Hispanic parents' and teachers' perceptions of literacy: Finding common ground

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Abstract

The rapid increase in the number of Hispanic students in U. S. schools demands that school personnel meet the needs of Hispanic students and their families. This study examined teachers' and Hispanic parents' perceptions of Hispanic students' literacy practices and the home literacy practices of Hispanic families. Interviews, observations, and participation in an 8-week emergent participatory family literacy program provided data for this qualitative study. Eight teachers and six Hispanic parents participated in this study. All data sources revealed that the participating Hispanic parents' strong work ethic supports their children's academic work ethic and that these Hispanic parents are fearful that their children will lose their native language and cultural identity. Teacher participants viewed Hispanic parents as having limited means of providing academic support due to poverty and extended work hours; however, parent participants demonstrated multiple ways of supporting their children's literacy development. It was found that Hispanic family participants have limited access to district information regarding programs and procedures, thus imposing limits to the amount of educational support they can provide to their children. Implications for practice include teachers finding ways to incorporate family, culture, and other socioeconomic contexts into instructional practices. Implications for district personnel include honoring all cultures by making information equally accessible to all families.