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More than a Diploma

Strategies to Improve the Educational Attainment of Latino Students

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For

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Rights of Los Angeles**

(CHIRLA)

INTRODUCTION

My interest in education began when I was a student at John Adams Middle School in Los Angeles. A major education issue at the time was Proposition 187. In essence, the Proposition attempted to deny any public services, including education, to illegal immigrants. The Proposition did not pose any threat to me and this led me to believe that none of my friends were going to be affected by it as well. However, I soon learned that many of my friends were vulnerable to the Proposition's passage because they were undocumented students. Proposition 187 did pass, but it was ultimately deemed to be unconstitutional by the California State Supreme Court.

The passage of Proposition 187 opened my eyes because I never thought that the people it was going to hurt were the same individuals that I attended school with. In the past, I had always considered politics to be something that was distant from me and that would never affect me, but Proposition 187 made me realize that I was wrong. Consequently, I began to notice other problems that were present in public schools, but at the age of twelve I considered the problems to be too large in scope for me to do anything about them.

The concern over issues affecting education was still in my mind when I began to attend high school. By then, however, I was ready to get involved in these issues. In the ninth grade I had an English teacher; he was a new teacher with innovative approaches on how to help students get a proper education. One of those approaches came into fruition and it was called the Early College Academy Program. The program was composed of a series of academically challenging workshops and courses that enabled students to develop their skills. The program also had a network of supportive teachers, counselors,

and administrators who helped students through their years in high school and provided assistance with the college application process. The program was helpful to students, but it did not take every need of a student into account because student input was absent. As a result, my English teacher began to search for students who could give insight into some of the needs students had, but were not being addressed by the program. With my involvement with the program, I, along with another group of students, pointed out the need for a component in the program that dealt with community service, since students liked the idea of having a program that would challenge them academically and civically. The suggestion was accepted and the program began to schedule activities that had students involved in community events.

The involvement of students in the program enabled every student to enhance all of their academic skills. The teachers also went out of their way to assure that we applied to college and any scholarships that were available. Those in the surrounding community were also pleased because we participated in community events. Hence, my involvement in the Early College Academy Program allowed me to alleviate some of the concerns I had with education. More importantly, it was also an experience that helped me grow and believe that active involvement can reduce and even eliminate problems that plague a community.

Participating in the Early College Academy Program was a great experience, but I realized that such programs tended to ignore the educational needs of English learners (who need additional instruction in their native language) and undocumented students. Such engagement led me to get involved, while in college, with the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA). My involvement with CHIRLA allowed

me and another student to develop a project that informed English learners and undocumented students about their options after high school. The program consisted of developing an advocacy campaign that gave students the necessary information to apply for college and scholarships. I went from one school to the next informing students about Assembly Bill 540. This legislation, which passed in 2001, enabled undocumented students to pay in state tuition at any college or university in California, rather than the far more expensive out of state tuition. Many of the undocumented students I spoke to had no idea that they could apply to college. Both CHIRLA and I were glad to have been involved in the project and despite the fact that the project was small, it was something that would not have been done otherwise.

The time I spent interning at CHIRLA gave me the idea to research the problems that affected Latino students in education. Along with researching several issues and trying to discover possible problems that were never considered before, I also wanted to identify a set a recommendations that would allow schools to successfully guide Latino students into college. Hence, the first chapter of this study explains some of the legal and political decisions that had an impact on education and an even larger one on Latino students. The second chapter describes some of the structural problems that affect the educational experience of Latino students. In the third chapter several of the problems that affect Latino students outside of school and in their neighborhoods are described. The fourth chapter provides a set of recommendations that can help schools guide their students into college more effectively. Finally, the fifth chapter describes some of my research findings.

The overall purpose of this study is to demonstrate how Latino students can excel in education despite present barriers. Frequently, many studies attempt to describe the problems that prevent minority students from performing adequately in school and they also offer solutions. However, the solutions given do not take into account any input that educators or students have to offer. These same solutions tend to fail because while they are geared to improve schools and districts that are struggling financially, their implementation requires large sums of money. Due to such occurrences, this study will provide recommendations that depend on people, rather than money, as resources for their actual implementation. The recommendations described in this study had the input of educators, administrators, teachers, students, and parents and they are aimed at giving every student a fair chance of applying to college. These recommendations have been used by other schools and they demonstrate that if a collaborative effort is set forth by everyone from educators to parents that students, who at one point only dreamed about college, will now have the opportunity experience it first hand. This study will also address my initial hypothesis and research question, which are as follows:

Hypothesis:

In describing the obstacles that lead Hispanic students to perform poorly in school and often fail to move on to pursue a college education, there are evident structural and policy barriers (i.e. teacher quality; lack of books; tracking; elimination). Yet, there are other factors like culture, (i.e. deferred gratification; sexism; family centrism) and a student's relationship with other students and the surrounding community, that also help explain why some Hispanic students find it hard to excel in school.

Research Question:

Despite the barriers that many Hispanic students encounter while receiving an education, there are many students who are overcoming such barriers and are actually excelling in school. This project will try to discover and answer the issues that revolve around the proceeding question:

Does the Effective Schools model that emphasizes responsibility for student learning and strong instructional leadership, among other variables, provide an effect framework to help Latino students overcome these barriers?

CHAPTER ONE: THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION

The attempt to create a school system where every student can attain a decent education is a goal that every school official, policy maker, and politician would like to achieve. These same individuals, however, often create and support policies that may in fact prevent students from achieving their full academic potential. These policies also have the tendency to affect students unequally. Instances like this can be seen in the state of California, where Latino students have been victimized by educational policies that have not only decreased, but have also tried to prevent Latino students from pursuing higher education.

Some of the policies formulated are not directly intended to lessen the quality of education that Latino students receive. Policies are usually created in order to counteract the effects of a failing school system. Yet, these policies do not always address the needs of Latino students and may even create more barriers to the already difficult task of acquiring an education.

What follows is a chronological review of the policies, initiatives, and events that have significantly affected the education of Latino students.

Lau v. Nichols 1974

Since its creation thirty years ago, bilingual education has always been at the center of controversy. Opponents of bilingual education argue that teaching students in their native language shields students from the real world and prevents them from moving into mainstream classes. Other critics, including 1996 Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole, oppose bilingual education because he sees it as a way of “instilling ethnic pride, or as therapy for low self-esteem, or out of elitist guilt over a culture built on

traditions of the West” (Rothstein, pg. 101). Critics of bilingual education consider “English only” or mainstream classes as the best teaching approach for all students, regardless of their background. Proponents, on the other hand, affirm that bilingual education was created because schools realized that teaching students in their native language was a legitimate need and essential for the comprehension of English as a second language.

The earliest Supreme Court ruling concerning language instruction was *Meyer v. Nebraska, 1923*. Essentially, the Supreme Court declared that Americans had the unequivocal right to preserve their native languages and for “teachers in public and private schools to teach these languages to children” (Mitchell, et. al., pg. 91). The right to teach students in their native language was greatly supported by both private and public schools, yet it was a right that schools did not strictly adhere to.

It was not until 1974 in the *Lau v. Nichols* case where the Supreme Court addressed the question whether public schools had the affirmative task of providing specialized educational services to students who were not native English speakers (Mitchell, et. al., pg. 91). In the *Lau v. Nichols* case, the Supreme Court affirmed a regulation from 1970 that was promulgated by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), which interpreted the 1964 Civil Rights Act as “applying to persons having a ‘language deficiency’ when protecting against prejudice based on ‘natural origin’” (Mitchell, et. al., pg. 91). The argument made by the OCR was also reaffirmed in Title VI of the 1974 Equal Opportunity Act. In the end, the Lau decision held that students had the right to expect instruction to be conducted in a language that they could understand “and that schools have an obligation to assure that students get reasonable assistance in gaining

access to school academic programs” (Mitchell, et. al., pg. 91). The ruling held in the *Lau v. Nichols* case was interpreted as requiring schools to develop bilingual instructional programs that utilize children’s native language for instruction (Mitchell, et. al., pg. 91).

The development of bilingual education programs allowed several Latino students to develop a greater understanding of course material and the English language. Yet the opposition toward bilingual education still remained and language instruction programs were heavily scrutinized. Despite the evidence demonstrating that students who could not apply their native language towards the mastery of academic disciplines learned at a lower rate than students in bilingual classes, critics still believed that language instruction was a failure and a waste of money (Mitchell, et. al, pg. 92). Such hostile attitudes eventually lead to the creation of Proposition 227, a state initiative aimed at terminating bilingual education in every public school in California. (Proposition 227 will be discussed later in the chapter.)

The Leticia A. Network

Like bilingual education, the thought of immigrant students enrolling in institutions of higher learning has always been seen negatively by some politicians, policy makers, and a significant number of Californians. Presently there are several guidelines and requirements that prevent qualified immigrant students from attending the school of their choice. Moreover, undocumented students seeking to attend college do not receive any form of financial aid from the government. Hence, the dream of attending college is a desire that still evades many Latino students who are undocumented.

Today, Latino students who are undocumented are unable to qualify for any form

of financial aid provided by the state. There was a time, however, where undocumented students did not have to worry about their immigration status in order to attend the college of their choice. In 1982, in the case of *Plyer v. Doe*, the Supreme Court ruled that all undocumented children have the right to a free public education (Soto, pg. 35). The Supreme Court felt that it would be unfair to deny undocumented children the right to an education simply because their parents made the decision to enter the country illegally (Soto, pg. 35). Due to this federal law, public schools were prohibited from doing the following (Morse & Ludovina, 1999):

- deny admission to students on the basis of undocumented status
- treat a student fundamentally different from others to determine residency
- engage in any activity that might intimidate, or would make families fearful as a consequence of their status
- require students or parents to reveal or document their immigration status
- require Social Security numbers from all students
- reveal the status of children and their families to the Immigration and Naturalization Service

As a result of these federal provisions, all children, documented or not, were entitled to a free public education from kindergarten through the twelfth grade.

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Plyer v. Dough* allowed undocumented students the ability to receive a free public education. Still, the case failed to address whether undocumented students had the right to receive financial aid when deciding to attend college.

