HISPANIC STUDENT DROPOUT PROBLEM IN COLORADO

Colorado Advisory Committee
to the
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

June 1987

A report of the Colorado Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights prepared for the information of the Commission. Statements and viewpoints in this report should not be attributed to the Commission or the Advisory Committee, but only to individual participants in the community forums where the information was gathered.

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

The United States Commission on Civil Rights, created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is an independent, bipartisan agency of the executive branch of the Federal Government. By the terms of the act, as amended, the Commission is charged with the following duties pertaining to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the laws based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, or national origin, or in the administration of justice, investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study of legal developments with respect to discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

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An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has ben established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 105(c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 as amended. The Advisory Committees are made up of responsible persons who serve without compensation. Their functions under their mandate from the Commission are to: advise the Commission of all relevant information concerning their respective States on matters of mutual concern in the preparation of reports of the Commision to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officals upon matters pertinent to inquiries conducted by the State Advisory Committee; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission upon matters in which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Advisory Committee; and attend as observers, any open hearing or conference which the Commission may hold within the State.

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Colorado Advisory Committee to the
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
June 1987

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The Colorado Advisory Committee submits this report in order to advise the Commission of key issues and viewpoints on problems related to the dropout rate among Hispanic students in Colorado.

The report summarizes information received at a series of six community forums convened between January and May 1986 by the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee invited participants from among school officials, educators, parents, students and representatives of community organizations to address the issue of Hispanic student dropout, its causes, consequences and potential solutions. Mindful of the Commission's jurisdiction, reference was made to the possible civil rights implications of Hispanic student dropout issues.

The information provided is an overview of the complex factors involved in Hispanic dropout and provides a background for officials and educators to initiate programs and activities to deal with the issue.

Respectfully,

Maxime Kurtz, Chairperson
Colorado Advisory Committee

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*Although a member at the time of this study, this individual is no longer a member of the Advisory Committee. In April 1987 the Commissioners appointed Carlos Leal of Greeley and Karen Steinhauser of Denver to the Colorado Advisory Committee.

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Introduction

In keeping with its responsibilities to monitor civil rights issues throughout the State, the Colorado Advisory Committee conducted a series of six community forums between January and May 1986, to gather information on problems related to the high dropout rate among Hispanic students in Colorado. At these forums, school officials, educators, parents, students, and representatives of community organizations were invited to participate by providing oral or written presentations on the subject to the Advisory Committee. In addition, open sessions gave opportunity for members of the general public to participate. Participants were asked to address the magnitude of the Hispanic dropout problem, causes of the problem, consequences of the problem, and possible solutions.

Initially, only one forum in Denver was envisioned. However, upon receiving requests from representatives of communities throughout the State, the Committee enlarged its plan to encompass a series of information-gathering forums, in order to allow participation in areas with considerable economic, demographic, and geographic variation. During the four-month period, in addition to two forums in Denver, four others were conducted in Pueblo, Grand Junction, Durango, and Greeley. Invitations were issued to the Committee from each of these locations, and each city selected was located in an area of high Hispanic population.

At these six forums a total of 124 persons testified before the Advisory Committee. Others presented a large volume of written materials on the issue. A summary of the information collected at the forums, and of that recieved by staff and Advisory Committee members from other sources, is presented in this memorandum.

Mindful of the Commission's jurisdictional limitations, special note was made of references to possible links between Hispanic dropout issues and discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Of the 124 persons who testified in the community forums, 48 (or 39 percent) referred to aspects of discrimination in the overall problem. For example, Dr. Audrey Alvardo, Director of the Latin American Research and Service Agency (LARASA), declared that, "The unexplained reason [for the larger dropout rates for Hispanics] is proposed to be discrimination across the system....My recommendation to the Committee is to become involved in examining where discriminatory practices exist." Other

participants referred to a study of discriminatory practices in Mexican American education by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights completed in 1974, and asserted that little had changed since that time.

The forums also generated a great deal of attention to the problem by the media, with resulting interest and activities by schools and community groups. From the presentations to the Committee and ensuing discussion, it was obvious that the causes for the high Hispanic dropout rate are complex and frequently involve a combination of factors. It was also evident that in local communities and throughout the State the problem is believed to be a serious one with far-reaching implications.

The Magnitude of the Hispanic Student Dropout Problem

The size of the Hispanic student dropout problem in Colorado public schools is a source of much disagreement. Estimates run from as low as 11.3 percent to as high as 90 percent. The figures are clouded, furthermore, by varying definitions of "dropout" and by the State's lack of a standard attendance reporting system.

