

Chapter 5

RAUL RAMIREZ

Bridging Cultural Gaps

KINDERGARTEN

Clover Valley Elementary School

Raul Ramirez was born 5 years ago into a working-class home in Mexico City. Earlier this year, his parents, Carmen and Jorge, had the opportunity to be sponsored by Jorge's brother, who immigrated to Midland 2 years ago, with the hope of making enough money in just a few years to buy a farm in Mexico. They know that their U.S. wages will quickly allow them to become landowners in Mexico.

Raul was a healthy baby who had the advantage of being the first son of a young couple with two older and doting sisters, Angelina, then 5, and Diana, then 2. While Mr. and Mrs. Ramirez loved their daughters, Mrs. Ramirez often repeated to family and friends that "God has blessed us with a son to carry on the family name." Raul does not seem spoiled by his family's coddling. He does, however, expect that he will have privileges his sisters may not have because it is his birthright. Every subtle message he gets from his family and community is that he is special and will go far. The sisters, in turn, do not expect as much, because, after all, they are "just girls." Raul appears to be a very happy child, surrounded by a loving extended family. He assumes that his life in the United States will be much the same as it was in Mexico.

Upon arrival in Midland, Mrs. Ramirez quickly found a job as a salad maker at a local chain restaurant on the 3-to-11 shift. She is a hard worker and very proud of her ability to contribute to the financial security of her family. Mr. Ramirez discovered a group of Mexican men who work for a salsa manufacturer in the nearby city. Getting a job was easy, but the pay is in cash and unreported. The men do not seem to mind that they are making less than the required minimum wage in the United States. They are relieved each day to receive cash in hand for their work. Each day they are picked up by a van at 11 p.m. and delivered home at 7 a.m. Mr. Ramirez has also acquired some odd jobs on local farms in the afternoons. The family tells one another that they are "blessed" to be able to save most of their earnings.

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The family was able to move into a rented house to live with Jorge's brother, Michael Carlos, his wife, Maria, and their new baby. Thomas, an unrelated single man, also rents a spare bedroom in the house. Together they are able to afford an older home in a residential neighborhood. Raul and his parents share a bedroom, and the girls sleep on a couch in the living room. The house is in a lower-income section of Midland inhabited by many recent immigrants from Mexico. They have met with some subtle prejudice as the neighborhood changed in this small town. Some locals call the three-block area "South of the Border" and refer to their neighbors as "beaners."

At first it was difficult for the family to find food to which they were accustomed. The large supermarket with Mexican products is across town, and the Ramirez family shares one vehicle with the other residents in the household. They can usually make only one trip to the store each month. A new corner market with Mexican imports has just opened in the neighborhood. Because many of the neighbors also speak Spanish, the Ramirezes have a comfortable but isolated feeling about living in the United States.

Mrs. Ramirez enrolled the children in the neighborhood school, Clover Valley Elementary. She had no trouble enrolling the children in school even without previous transcripts, but a month after school began, she was contacted by the principal. The school had no immunization records for the children, and the school nurse insisted on having the children immunized within 2 weeks or they would not be permitted to continue attending Clover Valley. Because of the language barrier and confusion over what was required, the children were suspended from school. The children missed 2 weeks of school before the family was assigned a Spanish-speaking social worker, who explained the school requirements, including the immunization requirements. She set the family up with access to a health clinic, food stamps, and legal services. The town has just begun to respond to the growing number of Mexicans in the community, and services are scarce.

Mrs. Ramirez comes regularly to school to meet with the teacher despite the language barrier. She is embarrassed that she cannot help her children more, but she trusts the school to do what is best for her children. She rarely questions any suggestions by the teachers and respects the authority of the institution.

Raul picks up skills quickly and gets along with the other students. He has no other Spanish-speaking students in his class, but through nonverbal signals he communicates on a basic level with other students. One of the school's parent volunteers speaks some Spanish and is able to work with Raul one morning a week. Raul looks forward to the parent volunteer coming and eagerly waits to have content explained in Spanish. Each week he is able to do a little more because of the support he is receiving in his first language.

