

• *Abriendo Puertas!*

*Opening Doors
For Hispanic Youth*



**Report of the
Hispanic Education Task Force**



BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In the spring of 2005, at the request of the Christian Education Coordinating Board (CECB), the Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) authorized the creation of a special task force to “develop a comprehensive strategy that involves BGCT related educational institutions, associations, and churches in intentional efforts that will encourage and better equip Hispanic youth toward the pursuit of higher education”. The presidents of the BGCT and the Hispanic Baptist Convention (Albert Reyes and Alcides Guajardo at the time) jointly appointed 24 persons to this task force and named Felipe Garza and Javier Elizondo as chair and co-chair, respectively.

This call for formation of what came to be known as the Hispanic Education Task Force (HETF) grew from conversations between BGCT staff, Hispanic leaders, and the CECB. The rationale for formation of this group included:

- Because of the significant growth of the Hispanic population in Texas, higher education for Hispanic youth is essential to the future well being of the state and Baptist congregations.
- The percentage of Hispanic youth who complete high school and pursue higher education is significantly lower than other major population groups and experts suggest that there are many varied factors involved in this reality
- Texas Baptists, through their congregations, institutions, and associations have a unique opportunity and responsibility to help encourage and assist Hispanic young people toward the pursuit of higher education.
- The critical need and great opportunity call for a broad, intentional, and comprehensive strategy to be developed that involved all the resources of Texas Baptists
- The goals and efforts that result from this study can also provide guiding strategies applicable to other ethnic and cultural groups with low percentages of young people pursuing higher education
- The president of the BGCT (Dr. Albert Reyes at the time) has suggested such a task force and, along with other officers of the BGCT and Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, has offered his support to this effort

- This effort clearly fulfills the mission, vision, values and priorities affirmed by the BGCT.

An initial meeting of this “Hispanic Education Task Force” (HETF) was scheduled for the Fall of 2005 but had to be postponed due to the hurricanes on the Gulf Coast. Thus the task force held its first meeting in February of 2006 with subsequent meetings in May and September of 2006. Additional meetings occurred through the Spring of 2007.

OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

A key focus that quickly developed for the task force was the extraordinarily high percentage of Hispanic youth who drop out before completing high school. In its first meeting, the HETF reviewed background information and discussed thoroughly and candidly the realities and issues that appear to be the root causes of this high drop out rate. These realities and issues were categorized in four broad areas: Cultural, Social, Academic & Educational, and Personal & Practical.

At the May 2006 meeting, additional information was reviewed and discussion continued with a narrowing focus on those specific realities and issues that seemed most critical and were matters that might be effectively and meaningfully addressed by the churches, associations, and institutions of the BGCT. In September 2006, the task force sought to further clarify those specific issues that might be a focus of initial BGCT response and even moved to the point of identifying four initial pilot projects that can be implemented fairly immediately.

In their subsequent meetings, the HETF developed a long range, comprehensive strategy to guide Texas Baptists in their ministry response. The vision of the task force is that over the next decade that there will be significant progress made in encouraging and equipping Hispanic youth to pursue higher education and that the efforts of the churches, associations, and institutions of the BGCT will have had a meaningful part in this accomplishment.

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

Historical Background

In order to understand how we reached the current educational crisis among Hispanics in the United States it is important to understand the historical background of this group.

Prior to 1954 when the Supreme Court ordered the racial integration of public schools with the landmark ruling *Brown v. Board of Education* children of African-American,

Mexican, and Native American descent mostly received unequal and segregated education.

The 1960s brought Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and the passing of the Civil Right's bill. Although the Civil Right Bill of 1965 was centered on African Americans it addressed discrimination against Latinos, especially where states imposed language requirements as condition for voting rights. Another result of the Civil Rights bill was the creation of the first bilingual education program funded in Dade County, Fla.