While the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) reports the statewide dropout rate for Hispanic students at 11.3 percent, its calculations are based solely on those who leave school during their sophomore year or thereafter. Yet the National Commission on Secondary Schooling for Hispanics reports that about 40 percent of all Hispanics dropouts leave school sometime before the spring semester of 10th grade. Denver school board member Paul Sandoval claims that Colorado's Hispanic dropout rate is, in fact, 50-60 percent if 7th, 8th, and 9th graders are included in the count. Another conflicting figure is provided by the National Education Association, which places the Colorado dropout rate for Hispanics at 25 percent. A study by the Tomas Rivera Center similarly indicates that 21.6 percent of Colorado's 16-17-year-old Hispanics, versus 10.0 percent of Anglos and 9.7 percent of blacks in the same age group, were not enrolled in school in 1980. However, the Center makes no distinction between dropouts and persons who may not have enrolled at all. Still another perspective is offered by a Fort Collins, Colorado, school-community committee on Hispanic student progress. This group notes that "students may be physically present in the classroom, but demonstrate a psychological 'dropping out' through their lack of performance," suggesting that these students too could be considered dropouts, and the "dropout problem" is itself a manifestation of a larger lack of achievement problem.

Denver Public Schools (DPS), like the Colorado Department of Education, counts only 10th, 11th, and 12th graders in its dropout figures. Students who leave prior to 10th grade are considered to be truants instead of dropouts. Also not reflected in DPS dropout statistics are any pupils who transfer to other educational programs recognized by their local district, including those who enroll in private or parochial schools and those who enter the armed forces. Movement between Colorado school districts can further skew dropout figures. A rural district, for example, may incorrectly assume that a student moving to Denver has re-enrolled in a Denver school, when in fact that student has dropped out. And a pupil who switches from one DPS school to another during the school year will lower the dropout rate because that pupil is counted twice in the enrollment figures. (DPS determines dropout rates by dividing the total number of dropouts by the total number of students enrolled.)

Colorado's current system for educational funding may also minimize dropout rates by encouraging inflation of enrollment statistics. As Jim Esquibel, a parent and primary school teacher, put it, "There is one time that the DPS loves your children; it's when they have to take the count for the State aid. They want your kid in school that day!" Dr. George Archuleta, an education consultant, alleges that this all-important, once-a-year headcount leads to cheating on the enrollment numbers, resulting in artificially low dropout rates. Craig Bowman, a Denver newspaper columnist who is also a junior high English teacher, contends that the dropout rate runs as high as 75 percent when it includes such students "who are enrolled in name only."

Dropout rates also differ considerably from county to county acros the State. These variations show up clearly on Map One, which is included in the appendix. A LARASA study, based on 1980 Census data, concluded that there is a high correlation between the size of the Hispanic population in each county and the percentage of adults who have not completed high school. Map Two, also part of the appendix, seems to confirm this conclusion by showing that the proportion of Hispanic male adults who have not completed high school also tends to be highest in the southern, western, and northeastern counties, sections of the State heavily populated by Hispanics. (Patterns of non-completion for Hispanic women vary only one to two percent from those depicted for males in each corresponding county.) Four of the Advisory Committee's forums were held in these areas.

At the State level, 52 percent of Hispanic adults have not completed high school. This pattern appears to be repeating itself in the current generation of Hispanic youth. Information received by the Colorado Advisory Committee, regardless of whose statistics are used, indicates a pattern of Hispanic dropout rates which exceed overall rates, as well as those for Anglos alone. In Denver Public Schools as a whole, Hispanics dropped out during the 1984-85 school year at a rate almost double that of their Anglo counterparts: 14.7 percent versus 7.8 percent, respectively. At Denver's North High School, where nearly 60 percent of students are Hispanic, the '84-'85 overall dropout rate was the worst in the city (12.8 percent), but it was even worse for Hispanics (14.8 percent). At West, the city's most heavily Hispanic high school, with Hispanics over 66 percent of the student body, the rates were 11.9 percent for Hispanics, compared with 10.9 percent overall and 9.7 percent for Anglos.

Outside the Denver area, similar disparities are reported. In Montrose County, Hispanic pupils dropped out at a rate of 51 percent. The corresponding overall rate was 23 percent. In Mesa County, School Superintendent Raymond Waier, while noting that the State's student-counting system is less than accurate, estimates the dropout rate for Hispanics at 30 percent and the overall rate at 15 percent. At Durango High, one of three high schools in La Plata County, counselor Don Brown cites the Hispanic dropout rate at 7.6 percent, versus an overall rate of 5.3 percent. (The Colorado Department of Education places both rates much higher, at 22.1 percent for Hispanics, and 9.4 percent for all groups.) In Greeley, the Hispanic dropout rates for men and women were estimated at 80 percent and 70 percent, respectively, by Sal Salazar, a forum participant. (The Colorado Department of Education reports lower rates in this instance. It assigns the Greeley District a 19.5 percent dropout rate for Hispanic males and a 17.6 percent rate for Hispanic females, each still higher than the rates for their same-sex Anglo counterparts or for men and women overall, however.) And in Alamosa County, where Dr. Archuleta claims the very existence of migrant children (most of whom are Hispanic) has long been ignored, the dropout rate for such children may be as high as 90 percent.

Some Causes of the Hispanic Student Dropout Problem

Many reasons for the Hispanic dropout rate were advanced by forum participants, and in various research papers submitted to the Advisory Committee following the Colorado forums.

