

Juntos: Strengthening Family-School Connections for Multilingual Student Success



A case study in building social capital through family engagement in Eau Claire Area School District's Juntos Program.



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Agenda

- Section 1: Introduction to Social Capital
- Section 2: The Power of Parent Engagement
- Section 3: The Juntos Program
- Section 4: Impact and Community Building



Introduction to Social Capital

What is Social Capital?

Definition

-trusting relationships,
networks of people, and
norms that enable
cooperation

Types

Bonding - within groups
Bridging - across groups

Why does Social Capital Matter?



- Building community creates, trust, improves health, and improves the economy
- Strong school communities improve student success, and create support networks.
- The feeling of belonging builds self esteem and promotes mental health

Social Capital is in decline

Decreased civic participation has lead to weakened leadership, the inability to communicate effectively with others, and fewer neighborly connections.

Isolation affects everyone, especially families.



For more:
read *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam
watch *Join or Die* on Netflix

The comments we fight by building community:

“This district should think about who they let into our schools.”

“Did they become refugees on purpose, so they could move here.”

“Can you bring him back to the classroom when he speaks English.”

Turn and Talk

Share your own battles.

What stereotypes or negative ideologies do you confront while trying to build community access?



Social Capital and Schools

- Schools are a key space for building community networks
- Trust between families and staff lead to student success
- Family engagement is how we can build social capital



The Power of Parent Engagement

What can parent engagement do?



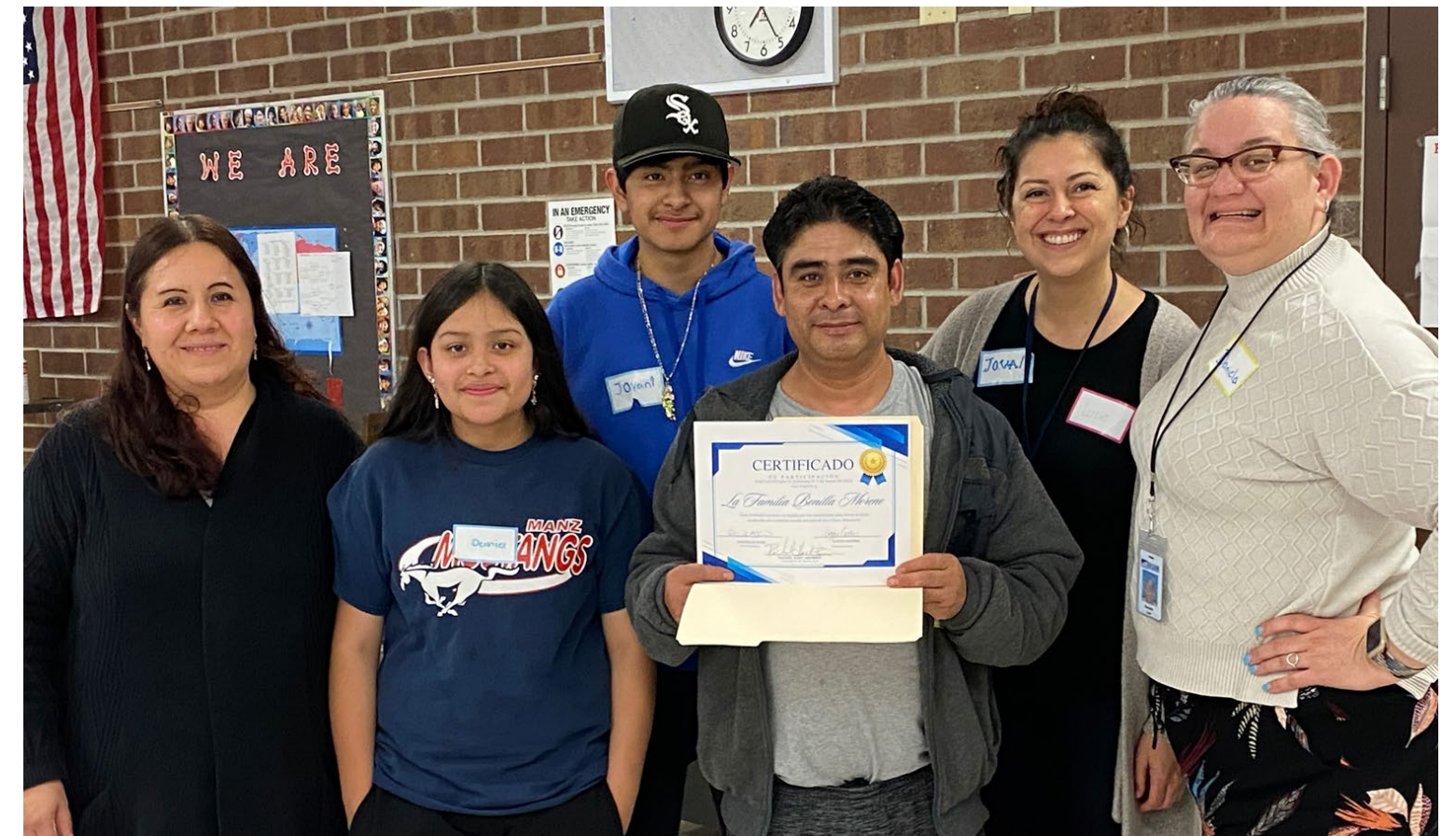
Regular Communication
and Student Advocacy
leads to academic
success

