



Report Summary: The Concilio's PASE Program 2011-2014

Background

The Concilio's Parents Advocating for Student Excellence (PASE) program teaches parents in at-risk neighborhoods how to positively impact their child's education by being actively engaged in supporting their learning. Parents – many of whom never graduated from high school themselves and are immigrants facing cultural/language barriers– learn how to navigate the school system, identify academic challenges their children may face, and provide a home environment that supports learning. PASE program participants attend a weekly training for nine weeks with a trained facilitator.

Evaluation Overview

The Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE) at SMU's Simmons School of Education conducted an evaluation examining the potential impact of the PASE program on parents and students. We evaluated the extent to which parental involvement in PASE during the 2012-13 school year may have impacted students' education outcomes in the intervention year (2012-2013) and post-intervention year (2013-2014). We utilized data from parent surveys and focus group interviews, classroom observations, teacher surveys, and student academic and behavior indicators such as standardized test scores (STAAR and ITBS)¹, course grades, attendance, tardies, and disciplinary referrals. This guide provides summaries of our findings and some guidance for how these findings should be interpreted. Additional information is available in the full report of findings.

Key Findings

The evaluation of the PASE program found that The Concilio's work has a positive impact on engagement behaviors, which are research-based indicators of future academic success, high school graduation and college attendance.

- Parents in the 2012-13 PASE program indicated an increase in pro-education activities in the home, parent contact with school staff, parent knowledge of school tests, and parent discussions with their child of long-term career and academic goals.
- Teachers of students with parents in PASE programming tended to report that PASE students generally performed better on a variety of academic indicators than comparison students, including positive behavior, attitude, motivation and homework habits.
- Children of parents participating in PASE programming attend school more often and arrive at school on time. Increased daily attendance and decreased tardies are a necessary ingredient for promoting academic achievement. While there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that the nine-week parent engagement program directly impacts student academic achievement, PASE does improve these critical indicators that can set the stage for academic achievement.

The Big Picture

The Concilio recognizes that a major contributing factor to the persistent education and achievement gap for low income students is a cultural barrier that can keep parents of these students from fully engaging in their child's school settings. PASE programming tackles this barrier head on by equipping parents with the tools they need to bridge this divide. By strengthening these skills, The Concilio is helping families to make positive behavioral changes within the family unit, such as getting to school more regularly and on time.

¹ *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* is administered to students in grades 3-8. The *Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)* is administered to students in grades K-2.

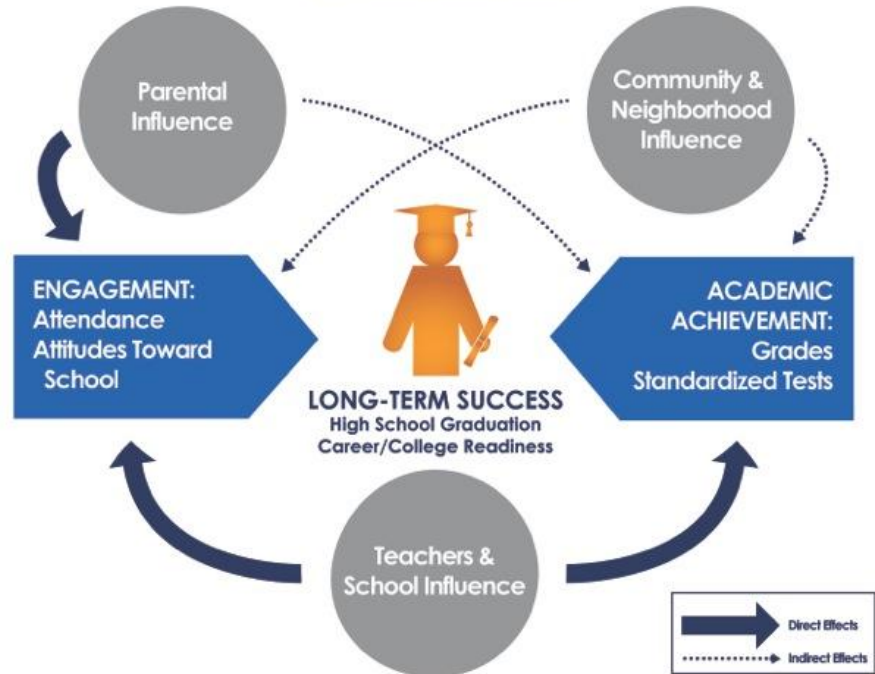


However, in addition to the parental role, many other factors in a student’s life—including qualities of their teachers and schools, and features of their surrounding community—all interact to determine students’ eventual educational outcomes. In short, parents, even when doing the very best that they can, can only change so much within a K-12 school environment. A highly engaged parent may be able to shepherd his or her own student through a challenging school environment and be instrumental in assisting that student to succeed and graduate. However, this is not likely to be the norm for most families.

In order to fully realize the potential to change academic outcomes for entire cohorts of students, organizations like The Concilio must engage in strategic partnerships with other community-based organizations, all working toward the same goals.

When each strategic partner does its service well—whether that be parental engagement, teacher quality initiatives, violence prevention in the neighborhoods surrounding the school—a collective impact may be achieved. The results of this evaluation indicate that The Concilio is successfully impacting critical engagement behaviors that help set the stage for a community effort to impact education and life outcomes for these children.