Discrimination, language and cultural differences, insensitivity on the part of teachers and counselors, low student self-esteem, lack of Hispanic role models, poverty, teenage pregnancy, migrant status of some students, lack of interaction between school personnel and Hispanic parents and community, and competency testing are just some of the reasons given. Several major themes emerged, however.

Parents, students, and educators alike repeatedly cited discrimination, both institutionalized and in the form of disparate treatment of individual students, as a major cause of the Hispanic dropout problem. Following the Advisory Committee's forums in Denver, School Superintendent James Scamman, in a speech before Hispanics of Colorado, acknowledged his own belief "that when students walk in classroom doors.... teachers look at last names on class rosters and the color of skin and that does affect their expectations [of students]." Magdalena Gallegos-Perez, the parent of a student at Denver's North High School, echoed this belief, noting that teachers' and counselors' low expectations for Hispanic students lead them to push such students into vocational rather than academic courses. Ann Dominguez, the parent of a student, and secretary at Central High School in Pueblo, stated that even though her daughter was an honor student, she had never been encouraged by any school counselor to attend college, which would have been the case for high-achieving Anglo students. Similarly, Theresa Montano, a Merrill Middle School (Denver) teacher, pointed out that very few students in her school's gifted and talented program are minority, implying that discriminatory factors operate in the gifted-and-talented selection process. Montano also offered as as example of perceived discrimination in access to equipment a typing class in which Anglo students were seated at the front of the classrooom, using electric machines, while all five minority students were placed at the back to work on manual typewriters.

Numerous other specific instances of disparate treatment were alleged. Roni Gonzalez stated that Hispanic students such as herself got less attention from teachers than their Anglo classmates in the public schools she'd attended prior to dropping out. Nita Gonzalez, Chair of the Denver Youth Employment and Education Task Force and administrator of a youth program at Servicios de La Raza, cited cases of Chicano students being graded lower than Anglos for the same quality of work. Mary Lou Beruman, a parent, reported that some teachers call Anglo, but not Hispanic, pupils by name. And Jim Esquibel, a parent and teacher, noted that a high proportion of Denver Public Schools suspensions involve minority children, 77

percent at the high school level and 75 percent at the elementary level.

One parent, Joe Navarro, also spoke of an incident in which an Anglo teacher reportedly threw a Chicano third grader down a flight of stairs. He felt the teacher was disciplined less severely than she should have been because the child was Hispanic. Another Hispanic parent, Joe Herrera, stated that his own involvement in the schools had resulted in discrimination toward his children.

The method of determining a student's ability in the English language was also alleged to discriminate against Spanish-speaking children. Armando C. de Baca, State Director of the League of United Latin American Citizens, described a DPS test used to determine whether Hispanic children whose primary home language is Spanish are bilingual or monolingual, noting that the test primarily involves listening. Since high listening acuity doesn't necessarily indicate facility in speaking, reading, or writing, he argued that this test is invalid and discriminatory.

The schools' alleged inability to deal with language and cultural differences in general was frequently cited as a contributor to the Hispanic dropout rate. As Dr. Frank Lucero, Director of the Hispanic Cultural Center at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, explained, "In many schools the operating assumption is that different backgrounds and languages constitute deficits to be corrected, rather than strengths upon which to build." Luis Cortez, a Colorado Springs resident, said that students with a heavy Spanish accent are perceived by some teachers as somehow handicapped in the learning process. And Manuel Vasquez, Director of Mental Health Services for Servicios de La Raza, held that textbooks which portray a negative Hispanic image, or omit reference to Hispanic contributions, display further cultural ignorance. The net result was described by Mr. Cortez as "the desecration of Hispanic students' self-esteem." Mr. Vasquez noted, furthermore, that these students may drop out because of lowered self-concepts, or in an attempt to preserve their own self-concepts.

Jake Guerrero, an assistant principal from a Colorado Springs high school, attributed the inability to teach multicultural children to deficiencies in the teachers' own education. Yet Dr. Mary Estelle Lujan, an educator involved in inservice teacher training, observed that there is strong resistance to cultural sensitivity instruction from some of these same teachers, who express their hostility by insulting the materials. One education major was reported by Lujan to have remarked during class, "I'm a bigot and proud of it."

In counterpoint to the extensive testimony relating to discrimination and/or language and cultural differences, Vincent Carroll, an assistant editor at the Rocky Mountain News, noted the successes of some non-Hispanic ethnic groups who also suffered discrimination in America. Carroll contends that the Hispanic dropout rate cannot be attributed, to any meaningful extent, to either bigotry or lack of cultural awareness, since these factors were not insurmountable for non-Anglo immigrants such as those who are Jewish, Chinese, or Japanese. A different view was provided, however, by Lori Orum, a Senior Education Policy Analyst employed by the National Council of La Raza:

> Some of our favorite national myths suround these Horatio Alger-type individuals...who, with sixth grade educations, built financial empires. However, most immigrant, poor, and limited English-proficient youth dropped out of school, marginally literate, and did not become millionaires. They worked in marginal jobs for low wages.

