Case Study  
December 10, 2003  

The case of Esperanza  

Esperanza Martinez is a 16 year old female, she is an 11th grader at Durant H.S. Esperanza is a very friendly young lady who seems well like by her peers. Esperanza came in after school to talk to me per my request. Our sessions started very slowly as she did not seem to have a real need for counseling initially. During our first session the purpose of our meeting was communicated, the length, duration, and her plans for the future were discussed. Esperanza seemed a little awkward but became more at ease towards end of the meeting. I began the meeting by advising Esperanza of the confidentiality of our meeting, and she seemed willing to continue. I explained my role as a student/counselor and the guidelines and expectations of our meetings. Our first meeting was productive, I was able to establish rapport, and get a dialogue started.

On our next meeting I continued to gather baseline data regarding Esperanza’s family. Through this conversation I learned that Esperanza lived with her mother, and 3 other sisters, Esperanza is the youngest of 4 daughters. She spoke very highly of her sisters and mother I could tell that this was a close family. I also learned that Esperanza’s father had passed away the year before and this was a very painful experience for her because he died suddenly. As a result of they have had to adjust to life without the father in the home, and Esperanza’s mother has had to sacrifice a lot for the family. We continued our discussion regarding the family, and I felt that Esperanza really needed to talk and get things off her chest so I let her talk with minimal interruption. I noticed a sense of calm at the end of our meeting. We than made an appointment to meet for future sessions.
During subsequent meeting we discussed Esperanza’s feeling about her father’s death and about the struggles her mother has been going through. Esperanza explained that her mother had gotten very overprotective since her father’s death and sometimes feels frustrated because she feels that her mother does not trust her. We continued our sessions discussing these issues, I used the person-centered approach allowing Esperanza to express those feelings. As part of our sessions I recommended that Esperanza keep a journal regarding her feelings, and as we met we discussed the entries in the journal. This strategy seemed to work well, as she wrote freely discussing with me the areas where she felt most comfortable. Our sessions ended by summarizing the meetings and discussing any further concerns or questions. We agreed that we would meet one more time to follow up, and that anytime she felt like talking she would make an appointment to come in and see me. Overall our meetings were very good, although they started our very slow. Esperanza was able to discuss her feelings regarding her family situation. I believe that my sessions with Esperanza were successful, I was very happy with the outcome and with her receptiveness toward my questioning.

Interview with parent

Interviewing Esperanza’s mother I learned that her mother was very proud of Esperanza. The mother stated that Esperanza is a very responsible young lady and has never really had any problems with her. The mother stated that Esperanza gets good grades at school, and seems to like to go to school. She mentioned that Esperanza really enjoyed reading, and was always reading at home. When I question her about her relationship with the school in general, she stated that Durant was a very good school but sometimes felt oblivious to the goings on at school because she did not speak very good
English. The mother stated that she was not aware of conference nights, or the grades Esperanza was getting at school. She stated that she felt frustrated by this because it is very difficult not knowing how Esperanza is doing until the report card comes home. She stated that she really did not feel comfortable contacting the school about Esperanza because of the language barrier that exists. The mother was very thankful that Esperanza has been doing well in school therefore she has not had to make much contact. She did state that overall she was satisfied with Esperanza’s school experience and felt that her daughter was getting a quality education.

Interview with teachers

In interviewing Esperanza’s teachers they stated that Esperanza was a pleasant student to have in the class, as she never causes any problems. Teachers stated that Esperanza seems to like school, attending regularly and turning in all her assignments. Teachers interviewed stated Esperanza can sometimes get chatty but is not disrespectful, when asked to stop talking she does so immediately. As far as parent communication and contact, the teachers stated that they generally contacts student’s parents when there is a general concern regarding student grades and behavior. The teachers also stated that the roadblocks they have experienced in trying to communicate with parents have been not being able to reach parents at home or at work. The teachers also expressed a general concern about parent’s not attending conference nights, the teachers felt that parents take for granted the fact that their child is doing well and the school is providing all of the necessary tools needed. Teachers felt frustrated by this, especially when trying to make contact with parents of Hispanic students like Esperanza.
Services needed for student success

In order to optimize student success teachers and parents must come together working as a unified force. As I examine my interview with parent and teachers I realize that there seems to be a lack of communication. I don’t believe this is not the fault of the teacher or the parent, because there is a language barrier that exists. I do believe that the school needs to take a more pro-active role in reaching these parents that feel uncomfortable speaking with teachers, counselors, and administrators. I also believe that parents also need to try to be more involved in the education of their children. Parents must not rely solely on the school, this must be a joint effort. In order to make this possible there needs to be an open line of communication. This can be obtained by recruiting parents to come in to school, and having Spanish speaking teachers, counselors if available, and administrators talk to this population about their concerns in an open forum. After the open forum they need to have workshops that deal with topics relevant to the students. This must be held after school, providing a small meal to these parents if possible. Consequent to these meetings, follow-ups must me conducted by way of newsletters, phone calls, and invitations.

Currently Durant H.S. has not bilingual guidance counselor on its staff. The school relies on a paraprofessional to assist parents that do not speak English. There are other Spanish speaking teachers on staff, but they cannot be used to provide the necessary services. As a result, there is a gap that exists in a school where 15% of its population is Spanish speaking. This case study has reaffirmed the need for more bilingual counselors. Living in an area like we live in where there is such a big Hispanic population we must make this a priority.