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Navigating a new land is made more complex for undocumented immigrants by the challenges of poverty, the inability to secure work for a living wage, and the daily dissonance experienced by living in a culture that rejects their very presence, but is welcoming of the labor of their hands, compensated for at a below market rate (Capps, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson, & Passel, 2005; Trueba, 2004). Passel (2006) reported estimations of the population of undocumented immigrants in the United States at over eleven million, with fully 60% of all Mexican immigrants being undocumented. Parents tend to bring their children when they immigrate to a new country. Recent estimates indicate there are approximately 1.8 million children residing in the United States without documentation. Approximately, 3.1 million babies are born every year to parents without documentation (Passel, 2006). Research by Hook (2006) suggests growing up in an immigrant household increases the risk factor of poverty by more than 50% compared to children growing up in native-born households.

The current wave of immigration to the United States is a mixed demographic. Rumbaut (2008) noted many of the new immigrants to the United States from Latin America have little formal schooling. They can be described as unskilled or semi-skilled workers who frequently enter the United States without proper documentation. Approximately 22% of all new immigrants have less than a ninth-grade education (Rumbaut, 2008). Research by Crosnoe and Lopez Turley (2011) and Rumbaut (2008) suggested many new immigrants live in areas of high poverty, racial segregation, and limited meaningful work opportunities. Furthermore, they are more likely to work for minimum wages, and in jobs without the benefit of insurance or other labor protections and safeguards. Unlike the opportunities for past waves of immigrants, the changing economic
structure in the United States offers today's low-skilled immigrants little opportunity for upward mobility through factory or industrial work (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Rumbaut, 2008). The constant fear of possible deportation is a real challenge for many immigrant families.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss Hispanic students' progress through high school in an immigrant responsive city. The chapter begins with a literature review of immigrant issues. Then the authors report an immigrant event that occurred in 2006. The third section of the paper presents a description of programs implemented by an immigrant responsive high school. The last part of this paper reports findings of investigating several questions that focused on immigrant high school students with no English language skills and some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the city where the event occurred.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Bearing the stigma of having undocumented status brings with it additional racism, and discrimination (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). When immigrants encounter racism, and ethnic discrimination it has a significant negative effect on their social, and emotional well-being, physical health, sense of efficacy, and sense of self; which in turn may diminish their motivation to succeed, and academic achievement (Borjas, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). This may account for an apparent diminishing in the levels of motivation, and positive attitudes of many immigrant youth towards school, and their future life chances. The longer many immigrant children stay in school the lower their levels of academic achievement, and the lower their grade point average (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Perreira, Mullan Harris, & Lee, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

**Parental Educational Attainment**

The educational attainment of immigrant parents is a significant factor in the academic achievement of their children. Immigrants who arrive in the United States with a history of educational attainment in their country of origin tend to have children who achieve a higher level of academic success than children of immigrant parents who have low levels of educational attainment (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011). The greater the educational level of the parent is related to an increase in the number, and quality of resources the parent has to help their child achieve academic success, and access to academic opportunities. The level of parental education has a direct correlation to student outcomes on achievement tests, grades, and school completion (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Children of immigrant parents who have higher levels of education are in a better position to receive help from their parents to navigate the road to college, enter school with greater and more sophisticated vocabularies, experience a literacy rich home environment, have easy access to technology such as computers and the internet, and are more likely to be able to receive help on homework (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).
Immigrant Paradox

Many students, immigrants or native born, experience a decline in their motivation, grade point average, and engagement the longer they are within the educational system - an overall decline in performance which crosses all racial and ethnic divides but is significantly more noticeable in minority populations (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). However, an interesting phenomenon in the research suggests new immigrants have better outcomes than second-generation immigrants in several areas. This has been referred to as the immigrant paradox (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Educational achievement may also be negatively correlated to perceptions of discrimination. The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) data indicate many immigrant youth feel a pervasive sense of discrimination in school and community settings. The source of their feelings of discrimination comes from interactions with peers, teachers, and neighbors. Interestingly, a majority of immigrant youths who report discrimination also feel that they would experience less discrimination if they obtained a high level of education (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

