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Building family strengths through successful parental involvement strategies: A case study with Latino immigrant families and elementary school staff

Children of immigrants are one of the fastest growing student populations in the United States (Child Trends, 2014; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005) with recent estimates showing that approximately 1 out of 4 school-aged children has at least one immigrant parent (Child Trends, 2014; O'Hare, 2004). Elementary school, in particular, is a critical marker of future educational and professional success (Alexander et al., 2002; Turney & Kao, 2009). Of note, evidence suggests that parental involvement in children's education predicts academic and behavioral success in elementary school (Domina, 2005; Englund et al., 2004; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009).

Yet effective outreach and engagement practices specifically for Latino parents, particularly recent immigrants, are not presently well understood (Greenberg, 2012). In fact, recent research suggests that public schools often struggle to work with Latino families in general due to language and cultural barriers, cultural misunderstandings and biases, and a lack of appropriate training and resources for school personnel (Greenberg, 2012; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009). Moreover, one of the few published studies in this area revealed that, although Latino immigrant parents care deeply about their children's educational success, their involvement is often unrecognized by school personnel due to its less conventional nature (Greenberg, 2012). Pérez Carreón et al. (2005) noted that Latino immigrant parents and school administrators do not generally appear to share a common understanding of what parental involvement means. Thus it is important for school staff, including school social workers, to recognize and encourage parent involvement in both traditional (e.g., help with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at school events) and non-traditional (e.g., providing life education, communicating the value of hard work as a means for achieving academic success) ways as a vehicle for building families' strengths via successful engagement in their children's academic and social success in school. Despite the importance of parent involvement as a means to bolster children's academic achievement, few studies to date have investigated how to successfully build relationships between schools and diverse families in the presence of cultural and language barriers. To that end, the purpose of the present case study is to explore and evaluate the strategies used by an elementary school to involve its Latino immigrant parents into their children's education.

Barriers to School Engagement for Latino Families

A limited body of evidence reveals a number of barriers often experienced by established and immigrant Latino families in their efforts to participate and engage in the children's education, which may partially explain the consistently high rate of educational failure rate among Latino students. Although the dropout rate has declined in recent years, Latino students continue to experience higher rates of dropout as compared to their non-Latino counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). An important avenue for increasing the educational success of Latino students is to enhance parental involvement in their academic life. Particularly important are early educational successes in elementary school (Alexander et al., 2002; Domina, 2005; Englund et al., 2004; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009). Thus, promoting parental involvement during these critical developmental years is paramount to children's academic and behavioral success.

Although the relationship between children's educational success in elementary school and parental involvement is well documented (see Domina, 2005; Englund et al., 2004), many studies are heavily skewed toward the experiences of white, non-Latino families. As such, current practice predominantly focuses on traditional means of parental involvement, defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as "the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including assisting their child's learning; being actively involved in their child's education at school; and serving as full partners in their child's education and being included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). However, Latino families, particularly recent immigrants, often experience language and cultural barriers, which can limit their ability to actively engage in their children's education in the ways outlined above.

Turney and Kao (2009) report that foreign-born Latino parents are 2.5 times more likely than native-born white parents to report they feel unwelcome at their child's school and 5.5 times more likely to report that language was a key barrier to their involvement. Although many Latino immigrant parents care deeply about their children's education, these parents often have different expectations and perceptions about their role as compared to the roles of teachers and school administrators (Greenberg, 2012). Pérez Carreón et al. (2005) purport that "engagement" carries differing cultural meanings for Latino immigrant parents and

educators, which often complicates their involvement. In fact, studies suggest that because the Latino culture in general commonly has such a high level of respect for teachers, questioning teachers and their methods can be perceived as being inappropriate and disrespectful (Greenberg, 2012; Tinkler, 2002). Moreover, research suggests that Latino immigrant parents are often working with schools that are not prepared to serve them (Gibson, 2002; Marschall, 2006). Although some schools have actively begun to engage these parents (Lopez, 2001), many schools have yet to make much effort in doing so (Greenberg, 2012; Marschall, 2006).

