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ABSTRACT

The black and brown minorities which constitute about 16 percent of the total U.S. population today are demanding equal opportunities and quality education. The fact that more and more of these students are attending high schools and colleges will accelerate these demands. The demands are not only to reinforce their own ethnic heritage, but also to educate the dominant majority in the realities of a true history; that is, through economic development and land expansion, the United States inherited a diverse citizenry whose potentials and contributions still require recognition. All institutions, particularly institutions of higher education, can either re-examine traditional white elitist beliefs and create real and equal opportunity, or risk that violence which increasingly has become the dominant instrument of social change. In meeting the instructional needs of Chicanos, both in the public schools and institutions of higher learning, standards must be reassessed regarding achievement and IQ test, admission and academic requirements, and teaching competencies for both pre- and in-service teachers. What is needed is not fewer standards but better standards. Teachers--particularly culturally deficient teachers--need training to work with linguistically and culturally distinct students. (Author/JM)

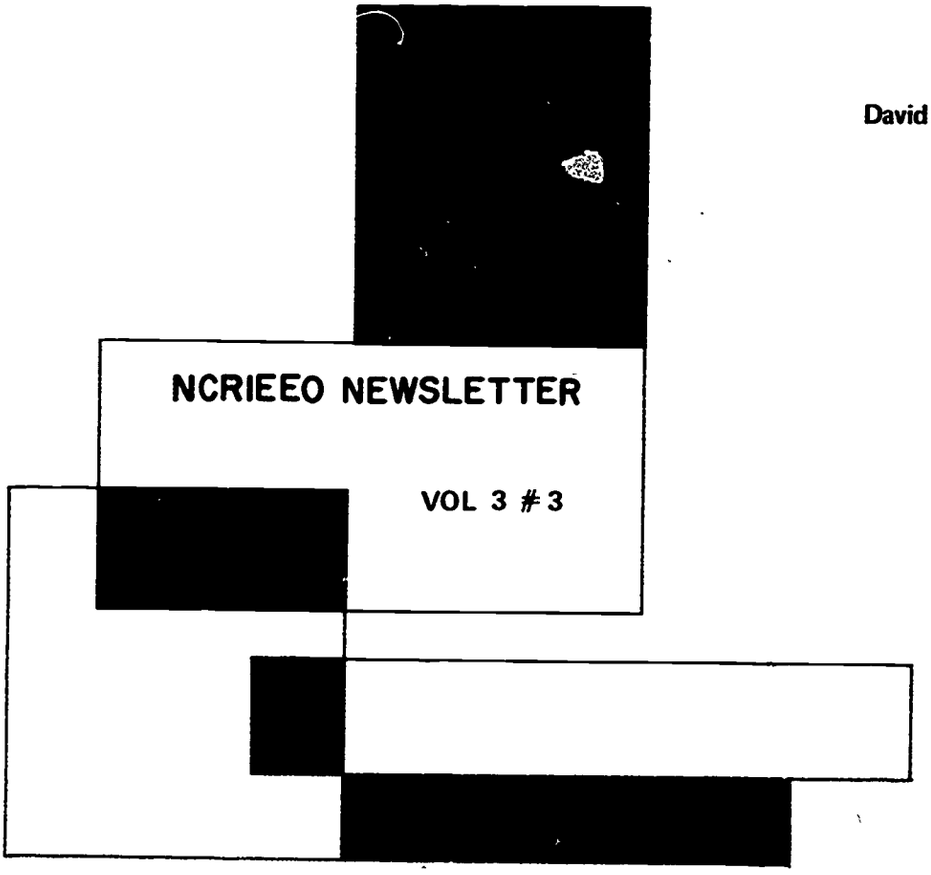
EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Meeting Instructional Needs

of Chicano Students

by

David Ballesteros



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MEETING INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS OF CHICANO STUDENTS

David Ballesteros*

Brotherhood unites us, and love for our brothers makes us a people whose time has come and who struggles against the foreigner "gabacho" who exploits our culture. With our hearts and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a nation of free pueblos, we are AZTLAN. (1)

Introduction

The educational attainment for the Chicano in the Southwest is four years below the Anglo American and two years below other minorities. This is a clear indication that the school curriculum lacks relevancy to the needs of the Mexican American population. Recent walk-outs and protests in secondary schools, colleges, and universities demonstrate the rejection of traditional curriculum by Chicano students.