Too often, immigrant parents do not experience efficacy in their interactions with the educational system. Limited access to English is a significant barrier to effective parental involvement--it also is a determinant of individual identity and authority. Access to interpreters can bridge some of these barriers, but this alone does not eliminate the problem (Trueba, 2004). Frequently, immigrant parents must rely on their children to act as interpreters. When this happens, the social dynamics of family are weakened, and become unbalanced. When the familial hierarchy is altered, the parent-child bond can be negatively affected (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

EVENT

KETV (2006) reported that early in the morning of December 12, 2006, the Chief of Police of Grand Island, NE, Chief Lamkin, met with federal agents and communicated that his department would not participate in the raid. Lamkin wanted to avoid the chilling effect that could descend between the local police and the Hispanic community if the people had reason to fear the police. However, Lamkin did inform governmental institutions, including the public schools that something was going to happen (KETV, 2006). Chaudry et al. (2010) note that Dr. Steve Joel, superintendent of Grand Island Public Schools, acted immediately to mobilize a coordinated, district wide plan to ensure the safety of all immigrant students, and to designate all public schools as safe havens. Lamkin publically denounced the raid, and the local health department and DHHS provided access to needed services for families.

Chaudry et al (2010) note that the Urban Institute reported on the effects of large-scale raids on children, using the 2006 raid in Grand Island, Nebraska, as one of their examples. They pointed out that fear was palpable among the Hispanic community, and in the days immediately following the raid over 275 Hispanic public school students were absent from class. In a united effort, school staff and faith-based organizations went door to door throughout neighborhoods delivering food to families and trying to communicate that
school was a safe place for their children. Despite their best efforts, many doors remained closed due to fear of detention and possible deportation by authorities. However, the safe havens provided by the schools allowed for trust to be rebuilt and for learning to continue.

Overstreet (2006) describes the devastating and far reaching consequences of tearing parents from children, ripping asunder the fabric of family and destabilizing entire communities in the name of immigration enforcement felt in this quiet Nebraska town that Tuesday morning, December 12, 2006, when the Swift meat packing plant in Grand Island, Nebraska, was raided by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, in an effort to serve 170 arrest warrants for identity theft. The ensuing mass arrests affected hundreds of Hispanic workers with and without documentation in an unprecedented demonstration of inequity in power and privilege.

Fathers and mothers kissed their children good-bye and sent them off to school on a chilly December morning with no inkling that it was to be years before they would see them again. Overstreet (2006) notes workers who were detained in the initial raid included single parents, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and guardians of hundreds of students attending the Grand Island Public Schools. A single father employed at Swift dropped off his young baby at the sitter before he left for work on Tuesday morning, December 12. Over one week later the infant was still in the custody of the sitter.

The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (2006) told the story of one worker, referred to as Juan, as indicative of the experience of many. Juan suffered the fall-out of leaving his green card at home on Tuesday morning when he went into work. He was one of hundreds of Hispanic employees who were detained and transported six hours away to Camp Dodge, Iowa. Despite his pleadings, he was not allowed to have a significant other bring his green card to the plant. When his legal status was finally established he was released, but not offered any compensation or transportation back to Grand Island. Juan spent $140 to get back to his family (UFCW, 2006).

Pore (2006) reported in the Grand Island Independent how Rev Jay Vetter, of the Trinity United Methodist Church in Grand Island articulated the mounting tragedy of the raid and its devastating impact on families asserting, “There is kind of a resurgence of mistrust in the community as a result of the raid that has created more polarization. Everyone affected are our family, our friends, and our neighbors” (Pore, 2006, para. 30). Of the 273 workers arrested in Grand Island, only nine are known to have been released in a timely manner to care for their children (Chaudry et al., 2010).

LaFee (2007) noted while children are frequently the forgotten causalities in the immigration debate, the Grand Island community was determined at the outset to make them the center point of policy and practice. In response to the raid over 60 teachers and volunteers were mobilized by the school district to take parentless children home for the night. Through a coordinated citywide effort, by 9:00 pm the evening of the raid the last child left at a school had been sent home with relatives (LaFee, 2007).

