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Empowering Families to Achieve Secondary Education

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Author Note

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**Abstract**

Many high school students in Monterey County are not pursuing secondary education. Through the Department of Community Services within Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association (CHISPA) a workshop to educate students and parents on the importance of education and the A-G high school requirements was implemented. The workshop's purpose was to educate and empower parents to become familiar with high school A-G requirements and a support system towards their children's education. By educating parents and students on the A-G high school requirements, more high school students will be on the right path to achieve a secondary education. The expected outcomes of the workshop were to reach a maximum of thirty parents and children. After the workshop parents and children were able to recognize the high school courses that will help them to be college bound. Another outcome from the workshop was to obtain a \$10,000 grant for Salinas High School to provide more academic guidance for high school Hispanic and Latino students. This workshop was a one-time workshop delivered in Spanish with a migrant high school counselor as a guest speaker. As a result of the workshop, ten parents walked out with an idea of what courses their children should be taking to pursue a secondary education. Recommendations to the agency are to keep doing the workshop annually around August, when students start the school year, and to have the workshop delivered to parents while children are occupied in other activities.

**Keywords:** secondary education, A-G high school requirements, academic guidance, Hispanic and Latino, one-time workshop

***Agency/Communities Served***

The agency Community Housing Improvement System and Planning Association, Inc. (CHISPA) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit community-based housing development organization in Monterey County. CHISPA services Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties (CHISPA, 2014). The agency's mission is to better human lives and generate fine neighborhoods by expanding, selling, owning, and directing affordable housing (CHISPA, 2014). CHISPA is an agency that gives people an equal chance for housing and does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability, familial status, marital status, source of income or any other characteristic (CHISPA, 2014). CHISPA was established back in 1980. Since then CHISPA has modernized 2,268 single-family homes and apartments for low to moderate income families and continues to do so (CHISPA, 2014).

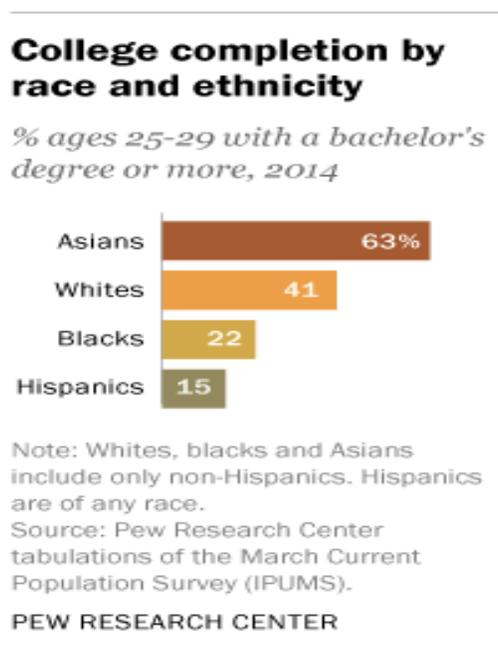
Other services CHISPA offers other than affordable housing is education and recreational programs. These programs are offered within the communities of CHISPA. The programs are available for people in their rental properties. According to Dana Cleary, the Director of Real Estate Development in CHISPA, all programs offered are programs that people requested (D. Cleary professional communication, February 24, 2017). The programs are mainly after school and summer programs. The programs offer multicultural activities for the kids, such as arts and crafts, dancing classes, science and technology programs, marching drum line programs, mathematics programs, Zumba classes, painting for seniors, hands on baking for seniors and ESL classes for seniors (CHISPA, 2014). CHISPA also provides scholarships to students whose families live in CHISPA homes or communities and students who are entering or

already attending Hartnell College or California State University, Monterey Bay. CHISPA has provided nineteen students with scholarships totaling \$24,000 (CHISPA, 2014). All these services help the community by improving the lives of people both physically and educationally.

### ***Problem Issue***

Many high school students are not pursuing higher education after high school. According to the Pew Research Center (2016), “Hispanics still lag other groups in obtaining a four-year degree” In 2014 there were 15 percent of Hispanics ages 25 to 29 that obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher. The Pew Research Center (2016), compared different demographics among the same age group, with approximately 41 percent of whites obtaining a bachelor’s degree or higher, 22 percent of blacks and 63 percent of Asians. As shown in Figure 1 it demonstrates that Hispanics are the ethnicity most affected when it comes to achieving higher education.

