



Background

On February 7, 2009, local Spanish-language media outlets, the Austin Independent School District, and a number of non-profit organizations worked together to create a community education fair, Feria Para Aprender. This was the third time that these groups came together for this event (prior events occurred on February 17, 2007 and on February 16, 2008). The 2009 event was chaired by its founder Sylvia Acevedo, CEO of CommuniCard, LLC, and organized by Austin Partners in Education (APIE). The goal of the event was to provide information to community members, particularly Hispanic parents, about educational opportunities and the importance of education. The Feria Para Aprender was held at the Burger Activity Center in Austin, Texas.

The Annette Strauss Institute was pleased to help with the event by conducting an on-site event survey. Below, we report on data that was collected from 276 individuals who completed the survey in 2009. Where appropriate, we also include data from the 2008 and 2007 event surveys for comparison.

Feria Para Aprender Attendees

Local Spanish-language media outlets (television, radio, and print media), the Austin Independent School District, and the other event sponsors heavily advertised the Feria Para Aprender. The survey documented that attendees came from a variety of different locations and heard about the event from different sources.

Around four in ten of the survey respondents (41%) identified that they were from zip codes surrounding the Burger Activity Center. Compared to 2008, where 51 percent of respondents were from zip codes surrounding the Burger Center, more respondents in 2009 traveled from other parts of Austin to attend the event. Zip codes named by at least five percent of respondents are shown in Table 1. The largest percentage of respondents (24%) came from 78744 or 78741.

Table 1: Common Zip Codes

Zip code	2009	2008	2007
78744	14%	11%	21%
78741	10%	13%	6%
78753	9%	6%	6%
78745	8%	13%	9%
78724	7%	<5%	<5%
78758	5%	8%	6%
78752	5%	<5%	<5%

Table 2: Age of Children

Age of children	2009	2008	2007
None	1%	2%	4%
0 – 5	56%	50%	52%
6 – 10	69%	64%	59%
11 – 13	24%	28%	29%
14 – 17	16%	18%	18%
18 +	9%	13%	9%

*multiple responses permitted

Most survey respondents (92%) had children between 0 and 10 years of age. This is higher than in 2008, where 85 percent had children in this age range. The percentage of respondents who had children in each age range is shown in Table 2. Only nine percent of respondents, for example, had children who were 18 years of age and older.

Table 3: Event Information

Heard about event from ...	2009	2008
School	59%	50%
Television	52%	49%
Radio	22%	16%
Friend/family member	11%	13%
Newspaper	9%	17%
Other	5%	9%

*multiple responses permitted

The 2009 event attracted a number of people who had not attended a previous FERIA Para Aprender. Two-thirds of respondents were attending this event for the first time. This is similar to 2008.

Table 5: Transportation to the Event

Took a school bus	2009	2008
Yes	23%	22%
No	71%	77%

*does not add to 100% due to non-response

Over eight in ten respondents (83%) reported that they learned about the FERIA Para Aprender either from school or from television. This is very similar to 2008. In 2009, respondents reported learning about the event from the radio (22%) and from a friend or family member (11%). Fewer respondents in 2009 reported learning about the event from the newspaper compared to 2008. Parents with children between 6 and 10 years of age were particularly likely to have heard about the event from school.

Table 4: Previous Event Attendance

Attended before	2009	2008
Yes	29%	25%
No	67%	75%

*does not add to 100% due to non-response

Nearly a fourth of respondents reported that they rode a school bus in order to attend the FERIA Para Aprender at the Burger Center (Table 5). Bus riders came from different zip codes this year. In 2008, half of bus riders came from 78704, 78741, and 78758. This year, only 24 percent of bus riders came from these zip codes. In 2009, 32 percent of bus riders came from 78724 and 78741.

FERIA Para Aprender Assessments

Event sponsors endeavored to create an event that was both enjoyable and educational. Results document that they succeeded in both regards.

Survey respondents were asked about their enjoyment of the event. Respondents reported enjoying the event a great deal. Ninety-three percent strongly agreed that they enjoyed the FERIA Para Aprender, a similar percentage of respondents compared to 2008 and 2007 (Table 6). Further, parents with children of different ages enjoyed the event equally.