The raid of 2006 can be viewed through the theoretical framework of social stratification and inequality of opportunity and condition that may have a direct impact on an individual’s life chances (Breen & Jonsson, 2005). The work of Breen and Johnson (2005) suggests inequality of opportunity is grounded in the belief that an individual’s ascribed status should not impact their ability to secure employment or gain an education. Regardless of an individual’s race, sex or socioeconomic status, the playing field of life
should be level. Inequality of condition is directly related to the distribution of resources in relation to individual time, effort, citizenship or employment status.

The workers subject to the raid in 2006 were struggling to overcome the negative effects of social stratification. They were targeted initially because of their race and place of employment. Illegal citizenship status was assumed and the onus of proof was placed directly upon the worker—thus, standing American jurisprudence on its head as individuals were arbitrarily judged to be guilty until proven innocent. Rumbaut (2008) discusses the effects of low social capital and socioeconomic status to perpetuate stratification and disadvantage among immigrants. The 2006 raid highlighted these effects (Rumbaut, 2008). While the scholarly research on stratification and immigration is robust, the scholarship on the long term implications for the children of immigrants is limited (Suarez-Orozco, 2000).

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) discuss the modes of incorporation for immigrants and how these determinants embedded in the context of reception by government, society and community, greatly impact the socioeconomic and social capital status and prospects for immigrants. The long term implications for immigrant children and their families, as well as their general adaptation to their new land, are discussed through the conceptual framework of segmented assimilation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Hirschman, 2001). The ICE raid of 2006 in Grand Island, Nebraska served as a catalyst for community members, motivating them to rally around their new families in an example of how immigration is both the history and the destiny of an immigrant responsive community (Suarez-Orozco, 2000).

AN IMMIGRANT RESPONSIVE COMMUNITY SCHOOL EFFORTS

The journey towards becoming an immigrant responsive community is neither linear nor clearly defined. However, there is a body of research that explores how communities can support the integration of immigrants and newcomers into their midst. McGrath (2009) suggests that when a community develops a symbiotic relationship of shared responsibility among immigrants and established residents, integration occurs. He cites Fort Morgan, Colorado as an example of a city has developed bridging social capital between different community members.

This process requires the full participation of both groups, and can be affected by the human and social capital of the immigrants as well as the commitment level of the receiving community. Ultimately, success can be measured by the participation and inclusion of every group into the social, civic, educational, governmental, health and faith fabric of the community (McGarth, 2009).

From 2000 to 2010 the Hispanic population in Grand Island grew by over 82%, while the Hispanic school age population experienced an 89% growth rate. As of the 2010 census data, the Hispanic population comprised 26.7% of the population of Grand Island and accounted for 44% of the Grand Island Public School’s student body (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010). Today, at Grand Island Senior High School, the Hispanic population represents over 50% of the student body.

The work of Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) clearly illustrate how the raid of December 12, 2006 is an example of the unilinear process of acculturation and how stratification and the inequalities of opportunity and condition can have a significant impact on the social and economic ascent of immigrant families and their children. Climbing up the socioeconomic ladder for immigrant children is predicated on their human and social
capital and that of their parents, the context or reception within the community, and familial composition.

Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller (2005) earlier suggest intact two parent households, with the presence of an extended family and community support network are protective factors for the upward assimilation of immigrant children. Furthermore, a family that is undocumented with the father, mother, or both facing deportation, marginal participation within the economic structure of the community and a limited social support network has the potential for downward assimilation and a decrease in socioeconomic status and human capital (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2005).

In their 2008 research, Portes and Fernandez-Kelly found when there is positive support from the school district and other governmental agencies, a willingness from much of the native population to stand behind immigrants, and the existence of social networks and an established co-ethnic community to help immigrants find their way in a new land, the potential for successful integration and upward mobility is increased. Governmental, community and faith based organizations were mobilized into action in response to the raid. The familial devastation and loss the raid engendered was felt across a wide range of socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural statuses. Few were left untouched during this experience. Existing educational and community supports and institutional structures were important to maintain a sense of continuity and consistency when the lives of many immigrant families were being torn apart.

The following section presents a description of three programs implemented by the school district in this community to become a more responsive community to immigrant parents. These programs are: Parent University, The Welcome Center, and the English Language Acquisition Program.

