

ABSTRACT

Emily G. Pake. INCREASING POST-SECONDARY AWARENESS FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOLS (Under the direction of Dr. Marjorie Ringler), Department of Educational Leadership, May, 2024.

The Hispanic population is on the rise nationwide, and counties in Eastern North Carolina, have witnessed one of the most significant changes in the last census. Consequently, the school systems are enrolling a growing number of Hispanic students. Despite this population increase, the rate of Hispanic students pursuing post-secondary education remains notably lower when compared to students from other ethnicities. This study endeavors to identify the barriers confronting Hispanic students at MAC Early College High School and proposes changes in current practices to foster more promising futures for these students.

In this study, the researcher directly engaged with Hispanic students and parents to comprehend the challenges impeding their pursuit of post-secondary education. The research incorporates a comprehensive literature review to delineate the difficulties encountered by Hispanic families. Additionally, a case study methodology was employed, involving interviews with Hispanic students and a focus group with Hispanic parents. Insights gleaned from these interactions informed the development of a support program tailored to address identified needs and provide requisite resources, enhancing the preparedness of these students to attain a post-secondary degree. The study concludes with final assertions and outlines potential next steps for researchers seeking to advance this line of inquiry.

INCREASING POST-SECONDARY AWARENESS FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS THROUGH
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

A Dissertation
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Hispanic students who persevere despite facing significant challenges in the public educational system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support I have received from numerous individuals throughout my doctoral journey. Their encouragement has been instrumental in helping me navigate the challenges and milestones along the way. I most acknowledge the support of my family. My husband and three daughters have made sacrifices along the way so I could focus on my work. This accomplishment is as much theirs as mine.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the participants in this study who generously shared their experiences and insights, making this research possible. Your willingness to open up about personal struggles and engage in meaningful dialogue has been instrumental in shaping the outcomes of this study. Your voices and experiences have shed light on important issues and have provided invaluable perspectives that will contribute to greater understanding and informed decision-making in our educational community. Your participation has not only enriched this study but has also paved the way for meaningful change and improvement.

Thank you for your trust, your honesty, and your willingness to be a part of this journey. Your contributions have made a lasting impact, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn from each of you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The responsibility of educators expands beyond high school graduation, especially pertaining to first-generation college bound Hispanic students and their families. These families require additional support to navigate many challenges that most families of other ethnicities do not face, including low parental educational attainment, economic hardships, immigration challenges, language barriers, and laws that restrict certain opportunities for undocumented students (Silver, 2018). The Hispanic population is underrepresented on most local and state boards in North Carolina. Without this representation, policies and laws are rarely passed to advocate for change to current procedures that have the potential to positively impact the Hispanic population.

For the purpose of this study, pseudonyms will be used for the county, school, and participants to ensure privacy. Data suggests that most of the Hispanic population of Mac County, NC is hesitant to participate in the local, state, or national electoral process. It is estimated that there are 3.77k Hispanics living in the county with only 463 registered to vote. Of the 463, only 265 Hispanic voters participated in the last election (North Carolina Board of Elections Statistics, 2021). There are currently no Hispanics serving in the county's government, including the school board, city council, or county commissioners. Furthermore, as of 2022, there is only one representative of Hispanic descent serving in the North Carolina General Assembly. As a result, changes to legislation that could benefit immigrants and undocumented students rarely make it out of the committee stage.

Many Hispanic parents in the county have not graduated from high school or college. Due to the limited exposure and knowledge of the educational system among these parents,

coupled with language barriers, Hispanic students in the county encounter challenges in establishing and achieving their post-secondary goals.

Administrators, counselors, and teachers are ideally situated to share resources and information with Hispanic students and their parents to assist in mitigating some of these barriers (Obinna & Ohanian, 2020). For example, counselors assist students by advising them on which courses they could take to maximize opportunities to earn college credit.

Mac County Early College High School (MECHS) is in rural eastern North Carolina and served 283 students during the 2021-2022 school year. Early colleges, also known as Cooperative Innovative High Schools, were established by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to provide students with an opportunity to achieve a high school diploma and an associate degree at no cost to the families who otherwise would not have the financial means to attend college (Haxton et al., 2016; Ongaga, 2010; Sparks, 2013). Over the past nine years, there has been a shift in the student population in terms of ethnicity at MECHS. The Hispanic population currently makes up 34% of the total number of enrolled students, with white students slightly higher at 42% (see Figure 1).

Many Hispanic students in North Carolina have learned that if they want to pursue post-secondary education, then applying to an early college would be the best financial decision since many come from low socioeconomic households or are undocumented, meaning they would have to pay out-of-state tuition at a community college or university (DiMaria, 2013; Heitin, 2016; Locke et al., 2014; Webb & Gerwin, 2014). The early college provides them with an associate degree or trade that would allow them to earn higher wages than merely a high school diploma; however, early colleges have an enrollment cap, where each grade level can only have up to 100 students (Cooperative and Innovative High Schools, G.S. 115C-238.50, 2009). In Mac

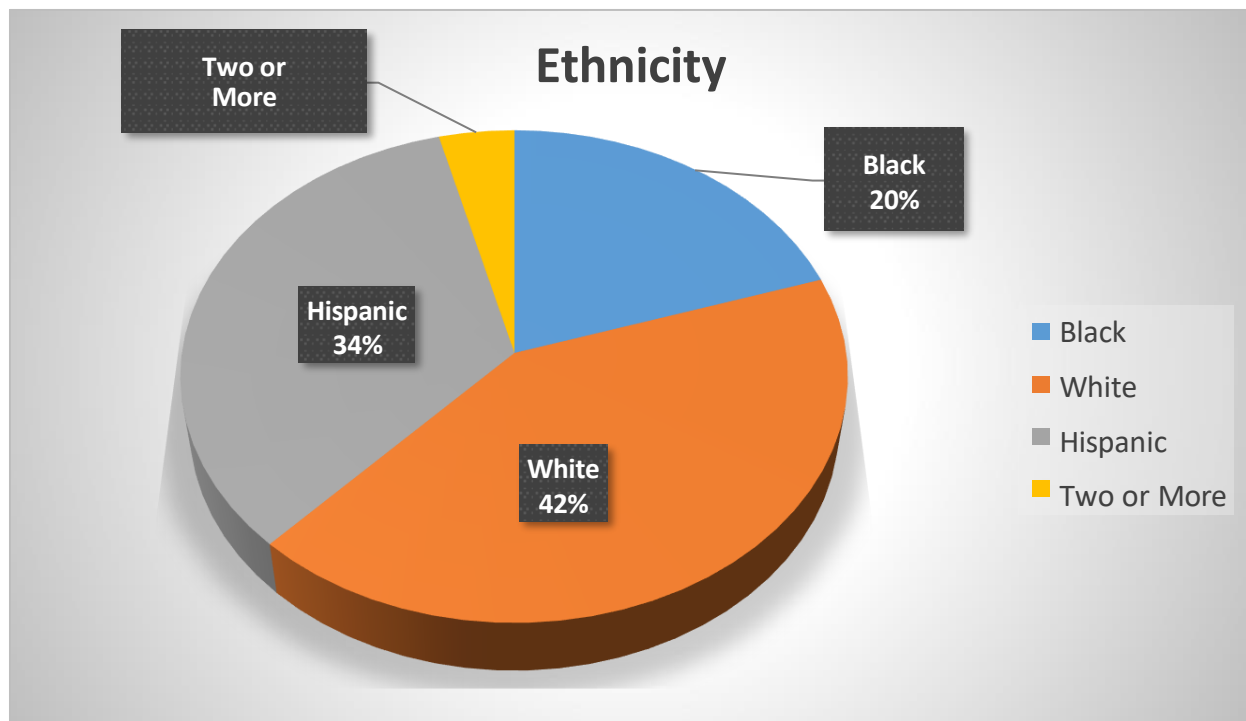


Figure 1. Percentage of students by ethnicity at Mac County Early College.

County, the school board only allows 80 students with each incoming freshmen class. As a result, many Hispanic students have no choice but to attend the traditional high schools in the county, foregoing the opportunity to earn a tuition-free associate degree and subsequent employment.

On average, 10 to 15 students graduate from the traditional high schools with an associate degree each year in Mac County through the Career and College Promise program. This program allows students to take dual enrollment courses while attending the traditional high schools beginning their junior year; however, students attending the early college may start college classes as early as their freshman year, giving them a distinct advantage toward achieving an associate degree. Since 2017, only one Hispanic student has completed an associate degree who attended a traditional high school in Mac County. By comparison, 50% of the Hispanic students in the early college graduated with an associate degree, a total of 26 in the same timeframe. Even though more Hispanic students complete the associate degree at the early college, only a few continue their education at a four-year institution due to low socioeconomic status and lack of resources. This chapter will focus on Hispanic students' barriers to post-secondary education, and the need for a support program for these students will be examined.

Background of Focus of Practice

The Hispanic population in eastern North Carolina, specifically Mac County, continues to increase. The number of foreign-born residents in Mac County jumped from 2.97% in 2018 to 11.9% in 2019. The most common origin for foreign-born citizens in North Carolina is from Mexico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). As a result, the number of Hispanic students in the school system is also increasing. As this population grows, it is essential to offer a support structure that

provides equity for these students, so they can benefit from earning a post-secondary education that may offer opportunities for a higher socioeconomic status.

After surveying the student populations of the early college in 2021, 75.3% of the Hispanic students enrolled in the early college speak Spanish in their homes. Only 21.3% of these students primarily speak English, while the remaining 3.4% speak both languages (see Figure 2). Currently, MECHS does not have a translator on staff making it difficult to communicate with Spanish speaking students and parents. Even when Spanish language versions of educational content is provided, the dialect and academic vocabulary still causes a barrier to understand the information provided (Heitkamp & Gunderman, 2021).

As the scholarly practitioner leading this inquiry, my positionality is described in this section. I have been the principal of MECHS for 10 years. In this capacity, I can share anecdotally that a few early college high school students decide annually to transfer to traditional high schools instead of remaining enrolled in the early college, usually for the purpose of participating in school sports. Sports are not a part of the MECHS due to the increased academic workload expected of students. Several of these transfer students reach out to me after leaving the MECHS program because they were not receiving information about the Career and College Promise opportunity. They became aware of receiving dual enrollment after attending the early college for a brief time, but once they transferred, the support stopped. Hispanic students may be overlooked at traditional high schools without parental support and knowledge of the dual enrollment option. If the students are unable to advocate for themselves, they may be at risk of not receiving the same opportunities as students whose parents are familiar with the education system (Newman, 2019). Building a support system in each high school for Hispanic students is essential for the advancement of these students with their post-secondary goals.

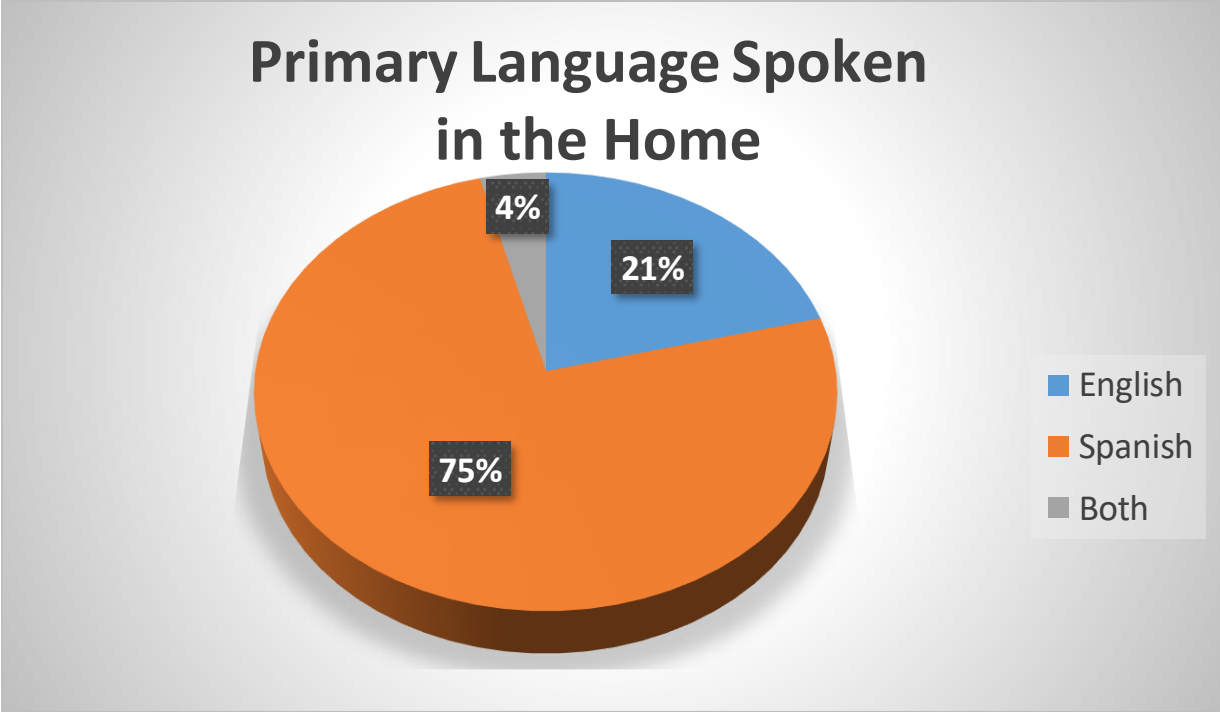


Figure 2. Primary language spoken in the home of Hispanic students.

Context of Study

Mac County, North Carolina, the site of this study, was one of many counties in the state with more than a 25% increase of Hispanics in the region between 2010 and 2019 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). In addition, foreign born Hispanics make up more than 25% of this demographic group in the county. Schools are seeing a change in ethnic makeup, specifically Mac County Early College. In the 2021-22 school year, Hispanic students are now the largest minority group, and in the sophomore class they are the majority based on a MECHS student survey in 2021.

Hispanic students make up 34% of the students who are enrolled in MECHS. Eighty percent of the Hispanic students enrolled report Spanish as the primary language spoken in the home based on the MECHS student survey. All staff members speak only English. In a 2022 interview, teachers expressed their neglect in communicating with the parents of Hispanic children because of the language barrier, which produces an inequity for this subgroup of students. Instead, the teachers would solely work with the student to address concerns instead of involving the parents. None of the schools in the district currently have a professional interpreter in the school full time, so if a parent meeting is held, families often bring their own interpreters, which are normally family members or friends, not a professional interpreter. As a result, the information being relayed is not always delivered correctly or as intended.

MECHS serves 283 students. The Hispanic population has increased significantly from 25% of the total enrollment to 34% since 2017. In 2021, MECHS parents completed a survey regarding educational attainment. Strikingly, out of the 119 Hispanic students enrolled in the school, only one parent had earned a bachelor's degree. When compared to the white and black students surveyed, there was an overwhelming difference: 22.9% of Hispanic parents did not

make it to 9th grade, 24.1% never graduated from high school, 28.9% obtained a high school diploma, and 10.8% have earned an associate degree. When comparing Hispanic students to their Caucasian peers, all Caucasian parents at least finished the 9th grade, 2.2% did not finish high school, 13% only graduated from high school, 12% had some college education, 19.6% earned an associate degree, and 53.2% have a four-year degree or higher based on the MECHS student survey (see Figure 3).

In addition to the educational attainment by the parents, students were also asked in a survey to list the obstacles that would hinder them from attending college. The two obstacles with the highest percentage included having the money to pay for college and the lack of parental support. Only 9.6% of Hispanic students said that they had no obstacles to attending college compared to 37% of the White students who chose no obstacles.

Since 2017, at least ten undocumented students have attended MECHS. These are students who do not have documents that prove citizenship. Due to their citizenship status, they must pay out-of-state tuition to attend a community college or four-year university in the state of North Carolina, which is triple the cost of tuition for those deemed legal in-state residents, even though they have lived in the state of North Carolina all their lives. East Carolina University is the closest four-year university to Mac County. As of 2021, in-state tuition costs \$7,325 while out-of-state tuition costs a student \$23,602 (East Carolina University Admissions, 2022). The percentage of Hispanic students attending community colleges is also extremely low compared to other minority groups. In 2021, only 100 students of Hispanic descent were enrolled as a traditional college student at Mac County Community College for the fall semester.

Caucasians make up a little over half of the total enrollment and Blacks make up 35%. This data

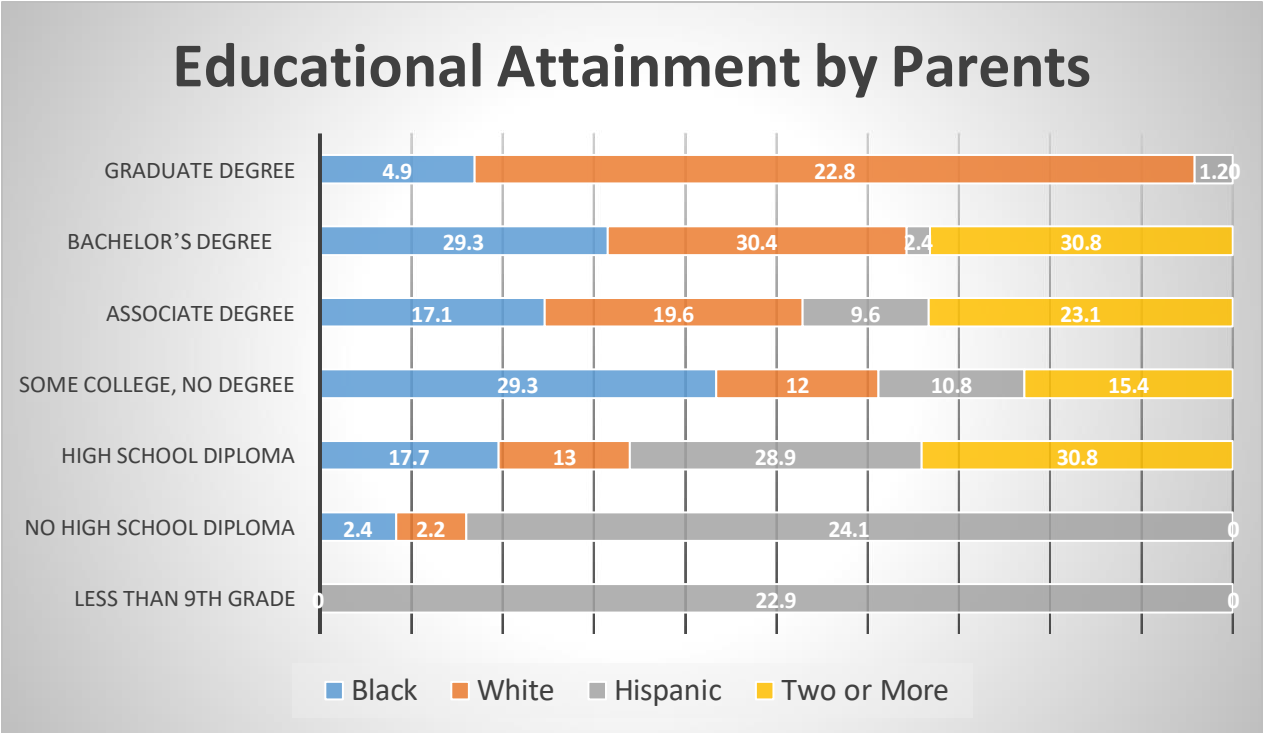


Figure 3. Educational attainment by the parents of students at Mac County Early College.

indicates that Hispanics in large are not taking advantage of the local post-secondary system in the county (see Figure 4).

Statement of Focus of Practice

This inquiry aimed to provide knowledge and support to the Hispanic population in a rural high school setting in Mac County, North Carolina. Building a support program may prove helpful to the success of Hispanic students. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2018), Mac County is experiencing the fastest growth in the Hispanic populations compared to other regions in the area with a 25% increase. Over 30% are not English proficient in the county, and over 40% of the adult Hispanic population did not graduate from high school. The median household income of Hispanic families is less than \$38,000. In addition, the opportunity map for Hispanics on existing conditions in the county is very low. Mac County has the lowest rating in the eastern part of the state (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Due to language barriers, low socioeconomic status, and lack of experience in the educational system, Hispanic families would benefit from more support in the public schools. Administrators, teachers, and school counselors would be able to assist Hispanic students and families more effectively in attaining a college education if they were provided more information on legislation and resources that are available. The purpose of this study was to build a model of support for Hispanic students at Mac County Early College to increase the number of Hispanic students attending post-secondary education.

Guiding Questions

To see the benefits of a support program for Hispanic students in a rural high school setting, the following questions guided the study:

- What barriers have impacted the educational experiences of Hispanic families?

Mac County Community College Enrollment by Ethnicity Fall 2021

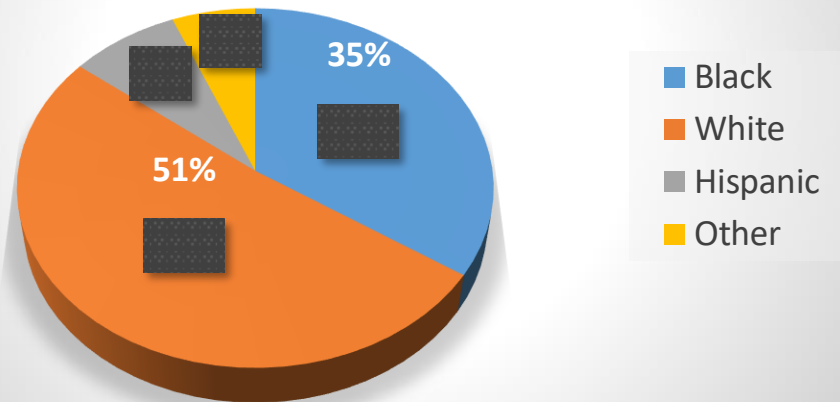


Figure 4. Percentage of students enrolled in the county's community college by ethnicity.

- What specific components of the support program were helpful?
- How do parents and students perceive the support program?

This study served to document the barriers that Hispanic families face in Mac County to gain a better understanding of what kind of support is needed from the school system. The strategies used in this study can help inform educators, policymakers, and stakeholders about effective ways to support Hispanic students in the educational system.

Overview of Inquiry

A mixed method, action research design was used to answer the questions guiding this study. I chose this process because it included the use of both quantitative and qualitative data that was collected throughout the study (Mertler, 2022). This design is important due to the information obtained through interviews and focus groups that would otherwise not be revealed through only using quantitative data. I used an explanatory sequential mixed methods model. Quantitative data was collected first, then I expanded on the topic by collecting qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study design was shared with all inquiry partners to understand the process and to gather feedback.

This study included three phases: collecting baseline data, program design, implementation of the program, and finally a summative evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. This process helped with continuous improvement on how to better serve this group of students as I moved through this study. The implementation of phases was important to structure the organization of the study.

The first phase of the inquiry consisted of collecting quantitative data regarding educational attainment of Hispanic parents, primary language spoken in the home, and

socioeconomic status. Qualitative data was collected through student interviews and a parent focus group to gain an understanding of the feelings that may not be collected through quantitative data. The qualitative data that was collected from these three groups was used by my inquiry partners and I to develop and implement a program of support for the students.

Once the data was reviewed and areas of need were identified, planning took place with the inquiry partners to develop the support program, which was then implemented schoolwide. I sought feedback from students and parents throughout the implementation process to check for effectiveness and to bring about change if needed (Mertler, 2022). The qualitative data was collected through interviews and a focus group.

Inquiry Partners

When examining the impact of a support program for Hispanic parents and students in a high school setting, several inquiry partners played an essential role in the development and implementation of the program. Throughout this study, the inquiry partners included district personnel, the principal of the school, the graduation coach, the school counselor, and teachers.

The principal, graduation coach, school counselor, and staff met monthly to interpret data from surveys and student performance and created a plan of action for Hispanic students based on the needs that were identified in the surveys. A Hispanic parent and student also attended the meetings to add input. The individuals joined me in planning parent nights, collecting and disseminating resources for the families, and monitoring the effectiveness of the program. Post-secondary plans were discussed and documented. Data was collected on college acceptance, scholarships awarded, and the percentage of students who enter the workforce after graduation based on the two-year degree they earned while attending the early college.

The parents and students participated in surveys and interviews to gain data pertaining to their experiences thus far in public education, their knowledge of the educational system, and any barriers presented to the families. They also participated in several parent nights to educate families on applying to colleges, financial aid, and scholarship opportunities for all students including those who are undocumented. Students and parents met monthly with the principal, school counselor, graduation coach, and interpreter to monitor progress. District personnel reviewed the data and offered additional suggestions to the principal and staff to provide impartial insight to the implementation of the program. Any additional funding needed to execute the program was also requested from the superintendent. The parents and students participated in focus groups at the end as part of the summative evaluation.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Social Identity is described as an individual's sense of themselves based on their membership in a group (McLeod, 2019). Social class, families, and teams all give a sense of belonging in society (Tajfel et al., 1971). Henri Tajfel suggest that this type of thinking is a natural process of grouping things together and developing the "them" vs "us" way of thinking. As a result, prejudice and racism may develop between cultures (see Figure 5).

