CLARK COUNTY DROPOUT NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT:
COMMUNITY READINESS DATA COLLECTION PROCESS TO ADDRESS
LATINA/LATINO SCHOOL DROPOUT

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Introduction

This report documents the assets, needs and community readiness related to addressing the school dropout rate in Clark County. University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) faculty conducted interviews with nineteen key stakeholders and informants in Clark County who were connected to the issue of school dropout. The purpose of the interviews was to assess six areas: 1) current efforts addressing the Latino school dropout issue, 2) community knowledge about the efforts, 3) leadership around the issue, 4) community climate, 5) knowledge about the issue, and 6) resources available to address the issue. The results of this assessment will help determine strategies and efforts needed to promote community-level change, build cooperation among systems and individuals and provide a roadmap for community development around school dropout prevention to be taken by UNCE faculty.

This document explores the current issues related to school dropout and presents a prevention framework that provides the rationale for having a concerted effort aimed at low-income, first generation college Latino students in Clark County. This document includes an overview of the literature related to the Latino experience in the educational system, background information on the Tri-ethnic Center Community Readiness Model (CRM), the results of the Clark County CRM assessment, suggested strategies to increase readiness, limitations of the CRM and a section on summary of conclusions and next action steps for UNCE faculty.
Dropout/Graduation Rates in Clark County

Graduation rates are an important part of educational accountability and an indicator of school performance for students, parents, businesses, policymakers and the community at large. Today’s economy requires a workforce equipped with a high school diploma and the skills necessary to succeed in postsecondary education and the workplace. High school dropouts earn less and have a lower quality of life than graduates. Sadly, dropouts are not the only ones that suffer; society also contends with the increased costs of crime-related problems, Medicaid expenditures, lost wages, lower tax contributions and lower lifetime productivity that results from failure to complete high school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

The Clark County School District (CCSD) is the fifth largest school district in the nation, with 308,783 students currently enrolled.

According to the CCSD definition, “the dropout rate is a one-time snapshot in time of the students lost the previous year. This should not be confused with a graduation rate which encompasses four years of data and a cohort of students. Students that are non-graduates, students that receive adjusted diplomas and students that earn adult diplomas or GEDs are not considered dropouts in the dropout rate but are considered non-graduates when calculating the graduation rate” (CCSD, n.d.a.). The 2006-2007 overall dropout rate is reported by the CCSD to be 6 percent (CCSD, n.d.b). Last year, 2007, the dropout rate rose slightly (by about 343 students).
Approximately 70 percent of the dropouts are non-return students. Non-return students are those that do not return to school in the fall but had attended school, for the most part, the previous year. The problems with current dropout and graduation rate calculations will be briefly discussed later in the section, but the dropout rates for students of color are by any accounts much higher than officially reported. According to the CCSD close to 10,000 students between 8th and 12th grade are lost (CCSD, n.d.a.).

CCSD personnel, in an effort to examine the reasons students leave school, contact non-return students every year. In November 2007, CCSD personnel collected some self-reported data regarding the reasons students left school. The sample was comprised of 30 percent non-return students. Eleven percent indicated they left school in order to work. Approximately 10 percent of students left because of credit deficiency and “not liking school.” Other reasons included poor attendance, pregnancy, planning to take the GED and unable to pass the proficiency exam (CCSD, n.d.c). Race and ethnicity were not asked; therefore, it is not possible to know if reasons varied by ethnic group.

According to the CCSD (2007b), in 2006, the overall graduation rate was 63.5 percent. For African-American students, it was 51.7 percent and for Latino students it was 53.6 percent. For males, the rate is 60.4 percent (as stated below, independent researchers report this rate to be much lower). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) reports that if Nevada raised the graduation rates of Latino, African-American and Native-American students to the levels of White students by 2020, the potential increase in personal income would add more than $2.2 billion to the state economy. According to the same report, increasing the graduation rate and college enrollment by only 5 percent
could lead to a combined savings and revenue of almost $78.4 million each year by reducing crime-related costs associated with high school dropouts.

During the 2007-2008 school year, CCSD ethnicity enrollment was as follows: Latino, 39.9 percent; White, 36.1 percent, African-American, 13.9 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander, 9.3 percent; and American-Indian/Alaska Native, 0.8 percent. While the African-American student population has remained at approximately 14 percent since 1980, the Latino population grew from 5.3 percent in 1980, to 12.1 percent in 1990, to 28.8 percent in 2000, to the current rate of 39.9 percent in 2008 (CCSD, 2007a; Nevada Department of Education, 2006-2007). The reasons for these increases among the Latino population are complex, but much of the growth can be attributed to immigration and higher birth rates. These trends are expected to continue. Unfortunately, while some areas have shown improvements in the status of Latino education, the data continues to show that Latino educational attainment does not match that of non-Latinos (Kohler & Lazarín, 2007). This unprecedented growth in the Latino populations has presented unique educational challenges to Clark County’s economy and political climate. The high non-completion graduation rates among Latinos are an indication that the educational infrastructure is not adequately prepared to meet the needs of Latino youth and their families.

Within the Latino student population, a subgroup with additional needs is English Language Learners (ELL). Currently there are 87,320 ELL students identified in the CCSD. Of those identified in need, 62,775 are enrolled in an ELL program. Of those enrolled, 88.8 percent speak Spanish (CCSD, 2008). This is
approximately 35 percent of the general student population. Research has indicated that Latino foreign-born children who do not speak English very well are more likely to drop out of high school (Fry, 2003). Therefore, English Language Learners (ELL) should be a focus of specific prevention efforts. The two regions in Clark County with the highest percentage of ELL are the East Region and the Northeast Region.

Applied Analysis (2008) in a report titled, “Surveying the Landscape,” analyzed data from the CCSD in the following areas: average daily attendance, graduation rates, habitual truancy incidence, proficiency exam failures and credit deficiencies. Based on the review, the zip codes with high schools in need of support in order of greatest need are 89110, 89101, 89032, 89131, 89120, 89031, 89107 and 89142. The top ten high schools in need of support in order of most need are: Desert Pines, Rancho, Cheyenne, Eldorado, Arbor View, Del Sol, Canyon Springs, Mojave, Western and Las Vegas. The East region has three – the region with the most high schools in need of support. In terms of school dropout prevention efforts, although the same analysis was not conducted with middle school data, research confirms that prevention efforts are most effective and fruitful long before high school. This is possibly due to the early development of goals, experience of school success and educational aspirations that begin long before high school (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Jerald, 2006). It follows that the middle schools that feed into these high schools also warrant identification as “high needs” schools.
Calculating Dropout and Graduation Rates

As mentioned above, there are problems with the way the districts calculate the dropout and graduation rates. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 requires that states use a graduation rate calculation defined as, “the percentage of students who graduated from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). However, due to a lack of data and capacity, states and school districts provide a range of rate calculations that do not demonstrate an accurate measurement and significantly underestimate the number of students dropping out each year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). For example, in 2005, Nevada reported the general graduation rate of 64.9 percent. Using the Cumulative Promotion Index method developed by C. Swanson (EPE Research Center, 2008) and considered to be more accurate, a 44.5 percent graduation rate was found for the same year in Clark County (EPE Research Center, 2008). This is a 20.4 percent point difference. The same report by EPE Research Center found that Nevada is losing 109 students each school day to the dropout crisis and has the highest dropout rate in the nation. For the same year, 2005, the National Center for Education Statistics (2007) reports Nevada’s graduation rate to be 57.4 percent. In summary, due to the inconsistencies in how rates are calculated and because CCSD does not track students over time, exact dropout rates are not currently known.

Summary

As Nevada’s Latino population continues to grow, the implications for ignoring their special educational needs and issues can have grave consequences for the
individuals and the community at large. Latinos make up 39.9 percent of the school enrollment and have a 51.7 percent graduation rate (CCSD, 2007a). A targeted effort to reduce the Latino dropout rate needs to be implemented. This need will require the allocation of additional resources. The benefits, however, will outweigh the costs as Latinos increasingly help shape Nevada’s workforce. For the purpose of developing UNCE prevention and intervention strategies, the existing data demonstrates the need to address Latino, middle school-aged youth in the East Region as a first step in the process. The following section provides further information on Latino students’ educational experiences and the need to focus prevention efforts on Latino students.

The Need to Focus on Latino/a School Dropout

Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The term “Hispanic” and “Latino” are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau to refer to persons whose origins can be traced to Spanish-speaking regions of Latin America and Europe, including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America and Spain. Within the Latino community, there are differences in each group’s ethnic background and racial composition. For example, Latinos may have Indigenous, African or European heritage. In 2006, approximately 61 percent of Latinos were foreign-born. However, second generation Latinos are growing at faster rates than foreign-born Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Over half of the U.S. foreign-born population residing in the
U.S. comes from Latin America, of which 64 percent were born in Mexico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

In the U.S., Latino children under 18 years of age are the second largest group of students after Caucasians and also are among the fastest growing student populations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). In Nevada, 24 percent of the people living in the state in 2006 were Latino, compared with the U.S. Latino population of 14.8 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006). Mexicans constitute the majority of Latinos, comprising 64 percent in the U.S. and 72.5 percent in Nevada (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). The growth of the Latino population parallels the fact that among married-couple families, Latinos account for the highest percentage of families living in poverty. Nationally, 29 percent of Latinos lived in poverty; in Nevada, 21 percent of Latinos lived in poverty in 2005-2006 (Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, n.d.). The economic challenge mirrors the educational challenge Latinos face. Currently, the state of educational attainment for most Latino students is in crisis. Latino students are more likely to be enrolled below grade level, less likely to participate in pre-school and after-school programs, drop out earlier and at higher rates than other groups and have lower literacy rates than other groups (President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1996).

Latino students are less likely than their non-Latino peers to complete high school, and recent Latino immigrants are even more likely to drop out (Kohler & Lazarín, 2007). The Latino population age 25 and older is less likely to have at least graduated
from high school than non-Latino Whites (57.0 percent and 88.4 percent, respectively). In addition, more than one-quarter of Latinos have less than a ninth-grade education (27.3 percent) compared with only 4.2 percent of non-Latino Whites. The proportion with a bachelor’s degree or more is much lower for Hispanics than for non-Hispanic Whites. Less than a one-quarter of Latino students ages 18 through 24 are enrolled in postsecondary, degree-granting institutions. Additionally, Latinos represent only 5 percent of graduate students in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Unfortunately, Latinos are less likely than their African-American and White peers to participate in early childhood education programs as well. Access to high-quality early childhood education has been consistently shown to have a positive impact on the school outcomes of children, particularly those from low-income households (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

Using Census data and information from the National Center for Educational Statistics, Yosso (2006) summarizes it in the following manner: “We begin with 100 Chicano and Chicana students at the elementary school level, noting that 56 drop out of high school and 44 continue on to graduate. Of the 44 who graduate from high school, about 26 continue on toward some form of postsecondary education. Of those 26, approximately 17 enroll in community college and nine enroll in a 4-year institution. Of those 17 in community colleges, only one will transfer to a 4-year institution. Of the nine Chicanas/os attending a 4-year college and the one community college transfer student, seven will graduate with a baccalaureate degree.
Finally, two Chicana/o students will continue on to earn a graduate or professional school degree and less than one will receive a doctorate” (p. 4).

