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The Road to Postsecondary Education

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Abstract

Hispanic/Latino students pursuing postsecondary education is too low. Central Coast High School is an alternative School which provides students with a second chance in the path to graduation. The program to be held in this agency is an outreach program to educate and provide information for students about the importance of going to college. Another purpose is to encourage students to apply for college and explain the different types of financial aid available for them. The expected outcome of this program is to have about 75% of the twelve-grade level students invited to be present and participate. The implementation will be an outreach program for the students and hold the program in the school's cafeteria. Students were notified to bring in the required paperwork to apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and apply at the site with the help of staff from the Monterey Peninsula College (MPC). The important results were the number of students who showed up to receive information and applied for FAFSA. Recommendations for Central Coast High School is to have better communication among their faculty for a better outcome in future programs. With the support of teachers, students might feel more comfortable and engaged to receive information, pay attention, and participate.

Keywords: *Hispanics, Latinos, Central Coast High School, Monterey Peninsula College, Graduation, Outreach, Students, College, Financial Aid, Education, Outcome, Postsecondary Education, Twelve-Grade Level.*

Central Coast High School (CCHS) is a public agency and it is situated in Seaside, California since the year of 2010 after moving from one place to another (MPUSD, 2016). The mission of this agency is “to provide a flexible setting for students with unique academic and social emotional needs. We encourage students to develop an enthusiasm for life-long learning and pursue a post-secondary education (Central Coast High School).” The vision of this agency is “where second chances happen (CCHS).” The mission and vision are well implemented in the agency because of the lack of resources they have compared to other high schools. CCHS’ values make a difference in the students’ academics by implementing the A through G requirements to graduate and pursue higher education. To help students reach their goal of graduation, CCHS offers more classes throughout the semester for students to make up credits and be on the graduation list. It is important for CCHS and the counselor to plan every single student’s academic year. The counselor has an educational plan for every student for them to either graduate from Central Coast High School or go back to their regular high schools.

The population of CCHS are at risk students in the junior and senior high school level. The age ranges from 16-18 years of age. Students who reach the age of 18 while been at CCHS can decide if they want to stay there, continue their education somewhere else, stop going to school, or go to adult school. According to the Public-School Review (2003-2017), the total students at Central Coast High School is 69. Out of the 69 students at the agency, 61% are male and 39% are female (Public-School Review, 2003-2017). The percentage of ethnicities in this agency is dominated by Hispanics or Latinos with a 72% followed by White with 16% and Black with 6%. The domination of one ethnicity can play a role due to the high percentage of one over the other. With that domination also come more statistics as what other services and resources are being offered to the students. About 68% of the entire school are eligible for free lunch and

4% are eligible for reduced lunch. This data show the importance of how an ethnicity might bring down or up the percentages. As stated in the U.S. Census (2010), 48.4% of the population in Seaside, CA are White, 43.4% are Hispanic or Latino, and 8.4% are Black or African American. Ethnicities are a big part of what goes on with the community because of the different cultures, beliefs, or education they have.

There are different issues which cause graduation rates to be low in the Hispanic population and Central Coast High School (CCHS) in the Monterey County. There is a domination of Hispanics or Latinos in school throughout the Monterey County. According to ed-data (2016), the percentage of enrollment in the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) is dominated by the Hispanic or Latino population with a 53.3%. With over half of the entire population in the MPUSD being Hispanics or Latinos, it is crucial to look at such population and the education they can reach. Education is key to everyone who believes in higher education. There are different causes why people do not pursue higher education or miss the point while getting their education. There are causes that affect different populations in different ways such as transportation, attendance, and employment. High school is a stage where people start to mature and try to be independent. High school graduation is very important to pursue higher education, get a job, and be educated. It is also important to see how each school is doing and how prepared students are. The numbers change from county to state to nation. At the State level, according to Torlakson (2016), the graduation rate in the 2013-2014 year among Hispanics or Latinos was of 76.6% compared to 87.6% White non-Hispanic. The Hispanic or Latino population falls behind on graduation rates and there are causes on why this occurs.

