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Building Bridges and Strengthening Bonds: Hispanic Family Engagement and Student Achievement

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This qualitative case study examined perceptions of ways in which Hispanic family engagement influenced Hispanic student achievement in a Midwestern school district. Using work in Social Capital Theory from Bourdieu, Putnam, Coleman, Stanton-Salazar, and others provided the theoretical framework for the study. Data was collected on site from three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Participants included building principals, teachers, school liaisons, and the district leadership team who engaged either in interviews or in focus groups. Documents and media sites relevant to the topic were reviewed to provide context and enhance knowledge of the participating sites. Parents and guardians of Hispanic students were invited to participate in a Qualtrics survey with an open-ended question soliciting ideas for improvement in practices. Research focused on perceptions of bridging and bonding occurring between the schools and their Hispanic families and ways that Hispanic family engagement contributes to, and could enhance, student achievement. Findings revealed bridging and bonding was influenced by internal factors including systemic opportunities and challenges, and shared stakeholder understanding of operational definitions and roles. External factors including barriers due to trauma, time and resource constraints, and socio-economic status influenced engagement. Recommendations for opportunities to enhance Hispanic family engagement were gleaned from participants and current literature.