

Int. transcript
→ Highlighted: evaluation
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Interview with Jay Hernandez (teacher)

What has been your involvement with the Hispanic Community?

As a teacher pretty much every year I have 10 to 20 students from Hispanic background. I've also taught for three years in the migrant summer school program, which is a month long program.

What methods are used to transition Hispanic ESL students into mainstream classes?

I think it depends on the student, obviously, like any other students they come with their own strengths and weaknesses. I think with ESL education we try to use more tactical, Kenistatic types of teaching. Being able to use reality, like pictures or things that the kids can put their hands on and name and come to some understanding of what they are. We try to use life experiences, those types of things. Some students come from backgrounds where they haven't been to school at all or very minimal school; and some students come to school having done well in school and having a formal education from where ever they are moving from. So it's going to depend on the students. Some students come... like in the migrant program, a lot of the kids move quite a bit, so they haven't had a consistent program. So we try to really stress giving them a solid foundation, so where ever they go they have a good foundation.

In migrant schools is it harder to keep on the same subject and make the learning connect?

Yes. In the migrant program we try to do a very fast pace lessons. It is a month long program so we try to do... for instance in math some kids need for problem solving skills or some need more algebraic skills or some need more multiplying and dividing schools. So we do a needs place assessment at the beginning of the program and then based on where the kid meets we have there will be a team of us from third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade that are all in the same group. So we will take different skills. Rather than necessarily teaching just sixth grade kids, I might have third grade kids, fourth grade kids, fifth grade kids and sixth grade kids learning a skill. I try to make the lesson quick, so they might get a skill for 3 days, 4 days and it is very intense kind of learning. That way, if the kids do learn a skill, they have a solid foundation in that skill.

What are some of the reoccurring issues with Hispanic students and migrant students?

Well, with migrant students, it's trying to help kids, whose family is one that dictates that they move quite a bit and trying to take them from where are and help them learn skills in a sense that they are not going to have a continuation. Maybe they go to another school and it's a totally different program. I think with Hispanic students, overall, is learning some of the cultural differences and the family expectations. Sometimes the families don't as high a value on education than other parents might. And I can't say as high a value. But they approach it differently. They feel that the teachers and the school know what they are doing so they, kind of are not involved as far as school goes. And I think that can send a message to the kid, the Hispanic kids when they see other parents coming



to the school and their parents not coming to the school. So they might feel like they do not have to be as involved in school. But, it might not what the parents want to communicate.

Do you find with ESL students to learn, write and comprehend English it has to start in the home or do you think the student and staff populations need to help more?

I think it's a little bit of both. I think students can learn... I think it is difficult to learn a language that you don't speak in a social environment. For instance traveling to Japan myself I know that one of things that helped me learn Japanese even outside of school the TV was bombarding me with Japanese. The family I was living with was speaking Japanese, every area of my life the context was Japanese. So that defiantly helped me learn it a lot faster. Where as in a Spanish speaking home, students can kind of get away with speaking Spanish. However at the same time, if kids have a good understanding of reading and writing in there own language, it is much easier for them to pick up a second language because they have a context to base it off of.

What issues do you see reoccurring and changing with Hispanic Students and do some change over time?

The population here in Hillsboro is defiantly growing, so think acceptance of the Hispanic population is an important aspect. And with my experiences people are pretty accepting, but I know that it is not always the case. I know at Brookwood because our population is still fairly small, we have only about 10% of our kids from Hispanic backgrounds or ESL backgrounds. Sometimes they can feel very alienated, especially if they are not strong communicators; if they come in with weak communication skills or if they just don't know a lot of English. So then they don't have a lot of peers that they can talk with or spend time with. So I've seen where I have had some students be at Brookwood, during the regular school year and I've seen them be real quiet and not seem like they are learning that much. Then they come to the summer school, where everyone speaks Spanish and it took about two days to realize "wow I belong here" and they lit up and become a totally student because they around students that speak their language. And you start to realize that this student is a real intelligent student and understands quiet a bit, in his or her own language.

Do you see with Hispanic students that have hard time speaking and understanding English and understanding the American cultural values creates segregation in the school?

It can, it defiantly can. Everyone, I think, gravitate to where they are most comfortable. You Know, if I'm going to hang with people, I' am more comfortable with this group more than that group. So I think it is very normal. At the same time I have also seen some students that reach me in sixth grade, a lot of them at the school for a little while and so some of those earlier tendencies are gone. Their best friends might be from the Hispanic population but they have defiantly intermingled and become friends with everybody; for the most part.

What improvements do you believe could be made to better address the needs of Hispanic students?

Well, think there are a couple areas. One, I think for students that just come here from another country, having an opportunity to stay a month or two stay at one facility. It is kind of an opportunity to assimilate to our culture and learn some things and be able to make some connections. So they are not just rushed immediately into an English speaking classroom, where they are very afraid and don't know what is going on. I think the first couple of months in an all English-speaking classroom they are lost. They are not going to gain a whole bunch by doing that. But if they could come into a school environment, where there is one special class in the district where all new students from the Hispanic culture or whatever culture come and can spend a month to get acclimated would help them be a little more prepared for the class room. I think having a consistent ESL program throughout the schools is another one. I think Brookwood has a tremendous ESL program, the teachers and helpers do a great job. At other schools I've talked to teachers who don't think that it is a great job. We have 16 different elementary schools and it seems that we have 16 different ESL programs. And to some extent, based on the school, you're going to have a different program because you have different clientele or student base of whatever.

