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## Why students in the Hispanic culture dropout of school?

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## Why students in the Hispanic culture dropout of school?

### Abstract

Many Hispanic students, almost 1/3, dropout of high school, and it is important to understand the factors leading to this extremely high dropout rate (Munk, 2004). While only 9% of white and 12% of black students dropout of high school, the number of Hispanic dropouts is on the rise. The increase in Hispanic dropouts is not fully understood; however, research has shown that factors such as the parent's education, involvement, low expectations, school attitude, limited English skills, limited school funding, and cultural differences contribute to Hispanic dropout.

The paper is organized into five different chapters. The first chapter discussed the problem and the significance of Hispanics dropping out of school. It also gives the definitions of terms that relate to the topic. The second chapter discusses the consequences of dropping out. The third chapter addresses the warning signs of future Hispanic dropouts. It describes the different characteristics that a future dropout might have. The fourth chapter talks about the different solutions that can be made to keep students in school. The final chapter addresses how teachers can implement some of the strategies into their classroom.

# **Why Students in the Hispanic Culture Dropout of School?**

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Many Hispanic students, almost 1/3, dropout of high school, and it is important to understand the factors leading to this extremely high dropout rate (Munk, 2004). While only 9% of white and 12% of black students dropout of high school, the number of Hispanic dropouts is on the rise (Merrow, Slutsky, Safaro, & Plummer, 1998). The increase in Hispanic dropouts is not fully understood; however, research has shown that factors such as the parent's education, involvement, low expectations, school attitude, limited English skills, limited school funding, and cultural differences contribute to Hispanic dropout. Dropouts are at a disadvantage socially and economically, and it is critical that students develop these educational skills in order to succeed in the labor market.

### **Statement of Problem**

Why students dropout of school has been a question that I have wondered about since I first came to Nogales, Arizona. I started pondering this question when I was in high school and saw my peers dropping out and I couldn't figure out why. As I began research into the matter, I noticed that there were patterns that were emerging and I wanted to figure how and why these tendencies occurred. As I continued my research, I found out that, "Arizona has the lowest completion rate of all 50 states" (Study, 2004, p. 1). I wanted to know how I, as a teacher, could help my middle school students be successful. Not only did I want my students to be successful in my classroom, but I also wanted my students to be successful in high school, college, in their future jobs, and in their lives as a

whole. It was from this initial thought that I decided to do my research paper on Hispanics and how to help them become more successful.

When I got my first teaching job in Nogales, it was a new experience for me. I am from a community where the majority were middle to upper class white students, with very few, if any, Hispanics or blacks. I was surprised to see that the students who I had in my classroom in Nogales were very different than the students who I had in my student teaching experience in the Midwest. Ethnicity was not the only thing that was different between these two classrooms of students. Their socio-economic status was drastically different as well as their view on education.

There were several specific characteristics that distinguished the Midwest students from the Southwest students. The vast majority of the students who I had in the Midwest did their homework every day, and it was done completely, with much effort. Discipline was not a problem, nor was attendance. The parents were very involved and it was common to have parents drop in and ask how their child was doing or what topic we were going to cover next. It also seemed that parents were always asking questions or trying to help their children with homework and projects. The amount of parent volunteers almost exceeded the amount of students in the classroom. For example, during one of my student teaching experiences in Pleasant Valley, Iowa, the class was having a Valentine's celebration. My mentor teacher and I sent a note with the students explaining that we would need some adult volunteers to help set up several games and to bring in food. There were approximately 24 students and there

were a good 20 adult volunteers. The room was so full that my mentor teacher and I thought about asking some of the parents to leave because it was so congested.

In contrast, the students in the Southwest rarely did their homework on a regular basis, and when they did complete it, it was done with minimal effort. Discipline was a major concern and attendance was not consistent. Parent involvement was minimal, typically only three parents out of almost four-hundred fifty stopped by regularly. The turnout for Math night at Wade Carpenter Middle School in Nogales, Arizona, shows the lack of parent involvement. Not only did the Math teachers tell their students about the Math night, a letter also went to their homes informing them of this event. Out of 700 students, the amount of parents who actually showed up was around 20. Food was also provided as a way to get parents to come, yet this did not seem to help. It was when I was reviewing this information that I became quite curious as to why the students in Nogales (Hispanics) were not meeting the expectations that the Midwest students had met so easily (or so it seemed). The more important question was what could I do to fix this potential problem.

It seemed as though my classes in Nogales were missing some major pieces that were causing them not to be as successful. I wanted to know what I could do so that the Nogales students would be at the same level as the Pleasant Valley students. To do this, I first wanted to know what the signs of potential dropouts are. Were there particular characteristics that all of the students had? What happens to the students' career if they dropout? If there were common

signs of dropouts, what should I and others do to help prevent this from happening? How can I and others help the children to stay in school?

### **Significance of Problem**

There are about 2,000 students who dropout every day, and almost 700,000 students out who dropout each year (Gerson, 1996). While the amount of white and black students who dropout is fairly constant or slightly decreasing, the number of Hispanics seems to be on the rise (Census, 2005). The number of Hispanic dropouts range anywhere from 30% to 56%. The reason this may be is because, "Most states, for example, do not consider students to be dropouts unless they have officially notified the school about dropping out, which few students do" (Lewis, 2005, p. 4). Other studies include students who received a GED degree as graduating, not as a student who dropped out. However, many say that GED certificates and high school diplomas are not the same thing. There are also no dropout rates for students who are in prison or are military members. Some dropout rates do not include students who transferred to other schools. (They may not have gone to school at all.) Some of the statistics that are related to the amount of dropouts include people from other countries who did not get their education in the United States, but live and work here. These workers received their education from their country of origin and others didn't receive any education. These are all things to consider when looking at various statistics of what the dropout rates are and who is included. Immigrant youth who come to the U.S. at an early age have fewer disadvantages. A 56% dropout rate is including the people who got their education from their country of origin or

who haven't taken education classes in the U.S. In contrast, the Hispanics who received their education in the United States had a much lower dropout rate, about 30%.

"Hispanic students as a group show the lowest educational achievement and the highest dropout rate" (Educating, 2002, p. 66). Mexican-Americans have the highest dropout of the Hispanics with 72.3% of them not completing high school (Friendenberg, 2002). The Hispanic dropout rate in 1990 was 22% with 346,000 Hispanics dropping out compared to the increase in 2000 of 34% of Hispanics dropping out which is 528,000 Hispanics dropping out (Census, 2005).

Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group in America. The number of Hispanics in the United States may be doubled by the year 2030, increasing from 35 million to 63 million. By the year 2025, there will be approximately one out of four students in the K-12 classroom who are of Hispanic descent (Valladares, 2002). Due to their high birth rates and growing population, it is important that they are fully educated because they are going to be our future.

## Definitions

**Hispanic:** of, relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent living in the United States: especially: one of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin (Merriam-Webster, 2005-2006)

**Latino:** a person of Latin-American origin living in the United States (Merriam-Webster, 2005-2006)

**Latina:** a woman or girl of Latin-American origin living in the United States (Merriam-Webster, 2005-2006)

**GED:** general equivalency diploma

**NCLB:** No Child Left Behind

**Dual-language education:** where students learn to speak and write in two languages (Merriam-Webster, 2005-2006)

**English immersion:** where all instruction is given in English (Merriam-Webster, 2005-2006)

**Bilingual education:** education in an English-language school system in which students with little fluency in English are taught in both their native language and English (Merriam-Webster, 2005-2006)

**LEP:** limited English proficiency

**ESL:** English as a second language

**ELL:** English language learner

**AP test:** advanced placement test

**Vocational:** of, relating to, or undergoing training in a skill or trade to be pursued as a career (Merriam-Webster, 2005-2006)

## **Organization**

The paper is organized into five different chapters. The first chapter discussed the problem and the significance of Hispanics dropping out of school. It also gives the definitions of terms that relate to the topic. The second chapter discusses the consequences of dropping out. The third chapter addresses the warning signs of future Hispanic dropouts. It describes the different characteristics that a future dropout might have. The fourth chapter talks about the different solutions that can be made to keep students in school. The final chapter addresses how teachers can implement some of the strategies into their classroom.

## **Chapter II: Results of Dropping Out**

### **Introduction**

Dropping out often leads to disastrous results. People that dropout are frequently not able to read well and function adequately in our environment. When students dropout, they are less likely to return to high school. If they do not finish high school, their employment options are limited. Not only do they have fewer selections, but they are often paid significantly less, leading to poverty. Dropping out can also lead to a lifestyle where drugs and crime are regular (Valladares, 2002). A person's self-esteem may be effected due to the negativity that engulfs their existence.

### **Illiterate**

Being illiterate makes it hard to function in every day life. Following cooking recipes, reading movie reviews, or trying to figure out how much fence should be around the garden can turn into a difficult task if the person is illiterate. Schools try to prepare students for these types of situations, but if one does not attend school, these tasks seem unattainable. The cornerstone of democracy, voting, is also impaired. For democracy is only truly successful with an educated populous. If a potential voter is not even able to fill out a registration form, what is the likelihood that the potential voter will do the necessary research to find a candidate whose political views reflect their own?

