Promoting Latino Parent Involvement in K-8 Schools

Through a Communities of Practice Approach

by

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ABSTRACT

Due to federal mandates, Title I schools now are being asked to implement parent involvement programs that meaningfully involve parents in the schools to increase academic gains. This action research study was based on three different concepts from the literature: a) critical pedagogy theory from Paulo Freire, b) parent involvement from diverse scholars including Epstein, Olivos, Mapp, Henderson, and Gonzalez-DeHass, and c) Wenger's communities of practice approach.

The study was designed to determine whether a community of practice approach could provide the necessary conditions to meaningfully involve Latino Spanish-speaking parents in school. This innovation took place for 14-weeks, during which the community of practice approach was developed and utilized during meetings.

Data were collected during each community of practice meeting at two schools. The data sources were surveys, audio video transcriptions of the meetings, journal, field notes, leadership meetings, and analytic memos. To add reliability and validity, mixed methods were applied to triangulate the data sources.

Results indicated that through a community of practice approach Latino Spanish-speaking parents could become meaningfully involved in their children's schools. Parent participants reported that the community of practice allowed them to dialogue, contribute, learn, reflect, and become self-aware of their role in the schools. Data also showed that parent participants applied the community of

practice approach to contribute to the solution of problems at their school. After participating in the study, parent participants realized their potential to impact in their children's school. Additionally, they started purposefully becoming more interested in participating and planning activities with the parent liaison. Based on the results, further cycles of action research are suggested.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family.

To wife, Julie, and sons, Javier and Andy, for their unconditional support, patience and understanding; to my mother, Ana Maria for instilling in me the importance of hard work and higher education; to my brothers and sisters, who also motivated and encouraged me to reach my dreams.

I also dedicate this dissertation to Spanish–speaking Latino parents, who struggle in their voices to be heard at schools, and who aspire to be part of their children's successes.

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Several individuals have responded to my requests and provided suggestions in the context of my study. I want to acknowledge the time and insightful feedback of the following well known scholars: Joyce Epstein, Etienne Wenger, Edward Olivos, Gustavo Gonzalez, Ron Glass, Gustavo Fischman, and Maria Cardelle-Elawar.

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Go to the people. Learn from them, live with them. Love them.

Start with what they know. Build on what they have. The best of

leaders are those when the job is done, when the task is

accomplished, the people will say, 'We have done it ourselves.'

(Igoa, 1995, p.70)

For the past several years, I have been working as an administrator at an

inner city Title I elementary school district located in the Phoenix metropolitan

area. During this time, I have witnessed the potential of Latino[1] parents and how

they can positively impact schools. For example, in one school, during a six-week

period, approximately 400 parents came to weekly meetings to discuss the

importance of education as a vehicle for their children's success. After the

program, most of the parents continued participating at the school as volunteers,

taking English classes, and representing the school in community associations.

These examples seem to provide plenty of opportunities for parents to participate

at schools. But this is not good enough; parents need and want to get involved in a

more meaningful way to positively affect their children at school.

Research indicates that family involvement efforts are most successful

when teachers and schools assume all parents want to do their best for their

children and can make important contributions to their children's education

(Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan Holbein, 2005;

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[1]The term Latino is used to refer to people originating or having a heritage related to Latin America. Comas-Diaz, L. (2001).

Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997). However despite parental

involvement in some circumstances, the characteristics of typical Title I school

communities present challenges for administrators and teachers to communicate

with and involve parents. For instance, several different languages spoken by the

parents can be a challenge. In many cases, the majority of parents who only speak

Spanish have teachers and administrators who speak primarily English. This

challenge may obstruct two-way communication and can hinder parents'

involvement in the schools. Furthermore, this communication barrier may lead

school personnel to believe that parents are either timid or disinterested in being

involved in their child's education (Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009;

Quiocho & Daoud, 2006).

Parent involvement programs are noted in the district policies and schools'

parent handbooks, but I believe that policies alone will not make a positive impact

unless parents feel welcomed and schools provide a well-delineated process to

inform, integrate, and learn from them (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Gonzalez,

Moll, and Amanti (2005) eloquently summarize how parent involvement in

schools promotes opportunities for parents to feel engaged and become active

participants in their children's education. The authors wrote about the experience

of one parent:

> He [the father] realized he loved working with children and
>
> coming to the school. He experienced enjoyment! He had control!
>
> He was empowered. His skills were needed. He was interested. He
>
> wanted to be there and was engaged . . . He felt success. His self-

worth increased as he felt valued. No one judged him by the way

he looked, the clothes he wore, or the amount of his education. He

was accepted for who he was and what he had to offer. (Gonzalez

et al., 2005, p. 144-145)

This quote illustrates what parents feel and experience when they are

purposefully involved in their child's school. Because of this, educators can start

authentic dialogue about the roles Latino parents have in their children's

education by engaging parents in meaningful ways (Glass, 2001).

Definition of Parent Involvement

Research states that there is no consensus on the definition of parent

involvement in schools, even though several have been proposed (Boethel, 2003;

Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Olivos, 2006). These various definitions include

familiar language such as family integration, student achievement, and

accountability; however, they are not well defined and do not describe how to

apply these attributes effectively for school success (Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos,

& Ochoa, 2011). Three scholars will ground the definition of parent involvement

in this study; they are Epstein (2001b), Olivos (2006), and Freire (1970). Epstein

proposes the creation of partnerships between school, family, community, and

home-based activities such as helping with homework and reading to children as

examples of how parents can be involved (Epstein, 2001b).

In contrast, Olivos (2006) recognizes that substantial social change is

necessary for a model of parent involvement that persuades genuine dialogue and

collaborative decision-making among stakeholders. Additionally, Freire (1970)

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states the belief that individuals need to understand reality by engaging in continuous interaction, discussion, and reflection that lead to transformation of self and reality. Taking into consideration the contributions of Epstein (2001b), Freire (1970), and Olivos (2006), the following definition has been constructed from action research innovation/intervention. Parent involvement is defined as a process that allows parents to become aware of the importance of their participation in their children's education. Through this process of involvement, parents will dialogue, share, reflect, and propose actions that could benefit their relationships with the school. Ideally, schools will become centers that support genuine discourse among stakeholders, including parents, administrators, and teachers, contributing to the creation of strong, collaborative relationships.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this action research study was to develop an innovative process that promotes parent involvement with Latino Spanish-speaking parents in the inner city public schools. This innovation also sought to address the disconnect that exists between school administrators, teachers, and parents about student learning. Despite current programs, such as *cafecitos,* which are monthly meetings of parents, material-making, English classes, and use of computers to involve the Latino Spanish-speaking community, the disconnection continues among stakeholders. These programs do not address student learning, which is key factor for school success.

Currently, district level data indicates there is little parent involvement in schools. For the last two years, teachers from both schools who participated in my

innovation completed the Standard Assessment Inventory (SAI), a 60 item electronic survey to assess staff perceptions of the level of National Staff Development Council Standards (NSDC) implementation in their school. One of the 12 constructs of the survey was family involvement. The results of the surveys demonstrated that teacher perceptions and participation regarding parent involvement at their schools had not improved in the last two school years. In the end, school administrators fell short on both building relationships with students' families and providing staff development for teachers on how to involve parents in their children's education (see Appendix A).

Despite the good intentions and efforts of the schools to provide opportunities for Latino Spanish-speaking parent involvement through monthly educational meetings, cafecitos, quarterly parent-teacher conferences, and fundraisers, it remains a challenge to involve parents in the schools. On the other hand, I am an optimist; if schools provide the appropriate avenues to engage our Latino Spanish-speaking parents, they can become an important force that provides constructive feedback and support to teachers and school administrators to benefit in their children's education.

Researcher Background/Bias

As an educator, I strongly believe in the importance of parent involvement for student success. I come to this action research innovation with a deep belief that parents at schools can be allies for school success if we allow them to be involved in the process.

More than two decades ago, when I began my professional career in the field of education, I immediately recognized the importance of parents and their potential to become active agents in changing the landscape of their children's education. I embarked on my first teaching job in rural Costa Rica. I was full of aspirations and eager to guide my students on a journey that would allow them to acquire skills and knowledge to help them confront challenges and make the best choices. At the same time, I was nervous and uncertain about the community's reaction, considering I was starting in the middle of the school year.

Working and living in this rural community was a total immersion in the community's social expectations. The geographical characteristics and infrastructure of the school did not give me the choice to commute to my hometown and university. After getting over my shock at the isolation, I made the decision to stay and listen to parents' concerns and problems and to find out why the previous teacher failed. I hoped to collect enough information to allow me to reassess the situation and act differently than the previous teacher, mainly because I wanted to prove to myself that I could succeed as a teacher. After few a weeks, I realized that our needs were mutual; I needed them to help me upgrade the school and represent the community in governing decisions, and they needed my services to engage their children in active learning, as well as to seek funding for the projects and initiatives.

During the next two years, we achieved many positive changes, such as a new bridge, health services, and adult literacy. However, most importantly, children were motivated by the positive changes in their community, and I had no

students drop out. By working together with the parents, we accomplished more for the children and the community than I could have accomplished on my own.

Although the demographics changed, I went on to have similar successful experiences at each of the next nine schools where I taught, both in Costa Rica and the United States. The common thread in all these communities was parent involvement that allowed parents to speak and reflect on the school practices and support decisions to benefit their children. Parents have always played an important role in my success as a teacher and an administrator. By listening to parents and addressing their needs in a respectful and effective way, I have leveraged their trust and mutual understanding into improvements in education. Today, as an administrator in a district where parents experience challenges and adversities that affect their children's lives, I have another opportunity to embrace my beliefs about parent involvement. Through my innovation, I propose an alternative way for parents to become active members in schools and make their participation meaningful to their children's successes.

Significance of the Study

First, this model allows parents to interact using their native language, to discuss, and to learn about what their children's school is doing to integrate parents in the school practices. Second, parents could have the opportunity to become full partners in the decision-making of the school by participating in meetings with the school principal and suggesting initiatives that reinforce parent involvement. Third, the study also attempted to provide opportunities to build strong relationships between parents and the school, building on purposeful

meetings to create a sense of community and ownership. Finally, through this innovation, school leaders could be prompted to recognize that parents have high expectations for their children and believe in their capacity to support their children's learning. Ultimately, this innovation challenges the status quo in our schools by proposing a new paradigm that can transform parent involvement.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The review of the research literature focuses on three bodies of literature

that help inform both the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study:

critical pedagogy, Latino parent involvement, and communities of practice. With

the examination of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, along with other integral

scholars, helps address and identify key concepts and processes by putting theory

into practice in social group settings where members search for their identities and

achieve transformation. The parent involvement literature outlines and defines the

problems of Latino parental involvement in schools in the United States. It also

portrays scholars' perspectives regarding culture in schools and its relation to

Latino parent involvement. The communities of practice social learning theory

framed by Wenger is an innovative paradigm that requires the involvement of

individuals in purposeful dialogue to work towards a collective goal. Moreover,

this literature review investigates present studies and experiences of how this

model has been applied to benefit participants and organizations.

Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire is the most well known proponent of critical pedagogy. This

method offers discourse and practices that strive to empower participants to

develop their capacities while also encouraging equality and consciousness-

raising, so society members may be transformed by their own actions and

perceptions (Freire, 1970; Gurn, 2011; Kincheloe, 2007). Critical pedagogy is

concerned with the development of *conscienticizao,* usually translated as "critical

consciousness" and the task of critical pedagogy is to bring members of an

oppressed group to a critical consciousness of their situation as a beginning point of their libratory praxis (Burbulels & Berk, 1999).

Critical pedagogy can be framed within five cyclical concepts: dialogue, critique, learning, empowerment, and transformation (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2007; McLaren, 2007). Each cyclical concept will be briefly described. Dialogue is a process between two subjects in which they confront each other as knowledgeable equals in a situation of genuine two-way communication (Freire, 1970). Through dialogue, in a non-hierarchical manner, participants are allowed to critique and suggest structures and procedures that maintain and protect the status quo (Martin, 2007; McLaren, 2007). The dialogical perspective suggests the integration of stakeholders that covers the entire learning community including parents of family, teachers, and students, under the assumption that all influence learning and all must work together (Freire, 1970).

Moreover, praxis is a fundamental step for participants to act and to reflect on their needs and aspirations (Freire, 1970; Glass, 2001; Gurn, 2011). Individuals connect experiences and learning with a critical perception of their reality and own identities, with an understanding that they are beings of praxis (Giroux, 2010; Martin, 2007; McLaren, 2005), so that they can intentionally link their learning to the transformation of reality and to their own self-determination. According to Freire (1970), liberation is praxis. It is an action and reflection of people on their world in order to transform it. Praxis is a problem-solving method conformed by the following steps: 1) Identify a problem, 2) Research the problem, 3) Develop a collective plan of action to address the problem,

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4) Implement the collective plan of action, and 5) Evaluate the action, assess its efficacy, and re-examine the state of the problem (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Freire (1970) pointed out participants first need to be empowered in order to start expressing ideas that lead to understanding and transforming reality. Empowerment in this context would mean that during the study, the interactive process between participants would be in the parents' native language, parents in the group would have equal participation with the other stakeholders, and parents' culture would be respected. Freire (1970) also mentioned that knowledge emerges through intervention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry people pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.

All these concepts are interrelated and necessary to provide the conditions to create a community of practice that can bridge the gap between parents and schools. Critical pedagogy can be applied to any social group or community in different places of the world, including adult education (Duncan-Andrade, & Morrel, 2007; Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2007). Critical pedagogy is a way to involve parents in schools through a process of thinking, negotiating, and transforming their own reality that can benefit themselves and their children's school.

Parent Involvement

During the past two decades, parent involvement has gained relevance as an important component for success in Title I schools in the United States. With revised and new federal mandates such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), local

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education agencies (LEAs) are required to focus on implementing strategies to promote parent, family, and community involvement in order to quality for continued financial aid (NCLB, 2001). Moreover, the role of parents is important in influencing the school performance of students (Epstein, 2001b; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The more positively parents and teachers perceive their relationship with one another, the more parent involvement occurs in the classrooms, which in turn positively affects student success (Epstein, 2001a; Henderson & Berla, 1997; Nzinga-Johnson et al., 2009). Regarding Latino parent involvement, the literature finds that families support, encourage, and assist their children through school in many ways. In addition, they also have high expectations for their children's education and want to participate in their academic success (Delgado-Gaitan, 1996, 2004; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Valdés 1996). Lastly, parents rely on their value of collectivity and can band together to better help their children in school (Delgado-Gaitan, 1996).

After comparing different definitions of parent involvement from well-known researchers, there seems to be little consensus about the understanding and application to parents and schools (Epstein, 2001b; Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Padgett, 2006; Olivos, 2006). Nonetheless, there is an agreement on common terminology such as integration, relationships, and collaboration between parents and schools as necessary to benefit students. Despite these agreements, it is also known that the application and practicality of parent involvement with Latino parents is not well understood (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011; Olivos, 2006). Valdez (1996) a

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researcher on Latino parents argues that Latino parents often misunderstand their role in their children's education because they do not understand the concept of involvement as defined by the schools.

The perspectives vary on the concept of barriers that many Latino Spanish-speaking parents encounter in schools depending on the field of study. Within this research, a group of scholars indicated that some of the impediments that affect parent participation might be due to demographic characteristics (e.g., income, ethnicity, education) or psychological characteristics (e.g. beliefs and perceptions about parent involvement, Epstein, 2007; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Lopez, 2001; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). Impediments can also be related to teacher attitudes and school culture or climate (Epstein, 2001a; Fullan, 2001; Konzal, 2001; Mapp, 2003; Olivos, 2006; Ramirez, 1999; Turney & Kao, 2009; Valdés, 1996).

Contrarily, many other researchers and educators view Latino parents from a deficit thinking perspective as a way to analyze their lack of involvement in schools. This dominant paradigm is deeply embedded in schools that serve children from low-income homes and children of color, and states that children from low-income homes are innately handicapped learners who need remediation (Skarla & Scheurich, 2001; Valencia, 1997). Researchers add that deficit thinking practices hold responsible these marginalized groups instead of examining what schools should do be doing to change their outcomes (García & Guerra, 2004; Jimenez-Castellanos & Gonzalez, 2011; Skarla & Scheurich, 2001). As a result,

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students are destined to fail in school because they have internal issues (Skarla & Scheurich, 2001; Valencia, 1997).

There are other possible reasons or causes why Latino Spanish-speaking parents do not get involved in schools. The studies show that work schedules prevent parents from allocating time to their children's schooling (Benson & Martin, 2003; Donald, 2009; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003; Turney & Kao, 2009). In addition, they mention that Latino families have the responsibility of caring for children, relatives, and elderly parents, all of which may interfere with parents' abilities to become involved with the school (Mapp, 2003).

Transportation and a lack of resources associated with lower-income families may obstruct involvement as well (Donald, 2009; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Turney & Kao, 2009). Moreover, parents have additionally reported that in their native countries they were not expected to get involved with their children's school, and in some cases, would even be characterized as disrespectful if they tried to do so (Donald, 2009; Mapp, 2003; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). In some parents' views, they show respect for the school personnel by letting them drive their children's education.

Findings suggest that teachers and school culture can contribute to the lack of parent involvement in schools. Some teachers do not value parent participation and opinions, and identify them as impeding their teaching work at schools (Nzinga-Johnson et al., 2009). While some teachers make broad comments about families based on low-income status (Amatea, Smith-Adcock, & Villares, 2006), they also interpret a lack of school involvement as a lack of interest, despite the

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research that supports the idea that parents from urban, low-socioeconomic settings do want their children to succeed in school (Epstein, 2001a; Mapp, 2003; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 2005; Olivos, 2006). Negative attitudes toward low-income families by teachers may then lead to inferior treatment of parents when they do attempt to become involved (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Olivos, 2006). The permutation of low-income and cultural difference can create isolation between parents and teachers. Epstein and Dauber (1991) suggested teachers are less likely to know students from culturally different backgrounds. In addition, most of those teachers' perceptions are due to the lack of meaningful academic programs that prepare teachers on school practices, family, and community partnership (Epstein, Mavis, & Sanders, 2006; Harris, Jacobson, & Hemmer, 2004).

There is recent evidence stating that culture in an organization could be a reason why parents do not get involved in schools. Researchers suggest that organizations need to have purpose and be collaborative in order to be effective (Fullan, 2001; Kotter & Cohen, 2002). The findings also propose that administrators as leaders can be strategic by implementing procedures and norms that allow parents to be part of the organization by sharing the school's vision and goals (Cotton, 2003; Hoerr, 2005; Muhammad, 2009; Reeves, 2004; Sharratt & Fullan, 2009; Schlechty, 2009). The lack of active administrative leadership in promoting parent involvement may also be due, in part, to the dearth of useful, organized information on parent involvement in schools (Epstein, 2001a; Epstein & Becker, 1982).

It is well recognized that many of the schools in the United States are guided by the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement. These standards assist schools in developing partnerships with families (Epstein, 2001b; NPTA, 2010; NCES, 1998; Shartrand et al., 1997). The standards include parenting, communication between home and school, volunteering, fostering learning at home, sharing responsibility for decision making at school, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995). It is unclear, however, why these are the almost universal standards that are implemented in all schools when there are other perspectives or models that may be more applicable for certain types of school communities, such as the communities in this study.

Three models that are often used in the parent involvement literature are Epstein's (1995, 2001b), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005), and Olivos's (2006). These models conceptualize parent involvement and investigate the effects of the relationships of parents and schools in relation to student outcomes. Epstein's parent involvement model presents six types of involvement: parenting, communication with school, volunteering, learning at home, parent participation in decision making, and collaboration with the community (Epstein, 1995). These types of involvement are widely used across schools in the United States. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005) developed a parent involvement model and later revised it, consisting of five levels that build upon one another. The five levels are: personal motivation and parent involvement forms, parent mechanisms of involvement, student perception of learning mechanisms engaged by parents, student attributes conductive to achievement,

and student achievement. A more recent parent involvement model based on Delgado-Gaitan's model (1990, 1991) proposed by Olivos (2006) includes a new paradigm by defining four models: the family influence, the alternative school reform, the cooperative schools, and the transformative education context model. These models range from some schools and teachers telling parents what to do, to the opposite, where parent involvement requires meaningful dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders in the decision-making process.

The Epstein, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, and Olivos frameworks delineate types of parent involvement to support schools in helping students thrive in school and in later life. Epstein proposes the creation of partnerships between school, family, and community (Epstein, 2001b). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler conceptualize parent involvement that requires changing behavior of both parents and school personnel. In contrast, Olivos recognizes that substantial social change is necessary for a model of parent involvement that persuades genuine dialogue and collaborative decision-making (Olivos, 2006). All these models propose different types of parent involvement, which could be successful in schools as long as parents are truly involved in the transformation of schools to support student learning. This challenge can be addressed by creating communities of practice at schools, where parents can convey and collaborate to impact their children's outcome.

Communities of Practice

Wenger (1998), perhaps the most well-known author of Communities of Practice, proclaimed that today's modern institutions are largely based on the

false assumption that, "learning is an individual process, that it has a beginning and an end, that it is the best separated from the rest of the activities, and it is the result of teaching" (p. 3). Communities of Practice (CoPs) foster learning as a more collective activity that evolves through interaction among practitioners. Although there are many definitions of communities of practice, the one that best fits my innovation comes from Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), who stated that CoPs "are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). A related definition comes from Hildreth and Kimble (2000), who defined CoPs as "a group of professionals informally bound to one another through exposure to a common class of problems, common pursuit of solutions, and thereby themselves embodying a store of knowledge" (p. 29). Both of these definitions add the necessary elements for this study, where practitioners will convey and share knowledge with a purposeful goal.

There are two types of CoPs: the self-organizing, which pursues the shared interests of the group's members, and the sponsored, which is initiated, chartered, and supported by management (APQC, 2001; Nickols, 2003; Wenger et al., 2002). Three dimensions define CoPs: a domain of interest, a community that interacts, engages, and shares, and members who become practitioners (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002; Winkelen, 2003). The domain is the work of negotiating a shared field of interest that relates to members' commitment and passion. The community is a group of people engaging in joint activities, helping each other, and sharing knowledge. Practice is sustained with interactions in a

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domain over time. Members focus on challenges and learning activities engaged to build, share, and apply the practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002).

CoPs promote participation and involvement as members tell each other about similar problems they have encountered and find solutions, contributing to new knowledge (APQC 2001; Burd, Hatch, Ashurst, & Jessop, 2009; Bilham, 2006; Cleves, & Toplis, 2008; Wenger, 2000). Involvement is essential to the development of CoPs. The relationships that are established help build the sense of trust and identity that defines the community (Cleves & Toplis, 2008; Guldberg & Mackness, 2009; Hildreth & Kimble, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). Summarizing, CoPs stimulate interaction, foster learning, create new knowledge, and identify and share best practices.

There are also concerns about CoPs (Wenger et al., 2002). They can become a fertile ground for frustration due to the lack of passion from participants about the domain. CoPs may fail to connect enough to develop trust among participants (Guldberg & Mackness, 2009; Wenger et al., 2002). Additionally, the intimacy that communities develop can create a barrier to newcomers, a blinder to new ideas, or a reluctance to become critical (Wenger et al., 2002).

Synthesis

There is a vast amount of literature that recognizes the importance of promoting Latino Spanish-speaking parent involvement in schools (Glass, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2005). However, significant barriers are present that hinder active involvement (Benson & Martin, 2003; Donald, 2009; Epstein, 2001b; Konzal, 2001; Mapp, 2003; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003; Turney, & Kao, 2009). In

response to those challenges, schools in the United States have intended to implement parent involvement programs, and at the same time, comply with federal mandates (Epstein, 2001b; NPTA, 2010; NCES, 1998; Shartrand et al., 1997). Recently, new paradigms of parent involvement models are emerging to meet the needs of public schools that are pursuing meaningful involvement of parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1991; Olivos, 2006). By integrating parent involvement programs with social learning theories such as critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002), they can become a decisive factor in determining school success.

