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ABSTRACT The Padres a la escuela (PAE) or Parents in the School program in San Antonio (Texas) encouraged the participation of Hispanic parents in the education of their children. The successes of the PAE program are used in this guidebook to help parents, program staff, and policy makers in similar efforts. This handbook describes the history, accomplishments, and lessons of the PAE program, beginning with a profile of the families, neighborhoods, and schools of San Antonio. Major goals accomplishments, and barriers are described. The program was instrumental in encouraging the participation of the Latino communities in the educational process through six PAE components: (1) bilingual and culturally sensitive information; (2) outreach and home visits; (3) advocacy and explanation of roles, rights, and responsibilities; (4) collaboration; (5) trust-building; and (6) leadership. The last two sections of this report assemble information for Hispanic families. Part 5 includes tools and resources used by the PAE program, and Part 6 introduces other tools and resources available nationwide for parents, schools, and communities. Twenty-two numbered figures illustrate the discussion. (Contains 19 references.) (SLD)

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Padres a la escuela (PAE)

Beyond Barriers

Involving Hispanic Families in the Education Process

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Introduction

The National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) is pleased to present this special Guidebook to those parents, program staff, and policymakers interested in the hopes and dreams, fears and frustrations of Hispanic parents who are committed to educating their children in this country's public schools. We are delighted to be able to share not only our experiences but also our learnings from our work.

A little over two years ago, NCCE embarked upon a most interesting and important journey to San Antonio. With the generous funding assistance of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and an anonymous donor, NCCE selected this well-known city in Texas to be the site of a multi-year pilot project to work with selected Hispanic families, schools, and local organizations to strengthen parent involvement. The project, known as *Padres a la escuela* or PAE, embodied the idea of community action for public education.

The project was significant for several reasons: First, it represented a parent involvement program that was designed and implemented exclusively for Hispanic families in one of this nation's leading Latino communities. Second, it featured two positive partnerships on behalf of Hispanic children: on one level, a partnership between home, school, and community; and, on another level, a partnership between a national organization (NCCE) and a local community-based organization (AVANCE).

The *Padres a la escuela* project also re-affirmed three simple truths essential to the healthy development of children and families throughout America--especially in our low-income communities: 1.) Cultural diversity is one of our greatest riches; it must be respected and preserved; 2.) Schools cannot educate every child singlehandedly; they need the active support of the whole community; and 3.) Parents need more than rhetorical support for parent involvement; they require resources.

In the course of this work, we re-affirmed our central belief that cultural diversity benefits one and all when it is acknowledged and nurtured. And with strong leadership, clear goals and appropriate commitments of both time and resources, Hispanic parents and community groups can--and will--play active and meaningful roles in the education of their children.

We also learned that schools, even those whose principals and teachers are willing to work openly and often with parents, are not able to provide--by themselves--all the support and sensitivity that children and their families deserve. Without question, most individuals and institutions who work with children benefit from thoughtful, increased public participation.

Finally, we found out first-hand that for parents in San Antonio to be effective advocates for their children, they need to have a number of things--both small and large--take place. First and foremost they need small support; that is, carefully considered people, training approaches, and material resources that provide useful and culturally sensitive information, offer multiple

outreach strategies, teach advocacy skills, encourage various collaborations, build trust, and develop leadership among Hispanic parents. Throughout the two years, NCCE and its local partners in San Antonio dedicated themselves to this agenda.

On a more profound level, parents need: 1.) citizen participation--the active collaborations and contributions of others, both with and without children, in the community; 2.) family support--broad and coordinated services, ranging from quality child care to decent housing; and 3.) community development--new visions and action plans to rebuild our nations's most abandoned neighborhoods in order to meet the needs of all its children and families.

NCCE intends to continue the work that PAE began with partners, both local and national, in urban and rural communities, from Texas to New York and California to Florida.

Executive Summary

Overview

This handbook, *Beyond Barriers: Involving Hispanic Parents in the Education Process*, describes the history, accomplishments, and learnings of the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) in reaching out and working with the Hispanic community in San Antonio, Texas. The *Padres a la escuela* (PAE)--or Parents in the School--program represents a national effort to encourage and facilitate the involvement of Hispanic families in public schools, with the collaboration of selected community-based organizations. The ultimate purposes of this pilot program are twofold: 1.) to improve the education outcomes of Hispanic children; and 2.) to share our initial lessons with other Hispanic groups and communities.

There are six major parts or sections to this report. In "Part One: A Profile of San Antonio," the reader is introduced to the families, the neighborhoods, the schools, and the context that shaped the PAE efforts. "Part Two. Program Overview" outlines the major goals and components of the project. The specific activities, accomplishments, and barriers that were central to the project are described in "Part Three: Putting Ideas Into Action." In "Part Four: The National View," the PAE staff have gathered information on Hispanic families and communities across the nation.

Finally, the last two sections assemble a number of informational resources and action tools for those readers who want to act--or are active already--with and for Hispanic families on school and community concerns. "Part Five" includes tools and resources used by the PAE staff in San Antonio during the project and "Part Six" introduces a variety of other expansive tools and resources taken from other similar work around the country.

One other important comment, by way of introduction: Although the term *Hispanic* is most commonly used in the United States to refer to Spanish-speaking persons--from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain--many who are included in this broad category prefer to be called *Latinos*. Because of its widespread usage in the U. S. today, however, the word *Hispanic* will be used interchangeably with the term *Latino* throughout this publication.

We do the Latino communities a serious disservice when we treat them as a single entity. Each of the Hispanic sub-groups, including the distinct communities of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, South and Central American (among others), has had its own patterns of immigration, culturalization, and geographic concentration, and each enjoys a unique sense of identity, racial mixture, and history. They do not share national culture or a common experience in the United States (Carrasquillo, 1991). Nor do they have one educational perspective or one set of expectations of the American public schools. All of

these differences must be understood and accepted by any group or program committed to improving the academic achievement of Latino students.

Furthermore, the United States Bureau of the Census defines racial subgroups within the population as White, Black, American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, and "Other Race." The Hispanic-origin population is classified for the purpose of Census studies on the basis of another survey question altogether, one recognizing that Hispanic persons may be of any race (1990 Census Profile.) All figures and data about Hispanics in this handbook are based on this premise.

Origins, Elements, and Accomplishments of the Project

Initiated in late 1990, PAE was created as a response to the rapid growth of the Hispanic community in the U. S. and the need for Hispanic families to become involved in public schools for the improvement of their children's education. The project evolved, in part, from the needs revealed by Hispanic callers to NCCE's Help Line and from a conscientious look at the distressing facts about the educational status of Hispanics in this country.

As a national organization with experience in working at the local level, NCCE--in the course of selecting San Antonio as its pilot site--immediately sought a partnership with a local community-based organization (CBO). In this case, PAE entered into a collaborative relationship with AVANCE, Inc., a respected and effective CBO dedicated to strengthening and supporting Hispanic families through educational programs.

During the first year of its implementation, PAE worked with two schools in San Antonio: Las Palmas Elementary School in the Edgewood Independent School District and Carvajal Elementary School in the San Antonio Independent School District. By the second year, the number of schools in the partnership was increased from two to four, adding Guerra and Stafford Elementary Schools, both in Edgewood.

In its commitment to increase parent involvement, and develop Hispanic leadership and capacity in education reform at the local level, PAE created and operated a project with six interrelated components: Outreach; Information; Advocacy; Collaboration; Trust-building; and Leadership. Each of these efforts has complementary goals and activities, which are discussed in this handbook.

A summary of accomplishments linked to the six PAE program components follows:

- **Information** (bilingual and culturally sensitive):
 - *Publications*: Created a series of 12 brochures--in Spanish and English; designed and distributed 5 issues of the PAE newsletter for parents and teachers;
 - *Training materials*: Developed bilingual information sheets, transparency kits and other handouts for the various parent, teacher, and community-based training sessions
 - *Help-Line*: Created and promoted a national bilingual service providing culturally sensitive telephone assistance to parents, teachers, and other practitioners
 - *Clearinghouse*: Expanded NCCE's previous resources to include more than 2,000 new entries on Hispanic organizations and education services, national and local
- **Outreach**
 - *Home visits*: Hired local staff as Parent Outreach Specialists to do extensive outreach by making hundreds of contacts and dozens of home visits throughout the project
 - *School district*: Made contact with parent involvement offices in each district; worked with the Edgewood office on an ongoing basis
- **Advocacy**
 - *Roles, rights & responsibilities*: Conducted approximately 8 training sessions per year for parents (and occasionally AVANCE) on these topics, to develop knowledge and skills
 - *Access to resources*: Helped to tie in parents to local and national advocacy networks
- **Collaboration**
 - *Local*: Along with AVANCE, introduced the project to businesses and community groups
 - *National*: Strengthened ties with several national Hispanic groups
- **Trust-building**
 - *Focus on teachers*: Provided teachers with training to promote comprehension and appreciation of parent involvement and to advance cultural awareness
 - *Focus on others*: Offered additional resources to parents, schools and the community
- **Leadership**
 - *Parent*: Provided support for parents who were recruiting and involving other parents
 - *Community*: Worked closely with the Mexican-American Legal Defence and Education Fund (MALDEF) on parent leadership training workshops

Key Findings and Lessons

Part One: A Profile of San Antonio

- ◆ Hispanics are unquestionably the largest, poorest, and youngest population segment in San Antonio. The vast majority are of Mexican ancestry.
- ◆ The relationship between poverty and ethnicity in San Antonio remains powerful, as indicated by such measures as high dropout rates, limited employment opportunities, and low income levels among the city's Hispanic population.
- ◆ Most of San Antonio's poorest neighborhoods are those in which Hispanic families live; this is especially true for the two neighborhoods surrounding the Edgewood and the San Antonio Independent School Districts, in which the PAE program operated. Parents living in these sections of the city lack the necessary resources and clout to ensure that their children receive equal educational opportunities.
- ◆ Children living in the economically disadvantaged neighborhoods of San Antonio suffer from disadvantages that will continue throughout their academic life; addressing the inequality in the schools and neighborhoods is central to any future advancements for children.
- ◆ In most Latino communities, like San Antonio, the family plays the most important role in providing safe and nurturing environments and teaching positive values. The family, as society's primary institution for strengthening their children's physical, emotional, and intellectual growth, is in critical need of services, policies, and resources that support and respect their effort. By strengthening the family, the community is also empowered.
- ◆ Thus, in considering the educational and developmental needs of all children--but especially those in poor communities like those in the PAE project--it is important to hold not only the education system accountable, but also the other systems--child care, health care, housing--that support Latino children and their families.

Part Two: Program Design

- ◆ Research and experience has demonstrated that parent involvement improves the academic achievement of all children, regardless of the family's socio-economic status, racial, ethnic, or educational background. It also benefits the family, the school, and the community.

- ◆ The PAE program strongly believed that Latino parents, like parents of other racial or ethnic backgrounds, are interested in the well-being of their children. It also recognized, however, that Hispanic parents in this country face many challenges that do not always allow them to provide the best housing, schools, and neighborhoods for their children.
- ◆ The role of decision makers and leaders in the educational process has traditionally been relegated to teachers; Hispanic parents are not used to taking a leading role in the education of their children. Therefore, the design of the PAE program assumed: that Hispanic parents are in need of a greater understanding of how a public school system works; that they would benefit from more information on what parent roles, rights, and responsibilities could be; and that they needed support in order to become more effective advocates for, and play more meaningful roles in, their children's education.
- ◆ Hispanic families and their public schools often suffer from poor relationships due to cultural differences, language barriers, and misconceptions about one another. Not surprisingly, the program discovered that teachers and administrators--both Hispanic and non-Hispanic--can play a more fundamental role in making parent involvement more effective in public schools.
- ◆ Parent involvement, as an important strategy for improving children's education, is not the exclusive task of parents and teachers. Local community-based organizations, like AVANCE, have a stake in educating Hispanic children; they can play an active role in providing a support system for families and schools.

Part Three: From Ideas to Action

- ◆ Involving Hispanic families in the education of their children is a time-consuming and challenging process, but one that can result in handsome payoffs for all who make a serious, long-term commitment.
- ◆ Information is a key factor in helping parents understand and interact with the public school system. Hispanic families, due to cultural and language differences, often lack meaningful information. Creating bilingual and culturally sensitive materials is essential to recruiting and retaining parents in the involvement of their children's education.
- ◆ With the proper leadership, training, and encouragement, most parents have the capacity to actively become involved on behalf of their children; it is within reach of some parents to influence school decisions and others to become leaders and organizers in their communities in order to mobilize other parents.

- ◆ Collaboration between community organizations, schools, and parents--representing three "legs of the stool" in support of children--proved critical to the ongoing success of PAE's parent involvement program in San Antonio.
- ◆ Finally, as revealed in San Antonio, too many educators, especially non-Hispanics, lack the time, opportunity, or motivation to learn about Hispanic families or culture. Ultimately, only the school system, with some strategic assistance from interested community groups, can play the necessary role in making sure adequate planning, training, resources, and energy are available for the task.

Part Four: A National View

- ◆ There are 22 million Latinos in the United States. It is estimated that by the year 2000, Hispanics will be the largest minority group--in the country and in the public schools.
- ◆ Not until educational conditions of Latino families are significantly improved will the socio-economic gap between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic population be closed. But education alone will not resolve poverty; it must be approached from several other directions, such as housing, health care, employment, and social services.
- ◆ Hispanics made modest gains in educational attainment in the 1980s; however, they remain among the most under-educated racial/ethnic groups, and in most instances the educational gap between Hispanics and non-Hispanics is widening.
- ◆ Hispanic youth have the highest dropout rates, fewer years of school completion, lower rates of college enrollment, and higher rates of illiteracy than virtually any group in the country. The extent of educational disadvantages for Hispanics goes from pre-school through post-secondary education. It also affects Latinos of every sub-group and in every region.
- ◆ Generalizations about Latinos have obscured the important differences among them and hampered the appropriate development of programs and policies to further their education and socio-economic outcomes.

Reflections and Recommendations

1. *Get to Know the Community*

It is critical for those involved in starting and/or operating a new program (especially one focused on parents, children, schools, and communities) to get to know the local people and their living/working/parenting/coping circumstances--whether or not they

are from that community. This is especially true in settings where most of the parents and families are viewed as being outside "the American mainstream."

With specific reference to San Antonio's PAE project--in which the parents are Hispanic (Latino), mostly living below the poverty level in neighborhoods that seriously lack services and resources, and with limited histories or connections with the public schools--it is incumbent upon everyone involved in running a program to take the time to visit, discuss, observe, study and otherwise get to know the parents, the neighborhoods, and the broader socio-economic and political issues that shape the larger context.

To this end, there are a number of diverse sources and strategies for gathering and using information. Many of the tools included in this handbook are helpful in this regard. Also, consider local census data and other relevant information that profiles the families, schools, and neighborhoods in the target communities.

2. *Understand the Broader Needs of the Families*

It was essential to gain as much understanding of the strengths and weaknesses, needs and opportunities of parents and families in the PAE program as possible. This is not to say that the PAE project--or any other single program--should promise more than it can deliver. However, it is not enough to discover/determine the needs of the parents apart from their children or divorced from their immediate living conditions.

Again, it takes time and commitment by the program to do this important background work. NCCE made efforts to do this on several fronts: a.) creation of review criteria for selection of both the community and the specific schools; b.) use of an evaluation design that incorporated strategies to learn from and about the San Antonio families; c.) our partnership with an experienced and respected community-based organization (AVANCE); and d.) a process dedicated to ongoing research, review, and revisions.

3. *Recognize and Anticipate Barriers--in the Schools and the Communities*

Even the best of parent involvement programs encounter barriers--both small and large. PAE anticipated many of these, including outreach, language, materials, and staffing--and addressed them reasonably well. It had more difficulty dealing with those concerns outside the schools--related to poverty, the lack of comprehensive and continuous child care, etc.

Perhaps the most significant challenges to overcome with regard to the schools were: the uncertainty by many low-income parents about how to maintain an active relationship with schools that have rarely welcomed them; and the limited knowledge of, and motivation by, educators towards these parents.

4. *Make Sure Resources Are Readily Available and Strategically Used*

It was important to have resources that were thoughtfully targeted to the needs and strengths of the parents in San Antonio. Through the partnership with AVANCE, the PAE project was able to hire and supervise staff who handled all parent outreach, provided useful information and materials, and acted as liaisons with the schools. In addition, the two PAE workers were housed and supervised by AVANCE which also served as the main contact with NCCE in Washington.

The presence of "local" NCCE staff in San Antonio, which meant greater visibility and credibility, also required tailored communications, support, and resources from the national office on a regular basis over the life of the project.

5. *Improve the Understandings and Attitudes Between Parents and Teachers*

Teachers and parents know relatively little about one another. They often come from and live in different places, and there are few opportunities for them to learn more about each other. Both need to find new and different (perhaps more creative) ways to better understand each other's world: educators can introduce parents to the overall school and parents can introduce school personnel to neighborhoods. This is an area that the PAE project was weak on, and that future work needs to emphasize.

6. *Make Parent Involvement more Familiar and Meaningful to All*

Despite regulations and rhetoric that often sing the praises of "parent involvement," too few teachers and administrators in San Antonio appear to be very knowledgeable about either parent involvement programs/resources in general or the PAE program in particular. Aside from attending the initial teacher training session, the school faculty made limited attempts overall to become familiar with the PAE program goals and resources. This points up a weakness of the PAE project, since it focused mainly on the parents and not as much on the teachers or the schools.

This can be remedied. NCCE has gathered a number of tools, resources, and strategies to address this concern, although their use would most likely require an even more significant commitment on the part of all participants.

7. *Address the Age-old Issues of Time and Resources*

Schools and their staff have many obligations and relatively little time for attending extra trainings or meetings, even when they have some interest in the new efforts. Many new commitments or "add-ons" are regularly being introduced, although not that many are ever fully embraced, much less institutionalized; new programs/priorities,

such as PAE, have to fight for time and attention. Successful adoption generally requires a "champion" on the inside, significant resources from the outside, and the necessary time to make the project work for everyone involved.

8. *Create Partnerships*

Overall, there was easier acceptance of the PAE project when the locally well-known and respected community-based organization (AVANCE) entered into partnership with NCCE. Their knowledge of the San Antonio families, schools, and neighborhoods made it much more possible to develop trust and relationships between the different players. Also, the fact that AVANCE had more diverse and extensive awareness of community resources enabled some of the parents and families to make connections with health, social services, and employment opportunities.

Participants, especially some of the principals, acknowledged the value of outside groups--both local and national--particularly when they were able to deliver useful materials and/or concrete services. Also, in the beginning there was some prestige and benefit from working with a national organization (NCCE) and being part of a pilot project, even though this currency does not last long or guarantee lasting commitment.

It is important not to be seen simply as a one-time resource. It is essential to improve the likelihood of continuation, in anticipation of the national partnership ending, by establishing a partnership with a solid CBO like AVANCE. (While there is no guarantee of new funding due to this partnership, there nevertheless is a capacity upon which to build.)

9. *Pay Attention to the Program*

It is crucial to review the program from beginning to end. Concerning start-up, there are a variety of sources to look at for inspiration on developing successful projects for Spanish-speaking families (schools and communities): 1.) recent and successful parent involvement programs, especially those models that stress collective responsibility as reflected in the concept of Home/School/Community partnerships; 2.) ideas and approaches drawn from the best work of other Hispanic projects and research (e.g., *Aspira*; *La Raza*); and 3.) more traditional citizen involvement, training, and organizing efforts.

