

Save Ethnic Studies



**Analysis and Evaluation of Mexican American Studies
Student AIMS & Graduation Outcome Data that was produced by
TUSD Director of Accountability & Research – David Scott and misrepresented by
Alexis Huicochea in her March 13, 2011
Arizona Daily Star Report
“Ethnic Studies Claim In Question”**

On March 11, 2011, regarding the AIMS performance and graduation rates of students enrolled TUSD Mexican American Studies (MAS) courses, TUSD Director of Accountability and Research, David Scott, communicated to TUSD Superintendent John Pedicone that:

“Using the measures previously reported by the MAS staff as evidence for academic and graduation success of the students participating in their courses, I find that there are positive measurable differences between MAS students and the corresponding comparative group of students. Juniors taking a MAS course are more likely than their peers to pass the reading and writing AIMS subject tests if they had previously failed those tests in their sophomore year. And, seniors taking a MAS course are more likely to persist to graduation than their peers.”

These statements are strikingly different than what was reported by Alexis Huicochea in the very misleading Arizona Daily Star’s “*Ethnic Studies Claim In Question*” story reported on Sunday, March 13, 2011 and now on-line from the Star.

In order to create greater understanding regarding graduation rates and AIMS performance of students enrolled in MAS classes, and to correct the misleading story reported by Alexis Huicochea, the following analysis is provided by Save Ethnic Studies.

Graduation Comparison

The graduation rates for senior Mexican American Studies (MAS) students compared to their senior peers not taking Mexican American Studies classes (Comparison Group) in TUSD high schools for six academic years (2005 to 2010) as reported by David Scott

demonstrates that MAS students graduate from High School at significantly higher rates than their peers (Comparison Group).

Methodology

The research methodology used by David Scott in many respects mirrors the research methodology that has been utilized by TUSD's MASD to measure the impact that the MASD classes have on graduation rates. Specifically, the analysis examines MAS students and non-MAS students (Comparison Group) who during their senior year successfully met all of the district and state mandates requirements for graduation. This comparative analysis is conducted to provide insight into how MAS classes impact graduation rates of students.

The Mexican American Studies Group is defined as Seniors taking at least one full credit of Latino Literature, American History/Mexican American Perspectives, or American Government/Social Justice Education Project. The Comparison Group is defined as Seniors taking zero or less than one credit of Latino Literature, American History/Mexican American Perspectives, or American Government/Social Justice Education Project.

It is important to note that previous MASD data analysis only included a site by site analysis, that is, an analysis that compared MAS students' graduation rates at a specific high school site with that of students at the same site that did not take MAS classes. An example of this site by site analysis is the measuring of senior year graduation rates of students at Cholla High Magnet School for both students taking MAS classes and students not taking MAS classes. For each of the 2005 to 2010 consecutive academic years, this analysis by MASD was conducted for the sites where MAS classes were taught to include: Cholla High Magnet School, Pueblo Magnet High School, Rincon High School, and Tucson High Magnet School.

The March 8, 2011 analysis conducted by David Scott on the Graduation Outcomes of MAS and non-MAS students includes **all** TUSD High School sites (excluding TUSD alternative high schools) to include: Sahuaro High School, Sabino High School, and University High School. The MASD Graduation Outcomes analysis for the 2005 to 2010 academic years never included these high school sites because no MAS classes are taught at these sites. It is also important to note that Sahuaro High School, Sabino High School, and University High Schools have a considerably higher Socio Economic Status (SES) than the high schools where MAS classes are taught (Cholla High Magnet School, Pueblo Magnet High School, Rincon High School, and Tucson High Magnet School). Students at schools that have higher "SES" traditionally graduate at higher rates than students at schools with a lower "SES."

It is also important to note that the MASD Graduation Outcomes analysis for the 2005 to 2010 academic years included a disaggregated analysis by ethnicity. This disaggregated analysis by ethnicity is important because it provides insight into the graduation rates of students of color, particularly Latina/o students, who have traditionally graduated at significantly lower levels than their White/Anglo peers. The March 8, 2011 Graduation Outcomes analysis conducted by David Scott did not include any disaggregated by ethnicity analysis.

