

Hidalgo Early College District Toolkit

HIDALGO ISD PARENT PROFILES

LEONOR DE LEON

A mother of four girls, ages 12 to 17, and an active volunteer at HECHS, Leonor Esther De Leon was a doctor in Mexico before coming to the United States four years ago. Soon after the De Leon family settled in Hidalgo, Mrs. De Leon's youngest daughter, Maria Jose, came home from school and said, "Mom, I need your help. I need to read the first chapter of 'Charlotte's Web.'" Recalling the experience, Mrs. De Leon said, "That was a frustrating moment for me; the chapter only had four short pages, and I couldn't read a single one." Later on, when she attended meetings with the teachers and counselors at her daughters' schools, she remembers feeling "an immense panic and frustration" due to her inability to communicate with her daughters' teachers and counselors in English. "To me they seemed to be speaking in Chinese, not English, when they talked about the ESL program, credits, grades, regular classes, Pre-AP classes, AP classes, dual credit. Everything for me was strange and difficult."

This panic and frustration fueled Mrs. De Leon's decision to participate in the Hidalgo Parent Academies, where she received English language instruction. "For me, the first year here in the United States was difficult because of the language. I felt fear to come to the school, to speak with the teachers, because many do not speak Spanish. I think the principal reason to enter the Parent Academies program is because I needed to understand English to help my daughters succeed in school."

The Parent Academies has empowered Mrs. De Leon to be a more active participant in her daughters' educational journeys, supporting them on their pathways to college. Speaking about the Parent Academies, Mrs. De Leon told us, "the program offers parents many options to learn and to achieve. It also enables us to find the information necessary to communicate and to understand how to assist our children on their way to college. Now, when I go to meetings at school, sometimes I understand and on other occasions I don't, but I have the confidence to ask, 'can you repeat that, please?'" In addition to becoming more confident in her ability to communicate with school faculty and administrators, Mrs. De Leon is also better able to assist her daughters with their schoolwork. "Last year I helped my daughter read not one, but three chapters of her science book in two hours, and I helped her prepare her science project in English," she said proudly.

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SANDRA MARTINEZ

Soon after moving to Hidalgo 11 years ago, Sandra Martinez became active with the Hidalgo ISD's Parent Academies to support her three children. "This is a good district because not only do they teach the students how to help to take more opportunities in their lives, but also we as parents have the opportunity to be better parents and we have the opportunity to take more education for ourselves." Ten years later, Mrs. Martinez's son, Esau, is a student at South Texas College. Last year, her eldest daughter, Sandra, a 2009 Gates Millennium Scholar, entered Texas A&M University, College Station, with 40 college credits. Mrs. Martinez's youngest child, Mariana, is in the 10th grade at HECHS and is taking three college classes this year. Mariana is working hard in order to achieve her goal of attending the University of Texas, Austin. Last year, Mrs. Martinez was runner up for the Texas Education Agency's Parent of the Year Award. Her ultimate goal is to earn her GED and to start college with Mariana in 2012. "I want to learn and improve myself to be a better example for my children. It's very important to demonstrate to my children that if I can do it, they can do it."

Through the Parent Academies, Mrs. Martinez was able to take English language and computer courses. "Now that Sandra is studying at Texas A&M University, I am happy because I know how to use computers and technology. I can have better communication with her through the internet," she said. Mrs. Martinez also praised the HISD for providing both students and parents with opportunities to improve their lives. With the support of the Parent Academies, which meets every week to share information about health and wellness, high school graduation requirements, standardized testing, college financial aid, youth emotional development, and even the U.S. Census, parents "have the opportunity to be better parents, to raise better citizens for the future, and to improve the community." Reflecting back ten years ago, Mrs. Martinez remarked, "when I came here, I didn't understand anything, about English, about other things. I felt afraid to come to the school. This district, I feel comfortable. It's like a family here."