Presently, undocumented students receive no financial aid and must pay the far

more expensive out of state tuition, yet there was a time where undocumented students received federal financial aid to attend college. In 1986, in a ruling based on a class action lawsuit, Leticia “A” v. the University of California Regents and the California State University Board of Trustees, the Alameda Superior Court declared unconstitutional Education Code 68062(h) (as implemented by both the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems) (Soto, pg. 36). The code stated the following: *“An alien, including an unmarried minor alien, may establish his or her residence, unless precluded by the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 u.s.c. 1101, et seq.) from establishing domicile in the United States.”* The ruling also enabled undocumented students to pay in-state tuition and qualify for some state aid.

The policies created by the Leticia A. Network had a strong run and were able to improve the chances of undocumented Latinos to attend college. The Leticia A. Network (which consisted of education policy makers, teachers, parents, lawyers, and community members) had garnered great momentum and was constantly monitoring the compliance of every public college and university to the Leticia A. policy. In 1991, however, the Leticia A. Network and the policy were challenged by Donald Bradford, an employee who worked in the registrar’s office at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) (Soto, pg. 37). According to Bradford, the Leticia A. policy requiring every UC campus to classify undocumented students as legal residents forced him to “violate the U.S. constitution, which gives Congress the responsibility to make laws regulating immigration and the California state constitution, which requires adherence to the U.S. constitution” (Soto, pg. 37). The Superior Court of Los Angeles concurred with Bradford and his reference to Education Code 60862(h), which prohibits undocumented students

from establishing in-state residency for tuition purposes (Soto, pg. 37). Consequently, every UC campus began to adopt the Bradford order in the fall of 1991 and newly enrolled undocumented students could no longer be classified as legal residents for tuition purposes.

California Community Colleges (CCC) were not sued in either of the Leticia A. or Bradford cases, but they interpreted the Bradford ruling through policies established in February 1992 that distinguished current and future enrollees. The community college policy allowed current enrollees to maintain their resident status. New enrollees, however, were subject to the Bradford order. In addition, community colleges also set guidelines that enabled undocumented students, who have taken steps to acquire legal residency, opportunity to qualify for in-state tuition (Soto, pg. 37).

In the spring of 1992 the California Student Aid Commission (SAC), which is responsible for state financial aid programs, also adopted the Bradford order. This halted the awarding of Cal Grants or any financial aid granted under the Leticia A. policy to undocumented students (Soto, pg. 37).

The last institution to adopt the Bradford order was the California State University System (CSU). The adoption of the Bradford order by CSU began when the American Association of Women (AAW) and other anti-immigrant groups (Federation for Immigration Reform, California Coalition for Immigration Reform, Valley Citizens for Fair Immigration) sued the CSU in the Superior Court of Los Angeles by asking the court to require CSU to adhere to the Bradford order and terminate the implementation of the Leticia A. policy (Soto, pg. 38). The AAW won its case against the CSU Board of Trustees on January 17, 1995 and the CSU began to implement the Bradford order

immediately; and both current and newly enrolled undocumented students were ineligible for state financial aid and had to pay out of state tuition (Soto, pg. 38).

The Bradford order may have ended the eligibility of undocumented students to receive financial aid. However, in January 2001 then governor of California, Gray Davis, signed Assembly Bill 540 (AB 540). Under AB 540 undocumented students who graduated from any California high school can qualify to pay instate tuition as long as they can prove they have been in the country for at least three years.

Proposition 187

During the decade of the 1990's California was a very hostile environment for illegal immigrants. Such sentiment was reflected in several statewide initiatives that were aimed at controlling the flow of immigrants into the country. One of the first initiatives was Proposition 187.

Proposition 187 was a product of California at a time when illegal immigrants were considered to be a burden to the state. According to the 2000 Census, between 1990 and 2000 there were approximately 6.8 to 8.8 million immigrants living in the United States. Opponents of illegal immigration also claimed that illegal immigrants were costing California \$5 billion annually. Many Californians felt that illegal immigrants were taking jobs away from legal residents and American citizens (Davis, 1999). These anti-immigrant attitudes laid the groundwork for Proposition 187; a state wide initiative placed on the ballot in 1994 and strongly supported by former Governor Pete Wilson. Immigrant supporters considered the Proposition to be a direct attack on the Latino immigrant community because it attempted to deprive any public service, including education to immigrants. In opposition to the measure, many immigrants and community

leaders held protest rallies, marches, and organized school walk-outs.

As previously mentioned, Proposition 187 attempted to deny any public services to illegal immigrants in several ways, including:

- Barred aliens from state public education, which included K-12 and higher education. (This would have excluded 308,000 students from schools.)
- Required that documentation be provided and legal status verified for individuals seeking non-emergency healthcare services.
- Required the status of individuals seeking cash benefits to be verified.
- All public service providers must report suspected aliens to the Attorney General.
- Individuals utilizing fake documentation will be charged with a state felony.

The protests held by groups opposing Proposition 187 did not ultimately influence the outcome of the election, which was passed by a margin of nearly 60% to 40%. Fifty out of the fifty-eight counties in the state voted for the measure and the exit polls indicated that 64% of Whites, 57% of Asians, 56% of Blacks, and 31% Latinos all voted in support of the measure.

Although Proposition 187 passed by a wide margin, its enforcement was challenged and delayed. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) did not comply with the proposition because 88% of its students were Latinos and at least 50% of them were of immigrant descent or immigrants themselves. If the school district adhered to the Proposition's clauses, a minimum of 20% of its entire student body would have been forced out of school and funding to LAUSD schools would have decreased due to their absence. Moreover, to implement such provisions school officials felt that schools would become an extension of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) if they

followed the following guidelines set by the measure. These included:

- By January 1, 1995 schools were required to verify the legal status of students enrolling in the district for the first time.
- By January 1, 1996 schools were required to verify the legal status of current enrollees.
- If an enrollee was found to be undocumented, schools would have 45 days to report the case to the INS, the state superintendent of the public institution, California Attorney General, and the affected parent or guardian.
- After 90 days of educational instruction schools were required to transfer the student to a school in the student's country of origin.

While Proposition 187 was seen as a direct threat to immigrants, it was never implemented as the measure was ruled to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1998 (Soto, pg. 38).

The ruling by the Supreme Court to declare Proposition 187 unconstitutional eliminated any actual harm that the measure could have caused the immigrant community. Nevertheless, many immigrant parents feared sending their children to school since they assumed they could be questioned and possibly deported. This resulted in parents temporarily losing their trust in schools.

Proposition 209

The hostility toward immigrants and the Latino community in California did not stop after Proposition 187. In fact, in 1996 another statewide initiative was crafted that targeted affirmative action. Proposition 209 was opposed by several minority advocates and voters were urged to vote against the measure. In the end however, 54% of

Californian voters voted for the measure, while only 46% voted against it (Houston, 1996). As a result, public colleges and universities were forced to abandon policies that secured admittance for minority students and minority enrollment began to decline. Students affected by Proposition 209 felt that the measure was racist and would prevent minority students from attending college. Yet proponents of the measure – which included several minorities – stated that allowing under-qualified students to attend college would hurt them in the long run and jeopardize the chances of qualified students from getting admitted. Individuals in favor of the measure stated that affirmative action did not help students admitted under the policy because they would either be placed in remedial courses or drop out of college due to a lack of adequate skills. Supporters of 209 also argued that by having affirmative action would ignore the fact that the real problems that lie in higher education are related to bad public schools. Thus, the chances of Latino students attending college were further decreased, but colleges immediately began to devise outreach programs in order to offset the effect created by Proposition 209 (Trounson, 2003).

Proposition 227

On the heels of Proposition 187 and 209 a third assault against the Latino and immigrant community was placed on California's ballot in 1998. The initiative was created by former gubernatorial candidate and software millionaire Ron Unz and teacher Gloria Matta Tuchman (Navarrette Jr., 1997). The idea to create the measure came after parents in an elementary school complained about teachers who were not helping their children learn how to speak English. It was also based on the supposition that bilingual education had failed and that school bureaucracies addicted to the additional funding

provided for bilingual education, overlook the demands of parents who want their children taught in English (Navarrette Jr., 1997). Unz's arguments about an English-only approach making assimilation easier and leading to affluence even got the support of Jaime Escalante, a former math teacher in a predominantly Latino high school in East Los Angeles. Unz also argued that under the current bilingual education programs only 5% of students became proficient in English while 95% failed to do so. Despite the arguments made by Unz, bilingual education is considered to be advantageous by several teachers because it has beneficial effects, "and efforts to eliminate native language [instruction] harm children by denying them access to beneficial approaches" (Greene, 2001).

Although bilingual education had a number of advocates, many of them also recognized the flaws in the current system. Many proponents argued that bilingual education could be successful if fewer under-qualified teachers were responsible for language instruction. Furthermore, proponents also realized that bilingual education instructors were reluctant to accept any reforms to language programs even if the suggestions came from people who supported them.

As Election Day came closer, Latino and immigrant advocates encouraged voters to vote against Proposition 227, also known as the "English for the Children" measure. The protests by several Latino and immigrant groups were unable to stop the passage of the proposition and it was instituted in 1998. Those advocating support for 227 were successful because they were able to present more concrete evidence and display facts that appealed to the concerns of voters (e.g. the fact that bilingual education programs cost California \$370 million annually).

In response to the adoption of Proposition 227, the LAUSD devised two models geared for teaching students who had not yet become proficient in English. The two models were known as “Model A” and “Model B.” Here is a description of both models:

- Model A: in this model students are enrolled in “English-only” classes and receive minimal instruction in primary language from a teacher’s assistant.
- Model B: in this model students are enrolled in “English-only” classes and receive minimal instruction in primary language from a bilingual teacher.

Besides Models A and B, parents were also given the option of applying for a waiver that enabled children to enroll in traditional bilingual education classes. Yet, parents were not informed about the waivers and several students were placed in classes that they were not ready for. As a result, several students were not able to perform adequately and were not allowed to move on to the next grade. Such occurrences, led to the retention of approximately 9,700 students who were in large part Latino

The fact that waivers gave parents the option to enroll their children in bilingual education has been widely criticized. Critics, like Ron Unz, feel that waivers ignore the fact that Proposition 227 was instituted, and fail to realize that English proficiency has increased since Proposition 227 was brought into effect. In 1991 the proficiency levels reached 4.2%, in 1998 -the year Proposition 227 was passed- proficiency levels grew to 8%, and in 2000 proficiency levels increased to 10%. English proficiency levels have increased since the adoption of Proposition 227, yet skeptics like Professor David Ramirez from California State University, argue that both 21% and 38% of students who reached proficiency in 2 to 3 years (after the passage of 227) respectively, had previous experience with the English language (Greene, 2001).

