

ED319580 1990-03-00 Making Education Work for Mexican-Americans: Promising Community Practices. ERIC Digest.

ERIC Development Team

www.eric.ed.gov

Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

Making Education Work for Mexican-Americans: Promising Community Practices. ERIC Digest.....	1
WHY THE INTEREST IN HISPANICS?.....	2
WHICH STUDENTS ARE SERVED?.....	2
WHAT DO COMMUNITY PROGRAMS DO?.....	3
WHAT FEATURES DO THESE PROGRAMS SHARE?.....	5
REFERENCES.....	5



ERIC Identifier: ED319580

Publication Date: 1990-03-00

Author: Sosa, Alicia

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools Charleston WV.

Making Education Work for Mexican-Americans: Promising Community Practices. ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT

ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

The 1980s were heralded as the decade of the Hispanic. Studies documented the underachievement and dropout rates of Hispanic students in our nation's public schools. Many reports decried what they perceived as the low expectations set for culturally and linguistically different students (Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1988).

While schools began to address the issue of underachievement, community groups began to implement enrichment programs that focused more on the affective domain. They established programs centered on family values and cultural pride. This Digest describes such programs and synthesizes their successful strategies.

WHY THE INTEREST IN HISPANICS?

Hispanic students have not been served particularly well by the educational system (Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1988; Quality Education for Minorities Project, 1990). Many students read two or more grade levels below grade placement, and comparatively few score at advanced levels on standardized tests. The National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that only 27 percent of Hispanic eleventh-grade students proficient in English scored at or above the "adept" reading level, whereas only 14 percent of those from language minority backgrounds did so. Nearly half of all Anglo students scored at this level (Duran, 1988).

The dropout rate for Hispanic students is high, 33 to 50 percent. In Texas, Hispanic youth are twice as likely as their Anglo counterparts to drop out; half of Hispanic dropouts do not finish the ninth grade (Cardenas, Robledo, & Supik, 1986).

Recent reports (for example, Horn, 1987; Valdivieso & Davis, 1988) present other alarming data. The families of about 60 percent of high school dropouts have incomes below \$15,000. Moreover, 40 percent of Hispanic children--and 72 percent of Hispanic single females raising children--live in poverty. Finally, the poverty rate for Hispanics has risen in each of the last three years.

The average age of the Hispanic population is 22, and demographers predict that this population will double by the year 2020. Mexican Americans represent 63 percent of all Hispanics (Valdivieso & Davis, 1988).

WHICH STUDENTS ARE SERVED?

Community groups have established programs to reduce the high dropout rate among Hispanic students. They target "at-risk" students, that is, those with reading achievement two or more grade levels below grade placement, repeated retention in grade, or high rates of absenteeism and disciplinary referral.

Community groups also help cultivate the aspirations of talented Hispanic students. Though talented, such students may not be getting the advanced instruction they need to succeed academically. Such programs fill in students' background knowledge and

refine students' communication skills (for example, in writing, speaking, and conducting interpersonal relationships).

Finally, community programs that focus on prevention help Hispanic children at the preschool level. Programs seek to enrich young students' experiences in the cognitive, affective, and motor domains. Sometimes, the primary emphasis is on training parents.

WHAT DO COMMUNITY PROGRAMS DO?

Marshalling resources from parents, school personnel, and business leaders, community-based programs address the precursors of students' achievement by increasing their internalized sense of competence and by enhancing their self-esteem. They help students feel valued and supported.

The Valued Youth Partnership Program of the Intercultural Development Research Association serves 100 youths in San Antonio (Sosa, 1986). This program identifies at-risk students as "valued youth" and trains them to tutor youngsters at nearby elementary schools. The valued youth learn how to be effective tutors and learn how to design instructional materials. Training sessions focus on communication skills, child development theory, and effective teaching.

As these students work with their tutees, they begin to see the rewards of their efforts. They begin to feel the appreciation of both their charges and their teachers. Moreover, as they teach, students reinforce their own basic skills and read stories at their level of independent reading. Field trips to sites of cultural and economic importance provide further enrichment to both sets of students--the tutors and the tutees. As tutors interact with Hispanic role models, they explore the benefits of an education and develop a sense of career prospects.

The Youth Community Service (YCS) program in Los Angeles helps high school students learn about their community and its people (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 1988). This program serves 22 high schools in Los Angeles. Approximately 800 YCS participants take a leadership role in identifying needs and planning activities. To deliver the needed services, the YCS students involve an additional 20,000 youth.

Adults from the community are important adjuncts to the YCS program. Adult mentors help students find meaningful and productive ways to help others. Added support comes from program staff who develop curricula that guide students' work. A leadership retreat and several daylong conferences provide further opportunities for developing new skills, for cultivating reflection, and for expanding networks. A year-end celebration summarizes students accomplishments and recognizes the results of their efforts.

In Dallas, the League of United Latin Americans developed Project ONDA (Opportunities for Networking and Developing Aspirations). Thirty at-risk high school students attend ten Saturday sessions. The objectives include increasing students'

self-esteem (by providing Hispanic role models) and enhancing the holding power of the schools (by establishing support groups). Peers, adults, and parents counsel students about goal-setting, being responsible, and prioritizing demands. School buses transport students to a community office. Community groups sponsor breakfast and lunch.