Many studies examined the possible contributing causes of this problem. Unequal funding for schools located in low-income areas (Kozol, 1991), the absence of qualified and caring teachers (Valenzuela, 1999), the dismantling of bilingual education programs in many states (Crawford, 2004), the imposition of disciplinary actions that reproduce conditions of dominance and subordination and institutional racism (e.g., low expectations, tracking systems) (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). All of these issues have been cited in the research literature as contributing factors for lower educational attainment of Latino students. Other factors identified in the literature include the absence of meaningful participation by teachers in school reform efforts (Orfield, 2004), tracking of students of color into vocational and special education classes, racial segregation, overcrowded schools, poorly maintained schools, untrained or un-credentialed teachers, shortage of school supplies and textbooks, minimal access to college preparatory, A.P. and honors courses, overreliance on biased standardized tests and dismissive treatment of Latino cultural strengths (Yosso, 2006).

In summary, there are many opportunities from early childhood education through higher education to improve educational outcomes for Latino students. Latino students in at-risk U.S. public education systems are confronting serious structural concerns and inadequacies. Adequate responses to the educational needs of Latinos are desperately needed. In a letter to the Latin Chamber of Commerce in Las Vegas, Chancellor James
Rogers, of the Nevada System of Higher Education, stated, “Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group in Nevada and are the most seriously underserved by the Nevada System of Higher Education” (personal communication, July 15, 2008).

Much has been written about the causes and societal impact of school dropout. There are many national organizations, foundations, non-profits, research centers and individuals working on understanding and improving the issue. There also are many identified risk or causal factors as well as proposed solutions. The following section provides a review of the risk and protective factor literature surrounding school dropout, followed by the review of the theoretical framework that has been used to examine this issue among Latino students.

The Risk Factors/Protective Factors Framework of Prevention

Prevention, according to the risk factors/protective factors framework, is based on a simple premise: to prevent a problem, the factors that increase the risk that the problem will develop must be identified and then ways to reduce the risk must be implemented. At the same time, the protective factors that buffer individuals from the risk factors in their environments must be identified and then ways to increase the protection must be implemented. Risk-and protective-factor-focused prevention is based on the work of Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller (1992), and a team of researchers at the University of Washington in Seattle.

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1 Communities That Care (CTC) is an operating system for risk- and protective-factor-focused prevention. CTC was originally developed by Social Development Research Group, University of Washington in Seattle. Currently, the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has full copyrights to this material. This section was originally published by CSAP’s Western CAPT, Developing Healthy Communities Brochure (www.westcapt.org).
Teenage problems of juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, violence, or depression and anxiety share many common risk factors (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992). Risk factors can exist in all areas of life—community, family, school and individual/peer relations. While exposure to one risk factor does not condemn a child to problems later in life, exposure to a greater number of risk factors increases a young person’s risk exponentially. Even if a community cannot eliminate all the risk factors, reducing or eliminating even a few risk factors may significantly decrease problem behaviors of young people. While levels of risk may vary in different racial or cultural groups, the way these risk factors work does not appear to vary. One implication for community prevention is to prioritize prevention efforts for groups with higher levels of risk exposure.

There are many reports that contain lists of risk factors for school dropout; however, this prevention approach requires three criteria for inclusion as a risk factor. First, the factors have to be shown to be predictive. Second, the results must have been demonstrated in multiple studies. Third, the studies must have been longitudinal. The basis of this framework is that prevention efforts should focus on reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors in order to be most effective. According to the literature, reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors leads to resiliency and positive youth development (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004).

The primary focus of school dropout prevention programs is to help students complete their schooling. Since problem behaviors—including substance abuse, violence,
delinquency, teenage pregnancy and depression and anxiety—share many common risk factors, reducing common risk factors is likely to reduce multiple problem behaviors, including school dropout. The following is a summary of the research-based risk factors that are predictive of school dropout (Hawkins et al., 1992; Fagan, Van Horn, Hawkins, & Arthur, 2007). For a complete list of risk factors and the problem behaviors they predict, see Appendix A.

Community Risk Factors

Transitions and Mobility. Even normal school transitions predict increases in problem behaviors. When children move from elementary school to middle school or from middle school to high school, significant increases in the rate of drug use, school misbehavior and delinquency result. When communities are characterized by frequent nonscheduled transitions, problem behaviors increase. Communities with high rates of mobility appear to be linked to an increased risk of dropout and drug and crime problems. The more often people in a community move, the greater the risk of criminal behavior, drug-related problems and school dropout in families. While some people find buffers against the negative effects of mobility by making connections in new communities, others are less likely to have the resources to deal with the effects of frequent moves and are more likely to have problems.

Extreme Economic Deprivation. Children who live in deteriorating and crime-ridden neighborhoods characterized by extreme poverty are more likely to develop problems with delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence. Children who
live in these areas—and have behavior and adjustment problems early in life—are also more likely to have problems with drugs later on.

Family Risk Factors

**Family History of School Dropout.** Children of parents who dropped out of high school are more likely to drop out of school themselves. This may be due to several reasons, including the modeling of behavior that is learned by the children.

**Family Management Problems.** Poor family management practices include lack of clear expectations for behavior, failure of parents to monitor their children (knowing where they are and who they are with) and excessively severe or inconsistent punishment. Basically, a lack of guidance, monitoring and consequences by parents results in forming many problems.

**Family Conflict.** Persistent, serious conflict between primary caregivers or between caregivers and children appears to increase children’s risk for all six of the problem behaviors. Whether the family is headed by two biological parents, a single parent, or some other primary caregiver appears to matter less than whether children experience conflict in their families. For example, domestic violence in a family increases the likelihood that young people will engage in delinquent behaviors and substance abuse, as well as become pregnant or drop out of school.
School Risk Factors

**Academic Failure Beginning in Elementary School.** Beginning in the late elementary grades (grades 4-6), academic failure increases the risk of drug abuse, delinquency, violence, pregnancy and school dropout. Children fail for many reasons, social as well as academic. The experience of failure, not necessarily lack of ability, appears to increase the risk of problem behaviors. This is particularly troubling because in many school districts, African-American, Native-American and Latino students have disproportionately higher rates of academic failure compared with White students. Consequently, school and instructional improvement and reducing academic failure for all students are particularly important prevention strategies for students of color and can involve culture-specific strategies.

**Lack of Commitment to School.** Low commitment to school means the young person has ceased to see the role of student and educational attainment as valuable. Those who do not have commitment to school are at higher risk for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy and school dropout. In many communities of color, education is seen as a “way out,” just as it was among the early immigrants. Other subgroups in the same community may view education and school as a form of negative acculturation. For example, some Latino youth may see doing well in school as “selling out” to the majority mainstream culture. Or, they may believe they are being asked to care about school when the school doesn’t care or value their culture or ethnicity; young people who adopt this view are likely to be at higher risk for health problems and problem behaviors, such as dropping out of school.
Individual/Pear Risk Factors

**Early and Persistent Antisocial Behavior.** Boys who are aggressive in grades K through 3 are at higher risk of substance abuse, juvenile delinquency and school dropouts. However, aggressive behavior before Kindergarten in very early childhood does not appear to increase the risk. When a boy’s aggressive behavior in the early grades is combined with isolation or withdrawal, the risk of problems in adolescence is even greater. This increased risk also applies to aggressive behavior combined with hyperactivity or attention deficit disorder. This risk factor also includes persistent antisocial behavior in early adolescence, like misbehaving in school, skipping school and getting into fights with other children. Young people, both girls and boys, who engage in these behaviors during early adolescence, are at increased risk of drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, violence, school dropout and teen pregnancy.

**Alienation and Rebelliousness.** Young people who feel they are not part of society, are not bound by rules, do not believe in trying to be successful or responsible, or who take an active rebellious stance toward society are at higher risk of drug abuse, delinquency and school dropout. Alienation and rebelliousness may be an especially significant risk for students of color. Children who consistently experience discrimination may respond by removing themselves from the dominant culture and rebelling against it. On the other hand, many minority communities are experiencing significant cultural change because of integration. The conflicting emotions that children in these communities feel when family and friends work, socialize or marry outside of their culture may well interfere with their development of a clear and positive racial and cultural identity.
Friends Who Engage in the Problem Behavior. Young people who associate with peers who engage in problem behaviors—delinquency, substance abuse, violent activity, sexual activity or school dropout—are much more likely to engage in the same problem behavior. This is one of the most consistent predictors that research has identified. Even when young people do not experience other risk factors, just hanging out with friends who engage in the problem behavior greatly increases the child’s risk of that problem. Young people who experience a low number of other risk factors, however, are less likely to associate with friends who are involved in the problem behavior.

Favorable Attitudes toward the Problem Behavior. During the elementary school years, children usually express antidrug, anticrime and prosocial attitudes. They have difficulty imagining why people use drugs, commit crimes and drop out of school. In middle school, however, as others they know participate in such activities, their attitudes often shift toward greater acceptance of these behaviors. This acceptance places them at higher risk.

Early Initiation of the Problem Behavior. The earlier young people begin using drugs, committing crimes, engaging in violent activity, dropping out of school and becoming sexually active, the greater the likelihood that they will have problems later with these behaviors. For example, research shows that young people who initiate drug use before the age of 15 are at twice the risk of having drug problems as those who wait until after the age of 19.
Protective Factors

Protective factors are conditions that buffer young people from the negative consequences of exposure to risks by either reducing the impact of the risk or changing the way a person responds to the risk. Consequently, enhancing protective factors can reduce the likelihood that problem behaviors will arise (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Catalano et. al., 2004).

Some young people who are exposed to multiple risk factors do not become substance abusers, juvenile delinquents, school dropouts or teen parents. Balancing the risk factors are factors that protect young people from exposure to risk, either by reducing the impact of risk factors or by changing the way young people respond to risks. The importance of protective factors cannot be overstated because they promote positive behavior, health, well-being and personal success. Research has identified protective factors that fall into three basic categories: 1) individual characteristics, 2) positive bonding, and 3) healthy beliefs and clear standards.

**Individual Characteristics.** Research has identified three individual characteristics as protective factors. These are characteristics children are born with and are difficult to change: a resilient temperament, a positive social orientation and intelligence. Intelligence, however, does not protect against substance abuse.

**Bonding.** Positive bonding to family members, friends, teachers or other school staff, or other community members makes up for many other disadvantages caused by other risk factors or environmental characteristics. Children who are attached to positive families, friends, school and community, and who are committed to achieving the goals valued by these groups are less likely to develop problems in adolescence. Studies of
successful children who live in high-risk neighborhoods or situations indicate that strong bonds with a caregiver can keep children from getting into trouble.