The Social Identity Theory leads into the Social Comparison Theory. Leon Festinger introduced the Social Comparison Theory in 1954, which describes how we all compare ourselves with others to make an accurate evaluation of our own self-identity (Festinger, 1954). For a Hispanic student that is growing up in a country that may not be their native country or their parents' native country, there is potential to develop a negative social identity because of comparing themselves to others within their environment (Kesici & Erdogan, 2010). Some

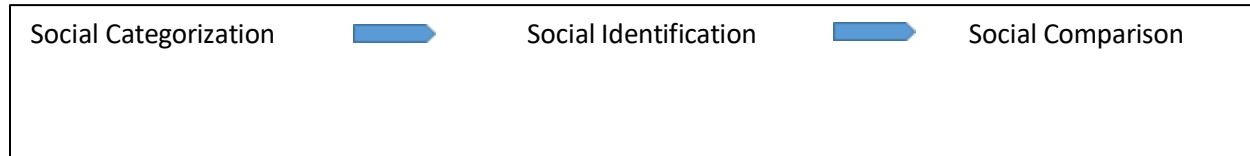


Figure 5. Social Identity Theory.

comparisons can make an individual feel inadequate and less motivated to pursue a goal, while other comparisons could give them the motivation to reach a goal (see Figure 6).

Relative to Social Identify and Social Comparison theories, the theory of Person-Environment Theory suggests that the environment can alter the outcome of one's motivation, behavior, and experience. Within this theory, it is suggested that the home, one's peers, and school, if supportive to the individual, can encourage growth and maturity within the individual student (Holmbeck et al., 2008; see Figure 7). This final theory suggests that despite barriers, the environment could alter a person's motivation. The school system and the support it gives to Hispanic students would serve as the environment to help all students have an equal opportunity to a sound education despite the social barriers that these students face. Each theory played a part in how the inquiry partners and I viewed the study and worked with Hispanic students and families.

Definition of Key Terms

Several key terms were utilized through the study and are defined as follows:

Career and College Promise: qualified high-school-age students in North Carolina have the opportunity to pursue these options, tuition-free, while they are in high school, allowing them to get a jumpstart on their workplace and college preparation (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2022).

Cooperative and Innovative High Schools: including early colleges and other innovative high schools, are small public high schools, usually located on the campus of a university or community college, which expand students' opportunities for educational success through high-quality instructional programming (NCDPI, 2022).

Early College High Schools: an innovative way for high school students to earn both a

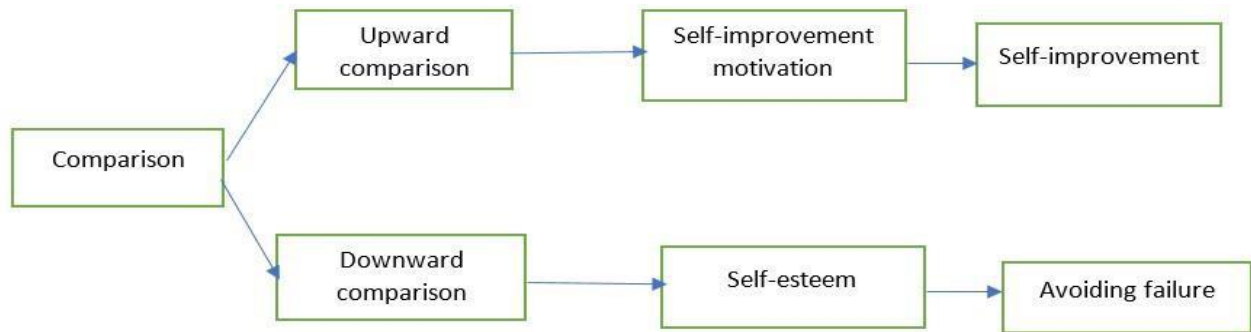


Figure 6. Social Comparison Theory.

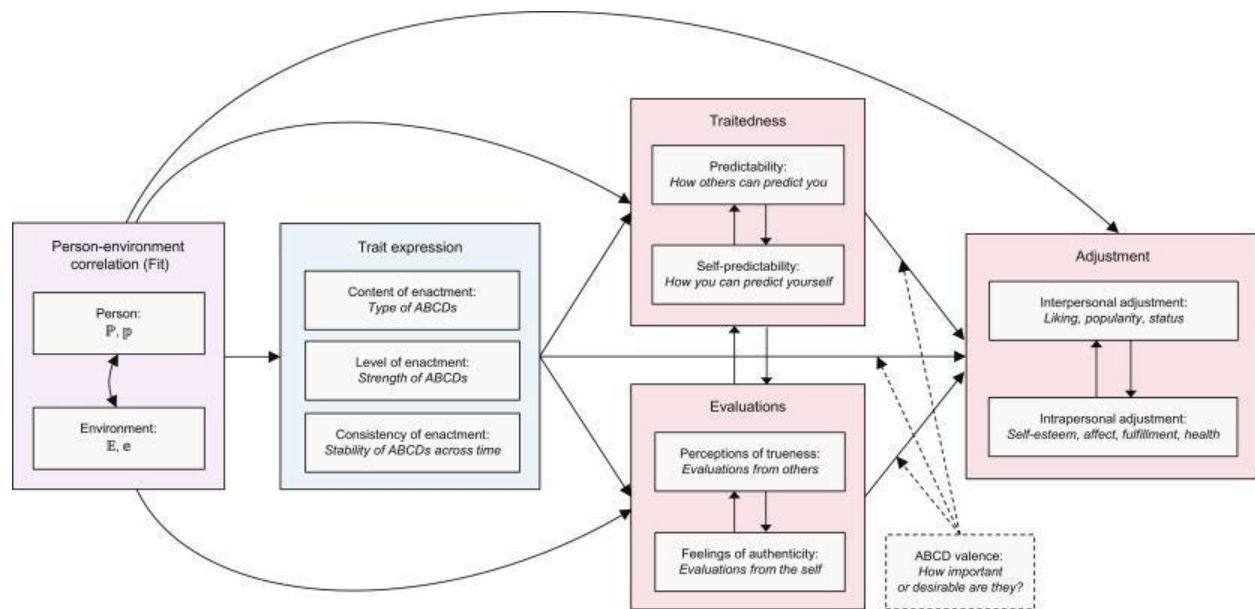


Figure 7. Person-Environment Theory.

high school degree and a two-year associate degree (DiMaria, 2013; Heitin, 2016; Hoffman Senior Advisor, 2015).

Undocumented – Including any student who does not hold legal residency in the United States (Stebbleton & Aleixo, 2015).

Significance of Inquiry

As the Hispanic population continues to grow across America, more of these students are enrolled in public school. These students value education and see it as a way to advance themselves; however, this group of students are still underrepresented in the higher education realm (Pérez, 2012). These students have many challenges that other students do not experience, especially undocumented students. This growing population can be a positive, contributing, and successful portion of the society if given the same opportunities as other students.

The purpose of this study was to give high schools a structured program that can provide support to both Hispanic Americans, documented and undocumented Hispanic immigrant students and their parents. The desired outcome was that Hispanic students will have the necessary resources to help them be successful in pursuing their post-secondary endeavors.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that providing support to Hispanic students and parents during their time in high school will increase the number of students who apply to and are accepted into four-year universities. Since MECHS students are selected through an application process, it is assumed that they value the need to advance past a high school diploma.

Based on the U.S. Census data it is assumed that most of the parents in Hispanic households speak Spanish primarily and more than likely are not bilingual in English. The parents who are highlighted in this study do not speak English and have not graduated from high

school. It was assumed that these barriers may hinder their child's performance in high school because they are not familiar with the resources and opportunities that are available. It was also assumed that all individuals completing surveys and interviews were honest.

Finally, this study assumed that parents who speak English and attended high school and a post-secondary institution are more equipped to guide their child and offer advice that leads to higher achievement. These parents also serve as a role model to their children allowing the students to see themselves in a post-secondary setting and in a certain career. Their experiences are shared in the home and discussed throughout the child's life.

Scope and Delimitation

This study is focused solely on Hispanic students who attend Mac County Early College High School. No other populations were measured. Also, the findings of this study may not be applicable to other races or communities, and potentially not to other types of high schools other than early colleges. Enlightening these students about post-secondary education opportunities such as the college application and scholarship process were the primary measures of the success of the program implementation. The study was intended to provide an insight on the struggles of Hispanic students in rural eastern North Carolina and potential ways the school system could support these students so they can earn a post-secondary degree.

Limitations

The study was limited to only those families at Mac County Early College High School that agreed to participate. The study may be limited due to fear from parents and students of being exposed as undocumented by participating. Another limitation may come in the form of legislation which may discourage some students with regards to post-secondary enrollment as an option, thus hindering the efforts of the inquiry partners.

My positionality as the principal of the school for the last 10 years may have presented a bias. I may have preconceived assumptions based on my experiences. My inquiry partners helped identify and address these areas when they were uncovered.

Significance of Inquiry

Hispanics are the largest minority group in the U.S. public school system making up 27.7% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The Hispanic population at the Mac County Early College makes up 34% of the student population, and they are the largest minority group in the school. Despite the increase in population, the number of students earning a post-secondary education is lower than other ethnic groups when compared nationally and locally (Mac County Community College [MCC], 2021). Due to increasing enrollment, it was the desire of this study for the school to provide a support network for Hispanic parents and students to help more of these students get on a path toward earning a post-secondary degree. Currently schools in the county do not provide full-time interpreters in every school, nor is there a structured support program for Hispanic parents that informs them on the educational process when the students start high school. These have proven to be barriers when it comes to students achieving post-secondary goals (Silver, 2018).

In addition, state and local legislation has hindered students who are undocumented even though the Plyler vs. Doe 1982 Supreme Court case allows undocumented students access to a free public education in K-12. Despite other states allowing undocumented students the same rights as citizens, North Carolina is one state that still requires undocumented students to pay out-of-state tuition. With the median household income of Hispanic families falling below \$30,000, requiring undocumented students to pay out-of-state tuition adds an additional barrier to post-secondary achievement (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

In many cases, even if the student is a citizen, their parents are not. This leads to fear of deportation for families. Hispanic students deal with external stresses that have a negative impact on their educational performance. Providing a support program in the school system can ease their anxieties. There have also been local changes in the county recently that have made Hispanic families feel excluded. English was adopted as the official language in Mac County (Silver, 2018).

Advancing Equity and Social Justice

Through the efforts of providing support to Hispanic students and parents, the school system can attempt to provide equity to all students. Most students of other ethnicities do not have the same barriers as Hispanic students in the educational system. Often teachers do not communicate with Hispanic parents the same way they do English speaking parents due to the language barrier. This program assisted Hispanic families, and it provided resources for teachers so they could build a better relationship with these families. By communicating with Hispanic families, school personnel identified their needs and offered support. To help every student succeed, individualized support is needed for these families. This allowed these students to have the same opportunity as other students when in high school. In addition, schools can inform undocumented students of scholarships that they are eligible for to help them pay for college. They can also inform them about the potential advocacy for a voice in government to change policies like the one that charges undocumented students out-of-state tuition.

Advances in Practice

The desire of this study was to provide a structured support system in a high school setting for Hispanic students and parents. It also educated school personnel on the barriers that

Hispanic families face and how the school system can provide aid, so the students have equal access to post-secondary opportunities. The support began as soon as the students entered high school through individual meetings with the parents, students, an interpreter, teachers, and administration. Parents were educated on course requirements, grade point average, the college application process, scholarships, and other resources that are available in the county. This support program served as a guide for school personnel in other high schools so this group of students can have equal access to post-secondary education.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the study and explained the problem of practice and the purpose. Chapter 2 was a review of the literature in relation to this topic. Chapter 3 consisted of the procedures used during this study. Chapter 4 was a collection and analysis of the data. Finally, Chapter 5 summarized the study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this literature review, five primary areas were examined that focused on a comprehensive approach to the barriers that documented and undocumented Hispanic students face in public education in rural eastern North Carolina. These areas included communication, parental awareness of the educational system, political voice, and federal and state legislation. Awareness of these barriers assisted school personnel in providing support that could benefit the growing Hispanic population in rural eastern North Carolina. In addition, three types of parental involvement for high school students were reviewed, and which type produced the greatest academic achievement with Hispanic families was determined.

This chapter provided an understanding of recent restrictions from federal and state legislation for undocumented students over the past several decades. Even though federal legislation has allowed undocumented students to receive a K-12 education since 1986, access to higher education in North Carolina is limited due to tuition requirements (Pérez, 2012). This chapter addressed Hispanic students who came to the United States as illegal immigrants at an early age and the emotional struggles they faced. The chapter revealed the issues faced by documented students, and how they are impacted by legislation that affects their parents who are of illegal status. In addition to the legal barriers, Hispanics face other challenges that add additional stress to these students and hinder their success in education.

This chapter began by examining how this country has responded to immigration in the past and the legislation that is centered on today's immigration concerns. Despite efforts of some to support Hispanics, most federal and state legislation that has been passed over the last few decades has restricted these immigrants.

History of Immigrants in the United States

The history of the United States, a nation of immigrants, is unfortunately a history of xenophobia. Even though the United States leads the world in accepting the most immigrants and refugees, Americans have been cautious of almost every group of immigrants (Lee, 2019). Anti-immigrant sentiment dates back to the founding of the nation. Benjamin Franklin, one of the nation's greatest minds and a Founding Father, was anti-German, as were many early Americans (Weaver, 1957). By the mid-19th Century, the penchant for anti-immigrant sentiment was turned towards Irish and Chinese immigrants. By the end of the 19th Century, Chinese, Japanese and other Asian immigrants were targeted by federal legislation intended to keep them from entering the country (Lee, 2019). With legislation in place, the national focus was directed towards eastern and southern Europeans – primarily because of their religion. These immigrants were Catholic and Jewish. They were not White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs). Federal legislation would severely limit their entry into the country by the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the National Origins Act of 1924 (Lee, 2019). By the mid-20th century, we shifted our anti-immigrant views towards the Koreans and Vietnamese throughout the decades of 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. By the 1980s, the US looked south of our borders towards Hispanics entering the nation (Lee, 2019).

Federal and State Legislation

The Immigration and Nationality Act was passed in 1965, which eliminated the quota system and encouraged family reunification (Lauret, 2016; Rubinstein-Avila, 2017). As a result, there was an influx of immigrants over the next three decades. Millions of immigrants arrived by the 1980's and an estimated 800,000 came to the country illegally (Durand et al., 2001). With this influx of immigrants, legislatures passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

This law placed sanctions on employers of illegal immigrants and tightened border control. There was also a push by some states to limit access to education for undocumented students (Durand et al., 2001). In 1975, Texas passed a law that allowed schools to charge tuition for undocumented students (Olivas, 2012).

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) fought against this law by using similar methods that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) used with *Brown v. Board of Education* (Olivas, 2012). The Supreme Court Case *Plyler v. Doe* 1982 ruled that school systems could not withhold funding for undocumented students because it violated the Fourteenth Amendment. As a result, undocumented students were able to receive a K-12 education despite their legal status. The Equal Protection Clause gives rights to both legal and illegal aliens. The court ruled that providing public education to some and not all would establish class distinction. Since this ruling, the Hispanic population continued to increase and most of the legislation that has passed on the federal and state levels have become more restrictive to immigrants directly and indirectly.

The federal government attempted to protect the rights of alien minors. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM) was first introduced in Congress 2001 but did not pass both houses. It was again introduced in 2010 and 2011 but both attempts also failed. This act, if passed, would give illegal minors legal documentation and a pathway to obtain citizenship (Bozick & Miller, 2014; García, 2004).

In 2012, The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was introduced by President Barack Obama (Gamez et al., 2017). This immigration policy allowed illegal immigrants who have lived in the United States since 2007 and were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012, the right to apply for DACA status. DACA only gave illegal aliens documentation

to work. It did not establish a pathway to citizenship, and it did not pertain to financial aid or scholarships (Gamez et al., 2017).

Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) was developed in 2014 to give parents of United States citizens and those who hold a green card protection from deportation. Twenty-six states sued the federal government which in turn blocked the attempt. Legislation that would benefit undocumented immigrants continues to fall short with protecting Hispanics. The legislation that has passed has only blocked the advancement.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) created stricter punishment for illegal immigrants in the United States. It focused on illegal immigration at the border, in the workplace, in education, and the criminal justice system. This law limited the access to state benefits for undocumented students (Banks, 2013; Darolia & Potochnick, 2015).

The IIRIRA law states that undocumented aliens “shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a State (or a political subdivision) for any post-secondary education benefit unless a citizen or national in the United States is eligible for such a benefit. . .” (Pub. L. 104–208, div. C, title V, § 505, Sept. 30, 1996, 110 Stat. 3009–672.) Relying on a strict interpretation of the IIRIRA, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) passed a resolution that would deny undocumented students access to their institutions in 2008.

Research shows that one in four children living in the United States is an immigrant, a refugee, or the child of an immigrant (Rubenstein-Avila, 2017). Several states across the country have passed laws allowing undocumented or DACA students the ability to attend college, apply for financial aid, and pay in-state tuition. Currently, 19 states allow in-state tuition rates for undocumented students: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas,

Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, and Washington. Seventeen states allow this through state legislation while two, Oklahoma and Rhode Island, do so through a board of regents. Seven states allow undocumented students to receive state financial aid: California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. All other states restrict access to educational opportunities. Alabama and South Carolina prohibit undocumented students from even enrolling at any higher education public institution (see Figure 8).

North Carolina does not allow undocumented students nor DACA students the right to pay in-state tuition. Therefore, to attend a four-year institution, these students must pay on average \$6,000.00 more each year to attend the institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). This financial burden causes many undocumented students to never pursue a post-secondary degree (Silver, 2018). In April 2021, Senate Bill 672 was filed which would grant DACA recipients in-state tuition to schools within the North Carolina University System; however, the bill did not make it to crossover by the May 13th deadline (DACA Recipients/In-State Tuition Senate Bill 672, 2021).

Not only is legislation that pertains to education a constant focus, but other legislation also directly affects the lives of Hispanic students. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 287-G Program deputized local law enforcement agencies to enforce immigration law (Silver, 2018). Across the state, Hispanic families heard stories about how illegal immigrants were being deported. Even documented students lived in fear that their parents would be deported due to their illegal status (Silver, 2018). In 2008, three children were left alone in a car when their mother was taken into custody for being illegal. The children were left with another adult, but they fled the scene because they were fearful that they too would be deported (Silver,

Comprehensive Access	Accessible	Limited	Limited to DACA	No State Policy	Restrictive	Prohibitive Enrollment
California	Florida	Arizona	Arkansas	Alaska	Missouri	Alabama
Colorado	Kansas	Delaware	Idaho	Louisiana	New Hampshire	Georgia
Connecticut	Kentucky	Iowa	Indiana	Montana	North Carolina	South Carolina
District of Columbia	Nebraska	Michigan	Maine	North Dakota	Tennessee	
Hawaii		Pennsylvania	Massachusetts	Puerto Rico	Wisconsin	
Illinois			Mississippi	South Dakota		
Maryland			Ohio	Vermont		
Minnesota				West Virginia		
Nevada				Wyoming		
New Jersey						
New Mexico						
New York						
Oklahoma						
Oregon						
Rhode Island						
Texas						
Utah						
Virginia						
Washington						
18 states and D.C.	4 states	5 states	7 states	8 states and P.R.	5 states	3 states

State Class Definitions

- **Comprehensive Access:** Policies provide statewide access to in-state tuition and some state financial aid or scholarships for the state's resident DACA recipients and undocumented students.
- **Accessible:** Policies provide statewide access to in-state tuition for the state's undocumented students, including DACA recipients.
- **Limited:** Policies provide the state's undocumented students, including DACA recipients, with access to in-state or reduced tuition in at least some public institutions.
- **Limited to DACA:** Policies provide the state's DACA recipients with access to in-state tuition in at least some public institutions.
- **No State Policy:** No known policies on access to in-state tuition or state financial aid for the state's DACA recipients and undocumented students.
- **Restrictive:** Policies actively bar access to in-state tuition or state financial aid for the state's undocumented students, including DACA recipients.
- **Prohibitive Enrollment:** Policies actively bar enrollment in all or certain public institutions for the state's undocumented students, but may still allow DACA recipients to enroll.

Figure 8. Tuition and financial aid equity for undocumented students.

2018). This case was reported by the ACLU, and it outlined the consequences of the 287-G program.

The negative rhetoric about illegal immigrants has been vocalized in many counties by elected officials in North Carolina. The *Raleigh News and Observer* quoted Sheriff Terry Johnson of Alamance County saying, “Mexican values are a lot different- their morals -than what we have here. In Mexico, there is nothing wrong with having sex with a 12-13-year-old girl... They do a lot of drinking down in Mexico” (Silver, 2018). Despite these comments, Sheriff Johnson remained in office and his comments did not jeopardize his career. Sheriff Steve Brizzell of Johnston County referred to Mexicans as “trashy” and said, “All they do is work and make love” (Silver, 2018). His statements were later addressed by the ACLU. He wrote a written apology, but he remained in office and was reelected in 2010 and 2014. In addition, Mac County made English the official language for the county (Silver, 2018). As a result, the county does not have to provide Spanish versions of governmental documents. The fact that elected officials can express their feelings openly that are clearly racist to this group of people without fear of not being reelected clearly reveals the level of acceptance in the region for negative expression and sentiment towards Hispanic families (Silver, 2018).

Most recently, a member of the Mac County School Board presented a policy to change the way curriculums were adopted within the county. The policy was accompanied by a document providing reasons for the proposed modifications. It read, “Many of the citizens in Mac County NC do not support Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Social Emotional Learning, and Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, and Queer+ indoctrination in our schools. Some of the NCDPI “approved curriculums” promote these social principles. These social issues are a distraction, especially in elementary grades, and do nothing to enhance the learning of basic reading, writing,

and math”. When local authorities overtly resist initiatives promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, it conveys an adverse message within the community.

Documented students also experience barriers associated with state and local legislation. Many of the students are children of illegal immigrants. Some even have siblings that are undocumented. Students with illegal immigrant parents live in fear that their parents could be deported. As a result, their parents are hesitant to get involved in their child’s educational career (Silver, 2018).

In 1994, a lawsuit was filed by five school districts in the state of North Carolina due to inequities in funding, known as the Leandro Case. The state’s supreme court ruled in 1997 and 2004 that the state is constitutionally bound to ensure that all students have access to a sound education. The state was hereby ordered to provide an equitable education for all students by increasing funds (Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2022).

North Carolina Public First compared the current funding with the amount needed to provide proper support for students based on effective implementation of the Leandro Case. This study showed the funding was still not up to the standards based on the ruling. According to the study, English Learner students in Mac County have the highest imbalance of actual funding as compared to the needed funding to provide equity with a 219% discrepancy (see Figure 9).

Effective Communication with Hispanic Families

Based on the 2019 United States Census, Hispanics make up 18% of the U.S. population. The South made up the largest percentage increase of Hispanic population with 26% growth compared to other regions (Pew Research Center, 2021) (see Figures 10, 11 and 12).

In Mac County, there are only six English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers for the entire county. One ESL teacher that serves three of the high schools only speaks Japanese.

Estimated Leandro Budget Impact	Changes in State Funding*				Additional Resources**	
	Current Funding	Funding Under Leandro	Change	Percent Change		
Children with Disabilities	4.2M	6.5M	2.3M	55%	Teachers	57
Limited English Proficiency	347.5K	1.1M	761.5K	219%	Teacher Assistant	34
At-Risk and Disadvantaged	1.9M	5.8M	3.9M	206%	Psychologists	6
Classroom Supplies and Textbooks	390.4K	936.6K	546.2K	140%	Counselors	18
Instructional Support Personnel***	2.1M	5.6M	3.4M	160%	Social Workers	15
Teacher Assistants	1.7M	2.4M	764.0K	46%	Nurses	9
Other Funding	32.2M	35.8M	3.6M	11%	Bus Drivers	3
					Other Personnel	48
Total State Funding	42.8M	58.1M	15.3M	36%	Professional Development \$/Educator	\$1,241
					\$/Student - Supplies, Texts and Tech	\$176
State Funding per Student	\$6,897	\$9,359	\$2,461	36%		

* Estimates for funding changes do not include additional amounts for anticipated pay increases. Salary increases will increase the value of allotments that may support personnel.

** Additional resources represent an example of the resources the district could add based on proposed changes in funding under Leandro. Actual changes in resources will be determined by the local board.

*** Instructional support personnel includes nurses, psychologists, counselors, social workers, and media specialists.

Figure 9. Estimated funding for Mac County based on the Leandro Case.