In spite of Proposition 227, several programs have been introduced in order to help students reach adequate levels of performance. These programs offer innovative approaches and even require the participation of parents. Many of these programs are in their initial phase as pilots, but they have demonstrated promise in a very short time. The details of such programs will be discussed in a later chapter.

Closing Thoughts

The state initiatives and policies discussed in this chapter have all affected Latinos and the immigrant community negatively. Supporters of such policies have frequently argued that these policies were created to assure that students would get the best education possible, yet in the end some students have been hurt. These policies and initiatives also created a loss of trust in schools by both Latino students and their parents. Consequently, members of the Latino and immigrant community began to consider schools as mirrors that began to reflect the anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment that was shared by the rest of California.

CHAPTER TWO: PROBLEMS INSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM

The previous chapter explained many of the policies and state initiatives (i.e. Proposition 187, 209, and 227) that were created to address some of the problems affecting the California public school system. These policies and state initiatives were created with the purpose of improving an ailing school system and increasing the performance of every child. Still, the policies and initiatives drafted by policy makers were prone to several flaws and criticism. Pro-immigrant advocates who were against such policies argued that these policies would greatly impact Latino students and prevent them from having a decent educational experience; immigrant groups also discussed and cited a number of the potential consequences that these policies and initiatives would have, yet critics as well as proponents of such measures did not fully grasp the extent of the impact that these measures would have on the school system and students.

This chapter will describe some of structural problems that both students and teachers encounter inside the classroom. It will also discuss how some of the Propositions and court cases discussed in the previous chapter further extend these problems.

Testing

Low test-scores have been a problem that constantly haunts the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Students are frequently criticized for not performing adequately in state examinations, and, as a result, teachers are scrutinized for failing to prepare students. Among the exams that have underlined the ineffectiveness of the LAUSD is the Exit Exam. The Exit Exam is comprised of an English (which is at a 10th grade level) and Math portion (which is at a 9th grade level). It also has two sections that

involve up to 80 multiple choice questions, and another section that asks students to complete two essay questions. The Exit Exam takes place over a three day period and students are given several opportunities to pass the exam if they fail on their first attempt. Even with the ability to take the exam several times in order to pass it, Duke Helfand, a L.A. Times reporter, states that only 48% of students in the class of 2004 have passed both the English and Math portions of the exam. In another study conducted by Helfand two years ago, the numbers for Latinos were even lower since only 30% passed both portions of the exam (Helfand, 2002). Education officials state that part of the reason why failure rates are high is because the school system has failed to adequately prepare the students for the exam.

Poorly prepared students are also becoming a problem in the California State University System (CSU). Under a policy adopted in 1996 by the Cal State trustees, entering freshmen must take placement exams to show that they have mastered basic skills in English and Math (Silverstein, 2003). However, in 2002 the CSU threw out 8.2% of its freshmen class (a figure that had increased from 6.7% the previous year) because they failed to pass remedial courses that help students master basic skills in both English and math. Educators state that the high dismissal rate among the 37,000 students admitted in the fall of 2001 was up from 6.7% due to the fact that high schools had not prepared students for college level courses.

The high failure rate of the Exit Exam has caused state school officials to delay its full implementation until 2006. Hence, students of the class of 2006 will be required to pass the exam in order to receive a high school diploma. The decision by state educators to delay the exam gives schools some breathing room, but it also forces them to try to

make sure more students pass. This would mean that schools must try to do better than they did with the class of 2004, where only 64% of students passed the English section and 44% students passed the math section on their first try. In subsequent attempts as many as 20% of the class of 2004 still failed. Still, there has been some improvement due to intensive preparatory programs, since 79% of students of the class of 2005 have passed the English section and 60% have passed the math section (Helfand, 2003).

The problem of low test scores is not limited to high schools. Elementary schools have also had their fair share of problems with exams. In recent years, however, elementary schools have usually outperformed middle schools and high schools in state administered examinations. The improvement shown by elementary schools is largely due to “Open Court,” a highly structured reading program that is used in almost every elementary school in the district. “Open Court” has greatly helped teachers improve the areas where students have shown weakness and it has enabled students to perform better in a variety of required exams. This has also caused elementary schools to raise their Academic Performance Index (API) by as much as twenty points in one year (Helfand, 2003).

The argument that students acquire low test scores due to poor school preparation has also been challenged by some educators. Educators believe that students receive low scores because they are required to take several exams, which take days to complete. Education officials who favor extensive testing argue that exams are the only way of letting the state, schools, teachers, and parents know if a child is performing satisfactorily. One of the exams designed to evaluate the progress of students is the California Standards Test, which tests elementary students on the required material for

each grade level and is considered the best test to monitor the progress of students. Another exam utilized to follow the performance of students is the sixth edition of the California Achievement Test (CAT/6). Essentially the CAT/6 exam tests elementary students on basic skills and uses a large sample of students to compare scores. Both the CST and CAT/6 serve to measure the yearly progress of schools, which include graduate rates in proportion to the students tested, and math and reading proficiency levels. Finally, native Spanish speakers are given the second version of the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education or SABE/2. This test is administered to native Spanish speakers in their first year of public education (Hayasaki, 2003). All the aforementioned exams comprise the tools that schools -elementary schools specifically- use in order to monitor their progress, which has steadily improved but still has several Latinos students lagging behind.

K-12 schools in the LAUSD have difficulties improving the progress of every student and new policies arise that force schools to be more accountable to their students. For instance, under the “No Child Left Behind” law, students who attend failing schools can have the option to transfer to another school. Moreover, the law was designed to close the academic achievement gap between Black and Latino students and their white counterparts. The purpose of the law is to eliminate what President Bush calls “the soft bigotry of low expectations” by holding schools “accountable for setting high standards for all students and testing to measure whether each student –and the school- has made the grade” (Shogren, 2004). This policy presents the LAUSD with several problems, since transferring students would mean that the district itself would have to pay for the transportation, but the district does not have enough money to do so. At this point,

220,000 students from failing schools could transfer if they chose to do so, but the lack of funds presents the district with the inability to provide enough room for transferring students. The “No Child Left Behind” law also requires failing schools to provide staff development and increase student tutoring, but it does not provide these schools with the funds necessary to do so (Hayasaki, 2003). Moreover, the district is unable to transfer students because most schools have already reached their maximum student capacity and have become what are known as track schools. Track schools were created in an effort to relieve the number of students attending a school at one time. As a result, these schools only have 2/3rds of the students present at any one time. Many educators and parents oppose transferring students from a failing school to a track school because these schools have their break periods or vacation at the end of the school year. Consequently, students who attend schools that do not provide their breaks during the summer have a harder time attending summer school or preparing for advanced placement courses. Students are also unable to participate in such activities as attending summer camp or finding a job. These disadvantages affect Latino students the most because they are the group in largest need of academic support and are also more likely to attend track schools.

Monitoring the progress of schools and students with a wide array of exams is considered a necessity by state education officials, yet many teachers believe that extensive testing affects their teaching and prevents students from receiving a complete educational experience. Educators state that the exams do detect the areas where students need improvement, but teachers are unable to improve in such areas because the tests are too frequent (Helfand, 2003). Additionally, teachers dislike the fact that there is frequent testing because they are forced to teach to the test, which in turn prevents students from

learning other vital material that is not covered in exams (Traub, 2002). Latino students, especially those who have not yet mastered the English language, have a hard time with exams because there have been several instances where students have passed their English Regents diploma test examinations in order to graduate, but are unable to receive a high school diploma because they have not passed the E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) test, which covers material that students have not been exposed to (Winerip, 2003).

State education officials expect teachers to aid all students in order to increase their performance in exams. This task has been very hard for many teachers to achieve because they believe that school districts do not provide them with all the materials necessary to improve student test scores. Additionally, teachers argue that the number of students in class is too large and prevents them from giving students the required amount of attention that is necessary in order to improve their test scores.

Class Size and Teacher Quality

The lack of teachers, including qualified ones, is a problem that has plagued the LAUSD for quite a while. Schools that often face the greatest teacher shortage are predominately composed of Latino students, yet the state has taken several steps to alleviate the problem. California has spent \$8 billion since 1996 to have one teacher for every 20 students from kindergarten through the third grade (Pierson, 2002). This rush to hire more teachers has resulted in the employment of too many under-qualified instructors “and disappointing academic results” (Pierson, 2002). Though California may have had an overabundance of under-qualified teachers in other times, current studies show that California is experiencing greater teacher shortages today. Presently, the state

has fewer teachers for every 1,000 students or 25% fewer instructors compared to the rest of the nation (Smith, 2003). California also lags far behind other states in counselors, 46%; librarians, 56%; and other support positions, 56% (Smith, 2003).

Like the rest of the state the LAUSD suffers from severe teacher shortages, which have been further increased due to recent budget cuts in education. In an effort to alleviate some of the shortfall created by the state's budget deficit the LAUSD decided to administer a \$70 million budget cut that included a decrease in the number of teachers. Furthermore, this \$70 million dollar cut has resulted in a student increase in classrooms that has some teachers teaching 35 to 45 students. Many teachers in the district already have classes with about 40 students. Special education classes have 14 students and the student to teacher ratio for remedial courses has increased from 15:1 to 20:1 (Giordani, 2002). The present teacher shortage is also attributed to the high rate of teacher turnover. Several teachers stop teaching or leave to other schools because they are in search of a higher salary or because they are unsatisfied with the support their current school provides. A large portion of educators who share this lack of satisfaction are Bilingual Education instructors, who constantly complain about not being given the proper support and materials in order to help students -most of whom are Latino- achieve English proficiency. Thus, the lack of teachers -qualified or not- is a problem that largely affects Latino students since they compose most of the schools that face these problems. This in turn may create an environment where both teachers and students are unable to reach their full potential whether they want to or not.

Social Promotion

Critics of public education often claim that school systems fail due to the

practices performed in schools. One practice utilized by critics to demonstrate the weakness and inefficiency of school districts, like the LAUSD, is social promotion. Although social promotion no longer exists, when it did many education officials believed that the act of promoting students, whose achievement was below satisfactory levels, to the next grade was responsible for creating a society in which high school graduates were unable to read, write, or compute. The argument in favor of social promotion claimed that the practice was utilized in order to boost the self-esteem of failing students. However, many officials, including former Mayor of New York Rudolph Giuliani, stated that social promotion “may sound right, it may be kind, but it is cruel” since it puts off a problem that will worsen in the future (Rothstein, pg. 93). Others like Sandra Feldman, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, believe that holding students back a year is also unacceptable. Instead, Feldman suggests that better school programs and better qualified teachers is the solution that can allow students to be eligible for promotion. The suggestions given by Feldman decrease the number of students that are held back, but these suggestions do not take into consideration that several districts, including the LAUSD, are unable to provide enough qualified teachers and quality school programs due to a lack of funds.

