

**Kronkosky Charitable Foundation
Roundtable Discussion**

Topic: Parenting Education

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Participants

Invited Agency Representatives

Rosalinda Gomez	Coordinator	Mutual Enrichment Through Learning and Discovery
Yvette Hinojosa	Director	Project P.O.D.E.R.
Hilda Salas	Parent Educator	San Antonio Independent School District
Vickie Squires	Child Life Manager	Christus Santa Rosa Child Life/Child Development Services
Mylinda Swierc	Program Director	Families and Schools Together

Foundation Staff and Trustees

Palmer Moe	Executive Director
Megan Kromer	Associate Director
Mark Carmona	Grants Manager
Rachel Duncan	Student Intern

Overview of Organizations

Mutual Enrichment Through Learning and Discovery (MELD)

- MELD has been in existence for 2 years and is operated through Methodist Healthcare Ministries (MHM) at 36 sites in San Antonio. The program is divided into 3 components: MELD for young moms, MELD for young dads, and MELD for growing families. The sites are group meeting places and they are usually located in churches or schools.
- Families are recruited through PTAs, church bulletins, CPS referrals, word-of-mouth, Seton Home, and Avance. There are usually 10 parents per group site, and they meet in 10-week phases for 2 years. Only one parent from Ms. Gomez sites has completed the full 2-year program. MHM provides meals and childcare, and the parents work on arts and crafts from time to time.
- The program is evaluated according to attendance levels and self-administered surveys given to participants.

Project P.O.D.E.R.

- Project P.O.D.E.R. has been in existence since 1992 as a program designed to cater to the needs of families of children aged 0-21 with disabilities. The program helps 4,000 families annually.
- Project P.O.D.E.R. holds monthly workshops explaining identification protocols and legal rights of special needs children.
- The Project provides home visits to families who need one-on-one assistance. These visits may be in response to parent phone calls on their crisis hotline.
- The program is evaluated annually according to the parents (increased) understanding of their child's disability and their participation in the child's educational planning.

San Antonio Independent School District Parent Academy

- The Parent Academy is a district-wide program that provides weekly classes on parenting skills to district parents. The Practical Parent Education program is used in addition to presentations from community groups. 550 parents of school-age children have attended one or more courses.
- Participants include about 10 grandparents and 20% fathers.
- Judges may refer parents, but they generally continue to attend after coming once or twice.
- Refreshments and childcare are provided. Parents are recognized for perfect attendance and other achievements, and there is a graduation ceremony for parents who complete a series of classes.

Christus Santa Rosa Children's Hospital

- The Hospital provides hospital-based medical and health-related education on topics such as asthma, and ECI referrals.
- The hospital evaluates its parent education programs according to specific targets such as increased holding and touching by the parent, play behavior, incidences of repeat admission, compliance in using prescribed medications, and parent patient satisfaction which is measured by a survey.

Families and Schools Together (FAST)

- FAST is a school-based program that focuses on prevention of child abuse and early intervention. Parents attend 8-week sessions of meetings that are designed to educate them on topics like communication, feelings, structure, and routine. Teacher teams use group discussion and role modeling to teach. Follow-up programming continues for two years after the initial 8-week session.

- The school contacts parents whose children are behind in school, have behavior problems, have experienced family traumas, and have low self-esteem among other difficulties. The parent gives the school permission to pass their contact information on to FAST, and FAST then contacts the parent to encourage them to come to meetings. The school usually contacts 20 families in order to recruit 15 for the program.
- Families are fed at each meeting, and the families have a chance to win a basket together at each meeting as well.
- Evaluation of outcomes is measured by behavior of the child in the classroom before and after as reported by the teacher and the parent, family adaptability as reported by the parent, school involvement as reported by the parent, and social isolation as reported by the parent. Standardized FAST national surveys are administered by the parent teacher or mental health partner on the teacher team, summarize by Alliance, and indicate a reduction by 20% of bad behavior inside and outside the classroom.

Issues

- Great strides have been taken in parenting education in San Antonio, but more is still needed. For example, the FAST program serves 25 schools, but the waiting list is still huge. The models are working, but it is not enough.
- There seems to be a lack in networking and communication between parenting education programmers in the San Antonio area. None of the roundtable participants were aware of each other before the meeting. It is important to link up and know how to refer and access resources. Parent educators need to be able to walk parents through the process of accessing the resources they need.
- Parents' primal needs for food and other concerns that might distract a parent living in poverty must be met before the parent can appreciate parenting education. It is important for parent educators to be able to connect parents with the resources they need to fulfill primal needs. Food is fairly easy to find for families, but even that can still be difficult because of certain regulations.
- Getting parents to attend parenting education can be difficult, but recognition incentives such as recognition for attendance or participation, childcare, refreshments or meals, and prizes encourage parents to attend.
- Many parents harbor some fear of the school institution. This fear spurs them to take parenting education seriously when they are contacted by the school about it but causes them not to attend when meetings are

actually held at the school. The school can be a very cold environment for parents; many of the teachers and staff working in them need professional training on their human interactions.

- Many parents are most interested in improving their parenting skills during early childhood, but they tend to lose that interest when their child is in elementary school.
- Many parents feel a lack of parenting education availability when their child enters adolescence. The transition is difficult, and there are not as many programs that serve this need.
- Pediatric health care has become more family-centered; almost 90% of the care provided to children and their families is psychosocial care. Hospitals are just now getting to the next level of transition to a proactive parenting education model from a reactive model. The nurses, however, have a full plate and find it hard to incorporate parenting education into their jobs. The average length of stay for the parents of a newborn is 36 hours, and the parents are very busy during that time. They do not usually return to the hospital for family care, but visit a pediatrician or general practitioner instead.
- Although the San Antonio Police Department does offer parenting education, its program is probably the least helpful because it is provided to parents during a time when they feel threatened and isolated. Parenting education works better when parents feel safe.
- Home-based services can be very effective, but parents need a setting in which they can form relationships with other parents. Examples of home-based parenting education programs include Migrant Even Start, HOPES, and Family Effectiveness Training offered by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.
- Disabled parents view their medical environment as an extended family.
- 11, 12, and 13 year old children who bear children are not developed enough mentally and emotionally for parenting education.
- There are no programs that target grandparents specifically for parenting education. Most programs just mix grandparents in with the group as primary caregivers. Some grandparents aren't motivated to learn parenting skills because they feel that they don't need them.
- Dads generally don't attend parenting education sessions and may cause their spouses not to attend by threatening to be angry if they do. Many times, however, fathers will attend the second session of the FAST program after the mother has gone once to check it out and continue to attend after that.