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CAPTURING LATINO STUDENTS IN THE ACADEMIC PIPELINE

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In this Brief we report on three California school-based programs aimed at improving the rate of both high school completion and college attendance among Latino students. While the aims of the three programs are similar, their strategies differ according to the segment of the population they target and the ways in which they deploy their resources. Yet each has proven to be effective. ALAS targets the lowest-achieving Latino students who are at the greatest risk of dropping out of high school. AVID targets underachieving students with above-average test scores who have the potential to take more-demanding college preparatory courses in high school. Puente targets students with varied levels of achievement with the aim of ensuring that they finish high school and go on to college. In the following pages we describe each of the programs and the evaluation results that exist to date. Because of space limitations, a cost analysis of each program is provided only in the complete report.

Why Target Latinos?

Latino students in California, up to 85% of whom are of Mexican descent, are the single largest ethnic group in the California schools, comprising 40% of the total K-12 population. At the same time, they are at the highest risk for school failure of any ethnic group. The educational attainment of Latinos is significantly lower than that of other ethnic groups in both the United States and California. In 1995, for example, 30% of all Latinos in the U.S. age 16-24 had not finished high school, compared to 9% for non-Hispanic whites and 12% for African Americans. Latinos are also less likely to attend college even if they do finish high school. Of the 76,000 Latinos who graduated from California high schools in 1995, only 2,700 (3.5%) enrolled in the University of California.

Latino students are at risk not only because of their individual characteristics but also because of the characteristics of their families, schools, and communities--all of which help to shape their behavior and influence academic success. Many Latino students live and go to school in high-risk settings. For example, in 1995 Latino children 18 years old and younger were more than twice as likely as non-Hispanic white students (39% versus 16%) to live in poverty and young Latino children 3-5 years old were almost seven times as likely as non-Hispanic white students (27% versus 4%) to have parents who had not completed high school.

Research has shown that both factors have a strong influence on educational achievement. In 1993-94, Latino children were twice as likely as non-Hispanic white students to attend a high-poverty school, and research has pointed to the marked differences between the learning environments and resources of high-poverty and low-poverty schools. For example, teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to report problems of student misbehavior, absenteeism, and lack of parental involvement than teachers in low-poverty schools; teacher salaries and advanced training are also lower in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools.

The problem of Latino underachievement, however, should not be viewed as the problem of a single ethnic group. There are consequences for the society as a whole if educational opportunity is not increased for Latinos and few of these students are able to navigate successfully through the educational pipeline. Both the California and national economies pay in lost dollars and cents, as a recent RAND study has concluded: "Hispanics with a bachelor's degree will pay more than twice as much in taxes as those with only a high school diploma, and Hispanics with a professional degree will pay an estimated three times as much as those with a bachelor's degree, [but failing to increase the educational attainment of Hispanics] will exact a high economic toll for individuals and for society. Given the experience of other undereducated groups, there are certainly concomitant human, social and political costs."

THE *ALAS* DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

ALAS, which means *wings* in Spanish, is an acronym for "Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success." It was developed to test a comprehensive approach for educating and graduating Latino youth with disabilities and highest-risk middle-school Latino youth who live in urban neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. ALAS differs from other Latino dropout prevention programs in four important ways:

1. ALAS specifically addresses the needs of Latino students who manifest the least motivation, the poorest academic skills, and the greatest need for teacher supervision. Importantly, this highest-risk group of Latino students does not represent a small minority of Latino students, but appears to represent 30-40% of the at-risk Latino population. Despite their substantial numbers, these are the students who have been found to be the least positively affected by general school reform and the least helped by traditional dropout prevention programs.

2. ALAS emphasizes psychosocial interventions as much as academic and cultural interventions. Previous research has found that problems with academic work, including those resulting from social class or cultural conflict, account for only about half of the reasons for students failing classes or dropping out of school. Students' individual psychosocial behavior accounts for the other half. Specifically, for about 30-40% of high-risk students, psychosocial behavior may manifest itself in overt behavior (such as lack of productivity, truancy, verbal abuse, physical fighting, pranksterism, failure to follow instructions, chronic rule breaking, and vandalism) that is significantly disruptive to the individual as well as to school staff and other students. These students account for a major proportion of the school staffs' disciplinary efforts and time, and their school behavior problems are clearly related to

low-grades and high dropout rates.

3. ALAS addresses not only the students' individual characteristics but also the characteristics of the environments in which they live and function.

4. Finally, ALAS differs from traditional dropout prevention efforts because it focuses on the middle-school level, which recent studies have pointed to as a critical juncture for school reform and dropout prevention efforts.

Conceptual Framework and Program Design

ALAS was founded on the premise that the youth and school as well as the family and community contexts must be addressed simultaneously for dropout prevention efforts to succeed. Thus, ALAS consists of a series of specific intervention strategies focused on individual adolescents as well as on three contexts of influence on achievement: the family, the school, and the community. The intervention strategies are designed to increase the effectiveness of actors in each context as well as increase collaboration between them.