Involvement in
School Events builds a
sense of community.

Builds culturally
responsive
partnerships and
creates
understanding

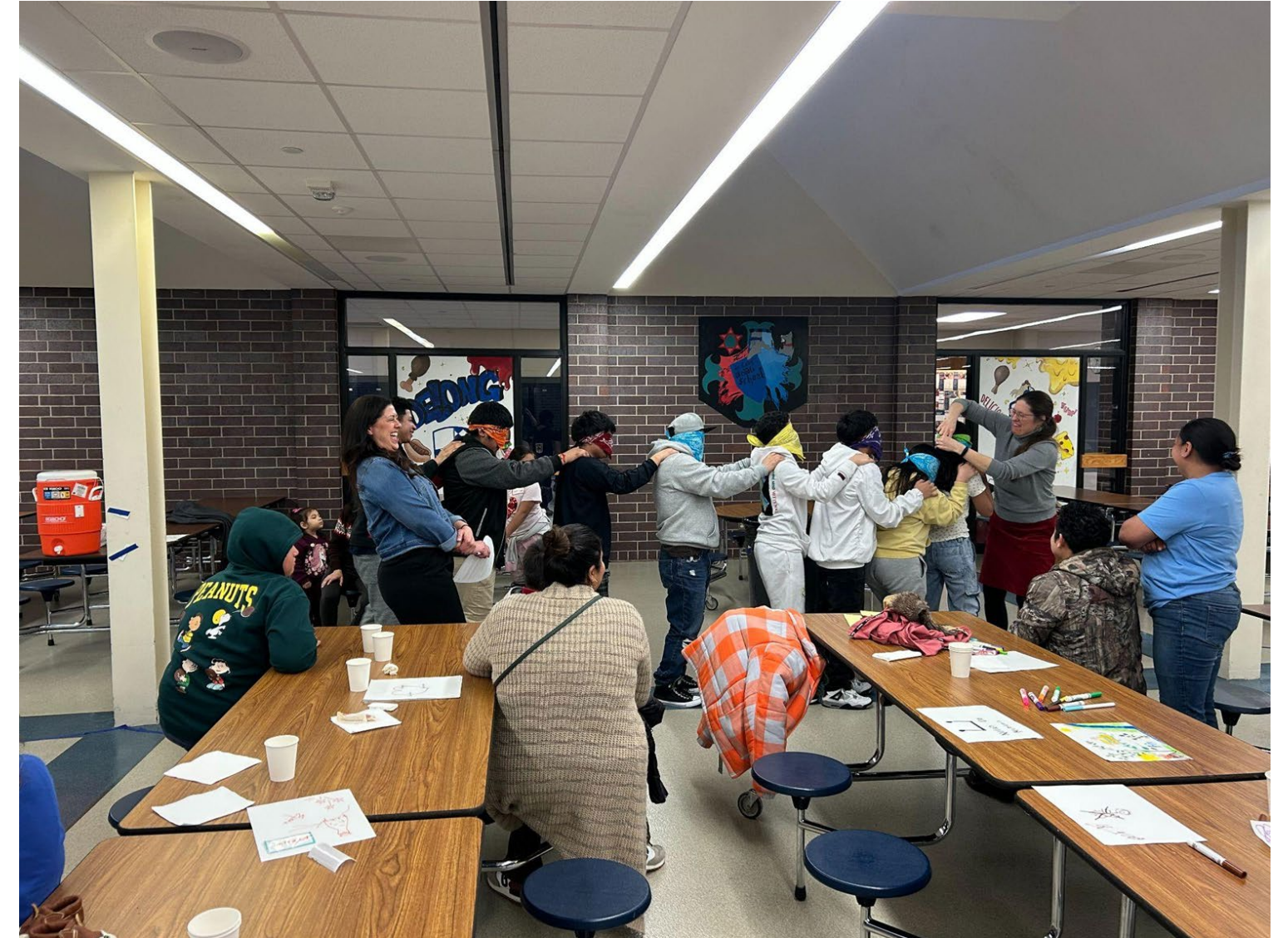
Parent Engagement Builds Social Capital

Connection builds trust among families, fosters shared expectations and supports community networks. Families become resources to each other.