To build bonding, three conditions are necessary: opportunities, skills and recognition. Children must be provided with opportunities to contribute to their communities, families, peers and schools. The challenge is to provide children with opportunities they consider meaningful that help them feel responsible and significant. Children must be taught the skills necessary to effectively take advantage of the opportunity they are provided. If they do not have the necessary skills to be successful, they experience frustration and/or failure. Children also must be recognized and acknowledged for their efforts. This gives them the incentive to contribute and reinforces their skillful performance.

Healthy Beliefs and Clear Standards. The people with whom young people have bonds need to have healthy beliefs about school performance, substance use and other behaviors, as well as clear, positive standards for behavior. The content of these standards is what protects young people. When parents, teachers and communities set clear standards for children's behavior, when these standards are widely and consistently supported, and when the consequences for not following the standards are consistent, young people are more likely to follow the standards. The model that shows how the protective factors work together to help young people engage in healthy behaviors is called the Social Development Strategy (see the far right column in Appendix A).
Summary

In summary, the risk factors/protective factors approach provides a research-based method to assess needs in a community and provides evidence-based strategies to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors, resulting in decreasing the likelihood of problem behaviors, like dropping out of school, from occurring. This approach has been implemented in many communities across the nation and has shown to be effective in preventing and reducing problem behaviors (Hawkins et al., 1992; Fagan et al., 2007). According to this research, prevention programs are most effective when they enhance protective factors and reduce or reverse risk factors which then leads to resiliency [National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), 2003; Catalano et al., 2004].

Theoretical Framework of Latino/a School Dropout

Explanations of school failure among Latino youth are complex and single-factor reasons are inadequate to explain the multifaceted experience. There is a lack of a coherent theory about macro-level factors that can adequately explain the failure and successes of Latino youth. There is also a lack of coherence among the many theories that have focused on micro-level variables. This section will provide an overview of two perspectives used to explain the underachievement of Latino students, as well as one framework on how to change the way we view the issue. Two models that will be presented focus on deficits within the individuals, and one model will provide a framework of community cultural wealth from which to view Latino students. The deficit frameworks focus on
identifying risk factors within the individual or Latino community, whereas the cultural wealth model relies on identifying the strengths or protective factors within Latino individuals and communities.

Deficit Frameworks

The two main deficit models that have been used to explain Hispanic/Latino lower academic achievement are the genetic and cultural models. The genetic model holds that some groups are more genetically capable than others. Supporters of this model say that racial and ethnic minorities have less innate capabilities (Eysenck, 1971; Herrnstein, 1973; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969). The genetic argument has failed to convince researchers and many scholars have challenged much of the research in this area, including the psychometric testing on which IQ tests are founded (Figueroa, 1983, 1989; Gould, 1981; Kamin, 1977; McClelland, 1974; Morrison, 1977; Schwartz, 1977; White, 1977; Zacharias, 1977). Despite the lack of supporting evidence, genetic deficit thinking continues to inform an overreliance on aptitude tests and other standardized assessments that are inappropriate to assess knowledge, skills or intelligence (Valencia, 1999; Valencia & Aburto, 1991; Valencia, Villareal, & Salinas, 2002).

Although there is little empirical evidence that supports cultural deficit models (Kretovics & Nussel, 1994; Persell, 1977; Solórzano and Solórzano, 1995; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997), they are most often used to explain school failure among Latinos. Cultural deficit models blame the Latino students, parents and communities for lacking specific attributes that in turn lead to academic failure. This model finds dysfunction in Latino cultural values and proposes that these values are to blame for low educational and
occupational attainment (Bernstein, 1977; Chavez, 1992; McWhorter, 2000; Ogbu, 1990). Some of the supposed deficient cultural values include immediate gratification, emphasis on cooperation rather than competition, present versus future time orientation and a tendency to minimize the importance of education and upward mobility (Barrera, 1979, 1997; Carter & Segura, 1979; Valencia, 1997). Further, supporters of this model assert that Latino families (mainly Mexican or Chicano) exhibit dysfunctional social structures: large, disorganized, female-headed, Spanish or nonstandard English spoken in homes and patriarchal or matriarchal family hierarchies that cause and perpetuate a culture of poverty (Lewis, 1968; Sowell, 1981). In addition, the model argues that Latino parents fail to assimilate and embrace educational values of the dominant group and socialize their children with values that do not support educational achievement (Banfield, 1970; Heller, 1966).

Deficit thinking permeates society today. Both schools, and those who work in schools, reflect this belief. Professional meetings, school personnel meetings, teacher training or any other place where people discuss the issue of Latino education or dropout includes words such as “underclass,” “at risk” and “disadvantaged” (Baca Zinn, 1989; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). According to García and Guerra (2004), this reality calls for a critical review of the factors that perpetuate deficit thinking, and in fact reproduce “educational inequalities for students from nondominant sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds” (p. 155).
Cultural Wealth

Recent studies looking at Mexican identity, such as the ones conducted by Valenzuela (1999), Cummins, (1984, 1986) and Ogbu (1991), steadily show that mainstream institutions continue to strip away the identities of Mexican children through educational systems that show a lack of caring for them and through subtractive assimilation practices. According to Valenzuela (1999), this loss of Mexican identity, plus a continuous loss of social capital available to later generation Mexicans, negatively impacts the academic achievement and school success rates of many Mexican students.

Using Critical Race Theory (CRT), Yosso (2006) shifts the view from a deficit perspective of Communities of Color and focuses on community cultural wealth. Community cultural wealth includes an array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts of socially marginalized groups that usually go unrecognized, acknowledged or celebrated. Her approach to understanding student success and barriers brings to the forefront structural barriers and sociopolitical histories and contexts. The results of these barriers and contexts include unequal funding for schools, racial segregation, overcrowded schools, poorly maintained facilities, undertrained and under-credentialled teachers and minimal resources. In addition, other results include less access to academic guidance counselors, minimal access to academically rigorous enrichment programs and courses, “tracking” Latino students into remedial or vocational courses, a lack of adequate bilingual and multicultural education, inappropriate high-stakes assessments and other discriminatory practices.

The framework is based on the concept of social capital that originally appeared in the literature in the early 1900s (Hanifan, 1916, 1920). Yosso (2006) asserts that
various forms of capital fostered through cultural wealth include aspirational, linguistic, navigational, social, familial and resistance capital are used by communities of color to survive and resist oppression. These areas of capital are used by Latinos in order to survive the institutional neglect of the U.S. public school system that has consistently failed them. These categories are not static or mutually exclusive; they are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of a community of cultural wealth.

Aspirational Capital is the “the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of barriers” (Yosso, 2006, p. 41). Research demonstrates that children from Mexico and other parts of Latin America are strongly driven to succeed and adhere to traditional values like familism, respect for teachers and a strong work ethic that enable them to succeed in their quests for upward mobility (Buriel, 1984, 1987; Abi-Nadar, 1990; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990). Despite all the research that shows that Latinos experience the lowest levels of educational outcomes compared to other groups in the U.S., Latino parents consistently demonstrate high aspirations for their children’s future. Latino parents allow themselves to dream of the possibilities beyond their present situation, often without the means to attain those goals (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 1994; Solórzano, 1992; Aurbach, 2001). Studies of Mexican families have consistently found that parents use a variety of ways such as consejos (stories that teach, giving guidance, advice on living life), dichos (proverbs), personal and family stories to motivate and instill academic success and hard work in their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; López & Vásquez, 2006; Espinoza-Herold, 2007).
Linguistic Capital is “those intellectual and social skills learned through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (Yosso, 2006, p. 43). Stanton-Salazar and Dornbush (1995) describe the bilingual/bicultural network of friends and family as assets that help youth be successful as they cross sociocultural and linguistics borders. This aspect of cultural wealth reflects the idea that Latino students come to school with multiple language and communication skills. Furthermore, children most often have been exposed to traditions of storytelling that may include listening and recounting oral histories, parables, cuentos (stories) and dichos (proverbs). These “storytelling skills may include memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm and rhyme” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Linguistic capital also includes visual art, music and poetry. In further support of linguistic capital, research has found that youth who are called upon to translate for their parents gain multiple social tools of “vocabulary, audience awareness, cross-cultural awareness, real-world literacy skills, math skills, metalinguistic awareness, teaching and tutoring skills, civic and familial responsibility and social maturity” (Faulstich, 2003, p. 6).

Navigational Capital is “skills for maneuvering through social institutions not created with Latinos in mind” (Yosso, 2006, p.44). Navigational capital includes the abilities to maneuver through racially-hostile educational, health care and other social systems. Alva (1991) studied Mexican-American university students and found “the ability to sustain high levels of achievement despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at
risk for doing poorly at school, and ultimately dropping out of school” (p. 19). Research demonstrates that loyalty to one’s homeland and culture provides important social, cultural and emotional resources that help youth navigate through the educational system (Buriel, 1984, Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1997; Valenzuela & Dornbush, 1994).

Social Capital is “networks of people and community resources” (Yosso, 2006, p. 45). Relationships constitute social capital when they enable the achievement of goals that otherwise would not have been possible individually. In this matter, educational achievement is not an individual attribute, but a collective process of emotional commitments among individuals who are embedded in supportive networks (Valenzuela, 1999). Social capital fosters trust, norms and expectations among youth who come to share a common goal of academic success by doing homework together, sharing a word processor or belonging to a study group. Research demonstrates that this type of social capital is more common among immigrant youth (Valenzuela, 1999) than U.S. born Latino youth. Further, females’ higher average level of academic competence enables them to contribute academic support to their social networks. Other examples include students sharing information about scholarships and assistance with college applications.

The history of Mexican immigrant social networks has played an important role in immigration. To this day, data demonstrates that Mexican neighborhoods offer examples of fundraising to help families in need, helping recent arrivals find housing and employment and organizing tandas (tandas function like a savings account. For example, a group of five people agrees to contribute $100 a week. Each week, one of the five members receives $500--the tanda. This association is built on trust.) (Yosso, 2006). Mexican immigrants use their social capital to maneuver through systems, then turn
around and give the information and resources they learned through navigating the system back to their social network. Social capital is used to attain education, legal justice, employment and health care.

Familial Capital is “cultural knowledge nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition” (Yosso, 2006, p. 48).

*Educación* is a broader term than its English translation, “education.” Among Latino families, *educación* refers to the family’s role of instilling in children a sense of moral, social and personal responsibility and serves as a foundation for all other learning. *Educación* includes formal academic training, but additionally it refers to being a caring, responsible, well-mannered and respectful human being. Thus, *educación* is both a means and an end. The end state of being bien educado/a is accomplished through a process characterized by respectful relationships (Valenzuela, 1999). These lessons are taught by a kinship-immediate family as well as aunts, uncles and grandparents, and those living or passed on (Yosso, 2006). Parents use multiple teaching strategies, such as taking their children to work in the evenings or weekend, and encouraging them to work hard in school by storytelling, giving advice to pass on the family values and communicate what is important. Familial capital is informed by the work of researchers who have addressed the *funds of knowledge* within Mexican-American communities that students bring with them to the classroom (Moll et al., 1992; Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992; Gonzalez et al., 1995; Olmedo, 1997; Rueda et.al, 2004).
Resistance Capital is “knowledge and skills cultivated through behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2006, p. 49; Freire, 1970, 1973; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1994; Delgado Bernal, 1977; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This type of capital refers to the legacy of resistance to subordination. Resistance may include behaviors that are self-defeating (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). When informed by recognition of the structure of oppression and the motivation to work toward social justice, however, resistance takes on the motivation to transform such oppressive structures (Freire, 1970; Pizarro, 1998; Solórzano and Yosso, 2002).