**Parent University**

Parents and students at Grand Island Senior High school were given opportunities to attend a Parent University, a program designed to bridge the gaps students and their families have to the educational process, high school completion and post-secondary opportunities. Louie (2005) suggests by engaging students and parents with the school, students are more likely to succeed academically and continue on to graduate.

In a few short years, approximately 30% of the nation’s K-12 students in public schools will be the children of immigrants, and over 25% of these children will be from low income families. The research of Portes and Rumbaut (2001) suggest high levels of parental optimism regarding the opportunities available in the U.S. for immigrants and their children. However, many students experience a decline in their motivation, grade point average, and engagement the longer time they spend within the educational system.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) describe this as the immigrant paradox. Its intensity is negatively correlated to how immigrants have been incorporated into their new land in terms of access to employment, legal status, and their context of reception. Many of the immigrant students attending Parent University with their families were the first to not only have the possibility of graduating from high school, but also of post secondary educational opportunities. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) note this is not an easy or smooth road immigrants travel as the social stresses inherent to immigration and movement across social
classes, acquisition of a second language, and the loss of cultural markers and status can directly impact the kind and quantity of their educational and economic opportunities.

The Grand Island Public Schools Welcome Center

Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) research on segmented assimilation theory suggests families and children from low socioeconomic status with limited social and human capital face formidable educational challenges. Louie (2005) further notes school districts are institutionally positioned to either enhance access to educational equality or hinder it. While Nebraska is not considered a destination state for immigrants, or a traditional entry point, the significant increase in the immigrant population of the state and Grand Island in particular called for a dynamic response and flexibility of the educational infrastructure. The Grand Island Public Schools’ response was to launch the Welcome Center in July, 2007 as the first destination for students and families coming into the district that speak something other than English as a home language.

The Welcome Center is a part of the ELA Department and is staffed with a Coordinator and a Parent Liaison. Each year, over 630 students and their families arrive at the Welcome Center to register and begin their educational journey. These students come primarily from Mexico, South, and Central America. Each student is given an English language proficiency assessment, parents are given an initial orientation to the school district and the community, and helped to complete the registration process for their student(s).

Welcome Center faculty and staff support is given with the understanding that many individuals registering their children for school, during this first introduction to a U.S. school system, have themselves had often limited, discontinuous educational experiences or success in their countries of origin. Furthermore, many parents may not have completed schooling in their country of origin, or they may not be literate in their native language. This is a critical time to develop bridging social capital between parent, child, family, and school district, to understand the many challenges and strengths the student and family posses, and to begin the process of connecting the family to needed resources within the school district and larger community.

After the student has been assessed and the family completes registration and orientation, a summary is prepared of the assessment results including a placement recommendation and compellation of the assessment data, a short history of student immunizations and any existing medical concerns, and the student and family’s socio-emotional, and socioeconomic needs and strengths. All of these factors are communicated to the receiving school and to community organizations to facilitate access to services that may be able to help the family adjust to a new life in a new town.

Confidentiality of the student and family is closely guarded, and any information shared with the receiving school and teacher is done so only with the permission of the parent. Upon receipt of the summary, the receiving school and teacher, as well as social workers and other student support services personnel, prepare for the arrival of the student. This support also helps the student academically by optimizing instructional time allowing for immediate student placement within a service level that is most appropriate to their academic and language needs.
The English Language Acquisition Program

Of the over 9,000 students in the Grand Island public school system, 28% are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and receive supplemental services through the district English Language Acquisition (ELA) Program. The ELA program is staffed by 52 teachers certified in English as a Second Language (ESL), who are also trained in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) method. Furthermore, there are 29 translators, bilingual Para-educators and two multi-cultural at-risk coordinators to support the teachers, in addition to a Migrant Programs Director, a Teaching and Learning Coordinator, an ELA and Migrant Coordinator, a Migrant Recruiter, a Migrant Para Educator, and a department secretary.

The district offers a variety of different service delivery models to address the academic and linguistic needs of students that scaffold language development through extensive content study. Every school, except one elementary site, offers ELA services to students who qualify for the support. Because academic English literacy skills are imperative for LEP students’ success in regular education classes’ substantial instructional support is provided.