Furthermore, parents with higher socio-economic status (SES) and higher education levels are typically more involved than parents of lower SES (Lareau, 2000). Census data consistently show Latino groups overall are 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty than white, non-Latino populations (US Census Bureau, 2010). Therefore, the consistent link between poverty status, race, and ethnicity make SES an important factor to consider when exploring ways in which involvement may be further limited for Latino immigrant parents. As such, research on low-income families is relevant to explore when considering ways in which families may be limited in their access and ability to become involved in their children's education. For example, evidence suggests that low-income parents who may struggle to meet the basic needs of their family may face specific barriers, such as limited time to invest in their children's schooling (Lawson, 2003). However, some parents may also feel as if they have limited personal agency or autonomy and/or little confidence or competence to engage in institutions like school (Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012). As low-income individuals often evidence lower educational attainment (Reardon, 2011), they may feel as if their children's school is not a place where they are welcome or capable of exercising much autonomy and control.

Further complicating involvement is the fact that many low-income, immigrant Latino parents may be undocumented, speak limited English, and/or have low educational attainment. In fact, Lawson and Alameda-Lawson (2012) suggest that "because Latino immigrants are equipped with social and cultural resources that carry little (immediate) currency in mainstream American institutions, negotiating the processes and boundaries of schools and other formal settings may be particularly unwieldy for them" (pp. 654-655). Consequently, low-income, immigrant Latino parents, in particular, may find that securing the necessary resources and relationships to assist in their involvement is a difficult task.

As nearly 60% of Latino children are immigrants or are children of immigrants (Turney & Kao, 2009); these barriers to parental engagement

are particularly important to address. To that end, studies are needed to understand Latino children of immigrants and the experiences of their parents in engaging in their success at school. Yet, to date, only a few published studies have investigated parental engagement among immigrant Latino parents with several noteworthy exceptions. Greenberg (2012) conducted a series of focus groups with 12 immigrant Latina mothers that investigated parents' practices and beliefs surrounding engagement in their children's education at home and at school as well as their perspectives on ways in which the schools attempted to engage them. Results from the study suggested that while some Latina mothers engaged in their children's education in traditional ways (i.e., attending parent-teacher conference, participating in parent-teacher associations, and volunteering at the child's school), these strategies may be beyond the "cultural repertoire" for others (2012, p. 235) as language and cultural barriers often exist.

Several authors assert (i.e., Greenberg, 2012; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005) that Latino immigrant parents may engage in their children's school in non-traditional ways, or ways not readily recognized by mainstream society. Consequently, limited evidence exists on the breadth of strategies that may be used by Latino immigrant families to become involved in their children's education. In fact, a recent literature search revealed only two unpublished manuscripts and one published paper that discussed parental involvement strategies among Latino immigrant families. Tinkler (2002) asserts that, due to the limited educational attainment and English language acquisition of many Latino immigrant parents, parents may struggle to assist their children with homework – a task viewed as a traditional form of parental involvement by mainstream cultural values in the United States. Further, a recent report to the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (Zarate, 2007) indicated that Latino immigrant parents might be more likely to provide life education rather than engage in traditional forms of academic involvement (e.g., homework help, attending school events). For example, study participants reported that they provided life education in the form of being aware of their child's life – their friends, activities, abilities, and career aspirations; teaching them good morals including respecting others; discussing their future plans; and providing discipline and behavioral role modeling. One of the few published studies provided a case example of a migrant family who expressed that their goal was to teach "their children to appreciate the value of their education through the medium of hard work" (Lopez, 2001, p. 420). Although many cultural groups engage in these kinds of behaviors, these forms of parental involvement may be more salient for Latino immigrant parents as

compared to some of the more traditional forms often recognized and reinforced by schools situated in mainstream cultural contexts. Therefore, it is important to identify the variety of ways in which Latino immigrant parents may contribute to and encourage their children's education, including ways not often recognized as being within the mainstream cultural values around them.

Importantly, further study is needed to explore ways in which schools can successfully engage Latino parents, particularly recent immigrants. As barriers are well documented, studies are especially needed that reveal ways in which schools have successfully navigated cultural and language differences to create positive learning environments where diverse students are successful and families feel welcome.

