

AP History Project
Interview on Ana Jimenez by Kathy Chin and Alyssa Larrabee at
Brown Middle School on May 25, 2004
Hispanic Parent Questions

What school does your child currently attend?

My son currently attends Tobias.

How old is your child and how long has he attended school in the Hillsboro District?

My son will be 7 on June 11th and this would be his second year there at Tobias.

To what extent do you feel that the school involves and informs you about your child's education?

I think the intent is there but the effect is differently, it's not really well received. I don't see a lot of, I guess Spanish maybe it isn't the most dominant language, so maybe that's probably why they don't translate a lot of the information, but I don't think a lot of the you know the meeting notices or school information is translated aside from just district info, so to really have someone call you and say be involved in the parent meetings or like what we would do for our high school or middle school kids, I don't see a lot of that at the elementary level.

What is your family's educational background?

My family's educational background, we're pretty educated I think, we try to be well mannered (chuckles). Let's see, out of twelve kids, I'd say we're... you know there's a doctor in the house, there's a government law enforcement type person involved because he does a little bit of everything for businesses as well as community doing law enforcement. We have a lot of professional construction, welding type things, I mean I got a lot of handy men pretty much, all my brothers are pretty well, highly educated I'd say.

Do you feel there is anything the district can do to increase parent involvement?

I think the district is set in motion like I said with the community, that they have developed in conjunction with the Office of Hispanic Relations where Ms. Acuna is heading and that tosa position she has, I think they're off to a good start for now based on what we know, I think it's a great start based on what we had before, we didn't have a lot of parent involvement aside from maybe independent schools, I think the district is doing really good getting that started and we'll see how it goes from there.

How does your education play a factor in your involvement in your child's school?

How does my education... Well I'm only just a couple blocks down. Let's see, it's very important, I think it's very important because it really sets in the structure and it sets in the pace of where I want him to go, so I definitely need that to rely on to guide him to what he needs to be.

How have you been involved in your child's education and what do you think you can do to help your child improve?

I think his behavior needs to improve, but I'm very much involved in my child's education, that's one of my priorities, I think just because it's being an educator and knowing what he's going to need to do. As he gets older and older, I think if you ask him, he'll say 'gosh, she always wants me to do homework,' but I'm constantly promoting that education. I think the last interview I mentioned to you his plan, he definitely wants to finish elementary, if it'd be up to him, he'd go from 1st grade straight to 7th grade and that'll be hanging out here at Brown with all the teachers and then he'd go to high school, but you know his plan is definitely go to high school, go to college, you know get a hummer, and then get married and so on and that kind of stuff, but to better educate him I think I'm doing enough and that would be maintaining what the school is requiring, what his teachers... supporting his teachers, and that would be like basic homework, making sure he's getting it done, have that structure net discipline at home.

How effective do you think the district is at helping Hispanic students?

I think we're working on it as a district employee, in this case towards a parent, who I myself am a parent of a Latino child, I think the district is improving, I think they realize that there is a great need for parent involvement especially from the Latino community because pretty much 1 out of 4 Latino that reaches high school drops out, so we've got the highest dropout rate and we're trying to focus on getting them educated as parents to understand just how important education is, so I think the district is trying really hard, in the past maybe if you were to ask that of others they would say no, I think overall in the 5 years I've been here at Brown, we've done a lot to help our parents and that's been through the support of the principal, teachers that we've had here, they're are very supportive, so I can only speak off of what our school is from and the past other school's I've worked with, we've always had that support with parents, maybe it hasn't been branched out like it is now through that office that's been created and that tosa position that we had, maybe it's more known now, but like Glencoe District Office has always been involved and migrant ed has always been involved, so I think they're trying and then just creating this program even helps it more.

Do you feel schools have personally reached out to your child?

Schools... Oscar has only been there two years; I can't say that Tobias really reaches out to my son. I think the reason being is because he's not an ESL kid, he's not a migrant kid, he's more of a mainstream kid and I don't know if that would make any difference cause I know if they're ESL or in a different program we tend to branch out to them and want to help them even more not that the other mainstream aren't important, it's just that

if my son's native language was only Spanish than obviously I going to speak to that parent more in Spanish, so I guess as a mainstream student I don't see that they've really branched out more than the ordinary that they would.

Do you think higher education is important and why?

I think higher education is important, I think everybody's always eager and willing to learn, I think it's very important to always pursue and educate yourself whether if... I mean if you're a physician and you're continuing to help families and there's always new information, new research, so you're constantly finding yourself updating your practice or your profession. If you're a lawyer, there's constantly new laws being passed, so yes education is important otherwise you just kinda sit where your at and you never branch out to what you could be, you miss out on opportunities I should say.

Has your child been involved in an ESL program in the district, if so how well has the program met his needs?

Actually, my son has never been in an ESL program or a migrant program. His first native language is English even though he does speak Spanish. So I wouldn't be able to answer that.

