Respetar a Otros


The first pages of Involving Latino Families in Schools warn that the book does not include a set recipe for involving Latino parents. But when I read it, shortly after being assigned my first school with a primarily Latino population, I realized that it did something better: it gave me the understanding and tools I needed to develop a parental involvement program that met my population’s needs.

Understanding how to effectively involve Latino parents begins with understanding their culture, their dreams for their children, and their understanding of school and education. Although I thought when first assigned to the school that my first step ought to be to learn Spanish, after reading this book I realized that having a basic understanding of the Latino community would serve me better.

While Latino families—which include Mexican immigrants, Mexican Americans, Chicanos, Central Americans, Latin Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans—are as diverse as any other cultural group, they do have some commonalities. As I read the book, I came to realize that many of the behaviors I had seen in my students and their parents were culturally based: being versatile; being bilingual; participating in extended family; being patient; and valuing education.

Respeto. Respect for education and educators.

Respetar a otros. A strong sense of mutual respect in relationships with others.

Ser buen educado. An emphasis on discipline and proper behavior.

Compadrazgo. The relationship between parents and grandparents that translates as co-parenting.

This book provides a great basic understanding of Latino cultures and their impact on schooling, with suggestions that are easy to implement. Gaitan highlights the major points of each chapter, distinguishes between concepts appropriate for elementary and secondary schools, and provides personal vignettes and stories provided by principals, parents, teachers, community leaders, and Latino students.

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Adult Learning Can Be Fun


Boring. “A total waste of time.” If you’ve ever left a training session thinking these thoughts—or if you’re worried that your staff might be thinking them when leaving one of your faculty meetings—“Sit & Get” Won’t Grow Dendrites was written for you. This easy-to-use book addresses adult learning in funny, creative, and engaging ways.

Tate dedicates fewer than 20 pages to theories about adult learning. Instead, she spends the bulk of the book describing 20 practical learning strategies. The strategies are arranged as chapters, each of which includes a description of “what, why, and how.” The “what” is a brief definition of the strategy, including examples from Tate’s own experience. The “why” provides a theoretical framework for the strategy, presented as short snippets of research that can easily be scanned and reviewed by a busy principal. The “how” includes a wide range of sample professional learning activities, many of which can be put into practice the next day. Each chapter concludes with ideas for incorporating the strategy into your own practice.

The ideas and strategies presented in “Sit & Get” Won’t Grow Dendrites are not new. However, the way in which they are organized will make this book a valuable resource for any professional library. When I first added it to my professional library, I frequently incorporated strategies at faculty meetings. The result? Greater participation, more staff buy-in, better use of time, improved collegial relationships—and lots of laughter.

If you’re looking to transform your faculty meetings or professional development from “a total waste of time” to time well spent, “Sit & Get” Won’t Grow Dendrites could be your recipe for success.

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