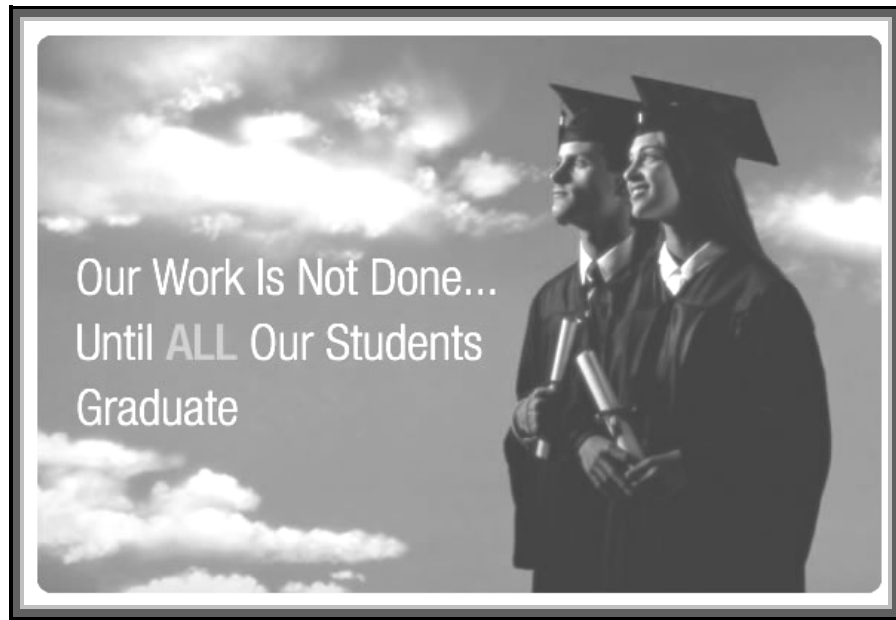


ASSOCIATION OF  
MEXICAN AMERICAN  
EDUCATORS, INC.

**JOURNAL 2008**

<http://www.amae.org>





## **EDITORS' MESSAGE**

It is a pleasure to present this year's edition of the AMAE Journal. As promised, The AMAE journal is back and it's here to stay. Last year, AMAE made the commitment to revive the academically focused, AMAE Journal, and this year's edition is the confirmation that we are committed to continue. The goal of The AMAE Journal is not just to criticize the shortcomings of the educational system, but to offer possible solutions to the problems encountered in public education.

All work in this Journal, essays, short stories and poems went through a blind review process. Each article was assigned to an impartial reader from our editorial board. All editorial board members used the same rubric that evaluated, among other things, proper APA format, in the case of research work, and content that addressed educational issues that affect Mexican American/Chicano/Latino children in public schools. The editors then re-evaluated the recommendations from members of the editorial board and made final decisions on the selected pieces based on content and based on the desired size of the Journal.

The essays included in this issue of the AMAE Journal cover the broad spectrum of students that are served by public schools throughout the nation. The essay written by Dr. Jimenez addresses the ramifications on the Latino population of a highly exclusive program, the Advanced Placement (AP) program; while the essay by Dr. Lavadenz addresses the struggles that new immigrants from Central America face in public schools in poverty stricken neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Mona Romandia presented an extended case study of a student in rural, central California, and Dr. Arenas shared an essay that is truly a reference bank of Chicano authors for children's books.

As part of our commitment to encourage educators of Chicano/Mexican American background to tell their stories and to share their experiences in education and from their own lives, several pieces were selected that are non-research based; they represent the light side of the AMAE Journal. The short story written by one of the editors about *Tecayates y Girasoles* exposes us to the way that some rural communities celebrate the Día de los Muertos or Día de Todos los Santos in central Mexico. Also, the story written by Helen Rivas Galvan reminds us about the complexities that Chicanos/Mexican Americans go through in defining themselves in the American culture. Finally, we selected a couple of poems, one that reflects on the expectations that some students have of their teachers and one as a hindsight of what the Americas could have been like if Moctezuma, a main character of the Aztec empire during the Spanish invasion of central Mexico, had been more assertive in his first encounters with the leaders of the Spanish incursion.

In 2009, The AMAE Journal will continue to grow and to take a step forward by inviting three university professors as guest editors. Dr. Edward M. Olivos, from the University of Oregon, Dr. Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, from Arizona State University and Dr. Alberto M. Ochoa, from San Diego State University will serve as guest editors for the themed, 2009 edition of The AMAE Journal. The theme will be *Critical Issues in Mexican-American/ Chicano/Latino Parent Engagement in K-12 Schools*. Everyone reading this edition of the AMAE Journal is encouraged to submit an article on the successes you may have in involving parents in your local schools, or have ideas about what public schools could do to improve parental involvement. Serious research work, short stories and poetry are welcome. Page 48 on this Journal is the *Call for Manuscripts for the 2009 Journal*; it specifies the requirements for potential articles.

Juntos logramos más.

**Jairo Sanchez, M. S.**  
**Juan M. Flores, Ed. D.**  
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## Essays & Research

# **Examining Advanced Placement Program Access and Equity for Low-Income, Latino, and English Language Learners**

By

Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, Ph. D.

### **Introduction**

#### Advanced Placement Program & Benefits

The Advanced Placement (AP) program was initiated during the early 1950's in response to growing concerns regarding the educational needs of high ability secondary school students (College Board, 2007). The Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education sponsored a study in 1951 to determine what students were learning during the last two years of high school and first two years of college. Their sample consisted of three elite high schools (Exeter, Andover, and Lawrenceville) and universities (Harvard, Princeton, and Yale). Findings from the study suggested that capable students could receive advanced placement in college if achievement examinations were developed (Zarate & Pachon, 2006).

As research and practice points out, there are clear and advantageous academic benefits for students who enroll in courses during high school (College Board, 2007; Geiser & Santelices, 2004):

- Students in AP coursework receive college level rigor experience in high school.
- Students who take AP examinations and score high enough (3 or better) earn credit at most colleges and universities.
- Students improve their grade point average (G.P.A) since AP grades have an inflated value (A=5).
- Students who take AP in high schools are more likely to enroll and graduate from a 4-year university.

#### Access to Advanced Placement Courses

The Advanced Placement "Status Quo" (AP Status Quo) framework (Figure 1, below) suggests

that there has been an emphasis on preparing a few students while excluding the majority of students when it comes to courses. Despite the apparent prevalence of AP courses available to some students, most high school students in the United States (U.S.) do not take AP courses. In many cases, this is simply due to their unavailability (Creech, 1995). Traditionally, higher education institutions have used AP courses to further filter "good" students from "elite" students, the former receiving an inferior education. The underlining belief in the AP Status Quo framework is that only certain high school students are capable and deserving of college level rigor in high school; therefore, exclusion is an acceptable practice. However, the students who are denied this high quality education are typically students of color and students of poverty (College Board, 2006; Darity, Castellino, Tyson, Cobb, & McMillen, 2001). Furthermore, the concept of equity is completely absent from the AP Status Quo framework (Figure 1). On the contrary, it promotes educational and social inequity through exclusion.

#### Exclusion is Illegal

In recent developments, the lack of AP courses at schools, predominantly in high minority urban schools as well as smaller rural schools, has spurred legal action on behalf of these groups. Two lawsuits (*Daniel et al. v. State of California* and *Castaneda et al. v. University of California Regents*), in California have sought to address the inequity in AP course offerings (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2002). These lawsuits focused primarily on schools that did not offer any advanced placement courses at all. Although, the lawsuits are necessary to assure that all schools offer at least one Advanced Placement course, it does not promote a goal for equal allocation in Advanced Placement courses between schools. In other words, one school could offer a limited number



of Advanced Placement courses and another school could offer an abundance of Advanced Placement courses and both would be seen as acceptable under the law.

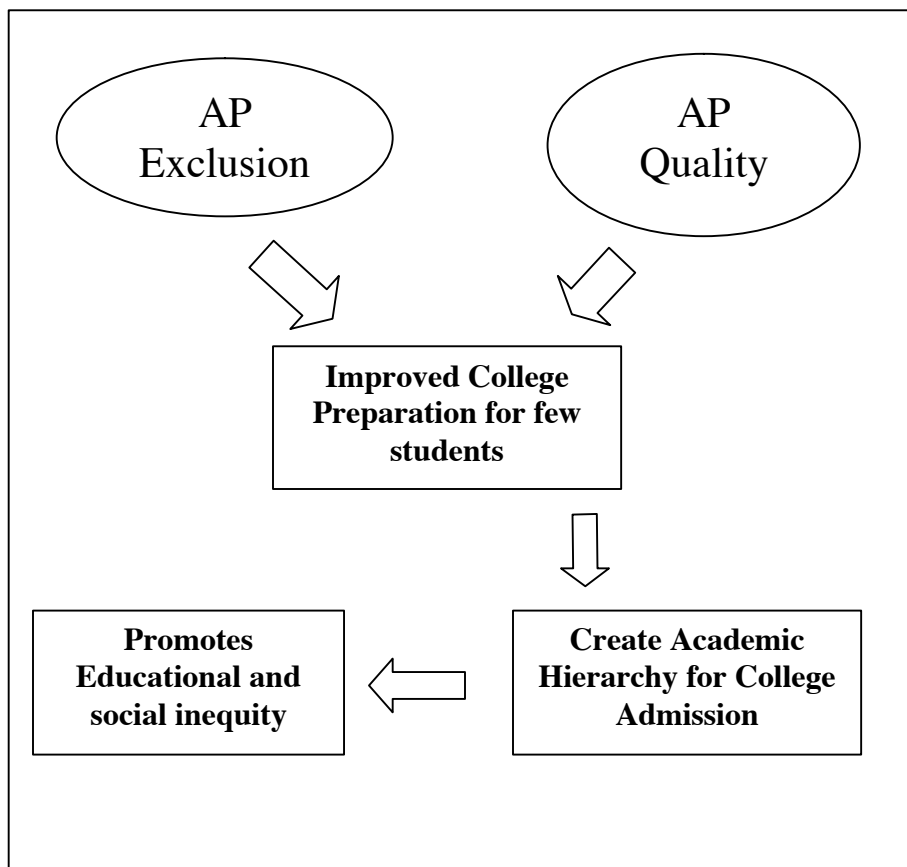
#### New College Board Policy

Although the College Board is intimately involved in all aspects of programs, it is important to be aware of their written policy as related to equity. Propelled by the lawsuits in California, within the last few years, the College Board and the Advanced Placement Program “encourages” teachers, AP Coordinators, and school administrators, via the written policy, to make equitable access a guiding principle for their AP programs. The College Board’s official *Equity Policy Statement* (College Board, 2007) reads as follows:

*The Board encourages the elimination of barriers that restrict access to AP courses for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in the AP Program. Schools should make every effort to ensure that their AP classes reflect the diversity of their student population.* (italics added, [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org))

However, there is no mandate or incentive for individual schools to follow this policy. Moreover, most schools do not keep track of AP ethnic/poverty representation.

Figure 1: Advanced Placement “Status Quo” Conceptual Framework (1950’s-Present)



#### **Need & Significance of Study**

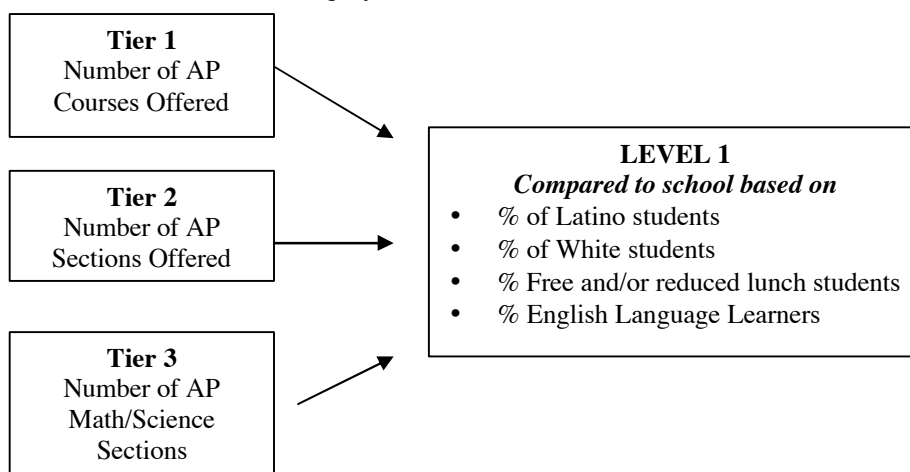
The needs for this study are many; however, the primary need and significance of this study is

conceptual and methodological more so than theoretical. Most of the Advanced Placement literature focuses on articulating pros and cons regarding AP programs (Mathews, 2007; Morgan & Ramist, 1998). However, very few scholarly data

driven articles exist that examine AP access and equity in California. The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) first began its research on AP course availability in 1996. In 2000, TRPI revisited the issue and examined all public high schools' AP course offerings in the fall of 1997 and again in 2006. In the latest research report and policy brief, (Zarate & Pachon, 2006) again reported the following: (1) Large and suburban schools offered more AP courses, (2) Schools serving low-income and rural students offered fewer AP courses and (3) The concentration of Latino or Black students was negatively correlated to the number of AP courses offered.

The TRPI also provided suggestions for future research in the area of AP access and equity. The research suggestions included the following two ideas: (1) Investigate the number of classes (sections) for each AP course and (2) Examine the distribution of AP course subjects between schools. Ultimately, the methodology in this study expands from the TRPI (Zarate & Pachon, 2006) methodology and incorporates some of their methodological recommendations while focusing on AP access and equity for low-income Latino English Learners.

Figure 2: Advanced Placement Access and Equity Framework



### Methodology

The Advanced Placement Access and Equity (APAE) framework (Figure 2, page 5) looks at access and equity through multiple tiers with each progressive tier revealing a more critical aspect regarding student access to AP courses between schools.

In the APAE framework, Tier 1 is the least rigorous indicator of equity due to its vagueness since it only indicates how many courses are offered. Tier 2 takes into account the number of AP sections for each AP course, thus providing more clarity to the AP picture of the school. Therefore, if a school offers five AP courses and four sections for each course, the access would increase since many more students will be able to enroll. Lastly, Tier 3 looks at the number of AP math and science sections offered. This indicator was selected since AP math and science courses tend to express the epitome of academic rigor in high school due to the high level of analytical

skills required.

In addition, this framework examines how the previous mentioned tiers of AP access and equity are distributed based on (1) the percentage of Latino students, percentage of White students, (2) percentage of students eligible for free and/or reduced lunch, and (3) percentage of English Learners (ELL's). These demographics are important to analyze since many students belonging to these groups have traditionally received an inferior educational experience (Espinosa & Ochoa, 1992; Kozol, 2006; Oakes, 2005). Furthermore, it is important to examine how courses are distributed among schools with varying demographics to verify if all students are provided an equal opportunity to learn.

### Research Questions

1. Is there a difference in access between schools with more affluent White students

and schools with more low-income Latino English Learners?

2. What are the best predictors (ethnicity, poverty or language) of AP program access? What are the individual effects of poverty, language and ethnicity?