Barriers to Engagement

- Language
- Transportation
- Lack of time or familiarity with the school
- Not feeling welcomed or valued



What is the Juntos Program?

■ Juntos means “Together”.



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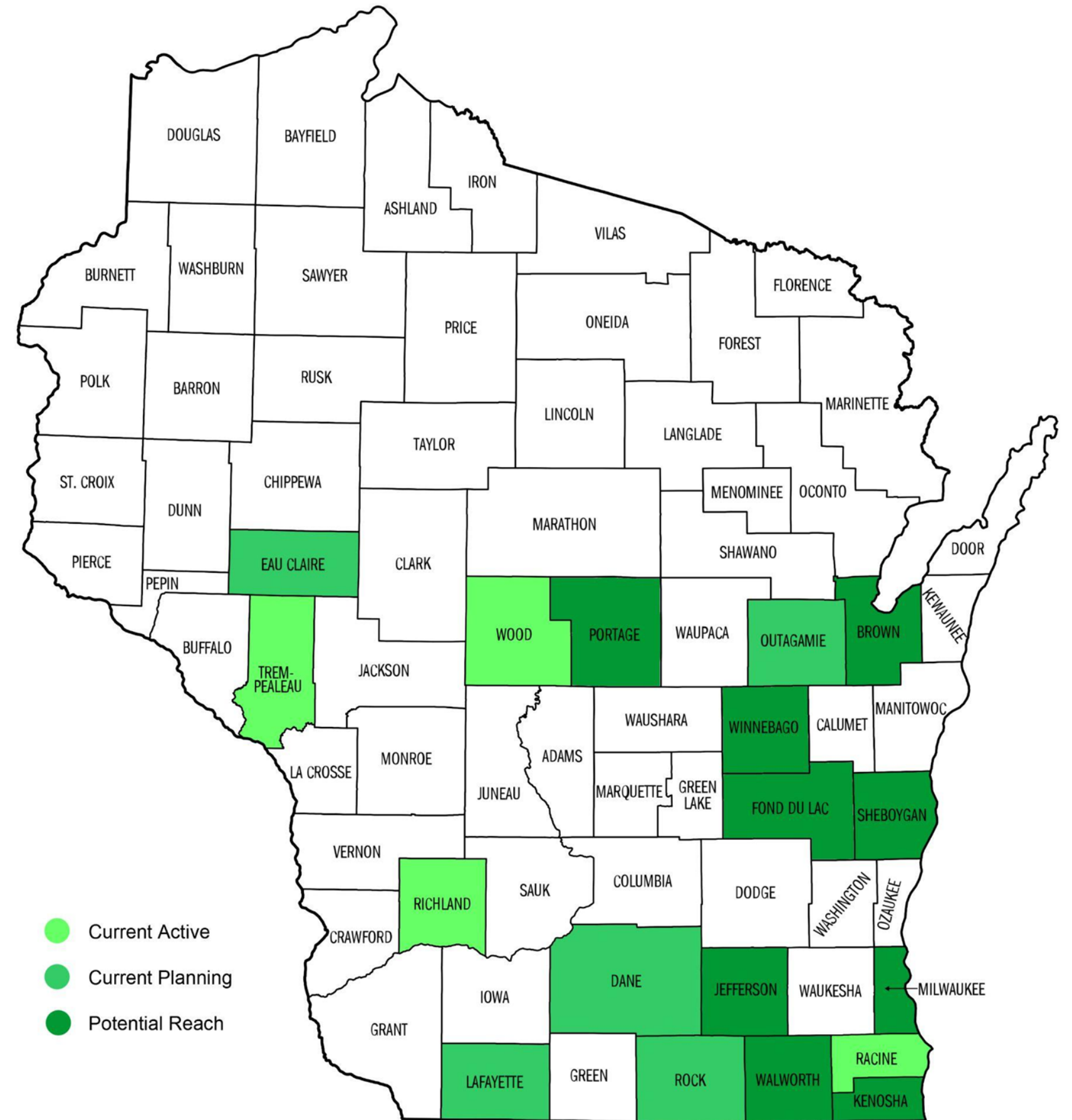
■ Mission: Increase family engagement, and support Latino student success.