The Pasadera (or Stepping Stone) Program targets high-risk female students in the middle schools of San Antonio. The objective is to increase students' likelihood of being emotionally and economically self-sufficient. The curriculum includes training in assertiveness, physical wellness, and substance abuse issues, and it deals with teen pregnancy (including prevention).

A similar theme, that of developing students' self-confidence and interpersonal skills, can be seen in programs for Mexican-American students who might be bound for college. Although these students can make passing grades, they tend to underestimate their personal and academic potential. The National Hispanic Institute was started in Austin to help Hispanic youth succeed in their careers and personal lives and to become leaders (Obregon, 1987).

The institute operates five programs to help young people become aware of their talents and to develop their interpersonal skills. Each summer, high school students attend a week-long Lorenzo de Zavala Youth Legislative Session at the state capitol. They explore what it means to be Hispanic, and they learn what knowledge and skills they will need to develop to serve as leaders in the future.

Del Mar College (in Corpus Christi, Texas) encourages middle and high school students to consider careers in mathematics, engineering, or science. Its Prefreshman Engineering Program (PREP) serves 110 students. Students attend a two-month series of lectures, seminars, work sessions, and field trips related to the sciences. Field trips and role models expose students to such disciplines as traffic and civil engineering, electrical and chemical engineering, computer science, problem-solving, and plant pathology. During the field trips students get a firsthand look at professional life, and they also talk to experts in their own communities. A dozen companies in the Corpus Christi area serve as cosponsors of the program.

At the University of Texas at El Paso, the Mother-Daughter Program holds meetings once a month with Hispanic female students. The young women have passing grades but are not considered to be "achievers." They visit the college campus four times: for a campus open house, career day, leadership conference, and an awards banquet. The YWCA coordinates transportation to school and community activities. Field trips have included a visit to the courthouse, where a Hispanic woman presides, a visit to view works of art by Latin American artists, and a trip to a medical school. Mothers receive training on building self-esteem, encouraging success, and finding resources to support their daughters' education. Sessions are conducted bilingually.

ADVANCE is another program working with parents to improve their children's education. ADVANCE seeks to prevent child abuse and neglect through the parenting classes it offers to low-income Hispanic women in San Antonio. The curriculum addresses parent communication, discipline, and infant and toddler stimulation and nutrition.

WHAT FEATURES DO THESE PROGRAMS SHARE?

The programs offered by community groups share a number of key features. In particular, they:

actively recruit students;

serve a small group of students (25-100);

direct personal attention at students;

focus on enrichment, not deficits;

target the affective domain (for example, self-esteem, interpersonal communication, and aspirations);

validate the language and culture of students' homes;

provide support and role models using local resources;

facilitate other support needed to ensure attendance (for example, providing meals, transportation, and child care); and

celebrate students' accomplishments publicly.

These characteristics represent three elements essential for the success of community-based programs (Cardenas, 1987): (1) Valuing students, (2) providing Support, and (3) forming Partnerships (VSP).

REFERENCES

Cardenas, J. (1987, June). Trustee of education award, keynote address. I.D.R.A. Newsletter.

Cardenas, J., Robledo, M., & Supik, J. (1986). Texas school dropout survey project: A summary of findings. San Antonio, TX: Intercultural Development Research Association, Center for Prevention and Recovery of Dropouts.

Constitutional Rights Foundation. (1988). Annual report. Los Angeles, CA:

Constitutional Rights Foundation.

Duran, R. (1988). Testing of Hispanic students: Implications for secondary education. Berkeley, CA: National Commission on Testing and Public Policy, The University of California at Berkeley.

Hispanic Policy Development Project. (1988). Closing the gap for U.S. Hispanic youth. Washington, DC: Hispanic Policy Development Project.

Horn, M. (1987, May). The burgeoning educational underclass. U.S. News & World Report, pp. 66-67.

Obregon, E. (1987, August). Shaping images for the future. Austin American Statesman, pp. C1, C5.

Quality Education for Minorities Project. (1990). Education that works: An action plan for the education of minorities. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Quality Education for Minorities Project.

Sosa, A. (1986, November). Valued youth partnership program: Dropout prevention through cross-age tutoring. I.D.R.A. Newsletter, pp. 6-8. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 279 764)

Valdivieso, R., & Davis, C. (1988). U.S. Hispanics: Challenging issues for the 1990s (Occasional Paper 17). Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau.

Prepared by Alicia Sosa, Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio, Texas.

This publication was prepared with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under contract no. RI-88-062016. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement or the Department of Education.

Title: Making Education Work for Mexican-Americans: Promising Community Practices. ERIC Digest.

Document Type: Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

Available From: ERIC/CRESS, Appalachia Educational Laboratory, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325 (free).

Descriptors: Community Involvement, Elementary Secondary Education, Enrichment Activities, High Risk Students, Hispanic Americans, Mexican American Education, Parent Education, Role Models, School Community Programs, School Community Relationship, Social Support Groups, Youth Programs

Identifiers: California, ERIC Digests, Texas
###



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)