

The Way I See It

by Dean Chavis, President of Native American Scholarship Fund

NOT GETTING READY FOR COLLEGE

I have been writing this column so long that some things come naturally. One of these things is sitting down to write it on time each month. Another is trying to tie it into something that is happening in the real world that is important to some people.

But one of the things that does not come naturally is relating what I do in my real life to the column. In my real life I try to get Indian students into college, make sure they get through, and help them find the money to go to college.

It's as if the two things are segmented and not allowed to touch. But I did a research project this past year that is important to many Indian people.

I learned years ago the ALL Indian parents want their children to go to college. In asking this question dozens of times across the U. S. over the past 15 years, I have only had one parent say she did not want her children to go to college.

But the reality is that only 17% of our Indian students are going to college. I found this result in a research project I completed this year. That is the same percentage that Alexander Astin found 20 years ago in his book "Minority Enrollment in Higher Education." We have made no progress at all in closing the gap between Indian and non-Indian students.

But the rest of the U.S. has made huge progress during this same period. In 1980, the U.S. was sending 40% of its school graduates on to college each year. In 1998, the U.S. was sending 67% of its graduates on to college. College enrollment in the U.S. grew 67% while Indian enrollment did not move at all.

The research report, which we published as "Indian Students and College Preparation," found that so-called college preparation is a disaster area for Indian students.

For instance, fewer than 10% of Indian students were taking four years of math in high school. This is one of the basic requirements for college admissions. Students need Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, and Trigonometry to get into all the best colleges.

To get into the top engineering and science colleges, they also need Calculus. But only 4.9% of the 5,002 Indian students in the study were taking Calculus. Most of them came from one school; if that high school were removed from the totals, the percentage would be under one percent.

There were two completely shocking findings in the research. One was that of the Indian high schools that provided the data, 55% did not have a science lab! When I have told this to people in the past several months, they don't believe it. "How can you teach science without a lab?" they will ask me in wide-eyed wonder.

I can't give them an answer, because I don't know. But they don't have math labs, biology labs, physics labs, and chemistry labs. When we announced a program last fall called the Math and Science Teaching (MAST) grants, we were flooded with applicants. Many of them told us they had never had a lab of any sort.

The other completely shocking finding was that Indian students do not belong to anything. They don't belong to FFA, to the Science Club, to the Honor Society, to the basketball team, to the cheerleaders, to anything at all. They are highly isolated within the mostly Anglo student bodies at their high schools.

They are simply not connected to the life of the school. Unbelievably, they don't even belong to the Native American Club! Only 6.8% of them belonged to the Native American Club. Admittedly, only 21% of the high schools surveyed even had a Native American Club.

The other clubs were seriously under represented. Only 30 students, for instance, or six tenths of one percent, belonged to the Cross Country team.

And only one percent belonged to the basketball team. Boys State and Girls State are disaster areas, with only one tenth of one percent of Indian students belonging to either one. There were only eight boys and six girls who were members of these two organizations.

Only 10 students one tenth of one percent belong to the Student Council. Only 20 students four tenths of one percent belong to the Rodeo Club. No rodeo? Unbelievable.

Obviously something is seriously wrong with the situation. Is it racism that is keeping Indian students out? Or is it Indian students disliking the schools so much they won't join anything?

Regardless of the reason, they need to be involved in the life of the school. That they are not is careless or deliberate social isolation.

The most distressing thing to me personally is the 50% of Indian students drop out of high school before they are graduated. I have known this from a variety of individual studies in the past, but this was the first time I had an opportunity to collect original data to see what the rate actually is.

Three out of ten Indian students were taking no math classes at all. Three out of ten were not enrolled in any science classes.

A quarter of the high schools had daily attendance rates below 80%. The lowest was under 50% daily attendance, which one school reported. One eighth of the schools (12.6%) had daily attendance rates of 75% percent or lower.

To be providing students a good education, they need to be in school 95% of the time. Thus 57% means a lot of students aren't in school often enough to learn enough to keep up. They get so far behind that they drop out from frustration.

