EMPOWERING MOTHERS IN EDUCATION

Workshop Report

Summary of the Empowering Mothers in Education workshop held on October 22, 2016 at St. Philip Neri Parish for Spanish-speaking Mothers facilitated by the Advisory Committee for Spanish-speaking Communities' PRO Grant volunteers.
Empowering Mothers in Education

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1. SUMMARY
The day included all aspects of the Lesson Plan. Learners began with an icebreaker and were then provided an introduction as to why they were there; the learning objectives; what the day would include; a reflective piece of what they wanted out of the workshop, what they expected of their peers, and what they expected from the facilitators; a parent group matching activity and T/F questionnaire to provide knowledge to the learners and to gauge what the learners knew at the present time; a case study to generate analytical thinking and problem solving; a keynote speech by Claudia Rivera regarding her personal experience when arriving in Canada; and discussing what the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) is doing for the community and the Advisory Committee for Spanish-speaking Communities' (ACSSC) role.

2. ATTENDEES
The number of learners anticipated compared to actual learners was less than expected. As a result, this turned out to be a more intimate workshop. The learners were placed in small groups in order to create a safe learning environment. As the workshop progressed, learners began to form friendships and were often heard sharing ideas and information. Several learners shared contact information with each other at the end of the workshop.

Sixty per cent of learners brought children to the workshop.

A majority of learners required TTC reimbursement.

When polled, the members preferred to have the workshop in Spanish.

Ninety-one per cent of learners signed up to be part of the focus group PRO Grant 2017 which is the final phase of three of the PRO Grant workshops.

3. FEEDBACK
Most learners were from the area:

Most learners have been in the school system for 0-3 years, followed by: 4-6 and 7-10 years.

Most learners appreciated this workshop because it provided them with resources to better help their children and to better understand the school system.

Some learners did not like the music – perhaps it was too loud or applied at inappropriate times.

Some learners wanted a longer workshop.

Most learners really valued the discussion with group members.

One member suggested if individual counseling could be offered.
One member wanted more information on daycare and extracurricular activities for kids.

4. REFLECTION ACTIVITY

a) Facilitator Expectations
Generally, learners wanted general information for the TCDSB to help their children, what we can offer as facilitators, who we are, answer their questions, to have some guidance in Spanish, to help them with their doubts and problems, they expected tolerance and patience, learn from our experiences, counseling, individual help, more parent communication, and how to be a the best mother possible.

b) Peer Expectations
Generally, learners hoped that peers were supportive, collaborative, they could form friendships, share experiences, help with solutions, get to know new people, and hear about similar situations.

c) Self Expectations
Generally, learners wanted to know more about resources, wanted to be able to help others, want to improve their skills, learn more about the Canadian school system, and being a better mom.

5. QUESTIONNAIRE
- The average score on the questionnaire was 77% correct answers. Some of the common unknown topics included:
  - What CPIC’s mandate was – parents thought they could go to the group for personal assistance
  - Did not know about annual Newcomer Conference
  - Did not know that the TCDSB website had information that was beneficial to parents and that they could obtain teacher emails
  - Most parents thought the only way to help their children is by attending parent meetings
  - Parents didn’t know they could set up a parent teacher appointment outside the scheduled meetings

6. CASE STUDY
The workshop included a summative assessment to determine what information the learners had retained from the learning throughout the workshop. The learners worked in small groups to come up with solutions to a fictitious situation where a child is experiencing difficulties and may go down a wrong path and what the single parent could do to help the situation.

General themes of what to do included:
- Spend more time with child
- Communicate more with your child
- Communicate more with the school
- Reach out to community groups
- Join parent groups to get support
- Contact community relations at the TCDSB
• Reach out to a social worker to get access to free services that will allow more time with your child
• Get in contact with the teacher and work out a plan to get the child back on track

7. CONCLUSION

Overall, the workshop went well. Learners were able to obtain new information in a safe learning environment and were able to share experiences with peers. The set up of the learners contributed to a better learning experience and a richer learning session with much participation. So much so that the majority of the learners want to be invited to the focus groups to be held later in the year and share their experiences.

There was lots of interesting side conversations with the learners and the learners formed new friendships and hopefully they have some support post-workshop.

Based on the responses for the case study, these learners are better prepared to deal with issues that arise with their children.

Learners were issued a Parent Engagement certificate to help affirm their commitment to being a more engaged parent and hopefully they will share their experiences with more mothers. Perhaps we can call on this particular group of learners to help kick start more engagement in the future.