Poverty was alleged to be another major cause of Colorado's high Hispanic dropout rate. Don Salazar, a participant in the community forum at Durango, observed that "[t]he cycle of poverty and discrimination makes students want material things and the moment they get old enough to drop out to work they do." North High (Denver) parent Magdalena Aguayo also spoke of the difficulties faced by some students who work in order to stay in school. Those who work late, she explained, may find it hard to be on time for their first class, which can start relatively early in the morning. Since being late results in being counted absent, however, such students may decide to simply skip class. According to (Denver) West High Principal Tony Salazar, cummulative poor attendance is a prelude to dropping out for some students, since "they get so far behind they can never catch up." On any given day at West or North High Schools in Denver, 300-400 students, up to 20 percent of the student body, may be absent. Poverty was also offered as a reason for the non-involvement of many Hispanic students in extracurricular activities, such as football, choirs, and student government, which might increase their incentive to stay in school. Linda Villa, a Grand Junction mother of seven, provided some real-life economic perspective when she stated that her children are not able to participate in athletics because she can't afford the $60.00 athletic fee charged for each child.

Though dropouts were reported to come predominantly from poor households, the relationship between poverty and school discontinuance may be due to something besides dollar impact. As Raul Yzaguirre, President of the National Council of La Raza observed, research shows socioeconomic status to be a predictor, but not necessarily a cause, of dropping out. Research may therefore be measuring, to some extent, an expectation that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds will do poorly in school. Whatever the relationship between poverty and discontinuance is, however, it is clear that poverty alone does not account for higher dropout rates among Hispanics. A study based on Census data revealed that, at four different levels of poverty, dropout rates for poor Hispanics were still two to three times higher than those for poor whites.

According to Dr. Charles Branch, Dean at Metropolitan State College, poverty is one of several factors used to identify potential dropouts; coming from a single-parent family is another. Both factors may be operative in Colorado's Hispanic dropout rate. Almost 93 percent of Hispanic single-parent families living below poverty level in the Denver-Boulder metro area are headed by women. In 1984, the poverty rate of Hispanic children in female-headed households was a staggering 73.6 percent.

Teen pregnancy was cited as another reason for Colorado's high Hispanic dropout rate by Debbie Ortega, a member of the Hispanic Advisory Committee, and teen pregnancy was, in turn, linked to poverty. A recent study by the Colorado Department of Social Services notes, "Teenage childbearing is...the hub around which the...poverty cycle revolves." Dr. David Kaplan, head of adolescent medicine at Denver's Children's Hospital, has presented statistics to local school board members which show that teen birth rates exceed both State and national averages in all but one of ten neighborhoods from which Denver high schools draw students. Teen birth rates are three to four times higher in the heavily Hispanic neighborhoods from which West and North High students are drawn. Cited in conjunction with the high teen pregnancy rate was a drop in female enrollment between grades nine and 12 which may be as much as 60 percent for some Denver schools. Though school districts are not currently required to report the number of students who drop out due to pregnancy, it has been estimated to be the cause of at least half the instances of female high school discontinuance. Statistics also show that every day in America 40 teenage girls give birth to their third child. This indicates that childbearing for many begins at the junior high level.

Poverty not only affects the resources of individual students, but often those of entire school districts as well. A Denver Post editorial on the need to overhaul Colorado's current school funding law contrasted the annual amounts per child which can be spent by the State's richest and poorest districts, $11,000 and $3,000, respectively. The disparity is not lost on Hispanic leaders; Dr. Lucero, for instance, emphasizes that education for students who are socially, economically, or culturally different requires the same dollar investment as education for average and upper class students. However, State Representative Jim Scherer, a member of the Colorado House Education Committee, testified that it is politically inexpedient to cut funding in some school districts in order to redistribute funds to poorer districts. He also noted that the loss of Federal dollars for early intervention programs has meant that some school districts cannot afford such programs on their own. Dr. Gilbert Roman, an administator at the U.S. Department of Education, claimed, however, that some districts refuse to even apply for necessary funds that would address the special needs of Hispanic children. Dr. Archuleta further alleged that funds for such programs, Title VII or those involving migrants, for example, are misused for athletics due to a lack of accountability.

Lack of Hispanic role models in the schools and school system was alluded to by many forum speakers as still another reason for the State's disproportionately high Hispanic dropout rates. Montrose City Councilman Daniel Alires said that, though Hispanics comprise 16 percent of the Montrose population, only three percent of the district's teachers and none of its counselors are Hispanic. Similar underrepresentations were cited elsewhere. Not one of Grand Junction's 32 school counselors, for example, is Hispanic. Only two of 20 teachers at one Durango high school are Hispanic, and only one member of Pueblo's school board is Hispanic, though these schools are in locations heavily populated by Hispanics. School superintendents, except in some very small southern Colorado districts, are almost exclusively non-minority. Hispanics are also underrepresented or lacking entirely on many policy-making boards which affect the educational system. In a recent special commentary featured in the Denver Post, Dr. Archuleta stated that no Hispanic has headed the Colorado Department of Education, nor served as its deputy assistant commissioner, in nearly 13 years. Further, no Hispanic sits on the State Board of Education, the elected body which appoints the commissioner. And "[n]o Hispanic has ever been selected to head any major office or division within the department."