The Present Study

A growing suburb of Kansas City has experienced a significant growth in its Latino population, especially recent immigrants. This growth is reflected in the ethnic composition of the students in the area school district where some elementary schools in this district have become a majority minority school, with populations being as high as 80% Latino. The schools have engaged these families with varying degrees of success, but one school, in particular, is well known by the district and its families for its success working with and engaging Latino immigrant families into their children's education. To that end, the purpose of the present case study is to reveal and evaluate the strategies this unique school has used to maneuver language and cultural barriers to create a positive and comfortable learning atmosphere for its students and parents, in hopes that schools going through similar circumstances can learn from its example. The primary research questions guiding this investigation are: 1) in what ways has this school created a positive learning environment where families from diverse backgrounds feel welcome? and 2) how does this school identify and encourage parent engagement in both traditional and non-traditional ways? Both parent and staff perspectives via focus groups and one-on-one interviews illuminate a number of important practices as well as school policies that facilitate increased access for parents to their children's learning environment. Consequently, the results from the present case study stand to provide valuable insights into effective practices to strengthen an often vulnerable population of families, namely Latino immigrants, by enhancing their role in their children's educational and future successes.

Methods

Sample Participants

A total of 11 parents were recruited from an elementary school that serves predominantly low-income, Latino students, most of whom are immigrants or children of immigrants. Purposive sampling was used to recruit parents for focus groups. Parents, all mothers, were predominantly from Mexico and ranged in age from their late 20s to late 30s. The majority of the sample was married. Time living in the United States ranged widely, from one year to 15 years, which contributed to a varying degree of assimilation and language proficiency among the participants. Semi-structured focus groups were conducted primarily in Spanish, but parents were welcomed to respond in Spanish or English. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the principal and translator of the school. The principal and translator were both female and had been at the school for ten and five years, respectively.

Data Analysis Procedures

All focus groups and interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated, when necessary, for data analysis purposes. Following a grounded theory method of data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), coding of the data occurred in three stages: 1) open (a process of selecting and assigning conceptual labels), 2) axial (making connections across conceptual labels developed in open coding), and 3) selective (developing and/or refining conceptual labels into high-order concepts or themes that lead to the development of theory).

Case Study: Wheatland Elementary School

Wheatland Elementary School (the name of this school, anyone associated with it, and its location have been changed to protect their privacy) has an enrollment that has fluctuated from 250 to 280 students per year. In the past ten years, the number of Latino students has grown from approximately 20 percent to 52 percent, and the number of students on free or reduced lunch climbed from 32 percent to 85 percent (personal communication, May 12, 2014). At the beginning of each school year, approximately 40 percent of the school's students are new. The changes in the school's population have brought on new challenges for the faculty and staff. Yet, unlike many schools across the country struggling to engage with Latino immigrant families (see Greenberg, 2012; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009), this school has

successfully reached out to its families and has involved them in their children's education. Parents reported that they volunteered in the classroom, attended various programs, worked with their children on schoolwork at home, consistently reminded their children of the importance of education, brought children to school, and generally stayed in contact with teachers and staff, representing a variety of ways in which parents became involved in their children's education.

Focus groups with parents and interviews with staff reveal three ways that the school has broken through cultural and language barriers to encourage their families to get involved: building trust, communicating, and empathizing.

Building Trust

One of the first outward signs of trust between the school and its parents was evident at the focus group conducted with mothers. The principal and translator of Wheatland had helped recruit parents for the focus group, and several busy mothers, many with small children in hand, volunteered to participate. Unlike another school where we had conducted a focus group, this school had allowed us to meet with parents without a staff member present. Staff members knew we were going to ask questions concerning the parents' thoughts and concerns about the school, but they welcomed the questions and were interested in the responses.

This relationship of trust was not established when principal Debbie Johnson arrived ten years ago. She explained, "The one thing that I realized is that trust is a very important issue with our Latino families. I knew we were going to have to build a level of trust with those families." She did this by bringing in programs for parents, including a nine-week program that walked eight families through basic concepts of schooling, like reading a report card and setting up a study space at home. This program revealed other concepts parents were not familiar with, which led to further initiatives to help parents learn about the American educational system.

