

Two Decades of hosting Back to School Family Institute, CESDP prepares for 20 year Anniversary.

The Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP) is preparing to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Back to School Family and Youth Institute -- New Mexico's flagship conference for families and youth -- on November 3 - 4, 2011. Once again the Institute will be held at the popular Buffalo Thunder Resort in Pojoaque, NM and will be sponsored by the CESDP, ENLACE – NM, and New Mexico Highlands University among others. The Institute was founded 20 years ago by Dr. Rodolfo Chávez, Senior Associate, and Dr. Paul Martinez, Director of the CESDP, both have worked extensively with the NM PED Bilingual Multicultural Education bureau over the years.

The primary goal of the Institute is to equip parents with the necessary information and resources they need to directly impact the academic success of their children. By providing specific information, resources and strategies that strengthen parent and community involvement, the Institute helps NM schools become places that foster collaboration and assists parents and students in negotiating the educational system. Dr. Chávez said, "I have personally seen parents improve their communication with schools and with the teachers who work with their children. I have seen parents gain positive parenting skills that apply to the home setting. Student learning has also been enhanced by parents networking with one another and with the excellent presenters who provide great training and resources at the Institute. Also I have seen an increase in parent volunteerism and advocacy for students. Additionally, the Institute serves to increase awareness, respect, and collaboration among the many districts that have participated over the last two decades."

The Back-to School Family and Youth institute provides an excellent venue for partnerships, especially when school districts recruit and support parents' attendance at this premier New Mexico event. All players become involved -- parents, families, students,

counselors, bilingual and special education teachers, Title I staff, and administrators -- to focus attention on closing the achievement gap. But the role of parents is often overlooked. If administrators, school board members and other educational personnel are receiving professional development and yet fail to include parents in this integral process, then schools have not realized the potential of parents' support and participation in ensuring academic success for all students. Rudy added, "Any district who sends us participants can rest assured with full confidence that those they send will return with a totally different commitment to help students succeed and with a greater sense of collaboration with NM school districts."

There will be 45 excellent workshops for parents to choose from as well as numerous nationally recognized keynote speakers. The youth strand is specially designed for middle and high school students with an emphasis on college and career readiness. Additionally, a unique feature of the Institute is the provision of childcare services for 3 – 11 year olds in hotel facilities specifically designed for numerous activities. Finally, five lucky participants will walk away with a laptop computer from the raffle in the closing session.

Dr. Paul Martinez, CESDP director, sums it up: "As schools continue to face increasing scrutiny at many levels, parents and families are even more critical to building strong alliances. Our Institute does a first-rate job of helping participants build skills, interface with others, and become more aware of the truly positive role they can play in strengthening their own home, school, and community partnership."

For registration and more information about the Back-to-School Family and Youth Institute go to <http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu> .