Competency testing, though seen by Denver School Board member Naomi Bradford as a means to head off academic failure, was viewed as downright discriminatory by other forum participants. Middle school teacher Theresa Montano, noting that only two of her 65 "high students" are minority, while 80 of her 85 "low students" are minority, felt that competency testing is being used to track minority youth into lower classes. U.S. Senator Lawton Chiles, in testimony before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, voiced his concern that our current national drive for educational excellence via competency tests and other means may even exacerbate the dropout problem, if "at-risk" students are not provided with extra help in meeting the new standards. Competency tests administered in January in the Denver Public Schools appear to support his point: Hispanic students at all three levels tested (7th, 8th, and 9th grades) failed at a higher rate (32 percent) than their black, Native American, Anglo, or Asian counterparts (27 percent, 27 percent, 22 percent, and 11 percent, respectively). As with classroom absenteeism, a high proportion of Hispanic students were not present for the competency exams. Their absence rate, at 33 percent, was twice the district average.

Consequences of Hispanic Students Dropping Out

If the magnitude of the Hispanic dropout problem has tended to be underestimated or ignored, its costs and effects cannot be. The consequences, some of which appear to be self-perpetuating, will be felt for generations to come in the educational, social, economic, and political arenas.

"As with a food chain," says demographer Harold Hodgekinson, "changes at one level in the educational continuum...have direct and predictable consequences for other levels in the 'chain.'" During the 1980-81 school year, Hispanics, who constitute at least 6.4 percent of our national population and a higher proportion of young adults, earned only 2.3 percent of all bachelors degrees, 2.2 percent of masters, 1.4 percent of doctorates, and 2.2 percent of first professional degrees. Colorado educators who testified described a similar underrepresentation of Hispanics in the student bodies of local institutions. Lupe Salazar, Coordinator of Hispanic Services at Colorado State University (CSU), said only 460 (2.6 percent) of the total 18,000 students at CSU are Hispanic. Bill Langworthy, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Fort Lewis College, placed Hispanic student representation at his school at three to four percent,

commenting that Fort Lewis's output of Hispanic teachers is also low. These low percentages result in a limited number of Hispanics who are eligible to become teachers or other academic professionals, thereby restricting the number of Hispanic educators who might induce Hispanic youth not to drop out by their own presence as role models.

But what happens to those who do drop out? According to U.S. Senator Lawton Chiles, in 1981 over a third of America's high school dropouts were unemployed. Furthermore, by 1982, dropouts aged 25 and older who were employed, were earning one-third less than graduates from the same age group. Though Senator Chiles does not disaggregate these figures for Hispanic dropouts, he too points out that Hispanic students have the highest dropout rates, suggesting that they are among those who experience the highest rates of unemployment. Other sources also suggest that the economic effects of dropping out, like the dropout problem itself, may be especially severe for Hispanics. A recent study reports that if the parents in an Hispanic family have not completed high school, a high proportion of the Hispanic children from that family are likely to be poor. In addition, LARASA's examination of a microsample of Census data for the Denver metro area show that both male and female Hispanic dropouts earn mean incomes which are less than those of their same-sex Anglo counterparts. LARASA also reports that its Census microsample indicates higher unemployment rates for Hispanic males than for non-Hispanic males (7.1 percent versus 3.7 percent), and for Hispanic females than non-hispanic females (3.5 percent versus 3.4 percent). In addition, over 60 percent of all Hispanics were found to be employed in three primary occupations: operatives (22.8 percent), service workers (21.4 percent), and clerical and kindred jobs (17.5 percent), while non-Hispanics were more evenly distributed across most occupations. As Hispanics are concentrated in relatively low-paying work, their family income is commensurately lower. And low family income, as discussed previously in this report, is, in turn, thought to be a major contributor to the Hispanic dropout problem.

Senator Chiles' study showed that only 20 percent of dropouts will enter any type of training program. Only 14 percent of males and 9 percent of females will enter a General Education Diploma (GED) program, and some will drop out of that. Charles Batey, a participant at the first Denver forum, attempted to demonstrate that the dropout without further training is, however, at a chronic disadvantage in the world of work. Mr. Batey, who is employed by Coors, a major Colorado company, stated that the majority of that company's jobs are

non-entry level, requiring previous related experience from adult job applicants, or some type of vocational or academic post-secondary training from younger potential workers. Dropouts must also realize, he said, that even if some jobs do not require a diploma or GED for initial employment, advancement will depend on skills and training which do require the educational credential.