What do these students want? They want an education, freedom, and equality in opportunities. They want books and curriculum revised to include the Indo-Hispanic contributions. They want instructors, counselors, and administrators who are either bilingual or who have empathy for their needs. They want bilingual-bicultural studies and Chicano studies. They want the quality education which has been the national goal of our educational institutions in this country.

The Mexican Americans are the largest ethnic minority group in the Southwest and the second largest in the United States. They comprise two-thirds of the Spanish-speaking population which numbers approximately ten million. Eighty-five per cent live in urban settings. More than fifty per cent are under twenty years old. By 1980 it is estimated that the Spanish-speaking population in this country will number fifteen million. For so significant a figure there must be sufficient educational planning. Together the brown and black populations make up one-sixth of the total U.S. population and a majority in several major cities.

The black and brown minorities which constitute about 16% of the total U.S. population today are demanding equal opportunities and quality education. The fact that more and more of these students are attending high schools and colleges will accelerate these demands. The demands are not only to reinforce their own ethnic heritage, but also to educate the dominant majority in the realities of a true history: that is, through economic development and land expansion, the United States inherited a diverse citizenry whose potentials and contributions still require recognition.

All institutions, particularly institutions of higher education, can either re-examine traditional white elitist beliefs and create real and equal opportunity, or risk that violence which increasingly has become the dominant instrument of social change.

In meeting the instructional needs of Chicanos, both in the public schools and institutions of higher learning, standards must be reassessed regarding achievement and I.Q. test, admission and academic requirements, and teaching competencies for both pre and inservice teachers. What is needed is not fewer standards but better standards. Teachers–particularly culturally deficient teachers–need training to work with linguistically and culturally distinct students.

Educational Neglect

Better education for Spanish-speaking students has grown from a hope and a prayer to a demand. The Mexican American youth movement which has raised the cry, *ya basta* (enough!), has focused on destroying the belief that the bilingual-bicultural person is disadvantaged or handicapped, and are striking at the long held, debilitating syndrome that the school can educate only those whose mold fits the curriculum. They are saying that if that is the extent of the schools' capacity, then truly the school and training institutions are disadvantaged and handicapped, for they cannot cope with different kinds of behavior. These schools and training institutions

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should change their programs to meet the students instead of trying to compensate the students for failure to meet the school.

The real problem in our society today—and therefore, the real problem in education today is not the "Black Problem," nor the "Indian Problem," nor the "Mexican American Problem"—it is the "Anglo Point of View Problem." This viewpoint determines what happens in the school—what emphasis will be given or denied racial, cultural, and language values. It is this point of view underlying educational activities, social relations in the school, and the subtle actions of educational personnel, that tells students they are not beautiful because they are different.

Money is only one problem in educating the Mexican American student. Perhaps even more serious is the problem of involuntary discrimination: the school's insistence on fitting the Spanish-speaking student into the monolingual, monocultural mold of the dominant Anglo society. This discrimination, plus the grim fact that millions of Mexican Americans suffer from poverty, cultural isolation, and language rejection, has kept them from becoming contributing members of society. An individual's contribution to society is sacrificed when he is denied adequate educational opportunities. Failure to consider both the values as well as the handicaps of bilingualism, and the placement of a large number of these students in "tracks," remedial and special education classes, are examples of discrimination against Chicano students.

Most Chicano children are still isolated in schools which are predominantly Mexican American, the result of de facto segregation or gerrymandered school boundaries. While the segregated Anglo American child is equally deprived of a heterogeneous environment which could lead to increased educational development, he is rarely confronted with a school environment which directly rejects the culture of his home environment: language, lifestyles, clothing, food, family relationships, holidays, and physical appearances.

The widespread use of achievement or aptitude tests for purposes of selection, for deciding from kindergarten on up who will succeed and who will fail, is typical of the kind of competitive culture that characterizes all of our social institutions, including our schools. Such static measures along with language difficulties impede scholastic progress. Mexican American and Puerto Rican students enter the educational system without speaking English. These students are then forced to repeat grade levels and to postpone all serious academic work until they learn English. This latter approach commonly leaves the Spanish-speaking student, by the time he is a teenager, three to six years behind his Anglo counterpart.

The Chicano student can learn. His language should not be an obstacle to his success in school, but an effective tool for learning. To destroy it is to destroy his identity, self-image, and self-esteem.