To what extent does your child feel welcome and comfortable in his school?

At first he was uncomfortable about it because there wasn't very many Latino kids and I think he didn't see anybody like him, but at the same time he didn't really know culture or ethnic background until he got to his pre-school, so I think...you know just like any 1st grader, I don't think he felt really comfortable, now if you ask me he likes it the more and more he's learning. It's hard to say because his personality is he just kinda hangs in with whoever and mingles with whoever, but at first he didn't quite like it, it was odd because he was half day pm kinder so he'd go in the afternoon and it was like, 'this is it,' you know that kind of thing and the makeup of the classroom wasn't too exciting, I know he was bored out of his mind because he already know his colors and his 1,2,3's, but as the year progressed he was learning new things, so once he was learning something he's getting busy, other than that he's just like, 'okay, I've done this already,' so about feeling welcome I think he does, but he'll tell you other.

Has your child been successful in school and what has contributed to his success?

I want to say he's successful, I mean he made it to 2nd grade benchmark already in reading. He had gone to Mexico for a month and fell behind in his reading and after he came back, we just crammed; I mean I would read and read and he would read and once he started realizing that he could read, it's like he just wanted to keep reading. So aside from the 20 minutes that Ms. Albrook would assign you would have to read to your child, we would go to the library and check out another book or get a book from home, which anything that has to do with fishing or hunting or anything like that he likes, anything with dinosaurs too. So he would constantly want to do it and says, 'mommy, I want to

read, ' just like his friends. He was behind, when he came back in February, a month after he came back, he was at benchmark for 1st grade, so we crammed it and really a lot of it I think was just the fact that he says, 'mom, I can understand this.' Once he knew that he could read, he kept wanting to read more and more, so to better him in that situation I just pushed and pushed for him, 'okay now remember we gotta read,' or we'd always practice in the car as we're driving somewhere, 'how do you spell cite words, there, here, was,' and pretty much that's how I do it, we'll sit when we're driving for a long distance, we'll play games like that, I'll describe an animal and he'll have to identify it, that kind of thing, I'm constantly doing that to stimulate him and so he felt really bad because he was behind, but then when he caught up he was like, 'yeah, I'm at benchmark,' and so not to long ago we had conferences and as it turns out Ms. Albrook said he's now at 2nd grade benchmark. So that's awesome, from February to May, he's already at 2nd grade level; I think that's cool.

What do you think about the bilingual elementary education school program?

The dual emersion program or just having the bilingual program? I think that depends on the program, I mean who you're trying to get to and who's benefiting from it, I think any bilingual program will work, it's beneficial, it help's their kids, but if it's intent is to use it as a recovery program, to maintain their cultural background and their own native language, then I think it's wrong. It'd be an example, like my son say he's more English speaking than Spanish and I'm living more like the American Dream rather than my own Mexican roots and I would say, 'yeah, my son needs to learn Spanish,' so I would put him in a program like that, so he could use that as a way to maintain his Spanish, then I'm using it as a recovery Spanish, then the purpose is wrong. I think, from my understanding, those programs are developed for those newcomers, straight migrant ESL kids that we have, that need to maintain their own native language to a point where they can begin to except a new native language or a new second language, such as English, if you don't have a basic foundation in your own native language then it's going to be harder for you to adapt to a new one. So the more you have, whether it be the grammatics, the academics, aside from your everyday casual conversation in your own native language, you'll be able to adjust to English just like that. So if that's the intent to the program is to help those kids that's great, but like I say, if I'm wanting my child just to recover his ethnic roots and his native language than I'm misabusing, I think, the program cause that's not really what it's for.

Do you think a program like that could be installed in Middle School and High School and would it be effective?

I think any kind of program would be a benefit to all kids because at different levels your always going to have straight newcomer kids. As matter of fact, I have 6 level 1 kids, which means those are kids that struggle with English. Now out of those 6, 3 are Vietnamese and the other 3 are Latino students, 2 of those Latino students come with an educational background, that means their academics are at the 7th grade level cause they're 7th graders, so it's easy for them to kind of associate the grammatics to what would be English, as they're learning English they're gaining that English language

because they're using the foundation of their own native language, Vietnamese it's the same way. I see my kids progress from the first day they got here till now and they're speaking more and more as they get comfortable in pronouncing the word, which means they're learning unlike one student that I have who is very limited in his own native language, that it's harder, it takes twice as long for him to grasp what the whole content of the idea would be because he doesn't have that to fall back on, his own native language, so it's twice as hard for him so I tend to help him more than the others. I think any kind of program like that would be beneficial, I'm sure high school has #1 newcomer kids who will need that help, it's just a form of help that they can rely on in case they need it, any kind of program is beneficial to anybody needing it, but any culture, ethnic background.

What kind of post-secondary education opportunities do you feel are open for your child?

