunteering
- Parent Mentors have shown much more confidence and competency in the classroom over the course of the program. In correlation, Parent Mentors and Teachers report positive changes in the students with which they work.
- This then ripples outward - parents repeatedly expressed more confidence in their ability to advocate for their children and a greater understanding of school system; many noted that they had gained knowledge about how to better help students in the classroom as well as their own children
- A significant increase in school engagement and family-school-community integration, and parents indicated better understanding teacher challenges.
- Teachers and principals in the participating schools reported overwhelming support for the program and an appreciation for its contribution to the school climate, student learning, and parent-school-community engagement.

The Parent Mentor Program is designed to reach low-income, immigrant, Latino and African American parents with the goal of promoting stronger parent-school-community relationships through a context-specific and process oriented Ecological Model for Parent Engagement. It is designed to help parents:

- 1) develop skills and strategies that will support their students in improving academic outcomes, engagement and persistence and
- 2) promote transformative forms of mutual engagement, interaction and investment between immigrant families, schools and communities.

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**“This is a wonderful program that benefits the children, teachers, and parents. I hope that it is able to continue and grow.”**

*– Principal involved with Parent Mentor Program*

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Many schools hosting parent mentors noted that parent mentors are engaged and enthusiastic about the work they are doing. Some note that the Parent Mentor program has inspired parents to think creatively and beyond the realm of the classroom to support student learning. Parents have become more familiar with the U.S. school system and this has helped to create a stronger link between parent, child, and school. Furthermore, some of the monthly reports note that being a parent mentor has inspired many participants to further their own education and personal and professional development. The training

opportunities offered by the program have contributed to these personal, familial, school, and community transformations.

The evaluation worked with community organizations that coordinated the program, school principals, teachers and the parents themselves. Below are key findings from each group.

## **COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

The evaluation conducted in-depth surveys with 9 of the 13 organizations involved in the Parent Mentor Program. 100% of

	Strengthened Principal Relationship	Strengthened Teacher Relationship	Strengthened Parent and Community Relationship	Strengthened Education Leadership	Strengthened Leadership Beyond Education
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	6 / 75%	4 / 50%	6 / 75%	5 / 62.5%	6 / 75%
<b>Agree</b>	2 / 25%	4 / 50%	2 / 25%	3 / 37.5%	2 / 25%

respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the Parent Mentor Program strengthened relationships with the partner schools' principals, teachers, and parents and community members. Furthermore, respondents agreed that the program strengthened his or her organization's leadership base on issues both regarding education and beyond education.

## **PRINCIPALS**

40 principals were surveyed as part of this evaluation. All agreed or strongly agreed that the program benefits their school, particularly through creating a welcoming and communicative environment for parents, building parent-teacher and parent-administrator trust. Furthermore, most respondents agreed that the program helped administrator, teachers and parents think of each other as partners in the profess of educating children, and that it helps build parent leadership that will help improve the school.

	Improves School's Understanding & Connection to Community	Helps School Create a Welcoming and Communicative Environment for all Parents	Helps Build Parent-Teacher Trust	Helps Build Parent-Admin Trust	Helps Admin, Teachers,& Parents to See Each Other as Educational Partners	Helps Build Parent Leadership that will Contribute Involvement that Improve School
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	26/ 65%	28 / 70%	28 / 70%	26 / 65%	29 / 74%	26 / 67%
<b>Agree</b>	12 / 30%	8 / 20%	10 / 25%	12 / 30%	8 / 21%	11 / 28%
<b>Neutral</b>	2 / 5%	4 / 10%	5 / 5%	2 / 5%	2 / 5%	2 / 5%

## **TEACHERS**

Teachers consistently ranked benefits of the Parent Mentor program to the school as very high, generally agreeing that the program creates a

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Not Applicable
Welcoming & Communicative Environment	172 / 94.1%	5 / 2.7%	2 / 1.1%	4 / 2.1%
Build Parent-Teacher Trust	172 / 94%	4 / 2.2%	2 / 1.1%	5 / 2.7%
Partners in Educating Children	175/ 95.6%	2 / 1.1%	2 / 1.1%	4 / 2.1%

welcoming and communicative environment, and affirmed that it helps teachers and parents think of each other as partners in educating children. Furthermore, the majority of teachers also agreed that the program helped to build parent-teacher trust.

