

## 2011-2013 AMERICAN DREAM ACADEMY EVALUATION

Dr. Joan Walker of Pace University evaluates data collected from parent participants in the American Dream Academy. The scope of the current study is approximately 16,000 Arizona parents of students enrolled in over 140 schools in more than 37 school districts. Grounded in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of the parent involvement process, the *Realizing the American Dream* program targets Latino parents' involvement beliefs, knowledge and behaviors. Pre- and post-program differences in these variables were examined across two samples. Both groups demonstrated significant increases in knowledge, followed by behaviors and beliefs, respectively. Hierarchical regressions revealed that parents' self-reported post-program behaviors were predicted primarily by their post-program knowledge and beliefs, followed by prior involvement behaviors and beliefs, and family income.

### Performance Metrics – 2011 Preliminary Results

Participants included two samples of parents enrolled in RAD at Phoenix area elementary, middle and high schools in fall 2011 and spring 2012. For the fall sample, complete data (matched pairs) were obtained for 1,245 parents. The spring 2012 sample involved 1,126 matched pairs. Table 1 summarized demographic data for the two samples. (See Appendix I)

- Meaningful pre-post differences were observed in parents' beliefs (see Table 5); a larger effect size was found for the spring sample.
- Many items in this scale (e.g., *It's my responsibility to make sure my child finishes high school*) were near ceiling at pretest, suggesting little room for change. This is logical given the voluntary nature of program participation; it attracts parents who already believe they *can* make a difference but may not *know how* to put their beliefs into effective action.
- The item that changed most dramatically from pre- to post-program reflected parents' beliefs about the role of home-based activities play in children's learning, *My child spends more of his or learning time at home than at school.*
- The largest pre-post differences were observed for parents' knowledge (see Table 6). All items increased and examination of individual items across both samples indicated that items that changed most were closely linked to the RAD curriculum (e.g., academic terms and concepts, steps required to succeed academically and go to a university, and how to work with the child's teacher, principal, counselor, or parent liaison.)
- Consistent with prior tests of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model with Latino parents demographic variables played a small role in predicting parents' involvement behaviors.
- This study shows that when knowledge and beliefs are addressed in a targeted way, it can impact parents' involvement behaviors despite significant sociological barriers.

- These findings, taken with results of other successful Latino parent education initiatives and reports of low-income mother's involvement, suggest that active school efforts to engage Latino families *can* succeed when parents are given the necessary tools.