Social promotion began to be questioned when LAUSD teachers realized that the practice was affecting their teaching, since they often had to alter their agenda for the year to meet the needs of lagging students while ignoring those of proficient students. The district also began to realize that social promotion was producing unsatisfactory academic results and decided to terminate the practice in 1998. At the time, however, many believed that the termination of social promotion should be delayed, since

immediate implementation would have caused 40% or 280,000 students to be retained. Thus, the formal termination of social promotion came in 2000 and teachers were required to utilize the CAT/6 and CST to determine whether students were eligible for promotion.

In the first year since the termination of social promotion, 13,500 students (or 3,800 eighth-graders and 9,700 second-graders) attending the LAUSD were held back a year. Many teachers no longer oppose the termination of social promotion, but they do have concern about the burdens it creates. The school district does not have the resources necessary to accommodate every single student that has been held back. In order to prevent failing students from being retained the district needs to provide tutoring programs and summer school courses, but they are unable to do so. To assure that struggling students move on to the next grade, the district needs to provide before and after-school tutoring programs and weekend classes, but again the school does not have sufficient funds and qualified teachers to provide students with such services. Due to the failure of the district to prevent retention, studies have indicated that students who are retained a year have a 20% to 30% chance of dropping out; while students who are retained for two years have up to a 100% chance of quitting school.

The possibility of being retained is something that several Latino students had to face ever since bilingual education programs were eliminated due to Proposition 227. The elimination of language instruction programs has caused several Latino students to be placed in mainstream classes they are not ready for. Many of these students do perform adequately in subjects like mathematics, but they struggle in other subjects that demand a greater understanding of the English language; this in turn causes students to be

retained. Teachers who deal with Latino students, who lack English fluency, also tend to have lower expectations from them and focus more on the mistakes made by the students. The retention of Spanish speaking students due to placement in mainstream classes is in a larger part due to the failure of schools to inform parents about waivers, which allow students to be enrolled in bilingual classes. In summary, it has become clear that the elimination of bilingual education programs and the absence of adequate exams that can assess whether or not students are eligible for promotion has resulted in high rates of Latino students being retained, as high as 60% of all retained students in the district.

Preconceived Notions

The inability of some Latino students to perform adequately in school is usually attributed to the student himself. Yet, few experts state that the cause of a Latino student's poor performance is perhaps due to the treatment of teachers. When a problem between a teacher and student presents itself, teachers do not blame their teaching methods; instead teachers think that it is because the student has special needs or is at fault (Trueba, 1997). This type of attitude may lead teachers to have preconceived notions about Latino students, which may cause teachers to give white students preferential treatment.

While many factors have been identified by experts to explain some the reasons why Latinos have trouble in school, preconceived notions and preferential treatment by teachers are often overlooked. Evidence does suggest, however, that preconceived notions and preferential treatment are usually the main culprits in causing Latino students to perform poorly in school and even drop out. In his article, Robert M. Davison, a sociologist, quoted a community worker who stated the following: "Mexican students

have trouble as soon as they enter the educational system because the school wants to place them in special programs” (1999). Davison also noted that in several instances schools made the mistake of placing Latino students, who were fluent in English, in bilingual education programs “on the assumptions based on surname and physical appearance” (1999). This problem, however, is not only exclusively linked to Latino students, since black students were also noted for having been placed in remedial classes and special programs based on their race. The expectation of failure held by principals and administrators forces Latino students “to opt out of mainstream education in favor of alternative schools, GED programs, or job corps” (Davison, 1999). These same programs are at times poorly designed and lead students to failure (Balousek, 2003). Race also influences teachers when deciding whether to take the time to teach a student or not. Davison affirms that some teachers would not bother to instruct a Latino student if they knew that he came from a migrant household. The reason for this is because teachers would feel it was a waste of time to deal with a migrant student who would leave once the harvest season concluded. The low expectations held by educators toward Latino students, also leads students to believe that college is beyond their reach. For instance, in his book entitled Small Victories, Samuel Freedman notes that schools “serving a student body that is overwhelmingly poor and nonwhite” habitually encounter military ads that encourage students to enlist (pg. 21).

The negative views held by instructors and counselors towards Latino students also leads them to downplay the culture of the students and thus leads them to believe that Latino students are not suited for college (Solorzano & Solozano, 1995). Schools where such ideas are held usually have fewer college programs or shy away from them.

Counselors also tend to discourage Latino students by advising them to set lower expectations for themselves after high school graduation and to enroll in less rigorous college institutions (Sykes, 2003). Besides discouraging Latinos to attend college, college counselors have also given preferential treatment to students whom they believe are college material. Students who receive preferential treatment from college counselors are usually the first to have access to college scholarships and are among the first to be enrolled in high school courses that are required to attend college.

Low teacher expectations often influence students when deciding to attend college or not and in most cases students fall victim to the attitudes of their instructors and decide not to attend college. However, there have been several instances where teachers help those students, otherwise labeled as lost causes, attend college. Occurrences like these result due to teachers who decide to be mentors for several Latino students (King, 2003). Latino students who are encouraged to perform well in school and who are guided by teachers are also more likely to enroll in advanced high school courses. Some instructors have taken upon themselves to enroll Latino students in advanced placement courses because of the low number of Latino students present in these classes. Hence, instructors such as these try to do away with preconceived notions and the effects of a deficient public education system by focusing their attention on Latino students who may have difficulties in school.

Closing Thoughts

With the numerous examples given above one can note that problems found within a classroom have more implications than initially thought by some education officials. The previous section explained how state initiatives affected the educational

experiences of Latino students. This section attempted to show how some of those initiatives influenced some of the structural and cultural problems within schools. It was also revealed how the negative attitudes held by teachers can affect the academic path of Latino students. The positive influence of encouraging teachers was also shown to greatly improve the academic performance of Latinos. Nevertheless, teachers realize that there is only so much they can do to help Latino students inside of school. Educators are unable to help them with problems that Latino students encounter outside of school in their homes and on the streets; these problems at times have more of an impact in a student's education than any problem found within the walls of a classroom.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PROBLEMS AT HOME

The previous chapter focused on the problems that have plagued Latino students in school. These problems have ranged from the elimination of bilingual education programs to the prejudices held by teachers and school administrators toward Latino students. The sources of these problems, however, can be traced to the school setting, yet some problems that impede a student's performance in the classroom can also be found outside a school's confines. Problems emanating outside of school may well have a greater impact on the educational experience of students than obstacles in the classroom. More importantly, policies to help troubled students frequently ignore this idea. What follows is an attempt to describe several of the problems that reside outside of school and how they affect the overall performance of Latino students.

Inner Cities

Many education advocates who criticize the public education system normally point to failing urban schools to demonstrate the inefficiency of public schooling. Yet, there are those like James Traub who state that "good schools aren't doing that much good, and bad schools aren't doing that much harm" (pg. 52). The problems that do exist with the performance of students -besides structural ones already discussed in the previous chapter- may be due to problems that are generated by the home and community environments. Additionally education analysts believe that the "inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school" (Traub, pg. 55).

Various education analysts believe that Latino students, as well as other minorities living in the inner city, are at a disadvantage because they lack the resources of

students from a middle class background. While many, like Jonathan Kozol, would argue that an increase in funding for inner-city schools would alleviate the problem, others believe that though disparity in school funding does play a role in creating such inequality it is still unable to “bridge the abyss between the children of middle-class and poor parents; for poor children grow up in a world without books and stimulating games and where their natural curiosity is regularly squashed and they are isolated from life beyond their neighborhoods” (Traub, pg. 57). Besides having limited resources, education analysts, such as Traub, argue that students have difficulties in school as a result of inadequate social capital. Social capital refers to the benefits created by social bonds and it is defined in relation to the “norms, the social networks, the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the children’s growing up” (Traub, pg. 57). Social capital is essential, since the support of a strong community can help a child develop social capital in numerous ways. However, institutions in the inner city usually disintegrate and cause mothers to keep their children locked inside due to fear for their safety. In that setting, social capital barely exists (Traub, pg. 57).

The absence of social capital is considered to greatly affect the success of Latino students in school, yet policy makers and education analysts also believe that Latino students, and others living in the inner city, are surrounded by individuals who lack high levels of “human capital.” Human capital refers to all the human capacities, developed by education, that can be used productively - the capacity to deal with abstractions, recognize and adhere to rules, and to use language at a high level (Traub, pg. 57). Like other forms of capital, human capital accumulates over generations; it is what parents give “to their children through their upbringing and that children then successfully deploy

in school, allowing them to bequeath more human capital to their own children” (Traub, pg. 57). Though it is uncertain whether some Latino families lack the human capital necessary to enhance the success of their children in school, it should be noted that these families are composed of parents who did not readily have access to education and in spite of this, such families have been shown to have a high regard for the value of education that they try to instill in their children (Trueba, 1997).

Education is valued highly by many parents of Latino children, but in some instances parents fail to express such value to their children. This in turn causes children to adhere more to the values of their peers. Additionally, educators and policy makers believe that the people students hang out with, both during and after school, can matter more than what happens in the classroom (Traub, pg. 57). Being heavily influenced by peers, especially those who might be a negative influence, can cause children to develop an “inner city culture.” Developing an inner city culture can lead to “the pathology of the ghetto,” which causes students to carry a stigma of racial inferiority that leads to self destructive behavior, including violence, alcohol, drug abuse, and family breakdown (Traub, pg. 57). This pathology is also described as an oppositional culture that readily accepts failure and believes that it is fine to do poorly in school (Massey & Denton, pg. 164). A low regard towards education is also due to a lack of support networks that aid students in their academics. Students who stay away from support networks -where and when they are present - do it because they consider the relationship with their peers to be more important (Rothstein, 2002). The oppositional culture or inner city culture is also described by Oscar Lewis who sees it as an adaptation and reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified, highly individuated, “capitalistic society... It

represents an effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair that arise from the realization by the members of the marginal communities in these societies of the improbability of their achieving success in terms of prevailing goals,” Lewis argues (pg. 220).