Another key finding showed that having a Parent Mentor in the classroom greatly increased the number of students who received one-on-one attention from a parent or a teacher. This individual tutoring is key to maintaining student success throughout the classroom.

<b>In the last week the number of times...</b> Note: Mean scores are of data grouped in ordinal categories, not the actual mean of the frequency of the activity.	<b>Pre-Survey Mean Rank</b>	<b>Post-Survey Mean Rank</b>	<b>Z score</b>	<b>Level of Significance</b> *indicates statistical significance
How many of your students did YOU have time to work with one-to one 10 minutes or more during school hours?	50.26	64.93	-4.283	.000*
How many of your students did another adult work with one-to one 10 minutes or more during school hours?	46.65	66.89	-7.078	.000*

## **PARENT MENTORS**

268 Parent Mentors completed pre- and post-program surveys, and as such were included in this evaluation. In all of the areas measured by the survey, there were statistically significant improvements.

<b>In the last week /month the number of times...</b> Note: Mean scores are of data grouped in ordinal categories, not the actual mean of the frequency of the activity. For some items the parents were asked to reflect on the previous week, in other on the previous month.	<b>Pre-Survey Mean Rank</b>	<b>Post-Survey Mean Rank</b>	<b>Z score</b>	<b>Significance</b> *indicates statistical significance
Ask Child About School / Week	38.42	57.21	-3.584	.000*
Communicate with Teacher / Week	95.94	106.36	2.648	.008*
Communicate with Principal / Week	80.07	91.02	-2.708	.007*
Talk with Other Parents / Week	80.41	94.99	-3.778	.000*
Spend Time in School Building / Week	27.63	105.31	-11.137	.000*
Spend Time in Classroom / Week	25.23	119.89	-12.134	.000*
Help Child With School-Work / Week	46.76	65.04	-3.078	.002*
Read to Child at Home / Week	73.06	97.67	-3.137	.002*
Parents Greeted by Name / Week	88.14	92.88	-5.237	.000*
Teachers Greeted / Week	63.45	92.51	-7.405	.000*
Have Parent Phone Number / Week	79.38	96.06	-4.913	.000*
Have Teacher Phone Number / Week	75.49	84.03	-5.153	.000*
Attend Parent Committee Meeting /Month	72.29	81.75	-4.428	.000*
Help Lead or Plan a School Committee /Month	54.54	67.92	-3.643	.001*
Help Plan or Lead School Event or Initiative /Month	76.41	81.25	-5.763	.000*
Attend Community Initiative or Event / Month	74.09	76.95	-3.894	.000*
Shared Information re: School or Community / Month	75.45	91.42	-4.728	.000*
Attend a Class for Yourself / Month	67.42	78.29	-3.018	.001*

The information above clearly demonstrates the links between the Parent Mentor involvement and increased high level leadership in the school (Leading or planning a school committee, leading or planning school event/initiative, sharing information, attending parent committee meetings) . Parents

build social capital through the program (parents greeted, teachers greeted, having parent/teacher phone numbers, etc.) and many metrics around increased attention given to parents' own children.

This is compounded by qualitative data provided by parents. Respondents noted their pride in seeing how significantly the children improved with extra help, and how willing they are to receive the help. Many respondents described an increased awareness in the importance of their own children's education and a larger devotion to their learning both at school and in the home. The majority of respondents reported more self-confidence and an increase in their own abilities, such as developing more patience and learning how to communicate with their own children. This in turn led to bettered home environments, as many parents reported learning skills that have improved relationships with their own children. All in all, respondents agreed to feeling a contentedness both with the change they are a part of and being able to observe how happy the children are as a result of the program.

The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR) defines *Involved Families* as one of the 5 *Essentials* for school improvement. The CCSR measures *Involved Families* along the dimensions of parent outreach, parent-teacher trust, and parents' active participation in schooling. It is clear looking at the responses of principals, community organizations, teachers and parents that this program meets all of these goals, and strongly engages parents in schools across Illinois.

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**“ I have learned the value of expressing myself more, to ask questions about issues related to my family, to help my kids and explain to them new goals, and in the school and in the community, promote changes and improvements.**

– Parent involved with Parent Mentor Program

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**“ Of course it changed my life! I feel better on a personal level and with my family.”**

– Parent involved with Parent Mentor Program

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**“ With respect to my children, they are more happy knowing that I am in the school and in that manner they feel more close to me. The school personnel all recognize me and in the community I am known as someone that helps.**

– Parent involved with Parent Mentor Program

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