INVESTIGATION OF QUESTIONS

The purpose of this part of the study was to determine the English language development, graduation credit accrual requirements, and school attendance frequency progress of new to the country Hispanic students who entered ninth-grade with no English language skills and some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the same high school in an immigrant responsive city. Research questions included the following:

1. Do immigrant high school students with no English language skills and some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the same high school in an immigrant responsive city lose, maintain, or improve their entering ninth-grade pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to the ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment scores?

2. Do immigrant high school students with no English language skills compared to immigrant high school students with some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the same high school in an immigrant responsive city have congruent or different posttest graduation credit accrual requirements?

3. Do immigrant high school students with no English language skills and some English language skills attending and completing ninth-grade through 12th-grade in the same high school in an immigrant responsive city have congruent or different posttest school attendance frequency progress?

Study Participants

Individuals who participated in this study were identified upon entering the research high school in their ninth-grade school year with no English language skills \((n = 13)\) and some English language skills \((n = 11)\). Identification of the study participants was based upon
their entering Las Links assessment scores and their placement into the English Language Acquisition program within the research study high school. Individuals who participated in this study attended the same high school from entry in ninth-grade until 12th-grade high school completion. See Table 1 for student demographics.

Group one study participants consisted of students with no English language skills \( (n = 13) \) who entered the research high school in their ninth-grade school year, attended the same high school until completion of high school, scored at a level one on their initial Las Links assessment of English language proficiency skills given prior to the students entering the research high school, and were placed into the English Language Acquisition program at the research high school.

Group two students with some English language skills \( (n = 11) \) who entered the research high school in their ninth-grade school year, attended the same high school until completion of high school, scored at a level two or above on their initial Las Links assessment of English language proficiency skills given prior to the students entering the research high school, and were placed into the English Language Acquisition program at the research high school.

Table 1

**Student Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>No English</th>
<th>Some English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>( n = 5 ) (39%)</td>
<td>( n = 3 ) (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>( n = 8 ) (61%)</td>
<td>( n = 8 ) (73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>( N = 13 ) (100%)</td>
<td>( N = 11 ) (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entering Ninth Grade

Las Links Level: \(^a\) Level = 1 Level = 2

Entering Ninth Grade

Mean Age: 15.5 years 15 years

Ethnicity: Hispanic Hispanic

Country of Origin: Mexico Mexico

\(^a\) Note. Students entered the United States at the beginning of the ninth-grade. The Las Links Assessment was used to place students with no English language skills (Level 1) and students with some English language skills (Level 2) into the appropriate English Language Acquisition program at the research high school.

**Variables**

Independent variable, English language skills, condition #1 was a naturally formed group of immigrant high school students with no English language skills who enrolled in the research high school in the ninth-grade. Independent variable, English language skills, condition #2 was a naturally formed group of immigrant high school students with some English
language skills who enrolled in the research high school in the ninth-grade. Las Links assessment and English language proficiency level at ninth-grade enrollment determined the placement of students into the English Language Acquisition program at the research high school.

The study's dependent measures were (a) English language development as measured by the research high schools individual student scores for the English Language Development Assessment Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Comprehension, and Composite measures, (b) achievement as measured by the research high schools individual student credit accrual towards fulfilling graduation requirements, and (c) student engagement as measured by students school absence frequencies.

**Research Question Number One Findings**

Entering ninth-grade pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment scores of immigrant high school students with no English language skills enrolled in the research high school's English Language Acquisition program displayed in Table 2 significantly improved over time. Null hypotheses for test score improvement over time were rejected for all six entering ninth-grade students pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to their ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment scores for Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Comprehension, and Composite.

Furthermore, entering ninth-grade pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment scores of immigrant high school students with some English language skills enrolled in the research high school's English Language Acquisition program found in Table 2 also significantly improved over time. Null hypotheses for test score improvement over time for the entering ninth-grade pretest Las Links assessment scores compared to ending high school posttest English Language Development Assessment score for Writing.

