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# WELCOME TO THE FIS NEWSLETTER



## Our Mission:

To involve parents and communities in their children's education to achieve lifelong success.

# Strengthening Parent Engagement

The foundation for success in school and in life

November/December 2011 - Vol 3/4, Issue 1



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## Dear Partner,

FIS is encouraged by the dedication of our partners, staff, and volunteers. We look forward to continuing to work together to strengthen parent engagement so that all students have the opportunities and resources necessary to succeed in school and in life.

Wishing you and yours a very Happy Holiday Season.



Warmest regards,

Oscar E. Cruz  
President & CEO  
Families In Schools

### Strong Organizations Result in Strong Programming



Research has shown that organizations that build robust infrastructure - which includes sturdy information technology systems, financial systems, skills training, fundraising processes, and other essential overhead - are more likely to succeed than those

that do not. To read full article, click [HERE](#).

## SPOTLIGHT: Daisy Rodriguez, GOT College!

**Daisy Rodriguez** is a first generation college student at CSUN majoring in Chicano Studies and Sociology.

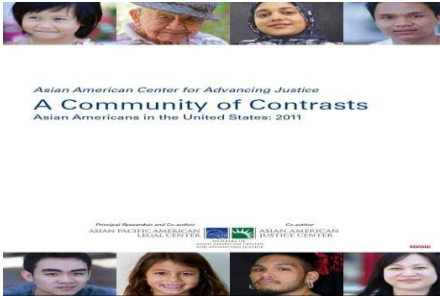
Daisy began the GEAR UP/Project Steps program in partnership with Families In Schools in 7th Grade at Sun Valley Middle School. The GEAR UP/Project Steps & Families In Schools partnership gave her the support she needed to keep her on the college track. In high school, the GOT College! sessions Daisy attended through Families In Schools helped her begin her successful journey towards higher education. As she continued with the program through East Valley High School, Daisy began to blossom as a student leader. As a result, Daisy participated in summer programs and career conferences. Through this process, her mother was able to attend parent workshops hosted by Families In Schools and became an active parent leader, inviting other parents to become involved.

Currently, Daisy and her mother are both supporting Daisy's younger sister through the college application process. Daisy is looking forward to graduating college and is exploring a career where she can help her community.



Daisy Rodriguez - A Highschooler's Perspective on GOT College!

## POLICY NEWS



["Income achievement gap" almost double black-white achievement gap > Click here for full article <](#)

["The Widening Academic Achievement Gap between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations" >Click here for full report <](#)

## RESEARCH CORNER



This new report cites large disparities in educational attainment for some groups of Asian Americans. These lower rates of educational attainment put some Asian American ethnic groups on par with Latinos and African Americans, the report found. CBOs in the Central Valley are engaging families in advocacy efforts to improve policies in their school district to help address this. Lao Family of Stockton and Fresno Center for New Americans are grantees of the Families Improving Education Initiative, a project managed by Families In Schools.

Please click [HERE](#) to access the article. Please click the image on the left to access the full report.

## TEACHER'S TIPS

### Outreach Strategy for Parent/Teacher Conferences

Do you have the right parents attending your parent-teacher conference events? If you want better results, try a few of these outreach tips.

Outreach:

- Begin your outreach effort no later than three weeks before the event.
- Identify the students whose parents you would most like to see at the conference and make personal phone calls to them a week before the event letting them know how much you want to meet them and partner with them for their child's success. You might call this group of students your "Focus Students."
- Let students know that you will give extra credit to students who attend with their parent or another adult interested in their education.

- Give your students a flyer with a tear off section where parents can tell you if they plan to attend or if they cannot attend, when is the best time for you to call them.
- Send out a "Robo Call" message to all of your students homes. Be sure to send it in the home language.
- Send an email to all of your students reminding them to encourage their parents to attend the conference.

For a complete list of outreach strategies, please contact:



**School Partnerships**

**Director:** Kathleen Mooney

**Email:** [kmooney@familiesinschools.org](mailto:kmooney@familiesinschools.org)

**ASK FIS**

Dear Families In Schools,

As a local district director, I visit schools daily and have opportunities to speak with principals and teachers about the work they are doing to increase the academic achievement of all students. Schools take this work seriously and I see teachers improving their craft as they work toward improved student results. One concern I hear expressed at schools is the difficulty teachers have motivating students to always do their very best.

I am interested in knowing whether Families In Schools has some experiences or insights on how local non-profits can help support teachers and parents in the area of student motivation.

Thank you,  
V

Dear V,

We know from experience that students want to be successful, but are in need of support to realize their potential and stay motivated. Students become motivated when adults in their lives talk with them often and when they have experiences that interest them by nurturing their curiosity and learning disciplines. Most students need access to additional resources outside of the classroom. Local community organizations can help your staff increase motivation by bringing additional resources for students and parents to your school community. These resources are often not well publicized and therefore, often not fully utilized.

School staff can help leverage community resources by building strong relationships with community organization staff and by helping to spread the word about these resources! Try one or more of these ideas.

- Form a small "Student Voice" committee made up of interested staff, local community organization staff, parents, and students. Ask the committee to answer the question, "What are we doing now that is motivating students to perform at high levels?" and "What do we need to do to motivate more students to perform at high levels?" Be sure the committee has a mechanism for gathering information from all types of students. Ask the committee to report their findings to the School Site Council with specific requests for improvements to the school site plan.

- Form a small "Fun Resources" committee of interested staff and local community organization staff to produce and distribute a comprehensive list of all community and school site resources that support students and their families.
  - Identify all of the resources in the community and on the campus that nurture students' academic and social lives and support families and parents.
  - Put all of the pertinent contact information into a 'student-friendly' document on-line and on paper. Give this document a name, such as "Fun Resources."
  - Ask staff to share the Fun Resources document with students and parents when they meet with students and parents.
  - Make the Fun Resources document easily accessible on the campus.
- Commit to nurturing a culture that welcomes parents and community into the school as important partners who help to motivate students. The more welcomed people feel when they enter the school, the more likely they are to return and share their knowledge and commitment with students and staff.

Thank you V for your inquiry. Families In Schools would love to hear from you and learn more about your experiences on keeping students motivated in school. We also look forward to hearing about other school related topics that you would like to see commented in this newsletter. Please send submissions to [srosas@familiesinschools.org](mailto:srosas@familiesinschools.org).

Sincerely,

The staff at Families In Schools

## ABOUT

*Families In Schools (FIS) is a nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, California whose mission is to involve parents and communities in their children's education to achieve lifelong success. FIS supports the movement of educational reform by pursuing the engagement of parents as an essential school reform component. To meet the mission, FIS focuses its efforts in four strategic areas: Community Engagement and Advocacy, Early Education and Family Literacy, College Awareness and Preparation, and School Partnerships. To learn more about our work, please visit: [www.familiesinschools.org](http://www.familiesinschools.org).*

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