Someone, Mister Principal, needs to be enforcing the law that requires students to attend school every day.

And they need to have some relevance in their curriculum to keep them interested. Parents need to do their part as well to make sure their children are in school every day. Seventy percent daily attendance means students are missing two days one week, and one the following week, on the average, year round, for their whole time in high school. That is unacceptable.

From my perspective, there is extreme frustration because of the fact that almost none of the Indian students are applying for scholarships. The whole group of some 900+ seniors for the three years studied (1997, 1998, 1999) won 150 total scholarships. Many of them, we're pretty sure, were tribal scholarships. But in the big world of the non-Indian scholarships, Indians still have not made a dent.

The beautiful thing is that since most of the non-Indian scholarship organizations NEVER get an application from an Indian student, when they do get an application from a good sound Indian student they will often bend over backward to make an award to that student. (Diversity works wonders.) That has been true for my whole 30 years in the scholarship business.

There were many other surprises. Only 8.5% of the schools were offering courses in tribal history and government. Only 23.4% of the schools were offering instruction in a Native language. Only 7.5% of the students were actually taking a Native language class. Only a third of Native students were taking a computer class.

You can probably tell, dear reader, that I am frustrated at the lack of college preparation by our Indian high schools. I thought it was an oddity when I went to school. Out of the original 70 of us that started the first grade together in 1947, only 35 finished high school. Out of the 35, only eight ever set foot in a college classroom. Only five of the eight of us finished college.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. But we have to do a better job of preparing young Indian students for life. Our future depends on it.

Pediatric Pointers

by Dr. Joey Bell, Pembroke Pediatrics

Jaundice of the Newborn is a treatable condition seen in many new babies. Before discussing jaundice found in newborns, we should first answer what is jaundice? In humans, jaundice is a term that is used to describe an abnormal yellowing of the skin and the white area of the eyes called the sclera. This color change is caused by increased amounts of a naturally occurring yellow pigment called bilirubin. This pigment is always produced during the normal breakdown of red blood cells and our livers then usually release this into our intestines so that it can be excreted with our urine and bowel movements. However, if the normal rate of this discharge is slowed, the yellow pigment backs up and elevated levels in our bodies are then physically exhibited as jaundice.

Jaundice of the Newborn can be harmless or severe, depending on its cause. The amount of yellowness in a baby is best judged by viewing a newborn unclothed in natural light from a window. Causes of Jaundice in the Newborn include physiological jaundice, breast-feeding jaundice, breast-milk jaundice, or a severe condition that is called "blood group incompatibility".

Physiological or "normal" jaundice can occur in many new babies who are fed by bottle. In newborns a slower processing of bilirubin into their intestines from their immature livers causes this jaundice. A yellow tint to a baby's skin and sclera will then appear 2-3 days after it is born. High levels of bilirubin in this type of jaundice are considered harmless and usually disappear in 1-2 weeks. Treatment for this condition involves bottle-feeding a baby more often. Increasing feeding times to every 2-3 hours to increase the natural excretion of a baby's waste products helps clear this up. Any excessive bilirubin is thus removed naturally. Also helpful is to undress an affected baby (except, of course, for its diaper) and place it near a window during daylight hours. The baby's skin can then absorb some direct sunlight through the window. This is known as "phototherapy". It results in chemically altering the bilirubin so that it may be more easily excreted in an infant's urine and stools.

Breast-feeding jaundice occurs when a baby does not drink enough breast milk. The "yellowing" symptoms are similar to those seen in physiological jaundice, but are probably much more pronounced. The usual remedy for this is to nurse the baby more often, every 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours is probably sufficient. Supplementing breast-feeding with formula is also helpful.

A substance found in some mothers' breast milk causes breast-milk jaundice. The substance is a protein enzyme that inhibits the absorption of bilirubin in a baby's intestines. This type of jaundice begins on days 4-7 after an infant's birth and may last up to 3-10 weeks. In this instance, increasing breast feeding may not always bring down a baby's level of yellowing. Alternating breast-feeding with formula feeding every 2-3 days helps in removing bilirubin. This type of jaundice is not harmful and once the yellowing clears, the mother can return to full breast-feeding without having to worry about the jaundice coming back.