Analysts, policy makers, and education officials believe that the oppositional culture must be eliminated in order to increase the performance of students. Many programs have been suggested to alleviate the problem, but they fail to be taken into account because they are believed to be too radical and impractical. A solution that is supported by many policy makers is to move “families out of the ghetto environment altogether,” since it is more likely to change a child’s neighborhood rather than a child’s parents (Traub, pg. 56). Such an idea is often characterized as impossible to realize, but programs like the Gautreaux experiment show that the idea of moving families can be both practical and effective. The Gautreaux experiment was conducted in Chicago and it gave families subsidies to move from high-poverty neighborhoods to the suburbs; studies “have found that children in these families were far more successful academically than would have otherwise been predicted” (Traub,pg. 90).

Similar to the Gautreaux experiment in Chicago, other cities like the city of Yonkers in New York also held experiments where families were relocated. The experiment conducted in Yonkers consisted of moving 132 adolescents from low-income African-American and Latino families. The program consisted of observing two groups of students; those who stayed (“stayers”) and those who moved (“movers”). The program noted that stayers had more social support compared to movers, while movers had more social leverage. Both social leverage and social support are defined by Xavier

de Souza Briggs as follows:

1. Social leverage -- social capital that helps one “get ahead” or change one’s opportunity set through access to job information, say, or a recommendation for a scholarship or loan. This form is about access to clout and influence.
2. Social support -- social capital that helps one “get by” or cope. This might include being able to get a ride, confide in someone, or obtain a small cash loan in an emergency. Although people at all income levels need social supports, coping capital is especially vital to the chronically poor; as it routinely substitutes for things that money would otherwise buy. Some of the most important supports we all rely on, though, are emotional and not material.

It should be noted, however, that although these two forms of social capital overlap in key ways- a supportive relative, for example, may provide one with child care so that one can get an education to get ahead (de Souza Briggs, pg. 179). Initially, adolescents who moved to other neighborhoods had trouble in their new school, but after their first year their grades improved dramatically. Movers were also more likely to finish high school, graduate from college and obtain employment.

The programs aimed at moving Latinos and students of other ethnicities out of the ghetto and into better neighborhoods have beneficial results for those who participate in them. The opposition for these programs is also great because they are compared to school vouchers. Education groups state that these programs give preference to some students over others because these programs are not large enough to help every student in need. Critics also state that these programs neglect the inner-city because they only extract individuals, instead of trying to improve the conditions that plague inner-city communities.

It is increasingly becoming harder for Latino students to attend college; UC schools have experienced as much as a 15% drop in minority enrollment. As a consequence of several cuts in education in California, the UC system and the CSU

system have been forced to eliminate several college outreach programs. College outreach programs have been substantial in enabling Latinos and African-American students attend college since 1996, which was the year affirmative action was eliminated due to the passage of proposition 209. Latinos and African-Americans have benefited widely from outreach programs, since 40% of enrollees participated in one (Trounson, 2003). Latinos students also have a harder time enrolling and staying in college because they have to balance their studies with their jobs. Many students opt not to attend college and decide to obtain a job in order to be an additional source of income in their household (Gardner, 2003). The need for employment and absence of outreach programs prevent the Latinos students from attending college, but education officials believe that some obstacles Latinos face is due to their culture.

Culture

There are a number of theoretical models that seek to explain the low achievement and attainment of Latino students in schools. One such model is the cultural determinist argument, which asserts that the values held by Latinos are the primary determinant of low levels of educational achievement and attainment (Solorzano & Solorzano, pg. 297). This model focuses on certain cultural values such as an orientation towards the present rather than the future, immediate instead of deferred gratification, emphasis on cooperation rather than competition, and “place[s] [a low] value [on] education and upward mobility “ (Solorzano & Solorzano, pg. 297). The model also argues that the goals of Latinos have never centered on education. Finally, the model associates the undervaluing of education with the Latino social structure, like large disorganized female headed families; Spanish or nonstandard English spoken in the

home; and patriarchal family structures. Additionally, the model states that because Latino parents do not assimilate and adopt the educational values of the dominant group “and because they continue to transmit or socialize their children with values that inhibit educational mobility, low educational attainment will continue into succeeding generations” (Solorzano & Solorzano, pg. 298).

The cultural determinist model has been used by a number of analysts to describe the academic performance of Latinos in public schools. Though this model does point to some of the reasons why some families fail to reach high levels of educational achievement, it fails to take into account other factors that might lead families, especially children, to disregard the importance of education. The notion that some Latino families fail to value the importance of education due to their values applies to certain families, but it is a notion that is not only an exclusive Latino family phenomena, but apparent in families of all ethnicities who devalue the significance of education. Many Latino students come from families where the highest level of schooling of each of their parents does not go beyond eight years. Part of the reason for this is due to the fact that the access to education was low and the need for additional sources of income was high. Furthermore, Latino students themselves often find that there is pressure for them to provide financial support for their families, which in turn causes them to view college as another four years that will prevent them from providing that assistance (Gardener, 2003). College is also seen as an impossible goal for many Latino students because of legal status issues.

To some Latino students the problems that educators consider barriers for high levels of educational achievement actually serve as motivation. Ultimately, the goal of

these thriving students is to become a solid source of income for their families, while providing themselves with a better way of life. Some Latino students put off college because federal financial aid is only given to students who are either citizens or residents. However, over the past several years many undocumented students and recently arrived immigrants have applied to community colleges, which do not require any special documentation to enroll. Many students are finding their way through college due to the support networks that are provided within immigrant communities, which focus on helping students in their academics and celebrate the success of their students (Rothstein, 2003). Additionally, immigrant parents have been seen as having higher academic expectations from their children (Ling Pong, et.al., 2002). This in turn, causes immigrant students to reach higher levels of academic performance that increase their chances of attending college.

Gender

Many factors affect the educational experience of Latino students and gender discrimination can also be attributed to the growing barriers that prevent students from reaching high levels of educational achievement. Latinas are constantly encountering obstacles that diminish the quality of their education. Latinas, and women of other ethnicities, confess to being discouraged from taking math and science courses, which are required to attend college, because counselors and teachers believe they lack the skills to perform adequately in those subjects (Weiler, 1997). Instead, counselors and teachers advise Latinas to take alternative courses that only allow students to obtain menial jobs. Latinas also have to struggle with less parental involvement than males, since evidence suggests that parents have higher expectations and are more involved in the education of

their male children (Weiler, 1997). As a result, Latinas may develop a low self-esteem and have a loss of direction due to an absence of positive female role models. The lack of interest held by many families toward the education of female students causes them to create an environment where Latinas must put their family values ahead of their own personal aspirations. Hence, many Latinas face the role of handling tasks at home or becoming an additional source of income for their families. The absence of female role models also undercuts Latinas from trying to prevent an early pregnancy or getting married before completing their academic career.

Problems with Poverty

Poverty is an issue that many Latino students have to confront when they attempt to receive an education. Despite the fact that many policy makers and educators show the effects that poverty causes on the quality of education a student receives, many fail to evaluate how this is so. Part of the reason why students from poor families perform poorly on standardized exams is due to the fact that these students are not in a single school long enough to learn the material that is covered in the exams (Rothstein, 2000). Children fail to receive all of the material in exams their parents cannot afford to pay the high rent prices of houses and apartments near their children's current schools, argues education analyst Richard Rothstein. Hence, these families have no choice but to move to areas where homes have lower rent prices and enroll their children in new schools.

Poverty is also a problem that seems to affect, with no less harm, single parent families that are welfare recipients. Initially policy makers believed that having welfare mothers join the workforce would drastically affect infants "unless adequate and subsidized childcare was provided" (Rothstein, 2002). Furthermore, policy makers

believed that having working mothers would have a beneficial effect on adolescents since their newly employed mother would be positive role models. Nevertheless, having mothers who stopped receiving welfare to join the workforce actually had a negative effect on the academic performance of adolescents. This lack in parental supervision is explained as follows:

If their mothers are at work, teenagers are more likely to get into trouble. They are more likely to take drugs. They are less likely to turn off the television, stop hanging out with friends and do their homework (N.Y. Times, 2002).

Furthermore, the performance of these students also declines because the absence of their mothers forces these adolescents to supervise their younger siblings rather than concerning themselves with completing their homework.

Closing Thoughts

With the problems described in this chapter it is apparent that Latino students face several obstacles that affect their educational experience both in and outside of schools. The main solutions that have been emphasized to eliminate the problems that plague students in their communities consist of moving entire families to other neighborhoods. These solutions, however, fail to help every student in need and undermine positive support networks that are generated in inner-cities. Solutions involving school reform require little money and ask nothing of the non-poor and are “accompanied by the ennobling sensation that comes from expressing faith in the capacity of the poor to overcome disadvantage by themselves” (Traub, pg. 55). If a true effort to improve the educational experience of Latino students is to take place then policy makers, school officials, educators, and parents must realize that it will take a collective effort to strive for change without leaving the responsibility to a particular group involved in the effort.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

So far, the first three chapters have focused on the problems that affect the educational experience of Latino students. Examples have been given to demonstrate why Latinos have a hard time performing adequately in school. To help Latino students with their struggles, several policies have been crafted, but they ultimately fail because they assume that Latino students, like their white counterparts, are situated on a level playing field. This study identified problems in areas that are not usually noted by policy makers and education officials. Thus, this chapter will focus on recommendations to help schools become more effective in meeting the needs of their Latino students. These recommendations will be based on the “Effective schools” model, modified to meet the unique needs related to California schools, particularly the LAUSD.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, all of the recommendations given here take into account the input of students, teachers, and parents. Hence, some of the recommendations reflect many of the points that students, teachers, and parents shared in their interviews.

Effective Schools

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, several educational reports concluded that schools did not have any influence in predicting a student’s achievement. Yet, in the mid 1970’s researchers began reevaluating the problem and reexamining the existing data on low minority achievement and attainment. First, “high-performing” and “low performing” schools, which were composed of low income and minority students, were identified by researchers. Secondly, researchers discovered the specific characteristics within schools, which differentiated high-performing schools from low-performing

schools. Researchers labeled the high performing schools as effective (Solorzano & Solorzano, pg. 303). In theory, the effective schools model does not reject the idea that family social class correlates with a student's achievement, "but challenges the position that the correlations are the result of minority and lower income student attributes, as is argued in the genetic and cultural determinist models" (Solorzano & Solorzano, pg. 303). It rather focuses on differences in schools such as structural (i.e., how a school is organized), resource and process (i.e., programs available in schools and how they are administered), which are characteristics of the school determinist model. In the end, researchers were able to develop a profile of five school-related variables that distinguish effective from non-effective schools. These five variables, as stated in the previous chapter, were (1) high expectations and responsibility for student learning, (2) strong instructional leadership, (3) emphasis on basic skill acquisition, (4) frequent monitoring of a student's progress, and (5) an orderly and safe school environment (Solorzano & Solozano, pg. 303).