Latino Population Growth in the United States, 2010-2019
Growth Rate by County

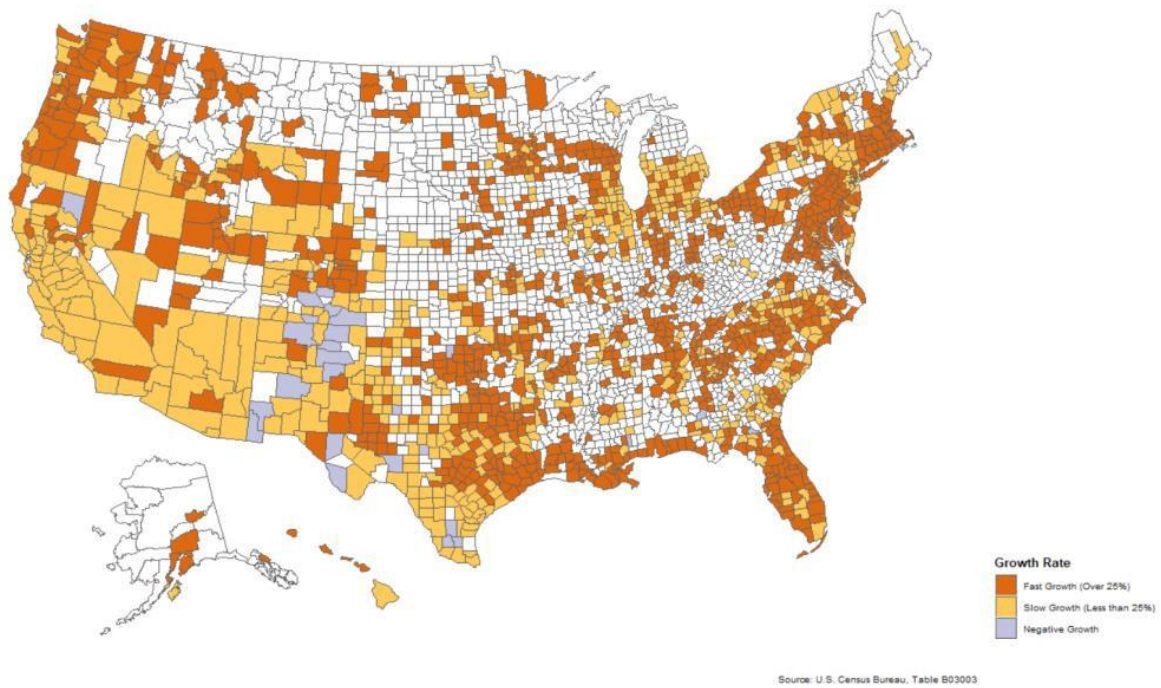
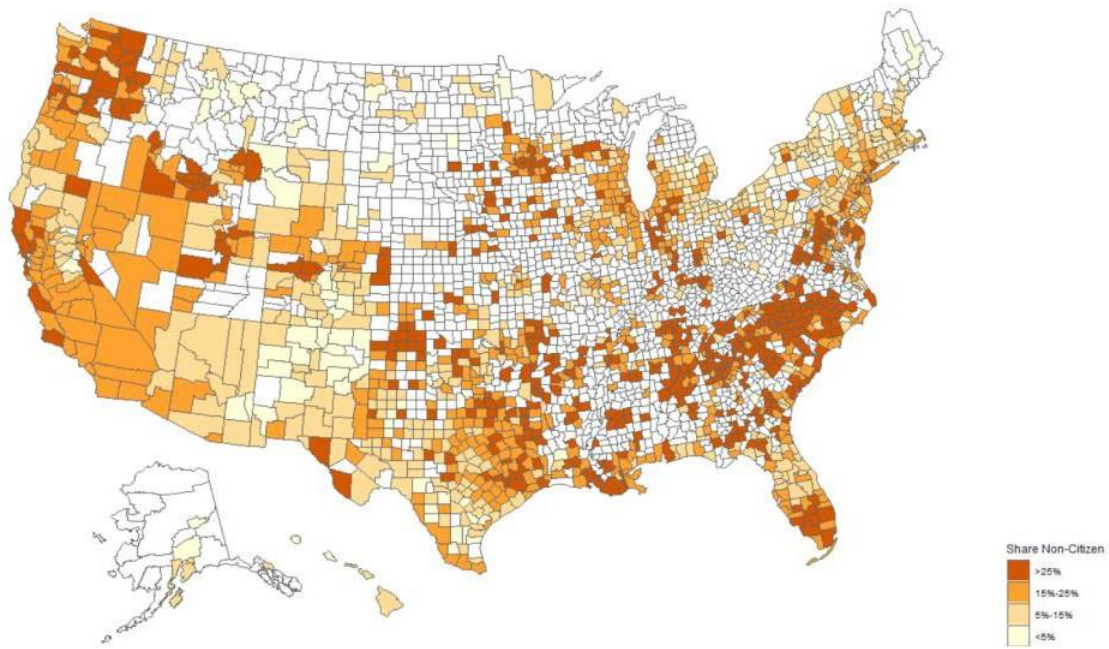


Figure 10. Hispanic population growth in the United States.

Latino Non-Citizen Population, 2019
Percent of Foreign-Born, Non-Naturalized Latinos



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Table B05003I

Figure 11. Hispanic non-citizen population.

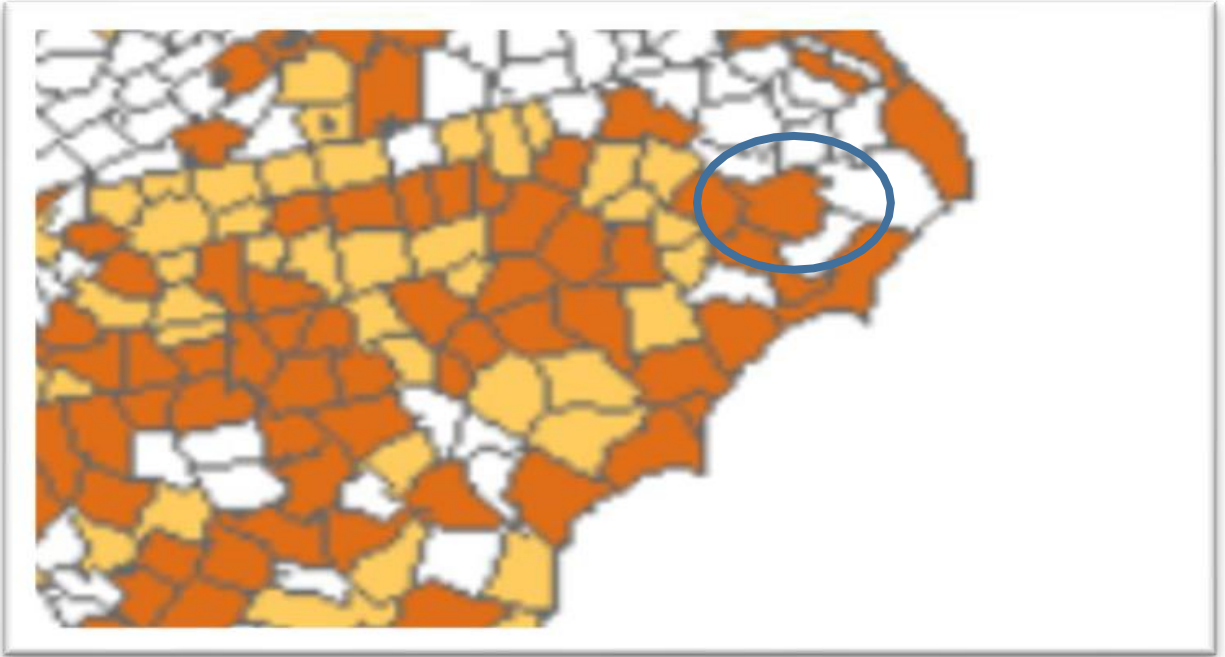


Figure 12. Hispanic growth in Mac County.

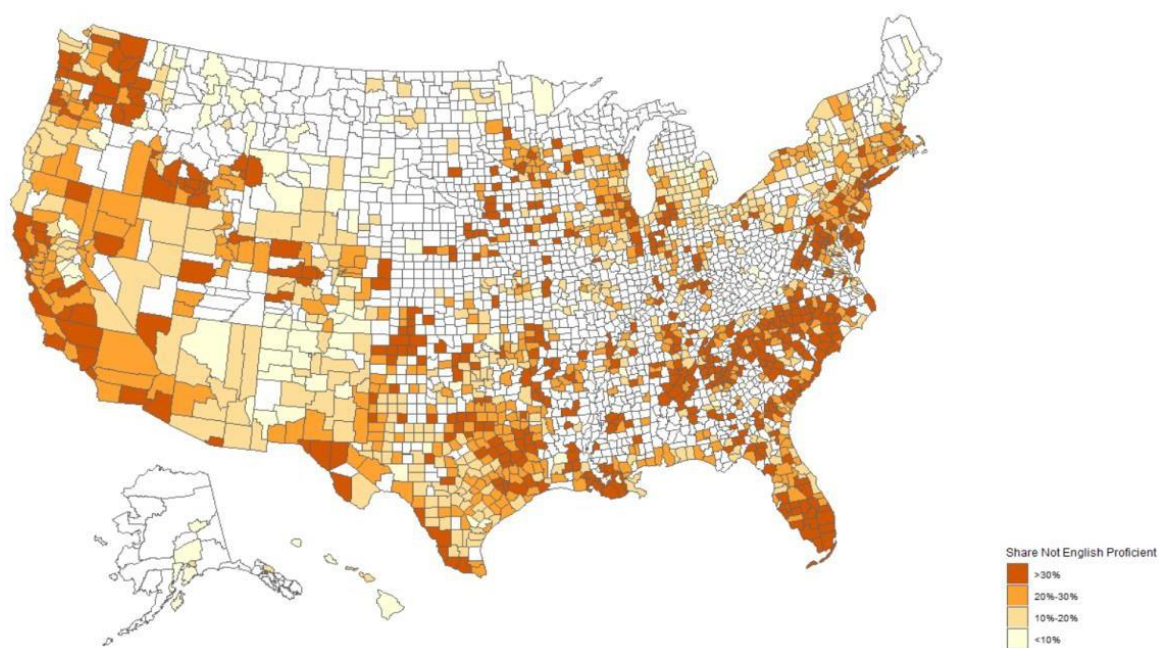
Principals and teachers struggle with communicating with parents who do not speak English. Therefore, Hispanic parents often bring their own interpreters which can sometime cause information to be shared inaccurately. Other professions have found the same to be true with informal interpreters. When family members and friends are used, the interpreter will often add their own bias while interpreting (Heitkamp & Gunderman, 2021). This is especially a concern in the medical field. With an interpreter present, a woman gave consent for a tubal ligation after the birth of her fifth child, not utterly understanding the meaning. During a follow-up visit, she asked the doctor when she could start trying for her next child (Heitkamp & Gunderman, 2021). The lack of proper translation and communication led to this misunderstanding. When teachers and principals work with Hispanic families they too are guiding them in making life changing decisions about their child's education and future, so proper and accurate communication is imperative.

This issue of communication barriers is even more taxing for Hispanic parents who have children in the Exceptional Children's program. One study revealed that parents feel overwhelmed with all the information that they are given during an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting, even with an interpreter. The parents felt the teacher controlled the meeting and that they were given too much information at once to comprehend (Newman, 2019). There are lower dropout rates when the language barrier is not present with Hispanic students and parents when they communicate with school administrators (Obinna & Ohanian, 2020). The growth in the Hispanic population has led to an increase in non-English speaking households which supports the need for professional interpreters in schools (see Figure 13).

Educational Attainment by Parents

The educational attainment of Hispanic parents is extremely low in Mac County.

Latino English Proficiency, 2019
Share of Latinos, Native & Foreign Born, Speaking English Less Than Very Well



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Table B10005f

Figure 13. Hispanic English proficiency.

Specifically, at Mac County Early College, 43% of Hispanic parents never graduated high school based on the MECHS student survey. The survey also revealed a lack of experience with the educational system. Ninety percent (90%) did not know how to assist their children with college applications or scholarships since they did not go to college.

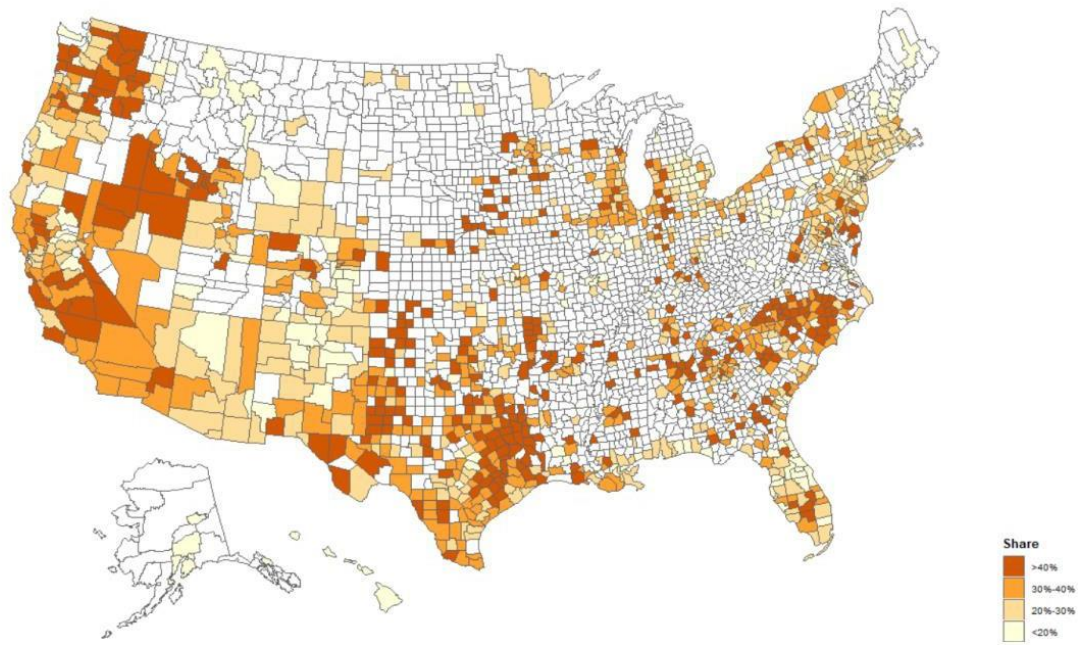
A mother's educational attainment has a direct impact on a child's achievement according to psychologist Michael Martinez. He explained the informal education given to children whose mothers have obtained a higher education (Gándara & Contreras, 2020). Examples of informal education consist of reading with their children, requiring them to explain ideas, and by encouraging exploration of the child's environment (Gándara & Contreras, 2020). However, Hispanic mothers have the lowest level of educational achievement when compared to other groups. Even if the mother obtained a higher education degree, the mother would need to be fluent in English to help prepare a Hispanic child to be successful in an English-speaking nation (see Figure 14).

There are distinct gaps between White and Hispanic parents in education, median household income, and poverty level. Mac County is in the highest range for the educational gap and poverty levels. When restrictive legislation, such as paying out-of-state tuition, is added to these issues, the ability for Hispanic students to move out of poverty is almost impossible (see Figures 15, 16, and 17).

Political Voice of Hispanics

Since 2009, the ethnic diversity in Congress has grown, but the percentage of White voting members is still higher compared to the percentage of Whites in the overall United States population. The Black and Native Americans have a comparison population and representative percentage; however, Hispanics in the United States only account for 9% in the House of

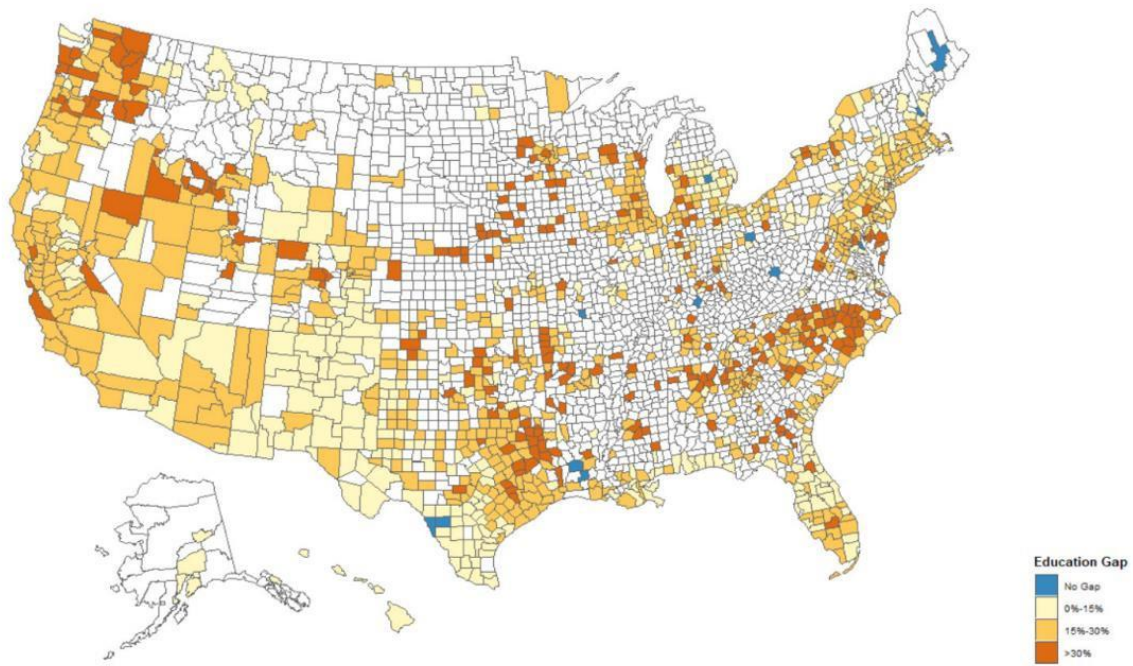
Latino Educational Attainment, 2019
Share of Latinos with Less than a High School Degree by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Table C150021

Figure 14. Educational attainment of Hispanic parents.

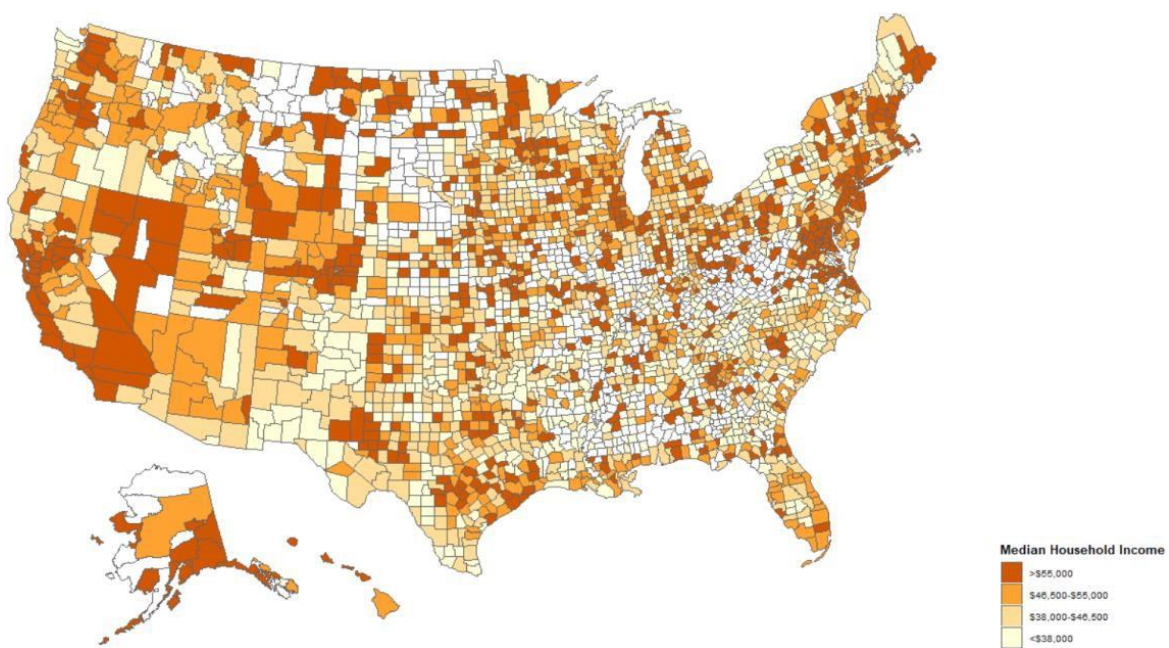
Education Gap, 2019
White-Latino Gap in Share with Less than a High School Degree by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Table C150021 & C15002A

Figure 15. Educational gap.

Latino Median Household Income in the United States, 2012-2019
Median Household Income by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Table B190131

Figure 16. Hispanic median household income in the United States.

Latinos in Poverty, 2019
Share of Latinos below the Federal Poverty Level by County

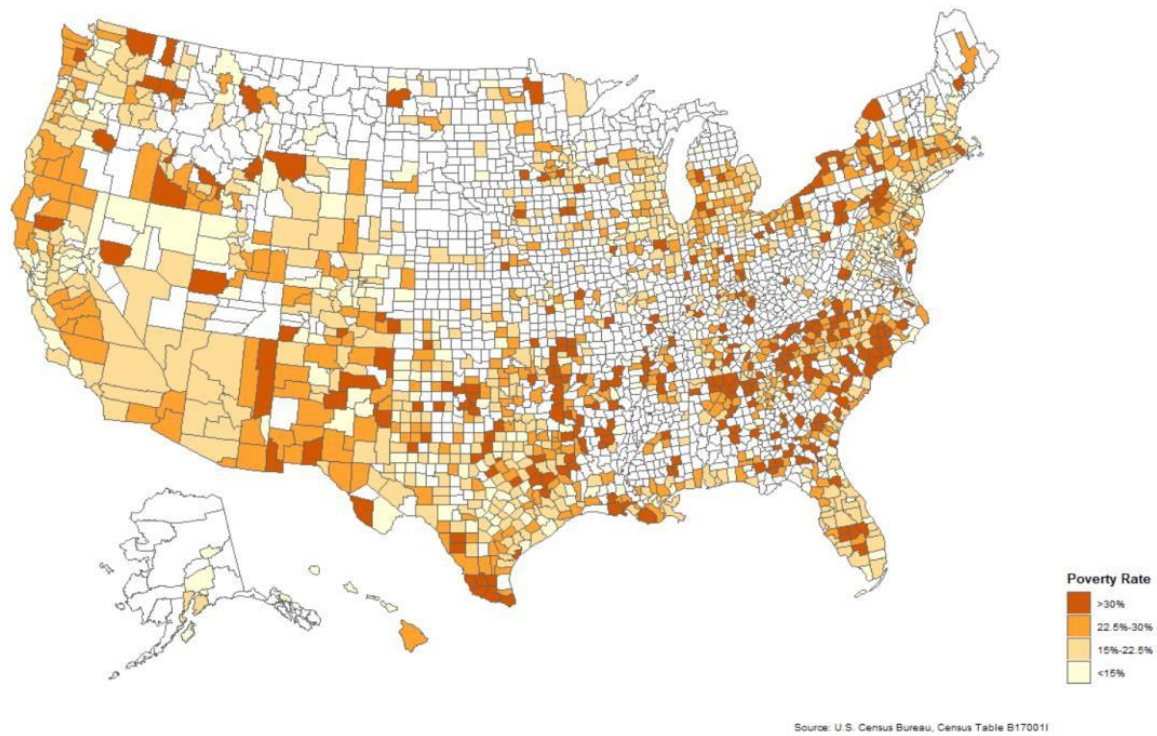


Figure 17. Hispanic in poverty.

Representatives when they make up 19% of the total population. In the United States Senate, six senators are Hispanic (Pew Research Center, 2021; see Figure 18).

Even though the country has experienced growth in our national government with lawmakers who identify with the Hispanic population, the same is not true with many state and local lawmakers. In North Carolina, only one representative in the Generally Assembly is of Hispanic descent. In many rural counties in eastern North Carolina, this group does not have any representatives on local boards representing their ethnic group. There are also no representatives of Hispanic decent in Mac County on the local boards including the county commissions, board of education, or city councils.