Critical pedagogy, parent involvement, and CoPs are intrinsically related by a common denominator, which is the capability to be applied to people regardless of their socioeconomic and ethnic background. These aspects of the framework also complement each other, making this research study sequential and structured. Critical pedagogy grounded and focused the purpose of the meetings, the CoP facilitated the process, and parents emerged as critical and constructive transformers of their own reality while becoming more involved in the schools. The integration of critical pedagogy, CoP, and parent involvement contributed to the school community. Through the practices of sharing and collaboration, better understandings of community issues or problems emerged and were addressed, which directly benefited schools.

Chapter 3 - The Innovation

The innovation in this action research was to create and foster a

Community of Practice (CoP) with a group of Latino Spanish-speaking parents in

two inner city public schools. The Community of Practice was representative,

based on the demographics of the school community. The majority were Latino

Spanish-speaking parents, but all ethnic groups were invited to participate in the

implementation of the innovation. The innovation focused on the self-organized

CoP, which requires voluntary participants drive common domains (APQC, 2001;

Nickols, 2003; Wenger et al., 2002). The CoP offered opportunities for parents to

get involved in a process that permitted them to dialogue, learn, and present

resolutions to benefit their child's school. The innovation also aimed to change

the relationships among stakeholders by introducing a CoP approach (Wenger et

al., 2002) that allowed participants to interact and learn from each other. Parent

participants engaged in certain common actions or domains related to their school.

By sharing historical and social resources, frameworks, and points of view,

members sustained reciprocal commitment in action. Parents acquired more

knowledge of and interest in current school issues, which could be discussed with

administrators or teachers.

By framing the innovation using Freire's (1970) critical pedagogical

approach, parents, administrators, and teachers actively participated by using their

own language and voice to externalize concerns and issues at their school.

Utilizing a CoP approach with parents helped reduce barriers that obstruct parent

involvement (Benson & Martin, 2003; Donald, 2009; Epstein, 2001b; Konzal,

2001; Mapp, 2003; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003; Turney, & Kao, 2009). For instance, meetings were conducted in Spanish, childcare was provided, scheduling meetings at different times of the day to increase the likelihood working parents were able to attend, and other stakeholders such as administrators and guest teachers were integrated. Finally, throughout the innovation, the steps taken during the process were video recorded and summarized to later create a guide that could be offered to school districts and parent involvement agencies i.e., parent liaisons, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), and Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO) in the future. This guide describes and illustrates the necessary steps to replicate this innovation.

Dimensions of the Community of Practice

The CoP was structured by dimensions, which outlined the level of participation of the members. Figure 1 illustrates the dimensions of the CoP and the representation of the members. The members met and focused on common purposes (domains) that led the discussions and resulted in proposed solutions. The consistent group of parents, parent liaison, and I, the researcher, formed the core group. The core group attended consistently throughout the innovation. School administrators on some occasions played a role in the core group by providing more in-depth information about the issue or topic of discussion or clarifying policies and procedures of the school. They acted as permanent sponsors of the CoP by providing space, materials, time, childcare, and other logistics such as refreshments and translation. Teachers and other community members were denominated as part of the CoP, but their role was indirect. Their

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participation depended on the topic under discussion and how it related to them. The coordinators were responsible for the community operation. The facilitators conducted the face-to-face meetings. The researcher found sponsors, encouraged and affirmed the values of the work of the community, and publicized successes.
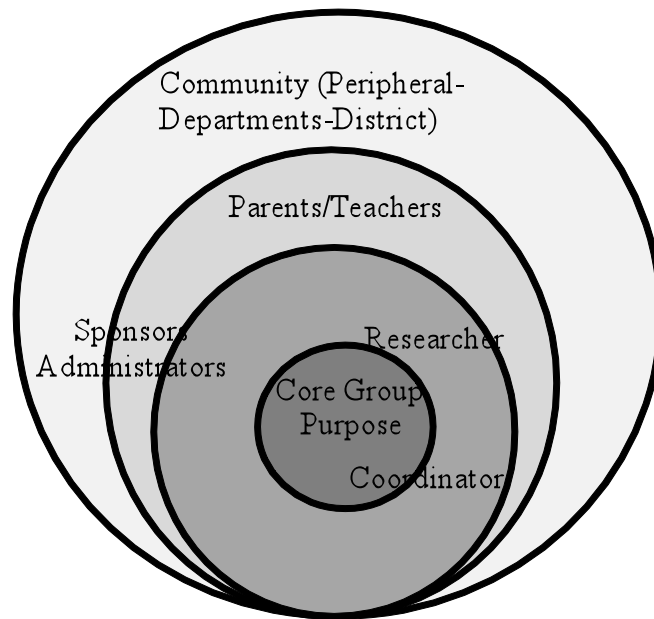
Figure 1. Dimensions of the community of practice
Adapted from Wenger, E., McDermott, and W. Snyder (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice.*

Responsibilities of the Members

Figure 2 illustrates the main responsibilities assigned to members typically associated with a successful community of practice. In order to make the community of practice effective and engaging, active participation was necessary not only in the preparation of the agenda and logistics, but also in sharing responsibilities to acquire ownership. Because of the dynamics of the group, some

stakeholders had more responsibilities than others. Wenger et al. (2002) mentioned that a good community allows different members to participate and improve their skills while they share responsibilities. The parent liaisons, coordinators, and leadership team had more responsibilities during the implementation of the CoP. Their participation provided important feedback to the researcher that permitted adjustments of the meetings to respond to the needs of the members of the community of practice. The teachers and administrators were involved on request of the parents and on the topic or issue in discussion.

Administrators	Teachers	Parent Liaison	Parents	Researcher
• Provide place for meetings. • Allocate resources. • Participate in meetings when it is required. • CoP Training and Interview. • Provide feedback. • Present alternatives. • Engage parents in committees or coalitions.	• Participate and deliver instruction to parents if it is required. • Present strategies about reading, math, and other areas. • Attend to CoP meetings if desired. • Share experiences and knowledge with members.	• Reserve place for meetings. • Coordinate child care. • Facilitate the activities. • Collect data. • Coordinate refreshments. • Facilitatate. • Collect instruments. • Participate in Leadership Team. • Provide feedback of initiatives.	• Attend meetings. • Facilitate the activities. • Participate in the Leadership Team. • Complete surveys. • Present concerns. • Discuss. • Reflect. • Share knowledge and experience. • Attend district and school meetings. • Propose Solutions.	• Prepare the invitations. • Facilitates the activities. • Explains purpose. • Collects data. • Participates Leadership Team. • Brings experts if necessary.

Figure 2. Responsibilities of the CoP members

The responsibilities of the CoP members became more meaningful and necessary when the CoP started moving to a maturity stage. Parent participants learned their responsibilities and modeled them during the discussions. The parents drove the dynamics and functionality of the meetings.

Roles and Definitions

Figure 3 represents the roles and definitions of community members. This organizational structure relies on the participants to expand their inquiry, find their voice, and propose solutions to a common domain. The community of practice permitted different levels of participation based on the interests and needs of the members. Their participation depended on what members valued and what roles they chose to play in the process. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) note that when community members move through different levels of participation, it is an indicator of a good and healthy community. This process allowed participants to feel like full members of the CoP.

Role	Definition	Participants
Members	Join the community, bring questions/problems, share knowledge, devise solutions, engage actively, usually including a core group and peripheral members	Parents, Administrator, Parent Liaison, Teachers, Researcher
Coordinator	Organizes meetings, recruits and communicates with members, moderates email lists, supports CoP projects, weaving relationships with other stakeholders	Researcher, Parent Liaison, Leadership Team
Facilitator	Facilitates group interaction during face-to-face meetings	Researcher, Parents, Teacher, Administrator
Sponsor	Provides legitimacy, engages in a strategic alliance with CoP	School Administrators
Guest Experts	Offer specific areas of expertise needed at some meetings on invitation from the CoP.	Guests from specialized agencies
Stakeholders	State/local agencies and other groups who support or influence members influenced by their ideas and proposals and who could be influenced by their ideas and proposals.	District personnel, Administrators,

Figure 3. Roles and definitions of the CoP

The CoP approach allowed participants to exercise their roles and function as a collaborative group. The parent facilitators and parent liaison participation were crucial in the process, as their connection with the parents allowed more participation during the discussions.

Phases of the Innovation

The CoP at both schools took place in three main phases: 1) preparation, 2) training, and 3) implementation. These phases delineated chronological actions taken during the implementation of the community of practice.

Preparation phase. The first phase occurred in August 2011. This phase provided information that set the stage for the implementation of my innovation. During this month, as researcher, I contacted administrators and parent liaisons from both schools participating in the study to book times for preliminary meetings about the implementation of the community of practice. Afterwards, a written invitation as a flyer was disseminated to parents at each school in both Spanish and English (see Appendix B) to participate in a forum to discuss and outline issues they would like to address in the CoP for the upcoming school year. Translation in English was available for non-Spanish speakers. From the forums, a list of topics and issues were listed as options to be considered for the CoPs of both schools (See Appendix F). During the forum, I talked to the parents about the innovation and encouraged them to participate in the CoP (see Appendix C). The parent liaisons and I asked for two prospective parents to become facilitators of the CoP. The facilitators conducted the meetings by interacting face-to-face with participants (see Figure 3). The facilitators, two parents, and the parent liaison,

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gained knowledge and expertise on facilitating meetings, discussions, and the operation of the community of practice.

Training phase. The second phase also took place in August 2011. During this phase, administrators and the parent liaisons received training on the CoP concept and functions (see Appendix D). In addition, the training addressed the definition and application of concepts such as dialogue, sharing, reflection, building knowledge, and resolutions, all of which were key components embedded in the innovation. The dates and times of the CoP meetings at the schools were determined and added to the schools' general calendar to be shared with school personnel and community.

In August 2011, parent liaisons and recommended parents participated in a two-session training to study and define their roles as facilitators of the CoP. They were responsible for conducting the meetings in the CoP; this made the sessions more familiar and less intrusive for the participants. The training reviewed the principles of a CoP, critical pedagogy, and how to conduct meetings (see Appendix E). As the researcher I shared with them the findings from the forum responses that provided topics for discussion that were added to agenda of the CoP's meetings (see Appendix F). In August 2011, I along with the parent liaison's help, we sent a written invitation form to the parents to be part of the community of the practice (see Appendix G). This English-Spanish invitation was sent to all parents of the school, announcing the purpose of the meetings, place, and time. The parent liaisons were responsible for distributing the invitations and contacting the parents who agreed to participate in the innovation.

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Implementation phase. The third phase occurred from September 2nd, 2011 to December 9th, 2011. During this period, the CoP and leadership team held meetings. The CoP meetings occurred every week at each school. The first meeting took place the first week of September (see Appendix H). The discussions and issues that arose through the CoP itself determined the length of the CoP meetings. The CoP was a continuous and on-going process, and dictated its own duration. But most of the meetings were between an hour to an hour and half. Participants were actively involved in each step of the innovation. Figure 4 represents the cyclical process of the innovation. They started by isolating an issue or problem to learn more about it, and then collectively shared their experiences. As a group, they made a decision, determined the action to take, and presented recommendations and made resolutions. They continued to monitor the issue and repeated the process as necessary, or they started the cycle again by identifying a new issue.
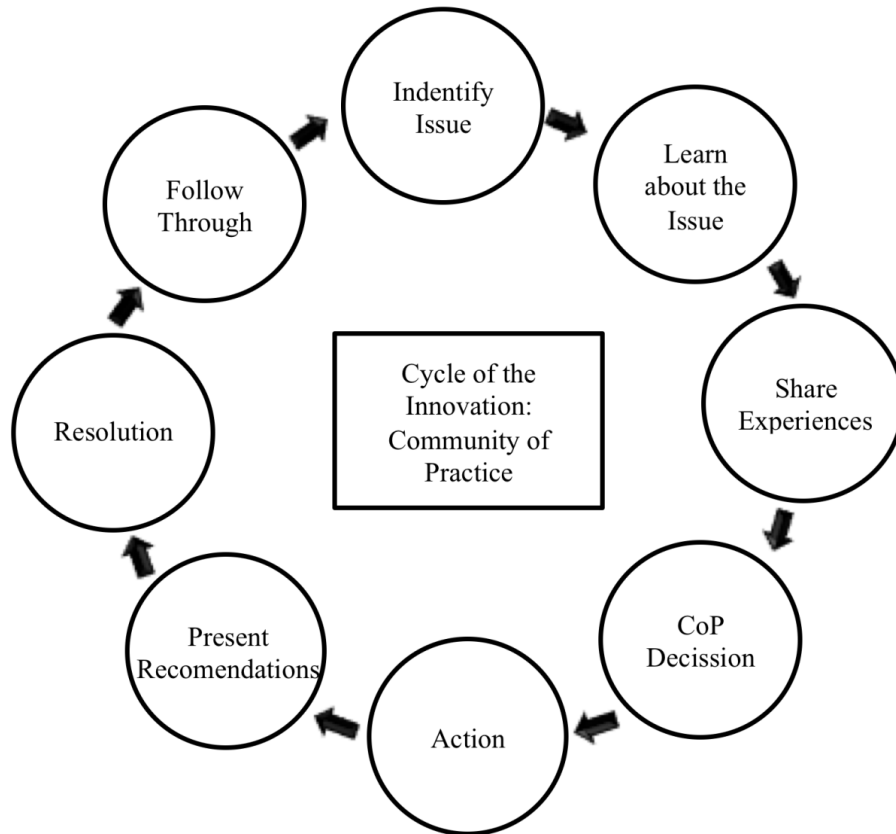
Figure 4.   Diagram depicting the cycle in the implementation phase of CoP.

Table 1 presents the three phases of the innovation and outlines dates and actions. The implementation of the CoP at each school was aligned with the school calendar, which allowed the participation of the parent liaison and the use of physical space and grounds for the meetings. Parents were actively involved in phase three by dialoguing, reflecting, learning, and proposing actions regarding parent involvement.

Table 1

Timeline of Implementation of the CoP

Phases	Date	Activity	Outcomes
1. Preparation	August 2011	Contact administrators and parent liaisons. Prepare invitations. Forum	Common domains to be discussed in the CoP.
2. Training	August 2011	Sessions with Administrators, Parent Liaisons, and CoP coordinators.	Understanding of CoP and setting calendar meetings.
3. Implementation	From September to December 2011	Meetings: CoP and Leadership Team at both schools.	Promote parent involvement and increase relationship between parents and school.

The research literature provides a foundation for understanding critical pedagogy, parent involvement, and CoPs by informing some key elements that were considered in this study. Nonetheless, the research often fails to identify practical procedures for applying non-traditional approaches to involve Latino-Spanish speaking parents in Title I schools.

Chapter 4 - Methods

This chapter describes the research methodology used in the study. The chapter is divided into sections including the setting, selection of participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and analysis of the data. The chapter also discusses the roles of the researcher, ethical concerns, bias, validity, reliability, and threats.

Participatory Action Research Design

This study used a participatory action research design (Stringer, 2007). McTaggart (1991) defines participatory action research as "a systematic and collaborative project between the academic and marginalized or oppressed members. Within the collaboration, evidence is collected on which to base group reflection and plan change"(p.175). He also mentions participants communally reflect on their own social situations and construct and reconstruct their problems to come up with actions or solutions that are meaningful for them. Figure 5 represents the cycles and events of the participatory action research in the study. Participants emphasize relationships and advocate for shared power. Parents participate in selecting the topic, planning, acting, reflecting, deciding, and making adjustments on how the action research cycle should continue in the next phase.

Initial Concept
Topic Concern

Reflection

Plan

Action

Re-Adjustment

Reflection

Action

Re-Adjustment

Next
Learning
Cycle
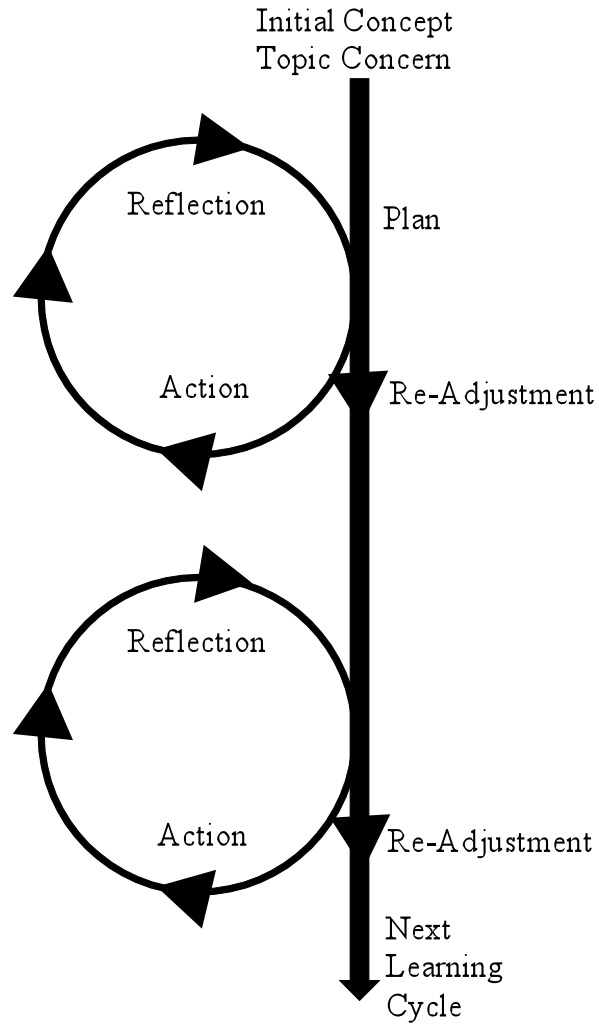
Figure 5. Participatory action research cycle.

Research Question

This study attempted to answer the following question:

1. To what extent does the community of practice approach provide the
   necessary conditions for Spanish-speaking Latino parents to become
   meaningfully involved in their children's education?

Operational Definitions of Research Question Terminology

The research question included two main operational components, necessary conditions and meaningful involvement. In order to delineate their application and impact during the implementation, the following definitions and the data measurement instruments were used.

Necessary Conditions: The term "necessary conditions" was conceptualized both from components of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) as well as elements of the community of practice theory (Wenger et al. 2002). During the study, the necessary conditions of dialogue, contribution, learning, reflecting, and self-awareness were behaviors and actions performed by the participants as part of the functionality of the CoP approach. To better understand these concepts, the following operational definitions were used in the study.

- Dialogue: A process between parent participants who come together to explore new possibilities, solve challenging problems, and create new, mutually beneficial opportunities.

- Contribution: A process by which parent participants share information, stories, and personal experiences in a way that builds understanding and insight.

- Learning: A collective activity that evolves through interaction among parent participants generating new knowledge that contributes to change practices.

- Reflection: A process whereby parent participants explain their own actions and consider their consequences.

- Self-awareness: The process of parent participants becoming aware of their strengths and weaknesses and being open to feedback to change behaviors.

These indicators were measured by data sources including surveys, journals, CoP meeting video recordings, leadership team meetings, and weekly analytic memorandums.

Meaningful Involvement: This operational concept was determined as the expected result or outcome of the CoP meetings at both schools. For the purposes of the study, the researcher took into consideration different elements from well-known scholars regarding conceptualization of parent involvement in schools to establish indicators that encompass meaningful involvement (Epstein, 2001b; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Olivos et al., 2011; Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 1995; Olivos, 2006). Meaningful involvement is defined in the study by the following indicators: learning about the American educational system, knowing more about educational programs at their children's school, understanding academic reports of their children, engaging other parents to get involved in school programs, learning how to work together to benefit their children at school, and participation in the governance of the school. These indicators were measured by data sources including surveys, journals, CoP meeting video recordings, leadership team meetings, and weekly analytic memorandums.

Mixed Methods

Embedded within the Participatory Action Research (PAR) study are both quantitative and qualitative methods, constituting mixed methods. As Gay, Mills,

and Airasian, (2009) state, "The purpose of mixed methods research is to build on the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand a phenomenon" (p. 462). Mixed methods studies take into consideration traditional quantitative and qualitative data sources (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989; Greene, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Smith, 1997). The type of mixed method research design applied in this study is called the triangulation mixed method (Gay et al., 2009). The main advantage of this method is that the strengths of the qualitative data offset the weakness of the quantitative data, and the strengths of quantitative the data offset the weakness of the qualitative data (Gay et al., 2009; Greene, 2007). By triangulating the data, the credibility of the study is enhanced by crosschecking information (Gay et al., 2009; Greene, 2007; Stringer, 2007).

The data collected was equally analyzed to reflect the value of it from the instruments of this study. This calculation guarantees more dynamic, valid, and realistic results (Erickson, 1986; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The information collected from the data sources was analyzed applying quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher looked critically at the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis to determine if the sources revealed similar findings (Gay et al., 2009).

Participants

The participants in this study included primarily Latino Spanish-speaking parents from two public schools that belong to an inner city school district in the Phoenix metropolitan area. One is an elementary school, K-5 with 23 parent

participants, and the other a middle school, grade 6-8 with 15 parent participants.

The elementary school is referred to as School A[2], and the middle school as

School B[3]. From each school, parents, administrators, and the school site parent

liaison were the main stakeholders. Additional participants such as teachers,

experts, and sponsors joined the innovation, based on the needs and actions taken

during the process (see Figure 1 in Chapter 3).

School Selection Criteria

The study took place in two public schools that were selected based on the

following criteria:

1. The elementary school feeds into the middle school. Students from the

   selected elementary school (school A) continue on to the selected middle

   school (school B). This allowed the researcher to understand the

   dimensions and complexities from the two different types of schools.

2. The schools administrators from both schools offered unconditional

   support during the innovation. In previous conversations, they expressed

   interest in trying new approaches to improve parent involvement at their

   schools. Their support included participation in the meetings when it was

   necessary, providing physical space, supplies, childcare, translators, and

   refreshments for the meetings.

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[2] Pseudonym
[3] Pseudonym

Parent Selection Criteria

Parents were selected once they returned an invitation form agreeing to be part of the innovation as the core group of each community of practice. The desired size for the core group at each school was between ten and fifteen parents who primarily consisted of Latino Spanish-speaking parents, which represents the majority of the student population at both schools (see Appendix I). Sampling of the participants for this study was purposeful (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to the extent that the community of practice of this study focused on ten to fifteen parents maximum at each school. This method of sampling was used based on the ethnicity parent representation at the schools. Other ethnic group parents were invited to participate albeit significantly less than the Hispanic population.

In case of attrition from the core group, the parent liaison in conjunction with the researcher invited new parents to join the community of practice. Only three parents dropped from the CoP; their attendance was almost perfect. Because of interest on participating in the CoP, more parents were added to the core group of one the CoP.

From the actions and resolutions of the CoP meetings, other parents were invited to participate in planned activities that contributed to promote parent involvement at their schools. Teachers were also invited to participate in the CoP sessions when necessary and based on the community needs. A written invitation was sent in that case, stating the purpose of their participation (see Appendix J).

Situational Context and Setting of the Study

        To better understand the characteristics of the schools and stakeholders in this study, the following sections contain detailed descriptions of the settings and participants. The sections describe and illustrate demographics, services, student performance on the state assessments, narratives of background, and experience of the school administrators.

        The study took place in the Sunrise Elementary School District[4] (SESD) located in the Phoenix metropolitan area. The school district employs approximately 2,600 people, of which over 1,000 are certified teachers. All the schools in the district are Title I, the largest federal education-funding program that provides economic support for high poverty schools to help students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind academically. The school district has a total of 20 schools: 12 K-5 elementary schools, four K-8 schools, and four middle schools.

        Sunrise Elementary School District currently serves over 18,000 children, 89% are Hispanic, 4.44% White, 4.76% African American, 0.54% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.33% Indian. The English Language Learners (ELLs) represent 39% of the student population, 11% of students are in special education programs and 91% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Table 2 shows the student representation in the school district by different demographics subgroups.

