

[“Realizing the American Dream” Program Research](#)

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Since the Realizing the American Dream (RAD) program began, RAD has graduated over 35,000 parents. It has been offered over 500 times in approximately 225 unique schools in over 50 school districts.

Realizing the American Dream: A Parent Education Program Designed to Increase Latino Family Engagement in Children’s Education

Does the RAD Program Work?: Research confirms that when parents are involved in their child’s education, their children are more successful in school as measured by test scores, promotion, retention and teacher ratings. Grounded in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995,1997, 2005) well-regarded model of the parent involvement process, the school-based, 10-session *Realizing the American Dream* (RAD) Program teaches parents what they need to know to be an effective partner in the education of their children including academic standards and performance requirements, strategies to motivate their child and how to create and follow an academic success plan for their child. To determine RAD’s effectiveness a program evaluation study posed three questions: 1) Does RAD positively impact parents’ knowledge, beliefs and behaviors related to their involvement in their child’s education? 2) If positive differences are observed, what predicts these changes? 3) Is the RAD Program being implemented with fidelity across multiple sites? To answer these questions pre- and post-program surveys were administered to more than 2300 participants (91% of which were Hispanic) in Fall 2011 and Spring 2012. Simultaneously, pairs of trained observers evaluated the fidelity of the RAD curriculum’s implementation at three elementary schools offering the program in Spanish.

Results: Comparison of parents’ responses before and after RAD revealed large effect sizes for knowledge, moderate gains in involvement behaviors and modest changes in beliefs. The small effect sizes for beliefs are likely due to self-selection: RAD parents know they have a role to play, they need information to guide their effective action. The largest effects found were for the understanding of: academic terms and concepts, academic requirements and standards, how to build reading skills at home, steps required to succeed academically and go to a university and how to work with teacher principal, counselor, or parent liaison. Moreover, *RAD* positively impacts parents’ behaviors, specifically: home-school communication, home-based support for academic skill development, and basic parenting skills (communication, discipline). These post-RAD behaviors were primarily a function of newly acquired knowledge and beliefs, not family demographics. Finally, observer ratings demonstrated that RAD can be scaled across sites with fidelity.

Long Term Implications and Impact: These results indicate that RAD should be replicated. To better understand long term implications of these positive results, a follow up study of RAD parent graduates is needed to track their children’s outcomes relative to peers whose parents did not complete RAD. Additionally, qualitative work that captures individual parent narratives is needed to illuminate the survey data. Finally, research needs to address the reality that while RAD helps parents to become more effectively involved, their children’s teachers also need support in how to effectively engage parents. Thus, implementing RAD alongside a robust teacher professional development program is a vital next step.