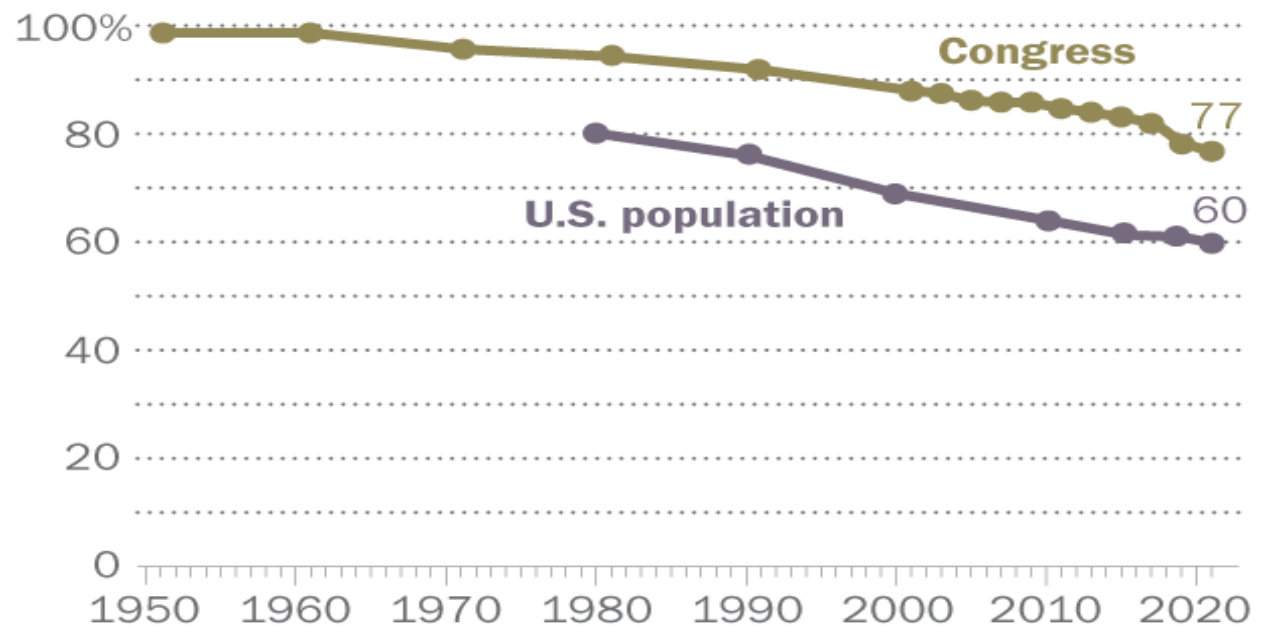
Not only is there a low percentage with elected officials, but many Hispanics do not vote in elections. In Mac County, 463 Hispanic residents are registered to vote. In the last election, only 265 Hispanic constituents cast a vote (North Carolina Board of Elections Statistics, 2021). To provide a more equitable education for Hispanic students, community organizations must encourage Hispanics to vote in elections and seek positions on local boards, so they can educate others about the struggles that are faced by this minority group. It is vital for this group to have a voice in the decisions and policies that are adopted by lawmakers (Espinoza-Herold & González -Carriedo, 2017).

History and Impact of Early Colleges

The first early college was established in 2002 in Texas (DiMaria, 2013; Locke et al., 2014). This model was founded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Haxton et al., 2016; Ongaga, 2010; Sparks, 2013). The early college model was set up to allow students to take high school and college courses. Students graduate with a high school diploma and a two-year associate degree tuition free. This model has allowed the opportunity for students who would not

White Americans make up larger share of Congress than of U.S. population

% White of ...



Note: Nonvoting delegates and commissioners are excluded. Historical data on the makeup of Congress reflects composition on session's first day; for 2021, data reflects members of Congress seated as of Jan. 26, 2021. For 1980 and 1990 population figures, White Americans include only non-Hispanics. For 2000 and later, White Americans include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race.

Source: Congressional Research Service, CQ Roll Call, Brookings Institution, Census Bureau population figures.

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Figure 18. Demographics of Congress.

otherwise have the financial means to receive a higher education (DiMaria, 2013; Heitin, 2016; Hoffman Senior Advisor, 2015). Early colleges target students who are at risk of dropping out of school, first-generation college students, and those from low socioeconomic status (DiMaria, 2013; Locke et al., 2014; Webb & Gerwin, 2014). Over 40% of early college students are Hispanic and 60% are from low socio-economic households (DiMaria, 2013; Ongaga, 2010). The early college model was also established on the principles of rigor, relevance, and relationships (DiMaria, 2013; Ongaga, 2010).

One study revealed that students who attend early colleges had a higher rate of graduating from high school, enrolling in post-secondary education, and received credentials from higher education institutions (Outlaw, 2017). For many Hispanic students, they see the early college option as their only way to obtain credentials after high school (see Figure 19).

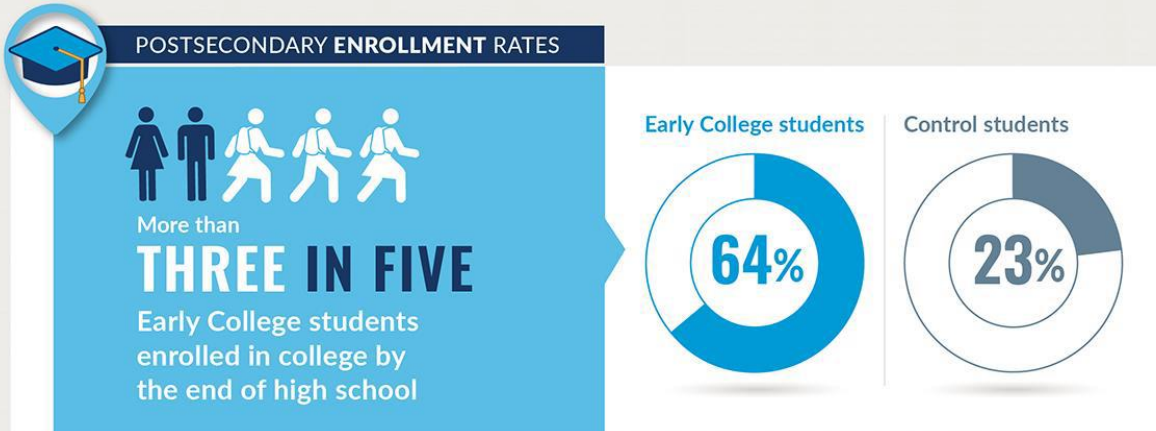
Educating parents on the resources that are available is key to supporting Hispanic students. Students spend a substantial amount of time with teachers and school personnel, and they often look to educators for guidance on how to be successful after high school graduation, which is especially true for undocumented students (Enriquez, 2011; Ruth, 2018; Trivette & English, 2017; Woodruff, 2013). Trust must be established with the students so they can leverage the school as a reliable resource that will help them be successful (Lauby, 2017). Being knowledgeable of scholarship opportunities for undocumented students and those of low socioeconomic status is essential for meeting the needs of Hispanic students.

Theoretical Framework

There are three theories that were used in this study: Social Identity Theory, Social Comparison Theory, and Person-Environment Theory. The Social Identity and Social Comparison Theories describe the external factors that Hispanic students encounter which are

How Did Early College High Schools Affect Students' Postsecondary Outcomes?

Early College students were significantly more likely than control students to enroll in college and earn a college degree within six years after expected high school graduation.



SOURCE: *Early College, Continued Success: Longer-Term Impact of Early College High Schools* (2019)

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Figure 19. Post-secondary outcomes for Early College students.

out of their immediate control. The focus of this study relies heavily on the Person-Environment Theory, which hypothesizes that a student's home, peers, and school could have a positive impact on their future success despite any perceived negative societal stereotypes.

Social Identity Theory

Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory describes how individuals naturally group things together. As a result, stereotypes are created among groups of people. This can be seen in many facets of society. When we assign each other to a category, then that tells us things about the individual. There are both positive and negative stereotypes (Tajfel et al., 1971).

As a Hispanic student growing up in America, other ethnic groups stereotype these students as all being undocumented, or if they are citizens, it is only because their parents crossed the border illegally. Unfortunately, what students hear on the news and at home regarding Hispanic students is often in a negative light. Many are painted as criminals or a drain on the economy (Silver, 2018).

Social Comparison Theory

Once an individual develops their social identity, they then compare themselves with others. This could be within their social group or outside their group. In a school setting, this is often an obstacle that Hispanic students face in public education. Their peers in other ethnic groups do not have the constant worry of family members being deported and separated permanently from their closest kin (Silver, 2018). The parents of Caucasian and African American students have a higher percentage of having earned a higher education than Hispanic parents. In North Carolina, undocumented students must pay out-of-state tuition even though they were allowed to obtain a high school degree. As Hispanic students become aware of the

differences between them and students of other ethnic backgrounds, they may become discouraged and may not see a way to overcome these obstacles.

Person-Environment Theory

The Person-Environment Theory focuses on the relationship between individuals and their environment and how they both influence each other. The capacity of this relationship can affect one's motivation, behavior, and overall wellbeing. Several negative changes occur during transitional periods for students such as middle school to high school and high school to college. An increase in academic failure and decrease in self-esteem often happens during these transitional periods. Providing a support structure in the school setting for Hispanic parents and their students would greatly assist them in promoting positive motivation and in breaking down many of the barriers that these students face (Holmbeck et al., 2008).

Impact of Parental Support Research

Parent involvement tends to decline as students get older but is still an integral part of student achievement according to a 2018 study by Elizabeth Day. Three types of parental support were described in the study: Home-based support, school-based involvement, and academic socialization. Home-based support was described as how parents enforce rules on how their child spends their time. School-based involvement deals with volunteering at the school in events such as parent-teacher organizations. Academic socialization involves parents communicating about their own values of education and the career path their student should take (Day & Dotterer, 2018).

This study found that for Hispanic families, parents who focus on academic socialization have greater achievement with their students than families who rely on home-based support or school-based involvement. This type of support provided by the parents can help sway their

child's academic success and development (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Research shows that more parental involvement is associated with higher student achievement (Gordon & Cui, 2012; Stewart, 2008; Toldson & Lemmons, 2013; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Summary

In Chapter 2, the history of America's immigration was examined, as well as laws that impact Hispanic students in the public school system. The impact of a lack of political representation in the national, state, and local levels for Hispanics was reviewed. The barriers to effective communication between school personnel and Hispanic households was examined, as well as the impact of limited parental educational achievement on their students' success in school. Finally, the theories of Social Identity, Social Comparison, and Person-Environment Theories were defined to support the study. In Chapter 3, the program to be established from this study was explained and outlined for future implementation.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS OF INQUIRY

This inquiry aimed to provide knowledge and support to the Hispanic population in a rural high school setting in Mac County, North Carolina. Building a student support program for Hispanics proved helpful to their success. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2018), Mac County is experiencing the fastest growth in the Hispanic populations compared to other regions in the area with a 25% increase. Over 30% are not English proficient in the county, and over 40% of the Hispanic population did not graduate from high school. The median household income of Hispanic families is less than \$38,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

With the lack of experience in the educational system, language barriers, and low socioeconomic status, some Hispanic families would benefit from more support in the public school system. Administrators and school counselors are better able to effectively assist Hispanic students and families in securing a college education by sharing information about legislation and resources that are available and by providing appropriate support services. The purpose of this study was to build a model of support for Hispanic students at Mac County Early College to increase the number of Hispanic students attending post-secondary education. The study was conducted in three phases by performing a case study of the support previously given to Hispanic students and how the development and implementation of a support program in high school will aid these students within the school. The following sections discuss inquiry design and rationale, procedures, and instrumentation.

Guiding Questions

To examine the effects of the model support program for Hispanic students in a rural high school setting, I collected data to answer the following questions that guide this study:

- What barriers have impacted the educational experiences of Hispanic families?

- What specific components of the support program were most helpful?
- How do parents and students perceive the support program?

This study served to document the barriers that Hispanic families face in Mac County to gain a better understanding of what kind of support is needed from the school system. The first guided question required quantitative and qualitative data to indicate the level of support that Hispanic students have received prior to implementation. This data was used to identify target areas for the support program. The last two guiding questions examined how effective the program was and identified areas to improve the support given to Hispanic families to further assist this group of students.

Inquiry Design and Rationale

The Hispanic population in rural eastern North Carolina and across the country is increasing faster than any other minority group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Even though the Supreme Court Case Plyler v. Doe supports the provision of Hispanic students access to K-12 public education no matter their citizenship status, Hispanic students still face barriers in the educational system that other students do not encounter. This study will identify the specific barriers that Hispanic students at MECHS face in public education and how the Person-Environment Theory can impact these hurdles.

The three components of this theory include the home, peer, and school. This theory is best suited for this study because the school personnel can have an influence in all three areas. The educators can create a culture where all ethnicities feel welcomed and supported by implementing strategies and processes where peers support each other in the educational setting. For example, two MECHS Hispanic freshman students in 2022 do not speak fluent English and struggle with communicating with their teachers. After learning about these students and their

struggles, 15 bilingual upperclassmen developed a plan to assist these students by creating a weekly schedule to have at least one student present in each of their classes to interpret educational content. Furthermore, the educators support the parents by providing multilanguage educational materials and educating the parents on resources and career pathways that will advance their child.

An action research, mixed methods approach was used. The action research approach was best suited for this study because it offers a process that can change current conditions in an educational environment by educators working together to improve their practices (Mertler, 2022). The mixed methods design was used because I collected both quantitative and qualitative data during this case study. I used Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles of improvement through three phases (Langley et al., 2009). For data collection, I administered surveys, interviewed students, and conducted a focus group with Hispanic parents to obtain the data. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I worked with my inquiry partners to develop and carryout out an implementation plan to better support this subgroup of students. The final phase consisted of evaluating the effectiveness of the support program to identify areas that may need adjustments.

I used three phases during my study. Within each phase, I implemented the Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles. Each cycle consisted of these four stages: planning, doing, studying, and acting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The phases were important because they provided a clear structure of how the study would be organized. They also promoted continuous improvement of the program implementation. Phase 1 consisted of collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the Hispanic families at MECHS. Phase 2 was the implementation of the program. The final phase included the analysis of the program's effectiveness.

Phase 1

The first phase of the inquiry design consisted of collecting quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a baseline of information from Hispanic students and parents. A demographic survey was administered to all students at the school to learn about their post-secondary plans, the highest educational achievement by a parent, and the primary language spoken in the home. I also determined the socioeconomic status of each family. Students reported their ethnicity in the survey to give me and the inquiry partners the ability to sort the data. Administering the survey to all students schoolwide ensured that the Hispanic subgroup of students did not feel targeted. The data was useful when disaggregated and comparing students of other ethnic groups.

Qualitative data from interviews was collected during the first phase. Two groups participated: Hispanic students and Hispanic parents. I conducted interviews with 5 students. I also conducted a focus group with parents. Both groups answered questions designed by the inquiry partners to get a better understanding of the past experiences that Hispanic parents and students have encountered with teachers and administrators and their feelings towards the sense of support from the school system.

This process gave me a better understanding of how the Hispanic parents and students felt about their involvement in the public education system which included both the elements that are and are not currently in practice. Based upon analysis of the interview and focus group data, it was expected that I would uncover areas that quantitative data alone would not identify. It was also expected that citizenship status would be disclosed during the interviews with students or the parent focus group. The instrumentation was piloted in the fall of 2022 to test the adequacy of the survey, interview questions, and focus group questions (see Appendix F). I piloted the study with two former parents and students who attended MECHS. I was also able to test the interview

and focus questions to ensure that responses in fact would help address the guiding questions of this study.

Phase 2

The second phase consisted of reviewing other similar programs that have been successful and taking key elements from these programs to assist with the plan design by the inquiry team. The inquiry team's goal was the development and implementation of a support program that was based on the needs learned from the qualitative and quantitative data collected in Phase 1. The design included the goals, alignment to study, timeline, formative data collection, and summative data collection (see Table 1). This included a full-time interpreter, hosting parent sessions specifically for Hispanic families, taking students on college visits, and assisting them with the college application process. The development and implementation of the program was evaluated in Phase 3.

Phase 3

The final phase of this action research, mixed methods study included the analysis of the effectiveness of the program. Surveys were administered to participants to reveal if the program was successful. It also provided details on how the program could be improved in the future.

Inquiry Partners

For there to be a significant impact of a support program for Hispanic parents and students in a high school setting, several inquiry partners played an essential role in the development and implementation of the program. Throughout this study, the inquiry partners included district personnel, the principal of the school, the graduation coach, the school counselor, the school interpreter, students, and parents.

Table 1

Timeline of Design and Implementation

Activity	Timeline
Review Qualitative and Quantitative Data with Inquiry Partners	January 2- 6, 2023
Identify Codes and Themes	January 2-6, 2023
Design Support based on Barriers with Inquiry Partners	January 9-13, 2023
Teach Staff	January 16-31, 2023
Implement Support	February – May 2023
Gather feedback from Participants	June 2023

The principal, graduation coach, interpreter, counselor, staff, and a Hispanic parent and student met monthly to interpret data from surveys and student performance to create a plan of action for Hispanic students based on the needs that were identified in the surveys. The individuals planned parent nights, collected resources for the families, and monitored the effectiveness of the program. Post-secondary plans were discussed and documented.

The parents and students participated in surveys and interviews to provide me with data pertaining to their experiences thus far in public education, their knowledge of the educational system, and any barriers presented to the families. The students and parents also participated in several parent nights to educate families on applying to colleges, FASFA, and scholarship opportunities for all students including those who are undocumented. Students and parents met monthly with the principal, counselor, graduation coach, and an interpreter to monitor progress. Any additional funding that would be needed to execute the program was requested from the superintendent.

Ethical Considerations

I followed ethical practices throughout this study. I obtained district and Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix A). In addition, I obtained consent and assent forms signed by all participants (see Appendices B and C). Before conducting this research, I completed Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative ethics training. The purpose of the study was disclosed to all participants before they agreed to participate to ensure the purpose was interpreted correctly by all participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). All participation during the study was voluntary. Quantitative data was collected from all ethnic groups to avoid isolating a particular group. I was aware of the qualitative data that was collected that had the potential of bringing stress on the participants or consequences that may occur because of the

interviews or focus groups. I was cautious of information that may come from the interviews and how to protect the individual's privacy; therefore, pseudonyms were used when the data was reviewed and recorded.

When analyzing data, I avoided exposing only positive or only negative results. I also made sure the anonymity of participants was protected. When sharing interview and focus group results, pseudonyms were used for the individuals to protect their identities. When dealing with potential undocumented students or parents, the information was not shared with others with the intent to harm the participants. The data was stored in a secured location where only limited and approved inquiry partners had access (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

When collecting the data, I framed questions to prevent bias and was careful to not use offensive terms that label groups. Copies of survey summaries were shared with all participants for transparency. The data will be stored for at least five years in a password protected computer database in the school where the study was conducted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I obtained consent forms from all participants before any qualitative data was collected. The findings were shared with the participants to promote transparency. All identities were kept confidential, so the participants and I maintained a trustworthy relationship. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.

Inquiry Procedures

The inquiry procedures employed for this study aimed to uncover the barriers that Hispanic students and parents face in the public educational system utilizing the Person-Environment Theory. The data collected during this study gave school personnel knowledge of these barriers and informed them of ways to provide structured support. The inquiry partner and I studied the findings, investigated effective programs, designed a program based on the Person-

Environment Theory, and implemented the program at the high school to address the barriers uncovered during the data collection. The effectiveness of the program was assessed after implementation to show effectiveness. This support was expected to increase the number of Hispanic students that choose to pursue a post-secondary education.

The action research cycle in Phase 1 included the collection of student data to identify Hispanic students whose parents did not attend high school, were undocumented, and primarily spoke Spanish in the home. This cycle also included interviewing students to understand the obstacles they faced and to collect qualitative data on their experiences so far in the educational system. A focus group with only Hispanic parents was conducted to gather qualitative data on their perspective and the level of support they have received thus far from school personnel. The information received from the survey, student interviews, and parent focus group helped identify areas of need when working with my inquiry partners.

The second phase was the implementation cycle of the support program. Inquiry partners met to establish support methods based on the results from Phase 1. Teachers and staff were trained on the strategies determined by the inquiry partners and me. Stakeholders completed surveys and the MECHS staff adjusted the program to meet the needs of the students and parents throughout Phase 2.

The third phase consisted of the summative data. Surveys were administered and analyzed with the inquiry partners. Results of the surveys were shared with all partners (see Table 2).

Table 2

Guiding Questions and Instrumentation Used

Guiding Question	Instrument	Number of Questions	Action Research Phases
1. What barriers have impacted the educational experiences of Hispanic families?	Qualtrics Survey	5 questions	Phase 1
	Student Interviews	6 open-ended questions	Phase 1
	Parent Focus Group	5 open-ended questions	Phase 1
2. What specific components of the support program were most helpful?	Qualtrics Stakeholder Survey	5 questions	Phase 3
	Parent Focus Group	6 open-ended questions	Phase 3
	Student Focus Group	5 open-ended questions	Phase 3
3. How do parents and students perceive the support program?	Qualtrics Stakeholder Survey	5 questions	Phase 3
	Parent Focus Group	6 open-ended questions	Phase 3
	Student Focus Group	5 open-ended questions	Phase 3

Sampling

After students completed the initial survey, I sorted the data and randomly selected 5 Hispanic students who spoke Spanish in the home and whose parents did not graduate high school to participate in the student interviews. The parents of these students were then contacted to see if they would be willing to participate in the parent focus group. I selected students from the 9th grade since they are new to the school, with a goal of getting a fresh insight on what they have experienced before enrolling in MECHS. Hispanic students at the sophomore level and above have already received some support from MECHS personnel that could potentially alter data collected in the surveys.

Instrumentation

Before implementation, a pilot study was conducted with survey, interview, and focus group questions (see Appendix D). I used Qualtrics, a secured survey system, in the pilot study. After the pilot study was completed, I was satisfied with the results and no changes were made to any questions.

Phase 1 - Baseline

Plan

A classroom script was developed for teachers to use, ensuring that the purpose of the survey was conveyed correctly. All students completed the surveys using the Qualtrics platform. A meeting was scheduled with inquiry partners to examine the data and analyze the results. Based on the data collected, 5 freshmen students were selected whose parents did not graduate from high school and who spoke only Spanish in the home.

Invitations were sent to students and parents to request participation in the study.

Consent forms were given to parents, and assent forms were given to students before the interviews and focus groups were conducted. A Spanish copy of these documents was provided along with the English version (see Appendices D and E). An interpreter who is employed by the school system was contacted to run the focus group. A time and location was established and shared with all participants.

Do

All classroom teachers who taught students in grades 9-11 administered the student survey during the first period of the school day. Each teacher read the same script that was provided to them regarding the scope of the survey. The survey asked students to report their ethnicities so Hispanic students who meet the criteria for the student interviews were identified. Once surveys were completed and results were examined by the inquiry partners, five students were selected. These students completed and submitted assent forms to participate in the student interviews. The parents of the selected participants in the focus group also signed consent forms.

The students and parents were informed about the purpose of the study. Students met individually with the facilitator at their designated time and location. An electronic transcriber was used to accurately record responses and the school's interpreter acted as a note taker. The facilitator ensured that the information shared would be anonymous.

Once all participants were welcomed to the focus group, I shared the goals and the ground rules for participants. The facilitator then asked the predetermined questions. An electronic transcriber was used to record the interactions. The facilitator ended the focus group by asking if there was anything else the participants would like to share.

Study

I met with inquiry partners to analyze results and identify areas where the school could better support Hispanic students and their parents. Inquiry partners were used during a peer debriefing. Data was openly coded and analyzed with inquiry partners. Categories and themes were determined from the focus group. I then checked for common themes when comparing the student interview and the parent focus group data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Act

A program was developed based on the data collected in the survey, student interviews, and parent focus groups. I conducted a member check individually with all subjects to ensure that the data collected reflected their experiences. If any misconceptions were identified, I recorded the changes. I completed a member check with participants in the focus group after data was coded and categorized to ensure that the parents' perspectives were recorded accurately (Mertler, 2022). This concluded Phase 1 (see Figure 20).

Phase 2 – Implementation

Plan

A staff meeting was held to discuss the purpose of this program. The data collected in Phase 1 was shared at the meeting. The timeline and training of the program's implementation and the responsibilities of the staff was presented as well.