**Figure 1. College Completion Based on Race & Ethnicity**



Many Hispanic or Latino students who do not strive for higher education are labeled immediately as dependent on public assistance with low paying jobs and low- income. In Monterey County many of the Hispanics are considered low to moderate income. Many people are aware of Hispanic students not achieving higher education due to the need of money in their family. Many Hispanic families that are low income rely on public assistance and if the students do not achieve higher education they will never be successful on their own. They will continue to rely on public assistance when they have families of their own. Not only will they repeat the cycle but they will end up with minimum wage paying jobs and continue to be low income families. Seventy-one percent of Hispanic or Latino people in Monterey County are receiving assistance from Medical, Cash Aid and Food Stamps (Kids Data Foundation Program, 2015). Monterey County has the highest percent of residents that rely on public assistance, compared to Santa Cruz County with fifty-two percent of Hispanic or Latinos receiving public assistance.

### ***Problem Causes***

#### **The Necessity and Pressure to Help the Family Financially**

There are several causes that lead to Hispanic or Latino students not achieving higher education. The first one is the pressure to help their family financially when completing high school. Many Hispanic or Latino families are considered low to moderate income and are suffering some how financially. Many students see their family struggle on a daily basis keep up with bills, food, clothing, even to the point where families stress over not having any spare change to wash and dry their clothing if they do not have a washer and dryer at home. As a son or daughter you feel the pressure to help out your family when you are capable of doing it.

Many high school students experiencing this stress look forward to graduating high school and obtaining a job as soon as they get that diploma to help out their families. Students see this opportunity as a way of bettering their lives and the lives of their parents. Also, many students think that, by working and providing to their families, they can give back to their parents who have worked very hard for them to go to school, eat and have a roof. According to Lopez (2017), "Nearly three-quarters (74%) of all 16- to 25-year-old survey respondents who cut their education short during or right after high school say they did so because they had to support their family". Many students feel that they will be better off if they get a job right out of high school but in reality it's a lot more stressful and hard to obtain a stable and meaningful job.

#### Lack of Academic Guidance

Another cause of Hispanic students not achieving higher education is the lack of academic guidance and resources from the high schools. Many high school students claim that the reason they did not look into going to a four-year university is because they had no idea where to start. According to French (2015), "The low-income and rural students most in need of college guidance are the least likely to receive it". Many students are afraid to start the process of looking into a university of their interest because they feel intimidated by the process and would rather not deal with it. French (2015) argues that "In high schools the rate is estimated to be about one counselor per 500 students". In cases like these counselors provide the guidance and assistance to students who want to transfer to a four-year university and have some sort of knowledge of the process rather than focusing on assisting other students that have no knowledge whatsoever on how to apply to a university. Those students are completely

forgotten and never pushed to achieve higher education; in many cases these students are Hispanic or Latino.

#### Parents Lack of Knowledge on the U.S. Education System

One of the last causes that lead to Hispanic or Latino students not achieving higher education is having parents that lack knowledge of the United States education system. Many parents have no idea there is an actual process to be able to get into a university after high school. According to Schhneider, Martinez & Ownes (2017), "For Hispanics, initial disadvantages often stem from parents' immigrant and socioeconomic status and their lack of knowledge about the U.S. education system". Parents lack of knowledge on the process of obtaining higher education is the reason why they do not push their children to obtain higher education. If parents are not aware of it, they are not going to push their children to get the requirements done and just allow their children to work right after high school. Schhneider, Martinez & Ownes (2017), argues that "Although parents and children share high educational aims, their aspirations do not necessarily translate into postsecondary matriculation. This is especially the case for Hispanic high school students, particularly those whose parents have not attended college". This lack of awareness causes the parents to not push their children towards the process of achieving higher education.

#### ***Problem Consequences***

##### Public Assistance Dependent

There are numerous consequences when it comes to Hispanic or Latino students not achieving higher education. The first one is public assistance dependency. Many Hispanic or Latino students who are consider low to moderate income will have the same or lower income