Transportation is also an issue because CCHS does not provide school buses to the students. The students are affected with this because they rely on public transportation, rides

from family or friends, walk, or use their own transportation. It very difficult to some students to rely on any type of transportation different than school transportation because they must be looking for alternatives on how to get to school. One way of transportation students at CCHS rely on is public transportation most known as the Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST). Although the MST offers discount fares, there might be students with zero income. According to the MST (2017), those eligible for a discount fare and traveling locally should be 18 years or younger to receive a discount of \$0.75 from the \$1.50 people ages 19-64 would pay. This fare might be cheap to some, but for a student who does not receive any income besides their parents it might be too expensive. Students using the MST transportation are looking to pay the fare of \$0.75 two times or more a day for everyday they have school. Students with zero income might see the money they must spend only on transportation in the long run. It is difficult for anyone to rely on public transportation because of safety, traffic, and wait-time for transportation. According to Robinson, R. (2015) in *Transportation Challenges Complicate School Choice for S.F. Students*, “Chris, 14, had hoped to attend Washington High School, just half a mile from his home. And he has no one to drive him across town. So, his commute takes 75 minutes, at best. When the 38 is overcrowded and he cannot squeeze in, he risks being late for his first-period English class” (par. 8). Transportation is a big issue for students in Monterey County, the state, and nation.

Transportation as mentioned before can be factor for students to be late or absent to school.

Independent students might not see their future in school specially if they are working and making money for their own. At CCHS few students work or have worked and many others would like to have a job according to the school counselor. The importance of being independent while in high school is crucial because there are many responsibilities in which every person prioritizes one or the other. Students who are in continuing high schools as CCHS is might have

the time to work and go to school. There are students who believe they can work and go to school, however there are struggles and interferences that come with such actions. According to Child Trends (2016), “According to studies, students who work more than 20 hours a week may have lower grade point averages and are more likely to drop out of school than those who work fewer hours. Students with jobs may experience stress due to pressure to perform well in both work and school settings. Overall, the negative effects of employment appear to be linked, not to whether students work, but to how often and how long. Some studies show that longer work hours are more prevalent among minority and other disadvantaged students” (pg. 2). There are students at CCHS who decide to work and are permitted to do so with the help of the counselor for the students to have some type of income. Those students are given the opportunity to take the first periods of school off which permits them to sleep more. There are other students who are helped by the school staff signing permission as underage to work. It is important to implement and look at the results that employed students bring either positive or negative.

Graduation is very important in today’s world to receive employment. It is known that there are jobs being offered with only a high school diploma or even less than a high school diploma, but is the job enough to make a living? There are many consequences coming the way of someone who decided to stop going to school or not graduate. It is important to look at your future. Without a high school diploma will be hard to be financially stable until you find good employment. According to Torpey, E., and Watson, A. (2014) “In May 2013, about 27 percent of all U.S. jobs were in occupations that typically require less than a high school diploma for entry. These jobs had a median annual wage of \$20,350” (par. 12). There are many jobs out there, but not everyone is willing to do hard work for less money. Students in high school should look at such consequences their actions might bring their way. It is important to see either get through

school and find good employment or leave and work in a less paying job. Having a high school diploma or equivalent makes a difference, “In May 2013, about 39 percent of all jobs in the U.S. were in occupations that typically require a high school diploma or equivalent, with a median annual wage of \$35,580” (Torpey, E., and Watson, A., 2014).

Having good employment means being financially stable, however that is not the case for everyone. Low-income families emerge from low paying jobs. Another reason why students should pursue higher education should be for them and their families to be financially stable and do not worry about how they are going to pay for utilities and rent. According to Simms, M., C., et al, (2009) the percentage for low-income Hispanic families in 2008 was about 30% (pg. 5). This percentage is very high for students to fall into right after high school. It is important for students at CCHS to understand the important difference that makes having a high school diploma. Being low-income does not provide a good life. Low-income families must depend on other services to go forward. There is governmental help for low-income families, but are students willing to live off government services their entire lives? The help brought by the government is limited and selected. There are different services in which low-income families must depend on to get through the day. According to kidsdata.org, (2017) about 49% of Hispanic or Latinos receive Cal Fresh (Food Stamp) in California and about 71% of Hispanics or Latinos receive it in the Monterey County. The importance of Hispanic or Latino students to understand their future situation is important. If they do not attend school, graduate, and receive their diploma, they will fall into any category mentioned before.