Do

The purpose of this program was to provide support to all Hispanic students within the school, and the staff would play a vital role. Teachers attended professional development to ensure a clear understanding of the strategies that they would implement. Teachers worked directly with the school's interpreter to ensure that there was proper communication with Hispanic students and parents. The staff participated in parent nights to help inform parents

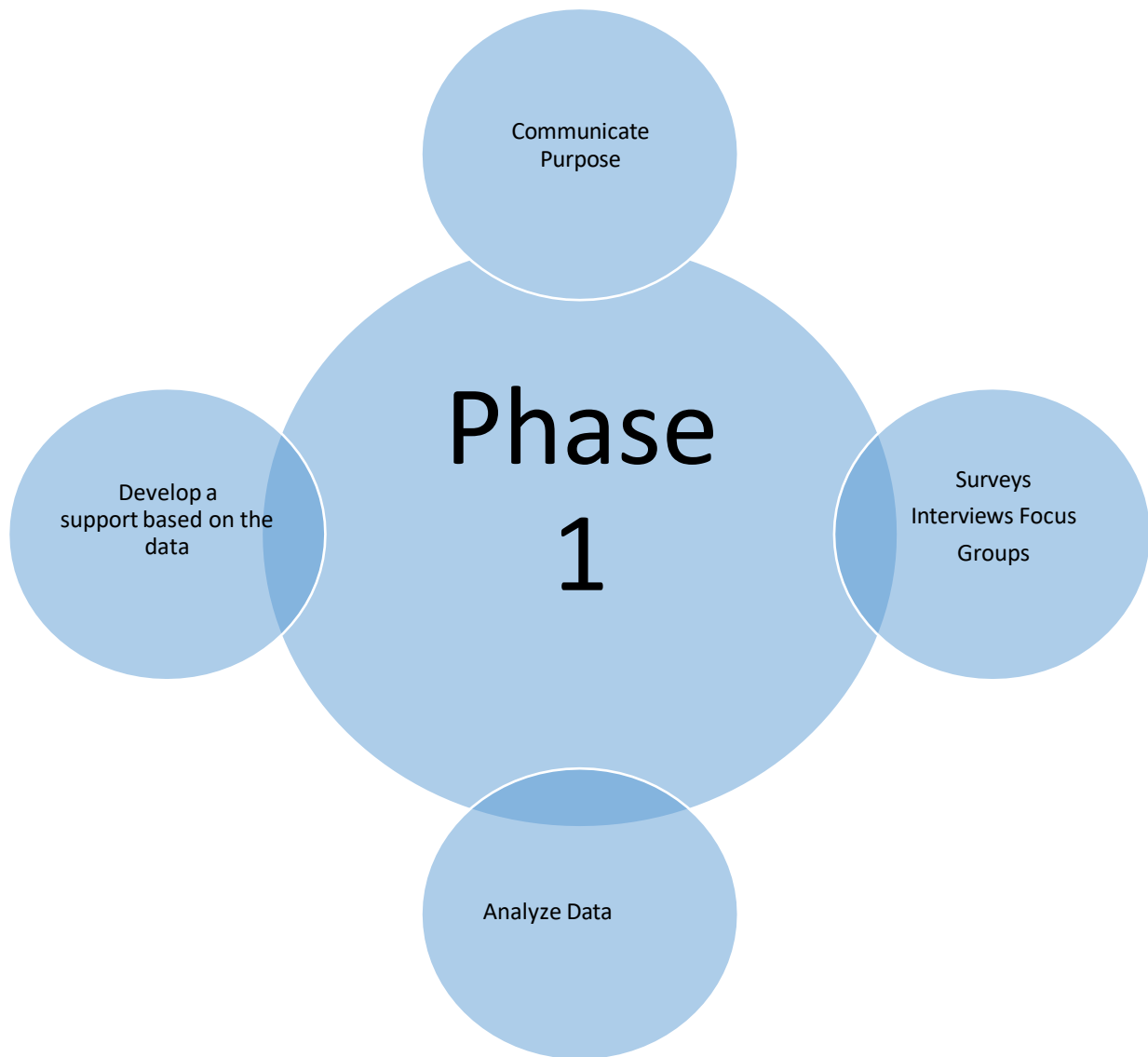


Figure 20. Phase 1 collection of baseline data.

of educational procedures and resources. The staff accompanied parents and students on college visits to give them exposure of post-secondary environment. Administration, the graduation coach, and the school counselor conducted individual meetings with parents and students to review grade point averages, college requirements, scholarship opportunities, and the college application process.

Study

Hispanic students and parents completed Qualtrics surveys after the first month of implementation to gauge the impact of the program. If parents and students had additional suggestions or felt a part of the program was unhelpful, adjustments were made and recorded. Similar surveys were conducted throughout the implementation stage.

Act

The staff met twice a month to review the implementation of the program and to review the survey data. Success thus far was evaluated and the need for changes was determined. The staff brainstormed ways to meet the needs expressed in the surveys (see Figure 21).

Phase 3 - Summative

Plan

To assess the effectiveness of the program, the families completed a post-implementation survey who participated in Phase 1. The families were called individually by the interpreter. Parents expressed their unfamiliarity with technology and preferred to respond via phone.

Do

Parents and students were asked to share their overall experience in the support program. Their feelings, whether positive or negative, towards the support given by the school personnel were noted for program evaluation purposes.

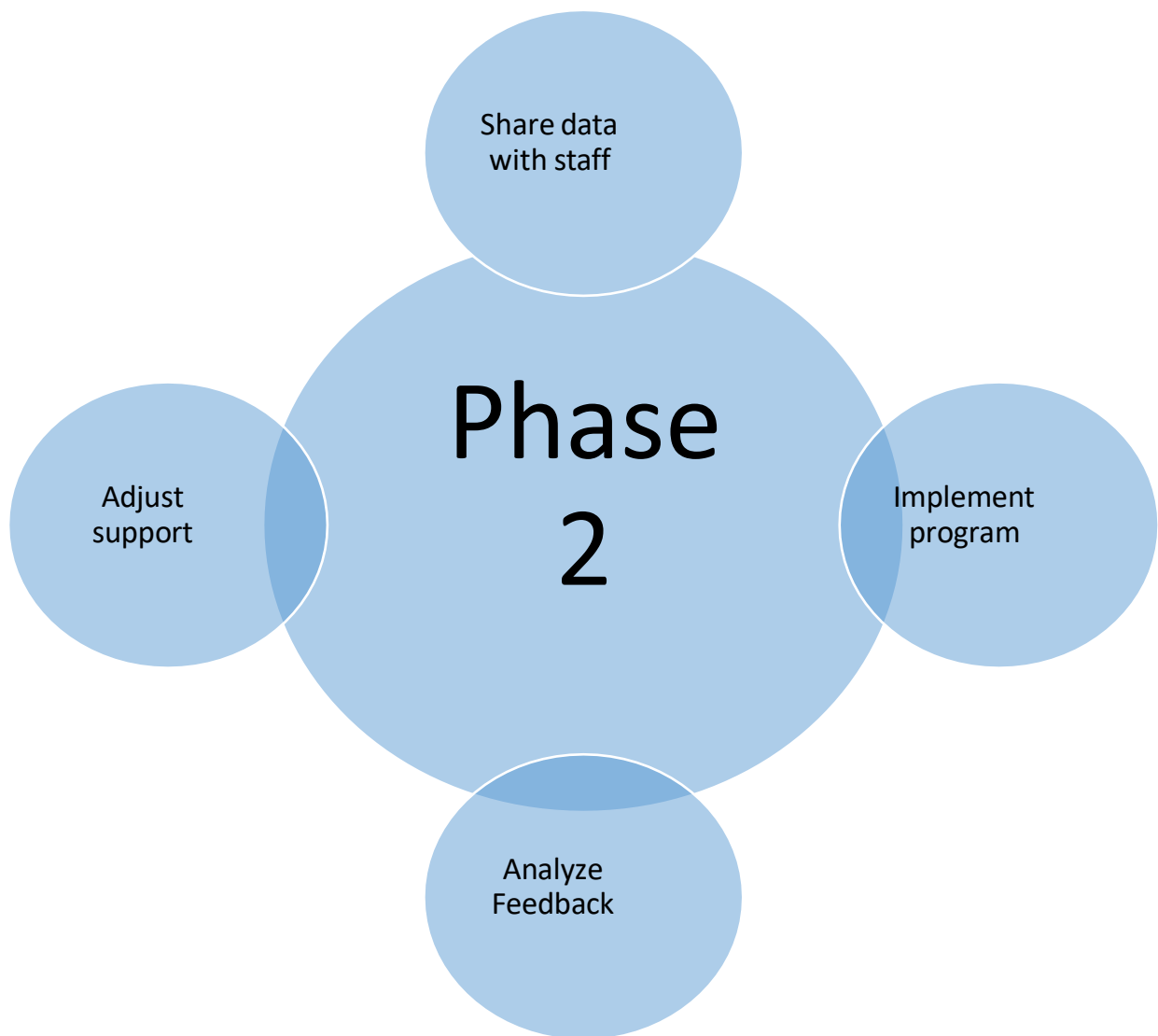


Figure 21. Phase 2 program implementation.

Study

The inquiry partners studied the responses from parents and students regarding the effectiveness of the program. Evaluation of the response data helped determine the future direction of supporting these students and parents. The implementation strategies used in the beginning of the program were evaluated for improvement purposes.

Act

I ensured fidelity and continuous improvement outlined in the action research model. Post-secondary data will be analyzed to determine if more Hispanic students are pursuing an education after high school. I will continue to use the strategies that proved helpful, as determined by the inquiry partners, in future implementation of the program (see Figure 22). The timeline for implementation of each phase was outlined (see Figure 23).

Inquiry Design Rigor

I followed ethical practices throughout the mixed methods action research study. By using mixed methods, I provided a variety of information that supported the study which included qualitative and quantitative data. The survey questions, student interview questions, and parent focus group questions were reviewed by inquiry partners. All surveys and questions were vetted through a pilot study (Mertler, 2022). Quantitative data was collected from all ethnic groups to avoid isolating a particular group. I was also aware of the qualitative data that was collected that may have the potential of causing stress for the participants or consequences that due to participation in the interviews or focus groups. Additionally, I was cautious of sensitive information that came from the interviews and was careful to protect the individual's privacy.

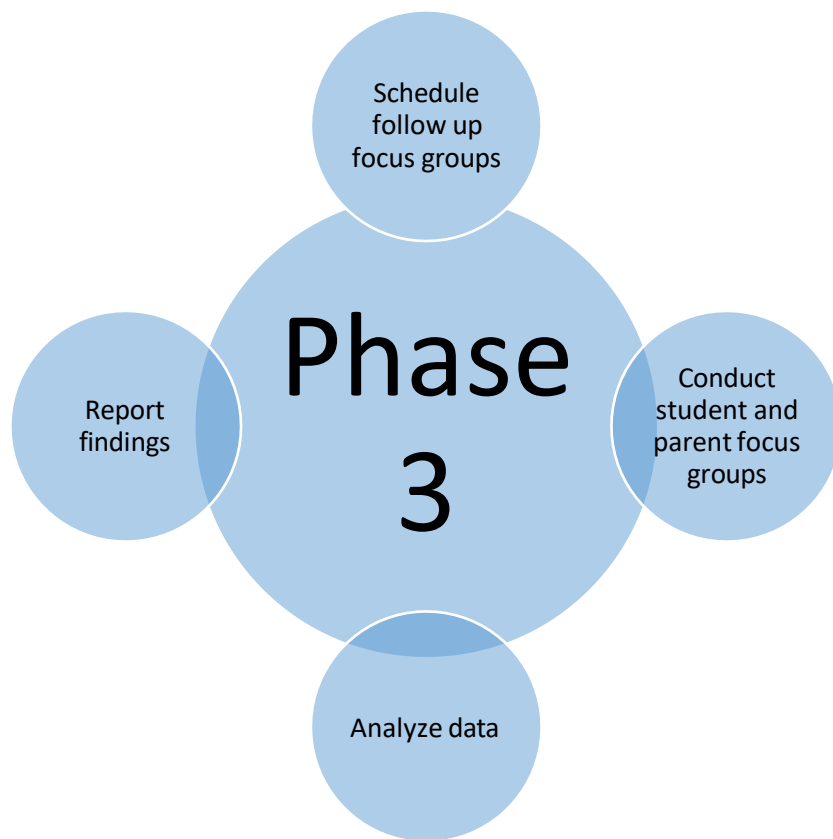


Figure 22. Phase 3 evaluating effectiveness of the program.

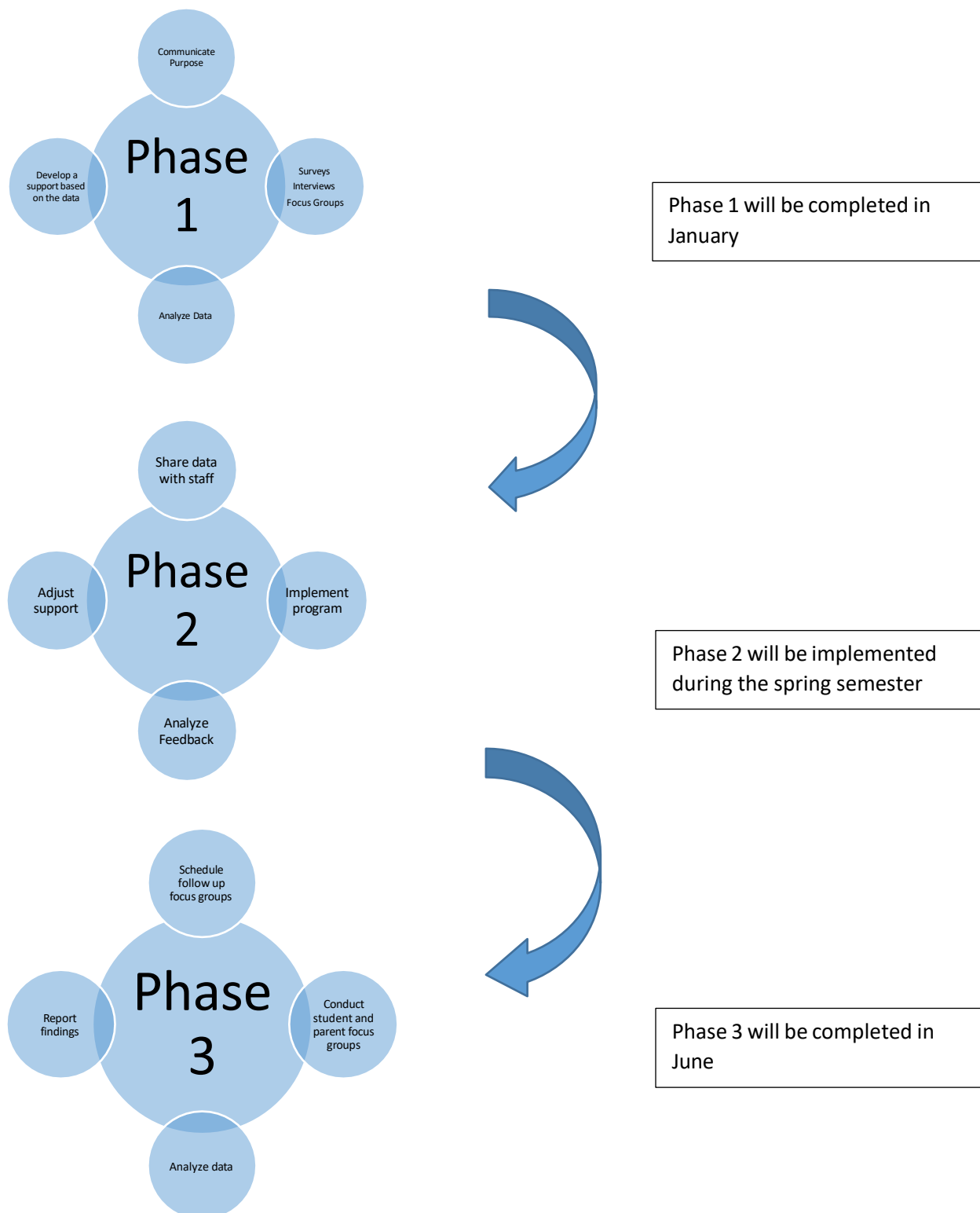


Figure 23. Action Research PDSA Phases 1-3.

When analyzing data, I avoided exposing only positive or only negative results. I also made sure the anonymity of participants was protected. When sharing interview and focus group results, a pseudonym was used for the individuals to protect their identities. When dealing with undocumented students or parents, this information was not shared with others with the intent to harm the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I followed the university's IRB protocol.

When collecting the data, I framed questions that were not biased and was careful to not use offensive terms that label groups. The questions were reviewed in a pilot study to refine their effectiveness. Copies of reports were shared with all participants for transparency. The data will be stored for at least five years (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I obtained consent and assent forms from all participants before any qualitative data was collected. The findings were shared with the participants to promote transparency. All identities were kept confidential, so the participants and I maintained a trustworthy relationship.

Assumptions

In this study, it was assumed that providing support to Hispanic students and parents during their time in high school would increase the number of students who are accepted into four-year universities. The parents who were highlighted in this study did not speak English and have not graduated from high school. It was assumed that these barriers may hinder their child's performance in high school due to unfamiliarity of the resources and opportunities that are available. It was also assumed that language barriers are a major cause of miscommunication between parents, students, and school personnel. Since students are selected through an application process to enroll at MECHS, it was assumed that they value the need to advance past a high school diploma.

It was also assumed that parents who speak English and attended high school and a post-

secondary institution are better equipped to guide their children toward higher achievement. These parents serve as educational role models to their children by personifying the benefits of achieving higher education. It was assumed that these students are better equipped to see themselves in a post-secondary setting or on a certain career path, because the parents' experiences are shared throughout the child's life. I assumed that participants would respond candidly and not misrepresent questions to present themselves as deserving of an intervention.

Scope and Delimitation

This study focused on Hispanic students who attend Mac County Early College High School. A survey determined which families met the criteria of the study, which included parents who did not attend high school, who did not speak English and were of low socioeconomic status. The focus on Hispanic student school performance improvement is necessary due to the consistent increase of Hispanic students at the Mac County Early College High School, and the many barriers that school personnel face when assisting these families.

While Hispanic families are not the only students whose parents did not attend high school, the language barrier adds an additional disconnect that other families do not face when communicating about resources and opportunities. The study provided an insight on the struggles of Hispanic students in rural eastern North Carolina and highlighted ways the school system could support these students so they could have more potential to earn a post-secondary degree.

Limitations

The study was limited to only those families at Mac County Early College High School that agreed to participate in the research. As principal of the school, I have observed that many Hispanic students struggle academically in the early college. Parents are often unable to assist them in improving performance.

Enrollment in the early college could present a potential bias since there is some motivation on the student's part to advance their education. Students will earn some post-secondary credits while enrolled. The results may be different if this study was used in a traditional high school setting where students are not guaranteed the ability to earn college credit.

Role of the Scholarly Practitioner

My positionality as both the principal of MECHS and the scholarly practitioner leading this study ensures the validity of the research and that sound ethical procedures are being employed. I have served as the principal for the past 10 years. I have a vested commitment to the success of the school. I also have observed trends in the school with the demographics of the student population that serve as proof as to why this study is needed. All subjects in the study agreed to participate willingly. They were assured that there would be no repercussions against subjects that decided not to participate. Participants were not compensated in any way for the information they shared during the interviews or focus groups. I requested honest responses from participants. There were no consequences for any participants that answered questions in a way that reflected poorly on the administration, teachers, school, or the community.

Approval from the school district and Institutional Review Board at East Carolina University helped protect the participants from any bias. Inquiry partners provided a more objective perspective than just my own when dealing with data collection and analysis. The intention of this research and implementation of this program was solely to improve the educational outcomes for the Hispanic population of Mac County.

Summary

This chapter provided an outline of the study and the methods used. The three phases provided quantitative and qualitative data that guided implementation of a support program to

better assist Hispanic students and parents in the high school setting. In the following chapter, I included the findings of the survey, interview, and focus group questions. An analysis was provided in Chapter 4 from the data collect.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this inquiry was to examine the barriers that Hispanic families face in the educational system and to determine the impact of providing additional support to both students and parents to help these students progress to a post-secondary institution. A three-phase case study was implemented to collect feedback from Hispanic parents and students, develop a plan of action with the staff, and gather feedback from participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and support that was implemented. The Person-Environment Theory was utilized throughout the inquiry to help myself and the inquiry partners to better conceptualize the relationship between individuals, their environment, and how their interaction influences each other. The capacity of this relationship can affect one's motivation, behavior, and overall wellbeing. Positive outcomes are more likely if an individual feels supported in the home, with peers, and at school (Holmbeck et al., 2008). In my capacity as the principal of the Mac County Early College, I personally observed a discrepancy in the level of support provided to the Hispanic population compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds. To conduct a case study on the effects of the support program for Hispanic students the researcher examined the following questions:

1. What barriers have impacted the educational experiences of Hispanic Families?
2. What specific components of the support program were most helpful?
3. How do parents and students perceive the support program?

To address my research inquiries, I employed a tripartite framework consisting of three distinct phases during my study. Within each phase, I implemented the Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles. Each cycle consisted of these four stages: planning, doing, studying, and acting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The delineation of these phases holds significance as it furnishes a systematic

framework for organizing the study. Additionally, it facilitates an ongoing enhancement of program implementation. Phase 1 involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from Hispanic families at MECHS, to identify participants and elucidate the challenges confronted by this demographic. Subsequently, Phase 2 encompasses the actual implementation of the program. The concluding phase is dedicated to the comprehensive analysis of the program's efficacy. The study proceeded according to the outlined plan, and there were no unforeseen circumstances encountered during its execution.

Implementation_[RMC1]

In Phase 1, I conducted interviews with both students and parents to discern areas in which the school could enhance support. After these sessions, it became evident that there was a pressing need for information to be delivered in the participants' primary language. Furthermore, it emerged that parents faced challenges in assisting their children with high school content and navigating the process of applying to post-secondary institutions, as they had limited to no experience in this domain.

To effectively communicate _[RMC2]with Hispanic parents and better support students, I successfully secured the services of a full-time interpreter by leveraging Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER_[RMC3]) funding. Additionally, I communicated the imperative need for this resource to the superintendent, thereby garnering support for the initiative. This individual was moved to the front office to provide Spanish speaking parents immediate access to information that pertained to their student's education. Previously, parents were frustrated with the lack of ability to communicate effectively. Many parents had to bring their own interpreter or call someone that could translate their needs. The interpreter played a dual role, alleviating parental frustrations and serving as a liaison among teachers, counselors,

and administrators to address academic or disciplinary concerns during the school day. Furthermore, with the assistance of the interpreter, all school documents were translated into Spanish, ensuring that parents had access to comprehensive information in their primary language.

Additionally, the interpreter took the lead in conducting parent meetings alongside school administrators. These sessions were designed to educate parents about crucial aspects such as the significance of transcripts, the importance of maintaining a favorable grade point average, the requisite number of credits for high school diploma attainment, and the stipulations for college admission. To address the language barrier, I strategically arranged informational sessions tailored for Hispanic parents, conducted in Spanish. This proactive approach ensured accommodation and facilitated effective communication with this specific demographic. The interpreter contacted the parents to inform them of the opportunity to attend the meetings. The consensus was that many were unavailable Monday through Friday. As a result, all the informational meetings were held on Saturday afternoons except for one.

The first meeting with the parents centered around building trust and collaboration with the families. The interpreter and I conducted a question-and-answer session [RMC4] to better understand the needs and concerns regarding their students' education. This meeting provided objectives for future topics of discussion. In the beginning, parents were more reserved and seemed hesitant to voice their concerns, but during each subsequent meeting they became more comfortable and trusting (see Appendix F). [RMC5]

In total, four sessions were held during the spring semester. Each session addressed a specific topic that was expressed during the student interviews and parent focus groups. They were all presented in Spanish (see Table 3).

Table 3

Informational Sessions

Date of Session	Topics Addressed
February 9, 2023	Transcripts, Grade Point Average, ACT Assessment
February 25, 2023	FASFA Presentation & College Application Process
March 18, 2023	Emotional and Mental Health of Students
April 29, 2023	Scholarship Opportunities & Community Resources

Data Collection^[RMC6]

The data collection process spanned five months; a duration deemed appropriate for effectively addressing the three research questions at hand (see Table 4).^[RMC7] Phase 1 of the inquiry consisted of collecting qualitative and quantitative data to aid in selecting participants and to gather feedback about the students' and parents' experiences thus far in the public educational system. In December 2022, I formulated a survey^[RMC8] to collect the requisite data for participant selection. I formulated the survey questions and distributed them to my inquiry partners for evaluation. No recommendations or suggestions were provided to enhance the initial questionnaire. My inquiry partners consisted of 9 teachers, an interpreter, graduation coach, and 4 former students and parents. No suggestions were given to improve the proposed questionnaire (see Appendix F)^[RMC9].^[RMC10] The survey was administered to the student population in the school (n=215) through the secure platform Qualtrics in January 2023.^[RMC11] The survey administration process involved each first-period teacher distributing the survey to their respective students. Students were provided with the option to decline participation if they chose not to partake in the survey. Out of 215 eligible students, 176 completed the survey^[RMC12] which was 82% response rate. The results were available the same day.^[RMC13]

Given that Hispanic students constitute the majority in the 9th grade in comparison to other grade levels, my attention was directed towards the 9th-grade class to pinpoint potential participants, as students in the 10th grade and beyond had already received some form of assistance. To identify eligible candidates, my interpreter and I conducted personal calls to Hispanic families in the 9th-grade class who met the specified criteria, seeking their participation in the study. Twenty families of Hispanic descent met the stipulated criteria, encompassing households where Spanish is the primary language spoken and parents who have not attained a

Table 4

Timeline of Data Collection

Activity	Phase	Relevance to Research Question	Timeline
Administer Survey	1	Question 1	January 2, 2023
Review Qualitative and Quantitative Data with Inquiry Partners	1	Question 1	January 2-6, 2023
Identify Codes and Themes	1	Question 1	January 2-6, 2023
Implement Support	2	Questions 2 and 3	February – May 2023
Gather feedback from Participants	3	Question 3	June 2023
Share results with the School Improvement Team	3	Questions 2 and 3	June 2023

college degree. We explained the purpose of the research and what they would be asked to do. Twelve families consented to partake in the study, while three families declined participation. Efforts to establish contact with four additional families proved unsuccessful.