In 1973, Richard Nixon divided the nation's population into five categories— Native American/Eskimo; Asian/Pacific Islander; White; Black; Hispanic. Prior to 1950, those born outside the United States were identified by place of birth and those Hispanics born within the United States were counted no different than the U.S. population. For example, Hispanics born prior to 1950 were considered "white" on their birth certificates.

Hispanics: A Definition

At the end of 2004, 40.4 million Hispanics lived in the United States and comprised 14 percent of the total U.S. Population. Latinos are not only the nation's fastest-growing minority group, but also its largest.

Hispanics are a multiracial group that includes people of different origins and race. Latinos do not all share a common language or culture and come from various ethnic identities yet they do share a common connection to Latin America. It is not uncommon for Hispanics to identify themselves with different terms depending on the circumstance—Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, Ricans.

The largest Hispanic subgroup is that of Mexican descent which comprised almost two-thirds of the Hispanic population in 2000. Puerto Ricans are the second largest group. Almost half of the United States Latino population lives in California and Texas. Latinos have the largest family size of any group: Mexicans average 4.1, Puerto Ricans average 3.3, and Cubans average 3.0 persons per family.

Educational Attainment

According to the 2000 United States Census, more than 31 percent of Hispanic adults 25 years of age and older in the state of Texas received less than a ninth-grade education. Only 21 percent of Hispanics in Texas have a 9th to 12th grade education but do not have a diploma and 51 percent do not have a high school diploma or GED.

In order to examine the dropout rate of Hispanic youth it is necessary to examine the number of Hispanics educated in the United States, foreign born who attend U.S. Schools and those that came to the United States for employment opportunities.

According to the 2001 United States Bureau of the Census, more than 69 percent of Hispanics adults immigrated to the United States and most of them did not attend U.S.

schools because they arrived after age 18. Fewer than 20 percent of Hispanic students in grades K-12 immigrated to the United States.

- Nearly 40 percent of immigrant Mexican 16- to 19-year-olds are dropouts, while the dropout rate for Mexican immigrants educated in U.S. schools is 20 percent.
- The dropout rate for immigrant Central American youth is nearly 25 percent, but it is only 7 percent for U.S.-educated immigrant youth from Central America, about the same as for white youth.
- The unemployment rate for U.S.-born Latino dropouts is 26 percent, slightly better than for white dropouts. For immigrant Latino dropouts who attend U.S. schools the unemployment rate is 6.4 percent. Latino immigrant dropouts who never went to school in the U.S. have an 8.3 percent unemployment rate.
- The average white high school dropout earns \$7,300 per year, compared to \$6,500 for U.S.-born Hispanic dropouts and around \$10,000 for immigrant Hispanic dropouts.
- Latinas who drop out appear to experience a higher rate of teenage pregnancy than either white or Black female dropouts. In 2000 more than 20 percent of Latina dropouts reported having a child within the previous year, significantly above the white rate.

Note: Above Statistics from Fry, Richard. *Hispanic Youth Dropping out of U.S. Schools: Measuring the Challenge*, 2003.

Additionally, Latinos that do attempt post- high school education are more likely to enroll in community colleges or trade schools rather than 4-year baccalaureate programs. Latino undergraduates are also much less likely to complete college than white undergraduates.

Latinos are the fastest growing poor of any ethnic or racial group in the United States. Hispanic households own less than 10 cents for every dollar in wealth owned by white households. Some 41 percent of Latinos are employed in service occupations or as laborers. Only 14 percent are employed in managerial or professional occupations. As a result, the parents of Hispanic students are often not educated and therefore are not able to assist with tutoring or homework.