Blood group incompatibility, sometimes called "Rh or ABO" problems, can cause severe jaundice in newborns. This happens if a mother and her newborn have different blood types from each other. The mom will then produce antibodies that will destroy a new baby's red blood cells. This type of jaundice is easy to identify because, unlike other jaundices, it is seen within the first 24 hours of a baby's life. This is a very preventable complication. Today women who are predisposed to blood group incompatibility problems are identified during their first pregnancy and are given RhoGAM injections that can help prevent this from happening in later pregnancies. The injections prevent the mother from forming antibodies that would otherwise hurt future babies.

Severe jaundice is treated using advanced techniques of treatment. These include lowering bilirubin levels with artificial phototherapy (usually a blue light that breaks down the bilirubin in the skin). Rarely, when bilirubin reaches dangerous levels, blood transfusions are needed. The baby's blood is exchanged with fresh blood to lower the levels of bilirubin.

Depending on the following signs and symptoms, parents should either take their child in for immediate evaluation and treatment of jaundice regardless of the time or day or wait until regular office hours to have their infant looked at.

If any of the following instances should occur, parents should take their baby to see their provider during regular office hours. The baby looks a deep yellow or orange color. The baby is not getting enough milk or gaining weight well. The baby has less than three good-sized bowel movements per day. The baby has less than six wet diapers per day. Any previously identified physiological jaundice is not gone from the baby by day 14.

From the Desk of the Superintendent

by Dr. Barry Harding, Public Schools of Robeson County

Attending the dedications of several schools where renovations and additions have provided vastly improved facilities for the students there was a great feeling. It was not difficult to sense the pride which staff members at the schools exhibited to those attending the ceremonies. For some it was the first time that they had been a part of a new building in which to work and they truly appreciated it. Even young students at the schools seemed to realize that they were a part of something special.

As I explained at each school how much money had been allotted to the work which had been done there. I outlined what that money was able to provide for the school in the way of new or improved facilities. At the same time, I had to temper my remarks by telling those assembled that, because of limitations placed on the projects by the amount of money available, they may not have gotten everything they might have liked to have. I pointed out that the bond referendum that was passed by voters a few years back provided us with \$64,000,000 for capital improvements within our system. It was, as I have had occasion to point out often, a large amount of money. Unfortunately, when you have needs amounting to about \$240,000,000, the bond money didn't quite cover all the bases. It left us, then, in the position of having to make decisions as to where and how the 64 million could be spent.

As you can well imagine, everyone had an idea as to how best to spend it. When we finally were able to prioritize our most pressing needs, we were able to decide on how best to get the most out of the available funds we could. Needless to say, everyone could not get all they wanted for their school. Still, everyone got or is getting something that they need and, hopefully, if more money becomes available, we will be able to do more for all of our schools. Obviously, when you are dealing with a system as large as ours, it takes a large influx of funds to make a dent in needs if you have to spread the money over very many schools. Still and all, we make every effort to see to it that everyone gets their fair share.

When you attend dedications such as the ones I have been privileged to attend during the past few weeks and are able to see, first hand, the gratitude that is evident from the staffs at the schools and the apparent appreciation that members of parent organizations in attendance demonstrate, you have to feel good about what we have been able to do for those schools. As I have told those attending the dedications, beyond having good teachers for our children, it takes clean and efficient facilities to make it easier for those youngsters to learn. We will continue to work towards both of those objectives.

Reflections

by Alta Nye Oxendine

TURNING POINT

If my 7th 9-1-1 birth date does actually become a TURNING POINT, for the better, for our society, that is something I'll be able to live with GLADLY for the rest of my life, including all the rest of my 9-1-1 birthdays!!!