The study volunteers agreed for their students to participate in individual interviews[RMC14], and the parents[RMC15] agreed to participate in a focus group[RMC16] as well as to complete a feedback survey [RMC17]at the conclusion of the study (see Appendix F). I chose to interview students, because I wanted their perspective on their educational experiences within the school setting. After I received assent and consent forms, I interviewed students individually the following week over the span of two school days. I organized a focus group with the parents the following Saturday. All parents who volunteered were in attendance.

I conducted an analysis by utilizing value coding [RMC18]with the student interview responses and the responses from the parent focus group to identify themes (Saldana, 2015). This type of coding is suitable for all qualitative coding. Saldana (2015) wrote, “Values Coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for those that explore cultural values, identity, intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies, appreciative inquiry, oral history, and critical ethnography.” The data collected from the interviews and focus group during Phase 1 assisted me in learning what type of support was needed for Hispanic families. The support was then implemented in Phase 2 over a four-month period. After implementation of the support strategies, Phase 3 consisted of gathering feedback on the effectiveness of the initiative.

Data Analysis

I utilized the mixed methods explanatory sequential design which includes the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. [RMC19]This specific methodology yields comprehensive

data for my overall case study. In this design, I first collected quantitative data by using a student survey through the secured system Qualtrics. This data was used to select participants for the students and the parents in the study. The second data that was collected in Phase 1 of this included the collection of qualitative data. This was accomplished by conducting student interviews and a parent focus group (Mertler, 2022).

After conducting the qualitative data through individual student interviews and the parent focus group, I met with my interpreter to analyze the data by hand. The interpreter was crucial to ensure the data was accurately translated. All interviews were recorded, as well as the parent focus group. We coded the data from both groups to identify common themes. These identified themes were shaped by the Person-Environment Theory, revealing a discernible disconnection between the home, peers, and school environments for Hispanic students. Several themes were predetermined based on research from Chapter 2. The predetermined themes included language barriers and how the educational attainment by parents presents a struggle for them to advise their students on post-secondary requirements (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). We also looked for emerging codes that were not mentioned in the literature review. The emerging theme that was discovered after conducting the parent focus group was the overwhelming feeling of not being supported or included in their child's education.

My interpreter and I used tables [RMC20] to code predetermined and emerging themes from each participant to organize the data and uncover the barriers presented by students and parents (see Tables 7 and 8). The two tables were then compared. The themes that were expressed by three or more participants were viewed as areas of concern that should be addressed by the support program.

Demographics

Phase 1

My inquiry partners and I administered a survey to all students within the school using Qualtrics to obtain demographic information of students, primary language spoken in the home, and the highest educational attainment [RMC21] of both parents. There were 176 students who completed the survey (see Table 5).

Student Interviews

Five ninth-grade students were specifically chosen to engage in structured interviews. These students were deliberately selected from households where Spanish serves as the predominant language and whose parents did not attain a college degree. Each qualifying student was contacted by the researcher to obtain an assent form (see Appendix C). A Spanish and English assent form was provided to each parent. Each student interview lasted approximately 35 to 45 minutes in my office at the Mac County Early College High School. I was accompanied by the school's interpreter. The student responses were recorded by both me and the interpreter (see Table 6).

Parent Focus Group

Following the analysis of student survey data, twelve parents were purposefully chosen and expressed their willingness to partake in a focus group. These parents were chosen based on the primary language spoken in the home, which was Spanish, and the parents' educational achievement. Participants for the parent focus group were contacted to participate in the group. Consent forms were signed, and the group met for two hours on a Saturday afternoon at the Mac County Early College High School. All 12 parents were in attendance along with three interpreters who recorded the responses from the parents (see Table 7).

Table 5

Demographics of Survey

Grade Level	Total # of Students in the Grade Level	Number of Response/ Response Rate	Gender	Ethnicity	% of Parents with a Post-secondary Degree
9 th	56	49/88%	Female 33	White 19	5%
			Male 16	Black 6	80%
				Hispanic 20	64%
				Multi 4	67%
10 th	81	67/83%	Female 41	White 34	85%
			Male 26	Black 14	60%
				Hispanic 17	8%
				Multi 2	66%
11 th	78	57/73%	Female 41	White 31	83%
			Male 16	Black 9	50%
				Hispanic 14	5%
				Multi 3	57%

Table 6

Student Interviews Demographics

Participant	Gender	Country of Origin	Citizenship Status
Itzel	F	United States	U.S. Citizen
Jesus	M	United States	U.S. Citizen
Carlos	M	Mexico	Undocumented
Maria	F	Mexico	Undocumented
Alondra	F	United States	U.S. Citizen

Table 7

Parent Focus Group Demographics

Participant	Gender	Age	Country of Origin, Language	Years in US	Highest Level of Education
Isabella	Female	31	Mexico, Spanish	9	9 th grade
Juan	Male	33	Mexico, Spanish	11	One year at a university
Camila	Female	44	Mexico, Spanish	24	9 th grade
Felipe	Male	42	Mexico, Spanish	24	11 th grade
Ana	Female	42	Mexico, Spanish	23	7 th grade
Jorge	Male	43	Mexico, Spanish	23	7 th grade
Luciana	Female	47	Mexico, Spanish	20	9 th grade
Miguel	Male	45	Mexico, Spanish	20	6 th grade
Mia	Female	36	Mexico, Spanish	16	12 th grade
Manuel	Male	39	Mexico, Spanish	16	12 th grade
Luis	Male	52	Mexico, Spanish	30	9 th grade
Bianca	Female	35	Mexico, Spanish	21	9 th grade

Results

I scrutinized both the student interview responses and the parent feedback gathered during the focus group sessions to comprehensively grasp the unique needs and requirements of the families under investigation. I successfully identified shared areas of concern within both cohorts. These concerns informed the decision-making process for allocating specific resources and support. To initiate this investigation, I conducted interviews with five students as detailed in Table 8. [RMC22][RMC23]

Student Interviews [RMC24]

In the ensuing paragraphs, I recounted narratives from student interviews, employing pseudonyms to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants. These anecdotes served to elucidate the obstacles confronted by Hispanic students, specifically stemming from their parents' primary use of the Spanish language and the challenges arising from their parents' limited educational background. [RMC25] Furthermore, they reinforce the three primary domains—home, peers, and school—of the Person-Environment Theory, showcasing their potential to positively motivate students.

In the context of the Person-Environment Theory, specifically concerning the home and school environments, Alondra's experiences are indicative of negative influences that could potentially impact her motivation adversely. Alondra lives with [RMC26] both parents who only speak Spanish. The mother dropped out of school in middle school and her father dropped out in the 9th grade. The student expressed that due to her parents' educational completion levels, she is unable to ask them for help with her schoolwork. "My parents don't know anything about school, so I never ask for help." Her parents are confused about transcripts, colleges, and which degrees are available. She also shared that when her father drives, she is fearful he will get stopped at a

Table 8

Frequency of Barriers During Student Interviews

Participants	Communication Barriers	Educational Achievement of Parents	Finances	Parental Support	Peers	Immigration Concerns
Alondra	X	X		X		X
Itzel	X	X		X		
Jesus	X	X	X	X		
Carlos	X	X		X		
Maria	X	X		X	X	

checkpoint. “My dad does not have a valid ID and I am nervous riding with him because if he is stopped, I fear that he will be sent back to Mexico. I feel more comfortable riding the bus, so I do not have to worry about being pulled over coming or leaving school.” She also shared how she is often asked to help other Hispanic students who are not fluent in Spanish communicate with their parents to explain school related content. She stated, “Educating parents on post-secondary options and the financial resources that are available for Hispanics would be beneficial in her situation. Having a fulltime interpreter who is available for parents who do not speak English would be good change.”

Itzel lives with both parents. Her mother speaks only Spanish, but her father speaks both Spanish and English. Her parents dropped out of high school to work. This student identified the difficulties of communicating with their parents about school because the parents never graduated from high school. She expressed that schools could better support students if teachers and administrators met with students so they could disclose their challenges. Itzel stated, “My parents want me to work instead of going to college. Teachers need to help parents understand that a college degree will help me make more money than just working after high school.” Itzel also struggles with others who speak Spanish because she is more fluent in English. She expressed the need for a translator in the school who could educate parents and improve communication.

Jesus cited financial concerns as a barrier for him and his family. He also suggested that having an interpreter in every school would help with the language barrier. He expressed that this school was the first time he had an interpreter at the school to assist parents with questions. He also stated, “One-on-one advising sessions for parents and students would bring greater support.”

Carlos lives with both parents. His mother did not finish middle school and his father made it to the 10th grade. He expressed that his father was always away from the home, so he would try

to ask his mother to help him with his schoolwork, but his mother had difficulties understanding the content. He said, “I must rely heavily on my two older siblings to help me.” He felt that more support for parents would help him achieve his post-secondary education goals.

Maria cited language as a barrier at school and home. She shared that both her and her sibling are undocumented and entered the United States last year. Both students speak little English and struggle understanding what the teacher is sharing in class. It takes them twice as long to do assignments because they must use a Spanish/English dictionary to translate the material. Despite their language barrier, they are expected to take all high school assessments in English which frustrates them. Maria’s mother did not finish middle school, but her father went to a university in Mexico. Maria believed that it would be beneficial to have English as a second language class to teach Spanish speaking students the English language. She also shared that additional help for Spanish speaking parents on the educational process would help. She stated, “I am treated differently by other Hispanic students in the school who were born in the United States.” [RMC27] Maria’s interview findings align with the Person-Environment Theory, particularly in the realm of peers, illustrating how interactions within this environment can potentially demotivate students.

Upon scrutinizing the responses from the student interviews, participants consistently highlighted language barriers, parental limitations in assisting with academic content, and the necessity for school personnel to provide guidance on college requirements and the application process as prominent barriers. It is noteworthy that only one student mentioned deportation as a concern; however, it is crucial to acknowledge that this percentage might vary with a different cohort of students.

Parent Focus Group

The parents responded to four questions (see Appendix F). After coding the responses to the questions, three common themes from the focus group matched the student interview responses. These three themes were language barriers, parents' educational attainment, and parental support (see Table 9). Without intervention, these barriers could substantiate the Person-Environment Theory, suggesting a potential negative impact on a student's motivation to complete high school and pursue a post-secondary degree. All parents recognized the need for their child to get an education but did not know how to guide them. Three parents could understand some English while the other 10 only spoke Spanish. They expressed that they feel alienated from the schools due to language barriers and because they did not experience a high school or college education. Isabella said, "Sometimes because of our race or because we do not speak the language, I feel that we are ignored." Ana stated, "When I go to the meetings at the other schools, everything is in English. I do not understand anything they talk about. I leave the same way I came in, with no information at all. I feel that we are not included, even though we are present for the meetings." When asked, the families were not familiar with college eligibility requirements, financial aid, transcripts, or the college application process. Jorge said, "I do not know how to help my child because I did not graduate from high school." (see Table 9)

The participants in the study expressed the barriers that they have experienced as Hispanic families in the public education system. Both groups identified communication barriers, parental support, and parents' experience in secondary education as areas to address. One theme expressed by parents that only one student mentioned was financial support and resources to help with post-secondary education. Therefore, these four themes were the focus of support during the implementation stage for Hispanic families at the Mac County Early College High School.

Table 9

Frequency of Barriers During Parent Focus Group

Participant	Language Barriers	Knowledge of Scholarships & College Application Process	Needs Meetings in Spanish	Does Not Feel Supported
Isabella	X	X	X	X
Juan	X	X	X	
Camila	X	X	X	X
Felipe	X	X	X	X
Ana	X	X	X	X
Jorge	X	X	X	X
Luciana	X	X	X	
Miguel	X	X	X	X
Mia	X	X	X	X
Manuel	X	X	X	X
Luis	X	X	X	X
Bianca	X	X	X	X

The data collected in Phase 1 was shared by the researcher with the staff. After reviewing the common themes uncovered from student interviews and parent responses, it was clear that there was a disconnect between the school and the home for families who did not speak English. [RMC31] The Person-Environment Theory unequivocally asserts that the home, school, and one's peer group exert a direct influence on a student's motivation and academic achievement. Parents expressed that they were unfamiliar with course requirements and high school transcripts. They felt as though they could not support their student with educational topics and requirements. Families were also unfamiliar with financial opportunities. It was imperative to identify and communicate these disconnects so that the staff could proactively address them and provide the necessary support.

Phase 2

Strategies to address these barriers were then developed with input from the staff at the School Improvement [RMC32] Team meetings. The top three areas that were mentioned in every student interview and during the parent focus group were the language barrier, parents' educational level, and the support for parents to better understand the educational process. The fourth theme overwhelmingly mentioned during the parent focus group was financial assistance opportunities, though this was only mentioned once during the student interviews. The following categories describe the plan of action to address each theme.

Opening Communication

Communication was mentioned during every student interview and during the parent focus group meeting. To facilitate more effective communication between parents and school personnel, a full-time interpreter was employed to serve as the school's receptionist and front desk attendant. Initially hired through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding

in December 2022, the subsequent year saw the creation of a permanent position for the interpreter when my teacher assistant relocated to another district. The interpreter, who has two children who graduated from the Mac County Early College and one currently enrolled, proved particularly advantageous due to her familiarity with the educational processes and procedures at the institution.

As a result, anytime^[s33] a parent calls or visits the school, they can directly communicate their needs with someone that speaks their language. This proves to be an efficient and effective way to have immediate assistance. Parents no longer need their own interpreter or to rely on their student to translate. Parents do not have to wait for someone to be called for translation, use artificial intelligence, or be turned away.

Teachers, counselors, and administrators communicate with the school's interpreter to share student successes and concerns, so parents are accurately informed and are better equipped to reinforce behaviors. The interpreter attends all 504 meetings, IEP meetings, and parent conferences throughout the year to ensure that the parents understand their rights and have a voice.

Educating Parents on the Educational Process and Resources

I^[s34] implemented monthly meetings with Hispanic parents. These sessions were held on Saturday afternoons from 2-4 pm in February – April of 2023. ^[RMC35] This date and time worked better due to the parents' work schedules during the week. During the first session, each parent was given a copy of their child's transcript. The interpreter and I explained course requirements, grade point averages, graduation requirements, End of Course assessments, and why transcripts were important for students transitioning to a post-secondary institution. None of the parents knew their child had a transcript. The parents were only familiar with their student's report card. Bianca stated, "You mean every student in high school has a transcript? I have never seen one and did not

know they existed. Now I need to get my other child's transcript who attends the traditional high school." Official transcripts from this point forward will be provided to every parent at the end of each school year, along with the student's report card. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction was contacted regarding having transcripts provided in Spanish; however, this is not a function that the state of North Carolina pays for in the state's data program, PowerSchool. This is a feature that the NC Department of Public Instruction should add to promote equity in the state with Hispanic families. Until this is provided by the state, I will host meetings with my interpreter to explain transcripts.

Financial Assistance

During the second session [RMC36] on February 25, 2023, a representative from the college Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC), who was fluent in Spanish, presented to the parents on how the organization works and how it helps families apply and plan for post-secondary opportunities. Information was shared about eligibility for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) and how to apply. Many questions were clarified regarding who is eligible based on parent's citizenship, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students, and undocumented students. Over 300 parents were in attendance. The representative gave all parents her direct contact information to assist families with questions after the presentation.

Parents also expressed the need for scholarships and did not know how to find them, nor apply. As a result, the graduation coach at Mac County Early College High School created a shared Google spreadsheet that listed every scholarship that is available to students. This was specifically helpful for undocumented students since it included scholarship opportunities geared toward them. The graduation coach presented the spreadsheet to every grade level at the school to

make students aware of these opportunities. The same list was shared with parents at the monthly meetings for Hispanic families.

Parental Support

The final major theme that I uncovered was parental support. Parents did not feel as if they could guide their child when it came to content at the high school level nor the steps to assist their student with post-secondary admissions. With the implementation of the previous steps, parents felt more comfortable with contacting the school since there is now a clear line of communication. The sessions held to educate the parents about resources and the college application procedures proved very helpful as well.

Phase 3

In Phase 3, families completed a survey on the effectiveness of the program after implementation (see Appendix F). [RMC37] Their responses were recorded individually by hand as they answered the questions asked by the school's interpreter. The parents preferred this method because they expressed that they were not comfortable [RMC38] with computers.

The first question of the survey asked if the families felt that the support was helpful to Spanish speaking families. The responses were overwhelmingly positive with all choosing yes. Miguel wrote, "The meetings we have had were great. I feel now as a parent that I matter in this school, which was not the case before in other schools. I think that there was more discrimination before." Filipe wrote, "Having the meetings in Spanish allows us to ask questions if we need to, and we are confident that we are going to get answers." Two parents specifically shared that the meetings in Spanish were the most beneficial and having a fulltime interpreter available in the school.

The second question asked of parents was what can we do differently in the future? Five out of 12 parents did not have additional suggestions and thought the current level of support was appropriate. Six parents referenced the importance of maintaining an interpreter and hosting meetings in Spanish. Luis wrote, “It is important to continue having the meetings for the parents. Also, providing written information in Spanish is very important. That way in our free time we can always read about the things that matter. For the first time I feel involved in my child’s education. Communication between parents and teachers about the progress of our children helped me support my student.”

The third question asked to parents was how this support compared to the support that they have received in the past. Only 2 of the 12 parents said they felt supported in previous schools. Luciana wrote, “I felt that there was not good communication between the school staff and the parents. I had a lot of problems with the former schools that my daughter attended. Now I like the fact that the school is providing an interpreter so we can understand, and this makes us feel included.” Isabella wrote, “Having the interpreter in school is very helpful. We have been provided with important information for the education of our children such as information about scholarships for college. At the other schools we did not have these services when I wanted to check my child out of school, I had to bring my own interpreter, and when we needed to check them out, we are asked to enter the information in the computer. I did struggle even more because I do not know how to use a computer.”

The final question asked to parents was what aspect was the most beneficial to their family? Six parents referenced the fulltime interpreter as the most beneficial. Five parents referenced the monthly meetings specifically around transcripts and scholarship opportunities. Camila stated, “Having an interpreter at school, it helps me greatly. Also, all the information that

has been provided to us in Spanish about scholarships for our children has been very beneficial to us. Our children many times do not communicate to us important things about school, so having a person working in school that speaks our language is very helpful because we can call and ask questions.” Seven parents shared that for the first time they feel included in their student’s education and are more informed as to what they need in high school so they can apply to a university. Juan stated, “Everything has been beneficial to me and my daughter. I have had meetings at school and everybody in the school has been very supportive and professional. I feel confident knowing that I have the support and services that my daughter needs at school[RMC39].”

Summary of Findings[RMC40]

The primary objective of my initial research question was to delineate the barriers impinging on the educational experiences of Hispanic families. These findings were guided by the Person-Environment Theory, providing a theoretical framework for understanding and interpreting the observed patterns. A consensus emerged among both students and parents, overwhelmingly identifying the language barrier as a formidable impediment. Notably, this demographic constitutes 36% of the student population and demonstrates a continuous upward trend annually. Operating without an interpreter poses a significant detriment to both the academic success of students and the overall functioning of the school.

The second research question aimed to pinpoint specific components of the support program deemed most efficacious. According to feedback from Hispanic families, the full-time interpreter ranked as the most valuable resource. Additionally, educational sessions for parents held on Saturdays, accommodating their work schedules, were identified as particularly beneficial. Limiting parent meetings to weeknights excludes a segment of families from

participation.

The third research question delved into the perceptions of parents and students regarding the support program. Parents expressed profound appreciation for the program's inclusivity, noting a stark contrast to previous experiences where they felt marginalized and, at times, discriminated against. For the first time, Hispanic families felt that their needs and inquiries were being acknowledged and addressed satisfactorily.

Summary

Chapter 4 outlines the study I performed to understand the barriers that some Hispanic families face in the public educational system. It also addresses how school personnel can implement strategies to make their experience more equitable, leading to a successful high school experience and better preparation for their post-secondary endeavors. Phase 1 began with a survey to identify students who come from a Spanish speaking home and whose parents did not graduate from high school. Once these students were identified they participated in student interviews and the parents participated in a focus group to get their perspective on the support they receive for their student. Themes of language barriers, difficulty advising their student with content and college opportunities, and [parental][s41] support were the most frequent responses by students and parents. Financial opportunities were expressed mainly by the parents.

In Phase 2, the researcher and the staff analyzed the data collected from the interview and parent focus group. Phase 1, I developed a plan to address the more prevalent themes. [The Person Environmental Theory was also shared with the staff to show how the support from home, school, and peers together would have a positive impact on the well-being of a student. Educators have a direct impact on all three areas. [RMC42]

Phase 3 included feedback from the participants on the effectiveness of the program. The

most impactful data from the feedback survey was the number of parents who finally felt like they were purposefully included in their child's education by school personnel. In their previous experiences, they did not feel as though their voices mattered. They also feel more knowledgeable about high school requirements and the college application process. As expressed by parents, the most important addition was the position of a fulltime interpreter that was available to them when needed.

This plan identifies ways other schools can support Hispanic families. These areas include hiring a fulltime interpreter, preferably one that can also serve as the receptionist of the school to answer any questions from phones calls and school visits in a quick and efficient manner. This individual is also supportive of teachers who cannot speak Spanish. The school can utilize the interpreter to share academic and behavioral concerns from teachers and other school personnel with parents. Another recommendation includes educating parents on transcripts, scholarships and the college application process so more Hispanic families are informed of the resources that are available to them.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, I researched the barriers that Hispanic families face in the public-school setting at the Mac County Early College High School. I applied the Person-Environment Theory to my case study, which suggests that the home, one's peers, and school, if supportive to the individual, can encourage growth and maturity within the individual student (Holmbeck et al., 2008). -Through [MR43]the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, I was able to determine how school personnel could better support this population of students. Over the past ten years as principal of the school, I observed a growing number of Hispanic students accepted into the school. Staff members came to me frequently and expressed the struggle of meeting the needs of these students mainly due to the language barrier. All staff members spoke English while Spanish was the language spoken in the home by 75% of our Hispanic families. I implemented three phases in the study to answer three inquiry questions. The first question was: what barriers have impacted the education experiences of Hispanic families? The second question was: what specific components of the support program were most helpful? The final question was: how do parents and students perceive the support program?

The primary objective of Phase 1 was to gather baseline data, identify participants, and assess the extent of support provided to Hispanic parents and students up to the current point. ~~In phase one,~~ I collected [MR44]quantitative ~~and qualitative data to select participants and to learn from students and parents the barriers they have faced. This was accomplished data~~ through administering a school-wide student survey [MR45] (see Appendix F). [RMC46]Following the completion of the survey by 82% of the students, [RMC47] a comprehensive analysis of the responses was conducted [RMC48] using Saldana's methodology, involving the systematic categorization and identification of recurring thematic patterns with the sampled population

(Saldana, 2015). I successfully identified five Hispanic students originating from Spanish-speaking households with parents lacking a college education. Additionally, twelve parents expressed willingness to

participate in the study who were also from Spanish-speaking households and did not earn a college education. ~~After the survey was completed by all students, I coded their responses and found themes amongst the groups.~~^[MR49] ~~I was able to identify students that fit the criteria for the intention of the support program.~~ Once candidates for the support program were identified, I conducted student interviews to gain further knowledge of their needs and challenges in the school setting. Parents of these students were contacted and asked to participate in a focus group to further elaborate on the need for support for the Hispanic Community of Mac County. After the initial stage of gathering information supporting the need for the program, I moved to Phase 2, planning and implementation of the program.

During Phase 2, I convened with my collaborative inquiry partners, comprising nine teachers, an interpreter, a graduation coach, and four former parents and students. Together, we formulated strategies to address the concerns identified in Phase 1. Collaboratively, we orchestrated five monthly meetings tailored for participating parents and students, conducted in their native language. The objective was to facilitate parents' comprehension of the educational process and equip them with resources, enhancing their ability to guide their students toward the attainment of a post-secondary degree.^[RMC50] ~~In phase two, I met with my collaborative inquiry partners.~~^[MR51] ~~to develop strategies to address the concerns presented in phase one.~~

At the culmination of Phase 2, I transitioned to Phase 3, aiming to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the program's effectiveness. In my interactions with parents, a notable insight emerged: many Hispanic parents expressed a preference for face-to-face communication over technological means. Consequently, to gather post-implementation feedback, my interpreter and I opted for a personalized approach by calling all participating parents and posing the post-

implementation question via phone (refer to Appendix F). We successfully collected qualitative data from each participant.