### **Unemployment**

Young teenagers who are illiterate will have difficulty in attaining worthwhile employment. The majority of jobs require literacy to some degree,

and if the teenagers do not possess this quality, finding a job becomes an almost impossible feat. Only 20% of jobs are for employees who are unskilled (Educating, 2002). The jobs that do not require such harsh prerequisites are often the low paying low skilled jobs. Jobs that can sustain a comfortable lifestyle are more likely to be for people who have attained at least a high school degree. 60% of employment requires a high school degree and at least some college experience (Educating, 2002). High school dropouts are two times more likely to be unemployed than those who attain a degree (Valladares, 2002).

If a high school degree is not attained, it also eliminates the opportunity to join the military. The military does not accept people who do not have a high school degree, not even a GED. If one wants to join the military, dropping out is not an option. For many in a low socio-economic class, the military is often their best and only option for a prosperous life.

### **Poverty**

40% of Hispanics live in poverty. If a high school degree is not received, studies show that one is four times more likely to be on welfare (Valladares, 2002). Jobs that do not require a lot of educational background are also the ones that are normally not high paying jobs. Dropouts are more likely to have these low paying low skilled jobs or no jobs at all. There is a 40% increase in pay, if high school is completed (Educating, 2002). No income or very little income may lead to, at the very least, financial trouble in the future. This is why so many people who have low skilled jobs or no jobs often live in poverty, leaving them with little hope of ever getting out of the vicious cycle that is poverty in

America.

### **Crime/Breaking the Law**

Many of the teenagers who do dropout are in some way involved with gangs. "The shocking national statistic, according to the Committee for Economic Development is that 82% of America's prisoners are high school dropouts" (Gerson, 1996, p. 24). Taxpayers are also affected by spending an average of \$20,000 on each prisoner every year they are imprisoned. "Dropouts add up to a cost to the nation of about \$240 billion over their lifetime in lost wages and productivity" (Gerson, 1996, p. 24). Edwards (1996) points out that "juvenile delinquents are experiencing a high degree of frustration and alienation because of failure to achieve their goals they have limited perception with regard to achievements" (Martinez, 2000, p. 7). If a teen does not feel accepted at school, being involved with a gang gives them a sense of belonging. "When respect, responsibility, membership, and opportunities for leadership are denied to students by their schools, then gangs and antisocial behaviors often fill the gap" (Secada, 1998, p. 18). To become a gang member some gangs have certain criteria that must be met to show loyalty to the group. Some of these activities involve getting beat up by fellow gang members, stealing, vandalizing, or even killing to be a part the gang. Once a teen is involved, the crimes continue. If one is participating in these illegal activities it stands to reason that their likelihood of going to prison will increase as well.

People who dropout have an 80% rate of having some type of drug-related problem (Friendenberg, 2002). These drugs can range from alcohol and tobacco

to cocaine and heroin. Men, in particular have been shown to have more alcohol problems (Arellano, 1998). Not only are drugs detrimental to one's health, but they may lead to unacceptable behaviors. Drinking and driving is very common and it can be fatal. Many of the alcoholic and drug prevention programs and classes take place in school, and since they are no longer in school they do not have access to said programs. Becoming dependent on drugs can explain why people feel they need to steal or they become involved with gangs and violence to help pay for their habit. People who do not have a high school degree have an increased need for physical and mental health services.

### **Less Likely to Continue Education**

When students dropout of high school, there is a slim chance that they will return. Although students may dropout, they may still try to attain their GED certificate. 40% of Hispanics who dropout choose to return to school to get their GED certificate (Fry, 2003). To get this certificate, they attend an alternative high school. Once a student has enrolled at an alternative high school, it is unlikely that a student will return to regular high school. If they have an interest of someday returning to regular school, it is vital that they become aware of the process of reenrollment to the regular high school. These schools face the same problems that regular education schools face: under funding, few resources, and getting qualified teachers (Valladares, 2002). Most of the focus at the alternative schools is on remedial skills that they may have already been taught and mastered. A seldom known, yet positive aspect of alternative schools is that there is a low teacher-student ratio, giving students more opportunities to get

help. Students who do dropout and do come back and graduate high school face more decisions. What do they do after high school is completed? College is less likely to be considered an option if a student drops out of high school. Masters degrees and doctorate degrees are rare.

### **Poor Self-Esteem**

Dropping out causes many students to have poor self-esteem about themselves. They see themselves as a failure and think that they will never be successful. Poor self-esteem also causes some students to become involved in gangs. With their fellow gang members there is a sense of pride and acceptance that cannot be found in a school setting or even at home. If teachers, principals, or parents label students as at-risk, it may harm them even more.

On the other hand, self-esteem issues may also cause students to dropout. Latinas are more likely to have self-esteem problems, especially during adolescence. How Hispanic females perceive themselves results from the acceptance of their role within the family and their ability to fulfill such roles. If Latinas are not accepted by their family, this will give them a lower self-esteem. Latinos who are accepted by their fellow peers at school do better academically because their self-esteem and self-confidence.

### **Summary**

The results of dropping out can be detrimental and can have lifelong consequences. Not being able to read at an adult level can make simple tasks, such as reading the newspaper difficult to do. Continuing their education if they dropout is unlikely to occur, which in turn leads to unemployment.

Unemployment is very possible for dropouts and if a person does not have a job money is inconsistent, leading to poverty problems. When people do not have the money they need, some turn to crimes to solve the problem or substance or drug abuse. All of the above reasons may cause the dropouts to have poor self-esteem, which is also a concern.

## **Chapter III: Contributors of Potential Hispanic dropouts**

### **Introduction**

There are numerous factors that might help spot potential Hispanic dropouts. The lack of funding available at schools and at homes, contributes to less qualified teachers, fewer supplies, and no tutors or tutoring materials. The ethnicity or race of a student may also have a negative impact on the importance of academia. Speaking English fluently and the student's family background are major contributors of potential dropouts as well.

### **Poverty**

Poverty is one of the factors for predicting if students will dropout. Students who go to schools that are not funded properly have a higher chance of dropping out. Teachers may not be qualified and supplies may be minimal. The lack of money influences students and their parents, as well as some of their actions. For example, tutoring or buying proper supplies may not be an option. Hence, poverty can be a liability and can have lasting effects on the students.

### **Limited Funding at School**

School funding is provided from the taxes placed on local property. If the surrounding community is low-income families, the money they contribute to taxes are minimal. If all or most of the families are of the same socio-economic status, the money that is designated for schools and their funding is also affected in a negative way. The more money that the community makes as a whole the more money that can be allocated for use by public schools (Educating, 2002). This means more qualified teachers, more supplies, and extra tutors. However, if

one does live in poverty, it will have an effect on the children and the school that they attend.

### **Teachers**

The problem with finding quality teachers who are involved, positive, and good role models is that they are less likely to come to schools where they are needed the most, in high poverty areas. The teachers who come to teach in areas with a high Hispanic population are often not highly qualified. Only 1 out of 4 teachers in middle school have received training in their specific teaching area. This means that either he/she does not have a degree in education, or their area in education does not match the grade or subject in which he/she is teaching.

It seems that teachers who are qualified that do come, leave these dilapidated areas within a few years. The turnover rate of teachers in high poverty, high Hispanic populated communities is very high. Even if one trains the teachers to become highly qualified, it does not inspire them to stay longer and many leave once they ascertain their certification. Once they receive the additional training, many leave for the greener pastures of other districts that can offer higher pay and fewer academic difficulties. This is a vicious cyclical process that seems impossible to break. When new teachers are replacing the older teachers, the new teachers need to create new teaching materials because the older teachers leave them with few or no items because the older teachers take their teaching supplies with them (Educating, 2002).

If there are few staff members or there is a high turnover rate, the teachers who are still there are likely to become burned out. This is because they are

frequently asked to sub for the teachers who left the school or are absent. If they are constantly asked to sub, they become exhausted, overwhelmed, and soon just don't want to do it. This makes it difficult to find someone who will take these substitution jobs.

Oftentimes teachers only care for students who do well academically, but if we care for all students, the students in return will care about academics. Since NCLB (No Child Left Behind) certain schools, teachers, and administrators are punished if their classes receive low test scores, and they are rewarded if they score highly. Because we are basically told to teach to the test, some question the validity or purpose of the exam. There is no creativity or higher level thinking skills that are taught when teaching directly to the test. Seeing as how the students are not taught these critical thinking skills, they are not adequately prepared for the college experience.

### **Resources**

Many of the schools are under funded that have a majority of Hispanic students. These schools cannot supply their students with the materials that the middle or upper class white students receive. The text books are often several years old, and contain outdated information. It is said that Hispanic students do well with hands-on activities. Because of the limited school funds, it is difficult or sometimes impossible to incorporate these activities into the curriculum due to the lack of these hands-on manipulatives. Even basic school resources are not supplied to many of these schools (Educating, 2002). There are some classes

where finding enough desks so that everyone can sit is a problem. Some students are asked to sit on the floor if desks are not provided.

