Recommendations for Bridging the Educational Gap for Hispanic Students in Idaho:

Based on Findings from the

"Idaho Summit on Educational Excellence About Hispanic Students" and Current Literature

Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs

in partnership with

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Less than 40% of any student enrolls in college after high school in the state of Idaho. That's not just Hispanic, that's any. (Anonymous from Conference, 2008)

My parents never got citizenship and now by default I do not have it. My choices are very limited. Some tactics are to offer in-state tuition. Trio can't work with undocumented students because of federal funding. Some have tried to start a foundation but can they get tax benefit without some documentation? (Anonymous from Conference, 2008)

Another thing that really got their attention, and I thought okay, how can I make this attractive to the students, I said why don't we do some kind of incentive. Let's pay them to go and work with the kids and go on home visits with the family educators. And so we got that as part of our budget and we got it approved so that the home visit they would do two home visits a month and the students got $12 a visit (Anonymous from Conference, 2008).

I really think it is our place to help the students in 4th and 5th grade. I'm not speaking to the new comers to Jerome in 4th or 5th grade although that is about 4% of our ESL students. The majority of our ESL students were born here or have been in our system since kindergarten and they are not out of our ESL students until 4th grade or 8th grade. (Ronda Demear from Conference 2008)

People can give you plan after plan and show you rhetorical piece after rhetorical piece about how the institution's heart is in the right place, but that doesn't mean a damn thing…I have no interest in the affirmative action plan. I am interested in affirmative action. (Anonymous in Eckel and Kezar, 2007).

Acknowledgements

The success of the report can be attributed to the many partner agencies, staff members, and devoted volunteers that collaborated and contributed their time, energy, and expertise to this project. Their commitment and dedication to furthering interagency efforts that focus on the needs of Hispanic families in Idaho, is very much appreciated.
Education is undoubtedly a tool for empowerment and it is that tool that the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs will seek to champion for Hispanics in Idaho. This report will be used as model to map the issues and present it to policy makers at the state legislature. This is the beginning for the Commission in addressing the issues the objectives for education:

- *Target organizations and education experts and find ways to maximize resources and push for more positive, fundamental, and systemic change;*
- *Increase awareness of the dire needs and challenges that face Hispanic students;*
  Promote more parental involvement and encourage parents to instill the values of education in their future;

The report was developed as a result from the event hosted by the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs "*Idaho Summit on Educational Excellence About Hispanic Students*" to act as a catalyst to reexamine these issues. This event provided educators, community leaders, policy makers, and interested members of the public with a forum for networking and exchanging information about current education issues and needs within Idaho's Hispanic community and possible solutions. The key word here is "solutions."

Recommendations to address this issue include establishing a coordinating/monitoring body, and building and executing a comprehensive, evidence-based and measurable strategic plan.

- A need to develop a new perspective toward problem solving
- *A need for a comprehensive approach*
- *A need to work at all stages of childhood development to create a sustainable "pipeline"*
- *A need for more sophisticated and standard user-friendly data and accountability systems*

The Commission stands prepared to work towards moving from recommendations to action.

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Problem Statement

The Hispanic population is fastest growing ethnic minority in Idaho, representing ten percent of Idaho's total population. Despite eight years of "No Child Left Behind," the statistics show that Hispanic students in Idaho do lag far behind their White counterparts in acquiring proficiency in the basic areas of Reading, Math and Language Use in all grade levels as measured by the Idaho Standard Achievement Test (Idaho State Department of Education Report Card (2008)). Mirroring national trends, the high school drop-out rate for Idaho Hispanic students is higher than for white students, and the representation of Hispanic students in our institutions of higher education is disproportionately low (Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs 2007, Seidman 2005, Carter 2006, Brown, Santiago & Lopez 2003).

Purpose of this White Paper

While there is adequate documentation of the above problems and many commendable efforts in addressing them here in Idaho, there has not been a comprehensive approach to addressing them. The "Idaho Summit on Educational Excellence About Hispanic Affairs" was organized by the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs (ICHA) to act as a catalyst to reexamine these issues. However many of the issues that were talked about in regards to Hispanic education are the same ones that were discussed a decade ago. Margie Gonzales, Executive Director of the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs opened the meeting by explicitly saying that the purpose of the conference was to "move one step beyond the discussion and start moving toward recommendations, accountability and resolutions for action."