ALAS was implemented and evaluated as a pilot intervention program in one Los Angeles-area middle school from 1990 to 1995. The school served about 2,220 students in grades 7, 8, and 9. Approximately 96% of the students were Latino; 70% participated in the federal school lunch program; 62% spoke Spanish as a first language.

The program specifically targeted two groups of students: special education students identified by the school district as learning disabled or severely emotionally disturbed, and other comprehensively at risk (CAR) students who, because of poor academic performance, misbehavior, and low income, were at greatest risk of school failure. The pilot program served two cohorts of special education students (77 total) and one cohort of 46 CAR students. Participating students received the intervention program in conjunction with the regular school program for all three years of junior high school, or as long as they remained in the target school. ALAS staff were based at the target school site every day for three years, and all participating students received all of the intervention strategies. Two control groups of comparable students received only the regular school program during junior high school.

The program's day-to-day operation was delivered by a supervisor, counselor-advocates, and clerical staff who were housed full-time in an office on the school campus. Each student was assigned a counselor/advocate who worked as a case manager to ensure that all components of the intervention were provided as needed and that all students were continuously monitored. The counselor/advocate worked not only directly with the student but also with school personnel, parents, and individuals and agencies from the community. The supervisor, who was an experienced teacher-counselor, provided ongoing training to ALAS advocate/counselors and worked to build cohesion between school, family, and community.

There are four components to the ALAS program: (1) the *adolescent* component focuses on social problem-solving training and counseling, student recognition, and enhancement of school affiliation; (2) the *school* component includes frequent teacher feedback to students and parents as well as attendance monitoring; (3) the *family* component includes use of community resources to train parents in school participation as well as in guiding and monitoring the adolescents; and (4) the *community* component focuses on enhancing collaboration among community agencies providing youth and family services, as well as enhancing their skills and methods for serving youths and families. ALAS provides the following specific interventions:

1. Remediation of the student's ineffective problem-solving skills regarding social interactions and task performance through 10 weeks of problem-solving instruction and two years of followup problem-solving training and counseling.

2. Personal recognition and bonding activities to increase self-esteem, affiliation, and a sense of belonging with the school organization. Students in the ALAS project are given frequent positive reinforcement such as praise, outings, recognition ceremonies, certificates, and positive home calls to parents for meeting goals or improving behavior, attendance, and school work. Students are allowed to "hang out" in the ALAS lounge during lunch or after school and are encouraged to bring friends to ALAS parties. In general, they are made to feel "looked after" and nurtured by ALAS staff.

3. Intensive attendance monitoring. ALAS students are monitored for period-by-period attendance. Truants' parents are contacted, with daily followups. Students are helped to make up missed time and are provided with positive adult contacts who communicate a personal interest in their attendance.

4. Frequent teacher feedback to parents and students regarding classroom comportment, missed assignments, and missing homework. Students are taught to use this teacher feedback for focusing thinking and decision-making during their continuing problem-solving training. The ALAS counselor regularly informs teachers about how students and parents are addressing their comments and evaluations.

5. Direct instruction and modeling for parents on how to reduce their child's inappropriate or undesirable behavior and how to increase desirable behavior. ALAS monitors parents to make sure they are using newly learned parenting skills, and provides information on how and when to participate in school activities, how to understand report cards and school credits, and when and how to contact teachers and administrators.

6. Integration of school and home needs with community services. Parents are given information about, and helped to obtain and retain, particular services that may benefit them or their child, such as psychiatric and mental health services, alcohol and drug counseling, social services, child protective services, parenting classes, gang intervention projects, recreation and sports programs, probation, and work programs.

Implementation Issues

The most significant issues that emerged when implementing the ALAS program had to do with crossing cultural borders of the various constituencies: the teachers and school staff culture, the parent and Latino culture, the student culture, and the social services agency culture. The parent and the social agency cultural borders proved to be much easier to bridge than the school and student cultural borders. For the most part, when parents and agency personnel were given respect, combined with concrete help in providing for ALAS adolescents, both were open and responsive to ALAS staff suggestions, and partnerships were built.

Crossing schoolhouse borders or the culture of teachers and administrators proved to be much more difficult, particularly in implementing a program for students who are often thought to be troublemakers and, therefore, the least deserving. At a time when most Latino students face educational difficulties, ALAS staff had to defend the notion that the most-difficult-to-teach Latino students, those with seemingly the least motivation and potential, had to be given extra help from scant resources. Moreover, while school personnel are prone to marginalize or "disown" highest-risk students, they are also very reluctant to release their individual and collective decision-making authority over these students. Thus, the essence of the ALAS program, the case management approach, is threatened at the outset if ALAS staff cannot work with school staff to convince them to share and often defer decision-making power to the ALAS case manager. This potential conflict often surfaced in dealing with discipline issues. Instead of being given individually tailored discipline, ALAS students generally were given school policy-driven punishments. For example, they were suspended when, in fact, most ALAS students considered suspension to be a reward, or were given assignments that they could not possibly fulfill, such as writing a 1,000-word essay, when after-school tutoring would have been more effective.