Raul is viewed as a novelty among his peers, and students ask to sit with him and invite him to play on the playground. While he wants to speak English, he recognizes that his Spanish makes him special among his classmates, and he likes the attention. The only problem he has had with his peers is that the friendships do not extend beyond the school day. Because of his parents' work schedules, he does not participate in Little League or other weekend activities except for a mass in Spanish at the local Catholic church. Because he is Mexican and the parents of the other children do not know his family, Raul is never invited to their homes. Ms. Buell, his kindergarten teacher, has worked hard to integrate him into the classroom, but she noticed that one student invited all of the classmates to his birthday party except for Raul. Fortunately, Raul didn't fully comprehend the situation and knew only that the other children seemed to share something from which he was excluded.

Raul seems to like school and spends a lot of time looking at pictures in books. He likes to draw and frequently chooses to draw answers to questions instead of attempting to write words. His frustration with not speaking English is only apparent when he asks his teacher questions and she doesn't know what he is asking. He is beginning to notice that the other children do not look like his family and Mexican friends and that he does not see many pictures in his books of people who look like him or live in homes like his. He has learned during the fall to pretend that some of the new ways of his new country are all familiar to him. He is uncomfortable being different. He is beginning to be ashamed about things his family does differently and does not talk about those things with his classmates. At the beginning of the year, he sat quietly during meals and did not eat breakfast or lunch. While the food on the lunch trays at first was tasteless and unfamiliar to him, he now eats some of it and pretends that he eats this kind of food at all meals.

Thanksgiving was a surprise to him, and he still remains confused about the holiday. His family is very religious, and as Christmas approaches, he again feels the chasm between his family's celebration and that of his classmates. He is forbidden at home to talk about Santa Claus. Presents are brought by angels. He has overheard his parents criticize American ways that seem frivolous and, in their view, anti-Catholic. His class makes secular decorations depicting some aspects of Christmas that his family looks down upon in their new country, so he destroys his decorations before he gets home.

His parents are very strict about his learning and ask him every day to show them what he has learned in school. When he feels lost and frustrated, he makes up things to tell his parents so that they will be proud of his success. He worries that somehow, despite the language barrier, his parents will discover at a parent-teacher conference that he is lying. He is learning that he needs to keep school and home very separate to be successful at both. He has noticed that his older sisters are not as much fun as they used to be. They are absorbed in making their own ways in their new environment. As the Christmas holiday is only a week away, Raul looks forward to being at home. He likes school, but even as young as he is, he feels exhausted pretending to be "American" in school and "Mexican" at home.

EIGHTH GRADE

Midland Middle School

Raul is now truly bilingual. He speaks Spanish at home and almost fluent English in school. He is secretly disgusted that his parents still have not learned much English even though they have been in the United States for 7 years. At times, he ignores them when they speak Spanish. He feels more American than Mexican and rarely hangs with the other Mexican boys in his neighborhood, instead preferring to spend more time in after-school activities and sports that align him with his Anglo friends. Because of this, he is ostracized by the other Mexican boys for "acting White." Some of these boys have started running with gang members from the nearby city. His sisters hooked up with boys from out of town to avoid dating the local Anglo boys, and dating the city boys gave them more status in their own neighborhood. Raul's older sister, Angelina, has dropped out of school and is pregnant by a boy from the nearby city. She is proud of her baby's father, who is a leader in a Latino gang. Much to her parents' distress, she has moved in with his family and rarely communicates with her own.

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Mr. and Mrs. Ramirez feel that they are losing Raul and Diana as well. Diana struggles in school and is aloof and noncommunicative at home. She still helps with the housework but expresses resentment that Raul is not expected to help around the house. The Ramirezes have raised their children as they were raised and cannot understand why the children do not share their values. They have been strict parents, but it doesn't seem to keep their children from disobeying. They are most concerned about the children leaving the Catholic Church. The first time Raul refused to go to church, Mr. Ramirez used the belt and threatened damnation. This tactic did not work and resulted only in driving a bigger wedge between him and his son. Raul has refused to go back to church and will not tell them why. Secretly, he feels that he cannot live up to the expectations of his religion and cannot face thinking about the consequences. Raul spends most of his time alone in a separate room or goes off to be by himself at the library or wandering the streets.

Despite their concern over his attitude toward their culture and their religion, Raul's parents are still proud of his success in school. He has always gotten above-average grades, and they hope that he will graduate from high school. They have devoted much more time and energy to Raul's school success than to Diana's, and they are angry when they feel he is not living up to their expectations. They get frustrated when they find him doodling in a notebook instead of doing his homework. They constantly stress the importance of his getting his high school degree.