What follows is an in depth description of each variable and how they can be adopted by LAUSD schools to improve the educational performance of their students. Practices created by ERIC (Educational Research and Improvement Center) will also be utilized in order to promote the achievement of Latino students. The descriptions will also include examples and suggestions to meet the specific needs of Latino students attending schools in the LAUSD.

1. High expectations and responsibility for student learning

The third chapter illustrated several instances where school counselors and teachers held low expectations toward Latino students. These expectations resulted in

students performing poorly or being enrolled in courses that did not prepare students for college. Education researchers have discovered that lower teacher expectations directly affect the teacher's classroom behavior, which, in turn, "affects student behavior and subsequent educational outcomes" (Solorzano & Solorzano, pg. 304). Education researchers have come across findings that demonstrate how lower expectations affect a teacher's behavior:

[T]eachers with lower expectations for their students have been found to use less praise, to wait less time for a response to a question, to be less likely to give a second chance for a wrong answer, to be more likely to criticize a wrong answer, to interpret behavior in more negative ways, and to teach less material (both qualitative and quantitative) than teachers with higher expectations. These differential teacher behaviors toward certain students are then directly related to student attitudes and behaviors (e.g. lowering their aspirations and spending less time studying), which leads to lower student outcomes (304).

The effective schools model suggests that to combat negative views toward Latino students, those who train teachers should develop a pre- and in-service model that:

- Uses existing demographic data to research and to challenge the negative stereotypes of minority groups
- Helps teachers conduct their own research projects on minority students using different theoretical models
- Provides experiences and simulations in minority low-socioeconomic-status environments to challenge the negative stereotypes regarding minority groups and the poor

If these guidelines are followed, future classrooms will be able to understand that lower teacher expectations prevent both students and the educator from reaching their full potential.

The guidelines and suggestions given under the "Effective schools" model would greatly improve the academic performance of students and the attitudes of teachers. Moreover, other measures should be taken in order to guarantee that there is

responsibility for student learning. For this to hold, ERIC suggests the following:

Teachers should teach content so that it interests and challenges Hispanic students. They should communicate high expectations, respect, and interest; understand the roles of language, race, culture, and gender in schooling; and engage parents and the community in the education of their children. Teachers should receive professional development to promote their ability to develop and use strategies that facilitate student learning and communication with Hispanic families. (ERIC, March 2000)

In order for this approach to work teachers in the LAUSD must work collaboratively to assure that their instruction is offered to every single student. This would mean that female students should not be alienated from certain courses (i.e. science and math courses) due to their gender. Similarly, courses geared toward female students should also be open to male students. To further assure that a student is learning ERIC suggests the following:

Each Hispanic student should have an adult in the school committed to nurturing a personal sense of self-worth and supporting the student's efforts to succeed in school. (ERIC, March 2000)

Having supportive individuals in schools has been proven to help the academic performance of Latino students. Evidence suggests that Latino teachers usually take the role of supportive adults to high school students, which in turn causes students to increase their academic performance. Schools in the LAUSD could benefit by following the example given by Lennox Middle School (Lennox, CA), which created the “Adopt a Student” program that provides an hour a day of teacher student-contact. Schools could also create programs where students in higher school grades adopt students in lower grades and aid them with any problem a student might have.

Ysleta Elementary (El Paso, TX), also serves as an example of a school that is committed to the education of its students. In an effort to ensure that students were learning, receiving a balanced curricula, and building social capital teachers at Ysleta

Elementary aligned their curricula with one another and abandoned the practice of placing all classes of the same grade level in adjoining sections of a building. As an alternative, Ysleta created vertical teams of teachers, from kindergarten through the fifth grade, who plan together and teach in a common area (CO, pg. 1997). The teams allowed teachers to develop personal relationships with students over six years of age and this allowed teachers to make sure that the students' cognitive development progressed in an orderly fashion. The teams also allowed teachers to create a family with students that worked inside of the school, which created an atmosphere where older students would take care of younger students. Furthermore, the teams allowed parents to work closer with their children's teachers as a child progressed through different grade levels. Hence, Ysleta Elementary created a social network that allowed teachers, students, and parents to work together for a common goal.

2. Strong Instructional Leadership

For schools to be effective they must have a strong leader who guides the entire school towards a common goal. Several schools, however, lack a sense a direction because their principals are too detached from teachers and students. This detachment then results in a weak academic climate. Under the "Effective schools" model a principal's responsibilities include:

- To create an academic climate by supporting teachers who are implementing the school's academic curriculum
- Make academic instruction the school's priority and encourage the staff to utilize the latest educational curriculum, pedagogy, and technology to enhance the academic achievement of every student

The suggestions offered above would enable school principals to improve their school environment. Yet, principals in LAUSD schools, particularly high schools, need to make

an additional effort to support teachers when they are gearing their students towards college. This would mean that a principal would actively support teachers who are seeking to organize externships, internships, and college fairs for their students. Additionally, principals should require graduating students to create a “senior portfolio” which includes the following items:

- Résumé
- A minimum of two letters of recommendation
- A minimum of two awards received by the student
- A personal statement and or biography

A “senior portfolio” is an important item because it will familiarize students with the kinds of documents that jobs require. This item is also vital for students who may not be considering college immediately after graduation. Several high schools in the LAUSD do not require students to submit a “senior portfolio” before graduating because they are under the impression that students will do it on their own. Nevertheless, if a student is not required to submit a portfolio the student will usually not do it.

Principals must also make sure to include parents as part of a student’s educational experience. Many parents feel like outsiders because their child’s school is not welcoming. Thus, principals should create activities and an environment that will enable parents to be actively involved. (The details of parent involvement will be discussed later.)

3. Emphasis on the Acquisition of Basic Skills

Schools that have difficulties improving the academic performance of their students frequently do not know what they want to do or what direction they want to take. In order for schools to be effective they must stress an academic program, have clear academic goals, show commitment to reach those goals, form an environment where the

goals can be achieved, and take responsibility for achieving those goals (Solorzano & Solorzano, pg. 306). More importantly, the goals that a school is attempting to reach should be defined by principals, teachers, community members, parents, and students. If this is done nurturing environments will be created for students both in and out of school. In determining the progress of students towards a set of established goals, many believe that minority students should be evaluated with other tools besides traditional standardized tests (e.g. performance based, portfolio).

While defining the goals to increase the academic performance of students, schools who serve Latino students in inner-cities should not limit themselves to make basic skill development their goal or the ceiling. Instead, schools should aim for their students to acquire higher order skills like problem solving, critical thinking, logic, and creativity. Moreover, schools offering bilingual education programs (which have been reduced due to Proposition 227) should be fully integrated in a school's general program rather than as a supplement to it. To further increase the acquisition of skills of every student ERIC suggests:

All students should have access to a high-quality, relevant, and interesting curriculum that treats their language and culture as resources, conveys high expectations, presents available options for their lives, and demands student investment in learning. Schools should have high quality up to date resources necessary for an effective education. They should reconfigure time, space and staffing patterns to provide students with the supports they need to achieve. (ERIC, March 2000)

For schools in the LAUSD to be able to follow the suggestions offered above they must strive to prepare and encourage students to enroll in challenging courses. This would mean that both teachers and counselors would have to create an environment where negative attitudes that hold Latinos in low regard are eliminated. Motivating students to enroll in harder courses (i.e., honor and advanced placement courses) would insure that

schools do not limit their goals to basic skill acquisition but also aim them at developing higher order skills. Teachers instructing English-learners should attempt to include material that is part of the school's overall curriculum. Doing so will prevent English-learners from feeling out of place once they are immersed into mainstream classes.

A common practice that has been developing in elementary schools around San Bernardino, Santa Ana, Santa Monica, and the Bay Area in California is "dual immersion." In essence, dual immersion allows elementary students of all backgrounds to enroll in classes that are taught both in English and Spanish. In the San Bernardino school district, about 320 of the district's 57,000 students participate in the program and half of the students are native English speakers (Sauerwein, 2003).

The dual immersion program offers several advantages to students. For instance, it allows students the opportunity to interact with students of other cultures. Students enrolled in the program will become bilingual and be better prepared once they enter the job market. The program also instructs students with material that is part of the overall schools curriculum.

4. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Schools, especially in the LAUSD, are constantly being monitored, which could be as often as every six weeks. Additionally, the tools utilized to assess the progress of Latino students, including English-learners, are the tools that are designed for students from the Anglo majority (although Anglos are a minority in the LAUSD) (Solorzano & Solorzano, pg. 307). Finding tools to assess the progress of Latino students is a lot easier said than done, but if there is an attempt, the following suggestions should be considered:

- Schools should utilize a performance based portfolio to monitor the progress of every student

- Schools should monitor a student's progress with repeated measures for identifying problems early and prescribing individual solutions to solve them
- Monitoring, assessment, and evaluation instruments and processes should be linguistically and culturally sensitive to Latino Students

To further assure that schools are adequately monitoring the progress of students, Eric suggests the following:

Schools should replicate effective programs by monitoring the effectiveness of programs and trying to improve them and replace them with more reliable strategies.

Schools should emphasize the prevention of problems, and be aggressive in responding to early warning signs that a student is disengaging from school.

Schools and alternative programs should be coordinated. (ERIC, March 2000)

Besides following the suggestions offered above, schools in the LAUSD should work to make sure that programs are coordinated so that they do not interfere with one another. For instance, "Open Court" is a program that has helped many elementary students improve their scores on standardized tests, yet at times teachers are unable to cover the lessons contained in the program because they are occupied instructing students with remedial material. Schools that have had success using the "Open Court" program set aside at least two days to cover the lessons under the program, while the rest of the days are utilized to cover remedial material, if necessary, and the acquisition of higher order skills.

Schools in the LAUSD would also find it beneficial to coordinate their school programs. For instance, several students want to participate in after school programs, but they are unable to do so because other instructional programs (i.e. adult school classes, after school English lessons) are offered at the same time. Due to this time conflict, some programs also operate on weekends in order to allow more students to participate in these activities.