■ Focus Areas:

1. Family Engagement
2. College and Career Readiness
3. Cultural Identity and Leadership

Juntos Components

- Family Engagement
- 4-H Clubs
- Academic Success Coaching and Mentoring
- Summer College Experience



How it began in Eau Claire...

The right team of people finally got into the same room.

- Rachel Hart-Brinson, Bilingual 4-H Program Educator for Eau Claire County
 - Dang Yang, Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for ECASD
 - Danielle M. Luer, EL Coordinator for ECASD
 - Lizzie Castro, Bilingual Academic and SEL Coordinator for ECASD
 - Blia Vang Schwahn, School Community Liaison for ECASD
- *with support from Misti Trowbridge, Director of Student Services for ECASD

The Community Partnership between Extension 4-H and Eau Claire Area School District



- Shared Resources: curriculum, staffing, expertise, money
- Shared Responsibilities: Planning, communication, and facilitation
- The Draw of Food and Hospitality

The First 5 Weeks of Juntos

Building trust, knowledge, and relationships for success in year one.

- Week 1: Making Education and Family a Goal
- Week 2: Effective Communication in the Home
- Week 3: Who's Who in the School
- Week 4: Postsecondary Goals (including financing)
- Week 5: Graduation and Celebration

Why these topics matter.

Every meeting begins with a family meal. We spend time enjoying each other's company and catching up on the chisme. We play music, the little ones run around the cafeteria, children color and play, older siblings sit together while their parents discuss life.

This sense of togetherness builds social capital among families, they share their goals as individuals and families, combining their collective knowledge. Families (and school staff) who attend these meetings begin to see each other as resources. Staff and community partners become trusted allies, working together.



Transition to Year 2 (2024-25)

Because of our strong start, families asked for more sessions.

- October: Review of 2023-24 and Goal setting for 2024-25
- November: WEOP Representatives and Food & Nutrition Dept. Menus
- December: Public Library Representatives
- January: AVID Program, School Resource Officer, and Early Learning
- February: Civil Rights, Technical College Rep. and Local Artist
- April: Family Resource Center

Transition to Year 3 (2025-26)

We're growing and expanding into joint school activities.

- August: Summer Picnic and Welcome Back
- October: Annual Review and Camp Planning (Joint Field Trip)
- November: Latin Business Incubator and Cultural Identity
- December: Financial Literacy
- January-May: TBD