These results represent a pattern of improvement that reflects the impact of participation in the research high school's English Language Acquisition program and participation in required high school academic coursework over time for these students who entered ninth-grade with no measured English language skills and for these students who entered ninth-grade with some measured English language skills.
Table 2  
**Entering Ninth-Grade Pretest and Ending 12th-Grade Posttest English Language Development Assessment Levels of Immigrant High School Students With No English Language Skills and Immigrant High School Students With Some English Language Skills Enrolled in the Research High School's English Language Acquisition Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigrant High School Students</th>
<th>Ninth-Grade Pretest</th>
<th>12th-Grade Posttest</th>
<th>Statistical Findings</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students with No Measured English Language Skills:</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Significant Improvement</td>
<td>0.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Significant Improvement</td>
<td>0.816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Significant Improvement</td>
<td>2.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Significant Improvement</td>
<td>2.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Significant Improvement</td>
<td>1.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Significant Improvement</td>
<td>2.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Significant Improvement</td>
<td>2.325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Students with Some Measured English Language Skills: | Level 2 | Level 4 | Significant Improvement | 0.783 |
| Speaking | Level 2 | Level 4 | Significant Improvement | 0.751 |
| Listening | Level 2 | Level 3 | Significant Improvement | 0.952 |
| Reading | Level 2 | Level 3 | Significant Improvement | 0.469 |
| Writing | Level 2 | Level 3 | Non-Sig. Improvement† | 0.697 |
| Comprehension | Level 2 | Level 3 | Significant Improvement | 0.751 |
| Composite | Level 2 | Level 3 | Significant Improvement | 0.697 |

*Note. English Language Development Assessment Level 1 = No English Language Skills; Level 2 = Some English Language Skills; Level 3 = Intermediate English Language Skills; Level 4 = Advanced English Language Skills.*

†*ns.*

**Research Question Number Two Findings**

Results of chi-square ending twelfth-grade credit accrual towards fulfilling graduation requirements of immigrant high school students with no English Language skills compared to immigrant high school students with some English Language skills enrolled in the research high school's English language acquisition program as measured by credit accrual towards fulfilling graduation requirements by school year found in Table 3 were statistically different. Thus the null hypothesis of no difference or congruence for the posttest compared to posttest ending high school core credit accrual towards fulfilling graduation requirements by school year cumulative frequencies comparison was rejected. It should be noted that the overall grades leading to credit accrual for the students passing course work ranged from a
low of “D” to a high of “C” falling into the “passing but needs improvement” category on the grading scale used for all high school students.

In viewing Table 3 the variance in core credit accrual is evident. Overall, data variance was observed for the students who entered ninth-grade with no English skills whose core credit accrual frequencies start low during their ninth-grade and 10th-grade school years, improve sharply during their 11th-grade school year becoming normative during their 12th-grade year. However, students who entered ninth-grade with some English skills maintained steady and consistent core credit accrual frequencies throughout their four years of high school. Again this pattern of positive credit accrual improvement reflects the impact of participation in the research high school’s English Language Acquisition program and participation in required high school academic coursework over time for these students who entered ninth-grade with some English language skills but most particularly those students who entered ninth-grade with no English language skills.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Credit Accrual by School Year</th>
<th>Core Credit Accrual of Students Who Entered Ninth-Grade with No Measured English Language Skills</th>
<th>Core Credit Accrual of Students Who Entered Ninth-Grade with Some Measured English Language Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ninth-Grade 2006-2007</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th-Grade 2007-2008</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th-Grade 2008-2009</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th-Grade 2009-2010</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals*</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $X^2 = 11.90$, $p = .008$ for observed versus expected cell frequencies comparison used for calculation with $df=3$. Chi-square result indicates that core credit accrual progress over the four years of high school was significantly greater for students who entered ninth-grade with some measured English Language skills.

Research Question Number Three Findings

As displayed in Table 4 the null hypothesis was rejected for observed absence frequencies across all four years of high school attendance. Students who entered ninth-grade with no English Language Skills had significantly greater recorded school absence frequencies compared to students who entered ninth-grade with some English Language skills recorded absence frequencies. However, this pattern of absence frequencies represents a serious concern for both groups of students' neither of whom could afford to miss any days of school if they were to succeed academically. The finding suggests the need for further study of the competing demands placed on these students by their families and their need to work to generate income to be used at home.