5. Orderly and Safe School Environment

If students are to improve their academic performance they must feel comfortable in the school setting. It is for this reason that schools must assure that they provide an orderly and safe school environment. For schools in the LAUSD serving Latino and other minority students the following should be considered:

- Increase in hall monitoring: at times many students fail to grasp the subject matter in class because it is easy for them to wander the school's halls and avoid class
- Keeping an eye on intruders: schools may have the problem of individuals entering the campus to disrupt students. If this is the case schools should increase their monitoring
- Establish a sense of community: schools would find in it their interest to develop relationships with parents and community groups in order to develop a safe community in and out of school
- Staff stability: schools must attempt to keep teacher transient or turnover rates to a minimum and avoid becoming a dumping ground for problem teachers from other parts of the district
- Respect in the classroom: teachers must make every student feel comfortable inside of the classroom in order for them to perform adequately

Students attending LAUSD schools should feel comfortable and be part of an environment where learning and personal growth is prioritized and encouraged:

Schools (especially high schools) should be safe and inviting places to learn. They should personalize programs and services that succeed with Hispanic students, give them the opportunity to assume positions of leadership and responsibility (to counteract the lure of gangs), target them for prosocial roles, and protect them from intimidation. (ERIC, March 2000)

As mentioned before, high school principals should strive to create opportunities for students that can enable them to be better prepared for college. Creating opportunities where students can have internships or externships will develop the confidence of students, allow them to communicate easier with others, and it will also place them in leadership positions. Teachers should also make sure that certain students are not being disrespected in the classroom by other peers. English language learners are usually prone

to disrespect by others when they have difficulties communicating in English; teachers must make sure that instances like these do not occur so that English language learners are not discouraged from speaking English.

Other Related Factors: Parent Involvement

The five variables or characteristics of the “Effective schools” model do not originally include parent involvement, but the model does consider it to be a vital component of any school attempting to follow the effective schools model. The involvement of parents in the education of Latino students is vital, especially since Latino parents usually have higher aspirations for their children than White parents (Solorzano & Solorzano, pg. 307).

Schools should recruit Hispanic parents and extended families into a partnership of equals for educating Hispanic students. Parents should be helped to envision a future for their children and a reasonable means by which to plan for and achieve it. Schools should work to overcome stereotyping that prevents the staff from assuming that parents have an investment in their children’s achievement. (ERIC, March 2000)

Schools in the LAUSD can create great outcomes for their students if they worked with a core group of parents that utilize a peer approach to involve other parents, while being sensitive to their schedule when meetings are to be arranged (i.e., scheduling some meetings on weekends). Schools should promote the goal of graduation to maintain the focus of students and work with parents to assure their child will graduate. Promoting such a goal will “inoculate students against the negative social messages their ethnicity provokes” (ERIC, March 2000).

Schools can also follow the example of the Garden Grove Unified School District, where a center costing nearly \$2 million was created (Luna, 2003). The center allows students to work alongside their parents while learning. Besides serving families from

four different elementary schools, parents also have the option of learning new skills for themselves. This program has shown promising results and it enables parents to be involved in their children's education.

The city of Santa Ana also has a unique approach to encourage parents to be involved in their children's education (Mena, 2003). The program helps Latino parents to reach full literacy in Spanish so that they can begin to help their children with basic concepts when their children might have difficulty with their homework assignments. Enabling parents to achieve literacy in Spanish can have beneficial outcomes for children, since a strong background in a native language usually facilitates the acquisition of a second one.

College Preparation Programs

Thus far the suggestions given in this chapter are intended for schools to improve the academic performance of Latino students. Ultimately, these suggestions have been given in order to make sure that the ultimate goal of schools is to prepare their students to be ready to enroll in institutions of higher education. The most common approach used by schools to prepare students for college are college outreach programs. Several programs have been created, but many of them fail to take into account the unique circumstances that urban schools serving Latinos and other minority groups encounter. For this reason the following suggestions, taken from ERIC's digest, will be recommended in an attempt to show how outreach programs can be effective if they are properly planned and utilized. As with other suggestions given so far, the suggestions provided here will be explained to better cater to schools in the LAUSD.

Program Organization

Range of services:

Pre-college programs that offer comprehensive approaches and combine a variety of services have the largest impact on college access for minority youth in low-income neighborhoods. Traditionally, however, programs have tended to focus on a specific type of service because of time, expertise, and funding constraints. Some programs, for example, specialize in test preparation (Princeton Review), counseling academics, enrichment in a specialized subject, or learning based on cultural integrity. Others concentrate on providing a better education in general through systemic school change. Still others only function as supplemental school resource centers (Oesterreich, 2000).

College programs that encompass a variety of services are usually more successful. If schools in the LAUSD want to make an impact with their students, they must also make sure that these programs include and offer help to English learners and undocumented students. These programs should also be informed about the latest immigration policies regarding education like Assembly Bill 540, which gives undocumented students the opportunity to pay in-state tuition to attend any public college in the state of California.

Program Duration:

The most effective college preparation programs are of substantial duration and focus on readiness rather than remediation. They begin offering students services and information about college and financial aid as early as possible, certainly in time to influence the educational outcomes for students. Most federal and state programs require services to begin no later than the seventh grade and to continue through the twelfth grade, although challenges associated with inequitable academic preparation exist as early as the fourth grade. (ERIC, November 2000)

Track schools, which have students take vacation breaks within the academic year, should utilize the breaks to continue the outreach programs to prevent them from losing momentum. Middle schools in the LAUSD would find it beneficial to make sure to prepare students to take algebra by the eighth grade. Evidence suggests that students who do so are usually better prepared when they enter high school and more likely to attend college.

Educational Strategies:

The key element of a college preparation program is the ability to provide students with the information and experiences necessary for post-secondary attainment. An effective program uses a wide variety of teaching strategies to offer students different types of relevant experiences and to ensure learning, including the following: direct teaching in a variety of content areas, summer enrichment programs, individual and group counseling, tutoring, college visits and courses, peer and adult mentoring, and motivational speakers. (ERIC, November 2000)

The suggestions mentioned above would increase the effectiveness of college programs.

Schools in the LAUSD, however, should make an attempt to include parents in the programs; since many Latino parents do not know how the college preparation process operates. Including parents will also allow them to may sure that their children are making efforts to successfully complete the college preparation program.

Types of Support

Academic Support:

In order for a college program to be effective students must be provided with rich academic content and promote their intellectual development (Oesterreich, 2000):

Pipeline courses:

These include algebra, geometry, calculus, biology, chemistry, and physics so that students gain the knowledge necessary for standardized testing; a transcript for a well-rounded, competitive college application; and the skills to succeed in college courses. Close monitoring of students' selection and successful completion of the courses should begin as early as junior high school. (ERIC, November 2000)

College counselors should make sure that students are enrolled in the courses necessary to attend college. Schools should also make sure that students are not tracked into courses that do not enrich and prepare the students to attend college. Increasing the number of Latinas in pipeline courses should also be a goal for many high schools. Finally, certain courses required for college are not offered in some high schools;

therefore high schools should provide students with all the accommodations necessary for students to take them at a local community college.

Study Skills:

Students need to master strategies to excel in these pipeline courses. Workshops and courses teach how to take notes, study, and complete homework assignments. Supportive networks, such as peer study groups and one on one tutoring provide additional learning opportunities. Supplemental coursework adapted to students' particular learning needs augments existing curricula. (ERIC, November 2000)

To prevent students from losing the skills acquired during school, track schools need to hold classes during vacation breaks. Doing so will prevent students from losing newly acquired skills over the break period. This period would also be ideal to have English-learners focus on catching up on any material that they had difficulties with.

Test Preparation:

Many students are now required to negotiate high school, college, state, and nationally developed high stake tests to ensure admittance into higher education. Thus, the most useful college preparation programs offer courses or workshops that focus exclusively on a student's preparation for each required exam. (ERIC, November 2000)

LAUSD schools need to focus on preparing students for the S.A.T. exam, since it is the exam that most colleges require for admission. In addition, students need to be informed about fee waivers because the price of the exams discourages students from taking it. Undocumented students may also shy away from taking the exam because the exam application asks for a social security number. Counselors need to tell students in this situation, that providing a social security number is optional and that the Educational Testing Service (ETS) also provides special pin numbers.

High Expectations:

Students in college preparation programs for minority youth in low-income neighborhoods, traditionally stigmatized as "at-risk," should be viewed as highly talented individuals who can achieve their goals. Thus, programs for them should be geared

toward learning and achieving, and provide students with encouragement, understanding, and structural support. (ERIC, November 2000)

Students in the LAUSD should be highly encouraged to do well. Additionally, students need to be included from every end of the spectrum, since some programs only tend to deal with advanced placement and honor students. Greater efforts should also be made to include female students and as well as E.S.L. students.

Social Support

Parent involvement:

It has long been assumed that parent involvement is critical to program success and student achievement. Evidence suggests that students whose parents discussed education goals with them went farther in post-secondary institutions than those who did not. Some programs, therefore, require parents to sign contracts agreeing to support their children's attendance, assist with homework, and follow through on necessary paperwork for college admission and financial aid. Programs may also invite parents to nonacademic performances or ask assistance in raising funds or providing supplies. (ERIC, November 2000)

Latino parents should be included in college preparation programs since many may not have any previous experience with the subject. To familiarize parents with college, parents should be invited to field trips and other activities whenever possible.

Peer Support

The strongest social support strategy used by programs is the fostering of the student community through opportunities for interaction in academic and nonacademic activities. Study groups provide a space for peer tutoring as well as encouragement in academic aspirations. Networking students who have graduated from the program and are currently enrolled in four-year institutions with program participants provides another important level of peer support. (ERIC, November 2000)

Students in college outreach programs should try to make others enroll in similar programs. High school students would find that mentoring elementary school students would also be beneficial, since elementary students can be guided to have high educational aspirations from a young age.

Cultural Affirmation:

For minority students from low-income neighborhoods, success in school and college aspirations is often equated with a rejection of their identity and background. To prevent such an identity problem, programs use students' cultures and backgrounds- race, class, and gender- in a positive manner in their curricula, teaching methods, and learning activities. (ERIC, November 2000)

When dealing with Latino students, programs should utilize examples that challenge the negative stereotypes that are associated with their ethnicity and race. The material utilized in the program should have examples that reflect aspects of the culture of Latino students.

