

# PARITY Parent Leadership

## Boulder Valley School District

### Boulder, CO



The long-range goal of the PARITY (Parents Advocating Responsibility in the Interest of Their Youngsters) parent training is to reduce the achievement and graduation gaps that exist between Latinx and Anglo students. The overall intent of the PARITY training program is to transform how immigrant Spanish speaking parents see their role as advocates for their children’s educational success. Because they are relatively new to school systems in the U.S., they shy away from being involved in the schools/District. The PARITY curriculum is strongly influenced by multiple studies that demonstrate the positive educational impact that parents have on their children’s educational success.

The PARITY Parent Leadership program, which was developed by CARE, has been one of the parent development practices used by Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) since 2012. The PARITY practice was initiated by a collaboration between CARE consultants and the Director of the Equity office in BVSD. Because of the success of the collaboration, and the positive impact on Spanish speaking parents, BVSD has now increased the frequency of PARITY training programs to three times per year at the elementary and secondary levels.

The PARITY training is provided to 15-25 Spanish speaking parents in seven sessions. The PARITY classes are conducted for three hours each Saturday morning for seven consecutive weeks in fall, winter, and spring. New parents are recruited by BVSD and CARE for each class. BVSD provides childcare, food, training materials, and consultant/facilitation fees. The program topics include how educational systems operate, parents’ rights/responsibilities, multiple intelligences, advocacy strategies, communication, and personal power (among other topics). The PARITY training sessions are circular, with a strong emphasis on dialogue. The intent is for parents to become “transformed”, not merely “informed”. A special session is conducted with administrators and board of education members for parents to ask questions and become familiar with district personnel. Because of BVSD’s commitment to parent training, the relationship and trust factor between Spanish speaking parents and school/district personnel has increased enormously.

The PARITY training has been evaluated through pre- and post- surveys to determine the baseline and change-over-time advocacy behavior of the parents. Following each session, the parents also identify what they have learned and how they will use that learning to advocate for their children. To date, approximately 180 parents have participated in the PARITY program affecting over 350 students. An effects study with the students has yet to be accomplished. The biggest challenge is the recruitment of parents to attend PARITY, partly because many parents work on Saturdays.

“Our district has continued to deepen our partnership with PARITY because of its dynamic and transformative impact on our Latinx parents,” commented Ari Gerzon-Kessler, BVSD Director of Family Partnerships. “It is led with passion and thoughtfulness and our participants quickly translate their learning into positive action on behalf of their children and our schools.”

Standard 4—Speaking Up for Every Child