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[4] Pseudonym

Table 2

School District Demographics of Students by Percentages

Hispanic	89.00%
White	4.44%
African American	4.76%
Asian Pacific Islander	0.54%
Indian	1.33%
English Language Learners	39.00%
Special Education	11.00%
Free and Reduced Lunch	91.00%

Note. District student information systems, Genesis 2010

School A

School A enrolls students from kindergarten through fifth grade (K-5) in the Phoenix metropolitan area. This elementary school has served the community since 1958. It has 42 teachers and approximately 836 students. Of these, 89% are Hispanic, 6% are African American, 5% are Caucasian, and 1% are categorized as other. The mobility rate is 11%, free and reduced lunch is 85%, the ELLs represent 36% of the population, and 14% of the students receive individualized education (special education).

In the last two years, this school has met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) mandated by NCLB Act (2001) in the subjects of mathematics and reading. It also has received a performing plus label from Arizona Learns

(AZLEARNS). However, the English language learners (ELLs) and special education subgroups continue to struggle to become proficient. This school has been under a school improvement plan in the past.

Administrators. The principal of the school has been in the position for one year. She previously served as assistant principal at an elementary school for five years in the same district. The principal also has six years of experience working as a teacher at the elementary school level. She obtained a Bachelor of Education degree from Arizona State University (ASU), and a Master of Administration and Supervision degree from Northern Arizona University (NAU). The principal is also fluent in Spanish.

Like the principal, the assistant principal has also been in the position for one year. He previously served for five years as teacher in another state. The assistant principal obtained a Bachelor's of Education degree in the state of California, and a Master of Administration and Supervision degree from NAU.

School B

School B is a middle school (grades 6-8) located in the Phoenix metropolitan area. Open since 2002, the school has 62 teachers and serves 1,218 students. Of these, 92% are Hispanic, 4% are African American, 3% are Caucasian, and 1% is categorized as other. The mobility rate is 14%, free and reduced lunch is 83%, ELLs represent 34% of the population, and 15% of the students receive individualized education services in special education.

In the last two years this school has not met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) mandated by NCLB Act (2001) in the subjects of mathematics and

reading. However, it has received performing and performing plus labels from Arizona Learns (AZLEARNS). The ELL and special education subgroups continue to fall short of proficiency. Their school improvement status is restructuring, year one.

        Administrators. The principal of school B has been in the position for five years. He previously served as assistant principal at an elementary school for two years. The principal also has eight years of experience working as a teacher at the elementary school level. The principal obtained a Bachelor of Education degree from ASU and a Master of Administration and Supervision degree from NAU. The principal was very enthusiastic about the innovation. In the past, the principal had implemented English as a second language classes and activities for parents to help them understand the grading system.

        This school has two assistant principals; one assistant principal has ten years of teaching experience, graduated from ASU with a Bachelor of Education degree and obtained a Master of Administration degree at NAU. The second assistant principal has 20 years of experience working in education, first as a teacher and then as an administrator. He graduated from ASU and obtained a master's degree in administration at NAU.

Data Collection Sources

        To answer the research question, five data sources were selected to collect information from the study. The quantitative and qualitative data sources included surveys, journals, CoP meeting video recordings, leadership team meetings, and weekly analytic memorandums.

Surveys. Two surveys were administered during the study. Gay et al. (2009) state, "a survey is an instrument to collect data that describes one or more characteristics of a specific population" (p.175). The first survey was called The Community of Practice Experience and Meaningful Parent Involvement. Participants rated their degree of agreement concerning the impact of the community of practice approach on their involvement in the school. This survey had 23 questions with a Likert-type scale and seven open-ended questions. It was structured into six constructs: dialogue, contribution, learning, reflection, self-awareness, and meaningful parent involvement (see Appendix K). To check the survey's validity, two well-known scholars on critical pedagogy reviewed it and provided feedback to the researcher. The survey was conducted at the midpoint of the innovation to show the course of the innovation and also to assist the researcher in making any necessary adjustments.

Based on the outcome of this survey, it was determined to administer a second survey, called CoP Meaningful Parent Involvement, at the end of the innovation. This survey focused on the meaningful involvement construct, in order to obtain more insightful data from the participants. This second survey had seven questions with a Likert-type scale and four open-ended questions (see Appendix L). Although the items from this construct were measured throughout the study, the intention of the innovation was not to explicitly teach them during the CoP meetings. Nonetheless, these items were proxies of more meaningful parent involvement manifested by the parent participants.

Journal. During the course of the study, a journal was kept to record behaviors, activities, talking points, and actions from the meetings. Stringer (2007) states that observations enable researchers to record important details that become the basis for formulating descriptions from which stake-holding groups produce their accounts. At the meetings, observations were made to see if the community of practice approach provided the participants with opportunities for dialogue, contribution, learning, reflection, and self-awareness. Also, observations were made regarding whether the physical space, time, childcare, and other logistics contributed to the implementation of the community of practice. The emphasis during observation is on understanding the natural environment as lived by the participants, without altering or manipulating it (Gay et al., 2009, Greene, 2007). A detailed account of the process was recorded, along with the researcher's personal thoughts. School site parent liaisons contributed in this task when the whole group was divided and when meetings happened simultaneously in both schools. The observations were kept on the left side of the handout, while reflections regarding the observations were recorded on right side (see Appendix M and N). The data collected through the journals were triangulated with the other data sources to make the findings more reliable.

CoP meeting video recording. All the meetings during the innovation were audio and/or video recorded. Gay et al. (2009) mention, "tapes and audiotapes provide qualitative researchers with another valuable…data source"(p. 374). Participants were asked to sign a waiver to give permission to be audio and/or video recorded, according to IRB guidelines. The purpose of the videos

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was to keep track of the discussions, reflections, and actions taken by the participants during the CoP meetings. Some relevant information was transcribed to illustrate important phenomenon or behaviors that impacted the community of practice. Additionally, the videos and transcriptions of the study could eventually become instructional materials for parent liaisons, counselors, teachers, and administrators who are interested in promoting parent involvement at their schools.

Leadership team meeting. At the end of each meeting or the next day, the researcher participated in a leadership team meeting that included two parents, the school site parent liaison, and CoP facilitators. The two parents represented the CoP and were selected based on their participation and interest in discussion problems, as well as their willingness to look for solutions to problems. I moderated the meetings to engage the team in the discussion of their perceptions of the process (see Appendix O). Members of the team provided honest and real-time feedback of the process of what was working and what adjustments were needed in the CoP meetings. Indirectly, this weekly meeting built leadership capacity for parents as well as the parent liaison. An indirect goal of the weekly meetings was to ensure that the CoP had consistent attendance and enough participation to have representative discussions. This qualitative information was video recorded and some of the members' participation were transcribed and added to the study findings.

Weekly analytic memoranda. As part of the study, weekly analytic memoranda, or memos, were maintained. These helped guide the early analysis of

the data. The weekly analytic memos were at least two pages in length and reflected a snapshot of meeting activities, as the researcher reflected on the following questions: Was your written material enough to tell a story of your study? What sorts of tensions have been experienced in the study? What was working? What challenges were you experiencing? The analytic memos also provided an opportunity to keep track of the events that occurred during the innovation and the next steps.

Synthesis of Data Collection Sources

The data collection sources described above provided information to examine the research question. They also validated the study by triangulating data to find common threads and consistency. The goal of this triangulation is also to enable the study to be replicated, lead other researchers to pursue more investigation, and, most importantly, preserve the integrity of the participants. Figure 6 describes the data sources that were involved in the study. Each data source briefly describes participants, characteristics of the instrument, administration time during the implementation, and protocol.

Data Sources	Who - To whom will it be administered	What does it look like	When	How
First Survey	CoP Experience & Parent Involvement at both schools.	23 items in a five point Likert-type scale, seven open-ended questions.	During the innovation.	Survey was administered during the innovation. Researcher collects the instrument.
Second Survey	CoP: Meaningfully Parent Involvement	A seven question Liker-type scale and four open-ended questions. It asked specifically the impact of the CoP on meaningful parent involvement.	At the end of the innovation (December 2011)	Participants completed survey during the last CoP meeting.
Journal	Researcher - Parent Liaisons.	A journal to record behaviors, activities, talking points, and actions from the meetings.	September - December, 2011	The observations and reflections.
CoP Video Recording	CoP Core Group - Coordinators.	The purpose of the videos was to keep track of the discussions, reflections, and actions taken by the participants during the CoP meetings.	September- December, 2011	Video recorder cameras were placed in the room before the meetings.
Leadership Team	Researcher- Parent liaison- CoP Coordinators.	At the end of each meeting or the next day the researcher participated in a leadership team meeting that included two parents, the school site parent liaison, and CoP facilitators.	September - December, 2011	Members of the team provided honest and real time feedback of what was working and what adjustments were needed.
Weekly Analytic Memos	Researcher.	The weekly analytic memos were at least two pages length and should reflected a snapshot of what was going on in the study.	September - December, 2011	What sort of tensions you have been experiencing in the study? What was working? and What challenges were you experiencing?

Figure 6. Data collection sources at a glance

Quantitative Data Analysis

For the purposes of this study, the researcher analyzed the data from the two surveys by using descriptive statistics to illustrate the behaviors of the participants and the impact of the intervention (Gay et al., 2009). To add validity and consistency, the same participants completed both surveys. The data gathered were entered into a spreadsheet to create a data form using a computer and then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18 to display the results of the study. By using descriptive statistics, the researcher was able to calculate, compare, and describe frequencies, the central tendency,

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and variance of the following constructs: dialogue, contribution, learning, reflecting, self-awareness, and meaningful parent involvement. With the first survey, CoP Experience and Meaningful Parent Involvement, quantitative data were collected from the Likert-type items. The responses were calculated presenting the mean, standard deviation, and variance of each construct to illustrate any difference among them. With the second survey, CoP: Meaningful Parent Involvement, descriptive statistics from the Likert-type items were calculated as well. The responses informed the mean, standard deviation, and variance of the items. Figure 7 summarizes and illustrates the quantitative analysis of the data collected from the two surveys during the study.
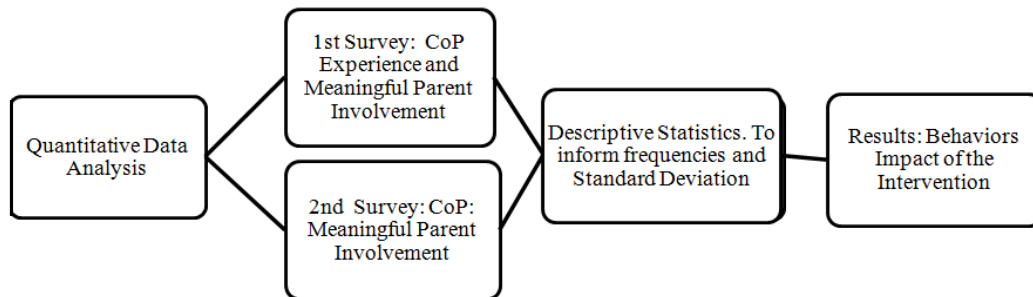

Figure 7. Quantitative analysis.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were gathered from the following data sources: the open-ended questions of the two surveys, journal notes, CoP meetings, leadership team meetings, and the weekly analytic memos. The open-ended questions were translated into English and converted into a Word document. All responses were

organized by survey name, school, construct, and item. The CoP meetings were transcribed and translated into English and then converted into a Word document, as well. The transcriptions were organized by date and school name. The journal notes, leadership meetings notes, and analytic memos were typed into a Word document and organized by date and school name. Once all the collected data was formatted in Word documents, it was converted to a text files, and then organized into electronic folders by school, date and data sources. Then these data sources were uploaded, structured, and analyzed using the data management tool called HyperRESEARCH™3.0, a software application used for qualitative data analysis. The data were grouped into two cases, one for each school, with categories and concepts to record frequency. This data was coded and subcategorized by topic to uncover similar evidence to describe the conditions, influences, and consequences of the phenomena in the study (Gay et al., 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). From the research question, literature, and theoretical framework, initial codes were identified prior to the initial data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The initial codes were determined and grounded from Freire (1970), Olivos et al. (2011), and Wenger (1998); the codes were dialogue, contribution, learning, reflection, self-awareness, and meaningful parent involvement.

Open coding was the first level of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998); the data was read to assign codes that appeared to make sense. Other codes were constructed during the data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that created new categories that contributed to the definition of my own research theory. Two

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classmates from our cohort participated with the researcher to complete this first

level of data analysis. Table 3 depicts the inventory, time length, and count of the

qualitative data sources.

Table 3

Qualitative Data Source Inventory

Data Source	Description	Content coded	*Time spent coding and construct-ing topics
Open-ended survey questions	Survey 1: Parents responded to seven open-ended questions. Survey 2: Parents responded to four open-ended questions. The surveys were done anonymously. The responses were translated to English.	15 typed pages	9 hours
Audio recording transcriptions of the CoP meetings	Twenty-six formal CoP meetings took place at each school for approximately one to one and half hours. Two certified transcriber typed the recordings from Spanish to English.	170 typed pages	48 hours
Leadership Meetings	Ten meetings occurred during the study. The approximate duration was a half an hour. Participants discussed about the course of the CoP meetings, and gave feedback to researcher of what was working or not.	40 typed pages	14 hours
Personal Field Notes (Journal)	From the beginning of my innovation in August until its end on December 9th, I kept field notes (Journal) of my experiences.	68 typed pages	19 hours
Other Meetings	Before during and after the innovation other meetings took place. These meetings included talking to experts, parents' task force, and district officials.	10 typed pages	3 hour

*Total time for coding each day is approximate and was initiated November 10, 2011 and ended in early January 2012.

The second level of analysis of the data was the axial coding process. The categories were subdivided into fewer categories to help make connections between each data set (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The same process was applied to the journal, CoP video recording meetings, leadership team meetings, weekly analytic memos, and open-ended questions from the surveys. After coding the data, it was quantified to describe the frequency of common topics and to illustrate what percentages of the participants responded similarly to the open-ended questions and interviews. Some relevant transcripts were presented in the study as well. Figure 8 shows the qualitative data analysis of the data collected during the implementation of the study.
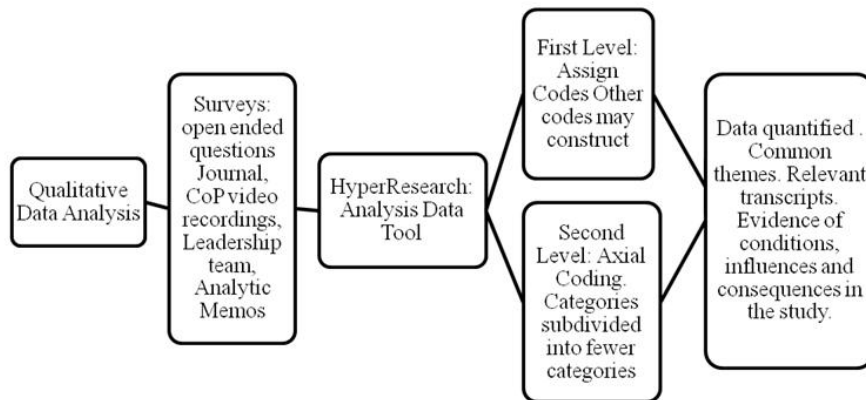
Figure 8. Qualitative analysis

Reliability and Validity

To increase credibility and validity, the collected data from the surveys, interviews, journal, transcripts, leadership team, meetings, and the weekly

analytic memos were triangulated. Gay et al. (2009) define triangulation of the data as "a process of using multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information" (p.377). The triangulating of the data balanced the weakness and strengths of the instruments and their consistency, and also determined any impact of the CoP process on the participants (Fraenkel, & Wallen, 2005). To increase reliability, two classmates from the researcher's cohort participated in several sessions coding and revising the categories and topics of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After all the data were analyzed, it was presented to the leadership team at each school; the findings were shared and reviewed to ensure validity.

Table 4 shows a matrix of the different methods used to collect and organize the data during the study. It includes the surveys, journal, leadership team meetings, transcriptions, and analytic memos.

Table 4

Triangulation of the Research Study

Research Question and Data Sources	To what extend does the community of practice approach provide the necessary conditions for Spanish-speaking Latino parents to become meaningfully engaged in children's education?
Surveys	x
Journal	x
CoP Meetings Video Recordings	x
Leadership Team	x
Analytic Memos	x

Threats

The most significant threats to the validity of this action research were attrition, the novelty effect and the halo effect (Gay et al., 2009; Smith & Glass, 1987). Attrition was a clear threat, because the participants voluntarily attended the CoP meetings. It became an issue for parents that had extended family or younger children and could not attend the meetings early in the morning. The parent liaisons and parent facilitators from each school put in place a reminder system to let participants know when the meetings took place. Each school provided childcare, refreshments, and physical space for the meetings. At the end of each meeting parents participated in a raffle that also became an indirect incentive for them to attend the meetings.

The novelty effect was a threat because as the researcher I expected to observe significance in the actions taken during the process and their impact in the school settings. The topics were not new, but the innovation drew some enthusiasm and reaction from other stakeholders. The halo effect was also a threat in the two surveys. Parents rated all the constructs in the levels of "agree" and "strongly agree." This could be explained by the fact that parent participants personally felt connected to the researcher, who had set up a new way to meet and discuss common issues. They liked the setting, incentives were raffled at end of each meeting, and other social activities, such as holidays, took place from the CoP meetings. They may have wanted to ensure that the CoP was successful for the researcher's project.

My Role as Researcher

As a researcher, my role was to participate as a facilitator, practitioner, and become a learner in the community. My responsibility was to help members clearly define their problems and support them as they worked towards effective solutions to the issues that concerned them. Stringer (2007) summarizes the role of the researcher by saying:

> Research facilitators also cannot afford to be associated too closely with any one of the stockholding groups in the setting. Members of all groups need to feel they can talk freely with facilitators, without fear that their comments will be divulged to members of other groups whom, for one reason or another, they do not trust. (pp. 49-50)

From the outset of my innovation, I was entirely involved in the process and believed that the innovation produced positive outcomes for the parents and the school. As the researcher, I cared about the importance of parent involvement at schools and valued it as an effective approach to school success. I recognized the strengths and positive implications of what parents contributed in the process and they were treated with great respect. I wanted parents to succeed and become an important asset to the schools. During the meetings, I provided instructional resources to members to make sure that knowledge and understanding was acquired, with the objective of creating a common understanding of the issue or topic in discussion.

My Role as Practitioner

As practitioner, I created conditions to mobilize participants' energy, engage their enthusiasm, and generate activity that was productively applied to resolving issues and sharing knowledge. Wenger et al. (2002) stated, "Although communities of practice continually evolve, we have observed five stages of community development: potential, coalescing, maturing, stewardship and transformation.... As communities evolve through these stages, the activities needed to develop them also change" (p. 68). I wanted community members to participate in the process by encouraging them to put meaningful procedures into practice. In collaboration with the parent liaisons and parent facilitators, weekly reminders for the meetings were sent to participants, snacks and childcare were provided, and the room for the meetings was comfortable and inviting so members felt welcomed and appreciated.

Ethical Concerns and Researcher Bias

To make sure the innovation was understood, prior to its start the researcher involved the participants and explained its purpose, as well as how confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. With an IRB and written permission from the participants, the videotapes may be used for future trainings. Gay et al. (2009) stated, "sensitivity to possible ethical issues that may arise during the study is critical to the success of the research" (p. 114). Permission was obtained from the district superintendent, school administrators, teachers, and parents to perform the study. I outlined the purposes of the study and timeline. Participants were also informed about the surveys, interviews, observations, meetings, and questions from the focus group. My role as researcher and practitioner in the study was to maintain personal and professional ethical perspectives with the members of the CoP.

<p style="text-align:center">**Chapter 5 - Results and Interpretations**</p>

This study began with the purpose of examining the following research question: "To what extent does the community of practice approach provide the necessary conditions for Spanish-speaking Latino parents to become meaningfully involved in their children's education?" This chapter contains the results and interpretation of both the quantitative and qualitative data. The chapter includes four sections: School A CoP results and interpretations, School B results and interpretations, a cross-case analysis and a summary section.

School A Community of Practice Results and Interpretations

For school A, the quantitative results are presented by analyzing the responses from the two surveys administered during the study, the CoP Experience and Meaningful Parent Involvement survey and the CoP Meaningful Parent Involvement survey. Results are analyzed by articulating the most relevant outcomes in relation to the research question. The qualitative results are presented from the open-ended questions in the surveys and the CoP meeting transcriptions. The qualitative results described the frequencies and applications of the following constructs: dialogue, contribution, learning, reflection, self-awareness, and meaningful parent involvement in the CoP. The qualitative results were used to analyze the principal outcomes of the CoP approach as well as the role of the stakeholders in the CoP meetings.

        School A: CoP Experience and Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey. This survey was administered midway through the innovation to get a sense of the process of the innovation and decide whether changes were needed.

The survey was translated into Spanish and administered to 20 participants after a CoP meeting. It consisted of 23 items in a five point-likert scale and measured the participants' level of agreement regarding the following six constructs: *dialogue*, *contribution*, *learning*, *reflection*, self-awareness, and *meaningful parent involvement*. These constructs are defined in chapter four. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate frequencies, means, standard deviations, and variance.

Table 5 shows the results for the CoP Experience and Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey. Overall, the average scores for all six constructs were rated in the levels of agree and strongly agree. Participants appeared to be in agreement, with little variance between the scores. The participants did not significantly deviate from the mean in any of the six constructs. No construct had a standard deviation above one. However, there were considerably high scores for *dialogue*, *learning*, and *self-awareness*, all with an average of 3.75. Participants rated the CoP approach between strongly agree and agree, which are relatively high ratings. Participants reported that the CoP allowed them to use their native language to dialogue, learn and become aware of their role as parents at school and home.

Table 5

School A: CoP Experience and Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey

Construct	*M*	*SD*	*V*
1. Dialogue (items 1,2,3,4, 5.)	3.75	0.444	0.197
2. Contribution (6, 7, 8.)	3.65	0.489	0.239
3. Learning (9, 10, 11.)	3.75	0.444	0.197
4. Reflection (12, 13, 14.)	3.55	0.510	0.261
5. Self-Awareness (15, 16, 17.)	3.75	0.444	0.197
6. Meaningful Parent Involvement (18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.)	3.70	0.470	0.221
Total	3.69	0.467	0.219

Note. N=20; 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4= Strongly agree

School A: CoP Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey. The survey was translated into Spanish and administered to 20 participants at the end of the innovation. Due to the high results from the first survey, the second survey focused only on the meaningful parent involvement construct. It consisted of 7 items in a five point-likert scale that measured the participants' level of agreement regarding the following seven items: 1) I know more about how the education system works in the USA, 2) I know more about what school programs are available for my children, 3) I'm better able to understand the school reports of my children's academic progress, 4) I'm better prepared to engage in constructive dialogue about my children's performance at school, 5) I'm better prepared to

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encourage other parents to get involved in school programs, 6) I learned that we have to work together as parents to look for a better future for our kids at school, and 7) I am better prepared to share my experiences in the governance of the school. Meaningful parent involvement is defined in chapter four. Descriptive statistics were again used to calculate frequencies, means, standard deviations, and variance.

Table 6 shows the descriptive results on the CoP Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey. The seven quantitative items on this survey asked participants their level of agreement whether the CoP approach promoted meaningful parent involvement. Overall, the average scores for all seven items were in between agree and strongly agree. All the participants appeared to be in agreement, with little variance between the scores. The participants did not deviate from the mean, with all of the standard deviations for all seven items around half point. There were considerable high scores for two items; one referred to parents' ability to understand their students' grades and the other referred to parents' reflections on the need to work together to benefit their children at school. These items had an average of 3.95.

