

# Carlos cuervo

Profession, Teacher



Carlos Cuervo MGF1107 723864 723866 Mathematician Essay Assignment  
March 14, 2013 " Jaime Alfonso Escalante" What does it take to become good at math? For Jaime Escalante, one of America's most famous teachers, it only takes " ganas". As Mr. Escalante often explained, " ganas" (Spanish word for desire) will motivate any student to find and exploit their full potential, regardless of their economic or ethnic background. Jaime Escalante was born in La Paz, the capital city of Bolivia, South America. With the example of his parents, who were both teachers, he found a passion for teaching in his native country. Escalante taught math for twelve years before migrating to the United States with his wife Fabiola. The first few years in the new country, he applied himself to learn English while working in restaurants washing dishes. He went to college for the second time in his life just to get certified as a teacher in the United States. He received the highest honor as Magna Cum Laude at graduation and right away found a position as a computer teacher at Garfield High School in downtown Los Angeles, California. To his surprise, the school lacked the computers he needed for the class, so he took an alternative position as a math teacher. In that first year of teaching, Mr. Escalante was confronted with many obstacles. The school was in the verge of losing its operative certification; many students scored poorly in their academics, had problems with drugs or were involved in gang violence. As a new teacher, he constantly felt frustrated, with a sense of guilt for not inspiring his class to love math the way he did. Subsequently, and against all the odds, Mr. Escalante made a great contribution in the lives of students, and transformed the face of the College Board's Advanced Placement Program® (AP®). Most of Garfield High

School's math class was regarded as the "unteachables", the students did not understand basic concepts of math and some did not speak English well. But instead of teaching basic algebra, which Mr. Escalante told his students was "too easy"; he decided to introduce them to an advanced placement program for calculus at a college level. The changes in his teaching plans required much work from the students, but the enthusiastic teacher encouraged them to push themselves and prove that with "ganas" they could be successful. Besides telling his students how much he believed in them, he infused the classes with dynamic illustrations and exposed them to "real life" applications for math calculations. He was very involved in their lives, not only in the academics, but also in other personal aspects that were affecting their performance. He became a father figure for some students and described his methods as a combination of hard work, attention, love and fun. In 1982, his accomplished class caught the public eye when the local media reported that eighteen students from Garfield High School passed the AP calculus tests. But the testing officials disputed the results, calling the students suspects of exam fraud. The news became a controversial topic for the school board and Mr. Escalante argued that his students were subjects of discrimination because of their Hispanic ethnic background and economic conditions. With the same tenacity that characterized Mr. Escalante in the classroom, he asked the students to take the tests again. Twelve of the students retook the tests; and this time, five of them had the top scores. This was just the beginning of a revolutionary success for the AP calculus program at Garfield High School. Jaime Escalante received many recognitions and teaching awards, including the Presidential

Medal of Excellence in Education. His life inspired many other teachers and schools around the country. The success he had in the poor neighborhoods of Los Angeles, California was the inspiration for the movie "Stand and Deliver", starring Eduard James Olmos, Lou Diamond Phillips and Andy Garcia. A PBS television instructional series called "Futures" featured professor Escalante with famous celebrity guests explaining how math and science were applied in their careers. Nonetheless, what Mr. Escalante considered his greatest reward was the impact on his students. Many of them went on to become engineers, scientists and university professors. In 1991 six of the former calculus class's students landed jobs at NASA. Tomas Valdez is one of those who still remains working on fuel cell technology. Erica Camacho, whose parents were janitors, got a PHD in calculus and teaches at Arizona State University. In "Connection", the College Board's online publication, Jenny Krugman, vice president of the Southern Region for the College Board states: "There is no one in the country who is more responsible for the democratization of the AP Program than Jaime Escalante... He turned the world around for students and for people like me, fueling a belief in children that's not just based on our hearts, but on facts. " In 1988, Jaime Escalante retired from teaching in the United States and went back to his native Bolivia, where he continued to teach advance math at a national university. In 2010, after a long battle with bladder cancer, Mr. Escalante died. He was seventy-nine years old. The legacy of this remarkable teacher continues after his death. A mural was painted in a prominent street of Los Angeles, California, and a school was named after him to honor his contributions to the community. Even though archaic, Biblical] Jaime

Escalante was not a mathematician known to father any complex formulas or discoveries, his contributions to mathematics were in education and social justice. His philosophy was that every student is capable of high achievement, regardless of their background or circumstances. With this in mind, Mr. Escalante raised the standard in academics with his AP calculus class experiment. He not only taught his students to do math, but to love math and have fun in the process. References Jaime Escalante. Retrieved from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaime\\_Escalante](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaime_Escalante) Jaime Escalante Bio Retrieved from: [http://www.thefutureschannel.com/jaime\\_escalante/jaime\\_escalante\\_bio.php](http://www.thefutureschannel.com/jaime_escalante/jaime_escalante_bio.php) Jaime Escalante Biography. Retrieved from: <http://www.biography.com/people/jaime-escalante-189368> Jaime Escalante Elementary School Named In Ceremony. Retrieved from: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/03/26/jaime-escalante-elementar\\_n\\_841067.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/03/26/jaime-escalante-elementar_n_841067.html) Remembering Jaime Escalante. Retrieved from: <http://www.connection-collegeboard.com/home/programs-and-services/344-jaime-escalante>