Two of the most important points to focus on during the operational phase of the PAE project relate to the concepts of process and partnership. An emphasis on thoughtful and clear processes can contribute a sense of consistency and ownership to the work. It also encourages mutual respect, increases benefits, and leads to potential "win-win" situations. The value of partnerships--at the local as well as national levels--is both conceptual and practical. It makes sense to advocate for collective responsibility on

behalf of our children and shared ownership for the program. And, as demonstrated in PAE's efforts, it is also a good idea to make use of national resources and local knowledge, whenever possible.

Throughout the project and at its conclusion, evaluation can be useful in the improvement and continuation of the program. If seen as a "user-friendly" tool, evaluation can be helpful in making mid-course corrections, measuring accomplishments, and informing strategies for future revisions. There are many types of evaluation design, ranging from a third-party or outside evaluator to self-evaluation. The PAE project used a combination of both, with mixed results. It is necessary therefore to consider carefully the most appropriate approach for assessing and documenting the project's activities and accomplishments.

Some final notes on program continuation: First, it is important to develop broad-based community ownership and ongoing public support for the work. And second, to the extent possible, both the original proposals and the actual programs need to have strategies that focus on local capacity building (advocacy; key information and resources; leadership development).

Program Evaluation

Most of the data and program results in this handbook have been extracted from two main sources: 1.) formal evaluation and documentation efforts and 2.) reviews of relevant data and literature. The formal sources included an independent evaluation on PAE's activities, program effectiveness as perceived by participants, and program strengths and weaknesses during the first year. It was conducted by the Center for the Study of Evaluation (CSE), at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). In addition, NCCE conducted its own exit survey at the end of the second year to parents (58, or 30%), teachers (15), and school principals (4) who participated in the program. The secondary sources that are reflected in this document include: 1990 Census data, resource materials and literature from Hispanic organizations, and NCCE's publication and research, and experience working with minority families and communities.

Part I

Community Profile:

San Antonio



Community Profile: San Antonio Texas

Roberto' and Lupe's Story: Part I

Roberto and Guadalupe Pérez have lived in their present home for the past twelve years. A console television set is the only luxury in their three-bedroom home, located in a housing project in southwest San Antonio. Roberto works for a construction company making minimum wage, and Lupe stays home to care for their seven children, whose ages range from two to seventeen.

Roberto, whose parents grew up in San Antonio, is bilingual and graduated from the same high school his two oldest children attended. Lupe speaks only Spanish and left school after the 10th grade, in her native Mexico. Later, she came to the United States with her family and soon married Roberto. She found English difficult to learn, and at the time she believed she did not really need it, since most of her neighbors and relatives were bilingual. The Pérez children, however, are all bilingual or are in the process of learning the two languages.

Their two oldest children, Juan and Teresa, dropped out of school. Juan (17-years-old) had poor grades and decided that school was not for him, while Teresa (15-years-old) became pregnant and was too embarrassed to return to school. The two youngest children are of pre-school age, but they do not attend school. Mrs. Pérez, does not know that her children are more likely to do better in school if they attend a pre-school program; and second, she has neither the means to send them to nursery school, nor access to information about free pre-school programs. The other three children attend the local elementary school and are in 2nd, 4th, and 6th grades. Lupe walks with them to school every day because she is afraid something will happen to them.

Lupe wishes she could work outside the home, but understands the difficulties of finding a job with limited skills and no knowledge of English. She knows that the low wages she can earn--possibly doing domestic work on the wealthier Northside of San Antonio--would all be invested in child care. At any rate, she would have to take the children to another neighborhood because she knows of no facilities close to where she lives. Transportation is also a problem: the family owns only a very old truck that Roberto takes to work every day, and public transportation is not very reliable.

Roberto and Lupe would like a better life for their children, but things seem to get worse every day. Now in her late thirties, Lupe wishes she hadn't dropped out of school and is determined to learn English; she realizes that education is important for a better job. She wants her children to stay in school, but does not know how to get the oldest ones back on the right track--and she fears that the younger children will follow in their footsteps. She desperately needs help and support. Unfortunately she does not know where to go for it.

A. Introduction

The implementation of *Padres a la escuela* in San Antonio was determined by factors related to the demographic, educational, and socio-economic conditions of that city, as well as logistical considerations involving site accessibility, funding potential, availability of a community-based organization (CBO) to carry out the program, and interest expressed by, as well as specific needs of, the school community. San Antonio fully satisfied all these site requirements, and offered greater possibilities for better educational outcomes for Hispanic children than did other suggested locations. This chapter summarizes the conditions that led to NCCE's two-year commitment to the Hispanic families in that southern central Texas city, and provides a brief description of the community in which the program took place.

San Antonio is, according to the Census Bureau, sixth among the nation's Metropolitan Statistical Areas with the highest percentage (47.6%) of Hispanic origin. The city is well known for its history, strong multicultural influences, beauty, and the warmth of its people. However, the reality is that in the middle of its richness, San Antonio faces poverty, tremendous educational inequities, and social disadvantages which affect the Hispanic family as well as its children's educational outcomes--despite the fact that the once-totally segregated Hispanic community is slowly dispersing into the northwestern section of the city and into suburban areas.

Often, the amount of time and energy required to provide their children with the most basic needs, combined with cultural traditions which separate schooling from family life, and with insensitive attitudes or policies in many American schools, have served to isolate Latino parents from their children's formal education. Although the Texas Education Agency (TEA) mandates the inclusion of parental involvement programs in all public schools, parent participation in school activities in low-income sections of the city remains minimal. Unless decisive actions are taken by the community, the low-income Hispanic families in San Antonio will not improve the quality of their lives.

The information provided in this chapter is the most recently available from the Census Bureau. Due to the difficulty of collecting complete data either for the San Antonio Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) or Bexar County, we will use information from both sources as availability dictates. The San Antonio MSA consists of Bexar, Comal, and Guadalupe Counties, with more than 90 percent of the population concentrated in Bexar County. Data for Bexar County includes the city of San Antonio. It's important for the reader to remember that the data reflects the U.S. Census determination that Hispanic population can be of any race.

Yolanda's Story: Part I

Yolanda García, even though she is a very young woman, feels as though her life is in a tunnel with no light at the other end. Her husband abandoned her and their three children two years ago, and has not been heard from since. She works as a part time cashier at the neighborhood's convenience store making minimum wage, and has no health insurance. Like many other single parents with a low income, it has often seemed to be all she could do just to provide her children with their basic needs.

Yolanda graduated from high school and would really like to go to college some day. She feels more comfortable speaking English, although she can communicate in Spanish when necessary. She lives with her parents in a small house on the Southside of San Antonio. They often take care of the children for her, particularly after school hours.

Patricia and Sonia, her two daughters, are not doing well in school. Yolanda would like to help them, but has never known quite how to go about it. All her life she has believed that it would be wrong to interfere with the way the teacher instructs, since the teacher is, after all, a well-educated professional.

The elementary school her daughters attend has been the target of several community organizations, which offer a variety of adult-education and parent-involvement programs on the campus. All parents are welcome to attend these sessions, which are usually held in the morning and less often in the evening or on weekends. Yolanda has seen flyers inviting parents to come to these programs, but she did not feel that they would concern her or her children's needs. In effect, she did not understand how these workshops might be of any benefit to the Garcia family.



B. Demographic Profile of San Antonio.

1. Race and Hispanic origin

Hispanics are by far the largest ethnic group in the San Antonio MSA. Approximately 616,800 (47.4%) of San Antonio's residents are of Hispanic origin which, combined with the African-American population, comprises more than half of the metropolitan-area population. Close to two thirds (64.9%) of the Hispanics in San Antonio are reported by the census to be within the White racial group (see Figure 1.1).

FIGURE 1.1
San Antonio MSA population
by Race and Hispanic Origin

Population	Numbers	Percentage
White	979,319	75.2
African-American	88,709	6.8
Asian	16,020	1.2
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	4,673	0.4
Other Race	213,378	16.4
Total population	1,302,099	100.0
Hispanic origin any race	616,878	47.4
Total non-Hispanic	685,221	

Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing

2. Hispanic diversity in San Antonio

The majority (92.7%) of Hispanics in San Antonio are of Mexican ancestry, which greatly exceeds the national percentage of 62.6 percent. Other Latinos, including Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans, constitute a small fragment of the Hispanic population in San Antonio. Overall, 44 percent of all residents of the San Antonio MSA are of Mexican background (see Figure 1.2). (*1990 Census of Population and Housing*).

FIGURE 1.2

**Composition of Hispanic population
in the San Antonio MSA 1990**

Hispanic Population	Numbers	Percentage
Mexican	571,960	92.7
Cuban	1,293	0.2
Puerto Rican	7,514	1.2
Central and South Americans	5,939	1.0
Other	30,172	4.9
Total Hispanic Population	616,878	100.0
Total non-Hispanic Pop.	685,221	

Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing



3. Age distribution of Hispanics in San Antonio

With a median age of 30, San Antonio's population is about 3 years below the U.S. median (32.9 years). Hispanics, with a median of 26.2 years, are slightly younger than Blacks, and more than five years younger than Whites. Almost two thirds of the Latino population in San Antonio are younger than 35, and almost half of those are school-age (5-19 years). At the same time, only seven percent of Latinos in the San Antonio MSA are 65 or older, compared with 11.2 percent of Whites and 8.6 percent of Blacks (see Figure 1.3).

FIGURE 1.3
Percentage of Age Distribution, Hispanics and
Non-Hispanics Bexar County 1990

Age	Hispanic	White	Black	Total
Under 5 years	10.1	7.8	9.2	8.4
5 - 19 years	28.9	22.8	25.5	24.3
20 - 34 years	26.3	25.2	27.4	26.0
35 - 44 years	13.4	15.0	13.7	14.6
45 - 64 years	14.3	18.0	15.6	16.8
65 and over	7.0	11.2	8.6	9.9
Total percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total in numbers	589,180	878,736	84,670	1,185,394
Median age	26.2	31.5	28.6	30.0

Source: Census of Population and Housing 1990

Locally as well as nationally, age distribution and other socio-economic indicators among Hispanic subgroups vary substantially. Hispanics of Mexican origin are not only the largest subgroup in Bexar County, but also the youngest, with a median age of 26.1. Puerto Ricans are a close second, with a median age of 27.1. The Cuban population has a median age of 36 years, which makes them the oldest Hispanic subgroup in Bexar county. Others, including Central and South Americans, have a median of 27 years.

C. Educational Profile of Hispanics in San Antonio

The growing socio-economic inequalities in the San Antonio MSA has a significant impact on educational outcomes, particularly for low-income minority groups: access, opportunities, and educational resources are not equally distributed among the poor and the wealthiest residents.¹ As throughout the U.S., Hispanic remain the most undereducated segment of the population: 23 percent of San Antonio's adults are illiterate; 47 percent of Hispanic ninth-graders do not graduate from high school; and the public school drop out rate for Bexar County is 5.7 percent.

1. School districts and student population

According to the TEA, during the 1989-1990 academic year there were 20 Independent School Districts (ISDs) in Bexar county, and most children attended school in the district in which they lived. This chapter will include data from 12 school districts, and will exclude three which are located on military installations, and those outside San Antonio city limits.



¹ A legal battle of historic proportions is currently being waged in the Lone Star State over the issue of equitable school financing. As of Spring, 1993, the Texas state supreme court had thrown out three proposed funding plans in the last four years.

Community Profile

In 1990, 60 percent of the student population in Bexar County were of Hispanic origin. Thirty-one percent of students were White, and 17.3 percent were African-American (see Figure 1.4). It is estimated that between the years 1990 and 2010 the school age population of San Antonio will grow by 40 percent.

FIGURE 1.4
Bexar County Population Distribution,
by Ethnicity, 1989-1990

Population	Numbers	Percentage
White	71,7	31.28
Black	13,7	7.54
Asian	2,3	1.05
American Indian	9	0.04
Hispanic	137,8	60.09
Total	229,3	100.00

Source: Texas Education Agency

The distribution of ethnic populations within the school districts reflects the demographics of the county itself. White students live primarily in the Northside areas of the county, Hispanics predominate in the Southside and Westside areas. The greatest percentage of Black students attend schools in three districts located closest to the Eastside (*Pride and Poverty, 1991*).

Ethnic separation in Bexar County continues to be evident. In 1990 (as seen in figure 1.5), 71 percent of all Bexar County students attended school districts with a Hispanic population greater than 74 percent. School districts with majority-White student populations have minority populations comprising less than 28 percent of all students.

FIGURE 1.5
Bexar County School Districts,
By Ethnicity, Number and Percentage 1989 -1990

District	Students	White %	Black %	Hisp. %
Alamo Heights	3,470	71	3	25
East Central	5,771	55	11	33
Edgewood	15,485	1	2	96
Harlandale	15,039	10	0	89
Judson	12,883	57	15	25
Northeast	39,622	62	7	29
San Antonio	61,156	7	12	81
Somerset	1,902	33	0	67
South San Antonio	10,692	7	2	91
Southside	2,819	25	0	74
Southwest	7,430	20	5	75
Bexar County	225,716	31	8	60

Source: Texas education Agency

All school districts teach low-income children. According to *Pride and Poverty: A Report on San Antonio*, there are students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals offered under the national school lunch program in every district in Bexar county. Edgewood has the largest percentage (90%) of eligible students, followed by San Antonio and South San Antonio with 88 percent each, and Southside, with 84 percent. Judson, Northeast, and Alamo Heights have the lowest percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. These are also the school districts with the lowest percentage of Hispanic students.

2. Academic achievement

The Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) is administered to all Texas schoolchildren. Results from the 1989-90 academic year tests, given to all 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, and 11th-graders, indicates that districts with a high percentage of free or reduced-price-lunch students had an average pass rate of 66 percent, while districts with fewer students eligible for the lunch program enjoyed a median pass rate of almost 82 percent.

The Edgewood ISD passing rate was below the median across the grades. The San Antonio ISD was also below the county median, except for 7th and 11th-graders, who scored 73 and 68 percent respectively (see Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6
Percentage of selected Bexar County Students
Passing TEAMS Test, 1989-90

District	Grade 3	Grade 5	Grade 7	Grade 9	Grade 11
Alamo Heights	69	81	90	73	80
Edgewood	54	60	63	43	60
Northeast	78	86	86	70	82
San Antonio	50	66	73	52	68
Bexar County	60	69	77	58	72

Source: Texas Education Agency

3. Dropout rates

According to the TEA, during the academic year 1989-90, 5,316 students dropped out of school in Bexar County alone. These statistics are especially alarming for the Latino community, because seven out of ten dropouts were Hispanic.

The relationship between poverty, ethnicity, and dropout rates comes as no surprise. The San Antonio-area school districts with the lowest percentage of minority students (Alamo Heights, Northeast, and Judson), also have the lowest percentage of low-income students, and an average dropout rate of four percent. In contrast, the San Antonio ISD--the

largest district in the county--has an 82 percent low-income student population and the highest dropout rate (see Figure 1.7).

FIGURE 1.7
Public School Dropouts by Selected
School District, Bexar County, 1989-90

District	Total Dropout	Dropout Rate
Alamo Heights	25	1.7
Edgewood	303	5.4
Harlandale	169	2.8
Judson	228	4.0
Northeast	628	3.5
San Antonio	2,662	11.3
South San Antonio	422	10.2
Bexar County	5,316	5.7

Source: Texas Education Agency. Information is based on a one-day count of students enrolled on the first Monday of October 1989.



D. The PAE Communities

The PAE program was implemented for a period of two years in two school districts in San Antonio: Edgewood Independent School District and San Antonio Independent School District. The most significant socio-economic and educational conditions of Latino families in these neighborhoods have been highlighted throughout this chapter. Specific data about the families participating in PAE was collected in two ways: The evaluation performed by the Center for Study of Evaluation (CSE) at the University of California at Los Angeles, and a less formal (but significantly informative) NCCE survey of PAE families and educators. But families, children, and schools are more than statistics; they are the core of almost every activity taking place in the community.

1. The families

A careful look at the statistics, and a review of the literature on poverty and other indicators of the socio-economic status throughout San Antonio reveals stark and distressful numbers. Visiting and working in these neighborhoods, on the other hand, brings a more balanced perspective, as the numbers translate into the reality of individuals and families who live and plan, hope and strive for a future from the devastation the statistics alone would seem to predict.

Certainly PAE staff saw poverty, unemployment, many families headed by single parents, illiteracy, drugs and violence in the streets. We watched beautiful children without shoes and poorly dressed skip along unpaved roads, while skinny "pets" roamed along the gutters. But we also established a relationship with many of these families: They are warm, friendly, and caring; like families in "upper-class" neighborhoods, there is a real sense of community, and parents want to provide their children with a better life.

Parents who attended our program wanted two main things: to better themselves and to help their children succeed in school.

Who are the PAE families? Ninety-five percent are of Hispanic origin and 90 percent of them are of Mexican background. The vast majority (89.7%) of parents who answered our survey are White, 3.4 percent Black, 5.2 percent American Indian, and 1.7 Asian--which reflects the racial composition of the county.

Both the age range and education levels of the parents, varied considerably:

- 23 percent have a seventh- to ninth-grade education.
- 34 percent have left school between the end of grade 9 and grade 12
- 4 percent have 13 to 16 years of schooling
- 26 percent of the respondents never attended school in the U. S.
(*Evaluation Report, CSE.*)

Almost half (43%) the PAE families include one or two children, and 39.7 percent have between three and five. Large families of six to nine constitute 12.9 percent, and 3.4 percent have ten or more children (*Padres a la escuela Survey*).

Bilingualism is highly regarded in San Antonio. Children and adults switch between English and Spanish very easily. Our survey revealed that 77.1 percent of children are bilingual, as are 79.2 percent of parents who attended the workshops--which led us to conduct all training and issue all written material in both languages (*Padres a la escuela Survey*).



Community Profile

2. The schools

The PAE program was implemented in four elementary schools: Las Palmas, Stafford, and Guerra in the Edgewood School District, and Carvajal in the San Antonio ISD. As established by the program plan, participating schools were required to have a Hispanic enrollment of 75 percent or higher and have a significant low-income population. Both requirements, as seen in Figure 1.8, were met in these school communities.

FIGURE 1.8
Percentage of Hispanic-Origin enrollment and
Free or Reduced-Meals in Four Schools

School	Total Enrollment	Percentage Hispanic	% of Hisp. Teachers	% Free Meals
Las Palmas	517	98.5	76	96.0
Stafford	680	96.0	50	95.0
Guerra	166	99.0	94	95.0
Carvajal	500	99.0	50	95.0
Total	1,863	98.1		

Source: Padres a la escuela. Survey for Educators



3. The neighborhoods

As previously described, the communities in which PAE was implemented are composed mainly of low-income Hispanic families. Very few own their homes and the vast majority live in substandard rental units. There is not enough subsidized housing for the growing numbers of low-income families. Health services (public or private) are not available for many; the state of Texas has the highest uninsured rate (26%) in the country, a fact that is reflected in the communities of the Edgewood and San Antonio school districts. Teen pregnancy rates in the low-income neighborhoods of Bexar county are more than three times higher than those in the highest-income communities (Texas' teen- pregnancy rate is the second highest in the nation; only Mississippi fares worse).