Another example of tension in crossing schoolhouse borders emerged in terms of academic work. Whereas each teacher might have known how a student was doing in his or her own class, he or she rarely knew how the student was doing in all of the other five classes. Because of ongoing monitoring, the ALAS counselor/advocate did know precisely what work needed to be done in each class for the student to maintain a passing grade. Sometimes, as part of an academic balancing act, the ALAS counselor would call in a student to miss a particular class or counsel a student to forego an assignment in one class in order to complete a more critical assignment in another class. Most teachers proved to be very resistant to this approach.

Crossing the borders of student culture was a primary challenge of project staff. Working with students directly was such a significant aspect of the effort that, in one sense, it could be said that ALAS staff spent most of their time with students in "building relationship." Even during many of the interactions that are directed toward teachers, school staff, and parents, the primary intent is to build a stronger bond between students and ALAS staff by enhancing the school and family system for them. These activities also build stronger bonds between students and parents and between students and educators.

Outcomes

To ascertain the efficacy of the program, 36 ALAS students who received the full program for three years or who dropped out of school were contrasted with 45 comparison students who received traditional school programs. The results reported here focus on comprehensively at-risk Latino students (special education students are discussed in another report). From the outset of the ALAS program it was assumed that longstanding school-related behavioral patterns in both students and parents would change slowly and develop over time as new skills were learned and integrated into existing life experiences. Thus, the first evaluation of student outcomes was performed when students were in the 9th grade.

Because one primary goal was to keep students enrolled in order to graduate from high school, each student's enrollment status was monitored throughout the project. Enrollment was defined as being in a program for which high school credits or a GED could be earned. By the end of the 9th grade, 97% of the ALAS students were enrolled in an educational program, versus 83% of the comparison group.

Keeping students enrolled in school is only the first step in getting students to graduate, however; while they are in school, students must also earn enough credits to progress toward graduation. When we assessed the total number of credits that ALAS students had earned by the end of the 9th grade, we found that the project had a profound, statistically significant impact on improving students' progress toward graduation.

We also assessed whether students were on track (had completed one-quarter of their graduation requirements by the end of 9th grade) to graduate on time. Seventy-five percent of the ALAS students were on track to graduate in a four-year time frame compared to 44% of the comparison students. The ALAS intervention also dramatically improved school grades for 9th-grade classes, and especially reduced the number of failed classes. The comparison group received about twice as many fails as ALAS students during the 9th grade.

To evaluate intermediate-term outcomes--the sustained effects of the program beyond the intervention--we studied enrollment and dropout rates, as well as high school credits earned, a year following conclusion of the intervention, when the students had moved on to senior high school. (Enrollment included either traditional high school, private schools, continuation school, adult education and vocational training programs, independent study, and special schools for the disabled; students were not counted as enrolled if they were incarcerated, although high school credits were awarded in juvenile detention facilities.)

At the end of the 10th grade, 86% of the ALAS students were enrolled in an educational program, versus 69% of the comparison students. When we evaluated high school credits earned by the end of the 10th grade, we found that although the number of students who were "on track" was stunningly low for both groups, more than twice as many ALAS students (44%) were on track than the comparison students

(22%).

Additionally, we wanted to see whether the program had positively influenced high school graduation rates. This was not an expected outcome, however, because students had been away from the ALAS program three full years, and typically programs aimed at changing human behavior do not have long-term effects unless some of the intervention is maintained--which was not the case in this project. Indeed, at the end of 12th grade, 32% of the ALAS participants had completed high school, whereas only 27% of the comparison students had done so.

The significance of the ALAS intervention is in both the *magnitude* of improvement in single-outcome variables and in the *breadth* of impact over many outcome variables, as well as in the sustained effects one year after the intervention terminated. Data show that the intervention doubled or tripled school success on virtually every measure of school performance and engagement.

By the end of 9th grade, students in the comparison group had twice the number of failed classes, were four times more likely to have excessive absences, and were twice as likely to be seriously behind in high school graduation credits. By the end of 10th grade, students in the comparison group were about 20% less likely to be enrolled in an educational program and about half as likely to be on track to graduate in four years.

Taken together, data on mobility, attendance, failed classes, and graduation credits indicate that the ALAS program had a substantial and practical impact on students who received the intervention. Results achieved appear even more remarkable when the characteristics of the subjects are considered. Subjects in this study represent the most difficult to teach students within a pool of students generally viewed as high risk. It is important to note, however, that these dramatic effects were not sustained, as three years later there was no effect on high school graduation rate. This clearly suggests that in order to increase graduation rates it is necessary to provide an ALAS-type intervention throughout the high school years.