Data variance is observed for the students who entered ninth-grade with no English skills whose absence frequencies increased every school year, as illustrated in Table 4. Students who
entered ninth-grade with some English skills had lower absence frequencies observed during the ninth-grade and 12th-grade school years with absence frequencies that were congruent with their peers who began high school with no English skills during their 10th-grade and 11th-grade school years. This pattern of absence frequencies represents a concern for students' who cannot afford to miss days of school if they are to succeed academically but who may have competing demands elsewhere at home and work.

Table 4
Ending Twelfth-Grade Engagement as Measured by Average Absence Frequencies by School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absence Frequencies by School Year</th>
<th>Absence Frequencies of Students Who Entered Ninth-Grade with No Measured English Language Skills</th>
<th>Absence Frequencies of Students Who Entered Ninth-Grade with Some Measured English Language Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ninth-Grade 2006-2007</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th-Grade 2007-2008</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th-Grade 2008-2009</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th-Grade 2009-2010</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals*</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $X^2 = 8.37, p = .039$ for observed verses expected cell frequencies comparison used for calculation with $df = 3$. Chi-square result indicates that absence frequencies obtained over the four years of high school was significantly greater for students who entered ninth-grade with no measured English Language skills.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

The demographic profile of the research school district's community is rapidly changing. Population growth, the life-blood of any community, is being realized through an influx of first generation immigrants and their descendants from Mexico. Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) suggest the socio-economic and civic vitality of our communities is inexorably tied to the wellbeing of the fastest growing segment of our population, our immigrant and minority youth. Furthermore, the context of reception embedded within our communities, state, and governmental organizations, and institutions will have a positive, neutral, or negative impact on the outcomes for immigrants, and their ease of transition to a new life in a new country.

The findings from this study suggest that when given rigorous content, high academic and educational expectations, and a community that is responsive and supportive, immigrant students coming into high school with no English language skills can be functionally equivalent in grade point average and graduation outcome with students coming into high school with some English language skills. These findings support the need for both educational institutions and communities to be responsive, flexible and dynamic in their approach to educating immigrant students.

Public schools' enjoy a unique and privileged position in the life of immigrants. It is frequently within the schoolhouse doors that immigrant families have their first exposure to life in their new land (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, &
Todorova, 2008). It is no longer sufficient to assume current educational pedagogy will reach the new population of students in our classrooms. Every school and school district must rethink their priorities and embrace a new educational framework reflective of a new reality, a new dimension, and a new level of cultural competence. Schools must adopt a philosophy of doing whatever it takes to forever relegate the theoretical paradigm of the rainbow underclass to the dusty corners of a seldom-donned reference book (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

Students entering our public schools with no English language skills and some English language skills are already starting their educational journey at a linguistic disadvantage. Schools must aggressively pursue every opportunity to educate both students and families on the importance of daily attendance, the opportunities available to high school graduates, and the efficacy of education to improve the life chances and future outcomes for all children.

Academic success and English language acquisition are two of the measures of successful adaptation by immigrant students, and both are strongly correlated with future social stability and economic ascent (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). The interaction between school and student will determine much of what is the future. Immigrant children experience an increased risk factor of poverty, interrupted school history, and the societal and institutional stressors inherent with racism and discrimination that have a significant negative impact on their motivation and academic achievement (Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes & Milburn, 2009).

This study suggests that when the public schools develop a symbiotic relationship with the community and family, the negative aspects of stratification can be ameliorated and the modes of incorporation within segmented assimilation can be positively harnessed to effect upward mobility in socioeconomic status by increasing academic achievement and graduation rates among immigrants.

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The results of this study support the efficacy of the English Language Acquisition program and the academic high school course work completed by students entering the research high school with no English language skills and some English language skills. Of greatest significance is the progress made by students entering with no English language skills. Despite beginning high school at a significant linguistic disadvantage, their posttest English Language Development Scores were functionally equivalent with students entering the research high school with some English language skills.

This is a significant achievement and should be recognized as such. This study supports the teaching and learning foci and strategies utilized by the English Language Acquisition department, the research high school, and the school district in teaching students enrolled in the research high school and served through the English Language Acquisition program. However, questions and areas of concern remain regarding how to improve on the current level of student achievement.