Table 6

School A: CoP Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey

Items	*M*	*SD*	*V*
1. I know more about how the education system works in the USA.	3.75	0.444	0.197
2. I know more about what school programs are available for my children.	3.80	0.410	0.168
3. I'm better able to understand the school reports of my children's academic progress.	3.95	0.223	0.050
4. I'm better prepared to engage in constructive dialogue about my children's performance at school.	3.75	0.444	0.197
5. I' m better prepared to encourage other parents to get involved in school programs.	3.80	0.410	0.168
6. I learned that we have to work together as parents to look for better future of our kids at school.	3.95	0.223	0.050
7. I am better prepared to share my experiences in the governance of the school.	3.65	0.489	0.239
Total	3.80	0.378	0.153

Note. N=20; 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4= Strongly agree

School A: Interpretation of quantitative results. Based on the results from both surveys, parents appeared to accept the innovation. They valued this new approach because it provided opportunities to identify and discuss common issues among themselves. The CoP approach also placed value on their

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participants' own experiences as a means to learn from each other. Dialogue, learning, and self-awareness were rated to be the most important constructs during the meetings. There are other possible explanations for the high rating that parents marked in the surveys. One factor could be the role of the parent liaison and the parent facilitators during the CoP meetings. The parent liaison could have affected the results because she already knew most of the parents from previous years and also from the general meetings at the beginning of the school year. The three parent facilitators could have also affected the outcome of the surveys. They knew most of the parent participants in the CoP and they felt indentified with the issues in discussion. The process could be perceived as more natural between parents, compared to an outside facilitator interacting with parents. On the other hand, parent participants felt that an area that they wanted to work on was their preparation to participate in school governance.

This type of involvement was new for them, as this new role had not been mentioned before in any other meeting facilitated by the school. School A did not have existing parent committees that advised school administration on decision-making. In the second survey, the innovation in this study did not specifically target the seven indicators of meaningful parent involvement for improvement. However, the indicators became indirect proxies that parent participants demonstrated during the CoP meetings. Parents' contributions and reflections denoted a different role at the school, as they started to focus more on their children's academic progress and also have more direct input in the governance of the school.

School A: Qualitative Results. During the study, qualitative data were collected from several sources: the open-ended questions of the surveys, journal entries, CoP audio and video recordings of the meetings, leadership team meetings notes, and the weekly analytic memos. Ultimately, the open-ended questions from the surveys and CoP meeting transcriptions were the primary data sources that helped clarify the research question of the study. The data collected from these two sources came directly from the parents and also represented the most in-depth data collected in the study.

From the frequency results, it was evident that these constructs were clearly an integral part of the weekly topic discussion conversations that contributed to parent involvement. Despite the short length of the innovation, in this school the results of the frequencies appeared to demonstrate that the constructs of dialogue, learning, *contribution*, *reflection*, *self-awareness* and *meaningfully parent involvement* were evident during the CoP meetings.

The CoP meetings were transcribed from Spanish to English and the open-ended questions were translated into English as well. From the CoP meeting, 96 double space pages were transcribed. The open-ended questions generated 10 single space pages of text. All the text files from both data sources were uploaded into HyperRESEARCHTM3.0 to be organized and analyzed by construct. From the transcriptions of the CoP meetings and the open-ended questions, the data was filtered by constructs to find phrases or lines related to each construct. The software tool was able to generate reports of the frequency of the codes by each individual construct.

Figure 9 provides a representation of the predetermined constructs that defined as the necessary conditions during the CoP meetings that allowed parents to become meaningfully involved at their children's school. The predetermined constructs were: *dialogue*, *contribution*, *learning*, *reflection*, and *self-awareness*. The *meaningful parent involvement* construct was also measured to clarify the research question of the study. The construct *dialogue* was found 60 times in lines of text or phrases, the *learning* construct was found 55 times, the *contribution* construct 42 times, the *reflection* construct 47 times, and the *self-awareness* construct 53 times. The frequency results of all of the constructs were similar to each other. The three constructs with the most frequency were *dialogue*, *learning* and *self-awareness*, which triangulated with the responses from the first survey. Parent participants also referred to the *meaningful parent involvement* construct 159 times with corresponding phrases or words.

Descriptions	Codes	Constructs	Frequency
CoP provided the necessary conditions to meaningfully involve parents	Learn about themselves and school, exchange experiences, active participation, two-way communication, contribution to solutions, awareness of their roles, want to positively impact the school, and governance of the school.	Evidence of dialogue, learning, contribution, reflection, and self-awareness	257
Parents demonstrated during the CoP meetings important evidence in becoming meaningfully involved at the school.	Parent advisory committee, visits to governing board meetings, parents facilitated CoP meetings, resolutions were presented and approved by school principal, continue constructive discussions about student academic success. Empowerment to seek for answers and propose alternative solutions.	Meaningful Parent Involvement	159

Figure 9. Frequency of the predetermined constructs in the study School A

The qualitative data seeks to answer the research question of this study, "To what extent does the community of practice approach provide the necessary conditions for Spanish-speaking Latino parents to become meaningfully involved in their children's education?" Through the discussion of the topics (See Appendix Q), participants were able to dialogue, contribute, learn, reflect, and become aware of their strengths and challenges as parents. Most of the topics became the driving force that allowed parents to complete the CoP cycle and clarify the research question of this study.

To reiterate the CoP cycle process described in chapter three, the cycle starts when participants, guided by a facilitator, isolate an issue or problem to be discussed. Through dialogue they learn more about the topic, sometimes elect to invite guest speakers, and then collectively share their experiences. As a group, they make a decision about whether or not to take action. If participants decide not to take action, another topic is introduced, to start the cycle again. But if they decide to take action, recommendations are presented to the school principal, who decides whether or not to take further action to address the participants' suggestions. If the school principal does not put resolutions in place, participants start the CoP cycle again, with a new topic. But if the school principal puts a resolution in place, participants monitor the resolution to make sure it is fully implemented. The cycle then begins again by identifying another issue. Three topics that followed the CoP cycle at school A are discussed below. The topics are: school safety, communication and parent education.

School A topic 1: School safety. One topic discussed during the CoP

meetings was school safety. This topic had the most frequencies, 242, in the data

collected from the open-ended questions of the surveys and the transcriptions of

the CoP meetings. The CoP cycle was completed, producing results for the

community. Based on their frequency from the various data sources, the

constructs of *learning* and *contribution* appeared most often. The constructs of

learning and *contribution* had 19 and 16 frequencies respectively in this topic.

The topic of school safety was likely affected by the location and

infrastructure of the school. The school is situated between two city streets, with a

main parking lot in the front. The perimeter of the property is fenced, excluding

the parking lot, which is used for parents and visitors to the school. The main

entrance of the school is by the parking lot; parents drop off and pick up students

during school hours. Anyone can walk onto the campus without being noticed by

the office staff. The kindergarten classrooms face one side of the parking lot,

making them vulnerable to uninvited visitors. This topic was well endorsed by the

school principal and district officials. Parents immediately related to this topic by

sharing their individual experiences at the school. Parents expressed their concern

during the CoP meetings about the safety of their children in the classrooms that

face the parking lot. From the transcripts of one the CoP meeting, and to illustrate

the construct *learning*, one parent said,

> I did not know that my daughter can't go to the restroom at the same time
>
> that everyone else does, she can't wait until the teacher decides when
>
> everyone needs to go. If she has an accident it embarrasses her and I need

to come to school and pick her up. This can be an issue for me because I

work during the day.

Parents discussed that with a protective fence, children would be able to freely

walk within the school campus and use the restrooms. From the transcripts of the

CoP meeting, another parent, contributed to the discussion by adding her own

concerns about the lack of security at the school, she said,

When I come to help in the school, I see children walking from their

classroom to the restrooms and I also see adults without identification that

I don't recognize. It would be a good idea to make visitors stop by the

school office to sign in and get and identification or a visitor sticker.

Parents continued sharing their points of view about school safety and the

importance of presenting their concerns to the school principal. From the open-

ended questions of the first survey, a parent response articulated the importance of

contribution by saying, "Through these meetings [CoP], I understand more how

to help in the school and I can also give ideas of how to fix problems regarding

the security of the school."

Safety at the school has been previously addressed by past school

principals. The consideration of building a fence in the front of the school had

been discussed and proposed previously to the district office, but for financial

reasons was not completed. From the transcripts of the CoP meeting, and in

relation to the constructs of *learning* and *contribution*, the parent liaison told the

CoP the following,

Five years ago a former principal of this school met several times with district officials to evaluate the possibility of installing a fence in front of the school office and the classrooms that face the parking lot. Recently, I spoke about this plan with the lead custodian of our school and he mentioned that blueprints for the installation of the fence were already designed and filed with the district office.

After parents identified, learned, and shared about the topic, they decided to make a resolution and created a task force of three parents to meet with the school principal to suggest the construction of a fence that directs everyone to the front office. Due to the actions of these parents, along with school and district support, the fence is now completed.

School A topic 2: Communication. The second topic that illustrated the CoP approach was communication. This topic had 179 frequencies in the data collected from the open-ended questions of the surveys and the transcriptions of the CoP meetings. Based on their frequency from the various data sources, the constructs of *self-awareness* and *dialogue* appeared most often. The constructs of *self-awareness* and *dialogue* had 14 and 16 frequencies respectively in this topic. These necessary conditions were demonstrated in the responses of the participants during the implementation of the innovation. From the beginning, the school principal welcomed parents' suggestions and also supported this topic. The Cop cycle of the innovation was completed; several suggestions from the CoP were put in place immediately.

This topic of communication at school A concerned the way the stakeholders exchange information. Parents mentioned that the information is not timely and also often gets lost. On the other hand, the school staff assumed that parents were getting the information and left it up to parents to follow through. Currently, the school has morning monthly meetings with parents as well as newsletters that are sent home when events are planned and parent participation is needed. From the transcripts of the CoP meetings, and to illustrate the construct of *self-awareness*, a parent shared her experience and point of view about communication by saying,

> I have a personal experience. I'm a volunteer and sometimes we help print the flyers. One day my son came home with all the flyers that we printed. He [her son] got home with the big packet and I asked why he had all the flyers and he answered that the teacher gave them to him to color because they were just papers that she did not need. So I was wondering why she [teacher] did that. They [flyers] were for all the kids to give to their parents. We need to share this problem with the school principal.

> The dialogue continued about alternative ways to share information. From the transcripts of the CoP meetings, and to illustrate the construct of *dialogue*, a parent proposed a solution by saying,

> Because like Aide [parent liaison] said sometimes the teachers don't send the flyers home or the kids leave them in their backpacks and they get lost, maybe half of you can receive an email or a text message saying there is a

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cafecitos meeting tomorrow. So that opens up more opportunities to share information with the parents. That is something that we, as parents, can suggest to do differently.

The parent liaison responded to the parent and clarified the importance of the Internet as another way to communicate with parents. From the transcripts of the CoP meetings, and to illustrate the construct of *dialogue,* the parent liaison said

> We have a webpage for the school and you can also contact your child's teacher by accessing their webpage. If you have a question then you can ask there. Like one lady [a parent] said, some parents work and can't make it to the school, but they can use the Internet to ask their question so there is no excuse. There are mothers that work at doctors' or dentists' offices where they can have access to the Internet. Just type your concern and the teacher will give you an answer.

The use of the Internet became an interesting topic as an innovative way to communicate. From the open-ended questions of the first survey, a parent response illustrated the construct of *self-awareness* by writing, "How can I communicate with my child's teacher if she doesn't know Spanish and I don't read or write in English, and I don't have access to the Internet, either."

Parents proposed taking action to improve communication. The school principal was invited to the CoP meeting and parents suggested increasing the newsletters about school events, implementation of the auto speed dial system, having accessibility of Internet at school, and offering English and Internet

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classes. They also proposed the creation of a parent advisory committee to meet regularly with the school principal to discuss issues related to school. The principal agreed to send newsletters more often, in collaboration with parents who could help distribute them to parents during arrival and dismissal. Due to the parents' suggestions, in coordination with the school district, the parent liaison also implemented the auto speed dial system. Automatic phone calls about meetings and events are now sent to parents in Spanish and English. Furthermore, the school district provided two computers with online access for parents, as well as Internet classes for parents. Regarding the parent advisory committee, the principal welcomed the suggestion and agreed to meet with parents on a regular basis to share ideas and plan more changes.

School A topic 3: Parent education. Parent education was another topic discussed during the CoP meetings. This topic had 142 frequencies in the data collected from the open-ended questions of the surveys and the transcriptions of the CoP meetings. In this case, the CoP cycle was not completed. The complexity of the topic as well as budget constraints made it difficult for the school principal to adopt any new resolutions. Based on their frequency from the various data sources, the constructs of *contribution* and *reflection* appeared most often. The constructs of *contribution* and *reflection* had 16 and 13 frequencies respectively in this topic. These necessary conditions were demonstrated in the responses of the participants during the implementation of the innovation.

During the CoP meetings parents felt very comfortable contributing and reflecting on their desire to learn and become literate in the curriculum concepts

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used at their children's school. From the transcripts of the CoP meetings, the following is a *reflection* and a *contribution* from a parent, who addressed the topic by saying,

> Our family moved from Mexico and education is very different than here [USA]. In Mexico, we knew how the system worked because I went to school there…but here my kids are having problems adjusting to the school and we don't understand how they learn. They argue because I want to help with homework but I can't. It is confusing and my kids said that I don't know the right way, because the teacher showed them in a different way.

Not only the challenge of understanding the education system but also the language barrier seemed to be an impediment for parents. About this struggle, from the open-ended questions of the first survey, a parent response illustrated the construct of *contribution* in relation to the topic. She wrote,

> I think that if we learn English, at least the basics, that is going to help us a lot because we are going to be able to read the problems. If we learn English and if we learn how to use the computer then we are going to be able to help our children, even if it's just the basics. If we could have English classes here at the school, I think that would help us a lot.

Besides learning English to be able to support their children, parents also discussed their role in the school and the expectations from the stakeholders to make sure children are going to succeed at school. From the transcripts of the CoP

meetings, a parent illustrated the construct of *reflection* by proposing new

alternatives of communication. She said,

> …after listening to what has been discussed, I would like to be a part of
>
> my children's education. We worked very hard to be here and my family
>
> wants to do very well but we don't know how…I wonder if we can meet
>
> more often with the teachers and the principal to discuss what our role is. I
>
> would like to do more for my own kids, maybe how to do math,
>
> understand their grades, and other programs that are available for students
>
> that need more help with their education.

After discussing the topic, parents decided to take action and bring their

concerns and suggestions to the school principal, who attended the following CoP

meeting. Parents suggested to the principal that the school offer after school math,

reading, and English classes, conducted by their children's teachers. They also

requested more information about the assessments and their repercussion in

school labels, and family curriculum nights, where the classroom teacher (with

the help of an interpreter) could share what the students were learning and how

parents could help them at home.

The principal listened to the suggestions and stated that she understood the

parents' concerns, but she expressed that all their requests were dependent on the

school budget, which is very limited and inflexible. In addition, any

extracurricular activities after hours would need to be paid separately. She also

added that it is difficult to have qualified teachers who can volunteer and stay

after school. The only program that is currently offered to parents is the fluency class, but it is limited in duration and enrollment.

School A: Interpretation of qualitative data. The qualitative data for School A suggests that the CoP approach provided opportunities for discourse and reflection. The results from the open-ended questions and the transcripts of the CoP meetings showed that parent participants were able to articulate the necessary conditions during the implementation of the innovation. Parent participants demonstrated interest in getting involved at their children's school. Their passion and desire is reflected in the responses and in the dynamics of the CoP meetings. Parents expressed their desire to learn how to become more involved in their children education. Because of their interest in the topics discussed, the meetings often went over the allotted time. Setting up the room in a circle, creating their own norms for the meetings, and deciding what topics should be discussed were practical but important logistics that cultivated the necessary conditions. Moreover, the ability to run the CoP meetings using parent participants' primary language, Spanish, enriched the dialogue, contribution, learning, reflecting, and self-awareness in the discussed topics. Participants understood and learned from each other, and their level of trust and competence moved to higher levels, prompting them to redefine their role as parents.

The parent liaison played an important role during the innovation at School A. Her years of experience of working with parents clearly influenced the meetings. She was used to daily interactions with parents in different situations.

The scope of her work ranged from providing information about community services to translating in a parent-teacher conference. Her attributes and rapport with the parent participants impacted the CoP meetings. They were already familiar with her, more so than the other members of the CoP. As the process evolved, meeting with her before and after the CoP meetings became an informal event for parents.

The school principal was another important stakeholder during the implementation of the innovation. The school principal participated in most of the meetings, sometimes as a guest expert or as a member of the CoP. One of moments that most impacted the parents was when the school principal told her personal story and shared her struggle as a child of immigrants. She specifically discussed obstacles she had to overcome to meet her educational goals. This story seemed to help parents realize that the school principal understood their situation.

The school principal was the catalyst for whether or not the CoP cycles of the innovation were ultimately completed by the participants. In most of the cases, the non-controversial and budget neutral suggestions from the parents were approved and implemented without objections. On the other hand, the principal did not approve the suggestions related to changing policy, procedures, instructional programs, or budget. The participation and actions of the school principal appeared to demonstrate that the administration does not have formal opportunities in place for parents to become involved in horizontal conversations about important issues that are affecting the school community.

School B Community of Practice Results and Interpretations

For school B, the quantitative results are presented by analyzing the responses from the two surveys administered during the study, the CoP Experience and Meaningful Parent Involvement survey and the CoP Meaningful Parent Involvement survey. Results are analyzed by articulating the most relevant outcomes in relation to the research question. The qualitative results are presented from the open-ended questions in the surveys and the CoP meeting transcriptions. The qualitative results described the frequencies and applications of the following constructs: *dialogue*, contribution, learning, reflection, *self-awareness*, and *meaningful parent involvement* in the CoP. The qualitative results were used to analyze the principal outcomes of the CoP approach as well as the role of the stakeholders in the CoP meetings.

          School B: CoP Experience and Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey. This survey was administered at the midpoint of the innovation, to get a sense of the process of the innovation and decide whether changes were needed. The survey was translated into Spanish and administered to 15 participants after a CoP meeting. It consisted of 23 items in a five point-likert scale and measured the level of agreement of the participants regarding the following six constructs: *dialogue*, contribution, learning, reflection, *self-awareness*, and *meaningful parent involvement*. These constructs are defined in chapter four. For this survey, descriptive statistics were used to calculate frequencies, means, standard deviations, and variance.

Table 7 shows the results for the CoP Experience and Meaningful Parent

Involvement Survey. Overall, the average scores for all six constructs were

positive. All participants appeared to be in agreement, with little variance between

the scores. The participants did not significantly deviate from the mean in any of

the six constructs. The construct *learning* had the highest average of 3.6. There

were high scores for the constructs *dialogue*, *contribution*, and *self-awareness*, all

with an average of 3.53. Participants rated the CoP approach between strongly

agree and agree, which are relatively high ratings. Participants reported that the

CoP allowed them to use their native language to dialogue, learn and become

aware of their role as parents at school and home.

Table 7

School B: CoP Experience and Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey

Construct	*M*	*SD*	*V*
1. Dialogue (items 1,2,3,4, 5.)	3.53	0.516	0.267
2. Contribution (6, 7, 8.)	3.53	0.516	0.267
3. Learning (9, 10, 11.)	3.60	0.507	0.257
4. Reflection (12, 13, 14.)	3.47	0.516	0.267
5. Self-Awareness (15, 16, 17.)	3.53	0.516	0.267
6. Meaningful Parent Involvement (18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.)	3.40	0.507	0.257
Total	3.51	0.513	0.263

Note. N=15; 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4= Strongly agree

School B: CoP Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey. The survey was translated into Spanish and administered to 15 participants at the end of the innovation. Due to the positive results from the first survey, this second survey focused only on the meaningful parent involvement construct. It consisted of 7 items in a five point-likert scale that measured the level of agreement of the participants in regards to the following seven items: 1) I know more about how the education system works in the USA, 2) I know more about what school programs are available for my children, 3) I'm better able to understand the school reports of my children's academic progress, 4) I'm better prepared to engage in constructive dialogue about my children's performance at school, 5) I'm better prepared to encourage other parents to get involved in school programs, 6) I learned that we have to work together as parents to look for better future of our kids at school, and 7) I am better prepared to share my experiences in the governance of the school. Meaningful parent involvement is defined in chapter four. For the second survey, descriptive statistics were also used to calculate frequencies, means, standard deviations, and variance.

Table 8 shows the descriptive results on the CoP Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey. The seven quantitative items on this survey asked participants about their level of agreement whether the CoP approach promoted meaningful parent involvement. Overall, the average scores for all seven items were positive. All of the participants appeared to be in agreement, with little variance between the scores. The participants did not deviate from the mean, with all of the standard deviations for all seven items around half point. There were

considerable high scores for one item: "I learned that we need to work together as parents to look for better future of our kids at school," with a mean average of 4.0.

Table 8

School B: CoP: Meaningful Parent Involvement Survey

Items	*M*	*SD*	*V*
1. I know more about how the education system works in the USA.	3.66	0.471	0.809
2. I know more about what school programs are available for my children.	3.80	0.400	0.830
3. I'm better able to understand the school reports of my children's academic progress.	3.80	0.400	0.830
4. I'm better prepared to engage in constructive dialogue about my children's performance at school.	3.80	0.400	0.830
5. I' m better prepared to encourage other parents to get involved in school programs.	3.46	0.499	0.751
6. I learned that we need to work together as parents to look for better future of our kids at school.	4.00	0.00	0.941
7. I am better prepared to share my experiences in the governance of the school.	3.40	0.490	0.723
Total	3.80	0.378	0.153

Note. N=15; 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4= Strongly agree

School B: Interpretation of quantitative results. From the results of both surveys, parent participants responded positively to the innovation of the CoP approach. Parents felt that the CoP approach allowed them to exchange ideas, learn from each other and become more reflective about their role at school. From the first survey, parent participants rated learning as the highest construct in the study. This could be related to the fact that this CoP had several guest experts who presented different topics that could have prompted learning. The meaningful parent involvement construct was rated the lowest; this could be affected by the few opportunities that the participants had to take actions and make suggestions to the school principal. Furthermore, according to the data results from the second survey, parent participants considered it very important to work together to benefit their children. Parent participants and the parent liaison were new to the school, and as a result had little experience with the school norms and practices. Prior to this school year, the school had not had a parent liaison for almost a year, making it difficult for parents to participate at their children's school.

Nonetheless, through the innovation process they recognized the value of the meetings as way to discuss, share, and solve common issues as a group to benefit their children. This group of parents became the first core group to start helping the new parent liaison. Even though parent responses from the second survey were rated positively, the innovation in this study did not specifically target the seven indicators of meaningful parent involvement for improvement. But these indicators became indirect proxies that parent participants demonstrated during the CoP meetings.

A general analysis of the two survey instruments used in this study indicated that the participants considered the CoP to be an important approach. It enabled them to discuss their concerns regarding their children's education as well as a way to become meaningfully involved at school.

School B: Qualitative Results. During the study, qualitative data were collected from several sources: the open-ended questions of the surveys, journal entries, CoP audio and video recordings of the meetings, leadership team meetings notes, and the weekly analytic memos. Ultimately, the open-ended questions from the surveys and CoP meeting transcriptions were the primary data sources that helped clarify the research question of the study. The data collected from these two sources came directly from the parents and also represented the most in-depth data collected in the study.

From the frequency results, it was evident that these constructs were an integral part of the weekly topic discussion conversations that contributed to more parent involvement. Despite the short length of the innovation, at School B the results of the frequencies appeared to demonstrate that the constructs of *dialogue*, *learning*, *contribution*, reflection, self-awareness and *meaningfully parent involvement* were evident during the CoP meetings.

Both the CoP meetings and the open-ended questions were transcribed from Spanish to English. From the CoP meetings, 74 double space pages were transcribed. The open-ended questions generated 5 single space pages of text. All the text files from both data sources were uploaded into HyperRESEARCHTM3.0 to be organized and analyzed by construct. From the transcriptions of the CoP

meetings and the open-ended questions the data was filtered by constructs to find

phrases or lines related to each one. The software tool was able to generate reports

of the frequency of the codes by each individual construct. The construct *dialogue*

was found in lines of text or phrases 25 times, *learning* 33 times, *contribution* 23

times, *reflection* 18 times, and *self-awareness* 24 times. The frequency results of

all of the constructs were close to each other. The three constructs with the most

frequency were dialogue, learning and self-awareness, which triangulated with the

responses from the first survey. Parent participants also referred to the *meaningful*

parent involvement construct 33 times with corresponding phrases or words.