This event provided educators, community leaders, policy makers, and interested members of the public with a forum for networking and exchanging information about current education issues and needs within Idaho's Hispanic community and possible solutions. The key word here is "solutions." The conference centered about successful programs and concepts that could be replicated. Tom Luna, Idaho's Superintendent of Education said in his keynote address about solutions that " quite frankly this is not easy and probably ought not be easy because what we are dealing with is so critical, the children and the future." And so, this paper is about the work that is yet to be done. Recommendations and findings from the current literature are also included to support our conclusions.

Organization of This Paper

If taken in its entirety, the task of bridging the education gap for Hispanic students appears overwhelming. The education gap spans all age groups of Hispanics in Idaho. For grades 3, 4, 7 and 8 Hispanic students that were below "basic" level of proficiency were more than double that of white students in the areas of Reading, Math, and Language Usage (ISAT 2008). Although there has been continued improvement in the past ten years, more than one in twenty Hispanic teenagers dropped out of Idaho public high schools in the 2006-2007 academic year (Idaho State Department of Education). It is estimated that in the 3 year period of 2005 to 2007, 87.4% of Idaho adults over the age of 25 have earned a high school diploma or GED.

Meanwhile, only 29.94% of Hispanics in that same category have. While 23.6% of Idaho adults over the age of 25 are graduates of a four year higher education institution, only 7.3% of Hispanic adults over 25 are in this category (American FactFinder- US Census Bureau 2008).

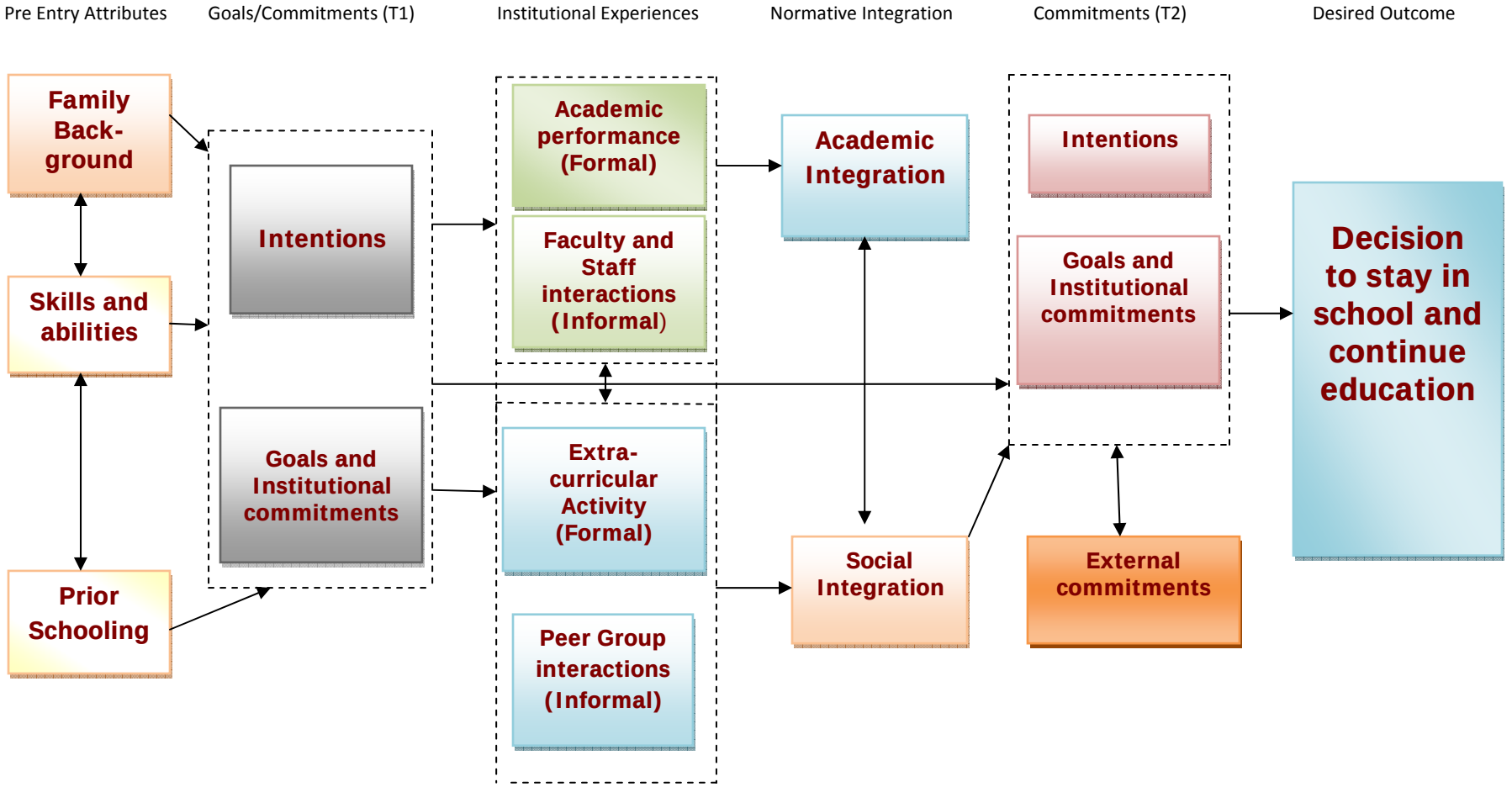
Therefore, the conference was organized into three primary categories so that issues would be more manageable and action more focused. They were:

