

**OVERVIEW**

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### ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence (APEX)

#### ADMINISTRATION

The APEX Program is in its third year of implementation at the ASPIRA Associate sites of Chicago, Illinois and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

#### PLANNING DESIGN

To insure the development of a high-quality, relevant and useful program model, the APEX planning phase utilized a market-research approach to maximize input from parents and a variety of institutions involved in education.

Parent Focus Group. A focus group session was conducted with Latino parents to (1) discuss beliefs and attitudes toward the educational system and (2) identify wants, needs, and interests in formulating school/family partnerships. During this focus group session, parents voiced many concerns with respect to the education of their children. Overwhelmingly, parents felt that "communication at home" was a major priority. Parents felt that if they could better communicate with their children and more effectively help their children study, they would then be able to address issues of community and school involvement. Based upon feedback from parents during the focus group session, workshops were developed which reflected the topics about which parents were most interested in learning.

Parent Field Testing. The materials and design of the workshops were field tested with Latino parents to insure that they appropriately responded to parents' wants and needs. Parents participated in trial workshops and then critiqued format, delivery, time, content, and design.

Stakeholders. Representatives from the ASPIRA National Office and Associate offices came together with advisors from organizations involved in various aspects of school reform to discuss and develop recommendations for implementation and dissemination of the APEX model. ASPIRA also asked outside readers with specific expertise in parent involvement and related areas to review the APEX materials for content and presentation.

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## WHY DID WE DO THIS?

Because parents matter, we began by asking parents what issues were most important to them in improving the education of their children. Parents participated in the planning sessions and gave important feedback on how these materials should be developed. Based upon such feedback, the APEX Training Series was designed to improve parents' ability to work with their children at home, get involved with school, and play an active role in helping schools be more responsive to the needs of Latino youth and their families.

Because parents matter, we created manuals that are easy to read and understand, and available in both Spanish and English. The APEX Workshop Series Manual trains parents who are not yet familiar with how the school system works, who have never been a member of a parent group before, or who want to help a child do better in school, but don't know where to start. Organizing and Working with Parent Groups: A Manual for APEX Facilitators provides important information on organizing and working with groups, networking with other parents, and becoming a leader.