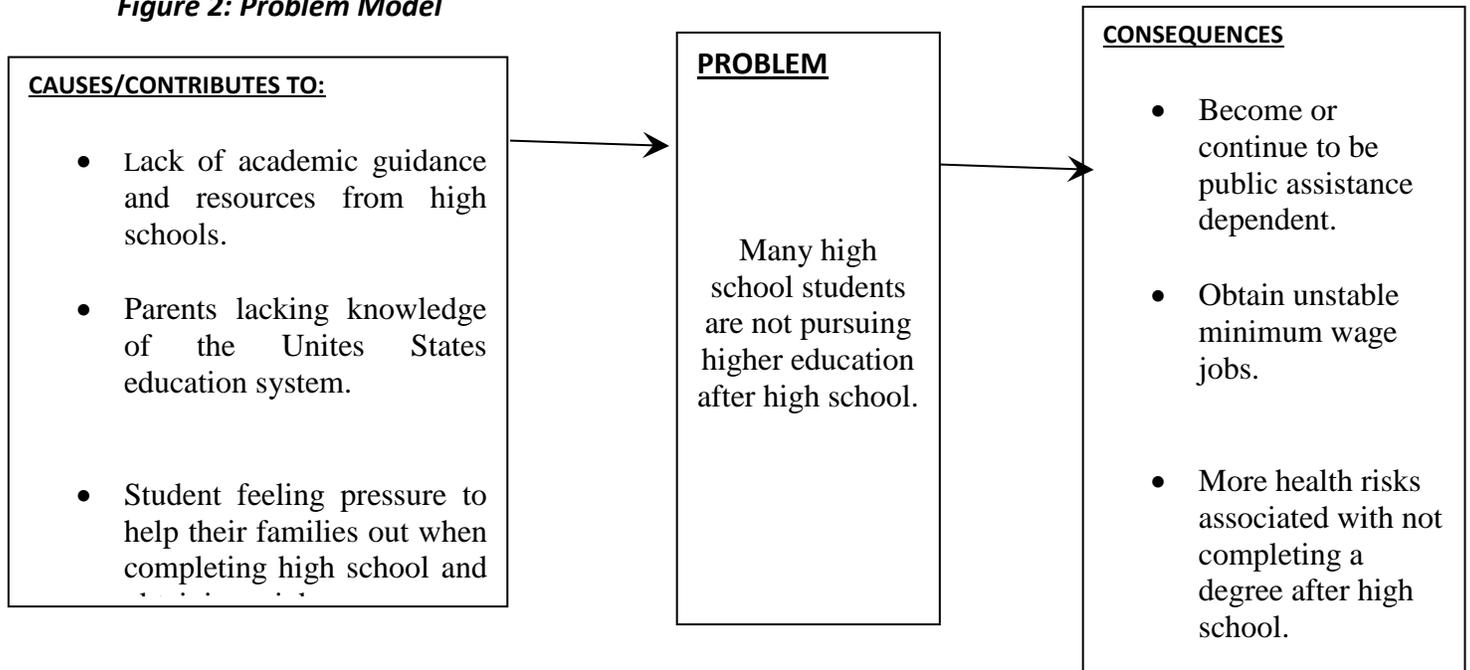
level. Many can or will continue to be public assistance dependent as a result of not achieving a higher education.

#### Minimum Wage Paying Jobs

Secondly, many Hispanic or Latino students that do not achieve higher education can possibly end up with an unstable minimum paying job. According to Schhneider, Martinez & Ownes (2017), “The standard requirement for stable employment in many fields is a baccalaureate degree”. Not only will they obtain an unstable job but the student might end up doing something they do not like for their rest of their lives. Living with a minimum paying job can become challenging once these students have families of their own. Being able to purchase a home and provide for their family necessities can be very challenging making it almost impossible.

#### Prone to Health Risks

Another consequence associated with Hispanic or Latino students not achieving higher education is health risks. Baker, et al. (2011), argue that some health risks associated with not obtaining a higher education are smoking, drug abuse, as well as the contraction of many diseases. The reason for these is that many Hispanic or Latino students end up in jobs that do not offer health insurance and going to the doctor can be very expensive. Many would rather choose to not get checked by a physician because of the high cost. Another reason could be the stress and burnout of the job the students end up getting. Overall, the consequences of not achieving a higher education are something that will become more noticeable in the long run and will always follow these students for the rest of their professional lives.

**Figure 2: Problem Model*****Project Description and Justification*****Parent Educational A-G Requirements Workshop**

A one-time educational workshop will be implemented. The purpose for this workshop is to educate parents of Hispanic or Latino students on the A-G requirements and the importance of completing a degree after high school. The A-G requirements are a guide for high school students to follow from the beginning of their freshman year to be able to transfer to a four-year university. Many Hispanic or Latino parents are unaware of these guidelines. If parents would be educated on these guidelines, the parents themselves would be able to check their student's transcripts and make sure that the classes they are taking match the ones in the A-G requirements. By educating and empowering the parents the students are more likely to succeed and achieve higher education. As a result of educating the parents, parents push and follow up with their children more frequently to make sure these requirements are easily meet.