Causes	Problem	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transportation • Graduation rates are low • Independent Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Rates of Hispanic/Latino Students Pursuing Postsecondary Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low income • Dependent on Government Services

“Pursuing Higher Education is Achievable”

This project was an outreach event to educate students about the importance of attending school, graduation, and the possibility of pursuing higher education. Students are in school to graduate, get good grades, and maybe pursue higher education as their parents want them to do so. This project was implemented to give students support from CCHS Staff, Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) representatives, and from one another. Students were given information on what it takes to graduate, apply for college, and pay for college. MPC representatives gave an overview of what they expect from high school students specially twelve-grade level students. Students were notified to bring the paperwork need to apply for Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). They were also encouraged by CCHS staff to be present for the event as well as to participate and bring the material required. This project was held at the CCHS’s cafeteria where students will feel comfortable and eat some appetizers provided by the intern after the event.

This event was followed by a survey to gather information on how much information students gathered from the MPC representatives’ presentation. According to past results of student participation observed by the intern and mentor, this survey was done during the students’ class time. The survey gave the intern, CCHS staff, and MPC representatives ideas on how many students are looking into a postsecondary education.

The goal was to get feedback students about the importance of school attendance, graduation, and transportation. There are independent students who take decisions on themselves and others still depend on their parents. So, the agency would like to see what type of help students, and independent students need. Also, to implement the importance of the students' education and how CCHS staff can help them in their future. CCHS wants to remark students the importance their education has and how important they are to CCHS. If students understand the importance of going to school on time and do their work to get their diploma, CCHS will be impacted positively with higher rates of attendance and graduation. It will also impact positively the students who will be leaving CCHS with their high school diploma and the doors open to pursue higher education and maybe a good employment.

The need for this project was determined by the different situations students at CCHS go through. There are independent students who work, students who drive themselves to school, and students who rely on someone else to get to school. It is important to help all students to be more effective and lead others to do the same. Students at CCHS rarely ask for help, and that is also a reason for this project to come in effect. CCHS will be implementing positive vibes into the students, and staff who will be part of the project and know that students are not alone.

The event will be the most important activity to be held at CHHS. This will be due to the importance of bringing in MPC representatives to talk about the importance of graduation and college. The survey will be implemented at the end of the project to target 12th grade students in their regular classrooms where with the help of their students they might be more collaborative. There will also be surveys might be online as well in Google Classroom where students turn in all their school work. Survey deliberation will come with the help of all CCHS staff. Students

will feel better to answer the survey with the opportunity to win a prize (a 20\$ gift card). It will be a collaboration project with the positive outcome towards the students at CCHS.

The anticipated outcome of the event is to improve the students' knowledge about future education, how to apply for college, and the different ways there are to pay for college. The change the mentor (CCHS counselor) and intern wanted was to have students engaged in working with them and apply for scholarships, college, and financial aid. Also, with the situation a continuation school has of low graduation rates, low attendance, etc. trust between those creating the event and the students must be build. All CCHS staff worked together to provide safety for the students and gain their trust. For this event that was not the exception, the counselor had to work extra hard to have as many students present during the event as possible. Implementing the program and approaching students was a challenge because students rarely ask for help or cooperate. This time students felt secure and trusted those involved in the event. "Involve families in all program planning and implementation. There must be mutual trust and communication for families and schools to work together to solve problems (pg. 18)" Railsback, J. (2004). Involving different parties made students feel secure in their own ways and that was the expectation in to have as many students present as possible.

The deliberation of the event was mainly done by Francisco Tostado the director of the student financial services at Monterey Peninsula College. Tostado went over the steps the students need to take to start applying for college. As MPC is partnered with Central Coast High School, Tostado encourages the students to apply to MPC as he can help them personally while he is available in the site. Tostado also covered the importance of graduation, attendance, grades, and financial need. He also explained the different types of financial support all students have access to and explained what loans, grants, out of pocket, and scholarships are. The mentor and

intern approached the students on the importance of applying for college to all 34 twelve-grade students present (65%) and to look at the different scholarships they could use. Another expected outcome was for students to gain the capacity to ask for help on how to apply either for college or financial aid. Also, for the students to ask about the different scholarships which the intern can give information on how to fill them out, whether they are open or closed.

