Child Welfare in Long Beach

Analytical & Field Research on the Study of the Quality of Life in Long Beach

By:

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I. Introduction

As Honor students at LBCC and as students of Dr. Novotny's Anthropology class we were asked to embark on a project that had never been attempted before. We were asked as students and researchers to study various subjects in Long Beach, and to state our conclusion on these topics with a final letter grade. We were encouraged to refer to our own community in order to collect data, and meet certain individuals who were experts in our line of research. Through this project we as students were learning and discovering the strengths and weaknesses of our society. Our team decided to explore the child welfare issues in California as well as in Long Beach. We were attracted to this subject sometime during the semester when we attended a meeting where an extremely motivating social worker spoke about some of the issues on child welfare and education. A spark of sudden interest led us to research this subject and learn more about the child welfare programs that are currently being utilized.

Through our research we have discovered that there are some new laws being put into effect that President Bush is hoping will improve our education all over the U. S. One of the many new ideas being enforced is the No Child Left Behind Act that is promising to improving children's education as well as improving the quality of their education.

Through our research we have studied the affects of these programs have looked programs and laws that will be put into place through President Bush's Master plan. We have collected information from the media and explored hundreds of websites; most importantly we visited some of our neighborhoods and schools to get insight on the types of child welfare programs as well as there effects on the clients who are in need of them. As any research group, restrictions that bound our research would be things such as
transportation availability, information that couldn't be gathered, and of course the lack of cooperation from some unwilling or extremely busy individuals. A project of this magnitude takes a lot of motivation and dedication shared among a research team. Through our efforts we will grade the past, present, and future plans for child welfare programs towards education and explain how we chose the grade and why they earned the chosen grade. We hope by doing this our community will improve.

II. The Importance of Education

The Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission states that for some time now, governments have undertaken to serve neglected children by taking them into their care or by helping the families of these children through what we now called child welfare services. During the last fifteen years, a majority of states and provinces have developed and implemented child welfare service program to insure the needs of their citizens. Research shows that many children who aren't receiving the right kind of education are most likely to become children who won't succeed in education and get to the point of dropping out. This leads to underage workers who will work at low paying jobs and will have a hard time supporting themselves as well as contributing to the rest of society who will one day have children who may possibly follow their parent's examples and be unmotivated as well, and won't succeed scholastically. Social Worker's believe that these are reasons why welfare reforms were implemented, to allow all people equal opportunity to receive the best education they can in order to receive a high paying job and to one day provide for their family as well as their own community. For a long time it was thought that children were no longer succeeding in school due to their household
situations and lack of a sufficient family income which is forcing young children to work rather than receive a good education. Many welfare programs were being implemented in order to keep children financially stable so that they have the opportunity to finish school and to have a chance like other students their age.

There are so many families below the poverty line or families with single parents who are working five to six days a week in order to bring home a meal to feed their children and to ensure a roof over their heads. These parents without any choice are often forced to neglect their children in all forms because they don't have any time to stay home and be with their kids. The majority of the time the oldest child is left at home taking care of the rest of the children while the mother and father work. These children aren't given the chance or the chose to concentrate on school because they are placed in a situation where they have to grow up quickly and contribute as much as they can to the family. The majority of the welfare programs created in the past were here to help these children have hope and help them take special classes, receive tutoring, find ways to get financial aid, and more, so that they have the chance to go to school and do something with their lives in the future.

Statistically, the number of Long Beach residents living below the federal poverty level rose by nearly two percent compared to last year as the city moved from tenth to seventh on a list of cities with the highest poverty rates. For children the poverty line rose dramatically, there were forty-two thousand living in poverty just last year, all of whom were under the age of eighteen. Poverty in Long Beach which is nearly thirty-eight
percent, are nearly families headed by a woman without husbands present, according to the Census Bureau's survey.