SOME QUOTES about 9-11-2001

Here are some quotes from pastor Robert Ray's sermon at first UMC, Pembroke, the first Sunday following the huge terrorist attack on America:

"When we are brought the lowest, God helping us, we can stand the tallest!"

"There is NO safe place in ALL creation, except in the relationship with the ONE TRUE God."

LOCKLEAR FAMILY

Let's remember Sue Locklear Oxendine (Mrs. Greg Oxendine) and her family in prayer. She has recently lost her mother, her husband's sister, Jeanette Marie Dial, and her father.

Also all other families who are going through something similar!

BYRON AT FIVE

With a birthday coming up this is one of the last times I can write about "Byron at Five". It's not that I haven't wanted to share the many positive things he's been doing during this past year. Too many other situations keep coming along, crowding out the notes I'd like to take and share about my only grandchild. I'm aware that he is only one of millions of precious children all around this world, but I can't help having a special place for him in my heart.

If there had not been so many other things on my mind, it would have been interesting to check with his other grandma, Grandma Elsie, on some of the special experiences she has enjoyed with him, at age five, during his visits to her house in Lumberton. One of the many things I'd like to do in this column, that never come into being. (In a number of cases every year, I ask permission to write something interesting about a person or family, then never manage to follow through. Looks like I'll have to stop making any promises!

During the past year Byron has really done a lot of growing up. He keeps learning more about sounds, letters, and now even three-letter words.

Also he keeps practicing throwing all kinds of balls, mastering bike riding, even learning how to drive the riding lawn mower (ONLY when his Daddy is close by).

And helping his parents and his "Nana", in a variety of different ways, in a regular basis.

We're all proud of Byron's growth and development. But, sometimes it seems a little sad that we don't really have a "little" boy around any more, although (like all children, a lot teenagers, and even some of us so-called "mature adults" once in awhile he reverts to not-so-pleasant childish behavior, especially when he is tired. Other times he can be so interesting!

One day while I was baby sitting, after picking him up from school, he got SO excited about making the sounds for his homework letters, that he ran to his room to get his learning "toy" that helps teach the correct sounds. Then he surprised me by excitedly climbing up on my lap, pressing the keys to experiment with varied sets of three-letters, and letting out a happy shriek whenever he stumbled on the right combination to make a word!

It felt awfully good to me to realize he still enjoyed sitting on my lap. On the other hand, it felt really good that he was having such a great time with this early stage of learning to read. (Reminded me of how thrilled I was as a first grader, learning so many exciting new things in school every day.)

Another thing he does these days to show how grown-up he is getting, is to proudly show you the hole where on baby tooth is now missing! Quite a milestone for each of us, isn't it!

(I can still remember when my teeth started getting loose. I was more fear-

ful then courageous, so it was a terrific RELIEF when I discovered my FIRST loose tooth in the food I was eating. It had come out automatically, painlessly, while I was chewing!

One positive thing about having so many family members (on Nana's side) so far away is what a great excuse this gives to look at a map. Another reason Byron is interested in maps: the trips he took this year to Hilton Head Island and Lake Junaluska with his parents, and flying with his parents two years ago to upstate New York when his mom attended a meeting there.

That's one of the states I've never been through, or even OVER. Leon and I had talked of taking a trip to New England to see the fall colors. Although I've had friends from that area, it looks like I'll never make it up that way. To tell the truth, even though I'm feeling a lot more secure than a lot of others (since the "attack on America") I find that my desire to travel has practically dissolved. (Even going to Montana, which I had hoped to do this past summer, seems a lot less important now.)

When I attended Byron's daycare school "graduation" ceremony last spring I wished I had a camera to capture what he and all the other "graduates" were doing. It was an exciting time for all of us. But, before I got any notes down, other things came up to claim my time.

Now, thanks to his family, I do have a camera again. Before long maybe I can take, and then share, a picture of our soon-to-be six Byron.



Here is a picture of Byron Jeffery Hunt, in his cap and gown, when he graduated from Grandma's Tender Loving Daycare School last spring.



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Discussion with Malinda Maynor

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