Johnson also went out of her way to emphasize to parents that their immigration status was of no concern to the school and that the school was a safe place for all families:

We've communicated no INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service], no ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] here. We care about you. I can't tell you how many parent meetings I've had that I said, "I don't care if you're here illegally. Your children are my students. I'm

going to help you with whatever I can” (Interview, May 12, 2014).

Her assurances have led to more comfortable and more frequent meetings with parents.

More trust was built when the school was given permission by the district to hire a translator. Principal Johnson hired a Mexican-American woman, Josefina, who had worked previously at the school as an English Language Learners aide. Although it was common practice to place translators in a workroom or in the back of the school to translate documents, Johnson put Josefina in the front office so that Latino families would have a point of contact immediately after walking in the door. In addition to translating school documents and conversations between families and staff, Josefina also answers the school’s dedicated Spanish phone line, answering parents’ questions and informing parents about events at the school. She also helps parents translate any personal documents that they bring to her. Parents will even visit her at school, as Josefina explained: “Some parents, especially women, come and talk to me. I think they feel very comfortable to talk to me, even with matters not related to school. Sometimes they need help to get doctor’s appointments, or they just come to talk to me about some problems” (Interview, May 12, 2014).

Many of the mothers in the focus group spoke highly about Josefina, with one mom simply stating, “Tiene un española que nos ayuda [There’s a Latino woman that helps us].” Principal Johnson credits much of the trust the school has built with its families to Josefina:

Latino moms are very, very connected to the school. They want to be connected. They want to know everything. They just aren’t demanding about it to us. What they do is they call her, and they call her a lot! There are parents who call her every single day. If they see anything, they call her and say, “Hey, what’s going on?” Probably, she gets more calls than we do because they want to know. She has built such a good foundation of trust with our families (Interview, May 12, 2014).

Communicating

Communicating effectively goes beyond speaking someone’s language; it also requires cultural understanding. The faculty and staff at this school embrace this idea and have worked to disseminate information

to parents. As one mom said, “Respetar el idioma [They respect the language].” Signs at the front door are in English and Spanish, and postings throughout the school are also in both languages. The majority of items on the school’s website are translated as well. Every teacher sends out a weekly newsletter to parents, and Josefina translates every one into Spanish.

Despite their best efforts to communicate in Spanish, the school has encountered language barriers that they have had to learn from. One of those barriers has been communicating with parents who cannot read Spanish, as Josefina recounted:

One day I had a parent call and say, “I received this newsletter from the teacher and I don’t understand it.” And I said, “Well, it is in Spanish also.” And she said, “I know, but I cannot read Spanish.” Oops! “Okay, come and talk to me. I’m going to explain to you what the teacher wants or needs” (Interview, May 12, 2014).

In addition to having Josefina invite parents in for clarification, there has been an overall effort to simplify the language in both written and spoken contexts. Principal Johnson explained, “When we start talking in educator jargon and using lots and lots of professional words, families get lost. We have to think of ways to say it more simply.” Principal Johnson has become mindful of the words and sentence structure she uses when writing news items. When translating for families, Josefina has begun to restate instead of translating verbatim.

In addition to the newsletters, the school also communicates with families through a weekly recorded phone call delivered every Friday at 5:30PM. Principal Johnson records the English version, and Josefina translates and records it in Spanish. This call has become so popular that the one Friday the school could not get the call out, several worried parents called in to make sure everything was okay.

Parents not only appreciate the newsletters and calls, but they also appreciate the constant contact the school maintains:

Ellos siempre están informándonos si hay un evento, si hay un niño llegó tarde, si un niño se siente mal, si un niño no está participando, si un niño tiene un problema. Ellos siempre están comunicando. [They are always informing us if there is an event, if there is a kid arriving late, if a kid feels badly, if a kid is not participating, if a kid has a problem.

They are always communicating.]

They appreciated that the school would go out their way to reach parents at home, work, or on their cellphones.

The school's good communication is not limited to Latino families. For other immigrant families that do not speak English, the school district has provided a translator service that faculty and staff can use when calling or meeting with parents. The school has not left out English-speaking families either. Watching English-speaking families grow bored sitting through presentations in English and repeated in Spanish, Principal Johnson changed the way she gave presentations to parents. Spanish-speaking families were given their own section so that they could easily hear Josefina and so English-speaking families would not be kept for too long. When some English-speaking families reacted negatively to Spanish classes offered to students, Principal Johnson spoke directly with families about the academic and social benefits of learning a new language.