Noting that he has responsibility for the affirmative action program at Coors, Mr. Batey also cautioned that affirmative action is designed primarily to assist minority and other individuals who are already employable, but is not an alternative experience or preventive program for the unqualified dropout. He went on to explain that many people already in the national labor force are currently losing their jobs to machines, and that there are not now enough jobs to accommodate new entrants to the labor force. Because the experienced employees displaced by automation will absorb many jobs historically held by women and minorities, Mr. Batey predicts that employment prospects for dropouts will be even poorer. He expects that they will be relegated to low-skill, low-paid jobs at the bottom of the scale, resulting in a continuation of economic hardship for them. Testimony given at the Pueblo forum reinforces Mr. Batey's statements. Hispanics in that city were said to have dropped out in the past to work for the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation (CF&I). But CF&I has now closed, and dropout rates there have doubled. A 20 percent national unemployment rate for 16-19-year-old Hispanics cited by La Raza would also appear to support Mr. Batey's contention.

Just as minority dropouts cannot rely on the continued availability of some jobs they have traditionally held, they may also no longer be able to look to the armed services as a means to escape poverty. Denver's Executive Director of the Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations, Richard Castro, spoke to this issue on behalf of the American GI Forum in Colorado. The traditional option of service in the armed forces is being foreclosed to Hispanic dropouts, said Mr. Castro, because of the armed forces' new emphasis on recruiting high school graduates. He also observed that a poor pre-service education affects the millitary testing scores which in turn limit which career opportunities young men and women can pursue within the armed services.

Senator Chiles infers that when dropouts are unable to support themselves because of limited education and unemployment, society as a whole bears the cost in both dollars

and human terms. He predicts that many dropouts will become our next generation of illiterates, estimating that illiteracy already costs the government $120 billion a year. The National Council of La Raza maintains that the functional illiteracy rate for Hispanics is at least 56 percent higher than for any other major population group, and that such illiteracy poses a danger to our nation's political well-being. Illiterate citizens have difficulty casting an informed vote, and illiterate non-citizens are deprived of the possibility of seeking citizenship and fuller participation. Many studies have also shown a link between crime and lack of education. Timothy Dyer, Superintendent for the Phoenix (Arizona) Union High School District, stated at a recent Denver Public School conference of Southwestern-State school administrators that 80 percent of most juvenile prisoners are high school dropouts. "It's more expensive to provide jail for inmates," he argued, than to provide "programs for dropout students."

Teen pregnancy illustrates another self-perpetuating aspect of the dropout problem; not only are teens who give birth more likely to drop out, but female teens who drop out are more likely to become pregnant, and female dropouts who have babies are even less likely to return to school. A conservative estimate of Colorado's costs directly attributable to teen pregnancy (AFDC, food stamps, etc.) has been placed at more than $21 million a year.

The potential long range effect of the Hispanic dropout problem was described by Greeley School Board member Pres Montoya as no less than a "social time bomb." For due to the rapid growth of the U.S. Hispanic population, by the year 2000 the number of Hispanic children in this country will have doubled. Mr. Batey's testimony also cited data from the American Council on Education which indicate that the Hispanic population growth rate (reflecting both births and immigration) is indeed the highest of all groups, and that Hispanics can be expected to constitute the nation's largest minority group by no later than the year 2020.

Harold Hodgekinson points out that there is also a direct link between State-level economic development and high school completion:

> In a state that retains a high percentage of its youth to high school graduation, almost every young person becomes a "net gain" to the state--with a...diploma, there is a high probability of that person getting a job and repaying the state for the

cost of his/her education, through taxable income, many times over. However, in a state with a poor record of retention to high school graduation, many youth are a "net loss" to the state, in that...the chances of [a dropout] student getting work and...repaying the state...are very small indeed. Addditionally, that young person is unlikely to leave the state, becoming a permanent economic burden to that state's economy.

Several forum participants, Phil Wishon, Virgina Guzman Fogg, Dr. Gilbert Roman, Dr. Audrey Alvarado, and Richard Castro, implied that Hispanic educational attainment patterns are intergenerational. If this is so, then those dropouts who become parents may produce the next generation of Hispanic dropouts, placing further strain on Colorado's economy.

Some Possible Solutions to the Hispanic Dropout Problem

As with causes, many possible solutions to the Hispanic dropout problem have been identified, including studying the effectiveness of some existing dropout programs. While there seems to be broad support for some efforts and proposals, others have been criticized as inadequate or as potential sources of new problems for Hispanic students.

The State Department of Education is responsible for implementing Colorado's Educational Quality Act of 1985 within the State. This act authorizes the joint partnership of school districts, administrators, teachers, and parent groups in a two-year, $2 million venture to promote educational quality (the Two-Plus-Two Project), including efforts at dropout prevention. The Two-Plus-Two dropout component provided for intervention with students who are "at risk," that is, likely to drop out, and re-enrollment incentives for students who have already dropped out. Phil Wishon, a faculty member at the University of Northern Colorado, stated, however, that "Two-Plus-Two" has had minimal success, as it is underfunded and involves little follow-up. Fewer than 12 schools, he said, have collectively received only $200,000 to conduct dropout assessment activities. Further, Virgina Guzman Fogg, an educator whose school district received money to operate a demonstration program aimed at dropout prevention, noted that hers was one of only five such programs to benefit from "Two-Plus-Two" statewide. School board member Paul Sandoval also felt that "Two-Plus-Two" didn't give Denver anything; rather, it "stole...three hundred and some thousand dollars [from the district]...in effect...[taking] ten counselors away who could have been working with the dropout problem of this city."