MOTIVATION FOR TEXAS BAPTISTS

Texas Baptists should be involved in helping equip students in fulfilling God's calling in their lives for the following reasons:

- The 51 percent high school dropout rate for Hispanic youth clearly impacts the future of our Texas economy and our society
- The high school dropout rate for Hispanic youth severely impacts recruiting and enrollment of students to Texas Baptist institutions. Without a high school diploma our Hispanic youth will not be able to enroll in our institutions of higher learning. In the next decade, our institutions could well be facing a recruiting dilemma as so few Hispanic students will be prepared or equipped to attend Texas Baptist colleges and universities
- The lack of basic educational attainment by Hispanics could have a significant detrimental effect on the effective witness and well-being of all Texas Baptist churches as a result of such factors as lack of leadership and limited financial support
- The Texas Baptist family of churches, associations, institutions has a unique opportunity to assist our Hispanic youth in discovering a God-purpose for their lives by intentionally mentoring and encouraging them
- As Texas Baptists we are called to love our brothers and sisters in Christ; therefore, we must seek to be the presence of Christ to Hispanic youth at risk of dropping out of school
- Finally, the ultimate motivation for addressing the high school dropout rate for Hispanic youth is not so much a matter of economics, church strength or university enrollments; but rather that we are called as the Body of Christ to equip people to fulfill God's purpose in their lives

STATEMENT OF STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

As a result of study, consultation, and dialog, the members of the HETF came to identify various "challenges" faced by Hispanic youth that particularly impacted their motivation and opportunity for basic educational attainment. Many of these are not challenges uniquely faced by Hispanics, but collectively they do represent some of the key reasons Hispanics sometimes struggle in educational attainment. In an effort to focus particularly on those areas where Texas Baptists might have the greatest opportunity for a

positive impact, the task force identified 4 areas of challenge and developed strategy statements and possible tactics for each of these.

1. CHALLENGE OF PASTORAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

A real key to academic achievement among Hispanic students that are involved in church is the support, affirmation and encouragement of their pastors and church families; however, this sometimes is a challenge for pastors whose own educational attainment is limited.

Strategy Statement:

Encourage, educate and equip Hispanic churches to initiate educational programs emphasizing academic advancement

Possible Tactics

1. Create a BGCT staff position for Hispanic Educational Advocacy
 2. Identify and equip an “education advocate” in each congregation
 3. Provide specialized resources for Hispanic congregations to share with young people providing encouragement and counsel regarding educational attainment
 4. Recognize and affirm churches who are creatively and successfully advocating educational advancement for youth (at all levels and avenues)
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Strategy Statement:

Enlist Hispanic pastors as partners in encouraging, promoting and participating in educational advancement

Possible Tactics

1. Provide opportunities and financial assistance for pastors to advance their own training and education
 2. Provide conferences in key areas around the state for Hispanic pastors to present issues, congregational examples, encourage their congregational response
 3. Develop informational materials specifically for pastors to assist them in advocating for educational advancement of young people (sermon ideas, Bible study materials, etc.)
 4. Develop and share with Hispanic pastors a theological basis for educational achievement
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Strategy Statement

Raise awareness of Hispanic educational issues among non-Hispanic congregations and engage these congregations as partners in responding to these needs

Possible Tactics

1. Develop intentional networks and partnerships between Hispanic and non-Hispanic congregations to address educational issues
 2. Provide workshops for mutual cultural awareness and understanding (annual meeting, Christian Life Commission, associational, fellowship meetings, etc)
 3. Produce materials that will inform all Texas Baptists of the issues and needs impacting the education of Hispanic youth (inserts, Baptist Standard, web, etc)
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2. CHALLENGE OF DROPOUT, SURVIVAL, AND POVERTY ISSUES

Many Hispanics unfortunately find themselves disadvantaged in a cycle of poverty that results in a sense of hopelessness, fosters a “dropout mentality”, and even derails educational attainment due to the necessity of young people assisting the family unit economically

Strategy Statement:

Introduce Hispanic young people to educational opportunities and possibilities at an early age in order to give them hope for success

Possible Tactics

1. Encourage Baptist schools and Baptist Student Ministries to invite Hispanic students to campus for special programs and emphases
 2. Establish a network of speakers to be available to churches, camps, conferences, schools, etc. to promote the importance of education
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Strategy Statement:

Enlist Texas Baptists to affirm and nurture the God-given educational potential of every child