According to Yosso (2006), the concept of cultural wealth begins with the perspective that communities of color are places with multiple strengths, cultural assets and cultural wealth. The deficit models place value judgments on communities that do not have White, middle or upper class world views. The community cultural wealth perspective serves as a tool to move toward social and racial justice and demonstrates the need to restructure not only education systems, but other social institutions around the community’s knowledge, skills, abilities and networks.

Integration of Theoretical Frameworks and Next Steps

In summary, each perspective offers implications for policies and school reform. For the purposes of selecting a working model from which to develop, implement and evaluate a program, the Risk/Protective Factor Model and the Cultural Wealth perspective will be used. The Risk/Protective Factor Model is an evidence-based
framework that has proven effective with various ethnic groups, although it was not specifically developed for Latinos. It has been demonstrated to be effective in preventing problem behaviors, such as school dropout, from occurring with various ethnic groups, including Latinos. Yosso’s Cultural Wealth (2006) perspective is based on research specifically with Latino communities. These two frameworks will provide a foundation for looking at strengths and reducing negative impacts in the environment for Latinos. Further, while issues of systemic, institutional and policy changes discussed in this section deserve attention and have the potential to make a greater impact on the Latino dropout rate, UNCE will address them as part of a larger community effort. The following sections provide an overview of the Community Readiness assessment conducted with nineteen key informants in Clark County in an effort to assess the level of support for a Latino-specific effort to reduce school dropout.

Community Readiness Overview

A faculty member from University of Nevada Cooperative Extension conducted a community readiness assessment by interviewing nineteen key informants in Clark County. The assessment will assist faculty and possibly other community members in planning prevention and intervention strategies. The following sections provide an overview of the model, the results and proposed next steps.

Community values and norms are an important aspect in the solution to any social problem. Oftentimes programs are implemented to reduce or impact a problem in a
Community, and unfortunately the program may not be accepted or is not successful. One method to assess whether a particular program or intervention will be successful is to measure the community’s readiness for change. The Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research at Colorado State University developed the Community Readiness Model (CRM) to assist communities in assessing and building a community’s capacity to take action on a social issue. “Community Readiness” is the relative level of acceptance of a program, action or other form of decision-making activity (Donnermeyer, Plested, Edwards, Oetting, & Littlethunder, 1997). In order for prevention programming to be successful, it is important for the community to have the commitment of its members and the required resources. If the community is not ready then the programs are unlikely to be successful or sustained.

Community level change can be very difficult and involves many factors, such as having a “champion” (Steckler & Goodman, 1989), sustaining citizen participation and empowerment (Florin & Wandersman, 1990) and maintaining long-term funding (Steckler & Goodman, 1989). The CRM can assist community members in identifying potential problems and barriers to change, collaborating with professionals to develop interventions and providing mobilization strategies to progress through stages to higher levels of readiness.

The Community Readiness Model identifies six community dimensions that need to be addressed in order for community level change to be most successful: 1) community efforts, 2) community knowledge of the efforts, 3) leadership, 4) community climate, 5) community knowledge about the issue, and 6) resources (Jumper-Thurman, 2000). In order to assess the level of community readiness, an assessment consisting of
approximately 36 questions is conducted with key informants and stakeholders in the community. The responses are used to measure the stage of readiness for each of the six dimensions. The CRM provides recommended strategies based on the stage of readiness of the community that persons or groups working on the issue can implement to raise community support.

The CRM identifies nine stages that describe the progression of community involvement from tolerance of a problematic issue to institutionalization and professionalization of programs and strategies that deal with the solution (Oetting, Donnermeyer, Pleted, Edwards, Kelly, & Beauvais, 1995). According to the model, communities can be in one of the following stages of readiness to address an issue: community tolerance/no knowledge, vague awareness, preplanning, preparation, initiation, institutionalization/stabilization, confirmation/expansion and high level of community ownership/professionalization. See Appendix B for a list of the nine stages and a description of each stage.

Research has found that as communities achieve successively higher stages, they realize greater improvement in their degree of readiness (Oetting et al., 1995). Therefore, to increase a community’s readiness for programming and thereby improve the likelihood that a prevention effort will succeed, it is important to give careful consideration to these nine stages of community readiness development during the process of conducting an objective assessment of community readiness.

An anchor rating scale was adopted for development of descriptors at each of the nine stages (Smith & Kendall, 1963). Anchor rating is a technique that utilizes experts in
order to develop statements that describe stages in a process. The scoring process involves completing the anchor rating scales.

Clark County Community Readiness Assessment Method

The objective of the Community Readiness Assessment in Clark County was to determine the level of readiness to address the Latino school dropout issue. Certification from the Office of Human Research Protection at the University of Nevada, Reno was sought for this research; however, due to the nature of the questions, exempt status was obtained for this project.

Interviews were conducted with nineteen key informant community members working closely on the issue of school retention/dropout of Latino youth. Informants were selected by referrals from initial respondents. Nineteen stakeholders were interviewed. Approximately 10 professionals working on the issue were contacted and did not respond, however, most informants that were contacted were willing to be interviewed. They were each asked 38 questions based on the six dimensions. See Appendix C for a list of questions. Key informants included professionals from the Clark County School District, State of Nevada, Nevada System of Higher Education, private industry, mental health field, a representative of an elected official, a high school student and persons from the non-profit sector. Three respondents were male and 16 were female. Fifteen respondents were Latino, three were Caucasian, and one was African-American. The interviews lasted between 30-90 minutes and most were done in-person, although a few were conducted over the telephone. The responses were compiled and scored using a
ranked rating scale in order to determine the stage of readiness for each dimension and an overall stage of readiness for the community.

Clark County Community Readiness Assessment Results

Scoring is a process of reading through the interviews, then assigning a rating for each dimension based on the criteria described in the rating scale. Two scorers read the interview transcripts, then scored the dimensions individually. The scorers then met and came to consensus on the scores. The scored assessments found Clark County to be in the following stages of readiness.

Table 1
Clark County Community Readiness Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Stage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Efforts</td>
<td>Stage 6, Initiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Knowledge</td>
<td>Stage 3, Vague Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Stage 3, Vague Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Climate</td>
<td>Stage 2, Denial/Resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about Latino School Dropout</td>
<td>Stage 2, Denial Resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for Latino School Dropout</td>
<td>Stage 4, Preplanning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Community Readiness</td>
<td>Stage 3, Vague Awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Dimension A, Community Efforts, Clark County was determined to be in a Stage 6: Initiation. In this stage, there is enough information about the problem that activities are underway. In order to move the community up, the goal is to provide community-specific information. Strategies may include conducting in-service training on Community Readiness for professionals and paraprofessionals, planning publicity
efforts associated with start-up of activity or efforts, attending meetings to provide
updates on progress of the effort, conducting consumer interviews to identify service
gaps, improving existing services and identifying key places to post information,
beginning library or Internet searches for additional resources and potential funding, and
beginning some basic evaluation efforts. For a list of prevention programs and efforts that
were offered by interviewees, see Appendices D and E.

In Dimension B, Community Knowledge, Clark County was determined to be in
Stage 3: Vague Awareness. In this stage there is no immediate motivation to do anything.
The goal is to raise awareness that the community can do something. Strategies may include getting on the
agendas and presenting information at local community events and to unrelated community groups, posting flyers, posters, and billboards, beginning to initiate events (pot lucks, potlatches, etc.) and using those opportunities to present information on the issue, conducting informal local surveys and interviews with community people by phone or door-to-door and publishing newspaper editorials and articles with general information and local implications.

In Dimension C, Leadership, Clark County was determined to be Stage 3: Vague Awareness. The stage is explained above. The general strategies to address this issue also would be the same as above.

In Dimension D, Community Climate, Clark County was determined to be in
Stage 2: Denial/Resistance. In this stage there is little recognition about the problem. The goal in this stage is to raise awareness that the problem or issue exists in this community. Strategies include one-on-one visits and encouraging those that are passionate to assist,
discussing descriptive local incidents related to the issue, approaching and engaging local educational/health outreach programs to assist in the effort with flyers, posters, or brochures, beginning to point out media articles that describe local critical incidents, preparing and submitting articles for church bulletins, local newsletters, club newsletters, and other trusted media and presenting information to local-related community groups.

In Dimension E, Knowledge about the Issue, Clark County was determined to be in Stage 2: Denial/Resistance. This stage is described above. The general strategies to address this issue also would be the same as above.

In Dimension F, Resources for Prevention Efforts, Clark County was determined to be in Stage 4: Preplanning. This stage includes some efforts, but they are not focused or detailed. The goal is to raise awareness with concrete ideas to combat the condition. Strategies may include introducing information about the issue through presentations and media, visiting and investing community leaders in the cause, reviewing existing efforts in community (curriculum, programs, activities, etc.) to determine who the target populations are and consider the degree of success of the efforts, conducting local focus groups to discuss issues and develop strategies and increasing media exposure through radio and television public service announcements.

In order to come up with the overall stage of readiness, the total calculated scores are divided by six, the number of dimensions. The average overall community readiness score is a 3, Vague Awareness. There is a general belief that Latino school dropout is a local problem and that something ought to be done about it. Knowledge about local problems tends to be stereotypical and vague, or linked only to a specific incident or two. There is no immediate motivation to do anything. No identifiable leadership exists, or
leadership lacks energy or motivation. The goal is to raise awareness that the community can do something. Strategies include getting on agendas and presenting information at local community events and to unrelated community groups, posting flyers, posters, and billboards, beginning to initiate events (potlucks, potlatches, etc.) and use those opportunities to present information on the issue, conducting informal local surveys and interviews with community people by phone or door-to-door and publishing newspaper editorials and articles with general information and local implications. For a complete list of scores per interview, see Appendix F.

Community Readiness Analysis

The following is a summary of the strengths and weaknesses identified through the nineteen interviews in each dimension. For a complete summary of the comments, see Appendix G.

In Dimension A, Community Efforts, interviewees were aware of some programs and strategies aimed at reducing school dropout among the general population. Generally, informants felt the programs did not reach enough students, nor did they reach them early enough. In addition, interviewees stated that the programs were not specifically aimed at Latino students and did not include bilingual and culturally competent staff.