Two different sources reveal the deep feeling of pride, dignity, and concern so important for all of us. These feelings exist especially among our youth who fight for self-identity and a positive image recognition:

> "Who am I?" asks a young Mexican American high school student. I am a product of myself. I am a product of you and my ancestors. We came to California long before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. We settled California, the Southwestern part of the United States including the states of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas. We built the missions; we cultivated the ranches. We were at the Alamo in Texas, both inside and outside. You know we owned California—that is, until gold was found here. Who am I? I'm a human being. I have the same hopes that you do, the same fears, the same drives, same desires, same concerns, same abilities; and I want the same chance that you have to be an individual. Who am I? In reality, I am who you want me to be."

This same concern for dignity and respect is found in the words of the Chicano poet, Alurista:

Mis ojos hinchados
flooded with lágrimas
de bronce
melting on the cheek bones
of my concern
razgos indigenos
the scars of history on my face
and the veins of my body
that aches
vomito sangre
y lloro libertad
I do not ask for freedom
I am freedom.[2]

Chicano, Boricua,[3] and other Spanish-speaking children can and will do well scholastically, but only in schools, including colleges and universities, that present the Anglo way of life (white studies) in addition to fostering pride in the Mexican American and Puerto Rican for their origin, history, culture, and bilingual background (brown studies).

Teacher preparation institutions do very little to aid their students in coping with the problems and assets of minority students. Colleges of Education continue to certify teachers who will have life-long contact with minority students, but do little or nothing specifically to prepare them. There are few special courses, or sequences, intended to provide future elementary and secondary teachers with either the skills or understandings relevant to linguistically and culturally distinct students. While there are courses in some colleges that concern the "disadvantaged," the poor, and the urban dwellers, few are required in the regular credential sequence–very few specifically treat the Chicano or require that teachers be proficient in Spanish.

Why isn't the Mexican American prepared to attend institutions of higher learning? the main reason is that the American education system is not geared to meet the educational needs of Spanish-speaking students, thus developing an atmosphere of discouragement. Indeed, the Spanish surname college population is very small; smaller yet are college graduates. In California, for example, which boasts a large college population, blacks and Chicanos comprise 18.3% of the state population, yet constitute only 3.8% of universities, 5.8% of state colleges, and 11% of community colleges.[4]

The Spanish-speaking community needs more college graduates. The power of education is basic. It constitutes one of the most important routes by which the Mexican American may reach some measure of equal opportunity with other citizens. For every successful man or woman of Mexican decent, there will be innumerable others who will be inspired to move ahead.

Teacher Training

It is most important that professional as well as paraprofessional personnel understand and recognize the unique cultural and linguistic differences attributable to Chicano students. Competent, proficient teachers are needed to teach Chicano students. Certification does not mean being properly qualified. In addition to the content areas–including a knowledge of Spanish–techniques and methodologies, education curriculum and educational psychology should include special sections on ethnic interest to allow preservice and inservice teachers to delve into cultural differences affecting classroom practices and teacher-student interaction.

The content of the curriculum and the teaching strategies used should be tailored to the unique learning and incentive-motivational styles of Spanish-speaking children. Moreover, these styles should conform to results of research conducted on Spanish-speaking children and their parents. A recent study[5] made on Mexican American and Anglo American mothers of the same socio-economic class showed that Chicano mothers were more nurturing toward and protective of their children. They also encouraged their children to be more dependent on and loyal to the family. In this same study, Anglo American and Mexican American children were asked to tell stories to accompany picture cards of educational scenes, such as a child and a teacher in a classroom. Analysis of the stories showed that Chicano children gave longer stories and introduced more characters, which indicated that their capacity to fantasize was well developed. The stories told by Mexican American children also revealed a greater desire to achieve for the family–that is, a desire to achieve so that the family was proud of the student. On the other hand, Anglo children were more concerned with achieving for themselves. Another study[6] indicated that Mexican American children were of field dependent cognitive style, while Anglo children were field independent. This in turn, indicates that effective teaching strategies must reflect a cognizance of the student's sensitivity to interpersonal encounters as well as classroom climate.

The passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 was a moral and legal commitment by our government to the recognition of language and cultural diversity in this country. It gave impetus to the education of non-native English speakers. Bilingual education means the opportunity to teach the student educational concepts, throughout all phases of the curriculum, in his mother tongue while, at the same time, he is learning English. This prevents his educational retardation while reinforcing his language and culture.

Bilingual education serves five positive purposes for the student and the school:

1. It reduces retardation through ability to learn with the mother tongue immediately.
2. It reinforces the relations of the school and the home through a common communication bond.
3. It projects the individual into an atmosphere of personal identification, self-worth, and achievement.
4. It gives the student a base for success in the field of work.
5. It preserves and enriches the cultural and human resources of a people.