More than half of poor Hispanic households in the area have a member in the work force. Twenty-one percent of them are employed in the service sector, and 70 percent earn minimum wage (*Pride and Poverty*). Yet only 25 percent of all eligible people in the community receive welfare. Texas is the only place in the nation with a state-constitutional limit on funding for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). No more than one percent of the state budget can be spent on welfare!

a. Possible problems affecting the community and its schools

In the *Padres a la escuela* survey, we asked parents about some "possible problems" and how much they might affect the community. Some very serious concerns were voiced by overwhelming percentages of respondents:

- presence of gangs (84.5%)
- violence in the streets (75.8%)
- presence of illegal drugs (70.7%) were the top three concerns.

Several major needs were also mentioned by many parents .

- child care (62%)
- affordable housing (56.9%)
- health care (53.4%)
- after-school programs (46.6%)

Community Profile

- public transportation (37.9%)
- pre-school programs (34.4%)



b. Possible resources available in the community

In the *Padres a la escuela* survey, we gave the parents a list of resources that "may or may not be available" in the community, and asked how available these resources are to them. In response, parents reported concern about the lack of resources that lead to human development, such as neighborhood associations, community-based organizations, parents groups, and community centers. The lack of services or facilities for child care and recreation (playgrounds) were a second priority. On the other hand, lack of shopping centers is not of major importance to this community.

Part II

PAE Program: Design and Components



PAE Program: Design and Components

Roberto's and Lupe's Story: Part II

Perhaps out of sheer desperation at first, because she knew she had to do something to help her children succeed, Lupe Pérez suddenly began attending PAE workshops. After several sessions, the change in her attitude was obvious: Lupe had realized that the education of her children was not all up to the teachers, and that she could participate in the decisions that affected their schooling. She was delighted--and gratified--to discover that she had rights in the public schools, and that she could count on support from within the community to act on behalf of her children's academic success.

In order to become more familiar with the school her children attend, Lupe found a source for the child care which is so scarce in her neighborhood. Now, when she needs transportation to or from the campus, she requests help from AVANCE--and she receives it. Lately, she spends so much time at the school that Roberto teases her gently about her "new life."

This is what Lupe told us about PAE: "I was callada (quiet) before. But here I have learned things that I never knew, and they have helped me to feel more confident talking to the teachers. I also feel more welcomed at the school. Besides all that, I have even learned to communicate better with my children; one thing is for sure--my youngest children are not going to drop out of school or become pregnant. I dropped out of school and now I am sorry that I did. But I can do something about it. Soon, I will take the G.E.D."

"PAE made me feel special, you care about me. No quiero que se acabe PAE (I do not want PAE to come to an end)."

"For these are *all* our children...we will all profit by or all pay for whatever they become."

James Baldwin

A. Background

1. Parent involvement in the public schools: A brief history

The parent-involvement concept and related activities were present in this country as early as 1890, when professional educators and urban lay people focused on defining the precise relationship between home and school. Parent-involvement activities at that time were led by middle- and upper-class women and reflected the age of "humanitarianism" and "social spirit." This period also saw the establishment of numerous local parent-trade associations, providing the basis for greater understanding between home and school.

Beginning in the 1900s, urban parents expanded their role to become active participants in the shaping of education policy, and contributed to the expansion of the curriculum. At the same time, there was resistance from educators who sometimes preferred indifferent parents to those who disagreed with the experts. Issues promoted by parents at this time were geared to making school more like home. Fund raising--bake sales--had its beginning as a way of supporting parent organizations.

In the 1960s, the country saw the rebirth of national commitment to a federal role in a number of social issues, and the growing awareness of the need for collective action. In education, parents, particularly members of ethnic minorities, began to challenge large public school systems to respond positively and actively to local tradition and values. In the mid-'60s, the federal government legitimized parental involvement. The Head Start and Follow Through programs were created to involve parents of migrant, bilingual, and special education children in pre-school and grades K-3.

During the '60s and '70s, legislation and court decisions mandated parental involvement for language-minority groups under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, Title I (Chapter 1), and Title VII (Bilingual Education).

In the early '70s, parent involvement received considerable attention from government agencies, researchers, ethnic constituencies, and organized teachers and citizens. In fact, NCCE was created in 1973 as a way of nationally promoting parent and citizen involvement in public education. NCCE became the first national organization dedicated to the improvement of public education through citizen involvement.

The 1980s and '90s have been characterized by renewed interest in parental involvement. Reassessment of parents, teachers, and community roles to create close partnerships in educating children is a major concern. During the last 15 years, parent involvement has

developed into an intrinsic part of education in the U.S. Hispanics, as a major and distinct minority, have become the focus of several organizations' campaigns to promote parental involvement, which is a relatively new concept for most Latino families (*Creating Parental Involvement: A Manual for School Personnel*).

2. Parent involvement purposes: What the research says

Nearly everyone involved in public education now realizes that working more closely with parents and families is essential for improving not only student achievement but also the quality of education offered in public schools. Today, the education literature is full of references to the importance of involving parents in the education of their children.

In *The Evidence Continues to Grow*, a book that reviews the research on the effects of parent involvement on student performance, editor Anne Henderson from the National Committee for Citizens in Education identifies these benefits which result from parent participation:

- Higher grades and test scores
- Long-term improvement in academic achievement
- Positive attitudes and behavior
- More successful programs
- More effective schools.



PAE Program

From the 49 studies included in this publication, other important conclusions which are highlighted include the following:

- The family provides the primary educational environment.
- There is no one best way to go about parent involvement. What works is for parents to be involved in a variety of roles over a period of time. The form of parent involvement does not seem to be as important as that it is reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting.
- This is not to say that positive effects take years to surface and that only highly developed programs work. Even a low level of participation can have a statistically powerful effect. Research has found that many effective programs are so different from each other that all they have in common is parent involvement--and student achievement. In fact, parents seem to be the one essential ingredient.
- Benefits are not confined to early childhood or the elementary level; there are strong effects from involving parents continuously, throughout high school. Nevertheless, the majority of parent-involvement activities remains in the early grades.
- Involving parents in their own children's education at home is not enough. To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, parents must be involved at all levels of schooling.
- Parent involvement improves academic achievement of all children regardless of the family's socio-economic status, racial, ethnic or educational background. Parents do not have to be well educated to help. The case is no different for Hispanic families.

The evidence is clear: When parents are involved in children's schooling, children do better in school and they go to better schools. Both families and schools want the best for children. They want to help them learn, grow, and develop into educated, responsible, and caring adults. Because they share the same basic goals, it seems obvious that parents and educators should be working together. (Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms, *Beyond the Bake Sale*).

3. Parent involvement principles: What NCCE and others believe

Everyone, from parents and teachers to community members and practitioners, has a different concept of parent involvement. And by the same token, there are a wide variety of ways to implement successful programs. There is no right or wrong definition of parental involvement. Because the process provides so many possibilities, parents may play different roles in their children's education: providing a safe, healthy, warm environment at home; helping their children learn and supporting school events; acting as an advocate for their individual child; taking direct action to affect local education policy and school governance--to suggest a few. Most parents begin their involvement at the point at which they feel most comfortable, based on their knowledge, self-confidence, motivation, language skills, and their child's success and achievement in school. For a more comprehensive overview of parents' roles in education, see Tools and Resources section.

Because NCCE recognizes and respects the family, school, and community values that seek to ensure successful student outcomes through parental involvement, we also believe that the following principles are essential for an effective family-school-community partnership:



a. Children and families

- All children must have the chance to develop to their full potential.
- While maintaining and respecting cultural diversity--one of this country's greatest riches--all children must have an equal opportunity to enter the social, educational, and economic mainstream.
- Children do best when parents are personally involved, offer support, and fulfill their responsibility of loving providers.
- Parents carry the primary responsibility for strengthening their children's physical, emotional, and intellectual growth, and for providing them with values and guidance.
- The family, as society's primary institution for bringing children into the world, is the main source of support for children's development throughout their childhood.
- The family is an agent in the culturalization process, teaching the children social manners and behavior.
- Parent involvement is not a one-time event, but a process through which parents grow in their ability to help their children receive the best education possible.
- Parent involvement is also a process that encourages and builds the capacity for both parents and children to become active citizens in a democracy.

b. School

- Schools are safe and caring places at the heart of every community.
- The public school system reflects the full spectrum of American pluralism in order to accommodate diverse families and children, and must recognize and support every child's gifts and abilities.

- Public schools must fully support every family's desire to raise their children to be healthy, humane, and productive citizens.
- The school has a responsibility to forge a partnership with all families in the school, including working parents, and race- and language-minority families.
- The public school welcomes the participation of citizens.

c. Community

- Communities have a major responsibility to create a safe and secure atmosphere for families and children.
- *All* citizens--not only parents--must hold public schools accountable for providing equal opportunity and producing excellent outcomes for all children.
- Community-based organizations and institutions, such as public- and private-sector agencies, houses of worship, and libraries, have an obligation to provide comprehensive support systems for the development of children and families.
- All citizens have the right and responsibility to have their voice heard in decisions affecting public schools.
- Parents and all other citizens need to be involved in building a strong public will in support of public schools.

Additional source: *Beyond Rhetoric: A New American Agenda for Children and Families*, 1991 (the final report of the National Commission on Children).

4. **The Hispanic family: Special concerns and contributions**

Hispanic families, like those of all other racial and ethnic groups, want to provide the best spiritual values and material means for their children. But socio-economic conditions present challenges which, too often, put the best housing, the best schools, and the best neighborhoods out of their reach. Poverty affects many Latino children's educational and social development.

a. The challenge at home

Even though more and more Hispanic families are headed by a single parent, the importance of the family structure prevails. Support for extended families remains strong among Hispanics in the United States. At home, Latino children are nurtured by a large number of relatives--grandparents, aunts, uncles, godparents. Even older siblings and friends play a role in reinforcing family values and rearing children.

Hispanic parents in the United States face the sometimes-competing desires of adjusting to a new society while also maintaining their native language and traditional values and roles. Like families of any other racial or ethnic background, they strive to ensure the well-being of their children within their adopted culture and to provide them with the basic elements to succeed in school. At the same time, however, it is important to these Latino parents to maintain many of the qualities which differentiate their households from "mainstream" families by stressing values, roles, and structures that emphasize their special traditions.

The strong family structure and family values among Hispanics, as well as the language and cultural characteristics which distinguish them from other racial or ethnic groups, should enhance the education of every child in the school. Instead, they tend to hamper the educational achievement of Latino children in the U.S.

b. The challenge at school

In the United States, parents increasingly are expected to be actively involved in all school activities and have a collaborative relationship with school personnel.

For many Hispanic parents, particularly in low-income families, this role is unfamiliar. The roles of the school and parents in the education of children are well defined in the Hispanic culture: it is the job of school professionals--principals, teachers, and counselors--to use their tools and knowledge to make the best decision for the child's academic success; it is the parents' responsibility to teach them to obey, behave properly, and show respect for others. Consequently, Hispanic parents are generally unaware of education practices geared to provide the child with the basis for academic success, thus hindering their capacities to further their children's education.

Diversity, including cultural and value differences, have created misconceptions about the Hispanic community and misunderstandings between the Latino family and the schools their children attend. Many teachers, for example, believe that Latino parents do not care about their children's education when in reality language limitations, for example, could be preventing parents from attending school activities--even when the differences in educational traditions described above have been overcome.

c. Meeting the challenges: contributions and benefits

Based on the PAE experience and other NCCE work, we believe the involvement of Hispanic families not only contributes to the improvement of student achievement but also benefits the family, the school, and the community in the following ways:

- Parents and teachers are able to understand and deal with cultural differences between the Hispanic home and the American public school system.
- Hispanic parents and communities preserve their culture, values, traditions, and language.
- Hispanic children whose parents are involved adjust more easily to the school system than those whose parents are not involved.
- By understanding the American public school system, parents can help their children at home.

B. PAE's Goals and Components

The initial data collected by the CSE from parents in San Antonio, through group and individual interviews, indicated that these Hispanic families had many concerns related to their children's education: Some parents were not familiar with, nor did they understand, school procedures and policies; they also did not see themselves as playing a proactive role in the planning of school activities; their contact with the school occurred only when there was a problem, increasing the likelihood that their experiences would be confrontational rather than being oriented to planning or problem-solving; the school-as-partner concept remained alien for most of the parents interviewed.

NCEE created *Padres a la escuela* to speak directly to those concerns. The idea, from the beginning, was twofold: first, to acknowledge and respect the specific beliefs and values, interest in their child's education, limitations and barriers to school involvement, cultural background, and socio-economic conditions of Latino families; and then, with that same recognition and respect, to help strengthen and develop the capacities of Hispanic families to become involved in the education of their children.

Padres a la escuela believes that the community and the schools must play a fundamental role in establishing and supporting a partnership with parents. This partnership can use the Hispanic family's strengths and values to create and maintain a support system in which families discover and develop their abilities to help their children within the American public school system.

In an effort to provide parents with a broader view of parental involvement and to prepare Hispanic families to lead the school improvement process, PAE established six main components of its program, with the following goals:

1. Information

Issue: Hispanic parents, school staff, and community groups dealing with the education of Latino children have expressed their concerns about the lack of bilingual and culturally sensitive materials to meet the needs of Latino families nationwide. There is also a lack of resources for teachers working in a culturally diverse environment.

Goal: To provide bilingual and culturally sensitive information for Hispanic families and school staff in order to help foster better communication and understanding.

Objectives:

- a. Create and publish bilingual, culturally sensitive brochures for parents on parents' rights and responsibilities in the public school
- b. Promote NCCE's toll-free Bilingual Help Line in the 16 most dominant Hispanic markets nationally
- c. Publish a quarterly bilingual newsletter for distribution in PAE districts and to all Help Line callers

2. Outreach

Issue: Hispanic families have been written off as "hard to reach," when in reality, cultural background and isolation from the socio-economic mainstream are largely responsible for the fact that Latino parents may be less responsive to the ways that schools traditionally communicate with parents.

Goal: To identify and promote through an outreach program effective strategies to mobilize communities to enhance Hispanic involvement in education.

Objectives:

- a. Establish a home-visit program to reach families of the PAE schools
- b. Initiate collaboration with parent involvement school district offices to widen program impact beyond target schools
- c. Create and develop different outreach approaches intended to make families aware of program efforts undertaken

" Un hogar sin libros es como un
jardín sin flores"

3. Advocacy

Issue: Hispanics are quickly becoming the largest minority group in the public schools, and there is increasing evidence that they are also the most vulnerable, at-risk group for low student achievement and for dropping out of school. Parents need to acquire the necessary tools to advocate for a better education and equal opportunities for their children.

Goal: To help Hispanic parents become effective advocates for their children's education.

Objectives:

- a. Formalize parent training on school involvement, and on their rights and responsibilities
- b. Increase the CBO's understanding of parent involvement concepts and parents' rights, in order to expedite support to families
- c. Promote parents' awareness of the availability of PAE's Help Line and Hispanic Clearinghouse



4. Collaboration

Issue: Improving the educational outcomes of Latino children is a task that is not solely the responsibility of parents and schools. Citizens and community-based organizations have a primary role in providing a support system through which families and school can find the necessary tools to establish a partnership.

Goal: To enlist substantial community involvement in the PAE partnership, facilitating parent-school-community identification of specific issues and the creation of an action agenda to address them.

Objectives:

- a. Strengthen the school's collaboration with community groups, agencies, and businesses
- b. Secure community representation on school advisory committees
- c. Strengthen ties with other groups interested in Hispanic empowerment and parental involvement in public schools



5. Trust-Building

Issue: Hispanic families and their public schools have too often suffered from poor relationships due to cultural differences, language barriers, and misconceptions about each other. Improving the school climate and promoting communication builds essential trust among those who have a stake in educating Hispanic children.

Goal: To establish a strong working relationship between families and schools by facilitating trust-building between parents and teachers.

Objectives:

- a. Provide teachers with cultural awareness training, as well as training in the benefits of parent involvement and strategies to encourage that involvement.
- b. Promote school staff participation in all PAE activities.

6. Leadership

Issue: Systemic changes in public education must reflect the needs of the community if they are to be meaningful and appropriate. The absence of Hispanic leadership in formulating a parental agenda for the improvement of public schools is a critical part of the problem.

Goal: To develop parent leadership within the Hispanic community which will be committed to positive system-wide change, and will insure that parents have a voice in school improvement.

Objectives:

- a. Organize and support a parent group that can motivate, recruit other parents, and be involved in school councils
- b. Provide leadership training to a group of parents interested in representing families at the school or school district level

Part III

Putting Ideas Into Action: Activities and Accomplishments



5

Putting Ideas Into Action:

Activities and Accomplishments

Yolanda's Story: Part II

One day, while she was dropping off her daughters at school, Yolanda was approached by the PAE parent outreach specialist (POS), who asked for permission to visit the García home. At first, Yolanda felt very uncomfortable about the idea of having a stranger in her house, but she accepted.

When the POS arrived, Yolanda listened politely and said she would go to the next workshop; but she didn't. Each of the next several times she was contacted by the PAE staff person, she had another reason why it would be impossible for her to attend whatever activity was next on the agenda: "My young son does not like to be with people other than me or my parents"; "I don't have time"; "I'll be at work."

But our home visitor did not give up. Finally, Yolanda decided that perhaps if she showed up for just one activity, this person would not call her again or come back to her house. What happened instead was that while Yolanda was surprised to find herself thoroughly interested in the workshop; her son was enjoying the child care program which had been provided.

At the end of the year she told us: "The program really helped me to understand why it is important to be involved. Until then, I did not know that I needed to participate. My daughters are happy to see me in the school, my son is learning a lot of things while in child care and is not afraid anymore. I am glad the home visitor was persistent and did not leave me alone. I am inviting my other friends to come with me now--I think it is that important. I would like to go to college and become a teacher."

" Lo que se aprende en la cuna
siempre dura"

A. Accomplishing Objectives

Over the course of the program, PAE developed a number of approaches designed to achieve the goals described in Part II. This chapter will explain the different activities and strategies utilized to reach those goals and objectives. While most of our aims were accomplished, others simply will take longer than two years to complete. The schools in San Antonio, although required by the Texas Education Agency to have a parent involvement program, have a long way to go before they settle into a meaningful partnership with parents. Nevertheless, we have seen real progress towards organizing parents groups and building parent leadership.

1. Outreach: Strategies and activities

Outreach strategies supporting PAE's primary purpose--to encourage and facilitate the involvement of Hispanic families in the education of their children--had to begin by creating an environment which was non-threatening but still relied on collaboration with the school. Building on the experiences of previous NCEE programs, as well as documented efforts of other groups, PAE tested and implemented several activities which were directed towards reaching out to the Hispanic community at both the local and national levels. It would not be enough, we knew, to improve conditions in San Antonio unless the program we developed held equal promise for Hispanic communities throughout the country. As we dealt closely with the problems in San Antonio, therefore, our focus was always also nationwide.

Below are some highlights of strategies used in San Antonio to enhance outreach to both parents and teachers:

a. Working with the community-based organization (CBO)

Becoming partners with AVANCE, a community-based organization dedicated to enhancing and supporting local families, facilitated PAE's presence in San Antonio. It strengthened our relationship with pilot schools there, and provided us with the necessary information to make the program more relevant and meaningful to the local community.