Empathizing

They are very sensitive, the teachers, the principal. And they really want to help people. Not even because they [students] need education. I think the school, and I'm talking about the staff also, they say, "Well, the kids need to be educated and learn but also they need a lot of things." Like, sometimes food, shelter, and they [the staff] are working very hard to get that. We are a team, a very, very good team to look for that and help them (Interview with Josefina, May 12, 2014).

The level of empathy the faculty and staff show for their families is noteworthy. Before coming to this school, Principal Johnson had her first experience with Latino immigrant students in her own classroom. When she was sent a fifth grade boy who did not speak English, she created a system in which fellow classmates helped the boy learn English over the course of the school year. As more Latino immigrant families came into the district, Johnson sought help from a neighborhood coalition that included the school district, the city, local churches, and other groups that worked to help Latino families maneuver life in America. It was here that she learned about cultural differences and the challenges faced by these families, such as unscrupulous landlords that took advantage of families that were accustomed to paying their rent in cash. She learned about the perils of coming to America from her Salvadoran neighbor, who had watched four fellow border-crossers get shot and killed when they could

not meet the new demands of the drug runners bringing them over. She has used these experiences to help her understand and work with the situations of her current families.

Previous meetings with teachers in this school revealed a sophisticated understanding of poverty and its effects on families, and this understanding is communicated through their and other staff members' actions. With only 250 students, Wheatland is one of the smallest schools in a district that serves almost 30,000 students in 52 total schools. Yet, despite its size, Wheatland has been the top United Way giving school (faculty and staff elect to have a portion of their salary given to charity) for almost all of the past five years. Principal Johnson explained this by saying, "Part of that is because our staff knows what is needed out there." Faculty and staff have also worked to provide families with beds, sheets, and food, among other things. They have even helped parents find employment. "There's just a belief overall in this school that if there's a need, we're gonna fill it and we're gonna help. I think that has permeated our staff and I think that makes the difference," Johnson concluded. This culture of understanding is disseminated to all levels of staff, including front office workers, who have been trained to recognize signs of illiteracy among parents so that they may help parents with important documents without embarrassing them.

Discussion

Admittedly, Wheatland Elementary is situated in a district that serves a largely affluent population. Students on free or reduced lunch at some elementary schools in the district are almost nonexistent. Outside of monetary support, Wheatland has benefitted from a supportive district that has worked to help the school and its families obtain what they need to ensure student success. This includes sending a district representative to the neighborhood Latino coalition, setting up community partners (churches, local nonprofit organizations) for the school to work with, and procuring grants for after-school programs. District support has allowed the school to better support its families, but placing all the credit on the district would ignore many of the initiatives, actions, and connections taken on by the school's faculty and staff.

As evidenced by the comments made by staff and parents, the school created a climate that welcomed parents from the moment they entered the building. Key themes in doing so centered on building trust, clearly communicating with families in culturally sensitive ways, and empathizing with families and their needs. In this way, the school became an asset for families beyond simply helping them engage in their children's

school. The school was able to provide additional resources for families in the form of material and social support that translated into strengthening families' capacity to meet their basic needs. In doing so, parents were likely better able to engage in their children's academic life and assist them with being successful at school.

Although several authors assert (i.e., Greenberg, 2012; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005) parental involvement may take many forms – and parents at Wheatland certainly expressed engaging in their children's school in a variety of ways – it appears that a key ingredient in Wheatland's success is this overarching climate felt across staff, students, and parents alike. Recognizing that parent involvement may take many forms – particularly strategies that may be more salient for Latino immigrant parents that may be presently unrecognized and/or undervalued by mainstream cultural values – is clearly an important part of the equation but it cannot be the sole means to creating an environment where families feel welcome. Accordingly, the findings from the present study suggest that schools serving diverse families may benefit from examining the ways in which a positive, welcoming climate can be created – focused on trust, communication, and cultural sensitivity – to break down the all too common cultural and language barriers experienced by parents (Greenberg, 2012; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009).