### Study Sample

The initial research sample consisted of one large county, in the state of California, consisting of 42 school districts, for a total of 654 schools and 498,186 students. The initial sample was filtered using three criteria: *type of school*, *charter status*, and *School Accountability Report Card (SARC)* data availability for 2004-05. As such, only “regular” non-charter 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade high schools (not including learning centers, alternative high schools or middle schools) that had an available SARC for 2004-05

with AP data were selected. Through the previously mentioned filtering process, the initial sample was reduced to the following districts and schools:

- Eight school districts comprising 46 high schools and 79,317 students.
- Two Unified High School districts (with 12 schools) and six Unified School districts (with 34 schools).
- One large Unified High School district (with 11 schools) and one large Unified School district (with 25 schools).
- The other six smaller districts totaled a combined 10 schools.

---

### Variable Abbreviation for Access

a)	Number of AP courses offered	#APC
b)	Number of AP sections	#APS
c)	Number of AP Math/Science sections	#APMS

### Demographic Variable Abbreviations

a)	Ethnicity—Percentage of Latino students	%LAT
b)	Percentage of White students	%WH
c)	Class—Percentage of students on Federal free and reduced lunch	%FRLP
d)	Language—Percentage of English Language Learners	%ELL

### SPSS Statistical Analysis

#### 1. Inputting, Coding, Computing and Recoding

The data for the 46 schools in this sample were inputted into a SPSS database. The primary variables analyzed in this study (AP and Demographic) were interval, or ratio level data.

#### 2. Descriptive Data

The data was inputted and analyzed using descriptive statistics to help provide a multi-dimensional analysis using exact ratio level data collected.

#### 3. Correlation Matrix

A Pearson-correlation was selected to examine the correlation among variables.

#### 4. Factor Analysis

A factor analysis was performed with all nine variables to understand the interrelationship among variables and to clarify if any multi-collinearity exists among them. The characteristics of the factor analysis were as follows: Rotation: Varimax, sorted by size, suppress values less than .35.

#### 5. Stepwise Regression Analysis

A stepwise regression analysis with three equations was performed. Dependent and Independent Variables used in the equations are shown on Table 1A.

Table 1A: Dependent and Independent Variables

Equation	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
1	#APC	%LAT, %WH, %ELL, %FRLP
2	#APS	%LAT, %WH, %ELL, %FRLP
3	#APMS	%LAT, %WH, %ELL, %FRLP

## **Data Analysis and Results**

### Descriptive Results and Analysis

Table 1 reveals that the mean number of AP courses offered in this sample (M=11.2) is higher than the state of California average of 7 and the standard deviation is higher in this sample (SD=5.9) than the state of California (SD=4.8), as reported by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (Zarate & Pachon, 2006). The mean number of AP sections offered per

school in this sample was 27.2 and the number of AP math/science sections was only 7.2. Interestingly, the California Department of Education, Tomas Rivera Policy Institute nor the College Board reported the mean score for number of AP section and AP math sections for the state of California.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	M	SD	Range
# APC	11.2	5.9	21.0
# APS	27.2	18.9	93.0
# APMS	7.2	7.3	40.0
% ELL	20.3	15.6	82.0
% FRLP	46.0	22.9	79.7
% LAT	48.3	23.4	86.1
% WH	27.0	23.0	83.8

Note. N=37 for # AP courses, # sections and # math/science sections.  
N=46 for the rest of the variables

The sample population is approximately half Latino (48%), a little over a quarter White (27%), less than half (46%) of the students qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, and one fifth (20%) are English Language Learners. The range for each variable was large, meaning that while some schools are predominately White, other schools are predominately Latino, and similarly, while some schools are predominately low socioeconomic, other schools are very affluent. In addition, some schools have a very low percentage of English Language Learners (5%) while other schools have over 80% English Language Learners.

### Correlation Results and Analysis

Two very clear patterns emerged from the correlation matrix (Table 2, page 10). Traditionally, marginalized students such as students in poverty, Latino students and English Language Learners are highly correlated to each other, while at the same time showing a highly negative correlation with the three AP access variables (#APC, #APS and #APMS). In other words, the higher the percentage of traditionally marginalized students in a high school, the less AP courses and sections are offered, in particular math/science sections.

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Major Variables**

#APC	#APS	#APMS	%ELL	%FRLP	%LAT	%WH	
# APC	<b>1.00</b>						
#APS	.84**	<b>1.00</b>					
#APMS	.79**	.81**	<b>1.00</b>				
%ELL	-.49**	-.53**	-.67	<b>1.00</b>			
%FRLP	-.47**	-.60**	-.63**	.74**	<b>1.00</b>		
%LAT	-.29	-.28	-.45**	.81**	.54**	<b>1.00</b>	
% WH	.34*	.42**	.55**	-.78**	-.66**	-.68**	<b>1.00</b>

Note. N=37 for # AP courses, # sections and # math/science sections. N=46 for the rest of the variables Pearson-correlation.

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

On the other hand, the percentage of White students is positively correlated to all AP access data (#APC, #APS and #APMS) while at the same time showing a high negative correlation to students in poverty, Latino students and English Language Learners. In other words, the higher the percentage of White students in a high school, the more AP courses and sections are offered, in particular math/science sections. It is important to note that multi-collinearity exists among the three AP access variables and among %ELL, %LAT and % FRLP.

#### Factor Analysis Results and Analysis

The rotated component matrix (Table 3,

below) results supported the correlation matrix that showed multi-collinearity among some variables. The factor analysis grouped together the following variables: percentage of Latino students, percentage of White students, percentage of English Language Learners and percentage of students eligible for free and/or reduced lunch. In addition the factor analysis grouped together the next group of variables: number of AP courses offered and number of AP sections offered. However, it is important to note that although there is high multi-collinearity among ethnicity, language and poverty, *each* demographic group is a distinct and separate construct and should be treated as such from a statistical perspective.

**Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix**

	#APC	#APS	#APMS	%ELL	%FRLP	%LAT	#WH
Construct 1	.85	.93	.81				
Construct 2				.84	.55	.85	-.86

Note. Suppress absolute value less than .35

#### Stepwise Linear Regression Equation Results and Analysis

To deal with the issue of multi-collinearity, three stepwise regression equations were performed (Tables 4-6, on pages 11-12). The results show that the level of poverty (%FRLP) is the strongest negative predictor for both the number of AP courses and number of AP math/science sections. Secondly, the percentage of White students is the strongest

positive predictor of AP section offerings.

Table 4 below, shows the results for a stepwise multiple regression with AP courses as the dependent variable. This regression analysis reveals that the most powerful independent demographic variable predicting the number AP courses offered per school was the percent of students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch (%FRLP) with an R-Square of .36 and a beta of .60.

**Table 4:** Equation 1-- Model Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting AP courses

Variables	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Squared	Std. Error of Estimate	
FRLP	.60	.36	.35	4.77	
	Unstandardized B		Standardized B	t	Sig.
	-.17	.04	-.60	-.46	.00

Note. Excluded variables included: %ELL, %LAT, %WH, %AA

Table 5, below, shows that the percent of White students (%WH) was the strongest independent variables relating to the number AP sections offered per school. The percent of White students (%WH) had the highest R-square with .59 and a beta of .35 significant at the P=.00 level and above.

**Table 5:** Equation 2 -- Model Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting AP sections

Variables	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Squared		Std. Error of Estimate
%WH	.77	.59	.57		12.45
	Non-standardized B	SE B	Standardized B	t	Sig.
	.29	.09	.35	3.17	.00

Note. Excluded variables included: %ELL, %LAT, %AA & %FRLP

Table 6, below, reveals that the most powerful independent variable relating to the number AP math/science sections offered per school was the percent of students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch (%FRLP) with an R-Square of .37 and a beta of -.61, this result is significant at the P=.00 level and above.

**Table 6:** Equation 3 -- Model Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting AP math/science sections

Variables	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Squared	Std. Error of Estimate	
FRLP	.61	.37	.36	5.89	
	Non-standardized B	SE B	Standardized B	t	Sig.
	-.21	.05	-.61	-4.56	.00

Note. Excluded variables included: %ELL, %LAT, %WH, %AA

### Major Findings

1. An “academic rigor gap” exists between schools with more affluent White schools and schools with more low-income Latino English Learners.

The study results suggest that students in some schools are receiving a more rigorous education than students in other schools based on race, poverty and language. These variables highlight the

distribution inequities of advanced placement courses. Overall, the distribution of AP courses, AP sections and AP math/science sections heavily favors schools with a higher percentage of White students, less percentage of students on free or reduced lunch and less percentage of English Learners. In other words, low-income Latino English Learner students have lower access to AP programs compared to affluent White students. The significance of this result is that a lack of rigor and access to AP programs is a contributing factor for the “achievement gap”.

2. Examining Advanced Placement access and equity through multiple tiers (Figure 2) is more useful to unveil the true dimensions of AP equity or inequity than only focusing on AP course availability. In addition, within the framework, to examine the individual effects of language, ethnicity and poverty added to the clarity of analysis.

The significance of finding is that schools, districts, or states using the analysis framework can understand not only if AP inequity exist but the type of AP inequity. For example, the differences in AP courses availability, number of AP sections and types of courses (i.e. math/science) offered. Also, by examining the individual effects of language, ethnicity and poverty, an administrator/policy maker or researcher can understand the differences among demographic groups. This would be extremely valuable to those administrators who advocate for equity and access for all students.

## Conclusions

The status quo model (Figure 1) asserts that AP programs should be reserved for the “best” students; to challenge them forward towards university enrollment. In other words, AP programs seem to be reserved for the “brightest and most capable” students. Former Secretary of Education, Richard Riley alluded to this perspective when he quoted a Newsweek journalist “we treat AP courses like the best family china brought out only for special guests” (Mathews, 2003). But who decides who are the “best” students? This perspective is firmly grounded in the belief in meritocracy.

Darder (1994) articulates the concept of meritocracy:

*Meritocracy refers to an educational practice whereby the talented are chosen and moved ahead on the basis of their achievement (...). The blind spot in*

*this practical system of advancement is that, while in reality, it is schooling as a cultural and historical process in which select groups are positioned within asymmetrical relations of power on the basis of race, class and gender groups.... (p. 11).*

In contrast, the author proposes an enrichment AP model builds from a student’s strengths. We, as a society, should no longer accept to blame a student’s culture, language or race for the “academic rigor gap.” This enrichment perspective is grounded in the belief of social justice and equity. The enrichment model requires school districts and schools to make equal representation in AP courses a minimum standard. The goal should be that all students, in particular, low-income, Latino and English Language Learners be provided academically rigorous coursework through AP programs. Ultimately, this paradigm demands that the educational system provide every child an equal opportunity to learn.

To this end, the researcher offers research, policy and practice recommendations to further examine Advanced Placement program equity and access.

## Research

1. Replicate study methodology and analysis in different parts of California and United States to test patterns and trends results found in this study.
2. Examine mechanisms that impact AP access and equity
3. Examine the concept of AP quality between schools with different demographics.

## Policy

School districts and individual schools need to have awareness of Advanced Placement representation to create equity in Advanced Placement programs. If the educational community is to attain the College Board’s Advanced Placement equity policy which strives for equal representation, then school districts must be more aware of the current inequities that already exist between schools as shown in this study. Currently districts and schools do not explicitly and consistently analyze data to improve AP access and equity. The myth of “open enrollment” assumes any student has the access, therefore creating equity. However, it is not enough to simply increase Advanced Placement enrollment in a district since

increasing the number of students participating in AP does not create equity between schools.

### Practice

Schools must create multiple tracks that ensure AP enrollment to close “academic rigor gap”. School districts and schools need to develop AP potential programs, pre-AP programs, and other such

enrichment programs to help assure access and equity in program enrollment. It is also recommended that high schools consider eliminating the “regular” classroom and convert them into honors classrooms to increase the expectations and rigor. However, this proposal cannot be done without working on better preparing the students in the earlier grades (K-8)

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# Telling Our Stories Using Chicano Literature for Children and Young Adults as a Means of Promoting Cultural Awareness and Self-Worth

By

Rosie A. Arenas Ed. D.

*My grandmother Josefa Alcaraz was born on a little ranch called La Viga near Puruándiro, Michoacán, México in 1899. After her father died, my grandmother, her four sisters and mother left México to come to the United States. Many people from Michoacán began traveling north to the United States during the revolution in México that began in 1910. They would travel in groups and only during the night, since it was too dangerous to be seen during the day by the troops of men that would travel across the land. During the day, they would rest. They traveled for many, many nights walking over a thousand miles until they got to the border at Juárez, Chihuahua. Even though people could cross the border freely from México into the United States by paying 2¢ to cross the bridge, Josefa and her family went into the river and crossed the Río Grande into El Paso, Texas because they did not have enough money to pay for the entire family. Within a few years, Josefa met Gregorio Arroyo and they were married. (Arenas, 2002, p. 3)*

## The Context

Stories of our rich past give us a glimpse into the lives of those that came before us, shaping our history in ways that seldom are recognized. These familiar stories told by family members at the kitchen table or under the shade of the avocado tree in the yard hold the key to the discovery and development of our identity—as a people and as individuals. Some of these stories have made it into the world of published books for children and young adults. These books written and illustrated by Chicano authors and illustrators give young Chicano students a different perspective to life that contrasts that of traditional school textbooks. They depict life as it was and continues to be. However, during the past few years, educational policy and law in California has imposed a strong focus on the teaching of reading skills, of phonics and decoding, of spelling and writing, that has all but eliminated the use of children's literature in its original form from the curriculum. Although,

major language arts textbook publishers (i.e. Houghton Mifflin, Open Court) report that they include authentic literature in the selections found in anthologies. It is not uncommon to find abridged versions with crucial information missing from the text and the illustrations. It is true that proficiency and fluency in reading is essential for having academic success but it is also necessary to access literature and be able to make connections to that literature in order to make a difference in the lives of the children we teach. Ada (2003) says, “*Good literature delves into the human soul, expressing its feelings and emotions, its hopes and its dreams. And good literature gives life to the full range of human relations*” (p. 2). These hopes and dreams are expressed in the simple beginnings of many Chicano families like the Arroyo family.

*Gregorio and Josefa moved to the Los Angeles area of southern California and settled down to have their family. Gregorio worked hard out in the field during the day and after work, he would come home to work on the house he had begun to build in Watts. During the time he was building it, they had five children—Francisco, Angelita, Amparo, Aurora, and Reynaldo. They grew up in this house and Josefa continued to live in it until the Watts riots of 1965. (Arenas, 2002, p. 5)*

## Current Research

The role of children's literature in the lives of the children, who read it, encompasses many areas. One can take a book and evaluate it solely on the topic of the story. The topics addressed in children's books may reflect the child's life and experiences. Ada (2003) says, *"Every child needs to reclaim and revitalize his or her sense of self"* (p. 8). One of the best ways children can achieve this is to have access to carefully chosen children's literature. Children can see themselves in literature and clarify their sense of self when they see books that mirror their existence, written by authors that share their own experiences in the books they write (Ada, 2003; Ada & Campoy, 2003; Day, 2003). This type of literature will allow children to look at their lives and know that others share similar experiences and that it is normal to have had those experiences. "When children enjoy books because they relate to characters, identify with situations, and understand personalities or behavior, they come to the realization that there are others like themselves" (Marantz & Marantz, 2000, p. 7-8). When children read books that reflect their culture, they realize they are not alone. These books validate who they are and give them a sense of belonging.