Possible Tactics

1. Establish a “true love waits” type emphasis with a promise to complete education
2. Develop and provide funding for channels such as pre-teen camps, youth camps, local rallies where a strong pro-education message is presented
3. Encourage the celebration of educational achievement at every level

Strategy Statement

Increase awareness of and advocacy for public policy issues that impact educational and poverty issues so that the cycle of poverty

Possible Tactics

1. Ask the Christian Life Commission to emphasize and speak to relevant issues for the next 3 legislative cycles (public school funding, immigration, specialized academic programs, etc)
 2. Encourage churches to be involved with and create coalitions with other faith based and not for profit groups to promote these issues and priorities
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3. CHALLENGE OF FAMILY AND CULTURAL REALITIES

Hispanics enjoy a rich, vibrant culture and highly value family; however, there are certain realities within Hispanic culture that inadvertently create challenges to educational attainment.

Strategy Statement:

Empower, encourage, and equip families to support the school experience and educational achievement of children

Possible Tactics

1. Provide workshops in a variety of venues (churches, compañerismos, Hispanic Convention meetings, Congress, institution events, etc.) that will inform families of educational opportunities and resources
 2. Develop an “Alliance School Model” to help empower families to be effective advocates in educational settings
 3. Create motivational and informative experiences for adults and children together that introduce the entire family to educational opportunities and potential
 4. Assist families to provide support for preschool and children’s literacy (Books for the Border, etc)
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Strategy Statement:

Enlist Texas Baptists to respond to the physical needs within poor communities so that students are better able to fulfill their educational potential

Possible Tactics

1. Call upon churches and agencies to identify and develop intentional partnerships in poorer Hispanic communities to provide for physical needs
 2. Expand programs such as Christian Women’s Job Corp that enable and empower families to break the cycle of poverty
 3. Sponsor special back to school events that provide needed supplies
 4. Encourage churches to establish “community centers” and programs to support poorer communities (nutrition programs, computers, libraries, etc)
 5. Encourage associations and churches to facilitate the creation of financial strategies such as credit unions to assist Hispanic families in providing financial resources for educational needs
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Strategy Statement

Establish networks of support to reassure Hispanic families in the transition periods of educational achievement in order to allay fears often present when sending students off to college or other educational opportunities

Possible Tactics:

1. Enlist Hispanic churches near college campuses to establish “adopt a student” programs
 2. Develop programs for Hispanic college students to serve as “educational ambassadors” with Hispanic churches and families
 3. Encourage and provide training opportunities for Texas Baptist university administrators and BSM directors to address issues impacting Hispanic students (including gender issues, extended family issues, cultural realities, etc)
 4. Organize a summer intern program to provide speakers for camps, conferences and churches that will address educational opportunities and resources
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**4. CHALLENGE OF ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITY
AND DIGITAL ACCESS**

Hispanic students often do not have opportunities for educational remediation that could enhance their academic success and often lack access to technology that is so crucial to educational achievement

Strategy Statement:

Enlist Baptist churches, agencies, institutions and other entities to provide meaningful technological access to students in communities where that is not readily available

Possible Tactics

1. Discover and establish avenues to acquire computers, internet services, etc. at reasonable costs in order to set up accessible computer labs in churches and other appropriate locations
 2. Enlist personnel and used equipment from Texas Baptist institutions to provide computers to students or to set up church based computer labs
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Strategy Statement:

Reengage high school drop outs in their educational development

Possible Tactics

1. Identify and develop relationships with local community colleges, technical, and other schools that are close and more affordable
 2. Validate and affirm alternative and vocational educational avenues
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Strategy Statement

Enlist Texas Baptists through churches and other entities to help students in local schools achieve academic success

Possible Tactics

1. Encourage church members to participate in tutoring and homework help programs through schools and in neighborhoods (e.g. teachers help with “how to take the TAKS, etc)
 2. Enlist churches and institutions to form partnerships with local schools that have a large percentage of at risk Hispanic students to provide academic and other types of support
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SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to more effectively enlist, encourage, and equip the Texas Baptist family to respond meaningfully to the educational needs of Hispanic youth and to implement effective and appropriate strategies such as those suggested in this report, the Hispanic Education Task Force makes the following specific recommendations:

1. That a full-time staff position for a BGCT Hispanic Educational Advocate be created beginning no later than January, 2008. This person would lead in implementation of a strategy of response to Hispanic educational opportunities that involves BGCT related institutions, associations, and churches. It is suggested that this person be Hispanic and bilingual.