Among all potential partners in San Antonio, AVANCE was particularly impressive in meeting PAE's selection criteria: They are a Hispanic grassroots group with a strong commitment to the Latino community; they have been in operation for more than 17 years and have demonstrated their capability to work with Hispanic families in different areas; they have the human and physical resources to meet

the needs of the PAE program, and interest in continuing parental involvement efforts once NCCE leaves San Antonio; and they have worked in collaboration with the schools to implement other programs such as Even Start. In general, their established relationship with the schools, the community, and other similar organizations was of major importance.

AVANCE's contributions proved essential to carrying out everyday activities, and providing a logistical and human support system aimed at meeting PAE objectives. In the program's exit survey, 82 percent of the parents told us that the AVANCE staff was very helpful to them in their efforts to participate in the program and become involved in school.

This decision to reach out to parents, schools, and local community through an established and trusted CBO opened the doors for a more effective inclusion of PAE in an area of the country where NCCE had had little previous visibility. (It is also appropriate to say that through its association with PAE, AVANCE had the opportunity to further *its* capacities to work with the schools and the Hispanic community on parental involvement.) In the end, our experience with AVANCE demonstrated that CBOs are a vital resource in promoting parent involvement in local public education.

Avance's contribution to PAE's success was fundamental. These were the people who carried out the day-to-day activities and provided both the logistical and the human support system to run the program. Working with the CBO enabled us to establish the PAE partnership as a three-way collaborative relationship between home, school, and the local community--with AVANCE and PAE as part of the community.

The partnership was created to facilitate communication between home and school; the CBO was the trusted local intermediary who was in daily contact with parents in the neighborhood and who introduced the services of NCCE, the national organization, to parents. Many times and in many ways this approach proved effective. It is important to acknowledge AVANCE's commitment to the success of PAE.

Parents' Comments

Q: Was the AVANCE staff helpful to you? Please explain:

- "They were understanding of the parents' and children's needs.
- They helped by translating and assisting in literacy.
- They helped us to understand a lot of things about ourselves and our children.
- If I needed transportation, or anything, they were willing to help.
- They took care of my children and taught them a lot of things while I went to PAE classes.
- They helped me a lot and provided everything so that it would be possible for me to attend the program.
- They are people who care!"

b. Choosing the parent outreach specialist

To intensify outreach activities during the first year, NCCE employed the services of a parent outreach specialist (POS); by the second year, PAE had two local specialists. The POS's main duties were to develop and carry out a home visit and telephone contact plan to reach Hispanic families of the participating schools, and, in collaboration with AVANCE's contact person, to coordinate and implement local activities.

The effectiveness of this strategy was demonstrated by the substantial increase in the number of parents attending our programs throughout the school year. Four parents, on average, attended the earliest programs. Later on, sessions drew approximately 20 participants in each school. This outreach approach also helped to establish a better relationship with the school administrations, and to minimize school skepticism towards an organization based in Washington, D.C.

The personal contact provided by the POS also influenced parents' decisions to participate in PAE and consequently to become involved in the school. Eighty-six percent of parents who answered our survey responded that the local PAE staff was "very helpful and encouraging."



Parents' Comments

Q: Was PAE staff helpful in San Antonio? In what way?

- "They took time to explain things well, and helped us to understand.
- They taught parent involvement and motivated me a lot.
- Home visits, the way they expressed themselves, and their willingness to help were something special.
- They were friendly, caring, and supportive to all parents.
- They helped me learn how to bring about change in the school.
- They answered any question we had.
- They were patient and persistent, they visited me several times. At first I came out of curiosity and now even my husband is helping in the school."

Parents were not the only ones enriched by the home visits. The parent outreach specialists left us with a wealth of experience and many tips to reach out to parents through personal contact. Home visits can go a long way in building friendly, cooperative relationships with families. However, home visits to Hispanic families can be difficult to negotiate.

Some parents may view home visits as intrusive; others may find them interruptive of their daily schedule; and still others feel uncomfortable opening their homes to "strangers." Visiting a home is a privilege, and parents should be assured that there is respect for their rights to privacy and appreciation for the opportunity to be allowed into their homes. (More on home visits can be found in the Resources section).

c. Emphasizing the involvement of volunteers

In addition to the PAE staff in the national office, NCCE's local part-time staff, and AVANCE's coordinator, a great number of community members *volunteered* an additional 100 hours to PAE activities each year. Their invaluable contributions

included: obtaining door prizes to award at workshops, providing child care, preparing food, visiting homes, doing clerical work, and in some instances, participating in the actual presentation of workshops.

2. Information

When PAE first arrived in San Antonio, relevant, bilingual, and culturally sensitive information on public education was lacking for Hispanic families and school personnel. To address this shortcoming, the project emphasized the following:

a. Creating culturally sensitive information for parents

PAE, in collaboration with other NCCE staff, developed the *Information for Parents* series, a set of 12 brochures in English and Spanish on parents rights and parental involvement in the public schools. These bilingual-bicultural materials were distributed in a systematic way to Help Line callers, parents, teachers, school districts, and many other organizations, not only in San Antonio, but nationwide. The *Information for Parents* series was especially beneficial in San Antonio, where the brochures were used as the basis for parents' training.

Feedback from community leaders working with Latino families and results from our own survey indicate that the materials prepared by NCCE/PAE were an important information and training device for parents.

"Collaboration is a mindset that says, of course I'm going to need the help of others to do my job well!"

Sidney L. Gardner

Findings regarding the *Information for Parents Series*

- * 81 percent of PAE parents read the brochures.
- * 97.9 percent of parents in the program that read the brochures said that they were easy to understand. The simple vocabulary used in the brochures --English and Spanish versions--attracted parents with a low literacy level.
- * 80.9 percent of parents said the brochures were "very helpful."
- * Incorporating culturally appropriate language in the brochures helped parents identify better with the issue.
- * The formatting and presentation of the material made it easier for parents to understand the subject.

b. Introducing the newsletter

Starting in the spring of 1992, a bilingual newsletter was published and distributed to all families and teachers participating in the PAE program, Help Line callers, and selected media. The newsletter was created to keep parents and teachers up to date about the program, current and pertinent issues concerning various phases of parent involvement, and to provide practical tips about educational enhancement at home as well as in school. Copies of the five published issues are included in the back pocket of this handbook. (see Tools and Resources).

c. Making use of the National Hispanic Education Clearinghouse

Inspired by NCCE's existing clearinghouse, PAE developed a new clearinghouse service for bilingual Help Line callers. The Hispanic Clearinghouse has a total of 4,550 entries, including national, state and local organizations specializing in different educational issues for caller referral. This national referral system has been effectively supporting families in San Antonio as well as individuals and organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

d. Operating the Bilingual Help Line

From January 1992 to August 1993, the Bilingual Help Line recorded more than 1600 phone calls including Hispanic parents, teachers, other organizations, and media from all over the country. The subject of the calls ranged from general information about parent involvement and parents' rights to specific rights of children with disabilities in the public school.

Because the participating families in San Antonio had the support of the local PAE and AVANCE staffs and attended monthly workshops where many of their concerns were discussed, their use of the Bilingual Help Line was comparatively low; one in six of those families surveyed had used the information service. But as the only national bilingual help line serving Latino families, the increasing numbers nationwide and the variety of information requested, is significant and is an incentive to maintain it. (For a profile of the last two years of operation of the Bilingual Help Line, see Tools and Resources).

3. **Advocacy**

For many Hispanic parents the role of advocate for their children's education is a new concept. Traditionally, Hispanic parents do not challenge teachers' decisions, nor are they accustomed to the idea of having rights in the public schools. To address these challenges, PAE emphasized the following:

a. Setting parent workshops in motion

One of the most effective ways to build on strengths and develop parents' capacities to become their children's advocate was through the workshops. In these eight sessions, parents had the opportunity to receive new information, share their experiences, and ask questions in a non-threatening environment and in the language they can understand. The workshops, all of which were bilingual, concentrated on the following issues:

- Parent involvement
- Communicating with the teachers
- Parent's rights and responsibilities
- Parent organizing
- Child abuse prevention
- Communicating with your child
- Prevention of gang participation
- School dropout prevention

Putting Ideas Into Action

Parent activities started in October 1991 with a very well-attended gathering of families for a fiesta and orientation meeting. The first workshops, however, had very low attendance, but it increased substantially over the course of the program: 46.9 percent of the parents who answered our survey had attended more than six workshops, and 24.1 percent had attended three to five.

Training for parents proved essential in providing families with the necessary tools to advocate a better education and equal opportunities for their children. Parents who participated in the workshops told us that they had increased their ability to work with teachers, administrators, and their children to advance the education process. According to the first year evaluation conducted by the CSE, 84 percent said that "they will be able to use the information" given. The same number reported that they "learned something that will help them to advocate for their children."



The exit survey conducted by PAE a year later reinforced those results: 74 percent attained the most helpful information in the sessions on communication with their child and teachers, as well as parents rights and responsibilities in the school. Likewise, more than two thirds believed that the parent involvement training they had received had made a significant positive difference, and almost three quarters said that the information was very helpful in their efforts to become involved.

Parents' Comments

Q: Did the program help you have a better understanding of the school your children attend? Among the positive responses were:

- "It enabled me to better communicate with the teachers.
- I learned how to deal with problems when they arose.
- It helped me to understand how the school functions.
- Now I have become involved in the parent volunteer program and have learned more about my child's activities and the people around him.
- I have a better understanding of my rights in the school.
- I got to work with some of the teachers, to know them better, and to know what is going on at the school.
- I now understand I have the right to see my child's records and other information concerning her."

Putting Ideas Into Action

Getting the parents to attend was a challenge and involved different strategies from those used with the staff. We learned that parents are more likely to attend when:

- Personally invited to the event
- Child care and organized activities for children are provided
- Transportation is available
- The event is connected to their child's school performance
- Food is offered
- Material incentives are offered (door prizes)
- The time does not interfere with home duties
- Telephone or written reminders of the event are sent
- They have a personal interest in the subject
- Training is offered in a language they can understand
- There is consistency in the schedule.

PAE's curriculum for the parents' training on rights and responsibilities was based on the "Information for Parents" brochures in which parents' rights in the public schools were highlighted. (More details on parents' rights can be found in the Tools and Resources section.)

b. Offering other support

Because AVANCE's efforts in the past had not included work specifically with parental involvement, that group also received intensive training in order to familiarize participating staff with the different components of the PAE program, parental involvement concepts, parents' rights, and materials and procedures to implement PAE in San Antonio.

Everyone involved in the project, as we have said, was also encouraged to use NCCE's Bilingual Help Line as often as necessary to obtain additional information and support in their efforts to become their children's advocates. Parents and others who called this service received not only relevant information about their concerns and rights, but also guidance on how to follow procedures to exercise them most effectively.

4. Collaboration

The improvement of the educational achievement of Hispanic children does not depend solely on parent involvement in the public schools, and certainly PAE alone could not fill all remaining needs. After the first year of PAE implementation in San Antonio, the urgency of working collaboratively with others became more clear to us. As a result, NCCE/PAE increasingly relied on its local partnership and its national network of like-minded organizations.

a. At the local level

In addition to the work with AVANCE, PAE staff contacted school administrators of both school districts where the program was being implemented, in order to seek expansion of project activities at the district level. (Both school districts have a parent involvement office.) The Edgewood ISD chose to work closely with PAE in providing training and speakers, sharing information, and organizing other activities for the families. Through this office, both the *PAE Newsletter* and *Information for Parents* series were distributed to many other schools.

b. At the national level

NCCE has maintained close relationships with other Hispanic and national organizations, in order for all of us to keep abreast of current efforts in the field and to utilize expertise at hand. Among others, PAE exchanged training services, bilingual materials, and support with AVANCE, Inc., National Council of La Raza (NCLR), Project EXCEL, National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), ASPIRA, Inc., Mexican American Legal Defence and Education Fund (MALDEF), and the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA).

5. Trust-Building

When NCCE first entered San Antonio, building a positive relationship among all program participants was fundamental to the success of the project; first and foremost, however, was establishing trust between teachers and parents.

The initial survey of parents and teachers in San Antonio gave us a better understanding of the misconceptions and lack of communication between parents and teachers. Hispanic parents felt that teachers only called them when there was a problem; if they heard nothing from the school, they assumed everything was fine. Teachers, on the other hand, often believed that Hispanic parents did not care about their children's education.

Putting Ideas Into Action

Consequently, PAE made a commitment to facilitate a better mutual understanding between those who have a stake in educating Hispanic children by:

a. Conducting teacher training at the school

Many Hispanic and non-Hispanic teachers lack skills to work with Latino families. Thus, PAE started each of the school years with a full day of training for the teachers. The purpose was to help them acquire an understanding of the fundamentals of parental involvement; enhance cultural awareness; understand parents' rights in public schools; and learn practical approaches to implement parent involvement programs.

With the collaboration of the Texas Education Agency, teachers were awarded Advanced Academic Training (AAT) credits, and were motivated in many other ways to attend this session. The full-day training sessions created awareness among teachers about Hispanic families, their backgrounds, and the need for parental involvement.



Teachers' Comments

We heard the teachers' opinions about the training sessions and the assistance provided by PAE in their efforts to improve Hispanic parental involvement in their schools. Of the teachers who answered the survey:

- * 73.3 percent stated that PAE helped the school in its parent involvement efforts; as one teacher noted, "yes, it has been a gradual change."
- * 46.7 percent said that the training provided for the school personnel helped teachers involve Hispanic families more effectively.
- * Teachers recognized that the training was not enough, but found it beneficial in understanding the cultural differences and principles of parental involvement, and learning about rights in public education.

b. Providing information and technical support

In addition to the formal training for teachers, different activities took place to improve parent-teacher understanding:

- The bilingual *PAE Newsletter* included articles on parent involvement, parents' rights, cultural awareness, and practical tips for the classroom helpful to both parents and teachers.
- *Taking Stock: The Inventory of Family, Community and School Support for Student Achievement*, a self-assessment tool developed by NCCE to help schools establish more creative and responsive strategies for forming closer relationships with their communities, was applied in two of the PAE participating schools.

c. Bringing parents and teachers together

Working with the school staff to improve parent involvement could be a program of its own. We learned that teachers themselves are not readily motivated and therefore need more specific activities, training and information on how to reach and utilize the strengths of the Hispanic family. Among major constraints are: teachers' lack of time, pressure from teachers' unions, their own perceptions

about the Hispanic family, and self-motivation to work with parents. Preparing teachers to accept Hispanic parents as equal partners in the educational process can be a demanding and arduous task, but efforts to involve parents would be hopeless without their commitment.

As successful as we found the formal teacher training to be, these sessions alone were not enough to improve school personnel's communication with Hispanic families. However, some specific progress was made. For example: bilingual signs replaced ones written only in English to encourage more parental participation; the teachers wrote a plan of action to attract parent volunteers; and committees were created to work on different approaches to parental involvement. To maintain teachers' interest in parental involvement, both the national and local PAE staff maintained periodic contact with the school, and provided more information and practical tips on recruiting and retaining parental participation, as needed.

6. Leadership

As Hispanics become the largest minority group in the U.S., Latino parents' representation in school governance and school reform activities becomes increasingly urgent. This participation will be their strongest assurance of equal opportunities and excellent educational outcomes for Hispanic children. Deep concern over the current lack of this Hispanic leadership fueled PAE's commitment to help develop and support potential community organizers and activists by :

a. Helping to create a parent group.

It was PAE's intention to create and support a parent group, different from the existent PTA/PTO, that would focus its activities on the improvement of parent-school relationships, recruitment and training of additional parents, and the planning of activities (in coordination with CBO) geared to promote parental involvement, parents' rights and cultural awareness.

This is not an easy step. Motivating parents to be involved as individuals in the school is a long process; convincing them to contribute even more of their limited resources--group activity can be demanding commitment of time and other energies--is a great deal more difficult still. Many PAE parents *were*, in fact, successfully participating in the school, some invited others, attended training at the district level, or sat at the Campus Advisory Committee; however none of these accomplishments reflected the efforts of an organized parent group to date.

But we remain hopeful. With the support and encouragement of AVANCE and perhaps others in the local community, these parents may yet organize and take a leadership attitude towards school improvement.

b. Providing leadership training.

MALDEF, one of the PAE project's national collaborators, started its *Parent Leadership Program* (a program to prepare parents to work within the system and to assist the administrators with problem solving at the school level) in San Antonio during the second year of PAE's implementation. Parents who wanted to take a more active role in the decision making of the school participated in those training sessions.



B. Overcoming Barriers: Recognizing the Constraints and Developing Parents' Capacities

Hispanic parents have as much to offer toward their child's education as any other parents in the American public school system. But, as San Antonio parents told us, there are many factors that prevent them from becoming involved. Among them:

- 48.2 percent faulted lack of transportation and child care.
- 17.2 percent blamed language barriers.
- 13.8 percent felt that teachers' attitudes discourage parent participation.
- 10.3 percent did not think being involved was important.
- Other answers included: need to work; other obligations; attitudes of other parent; volunteers; no time; sick most of the time; attending college.

Many parents (as well as too many educators) wrongly believe that they cannot help their child because of their lack of education, their low socio-economic status, or their limited English. Even though it is a difficult process, Latino parents can be effectively involved and support their child's education.

1. Factors that inhibit parent involvement

Forming a harmonious and productive relationship between families and schools is the most difficult and delicate task that parents and educators must perform. Parents as well as educators often have attitudes about, and inaccurate stereotypes of, one another which prevent them from establishing a collaborative relationship between home and school.

a. Family support considerations.

There are barriers related to logistics rather than attitudes: constraints of time, money, transportation, child care for siblings, and safety, especially in urban areas. These factors are not unique to Hispanic families. Low-income, single-parent, and families with both parents working for example, are all affected by these factors. Logistical factors that prevent parent participation in all school activities can be overcome by a collaborative effort between school and community using the resources already available.



Most of the logistical factors--child care, transportation, time--that affected parent participation in the PAE program were overcome due to the action of AVANCE and PAE local staff. In effect, by having available transportation, child care, and a flexible schedule of activities, we facilitated broader parent participation in PAE activities.

As PAE parents were showing interest in becoming involved in the school, they were also expressing their needs and concerns about attending school activities. Many parents used the transportation and child care offered by AVANCE to attend some school events. However, as we previously noted, AVANCE is a well-established CBO in San Antonio and knows the strengths and needs of the community. If AVANCE's model is followed closely by other communities, it will improve Hispanic and non-Hispanic parental participation in schools.

b. Language and cultural factors.

For Hispanic families, the barriers to parent involvement already mentioned are aggravated by language limitations; cultural differences which have contributed to misconceptions between the family and the school; and beliefs about parents' role in formal education. For a great number of Hispanic families, the low educational attainment, fewer economic resources, feelings of being less than--instead of different from--the "mainstream" population, and fear of the school system, make parents believe they have very little to offer to their children's education.

c. School-related factors.

School-related factors such as lack of knowledge about Hispanic culture and values, teachers' perceptions of parents attitudes, and shortage of bilingual staff may result in a less substantial Latino participation in the formal education of their children. Consequently, educators may also wrongly assume that Hispanic parents are not interested in the school and their child's education.

Parents and educators as well as citizens and community groups can work together to facilitate parental involvement in order to provide better educational opportunities to Hispanic children. The following three charts give some examples of barriers to parent involvement, as well as activities and resources that can be utilized to enable and further parent participation in the education of their children.