Upper class students have the money to spend on school supplies and come to school with a variety of materials for the first day. Not only that, but the school districts in upper class communities do not need to supply these basic materials and can therefore spend their money on other items, such as computers or extra teacher assistants. The poorer the students, the less access that they have to computers and computer software, especially the internet. Some teachers associate students' achievement level with the use of technology to complete various tasks or assignments. If computers are used, it is most effective to have the students work in teams and get help from their peers; the teacher does not teach, but is there to help.

The use of computer software can expose the students to the curriculum in ways that regular texts and standardized teaching cannot do. Obviously without these computers and computer software this task becomes impossible. In highly populated Hispanic schools it is less likely that computers will be in all of the classrooms, and if they are, the numbers are limited (Educating, 2002).

### **Violence in School**

School violence is also a reason that is given for students dropping out. School violence is seen more in lower income areas. Students just stop coming to school because they have serious concerns about their personal safety. Schools that have more physical violence also have difficulty getting qualified teachers. There is more violence in schools that are urban because of the high

population of students. Hispanics, however, have a high dropout rate from all areas: urban, rural, and suburban. The school climate is partially characterized by the number of students who wander the halls and how crowded they are. "Descriptions of troubled high schools often begin with the problem of large numbers of students who should be in class but are loitering in the school corridors" (Educating, 2002, p. 149). There is no supervision and this is when pushing, bullying, and fights are started. If there are more security measures, such as metal detectors or security guards, the fear factor also goes up. "A school needing even moderate security was found to affect the students academically" (Gerson, 1996, p. 46). Schools that have security measures often have not emphasized the rules or consequences.

### **Limited Money at Home**

Because many Hispanics live below the poverty line, they do not have the disposable income to spend on academic items for their homes. "Poverty, often measured under the labels of family income level, occupational prestige, social class, socioeconomic status or background, and economic disadvantage, is the most consistently associated indicator of poor academic achievement and school failure" (Educating, 2002, p. 4-5). There is a direct and undeniable correlation between free and reduced lunch recipients and low test scores and high dropout rates.

### **Tutors/Tutor Programs**

Tutors are sometimes offered at the school the children attend, but it is normally not required of the schools. It is up to the teachers if they want to offer

extra tutoring for their students. If students do decide to get the extra help it may be more difficult to get back to their homes. After school buses may not be available to drop off students and parents might have to work. The other option would be for parents to have tutors come to their house. However, tutors cost money; money that many Hispanic families do not have. Because many Hispanic families do not have that kind of money, they are often unable to get the tutoring help that their child may need.

Tutoring programs have a high success rate. Good tutoring programs help lower the retention rate so students do not have to repeat the grade level that they are in. High attendance in the school is also a result of pupils who go to tutoring. They feel more confident about themselves and are not ashamed to go to their classes. When students go to the tutoring and to school, their language skills will improve.

### **Supplies**

If Hispanic families do not have money to spend on tutors, the same could be expected for supplies. Supplies at home that may help students academically may be very simple items. A wide variety of reading books, math flashcards, computers, and computer programs that help practice reading skills are all items that cost money, but they also help reinforce academic skills. Fewer Latinos have computers at home, causing Latinos to be less familiar with computer technology (Latinos, 2001). Also, they cannot work on academic skills or games on their computer if they do not have one. If there is no money to spend on these items or it isn't used on these items, the children's educational could be

effected in a negative way. Not all academic benefits at the home come from actual materials, but can also be from actual experiences. An example of this would be to go a history museum to learn more about an era of history that they are currently studying.

### **Transience**

Families who have low incomes move from one place to another quite often. Children who move from one school to the next have an increased probability of dropping out (Friendenberg, 2002). The more schools that a child attends the more likely that they will dropout. Children could have some difficulty adjusting to the new school environment, meeting new friends, and becoming involved in school activities. Stress on the child may also affect some of the child's decisions.

### **Student Employment**

Because there are limited funds at home, some of the teenagers need to work to get enough money for their family. This decision may not be the child's, but decided by the family as a whole. Due to financial constraints, being able to provide for the family can be deemed as more essential than an education. If a child is spending time working to help support their family, their time to spend focusing on school is limited. The more hours that a teenager works, the more money they receive. Hispanics are said to have more connections to the job market, hence giving them more chances to get a job. The good news is that Latinos are quite successful in the labor market. More Hispanics have jobs in high school compared to other ethnicities. "Fifty-six percent of Hispanic high

school dropouts hold jobs, in comparison to forty-nine percent of white dropouts” (Fry, 2003b, p. 10). However, these jobs are often low paying and there are not as many opportunities for advancement. “Overall averages suggest that Latino workers are the lowest paid workers in the U.S. labor market” (Fry, 2003b, p. 1).

### **Ethnicity/Race**

“In the case of education, however, there exists evidence to document that both Black and Hispanic students do appear to have oppositional subcultures that devalue academic accomplishments” (Griffin, 2002, p. 4). Hispanics are only half as likely as the other races to earn a bachelor’s degree. Hispanics are more likely to go part-time in school and are also more likely to attend 2 year colleges instead of 4 year colleges. This is why Hispanics, in particular, have the amount of dropouts that they do.

Many children, especially teenagers feel they need to fit in with the others around them. Peers may influence others not to do well in school. When Blacks were asked their race, they scored significantly lower than when their race was not given, equal to the scores by the white children. The same results were given when the Hispanics took the test; they performed better when their race was not asked. In places like Japan, the peers are in competition with each other and it is accepted to do well in school, quite the opposite is true for Hispanics. “Latinos spend less time in school overall, entering later and leaving earlier than their African American or White peers” (Aviles, Guerrero, Howarth, & Thomas, 1999, p. 3). Mexican-Americans reject American education more than the other minorities. As a result, we see higher dropout rates, higher suspension rates,

and higher special education rates (Aviles, 1999). If students are not in school, it is very difficult for them to learn what they are supposed to do. Latinos also have a high suspension rate, causing them to miss more school. The more school that is missed, the more make up work they need to do, causing them to fall further and further behind in school, making it seem impossible to catch up. However, many of the present dropouts advised relatives and friends to stay in school and to be involved.

Many of the Latino students feel that they are discriminated against in school. Of the fights that occur at school, principals often only report the Latinos who were involved to the police. Some of these fights may not have occurred if there were more personnel around. Being tardy and/or absent are common reasons why females dropout, as well as getting pregnant or married. Males were more likely to dropout due to work or not achieving high academically (Gerson, 1996, p. 37).

### **Catholic Beliefs**

Many of the people in the Hispanic culture are Catholic. Because so many Hispanics are Catholic, it is also important to be familiar with their beliefs. This effects their perception on pregnancy, birth control, and marriage.

### **Teen Pregnancy/Birth Control**

One of the major reasons that Latinas dropout of school is because they do not have the foresight to avoid becoming pregnant. As such, the Latinas dropout and raise their child or children. This phenomena results in Latinas dropping out of school to fulfill their family obligations. In the Hispanic culture, teenage

pregnancy is not uncommon and is not necessarily frowned upon. When these students decide to make their new found family their absolute priority that leaves their education a secondary concern. This creates quite a dilemma because many high schools do not offer classes or other options for Latinas who are pregnant or who have young children.

This poses the question as to why this scenario exists. One possible explanation for this is that the majority of Hispanics are Catholics. Catholics do not believe in birth control, which more than likely would prevent pregnancy from occurring. Teenagers may not feel that they can talk to their parents about this situation, causing them not to be on any type of birth control.

Due to a shift in the socio-political climate sex education is no longer taught in the public schools despite the fact that this ideology has been proven to work. Because it is not addressed, Latinas may not be aware of the consequences of having "unprotected" sex. If birth control is not taken, it increases the chances of becoming pregnant. Abortion is also not accepted by the Catholic Church, so Latinas who become pregnant often choose to have the baby. This in turn, results in putting their academic career on hold, or even ending their schooling altogether.

## **Marriage**

Marriage is also one of the main reasons that Latinas dropout of high school. Many teens who are married become pregnant shortly after or vice versa: if one is pregnant, marriage may occur shortly after. If Latinas decide to get married, it also cuts down on the time that is spent on school, causing their grades to drop

and Latinas to eventually to dropout of school. In addition, marriage brings along a new set of responsibilities such as getting a job, which affects their academia in a negative way.

### **Latinas**

Latinas are especially prone to dropout. Latinas are the largest group of minority females and also have the highest female dropout rate, which is an astonishing 57%. Latinas are also two times more likely to become teenage moms than white teenager females are (Cavazos, 2004). Even their fellow Latinos expect that they, Latinas, are not to be well educated. The Latinos do not want their girlfriends or wives to be more educated than they are. Latinas are considered to be underachievers by not only Latino men, but by their family members, school members, and the media. Their gender role plays a significant part in the Hispanic girls' attitude about their educational attainment (Romo, 2000).

Sexual harassment is another reason that may cause Latinas to dropout. Some of the Hispanic girls who are harassed have said that nothing is done about the situation. If they tell their teacher or principal, no action is taken, making them feel that they're the problem and they are not important enough to merit an appropriate response (Romo, 2000). Another reason Latina girls are prone to dropping out are the other Latina girls. There are competitions and conflicts with other Latinas that affect their attitude and their learning abilities too.