     Figure 10 provides a representation of the predetermined constructs that

were defined as the necessary conditions for meaningful parent involvement

during the CoP meetings. The predetermined constructs were: *dialogue*,

contribution, *learning*, *reflection*, and *self-awareness*. The *meaningful parent*

involvement construct was also measured to clarify the research question of the

study.

Descriptions	Codes	Constructs (topic)	Frequency
CoP provided the necessary conditions to meaningfully involve parents	Learn about themselves and school, exchange experiences, active participation, two-way communication, contribution to solutions, awareness of their roles, want to positively impact the school, and governance of the school.	Evidence of dialogue, learning, contribution, reflection, and self-awareness	123
Parents demonstrated during the CoP meetings important evidence in becoming meaningfully involved at the school.	Parent advisory committee, parents facilitated CoP meetings, resolutions were presented and approved by school principal, continue constructive discussions about student academic success. Empowerment to seek for answers and propose alternative solutions.	Meaningful Parent Involvement	33

Figure 10. Frequency of the predetermined constructs in the study School B

The qualitative data seeks to answer the research question of this study, "To what extent does the community of practice approach provide the necessary conditions for Spanish-speaking Latino parents to become meaningfully involved in their children's education?" Through the discussion of the topics (See Appendix Q), participants were able to dialogue, contribute, learn, reflect, and become aware of their strengths and challenges as parents. Most of the topics became the driving force that allowed parents to complete the CoP cycle and clarify the research question of this study.

To reiterate the CoP cycle process described in chapter three, the cycle starts when participants, guided by a facilitator, isolate an issue or problem to be discussed. Through dialogue they learn more about the topic, sometimes elect to

invite guest speakers, and then collectively share their experiences. As a group, they make a decision about whether or not to take action. If participants decide not to take action, another topic is introduced, to start the cycle again. But if they decide to take action, recommendations are presented to the school principal, who decides whether or not to take further action to address the participants' suggestions. If the school principal does not put resolutions in place, participants start the CoP cycle again, with a new topic. But if the school principal puts a resolution in place, participants monitor the resolution to make sure it is fully implemented. The cycle then begins again by identifying another issue. Three topics that followed the CoP cycle at school B are discussed below. The topics are: communication, school safety and preparation for high school.

School B topic 1: Communication. One topic discussed during the CoP meetings was communication. This topic had 108 frequencies in the data collected from the open-ended questions of the surveys and the transcriptions of the CoP meetings. Based on their frequency from the various data sources, the constructs of *learning* and *contribution* appeared most often. The constructs of *learning* and *contribution* had 16 and 12 frequencies respectively in this topic. These necessary conditions were demonstrated in the responses of the participants during the implementation of the innovation. This topic successfully completed the CoP cycle of the innovation, and the suggestions from the CoP brought changes in how the school now communicates with parents.

The topic of communication at school B was affected by the way in which the school disseminated information to the school community. Traditionally, the

school administrators and teachers have communicated with parents by sending newsletters or flyers home with their children. The printed communication for parents are placed in the teachers' mailboxes and then distributed to students at the end of the day or period. Official documents are sent by certified mail to students' listed addresses. Parents or guardians can also make an appointment to meet with school personnel such as administrators, the counselor, and teachers.

Parents felt that the school did not have the appropriate channels for parents to reach the administrators, teachers, and the counselor. From the transcripts of the CoP meetings, the following response from a parent illustrated the construct of *learning* by saying,

I tried several times to meet with the principal but his schedule also depends on the availability of a translator, because he doesn't speak Spanish at all, and neither do the two assistant principals. So I tried to set up an appointment with the school counselor and it was the same situation, he doesn't speak Spanish and as a result a translator is needed as well. The girls at the front office all speak Spanish but they can't answer our questions.

The dialogue continued around the importance of improving communication between the school and parents by using a common language. From the open-ended questions of the first survey, a parent response illustrated the construct of *contribution*. She wrote, "In other schools, parents get newsletters in English and Spanish. Not only they are sent to home with the students but

parent volunteers also distribute them during arrival and dismissal. We could help by passing out the newsletters, I think."

During the meeting, the participants discussed several suggestions of different ways for schools to communicate with parents. From the transcripts of the CoP meeting, the construct of *contribution* was illustrated by the parent liaison, who shared the following,

> From last week's discussion, we got in contact with the district and we are planning to pilot a new system called 'in touch,' an audio speed dial, that automatically sends phone calls to parents. It records and sends a message in English and Spanish, and the district has approved it.

The parent liaison continued discussing the new communication tool by saying, "I tried it last week to remind parents to check the student progress report … a lot of parents are calling me since … and they are concerned about their children's grades and want to talk to their teachers."

From the transcripts of the CoP meeting, another parent suggested a new way to communicate with parents that could be accessed from any place and any time, which also illustrated the construct of *contribution*. She shared with the CoP by saying,

> In our house we have computers that our older children use to complete their homework, but they also access the Internet. I wonder if the school could send information to us by email or post it in the website announcements, events, homework, and times of the meetings. I see parents and children using computers in the city library, they can access

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Internet and get messages from school. I think it could work and save

time.

Regarding new ways of communication and how they can promote meaningful

involvement, from the open-ended questions of the second survey, a parent wrote,

"Not only do I want to learn English, but also how to use the computers. My

daughter is in high school and we look her grades [on the internet]. I wish this

school could do the same."

Parents decided to take action by asking the district to support the

implementation of the speed dial system. The district gave training to the parent

liaison and supported her during the process. Due to the parents' action, and with

the approval of the school principal, parents now receive direct phone calls from

school announcing events, meetings, and important information about the school.

Parents also brought up the need for having a place at school where they can

access online information about their children's classrooms, school websites, and

other agencies that provide information in education. Also due to the parents'

action, and with support from the district office and approval of the school

principal, two computers were installed in the parent liaison room where parents

can now access Internet. The parent liaison also agreed to update the web pages of

the school, making sure that they were translated into Spanish.

School B topic 2: School safety. Another topic discussed during the CoP

meetings was school safety. This topic appeared 70 times in the data collected

from the open-ended questions of the surveys and the transcriptions of the CoP

meetings. Based on their frequency from the various data sources, the constructs

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of *dialogue* and *self-awareness* appeared most often. The constructs of *dialogue* and *self-awareness* had 12 and 14 corresponding frequencies in this topic. The necessary conditions were demonstrated in the responses of the participants during the implementation of the innovation.

The CoP cycle of this innovation was not completed due to several factors. First, parent participants did not follow through on the resolutions made by the school principal. Second, the parent liaison was learning about her new position, making it difficult to focus only in the resolutions of the CoP. And third, the lack of empowerment from the parent participants hindered the follow through of the resolutions. The discussion section of chapter six presents more details about this topic.

The topic of school safety at school B was affected by the school's location and the lack of ability of the school administrators to supervise students before and after school. This school was previously a mall that was subsequently converted into a school. As a result, its location is in a commercial area with multiple parking lots and several entrances that provide easy access to the public.

Two parents who attended the other CoP at school A initially introduced this topic. The school safety topic was well received and enthusiastically discussed by all parent participants. They dialogued about drug use and prevention, bullying, fighting, general safety, and school disciplinary procedures. Several meetings were dedicated to this topic. Three guest experts were invited, including the school principal, to be part of the discussions. From the transcripts of the CoP meetings, a concerned parent illustrated the construct *dialogue* by

sharing an incident about the use of drugs in the vicinities of the school. She said,

> About two weeks ago, I saw two kids from the school on the corner by the
>
> high school close to Wal-Mart. I saw that when they shook hands one
>
> handed drugs to the other. I thought to myself it looks so practical, they
>
> exchanged a handshake and money and drugs at the same time. I told my
>
> son to be careful with those things. I wonder if the school is aware of these
>
> events because it happened during school time.

Continuing with the dialogue about the distribution of illegal drugs outside the school, a response from the transcripts of the CoP meetings illustrated the construct of *self-awareness*. A parent said,

> My daughter told me last week about a guy that lives in the apartments
>
> that are across the street from the school and offers drugs to students. I
>
> also wonder if the principal or the police officer can investigate because
>
> this is serious, our kids are exposed every day to these dangerous people. I
>
> do not understand why the school and the police allowed those people to
>
> be around our kids.

Regarding school safety, while the school principal still was present, one parent took the opportunity to talk about the importance of preventing fighting. Her responses were from the transcripts of the CoP and illustrated the construct of *self-awareness*. She said,

> Thank you, Mr. Principal, for listening to our concerns. My daughter
>
> heard about a fight that was going to happen. So as soon as we got home I
>
> called the school and I told them what was happening. I felt weird calling,

but at the same time I thought that it was good way to protect my

daughter. A lot of things are going on in the school that the administrators

and parents do not know about. We need to work together and

communicate to prevent the use of drugs and fights. I know that my

daughter does not like it but I come to school every day to drop her off and

pick her up.

During these discussions, the school principal listened to all of the parents'

concerns and suggestions and shared several actions that he would put in place in

the near future. However, in the end the principal did not execute any of these

resolutions. Parent participants also did not follow through to ensure that the

principal implemented what he had discussed during the CoP meetings.

School B topic 3: Preparation for high school. Preparation for high

school was another relevant topic discussed during the CoP meetings. This topic

had 56 frequencies in the data collected from the open-ended questions of the

surveys and the transcriptions of the CoP meetings. Based on their frequency

from the various data sources, the constructs of *learning* and *reflection* appeared

most often. The constructs of *learning* and *reflection* had 15 and 12 frequencies

respectively in this topic. These necessary conditions were demonstrated in the

responses of the participants during the implementation of the innovation.

The CoP cycle of the innovation for this topic was not completed, even

though it was a significant topic for the parents. Despite their concern, parents did

not know what actions should be taken, and the school counselor did not provide

insightful information that could have helped them decide how to proceed. This

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topic was discussed in more than one CoP meeting. Parents did not move forward to take actions or even make suggestions of what could be implemented at the school. Parents lacked an understanding of how high schools operate, and their actions were likely also hindered by the lack of guidance from the counselor. Chapter six presents more details about this topic in the discussion section.

School B is a middle school, grades 6-8. This school district does not have high schools, which makes the transition to high school more difficult for students and parents, as they must learn about a new school district as well as a new school. Clearly, parents in the CoP were interested in learning how to prepare their children for high school. They invited the school counselor as a guest to participate in the CoP meeting to discuss his role in preparing students to continue their education in high school.

Parents did not hesitate to participate and ask questions of the school counselor. One parent with an eighth grade student asked about services the school provides to prepare students to make the transition to high school. From the transcripts of the CoP meetings, her participation illustrated the construct of *learning* by saying,

> My daughter is an eighth grader and we want her to continue to high school. I asked her if the school is having meetings about registration and what high school to attend, and she said no. For us, this our first time and we are concerned because we want the best high school for her. So can you [school counselor] help us by explaining how it works?

Parents continued talking about their interest in knowing more about the

different high schools and how to determine which one would be the best fit for their children. After introducing himself, the counselor explained his responsibilities at school. From the transcripts of the CoP meetings, the following response from the counselor illustrated the construct of *learning* in relation to the topic in discussion. He said,

> …the next thing I do is coordinate with the Phoenix Union High School to transition our students from 8th grade into high school. I work with the counselors mainly from Alhambra, Maryvale, and Trevor Brown and make sure that our students are registered and get in the classes that they want to have. And along with that, I also go to every 8th grade Social Studies class so I see every eighth grader and I give them information about the Magnet High Schools from Phoenix Union.

The dialogue moved to admissions requirements for various high schools. Parents were concerned that low grades might hinder students' admission into the magnet high schools. A frustrated parent reflected on her recent experience of searching for help. From the transcripts of the CoP meetings, the following response illustrated the construct of *reflection*. She said,

> Right now I have been having a problem. I have called the counselor to find out why my son is always falling behind in school. He needs to improve his English, math and reading grades. The counselor agreed to follow this issue but I did not hear from him until I got the report card with lower grades; so I showed up at the counselor's office and I asked for help again and they told me the same thing. Because of his lower grades, I am

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worried that my son will be retained and have to wait another year before he enters high school.

Despite parents' frustration, the following is a statement about meaningful parent involvement from the open-ended questions of the second survey that summarizes the point of view of one of the most active parents in the CoP meetings. She said,

A lot of parents think that we are doing our job by sending our kids to school and they say that their kids are falling behind but it's the teachers' fault because they do not know how to teach. But by coming to these meetings I have learned that if we want our kids to succeed and be good students, we have to get more involved in their education and know what is going on. When we ask our kids and they may tell us something different, but by coming and participating at school we will know how and what our kids are learning. That way we know how to talk to our kids about school and work with the teachers to make sure our kids succeed.

Overall, this topic was incomplete, as it did not finish the innovation cycle. During the CoP meetings the school counselor shared his limitations, due to his multiple responsibilities at school as well as the lack of support from the high schools that previously were more involved in helping students move to high school.

School B: Interpretation of qualitative data. The qualitative data from School B denoted that the CoP approach could be successfully implemented in a school setting where parents are the main participants. Although parents did not

accomplish implementing changes in all the topic areas they discussed, they practiced a new approach that allowed the exchange of opinions and experiences, and prompted engagement in common issues. Moreover, the ability to run the CoP meetings using parent participants' primary language, Spanish, enriched the dialogue, contribution, learning, reflecting, and self-awareness in the discussed topics.

The role of the members in this CoP determined the outcome of the meetings. The CoP approach set the stage for parents to learn from each other and exchange experiences, with the goal of prompting them to take actions to resolve their concerns. Most of the actions were not taken, however. After reading and reviewing the data, several factors might have influenced the dynamics and outcomes of the CoP approach at School B.

First, the parent liaison at School B had just started in the position, and was still in the process of learning about her role. The need to build parent capacity, rather than the CoP, took priority during the time of the study. The CoP members were the first formal group with whom the parent liaison had ever worked. Her desire to provide services to parents kept the CoP meetings within the first stages of the CoP cycle. The need for having parents come to school and help make materials was the liaison's main goal for the members of the CoP, rather than apply the innovation, which was the researcher's goal. Traditionally, organizing parents to make materials is one of the main responsibilities of parent liaisons and it is understood as a common way for parents to get involved in schools. The liaison's personal life experiences also hampered her understanding

of the issues parents presented during the meetings. For example, the parent liaison attended school in California, and she has only one child, who is preschool age. As such, her lack of knowledge of school and district policies, as well as lack of familiarity with school age children, impeded the follow through of the issues brought up by parents.

Second, the school principal at School B did not fully participate in the CoP meetings. He came as a guest and had informal conversations with members and the researcher, but his involvement was minimal during the process. The school principal did not follow up on the actions he had agreed to during a CoP meeting. This was one of the first meetings, and this lack of follow through impacted the direction of the implementation of the CoP in the school. Initially, parents were excited because they felt their concerns were heard and the principal seemed about to take action to address their concerns. Those actions could have changed the role of the parents at school. But unfortunately, perhaps because of the immaturity of the CoP, the actions did not go as planned. The lack of empowerment of the parents and the miscommunication between stakeholders seemed to impede the completion of the CoP cycle.

Several topics were discussed in the CoP meetings, but possibly the most meaningful topic was the least discussed. Preparation for high school was a topic that could have given all stakeholders direction regarding how to help students succeed. Unfortunately, the school did not have the structures and procedures in place to make this an academic priority, due to several factors. For example, after budget cuts the previous year, both School B and the high schools reduced the

number of counselors. The role of the remaining counselor at School B had changed, as well. Whereas previously counselors worked more directly the students and families, the new counselor role involves more administrative and supervisory duties. These duties include mostly administrative tasks, such as coordinating state and district assessments, providing recess supervision, and dealing with student enrollment. As a result, the counselor has limited time to work with families. During the CoP meetings parents were very interested in finding out how to support their children in the transition to high school. During the meeting, however, the counselor did not offer many concrete suggestions on how to ensure a smooth transition to high school.

Cross-Case Analysis.

The purpose of implementing the CoP approach at both schools was to answer the following research question: To what extent does the CoP approach provide the necessary conditions for Spanish-speaking Latino parents to become meaningfully involved in their children's education? Parent participants at both schools easily adopted the CoP approach. As far as we know, this was the first time that Spanish-speaking Latino parents in a public school setting formed and participated in a CoP. The CoP approach used in the study also integrated a concept from Freire's theory called critical pedagogy, focusing on the dimension of problem-solving called praxis. By doing this, the innovation was created an optimal environment for parent participants to work towards common goals that could benefit their children's school.

Figure 11 lists the most relevant similarities and differences of the implementation of the CoP approach in both schools. Even though the implementation happened during the same period of time and many characteristics were shared, the dynamics and results were also somewhat different at each school. The following table illustrates the results noted at each school, as well as the similarities shared by both schools in relation to the research question of this study.

Similarities: Shared characteristics/results	CoP School A Unique characteristics/results	CoP School B Unique characteristics/results
• Parent participants responded "strongly agree" and "agree" to every construct of both surveys. • Parent participants felt most strongly about the constructs of dialogue, learning, and self-awareness • Parent participants responded positively to the seven items from the meaningful parent involvement construct in the second survey. • Parent participants referred to the necessary conditions constructs 380 times with phrases or words. • Parent participants referred to meaningful parent involvement construct 192 times with phrases or words. • Logistics hindered the implementation of the innovation. • Parent participants utilized the CoP cycle to address the topics of school safety, communication, barriers of parent involvement, parent education, and grading. •	• 69.1 percent of parent participants agreed that the CoP approach provided the necessary conditions to promote meaningful parent involvement. • 70.0 percent of parent participants marked "strongly agree" to the construct of meaningful parent involvement. • The construct dialogue was found 60 times in lines of text or phrases, learning 55, contribution 42, reflection 47 times, and the self-awareness 53 times. • Parent participants referred to the meaningful parent involvement construct 159 times with corresponding phrases or words. • The absence of childcare and schedule flexibility affected the implementation of the innovation. • Parent participants utilized the CoP cycle to address the topics of ELL program, substitute teachers, and incentives for learning.	• 49.1 percent of parent participants agreed that the CoP approach provided the necessary conditions to promote meaningful parent involvement. • 40.0 percent of parent participants marked "strongly agree" to the construct of meaningful parent involvement. • The construct dialogue was found 25 times in lines of text or phrases, learning 33, contribution 23, reflection 18 times, and the self-awareness 24 times. • Parent participants referred to the meaningful parent involvement construct 33 times with corresponding phrases or words. • The lack of functional physical space affected the CoP meetings. • Parent participants utilized the CoP cycle to address the topic of preparation for high school.

Figure 11. Cross-case analysis of both CoP groups

Similarities. At both schools, the CoP provided an environment for problem solving. Participants were able to formulate actions to address the topics discussed during the CoP meetings. They felt comfortable sharing their own experiences with others, which contributed to the process of learning. As more perspectives were shared, participants began collaborating and their own expertise increased. In addition, the CoP approach helped build a sense of belonging, as participants discussed topics and shared their own experiences. As meetings continued, parents began to take on ownership of issues related to the school. As Wenger et al. (2002) discuss, sharing experiences, learning, collaboration, and sense of belonging are short-term values that will ultimately benefit the organization.

Participants at both School A and School B reported that the CoP approach provided the necessary conditions to promote meaningful parent involvement. The survey responses for every construct were positive. Both CoP groups considered *dialogue, learning*, and *self-awareness* to be the most relevant constructs. Using their native language, Spanish, to communicate in the CoP meetings made a significant difference as parents exchanged ideas and learned from each other and as well as from the guest experts. This process allowed parents to reflect on their own learning and voice their strengths and challenges as parents.

At both schools, participants responded positively in regards to whether or not the CoP approach promoted meaningful parent involvement. Overall, the scores were high and all participants appeared to be in agreement. The average

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scores were above 3.0 for each construct and item. During the CoP meetings, parents participated frequently, expressing their points of view regarding their role at their children's school. As the process continued, they also began to have more frequent conversations with teachers about their children's academic performance. They shared that they also liked the use of the CoP cycle because they could share suggestions directly with the school principal.

From the surveys' open-ended questions and the CoP meetings transcripts, parent participants referred to the constructs from the necessary conditions 380 times. There were also 192 references to the construct of meaningful parent involvement. Parents were actively engaged, sharing ideas, and contributing to the discussion by sharing their experiences. The meaningful parent involvement construct had less frequencies than the necessary conditions construct, due to the perception and understanding of the parents and the short duration of the innovation.

Logistical problems were another similarity encountered at both School A and School B. The lack of a functional room for the CoP meetings for one of the schools hindered preparing the space, in regards to set up of chairs and equipment and snacks. At both schools the provided rooms were full of stored materials, and the small space limited the ability to arrange the chairs in a circle form. The accessibility of the rooms was also inadequate, as some parents got lost in trying to find the rooms. Childcare became another impediment due to the physical space limitations, qualified personnel, and budget. The schools did not provide an assigned room for childcare, nor budget to supply this service. Some parent

participants had to bring their younger children to the CoP meetings, which indirectly affected parents' full participation. Lastly, the schedule of the meetings at both schools hindered the CoP approach. Scheduling the CoP meetings in the mornings just after school started limited the participation of parents who work during the day. Because of conflict of schedules at the schools, specific days and times were not available, leaving limited choices for the CoP meetings. These factors could have affected the participation of other parents, especially male parents.

Despite serving somewhat different age groups, both School A and School B brought up similar topics of concern. Both CoP groups addressed school safety, communication, barriers to parent involvement, parent education, and grading. This similarity may have partly occurred due to the fact that several parents attended CoP meetings at both schools. Also, some of those topics had been defined previously during forums as common topics related to school practices.

Differences. Even though the process of implementing the CoP approach at both schools took place at the same time, the outcomes differed as follows.

At school A, more participants were in agreement, 69.1 percent, about the CoP as an approach to provide the necessary conditions to promote meaningful parent involvement, compared to 49.1 percent from school B. The CoP at school A had more opportunities to interact and learn about the topic in discussion, contrary to the CoP at school B, that had several presenters, which limited the discussion time for the participants.

At school A, parents rated the construct of meaningful parent involvement higher than School B, 70 percent vs. 40 percent. During the CoP at school A, parent participants were able to apply the CoP cycle more often, allowing them to have frequent interactions with the school principal. Contrarily, due to the number of presenters, the CoP at school B had fewer opportunities to get involved in conversations that could have led to engaging discussions.

Logistics affected the implementation of both CoP groups in different ways. School A had an assigned room for the meetings, while the CoP at school B met in different places until towards the end of the implementation when a room was formally assigned for the meetings. All of the meeting rooms were crowded and cramped, however. School B did not have a permanent assigned room for meetings with parents, making it difficult to prepare the rooms for the CoP meetings ahead of time. Childcare at school A was not available for parent participants, due to budget constraints and the lack of qualified personnel. On the other hand, at school B, the lack of an appropriate room for meetings made it difficult for parents to find their way and adjust to different rooms.

The CoP cycle at each school also addressed additional topics. At school A participants also discussed the ELL program, substitute teachers, and incentives for learning. At school B, another topic discussed was preparation for high school.

The school principal and the parent liaison could have also had an impact on the implementation of the CoP approach .At school A, the principal participated in almost all of the CoP meetings as an expert or a guest. At school B,

the principal came only twice, once when he was invited to discuss bullying, drug prevention and school safety, and again for the last meeting, which was social gathering to recognize the parents for their participation in the CoP. This factor affected the dynamics and outcome of the CoP at each school. At school A, parents met with the school principal regularly and she responded to their suggestions and changes were made. Meanwhile, at school B, parents only presented suggestions to the principal one time, and the suggestions did not take effect.

At school A, the principal spoke Spanish fluently during the CoP meetings. The administrators (principal, assistant principals, and counselor) at school B do not speak Spanish at all. This proficiency could affect the CoP approach; parents at school A were able to respond immediately to the principal in their native language, while at school B a translator was needed when the school principal, counselor, and police officer came to the CoP.