What is the greatest obstacle for Hispanic students trying to further their education?

I think increasing family expectations. And I think I say they that, cause it seems to me that we need to be able to show Latino students, Hispanic students examples of Latino's and Hispanic's that have gone to college and have successful carriers, to help them get a vision for themselves to farther than high school or whatever. I think there are a surprising number of Latino students dropouts, so we haven't quite got them picturing themselves having successful futures. I think that we need to help change the families' perspective of where their kids can go, not just the students perspective.

Do you think the schools could help by focusing on the accomplishments of Latino community to inspire the Latino students to further their education?

I think we have to. We need to. For instance when I taught in Portland, about 90% of the students parents dropped out of high school. Many of those students couldn't picture themselves in college, cause they would not know what it would be like. So I would take field trips, I would regularly take them to college campuses, so they could see what college would be like and so they could get a contextual view of college. And I think we need to do things like that with our Hispanic population as well. Like helping them to see this person can do it and you can do it too. I got a few guest speakers to come into my classroom to try to encourage the students that way, encourage all the students that way but as well as the Hispanic students.

To what extent have you been able to work with the parents of Hispanic students?

I think culturally speaking Hispanic Parents-this is just a generalization obviously- are less involved in school. They believe the school administrators and the teachers are the experts and they support the teachers whatever the teacher says is good, you know. I think as well maybe because they did not finish school or whatever and different backgrounds impede them from feeling that can be part of the school environment. As part of the school staff I need to empower the Latino parents to be involved and get them involved with the school. I think that is very important. They will come to conferences, but with my experiences most of them sit and nod and say OK, OK and yet there is not a lot of give and take. Like they don't give suggestions and ideas generally speaking. Sometimes a few parents are, they are much more involved and they are asking questions and giving suggestions. How they can improve. For the most part they sit and listen, they will deal with things at home. But for the most part they expect me to be the expert, the principle and to know what I'm talking about. Whatever we say is good.

With the ESL programs and other programs like that are unified and need to be changed?

I think there are some unifying aspects, but as I said before I think with our district, having 16 different schools, with varying populations, I don't think you can have a set program that will work for everybody. However, there should be some consistence. We get a lot of students that change from school to school, with in Hillsboro and there should be some continuity. When they first come we do this, after a while we do this, when they reach level we do this, and maybe there is some flexibility within the program but there should be some continuity within the program. I think right now there is not.

What do you think we could culturally do to better serve the Hispanic population?

I think in the school we need to see that 23-25% of the kids in Hillsboro schools is Latino. And I 'm wondering how much we celebrate being Latino at our school. I know at our school, Brookwood, we don't do anything. There is no recognition of the Latino and Hispanic culture in Hillsboro. The fact that 23% of the population in Hillsboro is Latino and is growing, so I think the schools needs to advocate cultural awareness. Putting up more signs that are in Spanish and English. Even the welcome signs in schools being put in Spanish and English, those types of things. I know some schools do that because there population is higher than 25%, there are a couple of schools that the majority of people are Hispanic. I think we to not be afraid that English is the language of the United States and the language we are speaking, but to accept that, hey, a big chunk of our population doesn't speak English or comes from a different culture background we need to celebrate that.

Are all announcements being giving in Spanish and English?

Some are, when district does it yes when the school does it no. I think that is wrong from the schools standpoint. And again Brookwood only has a 10% population, maybe a little more by now, and slowly growing, but the fact is that we haven't made transitions that say that we accept the Spanish speaking population of the school. I have a Russian student this year and Vietnamese Student this year and we need to get the language out to

their parents as well. And we don't make efforts to make everything come out in bilingual format, which sends a mixed message. I think the district, as a whole, have a bilingual version.

Do you think we should teach in both English and Spanish like at Peter Basco?

I think on the world market we should. If you at the students that are in Europe and Asia, almost every other country are learning two or three different languages. My student from Ukraine she knows Russian, Ukraine and English, she was taught those three languages in school. European kids often speak their country language, maybe another European country language and English. I think, we can say that this comes back to a political movement to keep English as the language of the United States, but I think if we want to competitive and our students to competitive on the world market our students need to learn another language. And I think the earlier the better.

With the migrant schools your tactics are to teach them math, social studies, reading writing and math.

In the migrant program we don't really do science, we don't really health, we don't really do health. Each teacher will probably do one unit, like, for instance the states, the states of the United States. That was kind of my social studies unit. But the majority of the day is doing writing, reading and math, we just focus on those three. They spend a big chunk of time doing reading, a big chunk of time doing math and big chunk of time doing writing and little time for social studies. So just really try to do a standard education.

Is there anything else you want to say?

Not really.