

Community Partner Advisory Group Meeting

MINUTES

Monday, May 16, 2005 Meeting—6:30 PM

Auditorium

County Courthouse Annex--Elkhorn, WI

James D'Alessandro, CPAG Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

Roll call—CPAG members present included Jacqueline Buleje, James D'Alessandro, Elton Feffer, Marilyn Kienbaum, Letha Kuecker, John Newhouse, Barb Papcke, Gen Reed, Nina Ruskey, Kathleen Tober, and Mary Vander Veen. A quorum was declared.

Ag and Extension Education Committee present—Committee members present included Stan Muzatko. Art Lein arrived at approximately 6:55 p.m.

UWEX staff present—Carolyn L. Belczyk, Department Head, and Angie Recknagel, Recording Secretary.

Public in attendance—Sarah Edens, School Psychologist, East Troy, Mike Hinske, Assistant Principal, Big Foot, Roni Telfer, Curriculum/Staff Development Coordinator, Whitewater, Mary Ellen Wright, School Social Worker, Elkhorn, Nicki Schoemperlen, ELL, Sharon, Dorothy Kaufmann, District Administrator, Sharon, Joe Reed, ELL, Badger High School, Barbara Isaacson, Principal Williams Bay Elementary School.

There were no withdrawals from the Agenda. **Feffer moved to approve the agenda as presented, with a second by Reed. The motion carried 11-0.**

Kuecker moved to approve the minutes of the April 18 Community Partner Advisory Group meeting, with a second by Tober. The motion carried 11-0.

Public comment—There was no public comment.

Discussion with School District Representatives regarding programs, services, and outreach initiatives for the Latino/Hispanic Community—Belczyk highlighted the UW-Extension program areas for the panelists. D'Alessandro then asked the panelists to introduce themselves to the committee and address the following questions:

What are the current programs, services, and initiatives to Latino students and families of each of the school districts represented?

How might UW-Extension and the schools work collaboratively to meet the outstanding needs of the Latino community?

Dorothy Kauffman and Nicki Schoempelen of the Sharon District introduced themselves, and Schoempelen explained that 20% of Sharon's enrollment is Latino. They have been running an ESL pullout program for the last couple of years. This is where children with limited English

skills will come to her from their regular classes, and she will work with them on English. She has done this through teaching science and math and also has gone into the classrooms. Some programs they offer through their school for Latinos are Head Start, daycare at the school, tutoring after school, and a summer school "academy". Spanish-speaking adults are working on English literacy with the Literacy Council of Walworth County at the public library in Sharon. The school district also provides translation services for school registration, parent-teacher conferences, etc. Kaufmann and Shoempelen believe the affordable medical care is a high priority for the Latino community.

Mary Ellen Wright of Elkhorn spoke next. She stated Elkhorn has experienced significant growth in its student population over the past several years, especially in the Latino population. They have an ESL program aide at every building and have an ESL coordinator for the district. They do use the pullout method, as well, for the children who are struggling with the language. There is state-mandated testing every year for all children that do not speak English as their first language. This test helps the school district know where the student falls. She stated that Latino families often find that the school is a centering point or connecting place for their needs. The school works to point these families in the right direction to help get their needs taken care of. She feels there is significant overlap between the needs of Latino families and of non-Hispanic low-income families. She noted that a lot of times the older children are taken out of school to go with the family to translate or have to stay at home to provide childcare for their younger siblings. She identified affordable health care as a significant issue facing all low-income families.

Roni Telfer of Whitewater spoke next. She stated they have bilingual aides in the middle and high schools, and ESL classes in a couple of the elementary schools. They also have two active Latino parent organizations: One for parents of elementary students, and one at the middle/high school level. The groups are quite active, with meetings conducted in Spanish. They have also had Latino students translate and proof the high school handbook and published it for the Latino families. They have been very fortunate to partner with UW-Whitewater. The high school also offers adult ESL classes and computer classes. They have good attendance at these. She noted a bilingual writers' workshop, for Latino youth, which focuses on increasing their Spanish grammar and writing skills, as well as their English literacy. The workshop emphasizes that students who are bilingual have a marketable skill. She noted that there is a misconception by Latino parents who think that if they are legal, their children are legal, as well. This makes it very hard for the child if they graduate from high school and would like to continue their education at a university. If they need to apply for aid, they are not able to if they are not legal. This is one of the big issues they see in their district.