1. Closing the Academic Achievement Gap
2. Dropout Prevention and Retention
3. Access to and Equity in Higher Education

While these three areas are compartmentalized for ease of discussion, they are in no way meant to be mutually exclusive or exhaustive entities. Each area is tied to each other and therefore there is a need to think and work in a comprehensive effort. Likewise, efforts for addressing each of these areas need the coordinated efforts of public agencies, communities and parents. Solutions will need to be at both the individual level and also at a systems level. There is no magic bullet and it would be unwise to think that one program or one entity will have the answer to resolve the disparities mentioned above.

A graphic depiction synthesizing the three areas is presented on the next page. You can see that there is inclusion of not only the commitment derived from the student, but also from the educational institutions, peer groups and families. Each of the boxes gives clues on what and where effort is required. This paper supports the need for both academic and social integration as key elements of influencing commitment and positive decision making. As such, it is an institutional as well as a social model.

Adapted from Tinto Model of Institutional Departure (from Seidman 2005)



Recurring Themes

While our goals remain closing the achievement gap, reducing dropout and improving retention, and creating access to higher education, the purpose of this white paper is to talk about ways to achieve those elusive goals. Through the discussions and presentations at the conference and evidence from the current literature, common themes emerged for developing strategies. They revolve around filling current gaps in our approach, or simply "needs." The filling of the gaps for these three need areas become the basis for recommendations. The needs areas are summarized below.

A need to develop a new perspective toward problem solving:

An adherence to a "deficit model" hampers creative ways to capitalize on assets possessed by Hispanic students, parents and communities. By this, we mean that many past approaches have been patriarchal and consider the flow of learning to be mono-directional; from teacher to student, from the school to the community, from federal or state to local programs. "The educational history of Latino students in the US is characterized by a pervasive misunderstanding of the role of language and culture in learning. In attempting to address Latinos' low academic achievement, policymakers and educators have consistently defined their language and culture as disadvantages that hinder learning. Therefore, school interventions have focused almost exclusively on how to overcome such limitations." (Rolon, 2005 pg. 32)

Superintendent Tom Luna in his keynote address touched on a way of doing business that needed to be changed in our education system. He believes that our system should be "customer driven" and that unfortunately many of our approaches to education are what is easier for the current infrastructure and not the needs of the people being served. Another speaker puts this into an operational classroom perspective.

> *What they will do is spread ESL students throughout the classrooms and there will be 2-3 In each class with no ESL support… I have spent 14 years of teaching and my ESL, Hispanic students were the best at becoming the wallpaper of any students I had ever seen. They were so polite, so well behaved and never drew attention to themselves and they just faded into the wall paper and faded to black (Demear, 2008).*

A need for a comprehensive approach:

There is a reliance on institutional approaches for issues like student retention where we should be also drawing from a more social ecology model to gain relevance. Empowerment models for students, educators and parents are part of those solutions that require partnerships beyond the school grounds (Chrispeels and Rivero, 2001, Pidcock, Fischer and Munsch 2001, Souto-Manning) and Dice 2007)). A comprehensive approach is necessary. For example, there is a tendency to look at one area, such as Hispanic dropout rates, and then to address that in a vacuum. The emphasis on the high school dropout rate masks the fact that the Latino community is also making progress in higher education … Media focus on high school dropouts and the limited attention given to Latino higher education achievement reinforces two bad habits--the reliance on the deficit model when talking about Latinos and the invisibility of Latino high-achievers (Brown, Santiago and Lopez 2003, pg. 41).

