

July 30, 1990

Mr. Walter Rambo
Division of Complaints
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress
Austin, Texas, 78701

Dear Mr. Rambo:

As a parent of a student in the Beeville Independent School District and a taxpayer, I feel obligated to complain to you about the following matters which I believe are counter productive to a good education system. I respectfully request that you investigate these matters fully to verify my complaint.

- A. Recently, the BISD board of trustees approved a program for the gifted/talented students of the district which will cost approximately \$140,000 for the first year. The program will affect about 100 students, will provide an additional teacher and teacher aide for each grade level from K to 12 grade, a new portable building and a bunch of computers. Although about 75% of the district's students are Hispanic, only a small number of Hispanics are enrolled in the gifted/talented program. I do not believe that Hispanics are less gifted or less talented than any other ethnic group. I am convinced instead that school officials intentionally and discriminatorily screen out minorities. The school administration formed 2 committees to recommend program substance and policy in the gifted/talented program. The elementary school committee has 11 members, 8 are anglo, 3 are Hispanic and none are black. The high school committee is composed of 11 members also, 10 are anglo, 1 is Hispanic and none are black. It is no wonder only a few Hispanics are accepted in the program and no blacks. The district has a dual practice of parent involvement...Anglos serve on policy making committees and Hispanics and Blacks cut-cut paper dolls and are invited to annual meetings to meet the school officials. This causes low self esteem among students and parents as well as lack of respect for the education system.
- B. Four years ago, a drop-out prevention program was initiated by BISD. Less than 50% of the students who begin the 9th grade graduate 4 years later. In fact, approximately 70% of the Hispanics who begin the ninth grade, don't graduate four years later. Our school system has become a breeding place of law offenders, welfare recipients and unemployable tax eaters. The district's drop-out prevention program consists of a lot of paper rhetoric but actually provides only one counselor with no staff to combat the more than 50% drop-out problem. The board of trustees provided an additional teacher and aide for each grade level of the gifted/talented children, who will succeed despite obstacles but only provide one person for the drop-out program...where the problem really is. The net result is that the drop-out problem is out of control and has not been reduced a single per-cent. As always, we, the parents are blamed for it. The Hispanic community is convinced that the BISD trustees and the school officials are not serious about the drop-out problem. What they are doing is equal to using a band aid to cure cancer.

- C. According to information released by BISD recently, TEAMS and other achievement tests revealed that Hispanics are 2, 3 and even 4 grade levels behind their Anglo peers by the time they reach high school although they start even at first grade. It is no wonder so many Hispanics drop-out. My experience has been that many of the teachers, counselors and even principals display obvious contempt and dislike for Hispanics to the point of "pushing" them out of school as was one of my children. Many of the teachers may evaluate well under observation, especially by a biased principal, but may perform poorly. Others evaluate poorly, have extremely high (30 to 50%) failure rates in the class rooms but continue to teach with the district. Add to this the many social, economic and peer pressure problems that many of the students face each day. It is impossible for one drop-out counselor to remedy the damage caused by so many. By the way, less than 20% of the district's teachers are Hispanic, although 75% of the students are Hispanic. I know that Hispanic teachers not only make good role models but are also more likely to be sensitive and to understand Hispanic students. However, when Hispanic teachers apply with BISD, they are usually not qualified or vacancies seldom exist. It is commonly known in South Texas that few Hispanic teachers and coaches are hired by BISD. Publicly, we are told that qualified Hispanics simply don't apply...they prefer to work in Dallas and Houston.
- D. Tracking or ability grouping is still practiced in junior and high school. There is no question that tracking is contributing to the mess of problems the district has. The rate of drop-outs is proof enough of the damage tracking is causing. TEA should not allow BISD to continue discriminating against minorities.

I don't profess to know all the answers or even to be qualified to tell you how to do your job but I would like to make the following recommendations.

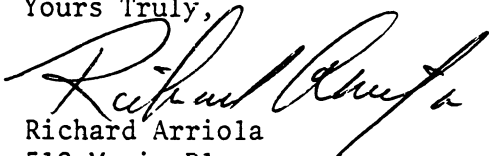
1. That TEA require BISD to adopt an anti-racial discrimination policy and that the state insure that it is practiced in employment, student and parent treatment and selection for program participation, policy making and program design.
2. That Hispanic parents be permitted (recruited if necessary) to participate actively and meaningfully in the education system including in advisory committees and that ethnic participation in said committees be proportionate to the ethnic composition of the school student population to insure equal and fair representation.
3. That TEA require BISD to seriously address the drop-out problem including earmarking necessary funds to adequately address the drop-out problem, implementing innovative programs, establishing and meeting quantitative goals and objectives, and to make a conscientious commitment to eliminate the district's perpetuating causes of drop-outs and push-outs.
4. That TEA require BISD to upgrade the teaching personnel, to recruit qualified Hispanic principals, teachers, counselors, coaches and consultants, to establish and practice an equal employment opportunity affirmative action policy to insure all ethnic groups are represented in the district and that teachers be evaluated on performance and results and not only on observation.
5. That TEA require BISD to terminate all tracking by end of the 1990-91 school year and that the "effective schools" program be fully implemented by the

beginning of the 1991-92 school year in all the BISD schools.

I regret having to complain about the above matters but the damage being done to the students cannot be overlooked. I know it is often said that minority parents don't care about their children...but that is not true. We care as much as any body else but we have so many obstacles and hurdles to overcome. I want the state of Texas and our great nation to be number one in employment, production, health care, education and excellence...not in drop-outs and push-outs. Our children need a good education to be productive and successful parents and leaders of tomorrow. I want our growing Hispanic population to contribute to our great nation and to have the opportunity to be all it can be.

Thank you for the consideration of the above matter. I hope to hear from you at your earliest convinience.

Yours Truly,



Richard Arriola
512 Marie Place
Beeville, Texas 78102
(512)358-8339

XC: Ruben Olivarez, PHD, Deputy Commissioner of TEA
Nilda Garcia, Director of Programs Accreditation Division
Gilbert Herrera, Deputy Director Office of Civil Rights
Robert Earley, State Representative
Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Dr. Hector Garcia, American GI Forum
Judith Zaffirini, State Senator