This research study identified excessive absences as a disturbing trend in students entering the research high school with no English language skills (Louie, 2005; Portes & Kelly, 2008; Ready, 2010). Each year of attendance for this group was marked by an increased number of student absences. Students entering the research high school with
some English language skills reflected absence frequencies congruent with their peers entering the research high school with no English language skills in the 10th and 11th grades. It is very difficult to increase academic achievement when students are not present.

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2006) suggest that children living in socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances are 25 percent more likely to miss school than their socioeconomically advantaged peers. In addition, De la Torre and Gwynne’s research (2009) suggest that the mobility rate of children from low socioeconomic statuses is significantly greater and is positively correlated with lower rates of attendance. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have also found that the student connections to school, familial structure and the competing stressor common among immigrants, such as the need to work versus the need to get an education, can negatively impact student attendance rates.

It is critical when seeking to overcome inequality, socioeconomic and ethnic stratification that the student is fully engaged in their education and is fully supported in their efforts, academic engagement, and educational investment by their family. There is a robust body of research on the importance of family engagement and support to the academic success of students (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly & Haller, 2005; Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Rumbaut, 2008, Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008), and effective engagement is beginning to be linked with research, data, school improvement processes, and educational outcomes (Marzano & McNulty, 2005).

Missing from the research are definitive studies that look expressly at how to connect with immigrant families coming to this country with a very limited educational background. In this regard, a question needing further study remains: how can school districts and other institutions reach immigrant families and parents to build new or maintain existing effective minority/majority equal privilege and power partnerships to increase student achievement? Anecdotally, this appears to be a simple question, with a simple answer. School districts reach out to parents through a multiplicity of avenues including: school conferences, back to school nights, connect-ed messages, curriculum-focused events, and newsletters. These methods have had success and served schools, families, and students well.

However, today there are new questions for a new time. How can we effectively engage parents who, through an interrupted and discontinued educational history, linguistic and cultural barriers, may have a limited connection with education? How can we bridge the chasm created by the stigma of illegal status and the majority culture power imbalance that creates this status? How can we seek to communicate with families about the transformative power of education when their focus is on day-to-day survival? How can we eliminate the barriers or fear and distrust that discrimination and racism engender?

Exploring these questions is not an aimless task. Educators stand at the brink of a chasm that is wide and deep, filled with squandered human capital, lost motivation, and failed potential. Many families forsake the long-term benefits of education for the immediate needs of food, shelter, and family preservation. The very real possibility of creating a permanent rainbow underclass is not a theoretical whimsy. It is a distinct possibility if educators and communities do not address current reality. Research is desperately needed to learn what we do not know; how can we fully engage the immigrant population to positively impact academic achievement and future life chances?
Specific further research conducted in immigrant communities exploring the efficacy of a home visit program with families and teachers, parental leadership initiative, and grassroots leadership development within targeted immigrant communities is a good beginning. Pretest and posttest parental attitudes and student achievement outcomes in innovative programs should be closely measured. Additional longitudinal research on teacher attitudes and student achievement is valuable to track the long-term benefits derived from the various programs.

Education has the power to change lives and educators are in the unique and privileged position of holding the golden key to the American dream for many who are new to this land. Learning is relational and education is best taught from a relationship of trust and mutual understanding. Even one student who does not reach their full potential is a human tragedy. The continued saga of unmet dreams and unfulfilled aspirations must find an ending place and can only end in the schoolhouse. We have a moral and professional obligation to determine through research and careful analysis how to bring ourselves and our immigrant students and families into a quid pro quo relationship within the world of schooling--the world through which all of our hopes, aspirations, dreams, and talents may be nurtured and realized.

Immigrant students who entered Grand Island Public Schools programs with no English language skills and some English language skills clearly benefitted from participation in the research high school’s English Language Acquisition program and content courses--however, there is much more to be accomplished. The academic achievement of immigrant students is a unilinear process that includes not only access to high quality education resources, but includes the various modes of incorporation for immigrants embedded in their access to and interaction with government, society and community. This is a process and product of segmented assimilation and is inexorably linked to the socioeconomic and social capital status and prospects for immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Hirschman, 2001).

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