With both the students and parents being on the same page it facilitates the process for both the student and the parents and allows it to be less intimidating

What the agency CHISPA is trying to accomplish with this workshop is to educate and empower Hispanic or Latino parents. By empowering and educating parents students are more successful. CHISPA will benefit from this workshop because CHISPA currently has a scholarship program that focuses on Hispanic or Latino students. By implementing this workshop many more Hispanic or Latino students will apply for this scholarship. By educating CHISPA's residents on the importance of education and the high school A-G requirements many more Hispanic or Latino students would be interested in applying for the scholarship.

Other A-G high school requirement workshops that have been implemented in the past are educational workshops for parents at Watsonville High School. According to J. Alcantar, a counselor at Watsonville High school, he argues how crucial it is to educate parents on the importance of education before teaching them anything else. J. Alcantar mentions "Many parents will not understand the purpose or meaning of the A-G requirements without knowing the importance of education and pushing their children to achieve higher education" (J. Alcantar, personal communication, April 3, 2017). Based on this evidence, the workshop will have a certain amount of time designated to discuss statistics of Hispanic or Latino students achieving higher education and the importance of education. The need of a workshop to educate parents on the importance of higher education and the A-G high school requirements was determined when the the agency CHISPA realized very minimal students were applying for the scholarship offered.

**Figure 3: Scope and Work Timeline**

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline	Estimated completion dates	Completed
Arrange meeting with high school counselor to communicate, date, time, and any other workshop information	Workshop information, schedule if ready	1 week 09/04/17-09/10/17	09/08/17	<b>x</b>
Design workshop flyers	Gather information for flyer design	1 week 9/11/17-9/17/17	9/17/17	<b>x</b>
Gather any additional data necessary for workshop and organize workshop schedule	Power Point	2 weeks 9/18/17-9/29/17	9/29/17	<b>x</b>
Deliver/pass out flyers	Flyers	10/2/17	10/2/17	<b>x</b>
Workshop	Flyers, Brochures	10/4/17	10/4/17	<b>x</b>

**Project Results**

The expected outcome from the planned workshop was to reach out to thirty students and parents all together. After the workshop, parents and students were expected to leave with some knowledge of the importance of achieving a secondary education after high school and the consequence involved when not pursuing secondary education. Another expected outcome was that parents and students attending the workshop learned to understand and recognize

the A-G high school requirements on high school transcript's a final outcome was that after the delivery of the workshop, a \$10,000 grant would be given to Salinas High School to provide more academic guidance to Hispanic and Latino students. With that grant Salinas High school will also continue to deliver educational workshops to parents and students on the importance of education and the A-G high school requirements.

### ***Assessment Plan***

One outcome measure utilized to assess the effectiveness of the workshop progress was questions during the workshop. The guest speaker created sections where he would pause and ask the audience some questions of the material he had previously presented to the audience to create some discussion and see if they had learned the material or needed more clarity on the topic. According to the Teaching Center (2017), "Frequent questions, whether asked by you or by the audience, provide a means of measuring learning and exploring in-depth the key concepts of the material delivered." Another section that was incorporated into the presentation was real life scenarios of people that did not achieve a secondary education and how they now regret not achieving it. According to Supporting Educators Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (2017), "If you have a multimedia project with a strong real-world connection, you can hardly go wrong. Audience engagement is just about guaranteed. This is a project your audience will work hard on now and remember for a long time. This strategy was used to measure how well people understood the topic.

During this part of the presentation the audience was allowed to reflect on the scenario the guest speaker had presented and was allowed to provide their feedback. The results of this part of the presentation were analyzed based on how many people asked questions and

participated in the discussion when questions were asked to the audience. The PowerPoint presentation was also printed out with available space for the audience to provide feedback on every slide. The purpose of this was to allow the audience to critique the actual power point presentation and provide feedback. The question and discussion methods were incorporated into the presentation because the audience may not like or be able to complete a questionnaire. According to “Everything You Want to Know About Questionnaires” (2017), “A written survey to a group of poorly educated people might not work because of reading skills problems.” The last method used to measure the project outcome was two short three-question questionnaires as shown in Appendix A. The parents were asked to fill out the same questionnaire before and after the workshop to measure their learning. The first survey was passed around before the workshop started. The second survey was passed around after the workshop was over. The surveys were analyzed one by one manually. Three people from the audience were not able to fill out the questionnaire because they did not read and write. Assistance was provided to those who could not fill out a questionnaire.