However, when we think of culture and identity we must reflect upon what Greene (1995) stated, *"Cultural background surely plays a part in shaping identity; but it does not determine identity. It may well create differences that must be honored; it may occasion styles and orientations that must be understood; it may give rise to tastes, values, even prejudices that must be taken into account."* (p. 163) Literature takes on the role of giving students the opportunity to see other perspectives and interact with all of the elements of the story critically. Morales (2001) says, "Promoting a shared experience, yet fostering an exuberance for one's own identity, will generate a multicultural classroom that empowers all students." (p. 18) This is one of the outcomes of using Chicano children's literature in the curriculum. By choosing literature carefully and incorporating it within all areas of the curriculum and ensuring that regardless of the percentage of Chicano students we have in classrooms, we are developing skills in our students that enable them to reflect upon who they are in this world and be able to live with others in a peaceful way (Banks & Banks, 1997).

The stories that Chicano(a) authors and illustrators tell about their own childhoods, about who they are in this country, in this culture are very similar to our students' lives. As educators using children's books that reflect the Chicano culture of the students in our classrooms we must note that we need to carefully choose books that do this in positive ways. Canning, Salazar-Guenther, Polanco-Noboa (2002) stress,

*It is important for Latino students to see themselves reflected in positive ways so that they develop self-esteem for the person they are and self-images of success. When students see themselves in school—their histories, heroes, customs, and issues—they are more likely to feel included and to envision for themselves a future in school. It is important that our Latino students develop pictures of themselves as included in productive, empowering citizenship. At the same time, it is important for all our students to see Latinos and Latino perspectives reflected in their schools so that Latinos do not seem like foreigners and so that all our students develop expectations of a productive citizenry, which includes Latinos.* (p. 2)

Ada (2003), reiterates what Canning, Salazar-Guenther & Polanco-Noboa (2002) believe by saying, *"It is important that the people of every culture study, analyze, and define themselves. There is otherwise the risk that we end up believing that we must look, think, feel, as others outside the culture have interpreted us to be"* (p. 37).

At a conference celebrating multicultural literature for children and young adults, Joseph Bruchac (2007), a Native American author, spoke about the circles in life's journey. He shared with the audience of 300 librarians, teachers, and educators that we must all have pride in what we are as we take *"steps into the circle of a journey."* The steps of that journey that Bruchac referred to were 1) listen to and respect each other, 2) observe what is around you, 3) remember what you have heard and what you have seen, and 4) share with others what you

have come to know. This is how stories emerge from our existence—as values, beliefs, and stories come to be and it is only in sharing them with others that we give validity to those stories. The journey begins from within as Villaseñor (2004) affirms with Ralph Waldo Emerson’s quotation, “*What lies before us and what lies behind us are small matters compared to what lies within us. And when we bring what is within out into the world, miracles happen.*”(n.p.)

The use of literature in the classroom written by Chicano authors can make magic for our Chicano students who are not only struggling in the classrooms to achieve academically but also struggling with identity issues. As a young Chicana, I clearly recall being ashamed of the color of my skin, not because I did not want to

### **Selected Literature for Children and Young Adults**

Literature for children and young adults depicting the Chicano culture is still not prevalent enough to really have a strong impact on the cultural awareness of children. In looking at the literature that has been published over the past twenty years about the Chicano way of life, children’s picture books and young adult novels seem to fall into three categories. The first category includes books written by Chicano authors about their own experiences growing up in the United States, knowing that there was always a disconnect between the home culture and the school culture. The second category represents books written about Chicanos by Chicanos and third—books about Chicanos that are written by authors outside the culture, which will not be addressed in this article.

One of the most powerful forms of literature for Chicano students are books written by Chicano authors about their own experiences growing up in the United States. Several authors such as Juan Felipe Herrera, Amada Irma Pérez, Francisco Alarcón, Pat Mora, and George Ancona are all Chicanos who have contributed outstanding books that address these common issues among Chicano students.

Author Juan Felipe Herrera wrote *Calling the Doves/El Canto de Las Palomas*

be Chicana, but simply because the people around me at school were not like me and my color, my language, and my culture was never validated and was never represented in the stories or illustrations in the books I read. And so, I would never speak up and spent many years as a silent observer instead of an active participant in my education. As educators, we know that children should not have to endure such feelings of not belonging.

about his experience growing up in the Central Valley of California and living with the people, su familia, as a migrant farmworker child. For children whose parents are migrant farmworkers, this book depicts the beauty of living and working the land, celebrating the language and culture of the Chicano. Moreover, Herrera also wrote *Upside Down Boy/El Niño de Cabeza* about the difficulties adjusting to a new life, a new school, but having one teacher that encouraged him to excel using his talents. Herrera’s books encourage students to celebrate those parts of the culture that are unique to Chicanos.

Amada Irma Pérez, author of *My Very Own Room* and *My Diary from There to Here* where she shares about her childhood experiences as an immigrant, the despair of having to leave her home but making the best of things in a new country and a new situation. Both of her books are illustrated by Chicana artist, Maya Christina Gonzalez, who also wrote, *My Colors, My World/Mis Colores, Mi Mundo*, a simple yet powerful children’s book about the colors of the world in which she grew up and the simplicity of opening your eyes to the surroundings to see the beauty all around you. Gonzalez’s illustrations represent the Chicano faces and colors that had been missing from children’s picture books.

Poet Francisco Alarcón wrote a series of poetry books with themes ranging from his surroundings, to families, to heroes, but always based on his experiences growing up Chicano. One of his poems from *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems/Jitomates Risueños y Otros Poemas de Primavera* (1997) says, “My grandma’s songs would follow the beat of the washing machine, turning our kitchen into a dance floor.” (p. 9) His poems based on the four seasons of the year are short, bilingual, and connect so well with Chicano students who have experienced the same things Alarcón did as he was growing up.

Photographer George Ancona wrote *Barrio/Jose’s Neighborhood* about a young boy growing up in the Mission district of San Francisco and follows a day in the life of Jose. Realistic depictions allow children to see the daily events in an inner city child’s life.

Several authors have written books for young adults around the same themes but at a higher level than the picture books mentioned. Pat Mora, author of several children’s books but also of young adult novels, writes about life as a southwest Chicana in *House of Houses*.

*I walk back and sit under the garden cottonwood with my aunts, the Mora sisters, feeling the tensions between them, the different lives they chose, the bodies fate gave them. They talk about their mother, her hands always busy, crocheting or cooking, about her crying, the grandmother who seasons her food with tears, recetas de lágrimas. I ask again for any stories, cures, prayers, recipes.*

*“There’s nothing Mama can’t do in the kitchen, m’ija,” her daughters say.*

*“Abuela Tomasa had a metatito,” says Aunt Chole, “and she and my mother grind pumpkin seeds to make pipián, make galletitas y gorditas y sopaipillas y menudo y tamales y champurrado.” (Mora, 1997, p. 97)*

Mora’s use of familiar themes and authentic language provides young adults with a strong affirmation of the Chicano culture.

Rudolfo Anaya, the author of the classic young adult novel, *Bless Me Ultima*, has also written several children’s books entitled, *Farolitos for Abuelo and Maya’s Children*, a milder version of *La Llorona*. His books delve right into the heart of the culture with the themes and language that many times are left out of books because they might not be understood by other audiences (referring to non-Chicanos). However Anaya has used both themes and culture effectively within his books through his beautiful use of language.

Two books that are a must, especially for children living in the Central Valley of California or those from farmworker families,

are Francisco Jiménez’s, *The Circuit* and *Breaking Through* that give honest descriptions of the struggles of every day lives of farmworkers. These honest depictions are also included in *Walking Stars* and *Burro Genius* (2004), by Victor Villaseñor in an almost magical use of the language. He states, “Unlike most books, mine are not read once, but five or six times, and then they’re passed around to the whole family. Why? Because my writing provides real-life experience that people want to share with their friends and family.” (p. 12)

There are several other Chicano writers such as Gary Soto, illustrator Simón Silva and Victor Martínez who have also contributed novels or poetry books for young adults. They give an honest account of the daily struggles of Chicanos trying to make it in a world that seems foreign at times.

## Implications for Educators

In many cases, the only way children are exposed to literature, in particular Chicano literature is if their teachers are knowledgeable about the positive effects of using children's literature, are creative in its uses, and incorporate literature into all areas of the curriculum. However, there is much more to literature than just simply being able to read it or being exposed to it. Banks (2007) summarizes several studies that support the use of culturally responsive pedagogy, which includes multicultural literature and concluded that when teachers understood the funds of knowledge their students possessed, achievement increased and students were engaged as active learners in their education. Moll (2005) reaffirms this idea as he describes these prior experiences as the funds of knowledge that students and families possess

when encountering new experiences. This is how we motivate students to become engaged in learning—by empowering them and their families as resources of knowledge that can connect with what the educational goals and outcomes are at their school sites.

When used appropriately, it can allow children's minds and spirits to open up windows to other parts of the world and to other experiences in addition to allowing them to see themselves in these stories. According to Ada (2003), "...good literature aspires to more than mere communication of information or just to be an entertainment: Good literature moves the readers. It broadens the readers' horizons, validates their experiences, invites reflection, and awakens an aesthetic sense". (p. 2)

*On August 1, 1942, Amparo married Andrés Gallardo Arenas. Since Andrés was in the Army, stationed in San Diego and had only been granted a two-day furlough, Amparo went to meet him. They went to the cathedral in San Diego where many couples were waiting to be married. The priest married one couple after another. The ceremony took place at 7 o'clock in the evening and was very short. Amparo did not wear a wedding dress but a skirt and blazer. Their "padrinos" were Andres' older brother and sister-in-law. After the ceremony, they all went to have a dinner of roast beef and potatoes. His brother and his wife decided they should all go to Tijuana to celebrate but Andrés was not allowed to cross the border because it was wartime. So their wedding night was spent waiting at the border for their "padrinos" to return from Tijuana. Early the next morning they drove to Chino where the Arenas family lived and when Andrés returned to San Diego the next day, Amparo stayed at the ranch in Chino until she joined him in San Diego a week later. This was the beginning of a lifetime together of adventures. (Arenas, 2002, p. 22)*

It is not enough to use Latino children's books but strive to represent the heterogeneity within the Chicano community by using literature with authentic cultural and language practices (Alamillo & Arenas, 2007). This is the

only way Chicano stories will be heard and appreciated not only by Chicano students but by all students seeking their own identities and striving to make this a better world by recognizing the similarities instead of the differences.

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# **Visibly Hidden: Language, Culture and Identity of Central Americans in Los Angeles**

By

Magaly Lavadenz, Ph.D

The history, culture and practices of Central America are inadequately addressed in teacher preparation and professional development across the United States, and especially in California based on my analysis of teacher preparation (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/html>, 2001). Information about the histories, cultures and practices add to the linguistic and pedagogic knowledge-base of bilingual and non-bilingual teachers of Central American immigrant students. To this end, this article documents the experiences of Central American immigrant families residing in the Los Angeles area and includes analyses from focus group data, participant observations and interviews collected at the Central American Resource Center, CARECEN, and with Central American families living in this area of Los Angeles. Selected folklore and writing by Central American youth in the Los Angeles area are interspersed within this article. Implications for practice conclude this study.

My interest in Central Americans began over 15 years ago while I was a bilingual, first grade teacher in Glendale, California, a suburb of Los Angeles. The elementary school had a reading “exchange” program, where students were sent to different teachers in order to be taught in the first language (Spanish or English). During one of the report card preparation meetings for the first grade teachers, a colleague asked “And how is Ruth doing, she’s such a space cadet?” This derogatory comment seemed to be a common label for certain children of Central American ancestry in our school. Ruth, the young girl in my classroom whom the teacher referred to as a “space cadet” was not a poor student; after the author observed her more closely, it was evident that she had difficulty paying attention and completing her work on time.

This curiosity also led the author to focus her master’s thesis and doctoral work on

Central American immigrant children (Lavadenz, 1994; 1991). Further work allowed the author to find that traumatic war zone experiences for Central American children, such as being witness to violence, increased the likelihood that they would have difficulty concentrating. Students who formed the case studies for my research on war trauma also reported that they daydreamed about the family members they had left behind, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents who were not as fortunate as they had been in coming to the U. S. The author also found that Central American immigrant students were more likely to be referred to special education, despite the fact that they were not “low performing students” in regard to academic achievement. Suárez-Orozco (1989) attributed the “achievement motivation” of Central American immigrant students to their success in school. He found that students felt an increased sense of responsibility and obligation in light of the fact that they had been able to escape the horrific war and violence of their native countries while their relatives had not.

Despite the time that has elapsed since Suárez-Orozco’s (1989) work, there continues to be little evidence that Central American experiences, history, culture and language have been attended to in public schools. Teachers receive little to nothing in their initial teacher preparation programs and Central American students and families do not see themselves represented in the curriculum, nor are their “funds of knowledge” incorporated into the discourse of the classroom (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992).

## Sociopolitical Background

Three decades of political and economic turmoil in El Salvador and Guatemala have resulted in unprecedented immigration to the United States. According to the United States Census, there are 3,372,090 Central Americans

living in the United States, accounting for 7.6% of the Latino population (2006). The two largest immigrant communities from Central America in Los Angeles County are from El Salvador and Guatemala (356,952 and 206,284, respectively). Their combined numbers comprise 98.4% of all Los Angeles residents from Central America. Los Angeles, the setting for this study, has the largest Salvadoran and Guatemalan population outside of those countries. The largest number of Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants to the Los Angeles area arrived in the 1980's, at the height of the civil wars in both countries.

Following independence from Spanish colonial rule, the United States engaged in economic, political and military interventions in those countries that resulted in incredibly divisive, destructive and chaotic conditions. Despite requests from international and US based human rights groups, the US denied giving refugee status to Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants (as opposed to the political refugee status granted to Cuban and Vietnamese immigrants), resulting in large waves of unauthorized immigration (Menjivar, 2002).

Figure 1 The seven countries in Central America.



Figure 1, the Map of Central America, identifies the region that was once known as the United Provinces of Central America, immediately following independence from Spain in 1821. Between 1821 and 1839 five countries, excluding Panama and Belize, formed part of this union.

### El Salvador

“Guanacos”, as the people from El Salvador are nicknamed, have experienced a long history of political, social and economic revolutions.<sup>1</sup> As the smallest country in Central America, the country was controlled by a strong oligarchy; fourteen families owned major land and agricultural concerns following

independence from Spain (Clements, 1984). The families maintained control over wealth, mostly in the form of agricultural land for coffee production, and subsequently power, in the nation from the 1860's forward. A quasi-feudal state existed between the rich landowners and poor peasants, mostly comprised of indigenous peoples, and/or mestizos, who worked the lands continuously until the disastrous depression in 1928. A very brief period of indigenous and peasant uprisings culminated in La Matanza (the Massacre) of 1932. The Massacre, an event that is engraved in the collective consciousness of Salvadorans to this day, resulted in the killing of

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, the in-group nickname Guanacos is now being used in derogatory ways in other Spanish-speaking countries. The term is roughly equivalent to being called a “country bumpkin”.



over 30, 000 indigenous peoples and virtually reinstated the shared oligarchy-military rule in Central America, which lasted until recent times (Menjívar, 2002)

The involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1970's and 1980's resulted in communication and political involvement of the clergy and a rising awareness on the part of Salvadorans. The Catholic clergy's political and human rights involvement, along with the increasingly complex economic and military intervention of the United States, resulted in one of the hemisphere's most violent periods.