Specifically, the graduation rate of students enrolled in MAS courses their senior year compared to the students not taking an MAS course (Comparison Group) for the past six academic years are as follows:

Table 1. Graduation Outcomes for MAS Students and Comparison Group (as reported by David Scott - TUSD Director of Accountability and Research–03/08/11)

Years Courses Taken	Group	Number of Seniors	Number of Graduates	% of Seniors Who Graduated	% Difference in Graduation
2010	Comparison Group	3744	3095	82.7%	
2010	Mexican Am. Studies	173	162	93.6%	+ 10.9%
2009	Comparison Group	3682	3130	85.0%	
2009	Mexican Am. Studies	105	96	91.4%	+ 6.4%
2008	Comparison Group	3795	3226	85.0%	
2008	Mexican Am. Studies	74	68	91.9%	+ 6.9%
2007	Comparison Group	3908	3362	86.0%	
2007	Mexican Am. Studies	77	74	96.1%	+ 11.1%
2006	Comparison Group	4003	3480	86.9%	
2006	Mexican Am. Studies	45	42	93.3%	+ 6.4%
2005	Comparison Group	3843	3303	85.9%	
2005	Mexican Am. Studies	34	31	91.2%	+ 5.3%

Results

After enrolling in their senior year, students who took at least one MAS course compared to students who did not take an MAS course (Comparison Group), the Graduation Outcomes reveal the following for six consecutive years:

- 1) In the 2005 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes graduated at a **91.2%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **85.9%** rate, illustrating a **+5.3%** greater graduation rate for MAS students.

- 2) In the 2006 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes graduated at a **93.3%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **86.9%** rate, illustrating a **+6.4%** greater graduation rate for MAS students.
- 3) In the 2007 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes graduated at a **96.1%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **86.0%** rate, illustrating a **+10.0%** greater graduation rate for MAS students.
- 4) In the 2008 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes graduated at a **91.9%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **85.0%** rate, illustrating a **+6.9%** greater graduation rate for MAS students.
- 5) In the 2009 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes graduated at a **91.4%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **85.0%** rate, illustrating a **+6.4%** greater graduation rate for MAS students.
- 6) In the 2010 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes graduated at a **93.6%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **82.7%** rate, illustrating a **+10.9%** greater graduation rate for MAS students.
- 7) For six consecutive years, senior students who have taken MAS courses have higher graduation rates than their senior peers who did not take MAS courses. For these six consecutive years, 2005 to 2010, a cumulative graduation rate for MAS students was **+7.7%** higher than their non-MAS peers.

Evaluation

In his March 11, 2011 report to Dr. John Pedicone, David Scott confirmed the abovementioned trend of greater MAS graduation rates by succinctly stating: ***“Based on this method of comparison, I find that over the last six years, students who complete a Mexican American Studies class during their senior year are more likely to graduate than comparison group seniors. The difference in completion rates range from between 5% to 11% higher for the Mexican American Studies students.”*** These statements by David Scott are a markedly different than what was reported by Alexis Huicochea in the misleading Arizona Daily Star’s *“Ethnic Studies Claim In Question”* story of Sunday, March 13, 2011. Specifically, with regards to graduation rates of MAS students Huicochea misleadingly reported, ***“The district’s graduation rate of nearly 83***

percent holds true for students who took a Mexican American Studies course and for those who did not, Scott found.” (Arizona Daily Star 03/13/11 – Tucson & Region, B1).

AIMS Passing Rates Comparison

David Scott reported to TUSD Superintendent John Pedicone the following regarding the AIMS Comparison and Outcomes of students taking/not taking MAS courses: ***“Based on the specifications of the MAS staff, my AIMS analysis is limited to juniors in each comparison year. The comparison measures are the number of students failing the AIMS on their first attempt in the spring of their sophomore year and the percentage of students who achieved a passing score on the AIMS by the spring of their junior year (which includes two additional attempts).”***

Methodology

The research methodology used by David Scott is similar in many respects to the research methodology that has been utilized by TUSD’s Mexican American Studies Department (MASD) to measure the impact that the MASD classes have on AIMS passing rates. Specifically, the analysis examines the MAS students and non-MAS students (Comparison Group) who came into their 11th grade year not having passed the AIMS test (See Number of Sophomore Non-Passers in Table 2.). The AIMS outcomes of MAS students are measured after taking one full junior year of an MAS course. These AIMS outcomes are compared to students who did not take an MAS course during their junior year. This comparative analysis is conducted to provide insight into how MAS classes impact AIMS outcomes of students.