Raul began the year doing well in most of his classes. He tried very hard, and his teachers recognized his effort. His math and science grades were outstanding, but his English and social studies grades were just average. Raul tries to relate to the literature, language, and history of his adopted country, but he feels a disconnect. He has lost his own Mexican heritage as his parents assimilated to U.S. ways, and he cannot find a connection to the things he is learning in his texts. Despite his success in some classes, he finds that he is frequently sad. He has a strange feeling of not belonging, not being like anyone he knows. As his schoolmates and teammates joke about sex and girls, he feels embarrassed and isolated. He is very uncomfortable with his peers.

On occasion, he has thought about college when his peers talk about the assumption that they will continue their education, but he knows that his only ticket will be financial aid. He fears his grades probably will not be good enough for an academic scholarship. His family's dream of going back to Mexico has grown more distant. They speak of the future in terms of staying in the United States. He becomes depressed thinking that he will end up working two menial jobs like his father while other less talented students may be able to go to college because they can afford it. His teachers see inconsistency in his work and moodiness in his demeanor. Originally, they thought that he could benefit by having a Spanish major from the nearby college meet with him. They assumed that the need to speak his native language was the problem. He resented the effort and refused to cooperate with the tutor.

Raul desperately wants to fit in, but he is accepted socially only by his classmates at school. He is not included in parties. Girls from his school do not seem interested in him, nor he in them. This is compounded by the problem that his parents are constantly asking why he doesn't have a girlfriend. The message from home is that he should be "breaking hearts" with his good looks, and the message from school is that he is too different to be a serious boyfriend. Raul likes hanging out with the girls, but as friends, not as potential dates. This confuses him, and he tries not to think about it. Instead, he blames his heritage for the disconnect. Raul thinks that if he had been born Anglo, he too could have everything.

Not being able to be Anglo after years of trying in school has left Raul ashamed of his family, neighborhood, and himself. He thinks he will never be what he wants to be: popular, accepted, and admired. He is angry every day at his parents, his friends, his teachers, and his situation. He is angrier every day with himself. He is beginning to be seen by his teachers as a resistant learner. He only cooperates enough in class to get by and not to be singled out as a troublemaker. By the end of the year, he is making C's and D's in all his classes. At 14, he is at a crossroads.

TWELFTH GRADE

Midland High School

By 12th grade, Raul speaks fluent English. In fact, he has forgotten any complex Spanish and never dreams in anything but English. His parents are bilingual but are more comfortable speaking Spanish at home and with their friends and extended family. Raul can no longer join in any meaningful conversations with his parents or his Mexican community. He feels sad that something in his relationship with his parents is missing. When he visited his grandmother last year in Mexico City for the first time, it was as if he was a tourist. He did not understand the language or the customs, and he did not like the food. He thought he would starve until he found a McDonald's a few miles from his grandmother's house.

Raul is finishing his high school career. His family has just purchased their first home, and for the first time it is a single-family dwelling in a mixed middle-class neighborhood. Raul's oldest sister, Angelina, has moved back into the home with her two children, so the small home is still filled with people. Diana graduated from high school and is living at home and attending a local vocational program to get her nurse assistant license.

Raul is a senior with no clear plans for the future. His grades are just average, and he knows that his family cannot afford a 4-year college. He is not sure that he even wants to continue in school. School has often been a battleground for him. As a young immigrant, he had difficulty catching up with his classmates because of the language barrier. As he grew older, he worked very hard to please his parents and teachers but could never really relate to some of the subjects. English and social studies could not hold his interest. The textbooks and teachers did not talk about him or his heritage. When he did run across a story with Latinos, it depicted them as migrant farmworkers or people still in Mexico. He found more success in math and science. But he found his passion in art. Taking it as an elective in ninth grade, he found it to be an outlet for the anger that had been inside him for so long. He had found a niche. He could forget everything when he was drawing, and his work was admired by both the teachers and his fellow students. His art teacher was amazed and for 4 years encouraged him to enter contests. He never did. Art was his private salvation. When he drew, he could forget the disappointment that he could never be what he wanted, what his family wanted, and what society wanted.