The greatest obstacle for everyone involved in this event, was bringing students together and have them focused during the time of the event. Students had a hard time either attending school or feeling the energy to go to the event. All parties involved in this project, came together for the best outcome even though few students decided not to show up to school the day of the event. Also, to engage students during the beginning of the event because they were loud and were not showing respect. It was an obstacle to try and explain to them that the event was created for them and the help was for them. This issue was well handed by the mentor who calmly and respectfully asked all students to be at their best behavior. She made students feel comfortable and they all showed more respect for the speakers.

Another obstacle was on what type of appetizers would be good to provide for the students. The intern decided to provide warm atole and Mexican bread due to the cold mornings. He also provided fruit, water, and cookies so students had different options to eat. This was an obstacle because of the how to carry stuff from home to the site and set up for the event.

The expected outcome was almost achieved as by a raise of hands **25** out of the **34** students who attended the event said that they gained more knowledge on future education and how to pay for it. The mentor, intern, and MPC representative were happy with the result of about **63% attendance** from twelve-grade students and a **73.5%** of students who gained knowledge on the information provided. The method to gather the information on attendance was

a sign-in sheet which was signed by the students who attended the event. Another way to see how much information the students took in was the survey which **40** out of the **52 twelve-grade** students responded to. This survey was deliberated by the intern going from classroom to classroom. This task was done asking teachers to collaborate due to the population targeted. Students might have decided not to collaborate with the intern, so the teachers were supportive asking the students to answer the survey as classwork. Also, the mentor provided the intern with the flexibility to go into the classrooms. All teachers teaching twelve-grade students encouraged them to answer the survey to the best of their ability. Students were surprised when the intern introduced himself and explained the reason for the survey. All students behaved well and were enthusiastic when they hear about a \$20 gift card to a random selected winner. Names of the students completing the survey were written on a notebook to know who answer the survey and to select the gift card winner. The results of the survey were analyzed one at a time and put into an Excel sheet to compare graphs regarding each question.

The event did not achieve the expected outcome because only about **65%** of the students attended the event compared to the **75%** planned. What it achieved was the energy and courage the students provided to the workshop. The students felt secured and comfortable to interact with the MPC representative and ask questions throughout the entire presentation. The event was held on a cold morning, so the intern took Mexican bread, atole, fruit, cookies, and water. All students behaved in an excellent manner which made it easier for those who presented to them and engaged them with all the information provided. During this event, four students brought all the paperwork needed to apply for FAFSA and decided to do the application there. It was a great outcome for everyone because all four of the students finished **100%** of the application.

Another achievement by the event was the survey. The survey was deliberated after a few days. 40 out of the 52 twelve-grade students responded the survey. The survey was taken by **77%** of twelve-grade student and all surveys taken were **100%** completed. The survey met the criteria to know how many students see graduation and postsecondary education important and how many students are willing to work with CCHS staff to meet their goal of a postsecondary education. This survey also asked about the different ways to pay for college mentioned during the event and **100%** of the students have in mind which resource(s) they will be using to pay for college. This survey helped the agency to know more about the students they have. Students responded to the variety of questions where about 90% of the students surveyed knew what type of resource (FAFSA, Dream Act, out of pocket, grant, loan) they would use to pay for college. All these resources were explained in detail by Francisco Tostado. Even though about 45% of the student surveyed stated that they will use FAFSA to pay for college, the other 55% gives a clear vision that more than half of the students know something about the other resources.

One of the strengths the outreach program had was the ability to put together the event on a morning schedule where students had to leave class to learn about their future. The support from CCHS staff especially from the front office, the counselor, and principal contributed to have a higher attendance than a 50% due to the encouragement they all gave the students. Another strength was the ability Francisco Tostado had to engage the students in his speech and had them collaborate with him throughout the entire presentation. That was a success which provided an ice-breaker for all students to feel involved in the event and feel comfortable to participate and ask questions. The support from a few teachers was also a success for them because they attended the workshop and students felt the connection and felt engaged on who to

go for help and further questions. The teachers present also helped to keep the event secure and going without interruptions.