By the time that Latinas do make it to college, the parents sometimes encourage them to stay at home while attending. Latinas still need to help out

the family and take care of the children. Sons are also expected to bring money home when they are in college to help support their families. The Hispanics who choose to attend college are likely to stay in their own town or very close to it.

### **Low Expectations for Latinos**

Latinos also encounter low expectations in schools. Often teachers who have Hispanic students in their class will not challenge them the same way that they would for white or black students. Because teachers do not expect much from the Hispanic students, the students in turn, do not work to their full potential. Another reason that students may not be achieving at the highest level is that the teachers are not adequately prepared (Valladares, 2002). When teachers do not know their material, it makes it that much harder for the students. If teachers are not prepared, the students lose interest, and it becomes hard to follow along with the teacher. Sometimes there is unequal treatment for Latinos or others because they are minorities (Adam, 2003).

The more successful that a student is in high school, the less likely they are to dropout (Census, 2005). People who do well in their jobs normally don't just quit. The same is true for students who do well in school; they normally don't just dropout. Helping students to achieve in school will help them stay in school.

Low expectations for students can also be seen in school attendance.

If students are not in their classrooms learning, their grades and test scores will fall behind where they are supposed to be. Because of these unsuccessful events, the students who skip classes are more likely to be dropouts. There have been times at our school in Nogales where students have been skipping

classes and no punishment is given, almost encouraging these students to continue not attending classes. To fix this problem, the school should be very clear about their attendance policies so that all students understand and this will not be the reason that they dropout.

### **English Fluency**

Speaking English is a major factor in the high amount of Hispanic dropouts. "English fluency is necessary for successful academic outcomes" (Educating, 2002, p. 8). Class instruction is normally given in English, and if the students do not understand the language, it is no wonder that they are not as successful as they could be. Not only are the students not going to be successful, but this leads to students dropping out.

The language barrier is part of the reason that there is a lack of communication between students or parents and the teaching staff. 72.9% of LEP speak Spanish as their first language (Educating, 2002). To prevent more students from dropping out, there should be more interaction between these two parties. In the classroom, there are often few, if any, translators. In one of my classes in Nogales, there were approximately 22 students and 7 of them spoke no English at all. Speaking only English, without having any translators or aids to help convert the information into their language makes it nearly impossible for all of the students to learn at their full potential. The students could not completely understand the content, and their grades and understanding were affected. Due to lack of success in one class, students may become ambivalent in others, causing them to dropout.

Speaking English is not only a problem for the children, but also for the parents of the children. If a student is causing troubles or is a discipline problem and the teachers try to communicate this with the parents or child, it is extremely difficult. This is if the teachers only speak English and the parents or students only speak Spanish. Sending notes home or making phone calls becomes a daunting task for the teachers. If the parents have questions or want to communicate with the teachers, this also becomes a chore. Translators are often not available, but this would be very beneficial for keeping the parents up to date with their child's behavior and academic well-being.

When pupils do not speak English well, it is sometimes thought to be a reflection of their intelligence. Some students are held back for a year and teachers feel this will benefit their academics. Others may be placed, incorrectly, into special education classes. However, retaining pupils and putting students unnecessarily in special education programs has not been effective (Friedenberg, 2002). However, if students are retained, it is best to do it in the early elementary grades. Teachers need to make sure they are very careful in retention and special education placement because it actually increases the probability of a student dropping out. There is a higher probability that one will dropout, with every grade that one is retained.

### **Family Education**

Latinos are not always expected to be successful in their home environments. This is due to multiple factors. One possibility is that the parents have not been successful in school and expect the same of their child. Parents

must value their child's education, if they want their child to succeed (Valladares, 2002). Out of all the students who are dropouts, 80% of their moms also dropped out and 97% of their dads dropped out of school (Friedenberg, 2002). If the parents accept dropping out, then the student will feel the same. If a parent is not familiar with how to fill out a college application, it will be difficult for the parent to help their child. This may discourage students to even apply for college. The same is true for filling out financial aid applications (Zehr, 2003, p. 12). College is also quite expensive, and most Hispanics will do all that is possible to avoid the imposing debt that can be created by paying for a college education (Schmidt, 2003). The parents may influence the child's decision to not continue their education, because they don't want their child to be in debt. A remedy to teenagers or even parents who cannot understand the application forms would be to have an example form in their first language, Spanish.

Parents influence their children in many ways. If parents are involved in their child's life and academic career, the students are more likely to graduate. Parental involvement can range from very simple things to more involved and time consuming tasks. Parental involvement can be showing up at parent conferences, where the parents spend several minutes talking with the teacher about their child and their progress. It can also be more complex, such as having the parents volunteer every day to work with a reading group. I think that most teachers will agree that any parent involvement is better than none. There is a positive relationship between parents and their involvement and the academic

success of their child. They see education as essential and necessary in life.

Graduation is seen as an obligation, not an option.

If the parents themselves are educated, the children are more likely to continue their education (Munk, 2004). This also works the other way; if the parents were dropouts in high school, their child is three times more likely to drop as well (Educating, 2002). However, the amount of parents who are dropping out is declining. Students who come from lower socio-economic families also have limited vocabulary and start their academic career already at a disadvantage. How a child spends their time at their house predicts how successful they will be in school (Family Engagement, 2004). Children who play video games and watch television at home are not as likely to succeed in school as a child who reads books and plays educational games on their computer. Some journal articles even say that the mother's education is the number one predictor if the student will dropout or not (Munk, 2004).

### **Family Dynamics**

The family make up is said to have an impact on the children. Divorced parents and the death of close family members can have a damning effect on the child and may cause the child to dropout. Other factors would be if parents are in or have been in jail or if family members are involved with negatively associated activities. Examples of these types of activities include drug use, physical abuse, robbery, gang relations, and even murder. If children are around this kind of behavior, they are likely to adopt it as well.

Children who come from single parent families are more likely to dropout (Educating, 2002). Children need a positive role model to look up to. Single parents often need to work several jobs to support their family and are therefore, not always around to give their child the encouragement they need. The child in turn gets less educational materials, less quality time with the parent, and less financial stability. Many times parents need their older children to take care of the younger children when they are sick so that they are able to go to work to make money for their family. Students who come from multi child families have the responsibility of taking care of their siblings. If the student has to watch their younger brother or sister, their school attendance is effected and their grades too (Martinez, 2000). Children who come from single parent families have a higher rate of absenteeism than children who come from two parent families.

### **Summary**

There are several factors that distinguish students who might dropout from school. These are poverty, ethnicity/race, English proficiency, family education, and family dynamics. Poverty can have an affect on the type of school that the student attends and the materials that are received. Ethnicity/race reflects their beliefs and their acceptance in their culture. Speaking English fluently affects their grades and their attitude about school. The more fluent they are, the less likely they are to dropout. The student's family and their family's education sets the expectations for the student. The more that is accomplished and expected for the student, the more most seem to complete. The family make up was the

final factor that was discussed. The fewer negative events (such as divorce, death, and substance abuse) the more likely they are to stay in school.

## **Chapter IV: Solutions to Prevent Students from Dropping Out**

### **Introduction**

There is no one correct way that will keep a child from dropping out of school. However, using multiple strategies will increase their chances of staying in school. The more that one can implement the better. School environments should be positive and should encourage students to be involved. The classes make up a major component of the school. Classes should be small, bilingual, and vocational technology classes should be offered. At home, parents and their involvement play a huge role in preventing their child from dropping out. There are numerous programs and outside influences that should be taken advantage of that can have a positive impact on the student.

### **School**

Students spend a big part of their adolescent years at school. Schools need to identify potential dropouts and help those who are considering dropping out. Offering after school programs will help the student and their grades. Early education programs can also help children get off to a good start so that the first few years of school will not be as difficult. Students need to have a good attitude and be involved with school so they feel like they belong and are accepted. Having teachers who speak the same language will benefit the child and their attitude about themselves. Offering vocational technology is an alternative to the regular classroom, that may help students find a task that they enjoy.

## **School Environment**

How a school views itself is very important. Schools need to be tough on violence and harassment issues because they are problems that make an unsafe and unfriendly atmosphere. The environment should be structured and orderly. More individual attention can be offered to the students if the class sizes are small. Students need to feel accepted and important to their teachers and fellow peers.

## **Attitude and Involvement of Student**

The involvement and attitude of the students are predictors of whether or not the student will dropout. To prevent students from dropping out, the students should be involved with activities in and out of school. The sense of belonging in these groups will help students feel accepted by their fellow peers and the adult who is in charge of the group. The positive experience will help show students that they can be successful and accepted by others. The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is a program where older students go to a different school and help younger kids work on certain areas they are having trouble with four days a week. Not only will the younger kid get individualized help from the older students, but it will help them develop a relationship and social skills with older kids. This program also benefits the older kids, because it helps build their self-esteem because they are able to help others in a field that they should understand. Even activities outside of school time are shown to have an effect on dropping out. Some outside school activities include recreational dances, sports, and student council.