***AVID*: ADVANCEMENT VIA INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION**

AVID, an acronym for Advancement Via Individual Determination, is an "untracking" program designed to help low-achieving high school students with high academic potential prepare for entrance in colleges and universities. (Untracking is different from detracking. Whereas untracking places low-track students in high-track classes as a way to slowly atrophy the tracking system, detracking attempts to dismantle the entire tracking system at once.) The AVID approach to untracking places previously low-achieving students (who are primarily from low-income and ethnic or linguistic minority backgrounds) in the same "college prep" academic program as high-achieving students (who are primarily from middle- or upper-middle-income and "majority" backgrounds), and provides a system of supports, or "scaffolds," to assist students make the transition from low- to high-track classes.

The idea was introduced to San Diego in 1980 at Clairemont High, a predominantly white school, by

Mary Catherine Swanson, a member of the English department. Untracking became a way to educate minority students bussed to Clairemont from predominantly ethnic minority schools in Southeast San Diego under a court-ordered desegregation decree. Unwilling to segregate African American and Latino students into a separate, compensatory curriculum, Swanson and the Clairemont faculty placed the bussed students in regular college prep classes. AVID soon spread beyond Clairemont High School, and by 1991, 17 San Diego city high schools, 50 high schools in San Diego County, and four high schools outside the county had introduced AVID programs.

Conceptual Framework and Program Design

AVID coordinators select for the program high school students from low-income, ethnic, and linguistic minority backgrounds who have average-to-high achievement test scores and C-level junior high school grades, and then contact parents to see if they will support their children's participation in the academic program. Those who agree sign contracts to have their children participate in AVID. The students are not left to sink or swim.

AVID arranges a system of supports to help students make the transition to high-track high school classes, among the most visible of which is a special elective class that meets for one academic period a day, 180 days a year, for three or four years. In addition to a classroom teacher, students are assisted by college tutors on a 1:7 tutor-student ratio. The AVID central office suggests a basic plan for the weekly instructional activities within AVID classrooms. Two school days are designated tutorial days, when students work in small groups with a tutor, and on two days the program emphasizes writing as a tool for learning. On these days students are to engage in a variety of writing activities, including essays for their English, social studies, science, and history classes.

Other important activities that occur within the classroom are instruction in note-taking, test-taking, and study strategies. One day a week, usually Fridays, is a "motivational day," when guest speakers are invited to address the class and field trips to colleges are scheduled. By dispensing these academic techniques and making these opportunities available, AVID gives its students explicit instruction in the implicit or hidden curriculum of the school, and also gives low-income students some of the "cultural capital" that more economically advantaged parents give to their children at home.

Other institutional support augments this explicit socialization process. AVID coordinators help remove impediments to students' academic achievement by intervening on their behalf with high school teachers, administrators, and college admissions officers. By connecting them to social networks at school AVID provides its students with the "social capital" that is similar to that which more economically advantaged parents are able to provide through their family connections. Thus, working-class and minority youth can enjoy the same advantages as their more privileged peers if schools and their agents act collectively in a deliberate, intensive, and explicit fashion to generate a socialization process that produces the same sorts of strategies and resources deployed in privileged homes and institutions.

Untracking is also supported by peer group relations. AVID students are publicly identified by carrying notebooks that clearly display the AVID logo, which also marks the AVID classroom that is used for lunch, social gatherings, and academic instruction. Within the social space demarcated for them, AVID students form new academically oriented friendships and develop academic identities. The time that students spend together on field trips to colleges, in collaborative study groups, and informal discussions with college tutors and guest speakers from local colleges and businesses facilitates this process.

Implementation Issues

The concept of tracking involves deep-seated cultural beliefs about human capacities, individual and group differences, fairness, individualism, competition, and the goals of public education. Despite the popularity of books like *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994), which tell us that intelligence is fixed and inherited and can be accurately measured by IQ tests, recent research in cognitive development suggests a radically different conception of human capacity: not only do all normally functioning humans have the capacity to reason sufficiently well to finish schooling and enter the work force, but standardized tests measure only a limited range of human abilities and reward only a narrow knowledge base. They do not measure students' higher-order thinking skills, such as how well they solve new and complex problems, how well they transfer knowledge gained in one situation to another situation, and how well they communicate ideas. Yet, because our cultural beliefs about intelligence, the purpose of schooling, and competition are so deep-seated, efforts to untrack schools have met with an uneven response.