"Children and families have never been in greater jeopardy. The tragedy is that we know what to do, but we've yet to master the national political will and financial will to do these things."

Jule Sugarman

2. Strategies that develop parent strengths and overcome barriers

Family-Support Considerations	
<p>Many low-income families, including Hispanics, may not be able to afford transportation and/or child care while volunteering in the school or attending other activities such as PTA meetings or workshops. It may also be the case that these families have a single parent or both parents that work, limiting their time to participate in school events. The community and community-based organizations can support parent/citizen involvement to overcome some of the barriers.</p>	
Barriers	Beyond Barriers: What a CBO and a school can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transportation to and from activities • Request help from other established groups in the community such as the church, transportation company, social services • Hold activities close to home in a community center or church • Create a fund so parents can use public transportation • Form a car pool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide child care while parents volunteer or attend meetings and training sessions • Make child care a learning experience for the children. (Parents will attend more activities if they know that their children are also learning.) • Plan activities or social events in which children are allowed to participate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold activities at different times of the day to allow parents with different schedules to attend • Hold some activities over weekends • Encourage frequent phone communication between parents and teachers.

Language and Cultural Factors

The Hispanic community has enriched this country's culture with a broad range of beliefs, values, language, and customs. However, the cultural differences have created many misunderstandings and misconceptions between the Hispanic home and the school which have prevented the parents from fully participating in the education of their children.

Barrier	Beyond Barriers: What parents can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request or bring a translator for parent/teacher conferences, workshops, PTA meetings, or to meet the principal • Request that the school send written communications in a language they can understand • Enroll in a class to learn English as a second language (Some community organizations offer free classes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs about education • Lack of understanding of the public school system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend and participate in training sessions on parental involvement offered by the school or community • Learn about how the American public school system works by attending training sessions • Talk to the schools about their culture, values, traditions, and special needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of inferiority and alienation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of themselves as the most important person in their child's life • Find their best qualities and use them to further their child's education • Take some time to improve their own image and self-esteem • Seek additional information and training when necessary • Have confidence in their abilities and use them to strengthen the entire family

School-Related Factors

Barriers to parental involvement are not limited to parents only. Schools may have policies or practices that unwittingly discourage collaboration with families. The appearance of the school, the neighborhood it is in, and the attitude of the staff towards the community all have important effects on the school's relationship with the families.

Barriers	Beyond Barriers: What the school can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of meaningful information for parents and shortage of bilingual school personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire Hispanic teachers' aids for the classroom • Send information and report cards in a language parents can understand. Conduct all meetings in English and Spanish • Have the school programs, policies and appeal procedures available in both English and Spanish • Have a clear parent involvement policy where <i>all</i> parents can feel welcome and appreciated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' attitudes can make parents feel alienated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit homes, or phone to invite parents to school • Plan culturally sensitive social activities and programs for the entire family • Provide teachers with training on cultural awareness to understand Hispanic parents and their children's behavior • Welcome Hispanic parents--even those who do not speak English--into the classroom and make them feel appreciated • Hold workshops for Hispanic families about the school system and the curriculum.

Part IV

National View:

**Educational Status of Hispanics
in the United States**



The National View: Profile of Hispanics in the U.S.

This section provides a statistical description--demographic and socioeconomic--of the Hispanic community in the United States. Its purpose is to provide the foundation for a deep understanding of the barriers which today frustrate even some of the best efforts to improve the education of Hispanic children throughout the country. From this overview, the conditions faced by children in the public schools in San Antonio, Texas will become more meaningful. The majority of the data provided here has been extracted from the *Current Population Survey*, June 1991, and 1992.

A. Who are the Hispanics in U.S.

The U.S. has one of the largest Latino populations of any country in the world. These people represent a community within the U.S. on the basis of a shared language, the common history of the Spanish Conquest, and general cultural background. Although there are significant subgroup disparities, the Hispanic community in the United States is a young, diverse, dynamic population that is experiencing rapid growth--fully five times the rate of the non-Hispanic population. This is a geographically concentrated, highly urbanized group which tends to have larger families than the nation as a whole. There are more single-female-headed households (Hispanic women are somewhat less likely to be working outside the home or seeking such work than are non-Hispanic women). Income is lower and poverty rates higher than among non-Hispanics, a condition due in part to the low educational attainment rates of Latino parents.

Two in five Latino children grow up in poverty, a fact which is particularly troubling when we realize how rapidly that school-age population is increasing: Hispanic children represent about 10 percent of the total K to 12 public school enrollment today. While in school, Latino children face serious difficulties: placement below grade level, high rates of retention in grade, frequent school suspension, shortage of Hispanic teachers who can act as role models and mentors, and a lack of adequate second-language-acquisition programs. Furthermore, Hispanic parents very often are not familiar with the American school system--nor are they introduced to it or informed about it in a language they can understand--creating a situation in which the very people who most need the support of the public education community are instead left feeling culturally isolated.

B. Demographic Profile of Hispanics in U.S.

1. Race and Hispanic origin

To repeat an important point: The United States Bureau of the Census defines racial subgroups within the population as White, Black, American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, and "Other Race." The Hispanic-origin population is separated out for the purpose of Census studies on the basis of another survey question altogether, thus recognizing that Hispanic persons may be of any race (1990 Census Profile.) All figures and data about Hispanics in this handbook are based on this premise.

Approximately 22.3 million people (9%) of the total U.S. population (excluding the 3.5 million Puerto Ricans who have not immigrated from Puerto Rico to the "mainland") are of Hispanic origin. By comparison, there are 29.9 million African-Americans--the largest minority group, and 199.6 million (80.3%) Whites. Asians comprise 2.9 percent of the total population, while American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleuts together account for 0.8 percent (see Figure 4.1).

FIGURE 4.1
U.S. Population by Race and Hispanic Origin

Population	Numbers	Percentage
White	199,686	80.3
African-American	29,986	12.1
Asian	7,274	2.9
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	1,959	0.8
Other Race	9,805	3.9
Total population	248,710	100.0
Hispanic origin any race	22,354	9.0

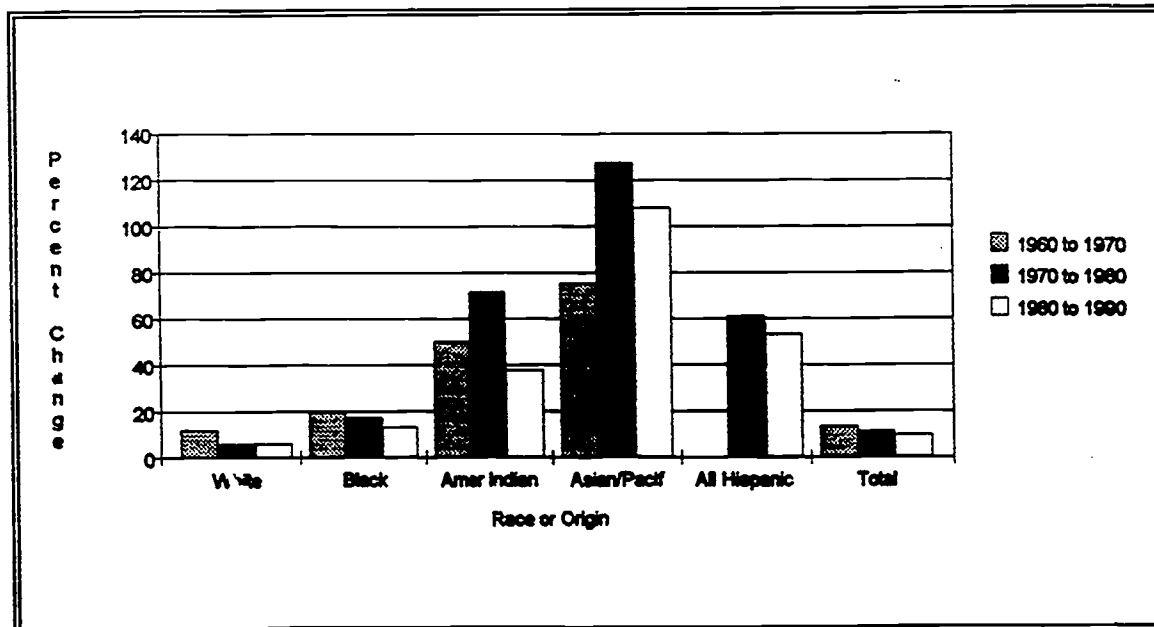
Source: 1990 Census Profile. Race and Hispanic Origin

2. Hispanic population growth

For two decades, the Latino population has been increasing dramatically as a proportion of the national census--about 5 times as fast as the non-Hispanic population, and two-and-a-half times as fast as the Black population, since 1980. While the total number of U. S. residents was growing 9.8 percent in the decade leading up to 1990, (with a 13.2 percent increase among African-Americans and a six percent growth rate among Whites) the Hispanic communities exploded by 53 percent (from 14.6 million to 22.4 million). Although Asian-Americans are growing at an even faster rate, by dint of sheer numbers Hispanics will pull ahead of African-Americans to become the largest ethnic minority group in the United States by the year 2000 (see Figure 4.2).

The Hispanic school-age population is growing even more rapidly. Hispanic children--now about ten percent of the total school enrollment--will constitute nearly one-sixth of the students in our nation's classrooms by the year 2000, and minority students in general will comprise one-third of the student population (NCLR, Hispanic Education).

FIGURE 4.2
Percent Change in Population by Race and
Hispanic Origin for the United States, 1960 to 1990



Source: 1990 Census Profile. Race and Hispanic Origin

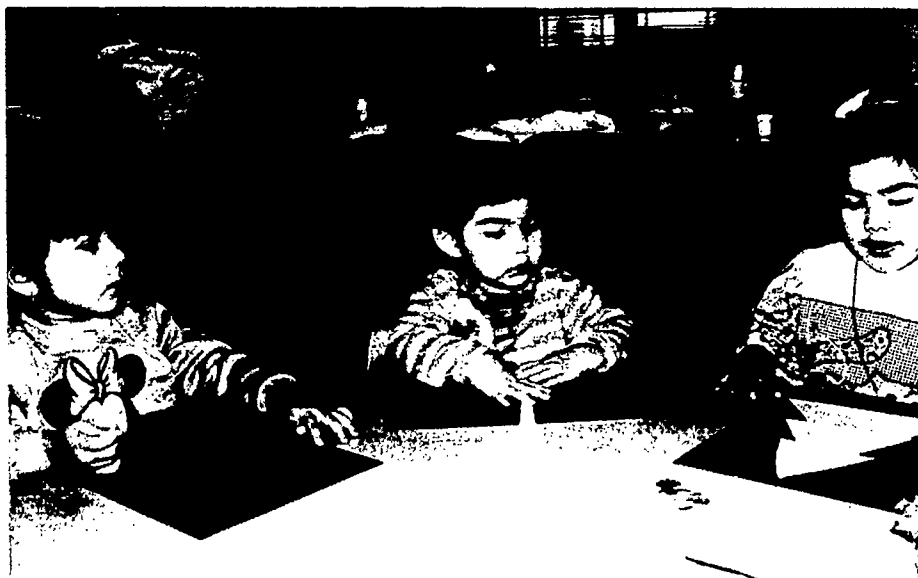
3. Diversity within the "Hispanic community"

The majority of U.S. Hispanics (13.4 million, or 60.4 percent) identify themselves as of Mexican origin, followed by Puerto Ricans (2.7 million, or 12.2 percent), and Cubans (1.0 million, 4.7 percent). Central and South Americans comprise 3.1 million (14.1%), while 2.1 million (8.6%) identify themselves as "Other Hispanics" (see Figure 4.3).

FIGURE 4.3
Composition of the U.S. Hispanic Population
in U.S 1990

Hispanic Group	In Millions	Percentage
Mexican	13.4	60.4
Cuban	1.0	4.7
Puerto Ricans	2.7	12.2
Central and South Americans	3.1	14.1
Other Hispanics	2.1	8.6
Total	22.2	100.0

Source: 1990 Census of Population, United States



4. Where Hispanics in the U.S. live

a. Hispanic-origin population by state

Hispanics live in every state of the Union; however, according to the 1990 Census, 87 percent of the Hispanic-origin population resided in ten states. The majority (53.8%) are concentrated in two states, California and Texas (see Figure 4.4).

FIGURE 4.4
States with the Largest
Hispanic-Origin Population, 1990

States	Numbers	% of total Hisp. pop.
1. California	7,688,000	34.4
2. Texas	4,340,000	19.4
3. New York	2,214,000	9.9
4. Florida	1,674,000	7.0
5. Illinois	904,000	4.1
6. New Jersey	740,000	3.3
7. Arizona	688,000	3.1
8. New Mexico	579,000	2.6
9. Colorado	424,000	1.9
10. Massachusetts	288,000	1.3
Subtotal	19,539,000	87.0
Other States	2,815,000	13.0
TOTAL	22,354,000	100.0

Source: 1990 Census Profile. Race and Hispanic Origin

California's Hispanic population increased by 69 percent from 1980 to 1990, exceeding the national Hispanic growth rate of 53 percent. Three other states had Hispanic populations of one million or more in 1990: Texas, New York, and Florida. The Hispanic growth rate in the 1980-90 decade was much higher for Florida (83%) than Texas (45%) or New York (33%). Massachusetts replaced Michigan as the tenth state, and Arizona rose from eighth to seventh largest, exchanging ranks with New Mexico (*1990 Census Profile*).

b. States with highest percentages of Hispanics among their population

Five contiguous southwestern states (New Mexico, California, Texas, Arizona and Colorado) had the highest Hispanic percentages among the States in 1990, ranging from 38.2 percent in New Mexico to 12.9 percent in Colorado (see Figure 4.5). These states also had the highest Hispanic percentages in 1980. Four additional states had Hispanic percentages in 1990 above the national figure of nine percent: New York, Florida, Nevada, and New Jersey.

FIGURE 4.5
States with the Highest Hispanic Population, 1990

States	Percentage
1. New Mexico	38.2
2. California	25.8
3. Texas	25.5
4. Arizona	18.8
5. Colorado	12.9
6. New York	12.3
7. Florida	12.2
8. Nevada	10.4
9. New Jersey	9.6
10. Illinois	7.9

Source: 1990 Census Profile. Race and Hispanic Origin

c. Metropolitan areas with greatest Hispanic concentration

Hispanic subgroups are concentrated in different areas of the country: Mexican-American families are mostly concentrated in the southwest; Puerto Ricans in Chicago, Jersey City, Newark, New York City, Orlando, and Philadelphia; Cubans live mostly in Miami, New York, and New Jersey; Central and South American families are more spread out, although there are large concentrations in California, Florida and New York. More recent immigration patterns have also increased the concentration of Central Americans in many areas along the eastern seaboard.

Today, 62.3 percent of the Hispanic-origin population lives in twelve metropolitan areas, with the greatest concentrations in Los Angeles (21.4%) and New York (12.4%)* (see Figure 4.6).

FIGURE 4.6
Metropolitan Areas With the Largest Numbers
Of Hispanic-Origin Population in U.S., 1990

Metropolitan Area	Thousands	% of total Hisp. pop.
1. Los Angeles (CA) CMSA	4,779	21.4
2. New York, Northern New Jersey CMSA	2,778	12.4
3. Miami, Ft. Lauderdale (FL) CMSA	1,062	4.8
4. San Francisco, Oakland (CA) CMSA	970	4.3
5. Chicago, Gary-Lake County (IL) CMSA	893	3.7
6. Houston (TX) CMSA	772	3.5
7. San Antonio (TX) MSA	620	2.8
8. Dallas-Forth Worth (TX) CMSA	519	2.3
9. San Diego (CA) MSA	511	2.3
10. El Paso (TX) MSA	412	1.8
11. Phoenix (AZ) MSA	345	1.5
12. McAllen (TX) MSA	327	1.5
13. Fresno (CA) MSA	237	1.1
14. Denver (CO) CMSA	226	1.0
15. Philadelphia (PA) CMSA	226	1.0
16. Washington, DC MSA	225	1.0
17. Brownsville (TX) MSA	213	0.9
18. Boston (MA) CMSA	193	0.8
19. Corpus Christi (TX) MSA	182	0.8
20. Albuquerque (NM) MSA	178	0.7
Subtotal	15,668	69.6
Other metropolitan areas	6,686	30.4
Total Hispanic population	22,354	100.0

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992. Bureau of the Census

* According to the Census Bureau, the figures presented in the table correspond to Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSA) and Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA).

d. Metropolitan areas with highest Hispanic percentages.

The six metropolitan areas with the highest percentages of Hispanics among their populations are all in Texas, as shown in Figure 4.7. Although some of these areas do not have a total population of one million, the percentage of Hispanic-origin population is still significant. In five of the areas, more than 50 percent of the residents are Hispanic. With the exception of Miami, Florida, all are in the western part of the country, and with the further exceptions of San Francisco and Fresno, they are all in the southwest.

FIGURE 4.7
Metropolitan Areas with the Highest
Hispanic-Origin Percentages, 1990

Rank	Metropolitan Area	(%) of total metro. area
1	Laredo (Texas)	93.9
2	McAllen (Texas)	85.2
3	Brownsville (Texas)	81.9
4	El Paso (Texas)	69.6
5	Corpus Christi (Texas)	52.0
6	San Antonio (Texas)	47.6
7	Visalia (California)	38.8
8	Albuquerque (New Mexico)	37.1
9	Fresno (California)	35.5
10	Salinas (California)	33.6
11	Miami (Florida)	33.3
12	Los Angeles (California)	32.9
13	Bakersfield (California)	28.0
14	Tucson (Arizona)	24.5
15	Stockton (California)	23.4
16	Houston (Texas)	20.8
17	Austin (Texas)	20.5
18	Dan Diego (California)	20.4
19	Phoenix (Arizona)	16.3
20	San Francisco	15.5

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992, Bureau of the Census

5. Age distribution of Hispanics and non-Hispanics

a. Age of Hispanics and other population groups

Latinos in general are the youngest U.S. population group, with a median age of 25 years, more than eight years younger than the non-Hispanic population (33.7 years). Hispanics are slightly younger than Blacks (28.1 years), and much younger than Whites (34.4 years). More than two-thirds (68.7%) of the Hispanic population are under 35 years old, compared with a little more than half (52.2%) of the non-Hispanic population. Likewise, only 5.2 percent of Hispanics are older than 65, compared with 13.3 percent of non-Hispanics. More than one-fourth (28.0%) of Hispanics are of school-age (that is, ages 5-19) compared with 20.6 percent of non-Hispanics (see Figure 4.8).