In the ensuing civil chaos in El Salvador, it was not uncommon for Salvadorans to experience and/or have first-hand or family encounters with violence. Torture, mutilation and disappearances of any person suspected of siding with either the pro-government or guerilla revolutionaries were everyday occurrences. Entire villages were massacred by these death squads, resulting in migration through Mexico to the United States. The twelve year cycle of terrorism left an indelible mark on the Salvadoran community, both in El Salvador and in the United States (Menjívar, 2002). Today, Salvadoran exiles provide the main source of revenue for the country, in the form of remittances sent to remaining family members.

### Guatemala

Anthropologist Loucky estimates that there are over ten thousand Mayan Guatemalans living in Los Angeles (2000). Guatemala has the largest indigenous population of Central America, primarily Mayan in origin. Billings (2000), citing CIREFCA (1992) claims that 80-90% of new immigrants from Guatemala are Maya, with 10-20% *ladino* (European-origin or mixed indigenous/European).

Although public schools do not request information regarding indigenous languages or origin as part of the enrollment process, many Guatemalan-origin immigrants may speak one of the four primary Mayan languages upon entrance to American, public schools, based on the Home Language Survey ([http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?\\_pageid=33,47493&dad=ptl&schema=PTL\\_EP](http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?_pageid=33,47493&dad=ptl&schema=PTL_EP)). Guatemalan immigrant children who speak an indigenous language as their first language experience difficulties in learning English, or

Spanish in a bilingual classroom. In the case of the latter, Spanish would be the second language, English the third, both of which have important implications for language learning and teaching. Teachers need to be aware that the diversity within the Mayan community is central to their indigenous identity (for example, the term '*indio*' (Indian) is derogatory to Mayans, as it negates the nature of belonging to the community of origin, listed here in order of predominance: Q'anjob'al (51%), Mam (16%), Chuj (16%), and Jakatek (7%) (Billings, 2000). The shift from being Maya in Guatemala and to being Guatemalan in the United States marks a transformation of language and identity for this immigrant community.

In 1996, following a thirty-six year period of civil war, a peace agreement was signed by the Guatemalan government. The conflict was a result of similar economic, social and political imbalance as in El Salvador. According to Menjívar (2002), social networks and organizations formed by indigenous communities were met with strong suppression by the government. The Guatemalan government, with support from the American government, believed the indigenous uprisings were leftist in ideology and reacted with an intensely violent campaign. Guerilla warfare resulted in the destruction of hundreds of village, the displacement of between half a million and one million people, and estimates of deaths exceeding in the hundreds of thousands. Because children were particularly vulnerable to kidnapping and induction into either the government or guerilla armies during the civil war, the separation of Guatemalan families is much more marked. As characterized by the film *El Norte*, children and adolescents from Guatemala were often sent to immigrate alone in order to avoid transcription in armies of either the guerillas or the government (Menjívar, 2002).

Guatemalans, nicknamed "Chapines", have a well-established history of political organizing. The Guatemalan transnational networks linking with the hometowns of immigrants constitute a major source of economic, social and political re-sourcing. (Hamilton & Chinchilla 1999) These networks are part of life for Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrants in Los Angeles. The strong sense of community for Guatemalans is a very important

consideration in understanding their challenges and successes in American schools.

*Primary activities and core underlying values relating to work, social interconnectedness and family priorities, as well as prior experience with hardship and even violence, enhance rather than inhibit their adjustment in Los Angeles (Loucky, 2000, p.215).*

### Central Americans in Los Angeles

The hub of the recently arrived Central American immigrant community in Los Angeles is CARECEN, a community service

organization. It serves as a cultural, legal and educational center since 1983, the year of its founding by a group of Salvadorans, US church leaders, attorneys and activists. CARECEN's outreach programs have evolved with the community's transitions; once heavily Central American in the 1980's and 1990's, it is now shifting to include more recent arrivals from Mexico. Located just west of downtown Los Angeles, in the Pico-Union/Westlake area, where 95% of the residents in the area speak Spanish, 35% of the population lives at or below the poverty level (as compared to 18.9% for Los Angeles as a whole), and the dropout rate for Latino students at the local Belmont High School is 82% (in contrast to the overall dropout rate of 22%) (LAUSD, <http://notebook.lausd.net>)

### **Methodology**

The data used in this paper come from two sources:

- 1) focus groups interviews conducted at CARECEN in the Spring of 2001, and
- 2) participant observations during several family events that occurred between 2002 and 2004, conducted in several locations in Los Angeles.<sup>2</sup>

This study is not intended to be representative of all Central American immigrant experiences, particularly because of its small number of participants. Rather, it intends to portray an exploratory examination of the family language and cultural socialization practices for a community for which these issues are not too often explored.

### Language Contact in Los Angeles

*In language-contact situations, developing languages, receding languages, and maintenance ... are characterized by constant and rapid changes which may be observed as they arise and spread in the linguistic and social systems. (Silva-Corvalán, 1992)*

Silva-Corvalán addresses the shifts in language that occurs where languages, cultures and people live in close proximity. García (1999) suggests a response to a traditional "purist" approach to language use in defining a Latin American ethnolinguistic culture that is so diverse. García suggests a focus on traits that address the plurality and diversity of language use that counters traditional (Spanish) purist attitudes. These three traits are important to highlight in regard to the varieties of Spanish spoken by Salvadoran and Guatemalan students in American schools. The Mayan first languages spoken by many Guatemalan immigrants and the specific linguistic features of Salvadoran and Guatemalan Spanish are integrally related to notions of cultural identity.

The complexity involved in the languages spoken in Latin American countries is further heightened when languages and language varieties come into contact as a result of immigration. Language contact and language shift have been well-documented in sociolinguistic research (Fishman, 1999; Pease-Alvarez & Vásquez, 1994; Zentella, 1997; Romaine, 1995). Unfortunately, scholars of language shift have found that, where language contact occurs in bilingual communities with more "socially powerful groups", the result is monolingualism (Romaine, 1995, p.51)

Parodi (2003) points out that the contact with English contributes to code switching

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<sup>2</sup> To a degree, this represents the distribution of Central American families away from the Pico Union/Westlake area after initial arrival after immigration to the United States. Two of the families were volunteers from the initial focus groups, the remainder were contacted through referrals from Salvadoran or Guatemalan acquaintances, from CARECEN or through schools.

among Spanish speakers in Los Angeles, a phenomenon that is well documented (Zentella, 1997, Perisintono, 2003). Lipski (1994) maintains that across Latin America and Spain, there are “no pan-Hispanic norms which unerringly select preferred variants, nor is there any one country or region universally acknowledged as the repository of the linguistic standard...” (p. 136). Thus, as language contact occurs between varieties of Spanish, and between those varieties and English in Los Angeles, the differences become increasingly less noticeable over time, according to Parodi (2003) and Silva-Corvalán (1994). This means that Central American Spanish shifts to become more like the dominant regional variety of Spanish in Los Angeles (Mexican/Chicano Spanish). Fictional author Hector Tobar describes the confusion about language contact

in Los Angeles through one of his main characters—a Guatemalan death squad soldier, who observes the following of second generation Guatemalan youth:

*Fijáte, vos, que ese vato from La Mara got in a fight with that dude from La Eighteenth Street who lives down the block. Yeah, right there in the class. Real chingazos. El de La Salvatrucha estaba bleeding y todo.* (Hector Tobar, *The Tattooed Soldier*, 1998, p. 59)

The shift described by Romaine and others is becoming apparent in this brief excerpt. The differences and similarities between Central American varieties of Spanish as they come into contact with Mexican varieties of Spanish are highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of words/semantic differences

Salvadoran Spanish	Salvadoran Spanish	Mexican Spanish	English
Casamiento	Arroz y frijoles	Arroz y frijoles	Rice and beans
Cipote	Patojo	Chamaquito, escuincle	child
Piscucha, barrilete	Barrilete	Papalote	kite
minutas	Granizada	raspado	“snow cone”; shaved ice
La cachimbona		Mi jefita,	Mother, mom, ma
Globo	Vejiga	Globo	balloon
chele	Canche	Güero	blond
Chompipe	Chompipe	guajolote	turkey
ayote	Guicoy	Calabacita	Zucchini squash
Chaqueta	Chumpa	chamarra	jacket
pajilla	Pajilla	popote	straw
Bolsón	Mochila	Mochila	backpack
Diccionario	amansaburros	Diccionario	dictionary

Table 2 provides a selection of the specific pronunciation/phonological differences in Salvadoran and Guatemalan Spanish (Lipski, 1994; Canfield, 1981). While this list is not exhaustive, it highlights those differences in

order to distinguish them from potential errors in reading/decoding for those students who receive reading instruction in Spanish through a bilingual program.

Table 2: Examples of pronunciation/phonological differences.

Salvadoran Spanish	Guatemalan Spanish	
<b>Ado</b>	<b>[a<del>d</del>o/</b>	Sounds like “ao”(sentado=sentao)
/s/? / aspirated/	/s/? /s/	Sounds like hard “s”; Salvadoran (español= ejpañol)
/n/? ?	/n/? ?	Sound like “ng”, esp. after vowels and pauses (en =eng)
/b, d, g/? / <b>b, d, g/</b>		Over-emphasis of consonants
/y/	/y/	Weak pronunciation (silla= sía)

Typical among Salvadoran and Guatemalans is the use of “vos” (*voseo*), a form of address that may or may not be maintained by the children of Salvadoran immigrants.<sup>3</sup> The more formal “usted” is used for politeness, and is consistent with its use in other Spanish-speaking populations. Examples of *voseo* include:

- *¿Vos sos Salvadoreño, no?* (You are Salvadoran, no?)
- *Vení conmigo a bailar esta noche* (Come with me to dance this evening).
- *Fijáte, vos, que mañana tenemos la cita con el doctor.* (Listen (you), we have a doctor’s appointment tomorrow).
- *¡Dejáte de babosadas y hacé lo que te digo!* (Stop your foolishness and do what I say!).

All of the sessions with participants were conducted in Spanish and all of the informants used the formal “usted” with the interviewer. When questioned about the non-voseo use, they all responded that as a form of politeness towards a non-Central American, Central American parents in this focus group preferred to use the other form of address.

#### Findings: Blurring and Transforming Language, Culture and Identity

The author began her study in the Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrant

barrio/community known as Pico-Union/Westlake; the neighborhood is centered around MacArthur Park and the Rampart Division of the Los Angeles Police Department, known as the most violent section of the city (Los Angeles Police Department, [http://www.lapdonline.org/crime\\_maps\\_and\\_compstat](http://www.lapdonline.org/crime_maps_and_compstat)). Known as the territory where rival gangs, Mara Salvatrucha (originally only open to Salvadorans and Guatemalans, but now ethnically mixed with Mexicans) and 18<sup>th</sup> Street. It is a bustling area, home to the largest elementary school in Los Angeles Unified School District, Hoover Street School. The popular documentary “Fear and Learning at Hoover Street School” was filmed there shortly after the passage of Proposition 187. Quality schooling is a key concern for the Central American families who participated in the focus groups. The summary of the central themes that emerged from the two focus groups is reported in the Table 3 below:

<sup>3</sup> Cotton & Sharp (1988) describe the use of *vos* in Central America as a specialized use of second person singular with the shift from the Spanish second person plural use of *vosotros* (i.e., *vosotros habláis* becomes *vos hablás* in Central America).

Table 3: Focus Group Findings (N=18)

Theme	Examples
Child-rearing principles	-Lack of respect-talking back to parents is not customary in country of origin -“scaffolding” of parental responsibilities due to the need for both parents to work” -Children are seen and not heard
Spanish-language use in the home	-Concern over loss of Spanish -Decreased use of Spanish in the home in hopes of a better professional future for children
Literacy practices	-Homework (in English). -Salvadoran literature (poetry, novels) -notes/letters to family members -Children’s literature (in Spanish), -bibles -notes/letters to family members
Memories of war	-Surfacing during conversations, esp. for Salvadoran informants -not discussed openly in the home
Immigration status	-concerns over length of time to establish residency, paperwork, etc. -more outreach on the part of US, especially for Guatemalans
Schooling	-need for teachers to communicate in Spanish with parents -Teachers casual/unprofessional dress -need for school uniforms

Results from the focus group interviews are consistent with the recent research on Central Americans in Los Angeles (Menjívar, 2002; Hamilton & Chinchilla, 2001; López, Popkin & Telles, 1996). Central American families are highly interested in their children’s education. The parents who participated in the focus groups created spaces, both physical and temporal, for their children to do homework, read books and talk about school. While none of them was highly educated (most had not completed high school) they articulated their concerns about the differences in schooling and the informal dress of teachers in American schools. John Ogbu (1978) referred to this as the “dual frame of reference, the comparison between what it is like to live in the country of origin with living in Los Angeles. One father of a 9 year-old reported watching the violence of the news on television with his daughter “¿Ves eso?, yo vivi peor que

eso (“See that? I lived through worse than that.”). He was referring to the experiences and memories of the war in El Salvador, which he openly shared with his daughter. Parents stressed the importance of raising their children to understand the importance of being Salvadoran or Guatemalan and Americans. In these ways, the Central American immigrant families who participated in the focus groups revealed that their children are socialized both culturally and linguistically to understand their histories. This important facet of the socialization of Central American immigrant students is key to understanding the socio-cultural knowledge that is a marker of social identity (Ochs1993; 1986). These markers can be captured by some of the writings of Central American immigrant youth, as well as by the excerpts from the families that I interviewed as part of this study.

#### What part of Mexico is El Salvador?

*On my first day in Mr. Bax’s fourth grade class, a little boy named Alex came up to me and asked me where I was from. I’ll never forget his name. Little Alex—a boy I had never seen*

*before—looked me right in the eye and smiled. It was an honest smile, unlike how boys smile when they’re about to size each other up. Although a nine-year-old boy’s smile can never be trusted, I was captivated by his enchanting honesty.*

*Where are you from? I had learned by the time I was nine that there were many answers to this question. I was searching for the one I'd give Alex. "Here" wouldn't work... I learned that the hard way. Saying "here" always made me the fool of someone's joke.*

*"Mmm," I started. "Mmm," I continued looking him in the eye. I was going to say Mexico, add, "but born here" and leave it at that. My mom said I'm supposed to say this all the time, even at the Union Avenue Elementary School. Anything Salvadoran like **pupusas**, **pacaya**, **flor de izote**<sup>4</sup> and Spanish was always left at home, never in public. Regardless, I looked back into Alex's eyes. "El Salvador," I blurted out. "I'm from El Salvador."*

*"Cool," said Alex approvingly. "What part of Mexico is that in?"... Was I really Mexican after all? Was El Salvador a state of Mexico? I really didn't know. Got to ask our moms.*

(Marlon Morales, 2000, pp 66-67.)

This excerpt describes blurring of identities that occur in part from the fear of being "found out". Because of the lack of legal status of some Central Americans, "faking it" meant "passing as a Mexican" in order to avoid deportation back to Central America. These experiences are similar to those cited by Zentella (1997), who discusses the complex and "expanding repertoires" of language, culture and identity.