Some vocational education teachers told us they fear they will lose their clientele if low-income and "minority" students are moved to college-prep classes. Teachers of mainstream students told us they resented the "special privileges" bestowed on untracked students. Parents of high-achieving students often worry that their children will suffer in heterogeneously grouped classrooms because minority-student enrollments will lead to lower educational standards, a belief that is bolstered by research evidence showing that students in high tracks receive a better education than students in low tracks. School administrators sometimes fear that dismantling tracking will drive the parents of high-achieving students away from their schools, a fear that has been fueled by parents of students in programs for the gifted and talented, who perceive untracking as a threat to the high-quality education their children enjoy under the current, tracked, system. If untracking is to be successful, all parents must come to believe that it neither reduces the probability that their children can attain the career of their choice nor hinders their intellectual development.

Heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning, and higher-order thinking skills are being touted as the newest panacea for students' achievement problems. Although these are commendable recommendations, and stand in stark contrast to the conventional wisdom of curriculum differentiation, the advocates of curriculum reform often devote scant attention to the problem of getting students from here (compensatory and remedial instruction) to there (rigorous academic instruction).

In order to ensure that previously low-achieving students achieve in demanding courses, we must pay an equal amount of attention to providing the educational and social support systems that will help students adapt to these new, rigorous academic arrangements. For if students do not succeed in these new arrangements, skeptics will have a new round of ammunition to fire at the ability of low-income and underrepresented students to succeed in academic programs.

Finally, institutionalization is a crucial issue. AVID requires tremendous energy and commitment on the part of teachers, coordinators, tutors, and students. Researchers who have studied educational reform have shown that educational innovations have the greatest chance of success when significant portions of the school culture are mobilized. In addition, if programs such as AVID are left to voluntary efforts, teacher burnout is a distinct possibility. The costs and structure of AVID or other educational reform efforts need to be built into the organization of the school system itself.

Outcomes

We studied the results of three years of AVID program implementation in eight San Diego high schools from 1990 through 1992 to see whether previously low-achieving students from low-income ethnic and linguistic minority backgrounds who are placed in college-bound courses with high-achieving students benefit academically and socially by the experience. During the period of study, 1,053 students who had participated in the AVID untracking experiment for three years graduated from 14 high schools in the San Diego City Schools system, and an additional 288 students started the program but left after completing one year or less. We interviewed 248 of the three-year and 146 of the one-year AVID students.

Of the 248 students who "graduated" from AVID, 120 (48%) reported attending four-year colleges, 99 (40%) reported attending two-year colleges, and the remaining 29 (12%) said they are working or doing other things. The 48% four-year college enrollment rate for students who have been "untracked" compares favorably with the San Diego City Schools' average of 37% and the national average of 39%. The college enrollment rate of students who completed three years of AVID also compares favorably with the college enrollment rate of students who started but did not complete the untracking program; 34% of them enrolled in four-year colleges within a year of graduating from high school.

Untracking and Ethnicity. African Americans and Latinos from AVID enrolled in college in numbers that exceed local and national averages. Of the Latino students who participated in AVID for three years, 43% enrolled in four-year colleges. This figure compares favorably to the San Diego City Schools average of 25% and the national average of 29%. African American students who participated in AVID for three years also enrolled in college at rates higher than the local and national averages: 55% of the African American students from AVID enrolled in four-year colleges, compared to 35% from San Diego and 33% nationally. These two major ethnic groups are underrepresented in college.

Untracking and Socioeconomic Status. AVID students who come from the lowest income strata (parents' median income below $19,999) enroll in four-year colleges in equal or higher proportion to students who come from higher income strata (parents' median income between $20,000 and $65,000). More AVID students whose parents have less than a college education enrolled in four-year colleges than students who come from families who have a college education. The longer students stayed in the untracking program, the better their college enrollment record--a relationship that held regardless of the students' family income level, further indicating that the program, and not the students' socioeconomic background or previous academic record, is influential.

Untracking and Persistence in College. We also attempted to follow the career trajectories of students who had enrolled in two-year and four-year colleges right out of high school to find out whether the four-year college students were still enrolled and whether those who had enrolled in two-year colleges had transferred to four-year colleges or had plans to do so. However, we were able to interview only 63% of the original 1990-1991 sample in the summer of 1992, only 75% of the original class of 1992 during the following summer, and far fewer students (32% of the original 1990-1991 cohort) after they had been out of high school for two years. This serious decline in cohort size demonstrates the difficulty of obtaining longitudinal data on the topic of persistence in college, and prohibits attaching any statistical significance to the following statements. Nonetheless, a few descriptive observations will be informative.