FIGURE 4.8
Age Distribution by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1992*

Population Age	Total	Hisp.	White	Black
Under 5 years	7.4	10.7	6.8	9.3
5 - 19 years	21.3	28.0	19.9	26.4
20 - 34 years	25.0	30.0	24.3	26.6
35 - 44 years	15.1	13.1	15.3	14.0
45 - 64 years	18.6	13.0	19.7	15.3
65 and over	12.6	5.2	14.0	8.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Median age	32.9	25.5	34.4	28.1

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992. Bureau of the Census

*Only the three largest race and ethnic groups have been selected for this comparison.

b. Age distribution among Hispanic subgroups

Age distribution varies substantially among Hispanic subgroups. Mexican-Americans are the youngest, with a median age of 23.8 years; 60.4 percent are between the ages of 5-34. Puerto Ricans are next in line, while Cubans are by far the oldest subgroup. Cubans have a school-age population of only 14.9 percent, and more than one third (39.6%) of this community is between the ages of 35-64 (see Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9
Age Distribution for Hispanic-Origin
Subgroups and non-Hispanics, 1992

Population Age	Hisp.	Mex.	P.R.	Cub.	Non-Hisp.
Under 5	10.7	11.7	10.5	.4	7.1
5 - 19 years	28.0	30.1	28.6	14.9	20.6
20 - 34 years	30.0	30.3	28.4	24.0	24.5
35 - 44 years	13.1	12.4	13.6	13.3	15.3
45 - 64	13.0	11.3	14.0	26.3	19.2
65 and older	5.2	4.2	4.9	16.1	13.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
MEDIAN AGE	25.5	23.8	25.7	38.9	33.7

Source: Current Population Survey, 1990



C. Socio-economic Profile of Hispanics in U.S.

1. Hispanic income and poverty

According to the Census Bureau, the 1989 median family incomes for Hispanic and non-Hispanic families were \$21,769 and \$33,142 respectively. Hispanic families are almost twice as likely as the total population to have income below \$10,000 (see Figure 4.10). Blacks have a slightly lower median family income (\$19,329) than Hispanics, while Whites enjoy a much-higher \$33,915.

Hispanics have lower per capita income (\$7,956) than either Whites or Blacks and are two-and-a-half times as likely as non-Hispanics to live in poverty. Almost one quarter (23.7%) of Latino families live below the poverty level, compared to 9.4 percent of all non-Hispanics and 7.9 percent of White families. However, Black families have the highest poverty rate (28.2%).

FIGURE 4.10
Family Income by Race and Ethnicity, 1988

Family Income	Percent of Population			
	All Pop.	Hispanic	Black	White
Less than \$10,000	10.8	23.3	27.3	8.5
\$10,000 to \$14,999	8.8	13.6	13.6	8.1
\$15,000 to \$24,999	17.8	22.2	19.7	17.7
\$25,000 to \$49,999	36.9	32.0	26.7	38.4
\$50,000 or more	25.7	11.9	12.6	27.4
Below Poverty Level	10.4	23.7	28.2	7.9
Median Income (\$)	32,191	21,769	19,329	33,915

Source: March 1989 Current Population Survey.

Among Hispanics, Puerto Ricans have the lowest median family incomes (\$18,932), the highest proportion of families with incomes below \$10,000 (29.1%), and the highest poverty rate (30.8%). Mexican-Americans have the second lowest median family income (\$21,025), second highest poverty rate (24.9%), and lowest proportion of families with

National View

incomes of \$50,000 or more (9.9%). Among Hispanic subgroups, Cuban families fare best, but they still have lower median family incomes and higher poverty levels than non-Hispanics. The Cuban median family income is \$26,858, the poverty rate is 16.9 percent, and 24.5 percent of families have incomes of \$50,000 or more (NCLR, *Hispanic Education*).

2. Latino children in poverty

Nearly two of every five Hispanic children live in poverty. Fully 37.9 percent of Latino children, along with 14.6 percent of White children and 44.2 percent of Black children, live below the poverty line. Among Hispanic subgroups, poverty rates for children are highest for Puerto Ricans (49.0%) and Mexican-Americans (37.8%). Seventeen percent of Cubans and more than one quarter of Central and South American children live in poverty (see Figure 4.11).



FIGURE 4.11
Children Under 18-Years-Old in Poverty

Population	Percent in Poverty
Total Population	19.7
Black	44.2
White	14.6
Hispanic	37.9
• Mexican-American	37.8
• Cuban	17.7
• Puerto Rican	49.0
• Central and South American	27.5
• Other Hispanic	38.0

Source: March 1989 Current Population Survey

3. Employment and wages.

As of March 1992, the majority of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic White persons in the civilian labor force had full-time employment (71 and 75 percent respectively). Among males, 74 percent of Hispanics (compared to 81 percent of non-Hispanic Whites), were employed full time. The proportion of Hispanic and non-Hispanic White females working full time was 67 percent and 68 percent respectively (*The Hispanic Population in the U. S. 1992*).

Although there is no significant statistical difference between employment rates for Hispanic and non-Hispanic White males, there is a substantial gap between the median earnings. The median earnings of Hispanic males were \$19,769 compared to \$31,046 for non-Hispanic men. The median earnings of Hispanic females were \$16,244 compared to \$21,089 for their non-Hispanic counterparts (*The Hispanic Population in the U.S. 1992*).

D. Educational Profile of Latinos in U.S.

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Hispanics in the U.S. have significant implications for their educational opportunities, school experiences, and academic outcomes. Hispanic families *are* interested in the education of their children, but the conditions in which they often find themselves--poverty, for example--do not allow them to fulfill their obligations to their children.

Statistics and research show that Hispanics remain the most undereducated major segment of the U.S. population. Functional illiteracy rates among Hispanic adults exceed 50 percent. Approximately one in two Hispanic youths leaves school without a diploma; of those who stay, three in four seniors are not enrolled in curricular programs which make college a possibility. Academic achievement scores for Hispanics and Blacks remain lower than those of White students, and in some cases, the gap is widening.

1. Hispanic educational attainment

Educational attainment is measured by the degree to which students complete their elementary and secondary schooling and are accepted into an accredited college (Carrasquillo, 1991). Hispanic children face many challenges to their educational advancement: many grow up in poverty; they are part of a minority group; many have limited English proficiency, which impedes their ability to communicate with teachers and English-speaking counterparts; and a great number come from an environment that has not prepared them for school.

a. High school completion.

Research also indicates that Hispanics have made small gains in educational attainment since 1970. Still, they continue to have the lowest high school completion rates of any major population group; the gap between Hispanics and Whites has not narrowed, and the gap between Hispanics and Blacks has widened since 1970. The NCLR publication *Hispanic Education: A Statistical Portrait 1990*, summarizes the findings in this way:

- During 1978-1988, the proportion of Whites 18-21 years old who had completed high school remained steady at 82 percent.
- The Black high school completion rate increased from about 67 percent in 1978 to 75 percent in 1988.
- The Hispanic high school completion rate in 1978 and 1988 was 55 percent.

Among Hispanic subgroups in 1983 (the most recent year for which this information was available), Mexicans had the lowest educational attainment. Seventy-one percent of Cubans were high school graduates, as compared with 53 percent of Mexicans and 55 percent of Puerto Ricans (Bureau of the Census, 1988)

b. College enrollment.

Only 12 percent of Hispanics in the 25- to 34-year-old age group has completed four or more years of college (less than half the percentage of non-Hispanics). The differences among Latino subgroups is even more striking, from a low of eight percent of Mexican-Americans to a high of 24 percent of Cubans (Bureau of the Census, 1988)

c. Years of school completed.

Overall, Hispanics complete fewer years of school than other population groups. Not only do they have lower high school completion rates, but they also enter the school system at a later age and leave it earlier. Hispanic children are less likely to attend pre-school or kindergarten than other groups.

Figure 4.12
Educational Attainment of
Hispanic Population 25 years or older

Years of school completed	Percentage
Less than fifth grade	11.8
Between 5th and 12th (no diploma)	35.6
High school graduates	27.3
Some college education (no degree)	11.7
Associate degree	4.2
Bachelor's degree	6.3
Master's degree	2.0
Professional or doctorate degree	1.1

Source: The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 1992

d. Expectations.

Recent research indicates that Hispanics tend to be placed in a lower educational track, in which students are taught with different objectives and different methods from students in higher tracks. Teachers' expectations of these students are lower; higher order thinking skills are not developed; and students are taught mainly by drill and repetition (Orum, 1988).

2. **School enrollment**

As the Hispanic population increases at five times the rate of the non-Hispanic, so too the percentage of Hispanic school-aged (K-12) children and youth continues to grow. It is projected that by the year 2000, school enrollment will increase to almost 44 million and nearly all the increase will come from the minority--especially Latino--communities. With that in mind, a number of problems faced by Hispanic students today take on even greater significance:

- *Enrollment below modal grade level:* At each grade level a larger percentage of Hispanic children are enrolled below grade level than are White or Black children.
- *Enrollment in gifted and talented programs:* Hispanic children have consistently been less likely to be placed in programs for the gifted and talented than White or Black children. White children are two-and-a-half times more likely than Hispanics to be involved in these programs.
- *Enrollment in segregated schools:* Hispanic students attend increasingly segregated schools in all parts of the country. This segregation varies by region and is more severe in some of the largest central-city school districts.
- *Enrollment in minority-intensive school districts:* According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the 100 largest districts (which account for about 23 percent of the nation's pupils) have slightly more than 40 percent of the nation's 12.2 million minority students (see Figure 4.13).

FIGURE 4.13
Highest percentages of Hispanic Enrollment
within the 100 Largest School Districts in U.S.

Rank	School District	Total Enroll.	%
3	Los Angeles Unified (CA)	943,969	63.3
5	Dade County S.D. (FL)	292,000	46.6
6	Houston ISD (TX)	194,000	44.8
26	Albuquerque P.S. (NM)	88,295	43.1
49	El Paso ISD (TX)	64,092	73.1
55	San Antonio ISD (TX)	60,161	81.7
67	Northside ISD** (TX)	50,229	47.9
68	Ysleta ISD (TX)	49,974	80.7
77	Santa Ana Unified (CA)	45,964	83.2
88	Corpus Christi (TX)	41,881	67.4
379	Edgewood ISD*** (TX)	14,991	95.9

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States 1992. Bureau of the Census

** Northside ISD is also located in San Antonio.

***Although Edgewood is a smaller district, it is included in this table because of the high-percentage Hispanic enrollment. It is also one of the school districts, along with San Antonio Independent, where PAE was implemented.



3. Hispanic academic achievement

Two major national surveys provide achievement test scores for elementary and secondary school students: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses the reading, writing, mathematics, science, and computer competence of the nation's 9, 13, and 17-year-olds; and the National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS), tests 8th graders.

According to NAEP, minority students, including Blacks and Hispanics, appear to be making gains on certain test scores but not on others; their scores remain lower than those for White students and in some cases the gap is widening. According to *NELS:88*, national assessment tests show an upward trend in Hispanic and Black math scores, but failure rates remain high and the gap between minorities and White students is still very wide (NCLR, *Hispanic Education 1990*).

4. Dropout rates²

The nation's student dropout rate in general is well recognized as a major educational and economic problem. Leaving school before graduation puts students at a socio-economic disadvantage and harms the entire national economy as well. As the workplace calls for increasingly skilled and educated workers, the prospect of future employment for high school dropouts seems especially bleak. Furthermore, the proportion of students who are most at risk of school failure--those with limited English proficiency, or who come from low-income families, for example--is on the rise. Conditions related to the family's socio-economic situation, ineffective school policies and inadequate programs, as well as personal factors such as high suspension/retention rates, today combine to make Hispanic youth the most likely group to drop out and therefore to severely limit their opportunities for a better future.

In 1989, approximately 4 million persons in the United States ages 16 to 24 had not completed high school and were not currently enrolled in school. This represents about 12.6 percent of all persons in this age group. Individuals of Hispanic origin were more likely to be status dropouts than others. About one third (33%) of all Hispanics age 16 to 24 had not finished high school and were not enrolled in school. There is no significant difference, however, between Black (13.8%) and White ((12.4%) status dropout rates (see Figure 4.14).

²Dropout figures can vary depending on the definition chosen, the type of dropout rate used in the study, and especially according to the way data is collected and reported in each school district. For our purposes, we will use the "status rate" approach which measures the proportion of the population who have not completed high school and are not enrolled at a point in time, regardless of when they dropped out (*Dropout Rates in the United States:1989*).

The status dropout rate for African-Americans has declined considerably over the last two decades--from 27.4 percent in 1968 to 13.8 percent in 1989. Furthermore, the difference between the dropout rates for Whites and Blacks has narrowed over the same time period, from a difference of about 12.7 percentage points in 1968 to a difference of 1.3 percentage points in 1989. However, Hispanic rates have remained high through the period.

FIGURE 4.14
Rates and Number of Status Dropouts by Race
and Hispanic Origin, Age 16-24: 1989

	Population Total	Number of Dropouts	Percentage
TOTAL	32,007,000	4,038,000	12.6
White	26,233,000	3,254,000	12.4
Black	4,661,000	645,000	13.8
Hispanic	3,460,000	1,142,000	33.0

Source: Dropout Rates in The United States: 1989. National Center for Education Statistics

5. Parental involvement

A great deal of research has been done about the effects of parental involvement in student achievement. The home environment, parents' attitudes towards education, and their relationship with the school are significant determinants of children's academic success. There are indications that Latino parents desire closer participation in the education of their children. Although there are not precise statistics describing the current extent of Hispanic family-school collaboration, research indicates that their aspirations for the education of their children are at least as high as those of non-Hispanic parents. Likewise, polls of Hispanic leaders and Hispanic organizations consistently show that the community perceives education as the single most important issue facing Hispanics (NCLR, *Hispanic Education 1992*.)

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Part V

**Tools and Resources
Used by the PAE Program**

A

Family, School, Community: New Roles and Relations

Everybody, including parents, teachers, community members, and practitioners, has a different concept of parent involvement and a variety of ways for implementing programs. There is no right or wrong definition of parental involvement, but there *are* a wide variety ways for families to become involved: by providing a safe, healthy, warm environment at home; helping their children learn; supporting school events; becoming an advocate for their child; or actively participating in educational decisionmaking or school governance, to name a few. Most parents begin their involvement at a point where they feel comfortable, based on their knowledge, self-confidence, motivation, language skills, and their child's success and achievement in school.

Many efforts have been made to classify the ways families can be involved or can develop an effective partnership with the school and their communities to improve student achievement. The PAE model encompasses not only what many parents are actually doing but also includes an array of possibilities and activities that parents could do at home, at school, or in the community to improve their child's educational outcome. Our framework takes into account:

- Parents' development through the parent involvement process
- Children's physical, emotional, and educational growth
- School willingness to incorporate parents in the learning process and in school governance as equal partners
- Parents' expectations of their children's educational outcomes
- The community's role in the development of the social, physical, and emotional well-being of all children

Parents' roles in the education of their children, and corresponding examples of activities at home, at school, and in the community have been characterized in the next five pages as follows:

- Role #1: Parents as Educators
- Role #2: Parents as Collaborators
- Role #3: Parents as Advocates
- Role #4: Parents as Partners and Decision Makers
- Role #5: Parents as Leaders

Role # 1: Parents as Educators

Parents are the first and primary educators of their children. As such, their role does not stop when the child enters school; it is a long-term commitment.

Goals	What parents can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide child with opportunity to develop physically, emotionally, and socially• To further the importance of education and hard work to succeed• To teach and promote family, community, and cultural values	<p><u>At Home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read to and listen to your children read.• Use positive discipline at home.• Teach your child the values that are important to you, to your family and to your culture.• Provide your child with quiet time and a place to do school work.• Balance indoor and outdoor play. <p><u>At School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let the teachers know that you care about your child's education and you are willing to help.• Talk about and demonstrate to school staff the values of your family's language and heritage. <p><u>In the Community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize learning activities before and after school.• Use the community resources such as the library and parks to motivate your child's learning.

Role # 2: Parents as Supporters

Parents' participation in their children's education becomes more significant when the child enters school. Parents work to obtain quality education for their children by helping at the school, initiating activities, and finding resources.

Goals	What parents can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build trust and maintain a positive relationship between families and school • To demonstrate to the child your interest in, and the importance of, education • To obtain quality education for your children • To be responsive to school and community needs 	<p><u>At Home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read, sign, and return to the school the teachers' notices. • Prepare for parent/teacher conferences by reviewing your child's school work. • Read information about the school rules and regulations. <p><u>At School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer in the classroom and for other school events. • Attend school activities, performances, and meetings. • Work with students for whom English is a second language. <p><u>In the Community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as translators for parents whose first language is not English. • Organize events that reflect the cultural diversity of the school and community. • Coach sport teams in after-school programs.

Role #3: Parents as Advocates

One of the most important parental roles is to be sure that their children receive a fair treatment in the public school. Parents should know their children's rights in the public schools, as well as your own, to improve education conditions and to take action when needed.

Goals	What parents can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To be sure that children are receiving the best education possible• To fully understand school policies and regulations• To become familiar with, and an effective user of, the school-policy appeals system	<p><u>At Home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep communication open with your children to reassure them that you are on their side when problems arise.• Review with your child the school policies on discipline, and on academic expectations. <p><u>At School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate regularly and build a rapport with the principal and teachers.• Become knowledgeable about school and district policies on discipline, curriculum, and special programs.• Learn about the appeals process in cases of suspension, retention, grade reduction, etc. <p><u>In the Community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Become familiar with local and national resources for school improvement.• Attend training sessions offered by community-based groups on parent involvement and parent rights in the public school.

Role # 4: Parents as Partners and Decision Makers

Parents become partners in their child's education by fully participating in the decision-making and governance of the school. By helping to decide school policies and programs, parents not only are affecting their child's education but the educational future of many other children as well.

Goals	What parents can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To fully participate in the decisions that affect the educational future of children • To work with educators on school improvement • To participate in school governance 	<p><u>At Home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with your child on setting high goals for student performance. • Become knowledgeable about the school's organization, policies, and practices. <p><u>At School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take part in decisions affecting your child's placement in programs such as special ed or bilingual education. • Attend, express concerns, and vote at parents' meetings. • Become part of the school site-council, advisory council or governing board. <p><u>In the Community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work for a policy that ensures all school committees or advisory boards have parent and community representation. • Establish a school-effectiveness advisory committee (with the principal's approval), and include community members who represent the racial and cultural diversity of the community.

Role # 5: Parents as Leaders

Parents as leaders have the capacity to influence school decisions and mobilize other parents and citizens to become active participants in the educational process.

Goals	What parents can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To empower other parents to become involved in school. • To generate broad-based public will to improve public education. • To take charge of issues that are important to parents. • To be politically active. 	<p><u>At Home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a role model and an example for your child concerning the importance of education. • When possible, offer your home for a parent's meeting about school issues. <p><u>At School</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a position and be active against issues that negatively affect student achievement, such as tracking. • Organize and provide training to parents and citizens on parent involvement and parents rights in public schools. <p><u>In the Community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact or visit families with low attendance at school events. • Organize a parent/citizens group to promote school excellence and equity. • Be a school board member or actively support a candidate. • Start a campaign to enhance the understanding of culture and language diversity in the community.



Rights and Responsibilities: The Two Sides of a Coin

Every child in the U.S. has the right to a free public education. This right is provided by laws in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The right to education extends to children with disabilities, by means of federal law P.L. 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, and to children from immigrant, undocumented families, as established by the Supreme Court ruling in *Plyler v. Doe*, 1982.

Rights of students and parents extend into other areas beyond the basic right to a free public school education. As Louis Fischer and David Schimmel point out in their book *Parents, Schools and the Law*, parents have two kinds of rights: those as parents and those as guardians of their children-- who *also* have legal rights as students. As guardians of their children, parents have the right to be involved in their education.

The Significance of Parents' Rights in Public Education

If parents are informed about their rights and those of their children as students in the public schools, they will be able to become active participants in the educational process and thereby bring about improvements in the academic achievement of their children and in the quality of their schools. With the knowledge and awareness of parents' rights, however, comes the responsibility to exercise those rights, and strive to establish a constructive partnership between home and school.