The most important limitation the event had was the time limit for it. As it was during school hours, the students had to be in class at a certain time. It was enough time for the speakers to give the information, but it was not enough for the students to keep asking questions or talk directly with Francisco Tostado about any questions/confusions they had. A challenge that this outreach event created was bringing in all students and have a higher percentage of attendance. Many of the students who did not attend the workshop decided not to go to school until the time it ended. This was a challenge that the mentor and intern have been dealing for a while now but it is an improvement on how many students decided to attend and ask for help. Another challenge was keeping the students focused first for the information and then serve them food. It was before lunch and students were hungry, but not everyone was cooperating. The students challenged everyone who worked extra hard to keep order which started as soon as Mr. Tostado started speaking to them.

This program should be continued because of the partnership CCHS has with MPC. MPC is on the lookout for new students every year and the goal of CCHS is for students to graduate and pursue higher education. If the program is available with the contribution of MPC, there should be a better outcome year by year. With the structure done this time, MPC representatives saw that the students were engaged and collaborated. The next time it is done, something small such as providing more time to answer question can make a bigger impact. During this event, MPC representatives brought lanyards, pens, and folders for the students. This was a good opportunity for the students to feel as they own something from a college and that might just be the beginning. A suggestion for CCHS is to give to the students. The students were anxious to

get food and the different things MPC was providing. If this event continues, MPC will win many new enrolled students yearly but CCHS will have a higher graduation rate.

Another recommendation for this event to keep, is to have a better scheduling. School hours interfere with the students' ability to keep focused because they might want to stay there because they do not want to go to class. If the event is done after class, maybe less students will come but those who do will be the students to target and help succeed. Giving to students will also help. Students who took the survey were more engaged after they knew that they needed to complete the survey to be entered in the raffle for a gift card. Gift cards are a good way to encourage students to do something for their own future, so why not reward them with something while they work on their applications.

This event also interfered with the working hours of parents. Parents should be included in future outreach events like this one because of the information provided. Parents will engage on information they might not know, and will encourage their children to keep going with their education. Also, parents might be able to use that information for future generations. The event should be held at times when most parents do not work and that could be after school. MPC should also provide information for parents so that they know how to help their students. This recommendation is the most important because if parents are present, they will encourage their own kids, what options they have, and how they can pay for college.

Based on the results, CCHS has a great structure to help students go into college. Personally the intern and mentor enjoyed working on this event and preparing the needed material to provide students with the information about future education. Professionally, the intern gained experience on how to deal with the population served in this school. The intern stepped up to be recognized as staff and for students to trust him and know that he is there to

help them achieve their future education goal. The intern also gained more knowledge on the issue of low percentages of Hispanics/Latinos pursuing higher education. Comparing the results and approaching students was a relief that students do care about their future and are willing to collaborate with the CCHS staff to meet their goal.

The broader social problem this project relates to is the low percentage of Hispanics/Latinos with a Bachelor's degree or higher. This project addresses the issue in an earlier process. If students know where to go for help and how to pay/apply for college by their last year of High School, probably they will be more engaged and happy about this types of events. Many of the students who attended the event gave positive results on the survey that they are thinking of going to college. What is stopping them? They might feel insecure due to the low knowledge on the topic. Events like this should be implemented in earlier stages of the students' lives for them to know more about the topic and understand the importance of it. Providing events like this project to middle school students and follow up during their high school years would be important for the students' success.

Advice for future capstone students in the agency or with this type of project would be to focus in the group of students that are in the eleven-grade level. Focus on that specific group of students and do the event with the same information provided. Follow up with the same group at least twice a semester and keep working with them until the last semester of their high school years. This will show the results more precise and specific to see how important is for someone to be there for students. Compare the starting point of the event to the last part of it and how successful you were. Students might feel pressured, but they might not have anyone else providing the information this type of event provided them with.

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Appendix A

Survey for twelve-grade students

1. How important is graduation for you?

Not Important

Somewhat Important

Very Important

2. Are you thinking of attending College/University at some point in your life?

Yes

No

Unsure

3. What school do you want to attend after graduation?

Choice #1:

Choice #2:

4. Which of the following resources would you use to pay for College?

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Dream Act

Scholarships

Out of pocket

Grant

Loan

Other (please specify)

5. How useful would a workshop to apply for Financial Aid/Scholarships/College be for you?

Very Useful

Somewhat Useful

Not Useful

6. Will you collaborate with the CCHS Staff to reach your goal of attending College?

Yes

No

Maybe

