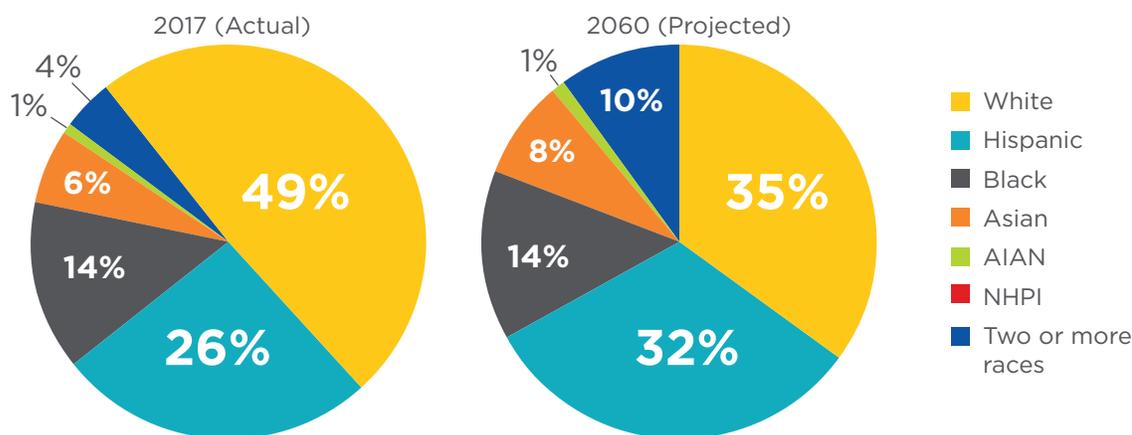


# Access to High Quality Early Childhood Education

Access to high-quality early childhood education (ECE) is the foundation toward educational equity, a core American value promising equal opportunity in the United States. Research shows that high-quality ECE programs have significant impacts upon children’s long-term outcomes due to the rapid cognitive, social, and emotional skills developed before age five.<sup>1</sup>

Children ages 3-4 years old by race



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Data Retrieval: Current Population Survey (CPS)," <https://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html?#> (accessed January 21, 2020).

Source: UnidosUS calculation using U.S. Census Bureau, "Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 2016 to 2060". Washington, DC, 2018, <https://census.gov/data/datasets/2017/demo/popproj/2017-popproj.html> (accessed January 15, 2020), Table 1.

American children stand to benefit substantially from access to high-quality ECE programs, particularly Latino children. By 2060, Latino children will comprise one-third (32%) of the three-to-four-year-old population.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, high-quality ECE programs promote a stronger economy because Latinos are projected to represent a larger and ever-growing share of the American workforce.

## Access to High-Quality Early Childhood Education: What Does It Mean?

**Access to high-quality early childhood education is multi-level, including:**

- Classroom spaces and outdoor areas that are safe, well-designed, and well-equipped for students.
- Social environments that are welcoming and inclusive for all children and families.
- Program services for families and children that are culturally and linguistically responsive and address the needs of the whole child; including support for the continued development of children’s home language and development of English.
- Classroom teachers who are intentional about creating children’s sense of belonging in the classroom and implement daily learning experiences that promote children’s physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills and abilities.

- Classroom staff that reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the families and children served by the program and who receive on-going professional development to build their capacity to work with diverse families and children.

## Few Latino Children are Benefitting from High-Quality ECE Programs

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education found that Latinos have the nation's lowest enrollment in ECE programs (49.5%), compared to 55.5% of White children.<sup>3</sup> In a recent study conducted by The Education Trust, research shows that only 1% of Latino children enrolled in a state funded ECE program received programs that can be characterized as "high-quality."<sup>4</sup> According to the study, high-quality ECE programs are culturally and linguistically competent, support language rich-environments, and offer "dual language immersion in a state's most common non-English spoken language."<sup>5</sup> Regardless of funding type, what we know about federal and state ECE programs is cause for concern because few have developed and implemented standards for dual language learners. High-quality ECE programs must include interactions in English and support for the continued development of a child's home language, as well as learning experiences through a culturally sensitive curriculum that develop stronger readers.

## Investing in the Nation's Youngest Learners

Lack of access to high-quality ECE programs undermines the educational opportunities and achievement of Latino children from their earliest years. Unfortunately, the educational achievement of Latinos has lagged behind their demographic growth: only 23% of Latino children nationwide read at a proficient level.<sup>6</sup>

Latino children are a large and rapidly growing group in need of appropriate, high quality ECE. It is crucial that state and federal policymakers meaningfully engage with Latino communities to identify barriers to access and work towards solutions. In order to advance access to high-quality ECE programs, UnidosUS supports the development of high-quality ECE standards for dual language learners, robust funding for Head Start and Early Head Start, and expanding eligibility requirements for Head Start.

## About Us

UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an [Affiliate Network](#) of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels.

For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger. For more information on UnidosUS, visit [www.unidosus.org](http://www.unidosus.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

## Endnotes

- 1 Carrie Gillispie, *Young Learners, Missed Opportunities: Ensuring That Black and Latino Children Have Access to High-Quality State-Funded Preschool* (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2019), 2, <https://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/edtrustmain/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/05162154/Young-Learners-Missed-Opportunities.pdf> (accessed January 15, 2020).
- 2 UnidosUS calculation using U.S. Census Bureau, "Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 2016 to 2060". Washington, DC, 2018, <https://census.gov/data/datasets/2017/demo/pop-proj/2017-popproj.html> (accessed January 15, 2020), Table 1.
- 3 National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics," [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_103.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_103.10.asp) (accessed January 15, 2020, Table 103.10).
- 4 Carrie Gillispie, *Young Learners, Missed Opportunities: Ensuring That Black and Latino Children Have Access to High-Quality State-Funded Preschool* (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2019), 2-20, <https://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/edtrustmain/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/05162154/Young-Learners-Missed-Opportunities.pdf> (accessed January 15, 2020).
- 5 Id
- 6 U.S. Department of Education, "NAEP Data Explorer," <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/xplore/NDE> (accessed January 15, 2020), Reading, Grade 4, 2019. Race/ethnicity using 2011 guidelines, school-reported, Achievement levels - cumulative.