Rights and responsibilities can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. For example, federal law gives parents the right of access to their child's school records. It then becomes the parents' responsibility to exercise that right by requesting to review those files. Likewise, parents whose primary language is not English have the right to have an interpreter or translator present at all meetings and interactions at the school. Few schools will offer such services at the outset; LEP parents have a responsibility to speak up and remind the school of their legal obligation to provide language assistance to parents.

NCCE/PAE maintains that a major role of parents is to be an advocate for their child. The school may not be aware of many student rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, federal laws, and Supreme Court rulings. Since students are typically considered uninformed, minor children, it becomes the responsibility of the parents to speak up for them. This section provides the reader with the means to do it. All of the rights discussed in this section have been established by law.

Parent Rights among Hispanic Families

It is very common to hear non-Hispanic parents asking about their rights and responsibilities in the public school. However, Hispanic families are not accustomed to this concept and so are much less aware of their legal position in the public education process. Very frequently Hispanic

parents accept a school's decisions and procedures without challenging or appealing the authority of the educators.

Rights, Responsibilities, and the Law

The following charts represent the parents' rights, responsibilities, and the legal bases that guarantee those rights. These rights, responsibilities, and laws apply to all parents with children in the public school system, including all racial, ethnic, and language minorities. However, there are some specific laws (Title VII for example) that give rights to LEP students and their parents. Those rights and laws are also included in the charts.

Parents' and students' rights fall into six categories:

1. Right to a free public school education
2. Right to be informed
3. Right to be consulted
4. Right of access
5. Right to have child treated fairly at school
6. Right to non-discrimination

Right # 1: To Free Public Education. Laws in all 50 states and the District of Columbia include mandates that all children have the right to a free public education. As a result of federal laws and Supreme Court rulings, this right extends to children with disabilities, those whose primary language is not English, and children from immigrant families.

Rights to Education	Examples of Parents' Responsibilities	Legal Basis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children with disabilities have the right to receive an appropriate free public education. Children whose native language is not English and who have limited English proficiency (LEP) have the right to receive language assistance. Children from immigrant families, including those who are undocumented, have the right to a public school education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn your rights as parents under P.L. 94-142. If your child is enrolled in special or bilingual education, monitor his/her progress to make sure the program is achieving its educational objectives. Be sure that your child is receiving language assistance as long as necessary, and is able to participate in regular and extracurricular activities. Become informed about the language assistance programs offered by the school. If the school denies enrollment to your children because of their legal status, contact an appropriate community organization and ask for help in advocating for your rights. Parents of undocumented children might need their child's immunization records, birth certificate, and proof of residence at registration time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P.L. 94-142 Education of All Handicapped Children Act, 1975, renamed in 1990 "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" Bilingual Education Act, 1968 Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 1974 Supreme Court ruling <i>Lau v. Nichols</i>, 1974. State laws Supreme Court ruling <i>Plyler v. Doe</i>, 1982

Note: For specific information on rights of children with disabilities, consult NCCE's *Information for Parents* brochures # 8, # 9, and #10 in English or Spanish. For more details on rights of LEP or undocumented children request brochure #12, also available in English and Spanish.

Right # 2: To Be Informed. In order for parents to be equal partners and active participants in the education of their children, they need adequate information. Parents have the right to know, to understand, and participate in decisions that affect the education of their children. The basic principles of a democratic society require that public schools be responsive to the needs of the parents, students, and citizens in the community.

Right to Information About	Examples of Parents' Responsibilities	Legal Basis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How public schools in the U.S. work • School policies, rules, and regulations in their district • Curriculum and special programs • Academic requirements, evaluation, and standards for promotion • Background and experience of teachers and principal • Grievance procedures • Policies, programs, procedures, and child's progress in the language parents can understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the school for a parent and/or student handbook, which includes information about policies. • Request information from your child's school about curriculum objectives, school policies, and requirements, when necessary. • Ask for information on grading policy, testing schedules, and report cards. • Review all school information carefully. Ask questions if it is not clear. • Find out about programs geared to promote cultural awareness. • Request a translator or bring a bilingual relative or friend to the parent/teacher conference. • Ask that the report card be translated into Spanish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Record Laws in each state • Bilingual Education Act, 1968 (Federal law) • Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 1974 (Federal Law) • Public Law 94-142 (Federal law)

Note: For more details on your rights to be informed, request NCCE's *Information for Parents* brochures # 1, # 2, and # 7, available in English and Spanish

Right # 3: To be Consulted. The Supreme Court has held that parents have the right "to guide the education of their children." Federal legislation concerning Chapter 1 programs for disadvantaged children, bilingual education, and special education for children with disabilities includes provisions for parent involvement in the planning and monitoring of these programs, as well as in their children's progress.

Right to be Consulted About	Examples of Parents' Responsibilities	Legal Basis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement of your child in the following programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Chapter 1 * Special Education * Bilingual Education or ESL * Gifted and Talented • Retention of your child in grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about the consequences of ability grouping and tracking. • Question your child's placement in reading or math if you are not satisfied with his/her progress. • Review the parent involvement policies for the program in which your child is placed. Find the best way to participate in your child's education. • Review--and sign only when in agreement--the necessary forms required for your child's evaluation before placement in special education • Be sure that the school places your child in a special education classroom only when there is a disability and not because of limited English. • If your child is having problems, be sure the school is providing services to solve the them. Do not wait until the end of the school year. • If you do not agree with the school retention recommendation, suggest alternatives . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Laws: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Chapter 1, ESEA * Bilingual Education Act, 1968 * Education of All Handicapped Children Act, 1974 (P.L. 94-142) • Supreme Court Rulings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Pierce v. Society of Sisters</i>, 1925 * <i>Wisconsin v. Yoder</i>, 1972 • State Laws and local policies

Note: For more information about your rights request NCCCE's *Information for Parents* brochures #1, #2, #8, and #12, available in English and Spanish.

Right # 4: To Access. Before 1974, many schools refused to tell parents what records were collected, much less let them see their child's files. However, the same schools often released records to outside groups. To curb such abuses, a federal law was passed to protect both the student and family privacy.

Parents' Rights	Examples of Parents' Responsibilities	Legal Basis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To access, challenge, and decide who can see your child's school records To visit your child's classroom and school To attend parent/teacher conferences To attend school board meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make an appointment to see all information kept by the school about your child at least once a year. Request a translator and an explanation of test results or any other information you do not understand Challenge misleading or false information. Advise the main office of your arrival and intention to visit your child's classroom. When problems arise, be ready to call the teacher or principal to discuss the situation. Attend school board meetings to learn about policies being discussed and decisions being made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 1974, also known as the Buckley Amendment State laws and/or local school board policies Open meeting laws in all 50 states and D.C.

Note: For more information about these rights, request NCCE's *Information for Parents* brochures #2, and #6. You also can obtain *Beyond the Open Door* by Susan Illesciak Hall and Nancy Berle. **119** **A20**

Right # 5: To Be Treated Fairly at School. It is illegal for schools to practice racial or ethnic discrimination in disciplinary procedures, testing, placement, or grouping practices. The Supreme Court has ruled that students have the right to fair treatment in schools even when they have violated school rules.

Parent and Student Rights	Examples of Parents' Responsibilities	Legal Basis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to due process of law • Right to not be disciplined with "excessive or unreasonable" physical force • Right to equal educational opportunity, fair and non-discriminatory treatment, regardless of gender, disability, racial identity, language, or ethnic and cultural background • Right to appeal school decisions which are not believed to be in the best interest of the child's education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a case of school suspension, be sure that the school is following local and state policies, and that due process requirements are met. • Become familiar with your state law and local school discipline policy. • If corporal punishment is allowed, find out the procedures the school must follow and/or request an alternative punishment. • Be willing to question policies and practices which you feel may discriminate against your child or some other students. • Report unprofessional behavior of school officials. • Follow the chain of command, state the complaint in writing, and suggest solutions to solve the problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Goss v. López</i>, 1975 • Laws in 22 states, the District of Columbia and some local districts prohibit the use of corporal punishment • Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972 • Title VI, Civil Rights Act, 1964 • Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 • 14th Amendment

Note: Additional information on these rights can be found in NCCCE's *Information for Parents* brochures #3, #4, #7, #8, and #12, and in *Beyond the Open Door*, by Hall and Berlin (published by NCCCE).





Effective Home Visits: Tips from the Field

1. First visits should be announced, if at all possible.
2. Be able to speak the language parents feel most comfortable using.
3. Build a trusting relationship with parents. Initial visits should be relaxed and pleasant. Learn children's names, the schools they attend, and how things are going before discussing the purpose of your visit.
4. The length of the visit should be mutually agreed upon. Never assume that just because you have been invited in that it is fine to take as long as you need. Never take the parent's time for granted.
5. Be sensitive to their environment. Do not expect complete privacy or total comfort when talking to parents in their home. If things are a bit chaotic, don't stiffen up or act annoyed. Accept a cup of tea or coffee, if parents offer.
6. Become visible in the community. Let the parents see you on the school campus, at neighborhood meetings, fairs, etc., if possible. Parents are more willing to let you into their homes if they have seen or talked to you before.
7. Dress comfortably. If you give the image of an authority figure such as an immigration officer, parents will be intimidated.
8. Do not treat the home visit like an interview. Avoid note-taking. Relax and be conversational.
9. For families without phones, home visits might be the only way to have personal contacts with parents. "Dropping in" is a little tricky. Do not expect to be let in the first time. Ask if you could visit later on an agreed upon day.
10. Make clear that you do not plan to take much of their time. Apologize for visiting unannounced.
11. Be prepared to hold an entire conversation at the door. Parents may want to talk, but may not want you to come inside, for any number of reasons.
12. Send notes of thanks to parents you visit (especially those without phones). Let them know you appreciate the time they spent with you in their homes.

Bilingual Help Line and Clearinghouse

for Hispanic Education

1-800-LE AYUDA

Bilingual Services: Advancing Hispanic Families

NCCE created the Bilingual Help Line and Clearinghouse as a response to the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the United States, and the need for effective information for families, educators, community organizations, and citizens about parental involvement and parents' rights in the education of their children. The Bilingual Help Line and Clearinghouse represents NCCE's increasing effort to develop culturally sensitive materials and to assist Hispanic families in their efforts to help their children succeed in school.

The Bilingual Help Line and Clearinghouse is staffed with two bilingual counselors and a director. The database contains about 3000 entries which include local, state, and national organizations specializing in different educational issues for caller referral. A library on education and extensive bilingual materials are readily available for parents.

Help Line Profile: An Up-To-Date Overview

Since January 1992, the Bilingual Help Line and Clearinghouse has provided parents, citizens, educators, various other organizations, and the media with up-to-date information on educational issues. Hispanic families, as well as others interested in the education of Hispanic children, have received guidance, support, and information about parent involvement, rights and responsibilities in the public school system.

- **Total Requests:** The monthly number of phone calls has increased from 23 in January of 1992 to 241 in March of 1993 for a total of 1,662 requests answered to date--August, 1993.
- **Users:** 40% of total requests for information were made by parents; 23% by school personnel; and 18% by other organizations. The remaining 19% includes phone calls from citizens, professionals, media, and students.
- **Calls by Issue:** 28% of the phone calls are requests for information on parental involvement in public schools. 22% are for information on parents'/students' rights and rights of children with disabilities in the public school. Issues which follow in frequency are discipline, school programs and policies, college and career information, as well as general information about other NCCE services.

- Request Sources: The majority of the phone calls are the result of NCCE press releases, magazine and newspaper publicity, and referrals from previous users of the Help Line. Some requests can be attributed to radio and T.V. Public Service Announcements.
- Calls by Region: The Pacific (CA, WA, OR, HI, AK) region originated 27% of the requests, followed by the South Atlantic (MD, DC, VA, WV, DE, NC, SC, FL, GA) region with 25%. The West South Central (TX, AR, OK, LA) and Mid-Atlantic (NY, NJ, PA) regions generated 16% and 11% of phone calls respectively. These four regions have a high concentration of Hispanic population.

The evidence continues to grow: Hispanic families are in great need of meaningful and effective information to help their children succeed in school. Hispanic parents have accepted and favored the bilingual information services provided through the Help Line. NCCE will continue its support to advance Hispanic children's education and will expand services to other culturally diverse citizens to strengthen the capacities of all children in the public school system.

AVAILABLE PUBLICATIONS FROM NCCE *

Publications in English

1. Books and Manuals

- Beyond the Open Door: A Citizens Guide to Increasing Public Access to Local School Boards
- Beyond the Bake Sale: An Educator's Guide to Working with Parents
- Effective Schools Through School Based Improvement
- The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement
- Helping Dreams Survive: The Story of a Project Involving African-American Families in the Education of Their Children
- The Middle School Years: A Parent's Handbook
- The Middle School Years: A Presentation Kit
- One School at a Time: School Based Management--A Process for Change
- Parent Involvement Kit
- Parents, Schools, and the Law
- Public School Choice: An Equal Chance For All?
- Public School Choice: From National Policy to Local Programs
- School Based Improvement: A Manual for Training School Councils
- School Based Improvement: A Manual for District Leaders
- A Workbook on Parent Involvement for District Leaders
- Your School: How Well is it Working? A Citizens Guide to School Evaluation

2. Cards and Bookmarks

- Annual Education Checkup Card
- The Middle School Years Bookmark
- Parent Rights Card
- Public School Choice Bookmark
- Special Education Checkup

* All publications are for sale through NCCE. For more information contact NCCE's Washington office.

3. Handbooks

- Developing Leadership for Parent/Citizen Groups
- How to Run a School Board Campaign--and Win
- Parents Can Understand Testing
- Who Controls the Schools?

4. Information for Parents Series

- #1 Parent Involvement
- #2 Parent/Teacher Conference
- #3 Corporal Punishment
- #4 Suspension and Due Process
- #5 Parents Organizing
- #6 Access to School Records
- #7 How to Appeal
- #8 Education of Handicapped Children
- #9 Individualized Education Program
- #10 When You Disagree
- #11 Parents and Dropout Prevention
- #12 The Rights of Students With Limited English

Publications in Spanish

1. Publicaciones de bolsillo

- Examen anual sobre educación escolar
- Características de la escuela intermedia
- Revisión de educación especial
- Tarjeta de los derechos de los padres

2. Información para padres

- #1S Participación de los padres
- #2S Reunión con el maestro
- #3S No al castigo corporal
- #4S Suspensión y sus derechos
- #5S Los padres se organizan
- #6S Acceso al expediente escolar
- #7S Cómo hacer un reclamo
- #8S Educación de niños
- #9S Programa educativo individual
- #10S Cuando usted no está de acuerdo
- #11S Padres y prevención de la deserción
- #12S Estudiantes con limitaciones en el inglés

Programs and Organizations

National Hispanic Organizations

ASPIRA Association Inc.
1112 16th Street, NW
Suite 340
Washington, D. C. 20036
(202)835-3600
Executive Director: Janice Petrovich

Cuban American National Council
300 SW 12th Avenue
Miami, FL 33130
(305)642-3484
Director: Guarione Díaz

Hispanic Policy Development Project
250 Park Avenue S.
Suite 5000 A
New York, NY 10003
(212)529-9323
President: Siobhan Nicolau

Intercultural Development Research
Association
5835 Callaghan Road
Suite 350
San Antonio, TX 78228
(512)684-8180
Director: María Robledo Montecell

LULAC National Education Service
Center
777 North Capitol Street, N. E.
Suite 350
Washington, D. C. 20002
(202)408-0060
Director: Richard Rayball

Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund
634 South Spring Street
11th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90014
(213)629-2512
Director: Antonia Hernandez

Multicultural Education, Training and
Advocacy, Inc.
240 Elm Street
Suite 122
Somerville, MA 02144
(617)628-2226
Director: Roger Rice

National Council of La Raza
810 First Street, N. E.
Suite 300
Washington, D. C. 20002
Director: Raúl Yzaguirre

National Puerto Rican Coalition
1700 K Street, NW #500
Washington, DC 20006
(202)223-3915
Contact Person in Education: Ruth Pagani

Puerto Rican Legal Defense and
Education Fund
99 Hudson Street
14th Floor
New York, NY 10013
(212)219-3360
Director: Juan Figueroa

Available Local Educational Services

Arizona

Superintendent of Public Instruction
State Department of Education
1535 West Jefferson
Phoenix, AZ 85007
(602)542-5460
Superintendent: Ms. C. Diane Bishop

Chicanos por la Causa
(Dropout prevention program)
1112 E. Buckeye Road
Phoenix, AZ 85034
(602)257-0700
Contact Person: Domingo Rodríguez

Centro Adelante Campesino
(Migrant education center)
15646 Norte Verde Street
Surprise, AZ 85374
(602)583-9830

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona
(Education & parent involvement)
2600 N. Wyatt
Tucson, AZ 85712
(602)324-3150
Contact Person: Yolanda Sevillano

Project YES
(Services for at-risk students)
2600 S. 5th Avenue
S. Tucson, AZ 85713
(602)884-1602
Director: Sister Charlotte Anne Swift

Valle del Sol
(Family services in general)
1209 S. 1st Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85003
(602)258-6797
Director: Ramón León

California

Superintendent of Public Instruction
State Department of Education
721 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916)657-5485
Superintendent: Mr. William D. Dawson

Children NOW
(Parent citizen organization)
1930 14th Street
Santa Monica, CA 90404
(310)399-7444
Contact Person: Wettle Ducker

Disability Rights Education and Defense
Fund (Special education)
2212 6th Street
Berkeley, CA 94710
(510)644-2555
Contact Person: Linda Kilb

Parents Institute for Quality Education
(Parent empowerment and involvement)
3370 San Fernando Road, Unit 105
Los Angeles, CA 90065
(213)255-2575
Director: Vohac Madirosian

Programa Bravo!
(Parent involvement in education)
119 W. Hall Avenue
San Ysidro, CA 92173
(619)428-1115
Director: Juan P. Leyva

Excellence in Community Educational
Leadership, EXCELL Program
(Education in general)
900 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1520
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213)489-3428
Director: Lorie Orum

Colorado

Commissioner of Education
State Department of Education
201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1799
(303)866-6807
Commissioner: Dr. William T. Randall

BUENO Center for Multicultural Ed
(Education in general)
School of Education, Room 255
Campus Box 249
University of Colorado at Boulder
Boulder, CO 80309-0249
(303)492-5416
Director: Dr. Leonard Baca

Colorado Alliance of Business
(Dropout prevention & mentoring)
600 Grant Street, Suite 204
Denver, CO 80203
(303)832-9791
Contact Person: Susan Kayler-Daley

Family Resource Schools
(Parent involvement & dropout prevention)
975 Grant Street
Denver, CO 80203
(303)764-3587
Contact Person: Lucy Trujillo

Latin American Research and Service
Agency/Hispanic Agenda
(Hispanic education)
899 Logan Street, Suite 400
Denver, CO 80203
(303)839-8300
Contact Person: Gerri Madrid

Mi Casa Resource Center
(General services)
571 Galapago
Denver, CO 80303
Director: Dorothy Trujillo

Florida

Commissioner of Education
State Department of Education
Capitol Building, Room PL 08
Tallahassee, FL 32201
(904)487-1785
Commissioner: Ms. Betty Castor