In Dimension B, Community Knowledge about the Efforts, interviewees believed that those who could benefit most from the dropout prevention programs were not aware of them. Further, informants generally thought that parents did not know how to seek assistance for their children when needed. Many informants described stories of
navigating through the school system either for their own children or “clients” and found many barriers to accessing services, including language issues, negative and disrespectful attitudes by school personnel and general user-unfriendly processes.

In Dimension C, Leadership, interviewees were able to identify people in the community that were passionate about the issue and were working hard in small scale programs or activities. However, no one identified a community-wide leader that was spearheading efforts or mobilizing the community to address the Latino dropout rates. Most interviewees believed that the leadership in the community was not taking responsibility to resolve the problem and spent most of their time blaming others or highlighting, “one-time, band-aid programs instead of systematically addressing the underlying causes of school dropout.” The business leadership was seen as not caring about the issue, as dropouts fill needed low skilled jobs available in gaming and construction. Some also perceived that leaders did not do something about Latino school dropout for fear of political repercussions or fear of being seen as excluding other groups. According to one informant, a current state legislator said, “Get those that don’t want to learn out [referring to Latinos].”

In Dimension D, Community Climate, seemed to hold the most challenging views and comments about the community’s attitudes. Interviewees generally believed that the anti-immigration backlash has been destructive and harmful to the entire Clark County community and specifically, to Latinos. Informants provided many anecdotes of students they work with being called derogatory terms, being “pushed” out of school and tracked into vocational programs instead of college preparation. In addition, respondents
generally felt that most school personnel and other social service providers are not only culturally incompetent and hold stereotypical views about Latinos, but are outright discriminatory and prejudicial against Latinos.

In Dimension E, Knowledge about the Issue, interviewees generally knew there was a problem with Latino school dropouts, but did not believe that the community at large knew about the risk factors, research about prevention efforts or the effects on the community at large. Informants felt that most people had misinformation about the causes of Latino school dropouts, including that Latino parents do not care about education or that most Latinos are undocumented.

In Dimension F, Resources for Prevention Efforts, informants agreed there were some efforts devoted to preventing Latino school dropout; however, the resources were very small in comparison to the problem and to the resources that would be available if this issue were a priority. Specifically, the gaming industry and businesses in the community are perceived as not doing enough to combat the problem. In addition, interviewees were generally not aware of scientific or systemic evaluations being conducted to assess current programs; therefore, there was little faith in the programs and services being offered. Many felt that competition or perceived competition between the African-American and Latino community was a barrier to implementing culturally specific and relevant prevention efforts aimed at Latinos.

These comments provide the basis for the scoring and stage of readiness results. Clark County was assessed to be in a Stage 3: Vague Awareness about Latino School
Dropout. The implication is that in order for efforts to address the issue, the community needs to be brought up to a higher level of readiness, or there will not be support for efforts aimed at reducing the Latino dropout rate. In order to raise community efforts, strategies must be implemented, such as raising awareness about the problem and solutions by publishing community fact sheets, getting on local agendas at meetings and community events, advertising and public service announcements and publishing editorials with general information and implications.

Informants also provided a list of perceived reasons for Latino school dropout, ranging from school deficiencies, parental attitudes, students’ personal issues like pregnancy, business and workforce attractiveness, economy, family issues and others. There did not seem to be consensus among interviewees on the reasons Latino students dropout. Solutions to the problem also varied tremendously. Respondents’ recommendations for prevention, not surprisingly, considering the perceived causes, ranged from increasing parental involvement, completely reforming school, engaging in media campaigns and increasing the involvement of the gaming and business industry.

In the area of family/parental involvement, informants recommended implementing strategies and programs aimed at improving communication between parents and teachers, providing parent education, improving adult literacy, focusing on the family and providing a school to family liaison.

In the area of school changes, informants recommended a range of strategies. Most often cited included increased funding to support the following: better trained and more culturally competent teachers and staff; culturally competent programs and materials starting in the early childhood and elementary school; and smaller class sizes,
individualized tutoring, and mentoring and access to extra curricular activities. In addition, respondents recommended multicultural education, such as teaching and celebrating Latinos’ contributions to the United States and having programs that are culture specific.

In the area of community, informants believed that community agencies and businesses are not doing enough to support education. Informants perceived that business could assist by being involved in mentoring programs, not hiring school dropouts and implementing work programs for students. In addition, they believe that local youth serving agencies could work together on a strategic effort and address known risk factors for school dropout. See Appendices H and I for a complete list of recommendations.

Limitations of the Community Readiness Model

The purpose of the community readiness model is to assess the extent to which a community is adequately prepared to address a specific social issue, in this case the problem of Latino school dropout. All efforts to gather data and assess a social issue include some limitations. Several limitations of this model also are evident.

First, informants were not chosen at random. The participants were chosen by referrals from initial informants. This method is appropriate, however, when the desired sample characteristic is rare. In this case, informants had to have knowledge of the issue of Latino school dropout in some way.

Second, the number of informants is too small to be representative of the population. The model calls for interviewing four to six people that are connected to the issue in order to make the assessment. Although, the research has found that accurate information can be determined by interviewing four to six key informants, in a city as
large and diverse as Las Vegas, this seemed an inadequate number to represent the community’s views. In an effort to ensure more accurate information that was more representative of the Las Vegas community, 19 interviews were conducted. Nonetheless, the opinions expressed by the informants cannot be generalized to the entire population. They only represent the views of the key informants, but they can shed light into the perceptions of others.

Third, informants may express views that are consistent with social standards. Also, all people have inherent biases and prejudices. The interviewees were professionals working in an area somehow connected to Latino school dropout. This makes it more likely they hold certain views that may differ from the general population. For example, they may favor increasing resources to reduce Latino school dropout and be critical of efforts that are seen as not doing enough to address the problem, whereas others who are not working in the area may believe that enough is being done about the issue.

In addition, attribution theory states that people tend to underestimate or overestimate certain behaviors. The interviewees are not asked to document or substantiate their position, examples or anecdotes with evidence. Hence, the responses are mainly the perceived reality of the key informants. For instance, key informants made some statements that are clearly not substantiated by the research literature. Fortunately, the comments are not being used to create policies or programs but rather measure perceptions in order to know where the community stands. Yet perceptions are an important factor in developing strategies to increase support for efforts.

Fourth, the data collection is highly dependent on the interviewer’s skills and the rigor of the analysis. Any number of variables may influence the quantity and quality of
information, including dress, demeanor or language. In terms of the scoring and analysis, although two people scored the interviews independently and reached consensus on the scores, it is possible that scorer prejudices influence the scoring process.

In summary, all data gathering methods have some limitations. Interviews with key informants are a good way to assess the perceptions of those working in the field; however, their comments may not be generalized to the entire community. Nonetheless, research has demonstrated the CRM assessment to be a good tool for increasing support for an issue.
Summary and Discussion

The purpose of this needs assessment was to provide guidance and direction to UNCE faculty and possibly other community members in the community in the areas of program development, research and community service. Based on a review of the literature, data and the results of the community readiness assessments, specific actions will be taken in the areas of increasing community readiness, program development and research. See Table 2: Timeline of Tasks.

Raising Awareness to Increase Community Readiness

First, the community readiness assessment demonstrates that the community is not adequately prepared to address the issue of Latino school dropout. The community is at Stage 3: Vague Awareness, and there is no immediate motivation to do anything about the issue of Latino school dropout. The recommended strategies of the model will be implemented, including raising awareness and disseminating information that the community can do something about the issue. Informational fact sheets with rates, current efforts, the impact of school dropout on the community and other relevant data will be compiled and distributed to local community agencies and specific populations, such as parents and non-profit agency staff. Also, presentations will be made to local agencies, coalitions and boards regarding the current problem and suggested solutions.

Second, a general Clark County needs assessment on the issue of school dropout will be conducted. The general needs assessment will focus on all ethnic groups. It will be a part of a larger youth needs assessment being conducted by a group of UNCE Children, Youth and Families faculty. This assessment will help increase the level of
support for the issue of school dropout prevention among community members working with non-Latino groups and the community at large.

Third, UNCE faculty will actively participate in current community efforts addressing the issue of school dropout prevention in order to develop a larger, strategic effort. The Nevada Public Education Foundation will be coordinating a statewide school dropout prevention summit. A University of Nevada Cooperative Extension faculty member will actively participate in the planning committee by serving on the content sub-committee. In addition, the University Chancellor convenes a board aimed at addressing diversity issues in Clark County schools and higher education institutions. Faculty will participate on the board and bring awareness, support and best practices to the table by leading a group aimed at examining and making recommendations to reduce school dropout. In addition, faculty will participate on the Nevada Department of Training, Employment and Rehabilitation (DETR) Youth Shared Vision, Communities in School (CIS) Advisory Council, Ready for Life Committee on Youth and the Latin Chamber of Commerce Education Committee.

Program Development

First, a review of the efforts addressing the problem clearly demonstrates there is not a single program that is culturally specific that builds on cultural strengths for Latino students. A ten-week curriculum aimed at teaching middle school Latino students life skills based on Mexican indigenous cultural practices and traditions (and Mesoamerican culture which includes Central America) will be developed using literature and best
practices from multicultural education research and input from focus groups as well as interviews with students. The curriculum will teach non-academic, but necessary life skills to motivate and provide tools for success in school.

The school dropout prevention/positive youth development program will be based specifically on the cultural values, traditions and heritage of Mexican and Mexican-American youth; however, participants of all ethnic groups may participate and will benefit from this multicultural program. The curriculum will be designed to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors primarily for school dropout, but it also addresses factors related to violence, delinquency, teen pregnancy and other behaviors that impact whether youth remain in school. The program will be based on Latino Cultural Wealth. Each session will include an opening activity, a short lecture, a group activity and an optional homework assignment. In addition, the participants will be linked to academic skills tutoring and other support as they are needed. The topics for the ten weeks are as follows: Self Identity, Values, Goal Setting, Self and Social Responsibility, Leadership, Coping with Stress/Resolving Conflict, Health and Well Being, Assertiveness and Communication, Importance of an Education and Closing Ceremony/Program Graduation.
Participants will be given pre/post and follow-up surveys to assess changes in outcomes. The anticipated impacts/outcomes of the program include:

1. Increased feelings of self-efficacy related to ethnic identity
2. Increased commitment to school
3. Decreased favorable attitudes toward dropping out of school
4. Increased bonding to school
5. Increased life skills
6. Increased participation in extra-curricular activities
7. Increased youth involvement in the community

Second, focus groups will be conducted to gather input into the program development in terms of content, methods and topics. The focus groups will be conducted with young adults and will be a part of a larger research project to assess the causes of school dropout and school success. The topics mentioned above may be revised based on focus group recommendations.

Third, a parenting component will be added after the youth curriculum is established. The parenting component also will focus on the cultural strengths and provide information about the differences between school systems in the U.S. and Latin America. It also will include information about how parents can support children’s school success without changing fundamental aspects of the culture.