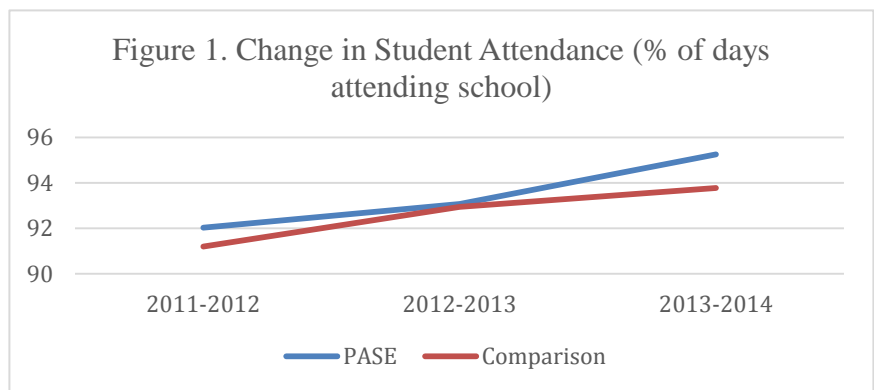
Theory of Change: Parent, School and Community Influences on Student Achievement



Summary of Five Key Findings

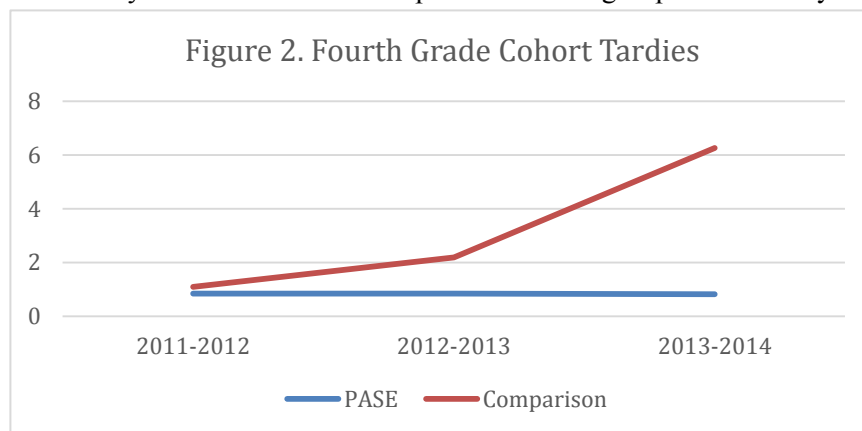
1. Parental involvement in PASE improves student attendance.

Analyses indicate that the PASE program had a meaningful and statistically significant effect on student attendance. That such a relatively short intervention (approximately 13 hours) with parents—as opposed to a direct intervention with students—is able to improve student attendance significantly beyond that of the comparison group is noteworthy, especially in light of research indicating the vital role that student attendance plays in predicting student achievement. CORE examined a group of students who parents attended PASE programming and who had problematically low attendance rates. We compared their change over time to a comparison group of students whose parents did not attend and discovered that PASE students improved more than the comparison students.



2. Parental involvement in PASE decreases student tardies.

The rates of the PASE students' tardies are very different from the comparison student groups'. It is a very important parental responsibility to ensure children get to school consistently and on time. Though presence in school alone does not guarantee high academic achievement, it does provide students with the best possible opportunity to learn.



Connection to the Research:

Research suggests a statistically significant relationship between attendance and achievement (Roby, 2003). Children from families living in poverty who were chronically absent in kindergarten performed lowest in math and reading in fifth grade (Chang & Romero, 2008). Attendance in elementary and middle school was a robust predictor of GPA and performance on standardized tests (Gottfried, 2011).

3. Involvement in PASE by parents does not directly impact academic achievement by most students, but may be impactful for students who are performing poorly.

CORE examined the pre-intervention to post-intervention course grades and STAAR test scores in reading and math for students whose parents were involved in the PASE program. There was not a statistically significant change in these scores. In some cases, if students were already performing particularly well, improvement in grades was difficult to interpret. Additionally, in some cases, students moved into more difficult courses over time. They may have received lower grades in the more difficult courses. Initial analyses of STAAR test standardized test scores indicate that PASE programming may indeed be most impactful for students who are performing poorly. Additional analysis over time is needed to understand this possible impact. Plans to incorporate these trends into future analyses of The Concilio's ongoing programming are addressed in the full report.

4. Parental involvement in PASE improves parents' attitudes toward their children and toward education.

Data show a statistically significant change in parents' attitude towards their child, their knowledge, and key behaviors related to academic advocacy before PASE and after participating in the program. In all categories, parents' indicated an increase in pro-education activities in the home, parent contact with school staff, parent knowledge of school tests, and parent discussions with their child of long-term career and academic goals. Overall, parents' perceptions of their ability to help their child make better grades increased significantly. Parents are spending more time requiring reading at home, having students do homework consistently, and communicating with school staff. The importance of homework as a tool for improved student achievement has been concretely established (Cooper, Harris et al., 2006).



5. Teachers of PASE students report that they perform well in class.

Teachers reported that 84.36% of the PASE students had average or above “on-time” homework, and 86.96% of the PASE students had average or above average quality homework compared to other students in their class. When asked to compare the PASE student’s behavior, attitude, and motivation to other students in class, teachers reported that 91% of the PASE students were average or above in their behaviors and attitudes in school.

References

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