

# Latino Students: What Matters

A Q&A WITH LCC'S JIM GARCÍA

**J**im García is the Chicano/Latino Student Program Coordinator at Lane Community College. For more than 39 years, he has worked with and advocated for K-16 Latino students and families. He is the co-founder of the Ganas middle school mentorship program in 4J (now in its 20th year), and the co-founder of the Puertas Abiertas Leadership Academy at LCC (now in its 15th year). García teaches Chicano/Latino leadership classes at LCC and in local high schools and is the recipient of the 2000 National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Community Service Award.

CAPE asked García for his perspective on the meaning and experience of education for Latino students and families.

*Based on your years of work with Latino students, what are their greatest hopes and desires for education?*

These students want to do the right thing, not only for themselves, but for others. Latino students are always concerned with their dedicated and hard-working immediate and extended family members. Latino parents are working one or two jobs to make sure that there is a better future for their children. Their children want to honor that.

*What could be done better to further Latino student academic success?*

As educators, we need to know the unique stories of Latino students and families that we serve. Based on that knowledge, our role is to provide a curriculum and educational policies that create an environment of academic success. Programs like Ganas at Kelly Middle School and the Puertas Abiertas Leadership Academy at Lane Community College are examples in our community for creating such environments.

*No Child Left Behind and other federal and state*



JIM GARCÍA

*legislation promote standardized curriculum and testing as the key to improving equity in our schools. Has this "corporate model" succeeded?*

These efforts arise from political systems, rather than from sound, real-world research. My first questions are, "Who was at the table?" and "Whose story is defining these ideas of testing, equity and curriculum?" For example, in my work with K-12 Latino students, they do not see their knowledge, learning styles or experiences reflected in these tests or the curriculum that the tests are based on.

*In your experience, what has been the effect of standardized testing on Latino students and what do you suggest?*

It is another layer of policy that is detrimental to Latino student schooling experiences and creates a sense of a self-fulfilling prophecy of doubt as to their worth in society. Assessment measures should

be created that are responsive to the realities and diversity of Latino experiences — and all students' life stories.

*Policy makers say that the opt-out movement is primarily for white middle- and upper-class people and that other demographic groups are supportive of mandatory testing. Do you agree?*

One of the challenges I notice in working with Latino families is the accessibility of information about school policies and options, and the way they are disseminated. If the information is culturally biased and doesn't reflect your culture, your opportunities for action are very diminished.

*You spend much of your time working with Latino LCC and high school students. What is their main message about what works and what doesn't work?*

What I hear is that they are being treated as a "Latino" but not as a student, not as a member of the student body or not one who should be in an AP class. They are multi-faceted people who live a "Spanglish" experience not only with language, but with conflicting cultural worlds. They detest being "single storied" by anyone. They want to have the sovereignty of being who they are as a person, and not as a representative of a single group.

*If you had one message to give to education policy makers, what would it be?*

Get to know your students in the building, in their classrooms, in your district and get to know their families. Be willing to address your "single story" paradigm. Be willing to reveal yourself as a person, and then act upon the "concealed stories" of your students and their families. ■

Community Alliance for Public Education's mission is to "to defend public education from the damaging practices of 'reformers' and corporate forces." CAPE meets the first, third and fourth Wednesdays at Perugino. The website is oregoncape.org.

**Chao Raya**  
Thai Cuisine

**Eugene's Thai Cuisine**



**541-344-1706**

Located at 580 Adams St. on The Corner of 6th and Adams

**DINE-IN | DELIVER | TAKE-OUT**

[www.CPYTHAI.com](http://www.CPYTHAI.com)



**20% OFF**  
Birkenstock Repairs

**Spring is Here. BIRKENSTOCK**

**Are Your Birkenstocks Ready?**

Our skilled craftsman offers repair on your favorite shoes, belts, wallets, luggage, handbags and more.

Offer good through 4/30/2018

**burch's**  
**SHOE REPAIR**

Repair • Renew • Recycle

1 Club Road, Eugene OR

**541.683.4115**

[burchsshoes.com](http://burchsshoes.com)