Fourth, professional development will be offered through presentations and workshops that will be developed for teachers, counselors, school staff, community agencies staff and others working with the Latino community. The training will focus on
proving relevant cultural information for practitioners on understanding and effectively working with Latino youth and families. Further, training of trainers will be conducted to disseminate the Latino Life Skills program. The program may be implemented in schools, community centers, churches or other locations that are welcoming to Latino youth and families.

Research

First, according to the readiness assessment data, more information is needed about the causes and correlations of Latino school dropout. Generally, interviewees were not aware of a systematic data gathering source on Latino school dropout, most referred to their own personal experiences and anecdotes. Focus groups will be conducted with both school dropouts and students successfully enrolled in college to gather more information about how to support young people to be successful in school.

Second, according to the results of the readiness assessment, further research is needed in the area of school dropout. Efforts will be made to collaborate with schools to conduct a risk factors/protective factors youth survey. This survey will assess the level of risk and protective factors for school dropout in the survey respondents. The survey results will provide a more accurate picture of the specific needs of youth, along with the programs and strategies needed to address these needs. The results also will be useful in increasing community readiness for school dropout prevention efforts.
Summary

In summary, there is not one single intervention, program or strategy that can work to eliminate the problem of school dropout with all young people. Prevention programs should be tailored to address risks and protection specific to population or audience characteristics, such as age, gender and ethnicity, to improve program effectiveness (NIDA, 2003). A variety of strategies will be implemented in an effort to impact the problem. Further, careful evaluations of the efforts will help determine the effectiveness of the strategies, will measure the outcomes and will be used to make changes and improve strategies. These strategies aim to impact the school, community and family, as they all are an important part of the solution. This multi-pronged approach is documented in the literature to be most effective (NIDA, 2003) and is also is supported by the community readiness assessment key informant results.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCREASE COMMUNITY READINESS</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informational fact sheets</td>
<td>Spring 2009 /Yearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School dropout prevention summit</td>
<td>November 2008</td>
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<td>Clark County dropout needs assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chancellor’s Diversity Board and other community efforts</td>
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<td>Communities in School (CIS) Advisory Council</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot test curriculum</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finalize and implement curriculum</td>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
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<td>Parent component</td>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training of Trainers (TOT)</td>
<td>Spring 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional development workshops</td>
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<td>Risk and protective factor survey</td>
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<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of curriculum</td>
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### APPENDIX A

#### Risk and Protective Factor Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Adolescent Problem Behaviors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
<th>Social Development Strategy (SDS)</th>
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<td>Substance abuse</td>
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<td>Availability of firearms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community laws and norms favorable to drug use, firearms, and crime</td>
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<td>Transitions and mobility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Media portrayals of violence</td>
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<td>Extreme economic deprivation</td>
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<td>Family</td>
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<td>Family conflict</td>
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<td>Favorable parental attitudes and involvement in problem behaviors</td>
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<td>School</td>
<td>Academic failure beginning in late elementary school</td>
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<td>Lack of commitment to school</td>
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<td>Early and persistent antisocial behavior</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rebelliousness</td>
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<td>Friends who engage in the problem behavior (including low perceived-risk of harm)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Early initiation of the problem behavior</td>
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<td>Gang involvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Constitutional factors</td>
<td>✓</td>
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SDS is a synthesis of three existing theories of criminology (control, social learning, and differential association). It incorporates the results of research on risk and protective factors for problem behaviors and a developmental perspective of age, specific problem, and prosocial behavior. It is based on the assumption that children learn behaviors.

(Hawkins, Catalano, Miller, 1992).
### APPENDIX B

 Nine Stages of Community Readiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1: Community Tolerance/No Knowledge</th>
<th>Community norms actively tolerate or encourage the behavior, although the behavior may be expected of one group and not another (e.g., by gender, race, social class, or age). The behavior, when occurring in the appropriate social context, is viewed as acceptable or as part of community norm. Those who do not engage in the behavior may be tolerated, but might be viewed as somewhat deviant.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Denial</td>
<td>There is usually recognition that the behavior is or can be a problem. Community norms usually would not approve of the behavior, but there is little or no recognition that this might be a local problem. If there is some idea that it is a problem, there is a feeling that nothing needs to be done about this locally, or that nothing can be done about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3: Vague Awareness</td>
<td>There is a general belief that there is a local problem and that something ought to be done about it. Knowledge about local problems tends to be stereotypical and vague, or linked only to a specific incident or two. There is no immediate motivation to do anything. No identifiable leadership exists, or leadership lacks energy or motivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4: Preplanning</td>
<td>There is clear recognition that there is a local problem and that something should be done about it. There is general information about local problems, but ideas about etiology or risk factors tend to be stereotyped. There are identifiable leaders, and there may be a committee, but no real planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5: Preparation</td>
<td>Planning is going on and focuses on practical details. There is general information about local problems and about the pros and cons of prevention programs, but it may not be based on formally collected data. Leadership is active and energetic. The program may have started on a trial basis. Funding is being actively sought or has been committed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6: Initiation</td>
<td>Enough information is available to justify a prevention program, but knowledge of risk factors is likely to be stereotyped. A program has been started and is running, but it is still on trial. Staff is in training or just finished with training. There may be great enthusiasm because limitations and problems have not yet been experienced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 7: Institutionalization/Stabilization</td>
<td>One or two programs are running, supported by administration, and accepted as a routine and valuable activity. Staff are trained and experienced. There is little perceived need for change or expansion. Limitations may be known, but there is not much sense that the limitations suggest a need for change. There may be some form of routine tracking of prevalence. There is not necessarily permanent funding, but there is established funding that allows the program the opportunity to implement its action plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 8: Confirmation/Expansion</td>
<td>Standard programs are viewed as valuable and authorities support expanding or improving programs. New programs are being planned or tried out in order to reach more people, those thought to be more at risk or different demographic groups. Funds for new programs are being sought or committed. Data are obtained regularly on extent of local problems and efforts are made to assess risk factors and causes of the problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 9: High Level of Community Ownership/Professionalization</td>
<td>Detailed and sophisticated knowledge of prevalence, risk factors and etiology exists. Some programs may be aimed at general populations, while others are targeted at specific risk factors and/or at-risk groups. Highly trained staff is running programs, authorities are supportive, and community involvement is high. Effective evaluation is used to test and modify programs.</td>
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### APPENDIX C

**Community Readiness Key Informant Questions**

<p>| <strong>A. COMMUNITY EFFORTS (Programs, Activities, Policies, etc.)</strong> | <strong>1.</strong> Using a scale from 1-10, how much of a concern is <em>Hispanic/Latino School Dropout</em> in Clark County, with one being not at all and ten being a very large concern? Please explain. |
| <strong>AND</strong> | <strong>2.</strong> Please describe the efforts that are available in Clark County to address Hispanic/Latino School Dropout? |
| <strong>B. COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE OF EFFORTS</strong> | <strong>3.</strong> How long have these efforts been going on in Clark County? |
|  | <strong>4.</strong> Using a scale from 1 to 10, how aware are people in Clark County of these efforts, with one being no awareness and ten being very aware? Please explain. |
|  | <strong>5.</strong> What does the Clark County know about these efforts or activities? |
|  | <strong>6.</strong> What are the strengths of these efforts? |
|  | <strong>7.</strong> What are the weaknesses of these efforts? |
|  | <strong>8.</strong> Who do these programs serve? (For example: individuals of a certain age group, ethnicity, etc.) |
|  | <strong>9.</strong> Would there be any segments of the community for which these efforts/services may appear inaccessible? (For example: individuals of a certain age group, ethnicity, income level, geographic region, etc.) |
|  | <strong>10.</strong> Is there a need to expand these efforts/services? Why? |
|  | <strong>11.</strong> Is there any planning for additional efforts/services going on in Clark County surrounding Hispanic/Latino School Dropout? If yes, please explain. What formal or informal policies, practices and laws related to Hispanic/Latino School Dropout are in place in Clark County, and for how long? |
|  | <strong>12.</strong> Are there segments of Clark County for which these policies, practices and laws may not apply? (Prompt: for example, due to socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, etc.) |
|  | <strong>13.</strong> Is there a need to expand these policies, practices and laws? If yes, are there plans to expand? Please explain. |
|  | <strong>14.</strong> How does Clark County view these policies, practices and laws? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. LEADERSHIP</th>
<th>15. Who are the leaders specific to Hispanic/Latino School Dropout in Clark County?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Using a scale from 1 to 10, how much of a concern is Hispanic/Latino School Dropout to the leadership in Clark County, with one being not at all and ten being a very large concern? Please explain.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. How are the “leaders” in Clark County involved in efforts regarding Hispanic/Latino School Dropout? Please explain. (For example: Are they involved in a committee, task force, etc.? How often do they meet?)</td>
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<td>18. Would the leadership support additional efforts? Please explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. COMMUNITY CLIMATE</td>
<td>19. Describe Clark County.</td>
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<td>20. Is there ever a time or circumstance in which members of Clark County might think that Hispanic/Latino School Dropout should be tolerated?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21. How does Clark County support the efforts to address Hispanic/Latino School Dropout?</td>
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<td>22. What are the primary obstacles to efforts in Clark County?</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>23. What is the overall feeling among Clark County members regarding Hispanic/Latino School Dropout?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE ISSUE</td>
<td>24. How knowledgeable are Clark County members about Hispanic/Latino School Dropout? Please explain. (Prompt: for example, dynamics, signs, symptoms, local statistics, effects on family and friends, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25. What type of information is available in Clark County regarding Hispanic/Latino School Dropout?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26. What local data on Hispanic/Latino School Dropout is available in Clark County?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27. How do people obtain this information in Clark County?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **F. RESOURCES FOR PREVENTION EFFORTS** | 28. Whom would an individual affected by the issue turn to first for help and why?  
29. On a scale from 1-10, what is the level of expertise and training among those working on Hispanic/Latino School Dropout? Please explain.  
30. Do efforts that address Hispanic/Latino School Dropout have a broad base of volunteers?  
31. What is Clark County’s and/or local business’ attitude about supporting efforts with people volunteering time, making financial donations, and/or providing space?  
32. How are the current efforts funded? Please explain.  
33. Are there any proposals or action plans that have been submitted for funding to address Hispanic/Latino School Dropout in Clark County? If yes, please explain.  
34. Are there any evaluations of these efforts? If yes, using a scale from 1 to 10, how sophisticated is the evaluation effort, with one being not at all and ten being very sophisticated?  
35. Are the evaluation results being used to make changes in programs, activities, or policies or to start new ones? |
| **G. OTHER** | 36. Why do youth drop out of school in Clark County?  
37. What recommendations do you have for reducing school dropout in Clark County? |
APPENDIX D

Clark County School District Strategies to Address School Dropout

- 21st Century Curriculum
- 9th Grade Back on Track
- 9th Grade Probation
- Academic Support (remediation, academic skills, enhancement programs, tutoring)
- Activity
- Adult Mentoring Program
- Advisory Period/Homeroom
- After School Programs: (1:31 credit retrieval program, etc.)
- Athletics
- Attendance Personnel/Staff
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)
- Behavioral Interventions (positive behavioral supports)
- Block Scheduling
- Character Education Programs
- Choice Programs
- Community Empowerment Programs
- Community Outreach Liaisons
- Counseling Groups
- CTA
- Dual Credit Opportunity
- Family Engagement Activities (events/programs designed to involve families)
- Family Success Advocate
- Gear Up/TRIO
- Homeless Advocate
- Language Transition Services
- One-Stop Youth Center
- Overage Student
- Parent Support Programs
- Peer Mentoring Program
- Proficiency Incentive Programs
- Proficiency Tutoring
- Related Services
- RTI
- School within a School
- Site-Based Health Center
- Specialized Curriculum: (Magnet, theme-based academy)
- Strategies for Hispanic Dropout
- Student Case Meeting Tracking
- Student Recognition Programs
- Transition Program
- Truancy Enforcement
- Truancy Prevention Program
APPENDIX E

Existing Community Efforts to Prevent Hispanic/Latino School Dropout

During the Community Readiness interviews, key stakeholders and informants were asked to identify programs and efforts that were addressing the Hispanic/Latino school dropout issue. Key informants were identified as professionals and community members connected to the issue or working on the issue in some way. Some of the efforts listed, many in fact, do not specifically target Hispanic/Latinos or address the issue of school dropout directly; however, they may address some of the risk factors associated with school dropout. They are listed here simply as a summary of what leaders working in this field and lay community members in Clark County perceive to be addressing the issue of Latino school dropout in Clark County.