### Visibly Hidden

As educators, we seek to create classrooms that are learning sites for democracy. In our classrooms, we can create opportunities for coherence with principles that value and

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<sup>4</sup>*Pupusas* are a traditional Salvadoran (and Guatemalan) dish that consists of thick corn meal tortillas, filled combinations of sausage, cheese and beans. *Pacaya* is a type of vegetable and the *flor de izote* is a type of mushroom that grows from the national flower of El Salvador (izote). The title of the book *Izote Voz* represents the national flower and a play on the use of *voseo*, the typical, more formal use of address in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, used here also to "give voice to".

respect the dignity of human experience of all of our students. Through engagement with the lived histories, languages and culture of Central American students in our schools, teachers have the power to practice what Paulo Freire termed as a "pedagogy of freedom" (1998). The type of engagement leads us to examine locally-situated policies and practices through reflection and action. It calls us to question our individual roles in the education of students in the perpetuation of oppressive and subtractive schooling, and to respond in concrete ways to inform and arm ourselves with the knowledge and power of our students' voices to create change. This process transforms traditional methods of reflection and inquiry into a model of teacher professional development that develops within us the ability to develop a disposition of change agency. This disposition is informed by a deepened knowledge of our students and their worlds, as well as a deepened knowledge of the pedagogic principles and content.

### Classroom Implications: A Sociocultural Approach

Teachers and other educators need to use the emerging research on Central Americans to inform their practices. They can also generate their own research about and with students in their classrooms to build a classroom environment using an approach to teaching and learning based on sociocultural/constructivist principles (Wertsch, Del Rio & Alvarez, 1995). This approach maintains that academic success involves the interaction of multiple factors mediated through a particular context, and that the relationship between the teacher, student and the task at-hand is paramount. Lavadenz and Martin (1999) identified the following aspects of sociocultural/constructivist practices:

1. Teaching and learning are inter-related and additive processes which should incorporate the funds of knowledge of the participants through which teachers become students of students (Freire, 1998; Gonzáles, N., Moll, L. C., Tenery, M., Rivera, A., Rendon, P., Gonzáles, R., and Amanti C., 1995). This can occur by including instructional materials that reflect the communities of the learners, and are authentic and relevant to the lived experiences of students.

Varying the participation structures based on multiple learning/teaching styles of students is another example of the incorporation of concept of funds of knowledge.

2. The role of the teacher is
  - a. one of a facilitator and guide to build on the student's knowledge base while attending to high academic expectations so that all students do achieve;
  - b. to establish an inclusive classroom climate where multiple voices/perspectives are valued and shared; and
  - c. to understand that conflict can be used as a learning opportunity through a Freirian model of inquiry, dialogue and voice (Freire, 1998).
3. Issues of social justice and equity permeate the teaching/learning process. The classroom becomes a location of democratic coherence, where the educator's commitment and consciousness acknowledge the dignity of human experience.

The sociocultural approach can serve to bridge the information void that exists about the Central American communities in the U.S. In the next section, I provide examples of the method of transformative inquiry as a Freirian and sociocultural approach for teachers.

#### Transformative Inquiry

The inclusion of students' languages and cultures into the curriculum in the discussion of the sociocultural approach is one step to shifting the apparent invisibility of Central Americans in our schools. To close, I propose a model of teacher inquiry which expands upon Alma Flor Ada's critical literacy phases (2004). Ada elaborated upon Freire's model of transformative literacy instruction. In the model

for transformative inquiry proposed here, I identify the following:

1. Descriptive Phase- Teachers read, write and record their observations of students, the related professional literature. The question here is "What do I want to learn about and with my students?"
2. Personal Interpretative Phase- Teachers reflect on what they have written based on their own past experiences, beliefs and attitudes. This connects the *text* with their own past. The question posed here is "What did I learn about my own history, socialization and beliefs as a result of what I found in the Descriptive Phase?"
3. Critical Phase- Teachers engage in a collaborative evaluation with students. This collaboration occurs through dialogue with students. The question posed here is: How can I share what I learned about my practices and beliefs with my students in order for me to model this and learn from students?
4. Transformative Phase- Teachers' recursive reflection, self-evaluation, negotiation and dialogue with students. The question to be addressed is "What did I learn from the entire process that allows me to make a change (praxis) in the teaching/learning process for myself and for my students?"

Finally, through this process, educators exemplify the model of professional, ethical and democratic authority in fostering more equitable learning for the students they serve. For the Central American immigrants, who are often ignored in US classrooms, enacting transformative inquiry processes on the part of their teachers can reverse the hidden nature of the hybrid identities they experience as they become participatory citizens.

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Mona Romandia previously submitted for our consideration her master's thesis, *Case Studies of Minority Students in a Transitional Bilingual Education Program*, which was an extensive study on four of her former students. Only a portion of her work was published in the 2007 edition of *The AMAE Journal*. In this issue of the AMAE Journal, a second case of her study, Alex, is presented.

**Case Studies of Minority Students  
in a  
Transitional Bilingual Education Program  
(Continues)**

By

Mona Romandia, M.S.

The educational system in many of our schools fails to meet the academic needs of minority students. The dramatic shifts in student demographics are demanding changes in the ways we are teaching them. It is essential to understand the long term effects of our past educational practices and bilingual programs. Research indicates that there are many academic, historical, socioeconomic and language factors that can contribute to minority students' success in schools. This research looked into the factors that have influenced the academic success or failure of native Spanish speaking students who were placed in monolingual English instruction programs in their early schooling. The project presents case studies of these students over

thirteen years in one district. The students' case histories reflect many of the same academic and social problems encountered by minority students in our school system. The parents' lack of formal educational experiences provided limited home support for the students. The families' and students' language and cultural backgrounds were in conflict with the school district's focused method of delivering academic instruction. The students' academic history showed the limited academic skills learned through their English instruction. Test scores did not show a steady upward growth of skills and students never reached parity with their English speaking peers.

**Alex, 18 Year Old Male Student**

Family Background

Alex was born in Visalia, California in 1982. He was raised in the small rural town where this study took place. He and his siblings have lived in the same house for the last eighteen years. Alex's nuclear family consists of his mother, father, two older brothers, a sister, and three younger siblings. Alex's parents came from Mexico as young adults. His mother, Toni, came at the age of twenty to California, where she met his father, Mario, and they were married. They settled in this town to raise their family. Both parents have worked in the fields for many years. This agriculture employment dependence has been hard for the family due to the limited seasons of full employment and therefore, limited potential income. The average income for the family is around six to seven thousand dollars a year.

For the past four years, Toni, Alex's mother, has played the role of a single parent because Mario, Alex's father has been away. Mario has been serving time in jail for several years. Although Mario is away, his influence and place as a father figure is maintained by phone calls and letters. During the interviews, Alex and his older sister both referred to their father with respect and sadness due to his absences.

The parent interview revealed that there are many relatives in town and in a nearby town. Toni comes from a large family that included five sisters and six brothers. Four of the sisters and two of the brothers are living in town. On Mario's side of the family, there are four brothers and three sisters. The extended family in town includes a number of uncles, aunts and cousins from both sides of the family.

### Family Educational Background

Neither of Alex's parents received any formal education as children. Toni cannot read or write and only learned to write her name as an adult. Both parents speak Spanish, understanding very limited English and are not able to speak English. Toni explained, "*Por que no tuve educación en la primaria, yo no puedo aprender o ir a clases de adultos*". (Because I did not have any primary education, I cannot learn or attend adult education classes). Alex completed his high school requirements in

February 2000 and reported for basic training in the army on May 15, 2000. In the family's history, Alex's oldest sister finished high school with an "A" average. She completed basic training in the army and planned to enter a college in September 2000. In June of 2001, it was learned that Alex's sister had married, was six months pregnant and working at a local store. Her present plan was to return to the army with her husband after the baby was born.

### Family and Community Language at Home and in the Work Place

Alex's family lives in a community where both English and Spanish are spoken. The children use both languages to communicate with neighbors and family members. At school the children use English with their teachers, but use Spanish and English with their friends. Adult members of the family use Spanish with each other and the children. In Alex's family, the children use Spanish to communicate with their mother. At the parents' work place,

Spanish is spoken with peers and the employers who speak both languages.

Toni feels that it is important to be bilingual for employment opportunities and that it is easier to learn two or more languages as a child. Furthermore, she believes that bilingual persons are more intelligent than monolingual speakers. She believes that it takes one year to learn to speak, read and write a second language.

## **Alex's Academic Background**

### Elementary

Alex's elementary school records show that he was in a bilingual setting during his kindergarten and first grade school years. The teachers were bilingual in English and Spanish. While in the second through sixth grades Alex received only English classroom instruction. During the second grade, the "Reading Transition Entry Recommendation Form, indicates that Alex had scored a four on the English Bilingual Syntax Measure II. The

teacher wrote that "the student functioned in English and refused to read in Spanish". Attendance information shows an average of 165 days of attendance and nine absent days each school year. No behavior problems were noted during these seven years. Alex did not participate in any after school programs or band during the elementary grades. Academic grades were in the "A" and "B's" ranges from the third to sixth grades.

### Middle School

Alex's attendance during his two junior high years showed that he was present 159 days with 5.5 absences during the school year. There were no indications of behavior problems noted in the cumulative folder. Alex's mother did mention that "*Alex tuvo unos problemitas en esos dos años*" (Alex had some problems during those two years"). She explained that "*Alex contestaba mal a los maestros y pasaba su tiempo con sus amigos*". (Alex would talk back to teachers, and he spent his time with friends).

The questionnaire indicated that he did not participate in band or after school sports programs during the middle school years. The student's academic profile during the seventh grade year showed low academic grades in math and science/health classes. At the end of the year, his cumulative grade point was at 2.08. An update on the Redesignation Recommendation Form during Alex's seventh grade year indicates a Bilingual Syntax Measure score at level 6 N. His Holistic Writing score was a four. The

Language Arts teacher for this Redesignation Recommendation update also wrote that “the student is doing well in class”. Alex’s semester grades of a C- and C+ in the Language Arts class contradicts her reported success in his English class. In the following eighth grade year, Alex had failing grades in science and social studies. His academic year ended with cumulative grade point of 2.08.

### High School

Alex’s academic plan for the four years of high school was based on following the pattern for required course work, and included whatever was available during the open enrollment period of classes each year. The student did not indicate that he requested or was offered extra guidance from counselors when selecting classes. During the parent interview, his mother indicated that Alex had problems in high school “*El tuvo problemas con sus maestros por sus amigos. El iba a las clases tarde y le contestaba a los maestros*”. (He had problems with teachers because of his friends. He was late to classes and he would talk back to the teachers). Alex did not show any interest in band, sports, or extra curricular activities while in high school.

Alex’s grade point average at the end of his freshman year was 1.80. Alex explained his low academic grades with the following reasons: He went to Mexico for a month from December through January, and missed the end of one semester, and the beginning of the second semester. By working hard during the second semester he brought up his grades and the two semesters averaged out to passing grades. He admitted he was also influenced by friends and cousins. He either did not attend classes or arrived tardy for class often. The most repeated reason given was, “*I did not care about the class*”.

In his sophomore year, his cumulative grade point average was raised to 2.00 by the end of the school year. The second semester grades were lower than the first and he showed excessive tardiness to class. He described his high school experience as: “*I was hanging around with friends, not completing group/individual assignments or not turning in the homework. The Spanish class was too easy, and I did not take the class seriously, and I did*

During the second student interview Alex was asked to review each subject, and to explain his failing grades for each of these two academic years. He explained the failing grades and C’s with the following comments; “*I did not care about the class. I was not into the subject. I hated the teacher. I was messing around too much. The advanced class had smart boys and I just wanted a passing grade.*”

*not complete the group/individual project. I got a “C” and now thinking about it I could have gotten a better grade*”. His English reading class required lots of writing, and the vocabulary was hard for him. Alex could not pronounce or read the long words in reading passages. There were too many words to keep looking in the dictionary for their meaning and after a while he gave up reading the words. He explained that “*The math class and the world history course tests were too hard. They required lots of memorization of information.*” In addition, Alex did not put much effort into homework assignments for these classes during the semester.

Improvement in his grades in some of the subjects was observed in the junior year. His grade point average for the end of the year was 3.14. When asked why the grades improved or dropped, Alex explained the changes with several reasons. He did extra credit work in the science class. He was a teacher’s aide in biology and was able to do the extra work. He learned to type in the computer class. He said that his low grade in the U.S. History class was due to incomplete references for writing the term paper. He also explained that the class was hard because they had a daily quiz and projects.

During the first semester in the senior year, Alex completed five classes with a cumulative GPA of 2.17. Alex’s grade in math dropped because it was hard learning and working the formulas. He did not like the class and expressed great respect for those who can do the math. The “C-” in the English 4 class was due to the class focus on reading for comprehension and poetry. Once again he repeated that he could not read or pronounce many of the words. The major difference this time was that the teacher helped him pronounce long words when they read aloud in class.

Grades in the other two subjects were maintained at a “C” in order to pass the classes. In order to complete credits for the last two classes during his second semester, Alex chose to attend Adult Education classes. He earned the credits needed

to graduate early from high school with a “C” average in one month by going through the Adult Education program. The student’s goal for his senior year was to complete high school credits needed in order to enter the army.

### **California Achievement Test Scores**

In the following table are Alex’s California Achievement Test scores from second grade to eleventh grade. These yearly test scores show the strengths and weakness in the core areas which are an important foundation for academic growth in the later years. By reviewing the California Achievement Test scores in the core academic areas of vocabulary,

reading comprehension, math, reading and language, any pattern of weakness during the elementary years is evident. Any low scores in reading comprehension, math, reading and language totals can be matched with the failing academic grades earned during high school. No scores were reported in science and social studies for the 7<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades.

#### Yearly Scores and Grades

Alex’s elementary school records indicated that he was in a bilingual kindergarten and first grade. He earned satisfactory grades for the kindergarten year. During the first grade in 1988, Alex finished the year with three “C’s” in reading, English, and math. He had a “B” in spelling. No CAT scores were found for the first grade. Alex took the Spanish Assessment Basic Education exam in second grade. That test reported only four skill areas had been tested. His lowest test score put him in the 1<sup>st</sup> percentile in reading comprehension and reading and the highest score was 20<sup>th</sup> percentile in math. Alex’s classroom grades in second grade were in the “C” to “B” range. It was not possible to compare the grades earned in his English instruction class to the SABE scores.

In the third grade, the lowest scores were below the 23<sup>rd</sup> percentile in all six skills area and he had a 58<sup>th</sup> percentile in math. Alex’s CAT scores did not match grades earned in class. Alex’s grades were a “C” for reading, a “B” for English, and “A’s” in spelling and math. His fourth grade CAT scores were very low in vocabulary, reading and reading comprehension. The final classroom grades of all “A’s” do not match the CAT test scores.

In the fifth grade, his classroom grades were in the “B” to “A” range in all subjects. The CAT percentiles were higher in all area except in the total reading scores that dropped to the 2<sup>nd</sup> percentile from the fourth grade year of 5<sup>th</sup> percentile.