He was not the macho young man his father had so desperately wanted him to be. He was not the successful young Anglo man he desperately wanted to be. At school his classmates were always friendly, but distant. At first he assumed this was only because he was Mexican. As he grew older, he realized that he was different in other ways. Raul had stuffed a secret inside him that ate at him until he could no longer deny it to himself. At first he did not even have words for it, but then he overheard others talking about "fags" and "homos" and the

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words came. Raul suddenly had another reason for shame. The anger that had separated him from his family, classmates, and community began to separate him from himself. He desperately wanted to talk to someone whose sexual orientation was the same as his. He could no longer deny to himself who he was, but he felt there was no one with whom he could reveal his true self. He had formed no close personal bonds with his classmates, and he felt his family would never understand or accept him. He longed for a normal loving relationship and acceptance. He felt he could never be who he was where he was.

Standing on the brink of his adult life at the beginning of his senior year, Raul is alone. What he wants more than anything now is not to be alone. He feels that if he could continue his art and find a community of his own where no one had to try to be something they weren't, he could be happy. He sees no way to find this in Midland. He has no knowledge of how to go about finding this. College is a mystery to him and his family, he knows no other community but Midland, and he feels no support from family, school, or friends. At this point, he is burdened with knowledge he cannot share, talent he cannot use, and separation that he feels will never end.

Raul is beginning his final journey in his senior year. This is the last opportunity anyone from the Midland educational system can help him. He is depressed and lost. To his family, classmates, and teachers, it may seem as if he has chosen to be alone and to work in solitude. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Raul's Cumulative Folder

This record must be completed by school and child care personnel from an immunization record provided by parent or guardian. See reverse side for instructions.

Student Name Raul Ramirez Sex: M F Birthdate 09/02 Place of Birth Mexico City, Mex
 Name of Parent or Guardian Jorge and Carmen Ramirez Address 125 Barbar St
 Telephone 706-3939 City Midland ZIP _____
Daytime Nighttime

Race/Ethnicity:
 White, not Hispanic
 Hispanic
 Black
 Other: _____

VACCINE	DATE EACH DOSE WAS GIVEN				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th Booster
POLIO (OPV or IPV)	09/14	11/12	03/17		
DTP/DTaP/DT/Td <small>(Diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis OR tetanus and diphtheria only)</small>	09/14	11/12	03/17		
MMR (Measles, mumps, and rubella)	09/14	11/12			
HIB (Required only for child care and preschool)					
HEPATITIS B	09/14	11/12			
VARICELLA (Chickenpox)	09/14	11/12			
HEPATITIS A (Not required)					

TB SKIN TESTS	Type* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PPD-Mantoux <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Date given 09/17	Date read 09/21	mm. indur.	Impression <input type="checkbox"/> Pos <input type="checkbox"/> Neg	CHEST X-RAY (Necessary if skin test positive) Film date: _____ Impression: <input type="checkbox"/> normal <input type="checkbox"/> abnormal
Person is free of communicable tuberculosis: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						

*If required for school entry, must be Mantoux unless exception granted by local health department.



Midland School District

1/16

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Ramirez,

It has come to our attention that Raul is experiencing academic difficulty in several subjects this year. He was referred to the Midland Middle School Academic Intervention Committee by several of his teachers.

After reviewing his grades and his file, we discovered that he has not had any English language support since early elementary school. We are concerned that he may be falling behind because he lacks competency in English. Beginning in February, with your permission, we will arrange to have a tutor from the local college work with him on English language skills during his study hall.

If you agree to this, please sign on the permission slip below and return it to the main office. Thank you.

John H. Haberman
Midland Middle School Principal

Name of child: Raul Ramirez

Yes, I give permission for my child to be tutored during study hall.