The need for more money targeted specifically at the dropout has also been recognized at the Federal level. One bill introduced in the Senate, for example, would provide $50 million dollars for dropout retention and recovery demonstration projects through grants to local education agencies. Another Federal initiative, The Choice and Equity Act of 1985 (TEACH), would establish an educational voucher system whereby parents could direct funds to schools of their own choosing. This concept received mixed reviews from forum participants. Douglas Johnson, Director of the Career and Educational Equity Resource Unit at the Colorado Department of Education, did not view vouchers as a solution, whereas Nita Gonzalez, administrator of Servicios de La Raza's youth program, gave them strong support. Luis Cortez, a member of the National Education Association (NEA), expressed his disagreement with the Association's position on TEACH, as follows: "The NEA says that it [TEACH] will segregate our students, but I think there's...a more insidious segregation that takes place...based on a sad economic base,...on poverty."

The National Council of La Raza, however, raises some concerns about what overall impact The Choice and Equity Act might have on Hispanic children. Since the funds to implement TEACH would come from a local district's Compensatory Education Program grant, money allocated under Chapter One of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, funding would be reduced accordingly for educational services provided by Chapter One to those disadvantaged students who remained in the public schools. Hispanic children are, according to La Raza, disproportionately represented among Chapter One students, comprising 20 percent of those who receive Chapter One services, but only eight percent of the total K-12 public school population. In addition, La Raza reports that Hispanic students are also "overwhelmingly concentrated in public schools." These factors have caused La Raza to caution that "any legislation which diminishes compensatory educational services in public schools requires thoughtful analysis by Hispanics."

One final legislative "solution" has been offered at the State level. In response to the many difficulties in measuring the dropout rate detailed earlier in this memorandum, Colorado legislators have proposed a law requiring that the State Board of Education cooperate with local school districts to develop and implement a uniform accounting method and data collection system on dropouts.

The Denver Public School System is trying a number of different approaches to the dropout problem. It has undertaken a series of public conferences in order to discuss the dropout issue with the community, and created a city-wide task force composed of administators, parents, concerned citizens, and government and private sector representatives, to seek coordinated solutions. DPS Superintendent James Scamman has also established an office for dropout prevention within the system's Instructional Services Department, and directed that all existing dropout programs be evaluated for effectiveness. For example, the Metropolitian Youth Education Center, an alternative school for students who have dropped out of regular high schools, showed a 41.5 percent overall dropout rate from 1984-85, as well as an Hispanic dropout rate (44.4 percent) which exceeded that for all other racial and ethnic groups. DPS also lists among its "alternative settings for [secondary students with]...special needs" two which served a total of 110 pregnant teens during the 1984-85 school year. Moreover, an elementary level Hispanic Dropout Prevention Project geared towards early identification of, and intervention with, "at-risk" students last year served 250 such youths. A bilingual, English as a Secondary Language (ESL) program additionally served 14,000 DPS elementary students in 1984-85.

In an effort to solve the dropout problem, the Denver School District is also working with school districts from other Southwestern States, institutions of higher education, the business community, and a community-based volunteer tutoring program. In April 1986 school administrators from Phoenix, Tucson, Albuquerque, San Diego, and Las Vegas met in Denver to share ideas on successful programs for dropouts. As Denver Superintendent Scamman explained, the six cities involved are comparable in size, have complex multicultural environments, and ethnically similar student populations. The group intends to continue such meetings annually, with a subgroup of officials who are involved in curriculum and instruction meeting on an interim basis as well.

DPS is involved with Denver's Metropolitan State College in a plan to turn four Denver schools into laboratory schools, starting in the fall of 1986. North High School, Skinner Middle School, Bryant-Webster Elementary School, and an additional, undetermined elementary school will then be run similarly to Greenlee Elementary, the school used to train student teachers from Metropolitan State College. The Greenlee School is itself part of a collaborative effort between DPS and Metropolitan State, according to Dr. Charles Branch, Dean of

the College. Greenlee is intended to be what Dr. Branch termed a family model school, rather than a factory model. While the factory model attempts to mold diverse, unique students into a uniform product, the family model is "characterized by warmth, cooperative spirit, and high positive expectations for everyone." Dr. Branch indicated that a high proportion of Greenlee youngsters are Hispanic, and that their parents are represented, along with faculty from the Greenlee school and Metropolitan State College, on a laboratory school advisory council.

A second institution of higher education, the University of Denver (DU), is also working to combat the high DPS dropout rates. DU researchers are studying ninth and 11th graders at North and West High Schools to try to isolate which of the causes for dropping out can be controlled by the schools and which cannot.