The final six grades recorded for the year are one “C” and three “B’s” and two “A’s”. Alex’s CAT scores in the different skills tested went both up and down from the previous year. Scores dropped in vocabulary (8<sup>th</sup> percentile), social studies (50<sup>th</sup> percentile) and language (38<sup>th</sup> percentile). Scores were higher in reading comprehension (29<sup>th</sup> percentile) reading total (14<sup>th</sup> percentile) and math (70<sup>th</sup> percentile).

The CAT scores in seventh grade dropped in vocabulary (1<sup>st</sup> percentile), reading total (4<sup>th</sup> percentile), and language (34<sup>th</sup> percentile). His scores in reading comprehension and math were a little higher than the sixth grade scores. Alex’s grades ranged from “D’s” to “B’s” with one “A” earned during the year. Grades in the core subject areas were “C’s” and below.

Alex earned classroom grades in the “F” to “B” range and with one “A” on a elective class during the eighth grade. His grades for core subjects were passing grades one semester then his grades dropped during the second semester. CAT scores dropped in the four areas tested, reading comprehension (13<sup>th</sup> percentile), reading total (14<sup>th</sup> percentile), and language total (15<sup>th</sup> percentile). Alex’s test score dropped and grades dropped in the core subjects.

Alex’s California Achievement Test scores in high school reflected a lack of preparation in the core subjects, and his lack of attention to completing course requirements. During the ninth and tenth grades, Alex did not

attend classes on a regular basis. His academic focus was drawn away by peer influences not to attend classes. He ended the ninth grade with one “B” in math for the year and with “C’s” and “F’s” in other subjects. Alex’s test scores went going up and down on the different subjects tested. The higher test score from the eighth grade do not match the failing grades earned during the school year. Alex’s grade point average at the end of the year was at 1.80.

In the tenth grade, the CAT exam was changed to the Stanford Achievement Test (“SAT-9). Alex had passing grades starting with a 2.60 grade point average then dropping to a 2.00 by the end of the year. His SAT-9 scores dropped in four out of seven areas tested. His lowest scores were in language and social studies

(7<sup>th</sup> percentile), while the highest score was in math (46<sup>th</sup> percentile). Alex’s passing grades for the years do not match failing SAT-9 scores.

The eleventh grade SAT-9 scores continued to improve from the previous test year but five areas are below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. The scores dropped in math (25<sup>th</sup> percentile) and science (30<sup>th</sup> percentile) while scores in vocabulary, reading comprehension, social studies and language showed little improvement from the previous year. Alex’s passing classroom grades did not match the SAT-9 test scores. His grades were lower in the first semester (“C’s” and “B’s”), only improving a letter grade in one core subject and one elective during the second semester. Alex ended the school year with a grade point average of 3.14.

#### Case Study 1 Test Scores, Alex

#### SABE, CAT and SAT-9 Scores

GRADE	YEAR	GRADE	YEAR	GRADE	YEAR
Second	1990	Third	1991	Fourth	1992
Test	SABE 87	Test	CAT 85	Test	CAT 85
Scores	NAT%ILE	Scores	NAT%ILE	Scores	NAT%ILE
VOC	1	VOC	6	VOC	2
RDGCMP	1	RDGCMP	21	RDGCMP	21
RDGTOT	1	SCI	19	SCI	25
MHTTOT	20	SOCSTD	14	SOCSTD	30
		RDGTOT	12	RDGTOT	5
		LNGTOT	13	LNGTOT	32
		MHTTOT	58	MHTTOT	28

GRADE	YEAR	GRADE	YEAR	GRADE	YEAR
Fifth	1993	Sixth	1994	Seventh	1995
Test	CAT 85	Test	CAT 85	Test	CAT 85
Scores	NAT %ILE	Scores	NAT %ILE	Scores	NAT %ILE
VOC	19	VOC	8	VOC	1
RDGCMP	27	RDGCMP	29	CMP	36
SCI	41	SCI	41	SCI	N/A
SOCSTD	63	SOCSTD	50	SOCSTD	N/A
RDGTOT	2	RDGTOT	14	RDGTOT	4
LNGTOT	45	LNGTOT	38	LNGTOT	34
MHTTOT	66	MHTTOT	70	MHTTOT	77

GRADE	YEAR	GRADE	YEAR	GRADE	YEAR	GRADE	YEAR
Eighth	1996	Ninth	1997	Tenth	1998	Eleventh	1999
Test	CAT 85	Test	CAT 85	Test	SAT-9	Test	SAT-9
Scores	NAT%ILE	Scores	NAT%ILE	Scores	NAT%ILE	Scores	NAT%ILE
VOC	15	VOC	70	VOC	21	VOC	23
RDGCMP	13	RDGCMP	22	CMP	13	RDGCMP	18
SCI	N/A	SCI	N/A	SCI	42	SCI	30
SOCSTD	N/A	SOCSTD	N/A	SOCSTD	7	SOCSTD	9
RDGTOT	14	RDGTOT	51	RDGTOT	12	RDGTOT	18
LNGTOT	15	LNGTOT	27	LNGTOT	7	LNGTOT	55
MHTTOT	71	MHTTOT	42	MHTTOT	46	MHTTOT	25

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### Key to SABLE, CAT and SAT-9 Scores

VOC= Vocabulary.....RDGCMP or CMP= Reading Comprehension  
 SCI = Science.....SOCSTD = Social Studies  
 RDGTOT = Reading Total.....LNGTOT = Language Total  
 MHTTOT = Math Total.....NP = National Percentile

SABLE = Spanish Assessment Basic Education  
 CAT= California Achievement Test  
 SAT-9 = Stanford Achievement Test 9

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**FIGURE 3.1 Alex's Test Score Summary**

### Influences That Affected Alex's High School Years

There were several positive influences on Alex during his high school years. His parents were supportive of all the family's children completing high school and continuing into college. His mother believed that the school system had prepared the student for middle school, high school and college. Alex credits his completion of classes to his older sister's help during the four years in high school. In addition, there was a computer in the home for Alex's use beginning his freshmen school year. He also had his own room for studying and working on homework assignments.

Through information gathered in the second interview, it became clear that the most eventful year of high school, was during Alex's freshmen year when his father had to go away. This had a major impact on Alex's mental state and efforts in his academic grades. During this period he did not care about school or passing his classes. In addition, his older cousins and friends were negative influences and they often dissuaded him from attending school regularly.

### Summary of Influences on Alex's Schooling

The important key points of this case study are the home support for academic success, and the student's personal investment in his academic work. First, the student's family influences were divided into two issues. The nuclear family encouraged and supported Alex's academic efforts. His two older brothers and sister were able to help with his development of

oral English skills, and supported his academic development during the early years in elementary school. At home, Alex had a computer and a personal place to study. Alex felt that resources were available from the school or the library whenever they were needed for homework assignments.

However during his high school years, Alex was also under daily negative influences not to go to classes. In his freshmen year he was greatly influenced by his cousins, many of whom dropped out of school after the first two years. Later Alex was persuaded by his friends not to attend class. Alex was often not prepared with homework assignments. He accumulated many tardy points, or just missed classes in order to be with his friends. This was clarified when he admitted that he did little homework, only the bare minimum to pass the class with a "C". He acknowledged that he was not a straight 4.0 student nor was he going to be a doctor. He compared his success and passing grades to those of other friends who did not seem to care or did not graduate. Alex was a far better student, because he could have gotten higher grades and he was graduating. From now on he was going to work hard to be successful.

In addition, Alex lacked the necessary skills to handle academic course work. He did not develop the academic vocabulary that was needed in many of the core subjects. During his interview, Alex constantly repeated, *"That class*

*was too hard, and I did not like the class"*. When asked if the teachers made an effort to make assignments clear by using handouts, overhead presentations, or vocabulary lists, Alex said that the teachers did use those strategies, but he could not recall or understand the assignments when he got home. He never indicated that he requested extra help from teachers outside of class.

A final factor to consider was that Alex did not consistently use good study habits. In spite of the fact that his home environment offered a place to study, he spent most of his time watching T.V. or visiting with friends. The average time spent on homework was half an hour. He would work on the assignment if he could do the work, but he often could not. When studying for a test, Alex spent about an hour going over the book. He never took class notes or used them to study for a test. He explained he would spend a maximum of four hours on major assignments. Alex felt it was easy to wait until the last days because he had learned to type on the computer.

### **Alex's Personal Reflection on His Schooling**

During the second student interview, the last half hour was spent summarizing the academic grades and answering any of student's personal questions. Alex had previously shared that he did not have a picture of his first grade class. The researcher gave him a copy during the interview. He was very happy to learn that he could keep a copy of the class picture. He spent time looking and laughing at his old friends. Alex pointed out students who were still in high school, and those who had dropped out of school. Alex asked about other students that might be included in the interviews. He explained that there had been a total of six cousins in this first grade class. As he named each one, he laughed and commented on their hair or clothing. Alex was surprised at how much they all had grown up. Alex reflected that the elementary years were normal and happy times for him. He talked about his favorite teachers, and expressed how he would like to relive his fifth and sixth grade years.

In a more serious tone, he shared that during his freshmen year; he had gone to Mexico during the winter break and returned to learn that his father was going to jail. After that, his school

life was not important and held little meaning. Somehow during the sophomore year, his father made him aware that he needed to go to school. Alex's body language and mood changed as he described his freshman year experience. It was clear that Alex did not have an understanding of what to call these "feelings". The description of his feelings and attitude toward his life indicated a case of depression. When I suggested this term to help explain these feelings, Alex reacted in silence then repeated the word. He sat up, raising his head to indicate that he understood. He agreed that he had been depressed for the first two years of high school.

Alex continued to explain that in his junior year there had been a girl friend and a change in his attitude. He decided to change his circle of friend and his plans for his senior year. His plan was to finish school as soon as possible and to enter the army. He wanted to make the army a career. The army would offer him an opportunity to continue his education at the college level, and a chance to travel the world.

When asked if there were any regrets or changes he would like to go back and make, he



said that he would have liked to learn to speak Spanish better. He would have liked to have learned the correct academic Spanish with a good vocabulary and to be able to read and write it. Alex explained that for now his Spanish was at a "Rancho Spanish" level. He understands a great deal of Spanish but he can not speak it

correctly. He is able to speak with his mother and father but can not express himself using long academic words. His lack of this level of Spanish has led to teasing by family members, and friends who are more fluent with the Spanish language.

### Analysis

In Alex's situation, there was misunderstanding on the part of the parents about their role and from the school system about the support Alex needed. His mother felt that by sending Alex to school, encouraging him, and providing a stable home environment, she had completed her role as a good parent. She believed that the schools had prepared her children academically during the elementary, middle school, and high schools years. She also believed that Alex was given equal treatment and opportunities in the educational system. She believed he was prepared to enter a college setting if he wished to do so. In this case, she believed that the overall behavior and low grades were due to the negative influences of friends. Because his parents lacked an understanding of how the education system works and the school skills needed to succeed in the academic areas, they were not able to monitor Alex's academic progress in an adequate manner.

Valdés (1996) explains some of the issues and conflicts encountered by the families of these students. Alex's parents had not asked him to sacrifice his education. Alex's parents wanted him to take advantage of the opportunity to finish high school because they had not been able to finish a primary education. The family's misunderstanding of the school system and the inability to monitor Alex's education was due to two major points. The first point was they did not understand the differences between the two educational systems. Secondly, they didn't understand the difference in the role of parents in the education of their children. Alex's parents believed in his education but did not understand how to help in the education process.

Alex agreed that his behavior was influenced by friends and cousins. His low grades were a reflection of his lack of understanding of the academic content which required high levels of thinking skills in English. Alex's difficulties with reading comprehension,

writing and vocabulary indicates that he was lacking the academic language explained by Cummins' (1989) as a higher level of cognitive development. Alex's development of oral language skills were begun with the help for his older sister and this gave him a false indication of his readiness for English only instruction. His lack of primary language development and lack of academic language in English led to many of the academic difficulties reported by Alex.

The fact that Alex completed high school credits for a diploma was a big accomplishment for the family. Conversations with him indicated that out of twenty cousins of approximately the same age, he was only the third or fourth male to graduate from high school. He explained that compared to his older sister, he did not have the academic grades, or talent to compare to his sister's accomplishments during her years of high school. Due to this fact, Alex's alternative plan was to join the army as soon as possible. He believed the army would provide him with opportunity to attend a college and have a career. Leaving the family and his home town was a very important decision, which he made with the approval of his parents.

In June 2001, it was learned that Alex's sister was married, six months pregnant and working at a local store. Her present plan was to return to the army with her husband after the baby was born. In a conversation with Alex in July 2001, it was learned that he had been in the army and stationed in North Carolina up until April 2001. He had to return home upon his mother's request. He was needed at home to help with his younger siblings. Alex was working full time at a local chicken processing plant. He plans to attend the local community college this fall and major in criminology. Alex is waiting until he turns 21 years old to apply for correctional officer's training with the state of California.

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## **Reflections from the Classroom**

### **It Used To Be a Nightmare on Elm Street**

By

Art Barragan, Principal

In 2004 I began my first assignment at Elm Street School in Oxnard, California. I had 17 years of administrative experience as an assistant principal at the high and middle school level and believed that I would be a successful elementary principal with ease. Elm Street Elementary was the lowest performing school in Ventura County with only 9.6% of the students scoring at a proficient level in Language Arts. After my first year at Elm, which was year round at the time, we only improved to 10.5% on the CST's. This was statistically insignificant. It's hard looking at oneself in the mirror every morning and thinking that I was "statistically insignificant." I knew we needed some kind of direction to improve our school.

In the spring of 2005, Superintendent, Richard Miller, introduced me to the concepts of Professional Learning Communities by R. DuFour. The implementation of this philosophy is directing us out of Program Improvement (PI) status. In addition, each member of the staff was given a copy of "Whatever it Takes," and "Learning by Doing," by R. DuFour. The staff has worked diligently to incorporate the PLC concepts at Elm.

During the summer of 2006, nine staff members and I attended a week-long training on the Sopris West Language Program. This is a Language Arts intervention program that was instrumental in our dramatic increase in the 2007 California

Standards Test. Along with demonstrating fidelity to the Houghton Mifflin program and the implementation of our technology programs, Success Maker and Waterford, we had a 24.8% improvement in language arts.

During the ACSA Leadership Academy at UCLA during the summer of 2007, the PLC concepts were reinforced throughout the week. In addition there were workshops covering curriculum development, data analysis, and school to home communication. Teambuilding activities were introduced throughout the seminars; they were easily duplicated at Elm.

It is fair to say that my personal leadership style has changed over the course of the last few years. In my first year I was quite autocratic and directive. I have learned to work collegially with my staff and increase communication. At Elm we are taking the opportunity to learn from our experiences/mistakes to make our school better; it's about developing positive relationships with all the stake holders at our school. Armed with the mantra that at ELM, Every Learner Matters, the dedicated staff is looking forward to this years CSTs and moving out of Program Improvement. Serving a population of over 97% Latinos, with the majority of them classified as socially economically disadvantaged, our staff takes great pride in the progress we have made and look forward to developing more success stories.