### ***Project Results/Findings***

Based on the methods utilized to measure the project outcomes, the outcomes were met for the most part, but not 100%. To begin, not all thirty expected participants showed up. Only ten participants ended up attending the workshop. When it comes to the discussion, 100% of people participated at all times. Many people seemed to understand the content being delivered. Minimal participants needed clarity on the information being presented. Some participants elaborated on information that the guest speaker presented making it easier for other participants to understand the content.

The pre workshop questionnaire as shown in Appendix A, nine of the participants wanted their children to attend a university and one participant was not sure. Also, based on the questionnaire nine of the participants did not know what the A-G requirements are and one participant did. Six participants did not know about the resources available when it came to their children's schooling and four participants did. Based on the post workshop questionnaire as shown in Appendix A, one participant did not see their children attending college, another participant somewhat, and the other eight did see their children attending college. When it comes to available resources, six participants knew where to go, three had some idea, and one had no idea of the resources available. Lastly, when it comes to understanding what the A-G high school requirements were after the workshop, one participant reported to not know what they were, two said somewhat and seven responded that they knew what they were. Ten percent of the participants walked away not knowing the A-G requirements, another ten percent left knowing somewhat about the A-G requirements, and eighty percent of the participants left the workshop knowing what the A-G requirements are.

The information was delivered but not all participant learned the content of the workshop. This was due to a lot of distractions around. There were children being loud, the community room reserved had no air conditioning, and it was very hot making it hard for the participants to concentrate. The lighting in the room also made it hard for the participants to see the digital presentation. All of these are distractions which negatively affected the delivery of the information to the participants. The grant is still pending; no decision has been made if the grant will be given to Salinas High School.

Some of the strengths of the workshop were the discussions between the speaker and the participants. Fifty percent of the participants were involved in deep discussion during the workshop. According to Harvard University (2017), “workshop discussions allows you to express your thoughts, hear from your peers, and stretch your limits through creative exploration.” This is exactly what happened in this workshop where many participants were connecting with one another based on the discussion that occurred. Although the digital presentation was hard to see, the design was very successful. It was designed with the audience in mind and made it very easy for the audience to follow. The raffle after the workshop was a good way to keep participants from leaving until the end of the workshop.

One of the challenges during the workshop was the children. The workshop was for students and children but when children are not being respectful it becomes a challenge. Some kids were too little to understand what was going on, but since there was no childcare provided, there was no other place for the little ones to go. After continuous disrespect from the older kids, they were asked to leave; otherwise, they could stay but they had to be respectful towards the presenter. Many kids decided to step out leaving an all-adult audience. Another challenge was the food. Many people did not wait to eat after the presentation and kept getting up. Which constantly distracted others. After a while the audience got notified that dinner would be available after the presentation. The other challenge was the questionnaires because thirty percent of the participants could not read or write. Assistance was provided for them to be able to fill out the questionnaires. Many participants were returning the survey in a matter of seconds. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), “[Hispanic or Latino people] are also more likely on average to give responses they perceive as more socially desirable in

response to sensitive questions.” The workshop needed more structure and deeper analysis of the learning methods that best fit the audience. According to the Latino Commission (2017), many Hispanic or Latino people learn with hands-on activities and discussions. This approach might have been more successful.

### ***Personal Reflection and Final Thoughts***

The workshop for parents and students on the importance of education and the A-G high school requirements was very educational and empowering for most participants. Parent involvement and high academic standards work hand-in-hand to prepare all Hispanic and Latino students for academic success. According to Schhneider, Martinez & Ownes (2017), “For Hispanics, initial disadvantages often stem from parents' immigrant and socioeconomic status and their lack of knowledge about the U.S. education system.” Parents lack of knowledge on the process of obtaining a higher education is the reason they do not push their children toward a secondary education. The workshop is something that should be continued. Most participants walked away from the workshop having some idea of the A-G high school requirements and the importance of education. The workshop being available not only prepares new generations, but also reassures the returning parents of the information they previously learned and updates them of any changes.