At school A, the parent liaison had more experience. She had more that eight years in the liaison position and her children had also previously attended the school; her youngest child was currently attending School B and the oldest had already graduated from high school. The parent liaison at school B only had few months of experience. Her job essentially started at the same time as the implementation of the CoP approach. Although she is a parent, her child is preschool age. This is another factor that could have affected the development of the CoP at the schools. The parent liaison at school A seemed to have a better understanding of the community and the policies and procedures of the school.

On the other hand, the other parent liaison had just started learning about her position and making connections with the school community.

Summary

Ultimately, even though both groups of parents found their experience meaningful, comparing the two schools offers some guidance for obtaining the optimal result from a CoP group. The administrator's attitude and priorities as well as the parent liaison's experience affect how well the parents' suggestions are received and whether actions are taken. The school counselor also played an important role, but his responsibilities are less focused on working with students and parents. Participants easily applied the first steps of the CoP cycle,, but in the later steps, when it came time to determine an action to take to the school principal, participants were not always successful. When this situation occurred, two factors appeared to impede participants' continuation of the CoP cycle. One was that the topic under discussion was controversial and the participants could not determine what to suggest to the school principal. The second factor was the level of involvement of the school principal. Most of the successful implementations occurred when the topic was budget-neutral and non-controversial, and also the principal had participated in the prior CoP meetings. When the principal did not participate, implementation did not always occur, even if the proposed action was inexpensive and non-controversial.

To conclude, there were more positive than negative outcomes with implementation of the CoP approach. The data suggests that this type of meeting

promotes discourse and gives parents opportunities to convene in a risk-free environment where their ideas and suggestions can be heard, using their native language. The discussed topics reflected parents' interest in understanding how the school system works as well as their willingness to learn how to become meaningfully involved at their children's school.

Overall, with the integration of Freire's critical pedagogy and Wenger's theory, this innovation has potential to generate high levels of thinking among stakeholders that could benefit schools.

Chapter 6 - Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter presents the following sections: discussion, limitations, conclusion, future implications, and recommendations.

Discussion

The major purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which a community of practice approach provided the necessary conditions for Spanish-speaking Latino parents to become meaningfully involved in their children's education.

This is the first time that a study like this has been done in a public school district with Latino-speaking parents. No examples were found in the literature of a model that integrates Freire's and Wenger's theories into a community of practice. As a result, this study could be used as a resource for further discussion of the lessons learned during the implementation of the innovation.

From the results of this study, the concept that most needs further discussion is that of the systematic challenges of implementing the community of practice approach with parents in a school setting.

The community of practice approach challenged traditional perspectives of parent involvement at schools (Epstein, 1995, 2001b; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005). Whereas traditional parent involvement programs view parents as passive responders to the school's requests, the CoP approach permitted different levels of participation based on the interests and needs of the members (Wenger et al., 2002). How members participated was guided by what

they valued as well as what roles they opted to play in the process. Members of the CoP created relationships that built a sense of trust and defined the community (Wenger, 1998). The CoP approach complemented the new theoretical paradigms of parent involvement that empower parents to become transformative agents at their children's school (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011; Olivos, 2006; Valdez, 1996). The CoP offers school districts a way to integrate parent involvement within the new theoretical frameworks. By utilizing theory effectively, policies and procedures regarding parent involvement are aligned to the mission and vision of the educational agency, as well as to the national standards. In addition, schools will have procedures and guidelines to guide administrators in how to involve parents to increase children's academic success.

Another systematic challenge in the implementation of the CoP approach was the role of the stakeholders in the study. Freire's and Wenger's theories were integrated and put in practice in the CoP, where participants determined the outcome of the innovation. Using this innovative approach, participants found themselves in new situations where their input impacted the CoP. Freire's method, critical pedagogy, offers discourse and practices that strive to empower participants to develop their capacities while also encouraging equality and consciousness-raising, so society members may be transformed by their own actions and perceptions (Freire, 1970; Gurn, 2011; Kincheloe, 2007). The CoP promoted participation and involvement as members told each other about similar problems they had encountered and solutions they had found, contributing to new

knowledge (APQC 2001; Burd, Hatch, Ashurst, & Jessop, 2009; Bilham, 2006; Cleves, & Toplis, 2008; Wenger, 2000). To carry out the innovation, advocates for parents were needed at the district and school level to support this implementation and monitor its process. The school principals played a crucial role; their participation in the CoP meetings provided first hand information that helped parents determine whether or not to take action. The principal became the catalyst in the cycle of the innovation by approving or disapproving the parents' suggestions, which could be seen as a kind of power struggle between the principal and parents. Parents wanted to make changes to benefit the school but the principal could slow or even stop the process. When suggestions were put in place, it was not always clear who would get the credit, the parents or the principal. According to Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, and Ochoa, (2011) empowerment is not an easy process. It requires a critical examination of ideologies and practices that obstruct collaboration and authentic relationships among the school and parents.

Other key players in the CoP approach were the parent liaisons and the parent facilitators. The parent liaisons' ability to communicate in Spanish and provide background to the issues helped parents better understand the problem. Parent facilitators, on the other hand, guided the face-to-face CoP meetings in Spanish. Through dialogue, in a non-hierarchical manner, participants were allowed to critique and suggest structures and procedures to maintain and protect the status quo (Martin, 2007; McLaren, 2007).

Limitations

There were limitations noted in the study that could be controlled for in the future. Nonetheless, they affected the study (Gay et al., 2009). These limitations included time, logistics, training of administrators and the duration of the study.

The study began at the same time as the academic year. The first and second phase overlapped and carried over to the very beginning of the school year. Prior to the official start of classes, parents were interested in participating (many attended the informational forums), but as school started priorities shifted and parents were more focused on the starting a new routine with their children. The parent liaison, school principal, and staff were also focused on supporting each other to make sure procedures were in place at school. The timing of the study also affected the new parent liaison at School B, as she did not have much opportunity to meet the parents and build relationships prior to the start of the CoP meetings.

In terms of scheduling, the community of practice meetings did not take place at convenient times for parents, as recommended by the literature (Epstein, 2007; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Lopez, 2001; Scribner et al., 1999). The day and time of the meetings were set up according to the availability of the parent liaisons, who already had other scheduled meetings with the school district, as well as other parents. The liaisons' work schedules also affected the time of the meetings, as they are hourly employees with no flexibility for after school hours.

The lack of adequate physical space for the meetings also hindered the implementation of the innovation. One school was affected more than the other; the meeting room had all kinds of materials and furniture that made it difficult to set up the chairs properly. At another school, the initial room was far away from the entrance of the school, making it difficult for parents to find. The meeting room was actually changed three times, until it ended up in room closer to the entrance but still too small to accommodate all the parents.

The limited training of school administrators in the CoP approach as an innovation was another limitation in the study. Principals were occupied with putting systems in place at the beginning of the school year and did not have much time to spend in training. The lack of time dedicated to the training principals about the innovation could have affected the outcome of the cycle of the innovation. Principals were very supportive and welcomed the study but possibly did not have enough time to reflect and understand the implications of the innovation. The buy-in of the innovation from the administrators was not fully demonstrated during the study. In the future, a more detailed and effective plan should be put in place to discuss with administrators the objectives of the CoP, roles and responsibilities, and most important the benefits for the school.

The length of the study was a factor that affected the behavior of the parent participants in the surveys. All parents from both schools found the communities of practice to be an approach that promoted meaningful parent involvement. The innovation took place at the beginning of the school, a time when parent participants were most likely to be interested in the school. If the

time of the study were prolonged, the results could have been different. As parent

participants got to know each other better, issues could have changed based on

current events, actions that did lead to the resolution of an issue, or suggestions

that the principal did not accept during the meetings. Possibly, parents could have

gotten frustrated with the responses of the principal to the point that they could

have brought those issues to a higher entity, such as the district governing board.

Methodologically, there were also some limitations in the quantitative and

qualitative data. From the quantitative data sources, the second survey was done

for refinement of the meaningful parent involvement construct. The items from

this construct were measured throughout the study, but the intention of the

innovation was not to explicitly teach them during the CoP meetings. In the future

this survey could be changed to measure the indicators of meaningful parent

involvement in more detail.

Regarding the qualitative data, in the future a pre and post interview could

be administered to the principals, parent liaisons, and some participants to

compare their conceptualizations about parent involvement in more depth, and

identify whether their perceptions changed throughout the study.

Conclusion

This study proposed an innovative approach to promote meaningful parent

involvement in Latino Spanish-speaking parent communities. The study sought to

clarify to what extent a community of practice approach could provide the

necessary conditions for Spanish-speaking Latino parents to become meaningfully

involved in their children's education. The theoretical framework of the study

merged three concepts: parent involvement, critical pedagogy, and communities of practice. Parent involvement has been discussed by prominent scholars, from Epstein (2001b), Henderson and Mapp (2002), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) to Delgado-Gaitan (2004), Olivos et al. (2011), and Valdez (1996), who have expanded on and conceptualized parent involvement in bicultural school communities.

Participatory action research was embedded in the study. According to McTaggart (1991), participants can collaborate, collect evidence, and take action to make change. Two schools participated in this study, an elementary school (K-5) and a middle school (6-8). This study combined quantitative and qualitative methods, constituting mixed methods, to examine the research question.

The study used quantitative data from two surveys. The data gathered were entered into a spreadsheet and then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18 to display the results of the study. By using descriptive statistics, the researcher was able to calculate, compare, and describe frequencies, the central tendency, and variance of the following constructs: dialogue, contribution, learning, reflecting, self-awareness, and meaningful parent involvement.

The study also incorporated qualitative data sources, including open-ended questions in two surveys, transcriptions of the CoP meetings, field notes, leadership team meetings, and a research journal, which were coded and categorized into topics using a qualitative analysis tool called HyperRESEARCH™. The most relevant data sources for clarifying the research

question were the transcriptions of the CoP meetings and the open-ended

questions from the surveys. The other sources supported and confirmed the

findings. Based on their frequency during the study, the parent participants

addressed the following topics: school safety, barriers to parent involvement,

communication, parent education, grading, the ELL program, and preparation for

high school.

Based on the results, the following are the most relevant findings in this

study:

1. School principals have the capability to hinder or promote the CoP
   approach.

2. The more controversial the topics discussed became, the less
   effective the CoP approach proved to be.

3. The merging of Paulo Freire's concepts of critical pedagogy and
   Wenger's Community of Practice framework allowed parents to
   feel empowered.

4. The CoP is an innovative method for working with parents in
   schools.

1. School principals had the capability to hinder or promote the CoP

approach. The school principal was the catalyst for the suggestions presented by

the parents. Whether or not the resolutions were carried out and put in place was

often the sole determination of the school principal. The CoP approach provided

opportunities for participants to engage in discussions and learning experiences,

and eventually came to a consensus of what needed to be changed in the school.

When those suggestions were presented to the school principal, the decision-making shifted to the principal, who filtered the suggestions and decided what could be done. It was evident that the school principal still holds the sole authority at the school level to decide what is best for the school.

2. The more controversial the topics discussed became, the less effective the CoP approach proved to be. Parents discussed and learned more about a topic, and took action by deciding to meet with the principal to present suggestions. The more controversial the topic became, more difficult it became for authentic dialogue to occur. The controversial topics presented were: the ELL program, parent education, grading, and preparation for high school. In most of the cases, the school principal's acknowledgement of the changes suggested by the parents regarding those topics was negative due to the school not having policies in place and/or allocated budget to cover the proposed changes. As a result, the dialogue did not continue to explore other alternatives or learn more about how changes could be implemented in the future. The discussion and approval of the topics were conditioned to the principal's own determination of what could be implemented without making bold structural changes. The non-approval topics came directly from the participants of the CoP approach who raised concern about the school practices. It brought tension to the school administrators, who interpreted parents' concerns as mandates, leading to a power struggle situation.

3. The merging of Freire's concepts of critical pedagogy Freire's (1970) and Wenger's CoP framework (Wenger et al., 2002) allowed parents to feel empowered. By framing the innovation using critical pedagogical approach,

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parents actively participated by using their own language and voice to externalize concerns and issues at their school. The CoP offered opportunities for parents to get involved in a process that permitted them to dialogue, learn, and present resolutions to benefit their child's school. The CoP approach also created an environment for parents to use their own language and share experiences. It also allowed them to learn about and analyze current education topics that are also discussed at state and national level. Moreover, they were able to not only identify those topics but also identify their responsibility to act and propose changes. This transformation occurred because the innovation allowed them to build and share their own knowledge collectively. Towards the end of the innovation, parent participants became more critical and aware of the importance of their role at school. By having a voice, their questioning changed to another level of empowerment and they began to request more meaningful dialogue about topics such as the grading system, parent education, and preparation for high school.

4. The CoP is an innovative method for working with parents in schools. The cycle of the innovation delineated the necessary steps to solve problems. Participants identified an issue or problem to learn more about, and then collectively shared their experiences. As a group, they made a decision, determined the action to take, and presented recommendations and made resolutions. They continued to monitor the issue and repeated the process as necessary, or they started the cycle again by identifying a new issue. Through the discussion of the topics, participants were able to dialogue, contribute, learn, reflect, and become aware of their strengths and challenges as parents. During the

thirteen weeks of the innovation, parent participants addressed more than ten topics. Some of them required more time than others, and guest experts were needed at times to enrich the topic. Furthermore, the CoP approach encouraged discourse among participants, who developed skills and knowledge about how to address and solve problems.

Future Implications

As noted in the literature review, research clearly demonstrates that parent involvement has become essential for Title I schools to succeed. The high stakes of government expectations now force administrators to reach out to the school community to collaborate on common goals. Parent involvement at schools needs to be conceptualized as social capital that contributes to the success of the students. Until school culture acknowledges parents' role in selecting where their children attend school, parents will continue to be underestimated and defined as stakeholders whose only contribution is sending their children to school and completing requested tasks such as making photocopies, cutting paper, binding booklets, participating in field trips, and fundraising events.

In times of budget constraints and increasing accountability, school administrators need to be strategic and perceive parent as partners who can support their children's education at home. Often schools' lack of budget for parent education programs ignores that parents can help at home by continuing the same strategies that their children learn at school. Many teachers argue that teaching time at school is restricted due to the heterogenic of the class and different styles of learning. It is therefore reasonable to increase capacity by

involving parents in curriculum activities that can be mirrored at home and reinforce learning.

Recommendations

Overall, the implementation of the community of practice approach in the schools provided insightful information, which should be considered in future investigations. This study opened opportunities for community organizers, school districts, and school administrators to involve parents in a different way that can prompt powerful transformations in the community.

More opportunities than challenges are ahead in the parent involvement field. Using this study, other schools in the district could implement a research-based program to involve parents in the educational process. The application of the CoP and the use of dialogue, learning, contribution, self-awareness and learning could promote more meaningful parent involvement.

Often educational agencies have initiatives that promote customer service but they are not well defined in terms of procedures and actions. The concept of customer service is theoretically conceptualized but not reflected in practices in the schools. Based on this study, schools do not have effective and established events or groups that allow parents to present their concerns and suggestions of what they want from the school. Schools do not have assigned rooms to meet the needs of the parents. The reception offices do not provide an inviting environment for visitors, chairs are not comfortable, and restrooms are difficult to access. Most of the time, school administrators and counselors determine the time for meetings with parents, based on their availability. And because administrators

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may not speak Spanish, the need of a translator also hinders immediate attention to monolingual parents. This study reflected the need for a parent involvement program that better meets the needs of the community.

Staff development programs of parent involvement can bring positive outcomes to the school district. Every year school personnel can participate in training about adult education, culture awareness, and guidelines on how to involve parents at school. These training sessions can be planned in tiers based on the positions at school. Eventually, all school personnel will have a solid foundation about parent involvement that responds to the district's mission and vision.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER STANDARD ASSESSMENT INVENTORY SURVEY

	School A		School B	
Questions/ School Year	2010	2011	2010	2011
Teachers are provided opportunities to learn how to involve families in their children's education	2.0	1.8	2.2	2.0
Communication our school mission and goals to families and community members is a priority.	2.5	2.4	2.1	2.5
School leaders work with community members to help achieve academic goals.	2.0	1.9	2.2	2.1
Our principal models how to build relationships with students' families.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.5
Teachers work with families to help them support students' learning at home	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.3
Average	2.16	2.14	2.18	2.28

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP INVITATION

You are invited…
"Focus Group"
Parent Involvement

Thursday, August 26

"The next school year we will start an innovation at your school called Community of Practice where parents will discuss important issues related to your school and they also will propose recommendations on how to improve the school

Come and make suggestions about what parents should discuss in the community of practice !

WHEN:Friday , August 26th
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM
WHERE: School Cafeteria
FOOD: Donuts and coffee will be served.
CHILD CARE will be provided

La Reunion sera traducida en Español
We are looking forward to having you join us

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Common Issues Related to Parent Involvement to be addressed

at the Community of Practice.

Developed by: Alfredo G. Barrantes, August 26, 2011

Moderator: Introduction Description of My Study / Time I plan to keep them/Why I asked them to participate/How much I appreciate them participating/Any questions Introductions (5 minutes)	Thank you for all agreeing to meet with me today, I appreciate your attendance. If all goes as planned, we should be done in about an hour and a half. We have a translator, if needed. This meeting is will focus on finding common issues about parent involvement at your school that are important for you. I will ask questions and Mrs. Sotelo will be recording your responses. The questions are only meant to be a starting point as I hope to hear rich discussion and dialogues as to what you are thinking regarding Parent Involvement. Therefore, there may be times that I will ask you to clarify or explain your thinking. The reason I have asked you to this focus group, is because I will be implementing a community of practice with parents next year at your school and I felt it was important to hear from you as parents at this school. I believe you can help me prepare for the innovation by helping me better understand your needs prior to my planning for the study to promote parent involvement in the school. At this point, does anyone have any questions? Please introduce yourself and tells us how many years you been at the school as parent, and how many children you have.
Review of norms (2 minutes)	Please refer to the poster; it refers to general direction such as: we take turns; one person speaks at the time and respects other people's opinions. Bathrooms are across the hall, and we will have a five minute break. Please feel free to get yourself refreshment from the table.
Process (5 minutes)	I am going to ask the first question. I would like full engagement, so I will ask you to find the rest of your group by matching the same color index card (4 parents) Please rearrange your seating to sit with these partners Then, each group will share their discussion with the full group. It is IMPORTANT that as much dialogue and discussion is brought to the attention of the group and – especially so that Mrs. Sotelo captures the ideas from this total focus group. PLEASE feel free to share anything you believe will support the response to each

	question at the end of the discussion.
Read Question 1 (10 minutes)	Based on your experience discuss in your group what parent involvement is and how it is implemented at your school. (After 3 minutes). "Now let's share with the group. Mrs. Sotelo will write your responses. Everyone will have an opportunity to share. Are there any more ideas you would like to share?
Break (5 minutes)	Let's take a break. We'll start again in five minutes. Thank you.
Read Question 2 (10 minutes)	Following the discussion about parent involvement, create a list of issues or topics that parents should know more about in order to get involved in the school (After 3 minutes). "Now let's share with the group. Mrs. Sotelo will write your responses"
Read Final Question 3 (10 minutes)	Now that we have those lists, let's prioritize them by order of importance starting with 1 as the most important. Phyllis will write your responses. I'll collect your list and create a master to be presented in the first meeting of the community of practice.
Closing/Thank you (2-5 minutes)	Is there anything else you want to add to our discussion today? (Pause) Thank you all for coming. I sincerely appreciate it. You gave me some great ideas of how to involve parents. You all are invited to participate in the community of practice starting in August, when school starts. In August you will receive a survey, please fill it out and hopefully you can join us. Thank you. Good Night.

APPENDIX D

COP HANDBOOK

Building Communities of Practice
A summary guide

Background

"We've got a single vision reality which is about using all our resources as effectively as possible – and not for the community, but with the community."
- Participant from Winsford Networked Learning Community, UK

As government structures around the world are being challenged to take a more integrated and participative approach to governance and development, a type of cross-sector learning network called "Communities of Practice" are emerging and gaining momentum. Through peer-to-peer collaborative activities, members of Communities of Practice are coming together willingly across sectoral and departmental divides to share information, build knowledge, develop expertise, and solve problems.

This brief guidebook is based on a research project conducted by Pioneers of Change for Ethekwini Municipality in South Africa in 2005. The research was based on ten diverse international case studies of Communities of Practice in the public sector, ranging from Canada to India, from Brazil to Scotland.

The intention with this guidebook is to provide a quick summary and practical sense of Communities of Practice and their potential, and how to go about cultivating them effectively. It accompanies the 84-page report from the research project and an associated compendium of readings.

WHAT are CoPs?

"Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a passion for something they do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better."

<div align="right">- Etienne Wenger</div>

CoPs are...

→ peer-to-peer collaborative networks

→ driven by willing participation of members

→ focused on learning and building capacity

→ engaged in knowledge-sharing, developing expertise, solving problems

All CoPs will be unique depending on their context. There is no single 'recipe' for creating a CoP.

Push and Pull

CoPs are designed to access tacit knowledge in response to **"PULL"** as opposed to explicit, documented knowledge available through **"PUSH"**.

PUSH - Knowledge presented in meeting reports, manuals, and expert presentations is usually selected by the person or group with the knowledge, deciding what others need to know.

PULL - Communities of Practice recognise that the most practical knowledge lives in people. Here, it is the learning need, and the specific challenges faced in the now, that determine what knowledge gets passed on. Communities of Practice are about "know how" and "know who".
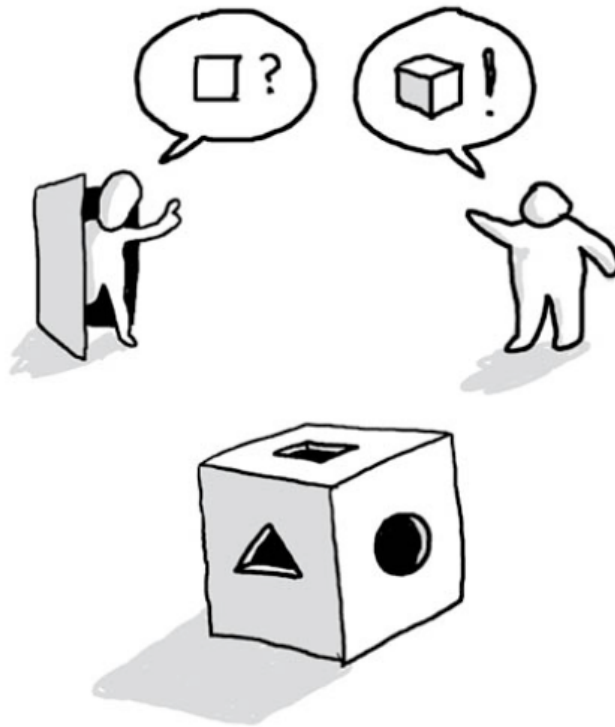
Dimensions of a CoP

CoPs are usually defined by three dimensions: the community, the domain, and the practice…

Community
- A group of people engaging in joint activities, helping each other and sharing knowledge
- Regular interaction
- Relationships of interdependence
- Feelings of trust, openness and commitment
- Held together by shared passions and interests
- Boundary-spanning, inter-disciplinary membership

Domain
- A focus on a shared field of interest and competence
- Related to members' commitment and passion

Practice
- Practical focus on real every-day challenges
- Shared repertoire of techniques, tools, experiences, stories
- Learning activities engaged to build, share and apply the practice
- Sense of joint enterprise

Domain

Community

Practice

What makes CoPs different from other groups?