Academic Excellence
(Bilingual education, LEP students)
Broward County Schools Board
701 S. Andrews Avenue
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33316
(305)767-8414
Project Director: Dr. Nancy Terrell

FLASH (Families Learning at School and
at Home)
Florida International University
Family English Literacy Program
University Park-Trailer MOS
Miami, FL 33142
(305)995-1794
Project Director: Delia García

Learn to Read Volunteers of Miami
(Literacy, tutoring, ESL, workshops)
Miami Dade Community College North
Campus
11380 N. W. 26th Avenue
Miami, FL 33167
(305)237-1457
Director: Maira Smith

Red Lands Christian Migrant
Association
(Migrant education)
219 North First Street
Immokalee, FL 33934
(813)657-3135
Director: Barbara Mainster

Parent to Parent of Miami
(Special education)
5555 SW 93th Avenue

Miami, FL 33165
(305)223-7379
Director: Dr. Eleanor Levinson

Illinois

Superintendent of Education
State Board of Education
100 North First Street
Springfield, IL 62777
(217)782-2221
Superintendent: Mr. Robert Leininger

Designs for Change
(Parents' citizen group)
6 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60604
(312)922-0317
Contact Person: Gwen Griffin

Comité Latino
(Parent empowerment & school reform)
513 North Clark
Chicago, IL 60604
(312)435-3900
Director: Margarita Klein

Family Resource Center on Disabilities
(Special education advocates)
20 East Jackson Boulevard
Room 900
Chicago, IL 60604
Director: Charlotte Des Jardins

Parents United for Responsible Education
(Grass roots education group)
1145 West Wilson, Box 398
Chicago, IL 60640
(312)784-7873
Director: Joy Noven

United Neighborhood Organization (UNO)
(Education in general, parent involvement)
125 North Halsted
Suite 203

Chicago, IL 60606
(312)441-1300
Director: Danny Solis
Education Coordinator: Juan Rangel

Massachusetts

Commissioner of Education
State Department of Education
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148
(617)388-3300
Commissioner: Dr. Robert V. Antonucci

Boston Partners in Education, Inc.
(Home-school partnerships)
145 South Street
Boston, MA 02111
(617)451-6145
Director: Betsy Nelson

Center on Families, Communities, Schools
and Children's Learning
(Home-school-communities partnerships)
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
(617)353-3309
Contact Person: Owen Heleen

Institute for Responsive Education
(Education issues in general)
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
(617)353-3309
Director: Don Davies

National Center for Immigrant Students
(Immigrant's education)
100 Boylston Street
Suite 737
Boston, MA 02116
(617)357-8507
Director: Vivian W. Lee

The Center for Law & Education
(Education issues in general)
955 Massachusetts Avenue
Suite 3A
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617)876-6611
Director: Kathleen Boundy

New Jersey

Commissioner of Education
State Department of Education
225 East State Street
State Office Park South, CN500
Trenton, NJ 08625-0500
(609)292-4450
Commissioner: Dr. Mary L. Fitzgerald

Citizen Advocacy Program
(Handicapped parent's advocates)
55 High Street
Mt. Holly, NJ 08060
(609)267-5880
Director: Lorraine Travaglione

Education Law Center, Inc.
(Education advocates)
155 Washington Street
Room 209
Newark, NJ 07102
Director: Marilyn Morheuser

Hispanic Affairs & Resource Center
(Dropout prevention program)
15 Main Street
Asbury Park, NJ 07712
(908)774-3282
Director: Iris González

Partners in Learning
(Home-school partnerships)
NJ Dept. of Education
225 W. State Street, CN 500
Trenton, NJ 08625
(609)292-1846
Director: Dr. Judith Lawrence

Puertorriqueños Asociados for Community
Organization, Inc.
(Education advocates)
392 Grove Street
Jersey City, NJ 07302
Director: Elia Rivera

New Mexico

Superintendent of Public Instruction
State Department of Education
Education Building
300 Don Gaspar
Santa Fe, NM 87501-2786
(505)827-6516
Superintendent: Mr. Alan D. Morgan

American GI Forum of the United States
3301 Mountain Road, NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104
(505)247-4910
Contact Person: Isabelle Ogaz Tellez

De Colores
(Hispanic education, empowering parents)
P. O. Box 7487
Albuquerque, NM 87194
Contact Person: José Armas, Ph. D.

Family Development Programs
(Parent citizen group)
University of NM
Oñate Hall, Room 213
Albuquerque, NM 87131
(505)277-6943
Contact Person: Dr. Mary Dudley

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for
Albuquerque
(Education in general)
1600 Lomas, NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104
Director: Leroy Pacheco

Youth Development-Stay In School
Program

(Dropout and parent involvement)

6301 Central NW

Albuquerque, NM 87105

Contact Person: Debra Bacca

New York

Commissioner of Education

State Education Department

111 Education Building

Washington Avenue

Albany, NY 12234

(518)474-5844

Commissioner: Dr. Thomas Sobol

Advocates for Children of NY

(Education advocates)

24-16 Bridge Plaza South

Long Island, NY 11101

(718)729-8866

Contact Person: Gail Kirkio

BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center

(National & state migrant education center)

Holcomb Building 210

Geneseo, NY 14454

(716)245-5681

Director: Robert Lynch

Cooperative Communication Between

Home & School Program

(Training & technical assistance for
educators & citizens)

Dept. of Human & Family Studies

MVR Hall Cornell University

Ithaca, NY 14853

(607)255-2531

Contact Person: Christiann Dean

Effective Parenting Information for

Children

(Parent involvement in education)

1344 University Avenue

Rochester, NY 14607

716)256-1290

Contact Person: Fran Heimrid

Puerto Rican Family Institute, Inc.

(General Services & Newly Arrived
Immigrants Program)

145 W. 15th Street

New York, NY 11111

(212)924-6320

Director: María Elena Girone

Texas

Commissioner of Education

Texas Education Agency

William B. Travis Building

1701 North Congress Avenue

Austin, TX 78701-1494

(512)463-8985

Commissioner: Dr. Lionel R. Meno

Association for Advancement of Mexican

Americans

(Education in general)

6001 Gulf Fwy

Houston, TX 77023

(713)926-4756

Director: Phill Moreno

AVANCE

(Family resource CBO)

301 South Frio, Suite 310

San Antonio, TX 78207

(210)270-4630

Contact Person: Elizabeth López

Center for Community Education

(Home-school-communities partnerships)

College of Education

Texas A & M University

Education Administration

College Station, TX 77843

(409)845-7620

Director: Dr. Cliff Whetten

Communities in School
(Dropout prevention program)
9123 Loraine Street, Suite 201
San Antonio, TX 78216
(210)349-9094
Contact Person: Jean McDonald

Service Center for Migrant Education
(Migrant education services)
7145 W. Tidwell
Houston, TX 77001
(713)744-6370
Contact Person: Steve White

Part VI

**Additional Tools and Resources
for Parents, Schools, and Communities**

B

Is Your School a Good One? A Checklist for Parents and Others

In developing the list of characteristics you feel your school should have, you may wish to ask the following questions. Be sure to record your answers so that you can review the information at a later time.

Parent/Citizen Involvement

- Does the school board give citizen requests a fair and timely hearing?
- Are copies of budget documents readily available to the public?
- Are parents and citizens consulted in planning for curriculum and extracurricular activities?
- Does the school have a clear-cut and fair discipline policy in writing, developed in consultation with parents and students?
- Is school communication with parents frequent and informative?
- Are student records readily available to parents?
- Are the results of achievement and psychological tests shared with parents?
- Are at least four parent-teacher conferences scheduled each year?
- Are children included in parent-teacher conferences?
- Do reports to parents clearly indicate strengths and weaknesses of children and how children are doing in relation to their own ability?

School Facilities

- Is the school well lighted and pleasant?
- Are the hallways clean and safe?
- Is the playground equipment adequate, safe, and well supervised when children are using it?
- Are separate facilities provided for such subjects as art, music, and phys ed?

- Does the school have a well-stocked library or multi-media learning center?
- Does each classroom have enough textbooks and other supplies for each child?
- Are most books copyrighted within the last five year?
- Do students or staff have access to a computer?

Staff

- Does the principal regularly visit classrooms?
- Does the principal evaluate teachers and offer them assistance?
- Is the principal trained in teacher evaluation?
- Is the principal ever formally evaluated by the staff?
- Is a teacher's aide assigned to each classroom?
- Does the school have a full-time nurse? A full-time counselor for every 250 students?
- Are special service personnel (psychologists, school social workers, speech therapists, and others) available for consultation?
- Are the recommendations of special services personnel implemented?
- Are substitute teachers certified to teach, not merely babysit?
- Does the school have a staff person with special training in such subjects as reading, art, music and physical education?

Attitudes Toward Students and Learning

- Does the school use a variety of learning programs to meet individual needs?
- Is the school program designed to help every child succeed?
- Do teachers' schedules allow time to give special help to children who are having learning difficulties?
- Are children helped to develop unique talents and abilities?

- Are children free of negative labels like "remedial," "retarded," "emotionally disturbed," "hyperactive," "trouble-maker," "from a broken home"?
- Do teachers speak positively about the children they teach?
- Do teachers treat children with compassion and sympathy?
- Do teachers protect the privacy of students and families by making sure that comments and written materials are confidential and professional in character?
- Are lunches provided for children who qualify for reduced price or free lunch?
- Are supplies provided for children who cannot afford them?
- May children come and go freely to use the media-learning center?
- Who is blamed when children fail?

Relations with the Community

- What are the various parent and community groups involved with the school?
- Are there any school advisory groups and organizations?
- Does the composition of these advisory groups reflect the composition of the community?
- What impact or influence have these advisory groups had on school policy?
- Does the school seek the assistance of the parents and community in developing its educational program?
- Does the school provide current information about its program to members of the community and parents?
- Does the school share its decision-making power concerning objectives, programs, activities, and procedures with various racial and cultural groups in the community?
- Has the school attempted to engage the support of minority groups in the community in developing school policy?

Source: *Your School: How Well Is It Working: A Citizens Guide to School Evaluation*, published by National Committee for Citizens in Education.



Building a Power Base

Ten Tips to Help You Gain and Keep Power

1. Develop more understanding of the system of communication.
2. Invest time in short- and long-range planning.
3. Learn to set priorities and use time effectively.
4. Work with parents at every level of their involvement.
5. Create a unified, well-disciplined organization.
6. Identify common problems and establish common goals with other groups.
7. Actively seek financial resources.
8. Develop strategies to influence education law.
9. Become part of the local/state political decision making by creating voting blocks.
10. Be persistent.

Adapted from *Developing Leadership for Parent/Citizen Groups*, published by the National Committee for Citizens in Education.

A Process for Understanding How Well Your School Serves Children and Parents

In order to conduct a thorough and useful evaluation of your school, you need to follow these steps:

1. Find others who are also concerned. Don't try to do it alone.
2. Work with a group to determine what criteria you will use to evaluate. Develop a good survey to come up with the criteria.
3. Establish the standards that will confirm that the school has and supports the items listed in the criteria you select.
4. Gather information related to the criteria on your list, and keep the school district informed about what you are doing.
5. Build support for your efforts by working closely with other interested individuals and groups.
6. Analyze and organize the information you collect.
7. Evaluate against the criteria.
8. Use the results of your evaluation to improve the school.

Source: *Your School: How Well Is It Working: A Citizens Guide to School Evaluation*, published by National Committee for Citizens in Education.

New Vision Schools

The following recommendations and principles, developed by the Carnegie Corporation, the Network of Progressive Educators, the Center for Collaborative Education and other are being shared to encourage you to think about a set of governing principles for your New Vision School. Each of these are important to consider in the shaping of your school.

- Students thrive in small, personalized learning environments.
- Schools improve academic performance through fostering health and fitness.
- Students learn best through direct experience, primary sources, personal relationships, and cooperative exploration.
- Schools pay equal attention to all facets of students' development.
- Assessment of school and student is accomplished through multiple perspectives.
- The school and home are active partners in meeting the needs of students.
- Parent, student, and staff cooperate in school decision making.
- Schools build on the home cultures of their students and their families.
- Schools encourage young people to fulfill their responsibilities as world citizens by teaching critical inquiry and the complexities of global issues.
- Schools help students develop their social conscience, appreciate the worth of others, and face issues of race, class, gender, and disabilities.
- Effective schools are not isolated but are connected with their community.
- All students, regardless of race, native language, gender, nationality, or disability, must receive a quality education and it is our responsibility to teach them the skills and knowledge that enable them to compete successfully in a new technological society.
- The vision of education is based on a commitment to preparing children for thoughtful and active citizenship in a pluralistic, democratic society. This requires schools to conceive of themselves as people-centered communities that organized educational experiences to promote intellectual habits of mind and life-long learning, critical reflection, and individual and collective contributions to school and society.
- Schools enable students to have the widest possible options for further education and career development.
- In sum, schools prepare students to be productive, caring members of our society.

Ten Characteristics of a Good School

1. High and realistic expectations for student achievement are held by the school staff.
2. Effective leadership is exerted by a strong principal.
3. Emphasis is placed on instruction.
4. Appropriate discipline is maintained.
5. Regular assessment of progress is conducted.
6. Positive attitudes are expressed often.
7. Respect for students is shown by school personnel.
8. There is an efficient school organization.
9. Parent involvement is encouraged and appreciated.
10. School pride and spirit can easily be felt.

Source: *Your School: How Well Is It Working: A Citizens Guide to School Evaluation*, published by National Committee for Citizens in Education.



PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Community education provides local residents and community agencies and institutions the opportunity to become active partners in addressing community concerns. It is based on the following principles:

- **Self-Determination.** Local people have a right and a responsibility to be involved in determining community needs and identifying community resources that can be used to address those needs.
- **Self-Help.** People are best served when their capacity to help themselves is encouraged and developed. When people assume responsibility for their own well-being, they become part of the solution and build independence rather than dependence.
- **Leadership Development.** The training of local leaders in such skills as problem solving, decision making, and group process is essential for ongoing self-help and community improvement efforts.
- **Localization.** Services, programs, and other community involvement opportunities that are close to where people live have the greatest potential for a high level of public participation. Whenever possible, these activities should be decentralized to locations of easy public access.
- **Integrated Delivery of Services.** Organizations and agencies that operate for the public good can meet their own goals and better serve the public by collaborating with other organizations and agencies that are working toward common goals.
- **Maximum Use of Resources.** Full use of the physical, financial, and human resources of every community must be coordinated if the diverse needs and interests of the community are to be met effectively and without duplication.
- **Inclusion.** Community programs, activities, and services should involve the broadest possible cross section of community residents. The segregation or isolation of people by age, income, social class, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, or handicapping condition inhibits the full development of the community.
- **Institutional Responsiveness.** Public institutions exist to serve the public and therefore are obligated to develop programs and services that meet continuously changing public needs.
- **Lifelong Learning.** Learning begins at birth and continues until death. Formal and informal learning opportunities should be available to residents of all ages in a wide variety of community settings.

(Developed by Larry Horyna and Larry Decker for the National Coalition for Community Education, revised 1992)

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS



Though every public school choice plan is different, all good programs have some elements in common.

1. Each community sustains good quality, well managed schools.
2. All parents have the opportunity to choose a school for their child and to remain involved in school activities throughout the year.
3. Many distinctive programs are offered, not just one or a few.
4. Time and money are provided to teachers to plan and develop their own programs.
5. An effective system of parent information and counseling is part of the registration process.
6. Free and appropriate transportation is provided, especially for low and moderate income families.
7. Most programs are open to all interested students. A fair and equitable process is used to select students for programs with special admission requirements or those which have more eligible applicants than space.

8. Student assignment and transfer policies do not discriminate against students on the basis of race, economic level, past behavior, test scores, or academic achievement. Students are not selected on a "first come, first serve" basis which could favor the most informed, assertive parents, but randomly or by lottery. Special provisions are made for families who want siblings to attend either the same or different schools.

9. Sufficient space is available in a program for every student who applies, and transfer is granted as long as it does not harm desegregation. (Often this will mean extending more popular programs to more than one school campus.)

10. Parents, teachers and their advocates are involved in decisions about the design and monitoring of programs.

11. Equitable funding is provided for each child attending school. (This includes spending as much on neighborhood schools as on magnets and reducing reliance on local property taxes to finance local schools.)

12. Dollars follow students, rather than dividing funds between sending and receiving school or district.

13. Publicly funded evaluation measures who is being admitted to choice programs and what progress they are making.

How to be the Effective Leader of a Parent/Citizen Group

The greatest contribution you can make toward developing an effective group is to develop its members. Everyone has leadership potential. If you develop yourself and fail to develop others, your group won't advance very far.

To operate in a cooperative leadership style:

- Set goals and objectives as a group.
- Help your group establish goals and priorities by analyzing the community and the previous efforts of other groups.
- Build on strengths each person has and the contributions each can make.
- Establish a procedure for decision-making but do not make the final decision yourself.
- Don't waste your members' time by making them feel less involved than you.
- Make fund raising a cooperative endeavor.
- Don't try to do everything yourself. Delegate responsibility.
- Take time to listen to other members' ideas and comments.
- Resolve group conflicts. Every group has them, but they are less likely to develop when everyone shares responsibility for the group's actions.

Adapted from *Developing Leadership for Parent/Citizen Groups*, published by National Committee for Citizens in Education.

A Successful Process for Building Learning Communities

Community education is a historically documented process for building learning communities. It has been around for a long time, but it has not been well-publicized in main-stream education circles.

Community Education is both a philosophy of education and a model for systematic community development efforts. The process has four major components:

1. Providing diverse educational services to meet the varied learning needs of community residents of all ages
2. Developing interagency cooperation and public-private partnerships to reduce duplication of efforts and improve effectiveness in the delivery of human services
3. Involving citizens in participatory problem solving and democratic decision making
4. Encouraging community improvement efforts that make the community more attractive to both current and prospective residents and businesses.

Key Targets of Community Education

(based on the Flint, Michigan model)

1. academic support
2. literacy
3. job skills, career training, and high school completion
4. parent involvement
5. student and community health
6. neighborhood development and school safety
7. greater collaborative uses of resources

Source: *Educational Restructuring and the Community Education Process*, Larry E. Decker and Valerie A. Romney, editors. University of Virginia.

Meeting Musts

Whether you are holding a meeting of parents, school faculty members, or are inviting community members, too, these tips will help make your session more productive.

- Know why you, as a participant, are meeting.
- Know who is there and why.
- Have a chairperson.
- Have an agenda.
- Have clear expectations on time and "what you want to come away with" for the meeting as a whole as well as for each item.
- Make sure that the people on the agenda and the chairperson know what they are asking the group to do and how much time they have.
- Make people feel welcome so that they can "ease into" a meeting.
- Clarify roles to be played in meetings, i.e., process observer, facilitator, secretary.
- Structure the agenda according to the shape of the meeting--light beginning, light ending, and heavy middle.
- Have the room set up in advance.
- Know how you make decisions and follow the process.
- Summarize throughout the meeting.
- State next steps clearly.
- Provide opportunity for exchange of ideas.
- Start and end on time--or have a good reason for not doing so.
- If possible, plan to hold some meetings "away" from the school.

Adapted from *One School at a Time: School Based Management, a Process for Change*, by Carl Marburger. Published by the National Committee for Citizens in Education.



Padres a la escuela

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