Community Involvement:

Mentors, role models, community leaders, and speakers motivate students and raise their self-esteem, expectations, and sense of accountability. They help students realize that their college attendance is part of a community pattern, preceded by earlier college graduates and to be followed by others heeding their example. (ERIC, November 2000)

College programs should bring Latino college students to talk to the students enrolled in the program. Doing so will allow the high school students to see that people like themselves can also attend college. College outreach programs should also require students to be involved in community service and find ways to better improve their communities.

Financial Support

Funding:

Socioeconomic status is the greatest determinant of enrollment and persistence in college for all students. Financial resources not only affect a student's decision to attend college but also impact the amount of time available to study after enrollment. Ideally, therefore, programs include direct financial aid such as full or partial scholarships, stipends for attendance, or book grants. (ERIC, November 2000)

Outreach programs dealing with Latino students should make scholarships available to undocumented students as well.

Aid Application Process:

Filling out financial aid packets and meeting deadlines for scholarships, loans, and grants are crucial for securing necessary funding for college. Simply making forms available and deadlines explicit is important, but programs which help families negotiate the mass paperwork, including reproducing tax forms and preparing applications for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), Pell Grants, and scholarships tend to secure more funding for students. (ERIC, November 2000)

Latino parents should be informed of every step that is necessary in order for their children to receive aid. These programs should also try to help undocumented students receive private sponsors, since undocumented students are ineligible for government aid.

Resource Procurement:

Staff members of effective programs also actively seek additional avenues for student financial support. They explore sources such as local community grants, professional organizations, corporate sponsorships, and endowed private scholarships. (ERIC, November 2004)

As mentioned before, programs should seek to find private sponsors for students who do not meet all of the requirements for federal financial aid. Moreover, these programs should also direct students with organizations that help undocumented students like MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund).

Support for Success in the College Climate

Admissions Process:

Programs facilitate the admissions process for students by providing information about how to get into a college and how to assess whether a college is a good match culturally and financially. Successful programs teach students how to look critically at a university's student body and policies to determine its cultural milieu and how to ask tough questions about retention rates, financial aid, and the climate. (ERIC, November 2000)

Programs should advise students to look at colleges that interest them. As with all students, Latino students at times tend to pick the colleges that others want for them.

Thus, students should be advised that they should have the final say in what college to

attend, since they are the ones that are going to attend it.

College Visits:

Opportunities for students to participate in university life, programs, and resources are essential elements of college preparation programs. Programs partnered with universities or colleges can offer summer enrichment programs enabling students to live and study on campus. College classrooms can be the site of an after-school program, a test preparation module, or an enrichment course. Students can utilize computer rooms, the library, and sports/exercise equipment on campus. Programs that cannot directly use higher education facilities can take students in college trips and to local college fairs and recruitment presentations. (ERIC, November 2000)

Programs should attempt to include every type of student in college visits. Usually many college programs only tend to invite students that are well on their way to attend college, while ignoring those who are undecided about enrolling in college. Students, who are uncertain about attending college, will tend to decide to apply once they have visited a college campus. Programs would also find it beneficial to include parents of Latino students on college trips, since it will also expose them to the college environment and possibly eliminate any uncertainties they have about their children attending college.

Necessary Competencies

Social and Cultural Capital:

Student differences in social and cultural capital create differences in college enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. Social capital for students preparing for college is the availability of information-sharing networks about college and financial aid. Cultural capital is the value placed on obtaining a college education, and the information available about the means of acquiring one. Effective programs create this capacity by teaching social norms, values, and expected behaviors necessary for college admittance and persistence. (ERIC, November 2000)

Programs should use the values of Latino students to let them know that the college environment is adequate for them. More importantly, programs would find it advantageous to let Latinos students develop networking relationships with Latinos who have graduated from college as well as students who are currently attending college.

Social Critique:

In a society where inequities in college access still reflect racism, classism, and sexism, it is useful to assist students in understanding the realities of the social economic stratification that impact on college admittance. Students can be given opportunities not only to critique social structures, but also to be active agents in the fight against inequities. (ERIC, November 2000)

Effective college programs should ask Latinos to evaluate their educational experience and find areas where it needs to improve. Students should also be asked to comment about the things that prevent them from excelling in schools and attempt to find solutions to these problems. The idea of high school students mentoring younger students should also be stressed so that more students are placed on the path to attend college.

Staff Development

The staff of a pre-college program is vital to its success. Effective programs provide staff members with continuous, in-depth professional development to keep them up to date on the following: high school-to-college transition issues, which are changing more rapidly than previously; high school graduation requirements; college admissions requirements; remediation policies; and student remediation options. Inservice training should also provide instruction in culturally responsive curricular and teaching strategies that are effective with particular students. (ERIC, November 2000)

Pre-college programs need to have a staff that is willing to talk to students about the problems they face as Latinos. They should be understanding and provide concrete advice whenever necessary. In addition, staff members should also be informed about policies affecting undocumented Latino students. At times, many pre-college programs concentrate on addressing the needs of Latino students, but they overlook or fail to address the needs that many undocumented students have.

Conclusion

A large part of this study concentrated on describing several obstacles that Latino students face while attending school. The obstacles described in this study might also

lead many readers to conclude that no viable solutions can be found for these problems. Nevertheless, the strategies and solutions offered in this chapter can enable Latino students to succeed in school despite the present barriers. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, many solutions offered to help alleviate the problems encountered by Latino students depend too much on money or ignore the input of teachers, students, or parents. The recommendations suggested here depend on teachers, students, parents, and community members in order to be effective and were created with their input in mind. If all of the groups mentioned above participate and make a collaborative effort to make these recommendations work, strong social networks will be created and these networks will create nourishing environments for students both in and out of school. These same social networks will also be responsible for enabling Latino students to overcome barriers, excel in school, and ultimately attend college.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

RESEARCH RESULTS

While embarking on the research for this project I undertook a literature review, including books, newspaper articles, and scholarly periodicals. My original research consisted of conducting interviews with several students and instructors. In my attempt to get a broader perspective, I conducted interviews with several focus groups composed of different types of students. The students who were part of these focus groups ranged from undocumented English-learners to advanced placement and honor students. The information and feedback provided by instructors and parents was also incorporated as part of this study. Students were interviewed about their overall educational experience, while teachers were asked to comment about factors that influenced how they instructed students, including barriers for adequate instruction. In some cases, teachers were asked to evaluate the teaching process and determine whether their teaching method enabled Latino students to obtain high educational attainment. The parents who were included in the study were also asked to determine if they were supportive of either their son or daughter's desire to go to college and express how valuable they considered education to be.

Sample Information

In the study I interviewed students from the following four schools:

Thomas Jefferson High School; Theodore Roosevelt High School; Garfield High School; and Franklin High school

There were five focus groups that were composed of ten students each:

-25 students were male and the other 25 were female

- 10 students were in advanced placement courses
- 10 students were in honor courses
- 15 students were in regular courses
- 15 were in English as a second language (E.S.L.) courses

The students who were part of this study were selected based on the courses they were enrolled and on their willingness to share their educational and personal background. I wanted to get a broad perspective of the overall educational experience of Latino students, which is why students from every honor, advanced placement, regular, and bilingual course were selected. I also wanted to include the voice of both genders in this study. As mentioned before, the fifty students were split up into groups of ten to make five focus groups and they participated in numerous confidential interviews that spanned for a period of five months.

The study also had the input of ten teachers and fourteen parents. Thomas Jefferson High School was the only school that had four teachers participate in the study; only two teachers were interviewed at each of the other three high schools. Each teacher only took part in one interview. Of the ten teachers that participated:

- Five were male and five were female
- Three were Black
- Two were Asian
- Two were White
- Three were Latino

The fourteen parents that were included in the study were Latino and they were divided into two groups of seven to create two focus groups. Parents were only asked to participate in one confidential interview.

Findings

All of the individuals were asked to comment on the effective schools model, which has five variables. The five variables are (1) high expectations and responsibility for student learning, (2) strong instructional leadership, (3) emphasis on basic skill acquisition, (4) frequent monitoring of a student's progress, and (5) an orderly and safe school environment. In addition, the parent involvement is also considered to be a crucial component of the model.

-High expectations and responsibility for student learning:

- Students: all of the students stated that at one point in their academic career they had had at least one teacher who had low expectations of them.
- Teachers: all of the teachers stated that they believed having high expectations would enable students to reach higher levels of achievement.
- Parents: for the most part parents believed that they had high expectations for their children, but they believed that a teacher must also have high expectations for a child to succeed.

-Strong instructional leadership:

- Students: Most of the students believed that their schools would be more goal-orientated if their principal interacted more with the teachers and students.
- Teachers: Teachers believed that the principal should have more contact with them and be more involved with parents.
- Parents: Almost every parent believed that the principal should make a greater effort to interact with parents.

-Emphasis on the Acquisition of Basic Skills:

- Students: Only 10 students stated that they believed that the school was making strong efforts to emphasize basic skills. The remaining 40 believed that their basic skills could still use some improvement.

- Teachers: All of the teachers agreed that emphasis on basic skills should be one of the main priorities of a school. However, they felt that they did not have enough time to help every student strengthen their basic skills.
- Parents: Most parents stated that they highly valued basic reading and writing skills. In addition, they stated that they often talked to their children's teacher in order to develop strategies to enhance the basic skills of students.

-Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress:

- Students: Students stated that they felt state administered exams are too long and sometimes too frequent. They also said that they disliked the fact that some teachers were adopting teaching strategies where they would only teach to the test.
- Teachers: Many teachers felt that some tests were too frequent and they disliked the fact that some tests took three days to be completely administered.
- Parents: Many parents disliked the fact that their children had to take several exams. Many also worried that their children experienced high levels of anxiety before taking an exam.

-Orderly and Safe School Environment:

- Students: Many E.S.L. students stated that they felt harassed by other students because they spoke English with an accent.
- Teachers: Teachers felt that E.S.L. students did not feel safe in school because they are verbally attacked by other students due to their appearance.
- Parents: Many parents felt that there needed to be more police officers in their children's school to prevent outsiders from entering a school's premises.

-Parent Involvement:

- Students: Students stated that they tended to do better academically if their parents checked up on their homework assignments and other school activities.
- Teachers: Teachers noticed that students who perform better in their classes usually have parents who are actively involved in their children's education.
- Parents: Many stated that being involved in their child's education helps their child get better grades in school.

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