Limitations

Several limitations to the present study are worth noting, particularly in regards to the study sample. The number of focus group participants is limited to only 11 Latina immigrant mothers. It will be important in future research to further investigate the perspectives of fathers and their views on involvement in their children's education. Second, the range of years spent in the U.S. also varied widely among focus group participants. Thus, the degree of assimilation and their English language proficiency also varied. Future research would benefit from purposive sampling of larger numbers of focus group participants where issues of assimilation may be explored concurrently with parents' views on school involvement. Last, the sample is limited to only two interviews with school personnel. Although the principal and translator are key informants to understanding primary ways in which the school involved these families, it would be beneficial in future studies to interview a broader range of school personnel to identify ways in which staff at all levels (e.g., teachers, school social workers, counselors) view and encourage parental involvement.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Despite these limitations, the findings of the present study have important implications for social workers, particularly those in school settings, who seek to enhance a family's strengths by building their capacity to engage in their children's school. The findings point to several potential best practices in social work in school and community settings for supporting immigrant families, particularly Latino parents, and successfully involving them in their children's education. An over-arching way to strengthen families is by making sure their material and social needs are met and schools may be an important resource for doing so. However, it may not be possible for every school to support these families in such extensive ways. Therefore, these findings also speak to the role of community support and the role of policy making in ensuring that all families have access to the resources necessary to meet their material and social needs. By doing so, the challenges experienced by vulnerable families may be alleviated, thus allowing for the opportunity to focus on helping their children be successful.

As this case study has shown, though, meeting material and social needs is only part of the equation when getting parents from diverse backgrounds involved their children's education. It appears that it has to begin with (or coincide with) creating a school culture built on trust, clear communication, and understanding. This kind of school culture has to permeate through all levels of the school and be evident in the policies, practices, procedures, and *values* held by staff. In this way, it is not just the words staff say but also the welcoming and supportive environment that is felt from the moment a parent walks through the door and in every conversation they have with staff members throughout the school.

Collectively these findings point to the importance of building the cultural competence of school staff as a mechanism for understanding, and thus supporting, diverse families. All too often, cultural competence is considered solely from a post-positivistic paradigm, where obtaining objective cultural knowledge is the primary goal (Williams, 2006). While this knowledge is clearly helpful in understanding cultural differences, it does not allow for depth in understanding cultural differences but merely breadth. It may also inadvertently lead to stereotyping and generalizing the experiences of diverse families. Conversely, as seen by the actions of staff at Wheatland, allowing families to share their own experiences – embracing families' own narratives of their experiences – was an important mechanism for bridging the cultural gaps between staff and families. In this way, staff was able to build trust, while also empathizing with families' unique experiences. Consequently, staff could more

effectively communicate with parents in a way that made parents feel understood and welcomed. One of the most important assets was clearly the translator – a cultural insider that could translate the families' needs to staff and vice versa in a way that diminished cultural differences and misunderstandings. Utilizing cultural insiders is an approach akin to the constructivistic paradigm of cultural competence (Williams, 2006). In this sense, the school was able to promote cultural competence among staff by embracing multiple forms of cultural knowledge, namely by incorporating various epistemologies of cultural competence via the post-positivistic and constructivistic paradigms. Importantly, this school's successful approach to building cultural competence among staff was likely a crucial element in developing a welcoming climate for the families they served. Combining multiple paradigms of cultural competence points to a potentially powerful best practice in social work that may be useful across diverse practice settings. As social workers are primed to consider the variety of ways in which cultural knowledge is obtained and communicated, they can be an important resource in school and community practice contexts in bridging gaps between staff and families from diverse social locations.

Promoting multiple avenues for building cultural competence appears to be a key mechanism for developing supportive school climates where parents from diverse backgrounds feel welcome. Accordingly, school social workers, for example, may be in an ideal position to spearhead efforts to build cultural competence among staff. Social work's unique values and ethical commitments centering on respecting human dignity, building relationships, and service make clear the important role social workers can play in building families' strengths through creating supportive school climates where families not only feel welcome but can also consider their children's school as an important asset for their collective success. As a result, it is important to consider as social workers the ways in which practitioners across practice settings, but particularly in schools, can advocate for resources at the school (and even district level as seen in this case study) and community level to support the success of Latino immigrant families and their children.

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