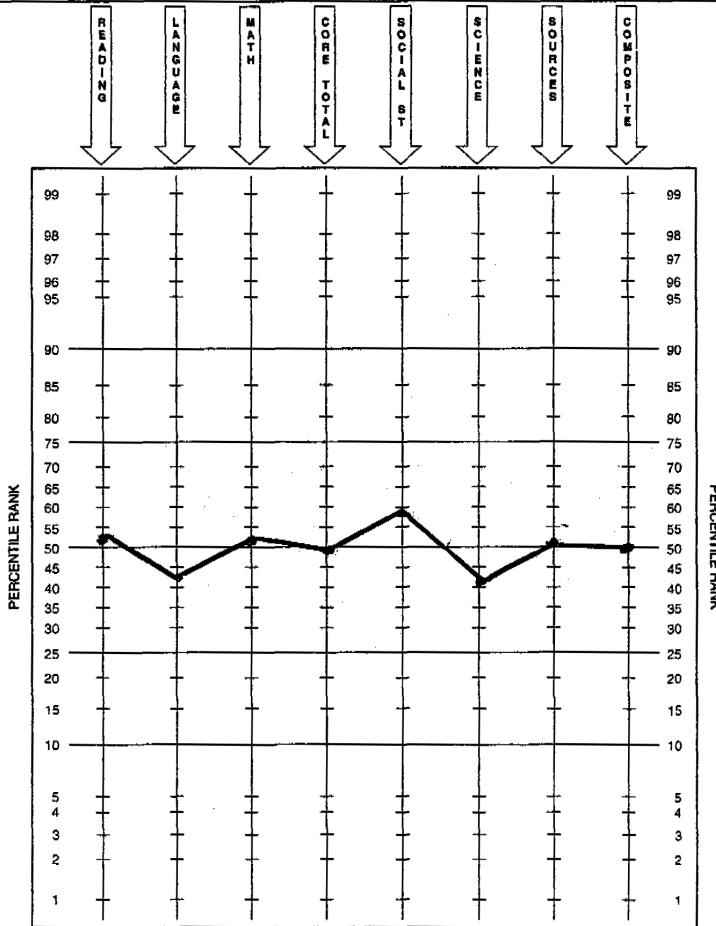
No, I do not want my child tutored during study hall.

Signature of parent (s) George Ramirez Date 12-13

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills

Raul Ramirez		Iowa Tests of Basic Skills					GRADE 7	TEST DATE
PERCENTILE RANK SCORES REPORTED	READING	LANGUAGE	MATH	CORE TOTAL	SOCIAL STUDIES	SCIENCE	SOURCES OF INFORMATION	COMPOSITE
NPR	54	43	52	49	59	42	52	50

COMPLETE/OTHER BATTERY, Key: NPR-National



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Raul Ramirez

Tests of Achievement

SERVICE 1:
STUDENT CRITERION-REFERENCED SKILLS ANALYSIS

Test 1 Reading Comp.	Test 2 Math	Test 3 Written Expres- sion	Test 4 Using of Info	Test 5 Social Studies	Test 6 Science	Test 7 Science	Test 8 Science	Test 9 Science	Test 10 Science
44	128	48	54	7	13	13	13	13	13
2	1	70	6	5	2	5	2	5	2

MAKE SURE TO
MARK RECORDABLE TEST & STUDENT

SKILLS	Number		Percent Correct		Class Average	National Average
	Number	Attained	Number	Attained		
READING COMPREHENSION	12	12	100	100	84	82
Textbook	12	12	100	100	84	82
Everyday	12	12	100	100	84	82
Fact	12	12	100	100	84	82
Inferencing	12	12	100	100	84	82
Generalization	12	12	100	100	84	82
MATHEMATICS	12	12	100	100	84	82
Operations	12	12	100	100	84	82
Equivalent Forms & Order	12	12	100	100	84	82
Common Applications	12	12	100	100	84	82
Geometry & Measurement	12	12	100	100	84	82
Statistics, Graphs & Tables	12	12	100	100	84	82
Basic Mathematical Principles	12	12	100	100	84	82
Computation	12	12	100	100	84	82
Concepts	12	12	100	100	84	82
Problem Solving	12	12	100	100	84	82
WRITTEN EXPRESSION	12	12	100	100	84	82
Spelling	12	12	100	100	84	82
Capitalization/Punctuation	12	12	100	100	84	82
Grammar & Usage	12	12	100	100	84	82
Paragraph Structure	12	12	100	100	84	82
Organizing Ideas	12	12	100	100	84	82
Writing Conventions	12	12	100	100	84	82
Knowledge/Information	12	12	100	100	84	82
Comprehension and Analysis	12	12	100	100	84	82
Application and Evaluation	12	12	100	100	84	82
Synthesis	12	12	100	100	84	82
Evaluation	12	12	100	100	84	82
USING SOURCES OF INFO	12	12	100	100	84	82
Maps	12	12	100	100	84	82
Graphs	12	12	100	100	84	82
Tables of Contents and Indexes	12	12	100	100	84	82
Dictionaries	12	12	100	100	84	82
General Reference Materials	12	12	100	100	84	82
Knowledge/Information	12	12	100	100	84	82
Comprehension and Analysis	12	12	100	100	84	82
Application and Evaluation	12	12	100	100	84	82
Synthesis	12	12	100	100	84	82
Evaluation	12	12	100	100	84	82