Of the 168 students interviewed after they had been out of high school for one year, 54 (or 32%) were enrolled in four-year colleges, 74 (or 44%) were enrolled in two-year colleges, and 40 (or 24%) were working or "doing other things" (such as church missionary work). All the students enrolled in four-year colleges had been in college the year before; that is, no students had moved from two-year to four-year colleges. This is not surprising, because students seldom transfer from community college until they complete two years. In addition, no students stopped working to enroll in four-year colleges. Of the 74 students in two-year colleges after one year of high school, 54 had started in two-year colleges and continued there, 12 began in four-year colleges but were now enrolled in two-year colleges, and 8 who had begun their career after high school by working now attended two-year colleges. In short, there was little upward mobility: only 5% (8 of 168 students) went from work to two-year colleges. More troubling is the downward mobility in this cohort: 7% (12 of 168) left four-year colleges to attend two-year colleges.

These trends persisted after students had been enrolled in college for two years, indicating there has not been much mobility from two-year to four-year colleges. Only 11% (2 of 18) of the 46 students we interviewed in 1993 had transferred after two years of community college. That figure is not very encouraging, and suggests that special "tag" programs (which direct students from an untracking program like AVID to community college, with the idea that they will transfer to four-year colleges after two years) need to be examined closely to ascertain their effectiveness. Likewise, the fact that three students who dropped out of four-year colleges during the 1992-93 school year--11% of the 27 students who were enrolled in four-year colleges in 1992-- gives cause for concern.

THE HIGH SCHOOL *PUENTE* PROJECT

The Puente (*bridge*) Project was conceived of as a bridge from one segment of education to another. The High School Puente Project, currently active in 39 community colleges throughout California, is an outgrowth of a successful community college program that was begun at Chabot College in Hayward, California in 1981 to address the low transfer rate of Latino students to four-year colleges and universities. The program combines innovative teaching and counseling methods with community involvement to provide a focused, supportive, and culturally sensitive learning environment to foster student success.

The High School Puente Project began in 1993 as a four-year pilot test in 18 schools in California to increase the number of Latinos graduating from high school and enrolling in college, and to reform a variety of practices in the schools in which the programs are located. At each pilot high school, Puente students, who represent a wide range of skill and motivation levels, are enrolled in a Puente college prep English class (taught by the same Puente-trained English teacher) for their 9th and 10th grades, which integrates community-based writing, portfolio assessment, and Latino-authored literature in the regular core curriculum. The Puente counselor works closely with the students and their parents to ensure the students' enrollment in college prep courses and the parents' support of their children's academic progress. In addition, a community mentor liaison recruits mentors from the community to work directly with students and to seek resources from local business and professional communities to help support the program.

The first full cohort of Puente students graduated from high school in 1997, providing the first data on college matriculation. Intensive evaluation of the program thus far has focused on the cohort that is one year behind these students, who entered high school in fall 1994 and are now completing their senior year. In the following pages we will concentrate on describing the experience of these students.

Conceptual Framework and Program Design

The High School Puente Project has emphasized three major components: writing and literature instruction in a two-year English class (9th and 10th grades), intensive college preparatory counseling, and assignment to a mentor who introduces the students to opportunities and roles that they may never have envisioned. A substantial literature exists to support these three elements as critical emphases in a program for Latino students:

1. Students who come from bilingual backgrounds (whether or not *they* are true bilinguals) face unique issues in writing, and both verbal and writing skills test scores are commonly depressed. Moreover, heterogeneous grouping of students within the classroom has been shown to expand access to higher-level curricula and increase learning outcomes, especially for students who have traditionally been denied such opportunities.

2. High school counselors, who provide access to college prep curricula and information about postsecondary educational opportunities, have been cited as critical "gates" or barriers for Latino students who might otherwise go on to college.

3. Finally, a number of studies have cited the importance of "cultural capital"--knowledge of the system, how it works, and how to access opportunities--for the academic and economic fortunes of students, as well as the positive effects of mentoring on long-term academic outcomes for students who are mentored.

High School Puente attempts to serve a broad range of Latino high school students in fairly equal numbers, from high achievers to low performers, based on a philosophy that all students can learn and can master a basic college preparatory curriculum if they are sufficiently motivated and provided with supportive, targeted instruction and information. There are three major components to the Puente intervention: instructional, counseling, and mentoring, and each is associated with a cluster of activities and interventions.

The instructional component is composed of a two- year-long class during the 9th and 10th grades in which the entire heterogeneously composed Puente cohort of 30 students participates. Students generally are required to write daily, in journals and in other forms; they cover the regular English curriculum in addition to the Latino literature component, and they must maintain their own writing portfolios and assist fellow students by providing helpful critiques of their written work. Learning to read and skillfully critique the work of others is seen as an important element in becoming a good writer. The Puente class is also a forum for cultural discussions as well as frequent presentations and conversations about colleges, careers, and personal aspirations.

The counseling component provides oversight of the student's high school program, assuring that students will be placed in college preparatory classes, that any deficiencies will be quickly noted and addressed, and that students are given the information necessary to prepare themselves for postsecondary education. Counselors also participate in some Puente classroom activities to integrate themselves into the daily activities of the Puente students. These may include a planned writing experience, a session on *a through f* (that is, University of California) college requirements, or some other focused activity.