At the secondary level, North and West High Schools are participating in the School-to-Work Action Program (SWAP), started three years ago by the Colorado Alliance of Business. SWAP serves students whose English or math performance is two or more grades below their grade level, or who display attendance or behavior problems. The program provides job skills training as well as basic skills classes, and includes staff development for teachers of SWAP students. Students' parents and the business community are also involved. The National Education Association will include the SWAP program in a document it is compiling on successful dropout programs nationwide.

Another program which couples academics with job training, JOBSTART, has also been announced by the Denver Public Schools. The program will cost DPS nothing, as it is financed primarily by contributions to the Manpower Development Research Corporation in New York under the Federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). JOBSTART will serve 120 dropouts, aged 17 and 21, through the Emily Griffith Opportunity School. A second group of 120 will receive no special training, and will function as a control group. Officials will then compare the progress of the two groups to determine the success of the program.

As a result of the high failure rate of Hispanic students on the DPS competency tests, noted earlier, a group of schools and elected officials called on the community and DPS to participate in a volunteer tutoring program. The program, called Partners in Education (PIE), began in February of this year, and has attracted hundreds of volunteers.

Denver School Board member Franklin Mullen has proposed that DPS address the issue of dropouts due to teen pregnancy by setting up school-based health clinics. Such clinics would include pregnancy prevention among the health services offered to students. Like JOBSTART, the clinics would also be free to DPS, as they would be funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. School Board member Paul Sandoval is adamantly opposed to the clinic idea, but similiar clinics operated for 12 years in St. Paul, Minnesota, were said to have cut the student birth rates in half. Debbie Ortega, a participant at the Denver forum, as well as the newspaper report of a forum sponsored by the Mayor's Commission on Youth, also cited the need for sex education and for enhanced support for parenting teens which would allow them to complete school.

While much attention has been focussed on efforts of the Denver Public Schools to curb the dropout problem, DPS is by no means the only entity involved in such activities. Other school districts, private schools, community organizations, and industry are also operating various programs for dropouts around the State.

In Montrose, Colorado, a "Two-Plus-Two" dropout prevention program emphasizing staff development, mentorship, middle school attendance, and parent training has been implemented. Since Montrose is the only western slope district receiving "Two-Plus-Two" dropout funds, it has chosen, contigent on second-year funding, to share both its Dropout Program Director and knowledge gained in the program with other western slope districts. Because the Montrose program is modeled on one implemented previously in Greeley, the two communities are also exploring a staff exchange of teachers and principals. Members of the Mexican American Development Association in Montrose have been studying the dropout problem on their own for 18 months and attempting to work with the school district to find solutions.

Durango High School has instituted an alternative school program for high school dropouts which allows students to work part time and attend school part time. As of spring semester 1986, there were 10 students in this program, and 59 more on a voluntary waiting list.

In Denver, Servicios de La Raza runs an alternative school, Escuela Tlatelolco Centro del Norte, to provide a basic high school curriculum in "a personalized, non-traditional setting" for youth unable to benefit from traditional

schooling. Roni Gonzalez, an Escuela Tlatelolco student who had previously dropped out of three public schools, praised her Escuela experience, describing how it provided positive role models in its Chicano teachers, offered supportive feedback to students, and raised student self-esteem, aspirations, and cultural pride. Noting that Escuela does not use suspensions, Gonzalez stated, "They want you there in school real bad." Escuela Tlatelolco currently serves about 30 students.

Another alternative school, the High School Equivlaency Program (HEP), is run by the University of Colorado's Bueno Center for Multicultural Education. HEP serves high school dropouts who are farm workers, a mostly Hispanic population, recruiting them in Alamosa, La Junta, and Fort Lupton. The program is pre-collegiate. striving to place its graduates in one of several community colleges with which HEP works. Of more than 580 students who have graduated from HEP since it began in 1981, 18 percent have gone on to college. The HEP staff is composed entirely of Chicano profesionals from the local communities in which it operates. HEP provides its students with counseling, employment skills, job placement, and follow-up. It also offers field trips and imparts survival skills which help dropouts from a farm worker background to adjust to middle-class Anglo society.

In Greeley, Colorado, the Hewlett Packard Company has come up with an innovative approach to help its Hispanic employees better their academic skills and futher employment prospects. The companmy has brought the classroom into the plant by offering an English as a Second Language course on site.

The programs and proposals listed above are by no means all-inclusive, but give an idea of the geographic and creative breadth of the many positive efforts being made to solve the Hispanic dropout problem in Colorado. While such efforts toward solution indicate a recognition of the magnitude and seriousness of the Hispanic dropout problem, they are, however, far from universal. Further, whether the current level of activity will continue, and whether particular activities prove successful in curbing the Hispanic student dropout rate statewide, both remain to be seen.

In Conclusion

This memorandum is a summary of information resulting from six community forums held throughout the State by the Colorado Advisory Committee. It should not be considered an exhaustive review of Colorado's Hispanic student dropout problem, and it does not purport to identify all the causes of this problem. Rather, it provides a cursory look at issues and concerns which the Advisory Committee may decide merit further investigation and analysis.