Bilingual Behavioral Counseling (www.mentesana.us)
- Services provided include bilingual crisis intervention, basic skills training, educational support, case management, therapy for teens’ and children, psycho-social rehab and marital, individual and family therapy.

City of Las Vegas (http://www.lasvegasnevada.gov/Publications/7821.htm)
- Batteries Included Program is a partnership with the Clark County School District (CCSD) and Nevada Partners. It teaches the secrets of success in a global marketplace to city youth to improve high school and college graduation rates and to cultivate professional young leaders in our community. There are seven components of the Batteries Included program: education and after-school awareness, incorporating education into after-school programs, youth engagement, city/public partnerships, celebrating youth achievement, youth career development, and re-engaging youth. The program is open to all youth in Clark County.

Clark County School District (CCSD) (http://www.ccsd.net/)
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program is available in nine local high schools. The purpose of the AVID program is to improve student GPAs, assist with increasing their test scores, and inspire students to pursue higher education.
- Newcomer Program designed for English Language Learners (ELL) in grades 3-12 who are new to the county. The program consists of curriculum, technology and parental involvement.
- Increased technical and career academies
- Small learning community at Rancho High School
- Hiring an assistant superintendent to oversee the multicultural department, English Language Learners and Dropout.
- College Initiative Schools
- Saturday School
- Before and after school tutoring (tutoring on proficiency exam)
• Career Days
• Supplemental Educational Services
• Adult Education conducting a study of students who have dropped out of school
• Sunset High School Program for pregnant teens
• Bilingual/Dual Language programs at two elementary schools
• (For a complete list see Appendix A)

College of Southern Nevada (http://www.csn.edu/pages/579.asp)
• Learning and Earning Program targets juniors and seniors in high school at risk of dropping out and offers employment, incentives and mentoring to help students stay in school and graduate.

Communities in Schools (http://www.cisnet.org/)
• Links school needs with community resources in the following areas: health and wellness (dental and medical clinics at school), welfare (clothes and food at school), skills for the future (experiential career days at school), self-esteem and joy and family and community.

Educational Achievement Services (http://www.latinaspeaker.com/aboutus.htm)
• Family Leadership Institute teaches parents and caregivers the art and skills of family leadership in support of academic achievement and life success for their children by using a practical ten-step approach. This ten-module curriculum is implemented in Clark County schools in Spanish and English.

Latin Chamber of Commerce (https://www.lvlcc.com/)
• Latino Youth Leadership Conference prepares juniors and seniors in high school to more fully participate in Nevada’s economic, social and political development in the 21st century and beyond, by empowering participants to become active members of the community.
• Scholarships to Latino Youth
• Career Day offers students an opportunity for a “Day on the Job” with local employers.

Luz Community Development Coalition (http://luzonline.org/about.html)
• The Southern Nevada Latino Community Coalition (LUZ) is a newly formed Coalition designed to educate and mobilize the local Latino communities across the Southern portion of Nevada to indentify risk and protective factors that positively affect drug and alcohol abuse in their counties, and to educate the community on the prevention of a number of at-risk behaviors leading to the reduction and eventual elimination of drug and alcohol abuse across all levels of society. The coalition funds many programs throughout the community that target Latinos and reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for not only substance abuse, but also school dropout.
Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) (http://detr.state.nv.us/)

• The Shared Youth Vision calls upon the youth service system at all levels to work collaboratively in designing and coordinating programs focused on serving the neediest youth. Tasks include: data analysis to identify gaps, target services to neediest youth, develop strategic plan and coordination of services and build partnerships.

Nevada Partners (http://www.nevadapartners.org/)

• Fellows Program for students who failed 8th grade and can still earn high school credits.
• Pathways Program for adjudicated youth that includes tutoring, job skills and recreation

Nevada Public Education Foundation (http://www.nvpef.org/)

• Connects schools, communities, government agencies, workplace partners, non-profits and youth organizations to improve outcomes for youth
• Coordinating a statewide dropout prevention summit to begin a policy platform and develop a statewide action plan (November 2008)
• Convenes the Ready for Life Committee on Youth, a collaborative cross-agency effort to improve our community’s success at engaging and graduating more “ready for life” students and re-engaging those who have prematurely left school

Nevada State College (http://www.nsc.nevada.edu/)

• Crossroads Program is a partnership with CCSD to help middle school students stay in school. Students learn non-academic skills such as time and stress management, motivation, resiliency, self-esteem and decision-making tactics.

Southern Nevada Hispanic Employment Program (http://www.snhep.org/)

• Youth Leadership Conference
• Scholarships to Latino Youth
• Career Connections brings professionals from the community to teach various topics to ninth graders who earn class credit at Eldorado High School.
• Mock interviews at Western High School

University of Nevada Las Vegas (www.unlv.edu)
Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach (http://caeo.unlv.edu/)

• Gaining Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) trains tutors for ELL classrooms and special education, pays summer school tuition and credit retrieval programs and offers college advisement at six target middle schools and eight target high schools.
• TRIO Educational Talent Search identifies disadvantaged youth with potential for post-secondary education, encourage them to continue and graduate from secondary schools and to enroll in post-secondary education programs. In addition, Educational Talent Search encourages high school dropouts to return to school.
• TRIO Upward Bound provides fundamental support to participants in their preparation for college entrance.

Center for Health Disparities Research (http://chdr.unlv.edu)
• Dando Fuerza a la Familia (Strengthening Families) is a 14-module Model Program for Mexican parents and their children ages 6-11 years of age. The program is designed to increase protective factors and reduce risk factors and has been proven to increase family bonding, improve communication, increased parental involvement in school, increase school attendance and other positive indicators for school success among participants. This program is implemented in Spanish in community centers.

Student Organizations
• Tutoring to high school and middle school students
• Kappa Delta Chi sorority members talk to high school students about college.

Financial Aid and Scholarships (http://financialaid.unlv.edu/)
• The America Reads and America Counts programs are federally funded and provide students with the opportunity to tutor preschool age children in reading and math. The federal funding covers 100 percent of the student’s wages. Students must be eligible for work-study in order to receive an America Reads/America Counts award. These awards are given to departments with close affiliation to preschool age children.
### Community Readiness Assessment Interview Scores

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**Dimension A, Community Efforts:** 115 divided # of interviews (19) = 6.05  
Stage 6: Initiation

**Dimension B, Community Knowledge:** 66 divided # of interviews (19) = 3.47  
Stage 3: Vague Awareness

**Dimension C, Leadership:** 62 divided # of interviews (19) = 3.26  
Stage 3: Vague Awareness

**Dimension D, Climate:** 43 divided # of interviews (19) = 2.26  
Stage 2: Denial/Resistance

**Dimension E, Knowledge about the Issue:** 54 divided # of interviews (19) = 2.84  
Stage 2: Denial/Resistance

**Dimension F, Resources for Prevention Efforts:** 82 divided # of interviews (19) = 4.31  
Stage 4: Preplanning
Average Overall Community Readiness Score: 22.14

Total Calculated Score: 22.14 divided by 6 (number of dimensions) = 3.69. The protocol calls for the number to be rounded down, not up as this means the community has not reached all of the items needed to be at a stage 4.

**Overall Stage 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Stage of Readiness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Denial/Resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vague Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Preplanning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Initiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Stabilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Confirmation/Expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>High Level of Community Ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

Strengths and Weaknesses in Addressing Hispanic/Latino School Dropout

A and B: Community Efforts and Community Knowledge

Strengths identified through the interviews

- There are programs, efforts and activities throughout the city to address the issue.
- Most programs are aimed at low-income and minority schools.
- The programs help the students they reach.
- Students develop relationships to other students who are college bound.
- Many programs are designed to help students with their individual needs.
- The CCSD and other community agencies have been offering programs for many years.
- There is some support in the community for expanding efforts to reduce Hispanic/Latino school dropout.
- Several new efforts are being planned that will address the general school dropout issue (Ready for Life, America’s Promise Statewide School Dropout Prevention Summit and the Youth Shared Initiative will bring partners and collaborators working on youth issues together to leverage resources, conduct data analysis and strategically coordinate services).
- The CCSD will be hiring an assistant superintendent to oversee the multicultural department and dropout issues (personal communication with CCSD personnel).
- Some additional efforts to expand services are being planned.
- Most interviewees cited the passage of SB 312 and SB 184 as positive. It will do three things: 1) Mandate that students be tracked for dropout starting in 6th grade, 2) Raise the age that kids can dropout to 18 (although one key informant saw this as a possible detriment to Latino youth and parents), and 3) Allows for probationary high school.
- The schools try to get all the youth engaged. The clubs, like the Hispanic Club, help to make students feel recognized.
- Latino immigrants know the importance of education and want their children to be educated and do well in school; parents just may not know how to support them.