2. That the following initial tactics, gleaned from suggestions in this report, be affirmed as a beginning point for implementing a comprehensive strategy:

A. Challenge of Dropout, Survival, and Poverty Issues

- Establish a “true love waits” type emphasis enlisting Hispanic youth to make a commitment to complete their high school education
- Develop and provide funding for channels such as pre-teen camps, youth camps, local rallies where a strong pro-education message is presented
- Encourage Baptist schools and Baptist Student Ministries to invite Hispanic students to campus for special programs and emphases

B. Challenge of Family and Cultural Realities

- Create a variety of educational experiences for Hispanic adults and children together that introduce the entire family to educational opportunities and potential

C. Challenge of Academic Opportunity and Digital Access

- Facilitate churches to provide tutoring and homework help programs through technology and schools or neighborhoods (e.g. teachers help w/ “how to take the TAKS, etc)
- Develop and provide intensive programs for GED completion to be offered in churches and institutions

D. Challenge of Pastoral Encouragement and Church Involvement

- Identify and equip an “education advocate” in both Hispanic and non-Hispanic congregations to encourage and lead educational efforts with Hispanic youth in the community

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3. That the current Hispanic Education Task Force meet once more in 2007 to monitor progress in implementing the suggestions of this report and that beginning in 2008 an ongoing “Hispanic Education Advisory Group” be formed that includes representatives from churches, associations, institutions, the BGCT, the Hispanic Baptist Convention, and other appropriate entities.

APPENDICES

Upon request, the HETF will gladly provide print materials or a CD-ROM containing key documents and reports that were used by the team during the course of its work and in preparation of this report. To obtain a copy, please contact Institutional Ministries Office, BGCT at 214-828-5136 or e-mail .

MEMBERS OF THE HISPANIC EDUCATION TASK FORCE

The members of the Hispanic Education Task Force were appointed jointly by Albert Reyes, then President of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Alcides Guajardo, the President of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas. In alphabetical order, those who served as members of the Hispanic Education Task Force are:

- Carlos Ayala, Alamo Community College District, San Antonio
- Laura Cadena, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Dallas
- Ernest Dagohoy, Pastor, First Philippine Baptist Church, Houston
- Javier Elizondo, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Baptist University of the Americas (Vice-Chair)
- Jeremy Everett, Baptist Child and Family Services, San Antonio
- Diana Garland, Dean, School of Social Work, Baylor University, Waco
- Felipe Garza, Buckner Child & Family Services, Dallas (Chair)
- Nora Lozano, Professor, Baptist University of the Americas, San Antonio
- Rick McClatchey, Texas Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, San Antonio
- Lydia Padilla, Public School Educator, Dallas
- Frank Palos, Hispanic Evangelism Director, BGCT, Dallas
- Suzii Paynter, Director of Christian Life Commission, BGCT, Austin
- Carolyn Porterfield, Executive Director Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas, Dallas

- Amanda Revelle, School Administrator, Donna
- Gus Reyes, Service Center Director, BGCT, Dallas
- Jesse Rincones, Pastor, Alliance Baptist Church, Lubbock
- Rolando Rodríguez, Pastor, Cockrell Hill Baptist Church, Dallas (now Director of Hispanic Ministries, BGCT)
- John Román, Pastor, Pueblo Nuevo Community Church, El Paso
- Steve Theodore, Vice President for Enrollment Management, University of Mary Hardin Baylor, Belton
- Daniel Treviño, Pastor, Harlandale Baptist Church, San Antonio
- Don Williford, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Hardin Simmons University, Abilene
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