A bicultural model has been developed in the form of a program for inservice teachers by corpsmen at Dorie Miller Elementary School in San Antonio. The existing teacher preparation courses have thus far not

provided the experiences which will enable a teacher to work effectively in the urban school with minority students. This program's current objectives for effective teacher training are:

1. The teacher will come to understand his own attitudes, anxieties, insecurities, and prejudices through a program of sensitivity development.
2. The teacher will understand the nature of the child's environment and culture (including language) through a program of teacher interaction with the school community.
3. The teacher will become knowledgeable of and competent in effective teaching skills and techniques.

In this Teacher Corps model, objectives are designed to relate specifically to teacher understanding, attitudes, and skills which presumably will enable the teacher to provide an effective teaching-learning environment in the school. In addition, extensive use of classroom video-taping is made.

The new branch of the University of Texas at San Antonio has placed the Division of Teacher Education in the College of Multidisciplinary Studies. The emphasis for the teacher is on obtaining a wide range of experiences outside the field of education, in particular as it relates to cross-cultural experiences. Teachers will be prepared to work in urban settings and, in the process, obtain a linguistic understanding of black and Chicano children. Contributions of the various ethnic groups of this continent should be integrated into all aspects of the school experience: history, geography, art, music, literature. Cross-cultural education means not only the integration of students and staff but also the integration of the curriculum.

Community

An effective program is characterized by community participation. The community must be involved in its planning and implementation, and should be involved in the training of staff and classroom activities; otherwise, the participants may not be aware of the necessity and relevance of the program in question. The community must participate in the evaluation and revision of programs so that community feedback will continue to contribute to the program's success.

Parent participation is particularly indispensable in bilingual-bicultural education programs. In most Spanish-speaking communities, parents have a considerable knowledge of their language and heritage. Curriculum should be developed in such a way that parents can teach portions of it to their children at home. The Spanish-speaking parent will support the goals and values of the school when the school begins to recognize the worth of his culture and realize that he can make a unique contribution to the educational process.

The Spanish-speaking population views the community not only as a physical setting but also as a spiritual experience—an extension of the immediate family. Whether they live in the barrio or not, all are concerned with the welfare and education of their children. As educators depend on support from the community so the community depends on our support. The pursuit of academic excellence is fully compatible with service to the community. The educational institution should be an integral part of the community and must exist primarily to serve and support it.

Chicano Studies

The late Commissioner of Education, James E. Allen, talked about specific steps which communities may find constructive in dealing with some of the underlying causes of student unrest. One of the suggested steps includes: "The introduction of black, brown, and other ethnic studies into existing courses and through additional offerings—developed collaboratively by students, teachers, and administrators—to increase understanding, rather than fear, of cultural differences."[7]

The goal for Chicano studies is to provide a coherent and socially relevant education, humanistic and pragmatic, which prepares Chicanos for service to the Mexican American community and enriches the total society—students prepared to work and live for the purpose of realizing political, social, and economic change. Chicano studies (1) are dynamic and always changing, (2) seek new methods of approaching the teaching-learning experience, (3) are directed toward service to the community, (4) seek liberation of the individual as opposed to the single-culture, socializing processes of American education.

The Chicano studies curriculum mainly involves the following disciplines: anthropology, art, economics, education, English, history, linguistics, political science, public health, sociology, Spanish, and theatre arts.

The demand for a relevant educational experience is one of the most important features of the contemporary Chicano cultural renaissance. On the university and college campus the demands for a relevant cultural experience has taken the form of proposals for Chicano studies curricula. From the standpoint of an organized curriculum, Chicano studies means the formal, institutionalized, and dynamic study of Chicano culture in all of its diversity and unity.

A Chicano studies curriculum organizes the Chicano experience, past and present, in accordance with established cultural categories. The unity of Chicano being is based, in large part, on the Chicano heritage—*la herencia del ser Chicano*. This contributes to the shaping of an individual Chicano's personality through the living or experiences of Chicano culture, and produces a sense of community. Thus, formal Chicano studies should be designed to influence the student's personal experience, or identity, and by so doing reveal to him, either by showing him or eliciting from him the diverse aspects of himself and of his community.