Table 6: Event Enjoyment

I enjoyed the FERIA	2009	2008	2007
Strongly agree	93%	89%	89%
Somewhat agree	4%	9%	6%
Neither agree nor disagree	1%	1%	1%
Somewhat disagree	0%	0%	1%
Strongly disagree	<1%	0%	3%

* does not add to 100% due to non-response

Table 7: Frequently Mentioned Event Learning

Learned about ...	2009	2008
Community services/programs	13%	25%
Information on childhood development/ discipline/reading	12%	7%
General information/lots of things	11%	10%
Information about college	10%	4%
Benefits or importance of school/college	7%	8%
Information about education/schools	4%	10%
Information on scholarships/financial aid	2%	9%
Information about education and healthcare	2%	6%

Respondents were asked what they learned at the event. There were many different responses. As shown in Table 7, 13 percent of respondents reported learning about available programs and community services. This is less than the 25 percent of respondents in 2008. Twelve percent reported learning information about childhood development, discipline, and reading.

Some examples of the responses provided by respondents regarding what they learned are below.

“Todo me fue muy útil.”

Translation: “Everything was very useful.”

“There are many ways to prepare for college and help prepare my kids for their future with as much input as possible.”

“How to enroll in college.”

“Hay que participar más activamente en la educación de los niños.”

Translation: “I need to participate more actively in the education of my children.”

“Sobre la salud, seguridad, importancia de la lectura.”

Translation: “About health, safety, importance of reading.”

“Cómo agarrar información sobre scholarships.”

Translation: “How to get information about scholarships.”

“Cómo alimentar los niños.”

Translation: “How to feed/nourish my children.”

“Cómo ver calificaciones de mi hija por internet.”

Translation: “How to see my daughter’s grades on the internet.”

Respondents also were asked what they planned to do *differently* after attending the Feria. It was the first year we asked this question and the results were revealing. All responses named by more than 5 respondents are shown in Table 8. Respondents reported that the Feria motivated them to learn more and to be more involved in their children’s education.

Table 8: Frequently Mentioned Intentions to Change

Plans to do differently after Feria	Respondents
Help / support my children more	14%
Teach / motivate my children, talk to my children about school	8%
Get more informed / educated / involved	8%
Apply to universities / scholarships / get more information about college	4%
Learn English	3%
Read with my children	3%
Review the information I received	3%

Below are several examples of the verbatim responses to what respondents planned to do differently after attending the Feria:

“Aprender inglés y apoyar a mis hijos.”

Translation: “Learn English and support my children.”

“Ayudar a mi hijo más en sus tareas.”

Translation: “Help my son more with his homework.”

“Motivar a mi hija para ir a la Universidad.”

Translation: “Motivate my daughter to go to the university.”

“Voy a empezar a llenar aplicaciones para universidades y becas ya que recibí la información necesaria.”

Translation: “I’m going to start applying to universities and for scholarships now that I have the information I need.”

“Pues empezar a pedir más información sobre las becas para ir a la universidad e involucrarme aun más en las escuelas.”

Translation: “I’m going to start asking for more information about scholarships to attend the university and I’m going to get more involved with the schools.”

“Hablar más con los maestros y también con mis hijos.”

Translation: “Talk more with the teachers and also with my children.”

“Ser más positiva y optimista con mis hijos.”

Translation: “Be more positive and optimistic with my children.”

Using a close-ended format, respondents were asked about their plans after attending the Feria. The results, shown in Table 9, show that over 90 percent of parents planned to be more involved in their children’s education and to visit with their children more frequently about education. They also reported learning things that they did not know before they attended the event.

Table 9: Plans after the Feria

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree
I plan to be <i>even more involved</i> in my children’s education than I was before I came to the Feria today.	93%	3%	<1%
I plan to visit with my children about education <i>even more</i> than I did before I came to the Feria today.	92%	3%	1%
I learned about educational opportunities at the Feria <i>that I didn’t know about</i> before I came here today.	90%	5%	1%

* No respondents selected “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree”

Information Obtained at the Feria Para Aprender

Respondents were asked to report whether they obtained information about infants/toddlers, elementary school, middle school, high school, GED, college, or learning English at the Feria Para Aprender.

Table 10: Information Obtained at the Event

Information about ...	2009	2008
Infants/toddlers	34%	40%
Elementary school	71%	67%
Middle school	36%	40%
High school	28%	34%
GED	22%	12%
College	43%	32%
Learning English	45%	--

*multiple responses permitted

Respondents made use of all of the available information at the event. Seven out of ten respondents reported obtaining information about elementary school at the event – the most frequently mentioned category. Other results are displayed in Table 10. Forty-five percent of respondents mentioned that they learned about learning English at the event (this was a new question). More respondents this year obtained information about obtaining a GED or about college compared to 2008.