SKILLS	Number		Percent Correct		Class Average	National Average
	Number	Attained	Number	Attained		
HIGHER ORDER THINK SKILL	12	12	100	100	84	82
Reading Comprehension	12	12	100	100	84	82
Language Usage/Expression	12	12	100	100	84	82
Mark Study	12	12	100	100	84	82
SOCIAL STUDIES	12	12	100	100	84	82
History & Perspective	12	12	100	100	84	82
Higher Order Thinking Skills	12	12	100	100	84	82
Economic	12	12	100	100	84	82
Geographic	12	12	100	100	84	82
Political	12	12	100	100	84	82
Social Anthropologic	12	12	100	100	84	82
Related Social Sciences	12	12	100	100	84	82
Knowledge/Information	12	12	100	100	84	82
Application and Evaluation	12	12	100	100	84	82
Synthesis	12	12	100	100	84	82
Evaluation	12	12	100	100	84	82
SCIENCE	12	12	100	100	84	82
Nature of Science	12	12	100	100	84	82
Earth Space Science	12	12	100	100	84	82
Chemistry & Physics	12	12	100	100	84	82
Higher Order Thinking Skills	12	12	100	100	84	82
Knowledge/Information	12	12	100	100	84	82
Comprehension	12	12	100	100	84	82
Application and Analysis	12	12	100	100	84	82
Synthesis	12	12	100	100	84	82
Evaluation	12	12	100	100	84	82
Experimental Methods/Techniques	12	12	100	100	84	82
APPLIED SKILLS	12	12	100	100	84	82
Oral	12	12	100	100	84	82
Written	12	12	100	100	84	82
Visual	12	12	100	100	84	82
Reference Materials	12	12	100	100	84	82
Applied Mathematics	12	12	100	100	84	82



**Midland School District
Home Language Survey**

Student's Name Raul Ramirez
School (Circle one) CE MMS MHS

Parent (s) or Guardian (s) name (s) Carmen Ramirez
Jorge Ramirez

Address:

Phone:

1. What was the first language your child learned to speak?

Español

2. What language (s) does your child speak at home?

Both

3. What language(s) is spoken most often at home?

Español

4. What language(s) does your child speak most often with friends?

Both

5. Has the student received any English Language Learner services in the past?

If yes, # of years ✓ Where school

6. How long has your child lived in the USA?

6 years

7. What language do the parents speak? Español Read? Español

Dear Parents:

ACCORDING TO STATE LAW, A STUDENT WHO HAS EARNED THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF CREDITS BUT DID NOT PASS THE NINTH GRADE PROFICIENCY OFICIENCY TEST WILL AWARDED A CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE BUT WILL NOT RECEIVE A DIPLOMA.

Our district is committed to the goal of providing a sound education for each student entrusted in our care. We will be offering extra help for those students who do not pass all sections of the test on the first trial so they can be successful when they take the test again. We will also be addressing instruction in kindergarten through eighth grade so that our students have the skills they need to pass the test when they reach the ninth grade.

Attached are the results for your child. Unfortunately, the scores are not provided; this report only states whether your child passed or failed each of the form areas.

NAME: Raul Ramirez
SCHOOL: Midland High School Grade: 09
DISTRICT: Midland School District

<u>MATHEMATICS</u>	<u>READING</u>	<u>CITIZENSHIP</u>	<u>WRITING</u>
PASSED	PASSED	PASSED	PASSED

We look forward to working with you to help your child achieve the goal of receiving a high school diploma.

Sincerely,
Jane L. Carr
Jane L. Carr
Superintendent
Midland School District

Querida Señorita Buell,

Muchas gracias para consiguiendo Señorta Manning a ser la titora de Raul en Inglés. Querem. muchísimo que él aprenda en la escuela. Quiero que sepas que mi esposa y yo vamos a ayudarle a él en todo posible. Sabemos que el es inteligente y que va a aprender rápido.

Sinceramente,

Jorge Ramirez

10-27

Dear Mrs. Buell,

Thank you for getting Mrs. Manning to tutor Raul in English. We want very much for him to learn in school. Please know that my wife and I will help him all we can. We know he is smart and will learn fast.

Sincerely,

Jorge Ramirez

