



League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

Unit Meeting – August 1, 2011 – 10-11:30 a.m.
Good Samaritan Social Center, Conference Room 3011 Buena Vida Circle.

IT TAKES A COMMUNITY TO BUILD GOOD SCHOOLS

1. Introduction
2. Socio-Economic Issues Impacting Academic Achievement – Sue Cain
3. Role of Community Businesses in Education – Erika Graf-Webster
4. Business and Community Initiatives – Jane Asche and Bonnie Burn

Business and Community Initiatives

LCPS Early College High School:

1. The Bridge was an early initiative begun by the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce. Its goal was to bridge the gap between young people searching for a career path and businesses seeking a skilled workforce. Increasing the high school graduation rate was a top priority.
2. As the initiative experienced success, it reorganized itself into The Bridge of Southern New Mexico, a nonprofit organization that brings together business, economic development, government, and education. The goal is again to create a workforce for Doña Ana County.
3. Its focus has become the Early College High School that houses smaller learning communities (up to 500 students in grades 9-12) and focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) curriculum. High school students earn college credits in pursuit of a specific post secondary certification or a four year college degree.
4. A new campus for the Early College High School is being constructed in the Arrowhead Research Park on the NMSU campus. Until it is completed, classes are housed at Doña Ana Community College.
5. In 2010/2011 – 117 ninth grade students were enrolled in Early College High School. Of those, 112 moved on to be sophomores. In 2011/2012 – 125 students are expected to be enrolled in the ninth grade. Eventually, 500 students will make up grades 9-12.

Hispanic Education/Achievement Gap Workgroup – An initiative put forth by U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman

1. Promise Statement: We resolve to work collaboratively with all members of the community to eliminate the achievement gap leading to an educated citizenry and improved economic opportunity.
2. The Task Force was formed in December 2009 following a Community Conversation hosted by Senator Bingaman in Las Cruces with Juan Sepulveda of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans.
3. The Workgroup meets quarterly.
4. Attached is a handout that gives details about it.

U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman

Democrat, New Mexico

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Doña Ana Hispanic Education/Achievement Gap Task Force

Background

The Task Force was formed in December 2009 following a ‘Community Conversation’, hosted by Senator Bingaman in Las Cruces with Juan Sepulveda of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. Senator Bingaman convened the Task Force in response to concerns over the chronic and consistent gap in achievement and graduation rates of Hispanics in Southern New Mexico. Senator Bingaman is a senior member of the Senate’s Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and has a strong interest in education issues.

To date, the Task Force has sought out and connected with people that agree to take on this challenge. It has also served as an instrument to research and share information on evidence-based practices that positively impact Hispanic educational outcomes, funding opportunities and federal policies, efforts that have already been undertaken within schools and communities, and to develop consensus on what strategic, high-impact interventions could be implemented locally to eliminate the achievement gap.

Quarterly meetings have been held to facilitate regional participation. On the other side of this handout, you will see a list of participant affiliations and priorities for action that address the task force’s most pressing concerns. It is our strong intent to bring together all of the entities that have a role in eliminating the Achievement Gap – including state and local elected officials, state and local government, educators, school districts and charter schools, parents, youth, non-profit organizations, businesses, educational and research institutions, and interested constituents.

Purpose

The Hispanic Education/Achievement Gap Task Force serves as an open and ongoing forum through which a broad range of stakeholders in Doña Ana County work collaboratively to eliminate the achievement gap leading to an educated citizenry and improved economic opportunity. The Task Force addresses challenges by (1) researching, prioritizing, and implementing strategies that positively impact Hispanic educational outcomes and (2) leveraging existing activities of members and others in a synergistic and non-duplicative manner to facilitate the dissemination of information, build additional capacity, create strategic partnerships, and provide policy recommendations to Senator Bingaman and others.

Problem Statement

The chronic and consistent gap in achievement and graduation rates of Hispanics in Southern New Mexico and the lack of effective community wide involvement to eliminate this gap has dire economic and social implications for our youth, our community, our nation and our quality of life.

Promise Statement

We resolve to work collaboratively with all members of the community to eliminate the achievement gap leading to an educated citizenry and improved economic opportunity.

Priorities

- 1) Promote understanding and value of race and culture within the school community
- 2) Launch community-wide efforts to lift expectations around educational excellence and accountability
- 3) Surround students with a community of mentors

Participants to Date

Academia Dolores Huerta Charter School
Alma de Arte Charter High School
Court Youth Center
Bridge of Southern New Mexico
City of Las Cruces
Colonias Development Council
Doña Ana Community College
Doña Ana County
Doña Ana Juvenile Justice Advisory Board
Enlace
Families & Youth, Inc.
Gadsden Independent School District Graduate NM, NMPED
Hatch Valley Public Schools

Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces
Las Cruces Bulletin
Las Cruces District Court
Las Cruces Machine, Inc.
Las Cruces Public Schools
Las Montañas Charter High School
New Mexico State University
Office of U.S. Senator Bingaman
Office of U.S. Senator Tom Udall
State Representative Mary Helen Garcia
State Senator Cynthia Nava
State Senator Steve Fischmann
Western New Mexico University