El Plan de Santa Barbara is a Chicano Studies model for higher education.[8] It was formulated at a Chicano conference hosted by the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1969. Participating in the conference were students, community, faculty, and administrators. *El Plan* treats the following areas: (1) organizing and instituting Chicano studies programs, (2) recruitment and admissions, (3) support programs, (4) curriculum, (5) political action, (6) campus organizing, (7) the University and the Chicano community, (8) bibliography. El Centro de Estudios Chicanos at Santa Barbara has become, for other colleges and universities as well, the major institutional catalyst for the developing of an entire program: teaching, research, student services, and public services. *El Centro* receives direction from the Community Advisory Board which has student, faculty, as well as community representatives.

A Chicano studies curriculum should be open for all students on campus. But, because the curriculum is especially designed for Chicanos, it must take into account the Chicano students' special psychological, social, and intellectual needs. In too many cases, the Chicano student is unprepared for college work due to the deficient education which he receives in the public schools. With the proper motivation and creative counseling, however, a student can overcome a deficient academic background. Such conditions are particularly relevant to the lower division curriculum. The lower division curriculum should stress core courses, seminar-sized discussion groups and tutoring services, which will meet general education requirements. During his third and fourth year a student would then go into the department in which he intends to specialize, and within that department he would continue to emphasize his interest in the Chicano. For example, a student could go through the first two years in general education and then go into the history department for his upper division major, emphasizing Chicano history. Similarly, he could follow the same plan in other departments as well.

Summary and Conclusion

The commitment to alleviate curriculum deficiencies in educational programs from pre-school through university levels must continue and be intensified. The university must act as a direct agent of change rather than simply as a recorder and analyst of events. Both schools and teacher preparation institutions must change before any real benefit will trickle down to the student. There will continue to be a need for major curricular changes in our schools and colleges and greater fiscal efforts by federal, state, and local governments during the decade of the 70's. There is no room for deprived, disadvantaged, and handicapped students in American education, regardless of color or ethnic background. The need for recognizing the bilingual-bicultural student as a positive force in our society is essential.

The following recommendations are germane to the instructional needs of Chicano students:

1. Encourage the student; make him feel proud of what he is—he should be able to succeed without losing his identity.
2. Provide services to the community; communicate with parents—unless parents and school personnel become aware of each other's values and respect these values, conflicts will continue, with the student suffering the consequences.
3. Facilitate cultural awareness sessions for staffs.
4. Form a coalition with other ethnic groups on campus to promote needs and desires of minority students.
5. Hire and prepare staff who understand and empathize with students.
6. Reassess standards; they do not have to be lowered—most standards were made for middle-class Anglo Americans.
7. Seek research funds to make studies on personal characteristics of Chicano students, particularly their attitudes, values, and feelings toward teachers, subjects, parents, Anglo Americans, other minority students, and each other.
8. Promote legislation prohibiting discrimination against bilingual students in the testing and placing of such children in "tracks," "special education" or remedial programs on the basis of factors that do not take into account their language and culture.
9. Make available in Spanish, as well as in English, notices, booklets, and other parental correspondence.

10. Promote cultural democracy; make it clear that all minority groups have made a contribution and that this country was built by many different ethnic groups.

In planning and implementing programs, the community, students, faculty, and administrators must work together if curriculum is going to be relevant and viable. Programs must be designed to make students succeed, not fail. The educational institutions and community must be reminded of the desirability of a cross-lingual and cross-cultural environment if social relations in this country are to improve. To meet the needs and demands of the upcoming 21st century, there is one type of disadvantaged student: he who remains monolingual and monocultural.

Footnotes

[1] "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan," *Epoca*, The National Concilio for Chicano Studies Journal, Vol. 1, No. 2, (Winter, 1971).

[2] Alurista, "The Poetry of Alurista," *El Grito*, Quinto Sol Publications, Vol. 2, No. 1, (Fall, 1968), p. 6.

[3] Boricua is another term used for Puerto Rican.

[4] Kitano, Harry and Miller, Dorothy, *An Assessment of Educational Opportunity Programs in California Higher Education*, cited in Cottle, Thomas J., "Run to Freedom: Chicanos and Higher Education," *Change* (February, 1972.)

[5] Cited in Ramirez III, Manuel, "Cultural Democracy: A New Philosophy for Educating the Mexican American Child," *The National Elementary Principal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (November, 1970), p. 46.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Speech made on September 2, 1969, regarding student unrest in secondary schools.

[8] For more details on Chicano Studies curriculum, see *El Plan de Santa Barbara–A Chicano Plan for Higher Education*, Santa Barbara, Californai: La Causa Publications, 1970.

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