



**Background**

Nationally, there are gaps in educational achievement between Hispanics and Whites. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 2005, Hispanic 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored lower than Whites in both math and reading. Furthermore, compared to 1992, these gaps have changed little.<sup>1</sup> In Travis County, Texas, where 32 percent of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino,<sup>2</sup> addressing these gaps is particularly important. In this county, as elsewhere in the country, Hispanics have higher drop-out rates and lower rates of college attendance compared to Whites.<sup>3</sup>

To address these gaps, the Austin school district, local Spanish media outlets, and a number of non-profit organizations worked together to create a community education fair, Feria Para Aprender. 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 on February 17, 2007.

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 216 individuals who completed the survey.

**Results: Feria Para Aprender Attendees**

Local Spanish media outlets (television, radio, and print media), the Austin 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.

Nearly half of survey respondents (43%) identified that they were from zip codes surrounding the Burger Activity Center. Others traveled from various parts of Austin to attend the event. Zip codes named by more than five percent of respondents are shown in Table 1. The largest percentage of respondents (21%) was from 78744.

**Table 1: Zip Code**

Zip Code	Respondents
78744	21%
78745	9%
78741	6%
78758	6%
78753	6%

**Table 2: Age of Children**

Age of children	Respondents
None	4%
0 – 5	52%
6 – 10	59%
11 – 13	29%
14 – 17	18%
18 +	9%

Most survey respondents (85%) had children between 0 and 10 years of age. The percentage of respondents who had children in each age range is shown in Table 2. Nine percent of respondents, for example, had children who were 18 years of age and older.

\*multiple responses permitted

**Table 3: Event Information**

Heard about event from ...	Respondents
Television	36%
School	36%
Radio	12%
Newspaper	11%
Person	7%
Other (e.g. pamphlet)	7%
Media/news	5%

\*multiple responses permitted

Two-thirds of respondents reported that they learned about the Feria Para Aprender from their school or from television. Others learned about the event from radio (12%) or from newspapers (11%). Advertising both in the media and at local schools helped to increase event attendance.

### Feria Para Aprender Outcomes

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

Results of the survey showed that respondents felt that the event either met or exceeded their expectations. As shown in Table 4, 49 percent of respondents reported that the event exceed their expectations.

**Table 4: Event Expectations**

Expectations	Respondents
Exceeded my expectations	49%
Met my expectations	44%
Did not meet my expectations	1%

**Table 5: Event Learning**

Learned about ...	Respondents
Services / programs	16%
Education / school	15%
Higher education	7%
How to motivate child	5%

\*multiple responses permitted

Respondents were asked what they learned at the event. There were many different responses. As shown in Table 5, 16 percent of respondents reported learning about available programs and services, such as where to take English classes and how to obtain a GED. Fifteen percent reported learning more about education and school. Other frequent responses are shown in Table 5.

A majority of respondents noted that the information provided was their favorite part of the event. Others mentioned that they appreciated how they were treated, the available activities, and the booths (Table 6).

**Table 6: Favorite Part of Event**

Favorite	Respondents
Information	52%
Everything	10%
People / treatment	7%
College/ University information	7%
Activities	6%
Booths	5%

\*multiple responses permitted

Survey respondents were asked a number of questions about their enjoyment of the event and how the event shaped their beliefs, knowledge, and intentions to participate in their child’s education. Respondents reported both enjoying the event and learning from the event. Furthermore, they credit the event with making them feel more empowered and efficacious. Eight-six percent strongly agreed that the event made them believe that they have a say in their child’s education and 80 percent strongly agreed that the event made them believe that they can understand what is going on with their child’s education. Respondents also reported high intentions to participate in their child’s education, thanks to the event. Descriptive results are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7: Event Outcomes**

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
I enjoyed the Feria Para Aprender.	3%	1%	1%	6%	89%
At the Feria Para Aprender, I learned something that I did not know about education.	3%	1%	2%	13%	80%
The Feria Para Aprender made me more likely to participate in my child’s education.	4%	1%	2%	6%	84%
The Feria Para Aprender made me believe that people like me have a say in their child’s education.	4%	1%	1%	5%	86%
The Feria Para Aprender made me believe that I can understand what is going on with my child’s education.	4%	1%	2%	10%	80%

**Methodology**

At the Feria Para Aprender, volunteers from the event and the Annette Strauss Institute passed out surveys. In total, 216 surveys were completed. Surveys were available in both Spanish and 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 weren’t affiliated with the event sponsors and that they greatly appreciate the respondent’s honesty to try to decrease response bias.

## **Acknowledgments**

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## **About The Annette Strauss Institute**

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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.

## **References**

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<sup>1</sup> See 2006 The Condition of Education report from the National Center for Education Statistics, available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2006/section2/indicator14.asp>

<sup>2</sup> See the 2005 American Community Survey report about Travis County, Texas, available at: <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

<sup>3</sup> See the 2006 Biennial Data Report of the Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project, available at: [www.centex-indicators.org/annual\\_rept/ar2006.pdf](http://www.centex-indicators.org/annual_rept/ar2006.pdf).