Summary of the Findings[MR52][RMC53]

The Person-Environment Theory suggests that the environment can alter the outcome of one's motivation, behavior, and experience. Within this theory, it is suggested that the home, one's peers, and school, if supportive to the individual, can encourage growth and maturity within the individual student (Holmbeck et al., 2008). This theory suggests that despite barriers, the environment could alter a person's motivation. The school system and the support it gives to Hispanic students would serve as the environment to help all students have an equal opportunity to a sound education despite the social barriers that these students face. Throughout my tenure as principal, I have observed the distinctive challenges encountered by Hispanic students, including barriers that have adversely affected their motivation and hindered progress toward a post-secondary degree. These observations align with the principles of the theory. These barriers are consistent with the findings from my research involving Hispanic students across the state and the nation.

As the school principal, it is my responsibility to adeptly advocate for students from diverse backgrounds. While this skill may not be conventionally taught in principal preparation programs, it remains an inherent duty for every principal to fulfill. By choosing to resolve problems rather than contribute to them or ignore them, educators can wield their influence in ways that uplift and empower students, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable educational experience (Espinoza-Heralk & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017).

The demographics of school leaders often differ from those of rural areas, particularly as the Hispanic population experiences rapid growth. This discrepancy may be attributed, in part, to educational attainment levels among Hispanics, which may not align with the educational preparation typically required for leadership roles in schools (Pew Research Center, 2021). Therefore, principals must be intentional about understanding the lived experiences of their students to better serve them within their school buildings (Silver, 2018). To effectively advocate for Hispanic students at Mac County Early College High School, it was imperative for me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the lives of both students and parents, as well as the challenges unique to their experiences in rural Eastern North Carolina. Engaging in conversations with both groups facilitated an enriched insight into their backgrounds. This process allowed me to glean valuable perspectives on their values, beliefs, and familial structures. By applying the Person-Environment Theory, it facilitated communication and the development of relationships (Holmbeck et al., 2008).

The importance of education emerged prominently as a shared value, with a collective aspiration for their children to pursue post-secondary degrees to secure a promising future. This is corroborated in my literature review by Christopher Ackerman-Avila, who emphasized the necessity of providing support to Hispanic students through education to open doors for a better future and improved financial status (Ackerman-Avila, 2021). Notably, there exists a robust support system from both parents, underscoring their commitment to the academic success of their children. This aligns with the literature review, indicating that Hispanic parents generally place trust in the U.S. educational system and express gratitude and support for educators (Espinoza-Heralk & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017). It is notable that all parents in the study were blue-collar workers, underscoring their dedication to the significance of higher

education for their children. Additionally, it is crucial to acknowledge the broader societal context, where non-citizen Hispanics with limited English proficiency are often vulnerable to exploitation by employers seeking inexpensive labor, as indicated by (Pew Research Center^[RMC59], 2021). This underscores the complex intersection of socioeconomic factors and the challenges faced by this demographic in pursuit of educational and professional opportunities.

To inform my advocacy efforts, I conducted extensive research on trends at both state and national levels. This comparative analysis aimed to draw parallels between the challenges faced by my students and those encountered by Hispanic individuals in diverse regions across the country. Through this research, I identified commonalities in experiences that were universally felt across all regions, contributing to a more nuanced and informed approach to advocacy.

-The participants in my study highlighted three distinct factors that set them apart when juxtaposed with other ethnic groups. The participants identified three factors that stood out over ethnic groups. These factors included communication barriers, unfamiliarity with educational requirements due to educational attainment by parents, and the feeling of being excluded when attending school events. by school officials.

Over the past 10 years, the Mac County Early College High School's Hispanic population has increased from 11% of the student population to 36%. ^[MR60] This consistent rise aligns with prevailing state and national trends discussed in the literature review. Based on the 2019 United States Census, the Hispanic population was 18% of the U.S. population. The South made up the largest percentage increase of Hispanic population with 26% growth compared to other regions (Pew Research Center, 2021). For the majority of most of these students, the primary language spoken in the home was Spanish^[MR61]. This pattern closely mirrors the trends observed at the

local, state, and national levels regarding households with non-English proficiency. The most recent census documented a notable 30% increase in the county in this regard (Pew Research Center, 2021).

The language barrier made it difficult for school personnel and parents to communicate since no one on staff spoke Spanish. Parents would attend school functions, but all presentations, conferences, and written material was in English; therefore, the parents left the events with no new information or knowledge^[RMC62]. These barriers are often systemic within school systems or local governments. It is noteworthy that some citizens have supported and enacted English-only laws, further hindering access to information about educational topics (Silver, 2018). The language barrier played a major role with the students who were interviewed and with the parents who participated in the focus group. Hispanic parents are often bring their own interpreters which can sometime cause information to be shared inaccurately. Other professions have found the same to be true with informal interpreters. When family members and friends are used, the interpreter will often add their own bias while interpreting (Heitkamp & Gunderman, 2021). All participants cited this as the main barrier. ^[MR63] ~~ADD QUOTES.... said, its hard to help our child when everything is presented in English.~~

In addition to ~~On top of~~ the language barrier, the quantitative data that was collected during my study revealed that 76% of Hispanic parents never attended a post-secondary institution. Likewise, only 47% of the parents of Hispanic parents never graduated from high school. ^[MR64] This trend corresponds to the patterns observed at both the county and state levels, indicating a significant increase of more than 40% in the proportion of Hispanic parents who have not obtained a high school degree (Pew Research Center, 2021). When compared to the national average, 32% of Hispanics have less than a high school degree and Hispanic education

attainment is lower in rural areas. Counties with a higher population of blue-collar Hispanic workers are experiencing a widening education gap (Pew Research Center, 2021). [RMC65]

There is a direct correlation between the level of educational attainment and income, compelling Hispanic parents to pursue jobs that do not provide financial stability, thereby impeding their ability to support their children's post-secondary education. This is even more traumatic for undocumented students who, due to their immigration status, often face the burden of paying out-of-state tuition. This cycle is likely to persist unless policymakers enact laws aimed at breaking this vicious cycle and uplifting this group of individuals (Ackerman-Avila, 2021).

Their own limited educational experience left them unaware of the significance of a transcript, grade-point average, scholarship opportunities, or the intricacies of the application process for post-secondary institutions—essential factors for their children to access higher education. As a result, these parents were not equipped with the necessary knowledge, experience, or tools to guide their students toward educational success. [MR66] Even when Spanish language versions of educational content is provided, the dialect and academic vocabulary still causes a barrier to understand the information provided (Heitkamp & Gunderman, 2021). [RMC67]

Following the completion of the study, parents expressed that they had gained a better understanding of access to higher education. Upon recognizing the educational attainment of parents and their limited awareness of expectations related to higher education, I implemented measures to eliminate this barrier for parents.

Universities are also not taking into consideration the same barriers identified in my study at this high school. It came to my attention that during a Hispanic parent night hosted by one university, the entire presentation was conducted in English. In addition to the language

barrier, the university used academic language that was unfamiliar to the parents. One parent approached me after the event and expressed, "I wish they would structure their gatherings like you do with Spanish presentations, teaching parents the process instead of just referring to things we know nothing about."

Only one parent in the focus group had [RMC68]experience at a university. All other parents never went through the college application process themselves and felt unable or unprepared to discuss the requirements with their student. During the first session, I gave every parent a copy of their child's high school transcript and explained the entire document. Bianca, who only completed the 9th grade, asked, "You mean every single high school student has one of these, even my child who attends a different high school? This is what colleges look at?" None of the parents knew that transcripts existed nor their purpose. The parents were only familiar with progress reports and report cards. A prevalent sentiment among most parents was satisfaction if their child was passing the course. However, there was a notable lack of awareness regarding how earning A's and B's, as well as participating in honors-level classes, could significantly impact their children's chances of being accepted into a university. This highlights an opportunity for increased communication and education about the nuances of academic achievement and its potential implications for higher education opportunities.[RMC69] Conducting seminars at the high school level for Hispanic parents would likely be more meaningful and impactful for them.

The focus group with parents revealed prevalent themes of scholarship opportunities and financial concerns, in contrast to the student interviews where only one student mentioned this as a barrier. [RMC70]College expenses pose a considerable financial burden overall, but it becomes particularly challenging for parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds, especially those with

undocumented students. Due to their citizenship status, they must pay out-of-state tuition to attend a community college or four-year university in the state of North Carolina, which is triple the cost of tuition for those deemed legal in-state residents, even though they have lived in the state of North Carolina all their lives. East Carolina University is the closest four-year university to Mac County. As of 2021, In-state tuition costs \$7,325 while out-of-state tuition costs a student \$23,602 (East Carolina University Admissions, 2022).

This difference is understandable, given that students are still dependent on their parents for financial support and may not be at the stage of worrying about the cost of attending college or university. Certainly, if the participants were seniors instead of freshmen, the financial concerns among students would likely be more pronounced. As seniors approach graduation and consider higher education opportunities, the impending costs associated with college or university become a more immediate and tangible concern. The transition to post-secondary education often prompts heightened awareness and discussions about financial considerations, scholarships, and the overall affordability of pursuing higher education.^[MR71] Many Hispanics experiencing poverty may perceive the cost of college as an insurmountable barrier, leading them to not even consider this option. It is crucial to emphasize how conversations initiated in 9th grade may open students' minds to the possibility of attending college, even with the availability of financial aid. While financial aid is sometimes misunderstood as a barrier due to concerns about high debts, it is essential to highlight the potential returns on investment associated with education.

Federal legislation has enabled undocumented students to receive a K-12 education since 1986. However, in North Carolina, access to higher education is constrained by tuition requirements (Pérez, 2012). During the last session with parents, a comprehensive spreadsheet

detailing all known scholarships for Hispanic students was provided (see Table 10). The explanation included clarification that some scholarships are tailored to specific circumstances, such as students with a deceased parent, those facing specific health issues, and dedicated scholarships for undocumented students. This initiative aimed to empower parents with information to navigate the financial aspects of their children's education effectively.

I observed several mindset shifts among my inquiry partners, indicating a heightened understanding of the diverse challenges these families encounter. A notable instance occurred during a Saturday session when English-speaking teachers attended a Spanish-only presentation.

Table 10

Scholarship Information Specifically for Hispanic Students

Scholarship	Amount	Criteria	Application Location	Deadline
Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund	Varis	Database of Scholarships for Mexican American Students – many do not require proof of residency	https://www.maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resources/	Varies
Hispanic Scholarship Fund	Varies	Hispanic Scholarship Fund – U.S. Citizen, permanent legal resident or DACA eligibility	https://www.hsf.net/scholarship	Open January 1; Deadline 2/14
NC State Goodnight Scholars Program	\$20,500/year – up to 3 years	NC State or transfer candidates – consideration for 1 st generation college students; DACA eligibility	https://goodnight.ncsu.edu/	First Year – NC State Application – Nov. 1; Transfer students - March

|

Struggling to comprehend, one teacher turned to me and remarked, "Now I know how our Hispanic parents feel when they come to our open houses that are only presented in English. We have really done a disservice to this group of parents and students." This experience further reinforced the Person-Environment Theory, underscoring the notion that a student's environment directly impacts their motivation and success ([Holmbeck et al., 2008](#)).

In the state of North Carolina, undocumented [and DACA](#) students must pay out-of-state tuition due to [legislation G. S. 115D-1](#). ~~On a~~ On average, the Mac County Early College High School has 4 graduates each year who fall in this category. These students would not be able to afford college tuition without the financial assistance from scholarships. ~~We provided the scholarship applications to all the participants, so they were aware that there is assistance for undocumented students despite legislative restrictions.~~

The participants also expressed during the interviews and focus group that they feel more excluded than other parents because of their race. [Hispanics feel that communication barriers, and lack of effort to address the issue, are a symptom of systematic racism.](#) [MR72] [The IIRIRA law states that undocumented aliens “shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a State \(or a political subdivision\) for any post-secondary education benefit unless a citizen or national in the United States is eligible for such a benefit. . .” \(Pub. L. 104– 208, div. C, title V, § 505, Sept. 30, 1996, 110 Stat. 3009–672.\) Relying on a strict interpretation of the IIRIRA, the North Carolina Community College System \(NCCCS\) passed a resolution that would deny undocumented students access to their institutions in 2008.](#)

Parents also feel that anti-immigrant legislation that negatively impacts the path to success of their students amplify these feelings. [The national sentiment against Hispanics and how](#)

many see them as a financial drain on the system and taxpayers adds fuel to the [MR73]fire of these

feelings of oppression by many in this community. Unfortunately, what students hear on the news and at school regarding Hispanic students are often in a negative light. Many are painted as criminals or a drain on the economy (Silver, 2018). In Mac County, North Carolina, Hispanics are experiencing the highest level of inequality in terms of opportunities in the area, as depicted in Figure 24. This supports the pressing need for transformative change within the community.

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~~students are often in a negative light. Many are painted as criminals or a drain on the economy (Silver, 2018).~~

Interpretation of the Findings

The theoretical framework that was selected to shape this study was the Pperson-Environment Theory[MR74]. This theory suggested that environment can influence individuals either positively or negatively. Students spend approximately 6.5 hours at school every day and 32.5 hours every week. A student's educational setting makes up a large portion of their daily lives. The creation of a collaborative and positive environment at school for Hispanic students can give them the resources and support to overcome barriers that are specific to their ethnicity such as English-only settings, racism, and immigration challenges that could be detrimental to their future.[MR75]

The theory emphasizes three key environments—home, peer interactions, and the school setting—and highlights the capacity of educators to exert a positive influence across these realms. To cultivate a positive impact in the home environment, school officials play a crucial

role in establishing trusting relationships with parents and students. This proactive approach ensures that families feel supported and heard, creating an environment where queries or concerns about their child's education are effectively addressed.

Educators can further contribute to a positive atmosphere by fostering inclusivity (Espinoza-Heralk & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017). [MR76] This involves incorporating diverse content into lessons that highlight ethnic groups beyond the conventional curriculum. For instance, teachers can diversify the selection of novels by including works from authors with varied

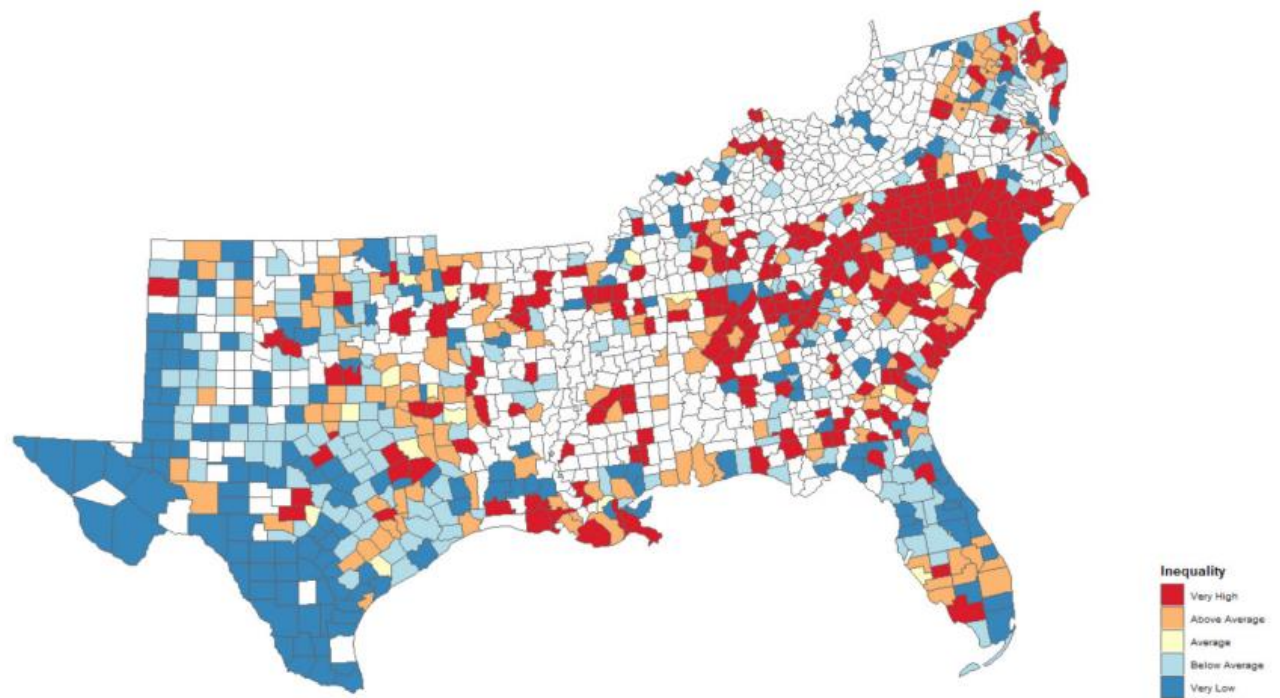


Figure 24. Inequity Map for Hispanics.

backgrounds. By doing so, they contribute to creating a more comprehensive and representative educational experience.

Establishing a supportive structure within the school setting specifically designed for Hispanic parents and their students can be instrumental in fostering positive motivation and breaking down the barriers that these students may encounter (Holmbeck et al., 2008). Such initiatives aim to enhance the overall educational experience and create an environment conducive to success for students from diverse backgrounds.

Diversity in staff ethnicity is another way to bridge gaps in feelings of exclusion, so students can identify with adults from their own race. The case study, conducted with several Hispanic students in another state, delved into the significance of role models within the school setting, particularly when comparing the perspectives of Anglo teachers and Hispanic teachers (Espinoza-Heralk & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017).

A consistent pattern emerged in views about role models, with all groups concurring on the essential role they play in the development of Latino youth. Anglo teachers tended to perceive role models as necessary within the community and family, emphasizing their role in promoting the effective utilization of educational opportunities. In contrast, Latino educators associated the need for role models more directly with the school environment and the teaching force. Notably, the respondents, regardless of background, frequently highlighted the imperative for more Hispanic leaders and role models within both the school and the community (Espinoza-Heralk & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017).

Furthermore, inviting guest speakers from diverse ethnicities and backgrounds to share insights about their occupations with students is a valuable asset. This practice enables students to witness individuals from their own backgrounds who have achieved success in their careers.

Such initiatives have the potential to broaden students' perspectives and aspirations by demonstrating tangible paths to success that may not have been apparent to them previously.

The essence of education lies in human relationships, and effective instruction necessitates educators to be cognizant of the historical racism directed at certain social groups. It calls for a conscious choice to challenge this racism in interactions with students, rather than perpetuating it. Recognizing that students engage more academically when their identities are affirmed, [MR78]educators should actively work against devaluing and excluding cultures, languages, and identities from the school environment (Espinoza-Heralk & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017).

A crucial aspect is fostering communication with all ethnicities. This dialogue enables educators and policymakers to comprehend the immense impact they have on the lives and academic paths of students, both positively and negatively. By choosing to resolve problems rather than contribute to them, educators can wield their influence in ways that uplift and empower students, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable educational experience (Espinoza-Heralk & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017).

Educators also can create a positive culture among students and their peers. In the 2021-22 school year, two new Hispanic students were accepted into the early college. These students moved to the United States the year before and could barely speak any English. Obviously, they struggled in their classes to understand what the teachers were saying despite the use of bilingual dictionaries and electronic translators. Upon learning of the struggles of these students, some Hispanic upperclassmen volunteered in the classrooms of these students to assist in translation for the students to earn volunteer hours. The students recognized that these students were struggling, so they decided to create a Google spreadsheet to share with more bilingual students

to create a schedule of volunteers to assist the students in every class throughout the day with understanding what was expected of them. This instance exemplifies how educators, through their actions, can cultivate an environment where students feel cared for and accepted by their peers, subsequently resulting in elevated performance levels. It serves as a tangible illustration of how educators can influence not only individual students but also foster a positive impact on the broader peer community, aligning with and reinforcing the principles of the Person-Environment Theory.

The final component of the Person-Environment Theory, the home, is also an area where educators can have a significant impact by ensuring parents are included and feel supported. This study addressed this aspect by hiring a full-time interpreter who is readily available to parents whenever they have questions or needs. Taking it a step further, the interpreter was designated as the full-time receptionist, ensuring immediate assistance for Hispanic parents without the need for external interpreters or feeling overlooked.

Conducting meetings in Spanish and providing guidance in their native language about the educational process and scholarships serves to alleviate stress for parents unfamiliar with the requirements of the educational system. Research, such as that by Obinna and Ohanian (2020), indicates that overcoming language barriers correlates with lower dropout rates among Hispanic students and parents when communicating with school administrators. These interventions contribute to fostering a positive experience for students and parents in a group that is often overlooked due to their unique barriers (Espinoza-Heralk & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017).

Limitations of the Study

I have been the principal of the school for over 10 years and the fulltime interpreter that I hired had two children who attended and ~~graduated~~graduated from the Mac County Early

College High School. She is also a well-known and respected individual in the Hispanic community. She has built trust in the community which made parents and students feel more comfortable to share their struggles with school personnel. If this study was conducted without this type of trust, participants may not have been as willing to share their true feelings about their experiences especially in a county where anti-immigrant feelings are so publicly displayed by individuals running for local office.

The study was limited to only those families at the Mac County Early College High School who agreed to participate. Enrollment in this school could present a potential bias since there is some motivation on the student's part to advance their education. Different results could appear with participants who do not attend the early college but rather a traditional high school.

Implications of the Findings for Practice

The presence of full-time interpreters should be considered a fundamental requirement in every school. Parents and school personnel, including administrators, should not be compelled to rely on their children for interpretation or be burdened with the task of bringing their own interpreters to communicate with school staff. Proper interpretation is indispensable for ensuring accurate and meaningful information exchange.

To enhance accessibility, all forms, including those related to events and opportunities, should be provided in languages spoken by parents, such as Spanish. Additionally, transcripts and report cards should be made available in languages other than English for parents who may face language barriers. While the capability to offer such services exists in systems like PowerSchool, it is crucial for the state to invest in and provide this functionality to schools across the region, fostering a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

A large amount of Hispanics families are unfamiliar with college acceptance requirements and the application process because they did not experience the process for themselves. As a result, it is difficult for these parents to offer guidance to their students. Without the support of school personnel, parents and students struggle with taking the appropriate steps to pursue post-secondary education. Parents of undocumented students were also unaware that scholarships are available just for their students since they must pay out-of-state tuition. Providing parental education sessions to teach parents about the process and opportunities will lead to more Hispanic students applying to colleges and receiving financial support to earn a post-secondary degree.

In my role as a principal, I have observed that Hispanic parents exhibit strong support for teachers and administrators, and they seldom come to the school with complaints compared to students from other backgrounds. They consistently participate in all school functions. Recognizing the importance of addressing the language barrier and providing dedicated support to these families is crucial in fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, making them feel genuinely included and valued in the school community.

Implications of the Findings for Equity ~~(or Social Justice, as appropriate)~~

Hispanic students must confront barriers that students from other ethnicities do not face. Some of these obstacles include language, legislation, and parental educational experience. To provide equity for these students, school personnel must change practices, so these students have the same opportunities as those from other ethnic groups of being successful.

The Supreme Court case Plyer v. Doe provided legal support for undocumented students by providing them a kindergarten through twelfth grade education. However, this does not protect them from the post-secondary realm. Despite living in the United States and growing up

hearing that it is possible to achieve the one's goals by staying in school and putting focus on education, undocumented students have another struggle once they apply to college in the state of North Carolina. They learn their immigration status requires them to pay out-of-state tuition, which for most, stops them in their tracks. The cost of tuition alone for universities in the NC system is out of reach for most Hispanic students, due to their low socioeconomic standing.

A prevalent perception among public school educators and the broader public is that minority students drop out of school due to perceived personal deficiencies, language difficulties, and poverty, among other culturally ingrained pathologies. This concentration on students and their families as the source of the problem has resulted in a limited exploration of the school's responsibility concerning the dropout phenomenon. Few significant actions have been taken to thoroughly investigate and address the role that schools play in contributing to or mitigating the dropout rates among minority students (Espinoza-Heralk & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2017).

Recommendations for Practice^[RMC79]

The purpose of this study was to assess the need, develop the objectives, and implement a support program for Hispanic students. The goal of this support was to increase Hispanic's access to a ~~postsecondary institutions~~ post-secondary institution. The mission of the Mac County Early College is to provide a personalized and supportive educational environment that motivates all students to successfully complete high school and a college degree.

The recommended practices for teachers involve a heightened awareness of their students' diverse backgrounds and unique challenges. Given that teachers spend more time with students than any other individuals in the school setting, it is essential to conscientiously integrate content that showcases various cultures into lessons, rather than relying solely on traditional materials. Additionally, actively seeking guest speakers who represent a range of

ethnicities can contribute to a more inclusive and enriching educational experience. Exposure to professionals of the same ethnicity provides students with the opportunity to witness individuals like themselves in successful positions. This representation can be instrumental in fostering a sense of possibility, aspiration, and connection. Teachers

Principals

Counselors play a crucial role in reviewing transcripts and grade point averages. It is imperative to ensure that students, particularly Hispanic students, are not overlooked when being considered for placement in honors-level classes. Recognizing the reliance of Hispanic parents on school officials for appropriate placement in rigorous courses underscores the importance of thorough and equitable assessment processes.