Attitudes of the students also relate to their involvement. The more involved they are, the more accepted they are in the school setting. Also, the more likely one is to stay in school if he/she is accepted by their fellow peers and adults in the school. The only problem with being involved is that it may be costly to buy the appropriate supplies to be involved in after school activities and sports. Helping students have a positive attitude about school may be a challenge. One way to help raise their attitude and self-esteem is to make them feel successful and involved. An example in the classroom that might help the students' attitude would be to do a report on their heritage/ethnicity so that all of the students are aware of the different backgrounds and they see that no person is exactly the same, causing them to feel more accepted and part of the class. Giving all students ample time to answer questions and not criticizing students who give incorrect answers will also help students sustain their positive attitude.

### **Classes**

The different classes and the make up of these classes can influence the teachers, as well as the students. The class size and structure determines how much individualized instruction time students get, if any. Offering classes in the student's language also will help their learning as well as having ESL teachers present. Vocation technology is an alternative way to learning that is said to benefit minority students. Teachers also need to be responsible for their class's learning and instruction.

## **Class Sizes and Structure**

Smaller class size will help all students, not just Hispanics (Census, 2005). This way the student will have more individualized attention and interaction with the teacher. The teacher is better able to know the students and what they can and cannot accomplish. The relationship between the teacher and the student will be more personal. This will help the students to accomplish work at their level. If there are fewer kids in the class, there also should be a reduced amount of distractions (Educating, 2002). Class size is especially important in the early grades when they are still learning the basic skills that they will need for life. Having smaller schools is also suggested to make the students feel more like they are a person, not just a number. If the high schools themselves are bigger, breaking them down into smaller sections within the one larger school could help the students feel that they belong.

Having flexible class schedules would help many Hispanics who have other commitments find a way to keep school as one of those commitments. If teens have children, offering some type of daycare for their child will help them stay in school. Offering night classes or after school classes so that students can work at their jobs during the day could prevent these students from dropping out. These designated times could be used as an official class or can be used to work on missing assignment or concepts that are not fully understood during official class time. The biggest problem is that the students who really need the extra help are the ones who do not attend. The other potential problem is that teachers who help out with after school classes may not be familiar with the

specific class or assignment that is asked to be completed by other teachers. Saturday classes and summer school are other options to accommodate the working student's schedule. If students do attend it is difficult to get a teacher who is fully trained. Also, letting students work at their own pace will increase school completion (Census, 2005). For example, if a student has a new job and more hours, they can decrease the amount of classes they are taking and vice versa. Summer classes are another way to let students get their credits they need to graduate if they are occupied during the school year with other obligations. Attendance at summer school is especially inconsistent. Some students don't know about alternative programs, so they think their only option is to dropout. As such, it is vital that if these programs exist, that they be advertised to the student body.

Another option to keep students in high school is to offer higher level classes at an earlier level. For example, offer geometry in middle school instead of in high school (Improving Opportunities, 1998). By the time students get to high school they will be somewhat familiar with the material. The more someone is exposed to the material, the more they pick up. This also helps to open the door to college. If students take the higher level classes in middle school, then the same higher level classes can be offered in high school. By the time that they are a junior or senior they can start college level classes. Not only will this help them advance their skills, it also may save them money that could have been spent on these extra college classes. Latinos and other minorities are underrepresented in the advanced classes and more of them should be

participants. Implementing this strategy can lead to more Hispanics being involved in higher level classes. It would also help the students if the school would help the students get some part-time job placements.

A pressing issue for some students in a higher level class is the language barrier. Therefore, it would be prudent to offer higher level classes in languages other than English. Often the classes are offered only in English, making it very difficult or impossible for the Spanish speakers to understand. Even if the teenagers do take these classes, there are limited jobs for this academic focus and also there is limited income potential.

### **Bilingual Staff and ESL Classes**

Hiring more bilingual staff and offering ESL classes would be a wise decision in making Hispanics more likely to stay in high school. With an ever increasing rate of immigrants, both legal and illegal, it stands to reason that there will be an increasing rate of ELL students. With these additional ELL students, there will be a need for classes designed to meet the unique needs of these particular students. Some schools have taken it upon themselves to only hire bilingual teachers, teachers who usually speak English and Spanish, and who have been exposed to the Hispanic culture. The problem is finding the money to support these staff members and finding staff members who meet the criteria (Census, 2005). 70% of pre-school teachers said that they would feel more comfortable if they had extra assistance for the students who have limited English skills (Latinos, 2001). The United States is deficient in the number of bilingual staff at schools. If the teachers can speak two languages, they are able to address more

students in their classroom. ESL classes will help make the transition from speaking only Spanish to speaking English easier. Material is more at the students' level and their grades and understanding is much higher.

There is disagreement concerning whether ESL classes are really helpful. The children are exposed to fewer words than if they were in a regular class, meaning limited vocabulary. There is also limited time that is spent on reading. There are frequent interruptions in the ESL classes. They may never fully be immersed into the English speaking world because for when they leave school grounds and return home, they are in an environment where their English skills are seldom, if ever, practiced.

### **Vocational Technology**

The more vocational technology classes that are offered, the lower the amount of dropouts. Vocational technology is an alternative to the regular class setting. These classes are found to be successful, especially with Latino students who do best with hands-on materials and activities. Although these classes are beneficial, they are often not offered until 11<sup>th</sup> grade, when it may be too late for students to be involved with their academic career (Friendenberg, 2002). These classes should start even earlier so that students can succeed earlier and thus find school to be more rewarding.

### **Teaching**

Teacher plans are an essential part in deciding if students will dropout or not. "Not surprisingly, the dramatic differences found in most of these studies between resilient and nonresilient students are consistent with teachers'

expectations and attitudes toward the students” (Educating, 2002, p. 32).

Students need teachers who believe in them. Teachers need to create an environment where students can feel comfortable to discuss academics and other matters that are going on in their lives. Administrators, as well as teachers, need to make the children feel that they are needed and are a part of their school. Insightful and dedicated counselors are also needed so that they can be encouraging and helpful when students sign up for classes. Making sure that students understand how many credits are needed to graduate is sometimes confusing. This confusion can lead some students to make decisions without adequate and complete information, which may lead some students to dropout. Sending a schedule home every semester will help eliminate this problem.

Teachers need to have lesson plans that are aligned to the state and district standards, and those standards can be challenging (Educating, 2002). When working in groups, the goals that the group creates should increase achievement. The goals also create a sense of responsibility for all of the students in that group. Working in small groups will help students who have trouble understanding by allowing them to ask the others in their group. Cooperative learning is said to help the students more than just having the teacher lecture. The Mexican-American culture also praises working together compared to individuality. Taking field trips to potential job sites, gives the students career options that they otherwise might not have considered. Once they visit the work sites, it may give them a new outlook on education. For they see the value and relationship between a quality education and prosperous employment.

Keeping a journal is also a way that teachers can make the writing material personal. As the teacher reads, he/she is learning about the students' writing and also about the student. Using visual aids and hands-on materials is also said to benefit the students (Early Childhood, 2005). The problems that the teacher gives should be real-life so the pupils can see how certain material they are learning is actually needed in the real world (School Practices, 2000). Teachers should write clear and specific comments on assignments so that pupils will know exactly what is expected and what they can do to improve for the next assignment. Teachers also need to make sure that students are aware of what materials they can use to help with assignments. For example, dictionaries may be used on certain assignments or using the school writing center after school to revise papers is another helpful tool.

Teachers should also want to improve for their students. Teachers should use all of their resources at their disposal to make the lessons interesting. They should teach to all different learning styles, not just lecturing. Teachers should keep up to date with current technology and new reading and math programs (School Practices, 2000). They should receive professional development to make them more professional teachers. Teachers should collaborate with peers and find out what activities work with their class and which ones don't work. Sharing ideas and activities will benefit the students and the teachers by giving them a new outlook on the lesson they are teaching. If teachers have positive relationships with their fellow teachers, they can work together to create a utopian learning environment. Holding teacher meetings to model specific

lessons can benefit all teachers. The teacher who is teaching will get feedback from their peers and they can give suggestions to improve the activity or lesson. The teachers who are watching can get new ideas they can use for their classrooms. Model teachers should share their wisdom and ideas with others. Team teaching is also an idea where teachers can get ideas from the other teachers (School Practices, 2000).

If students are involved in a meaningful and challenging lesson they feel accepted by the teacher and the class making Hispanic students, and others, less likely to dropout. Schools should encourage teaching classes that will be of interest to them, such as Latino history/culture. One complaint that the dropouts had about their teachers was that their teachers ignored them; this led them to become discouraged, thusly making the students feel irrelevant. When the teachers would come over to the student who needed help, they would not want the help that was offered. To help Latinos feel more accepted and like they are a part of the school teachers should make eye contact or appropriate physical contact with the students, allow enough wait time between asking a question and expecting an answer, expect all students to participate, create a classroom where all students feel they are a part of the class, and teachers need to make sure students know and believe that they all can be successful. In some schools the teachers act as the students' mentors providing the children with advice and by being someone they can open up to about other things. One such program is called, "O Adopt a Student" where there is one-to-one interaction between the teacher and the student for one hour. Teachers and students can also meet out

of school and do different activities: such as attending their sporting events and musical recitals (School Practices, 2000).