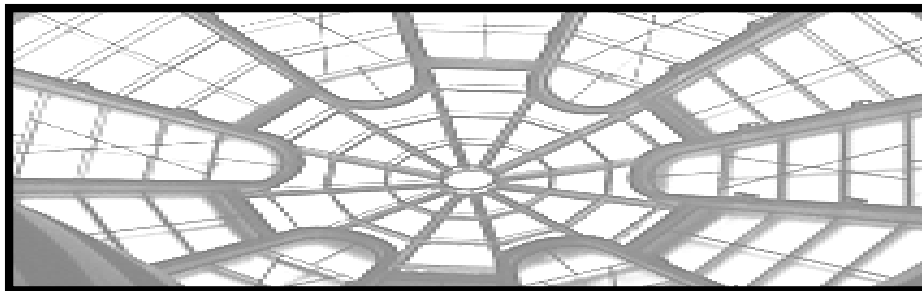


Photo by: Jairo Sanchez  
Guggenheim Museum, New York

## Short Stories

### My Identity

By

Helen Rivas Galván, M.A., A.B.D.

One of my father's favorite sayings was from Cervantes' "Don Quixote". This he always delivered in Spanish, as he changed the Castilian to a more popular version and added his own addendum to it, which explained the reason for quoting it. He would bring up the saying whenever we started to speak too much English inside the house, and especially if we tried to speak English to him:

"Hay un dicho: 'Cuando en Roma, haz como los Romanos' – y en MI casa, van a hablar español"

*("There is a saying: 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do' – and in MY house, you will speak Spanish!")*

This was his very subtle way of telling us that English was not permitted inside the house. He would add that we could speak all the English we wanted outside the house to each other, or at school, but not to him inside his house. He even went so far as to ignore anyone who spoke English to him, including his own children.

My mother, on the other hand, subscribed to the policy that the schools imposed on parents at that time: an edict that parents should speak English to their children at home so that the children would more quickly learn English. Luckily, my mother had attended two years of school in Arizona and also worked a few years before she was married, so she spoke some English. And she wanted to perfect it; therefore, she allowed us to speak English to her, and answered as well she could. Although my father made it apparent that he didn't approve of that practice, we continued to speak Spanish and English to my mother, but only Spanish to my father.

One day, when I was around 8 years old, my father called me and asked me to sit down by him. Then he asked me "¿Qué eres tú?" (*"What are you?"*)

"What am I?" I questioned in Spanish, not quite knowing what he wanted me to say.

"Sí, ¿qué eres?"

"Mexicana...?" It came out slowly, more like a question – is this what you're asking me? What I am? I didn't doubt the answer, only the question.

"¿Tú crees? ¿Tú crees que si fueras a Mexico te iban a ver igual a los Mexicanos que nacieron y viven allí?" (*"You think so? Do you think that if you went to Mexico, people would see you the same way they look at Mexicans who were born and live there?"*)

"No," I answered, now a little quicker than the first question. I knew that I couldn't compare my "Mexicaness" with those of my classmates who came from Mexico. I was born here in the United States, and my Spanish was definitely not as good as those who were born in Mexico.

"Entonces, ¿qué eres?" (*Then, what are you?*)

"Americana..." Even as I said it, it didn't sound like a word I would use to describe myself. I knew I was American, I was born in the United States, but it just didn't feel as comfortable to say I was American as it did to say I was Mexican.

"¿Tú crees? ¿Tú crees que te ven a tí igual a los Americanos blancos que nacieron aquí?" (*"You think so? Do you think that people see you the same way they see a white American who was born here?"*)

"No."

"Entonces, ¿qué eres?"

My father gave that familiar wave of his arm that seemed to say "This discussion is finished for today. Think about what I've said."

I knew he wanted me to think about it, but what was there to think about? I was either Mexican or I was American. No matter what he said, I still felt more Mexican, but I knew I wasn't as "Mexican" as he was. And I certainly wasn't as "American" as some of my classmates. I wanted to cry out "Just tell me! What am I?!!" But it was clear he was finished with the topic, and the 'problem' had been passed on to me.

It wasn't until twenty years later, when I was a student at the University of California at Santa Barbara that I realized that it was my father's way of telling me that someday I was going to have to deal with my identity, to be able to say what "I am."

During the 1960s and 1970s, the history of the Hispanic contribution to the United States was being retold, rewritten, and reinterpreted. It was an exciting time that exposed historical events that many of us had never even heard of. An awareness of who we were and events collectively experienced, bound us together as a people and begged a label that would define us under a spirit of unity and celebration of our culture. But just as our culture is richly diverse, so are the labels that we can choose from to identify ourselves.

It is important for us, as Hispanics, and especially as teachers, to have our own identity, to be able to express that to our students and to be proud of who and what we are. Only then can

the students entrusted to us understand that whatever experiences they hold dear are valuable, and help to shape and form their own unique identity. When our students can say what they "are" with pride, they are confident and capable of success.

As a teacher, enrolled in a class to teach Culture to those who were going to take the BCLAD, I was somewhat surprised to learn what my Hispanic colleagues called themselves. A teacher born in Mexico who has lived here most of her life is still "Mexican", while another born here in the United States, like I was, called herself "Mexican-American." Another teacher, one I consider a very vibrant activist, calls herself "American."

And mixed races are a whole issue to themselves. I enjoy hearing the identities of persons that I know. There is the Chicano-Filipino who is a "Chipino," the Black-Mexican who is a "Blaxicana," and the Mexican-Chinese who is a "Mexichin."

I can be "Mexican," "Mexican-American," "American," "Hispanic," "Latina," "American of Mexican Descent," "First-Generation American", "Mexicana-Gringa" or any other monikers that I cannot think of now, or that may come in the future. But for me, "Chicana" fits perfectly, and that is how I would now answer my father's question – "¿Qué eres tú?"

## **Tecayates y Girasoles para Todos Los Santos**

By

Jairo Sanchez, M.S.

Abro los ojos y miro que la luz tierna de la tempranera mañana entra por la ventana. Mis ojos no quieren quedarse abiertos. Miro hacia el techo y miro los carrizos dorados, alineados juntos como renglones en un libro. Los minutos pasan y miro que los rayos del sol empiezan a entrar, poco a poco, más y más por la ventana hasta hacer que los carrizos parezcan estar cubiertos de oro, ensendiendo más el cuarto sobrepasando a lo oscuro.

De la cocina oigo ruidos. Suenan como aplausos de un evento social de mi escuela. Recuerdo que cuando presenté mi poema el día de las madres, la gente me aplaudió con mucho gusto y alegría. Esta vez, los aplausos no son muchos, pero suficientes para despertarme. Solamente es mamá y mis dos hermanas, Gloria y Gaby. Las tres hacen tortillas frescas a mano para el desayuno. Puedo distinguir que mamá es más rápida que Goya y Gaby. De todos modos, mis hermanas no se quedan mucho atrás.

De la sala junto a mi recámara llega un aroma dulce. Es principios de noviembre y celebramos Todos los Santos, aunque hay unos que dicen que es el Día de los Muertos. La mesa de la sala está llena de pan fresco, frutas y comidas, las comidas más favoritas de mis abuelos y de mis tres hermanitos ya fallecidos. Nunca los conocí a ninguno de ellos; murieron antes de que yo naciera.

De pronto, oigo que mamá llama, desde la cocina. “Jorge, te toca traer las flores!” Ya los sabía, pero la mañana es fría y húmeda. La cama se siente muy sabrosa y no quiero salir de ella.

“Sí mamá,” le contesto. Poco a poco me levanto y me pongo mis zapatos. Primero me dirijo a la cocina y saludo a mi mami y a mis hermanas. “Buenos días mami” y le doy un beso en la mejilla.

“Buenos días hijo,” me dice. A mis hermanas nomás les digo “¡je!” y me robo una

tortilla fresca y calentita del *chiquepeshtle* (tortilla basket). Mis hermanas rápidamente me corren de la cocina.

“Sácate de aquí” Me dice Gaby bruscamente.

Goya, me pega en el brazo y me dice que me espere hasta que esté todo el desayuno listo.

Mamá las apoya también y me corre, “Ve a traer las flores Jorge. Apurate, que se les hace tarde ir a la escuela.”

“Si mamá,” le contesto saliéndome de la cocina con mi tortilla calentita en mano. Huy, que bien se siente una tortilla calentita en mis manos frías. Quisiera tener guantes tan calientitos como esta tortilla, pienso en mí mismo.

Ya lo sabía, esta mañana me va a llevar más tiempo en encontrar las flores silvestres de tecayates y girasoles para el camino de los muertos. Agarro la canasta y me dirijo a la ladera en la barranca en busca de flores de tecayates y girasoles. Estas mañanas de otoño la barranca es fría y rociada. Nubes de vapor blanco se forman en frente de mi cara a como respiro, mucho más hoy que voy comiendo mi tortilla caliente. Siempre me gusta hacer nubes de vapor con mi nariz y boca; me hace sentir como si fuera yo grande. Los adultos siempre hacen mucho humo por la boca y nariz. Hoy me siento como un adulto por poder hacer mucho humo por la boca y nariz.

A como camino por las veredas entre las hierbas y el sacate, mis zapatos y mis pantalones rápidamente se mojan y me entumen las piernas y los pies. Aun así debo encontrar suficientes flores para llenar mi canasta de tecayates y girasoles. Los tecayates son flores pequeñas de pétalos amarillos con centro anaranjado, y al cortarlos dan un aroma dulce y fresco, como menta y caramelo a la misma vez.

Los girasoles son de pétalos rositas y blancos con centros amarillos y negros. También los girasoles tienen olor dulce y saben a menta, ligera y dulce. Al cortar las flores, mis manos se manchan rápidamente de amarillo y verde oscuro con el color de la hierba. Con el rocío y el frío de la mañana, los dedos de mis manos rápidamente se entumecen y se ponen tiesos, igual que mis pies y piernas.

En lo alto y en los árboles los pájaros vuelan jubilosos y ruidosos, gozando del calorcito de la fría mañana. Dichosos son los pájaros que pueden estar arriba de los árboles para gozar de los tempraneros rayos del sol. Son gorriónes, muchos gorriónes. Unos con crestas rojas y pechos amarillos. Otros son gorriónes de plumas cafés y pechos blancos. Entre ellos parecen tener fiesta en la mañana. O tal vez no es fiesta lo que tienen, sino que son como mis hermanas quienes juntas me corrieron de la cocina, ruidosas y rudas. Tal vez los pájaros también están corriendo a uno de esos gorrióncillos a traer las flores a la barranca para los muertos.

El otro lado de la barranca, al oeste, se mira más hermoso. Ya le cae más luz del sol. Cómo quisiera vivir en ese lado de la barranca. Mi lado tiene que esperar más tarde en la mañana para gozar del calor del sol. A como voy descendiendo hacia el fondo de la barranca, paso a paso, el frío se siente más intenso. A la vez mis zapatos y mis pantalones se mojan más y más. ¿Dónde están las flores de los tecayates y girasoles? Ayer levanté un tanto por este lado. Hoy tengo que caminar más lejos y más abajo de la fría barranca para llenar mi canasta con tecayates y girasoles.

¿Por qué necesitan flores los muertos? Me pregunto a mí mismo. Si sus almas deciden directo del cielo, ¿por qué no deciden directamente a la mesa donde está la comida y el pan que les hemos preparado? Mamá dice que los muertos necesitan saber que sus almas son apreciadas e invitadas y por eso les regamos flores en estos días de Todos los Santos. Tenemos que hacerles un camino de flores frescas en frente de la casa. Por ahora a mí me toca marcarles el camino con tecayates y girasoles. Las flores son suaves cuando son frescas, suaves como una alfombra multicolor, con olor dulce y fresco.

Poco a poco mi canasta se va llenando con tecayates y girasoles. Con canasta llena, pantalones y zapatos mojados y manos tiezas de frío, regreso a casa. Toda la subida de la barranca camino deseando que el sol del otro lado de la barranca se venga para mi lado. Así, mi cuerpo dejaría de temblar. Pero sé que pido lo imposible, y me tendré que conformar con el calor del *tlequil* (*open fire*) donde mamá y mis hermanas cocen las tortillas y la comida del desayuno.

En frente del sagüán empiezo la regada de flores formando un arco de tecayates con una cruz en medio de pétalos de girasoles. Completo un rectángulo alrededor de la cruz y el arco. Sigo regando las flores como vereda hacia la sala principal donde la mesa y el altar han sido preparados para las almas de los muertos. Camino con cuidado y en silencio enfrente del altar para no perturbar sus almas. A veces yo quisiera ver a uno de ellos ahí disfrutando de lo que les hemos preparado. Así tendría la oportunidad de conocer a mis hermanos y abuelos.

La sala huele muy sabroso con todo el pan de muertos, recién hecho, las guayabas, zapotes, caña de azúcar, plátanos, naranjas, dulce de calabaza y mole. Las veladoras encendidas iluminan la mesa y altar. Y con la luz opaca y vibrante le ponen más misterio a todo lo presente. Entre vibración a vibración de la luz me da el presentimiento y me late que cualquier momento un alma se aparezca, ahí, en frente de mis ojos, pero por mala o buena suerte nunca pasa. En frente del altar termino de regar las flores en forma de cruz. Al terminar la cruz, pienso y deseo que las almas de mis parientes aprecien el camino de tecayates y girasoles esta mañana.

En cuanto termino de regar las flores, me dirijo hacia la cocina a calentarme cerca del *tlequil*. Mis hermanas me miran llegar, mojado y friolento, y me dicen “Ya está el desayuno listo, siéntate manito.” Goya me da una taza de leche caliente y me sirve un plato de huevitos revueltos con hongos campestres y tortillas frescas y calientitas. Ambriento y friolento a la misma vez, cómo con muchas ganas. Ni siquiera me acuerdo de cambiarme la ropa mojada.

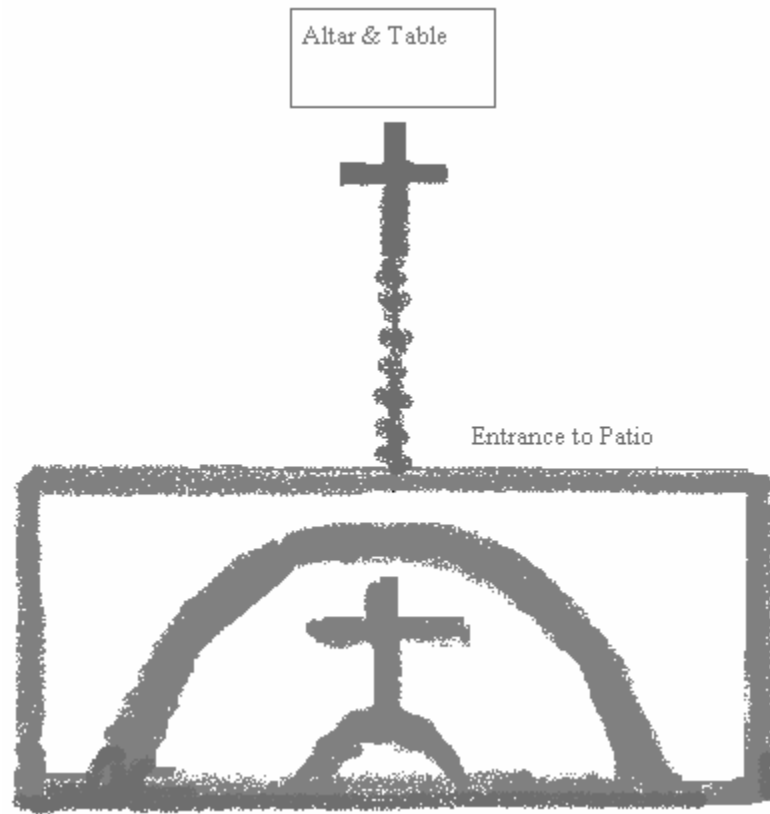
Gaby se retira de la cocina rápidamente y me busca un par de pantalones secos, los placha rápido y me los da en la mano, aun



calientitos de la planchada. “Póntelos y cámbiate rápido” me dice con apuro en su voz. “Apúrate, que ya nos vamos a la escuela. Se nos hace tarde.”