Weaknesses identified through the interviews

- There is not much information available to youth and parents about the programs that are being offered to help reduce school dropout.
- Many interviewees were not aware of any specific programs to reduce Hispanic/Latino school dropout.
- Some agencies that offer programs that require school counselors to distribute information often do not have participants from certain schools (implication is that school counselors from certain schools do not pass along the information to students).
• Information about the programs and resources is not widely available in Spanish.
• Language barrier keeps parents away from school and the school does not reach out to the Latino parents. An example are the school report cards that are described as very difficult to understand and not user-friendly at all.
• The programs that are available don’t reach enough students, “It’s a drop in the bucket.” Further, the programs don’t reach students in the elementary school.
• Most efforts to reduce the dropout are intervention strategies instead of prevention.
• Many good programs are not accessible due to geographic locality and lack of transportation. Some students are bused to school and cannot arrive early or stay late to participate in the extra programs.
• There does not appear to be an initiative to develop and implement a plan specifically designed to reduce Hispanic/Latino school dropout (or dropout in general).
• English Language Learners (ELL) funding has been cut or eliminated.
• There is a lack of bilingual and bicultural staff and programs.
• There is a lack of financial resources and additional budget cuts are planned.
• Many people in the community are critical, “why we are educating kids that are not citizens?”
• The growing population and transiency of students make it difficult to implement programs and show success.
• Some schools are very “criminalized” by police presence and disciplinary practices.
• Hispanic/Latino students and families are viewed with a “deficit” model by teachers and community.
• Kids feel teachers don’t care and have no interest in teaching them.
• Community members have provided suggestions for improving bicultural and bilingual teachers and nothing has been done about it.
• Many true leadership programs or elite internships are only for “A” students.
• Many youth are not receiving their high school diploma, but only a certificate of attendance. The students and parents often do not know this until it is too late.
• Many programs do not serve the undocumented students or the limited English language person.
• Services are being eliminated due to budget and funding cuts.
• There is a lack of bilingual and bicultural staff at school and parents can’t communicate with their children’s teachers.

C: Leadership

Strengths identified through the interviews

• The leadership would support additional efforts (if the budget allowed and it was made “easy” for them).
• There are identified leaders on the issue in the community.
Some leaders are able to get lots of resources for their school or their specific group of students and families.

**Weaknesses identified through the interviews**

- There is not a task force, committee, strategic plan or any other systematic arrangement to reduce Hispanic/Latino school dropout.
- Leadership is not as concerned to do anything about the issue due to political retribution. Leaders don’t care; education is not valued for everyone.
- Leadership may take action but the governor’s budget cuts and federal cuts don’t allow for new or expanded programs.
- Leadership does meet in various youth efforts, but they are not specifically addressing Latino dropout (or dropout in general).
- Leadership embraces one-time programs, small scale band-aid efforts with little promise to make an impact (instead of systematically addressing the underlying causes of dropout).
- Leaders don’t seem to know what to do.
- Everyone is used to seeing the dropout numbers and there is no uproar by leaders or the community when the statistics come out every year.
- Gaming industry is a leader in promoting non-education norms.
- Leaders are trying, but do not have a core group of dedicated people.
- Leaders may support more efforts if they saw some documented successes.
- Leaders do not care because dropouts will serve the need for dishwashers and maids.
- Leaders would not want to support a Latino-specific effort because of competition between Latinos and African-Americans.
- Everyone is playing the blame game.

**D: Community Climate**

**Strengths identified through the interviews**

- Families of program recipients are very grateful for the support their children receive.
- Local, state, federal and private companies offer programs, grants, volunteers, internships, scholarships and support other efforts to address the issue.
- Small groups of dedicated members do a lot of the work in the community.
- Some students who have dropped out later lament the decision and return for a GED or diploma.
- The Latino community is discontent with the high dropout numbers and may be ready to act regarding the issue.
- The community is moving toward being ready for change.
- Latino community would welcome efforts to address the issue.
- Professionals working in the social services field are aware of the problem and believe something should be done.
Weaknesses identified through the interviews

- Community is afraid of undocumented workers and resents them.
- All Latinos are seen as undocumented by the larger community.
- People are tired, busy and worried about day-to-day survival to care about the issue.
- The anti-immigrant attitude impacts students too. Many students have been left behind by parents who have been deported.
- Community members may tolerate the dropout because it doesn’t impact them.
- Obstacles to addressing the issue include funding, human and other resources, language, lack of knowledge about the issue, lack of bilingual and bicultural teachers and school staff, racism by teachers and school personnel, lack of leadership and lack of prioritization from the leaders and government.
- The community may be concerned but feel resignation about it.
- The community is divided; there is competition between African-Americans and Latinos for resources and Caucasians feel threatened.
- The community thinks Latino kids are just lazy; they have no support at home and if they don’t take advantage of the education, that’s their problem.
- There is not a connected effort.
- Las Vegas is a community where people don’t engage; ranks 44th in giving to charity, 48th in voting and only 5 percent of the population was born here. People live behind a wall.
- Most people are unaware of the problem or how it affects them. They don’t know the facts, figures or risk factors; they have stereotyped information like, “parents just don’t care.”
- Youth don’t feel supported or valued; they have experienced racism. They are treated as if they are undocumented whether they are or are not.
- There are many adults who are now searching for jobs, and it’s very hard to place adults with no skills in jobs.
- Teachers don’t care, they have no respect for the students, they can’t manage their classrooms; in turn, students do whatever they want in the classrooms and learning is not taking place.
- Students do not receive college preparation classes; most are not informed about college and told they are not book smart.
- Students know someone needs to have the labor jobs and they meet that need.
- This is an entertainment industry, only one president and lots of dishwashers: “if they need more educated people, they will go look around the world.”
- Community feels that Latinos shouldn’t even receive an education in the U.S..
- Some legislators don’t care. Some have been heard saying, “get those that don’t want to learn out.”
- Every year national statistics are published, and Nevada is last on addressing all the problem indicators and the community doesn’t do anything about it.
- People say, “oh, they’re just Mexicans” and “it doesn’t affect me.”
- Parents are afraid to go to school. Sometimes they are treated rudely and not allowed past the front reception.
• There is a strong anti-Latino sentiment in Clark County. People think all Latinos are illegal and shouldn’t even be in school or using resources.

E: Knowledge about the Issue

Strengths identified through the interviews
• The community is generally aware from the television news and newspaper about the issue.
• Various websites have information that includes dropout rates and other relevant information:
  http://www.ccsd.net/
  http://www.doe.nv.gov/
  http://nces.ed.gov/
  http://system.nevada.edu/
  http://kidscount.unlv.edu/
  http://nic.unlv.edu/.
• The CCSD compiles an annual accountability report that goes home to every parent.

Weaknesses identified through the interviews
• Information that is available doesn’t show all the students who dropped out before 9th grade.
• The general community and parents don’t access information that is available.
• The community knows about the problem and blames the students.
• The community has negative information about the issue (all Latinas get pregnant and dropout, all Latinos are illegal, parents don’t care).
• Information about the causes of dropout is not available.
• This issue is not a “warm fuzzy” topic therefore hard to get volunteers or champions for the issue.
• Latino families are aware of the problem if it impacts them personally.
• Students obtain information about the problem by seeing their peers dropout and no one doing anything about it.

F: Resources for Prevention Efforts

Strengths identified through the interviews
• Several programs addressing the issue have outcome evaluations showing positive results.
• Gaming industry does provide funding for scholarships, sponsorship of some events and activities, volunteers and other resources.
• Some casinos provide computers in the workplace so employees can check their children’s school records online.
• There are plans to expand wrap-around services to more elementary schools in low-income areas.
• Businesses and volunteers would be willing to help if there was a coordinated effort.
• There are teachers, leaders and community members who care about the issue.

Weaknesses identified through the interviews
• Businesses, community agencies and others in a position to help with the efforts do not want to see “ethnic” specific programs or plans.
• The issue does not have a broad base of volunteers.
• Most programs addressing the issue do not have high-level evaluations.
• Students in need of help often do not seek it from school personnel.
• Those working on the issue to address school dropout need more tools, more training and training on cultural issues.
• Funding is very limited and not enough to impact the issue.
• There are not any plans to expand services.
• School personnel need training on reaching out to parents and involving them.
• Most teachers are not from this community and don’t understand the Latino culture.
• The community and school personnel do not want anything specific to Latinos.
• There is not a system in place to help individuals dealing with this issue.
APPENDIX H

Reasons, identified during the interviews by informants, of why Latino youth dropout:

- Underfunded schools
- Underfunded homes
- Racism
- Discrimination
- Sexism
- Anti-Latino backlash
- Lack of money
- Lack of knowledge regarding the importance of education
- School is boring
- Teachers don’t care
- Students get lost at school
- Students don’t get the basics early on
- Students who are failing are pushed out
- Credit deficient
- Could not pass high school proficiency exam
- Do not find school relevant
- Lack of guidance at home
- Language barriers
- Homelessness
- Lack of knowledge regarding programs available to help
- Students get discouraged
- Students have no hope
- Students that don’t know English fall behind
- Students need to work to help their family
- The casino industry is appealing
- Pregnancy
- System does not meet the needs; set-up for mainstream, Caucasian, middle-class community
- Staff is not prepared to address youth’s needs
- Equal is not equitable
- Teachers have apathetic attitude
- No time to teach; students are constantly being tested
- Immediate gratification
- Need to babysit younger kids
- There are good paying jobs available
APPENDIX I

Recommendations, identified during the interviews, of what needs to be done to reduce the Latino dropout rate:

Parents
- Family involvement
- Parent education
- Improving adult literacy
- More communication between teachers and parents
- Teacher training on working with Latino families
- Focus on family
- Include a home-school liaison
- Involve parents

School
- Stop ignoring the problem
- Alternate ways to proficiency
- Coordinated, well-funded statewide or county-wide effort to address the problem
- Educational reform proficiency
- Increased expectations by teachers
- Augment college preparation curriculum
- Peer support
- Smaller class sizes
- Professional development for teachers
- Need to meet three needs: Rigor, Relevance and Relationships
- Efforts need to start in elementary school
- Provide academic support
- Tutoring
- Early childhood centers
- Evaluate programs
- More teachers and better trained teachers
- Bilingual and bicultural staff
- Culturally relevant and bilingual materials
- More books, computers and intervention programs
- Address cultural aspects
- Address African-American/Latino issues
- Offer incentives
- Offer extra-curricular activities that are free
- After school programs
- More attention from teachers and counselors
- Teach life skills
- Mentors
- Support Latino celebrations
• Every child has access to a GATE or MAGNET school education
• Every student is involved in at least two extra-curricular activity
• Start in elementary school
• Track youth the entire time they are in school
• Offer music and art
• Teachers become TESOL endorsed
• Have mental health counselors available to students
• Provide a place where young people can go to learn skills even if they dropped out.
• Focus on elementary school by setting a good foundation
• Provide individual attention to needs
• Evaluate teachers
• Conduct assessments and provide help for students that are struggling early on
• Case management
• Problem identification and referral
• Personal relationships
• Home/school liaison

Community
• Corporations stop hiring youth without diplomas
• Community also needs to get involved, it’s not just a school district responsibility
• Instill a purpose in students
• One-stop services
• Expose students at an early age to role models
• All agencies should address known risk factors
• Bring all agencies together and coordinate efforts
• Campaign to show benefits of education
• Every child has a caring adults (doesn’t have to be parent)
• Have a connected system
• Include wrap-around services
• Gaming industry needs to get behind the issue
• Increase awareness about the issue
• Bring problems to the forefront
• Work on reducing prejudices between African-Americans and Latinos
• Work programs for students
• Mentoring programs
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