Students who are below the poverty line are forced to attend schools where educated isn't enforced compared to upper class schools such as private schools. They are being taught by teachers who are inexperience and are unqualified to insure the enhancement of their student's knowledge. For example, one young girl attended a school that was designated as falling under state and federal standards for more than three years. But low expectations were the least of this seventh-grader's problems. In 2004 her gym teacher became irritated by his unruly class and punished all the girls by putting them in the boys' locker room. Two boys dragged Ashley into the shower room; one held her arms and the other held her legs, while they fondled her for more than ten minutes. The teacher was not present, and no one helped her. This is just one of the many situations that has arisen in our school systems, eventually when children aren't being educated the violence within schools and within society increases. Another example would be of another school attending a near by high school, this student after refusing to give up his chemistry class stool to a latecomer. According to a Philadelphia Inquirer story based on this account, his assailant, who outweighs him by about sixty pounds, typically arrived late for chemistry class and demanded the subject's seat. The young boy was studying for the state's high school proficiency exam and refused to move. The student said he was surprised when the student confronted him later in the locker room. He was beaten by at least four students. Samet could transfer to the other public high school in Camden, but it officially designated as "persistently dangerous".
III. No Child Left Behind Act

Violence and crime increase contributes to Presidents Bush's decision three years ago, which signed into the law No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a law first passed in 1965. As President Bush explained in an article written by Lisa Snell, who is the Director of Education and Child Welfare For Reason Foundation quotes President Bush in a January 8, 2002, speech at the University of New Hampshire, "If a school can't change, if a school can't show the parents and community leaders that they can teach the basics, something else has to take place. In order for there to be accountability, there has to be consequences. And the consequences in this bill is that after a period time, if a parent is tired of their child being trapped into a failed school, that parent will have different options, public school choice, charter, and private tutoring". The new law reflected a commitment to ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, receive a quality education. To reach this goal, NCLB refocused federal education programs towards stronger results, more choices for parents and students, and greater flexibility for states and school districts.

IV. Interview with Our Mentor

A mentor throughout this project passed on her personal beliefs and explained the pros and cons to this newly enforced law. Our mentor has been working in Long Beach as a Social Worker for at least two years and has spent most of her time working in low income areas around California. During a presentation that we attended she mentions few important components that play a huge role within this law. First of all, the No Child Left
Behind Act allows for increased accountability as well as flexibility for states and communities, more choices for parents and students, and strengthens teacher quality, and helps all children learn to read. Increased accountability requires each state to set standards for grade-level achievement, and annual testing of students. Assessment results will be broken down into several subgroups by race, gender, and disabilities, and etc. These results from the schools and school districts must be made available to parents and to the public at all times. Now if these schools and school districts repeatedly fail to make adequate progress toward the state proficiency goals, they will be subject for corrective action and can be restructured by the states. Some schools that are four or five years involved with Program Improvement, are required to engage in major changes in the school's operation. Parent choice services require state schools to work with their district offices to prepare a restructuring proposal for approval by the local government board. The most common approach to restructuring our school systems is to reorganize school staff assignments and creating a new curriculum. Another approach would be a reconfiguration of the school with the approval of the State Board of Education.

More flexibility for states and communities allows for flexibility given to school districts in how they use federal education funding. A social worker introduced to us by our mentor, states that, "school districts are able to transfer up to 50% of the funds they receive under state grant programs to any one of these programs or to their Title-I program. The covered programs include the Teacher Quality State Grants, Educational Technology, Innovative Programs, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools programs". This
initially gives school districts the ability to decide how much of these funds are being allocated into these specific programs.

Strengthening teacher quality is one of the main focuses within this act. This requires there to be a highly-qualified teacher in every classroom. A "highly qualified" teacher must have a bachelor's degree and be certified or licensed to teach within the state of his or her employment. Key parts of the President's efforts to ensure a quality teacher in every classroom includes providing state grants to recruit and train teachers, recruit highly educated and qualified individuals to become teachers. Another key point would be to expand programs that train teachers in specific subject's and implementing the Teacher Protection Act and by creating a New Teacher Tax Deduction.