If the teacher is re-teaching a lesson, many of the students will lose interest because they already know certain parts. If students are not interested and involved they start to become behavior problems due to apathy (Educating, 2002). When students need to be disciplined, teachers should talk quietly and privately to the students.

Community college teachers have certain things that they can do to help their students stay in school. Some of these ideas can be used in the regular classroom as well. They can pronounce the student's name correctly, and use it in class. If one is not sure how to pronounce it, ask them. This will increase their self-esteem if they are acknowledged correctly. Teachers should use icebreakers so that the students have an opportunity to become familiar with other students in the class. If students have a question about an assignment, they might be able to get help by a fellow student. Creating a rubric or syllabus for the class should be required. This way the students are completely clear what their objectives are, what their assignments are, and when assignments are due. Another thing that may help is to have students stop by the office. For example, post their first assignment grades by the office. This way the students know where the office is so that if they need or have questions later, they are familiar with the location and feel comfortable going there (McGlynn, 2004).

## Home

School is not the only place where learning occurs. Much of the learning that occurs takes place at the home (Family Engagement, 2004). To make the home a successful place for education, families can be involved with academics and academic related activities. Family members can stress the importance of continuing their education and can assist with college and scholarship applications. These are small things where the family is involved and can help out.

## Latina Solutions

Latinas need to be given more career options, including some at which they feel they can succeed and one they enjoy doing. Giving them more options will also give them an increased likelihood of employment and said employment will be something they take pleasure in.

Latinas also have a more difficult time obtaining high paying jobs. It is also hard for Latinas to get as many opportunities to be successful after high school. If Latinas have a strong ethnic background, they may overcome some of these gender biases that are made about them.

## Scholarships

With being in debt as a concern for students who want to enter college, scholarships are an absolute must. 40% of Hispanics receive a Pell Grant when entering college (Improving Opportunity, 1998). A positive thing about Latinos is that they are three times more likely to take the foreign language AP test (Latinos, 2001). Because Spanish is often their first language, it seems that their

foreign language is really their primary language. It is advised that Hispanics take the AP language test for they have a high probability of passing this test. If one passes the AP test, they are given college credit, while still in high school. They will not have to pay to take the class in college and that can encourage more Latinos to attend college. Offering scholarships increases that chance that the student will attend college. There are several scholarships that are only given to students of Hispanic descent. "The Hispanic Scholarship Fund, a non-profit organization, has the admirable goal of raising the percent of Hispanics who have a college degree from 9 to 18 percent of all U.S. Hispanics" (Valladares, 2002, p. 2).

### **Other Educational Chances**

Many students who do dropout do not go back to school. To get students to go back to school, adult education classes should be offered. The students are given another chance to finish what they started and are at least given the opportunity to finish high school and maybe college if they want it. Frankly, no one has any excuse for dropping out and not going back to school.

If the graduation requirements increase, the dropout rate will also increase. The more requirements, the more obstacles that students need to overcome before completing high school (Honawar, 2004 p. 6). The federal government penalizes school districts that do not score well on state tests (Bracey, 2001). With NCLB creating a competitive environment, some districts do their best to chase away poor students so that these poor students don't take the "high stakes" standardized test at years end. Without these low scores, the average

score for the school will increase. With this increased score, additional monies will be allocated to the school district that can be used for extra materials or extra staff members.

### **Parent involvement**

Case managers can provide information about dropping out. It is said that the warning signs of potential dropouts can be seen as early as elementary school (Friendenberg, 2002). Parents need to be aware of these warning signs as soon as possible. Early intervention should occur so the child does not see failure as a continuous pattern. If a child does have many of the warning signs of dropping out, parents should talk with a case manager to see what they can do to help their child.

Many family problems were related to the lack of control that parents have within the family itself. Parents always say that they want what is best for their child. If this is true, then the parents would want their child to stay in school. The consequences of dropping out should be discussed between the parents and the child, especially if they are considering dropping out. Letting the child know that parents support staying in school will hopefully have some influence on their decision. The parents and children must work together to accomplish their goal (Valladares, 2002). It is easier to get parents involved in elementary school, and the trouble is keeping this involvement in middle and high school. When the family is involved with their child, it also increases their child's attitude, attendance, behavior, and rate of homework completion. Minority families are

most involved with hands-on activities and chances where they can share their information.

The parents' involvement increases if written communication is consistent, positive, and if they understand the language and level that it is written in. Home visits are said to be effective for poor and minority students. However, the problem with making home visits for teachers is that there is more planning involved, more to prepare for, more time that is devoted, and the teacher may not know the primary language of the home. If home visits are made, it is more comfortable for the parents because they may have a lack of experience and skills in this type of situation. Some parents have a poor perception of the school environment and therefore do not want to go to the school. Many schools said that they would like to do something to help bring the barrier down that was between parents and the schools. To bring up the number of parents who attend school events, childcare and transportation for the parents should be provided. This is especially true for low-income families who may have difficulty finding someone to watch the younger children; also transportation may be a problem, especially if the family does not own a car. Translators should be around the school so that if parents do come to school, they are able to communicate effectively. If something is sent home from the school it should be written in the parent's primary language and composed in a manner that is clear and concise so that they are better able to understand what is trying to be said. Ann Lewis said, "They (educators) are allowing the gap between the disadvantaged and more advantaged to widen, and they have not fully understood or accepted their

role of extending education to the family and the community” (Gerson, 1996, p.

4). “Strategies That Families Use to Keep (Hispanic) Adolescents in School

1. Maintain parent in charge;
2. Recognize a two-way influence (between parents and their children);
3. Set limits;
4. Monitor (their children’s) actions, whereabouts, feelings;
5. Draw the line about peers;
6. Send continuous positive messages (to their children);
7. Stay involved in school” (Secada, 1998, p. 23).

One option administrators could consider instead of having so many students suspended, would be to have a hearing for the students who are doing more serious actions in school. Another option is to have the students still come to school as part of an in-school suspension program where they are not given the option of going home to play video games and watch TV all day. If students are absent, have teachers, counselors, or administrators make phone calls or home visits so that they are more likely to attend school on a regular basis. Parents should be contacted if their child’s behavior is not appropriate as soon as possible so that the problem can be addressed and resolved.

To get parents involved in their child’s academic career, some schools reward this behavior by providing free items. If parents attend meetings or parent-teacher conferences, they may receive free lunches, books, or prizes, just for attending.

The other option would be to offer classes for the parents of the children who are having difficulty in school. Offer ESL classes and GED classes to the parents so that the parents will stay involved and are more willing to help their child. The Adult Education Act contributed 361 billion dollars in 1998 to help disadvantaged adults further develop their literacy skills (Improving Opportunities, 1998). Even Start is another program that adults can be a part of. It helps parents to learn English and helps their child in an early childhood curriculum. In 1998, 124 million dollars was spent to help Even Start.

### **Programs**

There are various programs that can have an impact on the students. One idea is to enroll the child in an after school program. This may be beneficial for the parents too, if they work later or work far from the school. Also, getting the children in early education programs can have lasting effects on a child's education and learning. The different English/Spanish programs are used to bring down the language barrier, which is very common in Hispanic students. Also, knowing how the teacher adapts the different programs into the classroom can show positive results.

### **After School Programs**

After school programs are an effective way to get students involved in school (Munk, 2004). Sports are a good way to keep the children involved, yet still having fun at school (Census, 2005). Many schools require that students keep a certain grade point average to play sports, causing them to concentrate and put in maximal effort to be a part of the sports team. Other after school programs are

chess, drama club, music club, and student council. Associating the school with something positive and fun will help them link school and being positive together. The Mott Foundation and Macarthur Foundation help in funding some of the after school programs (Valladares, 2002).

Other options could be the YMCA, YWCA, church groups, and the boys and girls club. This gives them an alternative to becoming involved with gangs. If children are not interested in sports or other school activities, this is a good choice.

### **Early Education Programs**

If the importance of education is stressed at an early age, children are more likely to embrace the notion. Early education has the biggest effect on children who come from low-income families. It is never too early to start teaching one's child. Even if the child is two years old, one can help classify the different shapes, colors, letters, or let the child scribble (write). Research shows that children who are read to every night, by their parents, are more likely to get better grades in school and to continue their education. Even reading daily to babies and toddlers several times a week is said to help them understand basic literacy components for their age such as which way a book should open, reading from left to right, and one must turn the page. The same is true for teachers when they do read-alouds to their class; there is an increase in their literacy skills. When teachers are not present, students can still work on their literacy skills. Children who read aloud to each other will improve their fluency and understanding of the English language, making them more successful (Early

Literacy, 2004). The more successful they are and feel, the less likely that they are going to dropout by the time they reach high school.

Teachers should provide a wide variety of reading and writing activities to get them exposed to the different activities and concepts that they might see later on and also to keep the students interested and involved in the curriculum. Good early childhood programs are nurturing to their children, consistent in rules, rewards, and punishments, and should have hands-on stimulation.