This comprehensive approach requires a serious look at drawing from the strengths of the Hispanic community and developing family and community interest in support of educational goals (Cammoarota, 2007). Although "empowerment" is an often overused term, it simply means in this case, a "sense of belonging" and a "supportive peer group" (Kettler, Shiu and Johnsen, 2006). The effects of deficit modeling toward education have disenfranchised family and community stakes in the outcome.

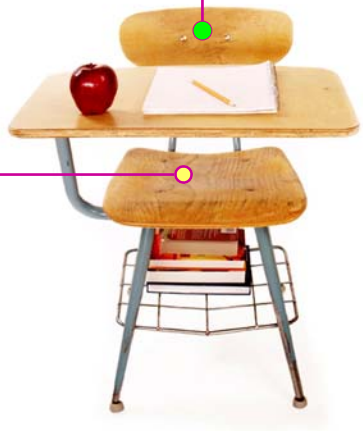
Another key component of this empowerment model is for future training of Idaho teachers (Dice, Souto-Manning, 2007). It is assumed that those with a teaching certificate are fully versed in socio-cultural aspects of teaching where in fact, this is not a given case.

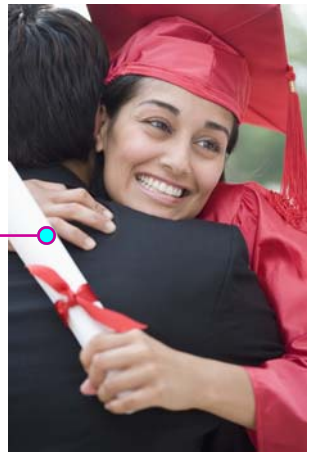
> *50% of all teachers teach some language minority student at some point in their careers and a large percentage of teachers especially in Idaho receive little to no preparation for working with these students. So, there is an impact on immigrant students and their students. Sometimes when a teacher feels unprepared they feel resentful of their students (Adam Chiaverra from Conference 2008).*

A need to work at all stages of childhood development to create a sustainable "pipeline":

A sustainable pipeline must be built that encompasses all stages of childhood education, from pre-school all the way to university. The pipeline consists of segments that include strengthening community and family relationships, infrastructure and teacher training.

It's not rocket science, it's not a mystery. We have to ensure our children are beginning early and being told early on what they can accomplish despite parents educational level of income. Parent involvement is a strong indicator of child's ultimate success. Folks we must remind ourselves that families are an important resource and they will remain so for generations and we should draw on that to improve educational outcomes (Adam Chiaverra from Conference 2008)





Recommendations

The following table lists the recommendations for attaining the three goals stated previously.
They are to:

- Close the Achievement Gap
- Reduce Drop Out and Increase Retention
- Assure Access to Higher Education

Because these are not mutually exclusive activities, an “x” mark is placed by each recommendation because the outcome may have an effect on more than one of the above goal areas.

In addition, each of the recommendations fall into one of the following strategic domains. These are as follows:

- Standards and Accountability
- Programmatic Initiatives
- Pipeline: Teacher Training
- Pipeline: Community Empowerment
- Pipeline: Infrastructure

Domain	Recommendation	Closing the Gap	Retention / Decreasing Drop Out	Access to Higher Education
Standards and Accountability	Implement statewide educational achievement standards for bilingual and English Language Learners (ELL) programs.	X		
Standards and Accountability	Accurately track and report accurately dropout/push out rates by ethnicity.		X	
Standards and Accountability	Require school districts to use Limited English Proficiency (LEP) state and federal monies to fund researched-based practices that increase academic achievement and school success.	X		
Standards and Accountability	Stop funding English as Second Language (ESL) and other programs currently in place that have been proven to be ineffective.	X		
Standards and Accountability	Ensure the inclusion of Hispanic and English Language Learners (ELL) students in the NCLB accountability system.	X	X	
Standards and Accountability	Address the undercount of the Hispanic dropout rate as part of the NCLB account ability system and in determining adequate yearly progress (AYP).		x	
Standards and Accountability	Collect student data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, language status, migrant status.			X
Programmatic Initiatives	Fund and disseminate basic research in second language acquisition, including research on assessments for English Language Learners (ELL) programs.	X		
Programmatic Initiatives	Use native-language or dual language assessments for students in bilingual programs in determining AYP and for providing English Language Learners (ELL) students with individual education plans, when appropriate.	X	X	
Programmatic Initiatives	Provide challenging and appropriate learning opportunities for Latino and English Language Learners (ELL) students.	X	X	
Programmatic Initiatives	Appropriate and effective teaching must be in place prior to high-stakes testing being required. Immediately stop testing ELL students using the ISAT if they are not language proficient. Use appropriate alternate assessment methods to determine academic competency in the student's native language.	X	X	