In *general…*

	What's the purpose?	Who belongs?	What holds them together?	How long do they last?
Communities of Practice	To develop members' capabilities; to build and exchange knowledge	Members select themselves based on expertise or passion for a topic.	Passion, commitment, and identification with the group's expertise	As long as there is interest in maintaining the group
Formal work groups	To deliver a product or service	Members include everyone who reports to the group's manager.	Job requirements and common goals	Until the next reorganization
Project teams	To accomplish a specified task	Members are assigned by senior management.	The project's goals and milestones	Until the project has been completed
Informal networks	To collect and pass on information	Membership consists of friends and business acquaintances.	Mutual need and relationships	As long as people have a reason to connect

From Wenger, "Communities of Practice: The organisational frontier" in HBR, 2001

WHO participates?

- **Individuals**, who are
- **Practitioners**, who come from
- **Diverse** departments and sectors
- **Voluntarily** because they
- Share a **passion and interest**
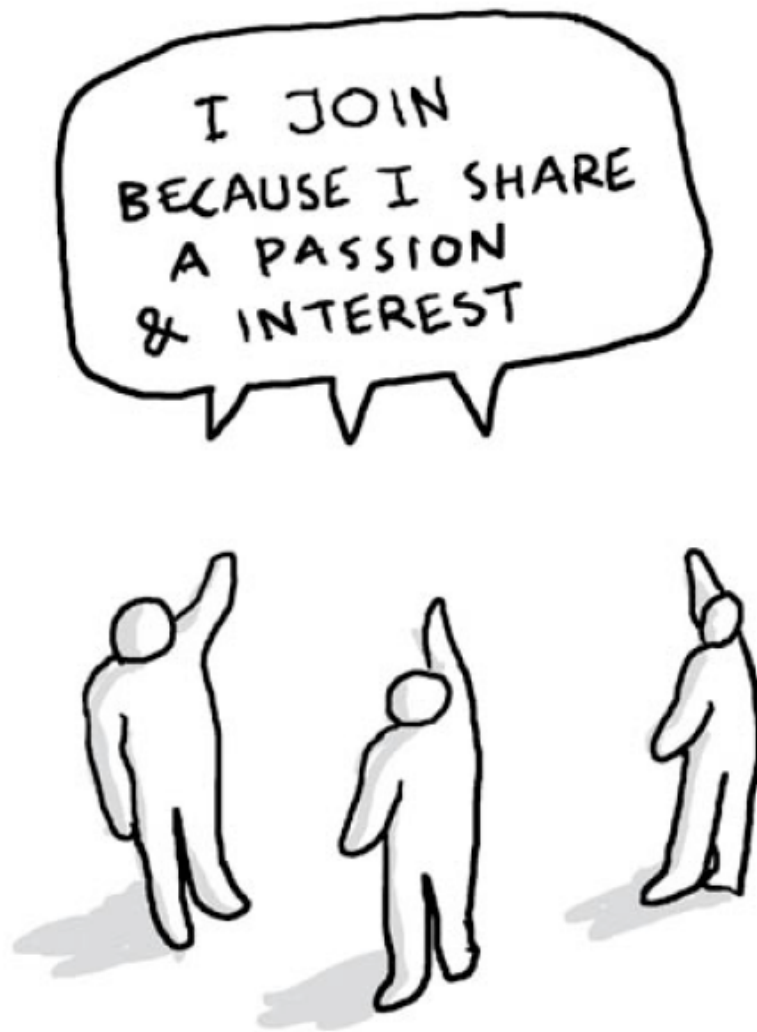
CoP lifecycle

Communities of Practice have a lifecycle. For CoPs in the public sector, the lifecycle is likely to display the following phases:

1. **Discovery**: Identifying strategic issues to address – those that align with both strategic objectives and members' interests
2. **Committing**: Taking the conscious decision to move forward with a CoP
3. **Creating an Enabling Environment:** Making sure that the organisational context and support is available for the CoP
4. **Coalescing:** Convening members to develop an action-learning agenda and building their collective commitment to pursue it together

[adapted from Snyder and Briggs, 2003 and Pioneers of Change case analysis]
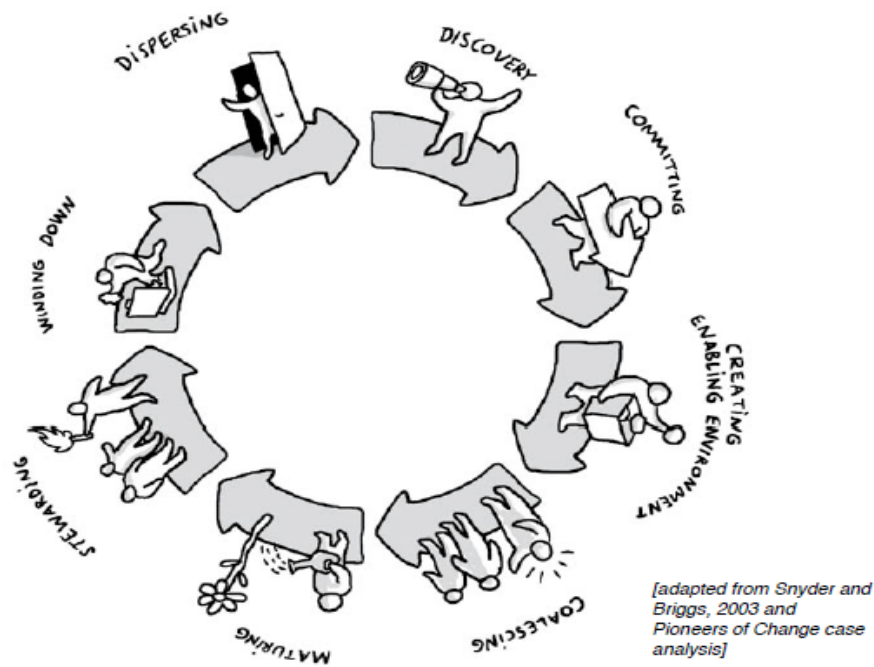
5. **Maturing:** Building on knowledge-sharing and co-consulting activities – toward collaborations on innovation and application projects; growing beyond the initial group
6. **Stewarding**: Establishing a prominent role in the field and taking stewardship for addressing leading-edge issues at scale
7. **Winding down:** Acknowledging when the CoP has served its purpose and needs to close; slowing down activities; preparing for closure
8. **Dispersing and leaving a legacy:** Beyond success, "what's next"-could be institutionalization as a formal organization; letting the community dissolve once the issues lose salience; segmenting the community into sub-areas as issues become more differentiated.

Benefits of a CoP strategy

Ten stories of CoPs from around the world showed the impact of Communities of Practice in terms of…
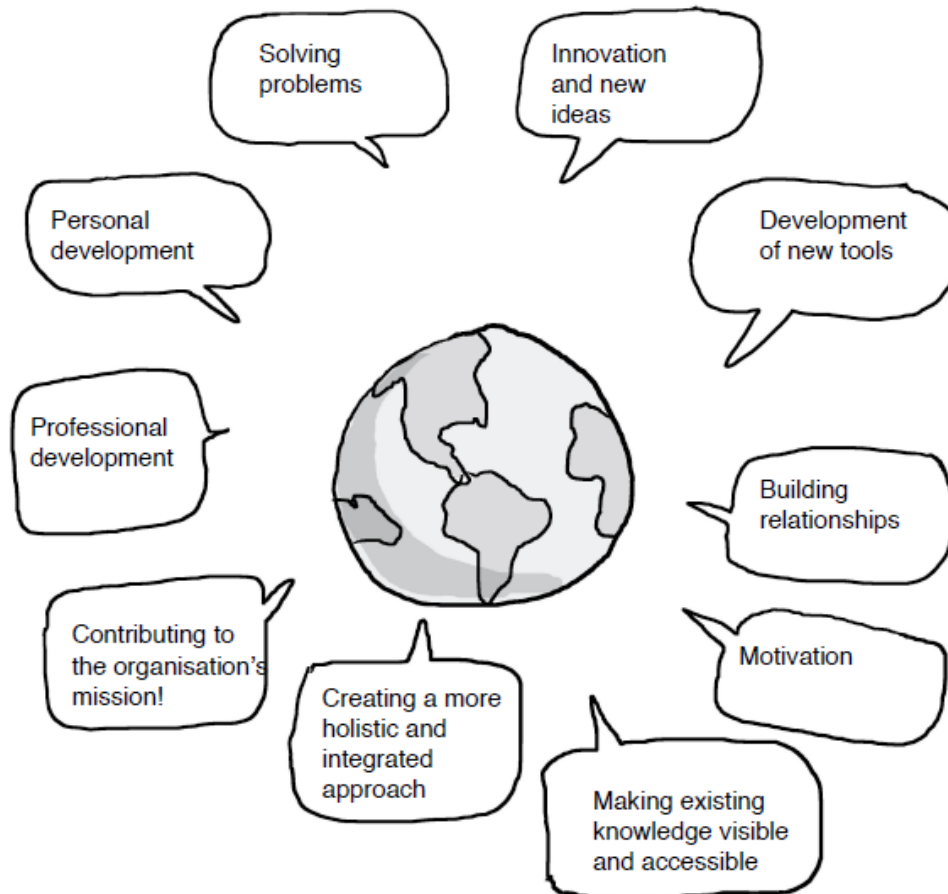
Roles

Members – populate the community, bring questions/problems, share knowledge, devise solutions, engage actively, usually including a core group and peripheral members

Coordinator – organises meetings, recruits and communicates with members, moderates email lists, supports CoP projects, weaving relationships with other stakeholders

Facilitator – facilitates group interaction during face-to-face meetings

Information Integrator – documents learning, helps to store knowledge, coordinates information, maintains information-sharing relationships

Sponsor – provides legitimacy, engages in a strategic alliance with CoP

Guest experts – offer specific areas of expertise needed at some meetings on invitation from the CoP

Stakeholders - state/local agencies and other groups who support or influence members and who could be influenced by their ideas and proposals

Note that one person can play more than one role, and one role can be shared by more than one person.

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Learning Activities and Communication Tools

Face-to-face meetings

    -> Group dialogues, case clinics, external input

        Visits, peer exchanges, learning journeys, field trips

        Email lists and website

        Teleconferences and videoconferences

        One-on-ones and informal interactions

        Sms (for announcements)
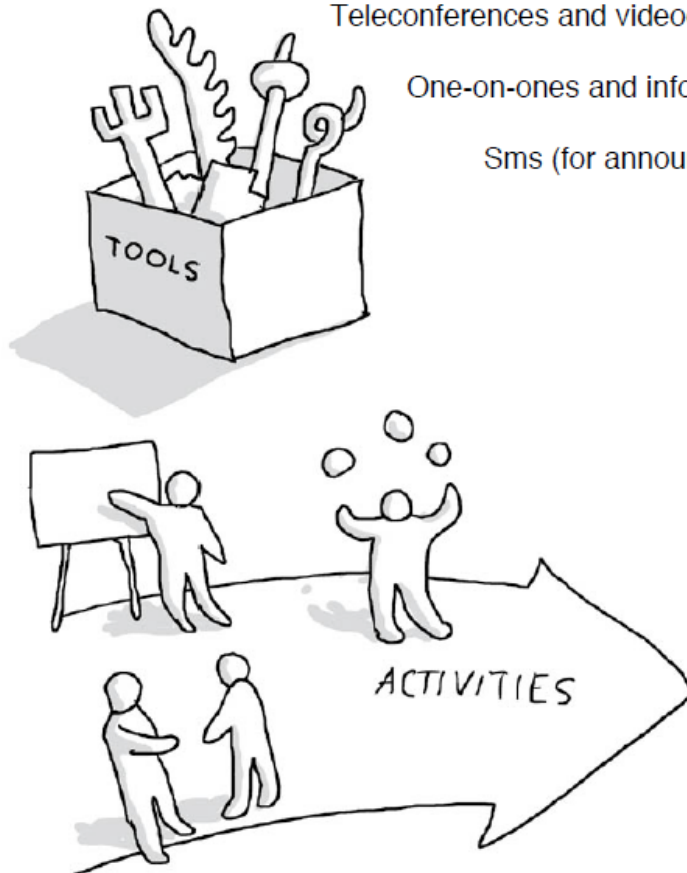
Summary Overview of the CoP…
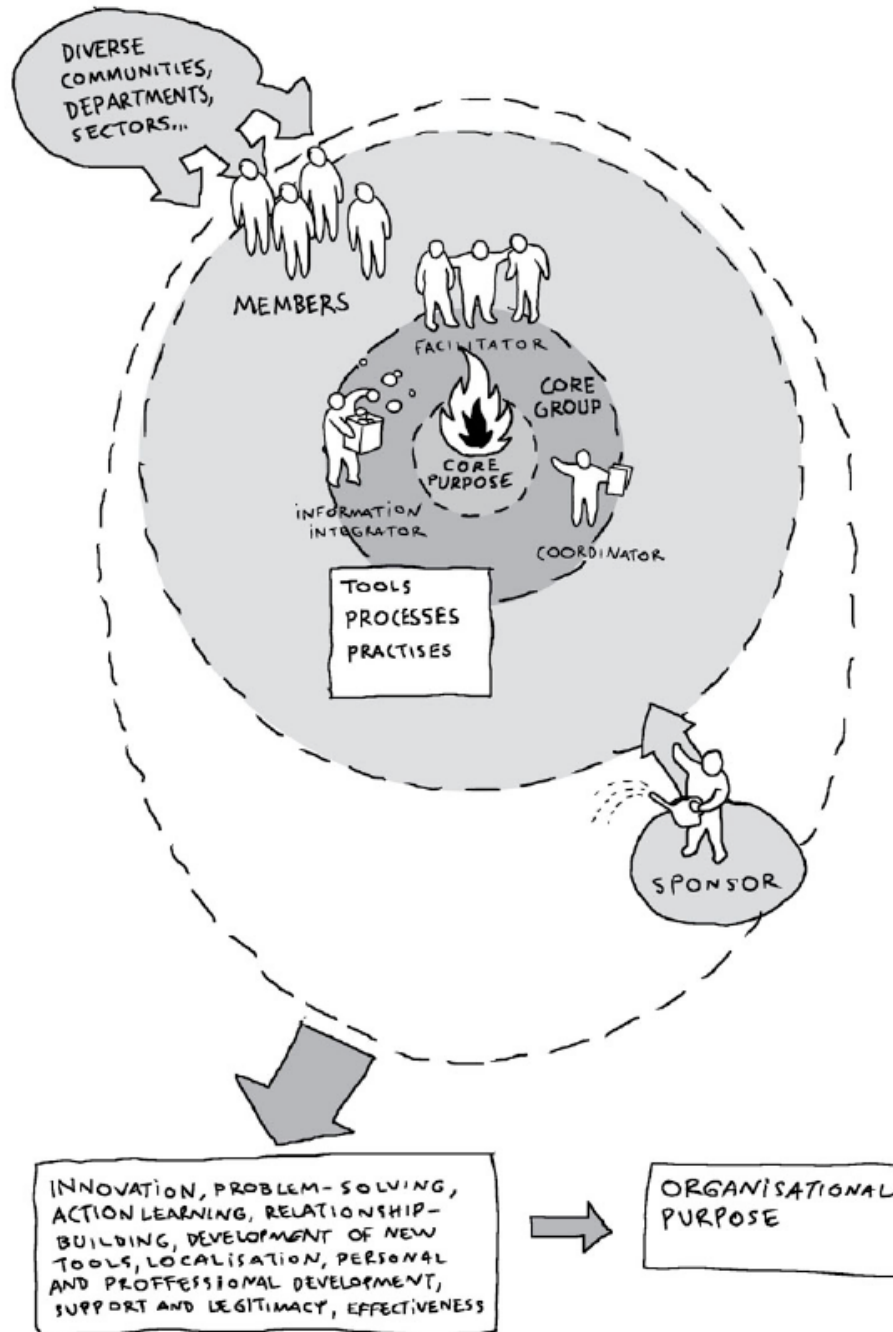
Creating an enabling environment for CoPs

"Organizations and communities have always coexisted, but in the past, they have lived parallel lives, as it were. Today, they need to learn to recognize each other and function together in ways that let each do better what each does best." – Etienne Wenger

- ➔ Recognition of time and effort of members
- ➔ Institutional willingness to listen to the community and be affected by it
- ➔ Energising tasks and expectations
- ➔ Executive sponsorship providing legitimacy, credibility, support and encouragement
- ➔ Information technology infrastructure making people and knowledge accessible
- ➔ Physical meeting spaces
- ➔ Skilled facilitation and dialogue tools
- ➔ Alignment in impact measurement

Cultivation, not Management

CoPs are cultivated, not managed. They require active engagement without control. Tips for cultivating:

- Stay focused on the primary purpose of learning
- Enable members to formulate their own questions and to access each other for answers
- Invite participants to express their interests and learning needs
- Build relationships of trust and knowledge-sharing across departments
- Provide infrastructure and resources that enable learning and collaboration
- Keep members energised through stimulating, quality discussion and real dialogue around cutting edge issues for them
- Keep feeding the CoP useful material and information, share information on visiting experts and other relevant events
- Remind members by email and sms of upcoming meetings to help them prioritise the CoPs activities
- Assess the success of the CoP by level of participation, diversity of participation, member development, member satisfaction, and stories of problems and challenges solved through the work of the CoP
- Pay attention to participation of members – if people leave or join, try to find out why

Getting started

BANG
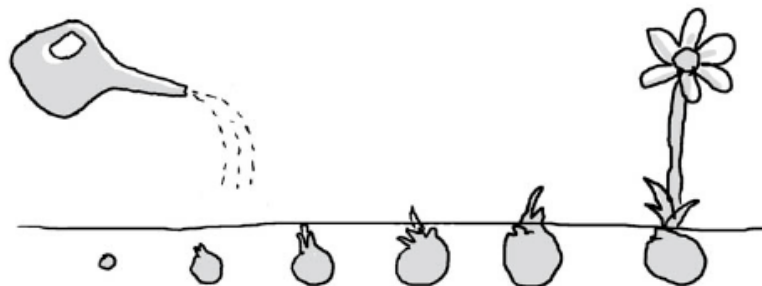
START
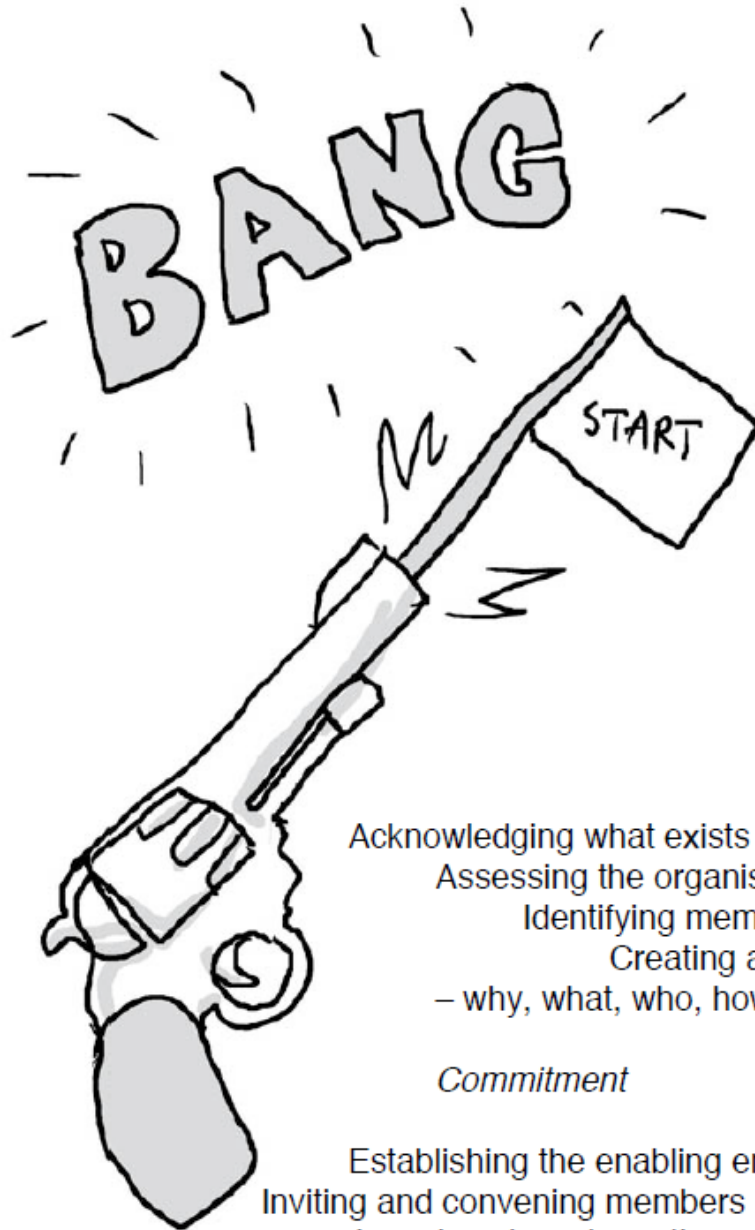
Acknowledging what exists already
Assessing the organisational context
Identifying member needs
Creating a business case
– why, what, who, how, when, where?

Commitment

Establishing the enabling environment
Inviting and convening members
Agreeing shared practices
Cultivating the CoPs

➔ Experiencing the CoP lifecycle

For more information….

See "Building Communities of Practice" report to INK ABM/URP by Pioneers of Change July 2005 and associated compendium.

Websites:

www.ewenger.com
http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/
www.pioneersofchange.net

Articles:

Snyder, William and Xavier deSouza Briggs (2003) Communities of Practice: A New Tool for Government Managers. IBM Center for the Business of Government (Collaboration Series).

Wenger, Etienne and Snyder, Williams (2000) Communities of practice: the organizational frontier. Harvard Business Review. January-February, pp. 139-145.

APPENDIX E

COP POWER POINT

Communities of Practice: turning conversations into collaboration

Date 2011

Alfredo G. Barrantes

www.collabor8now.com

Semantix
www.semantix.co.uk

What I will cover

- What is a 'Community of Practice' (CoP)?

- Five steps to a successful CoP

- CoP Facilitation – the magic ingredient

Communities of Practice

communities of practice – an environment connecting

people and encouraging the sharing of ideas and experiences

A community of practice

@Bill Coleman
814-238-8495

Communities of Practice

A Community of Practice is a network of individuals with common problems or interests who get together to explore ways of working, identify common solutions, and share good practice and ideas.

- puts you in touch with **like-minded colleagues and peers**
- allows you to **share your experiences** and **learn** from others
- allows you to **collaborate** and achieve **common outcomes**
- accelerates your **learning**
- **validates** and **builds** on **existing knowledge** and good practice
- provides the opportunity to **innovate** and create **new ideas**
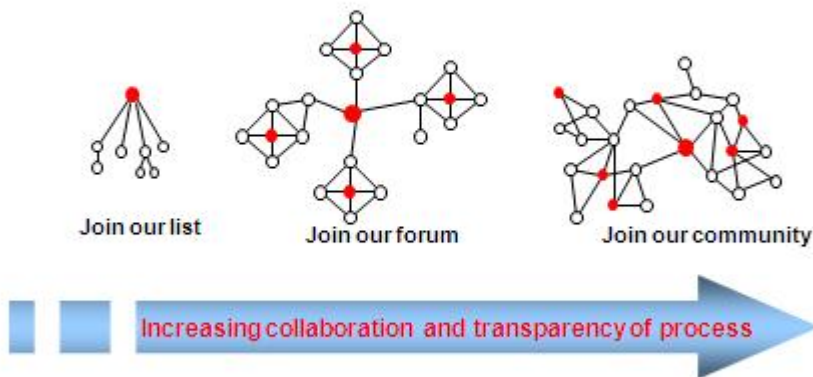
Why have a Community of Practice?