Post secondary.... I think there's a lot of educational services out there, there's a lot of programs, whether it be community colleges, trade schools, vocational, whether it be 2 years, associate degrees, there's a lot, it's just again knowing to see if they're able to take advantage of those opportunities, a lot of minority grants and a lot of it is just wanting to get the motivation to do it, pursue it, have the patience to wait cause a degree takes at least 6 years to get one and you'll see in the end it's beneficial to you, but to have that patience to endure everything between those years to finish that education is hard so a lot of them can't handle it and they'll drop out, there are a lot of opportunities out there, it's just wanting to take advantage of it and being able to do that through documentation, if you're a legal resident then by all means those opportunities are there for you, but if you're not documented then you can't pursue an education further than high school.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us that we haven't already asked?

I don't think so.

So why did your family migrate to the United States?

Personal story
Here you go, I'm the youngest of 12, 8 boys and 4 girls. My oldest sister who is now 47 is now a physician and she studied 2 years, her associates, out in the University of Texas or San Antonio and then from there, she chose to go, I'm sure she came to Portland State, she's always been constantly studying bits and pieces here and there at the University of Washington, she's always involved to that. Then she kind of went to Mexico, what seemed like forever, she studied her medical degree, she got her medical degree over at the University of Mexico at the capital of Mexico City and I remember going down there to visit here every year sometimes twice a year when my mom would go and check up on her because she was down there by herself and I remember my older sister's stories saying she only obviously knew more English because back when she was attending school, it was not right to speak Spanish, she couldn't speak Spanish at all, so she didn't know English and she couldn't speak Spanish so she kind of didn't know what to do and then later on she got to learning how to speak English and she kind of lost a little bit of

the Spanish, the correct grammatical Spanish and when she went to Mexico to study over there she took her Spanish and English dictionary and that's how she dominated both languages and she's so fluent. So as my mentor and the person who I look up to is definitely that. My parents are very limited in education, my dad came here when he was 14 and he was born in 1929 during a lot of the revolutionary time that was still a lot of issues about the Mexican government and unfortunately...which is some of the reasons why also a lot of the families come, they want to have a better life here in the United States, work is easier, of course, hard labor isn't easy, but it's easier to make money compared to Mexico, so my dad came here and worked as a truck driver, has always worked in agricultural field work and my mom came here to Texas as well and they ended up getting married and having all these kids, well my mom's level of education is up to the 3rd grade and my dad didn't know how to read or write in Spanish because he never went to school, so he was very oral, in other words he can say it but as he kind of got older, he would pick up here and there, so my dad eventually taught himself how to read and write in Spanish, his own native language, and not only to read and write and speak English, my dad is now 75 and has given all that he's got to what is the United States and he'll tell you he's more Texan than he is a Mexican citizen and he became a U.S. citizen back in the 80's because he never went back to Mexico, his parents died and I think there's only 2 or 3 other siblings from his family that are now living. My mom's family is here, as a matter of fact, Ms. Acuna is my cousin through my mom's side and through my mom side of the family, education has always been a push. Obviously, she was limited in her education because she came here and based on the needs of that point and time. My mom is 10 years younger than my dad, born in 1939, so the drive of education and wanting to better yourself has always been pushed through my mom, my dad's dreams have always been, 'Yes, I brought you here, I had my kids here, and never left because I wanted them to have the rights and be able to do more than what we would do in Mexico,' so that's the reason why we're all Texan because we're just from that little town down there, 11 miles away from the Mexican boarder called McCallen. Pretty much that's the story of my life, is migrant work, my parents obviously....I'm the last end of it so I didn't have to work the fields. I ended up going to the fields and picking but because we were the young ones, my brother Martin and I, we always got to play around and my older brothers and sisters always took care of us but I remember going out to the field and only picking however many I wanted to versus my brothers, my dad would say you have to do, for example, 30 flats a day before they could even quit, so definitely they had it harder, a harder life than we did but they kind of gave us the opportunities that we have now because they took in the hardships for our lifestyle to be much easier. Now my dad is definitely retired, he ended up not only being a migrant field worker to owning his own farm and harvesting his own strawberries back over here where Albertson's is now, those 13 acres used to be my dad's organic strawberry fields and it's funny because now I drive by and I think I know it their yard a strawberry plant is going to pop out because that's where we used to pick and it was awesome. It was just memories when I was young and then he had 30 acres out in Gaston and he no longer has his farm because my dad got sick of diabetes and so he can't do that anymore but it was interesting to see that from a person who was a migrant and limited in your own education came that far to own his own farm and to do the best that he could and I think if my dad had the strength and the youth, he would still be doing it cause that's just what he does, that's what he

lives and breaths. My mom, she'd fly down south to Texas because she has a lot of health problems because again they worked in the fields, my mom being pregnant out there with all of us kids working out in the fields hoeing and picking and it's interesting to see how my dad's generation kind of made way for the new generation families of migrants that are coming working in nursery's and cannery's, they no longer have to work that hard in agricultural crops, so it's kind of neat to see at least we did something to better our culture's way of life, in that sense.