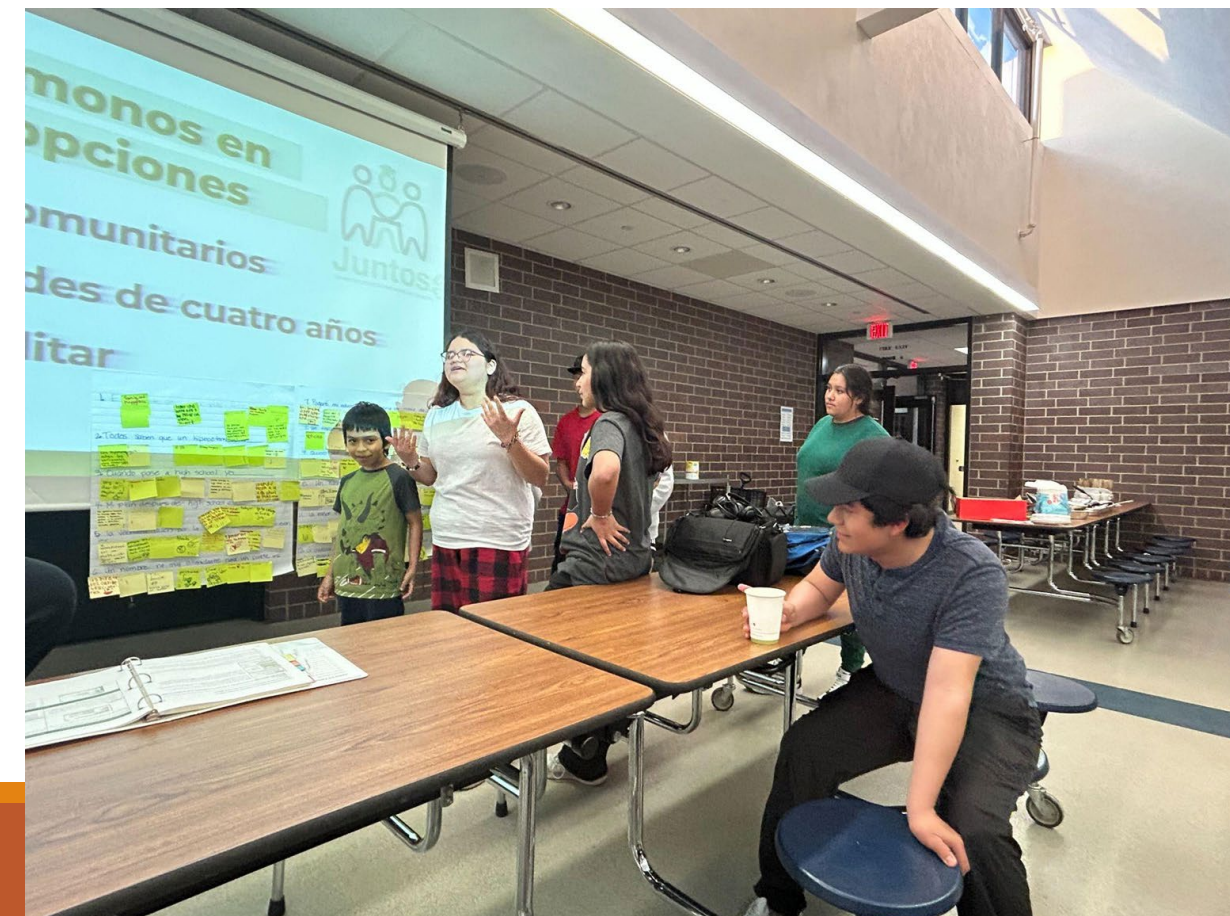


South and Delong Middle Schools

South: established Mexican community, been in the city for many years. These families are interested in long term community resources.



Delong: newcomer community including Mexican, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan families. Recent immigrants with more immediate basic needs.



Implications for Practice



- Invest in relationship-building
- Partner with community organizations
- Center family voices in planning and decision-making
- View families as partners, not just participants

Building a Community of Belonging



“Thank you for giving
us a voice.”

South Mom

Feeling seen, heard,
and valued.

“God has blessed us
with this community.”

Delong Dad

Building a sense of
community.

“Let’s get interpreters for
the open house.”

South Secretary

Increasing access.

How Social Capital Has Grown

■ “Call me, text me, email me in any language, let me worry about translating it.”

South Principal

■ “We had Juntos families at FAFSA night. They were applying for financial aid.”

H.S. Counselor

■ “Congratulations, your grant application has been approved for technology for equitable family engagement.”

Eau Claire Public Schools
Foundation

Success Stories



“I’m working on my English and I have a long way to go, but could I volunteer in one of the schools.”

South Mom

Finding new ways to help.

“I know a woman in the community, she’s been here for six months but she’s scared to enroll her daughter in school. Can she call you?”

Delong Mom

“Being here and learning about this country with you, makes me less scared to be in the street with my daughter.”

Delong Mom

Trusting school staff.

Bridging



“Thank you for participating in our multilingual survey, we will be adding Spanish, French, Hmong, and Ojibwe books in time for summer”

Public Library

“We got a call from one of the Juntos families asking for counseling services.”

Mental Health Coordinator

Parents reaching out for services.

“No Teacher, we don’t need a ride, Maris is going to drive us home.”

Delong Mom talking about a South Mom

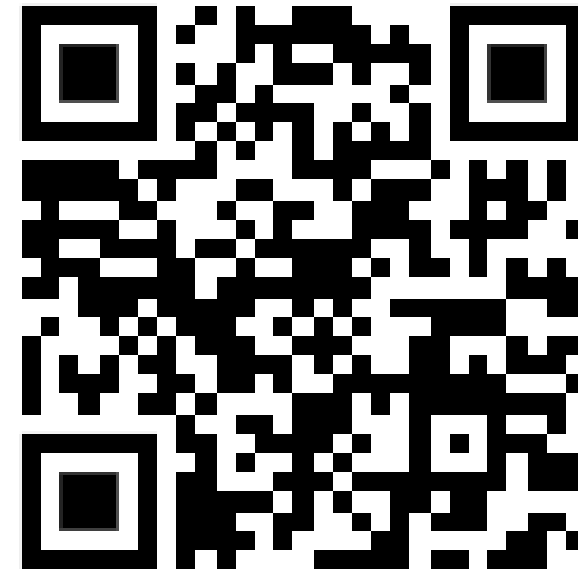
What's next for Juntos

- Increasing School Staff Participation
- Meeting the Needs of Our Families
- Exploring High School Opportunities for continuing students.
- 4-H Student Clubs for Juntos Youth



How to Get Involved

- Check out the Juntos Wisconsin website
- Contact your local Extension office
- Let them know you are interested in the program and see what options there are to partner with them



Questions?

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