CoPs are not about bringing knowledge into the organization but about helping to grow the knowledge that we need internally within our **organizatio**

Degrees of Transparency and Trust

Join our list   Join our forum   Join our community

Increasing collaboration and transparency of process

Dynamics of Different Network Types

	Community of Practice	Project Teams	Informal networks
Purpose	Learning Sharing Creating Knowledge	Accomplish specific task	Communication flows
Boundary	Knowledge domain	Assigned project charter	Extent of relationships
Connections	Common application of a skill	Commitment to goal	Interpersonal acquaintances
Membership	Semi - permanent	Constant for a fixed period	Links made based on needs of the individual
Time scale	As long as it adds value to the business and its members	Fixed ends when project deliverables have been accomplished	Long – term, no pre-engineered end

# Members of an active community
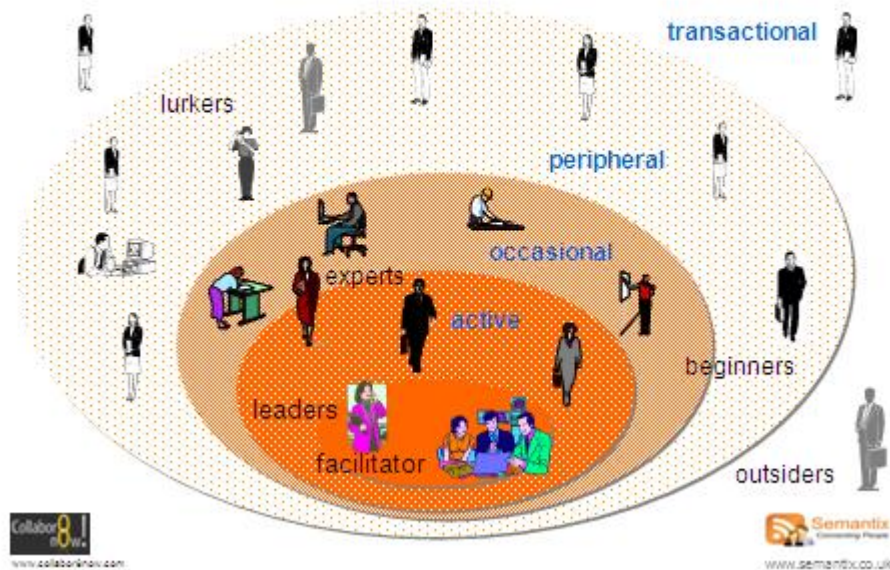
Community Type

- **Helping Communities** provide a forum for community members to help each other with everyday work needs.
- **Best Practice Communities** develop and disseminate best practices, guidelines, and procedures for their members use.
- **Knowledge Stewarding Communities** organise, manage, and steward a body of knowledge from which community members can draw.
- **Innovation Communities** create breakthrough ideas, new knowledge, and new practices.

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Understanding your Community

	Helping Communities	Best Practice Communities	Knowledge Stewarding Communities	Innovation Communities
Drivers	▪Lower cost through reuse ▪Social responsibility	▪Lower cost through standardisation ▪Consistency of project ▪Improves outcomes	▪Professional development	▪Tracks shifting marketing trends ▪Regulation and legislation
Activities	▪Connecting members ▪Knowledge who's who	▪Collecting, ▪Vetting ▪Publishing	▪Enlisting leading experts ▪Manage content	▪Decipher trends ▪Share insights ▪Development of Policy
Structure and roles	▪Problem solving ▪Sub committees	▪Index and store Best practice ▪Publishing	▪Task force	▪Domain experts ▪Sub-committees
Reward for participation	▪Sense of belonging ▪Assistance to daily work	▪Desire for improvement	▪Passion for the topic ▪Professional development	▪Job responsibility to detect emerging trends
Knowledge	▪Tacit - high socialisation	▪Low tacit ▪Explicit to explore	▪Tacit to explicit ▪Tacit to tacit	▪Explicit to tacit.

Addressing the culture

Collabor8w!
www.collabor8now.com

Semantix
www.semantix.co.uk

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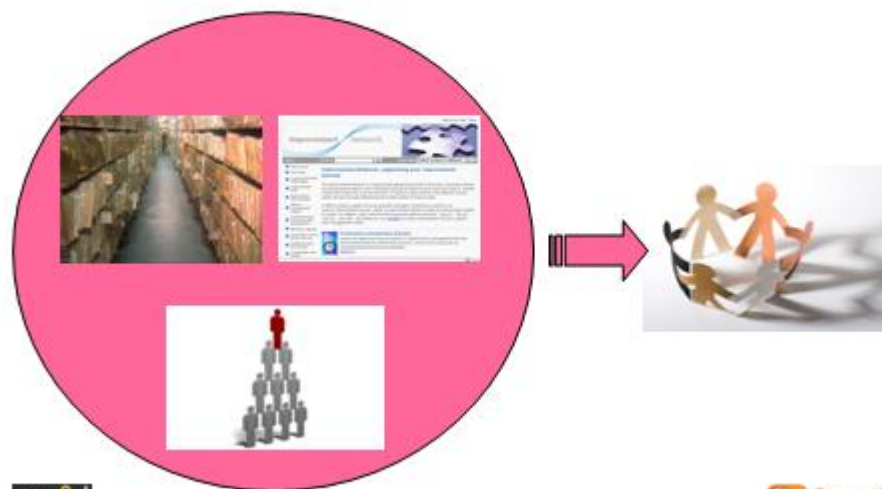
Why does a person engage with a Community of Practice?

- Attractive purpose grabs and retains attention
- Perceived benefits:
  - Socialisation
  - Co-learning, knowledge sharing and co-production
- Each person chooses to be a member
  - Volition
  - Joining in – and leaving!

Community Archetypes

Ego

For **Ego**, the discussion forum is all about him, and he regards discussions that stray from that topic as trivial dalliances. Ego is one the fiercest of all the Warriors and will fight to the death when attacked

Community Archetypes

Fillibuster

Attempts to influence the forum simply by holding the floor. His monotonous hectoring and prodigious output of verbiage rapidly clears the field of other users

http://redwing.hutman.net/~mreed/warriorshtm/fillibuster.htm

Community Archetypes

Big Dog and MeToo

Big Dog is a bully who doesn't hesitate to use his superior strength to intimidate other combatants. **Me-Too** will join the attack. Me-Too is far too weak and insecure to engage in single combat.

http://redwing.hutman.net/~mreed/warriorshtm/bigdogmetoo.htm

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Community Roles and Responsibilities

On a more serious note...

- **Champion/Sponsor** is able to envision the services of a CoP over time, and should have a sense of how the CoP can interact across the organisation
- **Facilitator/Coordinator** consulting, connecting, facilitating, helping, guiding.
- **Leader** serves an integral role in the community's success by energising the sharing process and providing continuous nourishment for the community
- **Librarian** organises information/data (may be part of Facilitator/Coordinator role).
- **Technical Steward** understands business needs and ensure the appropriate tools are available to meet these needs.
- **Core Group** is a working group that initially performs start-up activities and continues to provide ongoing organisational support.
- **Experts** are the subject matter specialist
- **Members/Participants** without these there is no community; the essence of a community is its members.

Facilitation – the magic ingredient

STONE SOUP

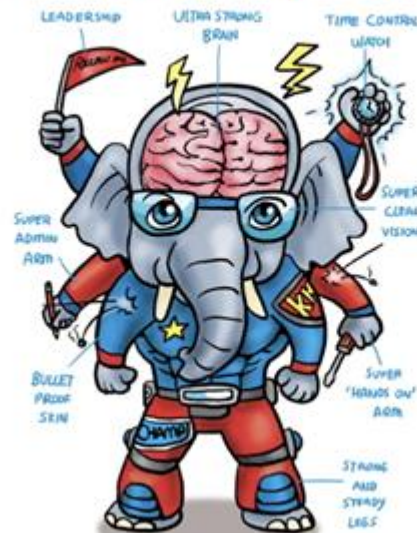## Facilitating or Coordinating a community

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Facilitators' (Coordinators, Moderators) responsibilities

Facilitation and Coordination of a CoP includes:

- monitoring activity
- encouraging participation (facilitation techniques)
- producing an action plan
- reporting CoP activity – metrics, evaluations
- monitoring success criteria and impact
- managing CoP events

A Good Facilitator/Coordinator?

www.greenchameleon.com 2007

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A Facilitator/Coordinator cultivates the community

What makes a successful CoP?

- ✓ clear purpose – what will it be used to do?
- ✓ creating a safe and trusted environment
- ✓ committed core group of active participants
- ✓ being motivated
- ✓ knowing the needs of participants
- ✓ having a clear action plan with activities to meet needs
- ✓ blending face-to-face and online activities

This can all be achieved by good, active facilitation

www.collabor8now.com

Semantix
Connecting People
www.semantix.co.uk

Project Timeline

Aug. 11	Sept. 11	Oct. 11	Nov. 11	Dec. 11

Lessons Learnt: What went well and not so well

Summary – Conversations to Collaboration

- Step 1: Establish/identify a purpose
- Step 2: Identify a Community
- Step 3: Understand the culture and behaviours
- Step 4: Develop/support the 'Practice'
- Step 5: Monitor and measure everything!

www.collabor8now.com

Semantix
www.semantix.co.uk

A Quote

I'm now convinced that sharing knowledge, information and experience through CoPs is the future of success in local government, and that social media tools such as those employed within the IDeA CoP platform are the glue that can stick cross-sector collaboration projects together

Local Authority CoP facilitator

www.collabor8now.com

Semantix
www.semantix.co.uk

Thank you!

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Alfredo G. Barrantes
Email: abarrantes@mail.cartwright.k12.az.us

APPENDIX F

AGENDA COP MEETING

Community of Practice - Agenda

Meeting Information

Objective:

Date: *September--, 2011*   **Time:**   *-----AM-- PM*

Location: *School A – B*   **Agenda**

Item/Presenter
1. Welcome
2. Introductions
3. Discussing and establishing norms
4. Presentations:
    a. Parent Involvement Standards
    b. Communities of Practice
5. Break refreshments
6. Presentation topic to discuss
    a. Small group discussion
    b. Group presentations
7. Resolutions or to be continued next meeting.
8. Adjournment
9. Next Meeting
[Date, Time and Location]
Other Notes or Information

_____   _____
Recorded By: Date:

APPENDIX G

INVITATION TO THE COP

August 2011

Dear Participants:

       I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, Assistant Professor in the College of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to promote involvement of Latino Spanish speaking parents through a community of practice approach at your school.

I am inviting your participation in "the community of practice" at your child school, which will involve meeting one hour for one day per week starting September 2011 and ending December 13th, 2011. Fifteen meetings will be conducted, each lasting about one hour, once a week. This study will involve dialogue, discussion, collaboration, and reflection between parents regarding topics or issues related to the school.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Participants are requested to be 18 or older. **If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will not be a penalty and it will not affect your participation in district or school professional development.** You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified. The benefits of participating in this study include increased understanding of parents' role in the schools, training, and exposure to leadership training and skills.

All information obtained in this study will be confidential. I will be collecting data in the form of: surveys, video recording community of practice meetings, leadership team meetings, journal and the analytic memos.   I would also like to video audiotape the community of practice meetings and debrief them for transcription; however, if you do not want to be video recorded, you have the right to ask not to be recorded at anytime. You can also change your mind at any time once the recording starts.

       All data collection measures will be analyzed and described in my final dissertation. Information will be kept confidential. No identifying information will be gathered. Additionally, the school names will not be identified in my final dissertation study. The video audiotapes will be stored in a secured cabinet in my

school office. The video audiotapes will be destroyed on June 1, 2012 at the conclusion of my study.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at:

Dr. Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, Principal Investigator
4701 W. Thunderbird Ave
Glendale, AZ 85306-4908
602- 543-6336

Alfredo G. Barrantes, Co-Investigator
8575 W Andrea Drive
Peoria, AZ 85383
602-478-2532

Please let me know if you want to be part of the study.

APPENDIX H

FIRST COP MEETING

At the first Community of Practice meeting on September 2nd, I welcomed all participants and presented the purpose of the meetings, schedule, agenda, and their role in the community of practice. Coordinators started by leading the introduction of participants, asking them to get in pairs to share their names, grades of their children at the school, and reasons for participation in the CoP. Then, each introduced their partner to the whole group. Coordinators guided propositions, discussions, and agreement of norms to follow during the meetings. Coordinators presented an overview of Parent Involvement National Standards, and the school profile that includes demographics, subgroups, student achievement, programs, and services. The first topic was presented in small groups. Parents interacted by sharing experiences and knowledge, and proposed solutions or actions to be taken. I, the researcher, brought an expert in the domain or area to be available in case parents had questions or wanted to learn more about it.

After this interaction, the entire group convened as a community and each small group presented their positions for discussion or clarification. The coordinator invited an administrator or stakeholder who is related directly to the domain to listen to a parent presentation. An administrator or stakeholder could participate by addressing their points of view and responding to the parent presentation. The community decide if an action should be taken and presented to the administration or stakeholder. If their decision has opposition, another topic

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could be presented and the same procedures mentioned before will be followed.

However, if the decision is affirmative, the administrator or stakeholder will

articulate how and when they will intervene to contribute to the solution of the

issue. The principal can present the plan personally to the CoP or choose to send it

by email. The CoP will nominate a group member to follow through on the action

and give updates to members during the meetings. Another topic will be

presented and will follow the same procedures mentioned before. Only the

dynamics of the community will determine when it will move to address the next

topic. The process of sharing learning experiences, acquiring knowledge, and

becoming more critical are fundamental during the meetings. Other concerns can

emerge during the process that can be addressed in the next meetings, based on

their importance to the participants.

APPENDIX I

SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SCHOOL'S DEMOGRAPHIC

Table 1

School District Demographics of Students by Percentages

Hispanic	White	African American	Asian Pacific Islander	Indian	English Language Learners	Special Education	Free and Reduced Lunch
89%	4.44%	4.76%	0.54%	1.33%	39%	11%	91%

Note. District Student Information Systems, Genesis 2010

Table 2

Elementary School Student Ethnicity by Grade

Grade	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Native American	Pacific Islander	White	Other	Total
K	136	1	10	4	0	11	2	164
1	131	0	5	2	0	2	1	141
2	104	1	4	3	0	9	2	123
3	99	1	9	1	0	4	1	115
4	116	1	6	0	1	10	3	137
5	107	1	6	0	0	3	4	121
Total	693	5	40	10	1	39	13	801

Note. Information on demographics from Student Information System, Genesis, District Office, 2010.

Table 3

Middle School Student Ethnicity by Grade

Grade	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Native American	Pacific Islander	White	Other	Total
6	355	1	13	8	1	17	4	399
7	352	0	10	4	0	18	2	386
8	384	4	22	1	0	15	3	429
Total	1091	5	45	13	1	50	9	1214

Note. Information on demographics from Student Information System, Genesis, District Office, 2010

APPENDIX J

TEACHER INVITATION FROM COP

Date

Dear
[Ms, Mrs., Mr.]

[Name, last name]

My name is Alfredo Barrantes and I am facilitating a group of parents in a

community of practice group at your school. After dialoguing about [name of the

topic or issue], they feel that more information is needed it in order to come to a

resolution and make recommendations to the administration. The school principal

suggested that you are the most qualified person to speak to the community of

practice. The group would like to invite you to participate in the discussion of

[name of topic or issue]. I will contact you in the next few days in hopes of going

over the specifics and collaborating in the preparation of a possible presentation.

Sincerely,

Alfredo G. Barrantes S.
abarrantes@mail.cartwrigh.k12.az.us
6230691-3987

APPENDIX K

FIRST SURVEY: COP EXPERIENCE AND

MEANINGFUL PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Please put a check mark on your level of agreement of the following statements. Think about your experience during the meetings. **During the community of practice**	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I exchange my ideas	○	○	○	○
2. I discuss my beliefs	○	○	○	○
3. I share my feelings	○	○	○	○
4. I engage in open exploration of issues on an equitable basis.	○	○	○	○
5. I am honest on my participation	○	○	○	○
6. I share my experiences	○	○	○	○
7. I share my opinions	○	○	○	○
8. I share possible solutions	○	○	○	○
9. I am an active participant	○	○	○	○
10. I construct my own understanding of what they hear	○	○	○	○
11. I apply what I have learned	○	○	○	○
12. I reflect on my own participation	○	○	○	○
13. I think carefully about the topic in discussion	○	○	○	○
14. I make better choices about how to act	○	○	○	○
15. I am aware of my strengths as a parent	○	○	○	○
16. I am aware of my weaknesses as a parent	○	○	○	○
17. I am becoming more decisive as a parent	○	○	○	○
18. I learn more about the educational system	○	○	○	○
19. I learn about the school programs	○	○	○	○
20. I learn how to discuss my child academic progress with the teacher	○	○	○	○
21. I learn how to propose constructive suggestions to the school	○	○	○	○
22. I am better prepared to be a leader to encourage other parents to get involved in the school	○	○	○	○
23. I am better prepared to get involved in school governance	○	○	○	○

Please answer the following questions. Write as much you can.

24. In which ways has your participation in the community of practice meetings made you more critical of the current reality at your children's school? Please write 2 specific examples.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

25. How have your experiences in the community of practice helped you interconnect on a personal and collective level with the topics discussed during the meetings? Please write 2 specific examples

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

26. In which ways has your participation in the community of practice helped you make changes regarding your role as a parent at your child's school? Please write 2 specific examples

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

27. In which ways has your participation in the community of practice provided you with knowledge on how to address problem-solving? Please write 2 specific examples

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

28. In which ways has your participation in the community of practice helped you get more involved in your child's school? Please write 2 specific examples

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

29. To what extent has participation in the community of the practice helped you advocate for all children in the school? Please write 2 specific examples

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

30. Since your participation in the community of practice, what are some changes that you have made in relation to your role as parent at the school? Please write 2 specific examples

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you

APPENDIX L

SURVEY TWO COP: MEANINGFUL PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Directions: Please put a check mark next to the statement that best indicates your level of agreement. Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

After attending the Community of Practice Meetings:

1. I know more about how the education system works in the USA.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. I know more about what school programs are available for my children.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. I'm better able to understand the school reports of my children's academic progress.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. I'm better prepared to engage in constructive dialogue about my children's performance at school.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. I' m better prepared to encourage other parents to get involved in school programs.

☐ Strongly Agree　　　☐ Agree　　☐ Disagree　☐ Strongly Disagree

6. I learned that we need to work together as parents to look for better future of our kids at school.

☐ Strongly Agree　　　☐ Agree　　☐ Disagree　☐ Strongly Disagree

7. I am better prepared to share my experiences in the governance of the school.

☐ Strongly Agree　☐ Agree　　☐ Disagree　☐ Strongly Disagree

Please answer the following questions.

7. In which ways has your participation in the community of practice helped you get more involved in your child's school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. To what extent has participation in the community of the practice helped you advocate for all children in the school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Since your participation in the community of practice, what are some changes that you have made in relation to your role as parent at the school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you

APPENDIX M

JOURNAL TEMPLATE

Journal

Observation #:   Location:
Purpose of the Observation:
Date: Start and Stop Time:
Attendees: See Attendance Sheet   Researcher Role:

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

APPENDIX N

OBSERVATION TEMPLATE

Researcher Observation

Observation #: 1   Location:

Purpose of the Observation:
Date: Start and Stop Time:
Attendees: Total: --participants
Researcher Role:

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

APPENDIX O

LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING

Moderator introduction, Purpose, and how I will record the meeting. (2 minutes	Hello…
Norms (3minutes)	Norms…
Introduction of members (10 minutes)	
Discussion of the community meeting (positives, challenges, next steps) (3 minutes	Personal insights…
Summarize (5 minutes)	Most important …
Close and thank you (1 minute)	

APPENDIX P

SCHOOL A: TOPICS

Topics constructed from CoP Meeting Transcriptions, Leadership Team Meetings, and Field Notes

Descriptions	Codes	Groups (topic)	Frequency
The CoP meetings brought parents concerns of the procedures and infrastructure to provide safety for students, teachers, and community in general.	Unsafe Parking Lot, Entrance to School, KG and First grade Bathrooms, Bullying program, and Use and Prevention of Drugs	School Safety	242
During the CoP meetings parents learned and shared their concerns of the lack of a bullying program at their school.	Administrators speak only English, schedule of meeting for parents, online access, auto-dial calls, and alternative ways to communicate with parents.	Communi-cation	179
Parents dialogued and learned about the ELL program at their school.	Student Placement, Home Language Form, Testing procedures, and Interpretation of the tests.	ELL Program	76
Parents discussed and reflect on the lack of communication between school and parents. They also proposed alternatives to effectively communicate with parents.	Auto-dial, text messages, online access, parent surveys, schedule of the meetings, child care, physical space for meetings, administrators learn Spanish, and educational nights.	Barriers of Parent Involvement	189
Parents recognized the importance of having educational programs at the school to support the academic goals of their children at school.	Curriculum nights, strategies for reading: fluency and comprehension, math problem solving, learn about initiatives implemented by the school. English classes, use of the Internet, grading system and leadership.	Parent Education	142
CoP provide the necessary conditions to meaningfully involve parents	Learn about themselves and school, exchange experiences, active participation, two way communication, contribution to solutions, awareness of their roles, want to positively impact the school, and governance of the school.	Evidence of dialogue, learning, contribution, reflection, and self-awareness	257
Parents demonstrated during the CoP meetings important evidence in becoming meaningfully involved at the school.	Parent advisory committee, visits to governing board meetings, some parents facilitate CoP meetings, resolutions were presented and approved by school principal, continue constructive discussions about student academic success. Empowerment to seek for answer	Meaningfull y Parent Involvement	159

and propose alternative solutions.

Parents brought their concerns regarding how procedures of grading, homework, instructional time, and the lack of assemblies to recognized student success.	Consistency on grading: teachers, substitutes, students, state and district benchmarks, homework, and incentives to recognize student achievement.	Grading	94
During the CoP meetings several guests (experts) came to present and share their expertise with the parents.	Researcher, guests, experts, participation during the innovation.	Other Topics	89

APPENDIX Q

SCHOOL B: TOPICS

Topics constructed from CoP Meeting Transcriptions, Leadership Team Meetings, and Field Notes

Descriptions	Codes	Groups (topic)	Frequency
The CoP meetings brought parents concerns about	Bullying program, Silent witness, Fighting, Discipline Actions, Alcohol, Concerns about Safety, Use of Drugs and Prevention.	Drugs	70
During the CoP meetings parents learned and shared their concerns of the lack of a bullying program at their school.	Administrators speak only English, schedule of meeting for parents, online access, auto-dial calls, and alternative ways to communicate with parents.	Communication	108
Parents dialogued and learned about the ELL program at their school.	Registration, transition, grades, magnet schools, orientation, visits, websites, placement.	Preparing for High School	56
Parents discussed and reflect on the lack of communication between school and parents. They also proposed alternatives to effectively communicate with parents.	Auto-dial, text messages, online access, parent surveys, schedule of the meetings, child care, physical space for meetings, administrators learn Spanish, and educational nights.	Barriers of Parent Involvement	140
Parents recognized the importance of having educational programs at the school to support the academic goals of their children at school.	Curriculum nights, strategies for reading: fluency and comprehension, math problem solving, learn about initiatives implemented by the school. English classes, use of the Internet, grading system and leadership.	Parent Education	46
CoP provide the necessary conditions to meaningfully involve parents	Learn about themselves and school, exchange experiences, active participation, two way communication, contribution to solutions, awareness of their roles, want to positively impact the school, and governance of the school.	Evidence of dialogue, learning, contribution, reflection, and self-awareness	123

Parents demonstrated during the CoP meetings important evidence in becoming meaningfully involved at the school.	Parent advisory committee, visits to governing board meetings, some parents facilitate CoP meetings, resolutions were presented and approved by school principal, continue constructive discussions about student academic success. Empowerment to seek for answer and propose alternative solutions.	Meaningfully Parent Involvement	33
Parents brought their concerns regarding how procedures of grading, homework, instructional time, and the lack of assemblies to recognized student success.	Consistency on grading: teachers, substitutes, students, state and district benchmarks, homework, and incentives to recognize student achievement.	Grading	16
During the CoP meetings several guests (experts) came to present and share their expertise with the parents.	Researcher, guests, experts, participation during the innovation.	Other Topics	46

APPENDIX R

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

To: Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
          Soc Beh IRB

Date: 08/01/2011

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 08/01/2011

IRB Protocol #:   1107006653

Study Title: Promoting Latino Parent Involvement in K-8 Schools Through a Community of Practice Approach

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.