The way the information was delivered and who delivered is very crucial for the workshop. The guest speaker is a migrant counselor that is very familiar with the Hispanic and Latino population and knows very well how to communicate and connect with them. One recommendation is to continue to have a guest speaker like Miguel Orejel. According to North Salinas High School (2017), the purpose of a migrant counselor is to help the students with their

individual learning plans to inform parents of their child's needs and recommendations for academic and support services. By having a migrant counselor as a guest speaker there is a better chance to identify new patterns or social problems when it comes to career success and Latino students. Another recommendation is having the workshop target only parents. Also, by having deep discussions during the workshop seemed to be a better approach than questionnaires, since not all participants can read and write. Lastly, providing childcare during workshop can also make the workshop more effective. Having the children distracted or occupied doing something else would allow the parents to focus on the information being presented. It is clear that Latinos will represent a greater percentage of students and workers in the future. The Latino population is growing from 13 percent to 17 percent of the U.S. population in 2004. The number of Hispanic students in public elementary and secondary schools has increased as well, from 19 percent to 24 percent (Krogstad, 2017). By continuing these workshops, Latino students are guided towards a career success path.

What I learned from this social issue is that many Hispanic and Latino students are being left out from achieving a secondary education and receiving proper academic guidance for the wrong reasons. Many Hispanic and Latino students have the ambition and desire to complete a secondary education but do not know where to begin. I also learned that many parents and students believe that by obtaining good grades in all their classes will get them into a university, not knowing that obtaining good grades is only part of getting into a university. The other part many students miss is completing the A-G high school requirements. By delivering the workshop on the A-G high school requirements more parents and students become aware of

what is completely needed for the students to go into a four-year university right after high school.

Many Hispanic and Latino in Monterey County are labeled as low socioeconomic, public assistance dependent, and is associated with many health risks from not being able to afford most medical treatment. By guiding Hispanic and Latino parents and students to achieve a secondary education we are lowering the rates of low socioeconomic status, public assistance dependent, and health risks. At one point when rates of Hispanic and Latino students achieving a secondary education become higher all the negative factors will begin to decrease. You will not see many Hispanic and Latino be low socioeconomic, depend on public assistance, and you will see the Latino population become healthier if they obtain jobs that offer healthcare insurance. This is an issue that will not get resolved with one workshop, by proving numerous workshops all around Monterey County, such as, schools, public libraries, summer programs, and possibly get into contact with companies such as Driscoll's and see if they will allow for someone to go and deliver a workshop for parents for half an hour and talk about the A-G high school requirement is a great start.

My recommendations to a future intern with CHISPA that will continue this project is to make sure that who ever is delivering the workshop is someone that is very passionate about this issue so that after the workshop the audience walks out feeling empowered and ready to help their children pursue a secondary education. Also, do some research on your audience. Go around and ask what they know and how they feel about education, get to know your audience if the agency allows you to, but more than anything have fun with your project and as much as you want to teach others try to learn as much as you can from the experience.

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Appendix A**Pre-Education Workshop Survey**

1. Do you want your kids to go to college?  
a) Yes      b) No      c) Somewhat
2. Do you know what the A-G high school requirements are?  
a) Yes      b) No      c) Somewhat
3. Do you know where to get information on how to prepare your children for college?  
a) Yes      b) No      c) Somewhat

**Post- Education Workshop Survey**

1. Do you understand A-G high school requirements more?  
a) Yes      b) No      c) Somewhat
2. Do you know about your available resources?  
a) Yes      b) No      c) Somewhat
3. Do you visualize your kids going to college more now that you know this information?  
a) Yes      b) No      c) Somewhat

**Encuesta del Taller de Educación (Antes)**

1. ¿Le gustaría que sus hijas/os asistieran a la Universidad?  
a) Si                                      b) No                                      c) Algo
2. ¿Sabes cuáles son los requisitos de la preparatoria A-G?  
a) Si                                      b) No                                      c) Algo
3. ¿Sabe donde obtener información acerca como preparar a su hijos/as para la Universidad?  
a) Si                                      b) No                                      c) Algo

## **Encuesta del Taller de Educación (Despues)**

1. ¿Entiende más los requisitos de la escuela secundaria A-G?  
a) Si                                      b) No                                      c) Algo
2. ¿Sabe usted acerca de sus recursos disponibles?  
a) Si                                      b) No                                      c) Algo
3. ¿Usted visualiza a sus hijos asistiendo a la universidad más ahora que usted sabe esta información?  
a) Si                                      b) No                                      c) Algo

\*These are the surveys that were handed to the participants before and after the workshop. The questionnaires are both in Spanish and English.