AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF A PRINCIPAL’S ACTIONS ON THE
PARENT INVOLVEMENT OF LATINO IMMIGRANT PARENTS

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ABSTRACT

There is vast amount of research that shows that parental involvement in children’s
education has been associated with children’s school success, including higher academic
achievement, better behavior, lower absenteeism, and more positive attitudes toward school
(Overstreet, Dvine, Bevans, & Efrem, 2005).

Attracting parents to schools has always been a challenge, especially in urban schools. Now, as schools face this charge of involving parents in their children’s academic life through
the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, they face at the same time an increase in immigrant
population. This adds new demands for creating just, equitable and successful schools (Arce et
al., 2005, Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Mayers, 2006). School leaders must determine
the best ways to attract parents, at the same time that they may have to redefine their concept of
what parent involvement means (Henderson et al., 2007; Hoerr, 2005).

The participants for this single case study consisted of 1) the principal of the school, 2)
teachers of the school, 3) Latino immigrant parents whose children attend the school, and 4) the
school secretary. The study findings revealed two themes that emerged from the actions of the
principal: 1) Institutional Receptivity, and 2) Awakening to Self-Reliance. The implications of
this inquiry for practice in education could impact both K-12 institutions and higher education
institutions as they address the issues of diversity in schools, parental involvement, and giving
voice to the marginalized, thus creating truly inclusive school climates.