

# Working with Diverse Populations

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## **Build on the cultural values of families.**

**Example:** I was working on developing an after school program in a new school and 98% of the families were only Spanish speaking. I asked each family and attending member to bring something to the meeting that represented their culture and values and explain each object and its significance in their lives. This exercise was powerful and the commonalities were abundant. Members learned to look beyond what they saw after the exercise was completed. The purpose of the meetings was to build rapport, identify commonality and skill sets and discuss gaps in programming.

## **Stress personal contact with families**

**Example:** Even though language was a barrier I made it a point to learn the names of each parent and say hello and thank you in Spanish, I watched babies while mothers filled out registration forms for older kids, these small gestures on my part helped to speed up the rapport building and create a level of comfort.

## **Foster communication with families**

**Example:** Personal contact and fostering communication went hand in hand but the most important part of fostering communication was to have a translator present and having our program information in Spanish.

## **Create a warm environment:**

**Example:** We encouraged families to stop in and see their children at play and to join them. Kids were separated by activities and instructed to find a comfortable spot on the floor or at a desk. The teachers and principals did a great job of making the school a welcoming place for the parents by instructing them to the programs, answering any questions just good customer service.

## **Facilitate accommodations for family involvement**

**Example:** Translators, transportation, childcare and other similar services

## **Outcomes:**

- The group discussed how they wanted to be identified (SEE FYI on pg. 2)
- Shared with me about their family traditions/values and which helped to guide the tone and feeling of the meeting.
- Informed me that they wanted and expected to be a part of the planning process where their children were involved.
- Each parent volunteered to assist for a week in the 6 week program
- I was able to utilize some of the parents as translators, group leaders, aides, and administrative help
- 132 youth were served through 4-H curriculum
- 25 parents volunteered

- Parents and teacher developed a open door relationship
- Parents were trained to lead 4-H curriculum
- 4-H programming delivered to a more diverse base of youth
- A new respect or realization for or of each other
- Successful after school program according to the kids, parents ,principal

#### **Important Factors in the Success of this Program**

- School Staff cooperation and participation- The school that I worked with let us use the school to conduct meetings, and the principal or assistant principal attended each meeting (4) before the programming began.
- Parent liaisons, parents, teachers, principals, community developers were all invited to attend these meetings.
- Information was sent out in English and Spanish
- A willingness by all involved to understand and communicate with each other

(FYI)

The terms "Hispanic" and "Spanish" are not to be confused. The Spanish (or Spaniards) are the people who are native to or who have origins in Spain, located in mainland Europe. Previously, Hispanics were categorized as "Spanish-Americans," "Spanish-speaking Americans," and "Spanish-surnamed Americans." These terms, however, proved misleading or inaccurate, since:

Although most Hispanics have Spanish ancestry, most Hispanics are not of direct (non-Latin American) Spanish descent; many are not primarily of Spanish descent; and some Hispanics are not of Spanish descent at all. For example, there are Hispanics of other European ancestries (e.g. Italian, German, Polish), as well as Middle Eastern (e.g. Lebanese), Black, Amerindian/Native American, Asian, and mixed race ancestries — of the latter, Mestizo (White and Indigenous/Native American) and Mulatto (White and Black) are the most common. (Good history lesson)

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