Counselors also arrange for college visits and other field trips, parent and mentor meetings and events, and most oversee the Puente Club, an extramural club where students get together for social events that support their college preparatory activities (e.g., plan for car washes and bake sales in order to support a field trip).

The mentoring component is coordinated by a community mentor liaison (CML) who seeks out appropriate mentors from the community for the students, trains them, and matches these mentors to 9th grade students with whom they will meet ideally at least monthly. The CML also works with the counselor to arrange for appropriate activities for the students and monitors these relationships. In addition to locating, training, and monitoring mentors, the CML has a more vaguely defined community relations role: making presentations to local community groups and raising the profile of Puente in order to encourage greater community participation in the program in the form of donations to sponsor field trips, provide resources--such as site visits or even internships for Puente students--and mentors. The CML's primary role, however, is the rather arduous task of locating and training Latino professionals to mentor and provide role models for high school students.

The High School Puente model is "front-ended" in its resource allocations. Students are placed in the Puente classroom for the first two years of high school with the hope that this will provide the foundation to successfully mainstream into the core college-preparatory English classes. The program thus emphasizes a strong academic start in the first two years, with continued counseling and mentoring of students in the final two years of high school.

Implementation Issues

A recurring issue has been the fluctuating support for the program in the schools as district and school staff turn over, as well as the general local and state climate with respect to racial and ethnic relations. Propositions 187 and 209, and the legal maneuvering that has accompanied these movements in California, have had a chilling effect on programs that serve largely minority students. Nervousness about what is legal and acceptable has had an unsettling effect on school administrators, which filters down to the classroom. Nonetheless, the program has remained vibrant at all of the implementation sites, due in large part to the extraordinary dedication and sense of mission shared by the staff.

The second biggest implementation issue concerns the functioning of the three-person teams. The program design specifies that the teachers, counselors, and CMLs form teams, meet regularly, and plan jointly for activities with the Puente students. However, struggles over turf and personality clashes can impede the optimum functioning of the teams. Moreover, turnover in any of these positions requires a renegotiation of relationships and task assignments. Nonetheless, the great majority of teams have functioned effectively and been successful in meeting the challenges of the program.

The mentoring component of the Puente program holds some of the greatest potential for making a significant contribution to our understanding of how to guide Latino students toward college aspirations. At the same time, it is perhaps the most difficult program element to implement in a high school setting. The community college model paired a student with a mentor from the community who had already completed college and achieved substantial status in his or her career. The idea was that this person could be a guide, a motivator, and a role model.

However, 9th grade students are quite different from community college students, and most are not yet ready to seriously discuss careers nor form close relationships with adults who may appear to be the age of their own parents. Developmentally, 9th graders are still most concerned with establishing an identity and place for themselves within the social order of the high school. Future careers are largely peripheral to these concerns. It thus became clear after a couple of years into the pilot project that new mentoring models were needed, and older peer "partners" were introduced to act as guides in the high school socialization process. Older mentors were then reserved for the later high school years, when students are more developmentally ready to address issues concerning their future.

Outcomes

College matriculation. The cohort of students who entered high school in 1993 graduated from the initial seven High School Puente programs in June of 1997. This included 150 students of whom 58 or 39% were accepted to four-year colleges. Hence, a conservative estimate would place the Puente college-going rate at approximately double that of the non-Puente students from two years prior (the last year for which comparison data from the same schools were available), and approximately three times that of all Hispanic students in the state for the same year.

High school retention. Turning to the cohort of students for whom we have careful and up-to-date comparison data, at the beginning of the senior year of high school, 78% of Puente students (n=96) and only 54% of Latino non-Puente comparison students from the same schools (n=614) were still enrolled in the same schools. While some students from both groups were certainly still enrolled in school *somewhere,* student mobility is, in itself, an important risk factor. Students who change schools frequently are more likely to fall behind in subjects and they therefore drop out of school at much higher rates than students who remain enrolled in one school. Hence, an important objective of the Puente program is to retain students in the same school through graduation.

Academic achievement. While at the beginning of the senior year of high school there were no significant differences between Puente (n=75) and non-Puente comparison students (n=75) on GPA or honors courses taken, Puente students had taken and successfully completed substantially more college preparatory courses, indicating that they have either taken a more rigorous curriculum, or alternatively that they have been more successful in an equally rigorous curriculum.

Attitudes toward schooling. One of the hardest lessons that adolescents must learn is that doing well in school involves making choices among a number of competing interests. Puente (n=520) and non-Puente comparison students (n=492) were surveyed about their willingness to give up a number of attractive alternatives in order to focus on school. Puente students were significantly more likely to say they would give up a friend, a job, a sport or other important activity, or hanging out with friends, if these were found to be impediments to doing well in school.

