A two-generation approach to improving the prospects of immigrant families living in poverty in the Roaring Fork Valley

- 450 Kids (age 0–5) learning
- 50,000+ volunteer hours
- 180 Parent Mentors in Schools
THE COMMUNITY

- Central Colorado mountains
- Long, narrow river valley spans 3 counties
- 3 rural resort towns: Basalt, Carbondale & Glenwood Springs, each w/population under 10,000
- Rapid increase in Latino population over last 15 years
- Immigrants work primarily in construction, restaurant & housekeeping jobs in Aspen, CO
- Area: Roaring Fork School District w/5,600 students
  - 56% Latino (86% qualify for FRL)
  - 44% Anglo (50% qualify for FRL)
THE CATALYST

• Manaus Fund was Founded in 2005 with a focus on social justice

• Involved in a preschool cooperative that had challenges reaching Latino families

• W.K. Kellogg Foundation conversation in 2011 led to a planning grant to knock on doors and listen to people’s stories

• Started Valley Settlement Project in 2012 with multiple programs: all in response to what people said they needed and what they were willing to work for
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (circa 2011)

- Held 270 one-on-one interviews in homes
- Presented to thousands in the community

**Parent Education**

- 12th grade: 31%
- 9th grade: 25%
- <6th grade: 44%

**Findings**

- Want computer training
- Want to study English
- Children in pre-school
- From Mexico
- Income < $35,000
PROGRAM GOALS

• **Children:** Improve school readiness & elementary school achievement

• **Adults:** Increase family economic stability & community engagement

Family Support Team

Alumni Network
90 Adults

Learning with Love
50 Children (age 0-3)

Lifelong Learning
105 Adults

El Busesito
100 Children (age 3-5)

Health & Wellness
150 Families

Parent Mentor
60 Volunteers
VALLEY SETTLEMENT FUNDING

**2015 REVENUE**
- Foundation Grants: $858,875
- Government Support: $162,000
- Individual Donors: $948,411

2015 TOTAL REVENUE: $1,969,286

**2016 BUDGET**
- Early Childhood Education: $805,852
- Parent Mentor: $445,839
- Lifelong Learning: $189,196
- Family Support: $305,632
- Administration & Development: $346,398

2016 BUDGET: $2,092,887
PARENT MENTORS

Program: 6 elementary schools, 120 classrooms, 60 Parent Mentors, 5 school coordinators

• Teachers apply to have a Parent Mentor assigned to their classroom

• Recruitment, training, empowerment

• Two hours, four days per week in classrooms with training provided on the 5th day

• Transformation in the classroom and throughout the school culture

• Provide $600 stipend at end of each semester

*Modeled after a program from Chicago’s Logan Square Neighborhood Association: www.lsna.net
PARENT MENTOR THREE DAY TRAINING

• Goal setting process
• Focus on personal goals, often for first time
• How to use a calendar
• The importance of being on time
• Teamwork, “others are relying on you”
• Peer support
• Classroom skills
• Filling out forms, record keeping
PARENT MENTOR WEEKLY TRAINING

- Working in the classroom and the schools
- Principles of professional ethics
- Reading for champions
- Reading and math teaching skills
- Ten tips to keep the kids safe
- Supporting student learning
- Depression
- Financial literacy
- Nutrition
- The gift of giving
- The power of teamwork
- Ultimo seguimiento
- Chromebooks
- Health insurance system
- How to be a good community organizer
- Human values/Integrity
- Community Leaders working together
- Professional skills
- Resume styles
RESPONSE FROM TEACHERS

- **84%**...reported students had improved confidence in their school work
- **85%**...reported improved effort in children’s class work with support of Parent Mentors
- **100%** would like their future students to have a Parent Mentor in the classroom
- Teachers report understanding more about their individual students with Parent Mentors
RESPONSE FROM PARENT MENTORS

• 95% of participants agree being a Parent Mentor
  “supports my child’s social and emotional growth”
  “supports my child’s interest in school”

• 99% “learned new skills”

• 100% “feel welcome at my child’s school”
CHALLENGES

• Parent Mentors
  o Time commitment competes with part-time jobs for those who chose to work
  o Requires basic level of executive functioning
  o Requires home & time management skills
  o Subtle shift in household rules and roles to accommodate mom’s success
  o Challenges remain around skills, language and documentation to work

• Programmatic
  o Recruiting new cohorts each year—always recruiting
  o Need for culturally appropriate mental health services
ALUMNI NETWORK

• Engage with each other & the community (107)
  - Arts, church, volunteering, tutoring, promotoras, peer support, photography, fitness, nutrition, etc.

• Continuing Education (130)
  - Connections to our Lifelong Learning classes: Spanish literacy, computer skills, GED prep, etc.
  - Support groups enrolling together in certificate programs at Colorado Mountain College

• Connects Parent Mentors to jobs (57):
  - Paraprofessionals and admins in schools
  - Positions at Valley Settlement
  - Other opportunities in the community
ADVICE TO RURAL PROVIDERS

• Do not replicate any program before asking people in your community what they want.

• Never presume to know what families need.

• “Tell us about your life…”

• Ask families what they need & what they are willing to work toward.

• Be culturally aware, listen carefully.

• Hire staff who are from your community.

• Be responsive to evolving needs of families to improve your programs.
Webinar “Helping Rural Immigrants Earn a Living”
Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group

Thank you for your time!

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Learning with Love

• Early childhood development program for families with kids 0–3 years’ old
• Curriculum: Parents as Teachers® + FocusedKids™ + group classes
• Meet twice a week near El Busesito
• One-on-one home visits twice a month
El Busesito

• Improve school readiness prior to Kindergarten
• Identify kids with special needs much earlier
• Prioritize highest need 4 year olds
• Eliminate the Colorado Pre-school Program waiting list

% Exceeding Expectations

*Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment Data
Lifelong Learning

• Reaching immigrant low-income learners
  o Basic Spanish Literacy (to 4th grade proficiency)
  o Spanish Literacy (to 8th grade proficiency)
  o Spanish language GED Class
  o English classes for first-time students
  o Math and computer literacy

• Partnering with Colorado Mountain College
  o English classes
  o GED classes in English (& hybrid Spanish/English)
  o Spanish GED testing site
  o Job training (e.g., Personal Care Assistant)
  o Basic math class
A Lifelong Learning Class
Family Support Team

• Wraparound programming providing
  o Home visits for all families in early childhood programs
  o Targeted home visits for other high need families
  o Problem solving with low-income families and referral to other resources

• Promotoras (community health workers)
  o Wellness & nutrition program (e.g., cooking classes, gardening & fitness)
Community Engagement

“I belong. I am learning. I make a difference.”

- Working together with RFSD we are working with 450+ low-income families to ensure that every student develops enduring knowledge, skills and character to thrive in a changing world
- We are working with other organizations to share our learning's
  - Aspen Institute: Ascend & Community Strategies networks
  - Harvard’s Center on the Developing Child: Frontiers of Innovation
  - Vail Valley Foundation
  - Aspen Community Foundation
  - Other Foundations, Governments & NGO’s