There are different programs that are available, such as Head Start, which will help young children learn these skills. The Head Start program has a return rate of 7 to 1. For every dollar that is spent on this program, the rate of return is seven dollars (Early Childhood, 2005). This one dollar that is invested in Head Start is given back from these students attaining jobs and paying taxes or putting this money back into the community. Head Start helps develop good language development, cognitive skills, and self-concepts:

Full-day kindergarten would be the best choice if considering an early childhood education. However, not every full-time kindergarten will be as beneficial to the child. Some part-time kindergartens have more material and impact in their curriculum than the full-time ones. When considering a kindergarten look at their curriculum and activities. This will help one decide which early childhood program is the best for the child. Language development, math concepts, and writing should all be components in good early childhood programs. Math is sometimes not given the time that it should be allotted. Some of the teachers do not feel comfortable with math, and therefore do not cover this

much needed material. Asking open ended questions, going over vocabulary words, reading stories several times, and retelling the story are all good things to do with one's young students or children. Asking too many questions is discouraged because young children may become distracted.

Many of the children involved with these early education programs are either white or black students. Rarely are Hispanics enrolled in these programs. Less than 15% of Hispanics have chosen to be a part of these pre-school programs (Valladares, 2002). This number will hopefully increase as well as their high school completion rate.

### **Teacher Adaptations of the Programs**

When the school decides on a program, make sure that each grade level of teachers are covering the materials, attempting to move at the same pace, covering the same goals, and using the same instructional strategies. This will limit the overlapping of material between one grade to the next and will prevent not covering other standards at all.

### **English/Spanish Programs**

There are also limited funds to finance new programs that could be very beneficial (Census, 2005). Before a program is implemented in a school, it should be piloted first, revised, and tested. Programs that are implemented should be research based, and they should be aligned with national or state standards.

Title I of NCLB 2001 is scheduled to allocate 7.4 billion dollars to students from low-income areas to assist in the funding of public schools (Improving

Opportunities, 1998). Congress added language to Title I to help the students who had limited English skills. This is money that is much needed to help students who speak Spanish as their primary language. The money is used to provide these Title I funded programs to the schools that have a high Spanish speaking population. The problem with the growing population of Spanish speakers is that they require more classes to learn English. The more classes, the less money that each class receives.

There are three different programs to focus on breaking the language barrier: dual-language education, English immersion, and bilingual education. There is much debate over which program is the best for the students and which one produces the best test results.

Dual-language education is where the students learn to speak and write in both languages. Dual-language is said to help learners score better on tests. The good thing about dual-language is that the students are able to speak both languages equally well. The problem with dual-language is that the students may get confused and mix their English and Spanish words together (Morrow, Slutsky, Safaro, & Plummer, 1998).

English immersion is where all instruction is given in English. When English immersion is used, they often use sign language to symbolize what they are trying to say. With English immersion, some worry that they are going to forget their first language, Spanish. If they are in English immersion, Spanish can be taught in the middle or high schools so that they can learn both languages (Morrow, Slutsky, Safaro, & Plummer, 1998).

Bilingual education is where instruction is first given all in Spanish; when the students get to the later grades English is spoken so students learn how to translate Spanish to English. These schools normally offer books to read in both languages and they can pick which language they would like to read. These schools often do not know which language they are going to be tested in Spanish, English, or both. In June 1998, California banned bilingual education. The negative thing about bilingual education is that it is thought to delay English learning. It also sends the message that Spanish is inferior and should not be used in an academic atmosphere (Morrow, Slutsky, Safaro, & Plummer, 1998).

### **Outside World**

Although one may not think about it, the world outside of school also has an effect on the children. Anything from the television shows that a child watches to the work programs for Hispanics have an effect on any child. Finding people and things that are a positive influence on one's child is an important thing to do for the child.

### **Mentoring Programs**

There are different types of mentoring programs that occur outside the classroom. The U.S. Department of Education supports the HOSTS program. This program matches up volunteer adult tutors and the youth who need this extra help. When the children read to the tutors, it will help the children identify certain words. Students who dropout often do not have a continuing relationship with an adult, which is why the mentoring program is thought to be so successful. The relationships in the mentoring program with the adults are often long-term

and positive. The adults must be caring, responsible, and have high expectations (Chavkin, 2000). The child must feel that they can participate and interact with the adults if they are truly going to help.

### **Financially**

The United States people should be encouraging all teenagers to complete high school, as well as college. There is a return rate of 4 to 1 for people who have a college degree. If citizens have a college degree, the government will have more money that they collect from taxes and increased money for social security (Valladares, 2002). If dropouts are on welfare or go to prison, the taxpayers will also pay for this. This means more money that goes back into our society and more money that can be spent on other things such as new arenas, repaired roads, and other improvements.

### **Presence of Hispanic Role Models**

There are few well known Hispanic role models. Hispanic students need to see someone who is of their own ethnicity that is a role model. These role models can be anyone from a teacher in the school to a Hollywood movie star. If society gives the impression that Latinos cannot be successful, that is what these young adults will believe. Showing young Latinos that there are people in the community and the world who have made it to where they are will give them the idea that they can do the same for themselves. Latinas especially have a need for some Hispanic female role models. If the Latinas make the connection with these role models early on, it is more likely to have some affect on them.

## **Educational Television**

Many people who watch television believe what it says. Univision and Telemundo are two Spanish TV networks that are trying to send a positive message about education (Valladares, 2002). On these networks there are campaigns addressing why education is important and why it is essential to take education seriously. If a viewer would like to learn more about why education is so important one can request information about it from these two TV networks.

## **Work Literacy Programs**

If Latinos can mix academics and their jobs together into one, why not do it? This is what some high schools are doing (Census, 2005). Instead of going to school for 8 hours and then working at a job for 4 or more hours, it was thought that they could somehow combine the two. After school, the teenager would still go to their job, but if they finished their job work early they can work on the school work. This will help students keep up on their homework as well as supply extra money for their families.

## **Summary**

There are many things that we can do to help keep students in school. Everyone can help ranging from school administrators, teachers, parents, television producers, other Hispanics, and the U.S. government. Schools, homes, and outside resources all can do their part to help reduce the amount of dropouts. Giving adequate teachers, classes, programs, and supplies will help the schools do their part. Parents can help their child with homework and can check their child's grades regularly to make sure that their child is successful at

the home. There is no one solution to solve this problem, but if everyone works together we can decrease the dropout rate.

## **Chapter V: Implications in the Classroom**

### **Introduction**

There are many things that educators can do to help decrease the number of Hispanics who dropout each year. These implications range from getting the parents involved to getting the administrators to be active. There are also many things that teachers can implement into our classroom. If educators do our part and contribute and get others involved, we can help to reduce the Hispanic dropout rate.

### **Implications**

I have strong feelings about the limited funds that are available for the high Hispanic populated schools. We experienced situations at Wade Carpenter Middle School, the school where I taught for two years, where the students did not have enough desks, basic books, and manipulatives. Our school had to supply even the basic materials that the middle to upper class students saw as a necessity. Some of these supplies that I had to supply my Hispanic students were pencils, paper, and notebooks. Our school even supplied every student with an organizer at the beginning of the year to write assignments, goals, and test scores in. Our classrooms in Nogales had only one computer in every classroom, which was used for the teachers to take attendance, record grades, and type lesson plans. We did have one computer lab with approximately 50 computers for almost 700 students, but we were not allowed to use it during the school day. From personal experience, I could see that these types of limited supplies did have a direct impact on the students and their learning abilities.

To compensate for the limited funds that may be available, there are a variety of things that the teacher can do. One suggestion would be to buy different school supplies and give them away as an incentive for working hard. Items that could be given away include: rulers, pencils, paper, pens, folders, and books. Have students use the front and backs of their papers so that buying paper supplies is not habitual. Because there are limited or no manipulatives available through the school, buying your own materials for the class may be a possibility. If money for the teacher is tight, buy approximately 6 items so that the classroom can use the materials in groups and share them instead of buying one for each student. One suggestion would be to talk to who is in charge of the budget for these extra supplies and see if there would be any possibility to use the money for these basic materials. Another idea would be to have fund raisers or ask the parents to help supply these goods. In regards to computers, use them when available. If there are only five computers for the whole class, take turns and rotate people, so that everyone gets a turn. If computers cannot be used during the school day, talk to parents and make arrangements with them to pick their child up later certain days so they don't miss out on the opportunity. During these days, work with small groups so that they have more individualized attention and so that they can learn in a new and exciting way.

The money that low-income families do have is often not used effectively. I know of students who receive either free or reduced lunches, but their family drives a SUV that costs almost \$40,000. Other students come to school with CD players, video games and equipment, or DVD's that cost a lot of money, but they

cannot afford to pay for their lunch. We need to educate the students and the parents on making wise investments and how to handle their money effectively and efficiently. The teacher could teach an after school class for parents and their child on how to manage their money properly. The child could work on smaller concerns, such as how to spend their allowance money in a productive and useful way.

