

FLI Executive Summary

The Family Leadership Institute (FLI) has been a major program initiative at the San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) since AY2015-2016, aimed at parents and caregivers with the goal of providing family leadership skills that support lifelong success for parents and academic achievement for their children. The curriculum is being offered to the district through a contractual arrangement with Education Achievement Services, Inc.

During the past two academic years, seven cohorts of parents and caregivers together with certain district personal have completed the FLI program for a total of 344 participants. Another 149 participated in additional cohorts of FLI-related events (e.g., National Practitioner Training Summits and PLP community events) for a total of 493 participants that have received some type of training/orientation from the FLI.

Evaluation of the FLI began early 2017. The study was based on a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were based on district documentation as well as from meetings and interviews held with school staff and parents, including parent focus groups and formal/informal field observations; with quantitative data gathered from two parent surveys. In addition, student performance indicators from a stratified random sample of their children were matched with comparison groups for analysis of student outcomes. The study was driven by three research questions. The first regarded the demographics of who participated in the program and how they viewed the program, with two additional research questions focused on specific parent outcomes and student performance.

Among the participants that were primarily female (87%) and Hispanic (85%), evidence of program effectiveness yielded most favorable results of increased parent participation rates across a variety of indicators of parent engagement. As parents gained more positive attitudes toward schools, they became more involved in school-based activities and events, with nearly one-fourth now working at schools districtwide, focusing on special initiatives aimed at greater academic progress for their children. Among ancillary outcomes, the FLI has helped strengthen the Family Engagement Leadership Development Office and the formation of multiple cadres of parent leaders districtwide.

Study results indicate substantial evidence of program effectiveness, where parents have become greatly involved with local schools. The vast majority (98%) of parents reported been able to put into practice multiple strategies learned, with nearly all (94%) reporting that FLI had considerable influence on time spent with their child, and a large majority (88%) also indicating increase in school performance for their children.

In addition, student academic performance seems to also have been influenced by parent engagement, though the time period has been extremely short to reflect significant changes in behavior and academic progress, as change of this magnitude takes time, often four years or more. But when compared to matched samples at the district level, slight increases in attendance, GPA, and graduation rates are becoming notable for FLI students, with related decreases in retention and discipline more evident.

Not only is there evidence that parents are more greatly involved in the schooling process due to the FLI, but evidence is mounting that this effect may also impact higher student performance.