Al salir de la casa rumbo a la escuela, mis hermanas me dicen que se mira bonita la

entrada a la casa con tecayates y girasoles. En mi mente pienso que las almas de mis hermanitos y abuelos deben estar contentos de saber que no nos hemos olvidado de ellos. Y si a ellos no les gusta mi regada de flores, al menos, estoy contento que a mis hermanas sí.



Regada De Flores Para Las Almas  
Drawing by: Jairo Sanchez



Photo by: Cesar Sanchez  
Monte Albán  
Oaxaca, México

## **Poetry**

### **The “Born A” Student**

By

Alfonso C. Hernandez

For a “Born A” student at American High.  
I am not the cause of your unhappiness  
I am not here to soothe your failing tests  
Four weeks per chapter your tests always half done  
And your parents will cancel your summer camp trip?  
You hate to study you hate to have homework everyday  
You hate to MEMORIZE and still want a “B?”  
Because you were born obviously an “A” student.  
You listen to Heavy Metal and Punk music  
You drink Alcohol and tried Pot and Crack  
Or some other newly invented chemical in Raves  
To find the Ecstasy of watching TV until 3 a. m.  
And you arrive to my class with no brain to learn.  
And I will be the cause of all your failures in life  
Like not entering the University of your Choice?



Photo by: Veronica Sanchez  
Tlaxcala, México

## ¿Por Que Moctezuma, Por Que?

By

Jairo Sanchez, M.S

¿POR qué, Moctezuma, por qué?

¿Por qué, cuando Cortez vino, le creíste ser Dios?  
¿QUE no le notaste la ambición y la envidia en su voz?

¿POR qué, Moctezuma, por qué?

¿Por qué le creíste ser divino?  
¿QUE no viste que había viajado los mares sin destino?

¿Por qué, Moctezuma, por qué?

¿Por qué te volviste temeroso?  
¿QUE bueno hubiese sido si le hubieras hecho frente al español ambicioso?

¿POR qué, Moctezuma, por qué?

¿Por qué cuando te hizo preso, no le peleaste?  
¿QUE acaso tan confiado te creó tu madre, que ni te diste cuenta en el fango que te atascaste?

¿POR qué, Moctezuma, por qué?

¿Por qué le diste a los españoles oro?  
¿QUE mejor fuera si les hubieras dado de flechasos en coro!

¿POR qué, Moctezuma, por qué?

¿Por qué les diste doncellas?  
¿QUE diferencia hubiera hecho si les hubieras dado con la macana hasta que hubieran visto estrellas!

¡Moctezu**Ma**!

Si hub**I**eces peleado como guerrero Azteca,  
Tu g**E**nte  
te a**D**oraría, Y no viviera en eterna  
Hip**O**?teca.



Photo by: Jairo Sanchez  
Cancún, México

## **Scholarship on Mexican American Issues/ Book Reviews**

1. *The Search for a Civic Voice* Charts Birth of California Latino Politics  
Burt, Kenneth C. Regina Books, Claremont, CA, 2007.  
[www.KennethBurt.com](http://www.KennethBurt.com).

Mexican American educators have long been on the forefront of social change, committed to ensuring student advancement, and securing a larger role for Latinos in the civic arena. This is just one of many insights that emerge from the recently published book, *The Search for a Civic Voice: California Latino Politics*. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who wrote the book's foreword, said "*The Search for a Civic Voice: California Latino Politics* is both an academic book and one that will be enjoyed by readers interested in history and current events."

Review by Kenneth Burt

Kenneth C. Burt is political director of the California Federation of Teachers. He has a BA from the University of California at Berkeley and a MPA from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

2. Armando Rodriguez, *From the Barrio to Washington: An Educator's Journey*.  
University of New Mexico Press, 2007.

The trajectory of Rodriguez's life is awe-inspiring. Born into a large family in Mexico where his mother neither spoke English nor wrote Spanish, he became the second Latino college president and an advisor to four U.S. presidents.

Rodriguez grew up in the San Diego of the 1920s and 1930s, then a small city near the border. His military service during World War II facilitated his becoming a U.S. citizen so that he could obtain the clearance to become a code breaker. After the war he attended college and became a teacher. He was named the first Mexican American vice principal in the San Diego Unified School District in 1959, and the first principal in 1965.

Rodriguez experienced discrimination but always remained optimistic, confident that education provided the avenue to a better life. He also focused his efforts on opening doors for Latinos while embracing people from other ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Review by Kenneth Burt

3. Theatre Production of "Zoot Suit" at Pomona College

I saw the Pomona College performance of "Zoot Suit" at the Claremont College auditorium on April 6, 2008, and was left with such strong emotions that I would like to share them with you. I had the opportunity to watch the original stage production of "Zoot Suit" many years ago at the Aquarius Theatre in Los Angeles and was fortunate enough to see its revival at "El Teatro Campesino" in San Juan Bautista recently. These were very special opportunities for me.

What was especially touching for me was that the Pomona College production was directed by an original cast member of "Zoot Suit," Dr. Alma Martinez, who is now a professor of theatre arts at Pomona College. In addition, the actors were youthful undergraduate college students who were very busy pursuing very demanding college majors such as biology, economics, etc. However, they sacrificed many hours of preparation and rehearsal in order to bring to the stage the only authorized production of "Zoot Suit" not performed at "El Teatro Campesino."

Among the audience were elderly ladies and gentlemen who many years ago were actual participants in the real-life drama of the Sleepy Lagoon Case during World War II, on which the play is based. They were now in the theatre seeing a play based on their experiences, and were introducing to the young audience the stories of oppression that they lived and that should not be forgotten.

Some may say that the stories told by the "Zoot Suit" play are no longer relevant and that they pale in comparison to the atrocities currently being meted out to minority and language minority communities. My response is that history has a way of repeating itself because we have short memories and do not learn from our mistakes. George Santayana once said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." "Zoot Suit" is a reminder of the harm that xenophobia and a false sense of patriotism can do. In our contemporary history Americans of Arabic ancestry are being treated as scapegoats because of their appearance to the perpetrators of September 11th. Even though Chicanos per capita have earned more Congressional Medals of Honor than any other group, they are often the targets of anti-immigrant initiatives.

Incorporating "Zoot Suit" into our public school curriculum can provide an opportunity for our students to learn about some of the atrocities done during another time in history. Hopefully, teachers will be able to help their students see contemporary events with a new light and understanding.

The study guide for "Zoot Suit" is available for your educational use on the Pomona College Theatre Arts Department website as follows: <http://www.pomona.edu>.

Review by Juan Flores, Ed. D.

**Journal of the Association of Mexican American Educators**  
**Rubric for Evaluation of Major Articles**

*The following is the rubric that the Journal editorial board utilized in evaluating the submitted manuscripts. We hope that it gives you some guidance in the preparation of your manuscript and gives you a sense of how it will be evaluated.*

Reviewer/Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Article \_\_\_\_\_

	(Min.)				(Max.)
Article is identifiable	1	2	3	4	5
Article is readable and presentable	1	2	3	4	5
Article follows APA format	1	2	3	4	5
Article is well focused, concise and has few or no deviations	1	2	3	4	5
Article addresses an important educational issue and proposes possible solutions	1	2	3	4	5
Article is relevant to issues of Mexican American/Latino students	1	2	3	4	5

Do you recommend inclusion of article in upcoming journal? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments/ suggestions relative to the article:

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## Call for Manuscripts for the 2009 Journal



Association of Mexican American Educators, Inc.  
1630 Van Ness Ave  
Fresno, CA 93721  
(559)266-AMAE  
<http://www.amae.org>

### Theme for the AMAE 2009 Journal:

#### *Critical Issues in Mexican-American/ Chicano/Latino Parent Engagement in K-12 Schools*

AMAE guest editors, Edward M. Olivos, University of Oregon, Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, Arizona State University and Alberto M. Ochoa, San Diego State University invite submissions that address the complex and diverse educational experiences, histories, and philosophies of the Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino family. This themed issue deals with issues related to the struggle for educational justice by Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino families and communities and promising directions for transformation. Work which deals with the diversity of the Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino family and the social and cultural context they provide for their children are sought. Stories of struggle and triumph by Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino parents, families, and communities in the public school context are also strongly encouraged as well as theoretical and conceptual frameworks for understanding the Mexican-American/Chicano/Latino family within the current geopolitical and sociopolitical climate. Moreover, personal accounts by community activists working towards community empowerment and self-determination using traditionally activist and/or non-traditional activist practices (i.e. Action Research) to challenge conservative curriculums, instructional methods, and backlash educational policies and pedagogies are also sought. Papers that address new and/or revisited theoretical perspectives and/or highlight daily practices and pedagogies of trans/formation are welcomed.

#### **The selection of manuscripts will be conducted as follows:**

1. Manuscripts will be judged on merit and relevance to the theme of the issue.
2. Manuscripts should not have been previously published in another journal, nor should they be under consideration by another journal at the time of submission.
3. Each manuscript will be subjected to a blind review by a review panel with expertise in the area treated by the manuscript. Those manuscripts recommended by the panel of experts will then be considered by the editorial board, which will make the final selections.

**Deadline for journal submissions is February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009.** With submissions, please submit a cover letter.

#### **Manuscripts should be submitted as follows:**

1. Submit an electronic (CD) copy of the article in Microsoft Word and mail to Edward M. Olivos at the address below, or email to [emolivos@uoregon.edu](mailto:emolivos@uoregon.edu) or [emolivos1@gmail.com](mailto:emolivos1@gmail.com). All illustrations, charts, and graphs should be included on the CD. CD's will be returned only if requested and accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.
2. Manuscripts should be no longer than 3000 words, although, if absolutely necessary, longer ones may be considered. They may be submitted in the form of narratives, research articles, short stories, poems, or book reviews. Manuscripts may also be submitted in Spanish. The standard format of the American Psychological Association (APA) should be followed.

Submissions of articles, reviews of relevant books, and other creative endeavors can be mailed to:

Edward M. Olivos, Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, University of Oregon, 5277 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-5277. For further inquiries please email [emolivos1@gmail.com](mailto:emolivos1@gmail.com).



## APPLICATION TO JOIN AMAE

Association of Mexican American Educators, Inc.

1630 Van Ness Ave, Fresno, CA 93721

(559) 266-AMAE (2623)

<http://www.amae.org>

### Local Chapter: (Check One)

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central Coast              | <input type="checkbox"/> Central LA                       | <input type="checkbox"/> East LA             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fresno                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Inland Empire(San Bernardino)    | <input type="checkbox"/> LA Harbor           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Madera                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Oxnard                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Parlier             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pajaro Valley(Watsonville) | <input type="checkbox"/> Porterville                      | <input type="checkbox"/> San Fernando Valley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Central LA           | <input type="checkbox"/> North Central Valley (Patterson) | <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Maria         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Monica/W. Side LA    | <input type="checkbox"/> Visalia                          |  |

☐ I'm not sure. Place me.

☐ I'm too far from any existing chapter. I'm interested in starting a chapter in my area. Call me.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

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Place of Employment: District \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Dues cover a period of **one year** from the date of receipt. Local chapters have additional dues to support local activities (Check with the local leadership). For the moment, you may register with State AMAE, and your information will be forwarded to the AMAE Chapter closest to you.

Type of Membership	State Dues	Chapter Dues (if known)	Fill in Total
<b>REGULAR:</b> open to all certificated/Credentialed personnel (Teachers, Counselors, Principals, Vice- principals, Learning directors, etc.)	\$50		
<b>RETIRED:</b> open to retired, "regular" AMAE members (See above).	\$25		
<b>PARAPROFESSIONAL/ASSOCIATE:</b> open to non-certificated (classified) personnel and Community people, not in education, supporting our goals.	\$10		
<b>STUDENT:</b> open to full time students in the field of education (18 yrs. +).	\$5		
<b>INSTITUTIONAL:</b> open to institutions (businesses, schools, school districts).	\$500		
Donation for <b>Scholarship Fund.</b>			
Add up total due			\$
AMOUNT OF CHECK ENCLOSED			\$

Mail this form with your check or money order to the address listed above. **Welcome to AMAE.**

To expedite the registration process, you may register and pay online. Visit our web page: <http://www.amae.org>.

\$5 of state dues shall be credited to AMAE-PAC unless you check no \_\_\_\_\_

**AMAE is a 501c(3) organization**



## **Call for Lesson Plans Rich in Mexican American/Chicano Culture**

AMAE encourages all educators to submit lessons that reflect Mexican American/Chicano culture and traditions. AMAE is compiling these lessons on a Cyber library on its webpage. Such lessons will be made available to all educators who may wish to download them and use them in their curriculum.

Educators can submit their lesson(s) to the state Secretary or President as listed on. <http://www.amae.org>. Currently, educators can submit their work to: [johnnyb101@comcast.net](mailto:johnnyb101@comcast.net), [acamacho1950@sbcglobal.net](mailto:acamacho1950@sbcglobal.net), or [jairosan02@comcast.net](mailto:jairosan02@comcast.net).

Lessons should be complete and ready for use with minimal changes. It is recommended that copies of all required ditto sheets be included. Please organize the lessons as follows.

1. Title of the Lesson
2. Appropriate Grade Level(s): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Overview: Brief description/history that leads to the lesson
4. Purpose: Brief description about what the lesson is trying to do.
5. Objective(s): Students will be able to:
6. Activities:
7. Resources/Materials Needed:
8. Ideas on how to tie it all Together. (Displays, murals, dance performances, etc.)

After the lesson is submitted to one of the emails above, a committee will review it and make recommendations. The chair of the committee will notify the sender about the committee's decision. Those lessons approved will be uploaded to the AMAE.org webpage. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for response time.

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The major point of these lessons is to help teachers connect with students of Mexican American/Chicano heritage. The lessons and activities should help students show pride of who they are and connect with their Mexican roots. Also, by presenting lessons in the classroom that show the Mexican culture in a positive light, students should feel more welcomed in school. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the retention of students of Mexican American background in school until graduation from high school and beyond.





**MISSION**

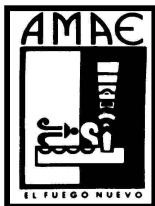
**of the**

**Association of Mexican American Educators**

To ensure equal access to a quality education at all levels for the Mexican American/Latino students where cultural and linguistic diversity is recognized and respected.

To advise state boards, local boards, legislators, administrators and faculty, and work in partnership with the community and parents for the benefit of our students.

To advocate the immediate recruitment, training, support and professional development of Mexican American/Latino educators and others committed to the education of our students.



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