Encourage your school to have an AP program. The sooner one is exposed to a concept, the more familiar it will be and the sooner they will learn it. Not only this, but teachers will be able to see what students are working above the expected grade level, and what students are struggling with the materials and need more help. If students are not in the advanced classes, encourage them to be in one or two so that they are exposed to that material before it is expected to be mastered.

I saw that smaller class sizes and regular attendance does help the students. I had several classes with 20 students and it was much easier to get through the lesson and there was more time to give individualized help. I felt more comfortable and I felt that the students felt more comfortable with asking for help compared to the larger classes. I would ask the principal what the teacher to pupil ratio is and make sure that it is reinforced.

Attendance is very important if students want to learn. We need to make sure that students are in class and they are on time so that instruction is not missed. In Nogales, I had several students who would skip classes and I reported them, but nothing was done. If this continues, it sends the message

that it is okay to not go to school or to come late to class. If society does not expect students to attend classes at school, why would the students think differently? When students are not even in the classroom, how can we expect them to learn what they are supposed to? Talking to the principal about the attendance policy may be beneficial before deciding on a school to teach at. If the school does not enforce the attendance policy, you as an individual teacher should consider giving detention for coming late to class or not coming at all to class. One thing that I do is give detention to the students that are consistently late, which I consider being late three or more times in a quarter. Making contact with the parents may also help to address the attendance issue and keep it under control. This is especially true if the child is late to their first class, where the parents need to learn to be responsible for their child and bring them to school on time.

Another problem at the school I was at was the turnover rate. I have never seen any school that lost more than a few teachers each year. The main reason for leaving the schools in the Midwest was retirement. At my site, Wade Carpenter Middle School in Nogales, Arizona, we had 17 out of 27 teachers (not all of them were qualified) who decided to go to another school, another district, or retire. That high turnover rate reflects multiple things. One thing that I heard from the teachers who left the school is that they did not like how they had been treated. They were not respected by the authority figures and they were not respected by their students. There were numerous occasions where students would call the teachers bad names and threaten them and nothing was done to

stop this behavior. Another reason that some teachers were leaving was due to higher pay in a neighboring community. The starting salary in Tucson, Arizona, which is 60 miles north of Nogales, was almost \$10,000 more than the starting salary in Nogales.

In order to fix the turnover rate several things can be done. The first and maybe the most important is up to the administration. Teachers need to stress the importance to the principals of being positive around the students and the school environment. Disruptive students need structure from the authorities and authority figures need to be strict and consistent. The principal at Desert Shadows, the other middle school in Nogales, is very positive when she does morning announcements. She is encouraging to the teachers and focuses on the good things that they do. This will help to solve part of the problem with finding good administration. Not asking teachers to sub in their planning period will also be beneficial to the teachers so that they don't get burned out. If teachers are consistently being asked to sub during their planning period, they should talk to the principal about the importance of having a break and how that time is for winding down and time to put grades in, make copies, make parent contacts, and plan for the upcoming weeks.

Teachers should stress to students that they should take advantage of the different programs that are offered. I would make sure that students know of the programs and post them somewhere in the classroom for all to see. Also, this year I sent a parent letter home that lists the different times that I will offer

tutoring. At open house I discussed with parents that if their child would like help or is having trouble understanding a concept to come in for tutoring.

If students are new to the school, educators need to make them feel welcome and like they belong. This should help the move go more smoothly for the child. If students are new to the area I would try to pair them up or have them sit near someone in the class who is helpful and a good role model. If they do not get along with that person, I would move their seat so that they can try to be friends with another group of students. Working with partners or groups would become a necessity so that they can become familiar with the students in the class.

Many students see employment as a must in high school. If they were considering this option because of their family's financial situation I would try to encourage them to work only a few hours after school so that they don't fall behind. I would also promote jobs where they could work on the weekends so that their academics are not jeopardized.

Violence and harassment at school are problem areas. One thing that I like about Desert Shadows is that there are teachers, administration, janitors, and security guards who patrol the halls throughout the school day. Because the halls are supervised, violence is not as likely to occur. During passing time, I stand in the hallways while watching my classroom so that the students know they are being supervised and so that any trouble that might happen stops before it becomes a major problem. Allowing limited access to the hallways should decrease the possible troubles that could happen during class time. I only allow my students two passes to the hallway per quarter so that they are not wasting

class time and also so that these problems are limited. Harassment was also addressed at Desert Shadows. We watched a video about harassment and then had a discussion and assignment that related to harassment trying to get the message across that they need to report it and it doesn't need to happen.

Making Latinas feel accepted is something that I try to do. I try to offer them equal opportunities as the boys and make them feel accepted and good about themselves and their achievements. When I ask for volunteers or for feedback, I always get responses from the males and the females. The same should be true regarding what is expected on homework and test.

Speaking English in the classroom is also a major problem that I see in my classroom. They are allowed to speak Spanish everywhere else and it is almost a habit to speak it in the schools. I had no bilingual aids or helpers who would help translate for the students who did not understand. The same is true for communicating with the parents, there was no one to help translate or help even during parent conferences. Because I don't speak Spanish well, and most of the parents do not speak English, it was almost impossible to communicate with them. When I do send notes home or other items, I get them translated into Spanish so that they or their parents will understand. Asking the few people that do speak both languages to help translate an occasional phone call or note into the parents' first language is something I recommend to all teachers. Also, the people that do help translate normally are happy to help and they can see that you are trying to help break the language barrier.

Another idea is to talk to individual teachers about taking classes to learn another language, such as Spanish. Teachers can talk to the principal if they can teach a class to fellow teachers and have it count for your 301 goal, or if they can take an official college class in another language that could count for their 301 goal. If they know another language they can teach their colleagues. This will not only benefit the teaching staff, it will help the students who speak that language feel more comfortable. If they speak the same language that the student does, they can be their role model and the teacher can also help them with the language problems.

Having students work in small groups is also something that I have always done. I decided to put them in rows for one quarter to try it out, but small groups seem to have many benefits. For the next three quarters I will put them into small groups for several reasons. One reason is that if they need help they can ask the students in their group. This may be very beneficial to the students that have limited English skills; they can ask their neighbors in Spanish and they will at least understand in one language. It also gets them ready and prepared for their jobs by practicing their social skills.

During the reading class that I teach, I decided to have the students keep a type of journal about the story that we were reading. They were to relate the story to personal experiences. This helped me to learn about their experiences and themselves. I am also doing a project now where the students are making a box which included five items that describe themselves. This will help me to

relate to the students and make the students more comfortable with me and their fellow peers.

Manipulatives are used almost daily in my math class. I have heard how important they are and how the students react to them. Dice are regular items that are used for the probability lessons. I also have a box where I keep items that can be drawn for the probability lessons. I try to relate real-life situations to keep the students interested and involved. I use references from game shows like Wheel of Fortune and from other things that the students may be familiar with such as sports teams to work on the ratio lessons or video game references to work on long or short vowels in reading class.

Writing specific comments on papers is something that I do so that students know what is expected and also so that they know what they need to do so that they can get 100%. For example, if students don't try every problem on their math homework, I take off between 1 and 9 points. Aligning lesson plans to state and district standards is something that must be done so that they are at the right level and so that they learn everything that should be learned at that level.

Working and getting ideas from other teachers is also something that I do. My mentor teachers have been helpful in attaining this information. At Carpenter, the teacher who was next door to my classroom, Kurt Colter, and I would talk during passing time to discuss what lessons were going well or what we could do next time to make them better and we shared ideas where manipulatives could be used.

If discipline becomes a problem, I give the student a warning. The second time, I call them over to my desk or wait until the bell rings where they are by themselves and where the other students can't hear. I discuss what the problem is one-to-one so that the student can hear my concern and so that I can hear what they have to say about it. Remember that discipline needs to be consistent and fair to everyone.

Typing a syllabus and a classroom management plan was required for all teachers at Desert Shadows. This helps eliminate problems that students may have in the future, such as what to do if they are missing homework assignments, what the rules are, and what the consequences are of breaking the rules. Students don't have to ponder about these things because they have their answer the first day of school before it can become an issue.

Making students aware of the different scholarship opportunities is something that I plan to discuss with my classes. I have already discussed how the more education that is received, the more money they are likely to make. I told the students how I was working on my master's degree and that when I finish I will make more money and the students seemed stunned, like it was a bazaar concept.

### **Conclusion**

There are a variety of plausible solutions to help the Hispanic children from dropping out. These are a few suggestions and experiences that may be beneficial to teachers. Keep in mind that there are many other things that we can

do to help prevent these students from dropping out. I listed only a few among many ideas.

As seen in this research, the amount of Hispanics in our school system is increasing and the amount of Hispanic dropouts is also increasing. We need to be aware of this problem and work on implementing plausible solutions. There are many factors that may cause one to dropout. These factors include parent involvement, school environment, English proficiency, limited funding, low expectations, and cultural differences. The potential results of dropping out are being illiterate, unemployed, living in poverty, crime relations, and not continuing education. To fix the problem of dropping out of high school schools and parents can: offer after school programs, enroll their children in early education classes, offer scholarships to college, and have qualified teachers as part of the staff.

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