Strategic Partnership for Family Leadership:
Education CAFE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter shares the organization background, theoretical frameworks, the case example of an Education CAFE model, challenges, and recommendations by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) from its more than 45 years of ground-breaking work in strategic partnerships focused on family leadership in education. The IDRA Education CAFE (Community Action Forums for Excellence) is a parent group that is rooted in a community-based organization, rather than in a single school. Its sole purpose is to collaborate with schools to improve the success of students in the community. IDRA developed the model through strategic partnerships with schools, families, and communities. It is the central focus of this case study illustrating lessons learned and next steps for successful strategic partnerships for family leadership in education.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter shares the organization background, theoretical frameworks, the case example of an Education CAFE model, challenges, and recommendations by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) from its more than forty-five years of ground-breaking work in strategic partnerships focused on family leadership in education. The IDRA Education CAFE (Community Action Forums for Excellence) is a parent group that is rooted in a community-based organization, rather than in a single school. Its sole purpose is to collaborate with schools to improve the success of students in the community. IDRA developed the model through strategic partnerships with schools, families, and communities. It is the central focus of this case study illustrating lessons learned and next steps for successful strategic partnerships for family leadership in education.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is a case description and not a report of a research study. The Education CAFE model is currently being studied in more depth with multi-pronged approaches using fidelity of implementation, quantitative methods, and qualitative methods. Researchers are looking at both short and long-term results. In addition to program evaluations for the U. S. Department of Education and the Kellogg Foundation, an ethnographic study with thirty family interviews has helped guide the preliminary recommendations of this case study of a strategic educational partnership.

BACKGROUND

Throughout IDRA's more than 45-year history, a strong model of family engagement in education has evolved, constructed from the experiences in the field, especially with Title I schools and the families whose children attend them. The research-based practices and experiences grew into the Education CAFE initiative, where the IDRA Family Leadership in Education model is thriving, embodied in grassroots organizations with effective community outreach. This section describes the rich history of IDRA's family leadership efforts leading to the current strategic partnership, namely IDRA Education CAFE. As Figure 1 illustrates, IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework™ (Robledo Montecel & Goodman, 2010) incorporates family engagement in several key sections of a comprehensive change model. It shows how quality public education for all students can be achieved. The framework–or theory of change–is grounded in school reform research and practice.

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