The Mexican American Studies Group is defined as Juniors taking at least one full credit of Latino Literature, American History/Mexican American Perspectives, or American Government/Social Justice Education Project. The Comparison Group is defined as Juniors taking zero or less than one credit of Latino Literature, American History/Mexican American Perspectives, or American Government/Social Justice Education Project.

It is important to note that previous MASD data analysis only included a site by site analysis, that is, an analysis that compared MAS students’ AIMS outcomes at a specific high school site with that of students at the same site that did not take MAS classes. An example of this site by site analysis is the measuring of junior year AIMS outcomes of students at Cholla High Magnet School (who had not previously passed the AIMS test during their 10th grade year) for both students taking MAS classes and students not taking MAS classes. For each of the 2005 to 2010 consecutive academic years, this analysis by MASD was conducted for the sites where MAS classes were taught to include: Cholla

High Magnet School, Pueblo Magnet High School, Rincon High School, and Tucson High Magnet School.

The March 11, 2011 analysis conducted by David Scott on the AIMS Comparison of MAS and non-MAS students includes all TUSD High School sites (excluding TUSD alternative high schools) to include: Sahuaro High School, Sabino High School, and University High School. The MASD AIMS outcomes analysis for the 2005 to 2010 academic years never included these high school sites because no MAS classes are taught at these sites. It is also important to note that Sahuaro High School, Sabino High School, and University High Schools have a considerably higher Socio Economic Status (SES) than the high schools where MAS classes are taught (Cholla High Magnet School, Pueblo Magnet High School, Rincon High School, and Tucson High Magnet School). Students at schools that have higher “SES” traditionally score higher on the high-stakes AIMS test than schools with a lower “SES.”

It is also important to note that MASD AIMS outcomes analysis for the 2005 to 2010 academic years included a disaggregated analysis by ethnicity. This disaggregated analysis by ethnicity is important because it provides insight into the academic performance of students of color, particularly Latina/o students, who have traditionally performed at significantly lower levels than their White/Anglo peers. The March 11, 2011 AIMS outcomes analysis conducted by David Scott did not include any disaggregated by ethnicity analysis.

Results

After one year of treatment, meaning taking one full year of at least one MAS course, compared to students who did not take an MAS course, the AIMS data outcomes reveal the following for six consecutive years:

- 1) In the 2010 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Reading at a **44%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **34%** rate, illustrating a **+10%** greater passing rate for MAS students.
- 2) In the 2009 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Reading at a **45%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **29%** rate, illustrating a **+16%** greater passing rate for MAS students.
- 3) In the 2008 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Reading at a **35%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **30%** rate, illustrating a **+5%** greater passing rate for MAS students.

- 4) In the 2007 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Reading at a **49%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **33%** rate, illustrating a **+16%** greater passing rate for MAS students.
- 5) In the 2006 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Reading at a **48%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **33%** rate, illustrating a **+15%** greater passing rate for MAS students.
- 6) In the 2005 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Reading at a **55%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **45%** rate, illustrating a **+10%** greater passing rate for MAS students.
- 7) For six consecutive years, students who have taken MAS courses have higher AIMS Reading passing rates than their peers who did not take MAS courses. For these six consecutive years, 2005 to 2010, a cumulative AIMS Reading passing rate for MAS students was **+12%** higher than their non-MAS peers.
- 8) In the 2010 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Writing at a **42%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **32%** rate, illustrating a **+10%** greater passing rate for MAS students.
- 9) In the 2009 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Writing at a **45%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **39%** rate, illustrating a **+6%** greater passing rate for MAS students.
- 10) In the 2008 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Writing at a **43%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **32%** rate, illustrating a **+11%** greater passing rate for MAS students.
- 11) In the 2007 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Writing at a **59%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **48%** rate, illustrating a **+11%** greater passing rate for MAS students.
- 12) In the 2006 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Writing at a **45%** rate compared to non-Mexican

American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **32%** rate, illustrating a **+13%** greater passing rate for MAS students.

13) In the 2005 academic year, students who took Mexican American Studies (MAS) classes passed the AIMS Writing at a **59%** rate compared to non-Mexican American Studies students (Comparison Group) at a **43%** rate, illustrating a **+16%** greater passing rate for MAS students.

14) For six consecutive years, students who have taken MAS courses have higher AIMS Writing passing rates than their peers who did not take MAS courses. For these six consecutive years, 2005 to 2010, a cumulative AIMS Writing passing rate for MAS students was **+11.2%** higher than their non-MAS peers.