Administrators bear the responsibility of ensuring that all families feel supported and heard. Organizing annual parent focus groups and student interviews communicates to families that their opinions matter, signifying their importance as stakeholders in the educational process. Administrators can further promote inclusivity by encouraging teachers to embrace and support the diversity within the school building. A willingness to explore new approaches is crucial. Understanding the student population and hiring professionals who are not only supportive but also value student differences is essential. It is imperative to focus on the needs of the entire student population rather than exclusively catering to the majority.

School district leaders must remain attentive to evolving demographics and be receptive to addressing the unique needs articulated by principals, which may vary across schools. Ensuring that funding is equitably allocated to all groups based on identified needs is paramount in fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment.

It is vital that each school administrator assesses all groups of students of whom they serve to get to their perspectives. Parents should also be included in the conversations to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are met. Using the mixed methods research design can be used with any group in the school setting. The questions could also be applied to any group to gain an understanding of barriers, implement change, and assess the effectiveness of the changes.

Recommendations for Future Study

There are several recommendations for a future study. This study can be applied in any school setting. The recommended actions can be categorized in short-ranged and long-ranged goals (see Figure 25). [RMC80]

The short-range goals include educating staff members on the barriers faced by Hispanic families through sharing quantitative and qualitative as supporting evidence. In addition, maintaining a fulltime interpreter to assist families in their native language so parents can stay informed is a necessity. Educators also need to provide educational sessions to parents on the requirements and opportunities for their students.

The long-range goal is to increase the number of Hispanic students in a post-secondary setting. One recommendation for a future study is to track the number of Hispanic students applying for colleges and scholarships who received the support from the program. This data should be compared to past data from students who attended the Mac County Early College High school who did not have a fulltime interpreter or attend the sessions provided during this study. In addition, it would be helpful to track not only the number of students applying and attending a post-secondary institution, but the number of Hispanic students completing their chosen degree program.

Conclusions [PMC81]

While not every school may have the same challenges mentioned in this study, educators need to be deliberate about providing support for all groups of students. This is accomplished by seeking feedback from all stakeholders to identify areas of improvement. This study exposed the barriers that Hispanic families face and how educators can change their practices to better support them.

This intentional process of addressing areas of improvement will improve the lives of students and the community. Public education serves a diverse population and can have a positive impact on all groups if administrators are willing to accept that their system has flaws. All institutions need a continuous process for improvement. This was captured in this study by seeking feedback, sharing evidence with staff members, and working collaboratively to implement strategies of improvement.

Educators must encourage open dialogue with parents and students of all backgrounds to understand their needs, especially for minority groups who may not feel like they have a voice

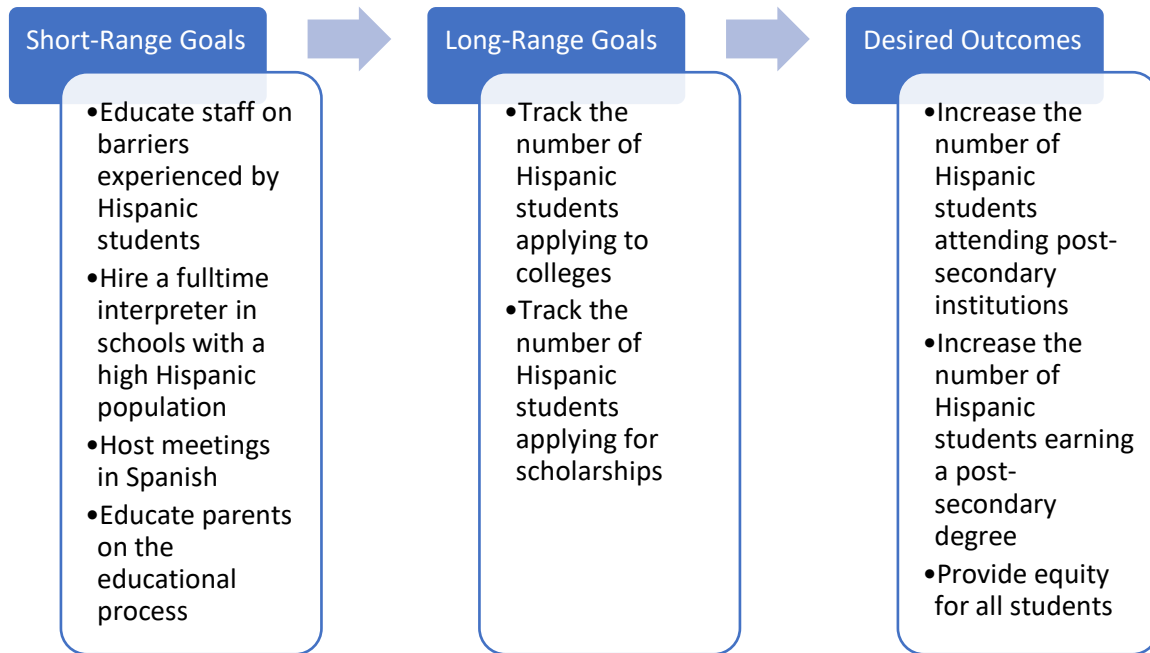


Figure 25. Recommendations for change.

until they are probed to use it. It is very easy for school personnel to become complacent and only view their school based on their own perception. Many times, one's perception is not reality. It is important to imagine the perspective view of others. I think of the adage, "walk a mile in someone else's shoes," when I consider the needs of others whose background may be different than mine. In the past, I never got complaints from Hispanic parents. In my mind, I felt they were being served well since I never had any complaints. After conducting this study, I learned that lack of complaining did not mean the same thing as well served. I learned the truth of their barriers and that the current practices needed to be changed.

The public-school system is constantly evolving, and educators must have the courage and desire to change their practices to provide equity to all groups of students. Over the last few decades, we have seen changes in many areas including instruction, technology, and emphasis on equity within student populations and demographics.

Investment in families who speak a different language and are unfamiliar with the educational process will improve the overall wellbeing and success of students. Educators are charged with not only supporting students but their families. As unveiled by this study, taking extra steps to provide assistance to aid Hispanic families can have a great impact on the success and the future of this historically underserved community. ~~he nex~~

We are not in the World War I era, a time when learning other languages in schools was linked with disloyalty to the United States. In the current era of profound global efforts towards globalization, where many countries are connected through a common currency and other nations adopt policies to officially endorse bilingualism, the United States should proactively enhance its language resources in a positive and additive manner, rather than viewing language acquisition as a subtractive process.

Engaging in this study has profoundly transformed my perspective as an educator. Moving forward, my aspirations include providing classes for Hispanic parents to enhance their understanding of the public-school system. Additionally, I aim to collaborate with district leaders and the community college system to implement dual language classes for students. Recognizing the potential of this growing population, which may one day constitute the majority, underscores the importance of equipping both English and non-English proficient individuals with a well-rounded education. This commitment reflects a broader vision for positively impacting the educational experience of diverse learners and fostering inclusivity within the community.

Conclusions[RMC83]

While not every school may encounter the same challenges outlined in this study, educators should be purposeful about providing support for all groups of students. This can be achieved by actively seeking feedback from all stakeholders to identify areas for improvement. The study revealed the specific barriers faced by Hispanic families and highlighted ways in which educators can adapt their practices to offer better support.

This intentional approach to addressing areas of improvement holds the potential to enhance the lives of students and the broader community. Public education, serving a diverse population, can exert a positive impact on all groups when administrators acknowledge and address existing flaws in the system. Embracing a continuous process of improvement, as demonstrated in this study through feedback solicitation, evidence-sharing with staff members, and collaborative implementation of improvement strategies, is fundamental for the betterment of educational institutions.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building - Mail Stop 682
600 Moya Boulevard - Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 @ - Fax 252-744-2284 @ -
rede.ecu.edu/umcirm/

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Emily Pake](#)
CC: [Marjorie Rinoler](#)
Date: 2/3/2023
Re: [UMCIRB 22-002205](#)
INCREASING POSTSECONDARY AWARENESS FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS THROUGH THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF A SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) occurred on 2/3/2023. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6,7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

As the Principal Investigator you are explicitly responsible for the conduct of all aspects of this study and must adhere to all reporting requirements for the study. Your responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Ensuring changes to the approved research (including the UMCIRB approved consent document) are initiated only after UMCIRB review and approval except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All changes (e.g. a change in procedure, number of participants, personnel, study locations, new recruitment materials, study instruments, etc.) must be prospectively reviewed and approved by the UMCIRB before they are implemented;
2. Where informed consent has not been waived by the UMCIRB, ensuring that only valid versions of the UMCIRB approved, date-stamped informed consent document(s) are used for obtaining informed consent (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the ePIRATE study workspace);
3. Promptly reporting to the UMCIRB all unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others;
4. Submission of a final report application to the UMCIRB prior to the expected end date provided in the IRB application in order to document human research activity has ended and to provide a timepoint in which to base document retention; and
5. Submission of an amendment to extend the expected end date if the study is not expected to be completed by that date. The amendment should be submitted 30 days prior to the UMCIRB approved expected end date or as soon as the Investigator is aware that the study will not be completed by that date.

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Assent Form	Consent Forms
Consent Form	Consent Forms
Dissertation	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Parental Permission Form	Consent Forms
Recruitment Script	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Spanish Assent Form	Translated Consent Document
Spanish Consent Form	Translated Consent Document
Spanish Parental Permission Form	Translated Consent Document
Survey, Interview and Focus Group Questions	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Survey, Interview and Focus Group Questions	Surveys and Questionnaires

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in Items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Research Study: Increasing Post-secondary Awareness for Hispanic Students through the Implementation of a Support Program for High Schools

Principal Investigator: Emily Pake (Person in Charge of this Study) Institution, Department or Division: East Carolina University Address: 715 US Hwy 13 N. Windsor, NC 27983

Telephone #: (252) 794 - 6016

Study Coordinator: Dr. Marjorie Campo Ringler Telephone #:(252) 328-4825

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this research is to explore the barriers experienced by Hispanic students and parents when dealing with the educational system. You are being invited to take part in this research because you are a parent of a Hispanic student who is enrolled in the district. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn what the barriers are for Hispanic students and parents and how the school system can better support this group of students.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about five (5) people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

The study has minimal risk. You may feel slightly stressed in needing to complete surveys or answer questions during the focus group.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research will be conducted at Mac County Community College. You will need to come to the multipurpose room in building 10 for the focus group. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately one hour during the spring of 2023.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. Complete a survey.
2. Participate in a focus group at the end of the school term.
3. Complete a final survey.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?

We don't know of any risks associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?

The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected to the fullest extent provided by law. In any sort of report, we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only the principal investigator and co-principal investigator will have access to the records. However, your records may be inspected by authorized University or other agents who will also keep the information confidential.

The research records will be stored in a locked cabinet or on a protected electronic storage device (computers or the cloud). The records will be kept for seven years and then shredded or permanently deleted from electronic devices.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop, and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator, Emily Pake, at (252) 940-6227 from M-F between the hours of 8am to 4pm or you via email, pakee99@students.ecu.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director for Human Research Protections, at 252-744-2914

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Participant's Name (PRINT)	Signature	Date
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Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all the person's questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)	Signature	Date
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Principal Investigator (PRINT)	Signature	Date
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APPENDIX C: INFORMED ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE



Assent Form

Things You Should Know Before You Agree to Take Part in this Research

IRB Study # _____

Title of Study: Increasing Post-secondary Awareness for Hispanic Students through the Implementation of a Support Program for High Schools

Person in charge of study: Emily Pake (Person in Charge of this Study) Where they work: Mac County Early College High School Address: 5337 HWY 264 E, Washington, NC 27889

Study Coordinator: Dr. Marjorie Campo Ringler Telephone #:(252) 328-4825

Study contact phone number: 252-940-6227

Study contact E-mail Address: epake@Mac.k12.nc.us

People at ECU study ways to make people's lives better. These studies are called research. This research is trying to find out the struggles that Hispanic students face in public education and how the school system can better support these students.

Your parent(s) needs to give permission for you to be in this research. You do not have to be in this research if you don't want to, even if your parent(s) has already given permission.

You may stop being in the study at any time. If you decide to stop, no one will be angry or upset with you.

Why are you doing this research study?

The reason for doing this research is to explore the barriers experienced by Hispanic students and parents when dealing with the educational system. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn what the barriers are for Hispanic students and parents and how the school system can better support this group of students.

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?

We are asking you to take part in this research because you are a Hispanic student who is enrolled in the district.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this research, you will be one of about 5 people taking part in it.

What will happen during this study?

You will complete a survey. Answer interview questions

Complete a follow up survey

For studies that involve video or audio recording:

- The interview may be recorded.
Check the line that best matches your choice:
_____ OK to record me during the study
_____ Not OK to record me during the study

This study will take place at Mac County Community College and will last about an hour.

Who will be told the things we learn about you in this study?

The principal investigator and East Carolina University will have access to the information obtained during the study.

What are the good things that might happen?

Sometimes good things happen to people who take part in research. These are called “benefits. The benefits to you of being in this study may bring greater support to Hispanics students.

What are the bad things that might happen?

Sometimes things we may not like happen to people in research studies. These things may even make them feel bad. These are called “risks.” These are the risks of this study: You may share experiences that bring about negative feels. You may or may not have these things happen to you. Things may also happen that the researchers do not know about right now. You should report any problems to your parents and to the researcher

Will you get any money or gifts for being in this research study?

You will not receive any money or gifts for being in this research study.

Who should you ask if you have any questions?

If you have questions about the research, you should ask the people listed on the first page of this form. If you have other questions about your rights while you are in this research study you may call the Institutional Review Board at 252-744-2914.

If you decide to take part in this research, you should sign your name below. It means that you agree to take part in this research study.

Sign your name here if you want to be in the study

Date

Print your name here if you want to be in the study

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Assent

APPENDIX D: SPANISH CONSENT FORM

ANEXO D: CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO PARA PARTICIPAR

Consentimiento informado para participar en la investigación

Título del Estudio de Investigación: Aumento de la conciencia postsecundaria de los estudiantes Hispanos a través de la implementación de un programa de apoyo para las escuelas secundarias

Investigadora Principal: Emily Pake (Persona responsable de este estudio) Institución,
Departamento o División: East Carolina University
Dirección: 715 US Hwy 13 N. Windsor, NC 27913
Número de teléfono: (252) 794-6016
Coordinador de Estudio: Dr. Marjorie Campo Ringler Número de teléfono: (252) 328-4825

Los Investigadores de la Universidad del Este de Carolina del Norte (ECU) estudian temas relacionados con la sociedad, los problemas de la salud , los problemas ambientales y la condición humana. Para ello, necesitamos la ayuda de voluntarios que estén dispuestos a participar en la investigación.

¿ Por qué me invitan a participar en esta investigación?

El propósito de esta investigación es explorar las barreras que experimentan los estudiantes y padres Hispanos al tratar con el sistema educativo. Se le invita a participar en esta investigación por que es usted padre de un estudiante Hispano que está inscrito en el condado. La decisión de participar en esta investigación es suya. Al hacer esta investigación, esperamos saber cuales son las barreras para los estudiantes y padres Hispanos y como el sistema escolar puede apoyar mejor a este grupo de estudiantes.

Si usted participa como voluntario en esta investigación, será una de las cinco (5) personas que lo harán.

¿ Existen razones por la que no debería participar en esta investigación?

La investigación tiene un riesgo mínimo. Es posible que sienta un poco de estrés por la necesidad de completar encuestas o para responder las preguntas durante un grupo de enfoque.

¿Qué otras opciones tengo si no participo en esta investigación?

Puede optar por no participar.

¿Dónde se va a llevar a cabo la investigación y cuánto tiempo va a durar?

Esta investigación se va a llevar a cabo en el Colegio Comunitario del Condado de Mac. Usted tendría que venir al edificio número 10, en el salón de usos múltiples (multipurpose room). El total de tiempo que es requerido para ser voluntario en esta investigación es aproximadamente una hora durante el verano del 2023.

¿ Que se me pedirá que haga?

Si usted acepta estar en la investigación, se le pedirá que haga las siguientes cosas:

1. Llenar una encuesta.
2. Participar en un grupo de enfoque al final del término escolar.
3. Completar una encuesta final.

¿ Que puedo experimentar si participo en la investigación?

No sabemos de ningún riesgo asociado con esta investigación. Cualquier riesgo que pueda ocurrir con esta investigación no es más que lo que experimentaría en la vida cotidiana. No sabemos si se beneficiará de participar en este estudio.

¿ Me pagarán por participar en esta investigación?

No podemos pagar por el tiempo voluntariado para participar en esta investigación.

¿Tengo que pagar para participar en esta investigación?

No le costará ningún dinero para ser parte de la investigación.

¿ Quién sabrá que tomé parte en esta investigación y aprenderá sobre mi inforMación personal?

ECU y las personas y organizaciones listadas abajo podrán saber de su participación en esta investigación y podrán ver inforMación sobre usted que normalmente mantiene privada. Con su autorización, estas personas podrán usar su inforMación privada para hacer esta investigación.

¿ Cómo mantendrán segura la inforMación que recopilan sobre mí? ¿ Cuánto tiempo la mantendrán?

Los registros de esta investigación se mantendrán privados y estarán protegidos en la mayor medida prevista por la ley. En cualquier tipo de reporte que publiquemos, no incluiremos ninguna inforMación que permita identificarlo. Los registros de la investigación se guardarán de forma segura y solo el investigador principal y el co-investigador tendrán acceso a los registros. Sin embargo, sus registros pueden ser inspeccionados por la Universidad autorizada u otros agentes que también mantendrán la inforMación confidencial.

Los registros de la investigación se guardarán en un gabinete cerrado con llave o en un dispositivo de almacenamiento electrónico (computadoras o nubes). Los registros se mantendrán por siete años y después serán triturados o permanentemente borrados de los almacenamientos electrónicos.

¿Qué pasa si decido que no quiero continuar con esta investigación?

Usted puede parar en cualquier momento después de que la investigación haya empezado. No habrá consecuencias si usted se detiene, no será criticado. No perderá ningún beneficio que normalmente recibe.

¿ A quién me dirijo si tengo preguntas?

Las personas conduciendo esta investigación pueden responder cualquier pregunta que tenga relacionada con esta investigación, ahora o en el futuro. Puede contactar a la Investigadora Principal, Emily Pake, al (252) 940-6227 de Lunes a Viernes entre las 8 am a las 4pm o por correo electrónico al pakee99@students.ecu.edu.

Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como alguien que toma parte en la investigación, usted puede llamar a University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) al teléfono 252-744-2914

He decidido que quiero tomar parte en esta investigación. ¿Qué debo hacer ahora?

La persona que obtenga el consentimiento informado le pedirá que lea lo siguiente y, si está de acuerdo, debe firmar este formulario:

- He leído (o se me ha leído) toda la inforMación arriba mencionada.

- He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas acerca de esta investigación que no entendía y he recibido respuestas satisfactorias.
- Se que puedo dejar de participar en esta investigación en cualquier momento.
- Al firmar esta forma de consentimiento informado, no estoy renunciando a ninguno de mis derechos.
- Se me ha entregado una copia de este documento de consentimiento, y es para mi.

Nombre del participante (ESCRIBA)	Firma	Fecha
--	--------------	--------------

Persona Obteniendo el Consentimiento Informado: He conducido el proceso inicial del consentimiento informado. He revisado oralmente el contenido del documento de consentimiento con la persona que ha firmado arriba y he contestado todas las preguntas que la persona tenía sobre la investigación.

Persona

que obtiene el Consentimiento (ESCRIBA)	Firma	Fecha
--	--------------	--------------

Investigador Principal (ESCRIBA)	Firma	Fecha
---	--------------	--------------

APPENDIX E: SPANISH ASSENT FORM

ANEXO E: CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO PARA PARTICIPAR

Formato de Consentimiento

Cosas que debes saber antes de estar de acuerdo en participar en esta Investigación.

Número de Investigación IRB: _____

Título de Investigación: Aumento de la conciencia postsecundaria de los estudiantes Hispanos a través de la implementación de un programa de apoyo para las escuelas secundarias

Persona a cargo de la Investigación: Emily Pake (Persona a Responsable de esta Investigación)

Donde trabajan: Mac County Early College High School

Dirección: 5337 HWY 264 E, Washington, NC 27889

Coordinador de la Investigación: Dr. Marjorie Campo Ringler Numero de telefono: (252) 328-4825

Numero de contacto de la Investigación: 252-940-6227

Correo Electrónico del Contacto de la Investigación: epake@Mac.k12.nc.us

Las personas en ECU investigan las maneras de mejorar la vida de las personas. Estos estudios se llaman Investigaciones. Esta investigación está tratando de averiguar las barreras que los estudiantes Hispanos enfrentan en la educación pública y como el sistema escolar puede apoyar mejor a estos estudiantes.

Tus padres necesitan dar permiso para que participes en esta investigación. No estás obligado a ser parte de esta investigación si no quieres, incluso si tus padres te otorgan el permiso.

Puedes discontinuar tu participación en esta investigación en cualquier momento. Si tu decides discontinuar, nadie se va a enojar o estar molesto contigo.

¿Por qué estás haciendo este estudio de investigación?

La razón de esta investigación es para explorar las barreras que enfrentan los estudiantes y padres Hispanos al tratar con el sistema educativo. La decisión de ser parte de esta investigación es tuya. Al realizar esta investigación, esperamos aprender cuales son las barreras que enfrentan los estudiantes y padres Hispanos y como el sistema educativo puede servir mejor a este grupo de estudiantes.

¿Por qué me piden que participe en este estudio de investigación?

Te estamos pidiendo que seas parte de esta investigación porque eres un estudiante Hispano inscrito en este distrito.

¿Cuántas personas formarán parte de este estudio?

Si tu decides ser parte de este estudio, seras uno de más o menos 5 personas que van a tomar parte en este estudio.

¿Qué sucederá durante este estudio?

Vas a llenar una encuesta

Responder preguntas en un entrevista Completar una encuesta de seguimiento

Para estudios que involucran grabación de audio o video:

- El entrevistado puede ser grabado.

Marque la línea que mejor se adapte a su elección.

_____ Si, puede grabarme durante el estudio

_____ No, puede grabarme durante el estudio

Este estudio se va a llevar a cabo en Mac Community College y va a durar aproximadamente una hora.

¿A quién se le dirán las cosas que aprendamos de ti en este estudio?

El investigador principal y la Universidad del Este de Carolina tendrán acceso a la información obtenida durante el estudio.

¿Cuáles son las cosas buenas que podrían suceder?

Algunas veces suceden cosas buenas a las personas que son parte de investigaciones. Estos se llaman “beneficios”. Los beneficios de tu participación en este estudio puede traer mayor apoyo a los estudiantes Hispanos.

¿Cuales son las cosas malas que pudieran suceder?

A veces cosas que no nos gustan le suceden a las personas en estudios de investigación. Estas cosas pueden incluso hacerlos sentir mal. Estos se llaman “riesgos” Estos son los riesgos de este estudio: Tal vez comparta cosas que le provocan sentimientos negativos. Pueden o no sucederle estas cosas. También pueden suceder cosas que los investigadores no conocen hasta ahora. Debes reportar cualquier problema a tus padres y al investigador.

¿Recibirá dinero o regalos por participar en este estudio de investigación?

No recibirás ningún pago o regalos por ser parte de este estudio de investigación.

¿ A quién me dirijo si tengo preguntas?

Si tienes preguntas relacionadas con la investigación, deben dirigirse a las personas listadas en la primera página de esta forma. Si tienes otras preguntas acerca de tus derechos mientras eres parte de este estudio de investigación puedes llamar al Institutional Review Board al 252-744-2914.

Si decides tomar parte en esta investigación, debes firmar tu nombre abajo. Significa que estás de acuerdo en participar en este estudio de investigación.

Firma aquí si quieres ser parte de este estudio.

Fecha

Escribe tu nombre aquí si quieres ser parte de este estudio

Firma de la persona que obtiene el Consentimiento

Fecha

Nombre escrito de la persona que obtiene el Consentimiento

**APPENDIX F: SURVEY, STUDENT INTERVIEW, & PARENT
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

Background Survey Questions

1. What is the highest educational attainment by either parent?
2. What is the primary language spoken in the home?
3. Who guides you on educational decisions?
4. What is your parent's occupation?
5. How long have you been in the US?
6. What obstacles could prevent you from earning a higher education?

Student Interview Questions

1. What barriers do you face at school? Home?
2. How can schools better support you?
3. Do you think your cultural identity impacts how others perceive you? Peers? School Personnel?
4. What fears do you have in school or about your education?
5. Have you experienced citizenship barriers that impact your education?
6. If you could be the principal, what would you do to better support Hispanics students?

Parent Focus Groups

1. How often do you advise your child about post-secondary achievement?
2. Do you feel like you are supported in the educational system?
3. Do you know resources to support your child?
4. How involved are you in your child's education?