Table 11: Information Obtained about Child’s Age Group at the Event

Information about ...	2009	2008
Infants/toddlers gained by parents with kids aged 0-5	46%	60%
Elementary school gained by parents with kids aged 6-10	79%	80%
Middle school gained by parents with kids aged 11-13	69%	71%
High school gained by parents with kids aged 14-17	47%	62%
College gained by parents with kids aged 18 and over	56%	48%

Respondents were fairly successful at obtaining information relevant to their children. As shown in Table 11, 46 percent of respondents with children between the ages of 0 and 5 said that they received information about infants/toddlers. This percentage is lower than in 2008. Yet over three-fourths of parents with children between the ages of 0 and 5 *did* receive information about elementary school (see Table 12). This was similar to 2008.

Seventy-nine percent of respondents with children between the ages of 6 and 10 said that they received information about elementary school and 69 percent of respondents with children between the ages of 11 and 13 said that they received information about middle school. Around 50 percent of respondents with older children found information about high school and college.

Table 12: Information Obtained about Child’s Future Age Group at the Event

Information about ...	2009	2008
Elementary school gained by parents with kids aged 0-5	76%	80%
Middle school gained by parents with kids aged 6-10	42%	48%
High school gained by parents with kids aged 11-13	46%	50%
College gained by parents with kids aged 14-17	51%	43%

Past Feria Para Aprender Attendees

Though less than thirty percent of respondents had attended the event in previous years, these respondents were asked to answer two additional questions. First, these respondents were asked to report why they returned to the Feria again. Of those who had been to the Feria before, around a quarter mentioned that they returned because they were hoping to obtain more information. Several examples of the types of responses that were provided can be found below:

“Porque la otra vez que vine aprendí sobre el colegio de mi hijo.”

Translation: “Because the last time I came I learned about college for my son.”

“Porque quiero estar mejor informada en la educación de mis hijos y aprender como puedo ayudarles.”

Translation: “Because I want to be better informed about my children’s education and learn how I can help them.”

“Para saber de más nuevos programas.”

Translation: “To know about more new programs.”

“Los niños se divirtieron”

Translation: “The kids had fun.”

These respondents also were asked what changes, if any, they had made as a result of attending the Feria in previous years. Respondents mentioned that they were more involved with their child’s education, that their child now participates in additional programs, and that they read more with their child. Several examples of the exact responses provided by respondents are included below.

“Bueno me involucre más en la escuela de mis hijos .”

Translation: “I became more involved my kids’ school.”

“Mi hija ahora participa en varios programas como Clubgen y Kumon.”

Translation: “My daughter now participates in a variety of programs like Clubgen and Kuman.”

“Leímos más.”

Translation: “We read more.”

“Si hubo mucho cambio por eso regrese.”

Translation: “There was a lot of change that’s why I came back.”

Methodology

At the 2009 Feria Para Aprender, volunteers from the event and researchers from the Annette Strauss Institute passed out surveys. In total, 276 surveys were completed. For the 2007 on-site survey, 216 surveys were completed and for the 2008 on-site survey, 209 surveys were completed. All years, surveys were available in both Spanish and English, and volunteers were available to consult with respondents in both Spanish and English. In 2009, 93 percent of the surveys were completed in Spanish and 7 percent of the surveys were completed in English. Efforts were made to pass out only one survey per family. Passing out surveys at the event has a number of limitations. First, there is no guarantee that the individuals who completed the survey were representative of those who attended the event. Volunteers did their best to approach as many people as possible and most agreed to complete the survey, but it is not possible to assess whether the results can be generalized to all event attendees. Second, there may be some response bias because at the event, respondents may have felt obligated to respond positively to the questions posed on the survey. Volunteers were instructed to tell survey respondents that they were not representing the event sponsors and that they greatly appreciated the respondent's honesty to try to decrease response bias.

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About The Annette Strauss Institute

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation was established at The University of Texas at Austin in 2000 to respond to growing political cynicism and disaffection in the United States. The goals of the institute are (1) to conduct cutting-edge research on the ways in which civic participation and community understanding are undermined or sustained, and (2) to develop new programs for increasing democratic understanding among citizens.