Table 2. AIMS Passing Rates in the Junior Year for Sophomore Year Non-Passers – Comparison of Students Taking/Not Taking a MAS Course During Their Junior Year (as reported by David Scott - TUSD Director of Accountability and Research–03/11/11)

Comparison Year	Group	Total Students in Group	Reading		Writing		Math	
			Number of Sophomore Non-Passers	Percent of Sophomore Non-Passers Passing Junior Year	Number of Sophomore Non-Passers	Percent of Sophomore Non-Passers Passing Junior Year	Number of Sophomore Non-Passers	Percent of Sophomore Non-Passers Passing Junior Year
2010	Mexican Am. Studies	297	100	44%	98	42%	114	18%
2010	Comparison Group	4035	807	34%	791	32%	945	19%
2009	Mexican Am. Studies	255	100	45%	94	45%	110	39%
2009	Comparison Group	4233	821	29%	1000	39%	1018	26%
2008	Mexican Am. Studies	199	71	35%	70	43%	86	44%
2008	Comparison Group	4179	893	30%	819	32%	1139	31%
2007	Mexican Am. Studies	178	69	49%	80	59%	76	28%
2007	Comparison Group	4097	994	33%	1232	48%	1146	28%
2006	Mexican Am. Studies	127	48	48%	42	45%	59	32%
2006	Comparison Group	4400	985	33%	919	32%	1214	31%
2005	Mexican Am. Studies	130	89	55%	63	59%	103	54%
2005	Comparison Group	4395	1415	45%	1169	43%	2073	54%

Evaluation

In his March 11, 2011 report to Dr. John Pedicone, David Scott confirmed the above mentioned trend of greater MAS student AIMS Reading and Writing passing rates by succinctly stating: ***“In each of the last six years, students who failed the reading and writing AIMS tests in their sophomore year and then took a Mexican American Studies course during their junior year were more likely than the comparison group to pass those two AIMS subjects by the end of their junior year.”*** Furthermore, within this same report, David Scott attributed the higher AIMS outcomes trends to the academic rigor

employed in MAS courses through the following: ***“Given that the MAS Literature and Social Studies courses emphasize language skills this observed differential improvement in reading/writing and math achievement would be expected.”***

These statements made by David Scott are markedly different than what was reported by Alexis Huicochea in the Arizona Daily Star’s *“Ethnic Studies Claim In Question”* news story reported on Sunday, March 13, 2011. Specifically, Huicochea misleadingly reported, ***“But an analysis by the district’s statistician shows outcomes are roughly the same whether students enroll in these classes or not”*** (Arizona Daily Star 03.13.11 – Tucson & Region, B1). Moreover, a very misleading statement from Huicochea was her assertion that ***“He also analyzed the program’s impact on the passing rate and found that students who take Mexican American Studies classes are unlikely to pass the high-stakes test for the first time.”*** This statement is very misleading for the following reasons: 1) The first time the high-stakes AIMS test is offered is during students’ 10th grade year; and 2) Mexican American Studies courses are not offered at the 10th grade level and as a result, an academic impact of Mexican American Studies classes on 10th graders is impossible to determine.

Conclusion

An obvious disparity exists between Alexis Huicochea’s misleading Arizona Daily Star’s *“Ethnic Studies Claim In Question”* story of Sunday, March 13, 2011. Her story on what David Scott reported on March 11, 2011 with regards to AIMS performance of MAS students and which he also reported on March 8, 2011 with regards to Graduation Comparison of MAS students was inaccurate and misrepresented the findings reported. Clearly, Scott’s reports to TUSD Superintendent John Pedicone demonstrate that MAS students are more likely to pass the AIMS than their non-MAS peers and that Seniors in MAS classes are more likely to graduate than their Senior non-MAS peers.

In a time where public schools are required by state and federal mandates to work on closing the achievement gap for Latina/o students that has persisted for decades, we have an established program in TUSD’s Mexican American Studies that has been highly effective in being responsive to the academic and social needs of one of our traditionally lowest achieving student groups, Latinas/os.

Our community needs accurate unbiased reporting. When news reporters sensationalize an issue that feeds into the pervasive and unprecedented anti-Latina/o, anti-Mexicana/o, and anti-immigrant sentiment that exists in Tucson and throughout the State of Arizona, a fundamental disservice is done to all.