Preparation for college. A critical element in moving students through the academic pipeline and into college is providing the appropriate preparation and instrumental knowledge to make college a viable option. At the end of 11th grade, the critical point at which students who wish to go to college must be preparing to make applications, 75% of Puente students (n=110) felt they knew all or nearly all they needed to apply, while only 36% of non-Puente comparisons (n=113) felt equally well-prepared. Moreover, by the 12th grade, 72% of Puente students (n=58) and only 34% of non-Puente comparisons (n=92) had taken the SAT exams which are required for UC admission. Finally, 55% of Puente students (n=513) stated that their counselor was influencing their decision to go to college, compared to only 15% of non-Puente students (n=453), and Puente students were significantly more likely to rely on parents, teachers, and other adults in making this important decision than were non-Puente comparisons. Puente students were not only better prepared to apply to college, they were also much more likely to have an important adult in their lives helping them to make this critical decision.

Aspirations. While both Puente and non-Puente students begin high school with high aspirations for going to college (74% versus 41%), by the 12th grade there are large differences in the aspirations of the two groups: 53% of Puente 12th graders (n=57) compared to only 25% of the non-Puente cohort (n=92) still intended to attend a four-year college after high school graduation.

Academic identity. One of the primary goals of Puente is to help students see themselves as scholars. To test the value students placed on being a "good student," Puente and non-Puente students were given four attractive options from which to choose and asked which they would prefer to be. Thirty-five percent of Puente students (n=549) selected "good student" as the person they would most like to be; this was the number-one ranked option for the Puente students, while only 25% of non-Puente students (n=529) selected this option, and it was their third-ranked option, behind "cool" student and "nice person who listens to friends' problems." (The fourth-ranked option for both groups was "popular student"--3% and 10% respectively.)

In sum, Puente students are more likely to stay in school, and in the same school, than are non-Puente students; they take and pass more college preparatory courses; their attitudes toward school are significantly more positive; their preparation for making college applications is stronger; their aspirations are higher; and they are more anxious to identify with the label of "good student." All of these factors bode well for staying in the academic pipeline.

SUMMARY

1. All three evaluation findings point to the critical importance of interventions that are consistent, intensive, well-articulated from grade to grade, and provide heavy monitoring of students *throughout the secondary years*.

2. All three programs attribute much of their success to the fact that *at least one adult in the school setting* takes personal responsibility for each student in the program. We must recognize that for underachieving Latino youth to adjust to and thrive in mainstream America, they typically must cross multiple cultural boundaries simultaneously: Latino culture, mainstream, middle-class culture, adult culture, peer culture, and school culture. For intervention programs to be successful at least one adult at school must serve as the youth's unfailing advocate as the student confronts the many cultures to be negotiated. Each of the three programs described here engaged in such advocacy.

3. All three programs have designed intervention components that locate students in *supportive peer groups* to reinforce achievement-oriented behavior.

4. Both ALAS and AVID findings point to the need for *increased time* to achieve high academic goals. This is also consistent with Puente's focus on providing supportive resources for students outside of school hours.

5. Both Puente and AVID have relied heavily on *heterogeneous, cooperative grouping practices ("untracking")* to both provide models of high achievement and to create access to a college preparatory curriculum that increases postsecondary options for Latino youth.

6. Successes experienced by all three of these programs have been built on a *sensitivity to the particular circumstances of the students and families they serve and the creation of "safe" places for them to interact in the school*.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

All three of these programs demonstrate that certain interventions, even at the secondary school level, can substantially affect educational achievement for students who are located along the whole continuum of academic performance, even those with a history of low achievement. The programs we evaluated all share two common factors: high academic standards, accompanied by intense, student-centered institutional supports to help students achieve those high standards.

We think our findings also demonstrate that a number of principles stand as good practice and should be incorporated into any intervention program, wherever it is implemented. We do not contend that we have discovered the magic bullets, or that the programs described here should be implemented in a uniform way at every school site in California. Local adaptation, based on a careful analysis of local data and needs, should drive the implementation of any program. However, the crisis in the proportions of Latino students who complete high school and successfully navigate into and through higher education compels us to make the following recommendations:

1. The state should make it an immediate priority to increase funding for intervention programs, and to make sure they include a strong evaluation research base. The problems of Latino undereducation are not going away, and in some respects are getting worse.

2. State-funded programs now in place should be required to conduct rigorous evaluations, that include appropriate comparison samples, to establish their effectiveness. The budgets of these programs need to be augmented, if necessary, to fund such evaluations.

3. The University of California's Office of Outreach should recommend incorporating the principles

identified here in new initiatives for outreach and intervention among Latino students.

4. The university and the state should take maximum advantage of the extensive, and carefully researched, infrastructure that has been built (largely by private funds) by the programs cited here, and disseminate these key practices through staff development of school personnel throughout California.

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