Domain	Recommendation	Closing the Gap	Retention Decreasing Drop Out	Access to Higher Education
Programmatic Initiatives	Fund enrichment/acceleration. Provide in-service training to all teachers, administrators, librarians, and other school personnel to improve their ability to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students.	X		
Programmatic Initiatives	Ensure that charter schools are adequately supported and are capable of providing Hispanic children and their parents with a quality alternative to traditional public schools, and increase funding opportunities for charter school start-ups.	X		
Programmatic Initiatives	Fund programs that minimize pulling students out of subject matter classes.		X	
Pipeline: Teacher Training	Continue/expand efforts to increase the number of bilingual teachers to work with Latino and English Language Learners (ELL) students. Limit over-reliance on paraprofessional teaching assistants.	X	X	
Pipeline: Teacher Training	Ensure that teachers of Latino students receive high quality professional development, especially in reading, mathematics and, for non-Latino teachers, in cultural competency.	X	X	
Pipeline: Teacher Training	Increase the number of well qualified teachers who are prepared to help Hispanic and English Language Learners (ELL) students meet rigorous academic and graduation standards.	X	X	
Pipeline: Teacher Training	Provide for the training of existing school leaders (including superintendents and principals) and counselors to be culturally and linguistically competent to address the needs of Hispanic students.	X	X	
Pipeline: Teacher Training	Increase the number of preschool teachers who are culturally and linguistically competent to work with Hispanics and English Language Learners (ELLs), and the number of bilingual and bicultural proposal reviewers for Head Start programs.	X	X	
Pipeline: Community Empowerment	Increase Latino Parent Involvement.		X	

Domain	Recommendation	Closing the Gap	Retention / Decreasing Drop Out	Access to Higher Education
Pipeline: Community Empowerment	Expand Early Head Start, Even Start and Head Start to include significantly higher numbers of Hispanic children, including increased services under the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program.	X		
Pipeline: Community Empowerment	Strengthen the parental involvement provisions in NCLB to ensure adequate implementation of the law.	x	x	X
Pipeline: Community Empowerment	Ensure that Supplemental Educational Services and School Choice options are available to Hispanics, through improved outreach to Hispanic families.	x	x	X
Pipeline: Community Empowerment	Increase support for basic adult education and workforce competence programs across the federal government, including such programs as those in the Workforce Investment Act, and increase support for private adult education programs that benefit Hispanics.			X
Pipeline: Infrastructure	Enhance and support high quality vocational and technical education programs.			X
Pipeline: Infrastructure	Create incentives for Hispanic students to select teaching as a career through fellowships, loan forgiveness and federal support to school districts with a high number of Hispanic students;			X
Pipeline: Infrastructure	Increase funding to Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) for teacher development and training to meet the education workforce needs of the pre-school and K-12 education system.			X
Pipeline: Infrastructure	Increase college preparation program funding for HSIs to engage in pre-college enrichment programs, including a new pre-collegiate program focusing on science, technology, mathematics and engineering training.			X
Pipeline: Infrastructure	Increase funding for student support services, including the federal TRIO programs, and increase funding under TRIO for Hispanic non-profit organizations.			X
Pipeline: Infrastructure	Increase opportunities for the recruitment of Latino faculty by colleges and universities.			X
Pipeline: Infrastructure	Support policies that would increase Latino faculty in colleges and universities.			X

Next Steps

A comprehensive approach will require a **coordinating or monitoring body**. It is recommended that one agency or organization take on this role.

Once a lead organization is designated, convene stakeholders to establish a **strategic plan**. You may need to hire or contract with a trained facilitator. As part of the strategic plan, a strong evaluation component should be included.

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