Mike Hinske of Big Foot High School spoke next. He stated that Big Foot is a unified district. The high school is a 9-12 entity made up of Sharon, Walworth, Fontana, and Reek K-8 districts. They have seen a steady growth in their non-English population up to last year when they reached a plateau. The board of education hired a full-time English Language Learning (ELL) teacher. Prior to hiring the ELL teacher, the district had two bilingual aides. The aides provided comprehensive case management for all of their non-English speaking students taught in the classrooms. They met with these children once or twice a week and worked directly in the classrooms with the students. Now they have one full-time bilingual teacher and one half-time aide. The aide works on their Back on Track programs and other initiatives to help the non-English speaking students gain essential skills. The full-time teacher works in English language

learning, which is specifically geared to the lowest level learners with the intent to help them development English skills needed to succeed. A year ago the district embraced the "Through New Eyes Concept." They grouped all of their at risk students and apply a comprehensive philosophy of case management. Every student in their building who is failing to make satisfactory academic progress for whatever reason has a case manager who is dedicated to working with them. Their non-English speaking students are also involved in their Title I reading program. Their school board is now voting on the development of mentoring program for freshmen that would provide a 20-minute peer advisory period each day. With students working directly with other students and teachers working with students trying to help with the transition piece for these students. They feel one of the number one struggles for the non-English speaking students is for the students to believe that they can succeed after high school. They need additional levels of opportunity – to see it is to believe it.

Sarah Eden of East Troy spoke next. She stated they don't have a large Latino population in their district. Because of their small enrollment they do not have any ESL programming. Their biggest challenge is being able to communicate with the several families that are non-English speaking. They do receive help from the high school Spanish teachers in translating for these families. They provide their newsletter in Spanish. They have to contract out for translators for registration or parent-teacher conferences at this time, as there is no funding for the ESL program, due to the low enrollment of non-English speaking students. Another area that is an issue is pulling together resources for helping their teachers support these students.

Jacqueline Buleje, CPAG member and Family School Liaison with Lake Geneva Schools, was the last panelist to speak. She stated the need was growing so much in their district that they had hired her as the family school liaison to work mostly with the Latino families to get information and programs out to them. They have ESL programming, both pullout programming and bilingual education, throughout the district. The bilingual program is used at Eastview Elementary. They start teaching in Spanish in kindergarten, moving towards a mix of Spanish and English, with the percentage of English increasing each year so that when the students reach 4th grade they are using 100% English. At Central Denison they use the pullout ESL program, which is where the students are not taught in Spanish. They are taught in English and receive some support services through pullout. At the high school they have a program where they go to classes with all the other students, but they have team teachers and have an ESL after school lab where help is available for these students. Some students, work with an ESL teacher who will re-teach them in Spanish what they learned in class to help support them so they do not fall behind. Two of the main needs they see are making students aware that there is help out there for them to continue on their education after high school and having communications available in Spanish to make more Latino families aware of what is available for them. Going beyond high school is difficult without documentation. Families need survival skills, affordable medical care, translation (available and visible). What about a Spanish language "Welcome Wagon" for new families?

D'Alessandro asked the panelists if the schools are teaching English or just translating? Telfer of Whitewater responded that schools do what they can with the resources available. It is a priority for students to learn English. Frequently non-English speaking students are placed into classes taught in English. Aides support these students and translate subject matter information when extra help is needed. The success rate is better with children that come when they are at the elementary level versus the students that immigrate at the middle and high school levels.

D'Alessandro asked if the drop-out rate of Latinos is the same or more than other students. Hinske responded that the rate is the same across the board.

Feffer noted that he knows of some cases where a student's parents are legal. However, they never made the student legal. He noted that businesses create the demand for Latino immigrants and therefore have a social obligation to help them make a decent living and have a good life. We need to help these people become legal. Buleje noted it is a very time-consuming, expensive, and complex thing to do. The process takes anywhere from 10-12 years to complete. Hinske stated this would be a good area on which to work—assembling a list of resources to help complete the immigration process.

Tober asked if in Mexico people only attend school through 6th grade. Buleje responded that high school in Mexico is different from here. After 6th grade, students are choosing a career for life and going to more specialized schools for training and education, where as here students go to high school for a more general diploma and go on for technical training and higher education after that.

Telfer of Whitewater stated they offer a grant called “Project Sweet” which is a grant to continue education. They have been fortunate that some of the participants in “Project Sweet” completed college and then came back to Whitewater, which gives hope to the other Latinos in high school that they could have the same opportunities. Several schools in the UW-System offer summer programs for Latinos.

Belczyk asked the panelists if they believed there is any value in investing in UW-Extension faculty and staff to learn Spanish through short-term immersion programs in Mexico or other Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. Buleje responded she felt this was one of the best ways to learn the language. Wright asked if the purpose of the immersion programs is to understand the language or just the culture. Buleje states that when you return from an immersion course you need to continue to use Spanish.

There were no further questions. D'Alessandro thanked the panelists for coming to the CPAG meeting and sharing their programs and insights with the group.

Next Meeting Date—The group will meet on June 29, 2005, at 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment—The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Angie Recknagel, recording secretary. Minutes approved by Ag and Extension Education Committee on June 29, 2005.