

## Students Equate Parent Involvement with Success

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Kids will tell you what they need to succeed, if you ask them. But whose responsibility is that, the parents' or the students' themselves?

The Schools & Community Partnerships and Title I departments at Albuquerque Public Schools are joining family engagement to the forefront and answer the question. They found some answers by sitting down with a group of Albuquerque High School seniors who told them, sometimes amid tears, about the role adults in their education.

The dozen seniors spoke about future plans of college, nursing, architecture, sports, poetry and the police. They have been influenced by parents, grandparents, siblings, friends and coaches. All expect nothing next spring.

"My dad wants to see me walk the line, something he never did," one student said. Another said his mother when most of the men in his family have served time in prison. Yet another credited her grandmother for staying off drugs and on track to graduate.

At schools where at least half of the student population qualifies for the federal free or reduced price lunch, students can receive extra help in math and reading. That covers about 90 of APS' 140 schools. Title I also requires a compact to be signed by parents—a compact that lists involvement responsibilities for parents, student and school administrators. Often the form is signed at registration and placed in a file, not to be referenced again.

Dale Hagin, a resource teacher for Title I, said parent involvement is still critical at the high school level. Both Title I and two APS departments want to establish the importance of the compact, starting with student input.

"Right now, participation is missing," Hagin said. "We need something that the community can work with."

Hagin and the others discovered something about the students. Some of them said their teachers don't always ask how many had ever received a positive phone call at home from their school, no one raised a hand. School members called several students' homes that night, and found that parents were pleasantly surprised to hear something that hadn't happened before. Students had told them so.

Students are helping rewrite the compact. More importantly, the process has opened a discussion that hasn't had with students, and will lead to improved conversations with parents and school staff.

"The compact should be the catalyst to bring us all together," Hagin said.