Los Angeles Leadership Academy

School impact on students lives beyond academics

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Many people tend to feel more comfortable living amongst people who share their cultural practices. Because of society's desire to belong to a group, many ethnic groups form their own communities. The result of communities clinging to people who share similar beliefs sometimes results in generalizations and stereotypes. Unfortunately, not all of these portrayals and expectations reflect their groups' individuality. These are then assumed to be immutable facts about an entire social economic class.The living choices these individuals make in their communities tend to affect the quality of education they can receive. One common misconception amongst Latinos and other ethnic groups is that they don't belong in college. Therefore, many communities, schools, and school districts are trying to change this mentality. Schools not only educate students, they also inspire students to go to a four-year university and improve their education capacity.

    Despite our diverse communities in Northern America, similar ethnic groups tend to live in areas where their culture is strongly influenced by the citizens. With a United States population of approximately three-hundred-twenty-three-million citizens, the fraction of fifty-five million of the total population is of Hispanic origin. With accordance to the United States Census Bureau, California had the largest Hispanic population recorded for any state, in the year two-thousand-fifteen, with a population of fifteen million. The second state to hold a grand population of Hispanic ethnicity is Texas followed by New México. The geographic position of these states along the Unites States-México border proves the former point, ethnical groups stay together and form communities that reflect their culture. Consequently, Southern California holds the city of Los Angeles whose Hispanic population makes up a forty-eight percent of the total population. The city of Los Angeles holds the largest communities outside of their home countries for Mexicans, Salvadoreans, Guatemalans, Chileans, and so on. These diverse Hispanics have come together through migration and have now formed families who thrive to excel in this country. Their future generations are expected to go off to college, but their education is not always placed as a priority.

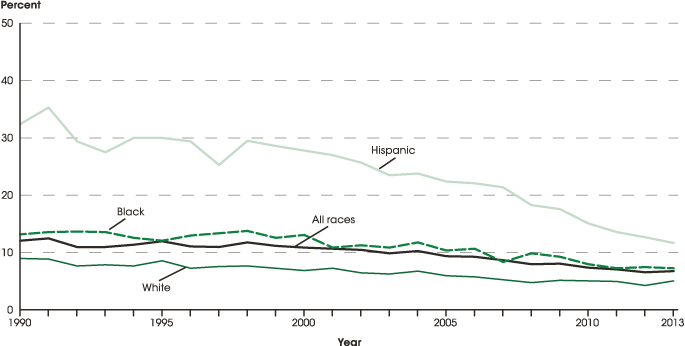
    The children of these Hispanic families have early child development programs available in the community for their children, but not all of them can take advantage of these programs. As depicted in an interview with fellow community member Susana Hernandez, she explained why she did not allow her son to start school until first grade. Susana works a ten-hour day, she leaves her home at seven in the morning and does not get home until six in the afternoon. She was advised several times to enroll her son in Preschool, but she always encountered the same problem. Susana would not be able to leave work to pick up her son in the afternoon and did not have any family member who could it for her. Being a single mother, she always struggled with taking care of her son and being able to pay the rent. As a result, she would leave her son at a daycare every morning and would pick him up after her long day of work. She did not see Preschool and Kindergarten as an option due to the minimum day and lack of after-school program.  As a result, her son began school in first grade, was enrolled in English Learner Language classes, and it always took him a bit longer to understand the material. She knows she affected his education level capacity, but Susana says she had no other option besides the daycare. This is true for Susana’s life along with her coworkers and fellow Hispanic immigrants.

    Organizations that encourage early child development programs, such as Preschool Matters, are concerned over California’s low preschool enrollment who have substantially fallen behind Texas by seventy-thousand students. Cecilia Ayala, Chief Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Universal Preschool, states,“while ELLs can come from any linguistic background and therefore include children of any race and ethnicity, Hispanic children merit particular attention as their population grows, but many continue to suffer from an achievement gap” (Carolan). It is evident that Hispanic children will fall behind other ethnic groups in early education if they do not take advantage of them; however, low-income financial latinos suffer the most. This group will be the one to have lower reading and comprehension levels, benchmark lexile scores, and English Language Development rates. Preschool is the base of education where student-habits need to be established prior to first grade; especially in Hispanic communities where low English proficiency requires immediate reinforcement.

    Los Angeles Unified School District has become aware of such setbacks on students and has established a plan to help all students be ready for college. A sudden change in class schedules and grade requirements has taken effect this year in few public schools this year and will take full effect on all public schools the following school year. To ensure graduating students of all backgrounds are prepared for college, high schools will now issue required classes students need to take  where they need a minimum of a “C-” grade to pass the class. Also known as A-G requirements, this new set of graduation rules was expected to drop the graduation percentage to an all time low.  As described in the article, “Are LAUSD Students Really Ready for College?” as it appears on Los Angeles Times, it was believed the graduation rate would drop to fifty-four percent. Unexpectedly, the district was proven wrong when the graduation rate increased to sixty-three percent. Instead of the dominant Hispanic ethnicity student high school giving up and settling with being held back a year in high school to complete all required courses, the students took it upon themselves to take additional online courses. The school’s graduation rate is expected to increase to eighty percent next year and all of those students would have been qualified for admission in the California State University system. The issuance of A-G requirements for graduation in LAUSD schools is motivating the seniors to apply to a four-year university because they are qualified.

    In addition to setting expectations higher for LAUSD students, the Los Angeles Board of Education is providing additional funds for the schools. LAUSD schools have set out a plan to boost the academic performance of their students. This new budget is targeting to help with “$3.6 billion for all students and an additional $838 million for those who are low-income, learning English or in foster care” (Watanabe). The Board of Education is taking action to help the students who want to excel in their education but may not have the available resources due to their economic status. This allows equal opportunities for all students and inspires them equally to graduate from high school and embark on the journey to college where they will further their education while opening job opportunities, internships, and various opportunities for their future.

    Studies done by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Center of Education Statistics recorded drastic changes in dropout rate from high school by Hispanics.



As depicted in the chart above, from the time period of 1990 through 2013, the Hispanic dropout rate declined from thirteen percent to seven percent. Not only did they receive their high school diploma, the students enrolled in college. “In 2013, 2.2 million Hispanics were enrolled in college, up from 728,000 in 1993 – a 201% increase” (Krogstad). Several of those students enrolled in four-year colleges and received their baccalaureate degrees. Thanks to the support they received from their high school, they were able to continue studying into their future.

    The schools inspired the students to go to a four-year university and improve their educational capacity. The abundant Hispanic community of Los Angeles is improving its educational boundaries and is creating a new status quo. The Los Angeles Board of Education is supporting the low-income students, and they are not letting this opportunity slip by. It is these opportunities that are being offered to them that inspire them and will continue doing so for years to come.

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