This new act is enforcing annual testing, grades two to eleven are required to pass California standard tests as well as California Achievement Tests. One of the most important exams is known as the AYP (adequate yearly progress) which is designed to show the yearly progress of students as compared to the year before. This test shows improvement if any among the different grade levels. High school graduation requirements have changed, beginning of last school year, students need to pass Algebra I. Now the minimum requirements also includes three years of English, two years of Math, three years of social science; including one year of US History, one year of World History, one semester of American Government, and one semester of Economics, two years of Science, one year of either visual and performing arts or foreign language; and two years of physical education. Also now, high school students must pass the California High School Exit Exam called the CAHSEE. This exam must be passed in order for
students to receive their diploma. There are two parts, an English portion and a Math portion. Students are given this exam six times in order to ensure their success in passing. They are given the exam once in their sophomore year, twice their junior year if they haven't passed yet, and still if the exam is not passed, students are placed into a specific class designed to better prepare students to pass the exam. They are given two more chances their senior year and one more final chance to take the exam the summer leaving high school.

We have taken an in-depth look at what is entailed in the No Child Left Behind act and all the ways it is suppose to improve the quality of life for everyone, but does it really fix public education? Flow good are the choices? Are charter schools really better? Are there enough highly- qualified teachers? There are so many questions gone unanswered. Is throwing money at education the way we should go about fixing it. At www.rppi.org found that the 2003 Programme for International Student Assessment demonstrated that students in countries that spent more on education don't necessarily do better then the countries that spent less such as Australia or Belgium who spent less per students then the US. Or is rising the standards for teachers and an incentive for people to become teachers for the little pay they receive for the amount of training they must now endure to become "quality teachers". What teacher is going to go teach at Title 1 schools that are failing when Charter schools are getting the most funding for there high success? Or is adding more test and assessment exams the best way to test our children to witness there improvement. Not only do our children have to worry about there classes and taking Sat 9's but now in middle schools they have assessment and exist exams that add to the
stress of being an educated person. As we talked to many parents to find their concerns and status on these issues we soon realized that a lot of parents were concerned with these issues too.

One of the most interesting topics that were being brought up by a few social workers was Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, where people must satisfy basic needs before they can worry about meeting higher needs. In his pyramid you must first take care of hunger and thirst, and then take care of safety and love and belongingness before you can take care of esteem needs and achievement and education before you can reach self-actualization. You have to get past basic needs before you can get a decent education before you can reach self-fulfillment. They also discussed Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation is how a person can influence a student to do better for themselves or give a student an incentive to want to do good for themselves.

Culture is one key factor in creating the kind of youth in which U.S. Citizens would feel confident in passing on the responsibilities of a greater society. There for a culture is meant to better prepare our youth for these responsibilities. There are five characteristics within a culture: one a culture is symbolic, it is learned, shared, integrated, and finally it explains reality. The culture in which we are born into creates a modal personality in each individual person. These are traits or characteristics found combined within that specific culture. Our personalities and characteristics are a result of the culture in which we are born and raised into. Therefore, if the culture in which we are currently living in can express and enforce the importance of education among our youth, then they will be highly educated and will one day have children to pass on their strong beliefs of
getting a good education and so forth. This will create a society of highly educated humans that will live on throughout that specific society or culture.

V. Conclusion with Grade

Based on this semester's work, research, interviews, and meeting and talking to professionals in our own community, we as researchers and students in the subject of child welfare with an emphasis on education are now able to place a grade on our final product. Based on a criterion created by the entire class we are now ready to give our research topic a grade, "B". This grade was chosen from a rubric that states the a B grade meets some yet not all of the clients expressed satisfaction with the organization and their dealings, meets most yet not all of its stated and written goals, and finally better than average. Child welfare is meant to only do great things for children and allow them to have some choices and chances to reach their goals. Some children are unfortunate for many unfortunate reasons and these programs are created to reach out to those unfortunate students and help them receive the best possible education they can so that they can live better lives. The system is not perfect and there are some holes that need to be patched up. This is why the program received the grade in which we gave it because until those patches are closed it will never be perfect, yet the No Child Left Behind Act only wants to ensure the best for our youth and therefore it only has the children's best interest at heart. Had we had more access to speak to more involved individuals and had a larger research group, or possibly more time, then much more research can be found within this field and subject.
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